

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Ki Sisa



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Ki Sisa

Emunah

This week's *parashah* discusses the *aveirah* of the *egel*, which was *avodah zarah*. Baruch Hashem, we are not tempted to worship *avodah zarah* anymore. Chazal (*Yoma* 69:) tell us that the Chachamim abolished that *yetzer hara*. Yet, although we do not worship *avodah zarah*, there are *aveiros* comparable to *avodah zarah*, and we must be wary of them. We began with the most obvious: a lack in *Emunah*. This is like *avodah zarah*, because *avodah zarah* means that one doesn't fully believe in Hashem.

There was a couple who was childless for twenty years. After much deliberation, they opted to adopt. The first step of the lengthy adoption process is to fill out forms at the agency, and the agency

attempts to determine whether the couple can raise a child. The first question on one of the forms was, "State, in order of preference, the five things you love the most." Reb Eliyahu Shamni, the husband, who was filling out the form, wrote at the top of the list "Hakadosh Baruch Hu" and then wrote the next four.

The agency asked Rabbi Shamni, "If you have an adopted child, will you love your child more than the five items you listed here?" This is one of the agency's methods to determine whether the couple will love the adopted child.

Reb Eliyahu Shamni answered, "I will never love anyone or anything more than HaKadosh Baruch Hu!"

There was another religious couple in the agency at that time, also applying for adoption. They said to Reb Eliyahu Shamni, "It's just protocol. Tell them what they want to hear. You don't have to tell them the truth."

Reb Eliyahu Shamni replied emphatically, "I love Hashem more than everything in the world, and I refuse to say differently."

The Shamni's were disqualified.

Nine months later, the Shamnis had twins.

The other couple who was with them in the agency were eligible to adopt, but after nine months, they were still waiting for their opportunity to adopt. By this time, Reb Eliyahu and his wife were blessed with their own set of children. Reb Eliyahu told me, "When one doesn't give up

on the One, he ends up with two."

Emunah is *mesugal* for children. The *gematriya* of בניים is אמונה. Actually, *emunah* is *mesugal* for everything. As it states (*Shemos* 17:12), וידי ידיו אמונה עד בא השמש "His hands were with *emunah* until sunset," and the Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* (Slonim) explains, just as one does things with his hands, one can do things with his *emunah*. With *emunah*, miracles take place.

A Yid with a broken foot was brought to Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz *zt'l*. He was in terrible pain. The Lechovitzer Rav said, "Repeat after me the second brachah of Shemonah Esrei: אתה גבור לעולם ה' מחיה מתים אתה רב להושיע... ורופא חולים. The man repeated after the Lechovitzer Rav, phrase after phrase. The Lechovitzer Rav asked him, "Do you believe in everything we just said?" The ill person said he believes. The Lechovitzer Rav rebuked him, "Don't

lie to me. We will repeat it," and they repeated the *brachah* a second time. The man repeated each verse after the Lechovitzer Rav, concentrating deeply. When they finished, the Lechovitzer asked a second time, "Do you believe?"

"I do," he replied.

The Lechovitzer Rav rebuked him again. His *emunah* wasn't perfect yet.

They repeated the *brachah* a third time. This time the ill person repeated each phrase with a lot of vigor, and when they were finished, he shouted, "I believe! I believe!"

The Lechovitzer Rav said, "Get off the bed," and he got off the bed.

Now that he believed that Hashem is a רופא חולים, he was healed.

The Lechovitzer Rav instructed him that although he is healed, he should conceal the miracle and remain in bed for

twenty-four hours as if he was still injured.

The man said that it was difficult to remain in bed twenty-four hours since he was completely healed (*Toras Avos, Maasei Avos, 55*).

So, we see that *emunah* can bring children and that *emunah* can heal the ill. As the Divrei Shmuel taught, *emunah* is like our hands that do things in this world.

We quote the Divrei Shmuel:

"Someone who has true *emunah*, his *emunah* becomes like his hand, literally. Just as a person can accomplish and take care of his needs with his hands, he can also do things with his *emunah*. The Lechovitzer Rav caused miracles, and he helped people because he had a very high level of *emunah*, and he imbued every Yid that came to him with clear *emunah*. With *emunah*, miracles, beyond nature, occur."

Once, at *shalosh seudos*, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* expounded on three concepts of *emunah*.

(1) Before Moshiach comes, the *yirei Hashem* will be disrespected and on a low social standing, and the sinners will be in power and successful. This situation will be so distressful that even the holy Baal Shem Tov students wouldn't have been able to tolerate it.

(2) Rebbe Elimelech compared it to a pot cooking on the fire. The unwanted flour rises to the top and is removed, and the good food remains in the pot. This is what will occur at the end of days. The *resha'im* will jump to the top and take power and control, while those who fear Hashem are trampled at the bottom. But those sinners will all be removed, and only the righteous people will remain in the end.

(3) In the final generation before Moshiach comes, it will be like Hakadosh Baruch Hu spreads out a long rope, from one side of the world to the other, and all Yidden will grasp hold on to the rope. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will shake the rope forcefully, and the fools will take that to mean that Hashem wants them to leave Him. But the wise will say, "This is a test. We must hold on to the rope with all our strength. And whoever holds on tightly will be saved. This is *חבלי משיח*, the ropes of Moshiach.

(Heard from Reb Refael Aurbach *zt'l* [brother of Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l*] who heard it from an old man who was present when Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk said these three points.)

