

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
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Shlita

Toldos



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Table of Contents

## *Torah Wellsprings - Toldos*

<b>Turn Your Eyes to Hashem</b> .....	4
<b>Helps, Saves, and Protects</b> .....	5
<i>Kibud Av v'Eim</i> .....	7
<b>The Avos</b> .....	11
<b>Joy</b> .....	12
<i>Chinuch</i> .....	14
<b>Boundaries</b> .....	17
<b>Positive Influences</b> .....	19
<i>Tam</i> .....	21
<b>Olam HaBa</b> .....	23
<i>Chinuch for Torah</i> .....	26
<b>Try</b> .....	27
<i>Bitachon</i> .....	30
<i>Tefillah</i> .....	34

# Torah Wellsprings

## Toldos

### Turn Your Eyes to Hashem

The Torah tells us (26:19-22) that Yitzchak's servants dug wells. When the Pelishtim came and claimed ownership over the wells, Yitzchak's servants moved to another location. This happened three times until, after the third well, there was peace. No one challenged them there; therefore, Yitzchak called this well רחובות, because כִּי עָתָה הִרְחִיב ה' לָנוּ וּפְרִינוּ בָאָרֶץ, "Hashem has given us respite, and we will prosper in the land."

We are therefore surprised when we read the next *pasuk* (26:23), וַיֵּעַל יִצְחָק מִשָּׁם בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע, Yitzchak went from there to Be'er Sheva." He finally found a tranquil place where there was water, where peace reigned, and they could find wealth

and success. Why move on?

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* explains that Yitzchak always wanted to remember Hashem. Therefore, he appreciated the challenges and hardships, as these were opportunities for him to turn to Hashem in prayer and with *bitachon*.

When everything was finally peaceful, and there were no challenges in his life, he wanted to move on.

The next *pasuk* states that Hashem blessed Yitzchak, as it says, וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים בְּלַיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר... אַל תִּירָא כִּי אֶתְךָ אֲנִי וּבְרַכְתִּיךָ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת זֶרְעֶךָ בְּעֵבֹר אֲבָרָהם, "Hashem appeared to Yitzchak that night and said... 'Don't be afraid because I will be with you, and I will bless you, and I will increase your offspring, in the merit of Avraham, my servant.'"

Reb Shwab explains that Yitzchak earned this blessing because he sought new opportunities to connect his heart with Hashem.

Yitzchak blessed Yaakov (27:28), "ויתן לך אלקים..." "And Hashem will give you..."

The ויא"ו of ויתן is extra. Rashi explains that the ויא"ו, "and he will give" implies that ויתן ויהזור ויתן, Hashem will give to Yaakov again and again. If the bounty runs out, Hashem will give him more.

Why is it necessary for Hashem to give again and again? Why wouldn't Hashem give all at once an amount sufficient for all Yaakov's needs?

Tzaddikim explain that the blessing ויתן ויהזור ויתן means that Yaakov will always be lacking; he will always need more. This is a blessing, as this will force him to raise his eyes to heaven continuously.

Our eyes should also constantly be turned to Hashem because without Hashem we cannot manage.

### Helps, Saves, and Protects

During the last sheva brachos of an old man's youngest child (after marrying off ten or fifteen children), he announced, "I married off all my children, and Hashem didn't help me."

The family was concerned to hear him say that. "Is he getting old and losing his mind? What does he mean that Hashem didn't help him?" They were thinking of asking him to stop his speech, but he immediately explained himself. "Hashem didn't help me; Hashem did everything!"

In last week's *parashah*, Eliezer expressed concern that he might encounter difficulties finding a spouse for Yitzchak. Avraham assured him (24:7), ה' אלקי השמים... הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך,

"Hashem the G-d of heaven...He will send His *malach before you*..." Avraham told Eliezer that he didn't need to worry. A *malach* will go before Eliezer and arrange *everything*. But when Eliezer repeated Avraham's words to Lavan and Besuel, Eliezer changed the words slightly. He told them that Avraham said (24:40), ה' ישלח מלאכו אתך..., "Hashem... will send his *malach with you*." The implication is that Eliezer will do his share, and Hashem will help him.

Lavan and Besuel couldn't understand the concept of לפניי, that Hashem will do everything. Therefore, when Eliezer spoke to them, he told them that Avraham said Hashem would *help him* arrange the *shidduch*. However, in truth, Avraham said that Hashem would go before him and take care of the entire *shidduch*.

We say in *Shemonah Esrei* מולך עוזר ומושיע ומגן "A King Who helps, saves, and protects." What is the difference between these three expressions of assistance - עוזר, מושיע, ומגן - "helps, saves, and protects"?

We finish the *brachah* with מגן אברהם. Why do we specifically use the expression מגן, protection, in reference to Avraham? Why not עוזר ומושיע?

Reb Avraham *zt'l*, the son of the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* says that the three words hint at three levels of *bitachon*. The first level is עוזר, "helps." This is when a person does *hishtadlus* and believes that Hashem will help him and bring blessing into what he does. A higher level of *bitachon* is מושיע, saves. This is when one doesn't even do *hishtadlus*, and he trusts that Hashem will protect and take care of him. Finally, the highest form of *bitachon* is מגן. This is when one does something that can harm himself, but

he trusts that Hashem will save him.

מגן was Avraham's Avinu's level of *bitachon*. He went into the fire at Ur Kasdim, he fought a war against four mighty kings and had *bitachon* that although he was doing something dangerous, Hashem would protect him. Therefore, the *brachah* concludes, מגן אברהם (not עוזר אברהם or מושיע אברהם) because Avraham's level was מגן, completely trusting in Hashem to help him, even when his actions seemed to predict danger.

### ***Kibud Av v'Eim***

The Chayei Adam (67) writes, "Honoring parents means to honor them in your thoughts... You should consider your parents to be *gedolim*, from the most important people in the world. This is the primary obligation of honoring parents."

The Torah tells us that Yitzchak had that type of

admiration for his father, Avraham. He held his father in the highest esteem, and he therefore tried to resemble his father in as many ways as he could.

