

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Voeschanon



בס"ד

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Voeschanon

Rejoice in Hashem's Promise.....	4
The Greater the Hardships, the Greater the Goodness that Follows ..	5
Hashem is our G-d.....	7
Hope.....	10
Giving Chizuk - Planting Hope.....	13
Tefillah	19
Minchah	20
Tefillos on Shabbos	24

Torah Wellsprings

Voeschanon

Rejoice in Hashem's Promise

The haftarah this week begins with the words (Yeshayah 40:1): נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר, "אלקיכם, "Comfort, comfort My people - says your G-d." Rashi writes that from this pasuk until the end of sefer Yeshayah, are words of consolation to the Jewish people, promising them a good future.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayah 445) states that the Yidden asked Yeshayahu whether his comforting prophecy applies only to the Yidden of his generation, who experienced the churban, or to all future generations. Yeshayahu replied, "I console all generations. It doesn't state אמר אלקיכם, "Hashem said" [in the past tense]. Rather, the pasuk states יאמר אלקיכם, "Says your G-d now." In each

generation, Hashem comforts the Jewish nation and promises them a better future.

Therefore, *Minhag Tov* writes, "You should be happy and welcome Shabbos Nachamu with joy and a happy heart. You will be comforted with many condolences. Hashem will console us with the redemption of Yerushalayim." It is a time to trust in Hashem's promise that better days are coming.

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

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*."

The Ritva writes, ומפני זה נהגו לעשות סעודה בשבת שאחר תשעה באב, "Therefore, there's a custom to make a seudah on the Shabbos after Tisha b'Av (Shabbos Nachamu)." We don't know exactly what this means because we anyway make a seudah on this Shabbos. Perhaps it means we should have a larger meal on Shabbos Nachamu. But one thing is sure; it is a time for joy and to trust in Hashem's salvation.

Our obligation to trust in the upcoming salvation must also be on an individual level. Everyone has his own needs and hopes for his personal geulah. For one, it may be parnassah; for another it is health, and so on. This Shabbos, Hashem consoles us and tells us to trust in the better days of the future.

The Greater the Hardships, the Greater the Goodness that Follows.

The rule is that after a difficult period, better times

follow. For example, the Ramchal (קל"ח פתחי חכמה) teaches, "After a hunger year, Hashem brings a lot of rain to the world." Also, there is a saying: "After a fire, Hashem sends wealth." Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l says that this is true. Hashem shows us open kindness after suffering hardship.

The Baal HaTanya says (quoted in Tzemech Tzedek, Derech Mitzvoseicha, 228), "Many people say, 'After a fire, we become wealthy.' I heard from holy tzaddikim that this is because the order of the middos are chesed, din, rachamim (kindness, strict judgment, and then compassion). Therefore, since there was the din, strict judgment, evidenced by the fire, rachamim, Hashem's compassion will follow. Rachamim (compassion) is greater than the initial chesed, as is known."

The Avodas Yisrael (דברים) compares it to a father who rebukes his child harshly, but then he draws him near and shows him

how much he loves him. The great kindness makes up for the hard times that preceded it. The Avodas Yisrael writes, "It is a mashal to a father who hits his son with a staff to educate him, and afterwards, the father is kind to the son, comforts him, and tells him how much he loves him..."¹

On Tisha b'Av, we put on tefillin only in the afternoon. The Avodas Yisrael explains that tefillin on the head represents acquiring wisdom, and Tisha b'Av in the afternoon, we acquire the knowledge and awareness that Hashem loves us.

This week's parashah has the Aseres HaDibros in it, another indication of Hashem's kindness that follows after hard times. Hashem gives us the Torah

again and tells us that He wants to renew our relationship.

The following illustrates how Hashem's kindness follows a difficult moment.

Reb Tuvia Weiss zt'l was a Rav in Antwerp (before he became the Gaavad of Yerushalayim). Antwerp's rabbanim arranged a rotation system among themselves for the honor of siddur kiddushin (to preside at a chuppah).

Once, someone asked Reb Tuvia to be mesader kiddushin, and he accepted. He was so engrossed in his learning, he lost track that it was really another Rav's turn for this honor.

At the chuppah, someone embarrassed Reb Tuvia for being mesader kiddushin. It

1. It states (Mishlei 3:12) *כי את אשר יאהב ה' יוכיח וכאב את בן ירצה*, "For Hashem chastens the one He loves, as a father placates a son." Rabbeinu Yonah explains that *כאב את בן ירצה* means that after Hashem punishes, He shows His immense love, just as a father does after punishing his son.

was humiliating, and Reb Tuvyah turned red and white from shame.

Later that evening, Reb Tuvia was learning with a chavrusah. The phone rang at 9:30. Reb Tuvyah instructed him not to answer. Every night, they learned until 10:00 pm, and he didn't want to interrupt their studies until then.

At 10:00 the phone rang again. It was the Eidah Chareidis of Yerushalayim, inviting Reb Tuvyah to be the gaavad of Yerushalayim.

