

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Shoftim



בס"ד

Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings

Shoftim

There are *pasukim* in the Torah that are fundamental to our attitudes in various areas of *avodas Hashem*. In this week's *parashah*, there is such a *pasuk*. It states (18:13) תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, "Be complete with Hashem, your G-d."

The Rabbeinu b'Chayei (18:12) writes, "This means one should be תמים, perfect, in his *yiras Shamayim*, to do what Hashem commands and to be cautious from that which Hashem forbids. תמים also connotes that one must be in his inside just as he is on the outside, and he should be a *tzaddik* with his words and with his actions."

So, if we can express the Rabbeinu b'Chayei in our own words, *temimus* means to be devoted to Hashem (1) with one's thoughts, (2) with one's words, and (3) with one's actions. We will discuss these three realms of *temimus*:

Temimus in One's Thoughts

The Chida (Nachal Kedumim) says that תמים תהיה עם ה' means we should be a *tamim* עם ה', in a place that only Hashem can see, which refers to being a *tamim* in one's thoughts.¹

1. The Husiatiner Rebbe zt'l hired someone to reupholster his coach. When the man said he finished the job, the Rebbe showed him that he didn't mend the holes in the back of the coach. "Rebbe," the man said, "no one looks there."

The Husiatiner Rebbe replied, "We were taught that where no one looks, it must be most perfect."

This means to believe that Hashem gave you the life that is best for you. There are people who complain about different aspects of their lives and that they are lacking in certain areas (everyone can fill in the blanks on their own), but the obligation of *temimus* is to believe that Hashem gave you that which is best for you. Only Hashem knows what you truly need, which is what Hashem gave you. You should be happy with your portion because it was tailor prepared just for you.

Rashi, in this week's parashah on the words תמים תהיה writes, כל מה שיבוא עליך קבל, בתמימות, "Accept whatever happens to you with [unadulterated] *temimus*." We trust that Hashem is leading us in the best way, and therefore, we accept wholeheartedly everything that occurs to us.

A similar lesson is found in the pasuk (Devarim 13:5) וואותו תיראו, "Fear Him." The Ibn Ezra writes, וואותו תיראו זה, מלשאול למה זה

ask, "Why is it this way?" We should be afraid to ask this question because we must be certain that it is all good.

We can compare it to when a father brings his child to the dentist. The child can be afraid, and he can wince from the pain. That is only natural. However, the child must believe that his father means his best. If he doubts that, the father has a right to be upset with his son. "Why don't you trust me? After all I've done for you, you should know that I only have your best interests in mind." Similarly, when one goes through hard times, it is natural to wince from pain. The problem is when he says that it isn't good for him. Hashem can tell him, "I do so much for you. How can you doubt My love and concern for you?"

A few years ago, the daughter of Rebbe Yankele, zt"l (Pshevorsker Rebbe) was niftarah, r'l. The custom in Pshevorsk is to make a large

tish on *Shabbos Parah*. That year, on *parashas Parah* (which was still in the middle of the shivah), the Rebbe conducted a tish, and at the tish, he told the following story:

A renowned rebbe was visiting a city, and the people there asked the rebbe to tell them *Divrei Torah*. The Rebbe replied that he only says *Divrei Torah* at his tish on Friday night.

So, Friday night, many people came to his tish to hear his *divrei Torah*. He requested that they bring him a *chumash*. He opened it up, turned the pages, closed the chumash, and said, "I don't have any questions." Usually, a *Dvar Torah* begins with a question. He had no questions, so he didn't need any answers.

Rebbe Yankele told this story, and then he asked, "The Rebbe promised that he would say Torah Friday night, but he didn't say any *Divrei Torah* at all! It must be that not to have any questions, that is in itself a

shtik Torah." It is a lesson in *temimus*, in accepting Hashem's decree.

Rebbe Yankele was hinting to his chasidim that he also has no questions. He suffered a great blow, but one doesn't ask questions about Hashem. תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך. Trust in Hashem that He is leading you in the best way.

There is a famous story of a student who once came to the Magid of Mezritz zt'l and asked him to explain the Gemara that one must praise Hashem joyously for the good and the bad. "How can one possibly praise Hashem for the bad?" he asked.

The Magid advised him to ask Rebbe Zusha.

When the student asked Rebbe Zusha the question, Rebbe Zusha replied, "I don't understand why the Rebbe sent you to me. I never had any bad in my life, so how can I know how to bless Hashem for the bad?"

I never had this test because Hashem has only given me goodness." This is the level of *temimus* that we strive to attain. We can daven for better, but simultaneously, we know that if Hashem doesn't grant us our requests, it is also good because Hashem leads us in the best way.

Be Happy with Your Portion

Some are jealous of their fellow man. They wish they had the wealth, honor, and prestige that their fellow man has. The path of *temimus* is to believe that Hashem gave you what is suitable for you.

A wise person once said, "Believe me, you don't want another person's portion. It is a package deal, the good comes along with the bad, and believe me, you don't want their package."

Tzaddikim say that if everyone would place their *peckel* (package of tzaros) on a table, and then they could

choose any package they wanted, each person would take back their own package. The grass seems greener on the other side of the fence, but if you knew everything that goes on there, you would prefer your own portion.

