

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Noach





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Torah Wellsprings

Noach

Bring Light into the World

The Gemara (*Menachos* 53:) states, "Why is the Jewish nation compared to an olive? The olive tree never sheds its leaves, not in the summer and not in the winter. Similarly, the Jewish nation is eternal. They live in this world and in the next world."

All agriculture perished in the *mabul*; only the strong, sturdy olive trees survived the storm. Reb Yehoshua Leib Diskin *zt'l* (*Pikudei*) explains that Hashem created olive trees with an all-weather nature to supply hope and *chizuk* to Noach and his family in the *teivah*. When the dove returned with the olive branch in its beak, Noach and his family rejoiced, because that meant the water was receding and the tree tops were

appearing. If all agriculture, including olive trees, were destroyed, Noach and his family wouldn't have a way to know that they would soon leave the *teivah*. Thus, from the beginning of Creation, Hashem created the durable nature of the olive tree to give hope and encouragement to Noach and his family.

This is a lesson for all mankind. When going through hard times, know that from the beginning of Creation, Hashem set up ways to help you in your plight, and to give you hope, help, encouragement, and joy.

Chazal (*Tanchuma, Tetzave* 5) state, "Just as the dove brought light to the world, so shall you bring olive oil and light the menorah of the Beis HaMikdash."

The dove brought light and hope to Noach and his family, but when did the dove bring light to the entire world?

The Maharal Diskin explains that the story of the dove encourages the entire world. We discover that Hashem prepared a way to encourage Noach and his family from the beginning of creation. Similarly, we understand that Hashem wants to give us hope, *chizuk*, and encouragement, too. This awareness "brings light to the world."

Bitachon

It states (8:11), והנה עלה זית, "The dove had an olive branch in its beak." Rashi says that טרף has two translations. It means either snatched or food.

If it means food, the dove was praying to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, יהיו מזונותי מרורים כזית בידו של הקב"ה ואל יהיו מתוקים כדבש ביד בשר ודם, "Let my food be bitter like

olives, but from Hakadosh Baruch Hu's Hand, rather than to receive food that's sweet like honey, but given to me from a human being."

For close to a year, Noach supported the dove. With the dove holding the olive branch in its beak, the dove was pleading to Hashem that she prefers a bitter *parnassah*, but from Hashem's hand, rather than a sweet *parnassah*, with a lot of good food, but having to come on to the generosity of man.

Following the second translation, חטף טרף means, snatched. The *pasuk* is saying that the dove grabbed the branch and held it in its beak.

The Divrei Yisrael explains that both translations of טרף (snatch and food) work in tandem to teach us how a person should go about earning *parnassah*.

The pursuit for *parnassah* should be laced with

bitachon, complete trust that Hashem will help you. Therefore, don't be anxious, don't panic. Even if you are going through financially challenging times, trust that Hashem will help. With this attitude, your *parnassah* will be sweet like honey. Hashem will grant you all your needs. Everything will work out, and it will be without bitterness and worry. But if you will be anxious and worried about your *parnassah*, the pursuit of earning a living will fill your heart with bitterness. Furthermore, you might "snatch" and grab the first job opportunity that comes your way, even when it isn't good for you.

So, if a person "snatches" his *parnassah*, because he is overly anxious, he will experience a *parnassah* that is bitter like olives. However, when one has *bitachon* and patience, his *parnassah* will be sweet like honey.

Rashi (7:7) writes, אף נח מקטני אמונה היה, מאמין ואינו מאמין שיבא המבול, "Noach had weak *emunah*. He believed, and he didn't believe, that the *mabul* would come. Therefore, he waited, and didn't enter the *teivah* until it began to rain..."

It seems surprising that Noach, the צדיק תמים, the perfect tzaddik, had doubts in *emunah*.

The Ohev Yisrael *zt'l* (quoting Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zt'l*) says Noach's *emunah* was perfect. Only, he was afraid to believe that the *mabul* would come because *emunah* could cause the *mabul* to happen. "*Emunah* has two translations: It means to believe, and it means to raise, as it states (*Esther* 2:7), ויהי אמן את הדסה, 'Mordechai raised Esther.' Because when one believes in something, this raises it and causes it to happen. Noach believed in Hashem with all his heart and soul, but he was afraid to believe that the flood would come.

He feared his belief might cause it to happen. Rashi writes, מאמין ואינו מאמין. He believed [in Hashem], but he was afraid to believe without a doubt that Hashem will bring the *mabul*, because perhaps his belief will cause the *mabul* to come."

We similarly understand that when one has *emunah* and *bitachon* that Hashem will help him, his *emunah* will cause it to happen. For example, if one trusts that Hashem will support him and his family, it will occur.

It states (6:13), ויאמר אלקים אל נח קץ כל בשר בא לפני כי מלאה הארץ חמס מפניהם והנני משחיתם את הארץ, "Hashem said to Noach,

"The termination of all life has come before me because the world is filled with theft. I will destroy them from the earth."

Rashi explains that there were other *aveiros*. They were guilty of *arayos* and *avodah zarah*, too. But the decree was sealed because of theft.

