TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry





כי תשא

לעילוי נשמת



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Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה' בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם - ***"Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul . . . so that there will not be a plague among them . . ."*** (30:12)

Why does the verse change from singular ("Every man shall give") to plural ("so that there will not be a plague among them")?

R' Yaakov Yichizkiyahu Gruenwald z"l (Hungarian rabbi; died 1941) explains: Our Sages teach that when one person repents, the entire world achieves a certain degree of atonement on his account. Thus, even one person's charity can avert a plague that could have affected multitudes. (Vayagged Yaakov: Parashat Shekalim)

וַיְחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־פְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹקָיו - "***Moshe pleaded before Hashem***." (32:11)

The gemara (Berachot 32a) teaches that following the sin of the golden calf, Moshe prayed for the Jewish people until his bones were burning.

R' Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk z"l (died 1926) explains: Chazal say that Moshe's grandson, Yonatan, was a priest to an idol. Thus, as Moshe prayed that the Jewish people be forgiven for their idolatry, his bones, his body from which his grandson would come, were burning with shame. - On the other hand, this very fact gave Moshe's prayers added credibility, for Hashem had said (in verse 10), "Let me destroy them and make you a great nation."

If Hashem offered to make Moshe into a great nation despite the failings in Moshe's own family, He could similarly overlook Bnei Yisrael's faults. (Meshech Chochmah)

וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ - "***You will see My back, but My face may not be seen***." (33:23)

R' Yitzchak of Volozhin z"l (1780-1849) explains: G-d's "face" refers to His thoughts, while His "back" refers to His actions, for just as the face precedes the back, so thoughts precede actions. One can only see G-d's actions and try his best to understand G-d through them, but no one, not even Moshe Rabbeinu, can fathom G-d's thoughts.

The same parallel, writes R' Yitzchak, is behind the statement of the **Sage Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nasi**, "The reason that I am sharper than my friends is because I saw Rabbi Meir's back. Had I seen his face, I would have been sharper still." He meant: I grew from seeing Rabbi Meir's actions, but had I been privy to his thoughts, I would have grown even more. (Introduction to his father's Nefesh Ha'Chaim)

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ - "***This shall they give — everyone who passes through the census — a half shekel of the sacred shekel . . .***" (30:13)



Why half a shekel?

R' Eliyahu Hakohen z"l (Izmir, Turkey; died 1729) offers fourteen answers, of which we present half.

(2) Only the men participated in the sin of the golden calf, not the women. The Zohar says that a man without a wife is only half a person. Thus, only half an atonement is required.

(4) Just as on Yom Kippur two goats were brought — one as a sacrificial offering and the other to be killed in a non-sacred manner (i.e., the se'ir l'azalzel), so one-half of a shekel is offered as a sacrifice and the other half is spent in a non-sacred manner.

(8) The Gemara teaches that G-d forgave only half the sin of the golden calf. For the remaining half, He exacts retribution from each generation a little bit at a time. This is symbolized by the half-shekel.

(10) Bringing only a half-shekel reminds a person that one cannot grow spiritually unless he also raises the spiritual level of those around him.

(11) Our Sages say that one who worships idols is considered to have denied the entire Torah. Thus, by worshiping the golden calf, Bnei Yisrael denied the "Ten Commandments," which consists half of man's obligations toward G-d and half of man's obligations toward other people.

We also are taught that Hashem does not forgive a person for sinning against another person until the sinner appeases the

offended person. This is symbolized by the half-shekel, as if to say, "You transgressed all ten of the Aseret Ha'dibrot, but I, Hashem, can forgive you for only half of your transgression."

(12) The leaders behind the making of the golden calf were in fact from the erev rav, other nationalities that were hangers-on to the Jewish People. Bnei Yisrael's sin was in not preventing this occurrence. This is a lesser sin; thus, only a lesser atonement consisting of a half-shekel was required.

(13) Our Sages say that Bnei Yisrael never worshiped idols because they believed in the idols themselves, but only as an excuse to live an immoral lifestyle. Thus, their sin of idolatry was only half a sin.



וַיַּ֤רְא הָעָם֙ כִּֽי־בֹשֵׁ֣שׁ מֹשֶׁ֔ה לָרֶ֖דֶת מִן־הָהָ֑ר וַיִּקָּהֵ֤ל הָעָם֙ עַל־אַהֲרֹ֔ן וַיֹּ֥אמְרוּ אֵלָ֖יו קוּם֙ עֲשֵׂה־לָ֣נוּ אֱלֹקִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֥ר יֵלְכ֖וּ לְפָנֵ֑ינוּ כִּֽי־זֶ֤ה מֹשֶׁה֙ הָאִ֣ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֣ר הֶעֱלָ֔נוּ מֵאֶ֖רֶץ מִצְרַ֑יִם לֹ֥א יָדַ֖עְנוּ מֶה־הָיָ֥ה לֽוֹ

"***The people saw that Moshe had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aharon and said to him, `Rise up, make for us gods that will go before us, for this man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Egypt — we do not know what became of him!'"*** *(32:1)*

R' Yaakov Charlap z"l explains how Bnei Yisrael came to commit the terrible sin of trying to replace Moshe Rabbeinu.

He writes: Even before Moshe ascended to Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael saw him as half man and half angel. Then he was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights, not eating and not drinking. Bnei Yisrael said, "We cannot relate to a leader who has become super-human, who has become an angel."

This is the meaning of their statement: "For this man Moshe — we do not know what became of him!" (Mei Marom: Nimukei Mikraot)



שְׁמָר־לְךָ֖ אֵ֣ת אֲשֶׁ֣ר אָנֹכִ֤י מְצַוְּךָ֙ הַיּ֔וֹם - *"Beware of what I command you today . . ." (34:11)*

The verses that follow repeat a series of laws that were taught in Parashat Mishpatim, which we read only three weeks ago. Why?

R' Chaim Kanievsky zt'l (Bnei Brak, Israel) explains: The Gemara (Eruvin 54a) teaches that, if not for Moshe's breaking the Luchot, one would never forget his Torah learning. Therefore, in our parashah, after the breaking of the Luchot, the Torah teaches the importance of review as an aid to memory. (Ta'ama D'kra)

וַיַּ֣רְא הָעָ֗ם כִּ֤י בֹשֵׁשׁ֙ מֹשֶׁ֔ה לָרֶ֖דֶת מִן־הָהָ֑ר... - *"The people saw that Moshe had delayed in descending the mountain* . . ." (32:1)

Rashi writes: "Satan came and threw the world into confusion, giving it the appearance of darkness, gloom and disorder, so that people should say; `Surely Moshe is dead, and that is why confusion has come into the world'."

Tradition records that the women of that generation did not participate in this sin, and they were therefore rewarded with a holiday of their own – Rosh Chodesh.

Why did they not participate, and why was their reward Rosh Chodesh?

R' Ben Zion Rabinowitz explains: It is well known that women possess a certain intuition that men lack. It was that intuition that told the women that Moshe was not dead. Therefore, they of course did not participate in making or worshipping the golden calf.

Rosh Chodesh is the only holiday mentioned in the Torah that has the status of an ordinary workday. However, a woman's intuition can discern the holiness in even such a day. This is why Rosh Chodesh is a holiday for women. (Mevaser Tov: B'zchut Nashim Tzidkaniyot)

אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ כִּי אוֹת הִוא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לָדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי ה׳ - ***"You must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am Hashem . . ." (31:13)***

Rashi z"l writes: **אוֹת גְּדֻלָּה הִיא בֵּינֵינוּ, שֶׁבָּחַרְתִּי בָכֶם בְּהַנְחִילִי לָכֶם אֶת יוֹם מְנוּחָתִי לִמְנוּחָה** – 'This is a mark of Gedulah / distinction for you–the fact that I have chosen you and let you inherit the day on which I, Hashem, "rested" as your day of rest.' [Until here from Rashi]



R' Yechezkel Sarna z"l (1890–1969) writes: In Mussaf [**תִּכַּנְתָּ שַׁבָּת**] recited on Shabbat, we identify several different levels among those who observe the Sabbath: **מְעַנְּגֶיהָ לְעוֹלָם כָּבוד יִנְחָלוּ. טוֹעֲמֶיהָ חַיִּים זָכוּ. וְגַם הָאוֹהֲבִים דְּבָרֶיהָ גְּדֻלָּה בָּחָרוּ** - ***"Those who delight in it will inherit eternal honour, those who taste it will merit life, and also those who love its words have chosen Gedulah."***

Even a person who is not on the level to experience Shabbat in its most perfect form (referred to as "delight") will merit "Gedulah," the sign of distinction referred to by Rashi if he merely loves Shabbat.

"You have eyes that can see, ears that can hear, you have nerves on your fingertips that can feel, you have taste buds in your mouth and you have the ability to think and remember, you are a wonderful machine that has no counterpart, and never will have a counterpart among the creations of men.

You're a miracle. Stand and look in the mirror and admire the handiwork of Hashem." ~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l.

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ... לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם - *"This they shall give — everyone who passes through the census — a half Shekel of the sacred Shekel... to atone for your souls." (30:13,15)*



Midrash Tanchuma relates: Moshe had difficulty understanding the sacred Shekel until Hashem showed him a coin of fire. [Therefore the verse says, "This they shall give . . .]

R' Moshe Midner z"l (1860-1929; Mashgiach ruchani of the Slonimer yeshiva Toras Chessed in Baranavich, Belarus) writes in the name of **R' Moshe of Kobrin z"l** (1784-1858): Moshe Rabbeinu constructed many complicated parts and implements for the Mishkan. Why did he have trouble understanding the half-Shekel, of all things?

He answers: Hashem said that the half-Shekel would atone for Bnei Yisrael. Moshe wondered: Could such a small coin really provide atonement?

In response, Hashem showed him a coin of fire, i.e., He showed Moshe how the Yetzer Ha'ra burns with resistance to giving even such a small coin to charity.

One who can overcome that burning Yetzer Ha'ra deserves atonement for his sins. (Kitvei R' Moshe Midner)

"People who focus on what they are missing, are blinded to what they have. ~ Rabbi Zelig Pliskin.

The Daf Hayomi



Superficially, one could describe the Daf Hayomi (commonly called "Daf Yomi") as an undertaking in which participants worldwide study the same page of Talmud Bavli (Gemara) on any given day and complete it every seven-and-a-half years. **R' Meir Shapiro z"l**, the tzaddik who first promoted the concept, saw it much differently:



The Daf Yomi is a bridge–though fashioned of paper–which lifts the Jew above the stormy confusion of the waters below, and he walks with more assurance and confidence than on the firmest steel structure.

The great allure of the Daf Yomi concept lies in the realization that the daf / page of Gemara which I learn here and now is being poured over by countless Jews scattered over the face of the earth. While each one has his own particular mode of learning and is influenced by the intellectual climate of his environment, nevertheless, Abaye and Rava [two great sages of the Talmud] remain Abaye and Rava. [From R' Meir Shapiro's remarks on the occasion of the first completion of the Daf Yomi cycle on Tu B'shvat 5691/1931]

The two-fold purpose of Daf Yomi, first begun on Rosh Hashanah 5684/1924, was to encourage Jews to increase their Torah study through the implementation of a regimented program or quota, and to provide a vehicle for uniting Jews worldwide. R' Meir Shapiro himself observed on the occasion mentioned above:

'It was on my first trip abroad on behalf of the yeshiva of Lublin [in 1927, to the U.S., England, and Western Europe], when I found groups and individuals learning the daf in every Jewish community I visited, that I saw at first hand the impact that Daf Yomi has made in the Jewish world. Whether it was in Strasbourg, London or Baltimore [here he mentioned by name people whom he had met], while their styles of learning differed, there was the same motivating force which is inherent in Daf Yomi.'

In every generation since the Daf Yomi was introduced, many gedolim have endorsed it. **The Gerrer Rebbe** studied the daf and encouraged his chassidim to do so. **The Chafetz Chaim** reportedly told R' Meir Shapiro, "In Heaven, they love you dearly."

R' Aharon Kotler z"l, one of the leading sages in America in the 1950's, studied Daf Yomi as well.

In addition to the advantages of Daf Yomi which R' Meir Shapiro himself described, **R' Moshe Feinstein z"l** notes that it gives the person the opportunity to complete the entire Torah.

R' Feinstein proves from various sources that every person is obligated to do this during his lifetime (Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah). He notes that centuries ago it was common practice to study a page of Talmud each day, and many towns had a chevrah shas which did just that.

R' Yaakov of Lissa z"l (the "Nesivos") wrote in his famous ethical will almost 200 years ago that his sons should study a page of Gemara every day.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַרְאֵנִי נָּא אֶת־כְּבֹדֶךָ – *'He said, 'Show me now Your glory'.'* (33:18)

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu make this request at a low point–after the sin of the Golden Calf–and not at the high point of Matan Torah?

R' Aharon Dovid Goldberg shlita (Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland) explains: **R' Moshe Cordovero z"l (Remak; 1522-1570)** writes that G-d is not like man. If one friend sins toward another and then apologizes, the aggrieved friend may express his forgiveness, but the friendship often will never return to its former intensity. - In contrast, when man sins toward G-d and then repents, G-d brings him even closer than he was before.

Thus, R' Goldberg writes, after Bnei Yisrael had sinned by making the Golden Calf and had begun the repentance process, it was an even more auspicious occasion than when the Torah was given. Thus, it was a fitting time for Moshe to make his request. (Ve'halachta B'drachav al Tomer Devorah p.65)

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פְּסָל־לְךָ שְׁנֵי־לֻחֹת אֲבָנִים כָּרִאשֹׁנִים וְכָתַבְתִּי עַל־הַלֻּחֹת אֶת־ הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל־הַלֻּחֹת הָרִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ - "*Hashem said to Moshe, 'Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones, and I shall inscribe on the Tablets the words that were on the first Tablets, which you shattered*.'" (34:1)



R' Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sudlikov z"l (1748-1800; grandson of the **Ba'al Shem Tov z"l**) interprets this verse as a message to every Jew:

Every Jew is rooted to, and has a letter in, the Torah. When a Jew sins, he damages that connection. He "shatters" his letter and causes its "light" to darken, which in turn

manifests itself in negative consequences in our material world. On the other hand, when he does teshuvah, he rekindles that light.

All of this is alluded to here: ""Go, descend — for your people . . . has become corrupt." When people act corruptly, the world's level descends. But one can carve for himself new letters; he can rekindle the light of the letters that he shattered.

Indeed, this is for man's own benefit, as it says, "Carve ***for yourself*** . . .," - for our Sages have taught that when a person repents because of love for Hashem, all of his sins turn to merits. (Degel Machaneh Ephraim)

This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

17 Adar: In the era of the Sages of the Mishnah, fasting was prohibited on this date in commemoration of the salvation that occurred on it. After King Yannai had attempted to murder the entire Sanhedrin, many Sages had fled to a neighboring land. However, there, too, a plot was hatched to murder them. When that plot was foiled, it was a cause of celebration for all of the Jewish People. (Megillat Ta'anit)

18 Adar: Purim Sana (Yemen), observed in commemoration of the miracle that occurred on this date. Two Arab noblemen had murdered the prince on Purim and attempted to incriminate the Jews. Three days later, on this date, the dead prince opened his eyes and identified his murderers. (Luach Davar B'ito p.643)

20 Adar: The famous story of Choni Ha'meagel, who drew a circle on the ground and vowed not to set foot outside of it until his prayers for rain were answered, occurred on this date. (Megillat Ta'anit)

Also on this date, King Uziah of Yehuda, was stricken with tzara'at when he attempted to usurp the job of the kohanim in the First

Temple, as alluded to in Melachim II, chapter 15. (Luach Davar B'ito p.647)

23 Adar: On this date, the dedication of the Mishkan began. The Mishkan was erected for the first time on this date, but it was taken down at the end of the day. This assembly and disassembly continued for the remainder of the week until, on the first of Nissan, the Mishkan was erected and left standing.

The Chofetz Chaim's Home

Someone once came to the Chofetz Chaim's house to speak with him. She noticed that his house was extremely simple. There was just a table, a few chairs and a small portable kitchen.

She asked the Chofetz Chaim, "Where is your couch? Where is your nice furniture?"

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "Tell me, when you go to a hotel, do you bring your couch, your table, your chairs and all your other furniture along?"

"Of course not," she replied. "Well, why not?" asked the Chofetz Chaim."

"Because I'm not planning on staying there for a long time; I'm only there for a few days and then returning home."

The Chofetz Chaim smiled and said, "That's exactly how I look at life; I'm not here forever. I am just passing through this world and in a few years my *neshamah* will be going back home!"

"Hashem's love for us is infinite and unconditional. We must strive to reflect that love in our relationships with others." ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986)





If I had a fire in my house, does that mean I have to think about doing teshuvah?

If a fire took place, chalilah, in somebody's house, does he have to think about teshuvah? Absolutely. Not only if a fire took place. Even if a person touched a hot pot by accident and burned a finger. Of course, you should run to the sink and keep your finger under cold water, that too. That's the first thing. But you have to think, "Why did this happen to me?"

We learned **אִם רוֹאֶה אָדָם שֶׁיִּסּוּרִין בָּאִין עָלָיו — יְפַשְׁפֵּשׁ בְּמַעֲשָׂיו** – If one sees that any sort of trouble is coming upon him, he should search out his deeds and do teshuvah. (Brachos 5a).

Certainly he should think that. Maybe I was pointing at somebody and talking lashon harah with my finger. Or something else. Of course you have to think. That's why Hashem sent it.

We forget about Hashem, so He reminds us. Now, if you had been thinking about Him in the right way, could very well be that He wouldn't have burned your finger. And therefore, anything that happens in this world is for the purpose of making us think about Him. And ignoring these things is ignoring the reason that you're in this world – to become more and more aware of Hashem.



Now that Purim is over, what are we supposed to think?

Ahh, the age-old question: What will be left after Purim? What packages are we taking with us after Purim?

On Purim, over here, we sang "Ah gantz yahr freilich" and we added in the words "Ah gantz yahr Purim." Because the wise man uses his Purim, he puts his mind to all the lessons of Purim, and the day of Purim makes his whole year freilich. His whole year becomes a Purim. Not only ah gantz yahr freilich, but all your life becomes Purimdik.

One of the biggest simchos is the recognition that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is Oheiv amo Yisroel. That's the second foundation of the whole Torah. The first yesod is Bereishis bara Elokim es hHashomayim v'es ha'aretz, that Hashem made the world. The whole world is nothing but the dvar Hashem. That's the first yesod of the Torah. But the second yesod, right on the heels of the first one, is Oheiv amo Yisroel – Hashem loves His people. The whole Torah, the whole Tanach talks only about Amo Yisroel. And that's a great happiness when you know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is thinking about you. Not only the Am Yisroel in general – He's thinking about you!

You see this man sitting here? Hakodosh Boruch Hu is thinking about him. Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "That's My son!" Hakodosh Boruch Hu loves us more than parents love their children. The love that a mother has for her children is nothing compared to the way Hashem loves each one of us. And since Hashem loves us so much, that's the happiness in life. There's no happiness like that.

The greatest simcha is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is Oheiv amo Yisroel. That's the true simcha, and that happiness remains all year round. And that's the lesson that you study all day on Purim and then you take it with you all year long. So let's think about that for a

minute before we say goodbye to Purim. - Hashem is looking at us right now, and He's thinking, "Ah, I have nachas from you, My children. I love you My tyierah kinderlach."



It says in the Gemara (Brachos 10a) that a person should never give up hope and should never stop asking Hashem for mercy, even if a sharp sword is already on his neck. So my question is: Why is Hashem putting the sharp sword on this person's neck in the first place?

And the answer is that Hashem puts the sword on his neck so that he should ask for *rachamim,* so that he should ask Hashem for mercy. The biggest achievement of life is not living itself. Oh no! The biggest achievement of our lives is *emunah* - to believe in Hashem and to become more and more aware of Him.

So if a man has a sharp sword on his neck and now he cries out to Hashem because of that, that's a success. That's his success! Whatever happens subsequently is not important! Just to live, just to continue living, without purpose is unimportant. What's important is the calling out to Hashem.

There's great success in thinking, "I'm calling out to Hashem!" Awareness of Hashem – that's the success of a person and that's why Hakodosh Boruch Hu causes things to happen.

Illness comes upon people for the purpose of stimulating them to call out to Hashem. Now, if they heal, they're very happy. But that's not the success. The success was that they cried out to Hashem. That's the real success.



Why did the second Beis Hamikdosh last ten years longer than the first one and it was also bigger than the first one?

And one answer is: What's the reason for a building in general? A building in general is to impress the people they should learn about emunah in Hashem. The presence of Hashem is demonstrated by the Beis Hashem. And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu, when he gave them a new chance, gave them a bigger building. He said, "Maybe this time, you'll make a better job of it. But you're not as great as the old generations who learned from a smaller building. You need a bigger impression to be made on you.

He gave them a bigger building and he gave them ten more years of Beis Hamikdosh. But even then, it didn't achieve the desired result. But the purpose was, it's like a physician who comes and gives you a dose and it doesn't have the desired effect, so he increases the dose. And the dose in this case was a bigger Beis Hamikdosh with longer years. - But finally, since it didn't have the desired effect, so He discontinued the treatment.



Why did Hashem make United States such a rich country?

Why did Hashem give prosperity to America? Now that's a question you'll need Hashem to answer, but I'll take my little one cent brain and I'll say a *svarah*. I'll say that it was because America allowed the Am Yisroel to come here and gave them opportunities to live with full rights. Other countries didn't do that all the way back; but America, right from the beginning, gave us full rights.

It's not America's fault that we misused those rights. It's not America's fault that we came and forced our way into gentile communities where we didn't belong – that's not the fault of the gentiles. But Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave America a certain reward because of its kindliness to the Am Yisroel.

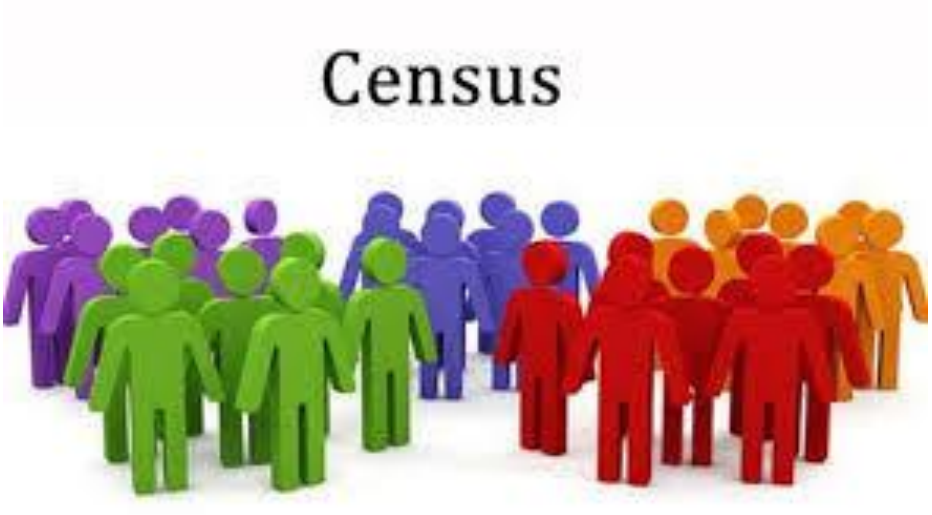
In addition, America was once a decent country. At first, America was a very moral country. You still see on the coins, "In G-d We Trust." I don't know how long it's going to last. The Supreme Court one of these days will strike it down.

Imagine such a thing – a country that writes on its coins, "In G-d We Trust" They deserve a reward just for that! - So America at one time deserved all this prosperity. What's going to happen in the future, I cannot foretell.



כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה' בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם - '***When you take the count of Bnei Yisrael to their numbers, each man shall give an atonement pledge…so that there should not be a plague when you count them***.' (30:12)

Jews are counted when necessary, but with great sensitivity and trepidation. - Rashi explains that when counting Jews, we refrain from taking a head count; rather, each person gives a machatzis, half-shekel, [to represent] themselves. These half-shekels are counted in their stead. In this manner, we avoid the chance of ayin hora, evil eye, which, when cast upon a person (even inadvertently), can catalyze a plague. (We take ayin hora very seriously!)



Rabbeinu Bachya writes that when we count people individually, we single them out; likewise, Hashem examines their deeds individually. We are in a better position as part of the larger aggregate of Jews.

According to Rashi, counting Jews directly is a recipe for creating a plague. Rabbeinu Bachya seems to explain that when people are singled out, they lose the general Divine protection afforded to the Klal, communal group, the nation as a whole.

The Malbim supplements this, saying that, when we count shekalim, rather than people, we place our primary focus on the sum total, instead of on the individual shekel/ coin.

Apparently, the manner in which we are to execute a Jewish census provides us with a mixed message/lesson: It is not healthy/safe to stand out as individuals. It is much better to blend into the community, be a part of the whole nation.

This goes against everything that we teach our children: Be yourself; be an individual; do your thing; be a leader, not a follower, etc. Did Hashem not grant us our individual talents and personality for a reason: To be ourselves? Should we simply blend in with the masses, surrender to the group without allowing for individual expression?

Horav Tzvi Kushelefsky, Shlita, teaches that we should most definitely acknowledge our talents, assert and employ them for the greater good of the community/others, who can benefit from us. Thus, we use our individuality for the greater good – the nation. In this context, we translate the word **תִּשָּׂא** (as in, **כִּי תִשָּׂא**), as "to lift

up," in both a positive and a negative sense. The message would then be: When we attempt to elevate/lift ourselves up for personal, individual aggrandizement, we fail. Life is not about "us." If, however, we lift ourselves up for the purpose of helping the community, we truly rise.

Life presents us with this challenge on a regular basis. The dilemma of focusing on our personal growth, as opposed to working for the benefit of others, presents a challenge. Some people really cannot do both: "It is either 'me' or 'them.' I cannot do both." Such a person has much more with which to contend than this decision. He is so engrossed in himself that he probably cannot be of much help to the community.



The Rosh Yeshivah posits that those who assist others, thereby utilizing their resources and talents for the greater good, will be sufficiently blessed, such that they themselves will experience unprecedented growth.

When Moshe Rabbeinu (as Klal Yisrael's advocate) came forward to plead the nation's case, he said, "And now, if You would but bear their sin – but if not, erase me now from Your Book that You have written" (Shemos 32:32). As a result, he was rewarded with the nation being called, "the nation of Moshe" (Midrash Tanchuma, Beshalach 10).

One does not lose out by devoting his talents to the benefit of the community. Mordechai was the fifth (from the top) in fame on the

Sanhedrin (Talmud Megillah 16b). Yet, the Talmud Chullin 139b implies that Mordechai was the most distinguished member of the Sanhedrin.

The contradiction can be resolved, explains Rav Kushelevsky, by asserting that, indeed, in personal erudition he was fifth, but, from a national perspective, he was the elite, the top. Mordechai devoted all of himself, all of his G-d-given talents and qualities, to benefit his people. This dedication catapulted him to the top.

Action defines greatness. Mordechai was great, but by accepting the challenge of dedicating himself to Klal Yisrael, he became greater. He dared – he grew!

This, concludes the Rosh Yeshivah, is the lesson of the machatzis ha'shekel, which was required of every adult male, regardless of position, i.e. social and financial strata. This money was used for the korbanos tzibbur, communal sacrifices. The Torah issues a prohibition against giving less than a half-shekel, as well as a prohibition against giving more.

This begs elucidation. More is good! - I have yet to be called by an organization that does not "ask" me to increase my annual pledge. Yet, the Torah demands "half" – no more – no less – from everyone, period.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl (Daas Chochmah U'Mussar 1:19), explains that even the avaricious man for whom parting with a penny is a life-threatening experience, would be likely to contribute a large sum of money if he would receive an honorarium, prestige, his name on the wall.

When everyone is limited to a half-shekel, he no longer has an opportunity to highlight his individual achievement or pride. We are all the same (which for some is a life-altering experience). This limitation is all about joint, communal effort.

וְעָשִׂיתָ כִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְכַנּוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת לְרָחְצָה – '*You shall make a copper Laver… for washing*.' (30:18)



The Kiyor, Laver, was a large, copper utensil filled with water, from which the Kohanim were required to wash their hands and feet prior to performing the service. This washing was not for purposes of hygiene, but for the sake of kiddush, sanctification.

The Kohanim purified their hands and feet, representing the upper and lower parts of the body, symbolic of the Kohen's total devotion and the sublimation of his entire body to the service which he was about to perform.

The Laver is not mentioned in the previous parshiyos (Terumah,Tetzaveh) together with the other utensils of the Mishkan, because, as **Sforno** observes, its function was different.

While the other utensils caused the Shechinah, Divine Presence, to rest on the Mishkan, the Laver prepared the Kohanim for the service which they were about to perform.

The Kiyor was not made from the copper that was contributed as part of the Terumas HaMishkan. Its copper was derived from a unique source. Later (Parashas Vayakhel 38:8), the Torah teaches that the Kiyor was made **בְּמַרְאֹת הַצֹּבְאֹת אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד**, "***Of the mirrors of the legions that gathered at the Ohel Moed***."

Rashi explains these legions were the nashim tzidkaniyos, righteous women, who came to contribute their copper mirrors to the Mishkan. This was in addition to the copper used for the Terumas HaMishkan. Thus, the copper which they donated was not counted in the original

reckoning of materials contributed for the Mishkan. The Kiyor was the only vessel not constructed of materials donated by all the people. It was uniquely the exclusive product of the women's contributions.

The gathering of the women at the entrance to the Ohel Moed indicates to what extent the women sought to have a part in the avodas HaMishkan. Unlike those who would question ritual, impugn tradition, undermine Halachah, the women of old (I guess that is why they were called nashim tzikaniyos) took their most prized possessions, their mirrors, which they used to adorn themselves (for their husbands), symbolizing the preoccupation with the mundane, and dedicated them to the service of the Mishkan.

שֶׁקֶר הַחֵן וְהֶבֶל הַיֹּפִי - "***Grace is false, and beauty is vanity***" (Mishlei 31:30), Shlomo Hamelech declares (at the end of his depicture of the true Aishes Chayil). - That it is all about serving Hashem – not garnering attention for oneself.

Are chein and yofi that bad? When that is all there is, if there is no yiraas Shomayim, then sheker and hevel reign supreme.

Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl, further explains the women's relationship with the Kiyor: We must consider the purpose served by the Kiyor, and its function in the Mishkan.

As mentioned earlier, the Kohanim were enjoined to wash their hands and feet prior to approaching the Mizbayach or entering the Mishkan. This was a purification rite that prepared the Kohen for the Mishkan by purifying him. The Kiyor, which was used as the medium for this rite, was the focus of the women's contribution. These righteous women wanted to purify their neshamos, souls, by casting aside the mirrors that they had used for vanity and elevating them to serve the purification process of the Kohanim.

The very act of giving up the mirrors was in and of itself a purification rite, and it imbued the shiny copper plates with a special

ability to purify the minds and bodies of those who used the water within the Kiyor in preparation for the Priestly Service. To purify others, one must himself/herself be pure.



The righteous women stood at the entrance of the Ohel Moed. They understood that parameters exist with regard to sanctity, parameters that are issued by the Almighty, not by man – or woman.

Perhaps we might suggest an alternative reason for the significance of the copper mirrors. If one wants to know how he/she looks, he/she either asks someone or peers into a mirror. Mirrors do not lie. What one sees is reality. In other words, the mirror provides the same function as does another person: each informs you how you look.

Obviously, the fellow who has a mirror does not require the services of another person. The mirror diminishes the need for people. The nashim tzikdakniyos sought a way to increase the significance of people, the need of one for another, while at the same time contributing something of substance to the Mishkan.

What is a more appropriate gift than the gift of friendship? Do away with the mirrors; rely on your friends. This was their message to the Kohanim. You serve Hashem as agents of the people. Please do not lose sight of those whose agents you are.

As we rid ourselves of our mirrors, thereby expelling something that stands between us and the nation – so should you maintain the legacy of 'pursuit of peace', which you inherited from Aharon HaKohen.

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ - '***This shall they give – everyone who passes through the census – a half-shekel of the sacred shekel.***' (30:13)



Why was Klal Yisrael commanded to contribute a half-shekel coin? Would it have been so difficult to give a whole shekel?

This question has been treated extensively by the various commentators. The gist of their commentary focuses on the need for each individual Jew to view himself as a mere half. No Jew is whole, alone and in and of himself.

Horav Yoshiyahu Pinto, Shlita, offers a powerful insight into the half-shekel requirement. He explains that a Jew should view every occurrence, every circumstance, every issue that he faces, as being only half of the story. Another side to the story always exists. Whatever he might be going through right now is only part of a larger picture. With emunah and bitachon, faith and trust, in Hashem, he will understand the "rest of the story".

Numerous stories and parables have received written and oral expression, which emphasize this verity. I have selected a classic culled from the Kisvei, writings, of **Horav Chaim Vital, zl**, which he redacted from his revered Rebbe, the holy **Arizal**. A story of this caliber from such a source increases its authenticity and should enrich and ennoble our Emunah:

Yosef was a young married man who, together with his younger brother, would visit their widowed mother after shul on Friday night. They entered the house to notice their mother reading a Tehillim that had belonged to their father, who had passed away two years earlier. When their mother looked up from the sefer, they noticed that her eyes were damp from crying.

Yosef looked at her and said, "Imma, two years have passed since our father left us. Why are you still crying? It is enough! Imma, it is time to move on. Hashem made a decision. We must abide by it."

Their mother rose from her chair and said, "Yosef, you are right, but I cannot forget. I cannot stop crying. I miss him so much. I will make a special attempt especially for you to put a smile on my face and live with joy."

They spent some time together and bid one another Gutt Shabbos. The mother retired to bed in a much better mood than she had been in some time. Soon she began dreaming of an exquisite garden filled with the most beautiful, fragrant flowers. As she stood there in awe, an old man with a long, white beard appeared and asked if she wanted to see her late husband.

"Certainly," she said, and she followed him to a clearing where a large group of (what appeared to be) righteous men were listening intently to a shiur, lecture, being rendered by a young man. She looked closely and was shocked to see that the young rebbe was none other than her late husband.

"My husband, why did you leave me at such a young age? How are you able to teach Torah to the righteous ones in Gan Eden?"

"Let me explain to you," he began. "The world in which you live is but a place where gilgulim, transmigrated souls, are sent to complete the spiritual repair of their lives. The real world is up here.

During my first sojourn in life, I was a great Torah scholar. Because of my overriding desire to learn Torah, I refused to marry and raise a family. It would be too time-consuming.

When I came here I was told that I had failed to fulfill the first mitzvah of the Torah. Thus, I was compelled to return to marry and have a family – but only long enough to set my sons straight on the path of Torah. Once this was achieved, I was called back."

"Why does our son not have good fortune in his business ventures?" she asked.

"Do you remember that Yosef was involved in a din Torah, litigation, with another Jew? Well, although he won, the other fellow was very angry and was about to take revenge against Yosef. My prayers on Yosef's behalf succeeded in sparing him, but at the expense of his financial success. The decree against him will have reached its designated time in one more year, when his ventures will take an about-face."

"Why does our son, David, have such difficulty in finding his appropriate match?" she asked.

"His zivug, match, is presently only thirteen years old. She will move to your city in five years, at which time they will 'meet' and become engaged."

"One last question: Why did our youngest die at the age of three at the hands of a gentile alcoholic? This was such a tragedy for us. Why?" she asked.

"Our youngest son was the gilgul of a great tzaddik who, at birth was kidnapped from his parents and raised by gentiles. Later on, he was redeemed and grew up to be a Torah luminary. Those few years during which he had nursed from a gentile, however, prevented his soul from ascending to its rightful position in Gan Eden. It was necessary for it to return in the body of our son, to nurse from a righteous woman, for which position you were chosen."

"But why did his death have to come through such tragic circumstances?" she asked.

"Our son was destined to die at a young age regardless," he explained. "A great decree against our community was decreed in Heaven which would have annihilated it. Our son's neshamah was chosen to serve as atonement, thereby averting disaster for our community."

He concluded his dialogue, saying to his wife, "You must move on. An appropriate match has been proposed for you. You should marry him, and you will be blessed with a happy, long life. Your suffering is over."

She woke up from her dream with a new, refreshed feeling, understanding that it was truly time to move on.

This is not an isolated incident, but one, which occurs constantly to each and every one of us. We just require greater insight and belief in order to confront the challenges of life.



אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ – '*However, you must observe My Shabbasos*.' (31:13)

תִּשְׁמֹרוּ is written in the plural, implying that the exhortation to observe Shabbos is being spoken to a group.

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, commented, "It is not enough that you and your household observe Shabbos. You must see to it that other Jews also observe Shabbos."

Thus, it is not a singular command. Rarely do we find the Torah instructing us not only to personally observe, but also, to see to it that our observance influences others.

I write this specifically because our observance, our valuing Shabbos, our sensitivity to this mitzvah is the only way the alienated Jew will ever come to appreciate Shabbos. When he sees how much it means to us: externally, our changed demeanour both in the way we dress and the way we act; and internally, our being at peace with ourselves, with our family, suffused by the glow and warmth of Shabbos, then it will imbue him with second thoughts.

Shabbos attests to Hashem as the Creator of the world. As He "worked" for the Six Creation days, He "rested" on the Seventh day. We are to emulate the Creator. Shabbos is an eternal sign between

Hashem and His People. To profane Shabbos is to deny the sign, to eschew the bond created by this relationship.

Sforno observes, regarding the admonition not to build the Mishkan on Shabbos, אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ כִּי אוֹת הִוא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, "*However, you must observe My Shabbasos, for it is a sign between Me and you*," that if we damage, undermine and ultimately destroy the **אות**, sign, of Shabbos, there will be no reason for Hashem's Divine Presence to rest among the Jewish People.

In other words, one primary contingency in building the Mishkan is that Shabbos be respected and observed. If there is no Shabbos – then there is no need for the Mishkan. The two go hand in hand with one another.

The sacred nature of the Mishkan applies as well to the Bais HaMikdash. Therefore, the imperative that Shabbos be observed as a contingency for warranting Hashem's Divine Presence holds true as well for the Bais HaMikdash. Our Batei Mikdash are gone, with a mere reminder of those glorious days and that magnificent edifice -- the Kosel Maaravi. Should we not accord the remnant of what is left of the Bais HaMikdash with equal respect?

Hashem's Presence is inextricably bound up with shemiras Shabbos, Sabbath observance. It is, therefore, perplexing and hypocritical that those who long ago eliminated Shabbos from their religious preferences would battle for their own form of ritual observance, which is inconsistent with halachah.

Why bother? Why is Shabbos any less of an important ritual?

A building is a holy place only as long as that edifice serves as a repository for holiness. One cannot sever their religious relationship with Hashem, the Source of Holiness, and expect the kedushah to be available for him.

לָדַֽעַת כִּֽי אֲנִ֣י ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶֽם – '***To know that I am Hashem, Who makes you holy***.' (31:13)

Chazal (Shabbos 10b) teach, **אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְמֹשֶׁה: מַתָּנָה טוֹבָה יֵשׁ לִי בְּבֵית גְּנָזַי וְשַׁבָּת שְׁמָהּ, וַאֲנִי מְבַקֵּשׁ לִיתְּנָהּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵךְ וְהוֹדִיעָם** - "***Hashem said to Moshe, 'I have a good (very special) gift in My treasury (where I keep My precious treasures). It is called Shabbos. I wish to give it to Klal Yisrael. Go and inform them.'***"



Shabbos is a precious treasure that Hashem saved especially for His children. We must learn to appreciate the unique nature of this gift, and, above all, how much it means to Hashem.

The Tzaddik, **Horav Avraham, zl, m'Porisav** related in the name of the **Chidushei HaRim**, the meaning of **לֵךְ וְהוֹדִיעָם**, "*Go and inform them*" (which Hashem said to Moshe). Leich implies to go in the future. This means, says the Gerer Rebbe, that every Erev Shabbos, Moshe Rabbeinu himself goes to every Jew and informs him that Shabbos is coming.

This implies that regardless of a Jew's geographical position – both physical and spiritual – the distance notwithstanding – Moshe will notify him that Shabbos is arriving. Thus, every Jew is able to sense the kedushah, holiness, of Shabbos when it arrives.

Anyone who has ever reached out to an unaffiliated Jew and invited him for Shabbos will notice a certain sense of calm, a spiritual uplifting which overcomes him when he experiences his first Shabbos. This applies to every Jew, every Shabbos, everywhere.



The Bais Avraham m'Slonim once visited Teveriah. On Shabbos morning, after davening, he sat at the table together with his Chassidim. They had recited Kiddush, and potato kugel was brought out to the table. The Rebbe (as is customary) divided the kugel and gave shirayim, small portions, to each chasid. They began to grab for the kugel, which annoyed the Rebbe.

He related the following story (conveying a lesson to them). The holy **Horav Shmelke zl, m'Nikolsburg**, was well-known for his generosity. He would give everything that he had to the poor. As a result, he was the primary address to which to turn for those in need.

One day, a man who was obviously a victim of abject poverty stood by his door with his hand out, begging for alms. The Rebbe was beside himself since he did not have a cent in his house. Suddenly, he reminded himself that his wife kept her jewelry hidden beneath the mattress in her room. He went there and removed a gold ring set with a beautiful diamond.

When he brought the ring to the poor man, the fellow began to dance with glee and left. The Rebbetzin was coming up the walk and noticed this poor man who was all smiles, and she began to wonder what her revered husband could have given him. They had nothing at home.

When she discovered what Rav Shmelke had done, she screamed, "That ring is worth three hundred rubles. The poor man has no idea what you just gave him! He will go and sell it for a few pennies!"

Immediately, Rav Shmelke ran out and searched for the man. When he caught up with him, he said, "I just wanted you to know that the

ring that I gave you is worth hundreds of rubles. Do not sell yourself short."

That Shabbos, Rav Shmelke related the incident to his Chassidim. In summation he said, "This is what Hashem told Moshe, '*I have a special gift for you in My treasury and Shabbos is its name. I wish to give it to Klal Yisrael. Go and inform them.*'

What is meant by, 'Go inform them'? Hashem was teaching Moshe to see to it that the Jewish People understand the extraordinary value and significance of Shabbos. They should learn to appreciate its value – not to give it away for a piece of kugel!

There is much more to Shabbos than Kiddush with its many foods. Shabbos is a holy day reserved for achieving spiritual ascendency, for taking stock of our lives and charting a course for spiritual success in the following week. It certainly is not about kugel!"

וַיַּ֣רְא הָעָ֗ם כִּ֤י בֹשֵׁ֨שׁ מֹשֶׁה֙ לָרֶ֣דֶת מִן־הָהָ֔ר וַיִּקָּהֵ֥ל הָעָ֖ם עַל־אַהֲרֹ֑ן וַיֹּ֣אמְרוּ֩ אֵלָ֨יו קוּם֙ עֲשֵׂה־לָ֣נוּ אֱלֹהִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֥ר יֵלְכ֖וּ לְפָנֵ֑ינוּ – '***The people saw that Moshe had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aharon and said to him, Rise up, make for us gods***!' (32:1)



One error, one simple mistake was all that was needed to precipitate Klal Yisrael's tragic rebellion, their egregious demonstration of infidelity-- the construction of the Golden Calf.

How did a people who had recently received the Torah under circumstances that were unreal become so faithless, almost overnight?

It was all due to a mistake, an error in judgment. They thought that Moshe was to have been back, but they erred. Once they exhibited fear, Satan was certain that he had ensnared them. They were putty in his hands. He seized the opportunity and created an illusion of a deceased Moshe being carried in Heaven. - This is all that was needed to break their resolve.

I could understand this, had this not occurred after they had witnessed the greatest Revelation in history. After being privy to hearing the Shechinah and seeing such an unparalleled display of Heavenly-orchestrated miracles and wonders, they should have maintained their faith. An error, regardless of its magnitude, should not have been able to sway them.

In his commentary, **Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita**, **quotes Horav Moshe, zl, m'Kobrin**, who says, "A moment of yishuv ha'daas, serenity, calm/relaxation, is worth more than all of the money in the world."

The ability to have a settled mind, to think rationally concerning the issues confronting a person, is invaluable. First and foremost, it is difficult to serve Hashem unless one's mind is tranquil and at peace. Anxiety undermines the ability to cogitate properly before Whom one stands. Without serenity, one is hard-pressed to maintain middos tovos, proper character traits, or success in Torah study. Furthermore, it is only when one is at peace that he may properly introspect and clarify what is truly important to him in life and the steps he must take to achieve success.

Obviously, today's society with its advanced technology does not lend itself to yishuv ha'daas. Life is fast-paced, and we are weighed down with obligations; the drive to earn a living sits heavily on all of us.

Is it any wonder that one who, despite all of these impediments, is able to achieve a sense of quietude; has a treasure of greater value than material wealth?

Having said this, let us return to our question: How did the Jewish people, who had just received the Torah, fall under the nefarious influence of the erev rav, mixed multitude, to rebel against Hashem, who had just-and continued-to do so much for them?



The Tzaddik, Rav Moshe Mordechai from Lelov, ztz"l quotes an insightful observation from the **Nesivos Shalom**, which I feel explains much of the failure of our People to stand resolute upon being confronted throughout history with the challenge of anti-Semitism.

This insight explains why many (following the French Revolution) absconded and fell prey to the malevolent Haskalah, Enlightenment, which laid the groundwork for the scourge of the German Reform movement.

In Megillas Esther (9:24), we find that Haman ha'rasha, the wicked, sought **לְהֻמָּם וּלְאַבְּדָם**, "***to confuse and to destroy them (the Jews)***."

The Nesivos Shalom explains that Haman knew quite well that he could not obliterate the Jewish People when they had yishuv ha'daas. When they were calm and relaxed, they were a formidable enemy whom he could not touch. Therefore, his first attempt was **לְהֻמָּם**, to confuse and frighten them with his evil decrees. Then – and only then – once they were not in control of their minds, when they were not thinking rationally due to the external pressure – could he effectively try to annihilate them.

One final note. The Lelover cites Chazal (Bereishis 61) who compare the yetzer hora, evil inclination, aka the Satan, to a fly. A fly disturbs a person's serenity and peace of mind by flying into their faces and buzzing in their ears. This, too, is the yetzer hora's goal –

to disturb our peace of mind, to agitate and create anxiety, so that we are unable to properly think.



Furthermore, flies also tend to feed on open wounds. They carry filth and disease, transmitting the germs to the wound, causing an infection, which can be debilitating.

The yetzer hora follows a similar pattern. Once a person sins, the yetzer hora's goal is to see to it that the person does not repent of his sin.

The Chassidic Masters teach, "*The yetzer hora is not concerned with the sin – it is the accompanying melancholy that he generates that is important. Thus, the yetzer hora is like a fly that steals peace of mind from a person.*"

The Jewish nation was not a candidate for rebelling against Hashem until the yetzer hora confused them with a vision of Moshe's death. This brought on fear and depression. True, they were on a spiritual high, but such a high works only when the person is at ease with himself, when he is calm and serene.

Once depression and melancholy set in he is fodder in the hands of the yetzer hora – as evinced by the cheit ha'eigel. - Their aveirah, transgression, was the result of a loss of serenity, leading to an inability to think cogently.

"Bitachon in Hashem frees a man from being confined to this world." ~ The Alter of Novardok.

לַחְשֹׁב מַחֲשָׁבֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת בַּזָּהָב וּבַכֶּסֶף וּבַנְּחֹשֶׁת – '***To weave designs, to work with gold, silver and copper***.' (31:4)

The Jewish mind has throughout time proven itself to be extraordinary. While we have a reputation for being gifted with an inordinate level of acumen in proportion with the size of our nation, it is specifically in the area of commerce, i.e. making money, that our worldly reputation seems to soar and take on a life all of its own.

While the Jewish mind shines in all areas of human endeavour -- from our primary vocation, Torah study, to the various disciplines of science, mathematics, medicine, law, social services, etc.-- one thing all Jews have in common is the way in which they use their money.

As Rachamanim bnei Rachamanim, compassionate sons (and daughters) of compassionate ones, we are all in one way or another devoted to chesed, carrying out acts of loving kindness, in order to help those who are less fortunate.

Money plays a vital role, without which we could not be such great baalei tzedakah. Perhaps, we might postulate that our inordinate success coincides with our commitment to helping others. Otherwise, what purpose does money really have? One can live in just so many homes, wear just so many suits, drive just so many cars. The money is not there for us to hoard; rather, it is for us to share.

With the above in mind, I share the following story, which at first reads like any other tzadik story. It is the punch line that is different, changing the entire focus and lesson of the story.

The Pupa Rav, Harav Yosef Greenwald zl, arrived in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, NY, shortly after the Holocaust. His goal was to rebuild the Chassidic dynasty that had been decimated during the war. His passion and fervor, coupled with uncompromising integrity and love of his Jewish brothers, helped him to secure a strong group of followers, which quickly grew by leaps and bounds.



Soon the building that had served as their home was no longer sufficient. They had to move into larger quarters. They looked to Boro Park as the place where they would establish their chassidus. As part of the foundation of a strong Chassidus, it was vital that Pupa establish its own yeshivah from cheder through bais medrash, where the students would receive a strong education based upon the principles of learning which distinguished Pupa Chassidus.

One problem held them back from seeing the realization of their dream: money. The vast majority of Pupa Chassidim were not men of means; they were barely eking out a living. Therefore, the steering committee decided to arrange for a dinner which would, hopefully, generate funds for their building project. - In order to motivate attendance, the committee arranged to have the Rav attend the dinner.

Not to waste the Rav's precious time, they decided that tickets for the dinner would cost one thousand dollars. This way, only the seriously committed would attend.

The crowd of well-to-do supporters were very inspired by the Rav's presence. Toward the end of the dinner, each person's contribution was publicly announced, followed by a blessing from the Rav.

As per pre-arrangement, every gift was one thousand dollars or more. It was, therefore, surprising when one of the wealthiest Chassidim, an individual who was not only a man of means, but also a

scholar and a devout follower of the Pupa Rav, announced that he was contributing two hundred dollars toward the project.

Surprised, the Rav commented, "I thought that we had requested a thousand-dollar minimum contribution?"

The man replied, "Rebbe, I have been blessed with only daughters. Thus, I will not personally benefit from the school. Two hundred dollars is what I feel I should contribute."

"If this is the case," the Rav countered, "if you give a larger donation, you might be blessed with a son." Hearing this, the Chasid asked, "Rebbe, is that a guarantee?"

"There are no guarantees," the Rav replied. "However, I am certain that a sizable donation will generate much nachas, Heavenly pleasure. I cannot imagine that your gift will be overlooked."

"If that is the case," the Chasid said, "I will immediately give ten thousand dollars toward the project." The man wrote a check, and the Rav blessed him to soon hold his son in his arms.

Nine months later, the Chasid's wife gave birth to a healthy boy. The joy that permeated their home was palpable. Because the Rav's blessing had played such a pivotal role in realizing the birth of his son, the Chasid asked the Rav to serve as sandek, hold the baby, during the actual Bris, circumcision.

The Rav agreed; the Bris, however, had to be held at the Rav's summer home in the Catskill Mountains. It was a long trip for such a young infant, but how often does one have an opportunity to have the Pupa Rav serve as sandek?

The infant's father had a brother who was very wealthy. His fortune was valued in the high millions. Sadly, one blessing eluded him: he was childless. He and his wife had been married for years and had exhausted every therapy. They had visited doctors and clinics all over the world, to no avail.

He was incredulous that his brother would make such a long trip with a newborn infant, just so that the Pupa Rav would serve as sandek. When it was explained to him that it was the Rav's blessing that had generated this blessing, his attitude quickly changed. He immediately approached the Rav and asked how much he would have to give in order to obtain a blessing for a child. Name the amount, and he would write a cheque.

The Pupa Rav responded with his usual humility, "Am I a contractor who accepts to perform a service for a given price? When your brother came to me, it was an *eis ratzon*. We were in dire need of funds to build the yeshiva, and anyone who would help us would have an incredible merit. As a result, Hashem looked kindly upon your brother, and he was blessed with a son. Our situation has, Baruch Hashem, changed for the better. I do not know if the merit of giving will have the same effect."

The wealthy man did not give up hope. He turned to the Rav's gabbai, secretary, and said, "Please, anytime that the Rav is in need of funds, call me immediately. I will help! Do not hesitate to call – even if it is in the middle of the night. I will respond positively to your summons!"

A number of months passed, and the Rav intimated to his secretaries that it was necessary to build apartments for the young married men in their growing kollel. Sadly, there was no money available for such a huge project.

When the gabbaim heard this, they immediately summoned the wealthy brother and related to him the Rav's need. The man came running: "Rebbe, I will donate any amount of money that the Rav asks. However, I need a guarantee that I will be blessed with a child!"

The Rav replied, "Am I in place of Hashem? All I can say is to give whatever you can, and Hashem will do His."

The man removed a blank cheque from his pocket and said, "Rebbe can write for any amount up to seven figures."

The Rav took the cheque and filled it in for $180! Incredulous, the man simply asked, "Is that all?" to which the Rav replied, "It is ten times chai. You want living children. Hashem should bless you."

Nonetheless, the man would not accept the Rav's response, and he proceeded to write another cheque for $10 million, with the hope that he would be blessed with a child!

Several months went by and nothing happened; his wife had yet to conceive. People do not just dole out $10 million, regardless of how wealthy they might be. - Once again, the man visited the Pupa Rav and pleaded, "Rebbe, I still have not been answered. Please help me!"

"I told you that it is not in my hands," the Rav said. "However, I pray for you constantly that you be blessed with a child."

The man left in a somewhat ambivalent mood that went from hopelessness to hope. He would not give up on the Rav's prayers.

Sadly, a short while later, the man's world came crashing down with the bitter news of the passing of the Pupa Rav. His world became bleak and dark. Now what was he going to do?

His depression did not last long, when nine months after the Rav's passing, the man's wife gave birth to a healthy baby girl. What the Rav could not affect in this world, he had rectified in the next world.

A few weeks later, the Rav's son and successor summoned the leaders of his Chassidic court to his office and showed them a sealed envelope, signed by his holy father.

The following words were written on the envelope: "On the day that Mr. So and So's wife has a child; you may open up this envelope and use its contents to complete our Kollel project."

The Pupa Rav would not avail himself of the wealthy man's money until he had upheld his end of the deal. This is the meaning of greatness.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה רָאִיתִי אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף הוּא. וְעַתָּה הַנִּיחָה לִּי וְיֶחַר־אַפִּי בָהֶם וַאֲכַלֵּם – *'Hashem said to Moshe, "I have seen this people, and behold! It is a stiff-necked people. And desist from me…and I shall annihilate them.'* (32:9,10)



The severity of the **חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל**, sin of the Golden Calf, is beyond description. It represents an egregious rebellion against Hashem, a sin for which we still are paying for to this very day.

One would think that, after Hashem related to Moshe Rabbeinu the sequence of events leading up to the sin, He would have addressed the iniquitous sin which the people so flagrantly committed.

Idol worship immediately after receiving the Torah was an unpardonable sin. Yet, all Hashem says is that Klal Yisrael is an **עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף**, stiff-necked people.

This is why Hashem is prepared to annihilate the entire nation – due to their self- asserting, pretentious nature? Being stiff-necked is certainly not a positive character trait, but is it the most important attribute in describing the sin of the Golden Calf?

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, explains that **קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף** is actually an extension of the sin of the Golden Calf. Rashi defines **קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף** as, "*They turn their neck against those who rebuke them and (thus) refuse to listen.*" This is quite possibly why they killed Chur when he attempted to reprove and stop them from continuing their descent to spiritual oblivion.

Therefore, he explains that the actual sin was creating and worshipping the Golden Calf. But it was their refusal to listen to

reason, to accept responsibility – by continuing to justify their nefarious sin – that caused their punishment.

We must realize that sin is an indication of error, of weakness, of a spiritual falling out. The justification which follows the sin, however, the qualifying of the sin, the lying to and degrading of those who only want to help, actually causes the punishment.

This is similar to transforming the sin into a mutiny against Hashem. This does not chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, in any way gloss over the sin; it is only a perspective on the punishment that follows.

We all make mistakes; we all have our weak moments, but to transform them into ideologies, to rebuff and abuse those who would help us return, is the ultimate chutzpah. It is kshei oref, for which there is no countenance.

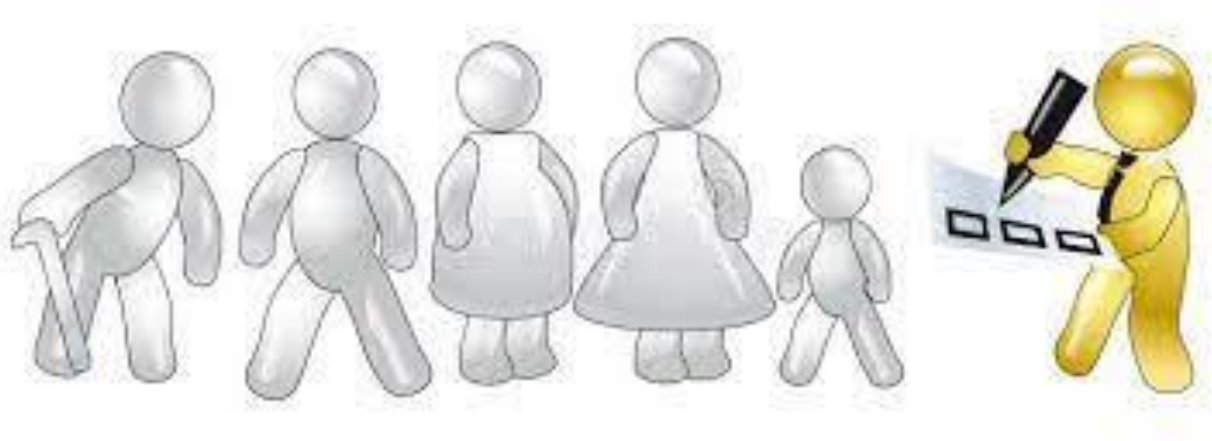
The first step following a spiritual fall is to concede that one has sinned – not to blame it on the whole world, as many do. Parents are the first scapegoats, followed by the system. It is never the individual who executed the sin.

This is why the sin of the Golden Calf still haunts us to this very day. We are still qualifying our egregious behavior, refusing to accept the responsibility, to listen to reason, to talk it out. Why? Because that would mean conceding that we might be wrong. This is where our kshei oref kicks in, preventing us from accepting responsibility for our deplorable behavior.

"Every difficulty that comes to a person is a direct result of the fact that Hashem loves them and wants to purify their soul.

The greater the difficulty, the greater the potential for spiritual growth. ~ Rebbe Nachmon of Breslov.

וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה' בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם. זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ. הֶעָשִׁיר לֹא־יַרְבֶּה וְהַדַּל לֹא יַמְעִיט מִמַּחֲצִית הַשָּׁקֶל
'Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul… This shall they give – everyone who passes through the census – a half-shekel… The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a shekel.' (30:12,13,15)



The Jewish census was taken by having the people contribute an item which would then be counted. In this instance, when the nation was counted in the wilderness, they were instructed to each give a half-shekel coin which was later used for the construction and maintenance of the Mishkan.

Participation in this census via the half-shekel coin was mandatory on each and every Jew, who was to give an equal amount – a half-shekel. This was mandated regardless of financial ability or lack thereof – everyone gave the same.

Why a half-shekel? Why did everyone contribute an equal amount?

Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, explains it succinctly. Viewed objectively, not even the most complete and perfect contribution of any one individual can achieve the whole of the work that must be done. The effort of any one individual can be only a fragment of a whole. An equally selfless sacrifice from his fellowman is required in order to produce the whole.

The equality of rich and poor alike expresses the symbolic character of the contribution, which is fixed at a half-shekel. If each person contributes an equal amount, then no one person "weighs more" on

Hashem's Divine scale than the other. We all stand equally before Hashem.

Alternatively, each Jew should view himself as incomplete without the other Jew. We are a unit. Also, a Jew should view whatever he gives as being only part of what is expected of him. One should never feel that "I have given enough."

This explains why we do not give a whole coin; but why do we specifically give a half-coin? If the objective is to give less than a whole, then anything less than a whole should suffice. Why the exact amount of a half-shekel? Furthermore, why may the wealthy person not express himself with greater generosity? If he has it – let him give it!

I would like to take a homiletic approach and present two different expositions, both of which intimate a Jew's collective responsibility to his fellow Jew.

Our people have produced generation after generation of Jews who are resolutely committed and wholly devoted to Hashem, His Torah and mitzvos. We have overcome challenges, triumphed over adversity, and surmounted obstacles to our faith with a fierce single-mindedness, and an unfaltering sense of commitment. We brook no compromise in our service of the Almighty. Nothing stands in our way. Why is this? What motivates us so?

The following Torah thought from **Horav Matisyahu Solomon, zt'l**, will elucidate this phenomenon. The Torah (Vayikra 10:12) relates Moshe Rabbeinu's conversation with Aharon HaKohen and his two sons, Elazar and Isamar, following the tragic deaths of their older brothers, Nadav and Avihu. - "And Moshe spoke to Aharon and to Elazar and Isamar, the children of Aharon, who remained."

The word ha'nosarim, who remained, seems superfluous. Aharon had four sons, two of whom perished. Obviously, the other two, are the remaining sons. Why does the Torah underscore this fact?

The Mashgiach explains that this term implies an added responsibility placed upon the shoulders of Elazar and Isamar. They were survivors, and those who survive when others perish are charged with the enormous responsibility of guaranteeing that the Torah will endure in ensuing generations.

The survivor carries a dual responsibility on his shoulders: his own and that of those who did not make it, who did not have a second chance. The survivor must be able to look at himself in the mirror and reflect, "I am here – others are not. Life cannot go on as usual. I must make up the difference."

The survivor may not tolerate compromise, because he is not acting only for himself personally. He carries with him the added weight of those who did not survive.

When one is a survivor he has no room for negotiation, no room for error, no room for concession. When he serves Hashem, he may not slack off, because even if he could somehow, someway, find a way of excusing his personal responsibility – it does not mitigate his responsibility towards the "others."

A Jew gives a machatzis ha'shekel, half-shekel, to remind him that he is truly only a half. He may never forget "who" rides on his shoulders.

We are a nation of survivors. We have survived the Romans, Greeks, Crusaders, Inquisition, pogroms and the Holocaust. Many have died under the most brutal and cruel circumstances. We are the survivors, the fortunate few, who thus have a responsibility to remember that what we do is only a half. We must carry out the other half on behalf of those who did not make it, so as to make it whole.

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, was the recognized leader of Orthodoxy in pre-World War II Europe. He was revered and respected by all segments of Orthodoxy: Ashkenazi, Sephardi,

Chassidic and Yeshivish. Everyone heeded his word because it exemplified the very apex of integrity and Torah scholarship.

When the Second World War broke out, Rav Elchanan fled with his yeshivah (Baranowitz) to Vilna. Before the accursed Nazis entered Vilna, he traveled to the city of Slabodka, near Kovno, with the intention of returning soon to Vilna. The Germans, however, quickly seized control of Lithuania, and Rav Elchanan was forced to remain in Slabodka.

On the 11th of Tammuz, 1941, the Nazis decimated the city of Slabodka and executed its Jewish population. Prior to their brutal murder, Rav Elchanan calmly addressed his friends, rabbinic leaders and the Jewish community. He spoke softly, articulating every word with the inner calm for which he was noted.

His last words have been recorded for posterity. I feel that the underlying motif of his farewell is connected to the idea of Jewish survivorship and kinship for others. We do not live only for ourselves. Every Jew is a "half." - He was a person who was acutely aware that no Jew lives only for himself.

These are the holy Rosh Yeshivah's parting words:

"**Apparently, they consider us tzaddikim in Heaven, for we were chosen to atone for Klal Yisrael with our lives. If so – we must repent completely, here and now. Time is short. The road to the Ninth Fort (where the Slabodka/Kovno martyrs were slaughtered) is rapidly approaching. We must realize that our sacrifice will be more acceptable when it is accompanied with repentance. We will thereby rescue our brothers and sisters in America.**

We are now about to perform the greatest possible mitzvah! 'You destroyed it (the Bais Hamikdash) with fire, and with fire you shall rebuild it.' The fire which will now consume our bodies, is the same fire which will give rise to the rebirth of the Jewish People."

For the second explanation, I cite a short vignette that I used a number of years ago. It has not lost its timely message: Chazal teach

that the distinguished Tanna, Rabbi Tanchuma, would always purchase two portions of food – one for himself and one for the poor.

Deriving a critical lesson from Rabbi Tanchuma's behavior, a young father was determined to impart this message to his children. Thus, every time they would go to the supermarket to shop, they would always pick up an extra item and place it into the shopping cart – an extra container of milk, a can of tuna fish, a bag of potato chips, etc. They would store the items, and every few weeks they would go to the local food g'mach, pantry, which distributed food to the poor, to drop off a bag of food items.

While in the supermarket, the father took a box of Cheerios off the shelf and said, "This will be our gift today." His six-year-old son picked up the box from the cart and replaced it with a box of Cocoa Puffs from the shelf and place it into the cart. His father looked at him incredulously, and asked, "What is wrong with Cheerios?" The young boy looked up to his father through his large, innocent eyes, and said, "Because there are hungry kids out there too – and kids like Cocoa Puffs better than Cheerios!"

Machatzis ha'shekel is a lesson in how a Jew should give charity. When he spends on himself, his family, his personal needs, he must take into consideration that there are Jews out there who are in great need. Whatever he is prepared to spend for his personal needs, he should likewise be prepared to spend for his fellow Jew.

Furthermore, not only must he give his fellow, but he must also give him an equal portion of equal quality – a perfect half – which will complement his half. This is why it is an even machatzis, half, so that the contributor knows to give an equal portion.

"The cloudy days of life are forecasting a downpour of Bracha from above." ~ Noda B' Yehuda.

כִּי עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף הוּא – '*For they are a stiff-necked nation.*' (34:9)

When the Torah describes the sin of the Golden Calf, we observe Hashem referring to the Jewish People as "a stiff-necked nation." It almost implies that it was this character trait – that seems to be inherently Jewish – which is blamed for their capitulation to the Golden Calf. It, therefore, begs elucidation why Moshe Rabbeinu uses this very same character trait as a defence for saving the Jews? - How can a trait which appears to have played a pivotal and negative role in the catalyzation of such an egregious sin, actually be the reason that Moshe presents to Hashem for our forgiveness?

Horav Yisrael Meir Lau, Shlita, explains that as Klal Yisrael's quintessential leader, Moshe was presenting the very reason for remaining with the Jewish People – despite their present indiscretion. Moshe turned to Hashem, and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, You are castigating the nation because of their stiff-necked nature. Is this really a negative trait? Is this a reason to find them guilty?

Indeed, I think that this very trait is what distinguishes the Jewish People from the rest of the world. This indicates that they have a backbone, an ability to withstand outside pressure and numerous difficult challenges to their faith. On the contrary, 'Let Hashem walk in our midst.' Let us look to the future.

Every nation caved in under various pressures. All of the supposed "faithful," when under pressure, wavered and resorted to a host of other beliefs, including Islam or Christianity. Why? Because they had no backbone – were not stiff-necked – were weak!

"True, my nation sinned gravely against You. But, because of their strong, stiff-necked nature, they will repent and cling to You, and never renege on their commitment to Hashem. We are Jews because we are stiff-necked and have been able to triumph over life's challenges to our faith."

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת כִּי קֹדֶשׁ הִוא לָכֶם – '***You shall observe the Shabbos, for it is holy to you***.' (31:14)



Shabbos is to the Jew much more than a mitzvah imperative. Shabbos is a holy day, consecrated from the beginning of time by the Almighty Himself.

This is an idea which we often do not consider. If Hashem made this day holy, what right do we mortals have to desecrate it?

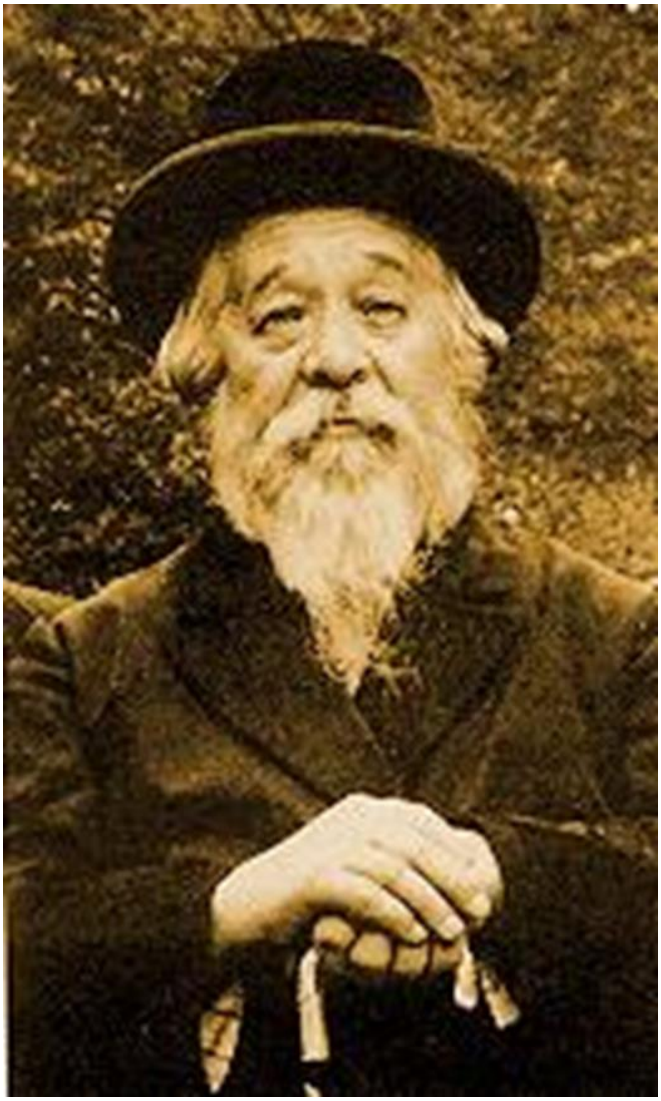
People tend to offer two common excuses/answers to this question. First, "I do not care." This is the response of the individual who disregards the Torah. It has no bearing on his life. Such a person simply does not fit into the equation. He has written himself off from the Torah. He has divorced himself from the centrepiece, the nucleus, of Judaism.

Second, is the Jew who claims to be a Jew at heart. He cares, but it is difficult for him to accept the yoke of mitzvos. He is a sort of non-practicing Jew. Regrettably, he is very much like a flashlight without its battery. It is still called a flashlight – but, without the battery, what function does it have?

If we keep in mind that Shabbos is holy and that devout Jews embrace this idea, we will better understand and appreciate the following vignettes:

One Shabbos morning **Horav Avraham, zl, m'Kopichnitz** [named after the **Apta Rov, the *Oheiv Yisroel***, of whom he was a direct descendant.] was walking to the Mikveh, to immerse himself prior to

davening. He chanced upon two young Jewish men who were not wearing headgear (hat or a yarmulke) standing outside the Mikveh. One of them held a lit cigarette between his fingers.



The righteous Kopichnitzer turned to him and said, "I do not know you well, but I am certain that within your chest pounds a good Jewish heart. If you would realize how much pain you are causing me by smoking on Shabbos, you would surely not smoke."

The young man was moved by the Rebbe's sincerity, and immediately disposed of the cigarette. His friend, however, was not so acquiescent. "If we want to smoke, what is it your business? We are not in Europe. This is a free country. If I have no problem with your Shabbos observance, why then should you deprive me of my pleasure?"

The Rebbe smiled, "I recognize you, too," he said. "You also have a good heart. If you see someone fall and hurt himself, you would immediately run to help him. Why? Why do you simply not say, 'This is a free country, I do not have to help him!'

You should know that one who profanes Shabbos breaks not only his leg; he endangers his entire spiritual dimension. He is punished with Heavenly excision.

If I walk down the street and notice a Jew bleeding to death – will I not do everything to save him? Surely, I would be wrong to say, 'It is a free country!'"

The young man understood fully well where the Rebbe was going with his critique. "Rebbe, what should I do?" he asked. "Keep Shabbos, observe it properly." The Rebbe said.

"I cannot do that. I already take off on Sunday. There is no way I can be free for two days."

"I understand," said the Rebbe, "but, at least, observe this Shabbos." The young man acquiesced and observed that Shabbos.

Sometime later, he visited the Rebbe and said, "Once I observed that one Shabbos, my entire outlook was altered, and I now accept upon myself to observe Shabbos every week."



The second story takes us back seventy years to the Lodz Ghetto: Unique among Polish cities, Lodz was able to secure an agreement with the accursed Nazis to allow its Jewish citizens to work for the Third Reich. In return, the city would be designated as a labour camp, rather than an extermination camp. This, of course, did not prevent its inhabitants from succumbing to starvation, deprivation of health, infection and disease.

Furthermore, occasionally, the Nazis selected the infirm and sickly and sent them away to the extermination camps. So, yes, Lodz was not as dreadful a ghetto as the others, but it was a ghetto no less, and far from a happy place.

In 1944, when it was clear that the tide had turned against them, the Nazis saw the Russians breathing down their necks and poised

for an attack on Lodz, they began liquidating a good portion of the Jewish population. In the end, only 10,000 Jews remained in this once beautiful Jewish city.

There was a factory in Lodz which, prior to the occupation, had belonged to a Jew. Now it was under Nazi control. Its workers, however, were all Jewish.

Among the workers was an individual who was nicknamed Reb Shabbos because he related everything to Shabbos. Each day of the week was Shabbos related – either to the previous Shabbos or to the coming Shabbos. No one knew his origins. They knew only that his knowledge of Judaism seemed to be limited, but his knowledge and passion concerning Shabbos were prodigious.

Now that the Nazis had assumed ownership of the factory, the work week included Shabbos. This troubled Reb Shabbos, who rallied the men around him saying, "If we work an hour or two extra each day, we will fill our quota without having to work on Shabbos."

His suggestion was accepted. The workers would show up on Shabbos at the designated time, but, instead of working, they davened. A worker stood guard stood at the door to notify them if any Nazis were coming to visit.

One day, catastrophe struck. The guard had dozed off from sheer exhaustion and was not awake when one of the camp guards came visiting – during Mussaf Shemoneh Esrai.

This guard grew up in Lodz close to the Jewish neighborhood. He, therefore, was quite knowledgeable of Jewish tradition and conversant in Yiddish. "Ha! You are davening with such kavanah, concentration," the guard began. "Have you begun laining, reading the Torah? Who is the Baal Korei, Torah reader?" he asked with a devious smile across his face.

The men realized that they were in a very serious predicament and were resigned to accepting the worst. Suddenly, Reb Shabbos came

forth, approached the Nazi, and, with a sense of self-confidence, said, "Honored sir. Last night I had a compelling dream. My saintly father, may he rest in peace, appeared to me in the company of my departed mother.

He implored me, 'My son, tomorrow is my yahrtzeit. I beg of you to somehow convene a minyan and recite Kaddish. If you do not do this, I will descend from Heaven and take your life!' - He reiterated his request and once again emphasized the punishment.

"It is because of this dream that I convinced nine other Jews to join me in prayer. Please do not hold them responsible. They are here because of me."

The men could not believe what they were hearing. Essentially, Reb Shabbos was relinquishing his life for them. What was all the more shocking was the guard's reaction:

"Good, but this better not happen again. The next time, you might not be so fortunate to have a 'nice' guard like me."

The men breathed a sigh of relief. They could not believe what had just transpired. It was a miracle. Nazi guards were not understanding people. They were cruel fiends.

Apparently, there was something more to this Reb Shabbos than people realized. Indeed, as soon as the Nazi guard left the block, Reb Shabbos said, "Nu, let us return to our davening!"

A person is granted wisdom not only for his own benefit, but also for the benefit of others. One is obligated to share his Torah knowledge with others. Hence, if he is a reliable transmitter of this wisdom to others, Hashem will bestow even greater wisdom upon him, in order that he may continue to share it with others. ~ R' Shimon Shkop zt"l.

וְעַתָּה אִם־תִּשָּׂא חַטָּאתָם וְאִם־אַיִן מְחֵנִי נָא מִסִּפְרְךָ אֲשֶׁר כָּתָבְתָּ – '***And now if You would but forgive their sin! – but, if not, erase me from this book that You have written***.' (32:32)



Herein lies the test of the true Torah leader. What are his priorities? Is it now about himself, or is it about his flock?

Moshe Rabbeinu's first priority was to save his nation. The Almighty had threatened to put an end to this nation that seemed to keep on testing Him. Moshe first had to save them. Then he would see to it that they regain their status as the Chosen People.

Once again, it is important to underscore that it was not the entire nation that had sinned. It was a group of mixed-multitude who had come along for the ride. They could not handle the pressure. While their influence on the people was not great, they engendered a feeling of indifference within the people. Therefore, while the hamon am, common Jew, did not sin – he did not prevent the eirav rav from sinning either.

A gadol, Torah leader, places his flock's welfare before his own needs. He will even sustain personal material loss in order to spare his people pain.

The following analogy, quoted by **Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz, Shlita**, in his sefer Nitzotzos, aptly describes such a scenario:

A small village in Japan was built atop a hill. At the foot of the hill was a beach that banked the ocean. The residents of this area were

simple, hardworking family people. They lived a serene lifestyle, unbothered by the hustle and bustle of the big city.

A wise old man lived in this city – right at the top of the hill. He was revered by the townspeople for his erudition and spiritual integrity and was their leader. The sage was respected and loved by all, and these sentiments were reciprocated. The village was undergoing difficult times. During the last three years, it had not rained sufficiently, and the earth was parched. There was very little to eat, since the inhabitants sustained themselves through the produce which they yielded from farming. No crops – no food.

After three years of drought, it finally began to rain. The fields were irrigated, the seeds germinating and the crops returning. It was a bumper crop like no other. The people were excited and decided to throw a party to celebrate their good fortune.

There was no room on top of the hill, so they set up the festivities at the bottom of the hill, on the shore of the beach. Everyone joined in, except for the elderly sage and his grandson, who took care of him. The sage sat atop the hill and watched with great joy and anticipation as his community's inhabitants enjoyed themselves.

Suddenly, the sage and townspeople noticed the ocean move backward, at first just a few inches, then a few feet. Finally, the ocean came to rest fifteen feet from its original bank. When it pulled back, it left incredible treasures, such as fish and old coins of gold and silver left over from sunken ships.

The people were overwhelmed with the enormous bounty which had just literally been placed at their feet. They all began to dig in and claim the treasures. - From above, the sage watched the entire scene with great joy.

Suddenly, his joy turned to utter horror, as he saw the ocean rising up and forming a giant tidal wave. At any minute, this water would come crashing down on the unsuspecting people, crushing them all.

What would any able-bodied person do in such a situation? He would yell and scream, run down to warn the people, "Save yourselves! Save yourselves!" The elderly man was physically unable to walk – let alone run. His voice would never carry the distance to the ocean, let alone be heard over the cacophony of excitement as the people collected the ocean's booty.

The old man did not give up. He cared about the people. They were his community. He was their leader. He asked his grandson to take a torch, set it aflame and torch his house!

The fire spread immediately and, within a few moments, everyone at the foot of the hill looked up in disbelief as they saw fumes of smoke rising up from their beloved leader's home. They dropped what they were doing and ran to save their leader's home. As a result, when the ocean came crashing down, they were no longer there. The old man had saved their lives by sacrificing all of his worldly possessions.

The analogy is obvious; the lesson is compelling. Our Torah leaders, who sit high up on the hill, have an ability to see lucidly without being impaired by involvement in hoarding material booty that claims our allegiance away from Hashem.

We do not hear their cries, because we are too busy chasing our profligate visions of grandeur. We are so obsessed with obtaining the booty that we do not see the mountain of horror about to come crashing down on us.

The gedolim attempt to get our attention, but we do not hear them above the sounds of our excitement. We are programmed on self-destruct.

The fire in the hearts of the gedolim, the fiery passion with which they cry out to us, even at the expense of their own health and welfare, can wake us up. The question is: Will they be in time?

וְהָיָה כְּצֵאת מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֹהֶל יָקוּמוּ כָּל־הָעָם וְנִצְּבוּ אִישׁ פֶּתַח אָהֳלוֹ וְהִבִּיטוּ אַחֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה עַד־בֹּאוֹ הָאֹהֱלָה – '***Whenever Moshe would go out to the Ohel, the entire people would stand up and remain standing, everyone at the entrance of his tent, and they would gaze after Moshe until he arrived at the tent.***' (33:8)



Chazal (Midrash Tanchuma) derive from here the reverence one must accord to a Torah scholar. "*One must stand in the presence of an elderly Jew, a Torah scholar, an Av Bais Din, Head of the Rabbinical court, and a king.*"

Moshe Rabbeinu was the nation's quintessential leader; it would make sense that he be demonstrated such respect due to his position as leader – no different than a distinguished political leader, king, etc. Chazal do not say this explicitly. The fact that they mandate kavod talmid chacham, the respect one must show to a Torah scholar, indicates that Moshe Rabbeinu was respected because he was Rabban shel kol Yisrael, the Rebbe of the entire Jewish nation. - They were honoring the Torah which he embodied.

When one honors the Torah, he honors Hashem. The talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who devotes his life to Torah study is the present-day embodiment of a living Torah scroll. - This is how one honors Hashem.

Regrettably, the "modern" human mind has difficulty equating Torah with Hashem, or, rather, the individual who studies Torah with great diligence and devotion with carrying out Hashem's command. It is, therefore, no surprise that the contemporary secular Jew has no

understanding of the critical importance of the maintenance of Torah study in our midst.



