

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Mattos - Massei



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

Mattos - Massei

## Heartfelt Tefillah

One of the translations of the word יהל is hope, as it states (*Tehillim* 130:7), יהל ישראל, "Yisrael, hope to Hashem..." It states (30:3), לא יהל דברו ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה. The *pasuk* can be translated as, לא יהל דברו, one shouldn't *hope* that his *tefillos* be effective. One should be *certain* that Hashem will answer his *tefillos*. One should approach *tefillah* with conviction that his *tefillos* will make a difference. When one approaches *tefillah* with that attitude, ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה, whatever he requests will be granted.

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* (in the name of Reb Yisrael Srug *zt'l*) explains the *pasuk*: לא יהל דברו, don't think speech is mundane, ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה, because everything you speak creates a *malach*. Each good word (of Torah, *tefillah*,

or *chesed*) creates a *malach* that speaks in his defense. Each bad word (*lashon hara*, *sheker*, etc.) creates a prosecuting *malach*.

Even when he davens without *kavanah*, he must believe that his *tefillos* will have an effect. לא יהל דברו, he shouldn't consider his words worthless or weak.

Nevertheless, when one does daven with *kavanah*, the potency of his *tefillah* intensifies, as we will explain.

Almost every time the word לה is found in Tanach, there is a dot in the ה"א, called מפיק ה"א. This dot means that the *heh* should be read a bit forcefully until the sound of the letter *heh* is heard. Without the *mapik*, it is read almost like לא and you don't hear the letter *heh*.

As we wrote, almost every *heh* is with a *mapik heh*, but there are three exceptions to this rule. One exception is in the final *pasuk* of *parashas Matos* (see *Rashi* and *Baal HaTurim*):

It states in this *pasuk* (32:42), ונבא הלך וילכד את קנת ואת, "Novach conquered Knas and its suburbs and named it Novach, in his name."

*Rashi* writes: *heh* in this *pasuk* isn't written with a *mapik heh*, and it is read like *לא נבא* because this name didn't last."

The *heh* isn't pronounced, and it can be read as *לא נבא*, "No Novach." This is because the name Novach gave the area didn't last.

The *Pnei Menachem zt'l* teaches that a dot in the *heh* hints to the heart, which is in the middle of the body, and the *pasuk* is teaching us that whatever is done without heart doesn't last.

In contrast, when one does a mitzvah with all his heart and soul, the merit of that mitzvah will remain with him forever and for all generations to come.

The heart is used during prayer because *tefillah* is called *עבודה שבלב*, the service of the heart. All our deeds should be performed with heart; how much more so *tefillah* should be said with all one's heart.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* of Lubavitch *zy'a* told the following story:

There was a simple, unlearned *Yid* who lived in a village near *Yerushalayim*, and once a week, he would come to *Yerushalayim* to sell his produce. Before returning home, he would visit one of the *rabbanim* of *Yerushalayim* and ask him to teach him the *tefillos* for the upcoming week. For example, if *Rosh Chodesh* or a fast day were approaching, the *rav* would direct him what to say.

One week, the villager arrived in Yerushalayim and found no one on the street. "What happened?" he wondered. "Is it *yom tov* today? Did the rav forget to tell me?"

He then saw people carrying their tallis and tefillin, which confirmed that it was a weekday.

"What's going on today?" he asked one of the people of Yerushalayim. "Where is everyone?"

"It's a fast day today," the person replied, "and all the stores are closed."

The simple villager went to the rav and complained, "Why didn't you tell me there was a fast day today? I've already eaten by mistake. Also, I didn't daven the right *tefillah* for today."

The rav explained that the fast was decided upon just recently since it hadn't yet rained that winter.

The villager was shocked. "For lack of rain you declare a fast day?"

"Yes. What do you do if there isn't rain?"

"When my field needs rain, I go outside and ask Hashem for rain, and it immediately begins to rain."

"Do that now," the rav instructed.

The villager raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father! Your children need rain. Is it possible You will let Your children die from thirst?" Clouds gathered, and it began to rain. His *tefillos* were answered immediately.

This villager prayed to Hashem with all his heart and soul, and his *tefillos* were answered.

Reb Avraham Eliyashiv *zt'l* and his rebbetzin were childless for many years. Finally, they traveled to the medical center in Vienna for treatment, but the

doctors told her, "There's nothing we can do."

She strengthened herself and didn't cry during their long trip home. But when she came home to Humla, she went into a silo where she could be alone and wept copiously.

Her father (author of *Leshem*) saw that her eyes were red and asked her about it. She gave an excuse, but her father wanted to know the real reason. She told him that the doctors said there was no cure for her. "I held back from crying during the two-week trip home, and now I broke out in tears and poured out my bitter heart before Hashem."

Her father told her, "It states (*Tehillim* 145:18), קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, 'Hashem is close to those who pray to Him sincerely.' When does one pray sincerely? That is when one knows he has nowhere to turn to other than Hashem. When one has that

awareness, he prays with all his heart and soul a pure prayer before Hashem. And since you said such a tefillah, I'm confident you will soon bear a child."

