

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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*Ki Seitzei*





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## Torah Wellsprings - Ki Seitzei

### Remember that your *Parnassah* Comes from Hashem

Why does the Torah prohibit lending and borrowing money with *ribis*- interest (as discussed in this week's *parashah* 23:20-21)?

One explanation is that the purpose of this mitzvah is to protect the borrower. As Rashi (*Shemos* 22:24) writes, "*Ribis* is like a snakebite (and therefore *ribis* is also called נִשְׁךְ, bite). A snake bites and makes a small wound on the foot, and one doesn't feel anything. Suddenly, [the poison] travels up to the head. *Ribis* is similar: One doesn't realize what's happening, and eventually, the *ribis* devours all his money."

The Chinuch (Mitzvah 68) elaborates on this idea: "Hashem desires the successful habitation of the nation whom He chose. Therefore, he commanded that we remove the obstacle from their ways so that one person shouldn't swallow up the wealth of another without him realizing it, until his house is empty from all good. For that is the nature of *ribis*, as this is known, and therefore it is called נִשְׁךְ, [like the bite of a snake]..."

The Kli Yakar offers another explanation for the prohibition of borrowing and lending with *ribis*. He explains that it is to help the lender retain his *emunah* and *bitachon*. He explains that lending money with *ribis* is a *parnassah*, which can cause the lender to forget to place his trust in Hashem.

He writes, "In all other businesses, one raises his eyes to Hashem because he isn't certain whether he'll earn or lose money. But, when one lends money and charges interest, his income is guaranteed. He isn't concerned that he may lose the money he lent since he doesn't lend money without collateral. Lending money with interest prevents him from developing *bitachon*... As it is known, those who lend money with

*ribis* are usually stingy people who don't give much *tzedakah*..."

The Megaleh Amukos *zt'l* let the people of Krakow know that he no longer wanted to be their *rav*, but he didn't tell them the reason for his decision. Despite many pleas that he change his mind and stay with them, he remained firm in his decision.

With a heavy heart, the community prepared a *seudas preidah* (goodbye party) for the Megaleh Amukos. At the celebration, the Megaleh Amukos announced that he will continue serving as the *rav* of Krakow.

The community was shocked and overjoyed simultaneously. Now they wanted to know (a) why he initially wanted to leave (b) and what caused his change of heart to remain with the *kehilla*?

The Megaleh Amukos said, "I still won't tell you why I wanted to leave, but I will tell you why I decided to stay:

A very unusual *din Torah* came to me. A wealthy person saw a pauper selling bread and bagels on the sidewalk, and he said to him, "I recognize you from years back! You are a great *talmid chacham*! It isn't befitting for you to sell bread on the sidewalk. I will give you as much as you need to live each month so that you can learn Torah all day long in the *beis medresh*."

The pauper agreed to the generous offer.

Some time passed, and the wealthy person found the pauper on the street selling bread and bagels. "We have an agreement," the wealthy man said. "Why are you here?"

The pauper answered that he and his wife decided to go back to their previous lifestyle, earning their living by selling bread on the street corners.

"But why? Isn't it better to earn your *parnassah* easily so that you can learn Torah? And besides, you can't back down from an agreement without my consent," the wealthy man added. "We had an agreement, and a deal is a deal."

They decided to ask the Megaleh Amukos. The Megaleh Amukos asked the pauper, "Why don't you agree to this arrangement?"

The pauper replied, "Before I received this generous stipend, my wife and I would wake up in the morning, and immediately turn to Hashem, pleading that He help us earn a living. When we ground the wheat kernels, we prayed that the bread would be white and clean. When we kneaded the dough, we prayed that it should rise well. We also prayed that I should find dry logs to heat the oven (as fresh wood smokes and ruins the bread). We prayed that the bread should bake well, that people should buy from us, and that they should be satisfied with their purchases so that they will buy from us again. When things went the way we wished, we praised Hashem for His kindness. From the beginning of the day until the end, we were constantly communicating and connecting to Hashem. But all of this stopped abruptly when we began receiving a monthly stipend. We weren't turning to Hashem anymore, because we knew that we will have everything we need. My wife and I decided that we don't want to live that way. We prefer going back to our old lifestyle because then Hashem will always be on our mind and in our prayers."

The Megaleh Amukos said to the community, "After this *din Torah*, I decided that I wanted to remain here, in this city, to be among such Yidden!"

### You Can't Succeed Without Hashem

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* was saying goodbye to his friends and students, as he was about to travel to Eretz Yisrael. He told them about his upcoming departure in his weekly *drashah*, in the beis medresh. After his *drashah*, one person came over to him

and said, "Rebbe, why didn't you say 'b'ezras Hashem'?" It was an oversight. The Chofetz Chaim had forgotten to say *b'ezras Hashem*.

Soon afterward, the Chofetz Chaim's *rebbeztin* fell ill, and he couldn't travel to Eretz Yisrael. We must always remember that it is impossible to succeed without Hashem's aid.

In general, the Chofetz Chaim remembered that he couldn't do anything without Hashem's help, and he taught this lesson to his students. One of the Chofetz Chaim's students was Reb Elya *zt'l*. A wealthy person once said to Reb Elya, "I am certain that I will always be wealthy."

