TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



וילך

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

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ר'שרגא פייביש ב"ר מרדכי צבי ערליך ע"ה

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

ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

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וילך

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Teshuvah

"Teshuvah" literally means "return." However, writes **R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l** (Yerushalayim; 1910-1995), this does not mean returning to one's previous state for, if that were the case, a person who had never in his life been righteous would not be called upon to "do teshuvah." Rather, teshuvah means bringing oneself close to G-d and not to remain far from Him.

R' Auerbach continues: True, the fundamentals of teshuvah are abandoning the sin, sincere regret for the past, and accepting on oneself not to commit the same sin in the future. However, these are only the tools. The essence of teshuvah is the act of coming closer to G-d. This is alluded to by the Gemara (Chagigah 4b), "Rav Huna said, 'If the master pines to see his servant, should the servant distance himself from the master'?" [Similarly, Hashem pines, so-to-speak, for us to come close to Him; will we fail to do so?]

"Once we realize that Hashem is a real live father Who takes care of all our needs, there are no more questions – everything is clear." ~ Rabbi Shimshon Pincus.

וְאָמַר֙ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֔וּא הֲלֹ֗א עַל֙ כִּֽי־אֵ֣ין אֱלֹקַ֔י בְּקִרְבִּ֖י מְצָא֑וּנִי הָרָעֹ֥ות הָאֵ֖לֶּה. וְאָנֹכִ֕י הַסְתֵּ֥ר אַסְתִּ֖יר פָּנַ֑י בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֔וּא - ***"[The nation] will say on that day, 'Is it not because my G- d is not in my midst that these evils have come upon me?' But I will surely have concealed My face on that day . . ."*** (31:17-18)

If the nation seemingly has recognized the evil of its ways, why should Hashem continue to hide His face?

R' Bunim of Peshishca z"l answers: It's a sin to say that G-d is not in our midst. Even in our darkest hour, Hashem is with us. (Ma'ayanah Shel Torah)



וּבְנֵיהֶ֗ם אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹא־יָדְעוּ֙ יִשְׁמְעוּ֙ וְלָמְד֣וּ לְיִרְאָ֔ה אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶ֖ם - "***And their children who do not know, they shall hear and they shall learn to fear Hashem . . .***" (31:13)

R' Moshe Sternbuch writes: Here the Torah teaches us how to educate our children. The way to attain fear of G-d is to study the Torah constantly. However, young children who cannot yet absorb a significant amount of Torah knowledge can still attain fear of G-d by being around those who study Torah and hearing their words.

He adds: Adults, too, who can't learn Torah in depth should try to keep company with Torah scholars. (Ta'am Va'da'at)



"Imagine that at the end of Yom Kippur of 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 we are up to Elul, and we look back at the year we had, we can see all the good that Hashem had given us last Yom Kippur. – So before asking for another great year, thank Hashem for the previous year." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.





בְּבֹוא כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵרָאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹקיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחָר תִּקְרָא אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת נֶגֶד כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם

הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטַּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וּלְמַעַן יִלְמְדוּ וְיָרְאוּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקיכֶם וְשָׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת

When all Yisrael comes to appear before Hashem… you shall read this Torah… gather all the people… so that they will hear and so that they will learn, and they shall fear Hashem. (31:11,12)

Since the purpose of the gathering of all of the Jews is for the reading of the Torah, the pasuk should have first stated **הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם**, "Gather together all the people," and then, **תִּקְרָא אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת**, "You shall read this Torah." - Reading the Torah is the purpose of Hakhel; therefore, Hakhel should precede the "reading" of the Torah.

The Gerrer Rebbe, zl, the Imrei Emes, explains that the (mere) gathering of all Jews b'achdus, in unity, is – in and of itself – Torah. Therefore (now that we have a unified gathering and having achieved the essence of Torah), the Torah is read.

The pasuk, **הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם**, "Gather together all the people," is addressed to the king; it asserts what he should do once the nation is gathered together. The gathering – plus the reading of the Torah by the king – together increases yiraas Shomayim, fear (awe) of Heaven.

Only when Klal Yisrael gather together in harmony, as one people, can Hashem be crowned. The Glory of the King is (only) when the nation is assembled in peace.

וְעַתָּה כִּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת – *'So now, write this song for yourselves.'* (31:19)

Simply, this "song" is a reference to Shiras Ha'azinu, which foreshadows Klal Yisrael's future. Chazal, however, interpret this "song" as applying to the entire Torah, thereby redefining Torah from a book of law, ethics and way of life, to the song of the Jewish people.

Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl, the Ponevezer Rav, explains that the Torah should be the Jew's song of life that reaches into his innermost emotions and accompanies him throughout his life's journey. Torah celebrates with him during his moments of joy and mourns with him as he traverses periods of pain and travail. It is his constant companion, his partner, his colleague, his friend.

Torah speaks to a Jew's emotions. Our relationship to the Torah is one of feeling. Song is a powerful manner of communicating emotion, of conveying our feeling, of expressing our passion. A human being is a creature of emotion. Our relationship with the Torah is how we express our feelings. Indeed, when we learn, we sing.

The Jew who views the Torah through the eyes of cold intellect, 'sans' the passion and vibrance that accompanies one who relates to the Torah as his song of life, lacks the ability to properly transmit and communicate Torah to others, to the next generation. When a Jew studies Hashem's Torah, he studies it with his soul, his spirit. Such study must be replete with emotion, which gives way to song.

When **Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl**, was liberated from the Nazi internment camp, the first thing that he sought was a Gemorah. Shaking, he took the pages in his hands and held it close to his heart. His life had been resuscitated. For the past few years, he had been unable to learn. His life had no meaning. It had now been returned to him. The Torah was his song.

וּבְנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלָמְדוּ לְיִרְאָה אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם - '***And their children who do not know, they shall hear and they shall learn to fear Hashem.***' (31:13)

The Torah implies that all Jews are able to learn Torah, no matter what their background, talents, and skills are.

The Steipler z.l. writes that if one just applies himself diligently to learn Torah, he will succeed and achieve scholarship even if he is not intellectually astute.

A young man once came to the Steipler and, in a voice full of chagrin, complained that even though he had been studying diligently in a yeshiva for five years, he still could not master the elementary level of erudition of Talmud and the basic commentaries.

The Steipler responded, "Nonetheless, you must continue even if fifty years go by, and you still have not become erudite in Torah literature. One who studies in Olam Ha'zeh, this world, will understand in Olam Ha'bah, the next world; one who doesn't study in Olam Ha'zeh, on the other hand, will have nothing to understand in Olam Ha'bah!"

A famous story concerning the **Netziv** is quite inspirational. The Netziv was one of the greatest gaonim, scholars, of the nineteenth century. At a siyum commemorating the completion of his magnum opus, the Haamek She'elah, he related the following story:

As a young child, he did not stand out as the most attentive and assiduous student. He was rather playful and resistant to demands placed upon him in regard to Torah study. He was once playing at home, when, by chance, he heard his father crying. His father, unaware of the presence of his young son, was lamenting to his wife about the child's lack of responsiveness to efforts to motivate him.

"It was always my dream to raise a son who would be a great talmid chacham, Torah scholar," his father said, "but, alas, I will have to train him to be a craftsman."

When the Netziv heard these words coming from his father, he was dumbfounded. He never realized he was capable of achieving success. He immediately ran to his parents, promising them that he would devote his life to Torah study.

The Netziv continued, "Imagine if I had not heard my father, I would have ended up as a craftsman. True, I would have earned an honest living and supported my family. I would even have set up daily shiurim, classes in which I would have studied Torah, but I never would have accomplished so much in my life. The seforim which I authored and the students which I have inspired and taught would never reached their potential. All this is because I heard my father cry bitterly."

The tears washed away the layers of unconcern and indolence. They soaked his heart with sensitivity, inspiring his remarkable growth to the point that he became one of the greatest Torah scholars of his generation.

Horav Yehoshua Frankel z.l., the Rav of Komarna, once overheard a group of Jews relating in shul how they had spent all their money to redeem a number of young men/boys from being drafted into the Polish army. Once a Jewish boy fell into that degenerate environment, it was not long before he forgot his yiddishkeit. Alas, the money ran out and one boy was left unredeemed.

When the Rav heard this, he shuddered and asked them, "How could you allow one Jewish boy to be assimilated among the gentiles?" They responded that he was not the "learning type." Besides, there just was no more money available because it had all been spent on those boys who were inclined to study Torah.

When the Rav heard these words, he immediately ran over to the Aron Ha'kodesh and opened it. Facing the Sefer Torah bedecked in its silver crown and breastplate, he exclaimed, "Our Torah, the pride of our people, you do not have to be adorned with silver. I will take

the silver and use it to redeem a Jewish boy who is about to become lost forever!"

After the boy was spared from spiritual extinction, the Rav spoke to him in the following words, "My child, see what I have done for you. I have removed the silver crown and breastplate from the Torah. How shameful it would be for you to grow up without becoming proficient in Torah knowledge! You must realize how important you are and how valuable is your achievement."

The Rav's words struck home, and the boy became a true talmid chacham.



וְעַתָּה כִּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמְּדָהּ אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׂימָהּ בְּפִיהֶם - "***So now, write this song for yourselves and teach it to the Bnei Yisrael, place it in their mouth***." (31:19)

In a sermon delivered at the writing of a new Sefer Torah, **Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, z.l.**, offered the following parable to explain this pasuk:

There once were two sisters who met a number of years after they had each been married. One sister, who had married a young man from a wealthy family, dressed in a manner which reflected her material success. The other sister had married a poor fellow who did not have the good fortune to better his lot during his married life. - It was truly surprising that at their meeting both sisters bemoaned their lot in life.

Upon looking at her wealthy counterpart, the poor sister remarked, "Why are you crying? You have it made. You have no financial difficulties. You need not worry where your next dollar is coming from. Life is treating you well. Why are you complaining?"

The sister, who had presumably "succeeded" in life, broke down and told her sister that life was not so rosy. "True, I dress well and have all the jewellery that I can use, but that does not lead to happiness.

I am like a showpiece. I have no say whatsoever in the management of my household. My husband talks down to me as if I do not exist. What benefit do I derive from the gold and silver?"

The other sister said, "Although my financial situation leaves much to be desired, I still have a wonderful husband who treats me like a queen. I am in charge of my home, and I play an integral role in the upbringing of my children."

After retelling the parable, Horav Ferber looked at those assembled and asked, "So who really was better off, the rich sister or the poor one?"

He continued, "I remember an old Sefer Torah in a small town in Lithuania that had no silver or gold to adorn it. In fact there were times when it did not even have a cover to protect the parchment. This Sefer Torah, however, had a 'say' which reverberated throughout the entire community. The members of the community adhered to its message regarding the management of communal issues, big and small, with the utmost reverence.

Can we say the same for the Sifrei Torah in some of the synagogues in our community? They are covered with fancy velvet mantels and adorned with silver and gold, but is their message heard beyond the Aron Ha'Kodesh -- or is it relegated to be a showpiece? What benefit is derived from a Sefer Torah that has no 'say,' whose Divine message is of no value to us?"

This is the meaning of the pasuk. When you write for yourselves a Torah, be sure not to leave it in the Aron Ha'Kodesh. Take it out and שִׂימָה בְּפִיהֶם, "Put its message into your mouth."

The words of the Sefer Torah should control and direct every aspect of your daily endeavour. Learn it, study it, become proficient in its laws. Let it be your life's inspiration. Only then will you actualize the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah.

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה – '*And Moshe went*.' (31:1)

From where did he come, and to where did he go? The pasuk does not address these simple questions. He simply went!

Horav S.Y. Levin, zl, distinguishes between amidah, standing still, and halichah, walking/moving. Each one has its own advantage according to the situation.

Moving forward is beneficial, as long as one goes in the right direction. If one has a prescribed course and he maintains it, then the more he walks, the closer he moves to his destination. In such a situation, moving is obviously more advantageous than standing still. Conversely, when one is lost -- or if his sense of direction is misguided -- the more appropriate action is to stop and remain standing until he locates the correct path.

Human beings are required to be "mehalchim," those who move, while angels are called "omdim," those who stand still. Angels remain on the same madreigah, spiritual level, during their entire existence. They do not ascend in spirituality and, likewise, they do not descend. Man must strive to attain greater heights. He must climb; he must constantly ascend the ladder of spirituality, never ceasing to advance further and further, higher and higher.

When is moving forward appropriate? Only when he is advancing on the road of Torah and mitzvos. If, however he has received his guidance from the yetzer horah, then it may be more beneficial for him to stop, to cease to move forward.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the paragon of virtue, the paradigm of kedushah, holiness, the quintessential leader of Klal Yisrael. As he reached the climax of his days upon this world, the Torah attests to his constant movement - in the proper path. It is not necessary to state his point of origin and destination. - Throughout his entire life Moshe Rabbeinu moved in a single direction - onward.





How does one avoid getting ill?

Every day one should do what the Gemara says: **לְעוֹלָם יְבַקֵּשׁ אָדָם רַחֲמִים שֶׁלֹּא יֶחֱלֶה** – 'A person should always plead for mercy from Hashem that he shouldn't get sick' (Shabbos 32a). Which means that every day you should pray for good health. I know you won't do it but listen to me anyhow.

Every single day of your life! Don't rely on shemonah esrei – you don't even think what you're saying. It can be done outside of shemonah esrei, or if you wish, you can add it when you finish shemonah esrei, before you take three steps back. Beg Hakodosh Boruch Hu! Although you've prayed all your prayers by rote, by stereotype, like a record; but when you've finished, at least one little thing say with kavanah.

Say **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ שֶׁתִּשְׁמֹר בְּרִיאוּתִי וּשְׁלוֹמִי** - Please guard my health and my well-being." **שְׁלוֹמִי** means, "Guard me against automobile accidents and other accidents."

You have to always pray to be saved from accidents. What do people expect, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to protect them for nothing? The reason there are accidents in the world is to be a spur, to incite people to pray. But if you don't pray, so what can Hakodosh Boruch Hu do? He might have to send an accident, chalilah, to make you aware.

So therefore **לְעוֹלָם** - always **לְעוֹלָם יְבַקֵּשׁ אָדָם רַחֲמִים** a man should always seek mercy from Hashem, not to be sick **שֶׁלֹּא יֶחֱלֶה**!

And that's one of the most important pieces of counsel you will ever hear.

Shell Shocked – Rabbi Shlomo Landau



The noted maggid, **Rabbi Shabtai Yudelevich** shared the following story: One day, his wife asked him to stop at the '*shuk*' [Machanei Yehudah in Yerushalayim] and pick up some onions and tomatoes on his way home.

When he gets to the shuk, he sees a very long line of customers outside one of the stalls. So, he asks someone, "why is there such a long line?"

They replied, "Because they are selling almonds in their shells for 5 shekel a kilo."

He thought to himself, 'wow, what a bargain, it's usually 50 shekel a kilo!' I came to get onions and tomatoes, but it's a bargain, and I can't pass up on this one-off opportunity. So, he gets in the queue and waits for 45 minutes. While he's waiting, he thinks about the 90% off price, so he decides to buy 100 shekel worth – 20 kilo! An opportunity like this is once in a lifetime. I'll put some in shul and share the rest with the family. He puts them in his shopping trolley, and he forgets to even buy the onions and tomatoes.

He comes home, and he starts shlepping in bag after bag of almonds.

His wife asked him, "What happened, I sent you to buy onions and tomatoes, and you seem to have bought the world's supply of almonds?"

He said, "You're not going to believe this – they were selling almonds in their shells for 5 shekel a kilo! So, I bought a 100 skekel worth."

She said, "What are we going to do with all these almonds?"

He said, "We'll figure it out, we'll give them out – you can't pass up on such a bargain."

He said, "Come on, let's eat some of them."

They start opening the shells, but there are no almonds inside! They open another bag, and there are no almonds inside – there were no almonds in any of the bags – just empty shells! – "The guy scammed me!"

He was really furious, and he ran back to the shuk to confront the stall owner. "You're a thief, you sold me just shells with no almonds inside! Give me back my money"

The store owner said, "I'm not a thief at all."

"What do you mean – where's the almonds?"

He said, "Let me ask you a question – when you usually by almonds at 50 shekel a kilo, there is a shell, and there is an almond. What proportion is shell and what proportion is almond?"

He answered, "Maybe 60% shell and 40% almond."

"So listen, when you are buying almonds, you're paying approximately 30 shekel for the shells, and 20 shekel for the nuts. And I only charged you 5 shekel for them – It's still an incredible bargain! What's your problem, what's your issue?"

Reb Shabtai says, "Fool – the shells are only worth something if there also almonds inside them. But if there is not nut inside, the shells are worthless! Give me back my 100 shekel"

Rabbi Shabtai Yudelevich realized at that moment an incredibly powerful life-lesson.

The Ribbono Shel Olam gives us a shell – which is our body, and he gives us the nut – which is our Neshama. If you just have a shell, and you don't have a nut – the shell is worthless!

How many people focus their lives on the shell leaving a hollow interior? - Let's focus on who we really are.



I'm Here For You by R' Ephraim Eliyahu Shapiro

Somebody told me that he had a smartphone, but he dropped it, and it got damaged. Unfortunately, all his contacts got erased. As a result, he could still make and receive calls, but there was no caller ID, so he didn't know who called.

He was going through a very trying week. He got a message from somebody with just four words… - 'I'm here for you!'

He told me, "I was going through such difficulty, and this person texts - 'I'm here for you!'" [Don't let anybody go through anything alone]. He said that these four words were the kindest heartwarming message that he could ever hear at this time. But he didn't know who to thank because he'd lost his contacts. So, he texted the person back… 'Your message came at such a good time, I was feeling so low, I was down and out. – Those four words… 'I'm here for you! meant the world to me. But who are you? I just need to properly thank you.'

And not a second later came the response – "***Buddy, It's your Uber driver…'I'm here for you!'*** Yalla, come on let's go!"

But the truth is, that those four words…***'I'm here for you'*** are from the best descriptions of an *Eila* (Identity) that you could come up with, because no one can do it on their own.

Uber driver or not, we must be there for each other. It builds your character and helps to define us. – Be there for someone.

The Oldest Hebrew Book Ever Discovered



Discovered in a cave in Afghanistan, the oldest intact book written in Hebrew

Called Afghan Liturgical Quire (ALQ) by researchers, the book was dated to the 8th century CE.

A quire is a manuscript that looks like a modern-day book. Earlier manuscripts are scrolls, where each subsequent page is sewn to the previous page. In order to read the next page, the reader needs to unroll the scroll. In a quire, the pages are folded and sown together at the folds so that the reader needs to turn pages, just like in printed books today. Unlike in a scroll, writing appears on both sides of each page.

Though earlier Hebrew manuscripts have been discovered, they are written as scrolls, such as the Dead Sea scrolls. The ALQ is the earliest manuscript that is shaped as a quire, or a book.



Written in Hebrew script easily readable today by anyone familiar with Hebrew prayer books, the ALQ contains Shabbat prayers, liturgical poems, and parts of the Passover Haggadah.

The ALQ was discovered in a cave in Afghanistan.

Originally, scholars thought that the manuscript was part of the Cairo Genizah. In 2013, Hobby Lobby purchased the ALQ from an Israeli dealer under that assumption. But when Hobby Lobby donated the ALQ to the Museum of the Bible in 2015, the museum's scholars realized that the new acquisition was much more significant than they'd thought.

Hepler calls the discovery "a gamechanger." He says, "The ALQ's significance is multifaceted. Dating to the 700s, it is the oldest Hebrew codex ever discovered. It's Sabbath morning prayers, piyyutim (poems) for Sukkot, and partial Haggadah (mysteriously written upside down) predate Amram Gaon's standardizing of a Siddur in the mid-800s. It predates the other two earliest Haggadahs, the Dropsie Haggadah and a Haggadah manuscript at Jewish Theological Seminary, by more than 200 years. Its content and structure offer a whole new dataset for scholars in Jewish liturgy and Hebrew codicology."

In the Middle Ages, Afghanistan was home to a thriving Jewish community. Information about the community's daily life was discovered in what researchers call the Afghan Genizah – a collection of about 250 documents detailing the lives and business dealings of the Abu Nezer family residing in Bamiyan, a commercial center located on the famous Silk Road.

The city of Bamiyan was destroyed during the Mongol invasion in the 13th century. Historians presume that the Jewish community was destroyed as well.

Among the Afghan Genizah collection [discovered in a fox cave] are Biblical and Talmudic texts in the original Hebrew, a Biblical commentary in Persian, legal documents in Aramaic and Persian, and a merchant's account book.

In the first half of the 19th century, many Persian Jews escaping persecution and forced conversion relocated to Afghanistan. They lived in the cities of Herat and Kabul. However, the Jews in Afghanistan faced increasing persecution and pogroms.

The majority of the Jewish community left Afghanistan in the 1960s. Most Afghan Jews moved to Israel. Some moved to America and Europe.

After Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, only a handful of Jews remained in the country. They were threatened and persecuted, and the last Jews left Afghanistan in 2001. Currently, no Jews remain in Afghanistan.

"If someone is too tired to give you a smile, leave one of your own, because no one needs a smile as much as those who have none to give." ~ Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

בס"ד
Menucha
A Shabbos table companion for the whole family
לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

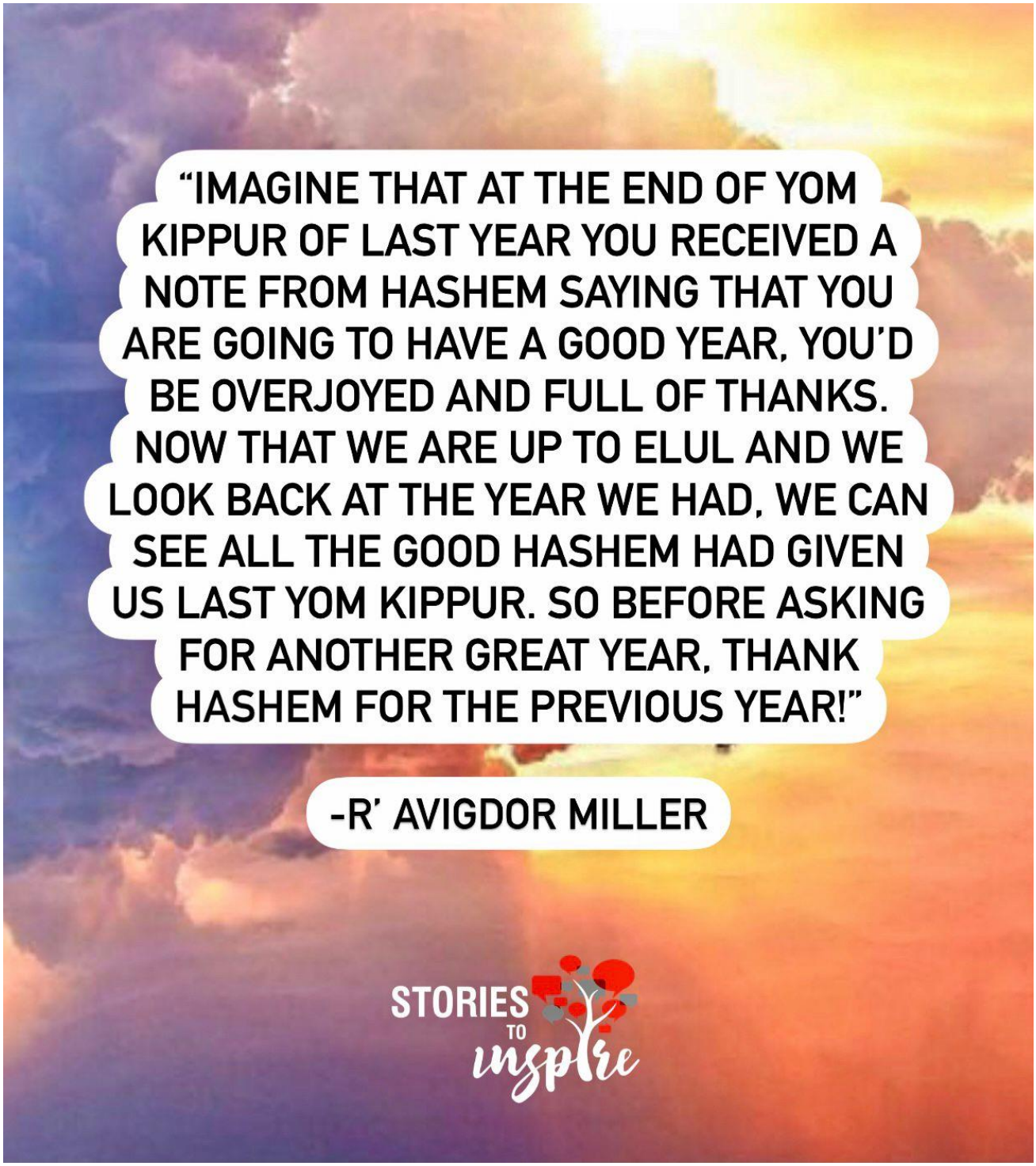
Imagine a Photographer

The Admor Rav Avraham Yeshoshua Heshel of Kopichnitz, z''tl was close with **Rav Moshe Feinstein, z''tl**, who lived in his neighborhood - the lower East Side. He also became close with **Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahanaman** when Rav Yosef once traveled to America to raise funds for his Torah institutions in Eretz Yisrael. This friendship eventually resulted in Rav Kahanaman matching up Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heshel's granddaughter with the son of **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z''tl**.

When the Admor of Kopichnitz arrived in Eretz Yisrael to attend the wedding, he met Rav Shlomo Zalman and developed a warm connection with him. After the wedding, when he was ready to return to America, the Admor went to Rav Shlomo Zalman to bid him farewell. When they heard a honk from outside, Rav Shlomo Zalman accompanied the Admor to the car. However, it turned out that it wasn't the car which was taking the him to the airport. Meanwhile, Rav Shlomo Zalman sent someone to bring a chair for the Admor and urged him to sit. However, the Admor refused to sit down.

The Admor explained, "When I was young, I once heard a wonderful yesod from my father, the **Admor Rav Yitzchak Meir of Kopichnitz**: "Before you take any action, imagine that a photographer is standing opposite of you, and photographing your every move. Take out the pictures and examine them. If you are satisfied with your appearance, you can carry out what you intended. If not, refrain!"

"I carried out this cheshbon and said to myself. "How will I be able to look at a picture of myself sitting, with Rav Shlomo Zalman standing next to me!?"



"Anyone who reflects on their life, can see Hashem's presence and create a personal Megillas Esther.

By focusing on these moments, they'll increasingly notice His involvement – even in difficult times when it's less obvious." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.



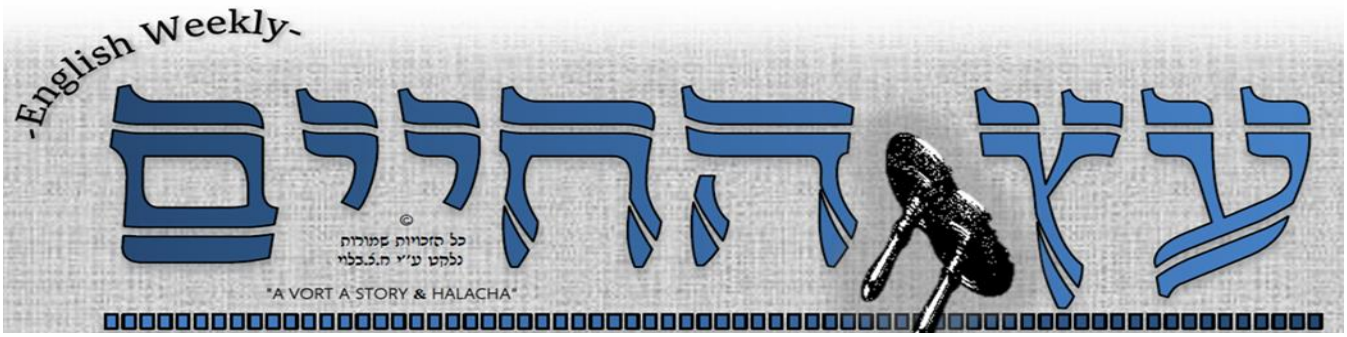
Gitta Levin opened a thank-you note from Sara Green, a woman she occasionally saw at shul. Confused, she called Sara, thinking it was a mistake.

"No mistake," said Sara. "A few weeks ago, you told me, 'Sara, you look stunning! I'm sure your kids will be the best-dressed on the block!'

At the time, I was feeling hopeless, thinking I will never get married. But your words gave me hope that I will one day get married and have a family of my own! I reconsidered a shidduch I had turned down... and now... I'm a Kallah! I wanted to thank you -your kind words changed everything."

Seen in Let my People Shmooz from the CCHF

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Rav Kalman זצוק״ל said from **Rav Chatkel Levenshtien זצוק״ל** that we find that when it comes to the mitzvah of teshuva we are constantly falling and falling again, and a person may think to themselves, "What is my teshuva worth if I keep on falling?!"

Rav Chatzkel explained that the mitzvah of teshuva is to make sure that you are on the right train. True, you may fall again and again but ask yourself, "Which train am I on?" Is your train at least driving in the right direction? If it is than you ARE considered someone who is becoming a baal teshuva.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Someone once approached **R' Boruch Ber Lebowitz z"l** and asked how it was that he had such a beautiful singing voice, while his Rebbe, **R' Chaim Brisker z"l** was a less than capable singer.

R' Boruch Ber was dumbfounded as he wrestled with the mere suggestion that his beloved master could be less than perfect. He stood there a few moments, then his brow cleared and he smiled.- "The Ribono Shel Olam would not wish to make a person have every ma'ala" he said, "or they would not be human. My Rebbi was perfect in every other way, so HaKadosh Boruch Hu made sure he didn't have the best voice. I, on the other hand, have no other redeeming qualities, so, out of mercy, He at least gave me a nice voice."

Chizuk - Inspiration

The height of the golden era of the healing baths of Marienbad was in the late 1800's and lasted until the Second World War. Many famous people used to visit this resort town including King Edward VII of England, Emperor Franz Josef I of the Astro-Hungarian empire, Alfred Nobel, Rudyard Kipling, and LeHavdil, the great Mashgiach of the Mir Yeshiva, **Rav Yeruchem Levovitz ZT"L** among other Gedolim.



Rav Yeruchem, who in all probability suffered from an undiagnosed brain tumour, used to visit Marienbad during the offseason to provide relief from his intense pain and headaches. At the same time, there was an observant Jew who was a headmaster of a school in England who attended the baths – probably to relieve the extraordinary stress and tension involved in his position. Aside from the baths, Marienbad was also noted for its remarkable and picturesque parks, and the two quickly developed a close relationship.

The English headmaster decided to open up to Rav Yeruchem and tell him of all the challenges that he faced at school and of the intense pressure that he was consistently under. Throughout the headmaster's entire discussion, Rav Yeruchem listened attentively. Finally, Rav Yeruchem gave him his advice. He uttered two Yiddish words, "Zarget Nisht" – do not worry.

As if by some magical force, the headmaster, who like Rav Yeruchem also suffered from intense headaches, was suddenly cured of his headaches and relived of his stress. How did Rav Yeruchem effect this remarkable change in the headmaster?

Rav Shlomo Freifeld ZT"L, the founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Sh'or Yoshiv in Far Rockaway, explained, "This was no magic or charmed luck. Rather, it was something else entirely. The change in the headmaster occurred due to the power of an "Ish Emes" a person who is deeply imbued with the qualities of integrity and truth. When someone is an Ish Emes, their words have great impact and great power. The headmaster knew that Rav Yeruchem was such a person – and knew that he spoke the truth. Accordingly, the loving and honest words of "Zarget Nisht" penetrated the inner recesses of the headmaster's psyche. He knew that if a man of truth and integrity of the calibre of Rav Yeruchem told him not to worry, there was indeed nothing to worry about – and he was cured.



The Sfas Emes and the Soldier

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a war between Russia and Japan. Sadly enough, many young Jewish people were drafted into the army. A group of bochurim came to the Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter) and they asked him for a brachah. He bentched them that they should not have to go out to war, but to one bachur he said, "Wait a minute."

The Sfas Emes went into his room, and came back with a book. It was a little manual on how to do brissim. The Sfas Emes said to him, "Here, learn how to make a bris, and I bentch you that even when you go to the army, you should come back b'shalom."

The boy began crying, and said, "Rebbe, please bentch me that I shouldn't have to go to the war at all." But the Sfas Emes was already talking to somebody else.

The boy got drafted and went to basic training. One day a general came to inspect the troops, his eye falls on the Jewish boy and he says, "I want to talk to you in private."

He takes him to his office, takes a pistol in his hand and says, "Is it true that you only eat kosher food?" The young soldier says, "Yes." He holds the pistol to his heart and he says, "Hey, you are a soldier of the Czar of Russia, and the Czar doesn't want you to be hungry, the Czar wants you to eat all the food you can get your hands on. So, I'm ordering you to eat non-kosher food."

Trembling, the boy answers, "I'm sorry, I'm a servant of G-d, not of the Russian Czar."

The general paces furiously up and down the room and then he comes up to him again and says, "I heard you keep the Sabbath." He answers, "Yes." He says, "You are crazy! You are a soldier in the army of the Russian Czar! The Czar needs you to work every day!" This young man knew that this is the test of his life. He says, "I'm sorry, I'm a servant of G-d," while the general holds the pistol against his heart.

Suddenly the general smiles and puts down the pistol and says to him, "Listen to me, nobody knows, but I'm Jewish. My wife just had a baby and I need a mohel to do the bris. I'm not religious, but one thing I know: A mohel has to keep Shabbos and eat kosher food. So, I just wanted to test you to see if you really eat kosher and if you really keep Shabbos.

