

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Beha'aloscha



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Beha'aloscha

Stop Complaining!

A young child was crying at the bus station. Someone came by and asked him why he was crying. The child said that he didn't have money to buy a bus ticket. The man had rachmanus on him and gave him money for the bus. The child returned with the bus ticket but was still crying.

"Why are you crying now?" the man asked.

The child replied, "When other people come to the clerk to buy a bus ticket, he gives them a ticket, and he gives them change as well. But the clerk only gave me a ticket" (because he paid the exact rate).

This story is a reminder that people cry and lose sight of all the good they have. A *gadol* mentioned that if one looks at a

newspaper, it will never write, "Ten thousand people traveled on the highway today, and they all returned home safe and sound." And they don't write, "Fifty thousand people went to work today, and they all earned parnassah." The newspaper focuses only on the one percent, the problems, and loses sight of all the good. People are the same. They focus on their issues. But it should be the opposite. We should focus on the good we have.

It states (11:1), וידי העם, כמתאוונים רע באוני ה' and the Ramban says their sin was that they complained. Complaining is רע בעיני ה', bad in Hashem's eyes.

What were they complaining about?

The Ramban explains, "Har Sinai was located near inhabited cities. [If they

needed something, they were near civilized areas and could buy it there.] But they had just left Har Sinai, and for the first time, they traveled into the great, awesome desert. Fearfully, they said, 'How can we survive in this desert? What will we eat? What will we drink? When will we leave this desert?' The translation of מתאווננים is complaining (see *Eichah* 3:39 and *Bereishis* 35:18). They spoke with bitterness... and that was bad in Hashem's eyes. They should have followed Hashem joyfully because of all the kindness Hashem gives them. But they traveled as though they were being forced to go, and they were complaining."

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* adds that immediately after the מתאווננים (the sin of complaining), the Torah states, התאוון תאוה... מי

יאכילנו בשר, "The nation had a temptation... and they said, 'Who will give us meat?'" Because this is the order of how things unfold. First, one is unsatisfied and complains, then he falls into bad temptations. But the correct path is to recognize and praise Hashem for the multitudes of kindness that He does for us.

It states (11:4), והאספסוף אשר, ובקרבו התאוון תאוה, and Rashi writes that the ערב רב craved for meat. The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* (*Zera Kodesh*) writes, "Only the *erev rav* craved meat, not the Jewish nation. This is because the Jewish nation believed in Hashem, and nothing is lacking for those who believe in Hashem. When they don't have something, they say, 'Apparently, I don't need it.'¹¹

1. The Ropshitzer Rav explained that the brachah לי כל צרכי, "Hashem gives me all my needs," means that you lack nothing. If something is lacking, you don't need it.

Rashi (*Devarim* 6:5) says, שלא יהא לך חלוק על המקום. The Beis Aharon translated it as follows: "Don't have complaints on the מקום, place."

There is no reason to complain. When you don't have something, say, "If I needed it, Hashem would give it to me." The *Erev Rav* wanted meat, but the Jewish nation believed that they weren't lacking anything, because what they don't have, they don't need.

Nevertheless, it states, והאספסוף אשר בקרבנו התאוה תאוה וישבו ויבכו גם בני ישראל. The crying began with the *erev rav*, because they craved meat, but then Bnei Yisrael also cried. Why did Bnei Yisrael cry?

The Ropshitzer Rav explains that when Bnei Yisrael saw the *erev rav* complaining that they wanted meat, the Jewish nation thought, "Why don't they realize that Hashem gives us everything we need, and there is no reason

to be upset? If we don't have meat, we don't need it! Where is their *emunah*?"

But then the nation said to themselves, "When I see people with a low level of *emunah* that means I also need *chizuk* in *emunah*." As the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* taught, when a person sees a fellow Yid committing an *aveirah*, it means that he is also associated with that *aveirah* - in some way. וישבו ויבכו means the nation was crying and doing *teshuvah*, and they were strengthening themselves with *emunah* because they witnessed the low level of *emunah* of the *erev rav*. They realized that if they see others crying and complaining about their lot, they have to improve themselves and attain the clear *emunah* that there is no reason to complain.²

Every place is good. If Hashem put you there, it is the best place for you then, and you should serve Hashem from there to the best of your ability.

2. The 17th of Sivan is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Aharon of Karlin *zt'l*, the

Beis Aharon. In honor of the *yartzei* we will tell some stories about this great tzaddik, specifically his simcha.

One of Beis Aharon's outstanding traits was simchah. The Rebbe of Kozmir (and other tzaddikim) called him the *freilechen* tzaddik because he was always happy. People thought he was a happy person by nature, but the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim *zy'a* said that the Beis Aharon's happiness was the result of his *hischazkus*. (He trained himself to be happy.)

Once, the Beis Aharon rebuked his son for not being happy. His son asked, "Why do you rebuke me specifically for this? I have other faults, and you never rebuke me over those matters!"

His father, the Beis Aharon, replied, "I know that you have yiras Shamayim, and on your own, you will try to improve the areas that need improvement. However, you think that being sad isn't so terrible. That's why I must teach you the importance of always being happy."

