# TORAH TREATS

*An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories Compiled by Yitzchok Henry*




# שופטים



***When Elul arrives, Jews hint to their task at hand by saying:*** ***- אריה שאג מי לא ייראה – When the lion roars, who does not fear…? (Amos 3:8). The letters of the Hebrew word א-ר-י-ה hint to*** ***אלול, יום כפור, ראש השנה, and הושענא רבה. These are all days of Judgment. Who does not tremble at their approach? (Matteh Moshe)***

# לעילוי נשמת



**אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה**

**ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה**

**ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה**

**ר'יעקב שמואל ב"ר צבי הלוי גרינספעלד ע"ה**

**ואשתו מרת חנה ב"ר דוד ע"ה**

**ר'שרגא פייביש ב"ר מרדכי צבי ערליך ע"ה**

**ר'יעקב ב"ר שלום הלוי פרידמאן ע"ה**

**ר'חיים דוד ב"ר אלכסנדר הכהן ריטשמאן ע"ה**

# ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

# Yitzchok's Collections אוספי יצחק

# שופטים

**Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz**



שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ לִשְׁבָטֶיךָ - "***Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities — which Hashem, your G-d, gives you — for your tribes.***" (16:18)

Last week's parashah ended with the commandment to rejoice on the festivals. Why does the directive to appoint judges and officers follow immediately thereafter?

Our Sages explain that the Torah is instructing that we appoint judges and officers to circulate among the people and ensure that there are no frivolous gatherings of men and women, as can easily happen amidst the rejoicing.

**R' Avraham Saba z"l** (1440-1508; Spain) adds: Similarly, our Sages ordained that one recite **בִּרְכַּת הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּיטִיב** after drinking one type of wine and before drinking a better wine. This blessing was originally composed to commemorate the miracle of the "Martyrs of Beitar." Although the Romans did not allow these martyrs to be buried for a long time, their bodies did not decompose. Because excessive drinking can lead to frivolity and improper mixing of the genders, our Sages decreed that one recall them in the middle of drinking in order to promote a degree of solemnity. (Tzror Ha'mor)

וְעָנוּ וְאָמְרוּ יָדֵינוּ לֹא שָׁפְכוּ אֶת־הַדָּם הַזֶּה וְעֵינֵינוּ לֹא רָאוּ -"***They shall speak up and say, `Our hands have not spilled this blood, and our eyes did not see'.***" (21:7)

These words were said by the elders of a city in proximity to which a corpse was found. Our Sages ask: Would we think for a moment that the elders murdered a hapless traveler? Rather, the elders are saying: We did not see this traveler. Had we seen him, we would have given him provisions for the road, which might have saved his life.

**R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l** (Chida; died 1806) quotes a certain R' Ephraim who notes that the Hebrew words "**לֹא שָׁפְכוּ**" are an acronym for "Levayah / accompaniment, achilah / food, shetiyah / drink, parnassat kol ha'derech / provisions for the whole way." (**כתיב שפכה**) (Nachal Kedumim)

## Teshuvah

**R' Zusia of Annipol z"l** (died 1800), is reported to have said:

The word "Teshuvah" (**תשובה**) is an acronym for the following injunctions:

* **תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ** - "*You shall be wholehearted with Hashem, your G-d*" (Devarim 18:13);

* **שִׁוִּיתִי ה' לְנֶגְדִּי תָּמִיד** -"*I have set Hashem before me always*" (Tehilim 16:8);

* **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ** -"*You shall love your fellow as yourself*" (Vayikra 19:18);

* **בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ דָּעֵהוּ** -"*In all your ways, know him*" (Mishlei 3:6); and

* **וְהַצְנֵעַ לֶכֶת עִם־אֱלֹהֶיךָ** - "*Walk humbly with your G-d*" (Michah 6:8).

(Be'urim U'mekorot L'orot Ha'teshuvah p.30)

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה׃ - "***Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue, so that you will live.***" *(16:20)*

**R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l** ("Chida"; 1724-1806) quotes **R' S. Primo z"l** as follows: The Gemara teaches that a person who gives charity with ulterior motives, for example, in order that his sick child will be cured, is nevertheless considered to be a perfect tzaddik.

How, ask the commentaries, can this be reconciled with our Sages statement that one should not perform mitzvot in the hope of being rewarded (although he, of course, will be)?

Says R' Primo: The Gemara is referring to a case where one has already fulfilled his obligation to give charity and now he gives additional charity with an ulterior motive. Such a person is not considered to be violating the Sages' teaching about performing mitzvot with pure intentions.

This is alluded to in our verse: "Tzeddek, tzeddek / Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue, so that you will live." If you give tzedakah twice, then you may do it with the intention that you (or someone else) will live. (Nachal Kedumin)

***"The old adage tells of a master that uses a stick to clout a slave; the unfortunate slave certainly doesn't blame the stick for his troubles, nor is he angry at the stick, nor does he try to appease the stick.***

***…any situation, person, object…that saddens us is none other than a 'stick' in Hashem's hands. Would we try to reason or negotiate with a stick? Certainly not! Just as the slave turns to his master, we must turn to Hashem whenever we seek to understand what's happening in our lives." ~ The Garden of Emuna***




וְהָיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּיו -"***And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.***" (17:19)

The Sefer Torah shall be the primary focus of the king's life. As it guides him through life, it shall be the object of his continual meditation. The love of Torah creates a bond that cannot be broken. Its influence is ever lasting. Indeed, many years later, the original impact of the Torah upon a person retains its freshness and inspiration as evidenced by the following story:

**Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita**, tells of a Yerushalmi Jew, a profound talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who moved to Tzefas. The story takes place years ago when the opportunity and availability to own a complete twenty-volume Shas was rare. This scholar possessed one volume, which contained mesechtos, tractates, Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah. This was the "Shas" which he took with him to Tzefas.

Regrettably, the city of Tzefas did not possess added volumes. Thus, these two mesechtos became the focus of his love and devotion to Torah. During his stay in Tzefas, he reviewed this volume over three thousand times!

While this individual was a talmid chacham of repute, he nonetheless asked his children, prior to his death, to inscribe on his tombstone only the fact that he had reviewed one mesechta over three thousand times. "Who knows," he said, "if this feat will one day inspire another Jew to love the Torah as I do."

Many years later, a distinguished family in Bnei Brak was shocked to learn that one of their sons had left the yeshivah where he had been studying, trading his seat in the bais hamedrash for a place in the

street with a gang of young, rebellious hoodlums. The parents were broken- hearted. They made every attempt to bring their child back to the living – to no avail. The more they tried, the more he rejected their pleas. The influence of his newly-found friends kept him in a stranglehold that was unyielding.

One day, out of the clear blue, the young man returned to his family and to Hashem. He asked to return to the yeshivah, and, in a short while, he was counted among the masmidim, more diligent students, of the yeshivah. Today, he is a great Torah scholar, a disseminator of Torah, par excellence. In fact, that episode in his life, when he had left Torah, is long-forgotten, erased as if it had never occurred.

What catalyzed his about-face? What brought about his return to Torah Judaism?

He related the reason to his parents. "I once had occasion to visit a cemetery in Tzefas," he told his parents, "and I noticed by chance the tombstone of a Torah scholar, upon which was engraved the fact that he had reviewed one volume of Talmud over three thousand times! - What impressed me the most was the fact that a basically simple Jew – not a rosh yeshivah or a rav – just a simple Jew, had such overwhelming love for Torah that inspired him to review the Talmud so many times. This man's exemplary devotion, his incredible love for Torah, awakened within me a spark that became a passionate flame. If he could do this, why could not I? I then made up my mind to pursue my own studies with a similar enthusiasm and fervor."

What a poignant and beautiful story!

There are a number of lessons to be derived herein. Quite possibly, the most significant is the impact our actions have on others, even over a period of time. Who would have thought that this young man would be walking in the cemetery and would notice a stone with a simple, but profound, message on it?







***How much credence should a Torah Jew give to current medical theories in the field of health and proper nutrition?***

As much as common sense requires. If it's something that one man has recently propounded, and it's not accepted by the body of medical men, so why should you bother? But if it's already so widely accepted, that it has become sensible to follow the advice, then you should do it. For example, smoking. Today, most knowledgeable people say that smoking is dangerous to the health. Therefore, it's common sense today. And if a person persists in smoking, so he is transgressing what the Torah says. There's no question that a person who smokes today is guilty. Only that there are some ignorant people who don't understand these things. And they think that what their father did, holds forever. And because their father didn't know about germs, they think they could also drink from a dirty cup.

There are people like that. They'll drink from a public drinking cup because their father also did! And they think, "My father also smoked; why not?" And the fact that this father might have died from smoking, that doesn't occur to them. Well, he's just an ignoramus. But those people who have some intelligence, are required to take into account the accepted medical opinions of the time.




***Can a woman wear a custom made sheitel?***

Let me explain something about this subject of sheitelech. I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings; I want to make everybody happy and wearing a sheitel is certainly a good thing. But you should know that some sheitels look too natural. And therefore, long-haired sheitels I think should be avoided.

I won't tell you exactly what to do, but you must know there is a responsibility on women to be able to come before the bais din shel maaleh when the time is up and she should be able to say, "I wasn't the cause of anybody who was looking at me too much." A woman should never be in a position where she is liable to be blamed for causing men to look at her. It's not her fault that she is a woman, but she has to be careful not to misuse that privilege. - Her husband is the one who has to look at her; others should not look. And therefore if you are too careful with your appearance, it's looking for trouble.

I don't say you shouldn't look good, but to make it your business to look attractive that's not right. At home many people are slovenly, they're sloppy. The husband sees a sloppy wife at home but on the street she dresses to kill! - It should be the opposite. At home you should dress up and make the best impression on your husband; on the street just be plain.

***"All that is thought should not be said, all that is said should not be written, all that is written should not be published, all that is published should not be read." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe***




***When children fight, should parents mix in?***

Absolutely! Children should be taught never to fight. I understand that children always are fighting and still you should always mix in, constantly and constantly and constantly. Hinei mah tov umah naim sheves achim gam yachad; children have to learn to get along. Your house is the home where you train them for life. If you train them to get along in the house, they'll be able to get along later with their wives and with their mechutanim and with their business partners and with their employers and with everybody else. - You have to train them in the house; you have to talk about shalom all the time.

Now, it's not necessary always to hit them but you must talk and talk and talk because a child is a human being and sof kol sof something goes into his little head. So talk to children always about shalom and achdus with their brothers. Say, "Love your brother."

To him it's a joke – love your brother? He loves his brother – smack! He smacks his little brother. No; teach him to love his brothers. After a while he'll begin to listen; it will penetrate. It goes in.

***The Chofetz Chaim teaches us that when a person speaks loshon hora, he is wasting one of the most precious commodities this world has to offer — time.***

***Things can go from the very worst to the very best in a blink of an eye. ~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810)***

## A Lesson in Life Courtesy Of "Professor" Ant

(Ethics of the Fathers. 2:4) Hillel says, "… do not say when I am free, I will learn for perhaps you will not become free".

Mishlei (Proverbs 6:6) King Shlomo says, "Go to the ant, O lazy person, regard her ways and be wise."

We tend to procrastinate, pushing off tasks for later. Sometimes we procrastinate so much that the task NEVER gets done.



A prime reason for procrastination is laziness. The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni quotes Rav Yehoshua the son of Prachiya as saying, "In the future the reshaim who had already passed away will ask Hashem for an opportunity to repent. Hashem will respond to them, 'Fools! The world that you had been in is compared to a Friday afternoon, while this [eternal] world is compared to Shabbos. - If a person doesn't prepare food before Shabbos, he will have nothing to eat on Shabbos. Similarly, if a person is going on a sea voyage and doesn't prepare food while still on dry land, what will he eat?

Furthermore, you should have learned from the ant. You didn't learn from the ant because of your laziness and foolishness, and therefore you didn't repent while you were still able to'."

It says in Orchos Tzaddikim (The Ways of the Righteous) that a person should learn from the ant the quality of zeal so that he may save his soul by preparing for Olam Haba (the next, eternal world).

The Talmud tells us that we can learn many good traits by viewing the world around us. Even the miniscule ant can teach diligence to a

human being. It busily accumulates thousands of seeds, far beyond its own needs, as a lesson to man to apply himself to a similar diligent accumulation of wisdom and good deeds.

Midrash Rabba (Devorim 4:2) says that an ant only lives for 6 months. It only eats 1 and ½ grains in its entire lifetime. Yet it spends the entire summer collecting food. The winter is too cold for it to do so.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said that 300 kur of grain, approximately three hundred million grains of wheat were once found in a single ant's hole!

Therefore, King Shlomo said that a lazy person should view the actions of an ant and prepare mitzvos in this world for the next world. He should do them while he can just as the ant collects grain when it is able to, during the summer.

Why does the ant accumulate so much more food than it needs? The Midrash continues, that the ant thinks that perhaps Hashem will grant it a longer life. Therefore, it continues gathering in order that it would have the food that it needs. - The likelihood of an ant living longer is doubtful, yet it puts all its efforts into accumulating more food-just in case.

Our eternal life in olam haba is a certainty. Surely, we should use all our time in this world to accumulate "food for our soul". That spiritual "food" is our Torah learning and our mitzvos.

Rav Dovid Leibowitz zt"l explains in the name of the Vilna Gaon why one feels pain upon dying. It is the pain of realizing that it is too late to do any more mitzvos! It is the pain of realizing that we could have and should have done more while we were able to.

We, like the ant, should be diligent to use our time in this world to the utmost. We should learn as much Torah and do as many mitzvos as we can




## הוא היה אומר

**R' Yitzchok Meir Alter *zt"l* (Chiddushei Harim)** would say:

"לֹא־יָקוּם עֵד אֶחָד בְּאִישׁ לְכָל־עָוֹן וּלְכָל־חַטָּאת"- According to *halacha*, one is forbidden to give testimony that affects a close relative. One can understand why a person should not give testimony in favour of a relative, as the person may be biased. Why, though, is one forbidden to give testimony against a relative?

The answer is because in order to bear witness, one must be an **איש**, a man. Anyone willing to give testimony against a relative is simply not a *mentsch* and cannot be a valid witness!"

## משל למה הדבר דומה

### תמים תהיה עם ה' אלהיך ... (יח-יג)

During the time when **R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin *zt"l***, (**Maharil Diskin**), was the *Rav* of Brisk, there was an unfortunate bout of *Chillul Shabbos* proliferating in the city. The residents of the city went out one *Shabbos* night to hold a large *hafganah*, a rally of protest. However, since their *hafganah* had not been approved by the authorities, the police quickly moved in and dissipated the crowd, arrested the leader, and brought him to the precinct.

The leader of the *hafganah* was led to a dark, enclosed room, and he sat there on *Shabbos* with no wine, *challah*, or any part of his regular

*Shabbos* meal. Not only that, but his thoughts were soured from worrying about what charges and punishments he would face in court.

But his sorrow didn't last too long. After several hours, the door to his prison cell opened, and the *Rav* of the city, the holy ***Maharil Diskin*** himself, walked into the cell where he sat down and remained with the prisoner.

The man later recounted, that from that moment on, his sadness disappeared. It was worth staying in the dark empty cell without any *Shabbos* delicacies just to be able to spend one *Shabbos* in the presence of the great and holy *Rov*.

We are all faced with challenges in our lives at one point or another. Sometimes it feels like a black darkness engulfs us with nowhere to turn and no one to aid. But when a person regards the *posuk "Be wholehearted with Hashem your G-d"* as it ought to be, with genuine faith and sincerity, he will quickly realize that *Hashem* is indeed with him - during the good times and especially during the not such good times. - There is nothing more comforting than knowing with certainty that *Hashem* is at your side!

## Short And Sweet Story of The Week by Yoni Schwartz

Decades ago, in the times of the **Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L**, there was a terrible decree against the Jews in Russia. As a result, the gedolei hador decided to hold a large convention in St. Petersburg to discuss the pressing issue. At some point during the convention, a very interesting dialogue took place between the Lubavitcher Rebbe at that time, the **Rebbe Rashab**, and the Chofetz Chaim. The Chofetz Chaim had to write a certain letter. However, there was just one issue: he didn't have any paper.

He saw that the Rebbe Rashab had some extra paper and decided to ask him for a piece. The Rebbe happily gave him one. Afterwards, the Chofetz Chaim handed the Rebbe Rashab two *kopecks*, which are

coins of very small value, but enough to cover the cost of that one piece of paper. A bewildered bystander approached the Chofetz Chaim and said, "You know the Rebbe has plenty of paper and plenty of wealthy people providing his stationery needs. Those two coins don't mean anything to him. Why are you giving them?"

The Chofetz Chaim's response was legendary. He said, "To me the two kopecks also aren't worth anything but two kopecks of *geneiva* (stealing), that's worth billions. That can create one *malach* (angel) that can turn over all of St. Petersburg with one blow!"




## Working on our Middos



**The Orchos Tzadikim** gives advice in regards to perfecting his Middos. To attain worthy character traits, one must intermix Yiras Shamayim, awe of Hashem with each Middah. Awe of Hashem is what binds all the Middos together.

This can be explained with the following analogy: If one were to string a strand of pearls, he would take a thread, tie a knot at its end, and insert the other side through a hole in each pearl. If that knot were to become undone or cut, certainly all the pearls would fall off the string!

It is the same with awe of Hashem. This is the knot that secures all of the good Middos on the strand. If it is removed, all one's good

Middos will fall away. And if one does not have good Middos, he cannot properly have Torah or do Mitzvos, because all of the Torah hinges on the perfection of one's Middos!

**Rav Naftali Amsterdam** was a Talmid of Rav Yisroel Salanter. He once came to his Rebbe and said, "Rebbi, if I had the head of the Shaagas Aryeh, and if I had the Neshamah of the author of the Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avodah and if I had your good Middos, then I could truly be a Servant of Hashem."

Rav Yisroel Salanter responded to him, "Naftali, with your head, and with your heart, and with your good personality traits, you can be Naftali Amsterdam! - That is all you have to be. You do not need to be the Shaagas Aryeh, or Rav Yisroel Salanter, or anybody else. Just be YOU, and that is how you will serve Hashem!"

## The Surprising Beracha



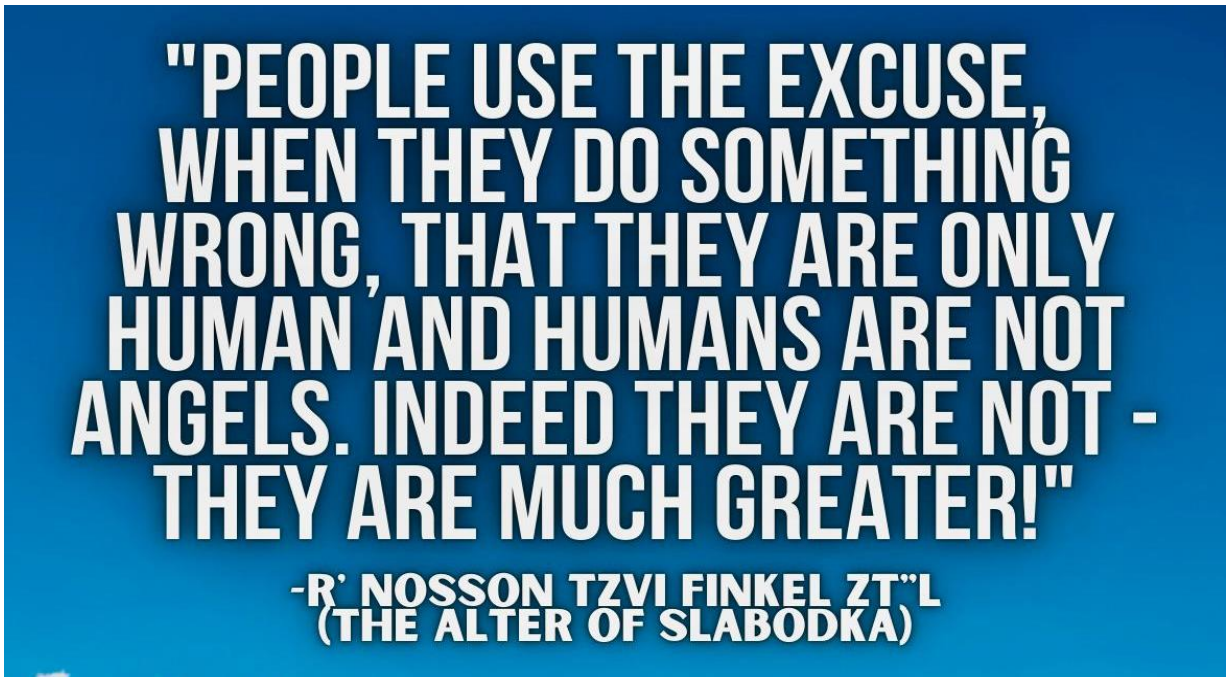
Klal Yisroel recently lost a great holy leader recently, **Rav Moshe Wolfson A'h**. Rabbi Yitzchok Gottdiener relates over a story of Rav Wolfson who by a friend's wedding gave a beracha to a young man that he should be blessed with many generations of strong children. Later by the wedding the young man mentioned to Rav Wolfson's grandson that it was a shame the Rabbi wasted a beracha on him and his wife as he had a genetic disease, and she was biologically infertile.

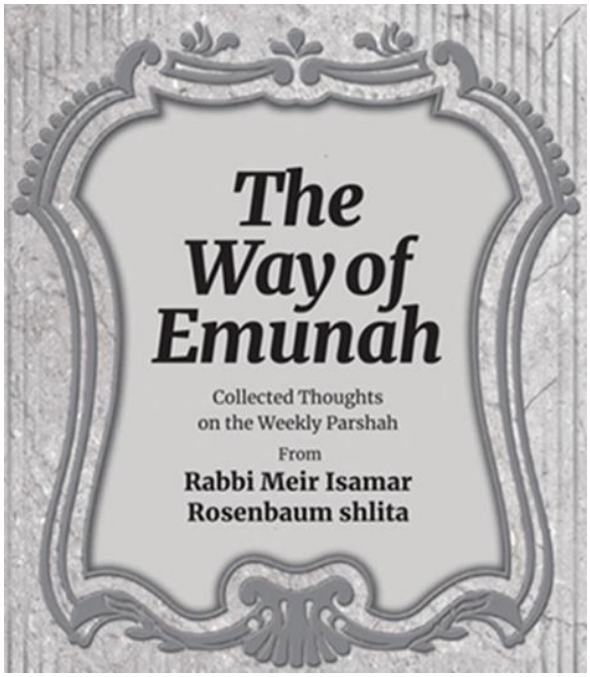
Two months later, this young man bumps into the gabbai—shul coordinator, and the young man tells him that against all odds his

wife was expecting! He explained that his wife is very worried that her child will be born with the genetic disease and wants to have her blood tested.

The gabbai told this over to Rav Wolfson who exclaimed that she should not get a blood test. This baby is a miracle, and everything will be okay. The woman still concerned proceeded to test her blood and the embryo for diseases, yet the tests showed everything was okay. Everyone held their breath at the birth, and miraculously the baby was born healthy!

Everyone attributed the baby's health to the Rabbi, however the Rabbi disagreed. He said that during the wedding he was so overwhelmed with love and joy for his friend that his beracha was infused with that same power. The Rabbi said he was not surprised that the baby was strong and healthy. When a Jew gives another Jew a blessing with his full heart it transcends the laws of nature. Let us be like Aharon HaCohen and Rav Wolfson A'h and use our love to support our fellow Jews. Tefillah for our fellow Jews can change Hashem's decrees instantly.






- **One Who Judges Others Favorably is Judged Favorably**

**The Kedushas Levi** writes that the Torah is teaching us that the way to merit being judged favorably during the Yomim Noraim is by judging others favorably. He says that Hashem judges us with mercy and compassion, but we need to do something in order to arouse His middah of chesed. - When we treat each other with chesed and judge each other favorably, He also judges us favorably. This is seen from the pasuk that states: "You shall place judges and watchmen in all of your gates" – meaning that you should create openings to reach the Heavens through your own actions. The way to do this is by "judging the nation with a righteous judgment." - When you judge others favorably, you create these gates to Heaven which allow you to be judged well by Hashem.

- **The Benefits of Achdus**

**The Sar Shalom of Belz zy"a** states that when one defends a fellow Jew, it creates much Divine mercy. For this reason, we do not recite the words "Yehi Ratzon" in the tefillah of "Acheinu Kol Bais Yisroel".

When we say "Acheinu" we do not need to request Hashem's mercy, as we have already brought it upon us through our achdus.

***R' Elya Lopian z"l says that faith can be gauged not by prayers when things are difficult but by the intensity of one's prayers when things are going well.***

- **Chasidim Who Steal Aveiros**

In the times of **Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchov zy"a**, some people would refer to chasidim as "ganavim". He explained that they were correct to call them by this name because the yeitzer hara collects people's sins all year round and stores them in one place.

When Rosh Chodesh Elul arrives, the chasidim go to the bais medrash to daven, fast and do teshuva, which causes all of the sins to be transformed into merits.

On Erev Yom Kippur, when the yeitzer hara goes to get the sins in order to bring them to Hashem, he finds that they are all gone. The chasidim have stolen them all! That is why they are called "ganavim" – because they steal the aveiros!




## Rabbi Paysach Krohn

The Meiam Loez says that אֱלוּל stands for אָהוּב לְמַעְלָה וְנֶחְמָד לְמַטָּה – "***He will be loved above in Hashem's eyes, and pleasant below in the eyes of the people***." (Gemara Berachos 17a)

This means **בין אדם למקום** and **בין אדם לחברו**

***"Hashem's blessings are reminders to recognize and appreciate Him. Every 'Thank You', deepens our awareness of His presence, bringing us closer to Him." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.***

***"A sure way to uplift yourself is to uplift someone else." ~ Reb Yisrael Friedman of Ruzhin (1796-1850)***

בס"ד

# Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

## Parsha Pearls

**תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ. -- דברים יח:יג**

Rashi explains one of the messages of this verse in the following way: **כל מה שיבא עליך קבל בתמימות** - '***Accept wholeheartedly everything that will come upon you***...' - Note that the word **קבל** in Rashi's comment above is in present tense, while the word **שיבא** is in the future tense!

The message is: Accept **now** that whatever **will** happen, will be all good, since it will come from your loving Father in Shamayim.

## Chabad.ORG From our Sages

**שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ** - '***Judges and officers you shall place at all your city gates . . .'*** *(16:18)*

The human body is a city with seven gates—seven portals to the outside world: the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the mouth. Here, too, it is incumbent upon us to place internal "judges" to discriminate and regulate what should be admitted and what should be kept out, and "officers" to enforce the judges' decisions . . .(Siftei Kohen)

***"Even if a person arrives in this world with a terrible lifelong destiny, Bitachon has the power to shatter that destiny." ~ Maharal***

A case once came before **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Rebbe of Apta** (1755–1825), when he served as a rabbinical judge in the town of Kolbasov. While the case was underway, he suddenly felt inclined in favor of one of the litigants, though his initial leaning was against him. This sudden change roused his suspicion that something was amiss, and he ordered a halt to the proceedings. Upon investigation, he discovered that someone had slipped a packet of money into his coat.

Said the Rebbe of Apta: Although I was totally unaware of the attempt to bribe me, my judgment was affected. How true are the words of the Torah that "bribery blinds the eyes of the wise"! ~ (Maayanah Shel Torah)

An impoverished widow once came to the *beit din* (courthouse) of the great sage Rabbi Yehoshua of Kutna. Weeping bitter tears, she begged him to summon to the court a man she accused of having wronged her.

Rabbi Yehoshua summoned the man to appear before the court, but referred the case to another rabbi, refusing to preside over it himself. "The Torah forbids the taking of bribes," he explained. "Do you think that a bribe is only a gift of money? Tears can also be a bribe that 'blinds the eyes of the wise'—especially the tears of a poor widow." ~ (Maayanah Shel Torah)

**צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף** – '***Justice, justice shall you pursue***.' *(16:20)*

Why does the verse repeat itself? Is there a just justice and an unjust justice? - Indeed there is. The Torah is telling us to be just also in the pursuit of justice—both the end and the means by which it is obtained must be just. ~ (Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa)




## Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

- **How does having judges in every city help to ensure that they will judge correctly?**

שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ לִשְׁבָטֶיךָ וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צֶדֶק (16,18) "***Judges and officers you shall place in all your gates which Hashem, your G-d, is giving to you, for your tribes, and they shall judge the people with a righteous judgement.***"

Chazal teach in Pirkei Avos 1:1 that one should be deliberate in judgement so that the judges will be able to arrive at the truth, because if they judge hastily it is quite likely that they will make a mistake.

Now, if there are judges only in a few places and not in every city, all the litigants would have to come to one of these few courts. This would put a big workload on the judges and as a result they will make their decisions speedily and not be deliberate in judgement. But if judges are appointed in every city, then they will only have to deal with the cases from their city which will not involve too large an amount of work. Thus, they will be able to take their time and deliberate the case.

This is why the Torah commands us that "judges and officers you shall place in all your gates" because then "they shall judge the people with a righteous judgement".

***The path to true humility begins with one ignoring insults or wrongdoings that were done to him. ~ R' Moshe Feinstein.***

- **Why will judges be afraid to act falsely?**

שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ לִשְׁבָטֶיךָ וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צֶדֶק (16,18) "***Judges and officers you shall place in all your gates which Hashem, your G-d, is giving to you, for your tribes, and they shall judge the people with a righteous judgement.***"

Another reason why the Torah commands us to appoint judges in every city is because a person does not lie about a matter which is likely to be revealed. Therefore, if they appoint judges in every city the judges will not judge falsely because they will be afraid that the litigants might go to another court close to their city which will rule the opposite, and so the first judges will be caught in their lie. But if they do not appoint judges in every city they might judge falsely since there are no other judges nearby to reveal their falsehood, and it is not likely that the litigants will trouble themselves to go to another court far away.

And even if there are other Torah sages around, the renegade judges could simply claim that they are not judges and so are not competent in judgements. This we see from the gemora in Bava Kamma 53a which comments that R. Noson was a judge and penetrated the depths of a case, which implies that somebody who is a Torah sage but not a judge is not so expert in judgements.

Therefore, the Torah says "Judges and officers you shall place in all your cities", and thereby "you shall judge the people a righteous judgement" since the judges will not act falsely in a matter which is likely to be revealed.

***"It's not enough to love Hashem. We have to act in such a way that others will come to love Him as well!" ~ Rabbi Paysach Krohn.***

# Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

## A Pat On The Back That Lasts For Decades

It was the 1st day at summer Camp Machanayim in Israel. The staff had gathered around, whereupon Eliav Friedman (head counsellor) got up on a chair and told them: "I want to encourage all of you to look out for any boy who seems lonely, sidelined or rejected. Go over to him and buy him a bag of chips or a snapple from the canteen, strike up some conversation, shoot some hoops or play some catch.

"And you know why, I am telling you this? Because when I was a little boy, I went to a camp called Camp Morris. I was very lonely and felt isolated, and I remember one division head counsellor, Ezzy Fireworker, and he took care of me. I want you to know that Ezzy changed my summer and changed my life. Therefore, look out for those boys on the side and reach out to them."

The head of Camp Machanayim, Rabbi Dovid Goldstein, was listening in on this. Thinking it through, Rabbi Goldstein began to wonder if Ezzy Fireworker knew the impact he had left on Eliav, so much so that Eliav was now encouraging others to do what was done to him! Rabbi Goldstein decided he'd look into it.

Soon enough, Rabbi Goldstein and Ezzy were on a call together. "Ezzy, you don't who I am… My name is Rabbi Goldstein. I have a camp in Israel called Camp Machanayim…" With that, Rabbi Goldstein proceeded to share with Ezzy what Eliav had told the staff members the other day, underscoring the impact Ezzy had left on Eliav. "Do you remember this boy?" asked Rabbi Goldstein.

"To be honest," replied Ezzy, "I don't remember him, because I did it to every kid who I saw was lonely."

"Really?" shot back Rabbi Goldstein, surprised. "Yeah, really…" Ezzy said, "and I'll tell you why. When I was a kid in Camp Agudah, I found myself crying one Friday afternoon after hearing that my grandmother had been rushed to hospital, and there was one

counsellor who came over to me and asked if something was wrong. I nodded, upon which he invited me into his bungalow and offered me something to eat. I'll never forget it… he changed my summer."

At the sound of this, Rabbi Goldstein thought aloud, his mind racing. "That's amazing! I wonder if that counsellor knows the ripple effect that caused you to impact Eliav, who is now impacting the whole staff at Camp Machanayim!" Ezzy could only smile. But Rabbi Goldstein still had one question. "Could you please tell me the name of the counsellor who was there for *you* when *you* were a camper? I am going to give him a call!"

"Well," said Ezzy, with a trace of reservation, "I don't know if you know him. His name is Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky."

"You mean *the* Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky, Rosh Yeshiva of the Philadelphia Yeshiva?" Rabbi Goldstein couldn't believe it to be true. But it seemed it was.

"Yes, *the* Rav Shmuel," Ezzy confirmed.

After hearing this story from Eliav and verifying it with Ezzy, I knew it to be true. Still, I never had the opportunity to confirm it with Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky *shlita* until a while later. I had a chance to be introduced to Rav Shmuel *shlita* at a Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation Convention in Connecticut, attended by 1,500 people. I plucked up the courage and asked, "Rosh Yeshiva, do you remember Ezzy Fireworker?"

Rav Shmuel nodded and smiled.

You never know how one act of kindness, or one pat on the back, whether at school, shul or at camp, can change the summer, year or even the life of someone else. And that someone else will go on to change the life of another someone else. For generations to come……

Good Shabbos




## ◣ Reflective Righteousness - Reb Asher Horowitz of Rimanov

וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צֶדֶק - "***They shall judge the people with righteous judgment.***" (16:18)

When one commits a transgression or performs a tactless act, we should not judge him as guilty immediately. First, judge yourself as to what you would do under the same circumstances, then you will be able to judge "with righteous judgment."

## ◣ Seeing The Full Picture - Chiddushei Harim

וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צֶדֶק - "***They shall judge the people with righteous judgment.***" (16:18)

Our Sages (Avos 1:6) teach us, וֶהֱוֵי דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת -"***Judge every man favorably.***"

The words for "every man," can also be translated as "the entire man." - We must not criticize someone for singular acts of which no person is exempt. Rather one should judge an individual based on his entire persona, for then one would probably judge him favorably.

***"When all else fails, faith remains; and with faith, everything else can be rebuilt." ~ Based on the teachings of The Brisker Rav, Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik (1886-1959).***

## ◣ Complete Distortion - Vilna Gaon

**לֹא־תַטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תַכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא־תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יְעַוֵּר עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים וְיסַלֵּף דִּבְרֵי צַדִּיקִם** - "***Do not accept bribery, for bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and distorts words of the righteous***." (16:19)

In Parshas Shoftim, it states: **כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יְעַוֵּר עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים** -" For the bribe blinds the eyes of the wise," whereas a slightly different version is found in Parshas Mishpatim: **כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יְעַוֵּר פִּקְחִים**. - What is the difference between the two?

A "chacham" refers to someone who is learned in Torah; a "peke'ach" is one who is clever in worldly affairs. We see that accepting a bribe has the effect of distorting both kinds of knowledge.

## ◣ Inner Humility - Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

**לְבִלְתִּי רוּם־לְבָבוֹ מֵאֶחָיו** - "***So that his heart does not become haughty above his brethren***..." (17:20)

To preserve discipline and inspire awe, a king must always act sternly. But this must be on the outside only. In his own heart, the king must not regard himself as superior to his brethren. He must never permit the regal dignity that he must preserve to the outside world penetrate his heart.

## ◣ Stay Vigilant - Ohr Hachaim

**וְכִי־יִהְיֶה אִישׁ שֹׂנֵא לְרֵעֵהוּ וְאָרַב לוֹ וְקָם עָלָיו** - "***If a man hates his friend, and lies in wait to overcome him***..." (19:11)

How can one hate a friend? If he's a friend, then he must love and care for him?

The answer is that although the pasuk literally refers to a killer who has fled to one of the cities of refuge, it allegorically alludes to the yetzer hara which disguises itself as a person's "friend." - One must

always be aware that the evil inclination is constantly "lying in wait," watching every step, hoping to "overcome" him and cause him to sin.

### ◣ Open To Greatness - Sigheter Rebbe

**וְהַשֹּׁפְטִים אֲשֶׁר יִהְיוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם** '***The judges who are in those days***'

Rashi comments and says: "Yiftach in his generation was like Shmuel HaNavi in his generation; you must treat him reverently." (19:17)

The name Yiftach comes from the root of "open up" - **פתח**. Thus, we learn a tremendous lesson for all time: If a person will strive to "open up" and expand his avodas Hashem, no matter what time period he lives in, Hashem looks upon him with honor and respect, as if he were as valuable as the great tzaddik, Shmuel HaNavi!

### ◣ Fruitful Victory -Sforno

**כִּי־תָצוּר אֶל־עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֶם עָלֶיהָ לְתָפְשָׂהּ לֹא־תַשְׁחִית אֶת־עֵצָהּ לִנְדֹּחַ עָלָיו גַּרְזֶן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכֵל וְאֹתוֹ לָא תִכְרֹת** - "***When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to seize it, do not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them, for from it you will eat, and you shall not cut it down***..." (20:19)

When an army realizes that it will not be victorious and will have to retreat, it destroys whatever it finds in enemy territory before retreating to inflict as much loss as possible on the enemy. But if the army is sure that it will conquer the territory, the property there would not be destroyed because it may make use of it later.

To assure the Jews of their ultimate victory, the Torah tells them: You are certain to conquer this land, because G-d Himself has promised it to you and you will be able to eat the fruit of these trees once you have settled in the land. Why, then, should you inflict loss on your own people by destroying the country's vegetation?

## Rabbi Dovid Trenk

One day, a group of Rabbi Dovid Trenk's students decided to play a prank on their beloved Rebbi. Knowing that he had the habit of stepping on the rising pile of papers in the garbage so that the discarded paper towels and soda cans weren't visible in the classroom, they filled the garbage bin with water, then layered it on top with papers. Rabbi Trenk, who could not see the water under the cover of garbage, lifted his foot and brought it down, as if to smooth out the pile- and stepped into a small pool of water.

The moment it happened, the boys felt horrible, realizing what they had just done. They hadn't really wanted to cause their Rebbi discomfort, but Rabbi Trenk beamed, "You got me, boys, you got me, as if he was so proud of their ingenuity and resourcefulness.

Throughout the class, every time more water came pouring out of the cuff of his pants, he smiled again and said, "The guys got me."

One of the students later recalled, "He didn't punish us, or berate our immaturity and poor judgement. The class was as cheerful as ever - but we all felt horrible, and it was worse than any punishment..."

Rabbi Trenk mastered the art of loving discipline, able to stand firm and enforce rules without having to resort to frustrated threats and accusations. One morning, he came in to say shiur and the classroom was a mess, papers and used tissues strewn all over the room. "Boys, we can't learn Torah this way, it's not respectful. I'm going to leave and come back in five minutes. Please make sure the room is spotless."

Rabbi Trenk left and returned precisely five minutes later. The boys had gone through the motions of cleaning up, picking up a few papers, and kicking some of the litter to the side, but the room wasn't much neater. He looked around the room but didn't react. Instead, he bent over and began to pick up pieces of trash himself. Several boys

ran over to help him, but he held up a hand. "No boys, I'm sorry, you had your chance. Now, I will have the zechus (merit) of cleaning the room so that it's a suitable place to learn Torah, and you," looking around, his voice rising a notch, "you will remain in your seats and not move.

For several quiet, uncomfortable minutes, the students watched their beloved Rebbi crawl, bend, and reach, tidying the room, while they were powerless to help. The students soon began to emulate Rabbi Trenk by cleaning the hallways of the Yeshiva themselves.




- **Preparing with Gratitude**

I recall when I was in Slabodka in Europe how on Rosh Chodesh Ellul they began saying a *mussar shmuz* every day; instead of three times a week, now it was every day. And not a short *shmuz* – it was an hour and a half each time. We spoke constantly about the Yom Hadin – even among ourselves. The entire month was spent in preparation and the air was saturated with gravity, a seriousness. All of our thoughts were, "We're approaching the Day of Judgment. Are we prepared?"

The truth is that some of the great men in the not so long ago didn't even wait for Ellul. One month alone should be enough to prepare for

Yom Hadin? The Alter of Slabodka, *zichrono levrachah,* already in the middle of the month of Av used to go to Kelm to prepare for Ellul. Others did similar things. They didn't wait for Ellul – already in Av they were busy preparing.

But now we are already *in* Ellul and so the question is what do we do *now?* We're already behind schedule and so to delay anymore would be foolhardy. And therefore we should do the best we can, *bli neder,* and spend some time now preparing for Yom Hadin. Anything else would be reckless.

- **Looking Backwards**

So we'll begin by saying that the first thing to do before the year comes to a close is to look back on the past year and to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu that last Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur He inscribed us for another year of life.

Nobody knows. Nobody knows. I remember once there was a member in my synagogue who went to sleep. In the morning, his wife came and said, "Mordechai! Wake up!" Mordechai didn't move. "Mordechai, wake up!" He didn't move. It was all over; he had passed away in his sleep. This happened to a young man by the way. Don't take it for granted! I've seen so many cases where people suddenly left the world, *lo aleinu.* Friends, family, acquaintances, members of my *shul;* so many people are taken away unexpectedly. And therefore that's number one – we should be happy and full of gratitude to the One Who gave us life.

Otherwise, how can we even think about appearing before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah? Imagine a person is going to stand in *shul* and ask, " **כָּתְבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים**– *Hashem please inscribe me in the Book of Life!*" Shouldn't he first discharge his obligation to say thank you for what he was written in for this past year? Always 'give me, give me.' Every year you come and ask for more; more and more. What about thanking for what you got up to now? Is thanking such a small thing?

- **First Things First**

It's not small at all. Just the opposite; the most important function of a person in this world is to recognize the *chasdei Hashem* to him. It's such an important statement, I'm going to repeat it. *Of all the things that are expected of us in this world, the foremost is the obligation to thank Hashem.*

And so if it comes into your head during these days, "What should I do to prepare?" so now you know. The first obligation is to think about how you lived a year up until now. You survived! You're here to tell the story.

Of course you have to do other things too. A person has to make time to think about his sins; there's a lot of *teshuvah* you have to do, various *aveiros* you have to spend time considering. You have to make resolutions, and you have to find ways and means of making sure your resolutions will have a *kiyum*. You can finish *mesichtas* too, why not? Absolutely there's a lot of work to do. But more than anything else, the top of the list before Yom Hadin, is the requirement of thanking Hashem, of giving gratitude to Him for the past year.

"I gave you another year of life," Hashem says, "and it was much more than life in general. All the needs of your life I gave you." If you're still here, it's a result of thousands and thousands of benefits, thousands and thousands of miracles. Your kidneys were working. Your pancreas was working. Your heart was pounding away every day. Your liver is functioning – did you once this year thank Hashem for your liver?

You never even thought about it. All year long your blood circulation was working. Do you know how many miracles there are in your blood? Even your blood clotting – just the fact that you didn't bleed to death every time you got a cut this past year is a miracle! There are *nissei nissim* in the process of blood clotting. Every process in the body is so deep and profound that it's astounding what Hakadosh Baruch Hu is doing for us all the time.

- **We Want it All**

And we want it again. We want a lot! We don't want a little bit; we want everything. We want to be healthy not only in our blood and our pancreas. We want to be healthy in our eyes and healthy in our ears and healthy in our teeth. We want to be healthy in our throats, in our pharynx, in our larynx; going down and down – we want to be healthy in our gullets, healthy in our stomach, healthy in the intestine, healthy in the bladder, healthy in the heart, and in the spleen and the colon.

There are a lot of things we need and each one is a very big achievement by itself. Because if a man has health in all of the organs except one *chas veshalom* he'll discover it's not enough. Oh boy will he discover it then!

Here's a man who tries to use the bathroom one morning and he discovers that he can't. He tries but nothing happens. But he has to! Now, that's not a comfortable feeling at all. And even though everything else is functioning but this one thing is too important. You can't fool around with such a thing!

So he calls out to his wife, "Something is wrong! Emergency! I have an emergency here!" So they take a taxi or an ambulance, whatever it is, and they rush to the hospital. A true story, a man in my *shul*. I heard that story – he was telling me about it with tears in his eyes and I was thinking about how important every function in the body is, how there are thousands of functions and processes that we need to work smoothly.

- **Uhum?**

And therefore life means a lot of things and it's all of those things that we're going to ask for on Rosh Hashanah. After a whole year of receiving benefits we are going to be standing and asking **כָּתְבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים**– *write us for a year of life and all the things included in life*. It means the millions of things that we need. "Can we have

another year?" So Hashem is looking at us, "Uhum? What about the past year? You forgot that?"

So at least we should be able to say that we spent the last month of the year thanking. It's true we got a late start but we'll do it now for a month and we'll try to make up for the whole year. And so our hands are full; there's a lot of work to do. You have to start a new career, the career of **וְיִתְבּוֹנְנוּ חַסְדֵי ה'** – *meditating in the kindnesses of Hashem* (Tehillim 107:43).

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuva 3:17) quotes those three words from Dovid Hamelech and he says we see from there that it's a duty to look back on all the happiness that you had in the past, all the successes in the past; to look back and enjoy all those weeks and days and nights and hours. And so if we'll listen to him, that's already enough to keep you busy the rest of the month.

- **Five Times Thirty**

Even if you put it into practice for five minutes a day, you're superior to everyone else because the world doesn't do it. They talk about it sometimes but talk is cheap – we'll be the ones who do it. Five minutes a day – five minutes on the clock for thirty days – we're going to set aside for this project of looking back in gratitude at the road we traveled from last Rosh Hashanah till now.

Remember Tishrei? Each day is something to consider. Each day was a glorious cacophony of pleasures, of successes, of life. There were two days of Rosh Hashanah and then you were busy preparing for Yom Kippur. Ah, Yom Kippur! The day our *aveiros* were wiped clean and we became reconciled with Hashem. And then after Yom Kippur, we sat down to the meal at *motzei Yom Kippur;* how good the food tasted. Did you think about that? Ah! It was a pleasure to eat that meal. You filled your stomach and it was fun!

And probably you continued eating after *motzei Yom Kippur* too. Almost three hundred and sixty five breakfasts you ate this year.

Did you enjoy breakfast? Now don't tell me you didn't. If you didn't, then you have to take a course in living a normal life because everybody should enjoy breakfast. Almost three hundred and sixty five times this year you ate supper. And most of us ate three hundred and sixty five lunches. Not to mention what you did between meals. You think it's possible to fit that into five minutes of thinking?

- **Room and Board**

What about all the occasions when you slept? You know there are some people who can't sleep. And most of us slept three hundred and sixty five nights. I don't think you were up in *mishmarim* all night. I don't want to be *choshed b'kesheirim* but I think you were sleeping almost every night.

And you didn't sleep on the railroad tracks or a park bench; you probably slept in a bed almost every night. Here's a poor woman, homeless, bedraggled and a little bit demented. All her worldly possessions are in the shopping wagon; she has nothing. She doesn't have a bathroom, she doesn't have a kitchen, she doesn't have a bed to sleep in. I see her on Ocean Parkway and she's trying to fall asleep on a park bench. It's *mammish* a heartbreak to look at her. If she could only have a place to sleep.

And you, all year long you had a bed and a roof over your head. Maybe your landlord is a tough fellow; maybe the rent is too high. But you have a roof and beds and running water. How lucky she would be if she could have a little place, a shack with a roof over her head; she'd be the happiest person right now.

You put on garments every day. You took baths once in a while. What *didn't* you have? Think of all the months that passed by, one after the other. But not wholesale. Wholesale thinking is not enough because each month has so many days in it and *Shabbosim, yomim tovim*. The truth is every day was a *yomtiv*. If your heart was

pumping, it was a glorious day. If you went to the bathroom successfully, it was a glorious day.

- **Look Back In Joy**

And so when we look back now with gratitude we should include all of those glorious days, all of the successes we had, all of the *simchahs* that we had, all of the pleasures we had in our private lives. Believe me, that's enough to keep us busy for a long time; a month is not enough.

But at least with that you should go into the *yomim noraim*. You had an entire year, a good year, and you made an effort to look back and express gratitude to Hashem. With details! At least you'll have that under your belt – you spent the last month of the year appreciating all the various kinds of happiness that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave you this past year, before you had the boldness, the *chutzpah*, to ask for another year.




## Preparation

This week's Parsha begins with the passuk, "**שופטים ושוטרים**", "make for yourself judges and policemen." The Midrash brings down that Shlomo HaMelech advised that one should observe the ant in order to acquire Chochma.

Why did Shlomo choose the ant over every other animal? The ant only lives for six months because it does not have veins or bones. The ant only eats one and a half pieces of grain throughout its entire life span, yet it stores a tremendous amount of food. Why does the ant do this?

He does so in case G-d grants him a longer life and therefore he will need to eat more. Therefore Shlomo recommended that we watch the ant who teaches us to prepare for Olam Haboh. Although the ant has no one monitoring him, we do have Shoftim and Shotrim and therefore we should certainly prepare ourselves in every way possible.

In truth, this Midrash needs a further explanation. Why does Shlomo select the ant when every animal has a natural instinct to store food for the future?

I once heard an explanation that every animal gathers food for the future; however, every other animal only gathers the amount that its senses consider necessary. The ant, on the other hand, cannot comprehend the amount of time that he is gathering food for because no ant ever lives nearly the amount of time that it gathers food for. So too, a person cannot comprehend Olam Haboh with his senses. Nevertheless, he should gather as many Mitzvos as possible in order to attain Olam Haboh.

The Midrash continues that the ant has no one supervising him, while we have Rabbonim, which are like shoftim and shotrim, guiding us and encouraging us to do the right thing. The Teva of a person is to pursue Olam Hazeh because that is what our senses perceive. Nonetheless, a person has to perceive this "esoteric" Ruchniyus world as his primary life so that he can direct all his strength and energy into it.

The Passuk before "**אחת שאלתי**" says "If vast armies fall upon me, I will not fear". The Ibn Ezra says that this is actually connected to the passuk of "Achas Shoalti". The Pessukim mean to say, that when a person attaches himself to G-d, and his only interest in life is "Achas Shoalti", G-d attaches Himself to that person. Similarly, The Ramban says in Sefer Iyov that when a person connects himself to G-d, G-d does not leave him for even one minute of his life!

With this, we can explain the Rashi in our Parsha. In 20:3 Rashi states that even if a person only has the zchus of Krias Shema, he will be successful in war. How can this be true? How does Rashi know that a person's sins won't be detrimental to him in a war merely because of his zchus of Krias Shema? Based on what we said previously, it is understood that when someone says Shema with genuine kavonos, he attaches himself to G-d. Therefore, he has the aforementioned assurances that "G-d will not leave him for one moment".

**R' Chaim Veloshiner** says that when a person is totally engrossed in thinking about Hashem, no bad can happen to him in that moment. Moreover, he brings down that this engrossment in Hashem is sure segulah to keep one safe in a time of any type of danger.

May we be zoche in this holy month of Elul to completely attach ourselves to Hashem, and with this zchus, we will safely make it through the Yom Hadin and be written in the book of life!

## "תמימות" - Perfection

In this week's Parsha, there is a fundamental Mitzvah mentioned. The Torah says "**תמים תהיה עם ה' אלוקיך**" which loosely translated means, "You shall act 'Tamim' with your G-d." Rashi explains that the "purity" which the Torah is asking from us in this verse, is a purity of trust in Hashem in which one has no need to visit a necromancer in order to determine the future, but rather fosters a trust in Hashem that everything will turn out okay.

The Ba'al Haturim points out that the "**ת**" in the word "Tamim" is written noticeably larger in the Torah in order to show how integral this Mitzvah is to the Jewish people. This large letter indicates that when the Jews cultivate a true faith in Hashem, it is as if they completed the entire Torah. This is demonstrated by the fact that the letter which is enlarged is the last letter in the Aleph Beis.

I would just like to offer another explanation in the verse, "One should be 'Tamim' in his service of Hashem" based on the translation of Onkelos. Onkelos translates the word "Tamim" as "complete in one's fear of G-d." Meaning that one's service of G-d has to be complete in which he has no aspect about his service which is subdued or held back. This means that every action that one does, whether big or small, is done with the sole intent to serve his creator. There are no places in his heart or in his actions which are bereft of G-d and there are no parts of his life which he reserves for himself and his own personal pleasure.

This is what the verse means when it commands us to serve Hashem with "**תמימות**" – perfection.

May Hashem bless us this Elul to re-dedicate ourselves to His complete service with conviction and guileless faith!

## צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף

In this week's parsha we learn about the justice system that the Torah envisions. As one can imagine, the Torah demands the utmost integrity from its judges and the sages who preside over the courts must be scholars of the highest calibre. However, the way the Torah chooses to command us to adhere to justice is peculiar. **צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף** - "Justice, justice you shall pursue!" (Devarim 16:20)

Why does the Torah repeat the term "justice" again? It seems redundant and we know that every word of the Torah is supposed to teach us something. Why does the Torah say "justice" twice? Furthermore, being told to "pursue" justice also seems odd. We don't find a command to "pursue" anything else in the entire Torah. What is the Torah trying to tell us?

**The Sfas Emes** answers that the Torah's hope for the Jewish people is not only that they should abide by the laws of the Torah. The Torah's hope for the Jewish people is that they be zealous for

justice and go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that Hashem's Torah truly permeates the entirety of the society around them. It's not good enough for a Jew to be honest just according to the world's standards. A Jew must have complete integrity according to the Torah's standards and Hashem has high expectations.

So why does the Torah place such tremendous emphasis on justice? **Rav Dessler** answers that the gemara in Shabbos 55a says that Hashem's signet is Truth. In other words, Hashem values truth so much that He chose it as an emblem to represent His very essence so to speak. Furthermore, honesty and integrity are also prerequisites for any real change that we hope to make in our Avodas Hashem.

We should especially pursue personal accountability for the true nature of our ways now as Elul begins and we prepare for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. This is the time to commit ourselves to change and if we are not genuine in our quest to do so, we will inevitably fall short of our goals and our chance for real transformation will fade away as this special period of time concludes. We must certainly commit ourselves to the truth if we really hope to evolve into better human beings.

Some time ago, I remember reading an article written by a certain young bucher in the newspaper. The bucher wrote about how when his father passed away, he was just seventeen years old. However, his father made sure to give his son great words of encouragement before departing from the world. He told the bucher to strengthen himself in learning and in Yiras Shamayim. He told him to trust in Hashem and remember that everything is for his good. He also told his son the importance of serving Hashem with joy and that a Jew should always be happy in life.

However, one lesson particularly stuck with the young man above all the others. His father told him to especially strengthen himself in his pursuit of truth. Being a person of truth, his father told him,

means something different for every individual. According to one's own unique abilities, comes its own set of expectations. One level of serving G-d may be sufficient for one person, but not sufficient for another. Some people have greater strengths than others and one must honestly evaluate what he is truly capable of. A person of truth applies himself to do not just what seems to be correct in the eyes of others, but what is truly the right thing for him to do in the eyes of G-d.

The young bucher concluded by saying, "This is the real inheritance my father left me."

May we all be zoche to truly pursue the truth!!!



## 102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - The Banker

**Rav Chaim of Volozhin**, author of Nefesh Hachaim, was particularly known for his staunch bitachon. His sefarim deal extensively with this topic, and in his talks to his talmidim and those who sought his counsel, he would emphasize the importance of increasing one's bitachon. - One day, one of his talmidim came to him and said, "Could Rebbi teach me how a person who trusts in Hashem should act and what is the hishtadlus incumbent on him?"

In answer, Rav Chaim pulled out a sheet of paper from his desk drawer and wrote on it, "My dear talmid, I appeal to you to teach the deliverer of this message how one who trusts in Hashem must act."

He signed the note and handed it to his talmid. "If you want to acquire bichon, go to the house of my former talmid, who lives in a big city in the south of Russia, and give him this note."

It was a long, arduous journey to the city where the former talmid lived. When the bachur arrived, he asked people for directions. He

he was directed to an estate where several magnificent stone houses attested to the residents' prosperity. In one of the houses, he found the man was looking for behind a large desk in a spacious reception room. A long line of people were waiting to cash checks or deposit their money. It appeared the man was a successful banker.



Rav Chaim's talmid stood in the doorway staring at the scene and feeling confused. Was this really where his rebbi had sent him? How could this rich man, who clearly didn't know what it meant to be lacking anything, teach him a lesson in bitachon?

Yet he knew Ray Chaim wouldn't have sent him here for nothing. With this belief, he stepped into the room. He handed the note to the man and he read it.

"Listen," he said to Rav Chaim's talmid, "I'm busy now with customers. Please wait here until I'm done serving these customers, and then we'll talk."

The talmid sat in the reception room to wait. Meanwhile, he observed the man at his work and the way he served the customers. As the morning turned into afternoon, someone walked in with a check for ten thousand rubles. The date showed that it was due to be cashed, and the fellow demanded the funds in full.

The talmid observing the goings-on became more alert. After serving dozens of customers, the till was empty. He was curious to see how the rich man, the ba'al bitachon, would handle the situation.

The talmid listened intently as the man said, "My friend, the day isn't over yet. Wait here till the end of the day, and with G-d's help, you'll get your money."

The customer had no choice but to wait. The talmid, too, waited with bated breath to see what would happen next. Two hours passed. The workday was coming to a close, and there were fewer customers. It seemed the banker would have to enter into an unpleasant confrontation with the waiting customer.

Then a distinguished-looking man in a military uniform covered with medals and various insignia entered. He pulled out a wad of ten thousand rubles and asked the banker if he could deposit the money for six months. "I've been given orders to serve the czar at the palace in St. Petersburg," he explained. "I don't want to carry this much cash with me on such a long journey. I'd feel better knowing it's deposited with you."

"Certainly."

As he took the bills from the military man, the banker murmured thanks to Hashem Who brought him the precise sum to cash the other customer's check exactly when he needed it. He handed the cash to the waiting customer, and then, finally, he was able to turn his attention to the talmid.

"I'm free to talk now," the banker said to his guest, who was sitting there open-mouthed at the miracle he had just witnessed. "Come with me, and I'll show you where my wealth comes from."

He led the talmid, who was burning with curiosity, into his office. He opened a drawer in his desk and pulled out a small metal box. The box contained a copy of Chovos Halevavos. The banker flipped through the pages until he came to Sha'ar Habitachon and turned to his guest.

"Every day I sit and learn Sha'ar Habitachon, and afterward I turn to the Ribono shel Olam with a special tefillah: 'Ribono shel Olam, it is revealed and known to You that from the day I started working in the field of banking, I didn't do anything without You, and I never worried about what would be tomorrow, how I would repay this loan

or that debt. I trust You with all my heart that You can help me fulfill every request. Please be with me always so that I can uphold all my obligations.'

"This is the secret to my success and the source of my strength. Even when the till is empty, I remain calm and confident, trusting in my Creator that He will help.'

After the astounding lesson he had received, seeing how the wealthy man had made bitachon an inseparable facet of his life, Rav Chaim's talmid parted from him and returned home.

## The Potch

The anteroom adjoining the study of the holy **Chiddushei Harim, R' Yitzchok Meir Alter zt"l**, founder of the *Gerrer* Chasidic dynasty, was filled with people waiting to be received by the *Rebbe* and to be helped by his counsel and blessing. Near the *Rebbe's* door stood his personal secretary, Reb Bunim, who presided over the waiting list; as soon as the door opened and a *chasid* would emerge from the inner room, all eyes turned to Reb Bunim, who would signal for the next in line to enter.



One day, a wealthy Jew dressed in high boots of glossy leather, a heavy gold watch-chain draped across his vest, a fur-lined jacket enveloping a generous girth in defense against the harsh Polish winter, entered the anteroom. The man wore an anxious and care-worn face belying his luxurious attire. Here was a man who had his troubles despite his wealth.

The man scanned the crowded room and a frown clouded his already despondent features. Impatiently, he made his way to Reb Bunim. "I must see the *Rebbe* immediately regarding an urgent matter," he whispered. "How much longer is the man inside going to be?"

"Have a seat," said Reb Bunim evenly, "and I'll put you on the list. What is your name, *Reb Yid*?"

"You don't understand," said the man, certain that the *gabbai* indeed did not understand. "I must see the *Rebbe* right now! I have an important meeting tomorrow in Warsaw, and I must be on my way shortly. I have no time to wait here."

"But surely, *Reb Yid*, you don't expect me to let you in before all these people who have been waiting for a while," said Reb Bunim. "Some of them have been waiting for hours ..." But the rich man waved him away.

"That's exactly my point," he said, beginning to lose his patience with the insolent secretary. "I cannot wait for an hour, or even half an hour. I need to speak with the *Rebbe* immediately. You can save your lists for people with more time on their hands."

"I'm sorry," said Reb Bunim, rising to the challenge to his authority. "You must wait like everyone else ..."

The crack of the merchant's open palm against the face of the secretary resounded through the room, which fell into a shocked silence. It took Reb Bunim several seconds to realize he had been slapped across the face, and when he did, he just stood there, unable to utter a word. Nothing like this had ever happened in the *Rebbe's* waiting room, where no one dared to even raise his voice at the *Rebbe's gabbai*. In fact, the only one in the room not paralyzed by incredulity was the rich man himself, who, satisfied that he had at last made himself understood, proceeded toward the *Rebbe's* door.

At that very moment the door swung open and the *Gerrer Rebbe* himself stood in the doorway. "How dare you raise a hand to a fellow

Jew," he thundered. "I shall not receive you," he added, "until you ask *mechilah* and have secured the forgiveness of Reb Bunim, my *gabbai*, the man you so unjustly attacked." With that, he closed the door behind him.

For a long second the rich merchant stood there staring at the *Rebbe's* closed door. Abruptly, he turned on his heels and fled from the room. But something in the man's face caught Reb Bunim's eye and he felt a stir of mercy rising inside which caused him to hurry outside after his assailant. There he found him leaning against his coach, his large body racked with sobs.

"You came out after me?" said the man, when he saw who had followed him outside. "What do you want of me now? To heap insult upon injury? To make me feel even worse? It is you who has destroyed our last hope."

"Your last hope for what?" asked Reb Bunim quietly.

"For fifteen years we've been childless, my wife and I," wept the man. "We've tried everything ... we've been to all the doctors ... I had hoped that the *Rebbe* would bless us with a child ..."

"Come with me," said Reb Bunim, grabbing hold of the merchant's hand. With a purpose of stride and before the sobbing man even knew what was happening, Reb Bunim opened the door to the *Rebbe's* room and ushered him inside.

"*Rebbe*!" said Reb Bunim, with a sense of purpose that surprised even himself. "I swear that I will never forgive this man, not in this world and not in the world to come, unless the *Rebbe* promises that he and his wife will be blessed with a child!"

The *Chiddushei Harim* looked from the anguished face of the merchant to the determined face of his *gabbai*. Slowly, he broke out in a smile. "*Yehi Ratzon* - May it be the will of *Hashem* as Reb Bunim says..." And before long, it was. **(L'chaimweekly.org)**




## "I Should Accept Him As My Rabbi?"

In Parshas Shoftim, the pasuk says: "You shall come to the Kohanim, the Levites, and to the judge who will be in those days; you shall inquire and they will tell you the word of judgment." [Devorim 17:8-9].

The Gemera [Rosh HaShannah 25b] makes a famous comment on the words "that will be in those days": The Gemara asks "Would I think that I should go to a judge who was no longer alive?" The Gemara derives a very important lesson from this precise terminology: "You have no judge other than the one who is present in your days." You need to go to the *Gadol* and *Posek* of your generation. Even though every generation that is farther removed from Sinai experiences *Yeridas HaDoros* (spiritual descent of the generations), nevertheless we have no choice but to go to the judges present in our own times.

As we get older, many of us here remember *Gedolim* of yesteryear. The *Siyum HaShas* is an incredible, wonderful event. But every *Siyum HaShas* — which happens every seven and a half years – there is a nostalgic feeling when looking upon the dais and thinking "I remember when…" I remember when Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky and Rav Ruderman and Rav Hutner and the list goes on and on. Today we go to the *Siyum HaShas* and to Conventions and we see that those *Gedolim* are already not amongst us. There is this understandable feeling of "I should go to **him?**" "I should ask my *Shaylos* of **him?**" "I remember when he was running around playing stick ball!"

That is what the *pasuk* is telling us. You have no judges other than those in your own day. You have to respect them and accept their

ruling. These are the *Shoftim* and the *Gedolim* that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has provided for our particular generation.