The Torah (26:18) tells us, וישב יצחק ויחפר את בארות המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם אביו ויסתמום פלישתים אחרי מות אברהם ויקרא להן שמות כשמות אשר קרא להן אביו, "Yitzchak dug anew the water springs that were dug in the days of his father, Avraham (which the Pelishtim sealed up after Avraham's death) and Yitzchak called the wells the names that his father called them."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains that he didn't change the names of the wells. He wanted to call the wells the names his father called them. "He did this to honor his father. If the Torah tells us about this, it is apparently counted as one of Yitzchak's merits. We should do the same for our parents. Yitzchak didn't even want to change the names that

his father gave to the wells. *Kal vachomer* we should follow our parents' good customs and ways."

As the Chayei Adam teaches, we should honor our parents in our hearts. We should consider them as the most important people in the world. And when we have that admiration, we will try to emulate their good ways.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya concludes, "Perhaps this is the reason Yitzchak's name wasn't changed, unlike the other *avos*."

אברהם was changed to אברהם; Yaakov became ישראל. However, Yitzchak's name remained the same. Yitzchak didn't want to change the names his father chose; therefore, he

deserved that his name remained the same, too.<sup>1</sup>

Eisav also honored his father; however, the Yaaras Dvash (*Yaaras Dvash* pg.70) says that he honored him in action and speech, but he didn't honor Yitzchak in his heart.

To prove this, consider that Eisav brought to Yitzchak dog meat! As the *Targum Yonoson* (27:31) writes, "Hashem prevented Eisav from finding kosher game. So, he found a dog, killed it, made a meal from it, and brought it to his father. He said, 'Father, get up and eat from your son's game.'"

He wouldn't have done that if he honored his father in his heart.

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1. The Torah tells us that Yaakov Avinu prepared tasty food (27:31) ויבא לאביו "...and brought it to his father." The two words ויבא - אביו have the same letters, only in the opposite order. This hints that if you will honor your parents, your children will honor you back. Your good deeds will be returned to you.

Furthermore, Rashi (*Bereishis* 29:11) tells us that Eisav sent his son Elifaz to kill Yaakov! He wouldn't do that if he cared for his parents, for how would they feel if Elifaz actually carried that out.

And in this week's *parashah* (26:35) it states, ותהיין מורת רוח ליצחק ולרבקה, that Eisav's wives caused Yitzchak and Rivkah much distress because they worshipped *avodah zarah* to spite and to anger Yitzchak and Rivkah. Eisav didn't stop them. He honored his father with his deeds and with his speech, but the primary aspect of honor was lacking.

Yet, Eisav was rewarded for his *kibud av v'eim*. One reward was the strength and power that was passed over to his grandson, Amalek.

Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* writes, "Amalek's power comes from Eisav's merits because he honored Yitzchak. As it states (22:28),

וַיֵּאָהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו, 'Yitzchak loved Eisav...' But it was all *עֵשָׂו בְּפִי*, from Eisav's glib tongue, because Eisav didn't honor Yitzchak in his heart. He didn't do anything from his heart, only with his mouth..."

And since his honor was only in deeds, we can cancel and revoke Eisav's merits when we honor our parents with our deeds, with our speech, and with our thoughts, too. This perfect form of *kibud av v'eim* will annul and cancel Eisav's merits for his imperfect *kibud av*.

Additionally, Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz says that if we serve Hashem with all our heart, we can also annul Eisav's strength. Since Eisav's good deeds were only in action, when we serve Hashem with our heart, mind, and soul, it cancels out all of Eisav's credit.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz laments the fact that we lack heart, and especially

during tefillah. He writes, "I talk about this matter all day and all night, and I don't stop speaking about it: A Yid should serve Hashem with his heart, with *kavanah*. He shouldn't serve Hashem by rote, due to custom... especially *tefillah*, because *tefillah* is *avodah shebalev*, the primary service of the heart. But due to our many sins, people got into the habit of mumbling their *tefillos*... The lips and tongue move by habit, and his heart is thinking about business and other matters. Woe to him for the day of judgment! When he is old, there won't be more than two or three proper prayers that he said with *kavanah* his entire life... The same is with *kriyas Shema*. How many weeks and years pass, and we don't say *kriyas Shema*, the three *parshiyos*, with a whole heart, without interspersing other thoughts?! Woe to us! This empowers our enemies because we are in *galus* under Eisav's domain, and

their merit comes from their forefather [Eisav] whose power was with his mouth (ציד בפיו). If we serve Hashem with our hearts, he loses his strength. But if we will be like them and only serve Hashem with our mouths, Eisav's merit remains in its place."

The Yaaras Dvash adds that this is the intention of the *pasuk* (27:22), הקול קול יעקב, והידים ידי עשו, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Eisav." This means, that if all we have is the קול יעקב, the voice of Yaakov, such as the sound of Torah and *tefillah*, but it is without the heart, then והידים ידי עשו, Eisav still has power over us.

When we serve Hashem with our heart, Eisav's merit will be canceled, and Amalek and the goyim won't have any power over us.

Also, when we honor our parents in our hearts, recognizing their greatness and desiring to emulate

their good deeds, that will annul Eisav's merit of kibud av v'eim.

### The Avos

In addition to honoring and admiring our parents, we should recognize the greatness of the holy avos, patriarchs and the matriarchs, and seek to go in their ways.

As Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* 25) says, שכל אחד ואחד מן ישראל חייב לאמר מתי יגיעו מעשי למעשי אבותי אברהם יצחק ויעקב, "Every Yid is obligated to say, 'When will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.'"

Tzaddikim explain that we will never reach the levels of the *avos*, but everyone is obligated to yearn that יגיעו, that our deeds should at least touch and have a resemblance to the ways of the *avos*.

The Ramchal *zt'l* (*Derech Eitz Chaim*) writes that every

day one should ask himself the following questions:

"Who am I?"

"Why did I come to the world?"

"What is the King of kings Hakadosh Baruch Hu asking of me?"

"What did the *avos* do that Hashem loved them so much?"

"What did Moshe Rabbeinu do?"