An individual with a sad disposition came to join the Stoliner chasidus. The Beis Aharon told him the following mashal:

A family was traveling to a chasunah and encountered a poor man walking on the side of the road. The man asked them if he could ride along with them. The head of the family told him, "We are traveling to a chasunah; the kallah is in the wagon, and we are all very happy. If you can be happy with us, you can join us. But if you will be sad, we don't want you on the wagon. You will ruin the joyous atmosphere." The Beis Aharon turned to the chasid and said, "We have a happy chasidus. You can join us, but if you want to join us, you must be happy with us."

The Beis Aharon *zy"*a once stood before the amud to daven and said to himself: "I am a grandson [of tzaddikim], but I am a simple person. What connection do I have with my holy grandfathers?"

He thought about this for a few moments and then said: "But I *am* a grandson, so I will daven *liluy nishmas* my grandfather," and then the Beis Aharon began the tefillah.

The Beis Aharon's grandson, Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin

zy"א said: This is a lesson in serving Hashem. On the one hand, one should feel broken and humble because of his sins and imperfections, but on the other hand, one should strengthen himself and say: "I am a ben Melech [a child of Hashem], and therefore I have tremendous value."

The Gemara (*Megillah* 28.) says שמעתתא בעי צילותא. Literally, this means, "To learn Torah, one needs a clear mind." צילותא can also mean tefillah. The Beis Aharon taught שמעתתא בעי צילותא, to succeed in Torah, one needs to daven properly, and to succeed in tefillah, one needs to learn well. One influences the other.

Chasidim from Poland came to the Beis Aharon for a *yom tov*. When they were ready to leave, the Beis Aharon told them, "Yidden in Poland love to learn Torah, and so do we. The difference is that we explain the Gemara (*Megillah*) שמעתתא בעי צילותא, to mean that for success in Torah, one needs to daven well. And also, to daven well, one needs to learn Torah."

The Sadigura Rebbe זת"ל was a son-in-law of the Beis Aharon. The Sadigura chasidim had a custom to gather and discuss chasidus and avodas Hashem. To raise money for the refreshments of their gatherings, the Sadigura Rebbe would give them a coin that he blessed to be a segulah for protection and success, and the chassidim would auction off the coin to the highest bidder.

Once, there were wealthy people among the bidders, and the coin sold for a hefty sum. The chassidim debated what to do with the money. Should it all be used for their chassidic gatherings, or should they designate some of the money for other needs, since it was a lot of money? They asked their Rebbe's father-in-law, the Beis Aharon זת"ל. He replied, "There is nothing more special than when Yidden gather in friendship to speak words of Torah and *emunah*. So I don't think you should use the money for any other cause."

Once, at a *tisch*, the Beis Aharon sent a chassid outdoors to report back what he saw. The chassid returned and said, "I saw two drunkards walking together. One of them said to the other one: 'Let's hold on to each other so that we won't fall.'" The Beis Aharon

Im Yirtzeh Hashem

In the desert, Hashem showed the nation when to travel, which direction to go, and where they should camp. Hashem directed them with the ענני כבוד, clouds of glory, as it states (9:18-20) על פי ה' יסעו ועל פי ה' יחנו "According to Hashem's word, Bnei Yisrael traveled, and by His word, they encamped."

The Shlah Hakodesh teaches that although today we don't have the ענני הכבוד guiding us, where and when we travel is still in Hashem's hands. And this applies to everything we do. We think we make decisions on our own, but Hashem is directing us. The shidduchim we choose, the parnassah we work with, and millions of

said, "Did you hear what he said? When Yidden hold on and support one another, they won't fall from their spiritual levels."

Chazal say כל הגדול מחברו יצרו גדול ממנו "Whoever is greater, has a greater *yetzer hara*." The Beis Aharon read it, כל הגדול, whoever is great in Torah and *avodas Hashem*, מחברו, it is because he has friends. יצרו גדול, but if one has a great *yetzer hara*, הימנו, it is because he is alone.

The Beis Aharon taught his *chassidim* to daven loudly, passionately, and slowly. One Shabbos, a visiting rav heard the Beis Aharon begin *Baruch She'amar*, but didn't hear him finish it. The rav assumed that the custom in this *beis medresh* was that the *chazan* didn't end each piece, so the rav continued to daven on his own. When the rav reached *Yishtabach*, he heard the Rebbe shout, in the renowned Stoliner tune, יחיד חי העולמים... So slow and passionate were their *tefillos*.

When the Beis Aharon was niftar, his son-in-law, the Sadigura Rebbe, said, "The יחיד חי העולמים, the one Hashem, will remain the same, but the way my father-in-law said those words won't be heard again until Moshiach comes."

Zechuso yegen aleinu, may his merit be a protection for us, amen.

other details are all in Hashem's hands. על פי ה', according to Hashem's will, that is what we do, and that is what occurs.

We must remember this. We shouldn't think that things happen by chance or through our choices.

The Shlah Hakadosh (Derech Chaim Tochachas Mussar 12) writes, "This teaches us a lesson in mussar: With everything that a person does, he should say *im yirtzeh Hashem* or *b'ezras*

Hashem. For example, when traveling, he should say, 'I am traveling *b'ezras Hashem yisbarach*, and I plan to stop at place *ploni b'ezras Hashem, im yirtzeh Hashem*.' When he gets to that place, he should praise Hashem and say, '*B'ezras Hashem yisbarach* (with Hashem's help) I came here, and I plan to travel on day *ploni, b'ezras Hashem, im yirtzeh Hashem* (with Hashem's help, if Hashem desires it).' When one does so, Hashem's name will always be on his lips."³

3. In year 5685, the Chofetz Chaim informed his community in Radin that he was going to Eretz Yisrael. He was, in a sense, taking leave from his community. When he finished the *drashah*, one of the *baalabatim* came over and asked, "Why didn't you say '*im yirzeh Hashem*'?"

