

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
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Shemos



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Table of Contents

## *Torah Wellsprings - Shemos*

"I Love You' Says Hashem" ( <i>Malachi</i> 1:2) .....	4
<i>Kinah</i> .....	8
The Right Perspective on Money .....	11
<i>Shovavim</i> .....	13
<i>Hashem's Hashgachah</i> .....	20
<i>Chesed</i> .....	23
<i>Yiras Shamayim</i> .....	24
Teshuvah in Private .....	26
The Power of Tefillah .....	30
<i>Lashon Hara</i> .....	32

# Torah Wellsprings

## Shemos

### "I Love You' Says Hashem" (*Malachi* 1:2).

In this week's parashah, Rashi (1:1) writes, "Hashem counted [Yaakov's descendants] in their lifetime, and He counted them again after their deaths, להודיע, to make known חבתו לפני המקום that they are beloved before Hashem..."

The Sfas Emes (תרל"ב) asks on the word להודיע, "to make known to whom?" He answers that the Jewish nation themselves need to know that Hashem loves them. Hashem says, "Do you see that I'm counting you again and again? I do so, just so you will know how much I love you."

The *parashah* begins ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה... ויהי כל נפש יצא ירך יעקב שבעים נפש, "And these are the names of Bnei Yisrael who came

to Mitzrayim... All the descendants of Yaakov were seventy souls." Each member of Yaakov's descendants was counted because Hashem loves each Yid individually, from the time of Yaakov Avinu until this very today.

Some people feel unworthy of Hashem's love. They say that after they committed many severe *aveiros*, it isn't logical that Hashem should love them.

The Sfas Emes (וארא תרס"ג) explains, "Just as we are obligated to believe in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, even if we don't always understand His ways, so too must we believe in Bnei Yisrael, even when they appear black. As it states (Shir HaShirim 1:5) שחורה אני ונאווה, 'I am black, but I am beautiful.'" We may appear black, our deeds lacking,

but Hashem sees our beauty.

Similarly, Reb Tzaddok HaKohen (*Tzikdas HaTzaddik* 154) writes, "Just as one must believe in Hashem, so must he believe in himself. This means he must believe that Hashem is interested in him (שיש להקב"ה עסק עמו). He must believe that his *neshamah* comes from the source of life, Hashem *yisbarch*, and Hashem *yisbarach* derives pleasure when he performs His will, as it states ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו, 'And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.'" Moshe represents all Yidden.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 2:5) teaches, "Why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu speak with Moshe specifically from within a thornbush (a סנה)?" Why didn't Hashem appear to Moshe from a more beautiful tree?

The Midrash relays that the סנה was actually a rosebush. The roses in the

bush represent the tzaddikim of Klal Yisrael and the thorns represent the *resha'im* of our nation. Nevertheless, Hashem resided among the thorns, too.

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* ch.23, p.100) explains that the thornbush represents Yidden who fall to low levels. The *Shechinah* appeared in a thornbush (and not a more beautiful tree), so we will know that Hashem resides with every Yid – even the very lowest.

The Yismach Moshe told his daughter, Chana, "There are three *shidduch* offers available for you. One, is a very wealthy boy, but he doesn't know much Torah. Another boy comes from a middle-class family and is average in his Torah learning as well." The third option is a *bachur* from a very poor home, but he is an outstanding *talmid chacham*. Which *shidduch* do you prefer?"



His daughter replied that she didn't understand the question. "Father just said that there are three *shidduch* offers..." and she repeated her father's words, precisely as he said it. In this clever way, she was implying, "Of course I want to marry the boy who is a *talmid chacham*."

The *talmid chacham*'s name was Reb Aryeh Leib Lipshitz, who eventually became *rav* of a large city (Vishnitze) and renowned by his *sefer*, *Aryeh d'Bei Iloyi*. As a young scholar, Reb Aryeh Leib wrote a small *sefer*, and a *shadchan* showed the *kuntres* to the Yismach Moshe. The Yismach Moshe sent a letter to Reb Aryeh Leib, commenting on some of the points, and a correspondence between the two ensued. This went on for some time until the Yismach Moshe was convinced that he wanted this young scholar for his daughter. But the *shidduch* would require a large

dowry - three hundred gold coins. So the Yismach Moshe asked his *rebbetzin* if she agreed to sell her *shtern-tichel* (a head-covering studded with precious gems) so that they could do this *shidduch*.

The *tichel* was beautiful and precious, and it also had sentimental value, as she received it as a wedding gift from her late father. But for her daughter's sake, and for the sake of this very special *shidduch*, she agreed to sell it.

After the week of *sheva brachos*, the *rebbetzin* discovered something she hadn't known beforehand. She found out that their *chasan* was married once before! His first wife came from a wealthy home, and it was hard for her to adjust to the lifestyle of being the wife of a Torah scholar, and the marriage ended in divorce.

The *rebbetzin* complained to her husband, "Why did we bring into

our home someone who others threw out? Had I known he was a divorcee, I would never have sold my *shtern-tichel*.

The Yismach Moshe replied with a *mashal*:

One day, a farmer plowing the earth found white beans in the ground. Happy with his find, he brought them home for dinner. He was anticipating his home to be filled with the good scent of cooked beans, but the white beans remained hard.

After four or five hours of unsuccessful cooking, he went to his next-door neighbor – a Yid, who he knew was a wise, clever man – and asked him what to do with his white beans that weren't cooking.

"If you want, we can make an exchange," the Yid replied. "I have two bags of beans. I'll give you my beans, and you give me your white beans."

The simple farmer agreed, figuring that he got the better end of the deal. He didn't know that he was giving away precious gems and rubies.

The Yismach Moshe concluded, "The farmer threw gems out of his home, but that doesn't mean the gems lost their value. The same is with our son-in-law. His ex-wife didn't recognize the greatness of her husband, and she threw him out, but that doesn't mean he isn't a gem."