"What did Dovid HaMelech and all other tzaddikim before us do?"

Then ask yourself whether your deeds are like theirs?

Ask yourself, "Where are you, compared to them? Are you following the path of tzaddikim, or not?"

"These contemplations are the most powerful remedy against the *yetzer hara*. They are easy to do, and the results are great. Think about these matters for at least an hour a day

when your mind is free from all other thoughts. Keep thinking these thoughts, and you will succeed in all your ways. You should spend at least some time, each time – long or short – considering these matters, and you will succeed in all your ways."

Certainly, when we read the *parashiyos* that discuss the holy *avos* and *imahos*, we should study their righteous ways and ask ourselves what we can do to emulate them.

### Joy

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that Yitzchak's face was always shining with joy. He was happy all his life, and therefore he was called *יצחק*, which means joy.

Yitzchak is also renowned for his fear of Hashem, and he is therefore called *פחד יצחק*. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that fear isn't contradictory to joy. "They actually go together because no one is happier

than the person who doesn't fear anyone other than Hashem."

Chazal (*Brachos* 54.) say, *חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שהוא מברך על הטובה*, "You are obligated to bless Hashem for the bad [just as joyously as] you bless Hashem for the good."

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickolsberg and his brother, Rebbe Pinchas, the *Hafla'ah*, asked the Magid of Mezritch *zt'l*, "How does one bless Hashem for the bad joyously? How can he be happy with the bad?"

The Magid instructed them to ask Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l*.

Rebbe Zusha was sitting in the Magid's *beis medresh*, and they asked him their question.

Rebbe Zusha replied, "I don't understand why the Magid sent you to me? I never experienced bad in my life. I recommend that you ask someone who actually has experienced

bad. Ask him how he thanks Hashem with joy even then. But how should I know? I never experienced anything bad."

Rebbe Shmelke and the Hafla'ah received their answer. If you don't even recognize the bad, you will be able to praise Hashem with joy. Rebbe Zusha was extremely poor, and there were days that he went hungry. He didn't have an easy life. But he didn't notice the difficulties in his life.

How did Rebbe Zusha reach that level? How does one not recognize the bad?

We'll answer that in two ways. One is with *emunah*. When you have *emunah* that everything is pure *chesed*, you will never complain.

Or, because he focused so much on the good, he hardly saw the bad.

We will explain this concept with a *mashal*:

There was a person who always complained. He focused on the half-cup that was empty. Nothing was good enough for him.

His mentor, wanting to change his outlook on life, handed him a cup of water and threw in a handful of salt. "Drink it," he instructed.

"I can't," the student replied. "It's bitter."

The mentor brought the student to a river, threw in a handful of salt, filled a cup with water from the river, and said, "Drink this," and this time, the student drank it.

"I don't understand," the mentor said. "I put the same amount of salt into the river as in the cup. Earlier, you didn't want to drink the water, but now you did drink it. What's the difference?"

The student explained that a handful of salt is a lot of salt for a cup of water.

But a handful of salt in a river is insignificant."

At that, the mentor explained that the same is true with life. A person who focuses on all the good in his life will not be bothered by bitter experiences as much. The bitterness will be *batel* and almost not recognizable among all the good.

### **Chinuch**

As we wrote above, the Ramchal says that everyone should ask themselves, every day, "What did the *avos* do that Hashem loved them so much?"

In *parashas Vayeira*, the Torah reveals the reason Hashem loved Avraham. (18:19) כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה את בניו אות ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט, "I love Avraham because he commands his children and his household to follow the ways of Hashem to do charity and justice...

Hashem loves those who teach others to go in Hashem's ways. Therefore, being a *melamed* is a great privilege, but it is also a great responsibility because the children's future lies in their hands.

The Baal HaTanya hired a *milamed* (a student of the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l*) to study with his son, Rebbe Dov Ber (the Mittele Rebbe *zt'l*), when his son was still a child. The Baal HaTanya said to the *melamed*, "Be aware that you are doing *ה' מלאכה*, Hashem's service, and it is *דיני נפשות*, matters of life and death, because your students' spiritual life is in your hands, and the spiritual life is far more critical than the physical life. If you do your service well, you will earn the children's merits and the merits of their children and grandchildren forever. But *בכלל הן אתה שומע לאו*, if you don't teach well, the children's failure is due to you.<sup>2</sup> Everything is in your hands. Think about this

before you begin to teach, and Hashem will help you establish and mold good students. Your portion will be together with the great tzaddikim."

The Baal HaTanya said this to a *melamed*, but it also applies to parents. They have to know that *everything* is in their hands. If they educate their children well, their children's and grandchildren's success will all be accredited to the parents. But if they are negligent, they will be held responsible.

When the Torah writes קח, take, in reference to people, Rashi explains that it means to take them with encouraging words and inspire them to want to go with you.

Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu (*Devarim* 27:18) קח לך את יהושע, "Take Yehoshua..." and appoint him to be your successor after your demise.

Rashi explains that Moshe should take Yehoshua by telling him, אשריך שזכית להנהיג בנו שלל מקום, "You are fortunate to be granted the merit to lead Hashem's children."

Reb Shlomke Zvehiller zt'l said that a *bas kol* says these words to each *melamed*, every day, and sometimes (when the *melamed* needs more *chizuk*) the *bas kol* will say it to him twice a day: אשריך שזכית להנהיג בנו שלל מקום, "You are fortunate because you were granted the privilege to lead Hashem's children."

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2. Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l once dismissed a *melamed* who wasn't fit for the position. The *melamed* complained, "What will I eat?"

Reb Yosef Chaim replied, "Would you rather eat the children?"

We add that the *bas kol* also says these exact words to parents: אשרך שוכית להנהיג בניו שלל מקום, "You are fortunate because you were granted the privilege to lead Hashem's children."

Rebbe Shlomke Zvehiller said that a *daf* Gemara on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred blatt Gemara on a weekday. A chapter of *Tehillim* on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred chapters of *Tehillim* on a weekday.

We add that an hour of singing *zemiros* with the family on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred such hours on the weekday.