A year later, she gave birth to Reb Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv *zt'l*, who illuminated the world with his Torah.

In *parashas Masay*, we study the laws of someone who accidentally killed his fellow man. He must flee to *arei miklat* and remain there until the *kohen gadol* dies. When the *kohen gadol* dies, he goes free (see 35:25).

*Rashi* explains (in his second explanation) that the murderer's freedom is linked and dependent on the *kohen gadol*'s life because the *kohen gadol* is somewhat responsible for the murder. *Rashi* writes, לפי שהיה לו לכהן גדול להתפלל שלא תארע תקלה זו לישראל בחייו, "The *kohen gadol* should have davened that such a calamity shouldn't occur in his lifetime."

The *kohen gadol* is granted the power of tefillah; therefore, he is held responsible for such calamities.

The murderer's freedom depended on the *kohen gadol's* demise, which caused a problem for the *kohen gadol*, because now murderers might daven for the *kohen gadol* to die, so they could go free!

The Mishnah (*Makos* 11) states, "The mothers of the *kohanim gedolim* would supply food and clothing [to the murderers who escaped to *arei miklat*] so they shouldn't pray that their son die." She wanted them to feel content and satisfied so they wouldn't pray for her son's death.

The *arei miklat* were like prisons. How were the food and clothing parcels sufficient to appease them? Wouldn't they still pray for the *kohen gadol's* death, so they could go free?

The answer is that they still wanted to leave the *arei miklat*, and perhaps they continued to daven for the *kohen gadol's* demise, but due to the care packages they received, they didn't pray with all their heart and soul, and such a tefillah is less effective.

The *kohen gadol's* mother knew that the most potent tefillah is a tefillah said with all one's heart. So she sent food and clothing so their tefillos shouldn't be as powerful.

Due to the sin of the *meraglim*, it was decreed on the Jewish nation that the entire generation must die in the desert. Each year, on Tisha b'Av, Klal Yisrael dug graves for themselves and slept in them overnight. In the morning, those who survived climbed out of the grave, and those who died were already in their grave.

The nation had 600,000 men destined to die within the forty years they were in the desert. 600,000 people

divided by 40 years equals 15,000 people. This means 15,000 people died annually on Tisha b'Av.

Rabbeinu Tam (*Tosfos Bava Basra* 121.) teaches that the last year they were living in the desert, they received a "discount." That year, on the night of Tisha b'Av, 15,000 people lay in their graves. They thought they would all die because they were the final 15,000 people from the generation of the *meraglim*. Surprisingly, they all woke up in the morning alive and well. Their lives were saved.<sup>1</sup>

We can explain that they were saved because of their *tefillos*. Each year, when the men climbed into their graves, certainly everyone davened to be saved, but they didn't daven with all their might. Deep in their

hearts they thought that perhaps their life wasn't in danger. Maybe 15,000 other people will die, and they will be among the people who will remain alive.

But that final year, fifteen thousand people climbed into their graves, knowing they were all destined to die. When they davened that night for salvation, they prayed with all their heart. And when one prays with all his heart, his *tefillos* are answered.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 53:) states that when the *kohen gadol* was in the Kodesh Kadashim on Yom Kippur, he prayed that Hashem shouldn't listen to the *tefillos* of travelers who pray that it shouldn't rain. Why was this prayer so important that it had to be said in the Kodesh

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1. According to Rabbeinu Tam, the celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av is for the 15 thousand who were granted life and spared from the original decree.

Kadashim on Yom Kippur by the *kohen gadol*?

It's because only such an important tefillah (the *kohen gadol*, in the *Kodesh Kadoshim*, on Yom Kippur) could counter the tefillos of travelers. Travelers know that they have nowhere to turn other than Hashem. No one can make it stop raining other than Hashem. And with this awareness, they davened with all their hearts. And when one davens with all their heart, only the highest form of tefillah can overcome it. `

*Tehillim* (107) discusses four groups of people who were in a dangerous situation and were saved: (1) Someone who traversed a desert. (2) Someone who sailed the seas. (3) An ill person who became well.

(4) Someone freed from jail.<sup>2</sup>

The Malbim notes that the *pesukim* describe the first two situations we listed above differently than the final two. For the first two (someone who traveled overseas or who traversed a desert) the *pasuk* states, ויצעקו that they shouted to Hashem, ויצילם, and Hashem saved them.

In describing the other two situations, the ill and the imprisoned, it states, ויצעקו, which also means shouting, but it is a less panicky type of shout. It isn't as intense as ויצעקו. And for the salvation it states, וישיעם, which implies lesser salvation than ויצילם.

This is because when one is at sea, he is dependent on Hashem's mercy. There isn't anyone who can save

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2. *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 219) says that these four categories are alluded to in the words of *Shemonah Esrei*, וכל החיים יודך סלה, "All living shall praise you forever." חיים is *roshei teivos* for חבוש, יסורים, someone saved from either jail or an illness, someone who sailed overseas or traversed a desert. They must praise Hashem for their salvation.

him but Hashem alone, and he therefore places his whole heart into his prayers. The result is that the salvation is greater, too. The same applies to someone traversing a desert. This is the reason ויציילם is used to describe the yeshua.

