

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Shelach



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Shelach

The Meraglim's Error

The Midrash states, "Even if a person is a rasha, if he trusts in Hashem, he will be enveloped in Hashem's kindness." The Midrash learns this from the pasuk (Tehillim 32:10) והבטח בד' חסד יסובבנו, "For the one who trusts in Hashem – Hashem's kindness will surround him." No conditions are given. He doesn't have to be a tzaddik. He doesn't have to be perfect. והבטח בד', if he trusts in Hashem, he will receive Hashem's kindness.

Reb Elchanan Wasserman zt'l expressed it this way: No one is perfect, as it states (Koheles 7:20) כי אדם אין צדיק בארץ ולא יחטא, "For there is no righteous man on earth who does good and sins not." If so, who can have bitachon? Who can feel worthy that Hashem will certainly help him? It must

be that bitachon is for everyone. Regardless of one's deeds, when he trusts in Hashem, he will receive Hashem's kindness.

Another source is (Tehillim 37:3) בטח בד' ועשה טוב, "Trust in Hashem and do good." The Ramban says, בטח בד' is written in this pasuk before ועשה טוב, because one can have bitachon before he begins to do good.

The Midrash (*Shochar Tov*, Tehillim 25) tells the following mashal:

The police arrested a foreigner. The foreigner told them, "Please! Don't hit me. I'm a member of the royal household."

The police accepted his plea and didn't harm him. But they kept him under guard all night and in the morning they brought him to the king. They said, "We

found someone from your household."

The king asked the foreigner, "My son, do you know me?"

"No. I don't."

"So why do you say you are from my household?"

He replied, "I beg you, I am not from your household, however, I trusted that you would help me, so please save me."

The king accepted his pleas and told the officers, "Since he trusted in me, let him go."

The Midrash talks that about this when Dovid HaMelech says (Tehillim 25:2), אלקי בך בטחתי, "Hashem I trusted in You. [I relied on You. Therefore, I request] אל יעלצו אויבי לי, that my enemies shouldn't rejoice over me [and harm me]." I placed myself in Your hands, I trusted in You, so You should help me.

We say in the piyut of Rosh Hashanah and Yom

Kippur, הטוב ומטיב לרעים ולטובים, that Hashem is good and does kindness to all, for the good people and for the bad people. This occurs even when they don't have bitachon! Hashem helps every creature, good or bad, deserving or undeserving. Hashem's kindness spreads to the entire world. Certainly, when one relies on Hashem, he will merit Hashem's compassion and kindness.

With this information, we begin to understand the root of the *meraglim's* error. The *meraglim* frightened the nation with their report of the mighty countries living in Eretz Canaan. The nation cried all night long. They were certain that they would be killed at war.

The *meraglim* said (13:) לא נוכל לעלות אל העם כי חזק הוא ממנו, "We are unable to go up [to Eretz Canaan]... for they are stronger than we." Rashi writes that חזק הוא ממנו means they thought that the nations living in Eretz Yisrael were stronger than Hashem, keviyachol.

But why were they so afraid? The Jewish nation had witnessed Hashem's strength not long before. They saw the ten makos, yetzias Mitzrayim, and Kriyas Yam Suf.

Sifsei Tzaddikim (from Rebbe Pinchas of Dinavitz zt'l) explains that the *meraglim's* error was that they thought that after they committed severe aveiros – the *egel* and other aveiros (*mislonanim*, see Bamidbar 11:1-4), Hashem won't perform miracles for them. From the *meraglim's* report, they knew that according to the rules of nature, it was impossible for them to conquer Eretz Canaan, and they didn't believe Hashem would perform miracles for them. But they were wrong. They could trust in Hashem, and Hashem would perform miracles for them.

Hashem's Love to Us

Another factor in the *meraglim's* error is that they lost sight of Hashem's love for us. They thought that after sinning with the *egel* and other aveiros, we lost Hashem's love, and He wouldn't perform miracles for us.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 36.) says, בין כך ובין כך אתם קרוים בנים, even after we sin, we are still called Hashem's beloved children. Aveiros don't destroy Hashem's everlasting love and bond with the Jewish nation. And due to Hashem's love, they should have known that He would bring them to Eretz Yisrael with great miracles, regardless of their past deeds.¹

1. Rashi (13:2) writes that Bnei Yisrael asked Moshe Rabbeinu to send spies. Moshe asked Hashem, and Hashem granted their request.