"Why are you so certain?" Reb Elya asked him. "Things change. Businesses collapse. It happens all the time..."

"That's true," the wealthy man conceded, "however, my money isn't invested in one business. I have many businesses. Even if one or two of my businesses fail, many others can prosper. That's why I'm certain I will always be wealthy."

"Don't say that," Reb Elya rebuked him. "There are no guarantees. Chazal say *parnassah* is like a wheel. Sometimes one goes up, and sometimes one goes down."

The wealthy man laughed, for he was confident that his success will be forever.

Reb Elya met with that wealthy person years later, but by then, he wasn't wealthy anymore. "You were right," the man said to Reb Elya.

"What happened?" Reb Elya asked.

The man replied, "In the good old days, I owned a bridge. I took a toll from everyone who crossed it, and that was one of my sources of income. Once, a brigade from Czar Nicolai's army was crossing the bridge with their cavalry and heavy equipment. The bridge collapsed, soldiers drowned in the river below, and there was a great loss of money, too. I knew that I had to escape. I rushed home, grabbed my financial

documents so that I would still possess proof of my wealth and assets, and I quickly crossed the border. Soon, I realized that I took the wrong documents. Everything was left behind. I've been poor ever since."

The reason is that nothing is guaranteed unless Hashem guarantees it. We can't succeed without His help. That is a lesson that we should always keep in mind.

Once, an old priest put up his forest for sale. A chassid of Reb Dovid Moshe of Tchartkov *zt'l*, was very interested in buying it. He met with the priest to discuss the details, and then this Yid spoke to his financial advisors. Everyone agreed that this was "the deal of a lifetime." The price was extremely low, and he could sell the lumber and earn a nice profit.

But before finalizing the deal, the chassid wanted a *brachah* from his Rebbe. He wasn't coming for advice, because he did not doubt that he should buy this forest. He just wanted the Rebbe's blessings.

But the Rebbe told him that he doesn't think he should buy the forest.

The Yid was devastated. How could he turn down such a lucrative investment? In his eyes, it was like throwing away a fortune. He decided that he wouldn't listen to the Rebbe this time, and he went ahead and bought the forest.

The problem was discovered when he sent workers to cut some trees. The trees were rotting, wormy, and valueless.

For the next two years, he was embarrassed to visit his Rebbe, knowing that he foolishly lost so much money because he didn't listen to his wise counsel.

But one day he told himself, "It is bad enough that I lost money. Should I lose my Rebbe too?" and he traveled to Tchartkov.

Immediately upon meeting the Rebbe he said, "I know, it is my fault. I didn't listen to the Rebbe's *ruach hakodesh*..."

The Rebbe corrected him, "My counsel didn't come from *ruach hakodesh*. It was logical. I saw that you were so certain that you would earn a lot of money from this investment, and this attitude frightened me because you forgot that it is impossible to succeed without Hashem's help. When you consulted me, you didn't say '*be'ezras Hashem* once.' Therefore, I told you that you shouldn't invest in the forest, because an investment without Hashem is doomed to failure."

I heard the following story from people who heard it firsthand, from the *baal hamaasah*:

There's a *yungerman* in Eretz Yisrael who earns his *parnassah* arranging trips for tourists and visitors to Eretz Yisrael. Now, in the COVID-19 era, when the tourist industries were hit hard, he is struggling to make a living.

He had to pay his rent by Rosh Chodesh Av, but he couldn't afford it, so he asked his landlord to extend the deadline by nine days. Tisha b'Av passed, and he was still missing \$500 for the rent. Worried, he walked out of his house with a prayer on his lips. "Ribono shel Olam! I still need another five hundred dollars for the rent!" He decided to check his mail. He had an intuition that his *yeshuah* may come from there. There was a check in the mail for... \$500. The letter said, "I owe you this money since *תשס"ט* - eleven years ago. Now I remembered to pay it back. Good Shabbos!"

The *yungerman* was shocked. He saw how Hashem listened to his *tefillos* and helped him during his time of need. A debt from eleven years was paid up, so he could pay his rent.

Salvation often comes in the most unexpected ways. As Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* taught, "When a person lives with *emunah* and *bitachon* Hakadosh Baruch Hu will save him in ways he wouldn't even imagine.



## The Greatest Wonder

Even a child should be able to recognize that the world didn't come into existence on its own. If you look at a building, you know that human beings built it. You wouldn't suspect that it just happened by itself. Similarly, even a child knows that a craftsman created a table because no one ever saw pieces of wood joining together on their own to create a table.

Wherever one looks, one can easily recognize that there is a Creator. The same is true when one pays attention to the wonders of *hashgachah pratis* and the miracles that Hashem performs for us every day. These are true wonders that testify to the Creator. Thinking about these matters fills your heart with awe and fear.

But yet, an even greater wonder is that Hashem conceals these simple facts from us. People look at the world and see the miracles, yet they don't recognize Hashem. That is the greatest wonder of all.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* and Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* extrapolated this lesson from the following *pasuk*:

'מה גדלו מעשיך ה' (Tehillim 92), The world is filled with Hashem's wonders and miracles. Yet, מאד עמקו מחשבותיך איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין את, "How deep are Your thoughts." Because Hashem conceals Himself so well, until people are like fools who don't recognize the wonders that are happening constantly before their eyes.

