

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Naso



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Naso

Birchas Kohanim

This week's parashah talks about the mitzvah of birchas kohanim (6:23-26), that the kohanim should bless the Jewish nation. What is the purpose of this mitzvah? Hashem can bless the nation Himself. He doesn't need kohanim to bless them!

The Akeidah (74) explains that the purpose of birchas kohanim is to remind the Jewish nation that all the good we enjoy comes from Hashem. The kohanim say, *יְבָרֶכְךָ ה'... יֵאָר ה'... יִשָּׂא ה'*, and we remember that all the good we have, comes from Hashem. This awareness grants us Hashem's brachos.

The Akeidah writes that this is the reason for all the brachos we say (such as brachos over food). When we remember Hashem's kindness, we

receive more good from Above.

Chazal (Brachos 7.) say, *אֵל תְּהִי בְרַכַּת הַדְּיוּט קְלָה בְּעֵינֶיךָ*, "A simple person's blessings shouldn't be a small matter in your eyes." The Akeidah explains, "We shouldn't consider our brachos trivial because there is great benefit to them. It brings us awareness of Hashem's kingdom, and with this awareness, we will merit to receive bounty from Above."

A chasid once said to Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov zt'l, "The poritz in the area where I live is old, and he is selling all his properties for half-price. There is a large forest on his property, and I plan to buy it."

The Rebbe told him, "I advise you not to buy the forest."

The chasid didn't listen to the rebbe's counsel. He didn't want to lose out on this deal of a lifetime and bought the forest. The forest was sold for half-price but was still very costly because it was enormous. The chasid had to sell his properties and borrow money to pay for the forest.

His hired workers began chopping down the trees but quickly discovered a problem. The first tree they chopped down was infested with worms. So his workers chopped down another tree and then a third, but they were all rotting, wormy trees.

He was embarrassed to return to the Tchartkover Rebbe because the Rebbe had warned him not to buy

the forest, and he didn't heed his advice. But after two years passed, the chasid told himself, "It is enough that I lost my money. Should I lose my Rebbe as well?" So he went to Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchartkov and said, "I know. It is my fault. The Rebbe knew better than me. I should have relied on the Rebbe's ruach hakodesh."

The Tchartkover zt'l replied, "It wasn't ruach hakodesh. It is just that I saw you were certain that you would make money on this business venture, and it seemed that you didn't remember that you need Hashem to succeed. So I advised you not to enter this business because one can't succeed without Hashem. One must always remember this."¹

1. The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l explained the pasuk (Shmuel 1, 2:7) ה' מוריש ומעשיר, "Hashem impoverishes, and makes wealthy," that it can happen in a moment. In one moment, one can become wealthy, and in one moment, one can lose all his money.

A wealthy chasid heard this vort from the Chozeh but didn't believe that one could become poor or rich so quickly. On his way

Birchas HaTorah

Shulchan Aruch (47:1) states, ברכת התורה צריך לזהר בה מאוד, "You must be extremely cautious with *birchas haTorah*."

The Mishnah Berurah elaborates:

"Don't learn Torah before you say *birchas haTorah*, and you should say the *brachah* happily. Chazal say that the *galus* came because people weren't saying *birchas haTorah*. Therefore, we must be very cautious with this mitzvah, to praise

home, this chasid passed the home of a priest he knew, and a *kelipah* (impure spirit) took hold of him, and he went inside and told the priest that he wanted to convert, *r"l*. The priest knew this Yid for a long time as a G-d fearing person and didn't believe that the chasid was sincerely interested in converting. "You are playing a prank on me. You will turn me into a fool. I refuse to convert you." But the Yid insisted that he genuinely wanted to convert.

The priest told him, "I will agree to your request only if you sign a document that says that if you back out of the conversion, you will give me all of your possessions as a gift."

The Yid signed the document and handed it to the priest. Immediately afterward, he regretted what he did. He couldn't understand how he had done something so foolish. He believed in Hashem and the Torah. Of course, he didn't want to convert!

He quickly left the priest's home, although he knew he would forfeit his wealth. He ran to the Chozeh and told him what occurred. He added, "It happened to me because I didn't believe the rebbe when you said that one can become poor in a moment."

The Chozeh replied, "Now go home, and you will discover that one can become wealthy in a moment, too."

When he got home, the chasid heard that a fire had broken out in the priest's home, and the document he wrote was consumed in flames. He had become wealthy in a moment!

Hashem that He chose us and gave us His desired Torah. Chazal also say that one doesn't merit having children talmidei chachamim if he isn't cautious with birchas haTorah."

The halachah is that *birchas haTorah* is a mitzvah from the Torah, so we should be extra cautious with this brachah.

It states (*Yirmiyahu* 9:11) מי האיש החכם ויבין את זאת, ואשר דבר ה' אליו ויגידה, על מה אבדה הארץ נצתה כמדבר בלי עובר "Who is the man so wise that he can understand this? And who is he to whom the word of Hashem has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined (and) withered like a wilderness, without anyone passing through?"

