

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Bechukosai



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Bechukosai

Emunah: A Segulah for Success

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzitz zt'l writes, "There is nothing better for *parnassah* than *emunah*."

Reb Moshe of Kobrin zt'l said that a businessperson must believe that every aspect of his business dealings is from Hashem. What he buys, the items he sells, and the prices are all decreed from Above. When one has this *emunah*, he will succeed in all his ways.

Reb Yaakov Kopel zt'l (a student of the Baal Shem Tov zt'l) was called "The Shevisinik" by people because as he did business, he would always say the pasuk (Tehillim 16:8) שׁוֹיְתִי ה' לנגדי תמיד, "I have set Hashem before me always." He was always thinking of Hashem as he worked.

Reb Yaakov Kopel also had a very accurate scale, as the Torah obligates (Vayikra 19:36) מִאֲזֵי צֶדֶק, "You shall have correct scales." The Jewish merchants would borrow his scale at the marketplace, so they could also benefit from his accurate scale. On a day that Reb Yaakov Kopel didn't come to the market, the merchants said to each other, "We can't do business today because the Shevisinik isn't here." They meant: (a) In Reb Yaakov Kopel's absence, they don't have an accurate scale. (b) In general, it is impossible to do business without Shevisi, without the awareness of שׁוֹיְתִי ה' לנגדי תמיד, that everything comes from Hashem.

This *emunah* brings success in business and in everything we do.

On the other hand, thinking that you can earn *parnassah* on your own, without Hashem's help, results in failure. The Mishnah (end of *Kiddushin*) states, "Why do animals have their *parnassah* (their food) without difficulty, while I must struggle for my *parnassah*? It is because my deeds aren't good. My aveiros caused me to lose my *parnassah*."

The Mishnah's words are *קפחתי את פרנסתי*, which means I chopped away at my *parnassah*. We can also explain that *קפחתי* has the letters of *פקחתי*, which means wisdom. The Mishnah is saying that I forfeited my *parnassah* because I thought I was wise and that I could earn *parnassah* with my clever ideas. That is a formula for failure. When a person realizes that he can't make *parnassah* without Hashem's help, he is already on the path to success.

An old, blind priest was selling a forest for an excellent price, and a Chortkover chasid planned to buy it. His friends and business advisors all told him that it was a deal of a lifetime, an opportunity he couldn't pass up. He can earn millions.

He told Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Chortkov zt'l about the immense wealth he was soon to earn from this phenomenal venture. Very surprisingly, Rebbe Dovid Moshe advised him not to purchase the forest.

But the chasid didn't listen to his rebbe's counsel. How could he give up such a deal? So he bought the forest and immediately sent workers to begin chopping down trees. They returned with the sad report that the trees were all rotten.

He lost all his money in this business venture.

He returned to Rebbe Dovid Moshe two years

later and cried, "I know I was wrong. I should have listened to the Rebbe's ruach hakodesh."

The Rebbe replied, "It wasn't ruach hakodesh. It is just that when you spoke to me about your business venture, you didn't once say *im yirtzeh Hashem*. You were confident you would succeed, and you didn't think you needed Hashem's help. And I know that when one goes about doing business with that attitude, he is set for failure. That's why I advised you against buying the forest.¹

The parashah begins with the words אַם בְּחַקְתִּי תִלְכוּ. The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz explains that חַק means *parnassah* (as in חֻקֵי הַחַיִּים לֶחֶם, *Mishlei* 30:8). The pasuk is saying that if

you believe your *parnassah* is from Hashem, וּנְתַתִּי גַשְׁמִיכֶם, בעתם, you will have an abundance of *parnassah*.

In his younger years, Rebbe Moshe of Kapishnitz zt'l was a diamond merchant in Manhattan, NYC, and there was a time that several weeks passed without a single sale. He told his father, Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heshel zt'l of Kapishnitz, אֵיךְ מֵאֵד, גִּאֲרֵנִישֵׁט, "I'm making nothing."

His father replied, "You said it correctly. You can't do anything. Hashem decides whether you will earn *parnassah* or not."

One Erev Shabbos, after another unsuccessful week, he returned the diamonds into his home safe, and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I

1. The Beis HaLevi was once near a forest in Brisk, and he heard a businessman say, "Forest! It is because of you that I lost all my money." The Beis HaLevi replied, "You didn't lose your money because you bought the forest. You bought the forest because it was destined that you should lose the money."

see that I really can't do anything." Just then, the house phone rang. On the phone was a merchant who required a large number of diamonds. Reb Moshe made more money that moment than he hoped to earn during all the weeks he didn't make a sale. This is because when one believes that everything comes from Hashem, he will see great *siyata dishmaya* in all his endeavors and will be successful in whatever he does.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* (Toras Avos, *Emunah u'bitachon* 46) said, "The Lechovitzer told me to build a house. He told me, 'If you build it on the earth, it will stand. But if you build it on your head, it won't last.' [He meant that he should build the home with *emunah* and *bitachon*.] 'It is a *mitzvah* to tell *balabatim* how much *siyata dishmaya* I saw from following this counsel.'"

The Gemara (*Brachos* 8.) tells that when someone got married in Eretz Yisrael, people would ask the *chasan* מוצא או מוצא?