Whereas, when one is ill, he thinks doctors can help him. When one is in jail, he thinks lawyers can help him. He isn't totally dependent on Hashem; therefore, his shouts aren't as intense, and the salvation isn't as complete. Thus, by them it states ויזעקו and וישעם, a weaker cry and a lesser form of salvation.

### The Power of Speech

The *parashah* begins with the laws of *nedarim*. If a person says, "This food is forbidden to me," it becomes forbidden. The food is kosher, but he may

not eat it because of his vow.

This shows that words have immense powers. They aren't as insignificant as many people think.

The Rebbe of Ruzhin *zt'l* said we can derive the power of speech from the laws of marriages. One takes a ring and says to a woman, "Behold you are married to me with this ring..." and she becomes married. Words can change the status of a person.

On the *pasuk*, יוצר הרים ובורא רוח מגיד לאדם ומה שיחו (Amos 4:13), the Rebbe of Ruzhin *zt'l* explained, יוצר הרים, Hashem created mighty mountains, רוח ובורא רוח, but wind can uproot mountains because winds are even stronger than mountains. מגיד לאדם מה שיחו, this tells a person how powerful his speech is. Speech is only wind, yet the wind is the greatest strength in the world.<sup>3</sup>

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3. The Imrei Noam (הקדמון) explains the *pasuk* (Bereishis 49:21), נפתלי אילה, as follows: "Why was Naftali quick on his feet

Words are very powerful, not only in reference to tefillah. If you say kind words to someone, it can be very influential, and harsh words can create immense pain.

The *Zohar* teaches, "Just as one is punished for speaking bad words, so is one punished for the good words he could have said but refrained from saying them."

The Gemara (*Taanis* 22.) tells of two jolly people who with their humor and kind words would bring happiness to people. Eliyahu HaNavi said that they were בני עולם הבא because

it is a great mitzvah to make people happy.

Words can be a great source of encouragement. And when one is encouraged, he can accomplish so much.

Someone from Bagdad came to Yerushalayim and told the Leshem, "When your *sefer* arrived in Bagdad, the Ben Ish Chai wore Shabbos clothes for three days; he celebrated and rejoiced with your *sefer*."

The Leshem said, "If I knew how cherished my *sefer* is, I would have written several more."

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like an אילה, hind? It is because הנותן אמרי שפר, he would say nice words to people. When he traveled, he would greet everyone he met. Therefore no one stopped him, allowing him to go on his rushed way. This is the reason [when the brothers wanted to bury their father, Yaakov Avinu, in Mearas HaMachpeilah, and Eisav claimed that the grave was his] that Naftali was sent to bring the document [that would prove that Eisav sold his share of *Maaras HaMachpeilah* to Yaakov]." Naftali was chosen because he would greet people and was loved by all, and everyone would permit him to rush by.

People often don't realize how precious they are and just how valuable their deeds are. They don't know their qualities. If you can help them recognize them, it will help them reach their potential.

And words can give joy to people who are bitter and sad. The Me'il Tzedakah (תתש"כ) writes, "There's a form of *tzedakah* that is easy to do, and the reward is great. It is to say comforting, kind words to the poor. Encouragement brings joy to those who are worried, and you can say words that increase peace. I once met someone very distraught about his financial situation and was planning to take his life. He told me about his problems, and I spoke with him for a long time and comforted him. A few days later, he told me that if I hadn't comforted him, he would have committed suicide. Therefore, one should be generous with his words when he is among the poor and among

those who are worried and distressed. He shouldn't speak sparingly. He should speak a lot with people, and he should give them a lot of encouragement. Even if he has worries of his own, that shouldn't stop him from speaking to the poor and supporting those who are worried and down."

A young bar mitzvah *bachur* became an אבל, r'l, for his mother, and he davened at the amud for the first time in a beis medresh in Yerushalayim. After davening, a fellow *mispallel* came over to the young orphan and said, "Apparently, you will be davening here each day for a year. You must learn the right speed — not too fast, nor too slow."

The boy came home crying.

The boy's father was a close friend of Reb Yaakov Mendel Yuravitz (from the *beis din* of the Eidah Chareidis), and the father told Reb

Yuravitz what happened. Reb Yuravitz replied, "I was also at that *minyán*. I was planning to tell your son how nicely he *davens*; only I didn't get around to it. Now I realize how much distress I could have prevented had I taken the time to encourage the poor *yasom*."

One shouldn't be stingy with kind words. Words are free, and they do so much to encourage others.