"And Hashem said, 'It is because they have forsaken My Torah...' Chazal say that this means they didn't make a brachah over Torah. This caused the destruction of the land and the galus. They didn't recognize the

gratitude that they should have to be able to study Torah, and this caused the galus.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 35) discusses a contradiction in the pasukim, whether the world belongs to Hashem or to man. It states (*Tehillim* 24:1) לַה' הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוּכָהּ, which means that the world, and everything in it, belongs to Hashem. And it also says (*Tehillim* 115:16) וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִבְנֵי אָדָם, which means Hashem gave the earth to man. So which one is it? Does the world belong to man or Hashem? The Gemara replies that before reciting a brachah, the land belongs to Hashem. After the brachah, Hashem endows the land to man.

A similar contradiction is found regarding the ownership of the Torah (as discussed in *Avodah Zarah* 19.). It states (*Tehillim* 1:2) כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' חִפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה, "His desire is in Hashem's Torah, and in his Torah, he toils day and night." The pasuk begins by telling us that it is

Hashem's Torah and ends by saying it is man's Torah.

The Noda b'Yehuda (Tzlach, Brachos 64) answers that the exchange occurs when we say birchas haTorah. Before the brachah, it is Hashem's Torah. After the brachah, Hashem gives it to us.

The Noda b'Yehudah (Tzlach) writes, "In my opinion, *birchas haTorah* is a wonderful *segulah* for remembering Torah "because when one says *birchas haTorah*, Hashem gives him the Torah as a gift."

He explains that Mishnayos used to be studied by heart, until Reb Yehudah HaNasi wrote down the Mishnayos so that the Torah shouldn't be forgotten. He therefore named the first *masechta*

"Brachos" to remind people to say birchas HaTorah before they begin to study, as this is a *segulah* to remembering Torah.

The Tzlach writes, "If it weren't for this reason, he would have called the *masechta* "Kriyas Shema," because Shema is a mitzvah from the Torah and is the opening topic of the *masechta*."²

The Holiness of a Nazir

One of the primary halachos of a nazir is that he is forbidden to drink wine. Standard nazirus is for thirty days. So, it is just a bit of prishus, because how hard is it to refrain from wine for thirty days? And yet, it causes holiness, as it states (6:8) כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא לה', "For the entire duration of his abstinence, he is holy to Hashem."

2. The Tzlach writes that this is also why the ב"ה"ג (Baal Halachos Gedolos) wrote out the entire birchas haTorah at the beginning of his sefer. He wanted to remind people to say birchas haTorah, so the students would remember the lessons he writes in his sefer.

The Lev Simchah (5743, ד"ה איש) writes, "This parashah teaches us a profound lesson, and it is a great wonder. A person accepts upon himself not to drink wine – kosher wine – for a short period of thirty days, and he already reaches the level of *כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו קדוש* 'The crown of Hashem is on his head... he is holy to Hashem.' From this we learn the power of a kabbalah tova. He accepts upon himself a small amount, and from heaven, he will receive much more and divine aid. Hashem's crown is on his head."³

The Torah writes (6:2) *איש כי יפליא*, and the Ibn Ezra writes, "*יפליא* means doing something amazing (*דבר פלא*) because most people follow their temptations and this person distanced himself

from his temptation for wine. He did this for avodas Hashem because wine ruins the mind and ruins avodas Hashem."

Rebbe Yisrael of Husiaten zt'l was once walking with his gabbai, and a passing goy was impressed by the majestic appearance of the rebbe. He asked the gabbai, "Who is this rabbiner?"

The gabbai replied, "He isn't a regular rabbiner. He is a Vunder (Wonder) Rabbiner."

"What does a Vunder Rabbiner mean?" the goy asked.

The Husiatener Rebbe overheard their conversation and replied: "There are rabbis who lead a city; other rabbis influence a neighborhood. But there is a rabbi who rules over himself.

3. The Lev Simchah adds, "The practical lesson is that when one has trouble overcoming a certain yetzer hara, he should make a kabbalah to refrain from something, and in the merit of the kabbalah, he will receive divine strength and aid from above, and he will be able to overcome that yetzer hara."

He is called a Vunder Rabbiner."

The Husiatener Rebbe's son-in-law brings this story in his sefer Ohalei Yaakov. He adds the Ibn Ezra we quoted above, that איש... כי means that he did something amazing (דבר פלא) because most people follow their temptations. A person in control over his desires is indeed wonderous.

Another primary halachah of a nazir is that he may not become tamei to a human corpse. This halachah is another indication of the immense kedushah a nazir attains through his prishus.

The Alshich HaKadosh writes, "In addition to the shefa of kedushah that is poured onto him when he is poresh (refrains from drinking wine), he acquires another kedushah – the kedushah of kohanim. Therefore, he may not become tamei to the dead. Furthermore, he receives the kedushah of a kohen gadol, who may not become tamei even to his

closest relatives. He attains the level of a kohen gadol because of his prishus and chasidus.

"These ideas are hinted at in the pesukim: כל ימי הזירו לה, since he became a nazir for Hashem, it is proper that he be like a kohen hedyot. Therefore, על נפש מת לא יבא, he shouldn't become tamei to the dead. However, I will do even more for him, לאביו וכו' לא יטמא; he can't even become tamei to family. This means he is on the level of a kohen gadol. The reason is כי נזר אלקיו על ראשו, Hashem's crown is on his head, similar to a kohen gadol."

