

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Yisro



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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**USA OFFICE** Mechon Beer Emunah  
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# Torah Wellsprings

## Yisro

### Reading the Aseres HaDibros

The Shevet Mussar (34:19) discusses what a person should think when he hears kriyas HaTorah. "Imagine that the *bimah* is Har Sinai and that you are receiving the Torah from Har Sinai. Think that Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His *malachim* are present, as it was by *mattan Torah*. Visualize Moshe Rabbeinu reading the Torah and the entire nation standing around Har Sinai to hear Torah from his mouth."

The *Mishnah Berurah* (141:19) writes, "According to halachah, it is permitted to sit when hearing kriyas haTorah, but the Maharam says that the proper way is to stand. This is because when hearing the reading of the *sefer Torah*, one should imagine as if he is hearing the Torah from Har Sinai, and at Har Sinai,

all the Yidden stood (see *Devarim* 5:3)."

We derive from these sources that any time that the Torah is read, it is a micro *mattan Torah*. Surely when we read the portions of the Torah that discuss *mattan Torah*, it is like we are receiving the Torah from Har Sinai. As the Midrash (*Psikta* 12, *Yalkut Shimoni Yisro* 271) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to the Jewish nation, 'My children read this *parashah* [of *mattan Torah*] each year, and I will consider it as though you stood before Me on Mount Sinai and received the Torah.'"

We read the *Aseres HaDibros* three times a year, on 1) Shavuot, 2) Shabbos *parashas Yisro*, and 3) Shabbos *parashas Ve'eschanan*.

The Beis Avraham explains why:

Very ill patients require potent medications, but their bodies are too weak to endure the powerful drugs. The doctor, therefore, administers the medication in two or three doses. Similarly, we acquire high dosages of *emunah* when we read the *Aseres HaDibros*. But the spiritual experience that comes from reading this section is very intense and perhaps too strong for our weak selves. Therefore, the impact is divided into three portions so we will be able to absorb its message.

There were *tzaddikim* who literally experienced *mattan Torah* when they heard this *parashah*.

The Divrei Yechezkel of Shinov *zt'l* related that on Shabbos *parashas Yisro*, his father, the Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l*, read the *Aseres HaDibros*, and the Shinover Rav felt as though he was standing at Har Sinai,

hearing the *Aseres HaDibros* from Hashem. He said that he heard and saw the shofar, thunder and lightning, and all the other details that took place at *mattan Torah*. The Shinover Rav added that he was expecting the same experience on Shavuot, and prepared himself for that moment. However, the Shavuot experience was not the same.

Friday night, *parashas Yisro*, Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev *zt'l* once said at his *tish*, "Tomorrow, when the *Aseres HaDibros* is read, people with holy ears will hear Hashem say the *Aseres HaDibros*..."

When the Avodas Yisroel of Koznitz *zt'l* heard this, he added, "Someone who doesn't have such ears should cleanse his ears well, so that he too will be able to hear Hashem proclaim the *Aseres HaDibros*!"<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Chizkuni (introduction to *Chumash*) writes, "I swear by my soul

## Torah for Everyone

Some people are so heartbroken by their *aveiros* that they think that Hashem doesn't desire their *avodas Hashem* and Torah study. Their low morale causes them to fall even further. As the Mishnah (*Avos* 2:13) states, ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך, "Don't think of yourself as a *rasha*," and the Rambam explains, "When a person considers himself lowly and lacking, he won't deem his wrongdoings severe."

How can such a person realize that he is special to Hashem and that his Torah study and mitzvah observance are cherished?

One way is to remember that when Bnei Yisrael received the Torah at Har

Sinai, they weren't on a very high level. They had recently left Mitzrayim, where they had fallen to the forty-ninth degree of tumah. At the Yam Suf, the malachim were saying, "Why should the Yidden be saved while Mitzrim drown? The Yidden also worship avodah zarah!" So we see that they were on a low level, and still, Hashem gave them the Torah. This teaches us that the Torah is for everyone.

The *Aseres HaDibros* begins with, אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר, "הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Mitzrayim." The *rishonim* question why the posuk doesn't say, "I am Hashem, Who created the world."<sup>2</sup>

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that I, Chizkiyah, heard Hashem saying the Ten Commandments in my dream."

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* explained that נעשה ונשמע means if a person prepares himself with נעשה, deeds, he will merit נשמע, to hear Hashem say אנכי ה' אלקיך.

2. The *rishonim* answer that *yetzias Mitzrayim* is actually a better



We can answer that the *Aseres HaDibros* emphasizes *yetzias Mitzrayim* to remind us that the Torah was given to the Yidden when they were on a low level, having lived in Mitzrayim and where they fell to the forty-ninth gate of *tumah*. If the Torah can be given to them, the Torah can undoubtedly be given to us. Every Yid has a right to study and keep the Torah.

As the Chasam Sofer *zt"l* (*Drashos, Shavuos* 5562) writes, "The Torah wasn't given to specific individuals – it was given to all of *klal Yisrael*, the *chelbenah* (lowly people) together with the *besamin* (tzaddikim) and this was intentional, to enable every Yid to earn his portion in the Torah... This is the reason we received the Torah shortly after we left Mitzrayim, although we weren't yet worthy of

*matan Torah*. This teaches us that one should never lose hope from acquiring his portion in the Torah. Even if he is on a low level, he is equal to the greatest."