"But now that I see that you do, I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I'll sign you out from here and say I need you and take you with me. And after you do the bris, I will give you civilian garments and you can just run home."

Chabad.ORG

From our Sages

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל – ***'Moshe went . . . to all of Israel.' (31:1)***

But the Torah doesn't tell us *where* Moshe went on this last day of his earthly life. The chassidic masters say: Moshe entered into the core of every Jew of every generation, so that every Jewish soul possesess a spark of the soul of Moshe. ~ (Maayanah Shel Torah)



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

- **How was Moshe able to make all Yisrael totally righteous?**

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה בְּאָזְנֵי כָּל־קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־דִּבְרֵי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת עַד תֻּמָּם (31,30)
"***And Moshe spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Yisrael the words of this song until their completion.***"

The phrase "until their completion" is difficult to understand, because obviously Moshe didn't leave out any words.

We can explain it according to Chazal that words which come from the heart, penetrate the heart. Therefore, when Moshe Rabbeinu reproved Yisrael with the words of this song, he reproved them so well that they repented completely and became tzaddikim.

This is what the posuk is saying: "Moshe spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Yisrael the words of this song until their (Yisrael's) completion" - until they became unblemished and totally righteous in their deeds.



◣ Our Inner Moshe - Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל - "***Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Israel...***" (31:1)

Why aren't we told where Moshe went?

Because this pasuk implies that Moshe "went into" or entered into the heart of every Jew. Every Jew, in every generation, bears within his or her heart a spark of our teacher, Moshe's spirit. Thus, the answer to our question may be found at the end of the pasuk. Moshe, we are told, went forth "to all of Israel." This, too, is the reason why the Torah says of Moshe that "no one knows his burial place" (36:6). For Moshe is not in an ordinary tomb, rather he is enshrined within every Jew's heart.

◣ Pray Right Away - Rav Eliyahu Lopian

בֶּן־מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה אָנֹכִי הַיּוֹם לֹא־אוּכַל עוֹד לָצֵאת - "***I [Moshe] am 120 years old today; I cannot any longer go forth and return...***" (31:2)

Chazal tell us that if Moshe had prayed immediately, Hashem would have allowed him to enter Eretz Yisrael. We learn from this that we should not put off praying when a need arises. Rather, we should pray immediately.

◣ For The Right Reasons - Tiferes Shlomo

וּנְתָנָם ה' לִפְנֵיכֶם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לָהֶם כְּכָל־הַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם - "***And Hashem will deliver them [the nations] up before you, and you shall deal with them in accordance with all the commandment that I have commanded you...***" (31:5)

When you execute vengeance on the seven nations of Canaan, you shall do it not for the sake of selfish gain and thirst for revenge but solely for Heaven's sake, because I, G-d, have commanded you to do it.

◣ Always With Us - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא הֲלֹא עַל כִּי־אֵין אֱלֹקַי בְּקִרְבִּי מְצָאוּנִי הָרָעוֹת הָאֵלֶּה. וְאָנֹכִי הַסְתֵּר אַסְתִּיר פָּנַי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא - "***...and they will say on that day, 'Look! Because my G-d is not with me did these evils happen to me'... And I will surely hide My face on that day...***" (31:17-18)

This is perplexing. In the first pasuk, it's clear to the person speaking that his suffering was caused by the lack of Hashem's presence in his life. Why then would Hashem punish him further by continuing to hide His face?

Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa explained that this is a fundamental mistake. Hashem never left him. Hashem is always watching over him. Thinking that Hashem was not with him - that was his sin. - One must recognize that even when he sins and is "walking in the valley of the shadow of death," Hashem is always with him.

"A person accomplishes much more with a bit of patience and tolerance than with all the anger and resentment in the world." ~ Rav Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821).

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

31:12 הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטַּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ

The mitzvah of Hakhel is described in this week's sedra. The term "Hakhel" comes from the Hebrew verb **הַקְהֵל**, which means "assemble".

The mitzvah of Hakhel is a Biblical commandment that requires the gathering of the entire people of Israel every seven years to hear the Torah read to them. The gathering takes place on the second day of the holiday of Sukkot, during the Festival of Succot. The king of Israel reads from the Torah to the assembled people, who include men, women, and children. The purpose of the gathering is to inspire the nation and to rededicate them to their mission. The essence of Hakhel is to gather with fellow Jews for Torah study and inspiration.

The mitzva includes the small children who aren't even going to understand a word of what's going on.

This is mindboggling as in hilchos Rosh Hashanah the **Chofetz Chaim** says that this is a time where you shouldn't bring small children, as they will disturb you from davening. – So why by this once in 7-year occasion do we especially include the young children that will surely disturb?

The Chasam Sofer says over an unbelievable answer from his rebbe – **Rav Noson Adler** which I think as parents, it's so important to hear this and is truly inspirational:

Do you know why you bring these kids? – To disturb you! Yes, and you won't learn a word! You won't be able to focus or concentrate on a word that the king is saying. – It doesn't matter, because the children themselves will be inspired by being present at a gathering with hundreds of thousands of Yidden. And it is worthwhile on giving up on ones own avodah for the kids to be inspired.

Rav Noson Adler says that our children are our primary responsibility and it's worth investing in our children, even if that means a loss in our own shteiging and potential growth.

This is a responsibility that Hashem has given us as parents or teachers of children. And I believe that as a result of this we will become better people ourselves.



In this week's Parsha, the verse says, וְהַסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי מֵהֶם "And I will hide My face from you (the Jewish people)". 31:17

It is interesting to note that the verse repeats the word "to hide" twice. Chazal learn out from this apparent redundancy, that when the Jewish people stray from the path of the Torah, and pretend that they do not see Hashem in the world, he too will respond in kind and make Himself so hidden from the Jewish people, that they will not see His ways in the world at all, and this response of Hashem will cause the Jews to stray even further in a vicious cycle.

If one contemplates the severity of this punishment, one will realize that there is no greater recompense that not being able to see Hashem's presence in the world affairs. However, **R' Aharon Kotler** explains that the salvation from this pitiful state is not far off.

There is a Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 10b) which quotes the verse slightly later on in the Parsha which says, "And now, write for you these words (the Torah), and teach it to the sons of Israel, in order that it should not be forgotten from their offspring". R' Aharon explains that in this verse, lies the key to our deliverance from our disgraceful situation in which we are separated from Hashem. By

properly studying and keeping the Torah, we will be able regain our ability to see Hashem's involvement in our daily live.

This week's Haftarah is where the name "Shabbos Shuva" comes from. When one examines the verses in this Haftarah, it is clear that the central theme is to repent for our misdeeds out of love of Hashem. The Haftarah opens with the verse which we quoted before, "Come repent sinners, and bring with you words (of Torah)". Later on it says, "Uplift your sin, and replace it with goodness". This means to say that if a person repents properly, (out of love), he can actually transform his iniquities into good deeds!

From these verses, and many others, it is clear that Hashem wants us to return to him out of love, by studying Torah and fostering a better understanding of Him, and by doing this, we will merit to return to the state where we are "Walking with Hashem all the days of our lives"!

May we all merit to return to Hashem out of true love!

חֲזַק וֶאֱמָץ

In this week's parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu encourages Yehoshua as he prepares himself to assume the mantle of leadership of the Jewish People. "*Chazak ve'ematz*," Yehoshua is told, first by Moshe (31:7) and then by Hashem (31:23), and Hashem says these words again to Yehoshua several times at the beginning of Sefer Yehoshua (1:6,7,9).

Why was Yehoshua told so many times that he should be strong and not weaken? Such repetitions are very rare in Tanach. Yehoshua had been Moshe's dedicated talmid for decades and merited prophecy of his own. He later commanded the sun to stand still. Did he really need so much *chizuk*?

Closer to our times, a similar question arises about **Rav Chaim Vital**, the closest talmid of the **Ari Zal**. At the end of the Ari Zal's life, he gave his talmid *chizuk* in advance of the challenge that awaited

him as the prime disseminator of *Toras Hanistar* in the world. After the Ari Zal passed away, he returned to Rav Vital in a dream every few nights and urged him to continue in his holy work and not to give up or slacken. He did this for the next twenty years, and even after that, the Ari Zal's spirit still came to Rav Vital about once a month with the same message that he should not slacken.

This is hard to understand. Was Rav Vital so close to giving up that he needed such frequent encouragement from his rebbe? Was it really necessary for the Ari Zal to have to come back from Olam Haba just to tell him not to slacken, and so many times?

Rav Yitzchak Ze'ev Josef answers: The reason these great men needed such *chizuk* was because of the great tasks they had accepted upon themselves. Since they were pushing themselves to their utmost level of perfection, they needed much more chizuk.

If it seems exaggerated to us that the Ari Zal had to give a talmid such as Rav Chaim Vital such regular chizuk, it's only a sign that our own *she'ifos* (spiritual aspirations) are not what they should be. Indeed, if a person contents himself with a level of *avodas Hashem* that has become easy for him, he feels no need for chizuk in order to maintain it. The question is: Is this really where he should be holding? Much more may be expected of him.

In Pirkei Avos (5), the sages instruct us to be "courageous like a leopard and light like an eagle" in our *avodas Hashem*. **The Yaavetz** explains that it is up to us to be *mechazeik* ourselves and be courageous when it comes to mitzvos, even if they seem impossible to accomplish.

We must develop the courage to take on these mitzvos, with the *bitachon* that once we've done our absolute best, Hashem will make us "light as an eagle," meaning he will give us the *siyatta DeShemaya* to succeed. (The eagle symbolizes capabilities beyond one's nature — it can fly across vast distances in a short span of

time). The *bitachon* that Hashem will give us *siyatta deShemaya* serves as the basis for our courage in *avodas Hashem*.

For many of us, the mitzvah of teshuva seems impossible. How many of us have given up? Teshuva is a mitzvah year-round, but during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva it is critical. The Rambam (Laws of Teshuva 3:3) writes that if a person possesses an equal level of mitzvos and aveiros, if he fails to do teshuva in these days, he will not be inscribed in the Book of Life!

We therefore must do teshuva, and we can be *mechazeik* ourselves with the promise of Rabbeinu Yonah at the very beginning of Shaarei Teshuva (1:1): "Hashem assists those who return to Him in teshuva when they are limited by their nature, *and implants in them a spirit of purity*."

If a person does all he can, and by natural means can do no more, Hashem will change his nature and enable him to do teshuva! The initial teshuva process requires only an honest resolution to improve oneself (even if it involves only a minor change in one's behavior) and regret for one's errors until now.

May we develop *she'ifos* in *avodas Hashem* and be mechazeik ourselves to achieve them!

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - The Girl in the White Van

The following story is in a sefer entitled Nifla'osav Livnei Adam. The message conveyed is that when a person faces a challenge, he should know that everything is orchestrated by the Creator of the world. If he prevails over the challenge, he may get a glimpse of how the Creator of the world brought about the salvation.

Motty, who lived in Bnei Brak, drove a van for a living. One day his cell phone rang. It was a caller from Yerushalayim who wanted him

to drive her and her family to a family simchah taking place in Bnei Brak.

It had been a long and exhausting day, and all he wanted was to go home to rest a little before Ma'ariv and the shiur he regularly attended. But he happened to be near Yerushalayim at the time, so he agreed. "We'll send one of the children downstairs," the woman said. "Honk when you get to our building."

There was traffic at the entrance to Yerushalayim, and it took him a long time to get to his destination. When he pulled up and honked, a little girl with a backpack happily approached the van, opened the door, and sat down in the back seat next to the window. A minute later the rest of the family came and got into the van.

Their father sat in the passenger seat next to Motty, and they conversed throughout the ride. An hour later, the van arrived at the hall in Bnei Brak, the father paid, and Motty headed home.

As he entered his building, his cell phone rang. It was his wife. "Where are you?" she asked.

"Downstairs. I'll be up in a minute."

"It's good you're here," she said. "I have to go out to do some volunteer work for Ezer Mizion. Could you drive me there?"

I have no energy for this. I finally got home, and now I have to go out again?

"Please," she said. "They're waiting for me and I'm late. Do me a favor. I don't have time to order a taxi. It will take you less than five minutes. Please?"

Motty didn't want to refuse his wife's request. He took out his keys, got back in the driver's seat, and turned on the engine. His wife emerged from the building and opened the back door to stow away her bag… Then she gasped. "There's a little girl sleeping in the back of the van!" Motty jumped out of the van. "What?!"

On the back bench of the van, next to the window, a toddler slumbered, clutching her little backpack.

"How could they forget her?" Motty cried. "How irresponsible! Why didn't they call looking for her?" He took a deep breath. "What a miracle. I can't imagine what might have happened if we hadn't come back to the van. She might have been here all night!"

Motty pulled out his phone and scrolled through the numbers to contact the family he had just given a ride. The problem was that they'd called him up from their house in Yerushalayim, and they were still in Bnei Brak. Without any choice, he drove back to the hall. The little girl woke and started crying. Motty's wife tried to calm her while Motty dashed into the hall and searched for the girl's father. He led him outside and not attempting to contain his fury, yelled, "What's wrong with you? How could you forget your daughter in the van?"

The father called the mother, and they rounded up all their children. "All four of our daughters are here," he declared. "We've never forgotten any of them."

"I think you're mistaken," Motty said.

He led them to the van and showed them the little girl, who was still crying. They peeked inside the vehicle and said, "That's not our child. When we entered the van, she was sitting on the back row. We thought she was yours!"

An appalled silence fell over them. Motty remembered that the child with the backpack had gotten into the van as soon as he pulled up in front of the building in Yerushalayim. He'd been certain she had belonged to them. Now it was clear that she had no connection with the family he'd driven to Bnei Brak.

Chills ran up and down his spine. He couldn't think about what might have happened if he hadn't returned to the van. The child had been

asleep and didn't make a sound. Now, somehow, they had to find her parents.

His wife opened the little girl's backpack and pulled out a book of music notes. On it was written in glitter, "This belongs to Tzippora Yerushalmi, 41 Rimonei Nechoshes Sreet, Yerushalayim." There was also a telephone number.

Motty called, but the line was busy. They must be calling the police to report their daughter was missing. After several minutes of trying the number, they finally answered.

"Hello, is this the Yerushalmi family? Is your daughter missing? "Yes! Where is she?! All of Yerushalayim is looking for her!" It turned out that the little girl had been taking a music lesson that they told her he couldn't come to get her. He would send his friend who afternoon. Usually her father came to pick her up, but that day her father drove a white van to get her. Motty drove a white van. He had pulled up at exactly the time and place when the little girl was supposed to be picked up. She got into Motty's van, and not into the friend's van, and promptly fell asleep.

It's frightening to think what might have happened if Motty had refused his wife's request....

The main thing in life is to connect all the everyday events in all their details to the Creator.

When asked about traveling to daven at the graves of the tzadikim, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach would respond, "In order to pray at the graves of tzadikim, you don't need to travel up to the Galit. Whenever I feel the need to pray at the graves of tzadikim, I go to Mount Herzl, to the graves of the fallen IDF soliders." ~ Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



Choose Life • Man Versus Roach

When we speak about the species called mankind, we understand right away that the outstanding feature that makes him superior to all of creation is his mind, his ability to reason. Left unfettered, without any incentive, without any initial input, a man's mind is able to develop the greatest theses, the greatest arguments, the greatest results; from logic.

In all of the animal kingdom there's nothing as impressive as man's ability to think and reason and to make decisions.

Now, by no means am I saying that we are superior in all areas. Animals can do some things *instinctively* in a way superior to mankind. Did you ever encounter a roach, let's say, in the bathroom? You give him a whack with a newspaper and he falls down. It's all over you think. But as soon as you turn around, he darts swiftly away and he hides. So not only does he bolt like an arrow but he's cunning; he plays dead to save his life.

- **Spider Versus Wasp**

Or the spider; a spider builds webs that are feats of architecture, complicated edifices that engineers marvel at. I was watching

at *minchah* here how a spider web in this window had caught a wasp. During *chazaras hashatz* I was distracted; I was watching the wasp. It was a very big insect and it was struggling like it never struggled before, rapidly beating its wings trying to escape. And the strings, the threads of the web, were so thin that from where I was standing I couldn't see a thing; it looked like the wasp was suspended in midair, on nothing. But the web was so built that it stood its ground.

It was remarkable to see the principles of engineering that the spider had employed so that these weak threads should not be pulled off from their bases or should not snap. They are spaced with such *chochmah*, with such design and structural wisdom that they are able to withstand an invasion by a very big insect and even the extremely strong force the insect exerts when he struggles to get free. And I saw the little spider sitting a little way off and watching how the wasp was struggling and then when he saw the wasp was becoming too active and the spider was afraid that the web might snap, he climbed down from his hiding place and injected a little poison to quieten down the wasp. Then he went back and he waited.

- **The Orphaned Spider**

"What skills!" you'll say, "What *chochmah!* What wisdom!"

But actually it's not; it has nothing to do with the spider – he's been pre-programmed. Let's say he was an orphan. His father and mother were eaten up by a sparrow on the day he was born and he has nobody to train him. No parents, no trade schools, no employment training.

No matter! That little spider has stored up in his tiny brain all the wisdom he needs to make a web. And he makes it just like his great-great grandfather did without even knowing that he had one.

So where did the spider get in his tiny brain the *chochmah* of making such an architectural accomplishment that engineers today study? Where did the roach learn to play dead and then to dart away

exactly at the right time? It's instinct. It's *niflaos ha'Borei, chochmas Hashem,* and nothing more.

- **Uniquely Human**

Man on the other hand wasn't given these gifts; it takes many years of studying and training for a human being to learn the wisdom of architecture and engineering. And yet even though the spider has a leg up on us when it comes to that, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave mankind something that's infinitely superior to those innate instincts. What is it? It's the gift of free will.

The difference between animals and mankind is most markedly noticeable in the fact that we are *not* pre-programmed robots. We were given that great gift of the ability to reason, the ability to use the mind in order to make choices. A spider can make the most ingenious spider webs but it can't choose to do anything else. It's on automatic pilot.

Man however can choose! Man, by means of his own reasoning, can choose to do or not to do, to think or not to think. Man can choose to become great or not to become great. And that's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu says in this week's *sedrah:* **הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ** – "*I put before you life and death …,* **וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים** – *and I want you to choose life*" (Netzavim 30:19). Man can choose to live or not to live!

Life and death in the words of the Torah mean more than just saving your life or preserving you from death. **הַחַיִּים** means *to live forever.* You have the choice of becoming worthy of living forever. And **וְהַמָּוֶת** – you have the other choice too. Death means not only to die in this world, but it means death forever and ever in the Next World.

- **The Mitzvah to Choose**

And Hashem tells us what He wants: **וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים** – *You should choose life.* Rabbeinu Yonah in his Shaarei Teshuvah (3:17) says that some of the most fundamental principles of successful living are given to

us in the forms of *mitzvas asei*. And he gives as an example, a prime example, this mitzvah of **וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים**. It's a command that is unceasing, never-ending. To be alert; to keep your thoughts focused on choosing life. It's a mitzvah that includes the whole life of a person because that's what living means. Not that we should live like the spider, like a pre-programmed creature, waking and doing and eating and sleeping. No, no; **וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים** means to live with alertness, with awareness that every minute is an opportunity to choose to live successfully.

Now, once a person understands this, life becomes the most precious commodity. That's why when Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe Rabbeinu, **הֵן קָרְבוּ יָמֶיךָ לָמוּת** – *Your days are close to die,* so Moshe put up the biggest fight. He didn't want to die. **וָאֶתְחַנַּן אֶל ה׳** – *I entreated Hashem!* 'Please, let me live longer and go into Eretz Yisroel. Even if I can't lead the people, don't take me out of this world yet.'

And when Hashem said, "No, your time is finished," Moshe was devastated; not just because he wanted to see Eretz Yisroel – because to live means the opportunity to choose, to choose life.

- **The Living Dead**

That's why **רְשָׁעִים בְּחַיֵּיהֶם קְרוּיִם מֵתִים** – *the wicked, even while they're alive, they're called 'dead'* (Brachos 18). *A rasha* who is always responding to his base desires, his instincts, so he's not living with choice. He's living like a spider.

Even worse, it could be he's already so ingrained in wrong habits that many times he's not able to change anymore because Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes away his *bechirah;* like He did to Pharaoh. He made Pharaoh's heart heavy, so Pharaoh could not change anymore – he couldn't choose; the Rambam says that. He says that sometimes Hashem punishes a wicked person by taking away their free will and they remain *reshoim* forever. That's a terrible *onesh;* it's the same

as death. **רְשָׁעִים בְּחַיֵּיהֶם קְרוּיִם מֵתִים** – they're dead while they're still alive because life is intended for choosing.

- **Litter on the Road**

Now, this is a subject we should think about often because the awareness of what *bechirah* means opens up for us a whole boxful of opportunities. Once a person understands this great gift of *bechirah,* every moment of life is an opportunity to achieve diamonds! There's no end of choosing life for the one who is alert to this mitzvah. There are diamonds everywhere!

It's not a form of speech. We actually are traversing a road littered with rubies, emeralds, sapphires. And every one of them is more precious than a block of apartment houses because you're choosing eternity – you're choosing to live forever.

Now, if you'll ask me for examples of these precious stones so I'll tell you that you have to keep coming here. That's what we talk about here in this place, about how to choose life. One of the stones is, as you're walking down the road you're thinking for one moment, "I remember from our great history that Hakadosh Baruch Hu took our forefathers out of Egypt and gave us freedom from bondage." In middle of the day – its not Pesach – it's an ordinary Wednesday. You're doing a mitzvah of the Torah, **לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ**. A real commandment of the Torah! In that one second it took to say these words or to think these words, you gained a most precious gift. You chose life!

- **Love and Diamonds**

Another diamond: Let's say tomorrow you're sitting down to eat. Between bites you remind yourself of what you heard tonight and you'll think, "Why should I waste this one half minute?" And so you'll say as follows, "I love my people."

You know what you did now? You did what Hashem wanted to hear from you because He loves them too. **אֵין הקב"ה אוֹהֵב אֶלָּא לְמִי שֶׁאוֹהֵב**

אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Hashem loves only those who loves His people!* (Mesillas Yesharim, Ch. 19) "Oh," Hashem says, "What did I just hear from this man? He said he loves his people!" You picked up a diamond now! You chose life!

Why wait till tomorrow? Right here where you are, stop for a moment and say, "I love you Hashem." Right now, all together, everyone say, "I love You Hashem." That's a tremendous achievement in life! You can say it again and again and each time it's another precious diamond! And don't think it's an exaggeration! Life is full of diamonds! You don't have to waste a minute from choosing.

- **Driving Blind on Ocean Parkway**

Oh, what a tragedy for those who don't know this! I look out my window on Motzei Shabbos, Saturday night, and I see cars rushing down Ocean Parkway. An endless line of cars are traveling to Manhattan; also an endless line of cars arriving from Manhattan to here. Where are they going? If there's something in one place, they'd all be traveling in one direction. But they're traveling in various directions

Some of them are choosing to go to the movies. How silly a choice it is! "I'll coop myself up in a movie where there's no fresh air and it costs money too and my eyes are feasting on garbage that never happened, on someone else's imagination." If people would only know what they're giving up when they choose movies; it's *mavess*, if you're Hungarian, it's the same word. They're not choosing life. They're choosing the other thing.

It's only that people are blind and they don't see the diamonds right in front of them. But if you would open your eyes, you would see diamonds on the street, rubies, beautiful stones, precious stones. And as you walk on the street you say, "I love you, Hashem," or you say, "I love my nation, the Jewish people," you say, "I love the Torah," or you say, "I remember you took us out of Egypt."

Thousands of things you can choose to do. Daven to Hashem, "Hashem, guard me against *loshon hora*." Every moment of life is another opportunity. And as you say these words, as you think these thoughts, you're picking up diamonds. And the diamonds go into your mind; your mind becomes more valuable, more exquisite than it was before!

That's what life is but the world is blind. And therefore, Hashem said, "Take off the blinders. I put you into this world to accomplish. **הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ** – *I put before you life and death,* **וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים** – *and I want you to choose life."* And not only I 'want', I *commanded* you. You must constantly choose to live for a purpose. It's called living in the present, understanding that every moment of your life you can be choosing life.

The Apter Rav was once accosted by a group of Maskilim. They got into a heated discussion with him. At one point, one of the Maskilim took out a cigarette. The Apter Rav reached into his pocket, pulled out a match box and asked, "Can I give you a light?"

At that point, the Maskil, who pulled out the cigarette said to his companions, "Enough already. This is not the type of person we should be harassing."

This was an example of Ahavas Yisrael in action. He could have had fundamental and vehement disagreements with them, but when a Jew needs a favor, you do him a favor. It so disarmed them, that they ceased the harassment. - A person cannot have a hostile discussion with a person who is so willing to help his sworn adversary.

"Happiness is achieved by appreciating the blessings you already have." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.



A Three-twined Thread Teaching Bitachon: Shmitah, Succah, Aliyah L'Regel

The Torah gives us the mitzvah of Hakhel: "At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of release in the Festival of Succot, when all Israel is come to appear before the L-rd thy G-d in the place which He shall choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and the stranger that is within your gates that they may hear, and that they may learn and fear the L-rd your G-d and observe to do all the words of this law…" [Devorim 31:10-13]

The King gets up in the midst of the entire congregation at the conclusion of the holiday of Succoth following the Shmitah year and reads the Torah to the gathered assembly. It is interesting: We have the confluence of three events: Motzai Shmitah; Motzai Succoth; and Aliyah L'Regel. [The Sabbatical year has just ended; Succoth has just ended; and all the Jews are together because they traveled to Jerusalem for the Festival pilgrimage].

The Rosh Yeshiva of the Gateshead Yeshiva, **Rav Avraham Gurwitz** makes the beautiful point that these three events have a common denominator. All three associated mitzvos (Shmitah, Aliyah l'regel, Succah) bring home to the Jew the attribute of Faith (Bitachon) in G-d.

When one just finished Shmitah, he hasn't worked for a year but has been relying on the Being Who provides sustenance. The farmer thereby gains a new perspective on life. When he sees a year later that he still has sustenance this brings home the concept that "He is the One who gives you strength to carry on with valor" [8:18].

Aliyah l'regel is also a lesson in Faith. Everyone leaves home and comes to the Temple in Jerusalem. Who will guard their property? Who is watching the farm? The answer is that no human being is watching the farm but Someone is watching the farm. This too is a lesson in faith in the One Who is the Guardian of Israel. The Almighty guarantees "And no man will covet your land" No one will steal. The neighbors are not going to attack. Your property will be safe. We see real live Bitachon in practice.

Finally, Succos is also a lesson in faith. Succos is "walking after Me in the wilderness in an unsown land". [Yirmiyah 2:2] The Master of the Universe took us out of Egypt into the shadow of death. We found ourselves in a wilderness with no water and no protection from the elements — but the Master of the Universe protected us. We sit in the Succoth to commemorate this event. "For in Succoth I caused the Children of Israel to dwell." [Vayikra 23:43]

Here then we have the confluence of three events, three periods of time that shout out to us the truth that at the end of the day it is the Almighty who takes care of us, who provides us with sustenance. That is why this is the appropriate time to read the Torah in the presence of all Israel (I.e.. — the mitzvah of Hakhel).

There are normally so many things going on in our lives that prevent us from devoting ourselves to Ruchniyos and spirituality. We are in general so hassled with the need to make a living that we have no time for learning or for devoting proper time for prayer and contemplation of spiritual matters. Here we are on the eve of Rosh HaShannah and we always say to ourselves, "We'd like to learn more, we'd like to daven slower, we'd like to be better Jews, but we can't because of the hassle of making a living" (Tirdas haParnassah).

We blame our lack of spirituality on our lack of serenity due to the pressures of earning a living. The lesson of Hakhel is that we really should be serene because at the end of the day it is really the Ribono

shel Olam who will provide the parnassah. We pay lip service to this and we say it, but we don't really believe it.

This is not to say that everyone should resign their jobs tomorrow, join a Kollel, and somehow their families will exist. One has to make a legitimate effort to do what it takes to earn a livelihood (hishtadlus). But he has to realize that at the end of the day the Ribono shel Olam will give him what he is supposed to get and working the extra hours or staying later is really not going to make the difference.

What Hakhel provides is the lesson in Bitachon, which is a lesson in serenity. If there is one bracha we should all daven for it is not only that it should be a year of peace (shalom) for our brethren the Children of Israel in all places they find themselves, but it should be also a year of serenity (shalvah) that we realize the Ribono shel Olam takes care of us. The longer we live the more we see the Hand of the Almighty in our lives. We see that ultimately He takes care of us, He is going to provide for us. This belief gives a person a certain serenity with which he can face life.

When we have that sense of confidence (Bitachon) and that sense of serenity, then we can do those things we want to do — be it learning or davening or spending more time with our children and with our families, growing with them spiritually. At the end of the day we recognize that "it is He who gives you strength to act with valor."

May the Ribono shel Olam bless us with a year of Redemption and Salvation, a year of Peace and Serenity for us and for all the House of Israel.

"Hashem's love for us is like the sun - always shining, even on the cloudiest days." ~ Rabbi Nachman Of Breslov (1772-1810)

A Torah Leader's Job Is Never Over

Parshas Vayelech takes place on the last day of Moshe Rabbeinu's life. On the day of his death, Moshe Rabbeinu chastised the nation (gave them mussar) and told them "I know that after I die you will stray from the path I have commanded you."

This is the end of Moshe's career. He began his leadership of the Jewish people when he was 80 years old. He is now 120 years old, having led Klal Yisrael for 40 years. The last 4 books of the Torah have really been the story of his life — "Toras Moshe." We have followed his career, all he has done for Klal Yisrael and all the mussar he has given to them over the years. For 40 years, he has been trying to straighten out the wayward and stiff-necked nation.

Today is the last day of his life. "I'm retiring." He is going to die. One would think, "Enough already!" It seems somewhat strange that on the last day of his life he needs to warn them "Watch out! Do not do it! I know that you are going to go off the path and bad things will happen to you!" Why should he have to worry about that at this point? He is "giving over the keys" to Yehoshua. Let Yehoshua worry about all that!

Yet Moshe feels this need to warn his flock about what is going to happen after he is already dead.

Moshe Rabbeinu knew he was already going to die and that his job was over. However, the job of a person who has been a leader of Klal Yisrael does not end even after he leaves this world. Moshe was worried that after he leaves this world, Klal Yisrael would sin and he would be called to accounting for not having trained them better. Therefore, on the day Moshe died, despite the fact that "his job was over" nevertheless, he wanted to give them mussar that they should not stray from the proper path.

Write This "Song"

I saw a beautiful observation in the *sefer HaKesav VeHakabalah*. The Torah teaches the very last of the six hundred and thirteen commandments in *Parshas Vayelech*: "So now, write this song (*haShirah hazos*) for yourselves, and teach it to the Children of Israel, place it in their mouth, so that this song shall be for Me a witness against the Children of Israel." [Devarim 31:19]. From here we learn Biblical *Mitzvah* #613 – Writing a Sefer Torah.

HaKesav VeHakabalah was a master of the Hebrew language (*lashon haKodesh*). He asks – why was Torah called a 'song'? If we were asked to draw up a list of ten words which might be used to describe or summarize the contents of Torah, 'song' would very likely not be on the list. Yet the *Mitzvah* to write the Torah is expressed here as "write this song". Why?

HaKesav VeHakabalah writes the word *shir* [*shin-yud-reish*] (song) is related to the word *yashar* [*yud-shin-reish*] (straight). He explains "If you want music to be appealing, the musical notes need to follow one another in a perfectly arranged sequence to provide a harmonious melody." Once music goes "off key," it greatly bothers the listener. This is the essence of *shirah*: A flow, a precise sequencing of the components of the song – one note following another in carefully planned arrangement. When the notes are "off," the song loses the its pleasantness.

If that is the case, it is obvious why the Torah is called *shirah*. The Torah is – as the prophet calls it "*Sefer haYashar*" [the Book of the Straight]. The *pasuk* alludes to this: "…behold it is written in the *Sefer haYashar*…" [Yehoshua 10:13]. The Torah is a book of *yashrus* – of being straight.

The word that defines Torah is *Yashar* – to be straight, to be honest, no tricks, no deception. This is what the *Sefer HaYashar* represents. Unfortunately, we live in a time when this principle is observed in the breach rather than in actuality. We

hear all too many times stories about people who are "less than *yashar*". Very less than *yashar*! We all cringe when we hear these stories, every time one of these scandals rears its ugly head. That is not the way it is supposed to me.

A nephew of mine corrected a story I had heard involving **Rav Aharon Solveichik**, *zichrono l'bracha*. Rav Aharon Soloveichik commuted by plane between Chicago and New York. He lived in Chicago, was a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshivas Brisk there, and for a time served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshiva University. He travelled regularly between the two cities. One time, his mother-in-law, who lived in New York, wanted to visit her daughter in Chicago, but she did not like to fly. So Rav Aharon Soloveichik accompanied her back from New York to Chicago on the train.

They came to the train station to purchase two tickets and the agent behind the counter said, "you're in luck – today spouses go for free!" So Rav Aharon Soloveichik looked at the agent and said, this woman is not my spouse, she's my mother-in-law! The agent responded, "We don't look at marriage licenses." Rav Aharon was insistent: "But she is not my wife. Let me see your supervisor!"

The dialog was repeated with the supervisor. Rav Soloveichik protested that they should not be eligible for the free ticket because she was not his wife. The supervisor told him, "Listen here, you look old enough that she looks like she's your wife! What do you care?" "No. She's not my wife. I want to pay for her." This is *yashar*.