The Alshich adds, "The nazir is even greater than a kohen gadol because a kohen gadol's crown is the holy oil, and for the nazir, his crown is Hashem himself." As the pasuk writes regarding the kohen gadol (Vayikra 21:12) נזר שמן משהחת אלקיו עליו, "for a crown – the oil of Hashem's anointment – is upon him." The crown is "the oil of Hashem's anointment."

However, about a nazir, it states נזיר אלקיו על ראשו "for the crown of His G-d is on his head." The nazir's crown is Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself! It is wondrous. All these levels in return for a small prishus of abstaining from wine for thirty days.

The Baal HaTurim (6:6) writes that when one becomes a nazir, he might reach such a level that the Shechinah resides on him. People witnessing his spiritual transformation might suspect its source is an impure spirit, not kedushah. Therefore, says the Baal HaTurim, a nazir refrains from becoming tamei to a human corpse so that people will know that he attained a ruach of

kedushah and not one of tumah, chalila.

The Baal HaTurim writes, שאם תשרה עליו שכונה מחמת נזרו, שלא יאמרו שהוא דורש אל המתים "If the Shechinah resides on him because he became a nazir, [we don't want] people to say that he was *doresh el hameisim* [and that he received his spirit by being contaminated from the dead]."⁴

Even after the thirty days of the nazirus pass, the nazir remains with his sanctity. The Alshich proves this from (6:20) ואחר ישתה הנזיר יין "Afterwards [when the nazirus is completed], the nazir may drink wine." Even after the term ends and he drinks wine, the Torah still calls him a nazir. This is

4. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 65:) explains the prohibition of (Devarim 18:11) דורש אל המתים: "This is a person who refrains from food, and sleeps in a cemetery to attain a ruach tumah, an impure spirit. When Reb Akiva would reach this pasuk, he would cry: 'If a person who refrains from eating in order to receive a ruach tumah can succeed in receiving the impure spirit, kal v'chomer if a person will refrain from eating so he can receive a ruach taharah, a pure, holy spirit, he will certainly succeed to attain it.'"

because his short stint of prishus made an imprint on him, and he is no longer the same person as before.

The Mishnah in Makos (2:6) tells us that when one kills his fellow man accidentally, he must go to arei miklat and live there until the kohen gadol dies. This prompted people in arei miklat to daven that the kohen gadol should die. Therefore, the Mishnah writes, "The mothers of the kohen gadol would supply clothes and food [for the people in arei miklat], so they won't daven that their children die."

The Gemara (Makos 11.) wonders why the mothers are concerned since the kohen gadol did nothing wrong. It wasn't his fault that they ended up in arei miklat, so their tefillos that he die won't harm him.

The Gemara answers that the kohen gadol is, in fact, responsible "because he should have davened for his generation [that even

accidental murders shouldn't occur], and he didn't daven."

The Gemara brings an incident where a person was eaten by a lion three parsah away from Reb Yehoshua ben Levi, and Eliyahu HaNavi didn't reveal himself to Reb Yehoshua ben Levi for three days. Reb Yehoshua ben Levi was held responsible for the death because he should have davened that such accidents shouldn't occur.

The Meshech Chachmah (6:8) writes that this is the reason a nazir who becomes tamei must bring a korban chatas. What is his sin, and why does he need atonement? The Meshech Chachmah answers that the nazir should have davened that people shouldn't die. Therefore, he is responsible for the death, similar to Reb Yehoshuah ben Levi and the kohen gadol. He has reached such a high level due to his nazirus that he becomes responsible for davening for his generation.

The Kli Yakar writes that the reason for the korban chatas if that he wasn't happy with his nazirus and the restrictions that he placed on himself. The proof is that he became tamei. The Kli Yakar writes, "If he were happy with his nazirus, he would be extra careful to avoid tumah. However, he wasn't cautious, proving he wasn't so happy with his nazirus." His lack of joy is an aveirah, for which he brings a korban chatas.

We must realize that one doesn't need to become a nazir to attain this great holiness. Whenever one refrains from indulging in unnecessary worldly pleasures, and practices

prishus for Hashem's sake, he becomes extremely holy.⁵

The Gemara (Taanis 8; see Maharsha) says that in Reb Zeira's days, the government realized that whenever they make a harsh decree on the Jewish people, they fast, and the gezeirah becomes annulled. Therefore, one time they placed a גזירת שמד, a law forbidding the Jewish nation to keep the Torah, and in addition, they decreed that it was forbidden for them to fast. Reb Zeirah advised the Yidden that although it was dangerous for them to fast, they could make a kabbalah to fast when the opportunity arose. He explained that the kabbalah to fast is sufficient

5. Someone came to Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l because he had been married a long time and still doesn't have children. Reb Yechezkel advised him to make a kabbalah to learn mussar daily for ten minutes. The man made this kabbalah, and his wife became pregnant immediately afterwards. People were amazed at the miracle. Reb Yechezkel said, "It isn't a miracle. When a person makes a kabbalah tova, he becomes a new person. So, even if there was a gezeirah on the previous person, he is now a new person. On this new person, it was never decreed not to have children."