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zy"א* once spoke with his students about how everything is destined from Hashem, and nothing happens by chance. He told his students that even where an animal drops its

waste is also planned from Heaven.

One of his students couldn't believe that. "Why would it make a difference to Hashem where the animal drops its waste?" he thought.

The following day, the student slipped on the ice near a cliff. Suddenly, something stopped him from skidding off the cliff. He looked to see what saved his life. It was frozen manure.

He returned to Rebbe Elimelech, who said to his student, "Nu? Now, do you believe that even the place where animals drop their waste is also planned from Heaven?"

Once, two Yidden came to Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zy"a*, and they told him candidly that they are looking for a Rebbe and are considering joining his chassidus. Reb Uri told them that he only accepts

chassidim who believe in *hashgachah pratis*.

The chassidim affirmed that they believe in *hashgachah pratis*.

The Rebbe tested them: "When a piece of straw falls off a wagon, do you believe that this was destined from Heaven?"

The chassidim admitted that they don't have that level of *emunah*. "Why would Hashem care about such trivial matters?" And they left.

A few days later, they returned and said that they believe in *hashgachah pratis*, and they also believe that even if a straw falls off a wagon, it is also planned by Hashem.

"Why did you change your minds?"

The chassidim replied, "We used to think that Hashem only cares about and arranges the major episodes of our life. Like, if a lion would enter a city

and devour a human being, *chalilah*, we would believe that it was *bashert*. Something so major wouldn't happen just by chance. But then we realized that for Hashem, what we consider major is also insignificant. When you consider Hashem's greatness, it is hard to imagine that Hashem cares about even the major events of life. We told ourselves, "If we believe Hashem has *hashgachah* over matters we consider major, we should also believe that Hashem's *hashgachah* is over matters we consider insignificant."

Two friends came to the Husiatiner Rebbe *zt'l*. One asked for a *brachah* for *parnassah*, the other asked for a *brachah* for *yiras Shamayim*.

After receiving the Rebbe's *brachos*, they shared a taxi home. The one who received a *brachah* for *yiras Shamayim* paid the taxi driver his share for the ride and left. The friend who received a *brachah* for

parnassah gave the taxi driver a large bill and asked for change.

"I'm not a bank or a money changer," the driver said. "I don't change money. Go to a store and ask them to change it for you."

The closest store was a kiosk that sold nuts, bakery goods, and lottery tickets. The storekeeper also didn't want to change the large bill. Instead, he said, "If you buy something, I'll give you change." So, he bought a lottery ticket... and won!

The friend who asked for *yiras Shamayim* returned to his Rebbe and said, "I see that the *brachah* you gave my friend had quicker results than the *brachah* you gave me. He received a *brachah* for wealth, and in less than an hour, he became wealthy, but a week has passed, and I didn't receive *yiras Shamayim* yet."

The Husiatiner Rebbe replied, "When you will want *yiras Shamayim* as much as your friend wants wealth, your *brachah* will be answered, too."

Similarly, we add that if you really want *emunah*, you will be able to lead your life with the fundamentals of *emunah*. There are endless levels of *emunah*, and you can always rise to the next level of *emunah pshutah*, belief in Hashem.

And just as we must believe in Hashem, we must believe in ourselves, as well.

Belief in Our Self

There was once a priest who was very ill with wounds all over his body, and he asked the Baal Shem Tov for a cure. The Baal Shem Tov told him that his illness came because he pursued his *taavos*. "The only solution is to stop pursuing your desires."

The priest responded that he was so addicted to his temptations that he couldn't control himself. He asked the Baal Shem Tov whether he successfully controlled his *taavos*.

The Baal Shem Tov pointed to his white beard, indicating that he is an old man, and he doesn't have to struggle with these matters anymore.

The Baal Shem Tov's grandson, Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuzh was present during this exchange. Rebbe Boruch'l asked the Baal Shem Tov, "Why didn't you tell him that you are a Yid, and a Yid is able to control his temptations?"

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "It is impossible to explain to a goy what it means to be a Yid."

We add that it is impossible to explain to a Yid what it means to be a Yid.

We don't recognize our greatness, our potential,

how much Hashem loves us, etc.

As it states (*Tehillim* 145:12), להודיע לבני האדם גבורותיו, this means we must tell people about their strengths and how much they can achieve, if they put their heart to it.

And even if you are at a very low level, you are beloved to Hashem.

The following story took place in the year 1960, and it was well known at the time.

The Pittsburg Rebbe *zt'l* lived in Ashdod. From time to time, he traveled to his chassidim in New York. Once, he was flying to New York, together with eight other Yidden. Midflight, the plane began gliding downwards, and the passengers didn't know why. They were still far from their destination. Panic reigned on board. Finally, a flight attendant announced that they were having engine problems,

and they were hoping to find a runway nearby. Otherwise, the plane will plummet into the forest below.

The Yidden on board said *viduy, kriyas Shema*, and davened for a miracle. It was a frightening moment. With Hashem's compassion, they found a small airport in the vicinity, and the plane landed safely.

It was time to daven Shacharis, but there was a lot of commotion in the airport. The Yidden approached a member of the ground crew and asked, "Is there a secluded place where we can pray?"

The man fainted on the spot.

When he awoke, he spoke to them in Yiddish. He said, "Don't judge me by my appearance. I am a Yid. I was brought up in a chassidic home in Williamsburg. I was orphaned from my father

when I was ten, and I made some foolish choices in my life. I now live and work here, distant from all Yidden.