Rav Yakov Kamenetsky was a Rav in Toronto before he came to Torah VoDaath. One Purim, the community in Toronto gave him a silver platter. A couple of days later, a congregant saw Rav Yakov in downtown Toronto at a pawnshop. It looked like he was trying to pawn the silver tray he had received earlier that week as a present from his congregation. The congregant went back to the other members of the shul and said "What kind of a Rabbi do we have here? We give him a present and he pawns it!"

The President of the shul called in Rav Yakov and demanded an explanation. Rav Yakov told them that the Magen Avraham rules that the presents a Rav gets from his congregation for Purim and Pessach are to be considered as part of his salary. "If it is part of my salary, I have to report it on my taxes so I have to know how much it costs. I went to the pawn shop to find out the fair market value of the tray so I could accurately declare it." - This is *yashrus*.

This is the *yashrus* of which the **Semag** writes [Positive Command #74] that when the Almighty finally comes and redeems us, the nations of the world will say "He acted correctly (*b'Din assa*) because they are honest people (*sh'hen anshei emes)*. However, if the Jews cheat, the nations will wonder "What is this that G-d has done? He chose for Himself thieves and cheaters!"

We daven the entire Rosh Hashana that we want *Moshiach*. We want G-d to rule over the entire world. There is a very simple formula for bringing Moshiach. We must first make ourselves into such people that the nations of the world will be able to say "Ah! Those Jews are so honest! The Almighty knew what He was doing by redeeming them!" — When that happens, *Moshaich* will come, may it be speedily in our time.

Why Bring The Children To "Hakhel"?

We learn in Parshas Vayelech about the mitzvah of "Hakhel," whereby the entire nation gathered in Jerusalem once every seven years (at the conclusion of the Sabbatical year) for a communal reading of the Torah. The pasuk says, "Gather together the people — the men, the women, and the small children…" [Devorim 31:12].

Rashi spells out the details of Hakhel, based on the Gemara [Chagiga 3a]: The men come to learn; the women (who in those days did not have the educational background to really learn the Torah) come to listen; and the children come to bring a reward to those who bring

them. The simple reading of the Gemara is that there is in fact no inherent purpose for the children to come. The men can learn. The women can at least listen. But what are the kids coming for? They will not even listen properly.

In light of this, it is hard to understand the meaning of the Gemara when it says, "to give reward to those who bring them". What does this mean? If, in fact, there is no purpose to bring the children, then what reward should be granted to those who bring them? There is no mitzvah to bring a sack of potatoes!

The Nesivos answers this question practically. All the Jews throughout the Land of Israel came to Jerusalem for Hakhel. So who was left home to watch the kids? Where would they find baby sitters? Obviously, the adults had no choice but to bring the children. Since the children had to be brought anyway, the Torah commanded that they be brought, so that there would be a mitzvah and associated reward involved in bringing the children.

Reb Yerucham, as well as the Sefas Emes interpret this Gemara in a slightly different fashion. When the Gemara states that the children are brought "to grant reward to those who bring them", the intent is not that there is no inherent value in bringing children to Hakhel. In fact, there is something to be gained from bringing them even if they do not have the intellect to learn or the patience to listen. Merely being present at an event like Hakhel — in an atmosphere permeated with holiness has an effect on the children, not necessarily immediately, but in years to come.

The Gemara [Jerusalem Talmud: Yevamos] says that the mother of Rav Yoshua ben Chananya used to take his cradle and put it in the Beis Medrash so the baby should absorb the sound of Torah.

So too, explain both Reb Yerucham and the Sefas Emes, parents who make the effort to expose their children to positive experiences in life, despite the fact that the child ostensibly does not gain anything concrete from the experience at the time, will be rewarded. Merely

making the effort to expose them to a positive environment will allow the parents to reap reward in the future.

I recently bought a book for my wife called, "A Day in the Life of Israel". Sixty of the best photographers in the world were assigned a city or an area in Israel and told to take photos on a given day, the best of which would appear in this book. I saw one photo of a newborn nursery in Bnei Brak. There is a picture of rows of little infants in plastic cribs lined up in the nursery. In one of the cribs, there is a picture book opened to pictures of Rav Shach, the Steipler Gaon, and the Chazon Ish. There in the cradle, in the hospital, pictures of Gedolim surround the baby. This book is not a religious book. It is a secular book. Nonetheless, the caption on this photo is "Education starts early in Israel".

This illustrates our explanation of the previously quoted Gemara in Chagiga. Even though the child's only care in the world at this point is when he is wet or hungry, somehow on a subconscious if not a conscious level, his environment influences him. Parents who make the effort to put their children into a good environment — even though at the time the efforts seem in vain — will eventually receive reward, in the form of the development of spiritually developed children. This is what our Sages mean when they say, "to grant reward to those who bring them".

Hakaras Hatov

Nothing anyone ever did for **Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky** was taken for granted. When one of the women in Monsey whose family was close to Reb Yaakov drove him somewhere, he insisted on sitting in the front seat so that she would know that he did not view her as a chaffeur — i.e., someone required to do what she was doing - but rather as the generous benefactress.

וְעַתָּה כִּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת – 31:19

The pasuk from which we learn the mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah says "And now write for yourselves this song…". The Torah refers to itself as a "Song" (Shirah). Why is Torah called Shirah?

Rav Herzog once gave the following explanation: In virtually all fields of study, a person who is uninitiated in that discipline does not derive any pleasure from hearing a theory or an insight concerning that field of study. Take physics, for example: A physicist will derive great pleasure from hearing a "chiddush" in his field of expertise. However someone who has never studied and never been interested in physics will be totally unmoved by the very same insight. The same applies to many, many other disciplines.

However, this is not the case with music. When Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is played — regardless of whether one is a concertmaster or a plain simple person — there is something one can get out of it. Music is something that everyone on his or her own level can enjoy. Everyone can relate to music.

Rav Herzog says that this is why the Torah is called "Shirah". On one hand, someone can be a great Talmid Chochom and learn "Bereishis Barah Elokim…" and see great wisdom therein. On the other hand, one can be a five-year-old child, just beginning to read, and learn "Bereishis Barah Elokim…" and also gain something from it. Every person, on his own level can have an appreciation for Torah. Therefore, the pasuk aptly refers to Torah when it says "And now, write for yourselves this 'song'…"

"Your potential is not determined by your circumstances, but by your mindset. Cultivate a positive mindset and believe in your capabilities." ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980)



Looking For Stars by Rabbi Shlomo Landau

One evening, one of the mispallelim in R' Yaakov Edelstein's shul approached him to ask for a favor. "A chiloni friend of mine named Motti* was just niftar, and I was hoping that the Rav could come to the levayah and say a few words."

R' Yaakov expressed his condolences but he was simply unable to participate in the funeral of everyone in town. He continued to explain that unless he had a personal kesher with an individual, he usually did not attend.

The fellow continued to push. "Perhaps if I share a story about Motti, the Rav would change his mind." The fellow then proceeded to share a remarkable episode from the deceased's life.

"I am part of a diverse group of Polish Yidden that gathers together every Shabbos day toward evening. We sit and schmooze and reminisce about life before the war. Over time, I began to notice that each week as the sky began to darken, Motti would exit the apartment where we sat and go outside multiple times and then subsequently return. One time as he got up to leave, I walked alongside and asked him about his peculiar behavior and why each week he leaves and returns multiple times.

"Motti then shared a personal wartime story with me…

"During World War II, Motti enlisted to fight for the Allied Forces. He joined the Navy. Shortly thereafter, as their boat sailed in turbulent enemy waters, they were sighted by a German U-boat and subsequently sustained a series of direct torpedo hits. Many of the sailors were killed on impact and the ship quickly began to break apart. Motti was violently cast into the stormy waters but

miraculously managed to grab onto a beam. He was cast to and fro by the massive waves and had to use every last ounce of his strength to cling to the slippery beam. Motti began to run out of strength to maintain his grasp on the beam. He realized that barring a miracle, he was not going to make it.

"With his last strength, he began to talk to the Ribbono Shel Olam. 'Master of the Universe, you know that I am far from being an observant Jew, but if you save me, I promise that I will stop smoking on Shabbos!' - Minutes later, Motti heard the clacking of Allied rescue helicopter. The pilot spotted him almost immediately and lowered a rope for Motti to grasp. Miraculously, despite the inclement weather and raging sea, Motti was able to hold onto the rope and was pulled to safety.

"True to his word, starting that very Shabbos, Motti stopped smoking and although he was not fully shomer Shabbos, he never put a cigarette in his mouth on Shabbos ever again. "That's why I usually leave the apartment each week as we chat,' Motti told me. 'I go outside to check if it is dark and three stars have emerged signalling the conclusion of Shabbos.'

R' Yaakov Edelstein was deeply moved by this story. He remarked, "Take a look at Hashem's infinite compassion! A fellow is on the brink of death, and he makes a deal with Hashem. Yet, even under these circumstances he is unwilling to commit to teshuvah sheleimah and not even to complete shemiras Shabbos. All that he is willing to concede is smoking on Shabbos. Yet in the Ribbono Shel Olam's eyes, that is sufficient to effect an immediate miraculous salvation.

Let's ponder for a moment: A Yid who is shomer Torah u'mitzvos by and large, and during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah does some serious cheshbon hanefesh and truly commits to sheleimus in avodas Hashem, can we even imagine the rachamei Shamayim that this commitment can engender?"

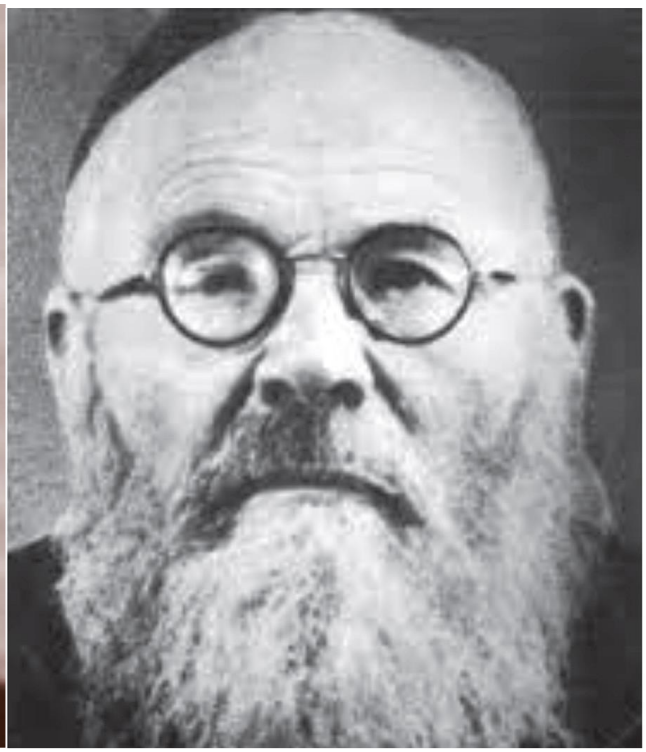
When They Were Young

RABBI ELIYAHU LOPIAN

הרב אליהו לופיאן זצ"ל

As a child, Elyah lived with his family in a simple hut. The hut had a dirt floor that had been walked on so much that it became as hard as a cement floor. One day, Elyah's mother decided to wash and polish their crystal and glassware. These were special treasures, and she took great care to clean them until they sparkled like diamonds. She laid them out carefully on the large wooden table to dry, planning to put them away later.





Elyah, like many young boys, was full of energy and always in a hurry. As he rushed past the table, he didn't pay attention to the delicate glassware his mother had worked so hard to clean. And he accidentally bumped into the table. Before he knew it, one of the beautiful glasses teetered on the edge and fell to the hard floor with a loud crash, shattering into tiny pieces. Elyah's heart sank as he saw the broken glass scattered across the floor. His mother,

seeing the mess, was disappointed and upset. She gave Elyah a harsh lesson about being careful, especially around fragile things.

Elyah learned that he needed to be more cautious, and he promised himself he would be. He even avoided going near the table whenever his mother laid out the glassware.

But one day, something unexpected happened. The family kept hens in their yard for eggs and meat, and one of the hens, curious as ever, wandered into the hut. As it pecked at the ground, searching for crumbs, it suddenly got startled. In its panic, it flapped its wings and jumped toward the doorway. But instead, it hit the table where the crystal glasses were once again set out. Elyah watched in horror as three of the precious crystal glasses toppled off the table and fell to the hard floor, breaking into pieces. He stood frozen, remembering the punishment he had received for breaking just one glass. What would happen to the hen for breaking three? Surely, it would be punished even more severely.

To Elyah's amazement, his mother didn't scold or punish the hen. Instead, she gently picked it up, stroked its head, and calmly set it outside. She even gave it some grains of feed as if to comfort it. Elyah was shocked. How could this be? He had been punished for breaking just one glass. And now the hen, who broke three, was treated with kindness.

As he watched his mother care for the hen, Elyah said to himself, "I wish I were a hen!" But as he grew older, Elyah began to understand. His mother had punished him because she wanted him to learn an important lesson about being careful and responsible. The hen, on the other hand, didn't know any better. It was just a hen, after all. Elyah realized how much better it is to be a human, even with all the extra responsibilities.

Rabbi Elyah Lopian

Eliyahu (Elyah) Lopian was born in 1876 in Grieve, Poland, to R' Yaakov and Freyda. As a young man, he studied in Lomza and in the great Kelm school of *mussar*. In Kelm, he was influenced by R' Simcha Zissel Ziv. R' Simcha Zissel, known as the Alter of Kelm, was a close *talmid* of the founder of the *mussar* movement, R' Yisrael (Lipkin) Salanter.

In 1895, Elyah married Sarah Leah Rottman. R' Elyah learned in kollel in Kelm and also founded a yeshivah there. R' Elyah and his wife moved to England in 1928, where he served as rosh yeshivah in Yeshivas Etz Chaim.

In 1950, he immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, where he served as mashgiach at Yeshivas Knesses Chizkiyahu, located in Zichron Yaakov and later Kfar Chassidim. He was *niftar* in 1970.

Shabbos Shuva



This Shabbos, between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, is called Shabbos Shuva because of the words of the Navi we read upon it. "Return, O Israel, (all the way) to HaShem, Your G-d…"

A young man came home from school one day to find his father waiting for him on the porch. "Son," he said, "I have a job for you. You see that big rock over there? I want you to move it to the backyard."

The boy scratched his head. The rock looked like it weighed over three hundred pounds! How would he ever move it? Figuring his

father wouldn't give him an impossible job, he tried to move it in case it wasn't so heavy. It was. No matter how he pushed or pulled, he couldn't budge it.

Seeing his consternation his father said, "Son, go get yourself a sledgehammer. You can break up the rock and take it in little pieces."

Sometimes we see the challenges ahead of us and they seem overwhelming. Even Teshuva seems beyond us. We need to remember that Our Father never gives us impossible tasks. If we tackle them bit by bit, we can move mountains.

Global Kabollah Initiative

אִם־תָּשִׁיב מִשַּׁבָּת֙ רַגְלֶ֔ךָ עֲשׂ֥וֹת חֲפָצֶ֖יךָ בְּי֣וֹם קָדְשִׁ֑י (ישעיהו פרק נייח פסוק יג)

The Holy Rizhine'e Rebbe claimed a remarkable translation. If a Yid takes a Kabolah upon themselves during Shabbes T'shuva, the Ribono shel olam will execute your desire/Bakosha on Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt



In this week's Parsha we have the Mitzva of writing a Sefer Torah **כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת** How else can one fulfil this Mitzvah?

The Chinuch writes that although the main Mitzva is to write a Sefer Torah, one can also fulfil this by acquiring Sefarim.

The Shiniva Rav writes in the name of his grandfather R' Baruch Frenkel- the Av Beis Din of Leipnik- that one also fulfils this Mitzva

by giving money to print Sefarim. It is said from the Rosh, that nowadays we fulfil writing a Sefer Torah with writing and printing Chidushai Torah.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטַּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וּלְמַעַן יִלְמְדוּ וְיָרְאוּ אֶת־ה׳



The Torah tells us to gather together the men, women and even the small children, for the mitzvah of Hakhel, so that they may hear, learn, and fear Hashem, and perform all the mitzvos of the Torah.

In essence, Hakhel marks three unique events: the end of Shemittah, the Chag of Sukkos, and the mitzvah of Aliyah L'regel. The common denominator of these three events is that they all require Bitachon in Hashem. During a Shemittah year, farmers rely entirely on Hashem for their sustenance, without being able to lift a finger to help themselves. This give them a new perspective on life realizing that even when one does work, Hashem is behind his success.

Aliyah L'regel requires every person to leave his home and come to Yerushalayim. Who will guard their homes? Who will make sure that no one steals their livestock? The answer is, Hashem is watching their crops, their homes, and their possessions. Every person maintains tremendous Bitachon in Hashem and knows that he will come home to find everything intact.

Sukkos commemorates Klal Yisroel following Hashem's command to go into the wilderness with no food, no water, no new clothing and no protection from the elements ... obviously requiring tremendous Bitachon.

My machshava here is that when these three events come together and every Jew comes to the realization that Hashem is the only One Who provides all of our needs, it is now the perfect time to read the Torah at Hakhel. We are so hassled with our need to earn a living, that many of us have no time to learn, or daven with the proper Kavanah.

The lesson of Hakhel is to realize that we can maintain our serenity and rely on Hashem to provide our parnassa. We have an obligation to do our hishtadlus but we must realize that since Hashem determines how much money we will make this year, we should devote more time to davening, to learning, and to spending time with our wife and children, without forfeiting our entire life to work. This way we will merit that all of our wishes will be answered by the Ribono Shel Olam.

חורבן בית המקדש

There are four fast days that are connected to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash - Tzom Gedalya- the 3rd of Tishrei, the 10th of Teves, 17th of Tamuz and the 9th of Av.

The Beis Hamikdash is the revelation of Hashem in this world. When we get the Beis Hamikdash back, the revelation of **ה' אחד** will manifest and as it says: **והיה...ה' אחד ושמו אחד** To rectify these fasts we need to believe in **ה' אחד** and serve Him properly.

When we add up these numbers- 17, 9, 3 and 10- we come to a total of 39. This is the Gematria of **ה' אחד** !

R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l (Sichos Rav Nosson Tzvi) would say:

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה Rashi writes: **לא אוכל עוד לצאת ולבא** 'What is the meaning of 'I can no longer go or come'? **מהו לא אוכל, איני רשאי שנטלה ממני הרשות ונתנה ליהושע** (Moshe said,) *'I am not permitted,' because authority was taken from him and granted to Yehoshua.'*

The lesson we learn from Rashi is that only because Moshe was not permitted to enter the Holy Land, did he not go in. A person cannot say - 'I am not able,' to do something, for if the Torah says to do it, one must marshal all his strength to see it through, and cannot say he is too tired, too weak, or too old.

The only thing that can stop a person from doing something is the call - 'I am not permitted.' If Hashem does not allow it, then one cannot do it; otherwise, he has no excuse."

There are four periods of Teshuvah that are alluded to in the parshiyos that we read during the month of Elul and through the beginning of the new year.

R' Moshe Wolfson shlit'a points out that there are 30 posukim in Parshas Vayelech, which can be compared to the 30 days of Elul, after which the perfectly righteous are signed and sealed into the Book of Life.

There are 40 posukim in Nitzavim which are linked to the 40 days from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur, when the Beinonim can repent and be inscribed for a good year. And there are 52 posukim in Parshas Haazinu which allude to the 52 days from the beginning of Elul until Shemini Atzeres, when extra time is given for every individual, even those of minimal merit, to return to Hashem through Teshuvah and receive a positive judgment.

The combined total of all the posukim in these three parshiyos is 122. This is an allusion to the 122 days - a bit more than four full months - from Rosh Chodesh Elul until "Zos Chanukah" - the last day of Chanukah - when Hashem, in His infinite Wisdom and Mercy still leaves a window open for everyone to find their way home.

He further points out that Parshas Ki Savo, which also contains 122 posukim, is filled with many curses that will come to those who do not serve Hashem properly. But these curses must come to an end, as it says - may the year and all its curses end.

From these 122 posukim of Ki Savo, we go on to read the 122 posukim of Nitzavim, Vayelech and Haazinu, which we hope will replace all the terrible curses with the most wonderful blessings for the coming year.



בֶּן־מֵאָה֩ וְעֶשְׂרִ֨ים שָׁנָ֜ה אָנֹכִ֣י הַיּ֗וֹם לֹא־אוּכַ֤ל עוֹד֙ לָצֵ֣את וְלָב֔וֹא 31:2

A number of years ago, the French government instituted a novel arrangement whereby a younger person would pay five hundred francs a month to support an older person without relatives. When the older person died, the younger person would then inherit all of his possessions, including his home and anything else he had left behind.

Andre Raffray was forty-one years old when he came to know a ninety-one-year-old woman by the name of Jean Calment. They made this arrangement, and over the next thirty-one years he paid out five hundred francs a month in the hopes of eventually inheriting her vast possessions when she died.

Incredibly enough, his plan backfired. He died at the age of seventy-two without ever seeing the results of the money he had invested. Jean Calment lived one year longer than him and died at one-hundred-twenty-two. At the time this was the highest age ever reached.

Moshe tells Klal Yisroel, "Today, I am 120 years-old." Explains the Ksav Sofer, only on this day did Moshe finally feel the effects of old age. Before this day, he felt strong and clear, and although most people feel their strength ebbing with age, Hashem kept Moshe strong and vibrant until his final day. May we all live out long, fulfilling, and productive lives.

הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטַּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ

The Gerrer Rebbe, R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter ZT"L (Sefas Emes) would say: - Rashi quotes the gemara: '*The men were there to learn (Torah), the women were there to listen to the words and the children, why did they come?* So that reward would be given to those who bring them along.'



If there really was no purpose for the small children to be there, then what sort of reward do those who brought them deserve? Rather, the extra exertion of parents to include their young children in mitzvos and all forms of Avodas Hashem, will result in Hashem rewarding them with children who will grow up to truly serve Hashem properly and do mitzvos as they should. This can affect Jews of all levels - even the simplest Jew can merit great children."

"The only difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra."

R' Simch Bunim of Pshischa ZT"L would say:

"Every single Jew has the capacity for doing Teshuvah. That is, everyone except for a person who lies. A liar is someone who after telling untruths for so long comes to believe his own lies and does not even realize that what he's doing is wrong. As a result, a person who tells lies is doing himself a terrible injustice for he prevents himself from Teshuvah. It is surely a sin to deceive others, but it is pure 'shtus' (folly) to deceive oneself."



When Hashem hides Himself from Bnei Yisroel due to our sins, terrible repercussions are sure to follow. Our interminable golus, together with the pogroms, massacres, and hate-filled decrees, are all a testament to this reality.

Almost a century ago, a professor at a renowned institution of higher learning challenged his students with this question. "Did G-d create everything that exists?" A student bravely replied, "Yes he did!" The professor paused for effect. "Well, if G-d created everything, then G-d created evil. According to the principle that our works define who we are, we can then assume that G-d is therefore evil."

The student became quiet and did not answer the professor's ridiculous definition. Quite pleased with himself, the professor boasted that he had proven once more that religion and faith in G-d was a myth. A moment passed before another student raised his hand. "May I ask you a question, professor?" Still gloating over his

self-perceived victory, the professor nodded. "Sir, does cold exist?" "What kind of question is this? Of course, cold exists. Haven't you ever been cold?" The other students snickered at the young man's question. The young man replied, "In fact, sir, cold does not exist. According to the laws of physics, what we consider cold is in reality the absence of heat. Absolute zero is the total absence of heat and all matter becomes incapable of reaction at that temperature. In reality, cold does not actually exist. This word was created in order to describe how we feel if we have no heat."

Quiet consideration followed. Then the student continued, "Professor, does darkness exist?" The professor responded indignantly, "Of course darkness exists." The student replied, "Once again, you are wrong, sir. Darkness does not exist either. Darkness is in reality the absence of light. Light can be studied and measured with prisms. You cannot measure darkness. A simple ray of light can break into a field of darkness and illuminate it. How can you know how dark a certain space is? You measure it by the amount of light present. Isn't this correct? Darkness is a term used by man to describe what happens when there is no light present."

By now, even the students were nodding in concurrence. Finally, the young man asked the professor, "Sir, one more question. Does evil exist?" Now uncertain, the professor responded, "Of course, as I have already said. We see it every day. It is in the daily examples of man's inhumanity to man. It is in the multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil."

Patiently and with the hint of a smile, the student replied, "Evil does not exist, sir, or at least it does not exist unto itself. Evil happens in the absence of G-d. It is just like darkness and cold, a word used to describe the absence of G-d. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not believe and have G-d's love in his heart. It's like

the cold that comes when there is no heat, or the darkness that comes when there is no light."

Amid thunderous applause by the students, the professor sat down. The young man's name? …Albert Einstein.



R' Chaim Ozer

In his later years, the great Gaon and posek, R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky ZT"L, would visit the health springs and natural baths in Carlesbad, Germany, in order to benefit from the rejuvenating waters. As his health deteriorated, he was required to travel more often. One time, his doctor decided that it was imperative that he go immediately, even though it was during the month of Elul, and that he must remain there throughout the Yomim Noraim.

R' Chaim Ozer was very distressed by his doctors' orders. Although he knew that he should go, he nevertheless wondered why Hashem had decreed that he spend these awesome days so far away from his beloved Vilna. The very thought of remaining far from home, in such an alien setting, disturbed him greatly. Nonetheless, the doctors had ordered it, and so he felt he had to go. During his stay in Carlsbad, by Mincha of Shabbos Shuva, he noticed a man in shul who was obviously not from around those parts. After davening, R' Chaim Ozer went over to the man and greeted him warmly. "Sholom Aleichem," said the Rov. "Fun vannet kumpt ah yid? (Where are you from?)".

"I am a Jew from America," he answered. "So what brings you all the way here?" R' Chaim Ozer asked smiling. The man explained that his brother had recently passed away leaving a young widow with small

children. His friends had persuaded him that rather than allow her to marry someone else and subject the children to an unknown stepfather, he himself should marry his brother's widow and raise his nieces and nephews. He had written his sister-in-law who was inclined to accept the suggestion, and they had agreed to meet the following day to conclude plans for a forthcoming marriage.

R' Chaim Ozer was horrified. "But if one's brother's widow already has children, the Torah explicitly forbids marrying her," he told the man anxiously. The man looked at him for a long moment and then shrugged noncommittally.

Seeing that the man was not persuaded, R' Chaim Ozer continued, "If you think this is only a - a stringency, I'll show you a posuk in the Torah clearly prohibiting such a marriage." With that he took out a Chumash and showed the man exactly where it was forbidden and how grave the offense was. But the American Jew was still not convinced. "Reb Yid," he finally said to R' Chaim Ozer, "I appreciate your concern, but I don't know who you are and anyway I have made up my mind. I have no intention to change my plans based on the words of some stranger I just met in a shul in Germany."

The man turned to walk away and then with a smile, he turned back and said, "Perhaps if the chief rabbi of Vilna himself would tell me that it is forbidden then I would listen to him." At that point R' Chaim Ozer exclaimed to the man, "But I am the chief rabbi of Vilna!" The man was stunned and after quickly verifying that he was speaking with the great Rov of Vilna, he began to take the words seriously and a catastrophe was averted.

"Only then," R' Chaim Ozer would say later, "did I understand why I had been required to spend the Yomim Noraim in Carlsbad." To prevent an ordinary Jew from violating a Torah prohibition, it was even worth it to afflict R' Chaim Ozer with bad health so he would have to be in Carlsbad.

Torah Anytime- Rabbi Charlie Harary

It was my second year as a lawyer. It was thus particularly nerve-racking when I entered my office one day and the secretary looked at me with a white, blank stare. "I was told that so-and-so wants to see you as soon as you arrive." I knew the name. He was a very important litigation partner in the firm.

A feeling of fear and uncertainty overwhelmed me. After I knocked on the door and was called in, he looked up at me and said, "Please close the door. Can I ask you a personal question? Something we can keep between the two of us…"

"Absolutely," I said.

"Okay, good." And with that, he began. "My sister and brother-in-law are religious, Orthodox Jews like you. A few weeks ago, I was at their home for a barbeque, when all of a sudden, my brother-in-law got up and was about to walk out the door. 'Where are you going?' I asked.

'Going to pray,' he said simply.

'Going to pray? It's not the High Holidays.'

But, after thinking about it for a moment, it caught my interest. 'Do you mind if I come?' I asked. And so, off I went.

"We arrived at the synagogue for the afternoon service. The prayers took around fifteen minutes, after which I thought we would head back home. Not exactly. 'The rabbi is going to speak now.

"The rabbi went on to speak about the importance of Rosh Hashanah, and how it is the day upon which our entire next year is decided. Everything is determined, from the biggest of events down to the finest of details. It is a time of introspection and repentance, improvement and redirection.

Throughout the rabbi's talk, all I could think about was, 'The High Holidays are about this? I thought that you just show up to the

synagogue and say hello to G-d. I had no idea that so much was decided on this day. I am so unprepared!'

"The rabbi then took a seat. 'Okay,' I said, 'are we done?'

'There's another service now,' my brother-in-law replied.

I couldn't believe it. A service, a sermon and then another service, all on a regular Sunday afternoon.

"When I later returned home that night, I couldn't fall asleep. I had never known that over the course of forty-eight hours once a year, G-d determines my entire future year. But then I said to myself, 'I'm an incredible litigator! I can handle this. I know what I'll do…'

The next day, I sat down and wrote out my closing argument of exactly what I planned on telling G-d over Rosh Hashanah. I would propose the most compelling argument as to why I deserved another year of life. 'I'll put it in my prayer book,' I told myself, 'and when the rest of the congregation is saying sorry for their sins, I'll pull out my argument and convince G-d! I'll cash in right there and then for another year of life!'

"The following day, I approached my secretary and asked if she could buy me an Orthodox English prayer book for Rosh Hashanah. "When she returned, I immediately began skimming through the book from cover to cover, looking for where I could insert my piece of paper. I figured that at that point during the prayers, when everyone was confessing and telling G-d that they were sorry for all their misdeeds, I would slip in my paper and be good to go. I'm a lawyer, after all, and know how to argue a winning case.

"I went through the prayer book maybe five times, but not once did I see any mention of confessing or saying sorry. I was puzzled and didn't know what to make of it.

"So, Charlie," he said now looking at me with a sincere and intriguing stare. "I know you're an Orthodox Jew and wear a head covering. Maybe you can help me. How can there possibly be a day of judgment

when there is no option for the defendant to defend himself ? On what basis does the judge administer justice if you cannot even say you're sorry?"

Good question. Really good question. At the moment, I didn't know what to answer him. All I could say was, "That's an excellent question," and head out of the office to begin searching for an answer.

Now let's think about it. For forty-eight hours, we stand before Hashem in judgement. Yet what is our judgment based upon? What determines if we are granted a good year? If we do not admit to our wrongdoings and confess on Rosh Hashanah, what is the day of judgment really about?

Jewish law and practice even goes so far as to have us avoid mentioning anything about sin and even eating nuts, which shares the same gematria as the word cheit, sin. Sin and Rosh Hashanah are almost antonyms. How are we to make sense of the fact that we stay far away from talking about our past misdeeds and making amends on the Day of Judgment?

But that's not all. The one place in Tanach where reference is made to Rosh Hashanah is in the book of Ezra-Nechemia. After the Jews returned from Bavel following the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash and subsequent seventy-year exile, the nation gathered together as Ezra read portions of the Torah. The nation, though, soon became afraid, after realizing that the day was Rosh Hashanah and they had been lax in their mitzvah observance. But Ezra reassured them that such mourning and crying should be turned into rejoicing and celebration. "Do not mourn and do not weep… go eat rich foods and drink sweet beverages, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared… for the enjoyment of Hashem is your strength" (Nechemia 8:10).

This only calls for more confusion as to what Rosh Hashanah is about. On a day of judgment, we are not only instructed not to recall our

past faults and failings, but told to rejoice and enjoy ourselves? What in fact, you ought to be wondering by now, is Rosh Hashanah all about?

This was ultimately the question the litigation partner was asking. No less than a penetrating question which speaks to the very core and essence of Rosh Hashanah. But what would we answer him and ourselves as well?

Let's take a deep breath. You ready? What determines if we are granted a good year? The answer is one word: HaMelech, the King. Put very simply, Rosh Hashanah is the one day when we stop worrying about ourselves. That is the ultimate challenge. Hashem puts us in a room and says, "Your whole life in on the line, but you can't worry about yourself."

Now I know what you're thinking. It seems odd and contrary to any logic. But that is the truth. The way we earn a favourable judgment is by once and for all realizing who is really in charge of our life. Me or G-d? Everything is on the line, but that is precisely when you tell yourself, "It's not about me and my life." What is your life about? Is it about receiving from G-d or giving to Him? It is that simple. At the core of all that you stand for, ask yourself, do I live for G-d? Is it about me recognizing and performing His will or asking that He give me everything I want so I can enjoy myself ?

If a Jew stands on the Day of Judgement and crowns the King, he has taken the perfect step towards being granted a favourable verdict. And that is because life was just turned around from being about "me," to being about Him.

Why don't we say "I am sorry" on Rosh Hashanah? Because the first word in that phrase is "I." It is about me and my life. The ultimate secret to Rosh Hashanah, though, is realizing that we are given life when we cede control of our life. When we tell G-d, "I know You are in charge and I trust You," we are in the best place possible for a good judgment. And what is the proof in the pudding? What does

Hashem do to direct our focus on this day? "Go home and eat." Eat? Yes, exactly that. On the day when we should feel frightened because everything is being determined, Hashem tells us, "Go eat, celebrate and send gifts to one another…" It is precisely this behaviour and attitude which demonstrates that we are not overly worried and that we trust Hashem and know that He will take care of us. We are confident that He will favour us because we know that He is in control.