Let us learn the following lesson from this story:

When we examine our deeds, we consider ourselves mediocre or perhaps even bad, and we can't imagine that Hashem loves us. But Hashem sees us as precious gems, and therefore, He loves us. Our misjudgment doesn't change the reality of who we are. We say about ourselves, שחורה אני, "I'm

black." We recognize our faults and shortcomings, and Hashem says וְנָאֹה, you are beautiful.

### ***Kinah***

Why are people sad? Test it, and you will see that it is generally due to jealousy. They would be happy with their lot if it weren't that others have more than them.<sup>1</sup>

Chazal (Avos 4:21) tell us, הקנאה... מוצאין את האדם מן העולם, "Jealousy...drives man out of the world." Kinah ruins people's lives, causing them to feel depressed and unsatisfied.

The Reishis Chachmah writes, "Someone with *kinah* is 'robbing' himself because he is always sad. Everyone can find

sweetness in life, except for someone who suffers from jealousy. He cannot enjoy his food if someone else has something good."

The Rosh (Orchos Chaim) writes, "Jealousy is a disease that does not have a cure."

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.11) writes, "It is foolish to be jealous because what does one gain from it? The only one who loses is him. Some people are so foolish that when they see their fellow man has something good, they become very distressed and upset. Because of their sorrow, they don't enjoy anything they have... Others don't become so upset, but they also have some remorse. They aren't calm when they see someone reach a level

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1. In Eretz Yisrael there lived a special Yid who was always happy, although he was confined to a wheelchair. People would ask him how he can be happy in his state. He would reply, "If everyone would be wheelchair bound like me, no one would wonder how I can be happy. So now that most people are healthy and don't need a wheelchair, is that a reason I should be sad?"



above them (unless this person is their very close friend). This describes most people. They aren't *baalei kinah* (constantly filled with jealousy), but they aren't pure from it either..."

It states (Mishlei 14:30) וְרִקְבָּה עַצְמוֹת קִנְאָה, jealousy causes one's bones to rot. If we could free ourselves from this illness, we would lead much happier and satisfying lives.<sup>2</sup>

2. Chazal (Avos 4:21) tell us, הקנאה התאוה והכבוד מוצאין את האדם מן העולם, "Jealousy, temptation, and honor drive man out of the world."

The rebbe of Kotzk said:

קנאה - נאך וואס; תאוה - צו וואס; כבוד - פארוואס  
 "Jealousy - Over what? Temptations - For what? Pride - Why?" With a bit of thought, one realizes that there is nothing worth pursuing in this world other than Torah and mitzvos. Everything else is futile.

The rebbe of Kotzk zy"a said: Most bad *middos* begin later in life, but the trait of jealousy begins when a child is born." We see even young children of one year old getting upset when someone else gets something that they don't have.

Once, chassidim of various courts were speaking together, each one telling the greatness of their rebbe. Rebbe Moshe Midner zy"a, from the esteemed Slonimer chassidim, was also present, but remained quiet throughout the conversation. Someone asked, "Reb Moshe? Why are you silent? Tell us something about your rebbe."

Reb Moshe replied, "All I can tell you is that the three *middos*: *kinah*, *taavah* and *kavod*, which the entire world chases after, my rebbe runs away from them like from fire."

Once, the Imrei Emes (the Rebbe of Gur) zy"a was a guest, and his host wanted to honor him, but the Imrei Emes was shying away from the honor.

The host said, "Chazal say, כל שאומר לך בעל הבית עשה, the guest must

This subject also applies to spiritual pursuits. For example, many people are jealous of those who know a lot of Torah, enjoy the spirituality of Shabbos, daven well, are very involved in chesed, and the list goes on. Sometimes, jealousy is beneficial. As Chazal say, קנאת סופרים תרבה חכמה, jealousy increases wisdom. But often, jealousy causes people to belittle themselves, preventing them from attaining the levels they could have achieved.

We can overcome the tendency of jealousy when we internalize that Hashem gives everyone precisely what they need. So, if someone has a larger house or a nicer car than you, it's because Hashem

determined that that person needs it (for his avodas Hashem), and you don't. Therefore, there is no reason to be jealous of others. As one tzaddik said, "If I don't have something, that means I don't need it. Because if I needed it, I would have it."

In regards to spirituality too, remember that Hashem wants a different service from each person. Each individual creates a unique *nachas ruach* for Hashem. So why be jealous of others? They aren't doing what you can do.

The following *meshal* brings out this point.

In honor of their father's eightieth birthday, his three sons decided to throw a party. They wanted to lift

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do everything the host requests. So, since I want to honor you, you must accept it."

The Imrei Emes corrected him: "Chazal say, כל שאומר לך בעל הבית עשה, חוץ מזה, 'Do whatever your host requests of you, except when he tells you to leave,' and you are asking me to leave. As Chazal tell us, honor drives a person out of this world."

the spirits of their father, an aging widower.

His oldest son was very wealthy. He bought his father a three-story house. At the party, he presented his father with the contract, together with beautiful pictures of the house.

His second son was a middle-class earner. He bought his father a used car, which was an upgrade from the jalopy their father drove at the time. He gave his father the car keys and showed him pictures of the vehicle.

The youngest son was poor. He couldn't afford a gift. So, he wrote a letter and read it out loud at the party.

The sons were sure their father would be happiest with the house, the car next, and the letter last.

Their father surprised them when he got up and said, "I live alone. I don't need a three-story house. The car is good, but I hardly

drive. My old jalopy is good enough for me. But my youngest son gave me the best present of all. His letter expressed gratitude for all I did for him all these years, and that's the best gift of all."

Similarly, we don't know which deed is more beloved to Hashem. You might think your deeds are mediocre or paltry, and you are jealous of those who seem to do much more, but your simple deeds may be the most beloved of all.

### **The Right Perspective on Money**

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l related that he knew two men, both earned more or less the same amount of money. Both had large families and were in the stage of marrying off their children. But just as similar as were their life situations, so were their dispositions different. One of them was always happy and made

everyone around him happy. The other one was bitter and nervous.