This realization is *temimus*. It is to accept the portion that Hashem gave you because Hashem knows exactly what is best for you.

A *chasid* of the Imrei Emes zt'l complained about his limited parnassah. The Imrei Emes told him that it states in parashas Shoftim (16:22) וְלֹא תִקֵּים לְךָ מִצְבָּה אֲשֶׁר שָׁנֵא ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, which can be translated as, don't make a demonstration against Hashem (וידעו שטאנד). Don't complain. Believe that if Hashem gave you this situation, it is best for you.

The Nesivos Shalom zt'l of Slonim zt'l would often say, "Women seem deprived of many mitzvos. They don't wear tallis and tefillin, or study Torah (at least not in the

manner that men do). However, there is a great avodah that they do for Hashem. They say שעשני כרצוני, thanking Hashem for making them exactly as they are, and there is no greater avodah than when one accepts Hashem's plan.

This message is also expressed in the brachah שעשה לי כל צרכי "Hashem gave me everything I need." It expresses, "Hashem gave me everything I need; I lack nothing."

Someone told Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l that he feels he can't say the brachah שעשה לי כל צרכי because he lacks things. "If I say this brachah, it will be a brachah l'vatalah, because it isn't correct for me." Rebbe Bunim told him, "Whatever you lack is for your benefit. You couldn't complete your mission in life if you had those things. So, you do have everything you need."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (*Toras Moshe, Eikev, Shma*) writes,

"Man was created lacking so he will recognize his Creator, serve Him, and earn both worlds. His lacking is, therefore, the greatest benefit. One says, בורא נפשות רבות וחסרונם, Hashem created people who lack things... and that is the greatest kindness, because ברוך חי העולמים, with it one merits both worlds."

Chazal (Brachos 57:) say, שלשה מרחיבין דעתו של אדם אלו הן דירה נאה ואשה נאה וכלים נאים, "There are three things that broaden the mind of man. They are a beautiful home, a beautiful wife, and beautiful utensils."

The simple explanation is that having a beautiful home, wife, or utensils calms the mind and broadens one's thoughts.

The Ruzhiner zt'l says that we can also explain that the Gemara urges people to broaden their mindset and recognize that their home, wife, and utensils are beautiful. Instead of

complaining that you want better, train yourself to מרחיבין דעתו, to widen and broaden your mind to accept and rejoice with the portion Hashem gave you.²

It states (Tehillim 23:4) שבטך ומשענתך המה יחמוני אשר ו "Your rod and Your staff - they comfort me." Rashi explains that he

is even comforted by the staff of yesurim because he trusts that it is for his good. The Chida says that this is also implied in the pasuk at the beginning of the parashah (16:18) אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לשבטיך לשבטיך. אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך means a punishing rod. It states אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך... ה'... it is like a present from Hashem.³

2. Someone was telling the Tosher Rebbe zt'l about the troubles he suffers in life. As they talked, the gabbai brought in a hot tea for the Rebbe. The Rebbe spilled some drops of the tea on the man, and a few moments later, the Rebbe spilled more of the tea on him.

The Rebbe asked him, "Did the hot tea hurt you?"

"Of course, it hurt," the man replied. "But if the Rebbe did it to me, I am certain that it was for my benefit, and it will be mamtik my dinim (remove my problems from me)."

The Tosher Rebbe replied, "I am a simple person. I don't know how to be mamtik dinim (to remove your tzaros). Nevertheless, you believed that I can bring you salvation with the scolding of hot tea because people call me Tosher Rebbe. Kal v'chomer, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings you tzaros, you should be able to believe that it is for your good. Hashem can certainly be mamtik dinim. There is no reason to cry and complain. Believe it is all for your good."

3. He adds that the beginning of the pasuk, ופטים ושטרים תתן לך, means that when one suffers from yesurim, he should judge himself and seek to understand why they came and which aveirah needs to be amended.

Torah and Mitzvos are for our Benefit.

Until now, we discussed believing that the yesurim we endure are for our good and to recognize that the portion Hashem gives us is best for us, even when it seems smaller than the portion that others have.

We now take this a step further to believe that Torah and Mitzvos are for our benefit. This seems obvious, but unfortunately, some people are confused about this. And to an extent, everyone needs *chizuk* to believe that Torah and mitzvos are for our good. We will explain this with a mashal:

A king had a servant who served him for many years with devotion. When the servant died, the king wanted to bestow kindness on the servant's son. He told the son to take two empty bags and go to the king's treasury. "Fill the bags with anything you want."

The servant's son didn't realize he would be allowed to keep everything for himself. With a bitter heart, he thought, "The king wants to clean up the treasury, so he is taking advantage of me, and he gave me this job. I will show the king that he chose the wrong person. I won't work hard at all."

He picked up a few small items and placed them into sacks. He wouldn't take more. "Let the king know he should find someone else to be his slave."

But then the king told him he could keep everything in his bags. Now he regretted that he didn't take so much more. Had he known it was for his benefit, he would fill his bags with the most precious gems.

The *nimshal* is that Hashem gave us Torah and mitzvos, but people try to get around them. They suspect that they are for Hashem and not for them. They don't believe that the mitzvos are for their benefit.

