

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Vaeira



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

## Vaeira

### Studying Torah

The Arizal revealed that the weeks of Shovavim are conducive for *teshuvah*; specifically, to atone for serious *aveiros*. In the past, people would fast and afflict themselves in other ways during these weeks.

In later generations, *gedolei Yisrael* determined that the general population is too weak to fast, and it is better to attain purity through studying Torah.

The Ohev Yisrael (end of *Vayechi*) writes, "*Teshuvah* is primarily attained by learning Torah, davening, and giving *tzedakah*, each person according to his abilities. In particular, one should study the oral Torah and halachah in-depth."

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* (*Zera Kodesh, Terumah*) writes, "The primary *teshuvah* is to study Torah. As Chazal

(*Vayikra Rabba* 25:1) say, 'If you were accustomed to studying one *daf*, now study two *daf*.' The primary chassidus is to study Torah with *hasmadah*..."

In a way, studying Torah diligently is harder than fasting because studying Torah requires a lot of self-discipline.

As it states (5:17), נרפים אתם נרפים על כן אתם אומרים נלכה "You are lazy, and therefore you say, 'Let's go and bring *korbanos* to Hashem.'" The Pri Megadim writes in the name of the Shlah HaKodosh that a fast day is compared to bringing *korbanos* (see the tefillah written at the end of the Minchah Shemonah Esrei, which is said before a fast day). The *pasuk* is saying, "You are lazy; you don't want to study Torah. So, you prefer fasting (which is like bringing *korbanos*)

because that is an easier route."

Moshe told Pharaoh (8:23), דרך שלשת ימים נלך במדבר, וזבחנו לה' אלקינו, "We will go a three-day distance and will sacrifice to Hashem our G-d." Several times in this week's *parashah*, Moshe asks Pharaoh to give the nation a respite so that they can celebrate their holiday and sacrifice *korbanos* in the desert.

He wasn't asking for much, just for a minor holiday. Some explain that this is because Hashem doesn't test people beyond their abilities. Asking Pharaoh to free the nation forever would be asking too much from him, but for a short holiday in the desert is something he could agree to, but he didn't.

But the question is, what would a short respite from

slavery accomplish? Shortly afterward, they would be back in Mitzrayim performing backbreaking labor. So why was it essential for Klal Yisrael to have this holiday?

Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l (*Emes l'Yaakov*) answers that these few days would raise the nation's spirits, and they would become like new people. They would feel spiritually uplifted. And afterward, even if they returned to Mitzrayim, they would have the strength to live as Yidden should.

Reb Yaakov Kamenetzki explains:

The Yidden were destined to be in Mitzrayim for four hundred years.<sup>1</sup> But they fell to the forty-ninth gate of tumah and had to leave after 210 years. If they stayed any longer,

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1. As it states (*Bereishis* 15:13), כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו אותם ארבע מאות שנה, "[Hashem told Avraham] your children will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will be afflicted four hundred years."

they would fall to the fiftieth level of *tumah*, from where there is no return.

But since they didn't finish the four-hundred-year quota, their mission wasn't complete. Therefore, it was destined for them to undergo more exiles to attain their *tikun*. This is the reason we are in *galus* until today.

Moshe asked for a short holiday in the desert. Had it been granted, that holy experience would have raised the spirits of the Jewish nation, and they would be able to endure another 190 years in Mitzrayim until they completed the four hundred years.

We take from this discussion a very important, and relevant lesson. It's our reminder to set time aside each day for Torah study. These moments of Torah are significant. They are when you can elevate yourself above the *tumah* of this world and connect to

Hashem. It gives you the strength to live as a Jew.

It states in this week's parashah (6:7), והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים. The Chiddushei HaRim explains that סבלות can be translated as tolerance. Thus, the *pasuk* can be translated, "I will redeem you from tolerating Mitzrayim." We shouldn't tolerate the decadence of Mitzrayim and the immoral culture of the *galus* we live in. Their ways should be disgusting to us. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* (quoted in *Sfas Emes* 5631) explains that when people are around *tumah* for too long, they begin to tolerate it, and it doesn't bother them so much. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים, I will help you that you will no longer be able to tolerate the *tumah* of Mitzrayim. The *Sfas Emes* adds, והוא עצה היעוצה לכל איש מישראל ע"י שמרגיל עצמו להיות שונא הרע בתכלית השנאה... וזה התחלת הגואלה, "This is the counsel for every Yid: He should

train himself to hate the evil with all his might... And this is the beginning of the redemption."

Similarly, the Sfas Emes (5639) writes, ולא יראה בד ערות, דבר ושב מאחרין לא can be translated סזאל יראה, you shouldn't appreciate it. Train yourself to be disgusted from *aveiros* (ערות דבר).

We attain this mindset through designating times for Torah study and studying Torah with zeal.

### **Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l**

In honor of the *yahrtzeit* of my grandfather, the great tzaddik, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov (24th of Teves), I will share some stories of how he would encourage people to study Torah:

I remember when a bar mitzvah *bachur* (on the Shabbos before his bar mitzvah) came to the Rebbe for a *brachah*. My grandfather

told him, "You are about to receive a new guest, the *yetzer tov*. This is not a simple guest. The *yetzer tov* is a *malach*, an angel. You should do appropriate *hachnasas orchim* with this guest. Whenever one has a guest, he provides what the guest enjoys most. The *yetzer tov* loves when we study many pages of Gemara. This is the best way to honor your new guest."

The Rebbe's *hoiz bachur* (personal attendant), Reb Shlomo Weinstock z'l, celebrated his engagement in the Rebbe's home. On the bottom of the *tenaim* [engagement document], the Rebbe added, "The *chasan* asserts that he will complete *masechtos Brachos, Shabbos, and Kiddushin* before the *chasunah*," and the *chasan* signed it. The *chasan* wasn't asked whether he agrees to this, but the Rebbe wanted to push him and encourage him to learn a lot of Gemara before his *chasunah*. From

time to time, the Rebbe would ask the *chasan* where he was holding with the Gemaros and whether he was keeping his word. The Rebbe would add: "Shlomo, if you don't finish these three *masechtos*, down to the very last words, you aren't going to the chuppah," because finishing these *masechtos* was one of the conditions stipulated in the *tenaim*.