People steal when they lack *emunah*, because those who have *emunah* know that Hashem will support them, and they know that it is impossible to receive more than the amount Hashem decreed for them. Noach's generation stole because they didn't believe in Hashem.¹

1. The Sfas Emes (*Berzhan, Noach*) *zt'l* writes, "קבלה בידינו", "We received [from our teachers] that Eliyahu is often in the marketplace (see *Taanis* 22.)... This is because people have a hard time remembering that also in the marketplace, everything happens by Hashem's *hashgachah*. People think that טבע, nature, rules there. Eliyahu is in the marketplace to rouse people to remember that everything is by Hashem's *hashgachah*."

I heard the following story from Reb A. S. Freund Shlita, who is one of the *baalei maaseh*:

For about a year, a woman was ill with 'the disease' (cancer), which eventually took her life. The widower husband was left alone to care for his five young children and to pay the large debts he accumulated for his wife's medical care.

One *erev Shabbos*, he was walking towards the Kosel for *kabbalas Shabbos* and discovered that he still had two thousand dollars in his pocket. He received the money from a *baal tzedakah*, and it was all the money he owned at that time. He had forgotten to take out his wallet before heading towards the Kosel.

Shabbos was fast approaching. What should he do now? He didn't know anyone who lives near the Kosel. If he leaves the money at any random frum address, how can he feel secure that he will get the money back on *motzei Shabbos*?

"Perhaps there is a *heter* to keep the money in my pocket on Shabbos?" he wondered.

But, on second thought he decided to listen to his *yetzer tov*, and he knocked at the first door with a mezuzah. The person who answered the door was new to Yerushalayim. He only spoke English. They had a hard time communicating, but the point was conveyed. The sun was setting, it was almost Shabbos, and he needed a place to store the money. After Shabbos, he will return to collect it.

On *Motzei Shabbos* he went back to that address, and he was happy that the money was returned to him. Once again, they struggled to communicate. The widower expressed his gratitude, and the benefactor wanted to tell him something, but they didn't understand one another.

So the widower wrote down the man's phone number and later that night had someone who speaks English call up this man from the Old-City.

The Yid from the Old-City explained on the phone, "I want to give him *tzedakah*, because I realize that he is poor. Please give me his bank information, and I will transfer two thousand dollars."

The lesson: When a person follows halachah and does the right thing he will earn even more.

Noach, on the other hand, believed in Hashem. As it states (*Bereishis* 6:7), וַיִּנַּח, "Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes." Some explain that he had *chen* because he believed that everything happens by עֵינֵי ה', Hashem's *hashgachah*.²

Furthermore, the Chareidim (*Mitzvas Asei* 1) writes, "Noach was extremely calm and tranquil. As it states, וַיִּנַּח [נה means calm]... נח is written three times in the first *pasuk* of the *parashah*, because Noach was extraordinarily calm and composed (נח) in the way he spoke, walked, and executed his deeds." His calmness was rooted in his *emunah* in Hashem. In this manner, he was completely different than his generation, who lacked *emunah*, and because of his

emunah and *chen*, he was saved from the flood.

Kedushah

As we wrote above, the dove returned with an olive branch in its mouth, וַיִּדַע נֹחַ כִּי קָלוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ, "Thereby Noach knew that the waters upon the earth had receded." We explained that the olive tree survived the *mabul*, so Noach could know that the waters were receding.

There is another approach.

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 33:6) says that also olive trees were destroyed in the flood. Rather, נִפְתְּחָה לָהּ, "The gates of Gan Eden opened, and she brought the olive branch from there." The olive branch didn't come from this world; it came from Gan Eden.

2. The Ben Ish Chai (*Ben Yohoyada*, *Beitzah* 16.) says that the word בטחון has two words in it: חן - טוב. "Because when one has בטחון, he receives *chen* and טוב, goodness."

So how did the olive branch reveal to Noach that the waters were receding?

The Ramban (8:11) explains that during the flood, the gates of Gan Eden were sealed shut to prevent the waters of the flood from entering there. When the dove returned with the olive branch, Noach knew that the gates of Gan Eden were open, which was a sign that the flood was withdrawing.

There's another Midrash that the flood didn't come to Eretz Yisrael, yet, some water did spill over to Eretz Yisrael, too.

The Jewish home is very sacred. It is our "Eretz Yisrael." It is our Gan Eden. And we have to keep the doors sealed from foreign influences so that the foul waters don't penetrate.

Last year, *erev Shabbos Ekev*, someone was studying in the beis medresh of his bungalow

colony when he received a call from another member of this bungalow colony. The caller began the call with some words of comfort: "Baruch Hashem, everyone is well. No one is harmed. Your wife was in an accident, but she isn't hurt. If you want to hear the details, call this number. This person was present when the accident occurred."

The husband immediately called that number, and once again, he heard that his wife was well. "But your van is destroyed. It was a head-on collision with a large truck. It's a miracle everyone is well."

Generally, when a car is demolished, the people inside are also harmed, especially when the accident is with a large, heavy truck. The husband was happily surprised that his wife was well.

He went to the site of the accident. He found his

wife and the other passengers standing at the side of the road, together with the large truck that crashed into them. Their van wasn't there anymore, as it was towed away.

The couple tried to figure out which good deed granted them this miracle, but they didn't know why they merited it.

Some days later, the junkyard called and asked them to come and take out anything they wanted to salvage from the van before it they completely destroy it.

The couple went to the site, and they saw that the van's body was torn upwards above the chassis, like the cover over an opened tin can. The wife showed her husband where the truck's fender tore through the car and stopped a centimeter before ramming into her.

