

NEFESH SHIMSHON



DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

It's for Every Jew

וְאַתָּה תִּחְזֶה מִכָּל הָעָם אַנְשֵׁי חַיִל יִרְאֵי אֱלֹקִים אַנְשֵׁי אֱמֶת שֹׂנְאֵי בָצַע וְשֹׂמְתֵי עֲלֵהֶם שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֵת: (יח, כא)

You shall search out from all the people: men of valor, G-d-fearing, men of truth, who hate unjust gain. And you shall place upon the people leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties and leaders of tens. (18:21)

Chazal praise Yisro's great wisdom in advising Moshe to set up this system of judges to help Moshe judge the people. Yisro thereby made a great contribution to the Jewish nation.

However, it sounds like a relatively simple idea that anyone could have come up with. He claimed that Moshe was overburdened by the job, so he recommended to look for qualified individuals who can help bear the responsibility. What was the outstanding wisdom in this?

The answer is that Moshe might well have been able to judge the people on his own, as he was a "man of G-d." And the people preferred

to be judged by Moshe himself. However, this created a situation in which the Jewish people has only one Rav in any given generation, a Rav who is great like *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Everyone else, regardless of their particular merits, were equal. They were all *talmidim*, and there was one *Gedol Hador*. Thus there was hardly any reason for a person to aspire to greatness in Torah and *yirah* and *kedushah*, to become a Rav.

Yisro taught us that you don't have to become the greatest person in the generation in order to get somewhere. There are many levels of greatness. There are leaders of thousands, leaders

of hundreds, leaders of fifties and leaders of tens. Each person according to his *madreigah* can attain greatness. Thus, every Jewish mother can cry in *tefilah* when lighting *Shabbos* candles that her son will be great in Torah and *yirah* and become a Rav, because *gadlus b'Torah* is not reserved for one person or a handful of exceptional individuals, it is open to all to attain.

Moshe took the idea even further. Yisro had advised him to look for “men of valor, G-d-fearing, men of truth, who hate unjust gain.” Having all these qualities is a very high level. Moshe did not find people like this, so he appointed “men of valor” over the people. Moshe taught us that even if a person does have every possible desirable quality, even if he is not comparable to *Gedolei Hador* of past generations, he may be a leader and teacher, and is well deserving of our respect, as long as he is valiant in Torah study and pursuit of *yiras Shamayim*.

When the Torah was given, *Hashem* added to this by saying, “You shall be for Me a kingdom of priests and holy nation.” What does this add? Yisro taught us that out of every ten Jews there needs to be at least one who is special among his people and dedicates his life to Torah and *avodah*.

Then *Hashem* told us that He takes a broader outlook: He looks at us in relation to the whole world. We are the chosen people, the priests of G-d among them. It is not enough for one Jew out of ten to be great in Torah. Rather, out of every ten people in the world, there should be one Jew who is great in Torah. Accordingly, the entire Jewish people is special, is distinguished in Torah and *yirah*.

Our *parshah* thus contradicts the false idea that not everyone can be a rabbi. This is why the *parshah* gives us this introduction to *Matan Torah* and to the future of the Jewish people. It's true that not every person in the world can be a Rav, but every ten human beings need one Rav, so if we make an estimate according to how things are today, it comes out that even if every *shomer Shabbos* Jew would be great in Torah, there still would not be enough even for leaders of thousands.

So there is a sacred and absolute obligation on every one of us to be a man of valor and G-d-fearing, to learn a lot of Torah, as much as possible, and to exert ourselves in *avodas Hashem* all our lives. Then we will fulfill the *pasuk* that says **והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים** ●

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Ties that Cannot be Undone

וַיִּתְּצֻבוּ בְּתַחֲתֵית הָהָר: (יט, יז)

They assembled under the mountain. (19:17)

Said R. Avdimi bar Chasa: This teaches that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* held the mountain over them like a barrel and said to them, “If you accept the Torah, it will be good. And if not, you will be buried there. (*Shabbos* 88a)

Although the Jewish people said *Na'aseh v'nishma*, they still needed to be forced to accept the Torah. *Hashem* held the mountain over their heads.

Let's say they would have accepted the Torah totally willingly, without asking any questions. What would be then?

It would indeed be an enormous virtue, but it carries with it a significant drawback as well. When a person accepts something willingly, the choice remains in his hands. Today he agrees, but tomorrow he can change his mind.