A *chasan*, during the week of *sheva brachos*, was at my grandfather's *tisch*, and my grandfather honored him with leading the *benching*. Before *benching*, my grandfather announced, "The *chasan* accepts upon himself to study seventy *blatt* Gemara each month."

The Rebbe came up with creative ways to encourage people to study a lot of Gemara because he knew how important this is.

My brother *shlita* asked the Rebbe for a *brachah*

because he was about to be drafted into the army. The Rebbe replied, "When people come to me with problems, I recommend that they donate the value of 138 to *tzedakah*, because *הצלה* is *gematriya* 138. But you're a *bachur* and don't have so much money. So instead, study 138 pages of Gemara."

My brother asked, "Should I study these pages with *Tosfos*?"

The Rebbe answered: "Yes. But only those *Tosfos* that directly explain the Gemara (not the *Tosfos* that discuss other Gemaras)."

The day my brother finished the 138 pages, the army informed him that he was exempt from the service.

A *bachur* from Slabodka Yeshiva asked the Rebbe for advice on *shemiras einayim*. The Rebbe replied, "Keep your eyes focused on the Gemara, and your eyes will be safe."

To my grandfather, studying Gemara was life itself, and therefore, no situation warranted putting away the Gemara, not even when one desires to be humble. He said the following analogy: "People conceal their wealth when tax collectors come to their home so that the tax collectors won't suspect that they are earning more money than they declare. But they will never conceal their bread because bread is a necessity for living, and it should be in every home. Similarly, some righteous people conceal their good deeds from others. This is praiseworthy because it is proper to be *הצנע לכת*, to act with humility. But one should never hide his Gemara because learning Gemara is like eating bread – one cannot live without it. This isn't arrogance; any other way is simply impossible."

Reb Yitzchok Dovid Grossman *shlita*, the Rav of Migdal Emek, was very

close to my grandfather. Once, he came to my grandfather with another father and son from Migdal Emek. The boy needed kidney surgery, and they came for a *brachah* that the operation should be successful.

The Rebbe told the *bachur*, "If you take upon yourself to study Gemara, you won't need the operation."

The father replied to the Rebbe, "All doctors agree that my son needs the surgery. We aren't trying to get out of that. We are only requesting a *brachah* that the operation be successful."

The Rebbe turned to the boy and said once again, "If you make a *kabbalah* to study Gemara, you will not need the operation."

The Rebbe blessed the *bachur*, and Reb Grossman and the father and son left the Rebbe's home to go to the hospital for the surgery.

While performing routine pre-op tests, the doctors were astounded to discover that the young man was fine. The problem had mysteriously disappeared.

The young *bachur* was overwhelmed by the miracle and kept his word. Previously, he hadn't studied much, but now he placed all his efforts into learning Torah. When he was seventeen, he finished the entire *Shas*. By the time he became an adult, he was an established *talmid chacham*.

Reb Yitzchok Dovid Grossman repeated this story and concluded, "This story has two miracles: (1)

The boy miraculously, didn't need the surgery, and (2) He developed into a great scholar. The second miracle is greater than the first because this *bachur* wasn't a serious learner at all. The Rebbe's wisdom turned this young man into a great *talmid chacham*.<sup>12</sup>

### The Influence of Friends

When my grandfather conducted a *tisch*, he would often repeat over and over again: "There is no hope for me - other than *teshuvah*... It is time to do *teshuvah*... The time has come to do *teshuvah*..." He spoke to himself, but his words inspired everyone present to do *teshuvah*.

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2. During the great earthquake in the north of Eretz Yisrael (5597) Reb Shmuel Heller *zt'l*, the *rav* of Tzfas, was buried under a layer of debris and couldn't climb out.

He shouted, "If I will be saved, I promise that I will study Torah more vigorously." Miraculously, the stones began to fall to the side, and he was able to crawl out.

Because when one accepts upon himself to study more Torah, it brings *yeshuous*.

After the *ticsh*, he would shake the *bachurim*'s hands and would bless them, "Learn the holy Torah and be healthy."

One time, the Rebbe took the hand of one of the *bachurim* and said, "Why is your hand so cold? What happened to you?" Then the Rebbe added, "Have good friends, study Gemara, and be healthy."

The *bachur* left the Rebbe's room ashamed and devastated. The *gabaim* tried to calm the distraught *bachur*. They said, "The Rebbe is very weak, and he's sensitive to cold. Apparently, your hands were cold."

The *bachur* replied, "The Rebbe knows exactly what he was saying, and his words were on target."

I was with this *bachur* when we returned to our yeshiva, Yeshivas Ponoviz. We were still outside the yeshiva building when one of his close friends came

over and greeted him. The *bachur* replied, "I was just with Rebbe Moshe Mordechai. He held my hand for five minutes, asking me why my hands were cold. Then he told me that I should have good friends, learn Gemara, and be healthy. This means that we cannot be friends anymore."

That boy wasn't an ideal friend for him, and the Rebbe was hinting that he should break up that friendship.

Years later, the bad nature of that friend became known to all. And then I understood why the Rebbe warned him to have good friends.

The Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz would often say, "One must be good to everyone, but not *with* everyone." Be kind to all, but don't spend too much time *with* them. You must choose your friends carefully.

The Shlah Hakadosh writes that חבר can also be spelled בחר [to choose], or חרב [sword], or ברח [escape and run away]. The Shlah Hakadosh explains: One should be a *friend* (חבר) to those who *choose* (בחר) to be good. But from those whose deeds are harmful like a *sword* (חרב), one should *run away* (ברח) and keep a distance.