מוצא is as in the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 18:22), מוצא אשה מוצא טוב, "One who has found a wife has found goodness." מוצא is as in the *pasuk* (*Kohel* 7:26), ומוצא אני מר ממות את האשה, "I have found, more bitter than death, the woman." They were asking the *chasan* whether his wife, for him, was like finding goodness or was his married life more bitter than death.

This Gemara arouses some questions: First, why is it their business whether his wife is good or bad? The Chofetz Chaim (1:13) discusses why this conversation doesn't involve *lashon hara*. Furthermore, the *chasan* just got married. How should he know whether his wife is good or bad?

We can also ask about the words במערבא אמרי "in

Eretz Yisrael they would say [to the *chasan*] מצא or מוצא." Since they were asking a question, it should state במערבא שאלו, "In Eretz Yisrael they would ask."

We can answer that מצא מצא is when he believes Hashem helped him find his wife. In contrast, מוצא אני, "I found" is when one thinks he found his wife on his own. If he believes he found his wife on his own, it will be מר ממות, more bitter

than death. This is because *emunah* brings success in *shalom bayis*, *parnassah*, and all aspects of life. One must never forget that it is never מוצא אני, "I found." Whatever he has, Hashem gave him.²

Chazal (Shabbos 31.) say, אמונת זה סדר זרעים, that the tractate *Zeraim* (in *Shas*) is about *emunah*.

Zeraim discusses the halachos of agriculture.

2. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* (*Imrei HaRim Beshalach*) says that when we pray, ותקנו בעצה טובה מלפניך, "Prepare us with good counsel" what we are really asking for is *emunah*, as we say (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) עצתו אמונה. When we have *emunah*, we will automatically find the right solutions, and Hashem will direct us on the best path.

People often say, "These are hard times for *parnassah*. In the past, it was easier, but now we came upon hard times." Their mistake is that they think the "time" is the problem when in truth *parnassah* is dependent on the extent of *emunah* he has. As it states (*Yeshayah* 33:6), והיו אמונת עתיד, the times (good or bad) are according to your *emunah*.

Reb Yitzchak of Neshchiz *zt'l* asked, since *parnassah* and its bounty depends on *emunah*, why are there people who don't believe in Hashem, and yet they have *parnassah*? The answer is that Hashem has *rachmanus* on them because it is truthfully difficult to have *parnassah* without *emunah*.

Why is it called emunah? Tosfos writes, שמאמין בחי עולמים וזורע, "It is because he believes in the creator of the worlds, and plants." How does planting demonstrate that he believes in Hashem?

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l (Sefer HaZechus) explains that the highest level of emunah is when one does hishtadlus, knowing that the hishtadlus doesn't bring the results, only Hashem's kindness does. The test is to believe in Hashem even when you plant and you do hishtadlus; nevertheless, be aware that the results are from Hashem, not from your hand's strength.

It is All from Above

The Torah writes the *tochachah* (the curses) twice. Once is in this week's *parashah*, and again in *parashas Ki Savo*. One difference between the two *tochachos* is that this week's *parashah* contains some

words of comfort to the Jewish nation. For example, it states (26:44-45), ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלותם... כי אני ה' אלקיכם, "Despite all this, while they will be in in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them...because I am Hashem, their G-d..." Whereas, the *tochachah* in *parashas Ki Savo* doesn't include any comforting words.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that the *tochachah* of *parashas Ki Savo* doesn't need comforting words because Hashem's name is mentioned with almost every affliction. As it states (28:21-25) ידבק ה' בך הדבר, "Hashem will attach the plague to you... יככה ה' Hashem will strike you... יתגך ה' נגף לפני אויבך, Hashem will cause you to be struck down before your enemies," and so on. And when one remembers that all the hardships are from

Hashem, that grants him comfort.

Reb Michoel Ber Weismandl *zt'l* saved many people from the Holocaust, and he had plans to save tens of thousands more Yidden, but cruel people prevented him. Devastated, Reb Michoel Ber told Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch *zy'a* (the Rayatz) about it. The Rebbe replied, "And Who did all of this?"

The Rebbe reminded him that ultimately, what occurred was decreed from heaven. Although, the cruel people will be punished severely for their sin, nevertheless, what happened was *bashert*. Reb Michoel Ber said that the Rebbe's words changed his entire outlook.

Chol HaMoed Succos, Rebbe Shlomo Leib Lenchana *zt'l* was leading a *tish* and he was telling chassidim the following ideas: "The entire world isn't worth a *krechitz*. Our destiny is Olam HaBa.

Therefore, we shouldn't be upset about worldly matters. They are trivial. We should keep our focus on the goal, on Olam HaBa."

Just then, a bench collapsed from the weight of the many people standing on it. Some of the chasidim fell and were injured, and also the Rebbe was hit and got injured from the broken bench. The Rebbe emitted a *krechitz* from the pain.

One of the chassidim asked, "Why is the Rebbe *krechitzing*? Didn't the Rebbe say this world isn't worth a *krechitz*?"

The Rebbe replied, "The world isn't worth a *krechitz*. But when it hurts, one shouts and *krechitzes* from pain." The Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l* repeated this story and explained that it is a natural reflex and reaction to *krechitz* and shout when one is in pain. But even then, his mind and intellect should remember that this

world isn't so important that we should moan over it. Furthermore, we have emunah that everything is for the good. Feelings remain feelings, and when one is in pain, he shouts; nevertheless, deep in his heart, he should remember that it is all for the good.³

Yaakov Avinu wanted to tell his children when the galus will end, but when his children arrived, the Shechinah left him, and he was unable to tell them. The Sfas Emes zt'l (Vayichi 5631) explains that Yaakov wanted to tell them that Hashem will be with them, even in galus, but he wasn't allowed to reveal that to his children because if they knew that there would be no galus. All troubles

disappear when we know that everything comes from our Father, who loves us.