They saw that the truck stopped precisely at the

place where they had inserted an additional step, some years before.

Because thirteen years before, in Lakewood (תשס"ה) there was a large *asifah* (gathering) to discuss the importance of *tznius*. The meeting was well attended, and many *roshei yeshiva* and rabbanim spoke. After this gathering, many women discarded their questionable clothing and bought new clothing with a higher standard of *tznius*.

A member of the Hatzalah organization in Lakewood said that for a week after the meeting, Hatzalah hardly received any calls. And when there was a call, it wasn't for issues related to life and death. And that was starkly different than how it generally was. One wise person said that it is hinted in the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 23:15), כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּקֶרֶב מוֹחֲנִיד לְהִצִּילְךָ... this *pasuk* is discussing *tznius* and it states לְהִצִּילְךָ, that Hashem is your Hatzalah. Because when

there's *tznius*, you don't need Hatzalah. Hashem performs Hatzalah for you.

This couple lives in Lakewood, and they were at this inspirational *asifah*. A few years later, the message of the *asifah* was still on their mind. Therefore, when they bought an eight-seater van (to accommodate their growing family), the wife requested that for the sake of *tznius*, another step be added to the van, so people going in and out of the van won't need to take large strides.

The truck stopped right before that additional step. The couple now understood

the root of the miracle. The merit of *tznius* protected them.³

It states (Bereishis 6:8), ויח מִצַּא הֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה' . The Beis Avraham *zt'l* explains that Noach had *chen* because he was cautious with his eyes (בְּעֵינֵי ה').

The final words of the Torah are לְעֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל, "before the eyes of the entire Jewish nation." These words connect with the first word of the Torah, בְּרֵאשִׁית, "the beginning," or "the foundation," implying that the foundation of the Torah is to be cautious with the eyes.⁴

3. Reb Yehudah of Nasid *zt'l* once jumped out of the window of a moving train to avoid the sin of *yichud*. People asked him, "Reb Yehudah, the woman who boarded the train was an old woman. Are you afraid of an old woman?"

He replied, "I'm not afraid of her, I'm afraid from Hashem Who commanded us this law."

4. On the *pasuk*, לְעֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל, Rashi writes, זוּ שְׁבִירַת הַלּוּחֹת, this is referring to [when Moshe] broke the *luchos*." The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said that this hints that when one isn't careful with his eyes, that's like שְׁבִירַת הַלּוּחֹת, the shattering of the *luchos*, *chas veshalom*.

When Shem and Yafes covered Noach, they turned their eyes away from Noach. As it states (9:23), ופניהם אחרונית וערות אביהם לא ראו, "Their faces were turned backwards, and they didn't see their father's *ervah*." Rashi adds that it states twice in this pasuk because when they turned to cover their father, they turned their faces away a second time.

The Alshich HaKadosh asks, why didn't they simply close their eyes?

The Alshich answers that even to face an *ervah* (with the eyes closed) creates a *pgam*, a blemish, on one's soul. Shem and Yafes didn't

want to see, or even face, an *ervah*.

In contrast, the Torah (9:24) tells us, וירא חם אבי כנען את, ערות אביו, "Cham, the father of Canaan saw his father's *ervah*." The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 70) states the terrible things Cham did to Noach, but from the literal words of the *pasuk*, it seems that Cham's sin was that he saw his father's *ervah*. The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said we can learn from this the severity of not guarding the eyes. Because it seems that for this sin, alone, one deserves the curses Noach gave Cham, *chalilah*.

Today, it is especially important to discuss guarding one's eyes

Reb Mordechai (Motke) Leider *zt'l* (renown Slonimer chassid from Teveria) was once very ill, and he miraculously recovered. He came to the Slonimer beis medresh in Teveria and said, "I almost did the *kuntz*" (trick, implying that he almost died and went up to heaven).

His friend (Reb Elazar Katz *zt'l*) replied, "What did you say? That you almost made the *kuntz*? You make it sound like it is better to be in heaven. But it isn't so. In heaven you won't have there the mitzvah לא תתורו... אחרי עיניכם, to guard the eyes."

because the tests on the eyes are all around. If one isn't cautious, the floods of temptation can penetrate the fortress of the Jewish home.

A *bachur* in Yerushalayim made a *kabbalah* that he won't leave his yeshiva (ישיבת יקירי ירושלים) the entire month of Elul, in order to keep his eyes pure.

But during Elul, the skin on his arm became irritated, and his parents wanted him to go see a doctor. "I'll go after Elul," he replied, not wanting to break his *kabbalah* and leave the yeshiva during Elul.

The parents spoke with the *rosh yeshiva*, Reb Yehudah Cohen Shlita, and they expressed their concern. The *rosh yeshiva* agreed with the parents that the *bachur* should go to a doctor.

The following day, after *shacharis*, the *rosh yeshiva* called over the *bachur* and told him that he must see a

doctor. The *bachur* began to cry.

The *rosh yeshiva* realized how sincere the *bachur* was in his resolve, so he said, "Come to me this afternoon. I need time to think this through."

That afternoon, a skin doctor from Brazil came to the yeshiva. He told the *rosh yeshiva*, "I saw you at a *chasunah* last week, and I saw concerned about a blotch I saw on your skin. I came to make certain that everything is well."