This is the pattern. After enduring humiliation or any difficult period, excellent times will follow.

Hashem is our G-d

Hashem tells the navi, נחמו נחמו עמי, that he should console the nation. But how are we consoled? The answer is יאמר אליכם, the awareness and the joy that Hashem is our G-d is our condolence.

We can compare it to a child at an amusement park

but afraid to go on the roller coaster, Ferris-wheel, and other tall rides. People ask the child, "Why are you afraid? It is totally safe. Millions of people ride on it." But the child, nevertheless, is afraid. Only one thing will calm the child and remove his fears, and that is if his parents will ride with him.

Hashem is our G-d and is always with us. That is our condolence. That is our guarantee that there is nothing to fear.

There is a pasuk in *Shir HaShrim* (4:8), which promises that Hashem will always be with us; when we go to galus and when we return for the Third Beis HaMikdash. It states, אתי מלבנון כלה אתי מלבנון תבואי, "With me from Lebanon, my bride, with me from Lebanon shall you come." Rashi explains that 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.²

The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2) relates the following story:

There was a ship with goyim on it, and l'havdil, there was also one Yid aboard the boat. The ship arrived at an island to buy provisions for the remainder of the voyage. The captain asked the Yid to go to the island to buy the produce for them.

The Yid replied, "Why are you sending me, specifically? I don't know

anyone on this island. I am alone on this island, just like you."

They told him, "You are not alone. Wherever you go, Hashem is with you. As it states (this week's parashah, 4:7) כִּי מִי גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֱלֹהִים קְרוּבִים אֵלָיו בְּה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, "Which great nation has a god close to them like Hashem our G-d.." Wherever one is, Hashem is with him.³

Reb Shmuel Minkas zt'l, a student of the Baal HaTanya zt'l, was a very happy person.⁴ Once, a fire burned down Reb Shmuel's

2. *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 ללבנון 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.

3. The Beis Avraham zt'l would often repeat this Midrash, emphasizing that even goyim know that Hashem is with the Jewish nation. We are never alone.

4. It is known that the Baal HaTanya was once imprisoned, and after fifty-three days, with Hashem's kindness, he was released from jail on the 19th of Kislev. Sometime afterward, people tried to convince the government to imprison the Baal HaTanya again. The Baal HaTanya heard about this, and this caused him immense

home, and Reb Shmuel was dancing. People feared that he had lost his mind due to the financial loss. He explained to them, "If I were a non-Jew, my god would be burned in the fire together with my home. But I'm a

Yid, and my G-d still exists. That's why I'm so happy."⁵

Hashem says (Yeshayah 51:12) אֲנִי הוּא מְנַחֵמְכֶם, "I am He Who consoles you" (from the haftarah of parashas Shoftim). Why does it state אֲנִי twice?

distress. Reb Shmuel Minkas wanted to lighten the Baal HaTanya's mood, so he suspended himself from a rope outside the beis medresh. It was an unusual sight, and people came to watch. "Why is Reb Shmuel hanging outside the beis medresh?" they wondered. When the Baal HaTanya walked out of his beis medresh, he looked up and asked, "Reb Shmuel! What are you doing there?"

He replied, "Craftsmen hang samples of their products outside their shop, so people should know what is being manufactured inside. A cobbler hangs a shoe outside his store; a tailor hangs a suit outside his store, and so on. In this beis medresh, the Rebbe produces chasidim. I am hanging here as an example, so people who pass by will know what is manufactured here."

The plan succeeded. The Baal HaTanya laughed and got back to himself. The Baal HaTanya's joy helped to sweeten the dinim, and he was saved from the hands of those who attempted to harm him.

5. Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* had just returned from a fund-raising trip in chutz l'arezt, and the money he raised was wrapped up together, but he couldn't find it. His family frantically searched all over the home for the package of money while Reb Zalman Brizel danced and sang. His family asked him, "Why are you so happy? Did you find the money?"

"No," he replied. "I didn't find the money yet, but I decided that I lost my money, should I also lose my mind from despair?"

It is explained that it alludes to two אנני that are written in the Torah. The Torah writes by the Aseres HaDibros אנני ה' אלקיך, "I am Hashem, your G-d," and when discussing the troubles of galus, the Torah (Devarim 31:18) states, אנני הסתר אסתיר פני, "I will hide My face on that day." These two אנני are alluded to in the words, אנני אנני הוא מנחמכם. The navi is saying that when one knows that even the אנני of הסתר אנני is also אנני ה' אלקיך, this consoles us. The awareness that it is our beloved G-d standing behind everything that happens in life is our condolence.

At birkas hamazon, we recite the fourth brachah of הטוב והמטיב. This brachah was established to praise Hashem for enabling the dead of Beitar to be buried and that their bodies didn't rot. We wonder why we say this brachah every day of the year (whenever we bench). It is important to remember the miracles, but we remember the miracles of Chanukah

eight days a year, and Pesach is for seven days. Why is this miracle remembered every day?