Indeed, a few decades ago, shortly before the petirah, passing, of the venerable sage, the **Tchebiner Rav, Horav Dov Berish Weidenfeld, zl**, the Gaon was approached by representatives of the security forces of Eretz Yisrael to discuss issues of national security. They presented a bleak picture, emphasizing that the newly established State was under increased pressure from its surrounding enemies. This was their overture to getting him to "understand" permitting yeshivah students to leave the bais hamedrash and join the country's security forces.

The Tchebiner Rav listened to their request, and very calmly he replied, "Let me share a story with you. I am hopeful that, after hearing the story, you will on your own understand my response to your request:

A wagon laden with various wares attempted to make it up a steep mountain. The wagon driver nudged the horses along – at first, ever so gently, but then, as the climb became increasingly difficult, he applied greater pressure. At one point, the horses could no longer go on. They had reached their breaking point. It was just too much for them.

"The wagon driver descended from the wagon and began removing some of the heavier items that he was carrying. It was to no avail. The wagon would not budge. Finally, the driver removed everything from the wagon. Yet, the wagon was stuck in "park." It could not budge forward. - What was the driver to do?

Suddenly, he thought of a brilliant idea. The wagon's large wheels were made of steel. As such, they were quite heavy. If he could remove the wagon's four large wheels, the diminished weight should do the trick.

"Obviously, you understand that once its wheels had been removed, it was no longer a wagon. It was a large immovable box.

A similar idea applies to the phenomenon of Torah study with relationship to the Jewish People. Without Torah, we have no "wheels." We cannot move!

With their Torah study and prayer, the yeshivah students are truly protecting the Jewish nation. To halt their studies would be tantamount to removing the wheels of the wagon."

אָנָּא חָטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֲטָאָה גְדֹלָה – '***I implore! This people have committed a grievous sin***.' (32:31)

What did Moshe Rabbeinu mean by this statement? Of course the people had committed a grave sin. There was no question about this. On the contrary, by restating the offence, he was essentially adding insult to injury.



In his **Ohaiv Yisrael, the Apter Rav, zl**, explains that when a person commits an aveirah, sin, the greatest punishment is the realization that he has sinned against Hashem. This does not come immediately, but, after introspection, he becomes cognitive of Hashem's eminence; and thus, the sin which he has committed takes on a

different guise. How could he have sinned against the One Who gave him everything – Who continues to sustain him?

He begins to realize that, by commission of this sin, he has distanced himself from the Source of all sanctity. He will slowly develop a sense of shame, which will ultimately lead to regret and remorse. He will then accept upon himself not to sin again.

Indeed, one who finds himself on the level of this approach will benefit much more than if he were to experience the harshest punishment.

This is what Moshe said to Hashem. **אָנָּא חָטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֵטְאָה גְדֹלָה**, "***The nation has sinned egregiously***" – and they know it. What greater shame can there be? What punishment supersedes the pain they must sustain, knowing that they have sinned against their great Benefactor? - The shame they are experiencing upon confronting the sin will certainly catalyze such regret that this will never happen again. For this reason, they deserve forgiveness and pardon.

How fortunate is one who achieves such a level of reflection, in which the very fact that he "sinned" is sufficient punishment for him. The realization of the blemish created by the sin, and the distance it accords the sinner in his relationship to Hashem, comprise all of the punishment the person needs.

"Sometimes when you are in a dark place, you think you've been buried, but you've actually been planted. - You can be in the worst place in life, and believe that you are having more dirt and more dirt being thrown on your head, and you wonder to Hashem, 'What are You doing?' – 'You are burying me so deep!'

The truth though, is that Hashem is planting you. You are a seed that is awaiting growth. ~ Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein zl.

וְהָיָה כְּצֵאת מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֹהֶל יָקוּמוּ כָּל־הָעָם וְנִצְּבוּ אִישׁ פֶּתַח אָהֳלוֹ וְהִבִּיטוּ אַחֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה עַד־בֹּאוֹ הָאֹהֱלָה – '***Whenever Moshe would go out to the Tent, the entire people would stand up and remain standing, everyone at the entrance of his tent***.' (33:8)

Midrash Tanchuma derives from here that one must stand up and show respect to an old man, a scholar, Av Bais Din; Head of the Rabbinical Court, and a king. He must remain at attention until the individual whom he is honoring walks out of sight.

One Tanna adds that as a result of this halachah, if one of these individuals would notice a large group of people near his intended walking path, he should alter his route, so not to disturb them, since they would have to stop whatever they were doing in order to show him respect.

A second Tanna disputed this notion, contending that on the contrary, he should make a point of going past them. When people observe a righteous man, the image is indelibly engraved onto their hearts and minds, elevating them spiritually.

The Chida, zl, writes that the purpose of venerating talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars, is not that they require the honor. It is due to the Torah which they have studied. By honoring them, one honors the Torah, thus facilitating his Torah observance. It is not about the man, but about his Torah.

With this in mind, we understand why one gives respect to a talmid chacham even if he is himself greater than he.

The Chafetz Chaim would give kavod to younger, less knowledgeable rabbanim, despite his personal ill health and weakness.

While it may be difficult for some people to give kavod to someone whom he feels is not yet worthy of it, it is clearly deplorable to degrade a Torah scholar. Furthermore, not only does he infringe the laws of respect, but he also harms himself and creates a negative atmosphere for his children.

A child growing up in a home in which his father lacks kavod haTorah, in a home in which a child will often be relegated to listening to his father abuse rabbanim, will sadly see his son follow in his footsteps.



Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites the **Ben Yehoyada** in his commentary to the Talmud Shabbos 119b. The Ben Yehoyada says: "*One who shames a talmid chacham, who denigrates a sage, will eventually be the cause of evil, touching his children.*"

When young children observe a lack of respect of scholars; when they see adults knock the rabbi or Rosh Yeshivah; when children see their parents' lack of respect for a Torah personality – they will eventually follow suit.

Rav Zilberstein shares the story of a young, pre-Bar-Mitzvah yeshivah student who was both brilliant and diligent. His desire to learn more and more was outstanding. This was a boy who could not wait to go to school, who jumped out of bed the moment the alarm clock rang – in short, the perfect student, a rebbe's dream.

One day, however, it all changed. The alarm rang and he continued sleeping. After a while, his mother went to his room to check on him. Something must be wrong. Her son never slept in. "Come, get up, it is time to go to school," the mother said to her son.

"I am not in the mood" was the boy's response.

Something was terribly wrong. This was unusual. The father was called. Perhaps he could clear up the problem.

The boy's father had as much success as his wife. Their son absolutely refused to go to school. It made no difference to him if he slept in – or not.

The parents turned to the rebbe. Perhaps he could help. His relationship with his student/their son was close. He might be able to discover what had entered their child's mind.

The rebbe gladly came over to the house, infused with self-confidence. He would inspire the boy with hope. He would succeed in getting him to return to school. He tried, once, twice, a number of times – all to no avail. The child had lost his interest in Torah.

Parents do not give up. A rebbe does not give up – that is, if they are genuine. They worked together in order to achieve a breakthrough. Finally, the young boy opened up and related a frightening, but regrettably all-too-common story:

"The other day I saw one of the distinguished talmidei chachamim of our community, who also happens to be the Rav of a shul, walking home. Behind him were a group of youths making fun, catcalling and denigrating him. I decided then and there, that if this was the reward for spending a life studying Torah – I want out! Better I should remain at home, sleep and play, than attend cheder."

The young boy then turned to his rebbe and said, "The other day you pleaded with me to return to cheder. You claimed that I was a wonderful student who would one day grow up to be a distinguished Rav or Rosh Yeshivah. I thought to myself, 'My rebbe is cursing me! He wants me to be like that hapless Rav who was disgraced by supposed bnei Torah! If this is the case – I am not interested.'"

When one acts harmfully towards Torah scholars, he creates a situation in which this harm will touch his children. Regrettably, this is an issue that has come to the fore time and again, as young people become "turned off".

While a number of issues have colluded to catalyze this tragedy, one of the reasons that always seem to pop up is: I lost all respect for the rabbi, Rosh Yeshivah, etc.

From where does such an attitude originate?

When young people listen to adults who are either malcontent, insecure, egomaniacs who are jealous of others, or talk with derision regarding Torah leaders, their words "touch" the children.

If Torah is to mean something, its disseminators must be held in the greatest esteem. There is, however, one catch: they must be worthy of such respect.



וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם - "***The Bnei Yisrael shall observe the Shabbos***." (31:16)

Shabbos observance is a foundation of our faith. It is a sign of our commitment to the Almighty and His Torah. In his sefer, M'loh Ha'omer, the **Aruch L'Ner** notes an intriguing phenomenon. Those years that the first day of Rosh Hashanah was on Shabbos, Klal Yisrael either experienced its most wonderful years or its most tragic years.

Indeed, our greatest national tragedies, the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash and the most devastating pogroms against our People, occurred during years when Rosh Hashanah fell on Shabbos. - Why is this?

The answer given by the Aruch L'ner, based upon a penetrating analogy, should open our eyes to the overwhelming significance of Shabbos Kodesh.

When the beginning of the year falls on Shabbos, then Shabbos may serve as an advocate in our behalf, as a merit for us to enjoy a healthy and joyous year. There are years that Hashem listens carefully to Shabbos', pleas in our behalf and grants us our wish.

Some years, however, Shabbos' pleas are to no avail. It all depends upon one stipulation: how we treat that Shabbos.

We explain with the following parable: One of the officers of a king was found guilty of an offense that carried the sentence of the

death penalty. People tried to have his sentence commuted, but to no avail. The king refused to listen to even his closest advisors. The officer was to die. The defendant's wife was a seamstress who sewed the king's royal garments. Due to her unique profession, she had special access to the king. She told her husband, "Do not worry. I will intercede with the king to release you."

She went to the king and threw herself at his feet. "Please my king, grant my husband a reprieve. I have no one else. You know, my lord, that I am the royal seamstress. If my husband dies as a result of your decree, I will no longer be able to serve you."

Lo and behold, that which all the lawyers and officers could not accomplish, the condemned man's wife achieved. His sentence was commuted, and he was free to go home.

A few months later, a similar offence was perpetrated by another officer. His punishment was the same, death. This officer's wife also had a royal position. She figured that she would also prevail on the king, as the previous officer's wife had successfully argued her husband's case. She went before the king and pleaded on her husband's behalf. Alas, she was not successful, and her husband was executed.

What happened? The royal officers were stymied. Why did the king listen to the pleas of the first wife and not of the second?

The Aruch L'ner explains that while the second wife was just as sincere as the first, the king took note of the marks on her face that unfortunately were caused by her abusive husband. The king told her that he wanted her to return, to continue her much needed work for the royal household. That is why he chose to have her husband executed, before his continued abusive behavior became responsible for her death.

This is the reason that during some years Shabbos can be our advocate. Only if we treat Shabbos properly, if we observe its laws,

if we sanctify it, if we hold it dear and precious, can it intercede on our behalf. When we abuse, neglect and reject Shabbos, when it is no more holy than a regular weekday, it cannot testify on our behalf. In fact, some people view Shabbos as the "fun day," the day when they go out and act in a manner unbecoming such a holy day. Under such circumstances, Shabbos is the abused wife who, rather than interceding, points an accusing finger at us.

We should remember that the way we act during the present year will effect a like response in the coming year.



הַרְאֵנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבֹדֶךָ. וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ - "***Please show me now Your Glory"… "You will see My back, but My face may not be seen.***" (33:18,23)

The question: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" has plagued man from time immemorial. To the individual who does not believe in an All-good, Omniscient, and Omnipotent G-d, this question remains unanswered. If Hashem is not All-good, He could do evil and even enjoy inflicting it on others. If the Almighty is not Omniscient, bad things could easily occur, since He does not know everything that is taking place in the world which He created. And, if G-d is not Omnipotent, then bad things could just happen, because forces exist in the world which are beyond His control.

So, clearly, the believing Jew does not question things of this nature, because for him the Thirteen Principles of Faith, the Ani Maamin, is a reality – a verity of verities – which remains the bedrock of Jewish Faith. As the famous dictum goes, "For the believer, there are no questions. For the non-believer, there are no answers."

With this premise in mind, we can take an intellectual approach to suffering, tragedy, and to all events which are beyond our ability to comprehend. The answers remain theoretical, since we truly must understand that no human being is able to understand Hashem's

ways, nor should any human being expect a cognitive appreciation of Hashem. That idea undermines the very basis of humanity with its limited vision, versus the spiritual with its unlimited scope. This does not mean that questioning is not good. On the contrary, one should question – himself.

Events in our life are not random accidents. Indeed, the word coincidence does not belong in the lexicon of the believing Jew. The very notion of coincidence is heretical. If one believes in an All-knowing, All-powerful, All-good G-d, nothing, as the popular contemporary cliché declares, "just happens."

Let me take a moment to share with the reader a fundamental truth expounded by **Horav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, zl**, in his Daas Tevunos. I paraphrase: "**One who believes in G-d's Oneness and understands its implications must believe that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is one, single, and unique Being, subject to no impediment or restraint whatsoever. He alone dominates all; there is no other beneath Him who exercises any dominion in the world. He alone supervises all His creatures individually, and nothing transpires in this world except through His will and agency. There is no chance, no nature, no constellation. It is Hashem Who governs all of the earth and all that is in it. He alone decrees all that is to be done**."

This perspective gives our life meaning, as it grants us the ability to accept that Hashem's guiding hand is an active part of our life. We are never alone, nor does something just happen. It is all from Hashem.

Why? That is a question that, for the most part, we are unable to answer. The need to understand, demanding answers to every ambiguous situation, every question, suggests that the individual considers himself great enough to impose what he feels is his inherent right to be privy to G-d's Divine plan for the world.

It does not work that way. Hashem owes us nothing; we owe Him everything. It is as simple as that. Our brains lack the capacity for understanding the ways of the Creator Who created us. As the

Kotzker Rebbe zl was wont to say, "***I could never believe in a G-d whom I could understand***."

Living a life where everything is based upon good fortune, chance, or coincidence, reduces the meaningfulness of life. When we ignore Hashem's Divine messages, relegating them to coincidence, we are robbing ourselves of meaning, inspiration, and the ability to maximize our potential.

Hashem "talks" to us constantly. At times, it is a subtle message, while at other times it is a powerful wake-up call. When we ignore His call by saying it was bad fortune, we waste our greatest opportunity for spiritual growth and closeness with Hashem.

We are all here for a purpose, to carry out our own personal mission. We are part of a large picture, a collective destiny, all fitting together in one tapestry of events as a component of Hashem's Divine plan for the perfection of the world.

One day we will all be privy to clarity of vision, when the veils of ambiguity will be lifted, and we will see that what we thought was "bad" was inherently "good", and what was perceived as chastisement and tribulation were actually the precursors and evolution of blessing.

It is with the above in mind, that I return to our stated pasuk in which Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem, **הַרְאֵנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבֹדֶךָ**, "*Show me now Your Glory*," to which Hashem responded, "Behold there is a place near Me; you may stand on the rock. When My glory passes by, I shall place you in a cleft of the rock and I shall cover (shield) you with My hand until I have passed. Then I shall remove My hand – **וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ** – "*and you will see My back, but My face may not be seen*" (33:21-23).

The Chasam Sofer explains Moshe's request, and Hashem's reply, allegorically: Moshe was asking the age-old question – "Why are there righteous who suffer and wicked people who prosper?"

This question has befuddled the minds of many as they seek an answer to a question that can only be explained from a vantage point beyond the human realm of cognition. Hashem replied, "My face cannot be seen – I can only be seen from the back."

What does this mean?

Chasam Sofer explains that seeing Hashem's face up front is an allusion to understanding life's events as they take place. Man is incapable of understanding an event while it is happening. Thus, the idea of the righteous suffering while the wicked prosper is an anomaly beyond man's ability to grasp. Only when man "stands with G-d" and has an all-encompassing perspective of the entirety of history – from the beginning of time, until the End of Days – will he have the ability to comprehend things in context, and then appreciate everything that Hashem did.

"Seeing from the back" is a reference to hindsight. Only in retrospect can man have the clarity of vision to see and understand. To expect it all now – in the present – is nonsensical. To make theological decisions based upon one's current perspective is heretical.

Horav Yissocher Frand cites the Kol Aryeh in the introduction to his Teshuvos, Responsa, where the author elaborates on this subject, providing greater insight and inspiration: As Yaakov Avinu was about to descend to Egypt, Hashem appeared to him and said, **אָנֹכִי הָקֵל אֱלֹקֵי אָבִיךָ אַל־תִּירָאֹ מֵרְדָה מִצְרַיְמָה כִּי־לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׂימְךָ שָׁם. אָנֹכִי אֵרֵד עִמְּךָ מִצְרַיְמָה וְאָנֹכִי אַעַלְךָ גַם־עָלֹה וְיוֹסֵף יָשִׁית יָדוֹ עַל־עֵינֶיךָ** - ***"I am G-d, G-d of your father. Do not be afraid of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up; and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes."*** (Bereishis 46:3,4).

The Zohar makes a cryptic comment concerning the words, "*And Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes*." He says, "This is what the secret of Krias Shema is all about." In order to give meaning to the

Zohar, Kol Aryeh cites Chazal in the Talmud Pesachim 50a who make the following statement: **אָמַר רַבִּי אַחָא בַּר חֲנִינָא: לֹא כָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, עַל בְּשׂוֹרוֹת טוֹבוֹת אוֹמֵר: ״בָּרוּךְ הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּטִיב״, וְעַל בְּשׂוֹרוֹת רָעוֹת אוֹמֵר: ״בָּרוּךְ דַּיַּין הָאֱמֶת״. לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, כּוּלּוֹ ״הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּטִיב״**

- Rav Acha bar Chanina distinguishes between This World and Olam Habba, the World to Come – the world of truth. In This World when one hears good news, he recites the blessing of Ha'tov u'meitiv, "Blessed is the One Who is good and does good." If he hears bad news, he blesses, Dayon HaEmes, "the True Judge." In the World to Come, regardless of the tidings, the blessing is always Ha'tov u'meitiv, "Who is good and does good."

This, explain Chazal, is the meaning of the pasuk in Zechariah 14:9, **וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה' אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד** - "***And Hashem will be King over the entire world; on that day His Name will be One and He will be One***."

In his commentary Tzlach, to Meseches Pesachim, **Horav Yechezkel Landau**, explains that life in 'This World' is fraught with what appears to us as "bad" or conversely, as "good" tidings. While we pray for events that are filled with joy and hope, nonetheless, we are privy to events that are tragic and heartbreaking. A Jew must believe that ultimately everything is for the good.

Indeed, tzaddikim, the righteous, throughout the millennia have uttered the words "**גַּם זוֹ לְטוֹבָה**", "***This is also for the best***." We underscore the tzaddikim, because this is not the attitude of the average Jew. For most of us, we see "bad" and "good." It takes enormous conviction to view what clearly appears as "bad" through the prism of optimism and positiveness.

In the 'World to Come', it will make sense as our perspective broadens and deepens, creating a clarity of vision that in This World, with its restrictions of time, make it impossible to perceive. Then, it will all be good, allowing us to declare, without reservation, the blessing of **הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּטִיב**, for all occurrences.



The belief that Hashem always does good is the underlying message of the Krias Shema. Our most seminal prayer, the prayer which connotes our kabbolas ol Malchus Shomayim, acceptance of the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom, and the last words a Jew utters prior to leaving This World, is the Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad.

This declaration of the unity of G-d, tells it all. How? The Name Hashem – Yud, Kay, Vav, Kay – has a different connotation than the name Elokim, with the latter reflecting the Almighty acting as the Divine Judge, applying the Attribute of Din, Strict Justice, and the former reflecting Middas HaRachamim, Divine Mercy. Thus, the Shema Yisrael prayer expresses the belief that: Hear O' Yisrael, Hashem = Mercy and Elokeinu = Justice are one, echad – one and the same! We have one G-d. He sometimes appears merciful, and other times acts like a strict judge.

But how do we ignore the bad, the tragic, the painful? How do we overlook the depressing, the heartbreaking, the nerve shattering experiences of life?

We cover our eyes. We do this so we will not see the various troubles appearing right before our eyes; so that we can affirm our faith – attesting to our full conviction in the unity of G-d – without any impediment. At least symbolically, we do not see the tribulations before us.

The Kol Aryeh uses Yosef's experience as an example of this verity. His life, albeit miserable for many years, ended on a high point. In

retrospect, Yosef was able to say, it was all "good"! Thus Hashem told Yaakov, "Do not fear descending to Egypt, with the doom and gloom of the upcoming exile overshadowing your every move. Yosef will place his hands over your eyes."

This is the secret of the Krias Shema. We see from Yosef that it all works out – that "Hashem" and "Elokeinu" are One. But, regarding the present tragedy –"cover your eyes."

After all is said and done, what does the individual who is not yet on the spiritual plateau of belief that everything is inherently good – do?

If one cannot believe – he should attempt to at least learn from the experience. Transform tragedy into hope. When bad things happen, apply them to sensitize yourself to the plight of others. Rather than live with the compelling question of "Why?" one should say, "I will not succumb to this misery. Instead, I will reach out to others."

Everything that occurs happens for a purpose. There are no spiritual vacuums. Seize the opportunities to turn tragedy into triumph and hope, and to strengthen one's affirmation of belief in Hashem.



הֶעָשִׁיר לֹא־יַרְבֶּה וְהַדַּל לֹא יַמְעִיט מִמַּחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לָתֵת אֶת־תְּרוּמַת ה' - "***The wealthy shall not increase, and the poor shall not decrease from half a shekel to give Hashem's offering***." (30:15)

Everyone was to contribute the same amount, so that no Jew could say that his contribution was greater – or more significant – than that of someone else.

Horav David Feinstein, zl elaborates on this idea. One who is blessed with great wealth or has a brilliant mind, such that he has amassed great Torah scholarship, cannot claim that he serves Hashem more completely than the ordinary person who serves Hashem humbly and obediently – conducting himself scrupulously in accordance with the Code of Jewish Law.

Likewise, the worker who assembles a computer module is no different than the one who makes the screws and bolts that hold the apparatus together.

Just because people serve in various capacities does not mean one is any greater than the other. What really matters as far as Hashem is concerned?

It is neither the position nor the function of one's endeavor; it is neither money nor brains. In addition, Hashem does not count how much time a person devotes to His service.

The two things that Hashem views as important are the proportion of one's available time that he puts to good use and the sincerity with which he carries out this endeavor.

Thus, Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest Torah scholar and quintessential leader of the Jewish People, does not view himself as being any more distinguished than the most simple of his followers. Moshe saw only one distinction in regard to himself: he had a greater load to carry. His responsibility paralleled that of the most common Jew: maximize your time and potential to be all that you can be.

It is for this reason that at the beginning of Parashas Netzavim, Moshe emphasizes, **אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם** - "***You are standing this day, all of you, before Hashem***" (Devarim 29:9).

In Moshe's eyes, all Jews were the same, standing before him that day as equals – from the greatest leaders to the youngest child, from the most profound professional to the simple laborer.

One who is not that gifted cannot say, "I am not smart, and, therefore, Hashem expects less of me." - It is not true. Hashem expects that each individual gives up as much of the twenty-four hour day that he has available – qualitatively and quantitatively.

If one looks at a classroom, he will notice different students with differing strengths and backgrounds. Some may function better than others. Success should be measured with the yardstick of how

much of what they could have accomplished in the time allotted to them did they accomplish and the level of sincerity that accompanied this endeavor.

If we make use of this scale, we might end up viewing our students and our children in a different light – a more accurate one.

וַיִּקָּהֵל הָעָם עַל־אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם עֲשֵׂה־לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים. וַיִּתְפָּרְקוּ כָּל־הָעָם אֶת־ נִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב. וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם וַיָּצַר אֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט וַיַּעֲשֵׂהוּ עֵגֶל מַסֵּכָה' – ***'And the people gathered around Aharon and said to him, "Rise up, make for us gods...The entire people removed the gold rings... He (Aharon) took it from their hands and bound it up in a cloth and fashioned it into a molten calf.'*** (32:1,3,4)



One of the most grievous sins and tragic episodes in the history of our People is the חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל, sin of the Golden Calf. What makes things worse is Aharon HaKohen's involvement in its construction. Indeed, when Moshe questioned Aharon about his role in its creation, he responded that he was overwhelmed by the people. Hoping to create some delay, he had them bring their gold and jewelry to him.

Regrettably, their response to his request was incredible. [It always seems to be like this when people have the passion of sin in their hearts: nothing stands in their way.] Aharon then threw their gold and jewelry into the fire and a golden calf emerged.

He was not prepared for this surprising result of his innocuous action. After all is said and done, we still must understand the

rationale for Aharon's action. Why did he throw the gold into the fire? What was he trying to prove? Moreover, why did he defer to the people's demands? - A man who stood before Pharaoh, unwavering in his demand, should not have feared a group of wild rabble rousers.

In addressing Aharon's enigmatic role in the **חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל the Shem MiShmuel** first focuses upon Klal Yisrael's original demand for a replacement for Moshe.

What was Moshe's greatest achievement in regard to this fledgling nation? He provided leadership. He was the focal point around which they all rallied. He was their unifying agent. He transformed a multitude of people, who had previously been subject to slavery and deprivation, into a cohesive unit, ready to serve the Almighty. His stature and prodigious spirituality guided them through their collective experiences, helping them to handle their petty differences. He was their paradigm of selflessness, their beacon of inspiration to overcome their selfish interests.

The loss of Moshe, albeit brief, threw the developing nation into a turmoil. They were like a ship without a rudder. They had no direction and no stabilizing force to navigate them. They were no longer unified, no longer cohesive.

They came to Aharon seeking alternative leadership. They stood before him scared, confused, bereft of their leader. They made all kinds of demands, most of them nonsensical and some even rebellious in nature.

Aharon understood the source of the problem; he was acutely aware of the stimulus for their spurious demands. They needed unity, a galvanizing force to unify them during their wait for Moshe's imminent return.

Aharon realized that a community-wide project would unify the people. The physical act of contributing towards one common goal

would meld the individual personalities, represented by their jewelry, into one community, symbolized by the single gold ingot that Aharon would make.



Who would be better than Aharon to effect such a goal? He was the Kohen Gadol, the personification of peace and harmony. He understood the source of their problem, and he addressed it. How could this be considered wrong? How was this noble goal transferred into a calamitous sin whose affect is still felt today?

Aharon wanted to create a gold ingot, the symbol of Klal Yisrael's unity. Suddenly, to his horror and dismay, there emerged a golden calf, an idol.

Aharon did not realize that along with those who were sincerely confused, there joined the eirev rav, mixed multitude of non-Jewish "add-ons", who had left Egypt out of fear for their lives. They infused a non-Torah oriented seed into Klal Yisrael. They undermined their unity.

When an alien item is added to a group, the result is complete ruin. Unity can only be effected when all members sincerely seek it. When there are those who have their own agenda, who use the concept and goals of unity as a vehicle to exploit and deter others - it is disastrous.

That is precisely what they had intended. Aharon's ingot was poisoned by the infusion of evil forces, whose self-oriented goals destroyed the common good he sought to achieve.

In the end, Aharon was rewarded for his virtuous aims. He aspired for the common good, to effect unity until Moshe returned.

His intentions were rewarded when he was selected to serve in the Mishkan/Bais Hamikdash. The Sanctuary is the focal point for all of Klal Yisrael to seek out Hashem, to serve Him through prayer and sacrifice. The Kohen Gadol's task is to unify the hearts and minds of Klal Yisrael in their service of Hashem. - Aharon was eminently suited for this role.

פְּסָל־לְךָ שְׁנֵי־לֻחֹת אֲבָנִים כָּרִאשֹׁנִים - "*Hew out for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones*." (34:1)



Upon descending from Har Sinai and witnessing the degradation of Am Yisrael with the Golden Calf, Moshe immediately broke the luchos. After entreating Hashem on behalf of Am Yisrael, Moshe was commanded to hew out a second set of luchos. This time Moshe was to ascend the mountain alone.

The Midrash notes the disparity between the aura surrounding the giving of the first luchos and the aura surrounding the giving of the second ones. The first luchos were given amidst great publicity, before the entire nation, accompanied with thunder, lightning and smoke. Chazal point out that the first luchos were adversely affected by an "evil eye," because of all the glory. Consequently, they had no permanence. The second luchos were, therefore, given quietly without ceremony.

The lesson to be culled from the Midrash is simple -- nothing can be more successful than that which is done modestly.

The Kotzker Rebbe z.l understood this Midrash on a more profound level: The first luchos, because they were given amid such pomp, acquired their sacredness much more from Hashem than from the people. The second luchos, which were given under modest circumstances, had to be sought out by the people if they wanted to receive them.

Only that which is acquired through determination, effort and resolve can achieve permanence. That which comes without effort is much less likely to endure.

Chazal teach us that Moshe Rabbeinu became wealthy from the pesolas, worthless chips from the luchos. This is enigmatic. Was there no other way for Hashem to make Moshe financially secure? What is the rationale behind this act?



Horav Shimon Shkop z.l responds to this question by citing Chazal who state that had the first luchos not been broken, whatever Torah one learns in his lifetime would never be forgotten.

Imagine, review would not be necessary since the Torah would remain permanently ingrained in one's mind. With the second set of luchos, this unique characteristic disappeared. One would now have to learn over and over again to achieve proficiency in Torah knowledge.

Horav Shkop explains that this new development might make people anxious about their livelihood. If access to Torah accomplishment is only reached through constant study, how would one earn a living? Indeed, had the first luchos remained whole, one would only need to study an hour per day and the rest of the day could be spent in

financial pursuit. Hashem, therefore, made Moshe wealthy from the luchos chips. - This demonstrated to the people that while Moshe was actively involved in preparing the new luchos, the small pieces of engravings became his. His financial welfare was secure while he was involved in Torah endeavor.

This is Chazal's lesson. One should seriously involve himself in Torah study and trust in Hashem to provide for his financial support.

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם - "***And Bnei Yisrael shall keep the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos for their generations an eternal covenant***." (31:16)



Horav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor z.l. explains the repetition of the word "Shabbos" in the following manner. How does one ensure that shimiras Shabbos, Shabbos observance, will be an everlasting covenant between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem?

The pasuk responds: One must see to it that his children and generations after him will also observe it. - It is not sufficient for one to simply concern himself with his own spiritual needs while neglecting his children's simultaneous spiritual development. If this is the case, he can be certain that mitzvah observance will cease with him!

One's focus in religious observance should be "***to make the Shabbos for his generations***." Children must be imbued the excitement of preparation for Shabbos and mitzvos in general.

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ - "***This they shall give... half a shekel of the shekel of the sanctuary***." (30:13)



Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe a "fiery" likeness of the half-shekel coin.

The Chachma Umusar explains this homiletically, as an allusion to the fire of devotion that must permeate our fulfillment of mitzvos. It is not sufficient to merely give one's shekel. The significance lies in how it was given. Does one part with his coin with coolness or does he distribute it with the enthusiasm and joy which should be present in the performance of mitzvos?

When a Jew keeps Shabbos but does it indifferently, without the warmth that should permeate an Oneg Shabbos, he will not be able to transmit this mitzvah to others, not even to his own children. This applies to other mitzvos as well.

Upon being questioned regarding the lack of Shabbos observance among many second-generation American Jews, **Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz Z"l**, responded, "***Their parents observed Shabbos with mesiras nefesh (self-sacrifice)***."

One must perform mitzvos ecstatically with the opportunity to serve Hashem. When one feels that serving Hashem is a hardship which he must endure, he conveys to his children a negative message. This applies in all areas of Jewish endeavour, including the performance of mitzvos, public service, and education. - If one desires his shekel act to be accepted, it must glow with the fire of enthusiasm and zeal.

כִּי־זֶה מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מֶה־הָיָה לוֹ – '***For this man Moshe brought us up out of the land of Egypt we do not know what became of him***.' (32:1)

Rashi says: An image of Moshe was shown to them by the Satan as Moshe was being carried in the sky. The Satan was able to deceive the Jewish people into believing that Moshe had died.

Daas Zekainim states that there were three groups involved in the incident of the Golden Calf. One group intended only to create a leader to replace Moshe but not to make an idol. A second group accepted the Golden Calf as an idol. The third group consisted of the tribe of Levi, who remained resolute in their belief in Hashem, never for one moment giving any credibility to the Golden Calf.

Their exemplary display of faith in Hashem is attributed to that they were the direct recipients of the Torah from Yaakov, who in turn, received if from Avrohom and Yitzchok. Their incessant study of Torah protected them from falling into the pitfalls of doubt and uncertainty.

The Chovas Halevovos writes that the method employed by the yetzer hora to ensnare one into committing a sin is deception, clouding the truth with a veil of illusion and camouflage. It is only through the constant study of Torah that a person develops the clarity of vision to pierce through these various disguises and deceptions to see the truth.

The tribe of Levi did not falter in their study of Torah, and therefore did not fall prey to the cunning of the Satan. It was their strong attachment to Hashem that gave them the courage to withstand the pressure brought upon them by their misguided brethren.

It is only through the diligent study of Torah that we can face the uncertainties of daily life, finding courage in our belief in Hashem.

The Chofetz Chaim's Mother

The Chofetz Chaim had a daughter by the name of Rebbetzin Feiga Zacks. Rebbetzin Zacks lived a very long life. I remember seeing her in Yerushalayim when I was a bachur. She lived in Yerushalyim and she would tell over that she remembers hearing when the Chofetz Chaim was becoming very, very famous, and people wanted to know from his mother, "What zechus did you have to have the Chofetz Chaim?" She thought about it and said, "I don't really know. There is nothing special that I did".

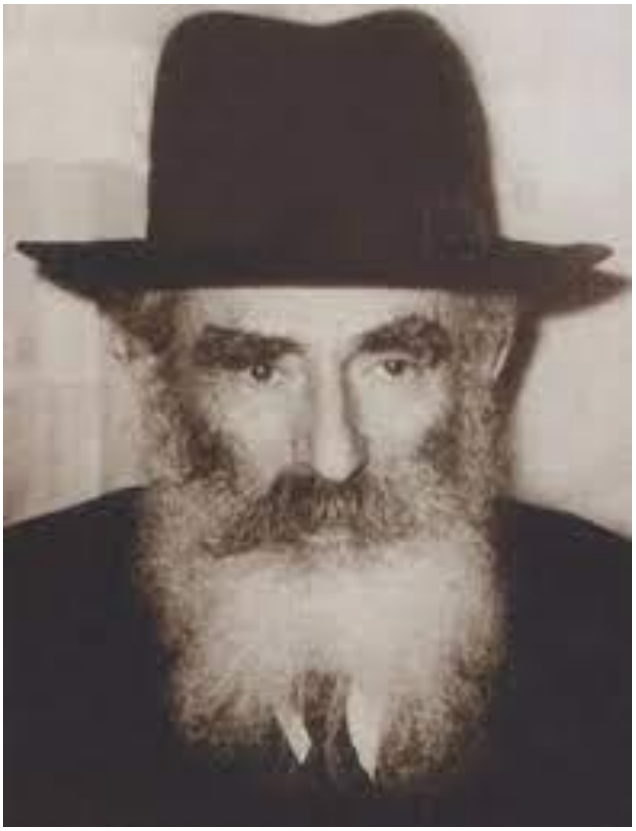
They pressed her further and asked her to please think. She said, "If you want to know, there is one thing. On the day that I got married, my mother asked me for a moment of my time. She sat down with me quietly and handed me a siddur. She said to me, my daughter, today you are zocheh to walk down to the chuppah. My tefilah is for you to be zocheh to very soon have a family, and you should be zocheh to raise your children in Torah and yiras shamayim. You're job is to daven for them. That is why I bought you a siddur for the day of your chasunah.

That is the key." The Chofetz Chaim's mother said, "If you want to know why I think I was zocheh to the Chofetz Chaim it's because whenever I had a free moment, I would take out my siddur and cry for my little Yisroel Meir, for my little Srulik to become a talmid chacham and a yarei shamayim. ~ **R' Yechiel Spero.**

"When you want to come up with new ideas in the Torah, you must concentrate on one particular subject. Take a verse or a subject, and review it many times, hammering on the door until it is opened for you. Sometimes a thought flashes through your mind and is then forgotten. - You must be a man of valour, pursuing it until it is recaptured." ~ R' Nachman of Breslov.

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM
Lights Of Our Righteous

Gedolim Be'Masayhem
Stories & Anecdotes



Rav Yechezkel Levenstein - Reb Chatzkel (Adar 18)

● Three Giants of Emuna

The Chazon Ish used to say that there were three giants of mussar who excelled in emuna: In **Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler** we see his greatness in emuna of mind, in **Rav Eliyohu Lopian** we see his greatness in emuna of the heart, and in **Rav Chatzkel Levenstein** we see that he had emuna in his hands – he had experiential emuna, the kind you can touch and feel with your very hands! (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p. 23)

● Order And Insanity

A talmid described how his room was situated above the lunchroom such that from his window he could see the Mashgiach walk on his daily route to the Yeshiva.

The Mashgiach's daily routine was fixed: he walked straight past this talmid's window, never veering or even looking to his right or left but walking straight to the Yeshiva.

One day the talmid noticed the Mashgiach stop, turn his head toward the lunchroom as if looking at something and only then did he continue on his regular routine. The puzzled talmid wondered what

had caught the Mashgiach's eye. He didn't have long to wait before he found out.

During the mussar shmuess he heard the Mashgiach ask incredulously, "When you walk past the lunchroom and observe all the cups, bowls, plates and cutlery neatly arranged all in their places in order…does anyone think this happened all by itself? Did the plates and cups fly in the air and land perfectly arranged in order?! Obviously, someone set them in order and put them away. You would have to be insane to entertain the fanciful notion that they could arrange themselves this way on their own, just as you have to be insane to believe that this world was created all by itself!" (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p. 23)

● **You Would Have to Be Blind**

One of his talmidim described how during a mussar shmuess in Yeshivas Ponovezh, the Mashgiach, Rav Chatzkel, stood up and yelled loudly with emotion, "You can experience emuna and feel emuna with your hands! You would have to be blind not to see emuna in every step we take – you need to shut your eyes tight in order not to experience and see for yourselves that the entire world and everything in it runs according to Someone up above!" (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p. 23)

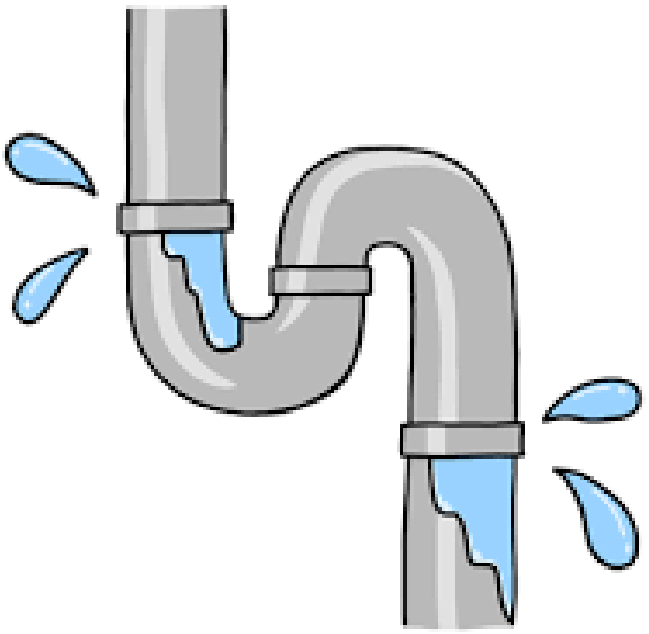
● **I Got Back My Bitochon**

Rav Sholom Shwadron used to tell the following story: The Mashgiach, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, was known always to walk around with a serious expression on his face that reflected his awe and reverence – Yiras HaRomemus – that permeated his very being and all his 248 limbs and 365 sinews.

Once, one of his talmidim was extremely surprised to walk in and find the Mashgiach smiling broadly – a rare sight indeed. The talmid queried the Mashgiach as to the source of his smile and Rav Chatzkel responded: "When I used to be the Mashgiach in the Mir Yeshiva I

almost never received my monthly salary on time (because of the Yeshiva's dire financial means or lack thereof). I trusted instead in Hashem and had bitochon that He alone would see to my parnossa from other sources. When I took up the position as Mashgiach in Ponovezh I began to receive my monthly salary on time and unfortunately, I lost this level of bitochon in Hashem that I had regarding my parnossa. But now – Chasdei Hashem (thank G-d) – it is some eight months that I haven't been paid (due to the Yeshiva's staggering debts) and I now have my bitochon back in Hashem that He will send me my parnossa in another way, and this is why I am so happy and overjoyed! (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p. 54-55)

● **A Seventy-Year Warranty on All Maintenance And Repair**



The Mashgiach was once walking with one his talmidim when they passed by a drainpipe that was leaking. Upon observing this, the Mashgiach pointed it out to his talmid and remarked, "How old is this drainpipe? Probably not more than decade. And it is made of metal and see how it is already cracked and leaking!

The human body is made of soft flesh, not metal, and carries things worse than water! Our own "drains and pipes" are soft flesh and they carry such hazardous materials that are acidic and toxic like urine and waste, yet they last decades and decades, an entire lifetime; a span of seventy years or more can go by with no mishap. - From my flesh I see the Divine!"

A different time, the Mashgiach asked rhetorically, "How is it that the machine we call man does not break down and need maintenance and repair as often as other machines and mechanisms do? Take a watch for example, whose mechanisms and gears are all enclosed in

a metal casing shut tight. Still, every few years, it requires some maintenance to keep its timing and precision; it must be opened, dusted, cleaned and wound, and it can easily break down.

Man is made not of iron, silver, or copper, but of flesh – and still sometimes he can live his whole life of some seventy years or more with nothing breaking down and no maintenance needed! (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p.76)

● **Hashgocha Protis Training**

The Mashgiach used to relate that when his daughters were still young, he would give them small change if they would think about ways to see Hashgocha Protis in their home and in their lives. And this Hashgocha was easily observed in how the Mashgiach's household was run, as the level of poverty was great, and yet, when they would tell him what they had seen and discovered, for each story he would pay them a coin. (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p. 73)

One of his daughters, Zlata Malka Ginsberg, related, "My father zt"l used to educate me using chinuch in the ways of Hashgocha using a variety of methods. One of his methods was to give me a notebook; he promised that if I filled in one daily occurrence of Hashgocha Protis he would buy me a prize.

And true to his word, once the notebook was full, he bought me a prize, even though this cost him dearly because of our poor financial situation and his lack of means, because to my father, the need to recognize Hashgocha Protis was so important that it was worth the money." (Mipihem, p. 196, cited in Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p.73)

● **Midda Kenegged Midda - Measure for Measure**

In the days before the war, there were almost no private Yeshiva buildings; rather, the Yeshivos learned in local shuls and Botei Medroshim of the town or city where they were located.

Once, one of the gabbo'im of the shul where the Mashgiach's Yeshiva studied was bothering and disturbing the talmidim of the Yeshiva.

He disturbed the talmidim so often that his interference became simply unbearable. He constantly interrupted their studies –and one day he kicked them out of the shul in the middle of the learning seder! - With no choice left, the Yeshiva relocated itself to a different town and shul.

For years afterward, whenever the Mashgiach met anyone who hailed from that town he asked that person about the town, its shul and the welfare of the gabbai – until one day someone reported that the gabbai had died.

"And how did he die?" asked the Mashgiach.

They told Rav Chatzkel that it was on Yom Tov in the middle of Birkas Kohanim that his heart stopped and he died. In Chutz La'Aretz, Birkas Kohanim is a special occasion that takes place only on Yom Tov and the shul was in a quandary – what should they do? To interrupt the Kohanim in the middle of reciting Birkas Kohanim was impossible, yet there was a dead body in shul and the Kohanim were forbidden to become impure from tumas meis. - They had no choice and decided that they had to take his body and deposit it outside the shul.

When the Mashgiach heard this, he replied, "This is the kind of story I have been expecting to hear for some time now. I knew that something like this must happen. Just as he did, so was done to him.

When he expelled the talmidim from shul, I knew that midda kenegged midda – measure for measure – Hashgocha Protis would see to it that he too would be thrown out of shul one day." (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, page 77)

● Tefilla - Soul Food

The Mashgiach Rav Chatzkel Levenstein would often repeat and review the words of the **Kuzari** that tefilla is like food for the soul, nourishing the soul like bread nourishes the body. He used to say

that Shacharis is breakfast and it should keep you satisfied until lunchtime – Mincha.

He used to give the following moshol: A hungry man once went to a store and purchased a variety of food and provisions to satiate his hunger that could last him some weeks. He stuffed the food into all his pockets, alas to no avail. The fool remained hungry and couldn't understand why!

Of course, the fool remained hungry – he filled his outer garments with food and never satisfied his true inner self by eating the food!

So too do we run after fulfilling our lusts and desires for all manner of gashmiyus, yet we are never satisfied, because while the externals are stuffed, our inner being remains starving. The soul thirsts and if only the pockets of the outer garment called the body are filled, then the thirst and hunger of the inner true self – the soul – remain.

But if someone were to ignore the pangs of hunger in his stomach and daven a good tefilla and learn a geshmak seder, he could feel satiated and satisfied, because this is what it means "to do without".

The body can go without, and you can feel fine, whereas the soul must be satisfied or the cravings and unquenchable thirst remains. (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, Tefilla, p. 55)

● Do As I Say, Not As I Do

Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, the revered mashgiach and Ba'al Mussar was once riding in a cab and the Israeli driver related the following story:

"Rebbi, when my friends and I completed our army service, we decided to go on a world tour. We found ourselves in the jungles of Africa one night when all of a sudden one of my friends woke up screaming. a boa constrictor wrapped around his neck. We tried as much as we could to pull the snake off, but with no success. He was turning blue; close to death. We didn't know what to do. At that

point, one of us shouted to him, 'Yigal, you're going to die, at least say Shema.' *Yigal started saying* Shema. *As soon as he finished the first* passuk, *the snake released himself and slithered away."*

The cab driver continued, "Rebbi, do you know that as a result of that incident my friend Yigal became a baal teshuva! *Today, he is* frum *with a beautiful religious family. They keep kosher, his wife covers her hair, and his kids all go to cheder."*

Rav Levenstein responded, "That's amazing." He paused for a minute and then suddenly asked, "and what about you?"

"Me? Oh no," said the cab driver, glancing away from the road. "It didn't happen to me. It happened to him."

A man has a life-threatening experience. He prays, and the situation resolves. He is safe. To his credit, his life and behavior is changed dramatically going forward. But those who witnessed the event? Those who saw the miracle? They acknowledge the wisdom of their friend becoming *baal teshuva* but what lesson do they take from the incident? What do they incorporate into their own lives? - Nothing.

A life-altering event is reduced to little more than a story a taxi driver tells to pass the time when he has an observant passenger.

Must we always be deaf to the truths that we speak? Must we always be blocked in our ability to translate earned wisdom into appropriate behavior?

How many times have I heard someone say, "Do as I say, not as I do"? as though the insights and intelligence of our words can truly teach someone else if they have not taught us!

● 'Anyone Who Doesn't Anticipate Moshiach Is a Heretic'

Chazal wrote about all the occurrences that would surround Moshiach, and how these things would also occur around every true Tzaddik of the generation, as well, as history bears out.

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, ztl, the former *mashgiach ruchani* (spiritual guide) of the Mir and Ponovezh yeshivos, wrote in his book *Or Yehezkel* (v 7) the following words about the importance of believing in, and hoping for, the coming of Moshiach.

"Emuna (belief) in the coming redemption is one of our fundamental obligations. And not just a grudging, low level of emuna; the Rambam writes that: "A person is obligated to stand and wait for the coming of Moshiach, and anyone who doesn't wait [i.e. anticipate Moshiach's coming] is a heretic.

"And even though the whole of the nation of Israel believes in and recognizes the [idea of the] coming of the Moshiach, there is still an obligation to wait for it, and to anticipate it actually happening, and anyone who stops anticipating [the coming of Moshiach], even for just a moment, we see from this that they are not a believer.

"Once a person really expects and yearns for the coming of the Melech Moshiach (King Moshiach), then any of the occurrences happening in the world appear to him to be a hint, or connected with the [imminent] redemption, and will cause him to think that maybe, the Melech Moshiach is truly on the threshold [of being revealed].

"It should be underlined that people don't see the signs of redemption because they don't think about it all or reflect on the matter [of Moshiach coming]. I remember how the Chofetz Chaim, ztl, used to wait for it, and connect everything to the geula (redemption)."

"If things do not go your way in reality, then allow yourself to desire the way things are in reality." ~ R' Morderchai Levovitz.

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There is scarcely a yeshiva today whose leaders have not been influenced to one degree or another, by the strong yet gentle character and the moving shmuessen of **Reb Chatzkel** who conveyed a faith in Hashem that was so pure and clear that it was virtually tangible. From prewar Europe and Eretz Yisroel, from Mir across Europe to the Far East, in postwar America and again in Eretz Yisroel, in Yerushalayim and Bnei Brak, Reb Chatzkel inspired three generations of bnei yeshiva with the faith to cling to Hashem and His Torah under all and any circumstances, and with the strength to attempt the rebuilding of the yeshiva world in new times and places.

To fully plumb the depths of his character, or to assess the true extent of his influence is beyond our capability. All we will do here is present a handful of recollections gathered from some of his talmidim, that will give us a picture of his life, his character and his achievements.

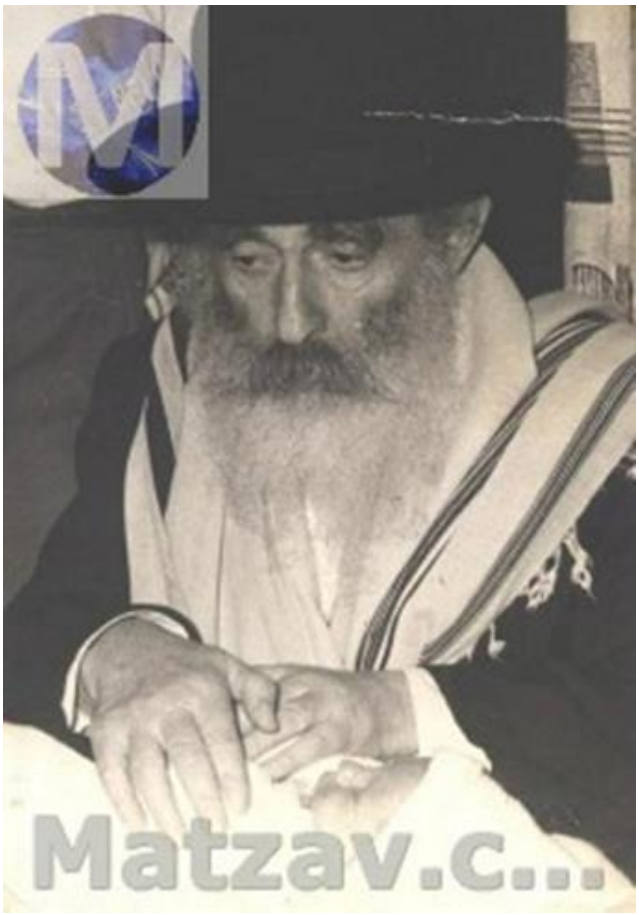
In a *hesped* for the *mashgiach* which he delivered at the *levaya* in Ponevezh Yeshiva, **HaRav Shach** said that even were **Reb Chatzkel *zt'l,*** to have lived his life of *avodas Hashem* five hundred years ago, in the time of the *Rishonim,* he would still have been reckoned as a great and a pious man. To see the *mashgiach,* the Rosh

Yeshiva *ylct'a*, continued, was to behold a wonder; a man so weak and frail, who nevertheless waged war.

In his seventies and his eighties, he still battled the *yetzer hora* with might, refusing [for example] to lie down for even a brief rest during the day, because his daytime hours were wholly devoted to serving Hashem.

The Rosh Yeshiva added that the comment made by **Rav Yisroel Salanter *zt'l***, about his teacher, **Rav Zundel of Salant *zt'l***, can be applied to the *mashgiach*. Rav Yisroel Salanter said that he had never seen someone who served Hashem to such a degree. We too, said HaRav Shach, have never beheld a servant of Hashem to equal the *mashgiach*.

The Chazon Ish described Reb Chatzkel as someone who had "*emunoh* in his hands"! Everyone who knew him could see that his faith in Hashem was so strong and so solid, that it could virtually be touched. It is this aspect of Reb Chatzkel that we shall try to portray.



None served Hashem as he did, and he left no one who could be compared with him. With his passing, the last remnant of the *Beis Hatalmud* of Kelm, as Reb Chatzkel was described by **HaRav Dovid Povarsky *zt'l***, was also lost to us.

The feeling of all who knew him, and his teachings could be summed up in a paraphrase of a well known *gemora (Makkos 24)*: Came Reb Chatzkel and placed the entire Torah upon a single foundation — *emunoh!*

We will briefly survey the story of his life and trace the path that led him to the positions that enabled him to peel away the layers of concealment which the world casts over events from the eyes of his *talmidim,* to find the keys that opened up closed, numbed hearts, to lead and guide Yeshivas Mir safely through tempestuous times and through the vicissitudes of exile and then to exert an influence upon a young, new generation in Eretz Yisroel.

His Origins

HaRav Yechezkel Levenstein was born in Warsaw, the Polish capital, in 5656. When five years old, he was orphaned from his mother, a very righteous woman named Zlota *o'h.* His father Reb Yehuda *z'l,* remarried.

The young orphan went to learn in Yeshivas Lomza, after having become a *bar mitzva* and arriving at the realization that Torah study was a far better investment than any other: he had worked in a store and suffered the theft of his money.

Reb Chatzkel spent two and a half years in Lomza, learning with great application, as those who knew him at the time later attested.

With the Chofetz Chaim

As a young *talmid* in Lomza, Reb Chatzkel heard about the righteousness and the holiness of the great Rabbi Yisroel Meir Hacohen *zy'a* and about his yeshiva in Radin, and he decided to travel there in order to learn from the Chofetz Chaim. In Radin, he gained a reputation for fluent knowledge of the works, *Ketzos HaChoshen* and *Nesivos Hamishpot.*

In *shmuess (Or Yechezkel, Middos),* Reb Chatzkel recalled the Chofetz Chaim's comments at the time of an earthquake in Japan, which resulted in thousands of deaths. "I remember that he said it had happened because there were no Torah scholars in Japan."

He also related how the Chofetz Chaim had once been able to 'smell' the odour of theft hovering about a fish which came from a concern

owned by partners, one of whom had not taken his share. Although he was unaware of all the story's details, the Chofetz Chaim would not partake of the fish when it was served to him on Shabbos.

" He also recalled the Chofetz Chaim's admonition to a man who had come to him asking whether he should buy chairs for his children's dowry. - "*HaKodosh Boruch Hu* doesn't yet have even one complete seat! And moreover, a man is only a visitor in this world."

The Shmuess that Led Him to Kelm

When the renowned *mashgiach* of Mir, **R' Yeruchom Leibowitz *zt'l***, arrived to serve as *mashgiach* in Radin, he delivered a *shmuess* whose subject was the strengthening of *mussar* study.

Reb Yeruchom discussed Chazal's observation that, "*Techeiles* (the blue color with which one of the threads of each group of *tzitzis* is dyed), is similar to the sea; the sea is similar to the sky and the sky is similar to Hashem's Throne of glory."

How is it, Reb Yeruchom asked, that people can wear *tzitzis* and see the *techeiles*, yet remain unmoved by it?

He answered that without *mussar* study, one is simply not aroused — one's *emunoh* will have no practical fulfillment and neither is the breaking of harmful character traits possible.

Reb Chatzkel said that this *shmuess* was the greatest and the most instructive lesson of his life in *emunoh*. From that time on, he resolved wholeheartedly never to remove his attention from bolstering his *emunoh*.

He said, "For a year and a half I had no peace, for I felt pressured by the question, how could one live without learning *mussar?* It is a matter of life and death when it comes to guarding one's spirituality! Until, in Hashem's mercy, I travelled upon the advice of my teacher and *rebbe* the *mashgiach* Reb Yeruchom to learn in the Talmud Torah of Kelm."

A single *shmuess*, that had afforded him no peace, was the deciding factor in Reb Chatzkel's journey to one of the most renowned *mussar* centers, the Talmud Torah of Kelm.

In Kelm



When he arrived in Kelm, he was fortunate to enjoy the close attention of **HaRav Tzvi Hirsch Broide *zt'l*,** (son- in-law of the Alter of Kelm), at whose table he ate his Shabbos meals. One Shabbos, Reb Tzvi Hirsch said to him, "One can see on your face that you had a great and an honorable mother, and it is in your mother's merit that you have arrived in Kelm."

Reb Tzvi Hirsch's wife, Rebbetzin Nechamah Leba Broide, the Alter's daughter, added that Yechezkel had his own merit, for it was also visible on his face that he had never read any secular literature.

Reb Chatzkel's comment on this incident was that what both of them said was true. His mother had in fact been a distinguished woman and he himself had also taken care throughout his life to refrain from reading any secular books.

In a letter to Reb Yeruchom in Radin, Reb Tzvi Hirsch wrote, "Know my dear one, that I have great pleasure from the dear *bochurim* you sent . . . as to the *bochur* Yechezkel from Warsaw *n'y*, we have great hopes from him. He has been here only a short time, but it appears that he arrived well prepared to succeed."

When the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law HaRav Tzvi Hirsch Levinson *zt'l*, visited Kelm, he wanted to take Yechezkel back with him to Radin but in Kelm they would not agree to it.

Serving Hashem in Kelm

Reb Tzvi Hirsch revealed to Reb Chatzkel that were three prerequisites to becoming a *ba'al mussar:* first, powerful feelings; second, a good head; and third, the desire and the longing to be a *yirei Shomayim.*

His Marriage



In Kelm, the *mashgiach* married his *rebbetzin,* Chaya *a'h* who was an orphan. The proposal had been HaRav Aharon Grossbard's *zt'l* and it had also been shown to him in a dream. Reb Chatzkel rejected glowing offers made to him by wealthy men who wanted him for their daughters. He argued that a girl who had been brought up in riches, would be unable to share a life of privation and restraint and of subsisting on the bare essentials. Great *talmidei chachomim* attended his wedding, as did all his teachers in Kelm.

The Rebbetzin indeed merited to stand by him through all manner of difficult times and circumstances, until she passed away in her

old age. In Kelm, she worked in a shop to support herself and her husband, who would only end his learning late at night. Not only did she not prevent him from doing so, she rejoiced in this practice and requested from him a share in his Torah in *Olom Haboh*, which Reb Chatzkel undertook to provide her with.

Influencing Others



In Kelm, there was a *yeshiva ketana* which was headed by **HaRav Eliyohu Lopian *zt'l***. Reb Chatzkel used to deliver a short discourse, five to ten minutes of reproof and guidance, before the *shiur*. *Talmidim* from that period affirmed in later years that the impressions of those brief sessions exerted a lifelong influence over them.

Mashgiach in Mir and Kletsk

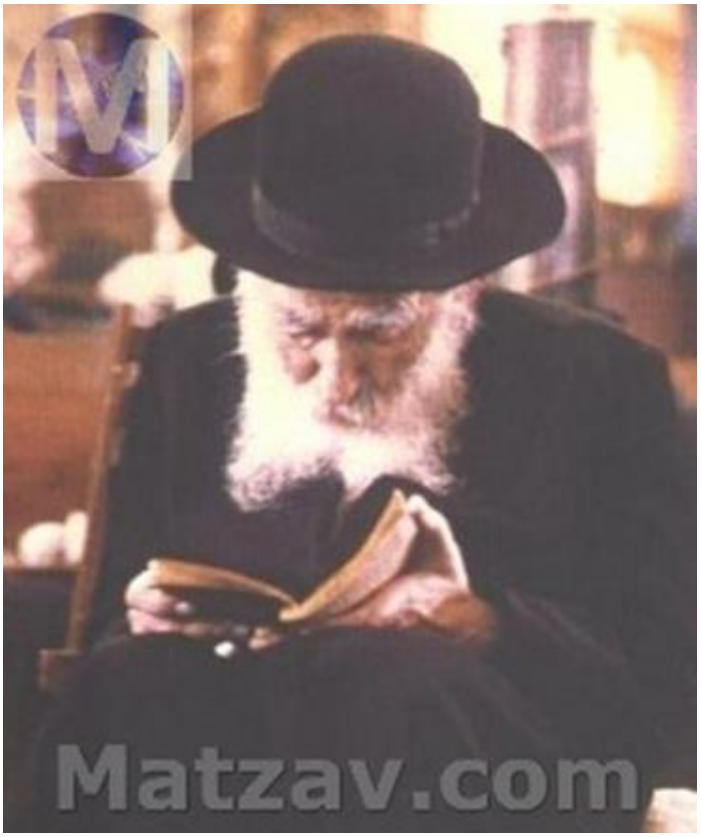
In 5679 (1919), during the First World War, while Reb Yeruchom was serving as *mashgiach*, the Mirrer Yeshiva was exiled from its hometown of Mir, Poland, into Russia and then to Vilna, returning to Mir only after the war's end. Reb Yeruchom however, did not return even then. He travelled among the yeshivos in Lithuania for a further four years.

At this time, Reb Chatzkel, who was learning as an *avreich* in Mir, was asked by the *rosh yeshiva*, **HaRav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel *zt'l***, to supervise the yeshiva's spiritual welfare until his *rebbe* Reb Yeruchom returned. Despite his youth, Reb Chatzkel succeeded in rallying the yeshiva with his *shmuessen* and maintaining its high spiritual level.

Upon Reb Yeruchom's return to Mir in 5684, he was highly impressed with Reb Chatzkel's success in guiding the *bnei hayeshiva.*

HaRav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman *zt'l*, who had been appointed as rav of the town of Ponevezh, proposed that Reb Chatzkel come to serve as a *maggid shiur* in a *yeshiva ketana* there, a proposal which the latter accepted, remaining at this post for over a year.

Reb Chatzkel was then approached by **HaRav Aharon Kotler *zt'l***, who headed Yeshivas Eitz Chaim in Kletsk, to come and serve as *mashgiach ruchani* in his yeshiva. Reb Chatzkel accepted this offer, feeling the weight of the responsibility which he was undertaking.



In his *hesped* for Reb Chatzkel, HaRav Shach *ylct'a,* related that while he was in Kletsk, he noticed that the *mashgiach* would remain in the *beis hamedrash* all day long, not so much as stepping outside.

He asked Reb Chatzkel about this and was told that there was a certain *bochur* learning there, who was liable to leave the *beis hamedrash* if he, Reb Chatzkel, did. This was why he stayed there all the time.

In Kletsk, Reb Chatzkel's influence was very great. However, for reasons which are unclear, he left the yeshiva's staff abruptly and returned to Mir to learn there as one of the *avreichim. Bnei yeshiva* from that period recalled how he would clamber up onto the benches in order to hear Reb Yeruchom's *shmuessen,* despite the fact that he himself had once served as the yeshiva's *mashgiach.*

Petach Tikvah

The call came from Yeshivas Lomza in Petach Tikvah, which was headed by **HaRav Reuven Katz *zt'l***, for Reb Chatzkel to be *oleh* to Eretz Yisroel and serve in the yeshiva as *mashgiach*, as well as exerting an influence upon the surrounding area. This was in 5695 (1935), a few years before the Second World War.

There were very few *talmidim* learning in the yeshiva when Reb Chatzkel took up his post but many more were attracted after he joined and both the yeshiva's size and reputation greatly increased. Many *talmidei chachomim* developed there, some of whom have become well known *roshei yeshiva.*

Back to Mir

Despite the very difficult, poverty-stricken life he led in Petach Tikvah, sometimes finding it necessary to borrow money in order to fulfill the obligation he had undertaken to support his son-in-law who was learning in Mir, Reb Chatzkel never complained. His sole aim was to spread Torah and *yiras Shomayim*, to implant faith in *HaKodosh Boruch Hu* within his *talmidim* and to place the mark of *mussar* and character refinement upon them and all the *bnei yeshiva* in Eretz Yisroel.

When Reb Yeruchom passed away (on the eighteenth of Sivan 5697) however, the heads of the yeshiva asked Reb Chatzkel if he would agree to return and serve as *mashgiach* in Mir, which was then world famous and had a student body hundreds strong, and which consequently offered the possibility of exerting a much wider influence. With a sense of gratitude to his teacher Reb Yeruchom, Reb Chatzkel consented to return, hoping to continue the promulgation of his *rebbe's* teachings in Mir.

In hindsight, the workings of *Hashgocho* can be seen, in preparing the means for the yeshiva's rescue, under Reb Chatzkel's leadership and guided by his unswerving *emunoh.*

East and West

The yeshiva's experiences during the Second World War have already been extensively chronicled. The move to Vilna at the war's beginning, the dispersal in Lithuania, the miracle of the granting of exit visas making it possible to escape from the Russians, the yeshiva's journey to the Far East and its sojourn in Japan and China until, in Hashem's mercy, the *bnei hayeshiva* succeeded in reaching America.

For a long time after the war's end, the *Mashgiach* waited in Shanghai for the gates of Eretz Yisroel to be opened to the *bnei hayeshiva.* When the anticipated certificates failed to materialize, Reb Chatzkel was forced to agree that the yeshiva travel to America, as a temporary measure.

From Shanghai, he wrote to the **Chazon Ish *zt'l***, "I waited for a long time, in case Hashem would open the gates of the Holy Land to *bnei Torah,* for in that eventuality, I would certainly travel together with all the *bnei hayeshiva,* and that is why I delayed my journey to the United States until now. Since I have seen that our hopes are far from being realized however, *R'l,* I have decided to travel to the United States, until I can travel to Eretz Yisroel . . . my hope is to erect the yeshiva's edifice only in Eretz Yisroel. I extend my request that he mention me in his *tefillos* . . . "

Why did Reb Chatzkel and his teachers, and the Chazon Ish have such reservations about the materialistic atmosphere of America? The issue at hand was after all, reestablishing the yeshiva there, as a self-contained unit.

The *Mashgiach* likened America to a wine press, where the fumes intoxicate all who are there, irrespective of whether they actually drink anything. It was for lack of an alternative that Reb Chatzkel left for America in Teves 5707, together with the last group of *talmidim.*

In a letter to HaRav Shach he wrote, "I wanted to let my friend know that I intend to return to our Holy Land, but at the time my journey to the United States was unavoidable for the *bnei hayeshiva* had no entry permits for Eretz Yisroel . . . and besides my own desire for Eretz Yisroel, it is very difficult for me to live here, as is obvious.

In my opinion, this place is not suitable *R'l,* for our yeshiva, and not even for a *ben Torah* . . . at present I am not revealing my views, for it will not be easy for me to travel from here, and also because right now, I do not want to become connected to any particular place in Eretz Yisroel. I have received information from a certain place that I will be able to be of great benefit there *be'ezras Hashem,* but for the moment I intend to conduct myself as mentioned."

The *Mashgiach* worked hard on his *talmidim* in the very materialistic atmosphere of that period and his influence upon them was profound, imbuing them with the spirit of *mussar* and firing them to devote their lives to *avodas Hashem.* Many of his *talmidim* developed into great *roshei yeshiva* and rabbonim in America, greatly benefiting the spiritual level of American Jewry.

In Eretz Yisroel

On the twenty-fourth of Adar 5709, after two years of toil, the *Mashgiach* hastily fled the shores of America, arriving at Haifa shortly before Pesach. He was accompanied by his son-in-law the *mashgiach* **HaRav Reuven Ginsburg *zt'l***, and daughter Rebbetzin Yocheved Ginsburg, together with their young family, as well as two of his *talmidim,* HaRav Reuven Melamed *zt'l* and HaRav Moshe Bernstein *zt'l.*

The *Mashgiach* spent his first few days back in Eretz Yisroel in Bnei Brak, in the home of Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, an upright store owner. He then travelled to Yerushalayim, where the **Brisker Rov** tried to persuade him to serve as *mashgiach* in a yeshiva which he intended to open together with his sons.

However, it was to the Mirrer Yeshiva in Yerushalayim, then led by HaRav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel, that Reb Chatzkel felt himself indebted. He served as *mashgiach* in Mir and also delivered *shmuessen* to distinguished members of the local community in his home and in the *Beis Hamussar* which he opened. The Brisker Rov used to encourage his sons to go and hear Reb Chatzkel's *shmuessen* and they were among those who attended.



In the winter of 5714, after the passing of his old friend (from their days in Kelm) **HaRav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler *zt'l***, Reb Chatzkel was asked by the **Ponevezher Rov *zt'l***, to serve as *mashgiach* in Ponevezh Yeshiva, which was then the Torah center of Eretz Yisroel and which therefore afforded an opportunity of working with a large circle of *talmidim,* in accordance with the *Mashgiach's* lifelong ambition of inculcating Torah, *emunoh* and pure *yiras Shomayim* into the *bnei Torah* of Eretz Yisroel.

Despite his advanced age, Reb Chatzkel accepted this offer and he spent the following twenty years working in Ponevezh, inspiring the *talmidim* with *emunoh,* to toil in Torah, and to work at heightening their *yiras Shomayim.* His vision embodies the highest ideals of Torah inspiration and education.

The *talmidim* became closely bound to him. On his very first Purim in Ponevezh, one of the *bochurim* cried out to him, "Please *Mashgiach,* revive the dry bones, like the *novi Yechezkel* did!"

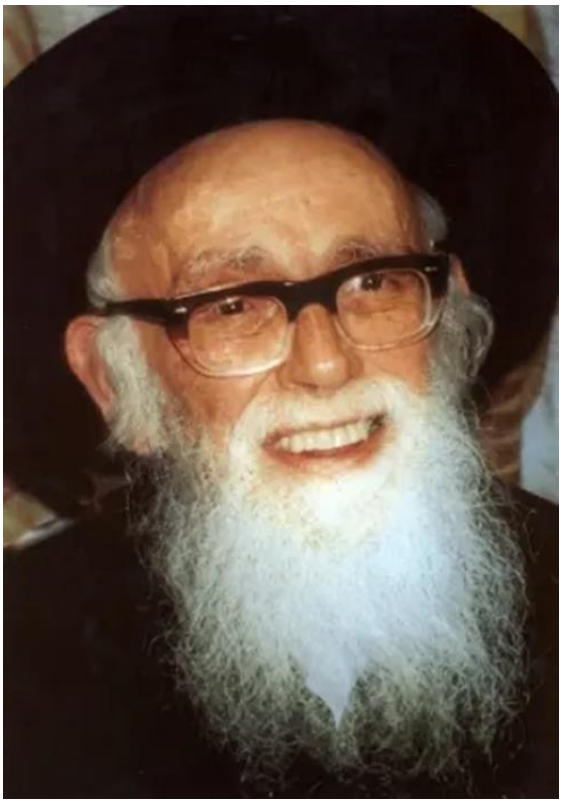
The *mashgiach* responded to the need and he truly evoked a spiritual revival.

When the *rosh yeshiva* of Mir, HaRav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel asked Reb Chatzkel, "Why have you forsaken us, forgetting your years of leadership in exile?"

The latter replied that his obligation to be grateful only extended to the *Ribono shel Olom,* who had helped the yeshiva and taken it to safety. Now that he had the opportunity to reach larger numbers of *talmidim,* there was no debt to Mir that ought to hold him back.

In his *hesped* for the *Mashgiach,* HaRav Shmuel Rozovsky *zt'l,* revealed that the *Mashgiach* extended great help to *talmidim* without them being at all aware of it. He had concealed these efforts completely.

Such was the inspiration of Reb Chatzkel's presence and the feeling of loss and helplessness when he passed away, that one of his distinguished *talmidim* wrote, "The pillars of the Heavens grow weak and the ends of the earth tremble *chas vesholom.* We have no one to lean on, therefore, save our Father in Heaven."



Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Adar I 20)

● Rain, Rain Don't Go Away

Rav Yitzchok Freiman related how, on a very rainy day in Yerushalayim, walking side by side to shul at a quick pace, Rav Shlomo Zalman grew visibly tired. As he sidestepped puddles, a small sigh escaped his lips.

Quickly recovering himself, he said out loud, "May Hashem not hear the tefillos of the wayfarers and travelers – we want rain!" He then began to explain the Gemora that discusses

this idea: "Why did the Kohen Godol daven to Hashem on Yom Kippur that He not accept the tefillos of wayfarers and travelers? Surely, if the traveler is a Tzaddik he will not daven for the rain to cease when it is needed. And if he is wicked his tefillos will anyway not be heeded?

Rather, the Kohen Godol was worried about an ehrlicher Yid who won't actually ask for the rain to cease but might just sigh at the discomfort, because the rain might bother him at the moment. Such a small sigh from an ehrlicher Yid can cause a great stir in the Heavens – so take heed!"

● The New Hadas And The Old Mesora



Rav Shmuel Havlin once related that one year there was a shortage of hadassim. They discovered that a certain type of hadas grew in many Yerushalmi gardens, and it did fulfil the requirements; it was meshulosh and an expert horticulturalist verified that it was from the same genus and species as the hadas we use. Who then could pasken this sheila? Only Rav Shlomo Zalman, a respected posek who nonetheless did not shirk from paskening regarding modern technology and advances.

The matter was presented to Rav Shlomo Zalman but he would not permit the use of the new type of hadassim. This hadas, he explained, is different from the one for which we have a mesora in Am Yisrael. Even if someone would argue that the hadas we use today is the wrong one, still we would prefer it over the new one. Why? Because the new one has no mesora. Better we all sit together with Klal Yisrael in Gehinnom than all alone in Gan Eden!

● The Simple Rosh Yeshiva and the Learned taxi Driver

Rav Dovid Nadav related an incident from 1984: "When Rav Shlomo Zalman used to arrive as Rosh Yeshiva to deliver his shiur in Kol Torah he would often be flanked on all sides by bochurim who wished to catch a glimpse of him or ask a quick question.

The bochurim noticed that the taxi driver was zoche to long conversations, sometimes lasting several minutes, before the Rosh Yeshiva exited the taxi.

One day, the conversation lasted some ten minutes. We were jealous. What could the Rosh Yeshiva discuss for so long with the driver when we wanted his attention?

"I had chutzpa and approached the young, non-religious taxi driver and asked him what he and the Rosh Yeshiva discussed. "

'What? You mean he is a Rosh Yeshiva?! I never would have believed it! I met him some years ago and he seemed like a nice old man, and he asked and inquired about me, my family and background. When I told him I had once attended a religious school in my youth, he asked me if I remembered any stories from Tanach.

I told him whatever I remembered about Bereishis and he seemed very interested. So each time I study stories! and Sipurei Mikra, children's books, and tell him stories about Tanach and he always listens and seems so interested that I always study more to tell him more stories. - I would never have guessed he was a Rosh Yeshiva!'"

● One Of The Family

I once met a simple Jew who had emigrated from the former Soviet Union and who had no family in Eretz Yisrael. He and his entire family were permanent fixtures at all the Auerbach family simchas. When questioned how he was related, maybe a distant relative, he told the following tale of Ahavas Yisrael: He had once met Rav Shlomo Zalman years ago and the Rav asked him about his background and family. When the young man admitted he had no family and was struggling

all alone, Rav Shlomo Zalman said, "Listen, let's be friends! My schedule is packed and very busy, so let's arrange for you to meet and befriend my children. Then, when you attend our family simchas, we can also meet there and continue our joint mutual friendship!"

And so he befriended the Auerbach family and at each simcha he showed up with all his family as a relative. There he would happily meet and greet his "friend" Rav Shlomo Zalman. In fact, he became so much a part of the family that when his wife was due and gave birth early, he divided all his kids among the Auerbachs to stay – where else but with his new family?

● **A Gaon In Deed**

It has been said that Reb Shlomo Zalman's everyday actions were as much a lesson to us as his scholarly discourses and halachic rulings. In this, too, "he was a gaon," writes longtime disciple, Rabbi Yehoshua Neivirt.

He truly exemplified the injunction to behave in a manner which "would cause the name of Hashem to be beloved on your account."

● The parents of a retarded child came to Reb Shlomo Zalman to discuss institutionalizing him. When he asked what the boy said about the proposal, they replied that it had not occurred to them to ask him.

Reb Shlomo Zalman was irate. "You intend to evict him from his home and consign him to a strange place with a regimented atmosphere," he told them. "He must be encouraged and not allowed to feel that he is being betrayed.

" He asked to see the youngster and the parents fetched him. "What is your name, my boy?" the gaon asked.

"Akiva."

"Akiva, my name is Shlomo Zalman. I am the gadol hador, the greatest Torah authority of this generation, and everyone listens to

me. You will be entering a special school now; I want you to represent me and look after all the religious matters in your new home."

The boy's eyes were riveted to Reb Shlomo Zalman's face and the awestruck parents sat with their mouths agape as the Rav continued. "I shall now give you semichah which makes you a rabbi and I want you to use this honor wisely."

● For many years, the local grocery store in Reb Shlomo Zalman's neighborhood was run by a widow. To operate such a store consumed every ounce of the woman's strength. Delivery vans would pull up at dawn and the truckers would deposit crates of milk and dairy products on the sidewalk. Later, the widow would drag them inside when she opened the store.

Once to her delight, she saw that the crates had been placed at the front entrance, considerably easing her workload. This phenomenon recurred the following morning and continued day after day.

One morning, she felt that she should thank the drivers personally, so she made a point of arriving at the store very early. However, to her amazement, when the vans appeared the men deposited her delivery on the edge of the sidewalk as they had always done in the past. Perplexed, she stood on the pavement wondering how the heavy crates had transported themselves to her door, when suddenly the figure of Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach appeared, tallis bag under his arm. - One by one, he lifted the heavy crates, deposited them in front of the grocery store, and hurried off to shul.

● Reb Shlomo Zalman once confided to Reb Meir Goldvicht that when he was young he was easily irritated. "So," he explained, "I informed my fiancee as soon as we became engaged that I wished to establish a simple method whereby I would never come to anger.

She! agreed to give me her full support, whatever that method should be. Then, in the cheder yichud, when we were alone for the first time after the chuppah, I told her the method I had devised."

He concluded with a twinkle in his eye, "The method was that if we were ever to disagree about anything — she is always right!"

● After 54 years of marriage, the Rebbetzin passed away. At her funeral Reb Shlomo Zalman was heard to utter the following remarkable words: "It is customary to request forgiveness from the deceased. However, I have nothing to ask you forgiveness for. During the course of our marriage never did anything occur that would require either of us to ask the other's forgiveness…"

● When Rav Shlomo Zalman passed away, a beggar in Sha'arei Chesed sobbed in her anguish: "Now who will say 'good morning' to me every day?" (Mi yagid li boker tov?)

● Towards the end of her life Reb Shlomo Zalman's mother-in-law lost her sight and she could no longer recite Tehillim as she had so loved to do in the past. Reb Shlomo Zalman taped the entire book of Tehillim, so she could continue her practice.

● Shortly before he passed away he advised a young family member, "Learn well. Eat well. Sleep well. And always smile."

● Dr. Abraham of Shaarei Zedek Hospital recalls that Reb Shlomo Zalman never disparaged an individual with whom he disagreed. He would merely say, "Aich zeh yachol lihyot? (How can that be?)"

● Though he was the greatest halachic authority of our day, and was particularly skilled at solving modern-day questions, Reb Shlomo Zalman abhorred any and all titles appended to his name.

In his will, he requested that his headstone be no higher than that of his parents and he stipulated that "you may add to the headstone the following words. 'He developed disciples in the Yeshiva Kol Torah and disseminated Torah to the many.' Should someone wish to say words of eulogy, I strongly request that they be concise and not say words of praise about me."



TZADIKIM

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Zt'l - 20th of Adar

Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Hebrew: **שלמה זלמן אוירבך**; July 20, 1910 - February 20, 1995) was a renowned rabbi, posek, and rosh yeshiva of the Kol Torah yeshiva in Jerusalem, Israel. The Jerusalem neighborhood Ramat Shlomo is named after Rabbi Auerbach.



Rabbi Shloma Zalman Auerbach was born in Jerusalem 1910 where he lived his entire life until his passing in 1995. Rabbi Shloma Zalman and his wife raised ten children. He lived a very simple and unassuming life, devoting himself entirely to the study of Torah, meticulous performance of Mitzvohs, and lending a listening ear and helping hand to all Jews in need regardless of their affiliation.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman was the first child to be born in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood of Jerusalem which was founded by his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Shloma Zalman Porush, after whom he was named. Rabbi Shloma Zalman Auerbach's father, Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach, was a great Mekubal and the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Shaar Hashamayim for the study of Kabbalah. His mother was Rebbetzin Tzivia. Rabbi Shloma Zalman's parents home was almost empty of material

possessions, as they had been sold to pay off debts that Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Leib incurred to support his Yeshivah. The only time they were brought to tears was when Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Leib needed to sell the seforim from his extensive library.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman's paternal grandfather was the great Rabbi Meir Auerbach, formerly Chief Rabbi of Kalish, who later settled in Israel and was appointed in 1860 by Rabbi Shmuel Salant to join him in the office of the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbinate of Jerusalem. Rabbi Meir Auerbach maintained this position until his passing in 1878.

At the tender age of eleven, Rabbi Shloma Zalman Auerbach was already proficient in Talmud. As a teenager he attended the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Jerusalem. He was known for his remarkable diligence. Following his marriage, he studied under **Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank** at Kollel Kerem Tzion which focused on the laws of the Land of Israel.

In 1949 Rabbi Shloma Zalman became a senior lecturer of Torah at Yeshivah Kol Torah. Three years later he became the Rosh Yeshiva, a position he held until his death in 1995. Renowned for his lucid classes as Rosh Yeshiva, his thousands of students continue to influence the Torah world today. Some of his more famous students are: Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg who is a son-in-law, Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl, the rabbi of the Old City, and Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth, famed author and halachic expert.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman's first major published work, Meorei Eish, was the first ever written on the subject of using electricity on Shabbat. It was published in Jerusalem in 1936.The work was endorsed by **Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky** of Vilna who read it and lavishly praised it.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman's other publications were: Interpretations and insights on the sefer Shev Shemateta of Rabbi Aryeh Leib HaCohen Heller, Kovetz Maamarim Be'inyanei Chashmal Beshabbos, Maadanei Eretz a two-volume work regarding the halachic agricultural laws of

Shevi'is and Terumos (1946), and Minchas Shlomo, a commentary on the Talmud.