### **Encouragement by Accident**

Someone was cured of cancer, and he celebrated with a *seudas hoda'ah*. He stood up to speak and publicly revealed the secret of his recovery:

"One day, I was lying in the hospital, and my eyes were closed. The doctors assumed I was sleeping, but I listened to everything they said. One doctor said, 'According to statistics, he barely has a chance to live. But he has a strong desire

to live, and I think that because of his willpower, he will pull through and survive.' I heard those words and decided to stay strong and pull myself out of the illness. No one should ever go through the suffering I endured. But the doctor's encouraging words were always on my mind: 'I have the willpower to live, and therefore I will survive.' That's what pulled me through to recovery. And now I'll introduce you to my doctor. He's here at this *seudas hoda'ah*. He saved my life. Please come forward, Dr. ..."

Everyone applauded, and the doctor stood up to speak. He said, "It's true. I recall that meeting at your bedside, but we were discussing another patient. We weren't talking about you. Your illness was so serious that we thought that even strong willpower to live wouldn't suffice. I learn from your recovery two things. First, when one has a strong desire to live,

he can triumph over the most severe illness. Two-encouragement goes a long way. Even if the patient imagines that the encouragement was intended for him, it helps."

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l*, *rosh yeshivas* Mir, Yerushalayim, heard that people learning in Mir yeshiva in America were also learning "Reb Chaims." At first, Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz thought they were referring to his *chidushei Torah*, because his name is also Chaim. He thought the yeshiva students in America were studying his *chiddushim*, which gave him a lot of encouragement. Then he realized that they meant the yeshiva *bachurim* in America are studying Reb Chaim Brisker's *chiddushei Torah*. "Nevertheless," Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz said, "the thought that people across the ocean were learning my *chiddushei Torah* gave me a lot of *chizuk* and encouragement."

This is because encouragement, even by accident, is powerful and helps people bring out their best abilities.

When Dovid HaMelech ran away from his son, Avshalom, he praised Hashem, as it states *מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבִשְׁלֹם בְּנוֹ*, "Dovid's praise, when he was running away from his son Avshalom" (*Tehillim* 3:1). The Gemara (*Brachos* 7:) asks, why was he praising Hashem? He should have cried! His own son was chasing him to murder him!

The Gemara answers that Hashem told Dovid that he would endure opposition and danger. When he discovered that it would come from his son, Avshalom, he thanked Hashem because his son would undoubtedly have *rachmanus* on him.

The Maharsha writes that, in retrospect, we don't find Avshalom having any compassion for Dovid. Yet,

Dovid praised Hashem because he thought his son would have mercy on him.

It's possible that Dovid's joy, and the praises he sang, led to his salvation because it is known that joy and praises are *segulos* for *yeshuos*.

Dovid's joy and praises were based on an allusion yet may have led to his ultimate salvation. This is because encouragement, even from a *m i s u n d e r s t a n d i n g*, accomplishes a lot.

Indeed, we can accomplish a lot when we give wise, genuine encouragement to others.

### **The Forty-Two Journeys**

This week's parashah lists the forty-two stations the Jewish nation covered in the desert. The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* taught that every Yid also goes through forty-two *מסעות*, journeys, during his lifetime. These travels refer to the various

struggles and tests people go through in their lifetime. The Jewish nation traveled forty-two times from when they left Mitzrayim until they reached the land of Eretz Yisrael. Similarly, a Yid endures forty-two situations in life from when he was born until he goes up to the "land of the living," in heaven.

The Degel Macheneh Efraim *zt'l* (Masay) writes, "I heard from my grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a*] that the forty-two journeys happen to each person from the day he's born until he returns to 'his world' [in heaven]. The day he is born is like *yetzias* Mitzrayim. From there, he travels from trip to trip until he reaches ארץ החיים העליונה, the land of the living in heaven [Olam HaBa]."

The Degel Macheneh Efraim writes that each location has its challenges, which can bring down a person. But if he serves Hashem from that place, he will become holy and pure.

An example of this is קברות התאווה, which is one of the forty-two sojourns (33:16). At this location, the nation had a תאווה, a temptation, for meat, and many people died and were buried there, thus, the name קברות התאווה. However, had they served Hashem in that place, Bnei Yisroel would have reached high levels.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim writes that he heard from his grandfather (the Baal Shem Tov zt'l, who quoted the Bris Menuchah) that potentially, they could have buried all of their negative temptations (קברות התאווה). Their only will would have been to be close to Hashem. However, they didn't take advantage of that option and fell into taavos, wanting to eat meat (see Bahaloscha 11).

Similarly, every life situation, challenge, and location has the potential for immense growth or descent. This is where free-will comes in.

Rashi writes שלא יהיה לבך חלוק על המקום (Devarim 6:5). Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin zt'l explains, "One should never feel that the place where he is isn't good." Hashem arranged for you to be in that place, so it must be for your good. You might think it is hard to serve Hashem there, but if you pass the tests, you can reach high levels.

A youngster lived in an apartment building where many neighbors were building and adding rooms to their homes. The constant construction (the noise, the dust, etc.) disturbed this youngster's peace of mind so much that he decided to sell his apartment and move elsewhere. But in his new home, he encountered another problem. His neighbors were noisy. Despite his numerous requests, they kept their late hours and noisy lifestyle. He could hardly fall asleep at night from the noise. He regretted selling his first apartment.

It was better there than where he lived now.