The answer is that this miracle occurred at a time when Hashem's wrath was dominant in the world and when Hashem concealed Himself from the Jewish nation. Even then, the dead didn't rot, and they merited burial. This reminds us that Hashem's kindness is with us even during the most challenging times. This is a lesson that we should never forget.

Hope

One of the halachos of *arei miklat* is that there needs to be three *arei miklat* in עבר הירדן and three in Eretz Yisrael. The three in עבר הירדן only begin to function as *arei miklat* when the corresponding three in Eretz Yisrael are established (see Rashi, this week's parashah 4:41).

What is the reason for this halachah? Why can't the

arei miklat in ever HaYarden function immediately?

The Meshech Chachmah (*Maasay*) explains that if the three *arei miklat* in עבר הירדן functioned on their own, it would leave the people living in those *arei miklat* without hope for freedom, and we can't leave a person without hope.

The explanation is as follows:

When someone kills by accident, he must go to *arei miklat*. These cities are like a prison; the killer goes there for atonement (and protection). But he can hope to go free. He doesn't despair because he knows that when the *kohen gadol* dies, he will leave the *arei miklat* (see Bamidbar 35:25), and the *kohen gadol* can die any day.

The problem was that Elazar was the *kohen gadol*, and Hashem indicated that Elazar would live another fourteen years until the land of Eretz Yisrael was conquered and divided. (Hashem said that Elazar, the *kohen gadol*, will help divide the land [see Bamidbar 34:17]. This indicates that he will live at least until then.) So, if the three cities in Ever HaYarden were immediately active *arei miklat*, the murderers living there wouldn't have any hope for freedom for another fourteen years, and we can't allow people to live without hope of immediate freedom. A person always needs hope. Only after the land is conquered and divided, and three *arei miklat* are established in Eretz Yisrael, will the three in עבר הירדן begin to function.⁶

6. The *Siforno* (Bamidbar 35:25) writes, "There are several degrees of killing by accident, for there are almost unpreventable accidents, while other accidents involve an element of negligence. Therefore, the Torah didn't set an amount of time for all murderers. Those who were only slightly guilty of the murder [will come to *arei miklat*] shortly before the *kohen gadol* dies, while others die in

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

The Baal HaTurim explains that Moshe was saying, הזקתי את ישראל אולי ירחם עלי, "I gave *chizuk* to Bnei Yisrael. Perhaps [in this merit] Hashem will have compassion on me [and answer my tefillos]."

The Baal HaTurim refers to the pesukim that precede Parashas Va'Eschanan. Moshe said (Devarim 3:21-22), עיניך הראת את כל אשר עשה ה' אליכם לשני המלכים האלה כן יעשה ה' לכל הממלכות אשר אתה עבר שמה, לא תיראום כי ה' אליכם הוא הנלחם לכם, "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 [to Eretz Canaan]. Don't be afraid. Hashem shall wage war for you." Moshe encouraged and gave hope to the Jewish nation, and in that merit, Moshe davened ואתהן, 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 Hashem to answer his prayers because of these merits. He requested that Hashem answer his tefillos in the

arei miklat before the kohen gadol dies. And this is just. Hashem knows the degree of punishment each one deserves."

So, each person needs to spend a different amount of time in the *arei miklat* to attain his atonement, and through hashgachah pratis, each person gets exactly what he deserves. (See *Meshech Chachmah*, who elaborates on these ideas.)

merit of giving 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 darkest moments, there is always, at the very least, a flicker of hope in their hearts. This is undoubtedly Hashem's kindness 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.⁷

Giving Chizuk - Planting Hope

The Chofetz Chaim once said before a large crowd, "In our generation, anyone 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 everyone to give drashos and to rouse people to teshuvah.

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

The Chofetz Chaim overheard them and immediately returned to the

7. It states (*Yeshayah* 1:1) חזון ישעיהו בן אמוץ. The Rebbe of Zutchkeh *zt'l* said that חזון ישעיהו can be translated as "To see your salvation." The advice is בן אמוץ, be strong. Don't lose hope, and you will have your salvation. Therefore, it is a great mitzvah to raise people's spirits and help them have hope. In addition to the good feelings this generates, hope has the potential to lead them to their salvation.

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. 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. The *poritz* shouted for help, 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 speaking in public. But now, a fire is raging. Whoever has the ability to speak must do so."