Sifsei Tzaddikim explains that Hashem *wanted* they should send spies. Hashem wanted the nation to know of the mighty giants

After hearing the meraglim's report, the nation cried bitterly, as it states (14:1) ותשא כל העדה את קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא, "The entire nation raised their voices and the nation wept that night." That night was Tisha b'Av. Hashem said, "You cried for no reason, בכיה של חנם, I will establish for you a reason to cry in all generations, בכיה לדורות" (Sotah 35.). This is the reason the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed on Tisha b'Av, and there is a בכיה לדורות, a reason to cry in all generations.

They cried because they thought that Hashem didn't love them and that He wanted them to die at war, r'l. As it states (Devarim 1:27) ותרגנו באהליכם ותאמרו בשנאת ה' הוציאנו מארץ מצרים לתת אתנו ביד האמרי להשמידנו, "You slandered

in your tents and said, 'Because of Hashem's hatred for us, did He take us out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorite to destroy us.'"

It was the false thought that Hashem didn't love them that caused them to cry. This resulted in Hashem saying, "You cried for no reason. Therefore, there will be a reason to cry in all generations." This false thought brought about the churban Beis HaMikdash, the root of galus. The belief that Hashem loves us unconditionally will result in the redemption.

The Toldos writes in the name of the Baal Shem Tov zt'l that the galus is so long because we don't say the brachah of אהבת עולם (before shema) at length. Which part

who live in the land so they would know that the conquest of the land is solely with miracles – a gift from Hashem – and not through the rules of nature.

We add that Hashem wanted the Yidden to discover the extent of His love for them, even after they commit aveiros. Hashem performed miracles for them even after they sinned with the egel.

of the brachah should we recite at length? Many assume that it is *והאר עינינו* *בהתורה*, where we plead for success in Torah, etc. But we can explain that most important is to say at length, and to concentrate, on the words *אהבת עולם אהבתנו* and *וקרבתנו מלכנו* and similar words that express Hashem's love to us. Thinking that Hashem hates us resulted in the Churban and the galus, so the realization that Hashem loves us will result in the geulah.²

The Best Life

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l has another explanation

of how the *meraglim* sinned. He explains that the *meraglim* thought it was better for the Jewish nation to live in the desert than to live in Eretz Yisrael. In the desert, they had Moshe Rabbeinu as their Rebbe; they had the manna and didn't have to work to earn a living. All the Jewish nation had to do was invest in studying the Torah and serving Hashem! This was an ideal situation; therefore, they spoke lashon hara and convinced the nation that it wasn't safe to enter Eretz Yisrael.³

However, they should have believed that only Hashem knows what's best

2. The Imrei Emes zt'l said, "If *בבית של חנם*, crying for no reason, resulted in *לדורות*, generations of crying, we understand that *שמחה של חנם*, when we are happy for no specific reason, just because we know that Hashem wants us to be happy, will result in *שמחה לדורות*, good times and happiness for generations."

3. We quote the Chidushei HaRim zt'l, "The *meraglim* had Klal Yisrael's benefit in mind. They observed that the Yidden in the desert lived an ideal, spiritual life. They learned Torah from Moshe Rabbeinu, ate *mon*, always had clothing, and had no disturbances. They were able to devote themselves to *avodas Hashem* fully. The *meraglim* figured it would be a pity for them to go to Eretz Yisrael

for the Jewish nation. And if Hashem desires to bring them into Eretz Yisrael, that is the best situation for them.

The Chidushei HaRim's grandson, the Sifsei Tzaddik (*Shelach*), writes, "I heard from my grandfather *zt'l*, that the *meraglim* were great *tzaddikim* who were *moser nefesh* for Klal Yisrael that they shouldn't fall from the

level they were on in the desert. They were successful because all these forty years the *Dor Hamidbar* didn't have to carry the burden of the materialistic world on their shoulders. Their only occupation was Torah and *avodah*. Their sin was that they thought of this idea on their own. They should have relied on Hashem and

because in Eretz Yisrael, they would have to work hard and till the land, which would distract them from *avodas Hashem*. They were *moser nefesh* for Klal Yisrael... and they succeeded. The Yidden remained in the desert for another forty years, and throughout that time, they had *parnassah* from heaven and were focused on *avodas Hashem*. But this wasn't Hashem's will. It is wrong to offer advice on how Hashem should lead the world. Hashem leads us in the very best way."

