

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Voeschanon



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

Voeschanaon

## Giving Chizuk – Planting Hope

The parashah begins with the words, ואתחנן אל ה' "And I davened to Hashem at that time."

The Baal HaTurim explains that Moshe was saying, חזקתי את ישראל אולי ירחם, "עלי" I gave *chizuk* to Bnei Yisrael. [I raised their morale to believe that Hashem will help them conquer Eretz Yisrael]. Perhaps [in this merit] Hashem will have compassion on me [and answer my tefillos]."

The Baal HaTurim is referring to the pesukim that precede Parashas V'eschanan. Moshe said (Devarim 3:21-22), לא תיראום, "Don't be afraid. Hashem shall wage war for you. Your eyes have seen everything Hashem did to these two kings [Sichon and Og]; so will Hashem

do to all the kings where you cross over [who live in Eretz Canaan]." Moshe gave hope and encouragement to the Jewish nation, and in that merit, Moshe davened ואתחנן, that Hashem should have mercy on him, answer his tefillos, and permit him to enter Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe Rabbeinu's merits are countless. He brought the Torah down to the Jewish nation, he saved the nation many times with his tefillos, and he led them out of Mitzrayim and through the desert for forty years. Who can compare to Moshe? Who can count his tefillos? Yet, he didn't ask that Hashem answer his prayers because of all these merits. His only request was that Hashem answer his tefillos because he gave hope to the Jewish nation.

Hope is inherent in mankind. No matter what people go through, they hope for a better future. Even during the grimmest moments, there is always, at the very least, a flicker of hope in their hearts. This is undoubtedly a kindness of Hashem because a person could have been created always expecting the worst.

Nevertheless, despite our tendency to think positively, we worry a lot. People are frightened, "What will be if the future isn't better? What will be if I don't find a *shidduch/parnassah/health*, etc.?" Therefore, it is a great mitzvah to encourage others, to cultivate their hope for a better future.

Moshe Rabbeinu encouraged the nation that they would succeed in all their wars, and this is counted among Moshe Rabbeinu's accomplishments. For this, he hoped Hashem would answer his tefillos.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, say a kind word to someone, encourage him, compliment him on his qualities, smile at others, etc. These small, easy-to-do acts are so significant and far-reaching.

Around one hundred years ago, Reb Mordechai Chaim Slonim *zt'l* was once waiting his turn to use a tiny *mikvah* in Teveria. The town's fool who was present at the time announced, "Rabboisai!

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1. It states (*Yeshayah* 1:1) *הזון ישעיהו בן אמוץ*. The Rebbe of Zutchkeh *zt'l* said that *הזון* means to see, *ישעיהו*, means salvation, and *בן אמוץ*, means to be strong. The *pasuk* is saying, "To see your salvation, be strong and believe in the salvation that will certainly come." When one has hope, and doesn't despair, he will merit seeing his salvations. Therefore, it is a great mitzvah to give people a feeling of hope. That sensation will help bring the good that this person is hoping for.

The holy rav is here! Make room so the holy rav can *toivel!*"

After his *tevilah*, Reb Mordechai Chaim said, "Everyone knows that this man is the town's fool, and the *miokah* isn't the ideal place for honoring others, either. Nevertheless, when he gave me honor, it felt good."

Reb Mordechai Chaim said, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu placed into the fabric of creation that people enjoy receiving honor, regardless of who is bestowing the honor. Therefore, we should seek to honor others."

It states in this week's *parshah* (4:41), אז יבדיל משה שלש ערים בעבר הירדן מזרחה שמש לנס שמה, רוצה אשר ירצה את רעהו בבלי דעת, "Then Moshe set aside three cities on the other side of the Jordan River, to the east, so that a man who accidentally murdered someone can escape there."

The *arei miklat* were places of refuge. No one can harm the murderer when he is within the walls of one of these cities. They were also like prisons because the murderers weren't permitted to leave these cities until the kohen gadol died.

Rashi writes that the three cities in עבר הירדן didn't attain the status of *arei miklat* until the other three *arei miklat* were prepared in Eretz Yisrael. Nevertheless, Moshe said, "There is a mitzvah that I can do; I will do it."

Moshe Rabbeinu readied the three *arei miklat* in עבר הירדן so that they would be functional the moment the other three *arei miklat* were established in Eretz Yisrael.

All six *arei miklat* needed to begin their services at the same time. What is the reason for this? Why couldn't the first three *arei miklat* serve their function immediately as Moshe

prepared them? Why was there a need to wait until the other three cities of refuge were prepared in Eretz Yisrael, as well?

The Meshech Chachmah (*Maasay*) says that it is because the Torah reveals that Elazar the *kohen gadol* stayed alive until the nation inherited Eretz Yisrael. He would be among the primary figures that would choose each family's lot in Eretz Yisrael (see *BaMidbar* 34:27). The Meshech Chachmah explains that generally, when someone is in arei miklat, he lives with the hope that he might be freed immediately. The moment the *kohen gadol* dies, he goes free (see *Bamidbar* 35:25). If the three cities in *הירדן* served as arei miklat, they would live there without hope for freedom because Elazar the *Kohen Gadol* was destined to live for many more years. We can't allow people to live in Eretz Yisrael without hope for freedom.

We learn from this that hope is so vital. If we can give hope and encouragement to another *Yid*, we have done a great deed.