It states (*Shemos* 19:17), וַיִּתְּצוּ בַתְּחִתִּית הָהָר, "The nation stood at the bottom of the mountain." The Beis Aharon *zt"l* (*rosh chodesh Sivan*) says that this *pasuk* alludes to the nation's low level when they received the Torah. He writes, "Everyone can receive the Torah, no matter who he is. Even those at the lowest level can receive the Torah. In fact, when the Torah was given, the Jewish nation was at the bottom level, as it states, וַיִּתְּצוּ בַתְּחִתִּית הָהָר."

The *Zohar* (vol.2 68.) writes, "Yisro was a high-ranking, respected priest (כומר עליון וגדול). He was like 'the Pope' for all types of

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source for our *emunah*, because in addition to *emunah*, *yetzias Mitzrayim* also teaches *emunah* in Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* and His love to the Jewish nation.

idol worship. When he praised Hakadosh Baruch Hu and said, עתה ידעתי כי גדול ה' מכל האללים, 'Now I know that Hashem is greater than all the gods...' Hashem's honor was increased in all words, above and below."

Many priests of *avodah zarah* were waiting to see Yisro's reaction to the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf*. Yisro was the spiritual leader of the goyim at that time, and they would react as Yisro does. So when Yisro praised Hashem for the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf*, they followed his lead, and also praised Hashem. This created an enormous *kiddush Hashem*.

Mattan Torah follows the story of Yisro. What is the significance of this order?

Rebbe Leibele Eiger *zt'l* (*Toras Emes*, beginning of *Yisro*) explains that the Torah wants to encourage every Yid to accept the Torah. No one should feel he isn't worthy because no matter

how far he fell, he didn't fall further than Yisro. If Yisro could receive the Torah, so too can he.

The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Devarim*) writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu offered the Torah to all the nations of the world, but they declined. Then Hakadosh Baruch Hu offered the Torah to Bnei Yisrael, and they accepted it."

The *Imrei Emes* (5667) points out that Hashem would have given the Torah even to the goyim had they wanted it. So, if even a goy can potentially learn and keep the Torah, then surely a Yid, who is a part of Hashem and a descendant of the holy *avos*, can study Torah and keep the mitzvos.

It states (*Shemos* 19:4), ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים ואביא אתכם אלי, "I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me." An eagle is a non-kosher bird. The *Sfas Emes zt'l* (see *Imrei Emes, Yisro*, 5691) explains



that Hashem carried us on a non-kosher bird to tell us that even those who sinned (and are on the level of non-kosher birds) can be elevated to be fitting to receive the Torah.

The nature of an eagle is that it molts its feathers every year, so annually, it is like a brand-new bird (see *Rashi, Tehillim* 103:5). So perhaps Hashem carried us on eagle wings to instruct us to be like the eagle who is always starting over again.

As it states (19:1), ביום הזה, "On this day they arrived at Midbar Sinai." Rashi comments that "This day" implies that each day we must think that the Torah was given today.

And it states (19:5), ועתה אם שמוע תשמעו בקלי ושמרתם את בריתי והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים, "And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My covenant, you shall be to me the most beloved treasure of all nations..." The key is ועתה, "And now."

Forget about the past. Accept the Torah today, and you will be סגולה מכל העמים, "the most beloved treasure of all nations."

### Understanding Torah

We have concluded that Torah observance is for everyone. Even if one falls to low levels, Hashem wants him to be His servant and study His Torah.

Nevertheless, some people feel that Torah study isn't for them because they don't understand what they are studying. For them, we quote a lesson from the Chidushei HaRim (*Shavuos*):

"Hashem Yisborach gave us the Torah as a gift, and Chazal (*Bava Basra* 65.) tell us that when one gives a gift, he gives it with a good eye (generously). Similarly, when Hashem gives us the Torah, he gives it with a good eye. This means He gives us the strength and the wisdom that is needed to understand

the Torah." Hashem didn't only give us the Torah; He also gave us the tools and the ability to understand it. Furthermore, we must know that Torah study is supposed to be hard. If you find that understanding the Torah is a challenge, you are in good company because this is the true meaning of "toiling" in Torah study.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 3) teaches, "The *Targum* (translation) of *Nevi'im* was taught by Yonoson ben Uziel... and Eretz Yisrael shook four hundred *parsah* by four hundred *parsah*. A *bas kol* announced, 'Who is revealing my secrets?' Yonoson ben Uziel stood up on his feet and said, 'I am revealing the secrets. And You know that I didn't do it for my honor or my family's honor. I translated *Nevi'im* for Your honor, so there shouldn't be many *machlokes* in Yisrael...'"

The Tosfos Ri"d asks, why did Eretz Yisrael shake four hundred *parsah*

when Yonoson ben Uziel translated *Navi*? Isn't this the purpose of the Torah, that people should understand it? What did he do wrong?