A good friend can do wonders, and a bad friend can cause destruction. One must therefore choose his friends very carefully.

In last week's *parashah*, Pharaoh said (5:7), לא תאספון לתת לכם תבן, "We will no longer supply straw."

It seems the Torah should have written, לא תאספון, "We will no longer." The word תאספון with an extra alef, means to gather.

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* explains that Pharaoh sought to destroy the Yidden's spirituality. The Midrash tells us that the

Yidden got together every Shabbos in Mitzrayim to discuss *emunah*. Pharaoh understood that these meetings strengthened their Yiddishkeit, therefore, he decreed לא תאספון, that they may not gather anymore.

Rebbe Dovid of Lelover said, "I'm certain that when I go up to heaven, Moshe Rabbeinu will come out to greet me, to tell me that I revealed the correct reason he wrote תאספון with an extra alef."

When Yidden gather to speak *divrei Torah* and to sing songs to Hashem, their hearts become filled with *emunah* and yearning for Hashem.

As the Chinuch (*mitzvah* 384) writes, "There is nothing that awakens the heart as much as songs do."

Tzaddikim from the Ruzin dynasty told the following *mashal*:

A king wanted to build a large castle but didn't

have where to build it. So he instructed his servants to clear a large area in the forest to make space for this large edifice.

The servants began cutting, one tree at a time, but the task was endless, and the work tiring. There were so many trees. A wise man suggested to the king, "Instead of cutting down the trees, just set the forest on fire. The forest will be cleared in moments."

Similarly, some people attempt to uproot bad *middos* and negative tendencies, one *middah* at a time, but that is a long and arduous task. But if one can light a fire in his heart for Hashem, all the bad will disappear automatically.

Similarly, the Sefas Emes (*Tzav* 5634) writes, "When one has genuine love for Hashem, it will burn away all foolish thoughts. And this is the only effective way to overcome bad thoughts: to

have a constant desire to serve Hashem."

## Guard Your Children

The *pasuk* says (9:20), הִירָא אֶת דְּבַר ה' מֵעַבְדֵי פֶרְעָה הַיֵּיטֵב אֶת עַבְדָּיו, וְאֵת מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל הַבָּתִּים, "Whoever feared Hashem...chased their livestock into the homes..." The Imrei Chaim *zt'l* said that the *pasuk* implies that when possible, keep your children home. Who knows who they are playing with outside on the street?

But is the home safe for them? In this challenging generation, unfortunately, the impurity of the street can be found in the dining room too.

Sometimes, for *parnassah* purposes, a computer is needed at home. Perhaps one received a *heter*, permission, to obtain it. But what about the children? Is it healthy for the children to be so close to the internet? Or maybe we should shout, לֵךְ לְךָ... סוּחָר,

<sup>3</sup>סחור, "Keep it far away from home."

An old lady had an obsession that she touched every bag she saw. Once, at a *chasunah* she was touching the bags in the *kallah's* room. The *kallah's* mother shouted at her, "These are the *kallah's* bags. Why are you touching them?"

The old woman became very embarrassed and ran home. That evening, her son, Reb Shimshon, came to visit her and was shocked to see her crying.

She told him what had happened. Shimshon replied, "Well, she's right. You shouldn't go around touching other people's bags."

The mother said, "Sit down for a moment, and I will tell you a story that I

never told anyone before. When I was younger, living in Poland, the *resha'im* entered our city and killed my husband in front of my eyes. Then the *resha'im* commanded us to leave our homes and enter a ghetto. Everyone was granted permission to take along two bags, nothing more.

"I gathered my gold and silver and other precious items, and I placed them in one bag. In the other bag, I put my son, Shimshon. I ran together with the crowds of people towards the ghetto. But then the *resha'im* suddenly changed the rules. Only one bag was permitted. Obviously, I decided to drop the bag filled with precious items, so I could remain with my Shimshon. I dropped one bag on the roadside and

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3. The Gemara uses these words to express that we tell a *nazir* that he shouldn't pass through a vineyard. It is better to stay away from tests and challenges.

continued rushing along with the throngs of people.

Suddenly, I realized that I had thrown away the wrong bag. I was carrying the bag with gold and silver, and my Shimshon was tossed on the road! It was impossible to turn back. Whoever went back was shot. Since then, whenever I see a bag, I check it. I think, 'Perhaps my Shimshon is there.' This is the root of my obsession, which I can't control. Hashem saved me from the Holocaust, I came to Eretz Yisrael, and I adopted a son who I named Shimshon. This child is you."

This story was publicized a few years ago.

Regarding our topic, the lesson of this story is to realize there is only so much we can take. We can't have everything. Therefore,

one must choose between his children and technology because often one comes at the expense of the other.

### ***Ahavas Yisrael***

When one does kindness for others, Hashem does kindness for him.

Two years ago, at the peak of the first corona outbreak, an older woman came to a hotel in Bnei Brak and paid in advance to stay for two weeks.<sup>4</sup>

After two weeks, no one told her to leave, so she remained there another two weeks.

(People weren't traveling and the room wasn't needed. Somehow the staff forgot that someone was staying there without pay.)

At last, the hotel clerk realized the error and asked her for payment. She replied that said she didn't

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4. I heard this story from the hotel proprietor.

have any more money. She pleaded with him to be allowed to stay. "Anyway, the hotel is empty," she told him. "Why should it bother you if I stay here?"

The clerk replied, "This isn't a *chesed* resort. You can't be here for free. Take your belongings and leave."

The hotel owner was in the hotel at that time, and he overheard the conversation between the clerk and this woman. When he saw the old woman dragging her belongings towards the door, without having a proper destination, he had compassion on her. He raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Ribono shel Olam, what do you want me to do now?"

He asked the woman for her story. She said, "I worked as a nurse in Shaarei Tzedek Hospital for several years, until I suffered cartilage damage in my knee, and I couldn't work anymore. I received

compensation benefits, which covered my rent.