The Torah tells us (*Devarim* 23:4-7) that a Jewish woman may not marry a *גר*, a convert (nor a descendent of a convert) from the nations of Amon and Moav (see *Even HaEzer* 4:2). (We don't practice this prohibition anymore [see *Even HaEzer* 4:10] because it is impossible to trace one's nationality. We can never be sure they are of Amonite or Moabite descent.)

The Torah tells us that the reason for the prohibition is, *על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים...* "It is because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Mitzrayim..."

The *Chinuch* explains that people with such bad traits don't deserve to marry into the Jewish nation.

The Beis Yosef (דרשות) ,א"ת, מזהיריק"א, printed in *Or Tzaddikim*) notes that the Jews didn't need bread or water because the manna fell every morning and they drank the water of Miriam's well. So why are we so strict with Amon and Moav? Why is it forbidden to marry them? What did they do that is so bad?

The Beis Yosef answers, "We can say that על דבר means 'for the words.' They are punished because they didn't share kind, encouraging words." We could manage without their bread and water, but why didn't they tell us words of encouragement? Words are free. Why couldn't they say something nice to the Jewish nation who had just sojourned forty years in the desert?

They didn't convey kind words, they didn't give us a feeling of encouragement, and therefore it is forbidden to marry them.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, everyone needs *chizuk*, from the greatest to the smallest, and those who supply it deserve the greatest rewards.

The Chofetz Chaim (*Shemiras HaLashon* vol.2 ch.7) shares the following idea: Imagine that you are attending a fundraising dinner, and the goal is to raise money to build the Beis HaMikdash. Everyone present would be *moser nefesh* to donate whatever they could. Who wouldn't want to have a part in the third Beis HaMikdash?

We have the opportunity, always, as it states (*Yeshayah* 1:27), ושביה

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2. Amon and Moav were goyim. Who needs their praise and admiration? Who needs their encouragement? Nevertheless, apparently, the nation needed it. Their kind words would have helped them. And Amon and Moav were punished severely because they refrained from providing this to Bnei Yisrael.

בצדקה, that the *galus* will be redeemed in the merit of tzedakah. So, every time you give tzedakah, you can consider it like you added a brick to the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

However, there are poor people who cannot give much tzedakah. How can they give tzedakah? How can they contribute towards building the Beis HaMikdash? They should say kind words to the poor and to the suffering. The Me'il Tzedakah calls that, "A tzedakah that doesn't cost money." This form of tzedakah will also build the Beis HaMikdash.

A wealthy person visiting Eretz Yisrael gave his relative a thick wad of one-hundred-dollar bills and told him to distribute the money to the tzedakah of his choice.

The relative wasn't sure where he should give the money, so he discussed it with one of the *gedolei hador zt'l*. The *gadol* replied, "Hire

*yungerleit* to give *chizuk* and to smile at *bachurim*."

This isn't a joke. So many people wait for someone to show them respect, smile, and listen to them. Fortunate are those who occupy themselves in this good deed.

It isn't hard to find opportunities to perform this mitzvah. In every beis medresh, every yeshiva, every girls' school, and every neighborhood, there are people hungry to hear a kind word, hoping that someone will smile and spend a moment of their time with them. Fortunate are those who can satisfy their void.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said, "Every *bachur* needs a spoonful of *kavod* each day."

Educators say that children who fall away from Yiddishkeit are because they were missing a kind word, some *chizuk*, a smile, someone who would

ask them how they are, and so on. By performing this mitzvah, you can encourage people and also save Yidden from leaving the fold.<sup>3</sup>

Some years ago, the thirteen-year-old son of a very special *yungerman* began drifting off the

*derech*. The father thought, "Why is this happening to me? We sent him to the best schools; we made certain that he be around good friends. So how is this happening to him?"

He reviewed his deeds, past and present, and he remembered that as a

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3. There was a boy who was falling away from Yiddishkeit, and his father paid many people to mentor him and to direct his son back to the right path. Baruch Hashem, he returned to Yiddishkeit. Afterwards, his father asked him, "Which dollar brought you back?" He meant, "I paid many people to help you. Which investment did the trick and brought you back?"

The *bachur* replied, "It wasn't your investments that brought me back. There was a rav who greeted me with a warm smile, and he told me that Hashem loves me, despite of all my *aveiros*. He is the one who brought me back to Yiddishkeit."

A rav once accidentally dialed the wrong number. He immediately realized his error, but decided to let the call go through, rather than to suddenly hang up. The person he called was a member of his *beis medresh* but hadn't come to daven for some time. He decided it was *min hashamayim*, so he could hear how things were going with him.

"I just wanted to hear how you are?" the rav told him, when the man answered the phone.

The man was so impressed and flattered. This phone call gave him *chizuk*. He was in Italy at that time, contemplating committing an *aveirah*, but this phone call – which showed him care, love, and respect – stopped him.

*bachur*, he once spoke against the Vilna Gaon *zt'l*. Disgracing *talmidei chachamim* is a terrible sin; at the time, he thought he was a bigger chassid if he spoke against this great tzaddik. He feared he was being punished for that *aveirah*.

He contacted Reb Mordechai Gross *shlita*, who goes to the Vilna Gaon's *kever* every Elul, and asked him to be his *shaliach* to ask forgiveness for the wrong things he said.

Reb Mordechai Gross replied, "I was already in Vilna this Elul, and I won't be going there again this year. But I know someone who is in Vilna right now. I will send him to the Vilna Gaon's *kever* to ask forgiveness on your behalf.