Motzei Shabbos, the Chofetz Chaim's *rebbeztin* fell ill, and they couldn't travel.

(This story was told by Reb Yechezkel Abramsky *zt'l*, who heard it from Reb Isser Zalman Melzer *zt'l*.)

A *chassid* once told the Rebbe of Kosov *zt'l* that he would be in Zlatipola for Shabbos. The Rebbe commented, "Do you really think you'll be in Zlatiploa?"

The *chassid* set out to Zlatipola but encountered many difficulties and obstacles and had to return to Kosov. The *chassid* asked the Rebbe, "If the Rebbe knew I wouldn't be in Zlatipola, why didn't

you tell me not to go?"

The Rebbe replied, "I wasn't sure you wouldn't get to Zlatipola. But I heard how certain you were that you'll be there, and you didn't even say *im yirtzeh Hashem*, so I wondered if you would succeed."

The Chida quotes the following story (Chadrei Beten; *sefer Eliyahu HaNavi*; Otzar HaMidrashim), which teaches the importance of always saying, "*im yirtzeh Hashem*."

There was a wealthy person who was generous with his money, and he helped the poor, but he thought he earned his wealth on his own.

One day, he was going to the marketplace to buy oxen. Eliyahu HaNavi appeared to him disguised as a merchant. [Apparently, although his emunah was lacking, due to his acts of chesed, he merited to see Eliyahu HaNavi, who came to teach him a lesson in emunah.]

Eliyahu asked, "Where are you going?"

"To buy oxen."

"Say that you are going to buy oxen, אם ירצה ה', 'if Hashem wills it.'"

"Why should I say that? I have money and am going to the market, so I will buy oxen. I don't need Hashem's help. If I didn't have money, I would say *im yirtzeh Hashem*. But I am wealthy and can buy the oxen on my own. "

The wealthy man continued to the market, not realizing that he had dropped his wallet. Eliyahu picked up the wallet and put it on a stone in the forest.

It took the merchant quite some time to find the oxen he wanted to buy. When he was ready to pay, he discovered that he had lost his wallet. He returned home disappointed and without a purchase.

Sometime later, he took money and set off to the marketplace. Once again, he met up with Eliyahu HaNavi. This time, Eliyahu appeared to him like an elderly person. Eliyahu asked him, "Where are you going?"

The Shlah Hakadosh's lesson is a practice to get accustomed to. We should say b'ezras Hashem and im yirtzeh Hashem with everything we do. Hashem's

The wealthy man said he was going to buy oxen. Eliyahu HaNavi told him, "You won't be able to buy oxen if it isn't Hashem's will. Say im yirtzeh Hashem!" But the man refused. He didn't think he needed Hashem's help to buy oxen.

Eliyahu caused the man to fall asleep, then took the man's money pouch and placed it on the stone in the forest, next to where the first bundle of money lay.

The man awoke, and when he saw the money was gone, he again went home disappointed.

At home, he thought over what had occurred and realized he was being punished because he didn't say im yirtzeh Hashem. He made a kabbalah that, from now on, he would say, im yirtzeh Hashem.

He set off to the market to buy oxen a third time. Before he reached the market, he met Eliyahu HaNavi. This time, Eliyahu appeared to him like a young lad seeking work. He spoke with the wealthy merchant, and when the lad heard that he was going to buy oxen, he said, "If you need help bringing the oxen home, you can hire me."

The wealthy man replied, "Im yirtzeh Hashem; if Hashem helps me and I buy oxen, I will hire you."

With almost no effort, the wealthy merchant found very good oxen at an excellent price. He hired the lad to help him bring the oxen back to his home. As they walked, the oxen suddenly ran into the forest. The merchant chased after them. The oxen stopped next to the stone with his money. The merchant praised Hashem joyously. The merchant and the lad arrived at his home, and then the lad suddenly disappeared. The merchant understood that this was Eliyahu HaNavi and that Hashem's hashgachah was involved in everything that occurred.

name should always be on our lips, and the awareness that we can't do anything without Hashem's aid should always be in our hearts.⁴

Working Hard

It states (8:4) *וזה מעשה המנרה* מוקשה זהב עד ירכה עד פרחה מוקשה הוא כמראה אשר הראה ה' את משה כן עשה את המנרה. This pasuk teaches how the menorah should be made, such as that all details of the menorah should be made from one piece of gold. We wonder why this pasuk is written in this week's parashah. This

parashah discusses lighting the menorah and not its construction. The details of how to build the menorah are discussed in parashas Teruma, so why is this pasuk written here, in parashas Behaloscha?