Reb Pinkus said, "I asked the happy person, 'Why are you happy? Aren't you worried about the chasunah expenses?'"

"He replied, 'My wealthy דוד (uncle) is paying for the wedding, up to the last penny.'"

"I responded, 'I didn't know you have a wealthy דוד.'"

"He replied, 'I was referring to (Shir HaShirim 5:16) זֶה דָּוִד וְזֶה רֵעִי, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is called דָּוִד. He has all the money in the world, and He will pay for all my expenses.'"

Reb Shimshon Pinkus approached the other man, the sad, bitter one, and asked him why he was so worried. He barked, "Why shouldn't I be worried? Do you have any idea how expensive a chasunah is? I do not know how I will come up with the money."

I told him, "I don't have an answer. You are asking a good question but let me tell you a story:

"A business consultant advised Shimon to build an apartment building on the beach. Shimon asked, 'How can I do that? The building will sink in the sand!'"

The advisor replied, 'Good question. I don't know the answer but take a look around you. Don't you see that many people are building on the seashore? Apparently, it can be done.'"

Reb Shimshon Pinkus concluded, "I don't know how you can get the money, but there are many people who earn the same amount as you do, are in the same financial situation as you are in, and somehow they manage to marry off their children. It can be done. Hashem helps. So why are you so worried?"

The Beis Yaakov (Vayeira ד"ה וירא) written by a student of Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l writes, "The counsel for everything is to be happy, always. Happiness brings salvation. My Rebbe (Reb Bunim zt'l) told me this explicitly, when I told him that my son was dangerously ill. He said that he doesn't have any advice for me other than to be happy. So I followed his counsel and gave money to chasidim so we can eat and drink together with ahavas chaverim, and my son was immediately healed, with Hashem's help."

A fool was once very sad. "Why are you sad?" his friends asked.

"I just lost a lot of money."

"What happened?"

"I went to the bank and asked for ten million dollars. The cashier refused to give me the cash. I had grand plans on how I was

going to spend the money, and now all is lost."

Obviously, he didn't lose anything because it was never his.

Similarly, people are upset when they try to earn money and fail, but there is no reason to be upset because they didn't lose anything. That money wasn't meant for them.

And even if you had money and lost it, that's also not a reason to be upset because that money was never yours to keep. Hashem gave it to you to hold on to, like a mashkon, and now He took it back from you. You didn't lose anything.

### **Shovavim**

Shovavim is a six-to-eight-week period beginning *parshas shemos* when we cleanse ourselves from *aveiros* (primarily, *aveiros* related to *kedushah*, such as guarding the eyes, etc.) and we become pure before

Hashem. Years ago, people would fast and afflict themselves during Shovavim. Today, we become pure during Shovavim by studying Torah and saying Tehillim.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l said, "More than all fasts and afflictions,

nothing purifies as much as studying Torah" (*Chavetzeles HaSharon*, introduction).<sup>3</sup>

*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (Rabba 18) states, "Come and see the great power of Torah study. It purifies Bnei Yisrael even if they worshipped *avodah zarah*."<sup>4</sup>

3. The Yesod HaAvodah (3:5:8) writes, "Chazal say Torah study atones, protects, and saves, and the fire of Gehinom doesn't harm those who study Torah. When one studies for five hours straight, without interruption...I think this will be extremely beneficial. It will purify and atone, and it will lead him on the path of *teshuvah* and complete forgiveness."

4. I heard the following from the gaon Reb Shlomo Sabresky Shlita who lives in Beit Shemesh. (He used to live in Gateshead):

He came to America during the year of תשל"ח to collect money for the Kollal in Gateshead. Some potential donors in New York declined to give him money. They said that there are enough wealthy people in London who can support the kollal, and there is no reason the Americans should have to support it. They added, "What connection do we have with the kollal in Gateshead that we should support it?"

Reb Shlomo was very hurt from these remarks and repeated these comments to Reb Yaakov Kamenetzki zt'l.

Reb Yaakov told him that both claims are foolish. "They say the people of London can support the kollal, but your coming here proves that their donations aren't enough. And this that they say they have no connection to the kollal in Gateshead is simply not true. When talmidei chachamim study Torah, everyone in the world benefits from it, no matter how far or near they are.



*Parshas Shemos* starts with the words ואלה שמות בני ישראל, and the final letters spell תהלים. This hints that saying Tehillim purifies us in Shovavim.<sup>5</sup>

In this week's parashah, Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu (3:5) של נעליך מעל רגליך כי המקום אשר אתה עומד אליו אדמת קודש הוא, "Take your shoes off your feet, because the place upon which you stand, is holy land." The Chofetz Chaim (*al HaTorah*) explains, "In every place,

and at every time, it is possible to serve Hashem. Only, we must make sure that our sins don't separate us from Hashem. As it states, כי עוונתיכם מבדילים, 'Your sins separate you from Hashem.' Hashem told Moshe נעליך מעל רגליך, you must remove the division is between you and Hashem." The Chofetz Chaim writes that we can reach very high levels, even the levels of the early tzaddikim, but we must

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5. It states ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה את יעקב איש וביתו באו, "These are the names of Bnei Yisrael *coming* to Mitzrayim. Yaakov and his household *came*." *Coming* and *came* (באו - הבאים) are present and past tense. Why does the Torah change the tense?

The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe*) answers that את יעקב איש וביתו באו implies that Yaakov took his household, together with the air and holy atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael, and transported them to Mitzrayim. They had a yeshiva in Mitzrayim, and it was as if they were living in Eretz Yisrael. However (1:7) it states וימת יוסף וכל אחיו ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו... ותמלא הארץ אותם, "Yosef, his brothers, and the entire generation were niftar, and the Jewish nation increased and multiplied...and they filled the land." The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Shemos 1*) explains, the Jewish nation filled the circuses and the theatres. They stopped studying Torah and were enjoying the Egyptian culture. Therefore, it states הבאים מצרימה, in the present tense. Previously, they weren't really living in Mitzrayim, but now they arrived.

first remove the bad that separates us from Hashem.

