

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

Naso



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

Naso

## Be Yourself

The Torah is written concisely. Often, many halachos are derived from one letter in the Torah. So we wonder why the Torah elaborates when it describes the korbanos and donations that the nesi'im brought (ch. 7). Each nasi brought the same offering, so why didn't the Torah list the korbanos and contributions once and then state that all twelve nesi'im brought the identical korbanos?<sup>1</sup>

The Ramban quotes the following Midrash: "Nachshon brought a קערת כסף, a silver dish because its *gematriya* is 930, the number of years Adam lived. It

weighed 130 shekels, corresponding to Adam's age when he had his child, שת.

"Nesanel ben Tzuar [of Yissachar] brought the same items for the *chanukas hamizbeiach*, but for different reasons. Yissachar's tribe is praised for their Torah wisdom. The קערת כסף, silver dish signifies the Torah.

"Zevulun conducted business and supported Yissachar. For Zevulun the קערה represents the sea [from where imports would come in, from which Zevulun earned his wealth]."

The Ramban concludes, "Similarly, the Midrash

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1. One answer is that Hashem loves the Mishkan very much; therefore, elaborates on anything related to the Mishkan. Another example is how parashiyos Terumah and Tetzava (and the beginning of Ki Sisa) instruct how the Mishkan should appear, and in parashiyos Vaykhel and Pikudei the Torah repeats with elaboration that it was built that way.

lists the different reasons each *shevet* had for bringing their *korbanos*. This explains why the Torah writes each *nasi's* sacrifice separately."

Next week's *parashah* begins with the menorah, and on the words (8:3) ויעש כן אהרן, "Aharon did so," Rashi writes, להגיד שבחו של אהרן שלא שינה, "The *pasuk* praises Aharon that he didn't change." He lit the menorah precisely as required.

שינה can also be translated as "repeat." So we can explain Rashi's words as follows: "The *pasuk* is praising Aharon that he never repeated a deed." Each time he lit the menorah, it was a new experience, with new intentions and inspirations. It was never a repeat of yesterday and the day before that. Aharon lit the menorah in the desert for thirty-nine years, and each time it was like new.

There are no duplicates in Hashem's world. There aren't even two identical leaves or blades of grass.

Hashem wants each person to be unique in his *avodas Hashem*. The deeds may appear the same, but internally they should be different.

This was Aharon's praise. He never did the same deed twice. It was always with new inspiration and intentions. And this is the reason the Torah repeats the twelve sets of *korbanos* that the *nesi'im* brought for *chanukas hamizbeiach*. They were not the same. Each tribe brought its set of *korbanos* with their own inspiration and reasons.

You can enter a yeshiva where everyone is learning the same page of Gemara. You think there is no innovation. Everyone is doing the same thing, but it isn't so. Everyone understands the Gemara slightly differently, and everyone's intentions and inspiration are different.

Enter the yeshiva the next day, and you will see



a repeat of what you saw the day before, only that it isn't a repeat. Today there are new inspirations and new insights. There are unique challenges each day, too, to help us find newness in each day. This should be our goal: To perform every good deed with renewed vigor, with new excitement, and a deeper understanding of what we are accomplishing.

When the Yidden stood at the Yam Suf, the sea was in front of them, and the Mitzrim were pursuing them from behind. The Torah (*Shemos* 14:10) says, וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה', "Bnei Yisrael shouted out to Hashem."

Rashi writes, תפשו אומנות, "They grabbed the profession of their forefathers." Their forefathers would daven when they were in danger, and now they grabbed that

approach and they, too, began to daven.

Usually, this is understood as a praise of the Jewish nation. They followed in the paths of their forefathers and davened to Hashem.

However, Reb Ovadyah Bartenura (in his commentary on Rashi) *zt'l* explains that Rashi is telling us that they were copying what their ancestors did when they were in a difficult situation, but they weren't inspired to daven on their own. This isn't how it should be. Ideally, Bnei Yisrael should comprehend on their own that they must turn to Hashem in prayer for salvation.

Although their tefillos weren't perfect, Hashem answered them and split the sea before them. Because even imperfect tefillos are special to Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Tzaddikim say that to daven sincerely one must believe (1) that Hashem can help. (2) Hashem wants to help. (3) My *tefillos* make a

## Learning Torah with Passion

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef zt'l (Tzafnas Paanach, end of *Bishalach*) writes, "I heard that there is no Gehinom. Rather, they bring the *rasha* into Gan Eden, and that becomes his Gehinom. He hears people davening with joy and dancing as they learn with *hasmadah*, and as he isn't accustomed to all this, it is a very painful experience for him. This is the explanation of the Gemara (*Nedarim* 8.), 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu is going to take the sun from its sheath. The sun will heal the *tzaddikim* and punish the *resha'im*.' This means that the same source that brings joy to *tzaddikim* will punish the *resha'im*. This is also the meaning of the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 9), והנה טוב מאד זה גדינים, 'When the Torah writes (*Bereishis* 1:31),

טוב מאד it refers to Gehinom.'" It is טוב מאד because it is also Gan Eden! It is a very good place! But it is also Gehinom for those who aren't accustomed to serving Hashem.