If we can spend the Day of Judgement with this feeling, we are doing exactly what we need. Ever since my kids were young, I played this little game with them on the monkey bars. When they would turn five or six, I would have them climb halfway up the monkey bars in the jungle gym and tell them to fall back into my arms. They would have to trust me that I would catch them. And for everyone's sake, I always kept my eyes wide open to make sure they safely landed in my arms.



Typically, the first time they lean back and are about to let go, they look at me and say, "Daddy, are you going to catch me? Are you sure?" "Yeah!" I emphatically say. Only then do they close their eyes and let go, falling into my arms.

By the time they've done this a few times, it becomes a fight as to which kid gets to climb up and fall back into my arms. With a wide smile and outstretched arms, they fall back comfortably and confidently, knowing with close to certainty that I will catch them.

One time, I wasn't paying attention and my five-year-old began leaning back. You know what I did? I dove. What father will not try to catch a kid that is falling into his arms?

On Rosh Hashanah, we have a choice. We stand before Hashem and close our eyes and fall back into His arms. And no matter what we have done and where we are, what father will not stretch out his arms to catch a falling kid?

When we place our lives in Hashem's hands and acknowledge that He is in control of the world and will take care of us, what will He do? When we place such faith in Him, He will certainly catch us, because what father will not catch his child, and even dive if necessary.

So what's the secret formula? Close your eyes, open your arms wide, let out a big smile, lean back and let go. And when you do so, you can be guaranteed that your Father in Heaven will catch you.

Torah Anytime- Rabbi Dovid Ozeri

As a man got underway putting together a wedding for his daughter, he decided to hire out an artist to craft a very expensive Ketuba, marriage document.



It was to be a magnificent and beautiful ketuba with elegant writing and artistry. As the witnesses were summoned to sign the ketuba, one of them signed his name, though made a mistake and crossed it out. As the rabbis examined the ketuba, it was declared to be invalid, for reasons relating to its halachic validity. What remained to be used instead as the ketuba was an inexpensive one, which had been purchased from the local Judaica store. It was evident to all nearby that this incident incensed the

father of the bride, given the attention and investment he had put in for the expensive ketuba.

Rav Pam zt"l was in attendance at the wedding, and was a man known to carry himself with extreme calm. Rav Pam, after studying the situation, approached the father of the bride and whispered something into We have very little information in the corpus of Jewish literature written by gedolei yisroel regarding philosophical issues on the Holocaust. Not many gedolim ventured even to his ear. After a few moments, a huge smile enveloped the face of the father. For the rest of the night, he appeared content and happy, as if nothing had occurred whatsoever.

At the end of the night, a gentleman went up to the father and asked just exactly what Rav Pam had whispered to him. "I'll tell you," the father said. "He told me that it seems that in heaven there was a decree that my daughter should have two ketubot in her lifetime. Usually, this means that, G-d forbid, there will be a divorce or death. But Hashem, in His infinite kindness, decided to make it easy for your daughter and give her two ketubot tonight, and that finishes the decree." That is why the father was happy for the rest of the night. Did Rav Pam have ruach ha'kodesh, Divine Inspiration? I don't know. But he was a person who understood how to look at a situation and respond appropriately and accordingly, and he found just the words to reach this father's heart.

"Chazal teach: - 'Everything is determined by the conclusion.' One can make amends for all the days of the year by rectifying the last week of the year. It is especially appropriate to conduct oneself on the last Shabbos of the year in a more perfect Shabbos observance. This will cause that all the Shabbosos of the year will be credited as having been done in this manner." ~ R' Yeshaya Halevi Hurvitz zt"l - Shelah Hakadosh

To Life

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הֵן קָרְבוּ יָמֶיךָ לָמוּת "And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Your days approach that you must die." (31:14)

The Midrash tells a story about the great sage, Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta, who went to a brit milah at which the father made an impressive feast. After serving a very old wine to the guests, the father proudly proclaimed that he would age a portion of this wine for the future joyful occasions of his son. Upon leaving the feast, the sage encountered the Angel of Death, who seemed to be in a "happy mood." He questioned the Angel as to the source of his merriment. The Angel responded that he was laughing at the foolishness of human beings.

He explained that this man, who had promised to put away wine for the future, would actually be dead in less than thirty days. The sage then asked the Angel to show him his own time of death. The Angel responded, "I have no power over you or other righteous people like you. Hashem often desires your good deeds and He, therefore, adds days to your originally predetermined life-span," as it says in Mishlei 10:27, ***"the fear of Hashem adds days."***

During the Days of Awe, our future is precarious. Our merit is meticulously scrutinized every day. **The Mezritcher Maggid** states that man is placed on this world to fulfil a purpose. When that mission has been completed, we should constantly undertake new spiritual endeavors, so that they may serve as a source of merit for our continued life. With this thought in mind, we might view opportunities for new spiritual tasks as a special gift from Hashem for prolonged life. (*Peninim on the Torah)*

"Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go, just remember how far you have come."

A Short Vort- Who's a mover? – D. Fine

There is a very sharp contrast between the two titles of these two inseparable sedras (netzavim-vayelech) that bring out the greatness of Moshe Rabeinu. And this is relevant for us too, for the Rambam famously says that every Jew can reach the level of Moshe Rabeinu – and though that needs explanation, it certainly does mean that one can reach an aspect of Moshe's greatness. So here's the vort…



Bnei Yisrael are described as 'netzavim' ie standing still, whilst Moshe (even when he is on the verge of his death) is described as 'vayelech' ie he moves. The contrast shows that Moshe was always someone who was moving and growing in his kedusha and tahara, as brought out by the rest of bnei yisrael being relatively still in comparison to Moshe.

With Rosh Hashanah coming up, it is our job to ensure that we are going to be constantly living, moving, growing Jews as opposed to static ones.

The End Is Nigh - Written by D Fine

Parshas Vayelech is essentially Moshe's last speech to Bnei Yisrael regarding their conduct and faithfulness to HaShem. How did Moshe know that this was going to be his last speech?

The Ohr Hachaim (31:1) writes that the opening words 'vayelech moshe' hint to the fact that when a tzadik is about to die he can feel part of his neshama departing. The words vayelech Moshe mean that

part of Moshe went – part of his neshama left him. This is how Moshe knew he was about to leave this world.

Another explanation of the words vayelech Moshe is that Moshe went into the camp of the people (he left the Levites camp where he resided) to take leave of them, like someone who is leaving his friend and wants to ask permission to do so **(Ramban)**. Indeed, we see that even in his final days, Moshe was always on the move – he was always growing and shedding his spiritual light upon others. Moshe was the ultimate holech.

Select Segulos for Parnassah - Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits



Even though the amount of money we make for the year is decided during the Yamim Nora'im, there are some segulos one can perform for added parnassah. We will list a few of them.

Pitum Haketores on Klaf

We find that many people today are careful to read the parshah of the ketores from a klaf. The earliest source for this is the Seder Hayom which mentions, "one who is concerned for himself and his soul, it is proper to try with all his strength to write the entire inyan of the ketores on a kosher klaf, using kesav ashuris (letters used in writing a sefer Torah) and read it twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening with a large amount of concentration, and I am guaranteeing it."

The Chafetz Chaim zt"l would say that people do all kinds of segulos but the biggest thing one can do for parnassah is to do kindness with others (Yesodos Habayis page 228).

Sandek Becoming Rich

The Maharil says that one who is a sandek is greater than the one who does the milah. The reason is since his knees are comparable to a mizbe'ach and it is like he is offering a ketores (korban). Therefore, just as a kohen who brings the ketores becomes rich, a big segulah for one to become rich is to act as a sandek.

The Gra mentions that he has seen people be a sandek but they did not become rich. There are many explanations for this. When the sandek performs his sandeka'us he should not have in mind to do it to become rich. Some explain that rich does not mean money, but it means rich with success. Others say the reason could be that his sins caused him not to become rich.

The Satmar Rebbe said this means rich in the mind, long life, and good children.

Someone once asked the **Steipler zt"l** why it is that if one is sandek he should be rich, but this is not the case with the Steipler, and he answered that it is true, since he is rich from the sefarim he published. Some say when it says rich it means one won't lack anything.

The Gerrer Rebbe zt"l said that if the sandek does the complete job of being a sandek, which means holding the baby when the brachos are being said and then drinking the wine, then there is a segulah for wealth, but just to hold the baby on the lap and giving it to someone else after the milah is not counted.

It is said that **Harav Chaim Kreiswirth zt"l** tried this, and he won a lottery afterwards and became rich.

Some say the reason why the rav of the community is given sandeka'us many times even from the same parents is because there is a segulah for wealth, and if the rav has riches he can learn properly, which will benefit the entire community that he services.

The Chazon Ish zt"l was very makpid that a sandek be someone who is fit and proper to be a sandek. If one wishes to give sandeka'us to an important learned person but one's father is a religious and simple Jew, one should make sure to honour his father.

Water at Netilas Yadayim

When one adds water to his hands when washing for bread it is a segulah for wealth. However, one should not do it with this intention. This means more than a revi'is of water per hand. However, others say the more water the better, not just more than a revi'is on each hand, and therefore one should make sure to fill the cup all the way.

The segulah means one should pour a lot of water on his hand the first and second time of washing one's hands, but to increase the amount of times one washes to more than two is a waste of money.

This does not apply to washing hands in the morning upon awakening.

Bentching

The Chinuch says, "I have a tradition from my rabbeim, that those who are careful with bentching will receive their mezonos (i.e. parnassah) in an honourable fashion all of their days."

The poskim note that there is no Hebrew letter "enda pei" in the entire bentching. This is because one who bentches properly merits that no anger will fall on him from Hashem. (The terms for anger, af and ketzef, end with a pei).

Honouring One's Wife

The Gemara says that one should be careful to honor his wife since by doing so, brachah enters the home. The Gemara also says one who lives without a wife lives without brachah.

Some explain that the reason for this is that a husband was cursed with working, whereas the wife was cursed with the fact that a husband will rule her. If the husband shows honour to his wife, he is being mochel the fact that he rules her, and then Hashem will show

him that just like he is mochel his wife's curse, so Hashem will take away his curse of working and make him wealthy.

You Matter



In the DP camps after World War II, the echoes of the Holocaust hung heavily over Europe. Many of the survivors had lost their faith, their souls, and their desire to go on living or believing in a greater purpose. Like many rabbis, **the Klausenberger Rebbe, R' Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam z"l** reached out to offer them comfort and support. He rallied the surviving Jews to serve HaShem and helped them begin again.

Once, he saw a man whose soul was nearly completely separated from his body. He no longer believed in G-d or in anything. When he saw the Rebbe approaching, he explained that he didn't want to talk. "I understand," replied the Rebbe, with love in his voice, "but please, always remember who you are."

Years later, that man, looking around at his children and grandchildren - generations of Torah-true Jews - would remark that the Rebbe had said the one thing that could get through to him -- that he still mattered.

"Hashem is with you in all your endeavors – In all places, at all times- Wherever you go, wherever you turn." ~ Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

First Impressions Count!

הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטַּף – "At the end of seven years… when all the Jews come to appear before Hashem… Gather together the people – the men, the women, and the small children… And their children who do not know – they shall hear, and they shall learn to fear Hashem…" (Devarim 31:10-13)

Susan, a woman in her fifties, had brain surgery. Boruch Hashem it was successful. When she went to the doctor for a follow-up appointment, he casually mentioned to her, "I hear that you love opera". She looked at the doctor incredulously, "Are you kidding? I hate opera"! He said," Well, in the middle of the surgery, when we were touching your brain with our instruments, you suddenly started singing opera". The doctor's comment bothered Susan very much.



Over the next few weeks she tried to figure-out why she would sing opera. At her next appointment, she had her answer. She told the doctor a story that happened to her when she was nine years old. "My class was going to the park for an outing. When we arrived, we were disappointed that we couldn't go in since an opera was performing".

Susan's only experience with opera was the one time when she was nine years old. That memory remained with her – forever. It was dormant but when the doctor touched the part of the brain that held this memory, she started singing the opera that she had heard.

We must be so careful what we see and hear – as children and as adults. The music that we hear and the pictures that we see remain with us forever! They are stored in part of our brain. Certain actions or scenes can trigger that memory and bring it back into our mind.

Every seven years, the entire Jewish nation – men, women, and small children, would come to the Beis HaMikdash, the Holy Temple, to hear the Jewish king read portions of the Torah.

Why were the small children brought? They were incapable of studying the Torah portion that was read. They weren't even able to listen and understand it on a simple level. **Rashi says,** they were brought solely to reward the parents who brought them.

The Sforno explains, that the small children who didn't understand enough to ask, would at least **hear** the Torah being read. When they got older they would be able to discuss and ask. Perhaps the Sforno means that an indelible impression would be made on the small children, even though they didn't understand what was being said.

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin quotes Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm: "Even though the young children do not understand what is being said, just being there when the king reads the Torah in the presence of the entire nation will have a major influence on the child for the rest of his life. He gains an experience of how important the Torah is… Every experience makes an impression; make certain to give your children many positive Torah experiences".

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky once visited a kindergarten whose mezuzah was placed on a low spot on the doorpost, for the children to kiss it. Rabbi Kamenetzky said, "It's a lovely idea to let the children reach the mezuzah but put it where it belongs, on the upper third of the doorpost and let the children use a stool to reach it. Otherwise they will grow up thinking that a mezuzah can be put anywhere you wish".

The circumstances that we put ourselves and our children into, make an indelible impression that will <u>never</u> be erased from our brains. May we always allow only positive impressions to enter.

"ויהי ככלות משה לכתב את דברי התורה הזאת על ספר עד תמם"



"So it was that when Moshe finished writing the words of this Torah onto a book, until their conclusion." (31:24)

According to the Zohar (Shemot 156a) Moshe passed away Shabbat afternoon. According to Midrash Rabbah (Devarim 9:9), Moshe wrote thirteen Sifrei Torah on the day of his passing, giving one to each tribe and one to be kept in the Ark.

Writing on *Shabbat* is forbidden. Why did Moshe violate the law?

In his holiness, Moshe recited a Name of Hashem which instructed the quill to write on its own. Writing which is not performed physically by a human being is not forbidden on *Shabbat*. (**ליקוטי שו"ת חת"ס סי' כ"ט בשם השל"ה**)

Chabad.org

A difficulty with the above explanation is that a *Sefer Torah* which was written miraculously, not by a human being, cannot be considered kosher.

Tosafot (Menachot 30a) writes that Moshe did not die on Shabbat but on erev Shabbat — Friday. Perhaps theMidrash that says he wrote thirteen sifrei Torah on the day of his passing follows this opinion.

Possibly, the *Midrash* agrees with the *Zohar* that Moshe died on *Shabbat* but holds that his demise started on Friday and culminated on *Shabbat*, and Moshe wrote the *sifrei Torah* on Friday when he felt his end drawing near. (**לקוטי שיחות**)

The Siddur Speaks A Closer Look at *Davening*



Rav Elimelech Biderman writes that there was once a wealthy man who owned a furniture factory, and each morning he *Davened Shacharis* in the *Bais Medresh* of one of the *Gedolei Ha'dor*. However, this wealthy man had a tendency of coming late to *Shul*. He would quickly put on his *Tefilin* and rush through the *Davening*, and somehow ended together with everyone else.

The *Rav* said to him, "Why don't you come on time for *Davening*?" The man replied, "I'm doing the best I can. I'm only a few minutes late, it really doesn't matter that much. I am here for most of *Davening*." The *Rav* saw that he couldn't convince him, so he let the issue go.

Sometime later, this wealthy man came to the *Rav* and told him that there was a fire in his factory, and everything burned down. He admitted, "It is because I come late to *Shul* that this happened."

The *Rav* asked, "How do you know?"

He answered, "When the fire broke out, I called the fire department to come right away, but they were late. I watched as each minute passed, more and more furniture got destroyed. When they finally arrived, I asked the fire chief what took them so long, and he said, 'We did the best we could. But the reality is, we are only a few minutes late, but it really doesn't matter that much, everything would have been destroyed anyway.' His words hit me like a ton of bricks because those were the same words I had said when I

explained away why I come late to *Shul*. I know that if they would have come when I called them, they could have stopped the fire and saved all the furniture. I understand that I am being punished for coming late to *Shul*." This was a wake-up call for this man, and he committed himself to come early for *Davening*.

It has been a while since this episode occurred, and perhaps, due to his commitment to *Davening*, his *Parnasah* and previous wealth has been re-established!

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

Normally, we announce and bless the new month on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh. Before Tishrei, however, we do not do this.

• One reason is that it is normally announced so people will know when Rosh Chodesh is, but everyone knows when Rosh HaShana is.

• Another is because it is not called Rosh Chodesh, but Rosh HaShana.

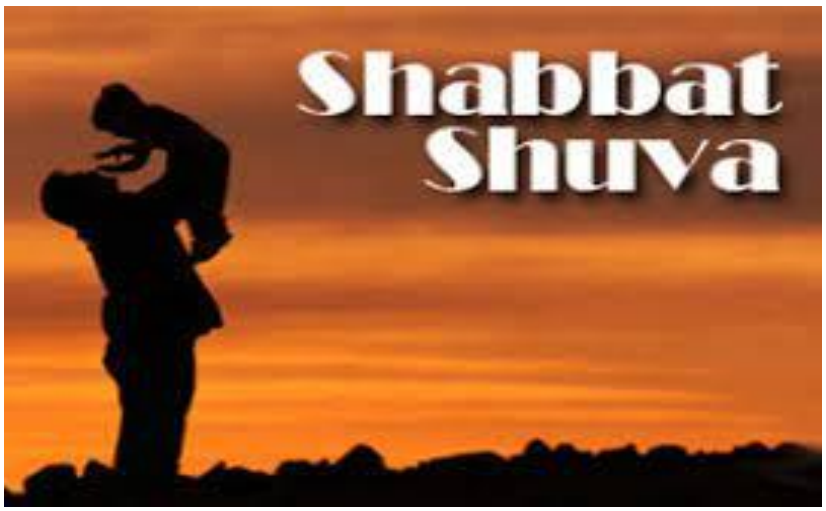
• An additional reason given is that the Satan looks forward to causing us to sin on Rosh HaShana, the beginning of the new year. When we don't announce it, we "confuse" him, and he thinks his calendar is off, so he leaves us alone.

One year, when they announced Rosh Chodesh Elul, the **Chofetz Chaim** was so overcome with awe and trepidation for the coming days that he fainted. When they revived him, he said, "It's no wonder they don't announce Rosh Chodesh Tishrei. Then EVERYONE would faint!"

The difference between who you are, and who you want to be, is what you do.

Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

Shabbos Shuva – Shabbos Teshuva



Shabbos Shuva is one of the few *parshios* in the Torah where the *Haftorah* is not linked directly to the *parshah* but rather to the calendar. The reason the Shabbos is called *Shabbos Shuva* is because we read the *Haftorah* that begins '*Shuva Yisrael*'.

The *Sh'lah Ha'kadosh* refers to the Shabbos that is between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as *Shabbos Teshuvah*. The word **תשובה** hints five things to us: **ת**ענית, **ש**ק, **ב**כיות, **ה**ספד, **ו**צדקה - *Fasting, wear sackcloth, crying, eulogizing, and giving tzedakah.*

We can accomplish all these five things on any of the weekdays of the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, however, on Shabbos when we cannot do any of these things, we must do an *internal Teshuvah* (**תשובה פנימית**) and *Teshuvah* within our hearts (**תשובה שבלב**).

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rebbe Yitzchok of Vorka used to teach that everything has its season. If one tries to sell something out of season when there are few buyers, they will endlessly negotiate over the price and no price will be low enough. However, when something is in season, buyers will outbid one another which will drive the price higher.

He said, "The *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* are a seller's market for *Teshuvah*. During this time, any *Teshuvah*, regardless of its quality,

will be snatched up by Hashem. We only have to make sure that we have some 'merchandise' for sale!"

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rabbi Yonasan Rietti taught how it is one's obligation to take control of his mind and thoughts and keep them positive. Just like *Hashem* ended the creation of each day with the words *'Ki Tov'*, *'It is good'*, and even on the sixth day when Adam and Chava did an *Aveirah*, we find the words *'Ki Tov'*, we have to train our minds to see all aspects of our lives as good.

Teshuvah, he explained, is the ultimate example of a *Mitzvah* which involves training our minds. We must have regret for our past *Aveiros*, but we must also have a healthy and positive focus on our future!

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

As Moshe prepared to depart from this world, he stressed the leadership of Yehoshua. He uses peculiar language when speaking to Yehoshua, and he says, "You will enter [*Savo*] the land with the nation" (31:7), instead of "You will bring [*Savi*] the nation into the land".

The *Or HaChaim* explains that Moshe did this on purpose to emphasize that everything is truly from *Hashem*, and we are only messengers of His. This is something important to keep in mind at all times, and particularly in these days preceding Yom Kippur. *Hashem* has the only say on anything we want or do not want. He is in charge, and everyone else we encounter, is only a messenger of *Hashem*.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



Rav Yosef Viener, *Shlit"a*, was once on a plane that was almost ready to take off when a young child came on and sat down in the empty seat next to him. The boy seemed to be travelling alone and looked very relaxed and calm about it, not anxious to be alone on a plane. Feeling a slight responsibility to look after him, Rabbi Viener asked the boy if anyone was with him. The boy simply answered, "My father is here, but you can't see him."

Not knowing what he had gotten himself into and thinking the worst, Rabbi Viener began to look around at the other passengers to see if he could see someone that might be this boy's father.

The boy explained, "The reason you can't see him is because my father is the pilot and he's the one who is flying the plane." Rabbi Viener sat back and reflected how this young child was too little to realize how powerful the words that he had just spoken were.

Life is sometimes just like that, where we feel like we are on a plane, and sense that things are spinning out of control. We conclude that there must be no one flying the plane because things are in such disarray. But, when we realize that *our Father is here, but we can't see Him* because He is the pilot, we can just sit back and relax because Hashem has everything under control.

When we understand that Hashem our Father is "flying the plane", we will also be able to sit and be calm, without anxiety, and without feeling that we are ever alone.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYEILECH

Give More Praise to Hashem than Requests

A man living in one of the southern cities of Eretz Yisrael was having a hard time marrying off his children. His oldest child was twenty-eight, and he had another four children above twenty. He also had financial problems, because he had taken out a mortgage on his house to help his chavrusah marry off his children. His chavrusah was supposed to pay the monthly fees, but he wasn't able to, and the bank put up his house for foreclosure.



One evening, this man was in Yerushalayim for a chasunah, and he met with a relative. He told his relative about his hardships marrying of his children and his financial problems.

The relative replied, "There's a great tzaddik in Yerushalayim – the **Beis Yisrael of Gur (Rabbi Yisroel Alter**, 1895-1977). Tell him your problems. He will certainly help you."

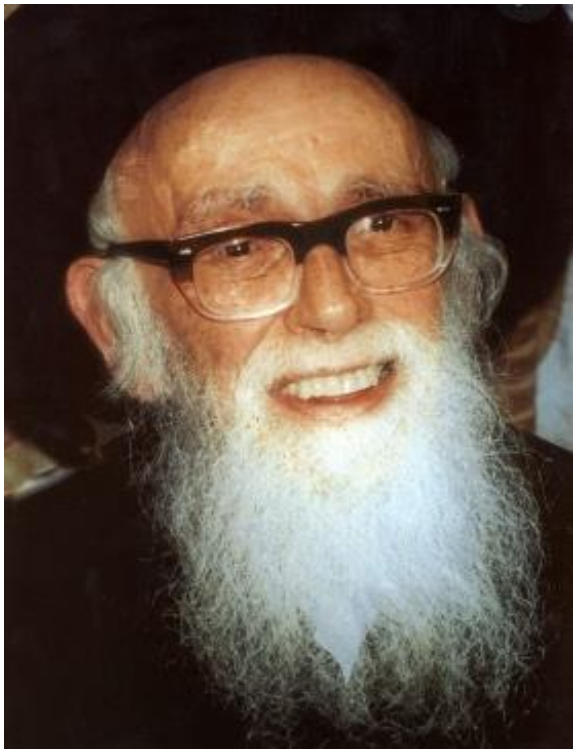
This man wasn't a chassid, but his relative convinced him to go. He poured his bitter heart out before the Rebbe. The Beis Yisrael asked him, "Do you ever praise Hashem? Praise should be 60% and requests should be 40%."

This man told his relative the counsel he received. The relative said, "You have a lot to thank Hashem for. You have health, a wife, and children. You always have food on your table… Focus on the good. Get into the practice of praising Hashem as the Rebbe suggested: 60% praises and 40% prayers."

Two months later, his oldest daughter was engaged. Within a half year, three of his children were married and two more were engaged. Around that time, his chavrusah's mother was niftarah, leaving a large inheritance. The chavrusah immediately paid up the debt, and this man was able to redeem his house from the bank.

This man realized that the Rebbe's counsel of 60% praises and 40% requests can be found in Hallel. We say there **הודו לה' כי טוב** six times, while **אנא ה'** is said four times. This is exactly as the Beis Yisrael advised: 60% praises and 40% requests. This ratio brings yeshuos. *(Torah Wellsprings: by Rabbi Elimelch Bidernman.)*

Do Something for Hashem!



A childless woman was complaining to **Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt'l** about her life. Reb Shlomo Zalman explained to her that she can't have complaints against Hashem, because Hashem doesn't owe her anything. However, if she will do for Hashem more than she is required to do, Hashem will do for her more than she deserves, and she will merit children. She became a volunteer in Shaarei Tzedek hospital in Yerushalayim to help the ill. This was a kind deed that was not required of her. A year later, she had a daughter.

A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him.

Tefillin in Auschwitz

In Parshas Eikev we are commanded with the mitzvah of tefillin. When Mendel and Moshe were deported to Auschwitz, they vowed that they would try to fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin every day. Upon arrival at Auschwitz, their tefillin was confiscated.

They soon discovered that all religious articles had been thrown into a shed. Mendel approached a gentile, who seemed to be a decent fellow, to ask at what price he would get him a pair of tefillin from the shed. The gentile wanted a day's food ration. Mendel agreed.

The next day, the man brought the tefillin and Mendel handed over his bit of bread and watery soup. But Mendel was disappointed – they were both tefillin shel yad ! He sought out the gentile, who told him that a 2nd trip to the shed would cost another day's ration. Mendel agreed. He fasted 2 consecutive days, but he got his pair of tefillin.



Mendel and Moshe shared their tefillin with others. Before long, as many as 50 Jews a day took turns fulfilling this mitzvah, fully aware that getting caught meant certain death.

One day a kapo entered the barracks and asked Mendel if he could borrow the tefillin. Mendel had no choice but to give the kapo the tefillin. He never returned them.

The next day, when a new transport of Jews arrived, Mendel stood near the barbed wire fence. As soon as they entered, Mendel hurried over to them. "Who has tefillin?" he asked frantically.

Finally, one man called out, "I have tefillin."

"Then please give them to me," said Mendel. "If you hold on to them, they will be confiscated. But if you give them to me, I will guard them and return them as soon as I can."

The man gave Mendel the tefillin. Old and weak, the man was sent to the gas chambers. Mendel kept the tefillin and shared them with everyone. One day, while one of the prisoners was wearing the tefillin, a Nazi y"s entered and flew into a rage, demanding that the tefillin be handed over. He asked to whom they belonged.

Mendel raised his hand. "You should really die for this," the Nazi said, "but I have an even better punishment. This afternoon, we'll assemble all the prisoners in this section around a fire, and you will throw your 'treasure' into the flames!" He tossed the tefillin back to Mendel and left.

But Mendel had prepared for such an eventuality. He bent down near his bed and withdrew from under the floorboard what looked like a pair of tefillin, which he had made a while back, thinking they might one day come in handy. That afternoon, the Jews assembled around a bonfire. As the Nazis looked on mockingly, Mendel threw his empty wooden black boxes into the flames.

The next morning, he and his friends donned the tefillin. Towards the end of the war, as the Nazis realized their defeat was imminent, even the prisoners' pitiful rations were stopped. Mendel was dreadfully weak. He lay on his bed with his eyes closed, barely alive.

Moshe was in somewhat better health, and he rushed about the camp, trying to find a crust of bread with which to keep his brother alive. He managed to find a lump of sugar, which he traded for a few slices of bread. He crumbled the bread into Mendel's mouth, which revived him.

Mendel then attempted to speak, and barely whispering said, "Moshe… Please bring me the tefillin… I haven't worn them today…" The next day, Auschwitz was liberated. Mendel and Moshe, along with their precious tefillin, eventually made their way to America.

Can a Kohen Take A Divorced Woman?

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, ZT"L (1863-1940), was once giving a shiur to a group of young men in his home when a man came in running and interrupted. "Rebbi," he began, "I am a Kohen – may I take a divorced woman?"

The students were justifiably disturbed by this interruption. How does someone have the Chutzpah to disturb Rav Chaim Ozer's shiur for such an elementary question? The Torah clearly states in no uncertain terms (Vayikra 21:7) that a Kohen may not marry a divorced woman.

Rav Chaim Ozer looked up at the man, thought for a moment, and responded, "yes, you may take a divorced woman."

The students were shocked at this response. How could the great sage render a decision that clearly contradicted the Torah? Yet, Rav Chaim Ozer continued the shiur as if nothing had occurred.



Finally, when noticing how distracted the students, said, "you're probably wondering about my decision, so allow me to explain. You probably noticed the man's boots and riding gear. He is a simple wagon driver. He knows that a Kohen may not take - that is, marry - a divorced woman. He understood the word "take" literally and didn't want to give this woman a ride. He feared violating a prohibition in the Torah."

Sure enough, the students went outside to see if their Rebbi's words reflected reality and saw the Rav's brilliant deduction play out. A

well-known divorced woman was in the process of boarding this man's wagon for the ride.

Comment: Although this is a humorous story (from Rabbi Paysach Krohn), it drives home the greatness of our Torah giants' grip on reality and the fact that even the simplest Jew can have a holy sincerity about them.



His Name Shone By Hillel Baron

A group of chassidim were travelling from Krakow to their Rebbe, the **Choze ("Seer") of Lublin**. When they arrived, after a trip of several days, their wagon driver asked if they could be so kind as to bring his note to the Rebbe, among the other notes they had brought from the people in Krakow. They happily obliged.

When they delivered all the notes, the Rebbe began reading through them, when suddenly, he picked up one and said, "Wow! Who wrote this note? His name glistens and shines!"

They explained that it was from the wagon driver, and the Rebbe said, "There is something special about this man."

After their audience with the Rebbe, the chassidim decided to find the wagon driver and figure out what was so special about him. They went to the inn and found his wagon and horses, but not the driver. They set off around town looking for him, until they reached an outdoor marketplace, and there he was, dancing and singing. "What is the occasion?" they asked, and he explained that this was a wedding of two orphans.

They asked his connection to the celebration, and he explained:

"After you left to go to the Rebbe, I took care of some maintenance with the wagon, fed the horses, and walked about town to see what was going on. I came across the marketplace and saw people singing

and making merry. I asked about the occasion and was told that a wedding between two orphans was about to begin.

"Then, I discerned sounds of unhappy talk. 'Oh,' they told me, 'there are some mixed feelings here. The people who arranged the match told the groom that the bride would provide him with a *tallis*. Unfortunately, this did not pan out, as they are both very poor.'



"What did I do?" the wagon driver said. "I quickly pushed my way through the crowd, and when I reached the bride, I took out the money which I happened to have on me, gave it to her and said, 'Here, with this money you will buy your groom a *tallis*. It's on me. No worries.'

"After that, the wedding went ahead without a hitch. And that's why I'm singing and dancing right now," the wagon driver concluded. "I may not have much money left in my pocket to show for this trip, but I am gratified to know that a new Jewish home will be established in joy and peace."

At that point, it was clear to the chassidim why the wagon driver's name shone so. It was because he had shown up and done his part immediately when an opportunity for a mitzvah presented itself to him.

How can we be on the lookout for "small" mitzvot which will make a big difference? Let's utilize every opportunity that arises.

Yeshivas Beis Dovid Newsletter

In Parshas Vayeilech, Moshe hands over the leadership to Yehoshua. While doing so, Moshe says "chazak v'ematz", encouraging Yehoshua to be strong and courageous while leading Klal Yisroel.

Rav Shteinman in his sefer Ayeles Hashachar asks why this encouragement was necessary. After all, in Parshas Pinchos, Hashem instructed Moshe to hand over the leadership. Surely no greater encouragement is needed than that of Hashem?

Rav Shteinman explains that Moshe's encouragement, despite Hashem's earlier promise that Yehoshua would take over, still benefited Yehoshua. Rav Shteinman adds that, regardless of Yehoshua's greatness, a word of encouragement can still go a long way in reassuring somebody.

Rav Shlomo Elyashiv, the "Leshem" and grandfather of **Rav Yosef Sholom zt'l**, published a sefer on Kabbalah. Many years later, he heard that when his sefer reached Baghdad, the **Ben Ish Chai** donned Shabbos clothing for three days.

The Leshem commented that had he known this fact at the time, it would have motivated him to write more seforim. We never know how far a simple compliment or word of encouragement can go. We know that Hashem judges us by taking those around us into account.

Let's uplift and reassure those around us and may we all be zoche to a ksivah va'chasima tova! (**Doniel Rosenthal**)

"The strongest words of encouragement are often spoken by those who themselves are facing difficulty. Standing before his own departure, Moshe's message was: 'Chizku v'imtzu—be strong and courageous.'"

Simcha By Rabbi Yair Hoffman



It is a song that we hear pretty regularly: **מִצְוָה גְּדוֹלָה לִהְיוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה – לִהְיוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה תָּמִיד** The statement is so well-known that it is often mistakenly identified as a Gemorah or early Maamar Chazal. Indeed, Rabbi Yehoshua Kurland from Sh'or Yoshiv says that it is the only song that ever became a Pasuk.