This *shaliach* was at the Vilna Gaon's *kever* at 6:30 in the afternoon, and that is exactly the time the *bachur* began his return to Yiddishkeit. At that time, the *bachur* was on a bus, dressed in jeans, gel in his long hair, and appeared very distant from the yeshiva *bachur* he once was.

A friend of this *bachur* was on the bus and was shocked by his appearance. He said, "I can understand that it is hard for you to study Torah all day long, but why do you need long hair, and why do you need to dress this way? You won't gain anything from it. You are acting foolishly."

Generally, it is risky to rebuke in this manner, but this time the sharp words entered the *bachur*'s heart.<sup>4</sup>

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4. If his parents or one of his rebbes or *mashgichim* of the yeshiva rebuked him in this sharp way, he probably wouldn't have paid attention to them and he would become even more detached. But coming from a good friend, he was able to accept the *mussar*.

When he came home, he told his father that he wanted to wear a *talis katan* again and asked for a haircut.

We learn from this story the power of words. Years ago, a father spoke out against one of the greatest scholars of our nation, and this caused a lot of sorrow. And then, sharp words of rebuke brought the *bachur* to do *teshuvah*. However, a safer route is words of encouragement and caring. Such words will accomplish so much!

### Consolation

The Chofetz Chaim once said before a large crowd, "In our generation, everyone who has a mouth must use it to give *chizuk* to others." In the Chofetz Chaim's generation, many people began being lenient with Shabbos observance, family purity, etc. The Chofetz Chaim encouraged anyone who could do so to

give drashos and to rouse people to *teshuvah*.

When the Chofetz Chaim went off the podium, he heard people saying, "The Chofetz Chaim is a *tzaddik*! He can speak to people and rouse them to *teshuvah*, but what can we do?"

The Chofetz Chaim overheard them and immediately returned to the podium to add this essential *mashal*:

There was a *poritz* who demanded that his servants serve him purified water. Once, someone brought him regular water to drink, and after taking a sip, he immediately spit out the water. "Why did you bring me dirty water? When you bring me water, it must be purified first. "

Sometime later, there was a fire in the *poritz's* home. "Fire! Fire!" the *poritz* shouted, but it took a long time before people came with water to put out the fire.

"What took you so long?" the *poritz* complained. "By the time you came with buckets of water, half my home burned down!"

"You told us to purify the water first," the servants explained. "We purified the water and came as quickly as we could."

The *poritz* said, "When there is a fire, any water will do."

The Chofetz Chaim said, "The same is with delivering speeches in our generation. There were generations when one needed to be a *tzaddik* before he could speak in public. But now, a fire is raging. Whoever has the ability to speak must do so."

Today, *chizuk* of a different nature is needed. In our generation, people need to hear a good word. It isn't rebuke that people need to hear; they need to hear that Hashem loves us, that they can succeed in *avodas* Hashem, that they are good, etc. Anyone with a mouth must use it to quench this fire and help their fellow man.

This is the comfort and consolation that we receive on Shabbos Nachamu. This week, we read in the *haftarah* (*Yeshayah* 40:1), נחמו, נחמו עמי יאמר אלקיכם "Console, console My nation, says Hashem." How are we consoled? The answer is אלקיכם, know that Hashem is your G-d. This awareness is our utmost joy and comfort.<sup>5</sup>

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The Chebiner Rav *zt'l* said, "Every sharp step (שארפע טריט) is regretted in the end." Sharp rebuke is generally not the path to take. But this time, it worked.

5. A child in an amusement park was afraid to ride the roller coaster. When his father offered, "I will ride with you," the child was no longer afraid.

It states, יאמר אלקיכם in the future tense because the condolence applies to every generation. Until today, on Shabbos Nachamu, a bas kol consoles us and tells us kol consoles us and tells us אלקיכם, "I am your G-d. I love you so much. We are so close. I will always take care of you."

On the words, נחמו נחמו עמי, יאמר אלקיכם, the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayah*, 445) teaches, "Klal Yisrael said to Yeshayah, perhaps you consoled solely the people who lived at the time of the Churban Beis HaMikdash?"

Yeshayah replied, "I am consoling all generations. As it states, נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר, אלקיכם, and יאמר is in the future tense. Tell these

reassuring words to the future generations."

These condolences are reiterated in the *haftarah* of *parashas* שופטים. It states there (*Yeshayah* 51:12), אנכי אנכי, הוא מנחמכם, "I, and only I, am He Who consoles you." Our only comfort is our connection with Hashem, our Father in heaven.

Why does it state אנכי אנכי? It is referring to two pesukim:

At *mattan Torah* (this week's *parashah*, 5:6), Hashem says, אנכי ה' אלקיך, and in the darkest moments of *galus*, Hashem says (*Devarim* 31:18), אנכי הסתר אסתיר פני, "I will conceal My face..." So, at the happiest moments and at the bleakest moments, Hashem is there.

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Similarly, in *galus*, when we know Hashem is with us, we aren't afraid of any dangers or perils.

A tightrope walker rode a unicycle over a tightrope while holding a child on his shoulders. People asked the child, "Weren't you afraid?"

The child said, "The tightrope walker is my father. When I'm with my father, I'm never afraid."

This tells us that in the darkest times, Hashem is with us, just as He was with us at *mattan Torah*. This knowledge consoles us.

*Shir HaShrim* (4:8) states, אתי מלבנון כלה אתי מלבנון תבואי. Rashi explains that אתי means "with Me." לבנון is the Beis HaMikdash. Hashem says, אתי מלבנון, "I will be with you when you are exiled from the Beis HaMikdash. אתי מלבנון תבואי, and I will be with you when you return to the Beis HaMikdash.