The Chidushei HaRim gave the following analogy: There was once a wealthy father-in-law who supported his son-in-law, a *talmid chacham*. As long as he supported him, the son-in-law was able to learn Torah without any disturbances. One day, the father-in-law informed his son-in-law that he was stopping to support him and that he should seek a way to support himself. Someone overheard the conversation and came to the father-in-law to convince him to continue supporting his son-in-law. He was concerned that his special son-in-law would learn less Torah without financial support.

That was the intention of the *meraglim*; to find a way for the Jewish nation to remain in Torah learning full-time. But it was a sin because that wasn't Hashem's will.

trusted in Hashem's *hashgachah*."

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* said, "There are those who want to daven and others who want to learn. But to want what Hashem wants, that's something else, entirely."

In the song *י"ה אכסוף* (Friday night *zemiros*) it states, *פתח להם נועם ורצון לפתוח שערי רצונך*. The Beis Avraham explained, "Give them the pleasure and desire to do *Your will*." Our goal should be to do what Hashem wants, not what we think is best.⁴

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* and Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l* were once in prison together. In their cell, there was a bucket meant to be used as a toilet. Rebbe Elimelech was very

upset because they couldn't even daven and learn Torah, as it is forbidden to learn Torah in a room with a stench.

His brother, Rebbe Zusha, asked, "Why are you upset? We desire to serve Hashem. Now we can do Hashem's will by refraining from learning and davening!"

They began to dance, happy to fulfill Hashem's will. The guard rushed to see why they were dancing. When he saw them dancing around the bucket, he said, "Oh, this is what you are so happy about," and he took the bucket away from them. Now, they were able to daven and learn, as well.

A Slonimer chasid had to be in America for Rosh

4. It states in this week's *parashah* (13:29), *עמלק יושב בארץ הנגב*, "Amalek dwells in the south." The south represents wisdom, as Chazal (*Bava Basra* 25:) state, "Whoever wants to be wise should pray towards the south." The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that Amalek dwelling in the south hints that Amalek uses wisdom but at the wrong times and places.

Hashanah and Yom Kippur. He wrote a letter to his Rebbe, the Birchas Avraham of Teveria zt'l, and expressed his immense *tzaar* that he was so far from the Rebbe during these holy days.

The Rebbe wrote back, "Hashem sets up a ladder for every Yid, with which he can climb up to reach high levels. Yosef's ladder, for example, was in Mitzrayim. From that dark place, he reached very high levels and is called Yosef HaTzaddik. Since you must be in America for the holy days, Hakadosh Baruch Hu certainly arranged a ladder for you there. The ladder reaches heaven. Therefore, accept your fate with love."

Accepting Life

As we explained, we must accept the avodas Hashem that Hashem chooses for us, and we must also accept the life circumstances that Hashem chooses for us because Hashem knows best.

It states (Devarim 18:13) תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, and Rashi explains, "Whatever happens to you, accept it with temimus." Temimus means to believe that Hashem leads us on the best path possible. If it would be better another way, Hashem would have guided us on the other path.

The Shem MiShmuel (5677) explains that the sin of the *meraglim* was that they didn't believe Hashem was leading them in the best way. But *temimus* is to trust that Hashem knows what is best for us, and we can rely on Hashem blindly.

The Shem Mishmuel teaches a tremendous benefit that is gained from believing that Hashem leads us in the best way. He writes in the name of his father, the Avnei Nezer zt'l, that with this temimus, Klal Yisrael can win wars against their enemies effortlessly. "The strength of the nations comes from a spark of holiness that gives them life. [It is known that everything can only live on a spark of

holiness; therefore, even our enemies have some sparks of holiness that they captured and utilize, which is their strength and life source.]