But is this true? Is there really a Mitzvah to always be happy? How does this fit in with mourning over the Beis HaMikdash, a lost relative, begging for forgiveness for an Aveirah, etc.? Also, what about those that survived the holocaust? Especially right after the devastation and the knowledge that the bulk of their family and all they knew were murdered?

And, if it is true – where do we first encounter it?

There will be attempts to state that it is not a contradiction – in that one can still maintain a state of happiness even in dire situations. We will see that, at least according to some authorities, this is not correct. **The Berditchever Rebbe's** view, to be described later, is a case in point.

Tehillim

The first place to look is in Dovid HaMelech's Tehillim. In Tehillim (100:2) we find the words, "ivdu es Hashem b'simcha – serve Hashem in a state of joy." And although the **Alshich** states that we should always be in a state of joy when serving Hashem – there is still the qualification that it when we are serving Hashem – in other words, performing Mitzvos. But let's say that we are doing something

else. Are we permitted to not be in a state of Simcha? And who says that it is still a Mitzvah Gedolah?

The View of The Berditchever

The Berditchever in the beginning of Parshas Vayaishev (Kedushas HaLevi) does extend it to always being in such a state – but he writes that it is only when he perceives that Klal Yisroel has good in this world. Otherwise, he writes, a person is obligated to partake in their sorrow. We see from his words that he does not agree with the resolving the contradiction view.

Happy With One's Lot

There is a concept of "same'ach b'chelko – being happy with one's lot in life" – but this may not necessarily mean that this means that one must constantly be in a state of happiness. The Menoras HaMeor (chapter 14) writes that whomsoever is happy with his or her lot is in a constant state of happiness – but once again, this does not mean that it is a Mitzvah per se. It could be that it is a reward.

This author is of the opinion that the idea is first found only in Chassidishe seforim, and that it was initially introduced as an effective countermeasure to the debilitating effects of depression. When one is depressed the shechina does not reside in him.

The Noam Elimelech on Parshas BaMidbar explains that the Torah tells us that one must be in an Ohel Mo'ed in the tent of a Yom Tov – i.e. in a state of happiness – in order that one have the Shechina be with him.

In a similar vein, **Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Nadvorna**, a prime student of the **Maggid of Mezerich** writes in his Alpha Beita (simcha) that one should be in a constant state of Simcha in order to always be able to perform his Mitzvos, his learning, and his Tefillah in a state of joy and zrizus – alacrity. In other words, it is kind of a hechsher

Mitzvah but he did not state per se that it is a full Mitzvah, much less a Mitzvah Gedolah.

The expression as we know it originates with **Rav Nachman of Breslov** (1772-1810) in his Likkutei Moharan 2:24). This author would like to suggest an alternative understanding of Rav Nachman of Breslov's formulation that does not contradict the fact that we do not find earlier mention of the idea. But before this, a brief overview is in order. During Rav Nachman of Breslov's times, sadness filled the air. Disease, hunger, famine, and poverty were everywhere. Indeed, both Rav Nachman's wife and he, himself, died of Tuberculosis at a very young age. Rav Nachman of Uman passed away at 38 years of age.

Being in a state of depression depresses other people. Being in a state of happiness cheers people up (within reason, of course). Cheering and uplifting the spirit of others is a Mitzvah of v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocha – loving your neighbour as yourself. Rabbi Akiva says that this is a Klal gadol baTorah – a great principle in the Torah. Being in a constant state of happiness allows us to perform the Mitzvah of v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocha in a flash – especially during dark times. During this period of COVID-19, this is especially applicable. We must keep in mind that it is always proper to try and cheer up and uplift others.

Either Way, Someone is Hurting

"We have a tradition from the Baal Shem Tov that when someone tells you 'not good things' about another person, you should feel great pain and distress. Because, either way you look at it, someone is hurting: If the story about this person is true, then things are not good for him. And if the report is false, then the one who has fabricated it is hurting."



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman – Shabbos Shuva

There is an incredible vort from the **Holy Rebbe of Ruszhin**. He said that the Pasuk says **אם תשיב משבת רגליך עשות חפציך ביום קדשי.** This is said in the haftorah on Yom Hakodosh (Yom Kippur). The Ruzhiner explains that if you repent on something concrete that you are accustomed to on this Shabbos, then Hashem says **עשות חפציך ביום קדשי-** Then I, Hashem, will answer your tefilos on my holy day, Yom Kippur. Hashem makes a deal with every Yid. If you return to Me, I will answer all your requests on Yom Kippur. It can even be something small. Everyone knows what he needs to correct.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn – Project Mesorah

This weeks sedra is parshas Vayelech but is more commonly called Shabbos Shuva after the first word in the Haftorah- **שובה**. So therefore this week is known as Shabbos Shuva.

I saw something from the **Sefas Emes** which is absolutely remarkable.

This is the first Shabbos of the year, right after Rosh Hashana. If you think about it, the first Shabbos in history was when Adam Harishon had just done the Aveiro on Friday afternoon.

That same day was when Kayin killed Hevel. Adam saw that Kayin appeared to be in a good mood, and asked him, "How come you are in such a good mood?"

Kayin answered, "I have just done teshuva, and Hashem is ok with me."

Adam Harishon responded - "**מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת**".

The meforshim ask, "How does this make sense?

They answer, that the word **שַׁבָּת** comes from the word **שב-** to return. So the very first Shabbos in history was Shabbos Shuva!

So how do we do teshuva this Shabbos?



If you take a look in the second Pasuk in the Haftora, it says : **קְחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל ה' - *Take words with yourselves and return to the Hashem.*** Which words is it referring to?

I would say, the words of the Machzor, the words of the davening on Yom Kippur. Try to prepare in advance of the tefillos to get a deeper understanding of the words that you are going to say. The words will be that much more meaningful, and will prepare us for **וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל ה'.**

Thank You Hashem – Learn how to say thank you:

We thank You Hashem for creating us! We thank You Hashem for giving us a sun that gives us light and warmth! We thank You Hashem for giving us air to breathe! We thank You Hashem for giving us water to drink! We thank You Hashem for giving us food! We thank You Hashem for giving us the ability to sleep every night and recuperate our strength!" ~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l

R' Moshe Malka - The Scratches of Life



This world is like a hotel, you check in and you check out. The only things that you take with you, are your good deeds. Things don't bother you that much.

A man checks into a Holiday Inn, and when he puts his bags down on the dresser, he notices a scratch. He calls the front desk, and he complains about the scratch, and asks for the dresser to be changed.

The receptionist says, "Are you out of your mind, you only paid $79 for this room, and you are out of here tomorrow morning."

How come most of us wouldn't give a hoot? It wouldn't bother us that much?

Because we are only there temporarily. You are out of there tomorrow morning.

That's how tzaddikim live their whole life. They get a dining room table from Ikea, and there is a scratch on it, they say – Kapara. The kids will make many more scratches on it over the years.

If you look at life like this, then things don't bother you that much, it is only a scratch, and your Olam Habah will be shining.

"The mitzvah of Hakhel reminds us that the strength of Klal Yisrael lies in gathering together—young and old, scholars and simple folk—to hear the word of Hashem as one people."

Yeshiva World News - Are YOU a Rachmanus?

If you get married at eighteen – you're a rachmonus. If you're still single at twenty – you're a rachmonus. If you have three children when you're married three years – you're a rachmonus. If you have no children when you're married three years – you're a rachmonus. If you must learn in kollel for five years – you're a rachmonus. If you must go to work at twenty – you're a rachmonus.

If you live close to your parents – you're a rachmonus. If you live far from your parents – you're a rachmonus. If your in-laws are involved in your life – you're a rachmonus. If your in-laws are not involved in your life – you're a rachmonus.

If you have a job and work very hard – you're a rachmonus. If you don't have a job – you're a rachmonus. If you "only" have four children – you're a rachmonus. If you have twelve children – you're a rachmonus. If you live on the top floor – you're a rachmonus. If you live in a basement – you're a rachmonus.

If only the husband is working – you're a rachmonus. If the wife is working, the children are neglected – you're a rachmonus. If you move, it's expensive – you're a rachmonus. If you can't move – you're a rachmonus.

If you attend a simcha every night – you're a rachmonus. If you can't go to simchas – you're a rachmonus. If you must take household help – you're a rachmonus. If you don't have household help – you're a rachmonus. If the husband is forced to help in the house – you're a rachmonus. If your wife managed the entire household without your help – you're a rachmonus.

At fifty, if you don't have work – you're a rachmonus. If you still "have to work" – you're a rachmonus. If your married children come too often – you're a rachmonus. If your married children don't come often – you're a rachmonus. If you're busy caring for elderly parents

– you're a rachmonus. If you don't have parents ch"v – you're a rachmonus.

If you've married all your children at fifty – you're a rachmonus. If you still have young children at home at fifty – you're a rachmonus. At sixty, if you're both home all day – you're a rachmonus. If your wife works and you're home all day – you're a rachmonus. If your children must care for your needs in your old age – you're a rachmonus. If your children don't care for your needs in your old age – you're a rachmonus.

If you live until you're old and weak – you're a rachmonus. If you pass away young ch"v – you're a rachmonus.

But……

If you trust that everything Hashem does is for the good – you're happy. If you trust that Hashem guides your every step with love – you're happy!

R' Eliyahu Maksumov - It Was All Worth It



Somebody once came to the **Chofetz Chaim Zt'l** and saw that he was contemplating something. He asked him what he was thinking about. The Chofetz Chaim answered that he was just looking back at his life. "I accomplished so much. I wrote sefarim, including the Mishna Brura and sefarim on Lashon Hora. I inspired people. But I am thinking how much more I could have accomplished if I had just stayed and learnt more for myself instead of reaching out to the masses."

And then he changed his mind and said, "No – although I had to sacrifice a large amount of time, I don't regret it one bit."

'The reason is because just for me to write about Lashon Hora in Shemiras Halashon, I went through incredible hardships including, travelling and many types of bizyonos and embarrassments.'

"It was worth all this if just one Yid would refrain from speaking Lashon Hora one time!"

'As precious as my time is, I devoted it to you, so that you can appreciate the power of Shemiras Halashon!'

Waking Up on the Wrong Side of the Bed and Being B'Simcha By Rabbi Yair Hoffman



You woke up on what is called, "the wrong side of the bed." Is it forbidden to remain in this state? Are we obligated to go through specific thought processes to "get out of it?" Is it a Mitzvah to do so? Is the song, "Mitzvah Gedolah lihios b'Simcha tamid – It is a great Mitzvah to be in a state of constant joy" really true? If so, where does it come from? What are the factors that cause us to wake up on the wrong side of the bed and what can we do about it?

Let's begin with an illustration. You were up half of the night because of various noises. You wash negel vasser and somehow, the water had spilled. You got to the bathroom and it is locked. You wonder why that is and you discover that no one is in there. You trip on the floor because someone left something there that shouldn't have been there. Today, it seems, is just not your day.

But does it have to be this way? Is there anything that we can do to change it up? Also, what is the halacha regarding this whole thing?

In Dovid HaMelech's Tehillim (100:2) we find the words, "ivdu es Hashem b'simcha – serve Hashem in a state of joy." The Alshich, however, states that we should always be in a state of joy when serving Hashem. But read carefully, there is still the qualification that it is when we are serving Hashem – in other words, performing Mitzvos. Are we permitted to not be in a state of Simcha? And who says that it is still a Mitzvah Gedolah?

The View Of The Berditchever

The Berditchever in the beginning of Parshas Vayaishev (in his Kedushas HaLevi) does extend it to always being in such a state – but he writes that it is only when he perceives that Klal Yisroel has good in this world. Otherwise, he writes, a person is obligated to partake in their sorrow. According to him, we must get out of this negative state of mind, unless we are partaking in the sorrow of Klal Yisroel.

Happy With One's Lot

There is also a concept in Pirkei Avos (4:1) of "who is wealthy? – hasame'ach b'chelko – being happy with one's lot in life" – but this may not necessarily mean that this means that one must constantly be in a state of happiness. The Menoras HaMeor (chapter 14) writes that whomsoever is happy with his or her lot is in a constant state of happiness – but once again, this does not mean that it is a Mitzvah per se. It could be that it is a reward.

Chassidish Seforim

This author is of the opinion that the idea is first found only in Chassidishe seforim, and that it may have been initially introduced as an effective counter-measure to the debilitating effects of depression. When one is depressed the shechina does not reside in

him. The Noam Elimelech on Parshas BaMidbar explains that the Torah tells us that one must be in an Ohel Mo'ed in the tent of a Yom Tov – i.e. in a state of happiness – in order that one have the Shechina be with him.

In a similar vein, Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Nadvorna, a prime student of the Maggid of Mezerich writes in his Alpha Beita (simcha) that one should be in a constant state of Simcha in order to always be able to perform his Mitzvos, his learning, and his Tefillah in a state of joy and zrizus – alacrity. In other words, it is kind of a hechsher Mitzvah but he did not state per se that it is a full Mitzvah, much less a Mitzvah Gedolah.

The Origin

The expression as we know it originates with Rav Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810) in his Likkutei Moharan 2:24). This author would like to suggest perhaps an alternative understanding of Rav Nachman of Breslov's formulation that does not contradict the fact that we do not find earlier mention of the idea.

But before this, a brief overview is in order. During Rav Nachman of Breslov's times, sadness filled the air. Disease, hunger, famine, and poverty were everywhere. Indeed, both Rav Nachman's wife and he, himself, died of Tuberculosis at a very young age. Rav Nachman of Uman passed away at 38 years of age.

Being in a state of depression also depresses other people. Being in a state of happiness cheers people up (within reason, of course). Cheering and uplifting the spirit of others is a Mitzvah of v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocha – loving your neighbor as yourself. Rabbi Akiva says that this is a Klal gadol baTorah – a great principle in the Torah. Being in a constant state of happiness allows us to perform the Mitzvah of v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocha in a flash – especially during dark times. We must keep in mind that it is always proper to try and cheer up and uplift others.

The Contributing Factors

So what are the contributing factors to waking up on the wrong side of the bed? - The following is a list:

- Anticipation of Stress or Being Overwhelmed
- Financial stress
- Frustration with the behaviours of others
- Frustration with the behaviours of children
- Poor sleep
- Going to bed upset
- Negative underlying thoughts and feelings.
- Conflicts one is having.
- Unidentified Frustrations that one is having.

What Can Be Done

Although it can be difficult to overcome, the following are some suggestions that people find to be helpful.

1. Don't say brachos without kavana – focus on the gifts that Hashem has given us. This gratitude can help us change our mood.
2. Reframe – focus on the positive aspects of that which we find to be negative.
3. Identify the exact source of the stress
4. Plan for a good day
5. Look for an innovative way to deal with other people's behaviours that frustrate.
6. Make time for yourself and really do it.
7. Connect with others.
8. Exercise
9. Eat healthy.

Hotzaos Shabbos - Expressing It Verbally



The Mishnah Berurah (252:2) writes that for whatever one purchases for Shabbos, it is worthwhile to verbally express, ***"I am purchasing this for the honour of Shabbos."***

The Machatzis HaShekel explains that through the verbalized words, the holiness of Shabbos will enter into the item itself.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein zt"l - Fight Fire with Fire

I'd like to share with you something which a girl going through a very difficult time wrote to me. She penned her heartfelt and authentic thoughts and feelings for the purpose of allowing her inner world to be seen and appreciated for what it is.

It's burning inside, burning a huge hole in every part of my body

My heart is the problem … it's on fire

It's burning and raging with so many mixed emotions

Sparks of anger, confusion, loneliness, helplessness and despair are infused into my bloodstream, igniting my blood, sending this searing, burning sensation and leaving holes in every part of my being

Tearing through, exploding into huge, raging flames that slowly burn away all the layers until it reaches the core – my deepest part of my soul

My soul, my being, my entire "me" is oozing pain

I'm so done, I'm crisp and ashes, that I feel that every breath is a struggle and I wish it's my last



I try to extinguish the fire

My first attempts are telling myself that the fire is not there

I know, I try denying that the burning is there and just drag some hidden emergency fire resistance cells and bring them forward because I need to move on

Or at least show people that I am

Slowly but surely, the cells emerge from their membrane, and soon they're burnt to a crisp too

I have no more cells to spare, so I turn to my next method

I try spraying some chemicals – drugs – on the wounds, but I don't realize that I have to cure the initial burning, the root of the flame, and I don't know where to take the strength from

I don't have anything big and strong enough that can stand against this fire, so I secretly spray more and more chemicals on the wound and the wounds get worse and worse, and then even really strong chemicals don't help and the fire rages on

The wounds and burns turn into a third degree

I can't even tolerate it on any level and it's starting to get more and more numb

People intervene but they give me really strong drugs that are not meant for the kind of flame I have raging inside, like a clash of tranquilizers and stimulants at once

I don't know what to do

The fire is raging and burning throughout every fiber of my being, not leaving a muscle or even a hair cell to help me carry on

And when things are burnt out, it's hard to get back, because some things are irreplaceable and gone forever

They leave eternal scars, things like third degree burns

This girl had been through the ringer. She'd gone through early childhood trauma, felt the pains and scars of its aftermath, attempted to soothe and sedate the pain, and had mired herself in even greater despair. She was burned from the raging and violent fire within, and was done and ready to give in.

But as she sat across from me, handing me a paper with these poetic lines, I realized something. She was burning inside with a wild and furious fire, as she described. Her pain, to her, felt as if she didn't "have anything big and strong enough that can stand against this fire." But I told her that I believed there was something.

When a forest fire erupts and turns all the trees and thousands of acres of landscape ablaze, firefighters utilize specific methods to extinguish it. At first, a helicopter will circulate around the areas and drop gallons of water on the fire. However, if the fire has gotten out of control and has torn though acres and acres, firefighters resort to setting up, what they call, a fireline. A fireline is created by lighting fire to the area adjacent to the uncontrolled fire.

This new fire consumes all the vegetation and brush that would serve as fuel for the growing and ongoing wildfire, and thereby chokes it of advancing forward. The surface soil is reduced to mineral soil, so that there remains no available flammable material for the fire to catch onto and progress. This second, new fire also consumes all the oxygen from the raging fire, which cuts off its source of fuel.

Knowing this, it hit me like a ton of bricks. "Your pain is fire," I said to her, "but love is also fire. And you put out fire with fire. If you are in an environment where you are deeply loved and cared for, then the intense fiery emotions of pain you are experiencing will be transformed into passionate and deep love. When that pain will come

into contact with the love you feel inside, with the fireline built within, the pain will be transmuted."

And then I looked at Miriam again. "If you come to my high school, Bnot Chaya Academy, we'll put out your fire of pain with our fire of love. We'll create a fireline of love for you and within you, and when your pain will hit that love, there won't be anything more for it to burn on. You'll be surrounded by so much love that the pain will diminish."

Miriam looked at me, mesmerized and taking it all in. And then I added more.

"The Gemara (*Sukkah* 52b) says that if your *yetzer hara* is agitating and wrestling within you, you should drag him to the *beis midrash*. This is recommended because if you want to douse the fire of the *yetzer hara* and pain in your life, drugs and other superficial pleasures won't work. The fire of Torah will. The fiery love felt when you pray and learn with fervor and passion will create the fireline that will calm your desires and heal your pain in life. At that point, the *yetzer hara* will have nothing to burn on."

Fight fire with fire. It's the most effective way to transform a life of pain into a life of love.



Napoleon and the Jews

Was the diminutive ruler a friend or foe to the Jews?

His name is famous the world over for 19th century imperial conquests, and a complex personality. He was renowned as a "genius" but was loathed for his "despotism."

But did you know that Napoleon's conquests also ushered in an era of unparalleled freedom for the Jews of Western Europe?



Back in the late 1700s, Jews in Italy were segregated and forced to live in ghettos. Jews could leave during the day, but they were forced to wear arm bands or bonnets with an identifying star of David.

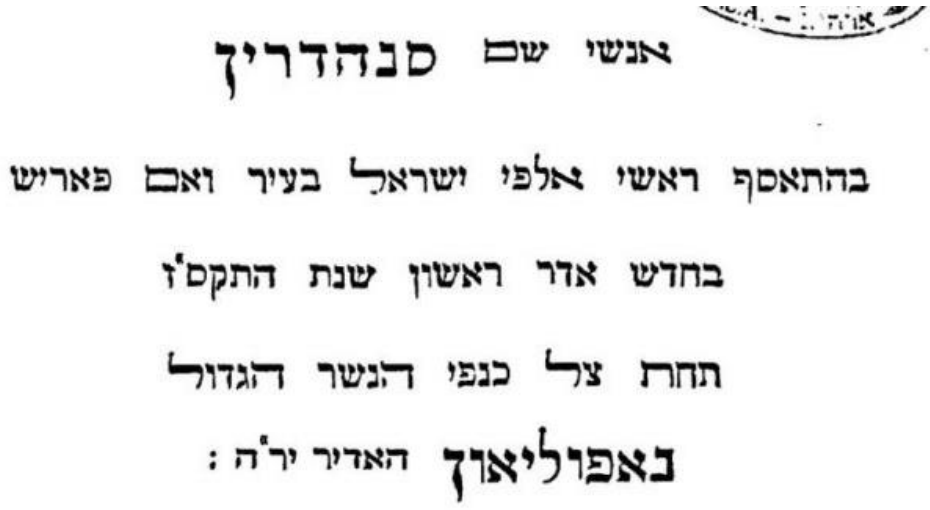
When Napoleon occupied Ancona in central Italy, he saw the anti-Jewish discrimination and ordered to close the ghettos immediately, allowing Jews to live freely and practice Judaism openly. Napoleon immediately ordered that the arm bands and the yellow bonnets be removed and replaced them with the tricolour rosette. He closed the ghettos and gave instructions that the Jews could live wherever they wanted, and they could practice their religion openly. The Jews of Ancona were overjoyed when they discovered that the first French soldiers who entered the ghetto were Jewish! Napoleon also closed the ghettos in Rome and liberated the Jews of Venice, Verona, and Padua.

If European emancipation wasn't enough, some historians believe Napoleon was even ready to give the Jews back their ancestral

homeland of Israel, which at the time was still under Ottoman rule. Napoleon declared: "If I governed a nation of Jews, I should re-establish the Temple of Solomon."

During the different periods of Napoleon's career, his sympathy for the Jews were clearly noted. He did everything he could to assure that the Jews were treated on an equal basis as Catholics and Protestants. It was on the 27th of September 1791 that France adopted a decree which accorded the Jews of France full citizenship.

Napoleon demanded the creation of a religious constitutional codex for Jews to which they would be beholden as they were to the Talmud. He called the new body established in February 1807, "The Great Sanhedrin," and decreed that like its ancient counterpart it have seventy-one members. But unlike in the past, twenty-five of its members would not be clerics.


אנשי שם סנהדרין

בהתאסף ראשי אלפי ישראל בעיר ואם פאריש

בחדש אדר ראשון שנת התקס"ז

תחת צל כנפי הנשר הגדול

נאפוליאון האדיר ירה"

Under the Directory, the synagogues were opened again and Jews got involved in business and in political life. But, in general, the Jews were barely tolerated.

Why was the compact conqueror so benevolent to the Jews?

According to his personal physician Dr. Barry O'Meara, Napoleon was quoted as saying, "*It is my wish that the Jews be treated like brothers as if we were all part of Judaism… I thought that this would bring to France many riches because the Jews are numerous, and they would come in large numbers to our country where they would enjoy more privileges than in any other nation.*"

Many Jews of the time believed that Napoleon was their benefactor. Primo Levi has pointed out that in Italy, some Jews named their sons Napoleone in his honour, and in Germany, when Jews adopted family names, some chose Schöntheil, or Bonaparte in German.

In France, and Italy, Jews wrote Hebrew prayers to praise Napoleon during services and called him "Chelek Tov" in Hebrew or "good portion" (bona-parte), as he abolished ghettos and granted civil rights to Jews, convening a council, which he termed with biblical grandeur the Sanhedrin, Napoleon was admired by Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav and Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Rymanov. Were they all wrong?

When **Shneur Zalman of Ladi**, the then-Lubavicher Rebbe, was asked by his followers in 1812 whether to support Napoleon's incursion to Russia, he responded: "If Napoleon wins, he will grant us freedom and Jews will lose their yiddishkeit; if the Czar wins, he will continue to oppress us, but we will remain Jews; so, support the Czar."

But Napoleon's love for the Jews wasn't so clear cut. In 1808 he issued an Infamous Decree limiting Jewish residence in France and took away many freedoms. Historian Richard Ayrun believed that Napoleon in fact "despised the Jews" and was only using them for his own political advantage. Napoleon has also been quoted as calling Jews "a nasty people, cowardly, and cruel" and also a "most contemptible of people."

The French historian Pierre Birnbaum also sees Napoleon's anti-Semitism, when he likened Jews to "crows" and "locusts ravaging France," as a "deeply regressive turning point."

Bonaparte and the Chassid

The renowned chassid Rabbi Moshe Meisels of Vilna, youngest of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's disciples, once told Rabbi Eisel of Homel: "The aleph of Chassidism saved me from a certain death."

[In his Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi states: "By its very nature, the mind rules the heart." This axiom, known as the "aleph of Chassidism," is a cornerstone of the Chabad-Chassidic approach to life.]

Rabbi Moshe Meisels, an extremely learned man, was fluent in German, Russian, Polish and French. During Napoleon's war on Russia he served as a translator for the French High Command. Rabbi Schneur Zalman had charged him to associate with the French military officials, to attain a position in their service, and to convey all that he learned to the commanders of the Russian army. Within a short while Rabbi Moshe had succeeded in gaining the favour of the chief commanders of Napoleon's army and was privy to their most secret plans.

It was he, Reb Moshe, who saved the Russian arms arsenal in Vilna from the fate which befell the arsenal in Schvintzian. He alerted the Russian commander in charge, and those who tried to blow up the arsenal were caught in the act.

"The High Command of the French army was meeting," related Reb Moshe "and hotly debating the manoeuvres and the arrangement of the flanks for the upcoming battle. The maps were spread on the floor, and the generals were examining the roads and trails, unable to reach a decision. Time was short. Tomorrow, or, at the very latest, the day after, the battle on the environs of Vilna must begin.

"They were still debating when the door flew open with a crash. The guard stationed inside the door was greatly alarmed and drew his revolver. So great was the commotion, that everyone thought that the enemy had burst in in an attempt to capture the French Chief Command...

"But it was Napoleon himself who appeared in the doorway. The Emperor's face was dark with fury. He stormed into the room and raged: 'Has the battle been planned? Have the orders to form the flanks been issued?'

" 'And who is this stranger?!' he continued, pointing to me. In a flash he was at my side. 'You are a spy for Russia!' he thundered and placed his hand upon my chest to feel the pounding heart of a man exposed.

At that moment, the aleph of Chassidism stood me by. My mind commanded my heart to beat not an increment faster. In an unwavering voice I said: 'The commanders of His Highness the Emperor have taken me as their interpreter, as I am knowledgeable in the languages crucial to the carrying out of their duties...' " **[Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn]**

So, was Napoleon a friend or foe?

With Napoleon, there is something worse than despotism, there is a feeling that one can do anything with reality, one can change everything, and with him that was doubtless the most dangerous. He really thought anything was possible; he had an absence of limits in his mind. At the same time, there was a principle of endless adventure, which could only end in catastrophe. A totally positive judgment about Napoleon is absurd and a totally negative view, as some historians have today, is equally absurd.

Whatever his true feelings, Napoleon's actions undeniably made Jewish life a whole lot easier throughout Western Europe. ***Perhaps it's fitting that it is illegal in France to name a pig Napoleon, but that doesn't make it Kosher!***

It states (Tehillim 130:2) **ה' שִׁמְעָה בְקֹולִי תִּהְיֶינָה אָזְנֶיךָ קַשֻּׁבוֹת לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי**, "***Hashem, hearken to my voice; may Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications***."

The Megaleh Amukos (Emor 27) writes that **שִׁמְעָה בְקֹולִי תִּהְיֶינָה** is roshei teivos **שב"ת** implying that on Shabbos, Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens attentively to our tefillos.

SEFAS TAMIM
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Chizuk – Inspiration

In the summer of 1883, the **Chofetz Chaim** published the first volume of his Mishnah Berurah. The Mishnah Berurah is a commentary on the Way of Life (Orach Chaim) section of the Code of Jewish Law (Shulchan Aruch).



Humbly, the Chofetz Chaim himself went from city to city and town to town to promote this publication and as was the custom, would give a speech (Drashah) in each locale he visited.

When he arrived at one city, the Chofetz Chaim saw that the following announcement was tacked to the shul door. "Today, the prolific author, the Chofetz Chaim, will be giving a Drashah on his most recent work, the Mishnah Berurah on the Orach Chaim section of the Shulchan Aruch.

"Seeing this announcement, the Chofetz Chaim promptly took out a pencil from his pocket and amended the advertisement as follows:

"As of now, only the first volume of the Mishnah Berurah - with commentary up to Chapter 128 (Siman 128) of the Orach Chaim - is available."

Without this correction, the Chofetz Chaim was concerned that the announcement implied that the Chofetz Chaim had completed his

Mishna Berurah on all of Orach Chaim when in truth, only part of it was completed.

As written, the advertisement would make him seem more accomplished than he was at the present time – a small untruth that the Chofetz Chaim needed to correct immediately. (**Midvar Sheker Tirchak – by Rabbi Avraham Tuvalski**)

Chizuk – Inspiration

Rabbi **Yechezkel Levenstein (Reb Chatzkel)**, the famed Mashgiach of the Mir and the Ponevezh Yeshiva was very careful to examine his actions and measure his words, to ensure they were true without a hint of falsehood.



Tragically, Reb Chaztkel had a grandson that passed away at a very young age. Reb Chatzkel was distraught and overcome with grief.

Soon after his grandson's passing, he was asked to give the eulogy (Hesped) for **Reb Issac Sher**, the Rosh Yeshiva of Slabodka, for the commemoration of the Shloshim. Reb Chatzkel said he was unable to give the Hesped.

They insisted, "But they already announced that you would be giving the Hesped!" Reb Chatzkel replied, "If I give the Hesped, I will do so in tears, and people will think that I am crying for the Rosh Yeshiva, but the real source of my tears will be due to the recent loss of my grandson. I cannot permit myself to leave this false impression. (Midvar Sheker Tirchak – Rabbi Avraham Tuvalski)

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

כִּי לֹא תִשָּׁכַח מִפִּי זַרְעוֹ ***"For it will not be forgotten by their descendants"*** (31:2)

On the night that the son of the great tzaddik and kabbalist -**Rav Chaim Erlanger**, was to become a bar mitzvah, his father surmmoned him to his study.



The young man entered the study, and his father closed the door behind him, R' Erlanger, with tears in his eyes, turned to his son and said, "My dear son, on this day that you are to become a bar mitzcah. I wish to give you a gift. It is a gift that will remain with you for the rest of your life!"

"What is the gift?" asked the son.

"The gift that I wish to bestow upon you," answered R' Erlanger, "is that from this day on, whenever you perform a mitzvah, you will receive ***double*** credit for each mitzvah you perform. You will receive this reward because I hereby order you to keep the mitzvos. Whenever you keep a mitzvah, you will therefore receive twice as much merit; once for the mitzvah itself and once for fulfilling the mitzva of honouring your father.

For the rest of your life, all of your mitzvos will be doubled!

"***The secret of Vayeilech is movement: never stand still in avodas Hashem.***"

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־יִצְרוֹ ***For I know its inclination*** (31:21)

The Ponevizher Rav, R' Yosef Kahaneman, related the following story: Shortly after his wedding, the **Chofetz Chaim** learned Torah under terrible conditions and dire poverty.

Each morning, the baker would give his wife a loaf of plain bread on credit and at a very inexpensive cost. She would then bring the bread home to the Chofetz Chaim, who would dip it in a glass of tea and eat his breakfast.

One morning, the Chofetz Chaim's wife ran her usual morning errand of getting bread for her husband. But this time the baker retused to give her any, claiming that she had already accrued a large debt.

The Chofetz Chaim's wife returned home empty-handed, and that day she served her husband a glass of tea without his usual bread.

Upon presenting the Chofetz Chaim with his breakfast, she broke out in bitter sobbing.

The Chofetz Chaim sat quietly for some time, but then he began to pound on the table, saying, "Satan! Satan! I know exactly what you want. You would like me to put down my Gemara. I want you to know that I will not listen to you!"

"It is quite obvious," concluded the Ponevizher Rav, "that the Chofetz Chaim did not end up succumbing to his scheming yetzer hara. For what would the Jewish world look like had he succumbed?

There would be no Mishnah Berurah and no sefer Chofetz Chaim! Nor would we have merited being led and educated by his thousands of students who went on to become the leaders of the Jewish people."



Questions & Answers with Rav Avigdor Miller Zt'l

Q ***Is there anything wrong with smoking only one cigarette a day?***

A If you'll give me a contract that it won't be more than one cigarette, I'll agree. But since you cannot give such a contract, you have to know it's the beginning of a career of chain smoking. Eventually that's what happens.



You have to know that in all things there's a principle: The first step is what's most important. Someday I'll talk about that *bli neder*.

The first step! Be careful with that first step!

Let's say you're going somewhere on the street, and somebody starts walking with you and he says, "Come into this place with me," and so you walk in with him. You have to know that the first step you just took is the beginning of a career either upward to Hakodosh Boruch Hu or down to Gehinom. It depends where he's taking you. Just one step!

If you look back, you'll see in your career that somebody persuaded you to take one step in the right direction. One step! And therefore, the first cigarette is the beginning of the end.

"When Moshe could no longer cross the Jordan, he taught a timeless truth: even when our personal journey ends, our mission can continue through those we inspire."