Reb Shmuel Tchalener *zt'l* was from the great students of Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l*. Once, Reb Shmuel experienced a miracle; Hashem did a great *chesed* for him, and Reb Shmuel repeated the details of the miracle many times. The family lost count of the times that he told them the story, and Reb Shmuel repeated the miracle to anyone who came to visit.

This went on for some time until his family became tired of hearing it so many

times, and they asked him why he keeps on repeating it.

He responded that the Or HaChaim (*Devarim* 8:17, וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות, חיל) writes, "The *yetzer hara*'s first attempt is to try to have a person forget Hashem's kindness, and then he will lose everything."

Reb Shmuel Tchalener explained that he was repeatedly reminding himself of the miracle because the *yetzer hara* is trying to have him forget and to think that it happened by chance. He is combatting the *yetzer hara* by remembering the wonder that occurred.

## The Truth about *Hishtadlus*

The Gemara (*Brachos* 51.) says that when someone gives you a כוס של ברכה to *bench birchas hamazon*, you should take the cup with both your hands and then hold the cup in your right hand. The Gemara asks, שמאל, מהו שסתייע לימין, may he use his left hand to help his right hand? Sometimes, it is more comfortable to hold the cup when your left hand is helping you balance the cup. Is it permitted to use your left hand too? The Gemara responds that he has to hold the cup only in his right hand.

The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* (*Teshuvah Orach Chaim* 29) explains that the right hand reminds us that everything is from Hashem. As it states, ימין, "Hashem's right hand does valiantly." We *bench* holding the cup in the right hand to remember that the meal we just ate, and all our financial success comes from Hashem.

The left hand represents man's *hishtadlus*. We are obligated to do *hishtadlus*, as it states, וברכתך בכל אשר תעשה, "I will bless everything you do," which means everyone must do his share. Therefore, the Gemara asks that perhaps you can hold the cup in the right hand and support it with your left hand, to hint that everything is from heaven, but it is also due to your *hishtadlus*. The Gemara concludes that the left hand isn't used at all. This is because although there is an obligation to perform *hishtadlus*, it is due to Hashem's

decree. However, in reality, everything is from Hashem. Therefore, the left hand shouldn't be used at all to support the becher.

The Mesilas Yesharim (21) explains that it states, *בועת אפך תאכל לחם*, "You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow." This *pasuk* is laying the rule that one must do *hishtadlus* to earn his *parnassah*. If it weren't for this obligation, one wouldn't need to work at all. Hashem decrees on Rosh Hashanah how much money a person will earn, and "a person could sit idle, and the decree would happen, if it weren't for the *קנס*, the debt that was placed on all mankind – *בועת אפך תאכל לחם*, 'You will eat by the sweat of your brow.' This is the reason one must do some *hishtadlus* for his *parnassah*; it is the decree of the Divine King. It is like a tax that every human being must pay, and no one can escape it. As Chazal say, 'perhaps a person can sit home idle, and he will receive Hashem's blessings? Therefore it states, *בכל משלה ידך אשר תעשה*, which means one must do *hishtadlus*. But it isn't that *hishtadlus* helps; *hishtadlus* is a necessity. Now, there is a place for Hashem's blessings to come. A person doesn't have to spend his entire life doing *hishtadlus*. As Dovid HaMelech *a'h* says (*Tehilim* 75) *כי לא ממוצא וממערב ולא וגו', כי אלקים שופט*, 'Parnassah isn't by those who go out to the business in the east or the west... rather Hashem judges and decides.' Similarly, Shlomo HaMelech says (*Mishlei* 23), *אל תיגע להעשיר מבינתך הדל*, 'Don't toil to become wealthy. This is something you should understand on your own.' The correct path to follow is the path of the early chassidim, who made their Torah studies primary, and their work secondary, and they succeeded in both realms. Because after a person does some work, all he has to do is to trust in his Creator."

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* sent Reb Shalom Shwardron *zt'l* to *chutz le'aretz* to collect money for Peilim, a *kiruv* organization. Reb Shalom wasn't successful, and he was embarrassed to tell the Chazon Ish about it. The Chazon Ish called for Reb Shalom and

said, "Someone from London just sent in a large check for Peilim. You did your *hishtadlus*, and Hashem sent the blessing some other way."

There doesn't have to be a connection between the *hishtadlus* and the *parnassah*, since *parnassah* is from Hashem.

In Dallas Texas, there is a large beis medresh, a beacon of light, where hundreds of people have come back to *Yiddishkeit*. Here is the story of that building:

Reb Moshe Rudner received the titles *יורה יורה*, which means he is an expert in halachah in all areas of the Torah, and he is fitting to teach and to *pasken shaalos*. Reb Moshe yearned to use his ability as a *rav* to help klal Yisrael, so he came to Dallas, Texas, to see what he can accomplish there. But it was *בל ההתחלות קשות*, a difficult beginning. He performed a lot of *hishtadlus*, but he was met with little success.