"Last night, my father came to me in a dream and said, 'It's my *yahrtzeit* and I want you to say Kaddish for me.'

"I replied, 'How can my Kaddish help you? I'm so distant from Yiddishkeit.'

"My father replied, 'No, my son. Your Kaddish will help me immensely.'

"But there is no minyan where I live. How can I say Kaddish for you?'

"My father replied, 'If I send you a minyan, will you say Kaddish for me?'

"I said I would. And here you are, nine people, sent down from heaven so I can have a minyan and say Kaddish."

What a lesson in the value of every yid!

A wise speaker was called to speak before bachurim who *fell* to very low levels, *r'l*. He stood before them and raised a one-hundred-dollar bill. "Who wants this bill?" he called out. They all raised their hands.

He crumpled the bill until it was a tiny ball and announced, "Now who wants it?" Once again, they all hooted and raised their hands.

He threw the crumpled, hundred-dollar bill into the mud, and asked them, "Now who wants the hundred-dollar bill?" and they all said that they wanted it.

He trampled on it, he jumped on it, and he asked them, "Who wants this crumpled, dirty, stomped on one-hundred-dollar bill?" They all said that they nevertheless still wanted it.

He asked them for an explanation.

They replied, "A hundred dollars remains a hundred dollars, no matter what you did to it. We can straighten it out, wash it off, and we have a hundred-dollar bill."

The speaker told them, "The same is with a Yid's *neshamah*. Even if it is crumpled, covered in mud, and is trampled on, you can wash it off and straighten it out, and it remains a holy, special *neshamah*."

The Mishnah (*Shabbos* 5:4), פרתו של ר' אלעזר בן עזריה היתה יוצאה ברצועה שבין קרניה שלא ברצון חכמים, "On Shabbos, Reb Elazar ben Azaryah's cow would walk outdoors while wearing a strap, and the Chachamim didn't agree to this." It is forbidden for one's animals to carry on Shabbos. (It's called שביתת בהמתו, the Jew's animals must keep Shabbos, too.)

It actually wasn't Reb Elazar's cow. It was his neighbor's cow. But since he didn't stop her and

didn't rebuke her for doing so, the Mishnah attributes the *aveirah* to Reb Elazar ben Azaryah.

The Yerushalmi (*Shabbos* 5:4) tells us that Reb Elazar ben Azaryah did *teshuvah* for this, and "His teeth turned black because of all his fasting."

Reb Chaim Vital asked the Arizal, "If Reb Elazar ben Azaryah did so much *teshuvah* for his relatively minor *aveirah*, what will be with us? If so much *teshuvah* is needed for every sin, how can we possibly attain forgiveness for our many *aveiros*?"

The Arizal replied, "This story happened in the previous generations. But in our times, the darkness of *galus* is very great. Even just one moan from the depths of the heart is equal to years of fasting in years gone by." (Written in *Yismach Yisrael*, Chanukah 56).

Therefore, we must believe in the greatness of

a Yid. In the previous section, we discussed raising our awareness and belief in Hashem.

These two *emunos*: belief in Hashem and belief in the Jewish nation, are related to this week's *parashah*. Although we don't have a *yetzer hara* to worship *avodah zarah*, there remains a struggle to believe in Hashem and to believe in ourselves. When we study about the *egel*, it is an ideal time to train ourselves to believe in Hashem and to believe in ourselves.

Tefillah

We must also believe in the power of our tefillos.

A person came home very thirsty. He opened the faucet to take a cup of water, but no water came out. He understands plumbing a bit, so he looked under the sink to find the source of the problem. Everything seemed o.k., so he went

outside to check the water main.

Someone saw him standing outside, checking the pipes, and said, "The faucets and the plumbing in your home are all in working order. The problem is that you didn't pay your utility bill, so the city cut off your water supply. Pay your bill, and water will run through your faucets again."

Another person went to the bank to take out some money. His son recently got engaged, and he needed money to pay the *shadchan* and buy a gift for the *kallah*.

But the bank was closed due to Covid. Only people with appointments were allowed into the bank.

He was very upset at the bank for all these restrictions, but he had an ATM card. He went over to a machine right outside the bank to take out some money, but the machine wouldn't allow him to

withdraw money. He banged the machine with his fist. "What type of bank is this?" he asked in frustration. "I can't even withdraw my money." Someone came by and said, "The ATM works fine. I just used it a minute ago. The problem is that there is no money in your account."

The *nimshal* is that when we have a problem, we tend to blame this person or that factor, but we might be focusing in the wrong direction. We have to find the correct address, and when we go there, the problem will be resolved.

And the correct address to go to for all our troubles is Hashem. When we daven to Him, He will save us.

During World War One, Turkey ruled over Eretz Yisrael, and the Turks were drafting all men into their army. Reb Aharon Yosef Luria *zt'l* was afraid of being drafted, so he hid in a basement for many days. The tzaddik Reb Eliezer

(Leizer) HaKohen Rozovsky *zt'l* told him, "It states (*Tehillim* 145:9) טוב ה' לכל. The literal meaning is that Hashem is good and kind to *all His creations*, but we can also translate it to mean that Hashem is a good address for *all problems and issues*. Therefore, go to Hashem and pray to Him, because Hashem is the right address to go to for all troubles, and He can save you from all *tzaros*" (*Avodas Pnim, Emunah u'Bitachon* 16).