Rashi writes that also throughout *galus*, Hashem is with us. עמו אנכי בצרה, He feels and experiences all our pain.<sup>6</sup>

It states (4:7) כי מי גוי גדול אשר לו אלקים קרובים אליו כה: אלקינו "Which great nation has a god close to them like Hashem our G-d.." The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2) elaborates:

A ship arrived at an island, and the gentiles on board sent the only Yid on board to the island to buy food and provisions. The Yid asked them, "Why are you sending me? I'm also a stranger to this island, just like you."

They told him, "You are not alone. Wherever you go, Hashem is with you. As it states, אשר לו אלקים קרובים אליו..."<sup>7</sup>

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6. Rashi explains that if Hashem is only with us when we leave the Beis HaMikdash and when we return to the Beis HaMikdash and not in between, it would state, אתי מלבנון תבואי, with a ל"ד. It states אתי מלבנון תבואי, with a מ"ם to indicate that from the time of the destruction until we return at the end of *galus*, Hashem will be with us.

7. The Beis Avraham would often repeat this Midrash. It shows that even non-Jews know that Hashem is with the Jewish nation. We are never alone.

There was a fire in the home of Reb Shmuel Minkes *zt'l* (a student of the Baal HaTanya *zt'l*), and Reb Shmuel was dancing. People feared that he had lost his mind due to the financial loss. Because why else would he be dancing at this time?

He explained to them, "If I were a non-Jew, my god would be burned in the fire together with my wealth. But I'm a Yid, and my G-d still exists. That's why I'm so happy."<sup>8</sup>

### The 15<sup>th</sup> of Av

The Chasam Sofer (*Masay*) quotes the Talmud Yerushalmi that Av is a

month comprised of two months. It is Av is until Tisha b'Av, and after Tisha b'Av a new month begins, called Menachem.

It states (*Yeshayah* 66:23), והיה מדי חודש בחדשו. The words חודש בחדשו imply that there's a month that begins in the middle of the month. The Chasam Sofer says that this is Menachem, which starts in the middle of Av. Several times, in the Chasam Sofer's *teshuvos*, he writes the date "the month Menachem." It isn't Av. It is a new month, a month of consolation and compassion.

Specifically, the 15th of Av, is a time of compassion and goodness for the Jewish nation.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Once, Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* couldn't find a package filled with money, and the entire household was panicking and looking for the money, but Reb Zalman was dancing. His family asked him, "Why are you so happy? Did you find the money?"

"No," he replied. "But I decided that because I lost my money, should I also lose my mind from despair?"

9. The Avodas Yisrael *zt'l* says that the 15th of Av is on the same plane as Yom Kippur. It is known that every month has a different

Tzaddikim said that on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, one can hear how they are moving and preparing the chairs in heaven for the court case on Rosh Hashanah. In many chassidic courts, the blessing for a *כתיבה וחתימה טובה* begins from *חמשה עשר באב*. Indeed, they have the same *gematriya*.

Rosh Hashanah is the day Adam HaRishon was created, but Creation began earlier, on the 25th of Elul. Forty days before a child is formed, it is decreed in heaven (see *Sotah* 2.). Forty days before 25 Elul is 15 Av. The *Kedushas Levi* says that this shows that the new year begins on the 15th of Av.

It states (*Devarim* 10:12),  
ועתה ישראל מזה אלךך שואל מעמד

"Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem ask from you? Only to fear Hashem, to love Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and soul. To observe His mitzvos."

The Bas Ayin explains *מה* represents forty-five days from the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av until Rosh Hashanah. The *pasuk* is saying that Hashem is asking us that during these forty-five days we should love and fear Hashem and follow in His ways; this will prepare us for a good judgment on Rosh Hashanah.

The 15<sup>th</sup> of Av is also a good time to make *kabbalos* to study more Torah. The Gemara (*Taanis* 31.) says that since the nights are beginning to become longer

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combination of the letters of Hashem's name *הו"ה*. The month of Av is in the order of *הו"ה*. Each letter represents a week, so the final two weeks, beginning from the 15th of Av are represented with the letters *ו"ה*, which are the *roshei teivos* of *יום הכיפורים*.

And he explains the connection between the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur according to kabbalah.

from the 15th of Av (and nighttime is an ideal time for studying Torah), it is important to begin studying more. The Gemara says, מאן דיוסף יוסף, "Whoever studies more will live longer."

We read about *kabbalas haTorah* and the Aseres HaDibros this Shabbos, an indication that we should take on *kabbalos* to devote ourselves to Torah study.

Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* insisted that the *chazan* for the *yomim noraim* in his beis medresh had to learn at least one *daf* of Gemara each day from the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av. He said he learned this from Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l*.

We will take this idea to the next level:

*Shulchan Aruch* says that the *chazanim* for the *yomim noraim* should prepare themselves for three days. For example, if someone will be a *chazan* on Rosh Hashanah, he should prepare himself with

teshuvah and good deeds from three days before Rosh Hashanah. The same applies to Yom Kippur.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* said that this was in the days of old, when the *chazanim* were great *tzadikim* and the community relied on the *chazanim* to be blessed with a good year. But in our times, everyone needs to daven for himself, and therefore, everyone is like a *chazan*. Therefore, the Chasam Sofer says, everyone should prepare himself three days before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, so his tefillos will be answered.