"The compensation benefits ended recently. I couldn't afford to pay rent anymore, so I returned the keys to the landlord. The day I returned the keys, I went to Tel HaShomer Hospital in Ramat Gan where I was scheduled for an operation on my knee.

"The doctors told me I need to rest for six weeks. They let me stay two weeks in the hospital, and I used my last pennies to be here for two weeks. I needed two more weeks to rest, and since no one told me to leave, I remained in the hotel for two more weeks. But now I'm being thrown out onto the street with nowhere to go."

The hotel proprietor told her, "We have a nursing home on the second floor of this hotel. You owe us 3,000 shekel because you were in the hotel for two extra weeks. You can work as a nurse at

the old age home, and part of your salary will cover what you owe us. You will have an income, and as long as you work for us, you will have a place to stay."

The woman was very pleased with this arrangement.

"However," he told her, "This arrangement begins next week. This week, the nursing home is fully staffed, and we don't need another employee.

The woman wondered where she could go meanwhile. Just then, the hotel proprietor's phone rang. There was an emergency. A nurse in the old-age home was diagnosed with Covid, and the entire workforce had to quarantine. He needed a new crew immediately, including a licensed nurse. He knew how difficult it would be to find a nurse at such short notice and couldn't believe his good fortune. He told the woman

that she could begin working immediately.

Clearly, he gained in the merit of his chesed and concern for his fellow man. When one performs chessed, Hashem does the same for him.

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* asked Reb Yaakov Eidelstein *zt'l*, how he was given the ability to give brachos and to daven with the koach that Hashem fulfills his requests.

Reb Yaakov replied, "I don't know that I have this power. Perhaps people say so, but it isn't true."

Reb Shmuel Wosner told him that it was true, and he asked for an explanation. Reb Yaakov Eidelstein replied, "Many people come to me, and they tell me their troubles. I listen to them patiently until they are certain that I understand exactly what they are going through. Perhaps Heaven rewarded me *midah kneged midah*. Just

as I listen to everything they have to say, Hashem listens to everything I say. And when I daven, Hashem listens to my *tefillah*."

Once again, we see the principle: When you do kindness for others, Hashem acts with you *middah kneged middah*.

In this week's *parashah*, Hashem says (6:5), וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל, "I also heard Bnei Yisrael's shouts." The word גם, also, seems extra.

Hashem was saying, "Just as you listen to the shouts of Bnei Yisrael, גם אני שמעתי, I also hear their shouts." The Yidden in Mitzrayim loved one another. When someone cried out from pain, his friends listened and tried to help him. Hashem said, "Since you listen to your fellow man's shouts, I will do the same. I will also listen to the shouts of Bnei Yisrael, and I will redeem them."<sup>5</sup>

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5. The Baal HaTurim (*Bereishis* 41:34) states that the words, ויפקד פקידים, "Appoint officials..." is written twice in Tanach. Once in *parashas Mikeitz* (*ibid.*) when Yosef told Pharaoh, ועשה פרעה ויפקד פקידים, that he should appoint officials to oversee the process of storing the crops for the hunger years. It also states, ויפקד פקידים in *Megillas Esther*, as it states (2:3), ויפקד המלך פקידים, that Achashveirosh should appoint officials to gather all women so Achashveirosh can choose a wife.

The Baal HaTurim writes that Yosef's counsel to appoint officials to oversee the gathering and the storage of the crops brought immense wealth. Achashveirosh's plan resulted in poverty. As Chazal (*Megillah* 11.) teach from the *pasuk* (*Esther* 10:1), וישם המלך אחשוורוש, מס על הארץ ואיי הים, "Achashveirosh placed a tax on the land and on the islands of the sea."

We can say that the difference lay in the intention. Yosef wanted to help the country; he wanted people should have food and *parnassah*. His intention was for *chessed*. Achashveirosh's plan was

The following story (heard from a renowned *shadchan*) is about a family who had a daughter in *shidduchim* for a very long time until there were four children under her of marriageable age.

Finally, the oldest daughter became a *kallah*. The family rejoiced, and they hoped that the others in the family would also soon get engaged.

Unfortunately, their happiness was short-lived, because a couple of weeks after the engagement, the *chosson* broke off the *shidduch* for a seemingly invalid reason.

The *kallah* and her family were devastated. The shame and disappointment were unbearable.

A few weeks later, the *bachur* (who broke the *shidduch*) was busy with another

*shidduch*, but before the *shidduch* could be finalized, the *bachur* had to receive a *shtar mechilah*, a letter of forgiveness, from his previous *kallah*.

The previous *kallah* refused to sign the *shtar*. The pain was too acute, too fresh, especially since the *shidduch* was called off for no reason.

People tried convincing the *kallah* to forgive her *ex-chosson*. "What will you gain from bearing a grudge?" they asked her. But still, it was too painful for her just to let go and to forgive.

After a short time, however, with super inner strength, she found a place in her heart to forgive her former fiancé. She signed the *shtar mechilah*, and the *bachur* was now engaged with his new *kallah*.

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self-serving. The lesson is: Striving to help others is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. Being solely interested in yourself brings poverty.

Three weeks later, the first *kallah* became engaged to an exceptional boy. Presently, they are building a *bayis ne'aman b'Yisrael* together.

When you are kind to others, Hashem performs kindness with you.

This lesson is alluded to in this week's *parashah*. About *makas barad*, the Torah writes (9:31-32). והפשתה והשעורה נכתה כי השערה אביב והפשתה גבעל, והחטה והכסמת לא נכו כי אפילות הנה, "The flax and the barley were smitten [because they were at their full height]... The wheat and the spelt weren't smitten..." Rashi explains that at the time of *makat barad*, flax and barley were fully grown, therefore, they were stiff and rigid, and they broke when the hail hit them. Whereas wheat and spelt reach their full growth later in the season. They were still flexible when the hail fell, so they didn't break.