The Tosfos Ri"d explains that Yonoson ben Uziel made Torah study easy. Now, when one wants to understand a *pasuk* in *Navi*, he just looks in *Targum*, and knows the explanation. He will not need to work hard to understand its meaning. This isn't the way Torah is meant to be studied. There must be a component of toil before one can truly understand it. It shouldn't come easy.

A very creative scholar built himself a rotating table. He placed many *sefarim* on the table, and when he needed a *Chumash*, for example, he didn't have to stand up to get it. Instead, he remained seated and just turned the table until the *Chumash* appeared in front of him. When he needed a Gemara, he revolved the table some

more, and the Gemara was in front of him.

When the Terumas HaDeshen saw this table, he told the designer that he disapproved. It is better when the Torah student stands up and invests effort to get the *sefer*. In the merit of his toil, he will understand Torah.

Therefore, if a person finds Torah difficult to understand, he must know that Torah is *meant* to be difficult and requires toil. If he sets himself to the task, he will understand it. It might be bitter for him at first, but it will soon become sweet. As Rashi (19:5) writes, "If you accept on yourselves [to study and to keep the Torah], it will become sweet for you from now on because all beginnings are difficult."

### **Finding Time for Torah**

There was a person who wasn't studying Torah. He simply didn't have time for it. He worked most of the

day, and in the little bit of spare time, he davened, ate, and rested.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* rebuked him. "Lack of time isn't a valid excuse for not studying Torah."

Reb Chaim Volozhiner explained, "When Hashem offered the Torah to Eisav's nation, they asked Hashem what is written in the Torah, and Hashem told them that the Torah forbids murder. They replied, 'Our father blessed us (Bereshis 27:40), על חרבך תחיה, 'By the sword, you shall live,' so how can we accept the Torah which forbids murder? It will take away our life-source.' Similarly, all nations didn't want to accept the Torah because they said that accepting the Torah would prevent them from living. You are saying the same thing because you claim that you can't find time to study Torah because it will take away from your livelihood."

If a person is conscientious with his time, he will discover that he has time for learning Torah. The day is made up of twenty-four hours – and that is a long time. Let's say he sleeps eight hours a day. He still has sixteen hours left. Even if he works ten hours, he still has six hours left. Part of the time will be devoted to tefillah and caring for his personal needs, but there should be enough time for Torah, too.

And if he doesn't have time for Torah, he can consider working less. This

is one of the reasons why having bitachon is essential. Trust in Hashem that He will support you even if you work fewer hours and make time for studying Torah.<sup>3</sup>

Chazal (*Kiddushin* 40) say, "When one desires to do a mitzvah, and he is not able to, he is credited as though he performed the mitzvah." Based on this Gemara, the Choshen Yehoshua explains that when one studies whenever he can, it proves that if he had more time, he would learn more hours. Therefore, even if he

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3. A *yungerman* told Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak (the Riyatz) of Lubavitz *zy'a* that if Hashem will give him a more *parnassah*, he will spend more of his time studying Torah. "But as things stand now, I have to work many hours to make a living, and I just don't have time."

The Riyatz told him that an ill man once said to his father, Rebbe Shalom Ber of Lubavitz *zy'a*, "If Hashem heals me, I will give a lot of money to your yeshiva."

Rebbe Shalom Ber replied, "It is better that you give the money first. That way, Hashem will owe you the *refuah*. It is better that Hashem owes you, than you owe Hashem."

"Similarly," the Riyatz *zy'a* said, "I suggest that you begin studying Torah already now. It is better that Hashem owes you than you should owe Him."

only learns for one hour a day (because that is all the time he has available), his diligence proves that he would have studied more if he had more time. Thus, he gets credit and reward as though he studied the entire day.

However, those who don't seek to use every

available moment for Torah prove that even if they had more time, they wouldn't necessarily use it to study Torah. Therefore, when these people are idle from Torah, they aren't only losing those few moments; they are losing the entire day.<sup>4</sup>

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4. When was the Torah given? We don't know for certain. The Gemara says that it was either on the sixth day or on the seventh day of Sivan.

Where was the Torah given? The Torah was given on Har Sinai, but where is Har Sinai? There are different opinions, but no one knows for sure. Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* concluded, "So we don't know *when* the Torah was given and we don't know *where* the Torah was given. This is to teach us that any time and any place is ideal for Torah."

Sometimes people say, "I can't learn here. The atmosphere isn't productive for learning." Or, "I can't learn now. I'm tired. I need a break."

We don't know the exact time or place of *mattan Torah* so we should know that it is always an ideal time and place for Torah.

Rebbe Yisrael of Stolin *zy'a* gave the following advice for those seeking a *shidduch*. He said, when you hear that the girl or the boy has good *middos*, mark down a "1" in your notebook. And then, if you hear that he or she has another quality, place a zero after the one. And if there is another quality, add another zero. The number will become bigger and bigger. But if the boy or the girl doesn't have good *middos*, your notebook will be filled with zeros but the

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 5:) states, "Reb Idi would travel for three months, be one day in Rav's beis medresh [and then<sup>5</sup> he took a three-month trip home]. The students of the yeshiva called him *בר בי רב דחד יומא*, A student of Rav for a day.' He was insulted. He said about himself (*Iyov* 12:4),

*שחוק לרעהו אהיה*, 'I have become a laughingstock to my friends.' Reb Yochanan went into the beis medresh and taught... When one studies Torah one day a year, he receives reward as if he studied Torah the entire year. The same is said about punishment. [A day of sin is like a year of

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*shidduch* is worthless, because good *middos* is the most important attribute when seeking a *shidduch*.