to annul the decrees. He proved this from (Daniel 10:12), ויאמר אלי אל תירא דניאל כי מן היום הראשון אשר נתת את לבך להבין ולהתענות לפני אלוקיך נשמעו דבריך, "He said to me, 'Do not fear Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to fast before Hashem, your words have been heard.'" Daniel's tefillos were heard even before he fasted. The salvation began on the first day when he decided to fast.⁶

Yichus

It states (Tehillim 118:3) יאמרו "Let the house of Aharon say..." The kohanim are called בית, house because the kedushah is their heritage that passes from father to child. The pasuk after it states (118:4) יאמרו נא יראי ה', "Let those who fear Hashem say..." and here it doesn't state בית יראי ה', "the house of those who fear Hashem." This is because fear of heaven isn't a heritage. Each person needs

6. The Mabit (Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefilah ch.13) explains, "This is because when one makes a kabbalah to fast, he already has *tzaar* now because it is human nature to worry about the future. He is answered now because he plans to fast afterwards." He is pained about the upcoming fast, which is enough to receive Hashem's salvation.

A bachur forgot his tefillin in a taxi. He was worried because (a) the taxi driver was an Arab and was liable to throw them out. (b) buying a new pair is very costly. The bachur made a kabbalah that if he got his tefillin back before Shacharis the following day, he would be cautious with the kedushah of tefillin for the next forty days.

Indeed, the Arab gave the tefillin to a Jewish taxi driver, who contacted his parents, and the tefillin were back in his hands before Shacharis.

to acquire yiras Shamayim on his own. The parents' influence can help, but ultimately, it is up to each person to acquire yiras Shamayim on his own.

It states (135:19-20) בית אהרן ברכו את ה', בית הלוי ברכו את ה', וראי ה' "O House of Aharon, bless Hashem; O house of Levi, bless Hashem; O those who fear Hashem, bless Hashem." Here, too, בית isn't written by the yirei Hashem because yiras Hashem isn't a heritage that can be passed down from parent to child.

On a similar note, the Gemara (Bava Metzia 85.) states, "Whoever is a talmid chacham, and his son is a talmid chacham, and his grandson is a talmid chacham, Torah will never leave from his descendants." Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l says this applies only to the knowledge of Torah. There is a guarantee that the Torah will continue for all his generations. However, for acquiring kedushah, each

person needs to acquire it on his own.

It states at the beginning of the parashah (4:22) וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, נשא את ראש בני גרשון גם הם למשפחותם לבית אבותם, "Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, 'Take a census of the sons of Gershon, as well, according to their fathers' household...'"

The Divrei Yechezkel zt'l writes, "I heard from the holy mouth of my Rebbe, Reb Tzvi Hirsh HaKohen of Rimmonov zt'l that Moshe alludes to every tzaddik (see Shabbos 101: (משה שפיר קאמרת), and גרשון alludes to *gerushin*, those who are banished. Hakadosh Baruch Hu speaks to the tzaddik and says נשא את ראש בני גרשון, give encouragement and raise the heads of those who feel they were banished and distanced from kedushah." The next words of the pasuk are גם הם למשפחותם לבית אבותם. This means that those who feel banished and distanced should know that they, too, are part of the Jewish nation. They, too, are precious to

Hashem. The Divrei Yechezkel said that when he heard this lesson from his Rebbe (Rebbe Tzvi Hirsh of Riminov), he felt that the Rebbe illuminated and elevated his neshamah.

נשא means to elevate, and גרשון means to banish. So, we have two opposite expressions in the same pasuk. Rebbe Meir of Premishlan zt'l explains (and some say it in the name of the Divrei Yechezkel) that there are people whom we should elevate, and there are those we should banish. נשא את ראש, elevate the leaders, the Torah scholars, and those who deserve respect. However, בני those who are the children of tzaddikim, or the grandsons of tzaddikim, גרשון, banish them (which means they don't deserve respect. If they don't deserve respect on their own merit, they also don't deserve respect on account of their ancestors). However, גם הם, if they, too, are Torah scholars and special people, we should honor them immensely. They deserve

respect for their own good deeds, and in addition, למשפחותם לבית אבותם, we should honor them because of their lineage, because the merit of their ancestry elevates them to even higher levels (זכות אבותם מסייעתם).

Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l said, גם הם, even if the descendants of tzaddikim are going in the ways of the tzaddikim of their lineage just a little bit, we should honor them.

The point is that one shouldn't feel satisfied that he has holy ancestors. He has to be worthy of respect for his own deeds, but when one goes on the right path, he will definitely be elevated even higher due to his holy origins.

Do the Best You Can

Hashem told Moshe to count the Jewish males from the age of twenty, as it states (Bamidbar 1:3), מבן עשרים שנה ומעלה, כל יצא צבא בישראל תפקדו אתם, "From twenty years old and upwards, all who are fit to

go out to the army in Yisrael, you shall count them."