Several medical-halachic articles by Rabbi Auerbach were published in Hebrew periodicals. Many of his medical halachic rulings are quoted by other authors in various books and articles. Although most of Rabbi Shloma Zalman's rulings were rendered orally and never formally published, many of his rulings involving medical subjects have been summarized by three of his outstanding disciples, Rabbi Yehoshua Y. Neuwirth, Rabbi Dr. Abraham S. Abraham and Rabbi Dr. Avraham Steinberg in their multivolume works. These are respectively; Shemirat Shabbos Kehilchasah, Nishmas Avraham, and Encyclopedia Hilchasis Refuis.

Although recognized as one of the greatest rabbinic authorities of the twentieth century, he refused offers to become a judge in the Supreme Rabbinical Court and declined to become Israel's or even Jerusalem's Chief Rabbi.

He was loved and admired not only for his erudition in rabbinics and theology but also for his integrity and modesty. Throughout his life he was unpretentious and actively engaged in acts of charity and emotional support for the needy.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman had no material ambitions, did not seek power and glory, and shunned publicity. He showed love and affection to every man, woman and child. He respected every Jew, religious and secular alike. He was accessible to anyone who needed his guidance and advice.

His rabbinic rulings were based exclusively on halachic principles. Through his enormous Torah knowledge and erudition, Rabbi Auerbach analyzed and defined halachic concepts as they apply to modern issues in medicine, technology, agriculture, economics and other areas. He never issued a ruling without a thorough investigation of the subject matter. He consulted experts to obtain a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the relevant facts

before issuing his ruling. The sum total of these characteristics, personal qualities and halachic abilities made Rabbi Auerbach the most widely recognized Torah giant and rabbinic halachic decisor of the generation, respected by all streams of Judaism.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman was wise and witty, possessed of an incisive mind and an unerring insight into people. Both world-class scholars and ordinary people felt that few if any were better equipped to guide them both on arcane halachic matters and on the mundane issues which beset every human being.

Inundated with inquiries from everywhere, he was nevertheless accessible to anyone who knocked at his door and needed face-to-face counsel or comfort. He gave everyone warmth and attention while asking nothing in return.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman was such a beloved national figure that an overwhelming crowd of 400,000-500,000 people from all walks of life attended his funeral in 1995.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman had seven sons. His sons are: Rabbi Shmuel Auerbach, a leading rabbinical authority in Jerusalem, Rabbi Ezriel Auerbach, a son-in-law of Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and a Rabbi in Bayit Vegan, Rabbi Mordechai Auerbach, a Rabbi in Tel Aviv, Rabbi Avraham Dov Auerbach, a Rabbi in Tiberias, Rabbi Meir Simcha Auerbach, a posek and Rosh Yeshiva in Betar Illit, Rabbi Ya'akov Auerbach, a Rabbi in Beit Shemesh, Rabbi Baruch Auerbach, who published the complete works of Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi in 1999. Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, a leading posek in Israel, is a son-in-law. Rabbi Sholom Schwadron, the famous Maggid of Yerushalayim was his brother-in-law who married Rabbi Shloma Zalman's sister Leah. The two shared a long and close relationship as learning partners and personal friends.

Rabbi Shloma Zalman Auerbach was an enthusiastic supporter of Rabbi Meir Baal Haneis Salant and is a signatory on its public appeals, along with his colleagues, the Torah giants Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel

Kanievsky The "Steipler", Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, Rabbi Elazar Simcha Wasserman, Rabbi Dovid Povarsky, Rabbi Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, Rabbi Yechiel Michel Feinstein, and many others. - May their memory be a blessing to all of Klal Yisroel.

The Weekly Vort

● **מבן עשרים שנה ומעלה** –***'from twenty years old and upward.'*** 30:14

The last letters of the words **מבן עשרים שנה** when placed in reverse order, form the acronym **המן**, *Haman*. Haman offered to pay ten thousand talents of silver to Achashverosh for the right to destroy the Jewish People. Finding his name concealed in the giving of *shekalim* to the Mishkan, indicates in a veiled manner that the Jewish *shekalim* would be triumphant over Haman's. This concept is clearly spelled out in the Gemara (Megillah 13b). [**Baal Haturim](Torah Treasures)**



Shidduchim Are Bashert

The Vilna Gaon had planned to move to Eretz Yisroel. He journeyed to Amsterdam, from where his ship was to depart, however, for various reasons his plans came to naught. Exhausted from his travels, the Gaon rested in a small village near Amsterdam before returning home.

A rich local Jew invited the Gaon into his home, not realizing the status of his guest, who chose to travel incognito. The Vilna Gaon stayed for three weeks in the man's spacious and elegant home. It was a

gathering place for Jews to daven and for scholars to learn Torah, as the wealthy Jew owned numerous *seforim* at a time when few owned any.

Prior to the Gaon's departure, he told his host of his intention to pay for all his hospitality; the man refused to take a penny, not wanting to forfeit the reward for the *mitzvah*. The Gaon conceded, however, the host pressed him for his identity, saying, "I recognize that Your Honor is a great Jewish leader as I have seen the way you do not desist from Torah study, day and night. During your three-week stay, you have learned all of Shas with the Rishonim, all four sections of the Shulchan Aruch, and other works. Since you are a man of stature, please tell me if you have noticed anything improper in my home. I wish to accept your rebuke so that I can improve my ways in this world, and not be ashamed in the World to Come."

The Gaon replied that all was in order in his home and lifestyle, with the exception of one thing. He explained, "The Gemara states (Yevamos 62) that a man must love his wife as his own body and honor her more than his own body. But here in your home, I have seen something new. I have seen a man who honors and respects his wife to such a degree, that he loves his wife more than his own body."

The man smiled at this "rebuke" and explained. This was his tale:

'I grew up in Poland, in a poor home steeped in Torah knowledge. I was betrothed when I was only 9 years old to the daughter of a wealthy man who desired me as a son-in-law. My future father-in-law attired me in fine clothing and hired a private tutor so that I could develop into a talmid chochom.

When I turned 15, and the wedding date was set, my kallah's father suddenly lost his fortune and became destitute. My father, who knew nothing of this, traveled to see him to arrange a dowry. He found them living as degraded beggars in a lowly hovel. He was so shocked, he nearly collapsed.

My kallah's father offered to cancel the shidduch, and his daughter consented as well. My father tore up the tenaim contract, and the shidduch was off. I was broken-hearted.

My father swiftly arranged another match with the daughter of another prosperous man. Though I was engaged to another fine girl, I could not forget my unfortunate first kallah for a minute. I was prepared to give up my wonderful new circumstances in order to avoid embarrassing a fine Jewish girl. But it was too late now.

After a splendid wedding, I completely forgot my first kallah. I was the happiest of men. But not for long. The morning following sheva brachos, I woke up aching all over. The pains persisted, and my father-in-law spared no expense in my medical care – to no avail. My entire body was covered with ugly sores and painful boils.

My treatment was too difficult for my family to manage, so they transferred me to the city's hekdesh, which served as a hospital and guest house for paupers and beggars. - In the hedkesh, my condition worsened, with painful sores so unsightly that no one could remain near me.

My father-in-law demanded that I give his daughter a divorce, and I agreed. I had been punished measure for measure. I understood that Heaven was punishing me for the pain I caused my first kallah.

After several months in the hekdesh, I finally saw some improvement, and my appearance became less revolting. I utilized my time to learn Gemara and Shulchan Aruch. Another man in the hekdesh suggested that I travel together with him from village to village where he would introduce me as a learned man and collect tzedakah for me. He felt my appearance would arouse compassion. I needed sustenance, so I agreed.

Compassionate people realized I was no common pauper. They asked me questions on Gemara, which I explained to the best of my ability. People at first cringed at my appearance, but they soon knew "not to look at the bottle, but at what lies within."

Of all the sick people who collected tzedakah, it seemed I was the most ill and deformed.

One day, we came to a town where we saw a poor man sitting in a wagon near the town's hekdesh. Inside the wagon lay his daughter, who appeared more ill than I was. We began to talk, and I agreed to leave my companion and travel together with this man and his daughter. Eventually I agreed to marry his daughter. I revealed to him that I had been divorced, but that did not deter him.

We were soon married in a pauper's ceremony – both of us sickly and weak, dressed in rags and tatters, with a wedding "feast" of bread and onions.

When we spoke alone in the yichud room, I was filled with happiness, but my bride broke down crying, as she recalled her past – her father was once rich and when she was a girl of nine, she was engaged to an outstanding scholar. Her engagement broke off because her father had lost his fortune prior to the wedding. She described her humiliation, and how it caused her to fall ill. She now was crying because she was forced to marry a sick, poor man.

I stared at her in amazement. This was my first bride! I exclaimed to her, "Look at me! I am your former chosson!" Both of us began crying. We sensed with powerful clarity the guiding hand of Hashgacha that brings people together and unites broken hearts.

We informed the others of our story; we wanted all to see how Hashem, in His eminent compassion and loving kindness, establishes homes in Klal Yisroel. Even if a couple is parted against their will, He will seize them by the hair and bring them back to one another.

Immediately after the wedding, amazingly both of us recovered, returned to full health, settled in this small village near Amsterdam, and Hashem blessed us with wealth, honor, and wonderful sons and daughters.'

The man finished his story, and asked the Vilna Gaon, "I ask Your Honor, after I caused my wife so much pain and distress, am I not obligated to appease her over and above the strict letter of the law? Do you now understand why I accord my wife this honor?" (**Tales for the Soul 3**)

When one davens, one must believe that:

1. ***Hashem can help.***
2. ***Hashem wants to help.***
3. ***And, your tefilos can make a difference.***

~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

Fascinating INSIGHTS



R' Tzvi Hirsch Meisels recounted the poignant tale of his tallis, adorned with an *atarah* (ornament) gifted by his father-in-law, once belonging to the author of **Yitav Lev**.

In 1944, when the Nazis came to take him to Auschwitz, he wore the tallis with the *atarah* until it was forcibly taken away from him at Auschwitz. Determined, he managed to locate where the stolen belongings were stored, recovering his tallis. Aware that openly wearing it could lead to dire consequences, he cut it so he could conceal it beneath his clothing without the Nazis knowing.

One day, R' Meisels was leaving the bathroom when a guard decided to inspect him and discovered the garment. When the guard asked R' Meisels about the garment's nature, he answered that it was a "G-dly garment." Enraged, the guard subjected him to merciless beatings, and said: How can you mention G-d amidst the atrocities befalling his people including his own family members being killed?

Threatening death unless a satisfactory explanation was given, the guard received a profound response. R' Meisels answered him with the following analogy:

In a critical operation to cure a severe illness, a world-famous surgeon performed it on a distinguished person. He began to making a large incision as well as some smaller incisions as were necessary.

A shoemaker watching from the side who was unaware of the medical intricacies questions the seemingly unnecessary pain. He thinks, "When I fix shoes, I would never cut the leather in a place that looks nice!"

Would we expect the surgeon to stop his surgery because the shoemaker, who doesn't understand what the surgeon is doing?

R' Meisels continued that the same applies to the actions of the Creator. The truth is that we don't understand all of His actions and why He makes a cut at the finest part from within the Jewish people. Nevertheless, we should know that the fact that, we, who have limited minds, cannot understand His ways, doesn't minimize His greatness.

The guard was impressed with R' Meisels' response and not only spared R' Meisels but told him that he should visit the guard's block whenever he needed some extra food.

Golden Connection

The pasuk (Yeshaya 40:26) says **שאו מרום עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה** - '***lift up your eyes and see who created these***.'

The Vilna Gaon writes that our purpose is to look at **אלה**, these, and be cognizant of what is around you and what you have, and recognize **מי**, from whom it all comes. When we do this, we will realize that it's all from Hashem. - Combining the word **אלה** with the word **מי**, we get to Hashem's name **אלה-ים** !

At the sin of the golden calf, where the Jews disconnected from Hashem, they separated the **מי** and **אלה**. They said **אלה אלהיך ישראל** - this is your god. (Shemos 32:4) Aharon's response was **למי זהב**, who has gold. (Shemos 32:24) He was referring to the fact that the Jews were demonstrating that they no longer lived with the vision that it is all from Hashem — the **מי** was disconnected from **אלה** but connected to **זהב**.

Moshe said **מי לה' אלי**, whoever is for Hashem join me, and only the Leviyim responded.(Shemos 32:26 That is to say, disconnect the **מי** from **זהב** and connect it to Hashem (**לה'**).

Parshah Pearls - Ba'al ha'Turim

● Six Hundred and Three

כִּי] תִּשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל] - The first letters of these four words add up to six hundred and three, the Ba'al ha'Turim comments, because this was the total number of thousand people in K'lal Yisrael at that time, who were eligible to be counted.

As a matter of fact, he adds, the numerical value of **בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל** is six hundred and three, too.

● The Boomerang Effect of Giving,

וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ (30:12).

The word **וְנָתְנוּ** (and they shall give), observes the Ba'al ha'Turim, reads the same backwards as forwards. This is because whatever a person gives comes back to him. It is a mistake to think that by giving Tzedakah, one loses anything, because what goes out of the front door, comes in through the back.

● Heads You Win, Tails I Lose

Three times, says the Ba'al ha'Turim, the word "Pekudim" appears in this Parshah, three times "Machtzis ha'Shekel", three times "Kofer Nafsho", three times "Le'chaper" and three times "B'nei Yisrael".

All this is because the half-Shekel atones for Yisrael in three areas: from defeat on the battlefront, from famine and from pestilence.

Indeed, these are the three options that Gad ha'Navi presented to David Hamelech, to atone for his sin of counting Yisrael instead of collecting their half-Shekalim.

● Even on Shabbos

אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ ***(But you shall keep My Shabbosos)*** 31:13.

The word **אַךְ** always comes to exclude. In this case, says the Ba'al ha'Turim, it excludes three things, all of which override the Shabbos: 1. 'Piku'ach Nefesh (life-threatening situations); 2. Public Korbanos (incorporating any Mitzvah which falls due on Shabbos and which cannot be postponed, such as B'ris Milah); 3. The conclusion of a battle (even if it is a Milchemes Reshus - a non-obligatory war), which began more than three days before Shabbos - see Rashi Devarim 20:19, and Ba'al ha'Turim there 20:20.

● Shabbos Specials

אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת (31:16).

The first letters of these three words spell 'Ohel', a tent, because we learn the prohibitions of Shabbos from the Melachos that were performed in the construction of the Mishkan, also known as 'the Tent of Meeting'.

● Shabbos Lights and Double Souls

אוֹת הִוא לְעֹלָם כִּי (31:17).

The first letters of these four words spell **אהלך** (your tents), says the Ba'al ha'Turim. This hints at Chazal, who extrapolate from the Pasuk **וידעת כי שלום אהלך**, the Mitzvah of 'Hadlakas Ner' (kindling the Shabbos Lights) on Erev Shabbos.

For the Shabbos lights are a source of Shalom Bayis; they create peace in the home, since they prevent people from falling and hurting themselves, not to speak of the joy that light brings into the home.

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפַשׁ (31:17).

This time, the Ba'al ha'Turim comments on the last letters, which spell **שתים** (two), hinting at the two Neshamos that a Jew acquires on Shabbos (as well as the two lights, the two Challos and all the other two's with which Shabbos is connected).

וּבַיּוֹם֙ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י שָׁבַ֖ת וַיִּנָּפַֽשׁ (31:17).

The numerical value of **וינפש**, says the Ba'al ha'Turim, is equivalent to the words **אלו שבגיהנם**, because even the fires of Gehinom rest on Shabbos ...



CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L מחשבת הלב



וְאַתָּה קַח־לְךָ֙ בְּשָׂמִ֔ים רֹ֖אשׁ מָר־דְּרוֹר֙ חֲמֵ֣שׁ מֵא֔וֹת וְקִנְמָן־בֶּ֥שֶׂם מַחֲצִיתָ֖ו חֲמִשִּׁ֣ים וּמָאתָ֑יִם - When listing the required measurements for the components of the **שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה**- the anointing oil, the cinnamon had to be brought in two parts; each part weighing the equivalent of 250 *shekalim* - a total of 500 *shekalim*.

Weighing it twice would end up giving somewhat more to *hekdesh*, as we add a bit to each weighing to ensure *hekdesh* not be shortchanged.

What may be the deeper message the *Torah* wants to convey here?

R' Shraga Grossbard *zt"l* offered a possible thought: Although this added bit of cinnamon wasn't a very significant amount and didn't

add much, nevertheless, it was still required. This teaches us that every little bit we disburse on *Hashem's* behalf is precious and regardless of its insignificance, it is cherished.

Perhaps we can add another *machshava* here to explain why it was מַחֲצִיתָ֑ו - brought in halves. In *Yiddishkeit*, it's not about all or nothing - either 100% or don't bother. The *Torah* tells us that we can accept even half at a time. Just do your best, and don't worry about the rest. - *Hashem* counts our efforts, not necessarily the finished product! May we all continue to bring Him *nachas ruach.*

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים



On December 25, 2023, two Israeli soldiers were killed *r"l* while fighting in the Gaza Strip. Sgt. First Class Yosef Gitarts and Staff Sgt. Elisha Yehonatan Lober. Gitarts lived in Tel Aviv, Lober in Yitzhar.

Side-by-side photos of the faces of two soldiers graced numerous social media sites and looked out from the front pages of every newspaper the next day. What stood out most in Gitarts' photo is his green beret; in Lober's, it is his white *kippah* and long, curly *peyos*. Gitarts was born in Russia and immigrated to Israel at the age of 13; Lober was born in Beit El, son of actor and playwright Chagai Lober, director of the Aspaklaria theater. Gitarts was a second-year computer science student at Reichman University;

Lober learned *Torah* at the *Roei Yisrael Yeshivah* in Yitzhar and was a youth coordinator in the community. Gitarts was single, Lober was married with a 10-month-old baby.

A look at the photos of the two, and a superficial glance at their biographical sketches, paints a picture of two different Israels: what someone pre-October 7 might have referred to as the "State of Tel Aviv vs Judea." Yet they both died battling an enemy who sees no difference between the two and wants to rid the world of both.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog later addressed this in a speech to the nation, saying that Israel must not return to the poisonous disunity that existed before October 7. "We must not return to the discourse of 'us and them'," he said.

Gitarts and Luber's pictures side-by-side show that in war, there is no "us" and "them." Yehonatan's father, Chagai, also appealed in a Facebook post for a day of unity to honor his son. "We request of the media and of every one of our nation: please, one day of unity to uplift his soul, please don't write or broadcast anything divisive, please, speak good [of others], find the good of the decision-makers and of our amazing people who Yehonatan was proud to fight for."

Chagai then told over the following story. A number of weeks after Yehonatan's death, I met with Brothers in Arms [a left-wing protest-movement for secular IDF reservists] out of a common concern for Jewish and Israeli unity. It was a meaningful encounter. We listened to one another, and even came to some tentative understandings on various issues.

After two hours I told them I had to leave and hurried to exit. They wanted to know what my hurry was, and I told them I needed to pray and say *Kaddish* for Yehonatan. "What's the problem?" said the brothers, "You can say it here." Here?

"What do you need to say *Kaddish*?" they wanted to know. They truly had no idea what it means to pray.

I explained, "Ten people ...Ten men."

They immediately did a mass recruitment in their offices and wouldn't you know it - more than ten men showed up.

"Okay, what do we do now?" they asked.

"Well, you'll need to cover your heads out of respect," I told them, hoping this wouldn't cause them to change their minds.

So they all stood up and covered their heads with sweatshirt hoods, handkerchiefs, and position papers. They were happy to do it and used any and all means to prepare for the prayer.

"Look," I told them, "we'll need your cooperation in order to pray. You'll need to answer *Amen*."

"For sure!" they all chimed in. "When do we say *Amen*?" It was amazing that they truly had no idea.

"Umm... it's hard to explain...," I told them. "You know what? Every time I raise my hand, you say *Amen*. Cool?"

They all nodded and so I stood, a religious settler, "extreme right-winger", in the heart of "them" - the left-wingers, and prayed with them. I said *Kaddish* and the *Amida* and I raised my hand in the right places and they, more obedient than they've ever been before, roared out *Amen* like *Breslovers* in Uman on *Rosh Hashana*, every time I raised my hand.

I finished the prayer and told them, "I think that for Yehonatan up there, that was his sweetest *Kaddish* ever."

Much has been discussed about how the horror of October 7 unified the country - but how inevitably, as time passes, that unity will fade. But it doesn't have to. *Acheinu Kol Bais Yisroel* ... we are all one big and hopefully happy family!

משל למה הדבר דומה

וַיַּ֤רְא אַהֲרֹן֙ וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּ֣חַ לְפָנָ֔יו וַיִּקְרָ֣א אַהֲרֹ֔ן וַיֹּאמַ֕ר חַ֥ג לַה֖' מָחָֽר (32:5)



R' Yechezkel Landau *zt"l*, known by his magnum opus "*Noda B'Yehudah,*" was the Chief Rabbi of Prague (1713-1793). He was known for his brilliance, and many times managed to redeem individuals, or sometimes the entire community, from intimate dangers.

Once, he was sitting in his study, which was located in the upper story of his house, completely absorbed in some difficult problems of civil and religious procedure which were sent to him from all over the world.

Suddenly, he heard shouting. As he looked up, he beheld a strange-looking man, armed with an axe. "I heard you are a wonder-rabbi, able to perform miracles," shouted the intruder, "Prove it!"

Frightened as the *Noda B'Yehudah* was by the imminent danger, he kept his composure and answered: "Ok. How would you wish me to prove it?"

"Jump from this window and land unharmed below; if not, I shall kill you as a fraud."

R' Yechezkel looked at the invader, "That would be little proof of my wonder-working power, for an acrobat could do it without a miracle; but listen, I will do something more astonishing. I will walk down below and you, remain here and see me come flying up, like a bird, through the window!"

The madman thought this a dazzlingly bright idea and consented.

R' Yechezkel dashed out, gave the alarm, and the lunatic was apprehended.

When *Aharon Hakohen* was requested to help make the *Eigel Hazahav*, he cleverly consented, or so the people thought. By not completely confronting the issue he was able to push off the calamity a bit longer and almost managed to deter it entirely.

There is much to be learned from the actions of Aharon on that fateful day.



L'Maaseh



Rav Dovid Hoffman writes a beautiful story. **When Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky, z"l**, used to make Challah every Thursday afternoon in her little kitchen in Bnei Brak, many women would come to watch and join her as she made the dough, said the Brachah, and Davened for Klal Yisroel. She would always welcome her guests with the warmest greeting of "Shalom Aleichem," and would make them feel special as she offered them cold drinks and gave heartfelt Brachos.

As the Rebbetzin escorted a group into her tiny kitchen, she would tell people to stand near her and answer Amien to her Brachos. Then,

she would begin. There was absolute silence as the Rebbetzin sprinkled some flour onto the dough, then she placed her hand under the cover of the large plastic bowl. She carefully separated a small piece of dough from the mixture and held it up for everyone to see, then proclaimed, "This is Challah." Rebbetzin Kanievsky then loudly said the Brachah of Hafrashas Challah, and all the women and girls present answered with a resounding "Amein!" Still holding the piece of Challah, the Rebbetzin whispered her special Tefilos for a long while.

Nobody would move or make a sound as they watched her Daven to Hashem. The group just stared, in awe of such Kavanah and devotion to Hashem while performing a Mitzvah.

After the Rebbetzin finished her Tefillos, she began to accept slips of paper, where people had written names and requests for Brachos for various Refuos and Yeshuos. Rebbetzin Kanievsky read each and every name out loud, gave a warm Brachah, and all together, the women around her would shout "Amein!" By the time the last name was read, there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

That tiny little kitchen was like a holy Bais HaMikdash. When they were done, nobody wanted to leave. They all just wanted to absorb more of Rebbetzin Kanievsky's warmth and love. She would smile at each woman or girl and wish them a very good Shabbos, with Kol Tuv!

The Rebbetzin passed away on Chol HaMo'eid Sukkos, and her daughter, **Rebbetzin Leah Kolodetsky** took over many of the chores and undertakings from her mother. One of the things was that she began to make Challah with women and guests on Thursday afternoons, just as her mother did for so many years. She would follow the same manner that she saw her holy mother do growing up, and to many, it was as if a torch had been passed down, with the flame still burning bright.

A few weeks after she began making Challah with the women, Rebbetzin Kolodetsky realized that Chanukah was soon approaching,

and that the Thursday afternoon of Chanukah would not be a good time for women to come, since they had to be home for lighting the Menorah. She hung a sign on her door that said, "This Thursday will be Chanukah, so we will not be doing Hafrashas Challah together. B'Ezras Hashem, we will continue again next week."

That night, Rebbetzin Leah had a dream. Her mother, Rebbetzin Kanievsky, came to her and said, "Leah, why did you cancel the Hafrashas Challah? Do you know how much Nachas Ruach it brings to Hashem in Shamayim when you make Challah with the women?"

Rebbetzin Kolodetzky woke up and thought to herself, I am sure this dream doesn't mean anything. It is probably my own guilty feelings for canceling the Hafrashas Challah. So she didn't say anything to anyone and went through her day.

However, that night she went to sleep and her mother came to her again, and said the same thing. Rebbetzin Kanievsky told her daughter that it is so important to keep having her Hafrashas Challah events as it brings many Zechusim to people.

After the second dream, Rebbetzin Leah realized it was real, and not her conscience. She went to her father, **Rav Chaim, zt"l**, and told him about her dreams. He told her, "Take down the sign and make Challah with the women, even on Chanukah." - And that was exactly what she did, and what she continues to do!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l, was known for his honesty in every area. When he was already older, Rav Yaakov was once asked how he had merited to live such a long life.

He answered simply, "I have never told a lie."

Rav Yaakov would have the same integrity when it came to other people's belongings, even with items that were not so valuable.

Rav Yaakov once met a young man that he hadn't seen since his wedding, two years earlier. Rav Yaakov was happy to see him, and he took out a pen and handed it to him.

Rav Yaakov said, "This pen is yours. I borrowed it to fill in the details on the Kesubah at your wedding, and I forgot to return it to you. I've been carrying it since then until I would see you again, and now, I am so happy to return it to you!"

The Siddur Speaks

We say a Pasuk in Ashrei (Tehilim 145:12): **לְהוֹדִיעַ לִבְנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרֹתָיו**. This can be translated to mean, "***To inform people about the greatness of Hashem***."

The Yesod V'Shoresh HaAvodah gives another explanation. He says that the word '**גְּבוּרֹתָיו**' can also refer to the strength and greatness of the Jewish people.

The Pasuk can now be understood to mean, "To inform people of **their** greatness." - This means that people must know that they have the ability to accomplish so much in their learning Torah, in their Tefilah, and in their Mitzvos.

The Pasuk is telling us to let people know how powerful they are!

Almost 100 years ago, after visiting America, R' Meir Shapiro zt"l, the founder of "daf yomi," commented that "American Jewry has learned to make Kiddush; it has not yet learned how to make havdalah!"

Havdalah – the ability to identify what is harmful to Jewish life and holiness and to separate oneself from it – is infinitely harder to deal with than is the convivial Kiddush.

Short And Sweet Story of The Week By R'Yoni Schwartz

It was bitter cold, and they were all starving. On one of the darkest nights in history, Malka Kleinman and her inmates at the Gross-Rosen concentration camp were surviving on their last reserve of willpower. Yom Kippur was around the corner and they were all planning to do the unthinkable: fast.

When the fast began and they were forced to work, the hunger pains, bitter cold, and exhaustion only strengthened exponentially; every second felt like hours, but they kept pushing.

Finally, the stars came out and they all felt some relief. However, when they asked the Nazi for their food since they did not get it in the morning, she screamed at them in a rage, "If you can work all day without food, then you don't need food now!" This meant many of them could possibly not survive the night.

Malka then did something unheard of. She stood up to a Nazi. "How can you expect us to work if you don't give us to eat?" she asked. Furious at the defiant confrontation, the Nazi wanted her to suffer.

On that freezing night, the Nazi forced Malka to run around the camp barefoot on the snow while being followed by a Jeep, knowing that if she stops or falls, she's likely being shot.

Sapped of all energy, Malka barely finished the lap. However, it was not over, as the Nazi wanted another lap. The pain was excruciating, each step drained her more and more - but she kept pushing. After finishing the lap, she was about to collapse. However, it was not over there. The Nazi wanted yet another lap.

She stood up, stiffened her slouched neck, and kept pushing because would not give the Nazi the satisfaction of winning, nor would she bow down to the pain. She did seven laps before the Nazi gave up and gave in.

Speechless and awe-struck with respect for Malka's superhuman willpower, she decided to feed her entire bunk. Because of Malka, countless lives were saved. (Writer's Note: Malka is my grandmother and because of her refusal to give up, I am alive.)

Comment: In this week's parsha (Shemos 32:9), the Jews are called a "stiff-necked people." While this was almost the cause of being wiped out by G-d, it is also what allowed us to survive thousands of years in exile. It is our greatest vice but also our greatest virtue. Although having a stiff neck means that, at times, we find it hard to bow down to G-d, we certainly will not bow down to anything else!





● The Bug Miracle

One of the special people who supported the Branovitch Yeshiva was a man called R' Cheikel. Besides assisting them with their needs, every morning, he would go to the local bakeries to get bread for the hungry yeshiva boys. As he approached the bakers, he had a special morning charm of singing for them while requesting their generous donations. When he had a substantial amount of bread, he'd return home with the collected bread, as his house doubled as the yeshiva's dining room, and the boys would eat their breakfast.

After that was done, he'd then turn to the butchers and ask them for any leftover meat for the boys supper meal. For a long time, his efforts successfully kept the boys well nourished.

R' Elchanan Wasserman had a great admiration for R' Cheikel and for his dedication. One day, R' Elchanan called him over and asked him if he had any request that he could fulfill in return for what he does on behalf of the yeshiva.

R' Cheikel responded that he never intended that the Rosh Yeshiva would grant him something in return for his work. But, if he was offering, he had one request: "Once a week, I ask that your shiur be given to the bachurim in my house. I may not understand what you'll be learning, but at least there should be learning in my home."

This wasn't so bizarre, since his home already served as the dining room for the older boys. Out of his hakaras ha'tov, R' Elchanan approved his request and set up his weekly shiur in his home. R' Cheikel diligently listened to R' Elchanan's shiur, though he didn't understand any of it.

It was known throughout Branovitch that no bug could be found in R' Cheikel's dining room. Though there were plenty of bugs swarming around the adjacent rooms, they stood immobile at the entrance to his dining room. Many people from the town came to observe this miracle, amazed at how the bugs didn't enter, despite the great amount of food that sat around.

When R' Elchanan was asked to explain what was happening in the home of R' Cheikel, all he said was that he hoped that in the Next World, they'll give him an opportunity to gaze at the portion awaiting R' Cheikel.

One time, R' Bornstein was analyzing the scene. Looking on with him was Mr. Dreazen, a well-known apikores who sought to disprove Yiddishkeit. This Yid didn't even come to shul on Yom Kippur, and here he was, trying to disprove the open miracle.

Mr. Dreazen told R' Bornstein that the bugs not entering R' Cheikel's dining room isn't proof of anything. "Look here," he said, and he took several bugs in his hand to try and bring them into the dining room. Yet, despite his brazenness, the bugs miraculously wouldn't go in. With all his force, he was unable to get them to go in. Several times he tried to disprove the miracle, but to no avail. The bugs just wouldn't go into the yeshiva's dining room.

A few days passed, and the news hit the yeshiva that Mr. Dreazen had returned to Yiddishkeit and was now becoming observant. Mr. Dreazen explained that when he saw what Hashem was doing for R' Chaikel despite his limited knowledge in learning, he understood that great power lies in learning. And although he wasn't the greatest talmid chacham, nevertheless, he was doing the best with whatever capacity Hashem had given him. That gave him the courage to start a fresh commitment to serving Hashem. (*Simchah Babyis,* p. 700)



● The Transformed Unit

Noam Ramati, a religious commander in the Israeli army, was on a mission in Gaza. One day, there had been tense fighting, and only several minutes before *shekiah* did he realize that he hadn't yet put on tefillin. However, they were in a situation that didn't allow him to do so. The entire unit had to remain frozen in their position or else be in great danger; any movement would endanger his life, and the lives of his whole unit.

Although he was certainly *patur* from putting on tefillin, nevertheless it bothered him greatly. The rest of

the unit, with many non-observant Yidden, saw his pain and anguish of missing a day without tefillin.

The next morning, the unit was lined up by his bedside, all requesting a chance to put on his tefillin. They'd seen his anguish over not being able to put them on, and they got an appreciation for it, and ever since then, they all put on tefillin every day.

This lesson teaches us what can come out from a sigh over a missed mitzvah. He hadn't been able to actually put on tefillin that day, but nevertheless, the benefit that came out from it was great! He did his very best and left the rest to Hashem, which bore impressive fruit.

● The Religious Doctor



A religious doctor from Germany learned of the yeshivas in Lithuania and the *mesiras nefesh* the boys there had for learning. In a sense, he envied their dedication and was intrigued by the whole idea of yeshiva.

He found a temporary replacement to fill in for him and took a "vacation." He visited all the main yeshivas — Slabodka, Mir, Grodno, Telz, Kamenetz, Kletzek, Ponovezh, and finally Radin.

After seeing them all, he was very sad and down. He approached the **Chofetz Chaim** and asked him: "What am I going to get in the Next World? I'm not sitting and learning like these boys, so what am I going to merit in the World to Come?"

"Calm down," responded the Chofetz Chaim. "*Kol Yisroel yesh lahem chelek l'Olam Haba* – all Yidden have a portion in Olam Haba."

"True," responded the doctor. "But what type will I get? Until today, I thought that I was in for a sizeable portion, but now I see that I'm far from perfection. I have been helping many people and attending shiurim in my community, trying my best, but now I see that I'm far from it."



The Chofetz Chaim replied with a powerful and fundamental principle. "It is possible that in the World to Come, we will be neighbors."

"Us?" thought the doctor. "The Chofetz Chaim isn't saying so as a joke. He must be serious!"

The Chofetz Chaim saw his astonishment and thus asked him: "Why does the Torah say that Gan Eden is situated in the center of the Garden? Why is it positioned so? Why can't it be on the side? Why is it particularly placed in the center?

"The reason for this," answered the Chofetz Chaim, "is because when you have a circle around a center point, everyone is equally distanced from the center. Everyone is equally capable of getting to the wanted and aspired destination from wherever he is.

"The same is true with Gan Eden," continued the Chofetz Chaim. "You were brought up in your situation, and look what you've done with it. You're a doctor who helps people, and so you are therefore in for the greatest Olam Haba.

"I was brought up in Vilna, where I saw **R' Yisroel Salanter**, who inspired me to write the sefarim that I have written.

"You, on the other hand, were brought up in Germany, where the accepted practice was to work and learn, so for your situation, you'll be granted with the greatest Olam Haba."

R' Yankel Galinsky repeated this story and concluded: "Everyone will be granted the greatest Olam Haba through the 'toll' that was granted to him. By utilizing the abilities one is granted, one fulfills the purpose of being created and will have an enjoyable Olam Haba."

Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l

L' Maaseh…

A certain rebbe of younger grades once challenged his students with a homework task of looking over a certain posuk. The next day, one child raised his hands in order to share his understanding of the homework assignment with the rest of the class.

When the rebbe asked him if perhaps his father had helped him, the child replied that his father wasn't home the evening before, so he decided to do what his father does when he has a question and call **R' Moshe Feinstein!**

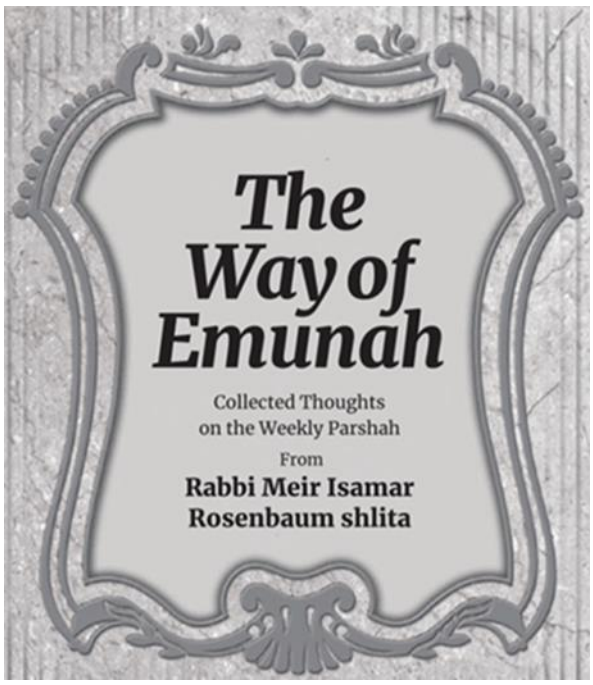
The melamed was moved that the gadol ha'dor took the trouble to help this child and travelled to R' Moshe to ask his forgiveness for his student disturbing him.

R' Moshe dismissed the apology completely, insisting that of course, he should ask. R' Moshe understood as he had learned from his own father, that it was his job to answer every query, regardless of the age or sophistication of understanding that the questioner possessed.



Chazal refer to tefilah as a conversation, and as such it behooves us to understand what this means and to approach davening in this way. A conversation takes place between two individuals. However, they need not both speak, and if one is listening attentively to the other, they spoke, even if they can't really see each other. Reuven can call Shimon and speak for several minutes as long as he knows that Shimon has answered the phone. Mission accomplished.

When we daven, we need to make sure that Hashem has answered our call. If we seek to connect to Him, then He will be there to listen, but we must first demonstrate our desire for this connection by properly preparing ourselves for davening in mind, and in deed. - Once we have reached out to connect to our Creator, He will answer our call. (Based on She'arim b'Tefilah, **R' Shimoshon Pikus zt"l**)



כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה' בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם - '***When you count the heads of the children of Yisroel according to their numbers and every man will give a redemption for their soul to Hashem when you count them***.' (30:12)

● One Who Treats Others With Chesed and Rachamim is Treated by Hashem The Same Way

The Chofetz Chaim (Sefer Ahavas Chesed, Chelek 2, Perek 3) writes: Everyone wants Hashem to treat him with middas hachesed

and rachamim, but this goes in tandem with emes and tzedek. This means that the way a person conducts himself with these middos is the way Hashem will treat him. If a person treats others with kindness and compassion, he will arouse the Divine attributes of kindness and compassion and Hashem will have mercy on the world in his merit, as is stated (Shabbos 151B): "Anyone who has mercy on other people will be provided with mercy from Shomayim."

In Sefer Sichos Hachafetz Chaim it is related that the Chofetz Chaim once met a businessman who made a living by importing merchandise from other countries. In order to avoid paying taxes while crossing the border, he bribed the head official and gave several hundred rubles to look the other way and allow his goods in tax-free.

The Chofetz Chaim asked him, "Is it really worth it to give the official so much money?" The man answered, "Yes. By giving him a few hundred rubles, I am saving thousands of rubles that I would have to pay in taxes."

The Chofetz Chaim said that this is how it will be in the Olam Ha'emes on the day of judgment. The person being judged will place all of his "merchandise" before the Heavenly Court, and it will be ruled that his aveiros were done completely but his mitzvos were incomplete, as they were missing ahavah, yirah, etc. It will be found that he owes "tax" that must be paid. However, if he performed acts of chesed, he will be able to "bribe" the court. - The mitzvah of chesed will exempt him from paying what he really owes.

The Chafetz Chaim concluded, "People often do not do chesed because they claim to have no time. What they really don't have is common sense.

Through a little chesed, one can save himself from a lot of suffering in Shomayim."



● Hachnasas Kallah and Simchas Chosson

It is said that **Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel zt"l**, the Rov of Lodzh, was a finicky person. Whenever he traveled, he would bring along his own bedsheets, pillow and blanket, as he found it distasteful to use someone else's.

He once found himself in a small town, where he was asked to serve as Mesader Kiddushin at a wedding. When he arrived, he found that there was a delay in starting the chuppah because the chosson was refusing to get married until the kallah's family gave him the bedding that they had promised to provide. Since the father-in-law was a poor man, he had not been able to pay for the bedding, and the chuppah was in danger of being cancelled.

When Rav Eliyahu heard about this, he ran to his wagon and took down his sheets, pillows and blankets, and gave them to the bride and groom. The chosson then agreed to go ahead with the chuppah, which was celebrated with much joy – and no one was as happy as Rav Eliyahu Chaim, who was overjoyed to have been given the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of hachnasas kallah.

When the wagon driver got ready to leave, he noticed that Rav Eliyahu Chaim's bedding was gone. He thought it had been stolen and he told the Rebbitzen about the theft. This caused her a lot of grief.

The next day, as Rav Eliyahu Chaim was sitting with his family, he told them the story of the kallah who couldn't afford to provide bedding for her chosson. The Rebbitzen said, "It's a shame that your bedding was stolen. If it hadn't been, it could at least have been given to the poor bride." - Rav Eliyahu Chaim then said with a smile, "In fact, that is exactly what happened."

● **No One to Rely On** (32:32) - **וְעַתָּה אִם־תִּשָּׂא חַטָּאתָם וְאִם־אַיִן מְחֵנִי נָּא מִסִּפְרְךָ אֲשֶׁר כָּתָבְתָּ** – '***And now if You forgive their sin. But if not, erase me now from Your book***.'

The Dubno Magid zt"l explains this pasuk with a moshol: There once was a high-ranking minister who had a relative who was arrested numerous times for stealing from the king's treasure house. Every time he was arrested, the minister would speak in his defence and use his connections to set him free without punishment.

This thief once went too far and stole a very substantial amount of money from the king's treasury, and the minister couldn't come up with any way to save him from judgment. He approached the king and said, "Your majesty, I request to be relived of my position." - The king was surprised by this request and asked for an explanation.

The minister said, "My relative always depends on me to save him when he steals. That's why he keeps stealing. If I quit my job, there will be no one to speak on his behalf, and he will stop stealing."

This is what Moshe Rabenu said to Hashem. "Erase my name from Your book." Klal Yisroel depends on me to speak to You on their behalf. Therefore, I ask to be taken out of the picture so that they will have no one to rely on and, therefore, will stop sinning.

● **The Sin of Depression** (33:4) - **וַיִּשְׁמַע הָעָם אֶת־הַדָּבָר הָרָע הַזֶּה וַיִּתְאַבָּלוּ וְלֹא־שָׁתוּ אִישׁ עֶדְיִוֹ עָלָיו** – '***The people heard this news…they mourned, and no one put on his finery***.'

Sefer Tiferes Yisroel (Perek 1, Ois 17) quotes **Rav Shraga Feivel of Gritza zy"a** as relating that the first time he went to see the **Chozeh of Lublin zy"a**, the Chozeh spoke about this pasuk. He said that we see from the verse that the people's main sin was the fact that they mourned and became depressed after they sinned.

He translated the words "**וְלֹא־שָׁתוּ אִישׁ עֶדְיִוֹ עָלָיו**" to mean that they didn't take to heart the fact that they were still holy people, who

are an adornment of finery to Hashem, and they should move forward, leaving the past in the past.

After hearing this explanation, Rav Shraga Feivel decided to connect himself with the Chozeh and he became very close to him.

וְחַנֹּתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן וְרִחַמְתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם - '***And I will favour when I wish to favour, and I will have compassion when I wish to have compassion***.' (33:19)

● **Davening for One's Friend**

The Gemara states (Brachos 7a): **״וְחַנֹּתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אָחוֹן״ — אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֵינוֹ הָגוּן, ״וְרִחַמְתִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם״ — אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֵינוֹ הָגוּן** - ***"I will favour when I wish to favour" – even if the person is undeserving. "I will have compassion when I wish to have compassion" – even if the person is undeserving.*** "

Sefer Tiferes Shlomo says that from this pasuk we see the power of davening for one's friend. He understands it to mean that Hashem will grant favour even if the person who is davening is undeserving and He will grant compassion even if the person one is davening for is undeserving. He will still accept this prayer because one who davens for his friend is answered first (Bava Kama 92a).

● ***A Small Bundle of Aveiros*** - **נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לָאֲלָפִים נֹשֵׂא עָוֹן וָפֶשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנַקֵּה לֹא יְנַקֶּה** '***Preserving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and rebellion and sin***.' (34:7)

Rav Chaim Eliyahu Sternberg zt"l, relates that next door to the **Me'ohr Einayim** there lived an irreligious Jew who transgressed every mitzvah in the Torah. This man made sure to avoid the Me'ohr Einayim, as it was known that the Rebbe could see every man's sins.

One day, however, he inadvertently bumped into the Rebbe, who proceeded to tell him all the aveiros he had done. This caused the

man to faint. When he was revived, he went into the Me'ohr Einayim's home, but the only one in the house at the time was his son, **Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl zy"a**. He told Rav Mordechai what happened and asked him to tell him how to do teshuva.

Rav Mordechai told him, "I won't tell you to engage in any bodily afflictions. All I ask of you is to accept not to return to your previous ways from now on!"

The man asked, "How will I atone for my past sins?"

Rav Mordechai said, "If you don't sin again, I will take your aveiros upon myself."

The man agreed but said that he wanted it in writing. Rav Mordechai, "If you agree to sign on a document saying that you won't go back to your sinful ways, I will sign the agreement."

And so it was. The two of them wrote up the contract and signed it. The neighbor went home and, as soon as he left, the Me'ohr Einayim entered his house and saw the contract on the table. He began to yell at his son for what he had done but Rav Mordechai said, "It says in the Torah that Hashem is 'noseh avon'. He 'carries sins'. - If Hashem can carry a huge bundle of sins, why can't I carry a small bundle of sins so that this Jew will do teshuva?"

OHR HAMERCAZ

Divrei Torah on the Daf, Parsha and more from members of R' Stefansky's Daf Yomi Shiur given in Mercaz Daf Yomi

The פָּסוּק says " אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ - You shall nevertheless keep My Shabbosos." (31:13) - Why does the פָּסוּק refer to Shabbos in plural tense?

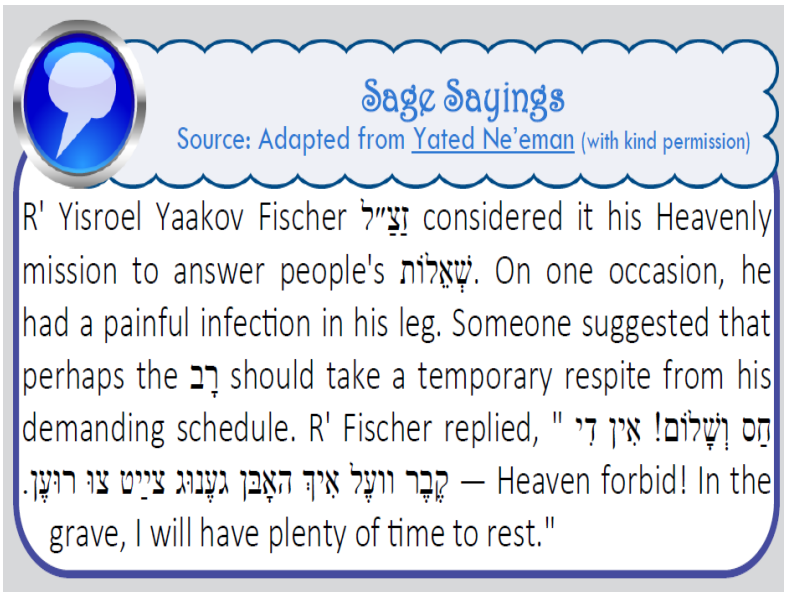
The Mincha Belula answers that there are two parts to Shabbos. There is the Shabbos itself, and there is what is called Tosefes Shabbos, which means a person could add on to Shabbos by starting a few minutes earlier than the scheduled time. By doing this, we are

showing Hashem how excited we are for Shabbos that we even want to start Shabbos earlier than we have to! [**ספר פרשה פשעטיל**]

A person once arrived at a bungalow colony very close to Shabbos. **Horav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל** told him that in future, he should try to take an earlier bus so that he doesn't arrive so close to Shabbos.

The person didn't listen to Rav Moshe's advice and the following week took the same bus. This time, the bus broke down and he didn't make it to the colony for Shabbos at all.





"If you see that someone came to the station after the train he wanted had already left, do not say that the man was late and missed his train, but that he came early for the next train. For everything is in the hands of Heaven." ~ R' Yosef Hurwitz zt"l.

"Bitachon is the realisation that all we have, all we are, and all that will be, is a gift from Hashem." ~ Rabbi Noach Weinberg.

Parsha Pearls



In this week's parsha, Moshe is instructed how to make the ketores blend, as it says: קַח־לְךָ֞ סַמִּ֗ים נָטָ֤ף וּשְׁחֵלֶת֙ וְחֶלְבְּנָ֣ה סַמִּ֔ים וּלְבֹנָ֖ה זַכָּ֑ה בַּ֥ד בְּבַ֖ד יִהְיֶֽה - "***Take for yourself aromatic spices: balsam sap, onycha and galbanum, aromatics and pure frankincense...And you shall make it into ketores***..." (30:34)

What is the difference between offerings that were offered on the copper mizbe'ach and the ketores which was offered on the golden mizbe'ach?

Seforim explain that the korbanos, correspond to our avodas Hashem in a physical sense – i.e., with our bodies (e.g., channeling permitted desire toward Divine service), while the ketores represents the essence of a Jew, his neshama - the ultimate connection to Hashem in love and dedication.

Now, the ketores is an aromatic blend of eleven spices. Commentaries explain that these eleven represent the community of Am Yisroel. And our sages teach us if one of the spices is absent, the entire blend is invalid. Perhaps, this shows that each person's individual contribution from his neshama is vital to ensure that our nation's avodah is "a pleasant aroma to Hashem."

The Piaseczna Rebbe, Hy"d in his sefer Aish Kodesh (Shabbos Shuva) writes the following incredible words that reflect this idea: **כשאיש ישראל עובד ה', מתגלה מכל אחד ואחד אור וקדושה מה שאין מתגלה מחבירו**. '***When a Jew serves Hashem, a unique light and holiness emerges from him that cannot come from anyone else***.'



Shraga Feivel Halevy Zimmerman Av Beis Din of the Federation of Synagogues in London

The pasuk says: **זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־ הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל** – '***This they shall give, everyone who goes through the counting: half a shekel…***'

What is the word **זֶה** coming to tell us?

Rashi brings a Chazal that **נתקשה משה עד שהראה לו הקב"ה** - Moshe Rabeinu was confused, so **הֶרְאָה לוֹ כְּמִין מַטְבֵּעַ שֶׁל אֵשׁ וּמִשְׁקָלָהּ מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ כָּזֶה יִתְּנוּ** – '***Hashem showed him a sort of coin of fire weighing half a shekel, and He said to him, "Like this one they shall give."***'

The question is, why was Moshe confused? What was his difficulty in understanding? It was completely different to the menorah who's design was very complex and intricate, and therefore he was shown how it should be. – The **מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל** was what it was.

The K'sav Sofer explains that Moshe's question was, "Why only half a shekel, why not a whole one? First of all, it would double the revenue, but more so, a whole shekel would display **שלימות** – peace , unity, perfection and completion.

The answer is that a person must realise that in life, all they can achieve on their own is half. But whenever they do their half, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will grant them the **סִיְעָתָא דִשְׁמַיָּא** – '**The help of Heaven**', and will do the other half.



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● **Does giving to charity affect one's capital?**

הֶעָשִׁיר לֹא־יַרְבֶּה וְהַדַּל לֹא יַמְעִיט מִמַּחֲצִית הַשָּׁקֶל (30,15) "***The rich shall not increase, and the poor shall not decrease from half a shekel.***"

For a rich person half a shekel is a very small amount, but for a poor person it is a lot of money. And so it is possible that a rich person will think to himself that since he is required to give so little relative to his wealth he will become more wealthy. And the poor person might think that since he is giving so much compared to his financial worth he will become poorer. This is like what would happen if everyone paid equal taxes - the wealthy would become wealthier and the poor would become poorer.

But the truth is that one gives a donation to Hashem or a gift to charity, not giving a large amount will not make the giver wealthier, nor will a large amount reduce the person's monetary worth. On the contrary, the more one gives, the richer he will become, and so anyone who reduces the amount he gives is reducing his wealth.

This is what the posuk is saying, "the rich shall not increase" - he will not increase his money by his giving only a relatively small amount, and "the poor shall not decrease from the half a shekel" - by his giving half a shekel, which for him is a very large amount, he will not decrease his money. Since they have to give this donation to atone for their souls, from a small donation will not come wealth, and from a large donation will not come poverty.

"Pain is a reality - suffering is a choice." ~ R Nosson Tzvi Finkel

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From our Sages

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ – 'This they shall give . . . half a shekel (30:13)

The mitzvah of the half-shekel is that each should contribute a coin that [is valued at] half of the dominant coin of that time. If the prevailing coin is a *takal*, they should give a half-*takal*; if it is a *sela*, they should give a half-*sela*; if it is a *darcon*, they should give a half-*darcon*. (**Midrash HaGadol**)

Why not a complete coin? To teach us that no man is a complete entity unto himself. Only by joining with another can a person become a "whole thing." (**The Chassidic Masters**)

Moshe could not understand: How could a mere coin serve a person as "a ransom for his soul to G-d"?

G-d answered him by showing him a "coin of fire." G-d was saying: When a person performs even a modest act of charity with the fire of passion and enthusiasm, he is indeed giving a piece of his soul. (**The Rebbe of Kotzk**)

Money is fire. Like fire it can destroy and annihilate, or illuminate and warm, depending on how it is used. (**Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk**)

"Bitachon means entrusting one's life to Hashem – trusting Him to choose the best path, and recognizing that every one of His actions is for the ultimate good." ~ Rabbeinu Yonah.

וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּכַלֹּתוֹ – *'He gave to Moshe, when He had concluded.' (31:18)*

The sages note the similarity of the Hebrew word *kechaloto*—"when he had concluded"—and the word *kekallato*, "as his bride," and cite numerous ways in which the Torah, referred to in this verse, and the Shabbat, spoken of in the previous verse, are analogous to a bride:

Just as a bride comes to her groom beautiful, bejewelled and perfumed, so does the Shabbat come to the people of Israel. . . . Just as the groom dresses in his finest clothing to receive his bride, so does the Jew receive the Shabbat. Just as a groom is pampered and absolved from working all his nuptial days, so is the Jew on Shabbat. (**Midrash**)

וַיָּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל־ה' וַיֹּאמַר אָנָּא חָטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֵטְאָה גְדֹלָה – *'Moshe returned to G-d, and said: "... This people has sinned a great sin" (32:31)*

What did Moses do? He went up to G-d, and said: "This people has sinned a great sin!"

When G-d saw this, He said to him: "Moshe, you too are angry with them? We cannot both be angry. When you see Me pour hot water, you pour cold, and when you see Me pour cold, you pour hot . . ." (**Yalkut Shimoni**)

"Hashem has enough angels. If hashem wanted perfection, he wouldn't have created humans. Hashem wants us - with our faults and imperfections.

Our deeds may seem slanted or incomplete, and sometimes we may step out of line. But it is precisely due to our human nature that hashem desires our service." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.



◣ Heartfelt Charity - Kotzker Rebbe

וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה׳ - "***Each man shall give an atonement for his soul to Hashem.***" (30:12)

Moshe wanted to know how a coin could be an atonement for the soul. Hashem told Moshe that if a coin is given away with happiness, then it is for atonement, for when one gives charity with enthusiasm, he is giving with a full heart.

◣ Splitting The Responsibility Reb Simchah Bunim of Pshischa

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ - "***This they should give, everyone who passes among the counted, the half-shekel of the holy shekel.***" (30:13)

The commandment to give a machatzis ha'shekel was in order "to make an atonement for your souls," to atone for the sins of the Jewish people. The amount was therefore set at precisely half a coin, to show that the Almighty Himself is responsible for the other half. - Had He not created the yetzer hara to tempt us in the first place, we would never have transgressed!

"No good deed is ever considered small or insignificant. Anything you do for hashem and for other people will live on for eternity." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller (1908-2001).

◣ Completing Our Souls - Reb Chanoch Henoch Of Alexander

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ - "***This they should give, everyone who passes among the counted, the half-shekel of the holy shekel***." (30:13)

The Jewish People are commanded to give a machatzis ha'shekel - half a shekel, toward the Mishkan. - Why not a whole shekel?

שֶׁקֶל has the same numerical value (430) as "nefesh" - soul. This alludes to the concept that every Jew is given only half his soul - his neshamah - from Heaven and the other half is his responsibility to create through his Torah, mitzvos and acts of chessed. - By doing so, he melds his soul into one finished and perfect specimen.

◣ Eager For Shabbos - Ohr Hachaim

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם - "***The Children of Israel shall observe Shabbos, observing Shabbos throughout their generations***..." (31:16)

The word **וְשָׁמְרוּ** should not be translated as, "And they shall guard," but rather as, "And they shall anticipate." This is from the description of Yaakov Avinu with regard to the dreams of his son Yosef: **וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדָּבָר**- "And his father [anxiously] awaited the fulfillment of the thing [Yosef's dreams]" (Bereishis 37:11).

Similarly, every Jew should not simply guard the sanctity of Shabbos, but rather he should anticipate it. One should not enter the holy Shabbos complacently, or consider it a burden, but rather await it with great eagerness, as one would await the arrival of a most revered guest.

"When you judge others favourably, Hashem judges you favourably." ~ Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Chanania (Shabbos 127b)

◣ Shabbos Dwelling - Yalkut Reuveni

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם - "***The Children of Israel shall observe Shabbos, observing Shabbos throughout their generations***..." (31:16)

לְדֹרֹתָם ("throughout their generations") is spelled without the vav. Hence, it may be read le'dirosam ("throughout their dwelling places"). - When Shabbos enters and the dwelling place of the Jewish home is ready to receive it, if the Shabbos table is set and the lights have been kindled, the Shechinah says: "I will dwell here with you."

◣ Days For Preparation - Koznitzer Rebbe

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֵּעָבֵד וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִּשְׁבֹּת בֶּחָרִישׁ וּבַקָּצִיר תִּשְׁבֹּת - "***For a six-day period you may work, and on the seventh day you shall rest; you shall rest from plowing and harvesting***." (34:21)

The Hebrew word for plowing is charish, חרש. The ח stands for חמישי -Thursday, the ר stands for רביעי - Wednesday, and the ש stands for שישי - Friday. This tells us that Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday should be used as days to prepare for Shabbos

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

Every Shul has its unique characters that, for years can go unnoticed, but, nevertheless, once they are not there any longer, are very much missed and things are never the same again. I don't mean the elected or paid people, but rather the ones that come and go unobtrusively.

He might be the kind man who gives sweets to the kids as they come to say Good Shabbos, or the old man who always has a supply of snuff. It could be the Yid who is always sitting on the first seat as you come into shul and knows everyone else's business, or the one

who is nearly always in need of an Aliya. Each one has his own special story.

My story is about a *Mispallel* whose 'stand up' place in shul was in front of the *bima* – not the middle but the south east corner. He had a regular place with a seat like everyone else, but somehow this extra place was known as his place, too. Every *Krias Hatorah*, as far back as I can remember Reb Yiddel stood at that spot, so that he could hear the *Baal Koreh* better. Also, during *Hallel* on Yom Tov, whilst the *Baal Tephillah* sang an inspiring piece, Reb Yiddel would again stand over there absorbing the atmosphere. Even on *Tisha B'Av* he would sit at this spot on an antique stool he'd probably inherited from his father. In fact, I recently saw a photograph of the opening ceremony of the Shul sixty years ago. When the *Sifrei Torah* were being taken around the shul and being kissed by the crowd, our Reb Yiddel was already standing at this spot.

So Reb Yiddel standing in front of the Bima was another unnoticed feature of the Shul that was always happening. It didn't bother anyone, nor was any fuss ever made about it. It was just taken for granted.

After Reb Yiddel's wife was *niftar*, he moved into the old age home next door and kept to his old routine. As time went on, and he started to become frail, I starting assisting him to walk from his seat to his *bima* place and then back again. Initially, he resisted but in time he came to accept me and even requested a little help from time to time. Each *Krias HaTorah* I would help Reb Yiddel move to his favourite place by the *bima*, and then help him back to his official seat, afterwards. When he had an *Aliya* I would help him up the steps and then back again. This went on for Months? Years? – I can't remember exactly.

This particular Shabbos morning seemed to be like any other, and when Reb Yiddel was comfortable back on his seat after *Krias Hatorah*, I returned to my place to resume davening.

Reb Yiddel called me back and asked me to help him go to the *bima*. Thinking that, maybe, he was becoming forgetful, I reminded him that we had completed the *Leining* and was now getting ready for *Mussaf*.

"No, No," he said, "I Know. I need to see something. You'll understand when I show you."

We arrived back at the *bima*. With one hand he held on, and with the other he pointed to the three *Sifrei Torah* being held each by a *Mechabed*. He turned to me and said, "How often does one see three *Sifrei Torah* on the *bima*, when we have just *leined* from all three, each dressed in a beautifully embroidered velvet mantel, and shinning silver ornaments? I want my eyes to behold such a sight."

Indeed, what a magnificent sight.

We stood there together for several minutes, before he allowed me to lead him back to his place.

Now, Reb Yiddel (**ר' יהודה יונה ב"ר צבי רייך ז"ל**) is no longer with us. As his family and friends reflect on his special character, I will, BHY, this coming Shabbos (Shabbos Chanukah 5783 (2022) be focused on seeing, once again, that special scene, capturing those precious moments.

The next time this opportunity will arise (besides on *Simchas Torah*) will be *Parshas Shekolim* 5785 (2024) …….. but by then *Moshiach* will be here, Bezras Hashem Yisborach.

Good Shabbos

"Do not fear the climb; the steeper the mountain, the more beautiful the view." ~ Based on the teachings of The Ishbitzer, Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner (1801-1854).

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

United We Stand!



When recounting the sin of the golden calf, the Torah tells us וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם וַיָּצַר אֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט (32:4), that Aharon took all the gold and wrapped it in a cloth. Why was Aharon concerned about their being leftover gold?

Aharon wanted to make sure that there would be no remnant – that there would be no excess gold to be found anywhere. Why? What was Aharon worried about?

I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita that the **Metzias Yitzchok** says something so incredible. He says that Aharon took all the remaining gold and put it away so that not one person would find a piece of gold and make his own golden calf. Aharon wanted there to be only one golden calf. The reason for that is that a sin is bad, but a lack of unity is even worse. - The Metzias Yitzchok says that unified and united people can get beyond sin. They have a merit to protect them and shield them. However, people who are sinning, people who are splintered will never be able to be salvaged.

This is such an incredible lesson to us. Sometimes we point fingers. We all make judgments that maybe we shouldn't have made. We must remember the power of unity. Unity can save and protect. Try to make sure that you're united with your family, that you're united with your neighbors and your community. When we are united, we stand but when we are divided, we fall!

The Yalkut Shimoni brings down a parable of a frail, elderly man who was about to die. He called together his sons and they saw that he was holding a bundle of reeds. He told them, "Sons, look at this bundle of reeds. I want one of you to try to break this bundle of reeds." Each son in turn took the bundle of reeds and whacked it and whacked it, but it would not break. The feeble, elderly father asked, "Can you not do it?" The sons looked at their father incredulously and asked, "What do you mean? Can **you** do it?" The father replied, "Sure, I can do it." They stared at their father in amazement, and he took the bundle of reeds, separated it, pulled out one reed, and snapped it in two. One by one, he broke all sixty reeds that had been in the bundle. Then the father said, "See, I just destroyed the bundle; I broke the bundle of reeds."

The lesson, said the father to his sons, is that like this bundle of reeds when you are all united, you are impervious to destruction. Nobody can hurt you. Nobody can break you. There is no sorrow, there is no pain. However, when you think you are an individual, when you think you are on your own, then you are just one reed, and anybody can crack you. Anybody can break you. Anybody can destroy you.

We all know that we are going through very challenging times. We must reach out to our fellow brothers and sisters with love! We must have achdus, we have to have unity. We have to live a life of harmony! We have to stay united because if we are divided then we will fall.

"The Jewish people draw their strength from their unity. Like a flame that grows stronger when fed, so too do the Jewish people shine brightest when bound as one." ~ Based on the teachings of The Maggid of Mezritch, Reb Dovber (1704-1772)

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



● Excited Over Him

With these few words, "קוֹל עַנּוֹת אָנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ – *'I hear sounds of empty excitement.'* (32:18) Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching us an attitude that we're expected to acquire. We must be careful what we get excited about in this world. To be passionate about something requires justification – the emotion of enthusiasm is given to us solely to be employed in matters pertaining to avodas Hashem. And that means that a kol anos, a sound of excitement over nothing, is a severe error because your career in this world depends on what you're excited about.

I remember in my yeshiva days in Europe, when we said borchu on Rosh Hashana night, it was actually wild. The shatz got up and said Borchu es Hashem hamevorach quietly – that's how it was, there was no niggun – everything was done with machshava, in a calculated manner. But then the congregation answered; the yeshiva men began shouting. BORCHU! What a noise! They were raising the roof and stamping with their feet. They actually went wild over Hashem!

We're starting Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment, and we came in to speak to Hashem, to express our love of Him, our gratitude and

our hope that maybe He'll give us another year of life. And so we shouted to Him! Everybody shouted!

Now, I'm sure if a stranger would come into the yeshiva, he would take one look around and say, "It's a madhouse here — a lunatic asylum." Of course, when he goes to the baseball field and they're screaming over nothing, he won't say that. Oh no; baseball — that's important! When the pitcher throws the ball and the man at the base gives a whack with the bat, everybody goes crazy: "Whoooo!" They stamp their feet and they become ignited — their blood becomes ignited with excitement. A whole crowd of lunatics going wild with kol anos over nothing — that this man understands. But when he comes into the yeshiva where they're excited about borchu es Hashem hamevorach, that's too much; suddenly he's the quiet intellectual; calm and composed. That's where he says, "What is this? A crazy house?" So we tell him! "Mister, you're right. In this place we're crazy about Hashem. And that's why it is a "crazy house"; you come in here a lunatic, and you go out sane."

● Two Forms of Kindliness

Here's a young man working in an office. I knew him. He was a young man with no connection with Torah and mitzvos and he's sitting in his office thinking about what fun he'll have at night. He'll go to Manhattan maybe, to the theatre – that's what his life is about, fun and games.

And suddenly one day he faints. He falls on the floor in a faint. And he's hurried to the hospital and he is diagnosed, most surprisingly, as suffering from tuberculosis. He never expected that. And now he must leave home for long months to go to a sanatorium. And there he lies on the porch of the hospital for months and months and he's thinking. There's no Manhattan now and no movie theatre so he has time to think.

And when he returns cured, he is also cured spiritually. He came back with a resolve to change his life. A true story! And instead of

remaining a playboy and becoming a nobody who wasted his life, he entered a yeshiva. He became a rabbi and he conducted a congregation for many years and he was zocheh to have good children. - And so when he looked back on that day, that black day of his life when he fainted in the office, he realized the kindness of Hashem. That disturbance was the best thing that ever happened to him in his whole life. And when he'll go to the next world, he's going to say, "Hashem, I thank You for all the good things, but for this most of all!"

● Speaking Up

Don't tell me that the gedolim don't speak up. I'm not a gadol but I can tell you that I saw real gedolim and they spoke up. Reb Aharon Kotler z"l gained a number of enemies because he was outspoken. The old Satmerer Rebbe gained enemies also because he was outspoken. There was a writer, a shomer Shabbos writer who once characterized the Satmer Rebbe in the story, "The Rebbe and the Satan" – a whole story about how the Rebbe made a bris with the Satan to attack Jews. Even Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky – he was a very sweet man – but he had teeth!

I was present once at a certain gathering and Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky spoke up against Bar Ilan University. Bar Ilan is a rotten place, a terrible place, and if it would close down, the world would be much better without it. And there were people present there who were big supporters of it and one man had the chutzpah to speak up and contradict Rav Yaakov, but he wasn't afraid. He spoke up. He felt it was an important issue and he spoke up.

If you see chachomim that never say anything then they're not chachomim. They look like chachomim. Sometimes they have positions where you think they're chachomim but not necessarily are they the real thing. Here's a Rosh Yeshiva. He's worried that if he opens his mouth he's going to lose all of his contributors. Suppose he would come out strongly against those who watch television. Let's say

he would say the truth – "you're all fools, stupid shotim who are giving up your chelek in Olam Habo" – he knows that's the truth. But every one of his contributors is a slave to the television! And if he'll say the truth so he's worried he'll have to close the yeshiva. I'm sure he says it to his talmidim – they speak about it in the Yeshiva – but in public, sometimes they're too weak-kneed, like me.

Do I really speak up against television like I should? I say it but the truth is that I'm not saying it in the way I should be saying it. I know that people have it in their homes. People are putting up a good front – that's all that they're doing. Some of them even grow beards, they put on black hats. But I know what's doing in the homes. There's a ruach hatumah in the homes. And so, if I was real, if I really loved Hashem, I would speak up. I'd blunt your teeth.

That's what our parsha is teaching us — if you want to be chosen by Hashem you have to have a big mouth. You have to speak up. If you're a nice quiet Jew that's good – it's important to be quiet — but most people are quiet at the wrong times.

If your wife says something to you that you don't like, that's the time to keep quiet, that's an excellent opportunity to keep your mouth closed. But when it comes to protesting against wickedness every person is mechuyav to speak up if he can. And who can't? You must speak up!

● Reproof - The Way of Life

Moshe wasn't commanded by Hashem to break the luchos. He could have been softer, more understanding. He could have come down with the luchos and said, "People, look. I'm bringing the luchos now from Hashem. Is this the way to act at such a time? You should be ashamed of yourselves. You could be so much better. You should live up to this great occasion."

If Moshe Rabbeinu would have asked the therapists today what to do, that's what they would have told him: "There are ways to speak

to people. You don't have to criticize like that." But Moshe didn't have the 'toras ha'therapists'. For him, it was only Toras Hashem and therefore he gave it to them over the head. And he did it with force, with bitter words!

That's a very important principle: When you love somebody, you're not going to praise him when he needs to be told the truth. When you love someone, you want to make him better. And you make him better by criticizing him.

The breaking of the luchos was the best thing that ever happened to our people. You know what would have happened had Moshe Rabbeinu been polite to the people when he saw the eigel? You know what would have been had he said, "My children. You can do better than that; you're letting Hashem down"? The people would have wept. Oh, how they would have wept! And the effect would have disappeared by the next day. But Moshe Rabbeinu wanted it to last. And that's why he scolded them and embarrassed them.

When a person is scolded, it hurts; it goes into the soul and the effect is forever. Now that seems a queer thing to our ears but that's the truth – when you're put to shame, you'll remember.

Do you know why the Generation of the Wilderness became the best generation in our history? Because they were the generation that was scolded most.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

The Secret Behind the Wagon

I was in the hospital with my young daughter, who was undergoing a medical procedure. Hospitals are daunting places, and surgery-no matter how major or minor, always comes that with its share of anxiety, trepidation, hopes, and prayers everything should succeed,

and no complications should arise. Thus, before my daughter was wheeled into the operating room, I took her hand in mine and reminded her to recite the brief Tefillah L'Choleh, "Yehi ratzon milfanecha... sheyehei esek zeh li l'refuah, ki Rofeh chinam Atah."

Instead of repeating the words after me, she surprised me with a question. "Before I say it, I want to know what it means. What does 'Rofeh chinam Atah' mean?"

I began explaining the meaning and significance of the words, and in the course of my brief answer, a woman entered the room pushing a large wagon weighed down with fresh sandwiches, cold beverages, sweets, and a variety of cakes and pastries.

"What can I offer you?" she asked cheerfully. "A sandwich? A snack? A drink? Here, honey, how about this?" she cooed, offering my daughter a pastry. "Take whatever you want."

"How much is it?" I asked politely, reaching for my wallet.

"How much? It's free, of course!" the woman exclaimed in surprise.

Free? I was awed.

"What organization are you from?" I inquired curiously.

The woman laughed. "No organization. It's our chesed."

"Your chesed? Who sponsors it?" I assumed she didn't understand my question.

"Oh. We do it on our own. It's our personal project."

"That's... really amazing," I breathed, genuinely impressed. Her wagon held such a bountiful and delicious-looking array of sandwiches, baked goods, snacks, and drinks; and this didn't strike me as a one-time visit, but a regular event. "Do you mind if I ask you how you got started?"

The woman smiled, eyes twinkling merrily. "If you're ready for a story, I'll tell you."

"Please!" my daughter exclaimed, sitting up straight in interest. The woman sat down on a chair and began to share.

I was married for many years without children. We attempted all kinds of treatments, traveled the country to daven at mekomos kedoshim, collected brachos and segulos, to no avail. After years of hopes, prayers and disappointments, I felt I'd reached the end and couldn't go on. I approached the tzaddik and gadol hador at the time, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ztz"l, spilling tears, frustration, bitterness, and even anger, sobbing copiously as I had never cried before.

Rav Shlomo Zalman didn't utter a word throughout my tirade and tears; all he did was listen patiently and lovingly as I unloaded my shattered heart.

After I was finished, the tzaddik sat in contemplative silence, after which he finally uttered a single sentence. "Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't owe you anything."

These were the last words I'd expected, so uncharacteristic of Rav Shlomo Zalman, a tzaddik renowned for his love and compassion to every Jew. I had come to him expecting warmth, sympathy, or at least a brachah, and here, all I'd received was a terse, painful response. I felt he had slammed the door against any hope, closing any road to light opportunity, and in response, I burst into tears again, crying even harder than I'd cried before.

Yet the tzaddik repeated softly, "Hashem doesn't owe you anything. The fact that He grants you health, a good husband, a supportive family, and parnassah-all this is chinam. We can't expect more."

I was bawling hysterically by now, and Rav Shlomo Zalman waited again until I'd calmed down to speak again.

"Although Hashem owes us nothing," he said, "I still believe that if you show Him that you are doing something that you don't have to do-that you reach out and volunteer to help others completely on

your own-then perhaps He will have rachmanus and grant you a free gift, something He doesn't owe you."

I listened solemnly to the tzaddik's advice and took it to heart. Thanking him, I took leave of the gadol hador and left feeling calmer and slightly consoled. As I walked home, I mulled over various volunteering options, wondering what I would be best at doing. Eventually, I concluded that I would volunteer in the hospital and distribute the food that you see on this wagon.

Hashem heard my tefillos and accepted my offer, and several years later, I was the proud of mother of three-a son and twin girls. My son and the older twin are married, baruch Hashem, and the younger twin is getting married tonight! You asked, so I answered.

A moment later, the woman and her blessed wagon had disappeared down the hall, leaving my daughter and I marveling at the woman's story and the glorious lesson that it conveyed.

I suddenly recalled what the two of us were discussing when the woman entered with her cart.

"You just asked about the meaning of 'ki Rofeh chinam Atah,' I reminded her. "I think Shamayim just sent you the answer!"

"A Jew was not created as a means for some other purpose; He himself is the purpose." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

"Bitachon is not just the absence of doubt, but the presence of inner peace." ~ Rabbi Noach Weinberg (1930-2009).

"When you help a fellow Jew, it is considered as if you helped Hashem himself." ~ Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

Rabbi Jeremy Golker – Giving

The parsha begins with the count of the Bnei Yisrael. **כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה' בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם** – *'When you take the sum of the children of Israel according to their numbers, let each one give to Hashem an atonement for his soul when they are counted; then there will be no plague among them when they are counted.'*

The **בעל הטורים** famously notes that the word **וְנָתְנוּ** is a palindrome – It can be read forwards and backwards. The message being that when a person gives tzedakah, it will come back to him, and a person will not lose out by giving tzedakah.

The **Chida** says something fabulous:- The **א״ת ב״ש** of **צדקה** is **צדקה**! If a person gives tzedakah, he won't lose out and will get it back.

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
ת	ש	ר	ק	צ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א

There is a famous **Vilna Gaon** [**קול אליהו**] who says that the 'Trop' (musical notes) of the word **וְנָתְנוּ** are **קדמא ואזלא** - *'You go up and you give.'* You could say that this is a remez to the gemara **במס' שבת (דף קנ״א:)**. *Rabbi Chiyya said to his wife: When a poor person comes to the house, be quick to give him bread so that they will be quick to give bread to your children. She said to him: Are you cursing them, your children? He said to her: It is like a wheel that continuously turns in the world.* – [Money comes and money goes!]

Says the Gaon, "Just like the word **וְנָתְנוּ** reads backwards and forwards, sometimes the giver has to be on the receiving end as well. And this is what the Torah is alluding to in the musical note of **קדמא ואזלא** – Go quickly and give the poor man bread, before the pendulum swings! Before the wheel of fortune turns!

Greatness in Gratitude

Our *gedolim* have refined their *hakaras hatov* to a level that spans generations and generates limitless opportunities for growth



When I [Rav Aryeh Zev Ginzberg] first left to learn in Eretz Yisrael at age 16, I promised my father that I would pay a visit to one of his close rebbeim, the famed *posek* and rosh yeshivah of Yeshivas Torah Ohr, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg *ztz"l*, within the first two weeks of my stay. I had never met the Rosh Yeshivah, but I had heard so much about him. And from my very first visit to his home in Mattersdorf, through which hundreds passed each day, I was treated like a long-lost son who had returned home after a long trip.

My first visit was on a Friday afternoon after morning seder. When the Rosh Yeshivah heard my name, he quickly called in his Rebbetzin *a"h* and asked her to prepare a bed for me, insisting I was going to be their guest that Shabbos. No amount of protest on my part would change the Rosh Yeshivah's directive.

I stayed that Shabbos, and the one after that, and many more after that. His home was always open to me. I began my weekly Friday visit presenting hundreds of *sh'eilos* to him, in both halachah and *hashkafah*, and he never asked me to come back another time, despite the incredible responsibilities weighing on him. I never gave it much thought, though, assuming that since my father had been his *talmid*, he felt that connection to me as well.

After more than a decade of visiting Rav Scheinberg and asking him hundreds of *sh'eilos*, I decided to commit them all to writing and publish them in a sefer. I consulted with Rav Scheinberg, who

greatly encouraged me, even offering to help. Ultimately, the Rosh Yeshivah didn't just help with the project, he completely took it on himself. He reviewed the entire manuscript three times, including one time when he sat with the proofs on a flight from Eretz Yisrael to New York and did not stop from take-off until landing. He made many valuable suggestions, and when the sefer was eventually published, his imprints were on every page. Still, again I just assumed the Rosh Yeshivah's magnanimity stemmed from his good nature, as well as his connection to my father.

It was only a few years later that I learned the real story. I met the Rosh Yeshivah's grandson in Eretz Yisrael and I shared with him how much *hakaras hatov* I had to the Rosh Yeshivah for all the time and effort he invested in me over so many years.

He smiled at me. "It's funny that you mentioned *hakaras hatov*," he said. "Some years back, I asked my zeidy why he spends so much time with you, despite his myriad responsibilities.

"My zeidy answered, 'How can I not give him unlimited time? I have *hakaras hatov* to his grandmother. His paternal grandmother had a bakery in Bensonhurst called Ginzberg Bakery, and when I started my yeshivah in the early days, we had no money to feed the bochurim. His grandmother would send us fresh bread every morning so the bochurim would have what to eat, even though we didn't have the money to pay for it. How could I not always be available for him, as *hakaras hatov* for what his grandmother did for me and the yeshivah so many years ago?'"

All those years in which I was *zocheh* to such an incredible connection to Rav Scheinberg and benefited so much from his Torah, I didn't realize it was because of the chesed my grandmother had performed a half-century earlier, because of her love for Torah and all who learn it.

The above story was the beginning of a 35-year relationship between the families. Rav Arieh Zev always wondered why Rav Scheinberg

always maintained such a close relationship with children, grand-children and even great-grand-children of his talmidim.

He came across an answer from Rav Scheinberg himself. And it is based on a pasuk in this week's sedra: **וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה, לֶךְ רֵד כִּי שִׁחֵת עַמְּךָ, אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם.** – '***And Hashem said to Moshe: "Go, descend, for your people that you have brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly.***'

Rashi says: **מִגְּדֻלָּתְךָ – לֹא נָתַתִּי לְךָ גְּדֻלָּה אֶלָּא בִּשְׁבִילָם** – '*Descend from your high position. I gave you this high position only for their sake.*'

Rav Scheinberg says on this, that a Rebbe must show Hakaras Hatov to the talmidim, because his greatness is due in a large part, to those talmidim! – Without his talmidim, he wouldn't be who he was.

And you sometimes see the converse as well: Many years ago, Rav Moshe Feinstein went to a wedding and gave the Choson an envelope with a wedding present. After the Sheva Brochos, the Choson and Kallah were opening their envelopes and they found a check from Rabbi Moses Feinstein from FDR Drive in Manhattan for $500 dollars! - When this story took place, $500 was an enormous amount for a wedding gift.

The Choson told his father that he thought Rav Moshe must have added an extra zero on the check by mistake. The father, the choson, and the Kallah together went to Rav Moshe's apartment and asked the great Torah sage whether he in fact had made a mistake in writing the check.

Rav Moshe said, "If I could, I would give you a check for $5,000! Your grandfather was Rav Pesach Prushkin and I studied with your grandfather. I felt such gratitude to your zeida that I wanted to give you a big present; unfortunately, I can't afford to give you more than $500!"