The message is that it is better to be soft, to let the

other person have his way, to be *mevater*. When you are rigid and stiff, and everything must be your way, you break. But when you do kindness with others, Hashem will perform kindness with you.

### Feel Your Fellow Man's Pain and Joy

The ultimate level of *ahavas Yisrael* is when you can feel your fellow man's pain as though they are your own, and you feel their joy and *simchos* like they are your *simchah*.

On the words (6:26-27), הוא אהרן ומשה... הוא משה ואהרן, Rashi writes, "Sometimes the Torah writes Aharon's name first...and sometimes Moshe's name is written first. לומר לך ששקולין כאחד, to tell us that they were equal."

The Shlah HaKadosh asks, surely Moshe was greater than Aharon. As the Torah testifies, לא קם עוד, נביא כמשה, that Moshe

Rabbeinu was the greatest *navi*. So why does Rashi write, שקולין כ אחד, that they were on the same level?

The Ksav Sofer answers that at this moment when they came to Pharaoh, Aharon and Moshe were on the same level. Aharon, the older brother, used to be the leader of the Jewish nation. Pharaoh also knew Aharon to be the leader of the Jewish nation. And now Aharon is coming to Pharaoh as Moshe's spokesman. This could have been humiliating for Aharon, but Aharon didn't

think about that. Instead, Aharon was happy for his brother, who received so much honor. As Hashem told Moshe (*Shemos* 4:14), וראך, ושמה בלבו, "Aharon will see [that you are receiving honor] and his heart will rejoice."

Rashi writes that Hashem told Moshe, "It isn't as you think, that Aharon is upset that you are getting this honor. [Aharon is happy for you.] Therefore, Aharon merited to wear the *choshen* over his heart.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Reb Yeruchem of Mir *zt'l* once jumped onto a train just as the doors were closing. One of his shoes got caught in the door and fell to the ground below. Reb Yeruchem quickly took off his other shoe and threw it out the window. He explained, "What can I do with one shoe? Let the person who finds the shoe have a pair." This story is an example of having your fellow man's needs in mind.

It's true that many people would also think that way. They can't use one shoe, so they might as well give the finder the other shoe. But what is unique of this story is that Reb Yeruchem thought of it instantly. It would take most people a few moments before they get over their disappointment or shock, until they realize that they might as well give away their remaining shoe. Had Reb Yeruchem delayed, the train would be far from the station and the finder

At this time, Moshe and Aharon were on the same level. Aharon's ability to feel his brother's joy brought him up to Moshe's level.

At the end of *parashas Behaaloscha*, Aharon and Miriam spoke *lashon hara*, but only Miriam received *tzaraas*, and not Aharon. Why is that?

The Kedushas Tzion (Rebbe Ben Tzion of Bobov *zt'l hy'd*) answers that Aharon excelled in *ahavas Yisrael*. When his fellow man had a problem, Aharon felt it as though it were his own problem. Therefore, Aharon didn't need to get *tzaraas*. He felt Miriam's *tzaraas* as though he himself was ill.

When Moshe saw that there are דילטורין, people who report others to the police, among Bnei Yisrael,

he said (2:14), אכן נודע הדבר, now I understand why the Jewish nation suffers and is punished so severely. The Nachal Yitzchak of Zutchke *zt'l* explains that Moshe saw that *ahavas Yisrael* is lacking. Yidden don't care about their brethren in distress. Moshe said that this is the reason they have been in *galus* for so long. If they could feel the pain of others, everyone would suffer together with the problems of their brethren. This intense suffering would hasten the redemption, and the *galus* wouldn't be so long.

The Shinover Rav became a Rebbe when his father, the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz was still alive.

Someone said to the Tzanzer Rav, "We can see that your son is a true Rebbe, because he is always

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wouldn't find the other shoe. But Reb Yeruchem always thought about his fellow man and therefore he immediately came up with the idea of helping his brethren by throwing out the other shoe.

studying Torah. He is truly a genius in Torah."

The Tzanzer Rav replied, "He might be a *gaon*, but this still doesn't make him into a Rebbe."

The man said, "Your son also davens with great *hislahavus*, and fasts a lot."

The Tzanzer Rav replied, "This still doesn't make him a Rebbe. Perhaps he's a *tzaddik* and a *kadosh* [a holy man], but it doesn't mean he is fitting to be a Rebbe."

The man continued, "Once, the Shinover Rav saw someone shivering in the cold because he didn't have a coat, and the Shinover Rav took off his own coat and gave it to him."

The Tzanzer Rav said, "If so, he is fitting to be a Rebbe."

During World War One, Reb Mottel Slonimer *zt'l* sold all his belongings to buy food for the hungry. He only kept his tallis and tefillin and his Shabbos *bekitché* [jacket]. Years later, he said he regrets that he didn't sell his *bekitché*, too. Some more hungry people would have had some bread.

Many poor people would eat at Reb Mottel Slonimer's home. One Friday night, one of his guests became angry at something he said and threw his portion of soup in Reb Mottel's face and quickly ran out of the house.

Reb Mottel Slonimer said, "Call him back. He didn't finish his soup." He wasn't upset that someone threw hot soup at him. He was only sorry that the poor person couldn't properly enjoy his meal.<sup>7</sup>

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7. To be ready for marriage, one must have good *middos*. Even if

### It is for the Good

A rav related that he was once in Germany and a Jew there asked him, "I heard that it is important to check the mezuzos. Is that correct?"

The rav asked him, "Did you ever check your mezuzos before? Where did you buy them?"

He replied that he bought them many years ago in Meah Shearim, and had never had them checked.

The rav told him that it was proper to check them.

"I would like to honor the rav with checking them for me," the man said, and the rav agreed.

The rav took the mezuzos off the doorpost and was shocked to see that there was nothing inside.

"Where is the mezuzah?" he asked.