This is the *avodah* of *Shovavim*: to remove the bad, the *tumah*, the *aveiros* so that we can be pure before Hashem.

The Dubna Magid *zt'l* tells the following *meshal*:

A poor person, disgusted with his humiliating, torn, and worn clothing, saved up enough money to buy material, and went to the tailor to make him a suit.

When it was ready, the poor man put on the suit, thrilled that he finally had respectable clothing, but the suit didn't fit. It was too small. He turned angrily to the tailor, "I told you to make the suit to my size! This is too small for me."

The tailor replied, "The suit fits you fine, but you first have to take off your old clothing before you can put on the new suit."

The *nimshal* is that we can attain very high spiritual levels, but first *של ועליך*, we have to remove the impure garments that are on us. We do so with Torah study, saying Tehillim, and most importantly, we cleanse ourselves through *teshuvah*.

Moshe asked Hashem (3:13-14) "If Bnei Yisrael ask for Your name, what should I tell them?"

Hashem replied, *אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה*.

The Yid HaKadosh (נחמד מזהב, ויצא *zt'l* explains that Moshe's question was regarding the Yidden who fall to very low levels until they forgot Hashem's name. How can they do *teshuvah*?

Hashem answered *אֶהְיֶה*. A Yid should say, "I will become better." Be prepared to improve your ways.

Hashem replies, "If you improve your ways, *אשר אֶהְיֶה*, "I will be with you."

During Shovavim, a kaballah to become better is the first step. We add to that Torah study and Tehillim, and we become completely cleansed from our *aveiros*.

It states (1:8), ויקם מלך חדש, "A new king arose over Mitzrayim who didn't know Yosef."

Rashi (*Shemos* 1:8) writes, רב ושמואל, חד אמר חדש ממש, וחד אמר שנתחדשו גזירותיו, "There's a machlokes between Rav and Shmuel: One says he was a new king. The other says that [it was the same, old king, but he is called new because] he decreed new *gezeiros* [evil decrees against the Jewish nation]."

The *Toras Chaim* (*Eiruv* 53.) says that this machlokes results in a halachic נפקא מינה (difference) related to money

matters. For example, let's say someone pays money for a new car and the seller gives him an old car, which was refurbished. The buyer says, "This isn't what we agreed on. I agreed to buy a new car."

The seller says, "But it's just like new."

It will depend on the two explanations of "new." If מלך חדש is literal, then when someone asks for a new car, you must sell him a new car. But if מלך חדש means renewed, then a refurbished car can also be considered a new car.

Following the view that חדש means renewed, we can explain that when one does teshuvah and changes his ways, he becomes "a new person."<sup>6</sup>

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6. The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* taught that this is how teshuvah atones. When you do teshuvah, you aren't the same person who committed the aveirah. You are a new person because you've improved your ways.

Pharaoh decreed (5:7-8)  
 לא תאספון לתת תבן לעם ללכך הלבנים  
 בתמול שלשם הם ילכו וקששו להם תבן  
 "We will no longer provide  
 straw to the nation to make  
 bricks, as we did yesterday  
 and the days before that.  
 Instead, they will go  
 around [the country] to  
 gather straw." Rebbe

Yaakov Yosef of Skver zt'l  
 explained that Pharaoh's  
 main goal was ילכו, that the  
 Jewish nation will need to  
 walk around the streets of  
 Mitzrayim. He knew that if  
 their eyes became  
 contaminated, he would  
 have the power to rule over  
 them.<sup>7</sup>

7. A novice fisherman stood at the pier and watched veteran fishermen catch their prey, so he could learn to do the same. He saw one fisherman throw a clock into his net and then tossed the net into the sea.

"Why did you put a clock into the net?" the young fisherman asked.

"This is a great fisherman's secret. I paid a lot of money and many weeks to learn this trick, and I won't tell you for free. If you give me a thousand dollars, a fraction of what I paid, I'll tell you."

After pocketing the thousand dollars, the veteran fisherman explained, "Did you ever wonder why fish swim with their eyes wide open? What are they looking for? Expert fishermen investigated this matter for a long time and concluded that the fish want to know the time. They are looking all around to find a clock. So, I throw a clock into my net. Fish come to check the time and get caught."

"Genius plan," the novice fisherman said. "How many fish did you catch that way, today?"

The experienced fisherman replied, "Today, I caught eight fish with this trick, and you're the eighth."

The yetzer hara also uses many tricks to trap people in his net. We must be cautious of him.

As it states (Yeshayah 27:6) יציץ ופרח ישראל, tzaddikim explain, יציץ, if one looks (where he shouldn't) ופרח ישראל, his Judaism flies out of him.

In contrast, it states (Yeshayah 49:18) שׂאִי סָבִיב עֵינֶיךָ

וְרָאִי כוֹלֵם נִקְבְּצוּ בְּאוֹךְ לָךְ. The pasuk is saying שׂאִי סָבִיב עֵינֶיךָ, look away from forbidden sights, וְרָאִי כוֹלֵם נִקְבְּצוּ בְּאוֹךְ לָךְ, and you will see that the many malachim you created with these good deeds are going with you to protect you.<sup>8</sup>

8. Reb Avraham Genichovsky zt'l (Rosh Yeshiva in Chiben) humbly shied away from being a sandek. Many of his students wanted to honor him with sandekaos, but he felt he wasn't worthy.

Shulchan Aruch (265:11) implies that being a sandek is mesugal for earning parnassah. (Tzaddikim say that if one doesn't earn parnassah from being a sandek, then the segulah was used for other benefits. Because spiritual success is also a form of wealth.)

There was a time when Reb Avraham Ginichovsky needed a lot of money, and he wanted the segulah of being a sandek. One of his students had a baby boy, so he told him that if he wants to honor him with sandekaos, he will accept it.

Less than a week later, he received ten thousand dollars. It was indeed mesugal for financial success.