Rabbi Jeremy Golker Short Burst of Inspiration – Sensitive Splitting

We know that every sedra is divided into 7 parts/Aliyos, and generally speaking, they are pretty even. However, the arrangement of the Aliyos in this week's sedra are pretty unusual. Rishon is huge, Sheini is huge, and the rest are very short. Why is this?

Rabbi Noson Ordman Zt'l explains that if a person (Yisrael) is called up to the Torah for an Aliya, and they are reading about the Cheit of the Eigel, he might think that it is a bit embarrassing – he will squirm uncomfortably with the reminder that his great grandfather was party to this insidious aveira.[Even though it has been many many centuries]. Even a Kohen might be bothered by this, as his predecessor Aron Hakohen was somewhat involved in it. The only person who will feel calm and collected is the Levi as the Levites were guiltless and were not involved at all.

To facilitate the protection of the sensitivity of a Jew, Chazal orchestrated that the whole parsha of the Cheit HaEigel would be in the second Aliya (Levi). So, Rishon is very long, to get to that point. Then we have the whole story of the Cheit HaEigel. And then the rest of the parshas which are much smaller in length.

So, the way the sedra is structured, is showing us how important it is to be sensitive to another person's feelings.



אִם־אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָתָּה וְאַצִּיעָה שְׁאוֹל הִנֶּךָּ - ***"If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in the lowest depths, behold, You are there." (Tehillim 139:8)***

No matter where you may find yourself in life, know that Hashem is right there with you. ~ Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).



Fascinating INSIGHTS

Divine Direction

Sometimes we are unsure of what decision to make. How are we to know which path to choose?

The Torah alludes to this as is shown in the following. It says **לכתך אחרי במדבר**, your following Me into the desert. (Yirmiya 2:2). If we take this literally and go after (**לכתך אחרי**) the letters of the word that make up the word **מדבר**, let's see what we get. After a **מ** is a **נ**; after a **ד** is a **ה**; after a **ב** is a **ג**; after a **ר** is a **ש**. Adding up the sum of these letters (**נ,ה,ג,ש**) we get the number 358. This is the gematria of the word **משיח**.

And so this pasuk is alluding to us that with every decision we make we must ensure that it is a decision leading to bringing Moshiach closer. That is the barometer to know if a certain action should be done. Will it lead us one step closer to Moshiach coming?

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Masked Emotions

In what is probably the most anti-climactic event in Jewish history, the nation that was about to receive the Torah from Moshe turns away from the will of Hashem. After 40 days they begin to worry that Moshe will never return, and they panic. They create a new leader for themselves -- The Golden Calf.

The Torah describes the scene in Exodus 32:6: **וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיַּגְּשׁוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וְשָׁתוֹ וַיָּקֻמוּ לְצַחֵק** - "***The people offered (the calf) peace offerings and they sat down to eat and drink, and they got up to revel.***"

Hashem immediately commands Moshe to descend Mount Sinai in order to admonish his corrupt nation. As Moshe comes down the

mountain, he hears tumultuous shouts emanating from the people who were celebrating their newfound deity. His student, Yehoshua, also hears the sounds and declares (Exodus 32:17) ***"the sound of battle is in the camp***." Moshe listens and amends the theory. He tells Yehoshua, "***It is not the sound of victory, nor the sound of defeat: I hear the sound of distress***." When Moshe sees the Golden Calf, he breaks the Tablets and restores order, sanity, and the belief in Hashem.

What is strange about the episode is the contrast of the sounds made and the sounds heard. If the Jewish People reveled and celebrated, then why did Yehoshua hear sounds of war and how did Moshe hear sounds of distress? They should both have heard the sound of celebration and festivity.

Rav Chaim of Sanz had a custom: he would test the local children monthly. The children would recite orally from the Mishnah or Talmud and Rav Chaim would reward them generously with sweets and money. Once a group of secular Jews decided to dupe Rav Chaim.

They taught a Talmudic selection to a gentile child and reviewed it with him until he knew it perfectly. They dressed him like a Chasidic child and had him stand in line with all the other children to be tested.

The rabbi listened to the young boy intently. The other children were puzzled: they did not remember this boy from their cheder, yet they were amazed at the remarkable fluency he displayed in reciting his piece.

Rav Chaim was not impressed at all. He turned to the young man and said, "please tell your father that there are better ways to earn a few coins!" With that he dismissed the child.

The secularists were shocked. "How did the Rabbi know?" Their curiosity forced them to approach Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim smiled as

he answered them. "There are two ways to say the Gemorah. One is filled with spirituality.

The child's body is swaying and filled with the emotion of Torah. The other is just repetitive rote. This young man lacked the fire and the true joy that the Jewish children have when learning Torah. I knew he was not one of ours."

The Jews got up to revel around the golden calf. Moshe and Yehoshua however knew the difference between true joy -- simcha -- and confusion. The Jews' revel was in essence distressed but it was masked with drinks and noise makers. True joy is coupled with a certainty and a sense of direction; something lacking for those Jews celebrating the idol.

The Jews may have gotten up to celebrate, but it was no celebration. It may have looked like a party to the untrained eye, but Moshe knew the true sound of joy. It did not exist with the Golden Calf. True joy is the harmony of spirituality and contentment. Superficial sounds of euphoria and celebration are heard by those with true insight as sounds of battle and distress.

In Shaarei Teshuvah (3:158), Rabbeinu Yonah tells us that every Jew has a special mission: "The reason that Hashem chose the Jewish nation, elevated them above the rest of the nations of the world, and sanctified them with His Torah and mitzvos, is solely so that they would fear Him and sanctify His Name."

According to the Nefesh Hachaim (shaar 1 Ch. 11), this is the message of the custom of lifting ourselves up on our toes at the words "kadosh kadosh kadosh" in Kedushah; this practice alludes to the idea that our mission is to elevate ourselves, along with everything else in the world, to attain a state of kedushah.

Living Kiddush Hashem - The Power of Empathy

A few months after Rav Eliezer's passing, his daughter drove into a gas station where the attendant on duty was a midget. As the man began washing her windows, he noticed a large portrait of her father, which she had left on the front seat of the car, and he became excited. "Do you know this man?" he asked. "I've been waiting for him to come back here for a long time. Where is he?"

The daughter gently told the attendant that Rav Lazer was her father and had passed away, and he began to cry. "I must tell you what your father did for me," he said. "This is one of the few jobs I can do, and most people here look away when they see me. But one day, your father came and greeted me warmly. He told me that I am an inspiration because I don't act like a victim even though I have a handicap, and I get up every morning and work to make an honest living. He even said that he was going to speak to the students in his school about what they can learn from my example. Ever since that day, I have looked forward to seeing him come here. He always made me feel tall."

Empathy is an important trait to use in our dealings with others, but it begins with our relationships with our families. Have we truly mastered this trait in our relationships with the people who are closest to us. Do we give enough consideration to the emotional needs of our spouses and our children? Are we concerned about their feelings? If our children are secure in the knowledge that we care about the way they feel, then they will learn from our example to be empathetic toward others as well.

"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)

Torah sweets

Wake Up and Smell The Spice Of Life

One of the many topics at the beginning of the Parsha is the formulation of the Ketores and the instructions surrounding it. I would like to use this as an opportunity to discuss the sense of smell, one of the most neglected senses.



The Torah tells us that it is Assur to assemble the Ketores or to burn it for our own purposes. The Gemara says that this applies even when making it in a small quantity. There are many reasons and insights given in the Sefarim as to what the purpose of the Ketores was. We can say simply that it was used as a method of bringing a pleasant/relaxing aroma into the Mikdash. **The Rambam** writes that it served to neutralize the bad odors caused by the Korbanos being slaughtered.

Besides for masking foul smells, there are many ways that scents can improve the quality of our lives. Let's look at a few: **Improving Mood**: Aromas like lavender and saffron (the Ketores ingredient of Charkom) can help reduce stress and anxiety and promote relaxation. **Enhancing Sleep**: Scents like lavender, chamomile, and spikenard (the Ketores ingredient of Shiboles Nard) are known for their calming properties and can help improve sleep quality. **Boosting Mental Clarity and Focus**: Peppermint, rosemary, and cinnamon (Kinamon) are commonly used to improve cognitive function, alertness, and concentration. **Reducing Physical Tension**: Aromas

like eucalyptus, peppermint, and frankincense (Levona) are commonly used to relieve physical tension, especially for headaches, muscle soreness, or sinus issues. **Promoting Relaxation and Stress Relief**: Aromas such as frankincense (Levona), myrrh (Mor), and rose can help lower cortisol levels, which is the hormone associated with stress. **Enhancing Meditation**: Incorporating sandalwood, frankincense, and myrrh can deepen your meditation space and enhance mindfulness and connection to the Ein Sof.

Takeaway: By incorporating the right aromas into your daily routine, you can help balance your emotions, boost your health, and elevate your overall sense of wellbeing. - A happy, healthy, and present self can accomplish a whole lot more!

Short Story of The Week by Yoni Schwartz



Already elderly, **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, ZT"L**, was walking to his house one day when he encountered a very undesirable surprise. Crack, splat, crunch. Somebody had just egged him! More astonishing than the fact that someone had the chutzpah to throw eggs - not just at an elderly man but at the gadol hador - was the Rav's reaction.

Remembering the Gemara, which states that a talmid chacham shouldn't walk in public with very dirty clothes, he showed not the slightest hint of frustration, let alone anger. Instead, he simply took out his handkerchief and began cleaning himself. However, not only did Rav Elyashiv refrain from getting angry, but he recognized that someone whose bitterness overflowed to the point of throwing eggs at an old man must be

harboring even deeper frustration and anger inside. He also realized that such a person likely had too much free time if he could engage in such shtick.

The Rav walked over to the man and blessed him - not just with a standard blessing, but one specifically suited to him. He discovered that this man and his wife had struggled for years to have children. The Rav blessed him that he should have more fruitful things to occupy him. About a year later, his wife gave birth to triplets. - From that point, he was indeed a busy man.



"So there will not be a plague among then couting them". **The Ben Ish Chai** writes on this verse that the words **גפן** and the word **נגף** have the same letters in it. They both have the letter **ג** which hints at **גמילות חסדים**, and they also both have the remaining letters **נ** and **פ**. So when does one merit to be fruitful and blessed like a grape vine, and when is one cursed with a plague?

If the **פ**, representing the **פה**, one's mouth is short (not an end **ף**) that symbolizes that the individual doesn't become haughty from his good deeds. In addition, the **נ** is long (**ן**) which symbolizes that his **נתינה**, giving or acts of chessed are extensive, then this person will be blessed like a grapevine (because this word is **גפן**). But if a person acts the other way – his haughtiness is 'long' and his chessed is short – that spells **נגף**…

The Chosson Breaks a Glass Under the Chuppah: Zecher L'Shviras HaLuchos



There is a universal Jewish custom that the *chosson* breaks a glass under the *chuppah* at the conclusion of the marriage ceremony. The conventional reason is that this is *zecher l'churban* – a commemoration of the Temple's destruction. Anytime we celebrate a *simcha*, we must remember the *churban haBayis,* and therefore no *simcha* is complete while the Bais HaMikdash and Yerushalayim remain desolate. Therefore, the *chosson* breaks the glass, "*zecher l'churban*."

One of the Geonim (I believe it is Rav Hai Gaon or Rav Sadiah Gaon) gives a different reason for breaking a glass under the*chuppah*: It is to remind us that Moshe Rabbeinu broke the *luchos*.

At first glance, this does not seem to make any sense. Why is it that a *chosson* or *kallah* under their *chuppah* need to remember that Moshe broke the *luchos*? What message is contained in that historical event that must be commemorated at every Jewish wedding?

I believe it is because the breaking of the *luchos,* and more specifically, the strength it took for Moshe to take that action, represents one of the great keys for success in any marriage.

Why was the breaking of the *luchos* Moshe's greatest act?

The answer is that it took tremendous strength of character for Moshe to break the *luchos*. It is the nature of humans that when we invest in something, and put our hearts and souls into

something, it becomes so dear to us that we rarely, if ever, want to walk away from that accomplishment. That is the way we are. Once we become invested in an item or a project, we do not want to abandon it. The last thing a person ever wants to do is to admit that he was wrong, and to walk away from something in which he has invested a great deal of time and effort.

Moshe Rabbeinu spent literally forty days and forty nights on the mountain — drinking no water and consuming no food. He exhibited tremendous self-sacrifice to receive the *luchos*. But when he came down from the mountain and he saw *Klal Yisrael* dancing around the Golden Calf, he said "Guess what? This is not for them." He did not rationalize and he did not procrastinate. It was now necessary for these *luchos* to be broken. It took a tremendous amount of strength of character for Moshe to say "I'm walking away from this."

One of the most difficult things for a husband to do in a marriage — after having long argued a certain issue with his wife – is to walk away and say, "You know, maybe she's right."

I deal with young men who get engaged and get married. Invariably, as long as they are going out and are getting engaged, they keep on saying to themselves, "We are literally two peas in a pod; we think the same way about everything. We have no disagreements, etc., etc." Then, two weeks after the marriage, he wants the window open she wants the window closed, and the list goes on and on as to how differently they view life. These are just the small things…

A marriage requires a person to sometimes say, "Guess what? You know, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe her way of looking at this is in fact the more correct way." That is very difficult. The prime example of this is Moshe Rabbeinu, who broke the *luchos*. In spite of the fact that he put his heart and soul into something, he was prepared to reverse course and write off his exertion and his investment.

This is why we break a glass under the *chuppah*. We break the glass to remind us that Moshe broke the *luchos*. It is the ultimate reminder that sometimes it is necessary to step back from deep investment in a certain project or position, and say, "Guess what? I am not right." In the case of marriage, this represents having the strength of character to say, "Maybe I am wrong, and she is right."

How Can Litvaks With Chassidic Wives Have Shalom Bayis? "Let Them Eat Cake"

In this week's parsha, the pasuk [verse] says, "And the Children of Israel observed the Shabbos to keep Shabbos, for all generations, an everlasting Covenant." [Shemos 31:16] This pasuk gives me the opportunity to relate a significant incident.

The custom of Jews from Chassidic communities is to eat mezonos, cake or cookies, on Shabbos morning after Kiddush.

The Shabbos morning custom of Jews originating from Lithuanian and German communities is to start the meal with the blessing of hamotzi on bread, immediately after Kiddush.

On a regular basis, Rabbi Pesach Diskind, grandson of Reb Yaakov Kaminetsky, tells me stories, practices, and opinions from his grandfather, Reb Yaakov.

One Shabbos morning when Rabbi Diskin was a guest of his grandfather, he noticed that after Kiddush, Reb Yaakov's Rebbetzin served cake to Reb Yaakov and he made a borei minei mezonos. Afterwards, they went to wash for the meal.

Rabbi Diskin knew that his grandfather was not a chossid. He was, in fact, a dyed-in-the-wool Litvak. Rabbi Diskin asked his grandfather from where he picked up the custom to have mezonos after Kiddush. Reb Yaakov explained the origin of this custom to his grandson. Rav Yaakov, who had lost his first wife, was now married

to his "zivug sheni" (his second wife). Reb Yaakov's second wife came from Chassidic background. Both her father and her first husband were from Chassidic backgrounds. She was accustomed to having mezonos with Shabbos morning Kiddush. If he would not have mezonos after Kiddush, she would feel something was lacking in the Kiddush.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky was 70 years old when he married his second wife. That means that for 50 years he made Kiddush in the morning without mezonos.

How many of us would change after doing something for fifty years, and for what? "Because with my wife, this is how Kiddush is made".

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky changed. To Reb Yaakov, it was worth changing a 50-year-old practice for Shalom Bayis — for the feelings of his wife. This is an insightful lesson for all of us.

Shabbos Is Both A Mitzvah And A Present

This week's parsha contains the Torah's first elaborate discussion of the mitzvah of Shabbos [Shemos 31:12-17]. Among other things we are taught: "The Children of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath an eternal covenant for their generations. Between Me and the Children of Israel [Baynee u'bein Bnei Yisrael] it is a sign forever…"

The Brisker Rav points out that Shabbos is two things: It is a mitzvah [commandment] and it is a matanah [gift]. The Talmud [Shabbos 10b] quotes the Almighty telling Moshe "I have a wonderful present in my Treasure House and its name is Shabbos". The present was given to the Jewish people. Any nation that was not a recipient of this present is not able to observe Shabbos and even if they go through the motions of observing it, they have not fulfilled any mitzvah. It is for this reason

that a Gentile may not observe Shabbos. He is taking something that doesn't belong to him!

Rav Moshe Shapira relates a story that took place in St. Petersburg in Czarist Russia. There were a number of very wealthy Jews who had contracts with the government and they had to come to St. Petersburg, the capital of Czarist Russia, for business. This gathering took place around the High Holidays so these very wealthy Jewish businessmen were all in the Russian capital for Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur. Of course, they gathered together and made a minyan. On Yom Kippur, as is customary in many places, they auctioned off the Aliyahs. When it came time for Neilah, they sold the Pesicha [honor of opening up the Aron] for Neilah. The bidding started at 500 ruble, a tremendous amount of money. The bidding went higher and higher until a certain Baron Ginsberg, a famously wealthy Jew, bid 2000 rubles.

Rav Moshe Shapira, who wrote up this story, writes that 2000 rubles in Czarist Russia is the equivalent today of a hundred thousand dollars. He describes that when Baron Folk heard that Baron Ginsberg bid 2000 rubles for "Pesicha l'Neilah" he rose to his feet and bid 2500 for the honor! Going once, going twice, going three times, Pesicha l'Neilah is sold to Baron Folk. Baron Folk then turned to the Jew sitting next to him and asked him "What is 'Pesicha l'Neilah'?" The person next to him was astonished. "You just bid 2500 for 'Pesicha l'Neilah' and now you ask what it is?"

Folk answered: I do not know what Pesicha l'Neilah is, but I know that Baron Ginsberg is a good businessman. If Baron Ginsberg wants to give 2000 ruble for Pesicha L'Neilah then I want it because it must be a good business deal. He became Baron Ginsberg because he is a shrewd business man. He knows a good deal when he sees one. If he wants it, I want it more.

"I have a good present in my Treasure House." G-d tells us he has a wonderful present. "Shabbos is in my vault. It is very valuable." If G-

d calls it a "matanah Tova" (good present) then we have something very special. L'Havdil it is like Baron Ginsberg. If he calls something good it must be good. Certainly, if the Almighty calls something good, it must be good!

When we have experienced Shabbos virtually all our lives, then as Shabbos rolls around again we think, "Ok, here comes another Shabbos." We never appreciate what we have while we have it. Shabbos is something that comes with a Certification. It is like when one buys a gem and he receives a certificate from the Institute of Gemmology stating the value of the gem. Shabbos comes with G-d's Certificate stating its worth: "A good present I have in my Treasure House."

They Have Strayed QUICKLY

In this week's parsha, while Moshe was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the Luchos, the people became impatient waiting for his return. Aharon created the Golden Calf for them and they began worshipping it. G-d told Moshe: *"Go, descend – for your nation that you have brought up from Egypt has degenerated. They have strayed QUICKLY from the way that I have commanded them; they have made themselves a molten calf, prostrated themselves to it and sacrificed to it, and they said 'This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.'"* [Shemos 32:7-8].

Rav Yeruchum Levovitz, the Mirer Mashgiach, commented on the words "*They have strayed QUICKLY from the way I have commanded them*". Why is it important to know, he asked, that they quickly strayed from the path? Would they be any less culpable if they had slowly strayed from the path?

Rav Yeruchum Levovitz explained that had they strayed slowly from the path, it would have not been condoned, but it would at least be understandable. After they stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai and

heard G-d speak to them directly — the only people in the history of the world to have such an experience en masse — it might be understandable if one or two or three years after that great event, the experience had begun to dissipate from their collective memories. This is the nature of human beings. We forget. Even major events in our lives become hazy in our memories as time goes on. Eventually they wear off.

The situation here was quite a different story. They heard *"I am the L- rd your G-d"* on the sixth of Sivan. The events with the Golden Calf happened on the seventeenth of Tamuz — less than six weeks later! If in 40 days, one can go from the experience of Revelation at Mt. Sinai to the making of a Golden Calf, unfortunately the timing brings into question the whole sincerity of their acceptance of the Torah and their declaration of *"We will do and we will listen."*

It is always somewhat depressing to me to see how short a time it takes — in myself and in others — for Yom Kippur to "wear off". We can reach a very high level on Yom Kippur. We spend the whole day in shul and reach a level of spirituality that we do not attain the whole year. How long does it last?

I remember from my youth — and there are still such places today — where the Rabbi had to get up after Neilah and urge the people to Daven Ma'ariv after Yom Kippur and not run out as soon as the shofar was blown! Granted, these might have been the "3 day a year Jews", but even they should have acted differently.

In the Ma'ariv shmoneh esray after Yom Kippur we recite, "Selach lanu, mechal lanu…" [forgive us] as we do in every weekday Amidah. But we should ask — what could we have done since Yom Kippur ended and atoned for our sins that we have to ask for forgiveness again?

If we "leave so quickly" from the path of the commandments that we were given, what does that say about the impact of the "spiritually elevating experience" that we ostensibly just went

through? This is the emphasis of the word "quickly" in the previously quoted pasuk. It is only the 17th day of Tamuz. It is not even a year! It is not even a quarter! It is just a little over a month!

This was a terrible indictment of the Jewish people and it is an indictment of us if after a Yom Kippur or another spiritually moving experience, we move back on the next day to "business as usual".

Where Is Mordechai Alluded To In Chumash?

The Gemarah in Chullin [139b] expounds on the pasuk discussing the recipe for making the ketores [incense] used on the Mizbayach HaPineemee [inner Altar]: Where is there an illusion to the personage of Mordechai in the Torah (Chumash)? It is found in this pasuk — "Take for yourself spices, Mor Deror…" [Shemos 30:23]. The Aramaic targum [translation] of the words Mor Deror is "Mor dechya" (which when put together becomes Mordechai). What do Chazal mean by this exegesis?

The Chasam Sofer suggests an interesting explanation: The Rambam explains in Hilchos Klei HaMikdash that the spice which the Torah calls Mor Deror is musk. This is the opinion of Rabbeinu Yona as well.

In Tractate Brachos, Rabbeinu Yonah explains how we obtain the musk ingredient. There is a certain animal that grows a boil on its neck, which is filled with blood. When the boil dries out, the blood turns into a powder-like substance, which is musk. This is used in the ketores and is critical for providing it with its pleasant aroma. Some Rishonim question the Rambam and Rabbeinu Yona: How can we take a substance that originated in an impure source (blood of a non-Kosher animal) and use it in the ketores in the Bais HaMikdash? The Rabbeinu Yona answers that the powder like musk is a "new substance" (panim chadashos ba-u l'kan) and is disassociated from the original blood of the non-kosher animal.

Mordechai's lineage is traced in the Megillah. He is identified as Mordechai the son of Yair, the son of Shimi, the son of Kish [Esther 2:5]. Who was Shimi? This is none other than Shimi ben Geirah, arch-enemy of Dovid HaMelech. Shimi was a traitor who cursed Dovid HaMelech when he was down and out. The righteous Mordechai was the grandson of Shimi. How can such a Tzadik come from such a wicked person?

The answer is that a person can disregard his lineage and make himself into a great person. Where do we find such a precedent as Mordechai in the Torah? Namely, where do we find that in spite of one's ancestry, he can prove himself and be the leader of a generation? We find that phenomenon in the musk (Mor Deror = More Dechya) used in the ketores. Its origin stemmed from the blood of a non-kosher animal and yet it was a key ingredient in the ketores burned on the Mizbayach HaPineemee.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – Humble leaders

Moshe requests **הראני נא את כבודך** - show me your glory, to which Hashem responds that one can't see me and live. Didn't Moshe know this?

Humility is required in order to be a leader since if one is arrogant, he can't lead the people. A king needs **לַית מַגרמי-ה כַלום** - nothing of himself. Consequently, this phrase contains the initials **מלך** . **מלך** is also composed of the same letters as **לכם** because he is there for you; nothing for himself.

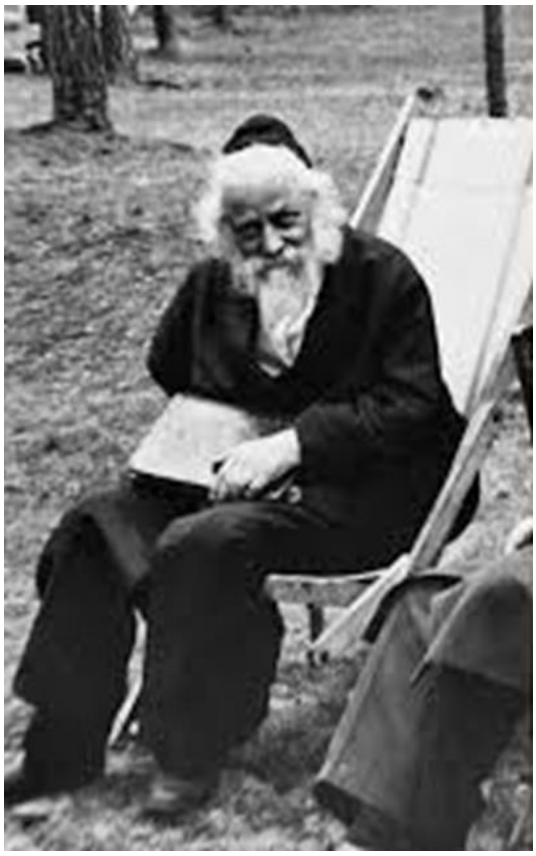
We see this idea hinted to from the fact that throughout Sefer Shoftim it says there was no king and each one did what was proper in his eyes. A dedicated king would have shown them the proper path. This is why a king can't have too many horses, gold and silver, wives and has to always have a Sefer Torah because he has to be there for the people. We see this by Dovid Hamelech who possessed

humility as it says **אנכי תולעת ולא איש** - I am a worm not a man. Similarly, Moshe is called the 'most humble' man.

In the secular world, the ones who become the leaders are the ones that desire to. This is in contrast to us, where the leaders are the ones who don't want to become leaders since they don't feel worthy of the position.



The Gemara tells us in **עקבתא דמשיחא** that **פני הדור כפני הכלב** - the face of the generation is like the face of a dog. **פני הדור** refers to the leaders. A leader must guide with authority and teach right from wrong. However, in the period before Moshiach the leaders will first check to see if their views are received. This is just as a dog appears that it is leading its owner but when it gets to an intersection it looks back to him to see where to go.



R' Baruch Ber said a Jewish leader needs to put his life on the line for the Jewish people. This is how the **Alshich** interprets the opening Pasuk in Ki Sisa **כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקדיהם ונתנו איש כפר נפשו** - ***when you appoint a leader let it be one who is Moser Nefesh for the people***.

In a similar vein, this is how **R' Yitzchak Vorka** interprets - **יפקד ה' אלקי הרוחת לכל בשר איש על העדה אשר יצא לפניהם** - Moshe wanted that Hashem should appoint a leader who is Moser Nefesh for Klal Yisroel. This can be achieved when a leader has the ultimate humility.

Moshe knew that one can't see Hashem and live. However, the Gemara informs us that the death of a Tzadik atones. This is specifically why Moshe asked **הראני נא את כבודך** since one can't see Hashem and live- bringing an atonement for the sin of the Eigel. Hashem's response: **לא יראני האדם וחי** - no, because I want you to live.

Think Right

One of the struggles many face is improper thoughts. We need to do what we can to protect ourselves. Much damaged would be alleviated if we would protect our eyes as this is a cause for improper thoughts and as it says **ולא תתורו...עיניכם**



A student of **the Kotzker Rebbe** (1787-1859) who saw a woman coming towards him veered off to a nearby wall to avoid looking at her. After the woman passed, the Kotzker Rebbe told him ***it is better to look at the woman and think of the wall than to look at the wall and think of the woman!***

The following is some advice given on how to protect ourselves in this area:

1) Reciting the words of **ונתנה תקף** along with its solemn melody may help with protecting our eyes and distancing our minds from improper thoughts as it contains the words- *'You remember all that*

was forgotten…You open the book of records…and the signature of the hand of every person is in it….

2) We should ask ourselves are these thoughts empowering us. If it is not, then we should keep our focus and attention on something else since we want to live the most powerful existence we can. Since we can't think two thoughts at once, if our minds are occupied with a different thought, we are free from improper thoughts.

3) Hashem gets so much pleasure when we overcome such thoughts as is indicated by Yosef who exemplifies this as he overcame the test with the wife of Potifar. It says there **וימאן** - he refused to be with her. **וימאן** forms an acronym of **מַה יָפִית וָמַה נָעמת אַהבה** - ***how beautiful and pleasant are you.***

When we realize the pleasure that Hashem receives from us overcoming such tests, it can help us in this area.

Pay Five Times More

After the sin of the **עגל** it states **... ויפל מן** - and there fell (killed) about 3,000 men on that day. The Midrash says that this is the meaning in that which it says **חמשה בקר**... - he shall pay 5 cattle in place of an ox. How are we to understand this?

The Gra gives the following explanation, through a Midrash. The Pasuk **אדם אחד מאלף מצאתי ואשה בכל אלה לא מצאתי** refers to the sin of the **עגל** - golden calf, where one of 1,000 men sinned but no woman sinned. Accordingly, only 600 men sinned from the 600,000 that were there. If so, why were 3,000 killed as this is not in accordance with **מדה כנגד מדה** - measure for measure? He answers this is what the Midrash was bothered by. So, the answer is **חמשה בקר**... - he shall pay 5 cattle in place of an ox since they caused damage in the ox in the **מרכבה**. So, 600 multiplied by 5 is 3,000!

Two long!



Observing the length of the Aliyos in Parshios we notice that the first two Aliyos of this week's Parsha are excessively long, unparalleled anywhere else. What is the reason for this?

Moshe said **מי לה' אלי** - whoever is for Hashem join me in which only the Levites responded. Perhaps they had second thoughts on this and wanted to act as everyone else. So, it says **רבות מחשבות בלב איש** - many thoughts are in man's heart. Let us go into the **לב** - the centre of the letters of **איש**. Spelling out **איש** - that is **אלף יוד שין**- we notice the middle letters spells **לוי**. Now it can be understood in the following way: There were many thoughts in the mind of the Levites– should they have the same response as the people or go after Hashem. How does the Pasuk there finish off? **ועצת ה' היא תקום** - they followed **מי לה' אלי** . The sin of the **עגל** is in the second Aliya- which is the Levi's- of this week's Parsha. This is because they were not involved in the **עגל** Therefore, there is no embarrassment.

Final Word

The Arizal states that upon awakening in the morning one should recite chapters of Mishnah since the word **משנה** has the same letters as **נשמה**.

Accordingly, on Friday nights after receiving the extra soul, one should be careful to learn the chapter of Mishnah **במה מדליקין** since the soul is called a candle **כי נר ה' נשמת אדם**

Smells Nice



In reference to Moshiach it says **והריחו ביראת ה'**- ***He will be imbued with a spirit of fear for Hashem.***

Why is the sense of smell highlighted- **והריחו**?

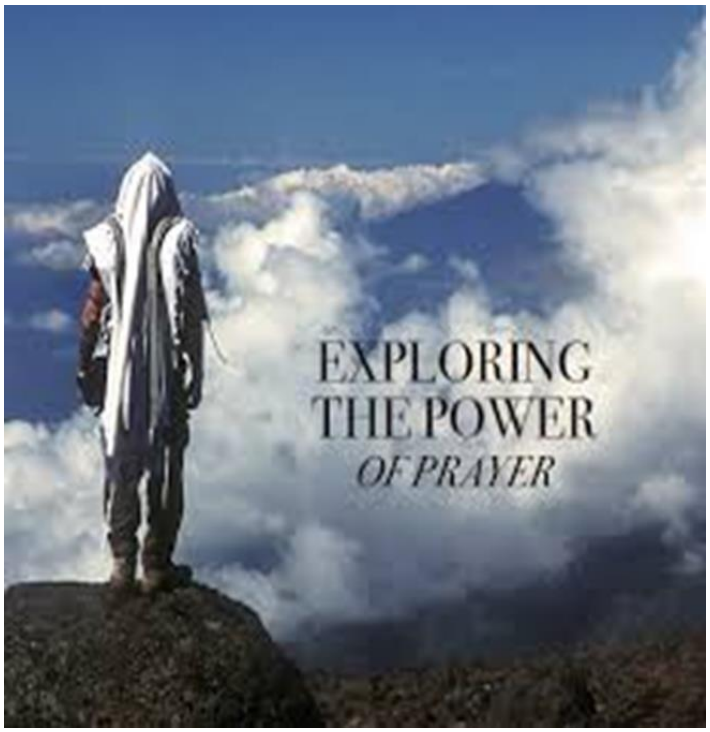
The only sense not mentioned by the sin of Adam was smell. With this we can appreciate the Gemara that says smell is something that the **נשמה** derives pleasure from. In fact, the Aruch Hashulchan tells us it is called **ריח** because it is a spiritual- **רוחני** - type of pleasure. Now we can comprehend what the Avudraham tells us that we smell **בשמים** at Havdala since our **נשמה יתירה** left us as we are going from **קדש** to **חול**. Tangentially, this is alluded to in our Parsha in **קח לך בשמים** as **קח** are the initials **קדש חול**.

In light of this we can now grasp why the Chassan puts the ring on the Kalla's index finger also known as the **אצבע**. **Rabbanu Bechaya** tells us each finger corresponds to a different sense and the **אצבע** corresponds to smell. Since each marriage is comparable to that of Adam and Chava and smell wasn't damaged in the sin, the ring is put on the finger which corresponds to smell. Hence, one of the Sheva Brachos is **...בגן עדן מקדם**.

With this we can comprehend why the Luchos were written with the **-אצבע אלקים**- finger of Hashem, as the Luchos were Spiritual and as it says **תורת ה' תמימה** - the Torah of Hashem is perfect. Furthermore, when the one who brought us the Torah- Moshe- was placed into a basket as a child, it had tar on the outside and plaster on the inside. This is so that he wouldn't smell the foul odour of the tar.

In regard to the Makka of Kinim the expression **אצבע אלקים** - is used since this Makka couldn't be duplicated, as it was clearly all from Hashem.

The power of Tefilla



Taking a look at different teachings of Chazal, we see the tremendous power of Tefilla, as is demonstrated in the following:

1) Those that are exiled by the city of refuge- **עיר מקלט** - for killing inadvertently go free upon the death of the Kohen Gadol. Therefore the mothers of the Kohanim Gedolim would supply these people with food and clothing so that they shouldn't daven for their sons to die. That's right- the Tefilla of killers could be answered for one as holy as the Kohen Gadol to die!

2) The Yerushalmi teaches that one can betroth a woman even on Tisha Bav so that no one precedes him in betrothing her by winning her through Tefilla.

3) The Midrash tells us that Tefilla is so strong that it can nullify a decree. Indeed, Tefilla is called **מצלי** - to save, as this is what it does. Actually, the Gemara refers to Tefilla as **חיי שעה** as it can affect one's needs in healing, livelihood and so on.

The Daas Moshe writes that his father told him that the mother of **ר' שמואל קאדנייבור** - who authored **ברכת הזבח** on Seder Kodshim as well as **ברכת שמואל** on the Torah among other Sefarim- didn't know how to daven at all. However, by **הדלקת נרות** of Shabbos, she would

say in Russian that it should be the will of Hashem that her son Shmuel should be a Talmid Chochom!

The following story is brought in the Sefer **יסוד ושרש העבודה.** To give money to the poor, **R' Alexander Ziskind** would borrow money from the wealthy. When the loan was due, he would borrow from someone else to pay back the first loan. It once happened that he wasn't able to fulfil his promise to pay back a loan of 500 coins (huge sum).

The wealthy man sent a reminder to him that the day had come to pay back the loan. R' Ziskind retorted the day isn't over yet so he therefore still had time. At Mincha, he cried and pleaded with Hashem by **שומע תפלה** that it shouldn't happen that he can't pay back on the day he said as then the poor would lose out since people wouldn't want to lend money.

Immediately after Mincha a visitor that was in town came and said I heard you R' Ziskind are trustworthy. Being that I need to travel to a distant place, I want you to hold my money and when I return, you'll give it back. The amount he gave him was exactly 500 coins. R' Ziskind never saw this man again. It was said this was certainly Eliyahu Hanavi.

Although at times it may seem that our Tefila goes unanswered, this is never the case, explains **R' Shimshon Pincus**. An example is given of one that is sick where the public davens for his recovery and yet he still dies. Those Tefillos are not in vain as it could be it prolonged his life or lessened his pain. It may also be that the Tefilos will help his descendants, or it will be saved for one who needs it or a time when it is needed.

"A good friend is a tower of strength; to find one is to find a treasure. "

No Spice Left Behind



The eleven spices of the **קטרת** all have a good smell besides for the **חלבנה**. Putting them together shows unity. That is, including the Jew that is foul smelling-sinners. Furthermore, the word **קטרת** is related to **קטר** - a knot, symbolizing unity.

The Gemara tells us that we Jews are called **אדם**. Why are only we referred to as **אדם** ? Of the various ways to say 'man'- **איש גבר, אדון** - only **אדם** doesn't have a plural form **אנשים גברים** . This is because we are one entity. When something happens to a Jew in one place, a Jew in another place feels it. That is a unique unity that is only by the Jewish people.

Consumer Oriented, by Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky

In one of the most difficult portions of the Torah, and chapters in our history, this week the Children of Israel make a Golden Calf and serve it. The act warrants their annihilation, and Hashem threatens Moshe with just that, adding that He is ready to build a nation from Moshe himself. "Hashem said to Moshe, ***'I have seen this people, and behold! it is a stiff-necked people: And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them, and I shall annihilate them, and I shall make you a great nation.'"*** (32:9-10)

But Moshe beseeches Hashem to forgive the nation for the calamitous sin of the Golden Calf, and Hashem acquiesces, offering an historic formula which is the precursor to every prayer of

penitence. Hashem entails the supplication that is known as "the thirteen attributes of Hashem."

They include the words "Hashem, Hashem, G-d, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth…" (Exodus 34:6-7).

Those powerful, deep, and concise statements that embody anthropomorphic qualities to an Omnipotent Creator contain significant meaning far beyond mortal comprehension.

What is astonishing is that almost immediately after Hashem forgives the people, Moshe beseeches Hashem to accompany them for the precise reason that Hashem was angered by them!

"If I have now found favour in Your eyes, my L-rd, let my L-rd go among us — for it is a stiff-necked people, and You shall forgive our iniquity and error, and make us Your heritage." (Exodus 34:9) Was it not stiff-neckedness that caused Hashem to want to annihilate them?

It had become a nuisance for most of those who strolled in the Swiss forest in the early 1950s. Hikers would come home and spend time removing the sticky cockleburs that had fastened to their clothing. But it was something that their forebears had lived with for years and another hindrance that nature had put in their way. But George de Mestral did not look at the cockleburs that had snagged his sweater as a nuisance. In fact, he realized that Divine genius played a vital role in their physiology.

Returning home after a walk one afternoon, he took out a microscope to get a better look at Hashem's prodigy. When he realized that the burs were actually comprised of thousands of natural hooks that would engage countless loops, he realized that this was no nuisance of nature. Their sticky nature was actually the way that these seed pods were transported to find new breeding grounds. They would latch themselves to the fur of animals and be transported.



De Mestral realized that he could carry this wisdom to the more mundane world. And so with a system of a fuzzy felt and crocheted hooks, he combined more than just two divergent materials. He also combined two words, velvet and crochet, now employed in the lexicon and inventory of both schoolchildren and rocket-scientists. He invented, or perhaps introduced us to, Velcro®.

The Dubno Maggid explains that after Moshe heard the wondrous quality of Unrestricted Compassion, he realized that Hashem was actually offering a product that was well-tailored to our mortal needs. It was in fact Moshe's biggest argument for Hashem to accompany His nation.

"Angels don't need those attributes! It is the fallible human who needs that ever-lasting, unceasing mercy! It is only because we are stiff-necked that we need Your unending kindness!"

That is why after Moshe heard Hashem's argument, followed by His attributes, he presented his plea for Divine accompaniment. Often, we do not take advantage of the great goodness of Hashem. We leave His attributes in heaven, distancing our mundane needs from His all-powerful abilities. Moshe teaches us that it is distinctly our capriciousness and mortality that needs His omnipotence. We must realize that the attributes of Hashem are specifically assigned to sustain His nation. And all we have to do is utilize that unceasing, unyielding, and everlasting product to our advantage.

Believing In Tefilla

After the sin of the golden calf, Moshe said to Hashem **ועתה אם תשא חטאתם ואם אין מחני נא מספרך** - ***if you would but bear their sin, but if not then erase me from Your book.***

Rashi comments, "*Erase me from the entire Torah, so they shouldn't say about me that I wasn't worthy enough to daven for them.*" Although Hashem forgave us, still, Moshe's name isn't mentioned in Parashas Tetzave. What did Moshe do to deserve this?



The Nesivos Shalom explains that Moshe erred when he said **ואם אין**; ***if You won't forgive them...***, as why did Moshe even consider such a possibility? He should have believed that since he was davening for their forgiveness, his Tefillos would certainly be answered, because we believe in the power of Tefilla.

We must believe that our Tefillos will be answered. **R' Yitzchak Isaac of Kamarna** translated:

לא יחל דברו ככל היצא מפיו יעשה as don't hope that your Tefillos will be answered rather **ככל היצא מפיו יעשה** - feel that it will certainly be effective.

The Chazon Ish once told **R' Shmuel Greinman** that it seems in heaven they concealed the Holocaust from us because had we known, we would have davened and maybe there wouldn't have been a destruction!

"The wise man turns vices into virtues, but the fool turns virtues into vices." ~~ Orchos Tzadikim

Rabbi Frand on Ki Sisso

The Chofetz Chaim & Rav Shimon Schwab: A Tale of Two Grandfathers

This is a true story involving the **Chofetz Chaim and Rav Shimon Schwab.**

Rav Schwab once visited the Chofetz Chaim, and the Chofetz Chaim asked him if he were a Kohen, Levi or Yisroel. Rav Schwab answered that he was a Yisroel. We all know that the Chofetz Chaim was a Kohen.



The Chofetz Chaim said to Rav Schwab, "You know what the difference between me and you is? Soon the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt. Everyone will go for the first time, crowding the doors to get into the Courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash. There will be a guard at the door who will ask the people whether they are Kohanim, Leviim, or Yisraelim. The Kohanim will get to go inside and do the Service of the Temple. I will be one of those people. You, Rav Schwab, with all the other Yisraelim will be left outside. All the Yisraelim will be terribly jealous of me. They are going to want to do the Service, but the Halacha will be NO! — Kohanim inside; Yisraelim outside. The Yisraelim will be angry and upset and jealous."

The Chofetz Chaim continued, "You know why, Rav Schwab, it's going to be like that? Because of something that happened thousands of years ago. Thousands of years ago there was something called 'the

sin of the Golden Calf.' The Jewish people sinned with the calf. Only 3,000 people participated in that heinous act of idolatry. But when Moshe Rabbeinu called out and asked everyone else to come and put out the fire… When he issued those famous words 'Whoever is for G-d, gather around me' [Shmos 32:26], do you know what happened? Only the tribe of Levi showed up.

My grandfather came and responded to that call and your grandfather sat there and did nothing. Therefore, the Kohanim who come from the tribe of Levi, will go into the Beis HaMikdash. But you, Yisraelim are going to be on the outside because you sat there and didn't respond."

The Chofetz Chaim then looked at Rav Schwab and said to him, "What do you think? Am I trying to make you feel bad? Am I trying to rub your face in it? Chas V'Sholom! But I want to teach you a lesson.

Many times, in life you will hear a little voice go off in your head that will say 'Whoever is for G-d, gather around me.' There is going to come an event, there is going to come an issue, something, that everybody is going to be told 'Stand up and be counted.' In whose camp, are you?

I want you to know that questions like that and challenges like that have implications not only for you but for generations and generations after you. Because your grandfather did not answer 'Yes' in the affirmative to 'Who is for G-d, gather to me', you are excluded from the Temple Service. It was an act that has implications thousands of years later. Because my grandfather said yes, I am a Kohen now and I am going to do the Service."

"Never forget", the Chofetz Chaim told Rav Schwab, "everybody has his moments of 'Who is for G-d, gather around me.' When you hear that voice, stand up and be counted!"

Calf Allusions



We know that through Aharon, the incident with the **עגל** - golden calf took place. If we add the sum of **אהרן** (256) with **עגל** (103), we get 359. This is the Gematria of **שטן** since the Satan initiated this sin.

Aharon is told **קרב אל המזבח...** - come near to the Mizbeach and perform the service of your sin-offering…. The sin-offering was an **עגל** – calf, as this calf was an atonement for the golden calf. Drawing near to the Mizbeach and offering this is to counteract the Satan. Let us take these words literally and put the sum of **קרב** (302) to **מזבח (אל)** (57). We then get a total of 359, the same as **שטן**.



R' Avraham Dov Auerbach of Avritch ZT"L would say: "Chazal teach: 'Be careful to respect a Talmid Chacham who has forgotten his learning through misfortune.' If a scholar is no longer capable of concentrating on Torah or prayer as he once was, thereby causing him to become broken-hearted, one must still respect him since these **שברי הלוחות**, (fragments of the Tablets) from his broken heart are deemed on par with the complete Luchos - and as the gemara tells us both were placed in the Aron Hakodesh."

Parshah Pearls Adapted from the Chofetz Chaim

The Great Gift- לָדַ֣עַת כִּ֤י אֲנִי֙ ה֣' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶ֔ם ***"To let you know that I am the G-d who sanctifies you"*** (31:13).

The Gemoro in Shabbos (10b) writes (in connection with this posuk, which refers to the Shabbos) that G-d told Moshe to go and inform Yisroel that He was about to take out a great gift from His storehouse and to give it to them – that gift was called 'Shabbos'.



Shabbos is the greatest of all the gifts that G-d gave to Yisroel. It is like the ring that the chosson gives to the kalah when they get engaged, says the Chofetz Chaim. No matter how estranged they have become or how many rumours abound, as long as the kalah wears the ring, everyone knows that they are still betrothed. But should she return the ring, everyone knows that the engagement is broken.

And so, it is with the Shabbos. Shabbos, like the ring, is what testifies to the bond that exists between Yisroel and their Father in Heaven. It is the everlasting covenant for all their generations. The moment they give up the Shabbos, it is a sure sign that they have severed the connection between themselves and G-d.

"When we trust in Hashem, we are able to find meaning in every moment." – Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman

העשיר לא ירבה והדל לא ימעיט ממחצית השקל לתת את תרומת ד' לכפר על נפשתיכם (30:15)



Parshas Ki Sisa begins by discussing the half-shekel coin that every Jew was obligated to give as part of the process of conducting an indirect national census, as well as to effect atonement for them. Every Jew was required to contribute this precise amount, as the poor were forbidden to give less, and the wealthy were prohibited from donating more.

In his sefer Oznayim L'Torah, **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin** points out that while it is indeed a struggle for a destitute person to voluntarily give away money that could be used to purchase food, a half-shekel represents pocket change to the affluent. How could the Torah condition the atonement of both groups on an action that was onerous for some of them but trivial for others?

Rav Sorotzkin suggests that the well-off also had a significant nisayon (trial) to overcome when doing this mitzvah. Many rich people are accustomed to preferential treatment and resent when they are grouped together with those of lesser means.

Accordingly, a wealthy man who is told that he must contribute the same half-shekel as the pauper despite his vastly superior resources will experience a tremendous challenge, no less painful than the struggle of the poor to give away money that they desperately need for basic expenses. Whether our difficulties are financial or psychological in nature, Hashem values each of our battles to overcome our individual nisyonos, for which we receive well-deserved atonement.

32:15 לֻחֹת כְּתֻבִים מִשְּׁנֵי עֶבְרֵיהֶם מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתֻבִים



The Gemora in Megillah (3a) notes that because the letters in the Tablets were carved out from one side all the way through to the other, it was a miracle that the letters mem and sameach remained in place. All of the other letters were partially connected to the rock around them. Because these two letters were circular, the piece of stone in the middle formed from carving them out was completely unattached and would have fallen out if not for this miracle.

In his blessing to his son Yissochar (Bereishis 49:15), who was one of the tribes most dedicated to Torah study, Yaakov said Vayehi l'mas oveid. It has been a sad fact throughout Jewish history that the institutions and individuals focused on learning and teaching Torah have often found themselves strapped for funds without any apparent source of assistance.

Rav Gedaliah Schorr beautifully suggests that Yaakov specifically referred to Yissochar's descendants with these two letters – mem and sameach – to hint that just as these letters inexplicably remained intact without any support, so too will those who dedicate their lives to the study and teaching of Torah miraculously succeed in their mission.

"The world exists only because of the innocent breath of schoolchildren." ~~ Talmud, Shabbat

The Reason the Chosson Breaks a Glass Under the Chuppah - Rav Yissochor Frand



There is a universal Jewish custom that the chosson breaks a glass under the chuppah at the conclusion of the marriage ceremony. The conventional reason is that this is zecher l'churban – a commemoration of the Temple's destruction. We say, ***"If I forget thee Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. Let my tongue adhere to my palate if I fail to recall you, if I fail to elevate Jerusalem above my foremost joy."*** [Tehillim 137:5-6]

Anytime we celebrate a simcha, we must remember the churban haBayis, and therefore no simcha is complete while the Bais HaMikdash and Yerushalayim remain desolate. Therefore, the chosson breaks the glass, "zecher l'churban."

One of the Geonim (I believe it is Rav Hai Gaon or Rav Sadiah Gaon) gives a different reason for breaking a glass under the chuppah: It is to remind us that Moshe Rabbeinu broke the luchos [tablets].

At first glance, this does not seem to make any sense. Why is it that a chosson or kallah under their chuppah need to remember that Moshe broke the luchos? What message is contained in that historical event that must be commemorated at every Jewish wedding?

I believe it is because the breaking of the luchos, and more specifically, the strength it took for Moshe to take that action, represents one of the great keys for success in any marriage.

At the end of the Torah, when the Almighty records the epitaph of Moshe Rabbeinu, He writes, "And by all the strong hand and awesome power that Moshe performed before the eyes of all Israel." [Devorim 34:12] Here the Almighty is giving Moshe's eulogy. What were his greatest accomplishments? Rashi elaborates on the points mentioned, one by one:

"***And by all the strong hand***": For he received with his hands the Torah engraved on the luchos.

"***And for all the awesome power***": The miracles and acts of might which took place in the great, awesome wilderness.

The crowning glory, the last item that the Almighty says about Moshe Rabbeinu is…

"***Before the eyes of all Israel.***" Rashi interprets: That his heart inspired him to break the luchos before their eyes, as it says, "And I smashed them before your eyes."

Why was the breaking of the luchos Moshe's greatest act?

The answer is that it took tremendous strength of character for Moshe to break the luchos. It is the nature of humans that when we invest in something, and put our hearts and souls into something, it becomes so dear to us that we rarely, if ever, want to walk away from that accomplishment. That is the way we are. Once we become invested in an item or a project, we do not want to abandon it. The last thing a person ever wants to do is to admit that he was wrong, and to walk away from something in which he has invested a great deal of time and effort.

Moshe Rabbeinu spent literally forty days and forty nights on the mountain — drinking no water and consuming no food. He exhibited tremendous self-sacrifice to receive the luchos. But when he came down from the mountain and he saw Klal Yisrael dancing around the Golden Calf, he said "Guess what? This is not for them." He did not rationalize and he did not procrastinate. It was now necessary for

these luchos to be broken. It took a tremendous amount of strength of character for Moshe to say, "I'm walking away from this."

One of the most difficult things for a husband to do in a marriage — after having long argued a certain issue with his wife – is to walk away and say, "You know, maybe she's right."

I deal with young men who get engaged and get married. Invariably, as long as they are going out and are getting engaged, they keep on saying to themselves, "We are literally two peas in a pod; we think the same way about everything. We have no disagreements, etc., etc." Then, two weeks after the marriage, he wants the window open she wants the window closed, and the list goes on and on as to how differently they view life. These are just the small things…

A marriage requires a person to sometimes say, "Guess what? You know, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe her way of looking at this is in fact the more correct way." That is very difficult. The prime example of this is Moshe Rabbeinu, who broke the luchos. In spite of the fact that he put his heart and soul into something, he was prepared to reverse course and write off his exertion and his investment.

This is why we break a glass under the chuppah. We break the glass to remind us that Moshe broke the luchos. It is the ultimate reminder that sometimes it is necessary to step back from deep investment in a certain project or position, and say, "Guess what? I am not right." In the case of marriage, this represents having the strength of character to say, "Maybe I am wrong, and she is right."

Pearls of Wisdom - A Word for the Ages

R' Avdimi bar Chama taught: "Whoever learns and is involved with Torah, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will fulfil all his desires!" (*Avodah Zarah* 19a)

$99,000 Kiddush Hashem By Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Over the past years, I have written stories, speeches, articles, poems and books, but never had I been asked to write a letter as this. When the man first called me to talk about the situation, I could not imagine that he was serious, but I came to realize that he was one of the most extraordinary people I have ever met.



I first met Yosef Herter*, a *chassidishe Yid* from Brooklyn, at a weekend resort in the summer of 2018. Over *Shabbos*, we became quite friendly and exchanged many *divrei Torah* and stories.

I had not heard from him in months, but in November of 2018, he surprised me with an unforgettable phone call. Reb Yosef told me that he was involved in something epic, and although he knew that most people would probably disagree with his actions, he was firmly convinced that he had to do what he was about to do. "This is especially so," he said, "since my father's first *yahrtzeit* is coming up and I want to do what's right as a *zechus* for his *neshomah*."

Most readers will find the following hard to believe.

Reb Yosef is an insurance broker who has been working for Montana Life* for more than twenty years. In 2015, he sold two life insurance policies that were surrendered at the end of the first policy year. Yet, in August 2016, Montana Life sent him a commission of $49,668.31. Reb Yosef felt it was an error and so he called the company.

They assured him that he deserved the commission and should keep the money. He was not convinced; the next morning, he had his

bookkeeper call Montana Life telling them that Mr. Herter had reservations about taking this money, since he felt it was a gross error. The company replied that it was he making the mistake, and that the money was his.

Remarkably, a year later in August 2017, Montana Life sent him another commission on the same lapsed policies. It was for the same amount: $49,668.31. The astronomical total that he had been given was $99,336.62. Again, he contacted company personnel, who assured him the money was his.

In August 2018, he received a letter from Montana Life that rattled him. In essence, they wrote, "We now realize that the two commission payments of $49,668.31 we paid you were mistakes. We ask you now to return the entire $99,336.62."

On August 30, Reb Yosef called Mr. Thomas Hanley*, Director of Operations at Montana Life, and told him that they could check their recorded conversations of the two calls both he and his bookkeeper had with Montana Life in 2016, which would show that he was hesitant in keeping the money as he believed *they* erred in dispensing it. Yet Montana Life, at the time of the calls, insisted that he could keep it.

For the next two months, Reb Yosef waited for a reply. On Friday, November 9, 2018, he heard from Montana Life, who wrote that in deference to their error, he could keep $49,668.31 and return the other half. Reb Yosef called his friend, Mr. Ira Lipsius, a renowned attorney and expert in insurance matters, who told him that legally, Montana Life was on weak grounds to insist upon any refund and therefore, if he would like, a better deal could be negotiated.

However, to Reb Yosef, the timing was incredible. Two days later, November 11, would be the day that he was to finish saying *Kaddish* for his late father. It was then that Reb Yosef called me and said, "For 11 months I have been saying *Yisgadal v'yiskadash shemei rabbah*, (*May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified*) –

now, I have to fulfil it. I am going to return the entire amount and I need you to write me the letter that will accompany the check." "I want to make a *kiddush Hashem*," he added emphatically. "I want them to know that a Jew is honest and would not keep a penny that is not rightfully his, and I need you to stress that in the letter."

Though I was astounded by his integrity, I protested, "But they are allowing you to keep half of it! Why not give it to various *mosdos* and needy people, and it'll be a *zechus* for your father? In this manner, you are not keeping the money for yourself and simultaneously many will benefit. I am not asking you to do anything against the law and *halacha*. They are giving it to you on their own volition."

However, Reb Yosef, with the full support and encouragement of his wife Rivka*, would not hear of it. He sought the counsel of his *rov*, Rav Avrohom Hersh Wosner of the Satmar *kehillah* in Monsey, who told him that because the company was only asking for half the money, he was not obligated to return any more than what they requested. However, there was a great opportunity for *kiddush Hashem* by paying the full $99,336.62, because Montana Life really knew that the whole amount had been paid in error.

Rav Wosner cited the well-known *Be'er HaGolah* in *Choshen Mishpat, 348:2*, which he often heard from his late grandfather, the renowned *posek* Rav Shmuel Wosner, when he counselled people about honesty in business: "*I write this for future generations…many have sanctified Hashem's name and have returned [funds] where gentiles erred in significant amounts, they prospered, became wealthy and were successful and left substantial amounts to their descendants.*"

The *rov* stressed the importance of an accompanying letter that would clarify the honesty and integrity involved in making this decision.

And that is exactly what he did…well, almost. I took Reb Yosef to a prominent *talmid chochom*, who advised him to go in person to return the money to the Director of Operations. The *rov* said, "Let them see a *chassidishe* Yid who is scrupulous to the penny. That indeed will make a great *kiddush Hashem*."

Reb Yosef set up an appointment, travelled more than three hours to the Montana Life office from where he was getting his correspondence, and personally handed the check and letter to Mr. Thomas Hanley*, Director of Operations. He explained the nature of the visit and Mr. Hanley was flabbergasted. Never had anything like this ever happened to Montana Life. The two men, the *chossid* from Brooklyn and the corporate man from Montana Life, chatted amicably for half an hour.

Two weeks later, Reb Yosef received a glowing letter from the Head of Advisor Operations, Donald Vinten*, which included these sentences:

"For me, this is a once in a career type of letter, realizing the type of professionalism and integrity we so desperately need in our profession, culture, neighbourhoods and families….I wanted to take this opportunity to recognize the outstanding characteristics you possess and convey how moved and proud I was reading your letter…Thank you again for the inspiration you have delivered through your decision and letter…You certainly have set a very high bar for others to follow and shown the power of honesty and integrity in our society."

For these words to be written by the head of operations of one of the Fortune 500 companies – with more than 10,000 agents and brokers throughout the United States – is simply remarkable.

Reb Yosef was correct. He made a *kiddush Hashem* in a magnitude that few had ever witnessed before. He did it in honour of his late father, who was his role model ever since he was a child. Remarkably, the letter from Montana Life was written just two days after his

father's first *yahrtzeit*. He feels it's a message to continue his father's legacy of honesty, integrity and *kiddush shem shomayim*.

Few of us will ever get opportunities to be mekadesh shem shomayim on that scale, but we must learn from the incident to always weigh our actions in our daily lives, so that we sanctify the Name of Hashem in all that we do.

Why Do "BAD" Things Happen?



"And he [Moshe] said [to Hashem], …show me Your glory. [Hashem replied], "You shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." (Shmos 33:18,23)

There are times that life is very difficult for us individually and as a Jewish nation. In contrast, why is life so good for evil people? Why are they so successful? Why does it seem that they have it good, while better people are in dire straits?

This is the age-old question of Tzadik v'ra lo, rasha v'tov lo. Why is a righteous person in dire straights, while an evil person is exceedingly successful? It seems as if it doesn't pay to be a good person. The prophet Chabakuk was bothered by this problem and questioned Hashem about it (Medrash Yalkut Shimoni).

The Ramban, in his introduction to the Book of Iyov, gives an explanation. He said that Hashem rewards evil people for any good they may have done here, in this World. This way, Hashem avoids having to reward them in Olam Haba (the next, eternal World),

where the reward would be so much greater. Conversely, Tzadikim are punished for any misdeeds they may have done, here and now, to be spared from punishment in Olam Haba, where the punishment would be more severe.

We can relate to this idea more conclusively if we focus on the words of King David (Psalms 37). He says, when you see the happiness of an evil person, try to **visualize** his downfall and the terrible punishment he will receive for his misdeeds. Then you will not be tempted to follow his actions.

The Chasam Sofer said that this problem also bothered Moshe. Why does the Tzadik sometimes have difficulty while the rasha succeeds? Hashem answered, "You can't see My face" – you can't understand My actions, at the time that you see them. "You can see My back"- However, **in retrospect**, looking back, (sometimes in your lifetime and sometimes not), you **can** understand.

It seemed bad when a certain good person lost his job. However, his perspective changed a few weeks later, on 9/11, when a plane crashed into the floor of the building that he used to work on. It seemed bad that **Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky** didn't get the expected job as Rav of a respected European town, and eventually had to accept a job in Toronto.

In retrospect it saved his life, as that town in Europe was wiped-out by the Nazis. It seemed bad that Rav Moshe Sherer's mother spilled the medicine that was desperately needed and that she couldn't afford to replace. It was truly good. It turned out, that the assistant pharmacist had made a fatal error and had given her medicine that would have been poisonous for the patient. It seemed bad when a group of Jews, who had escaped from the Holocaust, were sent out of England and put on a boat to Australia. They were mistreated on the boat and even their few belongings were thrown overboard. Not until many years later did they find out that the

dumping of their possessions, saved them from being sunk by a torpedo from a German submarine.

Even when things seem to be bad, as in 9/11, in reality, they are truly good. Sometimes we see the good right away, and sometimes we never see it in our lifetimes. Even when all appears bleak, we must always remember that Hashem loves us even **MORE** than a parent loves a child.

Hashem only does what is the best for us; and truly, it <u>always</u> is for the best!

וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּכַלֹּתוֹ לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי שְׁנֵי לֻחֹת הָעֵדֻת לֻחֹת אֶבֶן כְּתֻבִים בְּאֶצְבַּע אֱלֹקִים



The posuk tells us that after Hashem concluded teaching the entire Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu, He gave him the two Luchos (Tablets) to bring down to the people. **Rabbeinu Bechaye** explains (Rashi also quotes the Medrash) that the reason the word **כְּכַלֹּתוֹ** is specifically written without the letter "vav" is to draw our attention to the word **כלה** - bride, which is part of the spelling, "like His bride."

The lesson which we learn is that when Hashem handed over the Torah to the Jewish people through Moshe Rabbeinu, He did so in the nature of a groom- **חתן** receiving his bride **כלה** - with tremendous joy and happiness, the way one receives a gift from another. Had this not been the case, Moshe Rabbeinu could not have learned the entire Torah in forty days. Only through great joy and appreciation of the "gift" was he able to do so.

Much has been made of the responsibility that a chosson has to his kallah, which includes the wedding gifts, the Kesuba and support. But a groom's "responsibility" starts even before that.

A story is told about a yeshivah bochur who was searching for a shidduch. This boy was no ordinary bochur - the Rosh Yeshivah described him as a "Metzuyan" - an extraordinary student, whose Talmudic prowess was already evident at a young age. As the best bochur in the yeshivah, only a top prospect was good enough for him! What does a "top prospect" include? Well, naturally, the girl must come from a rich family, with a fine lineage, who appreciates Torah learning and wants nothing less in a son-in-law, than a boy who will spend all his days and nights immersed in his studies. For such a boy, the family of the girl is required to offer full support together with the purchase of an apartment in a city of the boy's choosing where he can "shteig" the best!

Well, our "Metzuyan" found just the right girl, and family to go along with her. After a few dates, it was announced that they were getting engaged. The Tenaim was a grand affair and the shidduch was the talk of town. It took only a few days before the fissures began. The new chosson spoke to his kallah and they planned to go "apartment hunting." However, the girl's father got on the phone and told the boy that plans have changed. He was not in any monetary position to purchase an apartment and the offer of many years of support was now withdrawn. The girl's father cheerfully explained that he was proud to have such a wonderful future son-in-law, but in all practical terms - he was broke!

The chosson hung up the phone and the image of the wonderful life he had built up in his mind came crashing down all around him! If his father-in-law will not be supporting him, how will he be able to reach the heights of scholarship that he was destined for? How would he one day fulfil the promise that so many of his Rebbeim and Roshei

Yeshivah said was inevitable for him? And without an apartment, where would he and his future bride live?

In a city far away from his yeshivah, friends and Batei Medrashim, just to pay a cheaper rent? Imagine the hours of travelling by bus to get home after a long and weary day in the Beis Medrash?

The chosson sat in a daze, trying to figure out his next move. And then, it came to him! He would break the shidduch and move on. He was still a "catch" and he would find a father-in-law who would keep his word and do what he promised to do. Yes, no doubt, this was his best course of action.

The "Metzuyan" decided to ask a shaila and he went to **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein shlit'a**. The Rav heard his complaints and of course attempted to talk him out of it. The Poskim tell us that one should not break a shidduch because of money! "It's not about the money," exclaimed the boy. "This is about my whole life's plan going down the drain! If I go through with this shidduch, I will no doubt be saddled with debt for many years to come! Isn't that enough of a reason?"

R' Zilberstein could not convince the bochur and finally told him that he will bring the shaila to his father-in-law, the Posek Hador **R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l**. They agreed that whatever Rav Elyashiv ruled, he would abide by.

The shaila with all its details was presented and Rav Elyashiv responded instantly and with authority: "What is the connection between his valid ta'anos (arguments) against the father-in-law, and breaking the shidduch and embarrassing the kallah? If he feels he has a monetary case against this man for reneging on his promises, let him take him to a din Torah - but why should the kallah have to suffer, why does he think it's alright to leave and embarrass her so deeply?"

Torah Tavlin



R' Moshe Alshich zt"l (Toras Moshe) would say: **כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־ הַפְּקֻדִים מֵחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ 30:13-** What is the connection of the beginning of the Parsha dealing with Machatzis Hashekel to the latter part which discusses the sin of the Golden Calf? The Gemara states: ***'A man without a wife is not a (complete) man.'*** The male is only half a human being when not paired with his female partner. At the episode of the Eigel, the women were conspicuously absent since they did not participate. Thus, the **כופר נפשו** (atonement for his soul) was needed only for half a Jew in each case; hence the requirement of the Machatzis Hashekel - half a shekel."

Torah Tavlin - Concepts in Avodas Halev From The Family of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּכַלֹּתוֹ לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי שְׁנֵי לֻחֹת הָעֵדֻת 31:18

After Hashem concluded speaking with Moshe Rabbeinu on Har Sinai, He gave him the two Luchos (Tablets) to bring down to the people. Rashi, in the name of Medrash Tanchuma, offers the following explanation: "The word **כְּכַלֹּתוֹ** is spelled defectively (missing the first 'vav' - **ככלותו**), as if to mean 'like his bride- **כלה**, for the Torah was delivered to Moshe as a precious gift, like a bride is (precious) to her groom, for (otherwise) he could not have learned it all in such a short time (40 days and 40 nights)."

This comparison of the Torah to a bride is taken a step further by **Rabbeinu Eliezer HaGadol ZT"L** of Worms, as he instructs his son in his final will and testament (**צוואה**): "My son, be vigilant in fulfilling the mitzvah of Hachnossas Kallah L'Chupah (arranging the needs of a bride for her wedding) and gladdening the heart of a Chosson (groom), for we know that anyone who brings a groom joy on his wedding day, is as if he accepted the Torah on Har Sinai. Where do we know this from? As it says, 'And He gave it to Moshe when He finished' - it says **כְּכַלֹּתוֹ** (rather than **ככלותו**), for it is definitely true that the day Hashem gave the Torah is like the day a Kallah goes to her Chupah." How do we gladden the heart of a Chosson? To each his own!



It is told that **R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv ZT"L** was once invited to a wedding. He walked into the hall with a relative and told the man, "Do me a favour. In a few minutes, please motion to me that we have to leave, and then the Baal Simcha will not feel bad that I am leaving so soon. He will understand that I have an important matter to attend to." "How long does the Rav wish to wait?" asked the man. "The amount of time it takes to fulfil the mitzvah of **שמחת חתן** (bringing joy to the groom)" answered R' Elyashiv. The man persisted. "And how long is that?" he asked. Without missing a beat, R' Elyashiv said. "Enough time for him to get a picture with me!"



Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai zt"l (Chida in Pnei Dovid) would say: **וביום השביעי שבת וינפש** - From this posuk we derive that on Erev Shabbos, every Jew receives a Neshama Yeseira - an added soul, which provides him with holiness, comfort and serenity - and it is taken back on Motzei Shabbos.

The word **וינפש** is an allusion to **ווי אבדה נפש** - ***woe is me for I have lost my (extra) soul.*** Where did these 'souls' come from? They were actually the crowns that were bestowed on the heads of Klal Yisroel at Har Sinai, and were removed from our heads after the sin of the Eigel. They were given to Moshe but in his humility, he refused to take them. Instead, he asked that every Shabbos, for one single day, they shall be restored on our heads - these are our Neshamos Yeseiros!"

Machtzis HaShekel

This week's parashah also discusses the machtzis hashekel, the half-shekel which Hashem commanded the nation to give for atonement (to atone for the eigel). As it states, **זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל אֶת־תְּרוּמַת ה' לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם** ***"This is what they shall give… a half shekel… to atone for your lives"*** (Shmos 30). Moshe Rabbeinu didn't understand what the shekel looks like, until Hashem showed him a sample. As Rashi writes, "[Hashem] showed him a coin of fire that weighed a half-shekel, and said, 'This is what they should give.'" Moshe knew the entire Torah, with all its laws and details. Why was the machtzis hasheckel particularly difficult for Moshe to

understand? The answer is, the machtzis hashekel was for atonement and it was hard for Moshe Rabbeinu to imagine that a half-shekel, which is a relatively small amount of money, could suffice to bring atonement to the Jewish people.

The Midrash Tanchumah (11) says, "When Moshe heard that the nation must give money for their atonement, he became afraid. [He feared that it would cost them a lot of money]…. Hashem knew what Moshe was thinking, so Hashem told him, "I promise, a kikar of silver isn't needed [for atonement]; and not a hundred, fifty, or thirty silver coins either. All I am asking for is a half-shekel."

Another Midrash states that Klal Yisrael was afraid when they heard that they must give money for their atonement. They were certain that they would need to give away tons of money. After committing the severe sin of the eigel, they figured that only a very great sacrifice could atone for them. They said, "All the money that we gathered in Mitzrayim, and afterwards from the Yam Suf, is for nothing, because we will now need to give it all away for our atonement…"

Hashem knew what they were thinking…. He took out a fiery half-shekel from under the Kisei HaKovod (Hashem's throne) and showed it to Moshe. 'This is what they should give.'" We learn from this to value each good deed that one performs. It may seem small and insignificant, but for Hashem, even a half-shekel is a lot, and can atone for great sins.

At a chevrah kadishah dinner in Yerushalayim, a speaker related the following story: One Friday afternoon, a woman called the chevrah kadishah and told the secretary that her husband just died. The secretary told her that it was too close to Shabbos, and that the levayah will be held immediately on Motzei Shabbos. "My husband left a request," she told the secretary. "Immediately following his burial, he wants people to sing Bar Yochai over his fresh grave." "We will do so. If this is what your husband wanted, we will fulfil his

wishes." Over that Shabbos, a gadol was niftar, and thousands of people attended the levayah.



The levayah of the almanah's husband was pushed off until after the gadol's levayah. The chevrah kadishah began the taharah late that night, and were ready for the levayah at 1:00 a.m., but by that time, there were only nine people around to attend the levayah. This couple never had any children, and they didn't have much family either, and now there wasn't even a minyan to escort this yid on his last journey.

One member of the chevrah kadishah went to a beis medresh where people study 24/7, and sought someone willing to join them for the levayah. No one was available, other than a magid shiur. At first he also said, "I came here to prepare a shiur for tomorrow morning. Try to find someone else." He tried, but soon returned saying that he couldn't find anyone else. The purpose of Torah study is lilmod al menas laasos, to learn in order to keep it, and so the magid shiur climbed into the chevrah kadishah-van, to join them for this mitzvah.

The funeral was finally completed at two o'clock a.m. The secretary remembered the niftar's final request. "Does anyone have a siddur with Bar Yochai in it? The niftar asked that we should sing Bar Yochai over his fresh grave." No one had such a siddur. "Does anyone know the song by heart?" They didn't. One person commented, "Maybe I know it by heart, but at two o'clock in the morning, standing in the cold, on Har HaZeisim, I don't know anything

anymore." It seemed that the man's final request wouldn't be fulfilled.

Just then, the magid shiur remembered that he has the Bar Yochai with him. He took a piece of paper with Bar Yochai on it from his pocket, and they all sang together. On the way back the magid shiur told the chevrah kadishah the amazing hashgachah pratis that occurred.

"Generally, on Shabbos I daven Minchah early, near my home. This week, I missed the early minyan, so I went to daven at the shtiblach, which is further away from my house. As I was walking to the shitblach with my son, my son noticed a page from a siddur on the ground. I picked it up, intending to put it into the sheimos box at the shtiblach. But I forgot it in my pocket, until now. That page has Bar Yochai on it!"

Everyone in the van was astonished by this wonderful hashgachah pratis. Seeing their amazement, the magid shiur added another detail, "On Motzei Shabbos, I usually study in my house. Tonight, I needed to prepare a shiur, and my children were crying and I couldn't concentrate. That's why I went to the beis medresh. If I would have been home, as I usually am, you wouldn't have found me."

One member of the chevrah kadishah remarked, "If such a story would have happened to a chassidic rebbe, people would speak about it for generations." "Perhaps he was a tzaddik nistar?" said another. "I'll check into the matter tomorrow," the secretary said. After some inquires, he discovered that this man was a plain simple Jew. On erev Rosh Chodesh, he would go to Reb Shimon Bar Yochai's kever in Miron, and every Friday night, he sang Bar Yochai before the meal – some communities have this custom."

The speaker concluded this story with the following thought: "We should treat every niftar with utmost respect, because we can never know how special he or she is to Hashem. Here is a story of an

otherwise simple person, but Hashem performed miracles for him, so his last will should be fulfilled."

The next speaker stood up and said, "Thank you for this wonderful story, and it definitely teaches us to be careful with kavod hameis, but I say that we shouldn't wait for people to die to respect them. We should honour each person when they are alive as well, because each person has their qualities that make them special. Even the seemingly 'small' good deeds that they do make them extremely precious to Hashem."

The specialness of a yid is also learned from this week's parashah. After the Torah tells us to build the mishkan, the Torah commands us to keep Shabbos. As it states אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ ***"but you must keep Shabbos*** (31:13). Rashi writes, "[The Torah is saying] although you are rushing and zrizim to build the mishkan, don't build it on Shabbos…" The mishkan is extremely holy, it is the place where Hashem's presence resides, keviyachol, in this world, but Shabbos is even more sacred. Therefore, Shabbos may not be desecrated to build the mishkan.

A yid is holier than the Shabbos. This is the reason Shabbos is desecrated to save a yid's life. When we contemplate on this, we have an inkling of just how special Yidden are to Hashem. The order of importance, from lower to greater is: mishkan, Shabbos, a Yid.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

"Why does the Torah (Shemos 30:13 זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ) command a Jew to bring a half-shekel rather than a whole one?

To teach us that alone, no man is complete – One needs another Jew to make him whole." ~Toldos Yaakov Yosef.

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וּבְלֵב כָּל־חֲכַם־לֵב נָתַתִּי חָכְמָה 31:6



This posuk seems to be unusual. Hashem says that He gives "wisdom to the wise." This, says **Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski**, is similar to the posuk in Tanach (Daniel 2:21) where Dovid HaMelech says: *"He gives knowledge to the wise."* The question is: What is the necessity of giving wisdom to the wise? The wise already have wisdom and knowledge! Wouldn't it be more beneficial to bestow wisdom upon the unwise, or at least on someone who has little or limited knowledge?

The holy **Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon Rokeach zt"l** said that when he was a small child, this posuk always bothered him and he asked his father, **R' Yissachar Dov zt"l**, "If Hashem only gives wisdom to the wise, doesn't one have to be wise to receive this wisdom? If so, from where is one supposed to receive his initial wisdom?"

His father answered him with the words that we all say each morning: **ראשית חכמה יראת ה'** - ***"The initial wisdom is fear of Hashem."*** Yiras Shamayim is the one thing that man must strive to achieve on his own. The Gemara tells us as much: **הכל בידי אדם חוץ מיראת שמים** - ***"Everything is in the hands of Heaven except for fear of Heaven."***

One way to acquire true Yiras Shamayim is by opening our eyes and looking around at the incredibly beautiful world that Hashem created for us. The more one pays attention to the brilliant details of nature and recognizes the imprint of the Almighty on every

aspect of his or her life, the more one will be awe-inspired and filled with true Yiras Hashem.

On the other hand, a failure to do so is not due to lack of intelligence or perception, but rather one who does not see Hashem in every aspect of his or her life and the world, has a desire to be free from the responsibilities that come with a recognition and fear of Hashem.

It is our choice to fear ה׳. By making that choice one has done his part to merit a special gift from above - the gift of wisdom.

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת 31:16

Although everyone agrees that the Friday night Kiddush starts with **ויכולו**, the passage of Hashem's resting on the seventh day of Creation, on Shabbos day, Kiddush is not so clear cut. Some start with the posuk here: **וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת**, which details how Bnei Yisroel kept Shabbos in the wilderness, while others start with **זכור את יום השבת לקדשו**, the words from the Aseres Hadibros exhorting us to keep the day holy. Additionally, most people recite the day Kiddush on wine and go right into their meal. However, some (mainly Chassidim) have a minhag to make Kiddush in the morning, eat a mezonos to be yotzei, and then wash for the seudah. Many even have a special cover for the cake so as not to embarrass the mezonos.



I heard a story from a relative of **R' Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT"L** who once spent Shabbos with him. He saw the Rebbitzen preparing a

mezonos for Kiddush; a change from the usual Litvish practice. When I saw R' Yaakov at an Agudah Convention, I ventured to ask him why he changed his custom and now eats a mezonos after Kiddush.

He answered, "R' Chaim, you are not the first to ask. Originally, I was a Rav in Lita (Lithuania). My first Rebbitzen was a Litvak like me and we did not have a mezonos before the seudah. However, my second Rebbitzen hails from Chassidim, and her father always ate a mezonos after Kiddush. After our marriage, I resolved to change my minhag and conform to hers in order not to cause my Rebbitzen the slightest possible **עגמת נפש** (distress), in order to have shalom bayis reign supreme in our home." As an aside, it is worth mentioning that R' Yaakov married his second wife at the age of 70, but for shalom bayis he was willing to change his family's minhag of so many years.



R' Yitzchok Elchanan Spector zt"l (Kovna Rov) would say: וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם- Why does the Torah repeat itself? If we must keep Shabbos **ושמרו את השבת** then surely we must fulfil the Shabbos **לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת** properly. The lesson here is that one is not considered as if he has kept Shabbos until he ensures that his children and descendants fulfil the precepts of Shabbos as well. If one wishes to be considered among **וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת** - those Jews who guard the Shabbos, then **לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם** - he must make sure that Shabbos is fulfilled by his future generations - a **בְּרִית עוֹלָם** for all."

Torah Gems

The Ramban writes that Bnei Yisroel did not intend to worship an idol. When they thought that Moshe had died, they panicked; they believed they needed an intermediary to come between them and Hashem. This was not a denial of Hashem; it was an erroneous belief that a "being" was needed to represent them before Him and convey His teachings to them.



R' Shimon Schwab ZT"L served as rav in the town of Ichenausen, Germany. In 1936, he delivered a sermon in shul on the topic of the golden calf. At one point in the sermon, he referred to the Ramban's statement that the golden calf was a "vermittler" - an intermediary between mankind and the Almighty.

The point he was making was that in the desert, the people thought they needed a golden calf, but in truth, he said, "the Jewish people do not need a vermittler." Not surprisingly, there was a Nazi spy seated in the synagogue. This miscreant misunderstood the word "Vermittler" as "Hitler." Believing that the rabbi was disparaging the German fuhrer **ימ"ש**, he reported what he had heard to the Gestapo, who wasted no time in apprehending the rabbi and threatening him with prison, or worse, for his seditious words.

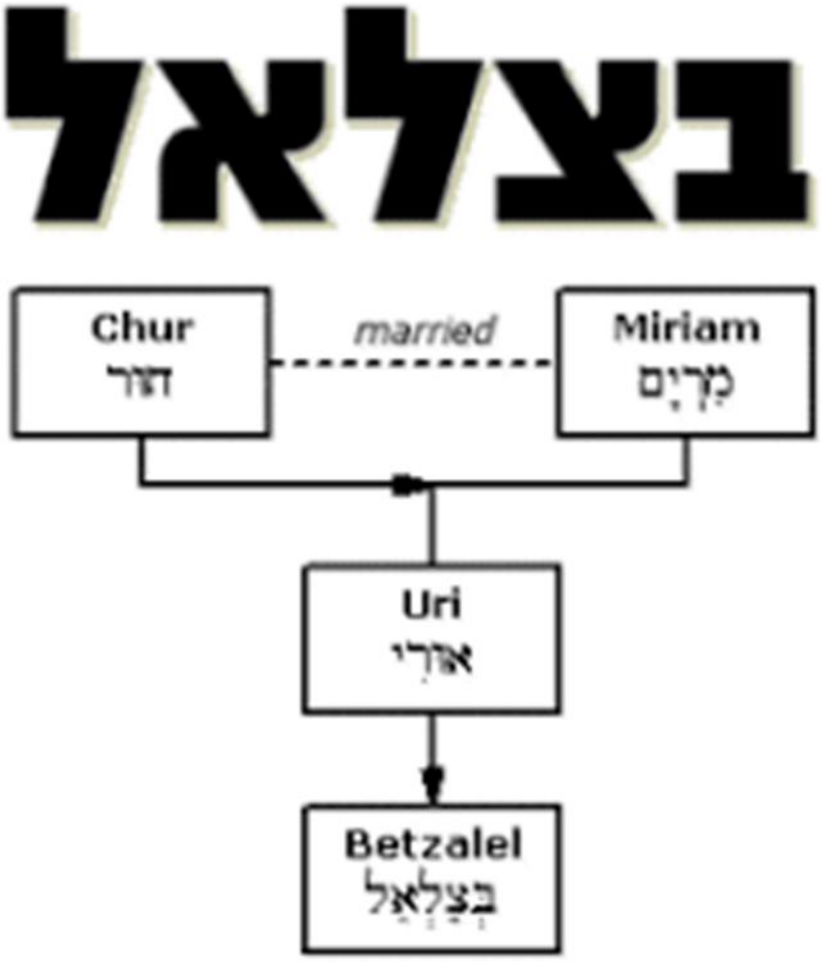
R' Schwab forcefully denied the accusation claiming it was an outright lie, "I said vermittler - intermediary - not Hitler!" After this explanation, he was told that his case would be reviewed and that he would be advised of the outcome. He was sent home to await

the decision. R' Schwab feared for his life, knowing that until his case was resolved, his life hung in the balance. If he was found guilty, he could be taken away in the middle of the night and publicly shamed and killed.