Someone with *temimus* will know in his heart that Hashem's mitzvos are for his good, and he will try to do as many mitzvos as possible.

The Gemara Shabbos (88.) says that Rava was so engrossed in his studies that he didn't realize that his fingers were under his foot and started bleeding. A *Tzedoki* (a Jewish apikores) saw this and said, "You are a wild nation. You spoke before you heard,⁴ and I see you still act in your wild ways. Why didn't you check first to see whether the Torah is too hard to keep, and if you find that the Torah is too difficult, you don't accept the Torah."

Rava replied that "We go with *temimus*. We trust in Hashem that Hashem won't obligate us to do that which is too hard for us. As it states (Mishlei 11:3) תומת ישרים תנחם,

'The *temimus* of the upright leads them.' But you and your apikorsim friends complain and have complaints about Hashem. About you, it states (Mishlei 11:3) וסלף בוגדים ידם, "The distortion of the treacherous robs them."

So, we've seen that the suffering we must endure, the small portion we have, and the Torah and mitzvos that Hashem gave us are all for our benefit and good. *Temimus* is to believe in one's heart that it is so.

Temimus in Actions.

Rebbe Yisroel of Ruzhin *zt'l* related the following story:

There was a Yid, a *yirei Shamayim*, who sold fur for his livelihood. But one year, business was slow. He had many furs in his home, and they weren't selling.

4. The nation said (Shemos 24:7) נעשה ונשמע, "We will do, and we will hear." They accepted the Torah before they knew what it entails.

One day, early in the morning, someone knocked at his door and said he wanted to buy all the furs.

But the fur merchant hadn't yet davened Shacharis. It is forbidden to do business before Shacharis (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 89:3). "Come back in an hour, and I'll sell them to you."

The man replied that if he didn't sell it to him right away, he would go elsewhere to buy furs.

The fur merchant quoted an exorbitant price for the furs, figuring that the *goy* would leave, but the customer agreed to pay that price!

So, the merchant quoted an even higher price because he didn't want to close this deal before Shacharis.

The man replied, "I see that you don't want to sell the furs," and he left.

The Ruzhiner told his chasidim, "I see that you are waiting to hear the end of

the story, the happy ending, how everything worked out for him. But that was the end of the story. He forfeited a great business deal with *mesirus nefesh* to keep halachah."

Generally, stories end with a wondrous hashgachah pratis or miracle, but this story is of temimus. It shows us to be loyal, to keep halachah, even when our common sense might dictate otherwise and even when there will be a financial loss.

Temimus in actions is to be loyal to Hashem's decrees and *halachah* without compromise and rounding edges.

We will elaborate with a mashal:

Many years ago, a person from a small village bought an invention: a clock. A neighbor told him, "I feel bad for you because you bought a clock. Now, you are a slave to the clock. If you wake up tired and want to go back to sleep, but the

clock says it is time to wake up, you will have to get out of bed. If you are hungry, but the clock says that it is early and it isn't time for lunch yet, you will have to remain hungry until lunchtime. I don't have a clock, so I am saved from these problems. I don't have a clock forcing me to keep to its schedule."

The other replied, "Before I bought the clock, I thought about this very problem you are mentioning, but I came up with a solution. Lunchtime is at noon. If I am hungry at eleven, I will turn the clock an hour, and I can eat my lunch. If I awaken and am tired, but the clock says that it is six o'clock and time to wake up, I will turn the clock back a few hours and go back to sleep..."

This *mashal* describes people who bend and adjust the Torah to fit their needs. When something doesn't suit their needs or agenda, they make changes here and there. *Temimus* means that

we do Hashem's will without changing, without adjustments, and with total acceptance of Hashem's decree. If this is Hashem's will, that is what we do.

This is the definition of *temimus* in actions.

Temimus with Words

We read in the Rabbeinu b'Chayei (quoted above) that *temimus* is also with words. An example of *temimus* with words is saying Tehillim.

The Gemara (Brachos 56:) discusses dreams and their meanings, and the Gemara says, "Only those who fear Hashem with all their might are shown pumpkins (דליונין) in their dreams."

Reb Nissan Gaon (printed on the side of the Gemara) writes, "A student from Spain asked me to explain this Gemara. [He asked, 'Why are pumpkins shown in a dream solely to those who fear Hashem?'] I never received [from my teachers] an explanation, and I never

asked about this Gemara before. I told him this is a tradition that the Chachamim had, and I don't know whether a reason was stated. But in my opinion, it could be because there is no fruit larger than a pumpkin. Yet, they never rise above the earth. Even as they grow larger, they remain low on the ground. This is like people who fear heaven. There is no one greater than them. Nevertheless, as Hakadosh Baruch Hu grants them greatness, honor, and *chen*, they increase their humility.

"Furthermore," writes Reb Nissan Gaon, "the word דלועין (pumpkin) stands for דלו עיני למרום (raise my eyes to heaven), and that is the trademark of people who are *yirei Hashem*. They place their trust in Hashem and wait for His kindness."

Reb Nissan Gaon concludes, "This student [from Spain] liked these explanations, and so did all

the other students, and therefore I wrote it here."

People with *temimus* raise their eyes to Hashem for aid, and they say Tehillim. This is our first explanation for why saying Tehillim is a form of *temimus*.