One of the antidotes against the *yetzer hara* is *zemiros*, to sing songs to Hashem. The joy and inspiration of a *nigun* overpowers the lure of *gashmiyos*. Singing with the children on Shabbos is five hundred times more powerful and influential than when we sing on a weekday.

Sing with the family and show them the joy of Yiddishkeit. This is one of the ways we teach our children to go in Hashem's ways.

Reb Yonoson Chever Shlita, son-in-law of the *mashgiach* Reb Dov Yafo *zt'l*, tells that one Shabbos morning, he was saying *pesukei d'zimra* in a room near the *beis medresh* and he paid attention to two young children who were pretending that they were learning Gemara. These five- or six-year-olds opened large Gemaras and were singing the Gemara (although they couldn't yet read the words).

One child sang, אסור אסור אסור. The second child asked, אסור אסור אסור? And the other boy replied, more forcefully this time, אסור אסור אסור! "Forbidden. Forbidden. Forbidden."

That week, Reb Yonoson Chever ate the Shabbos *seudah* in the home of his father-in-law, Reb Dov

Yafo, and he repeated this episode; thinking it was a cute story of two young children.

Reb Dov Yafo became very upset. He stood up, "I must speak with their father now."

Startled by this reaction, his rebbetzin and the family tried to explain to Reb Yafo that it was just two children playing. But Reb Yafo wasn't calmed.

The rebbetzin said, "But if you go to them now, while he is eating his *seudah*, he will be startled. If you feel you must speak to him, better push it off for later."

Reb Yafo accepted her advice.

Later he spoke with the father, and he explained to him that a child mustn't consider Yiddishkeit as אסור אסור, everything is forbidden. He needs to think about Yiddishkeit more positively. He should associate Yiddishkeit with joy and sweetness. If he has a negative, stifling view on Yiddishkeit, that could *chalilah* result in a "child at risk."<sup>3</sup>

The father didn't take Reb Dov Yafo's counsel seriously. Eventually, both children went off the *derech*, and became irreligious, *r'l*.

## Boundaries

Yaakov was (25:27) ישב אהלים, sitting in the tents of Torah, while Eisav was איש

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3. Certainly, there are things that are forbidden, and there needs to be boundaries, and especially in our generation. But to focus solely on the "no's" without emphasizing all the good, can leave the child with a negative view on Yiddishkeit, *chalilah*.

Even the boundaries should be viewed as gates to protect a precious treasure. They should be viewed in a positive light, and not as stifling prohibitions.

שדה, an outdoorsman. The difference between a tent and the outdoors is that the outdoors doesn't have any walls or boundaries.

This accurately describes the difference between Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov erects walls and boundaries to stay inside the realm of holiness, while Eisav lives without any limits. In his mind, everything is permitted.<sup>4</sup>

Boundaries are essential, especially in this generation. Reb Dov Yafo said that *Yiddishkeit* can't be viewed as אסור אסור אסור, that everything is forbidden, and that's true. We need to

generate in our children a positive view on *Yiddishkeit*. How good and sweet it is, and not how stifling and limiting it is. Children should be taught that boundaries and limitations are like gates protecting a great treasure. Because when the emphasis is on the treasure we possess, we will embrace the constraints and limits so that we don't lose it.<sup>5</sup>

An important rule of *chinuch* is that it should be without anger. A *mashal* to someone who owns the only supermarket in the city. He doesn't need to refrain from shouting at his customers because no

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4. The Yeitav Leiv said this in his *hesped* on the Maharam Shik *zt'l* that the Maharam Shik followed Yaakov's footsteps, and didn't breach any boundaries of halachah or tradition.

5. The *roshei teivos* of ישראל is: יש שישים רבוא אותיות לתורה, "There are 600,000 letters in the Torah". Each member of בני ישראל is represented by a letter of the Torah. The letters of a *sefer Torah* need to be separated with white parchment (מוקף גויל). The white parchment hints to the boundaries, limits, and precautions the Jewish nation accepts on themselves, so they will remain within the realm of *kedushah*.

matter how he treats them, they will come back to his store. They have nowhere else to go.

But when another supermarket opens in the area, he will begin treating his customers with respect because he knows that if the consumers feel slighted, they will take their business to the competition.

The *nimshal* is, in our generation, children have options. If parents don't show them love, and instead, they experience their parents' wrath, they might decide to find solace elsewhere, outside the house.

### Positive Influences

When a child is in his mother's womb, he learns the entire Torah with a *malach*. We, therefore, wonder why Yaakov Avinu wanted to leave his mother's womb to go to the

beis medresh of Shem and Eiver (see *Rashi* 25:22).

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* answers that Yaakov desired to leave the womb so as not to be in the company of Eisav because one needs to avoid bad influences and bad neighbors.

As the Rambam (*Deios* 6:1) writes, "The way of man is to be drawn after the thoughts and deeds of his friends, and he behaves like the people of his country. Therefore, it is essential to befriend *tzaddikim* and to dwell near *chachamim* so that you can learn from their ways. Distance yourself from *resha'im* who go in the darkness. Don't learn from their deeds. As Shlomo HaMelech (*Mishlei* 13:20) says, הולך את חכמים יחכם ורעה, בסלים ירוע, "The one who walks with the wise will become wise. And the one who befriends the fools will be bad."<sup>6</sup>

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6. A doctor asked his patient, "Why do you smoke? It is unhealthy."

A *bachur* once told me that he wanted to leave yeshiva. "I'm not learning anyway," he explained, "so why should I stay in the yeshiva?"

I told him the following *mashal*: Someone was in a traffic jam. The cars weren't moving. But it was sweltering outside, and the car was air-conditioned. He won't leave his car because he doesn't want to suffer the summer heat, although he isn't going anywhere. He'd rather remain in the car with the air-conditioning, along with the music or *shiur* he is listening to.

Anyway, the traffic will let up sooner or later, so it is best to be in a place that will bring him to his destination.

The *nimshal* is, even if you aren't succeeding in yeshiva, the yeshiva is the best place to be. You are among Torah scholars, among people who are growing in Torah, among *tzaddikim*. Even the air of the *beis medresh* is holy. Besides, in the yeshiva, you will eventually open a *sefer* or a *Tehillim*... But even if not, just being there is a *mitzvah*.