It was important that he, the rav of the community, not be hung in his bedclothes as this would surely denigrate his rabbinic position and what it represented. Thus, for the next two months, until he was formerly acquitted, R' Schwab went to bed every night in his clothes, maintaining his dignity under the greatest duress, because he understood what Kavod HaTorah represented.

Drush V'Chiddush

רְאֵה קָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל בֶּן־אוּרִי בֶן־חוּר לְמַטֵּה יְהוּדָה 31:2



The posuk says: "*See, I have called by name, Betzalel son of Uri, grandson of Chur.*" What does "I have called by name" mean? Should it not have said, "I have called Betzalel"? Furthermore, the Trop (cantillation) on this word is "esnachta" which is a pause, separating one word from the next. Why pause when we say בְּשֵׁם and not pause after the name Betzalel?

Targum Yonasan comments here: **שם טוב** which in gematria is 357, is exactly the same value as **ברכה עד בלי די**. Chazal say, **טוב שם**

משמן טוב, meaning a person that has a good name has the greatest, everlasting beracha throughout his life and thereafter, as well.

R' Mordechai Gifter zt"l cites the Medrash Tanchuma that a person has three names. The name his parents gave him, the name by which people refer to him and the name he acquires for himself. This idea is derived from Betzalel who was chosen to construct the Mishkan because he acquired a good name. Hashem is the One who gives a person a "shem tov" and sees the true life a person has led. His success in this world is based on Torah learning, performance of mitzvos, good middos, and yiras shamayim and then, together with siyata d'shmaya, he gains new strengths and abilities, all as a gift from above.

Hashem gazed into the heart of Betzalel and saw all of this - and then called him by his "shem tov." Thus, the Torah pauses after **בשם** to denote that Betzalel didn't just have a name - he earned the right to have such a good name. Betzalel was the son of Chur, who died al kiddush Hashem attempting to intervene and stop Klal Yisroel from creating the Egel Hazahav. Therefore, Chur's einekel was the individual designated to build the Mishkan in order to have his Zaida's yichus delineated. Chur, is remembered as the individual whose martyred death at the hands of the sinful nation was forgiven through his grandson's construction of the Mishkan, which began immediately after Chur's death.

May we all desire to acquire a shem tov in this world since this is the only name we take with us to Olam Haba when we move on to a better world.

"Who knows how to speak well, will know how to keep silent, but not all who know how to keep silent know how to speak well." ~~ Mivchar Hapeninim

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת כִּי קֹדֶשׁ הִוא לָכֶם מְחַלְלֶיהָ מוֹת יוּמָת 31:14

R' Chaim Volozhiner ZT"L, founder and Rosh Yeshivah of the renowned Volozhiner Yeshivah, and prime disciple of the holy **Vilna Gaon ZT"L**, had a brother by the name of **R' Shlomo Zalman ZT"L**. He, too, was an esteemed Torah scholar who served in the capacity of Rav, to a prominent community, not far from Volozhin. A member of R' Shlomo Zalman's kehilla once travelled to Volozhin to discuss an urgent matter with R' Chaim. It was about his brother, R' Shlomo Zalman, claimed the man, and it was of extreme importance. Of course, R' Chaim put aside what he was doing and listened intently to the man's tale. "Rebbe," cried the man, "I don't know how to say this, but it appears that your brother, R' Shlomo Zalman, has become a bit unhinged. Many people are concerned that he is not right in his mind!"



R' Chaim was surprised at this bold statement about his brother and requested that the man explain what he meant by "not right in his mind." The man swallowed hard but carried on with his narrative. "Last Friday night, a number of people in the community - myself included - saw the Rav running like a madman through the streets of our little town, without a Yarmulkeh, hat or any other covering on his head - holding a lit oil lantern!" The man gasped for breath. "Rebbe, I saw this with my own eyes! I don't know what to do or what to say to your brother, R' Shlomo Zalman. It appears as if he has gone mad!"

R' Chaim understood that this man was not the type to contrive a story about his brother on a whim and realized that the matter could not rest. He must look into it immediately. That very day, R' Chaim travelled to his brother's town, intent on getting to the bottom of this story. How could such a thing have happened to his own brother?

When he arrived at his brother's home, he found the Rav sitting in his study learning Torah as usual without a care in the world, looking as normal as normal could be. R' Shlomo Zalman was pleasantly surprised with the arrival of his esteemed guest and welcomed his brother into his home. After exchanging pleasantries, he asked R' Chaim what brought him to his little "neck of the woods."

R' Chaim's demeanour turned serious as he recounted what the man from town had told him. "Tell me, my dear brother, what's going on with you? Is everything alright?" Upon hearing this story, R' Shlomo Zalman let out a short laugh. Smiling broadly from ear to ear, he said, "Please let me tell you what really happened last Friday night.

It was night-time, after Shabbos had already begun, when a distraught man entered my home. His wife was in heavy labour and intense pain, and he wanted to know if he was permitted to turn up the lamp in his home, in order for the midwife to be able to see better. Well, of course, I ruled that not only was it permissible, it was required! Hurry home, I told him, and turn up the lamp and may your wife have an easy labour!"

R' Shlomo Zalman looked at his brother carefully and continued. "But the man didn't go right away; he walked out slowly, pensively. I sensed that he was hesitant to light a fire on Shabbos due to Chilul Shabbos and in that case, it may become a question of life and death - Sakanas Nefashos.

Immediately, I jumped out of my chair, and without a second thought as to donning my coat, hat or any other outer clothing, I grabbed the oil lantern from my house and ran out into the street. The man didn't live far and I took off in a dead sprint, running as fast as I

could to get there before a serious problem arose. I was so intent on getting there, that I didn't even realize that my yarmulkeh had fallen off my head and I burst into the man's home with my oil lamp and stayed there until I saw that he followed my order and lit his lamp."

R' Shlomo Zalman once again smiled broadly, "Now, my dear brother, do you understand why my constituents think that I am not 'right in my mind'?"

וַיַּעֲבֹר ה' עַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא ה' | ה' קל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם 34:6



The famous *"Frankel Rambam"* took many years to prepare and required a great deal of effort, money and research on the part of the publisher, **R' Shabsy Frankel zt"l**. Understandably, his hand-written manuscripts that were the foundation of his publication were priceless in his eyes and invaluable to the unique re-publication of the Rambam.

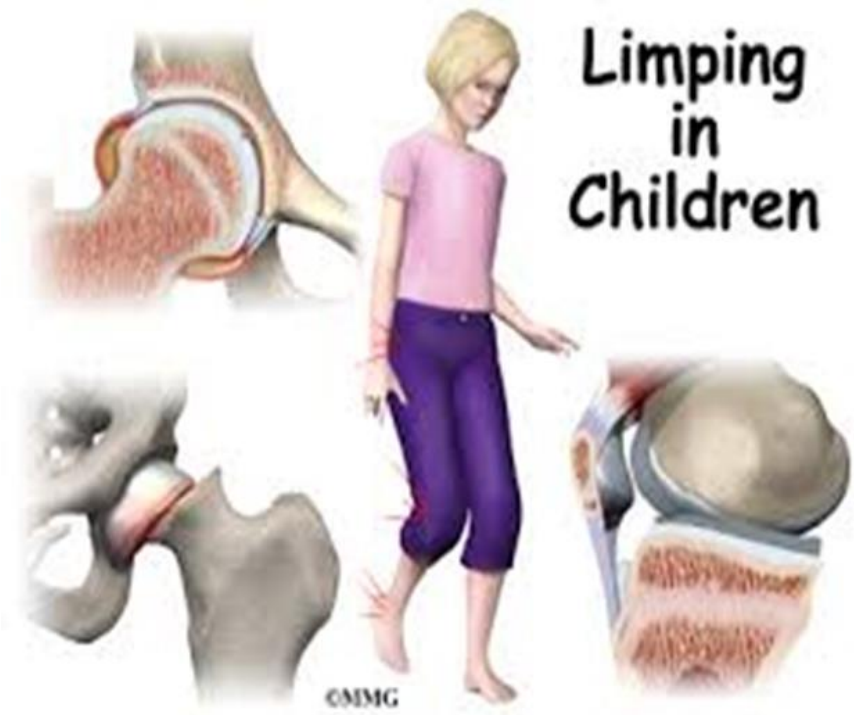
One day, as R' Shabsy was sitting with an editor discussing the plans for a number of manuscripts lying before them, the editor accidentally knocked over his cup of coffee which ran across the broad desk and drenched the precious handwritten pages. Red-faced and apologetic, the editor jumped out of his chair and began mopping up the spilled coffee, hoping to salvage as many of the manuscript pages as possible. R' Shabsy also jumped up, but after quickly surveying the damage, he rushed out of the room without a word. The editor truly felt terrible. He knew how much these pages meant to R' Shabsy and

realized how upset he must be - to the extent that he ran out of the room so as not to let his anger boil over.

Within seconds, however, R' Shabsy was back. He hadn't left the room in a fit of anger. With a beatific smile that stretched from ear to ear, R' Shabsy walked in carrying a full steaming cup of coffee. Placing it down in front of the editor, he said in the sweetest possible voice, "Reb Dovid, you haven't yet drunk your coffee. Here, please take this and enjoy..."

We are enjoined to follow the ways of Hashem. Just as He is merciful, so must we be merciful. Just as He does kindness, so must we do kindness. And just as He is **מעביר על מדותיו** - He looks away and allows our iniquities to go unpunished, we too, must always try to look away when someone does us harm. One who is **מעביר על מדותיו** is not just an exceptional human being, he is actually harnessing a piece of the Divine Presence, utilizing his G-dly attributes.

וַיְהִי֙ מִמָּחֳרָ֔ת וַיֹּ֥אמֶר מֹשֶׁ֖ה אֶל־הָעָ֑ם אַתֶּ֣ם חֲטָאתֶ֣ם חֲטָאָ֣ה גְדֹלָ֔ה וְעַתָּ֥ה אֶֽעֱלֶ֖ה אֶל־ה֑' אוּלַ֣י אֲכַפְּרָ֔ה בְּעַ֖ד חַטַּאתְכֶֽם 32:30



The following story occurred a number of years ago in one of the prominent girls schools in Bnei Brak. A new student arrived in the middle of the school year and it was immediately apparent that she was different. She walked with a noticeable limp which no doubt came about from a severe illness when she was younger.

She was not a well child and her parents thought that perhaps a new environment would be good for her spirit and physical well-being. At first, things seemed to be going well. The other girls in the class were friendly to her and included her in some of their activities. However, it didn't take long before a number of the more unruly students began to poke fun at her, copying her limping gait and sickly pallor, to the amusement of others. Some other girls joined in on the fun and they mercilessly taunted the poor girl. Her parents were upset at this and kept her home much of the time as she began to hate her new school and schoolmates.

The teacher saw what was happening and really tried her best to stop it. She constantly spoke about being kind to others and even created a number of programs in the class to get the girls to stop their despicable behaviour toward this one girl. Nothing she tried seemed to work or have any effect on the class. She was at her wits end. Finally, she asked her husband to accompany her to speak with the Gadol Hador, **R' Aharon Leib Steinman zt"l**.

The two arrived at the Rav's home and the Morah began to explain the situation in great detail. R' Aharon Leib became emotional with tears in his eyes as he imagined the pain and hurt that this poor girl was going through. He inquired as to what she was doing to stop it and the Morah provided a full accounting of all her class programs and speeches that she made to make the girls better.

R' Aharon Leib was quiet for a few long moments. Then, in a soft voice, he asked her, "Do the girls daven in class?" She answered yes. The Rav nodded and said, "Tell the girls that it is assur (forbidden) for them to daven."

The Morah and her husband looked at each other in wonderment, but R' Aharon Leib did not relent. "Tell them that the Rabbanim have ruled that as long as they continue to destroy a fellow classmate and, in a figurative sense, spill her innocent blood, they are forbidden al pi halacha from davening. Hashem does not want the

tefillos of murderers - they are disgusting to Him, and therefore you should begin your class without any sort of tefillah."



The Morah came in the next morning to teach and when the girls automatically took out their siddurim, she told them to stop. "Put away your siddurim. We are not going to daven today. We will go straight to our regular learning schedule."

The girls could not understand this. Why can't we daven like usual, they asked. The Morah responded that she received a psak from the Gadol Hador, R' Aharon Leib Steinman, and according to halacha, they are not allowed to daven. She even took out a Navi and read the posuk, **ובפרישכם כפיכם אעלים עיני... ידיכם דמים מלאו** - ***"When you spread out your hands (in prayer) I will conceal My eyes ... your hands are filled with blood."***

Once again, she explained to them that their tefillos are worthless in the eyes of Hashem, because they have practically killed another human being with their horrible behaviour, and thus, they have no zechus or right to daven.

"Please take out your workbooks," she told her students, "and we will begin our day from there." The students were shocked. No davening? How can they begin their day without davening? But the Morah was insistent. "This is the psak I received from Rav Steinman," she said.

Of course, this didn't sit well with the class. A few girls took the initiative and wrote on a piece of paper, how sorry they were for treating a classmate the way they did. They pledged to be nice and kind to the girl and would never hurt her ever again. Then, they walked around and every single girl in the class signed the paper. Only then, did the Morah agree to allow them to take out their

siddurim and daven Shacharis. And what a Shacharis it was! Their tefillos took on a new intensity and every girl could feel the power of prayer surging through them. The next day, the sick girl came back to class and was met with a new kindness and affection she had never known in her life. The girls truly went out of their way to make her feel comfortable and wanted, and shortly thereafter she began to blossom as a student and individual, with a newfound sense of confidence and simchas hachaim.

Torah Tavlin - Concepts in Avodas Halev From The Family of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וְהַלֻּחֹת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹקִים הֵמָּה וְהַמִּכְתָּב מִכְתַּב אֱלֹקִים הוּא חָרוּת עַל־הַלֻּחֹת 32:15



Several meforshim question why the Luchos are described in beautiful detail only when Moshe Rabbeinu was ready to descend from Har Sinai and bring them to the people. The posuk states: ***"Moshe turned and went down from the mountain, the two Luchos (tablets) of the testimony in his hand ... on one side and on the other side they were inscribed. And the tablets were G-d's work, and the inscription was G-d's inscription, engraved on the tablets."***

Why was this vivid description not applied at the time when the Luchos were actually given to the Jewish Nation? Why only later when the Jews made the Egel Hazahav and Moshe was about to destroy them does the Torah describe the miraculous Luchos in great detail?

We often do not appreciate what we have in life until we lose it. This inability to appreciate what we have before it is too late is one of the saddest aspects of nature. When the Luchos were first given to Moshe, Klal Yisroel may have not paid attention at all to their unique beauty or notice the miracle of the words inscribed from inside and outside. The true value of the Luchos became apparent when they were about to be destroyed.

This lesson applies to raising children. When they are small, we often get caught up with "life" and forget to spend time with them. Years later, when our nests empty out and our children marry, we look back and reminisce how we miss the laughter of our two-year-olds, our teenagers, and even the toys and clothes that are left on the just-cleaned floors.

This is especially true when parents pass away in their old age. We realize then what we have lost. And that we should have welcomed their friendly advice and appreciated the warmth, the caring and the love that poured forth from true loving parents.

By reserving the beautiful description of the Luchos until later when they were about to be destroyed, the Torah is teaching us to appreciate our many gifts of life: our children, our parents and the many other gifts that Hashem gives us before it is too late.

Did You Know That?

You probably know that ketores that is mentioned in this week's parsha may not have honey added to it. But did you know that the reason for that is because when honey is heated, it rises up?

Elevating itself higher than other spices would be symbolic of haughtiness in Avodas Hashem which is not acceptable. [based on peirush **Me'am Loez**]

Me'Oros Ha'Tzaddikim

Rav Elimelech Ben Eliezer Lipman of Lizhensk - Noam Elimelech (21st of Adar) - Food from Gan Eden

Toward the end of his life, Rebbe Reb Elimelech ate very little, and even the entreaties of his friends and relatives had little effect. One time, when his son, Rav Elozor, pleaded with him to eat enough to sustain life, Rebbe Reb Elimelech said, "I wish I could eat, but my body rejects all things physical. Ah!



One time, during my years of wandering in exile, I lodged at an inn near a certain village, and there I ate a delicious soup. If that were available, I could eat it. But the inn is so far away!"

Many years later, Rav Elozor happened to be in that village, and sought out the inn to which his father had referred. He asked the hostess whether he might have some of her special soup, and she said, "How I wish I could serve you the food that is appropriate for a great person like yourself. But we are very poor. Very few travellers pass this way, and we just have enough flour and beans to eat for our meals. I will be glad to make a bean soup for you.

When Rav Elozor tasted the soup, he experienced a spiritual delight, as though he were eating of the offerings of the Mizbei'ach (Altar) in the Bais HaMikdosh in Yerushalayim. He asked the hostess, "Please tell me, what ingredients do you use for this soup?"

The woman began crying. "I am so sorry that it is so meagre. I do not have any spices to put in. All I did was cook the beans with water, and then I davened to Hashem: 'Master of the Universe! You have provided me with the mitzva of preparing a meal for a special guest.

If only I had meat, vegetables and spices, I would prepare a meal for him that would befit him, but I have nothing. But You, Master of the Universe, have everything. You have Gan Eden (Paradise), where there are all the finest scents and flavours. Please put some of these in the soup, so that my holy guest can enjoy his food.'"

Rav Elozor thought, "Now I know why my father longed for this soup. This pious woman's sincere tefillos were answered, and the soup did indeed have the taste of Gan Eden.

Drush V'Chiddush

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם 31:16



The Gemara states as follows: "(Hashem said) I have a precious gift in my treasure chamber, its name is Shabbos. I want to give it to the people of Israel.". This is echoed in the words in Parshas Ki Sisa: ***"The Children of Israel are to observe the Shabbos to constructively make of it the Shabbos throughout their generations."***

The implication is that proper observance of Shabbos will ensure that we - the Jewish people - will continue to survive throughout the generations and will be part of the ultimate redemption. Having peace of mind, on Shabbos requires mastering one's negative traits. "Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day it should be a complete rest sacred to the Almighty."

One Friday night, a policeman came to the home of **R' Yaakov Yosef Herman zt"l** to inform him that he should run immediately to his

store, which was ablaze, and salvage whatever he could before it is all destroyed. R' Herman thanked him for the message but explained that he was not able to go since it was Shabbos.

The entire Shabbos, R' Herman showed no anxiety. After Shabbos ended (and he finished an unhurried havdala), he walked to his store, expecting to see it in ashes; instead, his store was intact, and it was the adjoining store which had been destroyed.



R' Shneur Kotler zt"l once came to a city to fundraise for Lakewood Yeshivah. He was briefed on who to go to for money - and who not to go to. One name stood out. "This man does not believe in giving charity," was what he was told, but R' Shneur was not deterred. He insisted on visiting the man's palatial estate, even though he knew it would take considerable time away from the homes where he would actually get money.

When he arrived at the man's residence, he was cordially invited in. However, as he led the Rosh Yeshivah into his study, the rich man made sure to tell him, "Rabbi, I want you to know, that I do not give to charity, so if that is why you are here, you are wasting your time."

In response, R' Shneur simply smiled. "I came to visit a fellow Jew," he reassured him. "I am, however, intrigued by your attitude. Tell me, why don't you believe in charity?"

"You see, Rabbi," the man explained, "I went to Yeshivah as a child. But then, I went through the concentration camps. Living through that terrible experience made me wonder how can G-d exist and lets this destruction come upon His people?"

"My friend," R' Shneur said in a soft voice, "you had a terrible experience. But we may not question Hashem's reasons." R' Shneur gently continued to discuss various topics with him, and the conversation went on for quite a while.

Finally, R' Shneur turned to the man and said, "In the past two hours that I have spent in discussion with you, I could have seen several people - people who support Torah. Instead, I decided to visit you." R' Shneur paused. "Why? Because I wanted to give you an opportunity to merit a portion in Olam Haba through the mitzvah of Tzedakah."

Tears welled up in the wealthy man's eyes. He was truly touched. "Thank you, Rabbi," he whispered. He wrote a cheque for fifty dollars and handed it to R' Shneur, who thanked him with broad smile and wished him well before departing. As he got back into the car, the man accompanying R' Shneur asked, "Rebbi, was it really worth spending so much time with this man for just fifty dollars?"

R' Shneur nodded vigorously. "It certainly was," he said. "Let me explain with a story. "At the outset of World War II, my father, **R' Aharon zt"l**, successfully managed to cross the border from Poland into Russia, with the rest of our family. However, he realized that in all the commotion, he had left his Tefillin behind. He decided to go back for them. Despite the danger and the pleas from family and friends, my father was determined to get his Tefillin.

That night, he crossed back into Poland, retraced his steps and found his Tefillin just where he had left them. "By then it was morning, so my father decided to wait until nightfall before attempting to return to Russia. He headed to one of the border villages to find a place to stay during the day and knocked at the door of one of the farmhouses. "

A kind farmer opened and allowed him to stay for the day. My father began to speak with his host, and he discovered that the man was Jewish, but he knew nothing about his heritage. Since it was full

daylight, my father took out his Tefillin and began to daven Shachris. The farmer watched my father intently as he davened. My father realized that this man had never seen a pair of Tefillin before and explained to him in easy terms that one who wears Tefillin is rewarded in the World to Come. With my father's help, the man put on Tefillin for the first time and it was a very meaningful experience for him.

"My father stayed in the farmhouse the rest of the day. Late at night, he again crossed the border back into Russia. "Years later, my father had a dream. A Polish farmer appeared and asked, 'Do you remember me? You stayed in my house in Poland, after retrieving your Tefillin.' He told my father how, after he died, he was called before the Heavenly Court. 'The evidence against me was overwhelming. I was sure I was doomed. But then, one defending angel came forward, and recounted how I had once put on Tefillin. For that one mitzvah alone, I was granted a share in the World to Come.'

"The next morning, my father remarked, 'At the time, I thought that I had gone back for my Tefillin. Now, I see that Hashem had sent me back to help a fellow Jew merit a portion in the World to Come.'"

"So you see," R' Shneur continued, "I was more interested in changing this man's attitude toward charity and faith in Hashem, than I was in the money I could get from him. With his new outlook, he will merit a portion in Olam Haba. And that's what I wanted to accomplish."

Parshas Parah - Purity From Shomayim

The Sefas Emes writes that every year before the month of Nissan, purity rains down from Heaven to Jews who seek to be pure.

The reason Chazal enacted the reading of Parshas Parah on this Shabbos is to enable us to receive this purity.

Reb Yossel Biller Shlit'a Would Say:



"The Parsha of **פסל לך** in Parshas Ki Sisa is unique in that it is the only one in the entire Torah that is lained for three separate aliyos: Kohen, Levi and Yisroel. On the second day of Chol Hamoed Pesach, we begin the kriah with it and the first aliya goes to a Kohen. On a Taanis Tzibbur (fast day) when we read **ויחל**, this parsha is lained second, the aliya of the Levi. On Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa, it falls out in the fifth aliya, that of the Yisroel."

Torah Tavlin - Concepts in Avodas Halev From The Family of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וַיַּ֣רְא אֶת־הָעֵגֶל֮ וּמְחֹלֹת֒ וַיִּֽחַר־אַ֣ף מֹשֶׁ֗ה וַיַּשְׁלֵךְ֙ מִיָּדָ֔ו אֶת־הַלֻּחֹ֖ת וַיְשַׁבֵּ֣ר אֹתָ֑ם תַּ֖חַת הָהָֽר 32:19



Why didn't Moshe Rabbeinu break the luchos immediately when Hashem told him that Bnei Yisroel made an Egel? Why did he wait to come down from the mountain with the luchos and then decide to break them?

My machshava here is based on the words of the **Kotzker zt"l** who explains the posuk:

(Devorim 28:47) **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ אֶת־ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל**- A person does not deserve severe punishment, curses and tochacha just for not serving Hashem with simcha. Rather, his punishment is for something much worse. It is because he does aveiros, he performs his **לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ** - not serving Hashem **בְּשִׂמְחָה** - with joy and happiness. It's not enough that he is sinning - he is happy about it! When that is the case, then severe punishment is due.

When Moshe heard that Bnei Yisroel made an Egel, he was not ready to destroy the special luchos that were crafted by Hashem Himself. He loved his nation and thought that the people would still do Teshuvah. However, when he came down and witnessed not only the **עגל** but also the **מְחֹלֹת**- that the **לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ** of the people was done with so much **שִׂמְחָה**- so much gusto and joy, with singing, dancing and immorality, he knew there was no Teshuvah. He had no alternative but to break the luchos.



The gemara states: "One who keeps Shabbos properly, even if he worships idols like in the generation of Enosh, he is forgiven."

The Gerrer Rebbe, R' Avraham Mordechai Alter ZT"L (Imrei Emes) provides an understanding to this Tannaic dictum based on the words of a Medrash Yashan which states as follows: "When Moshe Rabbeinu broke the Luchos, not one word or even letter remained intact. All the letters flew into the air and became shards except for one line: **זָכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ** -***'Remember the Shabbos to sanctify it.'***

We see, says the Imrei Emes, that not even the sin of the golden calf could have any effect on the holy spiritual nature of Shabbos, and thus, even if a person commits the lowliest of sins like idol worship, Shabbos has the power to offer him forgiveness.

Rabbeinu Ephraim ZT"L Writes As Follows:



"The last letters of the words **קַח לְךָ סַמִּים** - ***'Take for yourself the finest spices'***, form the acronym **חכם** - a wise man.

This alludes to the relationship that exists between fragrant spices and wisdom. How so? The gemara makes just such a connection by describing how both wine and spices are conducive to wisdom, for they both soothe man's spirit and free his mind for unencumbered thought."

Migdal Ohr - – J. Gewirtz

R' Yisrael Salanter's wife related that when they got married, they made a deal to divide up the decision-making in their home. Anything that was related to "ruchnius," spirituality, would be decided by R' Yisrael. Anything that related to the "gashmius," the physicality of their home, would be the decision of the Rebbetzin. A listener asked her how that arrangement worked out. Smiling, she replied, "I never made any decisions. To R' Yisrael, EVERYTHING was a matter of ruchnius!"

R' Chanoch Henach of Alexander ZT"L would say:

"The Jewish People are commanded to give a Machatzis Hashekel - half a shekel, towards the Mishkan. Why not a whole shekel?



The word **שקל** has the same gematria (430) as **נפש** - 'soul.' (Baal HaTurim) This alludes to the concept that every Jew is given only half his soul - his neshama - from Heaven and the other half is his responsibility to create through his Torah, mitzvos and acts of chessed. By doing so, he completes his soul into one finished and perfect specimen. This is hinted to with the giving of the Machatzis Hashekel."

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

My father [Harav Yitzchak Isaac of Safrin] excelled in three practices:

1. ***Never did he eat a meal unless he was joined by a guest.***
2. ***Never did he eat unless he first originated an idea in Torah.***
3. ***Never did he talk about anyone – either positively or negatively. - Harav Zvi Hirsch of Zidichov***

Chazal Say That One Who Keeps Shabbos Will See No Loss In His Worldly Affairs.



Once a Jew realizes that he is not just keeping Shabbos but in truth, Shabbos is "keeping him," he will embrace it wholeheartedly and with pleasure.

Among the many other functions that he was involved in as a leading layman of American Jewry during much of the twentieth century, **Irving Bunim Z"L** championed the cause of Chinuch Atzmai, Israel's Torah-observant day school system. As a close confidante and disciple of the great Lakewood Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Aharon Kotler ZT"L**, who founded and provided direction for Chinuch Atzmai, Irving Bunim worked tirelessly to further this worthy cause. Bunim would travel to Israel on occasion to assist the fledgling organization and raise money. His devotion to Chinuch Atzmai would grow dramatically after observing first-hand what it was accomplishing.

On one trip in the late 1950's, Irving met a Sephardic girl in Ashkelon. She came from a non-observant family, but, after attending a Chinuch Atzmai school, she had turned to religious observance and become a Ba'alas Teshuvah. Her family, however, was not so eager to follow her lead. Her father was in the retail chandelier business, and business was tough. As a result, he was loath to hire outside help for the store and each of his children was required to work one day a week in the store. As it turned out, this girl's turn fell out on Shabbos. Before she had accepted religious

observance, she hadn't known better. But now, she was torn between her family and Shabbos, not knowing which to honour.

Finally, she decided that she would honour her father - but in her own way - without causing any dishonour to the holy day. Every Shabbos morning, she walked to the store and politely stood behind the counter waiting for customers. When one did come in and would ask how much an item cost, she quoted prices so preposterously exorbitant that the customers immediately walked out.

The girl thought she had figured it out; she obeyed her father, but never made a single sale and so was never forced to violate Shabbos.

After three weeks, however, her father began to wonder why he was doing no business on Saturdays. He decided to spy on his daughter. Just then a man entered and inquired about a $180 chandelier. "That chandelier is very special," the girl said. "That chandelier costs $1,000." The man said the price was too high and he left.

The girl was relieved until she saw her enraged father coming toward her. "Why did you do that?" he bellowed. "Do you know how much money you've lost me?" The girl was too terrified to respond. She couldn't simply tell her father the reason why she quoted such a high price; he was not too keen on her religious observance in the first place. This would most assuredly cement his staunch opposition against it. She remained silent while her father vented his anger out at her.

The next day, her father was surprised to see the man walk back into the store. "I realize that $1,000 is a lot of money," he said, pointing to the $180 chandelier, "but I really had my heart set on it. I looked all over the city for one like it and found nothing else. So here," he added, reaching for his chequebook, "I'll give you $1,000 for it, all right?"

Stunned, the shopkeeper sold him the chandelier, but only at its proper cost. He then turned to his daughter and softly announced

that they had witnessed a supernatural event, It came from Shamayim, he said, and it imparted a profound message. "From this day onward," he added, "the whole family will be Shomer Shabbos, like you."

whY I Matter - Young Israel of Midwood



Halachic sources state that one should bathe before Shabbat. At a minimum, one should wash his face, hands and feet before Shabbat. (Shabbat 25b; Shulchan Aruch O.C. 260:1)

What is the significance of washing one's face, hands and feet? **R' Itamar Schwartz** (Yerushalayim) explains: Kabbalists write that the first mention of any object or concept in the Torah reveals the essence of that entity. The first mention in the Torah of handwashing is in our parashah (30:19), **וְרָחֲצוּ אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־יְדֵיהֶם וְאֶת־רַגְלֵיהֶם** ***"From it [the kiyor], Aharon and his sons shall wash their hands together with their feet"*** **before performing the avodah / Temple service.** [Washing one's feet is mentioned for the first time in Parashat Vayera and was discussed in Hamaayan for that parashah, as was washing one's face.]

The Ramban z"l writes that, when a kohen washes his hands before the avodah, it is not for cleanliness; it is a sign of respect, just as the one who serves the king's meals washes his hands even if they're clean.

On a deeper level, the Ramban writes, washing one's hands and feet symbolizes washing one's whole being, since the feet are the lowest part of the body, and the hands are the highest (when extended above the head).

Similarly, R' Schwartz writes, washing one's hands and feet for Shabbat cleanses one's whole being in preparation for Shabbat. With this understanding, continues R' Schwartz, we can understand also the halachah that a kohen who is preparing for the avodah must wash his hands and feet simultaneously. Washing the hands and feet is more than just an act of cleansing the hands and feet separately. Since it symbolizes the cleansing of the whole body from top to bottom, the kohen must wash the highest part of the body--the hands--and the lowest part--the feet--together. *(B'lvavi Mishkan Evneh: Shabbat)*

Torah Gems

31:17 **כִּי־שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם֙ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י שָׁבַת֙ וַיִּנָּפַ֔שׁ**



The final letters of these four words: **וּבַיּוֹם֙ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י שָׁבַת֙ וַיִּנָּפַ֔שׁ** - ***"And on the seventh day He ceased and rested,"*** spell out the word **שתים** (two). This is an allusion to the second soul, the **נשמה יתירה** - extra spirit, a Jew receives on the day of Shabbos. (R' Yehudah HaChasid)

The gemara learns out an unusual adaptation of the word **וינפש**: "Rabi Shimon Ben Lakish said, 'On Erev Shabbos, Hashem gives a person an extra spirit **נשמה יתירה** and on Motzei Shabbos he takes it back

from him. Like it says in the posuk: **שבת וינפש** - He ceased (work) and rested; once he has rested (Shabbos has ended), woe to him who has lost his soul **ויי אבדה נפש**.'"

Interestingly enough, the concept of **וינפש** - the removal of the Neshama Yeseirah, is first mentioned in the Friday night tefillos before Shemona Esrai. Why do we recite these words at the onset of Shabbos, when they are referring to an act that will take place at the conclusion of Shabbos?

The holy Ba'al Shem Tov ZT"L responds by noting an integral element of the human psyche. A person can only experience pure pleasure if he knows that it cannot last. If one believes that the joy he feels from an action or an object will last indefinitely, human nature dictates that he will no doubt come to take that joy for granted. On the other hand, if he knows all too well that the pleasure he is enjoying is fleeting, he will utilize every resource to ensure his complete satisfaction.

Thus, right when Shabbos begins, we recite **וינפש** with the understanding that our pure and celestial "extra soul" will leave us after Shabbos, and in this manner, we will come to appreciate it even more over the course of the coming holy day.

Living Jewish

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם | עֲשֵׂה־לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים ***"Get up, make us gods."*** *(32:1)*

Why did they ask this of Aaron instead of just appointing him in Moses' stead?

The answer is that Aaron, "the pursuer of peace," was too close to the people for them to consider him as their leader. Too much familiarity makes it impossible for people to feel the proper respect for their leaders. *(Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorka)*

R' Avrohom Yaakov Pam ZT"L would say:



"Simcha is the basic ingredient for success in life and is the medium by which parents transmit the heritage of Torah life to their children. Simcha is also the key element in Kiruv Rechokim - to bring those estranged from Yiddishkeit back to their roots. May Hashem bless each and every Jew with a life full of simcha!""



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings - Joy

One of the reasons joy is important is because it saves people from sin. This week, the parasha speaks about the eigel (Golden Calf). Many people sinned but the women didn't sin. What protected them? **Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zy"a** explains that it was because of simchah.

Some weeks earlier, the women danced and rejoiced in the miracles of kriyas Yam Suf, even more than the men. As it says, "Miriam, the prophetess… took the drum in her hand, and all the women went after her with drums and dancing…" (Shmos 15:19-20). The men sang Az Yashir, but the women sang and also danced. Their extra degree of joy protected them from the avodah zarah of the eigel. There was dancing around the eigel, as it states, **וירא את העגל ומחלת** ,Moshe

saw the eigel and the dancing" (32:19) but the women's dancing beforehand, safeguarded them.

The tribe of Levi also didn't sin with the eigel. We can explain that it is for the same reason. The Levi'im serve Hashem with music (in the Beis HaMikdash). When there is joy and music, one doesn't fall into the trap of idol worship.

Living Jewish

וְהַלֻּחֹת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹקִים הֵמָּה וְהַמִּכְתָּב מִכְתַּב אֱלֹקִים הוּא And the Tablets were the work of Gd, and the writing was the writing of G-d *(32:16)*

What was so remarkable about the Tablets after hearing the Commandments at Mt. Sinai? When the Ten Commandments were inscribed in stone, they were simultaneously engraved upon the heart of every Jew forever and ever, as it states, "Write them on the tablet of your heart." This, indeed, was truly "a work of G-d." ***(Sefas Emess)***

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

There is a Pasuk in Parashas Ki Sisa that many of us mention as part of Kiddush on Shabbos Morning:

בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִוא לְעֹלָם "And Bnei Yisroel will observe Shabbos, to make Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations *(i.e. descendants)* (31:17).

Rav Shimon Sofer (Shir Ma'on) elucidates this Pasuk as teaching us that the only way we can ensure that our progeny will properly sanctify Shabbos, is by properly observing and respecting Shabbos ourselves.

Peace



Focusing on the present is also a recipe for peace because one overlooks the wrongs that others did to him in the past. But when one always remembers the faults of others, there is anger and contention. Many of the customs we have by a wedding chuppah commemorate Mattan Torah. Some explain that we break a glass under the chuppah to remember the luchos that were broken after Mattan Torah. The gemara (Eiruvin 54.) teaches that if the luchos wouldn't have been broken, people wouldn't forget Torah.

The Divrei Yoel of Satmar zy"a explained that it is essential that the couple standing under the chuppah should be reminded of the broken luchos and their ability to forget. Because only when a couple can forget a past wrong that their spouse did, can there be peace in the home. **Rebbe Moshe Leib Sassover zy"a** explained that the past and the future are great deterrents to avodas Hashem. The sins and failures of the past discourage people from trying again, and worrying about the future robs people of their peace-of-mind. Yaakov Avinu blessed Efraim and Menasha, as it states, **ויברכם ביום ההוא**, he blessed them on that day… (Bereishis 48:20). He blessed them with the ability to focus on that day, without considering the past and the future.

The Kiyor



All the keilim of the Mishkan had specific measurements and sizes. What were the measurements and size of the kiyar?... I will give you a hint…What was the kiyar made of?... – copper. Where did the copper come from? From the copper mirrors of the women, that they donated towards the building materials of the Mishkan.

The passuk says, **והמלאכה היתה דים... והותר** the donations [for the mishkan] were enough… and extra" (Shmos 36:7). The collection was more than the Mishkan required, and therefore, some donations didn't end up going towards the building of the Mishkan. There was one exception: The women donated their mirrors for the kiyor, and as much as they donated was used. This is because these donations were particularly precious to Hashem. As Rashi writes, "The Jewish women owned mirrors, which they used to beautify themselves. They donated even these for the Mishkan.

Moshe was disgusted with them, since [mirrors] are used for the yetzer hara. HaKadosh Baruch Hu told him to accept them. [Hashem said] 'These are more precious to me than all the rest, because with them, the women helped establish a large nation in Mitzrayim…'" (Shmos 38:8).

The Ramban, the Ibn Ezra, and Onkelus tell another reason why these mirrors were precious to Hashem. The Ramban writes, "These

women were servants of Hashem. They turned away from the pleasures of this world and donated their mirrors.

Every day, they would come to the mishkan to pray and to learn about the mitzvos." Being that they were so precious, every donation was used. And therefore, there was no specific size of the kiyar, because however many mirrors that were donated, they were all used!



Anger

There are times when it is advisable to push matters off for the future. One example of this is anger. Several times in the Torah, Rashi writes "Any word that needs a ל at its beginning, the Torah [instead] places a ה at the end" (see Bereishis 14:10 and 32:4). For example, **מצרימה** means **למצרים** (to Mitzrayim). **חרנה** means to Choron, etc.

Rebbe Mendel of Vorkeh zy"a asked, what does the Torah gain by placing a ה the end of the word. If it would mean that fewer letters are used, it's understood, because every letter of the Torah is important and counts. But the amount of letters remains the same: **למצרים** has six letters, and so does **מצרימה**. So, what is gained by exchanging the ל for a ה?

Rebbe Mendel of Vorke answers that this teaches us that whenever one must say something, but he can push it off for later, it is worthwhile doing so. And often, by delaying his words and saying them later, they will be spoken in a softer tone. The softest letter to pronounce is the ה (it definitely is softer than the ל). When one postpones his words, they will be spoken more softly later. Another

gain earned by postponing anger is that it gives people time to clarify exactly what happened, because often anger is the result of a misconception.

A devoted cheder rebbe was particular about being in his classroom before the students arrived. (There are expert mechanchim and rabbanim who recommend this.) When the children would arrive, this rebbe was already sitting in his place, ready to greet them.



One day he came late. When he came into the classroom, all the children scurried to their places, but one child stretched out his arm and pointed to his watch with a big smile on his face. That was a clear act of chutzpah. Only a week earlier, the rebbe had a long talk with the child, and the child promised to behave better in the classroom. The now furious rebbe wanted to admonish the child, but he had made a kabbalah that he wouldn't respond to his anger before a half-hour passes. So he pushed the matter out of his mind and he taught Torah to his class. "I'll deal with this child later," he told himself.

The bell rang, indicating the first break of the day. The mischievous child was excitedly pointing to his watch again. He said, "Rebbe! Look! My father bought me a new watch!" The rebbe discovered that the child wasn't being chutzpadig; on the contrary, he was trying to befriend his rebbe. If the rebbe would have responded immediately with anger, the child would have been devastated. Time enabled him to learn the true story. How do the wise people control their anger? One method is by pushing off responding to something that angers them for a later time.

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zy'a (renowned for his wisdom) had an empty tabak pushkeh (snuff box) that he would often hold in his

hands, and sometimes he would open and close its lid. One of his chassidim asked him about the box, and why he holds onto it, and he replied, "Whenever I am aroused to anger, I open the lid of the tobacco box, and I place the anger inside. Two hours later, I open the lid again, to reassess the matter, and to decide whether the matter warrants anger or not."

Shabbos Treasures



When the Monn fell every day in the Midbar for the Jews, they would go out and collect their portion for the day.

On Erev Shabbos though, the Pasuk says (Shemos 16:22) that "Lechem Mishneh", "a double portion" fell because there would be no Monn to collect on the next day, which was Shabbos.

In order to remember this miracle, the Gemara says (Shabbos 117b) that we should use two Challos when we say the Brachah of Ha'motzi on Shabbos.

A Wise Man would say: "Don't mix your bad words with your bad mood. In life, you will undoubtedly have many opportunities to change your mood, but you will never get the opportunity to replace the words spoken."

L'Maaseh

There is a story told about the Ohr HaChaim Ka'kadosh. When he was about to pass away, his wife asked him how she would support herself, as they were so poor.



The Ohr HaChaim told her that a month after he passes away, someone will come to buy his Tefilin. The Ohr HaChaim instructed her to sell it to him for an exorbitant amount, and he will surely pay it, and she will be sustained from that money. However, he told her that she must make one condition to the sale, and that is, when the one buying them would wear them, he has to be extremely careful that when he wears them, he must maintain their Kedushah, and he should not think about anything except for Torah and Tefilah, and to never talk Devarim Bateilim, idle chatter, while they are on him.

A few days later the Ohr HaChaim passed away, and exactly as he said, one month later a man came to buy his Tefilin. The Ohr HaChaim's wife told the man that he can buy them on condition that he only be involved in Torah and Tefilah while wearing them and never talk Devarim Bateilim. The man agreed and paid the large amount that she asked for them.

The first morning that this man wore the Tefilin of the Ohr HaChaim, he felt as if he were lifted to a higher world. He was able to Daven with Kavanah that he never had before, and connect with Hashem as he poured out his heart in Tefilah. This went on day after day, until one morning a few weeks later, one of his employees came

running to him in Shul and said that he was needed desperately at the office. The man waved his hand at the employee, but he did not leave. He said he needed an answer about what to do, or else come in himself immediately.

Finally, the man rationalized that it was better to answer his worker than to leave Shul, so as quickly as he could, he gave a short answer and then continued Davening, but it wasn't the same anymore. Something was missing. He couldn't concentrate anymore, his mind wandered, and he didn't feel uplifted, and this man was devastated.

He tried day after day to regain the quality of his Tefilah, but he couldn't, and he began to wonder if something was wrong with the Tefilin. One morning after Shacharis, he went directly to the town's Sofer and asked him to check the Tefilin, and he watched anxiously as the Sofer carefully opened the Batim to remove the Parshiyos.

As the Sofer unrolled the Klaf, he gasped in amazement, and turned the Klaf to show the man, who nearly collapsed. The Klaf was completely blank— all the letters were gone! The man violated the holiness of the Tefilin by talking Devarim Bateilim while wearing them, so the letters of the Ohr HaChaim's Tefilin vanished!

We learn from this how important it is to listen to the directions of our Gedolim and have Emunas Chachamim. If the man didn't come up with a reason on his own to talk Divrei Chol with the Tefilin on, and instead followed the directive of the Ohr HaChaim, he wouldn't have ruined his Tefilin!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Simcha Wasserman, zt"l, would say in name of the **Chofetz Chaim, zt"l**, that there are three things that one should strive to never waste, and they are: time, money, and health!

Hashem's Will



One night, while on their wanderings, **Rebbe Reb Elimelech and his brother, Rebbe Reb Zusha**, were stranded in a village inn where a wedding was in progress. The drunken peasants, seeing the two bearded brothers hiding behind the large stove, grabbed Rebbe Reb Zusha and made him perform a dance, while goading him, poking and jabbing at him from all sides. Round and round poor Rebbe Reb Zusha danced, to the uproarious laughter of the rowdies.

Between dances, Rebbe Reb Elimelech whispered, "Why do they always pick on you?" "It is Hashem's will," Rebbe Reb Zusha sighed. "You know what, let's change places," Rebbe Reb Elimelech suggested. "They can't tell us apart. The next time they'll grab me, and you will get some rest." So Rebbe Reb Zusha took his brother's place behind the stove.

Just then one of the peasants roared, "This time, let's get the one behind the stove! The other one danced enough!" When it was all over, Rebbe Reb Zusha said, "When something is Hashem's will, it will come to pass, no matter what we do." May the merit of the Tzaddik Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk protect us all, Amen.

Rebbetzin Sora Schenirer: The Mother of Generations - 26th of Adar



A seamstress in Cracow, she became keenly aware of the spiritual poverty of the growing generations of girls, so she created a school, and clothed the naked souls of generations to come. She did not lecture as insistently regarding devotion to her fellow's needs, but her personal conduct was more eloquent than any lecture.

It was late one evening. Sora Schenirer came into my house, apologizing a thousand times. It was urgent, she said. She knows a young, married man who needs help badly, and here it was – two weeks before Pesach! Giving him charity openly would insult him terribly. She therefore asked me, since I daven next to him in shul, to slip fifty zlotys into his coat pocket. Fifty zlotys was a lot of money, but I had to fulfil her wish. I did exactly as she said, and I then watched the young man put on his coat after davening, place his hands into his pocket – and I watched his eyes light up to the heavens.

No wonder she was called "the female version of the Chofetz Chaim". When she took ill and was admitted to the hospital for an operation,

she wrote: For the first time in twenty-three years I did not daven be'tzibbur, and did not spend Shabbos with my girls.

She was only fifty-two when she passed away on the 26th of Adar, 5695 (1935), but she enjoyed the great satisfaction of seeing the widespread success of her revolution Leshem Shomayim. She was not blessed with children of her own. And yet she was a mother. In fact, one could rightly say that no mother in our generation had as many children as she did.

When she departed this life in 1935, hundreds of Jewish girls walked behind her aron, toward the Cracow cemetery, and wept with heartrending cries, as one does for one's own departed mother. And when news of her petira became known throughout the cities and towns of Jewish Poland, thousands of Jewish girls tore kria and sat shiva as if for a mother.

The very same year, hundreds of young Jewish mothers named their new-born daughters Sora, after a woman, who – two decades earlier – was still an unknown Jewish seamstress, but who had since become Rebbetzin Sora Schenirer, the legendary mother of a new Torah-true generation of Jewish women in pre-war Eastern Europe.

Essential Rabbi Nachman - *Music, Song And Dance*

In this material world, especially if we have sinned and are very far from G-d, the main way to attach ourselves to G-d is through melody and song. Likutey Halachot, Nesiat Kapayim 5:6 VIII

It is good to get into the habit of livening yourself up with a tune. Holy melodies are very exalted, having great power to stir the heart and draw it to G-d. Even if you cannot sing well, you can still inspire yourself with a tune. Sing it as best as you can, in privacy if you wish. The loftiness of melody is beyond all measure. Sichot Haran #273

Essential Rabbi Nachman

Torah Study The Misnagdim say that the main thing is to study Torah. The Chassidim say the main thing is prayer. But I say: Pray and study and pray. Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-87 IV

Daily study

Everyone should set himself a daily program of Torah study. This applies even to people who are far from holiness and sin regularly. So great is the power of the Torah that it can free them from their sins. If even the worst sinner would take on himself to study a fixed amount every day, he would be able to escape the evil trap. The power of the Torah is so great that it can accomplish everything. Sichot Haran #19

The Joy of Tefillin



Someone said to the **Avnei Nezer zt'l** (Rebbe Avraham of Sochotchov): "You learn Torah, and so do I. In our youth we studied in the same school. Why did you become one of the leaders of the Jewish nation, and not me?" The Avnei Nezer asked him, "Do you remember a time when you were sincerely happy?" "Yes! There was such a moment. That was when I won the lottery..." The Avnei Nezer said, "I have that joy —and a thousand times more — each time I put tefillin on in the morning..."

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l said, "I knew a Yid in Zvhil who was very happy putting on tefillin in the morning… The joy of a great rasha when he commits a sin can't compare to the joy this man had when he put on tefillin." (It's known that whenever Rebbe Shlomke said, "I knew I Yid from Zvhil…" he was referring to himself.)

Rabbi Hanoch Teller - A Perfect Job

כי מצאת חן בעיני ***For you have found favour in My eyes*** **(*Shemot* 33:17)**

Yosel Chapnick, a close friend of mine, once had a non-Jewish painter enter his apartment to begin a paint job. As they together began taking the pictures off the wall, the painter noticed that one of the pictures was a blow up of **the Bobover Rebbe**.



"Is this your rabbi?" asked the painter. "No, he's not," answered Yosel. "Why isn't he your rabbi?" the painter asked again. "He's just isn't my rabbi." "But why isn't he your rabbi?" came the question again. "He just isn't. C'mon, let's get on with the job." Yet the man was looking for an answer. "But why isn't he your rabbi?" "Can we please move on with the job!" Yosel politely said. "There are so many rabbis with beards and *peyos*."

"He's *my* rabbi," said the painter. Opening his wallet, he took out a photograph of the Bobover Rebbe. "I'll tell you what happened. One morning while I was painting the Rebbe's house, he came over to me and said, 'Did you have breakfast?' I replied that I hadn't. The Rebbe

proceeded to sit me down, give me food and wait on me. 'I want to tell you something,' the Rebbe said.

"I was thinking to myself," the painter continued, "that I knew exactly what he was going to say. I had heard it a million times. 'I pay you good money; I want a perfect job.' But he didn't say that. He told me, 'We once had the Beis Hamikdash and a world of perfection. Everything was the way it was supposed to be. But ever since it was destroyed, we have never had that world of perfection. I therefore cannot ask you to do a perfect job, but I would like you to try your hardest.'

"Let me tell you something," the painter now said as he held the picture of the Bobover Rebbe. "The Rebbe gave me the names of hundreds of other people to work for, but no one else ever offered me breakfast. They all said to me, 'I'm paying you good money; I want a perfect job.' But I say to them, 'You want a perfect job? There's no Temple. How can you want a perfect job?'"

No one in this world is perfect nor is supposed to be perfect. But that itself is the greatest perfection. We are all to be embraced and cared for exactly the way we are. And when such an attitude is adopted, we are on our way to rebuilding the true world of perfection – a world with the Beis Hamikdash.

Vechol Ma'amminim - *The Principal Emunah Depends on Amen.*

Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa is the yahrtzeit of the ***Aruch Hashulchan****. In his sefer (Orach Chaim 124 11) he rules regarding the virtue of answering amen: "The principal emunah is dependent on amen, and therefore, he should teach his young children to be careful to answer amen, and as soon as the child answers amen, he has a share in Olam Haba."*

Rabbi Mordechai Becher - Returning Home

***נצר חסד לאלפים The Preserver of Kindness for thousands of generations…* (34:7)**

Upon completing college, a student from San Francisco decided he would take a world tour. His first stop was Williamsburg, New York. Sitting on a subway, he noticed a Chassidic Jew for the first time in his life. Unsure where he needed to get off the subway, he turned to the Jew and asked for help.

Happily directing the young man where to go, the chassid introduced himself and asked for the boy's name. After repeating his name, the chassid remarked, "So you must be Jewish?"

"No, no," quickly interjected the boy, "it's just a Russian name; my parents are from Russia. Many Russian names sound Jewish, and many Jewish names sound Russian, but I am not Jewish."

"I don't think so," responded the chassid, "I know that name and it is a Jewish name."

"I am telling you," persisted the boy, "I am not Jewish."

Remaining steadfast to his opinion, the chassid gave it one last try. "Trust me, I know you are Jewish. My parents came from a small town and everyone in that town was Jewish. And the name of your family is from that town." Informing him of the name of the town, the boy soon realized that he was in fact right. That was where his parents originally came from.

"Here is my business card," said the chassid. "If you ever happen to visit Israel, go to one of these places." Jotting down on the card the names of two yeshivot –Ohr Somayach and Aish HaTorah – the boy took the card, put it into the pocket of his winter coat and forgot all about it.

Sometime later, the boy decided he would like to go sightseeing in Israel. Touring throughout the country, he eventually stopped off at

the Kotel. It was winter time, and he was wearing his winter coat. Taking in the breathtaking scene of the Kotel, he soon received a tap on his shoulder. It was **Rav Meir Schuster**, a man known for his dedicated outreach work.



"Are you Jewish?" R' Meir Schuster asked. "That's an interesting question," the boy replied. "Well, are you interested in learning about Judaism?" As the boy stood there and began to say, "I don't know if I am interested," he placed his hand into his pocket. Feeling a piece of paper, he pulled it out and opened it up. Looking at the paper, he turned to Rav Schuster. "Have you ever heard of Ohr Somayach or Aish HaTorah?" "Have I ever heard of those places? Of course I have!" Without delay, Rav Schuster took the boy to Ohr Somayach.

Sitting in on a class, the boy found it fascinating. And indeed, after some serious consideration, he decided to extend his stay and learn more about Judaism. Wishing to inform his family of his whereabouts, he phoned home to tell his parents that he would be away a bit longer than expected.

His father picked up the phone. "You want to stay in Israel? Where are you? On a kibbutz?" "Actually," the boy said, "I'm in a yeshiva." Coming from the other end of the line, the boy heard a bang. His father had just dropped the phone. Now picking up the phone was his mother. "Listen, can you call back later? Your father is not doing too well right now."

An hour later he called again, and again his father picked up. "I don't know how you found out or who told you that you are Jewish, but it is not too late to forget about it. No one has to know. I know what it means to be Jewish. I lived through the Second World War as a kid and it was horrific. Your grandfather also experienced pogroms. I'm doing you a favor. I don't know what you are thinking, but you should come back home right now and never again think about Judaism."

"Look," the boy inhaled, "I feel I have to pursue this. There is something about Judaism which speaks to me, and I feel a connection to it. I just want to look into it some more. "You know what?" replied the father, "do what you like." And so the boy decided to stay in the yeshiva.

Two months later, the boy received a package in the mail from his parents. It was a Hebrew book with a post-it note stuck on top saying, "This is the last Jewish relic we have in the house. You can have it; good riddance." Opening the book, the boy could not understand a word. But he eagerly wished to discover exactly what type of relic he was holding. Approaching one of his rabbis, he requested if he could explain what the book was about.

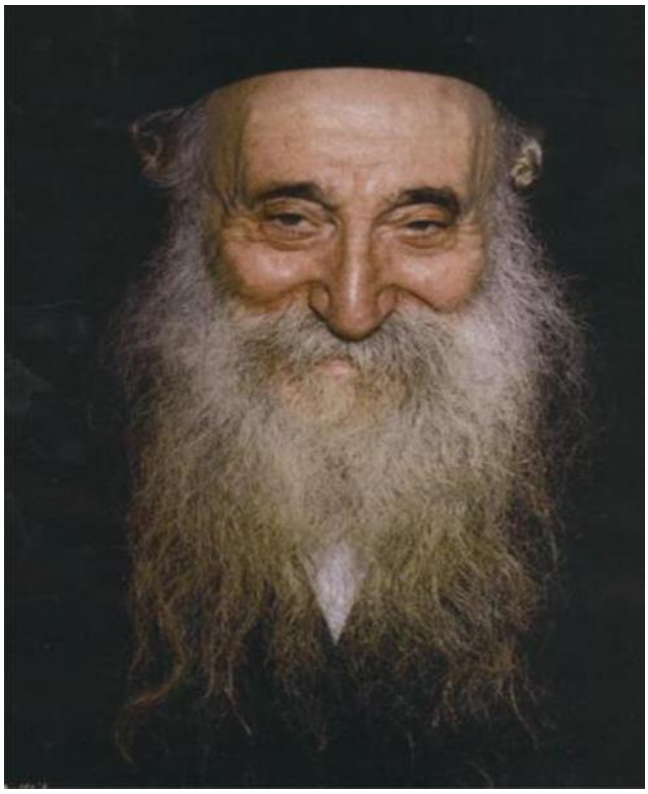
As the rabbi opened to the front of the book and looked at the name of the author, he was taken aback. The name printed on the inside was the same name as this boy. Mentioning the name of the author to the boy, it was soon realized that this book was in fact written by the boy's own great-grandfather.

Continuing to examine the book, the rabbi turned to the introduction. And with that, he began to read the words of the boy's great-grandfather: "I am not a great scholar nor am I writing this book for fame or money. I am writing this book because I see the winds of change blowing through Russia. I don't know if my children will be religious or if my grandchildren will identify as Jews. I don't know if my great-grandchildren will even know that they are Jewish.

But I am writing this so that if one of them finds his way back home, he will know where he came from."

The boy's great-grandfather would certainly be happy to know that his great-grandson is now more than well-aware of his heritage and is practicing Judaism as an observant Jew.

Oftentimes we may encounter one of our brothers or sisters who are wandering and looking for their way back home. They may have lost interest altogether in religion, not finding meaning in the Judaism they were brought up with, or are perhaps simply lacking a basic Torah education. But, in an attempt to return them to their Father in Heaven, we are to embrace them and show them the beauty of living a Torah way of life. And sometimes, to our delightful surprise, we may find ourselves reconnecting someone who is already closer than we ever thought.



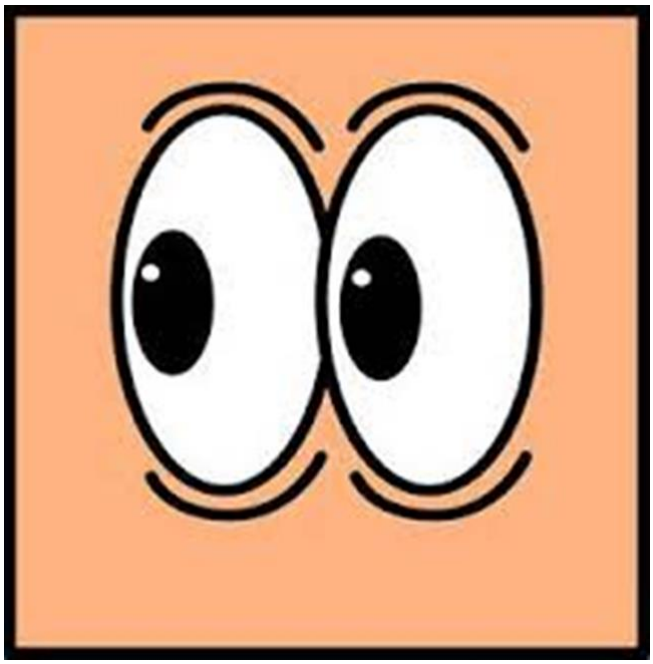
Rav Moshe Neuschloss, 27th of Adar - Av Bais Din of New Square

Rav Neuschloss was known to be very lenient with regard to fasting, especially for women and children. Once, on Tisha B'Av afternoon, he wanted to rest a bit, but before retiring to his bedroom, he instructed his Rebbetzin that if people called to inquire if they could speak to him because the fast was extremely difficult for them, she should tell them that they may break their fast.

When the Rebbetzin inquired how he can allow her to be lenient without her husband listening to the person directly, he replied, "If a person is already calling me that he can't fast anymore, then he's already at breaking point and I don't want him to wait until you wake me up to break his fast!" Such was the love that Rav Neuschloss had for Klal Yisrael.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky once remarked that if Rav Neuschloss would tell him that left is right – he would unequivocally believe him, so remarkable was the veneration and vast knowledge coupled with tremendous hasmoda that defined Rav Neuschloss.

Dr. David Pelcovitz - Observing with Empathy



As Moshe Rabbeinu grows up, the Torah tells us, **וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֶחָיו וַיַּרְא בְּסִבְלֹתָם** – "***And Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens***" (*Shemos* 2:11). **Rav Chaim Shmulevitz** (*Sichas Mussar, Maamar* 67) notes that the Pasuk uses the verb "see" – **וַיַּרְא** – to connote how Moshe empathized with his fellow brethren. Rav Chaim explains that it is through vision and face-to-face contact that empathy is developed.

Along these lines, research has proven something fascinating. When a person performs a movement, such as moving his hands, there is a very specific motor neuron that fires in the prefrontal cortex of the brain specifically designed for this movement. Research has shown that when an outsider sees the movements, the same motor neuron activity occurs in the viewer's head. Observing the body

language of one person triggers an identical reaction in the observer. This specific activated neuron is called the "mirror neuron."

The implications of this research are profound as it relates to human interaction. Human beings are hard-wired for what our Sages term "*nosei b'ol im chaveiro*," bearing the burden of our friends. We are predisposed to empathizing and identifying with the emotions of another. However, as the above research has indicated, this happens through visual contact. It is when a person makes eye contact with another that the mirror neuron is activated.

This is what Moshe experienced when looking at the Jews in Egypt. He closely and carefully looked at their suffering and took to heart their pain. It is therefore most important that parents and children give their undivided attention to each other and make eye contact when attempting to efficiently communicate and emotionally empathize with each other's feelings.

Rabbi YY Jacobson The Teacher's Greatest Lesson



It was some number of years ago that one Johns Hopkins University graduate professor assigned his students an interesting research project. They were to investigate the background and environmental circumstances of two hundred boys from ages twelve to sixteen and predict their chances of success in the future.

Beginning their longitudinal study, the students consulted social statistics and considered the background of these students, from which they compiled data. In conclusion, they arrived at the estimate that 90% of these two hundred boys would spend some time in jail for one reason or another. This statistic was fully understandable considering the life situation of these boys. Very likely, they would end up falling into this future.

Twenty-five years later, a second group of Johns Hopkins graduate students were given the assignment of testing the prediction of the first group of students. Returning to the area of study, they tracked down one hundred and eighty of the original two hundred boys and discovered that only four of them had ever been jailed.

Looking further into the resulting information, they wondered how these men, who had lived in a breeding place of crime for a quarter of a century, had an astonishingly good record. The boys, who were by now grown men, responded that it was thanks to a teacher they had. "I had a teacher," was the commonly heard refrain time and again by the men. Interviewing them as to who this teacher was, in 75% of the cases, it was the same teacher who was being referred to.

By now, she was middle-aged and had moved into a retirement home. Extending the question to her, they asked what she had done to so remarkably and positively impact this group of boys. What teaching methodology or character traits did she have which so significantly charted such a bright future for these kids who, quite likely, would have otherwise ended up behind bars?

"I really don't know," she repeatedly remarked. The researchers continued pushing her, however, in the interest of finding out what she had done. But she was without words. "I really did nothing," she said. Until finally, almost speaking to herself and mumbling under her breath, she whispered in a sigh and smile, "I loved those boys…"

And then, the researchers understood what this teacher's secret method had been. It was almost a matter of fact… "I loved those boys…"

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld - Building Homes, Building Families



Living in one apartment above another in Jerusalem were two families. Both blessed to have large families, as the children grew up and reached various milestones, the many happy occasions were always delightfully celebrated. Yet for the family living in the apartment underneath, life wasn't as easy. As the children became older and reached marriageable age, things seemed to come to a standstill. Few *shidduch* suggestions were made to the sons and daughters, a sure cause of frustration.

For the family living just above, however, circumstances were quite the opposite. As the children became young adults, they started becoming engaged and getting married one after another. Soon there was a *bris*, *bar mitzvah* and wedding with little time in between. The house was a happening place, full of constant visits from married children and relatives. Space was limited and tight, but it was without question a blessing.

One morning, the family living downstairs received a knock on the door. It was the father from the apartment just above. After exchanging greetings, the father asked if he could discuss something for a few minutes. "*Baruch Hashem*, our family is

expanding day by day. As such, we think it is time to build an extension to our apartment. But before we do so, by way of government regulation, we need to ask permission from our neighbours. Would that be okay with you?" The father of the family downstairs paused for a moment. All he could think about was the contrast between their respective families. The neighbour's family was happily growing and thriving, yet his family seemed to be staying more or less the same and not growing.

Unsure how to respond, the father of the downstairs apartment hemmed and hawed for the next few moments. Although he wished to be a kind and helpful neighbour, he struggled to come to terms with granting permission for such a project which would likely cause him and his family emotional turmoil. And so, the father went about expressing how he felt. "I am very sorry, but I don't think it would be a good idea for you to do so." And with that, the father bid his neighbour goodbye and gently closed the door.

When the father shortly afterwards saw his wife, she asked what had happened. "Well, the neighbor above us wants to build an extension to his apartment." "And so, you allowed him, right?" "No, I told him that I don't think it is the best idea." "Why did you say that? I know it may be hard for you to see how well their family is celebrating one *simcha* after another, but you should overcome that resentment and be a nice neighbour." Listening to his wife's advice, the man decided that he would acquiesce to his neighbour's request.

And so, without further delay, he headed back upstairs. After explaining to the neighbour upstairs that it would be fine if he wished to expand his apartment, the neighbour could not thank the father enough.

"Thank you so much for understanding." But there was one other issue to discuss. "Before you go, if I could just ask you one other favour. Since my apartment is directly above yours, it would be easiest if I could have my workers come through your apartment and

organize their equipment on your balcony. Would you mind if they do that?" Now realizing that an even bigger inconvenience would be placed on his family, the father hesitated. But then he reminded himself once again of what his wife had told him. And so, he looked back at the father and said, "That is fine. We would be glad to help you as best as we can."

At 7 am the next morning, a knock was heard at the front door. Wondering who it could be at such an early hour of the day, the father slowly walked over to the front door and opened up. Standing in front of him were eight broad-shouldered men with construction equipment in their hands. "Hi, we have been sent by your neighbour upstairs. He told us to come down here and set ourselves up." Now realizing who it was, the father allowed them in and showed them to the balcony despite the early hour.

This process continued for weeks. Day after day, construction was underway with the full blow of noise, hammering and drilling. This was aside from the trudging of the workers in and out of the lower apartment. But the family graciously went along with everything and did all that they could to be of assistance.

And then finally, the day came. All the work was completed. Finishing up with the final touches, the workers thanked the family for all their help and left for good.

Two weeks later, the father of the downstairs apartment received a phone call. It was a *shidduch* offer for his daughter. Pleasantly surprised, as this was the first suggestion his daughter received in quite a while, the father spoke about the proposed match with her. And in fact, not before long, she became engaged. The family was overjoyed and thrilled.

The parents of the *chassan* and kallah met for the first time at the *vort* . Yet when the father of the girl took one look at the father of the boy, he looked quite familiar. "Do I know you from somewhere?" "Sure, you do," replied the boy's father. "I was the

contractor for your neighbour who built an extension to their apartment." "That's right!" enthused the father. "What made you think of my daughter for your son though?" "I'll tell you," he replied.

"When I saw you and your family so kindly and graciously open their doors to help a neighbour, I was touched. 'Here is a family,' I thought to myself, 'who thinks outside of themselves and will go to great lengths to help someone else.' When I saw how much you put yourselves out day after day, I said, 'This is the type of family I want my son to marry into' And so it was. Our children got to know each other and today, *baruch Hashem*, they are *chassan* and *kallah*. But it all began by the way you and your family acted with such *derech eretz* and *middos*."

The way we act and relate to others makes the greatest of impressions and speaks louder than anything else. And especially when it is difficult, if we nonetheless make the effort to show our concern for another and open our door, we have taken one small step, yet one giant leap. That gesture and thoughtfulness will begin paving the way for a beautiful life for ourselves and so many others.

Rav Brevda said that his father taught him that a Rov is Kodesh Kodoshim and one NEVER reprimands a Rov. Lack of respect to a Rov is the worst poison that one can feed their children.

Rav Shloma Zalmen Aurbach once told someone that the reason his [meaning that someone] children went off the derech was because of the negative way he spoke about Rabbonim by the Shabbos Table.

You want good children? The Gemora says you have to love Rabbanim with a passion. Speak about it to your children "כִּי מִפִּיהֶם אָנוּ חָיִים" – 'For by their word we live'.

Rabbi Yehuda Stern - The Stonecutter



As a young man sat atop a massive mountain chiselling away little by little, he felt the blazing sun beating upon his back. Sweltering and aching from head to toe, the intense discomfort led him to begin pondering his life. "What am I doing here? What is my purpose?"

Confounded by these piercing questions, he suddenly heard a roar of commotion from below. Inching his way to the edge of the mountain, he peered down and saw, lo and behold, a magnificent procession of men, women and children escorting the king. "Oh wow!" exclaimed the stonecutter, "if only I could be the king, I would be so much happier!" And so, drifting off into a deep sleep, he turned to G-d and made a request.

"G-d, can You please make me the king? I don't ask much, but I know I would be so much happier if that would be my lot in life." The next thing the stonecutter knew, he was sitting in the royal carriage draped in majestic garments and shimmering with gold and silver accessories. The young man could not believe it. It was literally a dream come true. He was in fact the most powerful person in the world. No one was greater than the king in all his honour.

But it did not take long before the heat began to beat down with even greater intensity and make him feel terribly uncomfortable wrapped in layers upon layers of heavy clothing. And so, he turned to G-d once again. "G-d, I spoke a little too soon. I know I said I would be the happiest person as the king, but now I see that there is something even more awesome than the king, and that is the sun. The sun's rays are overwhelming and even more powerful. If you

would please make me into the sun." And indeed, within seconds, the man's wish came true. He was transformed into the sun.

Now sitting up high as the bright shining sun casting down rays here and there, life was perfect. "Thank you G-d; there could be nothing better than this." But his glee was short-lived. Out came the clouds and blocked the sun's rays. As much as the sun tried piercing through the clouds, it was unsuccessful. Turning to G-d once more, the sun said, "G-d, I know we've been through this exchange before, but I have another request. Please make me into the clouds. Then I will truly be happy." Poof! The sun turned into the clouds.

Now soaring around as cool clouds and dropping buckets of rain all around, there could be no greater experience. "G-d, I love You; this is the best. There could be nothing better!" But before long, along came a gust of wind and pushed the clouds. Even with the clouds attempting to resist the pressures of the wind time and again, it was to no avail.

"G-d," said the clouds, "what is happening? If you can please make me the winds, then I think I will be in the perfect position." And so, on went the clouds and turned into the wind. Now blowing the ocean waves and green leaves with unrestrained gusto, the wind was having the best of times. Except for one little detail. As much as the wind tried, it could not move the mountain. Even after blowing against the mountain with all its might, it came up empty-handed. The mountain would not budge one inch.

"G-d, I am sorry for coming to you again, but you have to make me into this mountain. Look at it! I never realized the enormous power of the mountain. There is nothing greater than that!" And so, without further delay, poof!

Now, firmly grounded as the tallest and strongest mountain, nothing could outdo it. It was impervious to the sun's rays, reached higher than the clouds, and the winds could not make it move one bit. Everything was absolutely perfect. Until…

Bang… bang… bang… The mountain began sensing a sharp, penetrating feeling of pain on its back. Hard to believe that someone would be disturbing it in such a way, it yelled out, "Who is more powerful than I?" Slowly looking up, the mountain caught sight of a young man sitting on top chiseling away little by little. And then he realized. It was a stonecutter. - "G-d, could you please make me into a stonecutter?"

Oftentimes, we wish we could be someone or something else. If only I could be like him or like her, or have her talents and her beauty, I would be happy. But then we come to realize that, in fact, we are perfectly beautiful just the way we are. We need not wish to be the sun, the clouds, the winds or the mountain. We only need to wish to be ourselves. Because, indeed, there is no one more beautiful and perfect than that.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR KI SISA

Stranded in London, Ontario By S. Jungreis-Wolff



Last week I landed at an airport in Texas. It was pouring outside and Rabbi Menachem Block, who had invited me to speak, met me at the airport. My talk was scheduled for that evening in his synagogue, the Chabad of Plano, Collin County.

As we drove, I looked around and asked, "Rabbi Block, how did you end up here? Were you born here?"

"No," he replied with a smile. "I actually grew up in a place I doubt that you've heard of. London, Ontario."

"London, Ontario?" I couldn't believe it. "Rabbi, have I got a story to tell you! It happened 35 years ago in London, Ontario and I'll never forget it."

When my eldest son was just a toddler, my husband and I traveled to Toronto, Canada on a Friday morning. We wouldn't normally fly on a Friday but since this was the summer, Shabbos was late and the trip was short, so we figured all would be good. Midair, the pilot made an announcement. There was a terrible windstorm and the Toronto airport was closed. We had no choice but to fly to London. There was so much upheaval amongst the passengers, some thought we were flying to London, England. Who had even heard of this place in Ontario?

A few minutes later the pilot told us that no one would be able to get off the plane until bus arrangements to Toronto were secured and customs officials completed their plans to process everyone and their luggage. Everyone would need to sit tight and wait.

My husband and I looked at each other, wide eyed. Shabbos was coming. There was absolutely no way this would work for us. By the time we would land it would be close to Shabbos. We needed to get off the plane as soon as possible. We called over the flight attendant and were told that the only way we could disembark right away would be if we declared a medical emergency. And we would be forfeiting not only the ride to Toronto, but we would have to get off the plane minus our luggage. That means no clothing, no more diapers for my toddler, no food besides the few snacks we had. Nothing.

But the sun was setting soon and there was no stopping Shabbos. We knew what we needed to do. I was expecting so I declared a medical necessity to leave. The moment the plane touched the runway, we carried our son, our hand luggage, left the plane and all its passengers behind. We looked around. We were standing in the

middle of a cornfield. The heat was sweltering. Where in the world were we? What would we do?

We walked into the tiny terminal. There was not a soul to be seen. Now what?

I sat down on one of the empty chairs, holding my little boy and started to cry. My husband tried to calm me but what would we eat? How would I care for my son? What kind of Shabbos would this be?

A woman appeared behind one of the ticket counters. After asking us about our situation she said that she thinks she knows of one Jewish couple in town. Would we want her to call them? She added that he was a professor at University of Western Ontario.

We were doubtful. A professor? Does he know about Shabbos observance? Does he keep kosher? Who knows who these people are? And we would be strangers to them, too.

The women found the professor's number and dialed. We explained our situation, wary of the voice on the other end. Hesitantly, we asked, "Do you keep Shabbos? Are you kosher?"

We heard a wonderful laugh filled with joy. "*Shalom aleichem!* Come join us for Shabbos! We will be so happy to have Shabbos guests!"

A few moments later we found ourselves in the home of a most welcoming couple. They somehow secured diapers for our son, gave us fresh clothing to change into, iced drinks and warm smiles. Incredibly, we felt at home. The professor had much Torah wisdom to share throughout the meal. There were all types of interesting people joining; Jews who were tasting Shabbos for the very first time.

The professor's wife had more than enough delicious food even though we were unplanned guests. It was only after Shabbos that we discovered the great kindness of this couple. They had given us their very own bedroom to sleep in because it was the only one with

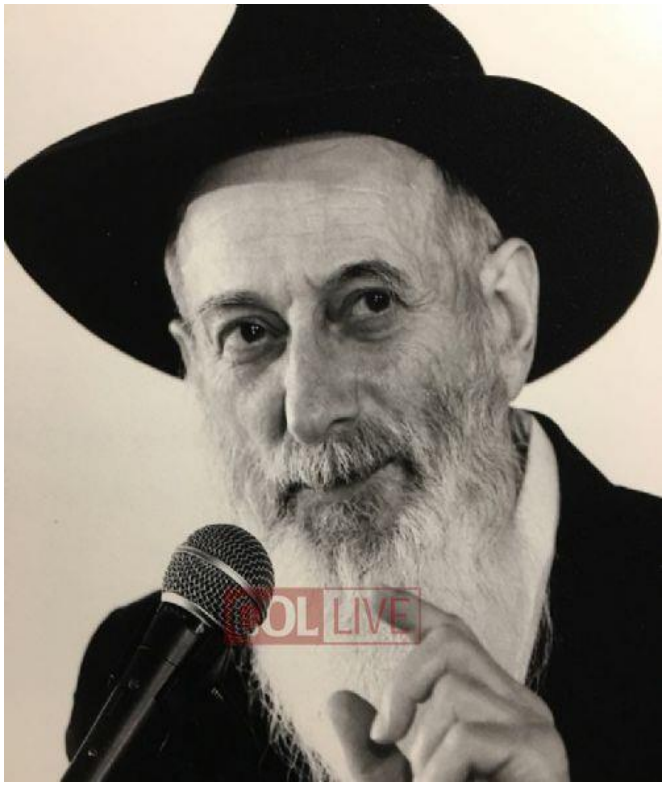
air conditioning. They slept in an airless room so that we would be comfortable.

After Shabbos they arranged our transportation to Toronto. We were touched to our core. We had never experienced such hospitality, in the spirit of Abraham and Sarah in the barren desert.

"So Rabbi Block," I said, "I do know London, Ontario."

Rabbi Block was silent for a moment. His eyes glistened.

"That professor? That was my father. You actually stayed in my home and spent Shabbos with my parents!"



Professor Yitzchok Block



Rabbi Menachem Block

I was speechless. I called my husband and said, "London, Ontario, tell me what comes to mind?" Without a pause, my husband recalled the professor, his wife and their mitzvah that remains in our hearts till today.

I had not known that Dr. Yitzchok Block had received his PhD from Harvard, was a brilliant scholar, and when offered a professorship in London, Ontario he had truly wanted to become a rabbi, instead.

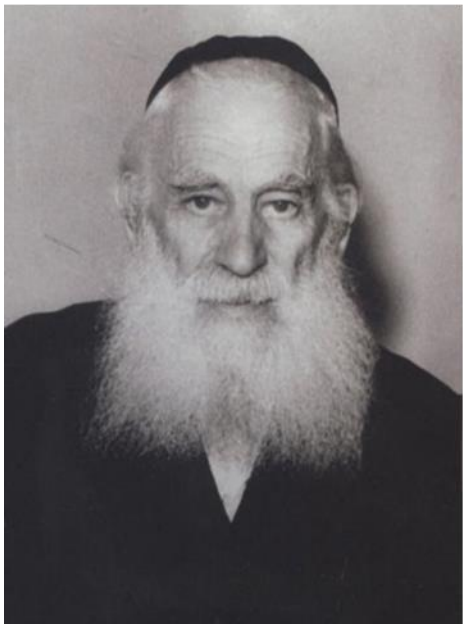
"What will we do there?" Dr. Block and his wife Laya asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"You will find what there is to be done," the Rebbe said.

We are placed on this earth to create a legacy, to make a difference, to shine our light. We can't realize the impact we have with just one deed, one good word, one Shabbos. But here we are, 35 years later and the kindness has never been forgotten.

Who knows what we can do today that will sprinkle our magic for years to come?

The Chofetz Chaim and The Secular Jewish Doctor





The Ponovezher Rav once told over how while he was undergoing medical treatment in an American hospital, he met a secular Jewish doctor. Speaking with him, the Rav discovered that the doctor had learned in Yeshivah when he was young, and although he wasn't now observant, he still maintained respect for Torah and its scholars. The Ponovezher Rav observed that this man had lost all connection to Yiddishkeit, R"L.

The doctor told him, "The only reason that I don't officially convert and go to church, is because the jacket of the **Chofetz Chaim** doesn't allow me to."

The Ponovezher Rav was a student of the Chofetz Chaim, and he looked at the doctor with curiosity, wondering what he meant.

The doctor explained, "When I was a child, my parents sent me to learn in the Yeshivah of Radin, by the Chofetz Chaim. When I arrived, I joined the line of new Bochurim at the home of the Chofetz Chaim, and I waited to introduce myself and receive instructions regarding where I would be lodging.

"My journey had been very long and exhausting, and as I waited there, I became overcome by fatigue. I sat down on the floor and within moments, I was fast asleep. I barely felt someone lifting me and carrying him to a bed, but when I woke up late that night, I realized that the great Tzadik himself, the Chofetz Chaim, had carried me to a bed and covered me with his own jacket.

"The Chofetz Chaim was sitting at his table and learning in his shirt-sleeves. The compassion that he showed me and the sheer simplicity of the Chofetz Chaim affected me profoundly, and even though many decades have passed, the Chofetz Chaim has left a warm glow that has remained within me. It is that inspiration that has always stayed with me, and it is why I will never leave Judaism completely!"

The Adopted Baby and Her Thief Son - J E. Rahmey

The following story that happened over 60 years ago in Argentina is an example of Hashem's mercy that came through something that on the surface seemed very negative. Baby Marcela was adopted by a Catholic family.

At eighteen, she was told that her mother was Jewish and had abandoned her when she was born. All Marcela had left was her mother's identity card with her name on it: Señora Calypso. Marcela looked for her mother but was never able to find her.