After an examination, the doctor concluded that the *rosh yeshiva* was fine. The *rosh yeshiva* thanked him and asked him if he can look at one of the *bachurim* in the yeshiva who has a terrible rash but refuses to see a doctor because of his *kabbalah*.

The doctor agreed, and the *bachur* was called. The doctor prescribed an ointment, which by

hashgachah pratis, the doctor had with him.

The lesson: When a person desires to be holy, Hashem will help him.

Someone from Eretz Yisrael was in an American hospital to help one of his ill relatives. He told himself, "Since Hashgachah brought me here, I should see if there are any other Yidden in the hospital whom I can visit and perform the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*."

There was another Yid in the hospital, a Holocaust survivor. He was attached to many machines and was at the end of his life. This elderly man told his visitor, "My wife left me years ago, and none of my children follow the path of Torah. I know I'm dying, but I'm not afraid to stand before the heavenly court. Being a bachelor has many tests, but I told myself, 'If I walk on a street guarding my eyes, I can consider it like I earning five dollars. If it is a larger street, I counted it

like making ten dollars. And if it is a major street and I guarded my eyes, I considered it like I earned twenty dollars.

"At the end of the day, I calculated how much 'money' I earned, and I calculated how much money I earned collectively from when I began guarding my eyes. I've earned so much over the years that I am now a multi-millionaire. So, I'm not afraid to stand before the court in heaven. I'm coming prepared."

When you see someone who guards his eyes, you can often discern that he is struggling. It looks like he wants to raise his eyes, and he forces himself to keep his eyes down. He will undoubtedly be rewarded immensely for this.

But some people guard their eyes painlessly. They keep their eyes down, and do what they have to do, and you don't perceive that they are struggling. One

such person explained how he does it: "I think about how much I earn when I guard my eyes, and I don't want to see bad. I don't have any struggle at all. That's why *shemiras einayim* is so easy for me."⁵

One of the *gashmiyos* gains for guarding your eyes is wealth. The Baal Shem Tov (*Lech Lecha* 3) proves this from Yosef HaTzaddik, who was cautious with his eyes (and with other aspects of *kedushah*), and he became very wealthy.

The Skulener Rebbe of Monsey Shlita tells that someone once came to his father *zt'l* seeking a *segulah* for *parnassah*. The Rebbe told him to say פֶּרֶשֶׁת הַיָּרֵאָה

(printed after *shacharis* in many *siddurim*). The man thought the Rebbe didn't understand him, so he explained that he wasn't seeking a *segulah* for *yiras Shamayim*, he was seeking a *segulah* for *parnassah*. The Rebbe replied that it states (Tehillim 111:5), טָרַף נֶתַן לִירְאָיו, "Hashem gives *parnassah* to those who fear him.' Therefore, if you fear Hashem, you will have *parnassah*."

Another *gashmiyos* gain for guarding your eyes is health.

Just a couple of months ago, in a maternity ward in Eretz Yisrael, the doctors began panicking when they could not find an unborn child's heartbeat. They expected the child wouldn't

5. Obviously, it is best when one doesn't go to places where there are tests. As Chazal (*Bava Basra* 57:) say, "If someone could go on a road where there are no tests at all, but he goes on a road where there are tests, even if he guards his eyes, he is a *rasha*." But there are times one doesn't have a choice. He has to go there. Then he should think about how much he is earning *b'gashmiyos* and *b'ruchniyos* each time he guards his eyes. With this thought in mind, it will be easy for him to guard his eyes.

survive. The father made a *kabbalah* to break his tablet when he gets home. At that moment, the child's heartbeat returned, and the child was born healthy.⁶

And in general, life is so much better when we guard the eyes. With this in mind, it is easier to be careful.

In a Moment

When the mabul began, the Torah calls it גשם, rain, and afterward, it is called מבול, a flood.

As it states (7:12) ויהי הגשם על הארץ ארבעים יום, "The rain fell..." And it states (7:17) ויהי המבול ארבעים יום על הארץ, "The flood was forty days..."

Rashi explains that at first began to rain. And, "If they would do teshuvah, it would be rain of blessing. But they didn't do teshuvah, and it became a flood."

We see that they had the opportunity to change the destiny of the world. If people of that generation would do teshuvah, the flood wouldn't occur, they would survive, and the path of history would have been different, forever.

This is because the destiny of the world or an individual can be altered and changed in a moment. As the Gemara (Pesachim 54:) says, "There are seven things that are concealed from mankind..."⁷ and one

6. When the father came home, the *yetzer hara* told him that the child probably would have recovered without his *kabbalah*, and that he doesn't have to keep his promise. But he overcame these tests, and he broke his tablet.

7. The Gemara says שבעה דברים מכוּסוּים מבני אדם אלו הן יום המיתה ויום הנחמה עומק הדין ואין אדם יודע מה בלבו של חבירו ואין אדם יודע במה משתכר ומלכות בית דוד מתי תחזור ומלכות חייבת מתי תכלה, "There are seven things that are concealed from mankind. They are: the day there will be condolence, the extent of punishment, what the other person is thinking, how to

of them is *יום הנחמה*, the day when everything will become good. As Rashi explains, "*יום הנחמה* is the day a person will be freed from his worries." It can happen in a day, in a moment.

This information gives us *chizuk*, because no matter what we are going through, we know that everything can change in a moment.

