

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Kedoshim



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

## Kedoshim

### Judging Others Favorably

It states (19:15) בצדק תשפוט עמיתך, "With righteousness, you shall judge your fellow."

Rashi explains (in his second explanation) that this means you should judge your fellow man favorably, l'kaf zechus. When your fellow man does something that appears like an aveirah, you are obligated to give him the benefit of the doubt and to assume that it wasn't an aveirah.<sup>1</sup>

The Chinuch (235) writes, "It is proper that every person should judge his friend favorably and interpret his actions and words favorably. This will

increase peace and friendship among people... and remove suspicion from one another."

The Kedushas Levi (Shoftim) writes, "When we act with kindness and judge every Yid לכה זכות, favorably, this rouses the same attribute in heaven, and Hashem judges us favorably. This is the translation of the *pasuk*, שופטים ושופטים תתן לך; this means you should prepare the judgment of heaven... וישפטו את העם משפט צדק, by judging your fellow man favorably... Because the way a person acts to others is how Heaven will act with him."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Rashi's first explanation is that the *pasuk* is speaking to the *shoftim*, the judges, instructing them to adjudicate honestly and truthfully.

2. Ponevezh yeshiva has a Yarchei Kalah program for *bein hazmanim*, where *baalabatim* come to study Torah in the yeshiva.

One Shabbos during the *Yarchei Kalah*, the *gabai* called up a wealthy person for *maftir*, even though there was a *chasan*. Generally the custom in Ponevezh was that a *chasan* received *maftir*. The wealthy guest got *maftir* this week, and the *chasan* got a regular *aliyah*.

People started whispering, "Why did the *gabai* give *maftir* to the wealthy person? *Maftir* belongs to the *chasan*! The *chasan* is an orphan! The *gabai* shouldn't have slighted him by giving him a regular *aliyah*. He honored the wealthy person because of his money!"

The *chasan* heard their hushed conversation and clarified the matter. He said, "I asked the *gabai* not to give me *maftir* because I am shy, and I didn't want to say the long *haftarah brachos* out loud."

Reb Ben Tzion Feldman zt"l repeated this story and said, "Imagine if the *chasan* remained silent. Who would think of this explanation and judge the *gabai* favorably? We must train ourselves to judge our fellow man favorably, especially since our assumptions are often wrong."

Someone told Reb Feldman that he had difficulty getting along with a neighbor. They don't fight, *chas veshalom*, but they just didn't get along. When they met, it is always a tense encounter. He complained that his neighbor was making a *chasunah* for his son, and he sent him an empty envelope without an invitation. He said, "I immediately understood what he was trying to tell me. He was indicating that I am not welcome at the wedding. What a *chutzpah!* a nerveghbor, after all. Well, if that's the way he wants it, I will stop pretending. I will turn this into a real *machlokes*..."

Reb Feldman told him, "You must judge your neighbor favorably. Perhaps he forgot to put in the invitation."

"Did you ever receive an envelope for an invitation with nothing inside it?"

Reb Feldman admitted that it never happened to him before and he had never heard of such a thing, "Nevertheless, you are obligated to judge him favorably."

### Judging Hashem Favorably

There is another explanation for בצדק תשפוט עמיתך, written by the Baalei HaTosfos. They explain that the pasuk refers to Hashem, urging us to judge Hashem favorably. Sometimes, we don't understand Hashem's ways, why hardships befall good people, and the like. The Torah obligates us to judge עמיתך, which refers to Hashem, favorably and to believe that it is all for the good. When one does so, the malachim in heaven praise him.

Rebbe Shayele Kerestirer zt'l (yahrzeit on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Iyar) was a student of the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz zt'l. After the Divrei Chaim's petirah (on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Nisan 5636), Rebbe

Shayele would travel to his rebbe's kever on the yahrzeit.

One year, Reb Shayele was already old and frail, and his gabbaim recommended that he travel to Tzanz by horse and wagon rather than with the many people who flocked to Tzanz by train. Reb Shayele wouldn't hear of it, saying that taking the train was more economical. He explained that the money he saved could go to tzedakah.

When people discovered that Rebbe Shayele was on the train with them, they went over to him with kvitlach and money, as customary. They wanted to receive his brachos. But there were other *chashuve* people on the train, and some were jealous of all the

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Later that day, this man received another invitation in the mail to some other *chasunah*. He opened the envelope and lo and behold, there was no invitation inside. Heaven was showing him that sometimes people forget to put in the invitation, and he should judge his neighbor favorably.