This phenomenon is evident in our world as well. Torah and *tefillah* can be Gan Eden for one person and Gehinom for another.

In a dream, the Yismach Moshe saw two Tana'im in Gan Eden. They were each sitting at a shtender, studying Torah. In his dream, the Yismach Moshe asked, "I have that in this world, too."

The answer he received was, "The Gan Eden is in them."

The world of Gan Eden is internal. If you go to an amusement park, you will see lots of lights and colors, and then you go to a *beis medresh*, and everything

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difference. If you believe in these three points, your *tefillos* will be real.

appears black and white. It seems that the joy is over there, in the amusement park. But the answer is you are looking at the external side of things. If you could see the joy each student has from the Gemara he is learning, you would understand that all the colors and lights are within the beis medresh and with those who serve Hashem and perform His mitzvos.

Unfortunately, for some, studying Gemara is Gehinom. As the Toldos teaches us, the same place can be Gan Eden for one and Gehinom for another.

But if the person in Gehinom strives to understand what he is learning, he will probably be in Gan Eden within a short time.

Reb Avraham min Hahar (from the *rishonim*) writes, "The primary part of the mitzvah [to study Torah] is that he should enjoy the wisdom. As it states (*Tehillim* 19), פקודי ה' ישרים,

משמחי לב, 'Torah brings happiness to the heart.' Therefore, with regards to studying Torah, it is impossible to say, מצות לאו, ליהנות נתנו, that mitzvos weren't given for pleasure because a primary aspect of the mitzvah of learning Torah is the pleasure that one derives from his studies.

"Therefore, if someone made a *neder*, a vow, saying 'Ploni may not derive pleasure from my possessions, it is forbidden for Ploni to read from his *sefer* because he will certainly derive pleasure from the *sefer*."

The Gemara explains that if someone made a *neder* forbidding you to derive pleasure from him, you may nevertheless borrow and don his *tefillin*. This is because of the principle of מצות לאו ליהנות נתנו, mitzvos weren't given for physical pleasure. Therefore, when you wear someone's *tefillin*, it isn't considered that you



received pleasure from him. However, studying Torah is different because the essence of the mitzvah is to enjoy the incredible wisdom of Hashem.

But what should a person do if he doesn't enjoy studying Torah? What should he do if studying Torah is like Gehinom for him?

The same question applies to *tefillah*. Those who love *tefillah* can daven for hours and don't want to stop. Each word is sweet like honey to them. But for others, *davening* is like Gehinom. They rush through the *tefillah*, trying to finish quickly (and sadly, sometimes they talk during the davening, too) because *tefillah* feels like Gehinom to them, and they want to have as little Gehinom as possible.

The same is true regarding mitzvos. Some people love doing mitzvos. For them, a mitzvah is more precious than gold

and silver. But others aren't on that level. So, in summary, how can one experience Gan Eden in this world with their Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvos?

The answer is: If you believe that there is immense joy there, you will seek it, and you will find it.

The Or HaChaim (Devarim 26:10) writes, ואין טוב אלא תורה, שאם היו בני אדם מרגישים במתיקות ועריבות טוב התורה היו משתגעים ומתלהטים אחריה ולא יחשב בעיניהם מלא עולם כסף וזהב למאומה כי התורה כוללת כל הטובות שבעולם, "Chazal say that טוב, the only goodness, is Torah. Indeed, if people would experience the sweetness and pleasure of the Torah they would chase after it with a passion. The entire world filled with gold and silver would be like nothing to them because Torah encompasses all the good of the world."

Similarly, there is immense joy and sweetness in performing the mitzvos

and in tefillah. Fortunate are those who experience it. And for those who don't, if they tasted it even just once in their lifetime, they would forever chase after it to experience that sweetness again. And then their Gehinom will turn into Gan Eden.

We will illustrate our point with a halachic discussion: Before drinking a beverage, one recites שהכל נהיה בדברו. However, when it comes to water, one only says this brachah when he is thirsty. If he isn't thirsty, he cannot say the brachah. This is because water is very sweet, but solely for those who are thirsty.

Torah is compared to water, and indeed, Torah is similar. The pleasure of Torah study is only experienced by one who thirsts for it. When he studies it without interest and thirst, he won't appreciate and enjoy the Torah he's learning.

As Rashi (*Shemos* 19:5) writes, "If you accept the Torah, it will become sweet for you from now on because all beginnings are hard." It might even feel like Gehinom because he isn't accustomed to the sweetness of the Torah. But if he accepts the yoke of Torah, and tries his best, he will discover just how sweet the Torah is. It will be Gan Eden for him, and he will never want to depart.

There's an expression in the *rishonim* (see *Rambam, Yesodei HaTorah* 4:3), מילא בריסו, "ש"ס ופוסקים, "to fill one's stomach with *Shas* and *poskim*."

The Kotzker *zt'l* asks that it should state, "to fill one's *mind* with *Shas* and *poskim*" because one learns Torah with his mind, not with his stomach.

The Kotzker answers: A few hours after one eats a meal, he wants to eat again. This is the appetite we need for Torah. We should

never be satisfied. We should always be thirsty for more.