He bought a third apartment. It was small for his family, so he hired contractors to add another room. But then a new problem arose. One of his new neighbors complained that the added room was blocking his sunlight, so even before he moved in, he already had an enemy in the building.

After trying and failing three times to find a peaceful home, he concluded that it was bashert from Heaven that he must suffer from his neighbors. Moving wouldn't solve the problem because what was meant to be would happen. It is impossible to escape Hashem's hashgachah. Furthermore, he realized that he shouldn't complain about the place where Hashem put him because if Hashem placed him there, it was best for him. It might be challenging and hard to serve Hashem there, but

that is where he can reach incredible heights.

An opponent of the Rebbe of Gustantin zy'a became ill, and the Rebbe davened extensively and fervently for his refuah. Someone asked the Rebbe, "Do you really need him so much? He is your opponent!"

The Rebbe replied, "If it is decreed on me that I must endure opposition, it will happen. If the opposition doesn't come from him, it will come from someone else. I am accustomed to his style of hisnagdus (opposition), therefore, I prefer that he lives on, rather than to have to deal with someone else's opposition, which will be challenges I'm not accustomed to."

We often don't know why we must go through hard times and challenges, however, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l said that in the future, everything will be explained. He will be told

why he had to go through what he did. And then he will laugh that he was so concerned and upset all the time. Then he will see that everything was only for his favor.

שמור sometimes means to wait (see Bereishis 37:11). Using this translation, Rebbe Boruch of Mezhibuz zt'l taught (*Tehillim* 107:43): מי חכם וישמר אלה, "He who is wise will wait patiently until he understands the reasons behind everything that happened to him." ויתבוננו חסדי ה' "and then he

will know that everything was Hashem's kindness."

It is written, עוד מעט וסקלוני, "a drop more and they will stone me" (*Shmos* 17:4). Stoning, in Yiddish is באשטיינערן, which sounds similar to פארשטיין, to understand. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l explained, עוד מעט וסקלוני, wait a drop longer, and everything will be understood. Right now, you don't understand why things are as they are, but there will come a time when everything will make sense.<sup>4</sup>

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4. מסעי – מטות hints that you should *מטות*, bend and accept the things that happen to you in life, *מסעי*, and then you will travel peacefully through life.

Someone owned a very strong and quick horse, and the proud owner fed it well and took good care of it. But eventually the horse became old and its upkeep was costly. Nevertheless, the owner had *hakaras hatov* to the horse, so he continued feeding it and caring for it.

One day, the horse fell into a very deep pit and couldn't get out. The owner thought it was an opportune time to put the end to his horse and began shoveling dirt into the pit to bury it. The horse looked up with pleading eyes, wondering why his owner was throwing earth over him. But the owner didn't pay attention to his

horse's plea and kept tossing in earth. As the pit filled up with earth, the horse climbed on top of that earth, and slowly, slowly it was raised, until it was able to leave the pit.

There are circumstances in life that seem negative, and sometimes we feel that someone is trying to bury us alive, but ultimately we grow from all those hardships, as everything is planned only for our benefit.

There was a loyal servant who loved his king, and he told the king, "I will do any errand. Just call me, and I am prepared to do your will."

One day, the king asked him to travel to a certain country to do an errand for the king over there. The servant was overjoyed that he was offered this privilege, and he immediately went home to pack for the voyage. He rushed to the port, his suitcase swinging at his side, but as he came to the port, he saw the ship pulling away from the dock.

"Wait for me," he shouted to the sailors, but they wouldn't go back for him. He watched in agony as the ship sailed away.

The next ship to this destination would set sail from a distant port. There was no other way. The loyal servant now had to travel the long and difficult way to the other port to be able to go on the journey that the king requested. As he travelled to the other port, he felt that he wasn't genuinely serving the king because if he had been a drop quicker, it wouldn't be needed.

However, if the servant would hear that the king specifically asked the ship to leave early because he wanted his servant to travel the long way to the other port, he would rejoice with every step of his way because he would know that he's doing exactly what the king desires.

The *nimshal* is that we go through hardships, and we think that Hashem would prefer it if we could serve Him without the hardships. But it is often the hardships and struggles that we go through that make our *avodas Hashem* special to Him.

Hashem told Moshe (Shemos 33:23) ראי את אחרי פני לא יראו, "You will see My back, but you will not see My face." The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* explains that the *pasuk* implies that, at first, one doesn't understand why he must go through hardships. But when he looks back, he will see what he gained from those situations.

What we can learn from here is not to complain about your situation. If there is something you can do to make things easier for you, perhaps you should. But sometimes, there is nothing you can

do. This is *bashert*, and there is no escaping Hashem's decrees. But make the best of it. Serve Hashem to the best of your abilities from that place, and you will reach incredibly high levels.<sup>5</sup>

### Emunah

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil would often give the following lesson in *emunah*:

People think they believe in Hashem, but the real test is when something doesn't go their way. During these times, do they also remember their *emunah*?