He saved the envelope as a reminder to judge his fellow man l'kaf zechus.

honor that Rebbe Shayele received.

Due to the large crowd on the train, someone accidentally stepped on Reb Shayele's foot, which became infected. Rebbe Shayele attributed the infection to the ayin hara, the jealousy of others.

For the return trip, the gabbaim again tried to convince Rebbe Shayele to take a taxi home now that he was wounded and ill. But once again, he refused, and they traveled home by train. Due to the infection, a few weeks afterward, he was niftar. Rebbe Shayele said throughout these final weeks that it was all because of the ayin hara, due to all the honor he received. He added, "Last year, we went to Tzanz for the yahrzeit, and I also received an ayin hara, but due to our frustration on the way back, the ayin hara was canceled." The previous year, on their way back, the border police checked their passports, and the gabbaim were caught

with false papers. This distress saved the rebbe from the ayin hara.

We don't know how much good we are gaining when we experience difficulties. It seems like a tzarah, but it might just be what was needed to bring his salvation.

The lesson is that we should judge Hashem favorably, בצדק תשפוט עמיתך. Don't question Hashem's ways. Sometimes, people suffer hardships; they don't know why, but it is all for our good. It could be saving us from much greater troubles.

Reb Chaim Vital zt'l said that if a person had sechel, he would seek to receive shame because shame doesn't affect a person's health and saves him from so much trouble.

It states in this week's parashah (Kedoshim 19:3), איש אמו, ואביו תראו, "Every man shall fear his mother and his father." Chazal tell us that

one of the ways we express our fear to our parents is לא לישב במקומו, that we don't sit in their places.

We are also obligated to fear Hashem, as it states (Devarim 13:6) את ה' אלקיך תירא. The Sfas Emes says that this also means that we shouldn't sit in Hashem's place. Hashem decides how to lead the world. We don't always understand. We sometimes think we would do things differently had we been running the world, but we mustn't try to sit in Hashem's place. We must trust that Hashem knows best and leads the world in the best possible way.

It states (Tehillim 89): וידו שמים פלאך ה' אף אמונתך בקהל קדשים. The Yismach Yisrael says that אף means anger, representing the times when Hashem's anger is evident in the world and people suffer. Someone may need a shidduch, be ill, or not have parnassah, etc. It is difficult to have emunah at these times because we don't understand Hashem's ways.

Even so, the Jewish nation strengthens itself and its belief in Hashem, realizing that Hashem leads the world in the best way.

Klal Yisrael went through very difficult periods r"l. There was the generation of the Holocaust and of other painful times in our history. And even during those challenging times, Klal Yisrael remained firm in their belief in Hashem, and knew that Hashem's judgment was correct. They knew that even then Hashem loved them and desired only their good.

Malachim stand in awe at the emunah of the Jewish nation. They consider it wondrous that the Jewish nation can believe in Hashem even through suffering and praise Hashem even when they go through the most challenging times. This is implied in the words וידו שמים פלאך... אמונתך בקהל קדשים. The malachim praise Your wonders... the wonders of the Jewish nation who

believe in Hashem even at these times.

Chazal (Brachos 60) say, and it is written in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 230:5): לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר, כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, "A person should accustom himself to say, 'Everything Hashem does is for the good.'" This phrase is in Aramaic. Why isn't it said in lashon hakodesh?

We can explain it with an idea from Tosfos (Brachos 3): "People say that the kaddish is said in Aramaic because it is a beautiful prayer and a great praise. It was established in Aramaic, so the malachim shouldn't understand it and be jealous of us."

Therefore, we can similarly explain that it was established that we should say כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד in Aramaic because this is a great praise to Hashem and a great wonder. It expresses the greatness of the Jewish nation who believe in Hashem, even when they don't understand His ways.

Malachim don't have this level because they don't suffer yesurim as we do. They don't have the avodah of believing in Hashem through hardship and pain. To avoid the malachim's jealousy, we say the phrase that embodies our unwavering emunah in Hashem in Aramaic.

The Zohar states that there are three categories of tefillah mentioned in Tehillim. There is (90:1) תפלה למשה, and there is (86:1) תפלה לדוד, but the highest praise is (102:1) תפלה לעני. It states תפלה לעני כי יעטף, and the Zohar explains that the tefillos of the poor wrap and elevate all other tefillos. The most perfect tefillos are the tefillos of the poor.