Some of the *meforshim* speculate that after Avraham died and Yitzchak took over, the converts made by Avraham said "I should go to Yitzchak? I remember when Yitzchak was just a toddler!" Therefore, they did not accept his authority.

I was in Europe this past summer (2016). We went to the *Kever* of the **Chasam Sofer** (Rabbi Moshe Schreiber [1762-1839]). As part of the preparation for this tour, I did a lot of research about the Chasam Sofer, his Yeshiva, his life, etc., etc. The Chasam Sofer was *niftar* when he was 76 years old. When he died, his son the **Kesav Sofer** (Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Schreiber [1815-1871]), was only in his twenties. It is incredible to imagine the impact the Chasam Sofer had. He was THE *Gadol Hador*! Here it is, his son, who was is in his twenties was taking over the Yeshiva and taking over the city.

At the Chasam Sofer's levaya, the Dayan of Pressburg (which is today Bratislava) got up and announced to the Kesav Sofer "I accept you as my *Rav*, *Mazal Tov*! The entire *Tzibbur* – there were thousands of people there – were crying! The Chasam Sofer was gone and they all yelled out "*Mazal Tov*!"

Have you ever been at a funeral where everyone yells "*Mazal Tov*"? The Dayan was doing something that was very wise. The Chasam Sofer was a man in his seventies. He had been the Rosh Yeshiva and Rav of Pressburg for decades. And now a twenty-year-old was going to take over? This was the problem of the thousands of converts made by Avraham Avinu. They could not live with the fact that their new *Gadol* was going to be Yitzchak Avinu.

One must go to the *Shofet* who is present in his own generation.

## Elul – An Ir Miklat in Time

Parshas Shoftim contains within it reference to the *arei miklat* (cities of refuge), to which a person who kills someone unintentionally flees. Rather than receiving some other punishment for taking innocent life, such a person remains in the *ir miklat* until the death of the*Kohen Gadol*.

The *arei miklat* were actually referenced in Parshas Mattos-Massei and even before that in Parshas Mishpatim. The *pasuk* in Mishpatim says, "And regarding the one who did not aim, but *Elokim* brought him (i.e., the victim) into his hand, and I will set aside for you a place where he can flee there." (Shemos 21:13).

The four words "אֲנָה לְיָדוֹ וְשַׂמְתִּי לְךָ" (brought him into his hand and I will set aside for you) begin respectively with the letters *Aleph, Lamed, Vov, Lamed*, which spells out the word *Elul* (the month of the Jewish calendar which precedes the High Holiday Days). So according to those who seek out hidden messages in the Torah, there is some kind of connection between the month of *Elul* and the *parsha* of *arei miklat*.

What is the connection between *arei miklat*, which involves a person who kills unintentionally, and *Chodesh Elul*? Many commentaries raise the issue – why does a person who killed *b'shogeg* (unintentionally) need to be punished with exile to a city of refuge? He did not mean to do it. It was unintentional. Yet he needs to confine himself to exile, which is no picnic. If the *Kohen Gadol* is a young healthy individual, the unintentional murderer may need to remain in the *ir miklat* for the rest of his life! Why is that? Why can't he be given a pass for his one-time mistake?

The answer is that the Torah deems that if a person was particularly careful about human life, this would not have happened to him. If a person is extremely judicious and careful when it comes to human life, it will not happen that *chas v'shalom* he would kill someone *b'shogeg*.

This is not an accusation that a person who does kill *b'shogeg* has committed an intentional crime. But when there is a certain lack of full respect for the sanctity of life, "accidents *b'shogeg*" are more likely to occur. You may wonder – are there really people out there that do not fully respect the sanctity of life? The answer is: Yes. There are millions of such people. People engage in dangerous activities all the time. Why? It is because they don't fully respect (lack of *chashivus* for) the sanctity of life.

We don't appreciate what we can do with one hour or even one minute of our lives. **The Kelemer Maggid** gave the following *mashal* in a *shmooze* he delivered once by *Ne'ilah*: - *A malach* came into a cemetery and gave all the dead bodies one hour to return to life. What did the people do when they arose from the grave?

One person went to his parents and devotedly served their needs. He felt he was lacking in *Kibud Av v'Em* during his lifetime. Another person ran into the *Beis Medrash*, took out a Gemara and learned for an hour. A third person gave *tzedaka*. A fourth person engaged in *gemillas chassadim*. When the hour was up, they all had to go back into their graves.

The Kelemer Maggid then asked, "And what if someone has more than an hour? And who knows if we even have another hour left in this world?"

The point of this story is that life is precious. Time is precious. This person who killed *b'shogeg*, who apparently had a lack of *chashivus* for life, is sent to the *ir miklat*. Who lives in the *ir miklat*? The *arei miklat* are all cities assigned to Shevet Levi – the *Leviim* live in the *arei miklat*. What do the *Leviim* do with their lives? Their lives are devoted to *Avodas Beis HaMikdash*. The Jew who has killed *b'shogeg* needs a re-education in the importance of life. The best place to get that is in the *arei miklat*, which are populated by *Leviim*, who are the primary Torah teachers of Israel

(Devorim 33:10). If you want to know what life is all about, go to the *Leviim* because they appreciate the *chashivus* of life

How does this relate to *Chodesh Elul*? An *ir miklat* is a **physical location**. It is geographic in nature. *Chodesh Elul* is an *ir miklat* of **time**. It is the time of the year for a person to reflect on life, the importance of life, and the importance of even individual minutes of life. That should be a person's focus during *Chodesh Elul*. We are yet early in the month. *Chodesh Elul* has just begun. But that is the primary function of this month – to reorient ourselves and to remind us of how precious life is, how fleeting life can unfortunately be, and what we can do with our lives.

That is why Elul is the *ir miklat* of time. Elul is a time for people to think about the importance of time and to ask themselves "What am I doing with the time that *Hashem* has allotted me?

## The Link Between An Inappropriate Judge and the Asheira Tree

The beginning of the parsha teaches the mitzvah of establishing a judicial system for the purpose of honestly ruling the people: There shall be judges and policemen throughout our society.

One of the rules enumerated is that the judges are not allowed to accept bribes. Bribes have the ability to subvert a person's view. He may be the wisest of men and the greatest of scholars, but if he takes a bribe he may be blinded to the truth. [Devorim 16:19]

The prohibition against accepting bribes is immediately followed by the prohibition against planting the idolatrous Asheira tree adjacent to the altar of G-d [16:21].

Reish Lakish derives from this juxtaposition of apparently unrelated pasukim, that one who appoints an inappropriate judge is equivalent to one who planted an Asheira tree in Israel [Avodah Zarah 52a].

Out of all the bad things we might be able to conjure up as an appropriate simile for an inappropriate judge, why does the Torah specifically link it with the planting of an Asheira tree? Many commentaries are bothered by this question. What is the connection?

I saw an answer in the name of **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**. Rav Soloveitchik says that a tree is a work of G-d. It has particular charm and particular beauty. A large cedar or oak tree or redwood can take away one's breath. What could be a greater example of G-d's handiwork?

However, it is possible to take that which one would expect to be a pristine example of G-d's handiwork and turn it into an object of idolatry. There is something particularly despicable about that. It perverts that which is fine and inspiring and G-d- like into an abomination. There is a certain blasphemousness about such a perversion.

Who should be appointed a judge? Certainly not the typical man on the street. A judge must be a Talmid Chochom, a Rav, a person who looks and acts the part and has the respect of the people. One who appoints an inappropriate person to that position — someone who acts with less than full integrity — is a blasphemous crime. It is akin to taking a tree and making it into an Asheira.

**Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky** cites an incident involving his grandfather, **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky**. There was a period when a group of unscrupulous individuals were involved in smuggling forbidden items across international borders. They smuggled the contra-band by putting them inside Tephillin. To make matters worse, they approached unsuspecting Jews and encouraged them to do a 'mitzvah' by taking Tephillin and delivering them to people who needed them in the foreign country. The person thought he was doing a great 'mitzvah'. In fact he was involved in the crime of smuggling.

The United States Custom Service got wind of this scheme. They decided to enlist the help of Orthodox Jewish custom agents to discern the difference between honest people carrying Tephillin and the smugglers. An Orthodox custom agent faced with this assignment came to Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky and solicited his advice. Rav Yaakov advised that the unscrupulous smugglers should be dealt with in the severest of terms.

He said it is bad enough that they are dishonest and committing a crime, but to take one of the holiest items a Jew possesses and use it as a vehicle to commit the crime — this is the worst perversion. This can be compared, he argued, to waving the white flag in battle only to use it as a trick for follow-up attack. When someone abuses the white flag, he causes all of society to lose respect for the white flag. Not only did he commit a crime against the enemy by his duplicity. He has committed a crime against all soldiers in all generations by misusing the international symbol of surrender. Similarly, using the Tephillin for smuggling is taking something holy and perverting it. There is no greater crime. Such people deserve no mercy.

Using a tree, for idolatry is a perversion. Appointing a person who is supposed to represent the ultimate in integrity, to a position where he can be a tool of corruption is a comparable perversion.

The gematria of 'אהבה' (love) is 13 (1+5+2+5). The gematria of 'דאגה' (worry) is also 13 (4+1+3+5). Ahavah = Da'agah (Love = Worry).

Every parent can appreciate this gematria. Being a parent means losing sleep, caring and worrying. It means looking at the clock, going to the window, and pulling the curtain. Why aren't they home yet? Why haven't they called? Ahava = Da'agah. This is what parenthood is all about.

## The Judge Who Will Be There in Those Days

The Torah tells us in this week's Parsha, "And you shall come to the Kohanim, the Leviim, and to the Judge that will be in those days" to seek guidance in legal matters. - Rashi is bothered by the expression "in those days" and comments "and even if he is not like the Judges who preceded him, you need to listen to him — you have none other than the Judge who is there in your days."

Rashi tells us that if you are an elderly Jew from Europe, who remembers Rabbis of the calibre of Reb Chaim Ozer, the Chofetz Chaim, and Reb Yitzchak Elchanan and now you feel that "today's Rabbis" do not measure up to this level of scholarship and piety, you must nevertheless heed the command of the Pasuk — you have no one else other than the Judges of your own time. This is your generation, these are your poskim, you have to accept them with the same respect and authority as was done for the poskim and shoftim of the previous generations.

Rav Henkin's grandson writes, that while the phrase "go to the Judges in your time" is an instruction to us as seekers (as Rashi says), the specific usage of the word "asher" is an instruction to the Judges themselves, regarding how they have to be.

In order for a person to be an effective Dayan, he has to be one who is living in those times, "in touch" with that generation. If the Posek feels he is above the generation, he doesn't understand the youth and the problems of the generation, he can't relate to them… then he cannot be a Posek! A Posek must be one "Who will be" (asher yiheyeh) — one who can relate to and appreciate his own generation. Only then can he be a Dayan.

The Mishneh says in Avos [2:5] "Do not judge your friend until you arrive in his place". The Shaylos U'Tshuvos Bnei Banim interprets this to mean– don't judge your friend until you have an appreciation for the people you are dealing with. He goes on to say that even

though **Rav Henkin** reached an elderly age and was in fact from another generation, he nevertheless had an appreciation for our own generation as well and therefore was such an effective Posek.

**Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev** says a similar insight. The Gemara, many times after raising a certain problem that cannot be resolved concludes with the word **תֵּיקוּ**. "**תֵּיקוּ**" is actually an acronym for the expression **תשבי יתרץ קושיות ובעיות** — Tishbi (Eliyahu HaNavi) will come and will clear up all of our doubts and questions. Reb Levi Yitzchak asks, with all due respect to Eliyahu, why is he of all the great personalities of Jewish history given the task of paskening all the Shaylos? What about Moshe Rabbeinu? What about Shmuel HaNavi?

Reb Levi Yitzchak answers, the reason Eliyahu can pasken all Shaylos is because our Rabbis tell us that "Eliyahu never died" — he was part of the twentieth century! He understands the nineties; … and the forties; … he was part of the 17th century; … and the sixth century; … he was part of it all. He never died. When a generation needs the resolution of a question, they have to go to the Posek that will be there with that generation. Who is such a Posek? Eliyahu haNavi.

## Reading One's Own Biography in the Torah

The king's obligation is to write for himself a private "royal copy" of the Sefer Torah. The Talmud tells us that even though every Jew has a Mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah, the king has a separate command over and above this to write a royal Sefer Torah, which was to accompany him wherever he went. "And it shall be with him and he should read it all the days of his life in order that he learn to fear HaShem, to observe all the words of this Torah…" [17:19].

The Ba'alei Derush say that the pasuk is telling us more than just the fact that the king has to READ the Torah daily. He has to plot his life each and every day, according to what is written in the Torah.

They interpret, homiletically, that he has to read in it (v'kara bo) his entire biography (kol yemei chayav), all the events of his life.

When a king has a question as to what to do, he has to be able to look in the Torah and come up with the answer.

I once heard a story about **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l**. When he first came to the United States he was a Rav in Seattle, Washington for a short time and then he became Rav in Toronto, Canada.

Someone was once walking with Rav Yaakov in Toronto on the second day of Shavuous, some 40-50 years ago. Having just heard the reading of Megillas Ruth in shul, Rav Yaakov told his companion "I am no better than Elimelech."

"Elimelech left Eretz Yisroel because he was worried about his livelihood. He went from a place where there were Jews, to a place where there were no Jews — the fields of Moab. He was willing to sacrifice the education and environment of his children, just so he could make a better living (escaping the famine in Israel)."

At that time, Toronto had not much to speak of in terms of a Torah community. Rav Yaakov rhetorically asked his companion "Why am I in Toronto, despite the fact that my children don't have the best environment? Parnosah! Because I have a job in Toronto and I don't have a job anywhere else. I'm wrong! That is the very reason that Elimelech was punished. One is not supposed to put one's livelihood over the spiritual welfare of his family."

He concluded, "I must move to a more Jewish environment." On that very day he decided to move to New York where he eventually became the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah VoDaath. And the rest is history.

That is the meaning of being able to look into the Torah and read about the events of one's own life. We must strive to be able to read our own biographies in the Torah. That is what Rav Yaakov was capable of and that is what we have to aspire for.

## The Dual Personality of the Jewish Monarch

The Torah speaks of the mitzvah of appointing a king. Apparently, a monarchy can be an optimal type of government – assuming, of course, that the right type of king is in place. The king must not be corrupt. He must be G-d fearing. Even though in the history of Klal Yisrael there were kings who were terrible, in theory, if it can be done properly, the Torah advocates the appointment of a king.

Even though every Jew has an independent *mitzvah* to write his own *Sefer Torah*, the king has a special *mitzvah* to write a second *Sefer Torah* (in addition to his first *Sefer Torah*). The Gemara (Sanhedrin 21b) says that the king kept one of his *Sifrei Torah* in his personal treasure house (his palace) and his other *Sefer Torah* accompanied him at all times. Many Torah commentaries discuss why the king needed to have this second *Sefer Torah* that accompanied him whenever he appeared in public.

In past years, we mentioned a very beautiful *dvar* Torah that appears in a *sefer* called Ner Uziel from Rav Uziel Milevsky, *z"l*, (among other places): Normally, the rule of thumb that every Jew should try to live by is "a person's insides should be like his outsides." A person should not live one way in private and another way in public. Obviously, there is a certain casualness that we allow ourselves at home. People don't always need to wear their jacket and tie at home, just because they appear that way in public. But in terms of a person's *midos* , his personality, his *frumkeit* and his *hashkafa* — these must be uniform inside and outside the home. This is the default rule for every Jew EXCEPT the king.

The king needs to have a different type of conduct and behavior outside the palace than he does inside. Inside the palace, like every other Jew, he needs to practice humility. He needs to be forgoing and forgiving. But the public king cannot play that role. He must assert his authority and project a certain awe and reverence to the public at large. He must maintain a certain demeanor outside the

home, which may be totally different than his natural demeanor when no one is around.

The Jewish king thus has a dual personality – one for the king in the palace and another for the king who is the public figure. That is why he needs two *Sifrei Torah*. He needs a *Sefer Torah b'Chutz* (outside) and a *Sefer Torah b'fnim* (inside). The *Sefer Torah* that he keeps in his private treasury teaches him how to have humility and to be forgoing – all the things that the *mussar sefarim* instruct us. But when he goes outside, he needs that second Torah which reminds him to conduct his actions with a certain presence, a kind of haughtiness, and a certain unforgiving-ness when the situation demands it.

This is a very difficult balance to achieve. Most people who act on the outside with strength and arrogance think that they are also the king when they walk in the front door to their personal living quarters (until "the Queen" tells him "No such thing!").

I saw a beautiful comment from the **Chasam Sofer**: When Dovid *HaMelech* gave over the kingship to his son Shlomo, how did he signify the passing of the torch, so to speak? The *pasuk* in Melachim I (1:33) says as follows: "The king said to them, 'take with you your master's servants and mount my son Shlomo upon my mule…'" The servants are to take the king's personal mule and allow Shlomo to ride upon it. The general protocol of royalty is that no one uses the king's sceptre and no one uses the king's mode of transportation. Air Force One, *l'havdil elef havdolas*, is uniquely reserved for use by the President of the United States. No one else uses it. If you are president, **you** get Air Force One. In Biblical times, the king's mule was the equivalent of Air Force One.

This never struck me when reading the *pasuk*, but the Chasam Sofer notes that the king should be riding on a horse, not a mule! A horse is a beautiful animal, especially a kingly horse like a thoroughbred. It is a beautiful animal. The Torah talks about "the **horse** of Pharaoh

and his chariot." Pharaoh did not ride around on a donkey. He rode around on a horse!

However, what was Avraham Avinu's mode of transportation? What will the *Moshiach*'s mode of transportation be? A donkey! A donkey does not have the glamor and status of a horse. This however is the Jewish vision of *Moshiach* – a poor man riding upon a donkey!

What is a mule? A mule is the product of the mating of a horse and a donkey. That is why King David used a mule. The Jewish king needs to have the haughtiness of the horse, but the haughtiness needs to be tempered with the humility of a donkey. How does he achieve that? He rides on the synthesis of a horse and a donkey.

That, the Chasam Sofer says, was why Dovid picked a mule to ride upon and also to be the vehicle of transfer of power to the next Jewish king – his son Shlomo. The mule testifies to the duality, the synthesis of personalities that a Jewish king must possess. He needs to know when to be the *Baal Gaivah* and when to be the *Ani*. Therefore, the proper mode of transportation is "the mule that belongs to me."

## Rav Dovid Feinstein Zt'l

One Purim morning, Rav Dovid Feinstein came into the local bakery to buy challos for the Purim meal. The proprietor came around the counter to speak to the Rosh Yeshivah privately. In a quiet voice, he told Rav Dovid that he had just received the news that his father passed away, and he was unsure how to proceed. He knew that he had to leave the store immediately, but he was hesitant to close the business on such a busy day.

Rav Dovid told him to sign ownership of the store over to a trusted brother-in-law, and to ask the brother-in-law to come in and run the store for the day. The proprietor did that, but the brother-in-law needed a few hours until he could make it to the Lower East Side.

The Rosh Yeshivah replied, "*No problem. You can go, it's taken care of until he comes.*" - Rav Dovid ushered the owner out as he, himself, stepped behind the counter to serve the customers…

The Rosh Yeshivah's hat was becoming misshapen, and a close student gently suggested that they go visit the hat store after the lecture to buy a new hat. He expected the sage to resist and argue that his hat was fine, but Rav Dovid was surprisingly amenable.

They headed to Williamsburg and entered the store, where the student asked the salesman to help fit the Rosh Yeshivah. Rav Dovid looked at him, perplexed. "*Me? I thought **you** needed a new hat!*"

The student asked, "If I needed a new hat, then why would I take the Rosh Yeshivah?"

"*I thought that maybe you wanted someone to give an opinion*," Rav Dovid replied, seeing nothing unusual about asking one of the leading sages in his eighties to come along to Brooklyn to offer opinions in the hat store…

Rav Dovid was sitting after the post-Shacharis Mishna class, enjoying conversation and refreshments with the students, not an unusual occurrence. On the Rosh Yeshivah's left side sat an East Side local, animatedly telling the sage about his major win at a Bingo game the night before. "I won twenty bucks!"

Someone then opened the door to the Beis Medrash and told the Rosh Yeshivah he had a phone call. Rav Dovid nodded and turned to face the man on his left. "*Twenty dollars? That's a lot of money. In one game, or two?*"

The gentleman happily explained the format of the game and how he managed to win such a significant sum. The student at the door again motioned that there was a phone call from another Rosh Yeshivah.

Again, Rav Dovid nodded but did not stand up. "*That sounds like fun,*" Rav Dovid said to the man. "*Can I join the game next week?*"

The man laughed. "Of course not! You're a smart guy. If you come, I won't win as easily."

Seeing saw how this lonely, quiet man's face lit up with pride as he described his Bingo triumphs, the student realized the Rosh Yeshivah keen sense of priorities.

Another student was walking with Rav Dovid one Erev Shabbos when a woman approached him. "Oh, Rabbi Feinstein! What time is candle-lighting tonight?" He told her that it was at 4:43.

"I just used my last candle!" she exclaimed. She reached into her purse and withdrew a $5 bill. "Can you get me more candles?"

Rav Dovid accepted the bill and headed to the local grocery to accommodate her request.

The student accompanying the Rosh Yeshivah asked if he could buy the candles for the woman since her apartment building was in one direction, and the Rosh Yeshivah's home, to which he was headed, was in the other direction. "Why should the Rosh Yeshivah have to walk two blocks in the wrong direction?"

Rav Dovid looked at him in surprise, as if the answer was obvious. "*Because it is my mitzvah.*" …

## *Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages*

***The Baal Shem Tov always taught that everything that happens to someone, and everything he hears, are all messages from Hashem. - Our job is to understand this and listen to our messages!***

## Working on our Middos

The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation shared a story: The Rosh Yeshivah was brimming with happiness. He was about to get into a Sheirut taxi from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim with one of the greatest Talmidei Chachamim in Eretz Yisroel, the Gaon, **Rav Avrohom Genachovsky, zt"l**.

Rav Avrohom was so great that **Rav Chaim Kanievsky** would stand up for him when he came to visit. And now, the Rosh Yeshivah had Rav Genachovsky to himself for an hour.

As they waited for the Sheirut to fill up, neighbors of Rav Avrohom, a baker and his wife, got in the taxi. Soon, they were off to Yerushalayim.

The Rosh Yeshivah asked his first question to Rav Avrohom, but Rav Avrohom asked him to wait, and he turned to the baker. Rav Avrohom said, "You know, I've eaten your donuts, and they are the most delicious donuts I ever had! How do you make your donuts so fluffy?" And with that, Rav Avrohom got into what turned out to be a one-hour conversation with the proud baker about the intricacies of making the perfect donut.

Every few minutes, the Rosh Yeshivah tried to interrupt and steer the conversation to Torah, but Rav Avrohom kept telling him, "Not yet."

When they finally got off the Sheirut in Yerushalayim, Rav Avrohom said, "Imagine, what would have happened if we had gotten into a deep Torah discussion. How would the baker's wife feel? I'm sure she respects her husband, and she knows that she isn't married to a Talmid Chacham, but she might feel, 'My husband could never even follow such a conversation.'

I didn't want to cause her to feel that way, so I had a conversation that would make her husband look distinguished in her eyes!"




## When One Guards One's Mouth, One's Mouth Guards Him by Rabbi Shlomo Landau

In 2017, an elderly Yid from Bnei Brak was niftar at the age of 96. His name was R' Avrohom Shteiner and he had lived through the Holocaust. R' Avrohom had a fascinating and inspiring story that may very well have been the key to his longevity.

R' Avrohom's story transpired at the height of the Holocaust when he found himself imprisoned in one of the notorious concentration camps. In this particular camp, the commandant was a particularly sadistic Nazi, and to ensure a daily dose of terror, each day, as the prisoners returned from their gruelling labour, he would randomly call out one prisoner's name and proceed to shoot him in front of all the other inmates. As R' Avrohom would later relate, this created a terrifying existence, as one never knew when they woke up in the morning if that day would be their last!

One fateful day, the emaciated prisoners returned from forced labor and waited in long lines, when the commandant called out one name: Chaikl Horowitz.* Chaikl, not wanting to die, did something horrible. Instead of presenting himself to the commandant, he pointed to a shocked Avrohom Shteiner and called out loudly, "Herr Commandant, he's right here. This fellow is Chaikl Horowitz!"

Avrohom Shteiner just stood there frozen in his spot. Chaikl had just sentenced him to death to save his own skin! Immediately, a small voice in Avrohom's head called to him saying, “Avrohom, speak up and tell the commandant that you are not Chaikl.” Yet almost immediately, a dissenting voice retorted, "Avrohom, even though

what he did was beyond wrong, is it the right thing to turn him in?" Avraham could not decide what to do, when suddenly a pasuk that he had heard flashed into his mind. "**שֹׁמֵר פִּיו וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ שֹׁמֵר מִצָּרוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ** - ***One who guards his mouth and tongue guards his soul from troubles.***" (Mishlei 21:23).

Somehow, Avrohom found the inner strength to remain silent and ever so slowly he made his way to the evil commandant. He stood in front of the commandant, silently reciting the viduy in his heart as he waited for the inevitable shot to ring out...

Yet, nothing. Suddenly and with great flourish, the commandant spun around to Avrohom and with a sinister smile on his lips he announced, "Despicable prisoners, today I have decided to mix things up and do things differently. Today this prisoner will live and all of you will die!" He quickly motioned to the SS guards who opened machine-gun fire on the helpless prisoners, as Avrohom just stood there slowly beginning to grasp that his silence had indeed guarded his soul from the Nazi evil.

R'Avrohom miraculously survived the war and eventually made his way to Bnei Brak, where he married and established a family of children and grandchildren all following in the ways of Hashem.

And while we could end this story at this point, there is one more idea that is perhaps even more amazing than the story itself. And that is that as we noted, R' Avrohom passed away at the ripe old age of ninety-six! The word "**פִּיו**" or mouth, from the pasuk "Shomer piv u'leshono," has a gematria of 96! - R' Avrohom had guarded his mouth, his piv, and in turn his piv had guarded him!

***"With kindness as our compass, every challenge becomes a journey worth taking." ~ Based on the teachings of Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1787).***




In Cheshvan of 5768, **Rebbetzen Batsheva Kanievsky Z'l** walked up the stairs to her apartment (23 Rechov Rashbam). When she walked in, her family immediately noticed that she was glowing. And one of the children said, "Savta, where are you coming from, and why do you have this incredible simcha on your face?"

She said, "A little over 5 years ago, there was a terrible car accident that happened to a family here in B'nei Brak. And while most of the family members walked out relatively unscathed, their 15-year-old daughter was in critical condition. For two weeks she was in a coma. During that time, they went to **Rav Chaim** and to me to request that we daven for her.

Two weeks later, suddenly one morning, this 15-year-old girl opens her eyes – she's back. The first thing she said to her mother was, 'Ima, for how many days was I in a coma?'

Her mother said, 'That's not important, the main thing is that you're back.'

But she pushes, and says, 'No, you must tell me for how many days I was in a coma.'

Finally, her mother says, 'Why is it so important?'

She said, 'About half a year ago, I committed to learning a lesson a day of the halachos of Shemiras Halashon – every single day. If I was unconscious, and wasn't able to do that, I'm a baal chov – I owe. I want to know exactly how many days I missed, because I want to be able to make it up.'

When the family went to **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l**, and his Rebbetzen, and shared her first words – they were blown away. And on the spot the Rebbetzen said, "Im Yirtze Hashem, I want to dance at her chasunah."

Rebbetzen Kanievsky said, "Tonight I went to that chasunah! – She was a radiant kalloh. She's whole, she's complete."

We don't know all of Hashem's calculations. But I think that it's fair to say that when you are so hyper-focused on Shemiras Halashon, amazing and incredible things can happen.

One thing is clear – Learning the halachos of Shemiras Halashon will certainly change our lives, and, hey, you never know – Shemiras Halashon might even save your life!



**צדק צדק תרדוף** – ***Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue*** (16:20).

One must run after righteousness with righteousness, and not follow the renowned rule of the non-Jewish world that the ends justify the means. One must pursue righteousness through righteous means. [**R' Simcha Bunim of P'shis'cha**] (Ma'ayanah Shel Torah)



***"Just as merchants take stock before the end of the fiscal year, a Yid must take stock of his deeds when Elul begins." ~ R' Yisroel Salanter.***





## Inspired by Time - Every Drop Counts: The Mikva of Elul – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

The threshold of the extraordinary month of Elul, the month of Ani l'dodi v'dodi li, the month of intense closeness, dvekus, and unspoken yearning.

Imagine a king in his palace: tall gates, guarded walls, courtyards filled with officials and ministers. To approach him is nearly impossible – months of waiting, endless protocol. But then, once a year, the king does something extraordinary. He leaves the palace. He walks into the open fields. There are no guards, no gates – just the king among his people. And anyone – the farmer, the shepherd, the child – can approach him.

This is Elul. haMelech ba'sadeh – the King is in the field. And we are entering an exceptional ruchniyus season – a forty-day journey that starts with Rosh Chodesh Elul, rises through the days of Ani l'dodi v'dodi li and Selichos, ascends into the days of Rosh Hashana, climbs higher through the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, and reaches its peak in the unimaginable purity of Yom Kippur.

### The Mystery of Forty

In the days of the Mabul, forty days of rain fell upon the earth. At first glance, those days seem like nothing more than a period of destruction. But in truth, those waters were not only destructive; they were purifying. They washed away a world steeped in tumah, even peeling away a layer of three tefachim from the surface of the ground. What was left was not merely emptiness, but a cleansed creation, ready for a fresh beginning under a new covenant with Hashem.

A period of forty days make another appearance when Moshe Rabbenu ascended Har Sinai. For forty days and forty nights, he was cut off from the physical world, sustained only by the light of Torah. It was not a waiting period, but a transformation: a mortal man being elevated until he could carry in his arms the luchos, engraved by the hand of Hashem. Only after those forty days could Torah leave the heavens and be bound forever to the soul of Klal Yisrael.

The same number is present in the halachos of tahara. A mikva must contain precisely forty se'ah of water. One drop less, and the tevila is meaningless. But when the measure is full, a wondrous thing occurs: a person who descends into those waters rises renewed. Outwardly the same, yet inwardly changed, the residue of tumah washed away, the soul restored to purity.

But why forty? What is the meaning of this number that repeats itself again and again in the moments of rebirth?

**Transformation**

Chazal reveal that forty is the number of transformation. It is not arbitrary. It is the Divine measure of change. **The Maharal** explains that forty always signifies a complete shinui – a passage from one state of being into another. Less than forty is incomplete; with forty, the cycle is whole, and something entirely new begins.

We see this in the most basic moment of life itself: a human embryo takes forty days to be formed. Before that point, it is called maya b'alma – mere water. After forty days, it has become a new entity.

The world after the Mabul was reborn through forty days of water. A Yid who immerses in forty se'ah is as though returning to the womb, to the waters of creation, emerging like a new child, cleansed and reborn. The Forty Years in the Wilderness When Klal Yisrael stumbled with the terrible sin of the meraglim, the punishment was not immediate destruction, nor was it an outburst of wrath. Instead, Hashem decreed forty years of wandering in the desert. At first

glance, it seems harsh. Was there no better way? Could there not have been a lighter consequence? But the truth is that Hashem was not looking merely to punish. Hashem does not punish for the sake of vengeance. He refines. He transforms. He purifies. It's a process.

A nation tainted with doubt, scarred by fear, and weakened by lack of trust could not walk directly into Eretz Yisrael. They first needed forty years – a full cycle of rebirth – to be reshaped into a people of emuna, nourished daily by the mann, sheltered by the ananei ha'kavod, drinking from the be'er of Miriam. It was not just a physical journey across the desert sands. It was a spiritual journey through forty years, each day another drop in the great mikva of transformation. And when the cycle was complete, when the forty years had fully refined them, only then were they ready to enter the Land once more – not as the broken generation of the spies, but as a new nation, prepared to live in the holiness of Eretz Yisrael.

Chazal teach: Ben arba'im l'binah – at forty, a person reaches understanding. For real binah, real transformation, does not happen in an instant. It requires fullness. It requires a cycle completed in every dimension. That is the secret of forty. Forty is the number of rebirth. It is the measure of purification. It is the passageway through which Hashem allows His world, His Torah, and His people to be renewed.

**Forty in Our Lives**

The mystery of forty is not just ancient history. It is alive in our avoda today. Every year, when the month of Elul begins, we enter our own cycle of forty. From Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur, there are exactly forty days. This is no coincidence. Hashem, in His infinite wisdom, carved out for us an annual mikva in time. During these forty days, we are invited to immerse ourselves in teshuva, tefila, and avoda.

Just as the floodwaters once cleansed the world, just as Moshe Rabbenu was uplifted on Har Sinai, just as a mikva renews the soul –

these forty days cleanse and renew us. Less than forty would not be enough; but with forty days, the cycle is whole. We are no longer the same people who began in Elul; we emerge on Yom Kippur transformed, washed in Hashem's mercy, ready for a new year.

The pasuk in Shir haShirim states, "Ani l'dodi v'dodi li – I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me." The first letters of these words together spell Elul. The Aruch haShulchan explains that this is the essence of the month: it is the time when a Jew must turn his thoughts fully towards his Beloved, to Hashem. And when he does so, dodi li – Hashem responds, drawing him close, helping him, embracing him.

The Mishna Berura adds a deeper allusion. The last letters of each word in Ani l'dodi v'dodi li equal forty (yud + yud + yud + yud). This alludes to the forty days from Rosh Chodesh Elul to Yom Kippur, the very days Moshe spent on Har Sinai. Just as those days brought forgiveness then, so are they a time when our teshuva is accepted with love. This is why many kehillos in Klal Yisrael begin saying Selichos already from the very beginning of Elul. They are not words of sadness, but the cry of a soul reaching out to its Beloved. They are the footsteps of Moshe Rabbenu climbing Har Sinai once more. They are the whispered voice of a nation longing to be embraced again by Hashem.

Each tefila, each kapitel of Tehillim, each inner stirring of teshuva, is another drop of water filling the great mikva of Elul. Just as a mikva must contain forty se'ah to purify, so did Hashem give us forty days to immerse our neshama. One day less, one drop missing, and the process remains incomplete. But if we guard every single day, if we treasure each of the forty, then when Yom Kippur arrives, the tahara is whole, the transformation complete, and we emerge renewed— cleansed and embraced by our Beloved.

Every morning in Elul the shofar calls us: the King is in the field. He has left His palace and is walking among us. No guards, no barriers,

no protocols. Any Jew can approach, no matter how broken, no matter how unworthy. He is waiting. This is the secret of Elul. These forty days are Hashem's mikva in time. If we step into them fully, if we hold on to each day, then we will emerge on Yom Kippur not the same people who entered, but renewed, purified, and embraced by our Beloved. Chazal teach us: "Mah mikva metaher ess hatemei'im, af HaKadosh Baruch Hu metaher ess Yisrael." Just as a mikva lifts away impurity and allows a Jew to begin anew, so does Hashem Himself take us by the hand and purifies us.

We are now standing at the edge of this mikva - a mikva woven of time itself – forty days stretching from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur. Days filled with yearning, with tefila, with the soft whispers of Ani l'dodi v'dodi li.

The halacha of a mikva is precise. Less than forty se'ah, and the immersion is invalid. The waters do not cleanse, no matter how deeply one submerges. But once the measure is whole, once it holds the fullness of forty, then the very same waters become a rebirth. The person who steps out may look the same in body, but in soul he is entirely different.

The same is true of this period of the year. These forty days are the exact measure Hashem has set aside for our transformation. Thirty-nine is not enough. A single day wasted, a single opportunity ignored, and the tahara remains incomplete. But forty – a full measure of sincere tefila, of honest cheshbon ha'nefesh, of small but real steps closer to Hashem – that changes everything.

Every one of us is being invited to step into these forty days. To guard them, to treasure them, to make sure not one of them slips away. For it is only with forty whole, complete days that we can emerge from Hashem's mikva of mercy as new beings, ready to live a new year in His light.

## The Posek in the Ghetto: Forty Days of Elul

It was Elul 5701 (1941) in the Kovno Ghetto. Only weeks earlier, thousands of Jews had been murdered in the infamous Ninth Fort. Every family in the ghetto had lost someone: a father, a mother, a brother, a child. Hope was fragile; fear was constant. People lived from moment to moment, never knowing who would survive the day. And yet, in a hidden cellar beneath the ruins of a shul, a group of Jews gathered quietly one night. The guards outside patrolled with rifles, but inside, a few dozen broken Jews whispered words that had been said for centuries: Selichos.

Their voices were soft, hoarse, and trembling. They did not know if they would live to see Rosh Hashana. But they knew that Elul had arrived. Among them was **Rav Ephraim Oshry**, later to become world-famous as the posek of the Holocaust. Even in those unspeakable times, Jews came to him with questions of halacha. Could one say Kiddush without wine? Could one eat treif to survive? Could one fast on Yom Kippur under starvation? His answers, recorded in She'eilos u'Teshuvos miMa'amakim, became a sefer of eternal faith.

That night, as the faint sobs of Ashamnu rose from the cellar, a young man broke down and cried out: "Rebbe! What meaning can Elul have in this Gehinnom? Outside, they slaughter us like animals. Inside, we are starving. What use are these forty days for us? Do our sins really compare to theirs? What is the point of saying Selichos when the world itself is burning?"

The room went silent. All eyes turned to Rav Oshry. He was pale, thin from hunger, but his voice was steady, filled with an otherworldly strength. "My child," he said, "do you know what a mikva is? It is not a drop of water, nor a barrel, nor a pond. It must contain forty se'ah. If it has only thirty-nine, the waters cannot purify. But once the forty are complete, the moment a Jew immerses, something

miraculous happens – he is reborn. He leaves behind impurity and emerges new."

He paused, scanning the faces around him. "Elul is our mikva. These forty days are not for punishment – they are for purification. Every day we cling to Hashem, every one of the Selichos we whisper, every kapitl of Tehillim we recite with tears – each one is a drop of water. One day may feel too weak, one prayer too faint, one heart too broken. But drop by drop, day by day, we are filling the mikva. And when Yom Kippur comes, when the forty days are whole, Hashem Himself will immerse us in His mercy. Even here, even now, "Mah mikva metaher ess hatemei'im, af HaKadosh Baruch Hu metaher ess Yisrael."

The words spread across the room like fire. Men began to cry openly. Women sobbed into torn kerchiefs. They whispered the next of the Selichos with a new strength, clutching the words as if they were lifelines.

Rav Oshry later recalled that night in his writings: "We were in Gehinnom, yet those forty days of Elul became for us a mikva of hope. We felt that even if our bodies were doomed, our neshama could still emerge pure. Hashem was with us – in the ghetto, in the cellar, in the whispered Selichos. He Himself was purifying His people." And so, in the very darkest of places, Jews entered Hashem's mikva of time. They guarded every day, every drop, until the forty were complete. And though the world around them tried to strip them of humanity, they emerged – not defeated but renewed in their bond with Hashem.

## The Chazon Ish's Forty Days

**Reb Chaim Kanievsky** would often repeat: those who merited to be near the **Chazon Ish** in the weeks before Rosh Hashanah remarked that his entire being was different during Elul. A close talmid once

asked him, "Rebbe, why do you approach Elul with such intensity? You already live every day with yiras Shamayim."

The Chazon Ish smiled and gave an answer that has stayed with his talmidim. "Elul until Yom Kippur," he said, "is like immersing in a mikva — but not all at once. Each day is another se'ah of water filling the pool. On the first day of Elul, the mikva is not yet full; it cannot purify. By the second week, it's filling, but still not complete. And then, as we approach Yom Kippur, the final se'ah enters — and suddenly the mikva is whole. At that moment, if we have been adding drop after drop each day, the purification is complete. But if we have wasted days, skipped se'ah after se'ah, then on Yom Kippur we will stand in an empty pit and wonder why the immersion did not change us."

He concluded quietly, "That is why I guard every day of these forty. Each day is a measure of water, and without all of them, the mikva is not ready." That is why it is so important, so critical, that we are ready to begin at Rosh Chodesh, from the very beginning of Elul. This tremendous avoda—not missing a day, not missing a moment—filling our mikva to its fullest, transforming ourselves regardless of where we are holding, into an incredible new and fully cleansed person, an Adam Hashem.

## Current Times

Shabbos Mevarchim Elul whispers to us: haMelech basadeh - the King is in the field. He is waiting for you now. Not for our perfection, not for our greatness, but for the ani l'dodi, for the first step. Every day you guard, every drop you add, draws you closer to Him. Every tefila, every kapitl of Tehillim, every moment of sincere teshuva is another drop filling the great mikva of Elul. And when all forty days are complete, when not a single one is missing, then on Yom Kippur we will be able to immerse ourselves in the fullness of His compassion, and rise from it renewed—bathed in light, embraced as

beloved children, ready to begin the new year with strength and clarity.

This is the gift Hashem places in our hands: a time of closeness, a season of renewal, an opportunity to return to Him with joy. Let us treasure each day of Elul as a precious drop, building toward a sea of rachamim that will carry us into the new year.

This is the gift of Elul. A gift of mercy, wrapped in love from our Father in Heaven. A chance that comes but once a year, a doorway opened for forty precious days. May we not waste a single moment. May we not let a single drop slip away. And may we merit an Elul of real transformation, and of closeness to Hashem that will carry us into the year ahead with light, hope, and redemption.

## Train Ticket In Elul

Before Rosh Hashanah one year, **the Chofetz Chaim** was traveling by train together with some of his *talmidim*. At one of the stations, he noticed a fellow Jew in a great panic, pacing back and forth. The man was dressed like a simple laborer, his face pale with worry. The Chofetz Chaim approached him gently and asked what was wrong.

The man explained: "Rebbe, I was supposed to buy a ticket for the train yesterday, but I kept pushing it off. I thought, *Eh, I'll have time…* Now, I'm here at the station, and the train is about to leave. If I don't get on, I'll lose my job. My family depends on me! But the ticket window is closed — and I don't know what to do!

The Chofetz Chaim turned to his *talmidim* and said with great emotion: "Do you hear what this Yid is saying? This is the whole story of Elul! Every person knows the 'train' of Rosh Hashanah is coming, yet many delay buying their ticket. They say, *there's time, I'll prepare later.* Suddenly, Elul passes quickly, the 'train' is pulling into the station, and a person panics — *I didn't prepare! I don't have my ticket of teshuvah, tefillah, and mitzvos!*

The lesson is: don't wait until the last moment to prepare. Use Elul wisely, while the ticket window is still open."

The Chofetz Chaim's *talmidim* said he repeated this analogy many times during Elul, urging people not to push off preparation until it was too late.

## When They Were Young

## QUIET ACTS, GREAT IMPACT

### RABBI AVRAHAM YESHAYAH KARELITZ
### הרב אברהם ישעיהו קרליץ זצ"ל





Young Avraham Yeshayah treated every single person kindly. He was very kind to animals, as well. When he was a young boy, Avraham Yeshayah once saw that a cat had fallen into a ditch and wasn't able to climb out. Avraham Yeshayah felt very bad for the animal. He let himself down into the ditch and helped the animal climb out.

Another time, a man in the community was very sick. Because of his illness, he could not keep himself clean. Before long, anyone who came near him was confronted with a terrible odour. The doctors

wanted the man's family members to help him wash up, but the family members were repelled by the stench. The man was very embarrassed about the situation.

When Avraham Yeshayah heard about the man's suffering and shame, he decided to help out. Without making a big deal, he began visiting the sick man several times a week. He helped him wash up and made sure that the bad odour was gone.

He did not do this for attention or compliments. He did it because he loved all Yidden, and he felt a responsibility to help care for them.




Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz, later known as the Chazon Ish after his *sefarim* (**איש** is an acronym for **אברהם ישעיהו**), was born in Kosava, Belarus in 1878. His parents were R' Shmaryahu Yosef and Rebbetzin Rochel Leah. His father, the rav was his main rebbi. Avraham Yeshayah married Bashi Bei, who operated a small store so that her husband could focus on learning Torah.

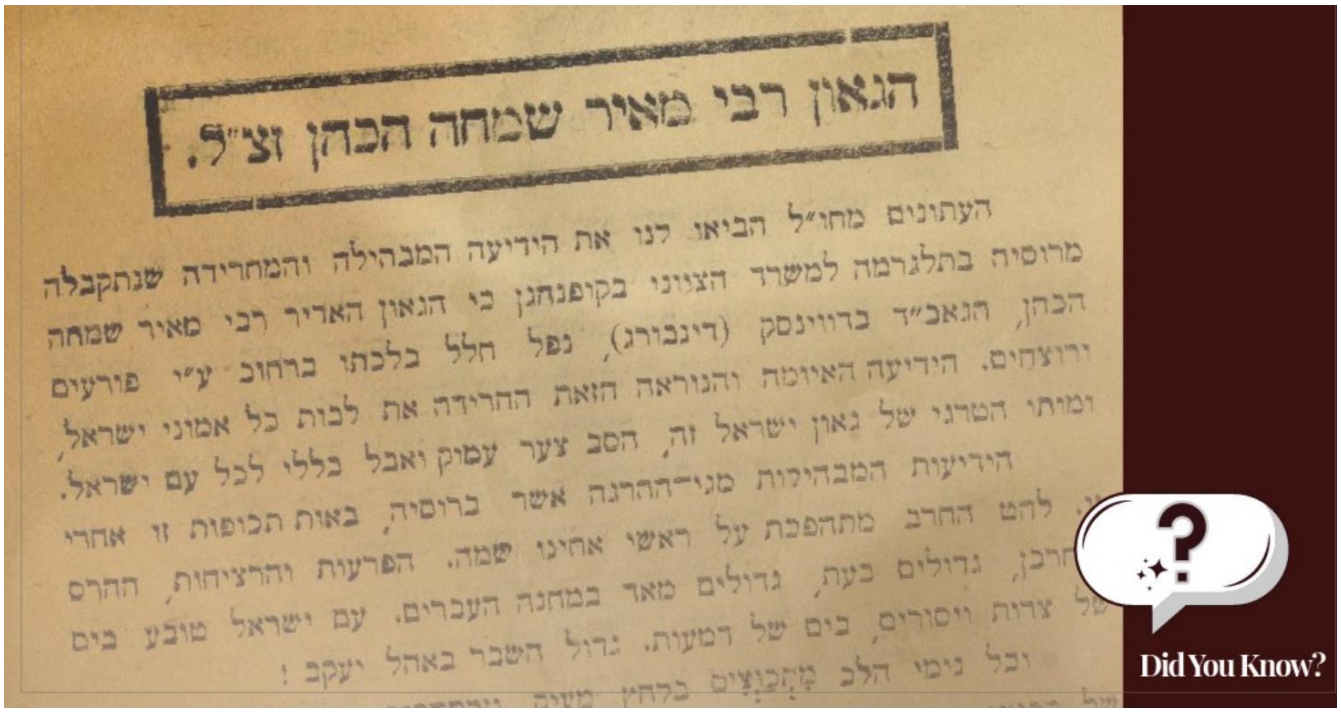
In 1920, R' Avraham Yeshayah and his wife moved to Vilna, where he became close to R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, the rav of the city and the *gadol hador*. For years, R' Avraham Yeshayah sat and learned without too many people knowing of his greatness.

In 1933, he and his wife moved to Eretz Yisrael. At that point, the secret was out. Thousands of people looking for guidance or an answer to their *shailos* came to his home. Though he wasn't a rav or rebbi or rosh yeshivah, the Chazon Ish had a huge influence on the Torah community in Eretz Yisrael, and on the whole world.

***'The surest way to have a positive influence on another is to first love them unconditionally.' ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson***

## 📖 The Guardians - bringing Jewish history to life!

### The Day They "Killed" the Ohr Sameach—Seven Years Too Early




This Elul marks exactly 100 years since the passing of one of the greatest Torah giants of pre-Holocaust Europe: **Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk**, author of Ohr Sameach and Meshech Chochmah, and the only contemporary rabbi cited by name in the Chafetz Chaim's Mishnah Berurah. - But in 1919— seven years before his actual passing —Jewish communities across Europe and Eretz Yisrael mourned him prematurely. Amid horrific pogroms sweeping through Ukraine and Poland, a shocking report spread like wildfire: -- 'Rabbi Meir Simcha had been murdered.'

Major cities declared work stoppages. Public eulogies were held. Rabbis wept. Communities grieved. Only later did the truth emerge: the report was false. The Ohr Sameach was alive—and would remain so until 1926.

The document pictured above - a heartbreaking obituary was written by none other than Rabbi Shlomo Blazer, son of the famed mussar figure Rabbi Itzele Blazer. - History got it wrong. But now, a century later, we remember it right.



**This** week marks the first *Yahrzeit* of the famed **Riverdale Rosh Yeshivah, R' Avraham (Avremel) Ausband *zt"l***. The *Rosh Yeshivah* was a pillar of strength for his *talmidim*, who knew they could turn to him not only for *Torah* guidance but for personal advice and support. His devotion to his family, his *yeshivah*, and *Klal Yisroel* was unwavering, and his legacy will continue to live on through the thousands of *talmidim* he shaped, many of whom have gone on to become *Roshei Yeshivah*, *Rabbanim*, and *marbitzei Torah* around the world.

Rav Ausband taught his students to be *masmidim* in learning and also to be **normal**.

One prominent *talmid* who is a successful businessman, would have a weekly *seder* with the *Rosh Yeshivah* and another friend, in Riverdale. They usually learned for 2 hours in the middle of the week but if things didn't work out, they would come early Friday morning and learn with Rav Ausband after *shacharis*. "We would prefer to learn on Friday morning because we learned a valuable lesson from the *Rosh Yeshivah* when we did. We would *daven* earlier and then drive to the *Yeshivah* and wait in the *Rosh Yeshivah's* office until he finished *davening*. When he would walk in, he would take off his *Talis and Tefillin*, and a *bochur* would bring him breakfast. He would push the food aside and pick up the *yeshivah* phone. He would then call his wife and ask her how her day was going. He told us that before he does anything, he calls his *Rebbetzin* and asks her how was the night, how did she sleep? - It was a short one-minute phone call, but it taught us the importance of *Shalom Bayis*.

"Until today, I will never forget that lesson. One can be a *masmid* and a huge *Talmid Chacham*, but before anything, one must be normal and think of others, especially one's own wife. Because there is nothing more important than *Shalom Bayis*."

## Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

**אִם־תַּחֲנֶה עָלַי מַחֲנֶה לֹא־יִירָא לִבִּי אִם־תָּקוּם עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בוֹטֵחַ**

During the month of Elul, at the end of our daily prayers, we add chapter 27 of Tehillim, in which Dovid declares, "If an enemy army camps against me, my heart will not be afraid, and even if war rises up against me, **בזאת אני בוטח** – in this I trust."

What is the **זאת** that is the source of Dovid's confidence? Although Rashi and the Radak connect it to the beginning of the chapter, where he proclaims **ד' אורי וישעי ומעוז חיי** – Hashem is my light, my salvation, and the stronghold of my life – and the Malbim explains it as a reference to the following verse, in which Dovid discusses his prayer to dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of his life, **Rav Meir Wahrsager** of Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim suggests that these interpretations do not fit well with the context and straightforward reading of the passage.

Accordingly, Rav Wahrsager cites the **Sfas Emes** (Shoftim 5634), who explains Dovid's words according to their literal meaning, that the very encampment of his enemies against him is the **זאת** that is the source of his optimism. In other words, Dovid is saying that when he is confronted by a difficult nisayon, he draws strength from the challenge before him, for he understood that as overwhelming and insurmountable as a situation may appear, **בזאת אני בוטח** – the very fact that Hashem put me in these circumstances is the greatest proof that I am up to the test and capable of passing it.

As we begin the period of introspection and self-improvement to prepare ourselves for the upcoming Yamim Noraim, we must

recognize that the moment we believe a battle is too hard for us, we have already lost. The fact that Hashem gives us a certain nisayon is the ultimate proof that He knows that we are up to the task and possess the necessary tools to prevail.

UKforTORAH@gmail
Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

**Insights Into The Torah Perspective From Great Personalities Of The Last Generation & Beyond**

**8 ELUL: REB MOSHE SCHEINFELD** *[Written for the fortieth yahrtzeit]*

Reb Moshe Scheinfeld (or Schonfeld) was arguably the most influential writer of **hashkofa** in Eretz Yisroel, and set the tone for all future efforts to clarify and disseminate Torah hashkofa. He penned countless articles and public statements, publishing them in several venues and specifically in the journal **Hashkofoseinu**, which explained all the relevant issues of the day — many of which are still just as relevant in our times.

Gedolei Yisroel considered him their trusted mouthpiece to formulate their **Daas Torah** — amongst them the Chazon Ish, the Brisker Rov, the Steipler, and others.

In his writings, Reb Moshe "spared no punches" and presented the truth the way it was without fear. An **Agudist** who was imbued with the original Agudah hashkofa and was not influenced by the changing times as others were, he suffered the consequences of his activity but continued without fear.

He was the shliach of Gedolei Yisroel to publicly expose the ideological collapse of **PAI** (Poalei Agudas Yisroel, a branch of the Agudah which became Zionist and later dissipated), despite the intense unpleasantness of having to attack a movement which at the time had public legitimacy even in the Torah kehillos.

He was virtually the only one who confronted the public with the deeply unpleasant facts about the Zionist involvement in the destruction of European Jewry, despite the backlash it evoked from those who did all they could to silence his voice. Rav Weissmandel's sefer **Min Hameitzar** was banned from Israel at the time (as was the book **Perfidy**), and Reb Moshe's book on the topic, **Srufei Hakivshan Maashimim**, was the only source of the dark history which the Zionist State was desperate to cover up. (It was said that the Prime Minister himself, B.G., was infuriated over his work.)

Another of his publications documented the terrible history of Zionist oppression of Yiddishkeit in the early days of the State, including war orphans who underwent forced **shmad** ("Yaldei Teheran"), and the immigrants from Yemen. This was also translated into English under the name **Genocide in the Holy Land**.

In 5733, near the end of his life, an enlightening article of his was translated and published in the Agudas Yisroel journal **The Jewish Observer** (Cheshvan 5733 / Oct. 1972 issue). The article explained that the conflicts between the State and the religious residents are not merely incidental but rather fundamental to the very essence of the State. The purpose of the State of Israel is directly contrary to the Torah.

Reb Moshe suffered greatly in his final years. Rav Moshe Mordechai Schulsinger, author of **Mishmar Haleivi**, who was very close to Reb Moshe and considered him an authority in hashkofa, recounted in **Peninei Rabbeinu Kehillos Yaakov** that Reb Moshe sent a letter to the Steipler expressing his concern that perhaps he was being punished for writing so many sharp articles against all the groups who identified with Zionism.

The Steipler replied with a letter:

"It is certain that suffering cannot come as a punishment for his mitzvos and good deeds, and all the many articles were benefiting the public and a Kiddush Shem Shomayim, and so certainly the

suffering is not from them." (This also appears in the biography of the Steipler, **Toldos Yaakov**, p. 271.)

Reb Moshe's levaya was attended by all the scholarly circles of Bnei Brak, including the Steipler himself. Rav Nissim Karelitz, legendary rosh kollel of **Kollel Chazon Ish** and author of **Chut Shoni**, delivered an uncharacteristically effusive hesped in which he declared Reb Moshe the quintessential **"man of truth."**

Reb Moshe, now in the World of Truth for forty years, lives on in the legacy of all those who strive to remain clear-headed and true to Torah hashkofa.




## Fascinating Insights-Rabbi Yehoshua Alt- A king and his humility

A king requires humility and as it says in our Parsha **לבלתי רום לבבו**; so that his heart doesn't become haughty. The Tikunai Zohar uses the terminology **לית מגרמיה כלום**; nothing of himself, humility. Consequently, the first letters of this phrase spells **מלך**.

Dovid Hamelech personifies this literally as the 70 years of his life were from Adam. This is because Adam was supposed to live until 1,000. However, he only lived until 930 as he gave 70 years to Dovid.

Here are some other examples of Dovid and his humility:

1) When Yehuda, the ancestor of Dovid, was born, his mother said **נטלתי יותר מחלקי**; I took more than my portion- humility.

2) Dovid Hamelech says on himself **אנכי תולעת ולא איש**; I am a worm not a man.

3) The gematria of **דוד** is 14- a relatively low number for a name, symbolizing humility.

4) In light of this we now see why Chazal say that one who sees Sefer Tehillim in his dream **יצפה לענוה** ; should anticipate humility.

5) We also see his humility in the letters of his name-

**ד** represents humility since when it spelled out it spells **דלת**, related to **דלות**. The **ו** is a straight, upright line alluding to that he became king, greatness. The last **ד** indicates he still has humility after becoming king. This is in contrast to Dovid's enemy **גלית** who is filled with Gaava.

Is it any wonder that **תועבת י-ה-ו-ה גבה לב** - a haughty heart is the abomination of Hashem, are the initials **גלית**.

How does one get to such a feeling? When one feels he is in the presence of Hashem he feels humble.

We should put Hashem before us at all times thereby becoming humble.

## Giving Until There Is No More

In the time of **R' Chaim Voloziner** (1749-1821), there was a wealthy Jew by the name of Moshe who gave lots of money to Tzedaka. Upon losing his wealth, people were investigating why this happened to such a kind person. All they could think of was that he gave more than 1/5 to Tzedaka.

R' Chaim Voloziner remarked that that wasn't the reason and with time we will see why such a thing occurred. Being that Moshe lost his wealth he now spent his day's entirely immersed learning Torah. This impacted his children whom he also brought to the Beis Midrash.

This Moshe became **R' Moshe Solivechik**. His descendants became some of our well-known Gedolim- **the Beis Halevi, R' Chaim Brisker, the Griz, R' Avraham Yehoshua Solevetchik** and so on. The reward for R' Moshe being such a Baal Tzedaka was that he would have such Gedolim come from him, which was the result of his losing money so that he can spend his days engrossed in Torah.



It was in the cemetery in Brisk that the **Beis Halevi** (1820-1892) noticed two gravestones where on one it was written **כפה פרשה לעני** ; her palm was spread for the poor, and on the other **וידיה שלחה לאביון**; and she extends her hand to the pauper.

The Beis Halevi checked the ledger of the Chevra Kadisha, where he found the following: There were two wealthy people in the town of Brisk who would help the poor. When their businesses plummeted causing them to struggle financially, the only explanation Beis Din could come up with was that they were guilty of giving too much Tzedaka.

As a result, Beis Din told them the Chazal of **המבזבז אל יבזבז**... - don't give more than a fifth of your money to charity. Accept this upon yourselves. Although it was difficult for them to accept, they did. When the poor approached them, they reasoned that Beis Din only forbade us from giving away too much money, not our assets. Consequently, they began distributing their assets to the poor. Eventually, all was given away.

Then, one day, two poor people came to their door for Tzedaka. All they had left was one gold spoon. So, they broke the spoon in half, and gave the round side to one and the handle to the other. When everyone saw how desperate they were to give Tzedaka, the people

davened for them. The result: these two men became wealthy again. When they passed away, their graves were inscribed with the Pasuk, **כפה פרשה לעני וידיה שלחה לאביון**. - the round end of the spoon was given to the poor person **כפה פרשה לעני** - the handle was given to the pauper **וידיה שלחה לאביון** .

## A Righteous Path

Did you ever wonder why the Torah uses the seemingly redundant wording of **צדק צדק תרדף** ?

**R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischa** explains this repetition that running to righteousness also has to be done with righteousness.

Here are some of the many examples of this. To get up for an early Shacharis with an alarm clock, one must be careful not to wake others. One who is rushing to Shacharis needs be careful not to bump into others along the way. One putting on his Tallis should be careful not to hit anyone with the strings. In this way we can comprehend that which it says regarding Avraham, **ושמרו דרך ה'** - the way to get to the Mitzva was also pure.

It is appropriate to work on these overlooked sensitivities during **אלול** , as is alluded to in the word **אלול** as it consists of the same letters as **אל לו** ; to Hashem. That is to say, that which is a means to get to the end.

***"Elul is a strange and wondrous month. The days are ordinary, yet the gates of Heaven are open wider than at any other time. A Jew walks to work, speaks with friends, eats and sleeps as usual — yet hidden within the ordinary is an invitation from Hashem Himself: 'Return to Me, and I will return to you.'" ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.***

## Fear Bringing Happiness



The Pasuk states **אריה שאג מי לא יירא**; when the lion roars who is not scared. (*Amos* 3:8) Encoded in the term **אריה** is אַלול , רֹאש השנה, יוֹם כפור, הוֹשענה רבה , as these are the days of the lion. Who is not scared during these days of **אלול** and **תשרי**. An allusion to this is **אתַ ה' אלקיך תירא** as **את** refers to **אַלול** and **תַשרי** . These are days specifically of **יראה**.

## Change Yourself to Change Others



The story is told of a son who was bored thereby irritating his father. To keep his son busy, the father decided to rip up a map of the world for him to construct back together. Expecting hours of silence from his son now that he would be busy, he was surprised when his son returned moments later with it all intact. The father watching in disbelief asked incredulously how he did it so quickly. The child responded that on the other side of the map there was a man. Once he put the man together, the pieces of the world fell into place. The lesson is clear and powerful- when we fix ourselves, we fix the world!

Attempting to change others doesn't change them. Rather it is changing ourselves that makes them change. This may be by

becoming a kinder person, through our writings and so on. We see this with the greatest of our people as through changing themselves, they changed the world as they had an impact on others. Examples include Avraham, Moshe, etc.

An upset mother of a boy who veered off the path of Judaism voiced her complaints to R' Greenwald in Monsey, New York telling him that all her other children had prominent jobs in business or in the Torah world. R' Greenwald's advice to the mother was to love her son unconditionally, although it may be difficult, just as Hashem loves us even though we may sin and act improperly.

Following this advice, the boy's mother would prepare her son's favourite foods when he awoke at three in the afternoon. She continued this daily although it was challenging. Eventually, the boy changed his ways. Today he is married with children and is the most devoted of all his siblings to his parents! So, the mother changed herself and that impacted her rebellious son to change.

This story was told over by **R' Rietti** at a seminar. After the seminar, a father who was rigid in his ways related to R' Rietti the following:




He had children who veered off the track of Judaism. The father changed himself and began to love them unconditionally.

One year later, he told R' Rietti, that although his children were no closer to being religious than the previous year, no matter where they were on Friday night, they came to ask for a Bracha. Additionally, they would always ask their father for advice wherever they were (which they wouldn't have done previously as they had a poor relationship).

It is said that the **Chofetz Chaim** desired to change the world, but he saw that it was too much. He then sought to change his family, but he realized that was also too much. Then he decided to just change himself. And because he did so, he changed his family, and then the world.

In light of this, we can comprehend a deeper meaning in **קשוט עצמך ואח"כ קשוט אחרים**; correct yourself and then others. It can also be understood that through fixing yourself, you fix others.

In this way, we can grasp **שפטים ושטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך**, as we first need to put judges and guards over our gates meaning to protect ourselves from sin. It all begins with us first and then it affects the world.

Similarly, R' Mendel Vorka would say **ובערת הרע מקרבך**, fix yourself up and then **וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראו**, others will change.

## Stay Connected




**The Ramban** (1190-1270) says that one's thoughts should never separate from Hashem whether he is on the road, just awoke or going to sleep. It should be to the extent that even when he converses with people, he is just talking with his mouth and tongue, but his mind is with Hashem.

When **R' Avigdor Miller** was asked by his grandson why he had short conversations with people, he answered because he can't speak to someone for too long without losing focus of Hashem.

**R' Nachman of Kossov** would urge people to observe **שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד** – to always remember Hashem. He would encourage them to think about Hashem even while they were doing business. He was asked how this was possible since one's mind may be focused on other matters. He responded that he sees people are capable of thinking about their business when they daven. Why is this different?!

The truth is **אין עוד מלבדו** - there is none other than Hashem and that in everything we can find G-dliness.

## A Cry for Mercy



We blow the Shofar during the month of Elul- which consists of 29 days- as well as the two days of Rosh Hashana. This gives us a total of 31. However, the Shofar is not blown on Shabbos and Erev Rosh Hashana.

Subtracting these five days (the four Shabbosim in Elul and Erev Rosh Hashana), we have 26 days where it is blown. 26 is the numerical value of **י-ה-ו-ה**, the name of Hashem that represents **רחמים**; mercy. This is what we especially desire during this time of year.