Marcela married a non-Jewish man at a young age. But after the birth of her son, her husband rejected her. She found herself alone with her baby, Diego, on the streets of Buenos Aires. It's not surprising that by the age of ten, Diego was already an experienced

and successful thief. In the beginning his mother had forbidden him to steal, but when she didn't have anything to eat, she had no other choice.

After a life of misery in Argentina, Marcela's Jewish soul prodded her to make aliya with Diego, now nineteen. There she found a job as a cleaning lady, while Diego quickly learned Hebrew and continued his dishonest activities. One evening he decided to rob a villa located in a wealthy neighborhood, but once inside he realized that there were no valuable objects to be found.

He was about to leave the villa when he noticed a briefcase on top of the fridge, which he took. When he opened it at home, he was disappointed to see that it contained old newspapers. Then he noticed an envelope under the newspapers. It contained two hundred dollars and a letter:

"Hello, my dear thief, this briefcase has been waiting for you for a number of years, as you can see from the dates on the newspapers. I hope that the two hundred dollars in this envelope will suit you. In this case, I'm very happy for you.

Diego had a hard time believing this. For the first time in his life, a man was giving him attention. Nobody except for his mother had ever given him attention, and here was a letter written by a man who not only seemed to like being robbed, but also seemed to rejoice in the robber's gain! He continued reading.

I wanted to present you with the world vision of an observant Jew. One does not need to dirty one's hands with theft. G-d loves everyone boundlessly, and every day He takes care of them, by providing them with all their needs. You're probably Jewish yourself, and I'm happy to meet with you and tell you more about our faith. Come by whenever you want. I'm not angry. I want to help you stop being a thief.

With all my affection, Dr. Shraga Avigad."

Diego knew that he was Jewish, but he had never heard of all these religious concepts. Deep down, he no longer wanted to be a thief. He told his mother the whole story, and they decided to meet this unique doctor together.

The doctor welcomed them inside and said with a big smile, "*You're the thief?! You can't imagine how happy I am to meet you.*" Diego told him of his difficult life, and then Marcelo told her story as well.

The doctor kept quiet and thought for a while. All of a sudden he began whispering, "*This can't be. This can't be!*" He left the room and returned pushing an old woman in a wheelchair.

"*Mommy, when you were young you told me about an event which had happened to you, and I'd like Marcelo and Diego to hear it.*"

His mother hesitated, then said, "*My name is Naomi. I got married very young but could not have children. After several years of tears and prayers, I finally got pregnant with a little girl. But when I gave birth, I barely had time to kiss her before I lost consciousness due to a dangerous virus. I was in a coma for three months. When I woke up, my daughter was gone. They told me that she had died of jaundice. But from what I remember before I blacked out, my baby was perfectly healthy. To this day I'm convinced that the government stole my baby girl.*"

"*Which government?*" Marcela asked. -"*That of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where I grew up. At the time, my name was Señora Calypso.*" Reeling, Marcela pulled out the old identity card with her mother's name on it — Señora Calypso — and handed it to Naomi.

"*Where did you get this from?!*" Naomi asked.

Marcela explained, "*I received it from the Argentinian government, when I wanted to know who my mother was. They told me that she had disappeared right after giving birth.*" And she burst into tears in her mother's arms.

The Grandfather of the Chassan By David Bibi

Rabbi Abittan [zt"l] often marvelled at the miracle of observant Jews and scholars coming from the Soviet Union. Lenin and Stalin and their cohorts tried for seventy years to eradicate Judaism and any vestige of it from the lives of Jewish Russians, yet against all odds they safeguarded their "pintele Yid", their Jewish flame until they were given the opportunity again to let it burn brightly.

The following is an amazing story I heard from Rabbi Duvi BenSoussan, a Moroccan rabbi in the community whose father like Rabbi Abittan was one of the boys brought by Rabbi Kalmanowitz, Isaac Shalom and my great Uncle Dave Bibi to the Mirrer Yeshiva in America through Otzar HaTorah

The Rabbi related the tale of a Chabad Rabbi he knew in Short Hills, New Jersey. Some years back the rabbi was able to mekarev or bring back to Judaism a young man. A few years later he was able to do the same for a young girl from the same area.

The rabbi explained that these two became part of his ever-expanding and extended family. He was overwhelmed with joy when the two decided to marry and assisted in arranging their wedding. He wanted it to be the most joyous wedding in Short Hills.

There were about 100 guests from the two small families; most of them with little connection to religion. The rabbi hoped that when the bride and groom would come into the hall, everyone in the room would dance with them. He went from table to table encouraging all the people and getting their commitments.

When the dancing began, he felt joy that everyone in the room was dancing, but then he said he saw one elderly man sitting at a table alone. He walked over to the man, put out his hands and asked the man to join him for a dance. The man said he would love to, but he was just into much pain and it was impossible for him to get up.

The rabbi asked him if he could help, and the man explained that earlier that day he underwent a circumcision. The rabbi looked at him and asked if seeing the rabbi's beard, the man was making fun of him. But the man said it all seriousness, "no, I did it this morning. There was the mohel, there was a sandak who stood behind me and it was all done kosher".

The rabbi asked, "But how old are you?"

The man said that he was 92 years old. And the rabbi asked, "Why now?" The man explained that the groom was his grandson and a couple of months earlier his grandson had come to him with the news that he would be getting married, that he was so proud that he was getting married to a religious girl and he had become religious himself.

At the same time, he apologized to his grandfather and said to him that although he would love him to be at the wedding there was one place in the wedding that his grandfather couldn't join them and that was under the chupah, because under the canopy was the presence of Hashem and as his grandfather wasn't circumcised, he didn't want his grandfather standing there.

The grandfather said, "I love my grandson more than anything in the world and so I decided in his honour I would do this. And so today I had my own Brit Milah. And I was overjoyed this evening as they carried me and helped me under the chupa where I sat and shared in the ceremony of the marriage of my grandson". "But Rabbi, the old man continued, "I am in terrible pain and I can hardly move".

The Rabbi had never felt so moved in his life and reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out an envelope. On the envelope was written, Lubavitcher Rebbe 1991 The rabbi explained that this was the last dollar he had received from the Rebbe [of Lubavitch – **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schnerson, zt"l**] and with this dollar the Rebbe blessed him with health and since that day the Rabbi had never been

sick. He wanted to give the dollar as a gift to the grandfather in hopes that it would help with his complete recovery.



The old man looked at the envelope held it in his two hands and started to cry. The rabbi fearing had done something wrong asked the old man if he was OK.

The grandfather told the Rabbi to sit down. Now Rabbi let me tell you a story. I came to this country 51 years ago. Because of Soviet law, I knew next to nothing about Judaism. A friend of mine told me on my second day in America that to begin life anew I should get a blessing from the Rebbe. He took me to Eastern Parkway on a cold Sunday morning where we stood in line for hours and it reminded me of the lines in Russia.

"When I finally got to meet the Rebbe , I looked at his piercing blue eyes, his long white beard and he looked at me handing me the dollar and then suddenly pulling it back. I wondered what happened. And then he asked me in Russian, Did I have a Brit Milah"?

"Embarrassed I looked at him and said no. He handed me the dollar and blessed me that I should have my Brit telling me on the day I would be circumcised he would give me another dollar."

And as he completed the story, the old man cried even more. The Rabbi asked, "but this is really miraculous, why are you so sad still?"

And the man looked up, tears still pouring down his cheeks and said, "Holding this dollar, I realize now that had I been circumcised when the Rebbe first told me to 50 years ago how different my life would

be. I am so happy to see what has become of my grandson, but sitting here now for the first time in my life I wonder what could have become of me?"



Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-*Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

In this week's sedra, we have the famous episode of the *eigel hazahav*. It is a baffling episode. It makes no sense. How can it be? A people that kaviyochel, saw the Riboino Shel Olam, saw all the nisim, and now an eigel hazahav?

Rashi tells us what happened 32:1. **בא השטן וערבב את העולם והראה דמות חשך ואפילה וערבוביא לומר ודאי מת משה, לכך בא ערבוביא לעולם.** ***Satan came and brought confusion into the world and showed a semblance of darkness, [even] pitch darkness, and confusion, [as if] indicating [that] Moses had surely died and therefore, confusion had come upon the world.***

The Yidden were scared and confused. Klal Yisroel were on such a high level. They were so close to Hashem. They virtually saw Hashem speaking. A normal yetzer hara wouldn't have been enough. It had to be a powerful yetzer hara.

The boys once came to **Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz** of the Mir and asked him, "how can it be, that a nation that was so holy, and saw open miracles, could fall so low?" He answered, "this is the koach of the yetzer hara".

The Ramban clearly writes in this week's parsha that the Yidden didn't want a new G-d, to chas v'sholom replace the Riboino Shel Olam. They just wanted someone in between. This is an unbelievable thing.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzki writes (**תתן אמת ליעקב**) that a person will do anything to save his life.

The Yidden believed that if Moishe Rabeinu was no longer there, then who would bring them the *mann.* They feared that they would starve to death. And therefore, they mistakenly looked for something in between.

Last week in parshas Tezave, we learned about the *tzitz* which was located on the Cohen Gadol's forehead, while he was doing the *avoida* in the Bais Hamikdash. The posuk tells us:28:38 **וְהָיָה עַל־מִצְחוֹ תָּמִיד לְרָצוֹן לָהֶם לִפְנֵי ה׳: *It shall be upon his forehead constantly to make them favourable before Hashem*.**

We want to know, what's the secret, how can we bring the Riboino Shel Olam to love us, to give us everything.

Says the **Orach Ha'Chaim Hakadosh**, why did the Cohen Gadol have to wear the Tzitz, what was the secret? He says a powerful answer.

The Tzitz had engraved on it two words – **קדוש לה׳** – ***Holy to Hashem.*** What does the word Kodosh mean? It is referring to Klal Yisrael. And the word **לה׳** means – ***"is for hashem"***. This is what the Tzitz is telling us, whilst the Cohen Gadol is proudly carrying out his *avoida.* Klal Yirael is for Hashem, and only for Hashem.

The **Orach Ha'Chaim** explains that this is the secret. That every Yid's secret desire is to be totally connected and devoted to the Riboino Shel Olam. So, every time that the Cohen Gadol wore the Tzitz, it proclaimed the most powerful message. And that awakened the Riboino shel Olam's love for Klal Yisrael. What a total amazing and powerful message!

It was Erev Pesach in Berditchev, and the **Berditchever** asked his gabbai, "please, bring me some Turkish furs, tobacco and liquor". So the gabbai replied, "Rebbe, we are at war with the Turks, the Czar has banned all Turkish products. Where am I going to procure these items?" The Rebbe said, "Just go, just look."

An hour and a half later, the gabbai comes back to the Berditchever with and abundance of Turkish produce as requested. The Rebbe

said, "thank you, now I would like you to bring me a piece of chometz." "But Rebbe, it is erev Pesach?" The Berditchever said, "just go and look." Six hours of searching, and the gabbai came back empty-handed. Not a piece of chometz was to be found in the whole town.

The Rebbe turned to Shamayim and said, " Riboino Shel Olam, look how much Klal Yisrael loves you. The Czar made an edict that no Turkish products can enter Russia. This law was enforced by a police force. Yet they can be found in every home. But You, The Riboino Shel Olam, told Klal Yisrael, three thousand years ago to not have any chometz for the week of Pesach, even without an enforcement agency, and you can't even find a morsal of bread in the whole town of Berditchev. Look how much Klal Yisrael loves you, and how much they love to keep your Mitzvos."

This is the message, and where Klal Yisrael went wrong over here. And every Yid's essence is exactly that. We yearn to have that relationship and get close with The Riboino Shel Oilam. But sometimes, we don't really feel it because our powerful *Yetzer hora*, right now, Ikvesa d'Meshicha, (right at the end of Golus, before Moshiach comes). The borders are being closed off. All the aeroplanes are waiting to bring everyone to Eretz Yisrael. The economy is collapsing – Chazal describe all these as signs that Moshiach's arrival is imminent. A small little virus that can paralyse the world. There is a Medrash in Shir Ha Shirim that tells us that there will be a tremendous plague that will threaten to wipe out mankind. It is all happening right now.

Now is the time to think about our relationship with the Riboino Shel Olam. To yearn to become closer to Him. Right now, before it is too late.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Teshuvah is Always an Option

The nature of oil is that it first drops low, and then it floats. For example, if you have a cup of water and pour in some oil, the oil will first drop to the bottom, and then it will immediately rise above the water. This hints to a Yid's ability to do *teshuvah*. Even if he falls to very low levels, he can do *teshuvah* and rise up again.



Even if he is (*Shemos* 27:20), **כתית**, squashed by his many sins, he can **למאור**, shine brightly again when he does *teshuvah*.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* taught that the mitzvah of *bikurim* is written close to the end of the Torah to imply that even if one transgressed the entire Torah, he could do *teshuvah* and become brand new again. This is represented by the new fruits of *bikurim* that we bring to the Beis HaMikdash.

The Beis Yisrael said that **עמלק** is similar to the word **אמאל** , which means "sometimes." Because we fight against the *yetzer hara*, and sometimes we win, and sometimes the *yetzer hara* wins. The main thing is that we never give up. If we have that attitude, we will triumph in the end.

When a person knows that everything is from Hashem, his troubles begin to fall away. ~ Baal Shem Tov.

Hakaras HaTov

Reb Dardak was in charge of the distribution and selling of the **Steipler *gaon's*** *sefarim* in America. Sometimes, Reb Dardak would write letters to the Steipler and the Steipler would answer him.

Years passed. The Steipler *gaon's sefarim* were being distributed through the stores, like all *sefarim*, and Reb Dardak's services were not needed anymore. Also, at this time, the Steipler stopped answering letters. He was weaker and had become world renowned as the *gadol* of Bnei Yisrael, and it was impossible for him to answer the many letters people sent him.



One day, the Steipler received a letter from Reb Dardak. The Steipler decided to make an exception and answer him. He wrote a letter and brought it to Reb Dardak's father's home (Reb Chaim Shmaryahu Dardak from Bnei Brak) and the Steipler asked him to send it to his son in America. Reb Chaim Shmaryahu was surprised that the Steipler wrote the letter and made the effort to bring it to his home.

The Steipler explained, "I don't write letters anymore, but this time I made an exception. I didn't want your son to think that I only wrote him letters when I needed his service, and now that I don't need his distribution, I stopped writing to him."

Reb Chaim Shmaryahu assured the Steipler that he will send the letter. A few days later, it was *erev Shabbos*, the Steipler was once again knocking on Reb Chaim Shmaryahu Dardak's door. "Did you

send the letter yet?" the Steipler asked. "No." "Good. I wrote up another letter, and I want you to send this one."

Astounded once again, Reb Chaim Shmaryahu asked, "Is this letter different than the first letter you gave me?" "No. They are exactly the same. I'll explain: I didn't want you to send the first letter, because I wrote it for the wrong reasons. I wrote the first letter so your son shouldn't think negatively of me. But that isn't the right reason to write a letter. I should have written to your son because I have *hakaras hatov* for distributing my sefer. Therefore, I wrote up a second letter. The words are the same, but the intention is improved."

The Jewish Weekly - The Young Man Who Cared about His In-Laws By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman



A young man was engaged, and his future in-laws promised him precious presents and a dowry. They kept their promise down to the last penny. His first Shabbat as a married man, in his in-laws home, he saw something was amiss.

The candlesticks were made of clay, the beds were broken, and in general, he saw several signs of poverty in his in-laws home. He asked his wife about that. She told him that her parents sold all their home utensils, and went into debt too, to cover the cost of the dowry they promised. He replied, "We can't let matters be this way." On Motzei Shabbat he returned the dowry and gifts. He couldn't have his wife light Shabbat candles in silver candlesticks, while his in-laws had clay

ones. He couldn't sleep well, knowing his in-laws were suffering because of him. On Sunday morning, he borrowed twenty thousand roubles from a friend. He used a thousand roubles to buy utensils for his home, and he went to the market to see where he could invest the rest of the money. A big merchant offered him a lucrative business opportunity for ten thousand roubles. He invested and became wealthy in a short time. Because of his wealth, when his children became of age, he made prestigious shidduchim.

One of his mechutanim was **Reb Shimon Sofer zt'l** (son of the **Chatam Sofer zt'l**). At that wedding, in Cracow, a rav asked him how he earned his wealth, and how he merited this prestigious shidduch with Reb Shimon Sofer. He told him his story. He explained that he was willing to forgo his own pleasure and wealth so his in-laws don't suffer. And just as he did kindness with them, Hashem performed kindness to him, and he earned wealth and wonderful shidduchim.

This story is brought down in Mishnat Yosef (Brachot 8.) who concludes, "It isn't my way to write stories in this sefer but this story has an important message that the wise can learn from. They should be cautious with the money and vessels of their father-in-law, and more importantly, they should be cautious with their father-in-law's heart. And if you act with kindness, you will receive many brachot from Above."



וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת ***The Children of Israel shall keep the Shabbat*** *(Ex. 31:16)*

Keeping Shabbat means much more than just refraining from certain kinds of work; the Hebrew root shin-mem-reish also implies waiting in anticipation and looking forward to something. The Torah teaches that rather than being considered a burden, Shabbat should be eagerly awaited and longed for each day of the week. *(Ohr HaChaim)*



Angelic Pleasure By Rabbi Levi Goldstein

The saintly Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk once recovered from a life-threatening illness. When his recovery was complete, his closest disciples mustered their courage to ask him what he had seen while hovering between life and death.



The Rebbe said that he would tell one thing he learned: As I walked in the Garden of Eden, I saw among the most honoured souls a familiar face. He looked very much like Mottel the Bookbinder. To be sure, Mottel was a G-d-fearing Jew, an honest, hard-working bookbinder, but he was otherwise an undistinguished ordinary Jew, not even much of a Torah scholar. "Is it truly you, Reb Mottel?" I asked the soul as I approached him. "Yes, it is I," called out Reb Mottel happily. "But how did you get to this exalted place?" I asked Reb Mottel quite innocently.

"When I was brought before the Heavenly Court, I was asked the usual questions. I had to admit that, regrettably, I had studied very little Torah. I didn't have much of a head for it. Besides, we were very poor, so I had to find a way of earning money to help my parents support the family. I was apprenticed, at an early age, to a bookbinder, I explained to the Court...

"They began the weighing of my mitzvot and sins. On the right side of the scale, angels began putting all my good deeds. Then they pushed the scale down to make it weightier, saying this was for the joy and sincerity with which I performed the mitzvot. "But then other angels came forward and began to load my sins and misdeeds on the left scale. I watched with horror as my sins were added up.

Most of the sins were truly not serious, and they happened because of my ignorance. But, though they were small, they were adding up dangerously, till they tipped the scale.

"As I stood there before the Heavenly Court, trembling and ashamed, an angel suddenly appeared with a worn-out siddur in his hand. Behind him was a line of wagons loaded with sacks. "

'I am the angel in charge of stray pages from holy books. I go to every Jewish home, every shul and every Jewish school. I look to see the condition of the holy books. Whenever I see a worn-out book, with crumpled pages and loose covers it gives me tremendous pleasure, for this is a sign that the books are in constant use. But when I see that some of these books are tattered beyond repair, I am troubled, for every holy book has a holy soul, and every page has a soul, which must be treated with care and respect. "

'In the course of my travels I met this man here on trial. Ever since he was a child, Mottel loved his little siddur and would often caress and kiss it before closing it. "

'When it came time for Mottel to be apprenticed, he told his father that there was nothing he would like more than to be a bookbinder. "'I have never seen a bookbinder like Mottel,' continued the angel in my defence. 'He never got any pages mixed up, never missed a stitch, and always used the best materials. From time to time, he would go to the shuls in his town and collect holy books that cried out for attention. He took them home and worked late into the night to restore them, bind them and give them new life. He never charged for this and never even told anyone about it.

"'I respectfully request that the Heavenly Court permit me to unload all the sacks of worn-out holy books to which Mottel the Bookbinder has given a second life and put them on the scale with all his other mitzvot and good deeds. "The Heavenly Court agreed.

Long before the wagons were half unloaded, the scale with the mitzvot clearly outweighed the other side. "Believe me, dear Rebbe," Mottel concluded, "I was as astonished as you were at what happened before my eyes at seeing me in this place of honour."

"I wanted to ask Mottel a few more questions," explained Rebbe Elimelech, but at just that moment I began to recover."

Reb Mottel's story speaks for itself. But let us also remember that G-d never fails to give credit and reward for any good deed, even for such a seemingly trivial act as smoothing out a crumpled corner of a well-worn page in a holy book.

A Shabbos Vort - Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

זֶה יִתְּנוּ - This they shall give



Rashi explains *He [G-d] showed him [Moshe] a sort of coin of fire weighing half a shekel, and He said to him, "Like this one they shall give.*

Fire said **R' Nachman of Breslav**, is one of man's most needed elements. When he is cold in the winter, it gives him warmth; and when he is hungry, it enables him to cook his food. Yet fire can also consume and destroy. - It is vital that man learns how to use fire properly.

The same applies to money. On the one hand, it can be put to very good use if it enables man to perform *mitzvos* and good deeds. But on the other hand, money can completely consume a man's character. Man must learn how to use his money properly.

Teaching a Lesson Written by Howard Jackson



A few years ago, a teacher at a Jewish primary school in Efrat was reciting Shacharit with the children in her class. She noticed that one of the children was being particularly disruptive and not treating the Siddur or the prayers with any respect. She marched towards the desk, picked up the child's Siddur and threw it on the floor!

Her intentions were to show the class that this child's behaviour was totally unacceptable, and she certainly succeeded in shocking the children and teaching them a lesson. When some of the parents were told what the teacher had done, they complained to the headmaster that the teacher should be dismissed for setting a terrible example of throwing a Siddur on the floor.

The headmaster suspended the teacher, and she appealed to Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, the Chief Rabbi of Efrat. What do you think Rabbi Riskin ruled: that the school must dismiss the teacher or that she must be reinstated? Rabbi Riskin quoted from our Sidra, Ki Tisa: "As he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moshe displayed anger, and threw down the Tablets that were in his hand, shattering them at the foot of the mountain" (Shemot 32:19). In his commentary to the last verse in the entire Torah (Devarim 34:12), Rashi explains that Hashem agreed with Moshe's decision to smash the Tablets. He cites the phrase "Asher SHibarta" = "which you broke" (Shemot 34:1) , interpreting it as "Y'asher Kochacha SheSHibarta" = "well done for having broken them!" (Gemara Shabbat 87a). When the people worshipped the golden calf, they

demonstrated that the Tablets were of no value to them. Therefore, it was acceptable to smash them.

Similarly, based on this and several other factors, Rabbi Riskin ruled that the primary school teacher must be reinstated.

Reb Shmuel Donn - Remez

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם... בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִוא לְעֹלָם *Thus shall the children of Israel observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant. Between Me and the children of Israel, it is forever a sign.*

On Shabbos, every Yid feels something special. A spiritual feeling that cannot be described in words. This feeling comes from the *extra Neshama* which enters each and every one of us on Shabbos.

The **שמנה לחמו** notes that the letters of the words: **וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת** are the very same letters as: **נשמה יתר ואור לאיש בשבת** and the **רבינו אפרים** writes that the word - **בֵּינִי** וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – is the roshei teivos of **בַּשבת יַש נַשמה יַתרה**.

On Shabbos, we are gifted with the **נשמה יתרה** – and this is the kedusha that we all feel on this special day!

Reb Shmuel Donn - Remez

The Gemarah in Mesechta Avodah Zarah on 4b says that **אמת** always alludes to the Torah. The greatest weapon against the Satan.

The **אמרי חיים** says that **כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל** is the gematria of 613. Through **אמת** the 613 mitzvos of the torah, all evil will vanish from amongst us!

What Exactly Is Hashem Doing Hiding Coins Of Fire Under His Kisei Hakavod? By Benjamin A Rose



The Medrash tells us that in order to explain the mitzva of the Shekalim, Hashem took out a coin of fire from underneath his Kisei HaKavod and showed it to Moshe.

Rav Elyashiv asks two questions. First, had Moshe Rabbeinu never seen a coin in his life? Second, what exactly is Hashem doing hiding coins under his Kisei HaKavod?

He answers with a Tosfos in Chulin (42a) that Moshe couldn't understand how money, the earthliest of all creations, can save someone's neshama (Kofer Nefesh). So, Hashem showed him a coin. Which coin? The gemara in Bava Basra (11a) says that during a hunger year Munbaz HaMelech emptied out his treasure chest to feed the poor people. His family became very mad that he was squandering the royal wealth. To this he replied that he is not losing the money, he is saving the money up in Shamayim in a place where it will last forever while they squander money down on earth where it will eventually disappear.

Rav Elyashiv says these are the coins that Hashem took out to show Moshe. The coins that are given for tzedoka are precious and are saved by Hashem under the Kisei HaKavod. Moshe understood that coins are made of destructive fire. They cause jealousy, cheating, stealing, and murder. Hashem showed him that coins can be made out of productive fire. Coins given for tzedoka can light the world and warm the world with their "Holy fire". On these coins Hashem said "Kazeh Yitnu". If the people give in this fashion, then even coins can be Kofer Nefesh and money can redeem your soul.

Go Down From Your Bigness!! by Benjamin A Rose



The posuk says **כִּי לֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל אַחֵר** (34:14); ***do not bow to a foreign god.***

The letter Reish in the word Acher is big. Chazal say since the Dalet and Reish look similar, the torah made the Reish big so that you don't confuse it with a Dalet and read it "Echad", do not bow to the Single G-d, meaning Hashem chas v'shalom. In the Pasuk of Shema Yisroel the Echad has a big Dalet

at the end so you don't read it as a Reish and say "Hashem acher" that there are other gods. **Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin** says that this is the meaning of Rashi.

The Pasuk says that Hashem told Moshe after Cheit HaEigel, "Lech Raid"; Go down. Rashi adds the word "MiGdulasecha" go down from you bigness. Rav Shapiro explains that the word Raid, is spelled Reish Dalet. These are the two letters which were written big in the Torah to teach us not to worship other gods.

Therefore, the Torah says "Lech Raid" Go down, letters Reish and Dalet and Rashi adds "from your bigness" since making these letters big didn't help in the earlier mentioned instances, after all Bnei Yisroel worshipped Avodah Zara.

"Men worry over the loss of their possessions, not over the loss of their years—which never return."

Is your face shining a Ray of Splendour?? Written by Benjamin A Rose



וְהִנֵּה קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו ***"Moshe did not know that the skin on his face became radiant".*** When Moshe descended from Har Sinai, the Torah says that his face was shining with rays of light. These "rays of splendour" radiated from Moshe's face in such a glowing fashion that Moshe was forced to wear mask so that his people could look at him.

The Midrash explains, Moshe merited such an honour from Above because when Moshe completed writing the Torah, a drop of ink remained in the container, so Hashem himself smeared the remaining droplet on Moshe's forehead. This drop of holy ink was the source of Moshe's "rays of splendour." However, the Midrash never actually explained what Moshe did to merit such a gift from Hashem. Furthermore, if the bottle of ink was divinely prepared, then HaShem would have prepared the exact amount of ink needed for the writing of a Torah, why would there be extra ink?

The Ohr HaChaim explains that really Hashem prepared the precise amount of ink required, yet a morsel remained because Moshe was so humble that he did not want to write the pasuk, "And the man Moshe was the most humble…" Instead, Moshe wrote the word "humble" (Anav) without the yud with which it is normally spelled. Similarly he made other words in the Torah shorter or spelled differently or with smaller letters such as the word vayikra having a small Aleph. All in order to keep His humility.

Therefore, the extra droplet of ink was a result of Moshe's humility in not spelling out the word "humble" completely. This extra droplet of ink was the source of Moshe's "rays of splendour."

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

וּבְבֹא מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי ה' לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ יָסִיר אֶת־הַמַּסְוֶה עַד־צֵאתוֹ וְיָצָא וְדִבֶּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת אֲשֶׁר יְצֻוֶּה When Moshe would come before Hashem to speak with Him, he would remove the mask until his departure, then he would leave and tell the Children of Israel *(34:34)*

What was the purpose of the mask that Moshe put on his face? **Rebbe Akiva Eiger, zt"l**, explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was the most modest person on earth. However, in his role as leader of Israel, he did not have a choice and he was obligated to scold the Children of Israel and put them in their place. Having no choice, he covered his face and true nature with a mask of leadership, and he scolded them, however, when he came to speak with Hashem, he could remove the figurative mask from his face and return to his real character – a truly modest man! *(Umatok HaOhr)*

Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם The Children of Yisroel shall observe the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations: *31:16.*

The Chidushei HaRim ZY"A said the explanation of Lidorosom is Dwelling. A person must dwell in the Shabbos. The Shabbos should encircle him, as one who lives in a dwelling.

"There is no one who never stumbled." ~~ Samuel Ha-Nagid.

Amazing Lesson from Brisker Bochur Who Went to a Non-Jew's Hotel Room to Discuss Football



"A bochur was visiting the Kosel, and saw an American goy writing a kvittel and placing it into a crack. The bochur was curious about what the goy could possibly have written.

After the goy left, the bochur pulled out the note and read the English message: "For the sake of G-d, there is a football game right now between team X and team Y in America, please let me know who won. Thank you, Alex."

The goy went so fasr as to write his room number at the Plaza Hotel beneath his signature on the kvittel. The bochur decided to answer the man's prayer. He called his father in the U.S. and asked him who won the game.

The father was taken aback.: 'You're learning in Brisk. What does this have to do with Zevachim and Menachos?

The bochur said that he would explain later, and again asked for the score. The father checked the results of the game and told his son. The bochur took a taxi to the hotel, went to the goy's room, knocked and asked: "Are you Alex'? The goy said yes. The young man replied: 'I am a messenger of G-d. The goy was annoyed and asked, "What do you want, messenger of G-d?"

The bochur replied, "You asked G-d who won the football game." The goy was startled. The bochur then said: 'G-d sent me to tell you that team X won. The goy got excited and thanked the bochur

emphatically. Then he pulled out a chequebook and wrote him a cheque for $2,000, saying "This is for the Messenger of G-d."

The bochur returned to yeshiva, and his friends began debating whether he was allowed to keep the money. They said, "You lied about it, and also it was a gift from a goy." The bochur replied: 'If I were to tell him that Hashem asked for $ 2,000 it would certainly be forbidden, but here the goy gave it on his own."

He asked a Rav for his opinion, and he paskened that he was allowed to keep it. However the story does not end there.

"When the bochurim were discussing the shaila in Bais Medrash, the Rosh Yeshiva, **Rabbi Dovid Soloveitchik zt"l** saw them arguing, and asked what they were discussing.

"And here we see how a Gadol looked at the story. Rav Dovid said ,'A goy just asked Hashem for something, and Hashem answered him.'

"Now we see a new picture of this story. Who gave this guy a bug in his head to open the note, and travel all the way to see the goy? It's all from Hashem.

"This means that the goy asked Hashem to tell him who won the game – and Hashem answered him." Why Hashem answered him is not relevant, the lesson for us is that we see that even when a goy simply asks, he gets an answer, all the more so when a Jew asks Hashem, 'I want to understand the Gemara, I want to understand the Chumash. He will answer, He has no shortage of ways and it has nothing to do with us – and this is the lesson for us, and this is what a yeshiva guy needs to know. "

Every yeshiva bochur should recognize the power of tefillah, and should ask Hashem to help him understand his learning, and ask for answers in areas where he is striving to succeed.

The Rebbe's Melodies



The melody is an integral part of the chassidic way of life. "The tongue is the pen of the heart," noted the first Chabad rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, "but melody is the pen of the soul."

The previous Chabad rebbe, **Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn,** of righteous memory, stated, ***"A melody should be sung with the same care that one would employ in citing a Torah commentary learnt from one's teacher or rabbi."***

"Song," wrote the second Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Dovber, "lies at the core of life; its source is in the most supernal ecstasy."

A Genius Among Geniuses

Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev writes in his approbation to the **Ohr HaChaim's** sefer Rishon LeTzion, "Many drank from the living wellsprings – the Be'er Mayim Chaim – of this great luminary, who is a genius among geniuses – gaon sheba'ge'onim, a holy Chassid, renowned world over for his greatness and splendour and the boundless shefa of the light of his Torah and his fear and awe of Heaven, as is seen from his sefer, the Ohr HaChaim." There is a tradition that the Ohr HaChaim heard a heavenly voice every Shabbos night that blessed him and said to him, "Shloma loch – Peace be upon you!" (Shivchei Ohr HaChaim,)

Saved by Covid-19!



In the Israeli town of Rechasim, near Haifa, a young orphan recently [January 2021] celebrated his Bar Mitzvah. His mother is a poor widow, and they really have no money. The boy gets great pleasure from spiritual music, soulful Chassidic nigunim - wordless melodies -- and appreciates hearing talented singers.

The mother contacted Mr. C, a kind businessman who helps her financially. "Please do my son a great favour. He has no father. Bring an excellent singer to his Bar Mitzvah. It will bring him such happiness."

So, this Mr. C contacted a particular local professional singer who he knew would fit the bill. He explained to him upfront that there was no money to pay for his services.

The singer shrugged and responded, "This is my living. I can't perform for free." Mr. C refused to take "no" for an answer. "The boy has no father. Along with the current lockdown restrictions it will be a sad occasion. You can make it into a time of joy. Remember:

the Rambam teaches that there is no greater pleasure for G-d than when we gladden the hearts of widows and orphans…"

The orphan boy's situation touched the singer's heart and he agreed to perform at no cost. At the celebration, he sat near the Bar Mitzvah lad, and each time he got up to sing, everyone felt uplifted. Thanks to him, it became an exciting and lively event, and was a huge success. For that night, the young boy forgot all his worries.

Two days later, the singer receives a surprise phone call. "The bar mitzvah boy has Corona. You have to quarantine for two weeks."

The singer was so upset. "I give up one night of work to sing for free and now I can't earn any money at all for two whole weeks!"

After another few days and the singer arranges to be tested. He is devastated to find out that he has Corona himself! "This is my reward for the mitzvah of bringing joy to an orphan?" he thinks. "Another two weeks without work! Why is this happening to me?"

Finally, he recovers from his illness and starts to seek new bookings locally. But then he is contacted by an organization in New York that arranges Bar Mitzvah celebrations for orphans. They are arranging a lavish event for boys who have become Bar Mitzvah in the past few months. There were to be a number of top-class entertainers there, and they wanted him to be one of them. They offered to fly him in for a very generous payment, more than he would earn from many nights of work, more even than he would have made during his entire period of isolation. Not only that, but this could also be a special opportunity for him, a breakthrough to the world-stage.

"How did you hear about me?" he asked wonderingly. They answered that someone from the organization had attended the Bar Mitzvah of the orphan and was very impressed with the way he had transformed the event to be so lively. So they decided that it was highly desirable that he too should perform at this event.

"However," said the organizer, "we cannot take the risk that you might possibly infect others, especially since you would be coming from Israel. So, there is one condition; otherwise, we can't hire you: You must already have been ill with Corona and have fully recovered!"

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the video recording of Rabbi Elimelech Biderman. Postscript to this story by Rabbi Biderman: ***We never lose from doing a Mitzvah!***

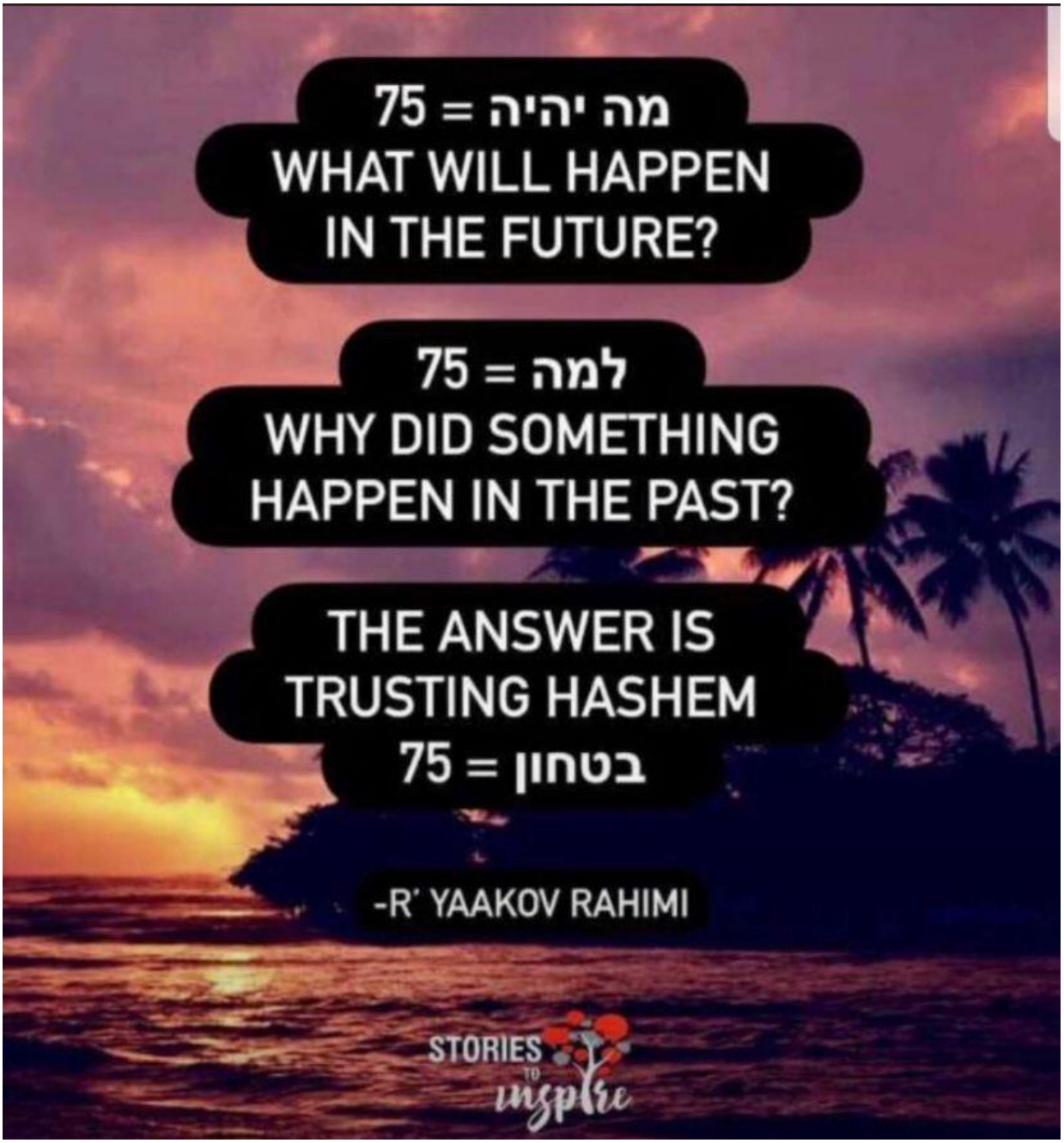
One Never Loses From Telling The Truth

Rav Moshe Midner was renowned for his exceptional adherence to the truth. It relates that a representative of the Joint (an organization that distributed funds to yeshivos) once came to the city of Baranovitch and met with the administrators of the yeshiva.

The representative asked them how many students were studying in the yeshiva (as the amount of funds they gave was based on the number of students in the yeshiva). The administrators told him a number that was higher than the actual number, but the representative didn't believe them.

The Joint representative said that he wanted to ask the question to Rav Moshe Midner, who was serving as the Menahel of the yeshiva, as he knew that Rav Moshe would say the absolute truth. The representative went to Rav Moshe and said, "I was told that there are x number of bochurim in the yeshiva. Is this true or is this false?" Rav Moshe replied, "What do you want from me? Do you want Moshe Midner to say a lie? Moshe does not say lies! But you should still provide the funds according to that amount of students!"

Rav Moshe Midner zt"l once asked a bochur, "Did you put on tefillin today?" The bochur answered, "No. I did not." Rav Moshe responded, "I love you because you didn't lie to me!"



Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

Rabbi Sholom Arush taught that whenever we express our gratitude to Hashem we invoke phenomenal Divine compassion. He explains that the entire task of a Jew is to give thanks to Hashem, for the Hebrew word for Jew, *Yehudi*, means "one who gives thanks". If one thanks Hashem for everything, he won't have to chase after *segulos* and *Kabbalists* to ask for blessings, because he will find that he is already be blessed in every way!



Friends

ידיד means a friend. יד means a hand. ✋ In the word ידיד there are two hands. 👐 When two Yidden shake hands, they are called a ידיד - a friend. 🤝

The word ידיד is gematria of 28. כח- strength is also the gematria of 28. So when two Yidden are friends, this will give them tremendous strength!

Revach L'Neshama - Maoz Tzur - The Roses Behind The Jug Of Oil

וְנַקֵּהּ֙ לֹ֣א יְנַקֶּ֔ה, and acquit Hashem does not acquit (Ki Sisa 34:7). This pasuk is the source of the Midas HaDin and all the troubles that seem to befall us in life. **The Gaon HaKadosh MiKozhnitz** tells us that if you take the words V'Nakeh and Yinakeh, and remove the letters Kuf and Nun from each of these words, the remaining letters are the Shem HaShem.

This is the meaning of the mishna in Pirkei Avos (4:20), **אַל תִּסְתַּכֵּל בַּקַּנְקַן, אֶלָּא בְּמַה שֶּׁיֵּשׁ בּוֹ**, don't look at the jug, only what is in it. Kan and Kan are the exterior of our Tzaros. We tend to focus on our pain rather than the underlying issue.

The Mishna tells us when we are in a situation of Nakeh Lo Yinakeh, we should not focus on the facade which is the Kuf Nun Kuf Nun, but rather the remaining letters of Hashem. We must realize that

within this ordeal, Hashem is close to us and holding our hand. Everything is directed by Hashem for a good reason, and we should use it to get close to Him.

Rav Yehuda Asad says that this is what we say in Maoz Tzur, "UMiNosar Kankanim Naaseh Nes LaShoshanim". From the Shem Hashem that stood behind the wars and the tzaros of Antiochus, which were merely empty jugs testing our resolve, Naaseh Nes LaShoshanim, a great miracle occurred for those who passed the test and came out smelling like roses.

Revach L'Neshama - Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh - The Mystery of The Extra Ink

וַיַּ֤רְא אַהֲרֹן֙ וְכָל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל אֶת־מֹשֶׁ֖ה וְהִנֵּ֣ה קָרַ֑ן עֹ֚ור פָּנָ֔יו 34:30

"Moshe did not know that the skin on his face became radiant".



When Moshe descended from Har Sinai, the Torah says that his face was shining with rays of light. These "rays of splendour" radiated from Moshe's face in such a glowing fashion that Moshe was forced to wear mask so that his people could look at him.

The Midrash explains, Moshe merited such an honour from Above because when Moshe completed writing the Torah, a drop of ink remained in the container, so Hashem himself smeared the remaining droplet on Moshe's forehead. This drop of holy ink was the source of Moshe's "rays of splendour." However, the Midrash never actually explained what Moshe did to merit such a gift from Hashem.

Furthermore, if the bottle of ink was divinely prepared, then HaShem would have prepared the exact amount of ink needed for the writing of a Torah, why would there be extra ink?

The Ohr HaChaim explains that really Hashem prepared the precise amount of ink required, yet a morsel remained because Moshe was so humble that he did not want to write the pasuk, **מְאֹד (כתיב ענו)** **וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנָיו מִכֹּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה** - "*And the man Moshe was the most humble...*" (Bamidbar 12:3) Instead, Moshe wrote the word "humble" (Anav) without the yud with which it is normally spelled. Therefore, the extra droplet of ink was a result of Moshe 's humility in not spelling out the word "humble" completely. This extra droplet of ink was the source of Moshe's "rays of splendour."

Revach L'Neshama - Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa & The Kotzker Rebbe - Forgiveness For The Eigel Without Teshuva



By the Cheit HaEigel Hashem forgives Am Yisroel after Moshe davened for them, despite the fact that we don't see anywhere that they did teshuva. Yet by the aveira of the Miraglim Hashem does not forgive them even though they showed remorse and did teshuva. Why is this?

Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa answers that they did not do teshuva by the eigel because they didn't think it would help. They were bitter and remorseful of their behaviour without any ulterior

motive. By the time they did the eigel they were very familiar with the mechanism of teshuva and how it could cleanse, so their teshuva had a tad of self service in it.

The Iturei Torah brings from Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk that the eigel while it was a terrible aveira nevertheless had an underlying yearning to reach Hashem albeit in a very misguided way. The chait of the Miraglim on the other hand was a yearning for gashmiyus or some "good potatoes" in the words of the Kotzker Rebbe.

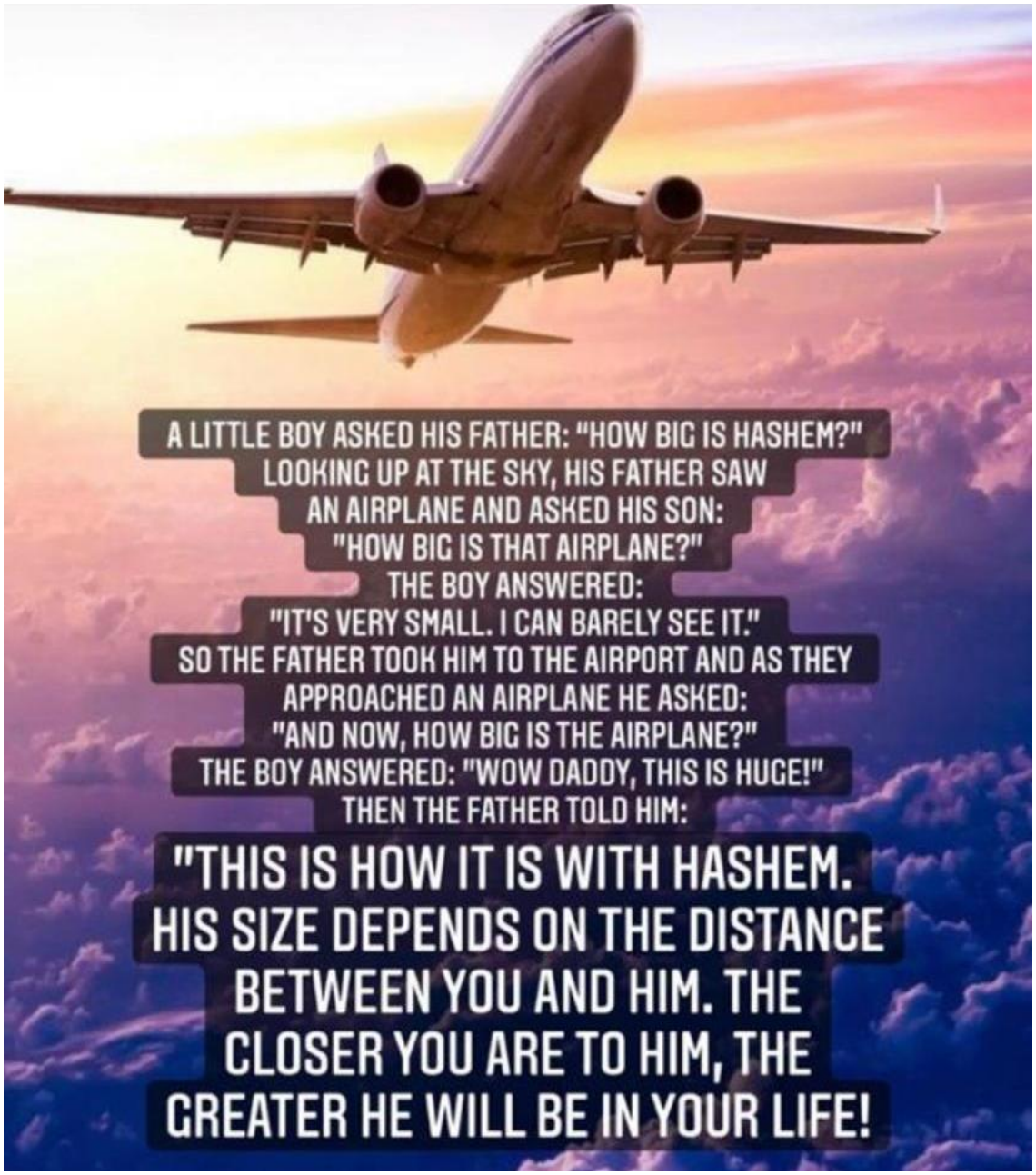
Revach L'Neshama - Vilna Gaon - Three Thousand Killed For The Ox

וַיִּפֹּל מִן־הָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּשְׁלֹשֶׁת אַלְפֵי אִישׁ (Ki Sisa 32:28) ***"Three thousand people were killed in reprisal for the Chait HaEigel."*** The Medrash says that this is what the pasuk means, that you pay five cattle for each ox (Mishpatim 21:37). What is this Medrash pliah talking about?

The Vilna Gaon answers with a pasuk in Koheles (7:28) that says, אָדָם אֶחָד מֵאֶלֶף מָצָאתִי וְאִשָּׁה בְּכָל־אֵלֶּה לֹא מָצָאתִי; ***I found one man out of a thousand but but among these not even a single woman."*** The Medrash says that this refers to Chait HaEigel (where they said "Eileh Elohecha Yisrael") where one out of every thousand men sinned, but not even a single woman.

One out of a thousand means that only 600 men sinned. "If so," asks the Medrash, "why did three thousand die?"

"Chamisha Bakar Yishalem Tachas HaShor," the halacha is that if you steal and slaughter or sell a cow you pay five times. Therefore, for the Chait of the Eigel or calf, Hashem collected five time which is three thousand.



Pearls of Wisdom… *A Word for the Ages*

It was said of **Rav Simchah Bunim of Peshischa**, ***zt"l***, that he always carried two slips of paper on him, one in each pocket. On one paper he wrote, **בשבילי נברא העולם** - ***"the world was created for my sake"***, and on the other paper he wrote, **ואנכי עפר ואפר** - ***"I am but dust and ashes."***

Rav Simcha Bunim would take out each slip of paper as often as was necessary, to remind himself of these two concepts!

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"זה יתנו כל העבר על הפקדים מחצית השקל...." *"This shall they give — everyone who passes through the census — a half-shekel...."* (30:13)

QUESTION: Rashi says, "He showed him a kind of coin of fire, the weight of which was a half *shekel,* and He said to him, 'Thus shall they give.' " Why a *fiery* coin?

ANSWER: Hashem demonstrated a fiery coin, to illustrate the positive and negative qualities of money. Fire has both beneficial and destructive effects. On the one hand, it can destroy, but through the smelting of metals, it can also unite and join together.

Similarly, money can destroy a relationship or family, or unite and help build a beautiful family. The fiery coin was Hashem's way to caution the Jewish people to use money properly and reap its benefits. (**נועם אלימלך**)

Vedibarta Bam

ולא יהיה בהם נגף בפקד אתם זה יתנו כל העובר על הפקודים מחצית השקל *"So that there will not be a plague among them when counting them. This shall they give — everyone who passes through the census — a half-shekel." (30:12-13)*

QUESTION: Why does the Torah call the half-*shekel* that averts a plague "*machatzit*" (**מחצית**) and not "*chatzi*" (**חצי**)?

ANSWER: The word "*machatzit*" (**מחצית**) — "a half" — has five letters, and the middle letter is a "**צ**", the first letter of the word "*tzedakah.*" Flanking the "**צ**" there is a "**ח**" and a "**י**", which spell the word "**חי**"— "life." The exterior letters of the word are "**מ**" and "**ת**", which mean death. Thus, the Torah is suggesting that "**צ**" — *tzedakah* — is the power which stands for the Jew and which can

represent the difference between life and death. *Tzedakah* can distance death and bring life to those who practice it. (**פרדס יוסף**)

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

'And every man shall give' (30:12) **...ונתנו איש**



The *parashah* begins by describing how each person was to give a half *shekel* coin donation to the *mishkan*, which would be used to conduct a census of the nation by counting the coins.

The *Gra*, in *sefer Kol Eliyahu*, writes that the word **ונתנו** is a palindrome, meaning that it can be read forwards and backwards. We learn a lesson from this that whatever one gives to charity comes back to him in return, as the palindrome implies.

There is a remez for this in *Shabbos* 151b, where Rav Chiya advises his wife to always be quick when giving a poor person bread, so that if *her* children will need bread, they too will be given.

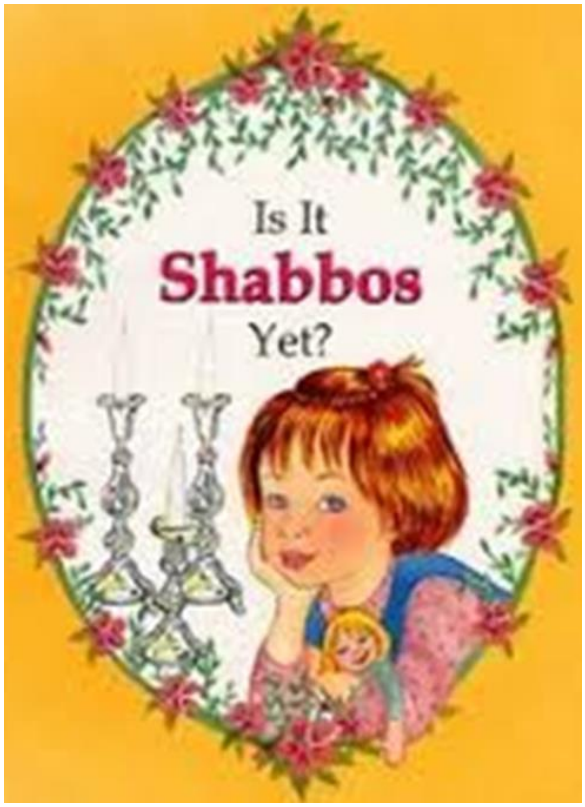
The *Gra* additionally points out that even the *trop* (cantilation notes) on the word **ונתנו** teaches this lesson, since the notes are **קדמא ואזלא** , which mean: get up and precede— be the first to give.

The *Shlah Hakadosh* comments on *Rashi* (25:2) on the words **ויקחו לי**, ***'And take for Me'***, **' לי לשמי '**, ***'for Me'***— for My Name. What does giving *tzedakah* have to do with Hashem's Name?

The *Shlah* explains that when a man takes a coin to give to a poor person, the coin, being small, represents the letter **י**. The coin is held in his hand with five fingers, representing the letter **ה**. The poor

person stretches out his arm to receive the coin representing the letter ו, and receives the coin with his five fingers representing another ה. Thus the entire act of giving *tzedakah* includes the letter י,ה,ו,ה — the sacred Name of Hashem! The *Shlah* also teaches that one must be careful to initiate and give the poor person first, in order to maintain the proper order of the letters of Hashem's Name— otherwise the Name of Hashem will not be spelled.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos



Baron Rothschild was a leading European banker and a proud Jew whose *Emunah* was legendary. Despite his many business dealings, on Shabbos, everything came to a stop, as if nothing else existed in the world.

One time a large financial institution in England was on the verge of collapse, and it needed to be rescued by a person or group with great means. The directors decided that Baron Rothschild would be a perfect candidate, so they drafted a proposal offering him the company for 2.5 million pounds. This price was considerably lower than the true value of the company, but was still not a huge bargain.

The telegram was sent on Friday night and Baron Rothschild completely ignored it. The directors of the company were anxiously awaiting a reply, and when no reply was returned, they took it as a sign of lack of interest, so the next morning they sent a new proposal for 2.2 million. Of course Baron Rothschild did not pay attention to this telegram either, and later in the day, out of desperation, the directors sent an offer of 1.7 million. This message arrived on

Motza'ei Shabbos and Baron Rothschild opened it together with the other two, and sent back a positive response to the third offer.

As soon as he sent off his reply, he told those around him about the transaction, and also to teach them a lesson about the power of *Shabbos Kodesh*. Shabbos is not only profitable in the next world, but in this world as well for those who watch over it. He told them, ***"Hashem rewards those who keep His Shabbos!"***



Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

Whatever one does to help prepare for Shabbos, he should say, 'This is *l'kavod Shabbos*!' These words actually imbue *kedushah*, holiness, into what we are doing (*Machatzis HaShekel, Orach Chaim* 250:1).

The *Chofetz Chaim* used to say *'l'kavod Shabbos'* when he put on his Shabbos clothes (*HaMeoros HaGedolim*, p. 343). The *sefer Devarim Niflaim al Shabbos Kodsheinu* says (p. 25) that each time these words are said a *Malach* is created!

If only we would be able to see these *Malachim* that we are creating, we would never regard cleaning for Shabbos in the same way again.



Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The *Gemara* teaches (*Shabbos* 117b) that we should eat three meals on Shabbos— one at night and two by day. **The *Zohar*** says (*Ha'azinu* 288b) that if we are careful to eat these three *seudos*, we will be *zocheh* to have complete *emunah* in Hashem. Also, it causes us to be considered by Hashem as if we have kept the entire Torah.

The *Sfas Emes* writes (*Emor* 5655) that eating these three meals brings with it three *brachos*: blessings for long life, blessings for children, and blessings for *parnassah*!





Rav Yisroel Salanter, *zt"l*, was once invited by one of his students to join him in a Shabbos meal. The *Rav* said that before he accepts, he must know how the meal is conducted. The student told his Rebbe, "We have a *seudah* that is beautiful from beginning to end! Only the best kosher food is used and a fine cook to prepare everything. In between the many courses we say over *Divrei Torah*, learn *Shulchan Aruch*, and sing *zemiros* late into the night!"

After hearing all the details, Rav Yisroel said, "I will accept your invitation, but on one condition. The meal must be carried out very quickly."

The student realized that he had no choice and agreed to his Rebbe's condition. That Shabbos evening, one course was served after the next, and they were up to *Bentching* within an hour. At this point the student turned to Rav Yisroel and asked why he had requested that the *seudah* be so quick?

Instead of answering, Rav Yisroel asked for the cook to come into the dining room. He said to her, "Please forgive me for making you tired by serving things so quickly and without giving you a break." The cook answered, "All blessing should come to you, *Rebbe*, and I wish you would come here every week!

I'm usually so tired from working the whole day cleaning and cooking, and then serving food until late at night, that I can hardly stand! Thanks to you, I am free to go home early and rest!" Rav Yisroel turned to his student and said, "That's your answer to why I requested that the *seudah* be expedited. Your *Shabbos seudah* is truly beautiful, but not if it's at the expense of others."

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

There once was a simple worker who was not able to learn a lot of Torah. However, every *Erev Shabbos*, in the afternoon, he would go to the *mikvah* and put on his Shabbos clothes. Then he would sit in a corner of his house and say *Shir HaShirim*, word by word, with great *simchah* and a sweet melody. It would take him over two hours to complete!

After this man passed away and went up to *Shamayim*, it was decided that he should first go to *Gehinnom* before being allowed to enter *Gan Eden*. As they tried to walk him through the gates of *Gehinnom*, a strong and powerful sound was heard.

It was the *pesukim* of *Shir HaShirim* sung beautifully. The power of the singing did not let them enter the gates to *Gehinnom*, because everything was shaking from the tremulous sounds. It was decided then that *Gehinnom* was not the place for him, and he was allowed to enter straight into *Gan Eden*.

That Shabbos the man came to the *Rav* of the town in a dream and told him everything that happened. He told the *Rav* to let everyone know how powerful saying *Shir HaShirim* is.

Shir HaShirim contains *all the cures in the world*, and it can help *anyone who needs any type of relief or salvation*! Saying *Shir HaShirim* on *Erev Shabbos* holds the power to awaken Hashem's mercy for any type of help a person may need!!

(*Devarim Niflaim al Shabbos Kodsheinu* p. 160)

"Success means that no matter what position you are in life, no matter where you're at or what you're going through, your mindset is always Baruch Hashem and thank You Hashem." ~ R' Zecharia Wallerstein.



Orchos Chaim L'HaRosh

זְכֹר יוֹם הַמָּוֶת תָּמִיד. וְצֵידָה לַדֶּרֶךְ הָכֵן
Constantly remember the day of death and prepare provisions for the journey. 32.

Rav Naftali Trop, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of the *Chofetz Chaim's Yeshivah* in Radin, once became very ill, and it became clear that he was in danger and that he might not survive the illness, *R"L*. The students of the *Yeshivah* sought out every possible way to give him *Zechuyos* and help him recover, and they decided to donate days, weeks, and even months of their own lives as a merit for his recovery. They approached everyone in their *Yeshivah* and compiled a list of time that was being granted for their beloved *Rebbe*. They even went to the ***Chofetz Chaim, zt"l***, and asked if he would contribute any time to give to Rav Naftali Trop so that he could live.

The *Chofetz Chaim* got quiet and thought for a few moments. Everyone thought he was going to donate a large amount of time, as they reasoned he could probably easily earn more time with all of his *Zechusim*. After contemplating for a while, he said, ***"I will give up one minute of my life."***

When the students heard their *Rebbe's* reply, they were very affected and moved at how much the *Chofetz Chaim* valued time, and they developed a new appreciation of what every single minute of time meant. From then on, the *Hasmadah*, the diligence in learning *Torah* in the *Yeshivhah* in Radin, became much more intense as a result of the *Chofetz Chaim's* remark, unlike any *Hasmadah* since the start of the *Yeshivah*!

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

העשיר לא ירבה והדל לא ימעיט ממחצית השקל The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half of the Shekel *(30:15)*

Why was the wealthy man prohibited from increasing his donation? Why does it bother us if someone wants to donate 2,000 *Shekels* instead of half a *Shekel*?

The *Maharil* Diskin explains that when it comes to giving donations, everyone can donate as much as he wants. However, when it comes to the half a *Shekel* from which we purchase the communal offerings which atone for the soul, then, the soul of the wealthy man is exactly equal to the soul of the poor man.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Yochanan Twersky, *zt"l*, the *Rachmastrifka Rebbe*, once visited his brother, who had a custom to honour his guests with the finest wine from *Eretz Yisroel*. Rav Yochanan, however, asked his brother if he can have wine specifically from *Chutz LaAretz*, as he said he preferred to not drink wine from *Eretz Yisroel*. Afterward, he was asked what was wrong with the Israeli wine that he wouldn't drink it.

He answered, "The truth is, I really don't enjoy wine. I only took some out of respect for my brother, but I drink it with great discomfort. If I would have been served wine from *Eretz Yisroel*, it would cause me to have negative feelings and thoughts about the fruit of *Eretz Yisroel*, which was used to produce that wine, and that is something I must avoid at all costs!

Orchos Chaim L'HaRosh

אַל תְּדַבֵּר בְּלַעֲגֵי שָׂפָה וּבְלָשׁוֹן אֲחֶרֶת, כָּל עֵת שֶׁהַחַזָּן מִתְפַּלֵּל, וְתַעֲנֶה אָמֵן
Any time the Chazan is Davening, do not speak even in abbreviated speech or in a different language, and be sure to answer 'Amein'.

Rav Moshe Sternbuch points out that the *Rosh* is not referring here to talking during *Chazaras HaShatz*, the *Chazan's* repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei*, because that is certainly forbidden, but even at other times as well, one should not talk when the *Chazan* is *Davening*.

Rav Yissochar Frand comments that the *Shulchan Aruch* writes (*Orach Chaim* 124:7) that if one talks during *Chazaras HaShatz*, his *Aveirah* is too great to carry— it is so great that one can't imagine the implications of it. This is the only place where the *Shulchan Aruch* uses such a language, even by such big *Aveiros* like *Chillul Shabbos* or eating *Chametz* on Pesach which have a punishment of *Kareis*— they are not as severe as talking in *Shul* during *Chazaras HaShatz*. The question is, why is this *Aveirah* so bad that it is too great to carry?

Rav Matisyahu Salomon answers that the reason for this is because *Hashem* has given us tremendous tools called *Tefilah* and *Tefilah B'Tzibur*, and when a person talks during *Davening*, he is in effect, so to speak, *Chas V'Shalom*, spitting in the face of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*! He is abusing a gift from *Hashem*! This *Aveirah* represents a tremendous *Chutzpah* to *Hashem*, and that is too great to carry. Why does one talk in *Shul*? It is because he doesn't care about *Davening*, or that he is standing before *Hashem*! That is a *Chutzpah* to *Hashem*, and that is an *Aveirah* too great to bear.

Since this *Aveirah* is about *Chutzpah*, it is an *Aveirah* to talk by other parts of *Davening* as well, not just *Chazaras HaShatz*. Rav Frand said a story that he was once at a wedding where the *Chupah* was going to be taking place in a *Shul*. Prior to the *Chupah*, some little children were running around playing tag with each other, and a non-

Jewish custodian saw them and said, "Children! You can't do that in here. This isn't a playground, people *Daven* here!"

He clearly understood what a *Shul* is, and certainly we, who know what *Davening* is and we know what *Hashem's Shechinah* is, should certainly understand what a *Shul* is. A *Shul* is the Home of *Hashem*, and we must treat it with the respect of which it deserves!

Rav Paysach Krohn offers his own answer to this question, of why the *Aveirah* of talking during *Chazaras HaShatz* is so great. "Imagine that you are in court and a lawyer is defending you, and as the lawyer is pleading your case in front of the judge, the judge glances at you and sees that you are talking to someone else about irrelevant issues. The judge will think, 'Is this person crazy? The lawyer is defending him and he doesn't care?!' The judge may not make an issue of it, but after it happens several times, the judge will say, 'If this person doesn't care about what his own lawyer is doing for him, then I don't want anything to do with him. Throw him out of court!'

The *Chazan* is representing us— he is our lawyer, even starting from the *Brachos* at the beginning of *Davening*, he is talking on our behalf! He is the lawyer talking to the Judge— *Hashem*, and we stand there not caring, and talking to our friends?! This is why the *Aveirah* is too great to bear, because it is like *Hashem* is saying to throw them out of court!"

Rabbi Krohn says that from now on, the moment the *Chazan* begins standing in front of the *Shul*, he is the lawyer defending and pleading for us and our families, and we should be respectful— *at least* as respectful as we would be in court, where people tremble in front of a judge, how much more so should we have respect for *Hashem* in a *Shul*!

Middos

The *Sefer HaChaim*, written by the ***Maharal's*** brother, points out that the word *'Gemara'* is an acronym for the names: *G*avriel, *M*ichoel, *R*efael, and *U*riel, and these are the *Malachim* that carry the *Kisei HaKavod* of *Hashem*.

This teaches us, notes the *Sefer HaChaim*, that when one learns *Gemara*, the *Malachim* surround him on all sides, and the *Shechinah* is above his head. The *Sefer Toras Chaim* writes that these *Malachim* make up the *Merkavah*, the holy chariot of *Hashem*, and when one learns *Gemara*, he becomes, so to speak, a *Merkavah* for the *Shechinah*, and *Hashem's* Presence rests on him. This is just one way to connect closer with *Hashem* when learning *Torah*!

The Shabbos Package – Rabbi Yossi Goldberg

וַיַּרְא הָעָם כִּי בֹשֵׁשׁ מֹשֶׁה לָרֶדֶת מִן־הָהָר וַיִּקָּהֵל הָעָם עַל־אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם | עֲשֵׂה־לָנוּ אֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לְפָנֵינוּ כִּי־זֶה | מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מֶה־הָיָה לוֹ לבו׳ א ***"The people gathered around Aaron and they said to him, "Come and make for us a god who will go before us because this man Moshe who led us out of Mitzrayim, we don't know what happened to him."***

Klal Yisroel were concerned that Moshe had not returned from Shomayim in time, according to their calculation, and so they wanted to create a new leader. To make it worse, the Satan showed them an image of Moshe in Shomayim being carried as though he had been Niftar. This made them think for certain that he was not coming back. Of course this was a big Aveiro and they should never had made the Eigel; but what should they have thought? After all, they were certain that they saw Moshe in Shomayim already Niftar!?

The Ponevezer Rov tells the following story that he heard from the Rebbetzen of the Chofetz Chaim. When the **Chofetz Chaim** was learning in the Kodshim Kollel in Radin, he had very little money. In

fact, they went through a time of such poverty that their daily meal consisted of leftover crumbs and leftover flour from the bakery that the Chofetz Chaim's wife would boil in water!





When they couldn't even afford that (!), the baker would allow them to take the crumbs on credit that they would pay back when they received some money.

One day, the Chofetz Chaim came home from Kollel and found his wife crying next to an empty kitchen table. "What happened?" The Chofetz Chaim asked his wife. She couldn't answer – her cries just got worse. "Please tell me; why are you crying? The Chofetz Chaim encouraged her again.

"I went to the baker today to buy our crumbs on credit," she sobbed, "and he said we can't buy on credit anymore!! So we have nothing to eat today and not in future!"

The Chofetz Chaim banged his hand on the table and called out, "Satan! Go away! You think you can stop me learning Torah by taking away our food! It will never happen! I will continue to learn even if I starve!"

The next day the baker "suddenly" changed his mind, and they were able to once again eat their crumbs. "Of course," the Rebbetzin finished her story, "after all, my husband had told the Satan that it wouldn't stop his learning either way – so the Satan allowed us to eat again!"

The Ponevezer Rov commented about this that it is truly amazing! If this story would have happened to us, we would have certainly been thinking of a way to convince the baker to change his mind, or perhaps we would try to think of other ways to get some food… the Chofetz Chaim saw past that. He saw the Satan disturbing his learning.

This, explains **Rav Yankel Galinksy**, was Klal Yisroel's mistake with reacting to what they saw. Instead of simply seeing the image of Moshe in Shomayim, their Emuna should have been so rock solid, that they should have recognised it to be the Satan throwing them off the correct path and should have not given up hope.

Meoros Hatzaddikim - Stories & Anecdotes

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld,19th of Adar I Av Bais Din and Rav of Yerushalayim

A wealthy woman who had been married for many years without bearing children came to the Rav of Budapest with a large sum of money. She wanted to donate the money to the Rav in order that he would daven for her to be blessed with children.

"I'll give you an eitza (a piece of advice)," said the Rav. "Send the money to Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Rav of Yerushalayim. He's a great Tzaddik. Hashem will surely listen to his tefilla and you'll merit zera shel kayoma." The woman agreed to the Rav's suggestion, and she sent the money to the Rav of Yerushalayim.

A few weeks passed and the husband of the woman came to the Rav, and complained bitterly to him, "Why did you send the money without my knowledge?! I demand that you send a letter immediately to the Rav of Yerushalayim requesting that he return the money."

The Rav was very upset by the husband's demand and said, "I'll give you the whole amount from my pocket, as long as you don't demand the money back from the Rav of Yerushalayim."

While they were still discussing the details of getting the money back, the postman arrived with an envelope from Rav Yosef Chaim. The Rav opened the envelope and was astounded to find a letter in it from the Rav of Yerushalayim accompanied by the full amount of money the man's wife had sent to him.

The Rav had written, "I received the letter with the money enclosed. However, since the Rav wrote that the woman gave him the money, I suspected that she might have done this without the permission of her husband. Because of this, I am sending back the money, and I request from the Rav that he return the money to the woman as quickly as possible.

It should be understood that I did not refrain from fulfilling the woman's request because of this. I davened fervently for her. May my tefillos be accepted before Avinu Shebashomayim."

The above story helps to connect us to the loving holiness of this great sage. Through studying the lives and deeds of the great sages of previous generations, we become their spiritual children, and this connection becomes a source of berocha and merit for us.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

When Moshe was on *Har Sinai* and he was informed of the sin of the Eigel, why did he continue to bring down the *Luchos*?

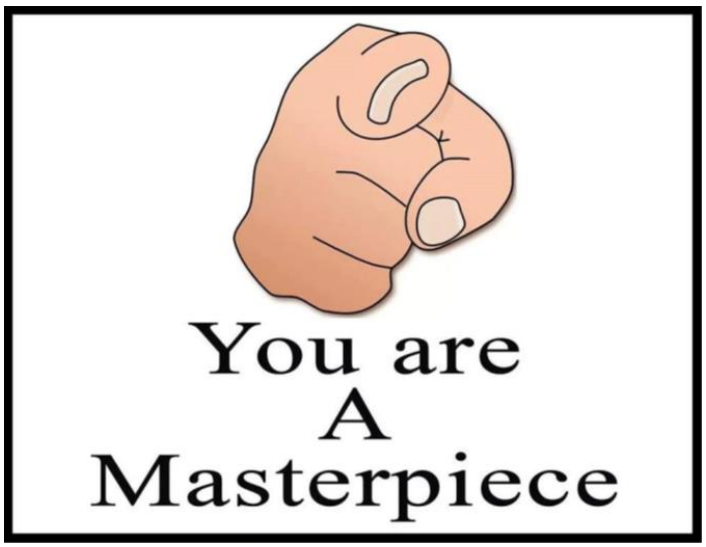
The *Abarbanel* offers an amazing thought. Moshe understood that by breaking the *Luchos* in front of the people, this would be a wake-up call to them. Seeing the reality of the broken *Luchos* in front of them, they would be jolted to realize the gravity of their actions.

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

Two brothers sold all they had and went prospecting for gold. They discovered a vein of the shining ore, staked a claim, and proceeded to get down to the serious business of getting the gold ore out of the mine.

All went well at first, but then a strange thing happened. The vein of gold ore disappeared! The brothers continued to pick away at the dirt, but without success. Finally, they gave up in disgust. They sold their equipment and claim rights for a few hundred dollars and took the train back home.

The man who bought the claim hired an engineer to examine the rock strata of the mine. The engineer advised him to continue digging in the same spot where the former owners had left off. Three feet deeper, the new owner struck gold. A little more persistence and the two brothers would have been millionaires themselves.



There's gold in each one of us too. Ask yourself, do you need to dig just a little bit farther? Parshas Ki Sisa begins with the bringing of the half-shekel. Each person would bring this coin as a 'ransom for his soul' no matter whether he was rich or poor. The Midrash gives several different reasons for the specific coin but there is one common denominator – everyone had to give it. Perhaps the Torah is underscoring the message that each of us has intrinsic value. But that's just the beginning. It's a starting ground, a place to stake a claim. The goal is to keep digging, keep working, and keep plugging away until we find the treasure buried inside each of us.

Etz Chaim - Stories of Gedolim



Torah is acquired through mesirut nefesh, self-sacrifice. There are many stories of people who were willing to sacrifice of themselves and were rewarded immensely for their efforts. Rov Asher was a chosheveh ben Torah, but a very poor man. He one day decided to save money to purchase material for a dress for his wife Reichel and a suit for himself lekovod yom tov.

It took many months, but finally the necessary sum was accumulated. At around that time, the Romm family had just inaugurated a new edition of the Vilna Shas, which would facilitate learning greatly.

Rov Asher had a wonderful plan. He broached the idea with his wife who was eager to implement his new idea into action. Together both parents walked into the beis medrash where their son Aryeh Leib was learning and toiling in Torah. Excitedly they handed him the Gemaras from his new Vilna Shas .

Rov Asher said, "Here is my suit". His wife exclaimed, "Here is my dress". "Your learning is worth more to us than anything. May this help you continue to make strides in your learning."

The boy never forgot his parents' sacrifice for his learning, one that was not tainted with bitterness and resentment, but rather with happiness and joy over their amazing opportunity to support Torah.

That boy grew up to be **Rav Aharon Aryeh Leib Kalmanowitz zt"l**, father of the famous **Rakover Rov, Rov Avrohom Kalmanowitz zt"l**.



Gedolei Yisrael: "Tear The Gates Of Shamayim As Each Day's Curse Is Worse Than The Next"

A letter was published on Tuesday by **HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanviesky and HaGaon HaRav Gershon Edelstein** calling on Klal Yisrael to be mechazeik in tefillah and achhdus in wake of numerous recent tragedies, world turmoil, and the Israeli government's anti-religious decrees.

The letter states: "We're in a situation where each day's curses are worse than the next and the passuk '**כי תמצאן רעות רבות וצרות**' is being fulfilled in us with terrible and painful tragedies and a multitude of severe illnesses, lo aleinu, and the government's decrees that seek to uproot all of Yisrael's connection to Yahadus and the plots to harm lomdei haTorah, chas v'chalilah. Surely Hashem is doing all this in order to awaken us and draw us closer."

"Apart from all this, the world is in turmoil, and nobody knows what the next day will bring. The danger of war in one location can have repercussions throughout the world. Chazal already said that no punishment comes to the world except for Yisrael."

"There's an absolute obligation for us to grasp the art of our forefathers to tear down the gates of Shamayim in tefillah, and each person should add a perek of Tehillim daily and be mechazeik in limmud haTorah as much as possible and especially arouse themselves in matters of bein adam l'chaveiro so that everyone is united."

The Gedolim also called on bnei yeshivos to be mechazeik in focusing exclusively on limmud Torah.

The letter concludes by stating that "through the chizzuk in all these things we'll be zocheh to the yeshuah of Yisrael quickly like was done to our forefathers during this month which was transformed into simcha."

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וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּכַלֹּתוֹ לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי שְׁנֵי לֻחֹת הָעֵדֻת לֻחֹת אֶבֶן כְּתֻבִים בְּאֶצְבַּע אֱלֹקִים ***"When Hashem finished speaking to Moshe on Mount Sinai, Hashem gave Moshe the two Luchos of stone, inscribed by the finger of Hashem." (Shmos 31:18)***

"For the last ten years of his life, ***Rabbi Shimon Schwab zt"l****, was confined to a wheelchair, unable to walk. His grandson asked him why he always smiled and never complained about his circumstance. Rabbi Schwab replied, 'Imagine that a wealthy man lent you a million dollars and let you keep it to use as you wished for seventy years! After the seventy years, he told you that he wanted one hundred or one thousand dollars back. Would you be angry with him? He gave you the opportunity to use a special gift for so long, he is entitled to take any part of it back whenever he wants. My feet were a gift from Hashem. He has the right to take them back.' (Reflections of the Maggid by Rabbi Paysach Krohn)*

After speaking with Moshe on Har Sinai, Hashem presented him with the two *Luchos* which were "inscribed by the finger of Hashem". Before Moshe descended the mountain to return to the Jewish

People, a terrible situation occurred. Through imagery, the Satan had convinced the Jews that Moshe had died.

Events moved quickly and culminated with the construction of the Golden Calf. Less than 3,000 of the 600,000 males (from ages 20-26) sinned. The sinners were mainly from the mixed multitude of nations who had joined the Jews leaving Egypt, and not from the Jews themselves. Yet, since the creation and the subsequent serving of this idol were done publicly, and no one protested, all the Jews were considered culpable.

At this point, the Torah continues with the narrative of Moshe descending Har Sinai, carrying the *Luchos*. The Torah describes the *Luchos* in detail (Shmos 32:15-16). The *Luchos* were inscribed on both sides. **Rashi** explains that the words could be seen the same way whether one saw them from the front or from the back.

The **Ohr HaChaim** explains that Hashem Himself had inscribed the Tablets so that the writing could be read from either side, something which would have been impossible if they had been inscribed by human hands. Such writing would appear on the reverse side as if it had been written backwards had it been inscribed on one side by a human scribe.

The **Talmud** (Megillah 2B- 3A) says that the final letters ץ and ם appeared with their respective centres suspended in the air miraculously. The **Chizkuni** says that the raw material that the Tablets consisted of was of Divine manufacture."

The **Ramban** and many other commentaries are bothered by a question. Why was the specific description of the *Luchos* mentioned at this point and not earlier when Hashem had first presented the *Luchos* to Moshe?

The **Ramban** answers, it teaches us that despite the greatness of the *Luchos* and despite how extraordinary they were, Moshe did not hesitate to break them when he saw that the Jews were sinning.

The **Tur Ha'aruch** (by Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher, also known as Ba'al haTurim) adds that despite the fact that the *Luchos* were Hashem's personal handiwork, that did not stop Moshe from smashing them.

Rabbeinu Bachaya asks, how was Moshe permitted to break the *Luchos*? He should have returned them to Hashem or asked Hashem what to do with them. The **Avos D'rav Nosson** says that Hashem told Moshe to break them. **Rabbeinyu Bachaya** answers, when Moshe came in sight of the Golden Calf, the letters on the *Luchos* flew away. At that point, Moshe realized that the *Luchos* no longer retained holiness and that he was permitted to break them.

Returning to our initial question of why the description of the *Luchos* was mentioned at this later point in time, the **Ba'alei Bris Avraham** (by Rabbi Avraham Azulay, a student of Rabbi Chaim Vital) gives a beautiful answer. He says that it is to teach us a very important lesson. Human nature is that we don't appreciate the value of something that we receive without hard work and without paying for it. Once it is gone, THEN we appreciate it. Only when the *Luchos* were broken, that's when their full value was recognized. Then, at that point, the Jews recognized the magnitude of losing such a gift made by Hashem's own hands.

This is a very important lesson for life. We often do not fully appreciate what we have until we lose it. Often, we don't fully appreciate our loving and supportive parents until they have passed on. Do we fully appreciate a good friend before he moves to a different state?

Often, we don't realize to appreciate Hashem's gift of health until it is taken away from us. We must stop, think, and appreciate the loving gifts that Hashem bestows upon us, as well as the loving people He puts in our lives.

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת לעשות את השבת לדרתם ברית עולם Thus shall the children of Israel observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant.

The *Posuk* says, 'to make the *Shabbos*', and we must understand what the intent is 'to make the *Shabbos*'? Can a person 'make' *Shabbos*? The sanctity of *Shabbos* is intrinsic, it derives from itself without the need to 'make' it! Apparently, 'to make the *Shabbos*' is referring to '*Tosefes Shabbos*', the addition to *Shabbos*, when we start *Shabbos* earlier and end it later.

Tosefes Shabbos is 'made' by the person. The *Torah* ends the *Posuk*, '*Ledorosam*', for their generations. It is important that every person be concerned with this so that the future generations, one's children and family members, will observe *Shabbos* for eternal generations.