People heard that Reb Avraham Ganichovsky was beginning to accept sandekaos, and many people began inviting him to be the sandek.

Reb Avraham didn't feel worthy to be a sandek, so he made a kabbalah so he can be more holy and more fitting for this position. He took upon himself not to read the newspaper anymore. Obviously, he only read Jewish newspapers, but nevertheless, he wanted to sanctify himself, and this was the kabbalah he took on.

He said, "The second wealth (that he stopped reading the newspaper) was greater wealth than the first wealth (the ten thousand dollars)."

***Hashem's Hashgachah***

One of the wonders of Hashem's hashgachah is how Hashem turns a problem into a solution. What we thought was the difficulty turns around and becomes the root of the salvation.

Here's an example (written in Divrei Moshe by Reb Moshe Dalina zt'l, a student of the Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh zt'l):

Pharaoh decreed that all Jewish male children be murdered. Later, Pharaoh added that all newborn Egyptian children should be thrown into the Nile.

As Rashi (1:22) writes, "The day Moshe was born, astrologers informed Pharaoh that 'Today, the savior of Bnei Yisrael will be born, and we don't know whether he will be an Egyptian or a Jew.' So, Pharaoh decreed that the Egyptian children should also be thrown into the Nile."

Pharaoh thought his decrees would prevent the redemption, when, in truth, each of his edicts facilitated the redemption, as the Divrei Moshe explains:

Pharaoh's daughter Basyah saw a basket floating in the Nile. If only Jewish children were being tossed into the Nile, she wouldn't have gone against her father's will and opened the basket to save the child. But after Pharaoh's second decree, Basyah assumed that the basket contained an Egyptian child inside. She opened the basket and discovered a Jewish child, but at that point, her compassion had arisen on the crying child, and she saved him. Pharaoh's plan backfired. He decreed that all newborn children, including gentile children, be thrown into the Nile. He thought this would rid him of Bnei Yisrael's savior, but instead, this decree granted Moshe life, and Moshe was raised in Pharaoh's home!



Pharaoh's first decree, to kill the Jewish children was also instrumental in the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu and the ultimate redemption. As the Divrei Moshe explains:

Pharaoh instructed the midwives Shifrah and Puah to must kill every newborn male (see 1:16). The Divrei Moshe asks: Why was it important for the Torah to write this decree? Many of Pharaoh's decrees aren't written explicitly in the Torah. For example, Midrashim tell us that the Egyptians would place young children into the walls during construction, and that they would plow the land over young children. These devastating decrees are discussed in the Midrash, and not explicitly in the Chumash. So why does the Torah deem it necessary to tell us about the decree to kill all newborn male children?

He answers, "We certainly aren't able to grasp or measure the

colossal holiness of Moshe Rabbeinu. As the Torah (Devarim 34:10) states ולא קם נביא עוד... אשר דבר אתו אלקים פנים אל פנים, 'There was never again a prophet like Moshe...to whom Hashem spoke face to face.' It is also certain that only a holy person like Moshe could redeem the nation. The Jewish nation in Egypt had sunken to the lowest levels of impurity (and therefore, they had to be rushed out of Mitzrayim, before the time). To take them out of this immense tumah, only someone of Moshe Rabbeinu's caliber could save them. But not everyone can give birth to such a holy child."

Moshe Rabbeinu's parents had to be at an extremely high level to bear this holy child. The Divrei Moshe explains that Amram, Moshe's father, was a perfect tzaddik. Chazal (Shabbos 55:) say that Amram was among the four people in history who didn't die because of their sins (because he had no *aveiros*).

He died due to עטיו של נחש, the Tree of Knowledge, which resulted in the decree that all humanity must die.

Yocheved (Shifrah) was also a perfect tzaddekes, fitting to bear this holy son. She became a perfect tzaddekes when she was moser nefesh to save the Jewish children, and defied Pharaoh's decree.

Pharaoh thought his decree would prevent the redeemer from living to save Klal Yisrael. As Rashi (1:16) writes, "Pharaoh was

only concerned to kill the males because his stargazers told him that a son will be born [to the Jewish nation] who will save them." Pharaoh tried to prevent this birth, but his decree provided Yocheved with the added sanctity needed to bear Moshe.

Because, as it often happens, the very means used to harm us end up being the source of salvation.<sup>9</sup>

It states (1:8), ויקם מלך חדש, "A new king rose over

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9. There is a rule: One cannot help his fellow man if he didn't go through the same problem his friend is going through. Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l teaches that Pharaoh knew that the redeemer of Bnei Yisrael will be from the shevet Levi. Therefore, Pharaoh exempt shevet Levi from the work because he thought that if Levi isn't enslaved, the redeemer who comes from this tribe won't be able to save the nation.

But this plan fell through because Moshe felt the pain of his brethren with his whole heart. As it states (1:11) ויצא אל אחיו וירא, "He went out to his brothers and he saw their suffering." Rashi writes, נתן עיניו ולבו להיות מוצר עליהם, "He put into his heart to experience their distress." Moshe felt their pain as though they were his own, and therefore, he was fitting to be their savior.

Once again, Pharaoh's plans to prevent the salvation failed.

Mitzrayim, who didn't know Yosef." The miforshim (see Kli Yakar) explain that Yosef dreamt that he would be a ruler and that his brothers would bow down to him. The brothers tried to prevent it from happening, so they sold Yosef as a slave. They weren't successful because Hashem's plan always prevails. Pharaoh didn't know Yosef. He didn't know that you can't fight Hashem. Hashem wants to multiply the Bnei Yisrael, Hashem wants to save them, and anything he does to try to prevent that will only backfire and work against his interests.

### ***Chesed***

Reb Chaim Kreizworth zt'l would say, "We aren't

able to learn Torah like Reb Akiva Eiger did, and we can't daven like Reb Akiva Eiger davened, either. But we can do chesed like Reb Akiva Eiger. Because chesed means to help your fellow man, and if you help your fellow man, you did the mitzvah, regardless of the purity of your intentions.