The same analogy can be used concerning Torah study. When a person studies Torah for an hour, he can mark a number "1" in his pad. The hours that he doesn't study Torah are zeros. If you place the zeros after the one, you will have a large number. But if a person doesn't even have that one hour of Torah, he is left with many zeros.

The Slonimer tzaddikim ask, if you put the number one before the zeros you have a large number. But if you place the number one at the end of all the zeros you have a very small number. So, if every hour without Torah is a zero, and the hour that you study Torah is a one, what can you do to guarantee that the one will come before the number and not at the end?

The answer is that it is important to consider the hour you study Torah as the most important hour of the day. That places the "1" before all the zeros, and you end up having a large number.

5. Rashi explains, "His home was a three- month distance from Rav's yeshiva. He left his home after Pesach, studied for one day and then returned home so he could make his wife happy on Succos."



sin. The *meraglim* scouted the land for forty days and their punishment was for forty years. See (*Bamidbar* 14:34)]." When one devotes a day to Torah study, it is considered like he studied Torah the entire year.

The Chasam Sofer teaches that it is even more than that. For one day of studying Torah is considered like five hundred years.

The calculation is based on the Chazal, מדה טובה מרובה, על מדת פרעניות חמש מאות פעמים, "Hashem bestows kindness five hundred times more than He punishes." We know that a day of sin is like sinning an entire year (as we see from the *meraglim*). Therefore, we understand that when one performs a mitzvah or studies Torah for a day, he will be rewarded as though he studied Torah and performed mitzvos for five hundred years.

Let this not surprise you because Hashem can grant

us as much reward as He desires.

## The Preciousness of Time

Early one morning, the Rebbe of Radishitz *zt'l* announced, "A special guest arrived today. It's his first visit, and he won't ever come back again, so I want to honor him properly."

He explained that the guest is 'Today.' "It came today, and a day like today will never come back."

Each day of our lives is unique. Everyone can testify to that. Each day there are new trials and challenges, things that make us happy, and factors that cause us distress. No two days are ever alike. The Arizal explains that spiritually, too, each day is a different entity. Therefore, it is important to make the most of every day because today comes only once in a lifetime.

The key is to use time well.

Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* compared time to a travel bag. If you pack your bag in an orderly fashion, there will be lots of space for your belongings. But if you throw in your clothes and items without folding them and without order, the bag will soon be full, and there won't be any room for more.

Time is similar. If one is careful with his time, he will find enough time in his day for Torah, tefillah, spending time with the family, work, *chesed*, and more. But if one is careless with time, the day passes quickly, and he doesn't have time for anything.

People say, "If you need a favor, ask a busy person." He will find time to help you. But someone lazy doesn't find time for anything. How will he have time for you if he doesn't have time for himself?

A serious student in Yeshivas Kol Torah asked the *rosh yeshiva*, Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l*, for advice on how to maximize time.

Reb Shlomo Zalman advised him to set aside time each day to review what he studied. The *bachur* replied that he didn't have time for that.

There was a *sefer* lying on the table, wrapped in decorative paper and held together with a rubber band. (Reb Shlomo Zalman planned to give the *sefer* a bar mitzvah.) Reb Shlomo Zalman removed the rubber band and showed it to the student. "Do you see how small it is? Just a moment before, it was wrapped around the entire *sefer*, and now it's tiny. How did that happen? This is what time is all about. Even when time is short, you can stretch it and find a lot of time within the shortest period of time."

The yeshiva of Kelm had a short *seder* of five minutes a day (in addition to their longer daily *sedarim*). The purpose of this short *seder* was to show the students how much they could accomplish in just five minutes.

Recently, I attended a *siyum hashas* of a young man. It was the first time he finished *Shas*, and he hosted a nice event. A month later, I met the young man again, and I asked him where he was up to in his second time studying *Shas*. He told me that he didn't begin yet and explained, "*Shas* isn't the main subject I study. My primary focus is on *halachah*. (He has already written several *sefarim* on *halachah*.) When I have extra time and want to study something different, I study *Shas*, going in the order from the beginning to end. Since the last *siyum*, I didn't have such a time yet..." In other words, he finished the entire *Shas*

from the free moments he found, here and there.

Another person told me that when his wife shops, he drives her to the stores. He stays in the car and studies *Gemara* as she shops. During the day, he studies other areas in *Torah*, but at these moments, he studies *Shas*. He said that he went through *Shas* just from learning while waiting in the car.

One of the rewards for keeping *Torah* and *mitzvos* is (*Vayikra* 26:9), ופנית אליכם. The *Chiddushei HaRim* zt'l says that פנית comes from the word פנאי, which means ample time. The *Chidushei HaRim* explains that this is the great reward is given to *tzaddikim*. They will have enough time to accomplish many good things in their lifetime.