The Yid replied, "Oh. You mean the paper with the instructions? I threw that out because I knew how to put up a mezuzah myself. I didn't need the manual."

He affixed the outside casing of the mezuzah without the inside, which is the essence of the mitzvah.

The same is with *avodas Hashem*. There are external deeds and internal deeds. Let's take saying *brachos* as

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a *bachur* is a *talmid chacham* and a genius, he isn't fitting for marriage until he learns how to get along with others.

Reb Yechezkel of Kuzmir said that there was a custom to give young people a tangled skein of yarn and ask them to untangle it. This wasn't an easy task. One needed patience and equanimity to accomplish this feat. If the young person succeeded at untangling the yarn it meant that he or she was ready for marriage.

an example. The external part of the mitzvah is to say the words, ברוך אתה... שהכל נהיה בדברו, and so on. But the primary component of the *brachah* is the *kavanah*, the feelings of gratitude to Hashem.

Another example is *emunah*. Many people are cautious with keeping the mitzvos, but the primary aspect of the mitzvah that gives the mitzvos their value is the *emunah* and connection to Hashem that the person feels when he performs the mitzvah. *Emunah* is internal, *deeds* are external, and we must be cautious to perform the internal aspect of the mitzvos, too.

Yet another example is to know that everything is for the good. Externally, perhaps it doesn't look good to us, but we believe that everything is from Hashem, and everything is for our good.

London, at 2:00 in the morning, the phone rang

in a Yid's home. "Who could be calling me at this unearthly hour?" he wondered.

"It's the police!" a strong voice boomed.

"The police? Why are you calling me at this hour?"

"I'm calling because it's our job to catch thieves, and you are a thief."

"What are you talking about? I did nothing wrong."

"A taxi drove you home tonight. You told the driver that you were going into your home for a moment to get the money. That was a half-hour ago. The taxi driver keeps ringing your bell, and you're ignoring him!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," he replied, now fully awake and a tinge angry. "I've been sleeping since ten. I didn't take a taxi tonight."

"Do you live at 13 The Drive St.?"

"That's correct."

"Then there's no mistake. The taxi is waiting outside your home. You owe him over one hundred pounds."

Eventually, the police figured out that there are two 'The Drive' streets in London. This Yid lived on The Drive St. in Golders Green, and the taxi was at The Drive St. in Edgware.

The Yid from Golders Green told his wife (who also was awakened by the phone call), "I'm not Pharaoh who wakes up and then goes back to sleep.<sup>8</sup> Hashem woke me at this early hour for a reason. I'll say some *Tehillim*."

His wife responded that she would also stay awake and say *Tehillim*. He urged her to go back to sleep, as she had a day job and

young children to care for, but she said the phone call shook her up, and she anyway won't be able to relax and fall asleep.

At eight in the morning, their son called, shouting "Mazal Tov!" over the line. His wife just had a healthy baby.

"Did everything go smoothly?" the father asked.

"There were serious complications," the son said. "The baby stopped breathing; the doctors scared us. But miraculously, everything turned around just in time."

"When did the complications begin?"

"A little after 2:00 AM."

Awakening at 2:00 AM from the police, being

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8. As it states (*Bereishis* 41:4-5), ויקץ פרעה וישן ויחלום שנית, "Pharaoh awoke, and he dreamed again."

wrongly accused of theft, and staying up all night are difficult situations. But it was all for the good. He and his wife said *Tehillim* at a time so crucial for their family's future.

Because even when initially it doesn't seem good, we believe that everything is for our benefit.

Let us see where these lessons are written in this week's *parashah*. Because the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that in Kotzk they said we should study these *parshiyos* of *galus* and redemption as one studies a *Tosfos* or *halachah* in depth (*Imrei HaRim, Shemos*).

We begin with a lesson from the Kaliver Rebbe *shlita* (may he have a *refuah sheleimah*). He taught that the Yidden enslaved in Mitzrayim thought that their suffering and enslavement came from the Egyptians. They didn't

realize that everything comes from Hashem.

As it states (6:5), וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל אשר מצרים... מועבדים אותם, "I also heard the shouts of Bnei Yisrael that [*they say*] the Egyptians are enslaving them..." They thought their troubles stemmed from the Egyptian's free will, failing to realize that it was all destined from Above.

The solution is written in the next *pasuk* (6:6): לכן אמור לבני ישראל אני ה' "Tell Bnei Yisrael that I am Hashem. Tell them that everything comes from Me. And they should also speak words of *emunah* because speaking *emunah* will bring *emunah* into their hearts.

We must know that everything comes from Hashem, and everything is for our good. And when we know that everything becomes good (as we will explain).

We say four times a day, שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.<sup>9</sup> It is known that הוי"ה is Hashem's name of compassion and אלקינו is Hashem's name for judgment and when He metes out punishment. The Meor Einayim (ורא) explains, ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, "Both when Hashem acts with you with הוי"ה or אלקינו, it is all kindness, הוי"ה אחד. As it states (at the beginning of the *parashah*) וידבר אלקים אל משה ויאמר אליו אני ה' Havayah." Previously, Moshe complained, למה הרעת לעם הזה, "Why did You do bad to this nation?" He thought that the situation was bad. Hashem told him, אני הוי"ה, it is all (hidden) compassion.

The Meor Einayim adds these essential words: "And when one believes it's *chesed*, it becomes so."

The words ה' אלקים are also written together in this week's *parashah* in the *pasuk* (6:7) וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים, "You shall know that I am Hashem your G-d Who is taking you out of the troubles of Mitzrayim." We can explain, וידעתם, when you know ה' אלקיכם, that even your troubles stem from Hashem's compassion, המוציא אתכם מתוך סבלות מצרים, that will redeem you from your suffering.