To a large extent, today, *chizuk* of a different nature is needed. In our generation, people need to hear a good word. It isn't rebuking that people need to hear. They need to hear that Hashem loves us, that they can succeed in *avodas* Hashem, that they are doing good, etc. One doesn't need to be a great tzaddik to do this. Every person must use the talents Hashem gave him to put out this fire and to help their fellow man.⁸

8. Reb Mordechai Chaim Slonim *zt'l* once waited his turn to use a tiny *mikvah* in Teveria. The town's fool, who was present then,

There is a prohibition for a descendant of Amon and Moav to marry into Bnei Yisroel (see *Devarim* 23:4-7). The reason 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 מהריק"א) printed in *Or Tzaddikim*) teaches,

"We can say that על דבר means 'for the words.' They are punished because they didn't share kind, encouraging words." He explains that the Yidden 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 harsh with Amon and Moav that we can't marry them? The answer is that their primary fault was על דבר; they didn't share kind, encouraging words with the Jewish nation.⁹

announced, "Rabboisai! The holy rav is here! Make room so that the holy rav can *toivel!*"

After his *tevilah*, Reb Mordechai Chaim said, "Everyone knows that this man is the town's fool, and the *mikvah* isn't the ideal place for honoring others, either. Nevertheless, when he honored me, it warmed my heart. Hakadosh Baruch Hu placed into the fabric of creation that people enjoy honor, regardless of who is bestowing the honor, and therefore, we should seek to honor others."

With a kind word, we can give people much *chizuk* and hope.

9. Amon and Moav were *goyim*. Who needs their praise and admiration? Who needs their encouragement? Nevertheless, apparently, we needed it. Their kind words would have helped us. Amon and Moav were punished severely because they refrained from providing this benefit to Bnei Yisrael.

Everyone needs *chizuk*, from the greatest to the smallest, and those who provide it deserve great reward.

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 will be *moser nefesh* to donate whatever they can. Who wouldn't want to participate in the building of the third Beis HaMikdash?

We have the opportunity, always, as it states (*Yeshayah* 1:27), *ושביה בצדקה*, the *galus* will be redeemed in the merit of tzedakah. Every time you give tzedakah, you add a brick towards the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

However, there are poor people who cannot give much tzedakah. How can they contribute towards building the Beis HaMikdash? They should say kind words to the poor

and the suffering. The Me'il Tzedakah calls this "A tzedakah that doesn't cost money." This form of tzedakah also builds 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 to 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 at them, and listen to them. Fortunate are those who occupy themselves in this good deed. It isn't hard to find opportunities to perform this great mitzvah. In every beis medresh, school, and neighborhood, people are hungry to hear a

kind word. They are waiting for someone to smile at them and spend a minute with them. Fortunate are those who satisfy that need.

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

Educators say that one of the reasons children fall away from Yiddishkeit is because they are missing a kind word. So, you can literally save one's Yiddishkeit by being kind to them. There is no limit to how much we can accomplish, and it is so easy to do.¹⁰

10. There was a boy who drifted away from Yiddishkeit, and his father paid therapists and mentors to help direct his son back to the right path. Baruch Hashem, he returned. The father later asked the son, "Which dollar brought you back?" He meant, "I paid many people to help you. Which investment paid off and got you back?"

The *bachur* replied, "It wasn't your investments that brought me back. A certain rav greeted me with a warm smile and told me that Hashem loves me, despite 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 hang up. The person he called by accident 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 with him.

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

The man was in Italy at the time, contemplating committing a serious *aveirah*, but this phone call – which showed him care, love, and respect – stopped him.

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, ensuring he was around good friends. So how is this happening to him?"

He reviewed his deeds, past and present, and he remembered that as a *bachur*, he once spoke against the Vilna Gaon *zt'l*. Disgracing *talmidei chachamim* is a terrible *aveirah*. (At the time, he thought he was a bigger *chassid* by speaking against this great *tzaddik r"l*.) 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.

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

This *shaliach* went to the *kever* at 6:30 in the afternoon, and that is precisely the time the *bachur* began his return to Yiddishkeit. At that time, the *bachur* was sitting on a bus, dressed in jeans, with long gelled hair, and appeared very distant from the yeshiva *bachur* he once was.

A friend of this *bachur* was also 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, 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. When he came home, he informed 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, someone spoke against one of the greatest *gedolim*, and he was punished severely. And then, words of rebuke caused the *bachur* to do *teshuvah*.

An even safer route would be words of encouragement and caring. Such words accomplish so much!

Tefillah

The Parashah begins with the words, ואתהגן אל ה' בעת ההיא "I davened to Hashem at that time..." Moshe Rabbeinu davened to be able to enter into Eretz Yisrael. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh says that Moshe davened בעת ההיא, at "that time," which means, "at a time of *eis ratzon*."¹¹ There are times when the heavens are open, and at these times, our tefillos are accepted with love and desire. Moshe knew when it was an auspicious time for tefillah, and he davened specifically then to be granted permission to enter Eretz Yisrael.

Dovid HaMelech also sought to daven at a time of *eis ratzon*. He pleaded (Tehillim 69:14) ואני תפילתי לך ה' עת רצון "...May my prayer to You, Hashem, be in an acceptable time (*eis ratzon*)."

Now is an excellent time to discuss this subject because, as we wrote above, Shabbos Nachamu is the beginning of good times. Shabbos Nachamu is certainly an *eis ratzon*. Soon after Shabbos Nachamu comes the 15th of Av, which is also a joyous day, an *eis ratzon*. 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."