The Tiferes Shlomo (Purim) explains that this is because the poor suffer but believe that it is all for the good. This belief makes them worthy that their tefillos should be answered.

We quote the Tiferes Shlomo: "The Zohar praises

the prayers of the poor. What is so special about these tefillos? They refer to when a person suffers from poverty and yet doesn't ask questions on Hashem. He believes that כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד everything is for the best. [When a person has this emunah], his tefillos break through all heavens."

The Zohar adds the pasuk כי שומע אל אביונים ה' that Hashem listens to the tefillos of the poor.

I heard from Reb Menachem Lunger n"y from Bnei Brak that thieves broke into his home one week when he and his family were away for Shabbos. They stole jewelry that he had inherited from his parents, jewelry that his daughter, a kallah, had recently received from her future in-laws, and one hundred thousand shekels, which he had just borrowed from a gmach to cover the expenses of his daughter's upcoming chasunah.

When they arrived home, his wife saw the overturned home. Being a very organized person, just seeing the overturned home itself was painful for her. Not to mention the tremendous financial loss they had just incurred. She said to Hashem, "Only you know my broken heart. Only You know how I feel now. But despite everything, I believe that it was bashert. I believe that it is for the good. And I request that in the merit of my emunah, our family should have yeshuos."

She listed the yeshuos she needed. One of her children was divorced. She requested that in the merit of her emunah, this child should get remarried. She also had two married children who were childless, although one was nine years after their chasunah and the other was six years after their chasunah.

All of them had their salvation that year.

A woman who survived through Holocaust, moved to France, and got married but never had children. Once, she was out shopping when a fire broke out in her kitchen, and her home burned down, r"l. When the neighbors saw the fire, they immediately called the fire department.

One of the neighbors was the gadol, Reb Mordechai Pogromansky. The neighbors approached him and asked him what to do. "When she discovers what occurred, she will be devastated. She went through the Holocaust, and she doesn't have children. What will be when she sees that she lost her home?"

Reb Mordechai advised that one of the neighbors should meet this woman a couple of blocks away from her home and break the news to her there, and immediately add that Reb Mordechai Pogromansky guarantees that if she accepts this decree with emunah

and without mourning, she will merit children.

She didn't complain, she didn't moan, and that year, she had a girl. The next year, she had another girl, and a year after that, she had a son.

We heard this story from Reb Naftali Silvertzvag, her third child.

We think that yesurim are detrimental to us, but in reality, we gain from suffering and discomfort. She lost a house and merited three children, although according to all doctors, it was impossible for her to bear children. Similarly, we must know that all troubles are for our benefit.

The holy Ruzhiner zt'l told his chassidim the following story:

There was a chassid who was cautious never to work before *shacharis*. He was once sitting with a large stock of furs and had difficulty selling them. One morning, a messenger from a poritz arrived and wanted to

purchase the furs, but the chassid hadn't davened yet, and he didn't want to conduct business before *shacharis*. Not wanting to get into a debate over his custom, he quoted an exorbitant price for the furs, assuming the messenger would leave. But the messenger was prepared to pay the high price. So, he raised the price even higher. Finally, the messenger said, "I see you don't want to sell them," and left.

The Ruzhiner told his chassidim, "I see you are silent and waiting to hear

the end of the story. (Generally, stories like these end with a miracle.) But that was the end of the story. He was *moser nefesh* to keep halachah, and he lost money."

Things don't always end with a miracle, but even then, we believe that everything is for the good, although we don't know precisely how and why.<sup>3</sup>

In תרפ"ט, Reb Boruch Frankel z'l, and a friend came from Europe to America and worked hard to realize the American dream. Every month they

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3. There was a person who owned a dog; they were always together. When his master suffered a heart attack, and an ambulance came to bring him to the hospital, the dog came along. Even in the hospital room, the dog was at his master's side. They were inseparable. But the doctors refused to let the dog enter the OR. The dog stood near the door, barked, and howled until the doctors felt they had no choice and agreed to let the dog in. It sat there next to its master who was put to sleep. The dog was ok with that, but when they took out a knife and began operating on the patient, the dog became vicious and upset. It didn't understand that the surgery was for the master's good. It states (*Tehillim* 73:22), ואני בער ולא אדע בהמות הייתי עמך, "I am a fool. I don't know. I am like an animal..." We are like animals who don't know anything and don't realize how everything - even matters that seem bad - is for our good.

sent some money to their wives and children who remained behind in Europe, and the rest they kept in savings accounts.