The Chazon Ish said that even people who aren't very wise and clever can become great in Torah, because their mental faculties can improve in a moment. He expressed it this way: "When he was at one side of the street, he wasn't able to understand Torah. But he crossed the street, and his heart is open for Torah. The change happened in a moment. And this is because every Friday when they lit the Shabbos candles, his

mother and grandmother davened for him that he should understand Torah, and the moment the *tefillos* are answered, everything turns around."

We have a daily mitzvah to remember that Miryam was punished with *tzaraas* when she spoke *lashon hara* on her brother, Moshe Rabbeinu. As it states (24:9), *זכור את אשר עשה ה' אלקיך למרים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים* (see *Chofetz Chaim*, (עשין א').

Rebbe Leible Eiger *zt'l* (*Imrei Emes, BeHaloscha*) explains that this mitzvah reminds us that all problems can be resolved in a moment.

Because Miryam had *tzaraas*, Moshe davened for her, and she was healed immediately (see *Or HaChaim, Bamidbar* 12:14). Similarly, no matter what one is going through, believe that the cure can come in a moment.

earn money, when Dovid's kingship will return, and when the sinful government (of Rome) will be destroyed."

I heard the following story from Reb Naftali Kaufman Shlita, *magid shiur* in Skverer Yeshiva, Yerushalayim.

After Tisha b'Av, the Skverer Yeshiva organized a trip to the north, so the *bachurim* could daven at the *kiorei tzaddikim* and refresh their energies. One afternoon (Tuesday, the 11th of Av), they spent a very long time in Neharia, and no one understood what caused the delay. Finally, they boarded the bus intending to daven *minchah* in Miron.

But it was getting late, and they realized that they wouldn't get to Miron in time for *minchah*. "Let's daven by one of the *kiorei tzaddikim* along the road," suggested one of the

bachurim, and everyone agreed it was a good idea.

Near Peki'in is the *kever* of the holy *Emorah* ר' אוריאל איש טריא (who is mentioned a few times in the Yerushalmi), and they stopped there to daven *minchah*. As soon as they arrived, they heard shouts of joy, "Hashem is with us!"

A couple with four small children approached the *bachurim*, and the husband said, "Last year, we came to this holy *kever* to daven for a girl. We had three boys, and we wanted a daughter. We promised that if we had a girl, we would return to his holy grave and offer cake in Reb Oshiya's honor.⁸ Today, we came here with our three sons and our newborn daughter, with trays of cake, but no one was at the

8. There's a *segulah* that has become known recently: to daven at Reb Oshiya ish Tirya's *kever*, and to promise a *seudah* in his honor when the salvation comes. This family wanted to make the *seudah* at Reb Oshiya's gravesite.

never to share it with them. My wife davened from the depths of her heart, 'Ribono shel Olam! Send us a busload of people, so I can honor them with the cake and celebrate the chesed you did for us!' Less than ten minutes passed, and you arrived."

As can be imagined, there was much dancing at the holy grave, as they rejoiced the hashgachah pratis they just experienced. It was destined for them to dally in Neharia, and that they chose to daven *minchah* in this spot because Hashem hears everyone's prayers. This woman's tefillos were answered in a moment, and a bus filled with *bachurim* arrived to celebrate with them the birth of their daughter.

Reb Eliezer Tzaddok Turchin *zt'l* would often discuss *divrei Torah* with the Chazon Ish. Once, the Chazon Ish told him, "Sometimes, we see *bachurim* who were *talmidei chachamim* and *yirei*

Shamayim when they were in yeshiva, but when they get married, they suddenly aren't studying Torah so much anymore and their *yiras Shamayim* is far from what it used to be. My question is, when did the problem begin? Perhaps the problem began after they got married and became introduced to the world outside the beis medresh, or perhaps was something significant lacking in their avodas Hashem even yeshiva? What do you think?"

Reb Eliezer Tzaddok was newly married, and he feared that the Chazon Ish was referring to him. He stumbled out of the Chazon Ish's home, thinking, "Is the Chazon Ish implying that I fell from my level and that I don't have *yiras Shamayim*?"

He was so engrossed in his thoughts that he didn't realize that he was walking in the wrong direction.

A friend stopped Reb Eliezer Tzaddok on the street and asked him why he looked so distraught. Reb Eliezer Tzaddok told him. The friend replied, "First of all, you're walking in the wrong direction. Your home is the other direction. Secondly, I advise that you go right now to the Chazon Ish and ask him to answer the question."

Reb Eliezer Tzaddok did so. He returned to the Chazon Ish and asked him to tell him why newly married people sometimes fall from their level.

The Chazon Ish replied, "I didn't tell you earlier because you didn't ask me, and you left in a hurry. But now that you ask, I will tell you. The problem began

when the *bachur* was in yeshiva, because *emunah* needs practice. Without a serious effort to attain *emunah*, one won't have it.

The Chazon Ish explained how one can attain *emunah*:

"Let's say someone needs to buy shoes. Before going to the shoe store, one should daven that Hashem help him choose and buy the shoes that are best for him. He should daven that an expert salesman help him make the purchase and that the price should be reasonable, too. And when one goes to the grocery to buy bread and milk, he should daven to Hashem... And in this manner, he will acquire *emunah*."⁹

9. As one of the best ways to teach a lesson is through a story, we tell here a story to strengthen our *emunah*:

Someone put down a down-payment on a house in Monsey, but then he discovered that one of the neighbors had a different mentality and cultural background than him.