Saying *Na'aseh v'Nishma* causes us to keep the Torah. But to build the Torah on a solid foundation, to root it firmly within us, *Na'aseh v'Nishma* is not sufficient, because accepting the Torah willingly leaves the door open for us to renege on our commitment tomorrow.

This is why *Hashem* held the mountain over our heads. He forced us to accept the Torah. Now the Torah is tied to our very lives. We must keep the Torah whether we like it or not.

The Maharal further explains¹ that when *Hashem* held the mountain over our heads, we were forced to accept it, and that gave us the Halachic status of אֲנוּסִים. If a man forces a woman, he may never divorce her. He may never send her away. This is law of אֲנוּס. When a man's tie to a woman is a willing one, he may terminate the relationship when he so desires. But when the tie is coerced, and is not dependent on his will, he cannot terminate it. He has no way out.

The Jewish people accepted the Torah willingly when they said *Na'aseh v'Nishma*. This type of commitment can be broken. So *Hashem* held the mountain over their heads. Now it was forced on them, and such a relationship cannot be terminated. “*He may not send her away all the days of his life.*”² In this way, the Torah became intrinsic to our very lives.

However, as the Gemara goes on to say:

Rava said: Even so, they accepted it again in the days of Achashverosh, as it says, “The Jews approved and accepted.” This means they approved what they had previously accepted.³

From this we see that even *Na'aseh v'Nishma* together with holding the mountain over our heads was not sufficient. We still needed to reaccept the Torah in the time of Achashverosh.

The Maharal explains that after the coercion of *Har Sinai*, we are forced to keep the Torah, but this doesn't necessarily mean the Torah is fitting to our nature and is part of our very essence.

This is why the Jewish people accepted the Torah a second time in the days of Achashverosh. At that time, they took upon themselves an additional mitzvah that is not written in the Torah. They willingly took upon themselves the mitzvah of Purim. This additional *Kabbalas Hatorah* was willing, and it showed that the Torah is truly an essential part of the Jewish people. We keep the Torah not because we must but because the Torah is our essence. ●

1 *Tiferes Yisrael* ch. 32.

2 *Devarim* 22:29.

3 *Shabbos* *ibid.*

אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאִשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׁרִים וְאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי: (יט, ד)
You saw what I did to Egypt, and that I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. (19:4)

Rav Shimshon Pincus *zt"l* printed this piece in the introduction to his Hebrew *sefer* called *Tiferes Torah Al Hatorah*. It elucidates one of his greatest principles, one that was woven into many of his talks, and was highly acclaimed.

The Reason you got into this Business

Every *sefer* has a title page that states the nature of the *sefer*. It says whether it is *chiddushim* on the Gemara, or it clarifies a certain area of Halachah, or it tells stories, etc. You can't open a book without knowing what it is about.

It goes without saying that the author of a *sefer* cannot forget even for a moment what his *sefer* is about. For instance, someone writing a *sefer* on *Hilchos Shabbos* will not pen a *chiddush* on *Maseches Zevachim* in the middle because he forgot what his book is about.

This applies as well to every business that a person undertakes. First he needs to know what he wants to accomplish, and only afterward he thinks about the best way to do it.

Let's say someone opens a store. It may be assumed that he wants to earn a profit. As time goes on, he might say to himself: I didn't take into account the competition between stores in this area. But he will never say: I made a mistake, I thought that I wanted to give out bread and milk at cost price to my neighbors, and I didn't take into account making a profit.

People never forget the very basis of their activity. So it is when a person gets married. Two

agreements are made between the couple. The first is what we call *Tanna'im*, and the second is the *Kesubah*. The *Tanna'im* state the basic contract between the couple. He is taking her to be his wife, and they will live together in love and affection and *siyata d'Shamaya*. Only after that comes the *Kesubah*, which goes into the details of the obligations that the husband undertakes. He will support her and honor her as befitting to Jewish society. It is possible that a man could forget some of the details stipulated in the *Kesubah*, but he will never say: I forgot that she is my wife, I thought for a moment that she is my maidservant. A person never forgets the basic nature of the relationship.

After all these examples, we will clarify the nature of the Torah and of Judaism. All the *mitzvos* of the Torah are the details of the "contract" between *Hashem* and the Jewish people. They are comparable to a *Kesubah*. What we want to understand here is the basic nature of this contract. It is important for every Jew to know, it is the most important thing, and we can't forget it even for a moment.