Tzaddikim have said that כתיבה וחתימה טובה has the same gematriya as חמשה עשר באב. Some tzaddikim began blessing their chasidim with a כתיבה וחתימה טובה from the 15th of Av onwards. It is the beginning of good times and the upcoming, blessed year.

So, as we are approaching days of *eis ratzon* (Elul, Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, and Succos), let us remember that these days are ideal for tefillah.

11. The Or HaChaim adds, "Who knew better than Moshe when it is an *eis ratzon*!"

Minchah

Just like there are days *mesugal* to be an *eis ratzon* during the year, there are times of *eis ratzon* each day. For example, it is an *eis ratzon* when we daven Minchah.

On Shabbos afternoon, before Minchah, we say the pasuk ואני תפילתי לך ה' עת רצון and the Rashba (Teshuvos vol.5:1) explains that this is because Minchah time is an *eis ratzon*. We quote, "Know that the time of Minchah (every day) is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah, just as there are auspicious times in the year, such as the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Gemara (Brachos 6) states, "One should always be cautious with tefillas Minchah because Eliyahu was answered through tefillas Minchah.

The Trisker Magid (Magen Avraham, Balak) writes, "My father zt'l (Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl) said in the name of the Baal Shem Tov zt'l that a

person who is busy with his business all day long and is running around in the streets and the marketplace, almost forgetting that there is a Creator of the world, and when it comes time to daven Minchah, he remembers that it is time to daven, and he moans in his heart when he reflects on how the entire day passed being occupied with the foolishness of this world, and he runs to a side road, and davens minchah, although he doesn't know at all what he said, nevertheless, this is also extremely precious in Hashem's eyes, and his moan pierces the heavens."

At the machlokes of Korach, 250 people prepared ketores to prove that they, too, could be the *kohen gadol*. Moshe prayed (Bamidbar 16:15) אל תפן אל מנחתם, that Hashem shouldn't accept their korban.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz says that אל תפן אל מנחתם means that Hashem shouldn't listen

to their tefillas Minchah. Moshe feared Hashem might accept their tefillos because Minchah time is an *eis ratzon*, and Hashem especially answers the tefillos of those who turn to him at that time.

It states (Bereishis 24:63) ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב, "Yitzchak went forth to pray in the field towards evening." The Kli Yakar writes, "Chazal learn from this pasuk that Yitzchak established the prayer of Minchah... And from this source, Chazal (Brachos 6:) says, 'A person should always be cautious with Minchah because Eliyahu was answered through *Tefillas Minchah*."

The Kli Yakar explains that the segulah associated with Minchah is that one is answered immediately. He writes, "Avraham established Shacharis and Yaakov established Maariv, but we don't find that they were answered immediately. However, when Yitzchak

established *tefillas Minchah*, he was answered immediately. Yitzchak was probably davening for a shidduch because Eliezer was on the way [to find him a shidduch]. Chazal say Brachos 8.) 'A person should always daven for a wife,' which is why Yitzchak went to the field to daven. Immediately, after he davened, it states וישא עיניו וירא והנה גמלים באים, "Yitzchak raised his eyes and behold camels were approaching." He davened with his eyes downward, and immediately when he finished his tefillah, he raised his eyes and saw that his tefillos were already answered."

The Gemara (Brachos 6:) states, "One should always be cautious with Minchah, because Eliyahu was answered with *tefillas Minchah*, as it states (Malachim 1, 18:36) ויהי בעלות המנחה ויגש אליהו ויהי עניי וגו' ויאמר וגו' עניי ה' עניי, 'And it was at Minchah time, that Eliyahu HaNavi came near and said... 'Answer me,

Hashem, answer me." Chazal explain that he requested twice ענני, "Answer me," because he was davening for two things. He said, ענני שתירד אש מן השמים וענני שלא יאמרו מעשה כשפים הם, "Answer me that fire should come down from heaven and answer me that they shouldn't say that I was performing witchcraft."

Chazal say that one shouldn't daven for two things in one tefillah. Yet here Eliyahu davened for two things. The Ben Yohoyada explains that at Minchah time, one can daven for two things together, and his tefillos will be answered.¹²

12. I heard the following story from the children of Reb Nechemia Becker z"l of Yerushalayim.

When Reb Nechemia's first child was born, there were complications, and his wife's life was in danger. The doctors recommended surgery. However - they warned - after the surgery, she won't be able to bear additional children, but there was no choice; they had to operate to save her.

Reb Nechemia went to the Chazon Ish zt'l, to ask what to do. He arrived just as the Chazon Ish was washing his hands before *Minchah*. Reb Nechemia said, "I have a question related to *pikuach nefesh*," so the Chazon Ish immediately gave him his full attention. "The doctors say that my wife needs an operation, and they say it is *pikuach nefesh*, but then she will not be able to have more children..."

"If it's *pikuach nefesh*, what's the question?" the Chazon Ish responded.