Someone wanted to print out a certain Torah pamphlet (*Torah Wellsprings*). He doesn't own a computer, so he went to his brother's office pressed the print button, but nothing happened. So he pressed it again and again. He kept trying, but the printer wasn't working.

His brother, who was working upstairs, rushed down the stairs and said, "Stop pressing the print button. You already printed twenty-five copies!"

Because downstairs, we don't always see what we are accomplishing with our deeds. But upstairs, in heaven, all our deeds, even those that seem as simple as pressing a button, are accomplishing so much. The same is with tefillah. We sometimes think that our tefillos aren't accomplishing, but the truth is that every tefillah has an effect.

Here is another *mashal*:

A person from a primitive village had to take care of some errands in the large city. He arrived at the building that he needed to go to, but a large metal barrier blocked the entrance. Suddenly, the metal barrier went up, allowing him to drive in. After he passed through, the barrier went down again.

Next to this metal barrier was a small hut with a person inside. The villager was convinced that the man in the hut was a

great tzaddik, a miracle worker, because how else could he cause the metal barrier to magically go up and down?

He stopped his car and went over to greet this remarkable man. It isn't every day that you meet a miracle worker. The man in the hut told him, "I'm not a miracle worker," and he showed him the buttons that make the metal barrier go up and down.

The *nimshal* is, we think that only Reb Shimon bar Yochai, the Arizal, and other great tzaddikim could accomplish great things with their tefillos, but what can simple people accomplish? But it isn't so. We do small deeds (compared to the easy act of pressing a button), we daven, and we can accomplish great things.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 32.) says that immediately after Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe that the Yidden made an *egel*, Moshe began

praying for Hashem's compassion. Hashem said (32:10), ועתה הניחה לי ויחר אפי בהם, "and now desist from Me, and let my anger flare against them." The Gemara says, "had the *pasuk* not written it, we wouldn't be able to say it. This teaches us that Moshe grabbed onto Hakadosh Baruch Hu like someone grabbing onto his friend by his clothes and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I won't let go until You forgive them." This teaches us the power of tefillah. It can reach the level of grabbing onto Hakadosh Baruch Hu and telling Him that you aren't letting go until He does your will.

After this tefillah, Moshe went down from the mountain, rebuked the nation, burned the *egel*, and took other steps to correct their grave sin. Then Moshe returned to Har Sinai to daven again. He said (32:32), ועתה אם תשא חטאתם ואם אין מחני נא, מספרך אשר כתבת, "And now if You would but forgive

their sin! – but if not, erase me now from The book that You have written."

Rashi explains that Moshe requested that his name be erased from the entire Torah, "So people won't say about me that I wasn't worthy to daven for the nation."

But behold, Moshe was ענו מכל האדם, the humblest person who ever lived. So why did he think he was worthy for his tefillos to be answered? Furthermore, for all his humility, why would he care if people ridicule him and claim that he wasn't worthy of davening for the nation?

The Beis Aharon (*Likutim* 144:) answers that Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to the tefillah of every person – regardless of what level he is on. It was important to Moshe that Hashem answer his tefillah to prove that Hashem listens to the tefillos of even the lowest person. If his tefillos were not answered, people at

low levels would lose faith in prayer.

Chazal (*Zohar Chaddash*, beginning of *Shir HaShirim*) teaches that Moshe's name isn't mentioned in *parashas Tetzaveh* because of Moshe's request (32:32), ועתה אם תשא חטאתם ואם אין מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת, "And now if You would but forgive their sin! – but if not, erase me now from The book that You have written." Hashem forgave the nation, but nevertheless, Moshe's request was granted, and his name isn't mentioned in *parashas Tetzaveh*.

The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l* asks, "Why was Moshe punished? Why isn't his name mentioned in *Tetzaveh*? He was *moser nefesh* for Bnei Yisrael, and this is his reward? The answer is that he was punished because he said וואם אין, "but if not..." This implies that Moshe wasn't confident that his tefillos for their atonement would be accepted, which is why he was punished. Because

we must believe that Hashem listens to every person's tefillah.

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (ch.20) tells us that when Agag was captured by Shaul, he cried and moaned, "Woe is to me! Perhaps I will never leave children in this world!" Hashem answered his tefillos, and he had descendants. That is how Haman was born.

Reb Chaim Kanievsky Shlita says that this Chazal reveals to us the power of tefillah: Even the tefillah of the Amaleki Agag, and even when his tefillos were for something negative, Hashem answered his tefillos.

The Ben Ish Chai (*Od Yosef Chai, Matos*) tells the story of a simple, G-d fearing person who didn't understand *lashon hakodesh*. Once, he was in the beis knesses, and he heard the chazan sing, אלו ואלו נשרפין בבית (איזהו מקומן) (from *הדרן*) in a beautiful tune. The words mean, "Both these *korbanos*

are burned in the place of ashes." The simple person didn't know the translation but figured that they must be a very special blessing since the chazan sang them so melodiously. As he wanted to bless his children in a very beautiful way, he memorized these words, and every Friday night when he *benched* his children, he would repeat with immense *kavanah* אלו ואלו נשרפין בבית הדשן.

Once, a *talmid chacham* stayed in his home on Friday and heard the simple man bless his children and say, אלו ואלו נשרפין בבית הדשן. Frightened by the implication of these words, the *chacham* said to the simple man, "Why are you cursing your children?" He instructed him never to say this "blessing" again.