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l taught that chesed isn't affected by people's intentions. Even when your intentions aren't pure, the chesed you performed is considered complete because the person in need received the assistance he needed.<sup>10</sup>

The Torah calls Yocheved and Miriam שפּרה ופועה. Rashi explains that שפּרה means she made the

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**10.** A hint to this concept is in the words הקול קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו. It says קול twice, alluding to the voice of Torah and the voice of tefillah. Torah and tefillah need to be יעקב, in the manner that Yaakov would perform them, with holiness and with the proper kavanah. However, הידים, when it comes to the hands – to put out your hand to help your fellow man – it can even be the hands of

child beautiful and פועה means she cooed and soothed the crying infants. They were called by the chesed they performed.

Similarly, the Midrash (Shemos Rabba 8) writes, "Moshe had seven names, and none of them remained, other than Moshe, as it states ותקרא שמו משה כי מן המים משיתחו, 'She called his name Moshe because she drew him out of the water.'" The Midrash writes, "See the greatness of those who do chesed, before Hakadosh Baruch Hu!" The name which Basya gave remained because it describes the chesed she did to save Moshe.

### ***Yiras Shamayim***

The Torah (1:21) says, ויהי כי יראו המילדות את האלקים ויעש להם בתים, "It was when the midwives (Shifrah and Puah) feared Hashem, and

Hashem made them houses." Rashi explains that this refers to houses of kehunah, leviyah, and kings. "The house of kehunah and levi'im came from Yocheved (Shifrah), and the house of kings came from Miriam (Puah)."

We would assume that they earned this reward because they saved thousands (perhaps millions) of Yidden through their mesirus nefesh. However, the Torah says they earned this reward because they feared heaven. As it states ויהי כי יראו המילדות את האלקים ויעש להם בתים.

This shows us that the greatest praise and the utmost achievement is to have yiras Shamayim.

Rebbe Meir of Amshinov zt'l said:

Imagine an event honoring a hero who saved

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Eisav. The chesed has value, regardless of your intention, because the poor or the needy received the aid they needed.

thousands of people during the holocaust. The host is introducing him before a packed audience: "We have the privilege to hear a few words from an exceptional man, a person who has *yiras Shamayim*. Every day, he wakes up early to learn a few hours, and then he davens with *kavanah*..." Throughout his introduction, he doesn't mention a word about the honoree having saved thousands of people during the war. People may think that the host is focusing on minor qualities and is leaving out the main reason this person deserves praise.

But as the Torah tells us that the primary praise is *yiras Shamayim*. Shifrah and Puah were rewarded for their *yiras Shamayim*; the *pasuk* doesn't even mention that they were

rewarded for the salvations they brought.

Indeed, *yiras Shamayim* isn't easy to come by. It is a great undertaking. The Shem MiShmuel (*Hoshana Rabba* תרע"ד) writes, "My grandfather, the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* said, 'It's easier for a human being to accept on himself any type of *סיוג*, affliction than to accept the yoke of Heaven. There is nothing harder for a human than to be subservient to the Kingship of Heaven and to govern himself according to the Torah.'"<sup>11</sup>

Approximately one hundred *bachurim* were learning in Tzanz, listening to the Tzanzer Rav's (Rebbe Chaim of Tzanz, *zy'a*) *shiurim*, but it wasn't an official *yeshiva*.

Someone asked the Divrei Chaim, "The *bachurim* are learning here

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**11.** Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitz *zt'l* said, "If someone knows Torah but doesn't have *yiras shamayim*, it is like a *talis kattan* without *tzitzis* attached to it.

anyway. Why shouldn't we make it official and open a yeshiva for them?"

The Divrei Chaim answered, "Running a yeshiva is a great responsibility. It means accepting accountability for the *bachurim's* spiritual growth. It means being liable if a *bachur* falls into the *yetzer hara's* clutches. I don't want to carry this responsibility."

The man asked, "But the Chasam Sofer opened a large yeshiva in Pressburg!"

The Divrei Chaim replied, "How can you compare me to the Chasam Sofer? Because of the Chasam Sofer's holiness, if he merely looks at a *bachur* when he gives his daily *shiur*, that *bachur* would not sin, even in private. By merely looking at a *bachur*, he fills him with *yiras Shamayim*. I'm not on that level, and therefore I'm afraid to accept that responsibility."

תמו"ת is *roshei teivos* for שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום.

The Baal HaTurim on the first *pasuk* of the *parashah* teaches the following lesson from *roshei teivos*: ואלה שמות בני ישראל תיבות אלו נוטריקון (ראשי תיבות) ואדם אשר לומד הסדר שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום, בקול נעים ישיר, יהיה שנים רבות ארוכים לעולם. "A person who studies the *parashah*, the *pasuk* twice and *Onkelus* once, and sings it with a beautiful voice, he will live long..."

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 285:2) states, "A person who learns the *parashah* with Rashi, it is as if he learned it with *Targum Onkelus*. A *yarei Shamayim* should read the *parashah* with both *Targum* and *Rashi*."

Tzaddikim add that studying the *parashah* שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום together with Rashi is *mesugal* for *yiras Shamayim*.

### **Teshuvah in Private**

Rabbeinu b'Chaya teaches that although the



time for the redemption arrived, Bnei Yisrael needed tefillah to merit it. As it states (2:24) וישמע אלקים, "Hashem heard their prayers." They also required teshuvah, as it states (2:25), וידע אלקים and Targum Yonoson writes, "Hashem saw the *teshuvah* they were doing when no one else knew about their *teshuvah*..." It wasn't a standard teshuvah. It was teshuvah in areas no one knew about, but Hashem himself. This teshuvah brought salvation.