Blowing the Shofar arouses Hashem's mercy. This is shown in the beginning of the Torah. Counting 26 letters from the **ש** of **השמים** in the first Pasuk in the Torah we have a **ו** (of **ובהו** ). 26 letters later is a **פ** (of **מרחפת**) followed by a **ר** (of **אור**) in another 26 letters. These letters comprise the word **שופר**.

It says **תקעו בחדש שופר בכסה ליום חגנו** - blow the Shofar… The letters that precede **חדש** spell **גזר**. That is, before a **ח** is **ז**, before a **ד** is **ג** and before **ש** is **ר**. Let us do the same with **שפר**. Before **ש** is **ר**, before **פ** is **ע** and before **ר** is **ק**. These letters spell **קרע**. Lastly, let us do the same to **כסה**. Before a **כ** is **י**, before **ס** is **נ** and before **ה** is **ד**. That spells **דין**. So, we have **קרע גזר דין** which is alluding to that through the Shofar, a decree can be torn up!

**The Panim Yafos** tells us that during these days we say **לדוד ה' אורי** because it says Hashem's name in it 13 times, corresponding to the 13 attributes of mercy.

During these days, we want **רחמים**. As a result, we say **י-ה-ו-ה**, the name of Hashem that represents **רחמים**, in **לדוד ה' אורי** 13 times. Since we recite it twice daily, we mention **י-ה-ו-ה** 26 times!, the sum of **י-ה-ו-ה**.

**The Bnei Yissaschar** explains the idea of dipping the Challa in honey: **דבש** has an equivalent of 306, the same as **אב הרחמים** and like we say during **עשרת ימי תשובה** in the second Bracha of Shemoneh Esrei- **אב הרחמים**.

## Cured through the coronavirus



A Jerusalem woman, the wife of a well-known Talmid Chacham, contracted a devastating virus twenty years ago which attacked her body, leading to many of her bodily systems shutting down. She has been laying in a coma-like state ever since and no medical treatment has been effective.

To everyone's horror, the woman, who was of course a high-risk patient, contracted COVID-19 and her situation became dire. When

her condition worsened and she needed to be ventilated, her doctors and family members lost all hope that she would survive. But then something shocking occurred. The woman successfully fought off the coronavirus, regained consciousness, was weaned from the ventilator and succeeded in rising from her bed for the first time in 20 years. She had a complete recovery not only from the coronavirus but also from the virus that had plagued her for 20 years.

The stunned doctors ordered a battery of tests which revealed that the coronavirus had taken control of her bodily systems and had "eaten" her previous virus and destroyed it. The family members felt it was a mitzvah to publicize this miraculous story and it was published in the Hebrew Yated Ne'eman.

## An Eternal Escort



Since either money is taken from the person or he is taken from the money, one should let his money escort him eternally. To do this, one must give it away for Mitzvos such as charity. In this way we can explain **אם כסף תלוה** ... when you lend money to the poor, as **תלוה** can mean to escort as in **מלוה מלכה**. So, if one wants his money to escort him eternally, he must give it to the poor.

An article dated February 14, 2007 read that the owner of B & H - Herman Schreiber (a Satmar Chassid)— until 10 years ago lived in a small rented apartment on the third floor. The house he lives in now he bought from a bankrupted, formerly wealthy person who needed the money to get back on his feet. He couldn't find a buyer because the house was across the street from a wedding hall.

In order to help this person out, Schreiber bought his house. When he moved into his new home, Schreiber didn't buy a single piece of new furniture rather he brought the furniture he had since he got married from his old apartment. He doesn't own a car nor have a chauffeur rather he travels with public transportation. He flies economy class, wears simple clothing and buys the simplest food. He believes being wealthy is a gift from Hashem and not something to show off with. Where does his money from his 700-million-dollar business go? Charity. He says that is what money is made for.

In 1924, **R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein** (1866–1933) travelled to the United States to raise the funds needed to relocate his Yeshiva from Slabodka to Chevron. A wealthy Jew named Harry Schiff gave R' Epstein 20,000$ for his cause enabling R' Epstein to transport his Yeshiva to Chevron.

Six years later in 1929 **R' Yechezkel Sarna** (1890–1969), the son-in-law of R' Epstein was in the United States and visited Harry Schiff. R' Sarna was in for a shock as he was unaware that Harry Schiff had lost all his money due to the Great Depression. R' Sarna sent a telegram to his father-in-law in Eretz Yisrael, telling him the state of Mr. Schiff. R' Epstein said that he will take a mortgage for the Yeshiva so that he can send back 20,000$, the amount of money Harry Schiff gave.

R' Sarna told Harry the great news. Harry began to cry saying, "I used to be one of the wealthiest people and now that money was taken from me. The only thing I have left is the $20,000 I gave to the Yeshiva and now you want to take that away from me also!" And in the end, Harry didn't take the money offered by R' Epstein.

***"A relationship with Hashem, is much bigger than any segula you will ever have." ~ R' Zecharia Wallerstein Z"L.***

## Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

**אם תחנה עלי מחנה לא יירא לבי אם תקום עלי מלחמה בזאת אני בוטח (תהילים 27:3)**

During the month of Elul, at the end of our daily prayers, we add chapter 27 of Tehillim, in which Dovid declares, ***"If an enemy army camps against me, my heart will not be afraid, and even if war rises up against me, בזאת אני בוטח – in this I trust."***

What is the **זאת** that is the source of Dovid's confidence? Although **Rashi** and the **Radak** connect it to the beginning of the chapter, where he proclaims **ד' אורי וישעי ומעוז חיי – *Hashem is my light, my salvation, and the stronghold of my life*** – and the **Malbim** explains it as a reference to the following verse, in which Dovid discusses his prayer to dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of his life, **Rav Meir Wahrsager** of Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim suggests that these interpretations do not fit well with the context and straightforward reading of the passage.



Accordingly, Rav Wahrsager cites the **Sfas Emes** (Shoftim 5634), who explains Dovid's words according to their literal meaning, that the very encampment of his enemies against him is the **זאת** that is the source of his optimism. In other words, Dovid is saying that when he is confronted by a difficult nisayon (test), he draws strength from the challenge before him, for he understood that as overwhelming and insurmountable as a situation may appear, **בזאת אני בוטח** – the very fact that Hashem put me in these circumstances is the greatest proof that I am up to the test and capable of passing it.

As we begin the period of introspection and self-improvement to prepare ourselves for the upcoming Yamim Noraim, we must recognize that the moment we believe a battle is too hard for us, we have already lost. The fact that Hashem gives us a certain nisayon is the ultimate proof that He knows that we are up to the task and possess the necessary tools to prevail.

## Parsha Points to Ponder

A person who kills another Jew accidentally must flee to an Ir Miklat (city of refuge) and remain there until the kohen gadol dies (19:4-5). The Gemara in Makkos (9b) rules that two Torah scholars must escort him to the Ir Miklat in order to protect him from the go'el hadam should they encounter one another before the murderer reaches the safety of the city of refuge.




Why did they send two Torah scholars instead of two strong men, who would presumably be more successful in protecting him from the angry blood-redeemer? (V'Ha'Ish Moshe)

**Rav Moshe Soloveitchik** explains that sending brawny men to escort and guard the accidental murderer on his way to the city of refuge wouldn't be productive. When the blood-redeemer becomes aware that the person against whom his wrath is directed is being protected by two burly men, he will simply counter by attacking with four men who are even more powerful, with the ultimate result being an all-out war.

Instead, Chazal directed that the accidental murderer be accompanied by two Torah scholars. Their purpose was not to

physically defend him, but rather to pacify the blood-redeemer in the event that they encountered him by explaining to him that the murderer's actions were accidental, and it would be inappropriate to respond by intentionally killing him.

The Gemora (Berachos 64a) teaches that Torah scholars possess a unique ability to bring peace to the world. The lesson that can be derived from here is that if a person attempts to resolve a dispute in a calm and peaceful manner, he significantly increases his odds of the other party responding in kind, but if he opts to pursue an approach of overpowering and defeating the other person, he will most likely end up enraging him, which will only escalate the conflict.



**The Tchebiner Rov, R' Dov Beirish Weidenfeld zt"l** was once in attendance at a hachnasas Sefer Torah and before the Sefer Torah was completed, he was asked to "write a letter" by dipping a quill in ink and filling in the outline of an already written letter. A few people had already written a letter, as is the custom before completing the Torah, and the overflow crowd was beginning to grow.

As R' Dov Ber was walking to the front to write his letter, he suddenly stopped. He looked about and then sat down next to the sofer, who handed him the quill. R' Dov Ber shook his head, and to the astonishment of all those present, he declared that he does not want to write in the sefer but rather, he is appointing the sofer as his shaliach to write the letter. The surprised sofer did as he was asked.

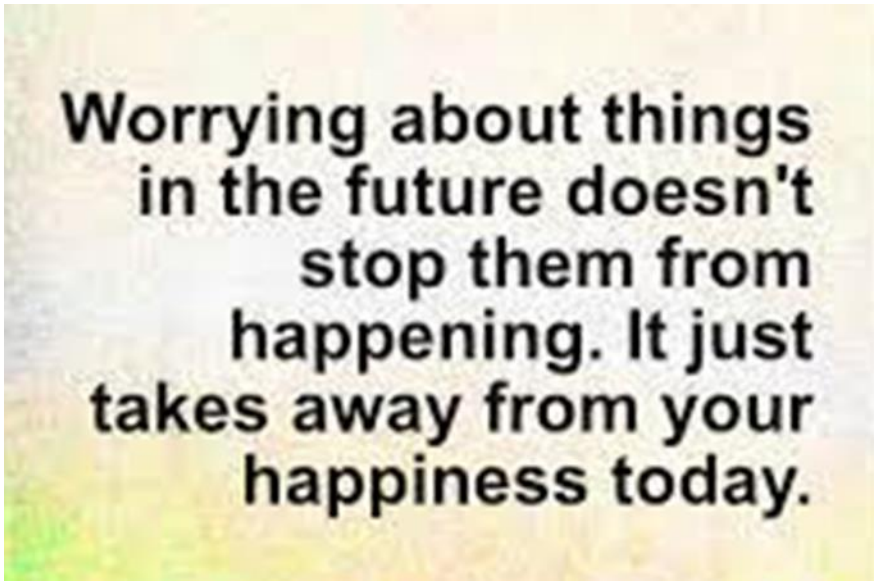
Obviously, after the Tchebiner Rov had used the sofer as a shaliach, every person continued to use him as well and the sofer ended up hand-writing all the remaining letters. This was unusual and some people later asked the Tchebiner Rov why he altered the normal practice.

He replied that he saw a man in the crowd who he believed was a heretic to one of the mitzvos in the Torah, and he was afraid that this man would write a letter and touch the Torah. This was unacceptable to him.

On the other hand, he couldn't just embarrass the man either - so he came up with a way that the apikores wouldn't touch the sefer or be shamed.

## Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

As Elul commences, with the daily haunting sound of the shofar beckoning, there is no better time to return to Hashem, knowing that His presence is so near. The posuk in Shoftim states: **תמים תהיי עם ה' אלקיך**.




**Rabbeinu Efraim** writes that the gematria of **תמים תהיי** is 910 - exactly the same numerical value as **תשרי**. A person must make sure he is **תמים** - flawless, without a blemish, with the impending approach of the **ימים נוראים**, while at the same time, realize that he must rely on Hashem to assist him in this war. As Rashi explains: **לא תחקור אחר העתידות** - Don't worry about the future, just do your best.

Bearing this in mind, waging this war with the yetzer hara will be much easier knowing that Hashem "has our backs." Yehi Ratzon that we merit a **תשובה שלמה** and all the beracha that comes with winning the great impending battle.

## From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

Parshas Shoftim ushers in the month of Elul, the month of relationships. The posuk tells us: **תמים תהיי עם ה' אלקיך**. Our relationship with Hashem should be perfect. But even our relationships with others and with ourselves - the goal of Elul is to improve all our relationships. This means to become closer to the other party.



The word for compliment in Hebrew is MACHMAAH. It stems from the root word CHAM, which means warm. The word for criticism in Hebrew is BIKORET which stems from the word KAR, which means cold. The sure-fire way to cool off a relationship with anybody, even Hashem, and even yourself, is with words of criticism. It is automatic. If you want to create a feeling of distance and coldness, then say something negative. Say something critical and you will feel a KIR, from the root KAR, a wall of ice that has just been created.

Now try the opposite. If you want to create warmth, love and good feelings between you and another party, say something nice! Give them a compliment! Tell them something positive that you like about them, and you will immediately feel a CHOMAH, a wall of love,

protection and caring that has enveloped both of you and created a certain bond in the relationship.

The acronym ELUL represents these 3 relationships that encompass all of our interactions in this world. **אֲני לְדודי וְדודי לי** represents the relationship between Hashem and us. **אֶת לְבבך וְאת לְבב זרעך** refers to the relationship we have with ourselves and **אֲיש לְרעהו וְמתנות לְאביונים** refers to the relationship we have with other people. All three posukim spell out the word "ELUL."

This teaches us that in Elul, we are meant to focus on and improve each of these relationships. "Ani Ledodi V'dodi li" - Only if I am to my beloved .... if I focus on and express the goodness of the one I would like to have a true loving relationship with ... then my Beloved will be there for me, to reciprocate the good feelings that I have created with my good words. For it was those good words that have truly brought the relationship to a new level!

## Cities Of Refuge

The **ערי מקלט** - cities of refuge, are where one goes if he killed another by accident and he is protected there from the wrath of a **גואל הדם** (avenger) until the death of the Kohen Gadol. The posuk is clear that there was no premeditated murder and it only applies to one who "strikes his fellow unintentionally, whom he did not hate in times past."

In 1987, then president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Dr. Don Harper Mills, went on stage at a banquet for members of his organization in the city of San Diego, California, and told a story about a case in which a medical examiner had investigated a suspicious death and concluded that a man was guilty of his own murder.

Later, in an interview, he admitted that he had fabricated the story for entertainment and to illustrate to his colleagues how if you alter

a few small facts you can alter the legal consequences. "Different legal consequences can follow each twist in a homicide inquiry." This is the story that he told that night.



On March 23 of that year, the medical examiner viewed the deceased body of Ronald Opus and concluded that he died from a shotgun wound to the head. Mr. Opus had jumped from the top of a ten-story building intending to commit suicide. He left a note to that effect indicating his despondency.

As he fell past the ninth floor, his life was interrupted by a shotgun blast passing through a window, which killed him instantly. Neither the shooter nor the deceased was aware that a safety net had been installed just below the eighth-floor level to protect some building workers, and that Ronald Opus would not have been able to complete his suicide the way he had planned.

The room on the ninth floor, where the shotgun blast emanated, was occupied by an elderly man and his wife. They were arguing vigorously, and he was threatening her with a shotgun! The man was so upset that when he pulled the trigger, he completely missed his wife, and the bullet went through the window, striking Mr. Opus.

Legally, when one intends to kill subject 'A' but kills subject 'B' in the attempt, one is guilty of the murder of subject 'B'. But wait ... there's more! When confronted with the murder charge, the old man and his

wife were adamant, and both said that they thought the shotgun was not loaded. The old man could not believe he might be charged with murder since he said it was a long-standing habit of his to wave his unloaded shotgun at others. He never had any intention to shoot his wife. Therefore, the killing of Mr. Opus appeared to be an accident - that is, assuming the gun had been accidentally loaded.

The continuing investigation turned up a witness who saw the old couple's son loading the shotgun about six weeks prior to the fatal accident. It transpired that the old lady had cut off her son's financial support and the son, knowing the propensity of his father to use the shotgun threateningly, loaded the gun with the expectation that his father would shoot his mother. Since the loader of the gun was aware of this, he was guilty of the murder even though he didn't actually pull the trigger. The case now becomes one of murder on the part of the son for the death of Ronald Opus.

Now comes the exquisite twist. Further investigation revealed that the son was, in fact, Ronald Opus! He had become increasingly despondent over the failure of his attempt to engineer his mother's demise. This led him to jump off the ten-story building on March 23rd, only to be killed by a shotgun blast passing through the ninth story window. The son, Ronald Opus, had actually murdered himself! So the medical examiner closed the case as a suicide.

**Chayim Yosef David Azulai zt"l** (Chida, Nachal Kedumim) would say: **תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך** - The posuk should have stated: "Tamim tiheyeh lifnei (**לפני**) Hashem Elokecha" - "You shall be whole-hearted before Hashem, your G-d," rather than "with Hashem, your G-d." We may explain that the words **תמים תהיה** contain Gematria of nine-hundred-and-ten, which is also the numerical value of the word "Tishrei" (**תשרי**).

Especially during the month of Tishrei, the days before Rosh Hashana, when Jews look forward to a "kesivah vachasimah tovah,"

to be inscribed in the book of good life for the coming year, they should make an extra effort to repent and be tamim - complete - in one's relationship with Hashem."

## The Plumber



In Jerusalem, lived a man who became a master plumber and worked for himself. He was good, so good in fact, that it wasn't long before he developed a reputation as an expert in all matters related to plumbing. On numerous occasions, he was brought in to figure out how to expertly handle a delicate situation or to correct someone else's mistake. He was creative and had "hands of gold" and whatever he worked on, he managed to bring to a successful conclusion. He became prosperous.

One day, he was called to an apartment where he found a complete and utter mess. This was no small sink installation or pipe connection - this was a massive project which would require hours of labour, considerable expense and ingenuity. The man spoke to the lady of the house, and it soon became clear to him that she was a widow with many small children and very little money. She asked him if he could fix the problem and he told her he would, but now, he was wondering how he could do this massive project for a woman with no money. Well, he figured, I will do this job for free and earn some points in Heaven. Problem was, how to tell the widow in an honourable fashion.

He pondered this question the entire day as he worked. Late into the day, he completed the massive job and the thankful woman approached him and asked how much she owed him. "Nothing," he

said, with a grin. "How is that possible?" she asked, "You worked here all day."

The man concocted a story that for these types of jobs, the local municipality reimburses him for his time and labour since he is improving the quality of the city's pipes, the property values go up, and they are happy to cover the cost. She was pleasantly surprised and very grateful to him, and he walked away with the satisfaction that he had done a really good deed.

The man ran his successful business for many years and when he got older, he purchased a vacant lot in a fine section of Ramat Gan, where he intended to build himself a luxurious house. As an expert craftsman, he was involved in every stage of the planning and construction of his dream home. He worked with the architects and contractors and helped map out the entire structure, including the layout, electricity, plumbing, air-conditioning and concrete walls. He applied for all the necessary permits and had them expedited. He even took on the task of pricing out the various supplies that would be needed and through his many contacts in the industry, he was able to get many items at excellent prices.

In the process of purchasing his construction materials, he went to one of the largest suppliers of building goods and materials, a company named "Itzik and Zuri Commerce" located in Bnei Brak. He spent considerable time there pricing out hundreds of items that would be needed once the construction began. He didn't make any purchases yet as he still wished to price out other supply companies in order to get the best deal.

How shocked he was to show up one morning and find trucks unloading all the building material he would need for his home. It was all top quality stuff - but he knew he had never ordered it. He ran over to the driver and yelled, "What is this? What is going on? I never ordered this stuff!"

The driver shrugged and showed him the purchase order where it listed quite clearly all the items being unloaded and a stamp in the middle, "Paid in Full." The man spluttered angrily. The driver said, "Look, I am just the driver. Take it up with the main office." In seconds, he was in his car driving to Bnei Brak and the "Itzik and Zuri Commerce" showroom. He stormed in and demanded answers. He never ordered these supplies - he was just pricing them out - and he certainly never paid for them. A kind man behind a desk told him to calm down. "My name is Zuri and no one ever said you paid for them," he said with a grin. Well then, who paid for them came the question. "Actually, I believe the municipality paid for them!"

Zuri stood up and took the older man's hand in his. "Many years ago, you came to my mother's apartment, and you worked on a massive plumbing project for free. I know it was free even though you told her that the municipality was reimbursing you. I never forgot that act of kindness and now, it is my pleasure to actually reimburse you for that great act of chessed!"

**שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ** 16:18



A police officer was called to a local elementary school to take down a routine vandalism report. Someone had broken a few items and the police were called. The officer arrived in a squad car and immediately began to question students and faculty alike, taking down people's statements and alibis, writing them down in his pad. Suddenly, the officer felt a tug at his pants and looked down to see a little girl, not more than six years old. Peering up and down at the officer's uniform, she sweetly asked, "Excuse me, sir, are you a cop?" "Yes," he answered, and went back to writing his report. The little

girl continued. "My mother said that the police are important people and if I ever needed help for anything I should turn to the police. Is that right?"

Now she had his attention. The officer looked up from his pad, concerned that maybe something had happened to her, and she needed real assistance. "Yes, that's right," he told her with authority. "Is everything okay, dear?" "Yes ... but," she said as she extended her foot toward the policeman, "would you please tie my shoe?"

After reviewing many of the laws that apply to the Nation at large, Moshe now focuses on appointing judges and law enforcement, to maintain the spiritual level of the people at large, and thus ensure the people's continued tenure in the Land of Israel. (Seforno)

The people look to these appointed officials of note for guidance in all matters, both spiritual and physical, for our Rabbinical leaders and Dayanim are there to see to our welfare. No matter is too large or too small and it is something that we must inculcate our children with. When a Jew has an issue - any issue - he should talk it over with a scholar who can provide proper Torah insight.

## From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

16:18 שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ

The Torah is telling us an incredible message: תִּתֶּן־לְךָ - ***"Give yourself a gift."*** The greatest gift you can give yourself is ... SHOFTIM - Judges! What does this mean? What is the Torah's approach to judges?

**הוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות** - Judge every person favourably. A person needs to see the good in others, even those with negative character traits and annoying habits. You will not be able to change people to become what you think they should be, but you can change the way you see them. **בצדק תשפט עמיתך** - Judge your **friend** with

righteousness! (If you want him to be your friend! If you criticize him all day, he will not remain your friend for long!) So SHOFTIM is the gift we give ourselves by judging others favourably.



SHOTRIM, on the other hand, means policemen. Police enforce the law. They ensure that we do what we must even if we wouldn't do it on our own. We must make SHOTRIM to ensure our SHOFTIM! Even though one's natural reaction might be to judge negatively, criticize others and blow up with anger, one must make SHOTRIM - a "mechayev" (obligation) that will make sure you do what is right.

The greatest benefit of judging favourably is the midda k'neged midda - if you judge other's favourably, Hashem will judge you favourably. May this be our ticket to a happy, healthy life, good relationships with everyone and a successful judgment this Rosh Hashana.

**תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך יח:יג**

The Torah instructs us: *"Be wholehearted with Hashem, your G-d." Rashi quotes the words of the Sifri as follows: "Conduct yourself with Hashem with simplicity and depend on Him ... accept whatever happens to you with (pure) simplicity and then, you will be with Him." If one accepts whatever comes his way, Hashem will be with him as well.*

On November 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the world-renowned violinist, came on stage to give a concert in New York city's Avery Fisher Music Hall at Lincoln Centre. If you have ever seen a Perlman concert, you will know that getting on stage is no small achievement

for this man. He was stricken with polio as a child, and wears braces on both legs. He walks with the aid of two crutches.



To see him walk across the stage, one slow, painful step at a time, is an awesome sight. Although he walks with obvious distress, his bearing is regal as he makes his way to his chair. Then he sits down, slowly puts his crutches on the floor, unhooks the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward. Finally, he bends down, picks up his violin and puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor and proceeds to play. By now, the audience is used to this ritual. They sit quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. They remain reverently silent while he unhooks the clasps on his legs. They wait until he is ready to play.

But on the night of November 18, 1995, something went wrong. The music began as usual, and the sweet strains of his violin hummed delightfully through the hall. Midway through his performance, however, one of the strings on his violin snapped. In fact, everyone in the audience could hear it snap - it went off like gunfire across the room! There was no mistaking what that sound meant, and the audience gasped in collective consternation.

The music stopped suddenly, and one could hear a pin drop in the vast hall. All eyes were on Perlman - waiting for him to get up, put on his leg clasps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way offstage - either to find another violin, or to find another string for the broken one.

But he didn't. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes, and then signalled to the conductor to continue playing. The orchestra began

again, and Perlman played from where he had left off. That evening, he played with such passion, such power and such purity as he had never played before.

Of course, everyone knows that it is nigh impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings on a violin. I know that, and you know that, but that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, adjusting, practically recomposing the symphonic piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was retuning the strings to extricate new sounds from strings that had never made them before.

When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And then the people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from every corner of the auditorium. Every man, woman and child were on his or her feet, screaming and cheering, admiring the strength and passion of this great musician and showing appreciation for what he had done.

For his part, Itzhak Perlman smiled, and sat in his chair, seemingly oblivious to the waves of applause that washed over him. He was breathing heavily - the strain of his extraordinary performance left him winded. And then, he wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet the crowd, and spoke - not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, reverent tone.

"You know," he said, ***"sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."*** Simple words - but so powerful! A line that is memorable and all-encompassing. Perhaps this is the definition of life - not just for artists, but for each and every human being. Look at Itzhak Perlman. Here is a man who has practiced all his life to make music on a violin of four strings; when all of a sudden, in the middle of a concert, he finds himself shorthanded. What does he do? Does he give up? No - he makes music with three strings, and the music he plays that night is more beautiful, more sacred, more memorable, than any he has

ever played before - even when his instrument has four strings. **תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך** - perhaps our task in the shaky, fast-changing, bewildering world in which we live is to make music - at first with all that we have, and then, when that is no longer possible, with whatever it is we have left.

## The Ramban writes about the mitzvah to listen to our Torah Sages:

**The Rav of Ramat Elchanan, R' Yitzchok Zilberstein shlit'a**,



records a remarkable story that illustrates how simple trust in our Torah sages (**אמונת כמים**) can bring about salvation, for when they speak, they do so with a "Spirit of G-d."

There were two prominent families of talmidei chachamim from Bnei Brak who concluded a shidduch between their children. Despite the fact that both families were of extremely limited means, the chosson and kallah agreed to sacrifice many of their own wants and would be satisfied with whatever their families could give them. As is the custom in Israel, the parents of both families exuded great effort to put together money to buy an apartment for the young couple. In the end, they were able to scratch together the sum total of $40,000. It wasn't much but it was all they had. R' Zilberstein relates how the parents went to one of the Gedolim in Bnei Brak to ask him where to purchase an apartment for the young couple, explaining that they had only $40,000.

The Rav heard all the details and instructed them to buy an apartment in Bnei Brak. Then, he extended his hand to them,

blessing them with bracha and hatzlacha. The parents were unsure if they had heard correctly. Forty thousand dollars is not enough to buy half an apartment, let alone in the exorbitant real estate market of Bnei Brak! The parents continued to speak to the Rav, clarifying that they wished to buy an apartment, not rent, but the Rav repeatedly told them that they should buy an apartment in Bnei Brak. Although it seemed impossible that they'd succeed in buying an apartment with so little money, both families had very strong emunas chachamim.

They went to all the real-estate agents in town, saying they were looking for an apartment selling for $40,000 - even though it was clear that the cheapest and smallest two-room apartment cost over $110,000. Naturally, the agents did not take them seriously, but nevertheless listed the request. The parents, as well as the chosson and kallah, though, had no doubt in their mind that if the tzaddik told them to purchase in Bnei Brak, they would succeed. Sometime afterward, one of the agents called with great news: he had an apartment whose owner was finally persuaded to sell for exactly $40,000.

"But there's a catch," the agent explained. "The owner is a single older man. He has a spacious, three-room apartment in a great location. He's not selling the whole apartment per se; rather, he is willing to sell two of the rooms to a young couple on condition that he continues living in the third room with them. Also, he insists that the new residents take care of all his needs, including food, laundry, etc. In the event the buyers meet his conditions satisfactorily, they will then inherit the third room after the man passes away, and the entire apartment will be theirs." Quite a deal indeed!

The families discussed the idea and put it before the prospective bride and groom. In the end, they felt that landing this apartment for this price was a sign from Heaven and agreed to all the conditions. That same day, they signed a contract. The wedding was

set for another month and a half. The couple had mixed feelings at first, realizing that they would be burdened with the care of the older single, which would not be easy for them, especially at the beginning of their marriage. However, they saw it as a miracle that Hashem was fulfilling the words of the tzaddik, who had instructed them to buy a home in Bnei Brak, something that had not seemed feasible. They would just have to put up with the added issues.

After they had purchased the apartment, or more correctly, the two out of three rooms of the man's apartment, the parents felt that a weight had been lifted from their shoulders and proceeded with preparations for the wedding. And wouldn't you know, five days before the wedding, the older single man passed away. On the table in his apartment, lay the contract stating that upon his passing, the entire apartment would be bequeathed to the young couple!



**R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l (Likutei Moharan) - מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב ילך וישב לביתו ולא ימיס את לבב אחיו כלבבו** - Moshe Rabbeinu told the people who were going out to wage war, 'Who is the man there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house.'

Rabbi Yosi Haglili said: This refers to one who is afraid because of his sins. The worst thing is when a person dwells on his transgressions and sinks into a depression. When the Yetzer Hara tries to entice a person to sin, it is more interested in the depression following the wrongdoing than the sin itself. The damage done by depression is greater than the damage done by the gravest transgression."

## Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l



In the mitzvah of appointing a Jewish king, the posuk states: **והיה כְּשבתו** - "It will be like he is sitting on his throne," instead of **והיה בְּשבתו** - "It will be when he is sitting on his throne."

**The Gerrer Rebbe** explains this anomaly as follows: The day a king is anointed, he becomes a new person, a royal individual unlike the man he was before, as we see from the Yerushalmi: **מלך וחתן מוחלין לו עוונתיו**. A king must make new edicts, grandiose decisions and novel plans for the future of his nation. He must act with newfound confidence, care and kindness toward his subjects. The posuk is telling us that throughout his entire reign, a Jewish king must continue to act **כשבתו** - the same way he did the first day he was crowned as king. With the same kindness, joy and benevolence to every individual. This is no different than a modern-day king and queen - a chosson and kallah on the day of their wedding. A chosson is **דומה למלך** with his bride/queen at his side.

On this most exhilarating day – **יום חופתם** - their joy and simcha, their chessed and devotion toward one another, should last with them their entire lives. The Navi says: **וארשתיך לי לעולם** - "And I will betroth you to Me forever." This is a metaphor to the engagement of Hashem, the Groom, to His bride, Klal Yisroel. But this is only a reference to the the engagement, the stage before marriage when the kallah continues to live with her parents, and the chosson with his family.

Why does the chosson say, **וארשתיך לי לעולם** - does he want the engagement to last forever? What about the future plans for marriage? The joy and bliss of matrimony?

My machshava here is that the chosson is speaking about this new relationship in life. He blesses the two of them that the simcha, excitement and **התחדשות** that they share today at their engagement, should continue to last after their marriage - and throughout their entire life together. Their lives should be as joyous as one long, happy engagement!

May all of Klal Yisroel merit a life of joy and **התחדשות** as we look to the new year, **הבא עלינו לטוב**.



**A group of mice once fell into a pot of milk and began to drown.** A few of the mice seemed to abandon hope immediately and didn't even struggle. What could they do? The milk was over their heads. But the others began to flail incessantly. There was still a chance for life. And so they started to jump upwards with all their might. With every jump they gained an additional breath or two, but immediately fell back into the milk helpless.

Nevertheless, their natural instinct for survival kicked in and they did what they could, jumping time after time, keeping their heads above the milk, hoping to escape.

In the end, an amazing thing happened. It was precisely because they did not give up and because of their constant movement and non-

stop action to grab a few more moments of life, that they were saved. Because as a result of all their jumping and flailing with their arms and legs, the milk quickly congealed, and a big clump of butter formed along the inside of the pot. The mice all climbed onto the mound of butter, made their way up the walls, and emerged from the pot safely.

Says **R' Yaakov Meir Shechter**, when a person is in distress, even when all hope seems lost, G-d forbid, one should do anything, even acts which bring only momentary relief, rather than fall into despair. Do what you can and never give up! Hashem will deliver you from your troubles in some amazing way that never entered your mind!



**With the outbreak of World War I in 1914**, the famed Mir Yeshiva moved to Poltava, Ukraine for a number of years, and only returned in 1921 to its original building in the Polish town of Mir. The yeshivah blossomed, attracting students not only from Europe, but also from America, South Africa and Australia.

By the time World War II broke out there was hardly a Rosh Yeshivah in all of Europe who had not studied in the Mir. Although this was clearly the golden age of the Mir Yeshivah, world politics had brought tension to all parts of Europe, and the little hamlet of Mir was not spared its own fair share.

Late one night, a group of students from the Mir were returning after a long day at their studies. The yeshivah had no dormitory facilities, so the students boarded with the local townspeople. Small groups of six to eight students banded together in private homes and hired the baalaboste, the wife or widow of a house owner, to look after them.

As the students were walking together down a quiet alleyway, a number of Polish policemen happened upon them. The streets were always empty at this time of night and the policemen became



suspicious of the group of men walking together. Immediately, they shouted for them to halt. But the Jewish students knew better than to entrust their fate to a few drunken Polish officers and started to run to the nearest place of lodging.

Panting heavily, they burst into the house and quickly bolted the door from the inside. They thought they were safe and began to relax after a few moments, until they suddenly heard loud banging on the door. The Polish police had found them, and they had no choice but to open the door.

The policemen came barging in and held their guns aloft at the terrified yeshivah students. "Do you know how close we were to firing on you after you ran off?" shouted the officer in charge. He then demanded to see everyone's papers. Apologetically, the boys produced their identification papers proving that they were not spies but yeshivah students.

All but one bochur had his papers. **R' Shlomo Shimshon Karelitz ZT"L, a nephew of the Chazon Ish**, who was studying in the Mir at the time, did not lodge at this home, but had run together with his friends when the policemen accosted them. Thus, he did not have his papers on him. When the officer in charge surmised that he could at least take one victim with him into custody, he let the other boys go and grabbed Shlomo Shimshon by the arm, marching him out the door.

The officer held him tightly as he headed in the direction of the local station. Young Shlomo Shimshon, thinking quickly, denied being anything other than a student and offered to produce his papers which were located in another lodging just a few houses away. He begged to be allowed to go there with the officer to retrieve them, and thankfully the policeman relented. Together, they walked to his lodging and he showed the officer that his papers were legitimate and in order.

Finally, Shlomo Shimshon was able to breathe a sigh of relief as the officer issued a stern warning and then let him go.

The next morning, the entire Mir Yeshivah was abuzz over the previous night's events, and word reached the ears of the Mashgiach, the saintly **R' Yerucham Levovitz ZT"L**. But when he rose and walked to the podium at the front of the Beis Medrash to deliver his daily Mussar lecture, no one could miss the foreboding look that came across his face. R' Yerucham stood quietly for a few moments before he spoke. He began in a quiet tone which gradually rose in intensity. "I must tell you the truth," he said, "that after hearing about what happened last night, I made up my mind that we must close down the yeshivah! Yes, close it down! I even spoke it over with other members of the hanhala...."

The students were shocked! Close down the yeshivah? Why? What had caused the Mashgiach to feel so strongly? His voice thundering now, R' Yerucham intoned, "How can it be that a group of bochurim allowed one of their own to be escorted - all by himself - by the Polish police? Not one of them thought to go with him? Aside from the great danger that this boy was in, can you imagine the feeling of dread and terror that he was experiencing as he was being led away? He was terrified! How can students who learn Torah allow their friend to feel this way? Where is the derech eretz that Torah students are supposed to have ....?"

**תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך יח:יג**



A chassidish yid from Boro Park hired a man to paint his home. When the non-Jew came by to view the interior, the chasid told him, "I'll pay you well but all I ask is one thing: I want this job to be 100% perfect!" The non-Jew just stared at him for a minute before answering back. "Now I know that you are not a real rabbi!" "What?" the chasid choked out, "What do you mean?"

The man took out his wallet and produced a picture of the **Bobover Rebbe, R' Shloime Halberstam ZT"L**. Looking him straight in the eye, the Italian declared, "I was in Rabbi Halberstam's house to do his painting and you know what the Rabbi told me? He thanked me for my hard work and then asked me NOT to do a perfect job on his home. He said that many years ago you had a Temple and it was G-d's house, and now that Temple is destroyed and the Jews had to leave their Land. He said, 'If G-d still doesn't have a House, then how can my own house be perfect?' So he told me not to make his own house perfect!" "But you want me to make your house very perfect, even though you have no Temple. So you're not a real rabbi!"

We are commanded to be "Tamim" - "Perfect" with Hashem. What does this mean? Only Hashem can be "Perfect"! Rather, it means we should be sincere in our service to Hashem. We must refrain from iniquitous behaviour, like fortune-telling and idol-worship, - when people blindly follow misguided ideals and wind up far from the path of Torah. If we wish to be "Tamim" - we must recognize that only Hashem is perfect, and it is our duty to serve Him in the best way we possibly can.

**וְלֹא יִשָּׁפֵךְ דַּם נָקִי בְּקֶרֶב אַרְצְךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ נַחֲלָה וְהָיָה עָלֶיךָ דָּמִים**
19:10



The Mishna states that the mother of the Kohen Gadol would bring gifts of food and clothing to the accidental killers who were forced to run to the **ערי מקלט** (cities of refuge). She did so in order to dissuade them from praying that her son should die (since the accidental killers are released from the city upon the death of her son). The Gemara infers that if the killers would pray that the Kohen Gadol die, then the Kohen Gadol indeed would be in danger of dying because such a prayer is not considered a **קללת חנם** - a curse uttered in vain which cannot take effect, as the Kohen Gadol does carry some responsibility for the accidental killing, since he should have prayed for the well-being of the people of his generation.

A remarkable incident took place not long ago, which demonstrates the far-reaching vision of our Gedolei Hador. A nineteen-year-old girl was blessed with a relatively easy "parsha" of shidduchim, and after a short while became engaged to a wonderful Ben Torah. The chosson and kallah were excited and began to make preparations for their big day.

All was going well, and a date was chosen, when suddenly, misfortune became their lot. The kallah's father began to feel unwell and after a battery of tests were undertaken, he was given the deadly diagnosis; he had contracted cancer. The father sat his daughter down and explained to her that in this moment of need, there was nobody he needed more than her. Especially since the passing of his wife, her mother, she had seen to his every need and been there to

take care of him every step of the way. Now that he was sick, he would need her that much more. There was no way he would manage if she moved out. He requested that she postpone the day of the wedding - at least for one year - as he underwent treatment.

The young girl was confused and distraught. She spoke to her chosson and asked him what he felt. As a true Ben Torah, his only response was, "Go talk to a Rav and hear what he has to say. Of course, I will honor whatever he tells you."

She came to **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein shlit'a** and presented the shaila. He spent quite a bit of time asking her all sorts of questions until it became clear that her father really relied on her and would be unable to manage if she moved out. The new couple could not move in with her father, nor could the father move in with them, as this was unfair to the groom and bride. Other options were untenable, and it was left for the Rav to decide on postponing the date of the wedding or not. R' Zilberstein thought long and hard. The kallah was all of nineteen-years-old. Waiting for one year was definitely a possibility. And unlike her chosson, she was not obligated in the mitzvah of **פרו ורבו** which could counterbalance her mitzvah of **כיבוד אב ואם**. Thus, if her father expressly asked her to wait, she should have no choice but to follow his directive.

R' Zilberstein was prepared to issue his ruling. Since this was a matter of halacha, though, R' Zilberstein decided to bring the shaila before his renowned brother-in-law, **R' Chaim Kanievsky** for clarification. He explained the entire situation at length and detailed why he believed the ruling must be that the wedding should wait.

R' Chaim listened throughout and nodded occasionally. Then he spoke up. "All your explanations are quite valid. according to strict halacha you are correct. However, based on the Mishna in Makkos, I would rule otherwise. You see, when an accidental killer goes to **ערי מקלט**, the mother of the Kohen Gadol supplies him with food and clothing, so that he does not daven for the death of her son. This is a real,

valid worry for the mother. If a person prays for the death of another, it is something to be concerned about."

R' Chaim looked at his brother-in-law and continued. "The same applies in this case. If the wedding is pushed off for a full year, who is to say that the chosson will not daven that his future father-in-law passes away quickly, so that he can marry his daughter? And if you think this is a stretch of the imagination .... well, Chazal obviously didn't think so since they believed that a desperate man in **ערי מקלט** would daven for the death of a Tzaddik as great as the Kohen Gadol!"

R' Zilberstein hurried to the home of the girl's father. Using the logic that if his daughter got married quickly, both she and her chosson would daven even harder for his imminent recovery, he convinced the man to let her get married.

**The Mahara'l M'Prague, R' Yehudah Loewy ZT"L would say:** **ידינו לא שפכו את הדם הזה** - The Gemara asks: 'Would anyone possibly suspect that the elders of Beis Din committed a murder?'

The Gemara explains that the elders were actually declaring that they were unaware of this person's presence in their city, which is why they did not escort him properly and attend to his needs for the road.

Every individual has an inner need to feel part of a community, to know that he is not only an individual, but an integral part of the Jewish family. By escorting someone even a few steps from our homes we create an attachment between him and us, and this can provide him with the Heavenly protection extended to the nation as a whole. This intense feeling of belonging is something we can provide the guests we host in our homes, and the effort it requires is worth our while."

**There was once a haughty man who would never walk outside without his top hat and cane.**



He would walk down the street of his little town twirling his cane and woe to the person that got in the way of the thick oak-wood staff. He enjoyed showing off his wealth and what better way to call attention to himself than with an ornate walking stick. There was only one time that the man would put his cane down; when he would go into the inner chamber of his **Rebbe, R' Schneur Zalman of Liadi ZT"L**, **the Baal HaTanya**. At least this much he understood: when one walks into the Rebbe's room, he leaves his external "accessories" outside. Even he knew it was disrespectful to enter the Rebbe's room with a cane. Habits die hard, however, and on one occasion, he forgot to leave it outside.

As he stood in front of the Alter Rebbe, R' Schneur Zalman eyed the wooden stick for a few long moments. All was quiet until he said to the discomfited chasid, "You know, a cane like that deserves a silver handle." The chasid walked out of the room, practically dancing on air! Was this not proof that the Rebbe approved of his adornment? A personal recommendation no less! And what more, the Rebbe felt that he should glorify his ornament even more!

He walked out the Baal HaTanya's house and rushed over to the local silversmith. Thrusting the heavy wooden staff in front of him, he demanded a silver overlay for the head of his cane. The silversmith looked at the walking stick and nodded. If this is what the man wants, this is what the man will get. The next day, when the chasid returned to the shop and saw the result, he was not satisfied. "That's all the silver you put on?" he said to the astonished

craftsman. "This won't do. You made it like a normal silver handle. This cane has to be special. The Rebbe himself told me to put it on."

The silversmith added another coat, then another, and then a third, but each time, when his customer returned to inspect it, he was still not satisfied. "Not enough," he insisted, "not when it is the Rebbe himself who said to add the silver." At this point, the silversmith took almost all the silver he had in the shop and attached it to the head of the cane. In fact, it was so thick and so heavy that the cane was no longer practical for use. This time, though, the chasid was ecstatic. "Yes! This is what the Rebbe would want! Thank Heavens, I have fulfilled my Rebbe's clear directive to the maximum - and beyond," he called out to anyone who would listen.

Taking his staff from the shop, he had difficulty walking due to the bulkiness of his creation. On the street, every eye was trained on him and his adjunction - just as he wanted - and with a goofy smile from ear to ear, he made his way home. But he did not progress very far along the country road before he was set upon by three highwaymen, marauding murderers who were intent on taking all of his valuables, especially, of course, the large wooden stick with its massive amount of glittering silver. With weapons aloft, they demanded he hand them the cane and although they promised he would not be hurt, it was clear that all along their plan was to dispose of the evidence, including the victim.

The chasid was terrified, but he also felt empowered with his staff. "You want my cane?" he screamed, "I'll give you my cane!" with the sudden realization that the handsome silver top was also a powerful weapon. There was so much metal on his cane that it truly was dangerous. He quickly reversed it, grasped it with both hands at the bottom, and swung it mightily at the head of the nearest robber. The top of the cane connected solidly with the back of the man's head, and he went down hard, unconscious. He quickly dispatched the second attacker as well. When he wheeled around to face the third

man, he watched in satisfaction as the man sped down the road, looking back a few times in shocked fright.

The next time the chasid arrived in Liadi, he was quickly admitted to a private audience. But before he could tell the story of what had happened, the Baal HaTanya spoke first: "Now you no longer need the cane or the silver head." The chasid was left speechless. He now understood why the Rebbe had told him to beautify his stick. Lowering his head, he left the Rebbe's room with the realization that his cane, his silver top - indeed, all his wealth - was not for him to glorify himself over.

## Torah Gems

**לֹא־תַטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תַכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא־תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יְעַוֵּר עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים וְיסַלֵּף דִּבְרֵי צַדִּיקִם** 16:19



**The Shla'h Hakadosh, R' Yeshaya Halevi Hurwitz ZT"L** writes about the severity of taking bribes: "Our sages warned us very much (**מאד מאד**) about the prohibition of bribery ... the moment one accepts a bribe, he distorts justice and turns over his merits.

The remez to this is in the words **תַטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט** for if one 'turns over' the letters **שֹׁחַד** (bribery), he arrives at **תַטֶּה** (distortion). The letters that follow **ש-ח-ד** are **ת-ט-ה** thus, what follows bribery is distortion of justice."

**In the settlement of Rishon L'Tzion, there lived a non-observant Jew who had emigrated to Israel from Europe after the Second World War.**

Born from parents who were devoutly religious, his observance of mitzvos had slackened from the time he had left his father's home as a young man in Hungary to earn a livelihood. Weak in faith, he did his best to conceal any vestige of Jewishness when the Nazis invaded his country. It did him no good; when the deportation of Jews began, he was herded aboard a train bound for Auschwitz.

After torturous years under the Nazi regime, he survived the war and made his way to the Holy Land. Unfortunately, the Land's spiritual blessings had little influence on him: he had drifted so far that even Yom Kippur was a day like any other to him. On the eve of Yom Kippur 5713 (1952), the man returned home from work as usual. Tired from a full day he lay down to sleep.



That night, his late father appeared to him in a dream wearing a kittel and talis. The father admonished his son to repent this very night, the night of Yom Kippur, for if not his life would be cut short. When the man woke up, he decided that it was no big deal, it was only a dream. He tried to shrug off the whole affair, but this became increasingly difficult as the same dream began to appear to him on seven consecutive nights.

Distant as he was from religious life, the man had heard of the famous **Chazon Ish, R' Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz ZT"L**, and felt that in such a matter of religion, he must consult with a person who understands these matters. He traveled to Bnei Brak to discuss his

dream with the great Chazon Ish. No sooner had the man entered his study then the Chazon Ish declared sternly, "You perform forbidden labour on Shabbos, on Rosh Hashanah and even on Yom Kippur! Your father has no peace in the Upper World. Kores (excision) has been decreed upon you!"

Having spoken, the Chazon Ish rested his head on his arms as if dozing. The man stood before him open-mouthed, dumbfounded by what he had just heard. He had yet to speak one word to the holy man. After a few minutes, the Chazon Ish opened his eyes and said, "In the merit of which great mitzvah that you performed in your youth have you been granted new life? The fact that your father is offering you a chance to save yourself is proof that you must have done something to deserve it. Do you recall any great mitzvah which you performed in your youth?"

The man regained his composure somewhat and collected his thoughts. He replied that he had always behaved properly toward his fellow man and was always charitable towards the poor. "This is not sufficient," responded the Chazon Ish quickly. "Not for this alone will you merit having the Heavenly decree against you be rescinded." Then the man remembered.

He had been about fourteen at the time. A woman informed his father that in a village some distance from theirs, a young Jewish boy lay dead with no one to care for his burial. And so, as a fourteen-year-old lad, he had set out alone on a holy mission. Times were dangerous; the roads were filled with roving bands of plunderers. Under constant fear of death, he had made his way through a forest. His mission proved successful, and he buried the lad by himself.

Hearing this, the Chazon Ish nodded in approval. From that day on, the man became fully observant. In 1961, the man related his story to the author of a sefer called Kiryas Arba and it was included in the work. When this author took ill in the spring of 1977, his family sent a copy of his sefer to the holy **Steipler, R' Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky**

**ZT"L**, along with a request that the Steipler pray for his recovery. Later, the Steipler told a close acquaintance, "There is a story about the Chazon Ish in this sefer that is truly amazing .... an awesome tale, the likes of which one does not hear ....."

**לֹא־תַשְׁחִית אֶת־עֵצָהּ לִנְדֹּחַ עָלָיו גַּרְזֶן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכֵל וְאֹתוֹ לָא תִכְרֹת** 20:19

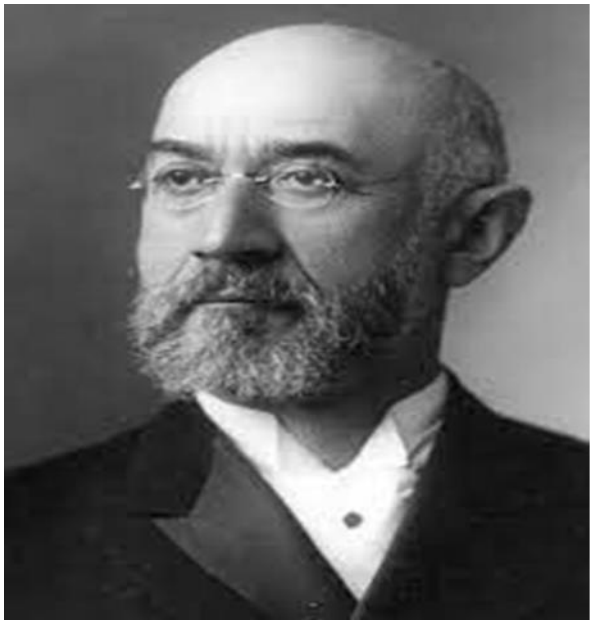
The wife of the **Chazon Ish ZT"L** would sell her husband's seforim out of their home. One time, a customer inadvertently handed her a full Lira for payment, instead of the quarter Lira that was the correct price. She didn't realize the discrepancy until it was too late and took the money. Later, she showed her husband the money she had received and explained what had happened.



The Chazon Ish immediately took the one Lira bill and tore it in half. His wife was surprised at his reaction, but he explained to her, "What I did was not 'Bal Tashchis' at all, for the lesson that the talmidim standing around learned, was worth far greater than the actual amount of the Lira!" Nevertheless, she found it hard to believe that the Chazon Ish would react in this manner, and even enter into a question of violating a Torah prohibition.

She needn't have worried herself, for the moment she left the room, the Chazon Ish took the pieces of the torn bill out of the trash bin and spent quite some time taping the pieces back together, as best as possible. Then, he asked his wife to return the bill to its previous owner.

**Netanya**




At the turn of the twentieth century, two of the wealthiest and most famous men in America, were a pair of Jewish brothers named Nathan and Isidor Straus.

Owners of R.H. Macy's Department Store and founders of the A&S (Abraham & Straus) chain, the brothers were multimillionaires, renowned for their philanthropy and social activism. In 1912, the brothers and their wives were touring Europe, when Nathan impulsively said one day, "Why don't we make a detour and stopover in Palestine?" Israel wasn't the tourist hotspot then that it is today. Its population was ravaged by disease, famine, and poverty; but the two wealthy brothers had a strong sense of solidarity with their less fortunate brethren, and they also wanted to check on the health and welfare centres they had endowed with their millions.

However, after a week spent touring, Isidor Straus had had enough. "How many camels, hovels, and stones can you see? It's time to go," Isidor decreed with edgy impatience in his voice. But Nathan refused to heed his brother's imperious command. It wasn't that he was oblivious to the hardships around him; it was precisely because of them that he wanted to stay. As he absorbed first-hand the vastness of the challenges his fellow Jews were coping with in the Holy Land, he felt the burden of responsibility. "Isidor, we can't

leave now," he protested. "Look how much work has to be done here. Look at the unfortunate people that we have to help. Thank G-d, we have the means to help them. We can't turn our backs on our own people." "So we'll send more money," his brother snapped back. "I just want to get out of here."

But Nathan felt that money simply wasn't enough. He felt that the Jews who lived under such dire circumstances in the Holy Land needed the brothers' very presence among them: their initiative and their leadership. The brothers argued back and forth, and finally Isidor said, "Listen, if you must, stay here. Ida and I are going back to America where we belong."

The very next day, Isidor and his wife returned to Europe, while Nathan and his wife stayed on, traveling the country and contributing huge sums of money for education, health, and social welfare programs to benefit the needy. He also financed the creation of a brand-new city on the shores of the Mediterranean. And since his name in Hebrew is Natan, and he was the city's chief donor, the founders named it after him. They called it .... Natanya.

Meanwhile, back in Europe, Isidor Straus was preparing to sail home to America aboard an ocean liner for which he had also made reservations for his brother, Nathan, and his wife. "You must leave Palestine now!" he cabled his brother in an urgent telegram. "I have made reservations for you and if you don't get here soon .... you will miss the boat!" But Nathan delayed. There was so much work to be done that he refused to leave until the very last possible moment to make the connection.

He hurried to England but by the time he reached London, it was already past April 12 and the liner had already left port in Southampton with Isidor and Ida Straus aboard. Nathan felt disconsolate that he had, as his brother had warned, "missed the boat."



This was no ordinary expedition, and this was no ordinary boat. The cruise that he had forfeited due to his unceasing acts of kindness to his fellow Jew, was the much-ballyhooed maiden voyage of the most famous ship of the century. This was the Titanic.

Nathan Straus, grief-stricken and deeply mourning his brother and sister-in-law could not shake off his sense that he had had a rendezvous with history. The knowledge that he had avoided death permeated his consciousness for the rest of his life, and until his death in 1931, he pursued his philanthropic activities with an intensity that was unrivalled in his time.

Today, Natanya is a scenic resort city of 200,000 residents and headquarters to Israel's thriving diamond trade - one of the most important industries in the country. And in almost every part of the city, there is some small reminder of Nathan Straus' largesse, his humanity, and love for his people. His legacy lives on.

***"The shofar of Elul is not merely a sound blown in the synagogue. It is the cry of the soul itself. A person can live an entire year surrounded by noise and distraction, yet the simple קול שופר breaks through all barriers and reminds him who he truly is and before Whom he stands. Elul is the time when the heart begins to remember." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.***

# From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

**וְלֹא־תָקִים לְךָ מַצֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂנֵא ה' אֱלֹקיךָ** 16:22




**The Bnei Yissaschar, R' Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov ZT"L** remarks that the underlying message of the words **וְלֹא־תָקִים לְךָ מַצֵּבָה** "Do not erect a pillar" is that a person should not be too rigid and inflexible in his ways. The word **מַצֵּבָה** comes from the root "**מצב**" which is the term used for a "situation." As if to say, "Don't make a big **מצב** out every little thing!"

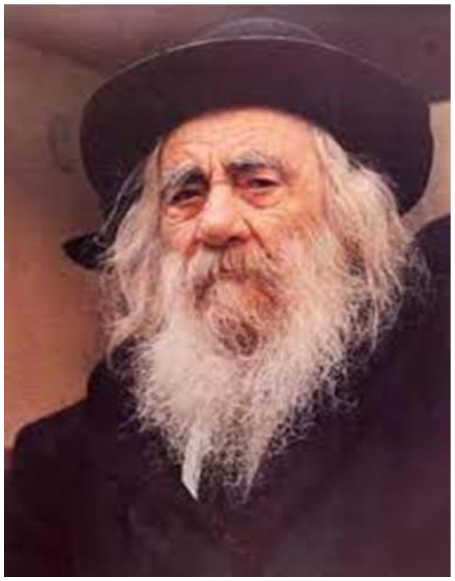
In every situation, one needs to weigh the circumstances carefully before reacting - even if the same situation occurs repeatedly! Because each time is different, and one minor change in external factors can be a reason for a major change in one's behaviour. One should not stubbornly stick to his "**שיטה**" unless every aspect of THIS **מצב** is taken into account. What may be correct today, may be wrong tomorrow - depending on the circumstances!

Be open-minded, be flexible, and always continue learning Torah, in order to truly learn and recognize what is correct and proper in every specific situation.

❖ ***You don't find happiness by looking for it elsewhere - it's already within you.***

❖ ***You have an endless fountain of joy inside you. when you discover the secret, you need nothing else.***

❖ ***There is no experience in life that can compare with the happiness within your own mind. ~ R' Avigdor Miller.***





**A man came to ask the Steipler Gaon, R' Yaakov Yisroel Kanievski ZT"L** for a beracha before taking his daughter to the United States for open heart surgery. When he read the man's petition, the Steipler answered, "Who told you surgery? Who says to operate?" "The doctors say it is necessary," the man answered. The Steipler shook his head. "I am telling you she'll grow up to live a long and healthy life."

The man explained that he hadn't come to ask for advice about the surgery itself, but just to ask for a beracha before he left. "We're leaving tomorrow," he wrote. "What do you mean you're leaving? Who told you to go? Go back home and she'll be healthy anyway."

The confused father did not know what to do, so he went to **R' Elazar M.M. Shach ZT"L** for help. When he heard the story, the Ponevezher rosh yeshivah smiled warmly. "Do you think I understand what he told you? Certainly, she appears to need surgery, but the Steipler was telling you that in Heaven they're saying that your daughter will still be healthy even without an operation. If that's so, then everything is all right, and why should you worry?"

The mitzvah of listening to the words of the Gedolei Hador is not due to the fact they have more experience in worldly matters; on the contrary, they may even have less. But our wise leaders are imbued with an other-worldly knowledge that allows them to see and understand things that ordinary people cannot. What a gift we have to be able to resolve our life problems with men of such deep wisdom.

כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה 20:19

We find an interesting phenomenon: Hashem instituted into the nature of the world, two powerful forces which are diametrically opposed to one another. On the one hand, there is the concept of gravity, which tells us that everything that goes up must come down. Gravity is a force that pulls everything downward so that nothing can stay up in the air for too long. It is gravity which keeps us anchored to this earth for without it, we would never be able to maintain our footing.



On the other hand, nature dictates that all plant life, trees, grass, plants, etc., begin growing from down within the soil of the earth. It then rises upwards toward the sky. In seemingly direct contradiction to the physics of gravity, a tree grows straight up into the air and no force of gravity can bring it down.

Explains **R' Simcha Hakohen Kook**, the same is true regarding human beings. The posuk tells us, "A man is likened to a tree in the field." In what way is a human similar to an inanimate tree?

The answer is that just as a tree goes against the natural force of nature called gravity and instead fights to grow upwards, so too, every Jewish man, woman and child's purpose in this world is to grow in Torah and Yiras Shamayim, in spite of the natural forces of the Yetzer Hara to bring them down!

***"The shofar awakens what words cannot." ~ Rabbi Chaim Friedlander.***

## R' Yechiel Meir of Gustinin ZT"L would say:



"Do you know who is a thief? Not a person who knows how to steal but a person who actually goes out and steals. By the same token, do you know who is a lamdan (a learned Torah scholar)? Not one who merely 'knows' how to learn Torah but one who actually sits and learns Torah!"

## Reliance Written by D Fine

In our parsha we are commanded (18:13) **תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ** 'be complete (tamim) with HaShem, your G-d.' What does this mean and involve? **Rashi** writes that we are not to go looking into what the future will hold – just accept everything with full trust and faith in HaShem; He takes care of us. This explains the connection to the next few psukim, which deplores the use of magic (something often used to predict or find out the future).

However, the **Chofetz Chaim** highlights that it only says that one must fully trust HaShem – it does not extend the same level of trust to fellow humans. This means, that one is not to be naïve in trusting everyone; before relying on someone, make sure they are trustworthy – one cannot merely fully assume so from the outset.

***"שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך — before correcting the world, establish order within yourself." ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.***




**After World War II, Jewry was left bereft with so many orphans, widows and lost souls, searching for any small vestige of their previous existence.** Gedolim, Manhigim and leaders were also in small supply after the terrible years of the Holocaust. The saintly **Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon Rokeach ZT"L**, realized the extent of the loss and attempted to shoulder a major part of Klal Yisroel's pain and need for direction upon his frail shoulders. Having seen first-hand the carnage that was European Jewry, before miraculously escaping himself, he was able to relate and uplift the many survivors who came to him for solace.

The fact that the Belzer Rebbe was recognized as an indisputable leader of the generation, though, did not prevent him from accepting criticism. Quite the opposite; his abiding humility ensured that he rated himself as insignificant!

This fact became evident one evening when he was visited by **R' Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel ZT"L of Kapcyznice** (who had escaped from Vienna to New York), and **R' Avrohom Friedman ZT"L of Sadigura**, in the spring of 1953. The two Rebbes came to pay their

respects to the holy Belzer Rebbe, and in an hour-long, free-ranging conversation they discussed many issues pertaining to World Jewry: Shidduchim, Moshiach, traveling, Yerushalayim, and Eliyohu Hanavi. At one point in the converstaion, the Kapcyznicer Rebbe looked at the gaunt figure of the Belzer Rebbe and gently chided him about what he ate that day.

Upon discovering that it had consisted of nothing more than a glass of coffee and a cube of sugar, he was horrified. Renowned for his kindness and good heart, the Kapcyznicer Rebbe could not accept that the Belzer Rebbe ate so little - yet R' Aharon insisted he just could not eat anymore, he had stomach problems! "But your father used to eat properly," the Kapcyznicer Rebbe pressed him. The Belzer Rebbe waved that aside, "Ah, my father was a malach, an angel. I cannot compare with him!"

Until now the conversation had been good-natured but now it took a serious turn as the Kapcyznicer Rebbe announced solemnly, "Belzer Rebbe! I would like to give you some words of mussar!" At that, the Belzer Rebbe was filled with awe and trembling. He stood up and thrust his hands into his gartel, as he waited expectantly for his guest's words of rebuke.

"I feel I must admonish the Belzer Rebbe for afflicting his body so much! I would suggest he be more generous in his intake of food, for the sake of strengthening his weakened body - and for the sake of the world that needs him so badly!"

The two honoured guests wanted to leave immediately so the Rebbe could have an evening meal, but R' Aharon would not hear of it. At the end of their hour-long conversation, he accompanied them to the front door and waited while they descended the stairs. Only after he completed the Maariv prayers did he consent to partake of his minimal evening repast.

When the Kapcyznicer Rebbe returned to Eretz Yisroel (four years later), he once again came to visit. The Belzer Rebbe greeted him at

the threshold of his home and exclaimed, "Kapcyznicer Rebbe! We are commanded to obey the words of the sages. Since your last visit whenever I'm finished eating, I add an extra spoonful in honour of the mitzvah **לשמוע לדברי חכמים** - To listen to the words of the Sages!"

## Torah Gems לֹא תָסוּר מִן־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־יַגִּידוּ לְךָ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל 17:11



A lady once came to the **Chazon Ish, R' Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz ZT"L**, with her baby son asleep in his carriage. The boy was ill, and she was begging that he bless him with good health. The Chazon Ish sat silently, listening to her pleas without answering. She persisted, crying and pleading repeatedly. This went on for a quarter of an hour.

At last, a man standing nearby went over to her and said, "Please, don't you see that the Rov isn't answering? Why are you continuing like this?" Abruptly, the Chazon Ish turned to the man and scolded, "Who did she come to see, you or me?" Then he turned back to the woman and gave her his blessing.

After she left, the man began to apologize for his behaviour. The Chazon Ish looked at him and explained: "A lady is standing completely immersed in emunas chachamim. Why stop her?"

***"A small אמת in Elul is worth more than great inspirations that do not last." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.***

17:18 וְכָתַב לוֹ אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת עַל־סֵפֶר מִלִּפְנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם



**Rashi** writes that a Jewish king must have two Sifrei Torah in his possession; one that remains in his treasury and one that he takes with him everywhere.

What is the purpose of having two?

**R' Moshe Cordovero ZT"L** (Tomer Devorah) explains that the two Sifrei Torah serve a crucial role. A king leads his people with the spirit of the Torah. Thus, he must be skilled at presenting the Torah in a way that the people can understand and accept it; in the language and in the spirit of the times in which the king and the people live. This is the Torah that the king takes everywhere he goes.

However, there is a second Torah that remains in his treasury. It represents the unchanging aspect of the Torah, which means that the king must always go back and study the Torah. He must make sure that in his daily effort to present the Torah to his subjects, he has not changed it by one iota.

***"In Elul, HaKadosh Baruch Hu comes close to every Jew, even to those who throughout the year felt distant and unworthy. The King Himself opens the gates before the people can even knock. The עבודה of Elul is therefore not despair over the past, but courage — the courage to believe that one can still return and become beloved once again." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.***

# Jewish Education Program - Let Me Give You a Hand!



כִּי־תִשְׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לַעֲשֹׂתָהּ אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וְלָלֶכֶת בִּדְרָכָיו ***(Devarim 19:9)***

The Torah tells us to love Hashem and "walk in His ways all the days".