Then the miracle occurred. He did *hishtadlus* in one area, and the salvation came from another source. A very wealthy, forty-nine-year-old bachelor visited him. This man was very happy to meet Reb Moshe, and he offered some advice and direction and then gave a donation of six million dollars. The large beis medresh was built with this money, where many people are finding out about Hashem for the first time.

A few weeks after donating so generously, the wealthy man was *niftar*. It was a sudden death. Reb Moshe delivered a *hesped* at the *levayah*. He said, "This man never married and he never build a *bayis ne'aman biYisrael*. However, Hashem blessed him with wealth. A few months ago, he was in Eretz Yisrael. He was searching for something; he himself didn't know what it was. But his heart yearned for something he knew he needed and didn't have. His friends advised him to go to the Kosel Maaravi, the last remnant of the Beis HaMikdash, and that's what he did. He watched an Ultra-Orthodox Yid stand before the wall, crying and pleading before Hashem as one speaks to his father. The



*emunah* he witnessed ignited his *neshamah*, and he realized that this was the light he was searching for. When he returned to his friends, he related what he saw, and asked whether there is anyone in Dallas that resembles that type of Yid that he saw by the Kosel. They told him about Reb Moshe Rudner. That was the beginning of great things..."

The person who prayed at the Kosel has no idea that in his merit, a \$6,000,000 beis medresh was built. He also isn't aware that in his merit, many people are finding out about Hashem and His Torah. It is also possible that his *tefillos*, at that time, weren't answered, and he felt distant from Hashem. But see how much he accomplished.

For our present discussion, this story is a lesson about doing *hishtadlus*, and then the *brachah* will come. There was no direct connection between the *hishtadlus* of Reb Moshe Rudner and the results, and there doesn't have to be because *parnassah* comes from Hashem after one pays his debt of *hishtadlus*.

### **The Blessings that come from Humiliation**

A woman in Bnei Brak suffered from 'the disease.' After a year and a half of painful treatments, the doctor told her husband, "With Hashem's help, it seems that we succeeded in getting rid of the cancerous cells. We will check a bit more, but things appear positive."

The husband's heart filled with joy. The treatments and the uncertainties were so frightening and painful, and now it seemed that it might be behind them. But then the doctor said, "However, we are afraid that there may be another outbreak of cancer in another part of her body. There are signs that the disease is growing there. We will take a biopsy to test it."

The *yungerman* broke down in tears. He felt the world collapsing on his shoulders once again.

That night, he couldn't sleep. He was anxious to hear the results of the biopsy. So early, before dawn, he went to the *kever* of the Chazon Ish (who is buried in Bnei Brak) to pray for his wife's complete recovery. He wasn't alone at the Chazon Ish's *kever*. Someone he knew was there too. He also couldn't sleep that night. This man told him that someone disgraced him cruelly, and he was praying that he shouldn't suffer any more shame. The *yungerman* told him about his wife's medical situation and his concerns. Then he took out four hundred shekels and said, "Let me buy the shame you endured. I want to buy it so that the humiliation will be a merit for my wife."

The man replied that he gives him the rights incurred from the shame with all his heart. He doesn't have to buy it.

The results of the test showed that his wife was well and that there was no new outbreak of the disease!

This story happened a few weeks ago. We repeat it to remind us of the merit and the benefits that one can receive from accepting shame (especially when one doesn't answer back)..

Here's another story, which also took place recently:

A tzaddik told me that he needed an operation. He consulted with a medical *askan* for advice (such as which doctor he should ask for, and so on). For some reason, instead of offering advice, the *askan* poured disgrace and humiliation on him.

He went to the hospital for the operation, and they told him that the illness was healed naturally, and he doesn't need surgery anymore!

And now, here is a third story which also occurred recently:

There were complications in a woman's pregnancy, and the doctors frightened her and her husband with their prognosis. On the Shabbos before the child was born, the

husband was shamed and humiliated, as he was thrown out of a beis medresh where he wanted to daven. (It isn't important to write here the reason this happened.) He remembered that from shame one can earn a lot, so he didn't complain, and he didn't speak *lashon hara* about the people who threw him out. He accepted his shame in silence, and he prayed that this should be a merit for his wife, for her to give birth naturally, and easily. And that is what happened.

One more story on this topic; it happened about three years ago:

In a certain shul, an elderly person came over to a *yungerman* to ask him some question. But it was during *tefillah*, and they were up to *Kaddish*, so the *yungerman* didn't answer. After the *tefillah*, the elderly man returned and asked him, "Why didn't you answer my question when I asked you?"

The *yungerman* explained that he doesn't speak during davening, and certainly not during *Kaddish*.

The elderly man shouted at him, saying that he didn't have respect. The humiliated *yungerman* didn't answer back. People passed by and asked the *yungerman* what this was all about, but he didn't respond. He stood in a corner and prayed for his 28 year-old cousin who was still a *bachur*. A few weeks later, that cousin was engaged.

In short, the lesson is as Reb Chaim Vital (*Shaarei Kedushah* 1:6) writes, "If you are wise, look for someone who will distress you, because that is the way to earn life."