Nevertheless, the Sfas Emes writes that although we aren't able to *know* that everything is from Hashem, we can *believe* it, and this belief gives us solace.

Doctors told Reb Leibke Glauberman zt'l of Yerushalayim that his legs need to be amputated. After the operation, one doctor admitted to Reb Leibke's children that they had made a mistake. The amputation wasn't necessary after all.

The children were very angry with the doctors. They made their father

3. A father brings his son to the dentist. It is expected that the son will cry during the treatments. The father isn't upset at his son for crying, because it is natural for a child to cry when in pain. But if the son says to his father, "Why did you bring me here? Why are you doing this to me?" the father will become upset with his son. The son should trust that everything his father does is for the child's benefit.

lame for no reason. They repeated to their father what they had heard.

Reb Leibke replied, "The doctors erred; they shouldn't have amputated. But what happened to my legs wasn't a mistake. In my younger years, I heard from the Yanukah (Rebbe Yisrael of Stolin zt'l) that to say, 'if only things were different' is apikorses because it couldn't have been different."

Everything is for the Good

It states (27:10), והיה הוא קדש, ותמורתו יהיה קדש "It and its exchange shall be holy." The Beis Yisrael notes that והיה is an expression of happiness. The *pasuk* is saying that one should be happy when things are good, but also תמורתו, when things appear to be the opposite of good. He should be happy with every situation because of his belief that יהיה קדש, every

situation is from Hashem, holy and good.

It states (27:14), והעריכו הכהן, בין טוב ובין רע, "The kohen should evaluate it, whether good or bad." the Beis Yisrael explains that the *pasuk* is referring to a person who evaluates his life and reaches the conclusion that it is all good. The *pasuk* reads as follows: והעריכו, he evaluates his life, בין טוב ובין רע, regardless of whether his life appears good or bad, הכהן, he considers it Hashem's chesed. (הכהן represents the attribute of chesed.)

The *pasuk* concludes, "כאשר יעריך אותו הכהן כן יקום" "As the kohen evaluates it, so shall it remain." Since this person maintains that it is all good, it will indeed become that way. Hashem will say, "If you say that this is good, I will show you what is good," and everything will turn around for the better.

"One Cannot Touch what is Destined for Others."

Chazal (*Yoma* 38:) say, אין אדם נוגע מן המוכן לחבירו אפילו כמלא נימא, "One doesn't touch that which is destined for his friend, not even a hairsbreadth."

The Ben Ish Chai zt'l (*Ben Yohayada*) explains the word נוגע, touch. He explains that it isn't just that Hashem prevents others from taking away your *parnassah*. They won't even be able to touch it. That is how distant they will be from taking your *parnassah*.

To explain, the Ben Ish Chai tells the following story:

"A jug containing an immense treasure was concealed under the ground, and no one knew of its existence. The location was a vacation resort. Many people camped in that field in the summertime to enjoy the fresh air. They would insert large pegs into the ground and erect

their tents. This went on for many years, but no one found the treasure. Sometimes, the pegs were just a *tefach* away from the treasure, but no one ever hit the jug, and it remained concealed.

"One year, a newcomer came to the field to vacation. As he pushed his peg into the ground, he hit something hard. He dug some more and found the treasure. This is the meaning of אין אדם נוגע מן המוכן לחבירו אפילו כמלא נימא, 'A person cannot touch that which is destined for his friend, not even a hairsbreadth.' The jug with the treasure was destined for him, and therefore, all the others who came to the field never touched the place where the treasure was buried."

Reb Dovid Saltzer sold salt for his *parnassah*. When a competitor opened another salt store, Reb Dovid Saltzer feared that he might lose his *parnassah*. He knew his fear was unfounded because he

knew that *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and no one can take away what is destined for him; nevertheless, he couldn't deny the truth. He was nervous.

He went to his Rebbe, Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz *zt'l*. His intention wasn't that his Rebbe should bless him that the competition shouldn't harm his *parnassah*. On the contrary, he came to the Rebbe with a broken heart and said, "I need a *brachah* and counsel on how to strengthen my *emunah* and *bitachon*. I see that I'm very distant from having genuine *emunah* and *bitachon*, for I am afraid that my competitor will undermine my *parnassah*."

Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz spoke with Reb Dovid Saltzer at length about *emunah* and *bitachon* and fortified his trust in Hashem. They spoke until Reb Dovid felt he had

sufficiently strengthened his *emunah*.

Sometime later, he returned to the Rebbe of Lechovitz and said, "Baruch Hashem, my *emunah* and *bitachon* has improved. I am no longer concerned about the competition. When I see people going into the other salt store, I know that no one is taking away my *parnassah*. He gets his portion, and I get what Hashem destined for me. Nevertheless, I can't say that I'm happy when I see people going to the other salt store – and this is why I returned. I once again need to strengthen my *emunah* because when I see people walking into the fish store, the shoemaker, baker, or tailor, I'm happy for the shopkeepers. I'm glad they're making *parnassah*. But I'm not happy when I see people going to the other salt store. How can I reach the level that I should be happy when I see people going to the other salt store?"

Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz spoke to Reb Dovid some more about *emunah* and *bitachon*, until Reb Dovid reached the level where he was happy when consumers went to his competitor to buy salt.

The Beis Avraham (Slonim) repeated this story to someone who told him that competition was taking away his *parnassah*.

The man asked the Beis Avraham, "What reward did Reb Dovid Saltzer receive for passing this test?"

The Beis Avraham answered, "First of all, just to be on this high level is already reward. Secondly, Reb Dovid Saltzer's daughter married the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim! Isn't that a great reward?"

Reb Shlomo Cohen owned a printing shop in Bnei Brak. A competitor opened another printing shop on the same street as

his store! But Reb Shlomo wasn't upset. In fact, he helped his competitor with hands-on advice, to help him advance his business. The Chazon Ish was very impressed by this and alluded to this episode in his *sefer, Emunah u'Bitachon* (5). He writes, "Someone who has *bitachon* will not be afraid when someone opens up another store in his neighborhood. He will even try to help him and offer him good counsel. How much *kedushah* is increased in the world when one does kindness for his competitor! Fortunate is he, and fortunate is his generation."

Someone came to Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* lamenting that a competitor opened a store directly across the street from his store.

Rebbe Shlomke listened silently and didn't respond.

The man told Rebbe Shlomke, "There was once

a tzaddik who wanted to help a poor Yid, so he broke off a piece of wood from his table, put it into water, and the splinter grew fruit, as a sign that the chassid would become wealthy. Perhaps the Rebbe can do the same for me?"

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "We are not obligated to believe that the story you just told me is true. But we are obligated to believe that no one can take away the *parnassah* destined for you. I see that you believe in what you don't have to believe in while you have trouble believing in what you must believe."⁴

Hashem Loves Us

When the Baal Shem of Michelstadt *zt'l* was five years old, he was known as a *vunderkint*, wonder-child because of his outstanding wisdom.

The count of Michelstadt heard about the *vunderkint* and asked that the child be brought to him. He wanted to test the child's wisdom.

The young child arrived at the count's castle, and before entering, he stood outside studying the magnificent, majestic edifice. Surprisingly, there weren't any guards or workers around, but the

4. The Meor Einayim (Rebbe Nachum of Chernobyl *zy'a*) was an orphan from both parents, who was raised by his uncle. His uncle was more generous with his own children than with the Meor Einayim. For example, he gave his children bread with butter, and for Reb Nachum, he only gave bread.

Once, there was a can of cement on the table. Reb Nachum thought that it was some kind of spread, and he put it on his bread. Afterwards, obviously, he couldn't eat the bread. He said, "I learned from that episode that when one takes what isn't his, he loses his own, too."

young child knew exactly where to find the count. He entered the castle and headed straight to the count's room, knocked on the door, and exclaimed, "Good day, honorable count."

The count opened the door and asked the child how he found his room so quickly. The child replied, "Before coming in, I looked at the castle from the outside, and I saw that every window has curtains. All curtains were drawn open to let in the sunshine, but one room had the curtains shut. So I understood that you were in that room, hiding behind the curtains to watch me. That's how I knew how to find you. There were no soldiers in the castle to direct me, but I knew where to go."

The count was amazed at the child's wisdom.

As an adult, the Baal Shem of Michalstadt would repeat this episode and

add, "Whenever you endure hard times and feel that the heavenly curtains are drawn closed, that's when Hashem is watching you even closer."

At the end of the *tochachah*, the Torah tells us (26:44), ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ, אויביהם לא מאסתי ולא געלתים לללותם, להפר בריתי אתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם, "But despite all of this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them - for I am Hashem their G-d."

The *pasuk* is saying that Hashem loves us eternally. Even if we suffer from punishment and Hashem's concealment, Hashem always loves us and desires our best.

The *Zohar* (vol.3 115:) describes the extent of the love. The *pasuk* states לללותם, obliterate, without a ויא"ו. (It doesn't state לללותם). לללותם comes from the word כלה.

The pasuk is saying that even when we are in galus, Hashem loves us like a *chasan* loves his *kalah*.

The Zohar continues, "It can be compared to a person who loves a woman who lives in a tannery market [a בורסקי, where there are very foul odors]. If she didn't live there, he would never go there. But since she lives there, he thinks of the tannery as though it were a market of perfumes, where the best scents of the world are sold.

"[This is what the pasuk is saying]: ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אוביהם, even when they will be in *galus*, which has a terrible stench like a tannery – לא מאסתים ולא געלתים –

I will not be revolted with her. And the reason is לללתם, I love her like a כלה. She is my beloved bride, and for me, it is like the best perfumes in the world are there.

Another translation of לללתם is yearning, as in ללתה נפשי. The Ropshitzer Rav ז"ל (Zera Kodesh, וזרא ד"ה וידבר, (משה) says that the pasuk teaches us why Hashem loves us as though we were His kalah. It is because of לללתם, which can be translated as yearning (כלות). Hashem loves us because the Yidden yearn for Hashem, with all their heart and soul.⁵

After the *tochachah*, the Torah discusses ערכין, which is when a person says ערכי

5. The Ropshitzer Rav adds the following words:

"A person should never lose hope. He should never say that he was detached from Hashem. He should shout and pray to Hashem that he became so distant from Him. He should plead that Hashem have compassion on him, that he should be able to express himself well before Hashem, to say the proper words, and to daven as one should, and Hashem will certainly help him."