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* answers that the Torah wants us to know that the light of the menorah comes from hard work. The light of the menorah represents the light of spiritually one can experience when he is involved in Torah and avodas Hashem. The Torah tells us that this light can be

4. The parashah begins with the lighting of the menorah, *בהעלתך את הנרות*, "When you kindle the lamps..." The Gemara (Shabbos 22:) tells us that all seven lamps of the menorah were filled with the same amount of oil, yet one lamp, the *נר מערבי*, remained lit for several hours longer than the others lamps, and this occurred daily!

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 15:6) connects *בהעלתך את הנרות* to the pasuk (Tehillim 34:10) *יראו את ה' קדושו כי אין מחסור ליראיו*, "Fear Hashem, His holy ones; for there is no lack to those who fear Him." The Tiferes Shmuel *zt'l* explains that the connection between these pasukim is that they teach us that one can work less, and Hashem will support him. Just as the *נר מערבי* burned longer than the other lamps, so can one work less, and Hashem will support him equally to those who work longer hours.

attained when one works hard and invests all his efforts in *avodas Hashem*. This is because it states in the pasuk *מקשה זהב... מקשה* היא... Rashi explains that *מקשה* means hammered, since the menorah was made from one piece of gold and it was hammered into shape.

מקשה also can be translated as questions. Chazal (*Bamidbar Rabba* 15:10) say, *נתקשה משה במעשה המנורה*, "Moshe didn't understand how the menorah should be made..." He toiled to understand how the menorah should be made but didn't succeed. Hashem told Moshe to throw the block of gold into a fire, and the menorah came out, ready-made. As Rashi writes (8:4), *על ידי הקב"ה נעשית מעליה*, "The menorah was made by itself, by Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that Moshe's toil to understand the menorah brought out its light because the light of

avodas Hashem emerges from struggles and toil.

Therefore, we shouldn't be frightened by the toil we encounter in *avodas Hashem* because these hardships are the gateway to finding the unlimited pleasurable, spiritual light that is there.

There was a soldier in Czar Nicholai's army who would spend a lot of time in the bar. When his money ran out, he gave the bartender his weapons as collateral and said, "When I have money, I will pay you and take back my weapons." But for the meanwhile, the weapons were at the bar.

The problem arose when Czar Nicholai visited the army base to check on the soldiers. The soldier carried a large bag as though he had his weapon inside it. This wasn't conspicuous because many soldiers held their weapons in bags. Overall, the Czar was pleased with the order and discipline he saw in the camp, but then he called

over this soldier and asked him to open his bag. It was filled with straw. He was punished severely.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zy'a* repeated this story and asked how Czar Nicholai knew to suspect this soldier. Other soldiers were carrying their bags, but this soldier aroused his suspicion. Why?

The answer is that the Czar noticed the ease with which the soldier was carrying his bag. The exertion involved in carrying a heavy sack filled with ammunition was absent, which gave the secret away.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin said that we learn a lesson in avodas Hashem from this story. Avodas Hashem should be hard and require effort. If it is too easy, something is off.

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* writes that if you find avodas Hashem to be easy, that is a sign that you didn't accept the yoke of heaven. When one accepts the yoke of

heaven, he understands to daven with *kavanah*, to have good middos, not to think negative thoughts about others or about Hashem's *hashgachah*, and more. He will discover that avodas Hashem is hard. If it is easy, it is because he hasn't begun yet.

But this toil isn't bitter. This toil brings forth the light and the joy in avodas Hashem.

At the beginning of the *parashah*, Rashi writes, "Why does the *parashah* of the menorah follow the *parashah* of the *nesi'im*? When Aharon saw the *chanukas hanesi'im* (that the *nesi'im* donated *korbanos* to dedicate the Mishkan), he felt disappointed because he and his shevet didn't participate in this inauguration. Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him, חייך שלך גדולה משלהם "I swear, your portion is greater than theirs, שאתה מדליק ומיטיב את הנרות for you light and prepare the lamps [of the menorah]."

Rebbe Yitzchok of Vorke *zt'l* says that the key word here is חייה, literally meaning "Your life." HaKadosh Baruch Hu told Aharon, חייה, the fact that it is so important to you, as if your life was dependent on it, שלך גדולה משלהם, your portion is greater than theirs.⁵

This means Aharon HaKohen's approach to the mitzvah of lighting the menorah (and for all mitzvos he performed) was חייה, that his life depended upon it. That made his mitzvos so precious.

And this should be our approach to Torah and mitzvos. When learning Torah, it is wrong to take the approach, "If I

understand, it's good, and if I don't understand, it is also fine." And when it comes to mitzvah performance, it is also incorrect to say, "If I do the mitzvah, it's good, and if not, I am ok with that, too." Our approach to Torah and mitzvos should be חייה, with a feeling that our life depends on it. One should feel a great ache in his heart, "How can I not know this portion of Torah? How can I not perform the mitzvos?" This ache and yearning is precious to Hashem. And with this attitude, he should toil in Torah and avodas Hashem. With this approach, his avodah is precious to Hashem, and he will experience the immense joy and light of Hashem's service.⁶

5. In Yiddish, the phrase is מינייט דיר אין לעבן; you feel that your life is dependent on your success in this matter.

6. The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

There was a rav who had a fantastic son. In that city, there lived a poor man who hoped that his daughter would marry the rav's son. He sent several *shadchanim* to speak with the rav. The rav didn't take the suggestion seriously. He wanted his son to either

marry into a wealthy family or that the father should be a *talmid chacham*. This poor man lacked both qualities.