Don't Despair

How often do we forget that everything that occurs in our lives is guided by Hashem for a specific reason? *Gam zu l'tovah*, "This too is for the good" is much more than a positive outlook on life. It should be our only perspective. Everything Hashem does is for a reason, which is often beyond our ability to grasp. Everything Hashem does is good, even though we presently are challenged to uncover that good.

We could fill volumes with stories that underscore this idea. I take the liberty of relating a classic.

A Jew does not despair. He has no right to give up hope, because it is not his to give up on. It all comes from Hashem.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, relates how he spent World War II and its aftermath in the frozen tundra of Siberia. Following the Ribentrop/Molotov treaty, Lithuania remained a free state, until the Russians conquered and took it over. The *yeshivah* students, consisting primarily of Yeshivas Novoradok, were rounded up and placed in cattle cars for the ten-day train journey to Siberia. The Russians did not permit the hapless Jews to exit the train to address

their basic, personal needs. They were locked in like caged animals for ten days.

They spent fifteen years at hard labour in Siberia. These students were very down; having to leave their Torah studies for slave labour in the coldest place on earth. How envious they were of the students who were able to escape from the clutches of the Russian soldiers; until they discovered that they had fallen into the hands of the Germans who forthwith included them in their final solution.

In other words, what they thought was their disaster, was instead their ticket to salvation.

Rav Galinsky relates that when he arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* he was a broken person, all alone in the world, his family having been murdered by the Nazis. He was told to go to speak with the ***Chazon Ish, zl***, to develop some perspective on the past and engender hope for the future.

After pouring out his heart to the saintly *gadol hador*, pre-eminent leader of the generation, the *Chazon Ish* replied, "Do you have a right to despair? Does the world belong to you? The world belongs to Hashem, and as long as He is the *Baalim*, Owner, of the world, you have no right to give up hope."

We place our trust in Him with the knowledge that whatever takes place in our lives is orchestrated by the Almighty for a reason. Giving up is not an option, because we are not in charge; we are not in control.

I close with the invigorating words of the holy ***Klausenberger Rebbe, zl***, who, when asked how, after losing his wife and eleven children, could he go on, replied, "I lost my entire family; I lost everything, but I did not lose Hashem!" This is how we live; this is what engenders within us the courage to move forward.

The *Rebbe* survived the purgatory of the concentration camps, adhering to all *mitzvos* including *kashrus*, eating an apple on *Rosh*

Hashanah night, lighting candles on *Chanukah* and eating fruit on *Tu b'Shvat*. - Never once did he complain to Hashem. Instead, he rebuilt and continued building in America and *Eretz Yisrael*, refusing to give in to despair.

Peninim on The Torah

The *Chazon Ish* writes (*Iggros* 13): "One who merits to acquire *yedios*, knowledge, of Torah, walks among men and (for all intents and purposes) appears to be the same as they are. Veritably, he is an angel who lives among men; his life is one of (spiritual) nobility." Such a person is different; everything about him, his entire demeanour is altered through his devotion to the Torah.

The *menahel*, principal, of a certain school wanted to have one of his students admitted to the famed Ponovezh *Yeshivah*. **The *Ponovezher Rav, zl***, refused to accept him (for his own reasons). As much as the *menahel* tried to convince the *Rav* to reconsider, it was not happening. This boy would not be attending Ponovezh. End of story, until… the family asked ***Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zl***, to intercede on their behalf.



Rav Chaim was all of thirty-five years old at the time. He went to the Ponovezher *Rav* and asked him to accept the boy in his *yeshivah*. He was immediately accepted!

A number of students (and the *menahel*) asked the *Rav* what had precipitated the change of mind. He replied, ***"What could I do? The 'Torah itself' asked me to accept the boy. How could I refuse?"***

The Sar HaTorah, Horav Chaim Kanievsky ZT'L



Rav Chaim was an individual whose entire life was devoted to Torah study. Nothing else mattered, because nothing else existed.

His life was one of *chovos*, debts, obligations, to studying every aspect and nuance of Torah. These *chovos* weighed heavily on his mind. One is astonished at his *seder ha'yom*, the order of his day. Every minute was accounted for; ever minute was dedicated to learning and covering various aspects of Torah.

There are so many stories which relate and describe his total dedication to the Torah. I selected one of many because it captures not only his devotion, but also that of his *Rebbetzin*.

Rav Chaim asked the *Rebbetzin* that whenever she left the apartment, she should lock the door. Many people sought his audience and it disturbed his learning. This was why a specific time was allotted for *Kabbolas Ha'Khal*, when he would listen, speak and offer blessings to those who came to see him.

One time, the *Rebbetzin* forgot to lock the door. *Rav* Chaim noticed that it was unlocked, so he locked it. The *Rebbetzin* returned home and saw that the door was locked. Since she had not locked it originally, she did not have a key to open the door.

It was a sweltering, hot day in Bnei Brak. The *Rebbetzin* began to knock, hoping that her husband would hear and let her in. Twenty minutes of knocking and calling passed until finally *Rav* Chaim opened

the door and said, "The *Rebbetzin* is not home," and promptly closed the door!

The *Rebbetzin* immediately called out, "Chaim, it's me!"

In another incident, one of *Rav* Chaim's neighbours, himself an outstanding *talmid chacham*, observed that *Rav* Chaim was just not himself. He appeared distressed and frustrated. Obviously, such feelings can take a toll on a person's health. The neighbour asked the *Rebbetzin* what was bothering *Rav* Chaim; how could he alleviate some of his distress?

The *Rebbetzin* replied, "My dear *Rav*… two weeks have passed that *Rav* Chaim has been troubled by a question that he has on the *Rambam*, *Hilchos Meilah*. If you can give him an answer, all will be *b'seder*."

Laundry

The grandfather of the ***Chazon Ish's*** grandfather (his great—great grandfather) was the famed *Baal ha Pardes* and *Rav* of Konigsberg. He was a contemporary of the ***Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*** and often corresponded with him and also with ***Horav Yonasan Eibyshutz, zl***.

Shortly before his passing, the members of his community asked him, "Who will be your successor? Who will be our *Rav*?" He instructed them to travel to a certain community and speak with its *Rav* concerning assuming the rabbinic leadership of Konigsberg.

They travelled to this city and, after meeting with the *Rav*, offered him the *rabbanus* of Konigsberg. He then asked, "Is there a *yeshivah* in your community?"

"But of course, a nice *yeshivah* with students who spend their days and nights learning."

He asked a few more questions before agreeing to accept their offer. He insisted, however, that they remain in the city for

Shabbos so that he can address his community and offer the proper leave-taking of them. They agreed to spend *Shabbos*.

Friday morning, the *Rav* summoned them to his house and said, "I have changed my mind. I will not be joining your community."

The men were floored. They thought that everything was settled to each one's satisfaction. "What is wrong?" they asked. "The *Rav* had agreed. Why is his honour changing his mind?"





He explained. "The following morning after I agreed to go with you, I noticed my *Rebbetzin* weeping copious tears. I asked what was wrong. She explained that every week she washes the clothes of the *talmidim*, students, of our *yeshivah*. (In those days it was a strenuous and difficult job, consisting of heating water and scrubbing the clothes in the burning hot water. There were many students in the *yeshivah*. Understandably, she was busy with this every day.)

The heads of the community interjected, "We have a group of women whose job it is to wash the students' clothes. The *Rebbetzin* will not have to trouble herself anymore."

"You do not seem to understand," the *Rav* explained. "This is the *Rebbetzin's* life. With each garment that she washes, dries and smooths out, she partners with the students' learning. This is her Torah learning.

My *Rebbetzin* said, 'If you take this from me, I have no reason to live. Without my partnering with the students in their Torah learning, what value is there to my life?' "How can I deprive my *Rebbetzin* of life?"

The *Chazon Ish* would often relate this story, to show the love for Torah evinced by the previous generations.

The List by R' Elazar Meisels



The first thing we say when we wake up in the morning is **מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיָּם.** The first words out of a Jews mouth are to thank Hashem. Don't just start your day with thank You – finish your day with thank You.

Just take a few moments, and say, "Riboino Shel Olam, I just want to thank You for all the chesed that You did for me today. I've got a job. Boruch Hashem all my kids came home safe today. Boruch Hashem my wife is ok. Boruch Hashem i had what to eat. The plumbing didn't burst. The electricity didn't go down. We didn't have a flood. We didn't have cockroaches. Boruch Hashem my car is still working. Etc, etc, etc

It's so easy to do in 30 seconds or less.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Whenever **Rav Chaim Brim, zt"l**, travelled by a taxi that was driven by a Jewish driver, he always added a Shekel to the fare. He explained that it was his way of indicating to the driver that he was pleased with the trip, and the price that he was charged.

He explained that often, the passenger feels that he is being overcharged, and he pays the fare begrudgingly. By giving an extra Shekel above the stated price, he was showing his satisfaction, and made the driver feel good.

Indeed, one taxi driver was so moved by Rav Chaim Brim's actions, that he returned the fare and kept the tip! He felt the lesson that it imparted was worth far more than the money he would have earned!

Peninim on the Torah

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף... למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו... Gather together the people, the men, the women and the small children… so that they will hear and so that they will learn… and their children who do not know – they shall hear and they shall learn to fear Hashem. *(31:12,13)*

Sforno comments concerning the young children's hearing and learning, "The young children assembled at the time of *Hakhel*, who are too young to be capable of appreciating the words read by the king, will nonetheless sense that something of significance is transpiring. Eventually, they will inquire and learn as they mature, for their curiosity and desire to know will have been aroused."

This explanation illuminates the practical benefit of attending the *Hakhel* for young people. The experience will ultimately cause them to pursue the Torah's teachings when they mature and become

capable of absorbing its lessons. We have no idea what the mind can grasp and what remains indelibly ingrained in one's subconscious.

***Horav Chaim* Zaitchik** says that when a child heard, saw, or experienced something when he was but an infant – a *mah she'hu,* minimal, insignificant amount, remains engraved in his subconscious mind, something which will remain with him, regardless of the environment in which he finds himself.

Once he matures, his subconscious will come to the fore and motivate him to seek clarity concerning what is "bothering" him.

The Torah feels that a spiritual experience can impact the mind of even the youngest child. It is like a seed that germinates and takes hold over time, until it bursts forth as a finished product.

Every opportunity to avail our children of wholesome, spiritual experiences should be embraced.



Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל 31:1

The Torah closes the final chapters of Moshe Rabbeinu's life with the words: "And Moshe went." Where did Moshe go?

The Seforno and Ramban both comment and say that Moshe Rabbeinu went to the Jewish people, either to comfort them on his imminently expected passing, or to ask for their permission to leave them.

Now, we would think that on the last day of his life, Moshe would be totally immersed in Torah, Tefillah, Prishus, etc. Yet, the quintessential leader of our Nation, saw no greater endeavour to busy himself with at this time, than to be mechazek his fellow brethren. In fact, the "book-ends" of Moshe's life as documented in the Torah, are his interactions with people and aiding Klal Yisroel. In Sefer Shemos, all throughout the shibud Mitzrayim and now, with

his parting words of comfort and chizuk. His legacy was our paradigm leader.



As we stand now in the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, this idea is truly something to bear in mind to enable us to be zoche badin.

R' Yisroel Salanter zt"l taught that one of the greatest segulos through which to earn inscription in the sefer hachaim is to be one who benefits others. Thus, he is judged, not on his own, but rather by how much he is needed by others.

I saw the following pshat which complements this machshava. We generally do not mention personal bakashos, supplications, on Shabbos. So, it begs the question - how are we permitted to say **זכרינו לחיים** on Shabbos Shuva?

The Sifsei Tzaddik answers, that the sad fate of the wicked **רשעים** was already sealed on Rosh Hashana. For them it's mamash pikuach nefesh! So we, their fellow brethren, beseech Hashem on their behalf, to have the gezeirah overturned!

In this way, we display the middah of Moshe Rabbeinu which was to be **נושא בעול חבירו**. And just as we all try our utmost to be mechazek others, and benefit them, so too, may **הקב"ה** be **מיטיב** with us and grant us all a Gmar chasima tova b'sifran shel Tzaddikim!

"Vayeilech teaches that every ending contains a beginning. Moshe's farewell was Yehoshua's commissioning, and one generation's sunset became the next generation's dawn."



Haftorah by R' Tzvi Hirch Hoffman

שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ Hoshea 14:2

Hoshea HaNavi opens the Haftorah of Shabbos Shuva with a beautiful message to Klal Yisroel. "Shuva Yisroel!" The Jewish people can indeed return to Hashem and repent their sins. But after a Yom Tov like Rosh Hashanah, when Jews all over the world spend the better part of two days steeped in prayer, is there truly any doubt to the potential for them to do teshuva and return to Hashem?

R' Yaakov Kanievsky remarks that indeed one should never doubt the ability of each member of Klal Yisroel to return to the proper path of Torah and mitzvos. In fact, even those who have spent their time engaged in sin should never think that his cumulative sins might overshadow the few good deeds that he had done.

The Steipler explains that since Jews are required to learn the entire Torah and all its accompanying parts, one can easily begin to believe the fallacy that if he cannot achieve full and total perfection in his avodas Hashem, he should rather give up.

On the contrary, because Jews must strive to achieve it all, every little bit that we do is laudable. When a Jew performs a mitzvah, he is in actuality inching his way closer to perfection and for that alone he is to be commended.

While this ideal may be hard to maintain, indeed after the inspiration of Rosh Hashanah leading up to Yom Kippur, it behooves us to strive for betterment and continue performing mitzvos and advancing ourselves in service to the Almighty. In this zechus, may we all merit a Gmar Chasima Tova.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

I Am Certain that You Can Do It!



"Moshe went and spoke these things to all Israel. He said to them…" (31:1-2)

One day, as a small child, Thomas Edison came home from school and gave a paper to his mother. He said to her "Mom, my teacher gave this paper to me and told me only you are to read it. What does it say?" Her eyes welled with tears as she read the letter out loud to her child … "Your son is a genius. This school is too small for him and doesn't have good enough teachers to train him. Please teach him yourself." Many years after Edison's mother had died, he became one of the greatest inventors of the century. One day he was going through a closet, and he found the folded letter that his old teacher wrote his Mother that day. He opened it … The message written on the letter was "Your son is mentally deficient. We cannot let him attend our school anymore. He is expelled." Edison became emotional reading it and then wrote in his diary:

"Thomas A. Edison was a mentally deficient child whose mother turned him into the genius of the Century."

A positive word of encouragement can help change anyone's destiny.

The **Talmud** (Yoma 86A) quotes Rabbi Levi who said, "Great is repentance, as it reaches the Heavenly throne, as it is stated: 'Return, Israel, to the Lord your G-D'"(Hosea 14:2). This implies that repentance literally reaches Hashem.

In last week's Parsha, Moshe gathered the entire Jewish People before Hashem, to bring them into a covenant with Hashem. The **Torah** (Devarim 29:12) says that if the Jews will remain faithful to Hashem, they will be Hashem's "people" and Hashem will be "their G-D". If the Jews falter and serve other gods, the punishment will be severe. However, when the Jews will repent and return to Hashem, Hashem will welcome them with open arms and shower them with much good.

In this week's Parsha, the **Torah** (Devarim 31:1-2) begins, "Moshe went and spoke these things to all Israel. He said to them…" The **Kli Yakar** asks two questions. The pasuk says that Moshe went. Where did he go? Then the pasuk says that "he spoke". However, the pasuk does not tell us what he said. What did he say?

The **Kli Yakar** says that the word "*vayedaber*", that he "spoke" is a tougher way of talking. On his last day of life, Moshe gave the Jews mussar. Moshe spoke "words of teshuva", telling the Jews to repent and come closer to Hashem. "Moshe went", says the **Kli Yakar**, to every single tent, to every Jewish home, to tell and exhort them to do teshuva. In the previous parsha, Moshe had already told the Jewish People as a whole, about the importance of teshuva. Yet, Moshe felt it was so important, that he repeated the message to each individual family. [I am not aware of any sin that the Jews had done. Therefore, I assume that the discussion about teshuva refers to a future point in time]

The **Ibn Ezra** has a different explanation of what the Torah means by the words, "Moshe went". The **Ibn Ezra** says that Moshe went to every shevet, tribe, to inform them that he was about to die and that they should not be afraid of what the future portended.

The last day of Moshe's life was a very busy one. The consummate leader, he didn't spend the time to take care of his own needs. He wrote 13 sifrei Torah (**Midrash Rabba**). One was placed in the Aron, in the Mishkan. The other 12 were given to each of the 12 shevatim,

ensuring that each tribe would have its own sefer Torah as a guide to follow the proper path in life.

Look at the love and sensitivity that Moshe showed to his people. He knew that he would soon die, and he was busy writing the sifrei Torah. Yet, according to the **Ibn Ezra**, he stopped to think about others and their feelings. How will the Jewish People feel after I die? They may be afraid about what will happen after their leader dies. Let me console them. Moshe took the time to go to each shevet to comfort them.

According to the **Kli Yakar**, Moshe went even further. He didn't just go to each shevet to speak with them. He actually took the time to speak to every individual family. Imagine how valued they felt, getting such personal attention by the greatest leader in history, and only hours before his demise.

We learn from Moshe Rabbeinu's actions the importance of showing sensitivity to others.

The Torah further shows us the importance of showing concern for others. Yehoshua was going to take-over the reins of leadership from Moshe. Numerous times, Yehoshua was encouraged to be "strong and courageous". Moshe called Yehoshua in front of all Israel and said, "Be strong & courageous" (Devarim 31:7). And [Hashem] charged Yehoshua son of Nun: "Be strong and resolute (Devarim 31:23). Twice more in the next few psukim, Hashem again tells Yehoshua, "Be strong and resolute". After Moshe died, Hashem told Yehoshua, "Be strong and resolute" (Yehoshua 1:6).

The **Chidushei HaRim**. (as quoted in Talelei Oros by Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rubin) questions why it was necessary to encourage Yehoshua so many times with the words "Be strong and resolute". Yehoshua had already proven that he was a capable leader when he led the battle against Amalek. The Torah had also testified that Yehoshua was "filled with wisdom".

The **Chidushei HaRim** says that this teaches us an important lesson. No matter how capable a person may be, he can always benefit from words of reassurance and encouragement. Even one as great as Yehoshua could benefit from it.

If even someone as great as Yehoshua could benefit from words of encouragement, how much more so we can also benefit from it. Let's take this lesson to heart and give words of encouragement to our friends, our acquaintances, our students, our families, and especially to our spouses. Our words will not cost us anything. The benefits will be endless, for others as well as for ourselves.

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

The trop, or cantillation marks, which go along with the words of the Torah and direct us how to pronounce and actually sing the words, each have names. Commentaries like the **Vilna Gaon** famously used the trop to add insight to a number of verses, and there is one in Parshas Vayelech from which can learn.

Our Sages tell us that when a person sins and repeats it, it becomes as if it is permitted to him. In other words, the more he does it, the more insensitive he grows toward the transgression.

We also have the concept of chazaka, that when something happens three times, it changes from happenstance to intentional and permanent.

In Devarim 31:16 the Torah speaks of one who serves other gods. The next posuk says, **וְחָרָה אַפִּי בּוֹ בַיּוֹם־הַהוּא וַעֲזַבְתִּים** "My anger will flare against him on that day, and I will abandon him."

The trop marks on these words are, "munach, munach, munach, t'lisha gedola, gershayim." Munach means to place down or leave something at rest. Three times, G-d will not take action. After that, when it becomes "permanent," there is T'lisha gedola, a big separation, and then gershayim, which means to send away.

Once a person sins so much that it becomes normal behaviour, Hashem breaks with him. The way to correct that is to come closer to G-d four times, so that it becomes normal for him to be close.

Perhaps this is one reason why there must be a minimum of four days of selichos, supplications of asking forgiveness, prior to Rosh HaShana, so his connection to G-d is once again permanent.

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface by R' Shmuel Winzelberg



Shabbos Shuvah is one of the few Parshios in the Torah where the Haftorah is not linked directly to the Parshah but rather to the calendar. The reason the Shabbos is called Shabbos Shuvah is because we read the Haftorah that begins 'Shuvah Yisroel'.

The Sh'lah Ha'kadosh refers to the Shabbos that is between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as Shabbos Teshuvah. The word **תשובה** hints five things to us: **תַּענית , שַׂק , בְּכיות, הֶספד, וְצדקה** , Fasting, wearing sackcloth, crying, eulogizing, and giving Tzedakah.

We can accomplish all these five things on any of the weekdays of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, however, on Shabbos when we cannot do any of these things, we must do an internal Teshuvah (**תשובה פנימית**), and Teshuvah within our hearts (**תשובה שבלב**). (Parperaos LaTorah)

The Siddur Speaks

Rav Elya Lopian, zt"l, frequently urged his students to Daven with devotion. He said, "Heartfelt Tefilos can rip open the Heavens, especially if accompanied by tears."

He would quote the Sefer Chasidim which says, "Hashem answers the requests of some individuals solely due to the intensity of their Tefilos and the copious amount of tears they shed. Even though they might not possess any merits or good deeds, Hashem accepts their Tefilos and fulfils their desires."

Rav Simchah Bunim of Peshis'cha, zt"l, writes that one is mistaken if he thinks that in order to Daven he must wrap himself in a Tallis and seclude himself. This is not so. Tefilah is not bound by time or place. One can pour out his heart to Hashem with devotion and fervour whenever he chooses, and wherever he is.

Wherever a person might find himself, providing it is a clean place, he may pour his out heart to Hashem, because Hashem is always there, and He always listens!

Shabbos Shuvo

The Sheloh Hakodosh explains: The reason why Shabbos was selected as a day of repentance and was given the name Shabbos Teshuvoh (Repentance), is based on the fact that the initials of the Hebrew word "Teshuvoh" represent the following categories:

Taanis (Fasting), Sack (Sack cloth), Bechioh (Crying), Hesped (Eulogy), UTzedokoh (And Charity). All of this is not applicable to Shabbos, for one is exempt from all of these activities on the Day of Rest. (Sheloh)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Dovid Shlossberg, one of the Talmidim of **Rav Elya Lopian, zt"l**, observed about his Rebbe, "In Zichron Yaakov, in Eretz Yisroel during the 1950's, people would see how the swarms of black swamp flies would never go near Reb Elya. The students were astounded about this, because at times, these flies would invade every inch of the Yeshivah.

Rav Elya explained, 'Chazal teach us that the Yetzer Hara is compared to a fly. When you chase a fly from your hand, it flies onto your head, and when you wave it away from your head, it returns to your hand.



It appears to me, that the nature of a fly is such that if a hand is clean and dry, the fly has nothing to do there and will continue on its way. If, however, there is some moisture or dirt on the hand, the fly will remain to pick all around it.

It is the same with the Yetzer Hara. If you do not give in to it in any way, it finds nothing interesting in you, just as a fly finds no reason to remain on a clean and dry hand. The Yetzer Hara will then leave you to search for a more rewarding victim to bother!'"

"A Sefer Torah is not merely placed in the Aron; it is meant to be placed in the heart. The words endure only when they are carried within us."

Working on our Middos

Most people wear a watch on their left hand, so that it's easy to adjust with the right hand, if they are righthanded. However, **Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, zt"l**, would always wear his watch on his right hand, even though he was right-handed.

Once, he was asked why he did that, and he responded, "I do it so that I do not insult people. Sometimes, you can be speaking in public, and somebody looks at his watch. What does that make the one who is speaking think? He thinks that his words aren't interesting to him, even though he may be looking at his watch for another reason entirely.



Sometimes looking at your watch can insult someone who is talking to you, as he's likely to think that you're waiting for him to stop talking. Therefore, I wear my watch on my right wrist, with the face turned inwards towards my body. That way, I can look at my watch without insulting the person who is talking to me, not even in the slightest!"

Rav Eliyahu also said that doing this also gave him an extra minute every day, when he would normally have to move the watch from his left hand to his right hand before Davening, when it was time to put on his Tefilin.

Even such a short amount of time could add up to a long time over a long period, and that time could be used to do more important things!

Working on our Middos

The Talmidim of **Rav Chaim Friedlander, zt"l**, noticed that he had a warm smile on his face, even when he spoke with someone on the phone. A student once asked him, "Rebbe, the person on the other end of the line can't see your smile. Why do you bother to smile when you speak with him?"

Rav Friedlander responded, "Even though the listener may not be able to see my smile, he can certainly ***hear*** my smile."

He explained that a happy expression on one's face when he speaks on the phone will be heard through his voice!

SEFAS TAMIM
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Rav Avrohom Genechovsky ZT"L (1936-2012) was the Rosh Yeshiva at the Tchebiner Yeshiva, Kochav M'Yaakov, in Yerushalayim. There was a period of time in which he had undergone eye surgery. During his convalescence, he continued his Torah study with great Mesiras Nefesh and he highly valued the Talmudic insights that he had originated during this time - they were quite precious to him. And now, he was ready to present these ideas that he had carefully formulated to his precious students. During the presentation, one of his students posed a question: "But Rebbe, doesn't the Baalei HaTosfos in the tractate that we had studied two years ago contradict what you are saying?"

Rav Genechovsky thought about the question and responded, "You are correct. I am mistaken." When he went home, he told his study partner, "Come, let us erase all of my beloved Chiddushim [original Talmudic insights] that I had thought to be correct. Do not,

however, think that I am saddened that these insights have been proven wrong. I am actually quite happy, for I have seen the truth, and finding out the truth about my Talmudic interpretations makes me the very happiest I can be!"

Peninim on the Torah



Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl (Mashgiach Kaminetz), once travelled to the United States on a fund-raising mission. One of his would-be donors owned a large factory in which he had hundreds of workers working throughout three daily shifts. The man was very proud of his success, and he insisted that *Rav* Moshe Aharon visit him in the factory. He would make it worth his while. The *Mashgiach* was not keen on the idea. It would involve precious time, which he did not have. In the past, this man, however, had been very generous to the *yeshivah*.

As he walked through the factory and saw the hundreds working at various stations, he thought to himself, "There is not a single Jew in this place. Surely, Hashem had me come here for a reason. What could it be?"

When he met the owner in his office, he asked him whether anyone working for him was Jewish. The owner replied that one of the secretaries in the office was Jewish by birth, but did not practice anything. She knew absolutely nothing regarding the religion of her birth. *Rav* Moshe Aharon asked to speak with her. The young lady acquiesced. After all, how often does one meet a distinguished rabbi from the Holy Land?

She entered the office, and, after the usual introductions, the *Mashgiach* asked her, "Do you wash your hands every day?" "Of course, I wash up every morning when I wake up."

"Would it be an imposition to request that you wash with a cup, and, after you have poured water three times on each hand, you recite the verse, "Hear o Israel, Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is one" (*Shema Yisrael*)?

"Sure, I guess I can do that."

End of story? No. The secretary was an intelligent young woman who had to know why she was doing this. She went on the computer and read up about *netillas yadaim*. This led to her need to satisfy her curiosity about Judaism and *mitzvos*. She slowly became observant, married a *ben Torah*, and raised a beautiful family.

All of this due to *zikui ha'rabim*. One never knows.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



After the **Chozeh of Lublin, zt"l**, passed away, his son, Rav Yosef, travelled to Lublin to receive his portion of the inheritance. The Chozeh left him his silken garment, a belt, and a wall clock.

On Rav Yosef's trip home from Lublin, the weather turned inclement. The wind blew fiercely, and the rain came down in torrents, making it impossible to travel the dirt roads. Rav Yosef had no choice but to stop off for a while in the village he was passing through, and wait until the weather cleared before resuming his journey.

He entered the town and found a home with a Mezuzah on the door, where he knocked and was invited inside to get out of the rain. When the weather improved, Rav Yosef wanted to repay the Jew who had hosted him, for his kindness. He showed his host the garment, the belt, and the clock. He said, "I don't have any money, but I can offer you one of these items. They belonged to my saintly father, the Chozeh of Lublin. Please accept one of these holy items as a gift." The villager chose the clock.

Some time later, **Rav Ber of Radoshitz, zt"l**, happened to spend the night at this same villager's house. The villager put him up in the room where the clock that had once belonged to the Chozeh of Lublin now hung.

In the morning, Rav Ber asked the villager how he had gotten that clock. When the villager explained where it was from, Rav Ber smiled and nodded. "When I heard the ticking of the clock," he said, "I immediately knew it had belonged to the Chozeh of Lublin.

The ticking of ordinary clocks informs one that the hour of his death is approaching, but the Chozeh's clock ticks the joyous message that the arrival of Moshiach is drawing closer!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The Divrei Shmuel of Slonim, zt"l, taught that one method of attaining tranquillity in life is to learn Torah, because Torah brings joy and happiness to its students. He said, "When I'm worried about something, I learn for an hour, and the worry goes away. If I have greater concerns, I learn for two hours, and then I am not worried anymore. And if I am going through extremely difficult times, I learn for three hours straight, and then nothing can disturb me. This is the meaning of the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (6:6), that one attains tranquillity through learning Torah."



A father was sending his son off to learn in Yeshivah. He wanted his son to start off the Z'man well, so he asked his former Rebbe, **Rav Avraham Genichovsky, zt"l**, to speak with his son, and give him Chizuk and encouragement to help him learn Torah diligently. Rav Avraham told the Bachur a Mashal.

There was a king who was once taking a walk in the forest near his palace, together with his aide and three ministers. The king became very thirsty, and the aide immediately went to get some water. The aide returned to the palace, filled a large, crystal glass with water, placed it on a diamond-studded tray, and headed back to the forest.

As he was rushing through the forest, he tripped. The water spilled, and the tray fell into a pit. The aide quickly went back to get another glass of water. After the king quenched his thirst and thanked his aide for his diligence, he asked his ministers for some advice.

"What can be done to retrieve the precious tray from the pit? The pit is very narrow, so climbing inside isn't an option." The first minister said, "We can widen the pit and then climb inside and take the tray out." The second adviser didn't agree. He said, "We may break the tray while digging. It's also possible that the tray will fall deeper into the pit as we dig. I suggest we dig another pit, next to it. Then we can burrow through, and get to the tray." The third advisor said, "That's a very expensive undertaking, and it will also take a lot of time. I recommend pouring water into the pit. The tray will float, and then we can take it out easily."

Rav Avraham Genichovsky explained to the Bachur that everyone suffers from something in this world. It's impossible to pass through this world without problems. However, there are methods that can

help us overcome the stresses of life, and this will bring us peace of mind. But often, these techniques can cause more problems than good. Even when the attempts work and are successful, the effort is tremendous.

There is one fool proof way to obtain tranquillity in this world, and that is to learn Torah. Torah is compared to water. When one is immersed in Torah, nothing will disturb him. One can then pass through all tests and come out unscathed, as he will be immersed in the joyous study of Torah!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

The Chofetz Chaim says a mashul (about himself).

There was a Yid who thought that he was going to change the world. He decided to go to the big city and speak in the main shul and give everybody mussar. The people said," Ah, you are a maggid, and you are after money to speak. Here, take some money and go and speak some other place - go!"

'Ok, maybe the city is too big, and they don't speak the same language as me. Maybe I will go to a town where they will be more receptive.'

When he went to the town, he got the same treatment – they didn't want to know him.

'Ok, maybe I need to go to a smaller village like where I come from.

When he asked to speak, they told him to go back to his own village where he came from.

He thought to himself, "Maybe I should start trying to improve my own ways before I attempt to fix other people. And this will eventually have repercussions on the whole world. The more I perfect myself, the more effect it will have on the whole of Klall Yisrael."



I once heard from my Rebbe – **Rabbi Chaim Kaufman Zt'l** : In the Zemer **כִּי אֶשְׁמְרָה שַׁבָּת אֲכַבֵּס בּוֹ לִבִּי** we say **אַל-יִשְׁמֵרֵנִי כְּבוֹרִית** 'I will cleanse my heart from stain, ***like*** soap.' Really it should say **בְּבוֹרִית** - '***with*** soap.'

He says that pshat is that '*I will cleanse my heart so clean, that it will be able to clean others like a bar of soap*!'

I hope to become so clean and pure and connected to The Ribboino Shel Olam, that it will have a cleansing effect on others!

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

It is known that the **Baal HaTanya** was once imprisoned, and after fifty-three days, with Hashem's kindness, he was released from jail on the 19th of Kislev.

Sometime afterward, people tried to convince the government to imprison the Baal HaTanya again. The Baal HaTanya heard about this, and this caused him immense distress.

Reb Shmuel Minkas wanted to lighten the Baal HaTanya's mood, so he suspended himself from a rope outside the beis medresh. It was an unusual sight, and people came to watch.

"Why is Reb Shmuel hanging outside the beis medresh?" they wondered.

When the Baal HaTanya walked out of his beis medresh, he looked up and asked, "Reb Shmuel! What are you doing there?"

He replied, "Craftsmen hang samples of their products outside their shop, so people should know what is being manufactured inside. A

cobbler hangs a shoe outside his store; a tailor hangs a suit outside his store, and so on. In this beis medresh, the Rebbe produces chasidim. I am hanging here as an example, so people who pass by will know what is manufactured here."

The plan succeeded. The Baal HaTanya laughed and got back to himself. The Baal HaTanya's joy helped to sweeten the dinim, and he was saved from the hands of those who attempted to harm him.

Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* had just returned from a fund-raising trip in chutz l'aretz, and the money he raised was wrapped up together, but he couldn't find it. His family frantically searched all over the home for the package of money while Reb Zalman Brizel danced and sang.

His family asked him, "Why are you so happy? Did you find the money?"

"No," he replied. "I didn't find the money yet, but I decided that I lost my money, should I also lose my mind from despair?!"

Pearls of Wisdom…*A Word for the Ages*

Once, a merchant from Warsaw became very wealthy as the result of a Brachah from **Rav Yaakov Aryeh of Radzimin, zt"l**. To show his gratitude, he travelled to the Tzadik every month, and he would always give him five golden rubles.