It's a *mitzvah* to be in the *beis medresh*, even if he isn't learning or *davening*. Just sitting there is a virtue. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (151:1), "Sitting in *beis medresh* is a *mitzvah*, as it states, אשרי יושבי ביתך."

Also, in *Shulchan Aruch* (155:1) it states, "After [*shacharis* in *beis kneses*] go to the *beis medresh* [where

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"I don't smoke."

"Your x-ray shows that your lungs are black! Surely you smoke!"

"I work next to people who smoke", he replied.

So, we see how much a person is influenced by his surroundings.

people learn Torah]." The *Mishnah Berurah* (6) writes, "Even if he doesn't understand what they are learning, nevertheless, spending time in beis medresh is a mitzvah. Certainly, it is a mitzvah if he can understand what they are learning..."

The Rema MiPano writes, "From all the merits that Yaakov had - his Torah, his good deeds, they were so many - the Torah doesn't mention [any of these] other than that he was, יושב אהלים, that he would sit in the beis medresh. Because sitting in the beis kneses and the beis medresh is very great, even if one just sits there and doesn't study Torah or pray."

אשרי יושבי ביתך, fortunate are those who sit in the beis medresh, even if all they do is sit there. עוד, all the more so, יהללך סלה are for those who praise Hashem there.

## Tam

In this week's *parashah*, Yaakov Avinu is called an תם, as it states (25:27), ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש תם יושב אהלים, "The children grew up, and Eisav was a hunter, a man of the field, and Yaakov was a *tam*, someone who sat in the tents."

Rashi explains that Eisav was יודע ציד, which means he knew how to trick his father. He would ask, 'Father, how does one separate *maasar* from salt and straw?' His father thought he was cautious with the mitzvos."

In contrast, Yaakov Avinu was a תם. Rashi explains, "He wasn't an expert in all these ways. He said what he thought. Someone who isn't cunning to trick others is a *tam*."

It wasn't that Yaakov wasn't clever, *chas v'shalom*. It was that Yaakov didn't seek to be cunning. He was יושב אהלים; he wanted Torah.

Nothing else interested him.

The *meforshim* say that Yaakov was an איש תם, which implies that he was an איש, in control of his *temimus*. When the need arose, he could be very clever. As Yaakov Avinu told Rachel (*Rashi* 29:12), אמ, לרמאות הוא בא גם אני אחיו ברמאות, "If Lavan wants to trick me, I am also his brother in trickery." But this wasn't his default lifestyle. He wanted to live with simplicity in the tents of Torah. All he wanted to know was Torah, and everything else didn't appeal to him.

Noach is also called a *tam*, as it states (*Bereishis* 6:9), נח איש צדיק תמים, but when the Torah discusses the flood, he is called צדיק alone (see 7:1 and see *Rashi*). As it states, בא אל התיבה... כי, אותך ראיתי צדיק לפני בדור הזה.

We can explain that in the generation of the *mabul*, Noach couldn't be a *tamim* anymore. The world

was filled with *avodah zarah*, theft, adultery (see *Rashi* 6:11), and Noach had to know what was going on to protect himself and his family from bad influences.

Noach couldn't be a *tamim*.

Because one of the aspects of *tamim* is to be a simpleton and not overly clever. But, when the generation is corrupt, you have to be very clever, or you (or your children) might be drawn after their ways.

In this generation, there are simple people, תמימים, who only want Torah and mitzvos. They never saw the internet before, they don't know what it is, and don't want to know. They weren't brought up with it, they never experienced it, and they are proud of that.

This is a quality and a form of *temimus*, but when you have children, you can't be naive. You

must know what's going on. You can't hide your head in the sand and think everything will be fine. You have to know which gadgets can connect to the internet, the dangers, and how to shield your children from them.

### Olam HaBa

Yaakov and Eisav were fighting in the womb over who will inherit this world and who will inherit the next world. As it states (25:22), ויתרוצצו and Rashi explains, מתרוצצים זה עם זה, ומריבים בנחלת שני עולמות, they were fighting over the two worlds, who gets Olam HaZeh and who gets Olam HaBa.

They reached a compromise: Yaakov gets Olam HaBa and Eisav Olam HaZeh.

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef *zt'l* (Toldos 1) says that this compromise is alluded to in their names. יעקב comes from the word עקב, heel, and it means Yaakov's

focus is on the end, on Olam HaBa. מעשו means "to do," implying immediate action, without considering the future consequences. If something is good right now, he takes it without thinking about what he will lose in the future world because of his choice.

We see Eisav's disinterest in Olam HaBa when he willingly sold the *bechorah* to Yaakov.

The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* described what the division between Yaakov and Eisav probably looked like:

Eisav came into Yaakov's tent one Shabbos and saw Yaakov seated with his students, enjoying a five-course meal. Eisav was indignant, "We have an agreement! Olam HaZeh is mine!"

Yaakov explained to him that Shabbos is מעין עולם הבא 1/60<sup>th</sup> of Olam HaBa, and therefore, he has a right to enjoy Shabbos.

Sunday, Eisav returned to Yaakov's tent and found Yaakov and his students enjoying a meal once again. "What happened today? Is it Shabbos again?"

"Today is *rosh chodesh* when everyone receives a *רוח יתירה*, a spirit from Olam HaBa. So it's also like Olam HaBa..."

Thursday, Eisav returned to Yaakov's tent, and he saw Yaakov and his students eating a wonderful meal. "What's today? "

"Today, we are celebrating a *siyum* for *masechta Bava Kama*. If you want, join us tomorrow when we begin *Bava Metzia*. When we finish, there will be another *siyum*."

The following day, Eisav came to Yaakov's tent and tried to learn *Bava Metzia*. They were discussing *שנים ארבעין בטלית*, and he quickly realized what he would have to put up with in the *beis medresh*,

and he picked himself up and ran away.

Eisav ran to his uncle Yishmael and said, "What should I do with my brother, Yaakov? We made a deal that I get Olam HaZeh, and he gets Olam HaBa, but I see that he's taking both worlds."