**The Chofetz Chaim says** we should be very vigilant that every day of our lives includes the holiness of learning Torah, performing mitzvos and "walking in Hashem's ways". The Chofetz Chaim, quoting the *Sifri*, explains that "walking in Hashem's ways" means to copy Hashem's behaviour, such as being kind and compassionate. The Chofetz Chaim explains that the Torah is emphasizing, we must walk in Hashem's ways *all the days*. Every single day we must go out of our way to do someone a favour Since we are following Hashem's example, if we are able to, we should try to do many acts of chesed every day. Typically, when we read about someone special, he is not described as one who learns Torah and does acts of chesed. Rather he is described as one who is involved <u>constantly</u> in learning Torah and doing chesed.

**According to the Tana D'vei Eliyahu**, when the Jews were enslaved in Mitzraim, they searched for a way to be saved from Pharoh's decrees. They decided to do chesed with one another, hoping that Hashem would then do chesed with them and redeem them from persecution. The merit of this chesed had the necessary effect. The Chofetz Chaim adds that this is a lesson for all generations. By doing chesed, we help bring redemption.

Even the smallest act of kindness is a mitzvah and we should run to do it. When giving someone change or even when passing salt to someone, we are fulfilling the mitzvah of doing chesed. A friendly smile and a kind word or even listen to someone unburden their troubles are also forms of chesed

Late one night while learning in shul, **Rabbi Yisroel Salanter** overheard two poor men talking. One asked the other to walk with him to the well because he was afraid to go alone, so late at night. The other poor man, who was half asleep, said no. Immediately, Rav Yisroel interrupted his learning and went to the well to get water for the poor man

In the Kelm yeshiva, after the students washed their hands before eating, they would fill-up the washing cup for the next person.

Once the **Chazon Ish** was approached by a sad woman who asked that he accept money to daven for her. The Chazon Ish accepted the money, gave her a long bracha, and cheered her up. When she left, the Chazon Ish's student questioned why he accepted the money; something he never did. The Chazon Ish explained, "Everyone is required to do chesed in every possible way. In this case, the biggest chesed I could do for this woman was to accept her money."

Many opportunities for chesed present themselves to us every day. If we "open our eyes" to become aware of them, we will see them. Did you ever notice any one of the following: A person in the store trying to reach-up and grab an item from the top shelf; Someone loaded with packages who could use someone to open the door for them; Someone looking for change to give tzedakah or to put into the parking meter; A new person entering your shul and looking for a siddur? These are all opportunities to do an easy chesed.

**Every day we should try to be aware of our surroundings and LOOK for opportunities to do chesed.**

## Protect Yourself From… YOU! by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick



שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ - You shall set up judges and enforcement officers **for yourself** in all your gates . . . (16:18)

From the seemingly redundant inclusion of the words "for yourself" in this verse, the ***Shela*** understands that the Torah is telling us that the Jewish People not only had to set up physical protection around their cities, but that each individual must place personal safeguards upon himself.

Namely, "judges" refers to the decision that one makes, and the "enforcement officers" are the means of enforcing these decisions. Furthermore, the "gates" which need protecting refer to parts of the body that are constantly facing external challenges. Essentially, the *Shela* is telling us something very simple to understand but very difficult to put into practice: the importance of using one's brain to make decisions and then to ensure that these decisions are enforced by strong willpower, and not overcome by one's base desires. Explains the ***Kuzari***, it is this strength of character alone that defines someone as being "devout" — someone even greater than a *tzaddik*!

Someone known to have incredible self-control in the minutia of every movement was **Rav Elyashiv**. In fact, the chief psychologist of the Israel Air Force once saw Rav Elyashiv at a wedding without knowing who he was and could not take his eyes off him. When questioned why he was staring at the 'stranger' who had just walked into the room, he responded, "I have never seen anyone display such self-control in my entire life!"

The moment when Rav Elyashiv's life changed, explained the Rav himself on several occasions, was when he was a young man and the

world-class Chazzan Yossele Rosenblatt was performing in Yerushalayim. Excited to hear the famous cantor, Rav Elyashiv made his way to the concert. But along the way, Rav Elyashiv had a thought: is my going to the concert going to further my relationship with Hashem more than sitting with a Gemara for the next few hours? As difficult as the decision was, Rav Elyashiv knew the answer. He turned around and headed back to the Beis HaMedrash.

Years later, Rav Elyashiv would credit his great success in self-control and Torah to that decision.

Self-control in every action may be far beyond us, but if we at least evaluate whether our decisions are coming from our brain or our instincts, and then try to apply self-control, when necessary, then we will be one step closer to achieving a level as great as any tzaddik.

## The Blessing

During WWI, the Turkish Pasha (governor) visited the city of Tzefas. He was perched on a white steed, accompanied by an entourage of soldiers. He wore a flashy uniform, and a glossy medallion which indicated his high rank, hung from his neck.

When **R' Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri ZT"L** heard of his arrival, he went out to greet him. The Pasha was awed by the appearance of the "**סבא קדישא**" - "Holy Grandfather" and asked him for a blessing. R' Shlomo Eliezer replied, "Only the humble can receive blessings. I will bless you after you come down from your horse." Amazingly, the Pasha got off his horse and lowered his head to receive the blessing. "May Almighty G-d help you in your efforts to see to the needs of the oppressed Jewish nation." The Pasha was very impressed by R' Shlomo Eliezer and, as a result of that encounter, he made sure that the residents of Tzefas had sufficient food and water.

שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ

We have been instructed to "appoint judges for yourselves in all of your gates" indicating that there should be a court in every city . Why then does the verse mention the somewhat misleading "gates" (if the city has more than one "gate") rather than cities? Furthermore, the verse seems to imply that properly judging the nation is contingent upon having courts in every city – but why should this be the case?



One day a man complained to the Rabbi of the community of a certain wrong that his neighbour had done to him. The Rabbi heard the congregant's story and said to him, "You are right." Soon the man's neighbour came in and made a counter complaint to the Rabbi, stating his side of the story. When he concluded, the Rabbi said to him: "You are right."

After the man left, the Rabbi's wife, who had heard the proceedings, could not restrain herself any longer, and exclaimed with astonishment, "How in the world can they both be right? One of them surely must be wrong!"

And so, the Rabbi turned to her and replied, "Yes, yes: you are also right!"

Perhaps "all your gates" teaches us to listen carefully to all sides before reaching a firm conclusion. Indeed, the phrase "bechol sha'arecha" can also be translated as 'all of your evaluations'. To reach a correct conclusion, all sides must first be heard and properly evaluated. Until then, everyone must be right and not left out.

## Shaking ourselves off from the dust by D Fine



This week's haftara includes the line in 'lecha dodi' **הִתְנַעֲרִי מֵעָפָר קוּמִי** – shake yourselves off and get up from the dust.

**The Vilna Ga'on** explains that the explanation is not 'get up and shake the dust from yourselves,' but rather 'get up from the dust that you are.' The idea is that at the generation when Moshiach comes, we will have the spiritual level of mere dust; confused priorities, sins, etc. It is from that level which we will have to somehow rise up.

## Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter




16:18 – **שפטים - בעל הטורים** There are crowns above and below the letter **פ** in this word. This indicates that a judge should feel as if a sword were hanging above him, and Gehinom were open beneath him.

**שפטים ושטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך– של"ה**

One's openings which provide senses for the body are called "**שערים**" – "gates" of the body – like the mouth and the ears. By all of these "gates," one must retain judges and officers to ensure that he follows the Rotzon Hashem.

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה וְיָרַשְׁתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ Justice, only justice shall you pursue, that you may live, and inherit the land which Hashem your G-d gives you. {16:20}

**The Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk** once said that every Jew could claim his share in the World to Come if only he answered the questions put to him by the Heavenly Court properly. When his disciples asked him to explain, he said: "When they ask me: "Elimelech, did you study as much as you should have?", I will reply: "No." "Elimelech, did you pray as fervently as you could have?" Again the answer will be "No." "Did you serve Hashem as well as you could have?" Once again, I shall answer "No". However, they will then be forced to admit me to Paradise, because I will have been honest enough to see my failures and to tell the truth!"

From this episode we can see the truth of the Rebbe Reb Elimelechs' service and devotion to Hashem.

Similarly we find a saying from The Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensks' brother, **Reb Zesha of Anipoli**, who said when he comes to Shomayim they will not ask of him why he was not as great as earlier generations, but they will ask him whether he was Reb Zesha!

After the passing of his Rebbe **the Chofetz Chaim**, **Reb Elchonon Wasserman HY"D**, inherited the mantle of being Daas Torah for his generation. He would defend Torah against attack from the outside and mercilessly fought those seeking to destroy it from within. To this effort Reb Elchonon felt the need to keep up with the goings on in the world and would read the newspaper daily. It was placed on

his shtender and each morning he would spend three minutes going through it and digesting it with his incisive mind.

When asked why he would read the newspaper on his Shtender out of all places, he said, if I must read the paper then it is because it is a mitzva and I can read in right here on my Shtender. If there is an issue with reading the paper then I cannot even do it behind closed doors.

## Practice What You Preach by Adam Lieberman aish.com - A Life Lesson

In this week's sedra, Moshe instructs the Yidden on additional commandments they need to observe. He tells them that when they appoint a king, the king:

**וְכָתַב לוֹ אֶת־ מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת... וְהָיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּיו**

*"...shall write for himself two copies of this Torah ... it shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life."* ( 17: 18-19)




Hashem wants the king to have a Torah - with all its commandments - in his personal possession at all times. Why would a king, the very person in charge of telling others what to do, have to do this?

It is because all too often we'll see people who are in charge decide - whether consciously or not - to have one set of rules for themselves and a completely different set of rules for everyone else.

Why is it that people "in charge" so often believe that one set of rules should apply to them and another set to everyone else? The

reason is when you're the one barking out orders, it's very easy to forget that you too have a boss to answer to - one named G-d.

This is precisely the reason Hashem wants every king not only to possess two Torah scrolls, but actually to keep one with him at all times. Every place a king goes (except in unclean places) the Torah goes with him as well. Clearly, there are many perks with being a king, and a king is certainly entitled to all of them. But his underlying behaviour must be to abide by G-d's rules, not his own.

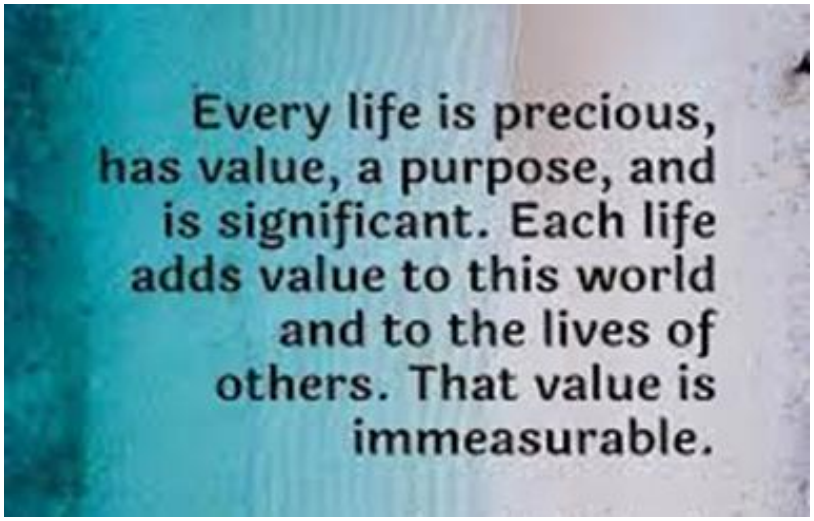
The powerful message is very clear. There cannot be one set of rules for a leader and another for his followers. Hashem tells the Jewish people that kings and their followers must all live by the same rules. We see this happening in our own lives all the time. Parents instruct their children never to lie, but when the same child answers the telephone, the parent may quietly whisper, "Tell him I'm not home." This is the exact behaviour that Hashem wants us to avoid at all costs.

And in everyday situations, sound advice you readily give to others you should also start taking for yourself. Practice what you preach. Live by the same words you give to friends, family, and co-workers, and don't feel you're above any of it. This will force you to grow in ways you've never imagined, and that's exactly what Hashem had in mind.

## Every Life is Precious by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

A murder victim is found in a field out in the open country between two cities. There are no witnesses and no clues to the identity of his assailant. The Torah demands an exact measurement to determine the closest city. The elders of that city have to declare, "We were not derelict in our responsibilities to this traveller. Our hands did not spill this innocent blood." Then they go through a process of atonement called the *eglah arufah*, the decapitated calf.

These laws seem to be incongruously wedged in between two chapters that talk about going out to war. What is it doing there?




**Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman**, my *Rosh Yeshivah*, explains that the Torah is teaching us a lesson. In times of war, life becomes incredibly cheap. People are dying left and right, men, women, children, soldiers, civilians. Life somehow loses its value.

Therefore, right in the middle of the discussion of war, the Torah interrupts to present the laws of *eglah arufah*, laws that underscore the extreme preciousness of each individual life. An entire city must bring atonement for the loss of one unidentified person who may or may not have passed through unnoticed.

**The *Shemen Hatov*** suggests that this may be why Yaakov learned the laws of *eglah arufah* with Yosef on their last day together. Perhaps Yaakov's soul felt intuitively that Yosef would become the leader of a huge and powerful nation, that he would have the power of life and death over millions and millions of people. Therefore, it was important to teach him about *eglah arufah* to impress on him the importance of every single human life.

**Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**, the *rav* of Brisk, once called a special meeting in the *shul*. "My dear friends, we have a serious problem. The Czar's police have arrested a young Jewish boy."

"What did he do?" asked a congregant.

"He burned the Czar in effigy."

The man slapped his forehead in frustration.

"Regardless of what he has done," Rav Chaim continued, "the boy is in danger. We must get him out immediately. It is a question of money. Just money."

"How much money?"

Rav Chaim mentioned the sum. It was an exorbitant amount, and people gasped audibly.

"We are faced with a great *mitzvah*," said Rav Chaim. "This is true *pidyon shevuyim*, ransoming captives."

"Who is the boy?" one man wanted to know. "Is he a *yeshivah* boy?"

"No," said Rav Chaim.

"Is he a member of our *shul*? Is he someone we know?"

"No."

"Is he religious?"

"I'm afraid not. At least not yet."

One of the men threw up his hands in frustration. "How will we raise money for a boy like that? And such a large sum!"

"I don't know," Reb Chaim said, "but somehow it must be done. I am not coming to *shul* on Yom Kippur until the money is collected."

Time passed, and only a small amount of money was raised.

Yom Kippur came. It was time for *Kol Nidrei*, and Rav Chaim still had not come to *shul*. The elders of the community went to his house.

"I told you," he said. "I am not coming until you raise the money. It doesn't matter if the boy is religious or not. A Jewish soul is a Jewish soul!"

The community raised the money to ransom the boy.

***Every life is precious.***



## The Yetzer Hara



The greatest battle of all is the battle against the yetzer hara. If one isn't afraid, and trusts that he'll succeed, he will win the battle. But if he's afraid, he will fail. The sitra achara and the yetzer hara are called **כלבין דחציפין** - chutzpadig dogs. Why?

**Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter shlita** explained it as follows: It is well known that when one is around a dog, he is advised to walk right pass it, without showing any fear. If he will run from the dog, and show that he is afraid, the dog is likely to run after him, and perhaps even bite him.

The same is with the sitra achara and the yetzer hara. When they sense that you are afraid of them, they attack, and incite to sin. But when you display an air of confidence, they are afraid of you.

**Reb Mendel Futerfas zt'l** told a legend of how Czar Nicolai's sr'y army once won a war, without even a single gunshot: Czar Nicolai's soldiers would fight by day, and drink at night. One soldier drank too much, and when the brigade was ready to move on, they weren't able to awaken him. They left him there and travelled on to the front.

When the soldier finally awoke, he knew that he had to hurry to catch up to his brigade. But first, he wanted to eat. He was hungry. He went to a Jewish home. It was Friday night, and he found cholent. He filled a plate with boiling hot cholent and mounted the horse. The hot cholent burned the horse's neck, and the horse began running as though its life depended on it. It didn't take long before he caught up to his brigade, but the horse didn't stop. It continued racing towards the front.

The enemy soldiers saw the lone soldier rushing towards them. They assumed that he was carrying powerful weaponry, or he would be afraid to come to their camp alone, and they fled in fear. That is how they won the war without a single gunshot.

Reb Mendel taught from this legend that when we show confidence, the enemy is afraid. Similarly, when we approach the yetzer hara, with confidence that we will win the battle, we will.

As the **Rebbe of Kotzk zt'l** said, the yetzer hara is compared to a paper lion. It looks frightening, but it's an illusion. Try ripping him apart — by passing the tests — and you will see how easy he tears.

## Rabbi Parkoff's Chizuk Letter

This parsha is an excellent introduction to Elul. It is now only a few weeks until Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment. In the olden days, says **Rav Yisroel Salanter** (Ohr Yisroel 14), people would tremble at the mere word Elul. A reminder that Yom HaDin loomed in the near future was enough of a jolt to scare people.




**Rav Chaim Walkin** once spoke about his mother who grew up in the very home of the **Chofetz Chaim zt'l**. She told him: "By us in the village, they used to say that in Elul, even the fish in the water trembled!" The ambience of Elul was felt not only in the yeshiva itself, but it enveloped the entire village of Radin!

**R' Mordechai Mann zt"l** explained it thus: In the nature of things, a person views everything in relationship to the particular aspect

which interests him. When a tailor sees a person, he immediately notices what clothes he is wearing; a shoemaker looks at a person's shoes and so on. Elul permeates the very being of every single person to the degree that when one sees fish swimming in the river, he cannot help asking himself: Why are they swimming so frantically? It must be that they are trembling from the fact of its being Elul.

## Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings -Tefillah



The Tur (581) writes, "Some begin to say selichos on Rosh Chodesh Elul… Another custom is to say selichos during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah…" The Tur concludes, **כל המוסיף לבקש רחמים זכות הוא לו** "The more one prays for rachamim it will be to his credit." Therefore, it is worthwhile to spend time during Elul davening. One can say Selichos, Tehillim, invest more energy in the standard tefillos, but the main thing is to be occupied in tefillah, because this will help us in the upcoming judgment.

Shulchan Aruch (581) states, "Starting from Rosh Chodesh Elul, there is a custom (1) to awaken early in the morning (2) to say Selichos…" Notice the two points are stated here: To rise early, and to say Selichos. The Rema however writes, "This isn't the Ashkanazic custom."

**Rav Shmuel Wosner zt'l** explains that it isn't the Ashkanazic custom to say Selichos from Rosh Chodesh Elul, however, it is the Ashkenazic custom to rise early on these days. Even those who don't

say Selichos from Rosh Chodesh Elul, it is good for them to rise early to say Tehillim or to study Torah, and in this way prepare for the new year.

## Find Good in Others



A method that will help us get a favourable judgement on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is to judge our fellow man positively, because then Hashem will judge us favourably as well.

**The Kedushas Levi** writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu judges the Jewish nation on the day of the great judgment with compassion and kindness. But we, below, must arouse these attributes above. How can we arouse the attribute of chessed [in heaven]? When from below, we…judge every Yid favourably, it will arouse that attribute [in heaven]…and all Yidden will be judged favourably."

The Kedushas Levi says that this lesson is alluded to in the words **שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך**, the judgment Above was given into our hands, because if we will judge people favourably, Hashem will judge us favourably too. The Torah therefore urges us to judge everyone favourably, and you will be judged favourably on Rosh Hashanah.

Get into the practice of seeing the good in others. We should be impressed, and even awed, by the yiras shamayim, middos tovos, idealism, Torah knowledge, etc. that we see by our fellow man, and we shouldn't see the bad at all. (If we do see something bad, we should find excuses for him. Such as, "It isn't really his fault. He

has a yetzer hara which is hard for him to overcome. And anyway, his good far exceeds his bad, etc.") By following this approach, Heaven will also judge us favourably along with the entire Jewish nation and inscribe us all for a good year.

## Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

**וּמִי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אֵרַשׂ אִשָּׁה וְלֹא לְקָחָהּ יֵלֵךְ וְיָשָׁב לְבֵיתוֹ פֶּן־יָמוּת בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְאִישׁ אַחֵר יִקָּחֶנָּה** ***"Who is the man who has betrothed a maiden, but did not marry her? Let him go and return to his home, lest he die in battle and another man take her."*** (Devarim 20:7)

When the Jewish People went to war, there was a vetting process to weed out soldiers who were more likely to desert. One example was a fellow who had become engaged to a girl but had not brought her into his home. The fear was that he might think of running back to his home and others might follow.



**R' Moshe Meir Weiss, Shlit"a**, suggests another approach. He says that the fear is not that the man might run away because the thought that someone else will take his bride is too painful. This is a man prepared to die for his country. Rather, the fear is that he will be killed in battle, but his dying moments will be preoccupied with thoughts of the bride he never got to marry. Instead of focusing on Teshuva and confessing his sins before G-d, so he can return his soul in purity, he will be focused on regrets of missing out in the physical world.

The Gemara says that the worst death is dying of thirst. Rabbi Weiss suggests that it's the same reason. Instead of preparing to meet his Maker, the person's final moments will be focused on wishing for a drink of water. Those moments are too precious to waste on physical things.

Every year, we face that same challenge. As we enter Elul, we are in the final stages of our year. We must prepare to meet our Maker on Rosh HaShana when He will judge us all. What a pity it would be to spend the time worrying about some physical pleasure we feel we are lacking instead of working on repentance and spiritual reflection! Therefore we are taught that one who is focused on things he wants for himself will never win the battle against the enemy, especially our eternal enemy, the Evil Inclination. Instead, one must feel that whatever G-d has given him is all he was ever supposed to have and he lacks for nothing. Then he will be able to fight a valiant battle and stand victorious on Rosh HaShana.

## Emunas Chachomim - Rabbi Jonathan Rietti



Our parsha tells us to heed the words of the sages and not to veer to the right nor to the left. Even if they tell you that your right hand is your left, you are to listen to them. The reason this can be so is that they are facing you. Your right hand is indeed on their left side. In other words, though it may seem they are wrong, you must realize they have a different perspective than you.

Rabbi Jonathan Rietti, Shlit"a, gives a beautiful analogy to explain the concept of Emunas Chachomim, faith in the sages. He relates that as a boy in England, he used to visit estates that featured hedge mazes, a popular pastime in that country. These tall bushes were cultivated and trimmed into a labyrinth of paths. Some were dead ends, while others led out of the maze.

The ultimate goal was to make it to the centre of the hedge maze. In that place, there was a raised platform from where one could look around and see all the paths and where they led. They would then have the privilege of telling other maze-goers whether they were on a path that would lead them to success, or simply to a dead end.

Our Chachomim, he explains, are given a heightened level of insight that allows them to see things the rest of us can't. This Divine inspiration enables them to tell us whether we're going down the right road or not.

Just as one wouldn't question the directions of the person in the maze who was on the platform, but would take their advice because it was clear they could see something the others still in the maze could not, so too must we realize that our Rabbis and teachers of Torah, who really have that special awareness, should be followed and trusted to take us safely through the labyrinth of life.

## Some of the Benefits of Emuna

"Among the benefits of trust in G-d in this world are the following: a heart at rest, free of worldly cares; a tranquil spirit, undisturbed and untroubled by lack of bodily gratification; a sense of calm, security and peace. As it says, 'Blessed is the man who trusts in G-d; G-d will be his refuge. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream.(Yirmeyahu 17:7-8)" ~ **Chovos Halevovos**

**Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid***

This story takes place in deepest Russia, where **Rav Moishe Feinstein Z'tl** was the rav of the city in Luban, Belarus. In this city, there was a *malshin* – an informer. Someone that went out of his way to go to the authorities at the expense of other Yidden. He was a Jew and was always informing them about what the Yidden were up to, accusing them of all sorts of things. People were wary and scared of him. He caused tremendous pain for the whole Jewish community.

At one point, as time went on, since everyone is destined to leave this temporary world at some time, the life of this informer came to an end, and he returned his soul to his maker.

On the last day of his life, he asked the Chevra Kadisha to come to him, so that he could make one last important request before he died.



They were concerned about what he would say. However, he told them, that he was aware of all the *aveiros* and all the nasty and despicable things that he had caused for the Jews of the city, and all the terrible sins that he had committed throughout his life. In his desire to attempt to make amends and do teshuva, he asked them to please bury him in the ground in a fashion similar to that of a donkey, with his legs positioned in a vertical position. This will be a display of my shame and disgrace.

The Chevra were very moved by this apparently sincere request. They gave him their word and signed a document that they would acquiesce to his last dying wish.

After the informer died, Reb Moishe found out about the unusual request. This manner would have been against halacha and forbidden. Reb Moishe would not allow this denigrating manner of burial to be carried out to another Jew under any circumstances.

The Chevra accepted his ruling and buried the informer in the normal manner.



The next morning, the secret police showed up, and they demanded that the body be exhumed right away, so that they could see in which way the body was buried.

The Chevra were reluctant to carry out this request, as it is against he halacha, but the police had a warrant and demanded that he be dug up. They opened up the plot and were surprised to see that he had been buried in the normal human fashion. As the police left angrily, the Chevra and the whole city realised that this informer had one last trick from the grave to cause the Jews trouble.

But he did not succeed in his last dastardly mission. Why? Because Reb Moishe paskened no.

In this week's sedra, it says in the posuk **לֹא תָסוּר מִן־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־יַגִּידוּ לְךָ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל** "You shall not divert from the word they tell you, either right or left." 17:11. Rashi says **אפילו אומר לך על ימין שהוא שמאל ועל שמאל שהוא ימין, וכל שכן שאומר לך על ימין ימין ועל שמאל שמאל**

***-Even if this judge tells you that right is left, and that left is right. How much more so, if he tells you that right is right, and left is left!- [Sifrei]***

Our gedolim are daas Torah who have a clarity of vision and understanding that we don't always comprehend. We may sometimes

question their rulings, thinking that maybe they have archaic views and are out of touch with the real modern world. Maybe they don't understand the challenges that we are going through.

The Torah understood all this and maintains that we should stand by the decisions and rulings of our gedolim without question or falter, **לֹא תָסוּר מִן הַדָּבָר**. They have special insights, understanding and are daas Torah.

***Have a wonderful Shabbos!***

## Tefillah

Elul is a month for tefillah, and it's very good to say Tehillim this month. **Reb Meir Shapiro zt'l** requested that in addition to the standard custom of reciting ten chapters of Tehillim each day of Elul, the students of his yeshiva, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, should also say chapter **קי"ט** each day of Elul, because it contains requests for Torah, for ruchniyos, to be close to Hashem, and these matters are the ultimate purpose of Elul.



**Reb Chaim Palagi** writes that there are four days that are especially good to say Tehillim. They are: Shabbos, Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh, and the greatest of them all is Elul. He writes that **אשרי** is roshei teivos for: **אַלול-שַבת-רֹאש חדש-יֹום טוב**. And as Chazal say, "Every portion of Tehillim which Dovid [especially] loved starts and ends with **אשרי**."

Most people have the custom to say **לדוד ה' אורי** (chapter **כ"ז**) every day of Elul. The Siddur Reb Shabsi writes, "Whoever says **לדוד ה' אורי** from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Simchas Torah, evenings and mornings, every day, is guaranteed that he will live his full lifespan, with goodness and pleasure. Even if a bad decree is written on him, it will be annulled, and all kitrugim (adversary angels and complaints against him) will be removed… He will be acquitted in the judgment… Because on Rosh Chodesh Elul, the thirteen attributes of compassion open up and are revealed below… and by saying this chapter, we remove the kitrugim, that the kitrugim shouldn't be permitted to judge us.

## Stories Of Our Gedolim



Life in the Russian army was difficult for the young bochur. He was surrounded by anti Semitic soldiers, forced to work on Shabbos, and was denied learning in his beloved yeshiva. He accepted his fate, but was determined to keep the mitzvos to the best of his ability. In keeping with this undertaking, the bochur, required to work on Shabbos, decided to do the minimal amount required. One time, when posted as a guard on a very frigid Friday night, the bochur chose to remain without a coat rather than remove the one that had been hanging on a tree (which was left for him by the previous officer that was posted at that station) as this would have necessitated his desecrating the holy Shabbos.

On another occasion, on Shabbos, the bochur was required to hit a certain target with his rifle. He calculated that doing this in an indirect manner (with a *shinuy*) would involve the least chillul

Shabbos. A fellow yid argued that perhaps this would necessitate firing the rifle more than once, whereas shooting properly without a *shinuy* would hit on the first shot and therefore would be preferable. The bochur went with his original calculation and shocked his fellow soldiers when he hit the target, dead-centre, on his first shot, while holding the rifle upside down!



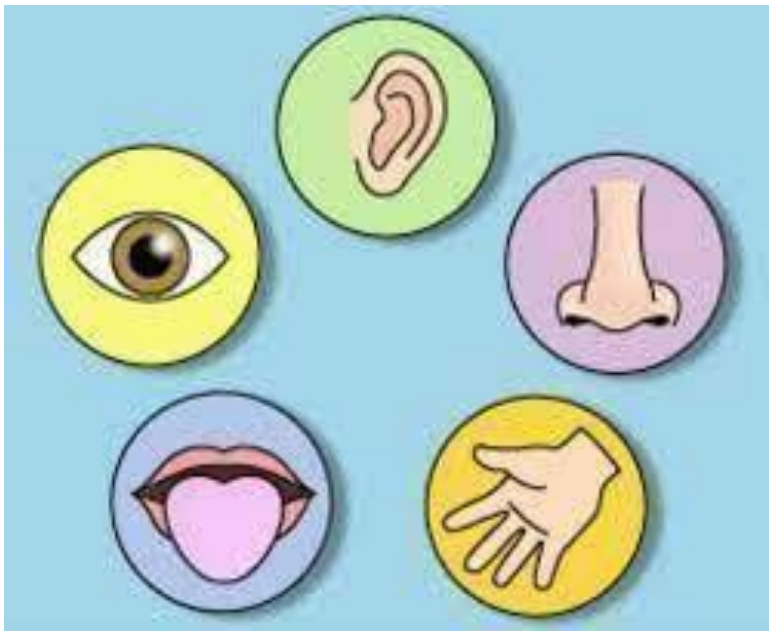

Another time the bochur was punished severely when refusing to perform a forbidden activity on Shabbos. The price he paid was steep indeed, as he was made to run through 2 lines of soldiers on either side while being beaten throughout.(running the gauntlet) When he reached the end of the line he collapsed, and was filled with incredible happiness at having had the zchus of being beaten to preserve the sanctity of Shabbos.

The bochur was eventually released from army service after experiencing incredible siyata dishmaya in making a tremendous Kiddush Hashem. He went on to become the great **Steipler Gaon, Rav Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky zt"l** who lit up the world with his Torah and continued to sanctify Hashem's name throughout his life.

## Chabad.org

**"שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך" *"Judges and officers you shall appoint for you in all your cities."* (16:18)**

The word *"lecha"* — "for you" — appears to be superfluous.



In a person's face there are seven openings: two ears, two eyes, two nostrils and a mouth. The Torah is indicating that besides judges for all cities, you should also appoint judges *"lecha"* — "for yourself" — i.e. you should judge carefully and police whatever you see with your eyes, hear with your ears, smell with your nostrils, and speak with your mouth.

Since *Parshat Shoftim* is always read around the beginning of the month of *Elul*, when *teshuvah* is primary, the Torah calls to our attention with the word *"lecha,"* that every person should carefully judge and police his own body especially during this month, and rectify any wrongdoing committed through these senses. (**של"ה**)

***"The greatest tragedy is not that a Jew sins; the greatest tragedy is that he grows accustomed to remaining where he is. Elul comes to uproot habit. The sound of the shofar says: do not sleep through your life. Rise above routine, above smallness, above yesterday's version of yourself." ~ Rabbi Yisrael Salanter.***

## Chabad.org



**לא תקח שחד כי השחד יעור עיני חכמים - "*You shall not take a bribe, for the bribe will blind the eyes of the wise.*" (16:19)**

Why is the Hebrew word for bribery "shochad" (**שחד**)?

According to the Gemara (Ketubot 105b), the etymology of the word "shochad" (**שחד**) is "chad" (**חד**) — "one." Rashi explains that when a judge accepts a bribe from a litigant he becomes "one" with him and therefore can no longer judge objectively the argument of the other litigant.

Alternatively, according to the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 10a), when a judge rules a case honestly he becomes a partner with Hashem in the creation of heaven and earth. Since the judge who accepts bribery cannot offer a just decision, G-d now remains alone, without a partner. (**פון אונזער אלטען אוצר**)

## Chabad.org

**"והיה כשבתו על כסא ממלכתו" *"It shall be that he sits on the throne of his kingdom."* (17:18)**

Why does the *pasuk* emphasize "*kisei mamlachto*" — "throne of his kingdom"? It should have just said "*vehaya kesheyimloch*" — "it shall be when he reigns."

The Torah forbids a king to amass too much "*kesef*" (**כסף**) — "silver" — for himself, to have too many "*susim*" (**סוסים**) — "horses" — and

to have too many "*nashim*" (**נשים**) — "wives." These things can corrupt him and distract him from his responsibilities.

The first letters of the words "*kesef*" — (**כֶסֶף**) "*susim*" (**סוּסִים**) and "*ishah*" (**אִשָּׁה**) spell the word "*kisei*" (**כסא**) — "throne."

If he wants to reign securely, he should always remember that "*kisei mamlachto*" — the success of his kingdom depends on observing the Torah's instruction regarding the three things for which "*kisei*" is an acronym. (**כלי יקר**)

## Chabad.org

**"לא תקח שחד...ויסלף דברי צדיקם" *"You shall not take a bribe...[for the bribe] perverts the words of the righteous."* (16:19)**




If he accepted a bribe, why is he called "*tzaddik*" — "righteous"?

A Din-Torah once took place before **Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apta**.

While the Din-Torah was in progress, one of the parties felt that he was going to lose, so he asked permission to leave the room for a short while. In the hallway outside the Beit Din room, he noticed the Rabbi's coat and placed a sum of money in the pocket.The *Din-Torah* resumed, and the Rabbi, who up until now was beginning to formulate a certain opinion, suddenly began to change his line of thought. The Rabbi, puzzled as to why his way of thinking was suddenly changing, told the two parties that he would like to call a recess and have more time to think over the matter.

In the interim he prayed to Hashem to be blessed with the proper wisdom to see the truth. A few days later, as he was putting on his coat, he put his hand in his pocket and suddenly felt a bundle of money. The Rabbi exclaimed, "Now I understand what happened to me. A bribe is so powerful that even though it was given to me without my knowledge it had an effect on my thinking."

Thus the Torah is telling us that even though the judge may indeed be a *tzaddik* and would not accept a bribe, a bribe given to him, even without his knowledge, may pervert his judgment. (**מעינה של תורה**)

## Chabad.org

***לא תטע לך אשרה "You shall not plant for yourself an idolatrous tree."* (16:21)** From the juxtaposition of this prohibition and the law of appointing judges, the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 7b) derives that appointing an unsuitable judge is comparable to planting "an idolatrous tree."



Why is an unsuitable judge compared to an idolatrous tree?

It is not difficult to recognize an idol when it is a carved or chiselled image, but an idolatrous tree looks the same as all other trees.

An improper judge is compared to an idolatrous tree because the outer appearance of every judge is alike: A beard and *peiyot*, and Rabbinic garb, but the corrupt ones are rotten inside. (**ר' חיים ז"ל סאלאוויטשיק**)

## Chabad.org

An honest judge is one who has a mind of his own. He does not permit people to influence him, nor does he waiver one iota from Torah teaching. An improper judge is one who permits himself to be easily influenced by those around him. He is compared to a tree since he bends and sways to all sides in the wind of public opinion, trying to satisfy the group with the most potential for advancing his interests. (**אוצר החיים**)

## Chabad.org

**"ואתה תבער הדם הנקי מקרבך"** ***"And you shall remove the innocent blood from your midst."*** **(21:9)**

How does the *eglah arufah* ritual remove the innocent blood if the perpetrator of the crime is still at large?

According to a *Midrash,* a few days after the calf would be killed and buried, a large worm would emerge from it and attach itself to the killer's garment. It would be impossible for the killer to detach it. Or a trail of worms would go from the site of the buried calf to the home of the murderer. This would attract attention and ultimately the murderer would have no other choice but to come before *Beit Din* and confess his crime.

The final letters of the words **ואתה תבער הדם הנקי** spell the word **רימה** — worm. The *eglah arufah* ritual will summon a worm, which shall help bring the murderer to justice and thus "remove the innocent blood from your midst." (**נחל קדומים – ילקוט מעם לועז**)

***"The gates of תשובה are never locked; Elul simply reminds us where they are." ~ Rabbi Kook.***

## Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

**תמים תהיה עם ה' אלוקיך (יח:יג)** (18:13)




The custom of the *Ashkenazim* is to say *selichos* at least four days before Rosh HaShanah. The reason for this is mentioned in the *Mishnah Berurah* (**סימן תקפ"א ס"ק ו**), that we find regarding animals which are set aside as *korbanos*, and require examination for a **מום** - a blemish, four days prior to being offered as a *korban*. We, who are compared to *korbanos* going to the Day of Judgement, require this amount of time as well to inspect ourselves for imperfections in our character.

**Rabbeinu Ephraim** explains that the *gematria* -of the words **תהיה תמים** is 910, which is also the exact *gematria* of the word **תשרי** . This hints to us that as the month of Tishrei approaches, we need to be **תמים** , complete and free from any blemish before Hashem. A person is only judged according to his actions at that time, as it says in *Parashas Bereishis* (21:17), **באשר הוא שם** , *…as he is there.*

***"ושפטו את העם משפט צדק — the command to appoint judges is not only for the courts of the nation; every person must appoint judges over himself. Before speaking, before acting, before desiring, he must ask honestly: is this truth or merely convenience? The חודש of Elul is the season of inner judgment, when a man becomes both the judge and the judged." ~ Sfas Emes.***

## *Parshah* Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*



The *parshah* discusses *Bnei Yisroel's* preparation for war. One of the preparatory points is the officers' announcement to those who do *not* go out to war. They are: one who has built a new house, one who planted a vineyard and hasn't redeemed it, one who has gotten engaged to a woman and not yet married her, and one who is fearful and weak-hearted. The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 49a) explains regarding the fourth category that it is not referring to one who fears the impending war, but one who is fearful because of his sins. If so, wouldn't it be more appropriate for the *pasuk* to say: one who has sinned, as opposed to one who is fearful?

**R' Mordechai Yehuda Leib Zaks, *zt"l***, explained, that we are only discussing those who are scared that they will lose their lives in war because of their sins. However, there are those people who may have sinned, but nevertheless have complete faith, that even so, Hashem is with them and they would still prevail in battle. This person can go to war even though he has sinned. Only the one who is worried that his sins will prevent his success is told not to go to war.

***"Real judgment begins when a person stops judging everyone else." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.***

## V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem



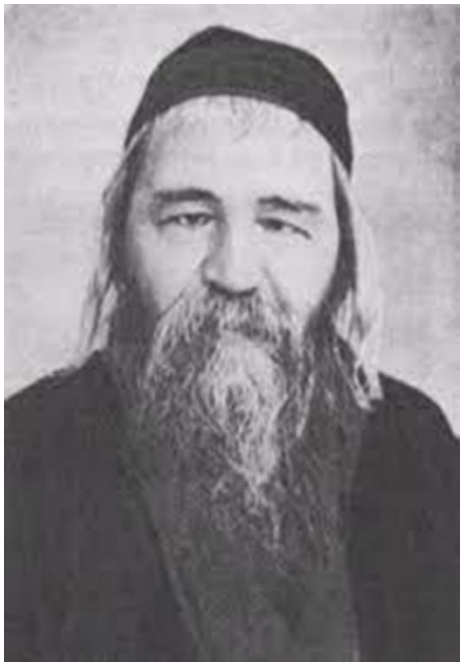
**Reb Yechiel Michel of Gustinin** wanted to learn how to play chess when he was young. However, he lost interest very quickly and stopped learning how to play. He explained his reason as follows: "In chess, one of the rules is that once a move is made, it is not permitted to take it back.

As Jews, this is against everything we believe. No act is absolutely final. It is never too late for a person to do *teshuvah*, and come back to the ways of Hashem in complete repentance." The *Gemara* (*Menachos* 29b) says that this world was created with the letter *hei* (ה), and the letter *hei* looks like a pavilion, as it is open on the bottom and one can leave it easily. So too is this world, man is given free will, and one who wishes to exit it by indulging in sinful behaviour may do so.

However, the left leg of the letter *hei* is suspended and has an opening at the top to teach that if one returns in repentance, he can come back through that opening. **The *Maharsha*** comments that a sinner should always know that if he wishes to return in *teshuvah*, the opportunity is always there for him.

***"Tamim tihyeh — the greatest greatness is simplicity with Hashem." ~ Baal Shem Tov.***

## *L'Maaseh…* A Tale to Remember



Every year when the month of Elul arrived, the Rav of Yerushalayim, **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, *zt"l***, used to relate a childhood memory from when he was still living in the city of Kovno. **Rav Yisrael Salanter, *zt"l***, was also a resident of Kovno, and Rav Tzvi Pesach retained a vivid memory from when he was eight years old about Rav Yisrael one Elul.

A sign had been posted in the main *shul* of Kovno that Rav Yisrael Salanter would be giving a *drashah* in the afternoon of *Shabbos Mevorchim Elul*.

"I went to *shul* at the designated time," said Rav Tzvi Pesach, "and I couldn't find a place to sit. With the innocence of a child, I decided to sit on the steps leading up to the *Aron HaKodesh*. A few minutes later, Rav Yisrael entered the *shul* and walked past the *Aron HaKodesh* to speak. He called out, '*Rabbosai*, we have already *bentched Chodesh Elul*!' At the moment that Rav Yisrael cried out the word "Elul", he actually fell and fainted from the fear of Judgement and lay in a faint next to me. Everybody in the *shul* stood up in shock, and brought water to revive Rav Yisrael from his faint."

Rav Tzvi Pesach added, "I was only a boy of eight when this happened, but the sight of Rav Yisrael's fear of judgement— to the point of fainting— a full month before Rosh HaShanah, left a deep impression on me and changed my life forever. Until this very day, this memory still affects my *Yiras Shamayim*!"

***"The nearer Rosh Hashanah comes, the more precious every ordinary mitzvah becomes." ~ Steipler Gaon.***

## Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

**שפטים ושטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך...ושפטו את העם משפט צדק. (טז:יח)**
***Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities …and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.*** (16:18)



**Rebbe Shlomo Kluger** links the first part of the *pasuk* with the second part of the *pasuk*. If you will appoint many judges in many different locales, then they will be able to judge properly and judge the people with **משפט צדק** – righteous judgment.

However, if you only appoint a few judges and they will be overloaded and overwhelmed with many cases, then they will be too rushed to judge each case righteously, and then possibly will not be able to judge with **משפט צדק** . (***Parperaos LaTorah***)

## *Parshah* Thoughts Ideas *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

*Hashem* instructed the *Bnei Yisroel* to sustain the *Kohanim* and *Leviim*, as they will not have any of their own property (18:1). **Rav Yaakov Galinsky, *zt"l*,** explains that the reason that the most elite group of the *Bnei Yisroel* had to rely on others was to ensure their constant connection with *Hashem*. They would have to always ask *Hashem* for their needs in order to get them and they could not just assume that it was coming.

We learn from this that even if one may have most of his needs, he should still remember to request his needs from *Hashem* and remember that *Hashem* is our Provider.

## *L'Maaseh…* A Tale to Remember



**The *Yid HaKadosh* of P'shis'cha** had a rule in his *shiur*, that no one could leave until all the questions were answered. As the *shiur* neared the end, the *Yid* asked a very powerful and difficult question which no one could answer, and he closed his eyes to think. One of the students had not yet eaten anything that day and was feeling weak from hunger. He thought that since he lives nearby, he would slip out of the classroom, run home and quickly eat something, then sneak back into class before his *rebbe* knew that he was missing.

And that was what he did. As he finished his snack and dashed to the door to head back to *yeshivah*, his mother asked for his help with something. At first, he hesitated because he had to return to *shiur*, but then he realized that just as Hashem commanded that he learn Torah, He also commanded that he honour his mother.

The boy quickly helped his mother, and then rushed back to *yeshivah*. Just as he opened the door, the *rebbe* opened his eyes, saw the boy entering, and demanded to know where he had gone and what he did! The boy was caught! He quietly explained that he hadn't eaten all day and because he was feeling weak, he ran home to eat something quickly. Just when he was about to leave, his mother asked for his help, which delayed him further.

The *Yid HaKadosh* smiled and said, "Because you did the mitzvah of *Kibud Av V'Eim* with difficulty, the Sage Abaye came and escorted you back to *yeshivah*! Abaye loves when anyone does the mitzvah of Honouring Parents, because he was an orphan and never had the opportunity to do it himself. When Abaye came in with you," explained the *Yid*, "he also explained the answer to the question that I was struggling with!" (*Sipurei Chassidim*, p.438)

## Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg



**צדק צדק תרדף למען תחיה וירשת (טז:כ)** ***Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue so that you will live and take possession*** (16:20)

**The *Chida*, *zt"l***, cites the words of ***Rabbeinu Ephraim zt"l***, that the letters in the word **וירשת** are the same as in the word **ותשרי**.This is the meaning of the *posuk*: Give charity (*Tzedakah*, from the word *'tzedek'*) and go back and give charity again, again and again, so that in the month of **תשרי** you will be inscribed for a good life. This is because charity is one of the things that can nullify a bad decree, and anyone who has compassion for people, Heaven will have compassion for him many times over. (*Maayan HaShevuah*)

## *L'Maaseh…* A Tale to Remember

Several years ago, **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman**, made an important trip from *Eretz Yisroel* to the United States on behalf of the *Yeshivas* in Israel. Already in his nineties, the trip was no simple undertaking. Rav Shteinman's assistants did their best to assure his comfort, yet certain challenges along the way were unavoidable, one of which was security clearance at the airport.

Before one of his domestic flights in the USA, Rav Shteinman was forced to endure the long line and the extended waiting period just like the young travellers to be cleared for security. When he finally reached the conveyer belt that would pass his belongings through the x-ray machine, he was given several plastic trays and was instructed to remove his shoes, hat, overcoat, belt and jacket. One

of his aides protested to the TSA officer in charge, saying, "Sir, this is one of Israel's leading Rabbis and spiritual guides! He is over the age of ninety as you see in his passport. Can't you ease regulations for him? This is an affront to the dignity of such a holy man to undress in public!" The TSA officer, politely but firmly said, "Your assurances mean nothing here. With all due respect to your Rabbi, I have to follow my rules and protocols. I can't allow any exceptions."

Slowly, Rav Shteinman removed his hat, coat, jacket and shoes and placed them in two trays. He checked his pockets for coins and placed them on the tray too. He was instructed to walk through the body screening cubicle, and as he did, the buzzer sounded, and the red lights flashed. Apparently, the Rav had forgotten to remove his watch. He did so and was instructed to return and re-enter the body-screening cubicle.



Once again, the buzzer sounded, and the red lights flashed. Another officer came over and frisked the elderly rabbi from head to toe. This was more than the one of his aides could tolerate. Protesting, he said to the officer, "Must you violate the Rabbi's dignity to such an extent? You're treating him like a terrorist suspect!" The officer warned the aide, "Any interference in our duties is a federal offense. One more word from you and we'll have to detain you for questioning." Rav Shteinman went through the body screener for a second and third time, yet the buzzer still sounded, and the red lights flashed once more.

One of the senior TSA officers came over to the Rabbi's lane to see what was going on, and the junior officers explained that the elderly Rabbi is carrying some type of metal on his body that they haven't been able to locate. The senior officer asked, "Rabbi, did you ever undergo any operation for broken bones or bone replacement?" Rav Shteinman answered, "Yes. I have metal posts in my hip." Finally, the Rabbi was allowed through security. His aides gathered his belongings and accompanied him to a nearby bench where he put on his shoes and his over-clothes, and they saw that Rav Shteinman had tears streaming down his cheeks. The young Rabbis who accompanied Rav Shteinman were shocked. "Rebbe," they said, trying to console him, "we are so sorry that you had to undergo this humiliation with no consideration of who you are at all!"

Rav Shteinman said to them, "That is not why I'm crying. It is not the TSA who put me through this ordeal – it is Hashem! Hashem is telling me an important message. The day will come when I will leave this world and my soul will have to go through the 'Spiritual Screener' before I'm allowed into *Olam Haba*. There is no favouritism up there! The screener sees everything on one's soul – every thought, every utterance, and every deed, from every moment of a person's entire life. There also, they don't make exceptions of the regulations. They too will tell me that I have something on my soul that will not allow me to enter, and they will send me back to go through the screening process once more! Who knows how many times I will have to go back for rescreening? That's why I'm crying.

The Heavenly screening is far more serious than the TSA. This security check on earth is Hashem's loving way of telling me that I must wake up and do *Teshuvah* while I still can!"

***"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."***

## *Parshah* Thoughts Ideas *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

A Jewish king is warned that if he is not haughty, he will have a long life (17:20). Conversely, haughtiness will shorten his life. **The *Ramban*** notes that although this is written regarding kings, this directive applies to all people. Kings may feel that due to their position they are entitled to haughtiness and therefore they are singled out for this directive.

In his letter, *Igeres HaRamban*, The *Ramban* emphasizes that a person has no reason to be haughty, as nothing he or she achieves in life is due to their own accomplishments. Everything we are and do is exactly what *Hashem* gives each of us and enables each of us to accomplish.

## *Parshah* Thoughts by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

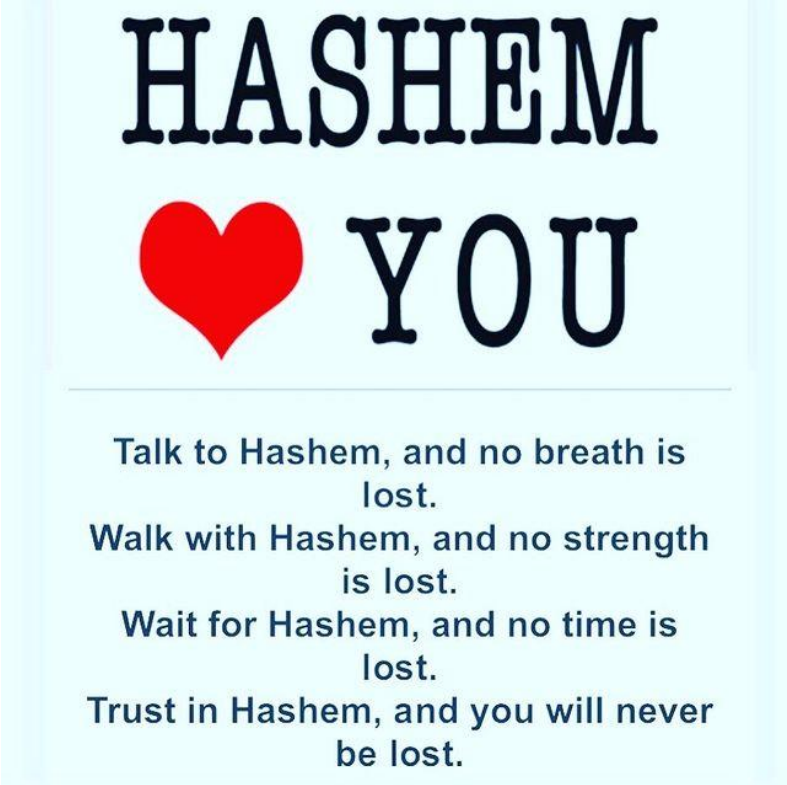
One of the concepts addressed in this week's *Parshah* is a king of Israel. If this is a positive enhancement, why were the Jewish people rebuked when they asked for a king in the times of Shmuel *HaNavi*?

**R' Yisrael Salanter** explains that part of having a king means to have a leader to follow— someone who can be trusted to lead and direct. The wording in the request for a king was, '*simah lanu melech*', *place for us a king*, which would imply that they only wanted someone to be an equal to them, one who could be swayed by pressure and 'culture'.

One has to be cautious, even when asking for something that is permissible to have— like a king, to ascertain that one's motives are altruistic.

***"צדק צדק תרדוף — a Jew must pursue truth even when it is uncomfortable." ~ Chazon Ish.***

## Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages




**Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev** teaches that a righteous person's main goal is to give pleasure to *Hashem*. To a person who has this perspective in life, there is no difference if he or someone else causes *Hashem* this pleasure. By keeping this focus, Rav Levi Yitzchok says, we can actually be happy and appreciate when someone else has a certain position or an accomplishment and avoid being envious. As long as the goal of pleasing *Hashem* is met, it doesn't matter who the person is that accomplishes it!

## The Siddur Speaks

**Rav Shimshon Pinkus, *zt"l*,** gives a *Mashal*. There was once a doctor who was told that for one night shift in the hospital, he would have to cover the entire floor all by himself. With many patients to tend to and no support, this was not going to be an easy task, and he reluctantly had to accept it. However, he was told that if things became too much for him, he has a phone line which he could use to call the nurses, and they would come and help him out.

When his shift started, the evening started out fine. One patient requested food and the doctor responded, then another patient asked for something, and the doctor was up to the task. However, as midnight approached, many patients started asking for things at

the same time, and the doctor was running around the floor like a lunatic trying to help them all. The doctor did his best, but it was just not humanly possible for him to get to every patient and provide the assistance and treatments that they needed. By the end of the night, two patients were in serious condition due to lack of treatment, and one other was on the verge of death.

The doctor was called into a tribunal and charges were pressed

against him for endangering the patients' lives. The doctor protested the charges and said, "What more could I have done? I was put in there all alone!" The judge responded, "You had a phone, and you should have used it to call for help."

Rav Pinkus explains that it is the same way with us in our everyday lives. "Sometimes challenges can seem too hard, and *Mitzvos* can appear to be too difficult to do and retaining that higher level of Jewish commitment seems to be at constant war with the messages of the world around us.

***But the key is to 'pick up the phone and call for help'— to Daven to Hashem and ask for assistance, that things should be made easier, so that we can get the support that we so vitally need!"***

## Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

***Rav* Zilberstein relates** that ***Horav Shmuel Rozovsky, zl***, represents humility at its apex. He was the premier *maggid shiur*, lecturer in Talmud, not only in Ponovezh, but throughout *Eretz Yisrael*. **The *Brisker Rav, zl***, referred to him as the *Rosh Roshei Yeshivos*, the head (premier) of the *Roshei Yeshivah*.

When Ponovezh had just opened its doors the *yeshivah* had no operating fund, because it had no money. The student body was small, numbering about fifty students. Due to the lack of funds, it was impossible to secure the services of someone to maintain the sanitary conditions of the *yeshivah*. **The *Ponovezher Rav, zl***,

travelled throughout the globe fundraising for the *yeshivah*, and *Rav* Shmuel was left to assume the responsibility of providing for the spiritual sustenance of the young men. It is difficult to focus on learning when the environmental conditions are far from appealing.



Thus, during this period, *Rav* Shmuel would come to the *bais hamedrash* early in the morning, lock the doors and pull down the shades, take out a broom and dustpan, and sweep the floors. He would take a mop and water and wash the floor. When the students entered the study hall for morning *davening*, the room was spotless. No one had the faintest idea of the identity of the new maintenance crew.

When *Rav* Shmuel lay on his deathbed surrounded by his family, he cried out in pain and said, "With what am I ascending to the Heavenly Throne?" (He was intimating that he was unworthy of any spiritual reward.) This was a question posed by the pre-eminent *Rosh Yeshivah*, whose lectures served as the lodestar for navigating the difficult subjects of Talmud. Finally, he said that perhaps the merit earned by maintaining the cleanliness of the *bais hamedrash* would serve on his behalf.

***Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl***, was asked concerning a choice of surgeon for a major procedure. One surgeon was highly skilled, but he had an arrogant bedside manner that left much to be desired. The other surgeon was skilled, but not in the same league as his colleague. His character was impeccable, however, manifesting unparalleled humility and warmth both to the patient and his family.

Does skill trump character refinement? *Rav* Shteinman replied that concerning the surgeon who was arrogant, Hashem says, "I and he cannot live together." Hashem does not tolerate arrogance. Why

would anyone choose a surgeon who does not have Hashem's support? On the other hand, while the second surgeon may be less skilled, having Hashem at his back will grant him a successful outcome."

## Fascinating Insights-Rabbi Yehoshua Alt-Gravestones




There is a concept of a **הולך** and an **עומד**. A **הולך** is one who has the power to grow spiritually—like us in this world. The opposite of this is an **עומד**, which is stationary. For this reason, a **מלאך** is called an **עומד** since he can't grow spiritually.

After one dies, he no longer has the ability to be a **הולך**. In fact, Chazal expound on **במתים חפשי** that the dead are free from Torah and Mitzvos. Indeed, the term **נפטר** is rooted in **פטור** as a dead person is exempt from the Mitzvos. This is in contrast to one who is living as **חי** is sourced in **חייב**, as he has an obligation to fulfil the Torah's precepts.

In the year 1797, when **the Vilna Gaon** was crying on his deathbed, he was asked why he was crying. The Vilna Gaon lifted his Tzitzis and said that in this world one can purchase Tzitzis for a few kopecks, and every moment he wears them, he gets a mitzvah. However, in heaven a mitzvah cannot be bought with any amount of money!

In this light we can grasp the words **ודרש אל המתים,** we should learn from the dead. That is to say, to get the right perspective on life

and make the most of it. There is a saying, "Only when you think about the fact that you will die, will you truly start living."

**R' Moshe Feinstein** tells us that the word **מצבה**, gravestone, is sourced in the word **נצב** , standing. This is because when a person dies, he becomes stationary (in a spiritual sense). One who sees a **מצבה** should then fulfil **והחי יתן אל לבו**, the living should take it to heart. He should be galvanized and realize that he has the ability to ascend levels spiritually.

## Uniquely Unified



Elul is a time that we need to improve and excel in our Bein Adam L'chavero. This is alluded to in **וּמתנות אִיש לְרעהוּ לְאביונים** as its initials spell **אלול**.

We must show care about each other as is hinted to in **וישאלו אִיש לְרעהוּ לְשלום**, each inquired about the other's well-being, where the first letters spell **אלול**.

When we act this way, we can then arrive at Rosh Hashana in unity, the way that it is intended. Indeed, Rosh Hashana is called **יום תרועה** - a day of **רעות**, love and friendship.

This idea is also hinted to in **בחדש השביעי באחד לחדש** (in the seventh month on the first day of the month, which refers to Rosh Hashana): we must arrive at Rosh Hashana **באחד** -as one, in unity.

***"Elul is the month when the soul stops running and begins listening." ~ Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira.***

## Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



Someone said to **Reb Yisrael Salanter *zy'a***, "I don't think I'll ever do *teshuvah*. I'm set in my ways, and I can't change." Reb Yisrael Salanter rebuked him, "Chazal tell us that when we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, the Satan becomes frightened. He fears that our *teshuvah* herald the shofar of Moshiach. So, you see, even the Satan believes in your ability to do *teshuvah*. Why don't you believe it?"

**The Beis Avraham *zt'l*** (this week's *parashah*) explains that seeds don't grow in silver or gold, only from the earth. This serves to remind us that when a person is at a low level, down in the dumps, he can grow and flourish. The hint is from this week's *parashah* (20:19), **כי האדם עץ השדה**, comparing a human being to tree planted in the ground. You are in the ground, but you can rise from those lowest levels and reach the highest levels.

# The Torah Any Times Newsletter

## Rabbi Yoel Gold-Exiting the Highway of Life

Years ago, I was driving with my wife and kids from Los Angeles, California to San Diego to the Legoland amusement park. We decided to drive there at night, given that if we would sleep at the hotel right next to Legoland, we would be given permission to enter the park an hour earlier before it opens for the public and go on any ride we wanted.

We set out for San Diego at around 9:30 at night, with all my kids piled into the back. It was not an easy ride, although it should have been. My kids were bickering and fighting, with one of them pushing the other's seat, and another shoving the other's arm for rights to the armrest. It began feeling like one of those experiences where I would need a vacation from the vacation.

I turned to my wife and said, "I can't believe this. We're spending so much money and time investing in coming closer together as a family, and here they are fighting! It's just not worth it. I feel like turning around." I instinctively pulled off the freeway to a random exit, not knowing where I was, and stopped the car. I got out from the driver's seat and opened the passenger door, telling everyone to step outside. My kids turned their heads in my direction, almost uttering in unison, "Are we here yet?" "No," I said. "But everyone, please get out of the car."

There was a patch of grass just off to the side, where my kids and I sat down. "Look," I said to all of them, "we are going on this trip to come closer together as a family. It's unfortunate that all of you are fighting. We can do this the short way or the long way. The long way is that each of you tell me what someone else did to you; the short way is each one of you tell me what you did to everyone else." There was silence.



Finally, one of my kids piped up in a low voice, "I kicked Yosef Chaim's chair." "Okay, that's a good start," I said. "Who's next?" Slowly, each one of them began to take responsibility and a conversation began to flow. And then I knew my job was done.

I said to my kids, "I'm going back into the car. When you finish the conversation, come back and we'll continue on to Legoland." I headed back into the car, and my wife and I began to wait. All of a sudden, as my wife stared out the passenger side of the car, she yelled, "Yoel! Look!" I looked out the window and I saw my kids… hugging each other…

I quickly yelled back at my wife, "Quick, the phone! We need a picture!" We took a picture, and shortly thereafter all my kids were back in the car and we were on our way to Legoland. The rest of the story is not that they never fought again. However, we actually took the picture of them hugging, blew it up into a full-sized photo, hung it up in our playroom, and wrote three words above, "Peace. Anytime. Anywhere." Since then, when my kids have gotten into an argument, I remind them of that picture. We have a moment which turned into a memory and continues to remind us all, "We can handle this."

As I have thought through this story from time to time, I have come to realize something. The only reason we had that moment was because we took the exit off the highway. In life, when we talk about slowing down in a fast-paced world, we need to learn to take exists off the highway of life. We cannot keep on speeding. We need to have built-in exits.

And in fact, if you think about it for just a minute, you will realize that we have an exit every six days… Shabbos. Nothing more need be said. We all know what it feels like. Indeed, it is an exit during which we are able to recalibrate and realign our lives, keeping ourselves on course for the rest of our journey.

***"Whenever you feel like a failure, just remember that even Coca Cola only sold 25 bottles in their first year"***

## Rabbi Chaim Eisenstein - Start with One Step



My father grew up in Western Canada and was trained as a young boy to be a runner. Now, in his eighties, he continues to run. As a child, I remember running with my father and learning the value of persistence.

Now, my father is a naturalist and does not like using the treadmill to run. Given that to be the case, he only runs in the warm weather of New York city. He begins at the start of Spring, putting on his sweatpants, sweatshirt and sneakers, and driving out to the local park about half an hour away. His first run at that point is 100 feet. That is the most he can do.

The next day, he gets ready again and this time runs 120 feet. By the end of the summer, he is able to run 5 miles, passing most of the young people who are running on the track. It is a very simple strategy that he has set for himself. He wants it badly enough and believes that he is capable of attaining his final goal, so he sets out for this and works towards it step by step.

Amazingly, every spring my father starts again by running 100 feet, after which he incrementally moves along little by little until five miles. He does not have the expectation that he will be able to run miles right away. He knows that he will not reach his goal immediately, but he is still succeeding because he is on his way there.

Just imagine how many times you could complete the entire Six orders of the Mishnah throughout your entire life if you would start today with learning just one or two Mishnayos? It is more than you would guess. The problem is that the enormity of something dwarfs our belief that we can do it all, so we decide to do nothing.

My father had a childhood friend, Menachem Marder, who was known to be an amazingly well-rounded individual. He excelled in both Torah and general studies, and had a brilliant mind and beautiful heart.

Menachem Marder went on to learn at the yeshiva Ner Yisroel, under the great **Rav Ruderman zt"l**, where he became an even more dedicated and astute learner. He then went to learn at the Mirrer Yeshiva in Israel, where he was beloved by the Roshei Yeshiva. Unfortunately, Rav Menachem Marder z"l passed away in his early forties, after having been learning in the Mirrer Kollel for several years.