One day he said to himself, "The Rebbe gives the money I bring him directly to the poor. The Rebbe is so holy that he doesn't even understand the value of what I am giving him. Why should I waste my money?"

The next time he visited the Rebbe, he gave him five silver rubles. The Rebbe looked at the coins and said, "You usually give me red coins, and these are white."

The merchant asked, "What difference does it make whether the coins are red or white?"

The Rebbe replied, "It makes no difference at all to me, but I see that the poor people are happier when I give them red coins. We both know that it makes no difference, but why not make them happy?"



The Belzer Rebbe, Horav Aharon Rokeach זצ"ל , was able to escape during WWII and come to Eretz Yisroel. When he got there, a chassid noticed that the Rebbe's coat was torn and all patched up. He decided to have a new coat tailored for the Rebbe.

However, the Rebbe refused because he said that he cannot get a new coat when there are Jewish people being killed.

The Power of the Rav's Tears by Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

A seventy-year-old man came to the Rosh Yeshiva of a baal teshuvah yeshiva and said he wanted to do teshuvah. The Rosh Yeshiva asked him why he wanted to do teshuvah at this point in his life. (It isn't common for people to do teshuvah and to totally change their life around at that age.)

The man explained that his father was burned in Auschwitz, and his mother became irreligious. She sent him to an orphanage, which **Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponovitzer Rav zt'l** ran. When she visited the orphanage and discovered it was a religious institute, she immediately took her son back home to Tel Aviv.

The next time the Ponovizher Rav visited the orphanage, he noticed that one of the children was missing. The staff told him what happened. The Rav immediately went to the woman's home in Tel Aviv. It was Friday afternoon, but his pain from losing a Jewish child was so great that he couldn't push it off. When the mother saw the Rav, she said, "If you came to convince me to return our son to the orphanage, I want you to know that there is nothing to talk about! I was in Auschwitz..." and she told him that she abandoned Yiddishkeit.

The Ponovizher Rav didn't respond – he just sat there and cried. When this son turned seventy, he came to the Rosh Yeshiva of the baal teshuvah yeshiva and said, "The Rav's tears chased me for sixty years, and that's why I am here today to do teshuvah."

* * *

There was an outstanding student learning in Gur, and the Rosh Yeshiva, **the Pnei Menachem zt'l** (Rabbi Pinchos Menachem Alter of Ger, 1926-1996), enjoyed speaking with him in learning. The boy's father visited the Pnei Menachem to ask about his son's progress. The Pnei Menachem replied, "He's doing well. He learns well," but didn't elaborate. He didn't tell him how special his son was. Soon after, the father returned to the Pnei Menachem and asked why he gave him such a cold report. "The students of the yeshiva told me that you enjoy speaking with my son in learning, and you talk with him all the time. So why didn't you give me a more enthusiastic report when I asked about my son?"

The Pnei Menachem explained, "Parents have to daven for their children, and I didn't want to take that away from you. If I had praised your son, you would feel confident that everything is fine, and you would stop davening for your son's success, which would be a great loss."

The Pnei Menachem added, "I was born from my parent's second marriage. My mother had children of her own before she married my

father, the **Imrei Emes** (Rabbi Avrohom Mordechai Alter, 1865-1948).

Once, she cried before her husband, the Imrei Emes, that one of her sons was called for the army draft. The Imrei Emes replied with a brachah, "May Hashem help." He davened but didn't tell her she had nothing to worry about and that her son won't be drafted. "My mother went to her mother and told her how worried she was about her son. Her mother was the sister of the Imrei Emes. So, she went to the Imrei Emes and asked him about her grandson. The Imrei Emes replied, 'Don't worry. He won't be drafted.' When he gave this havtachah (promise), everyone calmed down, and baruch Hashem, there was a salvation. "My mother asked the Imrei Emes, 'If you knew my son wouldn't be drafted, why didn't you tell me? I was so worried.' "

The Imrei Emes replied, 'A mother must daven. I knew there would be a yeshuah (salvation), but your tears were needed. If you had known for sure that everything would be okay, you would stop davening and crying, and your tears were needed for the yeshuah!'" The Pnei Menachem turned to the father, "This is why I didn't elaborate on your son's success. I didn't want you to feel that everything is perfect. A parent must daven."

The Chofetz Chaim once said before a large crowd, "In our generation, anyone who has a mouth must use it to give chizuk to others."

כִּי הָאָדָם֙ יִרְאֶ֣ה לָעֵינַ֔יִם וַה' יִרְאֶ֖ה לַלֵּבָֽב

"Man looks at the external appearance, but Hashem looks at the heart." ~ Samuel I, 16:7

L'Maaseh

Someone once went to **Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l** panicking as he had just visited a 'mekubel' who predicted that his wife would die within a very short time. Although ruach ha'kadosh is something very real, R' Moshe assured the man that this so called 'mekubel' was a phony.

He explained that R' Pinchas ben Yair teaches us there are steps leading to ruach ha'kodesh, beginning with Torah which leads to zehirus, moving onto zerizus, then several steps later ending with kedusha and ruach ha'kodesh. These steps are the basis of the Mesilas Yesharim, the Ramchal's classic mussar sefer.

R' Moshe explained that in order to reach the final level of ruach ha'kodesh, one must work his way through all the others first and it is clear that a man who could scare and shock someone with such tragic news as if it is a matter of fact, never worked his way through the rest of the sefer!

Sparks Of Shabbos

HaRav Shimshon Pinkus notes that unlike the yomim tovim, there is no mitzvah per se which is unique to Shabbos. The reason for this is because while on other yoim tovim we have to acquire our madreigah of closeness to Hashem through shofar, lulav, matzah, etc., Shabbos is called a gift and is given to us freely, without any need for our efforts; all we need to do is be ready to receive it.

The posuk teaches that for 6 days you shall work and rest on the seventh. **The Gra** explains that these 6 days are the 6 yomim tovim (by Torah law) on which one may cook, and on the 7th, which is Shabbos, there is complete rest.

Rav Pinkus offers a slightly different approach, that on these 6 days of yom tov, you shall work in avodas Hashem in order to be able to receive the kedusha of the yom tov, but on Shabbos, you shall rest

as there is no need to do anything to acquire the levels offered by Shabbos.

The 1190 Massacre At Clifford's Tower



Throughout history the world's Jewish population have been subjected to some of the most hateful treatment imaginable, from slavery in the Ancient world to the Spanish Inquisition to the Holocaust, and over eight centuries since the massacre in York, it's important to remember that treatment has also been a part of Britain's long history.

York's Jewish community was the victim of the bloodiest outbreaks of anti-semitism in the twelfth century. In those days the Jews were well-established alongside the merchant classes, to whom they provided financial services.

However, following the death of Henry II in 1189, the protector of the Jews, and the coronation of his infamous eldest son - Richard I, "the Lionheart", anti-Jewish riots struck, and crusade fever swept the country, bringing with it a rise in anti-Semitism.

One of the worst anti-Semitic massacres of the Middle Ages took place in York on March 16th 1190. Friday 16 March coincided with

Shabbos Hagadol, the 'Great Shabbos' before the Jewish festival of Pesach.

The city's entire Jewish community was trapped by an angry mob inside the tower of York Castle. Many members of the community chose to commit suicide rather than be murdered or forcibly baptised by the attackers. This marks the darkest chapter in the history of York's Jewish community.

The event was recorded in a Hebrew account written by Ephraim of Bonn, The victims included Josce, R. Yom Tov, and the tosafist Elijah of York. A poignant elegy on the massacre was composed by Joseph b. Asher of Chartres.



An anti-Semitic portrayal of Jewish money-lenders from a 13th-century manuscript. In England, Jews had been welcome since William the Conqueror (William I) invited them to live and work in his kingdom in England in the 11th century. Christians were forbidden from making a profit as moneylenders whereas Jews were not, and because their profession made them rich they were heavily taxed by the crown in exchange for the king's protection. (Notice the pointed hats that the Jews were later forced to wear and the depiction of gargantuan hooked noses!)

After the Norman Conquest of 1066, a number of Jews came to England from Rouen in France. The early Norman kings needed to borrow money to build castles and secure their kingdom, but money-lending was forbidden to Christians. It was, however, permitted to Jews. These French-speaking Jews were protected by the Crown, and in time established communities in most of the principal cities of England. In the later 12th century, members of the Jewish community in Lincoln settled in York.

However, there was growing hostility towards the Jewish population in England. This was in part due to public disagreements in theology between Jewish scholars and Christian churchmen. In the mid-12th century several vicious stories were spread accusing Jews of murdering Christian children. Such slanders, now known as the 'Blood Libel', strengthened anti-Semitic sentiment in England.



A reconstruction of York Castle with a timber tower on its motte, as it may have looked from the late 11th century until 1190

The events of 1190 are recorded in numerous accounts, though none were eye-witness reports and most show strong prejudice against the Jews. The story recorded by the chronicler William of Newburgh some 20 years later, described the rioters as York acting *"without any scruple of Christian conscientiousness"* in wiping

out the Jewish community. He tells of two Jewish citizens from York, called Benedict and Josces. Together they travelled to London to attend the coronation of Richard I in 1189. It is likely that the noted Aaron of York or Aaron fil Josce, the financier and chief rabbi of England was Josce's son.

Anti-Semitic feeling was running high throughout western Europe in the twelfth century, stoked by the Christian fervour of the Crusades, that directed aggression against Jews across England, France and Germany, as well as against Muslims in the Holy Land.

England's new king Richard I was about to set off on Crusade himself. Rioting had spread throughout England since prominent Jews, including Benedict of York, had been denied entry to King Richard I's coronation banquet in 1189. Benedict was the wealthiest Jew of York and he was mortally wounded in the rioting at Westminster.

Resentment about the presence of Jews at the coronation was fuelled by anger about taxes to fund the Crusades, leading to riots at the ceremony itself and in Norwich, Stamford, York and Lincoln.

The Jews were officially protected by the king as his feudal vassals. However, a rumour that Richard had ordered the expulsion of the Jews spread across the country like wildfire, and soon mobs of Christians were rioting against their Jewish neighbours with what they believed to be the king's permission to commit acts of anti-Semitic violence.

The rioters, meanwhile, were egged on by members of the local gentry called Richard Malebisse, William Percy, Marmeduke Darell and Philip de Fauconberg. These men saw the riots as an opportunity to wipe out the extensive debts they owed to Jewish money-lenders in the city.

These men had borrowed heavily from Jewish money-lenders but had failed to secure lucrative royal appointments and so could not

afford to repay their debts. Indeed, after the massacre they proceeded to burn the records of their debts held in the Minster, so absolving themselves from repayment to the king, who would acquire the property and debts owed to the murdered Jews.



TRAPPED IN THE TOWER

He raised a mob to attack the property of an agent of Aaron of Lincoln that soon grew out of control, claiming the lives of Benedict of York's widow and children when an attempt was made to loot and burn their house, with some reports suggesting their home was set alight while they were still inside.

Joceus managed to escape a similar attack. Understandably frightened by what had happened, Josce of York rounded up as many of the city's Jewish families as he could and led them to the castle, where they barricaded themselves inside the wooden keep to seek protection from 'the keeper of the King's tower' inside the castle, almost certainly the site of the present Clifford's Tower.

The Jews in the keep, fearing treachery, locked out the royal constable, who then demanded the castle be captured by force.The angry mob surrounded them and demanded they be forcibly baptised.

The sheriff's troops were called but for three days both the mob and the Jews, who were running out of food and water, refused to stand down. With the promise of their guaranteed safety should they leave the keep and agree to be baptised, the Jewish families were faced with a difficult decision. Would a mob that had already killed one Jewish family stay true to their word and, if so, were they willing to forsake their own faith for someone else's?

Most of the trapped Jews, forced to choose between certain death and enforced conversion to Christianity, decided at the instigation of Rabbi Yomtov of Joigny who was among them to take their own lives within the walls of the keep. They first set fire to their possessions, and then, as the flames spread through the tower's timbers, in order to save their souls from the mortal sin of suicide, the father of each family slit the throat of his wife and their children before being killed by Rabbi Yomtov himself, leaving the rabbi alone to take his own life and set fire to the keep so that their bodies could not be mutilated by the mob.

"There was [among them] a certain old man, a most famous Doctor of the Law, … honoured by all and obeyed by all as if he had been one of the prophets. When therefore he was asked his advice on that occasion, he replied: '… We ought to prefer a most glorious death… If we fall into the hands of the enemy we shall die at their will and amidst their jeers. And so since the life which the Creator gave us, He now demands back from us, let us willingly and devoutly render it up to Him with our own hands."

The alternatives were to renounce their faith and surrender to forced baptism or death at the hands of the mob.

Those who opted to face the crowd and managed to survive the fire, left what remained of the keep at daybreak and appealed for Christian mercy in return for baptism. They did not receive it. The mob slaughtered them before they marched to York Minster, where

the records of debts were kept, and compelled the guards to hand them over so they too could be burned.

It is not clear how many Jews were present – estimates range from 20 to 40 families, and a later account in Hebrew suggests about 150 people.

The blackened remains of the fire were uncovered in excavations at Clifford's Tower in the 20th century. From the ashes of that fire the present stone keep of Clifford's Tower was constructed.

The events at York were an affront to the dignity and authority of King Richard and so a royal inquest was held soon afterwards. This resulted in the city receiving a heavy fine, but by that time the instigators had escaped and no individuals were ever punished for the crimes committed on that fateful night. Probably some of them joined the King himself on crusade, as he was by then en route to the Holy Land through France.

The triggers for the massacre were many. The calls to crusade in the Holy Land made many Christians sensitive to the presence of non-Christians in England. These feelings may have been heightened by the approaching celebrations for Easter, when the Church preached that the Jews had connived at the death of J---s. Some rioters also saw the possibility of clearing themselves of debts to the Jews.

The massacre of 1190 was a horrific catalogue of violence and murder driven by religious intolerance and the greed of those who owed the leading Jewish money-lenders money. And it was sadly only one of countless incidents of mob-violence against Jewish communities across England and Western Europe in the Middle Ages.

Jews had only arrived in England for the first time in about 1070, with William the Conqueror. And despite the horrors of 1190, Jews did not abandon York altogether in the following 100 years. The best

known of their number, Aaron of York, served as the leader of the English Jewish Community from 1236 to 1243.



The present stone tower was built 60 years after the massacre, but it's possible that the earth mound may still contain evidence from 1190. A new Jewish community was quickly established in York. In 1218 Henry III, Richard I's nephew, proclaimed the Edict of the Badge, a royal decree requiring England's Jews to wear a marking badge similar to the marks European Jews over the age of six were forced to wear in Nazi-occupied areas during the Second World War, and twelve years later it was followed by the Edict of Expulsion on the 18th July 1290, when Edward I expelled all Jews from England.

For almost four centuries Jews were not permitted to return to England until Oliver Cromwell overturned the edict and sanctioned the readmission of Jews to England in 1657.[Cromwell saw that the return of the Jews would bring great financial benefits to England!]

In 1664, after the restoration of the monarchy, Charles II granted Jews religious toleration. By the end of the century, there were around 600-700 Jews living in London, mostly Sephardi. They were soon joined by an embryonic Ashkenazi community.

A handful of Jews came to the north, and more arrived in the late 1800s, setting up a synagogue above a carpentry shop.



The "Jewbury" stone set into the York city walls .

The Aldwark Synagogue served York's Jewish community from 1886 until 1975. However at that point the community declined and became affiliated to Leeds United Hebrew Congregation for the purposes of religious services and burial rights. However according to the 2001 census the Jewish population of the city numbered nearly 200.

In the city walls, there is a little blue Star of David, with the word "Jewbury," set into the stone walkway. It points toward the parking area of a supermarket just below us.

When we walk down to the parking lot, we see a street sign marked "Jewbury" and a plaque that records that this was "the location of the ancient Jewish cemetery of York," which was used from 1177 until 1290.

In 1984, when the supermarket was being built, and the cemetery paved over, some of the remains were dug up and transported for burial in Manchester, to the south.That same night, York Minster was hit by lightning.

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה

"As long as life remains, duty remains. Moshe's final day was filled with action, teaching, encouragement and responsibility." ~ Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch.

What You Need to Succeed

The Ribbono Shel Olam gives a person what that person needs to succeed, and success means being able to attain Olam Haba. It might be riches and it might be poverty.

The Chazon Ish says that *bitachon* doesn't mean that people should have faith that they will get whatever they hope for; rather, they should have faith that they will get that which is best for them.

A person can have complete faith that Hashem will send him riches, and never get it, because that's not what *bitachon* means.

Believe and trust and be sure that Hashem will send you that which is best for you to reach the ultimate goal, and have ultimate success, whether or not you understand it.

At the end, you will. ~ **R' Zev Leff**.

Va'ani Tefillah

עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל –*It is our duty to praise the Master of All.*

Aleinu should be recited while one is standing. It is a testament to Hashem's greatness. Witnesses who testify must do so while standing. One should recite *Aleinu* amid great joy. Indeed, it was Yehoshua's joy during his recitation of *Aleinu* (which he authored) that catalysed the collapse of Yericho's walls.

One should not recite *Aleinu* on the run, as he is leaving *shul*. Furthermore, he should not leave *shul* until he has recited *Aleinu*. The ***Arizal*** did not remove his *Tallis* and *Tefillin* until after he had concluded *Aleinu*.

The *Kaf HaChaim* (10:43) writes of the intense pain in his soul when he observed *yeshivah* students remove their *Tefillin* prior to *Aleinu*.

While this is all written from a practical perspective, due to the exemplary praise of Hashem within the words of *Aleinu*, the *Mekubalim*, Kabbalists, state that the esoteric meaning and benefits of *Aleinu* are compelling.

The *poskim* debate whether one is to bow when he says the words, *Va'anachnu korim u'mishtachavim;* "and we bend and bow."

The *Shlah HaKadosh* as well as the *Taz* and *Mishnah Brurah* – rule that one should bow. Otherwise, he appears to be lying. (He says, "and we bow" – yet, he does not bow.)

Shulchan Aruch HaRav rules that *Va'anachnu korim* applies to the whole world; thus, it is not considered to be lying.

Parshah Pearls *(Adapted from the Ma'yanah shel Torah)*

Tough on the Outside

"And Moshe called Yehoshua, and he said to him 'Before the eyes of Yisrael be strong and courageous' " (31:7).

The Meshech Chochmah attributes the punctuation to Yehoshua's deep humility, as is well-known from his days of serving as the Shamash in Moshe's Beis-Hamedrash (see also Targum Yonasan - Bamidbar 13:15).

That is why he needed to teach Yehoshua that a Jewish leader must keep his humility internal. Externally, he is obligated to display a tough streak, and to deal with his subjects firmly.

And a fine example of this is King Shaul, who in his humility, failed to punish the good-for-nothings who mocked him immediately following his appointment as king. And it was as a result of his failure to do so, the Navi told him that he lost the throne.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

About a year before the Iranian Revolution, two emissaries of *Chabad* came to Iran in order to print the *Sefer Tanya* in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. The **Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson *zt"l***, initiated a campaign to print the *Tanya*, the seminal work of *Chabad* Chassidic thought, in cities around the globe.


ספר
תניא
הוא כולל ארבעה חלקים
חלק ראשון הנקרא בשם ספר של
בינונים · והשני שער היחוד והאמונה ·
והשלישי שער התשובה, והרביעי אגרת
הקודש מלוקט מפי סופרים ומפי סופרים
סתומים עליהן נ"ע מיושר על פסוק כי קרוב
אליך הדבר מאוד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו
לבאר הישב איך הוא קרוב מאד
בפיך איזהו ובמה בעה"י מתבארין
האמתי אמפקליא המאורה אריכו"ת ורחב
שניאור זלמן נ"ל מליאדי אדמו"ר
שי"ע ולסלים בשם יקרא ספר
ליקוטי אמרים
הוצאת לשת קהלות ע"י מחמני הספרי
ומיסדרסים חוק אברהם חזוק נסדר
הכתיר אוב יהודה גרישון נאלס
Tanju
Gedruckt bei W. H. Kaufmann in Lemberg
1860.

The *sefer* was sent to be printed, but there were delays and it took a long time to get started. In the meantime, in February 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led a religious revolution which overthrew the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the reigning leader of Iran, and the Jewish community recognized the danger of the new radical regime.

Rabbi Yehuda Ezrachian, who was responsible for the Jewish community's spiritual needs, arranged to remove all copies of the *Tanya* from the printer in order to bring them to the community's library. There, in the large hall of the library, they were stored temporarily, in uneven piles.

The new government announced a law, called "cleansing," which stated that every Iranian citizen and all public organizations had thirty days in which to burn all documents, papers, and books that had the Shah's royal emblem or anything connected to his reign, on them. It ominously stated that after thirty days, anybody who possessed anything with these symbols would be severely punished.

And if it was determined that he purposely did not destroy them, he would be executed.

Rabbi Ezrachian relates: "We faced a serious problem in that we had archives over a hundred years old, and most of the documents and books had the royal emblem on them, as well as the name of the Shah and his government. We also had a collection of special gold coins that the community produced in 1967 in honour of the Shah's coronation and in celebration of 2500 years since the coronation of Koresh. On one side of the coin was a *Menorah* and on the other was either the Shah's royal emblem, the name Koresh, or a crown.





As Jews, it was very hard for us to accept the 'cleansing' of the entire library and huge archive of our traditions, but we had no choice. Still, there was no way we could comply with the law in such short time.

"When the month ended, we had not managed to complete the job, as expected. We hadn't really started either.

A day or two later, the secretary came into my office and said that two government inspectors had shown up to inspect the entire building, in order to see whether we had followed the cleansing law.

I was terrified. I understood that I was doomed and that the entire Jewish community was in great danger. I said *Vidui* (Confession) and *Shema Yisroel*, and prepared myself for what I knew was coming.

When the inspectors entered my office, I was able to outwardly remain calm. They asked to see some Jewish books. For some reason,

and still to this day, I can't explain why, it occurred to me to take them first to the library.

They immediately noticed the piles of books that were strewn all over. One of the inspectors bent over and picked one up. It was a *Tanya*! He asked me what it was, and I told him first about the author, about the *Baal HaTanya*, then about the *Chabad* movement, the **Baal Shem Tov *zt"l*** and *Chassidus*. I also said that this book was one of the primary texts of the movement.

"He opened it at random and asked me to explain to him what it said on the page he had opened to. It was the first page of Book Two, *Shaar HaYichud V'HaEmuna*. I read the words and then translated into Persian and explained the entire page.

When I was done, the inspector closed it, kissed it, and said, 'In a place with books like these, and with such a person in charge of a place like this, there is no need for any additional inspections!'

We were stunned. When I recovered from this unexpected but very pleasant shock, I said to the Iranian government inspector that the Jewish community would be extremely happy if he would do us the honour of signing our guestbook before he left. He agreed with a smile and wrote: 'On such and such a day, I visited the offices of the Jewish community, and inspected and ascertained that all was as it should be.'"

The following *Shabbat*, in *shul*, the entire Tehran Jewish community celebrated with Rabbi Ezrachian the miracle that took place in the merit of the *Tanya*. (Adapted from Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles interview with Rabbi Yehuda Ezrachian printed in Kfar Chabad Magazine)

"Two people talking at once make noise, but two people singing at once make harmony" ~ R' Nachman of Breslov.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - Cast Your Bread upon the Waters

When Rabbi Chaim Meir Kahan was in Siberia, he truly wanted to honor Shabbos. How can you honor Shabbos in Siberia under impossible conditions?

He received one slice of bread each morning and one slice of bread each evening. There was very little bread, and everyone was hungry. Each day, he would cut off a third of his slice in the morning and a third of his slice in the afternoon and save that dry bread. He accumulated a supply of bread for Shabbos, and on Shabbos, he would eat all the pieces, like lechem mishneh, in honor of Shabbos. He would skimp all week, and on Shabbos, he would have more to eat.

Then, one Friday out of the blue, the Russians told him that he was being transferred to a different camp. It was close to Shabbos, and he had a lot of pieces of bread. What am I going to do with all these pieces? he wondered. I'll be taking a big risk if I'm caught with them. He couldn't take the bread with him because they were going to check his pockets. Realizing there was no alternative, he thought, Instead of throwing it out, I'll give it to someone from the camp.

There was a goy there who was an abhorred prisoner. He was tall and very strong — a real ruffian, and even the guards were scared of him. Reb Chaim Meir approached him and said, "I see that you're hungry."

The goy said to him, "I feel like I'm going to die of hunger."

R' Chaim Meir said to him, "I saved bread for you," and he gave him the bread he had saved in honor of Shabbos. Everyone was afraid of that man. When the guards saw him, they would immediately keep their distance. Now, this Jew came and gave him bread. The goy didn't stop thanking him.

R' Chaim Meir felt a pang in his heart. Who got the bread I saved for Shabbos, sacred bread? Who got it? An evil goy.

He was transferred to a different camp, and there he had to chop down trees. Chopping down trees in Siberia was almost an impossible task. Since the trees were frozen, the trunks were hard as iron. Even if you banged and banged on it with an axe, the tree would not break.

He felt like he was collapsing. Suddenly, he noticed the goy to whom he gave his bread. He had also been transferred to the camp.

The goy said to him, "I was about to die, and you — with your bread — revived me. I will not forget the good deed you did for me. Anyone who does good for me, I repay him with good. Tell me what you want, and I'll help you."

R' Chaim Meir said to him, "I'll tell you what I'd like you to help me with. I'm a Jew, and Jews aren't allowed to work on the Sabbath, but they're telling me to chop down trees on the Sabbath."

The goy said to him, "No problem. You won't work on the Sabbath." The goy built him a small hut and said to him, "You'll sit here in the hut and rest the entire Sabbath, and we'll work." The ones in charge of them were the prisoners who were in charge of everyone.

The goy, the feared criminal, told all the prisoners that anyone who squeals that this Jew is not working on Shabbos will have his own blood on his head. One of the prisoners wanted to inform on him that he wasn't working on Shabbos. The goy caught him and decapitated him. Everyone got scared, and so R' Chaim Meir was able to rest the entire Shabbos. He was able to regain his strength and work the entire week until the following Shabbos.

R' Chaim Meir said that because he honored Shabbos by saving bread as if it were lechem mishneh, Hashem sent him the goy to allow him to keep Shabbos and not be mechallel Shabbos in the camp.

(Hischazkus U'Bitachon B'Mishnas HaZera Shimshon)

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - Because It Is the Source of Blessing

Rabbi Hominer, zt"l, the head of the Ruzhin Yeshivah, frequently traveled to France. While there, he tried with all his might to influence ignorant Jews to keep Shabbos according to halachah, for they naïvely believed that it was sufficient to keep Shabbos in shul, while the stores they owned would remain open. The rav would influence them to close their stores on Shabbos.

On one of these trips, he found out that his host's store was open on Shabbos. He beseeched him, "You know that I try to influence everyone to observe Shabbos, so it can't be that my host's store will remain open on Shabbos."

"Honored Rabbi," his host replied, "I have a jewelry store, and I earn my main profit on Shabbos. I can't close my store on Shabbos. Please, don't continue begging me to do this."

Rabbi Hominer smiled and said, "Believe me, if Shabbos were mine, I would give you permission to desecrate it. However, Shabbos isn't mine; it's Hashem's, and He obligates all of us to be particular in its observance."

When Rabbi Hominer saw that his host was still hesitating, he turned to him with an offer. "Come, let's make a deal. You'll close your store starting this Shabbos, and when you calculate your annual balance, if you see that you lost out in comparison to previous years, you'll go back to keeping your store open on Shabbos. If not, you'll continue keeping Shabbos. But you should know that I don't have a shadow of a doubt that keeping Shabbos is the source of blessing, and you won't lose out. On the contrary, you'll earn many times more."

Having no alternative, his host agreed to the deal.

When Rabbi Hominer passed away, that French Jew went to Eretz Yisrael to be menachem avel the rabbi's sons. He told them the story and added excitedly, "You should know, that first Shabbos when I

closed my store, I felt like I was going to lose all my money. I could not relax. I was losing!

"Then, on Sunday, as soon as I opened the store, a bus full of Japanese tourists stopped outside the store. They got off, entered my store, and cleared out almost the entire stock. Gold, diamonds, different types of jewelry — they bought it all. I didn't have to calculate the balance to know that I had never earned such a sum.

"But," the man continued, "what your father didn't know was that I own another store in France, and I didn't close that one on Shabbos, and because he didn't know about it, he didn't force me to close it. But after that Sunday, I decided that the other store would also be closed on Shabbos from then on, because I already saw that Shabbos is the source of blessing."

Short Story - Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky



In the years of World War I, a young student who was fleeing the war-ravaged city of Slabodka sought refuge in Tiktin, a village near Lomza, Poland. A prodigious Torah scholar, he compensated for room and board by becoming a simple *cheder* teacher. He gave his lecture in a small schoolhouse, but the townsfolk were quite suspicious. There were no shouts from inside the one-room schoolhouse as it was with other teachers; the boys seemed to be listening.

Rumor had it that the young man even let the children play outside for ten minutes each day in the middle of the learning session! They decided to investigate. They interrupted his class one morning and were shocked. The whip used by every cheder-Rebbe was lying near the trash bin.

Upon asking the kids, the parents learned that this radical educator never used it. Outraged, the townsfolk decided to call a meeting with their Rabbi to discuss the gravity of the situation.

The local Rabbi pointed to a picture of **Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Spector, ZT"L**, the leader of Lithuanian Jewry. "Do you see that picture of the Kovno Tzadik?" He asked the townsfolk. "One day thousands of homes across the world will have this young man's picture hanging on their walls." The elderly Rabbi was right. The young man became the leader of a generation and dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas.



It was the beginning of, **Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky's** career in education.

Parshas Vayelech discusses Moshe handing the reign of power to his beloved disciple Yehoshua, guiding him through the difficult mission of leadership. At the end of Parshas Vayelech, (31:7), "Moshe summoned Yehoshua and said... 'Be strong and courageous." The Yalkut Shimoni explains the words "strong and courageous." Moshe explained to Yehoshua, "This nation that I am giving you is still young kids - Do not be harsh with them. Even their Creator has called them children, as it is written, (Hoshea 11:1) "Israel is but a beloved lad." Moshe, the guide and architect of Jewish leadership, was empowering his disciple with a message of guidance.

The words "be strong and courageous" embodied leadership of love and understanding. One cannot talk of forbearance and patience without talking of strength and courage. More importantly, one cannot show true strength and courage if he is not patient and understanding. We are asking Hashem to be patient and understanding with us, but we need to first be that way with others as we cannot expect Hashem to treat us any differently than we treat others.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה -[A powerful mussar piece about Yom Kippur as a moment of closeness, the Yetzer Hara's attempts to block that closeness, and our ability to return to Hashem specifically as children, through tefillah, bechiya, and achdus.]

As we approach Yom Kippur, the final day of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, we enter what Chazal call a **מקוה טהרה**, a day when Hashem Himself is **מטהר** us. **The *Nachalei Bina*** brings a **משל** from the **Yismach Moshe**:

The Parable of the Prince

A benevolent **פריץ** leaves his estate in the hands of a greedy deputy who oppresses the people. When word spreads that the **פריץ** will return briefly, the deputy sends everyone far away to work so they cannot complain. When the people hear the familiar trumpet announcing the **פריץ**'s departure, they drop everything, run, and lie across the gate screaming **"הצילו!"**. The **פריץ** stops, hears their cries, returns, and removes the corrupt deputy.

The **Yalkut Shimoni** says this is us: all year we live in **הסתר**, in **גלות**, without the clarity of the Beis HaMikdash. But during the ten days Hashem says: **"דרשו ה׳ בהמצאו"** — ***I am here. Come to Me. I will come closer to you than usual.***

The *Yetzer Hara*, like the deputy, tries everything — even "holy distractions" — to prevent our **יחידות** with Hashem. At Ne'ilah, when the gates begin to close, we cry out **"הצילו!"**, begging Hashem not to leave us in the hands of the Yetzer Hara.

💔 Reaching the נקודה שבלב

The Arizal explains that *Shir HaMaalos* **ממעמקים** is said for ten days because the heart has ten layers, and each day we peel away one layer of **ערלת הלב** to reach the pure **נקודה** untouched by the Yetzer Hara.

The **Yesod V'Shoresh HaAvodah** says the deepest way to reach that **נקודה** is with **בכייה**— heartfelt crying. The roshei teivos of **כי ביום הזה יכפר** spell **בכייה**. - Tears break through the layers and allow the heart to connect.

👶 We come as children, not subjects

R' Shimshon Pincus said: we feel ashamed to stand before Hashem after a year of mistakes. But Rabbi Akiva says **אשריכם ישראל**— because we come not as subjects before a king, but as **children before a father**. Only a parent lovingly cleans a soiled child. Hashem, our **אב הרחמן**, cleans us on Yom Kippur.

🔑 "שובה אלי" vs. "השיבנו"

Hashem says: **שובה אלי ואשובה אליכם**— *you* take the first step. So why do we say daily: **השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה**— *You* bring us back?

Baron Rothschild offers a poor father a magnificent shidduch for his son, asking only for 10,000 rubles. The father has nothing, so he disguises himself and asks Rothschild for the money — and Rothschild gives it. So too: Hashem asks only **שובה**, a small step. But even that we cannot do alone, so we ask Hashem to give us the ability to return: **השיבנו**.

🤝 Achdus — the key to ובכן

The **אבודרהם** says **ובכן** in the Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur tefillos comes from **ובכן אבוא אל המלך** of Esther. Esther told Mordechai: *You fast for me, and I will fast for you.* Only when Klal Yisrael fasted for each other could she say **ובכן אבוא אל המלך**.