After three years, they had saved up enough money to start their own business in Europe and decided it was time to return. They were both excited about their future lives in Europe, together with their families and their, hopefully, prosperous business.

They purchased two tickets on a ship that would be leaving for Europe in about a week and got busy finishing their preparations and closing their business in America. But then Reb Boruch Frankel's father was *niftar*. He sat *shivah* in America, knowing he would miss his voyage. Reb Boruch Frankel planned to buy another ticket after the *shivah*.

Many people visited Reb Boruch during the *shivah*, and in one especially busy moment, his business

partner came to him with a stack of documents.

“What are these?”

“They are to close our business. We have to sign some documents before we leave. I brought them here to you so you can sign them.”

Reb Boruch Frankel looked at them briefly; everything seemed right, so he signed all the documents without checking each one. After the *shivah*, he discovered that one of those documents gave his partner permission to take all his money out of his bank account. His partner had tricked him and stolen all his savings. Reb Boruch didn't even have enough money to pay for his passage back home.

Reb Boruch stayed in America and worked hard for several more years. In תרצ"ד, he became an American citizen, and that's when he returned to Europe.

Then World War II broke out. As an American citizen, he was able to escape to America together with his family. His business partner, on the other hand, perished in the Holocaust r"l.

That terrible moment when his partner stole his life's savings turned out to be one of the most fortunate moments of his life; it saved his entire family.

Obviously, this doesn't exonerate the partner for his terrible deed, but the awareness that כל מה דעביד לטב עביד, "Everything is for the good" is a lesson worth learning. It is a reminder that we should always judge Hashem favorably, בצדק תשפט עמיתך, with the belief that even when we don't understand, everything is for our good.

We now share a relatively recent story that demonstrates once again how everything that happens is for our benefit:

A person studied to become a children's therapist. The therapy included horseback riding. When he graduated from the course, he rented a ranch in the village of Aderet, near Beit Shemesh, complete with a barn for the horses, a riding track, and a small office.

He rented the ranch for a year and invested in all the equipment needed to perform the therapy. At the end of the year, the landowner informed the therapist that he would be renting the ranch on a three-month basis. Every three months, they would draw up another contract. That gave the landowner the opportunity to raise the rent four times a year. Despite this uncommon arrangement, it worked fine for several years.

But eventually, the rent became too high. The tenant said, "If I pay that amount, I might as well close my practice. All the money I earn will go to the rent."

But the landowner wouldn't lower the price. He gave his tenant a week to decide. Deep in thought, the tenant/therapist was walking down a street, worried about his future, when he bumped into his old teacher who trained him in this therapy. The teacher immediately noticed that something was wrong and asked his student how his practice was going. The student told him about the high rent that he must pay.

The teacher replied, "There is plenty of room on the ranch where I teach the therapy. You can bring your horses there, free of charge."

The therapist was shocked. This was too good to be true. He didn't answer his therapist because he was having trouble believing that his therapist was serious

and that the offer was sincere. He was still debating what to do.

Four o'clock on Thursday morning, just a few hours before the deadline, he was awoken by a phone call from the police. "There's a fire in Aderet. You must evacuate the village."

He grabbed his horses and took them straight to his teacher's ranch.

We see how the problem proved to be part of the salvation. He told his teacher about his problems, this paved a place for him to bring his horses, and to continue his practice, free of charge, after the fire.

Because everything is for the good, and when we look back, we often merit to see it with our own eyes.<sup>4</sup>

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4. A שבט is a staff used for hitting. A משען is a stick used for support. Dovid HaMelech says (*Tehillim* 23:4), שבטך ומשענתך המה ירחמוני, "Your staff and your supporting stick comfort me." Because even when one is hit with a שבט, he should know that it really is a משען, his support. This awareness is ירחמוני, his comfort.

### Lo Sikom

It states (19:18) לֹא תִקוּם, "You shall not take revenge..."

Sefer HaChinuch (241) writes, "The ways of most people is that if someone wronged them, they don't cease seeking opportunities to get back at them to give them what they deserve... Hashem yisbarach forbids us to do so. The Sifra gives an example of revenge that is forbidden. You need a hoe, so you ask your neighbor to lend you one, who refuses your request. Sometime later, your neighbor comes to you and asks for an ax. It is forbidden to reply, 'I won't lend you

the ax, just as you didn't lend me the hoe.'