The *Chidushei HaRim* often repeated this explanation. It is the greatest gift of all because

what could be more precious than time?

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz writes that every ill person would be prepared to give away a lot of money just to be able to live one extra day. Because at this moment of his life, he appreciates the value of time. But when one is healthy, he can waste a day, "kill time," and that's a great loss.<sup>6</sup>

A gold watch is a traditional gift given to *chasanim*. The gold watch reminds the *chasan* that time is gold. The Lev Simchah *zy'a* added that the packaging of a gift is always less valuable than the item it contains. Time (the watch) is packaged in gold, which means time itself is even more precious because with time, one can acquire Torah and mitzvos, which are more precious than gold.<sup>7</sup>

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6. When the Torah lists the *tochachah* (curses) it also states (*Vayikra* 26:17), ונתתי פני בכם. According to the Chiddushei HaRim's explanation, this will mean Hashem grant sinners with ample time. Why is that a curse?

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* answers that for those who don't use their time wisely, having extra time is a curse. The best thing for them is to be busy, so that they don't get involved in things they shouldn't.

7. Rashi (19:5) writes, אם עתה תקבלו עליכם יערב לכם מכאן ואילך שכל התחלות קשות, "If you will accept on yourself [the yoke of Torah], it will be sweet for you for now on, because all beginnings are hard."

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zy'a* explained that Rashi is referring to making good *kabbalos*. The moment of taking on a *kaballah* is the difficult moment (when he is sincere about it, and truly plans to keep it). But afterwards, it becomes simple and easy. As Rashi writes, "It will be sweet for you, for now on."

The Yerushalmi Yid, Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l*, once spent a night in Bnei Brak, at his son, Reb Nota's, house. Reb Zalman used his time well, studying Torah diligently. Reb Zalman had a quota of studies that he learned each day, and he wouldn't go to sleep before he completed it.

"Father, it's late," Reb Nota told his father. "You can finish your studies tomorrow."

Reb Zalman didn't respond. He just kept on learning. Every so often, Reb Nota returned to urge his father to go to sleep, but Reb Zalman just kept on studying.

He finished learning around midnight. Reb Nota was then in the kitchen, eating a late supper. Reb Zalman said, "Reb Nota, it's late. You can finish your meal tomorrow."

The message was understood. There are some things that one just doesn't push off for the next day. Reb Zalman had a *kabbalah* how much he studied each day, and he wouldn't go to sleep until he finished.

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* tells the following *meshal*:

There were two wealthy people who were always debating which of them was wealthier.

It was important for them to know because whoever was wealthier had the final say in the city. They debated this matter for years and never reached a conclusion.

One day they decided to test it, once and for all. They would throw precious coins into the ocean, one coin at a time. Whoever stops first, that means he has less money than the other one, since it is hard for him to lose so many coins. The one who is still throwing in coins is unquestionably the wealthier one.

They were throwing coins into the sea for a long time, until one stopped. He didn't want to lose all his money. The other one was still throwing in coins. He was obviously wealthier. He didn't mind losing all those coins. Everyone was stunned by his immense wealth.

We can all accomplish a lot. All that's needed is time management, a good dose of *ratzon*, and, most important of all, *tefillah*.<sup>8</sup>

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Later it was discovered that he was throwing counterfeit coins. That's the reason he didn't mind throwing them all into the sea.

The *nimshal* is, when one throws away time, that's a sign he considers time like counterfeit, and not valuable, and therefore doesn't mind wasting it. Those who understand the value of time are cautious with it.

8. Pharaoh's infamous decree, to enslave the Jewish people, wasn't his own idea. He held a meeting with his advisors, Yisro, Bilaam, and Iyov. It was Bilaam's idea, and therefore Bilaam was ultimately killed. Iyov remained silent, so he was punished with *yesurim* (afflictions). Yisro ran away. In this merit, his descendants became judges in the *lishchas hagazis* (Sanhedrin).

Why was Iyov punished with *yesurim*? Iyov knew that Pharaoh wouldn't listen to him if he advised him otherwise, so the wisest approach is to remain silent.

But the answer is that when something hurts, you shout. Yisro suffered *yesurim*, and he shouted in pain. Heaven told him, "Do you see? When it hurts, you shout. So why didn't you shout when Pharaoh laid out the plans for his bitter decrees?"

For our present topic, if success in Torah is important to you, you will shout to Hashem. You will daven for success in Torah, and Hashem will answer your *tefillos*.

A story is told of a new doctor, fresh out of college, who was hired to work the night shift in a very difficult hospital ward. When he arrived, the doctor who worked the day shift told him what to expect and what he must do. He pointed to one of the patients and said, "Now he's sleeping, but when he is awake, he is in a lot of pain, and he is liable to pull at the wires that are connected to him."



## Don't Get Sidetracked

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

A simple farmer saved the king's life. The king granted the farmer permission to enter his treasury for one hour and take out anything he desired as a reward. They set a day and time when the farmer can come to collect his reward.

One can gather immense wealth with an hour in a treasury, and the king didn't want him to take that much. Therefore, the king made some inquiries among this man's friends regarding the food he likes and the music he enjoys hearing.

The big day arrived, and there were two stands outside the treasury. One was a bandstand playing the music the farmer

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"So what am I supposed to do?"