We say (in *birchas hashachar*), תרגילנו בתורתך, "accustom us in your Torah." The Imrei Emes *zt'l* asks that generally, we don't want רגילות, to become accustomed; we don't want to perform *avodas Hashem* by rote. We desire newness in *avodas Hashem*. So why do we pray, תרגילנו בתורתך, for familiarity with Torah?

The Imrei Emes replies that we see that when it comes to food, a person is accustomed to eating - he eats three meals a day with several snacks in between - and each time, it is with renewed eagerness and desire. He never gets tired of eating. This is the רגילות we seek in Torah. We should be very acquainted with the Torah, yet it should always feel like the first time.

When one studies Torah with *cheshek*, that will help him understand Torah. The

following story demonstrates this point:

The Beis HaLevi *zt'l* toiled to understand a certain *rishon* related to money matters. Many commentaries challenge this *rishon's* opinion, and after intense study - lasting three days and three nights - the Beis HaLevi succeeded in answering all their questions in a satisfactory way.

Soon afterward, the Beis HaLevi passed a municipal court, and he heard the person on trial say the same idea that the *rishon* said. (The simple person in court didn't know the *rishon*, it was just that he realized that this claim would help him earn money.)

Intrigued (because this was precisely the topic he had recently studied in-depth), the Beis HaLevi stopped to listen to the court case. He heard the judge ask the same questions that many commentaries ask on that *rishon*. The courtroom was

silent for a few moments, but then the man spoke up and said the explanation that the Beis HaLevi thought of (after three days and three nights of toil) and that removed all the questions on his position.

Initially, the Beis HaLevi was upset that he had to toil so long to arrive at this understanding, while this simple person attained this logic on his own. But then he realized that this person couldn't have come up with this idea on his own if it weren't that this explanation and logic would earn him a lot of money. Because when something is important to a person, his mind works hard and sharply, and he can come up with ideas that he generally couldn't come up with. The Beis HaLevi realized that if he came to the same conclusion, that means it was crucial for him to understand Torah. Otherwise, he wouldn't

have reached this understanding.

It states (*Tehillim* 119:93), לעולם לא אשכח פקודיך כי בם חיייתי. This can be translated as "I will never forget Your Torah because Torah is my life." Something related to his life, one doesn't forget.

Sometimes, one studies Torah and doesn't understand anything; even when he understands, he quickly forgets. This is often because he doesn't truly care to know. Deep in his heart he feels that until now, he managed fine in life without knowing this idea of Torah and thinks he can continue living well without it. But when one knows that Torah is his life, as it states, וחי בהם, he will put all his heart and soul into knowing Torah. With this attitude, he will understand and retain his Torah studies.

### **The Sotah**

If the sotah woman sinned, the water the kohen

gives her to drink miraculously harms her. The *rishonim* teach us that this is the only mitzvah of the Torah that is based on a miracle.

The Rambam (*Sotah* 3:16) writes, "If the woman sinned, her face would immediately turn green, her eyes will pop out, and she will become filled with sinews (*gidim*). People will shout, 'Take her out! Take her out!' so she shouldn't contaminate the *ezras nashim* [of the Beis HaMikdash], and they would remove her from the *ezras nashim* where she was standing. Her stomach swells first, her legs then fall off, and she dies. At the same time of her death, the man who sinned with her also dies, wherever he is."

Open miracles occurred with the *sotah*. Everyone was able to see clearly that Hashem punishes those who sin.

The Klausenberger Rebbe *zy'a* told the following story:

A husband brought his wife to the Chida and his *beis din* and told them that he suspects his wife of sin and that she is a *sotah*. The Chida told the husband to divorce her. The other judges were surprised that the Chida was so stringent since there weren't any witnesses to verify his accusation.

The Chida told the woman to accept a divorce willingly, but she spoke with *chutzpah* to the Chida and refused to accept a *get*.

The Chida told her, "I want you to listen to something." He read to her the *parashah* of *Sotah*, as it is written in the Torah (*Bamidbar* 5). When the Chida was halfway through reading it, the woman had heard enough and turned to leave. The Chida read the words (*Bamidbar* 5:20) ואת כי סטית... יתן ה' אותך לאלה... בתת ה' את ירכך נופלת ואת בטך צבה "and

you, who sinned... Hashem will turn you into a curse... He will cause your leg to fall, and your stomach to swell". Suddenly, her legs fell off, and her stomach swelled, just as it happened to the *sotah* in the Beis HaMikdash.

The Chida explained that when the woman and her husband were standing before him, he remembered that he once received a *brachah* from the Or HaChaim that he would have the *kedushah* of a *kohen*. He realized there was a good reason he remembered the Or HaChaim's blessings just then, and decided to do what a *kohen* does to a *sotah*.

### **The Torah was Given to Imperfect Human Beings**

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88) tells us that when Hashem wanted to give the Torah to the Jewish people, the *malachim* in heaven protested, "Why should

this holy, precious, and hidden treasure [the Torah] be given to human beings?"

Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu to respond to the *malachim*.

Moshe Rabbeinu asked them, "Let's see what's written in the Torah. לֹא תַחַמּוּד, do not be jealous of others. How does this apply to you? Does the concept of jealousy even exist among *malachim*?"