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5. Noah lived an entire year inside the *teivah*, it was like a prison for him. He was also busy 24/7 feeding the animals. One may claim that Noah had valid reason to complain. But let us consider how much Noah gained by being in the *teivah*. This year of hardship saved him, his family, and essentially the entire world. When taking this into account, we understand that Noah was in a very fortunate position, and he had plenty of reasons to praise Hashem.

Similarly, people go through hard times, and they think that they have valid reasons to complain. However, when one considers how much he gains from them, he realizes that he must praise Hashem, because every hardship is beneficial.

Do they say, "Even this is from Hashem, and it is for the good," or are they upset and distressed? These are the defining moments of whether one truly has emunah or not.

Reb Yechiel Michel Feinstein's zt"l daughter had severe asthma. The family kept three breathing machines in their home, so there would always be at least one available in case of an asthma attack.

One night, their daughter had an attack, and the family was frantically looking for the breathing machines, but they couldn't find any of them. They called Hatzalah. By the time hatzalah arrived, she had died. Then they found the devices. They were stored under her bed, and no one thought of looking there.

The family was devastated, and they blamed themselves, and one another, for what happened. "Why didn't we

put the machines in a place where we would find them? Why didn't we think of looking under her bed?"

Their conscience didn't give them peace of mind until the renowned magid, Reb Yaakov Galinsky zt'l came to be *menachem avel*. He told them, "My rebbes taught me that *hishtadlus* is only about the future; it isn't about the past. After something happened, one must believe it was exactly as Hashem planned, and nothing could have been done to change it. The person who placed the breathing machines under the bed isn't guilty, and the family members who didn't consider looking there aren't guilty either. This was Hashem's plan; nothing people did or did not do could have changed it."

Approximately twenty-five years ago, a bachur from yeshivas Chevron was killed in a terror attack, and Reb Nota Zehnworth zt'l came to be *menachem avel*. The father was a talmid

chacham and one of the magidei shiurim of the Chevron yeshiva.

Reb Nota asked the father, "If Avraham Avinu would have slaughtered Yitzchok by the akeidah, would Avraham need to sit shivah for him? Perhaps he wouldn't," Reb Nota suggested, "because the death was Hashem's will."

The father replied, "Every death is Hashem's will."

Reb Nota Zehnwirth said, "That is exactly what I wanted to hear." And then Reb Nota stood up and said, "*Hamakom yenachem eschem mitoch shaar aveilei tzion veyerushalayim*," and left. His message was understood. He wanted the father to know that even this challenging situation was part of Hashem's plan.

Reb Leibke Glauberman zt"l of Yerushalayim was in the hospital due to extreme pain in his legs, and the doctors decided they

needed to amputate the leg. Reb Leibke accepted Hashem's decree and was brought in for the operation while his children waited outside the operating room. After the surgery, a doctor admitted to the children that the amputation was unnecessary. The leg could have been saved. "But it is too late now," the doctor said, "What's done is done."

Reb Leibke's children were very upset with the doctors for making this terrible error.

When Reb Leibke woke up, they told him it was all a mistake and shouldn't have happened. "

Reb Leibke replied, "I heard from my holy rebbe, the *Yanuka* (Rebbe Yisrael of Stoln zt"l), '*Volt ich, zolt ich* [to say, "If only things would have happened differently"] is apikorsus.' Everything is destined from heaven, including this amputation. The doctor manuals say that my illness didn't need an amputation,

but I know that my foot did need to be amputated. My proof is that this is what occurred. It wouldn't have happened if it wasn't Hashem's will."

In our generation, Hashem's presence is very concealed. Therefore, those who are steadfast in their emunah and remain faithful even when tested are doing a very great service for Hashem.

Sometimes, we compare ourselves to the tzaddikim of the past and feel dejected. We ask ourselves: How do my deeds compare to theirs? But regarding emunah, we have no reason to be ashamed. The test of emunah is so difficult in

our generation, and every drop of emunah is valuable.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zy" a said, "I knew a Yid in Zvhil who enjoyed putting on tefillin every day, more than a great rasha enjoys sinning."<sup>6</sup>

When one hears stories such as this one, and then considers how he puts on tefillin, he often feels depressed and distant. He asks himself, "What value do my mitzvos have compared to the Torah giants and tzaddikim of years ago?"

But when we consider the difficult test in emunah that we have in our generation, we can consider ourselves tzaddikim, like the tzaddikim of the past.<sup>7</sup>

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6. It is known that when Rebbe Shlomke zt"l would say, "I knew a Yid in Zvhil," he was referring to himself. Once, he said, "I knew a Yid in Zvhil who sat in the succah when it was raining outside, and not a drop of rain entered his succah. "This time, too, when he said, "I knew a Yid in Zvhil," he was referring to himself.

7. The Gemara (Makos 23:) says: "Chabakuk placed the entire Torah upon one pillar, as it states, צדיק באמונתו יחיה, "A tzaddik lives with

## What You Do for Others You Do for Yourself

People say, "What you do for others, you do for yourself." This means if you act kindly to others, kindness will come back to you.