Emunah

Emunah is *mesugal* for children. The *gematria* of **אמונה** is **בנים** . Actually, *Emunah* is *mesugal* for everything. As it states (*Shemos* 17:12), **ויהי ידיו אמונה עד בא השמש** , "His hands were with *Emunah* until sunset," and the **Divrei Shmuel *zt'l*** (Slonim) explains, just as one does things with his hands, one can do things with his *emunah*. With *emunah*, miracles take place. Someone who has true *emunah*, his *Emunah* becomes like his hand, literally. Just as a person can

accomplish and take care of his needs with his hands, he can also do things with his *emunah*.

If you really want *emunah*, you will be able to lead your life with the fundamentals of *emunah*. There are endless levels of *emunah*, and you can always rise to the next level of *emunah pshutah*- belief in Hashem.

Story Of The Week With Rabbi Mordechai Levin

Rav Elchanan Wasserman, H"YD, was the recognized leader of Orthodoxy in pre-WWII Europe. He was brutally executed on Tammuz 11, 1941, along with the entire Jewish population of the city of Slabodka by the Nazis, may their names be erased.

Rabbi A.L. Sheinbaum, in his sefer "Peninim on the Torah", vividly describes Rav Elchonon's last words. He spoke softly, articulating every word with the inner calm for which he was note:

"Apparently, they consider us tzaddikim in Heaven, for we were chosen to atone for Klal Yisroel with our lives. If so, we must repent completely, here and now. We must realize that our sacrifice will be more acceptable when it is accompanied with repentance. We will thereby rescue our brothers and sisters in America. We are now about to perform the greatest possible Mitzvah, that of dying Al Kiddush Hashem. 'You destroyed it (the Bais Hamikdash) with fire, and with fire you shall rebuild it' (Tefillas Nacheim, Mincha Tisha B'Av). The fire which will now consume our bodies, is the same fire which will give rise to the rebirth of the Jewish People."

Comment: When the Jewish nation was counted in the Midbar, each person had to give a half-shekel coin. Why weren't they commanded to donate a whole coin? Rav Sheinbaum posits that a Jew must always remember that he is only a half, a part of the great Jewish nation. One must never mitigate his responsibility towards others. We, who

survive in this long exile, must carry out on behalf of all those who did not live.

Rav Elchonon was acutely aware that no Jew lives only for himself and predicted that European Jewry's demise would accelerate the growth of Torah in America.

Sugary Saying Of The Week - R' Menachem Lomner

"Appreciate that you can serve Hashem every day, for you must consider the alternative."

The Torah says (Shemos 30:18) that the Kiyor was made so the Kohanim can wash their hands upon entering the Mishkan before starting their work. **The Mishna Berurah** (4:1) quoting the **Rashba** brings down a reason that we wash our hands every morning: since we were granted another day on Earth in order to serve Hashem, and similar to the kohanim who wash their hands upon beginning their service, we also wash. We should be thankful that we were given this opportunity and use it properly.

מעשה אבות... סימן לבנים

אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ כִּי אוֹת הִוא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לָדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם

A native of South Africa and the son of a well-respected rabbi, Mr. Kivi Bernhard is an orator who built a successful diamond business from scratch in the United States. Kivi spoke about his experiences as an orthodox Jew who travels as a keynote speaker working with meeting planners and speaker bureaus across the world. But he is most passionate about Shabbos. "Nothing we do for Shabbos is a sacrifice, rather everything that we do is for Shabbos," he says. "The whole world compromises so that we can keep Shabbos." And he is talking from personal experience.

Kivi was once invited to deliver the opening address at an important Microsoft business conference. Hundreds of international figures key to Microsoft's business were slated to be there. Immediately realizing that the conference was scheduled to be on Shabbos, Kivi told the speaker bureau, "You know I don't work on Saturday."

A senior VP of Microsoft called him up and offered him double, even triple the rate to appear at the conference. He said to Kivi, "What do you need? We'll send you a blank cheque, you write it." At some point they were ready to pay him an astronomical fee, half a year's salary for some people.

Tempting though it was, Kivi knew it was a nisayon from Hashem. This is where his commitment to Judaism was being tested. This is where his integrity as a G-d-fearing Jew was being challenged. This is where he stood at the end of a chain of 4000 years of ancestors who celebrated Shabbos, and he would have to make his own decision now. And he did.

He explained to Microsoft, that his decision did not have to do with money. He was not declining the offer because he wanted more money; he was declining because G-d told the Jewish people to observe the seventh day of the week, Shabbos, as the one day which is beyond money, beyond career, beyond finances, beyond promotions. It was a day of rest and closeness with G-d, a day to pray in the synagogue - a day to spend with your loved ones.

The very next day they got back to him. They said that due to his strict Shabbos policy, they would reschedule the entire conference to Sunday. They asked if that was okay, and he said that would work and the original price would work too.

Indeed, the Sunday conference opened with a keynote address by Mr. Kivi Bernard. A few weeks later, Kivi got a call. It was the same senior Microsoft executive who tried to negotiate with him. He told Kivi that subsequent to the conference, he had an occasion to join

Bill Gates on his private jet where this particular event came up for discussion.

The name Bill Gates is well-known and as the one-time richest man in the world, his wealth and charitable donations are famous world-wide. The Microsoft executive mentioned the unusual experience of having to reschedule the entire conference for Microsoft in order to accommodate "a Jew's observance of the Sabbath."





Bill Gates was quiet for a moment. Then he said, "I am a person who can buy anything I want. From any skyscraper, yacht, jet, to any company under the sun. There is nothing I can't purchase for money. I can buy people. I can buy patents. I can buy talent. I can buy genius. But there is one thing that money cannot buy," Gates intoned as his executives listened intently. "One of them is the Sabbath! For a Jew, it is not up for sale."

Kivi shared the story and said that it was Bill Gates who made him understand just how meaningful his sacrifice really was. Bill Gates made him realize how rich he really was, when he owned something that money could not buy.

Torah Tavlin

וַיִּתְפָּרְקוּ כָּל־הָעָם אֶת־נִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן And all the people stripped themselves of the golden earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron.

The Tchebiner Rav, R' Dov Berish Weidenfeld zt"l, was known for his brilliance in Torah. He was universally accepted by all types of Jews, as he had the unique ability to connect with the greatest Torah minds of the generation, the simple Baal Habos, as well as the non-religious teenager who was trying to find his way back to Yiddishkeit.

Once, however, while giving a shiur in his yeshivah, he suddenly became confused. He lost his train of thought and couldn't figure out the point he was trying to make. Soon, his entire shiur began to unravel.

Sitting in the corner of the room was the now famous **R' Moshe Sternbuch shlit'a**. He offered a comprehensive explanation which seemed to put the puzzle back together again. He literally saved the shiur!

Satisfied, the Tchebiner Rav was able to regain his equilibrium and continue with the shiur. However, before he jumped back into the finer points of lomdus, he looked R' Sternbuch in the eye and said to him, ***"You are not the one to take the credit for this shiur!"***

Startled and utterly confused, R' Moshe managed to give a nod of consent, although he wasn't quite sure why he was nodding. After all, he wasn't trying to show off his brilliance; he was just trying to help put the shiur back together. The Tchebiner Rav smiled and told him, ***"It's not you who should take credit, rather the tefillos of your mother when she painstakingly recited, day in day out, והאר עינינו בתורתך."***

Rashi tells us that when Aharon Hakohen was attempting to stall the Jewish people from creating a "god" to worship, which eventually

became the eigel, he deliberately asked the woman for their jewellery and valuables because he knew that they wouldn't be easily convinced. It is this womanly power of faithfulness and unyielding that has kept the chinuch of our Jewish homes true to its Torah values.

Torah Tavlin - Concepts in Avodas Halev From The Family of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וַיַּעֲבֹר ה' עַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא ה' ה' קל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת

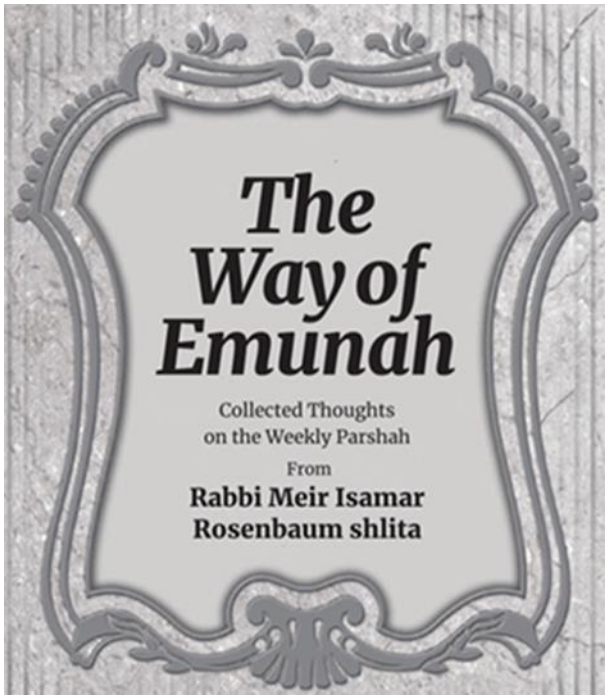
These famous and powerful words, (34:6) recited with intense emotion, are intended to invoke the mercy of our Father in Heaven. Rashi explains that the term **קל** is also a name of mercy, similar to Hashem and not like Elokim which represents din, strictness. He cites a posuk to prove this **קֵלִי קֵלִי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי** (**תהלים כב:ב**). Why does Rashi choose a posuk in Tehillim when he could have cited a posuk from Chumash- **קל נא רפא נא לה**?

Perhaps we can suggest the following. **The Vilna Gaon zt"l** explains that the term **קל** means strong or powerful. Here, too, the attribute we denote is a great and strong mercy, not just your typical mercy. The middos are in ascending order. "Hashem - Hashem - Keil..." The posuk, **קל נא רפא נא לה** is Moshe's tefillah on behalf of his sister, Miriam. It was a regular tefillah not born out of desperation, whereas Esther Hamalka called out **קֵלִי קֵלִי** to Hashem with a sense of urgency [Chazal, Megillah 15a]. It was an emergency. Therefore, Rashi quotes the words that Esther said to grasp that precise definition of Keil - a great and extreme rachamim.

We can present another machshava to explain this as well. There is one letter which creates a powerful difference between these two posukim: the letter yud. In the posuk **קל נא רפא נא לה** it merely says the Name of Hashem. In the posuk Rashi quotes, it says "Keili"- **MY** Hashem.

When a person comes to the realization that Hashem isn't merely a G-d over the universe that facilitates the smooth functioning of the world, but rather He is my own personal protector, the midda of rachamim is invoked in a far greater manner. Thus, Rashi chose the posuk from Tehillim, **קלֵי קלִי**.

Based on this machshava we can better understand the halacha of hiddur mitzvah. The source for this is **זה קלי ואנוהו**, because when a person realizes that it's a real and personal relationship with Hashem, he will seek to glorify the Almighty in a most splendid and mehudar fashion!



Rectifying The Sin in The Same Way It Was Done

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ ... ***This they shall give, everyone who goes through the counting: half a shekel of the holy shekel…***(30:13)

Chazal say that Hashem showed Moshe "a fiery coin" of the half-shekel. **The Bais Aharon of Karlin zy"a** explains that Hashem specifically showed him a coin made of fire to teach him a great lesson about teshuva. The nation sinned by throwing gold and silver into the fire, which created the eigel hazahav. They needed to rectify the aveirah in the same manner in which it was done. Therefore, they had to give a "fiery shekel" as atonement for the aveirah.

This is a lesson for all generations about how to do teshuva. One must be as enthusiastic about rectifying his ways as he was about doing the aveirah in the first place.

Counting Money, Not Pages of Gemara:



It is related that **Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Spector zt"l**, Rov of Kovno, once paid a visit to a wealthy and learned man in his town who was known to be very miserly in an attempt to solicit a donation from him for an urgent tzedakah cause. The rich miser told him, "I am exempt from giving tzedakah because I fulfil my obligations to Hashem by learning Torah all day."

Rav Yitzchok Elchonon replied, "Let me tell you a moshol. During the Crimean War (a war that Russia fought in the mid-19th century), a Russian general was travelling through the country, and he encouraged the residents to donate money to build ships for the army. When he delivered his appeal to one city, all the townsfolk reached into their pockets and donated whatever they could.

"To everyone's surprise, one villager, who was known to be very poor, jumped up and said, 'I pledge to give 100 rubles.' "Everyone wondered how this man, who was far from wealthy, even had 100 rubles to give.

The man then explained, 'A little while ago, I had to pay a ruble as punishment for breaking a law. But I had no money to pay the fine. Instead of paying, I accepted the option of spending a week in jail. Now that I heard that my homeland is in danger, I am prepared to give 100 rubles to help save it. Of course, I don't have the money. Therefore, instead of giving money I'll spend 100 weeks in jail if that will help save Russia."

Rav Yitzchok Elchonon concluded by telling the miser, "You sound like that foolish villager. You want to exempt yourself from your obligation to save lives through your Torah learning? The poor people

benefit as much from your Torah learning as the Russian army would benefit from that villager sitting in jail!"

Rav Yitzchok Elchonon explained: "When Moshe Rabeinu counted Klal Yisroel, he didn't count how many Daf Gemara they had learned. He only counted the coins they gave."

The Lesson of What <u>Was</u> Eaten

... וַיְהִי־שָׁם עִם־ה' אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה לֶחֶם לֹא אָכַל וּמַיִם לֹא שָׁתָה

***He was there with Hashem for forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread and drank no water…*(34:28)**

The Gemara (Bava Metziah 86b) states ***"A person should never do differently than the local custom, as we see that when Moshe went up to the Heavens, he did not eat bread."***

The Ostrovtze Rov zy"a asks: How can we bring proof from Moshe? If he had wanted to eat, would he have been able to? Was there any food to eat in shomayim?

He answers by saying that the proof that one should not act differently than the local custom is not from the fact that Moshe did not eat when he was in shomayim, as there is no food there in any case. Rather, the proof is that after Moshe came back down to earth, he ate and drank like a regular person.

He explains that when Moshe was in shomayim, he had learned how to survive without eating or drinking. Still and all, when he came back down, he followed the earthly custom of eating and drinking, even though he did not actually need to eat or drink. This is a proof that one should not act differently than the local custom.

Difficult roads often to lead to beautiful destinations.

Vechol Maaminim - Pischu Shearim -The Brachah and the Amen - Two Halves That Become a Whole

In the parashah this week, the Torah commands every Jew to give a "machatzis hashekel – terumah l'Hashem," a half a shekel as a donation to Hashem. The question is obvious: Why specifically a half, and why shouldn't each Jew give an entire shekel as a donation to such a lofty purpose such as building the Mishkan?

The Alshich brings a beautiful answer to this in the name of **Rabi Shlomo Alkabetz**, author of the Lecha Dodi piyut that Am Yisrael sings each week at Kabbalas Shabbos. He notes: By the fact that the Torah established that every Jew gives only a half, it seeks to teach us that every Jew on his own cannot consider himself a complete person. But when another Jew joins him – together they can be considered a 'davar shalem,' a complete entity.

It appears that nothing can illustrate this concept better than the subject of – brachos and amen. When a Jew makes a brachah, he can do only half of the act –saying the brachah with kavanah. He fulfils his obligation by doing this. But in order for it to be a brachah sheleimah, he must have another person to complete the second half by answering amen. A brachah without amen is compared to half an entity, as many of the Rishonim and Acharonim have explained (see Rema Orach Chaim 167 2 and Mishnah Berurah ibid 20).

But just like the brachah is not complete when standing on its own, so, too, the amen cannot stand on its own. Amen said randomly has no significance because its entire meaning is affirmation and confirmation. If no one says anything, what does it confirm?

Only after we hear a brachah can we contribute our part and complete it by answering amen. The brachah and amen are not two complete entities joining together, but rather two halves, which together create a complete entity.

We ask that our tefillos and requests should be fulfilled with sheleimus, completion: teshuvah sheleimah, geulah sheleimah, refuah sheleimah. If we want to merit the brachah of Hashem with sheleimus, why should we not express our gratitude with that same shleimus, by making sure that someone is around to answer amen to our brachos.

With blessings of bivrachah sheleimah –venomar amen, Good Shabbos, Yaakov Dov Marmurstein.

Shabbos

Someone once asked **R' Moshe Feinstein z"l** why so many people in America became secular and did not keep Shabbos, when their parents expressed such mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, for Shabbos, even losing their jobs and suffering in order not to desecrate it.

R' Moshe sighed and said, "It is precisely because they had mesiras nefesh." When questioned, R' Moshe explained: "Self-sacrifice is fine for oneself, but it cannot be transmitted to the next generation.

In order for the next generation to develop its own self-sacrifice, the love of Shabbos must be conveyed with joy and happiness; realizing its tranquillity, beauty, and pleasure. Then the Shabbos will become a part of them. But, if one looks at Shabbos merely as a day when one cannot do things, why would the next generation want anything to do with it?"

A Wise Man would say: "It's nice to be important - but it's more important to be nice!"

From Our Sages

וְחַנֹּתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן וְרִחַמְתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם ***And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy*** (33:19) The way an individual acts towards others is the way he himself will be treated by Heaven. If one is merciful to his fellow man, and behaves in a good and kind manner, G-d will be merciful towards him, even if he is really not deserving. "And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" - G-d will act accordingly to the person who always says "I will be gracious," and will be merciful to the person who always says "I will be merciful." (**Razin D'Oraita**)



Circle Time by Rabbi Yitzchok Landa

Highlights from the Midrash

When Moshe Rabbeinu descended from Shamayim after receiving the *Luchos*, his face was shining with a special glow. Klal Yisrael were afraid to approach him until he covered his face with a mask, which he wore for the rest of his life—except when he was teaching Torah to the people.

The glow came from a drop of ink left over in the quill when he finished writing the Torah. Moshe put that drop on his head, and it caused his face to shine. Moshe did not know that would happen and didn't realize he was shining. Why was there leftover ink?

The first *aleph* in *Vayikra* was made small because of Moshe's humility, causing less ink to be used. When Moshe returned to the camp, the glow from his face struck the golden *Egel* and caused it to be burned to a crisp.

Other people in history were also given a glowing face. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 31b) relates that Mar Ukva's face glowed. Other sources mention that the Levush and the Maharil experienced a similar phenomenon.



Circle Time by Rabbi Yitzchok Landa

הָעָשִׁיר לֹא יַרְבֶּה וְהַדַּל לֹא יַמְעִיט מִמַּחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל The wealthy may not give more, and the poor may not give less, than half a shekel (Shemos 30:15)

Why did the Torah choose half a *shekel*? Isn't there a whole coin that we can give? And why can't the rich give more? What's wrong with adding a little?

Abba, I'm tired." "I know, Binyamin, so am I. But we still have a long way to go before we get home." "Abba, can't we stop to rest? My feet hurt from walking so much."

"Mine too, *zeeskeit*. I also want to stop. But I don't want to get back to our city after the gates are locked. We may have to spend the whole night in the fields if that happens, and that could be really dangerous."

"What's so dangerous in the fields at night, Abba?"

"Well, there are lions and bears, and wolves and robbers… but never mind that, Binyamin. Let's just keep moving."

The man and his eight-year-old son continued walking in silence for a few minutes. It was nearly noontime, and the sun was climbing high in the sky. They still had time before the gates of the city locked for the evening, but the trip was long. They had many miles to go, many mountains to climb and descend, before they would arrive at their hometown. There was time for only one rest, and they needed to use it carefully.

"Abba, I'm too tired. I can't walk anymore." Wordlessly, the man stopped. He looked around at the sun-drenched, rocky landscape, shimmering in the heat. It was blazing and dry, but there was no choice. He wiped the sweat from his brow, scooped up the boy, and heaved him onto his shoulders. "Here, *zeeskeit*, you ride, and I'll walk."

The two continued on for a while. Slowly, riding on his father's shoulders, the boy recovered his good spirits and began to chatter. The father struggled on, now bearing the precious weight of his young son in addition to the strain of the walk.

"Abba, it isn't fair," Binyamin said. "Why do you have to work so hard, while I get to have a nice ride?"

"Don't worry, there will come a time when you will be able to help me with things I can't do," his father answered.

"What could I possibly help you with, Abba?" "I don't know, we'll find out. Like the story with the mouse and the lion."



"What story?" "A mouse once bothered a lion by running around too much. The lion caught him and was going to eat him, but the mouse begged to be let go. 'One day I'll pay you back!' he promised. The lion laughed—what could a little mouse do for a mighty lion?—but he let him go anyway.

Some time later, the lion was caught by a hunter's net, and the mouse saved him by chewing through the ropes."

The father fell silent, concentrating his energy on putting one foot in front of the other. His progress was slow, and time wore on.

Finally, weary and exhausted, the two arrived at the gates to the city. Dusk had just fallen. With sinking hearts, they approached the entrance. The gates were locked!

The man grabbed the tall, thick metal gates in his hands. He rattled them as hard as he could. It was no use! No one could hear them. A note pasted to the gates explained that they had been locked early, in honour of a holiday. Everyone was safe in their homes, except the father and son!

"Abba, what shall we do?"

With his son still on his shoulders, the father began to walk along the wall, carefully examining the wall, its stones, and the gates. Suddenly, he pointed. "Binyamin, see there! See that hole in the wall?"

"Yes?" "There's a small gap between the gate and the wall. No man could fit in there, but I think you can! I'll hoist you up there and you'll slide through and come open the gate for me!"

Quickly, the two carried out the plan. The small boy was

able to slip through the hole and soon had the gates open from the inside. The father passed through and then locked the gates behind him before continuing home.

"You see, Binyamin! You were able to help me. If not for you, I would have been stuck outside all night."

The rich and poor must both realize that they cannot do everything alone. Both must be open to help from each other and must see themselves as just a half of the whole.

"Stop worrying. The more you trust Hashem, the more He Provides" - The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Circle Time by Rabbi Yitzchok Landa

The haftorah of Parshas Ki Sisa is the famous story of Eliyahu Hanavi on Har Hacarmel.

The wicked King Achav led almost all of *Malchus Yisrael* to *avodah zarah*. His wife, Izevel, persecuted and killed as many *nevi'im* as she could find. Achav mocked Eliyahu Hanavi, asking why there was still plenty of rain despite their idol worship. In response, Eliyahu decreed that it would not rain again until the people did *teshuvah*.

Nearly three years of famine followed. Eliyahu went into hiding, while Achav put a life sentence on his head. Ovadiah, a tzaddik who worked for Achav, secretly supported 100 *nevi'im* in a cave.

After two and a half years, Hashem told Eliyahu that the time had come for the famine to end. Eliyahu set out to appear before Achav. Meanwhile, Achav and Ovadiah had gone searching for water. Eliyahu presented himself to Ovadiah with a message for Achav, challenging him to gather all of Israel to observe a showdown between himself, 450 prophets of the Baal and 400 prophets of Asheirah on Har Hacarmel. Before all of Klal Yisrael, Eliyahu challenged the prophets of *avodah zarah* to bring a *korban*, after which he would bring one to Hashem. Whichever would be consumed by Divine fire would be proven truthful.

The people forced the Baal prophets to agree. Of course, the Baal prophets could not get fire to come down from Heaven. They had planted a man named Chiel inside the altar to light a fire, but Hashem sent a snake to kill him. The prophets called to Baal all day, and Eliyahu made fun of them—as is the halachah.

When it was Eliyahu's turn, he flooded his *mizbe'ach* with water and *davened* to Hashem. A fire descended from Shamayim and consumed the *korban*, *mizbe'ach*, rocks, dust, and water. All of Yisrael saw and declared, "Hashem is G-d!" and resolved to serve Him alone, committing to *teshuvah*.

Connection to the Parshah

As in the *parshah*, the haftorah relates a time when most of Klal Yisrael engaged in idol worship, and a single leader stood up to the sinners. Moshe and Eliyahu both turned the people to *teshuvah* and challenged Hashem with their *tefillos*. Also, both contain Hashem's ultimate forgiveness, even for terrible sins. Each teach us an important *tefillah* formula to ask for *mechilah*.

You Know Navi

The climax of our most powerful *tefillos* is the sevenfold repetition of the phrase, "*Hashem Hu HaElokim*." This concludes Yom Kippur and any *tefillah* gathering at which *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim* is recited. These words were the ones uttered by Klal Yisrael at Har Hacarmel after they witnessed one of the greatest events of *kiddush Hashem* of all time.

Gematria

וְשָׁלַחְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ מַלְאָךְ... כִּי לֹא אֶעֱלֶה בְּקִרְבְּךָ כִּי עַם קְשֵׁה עֹרֶף אַתָּה פֶּן אֲכַלְךָ בַּדָּרֶךְ
And I will send a malach before you…for I will not go among you, because you are a stubborn people, lest I destroy you on the way (Shemos 33:2-3)

אַל תַּמֵּר בּוֹ כִּי לֹא יִשָּׂא לְפִשְׁעֲכֶם כִּי שְׁמִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ ***Do not rebel against him, for he will not bear your sins, because My Name is in him. (Shemos 23:21)***

Hashem sends a *malach* to be with us, instead of Himself. What is meant by "My Name is in him?"

The *malach* sent to be with us is the famous מטטרון.

ש-ד-י = 314 = מטטרון · *(Rashi)*

This Date In Jewish History



The 18th of Adar is the day of the Purim of Sana'a, capital of Yemen. The legend of Purim Sana'a refers to an unknown time when the Jews were miraculously saved from a plot hatched against them by the counsellors of the King of Yemen.

The king had many Jewish advisors of whom his other counsellors were jealous. The counsellors murdered the king's son, the crown prince, on Purim and framed the Jews for the murder. They had convinced the crown prince to visit the Jewish quarter of Sana'a and held his sword up as he dismounted from his horse, killing him.

The prince had been surrounded by Jewish well-wishers at the time and the king was convinced that one of them had murdered the prince. He gave the Jews three days to deliver the murderer. If they failed to do so, the whole Jewish Quarter would be set on fire and all the Jews would perish in the flames!

The terrified Jews of Sana'a fasted and *davened* for three days. On the third day, a child asked to be taken to the king, saying he could identify the killer. He placed a paper with the word "*emes*" on the forehead of the dead prince, who was lying in state before the king, and asked him, "Who killed you?" The prince sat up and pointed to the counsellors. He then lay still and the word on the paper lost its *aleph*, changing to "*meis*."

The true murderers were executed, and the Jews were saved.

Parsha Thoughts By: Mordechai Sapoznick



The Torah discusses the mitzvah of Shabbos both before and after the חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל. Why?

The Chochmas Chaim answers that Bnei Yisroel were afraid that because they sinned by making an עֵגֶל, they had broken the connection between them and the Torah, and as a result of this, they were no different than any other nation. Therefore, Hashem commanded them again after the חֵטְא to keep Shabbos.

Since a non-Jew is not permitted to keep Shabbos, by giving Bnei Yisroel the mitzvah of Shabbos, it comforted them because they realized that they were still Hashem's chosen nation. (Dvar Torah from **ספר פרשה פשעטיל**)

From Our Sages

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם ***The Israelites shall keep Shabbat, to make the Shabbat an eternal covenant for their generations*** (Exod. 31:16)

The word for "their generations," לְדֹרֹתָם can also be read "ledirosam," which means "their dwelling places." The Torah is teaching us that the Jewish people should strive to make the Shabbat beautiful and majestic in their homes. (**Iturei Torah**)

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky - Sacrifice and Reward

The Torah recounts the building of the Mishkan. "See, I have singled out by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah." (31:2) The Midrash (Rabba Shmos 48:3) explains that the Torah traces Betzalel's lineage to his grandfather Chur, who sacrificed his life to protest the sin of the Golden Calf. Why is that relevant to the Mishkan?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Tiferes Jerusalem, and leading halachic authority in the world, once spent a summer in a cottage a few miles away from a camp. His student would pick him up every morning and drive him to the camp, where he would daven with the minyan. One day, due to a misunderstanding, the student did not come, and Rav Moshe, who was then in his seventies, had no choice but to walk three miles to the minyan.

As the tired and heavily perspired gadol hador walked into the shul at the end of davening, the student realized his error, and ran over to ask forgiveness. Rav Moshe calmed him down and said, "You have nothing to be concerned about. Every day, I get a ride to shul, which is easy. But today, I received a bigger mitzvah with greater reward – for it was much harder for me to walk to shul than to get a ride!"

My grandfather, **Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky**, explains. The Gemara (Yomah 72a) tells us that the Mishkan will stand forever. Sforno (Shmos 38:21) explains that one of the reasons for thus is because it was built by Bezalel son of Uri son of Chur.

When a mitzvah is done with a high level of belief and sacrifice, it is that much more valuable, and deserving a greater reward. Chur, who did the ultimate sacrifice – he was murdered during his protest for Hashem's honour - was the grandfather of Betzalel. Chur's emunah and sacrifice merited him this great reward – that the Mishkan built by his grandson, will be immortal. Good Shabbos!

A Different Universe By Rabbi Y.Y.Jacobson

The world is different on Shabbos. The universe is different on Shabbos. You look at the trees, you look at the stars, you look at the firmament. You look at yourself. You look at your spouse. You look at your children. You look at your home. You look at nature. And you see - **כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא אלקים לעשות.** That is the gift of Shabbos.

But not every one of us is The Heilige Ruzhiner [**ישראל פרידמן רוז'ין**]. We need help and we need guidance. We need mentorship and inspiration. We need education to be able to appreciate what Shabbos is. What's its purpose? what's its meaning? What's its function? How can it become, not just an important day, or a day to catch up on some sleep or good food, but rather a day that every single week rejuvenates us, and transforms us into the human being that we are capable of becoming.

Shabbos is so great, cherish every moment of it.



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

Following the Churban of the Beis Hamikdash, everything has been damaged – except for the Torah.

She remains perfect. – Harav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa.

Patience

The Jews miscalculated when Moshe Rabbeinu was supposed to return from shamayaim, and when he didn't come down on the day they anticipated, they became impatient and demanded of Aaron to make a new G-d for them. Aharon cooperated, hoping to buy time, but the Jews ended up sinning with the Golden Calf-Chait Hae'gel.



We see from here the importance of patience. Sometimes it's hard to wait that extra hour, that extra day, but if we slow down and wait a little, we can save ourselves a lot of heartache and stress. When we are in the heat of the moment, we will most likely respond from a place of emotion.

But if we take just a few seconds to stop, drop what we are doing and breathe through the moment, we can actually approach the interaction from a place of logic and respond with empathy and care. When we are more patient with those close to us, we can deal with stress and tension with a different mindset and strengthen our relationships.

May we be able to work on our patience, become more disciplined in the process and see how it benefits our own lives!

Good shabbos! -D. Saull 🌿🌺🌷🌺🌿

A Wise Man would say:

"Truth is the property of no individual but is the treasure of all men."

The Luchos - Rabbi Yaakov Rachimi

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv said - We know that when Moshe Rabeinu came down the mountain, he was holding the Luchos. Chazal tell us that the Luchos were extremely heavy. They actually weighed a few tonnes. So how was it possible that Moshe could bear their weight? Says the gemarah [Shab. 104a] that it was a miracle. **שֶׁבַּלּוּחוֹת בְּנֵס הָיוּ עוֹמְדִין** . – What happened?

Moshe Rabeinu came down holding the Luchos, and what does he see? He sees Klal Yisrael dancing around the eigel, partying, screaming and drinking. As soon as Moshe saw this, the Luchos got too heavy for him to carry- the miracle ran away, and he dropped them on the ground, and they smashed.

Says Reb Elyashiv, what a tremendous lesson. The Torah, Shabbos, brachos, tefillin, shacharis, mincha, don't steal, don't talk lashon horah, don't offend, tzitzis, kashrus etc. There are so many mitzvos boruch Hashem. Literally, 24/7 we are occupied with mitzvos.

A person might think that there is so much to keep and do- it's too much. But you should realise, that religion carries itself. When a person keeps the mitzvos, he doesn't feel it as a burden- he loves it.

However, as soon as a person has an eigel in his life, like idolising things that he should not be busy with, celebrities, fashion, food, cars, holidays or money and when you have a golden calf- an idol in your life, than chas v'shalom, the Luchos, The Torah gets too heavy, and then you could drop religion and not follow The Torah anymore.

Yes, we go to work to make money. We need to eat, we need clothing, we need a holiday, we need cars and houses. But all these things are tools in order for us to serve Hashem. We live to serve Hashem.

Says Reb Elyashiv, be careful, know that your goal and your role models and your priorities in life, are Hashem, Torah, and Tzadikim.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn – Project Mesorah



I remember a few years ago I saw a transcribe by Reb Shimon Finkleman of a shmuz by the **Manchester Rosh Yeshiva – Rav Segal**. He quotes the Pasuk 32:7 **וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֶךְ־רֵד כִּי שִׁחֵת עַמְּךָ** ***Go down because your nation became flawed.***

Rashi says - **לך רד:מגדולתך** ***Go down from your greatness.***

Rav Segal asks, what has the Yidden sinning with the eigel got to do with Moshe Rabeinu going down in greatness? He wasn't even there, he was in shamayim?

He says a gevaldige vort. He brings the principle **כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה.** We are all responsible, one for the other. And, he says that the neshama of Klal Yisrael is one, and everything that a person does whether it is **לטוב או לרע** affects the rest of Klal Yisrael.

And therefore, when you do a mitzva, you elevate everyone in Klal Yisrael. And chas v'sholom, if a person does an aveira, he minimises the value and worth of the whole of Klal Yisrael.

So we have to know, that everything that we do, in public or in private, will affect the whole of Klal Yisrael, because we are all one big neshama. So it is a big responsibility for everything that you do, to ensure that you are elevating Klal Yisrael and not chas v'sholom degrading them.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב זצ״ל- נפטר כ׳ט שבט תשע׳ד

**וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל֮ לֵאמֹר֒ אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַ֣י תִּשְׁמֹ֔רוּ כִּ֚י אֹ֣ות הִ֔וא בֵּינִ֖י וּבֵינֵיכֶ֑ם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶ֔ם לָדַ֗עַת כִּ֚י אֲנִ֣י יְהוָ֔ה מְקַדִּשְׁכֶֽם "*And you, speak to the children of Israel and say: 'Only keep My Shabbasos! For it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I, Hashem, make you holy.*" (31:13)



The Chofetz Chaim Zt'l in sefer **שם עולם** asks what does the Torah mean when the Pasuk says that Shabbos is sign between us and The Riboino Shel Olam?

We know that a sign is like Tefillin which (we don't wear on Shabbos or YomTov) is called an **אות**. But why is Shabbos called an **אות**?

The Chofetz Chaim brings a beautiful mashul as follows: If you would walk down the cobbled street (at his time in the *shtettles*.) and above the shops in the town center, there would be a sign displaying what the shop sold, e.g., the bakery, butcher, haberdashery etc.

Imagine you walk past the shop, and the shutters are down. That means that they are closed. There is no one there now, but it doesn't mean that the shopkeeper has left for good - they are still usually open for business.

For as long as there is a sign above the shop, means that they are still in business. Once the sign has been removed, this means that the shop is no longer trading.

The Chofetz Chaim says, that when the Pasuk says - **כִּי אֹות הִוא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם** - this is a sign that I am connected with you – if you are keeping **שבת**.

For as long as you are keeping **שבת**, it is a **אות** that you are still there, you are open for business- the sign is still up.

Keeping Shabbos is one of the primary requisites. We may not be perfect in the rest of our avodah – the shutters may sometimes be down – but so as long as the sign of Shabbos is still there, it means that we are still open for business!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

**וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ כִּי אֹות הִוא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לָדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם "*And you, speak to the children of Israel and say: 'Only keep My Shabbasos! For it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I, Hashem, make you holy.*" (31:13)

The Ramban says that the word אַךְ is a *Miyut*. You must be Shomer Shabbos in all circumstances – except for two circumstances where you can violate Shabbos – For Pikuach Nefesh, and the mitzvah of Bris Milah.

Chazal tell us that the fact that this is juxtaposed to the building of the Miskan, tells us that even though the building of the Mishkan was a tremendous edifice that contained within it the Shechina,

nevertheless, it could not be built on Shabbos. So we see, that the kedusha of a Yid even surpasses that.

The Chasam Sofer says, that this shows the love that The Riboino Shel Olam has for every single Yid. Milah – which enhances the kedusha of a Yid, and Pikuach Nefesh – which shows the extent of the strong love that Hashem has for all of us, so that everything pales into insignificance, to the extent that even Shabbos is over-ridden!

One of the stories that was told over at my shver's (**Dayan Gershon Lopian**) hesped was as follows: There was a woman, whose mother was unfortunately terminally ill, in a hospice in Birmingham. Her brother from London had just been to visit her on Thursday night and was on his way back home.

As he is preparing for Shabbos and is about to go into the shower just before Shabbos, he gets a call from the hospice that his mother wants him to come back straight away.

He was frantic. What should he do? So he called my shver (the Dayan) and asked what he should do? The Dayan replied that he should get in the car and go right away without delay.

I went back to Birmingham on Shabbos, and Baruch Hashem my mother was ok.

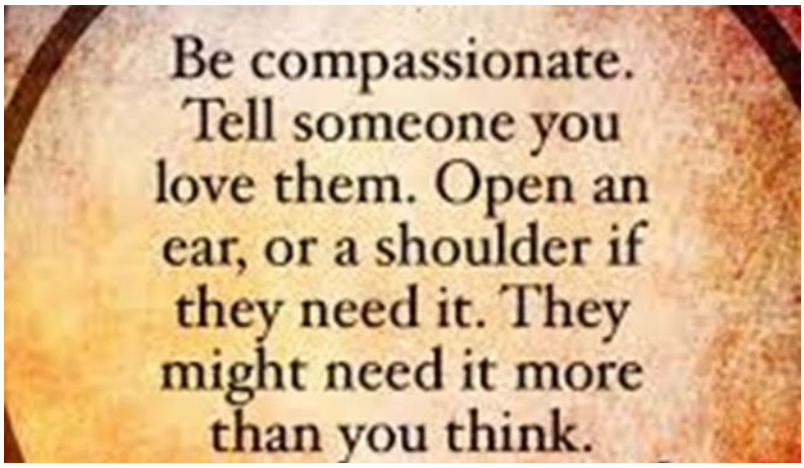
I called the Dayan up after Shabbos to explain his p'sak. I asked him, "Was it because of **כיבוד אב ואם** that overrode Shabbos?

He answered, "No, it's very simple. Your mother is extremely ill. She asked for you to come. If you would have said, 'No I can't come because of Shabbos', the distress that this may have caused her, could have resulted in ending her life earlier. The knowledge that you were on the way, would have undoubtedly extended her life at least until you had seen her again, even for only a few minutes."

That is Pikuach Nefesh – Every second that you can keep a Yid alive overrides Shabbos! This is the importance and appreciation of the life of a Yid! **כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם**.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

One of the attributes of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that we try to emulate, is **וְחַנֹּתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן וְרִחַמְתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם** – '***and I will favour when I wish to favour, and I will have compassion when I wish to have compassion***.' (33:19)



Chazal tell us, that for people who are compassionate towards others, Hashem will give them a '**מתנת חינם**' as well.

There is a sefer **משנת יוסף** – on Mesecha Berachos that writes the following story that occurred in the city of Krakow:



There was a very wealthy man, and whatever type of business he put his hands to, he was extremely successful. He was an **איש מצליח**. He was also **מצליח** with his children and ended up being the mechutan of **Rav Shimon Sofer** – (**The Chasam Sofer**'s son.)

People were astonished at this man's good fortune, and there was obviously a reason for it. One of the Rabbonim asked him, "What's the secret of your success?"

He answered, "When I got engaged, my future father-in-law promised a handsome and significant dowry. After we were married, my wife and I went to the in-laws for Shabbos. I noticed that everything in their house was very scarce and portrayed a house that was far less than opulent. Even his candlesticks were brass and not the usual silver. He was obviously not a man of means… in actual fact, he was living in dire poverty! And yet, he had provided me with enough funds to live very comfortably.

When we got home, I sat down with my wife, (in our lavish apartment) and she told me, that they wanted me as a son-in law so badly, that they sold all their belongings to make it happen!

When I heard this, I said, 'I can't have this. I can't live like this.'

After Shabbos, I took everything that we had, and returned it to my parents-in-laws. The next day, I borrowed 20,000 roubles. I gave 10,000 straight away to my in-laws, and with the other 10,000 roubles, I went to the market, and I bought the necessities that we need for our home, and with the rest, I invested it in buying some goods.

From that deal, I can't tell you how successful it was, and anything that I subsequently purchased made me a handsome profit. That is where my riches came from, and my success has continued ever since."

"There is no doubt in my mind, that this is what brought about my success." I was - **חַנּוֹתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן וְרִחַמְתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם**

There is a **Rama in Even Ha'Ezer** that says: If one behaves like this, they will become an **איש מצליח**. **The Chazon Ish** said, "There is no greater **הבטחה** (promise) than this."

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

There is a famous palindrome at the beginning of the sedra. Everybody had to give a half Shekel.

וְנָתְנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה׳ - the word וְנָתְנוּ can be read both forwards and backwards. This teaches us that the money that one gives to Tzeddakah will be returned to him.

A few weeks ago, there was a fund-raising dinner in Manchester in aid of Boinei Olam. One of the participants committed to a certain sum on a monthly basis.

One week later, he received an e-mail from his insurance company that he had overpaid for his car insurance- [he had told them that his wife only drove automatics, when in fact, she had a manual license] and they were going to refund the difference.

The next day he looked at his account to see if the money had been returned to his account. At the same time, he checked to see if his monthly standing order had started. He was gob-smacked to see that he had been refunded the sum of £324. His first monthly installment had also been taken out -£27/Month. 12 x 27 = 324! Nobody ever loses out by giving Tzeddaka! - וְנָתְנוּ

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

When Moshe Rabeinu came down with the לֻחוֹת, he saw the עגֶל הַזָּהָב. The פָּסוּק says, וַיַּ֣רְא מֹשֶׁה֮ אֶת־הָעָם֒ כִּ֣י פָרֻ֔עַ הוּא. Moshe saw that the people were troubled. (32:25)"

Onkelos translates this to mean that the people were idle. We learn from here that when people just spend their time doing nothing, it brings them to sin. A person should always use their time to learn Torah and do the mitzvos that Hashem gave us to do.



Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl relates how one of the most infamous heretics of the pre-World War II era, a heretic whose virulent writings dripped with venom against anything even remotely related to *frumkeit*, religious observance, returned to Jewish observance.

It occurred during the war, when he came face -to- face with the devotion and commitment evinced by a *frummer Yid*. He went by the name Priokin.

The *Ponovezher Rav, zl*, met Priokin in America and asked him, "Tell me, what was it that catalysed your return to *Yiddishkeit*?" Priokin wanted very much to bare his soul and reveal the inner turmoil with which he had dealt during the war.

"At the beginning of the war," he began, "I was in Warsaw when it came under siege. Through much suffering, I was able to make it to Vilna where I walked around like a refugee. Gone was my once proud self-esteem. I was like all other Jews, searching for crumbs to sustain myself. My entire world had been destroyed. My soapbox had been the newspaper in which I was free to write what I wanted and heap vitriol against whomever I pleased.

The newspaper was gone, my readership, refugees like myself, had nothing. My 'restaurant' was the soup kitchen, where I stood in line like everyone else. My once impressive apparel was now in tatters. I walked through the streets dejected, looking for shelter and a roof over my head.

"Suddenly, a loud explosion rent the air. I knew that I might not be so lucky the next time. The bombs were falling. I had to locate a shelter. I ran to the nearest building. Ironically, it was a *bais hamedrash*, a building I had not entered in years.

For some reason, I felt I would be safe here. "Bombs were exploding outside. Who knew how long the walls of the *bais hamedrash* would protect me?

I hid under a table for added protection from both the bombs and the blood-thirsty murderers who were searching for those who had survived the bombing. No one was safe. Hiding under the table, I heard feint sounds. Two *bachurim*, *yeshivah* students, were next to me beneath the table, heads together, learning! They were immersed in a *sugya*, topic, of the *Gemorah*.

"When I saw this, I understood what it is that makes us different. We have access to the eternal wellspring. If two *yeshivah* students can concentrate on their learning while bombs are falling all over, they know the truth. This is where the desire for the truth could be quenched. Then and there, I decided that if I lived, I would become a *baal teshuvah* and spend the rest of my mortal days imbibing from the wellspring of truth."



וביום פקדי ופקדתי עלהם חטאתם ***On the day I make an accounting (of sins) I will bring their sin to account against them****. (32:34)*

The sin of the Golden Calf is mind-boggling. *Klal Yisrael* is essentially a holy people. In addition, this outrage occurred shortly after the Giving of the Torah. How could they have fallen to such a nadir, so fast?

While a number of expositions focus on the nation's spiritual/emotional level, the simple explanation for their actions is that they really did not perpetrate the sin. It was actually the *eirev rav*, mixed multitude of Egyptians, who joined our people as we were leaving, claiming allegiance to Hashem. They were the ones responsible for making the Golden Calf; they were the ones who acted profligately, who exchanged Hashem for a molten calf of their own creation.

Specifically, it was Bilaam's sons, Yonus and Yabrus, who had originally served Pharaoh as his magicians, that had joined the Jewish people along with the *eirev rav*, who made the calf.

If so, why was the entire nation (excluding *Shevet Levi*) held in contempt – until this very day? Why are we still paying for the Golden Calf?

The answer is one that goes to the core of much that we are guilty of even today: We watched; we stood there with folded hands; we did not protest the outrage that was happening before everyone's eyes.

Indifference to *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name, is tantamount to committing the sin. One who cares about *Yiddishkeit* will not stand idly by as usurpers who flagrantly violate the Torah egregiously impugn it to suit their fancy.

On the other hand, we may not view anyone who violates the Torah as doing so maliciously. In most circumstances, he is acting out of ignorance, as the product either of an upbringing in which he was not taught anything or of living in an environment which was not conducive to *shemiras ha'mitzvos*.

The protest that we might want to register must be well-thought out and carefully mulled over to ascertain that, indeed, the individual had violated the Torah. Quite possibly, to the spectator's view, the individual transgressed a prohibition, while, in truth, he had a very good rationale to justify this behaviour.

The following story, related by ***Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl***, is not only an eye-opener, but it also illustrates the frightening scenario that can occur when we do not judge others favourably and do not look at the big picture before passing judgment.

A frum family from Tel Aviv adopted a couple who were recent emigres from Russia. They were both well-educated doctors, and they expressed an interest in wanting to learn and know more about

Yiddishkeit. The host family went out of their comfort zone to help the immigrants acclimate themselves to the country. Until now, they had lived in a country under the reign of an oppressive regime, which not only scoffed at religion as being the "opiate of the people," but actually forbade it and severely punished anyone who adhered to Torah and *mitzvos*.

All went well. It was an idyllic relationship. The Bnei Brak couple was excited that they had brought a once assimilated family back to *Yiddishkeit*. Then, one Friday night, after parting from one another in their usually friendly manner, for some reason the host walked over to the window of his third-floor apartment to see his guests flagging down a taxi, entering the vehicle and taking off.

It goes without saying that the disappointment and hurt the host family felt was saddening. Sadness gave way to anger, as they exclaimed, "What *chutzpah* these people have! They exhaust our time, making us believe that they were really interested in learning about *Yiddishkeit*. They joined us for the *Shabbos* meals, as if they cared. They just wanted our food. Did they have to take a taxi right in front of our house? Could they not have walked to the next corner, out of sight, and flagged a taxi there? Furthermore, in order to take a taxi, they would have needed money. So, they had money in their pockets the entire visit. Who knows? Maybe they even came by taxi. How dare they sit at our table, eating our food and singing *zemiros* as if they were observant, while, in truth, they were not."

Their decision was made. They would sever all relationship with the Russian couple. The couple called a number of times and received a cool response. After a while, they took the hint and accepted the message: we are no longer interested in you.

Two months passed, and they received a call from an acquaintance of the Russian couple. The husband had passed away in the prime of his life. Could they make a *shivah* call to the young widow? She was heartbroken and had few friends. They decided they would go. A

shivah call is not contingent upon a relationship. A Jew is grieving; his fellow is present to comfort him.

They went to the Russian couple's apartment where the young widow, her eyes red from weeping, greeted them. They started a conversation, the way people do at a *shivah* home, first abstract, then talking about the *niftar*, deceased, his sudden passing, and what they could do to help. "What was the cause of death? Had he been sick?"

"He suffered a massive heart attack – in the hospital."

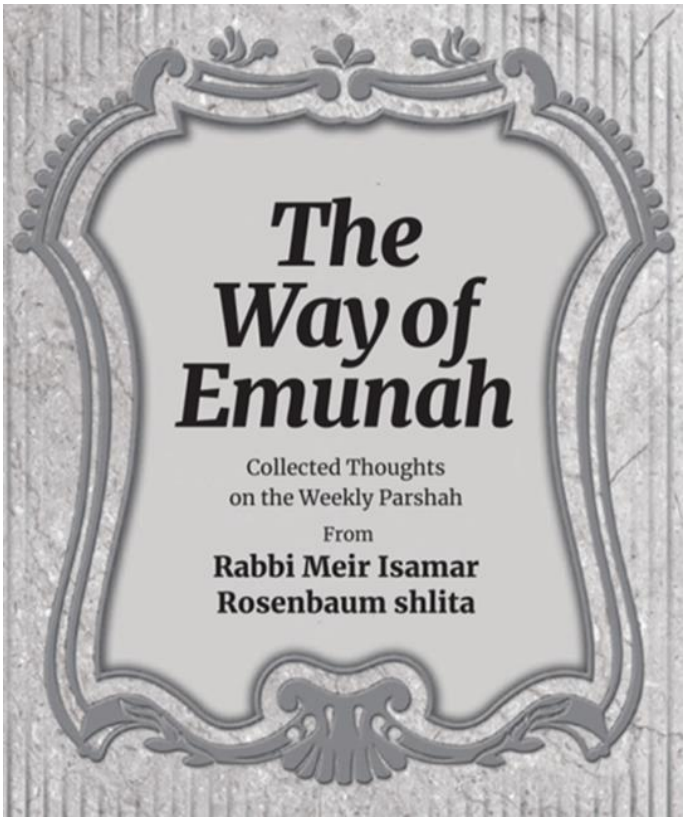
"Did he suffer from heart disease?" the Bnei Brak couple asked.

"He suffered from a heart problem that surfaced a short while ago. The first episode happened when we were leaving your home the last *Shabbos* that we were there. As we were walking down the stairs, my husband suddenly began to complain of chest pains and pain in his arm. Being a doctor, he knew this could be serious. When we reached the street, he immediately flagged down a taxi and went straight to the hospital. We made it in time, and they saved him. This time, his heart just gave out and he died."

We all make mistakes in judgment. We protest and often get carried away. It is prudent to step back, think and analyse the situation and ask ourselves, "Could we be mistaken? Could there be a reason for this behaviour which eludes us?"

Thinking before we act can spare repercussions for both parties involved.

***The Chazon Ish* would often say, "Hashem helps the moment a person doesn't see any natural means for his salvation."**



Picking One's Head Out of The Water

כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם 'When you count the heads of the children of Yisroel according to their numbers...' (30:12)

Sefer Divrei Yisroel explains this pasuk with a comparison to someone who is drowning in the sea. If his head is above water, he has the ability to be saved, but once his head is underwater, he can no longer be helped.

The same applies to earning a living and one's financial situation, which are compared by Chazal (Pesachim 118A) to a raging sea. The most important thing is to keep one's head up and making sure it doesn't sink under the waves of worry about parnassah.

The pasuk states: "Ki sisa es rosh bnei Yisroel l'pekudeihem." The word "sisa" can mean to lift up. Accordingly, the pasuk is saying that the most important thing is to keep up one's head and mind. "L'pekudeihem" can be understood as a reference to "pekudei Hashem", i.e., Hashem's Torah.

Thus, the pasuk is saying that when one lifts up his head by delving into His Torah, his head remains above water even if the body is busy with earning a livelihood and is "underwater". The Gemara says that one's body gets pulled after the head (Eruvin 41A). This means that even though the body is immersed in gashmius, it will be dragged after the head, which is immersed in ruchnius.

Through Tzedakah, One Fulfils All 613 Mitzvos



The Gemara (Bava Basra 10B) says that Moshe asked Hashem how the heads of Klal Yisroel can be uplifted and Hashem answered, "With Ki Sisa." Rashi explains that they should be made to give a donation to tzedakah.

The Chida zt"l (Sefer Maris Ayin) explains by quoting the Gemara (Bava Basra 9A) that says that the mitzvah of tzedakah is equal to all other mitzvos. Accordingly, he says that Moshe's question of how to "uplift the heads of Klal Yisroel" was how someone can fulfil all 613 mitzvos. Not every mitzvah applies to every person, so how can anyone fulfil all 613?

Hashem answered that one can fulfil the entire Torah through tzedakah because tzedakah is equal to all other mitzvos. This is alluded to by the fact that the words כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל, which refer to tzedakah, have a gematriah of 613.

Ruchnius – Gashmius

R' Yisrael Salanter's wife related that when they got married, they made a deal to divide up the decision-making in their home. Anything that was related to "ruchnius," spirituality, would be decided by R' Yisrael. Anything that related to the "gashmius," the physicality of their home, would be the decision of the Rebbetzin.

A listener asked her how that arrangement worked out. Smiling, she replied, "To be perfectly honest, I've never made any decisions. To R' Yisrael, EVERYTHING is a matter of ruchnius!"

Giving Tzedakah With Fiery Passion

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ This they shall give, everyone who goes through the counting: half a shekel according to the holy shekel… (30:13)



My grandfather, **Rav Mordchele of Nadvorna zy"a** (Sefer Maamar Mordechai), explains Rashi's words that Moshe Rabenu was shown a fiery coin and told "like this is what they should give", by saying that the pasuk is coming to teach us the best way to give charity.

When one gives charity to a poor man, he should not hand it over with a frown and act as if he is being forced to give it. Rather, he should give with smile and a full heart. He should hand over the money with a fiery enthusiasm and desire to help.

Moshe was shown that tzedakah should be given with such enthusiasm and zeal. When one gives money to the poor, he should be burning with desire to help a fellow Jew.

While speaking at a gathering to benefit his mosdos, the **Satmar Rov zy"a** related the following :

Any time a person performs a mitzvah or does any act in this world for the sake of Hashem, he creates an arousal Above. Even if a physical item is used to perform the action, it is sanctified and has great power in shomayim. For example, when a person gives a coin to charity in this world, it becomes a fiery coin in the Upper World that contains great power.

With this in mind, he explains that when Hashem showed Moshe a fiery coin, He was teaching him that money given to tzedakah in this

world is not merely a few simple coins. Rather, the coins given to tzedakah are extremely valuable in the Heavens above and create a fire there that is very great. Even if one gives just one coin to tzedakah, it can accomplish great things Above. Even if one gives only half a shekel, that coin is transformed into a fiery entity in shomayim. (And if one gives a large amount to tzedakah, it certainly will create huge bonfires of holiness that can provide untold goodness to Klal Yisroel.)



The Reward Is In Accordance With The Donation

The Baal Haturim notes that the word "v'nasnu" is a palindrome, meaning that it is read the same forwards and backwards. This teaches us that when one gives money to tzedakah, it will eventually come back to him and he will not lose anything by giving.

The Shinover Rov zy"a (Sefer Divrei Yechezkel) relates an incredible story on this topic: **Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov zy"a** once gave a certain man a bracha that he should become wealthy. Indeed, the man became incredibly rich.

Rav Naftali of Ropshitz zy"a asked the Rimanover Rebbe, "Why did you bless one man to obtain so much wealth? Wouldn't it be better to give a little bit of money to many different people so that all of them at least have enough to live on?"

The Rimanover answered, "I never said how much money this man should have. I just blessed him with wealth. I never said if he would get a little wealth or a lot of wealth. The reason he got so much is because when he got a little money, he gave much of it away to tzedakah. Since he gave tzedakah, the money came back to him. And since he keeps giving tzedakah, money keeps coming back to him. The more he gives, the wealthier he becomes. "Since he gives money to tzedakah without any limit, Hashem sends him unlimited money."

The Shinover Rov adds that the yeitzer hara tries to convince a person not to give tzedakah by reminding him how hard he had to work to earn his money. It asks him: Why should you just give away the money that you toiled for and put your own life on the line to obtain?

To counter this claim, the Torah tells us that tzedakah is a "kofer nefesh to Hashem." A person should know that by giving tzedakah, he is redeeming his life from the sins he committed before Hashem. As the pasuk says (Daniel 4:24), **בְּצִדְקָה פְרֻק וַעֲוָיָתָךְ בְּמִחַן עֲנָיִן הֵן תְּהֶוֵה אַרְכָא לִשְׁלְוָתָךְ** - ***one's sins are redeemed through tzedakah; therefore, one can dispute the yeitzer hara by telling it that he must give tzedakah in order to live***.

Shabbos After Shabbos

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם ***And the children of Yisroel shall observe the Shabbos, to make Shabbos throughout their generations… (31:16)***

Sefer Imrei Pinchos asks why the pasuk seems to repeat itself. It first says that Yisroel should observe Shabbos, and then says that they should make Shabbos. Why is it necessary to say the same thing twice?

He answers by quoting **Rav Aharon of Karlin zy"a** as saying that anyone who observes Shabbos, will have every day of his next week influenced by the holiness of Shabbos. If Shabbos is good, the next week will be good. And if the week is good, the following Shabbos will also be good. And the cycle will continue on and on.

Thus, the pasuk is saying that if someone observes Shabbos once, he will be able to make Shabbos in the future because each Shabbos creates kedusha that goes on to the next Shabbos.

Eating Can Help The Soul

Sefer Likutei Yehuda quotes his grandfather, **the Chidushei Harim zy"a**, as saying that Shabbos uplifts a person. Not only is this true about the spiritual aspects of Shabbos, such as learning and davening, but even the physical aspects of Shabbos, such as eating, uplift a person and illuminate his neshama.



Chazal say (Shabbos 118B) that anyone who creates enjoyment on Shabbos is given all that his heart desires. The Gemara refers to such a person as someone who is "m'aneg es Shabbos", he provides enjoyment to Shabbos. In other words, when one eats and drinks on Shabbos, he is providing enjoyment for Shabbos, not for himself.

This idea is also seen from the pasuk in Yeshaya (58:13) that says: "**וְקָרָאתָ לַשַּׁבָּת עֹנֶג** - ***And He called Shabbos an enjoyment***."

This teaches us that the physical enjoyment one has on Shabbos should be for the sake of Shabbos, not for his own sake. When one's eats and drinks like this on Shabbos, even this physical act can uplift his soul.

It is said in the name of the **Baal Shem Tov** that this can be compared to a moshol of a son of a king who had to go into exile and leave his father's home. One day, he received a letter from his father, informing him that he was planning on visiting him. This was a great cause of joy for the son and he wanted to celebrate. However, he didn't want to celebrate alone.

Since all of the people around him were ignorant villagers who didn't understand anything about the greatness of the king, he knew that they wouldn't share his joy. Therefore, he got them all drunk and began to sing and dance with them, which caused them all to be very happy. At that point, he was able to rejoice with them.

So too, when we eat and drink on Shabbos, we are providing enjoyment to our physical body. Once our body is happy, our neshama can rejoice with it and enjoy the holiness of the day.

However, one must be very careful that the "ignorant villager" i.e., the physical body, doesn't drag him down and degrade the joy of the day. Rather, he should rejoice with the holiness of Shabbos in an uplifted and sanctified way.

Yahrzeit of Harav Hakadosh Rav Elimelech ben Rav Eliezer Lipman Zy"a of Lizhensk 21 Adar



The Sar Shalom of Belz zy"a once related: I knew a man who knew the mother of Rav Elimelech zy"a. If not for this, I wouldn't be able to believe that Rav Elimelech was a human being who was born from a mother.

Sefer Ohel Elimelech (Ois 296) relates that the **Kozhnitzer Magid zy"a** said, "I cannot enter the holiness of Shabbos without first looking into Sefer Noam Elimelech."

I heard the following story that occurred shortly after the Holocaust from my mechutin, Rav Chaon Henoch Achkenazi shlita, Rov of the Atzei Hatemarim V'Avnei Tzedek neighbourhood in Kiryas Yoel:

A number of tragedies occurred one after another in the settlement of Gamzu in Eretz Yisroel and the residents went to ask **Rav Aharon of Belz zy"a** what they should do about it. He asked them, "Is there a cemetery in your yishuv?" They answered that there was not.

He told them that they should make a cemetery. He then asked them, "Do you make a seudah on the Yahrzeit of Rav Elimelech of Lizhensky zy"a?" Again, their answer was no. - He told them that from then on, they should make a public seudah on the Yahrzeit. After they did these two things, the tragedies stopped.

Many years passed and the chasidim moved out of the yishuv. The remaining Jews were not chasidish and they stopped organizing the seudah on Rav Elimelech's Yahrzeit. However, it wasn't long before tragedies started happening again.

The Rov went to ask one of the older former residents of the city, Rav Avrohom Boruch Rosenberg zt"l, what they had done when tragedies like this occurred in the past. Rav Avrohom Boruch asked if they still made a seudah on Rav Elimelech's Yahrzeit, and the Rov answered that this custom had been discontinued. Rav Avrohom Boruch advised him to start holding the seudos again. They did so, and, once again, the tragedies ceased.

From this story, we see the segulah of organizing a seudah on the Yahrzeit of a tzadik. This segulah works to provide salvation. It is said in the name of tzadikim that when a person needs to be saved from a difficulty, he should say, "Please Hashem, help me in the merit of the holy rebbe, Rav Elimelech." If one does this, he has a segulah to be answered immediately.

Rabbi Shlomo Farhi – The Lie



A lie that starts small, grows bigger, and it grows to other places. And if you lie at work, I promise you, that you be unable to keep up the 'Great Wall of China.'

If you lie, no wall is strong enough to stop you from lying on the other side of the wall. And that's why, of all the Mitzvos in the Torah, the Torah says **מִדְּבַר שֶׁקֶר תִּרְחָק** – You know why? Because by every other Mitzva, the chachamim said **עשו סייג לתורה** – build a wall around the aveira.

But what we are learning over here is, that the Torah had to tell you to stay so far away… You know why? ***Because a wall won't help***!

And if you are lying at work, you'll lie at home, and if you lie to your clients, you'll lie to your friends… and if you lie to your friends, you'll lie to your family - **לִמְּדוּ לְשׁוֹנָם דַּבֶּר־שָׁקֶר** - ***they have taught their tongue to speak lies***. (Yirmiyahu 9:4)

Do you know what happens? – Like every other muscle in your body, there is something called 'Muscle Memory.' Your body remembers how to repeat a particular motion… How to punch, how to walk, how to ride a bike, how to kick, how to hop - that way, even if you forget, you can just go straight back to it – it's like riding a bike!

Your tongue also has 'Muscle Memory'- **לִמְּדוּ לְשׁוֹנָם דַּבֶּר־שָׁקֶר**

Hashem should bless us to live lives of truth, and when a person lives a life of truth, they get close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Rabbi Lawrence Hajioff – The Rabbi Said No!

Many years ago, in 1998, when my sister was on shidduchim, she was meeting a guy who moved to New York. She wanted to go to America from England various times to meet him. She was convinced that this was her 'zivug'.

My parents were not too keen, as she was relatively young, and the costs were mounting up.

Somehow, she managed to get a voucher to fly from London. At the check in, they managed to get her a potential seat during her work holidays between Xmas and new year. They managed to actually book her a seat for the flight on December 21st.

She came home and told our parents that she is booked on the flight to go and see this boy.

They said, "What, you are just going to go? What about asking the Rabbi?"

Our Rabbi at that time was Rabbi Morderchai Sufrin Zt'l. He passed on the request by 'Fax' to the **Lubavitcher Rebbe Zt'l** (who was still alive at that time.)

The Answer came back in the negative – "No- don't go!" "It's not for her, break off the shidduch – Do not fly!"

I thought to myself, "What's going on, is the Rebbe a travel agent!? There was a lot of arguing over whether to go, but eventually, my parents prevailed, and she cancelled the flight.

On December 21st, 1998, this was the 'Pan Am' flight that originated in Germany, was going via London, and then on to New York. On the way, it ended up being blown up over the town of Lockerbie in Scotland!

She was supposed to be on this flight! She had a ticket and was on the original manifest!



It had a major impact on my parents, and they became much *frummer* as a result. I checked all the mezuzas afterwards and found that only my sisters was pasul!

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from the Ma'yanah shel Torah)

The Kiyor (Basin) is Dispensable - **וְעָשִׂיתָ כִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְכַנּוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת לְרָחְצָה וְנָתַתָּ אֹתוֹ בֵּין אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְנָתַתָּ שָׁמָּה מָיִם... *and they shall place it (the basin) between the Ohel Mo'ed and the Mizbei'ach and they shall put water there*" (30:18).

Strictly, the Pasuk ought to have written 'and they shall put water into it' (rather than 'there') asks the **Meshech Chochmah?**

The answer, he says, lies in the Halachah that in actual fact, the Kohanim were permitted to wash their hands and feet from any K'li Shareis, and not specifically from the Kiyor.

That being the case, the Torah chose its wording well - "and they shall put water in the location of the Kiyor", irrespective of whether the Kiyor is there or not.

Rabbi YY Jacobson – Escape from India

In 2008 there was a terrorist atrocity in Mumbai India. Close to 200 people were murdered, including six of our holy brothers and sisters. Nariman House, a Chabad Lubavitch Jewish centre in Colaba known as the Mumbai Chabad House, was taken over by two attackers and several residents were held hostage. Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife Rivka Holtzberg HY'D, who was pregnant, were murdered with four other Jewish hostages inside the house by the attackers.



According to radio transmissions picked up by Indian intelligence, the attackers "would be told by their handlers in Pakistan that the lives of Jews were worth 50 times those of non-Jews". Injuries on some of the bodies indicated that they may have been tortured.

Before her marriage, Rivka Holtzberg's maiden name was Rosenberg. When her parents were sitting *shivah*, a young Israeli woman came in. She took out a box and gave it to Mrs Rosenberg. She said, "This is from your daughter!"

Mrs Rosenberg said, "What is it?" - "Open the box."

She opened the box, and she saw a beautiful, stunning diamond ring together with a very elegant, sophisticated gown! – Something that you might wear for a wedding or very special occasion.

So, Mrs Rosenberg asks, "Is this Rifka's? How does it come to you?"

She said, "I will tell you the story:

"I am an Israeli girl who grew up in a secular home. I joined the Israeli army. When I finished my service, I went to the 'Far East', like many others, to discover myself.

I went to India. India is a very complicated country, and somehow, I got into trouble. I ended up in one of the worst prisons in India. Conditions were less than 5 star! It was the nearest thing to hell that you could imagine.

I was together with criminals, crooks, murderers etc – the dregs of society. I was in a terrible dire situation, with no way of getting out.

I studied the process, and spoke to the others, and I realised that there is much corruption there, and with a decent bribe, I might have a chance at escaping.

I bribed the governor and after a few months, I escaped. I didn't know where to go. I was a fugitive in the middle of the night.

I made my way over to the Chabad House in Mumbai in the middle of the night, and I woke up Rivka Holtzberg. She welcomed me at the entrance, and asked, 'Where are you coming from?' I said, 'I have just escaped from prison!'

She admirably said, 'Come in.'

I told Rifka the whole story, and asked her what I should do?

She said, 'You must get out of India as soon as possible. There is a lot of corruption here, and you must get out quickly. They will be searching for you. If they catch you, you will disappear forever!'

'But when I get to the border, they will investigate my documents and they will ask questions.'

Rifka said, 'But I'm going to help you, the computer system here is not well developed and is a bit archaic. They won't figure everything out.'

'I have an idea', and she took out her most beautiful gown, and handed it to me! She took off her diamond ring, and said, 'You put these on. If you get to the border dressed like a fugitive prisoner, you will have no chance. But if you are wearing this smart gown,

sporting an expensive diamond ring, they will see that you are a different calibre, and they will just let you go.'

'I went, and I managed to get back to Israel. I always had at the back of my mind that I must return these items – but I never did. But now, after I heard about their death, and I knew that you were sitting shivah here, so I have come to return them!'

Mrs Rosenberg took the box from her, and said, "I want to tell you something. I saw my daughter a few weeks ago, and I noticed that her diamond wedding ring was missing. So, I said, 'Rifka, where's your diamond ring?'

She looked at me, and she said, "I'mah – I'm on shlichos, and my diamond ring is on *shlichos* !"

'I didn't understand what my daughter was talking about. But now I understand what she meant!'

Torah Temimah

All mitzvos are uniquely recognizable both while fulfilling them, and after the mitzva is complete. For example, one can look at tzitzis or a shofar and see it is an object used in performance of a mitzva.

Shabbos is different in that it is neither recognizably different than any other day except that certain acts are forbidden but one could just sit and do nothing anytime.

In this way, Shabbos is really what a person makes of it. If he honours it as he should, both physically with food and clothing, and spiritually with tefilos, zemiros, and Torah, then it becomes discernible from the rest of the week, and it is he who has kept Shabbos, and 'made' Shabbos.

Sweet Story Of The Week With Rabbi Mordechai Levin

The great Mashgiach of Ponovez, **HaRav Chatzkel Levenstein, ZT"L**, (Niftar Adar 18th, 5734 / 1974) was characterized by the **Chazon Ish** as one whose hands actually held emunah, one whose faith in Hashem was physically apparent.

Rav Chatzkel lived and breathed Yetziyas Mitzrayim, the Jewish People's exodus from Egypt. He was once observed privately reenacting Krias Yam Suf, utilizing chairs and shtenders to simulate the path that the Jews took through the dried waters.

One early morning, a student came into the empty and still Ponovez Bais Medrash. The only person there was the Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Dovid Povarsky, ZT"L**, (who was known to enter the Ponovez Yeshiva every morning at 4 A.M, and learn in solitude until Shacharis).

Rav Dovid signalled for the student to come over to him. He heard Rav Dovid talking almost to himself, "I am overcome with chills, chills". When the student asked what was happening, Rav Dovid held his finger to his lips, and said, "Listen to what I hear coming from the Mashgiach's private room".

Suddenly the sound of the Mashgiach's voice was heard, a sweet clear voice singing the words of the Az Yashir Prayer. The talmid said later that "as we heard each word, we felt the joy and elation with which one should properly recite Az Yashir"!

R' Dovid commented, "I have chills going through my body as I comprehend the great level that a Jew can reach while singing Az Yashir, and the loftiness of the Mashgiach's emunah"!

Comment: As we begin preparations for Pesach, we must not only rid our homes of chametz. We must also reinforce our emunah, our faith in Hashem who took us out of Egypt. Visualizing the Exodus for ourselves, internalizing the occurrence as if we were participants, will grant us the clarity needed to have real faith in Hashem.



R' Elimelech Biderman shlita would say: וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ – (33:23) What is the back and the front of Hashem?

Sometimes we do not understand Hashem's plans for us until it is complete. In the moment, we do not get it. Only later, we can see it.

This is like a visitor to the cockpit of a plane who enters and sees many buttons and switches and immediately points to one and asks the captain, 'What does this one do?'

The captain asks him why he is interested in one specific button without awareness about what the others do in unison. The same is true with Hashem. When you look at the specifics without the picture you can easily become a fool."

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויאמרו אלה אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים ... (לב-ד)



In Prague, a new mayor was elected, in large part due to the efforts of many Jewish activists, who were unaware that the new official was actually an anti-semite and no friend of theirs.

The Jewish community of Prague tendered a dance and banquet in honour of the newly elected mayor, and one of the guests

was the city's rabbi, **R' Yechezkel Landau zt"l**, author of the famous **Noda B'Yehuda**.

While the banquet was underway, the mayor-elect thought he saw an opportunity to insidiously tease the city's chief rabbi, and made the following remark: "When I came to this dance, I thought, 'How fond Jews are of dancing!' It seems to be hereditary, for when their ancestors made the Golden Calf in the wilderness, they not only worshipped it, but danced before it."

R' Yechezkel Landau was a brilliant man and leader. He wasn't about to just let this new mayor push the Jews of his jurisdiction around freely. "Yes, Your Honour," he replied, "that is correct. Whenever the Jews go and appoint an ox or a calf as their leader, they've gotten a little too fond of dancing..."

When the Jews mistakenly came to the realization that they were stranded without a leader, they didn't just merely sit around and do nothing. **The Ramban** points out that the golden calf was not a selection of a new god. They weren't naive. Rather, it was a guide in place of Moshe. Hashem performed the miracles in Egypt, but Moshe helped guide them out. They wanted the golden calf to continue to guide them. That was a terrible mistake because despite their intentions, their actions transgressed the horrible sin of idolatry. This is something to learn from, albeit hopefully on a smaller scale. Even in religion, intentions don't replace actions, rather, they are meant to compliment them.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Moshe Sternbuch urges, especially one who is very busy during the day, to make an extra effort to Daven Minchah early in the day, and in this way it will help him not miss Tefilas Minchah due to being so busy.

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

סָרוּ מַהֵר מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִם עָשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מַסֵּכָה ***They have quickly turned away from the path that I have commanded them; they have made themselves a molten calf***! (32:8)



The fact that the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf is something that Klal Yisroel is still suffering from until this very day. The magnitude of this terrible act is so great, and the ramifications are extremely far-reaching.

R' Gamliel Rabinowitz shlita explains this tremendous atrocity by zeroing in on one small word: **מַהֵר** - "Quick."

He says that everyone is human and we all have free will, which means that we make mistakes. It is true that Bnei Yisroel made a terrible mistake, but the fact that they fell so fast is an even greater tragedy.

Just a few days earlier, they were standing at the foot of Har Sinai, on the level of angels, and now they were serving a Golden Calf!

When one is faced with a test, a nisayon, a decision needs to be made fast. One must take a stand and fight against his yetzer hara. Just putting up a battle will allow him to slow down the evil influences that surround him. We may even "borrow" a tactic that our greatest enemy uses to make us sin. We can take the concept of **מחר** - "Tomorrow," that Amalek utilized in the desert, to make us push off doing mitzvos. The posuk states: **וְצֵא הִלָּחֶם בַּעֲמָלֵק מָחָר** (17:9)- Go out and fight Amalek with the power of MACHAR.

Amalek/Yetzer Hara tells us, "Of course you should learn Torah and do mitzvos, but not NOW, do it TOMORROW!"

This idea can be turned around and utilized to fight against the Amalek inside each of us which tries to make us sin. The difference between מַהֵר and מָהָר is a little tiny connecting piece, that symbolizes that tiny little second it takes for one to fall and begin a long slippery descent to the lowest of the low.

We must jump QUICKLY - מַהֵר - to do the will of Hashem, but when something is wrong or even questionable, we must say, "Let me wait till TOMORROW. Let me think it through." Surely by then we will have the time to gather our strength and marshal our thoughts correctly, in order to overcome and emerge victorious from even the most difficult tests!





Torah on Shabbos

Towards the end of his life, **Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l** travelled to Vienna for medical purposes. His son, **Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l,** accompanied him. They stayed in Vienna for a few weeks.

Reb Yissacher Dov was impressed by a certain bachur in Vienna who was studying Torah with hasmadah throughout Shabbos. Rebbe Yissachar Dov spoke with this bachur, and the bachur told him his story:

"I was drafted into the army and had to work on Shabbos. So I asked my commander to let me take off on Shabbos, and in exchange, I would work extra during the weekdays. Miraculously, he agreed!

I realized this was a miracle, so I made a kabbalah to dedicate Shabbos to studying Torah."

Reb Yissacher Dov quipped, "Who knows whether this bachur isn't holding up the coming of Moshiach. Hashem has so much nachas ruach from his mesirus nefesh for Torah, and this nachas ruach won't be there when Moshiach comes…"

In the Aseres HaDibros, keeping Shabbos is written next to the mitzvah of honouring parents. **The Chida** explains that the two mitzvos are juxtaposed because a primary time for kibud av v'em is Shabbos. **The Zohar** states that the chidushei Torah one creates on Shabbos become a crown for one's parents in Gan Eden, so with Shabbos, one can honour his parents.

The Yesod v'Shoresh HaOvadah writes that for those who can't create a chiddush in Torah, a kabbalah tovah is also sufficient.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner zt'l says that understanding Torah better and clearer is also considered chidushei Torah.

The Ben Ish Chai writes, "One accomplishes a thousand times more with his studies on Shabbos than on a weekday."

Reb Elyah Roth zt'l said, "A daf Gemara on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred pages of Gemara on a weekday. One chapter of Tehillim on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred chapters of Tehillim on a weekday."

The Chazon Ish zt'l said that if a non-Jew knew the pleasure Yidden have when they study a daf Gemara Shabbos morning before Shacharis, they would convert just for that pleasure.

Hasmadah

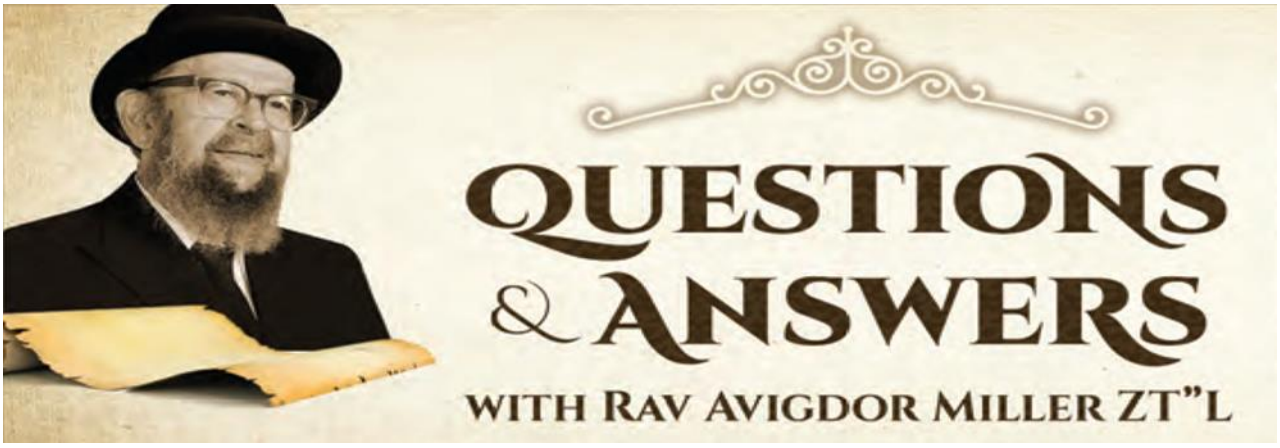
The Ponovitcher Rav zt"l, HaRav Kahanaman, learned in the Kollel Kodshim that the **Chofetz Chaim** initiated, and his chavrusa was **Reb Elchanan Wasserman zt"l, hy"d**. They would study every day for six hours straight, from eight to two.

One day, the Ponovitcher Rav received a telegram requesting him to go home because his wife was in labour. He showed the telegram to the Chofetz Chaim, but the Chofetz Chaim told him to continue studying Torah. Soon, he received another telegram that his wife had given birth to a boy. He put on his datchekel cap, said the brachah of 'HaTov VeHameitiv,' and continued learning until two o'clock, as he did every day.

Then he showed the Chofetz Chaim the second telegram and told him he wanted to go to the bris.

"Are you the mohel?" the Chofetz Chaim asked, and the Ponovitcher Rav remained in the yeshiva.

The Ponovitcher Rav told this story to **the Beis Yisrael of Gur zy"a**. He was very impressed and commented, "This story is fitting for chassidim."





How is it that Moshe, the greatest man who ever lived, married a Midyanite woman, the daughter of Yisro?

You must understand, number one, a very great principle, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is most interested in a person's character. **רחמנא לבא בעי**– *Hashem wants the heart.*

And Yisro was a most remarkable man with a remarkable heart. He was a man who made a break with his past. Yisro was a priest of idolatry and he was enthusiastic about it too. **שפיטם עגלים לעבודה זרה**– *He used to fatten the calves for the idol.* When he had a mitzvah of offering a calf, he refused to bring it right away; instead, he spent time fattening it so that it should be a *mitzvah min hamuvchar.* He was an enthusiastic idolater.

And when this man finally discovered the truth, he became an enemy of idolatry. He became enthusiastic about fighting idolatry. And because of that, he was ostracized by his people. He was in danger. Nobody would even help him. And the Medrash tells us that because of that his daughters had to go out and tend his sheep. And they were persecuted until Moshe came and he rescued the daughters from the persecutors. So, we see that Yisro was a man who was suffering for his principles.

Now when a man demonstrates greatness of soul, we don't care what nation he's from. And therefore, Tziporah was certainly a fit wife for this great man, Moshe Rabbeinu. Because he too was able to ignore his environment. He was born in a palace and he had all privileges and yet he forsook it to go out to help his downtrodden brothers. And so, there's no question that this was a perfect match and there's nothing to criticize in the shidduch of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Now why did it turn out just like this? It could be hashgacha; Hashem wanted to teach this great lesson that the nations of the world can attain greatness if they're willing to overstep the boundary between them and us.

And that's what happened to great people in every generation. Rus became great because she forsook her nation and joined ours. And if you look further, you find Shmaya v'Avtalyon, the great teachers of our people, also came from converts. And you look further, you find even Rabbi Akiva is descended from converts.

Rabbi Akiva is the main teacher of our people in the period of the Tanaim, from the times of the Beis Hamikdosh until the milchemes Beitar; all that we have came through his mouth. And he was the son of converts.

You see Unkelus HaGer. He made Targum Unkelus. And his work is in the Chumash. It's even printed in the Chumash above Rashi Hakodosh. Right next to the Torah itself.

And therefore, that's a great principle that the doors are open for the chosen souls of the nations of the world. And therefore, when you look at this inspiring story that Tzipora, a *giyoress*, was married to Moshe Rabbeinu, that's a tremendous lesson for the world. The door to greatness is open for everyone.