"If that spark leaves them, they will fall as dead corpses. This is the meaning of Rashi (Devarim 20:1), 'In your eyes, they are a large army, but in My eyes, they aren't many.'" This is because they don't really have any strength. It is all just a spark of holiness. Remove that spark, and they all fall.

Shem MiShmuel writes, "From this we learn that the wars of Bnei Yisrael are to take out the spark of holiness from the goyim, and then automatically, they will fall like stalks of wheat after the harvest. But we must understand, how does Bnei Yisrael remove this spark? The answer is that the spark of holiness desires to unite with kedushah like a needle is drawn after a magnet. This will only occur when Bnei Yisrael are worthy, and Hashem's presence resides

in them. Then the spark of holiness [that gives life to the goyim, our enemies] will automatically be drawn to the Jewish nation and become attached to them."

We have learned a new tactic in war. We don't need tanks or machine guns. We have to remove the spark of kedushah that gives them life and strength. But how do we do that?

Shem MiShmuel writes, "It seems that the best way to attain this is with temimus, as it states (Devarim 18:) תמים תהי' עם ה' אלקיך and Rashi writes that when you have temimus, you will be עם ה', with Hashem and you will be His portion." Hashem will be with them, due to their temimus, and then the spark of holiness of the goyim will come to them [like to a magnet], and the goyim, our enemies, will fall before Bnei Yisrael... And then, without any act of war...the nations will fall dead before them... They will fall by their own swords, one person by the sword of

his fellow man... But this will occur when they have *temimus*... and they will accept Hashem's will. Whatever Hashem desires to do should be desired and good in their eyes. And then, they have nothing to fear..."

So, the Shem MiShmuel's wonderful counsel at times of war is to have *temimus*. To believe that Hashem is leading us in the best way. It might not have been our original idea of what is good, but we believe that Hashem knows better, and the way Hashem leads us is certainly the best. And with that *emunah*, the *goyim* have no strength over us. They will fall due to their

own swords. They won't be able to harm us.⁵

"Ladders into Heaven"

Yet, another explanation for why the *meraglim* sinned is that they lost sight of Hashem's abilities. According to what they understood, there was no way they could win the war against the thirty-one nations living in Eretz Canaan. They forgot that Hashem has ways that are hidden.

The Rebbe of Piaseszna *zt'l*, in the Warsaw ghetto, taught, "A Yid must believe in Hashem's salvation, not only when he understands how it can happen. Even if

5. We wonder how the *meraglim* fell so drastically and sinned so severely. Initially, they were called *אנשים*, which means worthy and righteous (see *Rashi* 13:3). So what caused their great fall?

Rashi writes that when one has *temimus*, he becomes *עמו וחלקו*, "With Hashem; His portion." In contrast, we understand that when one doesn't have *temimus*, Hashem isn't with him. Without Hashem's aid, one is likely to sin. Hashem isn't with him to protect him from sin. The *meraglim* didn't have *temimus*, so Hashem wasn't with them, and therefore, they fell so quickly and drastically.

he has no plan and doesn't see any possibility, he still believes and trusts in Hashem's salvation.

"During these times [the Holocaust], it is probably better that one doesn't seek rational solutions on how to save himself because he probably won't find, and then he might fall from his *emunah*. And lacking *emunah* and *bitachon* may prevent the salvation from occurring, *chas veshalom*. Rather, one should say 'Although... there doesn't seem to be a solution... nevertheless, I believe Hashem will save me beyond the rules of nature.'"

He explains that this is what *Kalev* told the nation when he said (13:30), עלה נעלה, "We will go up to Eretz Yisrael and we will inherit it. We are capable of doing so." He said this to calm the nation when they were afraid to go to Eretz Canaan. But notice that *Kalev* didn't mention any strategy. He just said, "We are capable. We can

conquer the land." How did that calm the nation? Essentially, he told them, "We don't have to know how we will succeed in this war; Hashem has His ways. We just have to trust in Him."

And this is a lesson in *bitachon* for all our needs. We don't always understand how we will cover debts, find *shidduchim*, and countless other struggles in life, but we don't have to know how. We can trust in Hashem because Hashem has ways to resolve all our problems.