Based on the Chasam Sofer's lesson, we add that everyone should make sure to study a *daf* Gemara every day from the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av because everyone is his own *chazan*, and Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk and Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* taught that to be a *chazan*, one must study a

daf Gemara each day, on all of these days.

### Shabbos Nachamu

An ancient *sefer* (written by an Italian *gadol*) called *Sefer Minhag Tov*, writes, "It is a good custom not to take a haircut before *erev* Shabbos Nachamu, and when *erev* Shabbos Nachamu arrives, one is obligated to take a haircut, and he should be happy and welcome the Shabbos with joy and with a happy heart. He will be comforted with many condolences, and Hashem will console us with the redemption of Yerushalayim."

The Mahari'l states that on Shabbos Nachamu, ישמחו כל העם ויבטחו בנחמת הגואל, "The entire nation shall be happy and trust in the condolences of [Hashem] the Redeemer."

It is important to be happy every Shabbos of the year. Happiness on this Shabbos is of extra importance.

The Mishnah (*Taanis* 26:) states, לא היו ימים טובים לישראל, כחמשה עשר באב, "The Jewish nation never had such good *yomim tovim* as the fifteenth of Av." It seems that it used to be a very joyous day in the past, and we wonder why we don't celebrate this holiday anymore.

Actually, we do. We celebrate it on Shabbos Nachamu. The Ritvah writes about the holiday of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, ומפני זה נהגו עשות סעודה בשבת שאחר תשעה באב, "Therefore, there's a custom to make a festive meal on the Shabbos after Tisha b'Av (on Shabbos Nachamu)." So we do celebrate this great holiday, and the celebration is on Shabbos Nachamu.

בן שועיב (a student of the Rashba) writes, מצוה לעשותו כיום טוב, it's a mitzvah to celebrate this Shabbos as though it were a *yom tov*.

## Tips for Your Tefillos to be Answered

This *parashah* is called ואתחנן, which means (and is also the same *gematriya* as) תפילה. It states, ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא, לאמר, "I prayed to Hashem at that time, saying." The Or HaChaim HaKadosh says that Moshe davened in the most ideal way for his tefillos to be answered, and his approach is a lesson for all of us on how to daven.

The Or HaChaim lists the four steps in tefillah, which Moshe employed, so his tefillos should be answered:

1) Daven with humility, as if you don't deserve that Hashem should answer your tefillos. This is alluded to by the word ואתחנן, which means that Moshe pleaded like a poor person who humbly pleads for aid.<sup>10</sup>

2) The next condition for tefillah is hinted at in the

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**10.** Before *Shemonah Esrei* in the morning, we say עוזר דלים, "Hashem helps the poor." The Arizal says that one should imagine that he is poor, and unable to help himself, and with that mindset, he turns to Hashem in tefillah.

The Pelle Yoetz (*Kniyah*) writes that a group of tzaddikim were once davening with immense *kavanah*, and it was revealed to them from heaven that although their tefillos were wonderful, they deserved to be punished because their tefillos lacked humility. But there was one person in the group who davened with humility, and in his merit, everyone was saved.

Once, a woman asked the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* to daven for her gravely ill son. The Chofetz Chaim came to the beis medresh and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, over the years, You did so much kindness with me. You helped me write the *sefarim Mishnah Berurah, Shemiras HaLashon*, and other *sefarim*. It isn't that I deserved those favors. It is due to Your unlimited kindness. Please do for me one more favor and answer my tefillos and heal this sick person."

words, אלה. The Or HaChaim writes, שבקש ממקור הרחמים, to plead from the Source of Compassion.

This probably means that when you daven, believe that Hashem has compassion on you and wants to help you. הוי"ה is Hashem's name of compassion. Hashem has various names because Hashem leads the world in

various manners. The Torah tells us, ואתחנן אל ה', Moshe davened with an awareness that Hashem has compassion on him and wants to bestow kindness on him.

Tzaddikim say: When one daven, one must believe that (1) Hashem can help, (2) Hashem wants to help, (3) and my tefillos can make a difference.<sup>11</sup>

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Take note that the Chofetz Chaim didn't say, "In the merit that I wrote all these *sefarim*, answer my tefillos." He prayed with humility, like someone who doesn't deserve anything.

This is how we should daven.

A student of the Chazon Ish *zt'l* once said to his Rebbe, "*es kumt mir a mazal tov* – I deserve a mazal tov. I just had a child."

The Chazon Ish rebuked him because no one can say he deserves Hashem's kindness.

A woman complained to Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* about her childless life. Reb Shlomo Zalman explained to her that she can't have complaints against Hashem because Hashem doesn't owe her anything. However, if she will do for Hashem more than what is required, Hashem will do for her more than she deserves, and she will merit children.

She became a volunteer in Sharei Tzedek hospital in Yerushalayim. A year later, she had a daughter.

**11.** It states in this week's *parashah* (4:7), כי מי גוי גדול אשר לו אלקים קרובים, "Which great nation has a god close to them

3) The following words of the *pasuk* are בעת ההיא, "at that time," which teaches us that we should seek to daven when it is an *eis ratzon*, auspicious time for tefillah. Because there are times that are more *mesugal* for tefillah, and we should strive to daven at those

times, for then there is a better chance that the tefillos will be answered.<sup>12</sup>

4) לאמר means that when one davens, he should express himself well. He shouldn't speak in vague, ambiguous terms, leaving room for doubt on the meaning of his words.<sup>13</sup>

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as Hashem our G-d is close to us whenever we call out to Him." Hashem is close to us and desires to listen to our tefilos.