There is a special passage in the Torah about this. It is the introduction to *Matan Torah*. It says:

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, on this day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai... Moshe ascended to G-d, and *Hashem* called to him from the mountain, saying, "So shall you say to the House of Yaakov, and tell the men of Yisrael: 'You saw what I did to Egypt, and that I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. Now, if you will surely obey Me and keep My covenant, you will be a treasure for Me from all the nations, for all the earth belongs to Me. You will be for Me a kingdom

of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”

Here *Hashem* describes the basic nature of the contract between Him and us. This passage is extremely important and we cannot lose sight of it even for a moment.

It’s not a Work Contract

The nature of Judaism is a covenant, a *bris*, with *Hashem*. When a man marries a woman, their relationship is that of a covenant. It is not a work contract, that she brings in her income and he supports her, she cleans the house and he gives her jewelry. It is quite obvious that this is not the nature of the marital relationship at all.

And so it is with *Matan Torah*. It is a total mistake to think that it constitutes a work contract between *Hashem* and us, that we do the *mitzvos*, and *Hashem* gives us life and supplies all our needs. On the contrary, this outlook is the opposite of the whole nature of *Yiddishkeit*.

This applies not just to the nature of *Yiddishkeit* but also to life itself, to the purpose and goal of a Jew’s life.

Some people think that a person is in this world in order to live here. Furthermore, everyone wants a good life, everyone seeks happiness, and it is impossible to attain this without *Hashem*, since He is the Master and Ruler over all. So in order to attain a good life, we need to learn Torah and keep *mitzvos*.

This approach to the nature of life is the exact opposite of Judaism. Some people live in this world and think they are here to eat and drink and be healthy, to marry off children with great Jewish *nachas*, to do *mitzvos* so they will have all of this and continue to have it in the future. They are like someone sitting in his store, buying and selling, and thinking that he is sitting there only in order to buy and sell. He forgot that the reason he is sitting there is to make a profit. He forgot what business is all about.

Yiddishkeit is all about a covenant of love with *Hashem*. To live life together with Him in love and

affection and *siyata s’Shmaya*. Similarly, life in this world is all about living our lives in partnership with *Hashem* and being close to Him. Because here is where we attain the greatest closeness. This is the essential nature of a Jew and his life.

We were only Promised one Thing

It is amazing that of all the promises that *Hashem* made to the *Avos*, they all were about the same thing: *Eretz Yisrael*. There is no promise anywhere about giving Torah and *mitzvos*.

In the first covenant, *Bris Bein Habesarim*, it says:

On that day, *Hashem* made a covenant with Avram, saying, “To your offspring I have given this land.”

Also when *Hashem* made with Avraham the covenant of *milah*, it says:

I have established My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations, as an eternal covenant, to be G-d for you and your descendants after you. I have given to you and your descendants after you the land in which you reside, all the land of Canaan, as an eternal estate, and I will be their G-d.

Hashem promised to Yitzchak:

Dwell in this land and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I have established the oath that I swore to Avraham your father.

Hashem promised to Yaakov:

Behold, *Hashem* was standing over him and said, “I am *Hashem*, the G-d of Avraham your father and the G-d of Yitzchak. I will give the land that you are lying on to you and your descendants.

Hashem promised Moshe at the burning bush:

I will descend to save them from Egypt and to bring them up from that land to a good and expansive land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

This seems very surprising. How could *Hashem* not have mentioned the main thing, which is Torah? Is the main thing to have a land?! We have been attached to *Hashem* for two thousand years now without the land of Israel, whereas it is obvious that

everything would fall apart if we would go for one moment without Torah. So why did *Hashem* make such a point out of promising *Eretz Yisrael*?

One thing is clear. Our relationship with *Hashem* is built on Torah, and on nothing else. *Eretz Yisrael* per se has no significance. If the land was the main thing, it would be like a groom saying to his bride: Let's build a house together. Then they go and build a house. He sits in the house and stares at one wall, and she sits and stares at another wall. That's not a relationship. If we would be in *Eretz Yisrael* without Torah, that's what it would be like.

So why didn't *Hashem* promise us Torah and *mitzvos*, if that is what the covenantal relationship depends on? Because that would make it seem as if the *bris* is all about the learning itself and the mitzvah observance itself. Either because of the reward and punishment associated with them or because of their intrinsic wisdom. This is why *Hashem* made it clear that the main goal is closeness and attachment. When He promised *Eretz Yisrael* to the *Avos*, the message was that we will live together with Him in *deveikus* and closeness there.