The simple, poor man didn't lose hope and kept sending *shadchanim*. Eventually, the matter was settled when the rav's son was engaged to someone else.

At the *chasunah*, the poor man sat at the head table.

His friends asked him why he was sitting there.

He replied, "I am almost the mechutan. I *tried* several times to be the rav's *mechutan*." His friends laughed at him because wanting doesn't make him a mechutan. The fact is that he wasn't chosen to be the mechutan.

Avodas Hashem, however, is an exception. In *avodas Hashem*, the most important part is to try. For trying itself one earns immense reward. As it states (*Tehillim* 105:3), *ישמח לב מבקשי ה'*, "May the hearts of those who seek Hashem rejoice." The goal is to be a *מבקש ה'*, to seek Hashem, to strive to do His service. That is considered success, even if you don't ultimately succeed.

The Ben Ish Chai (*Niflaim Maasecha* 124) told the following story:

"Tuvia the Judge" was revered and honored by many. All judicial matters of the country were settled according to his judgment. But he also had his share of enemies who tried to harm him.

Eventually, the king believed the slander of Tuvia's enemies, and he decided to fire Tuvyah and punish him for his alleged crimes.

Tuvia caught on to what was about to happen, so he put on civilian clothing and escaped. People saw Tuvia passing through the dark streets that night but didn't realize that he was the celebrated Tuvia, the most influential person in the country after the king just a few hours ago.

Tuvia left the city, traversed a desert, and reached a river. He stood there, contemplating: If he made it to the other side, he would be free, but how could he cross the river without a boat or raft? He didn't know how to swim. He knew that he didn't have much time to figure this out. Soon the king will discover that

Tuvia escaped and will pursue him. Tuvia stood on the riverside, at a loss of how to proceed.

Just then, a passing peasant recognized Tuvia, and Tuvia told him that he needed to cross the river. The villager was short and scrawny. Under regular circumstances, he wouldn't consider swimming across the river while carrying a tall, heavyset man like Tuvia. But the villager realized that this was his opportunity to find favor with this great judge. He said, "Honored judge, hang on to my back. I will swim with you across the river."

When they were three quarters across the river, Tuvia said, "If Hashem will be kind to me and I become the judge again, I will reward you immensely."

"You mean you're not the grand judge anymore?"

"That's right," Tuvia replied. "Corrupt people slandered me to the king and now I'm escaping judgment..."

The peasant dropped Tuvia in the water and said, "When you become judge, call me and I will pick you up," and the peasant swam back to shore alone.

People rebuked the peasant. "Since you brought Tuvia three quarters across the river, you should have brought him all the way."

The peasant replied, "I'm weak and feeble. I can't carry a heavy person like Tuvia. As long as I was imagining the great honor and wealth I would earn for helping Tuvia, I had strength. I almost didn't feel his weight. But when Tuvia told me that he was escaping and that he couldn't reward me, I suddenly felt his full weight and didn't have strength to bring him to shore..."

The Ben Ish Chai told this story to emphasize the need to be cautious with our speech because so many troubles result from unwarranted and bad speech. If only Tuvia had remained silent, his life would have been saved.

This story also demonstrates what one can achieve with intense desire. When one wants something very much, he finds the

A story is told about a lively child who didn't have patience to study Torah. The *melamed* brought the child to the Rav of the city and asked the Rav to influence the child to be more devoted and interested in learning Torah.

The Rav met the child and said, "I had a *din Torah* between a *sefer Torah* and a pair of shoes, and I want to hear your opinion. The shoes told the *sefer Torah*, "Why do we have such different fates? When the *sofer* finished making you, they placed a silver crown on your head and carried you to a *beis medresh* amidst dancing and joy. Whenever they take you out of the *aron kodesh*, people stand up for you and hug and kiss you. When you get worn out, you will have a *levayah* and be

buried with honor. But I'm just a pair of shoes. People don't respect me. They tread with me into the mud. I will be tossed into the trash when I'm worn out. Is it fair that we should have such opposite fates? I remember years ago when we both came from the skins of the same cow. Those days, we were raised in the same barn, ate the same fodder, and drank from the same trough. But a *sofer* bought you, turned your skins into parchment, and made you into a *sefer Torah*. At the same time, a shoemaker bought me and turned me into a pair of shoes. Why do we have such different fates? We used to be the same!"

The Rav asked the boy for his opinion.

strength that he generally doesn't have. Therefore, think about the reward you will get through *avodas Hashem*, the light and joy you will experience when you toil in *avodas Hashem*, and primarily, think about the *nachas ruach* you will create for Hashem, and you will be strong and accomplish things you generally can't do.

The boy sided with the shoes. It didn't seem fair.

The Rav said it is possible to make a pair of shoes in a couple of hours, but many hours of hard labor are needed to make a *sefer Torah*. A *sofer* writes letter after letter until the entire *sefer Torah* is finished.

Now, the boy agreed that the *sefer Torah* deserves more respect. So much toil was put into making it.

The Rav said, "My son, if you want people to honor and admire you, you must

toil diligently. You must put in a lot of effort. Otherwise, you will be like a pair of shoes with minimal value."