"One of the reasons for this mitzvah is that a person should know that whatever happens to him, whether good or bad, is from Hashem yisbarach. It is impossible for a human being to harm his fellow man [if it wasn't decreed from Above]. And therefore, when someone harms you, know in your soul that Hashem is punishing you for your *aveiros*. Don't seek revenge. He isn't the cause of your tzaros.

"[When Shimi cursed Dovid HaMelech], Dovid haMelech a"h said (Shmuel 2,

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It states (*Tehillim* 139:8), אִם אֲסַק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אַתָּה, "If I go up to heaven You are there, וְאֲצִיעָה שְׂאוּל הַנֶּגֶד, and if I make a bed in Gehinom, behold You are present." This *pasuk* is discussing two very opposite experiences. אִם אֲסַק שָׁמַיִם, "If I go up to heaven" hints at good times. וְאֲצִיעָה שְׂאוּל "If I make a bed in Gehinom" hints at difficult times. The *pasuk* says that in all situations, good and bad, Hashem is present.

When is Hashem closer? When experiencing good times, the *pasuk* says שָׁם אַתָּה "You are *there*." When going through hard times the *pasuk* says הִנֵּה אַתָּה הֵרָא "behold You are *here*." It seems Hashem is even closer, helping him through the hard times.

16:11), הניחו לו ויקלל כי אמר לו ה', 'Let him curse; for Hashem has told him [to do so].'<sup>1</sup> Dovid attributed it to his aveiros, not to Shimi ben Gera.

"Additionally, this outlook helps resolve disputes and removes hatred from man's heart. And when there will be peace among people, Hashem will grant them peace... Someone who places in his heart to hate his fellow man for the bad he caused him and takes revenge has transgressed this prohibition. This is very bad; it leads to many troubles."

The Tosher Rebbe zt'l would send money to a particular person every year. His gabbai asked, "Why do you send money to him? He isn't poor!"

The Rebbe of Tosh explained, "I was once in an area with only one mikvah. It was just a hole in the ground, and a wooden plank was used to cover the mikvah when it wasn't in use. Once, I was immersed

in this mikvah, and this person was there, and he covered the mikvah with the plank! He intentionally wanted to harm me! My life was in danger! But then he lifted the plank, and this saved me. I don't consider him guilty for covering the mikvah. I know that he was sent from heaven to do that. But he deserves credit for removing the plank to save me. I send him money as hakaras hatov."

The Imrei Emes zt'l lived in Biyale (his wife's hometown) after his chasunah. One of the locals caused him a lot of anguish.

During World War One, this man (who had bothered the Imrei Emes) needed help, and the Imrei Emes sent him food and clothing and helped him immensely.

The Imrei Emes's Rebbetzin quipped, "I see that you can't forget all the trouble he caused you."

Another time, she said, "I understand that want to

repay his evil ways with kindness because there is a virtue to *משלם טובה תחת רעה*, to pay back good for the bad you received, however, he wasn't so cruel to you that you should help him so much."

The Imrei Emes replied with the pasuk (Mishlei 17:13), which discusses the opposite scenario: when people act

cruelly to those who did kindness to them. It states *משב רעה תחת טובה לא תמוש רעה מביתו*, "He who repays evil for good, evil will not depart from his house." The pasuk discusses when one does bad to a person who has helped him. The pasuk warns that he will be punished severely. Evil and troubles will not depart from his house."<sup>5</sup>

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5. The Or HaChaim (*Bereishis* 20:9) writes, שאין אדם מתחייב רע בעולם כמשלם, *רעה תחת טובה*, "No one deserves punishment like one who repays a favor with evil..."

When the Yidden left Mitzrayim they carried arms, as it states (*Shemos* 13:18), *והמושים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים*, "Bnei Yisrael were armed when they went up from the land of Mitzrayim." The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe, Beshalach*, *והמושים*) asks, if they carried weapons, they could have used their weapons and battled the Egyptians who pursued them! Why did they need the miracle that the sea split?

The Chasam Sofer explains that 210 years earlier the Egyptians did a great favor for the Jewish nation. At that time, there was a famine, and Mitzrayim opened their doors for Yaakov and his offspring. Therefore, the Yidden had *hakaras hatov* for the Egyptians. Raising arms against a nation that once welcomed them would be improper.

This vort shows us the extent of the obligation never to harm someone who helped you. The Mitzrim afflicted and enslaved the Yidden. The favor the Mitzrim did for the Yidden was so long ago! Nevertheless, the Torah obligated them to have *hakaras hatov*. It would be wrong to use weapons on Mitzrayim, a nation that

The Imrei Emes concluded, "If this is the punishment for doing bad to someone who did kindness to you, certainly when you do kindness to a person who performed bad to you, goodness will never depart from your home!"