The *Shaar Bas Rabim* (from Reb Chaim Aryeh Leib zt'l of Yadvamba, printed in תר"נ) writes, "It states in *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (ch.51), לעולם יהא אדם ירא שמים בסתר ובגלוי, "A person should always fear Hashem, in public and in private..." Because even when one is secluded in a room within a room, with no one there but Hashem

Himself, he should fear Hashem... As Chazal (*Avos* 2:5) say, במקום שאין אנשים, if you are in a place where nobody is around, השתדל להיות איש, try to be an איש, a tzaddik. Also, it states (*Avos* 2:13), אל תהי רשע בפני עצמך, even when you are alone, all by yourself, don't be a *rasha*. Because Hashem's honor fills the world, and He sees the revealed and the concealed. As it states (*Yirmiyahu* 23:24), אם יסתר איש, במסתרים ואני לא אראנו, "If a person hides in a concealed place, will I not see him?"

It states in *Shir HaShirim* (4:1) הֵנָּךְ יָפָה רְעִיתִי הֵנָּךְ יָפָה, "You are beautiful, my friend. You are beautiful..." What does the double expression of יפה, "beautiful" imply?

The Midrash (*Tanchuma* הֵנָּךְ יָפָה - בבית) explains, הֵנָּךְ יָפָה בְּשֹׂדֶךְ, "You are beautiful in your homes; you are beautiful outdoors."<sup>12</sup> We are

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**12.** According to the simple reading of the Midrash, it is referring to the mitzvos that Yidden perform in their homes and in the field. "You are beautiful in your home with the mitzvah of *mezuzah*, and

beautiful when our fear of Hashem permeates all our deeds.

Before going out, we put our hand on the *mezuzah*, kiss it, and remind ourselves to remain loyal to Hashem outside. There are *mezuzos* inside the home, too. Even if someone has a hundred rooms, one after the next, the last room will also have a *mezuzah*. This is to remind us that Hashem is in the privacy of our homes, too, and we

should serve Hashem there, too.<sup>13</sup>

The Gemara (Brachos 28:) says, "When Reb Yochanan ben Zakay took ill, his students came in to visit him...and the students requested, 'Bless us.'

Reb Yochanan replied, "May it be His will that you should fear Hashem as much as you fear human beings."

The students said, "That's all?" They wanted

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you are beautiful outdoors, where you do the mitzvos of *terumah*, *maasar*, *leket*, *shickcha*, and *peah*."

**13.** The Gemara (Brachos 5:) tells that Reb Eliezer was ill and Reb Yochanan came to visit him. It was dark in the room, so Reb Eliezer rolled up his sleeves, and the room became illuminated by his beauty. His arms shone, and it lit up the room. The question is, his face was already revealed. Why didn't the shine of his face illuminate the room? The answer is that it is specifically the concealed deeds that shine the most.

A craftsman was fixing a couch for the Husiataner Rebbe *zt'l*. The Rebbe showed him that he forgot to mend a tear on the back of the couch.

"No one looks there" the craftsman replied.

The Rebbe responded wisely, "We were taught that where no one sees, that is where it must be the most perfect."

to fear Hashem more than they feared humans.

Reb Yochanan ben Zakai replied, "Halavay, you should have that level of fear! The proof is that when a person does an aveirah, he says, 'Just don't let anyone see me.'" People tend to fear humans more than they fear Hashem. Therefore, if one's fear of Hashem equals his fear of humans, that is already a great achievement.

Shifrah and Puah were special because they feared

Hashem more than human beings. Pharaoh could have killed them for disobeying his order, but they feared Hashem, and did as they knew they should.

The Shevet HaLevi (Rachmei HaAv, Gevurah) zt'l explains that Shifrah and Puah, who were Yocheved and Miriam, were great tzaddikos before this episode, too. But the title **יִרְאַת ה'** was given to them when they passed this test because they showed they fear Hashem more than they fear humans.<sup>14</sup>

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**14.** It states (Tehillim 114:2, and we say it in Hallel) **הִיטָה יְהוּדָה לְקֹדֶשׁ**, "Yehudah sanctified Hashem." Rashi explains that this refers to Nachshon ben Aminodov, the nasi of the tribe Yehudah, when he jumped into the Yam Suf with mesirus nefesh and then the sea split.

Reb Yaakov of Lisa (Maaseh Nisim, Hagadah shel Pesach; also the author of Nesivos HaMishpat and Chavas Daas) zt'l asks that if the pasuk is referring to Nachshon ben Aminodov it should say **הִיָּה**, which is masculine tense, and not **הִיְתָה**, which is feminine tense.

He answers that **הִיְתָה** refers to Tamar, the grandmother of **נַחֲשׁוֹן בֶּן עַמִּינַדָב**. She was moser nefesh, preferring to be thrown into the fire and to die rather than to embarrass Yehudah (as discussed in Rashi, Bereishis 38:25). Her mesirus nefesh went into the genes of her descendants, and that's how **נַחֲשׁוֹן בֶּן עַמִּינַדָב** had the willpower to be

## The Power of Tefillah

The Yismach Yisrael (*Shemos* 2, quoting his father, Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander *zt'l*) writes, "In Mitzrayim, the Yidden were unable to speak. All they could do was shout 'Oy vay!'<sup>15</sup>... Those moans went up to heaven and were very precious to Hashem.

"Some people are almost unable to pray to Hakadosh Baruch Hu because of their *tzaros*... Nevertheless, don't lose hope. Call out to Hashem as best as you can. Even if your *tefillah* only produces one shout to Hashem from the depths of your heart, Hashem will consider your poverty, hardships, lowly state,

your place, your situation, and with His immense mercy, He will accept that moan and will help you."

When the Yidden were at the Yam Suf they also were unable to daven, only to shout, as it states (*Shemos* 14:10), ויצעקו בני ישראל אל ה', "Bnei Yisrael shouted to Hashem," and Hashem saved them.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* writes, "Hashem purposely planned that they should not be able to daven at that time, so for all generations, even when they don't have the strength to pray, they should know to shout to Hashem and Hashem will save them. As it states (14:14), ה' ילחם לכם ואתם,

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moser nefesh and jump into the sea. Because that is the nature of mesirus nefesh: It transfers to the descendants this attitude to be moser nefesh for Hashem.