"Now let's see what else is written in the *Aseres HaDibros*. לֹא תִנָּאֵף, 'do not commit adultery.' Do *malachim* have a *yetzer hara*?" In this way, Moshe proved that the mitzvos are for human beings, not for *malachim*.

When people perceive their shortcomings, bad middos, and temptations, they think the Torah isn't for them. How could the holy Torah be speaking to someone as lowly as him? But upon deeper reflection, we understand that the



Torah was given specifically to people with evil tendencies, people who must be warned not to steal, murder, commit adultery, etc. Hashem gave us the Torah *because* we have a *yetzer hara*. Our faults make us ideal candidates for receiving the Torah.

At the holy moment of *matan Torah*, one would expect Hashem to reveal the secrets of kabbalah or other lofty ideas. But Hashem told them, "Don't kill. Don't steal. Don't be jealous..." because the Torah was given to human beings, to people who have these tendencies and desires. Whoever has these tendencies should know that the Torah is talking to him.

Chametz represents the *yetzer hara*, and yet we use chametz as a *korban* on

Shavuos! This is because the *yetzer hara* gives us our right to the Torah. Our temptations and struggles make our service special to Hashem.<sup>3</sup>

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88) says that when the Jewish people were standing at Har Sinai, Hashem raised the mountain over their heads and forced them to accept the Torah.

Tosfos asks: The nation already expressed their willingness and desire to keep the Torah when they said נעשה ונשמע. So why was it necessary to force them to accept the Torah?

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zy'a, answered:

Chazal tell us that by *mattan Torah*, פסקה זהומתן, their impurity ceased, and they didn't have a *yetzer*

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3. There is a custom to decorate the beis medresh on Shavuos with trees that don't bear fruit. These trees hint that even lowly people, those who don't produce any fruit, are special.

*hara* anymore. This creates a problem because, ideally, the Torah should be given to human beings who have a *yetzer hara*. The Gemara (see *Succah* 52:) says that a mountain represents the *yetzer hara*. we can therefore explain that "Hashem placed the mountain over their heads" means Hashem brought the *yetzer hara* back. Because at *matan Torah*, everyone was cleansed from the *yetzer hara*, but that wasn't the purpose of *mattan Torah*. The purpose of *mattan Torah* is that people should have the *yetzer hara* and nevertheless overcome all obstacles to serve Hashem.

### Try Again

This week's *parashah* discusses the laws of a *nazir*. One of the *halachos* is that he is not permitted to become *tamei* (impure from contact with a human corpse). If he becomes *tamei*, the Torah states he must start the *nazirus* all over

again. As it states (6:12), והזיר לד' את ימי נזרו... והימים הראשנים יפלו "He shall become a *nazir* to Hashem [again]... [because] the first days fell away when he became *tamei*."

The Beis Yisrael taught that when one fails in his resolves, he shouldn't mope and give up. Instead, he should start over from the beginning and try again.

Many stumble and fall from high levels of *avodas Hashem*, as it says (*Mishlei* 24), שבע יפול צדיק, "a *tzaddik* falls seven times." There is a cycle of improvement and regression; we often tend to fall back to being our old selves. When this occurs, we are tempted to give up. The laws of the *nazir* teach us to keep on trying. If the first attempt failed, try again until you succeed.

Shlomo HaMelech says, שבע יפול צדיק וקם ורשעים יכשלו ברעה, "a *tzaddik* falls seven times and rises, while the *resha'im*

stumble in bad." Both the tzaddik and the *rasha* fall. The difference is that the tzaddik doesn't remain in his fallen state. וקם, he picks

himself up again and again. Even if he falls seven times, וקם, he will get up and try again. But when the *rasha* falls, he remains there.<sup>4</sup>

4. The Gemara (Succah 52) teaches that the yetzer hara has seven names. Hakadosh Baruch Hu calls the yetzer hara רע. Moshe called it ערל. Dovid HaMelech called the yetzer hara טמא. Shlomo HaMelech called it שווא. Yeshayahu called it מכשול. Yechezkel named the yetzer hara אבן, and Yoel called it צפוני.

Reb Yitchak Blazer zy'a (in Kochvei Or p.157) explains that the yetzer hara's seven names correspond to the seven tactics the yetzer hara uses to lead people to sin. These seven approaches are alluded to in the passuk שבע יפול צדיק וקם.

The seventh tactic is צפוני, which literally means hidden. This is when the yetzer hara sneaks up on people, ambushes them, and causes them to sin without them realizing it. The yetzer hara often does this by telling the person that a certain aveirah is a mitzvah. The person doesn't realize it's a hoax and that the yetzer hara is speaking to him, and falls into his trap.

The passuk tells us that the tzaddik falls for all seven hoaxes of the yetzer hara. But after all that, וקם, he gets up again and he conquers the yetzer hara. He doesn't allow himself to remain in his fallen state.

By contrast, ורשעים יכשלו ברעה, the sinners stumble with רע. The very first level of the yetzer hara (the name Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave the yetzer hara) is רע. The rasha falls at that first level and never recovers. He gives up at his first fall and he doesn't try again.