It is also because *temimus* means simplicity, and saying Tehillim is the deed of simple people. There are several translations for *temimus*. It can be translated as complete, perfect, wholehearted, and it is also translated as simplicity. Simple people aren't able to study Torah in depth, so they say Tehillim. Saying Tehillim is therefore called an act of *temimus*, of simplicity, but it is for everyone. Saying Tehillim is *temimus* with words.

Especially, at this time of year, in Elul, it is a crucial time to invest in saying Tehillim and other tefillos before Hashem. The Tur (581) writes, וכל המוסף לבקש וכל רחמים זכות הוא לו "The more

one asks for Hashem's compassion [in Elul], it is his merit." These prayers will help him on the days of judgment.

The first word of Tehillim is אשרי. Reb Chaim Palagi writes that אשרי hints at the four ideal times for saying Tehillim because אשרי is *roshei teivos* for ראש, שבת, ראש חודש, יום טוב.

Some communities would say chapter קמ"ג every day of Elul because it states ואל תבא במשפט את עבדך כי לא חי ואל תבא במשפט את עבדך כי לא חי "Do not come to judgment with Your servant, for no living being will be innocent before You."

Other communities would say chapter נ"א, which discusses *teshuva*.

Reb Meir Shapiro asked his yeshiva students to say chapter קי"ט of Tehilim during Elul so that they can daven for spiritual success for the upcoming year, together with their requests for success in gashmiyos.

Many say ten chapters a day during Elul so that within thirty days, it will amount to 300 chapters, the gematriya of כפר, atone.

Most people say לדוד ה' אורי (chapter כ"ז) every day of Elul. The Siddur Reb Shabsi writes, "Whoever says לדוד ה' אורי from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Simchas Torah, every evening and morning, is guaranteed that he will live his entire lifespan with goodness and pleasure. Even if a bad decree is written on him, it will be annulled, and all *kitrugim* (persecuting malachim) will be removed... He will be acquitted in the judgment... Because on Rosh Chodesh Elul, the thirteen attributes of compassion open up and are revealed below... and by saying this chapter, we remove the *kitrugim*, so that the *kitrugim* shouldn't judge us. Only Hashem alone will judge us, as it states מלפניך מושפטינו יצא 'may my judgment come before You,' and then we will be found innocent in the judgment."¹⁵

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer zt'l said that although we generally don't say Tehillim at night (because nighttime is a time of din, and it is dangerous to say pasukim at night), we may say Tehillim at night in Elul, because these days are days of Hashem's compassion, and there is no *din* at all.

The Vilna Gaon zt'l (commentary to Sefer Yetzirah) explains that creation was made of a mixture of דין and רחמים, compassion and justice, as Chazal say (quoted in Rashi, Bereishis 1:1), "At first, Hashem wanted to create the world with midas hadin. He saw that the world wouldn't exist in this

manner, שיתף בו מדת הרחמים, so He combined into creation rachamim, compassion. The world, therefore, is a mixture of din and rachamim. An exception is the month of Elul because Elul is entirely and solely rachamim.

Therefore, these are good days to invest in saying Tehillim and tefillah.

Someone once visited Reb Yosef Shmuel Fogel zt'l in an old-age home in Yerushalayim. Reb Yosef Shmuel was saying Tehillim then, and he didn't interrupt when his visitor arrived. When Reb Yosef Shmuel finished his Tehillim, he said, "I will tell you why I

5. It states in *Shulchan Aruch* (581) "The custom is to awaken early in the morning to say *selichos* and *tefillos* from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur."

The Rema writes, "The Ashkenazic custom isn't like that."

Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l explains, "The Ashkenazic custom isn't to say *selichos* from the onset of Elul, but waking up early is the Ashkenazic custom too.

The *Leket Yosher* writes that during the month Elul, the *Trumas HaDeshen* would recite *Baruch She'amer* each morning for almost an hour.

it will be as if you kept the entire Torah from א until ת.⁶

We discussed that an aspect of temimus is to accept everything that occurs to a person because he believes that it is from Hashem who loves him. The Apter Rav zt'l says that whoever accepts Hashem's *hanhagah* as it is, Hashem will accept him as he is.

Another benefit of temimus is that it brings a person very close to Hashem.

Rashi on תמים תהיה עם ה' וואו תהיה עמו ולחלקו אלקיך writes וואו תהיה עמו ולחלקו אלקיך. If you have temimus and you believe that everything is for your good, then תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, "you will be with Him and to His portion."

Similarly, Rabbeinu b'Chayei (18:12) explains the תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך means תמים תהיה עם ה', if you have

temimus, תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, you will be with Hashem. We quote, "The concept of temimus has been written before. [Hashem told Avraham] (Bereishis 17:1) ויהי תמים, to live with temimus. Now the pasuk is adding that תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, if you have temimus, you will be with Hashem. It is like what is written about Moshe (Shemos 34:28) ויהי שם עם ה' 'He was there with Hashem.' [This pasuk discusses when Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai to receive the *luchos shniyos*. The Torah tells us that he was with Hashem, and this is the portion of those who have temimus. As it states תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, if you have temimus, תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, you will be with Hashem.]