Rashi writes that *Kalev* told the nation, "Even if it is in heaven and Moshe tells us to make ladders to go up there, we will succeed with whatever he says." This sounds even more improbable. Who can climb a ladder up to the heavens?

The Rebbe of Piaseszna *zt'l* answers that *Kalev* said, "We can win the war against the giants. We can even climb up to the heavens if

that's Hashem's decree. If you ask me how that's possible, I also don't know. But we trust in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant. If Hashem tells us to conquer the land, we can do it."

Yetzer Hara - an Illusion

Kalev and Yehoshua told the nation that they don't have to be afraid of the nations living in Eretz Canaan because (14:7-9) **סר צלם** מעליהם, "Their shadow has left them."⁶

The Sfas Emes (5638) explains that a shadow appears real, but there is nothing there at all. Try to

touch it, but you can't. Shine some light on it, and it disappears. A shadow represents the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* comes up with many ideas, and at first, they seem so rational and true, but there is nothing to his claims. For example, this time, the *yetzer hara* devised a plan to frighten them. They were certain it was so dangerous to enter Eretz Canaan. But it was like a shadow, an imagination, an illusion.⁷

Kalev and Yehoshua said that they attained that realization and knew there was nothing to fear. **סר צלם**, they uncovered the shadow

6. Rashi explains that **סר צלם**, "their shadow has left them," means the tzaddik, whose merit was protecting them, had died. Rashi writes, "The righteous people of the land – their protector and strength – died. This refers to Iyov, whose merit protected them."

7. The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* called the *yetzer hara* a *dimyon*, an illusion. Another time, the Kotzker called the *yetzer hara* "a paper lion. Try ripping it up, and you'll see." It seems real, but there is nothing there.

One of the *malachim* in the *yetzer hara's* camp is called **דומה**. The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* (*Even HaEzer*, 232:10) explains that it is called so because the essence of the *yetzer hara* is *dimyon*, an illusion.

and revealed that there was nothing to take seriously.

The Sfas Emes ⁽⁵⁶³⁸⁾ elaborates, "The *yetzer hara*'s strength is merely an illusion, like a shadow with no substance. Someone who battles with the *yetzer hara* properly will see that it's nothing more than a mirage. The *meraglim*'s test was certainly a great test, but after Yehoshua and Kalev uncovered that it was just a shadow, as they said סר צלם... the other *meraglim* should have believed them and strengthened themselves with trust in Hashem. [They should have taken Yehoshua and Kalev's conclusion seriously and recognized that there was nothing to fear.] But they remained stuck with their first impression and they were

therefore punished. Similarly, when we see tzaddikim overcoming the *yetzer hara*, we must [learn from them to] be strong and believe that the *yetzer hara* is just a shadow. With *emunah* and reliance on tzaddikim, one can overcome the *yetzer hara*."⁸

In this week's parashah, the nation was afraid to go up to Eretz Canaan. They cried, they protested, and they were certain that if they went up to Eretz Canaan, they would be killed by the nations living in the land. As it states (14:1-3) ולמה ה' מביא אתנו אל הארץ הזאת לנפל בחרב נשינו וטפנו יהיו לבז, "Why does Hashem bring us to this land to fall by the sword; our wives and children will be as spoils."

8. People carry heavy financial burdens or other worries. Their situation seems unbearable. But there are tzaddikim who see the truth, that it's all just a shadow, an illusion, and they strengthen themselves with *bitachon* and trust that Hashem will help. We should emulate them and know that our fears aren't real; they are just there to test us. When we realize that, we can overcome all challenges.

The next morning, some people had a change of heart. They were ready to go to Eretz Canaan. (14:40) וישכמו בבקר ויעלו אל ראש ההר לאמר הננו ועלינו אל המקום אשר אמר ה' כי "They arose early in the morning and ascended to the mountain top, saying, 'We are ready to go up to the place of which Hashem spoke, for we have sinned.'"

Moshe warned them that they won't succeed. Moshe said, למה זה אתם עברים את פי ה' והוא "Why do you transgress Hashem's word? It will not succeed."

Despite Moshe's warning, ויעלו לעלות אל ראש ההר

defiantly ascended to the mountain top..."