This shouldn't be a problem. As long as there's *yiras Shamayim*, why should a different culture and mentality should not upset him. People need to learn to get along with all types.

After all, *ahavas Yisrael* doesn't mean, solely, to get along with people who are similar to you in dress, custom, and mindset. *Ahavas Yisrael* means to love all Yidden, from all backgrounds.

In fact, the highest form of *achdus* (unity) is when opposites learn to get along and to love each other.

But this person wasn't able to overcome this challenge. He called the real estate broker and told him that he wants to back out of the deal.

The broker replied, "That's not a problem. You can back out. But the down payment won't be returned to you. Are you sure you want to back down? What's wrong with the home?"

The buyer didn't want to tell the real-estate broker (who was a religious Yid) that he is canceling the purchase because of foolish prejudice reasons, because deep down he knew he wasn't acting rationally. There was no good reason not to buy the home, it was just a challenge that he couldn't face. So he said, "There's nothing wrong with the home, but we decided that it isn't for us. We'll cancel the purchase and suffer the loss of the down payment" (which was a tenth of the cost of the house).

He changed real estate brokers; this time he was going with a non-Jewish broker. He preferred non-Jewish real estate broker so he can explain to him exactly what type of neighbors he was looking for. He was embarrassed to express these things with the first real-estate agent, who was a religious Jew, because he knew that his prejudices were ridiculous.

With the help of this broker (and primarily, with Hashem's help), he found another home, in another neighborhood, which was to his likings. Now all he needed to do was to inquire about the neighbors.

The real estate agent assured him that the neighbors were all the same as him. He made some inquiries on his own, and he was satisfied with what he heard.

New Beginnings

The Rokeiach *zt'l* (in the introduction) teaches the following lesson:

אין חזק מן החסידות בתחלתו,
"Nothing is as powerful as
the beginning of *chassidus*."

These words are appropriate for this time of year, a few days and weeks after the holy days passed. We are still at the beginning of *chassidus* (new aspirations for improvement and growth), and nothing is stronger than that. Over the *yomim tovim* we made *kabbalos* and

plans to improve. Also, at this time, many *yeshivos* and *kollelim* begin a new *zman*, and people are motivated to grow in Torah. Let this spirit of beginnings help us succeed, because אין חזק מן החסידות בתחלתו, "Nothing is as powerful as the beginning of *chassidus*."

Chazal (*Tanchuma, Ki Sisa, 37:31*) say, אין לך יפה מן הצניעות, "Nothing is more beautiful than modesty... Therefore, the first *luchos*, which were given publicly, were broken.¹⁰ When Hakadosh

The day he and his family moved in to their new home, he saw that one of the neighbors was the same neighbor he saw in the previous house!

Frightened, he asked, "Didn't I see you at that other address?"

"We were renting there, and we just bought this home."

He discovered that Hashem's decree and plan will always transpire. You can try, you can move, but if Hashem wants something, it will occur. Hashem wanted them to be neighbors, and they are. And by now, they are good friends, too.

10. The first *luchos* were given in a revealed manner, as it states (*Shemos 16:19*), קולות וברקים וענן כבד על ההר וקול שופר חזק מאד ויחרד כל העם אשר, במחנה, "thunder and lightning, a heavy cloud over the mountain,

Baruch Hu gave the second *luchos*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'There is nothing more beautiful than modesty...' [and they were given with less public revelation], and therefore those *luchos* weren't broken."

The Sfas Emes (*Ki Sisa* אין (תרל"ט ד"ה ברש"י אין Hashem knows the future; Hashem knew from the onset that something *צנוע*, concealed, unrevealed, has a greater potential to endure. So why didn't Hashem initially give us the Torah in that humble manner? Why weren't the first *luchos* also given in a modest, concealed way?

The Sfas Emes replies that beginnings always need to be with *hislahavus*. Therefore, initially, the Torah was given on Har Sinai with great revelation and pomp.

The Sfas Emes writes, "This is a lesson for all generations: A person must begin with immense *hislahavus*, and although his fiery passion won't last, nevertheless, it will help him when he falls later on."¹¹

Similarly, it is natural that as the *zman* proceeds one might miss a *sugya* here and there. Nevertheless, the *hislahavus* of the beginning is the

the sound of the shofar was very powerful and the entire nation in the camp were very afraid." The second *luchos* were given in a more modest manner.

11. When one makes a coffee, he uses boiling hot water, although he will never drink it at that temperature. But if he wants the coffee to be cooler, why doesn't he use less hot water to begin with? The answer is, the base has to be hot, fiery, *hislahavus*. This is a *mashal* to *avodas Hashem*, which has to be hot and fiery at the beginning.

motor that will keep him going throughout the year.¹²

When the flood was over, it was time to start the world anew. Immediately, Noach planted a vineyard, and that had terrible consequences, as the Torah tells us. The Seforno explains, "Noach began with something improper, and therefore the results were matters that shouldn't be. This is because a drop of *kilkul* (ruin) at the beginning causes a lot of *kilkul* at the end."

We are also at a new beginning - a new year, a new *zman*, etc. - and if we set off the beginning well, everything that follows will be good, too.