"He will receive a divine light, as it states (Daniel 2:22)

6. The Kotzker zt'l says that there is a large ת to indicate that there is room for everyone to go under the umbrella of temimus. The exception is a baal gaavah. He feels he is greater than the ת and can't go under it.

ונהורא עמיה שרא
with him.'

"So, the pasuk [תמים תהיה] teaches us the greatness of temimus and its wonderful reward. Dovid Hamelech a'h also said (Tehillim 41:13) ואני בתומי תמכת בי 'As for me, because of my temimus, You shall support me, and stand me up before You forever.'"

There is also a source from the Rokeiach that with temimus one is before Hashem. It states regarding the faces of the chayos hakodesh (malachim in heaven) and of the Kisei HaKavod (Hashem's holy throne) (Yechezkel 1:10) "ודמות פניהם פני אדם, "The likeness of their faces was the face of a man..." One of the four faces was the face of man, and Chazal tell us that it was the face of Yaakov Avinu. Why did Yaakov merit that his face be on Hashem's throne? The Rokeiach says that it was because of his temimus, as it states יעקב איש תם. The hint is that it states דמות פניהם פני אדם,

and the final letters spell תמ"ם.

The explanation is as we wrote above from the Rabbeinu b'Chayei and Rashi. In the merit of temimus, one merits to be with Hashem.

So, if one will be a tamim in his thoughts, with the belief that Hashem is leading him in the best way; and if he will be a tamim with his words, and he says Tehillim and tefillos to Hashem; and he is a tamim with his actions, by following Hashem's mitzvos without compromise, this is a person who is with Hashem.

Always Starting Anew

It states in this week's *parashah* (17:15) שום תשים עליך "You shall set a king over you." We can explain that "A King" alludes to Hashem. The pasuk is hinting שום... עליך מלך, make Hashem your King. This alludes to the theme of temimus in thought, action, and speech, which we

discussed above. The pasuk is saying (a) Don't complain about your life because believe that Hashem is your king and leads you in the best way. (b) Do all of Hashem's mitzvos without cutting corners and without compromising. Hashem is king, and we must be devoted to His word. (c) For anything you need, turn to Hashem in prayer because Hashem is your king, and He will listen and grant you your needs.

The Torah writes שום תשים עליך מלך, which literally translates as "You shall set, you shall set, a king over you." It is written double because sometimes you will fall from your level. Once again, you are (a) complaining that your life isn't good. (b)

making compromises with your adherence to the mitzvos. (c) avoiding saying sincere tefillos.

It is natural that a person will fall from his level, so the Torah writes twice, שום תשים עליך מלך, after you accepted Hashem as king once, do so another time. Continually strengthen yourself with your awareness that Hashem is king and be prepared to serve him with *temimus*.⁷

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Although *tekiyas shofar* on Rosh Hashanah is a *gezeiras hakasuv* (a law, without a known reason), it is hinting to something. The shofar is saying עורו ישנים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם, "Awaken sleepers from your sleep..."

7. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 31.) lists several examples of double expressions written in the Torah. One example is פתוח תפתח, the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. The Gemara says that the double expression means that if the poor person keeps coming back to you, you should help him again and again, even a hundred times. Here too, the Torah is telling us שום תשים, make Hashem your king again and again.

A handwritten version of the Rambam states עורה עורה twice: עורו עורו ישנים משנתכם.

Perhaps the intention is that one should rouse himself again and again. If, after resolving to do *teshuvah*, he forgets his resolve, he should rouse himself a second time.⁸

ב-ראשית stands for ב-ראשית (two beginnings). This indicates that if one tried to change his ways once, and failed, ב-ראשית, start from the beginning again and try a second time. And if necessary, start a third time,

and a fourth time, until you succeed.

Each week, Shabbos at Minchah, we begin to read the new *parashah*, but we don't finish it. We only read until *Sheini*. Monday and Thursday, we start from the beginning again, and we only read until *Sheini*. On Shabbos morning, we read the entire *parashah*. This indicates that one starts and fails, starts again, and fails. But if he keeps at it, he will eventually succeed.⁹

The Teshuas Chein *zy'a* taught that in the *Mussaf*

8. Or perhaps we can explain that it shouldn't be (as by Pharaoh) וישן עורה עורה, that after he awoke, he went back to sleep. עורה עורה, wake up and remain awake. This is a lesson for *teshuvah*. After you arouse yourself to *teshuvah*, stay awake. Don't go back to your old ways.

9. Change and new beginnings are difficult, as Chazal say כל ההתחלות קשות, "all beginnings are hard." But eventually, the new behaviors will become second nature.

This can be compared to an airplane: Take-off is difficult; the engines are powered to their maximum capabilities. But after the plane is airborne, it soars gracefully in the sky. Similarly, *avodas Hashem* is difficult at first, but after one passes the initial difficult stages, it becomes easy.

Shemonah Esrei of Rosh Chodesh, we say ראשי הדשים לעמך נתת, Hashem gave His nation the ability to start anew, תשועת נפשם מיד שווא, and when they do so, their souls are saved from the enemy, from the *yetzer hara* (see *Succah* 52).

The Rebbe of Lechovitz zy'a said that בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ, the entire world was created for בראשית, for people who start anew and try again and again to change their ways.