That night the scholar had a dream and was informed from heaven that he wasn't correct for stopping the simple man from saying these words. Because he was saying

these words with *temimus*, and Hashem would rearrange the letters and turn them into a blessing for his children. (This story is also written briefly by the Or HaChaim HaKadosh, *Rishon l'Tzion, Mishlei 3.*)

Similarly, Sefer Chassidim (18) tells a story of a *kohen* who used to say, יברכך ה' וישמורך, and ישמורך means "Hashem should destroy you"! The *chacham* of the beis knesses told this *kohen* that he may no longer say *birchas kohanim* because of this terrible error. "He was shown from heaven that if he doesn't permit this *kohen* to *duchan* (say *birchas kohanim*) he will be punished."

The Sefer Chassidim explains, "The Creator who checks the heart of man only wants the man's heart. Even when he doesn't say the words correctly, it is considered as if he said them correctly. And those who say *pesukei d'zimra* in a loud, sweet voice, and they say the words

erroneously, they are accepted like a sweet incense, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is very happy with them."

Laziness vs. Alacrity

Sometimes the *yetzer hara* is very strong, and a person feels he can't fight him. What should he do then? One counsel is to tell the *yetzer hara*, "Later on. Not right now. Come back later."

Every attribute should be used for *avodas Hashem*. Laziness should be used when it comes to *aveiros*. Be lazy, procrastinate, and hopefully, later, you will overcome the *yetzer hara*.

In this week's *parashah*, Aharon used this technique to delay the nation from worshipping the *egel*. He told the nation (32:5), חג לה' מחר, "A festival for Hashem tomorrow!" He told them they shouldn't act immediately on their temptation to worship the *egel*. They should wait a

day. Rashi writes, בטוח היה, "He was certain that [by then] Moshe will come, and they will serve Hashem."

The plan didn't work, because (32:6) וישכימו ממהרה, "They rose early the next day," and Rashi writes, "The Satan gave them alacrity [*zrizus* to awaken early], so they would sin," and they made the *egel* before Moshe came down from the mountain. Nevertheless, we learn the technique. When you push off doing an *aveirah* for later, there is hope that you won't commit the *aveirah*. Something might prevent you from actualizing your plans; furthermore, you have time to think things over and to reconsider.

Also by the *machlokes* of Korach, Moshe said (Bamidbar 16:5-7), בקר וידע ה' את אשר לו... ושימו עליהן קטורת לפני ה' מחר, "In the morning, Hashem will make known the one He chooses... Place *ketores* [in the firepans] before Hashem,

tomorrow..." Rashi explains, הוא היה מתכוין לדחותם, שמא יחזרו בהם, "Moshe intended to push them off [for a day], perhaps they will do *teshuvah*."

That plan didn't work out, either. As Rashi (*Bamidbar* 16:19) explains, Korach spoke *leitzanus* with his group the entire night and spurred them on to continue the *machlokes*. He didn't leave them alone for a moment, lest they have time to reconsider. Nevertheless, we can learn the method: When you have a temptation to do something wrong, wait a day. Maybe by then, you will refrain.

And *chas v'shalom*, even if he commits the *aveirah* on the next day, he will be rewarded for the moments he refrained. Because refraining from an *aveirah*, even for a short time, is a benefit.

A speaker once gave a *drashah* for two hours straight but felt that his

words didn't accomplish anything. His audience wasn't with him; he thought it was a waste of time. The Chofetz Chaim told him, "For two hours, no one spoke *lashon hara*. That is also a benefit." Perhaps they spoke *lashon hara* afterward, but they refrained for two hours, which is also significant.

The Midrash states, וכל רגע ורגע שאדם חוסם פיו זוכה לאור הגנוז שאין מלאך ובריה יכולים לשער, "For every moment one refrains from speaking, he merits the *ohr haGanuz*, which no *malach* or creation can imagine." The Chofetz Chaim emphasizes that even if he ends up speaking, he will be rewarded for refraining for a moment.

A bachur in Yerushalayim had fallen to very low spiritual levels. Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* wanted to meet the bachur to try and influence him to return. People discouraged Reb Shlomke, telling him that many

people tried and failed. "It isn't worth your time."

Nevertheless, he tried. He told the *bachur*, "Even if you can't win the battle with the *yetzer hara*, at least push off doing the *aveirah* for some time. Your procrastination will bring Hashem immense pleasure, greater than the pleasure Hashem receives from the *malachim*."

He explained to the *bachur* that the *yetzer hara* is called "king," as it states (*Koheles* 4:13), מלך זקן וכסיל, "When a king demands something, everyone obeys immediately. Show the *yetzer hara* that he isn't your king."

This counsel helped the *bachur*, and eventually, he did *teshuva*.

There are two translations for the word כתר. The common translation is crown, but it also means to wait, as it states (*Iyov* 36:2), כתר לי זעיר, "Wait for me a bit." What connection is

there between a crown and waiting? This hints that when one waits and doesn't commit an *aveirah* immediately, this is his crown and pride. Furthermore, by waiting, he presents a crown to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The nation received two crowns when they said נעשה, ונשמע, but when they made the *egel*, they lost their crowns. As it states (33:4), ויתאבלו ולא שתו איש עדיו עליו, "They became grief-stricken, and no one donned his jewelry." Rashi explains that this refers to their crowns. Perhaps this is because the crowns are given to those who wait and postpone doing an *aveirah*. But they acted in haste and served the *egel*, so they lost their crowns.