Yishmael said, "Tell Yaakov that as you know you won't be getting Olam HaBa you aren't even able to enjoy Olam HaZeh. So, you aren't getting your fair portion."

Eisav followed Yishmael's counsel, and he told Yaakov that he is not getting either world because he is always upset, knowing that he won't receive Olam HaBa.

Yaakov replied, "Don't worry. After you die, you too will get Olam HaBa."

Eisav was very happy with this answer. He can enjoy Olam HaZeh and earn Olam HaBa too.

When Eisav died, the *malachim* wanted to bring him to Gehinom. "No! No!" Eisav shouted. "I made a deal with Yaakov. I get Olam HaBa too."

The *malachim* told him, "He only said that you will get Olam HaBa so you could enjoy Olam HaZeh. Now that you've fully enjoyed Olam HaZeh, your place is in Gehinom." And they took him to Gehinom.

This story reminds us that Yaakov gets both worlds. His primary focus is Olam HaBa, but he gets Olam HaZeh, too.

Eisav received Olam HaZeh, but that isn't much at all. As it states in *Pirkei Avos* (4), "One moment of pleasure in Olam HaBa is better than the entire Olam HaZeh."

Even in Olam HaZeh, Yaakov has a much better portion. As it states (ibid.) "*Teshuvah* and good deeds in this world are better than the entire Olam HaBa..."

Additionally, Yaakov lived with *emunah*, and with *emunah* life is always good. For these reasons, Yaakov has a better life, even in this world.

It states (at the beginning of the *parashah*), אברהם הוליד את יצחק. Reb Aharon Yosef Luria *zt'l* (*Avodas Pnim*) explains that Avraham represents *emunah* and Yitzchak means joy. The *pasuk* is saying, אברהם, *emunah*, הוליד את יצחק, leads to joy.

So, Yaakov received the best portion in Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa. *Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu!*<sup>7</sup>

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7. If a person does sin, there is always the option of teshuvah, which rectifies everything.

It states (25:17), ואלה שני חיי ישמעאל, "These are the years of Yishmael's

### **Chinuch for Torah**

*Pirkei Avos* (2:8) teaches, ר' יהושע בן חנניה אשרי יולדתו, "Fortunate is his mother." The Ra'v Bartenura explains, "Some explain that his mother made him wise. Because [when she was pregnant with this child] she went to the *batei midrashim* of her city and asked the *chachamim* to daven for the child in her womb that he become a *talmid chacham*. And from the day her son, Reb Yehoshua was born, she didn't take his crib out of

the beis medresh, so his ears will hear nothing other than *divrei Torah*."

As the Yerushalmi (*Yevamos* 1:6) tells us, "When Reb Yehoshua ben Chananya was young, his mother carried him in his crib to the beis medresh so he could hear the *divrei Torah*."<sup>8</sup>

Reb Noson Gestetner *zt'l* writes (בן עמרם vol.1 310) that when his mother was in labor with him, his father, Reb Amram *zt'l*, told the midwife that when the child is born, she

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life." Similar words are written about Sarah, שני חיי שרה, and Rashi writes there כולן שוין לטובה, that all her years were good. How can we say that about Yishmael's life, when we know that he had many sinful years?

The Baalei HaTosfos answer that Yishmael did *teshuvah* towards the end of his life. *Teshuvah* turns sins into mitzvos. Thus, it could be said about Yishmael that his entire life was good.

**8.** The Gemara (*Pesachim* 96: and *Yevamos* 79:) tells that Reb Yehoshua said, "I heard [a certain halachah, which he repeated to them] but I don't know what it means." Reb Chaim Kanievsky Shlita (*Derech Sichah Vayeilach*) says that perhaps Reb Yehoshua was referring to a halacha that he heard as a young child, when his mother brought him to the beis medresh.

shouldn't speak for the first few minutes.

When the child (Reb Nosson Gestetner) was born, the midwife was silent, while Reb Amram was studying Gemara aloud in the next room. He did this because he wanted that the first sounds his son hears should be the sound of Torah study.

The Gemara (*Succah* 42.) says, "When a child knows how to speak, the father should teach him Torah." And *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Deiah* 245:5) explains, "When does one begin teaching Torah to his son? When he begins to speak, teach him to say, תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה, קהילת יעקב of Shema. And then teach him gradually until he reaches six or seven years old, and then bring him to a *melamed*."

We want the child's first words that he hears and that he speaks should be words of Torah.

We have this devotion for Torah because our portion is Torah and Olam Haba. That is the focus of our lives.

### Try

The Targum Yonoson (25:27) writes, והוה עשו גבר נחשירכן למיצוד עופין וחיוון גבר נפיק חקל...ויעקב גבר שלים בעבדוי ומשמש בבתי דעבר תבע אולפן מן קדם ה' "Eisav was a person who wasted his time. He hunted birds and animals... and Yaakov was a person with perfect deeds; he served in the beis medresh of Ever, and sought Torah from Hashem." This delineates the difference between Eisav and Yaakov. Eisav wasted his time, while Yaakov invested his time in Torah study.

But notice a primary difference between Yaakov and Eisav.

The Torah (*ibid.*) writes, ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש, שדה ויעקב איש תם יושב אהלים, "The children grew up, and Eisav knew how to hunt,

he was an outdoorsman, and Yaakov was a wholesome man who sat inside tents."

For Eisav, the Torah says יודע ציד, that he *knew* how to hunt. But for Yaakov, the Torah doesn't say יודע תורה, that he knew Torah. Instead, it states יושב אהלים, that he sat and studied Torah in the beis medresh. Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* explains that our obligation is to sit and learn. And when we do so, we will succeed.

He said, "When I was studying in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, a rav came to speak to the yeshiva. He said, 'I met many great *talmidei chachamim*; most of them weren't outstanding geniuses. They were of average intelligence. This is because the primary factor to succeed in Torah

isn't a genius mind. Success in Torah is primarily the product of *hasmadah* and effort.<sup>9</sup> Yaakov Avinu is therefore praised for יושב אהלים, for sitting and studying in the beis medresh. We talk about his *hasmadah*, not about how much he knew, and not how brilliant he was, because *hasmadah* is the primary criterion for success in Torah.