One of the *gedolim* of today told this story at a family *simchah* and said that he was that child in this story who didn't want to learn Torah. The Rav told him about the "*din Torah*" to teach him that the crown of Torah is acquired with effort and toil. After this discussion, he began putting his efforts into Torah study.⁷

Here is another mashal:

7. When a person makes a *brachah* on an esrog and lulav, the *pitom* is down. In Yiddish, this is called מיט די פֿיטום אראפ, which is also an expression used to express someone going through difficult times. But we make a *brachah* specifically when the *pitom* is down because the challenging moments are the most significant ones of our lives.

The Yidden in the desert complained (*Shemos* 16:3), מי יתן ... בשבתנו על, "If only... as we sat by the pot of meat, when we ate bread to satiety." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that they were reminiscing how it was in Mitzrayim, when they sat alongside the non-Jews who were cooking a pot of meat. They smelled and desired it, but they passed the test and didn't eat it because it wasn't kosher. They only ate the bread/*matzah*, which was kosher. That is a good experience they missed because they appreciated the value of tests.

A man won the lottery. He hired a wagon driver and arrived at the office to pick up the many bags of gold that he had won. As they were traveling home, the coachman pulled over to the side of the road to rest. Soon, they were both sound asleep. They awoke and continued on their way, but the wagon driver said, "We were robbed. The money isn't in the wagon anymore."

"How do you know without checking?" the winner asked. He said, "It seems that you stole the money because otherwise, how would you know it was stolen without checking?"

The wagon driver explained that he didn't steal the money. He has another sign to know that they were robbed. He explained:

"The horses are sprinting. If the gold coins were still on the wagon, the horses wouldn't be able to run like this. That's how I know we were robbed."

This parable reminds us that when things go smoothly, there is no wealth. When things are difficult, when we struggle in our avodas Hashem, that's when we carry and earn immense spiritual value.

It states (11:1) ויהי העם כמתאוננים, that the nation was complaining, and the miforshim give different opinions about what they were complaining about.

Rashi (11:1) explains that the Jewish nation said, "'Woe to us! We are going on this long journey for three days and haven't yet rested from the tiresome travels.' Hashem became angry and said, 'I intended for their good, so the nation should come to Eretz Yisrael immediately...'" Their sin was that they were complaining that they were traveling so quickly to Eretz Yisrael.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l asks: If Hashem wanted, Hashem could have brought them to Eretz Yisrael without

any hardship at all! (For example, He could have flown them to Eretz Yisrael on eagles' wings.) Why was this long and difficult journey necessary?

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* answers that some hardship was required. As Chazal (*Brachos* 5) tell us, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave three gifts to the Jewish nation, and each is acquired solely through *yesurim*. They are Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam HaBa." It is impossible

to acquire Eretz Yisrael without some hardship. The three difficult days of traveling were for their benefit because the hardships would grant them Eretz Yisrael. But the nation thought it was bad for them.

The lesson here is that to acquire Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam HaBa, there must be hardship. It is never an easy path. Don't be afraid when things get hard. Keep trying, and you will succeed.⁸

8. People asked the Ateres Yehoshua of Djikov *zt'l* why he had *parnassah*, while his father and grandfathers were all poor.

The Ateres Yehoshua answered with a *mashal*:

A poor person passed a theatre. There was a long line of people waiting to buy tickets.

"How much does a ticket cost?" he asked one of the people in line.

"A regular seat costs a hundred dollars. There are better seats that can cost up to three hundred dollars."

The poor man was shocked. "A hundred or three hundred dollars just to watch a show?! What's the show about?"

"It's about a poor man collecting money."

Now, the poor person was even more confused. He said, "I'm poor and I collect money all the time, and all I get is a few coins!"

The man explained that people aren't interested in watching this

Wanting Torah

This week's parashah has the two upside-down *סנו"ן* (see 10:35-36). Between them are two pasukim, words we say each day when we read the Torah. *ויהי בנסוע הארון... ובנוחה יאמר*. Rashi explains that these pasukim are surrounded by the two upside *סנו"ן* to indicate that this isn't the right place for the pasukim. So, why are they written here? To separate between the punishments. We don't want to mention aveiros and punishment near each other,

so we have these interrupting pasukim.

The problem is that we don't find a punishment or an aveirah in the pasukim before the *סנו"ן*. So what separation are these two pasukim (surrounded by the upside *סנו"ן*) accomplishing?

The Gemara (Shabbos 115.) answers that before the *סנו"ן*, it states (10:33) *ויסעו מזה ה' דרך שלשת ימים*, "They traveled a distance of three days from the mountain of Hashem."

The Gemara explains that we should read *ויסעו מזה*

in real life. They want to see an imaginary show, played by actors..."

With this *mashal* the Ateres Yehoshua explained to his chassidim, "My father and my grandfathers were true Rebbes, therefore they only received a small amount of money. But I'm an actor, copying what they did, therefore I get more money."

The Ateres Yehoshua said this with immense humility, but we can learn a lesson from it: Why do people pay money to watch actors? It's because the actors show talent, expertise, years of training, and hours of hard work. People value that and are willing to pay money to see it. But when something comes naturally, it loses its value in people's eyes. Hashem desires to see us doing deeds that require effort, talent, and willpower. That is what makes our good deeds precious in Hashem's eyes.

ויסעו מאחרי ה' as ה' traveled away from Hashem."