In last week's *parashah*, Moshe told the nation they would be freed, everyone believed, everyone rejoiced, but then the slavery in Mitzrayim became even harsher than before. Pharaoh said (5:9), תכבד העבודה, על האנשים, "Make the workload heavier." Before, Pharaoh supplied the straw, and now the Yidden had to gather straw on their own.

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9. In the *korbanos* of Shacharis, by Shacharis, by Maariv, and at *kriyas Shema she'al hamittah*.

In this week's *parashah* the salvation begins.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (end of *Shemos*) says that this is the pattern that will occur with the future redemption (may it be speedily in our days). First, there will be respite; things will begin to become better, the rays of the redemption will shine, but then suddenly things will become worse than ever before, *r'l*. And afterward, the final redemption will come.

Because of the importance of this idea, we quote his holy words: וכאשר יתקרב הקץ תהיינה צרות רבות ומתחזקות יתקרב הקץ תהיינה צרות רבות ומתחזקות, "When the end [of *galus*] approaches there will be many *tzaros*...and these are a sign that the redemption is near."

It states (*Tehillim* 130:6), נפשי לה' משומרים לבוקר שומרים נפשי לה' משומרים לבוקר שומרים לבוקר. The word בוקר is mentioned twice because there will be two mornings in the future redemption.

There will be the first morning when the first rays of salvation begin to shine, and life begins to improve for Klal Yisrael. But then it will become dark again. And then comes the בוקר, the second morning with Moshiach's arrival.

Because the future redemption will resemble *yetzias Mitzrayim*. As the Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, גאולה זו עתידה להיות כדמיון גאולת מצרים בהרבה ענינים, "The [future] redemption is going to be similar to the redemption from Mitzrayim in many ways. As the *Navi* states (*Michah* 7:15), כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים, 'As in the days when you left Mitzrayim I will show you wonders.'"

### Ten Makos

It states (*Yeshayah* 19:22), ונגף ה' את מצרים נגף ורפוא, "Hashem smote Mitzrayim, a plague, and a cure."

Were the *makos* a plague or a cure?

The *Zohar* (Bo p.36.) explains, "They were plagues for the Egyptians and cures for the Yidden."

An example is *makas Dam*, blood. It was a plague for the Mitzrim, and a cure for Yisrael because the Yidden became wealthy from this *makah*. Similarly, all the *makos* were plagues for the Egyptians, while they simultaneously brought benefits and purity for the Jewish nation. Bnei Yisrael needed these cures because they were at the 49th gate of *tumah*. They needed the *taharah* and the good that came from the ten *makos* to become worthy of *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The Torah is eternal, which means that also today, Bnei Yisrael receive immense *chesed* and *taharah* when they read and study about the ten *makos*.

The Arizal teaches that the ten *makos* correspond to the ten *sefiros*. The first *makah*, דם, corresponds to the tenth *sefirah*, מלכות, and

צפרדע corresponds to the ninth *sefirah*, יסוד, and so on. This helps us understand why three of the *makos* are listed in *parashas Bo*, while seven are in this week's *parashah*. This is because the *middos* are divided into two groups, three relate to the intellect (כתר חכמה בינה), and seven correspond to the *middos* and emotions (חסד גבורה תפארת נצה הוד יסוד) (מלכות).

The second plague was מכת צפרדע, frogs. As we explained, this corresponds to the *sefirah* of יסוד, which is associated with *kedushah* (guarding one's mind against forbidden thoughts, protecting one's eyes from seeing what one shouldn't, and similar aspects of *kedushah*).

During מכת צפרדע the frogs had *mesirus nefesh* when they jumped into the heated ovens to do Hashem's will. We don't find examples of *mesirus nefesh* at any of the other *makos*. The concept of *mesirus nefesh* is associated specifically with צפרדע

because when it comes to concepts of *kedushah*, one must be ready to be *moser nefesh*. This means, one must be highly vigilant to guard his thoughts, eyes, etc. that they should remain holy.<sup>10</sup>

A unique feature of *מכת צפרדע* which was not seen by most other *makos* is *ותבאש הארץ*, "The earth had a terrible stench." There were piles of dead frogs around Mitzrayim, and Mitzrayim had a terrible odor. The *Chidushei HaRim zt'l* explains that when one has

bad temptations for adultery and the like, he should train himself to think of the sin as something smelly and disgusting, something that isn't good for him, something he doesn't want.

Specifically by the *מכת צפרדע*, which represents *yesod*, which as explained is *kedushah*, there was a terrible stench, for that is the mindset we should have towards such *aveiros*, and that will help us keep away from them.

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**10.** *Perek Shirah* lists the *pesukim* each creation says to praise Hashem. The *צפרדע* says, *ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד*. When we say these words in the Shema we think of *mesirus nefesh*. As the *Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah* (4:5) writes, "After saying the *pasuk* Shema... say silently *ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד* with all your concentration, just as you put all your strength into saying the *pasuk* Shema." It is therefore appropriate that the *צפרדע* says these words because in Mitzrayim the *צפרדע* demonstrated *mesirus nefesh*.

The *Divrei Shmuel (Va'eireh)* writes: How did the frogs (in *makas צפרדע*) enter a marble house? The *Midrash (Shemos Rabba 10:3)* says that the frog said to the marble, "Make room for me, so I can do Hashem's will" and the marble split. Similarly, every Yid should tell his heart that is closed like a stone, "Open up so I can do Hashem's will."

Moshe prayed for the *makos* to end, as the Torah writes, ויעתר משה. But by the frogs, Moshe employed a more intense kind of *tefillah*. As it states, ויצעק משה אל ה' על דבר הצפרדעים "Moshe shouted to Hashem..." The Be'er Moshe of Ozrov *zt'l* explains that when it comes to matters of *kedushah*, it isn't enough to daven. One has to shout and place all his heart and soul into the *tefillos*.

Europe is not very from Eretz Yisrael. It's often just a three- or four-hour flight. Therefore, some scholars live in Eretz Yisrael and give Torah classes in Europe. Some leave Eretz Yisrael on motzei Shabbos and return home on Thursday, some travel once a week or once a month to deliver a shiur, and so on.