### Compassion

While giving examples of people who harm others with their humiliating words (and the good that can come from it), we change the subject 180 degrees, to discuss the virtue of those who are careful to honor their fellow man.

Someone once came to the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* and told him about his many debts and expenses, including the expense of a *chasunah*

that he was going to make, and how he didn't know how he would manage that. The Satmar Rebbe asked, "How much money do you need?"

The man said that he needs \$30,000. The Satmar Rebbe took out \$29,000 from his closet and gave it to him.

When the man left the room, the *gaba'im* asked the Rebbe, "If you were going to give this exorbitant amount of money to this pauper, why didn't you give him thirty-thousand dollars, as he asked? Why did you give him one thousand dollars less?"

The Satmar Rebbe replied, "If I would have given him \$30,000, he wouldn't be happy. He would ask himself, 'Why didn't I ask for more money? If I had asked for more, the Rebbe would have given it to me!' But now he thinks he asked for just the right amount of money and his joy is complete."

The Kedushas Tzion of Bobov *zt'l* would buy antiques, such as inheritances, items from *tzaddikim*, old *sefarim*, and the like. He would always try to lower the price, and then, in the end, pay the amount the seller initially quoted. People asked him, "If you are anyway going to pay the amount that the seller asks, why do you try to lower the price?"

The Bobover Rebbe replied, "If I pay the amount the seller asks for, immediately, he will think that had he asked for more, he would have gotten that too. So I bargain down the price, showing him that I'm not happy with the price he offered. And then I buy it at the price he asked. This way, he feels like he made a good deal, and he is happy."

### Elul

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that Elul is a gift from Hashem so we can prepare for Rosh Hashanah.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Igra d'Kalah* יארא) writes that לעם לי לעם ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם is *roshei teivos* אלול, because in Elul Hashem takes us to be His nation

(because of the thoughts of *teshuvah* that people have in this month).

Reb Shmelke of Nikolsberg *zt'l* said that he doesn't want to leave this world, because there is no Elul in Olam HaBa, and what is life without Elul? (*Imrei Chaim, Sarfei Kodesh*).

One hundred people can't lift a wall made of cement. However, in recent times, a crane was invented, and it can lift a massive wall. Let this be a *mashal* for Elul. This month we can move things we couldn't move the entire year. We can grow, change, and our *tefillos* will be answered.

From the 15th of Av, Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* would cover himself with thick blankets, as he shivered from fear for the upcoming days of judgment. He explained that when he was young, his sister told him that in Elul even the fish in the sea tremble from the impending judgment. I thought to myself, 'fish don't have intelligence, and yet they are afraid. Certainly, humans who have intelligence should be afraid.' Ever since then, I am very afraid when the days of judgment are near..."

A rav who was in the *beis medresh* together with the Chofetz Chaim on Shabbos Mevorchim Elul relates that when the *chazan* announced ... ראש חודש אלול יהיה ביום... the Chofetz Chaim wept loudly, and this reminded everyone of the awesome fear of Elul.

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai Lelover *zt'l*, would often speak about the immense fear of Elul in the household of his grandfather, Rebbe Dovid Biderman *zt'l*. *Erev* Shabbos Mevorchim Elul, the women who worked in the kitchen would ask each other forgiveness (as we do on *Erev* Yom Kippur), because everyone was afraid of the upcoming judgment.

It is hard to turn the calendar back. The fear in תש"פ isn't the same as the fear that was felt in the atmosphere a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, at least in our deeds, we should strive to improve our ways, because indeed, the days of judgment are approaching,

and it will be judged and determined what type of year we will have.

To expound on this point, we share a couple of *mashalim*:

A newly married woman came to the rav and asked for a divorce.

The rav asked her for an explanation, and this is what she said:

"I served my husband a *fleishig* meal, and then he asked me to prepare him a cup of coffee with milk! I don't want to be married to a person who drinks milk after eating meat."

"Maybe he meant you should prepare coffee with soya milk?"

"No, he said clearly I should make him a coffee with regular milk!"

"How long after the meal did he ask for the coffee?"

"Immediately after."

The Rav replied, "I can't do anything until I hear what your husband has to say about all this."

The rav spoke to the husband, and he admitted to all the details. He asked for a cup of coffee with milk, right after a *fleishig* meal. The rav said, "I don't understand. You are a G-d fearing person. Did you lose your mind? Why do you want coffee with milk immediately after a *fleishig* meal?"

He replied, "I see you don't know my wife. When I ask her for a cup of coffee, it will take her about six hours before she finally gets around to making it."

The *nimshal* is that it takes people a long time to change their ways. It is a process that doesn't happen in a day. Therefore, we recommend doing *teshuvah* now, in Elul. Because if we wait until Rosh Hashanah to begin our *teshuvah*, perhaps we will succeed Chanukah time. But if we start changing our ways now, by Rosh Hashanah we will already be in a better place.



The Zutchka Rebbe *shlita* of Yerushalaim told the following *mashal*:

Someone once traveled a long distance, and he needed a satisfying meal and a place to sleep. Being that he was new to the city, he asked someone where he could get a good meal.

The man replied, "There is a great restaurant nearby; everyone goes there," and he gave him the address.

The traveler was impressed by the five-story building. This wasn't a regular restaurant.