עלי, "I will give my worth to the Beis HaMikdash," or when one says ערך פלוני עלי, "I will give the worth of another person to the Beis HaMikdash." Why do these *halachos* follow the *tochachah*?

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* explains that after reading the *tochachah*, one might think he is worthless because Hashem is angry with him. Therefore, following the *tochachah* comes the *parashah* of עריבן, so everyone will know that we always are precious before Hashem. Hashem's love to us is always intact.

A *bris milah* is a pledge of love between Hashem and the Jewish nation, and it is made with a young child of eight days old. As a child gets older, he might feel he doesn't deserve Hashem's love. So we tell him that Hashem made this bond of love with him when he was a young child, before he did any good deeds. This proves that the love is unconditional. It

can be compared to a parent's love for a child, even when the child doesn't deserve that love.

A *bachur* joined the Israeli army, became irreligious, *r'l*, and post-army, traveled to India. A Chabad *shaliach* living in India made it his mission to remind the Israeli youth wandering in India that they have their own heritage and don't need to search for meaning and spirituality among idol worshippers.

This *bachur* came to the Chabad house and told the Chabad *shaliach* that he knew how to put on tefillin and all about Yiddishkeit. He explained that he was raised in a religious home. "But I left it all behind me, and Hashem doesn't love me anymore."

The *shaliach* replied, "whether you wear a kippah or you don't, whether you keep Shabbos, or you don't; in all situations, Hashem loves

you and awaits your return."

The conversation was over. The *shaliach* thought he didn't influence the bachur (and still thinks so) when actually his words penetrated deeply into the bachur's heart. He discovered that Hashem loves him, and that spurred him on his process of *teshuvah*.

There is another story of a bachur who went off the *derech*, and his father invested a lot of money – tutors, *mechanchim*, role models, etc. – to bring the child back.

Finally, the child did *teshuvah*, and the father asked him, "Which dollar brought you back?"

The father meant, "I paid a lot of money for *mechanchim* and tutors.

Which investment paid off and brought you back?"

The *bachur* replied, "It wasn't the *mechanchim* or the tutors that you hired. Rather, a certain rav once greeted me warmly. I told him, 'Do you know who I am? If you knew who I am, you wouldn't be happy to see me,' and I told him all about my *aveiros*.

"The rav replied, 'Even so, Hashem loves you, and therefore, I love you, too.'

"I proceeded to tell about some graver sins that I committed. The rav repeated, 'Hashem is your Father, and a father always loves his child.'

The bachur said, "I had this conversation with the rav just as I was about to commit a severe *aveirah*. This conversation turned me around, and I returned to my Father in heaven."⁶

6. Reb Mendel Futterfas zt'l was in a jail in Russia for years. He once watched a spider spin a web. A fly got caught in the web,

The Benefits of Poverty

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 50.) relates:

Reb Yosef the son of Reb Yehoshua ben Levi was *niftar* (clinical death) and after a few days, returned to life. His father asked him what he saw in Olam HaBa. Reb Yosef replied, עולם הפוך ראיתי, עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה, "I saw a turned-over world. Those valued in this world [due to their wealth] are low and unimportant in the next world. And those who are low and disrespected in this world [because of

their poverty] are precious there."

This is as it states (*Zechariah* 14:6), אור יקרות קפאון, "The light that is precious and weightless." The Gemara says that this refers to wealthy people who are precious in this world but not necessarily in the next world.

This is because the poor live with a constant reminder that they must turn their hearts to Hashem. They know that they can't manage without Hashem's help.

and tried to go free, but it couldn't. It kept struggling in its attempt to leave the web. When it gave up, the spider came and finished the job.

Reb Mendel Futterfas thought to himself, "Everything in the world can be a lesson in *avodas Hashem*. What lesson can I learn from what I just saw?"

He came to the following conclusion. Chazal compare the fly to the *yetzer hara*. As long as one is trying to get free, the *yetzer hara* stands at a distance. The *yetzer hara* knows that he can't accomplish so much, because the person is struggling to get free and to come close to Hashem. But when a person loses hope, then the *yetzer hara* comes and finishes the job, *rachmana litzlan*.

When the Chofetz Chaim's *rebbeztin* was *niftar*, the Chofetz Chaim requested that she be buried next to a poor woman. He explained, "In *Tehillim* (109:31) it states, כִּי יַעֲמוּד לִימִין אַבְיוֹן לְהוֹשִׁיעַ מִשְׁפָּטֵי נַפְשׁוֹ, "Hashem stands to the right of the destitute, to save him in judgment." The *pasuk* doesn't say that Hashem stands next to *tzaddikim* or *gaonim*. It is specifically the poor who have this benefit; therefore, I want her to be buried next to a poor woman"

Similarly, Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* requested to be buried next to a poor person, as long as this poor person acted according to the Torah during his lifetime.

He could have asked to be buried near a *tzaddik*, or a great *baal tzedakah*, and the *chevrah kadisha* would have fulfilled his request. But Reb Shlomo Kluger understood the special place of the poor.