The *Yerushalmi* writes:

"No one is closer [than Hashem and the Jewish nation]. Hashem seems to be far away, the distance from earth to heaven. However, when a Yid comes to a beis kneses and stands behind the *amud* and davens silently, Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to his tefillos. Is there...anything closer? Hashem listens to him as though he is whispering into Hashem's ear."

**12.** The Gemara says, "When is it an *eis ratzon*? When the *tzibur* davens." Therefore, it is important to daven with a minyan, whenever possible, or at least, at the same time the *tzibbur* is davening.

Reb Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* says that for an hour each day the אור הגנוז (concealed light, which shone at creation) shines and whoever davens at that time when this holy light is shining, his tefillos will be answered. And since we don't know the exact moment the *or haganuz* shines, it is good to pray at several different times during the day. Maybe he will pray at the time when the concealed light shines.

**13.** There was a couple in Yerushalayim that had only one

We shouldn't say, "Hashem knows what I mean." Instead, speak clearly and say exactly what you want to say.

The Or HaChaim quotes the following Midrash (*Esther Rabba* 7:24):

Someone was exhausted after walking a long distance. So he raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Ribono Shel Olam! Send me a donkey!"

He walked on and met a high-ranking official. The official's donkey had just given birth to a baby, and the official commanded the Yid to carry the baby donkey to the official's home.

As the Yid walked with the donkey on his shoulders, he said, "This happened to me because I davened for a donkey, but I didn't express myself clearly. I didn't say that I wanted a donkey *to ride on*. My prayers were answered, I received a donkey, but instead of riding on it, I have to carry it."

Reb Moshe Minder *zt'l* asked: Why is it so important to express oneself well in the tefillah? Hashem knows what we need and what we mean even when we don't express ourselves well. Furthermore, why was the person mentioned in the Midrash punished that he had to carry the baby donkey? Does he deserve

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daughter. They wanted more children, so they davened, "Fill up our house with children." But they didn't have more children.

Their only daughter had many children. She divorced and moved in together with all her children into her parents' home.

The parents' tefillos were answered. Their home was now "filled with children," but that wasn't what they meant. This is because when you daven, you have to express yourself well.

this punishment for not expressing himself well in his tefillos?

Reb Moshe Minder replied that the root of the problem is that he didn't realize that when one davens, he is like a son asking from his father. If this person would realize that he is Hashem's son and that Hashem wants to hear his tefillos, he would express himself clearly. He wouldn't mince words; he would express himself well. He didn't express himself well because he didn't feel close to Hashem, and that was his error.

Reb Moshe Minder taught this lesson to his friend, Reb Hershel Mikrinki *hy'd*, seven weeks before Reb Moshe Minder's *petirah*. Reb Moshe concluded,

"Whenever you need a *veshuah*, go to a private place and say one or two chapters of Tehillim, and then ask Hashem for your needs, and you will be

saved. Express yourself clearly. Don't hint, don't be ambiguous, and don't be stingy with your words. And then Hashem will answer your tefillos. I request that when you do this, mention my name: Moshe ben Rachel, so I will also benefit from this" (*Sod Siach Chassidim*).

We learned the four conditions for tefillah to be answered, as they are alluded to in the words ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא לאמר. Moshe used these steps, hoping that his tefillos will be answered. (1) Pray with humility, realizing that you don't deserve anything. (2) Daven with *emunah* that Hashem loves you and desires to help you. (3) Daven when it is an *eis ratzon* for your tefillos to be answered. (4) Express yourself well.

When we do so, *b'ezras Hashem*, our tefillos will be answered.

There are more counsels for tefillah to be answered,

and Moshe employed those counsels, too, for he desired and hoped to enter Eretz Yisrael. Until here we listed four counsels for tefillah to be answered, so we go on to the fifth counsel:

5) It states, ואתחנן אל ה' בעת and the *roshei teivos* of ההיא להאמר spell ה"ב, the heart. This indicates that Moshe davened with all his heart and soul (*Chida, Nachal Kedumim, Ve'eschanan* 1). Davening with kavanah is certainly mesugal for the tefillos to be answered<sup>14</sup>

The Midrash says that when Moshe was praying to enter Eretz Yisrael, he thought, "There were times when Klal Yisrael sinned gravely, and I prayed for them, and I was able to attain atonement. My sin

wasn't so severe, so my tefillos will certainly be answered."

Hashem said, "Since you are taking your tefillos lightly (you don't feel that you need to concentrate so hard), your tefillos will not be answered."

6) The Baal HaTurim writes that the *gematriya* of ואתחנן is שירה. He explains that Moshe said שירה, songs of praises to Hashem so that Hashem would listen to his tefillos.

(We do the same by beginning our tefillos with *pesukei d'zimra* and praises, which helps our tefillos to be answered.)

The Imrei Shaul of Modzitz *zt'l* explains that

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14. Even when we don't have *kavanah*, we should continue davening. A hint to this concept is in the *piyut* (Hoshana Raba), שופכים, לך שיח בלא לב ולב, "They pour out their words, without a heart and with a heart." We can explain that they don't have a heart and concentration when they daven, but they *want* to daven with *kavanah*. Their desire to daven properly should be enough הושע נא, that Hashem should answer their tefillos.

praising Hashem implies that he is certain Hashem will help him. So, he sings and praises Hashem even before the salvation comes. That trust is *mesugal* for his tefillos to be answered. As it states (*Tehillim* 106:44), וירא,

Hashem checks to see whether בצר להם, when people are going through hard times, בשמחו את רונתם, they are already praising Hashem and thanking Him for the salvation that will come.<sup>15</sup>

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**15.** A man in one the southern cities of Eretz Yisrael was having a hard time marrying off his children. His oldest child was twenty-eight, and he had another four children above twenty.