"When he begins to make trouble, press the emergency button. This will alert all doctors in the hospital, and they will come to help you."

This patient awoke in the middle of the night, and as expected, he began to shout in agony and he pulled at his wires and at the wires attached to others. It was a disaster.

The doctor was fired and was even put on trial.

"What do you expect me to do?" he asked the judge. "I was one person, alone, in a very difficult ward."

"Yes, but why didn't you call for help?!" the judge asked him. "You had a button to call for help, why didn't you use it?"

When we aren't succeeding in Torah, we have a way to help ourselves. It is by screaming out to Hashem. If we truly care, we will make use of tefillah, and Hashem will help.

enjoyed the most. His favorite singer was there, and the musicians were his favorite players. He stood there mesmerized by the enchanting music for some time.

Then he spent some time at the food stand, which featured a lavish spread of his favorite dishes.

When he was ready to enter the treasury, he shouted in agony, "Only a few minutes left!"

The *nimshal* is that people get swept away in their pursuit of material pleasures and forget to take advantage of Torah and mitzvos, which will grant them eternal reward.

Nevertheless, although he lost most of the hour, he would be a fool if he didn't go into the treasury to collect as much as he could in the last few minutes that were left. Even a minute in the treasury is better than not being there at all.

Similarly, if the *yetzer hara* distracts you, and gets you to focus on the wrong things, don't let that faze you. Grab now as much as you can.

The Chofetz Chaim compared this concept to a woman selling apples in the market. Someone passed by and knocked over all the apples. Apples were rolling in all directions, and everyone was grabbing apples for themselves. She sat there, crying. Finally, someone came over and told her, "When everyone is grabbing, you too should grab." The lesson is that even if you lost out on a lot, don't let that stop you from salvaging whatever you can. Each moment, you can fill your pockets with the most precious commodities – more precious than gold and diamonds.

Someone was waiting for a train at a Switzerland train station. The train arrived, but he didn't board it. His friend asked him,

"Why don't you board the train?"

The man replied, "This is an old train; it isn't very comfortable. I'm waiting for a newer train, which I hear is far more luxurious. Each passenger gets their own table to eat on and a bed to sleep in... I'm waiting for that train."

"But the next train won't come here for many hours."

He replied, "That's okay. The new train is so comfortable; it's worth waiting for."

The train arrived, it was the model he had hoped for, and he proudly boarded it. Now he will have a pleasurable trip. First, he enjoyed a good meal and then exhausted from the heavy meal (and from waiting in the sun for hours until the train arrived), he lay down and slept for several hours. When he awoke, he discovered that he had boarded a train

traveling in the wrong direction!

It was almost Shabbos, so he would have to stay at that location. He didn't even have Shabbos clothes to wear or a place to stay, either!

The *nimshal* is, in life, we must focus on the destination, which is Olam HaBa, and the means to get there, which are Torah and mitzvos. We shouldn't allow the pleasures of this world to distract us from our ultimate purpose.

When the Satmar Rebbe zt'l visited Eretz Yisrael, he was invited to test the children in cheder Eitz Chayim.

The Rebbe asked a child, "What does it mean (*Bamidbar* 2:16), שְׁנֵי יָמִים יָסֻעוּ?"

The boy replied that it means "the years fly by." (Or, as it he said in Yiddish, די יארן פארן).

The Rebbe replied, "You deserve a *psak* (rebuke)

because you didn't know the correct translation of these words.<sup>9</sup> But for me, my entire trip from America was worthwhile, if even just to hear this *mussar*: The years fly by."

As the saying goes, "time flies." Fortunate are those who grasp onto time and use it wisely.

As a *bachur*, the Steipler Gaon *zt'l* learned in the Novardok yeshiva. Once, he was at his home in Hornisteipel, and a neighbor asked him when he was returning to yeshiva. The Steipler replied that he would be returning the following day.

"Good. My son also learns in Novardok, and I would like to write him a letter. Can I send it with you?"

The Steipler took the sealed letter and planned to take it to the yeshiva. But the First World War broke out and traveling became impossible. He never returned to the yeshiva.

Eight years later, the Steipler met up with the person to whom the letter was intended. "Your father sent this to you eight years ago. Due to the war, I wasn't able to deliver it until now."

The man opened the letter with awe. By that time, it was after his father's death, and he felt that this letter was like a final message from his father! He felt like he was receiving a hidden *צוה*, ethical will, written by his father especially for him.

The letter read, "To my dear son...When you come

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9. Literally, the *pasuk* means that the camp of Reuven (together with Shimon and Gad) traveled second, when the nation traveled in the desert.

home from yeshiva, please remember, and don't forget, to bring back some of the delicious herring that can be purchased in Novardok."

That was all the letter said.

The lesson: Never waste an opportunity. The father could have put in a thought of *yiras Shamayim* in the letter, something about *emunah*, *middos tovos*, encouragement. But, instead, there was nothing there—just a request for herring. Every moment is precious and a shame to waste.