The Chessed Boomerang

Shlomo Horwitz told an amazing story about a 17-year-old yeshivah student named Rafi who was eager and ready to do mitzvot and change the world. Rafi was on a bus in Jerusalem and having an existential moment, wondering what his purpose in life was. The radio was playing, and the talk-show host interrupted the music to answer an urgent call into the radio station.

A young boy called in crying and said, "I'm one of five children. My father died this year and my mother can't pay the electric bill. The electric company shut our power and we're freezing. We need 1,800 shekels to have it turned back on."

The radio host got back on and left the number of the station for any donations.

Rafi heard this and immediately decided this was his purpose. He had a mission! He ran off the bus at the next stop and grabbed a payphone and called the radio station. He said, "I heard the broadcast, and I will raise the money. Tell the family now that everything is going to be okay!" He opened his wallet, and he started with the 300 shekel he had on him. He started going into store after store to raise the money. He started to tell the store owners, "There was something on the radio…"

He Quickly Got Donations

And the owners said, "Yes! We heard it! Are you that guy that's going to be collecting?" Rafi said, "Yes, that's me," and he quickly got donations of 50 shekels, 100 shekels, 700 shekels, 20 shekels; everyone gave what they were able to. He raised the money and quickly got to the station to drop it off. The host looked at this young boy in awe and said, "Who are you!" Rafi only gave his first name and left.

10 years later, Rafi was married with two children, struggling financially as an aspiring rabbi. He was telling his friend that the

electric company had shut off his power because he has an outstanding bill of 3,800 shekel. Another man overheard them chatting, and said, "Wait one second. What's the meter number on your bill?"

Rafi happened to have the bill on him and showed the man. The man pulled out his cell phone and walked out and came back in to tell Rafi it's all settled, and his power will be turned back on in a few hours. Rafi, shocked, asked, "Why would you do that? How?!"

The man said, "It's not me, it's my aunt Shoshana. She always told me to call her if anyone ever can't pay their electric bill."

The Reason for Shoshana's Kindness

Rafi got home and called Shoshana with his wife to thank her. Aunt Shoshana said, "Ten years ago, I had just lost my husband, and I was widowed with five kids and couldn't pay my bill. Some angel out of nowhere raised the money in two hours for me!! What an amazing power of the Jewish people. I told myself that when my financial situation was better, I would do the same for people struggling with their electric bill. I don't know anything about the boy that helped me, just that his name was Rafi."

Rafi told her he was the boy who helped her ten years ago. They both started to cry and wished each other heartfelt blessings, because they both recognized the power of always looking out for each other, and always eager to be inspired to serve Hashem.

May we all be motivated to give as much as we can to others for altruistic reasons. May we maintain our synagogues with the highest level of decorum and kedusha so that we may be worthy of always having the Shechina rest among us. May we learn from Hashem to love Torah and never part with it. And may we always know that there is so much more to learn and keep our childlike enthusiasm when learning Torah! Amen!

Taken For a Ride - By Rabbi Yechiel Spero

It had not been expected. Reb Yaakov Tzvi Zusman was a well-respected shochet in the community that is now known as Neve Yaakov on the outskirts of Jerusalem. But one day, without any previous indication of heart trouble, the young man suffered a massive heart attack and died. His wife, Leah, was devastated and completely overwhelmed by sorrow and her feelings of inadequacy in coping with the daily struggles of survival.

Among those who came to console the young widow was the famed saddik of Jerusalem, Reb Aryeh Levine. He spoke with warmth and sincerity, offering to help in any way, and Leah was extremely grateful but never expected much to come of it. However, the morning after shivah, Reb Aryeh knocked on their door and offered to take the two young boys, the older of whom was six, to shul to recite kaddish in memory of their father.

Thrilled to be Going to Shul with Such a Kind Man

The children were thrilled to be going to shul with such a kind and famous man and before long settled into a routine where Reb Aryeh would pick up the children early every morning and take them to shul. Incredibly, he did not want the young mother to over-tax herself and so he would also dress the young boys in the morning so that she would be able to take advantage of some extra precious moments of sleep. Binyamin, who was only six years old, will never forget how much he loved walking to shul in the Batei Brodie neighborhood. He would hold Reb Aryeh's hand and feel secure, knowing that he was being looked after.

One morning Reb Aryeh fell ill and was unable to pick up the boys. In his place he sent Yoel Brand to bring the boys to shul. Reb Yoel arrived at the house on time and managed to get the boys up and out. But halfway down the street, Uri, the younger brother, stopped and refused to walk any further. Binyamin tried his best to convince his younger brother to move on but the little boy was adamant.

Reb Yoel was beginning to question why he had gotten himself into this situation in the first place but reminded himself that he was doing a misvah. He tried every tactic he could think of but nothing was working. The little boy just looked down with a frown on his face and big sad, brown eyes. Reb Yoel felt terrible, but he had tried everything and Uri wouldn't even tell him what was wrong. Exasperated Reb Yoel finally blurted out, "I don't understand it. You walk when Reb Aryeh picks you up. What's the problem?"

Uri looked up with tear-filled eyes and, revealing his childish innocence, said, "***That's because every morning when Reb Aryeh picks me up, he carries me on his shoulders***!"

Reb Yoel smiled. He should have known better. Of course, Reb Aryeh would have figured out how to find his way into this poor child's heart. He bent down and offered a ride. It was not Reb Aryeh's piggyback ride - but he took it anyway. (Touched By A Story 2)



A gabbai from a shul brought a Sefer Torah to Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv's זצ"ל house to write a letter in the Torah. When they finished, they left the Torah open to dry on the table where Rav Elyashiv learned.

Rav Elyashiv asked how long it had to be kept open, and the gabbai answered for five minutes.

Instead of just waiting, for the next five minutes, Rav Elyashiv went into another room and continued to learn.



For the Shabbos Table

וַיַּ֤רְא אֶת־הָעֵגֶל֙ וּמְחֹלֹ֔ת וַיִּֽחַר־אַ֖ף מֹשֶׁ֑ה וַיַּשְׁלֵךְ֙ מִיָּדָ֔ו אֶת־הַלֻּחֹ֖ת וַיְשַׁבֵּ֥ר אֹתָ֛ם "***And he saw the Golden Calf and the dancing, and Moshe became upset and threw the Luchos from his hands and broke them***" (Shemos 32:19)

Surely the worship of the Golden Calf was egregious enough, why does the Torah highlight that Moshe witnessed the dancing accompanying the sin?

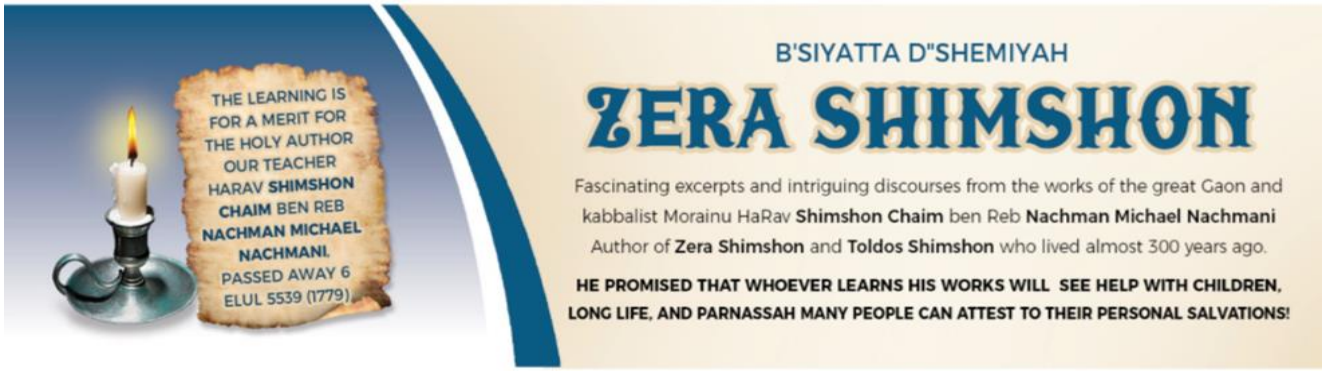
The Seforno writes that when Moshe witnessed their simchah in doing the sin, he understood that the sin would have a permanent and lasting impact.

Rav Ahron Dovid Willner shlit'a explains that while a sin may be reversible, when performed joyfully it causes the sin to become deeply ingrained in a person's psyche. The same is true regarding the effect of a mitzvah that is performed joyously. The joy infuses the mitzvah into a person.

The Arizal is quoted as saying that his lofty levels were attained through performing mitzvos with great simchah (M.B. 669:11).

As we are marbim b'simchah in Chodesh Adar, the great simchah shel mitzvah should infuse the effect of these mitzvos into our hearts.

R' Yankele (Der Zaida) would say: "Don't give up on yourself. Remember, Moshe Rabbeinu was once a 'basket-case' as well!"



וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת ***And the Jewish people shall observe the Shabbos*** (31:16).

The Gemara (Shabbos 118a) says whoever takes pleasure in Shabbos, merits 'a reward without borders.' The Zera Shimshon explains this intriguing statement by first asking the following questions. If the Gemara is referring to material reward, how can someone merit a reward that has no boundaries? Even if the person would receive the entire world, he would still be receiving something with boundaries. As well, there are many people that take pleasure in Shabbos. How then can each one get a reward without boundaries? And if the Gemara is referring to the eventual reward in the world to come, then all the reward in the world to come, not only the reward for Shabbos, is limitless and without boundaries?

The Zera Shimshon explains this Gemara as follows: Ideally, Hashem wants to bestow good to every person without any limit. However, due to a person's lack of merit and his indulgence in worldly pleasures, strict judgment holds back that good and limits it to much less than Hashem would want to bestow upon him. This is part of how Hashem created the world to run. The power of the prosecution only gains strength when a person follows his desires and pursues worldly pleasures.

On the other hand, when a person works to benefit his soul and serve Hashem, the forces that prosecute against him from receiving Hashem's goodness, cannot cause anything to be held back from him. (Obviously, even within this rule, there are many aspects that we

cannot understand since only Hashem knows the secrets of how He truly runs His world.)

The Zohar (Vayakhel 93b) says, that on Shabbos the forces of evil hide – even they 'rest' on Shabbos. This is what the aforementioned Gemara means to teach. The Gemara specifically says that one who 'takes pleasure' in Shabbos merits a borderless reward, as opposed to saying, one who 'keeps' Shabbos etc.

The Gemara means to imply that even though on Shabbos, one enjoys the day through eating and drinking, which regularly would be considered chasing worldly pleasures, still, this does not give the prosecutors power over him (when done properly and with the correct intention) to limit the good that Hashem wishes to bestow upon him. Therefore, the usual forces that would try to minimize the reward that he should receive for keeping Shabbos since he also enjoyed it with physical pleasures, have no power. Thus, his reward will be without the usual borders that the accusing angels try to limit his reward to.

In other words, according to the Zera Shimshon, the Gemara doesn't mean that he will merit a limitless reward, rather, his reward will be complete and without the usual borders attached by the prosecuting forces.

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The Zera Shimshon says that when a person prepares for Shabbos and awaits its coming, each and every week, he rectifies many souls that need rectification and did not attain their rectification while they were alive!

"A righteous man falls down seven times and gets up." – King Solomon, Proverbs, 24:16.

From our Sages

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם עֲשֵׂה־לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים ***"Get up, make us gods."*** (32:1)

Why did they ask this of Aaron instead of just appointing him in Moses' stead?

The answer is Aaron, "the pursuer of peace," was too close to the people for them to consider him as their leader. Too much familiarity makes it impossible for people to feel the proper respect for their leaders. (**Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorka**)

הֶעָשִׁיר לֹא־יַרְבֶּה וְהַדַּל לֹא יַמְעִיט מִמַּחֲצִית הַשָּׁקֶל ***The rich shall not increase and the poor shall not decrease from the half shekel*** (30:15)

A rich person's wealth will not be increased by not giving, neither will a poor person become poorer by giving. Even more so that this is true of charity. (**Imrei Shefer**)

Chinuch for Torah

Reb Noson Gestetner zt'l writes that when his mother was in labour with him, his father, **Reb Amram zt'l**, requested from the midwife that she shouldn't speak for the first few minutes after the child is born because he wanted the first sounds the child hears to be the sound of Torah study.

When the child was born, Reb Amram was in the next room studying Gemara out loud; these were the first sounds Reb Noson Gestetner heard as an infant.

Reb Yitzchak Hutner zt'l attributed his growth in Torah to his mother, who showed him her love for Torah. Once, her husband bought her a new dress. They were poor, so the dress meant a lot to

her, but she saved it to put on for the first time when her son made a siyum.

This showed her son how much she loves Torah, encouraging him to put all his efforts into knowing Torah.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָי - ***Hashem allowed Moshe to see His back*** (33:23).

The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe) explains that Hashem only gives clarity in hindsight. We can find situations in life where we cannot understand what is happening while it is happening, and only years later do we truly understand why it happened.

The story of Purim is a prime example where it made no sense as it happened, and only at the end did everything make sense.

We can see from the back, but when looking forward, when something is happening, we can never understand why it is happening.

Working on our Middos

The Bais Yisroel of Ger, Rav Yisroel Alter, zt"l, was once walking through the old cemetery in Teveria, when he stopped by the Kever of **Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, zt"l**, and he related this story.

A woman came to the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, and with tears in her eyes she asked for a Brachah. She was very ill, and she begged the Rebbe to give her a Brachah that she would recover and live.

The Rebbe sympathized with her and gave her a Brachah, but she wasn't content. She cried, "Please promise me that I will recover!"

The Rebbe replied, "How can I make a promise like that?"

But the woman wouldn't back down. She said, "I will not leave until you guarantee me that I will get better and recover!"

The Rebbe saw that the woman would not give up, so he gave her a warm Brachah and promised her that she would recover. She was finally able to calm down, and she thanked the Rebbe.

After she had left, the Rebbe said to his Talmidim, "If she recovers, I will be overjoyed, but if she doesn't, it will be an embarrassment for me. But the important thing is that I calmed her down for the time being."

After a short while, the Rebbe got news that the woman had a complete recovery!

The Kapischnitzer Rebbe did not take credit for this, but rather, in his humility, he said that it was due to her firm faith in Chachomim.

The Bais Yisroel ended off the story, "But I say that she recovered in the Zechus of the embarrassment that the Kapischnitzer Rebbe was willing to go through, just to relieve the pain of another Yid!"

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Yair Hoffman writes regarding a Bris Milah, that the Rama notes in Yoreh Dei'ah (265:11) that the Sandek is equated to the Kohein who offers the Ketores in the Bais HaMikdash, and it is a Segulah for becoming wealthy.

In regard to this point, the **Vilna Gaon** points out that we have not seen that being a Sandek causes one to become wealthy, nor do we find a source for this. Someone once asked the **Steipler Gaon, zt"l**, how it is that the Steipler had been a Sandek at so many Bris Milahs, and that he is not wealthy.

He responded, "Who said that the wealth mentioned by the Rama is a monetary wealth? Perhaps the wealth comes in ways other than money."

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, the Steipler's son, explained that the wealth one gets for being a Sandek is a spiritual wealth. He said, "For my father, his Seforim 'Kehilos Yaakov', is the wealth he was Bentched with!"



We had a great Purim, we were b'simcha, we were zocheh to fulfil the mitzvos of the day in a mehudar way, and currently we are getting back to regular life. What now?

My father **Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l** would always ask, after every holiday: Did we go through the chag and leave it behind us, or are we taking the chag with us? Are we bringing Purim along with us, into our regular lives?

Because that is the goal. We should continue on with Purim for the whole year. Purim has a message for us. We looked at things on Purim in a new and more uplifted light, and we want to hold onto it and make it part of us. Each of us has his own gain from Purim, which we can use to build ourselves, to be better Jews and to grow ever closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

May Hashem bless us to hold onto the beautiful spirit of Purim and to continue with that wonderful and delicious simcha of avodas Hashem, may it grow ever stronger. May we be always b'simcha!!

Wishing you all the best, with all my heart

Harav Yosef Dov Pincus

This Shekel is Holy

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ This is what they shall give, all who are counted: half a shekel of a holy shekel… to give Hashem's donation, to atone for their souls. (*Shemos* 30:13-15)



"This is what they shall give" – *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* showed Moshe a sort of coin of fire, and its weight was half a *shekel*, and said to him, "They shall give one like this." (*Rashi ad loc*)

It is a wondrous thing, as the Commentators have already pointed out, that a mere half a *shekel* can atone for the soul. They explain it literally. Even if Heaven has decreed that a person should die, the small sum of half a *shekel* given by him as *tzedakah* has the power to affect atonement and save his life.

However, this *shekel* is described a "coin of fire," as Rashi explains. This indicates the condition upon which the atonement depends. If a person gives his *tzedakah* with fiery enthusiasm, joy and desire, it has the wondrous power of atonement that the Torah attributes to it.

The Rambam writes: Whoever gives *tzedakah* to a pauper with a sour expression, looking at the ground, even if he gave him a thousand gold pieces, he lost his merit and forfeited it. Rather, he should give it with a pleasant expression and with joy, and share in the poor man's sorrow over his misfortune, and speak encouragingly and consolingly to him.

The *shekel* to be donated is also described as "holy," and this alludes to another important point.

The Rambam says that Hebrew is called the Holy Tongue because it has no words for vulgar things. It is a clean and sacred language.

This elucidates the meaning of the word *kodesh*, "holy." Something is "holy" when it is dedicated to one and only purpose. Hebrew, although all the worlds were created through it, and the Torah spoke in this language, still would not be called the Holy Tongue if we could use it for vulgar speech. Only because it is reserved for pure speech alone does it earn the name of "Holy Tongue."

The Torah requires a "holy" *shekel* to atone for the soul, so it is not sufficient if a person uses his money "also" for holy purposes such as *tzedakah* and supporting Torah learning. His money can be onsidered "holy" only if he abstains from using it for unholy purposes.

Let's say he contributes generously to *chesed* causes. There is no question that he has thereby performed a great *mitzvah* and acquired lofty merits for himself. But what if he spends his money also on newspapers or magazines full of improper content, or he purchases electronic devices that bring impurity and vulgarity into his home, or other things that are far from being holy?

Then we can no longer say about his home that it is holy, and resembles *Beis Hamikdash*, neither can we say about his money that it is holy, that it is "*shekel hakodesh.*"

There is an allusion to this point also in the "coin of fire" concept mentioned above. One of the qualities of fire is that it doesn't mix with other elements. Fire is always free of impurities; it is just fire. Similarly, a person's money needs to be like a "coin of fire." This applies to how he acquired his money, that it is free from unjust gain of any kind, and also that he spends his money only for proper purposes.

The money a person spends on supporting his home in order to rear children to Torah learning is completely holy and pure. But his other expenditures, too, need to be holy. He should not spend money on worthless matters and luxuries. Jewish money is not to be treated lightly.

The coins in our wallets are "coins of fire," and we need to treat them with *kedushah.* Then they will serve to atone for our souls and bring great blessing to our home.



Herren Uder DeHerren

The following story took place on Purim ten years ago, in the year **תשע"ג** . This story was related by a person who heard it from the Taxi driver – the baal hamaisa.

During the height of Purim in Bnei Brak, a Taxi driver noticed a Yungerman with a few small children flagging down one Taxi after another. He saw how each Taxi stopped and within seconds sped away. This particular Taxi driver was curious to see what is was that no Taxi wanted to take this Yid. He pulled up to the Yungerman and asked what it was that he wanted.

"I only have 40 shekel and I need to get to a hospital in Tel-Aviv for an important appointment. I need a Taxi to wait for me and then bring me back to Bnei Brak."

Now the Taxi driver understood why no taxi was willing to hear of such a request. He thought to himself, "True, it is Purim today and traffic everywhere is terrible. Besides, how can one go to Tel-Aviv and back **and** wait for only 40 shekel?! They will lose a lot of money from many other potential jobs. Purim is a busy day for a Taxi driver!"

The Taxi driver said over, "My heart felt bad for this poor Yid who was in desperate need of help. I told him, "I am happy to take you, and I am not willing to charge you a shekel. The entire trip, including the wait, will be free." I put my full **בטחון** in Hashem that I would not lose out any of my parnassa because of this act. I felt like I wanted to jump on the opportunity to fulfil this **מצוה**.

We drove to Tel-Aviv and I waited outside the hospital. After a short while, he came back to the car, and we were on our way back to Bnei Brak. As I was driving with the Yungerman and children in the back, I noticed a fellow waving his hand, trying to flag me down. Since I had an open seat in the front, I stopped for him. "Where do you need to go?" I asked him.

"Petach Tikvah." "Sure thing, come on in." I figured that I would stop in Bnei Brak and then continue on to Petach Tikvah.

As we were driving, the Petach Tikvah fellow turned to me and in a curious whisper asked, "Who is this family in the back?" Under my breath, I related to him what I had seen and done. The Petach Tikvah man listened and remained silent for a few moments. Then he spoke up, turning his head to the back of the car, "Reb Yungerman, I wish to assume that if all you have is 40 shekel in your wallet, then you did not have any money to buy Mishloach Manos to give out. Am I correct?"

The Yungerman shyly nodded in affirmation.

"Here," he said, and he pulled out 1,000 shekel cash and handed it to the Yungerman. "This is for you to buy stuff to be able to give Mishloach Manos **בכבוד**." The Petach Tikvah man continued, "Mistama you don't have the money to purchase wine and Matzah for Pesach, here is 2,000 shekel towards your Pesach expenses."

The Yungerman was almost crying from the tremendous chessed that was just bestowed on him. He thanked the unknown man and

told him how much it meant to him and that he brought a big **שמחה** to his family.

They reached Bnei Brak, and the Yungerman and his children got out, and the Taxi continued on to Petach Tikvah. As the Petach Tikvah man was leaving the Taxi, he turned to the driver and said, "Tell me, how much should the trip have cost the Yungerman had you charged him?"

I told him an amount, and he said to me, "I am so impressed with what you have done," and he proceeded to give me **ten times** more than the amount that I had told him!"

The Taxi driver related with temimus, "I was convinced that this man was Eliyahu HaNavi in disguise!"

There are **a lot** of lessons to be learned from this story. **One** thing that we clearly see is that this Petach Tikvah fellow knew how to hear much more than the voice of someone who had 40 shekel in his wallet! He saw is as a much bigger picture.

What is the connection between this story and the Parsha? **וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת־קוֹל הָעָם בְּרֵעֹה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־מֹשֶׁה קוֹל מִלְחָמָה בַּמַּחֲנֶה**

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין קוֹל עַנּוֹת גְּבוּרָה וְאֵין קוֹל עַנּוֹת חֲלוּשָׁה קוֹל עַנּוֹת אָנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ (32:17-18)

Why is it important for the Torah to tell us this conversation between Moshe Rabbeinu and Yehoshua?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that Moshe was actually giving **מוסר** to Yehoshua his Talmid. Moshe Rabbeinu was telling Yehoshua, "You have to train your ears to be intuitive and recognize the differentiation between different voices."

Especially since Yehoshua will be a **מנהיג**, he needed this intuition to recognize - what is a voice of war? What is a voice of sin?

Moshe Rabbeinu was telling Yehoshua that it is vital to comprehend *what* the nation is trying to say.

This yesod is so important, not only for a **מנהיג** like Yehoshu, but for all of us. For example, one of avodos of a Chavrusa is, that he is meant to be intuitive and understand the "voice" of his chavrusa. Say, one day one's chavrusa is a little uptight and in a rotten mood.

As a chavrusa we are meant to pay attention to that "voice". Maybe sneak out for a few minutes and buy him a coke to cheer him up a bit! Who knows what that can do!

Another example is a parent. A job as a parent is to pay close attention to their child's needs. The parent has to be able to understand the "voice" of what their child is **really** saying. Is he having a rough time in school etc. etc.

What about a spouse? All the more so, a spouse NEEDS this good sense of hearing. They must be sensitive to what the "voice" of their spouse is really calling for, what their *real* needs are. Say for example a husband comes home drained and feeling shvach or say a husband comes home and sees his wife not managing so well, one has to hear the voice of each spouse and take action on what the moment is calling for. It goes in both directions.

The same is for a friend, a sibling etc. It is one big yesod, **besides** the actual words that may be coming forth from one's mouth, one must also read between the lines and pay attention to *what* the **"voice"** is.

This is the lesson that Moshe Rabbeinu was teaching Yehoshua, that he must work on knowing how to be *mavchin* **בין קול לקול**. It is true that sometimes one can totally misinterpret what the **real** need of the other person is. It is tricky. Our job is to be aware, to use our brains in every situation.

There is another famous story that also brings out this idea. A fellow once came to the **Brisker Rov** before Pesach and asked if he could be **יוצא** the **ארבע כוסות** with milk.

The Brisker Rov heard a different voice than the actual halachic inquiry. The Brisker Rov "**heard**" that this man could not afford wine (and most probably other basic needs) for Pesach, and the Brisker Rov made sure that this man was provided with money to purchase what he needed for Pesach.

This is just another example of what it means to '**hear the voice**' and what the voice is **really** revealing.

Parsha Points to Ponder



How was Moshe permitted to break the Tablets (32:19) that contained Hashem's name when the Gemora in Sanhedrin (56a) rules that it is forbidden to cause the erasure or destruction of Hashem's name?

The Kesef Mishneh maintains that the prohibition to destroy written objects that possess sanctity is only Rabbinical in nature, and at the time that Moshe broke the Tablets this Rabbinical enactment certainly had not yet been made.

The Rokeach and Rogatchover Gaon note that Chazal say that before Moshe broke the Tablets, the writing on them miraculously flew away. As a result, the sanctity of the Tablets was removed and it was permissible to destroy them.

The Moshav Z'keinim explains that after the letters flew away, the Tablets ceased to miraculously carry themselves and became very heavy. Moshe realized that every moment that he delayed his return to the camp, the people would continue sinning with the golden calf,

so he reasoned that it was permissible to throw down the heavy Tablets that were slowing him down.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh quotes an opinion of Chazal (Avos D'Rav Nosson 2:3) that Hashem explicitly commanded Moshe to break the Tablets.

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

Parsha Pearls

וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ כִּי **אוֹת** הִוא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לָדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם

And you (Moshe) should speak to the children of Israel saying, 'But my Shabbos days you should guard, because it is a sign between Myself and between you for all generations, to know that I am Hashem who sanctifies you.

The Torah teaches us that Shabbos is a sign - **אות** between us and HaKadosh Boruch Hu. But what is it a sign of?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh in his commentary on this verse writes: **כי אות היא, פירוש: כל המנוחה והעונג הנרגש לישראל ביום השבת אינו אלא אות היא ביני וגו' פירוש: סימן לטובה הגנוזה**

"The oneg and menucha that one feels on Shabbos is a sign that Hashem has eternal oneg and menucha waiting for him in the future." -Thus, at the moments when we experience the Shabbos delight, we should hear through this delight a message from our loving Father in Heaven:

"This Shabbos delight is My way of letting you know that I have eternal oneg and menucha waiting for you in the future."

Divrei Torah, Ba`er Heitev באר היטב פרש"י בע' לשון. דברי תורה, שמחה וחיזוק.
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KI SISOH - POROH 5783 Vol. 14 No. 22

On Shabbos Parshas Poroh **The Beis Aharon of Karlin** said "***One must believe that just as we would become pure with the ash of the Poroh Adumah totally, to be pure for the offering of the Korbon Pesach, so too we are purified with the reading of Parshas Poroh, each and every person according to their stage, to the light of Pesach, and the holiness of each and every one according to their elevation in holiness***". • Sefer Beis Aharon – Likutim

A Vort in a Minute – R' Srully Ginsberg



When Hashem told Moshe that the Yidden should give a מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל, Hashem said זֶה יִתְּנוּ -***This is what they should give***.

What was Hashem referring to?

Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe מַטְבֵּעַ שֶׁל אֵשׁ- a sort of coin of fire. Like this coin, is what they should give.

If Hashem wanted to illustrate to Moshe Rabeinu what this coin looked like, why not show him a real coin? Why a coin made out of fire?

Says the *heilige* **Rav Nachmon Breslover** – Hashem is telling us, that money is like fire. Fire can be utilised very productively: To cook, to warm up, and to illuminate. However, fire can be very dangerous and destructive.

The same is with money. If we use our money correctly, we can help people, we can build, and we can illuminate.But money used incorrectly, could Chas V'Sholom destroy a person.

Hashem said זֶה יִתְּנוּ - Use the money like fire – Use it to give Tzeddaka and to help other people. Money that we give away to others, is the greatest investment. It is money that no one can ever take away from you, and it stays with you eternally – for this world and the next.



After the Sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe calls for Bnei Yisrael to make a decision. He asks them to stand up for the sake of G-d's Honor, and take up arms to defend His Name.

When commanding those who came forward (32:27), Moshe begins the instructions by saying, "כֹּה־אָמַר ה' אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל- *So said Hashem the G-d of Israel...*" - This is the only instance where Moshe, when addressing the Jewish People, uses the phrase, "Hashem the G-d of Israel." Why here and no other place in the entire Torah?

By examining the context of his remarks, I think we can begin to understand why this phrase is employed. Moshe comes down the mountain in furious anger. He proceeds to break the luchos, and confronts the Bnei Yisrael and his brother, Aharon. Moshe, acting as a barometer of the Divine attitude towards the Jews (see Shemoneh Perakim of Rambam for further elaboration of this idea), is clearly demonstrating Divine displeasure. However, even under these trying and tragic circumstances, Moshe is quick to point out that Hashem is still "G-d of Israel."

The newly formed relationship persists in spite of the betrayal. The covenant of commitment forged by the giving of the Torah faces its first serious challenge, and it survives…until this very day.

Collected Insights from Gedolei Yisroel Regarding Tefilla During Wartime

Rav Moshe Sternbuch Shlita

On 7 Teves (5784), Rav Aharon Feldman shlita, Rosh Yeshivas Ner Yisroel of Baltimore, asked Rav Sternbuch what one should currently be praying for. He answered: "**That HaShem should cause His Name to be sanctified without any Jew having to suffer. How is that possible? That is not our responsibility**."

HaShem wants and expects everyone to pray fervently for the welfare, safety and success of every Jew, both soldier and civilian, but we also beseech Him that our hoped-for physical salvation should be coupled with our spiritual salvation. In such a salvation, everyone, without exception, recognizes our physical salvation as being the outcome of HaShem's power, providence and kindness, rather than the success and power of any mortal beings, which is what the media would have us believe.

Due to the pervasive influence of the media, and decades of Zionist indoctrination, this seems like a tall order, but not for HaShem. If there are enough people who have truly internalized the fact that our physical fate depends only on our spiritual state, then HaShem will make sure that military successes will cause a *Kiddush HaShem*, and physical salvation will be coupled with spiritual salvation.

Rav Dovid Soleveitchik

Maran [the Brisker Rov] would say that one should not give "advice" to Hakodosh Baruch Hu on how to bring about the salvation; HaShem doesn't need our advice, and also sometimes a person doesn't know which way is truly good and correct for him. Therefore, one should not *daven* for a specific means of salvation. Rather, the main *tefilla* has to be general, for HaShem to save us, without giving advice to Hakodosh Boruch Hu on how it should happen. During the troubles that were happening at the beginning of the State [between the

Arabs and Zionists], Maran said not to *daven* for victory or for no [victory], but rather that we must *daven* that HaShem should save us, and He knows how to save us, and doesn't need advice from us…"

Rav Elazar Menachem Shach

[Rav Aharon Yeshayohu Rotter recounts:]… Immediately after the conquest of the Kosel [Six-Day War], I visited Maran Harav Shach; while all the population were exultant with joy, he had a gloomy look. Maran told me that he didn't share in this joy, but I did not understand what he meant. After that, on Shabbos, when [the Israeli army] had completed their victory, I came back [to Harav Shach] and joined him on his regular walk. Then he turned to me and said, "Reb Aharon, today I don't put my trust even in you…", meaning, you also were swept up with the crowd mentality.

I asked him, "The Rebbe should explain – when at the beginning of the war, the Jordanians bombarded Tel Aviv, all of us hid in bomb shelters; did you want then that the Arabs should win?" He said to me … **"I prayed that HaShem should send us victory, but not through *them* [the Israeli army]!"**

Rav Yaakov Eidelstein

"During the "Tzuk Eitan" war ("Operation Protective Edge" 2014), Rav Yaakov Eidelstein gave a *shiur*, and at the beginning of the *shiur* requested of everyone to say together *perek* 85 of Tehillim, over the danger presented to Klal Yisroel. He explained that the goal [of our *tefillos*] is not that the control and power should remain in the Land; rather, [we *daven*] that people should not be harmed. **Even if the control of power changes hands [from the State of Israel to an Arab government], the important thing is that Yidden should be able to keep Torah and Mitzvos.** The main danger is that the government could cause *chas v'Sholom* even many people to die just to preserve them in power."

Beyond the Words of Kaddish – Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

As a 12-year-old boy, **R' Pam** (1913–2001), who lived in Lithuania, was sent by his parents to a yeshiva in a different town. When his parents heard that the wagon driver from their city was headed to where R' Pam was learning in yeshiva, they would send him regards. When he would receive those regards, he felt such a thrill because he felt lonely as a 12-year-old boy away from home.

When his parents had more notice that the wagon driver was headed there, they would write a letter and send it. Upon receiving it, R' Pam was overjoyed. When his parents had even more notice, his mother would make him a fresh kugel. When R' Pam received that, he felt tremendous joy.

Later in life, after his parents passed away, he took it as a lesson, as he would say the following. 'When I recite *kaddish*, I am sending my parents regards. When I learn Torah, I am sending them a letter. And when I strengthen public Torah learning, I am sending them a fresh kugel.'



At age 14, **R' Ruderman** (1900–1987) learned in the Slobodka Yeshiva. One Erev Rosh Hashana, he accepted upon himself to finish *shas* by Pesach. Prior to the new *zeman* after Succos, a message came to the **Alter of Slobodka** that the father of R' Ruderman passed away (his mother passed away when he was seven).

The Alter of Slobodka (1849–1927), who knew R' Ruderman committed himself to completing *shas*, didn't tell R' Ruderman that his father died, which meant that he did not say *kaddish* for his father. Only after R' Ruderman finished *shas* by Pesach did the Alter tell him that his father had died.

The Alter explained to him that his learning *shas* was worth more than saying *kaddish* for his father. (If he had told him when it

happened, R' Ruderman wouldn't have finished *shas* due to the mourning.)

Once, on his mother's *yahrtzeit*, the Rosh Yeshiva of Telz, **R' Elya Meir Bloch** (1894–1954), was in a foreign city trying to raise funds for Jews who had had their house destroyed by a fire. Due to this, he was unable to say *kaddish* since there was no *minyan*.

R' Bloch's response to this was, "What does my mother want — to say *kadish* or to actually live it?!" - His action to help other Jews was a living *yisgadal v'yiskadash*… making Hashem's name great.

The Divrei Malkiel (4:96) was asked about a child who didn't want to say *kadish* for his father. In answering the question, he writes that people have forgotten the big picture around *kaddish*: The masses have thought that the essence is to lead davening and say *kaddish*. And there are those who say *kaddish* as much as possible, but all day they do whatever they want. - In truth, the essence is to increase Torah and good deeds and keep away from forbidden things. And in this a child confers merit on his parent.

Tailoring The Message - Rav Wolbe on Chumash by Rabbi Yitzchok Caplan

שְׁנֵי־לֻחֹת אֲבָנִים כָּרִאשֹׁנִים – '*Two stone Luchos like the first ones.*' (Shemos 34:1)

When Moshe Rabbeinu beheld Bnei Yisrael worshiping the golden calf, he threw down the Luchos and smashed them. Chazal tell us (Shabbos 88a) that afterward Hashem thanked Moshe for breaking the Luchos. Eighty days later, on Yom Kippur, Moshe descended from Har Sinai with a second set of Luchos, with the same commandments. What was the impetus for Moshe's decision to break the Luchos?

In addition, if he felt Bnei Yisrael were not worthy of receiving the Torah, what changed eighty days later when he returned with a similar set of Luchos?

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 5a) states that the second set of Luchos differed from the first set. Had they merited the first set, Bnei Yisrael would have been free from the dominion of the yetzer hara and would never have been oppressed by foreign nations. They would have achieved a level of existence without sin.

Prior to their sin, the Torah (i.e., the first set of Luchos) was tailored to the needs of a nation that had reached the pinnacle of spiritual ascent. When Moshe saw that the nation had sinned, thereby falling from their newfound spiritual plateau, he understood that the Torah in its present form was not suitable for Bnei Yisrael. They would need a new set of Luchos, tailored to a nation that had tasted sin. The actual Torah would remain unchanged, but the manner in which it would be conveyed to Bnei Yisrael would be different.

Every generation has a specific manner in which it can, and does, relate to the Torah. Those responsible for transmitting the Torah must understand the particularities of their specific generation and transmit the Torah accordingly. The Torah remains the same; it is merely the presentation that changes.

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein commented that his rebbeim in the yeshivah of Kelm would say that speaking about the terrible punishments in Gehinnom in order to motivate people to improve is not the proper approach for our generation.

The Alter of Slabodka would always stress gadlus ha'adam — the greatness of man. He understood that our era required a softer, more optimistic approach, and he tailored his discourses accordingly.

Whatever the means of transmission, the beauty of the Torah remains constant. We all have the ability to help others in their

Torah growth; we need only find the right language. What spoke to the last generation might not speak to our generation, and what speaks to our generation might not speak to our children's generation.

If we bear this in mind when delivering Hashem's eternal message, we will, be'ezras Hashem, succeed in imbuing others with a true Torah outlook, in a manner that rivals the pedagogy of Shmuel HaNavi.

משל למה הדבר דומה

הֶעָשִׁיר לֹא־יַרְבֶּה וְהַדַּל לֹא יַמְעִיט מִמַּחֲצִית הַשָּׁקֶל – '*The rich shall give no more, and the poor shall give no less than half a shekel.*' (30:15)



During **R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz's *zt"l*** leadership at *Torah Vodaath*, tuition was never a barrier to a student's desire to learn. One afternoon, while walking through the hall, he heard the muffled sobbing of a woman coming from the financial office. Stepping inside to investigate, R' Shraga Feivel found a mother of three boys enrolled in the *yeshivah*, tearfully begging for a tuition reduction. Without a word, he signaled for one of the office administrators to follow him outside. "Let us see for ourselves how she lives," he said.

The walk from the *Mesivta* to the woman's apartment was only a few blocks, but the reality inside was a world away. They were admitted into a cramped, meager dwelling where the very walls seemed to cry out with the weight of poverty. – R' Shraga Feivel stayed only long enough to quietly leave a few dollars on the table as a courtesy.

Upon returning to the office, he turned to the staff who had refused the woman's request. His voice was firm: "You are dealing here with *dinei nefashos*, matters of life and death. In the time you spent arguing over whether to reduce her tuition from five dollars to three, you could have gone out and collected far larger sums elsewhere."

From that day forward, he instructed the staff that every request for a tuition reduction must be met with compassion and a favorable eye.



The Half-*Shekel* teaches us that every *neshama* holds an equal stake in the *Mishkan Hashem*. Neither the affluent nor those who struggle to afford the "admission" are viewed differently; rather, the gates are open to anyone who sincerely desires to be part of *Hashem's* holy presence.

By requiring a uniform contribution, the *Torah* reminds us that while our bank accounts may differ, our spiritual worth is identical.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

In the synagogue of **Chacham Rabbi Zion Halevi *zt"l***, Chief Rabbi of Panama for 57 years, the atmosphere gradually changed. It had once been a synagogue where not a sound could be heard, but over time habits began to slip. Despite the rabbi's repeated reminders, people continued to chatter during prayer and even while the *Torah* was being read aloud.

Chacham Zion, known for his deep devotion and gentle nature, tried to correct the situation through words of rebuke. He explained the seriousness of the matter, urging the congregation to remember

that the *Torah* reading was not a casual moment but a sacred encounter. Still, his appeals fell on deaf ears. Chatter persisted, and the sanctity of the service was eroded.

One *Shabbat* morning, *Chacham Zion* decided that words alone would no longer suffice. After the third *aliyah*, he banged hard on the *bimah* with determination and announced: "*Rabbotai*, we are concluding the *Torah* reading right now and returning the scroll to the *Aron Hakodesh*. The talking in this synagogue is out of control, truly an affront to the *Torah*, and in this manner it is impossible to continue reading."

His voice carried through the sanctuary, and the congregation froze in shock. Never before had they seen the *Torah* reading halted midway. Was it even permissible by *halacha*?

Several members assured the rabbi in loud voices that everything will remain under control and the talking in the sanctuary will be halted. Unmoved by their gratuitous assurances, however, *Chacham Zion* carefully returned the scroll to its place. Quietly, he instructed his close associates that the reading would be completed later, during the *Mincha* service.

He knew that some would miss hearing the full portion, but he believed the lesson was more important. The act was not meant to punish but to awaken the community to the seriousness of their behavior.

The impact was immediate. The congregation realized that their casual chatter had crossed a line. The *Torah* was not merely a book to be read; it was the foundation of their faith, deserving reverence and silence. From that *Shabbat* onward, the synagogue in Panama was transformed. The chatter ceased, and the *Torah* reading regained its dignity.

When this story was told to **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein *shlita,*** *Rav* of *Ramat Elchanan*, he later shared it with his revered father-in-law,

the *Posek Hador*, **HaGaon R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *zt"l***, one of the great halachic authorities of the time. *Rav Elyashiv* admired *Chacham Zion's* boldness.

When asked where in the *Torah* it permitted stopping the *kriah* midway, *Rav Elyashiv* responded with a striking comparison: "And where does it say that it is permissible to break the *Luchos*, as *Moshe Rabbeinu* did when he came down from *Har Sinai*?" Just as Moshe shattered the *Luchos* to preserve the honor of *Hashem*, *Chacham Zion* was certainly within his rights to interrupt the *kriah* to preserve the honor of the *Torah*.





The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 122:3) tells us that a person who regularly recites the following words will have the merit of receiving the Shechinah: **עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן יְמִינֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קְדֻשָּׁתֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרָתֶךָ** - "*Act for the sake of Your Name; act for the sake of Your right Hand; act for the sake of Your holiness; act for the sake of Your Torah.*" - These words appear at the conclusion of every Shemoneh Esrei.

Rav Mattisyahu Salomon (Matnas Chaim) quotes a powerful teaching of the **Chasam Sofer** — that this passage helps carry the entire Shemoneh Esrei up to Heaven.

With these words, we effectively declare, "Hashem, everything that I have asked You for — wisdom, forgiveness, health, parnassah, and all the requests that I made during the Shemoneh Esrei — were all for the sake of Your honor, not for my own sake." And these words guarantee that our tefillos will be heard.

We all have many things for which we need to daven. We need Heavenly mercy to help us with so many of the issues with which we

constantly contend. We could plead with Hashem to help us, to alleviate our suffering, and to make us successful simply because these are things that we need. But if we daven out of concern for Hashem's honor, then we will have reached the ultimate level of tefillah, and our prayers will surely be answered.



Inspired by Time – War With Iran – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

No One But Hashem!

These are powerful, dramatic days – days in which Klal Yisrael needs oceans of tefillos. The question resting in the heart of every Yid is painfully simple: as we face such grave danger – rockets, drones, ballistic missiles flying over our heads, each capable of levelling buildings (as we have already seen in the catastrophe is Beit Shemesh), how do we protect ourselves? How do we ensure our safety in times like these?

History Repeats Itself

The truth is that we do not need to search far for the answer. This is not the first time our nation has faced mortal danger from that very region. We have just read the Megillah which describes the time Persia sought to annihilate us – **לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים** The ambition was total destruction.

But what did Mordechai do? He did not convene military strategists. He did not begin a political campaign. "**לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים**." - Gather them. Unite them. Through teshuvah and tefillah, Klal Yisrael brought about one of the greatest yeshuos in our history. And not only were we saved – **וְנַהֲפוֹךְ הוּא**, but the decree was also reversed entirely, **אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁלְטוּ הַיְּהוּדִים הֵמָּה בְּשֹׂנְאֵיהֶם**.

The sefer of **Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus** explains a breathtaking idea that sheds light not only on those days, but on every moment of national crisis.

When Klal Yisrael face danger, what do they do? They daven. They cry out to Hashem. That is our instinct. That is our lifeline. But we are human. And when we daven, we often – almost unconsciously – lean on something else as well.

We daven to Hashem... but we also feel reassured because we "have connections." We daven... but we also think, "There is someone influential who will intervene." - We daven... but part of our heart is still resting on flesh and blood.

Our MP

In the days of the Megillah, Klal Yisrael certainly fasted and cried out. But they also knew something else. They had Mordechai.

Mordechai was not merely a private individual. He sat at the king's gate. He was involved in royal matters. He had already uncovered an assassination plot. He was, in the language of our times, something like a member of parliament – a figure inside the system.

Subconsciously, there was a small measure of reliance. "We have a tzaddik in the palace gates. Mordechai will handle it."

So what does Mordechai do? He stands in open defiance of Haman. He refuses to bow. He makes himself the visible, public antagonist of the most powerful man in the empire. By publicly refusing to bow to Haman, he appeared to escalate the crisis. - Klal Yisrael could no longer rely on him.

Then they turned their hopes to Esther. She was inside the palace; surely she would intervene. But Esther removed that illusion as well. By inviting Haman to intimate banquets, she created the appearance of alliance. - Panic set in. There was no Mordechai to save them. No Esther to rescue them. There was only Hashem. And when Klal Yisrael realized that there was no one else to depend on, their

tefillos became whole – directed solely to Hashem, with complete trust. – That wholehearted tefillah is what brought the yeshuah.

Chazal teach that when a person stands in tefillah, he must see himself **כְּעָנִי וְכָרָשׁ** – like a poor man standing at the door.

On a simple level, this means humility. A pauper owns nothing. He has no savings, no property, no safety net. Every meal depends on the kindness of someone else. When we stand before the Ribbono Shel Olam, we are meant to feel that same dependency – that without Him, we have nothing.

Doing the Rounds!

But Rav Pinkus, in She'arim biTefillah, reveals a far deeper dimension. Imagine there is a knock at your door. A poor man stands outside and asks for help so he can buy food. Most people will give him something – a few coins, a few shekels. Even a wealthy person, who easily could give much more, usually gives only a small amount.

Why?

Because he assumes: "I am not the only address. This person will knock on many doors. Others will give as well. Together, it will add up."

Now imagine a different scenario. A man approaches you and says, "I need four hundred dollars to survive. I have gone everywhere. I have no one else to turn to. You are my last hope."

Suddenly something changes inside you. You are no longer one contributor among many. You are the sole source. The responsibility shifts. The giving becomes different.

Explains Rav Pinkus – this is exactly how tefillah works. If we stand before Hashem and ask for help, but in the recesses of our heart we are also leaning on other supports – the bank manager, the doctor, our professional connections, political alliances, military strength, technological systems – then our dependence is divided.

We are davening. But not exclusively to Hashem. So what does Hashem do, he says I will give you something, a few coins.

You Are the Only One Who Can Help

But when a person reaches a place of clarity and says, "Ribbono Shel Olam, there is no one else. There is no other address. No other source. No other solution. You are the only one who can help." - That is a real tefillah and then Hashem does not just give a few coins; he gives it all.

We are living in days that are deeply challenging. Klal Yisrael face real threats. Each missile carries the potential for devastation – rachmana litzlan. And what do we do? We daven.

But if we are honest, there is often a quiet parallel track in our minds. "There is the army. There is intelligence. There are advanced defence systems. There are powerful allies."

But this is not the truth. "**אִם־יְהוָה לֹא־יִשְׁמָר־עִיר** - *If Hashem does not guard the city, the watchman stands in vain.*" - When will the full yeshua come, the Navi explains, " **אֵין לָנוּ עַל מִי לְהִשָּׁעֵן אֶלָּא עַל אָבִינוּ שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם** – when we realize that we have no one to rely upon except for our Father in Heaven.

So what is our avodah now? - To strengthen that clarity. To gently but firmly uproot any illusion that salvation rests elsewhere. To train our hearts to feel that we are knocking on one door only.

When the sirens wail and we hurry to our shelters, we must certainly do our hishtadlus - we follow the physical protocols and utilize the defence systems available to us. But in those tense moments, our internal reality must reflect the profound lesson of the Megillah. We must remind ourselves that technology is merely a vessel, and the true shield is the Shomer Yisrael.

Like Mordechai standing unbending before Haman, and like Esther deliberately shattering the illusion of her political influence, we must consciously release our reliance on military might and

geopolitical allies. It is in that profound realization of vulnerability, when we recognize that we are utterly dependent on Hashem's mercy, that our tefillos become whole and can pierce the heavens.

If we can stand together with that absolute clarity, כְּעָנִי וְכָרָשׁ, directing our hearts solely to our Father in Heaven, we will no longer be asking for just a few coins of salvation. We will be asking the Master of the Universe, as our only hope, to give us everything.

May our unadulterated trust and wholehearted tefillos awaken His boundless compassion, serving as a shield over every member of Klal Yisrael. And just as in the days of Mordechai and Esther may we merit to see a glorious v'nahafoch hu in our own times—transforming these days of deep anxiety into a time of absolute yeshuah, light, and enduring shalom.

Dayan Yehoshua Posen



In this week's parasha Moshe Rabbeinu broke the luchos and we find that the shivrei luchas, the broken parts of the luchos were put inside the Aron together with the complete luchos that Moshe Rabbeinu received subsequently.

And the question is, why were the shivrei luchos put inside the Aron? And in fact, when Klal Yisrael went to war, when they went to battle, the Aron was taken out as well and these shivrei luchos accompanied Klal Yisrael in their most challenging times.

Rabbeinu Tam in Sefer Yehoshua explains that in life, sometimes we go through periods where everything is going well, both from a gashmius point of view, but also from a ruchnius point of view. And

sometimes we go through times when we fall down, when we don't necessarily act the way we want to act. And sometimes we have to pick ourselves up again. Says Rabbeinu Tam, our avodah is challenging times when things haven't gone the way they should have.

When maybe we've broken down, but we manage to pick ourselves up again and push through the limits to climb back up, that avodah is precious to the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** as well. And therefore, the Shivrei Luchas went into the Aron to show and remind Klal Yisrael that what's important to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. He knows that sometimes we fall, but it's how we pick ourselves up that counts.



How to Change Your Mazal by Michael Winner

וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ כִּי אוֹת הִוא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לָדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם -"*And you, speak to the Children of Israel, saying, 'But My Shabboses you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations to know that I am Hashem who sanctifies you*" (Shemos 31:13).

We see in this pasuk how Shabbos is worded. It's not "Shabbos," it's "My Shabbos." As fancy grammar people would say, "possessive."

Most of the world, these days, have a concept of "a day of rest," obviously getting it from us. Christians have it on Sunday. Muslims have it on Friday. Americans have it on Saturday and Sunday. And the French have it every day. - But, for all of them, it's a "day of rest." A day that they do not have to go to work. A day where they can do whatever they want to do. But Shabbos for a Jew is not so. Or at least, not supposed to be so. It's Hashem's Shabbos.

Of course, it's a day of rest for us. We get to sleep a little more, we have nice meals. We spend time with the family. All in all, we are more relaxed. However, we must not lose focus that this is a time that we have to build our relationship with Hashem.

A married couple with children, is always encouraged to "get out without the kids" every once in a while. If they don't, they might end up losing on their relationship, and after the last children are married, realize that they no longer have anything in common.

So too, our relationship with Hashem. Six days a week we hustle to make ends meet, take care of the children, take care of our bills, our homes, our cars, etc. And we end up losing our connection with Hashem. It's sad. But, it's also natural.

That is why we have Shabbos. It's a time to not just physically recharge, but to spiritually recharge. We can learn things that we want to learn during the week, but don't have the mindset for. We can slow down in our davening or our bentching after our meals. We can focus on the meaning of the songs that we sing.

There are many ideas that each person can develop for themselves. But the key is to remember that Shabbos is not merely a day off but it's "Hashem's Shabbos" and it's a 25-hour period where we can spend some quality time with Him.

With that, I wish you all an amazing, and quiet, Shabbos.

Anticipating Shabbos

In his commentary on "V'shamru" (31:16) the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh offers a profound insight that it means to anticipate or long for Shabbos, viewing it not as a burden but as a joyous, spiritual, and longed-for connection.



נעגל וואַסער By Reuven Eckstein

In שו״ת הרשב״א (חלק א סימן קצא) the **Rashba** explains:

We wash neigel vasser in the morning because upon awakening, a person begins serving Hashem anew, like a kohen who washes his hands and feet from the kiyor before the avodah in the Beis HaMikdash.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

מר דרור – Pure Myrrh

The Vilna Gaon explains that a person has 4 senses: sight, hearing, smell, and speech. Three of these are needed for learning Torah: to see what one is learning, to listen to what someone is teaching, and to share it with others. The sense of smell has no connection to Torah study, but its place is in the Divine Service in the Temple, as the pesukim in the Torah that discuss the offerings repeatedly speak about them as being a **ריח ניחוח לה׳** – a pleasant smell to Hashem. Today, when we do not have korbanos, we instead have prayer in their place.

The Gemara in Chullin (139b) asks where Mordechai is hinted to in the Torah, and it answers that he is alluded to at the beginning of Parshas Ki Sisa, where the Torah lists the spices that were used in creating the anointing oil. The first of the spices is called **מר דרור** – pure myrrh – which the Targum translates into Aramaic as **מרא דכיא**, which sounds like Mordechai.

The Vilna Gaon explains that the Torah is teaching us that Mordechai was the choicest of all spices, which means he was the most connected to prayer that corresponds to the sense of smell. For this reason, he had all four of the senses in his prayers, as he

lit up the eyes of the Jews with his entreaties, Hashem listened to his prayers, he knocked on the doors of Mercy by speaking his petitions, and his very name and his very essence connote that his prayers were the epitome of a **ריח ניחוח לה'**.

The Nuclear Threat Of Iran

The Emunah Perspective VS The Media Perspective by Rabbi Avrohom Benovos

For decades upon decades, Jews worldwide have been aware of the loudmouthed threats of the ayatollah leaders of Iran to completely obliterate both the United States of America and the State of Israel, the two countries which collectively host (in the case of Israel, somewhat unwillingly) the overwhelming majority of Torah Yidden of the world today.

Yet, by and large, the topic has simply not been taken seriously. Rare is the Yid who worries over the prospect of mass destruction, and even rarer is the Yid who will offer even a few *kapitlach Tehillim* to HaShem for the safety of Klal Yisroel. Why is that?

Gedolei Yisroel have told us that this is because the *source* of our information regarding Iran comes through the media, in the best-case scenario religious Jewish media. By definition, that means that the information comes already with the media interpretation, with endless talk of presidents and prime ministers, arrogant military spokesmen issuing threats, arguments pro a deal versus anti a deal, assessments of the capabilities of each side, and so on and so on for years upon years. The entire topic thus comes across to us as merely "news" like all other news, often repetitive, occasionally interesting, but never actually relevant in what we like to call "real life".

The Emunah perspective, on the other hand, could not be more different. The human figures who are maneuvered around the global stage by the Divine Hand are essentially irrelevant. The threats of

the ayatollahs are a call from Heaven for *tefilla* and *teshuva*. There is a real and tangible danger of mass destruction – and the ones who must respond to it are *us*. When the *yeshua* comes *be'ezras HaShem* it will be purely because of the response of Klal Yisroel. Everything else is merely a façade.

The current war with Iran is an attempt to remove the threat of nuclear annihilation. However, as should be obvious to every *ma'amin*, if the true cause of the threat is spiritual there is no conceivable way of it being removed without Klal Yisroel having responded suitably. At most, the source of danger could be repressed for a shorter or longer period of time or even transferred from one country to another. **Our task right now is to arouse ourselves with *tefilla* and *teshuva*. That is the true call of the hour. *That*, and nothing else.**

Maran Posek Hador Rav Moshe Sternbuch, the senior *daas Torah* in our generation today, speaks on this theme constantly. As the Geulah draws closer, the importance of returning full-heartedly to HaShem and accepting Him as the One and Only Power becomes even more critical.

During every single one of the dramatic events over the last few years – amongst them the Covid-19 era and the Israeli-Arab war which began on Simchas Torah – Rav Moshe has repeated time and time again that we must cease to place faith in man-made "solutions", whether the development of vaccinations, the election of a new president or the bombing of Iran. Although, obviously, one must know how to practically conduct oneself according to the Torah with each new situation, far more important is understanding that HaShem is expecting from us to turn to Him. Seizing onto flimsy human-made plans with the pitiful hope that they will solve the problem will only make it worse.

That must be the focus of our attention – always, and even more so now. "Keeping updated" by constant news is unlikely to make any

difference except to damage one's personal mental state. Speculating about what exact stage of the Messianic process we are in and what exactly each event signifies may be interesting, but (besides being unlikely to be accurate) will not cause any real change. Entering "safe rooms" during a missile attack for those in Eretz Yisroel may be important but will not provide the solution. Certainly being swept up in a media-hyped atmosphere of admiration towards non-Jewish or secular Jewish (anti-Torah) figures or military powers will cause nothing but harm. But ***genuine tefilla will save Klal Yisroel***.

That is our task. Emunah, bitachon, tefilla. Torah, mitzvos, teshuva, tzedaka. May the current tumultuous events bring us closer to HaShem and be a merit to arouse rachamei Shomayim to protect all of Klal Yisroel from all danger and hasten the dawn of the Geulah before our eyes!

Citations from Gedolei Yisroel

Rav Mattisyohu Chaim Salomon

The Mashgiach once spoke about Iran's nuclear designs.

"Iran is holding further in their plans today than Germany was holding in 1938," he said. The Mashgiach went on to relate that when the German General Rommel was not far from Eretz Yisroel and it appeared that he could easily conquer the small county, the great rabbanim in Eretz Yisroel at the time declared a three-day period consecrated to *teshuva* and *tefilla*.

After that, in a turn of events that could only be explained as above and beyond nature, the Germans turned back [i.e. were defeated by the British forces in Egypt] and did not conquer Eretz Yisroel.

The Mashgiach then quoted a comment made by the **Ponevezher Rav**: "***Had they held those three days of teshuva and tefilla before the war started, they could have avoided the whole war***."

The Mashgiach went on to say, "We have to take this seriously and daven to HaShem. People may criticize me," he said, "for unnecessarily scaring the *tzibbur*, but when Iran's designed are foiled, they will not realize that this was only as a result of our *teshuva* and *tefillos*."

Rav Yisroel Elya Weintraub

In the year 5793, when the oppressor [Hitler] rose to his position, and began to make heard his fearful plans to destroy *chas v'Sholom* [euphemistically] the 'enemies of Klal Yisroel', the **Chofetz Chaim** said about him that he [Hitler] himself does not know what he's saying; rather it's a message to give Klal Yisroel regarding what the Beis Din Above [in Shomayim] are discussing. For we have no great people who can serve as mediators between the King and His sons, and so there is no choice but to send the message through this crooked path.

Had we merited to become aroused from the holy words [of the Chofetz Chaim] and fix the foundations of the house and return in *teshuva*, the decree would have been annulled. But due to our many sins, they regarded the topic as a matter of politics, this one says this and that one says that, with all sorts of chatter and superficial reasoning, and thereby remained indifferent, and did not return in *teshuva* as they should have…

If over the first [missed opportunities] we are pained, then we should [at least] arouse ourselves over the later ones which we are living through today. We hear harsh threats from the ruler of Iran, who wants to destroy [euphemistically] the 'enemies of Klal Yisroel'; what his grandfather [Haman] did not succeed to do, he wants to succeed to do *Rachmona litzlan*, and to an ever greater extent – for he wants to throw a bomb which could destroy two-thirds of the world, *HaShem Yerachem*. We must know that this is a Heavenly message in an external wrapping, and **we have to take this *bas kol***

seriously, and arouse *rachamei Shomayim* with *tefilla* and *tachanunim*, and correct our weakening points, each person knows what his soul lacks.

But the newspapers make all this into a political affair, what does *this* ruler say, and what does *this* minister say, and they all constantly measuring the physical strength of [the Western countries] if they could counterattack [an Iranian attack] and so on, this one says this and that one says that, and *this is literally an injection of tranquilizer* into the *tzibbur* – as if the entire topic is not relevant to them, only to politicians – and thus they can be indifferent.

Rav Meshulem Dovid Soleveitchik

… We hear from the Jew-haters expressing similar sentiments to what Hitler said before the War. He said explicitly what he intended to do with the Jews, but even so no one believed him; they said that he's insane, and that the world will not let him [carry out his plans], etc etc. Had they believed him they would have fled to America and England and Eretz Yisroel, like some individuals did, but the great majority stayed because they did not believe him, until he came and did exactly what he said he would do.

Similarly today, there's someone standing in Iran who says those same things, explicitly, and also upon him people laugh and belittle him and say that he's a *meshugener*. But [in truth] whatever happens [this will turn out badly], because if they attack him [to prevent Iran attaining nuclear weapons] he will certainly shoot bombs to here, and if they don't then it will *certainly* be terrible…

… When we [Family Soleveitchik] came to Yerushalayim, the Germans were in Egypt and in Syria and according to logic it would be expected that any day the Germans would come here and conquer Eretz Yisroel. Then, in the month of Tammuz, everyone thought that

here they are at the entrance of the Land, and there was a tremendous *his'orerus* in Yerushalayim, in the Mea She'arim Shteiblach they said *Tehillim* around the clock without a break, the entire day and night, and also in Batei Rand [a neighborhood near Mea She'arim] and Sha'arei Chesed there was a great *his'orerus*. On Shiva Asar B'Tammuz there was a mass *tefilla* in Yeshivas Mea She'arim …

And indeed, these outcries and *tefillos* stopped the Germans coming and conquering the Land, for right afterwards Hitler had a downfall and began to falter until he finally lost.

שומר ישראל שמור שארית ישראל



Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

In this week's Parshah, the Luchos are broken and Moshe goes up to Shamayim to receive the second set. These were worked on and carved by Moshe Rabbeinu himself.

The Meshech Chochmah teaches us that we learn from the second set of Luchos that just as Moshe had to exert himself and put in the effort to hew and carve them, and only then did Hashem put in the finishing touches, so it is with our own Torah growth. If we exert and push ourselves to learn, Hashem will pull us through to great heights.



There is a famous question that many ask: Why did Moshe wait to break the luchos until he came down if Hashem had already told Moshe that the Yidden had made the golden calf?

There are many answers given to this question. I will bring three answers Be"H.

#1 - The seforno answers that when a person sins intentionally, it is usually because he could not take control of his yetzer hora. Therefore, while he is sinning, he has a guilty conscience and is not happy with his act. Chazal say evil people are full of regrets.

When Moshe heard from Hashem that the Yidden were sinning with the golden calf, Moshe did not yet think that was reason enough to break the luchos. However, only when Moshe entered the camp and saw that not only were they sinning, but they were dancing freilach with a guilt-free feeling, Moshe knew then that the luchos must be broken.

#2 - The **חתם סופר** in **תורת משה** page **קצז** answers that Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to teach a lesson for all future generations that a person is forbidden to judge until he sees the facts "on the ground".

Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to teach a lesson that one is forbidden to judge another based on mere presumption or *Ish M'pi Ish*. This means that even though Moshe Rabbeinu heard it from Hashem, Moshe Rabbeinu chose to act as if it was not fact **כביכול** until he witnessed the sin with his own eyes and only then did he break the luchos.

#3 - Another answer I saw from Rav Meir Chaim Gutfruend, He writes that there are people who sin secretly or even amongst friends. However, in front of their Rebbe or the Gadol Hador, the spiritual leader of the generation, few people would sin.

When Moshe Rabbeinu heard about the eigel, he expected that when he would appear in front of them, they would immediately stop, they would be totally embarrassment in his presence. However, when Moshe Rabbeinu saw that they continued to dance after he was there, Moshe Rabbeinu had no choice but to break the luchos.

Short Vertluch From Reb Yoel R. On The Parsha

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל - "*Everyone passing by to be counted must give this half shekel…*" **פרק ל פסוק יג**

Hashem showed Moshe a coin of fire that was the weight of half a shekel and told him that this was what *Bnei Yisrael* should give (Rashi).

Q: Why did Hashem show Moshe a coin of fire?

A: Hashem showed Moshe a coin of fire to demonstrate the positive and negative properties of money. Just as fire has the ability to either burn and destroy or to melt and join together, the same is true of money. Money can destroy a relationship or a family, or it can build a beautiful home.

The coin of fire was Hashem's warning to *Bnei Yisrael* to use money properly, so as to experience only its benefits. ~ **נועם אלימלך**

"If we truly understood another person's struggles, we would never judge them; we would simply embrace them." ~ Inspired by the teachings of Reb Zusha of Anipoli (1718-1800).

מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ "...half of a shekel based on the shekel of holiness..." **פרק ל פסוק יג**

Q: Why did Hashem specifically command that they bring half of a coin?

A: Hashem is teaching us an important lesson in unity. A person should not think that he can separate himself from the community and live his own life. Each person by himself is only a half, and the only way that he can reach completion and wholeness is by joining the community. ~ **חיד"א**

'The strength of a team is each individual member - The strength of each member is the team.'





Count Their Contributions

השם says **כי תשא**, when you count the Jews, don't count them. It's going to create a plague. What should you do?

זה יתנו כל העובר על הפקודים מחצית השקל. Let everybody make a contribution, count the contributions.

And it's very astonishing to people. What's wrong if we count Jews? Till today, you go to a **שול**, they're looking for a **מנין**, or it was like **ברוך אתה השם אלקינו מלך העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ**, we have ten, **הושיעה את עמך וברך את נחלתך**, because you can't count Jews.

I Once heard a very powerful insight by **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks זכרונו לברכה**, said something very powerful. He said, why do governments make a census? Why does anybody make a census? Census is a way of flexing your muscles, of showing the power that you have.

If a company, Google, Microsoft, you have ten thousand employees, that's powerful. Don't mess. If a country has a million troops, it

shows power. If a country makes a census, we have three hundred million people here.

This means the labor force, it means the contribution, it means the ingenuity is powerful. Counting is a way of demonstrating your power, your skill, your prowess, your efficiency, or at least how much potential you have.

The **רבונו של עולם** says to **משה**, don't count the Jews. You know why? If anybody's ever going to count the Jewish people, it's a recipe for despondency, for depression.

You're going to say, such a nation, how can they survive? How can they thrive? And never mind, how can they change the world?

אברהם אבינו was told that he's going to be a blessing to the entire world. This doesn't make sense. If at least we would number a few hundred million, a few billion.

אתם המעט מכל העמים.

Jews don't constitute even a quarter of one percent of humanity. It's not that we're one percent, we're not a half a percent, we're not a quarter of a percent. We are 0.2%. In other words, the number of Jews is smaller than a statistical error on a Chinese census.

השם says to **משה**, don't count Jews, never count Jews. Counting Jews is a recipe for disaster. But we want to count them. - **זה יתנו**. Let them give, and then you count their contribution. Don't count them, count what they have given, what they give, and what they will give the world, and then you'll know exactly who they are.

"People often take life for granted when things run smoothly, but when everything goes according to plan, that in itself is a reason for boundless gratitude to Hashem." ~ Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein Zt'l.



The Lesson of the Chukim – Dr Sholom Springer

We are in the afterglow of Shabbos, which this year was Parshas Ki Sisa. There is a remarkable confluence of themes: Ki Sisa deals with the Chet HaEigel; Parshas Parah is connected by Chazal to the Eigel; and the second Luchos were given on Yom Kippur. Parshas Parah also comes before Pesach because Klal Yisroel needed to become tahor for the Korban Pesach.

The Torah begins: **זאת חקת התורה**. Rashi explains: **לפי שהשטן ואומות העולם מונים את ישראל**. The Chukim are ridiculed by the Satan and the Umos HaOlam, so the Torah emphasizes that this is a **chok**—a decree from Hashem that we may not question: **גזירה היא מלפני, אין לך רשות להרהר אחריה**.



This is especially striking with Parah Adumah. Even Shlomo HaMelech said: **אמרתי אחכמה והיא רחוקה ממני**—"I thought I would become wise, but it remained beyond me."

Rashi, quoting Moshe HaDarshan, explains that the Parah Adumah comes to atone for the Eigel, using the mashal of a maidservant whose child makes a mess in the king's palace: "Let the mother come and clean up her child's mess." Yet the deeper mystery remains: Parah Adumah is **metaher teme'im and metameh tehorim**—it purifies the tamei while making the tahor tamei.

Learning to Live With a Question

The Be'er Yosef suggests that this may be the very purpose of the mitzvah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us things we cannot understand to teach us that we can live with a kashya. As the Yiddish saying goes: **פון א קשיא שטארבט מען נישט**—"A question won't kill you."

This is essential to emunah. There are things about the ways of Hakadosh Baruch Hu that we simply cannot understand.

We see this with Moshe Rabbeinu. After the Eigel, he asked: **הודיעני נא את דרכיך**, seeking to understand **צדיק ורע לו, רשע וטוב לו**. Yet Hashem answered: **וחנותי את אשר אחון ורחמתי את אשר ארחם**. Even Moshe was taught that some things remain beyond human understanding.

Acher could not accept this. The Gemara relates that he was disturbed by events such as the death of a child who performed **shiluach haken**, despite the promise of **והארכת ימים**, and by seeing the tongue of Chutzpit HaMeturgeman being eaten by a dog. He exclaimed: **אמר פה שהפיק מרגליות ילחך עפר**.

His problem was not simply the question; it was his inability to live with a question. If he could not understand it, he concluded that it could not be true. The Chukim teach us the opposite: we cannot understand everything, but we can still have complete emunah.

Parah Adumah — The Ultimate Chok

With Shatnez or Kashrus, we may not know why the Torah prohibits something, but there is no logical contradiction. Parah Adumah is different: its very effect seems contradictory. That makes it the ultimate chok.

The Chinuch teaches that our actions shape our emotions. On Purim, we perform acts of simchah and they create happiness; on Tisha B'Av, we sit in avelus and say Eichah, and the actions create the feeling.

So too with Parah Adumah. By performing a mitzvah we cannot understand, we train ourselves to accept that there are things beyond our comprehension. The incomprehensible does not have to shake our emunah.

Rabbi Akiva

The same lesson appears in the famous Gemara about Rabbi Akiva. Moshe Rabbeinu was shown Rabbi Akiva's Beis Midrash but could not understand the discussion. When told that the halachos were **הלכה למשה מסיני**, he was reassured.

Moshe then asked why the Torah was given through him if Rabbi Akiva would become such a great teacher. Hashem answered: **שתוק כך עלה במחשבה לפני**.

Later Moshe saw Rabbi Akiva's terrible death and asked: **ריבונו של עולם, זו תורה וזו שכרה?** Again came the answer: **שתוק כך עלה במחשבה לפני**.

Even Moshe Rabbeinu was taught that there are things beyond human understanding.

The Chukim and the Nations

Rashi says the nations ridicule us over the Chukim: **השטן ואומות העולם מונין את ישראל**. Yet the Torah also says: **ושמרתם ועשיתם כי היא חכמתכם ובינתכם לעיני העמים**—the nations will see our Torah as wisdom.

There is no contradiction. When we faithfully observe the Torah, the nations can recognize that there is something beyond their understanding. But when we abandon it, they can ridicule us: "You are intelligent people—why are you doing these things?"

That is the distinction Rashi makes.

Parah and Pesach

This brings us back to Parshas Parah and Pesach.

The Chacham at the Seder asks: **מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים**. He wants to understand the Torah, but the answer focuses on the Korban Pesach and its laws.

The message is that knowledge alone is not enough. A true Chacham must also understand **Chukim**—that we do what Hashem commands even when we do not understand why.

That is why Parshas Parah precedes Pesach. It prepares us for the Korban Pesach by teaching us the fundamental lesson of emunah:

We do not need to understand everything in order to believe. The ability to live with what is beyond our understanding is itself part of what makes us a holy people.



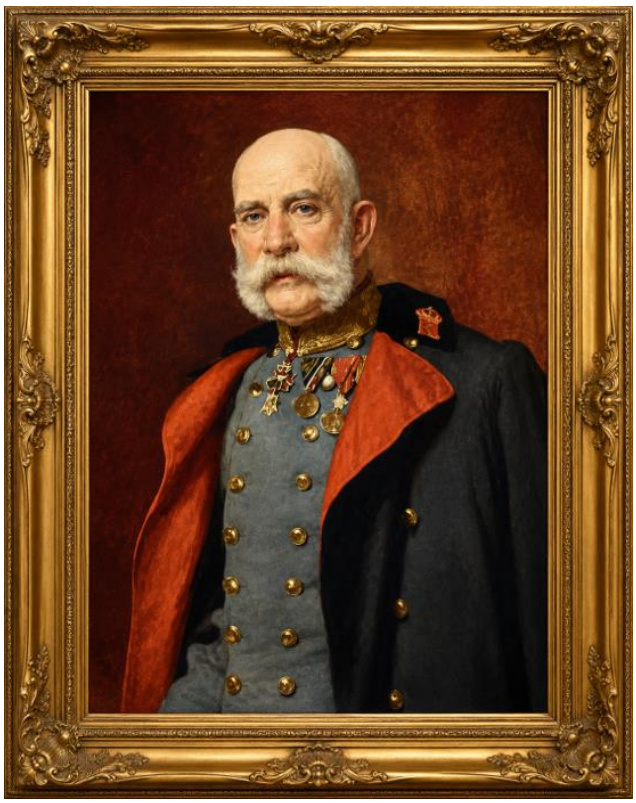
כל העובר על הפקודים מחצית השקל בשקל הקודש וגו' (ל-יג)

The great Rebbe, **R' Aharon Hagadol of Karlin Z''L**, makes a tremendous insight in the word '**מחצית**' - 'Half'. The innermost letter - the **צ** - represents the **צדקה** of **מצוה**. The two letters surrounding it on both sides are the **ח** and the **י**, which spells out the word **חי** - Life. The two perimeter letters are **מ** and **ת**, which create the word **מת** - death.

The lesson is quite clear. **חז"ל** teach us '**צדקה תציל ממות**' - Charity saves a person from death, and so, if one tends to surround himself with the Mitzvah of **צדקה**, he will be **זוכה** to live many happy and prosperous years (**חי**). However, one who refuses to keep this important Mitzvah and isolates himself from it, undoubtedly places his life in danger and death (**מת**) hangs over his head.

איזהו חכם...

ביני ובין בני ישראל אות היא לעולם וגו' (לא-יז)



The Austrian Monarch, Franz Josef, came to Vienna for a visit, and among other sites, he visited the Great Shul in the city. In the hallway of the Great Shul, hung a portrait of the Monarch as a sign of respect, however, soon before Franz Josef was to visit the Shul, the picture was stolen by an enemy of the Jews who wished to stir up some trouble. As part of the thief's plan, Franz Josef was informed of the absence of his picture and that this was a clear demonstration of the Jewish community's disloyalty towards him.

When the Monarch entered the Shul, along with his great entourage, he glanced around and then addressed the Rov, **R' Shimshon Sofer Z''L**, who happened to be a member of the Austrian Parliament, asking him if it was true what he had heard, that although his portrait always hung on the wall, with his visit to the Shul it was purposely removed.

R' Shimshon, himself, had just learned of the mysterious disappearance of the picture but quickly regained his composure. 'Your Majesty,' he began, 'It is true that your picture was removed from our Shul today, but for a very good reason. According to Jewish tradition, we don our Tefilin - phylacteries - every single day, which serves as a sign - **אות** - of the covenant between G-d and his people. However, wearing Tefilin on the Sabbath is forbidden, since Shabbos itself also serves as a sign of the covenant - **אות היא ביני וביניכם** - On Shabbos the Jewish people see themselves as eminently

close to their creator, so as to exclude the need for any additional signs.'

R' Shimshon concluded. 'With your majesty, we have decided to act in the very same manner. All year long we hang your portrait in our Shul as a sign of our respect and close connection with your majesty, even from a distance. However, today, on account of your honored visit to our Shul, to simply hang your picture on the wall would just reduce the admiration and cherished relationship that we feel towards you, for we have the privilege of your honored presence among us personally. For such a special occasion, the portrait of our Monarch is not necessary!'

Torah Gems

כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקדיהם וכו' (ל-יב)

This posuk can be translated literally. **כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל** - When you take the sum of Bnei Yisroel according to their numbers. Explains the **Yalkut Shimoni**, Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu, "If you want to know the number of Bnei Yisroel, take the beginning of each tribe's name and from this you will have the number:

The **ר** of Reuven has a numerical value of 200, denoting 200,00 people.

The **ש** of Shimon has a numerical value of 300, denoting 300,00.

The **י** of Yehudah which has a numerical value of 10, is 10,000.

The **י** of Yissochar has a value of 10, which denotes 10,000.

The **ז** of Zevulun has a value of 7, denoting 7,000

The **ד** of Dan which has a value of 4 is 4,000.

The **נ** of Naftali which has a value of 50, denotes 50,000.

The **ג** of Gad has a value of 3, which denotes 3,000.

The **א** of Asher has a value of 1, denoting 1,000.

The י of Yosef has a value of 10, which denotes 10,000.

The ב of Binyomin has a value of 2, denoting 2,000.

The total adds up to 597,000 people. Although the population of Bnei Yisroel was 600,000 when they left Egypt, 3,000 were destined to die as a result of the **חטא העגל** - Sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, they are considered dead and not enumerated among the shevatim.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

The city of Prague in the mid-1800's was host to many dignitaries, and when Empress Maria Theresa, the ruler of the Austrian Empire, came to the city for a state visit, she was honored with a gala reception. Amidst the festivities during the dinner in her honor, was a troupe of young Jewish youths featured in a dance performance, filled with colorful and elaborate costumes.

The Rov of the Prague community, the famous author of the Noda B'yehuda, **R' Yechezkel Landau ZT"L**, was required to attend the reception in honor of the Empress, as befitting the head of the Jewish community.

Amongst the many dignitaries and heads of state in attendance, was a General Brockman, a high official in the government and a well known and ardent anti-semite. He was known to persecute any Jew he came across, including those who enlisted in the army and would not pass up any chance he had to cause trouble for them. However, he wasn't much of an officer, and his reputation of inadequacy was no secret, not just among the government officials but even throughout the land and amongst the peasants. It was even rumored that he had once lost an important battle because instead of being at his command post and leading his troops into battle as a general should, he was found to be indulging in drunken revelry and was unaware that he was even being attacked.

When the Empress applauded the performance of the Jewish dancers, Brockman became irritated and said, "Hah, it is little wonder that they dance so well. After all," he snickered and stared hard at the Chief Rabbi, "Everyone knows that they learned how to dance in front of the Golden Calf, their primitive form of idol-worship!" Many fellow Jew-haters let out shrieks of laughter at the words of the General.

R' Yechezkel promptly responded, "The episode of the Golden Calf is indeed a shameful mark in our history. It occurred because Moses, the Jewish leader, was not with his people, as he had yet to return from Mount Sinai. But let me tell you something, we still see such calamities occurring today when a general who is supposedly leading his troops, allows his men to get slaughtered and can't be responsible enough to be with his men. That is more shameful than some "primitive form of idol-worship" that occurred thousands of years ago!"

Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster



Doctor of Souls - The Pnei Menachem zt'l teaches a chasid what it means to be a Jewish leader

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת כי תשא**. The **פני מנחם, רב פנחס מנחם אלתר גערער**, the previous **רבי זצ"ל**, often spoke about the self-sacrifice of his father and his brothers, who were the **רבי'ס** before him, and all the sacrifices that they made in order to help Jews whether in **גשמיות**, in material things, or in **רוחניות**, in spiritual things.

He himself once said that he's prepared to leave the world if it would help Jews whether in **רוחניות** or in **גשמיות**. When he agreed to become **רבי**, he even had to give up that which was most precious to

him, time for learning תורה. And he said, "I knew that I had to do that for the good of עם ישראל." He says, "For Jewish people you have to do everything."

One other aspect of it comes out in a story that was told by a גערער חסיד. He said that at one point he had done some things that were very wrong, so wrong that he was afraid that if he spoke to the רבי about them, it would put the רבי into so much pain.

He tried to ask advice from someone who was both close to the רבי and close to him as to whether he should put the רבי through that. The man advised him, he said, "I think it would be better if you just kind of keep it general, just speak about the problem in general, not to give him the details."

Anyway, he went in, and the רבי was able to sense that he wasn't telling him the whole story. Eventually, he got it out of him, and he said, "I'm sorry, רבי, but someone had told me that I should try not to give you the details because it would hurt you, it would put you into so much pain."

So the רבי asked him, he said, "Is a person allowed to hide details from a doctor? Right?" He says, "You have to realize, my father already said, he defined himself as what's called in the לשון of חז״ל, a גורף ביבין. A גורף ביבין means someone who cleans sewers." He said, "In order to help a Jew, I am prepared to go into the deepest, most polluted sewers and try to clean out that which needs to be cleaned out in order to help them."

If someone understands the purity of the רבי׳ס soul and what he cared about, he can really understand the self-sacrifice that was involved in there and the love for each and every individual Jew and his desire to help them in any way that he could, no matter what the cost.

In this week's פרשה, we see the picture of Jewish leadership, משה רבינו, who in defending עם ישראל asked השם to forgive them, and he

said, "**ואם תשא חטאתם**, if you will forgive them, **ואם אין**, but if not, **מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת**, erase me from the book that you wrote."

This is the picture of true Jewish leadership. **הקדוש ברוך הוא** sends to each generation leaders.

לא אלמן ישראל, עם ישראל is never without their leaders, but in order to be able to benefit from them, we have to understand what Jewish leadership is, appreciate the sacrifices made by our leaders, and know that we have to approach them in any way that will help us, because that's what they truly most want to do.

Wishing everyone a wonderful, peaceful **שבת** and a very good week.