Yom Tovim All Year Round

Many people feel that the holidays, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succos, Shmini Atzeres, Simchas Torah passed a long time ago, and that all the inspiration we had, all our thoughts of *teshuvah*, are far behind us and no longer attainable. But it isn't so! As a Stoliner chassid said, "The *yomim tovim* didn't pass; they went in." If we want, we can revive and relive the inspiration of those holy days again.

Motzei Shabbos, we smell *besamim* to revive our souls who feel disappointed that Shabbos left. But we don't smell *besamim* on *motzei yom tov*. Why? The Kedushas Levi says that

12. Chazal (*Yerushalmi Brachos* 9:5) say, אם תעובני יום יומיים אעובך, "If I leave the Torah for one day, the Torah will leave me for two days." This is hinted at in the words, אלה תולדות נח נח, and נח is written twice. This means, the תולדות, children, or the outcome, of נח, resting, is נח, resting another day. Because מנוחה גוררת מנוחה, one resting draws the next one (taught in the holy *sefer* "Reb Yeiva," written by Reb Yaakov Yosef of Austrau *zt'l*).

this is because *yom tov* never leaves us. We can always draw from the inspiration we had.

We'll explain with a story:

The people of Chelm built a train to enable them to travel far distances quickly. But the foolish people of Chelm didn't realize that a train can't travel without railroad tracks and a locomotive. When they discovered that the train wasn't moving, they hired five strong men to push it.

Pushing a heavy train is a lot of work. The men became hot, so they took off their jackets and placed them on the ground behind them, and they pushed some more.

As can be expected, thieves saw the jackets and ran off with them.

After some time, the men looked back, and they didn't see their jackets. "This train goes fast," they

said. "We can't even see our jackets anymore."

They didn't realize that they were in the same place as when they began.

This is how it is with the *yomim tovim*: We think we left the *yomim tovim* a long time ago. Perhaps we had good moments then and thoughts of teshuvah, but we think it doesn't have anything to do with the present, since we are far from the *yom tovim*. But it isn't so. The *yomim tovim* are nearby. And if we want, we can live with the inspiration, thoughts of *teshuvah*, and with the *kabbalos* that we made on those holy days.

Somewhere between Lublin and Lelov, there is a fork on the road. Each of the four roads lead to another city. Generally, a tall pole with four clearly labeled pointers stood at this junction, showing where each road leads to.

One year, a young man from Levov came to this intersection. He was traveling to Lublin, but there were four roads at the intersection, and he didn't know which route to take.

He searched for the pole and found it buried in the snow. He raised the pole and wanted to replace it, but he didn't know how to arrange the arrows.

But this wise, young man told himself, "I know where I came from. I came from Levov, so I know that the path I took leads to Lelov." He placed the arrow pointing to Levov towards the road he just came from, and that way, he knew which path led to Lublin.

I heard this story at a *sheva brachos*. The speaker was telling the *chasan*, "You are at the beginning of a new life, there are many forks in the world, and you don't always know which path to take. . However,

you know where you came from, and you saw the *chinuch* in your home. Let that be your guide, directing you on your path in life."

Similarly, we say:

We just had Tishrei, a month filled with holy days. The year is ahead of us, and we don't know where to go. How do we live this year properly? But we can take our cues from where we came from to direct us on the future path. Because we can take the inspiration of the beginning of the year to show us where we should face our focus throughout the year.

No one says it will be easy. *Avodas Hashem* requires effort. Upholding the *kabbalos* throughout the year is toil. But it is well worth it because this toil will enable us to remain with the warmth of the *yomim tovim* throughout the year.

Chassidim from Russia traveled to the Chiddushei HaRim (who lived in Gur, Poland) for the *yomim tovim*. When they were about to return to their homes in Russia, they said to the Chiddushei HaRim, "It was so warm here. How will we survive the cold, Russian winter?"

They were referring to a spiritual coldness. They experienced spiritually elevated days over the *yomim tovim*, but they suspected that when they return home, to their work and their problems, everything will be forgotten, and the warmth of holiness will be replaced with ice-cold feelings.

The Chidushei HaRim told them a story about the people from Chelm:

Chelm was warm during the daytime, when the sun shone, and very cold at night. So the people of Chelm asked their sage for counsel. "How can we

make it warm at night, too?"

The old sage told them, "We have to capture the sun so that the sun will warm us at night, too."

"But how can we capture the sun?" the men asked.

"Very simple. Look out towards the horizon, and you will see the sun setting deep under the ground. All you need to do is to place barrels in the ground at the location where the sun sets, and you can capture the sun."

The people of Chelm did as their wise sage advised them. The next day, they placed barrels in the ground where they perceived was the horizon, and waited for sunset when the sun would be captured.

It was a snowy day, and when they returned at night to find the sun in the barrels, all they saw were barrels covered with snow and ice.

They used hammers and shovels, and they worked very hard to uncover the snow so they could find the sun. As they worked, they became hot. "It's working!" the men proclaimed with joy. "We're getting hot. The sun is here!"

The Chiddushei HaRim explained to them that if they work hard in Hashem's service, they will always experience the warmth and inspiration they had on the *yomim tovim*. The warmth will remain with them all year long.

Drawing inspiration from the past and keeping the *kabbalos*, requires effort and toil, but that hard effort will keep you warm in Hashem's service throughout the year.