The source for this concept is from the pasuk (*Tehillim* 121:5) ה' צלך, "Hashem is your shadow." *Chazal* explain that just as a shadow mimics the movements of man, ה' צלך, Hashem *keviyachol* mimics a Yid's behavior. When a Yid performs kindness with others, Hashem does kindness to him.

In parashas Vayeshev, Yosef does kindness with

the Sar HaMashkim, and he interprets his dream well. The Arvei Nachal (*Mikeitz, drush* 1, אמונת) explains that Yosef did so because he wanted to receive Hashem's compassion. Therefore, he purposely acted with compassion towards others, so Hashem would act kindly and compassionately with him and free him from jail.

The Arvei Nachal writes that Mordechai and Esther were kind to one another, which is why Hashem did kindness with them and the entire nation. ה' צלך, Hashem is your shadow, and the way we act is the same way that Hashem will treat us.

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his emunah."

Reb Baruch Ber of Kaminetz zy"l said that this can be compared to an army that has many bases. But there is one base, that is the primary fort of the army. All the strong weapons are stored there, and all the high-ranking generals of the army live there.

Similarly, there are many facets to avodas Hashem - there are the mitzvos, studying Torah, tefillah, chesed, and so on. But the foundation and primary base is emunah.

Mordechai heard Bigson and Seresh plotting to kill Achashveirosh, so he told Esther about it. Mordechai wanted Esther to earn the credit and be rewarded for saving Achashveirosh's life. However, Esther wanted Mordechai to earn the credit, so she told Achashveirosh בשם מרדכי, in Mordechai's name. Because they were devoted to helping one another, Hashem saved them and the entire Jewish nation.

We quote the Arvei Nachal, who expresses these ideas:

"Chazal say, dreams will happen according to how they are deciphered. So why did Yosef decipher the *sar hamashkim's* dream positively? Why did he want to do kindness for an Egyptian? I believe that the answer is as the Alshich z'l explains the *passuk* (Esther 2:22) ויודע הדבר למרדכי ויגד לאסתר המלכה ותאמר אסתר למלך בשם מרדכי, "The matter was

known to Mordechai [that Bigson and Seresh were plotting to kill Achashveirosh] and Mordechai told Esther, the queen, and Esther told the king in Mordechai's name." Why didn't Mordechai tell Achashveirosh himself? The Alshich explains that the existence of the Jewish nation is due to their unity. This is as *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabba* 38:6) state on the *passuk* (*Hosheia* 4:17) חבור עציבים אפרים הנה לו, 'Even if the Jewish nation worship *avodah zarah*, if they are united, Hashem doesn't punish them.' The opposite, however, occurs (*Hosheia* 10:2) חלק לבם when they are divided. This also occurs for individuals. If two people befriend each other with perfect love until each one doesn't consider his benefits, only the benefit of the other, this creates a similar reaction from Hashem. Hashem, *keviyachol*, will leave everything He does, and He will think, 'How can I

bestow goodness onto these people?' Chazal teach this from the passuk ה' צלך, 'Hashem is your shadow,' for how man acts, is how Hashem acts toward him. Whereas, when people aren't united with perfect love - even if they don't hate each other, but each person is only thinking about himself, and he doesn't strive to help his fellow man - Hashem will similarly not seek their benefit, *chas veshalom*. Therefore, whenever a person is going through a hard time, *chas veshalom*, the counsel is that he should befriend someone or befriend many people. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will seek to do goodness with him and he will be saved. This is what happened to Mordechai and Esther. Mordechai didn't think about what he could gain, only what will be good for Esther. When he heard Bigson v'Sheresh's plotting and knowing that whoever saves the king from death

will be immensely honored, he told Esther about it [so Esther would be rewarded]. Esther, however, only wanted to do kindness with Mordechai, so she told Achashveirosh in Mordechai's name. This resulted that Hashem saved them and the entire Jewish nation. This is the Alshich's interpretation. Now, behold, Yosef was in distress [in prison] and sought to fix his problem by befriendng someone. However, since he was in Mitzrayim, where they were all *resha'im*, *baalei gaavah* and *baalei taavah*, he didn't have anyone to befriend. So he chose the best person he could find under the circumstances. He saw that the *sar hamashkim* was also in great sorrow, as his life was in danger, and he was very humbled [by what happened to him], and his *gaavah* left him. Yosef saw that he was sad and considered it an opportune time to befriend him. He

would be saved, and so would Yosef."<sup>8</sup>

In summary, "Help others, and Hashem will help you." This happened to Yosef HaTzaddik, and Mordechai and Esther, and this happens to every individual when he cares about someone else and strives to help others. Seek opportunities to do *chesed*; you will only gain.

### **Tzipisa l'Yeshua – Waiting for Moshiach**

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31) teaches:

"Rava said that when a person is brought for judgment in the heavenly court, they will ask him, "Tzipisa l'Yeshua? Did you

anticipate and await salvation?" Every person will be asked if he waited for the coming of Moshiach.

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l* studied in the Ksav Sofer's yeshiva in Pressburg. He repeated an episode that shows how the simple people of that city would wait and aspire for Moshiach's arrival.