The Mesilas Yesharim (1) writes, "Everything in the world, the good and the bad, are tests for mankind. Poverty on one side, and wealth on the other." Each situation is a test, and one can grow from every situation. Poverty is a great test. There are those who *chas veshalom* become angry at Hashem for not giving them more money, and there are poor people who don't have peace of mind because they are so worried about the future. Furthermore, some poor people steal from others, *r'l*. But there are the fortunate poor people who pass these tests; they trust in Hashem and are happy with their lot.

A *bachur* once asked the Chofetz Chaim's opinion about a certain *shidduch* suggested to him. The Chofetz Chaim advised the *bachur* to visit the family's home.

After visiting, the *bachur* told the Chofetz Chaim,

"The house is tiny, the floors aren't tiled, the ceiling leaks when it rains, and there are no chairs. They turn over a crate to sit down."

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "Nu! And tell me another good quality this family has!" In the Chofetz Chaim's view, poverty was an asset for the *shidduch*, not a fault.

The Chofetz Chaim himself married a poor girl (the daughter of his stepfather). He could have married into a wealthy family and received a large dowry, but the Chofetz Chaim realized that if he didn't marry his stepfather's daughter, it would disturb the *shalom bayis* for his mother, so he agreed to marry her. In retrospect, he said that marrying a poor girl was the best thing for him. The Chofetz Chaim had a friend who married a girl from a wealthy home and shortly after the wedding went into business and lost a lot of money. He lost out on

both worlds. The Chofetz Chaim said that if he had married a wealthy girl, the same would have happened to him. But he married a poor girl, and he was able to study Torah his entire life. His wife earned money working in a store, enabling the Chofetz Chaim to devote his life to learning Torah and writing his *sefarim*.

A very poor person complained before the Chofetz Chaim about his poverty. The Chofetz Chaim explained to him that in heaven Hashem will be his lawyer, as it states, כִּי יַעֲמוּד לִימִין אֲבוֹן הַחוֹשֶׁעַ מִשׁוֹפְטֵי נַפְשׁוֹ, "Hashem stands to the right of the destitute, to save him in judgment." What could be better than that?

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* told a *mashal*:

A poor man and a wealthy man were summoned to court. The wealthy person hired an expensive lawyer to defend

him, while the poor person couldn't afford to hire any lawyer at all.

One day, the poor man and the wealthy person met. The poor man said, "I wish I could be like you. I have no lawyer, but you have the country's best lawyer working for you." The wealthy man replied, "It is the opposite. I'm jealous of you. The judge on your case is your relative, and he will certainly have mercy on you. But I don't know what will be with me."

This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, כי יעמוד לימין אביון, להושיע משופטי נפשו "Hashem stands to the right of the destitute, to save him in judgment." He has the greatest help, and he will be found innocent in judgment.

There was once a poor person who was constantly bemoaning his plight, and

one day he said, "I wish that whatever I touch would turn to gold."

His wish was answered. He picked up an object, and it became gold. He touched the table, and the table turned into gold. He touched the chairs, and they also turned into gold. He went around his house touching things, turning them to gold. His head started racing, imagining how much money he would earn when he sold all that gold. He was hungry, so he picked up a piece of bread. It turned to gold. He tried taking a cup of water. It turned to gold. Fearing that he would die from hunger, he shouted, "Hashem! Take this blessing away from me!"

That is when he realized that there is more to life than wealth and that he should be thankful for the blessings Hashem gave him.⁷

7. The story we wrote is based on the Maharsha's commentary (*Bava Basra* 25:). The Maharsha discusses a person that whatever he

It states at the beginning of the parashah, אם בחקתי תלכו... ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם ונתנה הארץ פרוי ועץ השדה יתן פרוי "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments... I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce, and the trees of the field will give its fruit." The reward is about getting rain, productive agriculture, and cattle. Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l (*Tiferes Shimshon, Bechukosai*) asks, why doesn't the Torah say, "If you go in the path of the Torah, you will become wealthy, and you will have

a lot of gold and silver and diamonds?"

Reb Pinkus replied that a gift is given to increase the closeness between the giver and the receiver. Hashem doesn't want to give wealth, gold and silver, because these have an inherent risk of distancing the receiver from Hashem.

Because when one has a lot of money, he feels secure. He doesn't worry. He tells himself, "Even if there's a famine, I can take my money, travel elsewhere, and buy food

touched turned to silver, but then he didn't have anything to eat. The Maharsha writes the *pasuk* (*Koheles* 5:9), "אזהב כסף לא ישבע כסף, "The one who loves silver won't be satisfied with silver."

Sometimes it appears that the grass is greener on the other side, but everyone has their struggles and problems. Believe me, you don't want to go through what they are going through. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa said that if everyone would place their *peckel* (package of *tzaros*) on a table and then have the right to take any package they want, each person would choose their own package.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zy"l said that this is alluded to in *parashas Korach* (17:24), ויקחו איש מטהו "each person took his staff." Each person chose his own *peckel*.

there." Whereas crops and livestock can die in a plague or frost, and he can lose all his money. He must always turn to Hashem for help. Hashem prefers to give gifts that guarantee the continuous connection between the Him and His children.

The Noda b'Yehudah (*Ahavas Tzion drush 5*, ד"ה א"נ, מטבע) writes, "All coins – the new ones and the old

ones – are round. They don't have any other shape. Perhaps this was established purposely many years ago, to hint that money is something that rolls; it doesn't stand in one place. Wealth is a גלגל המתגלגל בעולם, like a wheel that turns around in the world [sometimes you have it and sometimes you don't] and one shouldn't place his trust in his wealth."⁸

8. One day, the owner of a hotel said to a businessman who was staying in his hotel, "You certainly have heard of Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l*. Tonight, this great Rebbe will be coming to our hotel. Do you mind sleeping in a less extravagant room, so I can give the best room to the Rebbe?"