Then the Chazon Ish asked, "Did you daven *Minchah* already?"

"No, I haven't."

"Daven with us."

After *Minchah*, the Chazon Ish called Reb Nechemia over and

asked him to repeat his question. The Chazon Ish listened to the question again, and this time advised him not to do the surgery.

"But the Rav just told me to do the operation because it is *pikuach nefesh*."

"That's what I answered before *Minchah*. And this is what I answer after *Minchah*."

Reb Nechemia returned to Yerushalayim and told the doctors that the Chazon Ish advised against the surgery. The doctors laughed at him and ridiculed the Chazon Ish for mixing into their business. "Is he a doctor? What does he know?" they asked.

A couple of days later, Mrs. Becker came down with an infection. The doctors admitted that had they operated, her life would have been in grave danger.

She lived to be over eighty years old and had eight more children. Everything changed with one *Minchah*. Such is the power of a *Minchah*.

A *kollel yungerman* honored one of his relatives to be the mohel for his son. The inexperienced mohel accidentally cut too deep. The doctors who examined the child said they couldn't heal the wound. The child would live, but he wouldn't be able to have children. Reb Meilech Firer (renowned for his medical expertise and referrals) told the family of a doctor in America who could help them. "But it will be expensive," he said the family. "You will need \$250,000 for the operation." This sum was way beyond the *kollel* family's abilities, and they didn't know how they would raise the money.

The father went to his *kollel* worried and not knowing what to do. He updated his concerned *chavrusah* on what was happening and that he needed \$250,000.

His friend replied, "Let's go and *shray oys a Minchah*. (In other words, they would pray *Minchah* with all their might.) They went into a beis medresh where people didn't know them (so they wouldn't be embarrassed), and they both davened a forty-five-minute *Shemonah Esrei*. When they finished, the father received a phone call from Reb Meilech Firer, "Did you do anything yet?"

Tefillos on Shabbos

Another time that is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah is on Shabbos kodesh. The Rashba (Teshuvos 5;1) writes, "Shabbos [is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah] more than other days, for two reasons."

One reason is that Shabbos is חמדת הימים,

Hashem's beloved day. Therefore, tefillos said on this day are answered. It also states ויכל אלקים ביום השביעי, which can be translated to mean that Hashem desires Shabbos (ויכל means desire, as in the pasuk ותכל דוד, and the Targum Yerushalmi writes that it means desire.) The Rashba concludes, "This is why

"I didn't begin," the father replied. "I just finished davening *Minchah*."

"Good," Reb Firer said. "You have good mazal. The doctor is coming to Eretz Yisrael to teach his techniques here. If you agree to have your son's operation videotaped and watched by doctors, you can have the operation for free."

This story illustrates the power of an intense and meaningful *tefillah*, particularly the potential of tefillas *Minchah*, which is answered immediately.

A non-religious Yid was once in yeshivas Kfar Chasidim when they were davening *Minchah*. Afterwards, people asked him what he saw. He replied, "I saw *bachurim* swaying back and forth, but an elderly man was standing near the front wall, and it appeared that he was truly speaking to someone." That man was Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l*. He could tell that his tefillos were sincere, that he genuinely believed that Hashem was listening to his tefillos.

People said similar things about Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l*. People wouldn't disturb his davening because it was obvious that he was speaking to some-One. They were certain that if they approached him, he would respond, "Can't you see I'm in the middle of speaking with some-One."

there is bracha on Shabbos, as it states, על כן ברך ה' את יום השבת, "Therefore, Hashem blessed the Shabbos."

The second reason that Shabbos is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah, says the Rashba, is because people involved in eating and drinking often neglect their avodas Hashem. When one remembers Hashem on Shabbos, he is doing something others lose sight of, and he deserves that his tefillos be answered.

We quote the Rashba:

"We add to this that Shabbos is a day of rest from all work and even from cooking food. A day of rest often becomes a day of doing nothing, and people will be drinking cups of wine, speaking idly, and singing over cups of beer. At a time when everyone else is speaking foolishness, and one sanctifies himself to be before Hashem, to daven, and to perform mitzvos, such a person is befitting that his tefillos be answered!

There are several sources to this idea from the Midrash. Dovid said about this (Tehillim 69:13-14) ישׁיחוּ בִּי יוֹשְׁבֵי שַׁעַר וּגְנִינוֹת שׁוֹתֵי שֵׁכָר וְאֲנִי תְפִילַתִּי לַךְ ה' עֵת רִצּוֹן, "They talk about me, those who sit in the gate, and [they make] melodies for those who imbibe strong drink. But, as for me, may my prayer to You, O Lord, be it an *eis ratzon*..."

The Rashba writes, ראוי שתקבל תפילתי, "It is befitting this his tefillos be answered!" because he is choosing good when so many others aren't. This turns his tefillah into an *eis ratzon*.