The thought that he will soon get a meal gave him some strength. He went over to the desk and asked for a meal. "Do you want a *fleishig* meal or a *milichig* meal?"

"A *fleishig* meal, please."

"For that, you must go to room 26. It's on the fourth floor."

Climbing four flights of stairs wasn't exactly what he had in mind. He traveled and walked enough that day... But the thought of a good meal gave him the strength to walk up the stairs. He found room 26 and asked for a *fleishig* meal.

They replied, "This is a very organized restaurant. You can't just ask us for meat and expect it served to you on a silver platter. First, you have to tell us what cut of meat you want. Perhaps you want chicken, duck, veal, meat? And how do you want it prepared - cooked, broiled, barbecued, well done, rare? You have to tell us the details of your request."

The man didn't care so much; he just wanted a meal. But since they offered, he told them exactly what he wanted.

They told him, "For that, you have to go up another flight and go to room 56."

When he got there (totally exhausted), he requested the type of meal he wanted. They replied, "In this restaurant, you can't order a main dish without toppings. Which side dish do you want to go along with it - rice, fresh vegetables, fried potatoes? And what do you want to drink with the meal, and what do you want for dessert? You need to tell us more details."

He answered, and they sent him to the first floor. "Just go to room #6."

The traveler was getting frustrated. After traveling all day long, he was being sent up and down, just to get a meal. Nevertheless, the thought that he will soon get a good meal gave him just enough strength to keep on trying. He climbed down the stairs, and when he got to room six, the door was locked. There was a sign on the door: "Goodbye. Thank you for visiting."

He went to the manager's office and said, "Do you call this a restaurant? Is this how you treat your guests? For more than a half-hour I was sent up and down the stairs, and I still didn't get a meal!"

The manager explained, "Don't you realize; the food wasn't cooked yet... But ignore that part for a moment, and tell me: What do you say about our restaurant? It is very organized, isn't it?"

The *nimshal* is that in Elul, people go to hear a *mussar drashah* here, and then they go to hear another speaker. They run up and down and all around, but the main factor - the change - is missing. Therefore, make sure that Elul shouldn't end with good intentions and attempts without results. There should be some changes taking place, too.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Just for a suggestion: Consider making a *kabbalah* that from now until after Yom Kippur, you will not speak during the entire *tefillah* - from the beginning to the end. It isn't asking too much, it is a *kabbalah* that most people can keep, and it will be a great merit in the judgment for the upcoming year.

## Do the Best You Can

This week's parashah discusses the laws of a *ben sorer u'moreh*, which is a boy who doesn't listen to his parents, and he eats a lot of meat, and he drinks a lot of wine. He is killed in the beis din, as Rashi (21:18) explains, "The Torah looked at how this boy will turn out to be in the end. He will use up his father's money, and he will seek [the meat and wine] that he is accustomed to, but he won't have it. So he will stand by the fork in the road and rob from people. The Torah says, "it is better that he should die when he is still innocent, than that he should [be killed in beis din] when he is guilty."

There is an opinion in the Gemara that throughout history, there was never a *ben sorer u'moreh* and there never will be. We can explain that this is because we don't lose hope in anyone. Even if a child has a difficult beginning (like the bad habits of the *ben sorer u'moreh*) we trust that there is hope for him. He can yet do teshuvah. Therefore, we don't kill him because we are certain he will sin severely in the future. No, it isn't certain at all.

Therefore, the parashah begins *כי תצא למלחמה*, "When you go out to war..."<sup>2</sup> That is man's mission in life – to battle a war against the yetzer hara. Even if the yetzer hara is winning, we don't give up, and in the end, we will succeed.

The *ben sorer u'moreh*, rebellious child, is killed, not because of his present actions, rather because of where his actions will lead him to. He is in the process of falling from level to lower level, until he will commit very severe crimes. The same (only in contrast) can be said about someone who is in the process of doing *teshuvah*. His ways are not

perfect yet, but he is on the path of growth, and eventually, he will succeed.

*Baalei mussar* tell the following *mashal*:

A king would visit the homes of very simple people of his land for ten days each year, so he would be able to understand their needs. Thirty days before the visit, he sent out a letter to the people whom he planned to visit. This gave them time to prepare their homes for this royal privilege.

One year, an old, childless couple received the letter. In thirty days, the king will visit them. The husband said to his wife, "How can we bring the king into our home? The walls are black; they weren't painted for years. All the windows in our home are broken. Each one of the four legs of our table is different from one another. And only our family knows how to sit on our chairs without falling off them. How can we bring the king here? This is what we have to do: We will hire carpenters to renovate our home. One will paint the walls, another will fix the windows, and we will buy a new set of table and chairs..."

His wife said, "For the past thirty years I told you that we have to do all that and you kept saying that we can't afford it. So how can you afford it now?"

The husband replied, "We will borrow money from a neighbor."

The wife said, "Are you going into debt that will take thirty years to pay back just for a half-hour visit from the king? Why do we have to hide our poverty? Let the king see how we live. Are you embarrassed about our lifestyle?"