As it states (32:1), וירא העם, כי בושש משה, "The nation saw that Moshe had delayed." Rashi explains that Moshe told the nation he would return from Har Sinai after forty days, which, according to the nation's calculation,

meant Moshe would return on the 16th of Tamuz. But, Moshe didn't return on the 16th (the Satan brought darkness and confusion to the world and produced an image of Moshe being carried up to heaven), and the nation thought that Moshe was *niftar*. This brought them to making the *egel*. Actually, Moshe meant he would come down on the 17th of Tamuz (because the day he went up on the mountain wasn't a full day, and it wasn't counted among the forty days). So, the *aveirah* was due to rushing. Had the nation waited another full day, they wouldn't have made the *egel*.

However, when you have the opportunity to perform a mitzvah, you should act immediately. Don't push it off for later because you might lose the mitzvah. For example, a person has a set time for studying Torah, but he also has something important to take care of. He shouldn't say, "I will learn Torah later. Now I need to take

care of my needs." Instead, he should say, "I will take care of my needs later. Right now, I have to study Torah." As it states (2:4), אל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה שמוא לא תפנה, "Don't say that when I free myself from my obligations, I will study, because perhaps there won't be a moment when you are completely free."

So, when it comes to *aveiros* push it off for later, and for mitzvos, grasp the opportunity as quickly as possible.

Amalek tells people to push off mitzvos for later. As it states (*Shemos* 17:9), וצא והלחם בעמלק מחר, which can be translated, "Go and fight with Amalek, who is renowned for being the one who advises you 'tomorrow,' to perform the mitzvos at a later time.

Esther invited Haman to her party, and Haman was pleased about it, as it states (*Esther* 5:9), ויצא המן ביום, "That day, Haman went out joyful

and exuberant." Why didn't Haman suspect that Esther was plotting his downfall? This is because Esther said (5:8), "ומחר אעשה, "Tomorrow I will do..." She mentioned tomorrow, which is Amalek's language, and that convinced Haman that it was safe. Because when Yidden do a good deed, they do it right away. Pushing it off is Amalek's approach.

Overcoming Anger

The first step in overcoming anger is the same; push it off for later.

There are times when one needs to show anger.¹ For example, teachers, parents, or anyone who sees something very wrong and understands that he must rebuke the subject. Even then, it is worth waiting for a later moment

because responding immediately will lead to anger, while pushing it off for later will help you address the matter in a wiser, calmer, and more effective manner.

The Ben Ish Chai told the following parable:

A king and his prime minister would often dress up like regular people and walk about the kingdom to hear what the common folks were saying.

Once, the king wanted to visit the hospital to hear what the ill people said about the king and the kingdom.

The prime minister didn't think it was a good idea. He said, "What can we hear in a hospital that is important for your kingdom?"

1. The *poskim* say that one may never actually be angry. There are times when he may demonstrate anger but there should never be any real anger in his heart.

But the king insisted, and they arrived at the hospital. They visited a patient who was in great agony. "What happened to you?" they asked.

"I was bitten by a wild dog."

"Is there no cure for you?"

"There is a cure. If I eat the liver of the dog that bit me, I will recover."

"So why are you upset? There's a cure. You can be healed."

The man explained, "The liver needs to be removed from the dog when the dog is still alive. But I was so angry at the dog, I threw a stone and killed it. Now, I don't have a cure anymore."

When they left the hospital, the prime minister said, "I told you this would be a waste of time. We didn't hear anything worthwhile here."

The king disagreed. "I heard something very useful. I learned that if I become angry, I must wait before responding. Because if I act impulsively, I might regret it later, like the ill man who regrets that he killed the dog. From now on, I will never execute someone in the kingdom before waiting a night to think things over."

The Sefer Chassidim tells of a father who said to his son before his demise, "You honored me in my lifetime, and I want you to honor me after my death, too. This is how you should honor me: When you are angry about something, don't respond immediately. Let a night pass before responding."

The son promised he would do so.

This son married, and the couple didn't have children. He traveled to a distant land to earn money and was away for many years.

One day, he finally returned. Before he knocked at his door, he heard the voice of a man speaking with his wife from within the house. He grabbed his sword, prepared to kill them both. But then he remembered the promise he made to his father. He immediately returned the sword to its sheath, and then he heard his wife say to the man, "Your father left many years ago and didn't know that I was pregnant with you. If he would know that he has a grown son of marriageable age, he would surely come home to marry you off."

From outside the door, the husband announced, "My wife, open the door. I've returned!"

He told them, "I bless Hashem for helping me overcome my anger. And I bless my father for teaching me to sleep a night before acting on my anger. Otherwise, I would have

killed my wife and my son tonight."

"They were extremely happy, and all their neighbors came to their home to celebrate together with them."

So many family feuds (and the like) evolve because people react immediately. If we train ourselves to push off getting angry until later, we will save ourselves a lot of heartache.

As a wise person said, "Before I speak, I rule over my words. After I speak, the words rule over me." Reb Chaim Vital (*Shaarei Kedushah* 1:6) says, "Always remember: Don't rush to do anything or to speak even a minor matter until you patiently think it through, whether you should say or do that matter or whether you should refrain. Because the fruit of rushing is regret, and then it is too late to put your words back into their bag."