My father always speaks about Menachem Marder. But what has personally stayed with me about Rav Marder was a story related to me by someone else who was personally close with him. Rav Menachem Marder passed away from brain cancer, r"l. In going through treatment, the doctors informed him that he needed to undergo surgery. At the same time, the doctors were hesitant that the surgery would even be effective. The prognosis indicated that he was going to pass away from this sickness anyway, and thus there was nothing to lose with undergoing the surgery. But, there was also the risk that were he to stay alive for some time thereafter, the surgery could likely cause brain damage.

Menachem and his wife realized that his chances of survival were slim, and thus surgery was the best viable option. When Menachem Marder woke up from surgery, most of his cognitive functioning was normal, although his memory was entirely gone. One of the most respected and brilliant minds of the Mirrer Yeshiva no longer knew how to read. Yet, what was the first thing he did after he was discharged from the hospital and had enough strength?

He entered the Mirrer yeshiva, took his old seat where he had previously spent hours learning day and night, and had someone teach him the Aleph-Beis. With renewed vigor and energy, he devoted

himself to learning the letters of the Aleph-Beis. He passed away in the middle of learning Eilu Metzios, the typical first chapter that initiates a child into the learning of Gemara.

For Rav Menachem Marder z"l, his love for Torah superseded what he was learning. It was his love for Hashem that underscored his Torah study, so no matter what he was engaged in, whether it be a difficult passage of Gemara or the Aleph-Beis, he was enthusiastically connected to Hashem.

If a person desires to know what one word of Torah means, or wants to thoroughly know a page of Gemara, or learn through all orders of the Mishnah or the entire Shulchan Aruch, he can do it all. Step. By. Step. At first, he runs 100 feet, then 120 feet, and then soon, he can run five miles, and he does.

But it all begins with a step in the right direction. And underlying it all: hard work and dedication. It requires self-discipline and a realistic understanding that no hard-earned feat will be accomplished quickly. Everything valuable in life takes time and work. But if you are willing to put in all that you've got, you will go far. Start today with one step, and in due time, you will have travelled miles.

## Dr. Jack Cohen - Saving You, Saving Me

***כי ד' אלקיכם ההלך עמכם For Hashem, your G-d, is the One who goes with you… (Devarim 20:4)***

Allow me to share with you the words of a girl who related the following:

I have wanted to tell this story for some time now because I believe many people will learn from it. My parents are fine, religious Jews who raised us, their children, very well. Our home is in Jerusalem, and growing up, we were a dream family. All of my brothers went to the best *yeshivot* and my sisters went to the best *bais yaakovs*. But

then, one of my brothers, Dovie, started going off the *derech*. He began associating with questionable friends. He then started staying at home all too often. "Why is Dovie home at 11 o'clock in the morning?" we wondered. "He should be in a classroom in yeshiva!" He started changing the way he dressed and the way he spoke. Eventually his whole conduct was not that of a *frum* Jewish boy. He changed completely.

My parents tried to reach out to him, and my mother prayed day and night. She went to rabbis, lit extra candles, and went all over Israel to various graves of righteous people to pray for him. My parents also thought long and hard about the effect he would have on the rest of us, his twelve other siblings. It was hard to watch our parents struggle, but we admired them and their decision to love Dovie and keep him in the house. Never did he feel that he didn't belong. Time went by as everyone adjusted to the idea that there was an off the *derech* child in our house. All the neighbours knew it. But any worries we had about how he would affect our *shidduchim* disappeared. It was not a problem. My older sister got engaged to one of the best yeshiva boys, and after that I got engaged. I'd like to send this as a message of encouragement to families dealing with similar situations. If you have a child in the house who is going off the *derech*, do not worry that they are going to hurt the marriage prospects of the other children. Families are not necessarily labelled by the actions of one child.

On July 2, 2008, Dovie was walking down Jaffa Road in Jerusalem. He was 18 years old at the time and had dropped out of yeshiva. Suddenly, he saw something very strange. A tractor trailer which was wildly making its way down the street rammed right into a bus stop at full speed. The tractor had been hijacked by an Arab.

My brother thought at first that maybe it was an accident, though he saw how the driver kept on going, ramming into a bus and turning it over. It was pandemonium. My brother couldn't believe his eyes.

The driver, though, continued on his rampage. My brother wanted to warn the other cars on the road to quickly move away, but it seemed useless. It looked like a battlefield in war.



Then my brother noticed something which made him stop cold. A few feet away was a woman trapped in her car, surrounded by multiple crushed cars on all four sides. The tractor was making its way right at her, yet she couldn't get out of the car. My brother noticed the woman lean to the back seat of her car and grab something. It was her baby who had been strapped in the baby seat. Frantically, the woman threw the baby out the window to my brother, who caught it and ran from the area as fast as he could. As my brother darted away, he heard the sound of crushed metal as the tractor made its way towards the car the woman remained in, flattening it like a sardine can.

My brother could not afford to stop running. Breathless and terrified, he finally found a police officer who instructed him to wait in a police car until everything was cleared. He stayed with the baby, holding it tightly. The police located the driver of the tractor and put an end to his rampage.

It was quite a while until the police returned to find my brother still sitting with the baby. "Where would you like us to drop you off now?" they asked him. My brother, an eighteen-year-old boy who just risked his life to save a baby and witnessed a traumatic event, insisted on being taken home.

The policemen complied with his wishes and returned him home. "Ima," he announced, "I have a baby!" Holding up the child, he related what had just occurred. The incident was so recent that news of it had not fully circulated around Jerusalem. My mother sent me to the store to buy everything the baby needed, after which we washed him and put him to bed. We couldn't believe our ears when we later heard of the tragedy on the news.

"We should call the police," my mother recommended. "The father of the baby must be looking for him!" My father went on to call the police station in Jerusalem and see if any inquiries had been made about a baby, but there were none. Social Services showed up at our house soon after, though they told us to hold on to the baby until the family was found or other arrangements were made. The next day, the identity of the mother was discovered. She was a Jewish Russian immigrant whose husband was not Jewish. The father had returned to Russia after the baby was born, and no other family relatives of the baby remained except for the mother's elderly mother.

For an entire week, Dovie did not leave the baby's side. He would feed him, play with him and try to make him laugh. Dovie became very attached to the little boy. At the end of the week, Social Services returned and reported that the grandmother was ready to take the baby. Yet, my brother stood there protesting, wishing he could take care of him longer. My brother, though, turned the baby over to the care of the grandmother.

But, rather quickly, the grandmother realized that it wasn't all too easy to care for such a young child. It had been many years since she raised a toddler. Social Services were once again contacted and informed that it would be in the baby's best interest to find a new home with parents, where he could be raised in a healthy, caring and wholesome environment.

As soon as Dovie heard that the baby was up for adoption, he jumped at the opportunity. "Can I adopt the baby?" he asked. "Dovie," he was told, "that is very sweet, but we cannot let a young and unmarried boy like you adopt a baby." "I'll get married," Dovie said, "and I'll provide him with a good home."

"That's not possible," Social Services said, "because the baby needs a home right now." But my brother wouldn't give up. "My mother can help take care of him until then!" After asking my mother if such an arrangement could be made, my mother said, "Dovie, don't think it is going to be easy to raise a child. You cannot wake up at two in the afternoon and go to sleep at four in the morning. And I don't think your friends are good role models. Raising a child is not like raising a dog. He is a real child and needs real attention and guidance."

Dovie told my mother, "Mommy, I will go back to yeshiva and get up every morning and pray. I will learn Torah and make myself into an upstanding *mentch* as long as we are willing to adopt this baby. I need to do this. I will not let him be abandoned." For the next two years, he raised the baby as a real son.

Dovie slowly began wearing respectful clothing as he used to and made his teachers proud. And every evening after learning, he would come home to the little boy. He began teaching him *Modeh Ani*, how to wash his hands and many other practices. When Dovie turned twenty, he began *shidduchim*. But it wasn't easy, as every time he went out and mentioned that he had a son, the girl would be shocked. Many of the girls were moved by the courageous story but were uninterested in marring a boy who came with a two-year-old child. Not many girls were willing to become a mother to a two-year-old child, and some didn't seem to be a good match for the baby.

Finally, though, the one in a million *eishet chayil* came into his life. She was a wonderful and deep girl who thought the baby was the

best thing about my brother. She fell in love with him and with the baby, and with that, they got married.

After this all unfolded, my brother realized that the baby was the means which brought him back to Hashem and Judaism. And despite being worried that as a twenty-year-old boy with an adopted baby he would never find a *shidduch*, he found the perfect wife.

In life, there is hope for everyone. It is five years since my brother first met the baby and two and a half years since he got married, and he now has a growing family along with the little adopted boy. Dovie's family looks like any other religious family, but they know the true story behind it all.

Every year we celebrate the miracle which occurred. But, in truth, it is a double miracle. "Everyone thinks I saved this child," Dovie has said, "but, in truth, I know deep down inside that this child saved me."

## Rabbi Fischel Schachter-Friday Night Lectures

***לשמר את כל דברי התורה הזאת To observe all the words of the Torah (Devarim 17:19)***



A number of years ago, I began receiving phone calls on my house phone day after day. Not assuming it to be of any great significance, I did not answer the calls. One day, though, I finally gave in and picked up. It was a young girl speaking in a British accent. "Rabbi Schachter?" "Yes," I said. After telling me her name, she explained the reason for her

incessant calling. "Baruch Hashem, I am a *kallah* and expecting to get married soon. But I told myself that I would not walk down to the *chuppa* before speaking to you." "Me?" I said surprisingly. "What's the issue?" Listening to this girl who I had never heard of before, she went on to tell me her story:

"I grew up in London and attended a prominent Jewish day school. I was a diligent student who cared about my studies and work ethic. Unfortunately, however, I got involved with the wrong crowd of girls and was exposed to things no Jewish girl should ever know about. As it turned out, I was asked to leave my school. I was then accepted into a different school. But things didn't get any better, as by now I had already inculcated the habits and values of the street and was by no means suited to be in a *frum* school. I was therefore kicked out of that school. But it didn't end there. I went to another school, and the same story happened again. I was expelled from school after school and was not in the best of predicaments.

"As I was not doing too well at school, my behaviour was as well affected at home. And so, to my chagrin, I was kicked out of my own house. Now alone and on the streets, my ill-reputed behaviour got me into trouble. I was far from acting as a Jewish girl should and I knew that fully well. But I didn't improve myself. After getting my own apartment, I stopped keeping Shabbat and for the most part forgot about Judaism. The only thing I used to do was watch your Torah lectures on Friday night. Every Friday night when I would return home, I would sit on the couch and listen to your classes. I didn't really care for any of the Torah content you mentioned, but I liked your jokes.

"One such Friday night, a friend of mine came over. She was also in a bad situation like I myself was. Angry with Judaism overall, she was particularly frustrated with her father. He would repeatedly tell her about the punishment for sinning and misconduct, and she couldn't handle it. Sitting with me on the couch, I put on a lecture.

And both to my surprise and dismay, the lecture of yours which I picked was about punishment in the Next World.

"After hearing a number of ideas from you about the retribution awaiting a person after life, I said to my friend, "You really should not blame Judaism. It is your father who is threatening you and scaring you unreasonably."

Looking back at me, my friend rebuffed, "Oh, and you are so righteous yourself!" As she said those words, I began thinking about my own behaviour and what I was doing with my life. It was then that I found myself yearning for something more meaningful.

"As it so happened, I eventually wound up at Neve, a seminary in Jerusalem aimed at teaching girls basic Torah principles and bringing them closer to Yiddishkeit. I began to better my behaviour and improve my attitude towards life and Torah. And before I knew it, I was engaged to a wonderful boy who shared a similar history and background to my own. Not too long thereafter, we got married. We were both committed to keeping Torah and mitzvot and helping other children who were disinterested in Judaism.

"Rabbi," concluded the girl, "I cannot thank you enough. You saved me. If not for your lectures and particularly that one Friday night with my friend, I do not know where I would be today."

Three years after speaking to this girl, I attended a dinner in London where I was approached by a young man. "Rabbi, would you be able to talk to my wife?" Unaware who this person was and how I could help, I asked him to get in touch with me after the dinner. The next morning, as I was rushing out to the airport, the man walked over to me again. "My wife is over there in that car," he said. "Could you go see her?" Not knowing exactly what to do, he started begging me. "Please Rabbi, she really wants to see you." I didn't know what to expect, but I made my way over to the car. As I continued walking closer, it all of a sudden hit me. "Wait a minute," I said to the man, "is your wife the *kallah* who called me a few years ago?" "Yeah, that's

her." I now had at least some idea of who I was dealing with. But I was in for a surprise when the car door opened.

Out walked a woman modestly dressed and holding a baby. Walking in my direction, she lifted up the toddler towards me as she said, "It all began that Friday night when I listened to your lecture. This baby is thanks to you." For about five minutes, she, her husband and I stood there crying. I had no words to say. All I could get out after crying for minutes and realizing that I had touched someone's *neshama* so far from Yiddishkeit and living thousands of miles away was, "I hope you use your life to help others." And with that, I turned around and began walking away with a feeling I had never felt before.

*Sometimes we think that someone far from Yiddishkeit will never be moved by anything we do or say. But you never know. Perhaps someone you never noticed and never knew existed was inspired by your little kind act or word and went on to change their life. Who would have ever guessed that a non-religious girl undergoing a difficult time and listening to a lecture on Friday night would have come so far? But then again, when it comes to Torah and its penetrating beauty, a person's dreams are not merely dreams. They can and do in fact come true.*

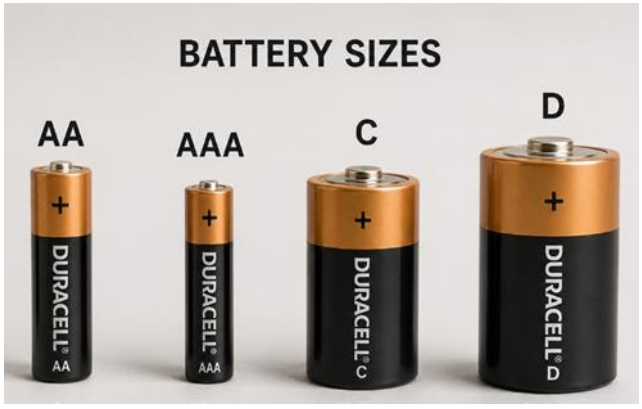
***"The Torah commands, 'Tamim tihyeh im Hashem Elokecha' — walk simply with Hashem. The closer the Days of Judgment approach, the more a person is tempted to become complicated: calculating, anxious, overwhelmed. The Torah's answer is simplicity. Speak honestly to Hashem, do mitzvos sincerely, and trust that purity of heart reaches farther than sophistication." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.***

## A Short Message from Rebbetzin Chana Silver




**Rav Eliyah Lopian zt"l** interestingly observes that the resources we have in life which are plentiful are the very same resources we direly need in order to survive. For example, air to breathe and water to drink. Air is free and available for everyone to breathe. Water, as well, is necessary for a person to survive. And as we know it, the world is largely made up of water.

The same is true, notes Rav Lopian, when it comes to emunah, belief in Hashem. Belief in G-d, which is so vital to our lives, is so plentiful. Simply looking out into our world and studying its breath-taking depth and intricacies leaves one awestruck. There are plenty of indications in our world which point to a Creator; all that we must do is open our eyes and take a look.




***"When a flashlight grows dim or quits working, you don't throw it away, you change the batteries..***

***When a person messes up and finds themselves in a dark place. Do you cast them aside? Of course not, you help them change their batteries!***

***Some need AA batteries. attention and affection: Some need AAA. attention, affection and acceptance. Some need C. compassion. some need D. direction. And if they still don't seem to shine simply sit with them quietly and share your light."***

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS SHOFTIM

## Promises Fulfilled: Buried Near the Shaagas Aryeh By Hillel Baron




The assistant of the famed Torah scholar, **Rabbi Aryeh Leib Ginzburg**, better known as the **Shaagas Aryeh** (1695-1785), was about to pass away. He turned to his master and said, "I served you loyally without ever asking for any reward. But now I would like to request that you look after my young son. Please ensure that he receives a proper education and grows up to be a Torah scholar." The rabbi gave his word.

The man passed away, and the Shaagas Aryeh took his promise very seriously. He took the boy into his home and learned with him every day. But a short while later, the boy simply vanished.

They looked for him high and low, but the young orphan could not be found. The rabbi began a regimen of prayer, and with tears in his eyes, he fell asleep. He dreamt that he saw the missing child, hidden in a nearby monastery. He understood that the boy had been kidnapped to be brought up outside of his religion by someone who thought they could get away with it because he was an orphan.

The Shaagas Aryeh called for a tailor whose business brought him in contact with leaders of the church, and who was familiar with their centers. The Shaagas Aryeh described what he had seen in his dream, and the man said that he recognized the monastery the rabbi had envisioned, and knew where it was located.

The rabbi then turned to the tailor and asked, "Since you are familiar with the place, and you can go there without raising

suspicion, can you please take upon himself the dangerous job of rescuing the boy, and returning him to his people?" The tailor agreed.

The Shaagas Aryeh asked how he could reward him for risking his life. The tailor replied that he did not need payment. The rabbi promised him a very long life, and that he would be buried immediately adjacent to him as a reward for this dangerous mission. The man accepted this proposal.

He went ahead with the plan and managed to smuggle the boy out of the monastery, and bring him to a Jewish farmer who lived far from town. The Shaagas Aryeh would send the boy letters, keeping up with him, and helping him advance in his studies.

In time, the Shaagas Aryeh passed away and was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Metz, the community he had served faithfully for many years. Sometime later, a younger rabbi from a nearby town passed away, and was buried to one side of the Shaagas Aryeh's resting place. Most did not know who he was, for he had changed his name, but he was actually the young orphan the Shaagas Aryeh had promised to take care of, then rescued, and brought up to be a true Torah scholar.

Years went by and the tailor, who had rescued the boy and had lived to a very old age, was on his deathbed. He called for the members of the burial society, and told them that he had the word of the Shaagas Aryeh that he would merit to be buried near him. He asked that they follow through. The men of the *chevra kadisha* were not inclined to believe him and did not plan to honour his request.

On the day that the tailor's soul left his body, torrential rains fell on the town and its surroundings, to the extent that visibility was significantly impaired. The burial society barely made it to the cemetery, and once there, they could not tell where in it they were. After hurried discussions, they decided that they would bury the man right where they stood.

When they arrived the next day, they found that they had buried him immediately near the Shaagas Aryeh, in the one available spot immediately adjacent to him. They understood that undoubtedly, this was the Shaagas Aryeh's will, which had been fulfilled, with their cooperation or without.

## Extra Time to Learn Torah



**Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, ZT"L**, was known for his assiduous Torah study, and he never wasted a moment. Once, before traveling to raise funds for his Yeshiva, he asked his brother-in-law, **Rav Moshe Shain, ZT"L**, to study an additional half-hour each day that he would be going away, to make up for Rav Scheinberg's lost study time. Rav Shain agreed.

Several years later, Rav Shain passed away. During the Shiva, Mrs. Shain told Rav Scheinberg, "you know you owe my husband those extra hours of study. Could you please add an additional half-hour to your Torah study time this week as a merit for my husband?"

Rav Scheinberg was clearly uncomfortable. "I never borrowed the time from your husband. I asked him to use his extra time. What can I do if I have no extra time?" Then, noticing Mrs. Shain's tears, he added, "I will make an effort to find an additional five minutes each day this week to learn in your husband's merit. I want you to know, though, that I would not sell these thirty-five minutes to anyone for a million dollars."

## Rib Roast for Sale



Rivkah Reiser is doing her Shabbos shopping and she goes into Yitz's butcher shop that has a sign in the window saying, "Sale! Rib Roast Five Dollars/ Pound!" Rivkah thinks that she's found herself a real metziyah so she asks the butcher for ten pounds worth.

But he shakes his head and says, "Sorry. I'm all out."

Disappointed, Rivkah goes down the street to Shloime the Butcher and asks, "How much is your Rib Roast?"

Shloimie replies, "It's $15 per pound."

"Fifteen!?!" Rivkah exclaims. "Just up the street, Yitz sells it for five dollars!"

Shloimie the butcher smiles calmly and asks, "Does he have any?"

"No. He's out of it right now."

"Well," says Shloimie, "When I don't have any, I can also sell it for five dollars per pound!"

## The Amazing Shabbos Meal

**R' Abraham J. Twerski M.D.**, writes, "According to tradition, the manna had a magical quality: one could taste in it whatever one desired. There is a magical quality within our means that can affect how we taste our food: that quality is love. One of my favorite stories is that of the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov (d.1760, Ukraine) who one Friday night saw a rather simple person whose face radiated with light.

'What is this man's secret?' they asked. 'Is he so spiritual a person that his face should shine in this manner?'

The Baal Shem Tov replied, 'Let's follow him home and see.'

"The man entered a small hut and greeted his wife with a hearty 'Good Shabbos!' Peering through the window, the Baal Shem Tov and his students saw a sparsely furnished room that testified to the austere conditions of the household. A wooden table was covered with a plain white cloth, and the two candles shed a warm glow.

The man sang Shalom Aleichem, welcoming the angels with a lively refrain, then sang Eishes Chayil. Then he said to his wife, 'Please bring the special wine.' "The wife brought two loaves of course, dark bread. He washed his hands and recited the proper blessing, then chanted the kiddush.

After he ate of the bread, he said, 'We have never yet had such fine wine! Can you please bring in the fish?'

Moments later the wife served him a small portion of beans.

'Hmmm!' he exclaimed, smacking his lips. 'This fish is unusually delicious.' He sang a Shabbos song and said, 'I'm ready for the soup.'

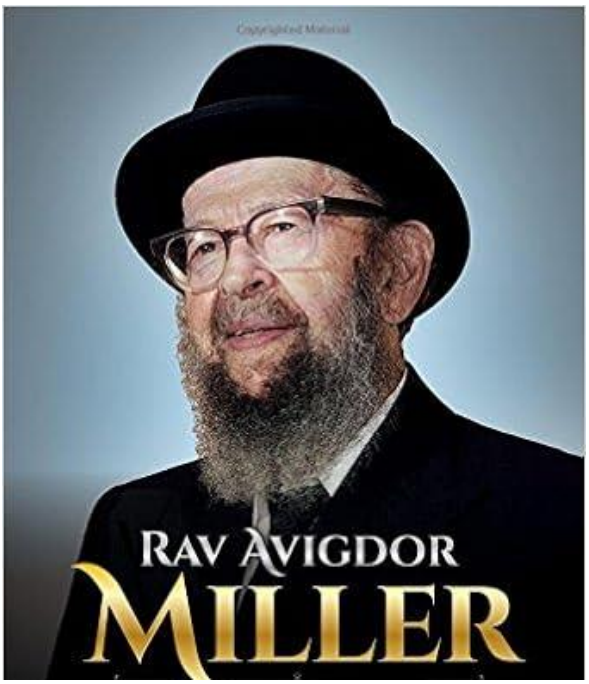
The wife appeared with yet another dish of beans. The man complimented his wife, 'This soup is simply superb.' He sang another Shabbos song and asked, 'Can we have the roast meat and tzimmes?'

Again the wife served him beans. 'How wonderful the roast and tzimmes are!' he exclaimed.

"The Baal Shem Tov said to his disciples, 'Our ancestors in the desert had the manna, a food from heaven, in which they could taste anything they wished. This man's love for G-d, for Shabbos, and for his wife have enabled him to reach a level of spirituality so lofty that he can taste the finest delicacies in a dish of beans.'

"Is such a level of spirituality attainable? Even if it is not, it is certainly a far cry from complaining that the food was too cold or

lacked salt. At the very least, we can certainly send our compliments to the chef and our gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for that which He has provided"




## Always Remember Hashem's Kindnesses to You-Sam Gindi

On one Erev Shabbat, the Rav told me four personal stories with the lessons of remembering the kindnesses done by Hashem.

"When I was about 3-4 years old in Baltimore, I was walking and tripped on a wooden board which had a nail protruding from it. The nail struck me in the head above my brow (the Rav pointed to the spot).

"I was taken to the hospital for stiches. If the nail had struck a bit lower in my eye, maybe there wouldn't have been a Rabbi Miller! But…Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

"When I was in school it was a very cold day and there was a chubby fellow playing and sweating in the yard. When he returned to the school, he drank cold water. He caught pneumonia and fell sick and did not return. But…Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

"I knew a young man of 20 years old; he did not make it to 21. But…Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

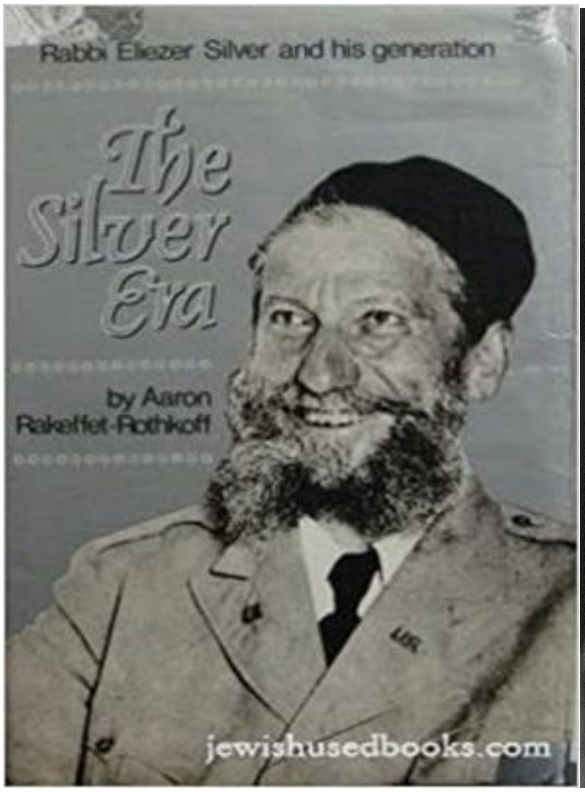
"I was learning in Slobodka Yeshiva, 1932-1938. The Nazis yemach shemom killed all my chaverim (the Rav sobbed when he recalled this). But…Baruch Hashem, I am still here!"

I was told that the Rav always reviewed the thousands of kindnesses that he kept recorded in his mind. He wrote this Pasuk, 'To

remember all the journeys in your life', in his instructions given to his family before he passed away. This is what he held as a Purpose of life. Hakarat Hatov!

## "Sho Do It!"

Mr. Herbert Tenzer (1905-1993) served as a distinguished congressman from New York in the 1960s. More importantly, he was an observant Jew who was a proud activist and was instrumental in providing relief for many Holocaust survivors.






**Rabbi Eliezer Silver, zt"l and Senator Robert Taft**

A few months before his passing, some years ago, he related to me the following story: The energetic and often outspoken **Rabbi Eliezer Silver, O"BM**, of Cincinnati, Ohio was a prominent force in the Va'ad Hatzalah Rescue Committee. He worked tirelessly throughout the terrible war years and their aftermath to save and place the victims of Nazi depravity.

In addition to his prominence in the Jewish world, Rabbi Silver enjoyed a personal relationship with the very powerful Ohio Senator,

Robert Taft. Rabbi Silver had a very difficult request that needed much political pressure and persuasion to accomplish.

He asked Mr. Tenzer to accompany him to the Senator. "Shenator Taft!" he exclaimed, mixing his distinct accent in which the **s** would sound as **sh**, with a high-pitched intoning of emotions. I have a very important and difficult requesht!" Rabbi Silver went on to plead his case of obtaining a certain number of visas for some refugees who may not have met all the criteria.

Senator Taft looked nonchalant and non-committal. The Senator thought for a while then grimaced. He slowly and carefully stretched his response. "It would be arduous and burdensome," Taft said. "But technically," he continued, implying all the while that he was not the least bit anxious to get his hands dirty, "it can be done."

But Rabbi Silver did not hear anything except the last three words. "IT CAN BE DONE?"

He shouted with joy. **"SHO DO IT!"**

Needless to say, the stunned Senator got to work immediately and obtained the visas for the beleaguered Jews. (Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky)

## The Blindfolding of The Chozeh of Lublin

**The Chozeh of Lublin, O"BM**, wished to avoid seeing unholy sights in the streets of his town, so he decided that he would wear a blindfold whenever he walked home from the Beis Medrash. He continued this practice for seven years.

After that time, the Chozeh removed the blindfold and found that he had been blessed with a miraculous gift of far-reaching sight, with which he was able to see things that were happening many miles away from him.



A certain chassid, who lived in the same town as the Chozeh, also wished to possess this miraculous ability. He, too, adopted the practice of blindfolding himself when he left his home until he was safely inside the Beis Medrash.

At the end of the seven years, when the chassid removed the covering from his eyes, he was sorely disappointed. Not only had he NOT been blessed with a special sight, but because he had worn the blindfold for seven years, his vision had deteriorated.

The chassid ran to the Chozeh and cried, "I did exactly what the Rebbe did. I didn't look at the streets of the world for seven years. Why have I not received the Rebbe's miraculous gift of sight, and my vision got worse?"

The Chozeh smiled sadly and gently told the Chassid "The reason you covered your eyes was in order to see, whereas my reason was in order NOT to see."

***"שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך — first appoint judges, and only afterward officers. A person who tries to force himself through fear alone will not endure. First there must be understanding, clarity, and inner recognition of what is right; only afterward can discipline succeed. This is the secret of lasting growth during Elul." ~ Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv.***

# The Day Walmart Cancelled Martin's Multi-Million Dollar Snow Globe Order by *Jack E. Rahmey*



I heard an amazing story recently that was printed in the Yated magazine which shows so clearly the hand of Hashem in our everyday lives if we allow Him into our lives. A man named Martin worked as a middleman filling orders for Walmart, hiring companies in China to mass produce merchandise for them.

One day in the early spring he received a massive order from Chuck, the buyer for Walmart, requesting 500,000 snow globes. Martin stood to make $1million dollars from this order, so he invested $2 million of his own money, a lot of which had to be borrowed, and he spent the entire summer overseeing the production.

One day in late August, as he was spending some time with his family in a park, he received a call from Chuck, the buyer for Walmart.

"*I'm afraid I have some bad news*," Chuck said."*The higher authorities in the corporation changed their minds and decided that the snow globes are just a passing trend, and it didn't pay to invest in them. I'm very sorry, but we have to cancel the order.*"

"*What?!*" Martin exclaimed. "*You can't cancel the order. The merchandise has already been produced and is currently on a ship on the Pacific. You can't back out now!*"

"*I am sorry*," Chuck said, "*but in the third paragraph of our contract it says explicitly that we have the right to back out of the transaction. I'm terribly sorry. Maybe try selling the merchandise to a different store.*"

When Martin got off the phone, he looked pale as a ghost. His wife and children asked if everything was all right, and he assured them that he was fine. But this was not how he felt at all. Over the next couple of days, Martin walked around in a daze. He had no money, and owed hundreds of thousands of dollars. And, he was stuck with 500,000 snow globes.

He thought that if the shipment was delayed and still in China, he could at least avoid the shipping costs, so he called the company. He was told, however, that the shipment was sent on time ten days prior and would be arriving in a couple of weeks.

Martin became a different person. He couldn't sleep, he didn't want to talk to anybody, and nothing interested him. He acted almost like a hermit. Martin's wife started worrying about his health.

"*What happened to you emunah?" she scolded. "You only have faith when things are going well? True, you lost a lot of money. But we still have each other and the children, and thank G-d we are all healthy.*"

Martin realized she was right and agreed to speak to his Rabbi. He told the Rabbi his story, and repeatedly lamented his foolishness in borrowing large sums of money for this investment. He mentioned how hopeless the situation was, as he had no money and was stuck with half a million snow globes.

"*Have you forgotten who runs the world?"* the Rabbi asked. *"Everything that happens in the world is decided by Hashem. There is nothing you could have done differently to avoid this loss. It was all from Hashem, so stop blaming yourself. And it is never hopeless. Hashem can do anything. As long as there is life, there is hope. Go cry to Hashem. The gates of tears are never closed*!"

His strength renewed, Martin opened a Tehillim and tearfully prayed for the next 4 hours. He later recalled how he begged the One who holds the key to *parnasah* to remedy the situation.

He returned home late that night, emotionally drained but finally with a measure of peace of mind. For the first time since receiving the phone call, he slept soundly. The anxiety and fear that had consumed him day and night were gone, as he handed his problem over to Hashem. He felt free from the burden of this problem.

The very next day, he received a call from Shawn, a representative of Martin's insurance company. "*I'm afraid I have some bad news for you,*" Shawn said in a sombre voice. "*Your shipment of 500,000 items was badly damaged. Yesterday a crack was found in the ship's hold, and all the boxes were flooded. The merchandise is unusable. We are very sorry about your loss. But you are fully insured, so we will be reimbursing you for the value of the entire shipment and paying you a 15 percent restocking fee. You should be receiving a check for $3.5 million within a week.*"

Just like that, the biggest loss of Martin's life turned around and became his largest gain. He ended up making half a million dollars more than he would have if the order had been completed. G-d's salvation came **כהרף עין** (*in the blink of an eye*).

We don't have to worry about figuring out how a problem will be solved. Hashem is very capable. We have to believe and pray to Him with the realization that He could always help.



***"צדק צדק תרדוף — truth must be pursued twice: once in the world around you, and once within yourself. It is easy to demand honesty from others; far harder is the honesty required to face one's own weaknesses without excuses.***

***Therefore this parsha is always read before the ימים נוראים, for without אמת a person cannot begin תשובה." ~ Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz.***



## Better to Die Because Of Learning Torah



**Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen, Rabinowitz, the Radomsker Rebbe OB"M**, was known as a very wise man who mastered the entire breadth of the Torah. **The Chofetz Chaim** knew him in his youth and told many people of how dedicated Rav Shlomo was to learn every available moment.

Between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, Rav Shlomo became mortally ill, and the doctors told him to take it easy due to a weak heart, which meant "no learning." They warned him that if he didn't heed their word, he would die.

Rav Shlomo answered them: If I don't learn Torah, my NOT learning will kill me, as I cannot live without it. Better to die because I learned Torah than because I didn't learn!"

Indeed, the Chofetz Chaim would become very emotional when telling the story and would repeat Rav Shlomo's classic refrain.

Comment: The Talmud (Shabbos 83b) writes that one should not stop learning Torah even at the hour of one's death, which is hinted to in this week's portion (Bamidbar 19:14).

Similarly, shortly after their wedding, **Rav Michel Feinstein's** wife came to speak to him. He asked her if it can wait until he was finished learning. To that, she replied, "what do you mean by 'finished?" Paused or interrupted? Maybe. Finished? Not an option, as long as one is alive.

## Two Children Because of Two Nights



**Rebbe Ahron of Belz zt'l** was once in Lizensk in order to daven by the kever of **Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk zy'a**. Reb Ahron's chassidim arranged a place for him to stay, not far from the tziyon, but the Rebbe didn't want to sleep in the bed that was prepared for him. (He pointed to the ceiling.)

At first, the chassidim didn't understand his intention, but they soon found out that above this room was a women's room. The rebbe sensed it with his ruach hakadosh, and due to his refined holy sensitivities, he didn't want to sleep there.

A child from the household offered the rebbe his bed. The rebbe didn't want to take the child's bed away. The child insisted that he had many relatives in the city where he could stay, and he is glad to give him the bed. The Belzer Rebbe accepted the offer and stayed for two nights.

Years later, this boy grew into an adult, but didn't have any children. He came to Rebbe Ahron of Belz – by that time, they were both living in Eretz Yisrael – and asked for a brachah for children.

The rebbe knocked on his table, "Two nights, two children. You allowed me to sleep in your bed for two nights; therefore, you will bear two children."

One of the wonders of this story is that Reb Ahron recognized this man many years later, but it is also a lesson in hakaras hatov.

**Reb Yitzchak Shlomo Ungar zt'l** repeated the above story at a beis avel. This turned out to be an amazing hashgachah pratis, because

the aveilim said that it happened to their father. They were the two children born from the rebbe's brachah.

Rebbe Ahron of Belz zy'a once said to the **Rebbe of Biala zy'a**, "I have hakaras hatov to you, because your great-great-grandfather, the Yid HaKadosh, zy'a, did favours for my great-grandfather, **the Sar Shalom of Belz**."

And as we wrote, when one has hakaras hatov to others, he will also have hakaras hatov to Hashem. He will know and recognize and remember that all the goodness that he enjoys, are presents from Hashem. *[ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman]*

## Emunas Chachomim - A Promise to the Yeshiva's Cook



That night there were only three students learning in the Beis Medrash of the great Chevron Yeshivah in Yerushalayim. Only three? Where were the hundreds of young men who were usually absorbed in Torah study – arguing, gesticulating, debating…? They were attending the wedding of one of the yeshivah's outstanding students which was taking place in another city.

The three stayed behind so that the light of Torah should not be extinguished for even one night. The shrill ring of the telephone shattered the quiet of the night. The three yeshiva students chose to ignore the loud ringing of the phone in the yeshivah office.

But when it rang incessantly for the third time, with no less than twenty rings each call, they felt it must be an urgent matter. It was. Shaarei Tzedek Hospital was calling to inform the yeshivah that

Mrs. Minna, the yeshivah's cook, had just passed away. Arrangements had to be made for the funeral.

A childless widow, Mrs. Minna had poured her entire soul into the food she cooked for the yeshivah boys, treating them as she would have her own children. The labor of her heart and hands helped to assuage her loneliness and bitter fate. But even more so, the promise, nay the guarantee, of the Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Yechezkel Sarna**, alleviated her anguish.

R' Sarna had promised that at her funeral, hundreds of Bnei Torah would accompany her to her final resting place. She held fast to this promise and her belief in R' Sarna's words breathed strength and comfort into her bitter life. And everyone knew of this promise, because Mrs. Minna would speak of it often.

But now, at 9:00 pm, it seemed that Mrs. Minna would have to be buried with the promise unfulfilled. The yeshivah students would not return for at least three more hours and one cannot leave a body unburied overnight in Yerushalayim.

The three students rushed to **R' Zvi Pesach Frank**, Rav of Yerushalayim, and explained the entire situation. He ruled that the funeral must take place immediately with a small minyan, and should not be delayed until morning.

Before the three ran over to the hospital to make the arrangements, they first returned to the yeshivah to close the lights and lock up the Beis Medrash. Just then they heard the shrill ringing of the phone. It was the hospital again. It seems that a few hours ago, Mrs. Minna's vital signs had been checked numerous times and since there had been no heartbeat or breathing and her blood pressure had plummeted to zero, she had been declared dead.

Now there was an uproar in the hospital. The "dead" Mrs. Minna was moving under the sheet, and she was pulling it down, away from her face, her eyes wide open! The hospital staff was shocked! It was

unmistakable techiyas hamaysim! They were calling now to inform the yeshivah. The three students were relieved and happily returned to their studies.

The next morning, when the entire yeshivah had already returned from the wedding, the hospital called to inform the yeshivah that Mrs. Minna had indeed passed away. At midday, hundreds of yeshivah students respectfully followed Mrs. Minna on her final journey, in perfect fulfillment of R' Yechezkel Sarna's promise, in which she had believed with her entire heart and soul.



## Appreciate the Gift of Breathing by Rav Shmuel Brog

**Rav Avigdor Miller**, of blessed memory, was famous for his emphasis on appreciating the wonders and beauty of nature and the vast wisdom of the world that Hashem created among a multitude of other qualities from which we can learn so much.

The following classic story epitomizes his constant focus on appreciation for Hashem. Once, a grandchild visited Rav Miller at home and was puzzled to see his grandfather with his face in the sink filled with water. After a few minutes, Rav Miller stood up, and breathed deeply. "The air is so wonderful," he said.

His grandchild asked, "Why was your face in the water for so long that you couldn't even breathe properly?"

Rav Miller replied, "On my way home, someone started talking to me and commented that lately, the air has been polluted. I didn't want my appreciation of Hashem's air to lessen, so I decided to deepen

my appreciation of air. After depriving myself of air for just a short while, I now am even more thankful to Hashem for providing us with such wonderful air."

**Comment:** It is a sad reality that we only appreciate something once it's gone. A close one is appreciated after he or she dies. Success is truly appreciated after one falls from grace. This is why Rabbi Miller's act of "pretending" to lose something to really be grateful is a genius trick.

## A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l



### How Can a Woman Get Excited About Washing Diapers or Cleaning Dishes?

How can a woman remain enthusiastic about her daily task of diapers and dishes, while her husband goes out every night to learn Torah?

Everybody is given a ladder to climb, and it's the same ladder. If you're washing nappies, you're not doing it for a doll, you're doing it for a future ben Torah or for somebody who will be married to a future ben Torah. Who knows whose virtue is bigger, your nappies or your husbands shiur that he goes to learn at night?

You might be washing nappies for a future gaon oilam, a future rosh hayeshiva who will say higher shiurim than your husband will ever say [or understand.] And even if you don't, your heart is in it and that's what you want to do, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu accepts your dishes and your nappies as korbonos if you do it with a pure heart. Of course you have to do it as offerings to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Now, does it mean that that's all you can do? Who says so! Instead of spending "only" two hours on the telephone every day, take off a few minutes and look in some worthy seforim. There are plenty of seforim that you can read. You can listen to good tapes, there are plenty of things women can do. You have time.

You have no time because it's all filled in. In between the nappies an hour phone call, in between the dishes an hour phone call. "Oh, I don't talk that much on the telephone; I only talk two hours a day not three hours." So talk one hour less and you'll be amazed at the opportunities that you have for perfection in many other areas besides nappies and dishes.

But if nappies and dishes do take up your time, let's say you have 13 children and diapers and dishes do take up your time, then rejoice, revel in that glorious opportunity. You're a rosh hayeshiva saying shiurim!

## A Woman Who Trusted in Hashem More than the Advice of the Doctor By Rabbi Reuven Semah

תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ ***"You shall be wholesome [in your faith] in Hashem."*** (18:13)

What does it mean to have wholesome faith in Hashem? Rashi explains: Walk with Him with wholeheartedness, trust in what He has in store for you. Do not delve into the future, but rather whatever comes upon you accept with wholeheartedness, and then you will be with Him, and of His portion.

Rashi tells us at first that we should have complete faith and trust in Hashem. But then he finalizes his words by saying you will be with Him. What does that mean?

**Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi** explains that Rashi (based on the Sieri) is telling us that there is a mitzvah and there is a reward. One who

doesn't try to find out the future and trusts Hashem will be rewarded in a way that Hashem will be with that person and help him. Perhaps even in extraordinary ways, as the next true story relates (by Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum).

There was a pious couple who lived in a little village in Lithuania with their ten children. While pregnant with one of the younger children, the woman's doctor perceived a serious problem with the baby and recommended she terminate the pregnancy.

The woman's faith in Hashem was strong and she refused to listen to the doctors. Eventually she bore a healthy baby boy.




During the Holocaust, eight of the children perished, and only one daughter and a son survived. The son, who would carry on the family's name, was the same child the mother refused to abort.

The child grew to become **Rav Elazar Shach**, one of the leading Torah authorities in our generation. Rav Shach would often comment that a person must always maintain faith in Hashem and leave the results to Him.

## Judging Others Favourably

***In his great humility, Rav Boruch of Mezhibuzh zy"a said (as quoted by Maamar Mordechai, page 130): "When I look out at the world, no one looks good to me. But when I look at myself, everyone else looks good in comparison."***

## A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt"l



### Career Woman?

Should a woman give up her life for her children or for her own career?

Well, children are the career of a woman. The truth is a woman has a career of her own. It's a big mistake to think, a woman is only a person who works in the house. A woman, when she does the things in her house and learns how to do it with the right Kavana, can become a tremendous Oived Hashem.

When she puts the food on the fire and she thinks, Ribono Shel Olam, I am doing Your will in order to feed a frum family. So Hakadosh Baruch Hu considers that Avodas Hashem, no less than bringing a Korban on a Mizbeiach.

The Jewish table, the Shulchan, is a Mizbeiach, the Gemora says. Put kosher food on the table for your husband and your children. When you hand the bread, Nosain Lechem L'chol Bosor, you give the piece of bread to a child, your hand is the hand of Hashem; you think that.

If a woman learns to think noble thoughts, that she serves Hashem in all the things she's doing, she becomes Mamesh a Sheliach of Rachmono. No question about it. She can become as great as the biggest Tzadikim, the biggest, famous Rabbeim and Rosh Hayeshivos. In her way, if she utilizes the opportunities. With one condition, she has to think L'shem Shomayim.

When she's washing clothing, washing nappies for children, she is doing it for the service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and she gets a

tremendous reward – no less than anybody else. If she sends her child to learn in the Cheder, she is the one who is learning. She sends her husband to learn in Yeshiva, she is a 100 percent partner. Noshim B'mai Kozachyin, she encourages her husband and children to learn, it's 100 percent her share.

So they have many opportunities to be Oived Hashem and He will put them on a golden throne, not less than the throne of the biggest Tzadikim.

## Orchos Chaim L'HaRosh Never be angry with your wife.




If you have pushed her away with your left hand, draw her near with your right hand without delay.

**Rav Moshe Sternbuch** states that when one argues with his wife, he has no Shalom Bayis, tranquillity in the home, and this is very destructive. If an issue arises, it should be addressed immediately without pushing it off. Having unsettled concerns in a house that has turmoil interferes very much with raising children in the proper way.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin teaches (107b) that if one has to rebuke another, it should be done with their left hand, and they should bring the person closer with the right hand. There are several explanations as to why the Gemara uses the left hand and the right hand as examples of distancing and bringing someone close.

**The Yad Ramah and the Ben Yehoyada** note that this shows that just as one's right hand is generally stronger and more coordinated than his left hand, so too, the degree of bringing another person closer should be stronger and more prominent than the degree of

disciplining and distancing him. The Menoras HaMe'or makes reference to a Pasuk in Koheles (10:2) which states, "The heart of the wise is to his right, and the heart of the fool is to his left." The Gemara is instructing one to dismiss anything on the 'left', as mere foolishness, and instead he should nurture and develop the other person's wisdom, which is on the right.

**The Maharsha** states that we find that the left corresponds to the trait of Divine Justice, the Middas HaDin, while the right corresponds to the trait of Divine Mercy, the Middas HaRachamim. The lesson we learn from this is that although it may be necessary to give rebuke, at the same time, one must use compassion to bring the individual closer with love and understanding.

**Rav Simchah Wasserman, zt"l**, comments that if one pushes another with the left hand, and simultaneously pulls him with the right hand, he results in turning the other person around to face the opposite direction. The Gemara is teaching us that when it comes to rebuke, this is the most effective method of turning another around so they can see things from the proper perspective.

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (29:3,15) instructs that one should always possess the trait of humility, and one of the ways this can be accomplished is by being accustomed to speaking in a gentle manner and with soothing words.

**Rav Meilich Biderman** related that once, a fellow came to Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, zt"l, and complained about his difficult Shalom Bayis. He went on and on, and listed his wife's many faults. Rav Ben Tzion Abba interrupted him, and said, "You remind me of the story of a man who came into the mansion of the wealthiest person of the city, and he put his nose into the garbage can. He said, "It smells terrible here!" and he started coughing from the stench. He said, "I would never imagine that the wealthiest man in town would have such a bad smelling home!" Someone finally told him, "Take your nose out of the garbage and go into the airy living room or the spacious guest

room, and you will not smell this bad odour anymore!" Rav Ben Tzion Abba told this man, "Stop focusing on your wife's faults, and begin thinking about all of her good qualities, and you will have an entirely different opinion about her. In fact, you will start to see what a good person she is with her many special qualities. When you start to see her in a new way, your entire life will change for the better!"



## Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

## The Glass Is Always Totally Full!

**Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zt"l** was a Chassidic Rabbi, known for his love of every Jew. He would always find the kernel of good in his fellow Jew. Two anecdotes illustrate that:

One Shabbos, Rav Levi Yitzchak met a Jew smoking in the street. The rabbi asked the young man if he had forgotten that such an act is forbidden on Shabbos. The young man replied that he had not forgotten. Rav Levi Yitzchak asked if there was some circumstance causing him to sin. The young man replied that he was knowingly and voluntarily sinning. Rav Levi Yitzchak looked up to the sky and said, "L- rd of the Universe, see the holiness of your people! They'd rather declare themselves sinners than utter a lie!"

Another time, Rav Levi Yitzchak saw a wagon driver fixing his wagon wheel, while wearing his tallis and tefillin and praying the morning prayers. Rav Levi Yitzchak looked heavenward and exclaimed to Hashem, "Look how your servants only think of You, even when busy pursing their livelihood.

The Torah requires a Jewish justice system be established (Devarim 16:18). Rashi says that the judges should be qualified and righteous and be able to judge honestly. The Midrash Tanchuma quotes Rabbi Yehudah ben Rabbi Shalom who learns from this pasuk that the judges have an additional responsibility. They must intercede before Hashem, on behalf of the Jewish People. They must search for any

merits that the Jewish People may have and bring them before Hashem.

**Rav Avraham Pam zt"l** says we should speak favourably about our fellow Jews! A father only wants to hear good things about his children. It distresses him to hear bad things. Hashem is our loving father. We do have our faults, but it saddens Hashem to hear negative reports about us. Hashem is grateful when one defends a member of the Jewish People, even if he is unworthy due to his sins.

Rav Pam says, "Jews must look for opportunities to praise the accomplishments of their fellow Jews. Who can estimate the far reaching effect this advocacy will have in heaven and the blessings it will bring upon the Jewish People."

## Torah Tavlin



**לֹא תָסוּר מִן־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־יַגִּידוּ לְךָ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל**
**you shall not divert from the word they tell you, either right or left. 17:11**

When he needed to recite Kaddish, a Jewish college professor would daven at the Los Angeles yeshivah headed by **R' Simcha Wasserman.**

Once, this academic asked the Rosh Yeshivah a question. "We are both teachers," he said. "You impart knowledge and I impart knowledge. What is the essential difference between us? The Torah you teach is a stream of wisdom and I teach advanced math, also a stream of wisdom. Why do you consider yourself more fortunate?"

Gently, R' Simcha asked the man how many students he had. He said that he had taught hundreds of students over the years, perhaps thousands. "How many of them have invited you to their wedding?"

R' Simcha asked. The professor looked at him in surprise. "To their weddings? Why would they invite me to their weddings? I am their teacher, not their friend."

R'Simcha smiled. "In our yeshivah, a student would never consider getting married without the teacher. We do not give them information; we give them life."

A Rebbi and a Talmid are connected not by wisdom alone, but by their shared bond, a vibrant, real cord of love and devotion, because Torah, and daas Torah, is Divine. Explains **R' Yaakov Bender shlit'a**, much like when a parent says something whose reasoning you do not completely understand, but you accept that it comes from a place beyond your comprehension and every word is meant for your gain, so too a Talmid Chacham.

When a Gadol Hador speaks, even "even if he tells you about right that it is left and about left that it is right," you must follow him. Because one who gives over the Torah is connected to the power and might of Sinai, the truth of the Divine word we heard there; when a Gadol Hador speaks, his word is reality.

## Bitachon Weekly

### A וְכָתַב לוֹ אֶת־מִשְׁנֶה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת עַל־סֵפֶר...וְהָיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּיו Person Needs to Surround Himself with Positive Influences

No matter what a Melech does, he must always have a Sefer Torah with him. Even when he goes to war, his private Sefer Torah comes with him. He sits in court, his Sefer Torah is with him. He sits down to eat, the Sefer Torah comes with him. The only time he doesn't take along his Sefer Torah is when he goes to the bathroom and bathhouse.

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that since a king is a big boss, and nobody can tell him anything [he can hit people, and even kill them

"at the drop of a feather"] he always needs a Sefer Torah as a protection not to get out of hand. Reading it all the time will save him from his Yetzer Hara and remind him of Hashem.

The Torah says that a Melech may not have too many horses, wives, or money. But he should have two Sifrei Torah. A true king, who is closer to Hashem than others, shouldn't have externals to make him happy. He should be internally happy with a double closeness to Hashem, by having an extra Sefer Torah.

# The Torah Any Times Newsletter

## Rabbi Shmuel Reichman - A Journey of Excitement



A boy ran into a local store and asked the storeowner if could borrow the phone and make a phone call. The storeowner acquiesced and showed the boy to the back of the store, where the phone was. The boy dialled a number and a woman picked up. "Hi," began the boy, "I wanted to know if I can mow your lawn? I'm looking for a job to mow people's lawns. Is there a job available?"

The woman replied, "Actually, we already have someone who mows our lawn, and he does a great job. We're not looking for anyone; I'm sorry." But the boy stayed persistent. "Let me emphasize, I'm going to do an amazing job!" "It's really okay; the boy who does our lawn actually does an amazing job." "You don't understand," went on the boy. "I'm not just going to mow your lawn; I'm going to pull out the

weeds, water it and landscape it. Your lawn is going to be the most beautiful lawn you've ever seen." The woman kept going with her point. "The boy who does our lawn does all that, and he does an absolutely amazing job. We're not looking for anyone; I'm sorry." The boy hung up the phone.

The storeowner, who had overheard the conversation, then asked the boy, "You really wanted that job, didn't you…? I'm sorry it didn't work out." The boy smiled and said, "No, I already have the job; I just wanted to see how I was doing."

This is really what Elul is. It's when we make that phone call and see how we are doing. It's when we check in on ourselves. One of the biggest challenges with self-development and self-analysis, and by extension with mussar and with Elul, is that we fear the process of acknowledging where we have gone wrong, because with that comes a big hit to our self-worth and self-image. We start to feel bad and say to ourselves, "All the things I wanted to work on since years ago… it's always the same list for Elul."

But there's one idea that can help. And that is when you change your perspective on self-development and you understand that it's not about, "What am I doing wrong?" but rather, "What can I become better at?" When you look at growth as an opportunity, when you learn to enjoy the process, when you fall in love with getting better at your middos, with your learning, your health, better relationships, with developing your mindset, with falling in love with Torah and with Hashem, it's a completely different experience. When you fall in love with the process of growth, then Elul becomes this most exciting and amazing time of the year, as opposed to a time that we dread. It is not just a time of judgment, but a time when we re-establish our relationship with Hashem. We become our best selves and remember our dreams and visions.

It's about tapping into who we know we are destined to become and who we know we are capable of becoming. So when we check in with

ourselves we ought to turn it into a journey of excitement. We must remember who we are supposed to becoming and learn to fall in love with the process.

## Chabad.org

## 14 Fascinating Facts About Prague's Altneuschul



The Altneuschul in Prague is one of the oldest functioning shuls in the world. What do we know about this historical place of worship?

**1. Its Paradoxical Name**

The Yiddish term *alt-neu* means "old–new." Why the odd name? Although not common today, this nickname was quite common in Europe. One need look no further than Nikolsburg (Mikulov), a mere three-hour drive from Prague, for a synagogue with the same name. What does it mean?

When the Jews of a town realized that their shul was too small and it was time to build a second one, the original shul became known as the "Old Shul" while the new shul was called the "New Shul."

What happened when a third shul was built?

The Old Shul stayed the Old Shul, and the third shul became the New Shul. The second shul, the older new shul, automatically became known as the Old-New Shul.



Indeed the Altnueschul wasn't the oldest shul in town, as Prague had its own "Alte shul," which, as its name implies, was much older than the Altneuschul. In 1867 it was torn down, however, and the Spanish Synagogue (which currently functions as a museum) was built in its place, rendering the Altneuschul the actual "alte shul."

What was the third shul, which gave the Altneuschul its name? It is most likely the Pinchas Shul or perhaps the Meisel Shul (the Pinchas Shul was a private family shul, and originally in a private home). Even though it was neither the oldest nor the most modern synagogue, the Altneuschul was and remains the most prominent synagogue in the city.

**2. Its Age**

From its gothic architecture, one may assume that the building was erected in the 13th century, making it more than 750 years old.

**3. Its Structure**

The lower rungs of the ladder leading up to the attic have been removed.

Although the building may look like it was built all at once, that is not the case. The western room, now designated as the women's section, was built first, in the 13th century. In the 14th century, the main sanctuary was built. A century thereafter, the right hallway was added. This is where the current entrance is. Only in the 18th century was the left wing (which is currently closed to visitors) built.

**4. Its Holy Walls**

Although the interior walls today are simply painted, they weren't always. For many years no one dared to touch the walls with any tools. Some did try to give the walls a fresh coat of paint, but sadly, one after another they mysteriously died. After that, the walls were left untouched.

On its southern wall, we still find that the last coat of paint the shul received was more than 400 years ago, in 1618—less than 10 years after the passing of the Maharal of Prague, the synagogue's famed rabbi!

**5. Coded Inscriptions**

Above the heads of the worshippers, several "codes" are inscribed on the walls. They are actually acronyms for famous Hebrew phrases.

On the *mizrach* (eastern) wall we find: **שייל"ת, דלמא"ע**, which represents the phrases **שִׁ'וִיתִי יי"י לְ'נֶגְדִּי תָּ'מִיד** (I place G-d before me, always) and **דַּ'ע לִ'פְנֵי מִ'י אַ'תָּה ע'וֹמֵד** (Know before Whom you stand).

On the western wall: **גה"א ימ"ה** and **סמו"ט אטלי"ס** , alluding to **גָּ'דוֹל הָ'עוֹנֶה אָ'מֵן, יו"תֵר מִ'ן הַ'מְבָרֵךְ** (He who answers 'amen' is greater than the one who utters the blessing)**ס'וּר מֵ'רָע וַ'עֲשֵׂה ט'וֹב** (Turn away from evil and do good) and **אַ'ךְ ט'וֹב לְ'יִשְׂרָאֵל ס'לה** (Only good for Israel, forever).




## 6. Its Candelabras

The shul has quite a few dark brass candelabras, which hang low in comparison to its very tall ceilings. When the candelabras were lit with hundreds of candles to honour Shabbat or Jewish holidays, their flames looked like swimming stars under its tall, darkened ceilings and walls.

## 7. Its Attic

Today the attic is empty. It has been thoroughly cleaned out. But it once contained collections of antique items which used to belong to Prague's rabbis, including the remains of the famous clay Golem of Prague, created by the Maharal.

## 8. Its Flag

The Jewish flag hangs over the almemor. In the shul, one can find a huge oddly shaped flag.



Many years ago, the Jewish Community of Prague helped the king fight against an enemy. In recognition of their service, the king granted them the right to fly their own flag. Over time, it became mouldy. Then in 1716, the Jews held a grand parade to honour the birth of a crown prince in the royal court. To honour the occasion a new flag was created.

Near the *bimah*, a staff almost the height of the shul stands, on which hangs a replica of the 1716 flag. Its inscription reads (translated from Hebrew):

*"In the year 117, which is 1357, Emperor Charles IV granted the Jewish community the right to raise its own flag. This was renewed in honour of Emperor Charles VI with the birth of his son, Archduke Leopold, in the year 1716."*

**9. Its Seating Arrangement**

Today, we expect that most seats in a synagogue face the front (east). This was not always the case. In the Altneuschul, the rabbi and other elders sit facing the community, with the rest of the seats

arranged around the walls and surrounding the *almemor/bima* structure (see next fact).

**10. Its Almemor**

The *almemor* is the enclosed platform which houses the *bimah*. One ascends via the left rear corner and descends from the right rear corner.

**11. Its Organ**

One of the most well-known features of the Altneuschul was its organ. This is not the same organs that appeared in churches and some non-orthodox temples of that era. Rather, the small positive organ was part of an ensemble, used every Friday afternoon (before the onset of Shabbat) for Prague's traditional musical Kabbalat Shabbat.

**12. Psalm 92 Was Said Twice**

The Altneuschul had the unique custom to say *Mizmor Shir LeYom HaShabbat* (Psalm 92) twice (instead of once) on Friday eve. This tradition developed from two different customs:

1. At the turn of the 16th century, the custom to begin Friday night services with this Psalm spread through Ashkenaz communities.
2. Later, the Kabbalistically-inspired Kabbalat Shabbat was introduced. It concludes with this same Psalm, which was accompanied by the musical ensemble.

These two customs were fused together to create the Alneuschul's unique practice. The first time the Psalm was recited, it was part of the pre-Shabbat service, accompanied by music, the congregants still dressed in their weekday clothes. The musicians would then stow away their instruments, and the congregants would go home and dress in their Shabbat finery. The women would light the Shabbat

candles, and the congregants would return to shul for the evening service, which started with this Psalm once again.

## 13. The Permanently Unkosher Torah Scroll



Near the holy ark, one can see the seat of the Maharal, which remains cordoned off.

In the *Aron Kodesh* of the Altneuschul, there was a Torah scroll which was never kosher to be used. This Torah scroll was commissioned in the times of Rabbi David Oppenheimer, chief rabbi of Prague in the early 18th century. Some young men in the community were not behaving properly and decided to donate to charity in an effort to find atonement for their misconduct. In time, the money accumulated and was used to commission a new Torah scroll, which was brought in with great pomp and celebration on *Shabbat Shirah*, 1728.

Alas, the very first week, a mistake was found, and the Torah scroll had to be returned to the *Aron Kodesh* with its sash on the outside, indicating that it was not fit for use. Although they fixed it, mistakes were found continuously for the next few weeks. The scroll was, strangely enough, determined to be unfixable. When Rabbi Oppenheimer discovered its history, he forwarded the case to the *Vaad Arba Aratzot* (Council of Four Lands), who ruled that it was to be left as is inside the *Aron Kodesh*, never to be used.

## 14. Under Water

In 1501, less than 10 years after the Jewish expulsion from Spain, Prague faced its share of flash floods. The Altneuschul was flooded with so much water that Rosh Hashanah services couldn't be held in the building.

Ninety-seven years later, in the times of the Maharal, the same thing happened. This time, the neighbouring Pinchas Shul was flooded too, and they were both inaccessible for the following day. The Alneuschul was also affected by the 2002 European flood, in which the Vltava swept through the older parts of the city.

## Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev - ימי הרחמים והסליחות




**The Lechevitcher Rebbe ZY"A**, was once travelling during the month of Ellul with his Chasidim. They stopped in a Kretchmer (inn) whose eating facilities were also occupied by Gentile peasants who were drinking beer. As they were socializing, one peasant called out to his fellow farmers, "My friends see to it to work well during this month (of harvest), for he who works will have what to eat a whole year".

The Rebbe turned to his Chasidim and told them "Do you hear what the peasant has said? He who does the proper Avodah to Hashem, will reap the benefits a whole year".

**The Sanzer Rov ZY"A**, said that a Chasunoh in the month of Ellul is a good Hachonoh - preparation to Rosh Hashonoh. Since a Chosson is compared to a king. On Rosh Hashonoh we crown Hashem as King of the world, that is Malchi'us. Alter Russisher Chasidim would call the

night of Rosh Hashonoh "Karnatzyoh Nacht" a night of Coronation of The King – Hashem Yisborach.

The Sefer Seder Hayom says, during these great days one should minimize his mundane businesses and maximize in Torah, Tefilloh and Shmiras HaMitzvos. By utilizing our time to Avodas Hashem, each person to their ability, may we be Zoche to have a sweet new year.

## From our sages

***תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ You shall be perfect with the L-rd your G-d*** (Deut. 18:13)

Some people behave in a G-d-fearing manner only when there are others around to observe them. When they're alone, however, it's another story.

This verse teaches that we must strive to be "perfect" even when our only audience is "the L-rd our G-d." For what difference does it make if humans see us, when G-d scrutinizes all our actions at all times? (***Alshich***)

## From our sages

***וְכִי־יִהְיֶה אִישׁ שֹׂנֵא לְרֵעֵהוּ וְאָרַב לוֹ But if any man be an enemy to his neighbour and lie in wait for him*** (19:11)

In the literal sense, this verse concerns a person who kills another person unintentionally. But allegorically, it refers to the Evil Inclination, the Jew's true enemy that perpetually "lies in wait" for him. In the beginning the Evil Inclination may present itself as "a neighbour" and friend, but its ultimate goal is to cause the person to fail... (**Ohr HaChayim**)

## Parsha Sheets.com – Quote of the Week




Just as everyone has a unique DNA, face and fingerprints so too we each have a unique mission. **R' Wolbe** (Alai Shur, 1, p. 168) writes: Each person is a one-time phenomenon, an occurrence that has never been before and will never be again. We each have a unique blend of character traits and personality. We are each unique in our particular family constellation, born in a specific time in history and in a specific environment. This uniqueness gives each of us great importance. Only we can accomplish our unique life tasks.

## Vechol Maaminim צדק צדק תרדף (טז כ)

## 'Tzedek' Must Be Pursued to Fulfil It

**Harav Eliyahu Horoshevsky, Rav of Drohobitch**, explained: **The holy Zohar** (Tikkunei Zohar Chadash 132 1) explains that the word tzedakah alludes to the quota of four holy things that a person must do each day and they are **צ** amens, **ד** kedushos, **ק** brachos and **ה** Chumashim of Torah – which are an acronym for **צדקה**.