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2. It is known that the Torah is for every person and for every generation. If the simple explanation isn't applicable in our times, we should understand the Torah according to its hidden meanings. Therefore, since we don't go to war nowadays, Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* says that the primary way to read this *pasuk* is in regards to our war against the *yetzer hara*. This explanation isn't only *drush*; it is the *pshat*, the simplest way of understanding the Torah, for our times.

The husband replied, "I would agree with you if the king made a surprise visit to our home. I wouldn't be embarrassed by my poverty. But now that the king gave us thirty days to prepare, we must do what we can to make our home fitting for his visit."

His wife disagreed. "The king knows we are poor. He doesn't want us to go into debt for the rest of our lives for this visit. We will cover the walls with white sheets. We will put paintings in the windows, so the king won't see that they are broken. We will cover the table with a tablecloth that goes down to the floor. But we have to buy at least one chair, so the king can sit on it without falling off."

The *nimshal* is: In Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Hashem is *בהמצאו*, near; He comes to visit us! We are told about this visit thirty days beforehand so that we can prepare ourselves for this great visit. However, it is impossible to become pure and clear from sin in just one month. So what will we do? The answer is, we are not expected to do more than we can, but we are expected to make an honest effort to bring ourselves to a place fitting to host the King. And, like in the *nimshal*, at least one new chair was bought. We too

should prepare at least one good *kabbalah* for the new year.

### Tefillos in Elul

In this week's *parashah* (22:23-24) the Torah says that if a *נערה המאורסה*, halachically engaged woman, is profaned in the city, *והוצאתם את שניהם אל שער העיר והוא וסקלתם אותם באבנים*, "Bring both of them to the gates of that city and stone them. *את הנערה על דבר אשר לא צעקה בעיר*, the girl because she didn't shout in the city..." Her shouts could have saved her, so she is punished for not shouting.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that similarly, one will be held responsible for his sins if he didn't shout out to Hashem and pray that Hashem save him from the *yetzer hara*.

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 5) states, *אפילו שיחה* קלה... מנידין לו בשעת הדין. Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* explains: *tefillah* is called *שיחה*. The Gemara is telling us that in the future, in heaven, when one will be judged, they will say to him *מה שיחו*, how much of his punishment could have been prevented had he prayed to Hashem.<sup>3</sup> In the month of Elul, let's utilize the power of *tefillah* to earn a good year.

### 3. Regarding the power of *tefillah*, we share a recent story:

There was a *bachur* who wasn't very wise; he just barely understood the Gemara. On tests, the *bachur* got around a thirty, at best, and even that mark was with by the generosity of the *magid shiur* who didn't want to give him a zero. The *bachur* tried so hard, but he simply wasn't able to understand.

Suddenly things changed. The *bachur* was getting a hundred on his tests, week after week. The *magid shiur* spoke about it with the *menahel* of the yeshiva, and they both agreed that either he copies the answers from the *bachur* who sits next to him, or a *bachur* fills in the answers for him. But it is impossible that he is suddenly doing so well on his tests.

The next test, the *magid shiur* watched that *bachur* and saw that he was diligently filling in all the answers by himself. He called the *bachur's* home to find out how the *bachur* suddenly turned around and was succeeding in understanding Torah. This is what his mother told him:

The *magid shiur* told the class that he remembers, from his youth, seeing the Satmar Rebbe pouring his heart out in *אהבה רבה*, which has many pleas for success in Torah. The *bachur* told his mother that he also wants to pray like that, but how can he pray that way in the yeshiva?

His mother advised him to say it (without Hashem's name) at home, before going to the yeshiva. And that is what the *bachur* did, each day. He woke up early and he davened and pleaded *by the brachah Ahavah Rabba*. And since then, everything changed for him.



## Simchah

Avos d'Reb Noson (34:49) says, "There are ten words for simchah: ששון, שמחה, גילה, רינה, ריצה, עליצה, עליזה, חדוה, תפארת, עליצה." Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l asks, "Why do we need so many words for simchah? No other language has so many words to describe joy.

When something is important, you find many words to describe it. For example, Eskimos have at least 14 words to describe snow. This is because snow plays a significant role in their life. Therefore, they have words to describe all different types of snow (frozen snow, soft snow, a blizzard, etc.). Similarly, for Yidden, *simchah* is so vital that there are ten words for *simchah*, to describe different types of joy that a person can have.

The Chozeh zt'l taught, "Someone who wants the Shechinah to reside near him should always be happy."

The Gemara (Brachos 58:) says "A krechtz (sigh) breaks half of one's body." When עולא heard Rav Chisda krechtzing (sighing), he asked him why he does so? It breaks half of one's body (and it isn't good for one's health).

The Kobriner zt'l explained the Gemara as follows: Ula asked Rav Chisda, "Why do you krechtz? It's true that a krechtz breaks half of one's body (which is also a good thing, because it breaks the *gashmiyos* and raises the light of his *neshamah*) however, you can do even better than that. You can be happy because with joy one breaks his *entire* body."