Tefillah with Heart and with Joy

Reb Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky zt'l told the following *mashal*:

A hungry lion once dlot a fox, "Give me your heart."

The wise fox knew that if he gave his heart, he would die, but if he didn't, he would also die because the lion would kill him for rebelling against the jungle king.

The wise fox dlot the lion, "My heart is precious to me, so I keep it at home. I will rush home to bring it to you."

Reb Dushinsky explained that when it is time for davening, many people leave their hearts at home. But without a heart, how can one daven?

The following *mashal* is repeated in the name of the Dubno Magid zt'l:

A king announced, "Whoever has a request should come to my palace, and I will *lilfluf* his wish."

Everyone praised the king for his generous offer, but there was a problem. One person, a nudnick, kept returning to the palace to speak to the king, and it was always for no particular reason. He bothered the king with nonsense. The king appointed guards at the palace's front door to prevent this person from entering. But the man entered through a side

entrance. The king set up guards at the side entrances, too, but the palace had many entryways, and despite the many guards, this man always found a way to get inside.

A wise man saw what was happening and said to the king, "Instead of placing guards at all your doorways, appoint one guard to stand in front of that person's house, and he shouldn't let him leave his home. Certainly, he won't come to your palace."

The *nimshal* is that the *yetzer hara* wants to prevent people from davening properly, so he sets up many guards to prevent them. In one *beis medresh*, he arranges that people should speak during the *tefillah*, which prevents people from davening with *kavanah*. (And even those who manage to daven with *kavanah*, the *tefillos*, don't go to heaven. Because when there are people speaking during the *tefillah*, this prevents everyone's *tefillah* from ascending to heaven.) In another *beis medresh*, the

yetzer hara encourages people to daven so quickly that it's almost impossible to daven there with *kavanah*. Similarly, the *yetzer hara* prevents many people from davening with *kavanah*. When someone nevertheless desires to daven with *kavanah*, and he decides to go to a *kever* of a *tzaddik*, hoping that perhaps he can daven with *kavanah* there, the *yetzer hara* will make sure that he meets someone who disturbs him over there or laughs at him — and he won't be able to daven there either. In short, wherever one goes to daven, the *yetzer hara* places a guard to prevent him.

But then the *yetzer hara* becomes even smarter. The *yetzer hara* says, "Why should I set up so many guards? I will appoint one guard; that is all I need to stop a person from davening with *kavanah*. The guard will stand before the person's heart and prevent him from opening his heart to Hashem,

and then he won't be able to daven.

Everyone has this guard standing and blocking his heart.

This brings us to the discussion of davening with joy. Joy opens the heart for tefillah, and sadness closes the heart.

The Gemara (Brachos 5:) tells us that Reb Eliezer was ill, and Reb Yochanan came to visit him. The room was dark, so Reb Yochanan, who was extremely beautiful, revealed his arm, and the room became illuminated. In the now-lit room, he saw that Reb Eliezer was crying. Reb Yochanan asked him, "Are you crying because you didn't study as much Torah as you wished you would? Behold Chazal say, אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין

לבו לשמים, the one who studies a lot is equal to the one who studied little, as long as their intention is for Heaven. If you are crying that you don't have a lot of money, it isn't everyone who merits שתי שולחנות, two tables (the table of Torah and the table of wealth). And if you are crying over children [who died in your lifetime], behold, this is the bone of my tenth son."¹⁰

Reb Eliezer told him, "I am crying over האי שופרא דבלי בעפרא, this beauty that will be disintegrated in the earth." He was thinking about Reb Yochanan's beauty and that it would one day be buried in the earth, bringing him to tears. Reb Yochanan replied, "This is certainly a reason to cry," and they cried together.

10. Reb Yochanan's ten sons were niftar in his lifetime, and he kept the bone (and some say the tooth) of his tenth son. Rashi explains that he did so because of his distress. The Rashbam says that he did so to console others, to show them that his tzaros were greater than theirs.

Reb Yochanan asked him, "Do you appreciate it that you have yesurim?"

Reb Eliezer replied, "I don't want them, and I don't want their reward."

Reb Yochanan said, "Give me your hand." Reb Eliezer did so, and Reb Yochanan healed him.

Why did Reb Yochanan's beauty bring Reb Yochanan and Reb Eliezer to cry?

The Maharsha explains that in the era of the Beis HaMikdash, all Yidden were beautiful. Reb Yochanan was the final remnant of that beauty (see Bava Metzia 84.). They were crying because Reb Yochanan's demise would represent the final stage of the destruction of Yerushalayim.

We can explain, *האי שופרא דבלי בעפרא*, "this beauty that will be disintegrated in the earth," alludes to the beauty of tefillah when it is tainted

and covered over in the earth of *atzous*, sadness.¹¹ Sadness very much ruins the tefillah.

Nevertheless, even a tefillah uttered with sadness is precious to Hashem. Bilaam revealed this truth when he said, *מי מונה עפר יעקב*, "Who can count the earth of Yaakov." He was saying: Even those *tefillos* that are tainted with earth, wrapped in unhappiness and laziness, are also very precious and accomplish so much in heaven. Every *tefillah*, even the weakest ones, are dear to Hashem.