So too: Hashem wants to see children davening for each other. The greatest **אהבה** is shown at moments of separation — like the **כרובים** embracing when Klal Yisrael went into **גלות**. Yom Kippur is such a moment: Hashem's love is strongest.

🤷 The Avodah — why do we say it today?

The **מהרי"ל** asks: the Avodah of Yom Kippur was mainly for **טומאת מקדש וקדשיו**— accidental entry into the Mikdash while **טמא**. Today we have no Mikdash. So why do we spend so much of Mussaf on it?

He answers: We are davening for Jews today who unknowingly enter Har HaBayis while **טמא**. Meaning: a major part of Yom Kippur is davening for other Jews, even those who don't know better.

🎁 Yom Kippur — the greatest gift

The **אור שמח** says the **שהחיינו** at Kol Nidrei is the *peak* of blessing of the year — thanking Hashem for bringing us to a moment where we can shake off our sins, uncover our heart, and reconnect.

Yom Kippur is Hashem's **gift**, a day to become a new person, to upgrade who we were last year, and to return as children to our Father who wants to give us everything — **רחום**, because He sees our pain; **חנון**, because He loves us even without seeing pain.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

One of the greatest Chassidishe Rebbes in the past two hundred years was the holy Tzaddik **R' Naftali of Ropshitz ZT"L**, who was well known for his keen insight and perceptively sharp statements. He was once quoted as saying: "***It would be better for me to be associated with a smart man in Gehenom, than to be stuck with a טיפש - a foolish person in Gan Eden"!***

Reb Naftali was once giving his renowned "Shabbos Shuva" Drasha in the Bais Medrash. He was silent for a while and then turned to his Chassidim and said, "It is obviously the custom of most people to beg and request of the Ribono Shel Olam that he should judge them mercifully and favorably. I have, therefore, a simple plan that just might work if it is implemented properly.

You see, the Mishnah tells us that a **שונא** - one's enemy, may not sit on a Bais Din to judge him.(**סנהדרין ג-ה**)

Now what constitutes an enemy? The Mishnah tells us this too: One who hasn't spoken to another out of animosity for three days is considered an enemy.

Now the plan is like this: Each person should accept upon himself not to do any Aveiros for at least three full days before Yom Kippur! The reason is that the Gemarah tells us **רשעים יצר הרע שופטם** - '*For sinners the Yetzer Horah himself judges them.*' - (**ברכות סא:**) – Meaning to say, the same Satan that caused the man to sin will be the one to sit in judgement over him.

"However," continued the Rebbe, Reb Naftali with a warm smile, "It would be safe to say that if a person will go out of his way to have nothing to do with his Yetzer Horah for three full days straight before Yom Kippur - his Yetzer Horah will then have a **דין** - a ruling, like an actual enemy who is not allowed to judge him! And if there will be no one on the panel to antagonize and prosecute him, he will surely be **זוכה** to a **חתימה טובה** and a life of health and happiness....."

Torah Gems

The word **תשובה** contains in itself the formula needed to complete honest repentence:

ת - תמים תהיה עם ה' אלוקיך- Be pure with Hashem your G-d.

ש - שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד- I see Hashem before me constantly.

ו - ואהבת לרעך כמוך- You shall love your neighbor like yourself.

ב -בכל דרכיך דעהו - Know him on all your pathways.

ה - הצנע לכת עם ה' אלוקיך- Be humble when with your G-d.

All these qualities are necessary to do real Teshuva and repent fully.

Start your day the TorahWay דרך התורה

Clouds of Glory – Dr. Sholom Springer

The Midrash on **וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן** teaches that Yom Kippur and Sukkos are linked. It gives a parable: two litigants enter a Din Torah; no one knows who won until one emerges holding a sword — a clear sign of victory. The Midrash concludes:



וְלוּלָבֵיהֶם בְּיָדֵיהֶם... אַנַן יָדְעִינַן דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל נָצְחֵי. ("We come out with our lulavim… we know Israel is victorious.") - This means that on Yom Kippur, Klal Yisrael and the nations "enter judgment," and Sukkos reveals the outcome: Hashem has chosen us anew.

Sukkos as the Bridge Between Yamim Nora'im and Shalosh Regalim

Although we normally treat Yom Kippur and Sukkos as separate categories, the Midrash shows they are connected. Sukkos becomes both:

- the final of the Shalosh Regalim, and
- an "honorary member" of the Yamim Nora'im.

This dual identity makes Sukkos uniquely positioned at the end of the intense spiritual arc of Tishrei.

The Extraordinary Simchas Beis HaSho'eivah

The Gemara (Sukkah 53a) describes supernatural displays of joy:

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel juggled eight flaming torches, "and no torch touched another." Levi juggled eight knives. Rabbi Chanina ben Kisma juggled eight cups of wine "and not a single drop spilled." Ben Azai performed kida, supporting himself on his thumbs — "no other creature could do so."



These feats were not practiced skills; they were moments of spiritual inspiration, similar to Yaakov rolling the massive stone off the well. The Baal HaTurim notes that the word **באר** appears seven times in that short parsha — corresponding to the seven days of Sukkos and its water-drawing celebration.

Why Simchas Beis HaSho'eivah Is for Baalei Teshuvah

Chazal call it "**מקום מיוחד לבעלי תשובה**." The songs sung there included: "**אַשְׁרֵי זְקֻנָתֵנוּ שֶׁכִּפְּרָה יַלְדוּתֵנוּ**." ("Fortunate is our old age, which atones for our youth.")

This celebration belongs to those who have struggled, erred, and returned — not only formal baalei teshuvah, but anyone who has undergone hirhurei teshuvah.

Rav Hutner: Two Meanings of "Atah Bechartanu"

We say Atah Bechartanu on every Yom Tov, but Rav Hutner explains that on Sukkos it means something different.

- Pesach/Shavuos: Hashem's original choosing of Israel — when we stood at Sinai like Adam before the sin, at the pinnacle of kedushah.

- Sukkos: Hashem's second choosing — after the cheit ha'eigel, after teshuvah, after the second Luchos.

The first Luchos were entirely divine (kulo kodesh). After the sin, they no longer matched our diminished state, and Moshe shattered them. The second Luchos were carved by Moshe — human effort — and written on by Hashem, symbolizing Torah's new role: elevating imperfect people.

The Return of the Clouds of Glory

After Yom Kippur, Klal Yisrael began bringing materials for the Mishkan. On the first day of Sukkos, the Ananei HaKavod returned, signaling that Hashem had chosen us again.

"When those clouds came back… they realized that we have been re-selected." Thus Sukkos celebrates not only joy, but the relief and gratitude of being restored to Hashem's closeness.

Joy Proportional to Awe

The Rambam writes that although all Yomim Tovim require simcha, Sukkos had "שִׂמְחָה יְתֵירָה" — an extra level of joy.

A man who fears he has a grave illness, then learns it was a mistake. His joy is proportional to his dread.

He then recounts meeting Rav Chatzkel Levenstein in Elul, who simply said: "שְׁוֵעָרָע טָג... שְׁוֵעָרָע טָג." ("Hard days… hard days.")

For such people, Yom Kippur's awe is real — and therefore Sukkos' joy is immense.

R' Shaul Yedidya Taub ZT'L (Modzitzer Rebbe) would say:

'The letters of the words that Bnei Yisroel uttered in the desert, 'מן הוא' - 'It is Mon' - when rearranged, spell 'אמונה' - faith in Hashem!'

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

The Shabbos Account

Harav Yaakov Yitzchak Galinsky Zt"l became well known after World War II, when he travelled around the world giving inspiring droshos. He was born in 5681/1921 in Krynki, Poland, and later, learnt in Novardok Yeshiva of Bialystok. After the war he settled in Eretz Yisroel, became close with the Chazon Ish, zt"l, and began his *habotzas haTorah* then. He was niftar in 5774/2014.

What is less well known is his life before the war: his wanderings, suffering and hardships but despite all that, he maintained his incredible *Emunah* and *bitachon*. On his 70th birthday he related to his close family and friends some incidents of his past. It must be noted that this gathering wasn't a celebration as such, but an acknowledgement of the tremendous guidance and help he had received from the *Eibershter*, and dedicated his post war years to *habotzas haTorah*, as a *hakoras Hatov* to the Ribbono Shel Olam. He, then, stated: "I want to say clearly that the *Shecheyanu that I just made* was not a formality, and it was not a celebration of a number. It was and remains a profound and deeply felt *hakaras hatov* to the *Ribbono Shel Olam* for a life that, if I am being completely honest, I had absolutely no reason to expect."

Harav Galinsky spent the war years in labour camps, in Siberia, suffering from typhoid, and above all that, severe hunger. He also knew he was the sole survivor of his whole family. But his heart, above everything else, burnt with *Emunah and Bitachon*. This is (part) of his story.

"Now I want to tell you something that happened during the very darkest period of all those dark years.

"There was a period during my time in detention when I was deliberately and systematically starved. It was a calculated tactic. They cut off all outside food sent in for me, entirely, and

reduced my daily ration to half of the already meagre standard prison allocation. This continued for 45 days. I will not describe what 45 days of that does to a human body. I simply ask you to imagine it, and then to understand that whatever you are imagining doesn't come near the truth or reality.

"One Shabbos, the prison worker, a non-Jewish woman, brought me a double portion of bread. She was distributing Shabbos's portion and Sunday's portion together in advance since she would not be there the following day to hand it out.

"I sat in my cell holding this doubled portion of bread, and a thought came to me, the kind of thought that can only be produced by the specific combination of profound hunger and years of immersion in Torah learning. The hunger itself, I will tell you, was what generated this reasoning: *di hunger hut gemacht di lomdus.* Only a person in that condition, with that desperation and that background, could have arrived at such a *chiddush*.

"The Gemara says, *'Kol mezonosav shel adam ketzuvim lo meiRosh Hashanah chutz mishel Shabbos,'* a person's entire sustenance for the coming year is fixed and allocated on Rosh Hashanah. Everything is calculated with one exception: the food one eats on Shabbos. That comes from a separate account, entirely. It is extra, above the annual allocation. It is a gift that comes on its own terms.

"So I thought that if this double portion was my Shabbos bread from my Shabbos account – the extra, the gift above any calculation – then, perhaps, the regular calculation still applied for the rest of the week. Perhaps the *Eibershter* had already arranged something for Sunday through other means. The means was already on the table somewhere. I just hadn't found it yet.

"I divided the bread carefully for three *seudos*. I made three Shabbs *seudos* from that bread, eating a *kezayis* at a time, making each one last as long as I could. And I trusted.

"Sunday came. From four to seven in the afternoon on Sundays, and again from four to seven on Wednesdays, outside food was permitted to be brought into the facility, for those who were so lucky. Among my fellow prisoners there were many Muslims, and it was their custom to eat together, communally. Every one threw whatever they had received into one large pot, and they ate together from it. That particular Sunday afternoon, they called out to me across the room, warmly, with real friendliness, because they respected me and called me 'Rav'.

"Come, Rav. Come sit with us. Eat with us." But their food was *treif*. I sat there and wept. I was hungry, because the last thing I had eaten was my *kezayis* from *shalosh seudos* the night before. But when they saw I wouldn't eat their food, they gave me their bread.

"The message I perceived was this: *You have not been abandoned.* There is a hand beneath you even in the fall. The *Ribbono Shel Olam* is paying careful and loving attention to every single detail of your journey, including the ones that seem trivial, including the ones that no historian would ever think to record. That is what I felt in the Siberian labour camp, and that is what I felt during the 45 days of deliberate starvation, sitting in a cell with a double portion of Shabbos bread and a Gemorah thought running through my head.

"The *Eibershter* was paying attention. He was arranging things.

Yes, *'Kol mezonosav shel adam ketzuvim lo meiRosh Hashanah chutz mishel Shabbos,'* a person's entire sustenance for the coming year is fixed and allocated on Rosh Hashanah, except for what he will eat on Shabbos and Yomtov.

May we all have a **כתיבה וחתימה טובה**.

Good Shabbos

Aaron Leitner

Precious Moments With Rav Chaim - Artscroll

Choose Life



Rav Chaim has to show Klal Yisrael what to do when it's time to vote. His teacher, the Chazon Ish, told Rav Chaim to vote, as the *gedolei Yisrael* said. Rav Chaim tells people that he knows that the Chazon Ish sent people to vote.

Rav Chaim travels all over the country to tell people to vote. When Klal Yisrael sees the effort he puts in to make sure people vote — going from city to city, from gathering to gathering — they understand how important it is.

One time, Rav Chaim says, "On the one hand, it's too bad about the *bitul Torah* that voting causes." Then he says, "On the other hand, G-d forbid that we don't go to vote."

Who sees Rav Chaim going somewhere and doesn't want to go with him? Rav Chaim always goes to vote. He places the slip of paper with his vote into the envelope and is putting the envelope into the box. He's giving all Klal Yisrael the chance to keep the mitzvah of "Do all that they [the gedolim] tell you."

A Different Kind of Bedikas Chametz

The way we see the world is different from the way gedolei Yisrael see it. A man who can't decide which apartment to buy stops at Rav Chaim's house to ask him what to do. "I have two choices," he says. "I could buy an apartment in a central area, but it costs a lot of money, or I could buy a bigger apartment in an area that's not as central."

"Why do you need a big apartment?" Rav Chaim asks. "Do you need another room to check for chametz? Bedikas chametz will take an extra half an hour every year if you buy a bigger apartment."

These words take the man to a new world, a world where an extra room isn't a place, but a halachic problem that will come up every year when it's time for bedikas chametz.

The Shtender in This World

A well-known rosh kollel comes to tell Rav Chaim about his problems. "How can I help you?" Rav Chaim asks.

"If you'll give me your shtender that you've learned on for so many years, I can sell it. It's worth a lot of money. I'll use the money for my kollel."

"Take it," Rav Chaim says.

His family is surprised. This is the shtender he's learned on for many, many years.

"What am I going to take to the World to Come?" Rav Chaim asks them. "The shtender or what I've learned on it?"

Rav Chaim's shtender earns the money that supports hundreds of avreichim for months.

Rabbi Yitzchak Oelbaum - Here For You

The Chofetz Chaim was once traveling by train to the worldwide Knessiah Gedolah conference, together with the **Kli Chemdah**, a great *talmid chacham* and tzaddik. At one of the stops along the way, word spread that the Chofetz Chaim was aboard the train.

Hundreds of people gathered at the station. They were not passengers and could not board the train, but they knew that it would remain at the station for several minutes. They came for one reason alone: they wanted the opportunity simply to catch a glimpse of the Chofetz Chaim.

The Kli Chemdah turned to the Chafetz Chaim and said, "Rebbe, perhaps you should go over to the window. There are hundreds of Yidden standing outside who came just to see you." The Chofetz Chaim declined. "Why not?" the Kli Chemdah asked.

The Chofetz Chaim explained that he was concerned about *kavod* (honor). If he were to stand at the window while hundreds of people gathered to look at him, he feared that the honor might affect him spiritually. He did not want to jeopardize even a small measure of his Olam Haba for the sake of receiving honor. The Kli Chemdah responded, "Rebbe, I have two reasons why I believe you should nevertheless go to the window." He began with the first.

"Hundreds of Yidden have come here because seeing the Rebbe will give them *chizuk*. If showing yourself to them will strengthen so many Jews, then perhaps it is worthwhile to sacrifice even a little Olam Haba for the sake of giving *chizuk* to Klal Yisrael." The Chofetz Chaim aim immediately jumped up. "You're right," he said. "I don't need to hear the second reason." And he went to the window.

The Chofetz Chaim's reluctance to appear at the window demonstrated his profound *anivus* (humility). He genuinely feared the spiritual danger of honor. But the moment he understood that

his appearance could strengthen other Jews, the calculation changed entirely. For himself, he wanted nothing. But for Klal Yisrael, he was prepared to give something up.

"I don't need reason number two." One reason was enough. If hundreds of Yidden could receive a little *chizuk*, then even the possibility of sacrificing a small portion of his own Olam Haba was a price the Chofetz Chaim was prepared to pay.

That is *anivus* in its deepest form. Humility does not mean hiding when others need you. It means that when you do step forward, it is not because you need to be seen.

It is because someone else needs to see you.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - The Test of *Emunah* and *Middos* That Rescued Someone From the Massacre

The following incredible, unique story was told by Reb Dovid from Yerushalayim: On Chol Hamoed Sukkos 2024, I got into my car together with my family and our three children. The plan was for us to travel to my parents' home in the south, where we planned to stay until after Simchas Torah. On the way, there was a very long traffic jam, and the intense heat outside gave me a strong headache.

Since I was the one driving, I was afraid to continue with such a headache. I felt I had to rest. I pulled into a grove at the side of the road while my family walked around outside, keeping quiet so that I could rest.

Suddenly, I heard a terrible scream. I woke up in a panic and saw that my five-year-old son had been bitten by a snake. I immediately called an ambulance, and the doctors took him to the hospital, where they treated him. With Hashem's great kindness, his life was spared.

But our plans went awry from there as we returned home from the hospital instead of traveling to my parents' home. Our plan was to travel to them later in the week, right before Simchas Torah, but my older brother pressured my parents to come to him for yom tov, and they agreed. When I heard that, I was very upset and hurt by my brother for ruining my plans which left us with no other choice other than to stay at home for yom tov.

We were lacking the right provisions for yom tov, so our seudos were very meager, and my feelings of resentment toward my brother grew as a result. In my heart, I was upset about everything that had happened: the headache on the road, and the snake bite which had caused us not to go to my parents according to our original plan. My distress made it hard for me to rejoice on Simchas Torah like in previous years.

Then, I decided to try to judge my brother favorably. In the morning, we heard about the attack in the south, but we didn't yet realize how it could have affected us personally. After yom tov, my older brother—who'd invited our parents to his house—called. "Dovid," he immediately told me. "Hashem loves you very, very much." "What happened?" I asked him.

"The cursed terrorists came to our parents' home. They broke in and then looted and burned the place. Neighbors were killed and kidnapped, Rachmana litzlan, and our parents' lives—and your life and the lives of your family—were spared by an absolute miracle."

I was stunned. Then, I asked him what had made him invite our parents to his house, when I was supposed to go to them.

"My wife hasn't been feeling well for a few weeks," he told me. "On Erev Simchas Torah, she told me she was feeling very down and needed to host or be hosted for yom tov to lift her spirits. I thought that going to our parents with our large family at such short notice wasn't realistic, so I pressured our parents to come to us. The truth is, I had planned to call you and explain why I'd done that and to

apologize—but as soon as our parents agreed to come, I got busy with the yom tov preparations and forgot to call. I only remembered after yom tov had already begun."

From this story, I learned several lessons. First, that everything that Hashem does is for the good. Hashem ensured that I'd have a headache on the way to my parents' home and that my son would bitten by a snake—all for our benefit. So we wouldn't reach my parents' house, and the terrorists wouldn't harm us, chas v'shalom.

I also learned that we shouldn't get angry when someone ruins our yom tov plans or causes our arrangements to go awry. Instead, we should try to judge them favorably, and to realize that he is Hashem's shaliach for our good. As it turns out, the change of plans that my brother's interference caused saved the lives of my parents, myself, and my family.



Dusty and Dirty - R' Moshe Malka

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein, **עליו השלום**, one day walked into a school of boys that were basically off the path. And they said, "Rabbi, why are you coming to talk to us? We're not even religious. We don't even keep **שבת** or **תורה**." One of the kids had an earring. These kids were off the path completely.

"You're going to tell us about **תשובה**, coming back to **השם**? You think G-d really wants us? We did so many sins that we're a waste, we're gone."

So the Rabbi pulled out a $100 bill from his pocket. And he said, "Does anybody want this hundred?"

The boys all said, "Yeah, yeah, we'll take a hundred."



And then he went like this: crumpled it up in a ball. And he said, "Does anybody still want this hundred?"

They're like, "Yeah, we'll take it." And then he took the hundred, put it on the ground, stepped on it in the earth, picked it up, and said, "You guys don't want this anymore?"

They're like, "Nah, nah, we'll take it."

"Why would you take it?" he said. "Because a $100 bill never loses its value. It always stays a hundo. It might be a little dirty, might be a little crumpled, but the hundred always retains its value.

Every one of you boys," said the Rabbi, "are a $100 bill in Hashem's eyes. You might have gotten stained, crumpled, and dirty, but if you pick yourself up, you clean up, you become closer and better.

A journey of 10,000 miles begins with one step, or one effort. That's really what השם wants: one little step, and the diamond inside of you becomes shiny again.

If a woman drops her diamond ring in the mud, does she just leave it there and say, 'Ugh, it's dirty, I'm done with it'? No, she picks it up, cleans it off, shines it, and it retains its value, it even becomes more beautiful."

R' Zelig Pliskin would say:

'All too often, people think of the past in terms of their sorrows and problems. Your being alive today means that you were able to meet your needs until now. Be grateful for that!'



I don't know if anybody really knows all the stories of Rav Dessler, Rav Eliyahu Dessler. There are incredible stories about his life. But what people may not know is that at the outbreak of World War II, he and his family, they were already in London away from the fires that unfortunately took so many Jews from this world. What you may not know is that his wife and his daughter had left right before the war broke out to go visit family back in Poland.

And when the war began unfortunately, they were found on the wrong side of it. Six years. Six years it took for them to finally come home. Six years of Rav Dessler worried, crying, praying, petrified.

What's going to be with his wife and his daughter? Thankfully they got out and they ended up having their own incredible voyage, but they ended up in Australia. Now, we have to begin to appreciate that there were no phones back then, there was no communication back then. When a letter would show up at his door, it would be the greatest day of his year. So now, you can only really imagine about one day when Rav Dessler had one of those letters show up by his front door and the letter you could tell had photographs inside, it had pictures of a daughter he hadn't seen in six years.

You'd figure he would take it, he would tear it open and he would read it up quick and he would just bask in the goodness of those few moments to know that they're okay and maybe to normalize and make everything right just for that fleeting second. However, when a neighbor saw that the mailman had dropped off the mail, the neighbor came running to find out how his wife and daughter was

doing. The neighbor found that Rav Dessler was sitting at his table and that the envelope was nowhere to be seen. What happened? How are they doing? Did you get news from them? He said, yeah, I did.

He said, well, how are they doing? He said, I don't know. The envelope is over there. Why? Why haven't you opened it? And he said, I've trained myself in life that if there's anything I really want, if there's anything that's pushing at the last ounce of my soul that I feel like I have to have, then that's me giving in and that's me not in control. So, I'm waiting about another ten minutes and telling myself you're opening this up with control.

And only then am I going to find out how they're doing. We ask ourselves, how is it that we can gain control? How is it that when things out there in this world that we are meant to really hold back on, how do we gain control?

And let's learn from Rav Dessler this incredible golden advice: become somebody who is G-dlike. The difference between G-d and everything else is that G-d is always in control. And the reason why He demands of us to not look at things is because we ourselves are meant to be in control.

Begin this as a practice. With anything that comes your way, whether it's good food, whether it's meeting up with somebody you haven't seen for a long time, take even thirty seconds and tell yourself: these are the Rav Dessler moments. The moments where I become G-dlike, the moments that I become in control. (R' Ari Bensoussan)

R' Moshe of Savran ZT"L would say:

"We know that if a person recites the entire Tehillim without interruption, his prayers will surely be answered. What people fail to understand, is that 'without interruption' means between the mouth and the heart!"

He Is Always With You!

A police officer wanted to find a frum Yid breaking a traffic law so he could give him a ticket. All of a sudden, two Yidden drove by on a motorcycle.

The police officer followed them for a long time, waiting for them to do something wrong. But they stopped at every red light, stayed within the speed limit, and followed every traffic law perfectly.

Finally, the police officer got upset and pulled them over anyway.

"I've been following you for a long time, and you didn't do ONE thing wrong! You didn't speed, you didn't miss a light, NOTHING! How did you guys manage that?"

They smiled and said, "Because Hashem is with us!"

The police officer shouted, "AH HA! GOT YOU! THREE people on one motorcycle!" and wrote them a ticket...!

What's the lesson?

One should feel that Hashem is with him so strongly and so real that he could almost get a ticket for having Hashem riding along with him!

We should try to live with the feeling, "Hashem is RIGHT HERE WITH ME" because he really is! (based on R' Shimshon Pincus quoting R' Uri Zohar zt"l)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Even though the Steipler Gaon's hearing was impaired, he refused to use a hearing aid for several reasons. He would ask, "Why is it important to hear well? No one will go to the trouble of shouting Lashon Hara into my ears. The things that are necessary for me to hear, I somehow manage to hear. So what do I need a hearing aid for?"



The Glass Eye on Shabbos

A young man blind in one eye is fitted with a glass eye so lifelike that no one notices, set firmly in the socket. May he walk out into the street with it on Shabbos?

The Case

A young man blind in one eye was fitted by doctors in Warsaw with a polished glass eye, so like a real one that a passing glance would never catch it. They worked up to it in stages. First a small eye, until the socket settled and grew used to it; then a larger one, so lifelike that only a long, deliberate look reveals it is not real. In time, they told him, they would replace the glass with a refined metal eye that would not shatter if it ever fell.

The question came from Rav Aryeh Shlomo Naumiast, a dayan in Kamarove near Tomashov: may the young man go out with it into a reshus harabim on Shabbos?

The Maharsham's Analysis

The Gemara had faced a cousin of this question, a woman's false tooth. The Mishnah and Gemara treat a gold tooth and a silver one differently, and the Shulchan Aruch rules the same: on Shabbos a woman may go out with a plain tooth, but not with a gold one.

Why the gold?

Because it stands out. People notice it and smirk, she grows embarrassed and slips it out to spare herself, and now she is carrying it four amos in the public domain. The silver draws no eye, so none of that ever begins.

The Maharsham's question is which of the two a glass eye resembles. He gives four reasons it is the silver, and they stack. First, it sits fixed firmly in the socket, so the fear that it falls does not arise.

Second, it is so natural that no one mocks or even stares, so there is no embarrassment to make him take it out. Third, and here he reaches for a rule from an unexpected corner: a kohen with a blemish or a blind eye may not lift his hands to bentch the people, lest they stare at him, yet once he is dash b'iro, familiar in his own town for thirty days, the worry lapses and he does. So here too, once the townsfolk know the young man's face, no one is studying his eye. And fourth, one does not originate a new gezeirah for a case that is barely met with.

Put together, the very worry behind the gold-tooth decree simply never appears.

The P'sak

He may go out with it on Shabbos, glass or metal alike. Fixed firmly, unremarkable to the eye, and made familiar once his town knows his face, the glass eye never raises the concern the gold-tooth decree was built to stop, and the coming metal eye stands on the same ground. There is no cause to extend an old gezeirah to so rare a case.

Rav Mattisyohu Salomon, zt'l on the parsha - The Last Shabbos of the Year.

Being that **פרשת נצבים וילך** is the last **שבת** of **תשפ״ו**, as **רב מתתיהו** used to say over from his **רבי, רב אליה**, that he would always speak in great **התפעלות** when it came to the end of the year in the last week of the year, saying that every day of the end of the year, each last Sunday, each last Monday, and so on could be **מתקן** for the entire year. And particularly, he would talk about the last **שבת**, that **שבת** contains in it so much, as we'll mention, that you could be **מתקן** all the **שבתות** of the year with keeping this **שבת כתיקונו וכהלכתו**.

The **חז״ל** tell us that **שבת** is **שקולה כנגד כל המצוות**. **שבת** is equaled to all 613 **מצוות**. What does that mean? So **רב אליה** would explain a **פשט** from his **רבי**, the **אלטער** of **קלם**, and that is that every **מצוה** that's

done on **שבת** has the **חשיבות** of **תרי״ג מצוות**, has the **שכר**, the reward, of **תרי״ג מצוות**. In other words, a regular **ברכה** that a person would make on **שבת**, it would be as if he made **תרי״ג ברכות**. A **דף** of **גמרא** that he would learn on **שבת** is as if he learned **תרי״ג דפים**.

That's the **כח** of **שבת, שבת שקולה כנגד כל המצוות**. On a deeper level, he explained how does that work? Because we know that there are **רמ״ח אברים** in a person, **שס״ה גידים** in a person, and so too there are **רמ״ח מצוות עשה** and **שס״ה מצוות לא תעשה**. Each **מצוה** corresponds to one **אבר** or one **גיד** in a person. But **שבת**, being the totality that it is, the **השפעה** of **שבת** has the **כח** to be **משפיע** on the entirety of the person, therefore every **מצוה** that's done has an effect on all of the **אברים** and all the **גידים** on a person.

And therefore each **מצוה** that's performed on **שבת**, it's as if a person did 613 **מצוות**. That's the **כח** of **שבת**. And **רב אליה** said there's a lot of different **ראיות** to this.

This being the last **שבת** of the year, we could **כאפ אריין** and get so many **מצוות** going into the **יום הדין, ראש השנה הבא עלינו לטובה**, and it's the last **שבת** we can be **מתקן** with this **שבת** all of the **שבתות כולם**.

31:19 **"וְעַתָּה כִּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמְּדָהּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׂימָהּ בְּפִיהֶם"**

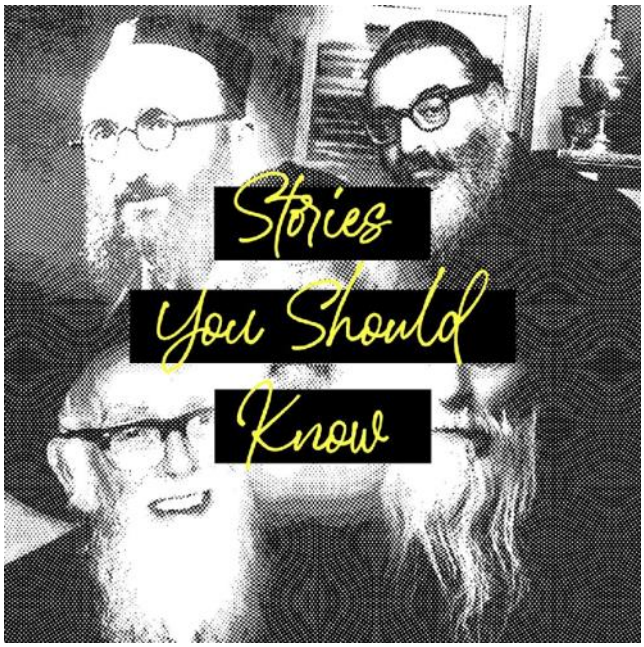
The numerical value of "**שימה**" - place it (into their mouths), is equal to "**בשמחה**" - with joy. The words of the Torah are "**בשמחה**" - gladdening the heart and should be studied amid a spirit of joy.

The gemarah (**ברכות ה**.) states: R' Zeira said, "Take note that the way of the Holy One, Blessed is He, is not the way of flesh and blood. The way of flesh and blood is that when a man sells an object to his neighbor, the seller is said (for he had to part with his possession), while the buyer is happy. However, this is not the way of Hashem. He gave the Torah to Bnei Yisroel and rejoiced."

What are we to learn from the fact that Hashem rejoiced when He gave us the Torah?

Answers **R' Avrohom Hakohen Pam Zt'l** that this teaches us that joy is a primary factor in the proper transmission of Torah. Hashem, who "teaches Torah to His people Israel", does so with great joy.

Similarly, every teacher of Torah must impart the Torah's teachings with joy and enthusiasm, for only in this way, will His words leave their desired impression upon his students.



Giving Life To Those Who Are Broken- The Alter of Slabodka's Last Moments In This World

I once heard a sensational story detailing the Alter of Slabodka's last few moments in this world. In 1892, the famous *yeshiva* of Volozhin closed. Shortly after, Rabbi Natan Tzvi Finkel, known as the Alter of Slabodka, opened up his own *yeshiva* with great success. His students became the eminent spreaders of Torah all over America and their teachings spread like wildfire.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky was the *rosh yeshiva* of Torah Vodaath. Rabbi Yaakov Ruderman was *rosh yeshiva* of Ner Yisrael in Baltimore. Rabbi Aharon Kotler became the *rosh yeshiva* of Beis Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, the biggest *yeshiva* in America today.

In 1924, when the Alter of Slabodka was 75 years old, he decided to open up a branch in Chevron, known then as Palestine. Unfortunately, this branch only lasted a few years, as it was destroyed in an Arab pogrom.

By 1927, things took a turn for the worse regarding his health, and at the age of 78, the Alter of Slabodka was on his deathbed. He was moved to Jerusalem and 21 students were appointed to watch him

nonstop. But unfortunately, one of these students made an untimely mistake. - Next to the bed of the Alter was a bottle of water and a bottle of alcohol. Mistaking the bottle of water for the bottle of alcohol, the student gave the Alter some alcohol. The Alter began to choke. Panicked, the student ran out of the room in unimaginable shame.

The moment became heavy. It was not long before that the Alter finally regained his breath. At this point in time, the Alter made a keen observation: the guilty student was no longer in the room. The Alter then called for the student to return to the room.

One can imagine how nervous, scared, terrified the student would be at this time. He almost killed his *Rebbe*! But when the student came back, as the Alter was lying there sick on his deathbed, he greeted the student with perfect serenity: "You made me happy! At first I panicked, but after it passed, I saw that it was nothing and I was very happy."

These sweet words were of the very last statements that the Alter made before falling unconscious and dying three weeks later.

What is so striking about this story is that just like his *Rebbe*, Rav Yisrael Salanter, the Alter of Slabodka chose to spend the last few moments of his life not in meditation, not in prayer, not in learning. He designated those last precious seconds in this world to encourage a student, to make sure that this student will not live in deep regret for the rest of his life, to live the dictum of Rav Yisrael that the one necessary idea to teach and live is to raise the spirits of those who are down and to give life to the brokenhearted.

R' Nachman of Breslov ZT"L would say:

"Passing through this world involves walking on a very narrow bridge, and the most important thing is not to be afraid at all!"