The Ramban says that it can be understood with a Midrash that says that ויסעו מהר ה' means that they were happy to leave Har Sinai, "like a student escaping from cheder."⁹ They were afraid to remain longer at Har Sinai because they feared that Hashem might give them more mitzvos, and that was their aveirah.

The Ramban writes, "It is possible that if it weren't for this aveirah, they would have entered Eretz Yisrael immediately."

So, their aveirah was that they didn't want more Torah. But we are teaching the opposite approach, that one should desire Torah and mitzvos. And even when it is hard, this isn't a problem. In fact, the hardships make

our avodas Hashem even more precious to Him.

Confrontations with the *Yetzer Hara*

It states (9:18-23) על פי ה' יסעו בני ישראל, Bnei Yisrael traveled by Hashem's command. When the ענני הכבוד (clouds of glory) gave the signal, they traveled.

ובהאריך הענן על המשכן ימים רבים ושמרו בני ישראל את משמרת ה' ולא יסעו, "When the cloud lingered over the Mishkan for many days, Bnei Yisrael kept the charge of Hashem and did not travel. ויש אשר יהיה הענן ימים מספר על המשכן על פי ה' יסעו, יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו, "Sometimes, the cloud remained for several days above the Mishkan; at Hashem's bidding they encamped and at Hashem's bidding they traveled.

ויש אשר יהיה הענן מערב עד בקר ונעלה הענן בבקר ונסעו או יומם ולילה ונסעו, "Sometimes the

9. Some explain that מהר can be translated as "quick," indicating they traveled quickly away from Har Sinai.

cloud remained from evening until morning, and when the cloud departed in the morning, they traveled. Or, the cloud remained for a day and a night, and when the cloud departed, they traveled.

או ימים או חדש או ימים בהאריך
הענן על המשכן לשכן עליו יחנו בני ישראל
ולא יסעו ובהעלתו יסעו "Whether it
was for two days, a month
or a year, that the cloud
lingered to hover over the
Mishkan, Bnei Yisrael would
encamp and not travel, and
when it departed, they
traveled.

"At Hashem's bidding they
would encamp, and at
Hashem's bidding they
would travel..."

What was the reason that
at some places, they stayed
for months and even years,
and at other places, they
were there for a week or a
month, and there were times
that they were at a location
for just a night or a day?

Reb Yitzchak of Volozhin
zt'l (son of Reb Chaim of Volozhin
zt'l) explains that the Jewish
nation traveled to forty-two
locations in the desert (as they
are counted in parashas Masai), and
each location represented
another yetzer hara that the
nation had to conquer.
When they conquered this
yetzer hara, they could
travel to the following
location.

For example, perhaps
one location was the origin
for the *yetzer hara* for anger,
another location roused the
yetzer hara for laziness, and
so on.

The Leshem zt'l (*Leshem
Shvo Va'achlamah* vol.2, *drush* 4:20:4)
elaborates, "It was extremely
hard for the Jewish nation
when they came to those
places in the desert because
they immediately felt the
yetzer hara's cloak of
darkness and they fell from
their *madreigos*, drastically.
They wanted to flee from
those places like someone
escaping from fire.

"After they were at the location for some time and they succeeded in purifying the region from the *yetzer hara*, they wanted to remain there [because the *yetzer hara* wasn't disturbing them anymore]. The Torah writes, על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו, 'They camped, and they traveled by Hashem's decree.' They didn't do what they wanted to do; they followed Hashem's will...'

The Leshem writes, "The Torah says, ובהאריך העץ, 'When the cloud was at a location for a long time...' They had to remain in that place for a long time because the *tumah* of that location was very strong, and they needed more time to purify that place from the *yetzer hara*. At those places, it was extremely hard for the Jewish nation [because they had to deal with a very strong *yetzer hara*]. They wanted to run away, nevertheless, ושמרו בני ישראל, 'Bnei Yisrael kept Hashem's decree, and they didn't travel.'

"There were places that the cloud stayed only מערב עד בקר, 'from nighttime until morning' and the reason is because those places weren't so impure. They wanted to stay there longer. Nevertheless, when the cloud left Ohel Moed in the morning, they traveled on."

New Every Day

The Torah testifies (8:3), ויעש כן אהרן אל מול פני המנורה העלה נרתיה, "Aharon did so... He lit the lamps." Rashi explains, להגיד שבחו של אהרן שלא שינה, "The *pasuk* is telling Aharon's praise that he didn't change."

Why is this praise? Of course, Aharon didn't change, and he did as Hashem commanded.

One translation of שינה is to repeat. So, להגיד שבחו של אהרן, שלא שינה, can mean, "To tell 'The *pasuk* is telling Aharon's praise that he didn't repeat.' Aharon HaKohen lit the menorah daily for forty years in the desert, but it was never dull for him. It never became a routine for

him. Each time he lit the menorah, it was like the first time in his mind and heart.

How did he do that, and what techniques can we adopt so that we can also perform all the mitzvos as though they were new?

One approach is imagination.

Rebbe Mendel Vitebsker zt'l would envision each Shabbos as if it were the first and the last Shabbos of his life. With this thought in mind, he utilized every Shabbos to its fullest extent.