It states (Tehillim 41:10-11) וגם איש שלומי אשר בטחתי בו אוכל לחמי הגדיל עלי עקב ואתה ה' חנני והקמני ואשלמה להם, "Even my ally, in whom I trusted, who eats

my bread, developed an ambush for me. But You, Hashem, be gracious to me and raise me up, so that I may repay them." In what way did Dovid want to repay those who went against him? The simple meaning is that I should repay them with revenge and give them what they deserve. Indeed, that is how Metzudas Dovid explains it. However, Reb Sadyah Gaon

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once did them a favor. How cautious we must be with the obligation of having *hakaras hatov*!

Rashi (*Devarim* 23:8) writes, לא תתעב מצרי מכל וכל, אע"פ שזרקו זכוריכם ליאור, מזה, "Do not completely reject the Mitzrim, although they threw your first-borns into the Nile. Why? Because they provided you with shelter in your time of need."

When Moshe Rabbeinu was living in Yisro's home in Midyan, Hashem told Moshe to return to Mitzrayim to redeem the Yidden from slavery. The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Shemos* 16) tells us that Moshe replied, "Ribono Shel Olam, how can I leave Yisro without first asking his consent? Yisro opened his home for me; he treats me like his son." The Midrash explains, "When one opens his house for you, you owe him your life... You are obligated to honor the one who opened his home for you more than you are obligated to honor your father and mother." Despite the urgent need to save the Jewish nation, Moshe said it wasn't right to leave Midyan without Yisro's consent because Yisro hosted him in his home. This is another example of how much *hakaras hatov* we need to have.

says that Dovid requested ויאשלמה להם, that I should repay them with kindness.

The following pasuk states בִּזְמַן יָדַעְתִּי כִּי חָפְצָת בִּי, "With this I shall know that You desired me..." Reb Sadya Gaon explains that if I am kind to them, despite all the bad they did for me, I am certain that you will desire and love me.

Reb Sadya Gaon concludes, והוא דבר ה' לא תקום, וזוהי תמורה, this is the meaning of the obligation that we mustn't take revenge or hold a grudge.

The Imrei Yosef of Spinka zt'l once had a guest in his home. The guest was a rav, and the Spinka Rebbe honored him immensely. After Shacharis, the Imrei Yosef immediately took his guest home to serve him breakfast. He didn't keep his general routine to learn a certain amount before returning home. The Imrei Yosef's son, the Chakal Yitzchak zt'l, asked his father why he honored this

rav so much. The Imrei Yosef replied that he was once collecting money and came to this rav's beis medresh. The rav didn't do anything to help him. Neither did he tell his wealthy congregants to help me; he just ignored me. The Imrei Yosef was upset with the rav, and he didn't want to help him now. To uproot those negative feelings, he was now honoring the rav immensely. He explained, "I was tempted not to help him, to act with him as he acted with me. To overcome this negative tendency, I am acting in the opposite extreme and helping him immensely."

The Chakal Yitzchak writes, "I saw many episodes like this one. The Imrei Yosef honored those who harmed him to break his desire to harm them."

The Divrei Shmuel of Slonim zt'l taught his son, the Beis Avraham zt'l, a rule of rabbinic leadership that his son could use when he became a rebbe. The Divrei

Shmuel told him that when someone goes against you, repay him with kindness. Don't fight back because you will only lose in the end. The Divrei Shmuel told his son a story that happened to him in his younger years, when he would travel from city to city to deliver Chasidic drashos, to strengthen the communities. "In one city, a person would always seek a way to disagree or disprove what I said. At first, I didn't understand what he wanted from me, but then I understood that he simply is looking for opportunities to oppose me and to make my life miserable. So I decided to help him. I purposely made mistakes so he could feel good about correcting me. Now, this person is from my loyal chasidim, prepared to do anything for me. This is the only way. To be kind to those who do bad to you. If you fight back, you won't gain anything other than making your life miserable."

Rebbe Hershel of Ziditchov zt'l said, "When two people are pulling at two ends of a rope (tug of war), and one drops the rope, the other will fall." The lesson is that if someone is fighting against you, as long as you fight back, the machlokes continues. But if you let go of the rope, your enemy will fall, and you will be saved.

Even better, if you do kindness to your fellow man, the machlokes will end.