In next week's *parashah*, Yaakov Avinu meets three shepherds sitting near a well whose opening was blocked by a large stone. Yaakov asked them why they weren't giving water to the sheep, and they explained to him that there was a large stone covering the well, and they needed to wait until all the shepherds arrived to remove the stone together.

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9. Reb Wosner *zt'l* said that he also noticed this. It was the *masmidim* who became great in Torah, not necessarily those who had great minds.

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* asked: Yaakov saw the large stone. Why did he ask them why they weren't giving water to the sheep? Did he not understand that they couldn't move the stone themselves?

The Imrei Emes replied: Yaakov asked them, "Why don't you *try* to remove the stone? I understand that it looks impossible, but why don't you at least try?"

Because a person must try, even when matters seem impossible. And when one tries, Hashem helps him succeed.

Throughout his life, Yaakov Avinu tried to accomplish the impossible.

One example began when he was still in his mother's womb. When his mother passed a *beis*

*medresh* (25:22), ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה, and Rashi writes that Yaakov Avinu tried to leave the womb so that he could go to the *beis medresh*. The Divrei Yisrael *zt'l* asks, why did Yaakov try to leave the womb? Eisav was in front of Yaakov in the womb (see Rashi 25:26). He couldn't leave the womb with Eisav still there. So why did he try?

The answer is one must try to do good, even when it seems impossible.

As the *Zohar* (vol.1, 69:) states, "Whoever desires and strives to know and to see [spirituality], although he is unable to fulfill his desire, everyone praises him immensely, because he is trying."<sup>10</sup>

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**10.** The Divrei Yisrael concludes, "[Yaakov Avinu's] descendants inherited this trait." He explains that sometimes they are working, and they can't leave their job. Nevertheless, they yearn and wish they can learn Torah. That yearning is very precious to Hashem.

And often, Hashem answers their desires and grants their wishes.

For example, Yaakov was born holding onto Eisav's ankle because he wanted to be the bechor. Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* explains that he was trying to accomplish the impossible, but it paid off in the end. Thirteen years later, Eisav sold the *bechorah* for a bowl of red lentil soup to Yaakov Avinu. He wanted the *bechorah*, and he received it because when one tries, Hashem helps.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Bitachon***

A Yid bought a forest near Brisk to sell the lumber (for firewood, furniture, and cooking purposes), earning a lot of money. Then, he purchased another section of the forest and another section until all forests around Brisk belonged to him. He thought he would become very wealthy, but a fire broke out in the woods, and he lost everything.

The Beis HaLevi *zt'l* heard this man say, "O forest, because of you I lost all my money."

The Beis HaLevi corrected him, "You didn't

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The Tchebiner Rav *zt'l* was a renowned rav and rosh yeshiva, but there was a period in his life when he worked for a living. He said that his growth in Torah took place primarily during those working years. Since he had less time to learn Torah, he was always thirsting for Torah. When he managed to learn, he swallowed the Torah like someone who didn't drink water for three days. This brought him tremendous success in Torah.

**11.** The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* taught that there's never reason to lose hope because with Hashem helps, there is no limit what one can accomplish.

lose money because you invested in the forest. You invested in the forest because you had to lose your money. It was decreed in heaven that you should lose money, and therefore, Heaven prompted you to make this investment so that the loss should occur."<sup>12</sup>

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 9:) states, רשעים מלאים חרטות, *resha'im* are always regretting. Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* asks: If they regret their bad deeds, why are they considered *resha'im*?

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer answers: They don't regret their *aveiros*. Instead, they regret the poor financial choices they made in life. Their conscience taunts them, "Why weren't you more careful? Why did you invest here or there?"

They are called *resha'im* because they don't believe everything is *bashert*. Why are they upset? Those bad decisions were also predestined by Hashem.<sup>13</sup>

Generally, when one goes hunting, it takes some

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**12.** Tzaddikim said, when one has a hole in his pocket and loses money, he didn't lose money because of the hole. The hole was there because he needed to lose the money.

The Meor Einayim (*Va'eschaan*) writes, "Every Yid must believe with everything he does: *parnassah*, his other worldly deeds, and also in regards to spirituality and *avodas Hashem*, that the idea that came to his mind regarding what he should do was sent to him from Heaven to direct him in the right path, so he should earn money in his financial endeavors, because Hashem wanted, at that time, that he should earn money. Or, *chas veshalom* the opposite, when Hashem wants him to lose money, Hashem places into his heart a thought to should do such and such, and thereby he loses money."

**13.** In spoken Hebrew there is a slang word, תָּבַל. It is used to

time until he catches game, and then prepares it. But Yaakov brought Yitzchak prepared meat shortly after Yitzchak asked for it. Yitzchak asked Yaakov (27:20), *מה זה מהרת למצא בני*, "How did you find so quickly, my son?"

Yaakov replied, *כי הקרה ה'* *אלקיך לפני*, "Hashem your G-d prepared it for me."

Yaakov is the pillar of truth, so why did he say that Hashem prepared the

animals for him? He took it from his mother's livestock!

The answer is, Yaakov Avinu understood that everything is from Hashem. Nothing happens by chance. He took it from his mother's livestock, but he understood that Hashem prepared it for him there.

The Zerah Kodesh writes, "When one earns money, he shouldn't say that it was because of his wise *hishtadlus*. Rather, it is Hashem's *chesed*. If he is

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expresses disappointment. (An English equivalent might be "shucks!" or "it's a shame.")

Sometimes you hear people say "חבל I didn't make that investment. I could have been wealthy today!"

Or, "חבל I wasn't more cautious before making a decision." All day long they're saying *חבל חבל חבל*. But when one has *emunah*, and he knows that even his bad choices were destined and planned by Hashem, he is saved from these negative thoughts.

In the *zemiros* on Friday night we sing, *מחבלי משיח יוצלו לרווחה*.