But for the tribe of Levi, Moshe was told to count the young children, too. As it states (*Bamidbar* 3:15), פקד את בני לוי לבית אבתם למשפחתם כל זכר מבן חדש ומעלה תפקדם, "Count the children of Levi according to their fathers' house according to their families. Count all males from the age of one month and upward."

(Rashi, *Bamidbar* 3:16) Moshe asked Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "How can I enter their tents to know how many infants they have?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, עשה אתה שלך ואני אעשה שלי, "You do yours, and I will do mine."

Moshe stood at the tent's entrance, and a *bas kol* came forth from the tent, announcing the number of infants that lived there. This is as the *pasuk* (*Bamidbar* 3:16) states, ויפקד אותם משה על פי ה', "Moshe counted them by Hashem's mouth." This

means that a combination of Moshe's counting and Hashem's *bas kol* enabled Moshe to know the count of the Levi'im.

The question is, if a miracle was going to occur, and a *bas kol* was going to help Moshe count the tribe, why did Moshe have to stand at the entrance of each home? He could have stayed at his home, and the *bas kol* would tell him exactly how many people were in each home.

But the answer is that a person must do his part. He must do as much as possible, and Hashem will do the rest.

The same applies to our battle against the *yetzer hara*. We do the best we can, and Hashem helps us succeed. As it states (*Kiddushin* 30:), אלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו לא יכול לו, "If Hashem wouldn't help him, he couldn't win against the *yetzer hara*." Hakadosh Baruch Hu helps him, עוזרו, but Hashem doesn't fight the *yetzer hara* alone. Each

person has to do as much as possible, and Hashem will complete the deed.

The Torah is for Everyone

Tzaddikim say, "The Shabbos *noch* (after) Shavuos is *noch* (still) Shavuos." So, now is a good time to share the following beautiful discussion about Shavuos.

The *minhag* is to eat *milichig* foods on Shavuos.

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos, Shavuos* תקס"ב) explains that milk can be separated into three parts. The best part is the butter, the thick cream that rises to the top. Once the butter is removed, there remains some cheese in the milk. When the cheese is removed, all that is left is a watery liquid, which serves no purpose.

The Chasam Sofer says that the creamy butter represents the tzaddikim, and the cheese represents the *beinonim*, the average Yid. The lowly elements of the nation are represented

by the watery whey, which doesn't serve much of a purpose.

When the three parts of the milk are mixed in one, it is a refreshing cup of milk, but when they are separated, a part of the milk is discarded.

Hashem didn't want a segment of Bnei Yisrael not to receive the Torah, so Hashem gave the Torah to the entire Jewish nation. As a nation, even the lowest Yid can have a portion in Torah.

It states (*Tehillim* 78:36-37) ויפתוהו בפיהם ובלשונם יכונו לו ולבם לא נכון עמו, "They beguiled Hashem with their mouths, and with their tongues, they lied to Him. Their hearts weren't sincere with Him."

The Tosefta (*Bava Kama* 7:3) says this *pasuk* alludes to when the nation said נעשה ונשמע, "we will do, and we will listen." The nation was praised immensely for this proclamation, but according to the Tosefta, at least, it

seems that they weren't sincere. ולכם לא נכון עמו, in their hearts, they didn't want to accept the Torah.

Therefore, the next pasuk (Tehillim 78:38) states, והוא רחום, יכפר עון, Hashem forgave them for this lack of sincerity.

Hashem accepted their proclamation of נעשה ונשמע. A bas kol came forth and said, מי גילה לבני רז זה שמלאכי השרת משתמשין בה, "Who revealed to my children this secret, which malachim use?"

We learn from this that Hashem accepts our service, even when it isn't perfect. In fact, our lack of perfection makes us suitable candidates for receiving the Torah.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88) relates that when Hashem wanted to give the Torah to the Jewish people, the *malachim* protested, "Why should you give human beings this holy, precious, and hidden treasure (the Torah)?"

Hashem instructed Moshe Rabbeinu to answer the *malachim*.

Moshe Rabbeinu told them, "The Torah says לא תחמוד, that it is forbidden to be jealous of others. Does this apply to you? Does the concept of jealousy exist among you? It also states לא תנאף, 'don't commit adultery.' Do *malachim* have a *yetzer hara*?"

In this way, Moshe proved that the mitzvos are specifically intended for human beings. Hashem gave us the Torah *because* we have a *yetzer hara*. The Torah speaks to people like us. Our faults make us befitting to receive the Torah.

During the holy moments of *matan Torah*, one would assume Hashem would reveal to His nation the secrets of kabbalah and the like. But, instead, Hashem told Bnei Yisroel, "Don't kill. Don't steal. Don't covet..." because the Torah was given to human beings, to people

who have these tendencies. And therefore, regardless of your deeds, the Torah is speaking to you.

Chametz represents the *yetzer hara*. So why do we use chametz as a *korban* on Shavuot? According to our discussion, it's because it is the *yetzer hara* that grants us the right to receive the Torah.

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

Tosafos asks: The nation already expressed their willingness and desire to keep the Torah by proclaiming נעשה ונשמע. So

why was it necessary to raise the mountain over their heads and force them to accept the Torah?