This is why the basic format of Jewish life is *davening* three *tefilos* a day and reciting a hundred *berachos*. Not every Jew sits and learns all day. But every Jew goes to *shul* and *davens* and recites *berachos* over his food. This is just like a couple sharing a home who always talk to one another and maintain communication.

It is amazing that out of all the *mitzvos* we do, *tefilos* and *berachos* are not Biblical obligations. They were instituted by the *Avos* and enacted as Rabbinical obligations.

Returning to the metaphor of the *Kesubah*, which stipulates the husband's obligations toward his wife according to *din Torah*, why doesn't it also say there that they should talk to one another? Because this is not an obligation stemming from the marriage relationship. It is the relationship itself. If the husband would speak to his wife because he is so obligated, it would have no value. It needs to come

naturally, out of closeness.

So it with the *tefilos* and *berachos*. They were enacted by the Jewish people themselves, because they wanted to keep up a solid relationship with *Hashem* throughout the day.

Get to the Point

Sefer Mesilas Yeshtarim begins as follows:

The foundation of piety and the root of perfected Divine service is that a person clarifies and recognizes the truth of his obligation in life, and knows the goal he should strive for in all his labors throughout life. *Chazal* taught us that human beings were created only to take delight in *Hashem* and take pleasure in the radiance of His Presence.... And the true place of this delight is in the Next World.

And *Sefer Mesilas Yeshtarim* goes on to quote the famous saying of *Chazal* that this world is but a corridor leading to *Olam Haba*.

This seemingly implies that *Olam Hazeib* is nothing more than a means to get to the next world and has no intrinsic purpose.

But in truth, there are two points here: the nature of life and the purpose of life. The purpose of life is *Olam Haba*. Temporal matters that are here today and gone tomorrow surely cannot be life's purpose. The nature of life, on the other hand, is a relationship of love with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. We achieve life's purpose mainly by means of this relationship. And this relationship may be established only here in this world.

The reader might wonder why I employ the metaphor of marriage so much. However, this is the metaphor that *Hashem* Himself gave us. There is no more fitting metaphor than this. We say in the blessings of *eirusin* as follows: "*Hashem* sanctifies His people Yisrael by *chuppah* and *kiddushin*." Some early Torah authorities explain this as a reference to *Har Sinai*, which *Hashem* held over our heads like a *chuppah*. And *Matan Torah* was the *kiddushin*. This sheds light on our topic.

The act of marriage is not a purpose unto itself.

The goal is the generations that will result from it. However, getting married is a time of affection and attachment. It is not just a means to assure future generations.

Let's say a *chasan* would go into the *cheder yichud*, take out a newspaper and read the news. When he sees that the *kallah* is astonished by his behavior, he explains: It's okay, it's nothing to get upset about. The main *simchah* will be in the future, when *b'ezras Hashem* we will make a *bris* for our future son!

The *chasan's* explanation is obviously false. It's true that the goal is far in the future, but the nature of marriage itself is relationship.

The same is true with life in this world. The goal is the next world, but this world is the *chuppah*. A

hundred and twenty years of affection, love and attachment to *Hashem*. *Chazal* say about marriage:

A woman makes a marriage covenant only with he who made her receptive.¹

The affection of the couple for the rest of their lives is according to the affection they had at the beginning. So it is with our *deveikus* and relationship with *Hashem*. According to the *deveikus* we have in this world, so will it continue for eternity. This world is not merely a place to acquire the future, it takes part in the very purpose itself: to live here with the *deveikus* by virtue of which we will continue to be attached to *Hashem* forever.

To be continued next week •

1 *Sanhedrin* 22b.

TEFILAH TOPIC

Birchos Hashachar

Get the Central Point

There is a rule of thumb in *avodas Hashem*: you should always grab hold of the central points that underlie broad areas. Let's say you want to pick up an object. You could pick it up from the top, but then you will need to raise one layer after another. Whereas if you pick it up from the bottom, from the foundation, you can raise it all up at one time.

There are a lot of things we need to work on. *Gaavah*, *lashon hara*, guarding our eyes, breaking our physical desires, etc. And all this is before we even touch on subjects such as constant Torah learning, prayer, *chesed*, and many other things.

The practical approach is to pick certain basic points that cover broad areas, and to concentrate on them. Points that if you conquer them, you gained a lot of ground. This is why we should focus on the

foundations.