The Kol Bo (16) tells that Yehoshua created the tefillah לשבח as he (and the Jewish nation) walked around the walls of Yericho seven times until the walls fell. The Kobriner zt'l (Toras Avos, *Simchah* 24) explains that the words of Aleinu arouse us to happiness, as we say שהם משתחווים להבל ולריק ואנחנו כורעים ומשתחווים לפני מלך מלכי המלכים... "They bow down to nothing, and

we bow down before the King of kings..." The words themselves bring us joy. And it was this joy that caused the fall of the walls of Yericho. For that is the power of joy. It breaks down all barriers.

## Joy and Parnassah

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l said that a person can earn parnassah from anything, even from small pieces of plywood, but the main thing is that he shouldn't be disgusted with his work.

Reb Yechezkel of Kozmir zt'l said that this is hinted in the pasuk (Devarim 16:15) כי יברכך ה'... בכל מעשה ידך "Hashem will bless... all your work. The condition is והיית אך שמח and you shall be very happy."

It is also hinted in the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 17:7) והיה ה' מבטחו, the word והיה implies to joy (Bereishis Rabba 42:3, אין והיה אלא לשון שמחה, מבטחו). He is happy because מבטחו, he trusts in Hashem, and that is a segulah for parnassah.

It is also hinted in the pasuk שמח זבולון והצלח בצאתך לסחורה, and Rashi translates it "you will have success when you go out to do business." Rashi changes the translation of שמח to mean הצלח, success because they are synonymous. When you are happy, you will succeed.

The rebbe of Alexander zt'l taught that the roshei teivos of שוא והיית אך שמח spell שוא, which means false. This hints that one should pretend that he is happy, even when he isn't because if he acts as if he is happy, he will become happy. As the Rebbe of Alexander expressed it: "Fake simchah is better than true sadness."

Notice that false, שוא, is the roshei teivos. This is because he will only have to pretend at the beginning. In the end, he will truly be happy.

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As it states in *Sefer Chassidim* (131) "When one prays for something that is שבה הבורא, Hashem's praise, for example he prays for success in Torah or the mitzvos, and he pours his heart out in his prayers, Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to his *tefillah*, even if he doesn't have merits."

As the Beis Aharon zt'l said, the only attribute that the chitzanos (external) can precede the pnimius (internal) is simchah. Because if he shows that he is happy, in the end, it will be so.

The Beis Aharon (Succos 102) also said, "One must work hard to have simchah more than all good *middos*."

Happiness is *mesugal* for *parnassah*, and sometimes, that might be all that the husband/father can bring home. Someone told the Lev Simchah (Gur) zt'l that he isn't succeeding in earning enough money for his family's needs. The Lev Simchah told him, "Your obligation isn't to bring home *parnassah*. Your obligation is to bring simchah into the house."

### Living in the Next World

The Gemara (taanis 22) tells that Reb Broka asked Eliyahu HaNavi, "Who is a ben Olam HaBa?"

Eliyahu HaNavi showed him two happy people, who were devoted to making people happy, and when they saw people in a dispute, they made peace between them. Eliyahu HaNavi said, "They are ben Olam HaBa."

Gaon Yaakov (printed in ein Yaakov) asks, why did he want to know who is a ben Olam HaBa? What difference does it make? Furthermore, let's say that right now, these two happy people were very righteous. That still doesn't guarantee that they will merit Olam HaBa. Perhaps they will sin and forfeit their portion in Olam HaBa. As long as one is alive, there is no guarantee. As it states (iyov 15:15) הן בקדושי לא יאמין, "Hashem doesn't trust the holy ones." So how can he say with certainty that they will inherit Olam HaBa?

The Gaon Yaakov explains that Rav Broka wanted to know who is living in the mode as though he is already in Olam HaBa. Because in Olam HaBa, everything is good, there is no sadness, and there are no disputes. Eliyahu HaNavi showed him two

happy people, who were always happy, and they also tried to resolve disputes. This is an example of living in Olam HaBa, which we should seek to emulate.

We quote the Gaon Yaakov:

"The pleasures of Olam HaBa don't exist in this world. This is because the pleasures of this world always have a dose of sadness mixed into them. For example, if a person [makes a party and] eats a lot of delicious foods, he will become sick from it. Furthermore, he will be upset if one of his family members or friends wouldn't come to his party, and he will be upset that he spent so much money on the food. His joy can also be blemished if there was a small fight at the party. But the pleasures of Olam HaBa are the real pleasures because there is no *atzvov* mixed into them at all. A wise person will seek to enjoy this world in the same way he would enjoy in the next world. This means that he should always be happy and accept how Hashem leads him. He isn't upset about anything that happens. He says, 'This is Hashem's gift, so why should I be upset with it?' When he sees people who are sad or are in a fight, he will try to make them happy and to abolish the fight [so they, too, will live in a mode of Olam HaBa]. If one lives this way, he experiences the joy of Olam HaBa in Olam HaZeh. As it states חייך תראה בחיך, 'See your Olam HaBa in this world.'

"Rav Broka asked Eliyahu HaNavi whether there is anyone in this world who lives in a mode that resembles life in Olam HaBa. He wanted to know so he could learn about the essence of Olam HaBa. Eliyahu showed him the two people who were always happy, and they were never sad. They also strived to increase peace among people. That is a sample of Olam HaBa, because in Olam HaBa there is no sadness or anger; there is only pleasure and peace."