Also, when it comes to anger, you will gain a lot by pushing off the anger for later. Therefore, *baalei mussar* would don special clothes before they got angry about something, and the custom of my grandparents of Lelov was to hold water in the mouth as a *segulah* to overcome anger. This gives you time to reconsider, to realize how much you will be losing with your anger, and to recognize that you might be overreacting.

Sometimes, when the Torah wants to put a ל"מ"ד at the beginning of a word, the Torah places a ה"א at the end of the word instead. For example, it states (*Bereishis* 14:10, 32:4), מצרימה, and Rashi teaches that this stands for למצרים, "to Mitzrayim."

Rebbe Mendel of Vorke zy'a (who was called the *shtiller Rebbe*, the silent Rebbe, because of his caution with his speech) asks, why does the Torah prefer to place a *heh* at the end of the word rather than

a *lamed* at the beginning of the word? Either way, there will be the same amount of letters, so why is a *heh* at the end preferable over a *lamed* at the beginning?

The Vorke Rebbe replied that the *heh* comes at the end of the word, which is preferable over a *lamed* at the beginning of the word because whatever can be said later is an advantage.

And usually, when you speak later, you will say in a softer tone which is alluded to the *heh* at the end of the word, which has a softer sound than a *lamed* at the beginning.

Achashveirosh didn't know of the advantage of holding off anger for later, and therefore, when he became angry with Vashti, he killed her (see 1:12). And at Esther's party, Achashveirosh became mad at Haman and killed him (7:7). He didn't leave himself time to think things over.

Often, fights are caused by misunderstandings, and if you have time to think things over, you will realize that you jumped too quickly to a conclusion. In the megillah, (7:9) Charvonah told Achashveirosh about the gallows Haman built to hang Mordechai, and he added the words, אשר דבר טוב, על המלך. This means that Haman prepared the gallows for Mordechai, who spoke well about the king. But due to Achashveirosh's haste, he understood it to mean that Haman said, "The gallows are even better for the king." The Vilna Gaon gives this interpretation and explains that this is the reason Achashveirosh ordered Haman's execution.

Due to Achashveirosh's misunderstanding, he ordered Haman to hang on the gallows. This resulted from acting impulsively, without taking time to think things through clearly.

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zy'a* had an empty *tabak pushkeh* (snuffbox), which he often held in his hands. Sometimes he would open and close its lid. One of his chassidim asked him about the box. He replied, "When I'm about to get angry, I open the lid and place my anger inside. Two hours later, I open the lid again to reassess and to decide whether the issue warrants anger or not."

Chazal say, כל הנועם כאילו, "Whoever becomes angry it is as if he worshipped *avodah zarah*."

The Orchos Tzaddikim writes, "Be very cautious not to damage anything when you are angry because Chazal (*Shabbos* 105:) say, 'If someone rips his clothing, throws away money, or breaks utensils when he is angry, you should consider it like he worshiped *avodah zarah*.'" The Gemara explains that this will eventually lead him to worship *avodah*

zarah. "Because this is the way of the *yetzter hara*: Today he tells you to do this, tomorrow he tells you to do that until he tells you 'Go and worship *avodah zarah*.'"

This week's parashah discusses the *egel*, so it is an opportune time to work on our anger, which is like *avodah zarah*. And as we saw, a counsel to overcome anger is to push off responding immediately. When it comes to getting angry, those who are lazy are fortunate.

Sadness vs. Joy

The Jewish women danced at *kriyas Yam Suf*,²

while the men danced with the *egel*.³ Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* explained that the *women's simchah*, praising Hashem while dancing at *kriyas Yam Suf*, protected them from worshipping the *egel*. However, the men didn't dance at *kriyas Yam Suf*, and therefore they ended up dancing with *avodah zarah*.

Similarly, the Levi'im also didn't sin with the *egel* (see 32:26). This is because Levi'im serve Hashem with music and joy, as we see in the Beis HaMikdash, and where there's joy, one doesn't fall into the trap of *avodah zarah*.⁴

2. As it states (*Shemos* 15:20), ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן את התוף בידה ותצאנה, כל הנשים אחריה בתפים ובמחולות, "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aharon, took the drum in her hand and all the women went forth after her with drums and dancing."

3. As it states (32:19), וירא את העגל ומחולות, "Moshe saw the *egel* and the dancing,"

4. It is important to bring the joy of Yiddishkeit into the home. When the children see the joy of Yiddishkeit, they won't be drawn to find joy in other places.

The Maor VeShemesh (*Behaloscha*) writes, "A great foundation in *avodas Hashem* is to distance oneself from עצבות ומרה שחורה, from being sad, as far as possible. Because the *Zohar* says that *atzvous* is like *avodah zarah* (שמץ עבודה זרה). The proof is that when one is sad, he has thoughts of *avodah zarah*. Therefore, one must be very distant

from *atzvous*. It leads to all kinds of *aveiros*."

The Tanya (*Igeres HaKodesh* ch.11) writes, "When one is sad, this means he thinks life isn't perfect, and that he is lacking something that he needs. But to think so is heresy, *chas veshalom*. Therefore, the *chachamim* of kabbalah warn against *atzvous* immensely..."¹⁵

5. A person was upset, feeling that he lacked things he needed. His rebbe told him, "The Rambam writes every halachah in Shas. When the Rambam leaves out a halachah, all *poskim* and *meforshim* seek to understand why he did that. No one suggests that perhaps the Rambam simply forgot this halachah. So why is it that when something is lacking in your life that you think a mistake occurred? Why don't you recognize that if you lack something, it is because that is the best thing for you?"