He also had financial problems because he had taken out a mortgage on his house to help his *chavrusah* marry off his children. His *chavrusah* was supposed to pay the monthly fees, but he couldn't, and the bank put up his house for foreclosure.

One evening, this man was in Yerushalayim for a *chasunah*, and met a relative. He told his relative about his hardships marrying off his children and his financial troubles.

The relative replied, "There's a great tzaddik in Yerushalayim - the Beis Yisrael of Gur. Tell him your problems. He will certainly help you."

This man wasn't a chassid, but his relative convinced him to go. He poured his bitter heart out before the Rebbe. The Beis Yisrael asked him, "Do you ever praise Hashem? Praise should be 60% of your tefillah and requests 40%."

This man told his relative the counsel he received. The relative said, "You have a lot to be thankful for. You have health, a wife, and children. You always have food on your table. Focus on the good. Get into the practice of praising Hashem as the Rebbe suggested: 60% praises and 40% prayers."

Two months later, his oldest daughter was engaged. Within a half

year, three of his children were married and two more were engaged.

Around that time, his *chavrusah's* mother was *niftarah*, leaving a large inheritance. The *chavrusah* immediately paid up the debt, and this man was able to redeem his house from the bank.

This man realized that the Rebbe's counsel of 60% praises and 40% requests can be found in *Hallel*. We say there יהודו לה' כי טוב six times, while אנו ה' is said only four times. This is exactly as the Beis Yisrael advised: 60% praises and 40% requests. That ratio brings *yeshuos*.

How does one focus on the good? Let's see how Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* (one of the *tzaddikim* of Yerushalayim) did it.

One day, he said to son, Reb Nota, "Don't ask! I had such a hard day today!"

"What happened?"

"I awoke in the morning [at two a.m., as was his daily schedule] and I wanted to put on my shoes, but the shoelaces were gone. I understood that the grandchildren played with them and hid them somewhere."

"What did you do?"

"Don't ask. I looked all over the house for the shoelaces, and I found one. I thanked Hashem for that, but I still couldn't go anywhere with just one shoelace. I searched the house for another one, which isn't an easy feat for an old man like me. I finally found the other one, and I went to the *mikveh*. But when I came out of the water, my clothes weren't there. Someone took them! I considered asking Reb Kalman [a Rav who would often help Reb Zalman] to bring me another set of clothes from the house, but then I decided against it because your mother wouldn't remain silent if she heard that someone stole my clothes."

"So what did you do?"

"What I did? I'll tell you what I did. I woke up this morning and

7) Another counsel for tefillah to be answered is to be aware that we have no place to turn to other than to Hashem. When we daven with this awareness, our tefillos are answered.

The following happened to Rebbe Aharon Roth (Rebbe of Toldos Aharon) *zt'l* when he was living in Hungary, Europe. Years later he repeated the episode to his grandson, Reb Asher Anshil Katz *shlita*:

"I was following doctor's orders, bathing in the sea for my *refuah*. One day, there was a strong current in the water, and before I knew it, I was very far away from the shore. What do you think I did? Do you think I said *viduy* or that I said *Kriyas Shema*? I didn't.

I shouted with all my strength, 'Tatte! Father! Only You can help me!'. Just then, a strong wave came and pushed me back!" Because only Hashem can save us, and when we know that, our tefillos are answered.

A *bachur* asked the Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* for a *segulah* to strengthen his *emunah*. The Sar Shalom told him, "Tefillah is the best *segulah*, because when you see that your tefillos are answered, your *emunah* is strengthened."

This concept is taught by the Ramban on the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 3:12), ויאמר לי מזה שמו מזה, ואומר עליהם. Moshe was asking Hashem, "How can I teach the nation to believe in Hashem?"

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found the shoelaces in my shoes. I went to the *mikveh*, and no one stole my clothes. Everything was fine and well."

So, think about all the problems that could be, and recognize Hashem's kindness that he saved you from all of those troubles. With this perspective, you will be happy with your lot.

Hashem replied, "You don't have to teach them anything. When they see that their tefillos are answered, they will believe in Hashem."

We must know that even when we daven without kavanah, and without all these methods, each tefillah is precious and significant and can bring yeshuos.

The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2:11) writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe, 'I swear, whenever the Jewish nation calls to Me, I will answer them. As it states (4:7), כִּהְיֵה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל קְרָאֵנוּ עִלְיֹו, whenever we call to Hashem, Hashem is near to answer our tefillos."

## Everyone Can Pray

(*Ve'eschanan* 4:29), ובקשתם, מושם את ה' אלקיך ומוצאת, "From there [in galus] you will seek Hashem, your G-d, and you will find Him..."

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l says the Torah is alluding to Yidden who are at very low levels. ובקשתם מושם, "From there, from that low place, you will pray to Hashem and Hashem will answer your tefillos."

Everyone can daven. There isn't a Yid in the world whose prayers aren't effective. We shouldn't think that only great tzaddikim can daven. Every Yid's tefillah is heard and accepted in heaven.<sup>16</sup>

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**16.** There are many things that people mistakenly believe apply only to tzaddikim and not for them. One example is *deveikus*, which means to always think about Hashem. They think that this is only for tzaddikim, but it isn't so.