Every person can take part in Torah learning by supporting those who learn (see Tur Yoreh Deah 246), but the brachos, amens and kedushos must be recited by the person himself. This is what the passuk alludes to here: "tzedek tzedek tirdof" – the three things alluded to in the word **צדק** are things you must pursue yourself in order to fulfil them – and can't rely on others.

## The Benefit of the Doubt – by *Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*



An older woman boarded a crowded bus in Israel. There weren't any available seats, so she was forced to stand. Next to her sat a young girl. The girl looked out the window pensively and ignored the woman beside her. The elderly woman expected the young girl to offer her seat, but the girl — though aware of the situation — did not look up.

The woman said, "She's not even looking at me; it's mindboggling. Today's teens are so self-involved, so entitled!"

The other standing passengers nodded their heads sympathetically.

"I'm so confused," the older woman said, unable to understand why the young girl still refused to get up and offer her seat even after the rudeness was pointed out to her.

Instead, the girl stared out the window, totally oblivious to the conversation around her.

A man standing next to the woman said, "Frankly, it's scandalous."

"It's not even crossing her mind that maybe I need the seat more than she does?" the critical woman continued.

A second man concurred. "Zero respect."

The woman said, "It's a lack of manners. What a generation." she sighed, expanding her criticism from the girl to all her imagined peers.

Just then, a woman across the aisle wrapped up a call on her cell phone. "I have to go," she said, shutting her phone and rising. She

opened a folded wheelchair and proceeded to help the young girl, apparently her daughter, out of her seat.

The passengers — who had been so free with their loud and vocal criticism — were silenced, and it was evident from their faces that they were deeply ashamed of themselves and regretted every word they'd uttered.

We learn from this story that we must be aware of our tendency to judge others and the consequences of this tendency. First, we judge, and soon enough, we feel the need to relay it to others. It is then an easy next step to humiliating the object of criticism in public. The woman did not hesitate to complain about the girl in front of a crowded bus. She was so sure of her judgment, so confident that she was right. Because of her, the others joined in on the harsh criticism.

This story exemplifies how we should never judge others.



## Rabbi YY Jacobson - The Gift of Silence

The Romans and the Greeks used to mock the Jewish people. One of the things they mocked was the day of Shabbos. They attributed it to Jewish laziness. In fact, the Gemara says that Haman told Achachverosh that the Jews always have an excuse not to go to work. First it's Shabbos, then it's Pesach, then it's Sukkos. They don't want to work. Whoever heard of a day off? The Romans couldn't understand it, nor could the Greeks. What's this day of no work? Why are you so lazy? Get your act together.

There was once a great pianist and one of his colleagues asked him, "I don't understand why you have become so much more successful than I? We both read musical notes. I know how to play those notes, I think just a skilfully as you do. What's the difference between you and I?" The man looked him in the eye and said, "The difference is

in the pauses. It's in the pauses between the notes that makes all the difference."

Anyone who has mastered the art of communication, music or other forms of art knows how important the pauses are, That silence has a thundering depth to it, because it's the silence that captures the depth and the meaning that cannot be articulated in the word. Shabbos is the pause between the notes. It's what the Romans and the Greeks did not understand. The Jewish people obtained the gift of the pause. The gift of silence. The understanding that it's in the pauses of life that we find the ultimate meaning of life. It's the pauses of life that give life its richness, its flavour, its delight, and its depth.

## Rabbi Ari Bensoussan

A friend of mine who was a psychologist went gone to a baseball game, watching the Yankees playing. There was a father and son sitting right in front of him. His son had a baseball glove on.

What if a foul ball would get hit high, and what if it would land right into the boy's glove? The kid was so excited.

And sure enough, incredibly, this is exactly what happened. The ball was hit high, and as it came down, the boy jumped up and it landed with a 'thwack' straight into the boys glove – but then it bounced out and rolled on the floor through the seats in front of him.

The father looks at the kid and the child looked at his father, and the father says, ***"You had one chance, and you blew it!"***

My friend leaned over and tapped the father on the shoulder, and said, ***"My friend, <u>you</u> had one chance, and <u>you</u> blew it!"*** All your son wanted to do was make you happy and proud, and you blew it.

Rabbotai, there are times in our life, when our children are sitting and listening to everything that we say and do. These are their

moments; they are not yours. How you act or react, how you smile or not, it is going to be embedded into their soul for eternity – You get one chance, please, don't mess it up.

## Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

When the **Shulchan Aruch** discusses the subject of Elul, ,Selichos and Rosh Hashana, he says that the minhag is that we wake up early in the morning and say Selichos, which is the minhag of the Sephardim.

Comes along the **Ramo**, who says that this is not our minhag. We wait until the week before Rosh Hashana before saying Selichos, however, we do blow the shofar the whole month of Elul.



**Rav Wosner Zt'L** in Shevet Halevi says that the Ramo was not coming to argue on the Shulchan Aruch but maintains that we should still get up early to daven.

We have to realise that we have an incredible opportunity in Elul for growth and connection to The Riboino Shel Olam.

Be'ezer Hashem, we should all be zoche to have a month of yeshua, bracha and teshuva!

***R' Elya Lopian zt"l says that faith can be gauged not by prayers when things are difficult, but by the intensity of one's prayers when things are going well.***




## No Worries

When Klal Yisrael is courageous and fearless because it trusts in Hashem, they will win the war. But when they don't trust in Hashem's strength, they are at risk.

The Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:32) says that this lesson isn't only regarding war. He writes, "The Torah is telling us that if one sees trouble approaching, his heartshould rely on Hashem's salvation." So, if one is worried about his parnassah, he should trust in Hashem. If he is concerned about finding a shidduch, he should trust Hashem. The same applies to health issues and all other kinds of problems.

One should be fearless and worry-free because he trusts in Hashem, and Hashem will save him.

**The Noam Eliezer of Skulen *zt'l*** explains that in the brachah of **יוצר המאורות** we don't say, **ברא רפואות** , that "Hashem created remedies" (in the past tense). We say **בורא רפואות** , that Hashem creates refuos even now. Always, new refuos are being created. Therefore, even when doctors say there is no known cure, don't lose hope. Trust in Hashem because Hashem is constantly creating new remedies.

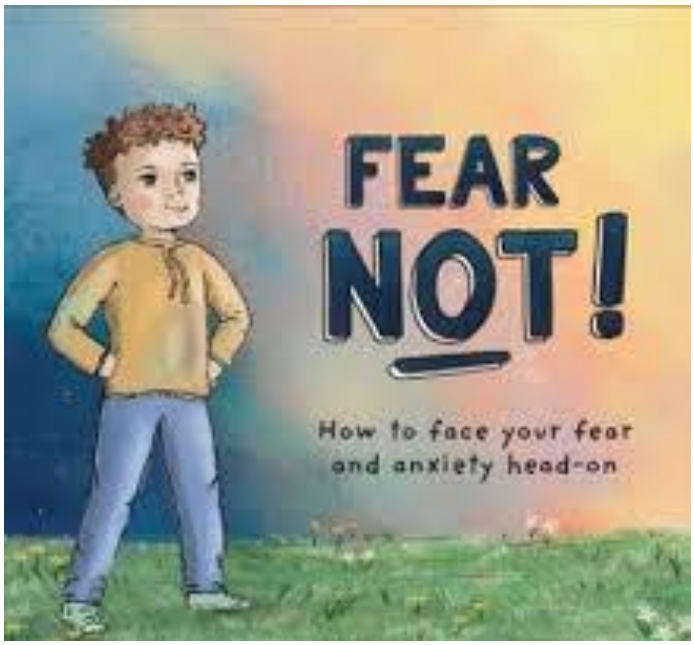
## Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

The **פָּסוּק** says, **צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף** -16:20

Why does the **פָּסוּק** use the word **צֶדֶק** twice?

The **חדרי בטן** says that it is to let us know that a person must be righteous both with Hashem and with people.

## Fear Not




There was a bachur who suffered from phobias for a very long time. **The Rebbe of Bahush zt'l** had in his possessions the **Ruzhiner's zt'l** snuffbox (he received it as an inheritance) and he gave the bachur to smell from it as a segulah to overcome his fears. Then, the Rebbe said, "For forty days, before going to sleep, say **אמר ה' ליעקב אל תירא עבדי יעקב** (from the zemiros of Motzei Shabbos), and your fears will go away."

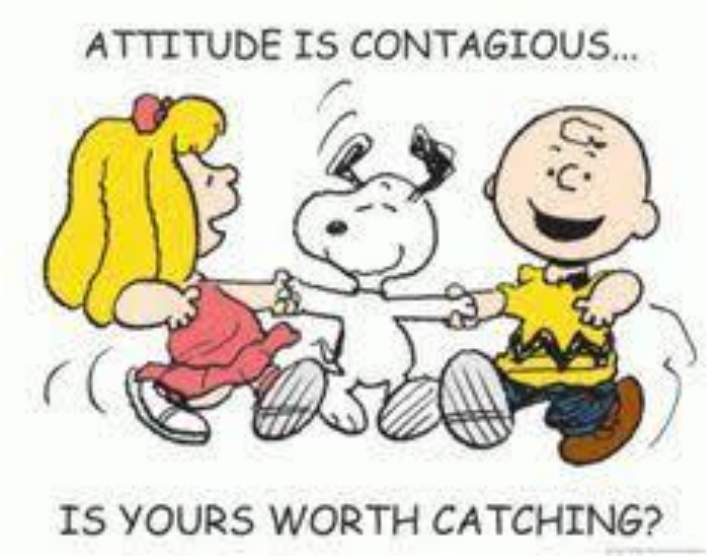
The bachur did so, and he was cured.

Years later, he was already a father of two, and his fears returned. This time, they were stronger than before, and in result, his marriage was in jeopardy. The Bahusher Rebbe wasn't alive anymore, so he went to the elderly tzaddik, **Rebbe Yitzhak Eizak of Zutchka zt'l**. The yungerman told the Rebbe about his fears, and the Zutchka Rebbe replied, "I also had many fears, but I overcame them with thoughts of emunah and bitachon."

The yungerman replied, "I'm not on the Rebbe's level. I won't succeed to get rid of my fears so easily."

The Rebbe replied, "So, then my advice to you is that you say the motzei Shabbos zemiros, **אמר ה' ליעקב אל תירא עבדי יעקב** for forty days before going to sleep, and you will get better."

It is quite incredible that both the Bahusher Rebbe and the Zutchke Rebbe gave the same advice, although it is a very rare and unknown counsel. He followed the counsel and was healed.




## Happiness

Pirkei Avos states, **וֶהֱוֵי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּשִׂמְחָה** ***"Greet every person with happiness"*** (Avos 3:12) because joy is contagious, and when you smile at someone, you can make their day. You never know who needs a smile to raise their spirits.

Those who are happy will be rewarded for all the people who become happy as a result.

The tzaddikim of **Ziditchov zy'a** said that a **שמייכל** (smile) is roshei teivos for, **כולם יהיו משועבדים לעבודתו יתברך שמו** , everyone will devote themselves to serve Hashem.

One of the benefits of a happy continence is that when you smile, people smile back at you. The way we treat others, is the way they will treat us. Therefore, greet everyone with a joyous disposition.

It will bring them joy, and we will also benefit, because our kind words and friendly smile will be returned to us.

## Positivity

Tzaddikim taught, **טראכט גוט, וועט זיין גוט** , "Think positively, and things will be good."

There was a Lubavitcher chassid whose child was sick, and the prognosis wasn't encouraging. So the chassid went to his rebbe, the **Tzemech Tzedek**, who told him, **טראכט גוט, וועט זיין גוט** "Think good, and it will be good." And that's what happened. The chasid thought positive, happy thoughts, and his son recovered.

Positive thinking is also mesugal for parnassah. Trust that Hashem will help you, and things will work out well.

**Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk *zt'l*** wrote a letter to his chasidim, "Every year, I've been receiving letters from the Jewish community of Beshinkawitz, and they were always complaining that they don't have *parnassah*. It was painful for me to read their letters.

This year, they didn't mention parnassah, so I'm certain they will be successful." Their worries were the source of the problem. When they stopped complaining, they had parnassah.

Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk explains: A person is where his thoughts are. When they trust in Hashem, they are attached to Hashem's kindness. When they are worried, they are bound to *din*, to limitation; therefore, that is what they receive.

**Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l** wanted to give a brachah to a man who helped him. Rebbe Bunim asked him what brachah he wanted. The man replied, "I want a brachah to have parnassah in abundance."

Rebbe Bunim replied, "I will give you a brachah that you shouldn't worry because Hashem doesn't give parnassah to those who worry. Hashem gives parnassah to those who ask."

The *navi* (*Shmuel* 1, 1) tells us that Chanah prayed for children, and the *navi* states **ופניה לא היו לה עוד**, "she didn't have a sad face anymore." She trusted that Hashem would answer her tefilos.

**The Chasam Sofer *zt'l*** explains that the combination of tefillah and optimism brought about her salvation.

***A Wise Man would say: "I live my life and let others live theirs. What people think of <u>me</u> is none of <u>my</u> business!"***

***"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."***

## Peninim on The Torah - Mishpat

Our gedolei Yisrael, Torah giants, personified the Torah's view of mishpat. To take something from another person, regardless of the circumstance, even with the knowledge that the owner would be honoured to give permission for its use, is considered tantamount to theft. It is not absolute truth.

If the individual were to be asked, "Do you have express permission to use it?" and the answer would be, "No," even though the person would certainly have given permission, the act constitutes theft.

**Horav Moshe Chevroni** (Rosh Yeshivah, Chevron) once sat in his seat on the Mizrach vont, eastern wall (the prestigious place reserved for the Roshei Yeshivah and distinguished guests), during Mussaf on Shabbos without a tallis. He davened Mussaf not wearing a tallis. Apparently, he had to leave davening for a few moments and had removed his tallis. When he returned, he discovered someone had taken his tallis by mistake. Halachically, he was permitted to use the other man's tallis. A dispensation allows one to use another fellow's tallis for a short while.

The Rosh Yeshivah refused to rely on the dispensation. If it was not his tallis, he would not use it. Instead, he would sit in front of the entire yeshivah and daven without a tallis!

When **Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl**, arrived in Eretz Yisrael to serve as Mashgiach in Ponovezh, a group of students from Gateshead, England (where he had founded and built the yeshivah), joined him. When they wanted to speak with their Rebbe in learning, he demurred. He said, "I have been hired to serve as Mashgiach, to be the ethical supervisor of the student body. As such, I am supposed to devote all of my thoughts and abilities to this task. To take time off to speak in learning on another subject is akin to stealing."



Last, when **Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl**, the Mashgiach in Ponovezh, reached the age of seventy-five, he asked the Ponovezher Rav, zl, to relieve him of his duties. He felt that, due to his age, he was unable to devote enough of himself physically to the students.

The Rosh Yeshivah replied, "Rav Chatzkel, I am prepared to pay your salary just to have you daven and learn in the bais hamedrash. The bachurim, students, benefit just from looking at you!"

**כי השחד יעור עיני חכמים ויסלף דברי צדיקים** ***For the bribe will blind the eyes of the wise and make just words crooked. (16:19)***

We think that shochad, bribery, is about taking money to sway judgment. As **Horav Shlomo Levenstein, Shlita**, points out, it is not always about accepting money. Any favour that, when granted, makes the beneficiary/judge feel indebted is considered a bribe. Indeed, as we see from the following story ("In the Footsteps of the Maggid," by Rabbi Paysach Krohn), one can never be too careful with regard to the far-reaching effects of taking a bribe/accepting a favour.

**Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl**, together with his brother-in-law, **Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl**, founded Telshe Yeshiva in America. The Rosh Yeshivah had lost his wife and four of his children to the Nazi murderers, when they decimated the city of Telshe, Lithuania. He remarried, and he and his wife were blessed with a son and a daughter. Understandably, he doted on these two children who served in some small manner as comfort and solace after the tragedy that he had sustained. Unfortunately, as much as they wanted to, they were unable, due to their material insufficiency, to provide the

two children with even the basic, simple toys with which all children grow up.




When their son's third birthday arrived, two of the yeshivah's bachurim, students, each one hailing from a well-to-do family, purchased a small tricycle as a birthday gift. We can only begin to imagine the joy that permeated within their home.

A short while later, the Rosh Yeshivah was set to give the Yoreh Deah bechinah, to test the oldest students and grant them semichah, ordination. When they walked into the bechinah the Rosh Yeshivah smiled, "Just the other day, I penned a thank you note to you for the gift you gave our son. It was greatly appreciated. However, due to the feelings of gratitude that I have for you, I do not think that I can be objective in testing you for semichah. Therefore, I must recuse myself and ask you to take a bechinah elsewhere."

Such was the greatness of the Rosh Yeshivah. He sensed that his overwhelming love for his son and his appreciation to the students

who had brought a little extra joy to his son's life, would impair his objectivity.

This is the extent to which the prohibition against taking a bribe can go.



## Rachmanim Bnei Rachmanim

The concept of *rachmanim bnei rachmanim*, merciful one's sons of merciful ones, was a character trait that was personified, not only by the Melech Yisrael, Jewish King, but throughout the ages by our gedolei Yisrael. Our Torah leaders were well known for their empathy, sensitivity and compassion in addressing the needs of their flock.

**Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita**, notes, Moshe Rabbeinu's primary quality for which the Torah lauds him is not the fact that he led us out of Egypt, served as the medium for the giving of the Torah or put up with us for the forty years that we sojourned in the wilderness.

The accolades bestowed upon him are expressed by two words: **וַיַּרְא בְּסִבְלֹתָם**, "He saw their burdens" (Shemos 2,11). Moshe was the prince of Egypt, living in Pharaoh's palace; yet, he went out to labour with his brothers and sisters. His compassion and empathy, his willingness to carry the yoke with his fellow, earned him the Torah's praise.

One erev Shabbos, a widow appeared at the house of the **Divrei Chaim (Horav Chaim Halberstam, zl, Sanzer Rav)**. She told him that she earned her meagre living from the profits she made from selling fruit in the city market. She complained that the quality of her fruit left something to be desired. As a result, she was rapidly losing her customers.

The Rav donned his bekeshe, frock, put on his hat and left his learning to head to the market. He stood at the widow's fruit stand

and took an apple in his hand and called, "Yidden, come take delicious, healthy apples!"

This was not enough for him. He had the widow double her price, in order to make up for her loss. When word got out in the city that the holy Sanzer was encouraging everyone to purchase the apples from the widow's fruit stand, everyone came running.

This is how one of the gedolei ha'dor, Torah leaders, demonstrated his sensitivity and caring for a widow.

There was a poor man in Kamenitz (Brest/Belarus) who, due to his abject poverty, wore the same clothes day in and day out. He did not have access to warm water and soap to bathe himself. As a result, his body emitted a noxious odour which permeated his one set of clothing. Wherever he went, people would disperse in order to distance themselves from him.

When the Rosh Yeshivah heard how this hapless man was being treated, he decided to do his part to change the attitude of the people toward this man. He waited until the man entered the bais ha'medrash. He then ran over to him, hugged and kissed him and walked arm in arm with him up to the mizrach, front of the shul, where he sat him down next to him.

Does this mean that Rav Baruch Ber's sense of smell did not function? Absolutely not! The man's lack of hygiene bothered him as well, but he would not allow his personal feelings to affect another Jew adversely. When a child soils himself, it is not very appealing. Does his mother complain? No, because he is her child. Likewise, this man was Rav Baruch Ber's brother.

***"Never regret a day in your life. Good days bring you happiness and bad days give you experience."***

## The Way of Emuna – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

## Judging Oneself Negatively and Others Favourably

**Sefer Tiferes Shlomo** explains that when the pasuk says **שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ** to "place for yourselves judges and watchmen" it can be understood to mean that a person should imagine that judges and policemen are watching him at all times. In other words, he should be his own judge and constantly be on the lookout for flaws in himself that he needs to rectify.

However, one should only look for criticisms about himself. When it comes to others, "they should judge the nation with a righteous judgment." When one judges his friend, he should always judge him favourably (Avos 1:6). One should think of all Jews as tzadikim (Yeshaya 60:21) and view them positively.

Thus, the pasuk continues to say: **לֹא תַכִּיר פָּנִים** "You shall not recognize their faces." Some people think they recognize what others are really about, and they can tell from their faces that they are bad people.

The pasuk says that one should not judge a person negatively just by looking at his face. Rather, one should know that he is a tzadik on the inside and he deserves to be judged favourably.

## It Is Forbidden to Question Any Jew

It is stated in Zohar Hakadosh (Parshas Emor): **ישראל ואורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא חד הוא** "Yisroel and the Torah ('oraysa') and the Holy One, Blessed is He, are all one."

Sefer Siach Sarfei Kodesh (page 98) quotes **Rav Yitzchok of Vorka zy"a** as explaining that just like it is forbidden to question Hashem or His Torah, it is also forbidden to ask questions about any Jew's behaviour. Rather, one should simply always judge him favourably.

## The Lesson of The Ants



The Medrash Rabbah (5:2) states: שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ בְּכָל־ שְׁעָרֶיךָ "You shall place for yourselves judges and watchmen at all of your gates This is as is stated (Mishlei 6:6): לֵךְ־אֶל־נְמָלָה עָצֵל רְאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וַחֲכָם 'Lazy one, go to the ant; study its ways and learn.

Without judges, officers, or rulers, it lays up its stores during the summer, gathers in its food at the harvest.' What were we meant to learn from the ant?

The Rabbanan say to study its manners, because it flees from theft. Rav Shimon ben Chalafta said: It once happened that a single ant dropped a grain. And all of them (the ants) were coming by and smelling it, and yet not one of them took it. The one who it belonged to came and took it.

See the wisdom that there is in it. And all of this praise that it has it did not learn from a creation, and it does not have a judge or an officer. As it is stated: 'Without judges, officers, or rulers.' You for whom I have designated judges and officers, all the more so that you shall listen to them, and there will be judges and officers set for you in all of your gates."

**The Nesivos Hamishpat zt"l** explains that we are meant to learn from ants how **not** to act. If you look at the life of an ant, the truth is that everything it eats is "stolen." It always takes food from a field without permission from the owner. However, although ants steal from people, they never steal from each other. They think they are straight and fair, but they are really thieves.

So too, a person can convince himself that he is an upstanding, good person and that his "shtick" is acceptable and fine. In truth, however, although he doesn't openly steal from others, he is engaged in theft through his corrupt practices. This is how one behaves if he has "no judges or rulers" and he thinks he can decide on his own what is permitted and what isn't.

Thus, one should learn from the ants that one must follow the laws of the Torah and refrain from any action that is not in accordance with its rules.

## His Eyesight Was Returned So That He Should Not be Suspected

וְלֹא־תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יְעַוֵּר עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים ***Do not take bribes because bribery blinds the eyes of wise men and perverts the words of the righteous.*** *(16:19)*



**The Chida** writes the following story in his Sefer Shem Hagedolim: **Rav Chaim Kapusi zt"l** was one of the sages of Sefardic world. He spent his entire life immersed in Torah and supported himself by accepting payment for presiding over monetary disputes.

In his old age, he lost his eyesight. There were some people who suspected that this was because he had accepted bribes, and the Torah testifies that a Dayan who takes bribes will be blinded.

When this gossip reached his ears, he was very upset because he thought it might be a chilul Hashem. He announced that everyone should gather on Shabbos in the bais knesses, where he would give a speech.

In his speech, he said, "I heard that some of you think I became blind because I took bribes. Therefore, in front of you all I ask Hashem to send us a sign. If He returns my eyesight to me, it should be taken as a clear sign that I never took a single bribe."

As soon as he finished speaking, his eyes opened, and he was able to see again. It was an open miracle!

From then on, whenever he wrote a letter, he would sign his name: "Hashem nisi (Hashem performed a miracle for me), Chaim Kapusi."

The Chida testifies: "When I was young, I saw a signature that he signed when he was blind. I was practically illegible. I later saw his signature from afterwards, with the words 'Hashem nisi, Chaim Kapusi', and it was written clearly."

## The Jewish Nation's Power of Renewal




**וְאָמַר אֲלֵהֶם שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתֶּם קְרֵבִים הַיּוֹם לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֵיכֶם אַל־יֵרַךְ לְבַבְכֶם** ***And he shall say to them, "Hear Yisroel, today you are approaching the battle against your enemies. Let your hearts not be soft…"*** (20:3)

Rashi - **אפילו אין בכם זכות אלא קריאת שמע בלבד, כדאי אתם שיושיע אתכם** -***Even if you have no merit other than the reading of the Shema, you are worthy that Hashem save you.***

**The Shem M'Shmuel** explains this by saying that Kriyas Shema represents accepting the "ohl malchus shomayim", Hashem rulership and authority. Even if a person has already accepted Hashem's authority many times but stumbled each time and disobeyed His

commandments, he should do it again and accept to serve Him once more. He should start all over and do it again.

This concept of renewal and the ability to start fresh is unique to the Jewish people. It is not found amongst the non-Jews. Non-Jews always feel that they are doing fine just the way they are, and they don't feel any need to reinvent or improve themselves. Only Jews have this ability to renew and recreate themselves and improve their ways.

This is the difference between Esav and Yaakov. The name Esav comes from the word "Asui", completed. This indicates that a non-Jew always feels like he is already complete and has no need to improve. The name Yaakov, however, comes from the word "Eikev", heel. This indicates how a Jew always feels small and lowly and always strives to raise himself up and renew himself.

As the **Yid Hakadosh of Peshischa zy"a** would say: Every day, a person should feel that he is a different person than he was yesterday. This is the different between a Jew and a non-Jew and it is in the merit of Kriyas Shema.

We do the same on Rosh Hashanah. We know that we stumbled a lot over the past year, but we accept to improve and to become new people in the coming year. It does not make a difference if we said the same thing last year and were unable to abide by our words. We believe that we can change this year, and, in that merit, we believe that Hashem will grant us a good year and the ability to fulfil our commitment to serve Him properly.

***"Elul is not a month of fear alone; it is the month when Hashem teaches a person that change is still possible." ~ Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin.***

כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה *For man is like a tree of the field* (20:19)



**The Alter Rebbe**, founder of Chabad Chasidism, once remarked to a Torah scholar during his first private audience:

"The Torah states, 'For man is like a tree of the field.' A tree that does not bear fruit is a barren tree. A person can be fluent in the entire Talmud and still be 'barren,' G-d forbid.

A Jew must produce 'fruit.' For what benefit is there in your learning and Divine service if you do not bear 'fruit' - if you do not cause your light to shine upon another Jew?"

## Short Story Of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

One time, a terrible event happened in the town of Vilna. The rich people used to make lavish and expensive weddings in a unique venue in the centre of Vilna.

A former shoemaker, who had struck it rich, also made his daughter a regal wedding in this fancy location. The rich people in town, who looked down upon this former shoemaker and his humble beginnings, were indignant and upset.

As the wedding party was walking home from the ceremony, all together and in great spirits, one of the rich people walked up to the father of the Kallah in the middle of the street. Intending to publicly embarrass him in front of everyone, the wealthy man removed his shoe and loudly asked him how much it would cost to repair the torn sole.

When told of this terrible occurrence, **Reb Yisroel Salanter ZT"L**, literally shook in pain and stated, "I am positive that the great leaders of the past generation who are now sitting in Gan Eden are being brought to judgment in Heaven for this. If such a story could happen, that means that they did not teach these townspeople well enough how to properly treat a fellow Jew."

*Comment: Parshas Shoftim discusses placing leaders and judges in all areas where Jews dwell. The role of our Gedolim (Torah leaders) is to lead by example, to show us how to live our lives correctly, and to discipline us when we stray from the true Torah path. We must value our Gedolim and heed their sage advice.*

## Avodas Halev – R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt'l

**וְאָמַר אֲלֵהֶם שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל** 20:3

As Klal Yisroel embarks on its way to wage a war, the Kohen steps forward, and proclaims the above and subsequent posukim. These posukim clarify who is and who is not qualified to fight in the army. The opening words of the Kohen are Shema Yisroel. Rashi quotes from Chazal that even if Bnei Yisroel have the sole merit of Shema, we are still worthy of being saved.

**R' Yitzchok Elchanan Spector z"tl** explains that what we say in davening: **שומר ישראל...האומרים שמע ישראל** - we are worthy of protection in the merit of saying Shema Yisroel. It would appear that there is a meritorious connotation in the words **שמע ישראל** alone, even without **ה' אלקינו ה' אחד**. We say afterwards **המיחדים שמך ה' אלקינו ה' אחד**.

What is that? I heard from a Rebbi of mine, in the name of his father **R' Dovid Affen shlita**, who quoted from the Sefer HaChareidim a new pshat in Shema Yisroel. Typically, we're used to translating Shema Yisroel as "Hear O Israel."

**The Chareidim** explains in depth and at length that here the word Shema means gather together, unite as one, based on the posuk **וישמע שאול את העם**. In order to accept upon ourselves the proper Kabolas Ol Malchus Shamayim, we must do so only through unity, forming a unified nation. That, in and of itself, is worthy of protection. Hence, **שומר ישראל...האומרים שמע ישראל**.




Based on this we may add an insightful machshava. Perhaps this is what the Kohen is proclaiming. Shema Yisroel - even if you only possess the merit of being a unified nation, that itself will enable you to successfully battle your adversaries, as one unit.

As Elul commences, and we begin our preparations for Rosh Hashana, the coronation of our King, we must strive to do so as a cohesive nation with great achdus and unity and without any discord. As our Rabbeim taught us: **אין מלך בלא עם**. With this in mind, we should all be zoche to an inspiring, uplifting Elul together as one.

## Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick




The Pasuk says צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף -

Why does the Pasuk say the word צֶדֶק twice?

**Rabbeinu Bechayei** says that it is to teach us that we have to be righteous in our actions and in our words. **~ ספר פרשה פשעטיל**

## Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

**Rav Chaim of Krasna, zt"l**, was a close student of the Baal Shem Tov. He once described a scene he had witnessed in his hometown. "A man made a public announcement that for the sum of one hundred golden coins, he would walk across the river on a tightrope. A great crowd gathered at the riverbank to watch this amazing feat.



I was astounded that anyone would be willing to place himself in such great danger, just for money. As I watched the man, however, I realized that he wasn't thinking of the money at all, as he made his way carefully across the rope. Instead, he concentrated one hundred percent on what he was doing, for otherwise he would have fallen into the river."

Rav Chaim said, "If one can concentrate so intently on what he is doing in order to gain one hundred golden coins, imagine how much more we should focus on our Avodas Hashem!"

## *Parshah* Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

One of the laws mentioned in Parashas Shoftim is the prohibition of planting Asheirah trees, trees worshiped as deities (16:21).

**Rav Yaakov Galinsky** quotes the Sifsei Kohein who understands an additional prohibition from this Posuk. The wording of the Posuk is, "Do not plant for you an Asheirah…" He understands this to also mean do not make an Asheirah of yourself, do not regard yourself as a deity.

The way we can come to such a misperception is when we become overconfident and haughty through our own self-perception, and when others make us out to be super-human. If we do not keep ourselves in check to ensure that we do not become haughty, it can spiral out of control to the extent where we will Chas V'Shalom view ourselves as gods.



## Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

## A Lesson In Life Courtesy Of "Professor" Ant

We tend to procrastinate, pushing off tasks for later. Sometimes we procrastinate so much that the task NEVER gets done.

"When we first got married, my wife brought home a whiteboard on which we could list the jobs that needed to be done. About a year later it disappeared. Just before our silver wedding anniversary, I found the whiteboard in our garage. There were about 20 jobs on it. None of them had been done - and most of them still needed to be done."

A prime reason for procrastination is laziness. The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni quotes Rav Yehoshua the son of Prachiya as saying, "In the future the reshaim who had already passed away will ask Hashem for an opportunity to repent. Hashem will respond to them, 'Fools! The world that you had been in is compared to a Friday afternoon, while this [eternal] world is compared to Shabbos. If a person doesn't prepare food before Shabbos, he will have nothing to eat on Shabbos.

Similarly, if a person is going on a sea voyage and doesn't prepare food while still on dry land, what will he eat? Furthermore, you should have learned from the ant. You didn't learn from the ant because of your laziness and foolishness, and therefore you didn't repent while you were still able to'."

It says in Orchos Tzaddikim (The Ways of the Righteous) that a person should learn from the ant the quality of zeal so that he may save his soul by preparing for Olam Haba (the next, eternal world).



The Talmud tells us that we can learn many good traits by viewing the world around us. Even the miniscule ant can teach diligence to a human being. It busily accumulates thousands of seeds, far beyond its own needs, as a lesson to man to apply himself to a similar diligent accumulation of wisdom and good deeds.

Midrash Rabba (Devorim 4:2) says that an ant only lives for 6 months. It only eats 1 and ½ grains in its entire lifetime. Yet it spends the entire summer collecting food. The winter is too cold for it to do so. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said that 300 kur of grain, approximately three hundred million grains of wheat were once found in a single ant's hole!

Therefore, King Shlomo said that a lazy person should view the actions of an ant and prepare mitzvos in this world for the next world. He should do them while he can just as the ant collects grain when it is able to, during the summer.

Why does the ant accumulate so much more food than it needs?

The Midrash continues, that the ant thinks that perhaps Hashem will grant it a longer life. Therefore, it continues gathering in order that it would have the food that it needs. The likelihood of an ant living longer is doubtful, yet it puts all its efforts into accumulating more food-just in case. Our eternal life in olam haba is a certainty. Surely,

we should use all our time in this world to accumulate "food for our soul". That spiritual "food" is our Torah learning and our mitzvos.

**Rav Dovid Leibowitz zt"l** explains in the name of the **Vilna Gaon** why one feels pain upon dying. It is the pain of realizing that it is too late to do any more mitzvos! It is the pain of realizing that we could have and should have done more while we were able to.

We, like the ant, should be diligent to use our time in this world to the utmost. We should learn as much Torah and do as many mitzvos as we can.

## Embarrassment




**Horav Yisroel Zev Gustman זצ"ל** was honoured with being mesader kedushin at a wedding. When he got to the chuppah, he noticed that they were going to use wine that had a hechsher that he preferred not to use. He didn't want to tell them to switch the wine because they might be embarrassed.

It just so happened that when they lifted the wine to pour it, the bottle broke, and they replaced it with a different wine that Rav Gustman approved.

***"When we face adversity, Hashem's love and support are unwavering. He walks with us through the storms, guiding us towards brighter days." ~ Rabbi Avraham J Trweski.***

## Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

**וכל העם ישמעו ויראו ולא יזידון עוד** 13:17

When a person is convicted of a capital crime, the execution is carried out in a public manner. Rashi writes that the Sanhedrin waited to carry out the execution until the next Yom Tov, when people would travel to Yerushalayim to fulfil the mitzvah of aliyah l'regel (ascending to the Temple), so that everybody would hear and talk about it. This was to inspire maximum fear in the populace in the hopes that future executions would become unnecessary. However, the Mishnah in Makkos (7a) quotes the opinion of Rav Elozar ben Azaria, who maintains that a Sanhedrin which carries out one execution in 70 years is considered violent and bloody.

If executions were so infrequent, how were they able to accomplish the desired deterrent effect?

**Rav Aharon Bakst** answers that this question may be asked only by one who has become accustomed and desensitized to the loss of human life. In the times of the Beis HaMikdash, the Jewish nation understood and appreciated the value of every person and every life to the extent that one public execution in 70 years caused such a national trauma that another one became superfluous for at least that long.

If we appreciated life with the proper perspective, we would be so shaken up by events like the Holocaust and recent tragedies in Israel that they would remain etched in our collective memory forever, inspiring us to proper repentance and rendering future reminders unnecessary.

***"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."***




## Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

In this week's Parsha, we find that Hashem commanded Moshe to appoint judges and officers.

The verse in Devarim 16:18 states: **שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן־לְךָ֙ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶ֔יךָ אֲשֶׁ֨ר ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵ֥ן לְךָ֛ לִשְׁבָטֶ֖יךָ וְשָׁפְט֣וּ אֶת־הָעָ֑ם מִשְׁפַּט־צֶֽדֶק** ***"You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates [settlements] that Hashem your G-d is giving you, Lishvatecha - for your tribes, and they shall govern the people with due justice."***

The word **לִשְׁבָטֶ֖יךָ** – *for your tribes* – seems to be misplaced. The Pasuk would read more smoothly and would appear more grammatically correct if the word had appeared right after the word "officers" earlier in the Pasuk.

The Pasuk would then read "You shall appoint judges and officers for your tribes…" Why does the word appear later in the Posuk?

**Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg ZT"L** (1785-1865), a student of **Rabbi Akiva Eiger ZT"L** and author of HaKsav V'haKaballah, explains the juxtaposition of this word in a manner that teaches us an extraordinary lesson. Judges and officers stand for the ideals and principles of truth and integrity.

The Torah is telling us here that to vouchsafe these ideals **לִשְׁבָטֶ֖יךָ** - for our tribes - for our people, it is not enough to merely treat judges and officers with respect only in court and while they are enforcing the law. Rather, we must do so all of the time.

One of the reasons for this is that judges and officers serve as role models of truth and integrity. If we want our role models to have the proper effect on us, we in turn need to treat our role models with respect and regard all of the time. When we fail to maintain this respect, our own moral growth and that of our society declines.

One of the reasons for court fines and in contemporary society, the assignment of bail, is not only to ensure that the person returns to court for judgement, but also to build respect for the law and its authority.

## Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk - The Jewish Art of War



When going to war, certain people were given exemptions. However, there were guards called זקפין - 'zokfim' stationed in front of the troops and behind them, armed with iron axes. (20:9)

Rashi explains that if anyone tried to desert illegally, they had permission to hit them in the legs. Then, he explains the term, 'zokfim,' which comes from the word לְזָקֵף 'upright.'

Rashi says they were called this because they would stand at the edge of the troop formations and uplift and strengthen the soldiers with encouraging words. They would say, "Do not flee, for fleeing is the first step to falling." They would reassure them that Hashem would fight for them, and they would succeed.

What a poignant message in this otherwise simple Rashi! These soldiers had permission to bludgeon deserters, but instead they would encourage them. Instead of wounding them, which would render them unfit for service, by using soft words instead of harsh force, they were able to empower these soldiers to complete their missions.

If each of us would consider this when we see someone doing something wrong, we would be able to turn so many people around, instead of turning them off to Hashem and their own Jewish heritage.

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes



## The Shofar

Throughout Elul, we blow a Shofar each day. The idea, say Chazal, is to wake us up from our sleep. However, don't be mistaken that the sound is merely a loud noise which could awaken us, and could easily be replaced with a drum, a bell, or a cute ringtone on our phones.

Rather, the Shofar is special because of its deep significance and meaning. It recalls the Akeida, when our forefather Yitzchok was willing to become a sacrifice to G-d, if that's what He wished. It was used to summon the Jews to war or to prayer, and it was the tool of miracles when conquering Jericho.

The Shofar represents the unhearable voice of Hashem, calling to us to look and see Him. Often, when we sleep, we can have a dream so vivid that we feel we are awake. Only when something is so out of the ordinary does it jar us enough to recognize that we are slumbering.

THAT is the role of the Shofar. It is a message to us to realize we are merely dreaming our way through life, and now it is time to wake up and take action in the real world.

***Daven – Not to ask Hashem for what you want, but to thank Him for what you already have!***

## Chizuk - Inspiration

### מִדְּבַר שֶׁקֶר תִּרְחָק

It was Chol HaMoed Succos when **Rabbi Gissinger** took his family to visit **Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky** at his Monsey home. Reb Yaakov greeted his family warmly and invited them inside where they sat to talk. Rabbi Gissinger wanted to give his Rebbi a little Nachas, and so he decided to demonstrate how his 14-month-old daughter was learning to walk.

Setting the child in one corner, Rabbi Gissinger dangled some candy in front of her, to encourage the child to walk to her father. Sure enough, the little girl balanced on her wobbly little legs as she giggled and made her way toward her father.

Glancing at his Rebbi, Rabbi Gissinger was gratified to see the ear-to-ear smile on his face and the clear joy he was feeling at watching his student's little child grow.

Hoping to extend his Rebbi's joy for a few more seconds, Rabbi Gissinger moved back a few steps, making it necessary for his daughter to walk a bit further. To his shock, Reb Yaakov's ready smile disappeared immediately.

"No," Reb Yaakov chided. "You must return to where you were just standing and give her the candy in that spot!" Rabbi Gissinger complied and then, once the little girl had her candy, turned to his Rebbi for an explanation.

"One cannot raise a child based on lies," Reb Yaakov said sternly. "The baby was shown that she would receive her prize after she walked to a specific spot, but then you changed the spot. This teaches the child an early form of lying and everything in a child's education has to be based upon the Emes."

This had a profound impact on Rabbi Gissinger in his understanding of how careful one must be to stay clear of dishonesty and falsehood. Even an infant child must not be promised one thing and

given another. How much more so do we, as Jewish adults, need to be loyal to truth and honesty. ("**Stories that Warm the Heart" by Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky**)

## Mussar – Introspection



The son of one of **Rav Pam's** former students was about to begin his first job in a Manhattan office where the manager was a non-religious Jew and the workers were Gentiles. The father told his son that before he began work, he should meet with Rav Pam and present any questions he might have relating to a Ben Torah's conduct in the workplace.

The young man had one question for Rav Pam: Given that he was going to be the only Orthodox Jew in the office, should he perhaps not wear a kippah at work?

Rav Pam said that this was out of the question; if taking off his kippah was the only way he could work there, he should not take the job. However, Rav Pam said: "To succeed, make sure to fulfil these three conditions: You must be the hardest worker in the office, the most honest worker in the office and the most pleasant worker in the office."

***"In Elul, even the smallest movement of the heart is precious. A person can rise higher in one moment of honesty than in many days without reflection." ~ Rav Yisrael Salanter — Ohr Yisrael.***

## Rabbi Peysach Krohn - Project Mesorah

**Rav Shach Zt'l** said, ***"Any Yid that is not tied to the past, has no hope of being connected to the future"***

In other words, we as Yidden, have to understand what our background is. I once heard a great expression, - ***"Every person should give their children roots and wings"***

You have to know where you came from, what your background is. What Klal Yisrael is all about. What your ancestors are all about. And then everybody can accomplish.

This is what the Pasuk means **כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה** 20:19. A person is like a tree. We all have roots. But we also have fruits. If we know what our background is and where we come from, then we will have a standard with what we can accomplish much.

## A Short Vort- Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

**עַל־פִּי הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר יוֹרוּךָ וְעַל־הַמִּשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁר־יֹאמְרוּ לְךָ תַּעֲשֶׂה לֹא תָסוּר מִן־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־יַגִּידוּ לְךָ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל- *According to the law they instruct you and according to the judgment they say to you, you shall do; you shall not divert from the word they tell you, either right or left.***




Commenting on this verse, Rashi says **אפילו אומר לך על ימין שהוא שמאל ועל שמאל שהוא ימין** that we must listen to the Rabbis even if they say that right is left, and left is right.

Based on this Rashi, **Rav Yitzchak Berkovits** asks the question; If a Rabbi was to actually come to you and tell you that right is left and left is right, shouldn't you respectfully say to him "I'm sorry but I think that you may have made a mistake"?

As Jews, we are trained to be independent thinkers. We are truth seekers and renowned for our critical eye. If so, how can we understand Rashi's statement to blindly follow the Rabbis when we know that they are wrong?

The answer, says Rav Berkovits, is simple. Rashi does not say, if the Rabbis come and tell you that East is West and West is East, you should listen to them.

Rather, he writes "right or left", because right and left are subjective our perception of them depends on the way which we are facing; for instance, when facing someone else, your right is their left.

Therefore, concludes Rav Berkovits, Rashi is telling us that if the Rabbis tell you that right is left, make sure you turn around because your perspective is all wrong!

## Rabbi Yossi Chazzan

**עַל־פִּי הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר יוֹרוּךָ וְעַל־הַמִּשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁר־יֹאמְרוּ לְךָ תַּעֲשֶׂה לֹא תָסוּר מִן־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־יַגִּידוּ לְךָ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל- *According to the law they instruct you and according to the judgment they say to you, you shall do; you shall not divert from the word they tell you, either right or left.***

**Rabbi Shimon Hirschler** asks, are there no other examples of two opposites besides left and right? It could have said light and dark, or day and night.

He answers that with light and dark, you can't make a mistake. Just look outside and you will see which one it is. But with left and right, it can be very confusing, depending on your perspective.

If I am standing at Mizrach and you are standing at maariv, my right is your left and your left is my right. So it all depends where you are standing in relation to me.

However, **אם אתה מאחורי הצדיק** if you are standing behind the Tzaddik, then your right is his right and your left is his left, and you will see things from his perspective.

But if you are standing **כנגד הצדיק** - opposite the Tzaddik, then your right is his left, and his left is your right.

The moral of the story is, that a person has to go **בתמימות**.

**תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה** is gematria 910 = **תשרי**.

## We are Better off than the Angels

Our sages say that the archangels — Gavriel, Michael, Rafael — they would give up their lofty station right under the Heavenly throne of serving Hashem, [in exchange] for one day of putting on *tefillin*… They are jealous of you who wear *tefillin*.

We have all these wonderful *mitzvos* that no angel can keep. We are better off than the angels. ~ **R' Lazer Brody**

## The Soul of a Tzaddik's Assistance

"**The Arizal Hakadosh** revealed that as soon as a person contemplates doing a mitzvah – the soul of a tzaddik from a previous generation who used to chase this particular mitzvah immediately appears and imparts the strength to perform the mitzvah according to its precise Halacha. Were it not for this, the evil inclination would overcome and seduce him into not performing the mitzvah.

Therefore, when we conceive of the notion to help a friend, we must act without delay because we are now receiving Heavenly assistance and one never knows what the situation will be like later. ~ **Rav Menachem Azolai**

## A Public Letter by the Chofetz Chaim – 5674

…The war that has broken out is truly fearsome, affecting every member of Klal Yisrael both physically and spiritually. There is no doubt that Hashem has caused it to happen in order to arouse us to return to Him in complete repentance. Therefore we are all obligated to beseech Hashem and pray that He saves us.

…It is the duty of each one of us to attend the Beis HaKnesses daily, to daven Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv there with our children, and to respond, "Amen, Yehei Shmei Rabba…" for, as the Midrash states, in this way countless harsh decrees are annulled each day.

It is impossible to fathom the number of salvation that could be brought about for Klal Yisrael if the inhabitants of each city were indeed to assemble in the Beis HaKnesses and daven together, and respond "Amen Yehei Shmei Rabba…" in unison every day. In this way, thousands of people could be saved from death. ~ ***Michtavei Choftez Chaim****, pp. 167, 169*

## Happy Under Any Circumstance

"Our sages teach that when a person thanks Hashem and is happy under any circumstance – relying on the emuna that everything Hashem does is for the very best – he or she will see the most trying situations in life make complete turnarounds for the better. Emuna is therefore the best way out of any difficulty." ~ **The Garden of Emuna**

***"Elul is a gift: a time when Hashem comes close. Whoever takes one step toward Heaven finds the gates already opening." ~ Chofetz Chaim — Shem Olam.***

## "My wife is unattractive"

The Gemara relates that R' Yitzchak ben Eliyashiv once observed his student, R' Mani depressed. The Rebbe asked what was wrong and the student complained, "My wife is unattractive." "What is her name?" R' Yitzchak asked. R' Mani replied, "Chana." "May Chana become beautiful," R' Yitzchak prayed, and so it was.

A short while later, R' Mani again complained. "She is beautiful now," he cried, "and treats me in an arrogant and offhand way." "If so," R' Yitzchak said, "May she again be unattractive." (Taanis 23b) And so it was.

Whatever Hashem gives us for our ultimate best – our attempts to "improve" things may not always lead to desirable outcomes. When we realize this fully, our lives are completely different. ~ **Rav Menachem Azolai**

## The Measure of A Person Is His Sense of Gratitude By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

לֹא־תַטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תַכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא־תִקַּח שֹׁחַד - The Torah admonishes judges not to show favouritism, not to corrupt justice, and not to take bribes "for bribes will blind the eyes of the wise and will pervert the words of the righteous" [Devorim 16:19].

No person is immune from the temptations of a bribe. Bribes attack a person's ability to judge fairly. Even if a person is righteous and even if he is extremely wise – he is not above falling prey to the power of a bribe.

The Gemara in Kesuvos [105b] states: "It goes without saying that monetary bribes are forbidden, but the Torah is coming to teach us that even 'verbal bribes' are forbidden." Flattery, kind words, and so forth can all affect a person's judgment. The Gemara lists several

incidents demonstrating how particular Amoraim of the Talmud acted regarding rejecting bribes.

Shmuel was having difficulty crossing a rickety bridge. A certain person stuck out his hand and helped him cross the bridge. Shmuel asked what brought him to the bridge right then. The person told Shmuel that he had a case to be heard in Shmuel's court for adjudication. Shmuel disqualified himself from being a judge in the case since he had just received a favor from this person.

Similarly, Ameimar was sitting in court and a feather flew on top of his head. A fellow came over and removed the feather. When he told Ameimar that he was there to have his case heard, Ameimar disqualified himself from hearing the case.

A third Amora related incident involved Mar Ukva. Someone spat in front of Mar Ukva and another person came along and covered up the saliva. Mar Ukva disqualified himself from hearing the case of the person who did him the favour of covering up the saliva.

A final case involved Rav Shmuel b'Reb Yossi and his sharecropper. The sharecropper who normally delivered produce to Rav Shmuel b'Reb Yossi every Friday showed up early one week and delivered the produce on Thursday because he had to be in town that day for a Din Torah. Rav Shmuel b'Reb Yossi disqualified himself from hearing the case, lest he be "bribed" by the favour of the early delivery that week.

**Rav Pam, zt"l**, asked a question about this narration: Are we to infer that these Amoraim were so fickle that the slightest favour could influence them? What's the big deal about any of these matters? Did these Amoraim have such little backbone that they could be swayed by trivial and incidental matters?

Rav Pam said that the lesson of this Gemara is not so much about judicial integrity or the corrosive nature of bribes. The major lesson that this passage of Talmud teaches is the concept of Hakaras

HaTov [gratitude]. This Gemara teaches us how indebted each of these Amoraim felt to anyone who did them even the slightest favour.

Such matters would be insignificant to us. As a result of our insensitivity to the proper attribute of Hakaras HaTov, such favours do not even register on our radar screens as necessitating any gratitude on our part. We do not even consider them favours. However, people who are highly sensitive to the attribute of showing gratitude do consider these kindnesses to be favours, worthy in fact of favours in return.

Rav Pam explains that many of the problems in our society indeed stem from the lack of appreciation of one's obligation for Hakaras HaTov. Husbands take the kindnesses that wives do for them for granted and wives take for granted the things that husbands do for them. Everybody has expectations of the other party in a marriage because "that's their job!" "Why should they get 'Extra credit' for merely doing their job?"

If each spouse would see the things done for them as a favour which needs to be recognized, marriages would be far happier and far more stable. The same is true in employer-employee relationships and in virtually all other relationships as well!

Rav Pam notes: If parents and alumni would have the proper sense of Hakaras HaTov to the institutions that educated them and their children, Yeshivos and Beis Yaakovs and Day Schools would not be in the sorry state of financial distress in which they find themselves today. All too often, the attitude is "I paid my tuition. I did my job. You did your job. Do not bother me anymore!" If they had a feeling for the proper sense of gratitude to these teachers and institutions, their ongoing gifts would be far more generous!

**Rav Kook**, when yet a Rav in Europe, before moving to Eretz Yisrael spent time in the summers on the Baltic seacoast in Latvia, as was the custom of many European Rabbonim. There was a hall there

where they made minyanim. Rav Reuvain Bengas happened to be there one evening and had Yahrtzeit. There were only nine people in the hall, so one of the people in the hall went outside looking for a tenth Jew for the minyan for Rav Reuvain's Yahrtzeit. Meanwhile, outside there was a certain fellow also trying to form a minyan and he had an exact minyan. The person from the hall did not realize this and pulled one person from the outside group into the hall for the inside minyan.

Although this was all unintentional, the person who organized the minyan outside stormed into the hall and started yelling at Rav Bengas and heaping insults upon him. Rav Kook, well-known for his great Ahavas Yisrael for every Jew, nevertheless went to the person who was berating Rav Bengas and slapped him across his face for embarrassing a Talmid Chochom.

The slapped person got so furious at Rav Kook that he decided to take him to the secular court for assaulting him. A whole commotion developed. A number of people asked Rav Kook to just apologize so that the matter would not go any further. Rav Kook refused. He said if this was just for my honor I could apologize, but this involves the honour of Rav Bengas who was shamed. I am not sorry I slapped him. I had to stand up for the honor of a Talmud Chochom. Let this person take me to court!

A few days passed, however, and the fellow had a change of heart. He came into Rav Kook and apologized and told him he was not going to take him to court. Seemingly that was the end of the story.

Years later, Rav Kook came to America and he was approached by the person who he had slapped years earlier in the Latvian seacoast town. He told Rav Kook "I cannot thank the Rabbi enough. I owe you a great debt of gratitude." He then took out a gold watch and gave it to Rav Kook. He explained that after Rav Kook slapped him, his life became miserable in Europe. As a result of that tumultuous incident, he became notoriously known as the Jew who yelled at Rav Benges

and the Jew who was slapped by Rav Kook. He had no choice but to leave Europe and go to America where no one knew him. In America, he became a millionaire! He felt his good fortune was all the result of the slap of Rav Kook and wanted to show Hakaras HaTov to him.

Sometimes we should feel gratitude even for a slap in the face! Likewise, the Amoraim felt a super sensitivity for gratitude even for trivial matters. The same is true of righteous Jews in every generation.

**The Chofetz Chaim** was a Kohen and could not attend funerals. A woman who had once donated a window to his Yeshiva in Radin died. (This was a simple window – not a fancy stained-glass window.) Even though the Chofetz Chaim could not enter the cemetery and despite his old age, he walked a long distance behind the casket to the cemetery to accompany the body to burial, as Hakaras HaTov for the donation of the window.

If only we would recognize the obligation to recognize favours – however small – the world would be a far better place!




## Gimpel's Din Torah

In Gimpel's words: "For the past 5 years, I have been fighting in **בית דין** with my contractor over a significant amount of money. A few weeks ago, I was frustrated that the case was getting so dragged out and I decided that I am putting an end to it! I hired a *Toen* who would help me finally end the case. We arranged a date for the **דין תורה**, and on a Monday night I was meant to go with my wife to the **בית דין**.

That day I was trying to learn with a chavrusa of mine and as you can understand I was having trouble focusing. My Chavrusa noticed something was on my mind. I was mamash worked up! He asked me if something was bothering me and oh did I let out my frustrations on

him. My chavrusa asked me, "If I would offer you that amount of money on condition that you hate another Yid, would you have agreed?" "No way," I answered, "It's a sin to hate another Yid." My chavrusa then told me, "Look at you now, you're doing the same thing – you're making all that hate! Just listen to you!" "But it's a lot of money." I said…

Punkt then one of the great Rabbonim of the Yeshiva passed me and my chavrusa, and my chavrusa said that we were going to ask his advice. He asked, "You're willing to give your menuchas hanefesh for this money?" I said, "But it's a lot of money!"

The Rosh Yeshiva said, "Let me tell you what the **Chofetz Chaim** writes about this – the Chofetz Chaim says that a father does not want his children to fight. The Chofetz Chaim explains with a mashal; (sha'arey tevuna perek yud aleph) there was a father who was giving out portions to all his children and one kid grabbed a different kid's portion. Instead of fighting back, the child went to his father and told him that his sibling took his portion and that he knew that his father did not want him to fight. The father gave his child a huge kiss and said, "Here, I am going to give you double."

The Chofetz Chaim concludes, "If the child would have fought even though he was the one who was right, Hashem is still upset". The Chofetz Chaim continues and explains, instead you should turn to Hashem and say, "I have bitachon in Hashem that I am doing the right thing (by not fighting) and I am making Hashem happy," Hashem will give you double!

I said to the Rosh Yeshiva "Is the Rebbe telling me that I should cancel the entire case?" He said " I am not telling you what to do I am just telling you a **מראה מקום**.

I called my wife and asked her if she is maskim to cancel the din Torah. She said "What happened all the sudden? I have been trying to convince you for the last 5 years to drop the entire thing!"

I told her what the Rosh Yeshiva said. I then cancelled the din Torah. I called the Toen and told him what the Rosh Yeshiva had said, and that I cancelled the case. The Toen told me that he wishes all his clients would speak to my Rosh Yeshiva, there would be a lot more shalom in Klal Yosroel and maybe Moshiach would be here already!

Later that Monday night I called my friend and told him "I won the din Torah!" And then I explained what I meant. At 7:15pm when I was meant to be at the Din Torah with my wife, my child with serious allergies had a dangerous allergic reaction and because my wife was home, she was able to use an 'Epipen' that aided in saving their life. "This is what I meant when I said I won the court case. My child was saved!"

This above story happened very recently. It was shared with another person who was tremendously inspired to the power of shalom and how pained kaviyochel Hashem is when His children are fighting, EVEN if they are the correct and he decided then and there to make up with his in-laws with whom he had been in a fight with for the last 15 years!



**The story:** Someone told me the following story that Rav Elimelech Bidderman once said over –

There was a young bochur who was becoming religious and studied every day with a choshuvah Rebbe. One day his Rebbe told him that if someone spends money for Shabbos, it is not part of his yearly **חשבון** and Hashem pays for it. This bochur heard the words and took them to heart.

The following Shabbos a friend asked him if he wanted to join him and a couple of other guys of a trip to Tzfas. (They wanted him to chip in). The boy agreed, but he did not have the money to pay for it right then. However, since his Rebbe told him that Hashem pays, so he agreed happily to join in.

After Shabbos, they told him that the total he was to chip in was 388.60 NIS. When they asked him how he was going to pay, he told them that he was not concerned since his Rebbe told him that Hashem will take care of it. They said no problem, he can pay as soon as he gets the money.

The following day a relative decided to give him a birthday present. What was the birthday present? He placed one of every bill and one of every coin into a pouch and gave it to him – I will let you do the maths - it was the exact amount of money he owed to the shekel!

זכרו תורת משה

## The Water Carrier

**R' Yaakov Aker** says over an incredible story that he witnessed. He saw the **Divrei Shmuel** sitting alongside **R' Mottel Slonimer** when the former said over a personal story that happened to him:



The city's watercarrier was a simple fellow who didn't know more than the very basics of Yiddishkeit. His daughter was getting to the age of seeking a shidduch, and understandably, the water carrier sought a *chassan* for her who was

of similar caliber to himself. *Baruch Hashem*, he found a *bachur* to his liking and they happily got married.

While the father-in-law knew very little, his new son-in-law knew even less. He decided that he would start learning with his son-in-law in the hope of imbuing in him at least as much as he knew.

They started with the basics: *aleph-beis*, *nekudos*, *Shema*, etc. The son-in-law absorbed everything he was being taught with much excitement and thirst. He hadn't been taught anything in his youth, and once turned on, he felt he needed to make up for all the lost time.

After they finished the basics, they started learning the meaning of *Shema*. When they got to *Ve'ahavta*, the father-in-law explained to him its commandment—that we're commanded to love Hashem. This time, however, the son-in-law responded disappointedly.

"That can't be the commandment," explained the son-in-law. "It can't be that we're commanded to love Hashem. We need to seek the *rebbi* to properly understand this."

With that, the two headed to the Divrei Shmuel and proposed their question. The father-in-law repeated the way he understood the commandment to ensure that he was understanding it properly. After hearing the water carrier's explanation, the Divrei Shmuel confirmed that he was, in fact, correct.

The *rebbi* then turned to the son-in-law and asked him, "What's bothering you with this explanation? What's preventing you from accepting this commandment?"

"How can it be," said the son-in-law, "that Hashem commanded me—little me—to love him?! How can it be that the King of the entire universe would want me to love him? It can't be?! If Hashem is commanding this, it must be that there's a great love that Hashem has for us, and therefore in return Hashem commands us to love

Him, as He loves us so much and wants our love. The commandment definitely must be that we in return should love Hashem."

"You're right!" responded the *rebbi*. "That is the proper approach! Hashem loves us, and therefore he desires that in return we should love Him. If Hashem did not immensely love us, then there would be no way that He could desire for us to love Him. It's only out of Hashem's immense love for us that He wants us in return to love Him."

When the son-in-law heard this, he began dancing uncontrollably. He started singing: "*Eich hub deir lib viel di hust meir leib*—I love you because you love me so."

Seeing this, the Divrei Shmuel remarked that at that moment, the son-in-law reached the ultimate and definitive level of *ahavas Hashem.*

This is what the Divrei Shmuel was relaying to R' Mottel—true *ahavas Hashem*. Proper love for Hashem comes forth through the knowledge that Hashem loves us and is seeking that we, in return, express our love.

As we've seen, when approaching something, the primary objective is to understand the theme. The theme of doing mitzvos is to connect with Hashem, as the sefarim teach us, and as David Hamelech himself teaches us: "All your mitzvos are to bring forth *emunah*." This means that the underlying premise of the Torah is connecting with Him, living with Him, and bonding with Him.

Being connected to Hashem is the most enjoyable thing. It's the greatest pleasure that one can possibly receive, in this and in the next One. Through doing Hashem's mitzvos, we'll feel so good and continue our commitment to fulfil His mitzvos.

## Rabbi Ari Bensoussan - Never Take for Granted

There was once an old, saintly, holy Rebbe. He had a beautiful community and those around him endeared him. One day, they saw that his clothing was quite worn out and tattered. This was their Rebbe and he can't walk around in old, torn clothing! With this in mind, they proceeded to buy him a new coat and a new pair of pants.

When the Rebbe saw this, he was so taken aback and so thankful. But the part that his students did not see was what happened next. Later that night when the Rebbe put on his new clothing, he took his old pair of pants that had served him well for all those years, folded them very nicely and said to them in Yiddish, "*A groyse groyse dank*— Thank you so, so much, for all the years that you've been there for me." He then gave them a kiss and put them nicely into the trash.

It is so within our bloodstream and pumps within our heart to have *hakarat ha'tov*, gratitude. It is ingrained within us to always show thanks to those who have helped us and to Hashem for giving us so much. That is what makes us who we are as Jews.

**Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l** was once asked where the best place in Shemonah Esrei is to ask for things. There are those who would have thought he'd say in Shema Koleinu. But it wasn't. "It's in Modim," he replied. When you are saying thank you to Hashem for everything He has given you, at that moment, Hashem says, "The world is open to you. Aks for anything you want."

We are a people of *hakarat ha'tov*. We are a people who show so much thanks. Let's sit for a moment and think: could I imagine a life without eyesight? Can I imagine groping around in the dark to get anywhere or anything? Can I imagine a life without being able to ever see?

Why are we people of *hakarat ha'tov*? Why are we people who show such appreciation? Because we should never take anything for granted. Can you imagine a life without eyesight? Of course not.

When it therefore comes to the things that we're meant to control, every single time that we are being challenged, we are supposed to stop and think, "I can't take my eyesight for granted because I am so thankful for what You have given me." This amazing tool, this amazing talent, this amazing gift called the "Gift of Sight" is something we only ever want to use for things which will propel us towards greatness and never for things which will take us downward.

Every single time you control yourself is a time when you are saying thank you for what you have been given and a moment in which, as highlighted by Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, you can daven for anything in the world. When you say thank you for the most valuable thing in the world, you open the channels for the greatest blessings in this world to flow into your life.

## Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff - Soaring Heavenward



The Torah doesn't want us to just observe the *mitzvos*. "You shall perform my commandments, and my decrees you shall observe, to walk in them" (*Vayikra* 18:4). We are meant to walk with the *mitzvos*.

**The Shelah Hakadosh** explains that a person has to always be walking, growing and ascending. Today is not yesterday and today is not tomorrow. Every day we are challenged to grow in our levels of *kedusha*.

The Navi Zechariah teaches us, "And I will place you as those who walk between those who stand" (Zecharia 3:7). There are two types of creations, explains **Rav Tzadok Hakohen** of Lublin. A *malach* and a *mensch*, an angel and a human. An angel is given a mission and sets out to accomplish it. In the words of Zechariah, an angel is one who stands, forever remaining on the level commensurate to its mandate.

A human being, in contrast, is compared to one who walks. He grows, he climbs, he aspires, he achieves. A person must always be "walking" in his observance of the *mitzvos,* says the Torah.

This is the foundation behind controlling our thoughts and impulses. By stopping what we wanted to do, we are walking. By stopping, we are running. By refusing to look and speak, we are growing in invaluable ways. We are reaching heights that we never had attained before. This is the power of working on our *middos,* our character. We are soaring heavenward.