It is written (Bereishis 49:9) גור אריה יהודה... כרע רבץ כאריה ולביא "Yehudah is like a lion... he crouches and lies down like a lion." The Sfas Emes (in the name of his grandfather, the Chidushei HaRim zy'a) explains that the greatness of Yehudah is that even after falling to the ground, he is still strong like a lion, ready to get up again.

Growth is attained through falling back and then picking oneself up and trying again. The holy *sefarim* call this process *ירידה לצורך עליה*, a descent for the sake of climbing even higher.

The Gemara (*Gittin* 43) says, "A person doesn't understand Torah until he errs, first." He has a wrong understanding, perhaps he even paskens wrongly, and then he learns from his mistake. That is how people grow in Torah.

Similarly, growth in *avodas Hashem* is achieved through elevating oneself again after the errors.

A certain *bachur* learned in Yeshiva Kol Torah when Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l was rosh yeshiva and was an outstanding student. But then there came a time when he experienced spiritual descent and wasn't learning so well. He spoke to the rosh yeshiva, Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach,

and sought counsel and *chizuk*. Reb Shlomo Zalman told him a *mashal*:

Someone brought material to a tailor and asked him to sew a suit. The tailor was cutting the material, and the man watched in horror. "What are you doing? I paid a lot of money for this material. Why are you cutting it in so many places?"

He soon discovered that each cut served a purpose. One piece served as the collar, another cut became a sleeve, and eventually a beautiful suit emerged.

Reb Shlomo Zalman asked, "Could the tailor have made this suit without cutting it? Of course not. Cutting the material is part of the process of making a suit. Similarly, this is also the process for the making of an *adam gadol*. The only way to become one is by going through hard times. There will be moments when one feels that he is drifting away from his

goal, but if he keeps trying, all these descents will help him in the end. These moments will enable him to reach the greatness in Torah he is striving for." (Today, this bachur is a renowned rosh yeshiva.)

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (*Noach* 8:1) explains, "The purpose of the relapses is to be raised up again. Therefore, even when they fall, they are really moving upward, and not down. As it says, שבע יפול צדיק וקם, this means that all seven descents are part of the getting-up process. It can be compared to someone who desires to throw something high into the air. He bends down low and drops his hand behind him, which enables him to throw the object with greater force into the air.

The same occurs when people fall. From the depths, they rise up to the heavens."

### This Generation

Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kehos, and Merari. When we carefully study the *pesukim* that count them, we find differences in the wording by each one. The word נשא (raise) is stated by Gershon and Kehos, but not Merari.

When mentioning Kehos, the Torah says (4:2) נשא את ראש בני קהת מתוך בני לוי, "Raise the heads of Kehos..."

Regarding Gershon, the Torah says, נשא את ראש בני גרשון, גם הם לבית אבותם למשפחותם, "Raise the heads of Gershon..."<sup>5</sup>

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5. Some explain this passuk, נשא את ראש בני גרשון גם הם לבית אבותם, in the following way: There are people who feel גרשון banished and distant from kedushah. We should elevate them, and let them know just how precious they are. How do we do this? By showing them that גם הם לבית אבותם, that they too are Hashem's children.

But when the Torah discusses the counting of Merari, the *passuk* says (4:29), בני מררי למשפחותם לבית, "The children of Merari, to their families... count them." The Torah doesn't write נשא to raise them. Why? Why did Hashem command that Moshe raise the heads of Gershon and Kehos, but not Merari?

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that גרשון קהת ומררי represent three situations that Klal Yisrael experience. קהת means gathering (see *Bereshis* 49:10). This refers to when the Jewish nation is gathered in Eretz Yisrael and the Beis HaMikdash. גרשון means banished or exiled. It represents the generations of galus. The Torah tells Moshe Rabbeinu נשא, to elevate them, למשפחותם לבית אבותם, to their ancestors, to their forefathers' levels. Moshe should elevate the Jewish nation who live at the time of the Beis HaMikdash and at the time of galus to the

levels of the avos hakdoshim (נשא... לבית אבותם).

Merari means bitter and alludes to the bitter generations that, in addition to exile, the Yidden suffer, too. Merari's children are מחלי ומושי. מחלי is translated as diseases; מושי means to move from place to place. These are examples of the difficult galus that the Jewish nation endures at these times: suffering, illness, and exile.

When the *galus* is so difficult and bitter, the Jewish nation is on the highest level. Chazal (Bava Basra 10) say, "A *dor* of *shmad* (a generation that the *goyim* are trying to destroy them) no creature can stand in their place." Therefore, the Torah doesn't say נשא, that Moshe should raise them and elevate them לבית אבותם, to the heights of the avos, because they are at an even higher level.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "Their forefathers are second to them." This is



because, despite all the hardships that they go through, they continue to hold onto their faith. They are on the highest level. They don't need to be raised לבית אבותם.<sup>6</sup>

We are living in very difficult times, and yet, in a way, we are living in the nation's most glorious generation. When Moshiach comes, speedily in our days, we will discover just how precious our generation is, precisely because we are living at such difficult times,

b'gashmiyus and  
b'ruchniyus.