This can also explain the *eis ratzon* of Minchah that we discussed above. Minchah is said at a time when everyone is busy with their businesses. When one ignores Olam HaZeh for a few moments and turns his eyes and heart to daven to Hashem, this creates an *eis ratzon* in heaven.

So, according to the Rashba, Shabbos is an *eis ratzon* because (a) it is

Hashem's beloved day. (b) When others are relaxing, eating and drinking, he remembers Hashem and davens to Him.

The Zohar (Tikunei Zohar 21) writes, "[The tefillos on Shabbos] are Imma Iloya [a kabbalistic term for a high world where there are no kelipos, and therefore] a person's tefillos are accepted before Hashem. It is [like the] tefillos of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah..." The Aseres Yemei Teshuvah are certainly an eis ratzon for tefillah. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:6) writes, "Although teshuvah and prayers are always good, during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it is even better. One's tefillos and his teshuvah are immediately accepted." Tefillos on Shabbos are the same because the Zohar compares the tefillos on Shabbos to those of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah.

It states (Tehillim 130:2) ה' שמועה בקולי תהינה אונין קשובות לקול תחנוני, "Hashem, hearken to

my voice; may Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications."

The Megaleh Amukos (Emor 27) writes that שמעה בקולי שב"ת תהינה is roshei teivos, implying that on Shabbos, Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens attentively to our tefillos.

The Mishnah (Brachos 34:) tells us that Reb Chanina ben Dosa knew at the time of his davening whether his tefillos were answered or not. When he would daven for the ill, he would say, "This person will live... This person will die." People asked him how he knew. He replied, אם שגורה תפלתי בפי יודע אני שהוא מקובל ואם לאו יודע אני שהוא מטורף, "If the tefillah flows easily in my mouth [without errors, and my supplications flow from my heart to my mouth, everything that I want to express lengthily in my tefillos - Rashi], I know that my tefillah was answered. Otherwise, I know it is ripped up [and the tefillah wasn't answered]."

שגורה תפילתי בפי is roshei teivos שבת. The Minchas Elazar zt'l (חמשה מאמרות, מאמר שבת) (פר' במדבר) quoting the Baal Shem Tov's students says that this hints that Shabbos is a good time for tefillah. Because when it is שגורה תפילתי בפי, "I know that my tefillah was answered."

It states שועתינו קבל ושמע "Accept our shouts and listen to our calls, the One who knows the secrets." The Minchas Elazar says from kabbalah sefarim that these words allude to Shabbos, and we understand from this that Shabbos is a time for our tefillos to be answered.

It states ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא, and the Beis Avraham zt'l explains, "We should daven all week long, בעת ההיא, that when it is the special time of Shabbos, לאמר, our mouths should be opened wide to speak holy words."

The Beis Avraham adds ואתחנן, that at least on Friday [the sixth day of the week], we should daven

that we merit to daven on Shabbos.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l traveled with a student to a city that needed a Rav, and he advised them to accept his student for the position. However, the townspeople didn't accept the Chasam Sofer's recommendation and chose someone else to be their Rav.

The Chasam Sofer told his student, "I cannot compete with his tears." The Chasam Sofer understood that the other candidate davened and pleaded with tears to Hashem to be hired for this position, and his request was granted in heaven.

On a Shabbos afternoon, someone came to a beis medresh and found a Yid saying *Tehillim* fervently, with all his heart and soul. He was so inspired that he also began saying *Tehillim* in this emotional manner. When he saw that the man finished saying *Tehillim*, he went over to him and said,

"From the way you said *Tehillim*, it seems you are going through a hard time. Maybe you want to speak about it?"

He replied, "I have an exceptional daughter, full of good qualities, but I cannot find her a *shidduch* because I don't have money for her dowry. During the week, I hardly see her; I am out of the house, earning a living. But on Shabbos, I am home, witness her pain, and feel so sorry for her. Therefore, every Shabbos immediately after the *seudah*, I go to beis medresh and pour my heart out to Hashem. I pray that she finds her *bashert* very soon."

"I also have an older child at home," said the other. "He is a *talmid chacham*, has good *middos* and *yiras*

shamayim, but I also can't find a *shidduch* for him since I also don't have money. Perhaps we should be *meshadech* together? You have a good daughter, and I have a good son. We are both poor. Let the children marry without a dowry." And the *shidduch* happened!

The Chofetz Chaim repeated this episode to his family one *shalash seudos* and concluded, "From this couple, four great *gedolim* were born. One was the Ktzos HaChoshen, another was the Baal Kuntras HaSfeikos, zy"á. From this story we learn the power of *tefillah* davened with all one's heart and soul. A person who davens like that, his *tefillos* will be answered."¹³

13. Years ago, a non-religious yid, confined to a wheelchair, would often pass a chassidic school in Tel Aviv and stop to speak to the children. The young students tried to convince him to become more religious, and they spoke to him about *emunah*. The non-religious man replied, "Don't speak to me about *emunah* because I believe in Hashem more than you do."