When bachurim would come to the Steipler Gaon, requesting a brachah to grow in Torah, he would reply, "I bless you with all my heart that you should succeed in Torah immensely, but you must know that from a blessing, you won't become a *gadol* in Torah. There is only one counsel: Keep away from *batalah* (wasting time) and

use your time well. If you study with *hasmadah* you will succeed and grow in Torah no matter where you are learning. But if you waste time, it won't help that you are studying in a yeshiva with a good reputation."

The Beis Avraham once shouted from the depths of his heart, מען זאל זיך נישט דרייען ווי, "א נער אויפן מארק, We shouldn't go around like a fool in the marketplace." One can become wealthy in the marketplace, but the fool just walks in circles without taking advantage of the opportunities there. He buys things of little value, and he ends up losing money instead of gaining.

It states (*Iyov* 1:7), ויאמר ה' אל השטן מאין תבוא ועין השטן מושט "Hashem asked the Satan, 'From where have you come?' The Satan answered Hashem, 'From wandering and walking around the earth.'"

The Satan is the *yetzer hara*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu asks him, מאין תבוא, "From where have you come?" This means, "What tactics do you use to catch people in your trap?"

The *yetzer hara* replies, משוט בארץ והתהלך בה, "I encourage people to wander and travel around the earth. And it is all משוט, foolishness (from the word שוטה). In other words, I encourage them to waste their time."

On Yom Kippur, the *kohen gadol* enters the *kodesh kadoshim* and places the *ketores* on the hot coals in the fire pan. When the fire goes out, and the *ketores* are consumed, the *kohen gadol* enters the *kodesh kadoshim* again to remove the empty pan.

Taking out the empty utensil is considered part of the Yom Kippur *avodah*, and he does it while wearing the white, Yom Kippur clothes.

But why is it necessary to take out the firepan? Why can't the empty *מחתה* (firepan) remain in the *kodesh kadoshim* until the following year, and when he comes in again next year, he can take out the empty pan that he left there a year earlier?

The answer is that empty things shouldn't be in the *kodesh kadoshim*. Empty items don't belong before Hashem.

Similarly, it isn't proper to leave time empty. It should be filled with Torah and mitzvos and good deeds. Especially on holy days, like Shabbos and *yom tov*, time should be utilized to its fullest.

### Hatred and Jealousy

There was a wealthy tzaddik and scholar in Vienna called Reb Shimshon Wertheimer zt'l. He was close with the king of Vienna, and once, the king asked him to explain why the Yidden are



persecuted more than any other nation in the world.

Reb Shimshon replied, "They are being punished because they have hatred toward their fellow man, and they are jealous of one another."

"That is not a valid answer," the king replied. "I'll give you three days to answer me. Tell me the true reason the Jews suffer so much. If you don't provide a satisfying answer in three days, I will banish every Yid from Vienna."

That night, Reb Shimshon made a *שאלת חלום*, and in his dream, he was told, "Don't retract your words. You answered correctly. Yidden suffer in *galus* because of hatred and jealousy. Soon the king will realize that you spoke the truth."

It was the beginning of the winter, an ideal time for hunting. The king went with a group of his close

officials into the forest to hunt game.

After several hours, some of the officials went home, and the king and the rest of his crew continued hunting in the forest.

Some hours later, it was almost dark, and the officials decided it was time to return home. They called for the king, and when there was no response, they figured that the king had already left with the officials earlier in the day.

The king, deeply involved in his hobby, was oblivious to the late hour and that he was alone.

Night fell, and that is when the king realized he was in trouble. The king couldn't find his way out of the forest in the dark. He wandered around the forest until he came to a river and saw lights on the other side. There was a town there.

The king knew how to swim, so he removed his coat, left his horse behind, and swam across the river.

He knocked at the first house he encountered, but no one answered. "Please let me in," he pleaded. "I am lost, and I need a place to stay for the night." But they ignored him.

He went to the next house; the same occurred. No one would let him in.

The king said to himself, "I will look for a door with a mezuzah. The Jewish people are compassionate, and they will certainly help me."

Indeed, a Jewish couple let him in. They gave him a warm meal and a coat so that he could warm up.

He didn't tell them that he was the king of Austria, knowing that they wouldn't believe him.

The wife suspected that their guest was a thief. She told her husband, "Send

this man out of the house before he steals everything we own – including the fur coat you lent him." The husband replied that he didn't suspect his guest, but just in case, he would remain awake all night to make sure the guest didn't steal anything.

In the morning, the king asked his host, "How far is it to Vienna, and how much does it cost to get there?"

The host replied, "I can drive you there for four forties (a currency)." The king agreed to that price and asked, "Will you let me wear your fur coat until we arrive because I'm still under the weather? Swimming in this cold weather made me sick."

The Yid graciously agreed.

The wife whispered to her husband, "He won't pay you. He'll kill you in the middle of the way and take your coat. Why are

you taking him? Why do you trust him?"

But he wasn't concerned.

As they approached Vienna, the host asked the king where he wanted to go. "Bring me to the king's palace," he replied.

The driver said, "It is forbidden to go there without an invitation."

The passenger replied, "Don't worry. I'm allowed to go there."

When they arrived, the king jumped out of the wagon and ran into the palace.

The Yid sat in the wagon, shocked. His wife was right. His passenger didn't pay him for the trip and ran off with his fur coat.