**15.** As it states (2:23), ויאנחו בני ישראל... ויצעקו... ותעל שועתם, "The Yidden moaned... they shouted...their shouts went up to Hashem." And it states (3:9), ועתה הנה צעקת בני ישראל באה אלי, "And now, the shouts of Bnei Yisrael have come up to Me..." They shouted and moaned, but they weren't able to pray.

תחרישון, and the Mechilta explains that even when Yidden are silent (תחרישון) because they aren't able to pray, ה' ילחם לכם, Hashem will fight their wars for them."

Sometimes, prayer in the form of a shout is the preferred kind of *tefillah*. The *Maor Veshamosh* (*Shemos* ד"ה ויהי בימים) writes, "We can ask, why does it state (2:23) ויזעקו, they shouted to Hashem? Why doesn't it state ויתפללו, they prayed to Hashem...?"

The explanation is that there are times when mekatrigim (prosecuting malachim) create an iron wall, preventing the *tefillos* from going up... The solution is (*Zohar* vol.2 p.63:), 'To shout from the depths of his heart and with all his *kavanah*.' It is just a sound, without words. This is called זעקה ושעה. The *mekatrigim* aren't aware of this prayer, only Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. Hashem Himself turns to these shouts and answers those who call to

him. It is a far more special *tefillah* than *tefillos* said with words, which the *malachim* understand and can prevent. Only Hashem knows his thoughts and requests that are being expressed through his shouts, and Hashem fulfills them..."

The Kotzker Rebbe zy"a once announced, "Berke needs *rachmay shamayim*." Berke was the husband of the renowned philanthropist Temer'l (who supported many rebbes of her generation). The Kotzker Rebbe saw through *ruach hakadosh* that her husband was ill and needed prayers.

A group of chassidim rented a wagon to travel to the great tzaddikim of the generation to ask them to daven for Berke. They planned to go to the Chidushei HaRim, Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke, and others. But as they traveled, a piece of the wagon broke, and they had to stop to fix it. Then one of the horses died. Later, one of the

chassidim, who rode with them on the wagon, became deathly ill, and they had to wait a few days until he recovered. When they were ready to resume their travels, they had heard that Berke was *niftar*.

People were amazed by the Kotzker's *ruach hakadosh*. He knew, from afar, that Berke was ill and needed tefillos.

Others said that the *Eibersther* performed an even greater *moifes* (wonder) because since it was destined for Berke to die, Hashem prevented the tzaddikim from praying for him. Because if people davened, he would be healed. That is the power of tefillah.

There was a gadol in Yerushalayim who fell ill, and many people davened for him, and he recovered. This gadol said, "It is no wonder that I recovered. Since people davened, it is only natural that I should recover. The wonder is that

people didn't lose hope. Despite my dire diagnoses, they continued to daven. And that's miraculous!"

### ***Lashon Hara***

Rashi (2:14) writes, "[Moshe said], 'I always wondered: What did Bnei Yisrael sin worse than the seventy nations, that they should be punished with עבודת פרך, backbreaking labor. But now I see that they deserve it.'" Moshe discovered that the suffering came because they spoke *lashon hara* and had *sinas chinam*.

Later, when Hashem told Moshe that He wanted to redeem Klal Yisrael, Moshe was wondered how they deserved to be freed. He said, (*Rashi* 3:11), מה זכו ישראל שיעשה להם נס ואוציאם ממצרים, "What merit does the Jewish nation have that a miracle will occur, and I will be able to take them out of Mitzrayim?"

Notice the irony: At first (*Rashi* 3:2) Moshe couldn't



understand why they were being punished. And now (*Rashi* 3:11) Moshe doesn't understand why they should be saved.

The Sfas Emes (5641) explains that this shows us the severity of *lashon hara* and *sinas chinam*. As the Sfas Emes writes, "This teaches us that one loses all his merits by the sin of *lashon hara*."

The Kli Yakar (3:2) says that the burning bush represents *sinas chinam*, vain hatred. *סנה* comes from the word *שנאה*, hatred. The fire burning in the bush represents the *tzaros* of *galus*, which come from *sinas chinam* and *lashon hara*.

The Kli Yakar writes, "And this is the primary reason Yidden are in *galus*. It is all due to the hatred and jealousy between them — more than it exists by other nations... Therefore, Hashem's fire [of punishment and anger] burns in them..."

The *pasuk* concludes, *והסנה איננה אוכל*, "the bush wasn't consumed." The Kli Yakar writes, "This implies that despite all the hardships and pain, *sinas chinam* continues in every generation. It is never consumed."

The Egyptian culture encouraged *lashon hara*. As the Zera Kodosh writes, "The *avodah zarah* of Mitzrayim is called (*Shemos* 14:2), *פי החירות*, [literally, "free mouth"] because the Egyptians spoke whatever they wanted, without restraint. As if they were free to speak whatever they desired. As it states (*Tehillim* 12:5), *אמרו ללשונו נגביר שפתינו אתנו*, "מי אדון לנו" 'They said: ...Our lips are ours. Who rules over us...' Hashem told Bnei Yisrael (14:2), *וישבו ויחזו*, *לפני פי החירות*... *ישבו* means they should do *teshuvah* and be cautious with their words."

The Pri Megadim (end of *siman* 685) teaches that during Shovavim we complete our exodus from

Mitzrayim. Although we were redeemed, some of the impurity of Mitzrayim remained with us. We cleanse ourselves from it during Shovavim. One way we do that is by refraining from *lashon hara*.

He writes that this is hinted at in the beginning of *parashas Shemos*, ואלה שמות בני ישראל. He explains that

אבק לשון אלה is *roshei teivos* הרע, the dust [even the smallest form of] *lashon hara*, from which we must stay away. And שמות בני ישראל is *roshei teivos* שביה, captivity (as the Baal HaTurim writes). Because we become free from the captivity and influence of Mitzrayim when we are cautious with our speech.