The Baal Shem Tov zy" a and his students once arrived at the home of a poor couple. The Baal Shem Tov sent his students to ask the *baalabuste* for something to eat. She replied, "All I

have is a bit of cheese and some dry bread. I'm saving it for my husband. He works hard, chopping wood in the forest."

The Baal Shem Tov told his students, "Tell her that

He told them the following story:

"When I was young, I wanted to join the army. My father brought me to Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l. The Rebbe told me, 'You want to go to the army, and I won't try to stop you. But I do ask that you keep Shabbos there.'

"The Rebbe pointed to a pair of crutches in his room and said, 'Just before, someone on crutches came into this room. I told him that he doesn't need crutches anymore and that he should leave the crutches here. He left on his own two feet. If you don't keep Shabbos, these crutches await you...'

"I went to the army, and although I wasn't very religious, I always kept Shabbos. After serving in the military during WWII, I came to Eretz Yisrael, serving as a general in the Six-Day War. When the war ended, I was invited to tour the borders of the newly captured territories. I heard that the tour would extend into Shabbos, but I didn't think much about it, and I joined the group.

"Friday afternoon, I was riding with the group in a tank. It was getting late. Shabbos was coming, but I pushed the thought out of my mind. Immediately when night fell, the door of my tank opened, and I fell out and broke both feet. Since then, I have been in crutches. So don't speak to me about *emunah*. If anyone believes, it is I."

The children asked him if he believed why he didn't keep the mitzvos. He replied, "the *treifa hartz!*" His impure heart didn't let him act as a Jew should.

I'm hungry, and I want her to give me this food." When the *baalabuste* heard the request, she couldn't say no. She gave the stale bread and cheese to the Baal Shem Tov.

After eating this meal, the Baal Shem Tov asked for a place to sleep. She said, "All I have is a little straw, and it's for my husband." The Baal Shem Tov replied that he was exhausted and needed to sleep, so the *baalabuste* gave him the straw.

Later that night, her husband came home, tired and hungry.

"I'm sorry," his wife said. "The Rebbe asked for your supper, and I had to give it to him." Since there was nothing to eat, he figured he might as well go to sleep. His wife told him that she had given away the straw as well.

The husband walked outside, raised his tearful eyes to heaven, and said, "Father in Heaven! I have no

food to eat or a place to sleep. I don't have anything. Please have mercy on me! Support me! I can't handle this poverty any longer..."

Later that night, the Baal Shem Tov and his students continued on their way.

A few months later, the Baal Shem Tov and his students returned to this couple's home. It looked very different. Previously, their home was nothing more than a broken shack; now, it was a beautiful house. The Baal Shem Tov asked his students whether they recognized the owner of this house. They recognized him, but now he was wealthy and well-dressed. The *baal habayis* was very happy with the Baal Shem Tov's visit, and he honored him immensely. This time he prepared a table filled with good food for the Baal Shem Tov and his students. The Baal Shem Tov told him, "Tell us your story, how you became rich, and then I will tell you my version of what happened."

The man said, "A few years ago, I used to sell wine and earned a fine reputation. But times changed, and I wasn't making a living through my wine business, so I began chopping wood for a few pennies instead. At least there would be food on the table.

"On the day, everything turned around. It happened shortly after you came to visit our home. The *poritz's* servant came to my house and requested wine. He said the *poritz* was throwing a huge party and needed a barrel of wine.

"I told the butler, 'You know I don't make wine anymore. I closed down the wine business long ago.'

"But the butler didn't let up. He wanted me to sell him wine. I took him to my cellar and showed him that all the wine barrels were empty. The butler noticed that one of the barrels was half full, and he wanted to buy it.

"I told him that it wasn't for sale. I needed this wine for Kiddush and Havdalah. The butler begged for even just a drop of wine. So, I poured a little wine into one of the empty barrels, then filled it with water, and the butler took it. It seems that Hashem placed the scent of Gan Eden into the barrel because the *poritz* loved it, and he ordered many more barrels of this wine. I put a few more drops of wine into several barrels, filled them with water, and sold them for an exaggerated price. The *poritz* paid the price in full because he loved the wine so much.

"People heard that the *poritz* was buying my wine, so many people began to come. In a short while, I became very wealthy," the man concluded.

"Now I will tell you my version of the story," the Baal Shem Tov told him. "A few years ago, Heaven decreed that you should become wealthy. However, there was a condition; you

needed to daven sincerely for it to occur, but you weren't davening. You were managing more or less with your meager portion and never asked Hashem for more. But without tefillos, you wouldn't get the brachah that Hashem wanted to give you. Two Rosh Hashanahs passed, and you weren't asking for wealth. The Satan said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Since he isn't davening for the wealth, it is time to

take this gift away from him.'

"But I [the Baal Shem Tov] said, 'I will make him daven for *parnassah*.' I came to your home, ate up your food, and took away your straw, hoping to get you to daven, and I succeeded. You went outside and davened from the depths of your heart. Immediately afterward, your mazal changed, and you received the wealth due to you."