Chazal tell us that in the days of Dovid HaMelech, one hundred people died daily. With his ruach hakodesh and depth of understanding, Dovid HaMelech understood that if the nation recited one hundred brachos each day, the epidemic would end, and so it was.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l explains that the deaths showed that there was a rift, keviyachol, between Hashem and the Jewish nation. There was anger

from Above, which resulted in these deaths. When there is a rift between people, and one of them smiles and speaks kindly to the other person, the machlokes won't last for long. You can't be angry with someone so kind to you. Dovid HaMelech understood that if Klal Yisrael came to Hashem with one hundred daily praises, the rift and the wrath would end, and goodness would come to the Jewish nation.

This is certainly an excellent counsel to act towards your fellow man. Be kind to them, even when they are cruel towards you, and goodness will come your way. If you try to harm them, it (a) is nekamah, (b) won't work, and (c) It will just fan the flames of the machlokes.

### **Build and Don't Break**

A wonderful story happened more than a hundred years ago in the Lower East Side of

Manhattan, New York City. A poor family had two children: a six-year-old girl and a twelve-year-old boy. The boy was very diligent in his Torah studies, and his father was very proud of him. There wasn't much food in the home. The only food on Shabbos was challah and cake.

On the Shabbos after Pesach, at the meager Shabbos seudah, the six-year-old girl went to her room, returned with some stale cake, and gave it to her brother. She said, "I am proud of you because you learn Torah. Therefore, when mother served cake for the past few weeks, I didn't eat it all. I saved a bit so that I can give it to you. The small amounts have accumulated, and now I can present you with this cake."

There was a problem. Pesach had passed, so the cake was חמץ שעבר עליו הפסח, and it was forbidden to be eaten. The father praised his daughter for admiring Torah so much and blessed her

that she should marry a talmid chacham. (He also told his family that they should cover the chametz because it needed to be burned, as it was chametz from Pesach.)

Indeed, she married a talmid chacham. She married Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l.

The point we want to make from this story is that the father didn't shatter his daughter's appreciation for Torah. He didn't shout at her for making this mistake. Instead, he praised her, saying that she is a special girl who loves Torah and respects her brother. This increased her love for Torah. Had he admonished her for hiding chametz over Pesach, it would have broken her and perhaps her admiration for Torah, too.

After the Holocaust, in the home of the Nesivos Sholom of Slonim zt'l, a child spilled wine, messing up the Shabbos table. The Nesivos Sholom and the entire family kept calm, and

no one rebuked the child for his negligence.

There was a guest in their home at the time. She wasn't religious. As was common among some Holocaust survivors, she had lost her emunah r"l. This episode brought her back. She said, "Some families consider a clean tablecloth to be more important than a child's feelings. But I saw in this home that the child's feelings were more important than a clean tablecloth," and that expression of good middos brought her back to Yiddishkeit.

At the tish of one of the Lubavitcher Rebbes, a person sat and ate matzah dipped in red beet borscht. The Rebbe didn't permit anyone to rebuke him. He explained, "Better that the matzos should turn red than this person's face should turn red."

A rosh yeshiva once said to Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l, "Your life is

like living in Gan Eden. You don't have enemies. Everyone loves you. No one tries to harm you. But I feel that my life is Gehinom. Many people try to harm me, to take away my parnassah, and I suffer in other ways..."

When the rosh yeshiva left the house, Reb Shlomo Zalman told his family, "He claims that he lives in Gehinom and that I live in Gan Eden. I say that he created the Gehinom for himself. He says that I live in Gan Eden. That's because when someone wants to push me back a step, I go back two steps on my own, and therefore my life is Gan Eden.

Chazal say that the Yidden in the desert lost their portion to Olam HaBa. This can be explained because the nation chose a lifestyle of complaining, as it states (Bamidbar 11:1) ויהי העם כמתאוננים רע באזני ה' "The people took to seeking complaints..."

And when they sinned with the meraglim, Chazal say that they cried for no reason, and therefore they were punished to cry with a reason (for the churban Beis HaMikdash).

So, we see that a person chooses the type of life to live. If he is wise, he chooses a life of joy. The Chazon Ish zt'l said, "Everyone goes through this world. Some cry and some laugh; it is better to pass through the world with laughter." The choice is in our hands because it isn't a person's situation that determines his happiness or the opposite; instead, the person's attitude affects how he will pass through this world.