We can explain *בדרך צחות*, that *חבלי משיח* refers to all the *חבל* people say. When Moshiach will come, *יוצלו לרווחה*, we will be saved from thinking this way, *ונס יגון ואנחה*, and all agony and remorse will disappear. Because when Moshiach comes we will know that nothing is *חבל*, as everything is exactly as Hashem planned it.

appointed to a high position, he shouldn't say that his wisdom earned him the position. It was from Hashem's *chesed*, alone. This is the meaning of, *כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני*, 'Hashem your G-d prepared it before me.' It wasn't that Hashem put it before Yaakov because behold, he went to take the two goats and prepared them quickly, and that doesn't take as much time as going out to the field to hunt. If so, it seems that Yaakov lied because Hashem didn't prepare the goats for him." Rather the explanation is, even the animals in Rivkah's possession were prepared by Hashem because everything is from Hashem.

The Kedushas Yom Tov (ד"ה ותקה רבקה) writes, "The Torah writes (26:12), *ויזרע, יצחק... וימצא... מאה שערים ויברכהו ה'* 'Yitzchak planted in that land, and he found...one hundred times more and Hashem blessed him.' *וימצא*, found, is applicable when

someone finds something he didn't work for. But this time, Yitzchak sowed the field and worked the land. Why is that called *וימצא*, that he found?"

He answers that everything comes from Hashem and not because of our efforts.

He writes, "It states, *ויזרע, יצחק בארץ ההוא*, this means that although Yitzchak planted the ground, nevertheless, *וימצא בשנה ההוא*, he found... because in his eyes, it was like he found it. He knew in his heart that it wasn't his deeds that brought him blessing; rather Hashem blessed him. Because everything he has is because of Hashem's blessings."

The Rebbe of Machnofke *zt'l* left communist Russia in the year 1964, *תשכ"ד*, and he moved to Eretz Yisrael, but at first, he didn't know where he would live and how he would support himself.

Shortly after he arrived, he met a relative at a family *chasunah*. The relative said, "Why did you come to Eretz Yisrael? You would be better off going to America. In America, it would be easier for you to have *parnassah*. What will you have here?"

The Rebbe replied, "We don't take *parnassah* on our own. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives it to us!"

People who overheard this conversation say that until this day, whenever they think, "I should have done so-and-so. I could have earned more money," they immediately hear the Rebbe saying, "We don't take *parnassah* on our own. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives it to us!"

The Be'er Mayim Chaim writes, "The amount that is decreed a person should earn on any given day will certainly get to him even if he hides in a room within a room. The *parnassah* will run after him and come to

him. Hashem has many ways of providing *parnassah*. As the wise scholar (*Sefer HaPeninim, Shaar HaEmunah*) said, 'If a person ran away from his *parnassah* like someone escaping death, the *parnassah* would run even quicker to catch up with him.' Therefore, why should he work so hard, all day long, from sunrise until nightfall? It is sufficient to do *hishtadlus* for *parnassah* part of the day, and you will earn what was destined for you for that day".

### **Tefillah**

When a person's tefillos aren't answered immediately, that can be for his benefit. We will explain this בדרך צחות.

Some people who collect money go around the beis medresh with credit card machines. Those who have money in their pockets give money, but if they don't have cash available, they swipe their credit card

and donate that way. Generally, when they do so, they give more money than when paying with cash.

When a person gives cash, he might give a dollar or two, and that's all. But when he uses a credit card, he usually doesn't use a credit card for such small amounts, so he charges the card for five, ten, or eighteen dollars, etc.

When one pays by credit card, he pays later. So, we see that when one pays later, he gives more. בדרך צדקות, when one's tefillos aren't answered immediately that can be a good sign, because Hashem is paying later, and when the payment is later, he will receive more.

Reb Mendel *zt'l hy'd* the son of Reb Alter'l Horowitz of Dzhikov was very ill. The Ahavas Yisrael *zt'l* was Reb A'ter's father-in-law, and he told him, "It states in halachah (*Hilchos שותפין*,

*Choshen Mishpat* 176:15) that if there are three business partners, and when they agreed to be partners, they set a time for how long they will remain partners; none of them may back out without the consent of the other two partners. Chazal tell us that there are three partners in the formation of man: Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the father, and the mother. Hakadosh Baruch Hu can't leave the partnership without your consent. Therefore, if you don't lose hope, and you believe that your son will recover, you are still partners in 'this venture,' and Hashem is obliged to remain as well. Your son will recover. However, if you give up and lose hope in your son's ability to become better, the partnership is dissolved. Therefore, don't lose hope. Continue to daven for him, and then the third partner, hakadosh Baruch Hu, will also remain in the *shutfus*.

They did so. They davened for their son, and he recovered.

Reb Zanvil, a chassid of Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l* needed money, so when a shul offered him the position of chazan for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, he accepted.

The Ropshitzer told him, "Oy, Reb Zanvel. ובני תן פהודך will also be about money?" He was telling him that when he says ובני תן פהודך, his thoughts will be about money because he will be davening for *parnassah*.

Reb Zanvel replied, "ובני צדיקים (also from the Rosh Hashanah tefillah) is also money." With this sharp but clever answer, he hinted to the Ropshitzer that Rebbes and tzaddikim also do *hishtadlus* to earn money.

Reb Ben Tzion of Bobov *zt'l hy'd* would repeat this story and add, "And I say

ובני יתקדש שמך ה' אולקיני (also from the Rosh Hashanah tefillah) is also money." Because to make a *kiddush Hashem*, to increase Torah and mitzvos, one needs money.

All our requests, even when we request *gashmiyos*, it is ultimately about *ruchniyos*. We daven for money so we can serve Hashem.

Chazal (*Taanis* 8:) say that one can't daven for two things. He should only daven for one thing at a time. The question is, in *Shemonah Esrei* there are so many requests! How do we daven for so many things at once?

The Chasam Sofer explains this with the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 27:4), אחת שאלתי מאת ה'...שבתי בבית ה'. I ask for many things, but they all boil down to one request: to be close to Hashem. אחת שאלתי, it is one requests, אותה אבקש, and it is my only request. שבתי בבית ה', to be close to Hashem.