The businessman wasn't a chassid, but he didn't mind doing this favor. He decided he would watch the Rebbe and determine on his own if he is truly a tzaddik.

Later that night, after the Rebbe had already arrived, the businessman overheard the owner of the hotel speaking with his wife. He didn't want to listen in to their conversations, but they were speaking very loudly, almost shouting at one another. He heard them say that the Rebbe asked them to give him two-hundred rubles, which was all they owned. They were wondering and debating whether they should acquiesce to the Rebbe's request.

The next day they gave two-hundred rubles to the Rebbe.

The businessman was upset with the Rebbe. He didn't think it

When Nevuchadnezzar Yerushalayim into galus, sent the Yidden of he didn't banish the poor

was fair that he should ask them for so much money.

The Rebbe with his *gabbai* were outside the inn, and the Rebbe pointed to one corner of the yard and said, "This is a good place to build a barn." Pointing to another spot he said, "This is a good location to build a new inn..." The businessman thought it was strange that the Rebbe was saying these things.

A few years later, the businessman returned to the inn and he saw that everything was exactly as the Rebbe had said. There was a large barn in the corner, and a new inn built exactly where the Rebbe spoke about.

The businessman immediately traveled to Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l* and said, "Now I know that you are a holy man. Everything you predicted occurred. But please tell me, why did you take so much money from that couple? Two hundred rubles was everything they owned. It doesn't seem correct."

The Rebbe replied, "It was destined in heaven that this couple should become wealthy, but it would only occur after they daven. Their two hundred rubles were stopping them from davening. Whenever a financial worry arose, they said to one another, "But we have two hundred ruble. If we need the money, we have from where to take it. Everything will be o.k.' So I took the two hundred rubles away from them. This spurred them to daven to Hashem, and they received the wealth that was destined for them.

The Nesivos Shalom writes that when they were building the Slonimer Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, they were confronted with many hardships, and the founders and *roshei yeshiva* would meet from time to time to seek ways to overcome all the obstacles. They would always conclude the meetings with the following words: "We are *umbeholfeners*, and the *umbeholfeners helft der Aibershter*." Translation: We don't see any hope. But Hashem helps those who feel helpless."

people. As it states (Malachim 2, 24:14) לא נשאר זולת דלת עם הארץ, "There was no one left except for the poorest of the common people." The Me'il Tzedakah (957) explains, "Let's learn from this the uniqueness of the destitute and the poor. The enemy was able to rule over the officers of Bnei Yisrael and all the chiefs [and wealthy people], but they couldn't harm the destitute people... Hashem put into Nevuchadnezzar's heart that he should leave the poor people alone because Hashem resides with the poor, they are His merkavah, and He didn't want them to leave Him."

In conclusion, there are many benefits to being poor. There are also tests and challenges, but so does every other situation in life. Being wealthy isn't a picnic either. Therefore, be happy with the portion Hashem gave you, whether it is large or small, and serve Hashem and pass the

tests that are unique to you and your circumstances.

Shabbos

The tochachah discusses the suffering in galus, the days when Eretz Yisrael is desolate, and we live among the nations. The pasuk explains that this punishment comes because the Yidden didn't keep shemitah.

It states (26:33-34) ואתכם אזרה בגוים... והיתה ארצכם שממה... אז I will scatter you among the nations...your land will be desolate.... Then the land will be appeased for the shemitah years."

Rashi writes, "This will appease Hashem's anger, for He was angry about the shemitah."

The Tiferes Shlomo zt'l has another explanation for the pasuk. It is saying that during galus, אז תרצה Hashem loves Shabbos. On Shabbos,

it is like there is no churban Beis HaMikdash. "On Shabbos, nothing is lacking due to the galus. Everything is well. This is the meaning of the pasuk את שבתותי תשמרו ומקדשי תראו, when you keep Shabbos, it will be considered like the Beis HaMikdash is built. The Shabbosim in galus are even greater than the Shabbosim in the times of the Beis HaMikdash. The love is more complete."

The Gemara (Shabbos 10.) tells us that Hashem said to Moshe, "I have a good gift in My treasury, it is called Shabbos, and I want to give it to the Jewish people. Go inform them."⁹

The Chidushei HaRim says that Moshe Rabbeinu still fulfills Hashem's decree today. Moshe didn't

tell us only once about the greatness of Shabbos. Each week before Shabbos arrives, Moshe speaks to every Yid's *neshamah* and tells him, "Hashem told me to tell you that Shabbos is coming. Hashem is giving you the great gift of Shabbos!"

Many people feel uplifted on Friday when Shabbos arrives. The Chidushei HaRim explains that they are receiving Moshe Rabbeinu's message. The Chidushei HaRim writes, "Even if a person is alone in a room, he will experience the holiness of Shabbos when it arrives."