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

Chazal tell us that by *matan Torah*, פסקה זהומת, their impurity ceased, and they didn't have a *yetzer hara* anymore. But without a *yetzer hara*, the Torah has no meaning and purpose. A mountain represents the *yetzer hara* (see *Succah* 52:). Therefore, Chazal say, "Hashem placed the mountain over their heads," which means Hashem returned their *yetzer hara* to them. Now they were fitting to receive the Torah.⁷

7. It states (Bereishis 32:33) על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה אשר על כף הירך, "Therefore, Bnei Yisrael may not eat the *gid hanasheh* (the displaced tendon), which is on the socket of the hip, until this day, for he touched the socket of Yaakov's hip, in the *gid hanasheh*." Surprisingly, we commemorate Yaakov's wound and not his victory against the malach.

Reb Chaim Ozer *zt'l* explains: It is the battles that make our avodas Hashem precious to Hashem.

Chazal (*Brachos* 63) ask, "Why does the Torah discuss the *nazir* after the laws of a *sotah*? It is because whoever sees the *sotah* in her disgrace will choose to become a *nazir* to refrain from wine." Wine leads to aveiros and adultery. Therefore, a person who saw what happened to the *sotah* should accept the *nazirus* vow to protect him against indulging in wine and its adverse effects.

The Pri Haaretz asks, someone who saw the *sotah*'s disgrace and punishment certainly has a firm resolve to never drink wine or commit adultery. He is the last person who would have to become a *nazir* to avoid drinking wine. Why does he nevertheless become a *nazir*?

The answer is, as Chazal say, "The greater the person,

The prohibition of *gid hanasheh* reminds us that even if a person stumbles, he remains beloved by Hashem. Yaakov Avinu suffered a moment of loss, but Hashem loved him and healed him.

(Toldos Yaakov Yosef, Ve'eira וידבר ד"ה): The Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh teaches that Moshiach hasn't come yet because Yidden say the *brachah* אהבת עולם quickly. Therefore, this *brachah* (which we say daily before Shema) should be said slowly and with *kavanah*.

Which words, in particular, should we say slowly and with concentration? Many will say that they are the words ותן בלבנו בינה ולהבין ולהשכיל... והאר עינינו בתורתך ודבק לבנו במצותיך ויחד לבבנו לאהבה וליראה את שמך, etc. However, we can explain that the primary words that need concentration are the opening words: אהבה רבה אהבתנו ה' אלקינו, "With a great love, You love us, Hashem our G-d." We must internalize Hashem's tremendous love for us at all times and under all circumstances.

Rabbeinu b'Chayei (Bereishis 3:21) says that Hashem clothed Adam "to show His love and compassion on His creations. Even after they sin, He doesn't stop loving them. He, Himself, rectifies them and does kindness with them."

the greater is his *yetzer hara*." After seeing what happened to the sotah, he gains a heightened realization of the severity of sin. He is at a higher level. Therefore, he has a stronger *yetzer hara*. He must therefore increase his deeds and precautions.

The Sotah

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

A husband brought his wife to the Chida and his *beis din* and told them that his wife was alone with a man, and he suspected her of being a *sotah*. The Chida ruled that the husband should divorce her. The other judges of the court were surprised at the Chida's stringent ruling since there were no witnesses to the severe aveirah – only the husband's accusation.

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

The Chida told her, "I want you to listen to something," and he read the *parashah* of *Sotah* as it is written in the Torah (*Bamidbar* 5). When the Chida was halfway through, the woman felt she heard enough and began to leave.

The woman was walking up the stairs to leave the courtroom just as the Chida read the words (*Bamidbar* 5:20) ואת כי סטית... בתת ה' את ירך נופלת ואת בטן צבה, "But for you, if you have gone astray... Hashem will cause your thigh to rupture and your belly to swell." As he read these words, the woman's legs fell off, and her stomach swelled, just as it happened to the *sotah* in the Beis HaMikdash.

The Chida explained that when the woman and her husband were standing before him, he remembered that he received a *brachah* from the Or HaChaim to have the *kedushah* of a *kohen*. The Chida thought, "Why did I remember this blessing just now? It must be that I

should act like a kohen and read the parashah of sotah to her, as kohanim would do in the Beis HaMikdash."

Time

When the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* visited Eretz Yisrael, he was invited to test the children studying in the cheder Eitz Chayim.

The Rebbe asked a child, "What does it mean (*Bamidbar* 2:16), שנים יסעו?"

The boy replied that it means "the years are flying by." (Or, as it he said in Yiddish, די יארן פארען).

The Rebbe replied, "You deserve a *psak* (rebuke) because you didn't know the correct translation of these words. But for me, my entire trip from America to come here was worthwhile, if just to hear this message: The years are flying by."

As the saying goes, "time flies." Fortunate are those who grasp onto time and use it wisely.

As a *bachur*, the Steipler Gaon *zt'l* learned in the Novardok yeshiva. Once, when he was home, a neighbor asked him, "When are you returning to the Novardok yeshiva?"

The Steipler replied that he planned to return the following day.

The neighbor said, "I want to send a letter to my son (who also learned in Novardok). Can you take it to him?"