Chazal tell us that Reb Eliezer ben Azaryah's neighbor sent her cow outdoors, where there wasn't an *eiruv*, as it carried a strap between its horns. She violated the Shabbos by doing so. One's animals must also keep Shabbos, as it says (*Shemos* 23:12) למען ינוח שורך וחמורך, "so that your ox and your donkey will rest."

Chazal say that Reb Eliezer ben Azaryah should have told her that it is

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6. About Moshe it is written מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה והאיש משה, (Bamidbar 12:3). "Moshe Rabbeinu was the most humble person in the world." How did Moshe achieve this great level of humility? Did he not received the Torah, and speak with Hashem face to face? He was the leader of Klal Yisrael! How could remain so humble?

Chazal say that Moshe Rabbeinu saw Adam HaRishon's sefer, which lists all people who will be born and all the things that would happen to them. In this sefer, Moshe Rabbeinu saw the final generation, all the hardships they will need to go through in ruchniyus and gashmiyus, and yet he saw that the Yidden will be moser nefesh to keep the mitzvos and to serve Hashem. When Moshe Rabbeinu saw this, he was humbled. That is how he attained his humility. (Taught by Rebbe Shalom Ber (ReSha'B) of Lubavitz zy'a).

forbidden to do so, but he didn't. He wasn't mocheh, so he was considered responsible for this transgression.

To atone for this aveirah, the Yerushalmi says that Reb Eliezer ben Azaryah fasted excessively until his teeth turned black.

Students of the Arizal asked, "What will be with us? We have many more aveiros than Reb Eliezer ben Azaryah, some of which are severe transgressions. If Reb Eliezer ben Azaryah had to fast so many days to atone for his minor error, what will be with us and our many sins? How will we ever achieve atonement?"

The Arizal answered, "In our generation, because the *galus* is so dark, even just shouting out to Hashem

once, or just one true moan from the depth of one's heart, is equivalent to many fasts."

The Yismach Yisrael of Alexander (*Chanukah* 56) adds, "From that generation [of the Arizal] until today, the *tzaros* and the *galus* have increased. Each day's problems are worse than the day before. Therefore, certainly today, when a Yid calls to Hashem from the depths of his heart, it will be very precious to Hashem and equal to many fasts of the past." We live at a time when illnesses, poverty, anti-Semitism, and overwhelming tests (such as the internet, etc.) are rampant. It is therefore challenging for people to serve Hashem today. Therefore, whoever serves Hashem in our generation is extremely precious to Hashem.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Chazal say (Avos d'Reb Nosson 3:6) "It is better once with hardship, than a hundred times with ease."

The Midrash (Shir HaShirim Rabba 8:14) writes, "Someone who studies

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 112) teaches, "If the first generations were like angels, we are like people. If the early generations were like people, we are like donkeys."

The standard pattern of the world is that each generation is lower than the generation before it. However, there are exceptions to this rule. The Bris Menuchah says that the generations become increasingly greater at the end of time.

It isn't that we are on a higher level because in almost all areas, we stand at a much lower level than the tzaddikim of the past. But in one aspect, we are greater than before. It is that we stand firm and loyal to Hashem and his Torah despite the tests, the *hester panim* (Hashem's concealment), and the bitterness of our *galus*. This makes us even greater than the tzaddikim of the past. As it says (*Yirmiyahu* 31:2), מרחוק ד' נראה לי, "From the distance, Hashem became revealed to me."<sup>8</sup>

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Torah with difficulties earns a thousand. When one studies without hardships, he earns two hundred." The difficulties make our deeds more valuable and desired in heaven.

8. The Nesivos Shalom zy'a writes in a letter that there was a time when he was hospitalized and extremely ill. During that difficult period, he found *chizuk* from the Chazal that says that the Shechinah hovers over the head of the sick. He writes, "I felt that the Kosel Maaravi, the place the Shechinah never leaves the Jewish nation, was above my head. This gave me strength to be strong in all situations." When people are ill – spiritually or physically – it is a time to become closer to Hashem.

The baalei Mussar say about a person that was once walking in the desert and saw another pair of footprints alongside his own. "What is this?" he asked. A voice from heaven told him that they

It is also written in this week's *parashah*, ביום השמיני נשיא לבני מנשה גמליאל בן פדהצור (7:54)). Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zy'a repeated in the name of Rebbe Dovid of Tolne zy'a the following interpretation: Some people feel מנשה, forgotten (מנשה) literally means forgotten, as in כי (נשני אלקים), that because of their aveiros Hashem forgot them and doesn't care about them.

The solution is that they should say גמליאל which stands for גם לי א-ל, "I also have Hashem. I am also

connected to G-d." They must believe that even in their present situation, Hashem hasn't abandoned them. When one has this belief, Hashem says, פדה צור, it is like you redeemed Hashem from *galus*.

The Chidushei HaRim zy'a said, chassidim make a mistake when they think that Hashem only wants them to serve Him when their awareness of Hashem is at its peak. Perhaps Hashem desires that they serve Him from amidst the darkness.<sup>9</sup>

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were Hashem's footprints. Hashem was walking with him. He was overjoyed and comforted when he heard this.

Sometime later, he saw a lion approaching in the distance. He looks to the side, but the other set of footprints were gone. "Why did Hashem leave me just now when I need Him most?"