Shabbos has two components: there are the halachos of Shabbos and the joy and holiness of Shabbos. It is important to

9. Hashem says that Shabbos is בבית נני, in His treasury. Tzaddikim explain that Hashem doesn't take Shabbos out of His treasury to give it to us. On Shabbos, Hashem brings us into His treasury so we can enjoy the Shabbos there.

experience both aspects of Shabbos.¹⁰

In the Shabbos *zemiros* we say, כל מקדש שבת כראוי לו, כל שומר שבת כדת מחללו שכרו הרבה מאוד. Rebbe Henoah of Alexander zy'a said that this song refers to the two levels of Shabbos observance. There are the fortunate people who keep Shabbos, כראוי לו, as is fitting and proper. They connect with the joy and spirit of Shabbos. And others keep it "with caution not to desecrate it." They don't experience the joy of Shabbos, but they are cautious with the halachos. שכרו הרבה מאוד, he will earn a great reward. This is explicitly stated about the people who keep Shabbos with the laws, without the spirit and joy of the day. Rebbe Henoah of Alexander explains that the *zemiros* wants to encourage everyone to keep Shabbos,

so it tells those who keep the laws that they will be rewarded immensely. They shouldn't be concerned that they are losing money or are limited on what they can do on Shabbos because they are earning a great reward. Those who keep the Shabbos together with the spirit and joy of Shabbos don't need encouragement. They are motivated to keep the Shabbos because they know just how beautiful, pleasurable, and joyous Shabbos can be.

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover zy'a told the following *mashal*:

Someone wanted to invite a very important person to his home. In honor of this guest, he ordered the best foods, hired professional musicians and comedians, and lit many candles. Everything was perfect...

10. The Chazon Ish said, "If a non-Jew would know the enjoyment of learning a daf Gemara before Shacharis on Shabbos morning he would convert just to be able to experience this joy."

but he forgot to invite the guest of honor.

Rebbe Moshe Leib said that this is what occurs to some people on Shabbos. They prepare for Shabbos by cleaning their homes, cooking good foods, wearing expensive clothing, and lighting the Shabbos candles. Everything is perfect and ready, but they forget to invite Shabbos itself.

Reb Moshe Leib explains that this is the meaning of the *pasuk*, וקראת לשבת [עונג]. Call Shabbos. Invite Shabbos as well. Don't forget the guest of honor.

Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* said that he knew a Yerushalmi Yid who would say the following *tefillah*: "Ribono Shel Olam, You gave me challos for *lechem mishnah*, wine for Kiddush and *Havdalah*, and all other things I need for Shabbos. Now I request, give me Shabbos for Shabbos." He meant that he wanted to experience the joy, sweetness, and holiness of the Shabbos. He didn't

want to remain only with the food.

The Midrash Shmuel (Reb Shmuel Azida *zt'l*) once came to the Arizal, and the Arizal stood up for him. Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* asked the Arizal why he stood up for his student. The Arizal replied, "I didn't stand up for him. I stood up for the tana Reb Pinchas ben Yair, who came in with him. Reb Shmuel Azida did a good deed today and merited a connection with Reb Pinchas ben Yair."

Which mitzah did Reb Shmuel Azida perform? The Arizal didn't say, so Reb Chaim Vital asked the Midrash Shmuel for an explanation.

The Midrash Shmuel told him that early that morning, he was walking to shul for *Shacharis* at the *netz hachamah*, when he heard cries coming from one of the houses. He went to see what happened, and found a distraught family that had been robbed that night. The thieves took away their money and their

clothing. The Midrash Shmuel said, "You see that I'm wearing my Shabbos clothes. This is because the head of the household didn't have anything to wear, so he gave him my clothes."

Reb Chaim Vital repeated what he heard to the Arizal. The Arizal concurred and explained, "Reb Pinchas ben Yair excelled in helping the poor. Therefore, when the Reb Shmuel Azida performed the mitzvah of *tzedakah*, Reb Pinchas ben Yair came to him from heaven."

The concept is discussed in kabbalah sefarim. When a tzaddik excels in a particular mitzvah, Hashem enables them to return to this world to help someone who is performing this mitzvah, which was their specialty. This is what happened to Reb Pinchas ben Yair and Reb Shmuel Azida. Reb Pinchas ben Yair excelled in charity, and when Reb Shmuel Azida performed the mitzvah of *tzedakah*,

Reb Pinchas ben Yair came down from heaven to help him complete the mitzvah in the best way.

The sefarim explain that this is for the benefit of the tzaddik in heaven and for the person who performs the mitzvah. It is the benefit of the tzaddik in heaven because how else can he perform these mitzvos in heaven? And it is for the benefit of the person performing the mitzvah because the *ibur neshamah*, the holy neshamah that comes to him, helps him succeed in fulfilling the mitzvah in the best way.

The Chidushei HaRim teaches: Hashem keeps Shabbos, as it states (Shemos 31:17) *וביום השביעי שבת וינפש*, "On the seventh day, Hashem rested." So, when one keeps Shabbos, he merits that Hashem Himself will come to the person to help him keep Shabbos. It will not only be a *Tana* coming to him; it will be Hashem Himself. What greater joy can there be than this close connection with Hashem?

The Midrash (*Beshalach* 25) says that when one keeps Shabbos, he can annul all harsh decrees.

This is alluded to in the words כל מקדש שביעי... שכרו הרבה מאוד על פי פעלו. The Beis

Aharon zy'a explains (in the name of Rebbe Mordechai of Kremnitz zy'a) כל שומר שבת, על, whoever keeps Shabbos, על, פי, whatever he prays for, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will grant him.