A woman asked her friend, "What did you make for lunch today?"

She replied, "*Beblach* (beans)."

"And what are you planning to cook for tomorrow?"

"Sha sha! *Al tiftach peh l'Satan*. [Don't imply that

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8. The Arvei Nachal writes that Yosef wanted to decipher the *sar ha'ofim's* dream in a positive way, too. But the *sar ha'ofim* was afraid at first to tell Yosef his dream, for he feared that Yosef might decipher his dream in a negative way. His fear caused him to be killed. As it states (*Iyov* 3:25) פחד פחדתי ויאתני, "What I was afraid of, happened to me." So Yosef wanted to help both of them, but due to the *sar ha'ofim's* pessimistic stance, he was only able to help the *sar haMashkim*.

tomorrow will be a regular day]! But if, *chas veshalom*, Moshiach doesn't come, I'll make noodles."

This demonstrates how we should wait for Moshiach. Every day, we should hope that this may be the day Moshiach will come.

The Shaarei Teshuvah (118) writes, "When one says לישועתך קוינו כל היום in *Shemonah Esrei*, one should think, 'I am from the people who wait for Moshiach,' because after one's demise, he will be asked whether he waited for Moshiach. Mahar"i Tzemech writes, 'In addition, [when I say these words] I have in mind that I am waiting for Hashem's salvation to save us from all bad encounters that occur every day and every moment. I often found this to be very beneficial.'"

Reb Shalom Keshenmacher (a chassid of Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zy'a*) had a difficult wife who made his life miserable. He would have divorced her, but his

Rebbe was very against divorces. So he held out as long as he could.

However there came a time when he felt that he couldn't cope any longer, and he divorced her. He understood that after having done so, he couldn't return to his rebbe.

Sometime later, Reb Shalom couldn't bear watching his children suffer, so he remarried his wife. And then he returned to his rebbe.

Rebbe Asher Stoliner said, "Reb Shalom? What brings you back here?"

"I remarried my wife."

"You did? Why?"

"I couldn't watch my children suffer."

Rebbe Asher exclaimed, "Ribono Shel Olam! Shalom Keshenmacher took back his wife, who he didn't like, because he couldn't bear to watch his children suffer. Woe to the children [the Jewish people] who were

banished from their Father's table."

It was a tefillah that Hashem should bring us back, so we won't suffer any more in galus.

During the days of *selichos*, end of the year תשל"ה, a tzaddik said to my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, "Perhaps we will merit that Moshiach will come next year. Rebbe Isaac of Kamarna *zy'a* predicted that Moshiach will come in the year תשל"ו."

My grandfather replied, "I'm still waiting for Moshiach to come in year תשל"ה." We must never lose hope, and we should constantly wait for Moshiach.

The first of the Aseres HaDibros is (*Shemos* 20:2), אנכי ה' אלוקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים. The Sma'k says that two mitzvos are hinted at in this *pasuk*: (1) to believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim* and (2) to believe in the coming of Moshiach.

אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים is our obligation to believe that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim. אנכי ה' אלוקיך, "I am Hashem your G-d" is our obligation to believe that just as He freed us from Mitzrayim, He will free us from the present *galus*.

Rebbe Dovid'l of Tolna *zt'l* once came late to his *tish* and explained that he was late because he had a conversation with Moshiach. Moshiach asked Rebbe Dovid'l advice, whether he should come immediately to redeem the Jewish nation or wait until all Yidden were ready. Moshiach explained, "If I redeem the Yidden now, some *neshamos* will never be rectified."

Rebbe Dovid of Tolna advised Moshiach to wait until all *neshamos* were ready.

One of the chassidim at Rebbe Dovid's *tish* asked, "Rebbe, isn't it better that Moshiach comes now? Why should we wait for those

few *shleppers* and unfortunate souls?"

The Tolna Rebbe answered, "You are one of those souls. If Moshiach comes now, you will never be rectified."

Someone asked Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* whether he may shave his beard during the Nine Days. "I have an important business meeting, and there will be non-Jews present. I'm afraid I won't get the deal if I don't shave my stub."

Reb Moshe answered, "You can go to the meeting, but don't touch your beard."

Nevertheless, this man was afraid to jeopardize the deal, so he shaved.

At first, the meeting was going very well, but when they were about to finalize the deal, one of the businessmen asked, "How can we know that you are trustworthy? We have your word and promise, but how can we know that you are honest?"

The Yid replied, "Don't be concerned. I am a religious Jew, and the Torah obligates us to deal honestly in business. Our word is a word."

"You're a Jew?" the man interrupted him. "So where is your beard? I know that during these weeks, Jews aren't permitted to shave their beard."

The man began hemming and hawing, obviously very ashamed. The non-Jewish businessman announced, "If you aren't loyal to your religion, how can we trust you to be honest in business?" Because of this, the deal fell through.

The lesson: Mourn for Yerushalayim. Cry for the churban. Keep all the halachos of the Three Weeks and Nine Days. Only good will come from it.

May we merit the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days, amen.