The bas kol replied, "Until now, Hashem was walking at your side. But now that your life is in danger, Hashem lifted you and is carrying you in His hands. The footprints that you see are Hashem's."

9. A sotah woman who was suspected of sin drinks the מי המרים, bitter waters. If she is guilty, these waters will cause her death. But if she is innocent, the water will bring her brachos. As Chazal

Sometimes, we hear about the tzaddikim of the past, how they loved the mitzvos so intensely, and we feel discouraged. We wonder, "How can I compare myself to them? Why should my mitzvos – dry and unemotional – be desired in heaven?" But we are discovering that in a way, because of all the hardships and *hester panim*, our deeds can be considered better than ever before.

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### **The power of a good kabbalah**

Concerning a nazir the Torah says (6:8) כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא לה', "All the days of his nazirus, he is holy to Hashem."

The Lev Simchah (Gur) zy'a taught: A nazir is bound by his kabbalah not to drink wine for thirty days. This undertaking isn't very difficult, for thirty days isn't very long. But

say, "If she used to have pain during childbirth, now she will have easy births. If until now she had girls, now she will have boys. If she had short children, now she will have tall children. If she used to give birth once every two years, she will now give birth every year. If she used to have one child at a time, she will now have twins. (Midrash Rabba 9:25, and see Rashi 5:28).

The Beis Yisrael zy'a asked, why should she receive all these brachos? She didn't act like the greatest tzaddekes. Her deeds were a breach of tznius. So why should she gain when she drinks the waters? It is sufficient that she doesn't die.

The Beis Yisrael answers that she was in this difficult test (because she was in a situation of yichud, etc.) and passed the test, so she deserves to be rewarded.

We should avoid tests, as much as possible. But when we are tested, and the tests are difficult, we will certainly earn immense reward and blessings when we pass the test and overcome the yetzer hara.

because he made this kabbalah he becomes "holy for Hashem." His holiness is compared to the kohen gadol, because both the nazir and the kohen gadol may not come in contact with the dead, and not even their own family r'l (see 6:7). This tells us that when a person takes a small step towards kedushah, he becomes extremely holy and pure to Hashem. He reaches the

level of the kohen gadol. The nazir refrained from drinking wine for a month and see what levels he reached!<sup>10</sup>

The Torah discusses a case of someone who died suddenly (בפתע פתאום 6:9) in the same room as a nazir. This obligates the nazir to bring a korban chatas (6:11) *מאשר חטא על הנפש*, "because he sinned on the soul."

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**10.** A kohen hedyot (a regular cohen) may become impure to family, while a nazir may not. The Avnei Nezer explained: The kohen hedyot receives his holiness from his family. (His father and grandfather were cohanim, and therefore he is a kohen as well.) Therefore it is appropriate that he become impure by attending to their burial. They are the source of his sanctity, and therefore it is proper that he honor them even after their death. The nazir, however, became holy on his accord. He becomes sanctified with his kabbalah. Therefore, he can't become tamei to his family.

The Gemara says, "The Torah returns to its host." When one's ancestors were talmidei chachamim, the Torah returns to this family and the descendants often become scholars as well. However, concerning kedushah, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zy'a notes, the Gemara doesn't say that holiness returns to his family. This is because one must acquire kedushah on his own. It isn't an inheritance.

The uniqueness of the nazir is that he acquired his holiness on his own, through his own efforts. It isn't a family heirloom.



Which aveirah did the nazir do? Why must he bring a korban chatas (a sin-offering)?

Rashi writes, "[He must bring a chatas because] he wasn't careful not to become impure by the dead. [Another explanation is] ציער עצמו מן היין, he needs to bring a sin-offering because he afflicted himself by refraining to drink wine."

The Meshech Chachmah offers a third explanation. He says that the kohen gadol is guilty that someone died suddenly. The kohen gadol's merits and tefillos should have protected the people that something like this shouldn't occur.

The Meshech Chachmah proves his lesson from the following sources:

The Gemara (Makos 11) tells that when someone killed his fellow man by accident, he is sent to exile [to the *arei miklat*], where he must remain until the kohen gadol dies.

Why is his freedom dependent on the kohen gadol?

The Gemara explains that the kohen gadol was somewhat responsible for the murder, "because he should have prayed for the generation."

The Gemara also tells us that a lion killed someone in the neighborhood where Reb Yehoshua ben Levi lived, and Eliyahu HaNavi didn't visit Reb Yehoshua ben Levi for three days.

This is because the merit of tzaddikim and their tefillos should protect their generation and their surroundings from all bad.

The Meshech Chachmah adds that the nazir, because of his kabbalah (not to drink wine) also became sanctified. He became like a kohen gadol and like a tzaddik. Now he is also responsible for all accidental murders and unnatural deaths. He must bring a chatas because מֵאֲשֶׁר חָטָא עַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ, he is

responsible for the death that occurred.

We learn from all this how lofty one becomes when he takes on a kabbalah tova, and even a relatively easy one. Look at the levels this man rose to after becoming a nazir!

### **Don't Push it off for Later**

Regarding teshuvah, the Mishnah states, **אם לא עכשיו אימתי**, "If you won't improve now, so when?" There is no time like the present.