The Steipler took the sealed letter, but the First World War broke out, traveling was impossible, and he never returned to the yeshiva.

Eight years later, the Steipler met with the person to whom the letter was written. "Your father sent this to you eight years ago, but due to the war, I couldn't deliver it until now."

The man took the letter with awe. It was after his father's death, and now he would receive a message

from his father! He felt like he was receiving a hidden *צוואה*, an ethical will, written by his father for him.

The letter said, "When you come home from yeshiva, remember, and don't forget to buy me the delicious herring that's available in Novardok."

That was all the letter said.⁸

The lesson: Never waste an opportunity. Had the father written a thought of Torah or *yiras Shamayim*, the message would have remained with his son forever. Every moment is an opportunity and a shame to waste.

The Beis Avraham once shouted from the depths of his heart, *מען זאל זיך נישט דרייען ווי*, "We shouldn't be walking around like a fool in the marketplace."

Wise merchants seek merchandise that can be sold for a profit, while fools roam the market, not recognizing the great deals and opportunities in front of them.

It states (*Iyov* 1:7), *ויאמר ה' אל השטן מאין תבוא ויען השטן מושט בארץ*, ומהתהלך בה, "Hashem said to the Satan, 'Where are you coming from?' The Satan replied, 'From going to and fro on the earth and from walking in it.'"

The Satan is the *yetzer hara*. We can explain that Hakadosh Baruch Hu asks the *yetzer hara*, *מאין תבוא*, "What tactics do you use to catch people in your trap?"

The *yetzer hara* replies, *מושט בארץ ומהתהלך בה*, "I get people to go around the earth, to travel here, to visit there. And it is all *מושט*, foolishness." In other words, the *yetzer hara* encourages

8. A *bachur* asked the Steipler, "Which yeshiva should I learn in?"

The Steipler answered, "It doesn't matter. The main thing is, don't waste your time."

people to waste their time and squander the opportunities given to them.

One of the *avodos* of Yom Kippur is to take out the *מחתה*, firepan, from the Kodesh Kadoshim. It was brought in to burn the ketores, and when the ketores was consumed, the kohen gadol took it out.

The question is, the *מחתה* can remain there until next year. Why is it necessary to take it out? But the answer is that empty things don't belong in the *kodesh kadoshim*!

Time must be utilized, especially on holy days, like Shabbos and yom tov, because leaving empty things before Hashem is disrespectful.

The Chovas HaLevavos tells the following mashal:

A foolish wealthy person had to cross over a strait of water. So he devised a plan for how to get to the other side. He began throwing

precious coins into the sea, thinking this would create a dam, allowing him to walk through to the other side (or perhaps he thought he could walk over the coins to the other side). After throwing all his coins into the water, they remained at the bottom of the sea, with the sea still roaring above it; he realized that he had made a foolish mistake.

Just then, he spotted a ship on the water. He has just one coin left. So he handed the sailor his last coin and got across the strait.

The message is: Hashem grants us days and years to do mitzvos and merit Gan Eden. But people don't use their time wisely. Instead, they get involved in activities that won't bring them to their destination. However, if there is still some time left, they can use their final days wisely to do good deeds that will grant them a place in Olam HaBa.⁹

9. The Minchas Yitzchak zt'l would speak drush at shalashudes.

The Shevet Mussar tells a story of a stingy man who never gave tzedakah. Once, as he was on his deathbed, his family said, "You haven't eaten in three days. Please eat something."

The ill man replied, "If you make me an egg, I'll eat it."

They prepared an egg for him, and then a poor man came to the door, begging for food. "Give him the egg," the ill man said. That was the first time (and the only time) he gave tzedakah.

After his death, he came to his son in a dream and told him to be cautious about giving tzedakah because that good deed brought him to Gan Eden.

The Shevet Mussar explains that the poor beggar would have died from hunger if the ill man hadn't given him the egg. He saved his life, so all the mitzvos he will perform in his lifetime, and all the mitzvos of his future generations, are to this man's credit. Therefore, he received Gan Eden.

The Beis Aharon (Rosh Chodesh Sivan) writes that it is an aveirah not to make use of our time because, in one moment, one can earn the entire Gan Eden, and a person can have many such moments in his lifetime.

Hashem is with Us

The words **כי אתה עמדי**, "You [Hashem] are with

People requested that he talk mussar, but he humbly refused, saying, "Who am I to give mussar?"

But one shalashudes, he acquiesced and told them this mashal from the Chovas HaLevavos, and since then, he would often repeat it at shalashudes. It reminds people to make the most of their days and devote their energy to deeds that will earn them Gan Eden. And even if they lost many opportunities, they could always improve their ways and earn Gan Eden.

me," are the most comforting and encouraging words one can hear. It states (*Tehillim* 23),
 לֹא אֵירָא רַע כִּי אַתָּה עִמָּדִי, "I am not
 afraid because You are with
 me."

Think of a child alone in the forest at night and terrified. With every rustle of the leaves and every branch that falls, he thinks thieves or wild animals are coming after him. But then he sees his father. His father is with him in the forest! And he isn't afraid anymore. This is how we should feel at all times. We shouldn't be

frightened because Hashem is always with us.