However, when one merits saying a tefillah with joy, it is much more potent, and it is far more likely that his *tefillos* will be answered.

Reb Chaim Vital (introduction to Shaar Hakavanos) writes, "It is forbidden to daven with sadness, and if one does so, his soul can't receive the light that comes

11. The Be'er Mayim Chaim, Toldos, writes something similar.

down from Above during the tefillah. Only when one says viduy and expresses his aveiros may he feel broken, but during the rest of the tefillah, sadness harms so much. He must daven with humility and fear, but it should be with as much joy as possible, like a slave who serves his master with much joy. If he serves his master with sadness, it will be disgusting for his master. Almost all high levels, perfection, and attaining ruach hakodesh depend on this factor. Joy is needed when one davens and when one performs mitzvos. The Gemara says that Reb Zeira was very

happy, and he explained that it was because he was wearing tefillin. Don't consider this matter trivial because [for serving Hashem with joy] the reward will be very great."¹²

A keyword of the tefillah that will arouse us to *simchah* is the word אתה, "You." The Chofetz Chaim zt'l says: There is a machlokes rishonim whether ברוך means "praise" or "bless", but all agree that אתה means You. This is the greatest joy that we can speak to Hashem directly. There is no joy greater than that!

12. The following words of Reb Chaim Vital zt'l are also essential, so we quote them here:

"Before one begins to daven in beis kneses, starting with the Akeidah and onward, he should accept on himself the mitzvah of ואהבת לרעך כמוך, to love his fellow man like himself. His tefillah will go up together with the tefillos of Klal Yisrael. His tefillah will go up very high, and it will bear fruit... If one of the friends has a tzarah (due to children or an illness, chas v'shalom) they should all participate in his tzaar and daven for him. My teacher (the Ari) z'l warned us immensely about the importance of the love between us students..."

Honoring the Tefillah

The Baal HaTanya (Igeres Hakodesh ch.24) elaborates on the great merit of davening with kavanah, and he writes that when one isn't able to daven with kavanah, he should at least appear like he is davening with kavanah. It will be a chilul Hashem to publicly show that he doesn't respect the tefillah.

We quote his holy words:

"My friends, my brothers, don't do bad, o friends, beloved to their Creator and hated by the yetzer hara. [Chazal say] אל יעשה אדם עצמו רשע שעה אחת לפני המקום, don't be a rasha, not even for a שעה אחת one moment before Hashem. שעה אחת alludes to the hour when we gather in beis medresh to pray before Hashem. That is the שעה אחת, the time that Hashem desires and chooses more than the rest of the day. It is an eis ratzon, an auspicious time before Hashem. At this time, Hashem reveals His presence in the beis medresh, the miniature Beis HaMikdash,

and we can meet with the Shechinah. [His presence] is en clothed in the words of tefillah of the siddur, and His Shechinah becomes revealed to each individual according to his intelligence and *shoresh neshamah* [when he davens with kavanah]... Those who search and yearn for Hashem will find Him. But if at this time you will speak [to your fellow man about] your own personal needs, you are expressing that you aren't interested in seeing Hashem's presence that is being revealed at this time. You are showing that you don't want to think about the beauty and greatness of the King of kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Who is revealed above at this time, and also He is revealed below for those who desire to look at His honor and greatness.

"The kingship of heaven resembles the kingships of kings in this world (מלכותא). (דרקיע בעין מלכותא דארעא). It is the way for kings to be concealed in their innermost room,

with many guards at the doors. People wait their turn for days and for years to be granted the opportunity to speak to the king. They wait for their turn to behold the beauty of his glorious kingship. However, there are times when the king comes out to the people, and everyone can see his glory. An announcement is made throughout his kingdom, telling people they can come, gather, and stand before the king to behold the honor of his kingship and the glory of his greatness. Imagine how disgusting and foolish it is if someone stands before the king, and instead of looking at him, he chooses to look elsewhere and is occupied with his own needs. How disgusting and foolish he is! Everyone will look down at him. Additionally, he disgraces the king because he expresses that the king isn't important to him, and he doesn't care to look at Hashem's honor and glory.

He is more interested in his own needs. For this, he deserves the death penalty because he is showing disrespect to the king in front of everyone. Therefore, it states (Mishlei 3:35) כְּסִילִים מוֹרִים קִלּוֹן, 'the fools show disgrace.' The pasuk is telling us that even if someone is a כְּסִיל, fool, he shouldn't מוֹרִים קִלּוֹן, show this disgrace to everyone. Chazal say that when one davens, it should be כְּאִילוֹ עוֹמֵד לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, *as if* he is standing before the king. This means he should at least show, in his deeds, כְּאִילוֹ, *as if* he is standing before the King. This is how it should appear to others who look at him and see his deeds and words... The purpose of tefillah, the reason they were established, was so that one can think well about the words. Someone who doesn't even pretend that he is davening with kavanah, he is *chayav misah*. The Zohar writes about him, that he is acting disgracefully...and that he doesn't have a portion with

the G-d of Yisrael r'l. Therefore, as a *shaliach* of Chazal, I make a *gezeirah* that no one should speak דברים בטלים from the moment the chazan begins the tefillah until after davening. This is for Shacharis, Minchah, and Maariv. Someone who transgresses this, on purpose, should sit on the ground and ask three people to be מתיר נידוי, to free him from the heavenly ban that he was placed into, and this will cure him..."