Towards the end of his life, the Imrei Emes zt'l said, "When I was young, there were many sections of the Torah and several aspects of *avodas Hashem* that I was planning to get to later in my life. Now I know that whatever one doesn't take on in his younger years, he will never get to later in his life."

The Torah was given in the desert and not in Eretz

Yisrael. Furthermore, there is a machlokes in the Gemara when matan Torah took place (either the 6th or the 7th of Sivan). So we don't know the location of matan Torah, and we don't know the date. Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l said that this is to stop people from procrastinating when studying Torah. Don't say that I will study Torah on a different date or when I get to another location because there aren't dates and locations for Torah. Every opportunity must be utilized.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88.) tells that Hashem raised the mountain over the Jewish nation and said, "If you don't accept the Torah, **שם תהא קבורתכם**, "You will be buried there." The question is: It should have stated **פה תהא קבורתכם**, "You will be your burial here." Why does it say **שם**, "there"?

Reb Chaim Shmuelewitz zt'l answered that the Gemara is hinting that if a person will say, "When I

go there, I will start learning Torah." or "When times are better, I will devote myself to Torah" שם תהא קבורתכם, the attitude of שם, "there" (pushing things off until he gets "there") תהא קבורתכם, will bury him. Instead, he should take the reins of his life in his hand and devote himself to Torah immediately.<sup>11</sup>

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* asked someone why he doesn't set aside time to study Torah. The man replied that he was poor and busy earning a living. There was no time left for Torah study.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner told him that he was speaking like the nations of the world spoke when Hashem offered them the Torah. Before *mattan Torah*, Hashem offered the Torah

to the nations of the world. Edom asked, "What is written in the Torah?" Hashem told Edom about the prohibition of murder. The nation replied, "Our forefather, Eisav, received the *brachah* על חרבך תחיה, to live by the sword. If we accept the Torah, how will we live?" Similarly, all nations said that if they accept the Torah, they won't have *parnassah*, and they won't be able to live.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner told him, "You're saying the same thing because you're implying that if you accept the yoke of Torah you won't have *parnassah*, and you won't be able to live!"

### Rising Early

To be able to grasp opportunities, it is crucial

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**11.** A cow is milked every day. It is impossible to push it off for tomorrow, or the milk of that day will be forfeited. There's a custom to eat milichigs on Shavuos. Perhaps this is to remind us to grab every opportunity for Torah and mitzvos, because what we don't take in the present, we won't have later on.

to awaken early. The day becomes so much longer that way.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that the entire day is influenced by its beginning. If one begins the day with *zerizus* and *avodas Hashem*, the whole day will follow in that atmosphere. If he starts the day with laziness, the whole day will continue in that way.

Rebbe Yisrael of Rizhin zy'a taught (based on *Tehillim* 63): If a person says to Hashem, קלי אתה, "You are my G-d" אשחרך, early in the morning, צמאה לך נפשי כמה לך, בשרי, and at that time, he thirsts and yearns to have a connection with Hashem, then, בארץ ציה ועייף בלי מים, even if during the day, due to his work and obligations, he is involved in worldly matters, nevertheless, כן בקודש חזיתך, the spiritual influence from the morning will remain with him throughout the day.

The Shevet Mussar (27) writes, "One should be *zariz* and get out of bed quickly to go to the *Beis Kneses*. He should think: If someone told him that there is a fire in the house, wouldn't he awaken immediately because he is afraid of being burned in the fire? Even if it is in the middle of the winter and it is raining outside, it's cold, and his sleep is so sweet, but he doesn't care. He immediately jumps out of bed to save his life. However, even if he would get burned, it would only be the body being burned, and not the soul.

"*Kal vechamor*, definitely one shouldn't be lazy in the morning. He should rise to serve Hashem, to save his body and soul from the fires of Gehinom, from a fire that never extinguishes. He shouldn't pay attention to the cold, the sweetness of sleep, or anything else.

"If you would be sleeping, and a murderer

arrives with a drawn sword, wouldn't you get up immediately to escape? You wouldn't even take a moment to think it over. So therefore, think: If you do not awaken early for *tefillah*, the angel of death's sword will be pointed at you, and you have nowhere to escape" When one thinks about these true ideas, it will help him awaken early in the morning.

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (1:4) writes, "Every person who fears Hashem must be strong to overcome the *yetzar hara* [when he tells you to sleep in]. Don't listen to him. Even if it is hard for you, your body is heavy, and you are lazy, focus on doing the will of the King of kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Contemplate the following: Suppose you have a business meeting early in the morning, which could earn you a nice profit. You would have no trouble

rising early because you want to earn money. You won't be lazy. Or let's say you were called to work for the king, you would also awaken early in order to find favor in the king's eyes. Certainly, to serve the King of kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, one should awaken immediately... 'Heaven helps those who desire to be pure' (*Shabbos* 104)."

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* adds the following invaluable tip, "When one practices [to rise promptly] four or five times, it won't be difficult afterwards."

Practice proves that this is true. At first, it is hard to awaken early in the morning. But if one forces himself to get up three, four, or five days in a row, afterwards it will be easy to rise and get out of bed, and then he will earn the great benefits of rising early to serve Hashem.