Let's take *midos*, for example. It is recommended to work on *gaavah*. This is because humility comprises all desirable character traits. A humble person does not get angry, doesn't get miffed, doesn't speak *lashon hara*, doesn't quarrel over who goes first, and so on. From *gaavah* spring all negative character traits.

On the one hand, foundations are not shiny and beautiful. A foundation is always hidden underneath. A magnificent palace has foundations buried in the ground and no one sees them. The building may be all glass, and gleams from far away, but the foundations are dark and dull.

It's the same with building up *avodas Hashem*. The building itself is very beautiful. We see a *talmid chacham* who delivers brilliant *shiurim*. But the foundations that needed to be laid before the

beautiful building was erected entailed a lot of very unglamorous work. Everyone is impressed by the building, but not everyone pays attention to the foundations on which it stands.

The Morning is the Foundation of the Day

One of the most basic points, which is unfortunately neglected by too many people, is how to get up in the morning. We need to know that someone who conquers this point has already attained a lot of things, because it is the foundation of the whole day.

The morning is a very important foundation. If we take advantage of the precious qualities that are included in the *avodah* of the morning, we have set up a foundation for the whole day. Many difficulties and *nisyonos* that we encounter during the course of the day can be solved by proper *avodah* in the morning.

Like every foundation, the beginning of the morning is not a shiny, brilliant moment. We don't deliver *shiurim* or do anything big. But it is the true foundation for the whole day.

We see this also in the *Tefilah* itself. The *Amidah* prayer is a time when we take delight in *Hashem*. *Krias Shema* and its blessings is also a time of taking delight in *Hashem*, in His absolute oneness and unity and uniqueness. *Pesukei d'Zimra* is songs and praises. All these things are uplifting and exciting. But *Birchos Hashachar* are the first stage. They are the foundation of everything that follows. They are not brilliant and shiny. We don't sing, we don't close our eyes, we don't stand up for *Kedushah*. But it is the foundation. The whole day stands on it, our whole person stands on it.

Birchos Hashachar are the practical foundation of our *avodah*.

Berachos Connect us to Hashem

The word *berachah* derives from *ברכה*, which means "pool of water." So it says in *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim*. When we say *Baruch Attah Hashem* it means, "You are the source and pool of all blessing." We recognize that a slice of bread comes from the Source, from *Hashem*. Reciting the blessing permits us to take benefit from the object over which we blessed, as *Chazal* say:

It is written, "The earth and everything in it belongs to *Hashem*."

But it is written, "The heavens belong to *Hashem*, and He gave the earth to human beings"?

The first verse applies before one recites a blessing, and the second verse applies after the blessing.¹

Taking benefit before reciting a blessing is considered theft because the object still belongs to *Hashem*.

The point may be understood in light of a Midrash on the following verse:

Hashem gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.²

The Midrash says as follows:

This may be compared to a wealthy man who had a son. The son came home from school and found a pot of food in front of his father. The father took a piece out of the pot and gave it to him. The son said, "I only want from your mouth." So the father gave it to him. Why? Because he loved him, he gave him from that which was in his mouth. This is the meaning of, "*Hashem* gives wisdom." To whomever He loves more, He fulfills the second part of the verse: "From His mouth comes knowledge and understanding."³

This is a profound parable and we won't go into it in depth. The main idea is that the Jewish people actually take from *Hashem's* mouth. Every Jew who

1 *Berachos* 35a.

2 *Mishlei* 2:6.

3 *Shemos Rabbah* 41:3.

learns Torah, is learning from the mouth of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. As *Chazal* say:

Any *talmid chacham* who sits alone and learns the written and oral Torah, it is as if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is sitting across from him and learning with him.⁴

This is a special closeness to *Hashem*. It is the closeness of, “I only want from your mouth.” And *Hashem* gives us from that which is in His mouth. A gift can be sent by messenger, a gift can be given

in a more personal way, from hand to hand, but the greatest closeness is “from Your mouth.”

Getting back to our subject: when a person eats a piece of bread and recites the *berachah* over it, he is, so to speak, opening up a conduit, a pool, a fountain, between him and *Hashem*. Instead of finding the bread that *Hashem* prepared for him in the street, far away from the One Who gave it, he takes the bread straight from *Hashem*. Straight from the Source of all blessing. The piece of bread serves as a tool that connects him with the Source of blessing. ●

4 *Yalkut Shimoni, Eichah* 1034.

STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RAV SHIMSHON PINCUS ZT"l



NEVER REFUSED

Impossible. No one would issue such a statement¹ with such confidence and self-assurance unless he has personally experimented with this technique and found it works. Such a promise can only be delivered by one with very broad shoulders, and we can assume that Rav Shimshon tried it many a time himself before declaring it tested and true.

1 This refers to the story quoted in last week's publication. The story ended:

A year didn't pass before the couple's despair turned to joy, and his wife gave birth to twins.

“It was a *moifes!* How did you do it?” Rav Shimshon was asked many a time after the story became known. Rav Shimshon, however, didn't perceive it as anything out of the ordinary.

“What *moifes?* The man spoke and shouted to the *Ribbono shel Olam* with such a sense of closeness that it was impossible for *Hashem* to not hear his *tefilah*.”

Even more astounding was a comment that the Rebbetzin once nonchalantly made to one of her children. “Ask *Tatty* to *daven* for you,” she advised a son who needed something badly. “I never once saw a *tefilah* that *Tatty davened* with tears that wasn't answered. He doesn't believe that everything warrants such intense *tefilos*, but when he does *daven* for something, he is never refused.”

PROMISE ME

Rav Shimshon was in his thirties when the Mann family was stricken with the heartbreaking news that their mother had cancer. Rebbetzin Mann, who still had a houseful of young children at home, was rushed abroad to undergo tests and treatments while the family remained behind in *Eretz Yisrael*, *davening* anxiously for her recovery.

Late one night, while her mother was hanging between life and death, Rebbetzin Pincus burst

tearfully into her husband's study where he was vigorously engaged in learning with his *chavrusa*. "Shimshon!" she cried, her voice betraying tears and desperate entreaty. "I'm not leaving this room until you promise me that *Imma* will recover!" Tears streamed copiously down the Rebbetzin's face while her husband tried to console her, insisting that he was, indeed, davening with all his might, but how could he deliver such a promise?

"While I," the *chavrusa* who witnessed the exchange related many years later, "was awed. The Rebbetzin had approached her husband with a highly unusual demand. She was an exceedingly intelligent woman who knew her husband well and certainly understood the implications of her words. If she could rely with such certainty on her husband's promise to *daven* on her mother's behalf, then she knew what she was talking about."

MAZAL TOV!

It is customary to wish *mazal tov* at every *simchah*, be it a *bris*, *bar mitzvah*, or wedding. Yet with the myriad options of more meaningful and specific *berachos*, why does one wish *mazal tov*?

Heartfelt *tefilos* or *berachos* that emerge from the heart along with a feeling of closeness to *Hashem* have the force to alter a person's fortune. Rav Shimshon cited the Ramban who explains *Yitzchak Avinu's* instructions to Eisav, "Make for me delicacies and I will eat, and my soul will bless you before *Hashem*," as, "When the soul feels good, the souls connect, and a blessing can have effect."

Rav Shimshon expounded upon this point: When dozens of people enjoy hearty food and drink and then approach the *baal simchah* with a sense of closeness and joy to wish him a hearty *mazal tov*, their words and sincerity contain sufficient power to

transform the person's negative *mazal* into a positive one. Motivated by this, Rav Shimshon insisted on hosting a *kiddush* in honor of the birth of every daughter and urged others to follow this custom, as well.

"Can you fathom the force of a single word uttered by a *Yid*?" he challenged. "Hundreds of people come to a *kiddush*, and each one wishes *mazal tov* and gives a *berachah*! How can you deny your daughter those *zechuyos*? These *berachos* escort her throughout life — through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and even in her elder years, all the way until one hundred and twenty!"

One of the Pincus girls was born less than two weeks before her brother's *bar mitzvah*. Rav Shimshon debated whether or not to make a *kiddush* immediately that week when he was anyway hosting a huge *kiddush* the following week in honor of the *bar mitzvah* and could easily say that the *kiddush* was in honor of the double *simchah*.

"I almost decided not to make the *kiddush*, but on second thought determined that just because her brother's *bar mitzvah* fell two weeks later, who was I to deny my newborn daughter hundreds of *berachos* that would be designated exclusively for her? Who knows what these *berachos* would do for her throughout her life, so lo and behold, we hosted two consecutive *kiddushes*, one week after the next!"

Indeed, time would tell exactly how desperately that girl would need those heartfelt *berachos* one day. For many months, she hung precariously between life and death following the tragic accident that claimed the lives of both her parents and sister. Yet with *tefilos*, miracles, and presumably the *berachos* that she received as an infant, she emerged from danger to make a full recovery. ●

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