He wanted to quickly leave the grounds, because it was forbidden for him to be in front of the palace without an invitation, but before he could leave, an

armed guard blocked his way.

"The king wants to see you," the armed officer said.

The Yid shuddered; he feared the worst.

The officer brought him to the king, and the king asked him, "Do you recognize me?"

He didn't. Now that the king was dressed in his royal clothing, sitting on his majestic throne, he looked very different.

"I know you," the king told him. "I even know what your home looks like." And the king described to him what his home looked like. The Yid was shocked.

"Who can compare to the king's wisdom!" the Yid exclaimed.

"It isn't wisdom; I was in your home. I'm the person you saved. I didn't tell you before because I knew you wouldn't believe

me, but I'm the king of Austria. You deserve a reward for helping me. You invited me into your home, gave me a meal and a warm coat. Ask for whatever you want, and I will give it to you."

The Yid was quiet.

The king explained, "You can ask me for a forest, and I will give it to you. You can ask for an entire city, and I will give that to you. Just ask, and it will be yours."

The Yid was quiet.

The king became impatient, "If you don't tell me what you want, I will just pay you the four forties we agreed on, and that's all."

The Yid replied, "Actually, there is something I want. I'm a traveling merchant. I go from town to town selling my wares. Recently, someone began coming to the same towns I go to and sells the same items as I do. He is competing with me

and taking away my *parnassah*. I request that the king issue an executive order forbidding this man from selling his wares in the towns that I go to."

The king said, "Your request is granted, but you are a fool. You could have asked for so much more, but because of jealousy, all you care about is that your competitor shouldn't make money."

The king now saw that Reb Shimshon Wertheimer was correct. He said to Reb Shimshon, "Now I know you were correct. The Jewish people are punished because of their jealousy and hatred."

Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* would repeat this story every year before reading the Torah on Shavuot morning. He would tell this story each year because the essence of the Torah is to do chessed, to have *ahavas Yisrael* and good *middos*. Being jealous of others is the exact

opposite of what the Torah  
is about.<sup>10</sup>

The Agra d'Kala writes,  
"It is known that the Ten

# 10. The following story happened last year:

A middle-aged man was blind in one eye and his other eye had only 20% vision. After a surgery, matters became even worse, and he couldn't see at all.

His children gathered to see what *kabbalah* they can take on as a merit for their father. They decided that three times a day, they would have an עין טובה, good eye. They prayed that in the merit of their עין טובה, their father should have a good eye and see well.

The children discussed examples of *ayin tova*, so they would know exactly what they need to do. They said, "For example, if a neighbor is building, adding on to their home, have a good eye and be happy for them. Don't be jealous.

"Another example: If someone gets engaged, be happy for them. Don't be jealous, even if there is someone in our family who is having a hard time getting engaged."

They began this *kabbalah* shortly after Purim, and after Pesach, their father's eyesight returned, and he could see well. The family decided to continue with their *kabbalah*. A few weeks later, an astonishing miracle occurred. The father's other eye, which wasn't functioning for twelve years, started to see again.

They were doubly rewarded for their good eye.

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak Weiss *zt'l* (the Rav of Yerushalayim, author of *Minchas Yitzchak*) was married three times. This is his inspirational story, as he himself related:

When he was young, a *shidduch* was suggested for him. Since the girl and her family lived far away, his parents sent a *shaliach* to check out the girl and her family, and to determine whether the girl was a fitting match for their son. The *shaliach* returned and said that it was a fine match, and Reb Yaakov Yitzchak was engaged from the distance.

Commandments are a synopsis of the entire Torah, and the last commandment of the Ten Commandments, לא תחמד, "You shall not covet" is a summary of all the Ten Commandments. [Thus, לא תחמד is the essence of the entire Torah.] לא תחמד means that you should be

satisfied with what Hashem gave you, even if He withholds from you something goods that He gave others. One is satisfied when he recognizes that Hashem alone knows what's truly good for each person. Consequently, there is no reason to be jealous of a fellow man."

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When the wedding date drew near, the Weiss's traveled to the *kallah's* hometown for the *chasunah*. When Reb Yaakov Yitzchak's mother saw the *kallah* for the first time, she was very disappointed. She felt that it wasn't at all a proper match for her son. She wanted to terminate the *shidduch*. (According to halachah it was permissible to do so because the *shaliach* was charged with finding a suitable *shidduch*, and this wasn't a proper *shidduch*). Reb Yaakov Yitzchak said, "Perhaps with time I will divorce her. But right now, I don't want to embarrass her."

They were married and had one son, Reb Berish.

His wife was killed in war. Reb Yaakov Yitzchak remarried the daughter of the Rav of Vasloy *zy'a*. Afterwards, he married the daughter of the Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zy'a*, but he didn't have children from either of them. His only child was Reb Berish, born to the woman he didn't want to embarrass.

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak testified, "Doctors told me that it was impossible for me to bear children. Berish was a miracle. I am certain I merited this child as a reward for not embarrassing a Jewish girl."

We tell this story as it is an example of the pristine middos that the Torah teaches us. It is the purpose of the Aseres HaDibros and the entire Torah.