### Turn Your Eyes to Hashem

We quote the Kli Yakar:

"The Midrash (Midrash Tehillim 44:2) says, 'Salvations come to the Jewish nation when they are at the very lowest level, at the nadir. As it states (Tehillim 44:26), כִּי שָׁחָה, לעפר נפשינו, when we fall to

the earth, קומה עזרתה לנו, that's when Hashem saves us. The explanation is that as long as people aren't at the lowest level, they think they can save themselves from their troubles through their *hishtadlus*. But when they see that all *hishtadlus* won't help them, they place their trust in Hashem, they call out to Him, and Hashem listens. And they rise suddenly from the lowest level up to the highest level. By nature, it isn't understood how they could rise so high and so suddenly..."

The Brisker Rav *zt'l* would say that he understands how the poor have *parnassah*. They realize that they can't manage on their own, so they place their trust in Hashem, and Hashem helps them. But how do the wealthy survive? They have their own money, they think they can manage on their own, so how do they have *parnassah*?" The Brisker Rav concluded that he doesn't have an answer to this great question.<sup>6</sup>

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**6.** Two competing farmers from two different farms were about to harvest their wheat, to sell the grain for Pesach matzos. One of them came to the *gadol* (of about 300-350 years ago) Reb Yaakov Bardugo, and said, "*Im yirtzeh Hashem*, I am about to harvest the grains. I want your *brachos* that it should be a success..." Reb Yaakov Bardugo blessed him.

The other farmer also came to Reb Yaakov. He said, "I'm about to harvest the grains, and I want your *brachos* for success," but Reb Yaakov didn't bless him.

Since he didn't receive the rav's *brachah*, he didn't want to harvest the crop. He figured, "The crop wasn't blessed. It will only bring me heartache." But his family urged him to harvest the crop, regardless, and he did so.

But there was no blessing in the crop. Whoever bought his grains

Rebbe of Sokolov *zt'l* and turn their eyes to answered it according to the Hashem to help them.

Chazal (*Koheles Rabba* 1:13):

"Whoever has a hundred wants two hundred." So the wealthy also feel lacking

We say in the *Haggadah*, לבן בקש לעקור את הכל, "Lavan wanted to uproot Yaakov

didn't enjoy them. One person bought the wheat kernels, and it rained on them, rendering them unfit for Pesach. For another, it rained when they were baking matzos. As people of this city were cautious with *gebroks*, he couldn't use those matzos. Similarly, whoever bought his wheat didn't enjoy it.

Reb Yaakov Bardugo summoned the farmer who was having this bad mazal and asked him if he knew why this was happening. It wasn't natural that whoever bought his grains couldn't use them for Pesach.

The farmer said he knew the reason and was ready to admit his error. It rained on his wheat kernels before he sold them. He dried them, and he didn't tell anybody what happened. Hashem protected the Jewish community, and whoever purchased flour from him didn't end up using it for Pesach.

The rav told the farmer that he must return the money to whoever bought from him.

The farmer asked the rav, "Why didn't the rav bless me as you blessed the other farmer? Perhaps all of this wouldn't have happened if I had received the rav's *brachah*."

Reb Yaakov Bardugo replied, "The other farmer said *im yirtzeh Hashem*. He mentioned Hashem's name, Who is the source of all blessings. Therefore, I blessed him, and he was successful. But you didn't mention Hashem's name, and there are your results..." (Reb Yosef Adhan *zt'l* [who lived 250 years ago] brings this story in his *sefer Shufrei d'Yosef* [p.437]. It happened to his grandfather, Reb Yaakov Bardugo *zt'l*.)

Avinu" from Hashem. We can explain that Lavan wanted to give Yaakov a set salary. He said (Bereishis 30:28) ונקבה שכרך עלי ואתנה "Specify your wage, and I will give it." He wanted Yaakov to feel that his *parnassah* comes from

Lavan, not Hashem. Yaakov didn't want that. He wanted a *parnassah* that would cause him to constantly turn his eyes to Hashem to help him. And indeed, Yaakov trusted in Hashem and had immense success.<sup>7</sup>

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7. In Eretz Yisrael, a paystub is called a *tlush* (תלוש משכורת). Another translation of תלוש is detached. This is when one receives a set wage, and he relies on that, and he detaches himself from feeling dependent on Hashem.

Obviously, we aren't recommending that people shouldn't take a job that pays a fixed wage, rather we are encouraging people to remember that no matter what type of *parnassah* they have, they should turn their eyes to Hashem, for Hashem is the one who gives *parnassah*.