And in a way, it is true. Each Shabbos is brand new. The holy sefarim explain that each tefillah, each mitzvah, and each day is a brand-new entity, and each accomplishes new things in heaven.¹⁰

Tzaddikim recognize Hashem's greatness, more and more each day, and that results in their avodas Hashem being different every day. Each day, their fear and love of Hashem, their clarity in emunah, reach higher levels, and therefore, automatically, they will serve Hashem in a brand-new way each day.¹¹

10. There are other thoughts that one can think to help him make the mitzvos "new" to him.

Tzaddikim of Karlin teach that when one davens, one should think that he was brought down from heaven for the opportunity to daven this one tefillah. With this in mind, he will undoubtedly daven properly.

11. Reb Sadyah Gaon zt'l was once a guest in someone's home. The host wasn't aware he was hosting one of the greatest people in his generation. He thought his guest was a regular person. When he learned he was hosting the gadol hador, he asked forgiveness for not honoring him properly. Reb Sadyah Gaon responded that he had honored him properly and that there was

We can also explain that each day Aharon had new intentions when he lit the menorah. We will give examples so the idea will be understood (although we don't know Aharon's lofty and profound intentions). One day, he may have intended that the menorah should shine the light of the Torah throughout

the world. Another day, he might have thought that the menorah should shine the light of teshuvah into the world, and so on. It was never the same, as Rashi writes להגיד שבהו של אהרן שלא שינה, he never repeated the same deed twice. Each day was different.¹²

no reason to apologize. The man replied, "Had I known who you were, I would have honored you much more!"

Reb Sadyah Gaon zt'l took from this episode an important lesson in avodas Hashem. Each day, he understood Hashem's greatness on a deeper level, and therefore, he did teshuvah every day. Although he honored Hashem yesterday, now that he comprehended Hashem's greatness even more, he realized that yesterday's avodah was insufficient. He would do teshuvah for his past lack of respect.

12. At the end of *parashas Naso*, the Torah lists the *korbanos* the *nesi'im* brought for the *chanukas hamizbeach*. Each *nasi* brought the same *korban* and the Torah repeats the same *korbanos* twelve times.

It would seem that the Torah could have written once the set of *korbanos* brought for *chanukas hamizbeach* and add that the other eleven *nesi'im* brought the same *korban*. Why does the Torah repeat the set of the *korbanos* for each *nasi*?

The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 7:2-5) answers (in his second explanation): "Each of the *nesi'im* thought to bring sacrifices for the *chanukas hamizbeach* and they all thought to bring the same amount, however, they differed in their reasons. Nachshon (the *nasi* of *shevet Yehudah*) thought to bring this amount for one reason, and similarly, each of the *nesi'im* had their own reasons." The Ramban gives examples of the

We are discussing a very high level, but it is something we should strive for. There are mitzvos that we do every day, and they become routine, and we must find ways to keep them new – either through imagination, improved awareness of Hashem's greatness, new intentions, or in some other way. We should always discover newness in our avodas Hashem.

It says in *Koheles* הבל הבלים הבל אמר קהלת הבל הבלים הכל הבל "Futility of futilities, says Koheles. Futilities, everything is foolishness" (*Koheles* 1:2). The Midrash states, "The seven הבלים that *Koheles* mentions correspond to the seven stages of a person's life. When a child is a year old, he is like a king sitting on a throne. Everyone hugs him and kisses him. When he turns two or three, he's like a pig that sticks its feet in the dirt. When he's ten, he

jumps like a goat. When he's twenty, he neighs like a horse...as he seeks to get married. After he's married, he's like a donkey [he must work hard like a donkey to bring home *parnassah*]. When he has children, he becomes aggressive like a dog to feed his family. When he's old, he is like a monkey. But that applies only to עמי הארץ, those who don't study Torah. But about Torah scholars, it states (*Koheles* 1:3) והמלך דוד זקן even when Dovid was old, he was a king."

The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* asks why the Midrash disgraces the elderly so much to call them monkeys. He answers that monkeys imitate others. When serving Hashem, one must be true to his personality, talents, and style. If he just copies what others do, he's like a monkey.

different reasons each nasi had for the same korban.

One shouldn't copy others, and he shouldn't copy himself, either. Instead, one should strive to make his avodas Hashem new each day.¹³

13. A person certainly shouldn't copy others because every person has their own path in avodas Hashem. It states (*Mishlei* 22:6), חנוך לנער, "Train the youth according to his way, so when he is old, he will not abandon it."

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* writes, "A person can't change how he was born. If a person was born with a bad nature, he has free will to use his tendencies to be either a *tzaddik*, a *rasha*, or a *בינוני*. As the Gemara teaches, 'A person born in the *mazal* of *maadim* has the nature of spilling blood... He will either be a *mohel*, a *shochet*, or a thief.' He has a compulsion to spill blood, but he has freedom of choice to choose to be a *tzaddik* and to use his tendency for a *mitzvah*, to be a *mohel*; or he can be a *בינוני*, a *shochet*; or he can choose to be a thief, someone who spills blood in its literal sense. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, חנוך לנער על פי דרכו, educate a child according to his way – in accordance with his *mazal* and nature. Accordingly, you should educate him to do *mitzvos*. If you do so, he will not leave this path when he is older. But if you steer him away from his nature, he will listen to you now because he is afraid of and obeys you. But later, when he isn't under your supervision, he will leave this path because it is impossible for one to change his nature."