Vitur

It states (16:22) ולא תקים לך מצבה אשר שנה ה' אלקיך "You shall not set up for yourself a monument, which Hashem, your G-d hates."

The Ishbitzer zt'l (Mei HaShiloach, Shoftim) explains that the pasuk refers to a lesson in *ben adam l'chaveiro*. One mustn't be a מצבה, firm and stuck in his decisions. He must bend and allow other people to have their way. The pasuk teaches us to be *mevater*.¹³

13. Vitur and improvement of ben adam l'chaveiro are parts of the avodah of Elul because אלול is roshei teivos for א"ש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים.

My grandfather, Reb Dovid Biderman zt'l, was one of the holy tzaddikim of Yerushalayim (niftar year 5678). He described the great fear in Yerushalayim during Elul in those days. One year, on erev Yom Kippur, at his seudas hamafsek, there were many broken and poor Yidden in his home, and he wanted them to be happy, so he livened up the atmosphere until everyone was speaking and laughing. Just then, Reb Shmuel Shenker zt'l (son-in-law of Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnefeld zt'l and student of Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l) came to Reb Dovid Biderman's home to wish him a good year. He was startled by the happy atmosphere in the home, and he whispered to Rebbe Dovid Biderman, "It is only an hour-and-a-half before Kol Nidrei, and it is so lebedig here!"

Rebbe Dovid Biderman told him, "When a baby is crying because a new tooth is coming in, the mother will take the baby and play

The Ishbitzer writes, שלא יהיה אדם בעקשות נגד חבירו שלא יאמר, לו שיקבל דעתו אף שידמה שהצדק עמו, "A person shouldn't be stubborn against his friend, he shouldn't say 'accept my view,' even when he thinks that he is in the right."

There is a *yetzer hara* of נצח, winning. Reb Dovid'l Tolna zt'l said that נצח שבנצח means that one should win over the temptation to be the *natzchan*, winner. For the sake of peace, allow others to win and have their way.

The Rambam writes in a letter to his son, אני לא מנצח לעצמי כי כבוד נפשי ומעלת מדותי אצלי, יותר כבוד מלנצח כסילים בלשוני בדבורי, "I don't win, because the honor of my soul, and the

betterment of my *midos* are more precious to me than to have my words win over fools."

Actually, the one who is *mevater* is the one who wins. Life is better for people when they know how to be *mevater*.

A Rosh Yeshiva said to Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt'l, "I envy you. You have a tranquil life, as though you live in Gan Eden. But I have many enemies and oppositions. I feel like my life is a *Gehinom*."

This Rosh Yeshiva left, and Reb Shlomo Zalman told his family, "He creates the *Gehinom* for himself because he doesn't know

with it, jump the baby up and down, toss the baby up and catch the baby until the baby smiles. These broken Yidden are the Shechinah's toothache. We have to get a smile out of them."

"Happy and happy again." לעבעדיג און ווייטער לעבעדיג, is roshei teivos, "Happy and happy again." And it is a great mitzvah if we can make others happy.

The Yeitav Lev zt'l said that when את לבבך ואת לבב אלוי"ל, that he thinks about others, then אלוי"ל means that he is אהוב למעלה ונחמד למטה, "beloved above and below."

However, if אני הכבדתי את לבו ואת לב אלוי"ל (Shemos 10:1) "I hardened his heart and the hearts..." He has a hard, unkind heart, then אלוי"ל stands for אוי לו ואוי לנפשו, "Woe to him and woe to his soul."

how to be mevater. When I was young, I trained myself that if someone wants to push me, I push myself even further back until he can't push me anymore." With *vitur*, the one who was mevater gains the most because he saves himself from much heartache.

Some Satmar chasidim were planning a *שבת התאחדות*, a Shabbos together with their Rebbe, and they planned this Shabbos weeks in advance. But on Shabbos morning, the Rebbetzin wasn't feeling well, and she asked the Rebbe to eat the meal with her and not make a tish with the chasidim, and he granted her wishes.

After Shabbos, the gabbai Reb Yoel Ashkenazi said to the Satmar Rebbe, "Why does she always win?"

The Rebbe replied, "We have a kabbalah that for shalom bayis, the one who is *mevater* is the one who wins."

Another time, the Satmar Rebbe wasn't feeling well on Friday, and they called a doctor. The doctor advised

the Rebbe not to lead a tish that Friday night. The Rebbetzin was present, and she said, "Of course not. There won't be a tish Friday night." She was loyal to her husband, protecting his health, but after the doctor left, the Rebbe told the Rebbetzin, "There will be a tish tonight."

That night, the Satmar Rebbe prepared to go to the tish. The Rebbetzin asked, "Where are you going?"

"I told you that there will be a tish tonight."

She said, "But I lit lecht in the house." The Rebbe would only say kiddush near the lecht that his wife lit, so in this manner, the Rebbetzin succeeded in keeping the Rebbe that night.

The Rebbe replied, "Baruch Hashem, I won." (א"ד. (האב אויסגעפירט).

He explained, "I won because I didn't become angry, not even for a moment."