It states (*Tehillim* 19:9), פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב. One of the translations of פקודי is lacking (see *Bamidbar* 31:49). פקודי ה' when you know that what you lack is from Hashem's decision, משמחי לב, you will be happy, because you know that it is certainly for the good.

Someone complained to Rebbe Shalom of Kaminka about his bitter lot in life. Rebbe Shalom told him that everything is sweet, "You just think that it's bitter."

The man replied, "How can you say that this is good?"

Rebbe Shalom answered, "Alcohol tastes bitter for those who aren't accustomed to it. But this bitter drink leads to joy. Similarly, although things seem bitter, it is really joyous. Something good

We've seen four reasons why it is important to be happy, and they are all associated with *emunah*:

(1) Joy in *avodas Hashem* protects from worshipping *avodah zarah* (Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz).

(2) When one is sad, he has thoughts of *avodah zarah* (*Maor v' Shamesh*).

(3) *Atzvus* is like *avodah zarah* (*Zohar*).

(4) Being sad means he doesn't believe that he has everything he needs (*Tanya*).

Now is an opportune time to work on staying away from *atzvus*. It is Adar, after all, and Chazal say, משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה, "When Adar arrives, we increase joy." בשמחה is *gematriya* שנה, year. The *Ohev Yisrael* teaches that the happiness of Adar brings joy to the entire year.

בשמחה is also the letters מחשבה. Because when one thinks positive thoughts, he will be happy.

It states (*Tehillim* 16:4), ירבו עזבותם אחר מהרו. Literally, the

will come from it."

We can compare it to someone who was lost in a forest for a long time, and he finally sees an opening in the distance. He rushes there and sees that it's a cemetery. He becomes extremely happy, because he knows he is near an inhabited area.

Generally, finding a graveyard isn't a joyous occasion, but for this person, it was a joyous sign, because it signified he was near civilization.

The *nimshal* is, people don't generally associate hardships with happiness. Nevertheless, when you realize that the hardships are a sign that something very good will follow, you will be happy with the hardships too.

pasuk is saying that those who worship *avodah zarah* will be punished with distress and sadness.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* once discussed this *pasuk* at his *tish* and explained that the *pasuk* urges us to be happy. After the *tish*, he called over three chassidim and asked them to repeat what he had said. Incredibly, each of them heard something else.

One of them said ירבו עצבותם because, אחר, the *parnassah*

that will come to them later on, מהרו, they are in a rush to attain it now.⁶

Another said ירבו עצבותם אחר מהרו means that one sadness brings on another one. Therefore, we must stay away from sadness, because אחר מהרו, the subsequent sadness will be quick to come after the first sadness.⁷

The third explained, ירבו עצבותם, when people are sad, אחר, it is like they are giving a present to the סיטרא

6. This explanation was also taught by the Rizhiner Rebbe *zt'l*. (*Irin Kadishin*) "There are people who have *parnassah*, but they are anxious and worried about the future. ירבו עצבותם, why are they sad? אחר, it is because they want today the *parnassah* that is supposed to come to them later on. He doesn't have it yet, because it is supposed to come to him later on. מהרו, they are quick to think, "What will be in the future?"

7. Rebbe Shaul Yedidyah of Modzitz *zt'l* always had a joyous smile on his face, even in Poland during the Holocaust. People asked him how he managed to keep a happy demeanor, and why he wasn't worried like everyone else. He replied, "I'm also worried, only I keep my worries tied up and put away. Once a day I take out my worries to look at them, and then I immediately tuck them away until the next day. That's how I am able to stay happy..." (*Imrei Shaul*).

אזרח (the Satan). מהרו means a gift (see *Shemos* 22:15).

The Beis Aharon replied that all three translations are correct (*Divrei Aharon*).

Perhaps we can offer a fourth explanation: ירבו עצבותם, people are sad because מהרו, they are always rushing, and they don't have time to think. There are many things to think about that will cause you immense joy. Just think about all the kindness Hashem gives you, and you will have more than enough reasons to rejoice. However, people are constantly rushing, they don't have peace of mind, and they don't allow themselves a moment to think about these matters.

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover *zt'l* and the Bardichover Rav's son, Reb Yisrael of Pikov *zt'l*, were collecting money together for *pidyon shevuyim*. One winter, they spent a night in a poor man's home. The roof was broken, and icicles

were hanging down. When the *baal habayis* turned on the oven, the icicles began melting, and the water dripped onto Reb Yisrael's bed, disturbing him immensely.

Rebbe Moshe Leib told him, "I have thirteen reasons to be happy: (1) My right side doesn't hurt me, so I can lie on my right side. (2) My left side doesn't hurt either, so I can sleep on my left side, too. (3) My back doesn't hurt..." He counted thirteen reasons he was happy, and they danced from joy. (*Maamar Mordechai* vol.2 p.117).

There is a lot to be thankful for, but for that, one needs time and patience to think.

Above we discussed the pros and cons of rushing. We discussed that it is good to rush to do a mitzvah, and one should be lazy when it comes to *aveiros*. Now we add that you have to slow down and find time to think

about all the good in your
life, because אחר מהרו, if you
will always be in a rush,

ירבו עצבותם, you will be sad,
and you won't discover all
the good that's in your life.