By now, one or two weeks after the *yomim tovim*, it is natural that people will become lax with their *kabbalos*. So, it is time to refresh them and to live with them always.

There is a special person who made a *kabbalah* not to listen to *lashon hara*. This is a hard *kabbalah* to keep because what do you do if you are among friends or family who are speaking *lashon hara* and it isn't polite to leave? But this young man is amazing. He will literally run out of the room when he hears *lashon hara*.

(It reminds me of the renowned Viznitzer chasid, Reb Mordechai Chana zt'l, who would immediately fall asleep whenever he heard *lashon hara*.)

The Magid, Reb Chizkiyahu Yosef Karlstein Shlita, asked this man how he reached this high level, to run away from hearing *lashon hara*, and this is the story he told:

Once he and a friend went sightseeing in the Amazon rainforest. They usually went with tour groups, but they sometimes rented a jeep and drove on the paths in this dense tropical forest. From time

to time, they went out of their jeep to explore the wonders of the tropical forest by foot. Once, a cheetah spotted them and raced towards them. The two friends ran for their lives towards the jeep. However, the jeep was quite a distance away, and they both knew that it was likely that the cheetah would catch up with them.

As they ran, they couldn't speak with one another, but they both knew each other's thoughts. If they could speak at that time, this is how the conversation would go:

One friend said, "I can't outrun the cheetah. My only hope is that I run quicker than you."

"And why do you want to run quicker than me?" asked the other.

"The cheetah will attack the first one he catches. If I am ahead of you, the cheetah will attack you, and I will be safe."

"What are you saying? What about our friendship? How can you hope that I will be killed?"

The other replied, "There is no friendship in life-and-death situations. Now everyone fends for himself."

Indeed, the one who wanted to run ahead succeeded in doing so. He felt relieved, and he was hopeful that his life will be spared.

But the other friend decided that he would rush off the path into the bushes on the side. As he had hoped, the cheetah stayed on the road and pounced on his friend, just in front of the jeep.

Nothing remained from his friend, other than the lesson: "When it comes to life-and-death situations, there is no friendship."

The survivor of this story told Reb Chizkiyah Yosef Karlstein that he did *teshuvah* after this near-

death experience. He studied in a yeshiva about the severity of *lashon hara*. As it states, החיים והמוות ביד הלשון. And, he knew from the Amazon rainforest that when one's life is at risk, there is no friendship. So, sometimes he is among friends, but he doesn't care. When they begin speaking *lashon hara* he runs away. "Let them think I'm crazy; let them be insulted; I don't care. There is no friendship when my life is at risk."

Let this story teach us how to act when it comes to *kabbalos*. Act as though your life depends on keeping the *kabbalah*, and stick to it always, under all circumstances.

Reb Yankele Galinsky *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

Someone addicted to alcohol wanted to break his habit. He knew he wouldn't succeed in stopping at once, so he made a *kabbalah* that he would only drink with

another person. This would automatically decrease the amount he drinks because he won't always find someone to drink with.

Once, he wanted a drink, but he didn't have anyone to drink with him. He went outdoors to find one of his friends, but one friend was working that day, and another friend was already drunk. He didn't find anyone who would drink with him.

He decided to put two cups on the table. Now, everything is prepared for the drink. As soon as he finds someone, they will be ready to drink, and they won't need to delay looking for the cups.

A few hours later, he still didn't have anyone to drink with, so he filled the cups with wine. Now there will be absolutely no delays. All he needed was to find someone to drink with him. He searched some more, but he couldn't

find anyone. He returned home, disappointed.

But then he noticed a fly sipping from one of the cups. "Someone is drinking with me!" he proclaimed. "I have a partner!" and he drank both cups of wine.

Reb Yankele Galinsky explains that the problem was that he came too near to his test. The cups were prepared, the wine was filled, and that led him to come up with the ridiculous idea that a fly is his drinking partner. Had the wine been in the bottle, and the cups in the cupboard, he wouldn't come up with such a ridiculous thought.

The lesson is, when we make a *kaballah*, we need to keep away from the test. If you place the test right in front of your eyes, you will likely fail.

An example of this lesson is the internet. Some say they will only go to good sites. But who can guarantee that? When the

test is right in front of you, it is harder to be cautious. Therefore, fortunate are those who steer as far away from the test as they can.

The Holy Nights

Every year, after Simchas Torah, the Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* would say, "We just left the great, holy days, and now comes the great, holy nights." Because in the winter the nights are long, and they are special times for Torah and tefillah.

Reb Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* called these nights, די גאלדענע נעכט, "The golden nights." Another expression is: די הייליגע ווינטער נעכט, "The holy winter nights." Reb Bunim of Pershischa called these nights די גוטע פריינד, "The good friend."

The Beis Aharon of Stolin *zt'l* would say that he feels disappointed when the *yomim tovim* pass. He asks himself, "Where can I attain holiness?"

But then the holy nights arrive, and he feels revived.¹³

The Ateres Tzvi of Zidichoiv *zt'l* said that these nights have the holiness of *chol hamoed*. He

also said that on these nights, before daybreak (*alos hashachar*), one should pray to Hashem. And at this time, he can accomplish with his tefillos as much as we achieve with our tefillos on Yom Kippur by *Neilah*.

13. Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* explained that these nights were so precious to tzaddikim because there's an element of *mesirus nefesh* to wake up in the middle of the cold nights to serve Hashem.