In this week's *parashah* it states, ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום, "You, who are attached to Hashem your G-d, are all living today." This pasuk is for all Yidden, people on all levels. Everyone can live their lives, constantly remembering Hashem.

Moshe Rabbeinu prayed 515 tefillos to enter Eretz Yisrael. Chazal tell us that if Moshe Rabbeinu had said one more tefillah, his requests would have been answered. But Hashem stopped him and said (3:4) רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד "It is enough! Don't speak to Me anymore about this matter." Hashem forbade Moshe Rabbeinu from praying another tefillah.

But Hashem didn't forbid the Jewish nation

from praying. The Midrash says that had the nation prayed on Moshe Rabbeinu's behalf, their tefillos would be answered and Moshe Rabbeinu would have entered Eretz Yisrael. But the nation didn't pray. They thought, "If Moshe Rabbeinu's 515 prayers weren't effective, what can I accomplish with my tefillah?" They didn't realize that tefillah from every Yid is extremely influential before Hashem.<sup>17</sup>

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The Rebbe of Bahush zy"א said, when we speak to people about *deveikus* - they make three errors: (1) They think *deveikus* is in Gan Eden (2) or in this world for the tzaddikim, (3) or for the people who are old.

The words of the passuk חיים כולכם היום disproves these theories:

חיים- In your lifetime, not only in Gan Eden.

כולכם- for everyone, not only for tzaddikim.

היום - Today, not only when you get old.

**17.** The Megaleh Amukos teaches: Hashem's name (Yud Keh Vov Keh) is gimatriya twenty six. We say Hashem's name twenty six times in Shemonah Esrei.  $26 \times 26 = 676$ , the same gimatriya as the word רעות [suffering]. This implies that by davening the Shemonah Esrei all forms of suffering are annulled and disappear.

## The Peak of Tefillah

With tefillah, we reach the highest levels.

One indication is that Shemonah Esrei is called Amidah, which means standing, and the Sfas Emes notes that also malachim are called *omdim*, standers.<sup>18</sup> This hints that when people daven, they reach the level of the malachim.

The Vilna Gaon zy"l says: When one stands and prays *Shemonah Esrei*, he speaks face to face with his Creator. There is nothing greater than to pray to Hashem in this manner. Therefore, Shemonah Esrei is called Amidah. He is like

the malachim who stand at the same place. He, too, stands in the same place because he has reached such a high level. It is almost like there are no higher levels to reach.

In the morning, we praise Hashem, *שְׁלֵחַ עֲשֵׂנוּ גוֹי*, for not creating us as goyim. The commentaries ask, "Why do we thank Hashem for *not* making us gentiles? Shouldn't we thank Hashem for making us Yidden? Shouldn't we say "*sheasani Yisrael*" instead of *shelo asani goy*?"

The Taz (46:4) writes, "Many answer that (Chazal tell us that) it would be even better for us if we weren't

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The Megaleh Amukos writes that this is the intention of the passuk ומכולם יצילנו ד' רבות רעות צדיק, "Many hardships befall the tzaddik, and Hashem saves him from them all (Tehilim 34:20)."

This refers to the twenty-six names of Hashem that are in Shemonah Esrei. They save us from all hardships [רעות].

**18.** Malachim are called עומד because they stand on one level, they don't experience spiritual growth or descents. This is unlike a human being who is called *holeich*, someone who goes, because he is always going from one level to the next.

created at all. Indeed, Chazal say that Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel agree that it would have been better if we weren't born. [So we don't thank Hashem for being born a Yid], rather we thank Hashem that if we are created already, at least we weren't created a gentile."

The Chasam Sofer asks that towards the end of the tefillah (in *Uva Letzion*) we do thank Hashem for creating us. We say ברוך אלקינו שבראנו לכבודו, "Bless Hashem for creating us to honor Him"!

The Chasam Sofer answers that after we've merited to daven a complete tefillah, we can now thank Hashem for creating us. To have the privilege to daven makes being created worthwhile.

Reb Hillel Parisher zt"l wanted to be in Lubavitz, by the Tzemech Tzedek zy"l for Shabbos so he asked a wagon driver whether it was possible to

arrive in Lubavitz in time for Shabbos.

"We could arrive in time for Shabbos," the wagon driver said, "but only if we take the quicker (less safe) route and only if you will not daven for too long. If you daven a long time when we stop, we will not make it on time for Shabbos."

Reb Hillel agreed to the terms, and they set out for Lubavitz. But Reb Hillel davened a lengthy Shacharis. The wagon driver had finished Shacharis quickly and eaten breakfast, and Reb Hillel was still davening. When Reb Hillel was finally done, the wagon driver said, "Why did you daven for so long? Now we won't make it in time for Shabbos."

Reb Hillel answered with a mashal, "A merchant was traveling to Leipzig to purchase merchandise, and he met a merchant midway. The merchant had the merchandise he wanted to

buy, and the price was the same as it would be sold in Leipzig.

"He'd be a fool not to buy the merchandise and continue to Leipzig. Why shouldn't he take advantage of this good opportunity?"

Reb Hillel Parisher explained, "I am traveling

to the Tzemech Tzedek because I want to daven better. But if I find this merchandise here, why should I forgo it? I'd be a fool if I didn't take it when offered to me."

In the end, they arrived in Lubavitz in time for Shabbos.