In the space module that the astronauts flew to the moon, the seats were molded to their body contours, the instrument panel was mere inches from their faces, and they ate through tubes. Did they feel claustrophobic? Absolutely not. They were soaring heavenward where man had never gone before.

That is exactly what you do when you control yourself and have checks and balances in your life. When you focus on strengthening yourself internally, you are soaring heavenward. You're walking, you're running, and you're climbing, and yesterday is not today and today is not tomorrow,

**The Chofetz Chaim zt"l** emphasized the importance of living in the present moment each and every day in reflecting upon the words, וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹקיךָ שֹׁאֵל מֵעִמָּךְ - "*And now* Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask from you" (*Devarim* 10:12). It's all about today. Yesterday was yesterday and tomorrow is tomorrow. We need to grow today. In the merit of that growth, we become worthy of all the blessings of the Torah and the greatest happiness in our lives.

***"The light of Elul awakens the inner point of truth. When a person listens to that point, he discovers who he was meant to be." ~ Rav Dessler — Michtav Me'Eliyahu***

## Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman -The Ultimate Kiddush Hashem



**Reb Yosef Friedenson z"l**, a precious Jew who lived on the Upper West Side and contributed much to the efforts of Agudath Israel, lived through twelve concentration camps. In one of the camps, underneath Reb Yosef's bunk, a Hungarian Jew named Reb Binyonim slept. Reb Binyonim was known to be a very special Jew. His prayers were said with a full, sweet heart and intense tearful devotion.

Each day, when the barracks were cleared for the inmates to be taken to work, two of the inmates would remain behind to clean up after everyone. One day, it came the turn of Reb Yosef and Reb Binyomin. As they went along with their work, they found to their utter surprise a loaf of bread. The value of a loaf of bread in a concentration camp was nearly priceless. Incidentally, when the transports from Western Europe, where the Jews were generally better off, arrived, a world-famous banker who was on the train met a new life. Still, he retained some hidden jewels. On one occasion, when the banker stood in his striped prison uniform and was starving, he took out his velvet pouch and poured out all its contained diamonds for a loaf of bread. Such was its worth in those dark days.

When Reb Yosef and Reb Binyomin came across the loaf, Reb Binyomin remarked to Reb Yosef, "I know who this loaf of bread belongs to. It belongs to the polish gentile, Ivan." Reb Binyomin then continued. "Reb Yosef, let's return the loaf of bread to the Polish non-Jew. He will then go around the entire concentration camp and remark, 'Jews are not thieves.'

"In our hunger throes," recalled Reb Yosef, "we took the loaf of bread and gave it to the Polish gentile. He couldn't believe what we had done, and he indeed went around to everyone, saying, 'Jews don't steal.'"

Kiddush Shem Shamayim. Sanctification of Hashem's Name. This is the essence, values and character that we want to build within our children. We have a responsibility to raise children who live as a walking Kiddush Hashem and who are examples of humility, modesty, and respect for others. And it begins with us living and breathing this very same way, as those who make our every step a Kiddush Hashem.




## Direct Line

A few days ago, someone asked me the following question. "Tell me, is there anyone nowadays who has a direct line to the Eibishter that I can go to, and he will pray for me?"

I was in a shul and I found an answer to this fellow's question in a sefer called Arugas HaBoisum.

There was once a city of animals with an animal king. One day the king made a decree on the city, and an emergency meeting was held amongst the most important animals of the city. At the meeting, they discussed that someone would have to step up and be the one to speak on behalf of the animals of the city and try to appease the king so he would annul his decree.

The biggest חכם of the animals, the wise fox, offered to be the one to speak. He said, "I have 300 parables that through them I can appease our king."

The following day, the fox, with many other important animals, made their way to the palace of the king. As they reached the entranceway the wise fox told all those with him that he apologized, but he forgot half of what he wanted to say. The other animals tried to encourage him, "Don't worry, you still have plenty what to say to intervene on our behalf." However, as they reached the kings chamber, the fox forgot the other half of what he wanted to say. The fox told them quickly, "I feel terrible, but each one of us must speak and try to appease the king on their own behalf."

Moshe Rabbeinu said to Hashem, "Rebono Shel Olam, I beg of you, when you see your children b'tzaar and they have nobody to ask for mercy on their behalf, please answer them immediately." Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu that He would do that.

The question on this is, if there is nobody to ask, then who will ask? And if nobody asks, how will Hashem answer?

The answer is that in every generation, there are **צדיקי הדור** who have the ability to turn to Hashem and beseech on our behalf. But what happens if one lives in a generation where they don't know of a **צדיק** that they can turn to, to beseech on their behalf – what should they do?

The answer is that he gets the power of the **צדיקי הדור** . Hashem promised this to Moshe Rabbeinu! If there is no "fox", you become the fox! As the possuk says, "**מי כה' אלקינו בכל קראנו אליו**" – all you need to do is cry out to Hashem from the deepest resources of your heart and you will be answered like the **צדיק** of the generation.

When we daven to Hashem we have to imagine that we are having a real conversation with a King because we are.

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstien Shlit"a said over that one time a woman came to see his Rebbetzin **ע"ה** and she was afraid to walk in because she saw her talking with someone. After a little while she saw her take three steps back and only then did the visitor realize that the

Rebbetzin was davening. That is how she davened to Hashem - it was real by her.

Similarly, a woman, who never knew what goes on in a Shul, once came and sat in the Ezras Nashim of the Yeshiva of **Rav Elya Lopian** and watched how all the boys were davening. Afterwards, someone asked her what she saw, and she said, "I saw something very unique about the Rabbi standing in the front, different than from everyone else. By the Rabbi, it looked like he was talking to someone."

This is how we are meant to feel and behave when standing in front of Hashem in Tefillah!



One out of the many things that **Harav Kalman Krohn** זצוק״ל said over was that one Elul, **HaRav Nosson Wachfogel** זצוק״ל sent him to Manchester to learn Yiras Shamayim from the **Manchester Rosh Yeshiva**. Rav Kalman Krohn said over that he wrote down everything he saw in those few weeks, and he filled up a few notebooks.

One story he mentioned was that the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva did not daven **מעריב** with the Yeshiva and instead davened by himself. Nobody was allowed to be there when the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva davened. Rav Kalman said that he stayed in the room and he got to hear how the Rosh Yeshiva davened **מעריב**.

Rav Kalman said that the Rosh Yeshiva would say a few words in the Shemoineh Esrei and then translate it into Yiddish! Rav Kalman said that he wrote down the translation that he heard at that time and they were marvellous! It was moirah noiraos to see the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva oimed lifnei HaMelech Mamesh!

People look at Tefillah like they are sending kvitlach to Hashem. However, that is not what Tefillah is. By Tefillah one is "Oimed lifnei Hamelech mamesh".

The Seforim Hakdoshim say that when you daven, you are meant to talk in a way as if you would be talking to someone standing directly in front of you. You are supposed to picture that you are standing mamesh in front of Hashem and talking to Him.

Tefillah is our private meeting with the **רבונו של עולם**. When we look at Tefillah in this way, that it is our private personal meeting with the King 3 times a day, - just me and Hashem, and I can talk to Him about whatever is on my mind - we could and would not possibly be able to look at Shacharis, Mincha, or Maariv as "bumps in the road" of our daily schedule. We would not be able to look at these Tefillos as a thing we need to do just to be able to get to the next part of our day. Rather we will begin to look at these Tefillos as the most important part of our daily schedules.

The following story I heard from **Harav Avrohom Chaim Foyer Shlit"a;** In Russia, there was once a Chossid who approached his Rebbe the **גר״ז** and said, "Rebbe, I need Chizuk in Tefillah!"

The Rebbe asked the Chossid "Why do you suddenly need chizzuk in Tefillah?"

The Chossid replied with a story. "Seven years ago, I was passing a courthouse and I heard torturous screams coming from inside the building. Curious to see what was happening, I went inside. I saw how there was young gentile there who was getting heavy lashes on his bare back and was bleeding and screaming in pain.

I went over to one of the people standing by and asked him why this fellow was deserving of such heavy blows. The one I asked explained to me that the fellow was a soldier in the Czar's army, and when he was on duty, one of his ears got frozen solid from the freezing cold. Bewildered I asked him, "I do not understand, such loyalty to the

Czar that he worked in the ice cold to the extent that his ear froze! I would give this soldier a medal for his devoted work and here he is getting punished for it?!!"

I could not understand, but he explained it to me.



"You see, he said, when you are working under the Czar, you have the mindset that you are in such awe and trepidation that your blood needs to be bubbling from the fear of the Czar. If a soldier's ear could possibly freeze while working under the Czar of Russia it is a sign that he doesn't realize and comprehend who he is standing in front of!"

The chossid continued, "After hearing this I thought to myself, if this is the attitude one has live toward the czar a king of flesh and blood all the more so I need to have a feeling a trepidation when I stand in front of the Rebono Shel Oilum when I daven.

After this story I had a tremendous chizuk in my Tefillah and when I would daven, I would stand in awe and fear of Hashem, like an *eved* stand in front of his master. However, now it is already seven years later, and I feel I need chizuk in my Davening again, so that is why I came to the Rebbe to ask for chizuk in Tefillah."

True, our ears don't freeze when we daven. We have many other distractions. A phone, for example, can distract someone, or *stam*, it is very easy to space out.

We learn from this story that to space out all the time and be busy with other *zachin* while standing in front of Hashem is unacceptable and we should think of it as something that is worthy of being lashed for ח״י. This soldier was not even standing directly in front of the Czar, whereas when we daven, we are standing Mamash in front of Hashem.

## It's All Good

"Everything Hashem does is for the very best…. A mortal can't possibly see or understand all the variables that Hashem takes into account. Just as a courtroom judge can't try a case – or comes to a mistaken verdict – with incomplete or insufficient facts, none of us are in a position to conclude that a particular situation is bad, without seeing what the future holds in store." ~ The Garden of Emuna.

## Our actions have long and far-reaching repercussions – both good and bad.

Many years ago, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of the Philadelphia *Yeshivah*, ***Horav Eliyah Svei, zl***, was in New York with his family. New York to Philadelphia is not a long trip. When one must take public transportation, however, it can be pricey – especially if a number of tickets must be purchased.

The local train was $12.00 one way. It was slow and made numerous stops, so they would arrive in Philadelphia later than they wanted. Amtrak had a train that was more convenient, but also very expensive: $70.00. They decided that all would travel by bus except for one son, who would take the train. This way, he could arrive in *yeshivah* for the last fifteen minutes of *shiur*, class.

When they asked their father why he was spending $58.00 for a mere fifteen minutes of *shiur*, the *Rosh Yeshivah* explained, "I do not want it to be recorded in Heaven that I refused to spend $58.00 for fifteen minutes of *shiur*. I do not know what the *schar*, reward, is for fifteen minutes of *Gemorah shiur*, but I do know that if I do not spend the extra money, then all the *schar* I will ever get for fifteen minutes of *Gemorah* is $58.00. I am not willing to exchange my Heavenly reward for a few dollars."

Not only does this show the *Rosh Yeshivah's gadlus*, greatness, it gives us a perspective on the far-reaching echoes of our actions.



# Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

## Be Happy with Your Portion

Someone was telling the **Tosher Rebbe zt'l** about the troubles he suffers in life. As they spoke, the gabbai brought in a hot tea for the Rebbe. The Rebbe spilled some drops of the tea on the man, and a few moments later, the Rebbe spilled more of the tea on him.

The Rebbe asked him, "Did the hot tea hurt you?"

"Of course, it hurt," the man replied. "But if the Rebbe did it to me, I am certain that it was for my benefit, and it will be mamtik my dinim (remove my problems from me)."

The Tosher Rebbe replied, "I am a simple person. I don't know how to be mamtik dinim (to remove your tzaros). Nevertheless, you believed that I can bring you salvation with the scolding of hot tea because people call me Tosher Rebbe. Kal v'chomer, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings you tzaros, you should be able to believe that it is for your good. Hashem can certainly be mamtik dinim. There is no reason to cry and complain. Believe it is all for your good."

**The Nesivos Shalom zt'l of Slonim zt'l** would often say, "Women seem deprived of many mitzvos. They don't wear tallis and tefillin, or study Torah (at least not in the manner that men do). However, there is a great avodah that they do for Hashem. They say **שעשני כרצונו** , thanking Hashem for making them exactly as they are, and there is no greater avodah than when one accepts Hashem's plan.

This message is also expressed in the brachah **שעשה לי כל צרכי**, "***Hashem gave me everything I need***." It expresses, "Hashem gave me everything I need; I lack nothing."

Someone told **Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l** that he feels he can't say the brachah **שעשה לי כל צרכי** because he lacks things. "If I say this brachah, it will be a brachah l'vatalah, because it isn't correct for me."

Rebbe Bunim told him, "Whatever you lack is for your benefit. You couldn't complete your mission in life if you had those things. So, you do have everything you need."

## Always Starting Anew

It states in this week's *parashah* (17:15) **שום תשים עליך מלך**, "***You shall set a king over you***."

We can explain that "A King" alludes to Hashem. The pasuk is hinting **שום... עליך מלך**, make Hashem your King. This alludes to the theme of temimus in thought, action, and speech. The Pasuk is saying (a) Don't complain about your life because believe that Hashem is your king and leads you in the best way. (b) Do all of Hashem's mitzvos without cutting corners and without compromising. Hashem is king, and we must be devoted to His word. (c) For anything you need, turn to Hashem in prayer because Hashem is your king, and He will listen and grant you your needs.

The Torah writes **שום תשים עליך מלך**, which literally translates as "You shall set, you shall set, a king over you." It is written double because sometimes you will fall from your level.

Once again, you are (a) complaining that your life isn't good. (b) making compromises with your adherence to the mitzvos. (c) avoiding saying sincere tefillos.

It is natural that a person will fall from his level, so the Torah writes twice, **שום תשים עליך מלך** after you accepted Hashem as king once, do so another time. Continually strengthen yourself with your awareness that Hashem is king and be prepared to serve him with *temimus*.

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 31.) lists several examples of double expressions written in the Torah. One example is **פתוח תפתח**, the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. The Gemara says that the double expression means that if the poor person keeps coming back to you, you should help him again and again, even a hundred times. Here too, the Torah is telling us **שום תשים**, make Hashem your king again and again.

**בראשית** stands for **ב-ראשית** (two beginnings). This indicates that if one tried to change his ways once, and failed, **ב-ראשית**, start from the beginning again and try a second time. And if necessary, start a third time, and a fourth time, until you succeed.

Each week, Shabbos at Minchah, we begin to read the new *parashah*, but we don't finish it. We only read until *Sheini*. Monday and Thursday, we start from the beginning again, and we only read until *Sheini*. On Shabbos morning, we read the entire *parashah*. This indicates that one starts and fails, starts again, and fails. But if he keeps at it, he will eventually succeed.

**בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ - The Rebbe of Lechovitz *zy'a*** said that the entire world was created for **בראשית** - for people who start anew and try again and again to change their ways.

**ואהבת לרעך כמוך**

**Reb Chaim Vital zt'l** writes: "Before one begins to daven in beis kneses, starting with the Akeidah and onward, he should accept on himself the mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**, to love his fellow man like himself. His tefillah will go up together with the tefillos of Klal Yisrael. His tefillah will go up very high, and it will bear fruit… If one of the friends has a tzarah (due to children or an illness, chas v'shalom) they should all participate in his tzaar and daven for him.

My teacher (**the Ari) z'l** warned us immensely about the importance of the love between us students…"

## Vitur

It states (16:22) **ולא תקים לך מצבה אשר שנא ה' אלקיך**, "You shall not set up for yourself a monument, which Hashem, your G-d hates."

**The Ishbitzer zt'l** (Mei HaShiloach, Shoftim) explains that the pasuk refers to a lesson in *ben adam l'chaveiro*. One mustn't be a **מצבה**, firm and stuck in his decisions. He must bend and allow other people to have their way.

The pasuk teaches us to be *mevater*. Vitur and improvement of ben adam l'chaveiro are parts of the avodah of Elul because **אלול** is roshei teivos for **א**יש **ל**רעהו **ו**מתנות **ל**אביונים.

The one who is *mevater* is the one who wins. Life is better for people when they know how to be *mevater*.

My grandfather, **Reb Dovid Biderman zt'l**, was one of the holy tzaddikim of Yerushalayim (niftar year 5678). He described the great fear in Yerushalayim during Elul in those days:

One year, on erev Yom Kippur, at his seudas hamafsekes, there were many broken and poor Yidden in his home, and he wanted them to be happy, so he livened up the atmosphere until everyone was speaking and laughing.

Just then, Reb Shmuel Shenker zt'l (son-in-law of Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnefeld zt'l and student of Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l) came to Reb Dovid Biderman's home to wish him a good year. He was startled by the happy atmosphere in the home, and he whispered to Rebbe Dovid Biderman, "It is only an hour-and-a-half before Kol Nidrei, and it is so lebedig here!"

Rebbe Dovid Biderman told him, "***When a baby is crying because a new tooth is coming in, the mother will take the baby and play with it, jump the baby up and down, toss the baby up and catch the baby until the baby smiles - These broken Yidden are the Shechinah's toothache. We have to get a smile out of them***!"

**אלול** is roshei teivos, **לעבעדיג און ווייטר לעבעדיג**, "Happy and happy again." And it is a great mitzvah if we can make others happy.

**The Yeitav Lev zt'l** said that when **אלול** is **את לבבך ואת לבב**, that he thinks about others, then **אלול** means that he is **אהוב למעלה ונחמד למטה** - "beloved above and below."

## Rabbi Shimon Kaplan - There is nothing in גשמיות




We must work on ourselves to understand how terrible the **דמיון** of **גשמיות** is. **גשמיות** gives a person no real **שמחת החיים** whatsoever, a person gets nothing real from **גשמיות**. Perhaps some of you read it, but there was recently an interview with **R' Eli Stefasnky**, a **איד** who gives a **שיעור דף היומי** every day to 12,000 people, a phenomenal thing.

I never realised what a **מתמיד** he was. He gets up every morning at three o' clock and he goes through the **גמרא** together with **רש"י** the **תוספות** and **ראשונים אחרונים**. He puts in tremendous toil and effort and **עמילות** into his **שיעור**, it's **הפלא ופלא**.

They asked him in the interview: What motivated you to uproot yourself and your family and to move to **ארץ ישראל**?

He replied, "**רוחניות** - I felt empty even though I was on the top of the world, I was very successful in business, and we just built a 12,000 square foot house in Chicago, with 12-foot ceilings with even an elevator. It was very opulent, and I even had a big room in which to learn, but I felt like I was in a rat race for the nicest house and the nicest car. Now I live in a simple apartment in **רמת בית שמש** in a

building with other people which isn't very comfortable, but my life is much better."

They then asked him, "Do you miss any of it?" "Not at all!" he replied, "Your standard of living has dramatically changed yet you're a happier person?"

"Much happier, there is a purpose to my life."

We must tell ourselves that this draw to **גשמיות** gives us no **שמחת החיים**, we get nothing at all from it, one is never satisfied. And that is exactly the great battle - to run away from the **אהבה** of **גשמיות**. If we want to work on this area of loving **ה"הקב** which brings a person close to **ה"הקב**, we must work on the area of telling ourselves and controlling ourselves knowing that there is nothing in the **גשמיות**.

## Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky





**Rabbi Moshe Sherer, ZT"L**, president of Agudath Israel of America, met **Rabbi Yosef Mendelevich**, the famous refusenik after he was released from the FSU. Rabbi Sherer noticed that Yosef seemed weak and tense and asked him why. He told Rabbi Sherer that he realized the seemingly relaxed attitude which American Jews have towards Soviet Jews and was going on a hunger strike to raise awareness as to the fate of his brethren. He hoped his brave

actions will counteract the indifference of American Jews and serve as a reminder of what is going on behind the Iron Curtain.

Rabbi Sherer noted the nobility of his actions but told him that a hunger strike is no simple matter, and he is taking him to **Rav Moshe Feinstein, ZT"L**, to ask if he is allowed to do so. Upon arriving at Rav Moshe's home, Rav Moshe immediately invited them into the kitchen. He instructed Yosef that a hunger strike has no basis in the Torah, and he should not continue, lest he endanger his health or even his life.

To assure him that his ruling was correct, Rav Moshe poured Yosef a cup of juice and instructed his wife to prepare him some eggs. Rav Moshe blessed Yosef and assured him that he can have a positive influence on all the Jews – and eat healthy as well!






## The Photographer

**R' Meir Stern** from Bnei Brak relays an incredible story he once heard from a photographer:

"I was offered a side job that would have potentially brought in an additional 10,000 shekels. I was very tempted to take it, and would've really benefitted from the extra income, but after learning that it would have required me to compromise on *kedushah*, I declined taking the job."

"A few days later, I was the photographer at a *chasunah* when I saw none other than **R' Chaim Kanievsky** as one of the guests. Even more surprising, R' Chaim was calling me over! I was sure he wasn't motioning to me, but when I could tell from his face that he meant me, I timidly walked over. "He was sitting, and so when I leaned over to hear what he wanted to tell me, I nearly fell over. '*Ani mikaneh b'chah*,' he told me. 'I envy you!'

"'From what is the Rav jealous?' I asked him.

"'The many people here don't know," continued R' Chaim, "but I know. I know the great challenge you recently withstood. That is why I'm jealous of you.' I understood very well what he was referring to—the previous challenge that I had faced and with much *gevurah* had withstood."

Can we imagine this? Our very own leader, R' Chaim himself, is saying how he envies this man's fortitude! This man overcame his personal challenge, and R' Chaim envied and admired his achievement.

We see the great value and significance in the simple act of overcoming one's personal challenges. R' Chaim was so to speak "jealous" of this man's victory in overcoming the challenge.

## Working on our Middos



One of the Chasidim of the **Satmar Rebbe, zt"l**, worked in the jewellery exchange in Manhattan, New York. Once, when he was visiting the Rebbe, he asked the Rebbe for a Brachah that he have abundant Parnasah, and it should come easily.

The Rebbe told him, "I give you my Brachah wholeheartedly, but only under one condition. Don't ever let a lie come out of your mouth. Neither in business nor in anything else in the world!" The man protested and said, "Rebbe! In the jewellery exchange it is impossible not to lie! Many times, the gemstone is not perfect, and we have to hide a crack or a defect here or there. That is how it works in the jewellery exchange!"

But the Rebbe would not back down, and he said, "Listen to me well. You will be different from all the other merchants, and no lie will come out of your mouth, and B'Ezras Hashem, you will see the abundance of Brachah that will come your way!"

The Chasid accepted upon himself the instructions of the Rebbe, and he began to be scrupulous about the Middah of Emes and being straightforward. To any buyer that entered his store, he would say to them, "I am not sure if this stone is right for you. There is a defect here and a small crack there. I have to be honest with you, this is not a perfect stone."

Very quickly, this Jewish jeweller earned an exemplary reputation. Everyone testified about his honesty and integrity, and he became very wealthy from all the customers who preferred to deal with only someone who was honest with them.

The Chasid soon realized the wisdom in the Brachah from the Satmar Rebbe!

## Migdal Ohr - J. Gewirtz




**R' Yeruchom Levovitz** wanted to leave the Mir Yeshiva (where he was the legendary Mashgiach) to go live in Kelm. He faced all sorts of obstacles that were clearly orchestrated from Heaven.

He decided to perform a Goral HaGra (a spiritual lottery using a Chumash) to determine his path and came to a pasuk that shook him deeply. "**בְּטַבְּעֹת הָאָרֹן יִהְיוּ הַבַּדִּים לֹא יָסֻרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ** - ***the poles of the Aron should remain in their rings and not be removed***." (Teruma 25:15) Unlike the other vessels in the Mishkan, the

Torah says the poles of the Aron must remain fixed in their place even if the Bnei Yisroel were not traveling.

Reb Yeruchom wrote the lesson he learned is that the "poles" are the people who help carry the torch of Torah. Those people should never leave their positions, just like the poles cannot leave the Aron.

## Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Like a Tree

כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה '*For man is a tree of the field*.' (20:19)

**The Bais Avraham** teaches us very encouraging lesson from this passuk: If you would plant a seed in gold and silver it would not grow. Only when you plant it in the earth where it is dark and dirty will you benefit from what you have planted.

It works the same way with people. You should not despair if it seems that Hashem has given you a life "in the dirt". On the contrary, specifically, from your situation you will develop, grow and, become the best possible version of yourself.

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM
Lights Of Our Righteous

*A Tzaddik, or righteous person, makes everyone else appear righteous before Hashem by advocating for them and finding their merits.* - **Kedushas Levi, Parshas Noach (Bereishis 7:1)**

**Rav Meir Tzvi Ehrentreu** Manchester Yeshiva Rosh Kollel & Rosh Yeshiva (Elul 6, 5760 / 2000 - 23rd Yahrzeit)

Among his descendants are four sons - his bechor and successor as Rosh Hakollel Rav Moshe Yitzchak, Rav Shloime Zalman, Rav Aharon, and Rav Avraham Ehrentreu of Antwerp. His brother is HaRav Yonah Yosef Ehrentreu, zt"l, the rav of the Adas Yeshurun community of Bnei Brak. Rav Meir

Zvi HaKohen Ehrentreu was the son of Rav Yisrael Ehrentreu. He was born in Frankfurt in 5690/1930. In time, he went to England and learned under Rav Moshe Schneider in London and later in the Gateshead Yeshiva. Quite rapidly, he became known for his outstanding hasmoda, unique character traits and in-depth studying.

He married the daughter of **Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva**, who recognized his greatness in Torah and Yiras Shomayim as well as his outstanding middos. After his marriage, he continued to learn with hasmoda, acquiring vast knowledge in the sea of Talmud. He served as a Maggid Shiur in the Manchester Yeshiva, greatly influencing his talmidim, who regarded him as the transmitter of the legacy of his illustrious father-in-law. He guided them along the Torah way with his pleasant manner and speech. Friendly and approachable, he was beloved by everyone. He was revered by his talmidim, who were aware that beneath his friendly exterior was a phenomenal Talmid Chochom, Yerei Shomayim and Oved Hashem. He was thoroughly proficient in Shas, Medrash, Rishonim, Acharonim and sifrei Shu"t, Meforshei HaTorah and Derashos. His father-in-law would say that he could come home at night with a question anywhere in Shas, and Rav Meir Zvi would resolve it.

An aura of excitement pervaded his shiurim, when, in addition to the standard meforshim, he added tidbits from the Avnei Nezer, Sedei Chemed, Oneg Yom Tov, Chiddushei HaRim and countless other seforim. Frequently, he would quote from the introduction or a footnote in a sefer. He repeated with relish Divrei Torah from Gedolim he had met, and his delight in a chiddush was palpable.

His talmidim learned to study the same sugya with different approaches. They were inspired by Rav Meir Zvi, from whom they received instant answers to their questions. Rav Meir Zvi was also known for his greatness in halacha. It is related that upon his leaving for Eretz Yisrael to serve on the Bais Din of the Eida HaChareidis,

Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Weiss, former Rav of Manchester, said that the community could rely totally upon Rav Meir Tzvi.

As widely acclaimed as he was for his knowledge of Torah, Rav Meir Zvi was equally well-known for his tzidkus, his exceptional middos and his humility. He honoured everyone and shunned honour for himself. For many years while his father-in-law, the Rosh Yeshiva, lived with his family, he relinquished his position as head of the household. As Maseches Sanhedrin 88b states: "He entered quietly, he exited quietly, learned Torah constantly and did not think he deserved credit for this." When his father-in-law was niftar, many people turned to Rav Meir Zvi for counsel. When asked for a beracha, he would respond humbly, as though he did not understand why he was being asked. But from a man regarded as a Tzaddik whose words were measured, even a short response was sufficient.

In the last decade or so of his life, Rav Meir Zvi suffered severe ill health, in particular a number of debilitating strokes, which significantly affected his ability to learn and teach at the same exalted level as before. Only on rare occasions did one see brief flashes of his earlier brilliance. However, there were indications that internally Rav Meir Zvi still retained much, if not all, of what he had previously known. When speaking with someone in learning, he would indicate that he was aware of the sugya, wanting to go straight to the chiddush. Similarly, his letters and notes contained quotations of Ma'amorei Chazal, even without the original sources in front of him.

Rav Meir Zvi was niftar on the sixth of Elul 5760/2000 at the age of seventy. He left a devoted Rebbetzin, who shouldered much of the family responsibilities to enable her husband to grow in Torah, sons, daughters and sons-in-law and grandchildren - all Talmidei Chachomim and Yir'ei Shomayim. He was buried in the Manchester cemetery beside his father-in-law, Rav Yehuda Zev Segal.



**Rav Eliezer Hager Damesek Eliezer** (Elul 2, 5706 / 1946 - 77th Yahrzeit) Rav Eliezer of Vizhnitz was born in Bedevilla, the town where his father served as Rav, on Shabbos (Parshas Yisro), 22 Shevat, in the year 5651/**תרנ"א**. He was named after his maternal grandfather, Rav Eliezer of Dzhikov. At the age of 16, Rav Eliezer married Chava, the daughter of Rav Yitzchok Meir Heschel of Kopischnitz and the great-granddaughter of the Rizhiner. He received smicha from the Maharsham of Berzhan, Maharsh Engel of Radomishla, and the Gram Shteinberg of Brody, author of Machzeh Avrohom.

When World War I broke out, Rav Eliezer and his father-in-law fled from Galicia to Bukowina. After stopping in Vizhnitz for a few days, they learned that the Russian army was approaching, so they continued on to Vienna, Austria.

In Vienna, Rav Eliezer met and learned with the tzaddikim of the Rizhiner dynasty who had also taken up shelter there. He also learned with the gedolim Rav Meir Arik, Rav Yosef Engel and Rav Shteinberg, and he gained greatly from their Torah. During this period, he worked hard to help the thousands of Jewish refugees who had flocked to Vienna, doing his utmost to ease their pain and attend to their physical and spiritual needs. He raised money to provide refugees with food and clothing; he sent anonymous care packages to those who were too proud to ask for handouts; and he worked tirelessly to obtain deferment and release for those who had been conscripted to serve in the Austrian army at the front. He also founded the kloiz of Chassidei Vizhnitz, which remained a centre for Torah and Chassidus until it was destroyed by the Nazis.

At the end of World War I, his father, the Ahavas Yisroel, took up residence in Grossvardayn and the center of Chassidus moved with him. On Lag Ba'Omer, 5682/**תרפ"ב,** with his father's blessings, he was crowned as Chief Rabbi of Vizhnitz. He returned to Bukowina and established a Chassidic yeshiva for the Jewry of Bukowina and Bessarabia, which saved thousands of youngsters from the spiritual dangers of assimilation. His talmidim included the Yeshuos Moshe of Vizhnitz. In addition to being the Chief Rabbi of Vizhnitz, he also served as the head of Agudas Yisroel in Bukowina. He was crowned as Rebbe after his father's passing in 5696/**תרצ"ו**.

At the beginning of World War II, in 5700/**ת"ש**, the Russians took over Vizhnitz, so he fled to Temishvar, where the local Jewish population became his Chassidim and followers. He did his utmost during the war to aid the Jews living in Transnistriya. He made aliya in 5704/**תש"ד** and lived in Tel Aviv, where he re-established the Vizhnitzer Yeshiva and was among the foremost Chassidic leaders in the Holy Land. After a serious illness (an inflammation of the lining of his lungs, which he suffered in silence), he passed away on 2 Elul 5706/**תש"ו** and was laid to rest on Har HaZeisim.

## Sholom Bayis

**Rav Elimelech Biderman** shared the following story: **The Damesek Eliezer of Vizhnitz** was walking down the street with his gabbai when they passed a jewellery store that had a fine display of watches in the window. Suddenly, the Rebbe stopped, turned around, and returned to the store they had just passed. To the gabbai's surprise, the Rebbe entered the store and asked the owner to show him the watches he had available. "My Rebbetzin is a real maven in watches; she will only want the finest craftsmanship," the Rebbe stated in a loud, clear voice.

The owner of the shop hurried to show the Rebbe a selection of beautiful watches, but the Rebbe shook his head. "No, no, these are no good," he said, waving them away. "As I explained, the Rebbetzin

has impeccably good taste when it comes to watches. Why, I have an idea – why don't you call over your wife and ask her to help us choose? I am sure she has fine taste in these matters."

To the gabbai's growing astonishment, the Rebbe invited the proprietor's wife to help him select the gift. After several minutes, the Rebbe seemed satisfied; he borrowed some money from the gabbai, paid for the watch, thanked the owner, complimented his wife's fine taste in watches, and left the store.

As soon as they were out of earshot, the gabbai couldn't hold back. "Rebbe!" he said, stricken. "Isn't it beneath your dignity to act in this way – to ask the opinion of the store owner's wife, and have her help you choose a gift for the Rebbetzin?"

The Rebbe chuckled and, with a gleam in his eye, explained, "When we passed by the shop the first time, I could hear the owner arguing with his wife. He claimed that she had poor taste in watches and jewellery, and even accused her of chasing away customers and ruining their business. I therefore returned to the store and went in to buy a watch so I could specifically request her opinion and praise her good taste."

He turned to his awestruck gabbai and smiled. "Don't you think their sholom bayis (marital harmony) will improve now that he values his wife's judgment and opinion? I think that's certainly worth the price of a good watch, don't you?"

***"True faith is not believing that Hashem can – It is knowing that He will!" ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.***

***Hashem put you on this earth because He loves you and He has a plan for you.***

## The Kindness That Opened Heaven By Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky

Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky shared a beautiful story about the great gadol, **Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach**. Anyone who ever saw a picture of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman noticed something remarkable. He was always smiling. There was a warmth on his face, a joy, and a calm happiness.

Rabbi Pruzansky once had the privilege of visiting Rabbi Shlomo Zalman's son, Rabbi Azriel Auerbach, while he was in Lakewood. He asked him: "How was your father always smiling?" "What was the secret to his happiness?"

Rabbi Azriel answered: "My father was always looking to help another Yid." "When a person helps others, he becomes a happy person himself." Then Rabbi Pruzansky shared an incredible story.

There was a woman who had been married for ten years without children. Ten painful years. No yeshuah. No child. No answers. One night, after her husband had gone to sleep, she sat alone at the table crying. "Ribbono Shel Olam," she cried, "what should I do?"

Feeling completely broken, she walked outside, hailed a cab, and traveled to the home of the great tzaddik, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, in Shaarei Chesed. When she arrived, she poured out her heart and cried bitterly. "I've been married for ten years," she said. "I want children. Why isn't Hashem giving me children?"

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman looked at her and answered with surprising honesty: "Hashem is not obligated to give you anything." "He does not have to give you children."

The woman felt crushed and completely shattered. She turned around, preparing to leave.

Then Rabbi Shlomo Zalman stopped her. "But wait." "Although Hashem is not obligated to give, if you want Him to give you

something beyond obligation, then you must also do something beyond obligation."

She looked at him, confused. "What does the Rav mean?"

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman explained: "If you go beyond what is required and perform chesed for another Jew…" "If you show Hashem that you are willing to give from your heart…" "Then Hashem too will give to you from His heart."

The woman accepted the advice. The very next day, she went to the hospital carrying toys, treats, and gifts. She entered the maternity ward and began giving presents to women who had just given birth. The women smiled warmly and thanked her. But after some time, she realized something. These women already had flowers, gifts, and visitors. She felt that perhaps she wasn't truly needed there. So the next day, she went to a different ward—the cancer ward. There she saw people undergoing painful treatments, facing frightening diagnoses, and sitting with sadness written all over their faces. She walked from patient to patient, offering encouragement, warm smiles, food, gifts, and kind words.

Slowly, something changed. The patients began smiling. They blessed her. Thanked her. Held onto her words. And suddenly she realized she was giving them hope. She was breathing life into people who desperately needed chizuk. She decided she would continue week after week and month after month.

Within one year, she gave birth to a son. A few years later, she had more children.

She later said she would never forget that night she felt hopeless and how Rabbi Shlomo Zalman understood that she needed more than just a bracha. She needed an eitzah, a path, and a way to open her heart by helping others.

Rabbi Pruzansky ended with a powerful message. Every person is waiting for some kind of yeshuah. Parnassah. Health. Shalom bayis.

Children. Clarity. Strength. And sometimes we turn to Hashem saying: "Ribbono Shel Olam, I know You are not obligated to give me anything." "But I'm going to do my part." "I'm going to go beyond myself." "I'm going to help another Jew." "I'm going to show ahavas Yisrael." "I'm going to give with a full heart." And when a Jew opens his heart to others, sometimes Hashem opens His Heart too.



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

**מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב ילך וישב לביתו ולא ימס את לבב אחיו וכו' (כ-ח)**

In the Volozhiner Yeshiva, the Talmidim once put on a performance during the Yeshiva's Purim seudah. Many of the students, members of the Hanhalah and Rebbeim were present, including the Rosh Hayeshiva **R' Chaim Soloveitchik ZT"L** .The play was based on the Posukim in this week's Parshah, whereby a Jew could become exempt from serving in the army. The scenario was as follows:

There was a great and mighty army of 100,00 Jewish soldiers standing by, all ready to wage war. The Captain of the Guard rose and declared - **"ומי האיש אשר בנה בית חדש ולא חנכו ילך וישב לביתו"** , He who has built a new home and has not yet dedicated it, may go and return home. Immediately, 10,000 soldiers left the camp and did indeed return home.

The Captain again rose and declared **"ומי האיש אשר נטע כרם ולא חללו** , **ילך וישב לביתו"** - He who has planted a vineyard and has not yet consecrated it, may go and return home. Another 10,000 soldiers left the camp. The Captain continued **"ומי האיש אשר ארש אשה ולא** , **לקחה ילך וישב - לביתו"** - He who has betrothed a woman and has not yet wed, may go and return home. Whereby, a further 10,000 soldiers turned around and left.

The Captain looked around and then announced, " **ומי האיש הירא ורך הלבב ילך וישב לביתו**" - He who is afraid and weak of heart, may go and return home. All the remaining soldiers took off and immediately

went home - all but four soldiers remained. Those that stayed were the **Sha'agas Aryeh, R' Aryeh Leib Hakohen, the Nod'ah B'yehudah, R' Yehudah Landau, the Pnei Yehoshua, and R' Eliyohu, the Gaon of Vilna.** The meaning was clear and the play was enjoyed by all.

The Rosh Yeshiva, R' Chaim Soloveitchik, commented afterwards, "What these students forgot to mention is the most primary point. These four Gaonim alone, still won the war!"

# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

**שפטים ושטרים תתן לך .... ושפטו את העם משפט צדק וגו' (טז-יח)**




A non-Jew once happened to be sitting on a train next to the holy **R' Avrohom Yehoshua of Apta ZT"L** as they were travelling to a nearby city. The non-jew recognized that a prominent Jewish rabbi was sitting next to him and decided that he would have some fun.

"Tell me, Rabbiner," began the non-Jew, as he struggled to maintain a sincere tone of voice, "I find quite a bit of difference between the Jewish legal system and our normal, contemporary court procedures. With us, when there is a case involving two litigants, the trial date is set far in advance. That way, the people have time to prepare their cases. Then, when the case comes up for trial before a judge, each litigant is represented by a lawyer. Even if a person loses his case, he can still appeal it to an even higher court. But by the Jews," snickered the gentile, "in every small village as soon as two people quarrel, they immediately go to the Rabbi. The Rabbi hears both

sides and in most cases renders his verdict on the spot. Where's the justice? What about ensuring a fair trial? Wouldn't you agree that our way is far superior?"

R' Avrohom Yehoshua thought for a moment. "Let me tell you a story," he began. "A wolf once managed to kill a deer. As it started to eat the deer, along came a lion and snatched the deer away. The wolf ran to the fox asking him to judge the case. The wolf, of course, had a simple claim - he had been the one to kill the deer so he should be allowed to keep it. The lion opposed this claiming that as king of the beasts, he was entitled, by right, to lay claim to anything he desired. The fox listened to both sides and then ruled, 'You both make valid points. Therefore, I will divide the carcass and each of you will receive half.'

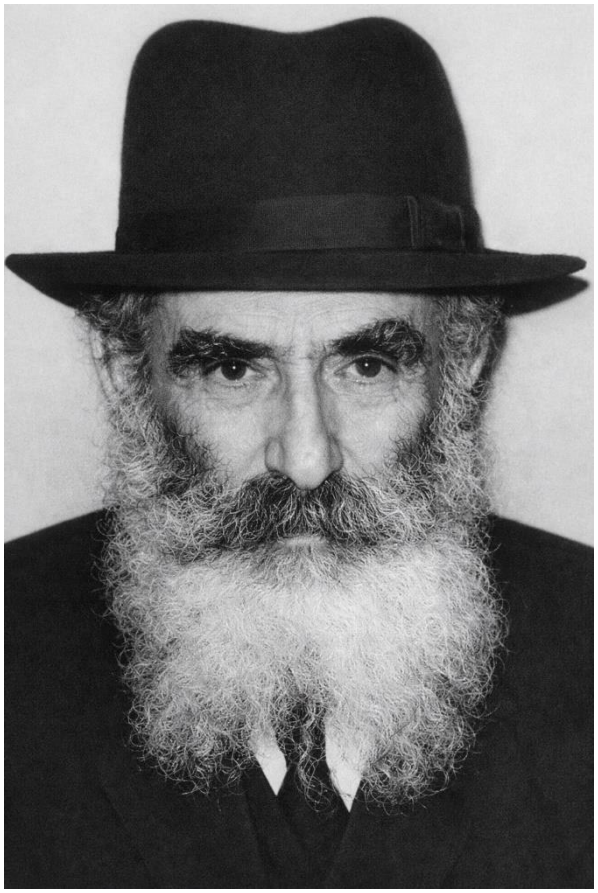
"No sooner had he said this, then the fox took the deer and split it in half - but not quite exactly in half. One side was bigger than the other. 'No problem,' said the fox, biting a chunk off the larger side and eating it. But now he bit off too much and the other side was larger. 'I'll settle that,' the fox responded, and again chewed off a large chunk. Well, by the time the two sides were exactly equal, there was nothing left for the lion or the wolf but bones."

The Apter Rov looked at the gentile who was rapt with interest. "The same is true with your court cases. By the time the case is finally settled and all the lawyers paid off, there's nothing left for either litigant!"

## *Timeless Truths by Rabbi Moshe Bamberger*

***"When a person endures hardship, never say that it is 'bad,' for nothing Hashem does can be described as 'bad.' One may, however, say that it is 'bitter.' Medicine is often bitter." ~ The Maggid of Mezeritch (Chassidim Mesaprim, Rabbi Y.L. Levin, z"l)***

# Personal Encounter with Rav Chatzkel Levenstein by Dr. Sholom Springer



I must tell you a personal story that occurred in the middle of *Elul*.

I was in the grounds of Ponevezh. This goes back 60 years. I was a *bochur* still. I was standing in the grounds with my brother-in-law, who's a *yungerman* from Ponevezh, and towards us we can see an old man who's shuffling towards us.

And my brother-in-law tells me that this is ***Rav Chatzkel Levenstein***. The great *Rav Chatzkel Levenstein Zt'l*. He's coming closer and closer. Anyway, he's going to introduce me.

So he comes close and he sort of slows down, sees two people waiting. And my brother-in-law tries to introduce me as his brother-in-law from London.

This 'man' would have none of it. He just stops for a minute, his eyes have got a faraway look, and he just says two words…

He says, "שְׁוֵעֶרְע טָג... שְׁוֵעֶרְע טָג." ("Difficult days… difficult days.") and he shuffles on towards the *Beis Medrash*.

Now, that image is in my mind 60 years later. For a man like that, he wouldn't waste time on how's the family, how's things at home? He wouldn't waste time on this sort of thing, or even say hello.

These people conducted a *ta'anis dibbur* the whole of *Elul*. They wouldn't talk. And you can see that for these people, the approaching upcoming *Din Torah*, the upcoming *Yom Hadin* is something very, very real. It's real for them.

They have a feeling of dread. And of course, after *Yom Kippur*, when they've done their best efforts, and they have a confidence that they are going to be re-selected, *Klal Yisrael* is going to be re-selected, can you imagine the feelings of joy that they have in proportion to the feelings of dread that they have before *Yom Kippur*.

Now, there is a *halacha* we all know that on *Erev Yom Kippur* you've got to eat. It's a *mitzvah* to eat. I'm going to fast 25 hours. And so are you. You've got to be told to eat? Yes. If you're like *Rav Chatzkel Levenstein*, you've got to be told to eat.

The last thing he'd have was any appetite *Erev Yom Kippur*. He's got to be told to eat. For a man like that, the feeling of dread and the feeling of the *Yom Hadin* coming out is very, very real.

## Precious Moments With Rav Chaim - Artscroll

### "Your Wine Is Yayin Nesech"

"I didn't have children for a long time," says an avreich from Yerushalayim. "I went to Rav Chaim for a berachah, and he told me to make Havdalah on wine.

"I did that, but still had no children. After two years, I went back to Rav Chaim and asked for another berachah.

"Rav Chaim's answer was a surprise. He told me what he'd told me before, to make Havdalah on wine. I told him, 'I already do that,' and he said, 'Your wine is yayin nesech' (wine that's been poured by a non-Jew).

"At first I didn't understand what he said. But I went home and told my wife what he'd said, and we remembered that many times, we went to her grandparents for Shabbos, and I made Havdalah there. It turned out that their non-Jewish aide was putting the wine left

in the cup back into the bottle. When he touched the wine, it became yayin nesech."



**Rav Chaim's Hobby**

Everyone is different. We each like different things. We're each interested in different things. Some love to hear *chazzanus*, some like different music, some like to take walks, some like nice views.

On a higher level: Some like a long davening, some like to learn *mussar*, some enjoy learning other things.

What does Rav Chaim like to do? It's hard to know, because his whole life is Torah. He davens because it's a mitzvah to daven. He learns Torah because it's a mitzvah to learn Torah. Every Jew has to learn Torah and know it all.

One time and only one time, he told his son that he...likes to chat, but it's a waste of his time.

Never once, at any time in his long days filled with Torah study and helping people, does he ever let himself chat. Few words emerge from his lips, and those are thought about carefully. That shows how completely the Torah fills him.

Chatting? What good is that?



**The Segulah of Taharah**

Many times, Rav Chaim would say, in the name of the Chazon Ish, that the greatest mitzvah one can do with money in our days — even better than giving tzedakah — is building mikvaos. Rav Chaim worked on raising money for mikvaos and told others to give too.

One year, a mikveh is built in a chareidi area. It is all ready for use, but it is summer, and there is no rainwater to fill it.

Rav Chaim is asked to daven for the mikveh to fill with rainwater, and he does. A few days later, there is a heavy rainfall. The mikveh is filled with rainwater. It is a great kiddush Hashem.



**Which Tefillah to Choose**

An elderly man, leaning on his cane, comes to Rav Chaim's house. His back is bent, and every step is hard. He has a question, and he has come to ask it davka because he walks so slowly.

He sits down in Rav Chaim's room and tries to catch his breath. "I was a child, and now I'm old," he says. "Oy, how old I am! I don't have the strength to come and go as I used to. It's hard for me to leave my house. I can't go to daven in shul three times a day because it's too hard for me to get to the shul and home again. I can do it only once a day. Which tefillah should I go to? Should I daven Shacharis in shul, or Minchah and Maariv?"

"Why don't you make a minyan in your house? If you ask people, they'll come to your house to daven. I also asked for a minyan in my house, and we daven here every day, Shabbos and weekday."

The elderly man is surprised at Rav Chaim's anavah (humility). It is as if Rav Chaim sees no difference between himself and others. It is as if the minyan in Rav Chaim's house is just a minyan for an old man, nothing more!



**הוא היה אומר ....**

***R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk ZT"L would say:***

***"A pious person is someone who does more than the halacha requires of him. Halacha says, 'Do not deceive others.' A pious person is one who does not deceive himself!"***



## 102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - He Gave His Heart to Torah and the Torah Granted Him Life

Rav Yechiel Meir Zucker shlit"a shared an incredible story about his father, Rav Natan Zucker. It is a tale that illustrates what it means to live with pure faith, just as Chazal taught us.

For how can a person these days be like those who ate the mann in the desert? How can a simple Jew, a regular wage-earner with a bit of simple faith, taste the sustenance of angels?

My father, Rav Natan Zucker zt"l, suffered from severe asthma most of his life. As a child, I often witnessed his frightening attacks. He would cough uncontrollably and gasp for breath, and there were times when I had to call an ambulance to save his life.

Dust is famously the greatest enemy of asthma, and my mother, may she live and be well, would meticulously wipe down all the furniture each day to ensure that no dust accumulated in our home. Additionally, clean air was essential for my father, and my parents were fortunate to live in a home in Bnei Brak with an open lot beside it, a rare commodity in the crowded city. The plot of land had never been built upon because it was a "pocket" between existing buildings and created an open corridor of clean air.

One day, the municipality of Bnei Brak allocated the land for the construction of a Talmud Torah, Be'er Yehoshua. The neighbors immediately realized what this would mean: the building would block all of their air, and the noise of hundreds of children learning Torah would fill the streets all day. Worse, the path leading to the Talmud Torah would pass just beneath my parents' window and the dust that would form from the footsteps of hundreds of boys passing by would coat their home every day.

One particular neighbor, who unfortunately did not possess a deep love for Torah, took the lead in organizing vociferous opposition to

the building of the Talmud Torah. He began gathering signatures to oppose its construction. And he was certain that my father, whose health was most at risk, would be his strongest ally. The construction of the Talmud Torah, after all, was more than a mere inconvenience; for him, it was potentially life-threatening.

The neighbor approached my father and forcefully made his case. "This school will destroy your health!" he warned. "Your apartment's value will plummet! You won't even be able to sell it and move elsewhere."

After hearing the neighbor out, my father did something unusual. He went into his room and pulled out from beneath his mattress a newspaper clipping with a small article that had deeply inspired him and which he had carefully saved. It was a story published in Yated Ne'eman's Shabbos supplement. The article recounted an amazing historical event: A terrible plague had spread across Europe, claiming many lives. As the disease approached Volozhin, people rushed to inform Rav Chaim of Volozhin zt"l. "When the plague comes closer," Rav Chaim said, "notify me immediately." The fateful day arrived. The plague was just outside the city. People ran to tell Rav Chaim. And what did Rav Chaim do? He sent the yeshiva's students into the streets—each with a Gemara and a shtender. Pairs of chavrusos sat and learned Torah aloud at a distance of several feet from one another. They encircled all of Volozhin with a wall of Torah, and the plague stopped right at the entrance to the city.

My father turned to his neighbor and said, "I am living on borrowed time. Every person needs oxygen from Hashem, but I feel it every second, because a moment of oxygen deprivation makes me feel like death is near. If I want a long life, there is nothing greater than Torah being learned beneath my window! That is the best spiritual protection I can have. In fact, if they don't have enough classrooms, I'll be happy to let them build into our courtyard. And if they really need space, I will gladly offer our living room as a classroom."

As his neighbor listened, speechless, my father continued, "As for property values, Chazal promise us: 'Wherever there are Torah scholars, there is blessing.' No one ever lost out because of Torah. Only blessing comes from Torah!"

Despite my father's impassioned speech, his neighbor was known for his considerable influence, and there was real concern that he might convince others to oppose the school's construction. So, my father took immediate action. He formed a neighborhood committee—a pro-Torah coalition of residents. Together, they ensured that the Talmud Torah would be built and that nothing would stand in its way.

I hereby testify that from the day that the Talmud Torah was established, my father's asthma dramatically improved. For the next thirty-two* years, he was never once hospitalized for his asthma. Moreover, during those years, he purchased apartments for two of his children. He was still paying off debts from previous weddings and left his job to devote himself exclusively to Torah learning. Still, he miraculously repaid every last debt within just a few years!

* The numerical equivalent of the word "lev" (heart) is thirty-two. He gave his "heart" to Torah and lived another thirty-two years.



***Shake a snow globe and everything becomes cloudy. Set it down, and without doing anything else, the water becomes clear.***

***When the week leaves us feeling scattered, Shabbos reminds us that clarity can come from settling down and taking a moment to rest. ~ Inspired by the teachings of the Maggid of Mezritch, Rabbi Dov Ber.***

## Mi Kamcha Yisroel - R' Tzvi Sytner

I went to the *Kollel* where I learn in the mornings and it was just me and another guy in the *Kollel*, one of the *yungaleit* in the *Kollel*. So he told me, he said, I have to tell you a *maaseh*. He said last night I was here and in the back of the *Beis Medrash* it was me and another guy. The other guy was a *Baal Habos*.

So the *Baal Habos* sitting in the back asks me a question, a *Halacha* question because I didn't have the answer to the question but we started discussing it. Meantime this *Yeshiva bochur* walks in, fifteen-year-old kid, hears the conversation and says, oh, the *Halacha* is as follows. He happened to be learning it or whatever, he knew it. So the *Baal Habos* in the back of the *Beis Medrash* says, I was so impressed with this boy.

So he said, what's your name? He comes, he says, here, I want to give you *Chanukah Gelt*. He pulls out fifty dollars and he says, here's fifty dollars. So the boy says, I don't want to take it. No, I want you to take it, I want you to take it.

No, I don't want to take it, I'm so impressed you knew the *Halacha*. He says, I don't want to take it, I don't want to take it, and he's pushing, pushing, the boy would not take it. Meantime he's looking at the boy, the boy's shoes were disheveled and ripped or whatever and his pants were... he looked like *nebuch*.

It could just be he's a good *Yeshiva bochur* and just hasn't used his other clothes yet but that's not what this *Baal Habos* assumed. He looked at him and he said the kid could use the money. And the boy would not take it. So eventually the boy said, fine.

He took it, and then he said, and now I want to give **you** *Chanukah Gelt*. And he gives it back to the *Baal Habos* and he leaves. This *Baal Habos* says to the *Kollel yungaleit* that was there, he said to him, can you find out who this boy is? I want to, first of all, I could see he doesn't have his clothing, *nebuch*. I want to give him clothing.

So he says to the *Kollel* guy, what does it cost for a new set of clothing? He says, it depends who's buying it. Is it clothing for you, clothing for me? We have different... he said, what does it cost to get kids clothing? So he tells him. Okay, he says, you know what, I want to give him two thousand dollars.

I'm giving two thousand dollars to get this kid new clothing, new shoes, new suit, new clothing. Find out what... get contact the *Rosh Yeshiva*, let's give it to him. So meantime he's reaching out, he says, okay I got in contact, I know who it is and I'll get the money to him.

So he says, okay I'm coming with cash tonight, two thousand dollars. He says, one second, who's this kid's family? He said, his father's a *Rebbi* in some out-of-town place, big family, they're not in a great financial situation. He says, okay, I'm giving a thousand dollars a month for the next twelve months to this family. He said, obviously all anonymous.

Find out how do I do it and this is what I'm giving. The *Kollel* guy says to him, he said, last night we're sitting in the *Beis Medrash*, this whole thing happened. We just had a *Halacha sheila* and this boy comes over just to answer. He gives the answer to the *sheila* and doesn't want to take fifty dollars, walks out with fourteen thousand dollars being gifted to his family.

And he said this morning the father who was given the twelve thousand dollars had another baby boy this morning, another baby boy born to the family.

Now, to me, **מִי כְּעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל**. He has no idea who this kid is, nothing. Did he have to go that extra mile to find out? The boy looked disheveled.

Okay, he looked disheveled. Fine, he looked disheveled. So what? We see people all the time who look disheveled. Maybe if it was a family member or close friend we would be concerned, we'd want to make a little donation, we'd want to help them out, we'd do it quietly.

But a complete stranger looks disheveled and you're going to go give thousands and thousands and thousands. This is just a way of going above and beyond, seeking out ways to come together *b'achdus* like the one *mishpacha* that we're supposed to be in such a special way.

## The Taxi Driver Who Sold His Olam HaBa by Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan



Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan shared a remarkable story about a man whose entire understanding of life changed in the course of a single day.

A young kollel avreich lived in Har Nof, the Jerusalem neighborhood where Rabbi Bensoussan himself once lived. During bein hazmanim, the avreich decided that he wanted to devote a full day to visiting the resting places of great tzaddikim throughout northern Eretz Yisrael. He did not want to spend the day waiting for buses or changing routes, so he called a private car service and hired a driver for the entire day.

"What time should I come?" the dispatcher asked.

"Nine o'clock," the avreich replied. "I want to begin early. I hope to reach Tiberias, Tzfas, Amukah, and Meron. I want to visit as many kevarim as possible."

The next morning, a taxi pulled up outside his building precisely at nine. The driver stepped out with a broad smile. He was a friendly, completely secular Israeli who expected a pleasant day on the road.

"Shalom, habibi," he said warmly. "Where are we going?"

"First to Tiberias," the avreich answered. "I want to daven at Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes. Then we will go to the Rambam and Rabbi Akiva.

Afterward, I would like to continue to Tzfas, Amukah, and finally Meron."

The driver stared at him. "Why? Why? Why?" he asked. "The entire day - only graves?"

The avreich smiled. "That is what I would like to do."

"All right," the driver said with a shrug. "You are paying. No problem."

They began the long drive north. For more than two hours they sat together in the car, speaking about Israel, family, work, politics, and life. When two strangers share a car for that long, the conversation naturally becomes personal.

By the time they reached the kever of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes, the driver felt comfortable enough to ask what had been troubling him. "Habibi, let me ask you something privately."

"Of course."

"I fought in the Six-Day War. I fought in the Yom Kippur War. I have seen everything a man can see. You know that you are about to walk into the grave of someone who is dead, correct?"

"Yes," the avreich answered calmly. "This is Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes."

"You are not understanding me. He is dead."

"Yes."

"And you traveled all the way here to speak to a dead man?"

The avreich could see that the driver was not mocking him merely for sport. He genuinely could not understand.

"Let me go inside and daven," the avreich said. "When I come out, we will continue our conversation."

The avreich entered the building. Ten minutes passed. Then fifteen. The driver became curious and went inside to look for him. He

stopped in astonishment. The room was filled with people. Men and women were standing with siddurim and Tehillim. Some whispered. Others cried openly. People were pouring out their hearts to Hashem with a depth of emotion the driver had rarely seen.

When the avreich came outside, the driver pointed back toward the crowded room. "I do not understand. Are all these people crazy? They are standing there crying and praying. The man is dead!"

The avreich patiently explained that Jews do not pray to tzaddikim. They pray only to Hashem. But they visit the resting places of righteous people because those sacred places awaken the heart, and they ask Hashem to answer them in the merit of the tzaddikim.

The driver shook his head. "You religious people are crazy. I fought in two wars. I saw life and death with my own eyes. There is nothing except this world. You have to grab whatever you can, enjoy whatever you can, and survive however you can. That is life."

The avreich looked at him carefully. "You truly do not believe there is an Olam HaBa?"

"No."

"You do not believe there is a Borei Olam?"

"No. None of this exists." The driver grinned and leaned toward him.

"Listen to me, habibi. Stay with me today and I will show you a good life. Forget the next grave. I will take you to the beach. We will sit in a cafe. We will laugh and enjoy ourselves. Why spend the entire day with the dead?"

The avreich paused for a moment. "If you do not believe in Olam HaBa, are you willing to sell me yours?"

The driver blinked. "What?"

"You said it does not exist. If it has no value, sell it to me."

The driver laughed. "You want to buy my Olam HaBa?"

"Yes."

"How much will you pay?"

The avreich smiled. "Interesting. A moment ago you said it did not exist. Now that money is involved, suddenly you want to know its price."

"No, no," the driver replied. "For you it means something. So tell me: how much?"

"Twenty shekels."

"Twenty shekels for my Olam HaBa?"

"You believe it is only a bag of air. You should be happy to receive twenty shekels for nothing."

The driver laughed again and agreed.

The avreich removed a sheet of paper from his notebook and carefully wrote a bill of sale. He included the driver's full name, his own name, the amount of twenty shekels, and a statement that the driver was selling his portion in Olam HaBa. At the bottom, he drew two signature lines: one for the seller and one for the buyer. The avreich signed it and handed the driver twenty shekels.

Still amused, the driver signed as well. "Here," he said, placing the contract in the avreich's hand. "Now my Olam HaBa is your problem." He pocketed the twenty shekels and returned to the driver's seat.

"Where are we going next?" "Tzfas."

They drove to the kever of the Arizal. Once again, the driver saw crowds of Jews standing in heartfelt prayer. He watched people who had traveled from every part of the country, each carrying private burdens that no one else could see.

"All these people are coming to speak beside someone who died centuries ago," he murmured. "They are all crazy." But his voice no longer carried the same confidence.

From Tzfas they continued to Amukah, traveling down the steep, winding road to the resting place of Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel. The driver knew the area to be isolated, and he expected to find it nearly empty. Instead, he saw one coach bus after another. Yeshivah students, seminary girls, parents, singles, and families crowded the site. Many had come to pray for a shidduch. They stood with tremendous passion, calling out to Hashem for help.

The driver watched in silence. "Hundreds of people," he whispered. "Can they all be wrong?"

For the first time, a crack appeared in the wall he had built around his heart. Maybe there was something beyond what he had seen in war. Maybe the world was larger than the years between birth and death. Maybe the people he had dismissed as foolish possessed something he had never allowed himself to seek.

When the avreich returned to the car, he asked where they were going next. "Now to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron."

The driver knew Meron well. He had driven there many times on Lag BaOmer. But this was an ordinary day during bein hazmanim, and he expected the place to be quiet. It was packed. Thousands of people filled the courtyard and surrounding rooms. The sounds of Tehillim, prayer, singing, and weeping rose from every corner.

The driver stood and watched people who appeared deeply connected to something he could neither see nor explain. By then, the sarcasm had disappeared completely. "What did I do?" he whispered to himself. "What did I do?"

The avreich returned to the taxi, and they began driving south toward Jerusalem. For several minutes, neither man spoke. Finally, the driver broke the silence. "I will tell you the truth. At the beginning of the day, I thought you were crazy. But I saw so many people in so many places. I saw their tears, their passion, and the

way they were connected. It cannot be that they are all holding on to something that is not there."

He swallowed hard. "I made a mistake. I want my Olam HaBa back."

The avreich looked straight ahead. "I am sorry. I bought it. You sold it. I have the contract with your signature."

The driver gave a nervous laugh. "Come on. I will give you back the twenty shekels."

"No."

"Fine. I will give you one hundred shekels. You will earn five times your money. That is a very good deal."

"No."

The driver glanced at him, expecting to see a smile. The avreich remained serious.

"One thousand shekels."

The avreich said nothing.

"Listen to me. Take the thousand shekels, and today's entire trip is free. You do not have to pay me anything. You taught me a lesson today, so the day was worth it. Keep your money. Take another thousand. Just give it back to me."

"No."

The driver began to cry. "Please. You are killing me. I need it. I want my Olam HaBa."

The man who had begun the morning laughing at eternity was now pleading for it with tears. The avreich allowed him to plead. He wanted those words to come from the deepest place in the driver's heart. He wanted the man to hear himself say that there was something more valuable than money, pleasure, and even life in this world.

At last, they pulled up outside the avreich's building in Har Nof. Before getting out, the avreich turned toward the driver. "Listen to me. I am going to give you back your Olam HaBa."

The driver stared at him.

"I never wanted to take it from you. I wanted you to beg for it. I wanted you to realize that until today, you were living blindly. You were chasing only what you could touch, buy, or enjoy, without asking why you were alive."

The driver listened without moving.

"I wanted to change the direction of your life. I wanted you to understand that there must be a greater purpose. Now that you understand what you have, I am ready to return it - but on one condition."

"Anything."

"You were prepared to give me one thousand shekels. Do not give the money to me. Find a talmid chacham who will sit and learn Torah with you. Use that money to begin discovering the life you were meant to live."

The driver nodded through his tears. "I agree. You are right. I want to learn. I want Olam HaBa."

The avreich removed the contract and handed it to him. The driver tore the paper into tiny pieces immediately. He did not want to take the slightest chance that such a document would remain in existence. Then he stepped out of the taxi, walked around to the avreich, and embraced him. He rested his head on the avreich's shoulder and cried.

In the course of a single day, the entire direction of his life had changed. He had awakened to a truth he had denied for decades. His purpose had been placed back into his hands.

The driver returned to his car and pulled away from the curb. Seconds later, he approached the nearby intersection. For reasons no one could explain, he did not see a large truck crossing from the other direction. The truck struck the taxi with devastating force. The car was crushed.

The avreich heard the collision and ran down the block. Emergency workers rushed to the scene, but there was nothing they could do. The driver was pronounced dead.

Only moments earlier, he had torn up the contract and declared that he wanted to learn Torah. Only moments earlier, he had begged for his Olam HaBa and chosen a new direction.

Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan concluded with the teaching of Chazal: "Yesh koneh olamo b'sha'ah achas." "A person can acquire his World to Come in a single moment." We do not know the calculations of Heaven. We do not know why one person receives decades to awaken while another receives a single day. But this story teaches us that no sincere moment is small. One realization can change the meaning of an entire life. One decision can redirect a person's eternity. One cry from the heart can bring a Jew home. Hashem does not ask us to become perfect in an instant. He asks us to open our hearts, recognize what is real, and take one honest step toward Him.

The taxi driver began the morning convinced that this world was all there was. By the end of the day, he understood that the greatest tragedy is not losing this world. It is living in this world without knowing what we were sent here to accomplish.

Sometimes Hashem gives a person years to discover his purpose. Sometimes He gives him one journey. One conversation. One final opportunity to wake up. The question is not how much time we have. The question is what we will do with the moment Hashem has given us.

## The Phone Call That Saved a Life by Rabbi Yaakov Mizrahi

One of his sisters-in-law works as a babysitter, caring for young children each morning. Over the years, she developed an unusual habit. Whenever a child failed to arrive by the usual time, she would immediately call the parents. Not because she assumed something was wrong. Rather, she wanted to make absolutely certain that the parents knew where their child was. Perhaps the mother thought the father had dropped the baby off. Perhaps another family member had been asked to bring the child. Or perhaps plans had simply changed. Whatever the reason, she never wanted to assume. If a child was missing, she made the phone call.

One morning, a little boy failed to arrive. Fifteen minutes passed. True to her routine, she picked up the phone and called the child's mother. "Hello," she said. "I just wanted to let you know that your baby isn't here today."

The mother sounded confused. "What do you mean he isn't there?"

"I don't have him," the babysitter replied.

"The baby is supposed to be with you," the mother answered. "My husband was supposed to drop him off this morning."

The babysitter gently repeated, "I'm just letting you know that he never arrived."

Suddenly, the mother's heart began to race. She immediately tried calling her husband. No answer. She called again. Still nothing. Growing increasingly frightened, she called the babysitter back. "I can't reach my husband," she said anxiously. "I don't know where the baby is."

At that very moment, the babysitter's husband overheard the conversation. By hashgachah pratis, he knew exactly where the father was supposed to be at that time of day. Without hesitation, he rushed to find him. When he located him, he ran over and asked one simple question. "Where's your baby?"

The father froze. In an instant, horror filled his face. He suddenly remembered. He had forgotten the baby inside the car. The two men sprinted toward the vehicle. Others nearby followed behind them. The baby had been trapped inside the locked car for approximately forty-five minutes. The windows were closed. The doors were shut.

It was a hot day. Everyone feared the worst. They opened the door. With tremendous rachamei Shamayim, the baby was alive. He was uncomfortable and in distress, but Baruch Hashem, he was alive.

One can only imagine the overwhelming relief the parents felt. Their precious child had been given back to them. Of course, they thanked the babysitter and her husband profusely. They expressed their gratitude and did everything they could to show their appreciation.

Rabbi Mizrahi then paused and asked a penetrating question. When we hear a story like this, our hearts immediately go out to that helpless child. We realize how precious a single human life truly is. But what about our own lives? Do we value our lives with the same appreciation? Do we recognize that every single day is a gift from Hashem? Do we stop to thank Him for the gift of life itself? And more importantly, do we use that gift wisely?

Even one extra moment spent learning Torah... One additional mitzvah... One heartfelt tefillah... One small step closer to Hashem... Can transform an entire life.

Rabbi Mizrahi concluded with an emotional message. The greatest tragedy is not only losing a life. It is wasting the precious life that Hashem has entrusted to us. Every day is another opportunity to grow, to become better, and to fulfill the purpose for which we were created. May we never take that gift for granted.

***"A true sign of a person's love for Hashem is the love they have for their fellow human beings." ~ Rabbi Yisroel Salanter.***




Our Chazal tell us **לא מצא הקדוש ברוך הוא כלי מחזיק ברכה אלא השלום**, there's no greater beracha than the beracha of shalom. Now, the other end of the spectrum, Rachmana litzlan, there's no greater destructive force than machlokes. And the Yetzer Hara wants machlokes because he doesn't want beracha to come to the world. And that's why we have to be so on guard and do our best to avoid machlokes at every opportunity.

We have to learn from our gedolim. Gedolei Yisrael knew how to disagree without making it personal. **Reb Yitzchak Meir Levin** was a member of Knesset. He was from the family of the Gerer Rebbe, zecher tzadik livracha.

And on a visit to America, he decided to visit the **Satmar Rov**, **Reb Yoel**, zecher tzadik livracha. Now Satmar and Ger don't see eye to eye on certain issues, regarding Eretz Yisrael, whatever, but Reb Levin felt that kavod haTorah is kavod haTorah, and the Satmar Rov was a gadol b'Yisrael, and he's going to visit him. And the Satmar Rov was mechabed him in a very, very beautiful way.

When Reb Levin left, a chosid turned to the Satmar Rov and said, "Rebbe, ich farshtay nisht. I don't understand. The Rebbe has very strong shittos, not like Ger, and he gave this Yid so much kovod. He's a member of the Knesset!" The Satmar Rov said, "I disagree with the shitta. I never disagree with the person. It's two different things. A shitta, yes. I have my shitta, he has his shitta. But the person, he's a talmid chacham, a neshama mechubedes.

What's the question? Of course he deserves kovod." It's well known, the Satmar Rov and **Reb Aharon Kotler**, zecher tzadik livracha, also

had disagreements. At Reb Aharon Kotler's levaya, the Satmar Rov gave a hesped. And what did he say? He quoted the Rashi on Aharon HaKohen, melamed shelo shina. Rashi says about Aharon HaKohen, he didn't change from anything Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him regarding the hadlakas hamenorah.

And the Satmar Rov applied this to Reb Aharon Kotler, that he never veered from the derech haTorah. Whatever he did was al pi Torah.

The same was with the Satmar Rov and **Reb Moshe Feinstein**. It's well known that the Satmar Rov disagreed strongly on a couple of the psakim and halacha of Reb Moshe.

And one time, after Reb Moshe gave out a certain psak that the Satmar Rov did not agree with, certain people hung up posters in Brooklyn, in Manhattan, that were disrespectful of Reb Moshe. And rumor had it that the Satmar Rov, chas v'shalom, encouraged the hanging of these posters.

Reb Hertz Frankel, alav hashalom, told me this. He was the English principal in the Satmar girl schools. He was not a Chasidishe Yid. The Satmar Rov called him in, said, "Reb Frankel, I want you to go with a few of the rabbonim of Satmar"—he named them—"go to Reb Moshe and tell him in my name that I'm very distressed about these posters, very distressed, and I want Reb Moshe to know about that."

Reb Frankel went, and he told me Reb Moshe, in response to the Satmar Rov's words, said, "Please tell the Satmar Rov, I appreciate very much that he sent this delegation, but tell him it was not necessary. I would never suspect the Satmar Rov of doing such things."

Gedolim disagreed. They disagreed in the past, and they will disagree in the future. But nevertheless, they had the greatest kovod for one another, and we have to do the same.

## All I've Got Is You by Rabbi Joey Haber

For ten long years, a couple in Eretz Yisrael waited for a child. Ten years of hoping. Ten years of davening. Ten years of watching other families celebrate births while wondering when - or if - their own turn would ever come.

And they tried everything. They went to doctors and specialists. They pursued every possible avenue. They gave tzedakah. They traveled to holy places. They tried segulos. They poured out their hearts in tefillah. But nothing changed.

Eventually, the doctors gave them the news no couple wants to hear. Their chances of having children were virtually non-existent. It would take a miracle. Still, the husband was not ready to give up. There was one more person he wanted to see: **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l**. One Last Hope.

The husband traveled to Bnei Brak and made his way to the small home on Rechov Rashbam where countless Jews had come carrying their troubles. He joined the line and waited. An hour passed. As he stood there, he watched people emerge from Rav Chaim's room. Again and again, he noticed the same thing. People would enter carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders and emerge looking different - relieved, encouraged, almost as though a burden had been lifted.

The husband watched them and waited for his turn. Surely, he thought, this was what he needed. After ten years of disappointment, after the doctors had essentially given up, Rav Chaim would give him a brachah. Rav Chaim would give him hope.

Finally, after waiting for an hour, he was ushered inside. He sat before Rav Chaim and began telling him his story. "Rebbe, my wife and I have been married for ten years. We have no children. We have gone to every doctor. We have tried everything. The doctors have given up hope. We don't know what else to do."

As he spoke, he began to cry. Rav Chaim listened. Then he looked at him and said: "I hear you. I don't know what to tell you."

The man could not believe it. Perhaps Rav Chaim had not understood. He tried again, explaining the ten years of pain and the doctors' prognosis.

Again, Rav Chaim responded: "I hear you. I don't know what to tell you."

And that was it. Even the Rabbi Couldn't Help.

The man walked out shattered. This was not what he had imagined. He had come to Bnei Brak believing that if the doctors could not give him hope, at least the tzaddik could. He had watched people walk out of Rav Chaim's room feeling as though a tremendous burden had been lifted from their shoulders. But he walked out carrying an even heavier one. In his mind, this had been his last hope. And now even that was gone.

He walked down the steps and back onto Rechov Rashbam. Nearby stood the famous Lederman Shul, where Rav Chaim davened for many years. The man walked inside. The beis midrash was empty. There was no crowd. No doctor. No specialist. No one to give him advice. No one to tell him that everything would be okay. He walked toward the Aron HaKodesh.

And then he broke. He fell down and began crying hysterically. Years of pain came pouring out - ten years of disappointment, ten years of doctors, ten years of hoping, ten years of wondering. He held onto the Aron HaKodesh and cried out to Hashem: "Hashem, I have no doctors. I have no people. I have nothing. All I've got is You."

And perhaps, Rabbi Joey Haber explains, that was the moment everything had been leading toward. The man eventually became a father. Not once. Not twice. He had nine children!

It is easy to hear a story like this and focus entirely on the ending. Nine children. What a miracle. But Rabbi Haber asks us to look

deeper. What was Hashem trying to accomplish through those ten painful years?

Perhaps the answer can be found in that empty shul. For years, this man had prayed. He had gone to doctors. He had sought brachos. He had tried segulos. He had done everything a person could possibly think of doing. But somewhere deep inside, there were still places to turn. Until one day, every door seemed to close. The doctors could not help him. And then, to his shock, even Rav Chaim did not give him the words he desperately wanted to hear. He walked into the Lederman Shul with nowhere else to go. And for perhaps the first time, his heart cried out with absolute clarity: "Hashem, all I've got is You."

That moment changed him. And that, Rabbi Haber explains, is one of the great purposes of tefillah. - Prayer Changes Us.

We sometimes think we pray repeatedly because Hashem needs to hear our request again and again. But Hashem already knows what we need. He knew before we said a word. He knew before the thought even entered our minds. So why keep davening?

Because the repetition is not changing Hashem. It is changing us. Every tefillah can make us a little stronger. A little more trusting. A little more patient. A little more accepting. A little more connected to the Ribbono Shel Olam.

Sometimes Hashem allows a person to encounter a challenge that seems to have no solution. We struggle with it. We fight through it. We daven through it. And slowly, without even realizing it, we become different people. Our emunah becomes deeper. Our dependence on Hashem becomes more real. Our relationship with Him becomes stronger.

And sometimes, Rabbi Haber explains, once that transformation has taken place, the challenge has accomplished what it was sent to accomplish. Of course, we cannot know why Hashem gives any

particular person a nisayon, nor can we assume that every story will end with the outcome for which we prayed. But we can know that no sincere tefillah is wasted. Because even while we are asking Hashem to change our circumstances, Hashem may be using our tefillos to change us. And sometimes the greatest moment of emunah comes when every other door has closed and a person finally looks upward and says: "Ribbono Shel Olam, I have nothing else. - ALL I'VE GOT IS YOU."

## Oneg Shabbos

Ten years before his passing, the **משגיח**, Rav Moshe Wolfson, developed intestinal problems and was unable to eat. Doctors told him that he would have to be on a liquid diet for the rest of his life.

"Until now I served the Ribbono Shel Olam by eating challa on Shabbos, from now on, I will serve him by not eating challa on Shabbos," the **משגיח** said.

During those months the mashgiach would sit contently at his Shabbos *seuda* smiling as he observed everyone eating. He quoted a posuk **כמו חלב ודשן תשבע נפשי ושפתי רננות יהלל פי כי** – It is as if my desire is sated with fat and abundance when my mouth gives praise with joyous language (**תהלים ס"ג, ו**) and said he will satiate himself with the **זמירות**.

On the first Friday night after his new diet began, the **משגיח** was served a small portion of ices for each course. Before partaking of his first spoonful he said, "This is instead of the fish **לכבוד שבת קודש**!" Before the next portion he said, "This is instead of the soup **לכבוד שבת קודש**," and so it went with each course.

His primary concern was that he would be able to partake of the taste of "Oneg Shabbos".

## The Call That Saved Her Daughter - Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro

Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro heard this story directly from both the mother and the daughter - multiple times. At their request, their names and the city where they lived have been changed. But the story itself is true, exactly as they related it. It happened a few years ago on a Motzaei Shabbos.

A young woman, whom we'll call Sarah Cohen, was about twenty years old. She and two friends were planning to drive through the night to attend a friend's wedding the following day in another city. Before she left, her mother wished her well. "Good night, Sarah. Gut voch. Drive safely."

Sarah said goodbye, joined her friends, and they headed out into the night. About an hour and twenty minutes later, Mrs. Cohen's phone rang. It was the police. Her heart stopped. "Are you Mrs. Cohen?"

"Yes."

"Is Sarah your daughter?"

"Yes."

The officer immediately reassured her. "Your daughter is fine."

Mrs. Cohen could breathe again. But then he said something she would never forget. "We've never seen a miracle like this."

Sarah and her two friends were in the emergency room, he explained, but only for observation. They were alive. They were okay. And according to everyone who had seen what happened, there was almost no explanation for how they had survived.

A few moments later, Sarah came onto the phone. Through tears, she began telling her mother what had happened. The three girls had been driving normally when suddenly their car hit a patch of black ice. They never saw it coming. The car began to skid. Within seconds, it was spinning completely out of control. And just beyond the edge

of the road was a cliff. There was another terrifying detail. For most of that stretch of road, there was no protective barrier at all. Had the car left the road almost anywhere along that section, it could have gone directly over the cliff. But there was one small stretch - perhaps forty feet long - where a barrier had been installed. And somehow, as their car spun uncontrollably across the ice, it slammed into that barrier.




People who saw the wreck could not believe that anyone inside could have survived. The police arrived. The girls were removed from the vehicle. And miraculously, all three were alive. The officers themselves described what they had witnessed as extraordinary. It was a miracle that the barrier was there. A miracle that the car struck that particular section. A miracle that the girls survived the impact.

Sarah was crying. Mrs. Cohen was crying. Then the police officer came back onto the phone to reassure the mother once again. Before hanging up, Mrs. Cohen suddenly asked him a question. "Officer, what time did the accident happen?"

He checked the report. Then he answered: "9:37 p.m."

Mrs. Cohen froze. 9:37. She knew exactly what had happened at 9:37.

To understand why, we have to go back several hours.

Earlier that Shabbos afternoon, before Minchah and Seudah Shlishis, Mrs. Cohen had decided to take a nap. While she slept, she had a dream. Her mother appeared to her. Mrs. Cohen's mother - Sarah's grandmother - had passed away not long before. Never before had she appeared to her daughter in a dream. But now she was standing before her. She was dressed entirely in white. She looked radiant. Almost angelic. Yet something was terribly wrong. She was sobbing.

Mrs. Cohen couldn't understand. Her mother told her: "I'm doing well. But there's something I need from you." There was a particular relative in the family - we'll call her Mrs. Stein - with whom there had been a serious falling-out. There was no shalom between them. Mrs. Cohen felt strongly that she had been wronged. And in the dream, her mother did not necessarily tell her otherwise. Maybe, she said, you're right. Maybe you really were treated unfairly. But then her mother begged her: "Even if you're right, when Shabbos ends, call her and make peace."

Her mother continued crying. "Give me your word. Promise me you'll call her." And then Mrs. Cohen woke up.

"Why Should I Be the One to Call?" Mrs. Cohen was trembling. Her mother had never appeared to her in a dream before. And the image of her standing there, dressed in white and sobbing, would not leave her mind. Mrs. Cohen davened Minchah. But inside, she was struggling. She had absolutely no desire to make that phone call. Why should she? She believed she had done nothing wrong. If anyone should be picking up the phone, she thought, Mrs. Stein should be calling me. Why should I make the first move? Why should I swallow my pride when I wasn't the one who caused the problem?

But she couldn't forget her mother's words: "Even if you're right..."

Shabbos ended. Mrs. Cohen made Havdalah. Still, she couldn't bring herself to call. So she opened a Tehillim. For an entire hour, she

prayed. "Hashem, give me the strength. Give me the koach to make this call. Help me do what I know I have to do."

Finally, she closed the Tehillim. She picked up the phone. And she called Mrs. Stein.

Mrs. Cohen didn't call to prove that she had been right. She didn't call to reopen the argument. She didn't demand an apology. She simply said: "Let's make peace."

The two women began talking. Slowly, the walls between them started to come down.

Mrs. Cohen later told Rabbi Shapiro: "It was one of the hardest things I ever did in my life." But she did it. They made amends. They restored shalom.

Then the conversation ended. Mrs. Cohen hung up the phone. And for reasons she could not explain, she did something she had never done before. She looked at the clock. She specifically wanted to know what time it was when they had made peace. 9:37 p.m.

Later that evening, the police called. Her daughter's car had spun out of control on black ice. There was a cliff. There was almost no barrier. Yet somehow, the vehicle struck the one short section of road where there was one. The police themselves couldn't believe the girls had survived. And when Mrs. Cohen asked when the accident happened, the officer checked the official report. 9:37 p.m. The exact minute Mrs. Cohen chose peace. The exact minute she swallowed her pride. The exact minute she reached out to someone she believed should have been reaching out to her. The exact minute, she believed, that her daughter's life was saved.

Mrs. Cohen specifically asked Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro to share her story because she wanted people to understand one thing. Sometimes we have disagreements with people and we know we're right. Perhaps we really are. Perhaps someone hurt us. Perhaps we were treated unfairly. Perhaps, objectively, the other person should

be the one apologizing. But sometimes the most important question is not: "Who is right?" Sometimes the question is: "What is shalom worth?"

Making peace when you know you were wrong is difficult enough. But making peace when you genuinely believe you were right can require tremendous strength. It means putting peace ahead of pride. It means choosing the relationship over the argument. It means being willing to make the first move even when every part of you says: "Why should I?"

Mrs. Cohen had no idea what was happening on that icy road while she was speaking on the phone. She didn't know that her daughter's car was spinning toward a cliff. She didn't know about the forty-foot barrier. She didn't know that her daughter was about to experience a miracle. She only knew that her mother had begged her: Make peace. And despite how difficult it was, she made the call. At 9:37 p.m.

We may never know what happens in Shamayim when a person forgives. We may never know what one act of humility accomplishes. We may never know what protection is created when someone chooses shalom instead of insisting on being right. But Mrs. Cohen knows what happened in her family. Because at the exact moment she made that phone call, her daughter survived what the police themselves called a miracle.

It was the hardest call she ever made. And she believes it was - THE CALL THAT SAVED HER DAUGHTER.

***The strongest people are not those who never broke, but those who refused to let brokenness have the final word. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980)***

# Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The holy sefarim say that when one does teshuvah, he should excuse himself before Hashem. He should express that he isn't entirely guilty for his bad deeds.

For example, when he says *viduy*, he can say how hard it was for him to overcome the yetzer hara, and that the tests were overwhelming, and although he wanted to do the right thing, he failed.

**The Sfas Emes** said to one of his wealthy chasidim, 'All year round, I speak to you about your business (because the Sfas Emes would advise him regarding his business). But during this month, the best investment is to invest in teshuvah.'

When one invests in teshuvah in this month, he earns great benefits, b'ruchniyus and b'gashmiyus, for the entire upcoming year.

## Letters of Loftiness

R' Simcha ben R' Gershon Hakohen teaches that initially they were called Dovid and Yonasan. But after Dovid swore to Yonasan, Hashem's name of **י-ה** was added to their names. Dovid was given the *yud* making his name **דויד** and Yonasan had a *hey* added making it **יהונתן**.

In this way we can explain – **נִפְלְאַתְאַהֲבָתְךָ לִי מֵאַהֲבַת נָשִׁים** - '*your love was more wonderful to me than the love of women.*' (Shmuel 2, 1:26). Just like a man and woman who merits, the name of Hashem **י-ה** is placed upon them [Sota 17a. The name of Hashem, **י-ה**, is found in the words **אי<u>ש</u>** and **אש<u>ה</u>**, representing Hashem's presence.] so too, Dovid and Yonasan merited and had added to their names Hashem's **י-ה**.




Anyone who's ever taken a taxi in Israel knows two Hebrew words: *Sim Moneh*, turn on the meter. The taxi drivers sometimes like to quote you a price, sometimes you're not so confident, so you say okay, turn on the meter and then the meter goes. Even if the guy turns on the meter, you're never really 100 percent sure if he's taking the shortest way, maybe he's taking a little bit of a longer way so the fare should be a little bit higher. You have to give him the benefit of the doubt, but this is one of the challenges of taking taxis in Israel.

With that introduction, here is a phenomenal story. There was a *Rosh Yeshiva* that attended a wedding of one of his students. At the end of the wedding when he was getting ready to leave, he went out to hail a taxi. A few of his *talmidim* accompanied him and said to him, *Rebbe*, can we tag along in the taxi? And the *Rebbe* says, sure, of course.

They order a larger taxi actually, a minivan type of taxi. They all pile into the minivan and they begin driving. The *Rosh Yeshiva* says to the driver, *Sim Moneh*, turn on the meter, and he does. At some point in the trip, the boys realize that the driver is not taking the traditional straight way, he's going around different ways so that he can make more money.

And one of the boys got super upset. First of all, he's not honest. Second of all, you're cheating my *Rosh Yeshiva*. I'm not going to let this stand.

And he turns to the *Rosh Yeshiva*, he says, *Rosh Yeshiva*, you realize? We all know the shortest route and he's taking this very long route so he should make more money. I'm going to let him have it. I'm going to scream at him. I'll tell him off.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* says to him, relax. *Yiddin*, Jewish people, we don't scream at one another. We don't tell people off. If it's a problem or an issue, we deal with it.

And most importantly, I'm the one that's paying. Don't worry about it. Pipe down. And if it's a problem at the end and I feel that he did something which is not so fair, I'll bring it up to him and we'll work something out. - And they continue driving.

When they arrive at their destination, the taxi driver turns around to the *Rosh Yeshiva*, he says, I heard that conversation and I'm going to tell you the truth. I was trying to make a few extra *shekel*.

I have a family, I've got three kids and I'm trying to make extra money off your back. And while I know that's not fair, that's what was happening. So, he turns to the *Rosh Yeshiva*, he says, but I heard the way that you talked to them. That Jews don't scream at Jews, and that we need to be kind to one another and we can always work something out.

And something inside of me at that moment changed. You see, last night, my wife and I were having a heated discussion. She's a little bit more observant than I am. She's *chozeret b'teshuva*, she's coming back to *Torah mitzvot*.

She wants to transfer our three children out of a *mamlachti* school, of public school, to a religious school and I'm kind of against it. She keeps telling me, I'm telling you, the religious people, they have better *middot*, they have better character, they live a higher lifestyle, we're not going to lose. And I kept saying we're going to lose a lot, it's going to impede our lifestyle.

In that exchange between you two, the way the *Rosh Yeshiva* was *mechanech* and educated the students, I realized I want my children to be in that type of school system.

I'm going to go home tonight and I'm going to tell my wife we're switching the kids.

Amazing story. And I just want to highlight one thing in this story. Imagine for a moment if the *bachur* wouldn't have said anything to the *Rosh Yeshiva*, he would have started to scream at the driver right away.

It's possible that the driver would have said you're right, and would have given back some of the money. But his kids would have stayed in public school and who knows if generations would not have been impacted and affected. But because the *Rosh Yeshiva* chose to take the high road, literally, three *neshamot* with *Hashem's* help are totally being transformed, and for generations, that decision could continue to endure.

We have to realize our words have such power. And if we just stop and think before we talk, those words can be transformative.

***It is written in the Zohar Hakodosh:***

***'Leah cried so that she would marry Yaakov and not Esav, and as a result, merited being buried together with Yaakov. Rochel cried so that she should have children, and as a result was buried in a place where her children will be forced to come to her and cry over her!'***

***R' Naftali of Ropshitz ZT"L would say:***

***"I can assure you that the Yetzer Horah won't pursue you - if you don't pursue it!"***

## 102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - How Did the Jewish Shoemaker Convince the Non-Jew to Save the *Sifrei Torah*?

Jewish immigrant from Uzbekistan (formerly Bukhara) shared the following incredible story: A group of Jewish refugees fled from Poland and

Russia to Uzbekistan, bringing *sifrei Torah* with them. They arrived in a remote village in Uzbekistan, built a shul there, and put the *sifrei Torah* inside. Over time, the refugees were either exiled to Siberia or managed to escape to Eretz Yisrael, but they had no way to take the *sifrei Torah* with them. Instead, before they left, they placed them in the *aron kodesh* of their fully-furnished shul.

The cruel gentiles could not tolerate the holiness in their midst. When they saw that the *sifrei Torah* had been left unattended, they took them out of the *aron kodesh* and prepared to set them and other objects from the shul on fire.

A simple Jew, a shoemaker who'd never studied Torah and who couldn't read or write also lived in that village. There was so much that he couldn't do, but he had a deep, innate reverence for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

One day, the shoemaker was approached by a tall and brawny non-Jew whose shoes he often repaired. "Know that the gentiles are removing everything from the synagogue and plan to burn it all," the non-Jew told him.

The Jewish shoemaker was not physically strong, and he knew that if he went out to fight the non-Jews, they would overpower him and burn him together with the *sifrei Torah*. So, he turned to the non-Jew and said, "Do you want an opportunity to earn something special? Go save the *sifrei Torah*."

"What will you give me if I do?" the non-Jew asked him.

"Look," the Jewish shoemaker replied. "I may not have money, because I'm desperately poor and barely have food to eat, but I can bless you."

The non-Jew agreed, because he remembered something that his mother had once told him: "If a Jew blesses you, grasp that blessing with both hands. A Jew's blessing is worth a great deal."

"For the blessing of a Jew, I am willing to do anything," he declared.

He ran toward the synagogue, struck the non-Jewish barbarians, removed the two *sifrei Torah* that were there, and brought them to the shoemaker.

The Jewish shoemaker embraced the *sifrei Torah* and danced with each one with unbridled joy.

"What about my blessing?" the non-Jew asked him. "You promised me a blessing!"

"I know that you have been married for twelve years without children," the shoemaker told him. "I promise you that in nine months, you will have a son."

Indeed, the blessing of that Jew who had such love for *kedushah* and for mitzvos was fulfilled verbatim, and the non-Jew and his wife were blessed with a son.

As for the Jewish shoemaker? He, too, had had no children when the non-Jewish barbarians attempted to burn the shul's *sifrei Torah*, but after the incident, he was blessed with twin boys. Perhaps that was his reward, *middah k'neged middah*, for rescuing two *sifrei Torah*.

I heard this remarkable story from my dear friend, Rabbi Goel Elkarif, who heard it from the grandson of the Jewish shoemaker. The story teaches that there is no such thing as a 'simple Jew.' Every Jew is precious. This shoemaker could not read or write, and he lived in a remote village with no *melamdim* to teach him Torah.

Still, he raised his twin sons, and in time, he immigrated to Eretz Yisrael. Today, from those twins, he has grandsons and granddaughters. His grandsons, all five of them, are *sofrim* who write *sifrei Torah*.

'I had a grandfather who did not know how to read or write,' his grandson says. 'He was desperately poor, childless, and had nothing. But he had a deep love for the mitzvos. He couldn't daven properly, but he could not stand by in silence and allow a *chillul Hashem* to take place. Hashem gave him the wisdom to persuade a non-Jew to risk his own safety for the Torah so that the *chillul Hashem* wouldn't take place. Hashem also repaid that non-Jew so that the Jew's blessing for a child was fulfilled. And my grandfather was blessed with five grandchildren who are *bnei Torah* and write *sifrei Torah*. It all came from a deep and pure feeling of reverence for *kedushah*.'

בס"ד

## למודי משה

**It's Elul, Are We Afraid?**



This week is Rosh Chodesh Elul, and we begin the forty-day period of the Yomim Noraim culminating in Yom Kippur. When contemplating these awesome days, the Navi asks, *aryeh shoag mi lo ye'ra*, who does not tremble when they hear the roar of the lion? The *meforshim* explain that the word *aryeh* is an acronym. The *aleph* stands for Elul, the *reish* for Rosh Hashanah, the *yud* for Yom Kippur, and the *hei* refers to Hoshanah Rabbah. Just as the lion's roar strikes fear in all the nearby creatures, the approaching Yomim Noraim

should shake us out of our everyday routines and cause us to do *teshuva*. These are days of judgment for the entire world, and the Navi seems confident that everyone is walking around in an appropriately fearful state of mind.

Yet, if we look around us – and perhaps inside us – life seems to be going on as usual, and the fear is not palpable. What is wrong with us? How did something that was taken for granted years ago become such a rarity? Why don't we take this time as seriously as we should?

To understand this, let's go back to the *mashal* of the lion. We have all been to the zoo, seen the lion and heard its fearsome roar. Yet it is probably safe to say that none of us trembled. Why were we not afraid? Because there is a barrier between us and the lion, and we know it cannot break out of its enclosure and attack us. We can approach the lion, and stand quite near to it, as long as there is a strong separation between us. When we see the solid fence, we feel detached from the lion, as if we are in a completely different setting, and we are not afraid.

Unfortunately, it seems that the very same concept allows us to remain unaffected during Elul. There is a *mechitzah shel barzel*, an iron barrier, between us and Hashem. This allows us to feel distanced, and so we remain unaffected by the spirit of the time. Our task during Elul is to break down this separation and draw close to Him, through sincere *teshuva*, *tefilah*, and *tzedaka*.

How does one go about breaking barriers? We know that the wall of Yericho came down after Klal Yisroel encircled the city seven times, and then blew the *shofar*. Apparently, one of the *segulos* of the *shofar* is the ability to break down walls and separations. On Rosh Chodesh Elul, we begin to blow the *shofar*, to start the process of tearing down the barriers between us and Hakadosh Baruch Hu. By instilling in us the fear of Hashem, we begin to relate to Him properly once more.

How do we go about reconnecting ourselves to Hashem? In fact, the *pasuk* says *u'vo sidbok*, the Torah commands us to become attached to Hashem. Yet Hashem doesn't have any physical manifestation. How are we expected to become connected to Him?

Since Hashem is not physical, we can only measure our closeness to Him by our spiritual acts and growth. Perhaps the most direct way to connect to Hashem is to perform a mitzvah – to give *tzedokah*, visit someone who is sick, say *Shema*, or keep Shabbos. The *Shela HaKadosh* explains that the word "mitzvah" comes from the word "*tzavsa*," which means attachment. When we do a mitzvah, we are using our *guf* and our *neshama* to fulfill the *ratzon* Hashem. In this way, we become like Him and grow closer to Him. The more we resemble Him by aligning our will to His will, the closer we become to Him.

The *Chida* (in his *sefer Nachal Kedumim*) explains that the very word mitzvah hints at this connection. Hashem's Name has four letters – the *yud*, the *hei*, the *vav*, and another *hei*. Amazingly, the letters of the word mitzvah correspond exactly to these four letters. The second two letters of the word mitzvah, *vav* and *hei*, are the very same as the last two letters of Hashem's Name. The first two letters, the *mem* and *tzadik*, correspond to the first two letters of Hashem's Name, the *yud* and *hei*, according to the system of *at-bash*. Thus, the word mitzvah is really another way of expressing the four-letter Name of Hashem, because doing the *mitzvos* connects us and draws us nearer to Him.

Now, we also know that there are two categories of *mitzvos*. There are *mitzvos aseh*, the positive commandments, and *mitzvos lo saseh*, the negative commandments. The *seforim* teach us the Name of Hashem is comprised of two distinct parts, and each part corresponds to a type of mitzvah. The *yud* and the *hei* represent the *mitzvos aseh,* while the *vav* and the *hei* represent the *mitzvos lo saseh*.

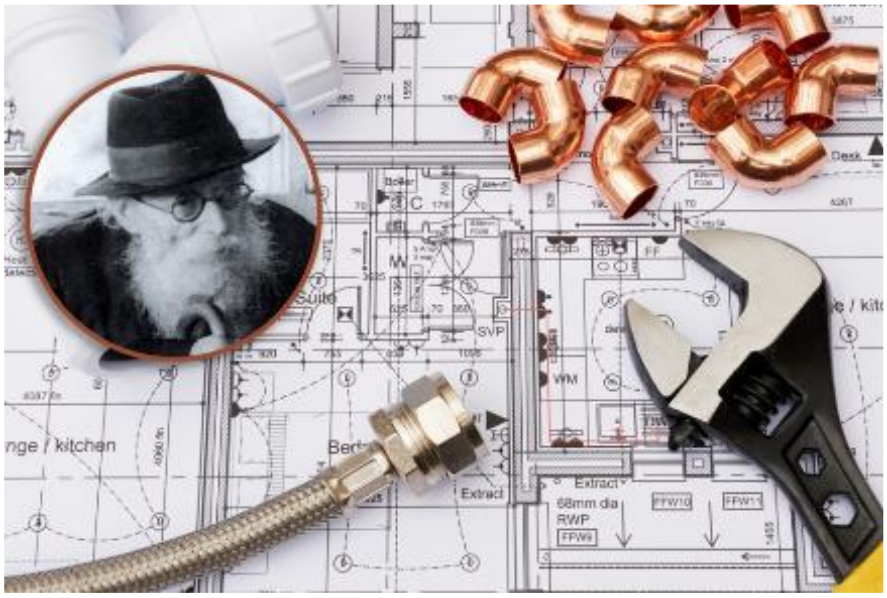
With this background, the *Chida* offers an incredible interpretation of a *pasuk* in this week's *parsha*. The Torah (18:14) refers to the nations of Eretz Cana'an and describes how they would heed the advice of the astrologers and sorcerers. The Torah cautions us not to follow in their ways – *v'ata lo chen nasan lecha Hashem Elokecha*, Hashem gave us another way.

The *Chida* explains that the non-Jews do not perform the *mitzvos* of the Torah. Therefore, they cannot access all the spiritual energies inherent in the *mitzvos*. Instead, they must turn to astrology or *kishuf*, the various manifestations of the *koach hatumah*. However, we do not need to turn to them, because we were given '*lo*' and '*chen*', which literally means 'no' and 'yes'. These refer to the *mitzvos aseh* and *mitzvos lo saseh*. We connect directly to Hashem, the source of all power, through the *mitzvos*.

Imagine the following common scenario: You walk into *shul* between *mincha* and *ma'ariv*. The Rav is delivering a *shiur*, and many people are listening. However, there is another group sitting outside the *beis hamedrash*, schmoozing about politics, while yet another group sits in the corner speaking *lashon ha'ra*. You are now faced with a choice. Now, let's consider: What are you guilty of if you choose to waste your time instead of learning? There is certainly *bitul Torah* involved, perhaps there will be some *lashon ha'ra*. It is probably a *bizayon* for the Rav, a serious transgression of its own. (Incidentally, this might be the case even if someone is learning while the Rav speaks!)

However, the *Chofetz Chaim* (*pesicha* to *Sefer HaMitzvos*, *asei* 6) makes a novel suggestion. He says that you will be *mevatel* the *mitzvas aseh* of *u'vo sidbok*! If you squander an opportunity to hear words of Torah, and decide to join a *moishev leitzim* instead, you have shown that you are not too interested in *dveikus*, in becoming closer to Hashem, and your priorities lie elsewhere.

During the days of Elul, we are all searching for ways to break down the barriers and become closer to Hashem. By evaluating our daily choices and making more efforts to be involved in those matters that will bring us closer to Him, we can refine our relationship with our Creator and enter Rosh Hashanah in an entirely different place - closer to Hashem, closer to our true goals and aspirations. (R' Moshe Oelbaum *shlita*)



**R' Shalom Shwadron *zt"l*** relates a fascinating story involving the ***Chazon Ish*** which highlights how although in today's generation we struggle to have *emunah* in the words of our *chachamim,* at least we see that in times of the past people use to be able to attain such levels:

There was a simple Jew who lived in Bnei Brak and would *daven vasikin* in the *minyan* of the *Chazon Ish*. This Jew was distinguished by his pure and straightforward *emunas chachamim*, and for every matter — big or small — what to do and what not to do — he would ask the advice of the *Chazon Ish*.

One Friday, close to candle-lighting time, he came to the *Chazon Ish* and told him that he had a leak in his house. The *Chazon Ish* said to him: "Go to a plumber."

The man replied: "It's late, and no plumber is willing to come."

The *Chazon Ish* asked again: "So what do you want from me?"

The Jew answered with complete innocence: "That the Rav should say that the water will stop flowing."

The *Chazon Ish* responded: "Alright — the water should stop flowing."

With his simple faith, the Jew returned home — and indeed, the water stopped flowing.

*Motzei* Shabbos, the Jew came again to the *Chazon Ish*, this time with the opposite complaint: "The Rav said the water should stop flowing, and it really stopped — but now there is no water in the house!"

The *Chazon Ish* asked: "And what do you want now?"

He answered: "I ask that the Rav should now say that the water will start flowing again!"

The *Chazon Ish* said: "Fine — the water should start flowing again."

The simple Jew returned home — and indeed, the water began to flow.

We must strive once again to reach such levels of *emunas chachamim* and really value the words that come out of the mouths of our *chachamim*.

■ **לא תוכל לתת עליך איש נכרי אשר לא אחיך הוא** – ***You may not place over yourself a foreign man, who is not your brother*** (17:15). The *posuk* is instructing about the appointment of a Jewish king over Klal Yisrael. Figuratively speaking, the "foreigner" is the *yetzer hara*. He presents himself as a person's best friend, his loving brother who wishes only to give him the best life has to offer. In truth, however, he is a foreigner, whose only interest is to draw man into self-destructive sin. Do not place over yourself a stranger who is in truth no brother to you. [**R' Mordechai of Nadvorna**]




## Reb Baruch Mordche by Yisroel Besser



The yemei haratzon, the month of Elul, were the most intense days of the year in Rav Baruch Mordche's yeshivah. From Shabbos Mevarchim Elul, the Rosh Yeshivah demanded more, because the season itself demands more. Elul, he told the bachurim, is not a period on the calendar, but a concept, and that concept is Ani ledodi, vedodi li, I alone am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine. There is a flow of Divine closeness available, but it is only accessible to one who desires it.

This was the backdrop to one of the most dramatic moments of the year in Ateret; after Shacharis on Rosh Chodesh Elul, his hand would rise, then come down with force on his shtender. "Elul," he would roar, ushering in the month.

In Elul in Ateret, nothing was new; the demands and expectations were the same as they were throughout the year, but everything was new; the air charged with possibility. In Elul, the challenge issued by the Rosh Yeshivah was this: Look inside, and see if the Torah you have learned has remained external, or if it has become part of you!

Elul, the Rosh Yeshivah would say in the name of **R' Elya Lopian**, is a vacation for the neshamah, its opportunity to be rejuvenated before the new year.

Every Shabbos of the year, he would greet the bachurim with a warm "gut Shabbos," but during Elul, he added another wish as well; a gut Shabbos uhn a gutten Elul.

One Elul night, he stood up to speak after Maariv. Rather than give a shmuess, the Rosh Yeshivah said that he simply wanted to make two announcements. First, he said, he had some not-such-good news to share; two weeks of Elul had already passed. Second, he had some good news as well; there were still two precious weeks of Elul remaining.



## Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

There was a young man, a real **ben Torah**, living in Brazil. He was driving around in his old car when he accidentally scratched a beautiful, expensive-looking car.

He wanted to pay for the damage, but he had no idea who owned the car—whether it belonged to a Jew or a non-Jew. So he took a small piece of paper and wrote a note explaining what had happened: *I accidentally scratched your car, and I would like to pay for the damage.* He left his telephone number and placed the note under the windshield wiper.

But he heard nothing. Nobody called him.

A week later, he returned to the same place in Brazil and saw that the car was still there, with the same scratch. He figured that perhaps the owner had not noticed the little note. So this time he took a much larger piece of paper and wrote in **very large letters**: *I scratched your car. Please contact me so I can pay for the damage.* Again, he included his telephone number.

A few days later, the owner of the car called him.

"I've deposited $50,000 into your bank account," he told him.

The young man was shocked. "What? Why?"

The man explained: "When I saw the first note, I understood that you were an honest person who wanted to take responsibility. Then

I saw the second note—you came back again and again, just to make sure I received payment for something you had damaged."

"But why $50,000?"

The man continued: "When you put the second note on the windshield, you didn't notice that underneath it was another piece of paper—your **bank statement**. I saw that you were overdrawn and had a debt of $50,000 in the bank."

"I thought to myself: *I have never met this person, but I can see that he is an honest and upright person. He is determined to pay his debt, even though nobody is forcing him to.* I decided that I wanted to help you."

"So I deposited the $50,000 into your account. And whenever you see that you have a debt in the bank, you can come to me."

As people say, **משמיא לא מפסיד**—a person does not lose by doing the right thing. When someone conducts himself with honesty and **ישרות**, **הקב"ה** takes care of him in ways he could never have imagined.



A young man with virtually no background in Gemara came to join **Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld's** yeshivah, Sh'or Yoshuv. He was handed a volume of Bava Basra. When he saw how thick it was, he became overwhelmed and told his roommate that there was no way he could ever learn such a huge sefer, and that he was planning to leave.

When Rabbi Freifeld heard this, he called for the yeshivah's bookbinder and instructed him to bind the first Daf between hard covers. Since the Gemara would be too thin to write "Bava Basra" on the spine, simply write the initials "**ב"ב**".

He then presented it to the bochur and said:

"This is your Bava Basra. You and I will learn this until you know every line of it. When you've finished it, I'll make a fleishig siyum for the whole yeshivah because you've completed your Bava Basra."

The student mastered that first daf. Then he learned the next one, and the next.

Forty years later, he was still sitting and learning. Rabbi Freifeld had taught him that great accomplishments are achieved one page—and one step—at a time.

## The Seat Near the Bimah

Dr. Bernstein, a respected dentist, had sat in the same coveted seat near the *bimah* for years, especially enjoying it on Shabbos and *Yomim Nora'im*. One Rosh Hashanah he arrived to find another man, R' Shalom, sitting there. Not wanting to create a scene, he said nothing. Yet the same thing happened on Shabbos Shuvah, and then week after week for nearly a year. Sometimes Dr. Bernstein got there first; sometimes R' Shalom did. Neither ever said a word.

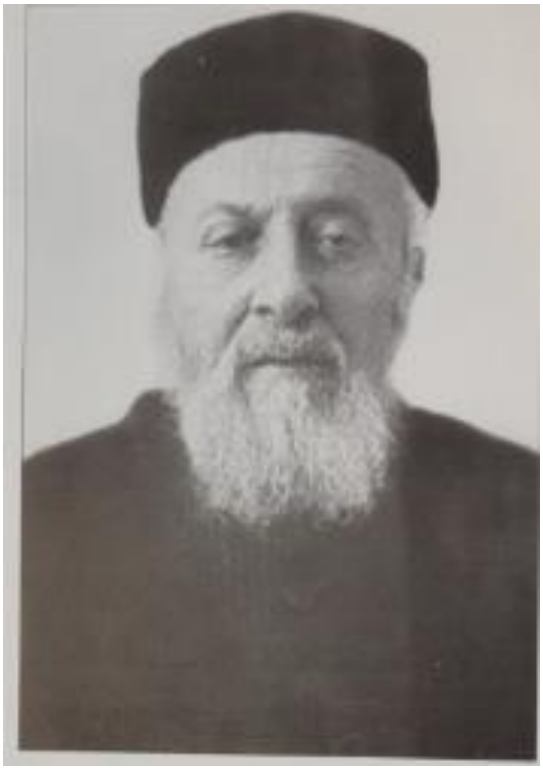
Eventually, R' Shalom approached the shul *gabbai* for a loan to cover costly dental work. When the *gabbai* suggested he see Dr. Bernstein, R' Shalom reluctantly explained the story. The *gabbai* then discovered what neither man knew: during a seat sale the previous year, R' Shalom had legally purchased the seat, while Dr. Bernstein, who attended only on Shabbos and Yom Tov, was unaware the sale had taken place.

"Why didn't you tell him?" the *gabbai* asked. R' Shalom replied simply, "I didn't want to embarrass him. I just tried to get there earlier." When Dr. Bernstein heard what had happened, he was deeply moved and immediately offered to treat R' Shalom at a reduced cost. As the two became acquainted, a remarkable possibility emerged:

Dr. Bernstein had a young daughter waiting for her *zivug sheini*, and R' Shalom had a son in a similar situation. Though their families came from very different backgrounds, each had witnessed firsthand the exceptional *middos* of the other. A *shidduch* was suggested, progressed beautifully, and ended in an engagement.

The following year, as *Yomim Nora'im* approached once again, the *gabbai* noticed an announcement celebrating the birth of a grandson to R' Shalom and Dr. Bernstein. A year-long dispute over a seat had become a powerful lesson in humility, sensitivity, and peace—and the means through which Hashem brought two families together.

## What's for Supper? By Rabbi David Sutton



**Rabbi Ezra Hamway (1860-1945)**

Shabbat had come to an end. R' Ezra Hamway's wife turned to her husband and asked him what he would like for the melaveh malkah meal.

R' Ezra thought for a moment. "I would very much like megedre and some leben (a yogurt-like food)."

"Megedre? Leben? But you know we cannot afford such a delicacy!"

R' Ezra, who was known for his sense of humor, laughed. "I didn't expect you to make it. You asked what I wanted, so I told you!"

Their conversation was interrupted by a knock. The Jewish maidservant of a wealthy man walked in. She had a question of halachah for the Hacham.

Seeing that the girl was shy and uncomfortable, R' Ezra spoke to her kindly and tried to put her at ease. Finally, the story came out. She had been preparing the melaveh malkah meal and had accidentally put leben onto a meat plate next to the hot megedre. Was the plate now kosher or not? And what about the dish she'd been preparing – did it have to be thrown out or could it be eaten?

R' Ezra questioned her closely. When had the plate last been used and what had been put on it? What material was it made of? What ingredients had gone onto the plate? What pot was used to cook the megedre?

Finally, he gave his answer: the food could be eaten. The maid thanked R' Ezra and went back to her master's home.

R' Ezra turned back to the question of what his wife should prepare for the meal. Again, though, a knock interrupted their conversation. It was the maidservant at the door once again. She looked anxious and embarrassed as she explained her problem.

"My master, you see, thinks that the only reason you said the food could be eaten was because you didn't want me to lose my job. But he's afraid that it really may not be eaten."

R' Ezra looked at her sternly. "Of course that's not true. I would never declare something that is unkosher to be kosher!"

The girl gathered up all her courage. "My master said…he said he would only accept the Hacham's ruling if the Hacham were to eat of the dish himself, then he would believe that it was absolutely kosher."

Instead of being angry at the brazen request, R' Ezra merely nodded. If eating something meant he could help this young Jew, he was certainly prepared to do it.

"Yes, my child, you may bring me back a bowl of what you made and tell your master I will have it for my se'udah revi'it."

As the relieved maidservant left the house, R' Ezra's wife turned to him. "What, exactly, did she cook that we will now be enjoying?"

He smiled. "As a matter of fact, it is something very good. Megedre and leben."




*Rebbetzin* Kaledetski, the daughter of **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l**, was in a *makolet*, a small grocery store in *Eretz Yisrael*, and there's a young man there, he buys a coin called an *asimon* coin.



The *asimon* coin was a coin that was used in those days for the payphones. You put it in the phone, you get a couple minutes to talk on the phone, and if you want to talk longer, you have to purchase another *asimon* coin. He bought 10 *asimon* coins.

She was obviously only able to hear one side of the conversation that was going on. As she was shopping, she heard this man talking, and the phone conversation went as follows: 'Hi, my name is Mr. Goldberg, I'm a gardener, I wanted to know if you need gardening work done outside your lawn. Quiet. You're sure? Okay, thank you anyways', and he hangs up.

Obviously declined for work that he was offering. He put in another *asimon* coin, made another phone call. 'Hi, my name is Mr. Goldberg, I'm a gardener, I do gardening work. I wanted to know if I could do work on your front lawn.'

Quiet for a moment. 'Aha, okay, you have someone, thank you anyways, are you happy with them? Thank you', and he hung up. A third call, puts in an *asimon* coin, same thing. 'Hi, I'm Mr. Goldberg, I want to know if you need gardening work.'

Again, silence. After a moment, 'okay, thank you anyways' and he hangs up. Ten times he does this. After he's done his *asimon* coins, he sighs and walks towards the exit of the *makolet*.

*Rebbetzin* Kaledetski, feeling terrible for this gardener who just generated no business and spent all that money, walked over to him and said, 'sir, I have a few trees in my backyard, maybe you could come and prune them and make them look a little better.' To which the gardener said, 'I'm so sorry, I just don't have the time, I'm busy with my clients.'

She looked at him in shock, 'what do you mean you're busy with your clients? I just heard you on the phone trying to generate new business.'

He said, 'you totally misunderstood. That notebook, those phone numbers I was calling, those were my current clients. I was calling them and saying, hi, my name is Mr. Goldberg, I do gardening work, do you need any gardening done? They don't know who I am, they don't know how I look or sound. I never see them, I never hear if they're happy. On the other line, the person tells me, no thank you, I already have a gardener, I'm thrilled with the work he does.

To hear those words, it's worth it for me to go buy an *asimon* coin, pay for the phone call, just to hear the nice thing that they're happy with my work. I was calling my clients. Thank you for the offer, but I really don't have time.'

*Morei Verabbosai*, we all bump into people: gardeners, employees, *chavrusas*, *talmidim* and spouses, siblings and parents.

Everyone could use a kind word. Everyone could use a word of thanks, of genuine appreciation. A word that says you're important and what you do makes a difference in my life. Who knows how far those kind words will go when trying to be *mechazek a yid* and giving him the strength he or she needs to go and do his next *mitzvah* or his next daily task.

# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

**וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים֙ הַלְוִיִּ֔ם וְאֶל־הַשֹּׁפֵ֖ט אֲשֶׁ֣ר יִהְיֶ֑ה בַּיָּמִ֣ים הָהֵ֔ם וְדָרַשְׁתָּ֖ וְהִגִּ֥ידוּ לְךָ֛ אֵ֥ת דְּבַר־הַמִּשְׁפָּֽט**

A true *Rav* recognizes that giving a *Halachic* ruling isn't about saving face or appearing knowledgeable, it's about rendering the absolute truth of the *Torah*. Unlike secular professions where people might feel compelled to project certainty to maintain professional credibility, a *Rav* knows that a incorrect ruling carries spiritual consequences.

One year, a few days before *Pesach*, **R' Yaakov Kamenetsky *zt"l***, needed to take a specific medicine and wanted to be entirely certain about the precise nature of its ingredients. Looking closely at the label, he spotted a complex chemical term and based on a logical deduction about the substance's Latin root, he reasoned that he understood what the compound was.

Still, when it came to making a decision that required absolute certainty, R' Yaakov refused to rely solely on his own assumptions. He decided to walk down to the local pharmacy to double-check with a professional.

At the store, R' Yaakov presented his question to the practitioner behind the counter. The pharmacist took the query seriously and began pulling heavy reference manuals and trade books from the shelves. For a long stretch of time, the man flipped through index after index, searching for the exact compound. Yet, as the minutes ticked by, it became increasingly obvious from the pharmacist's hesitant body language that he wasn't finding the information.

Eventually, the pharmacist closed the final volume, turned to R' Yaakov, and confidently declared that the medicine was completely fine to use.

R' Yaakov thanked the man politely and left, but he saw right through the interaction. It was clear that the pharmacist had simply been

too embarrassed to admit he didn't know the answer. In his line of work, confessing ignorance felt like a blow to his professional standing, so he offered a reassuring answer instead of an honest one.

Reflecting on the moment afterward, R' Yaakov pointed out to his *talmidim* that this encounter highlighted the profound difference between a secular professional and a true *Torah* authority. A professional often feels pressured to produce a quick, authoritative answer at all costs to protect their reputation, even if they have to invent something. A true *Rav*, however, carries a sacred responsibility where guessing is simply never an option.

To illustrate his point, R' Yaakov shared a story about the **Beis Halevi, R' Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik *zt"l***, from the time he was first appointed as the chief rabbi of the city of Brisk. The *Beis Halevi* was renowned across Europe as a towering genius whose depth of learning was practically unmatched, and the community was thrilled to have such a brilliant leader.

Shortly after his arrival, a member of the town came to him with a particularly difficult question. The new *Rav* listened intently, paused, and then simply said, "I don't know." - The questioner was stunned, but assumed it was just a rare oversight.

Soon after, another resident brought a second issue to the rabbinical court, and to everyone's utter shock, the *Beis Halevi* gave the exact same response: "I don't know."

When it happened a third time, panic began to spread among the city leaders. The town notables quickly gathered for an emergency meeting to figure out what to do. They argued that while he might be a brilliant scholar capable of giving deep *lomdish shiurim*, a community needed a practical authority who could actually answer everyday questions and provide clear rulings. They decided they had no choice but to ask their newly hired rabbi to step down.

A delegation of prominent leaders walked to the *Beis Halevi's* home to gently break the news and express their deep disappointment. Hearing their concerns, the *Beis Halevi* didn't get defensive; instead, he smiled warmly and reassured them. He explained that there was no need to worry and that, moving forward, he would readily address all of their future questions.

He then revealed his true intention: he had intentionally held back his answers to establish a vital principle right at the start of his tenure. He wanted both the community and himself to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that if a moment ever came where he truly did not know an answer, he would never let pride or embarrassment push him into guessing.

For a true authority, admitting "I don't know" isn't a sign of weakness but the ultimate proof of integrity and responsibility.



***Sea otters often hold hands while they sleep so they don't drift away. That connection gives them something steady to hold on to when the ocean around them is constantly raging. Staying together is the greatest protection they have.***

***Sometimes in life, the deepest comfort comes from knowing that no matter what happens, someone will be there holding your hand. While we may not be able to control the waves we face, if we hold on to one another, we can withstand even the strongest currents that come our way. ~ Inspired by the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994)***




## חדש אלול The Month of Rachamim V 'Ratzon

The days in the month of Elul are referred to as **יְמֵי רַחֲמִים** - days of compassion; **וְרָצוֹן** - days of divine will. These **יְמֵי רַחֲמִים וְרָצוֹן** originate from the times of Moshe Rabbeinu.



On Rosh Chodesh Elul Moshe ascended to heaven for a third time for forty consecutive days to receive the second set of luchos. At that time, the Ribbono Shel Olam revealed to Moshe the Yud-Gimmel Midos Shel Rachamim – the thirteen midos of compassion. Since then, this period has remained an extraordinary time of rachamim and ratzon.

When exploring the deeper meaning of these days one realizes that we cannot simply continue going about our lives during this time as if they were ordinary days.

Shabbos during minchah, before the aron kodesh is opened, we recite a special tefillah mentioned by the Rema in Siman 262. We recite the posuk from Tehillim: **ואני תפילתי לך ה' עת רצון** - "*As for me, may my prayer to You, Hashem, be at a favorable time.*" Dovid Hamelech asked the Ribbono Shel Olam that his prayers be accepted at a specific time of favor - an eis ratzon when all tefillos are accepted.

**Rav Chaim Vital** explains that the moment of opening the Aron Kodesh is an incredible moment for davening; it's an **עת רצון**, particularly during minchah on Shabbos.

According to the **Zohar**, this momentous moment is so powerful, that we daven: **ואני תפילתי לך ה׳ עת רצון**.

**The Chasam Sofer** presents a powerful insight illustrating the significance of mincha on Shabbos. The Gemara in Maseches Rosh Hashanah describes that Chana davened on Rosh Hashanah to merit having a child. Despite being childless for years, the Gemara says, **בראש השנה נפקדה חנה** -"*On Rosh Hashanah, Chana was remembered*." Her prayers were then accepted.

The Chasam Sofer notes that examining the posukim and calculating the timing, we gather that she didn't daven in the morning, but in the afternoon.

The Chasam Sofer asks why she chose to daven specifically in the afternoon, given that the primary tefillah is usually in the morning, as Shacharis is the longest tefillah.

He explains that that year Rosh Hashanah fell on Shabbos. She therefore specifically wanted to daven at the time of mincha, which is a time of **עת רצון**.

The Chasam Sofer states the following: At that moment - the moment of mincha on Shabbos - one can merit **בָּנִי, חַיֵּי, וּמְזוֹנָא**. "Banei" refers to children, "chayei" refers to life- a long life - and "mezona" refers to livelihood.

These three things, the Gemara says, do not depend solely on one's merit – whether the person is a tzaddik or not; they depend on the timing and mazal under which one is born.

'Mazal' refers to a higher spiritual source. You must connect to the upper realms. When do we get the opportunity to connect to such 'upper realms'? During mincha on Shabbos! That's when Chana davened, specifically choosing to daven by mincha and not in the morning. Because she understood the eis ratzon, and what occurs every Shabbos at mincha.

**The Sfas Emes** wrote the following: You should realize that this incredible time, this eis ratzon, happens every week on Shabbos during mincha. As explained, that's when Chana davened and merited having Shmuel HaNavi, of whom Chazal say was equal to Moshe and Aharon. That was achieved on Shabbos during mincha.

As we mentioned before, Elul is a time of rachamim v'ratzon. The moment Rosh Chodesh Elul begins - from the very start, at night when we say Ya'aleh V'Yavo - for the entire month, continuously, you are essentially standing before an open aron kodesh.

Just as Chana's tefillos were accepted at that specific moment, leading to the birth of Shmuel HaNavi, that same atmosphere exists throughout the entire month of Elul, from the beginning through Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Such is the power of the period we are now entering. We cannot sit idly and let this time pass by as ordinary days. Waking up and reminding ourselves to do teshuva on the day of Selichos is a bit too late. Start asking yourself what needs to be improved; what actions are necessary to take.

**An Elul Perspective**

***Imagine that at the end of Yom Kippur last year, you received a note from Hashem saying that you are going to have a good year. You'd be overjoyed and full of thanks.***

***Now that we've reached Elul and look back at the year we had, we can see all the good Hashem gave us last Yom Kippur.***

***Before asking for another great year, thank Hashem for the previous year. ~ R' Avigdor Miller.***

The **Chiddushei HaRim (Rav Yitzchak Meir of Ger)** has a particularly beautiful approach to Elul: Elul itself is a tremendous chesed and gift from Hashem, because it gives a person an opportunity to repair his past *before* the Yom HaDin.

He writes regarding the special days of Elul:

**אחינו בני ישראל, הזהרו בתשובה שלימה באלו הימים המסוגלים לתשובה**

He explains that although every day Hashem calls out **שובו בנים שובבים**, during these days the call is especially powerful. The days themselves "roar like a lion" and urge a person to return to Hashem.

And then comes the remarkable point:

**"והלא זה חסד גדול שעשה הקב״ה עמנו." - What an enormous kindness Hashem has done for us!**

The Chiddushei HaRim explains that a person can do genuine teshuvah in Elul and thereby transform what happened in the past. He writes that one should not think, *"I still have plenty of time to do teshuvah."* Rather, these days are an extraordinary opportunity, because through teshuvah:

**"אשר יוכל כל איש מישראל לתקן מעשיו, ויהיה כאילו לא עשה כלל"**

A Jew can repair his actions to the point that it is **"as though he had never done them."** And even more remarkably, if he returns **מאהבה**, his previous sins can actually be **נידונין כזכויות**— considered merits. The Chiddushei HaRim describes this as something **חוץ להשכל**, beyond ordinary human understanding, but it is a manifestation of **חסד עליון**, Hashem's supreme kindness.

Elul isn't merely a frightening month. It is a month of rachamim. The very fact that Hashem gives us the time and the opportunity to do teshuvah is itself an expression of His love and kindness.

**"חודש אלול הוא מתנה טובה"** — Elul is a *precious gift* given to Klal Yisrael to prepare for Rosh Hashanah.

# FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

During the month of Elul, there are a number of different practices undertaken in preparation for the Days of Awe. Sefardim begin waking early to say the Selichos prayers, though Ashkenazim don't begin them until shortly before Rosh Hashana. We blow the Shofar each morning, and we add the recitation of Psalm 27, L'Dovid Hashem Ori, morning and evening. This psalm is chosen because it includes references to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Then there is another custom brought down by the Maharil and the Mateh Efrayim. It is customary for people writing letters to their friends during the month of Elul to add blessings to either the beginning or the end of the letter, wishing them to be inscribed for a good new year. (This applies to e-mails as well!) This is done until Rosh Hashana, after which one can wish them to be sealed for a good year, and most agree this practice stops at Yom Kippur.

It is interesting to consider that while most of these customs inspire us to repent, this one seems to recall the importance of wishing others well, and of blessing them. It reminds us that our judgment on Rosh Hashana is not solely based on our relationship with Hashem, but on how we relate to others, as well.

***R' Mendel of Vorki ZT"L would say:***

***"I was always thrilled to discover seforim which instructed on how to combat the Yetzer Horah, until I realized that the Yetzer Horah also read these books and would develop new tactics."***




This week's *parsha* teaches us the *mitzva* of *Matnas Kehuna*, the obligation to give certain parts of an animal to a *Kohen*. *Rashi* explains that these gifts are connected to the reward that was given to *Pinchas* for his courageous act on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. *Pinchas* stood up for the honor of *Hashem*, and as a result, the *Kohanim* receive these gifts.

But there's an obvious question. If we want to show our *hakaras hatov* to *Pinchas*, why do we give these gifts to every *Kohen*? Why should every *Kohen* receive something because of what *Pinchas* did?

Perhaps we can learn from here a tremendous lesson about *hakaras hatov*. *Klal Yisrael* is expected to remember and appreciate something that was done for our ancestors thousands of years ago, and that appreciation doesn't end with the person who performed the act. It extends to his descendants and, even in this case, to the entire *shevet Levi*. This teaches us that *hakaras hatov* is not simply a one-time acknowledgment: 'thank you for what you did.' True *hakaras hatov* means allowing our appreciation to become part of the way we live.

But every time a person eats meat, he had the opportunity to fulfill the *mitzva* of *Matnas Kehuna* and give these gifts to a *Kohen*. And perhaps there's an even deeper lesson. When we receive something good in our lives, we shouldn't take it for granted. We should stop and think about where that good came from, who helped make it

possible, and ultimately recognize that everything we have is a gift from *Hashem*.

Our *hakaras hatov* shouldn't be limited to the person that directly helped us. It should create within us a broader attitude of appreciation.

During the Holocaust, a Jewish man named *Rav Avrom Laron* was imprisoned in a ghetto. At one point, another Jewish man gave him a loaf of bread when he was starving.

It sounds tiny, just a loaf of bread, but *Laron* never forgot it. More than seventy years later, the man who had received the bread was still carrying a sense of gratitude towards the family of the person who had helped him. Eventually, after *Laron* passed away, people were able to locate his family. The family received a check for $29,000, money that *Laron* had left behind and that was ultimately traced to them.

The story was described as the repayment of a personal debt of *hakaras hatov* dating back over seven decades. The point isn't really the money. It's that he never meant to close the account. He could have said 'that was seventy years ago, it was only a piece of bread, I was a kid, who even remembers?' But he didn't.

Imagine someone gives you a loaf of bread. You say thank you, you eat it, and you move on. That's what most people do. But this man carried the *hakaras hatov* for more than seventy years.

And that gives us an example of what the *Torah* is teaching us with *Matnas Kehuna*. *Klal Yisrael* doesn't say *Pinchas* did something great thousands of years ago, why are we still talking about it? No, we don't forget. Because *hakaras hatov* isn't measured by how long ago the kindness happened. It was a kindness; we remember it.

As we enter *Elul*, we're supposed to look back and take stock. And maybe *hakaras hatov* is the perfect place to start. Before we ask *Hashem* for everything we want in the coming year, let's take a

moment to recognize everything He's already given us. Because you can't truly appreciate what you're asking for until you've learned to appreciate what you've already received.

Have an amazing *Shabbos* and a *Gut Chodesh*.