Some people ask, "How will I have enough money to marry off my children?"

Some are worried about *shidduchim*. "Will I ever find my *bashert*?" There are countless worries in the world. Dovid HaMelech says that he doesn't have any worries. לֹא אֵירָא רַע כִּי אַתָּה עִמָּדִי, "I am not afraid because You are with me."¹⁰

Hashem will help. Hashem is with me, and everything will work out.¹¹

10. Before surgery, *r'l*, one doesn't say, "The doctor is probably good. After all, he has a diploma and went to college." Instead, he checks out the doctor and ensures that the doctor is an expert and has a perfect track record.

But when people fly on a plane, no one asks to see the pilot's credentials. What's the difference?

The answer is that the pilot is with you on the plane. The pilot is afraid for his life too. Therefore, you trust that he knows what he's doing. But during surgery, the doctor isn't in danger, so the patient is afraid.

11. The Kotzker *zt'l* said, "It's a good thing that worrying doesn't help, for if worrying would help, people would worry even more."

It states (*Shemos* 20:18), וּמֹשֶׁה, נִגַּשׁ אֶל הָעֲרַפֶּל אֲשֶׁר שָׁם הָאֱלֹקִים, "Moshe drew near to the darkness, where Hashem was." This refers to the dark cloud hovering over Har Sinai at *matan Torah*. The Baal HaTurim writes הָעֲרַפֶּל is *gematria* שְׁכִינָה. Moshe drew near to the opaque darkness, and Hashem was there. The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l* says that this hints that when one endures "darkness" in life (ערפל) and goes through difficult times, he isn't alone. Hashem is with him. The Shechinah is there, as it states וּנִגַּשׁ אֶל הָעֲרַפֶּל אֲשֶׁר שָׁם הָאֱלֹקִים, "Moshe drew near to the darkness where Hashem was."

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 5.) states, כָּל שֶׁאִינוּ בְּהַסְתֵּר פָּנִים אֵינוּ מְדָם. The Gemara is saying that every Yid suffers in *galus*. If everything is perfect in life, אֵינוּ מְדָם, it's a sign that he isn't a Yid.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (p.7:) translates this Chazal as follows: כָּל שֶׁאִינוּ, whoever

doesn't seek, פָּנִים, Hashem's countenance and kindness, הַסְתֵּר, which is concealed within the tzaros, אֵינוּ מְדָם, he isn't a Yid, because Yidden find Hashem's kindness in every situation.

It states (*Tehillim* 42:8): תְּהוֹם תְּהוֹם אֶל תְּהוֹם קוֹרָא לְקוֹל צְנוּרִיד, "Deep calls to deep to the sound of Your water channels..." This pasuk refers to the many tzaros we suffer in *galus*. תְּהוֹם אֶל תְּהוֹם קוֹרָא, when one misfortune ends, another one calls and begins. קוֹל צְנוּרִיד, "the sound of Your water channels" is the roaring sound of water pouring through a pipe, and it also represents the great tzaros of *galus*.

Reb Shamshon Rafael Hirsh asks, why does the chapter change its terms? Why are the troubles of exiles called תְּהוֹם (depths of the sea) and צְנוּר (water channel)? What is the difference between these two kinds of troubles?

Reb Shamshon Rafael Hirsh *zt'l* answers that תהום is the sea, and it represents when one feels, allegorically, that the entire ocean, with its endless and seemingly uncontrolled waters, is fighting against him, seeking to drown him.

צנור is a channel of water, or water pouring through a pipe. The water in the pipe is limited; it isn't endless. And the water is controlled and directed to flow in a specific direction.

We think the troubles of galus are תהום, endless like the sea, and overwhelming and out-of-control like the roaring waves. But, actually, the problems are more accurately compared to a צנור, a limited channel of water in which waters are directed and controlled.

We think the tzaros are out of control, but they are far less frightening than we think. The roaring waters are limited to the extent one

can accept. They are directed and channeled. Matters aren't out-of-control. Be patient, let the strong current pass, and things will be good for you again.

The *pasuk* concludes, כל משבריד וגליך עלי עברו, "All Your breakers and waves passed over me." Reb Shamshon Rafael Hirsh explains, "All troubles pour over me, but I remain strong. Why? It is because I know that these hardships are גליך... גליך, Your waves, and under Your control. Therefore, I won't let the water swallow me up and sweep me away.

The Gemara (*Yevamos* 121) states:

Rabban Gamliel said, "Once I was on a ship, and I saw a shipwrecked at sea. I was distraught because the great scholar Reb Akiva was on that boat. When I came to dry land, I met Reb Akiva. He was speaking halachos with me. I asked

him, 'My son, who saved you?'

"He replied, 'I grabbed onto a plank that used to be part of the ship. Every wave that came towards me, I lowered my head.'"

The Gemara concludes, "The *chachamim* learned from this episode, 'If *resha'im* come to a person, lower

your head." Rashi explains, "Don't start up with *resha'im*... Let the time pass."

This is how we should deal with all *tzaros* of life. Don't panic – be patient. Waves are limited and are led from Above. The problems will end very soon, and you will celebrate Hashem's salvation.