There's a talmid chacham who travels once every few months to a kollel in Europe to deliver a shiur. He tries to book a seat on a flight that doesn't have video sets so that he

won't put his eyes in jeopardy. He also prefers to travel during the daytime, because then he has energy to immerse himself in Torah study. Throughout the flight he studies Torah and doesn't even recognize all the garbage that his fellow passengers are watching on their screens.

But when he travels at night, it is harder for him to study, and the tests on the plane are more challenging.

Once, he had to travel by nighttime, and there were video sets by every seat. Naturally, he was concerned about that, but what could he do? There were no other options available for him.

When he davened Minchah, he prayed that Hashem help him pass the test.

And then the miracle occurred. All video sets on the plane were working,

except for two. The passengers on both his sides couldn't turn on their video sets. The flight attendants tried to help them, but the sets were broken. His tefillos were answered!

### Speech

As we explained, the first *makah*, blood, corresponds to the tenth *sefirah*, *malchus*. The Zohar writes, מלכות פה, that *malchus* is associated with speech. Therefore, we understand that the first plague came to purify our speech.

Indeed, having a pure mouth, clean from *lashon hara* and other types of forbidden speech, is the first step towards becoming holy before Hashem.

Hashem gave us a holy neshamah. How do we guard it that we don't fall into sin? The Vilna Gaon zt'l answers that the key is to guard the speech. As it states (Mishlei 13:3), שומר פיו, נוצר נפשו, "The one who

guards his speech protects his soul."

The Vilna Gaon elaborates, "This is also implied in the Gemara (Brachos 17.) שומר פיו מכל חטא, if you guard your mouth you will be guarded against all sins.' In contrast, someone who speaks whatever he wants, even if he has a good soul, and performs many mitzvos, and makes boundaries for himself, his mouth will completely break him." His carelessness with speech will lead him to aveiros, r'l.

And the Vilna Gaon (*Even Shlomo* 7:1) writes, וכל תשוקתו לדבר מצוה מתבטל ע"ז, "His desire for mitzvos becomes cold [due to his carelessness with his speech]."

In particular, during Shovavim, we should be cautious with our speech. The Pri Megadim says that the first word of sefer Shemos (which is the first week of shovavim) is ואל"ה and is *roshei teivos* for אבק לשון הרע. This hints that

specifically during Shovavim, one should be cautious to refrain from forbidden speech.

The Sfas Emes (Metzora 5650) says lashon hara is the greatest tumah. The proof is that there are three מחנות, camps: מחנה לוי, מחנה שנינה, מחנה לוי, מחנה ישראל, the camp of the Shechinah, which is the Beis HaMikdash. The camp of Leviyah, which is the Temple Mount. And מחנה ישראל is the rest of Yerushalayim. For all tumos, one is forbidden to enter the Beis HaMikdash, and sometimes, also the Temple Mount. But for tzaraas, which is caused by lashon hara, one is banished from all three camps. This proves that lashon hara is the worst aveirah and tumah of all.

It states (Bereishis 39:12) ותתפשהו בבגדו לאמר שכבה עמי. This pasuk discusses eshes Photiphar's attempts to seduce Yosef HaTzaddik to perform an aveirah. It states לאמר, "to say." The Gra (Pninin m'Shulchan haGra)

explains that she wanted that Yosef should say the words שכבה עמי. She wanted him to speak *nivul peh*. Because talking about an aveirah draws the person to commit the aveirah, chalilah.

### **Shevat**

The twelve months of the year correspond to the twelve shevatim. Reuvan (the first shevet) corresponds to Nisan (the first month) and so on. Therefore, the eleventh month, Shevat corresponds to Yosef, the eleventh child born to Yaakov.

The attribute of Yosef is kedushah (to be cautious with the eyes, etc.), and therefore, Shevat is an ideal time to work on kedushah.

As the Sfas Emes (Likutim Rosh Chodesh Shevat) writes, "This month represents the attribute of Yosef," and he explains that we should therefore be extra careful with kedushah matters during this month.

The Sfas Emes writes in the name of his grandfather, the Chidushei HaRim, that ש"ט is roshei teivos for שלום, טובה, ברכה, peace, blessings, and good. All three terms (שלום, ברכה, טובה) allude to kedushah. For example, טובה is kedushah, as this is discussed in the holy sefarim (see footnote).<sup>11</sup> And ברכה and שלום are also associated with kedushah, because where there is kedushah, there is peace and blessing.

Similarly, the Pri Tzaddik says that the month Shevat is associated with kedushah because each month is associated with another letter (as taught in sefer Yetzirah) and Shevat is related to the letter צ"ד, and tzaddik represents kedushah (צדיק יסוד עולם, tzaddik is the attribute of yesod, of kedushah.)

Shevat is also an ideal time for growth in Torah.

It states (Devarim 1:3-5) ויהי בארבעים שנה בעשתי עשר לחודש באחד לחודש... הואיל משה באר את התורה הזאת לאמר "It was in the fortieth year the eleventh month (Shevat)... Moshe began explaining the Torah..." Moshe reviewed and elucidated the Torah in Shevat, and therefore, Shevat is mesugla for growth in Torah.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l would say that on rosh chodesh Shevat, the wellsprings of wisdom open. All chidushei Torah that will be said in the upcoming twelve months stem from this day.

The Avnei Nezer said that he sees a difference between the chidushim he created before rosh chodesh

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**11.** The Sfas Emes explains that צדיק represents the attribute of kedushah, and it states (Yeshayah 3:10) אמרו צדיק כי טוב "Tell a tzaddik that he is טוב." So, טובה is tzaddik, which represent kedushah.

Shevat and the chidushei  
Torah he created after rosh  
chodesh Shevat.

May we be zoche to  
utilize these special days  
properly.