Suddenly, they weren't afraid. They were ready to go to Eretz Canaan, even after Moshe warned them not to go. What happened to their fear?

The answer is that the yetzer hara wins over us by making us imagine things. When they should have had *bitachon*, the yetzer hara incited them to be afraid to go to Eretz Canaan. Afterwards, when it was an aveirah to go to Eretz Yisrael, the yetzer hara placed in their hearts that there was nothing to fear.⁹

9. In the past, Cossacks were tall, large, and frightening; at least, that is how they appeared. Once, a Cossack was captured, and the captors called all their friends to see the captive. They removed the Cossack's large high-heeled boots and removed his many layers of coats, and now the Cossack appeared small and scrawny, nothing to fear. The yetzer hara makes avodas Hashem appear frightening, but it is an allusion; there is nothing to fear.

Offer a thousand dollars to whoever walks over a wooden beam on the ground, and many people will succeed and won't fall off. Now place the same beam very high, crossing between two tall buildings, offer a million dollars for the same stunt, and no one will take you up on the offer.

Since the *yetzer hara* is a *dimyon*, an illusion, it's helpful to push off acting upon the *yetzer hara*'s whims, even if just for a short while, as the person might come to the realization that it's just an imagination and not worth pursuing.

Therefore, the Torah says (13:30) וַיִּהְיֶה כָּלֵב אֶת הָעָם, "Kalev silenced the nation" and he encouraged the nation to believe they could conquer Eretz Canaan.

It doesn't seem that Kalev accomplished anything at that time. The *meraglim* and the nation were still afraid. But the pause was important because when one stops in the middle of pursuing his imagination, there's a possibility that he'll catch himself and realize that it's all a mistake.

Self-Image

We wrote above that the Jewish nation thought that Hashem didn't love them due to their aveiros, and therefore, they were afraid to enter Eretz Yisrael. This is an example of when one has a false *dimyon*, imagination, that prevents him from serving Hashem. We have to know the truth of how precious we are to Hashem at all times.

It states (Tehillim 119:59) חֲשַׁבְתִּי דְרָכַי וְאָשִׁיבָה רַגְלִי אֶל עֲדוּתֶיךָ, "I considered my ways and returned my feet to Your Torah."

The Beis Aharon explains that חֲשַׁבְתִּי דְרָכַי means that he should consider his deeds to be *ואָשִׁיבָה רַגְלִי*, important, *חֲשׁוּב*, and then he will be able to return his *רגילות*, his standard routine and habits, *אֶל עֲדוּתֶיךָ*, to keep the Torah. He will

But why? Everyone could walk over the beam while it was on the ground. No one fell off. What changed?

The answer is that when it is high in the air, they imagine falling off, and these frightful thoughts can cause what is feared to occur.

be able to leave his bad habits and change his ways because he considers all of his deeds special. But if he doesn't value himself and his ways, he won't be able to change his ways.

We quote the Beis Aharon:

"Even if a person is at a very low level, he should consider everything he does for avodas Hashem to be very important. He must believe that every good deed he does will go up very high. With this perception, he can change his *regilus* and his life patterns. חשבתי דרכי ואשיבה רגלי אל עדותיך, when your deeds are חשוב in your eyes, then ואשיבה רגלי, you can change your רגילות and change your life patterns to serve Hashem."

The Beis Aharon teaches that, therefore, a person should daven that Hashem should help him forget all the foolish things he did in the past. Then he will be able to consider himself and his ways special before

Hashem, and then he can change his ways.

Chazal say, כל מה שאומר לך, בעל הבית עשה חוץ מצא, "Whatever the baal habayis (host) tells you to do, you must do, except if he tells you to leave."

The Shlah teaches: The baal habayis is Hashem, the baal habayis of the world. You must listen to all His dictates, except when He tells you צא, to leave, that you can't do teshuvah. You must believe that no matter what you did in the past, you can do teshuvah.

The Gemara says, "Don't believe in yourself until the day you die." It seems that on the day one dies, he may believe in himself.

The Sfas Emes zt'l says that "the day one dies" means the days one falls from his levels (It isn't referring to the day that one literally dies; rather, it means the day that one falls from his levels). On the days that one falls from his levels, he must believe in himself. He must

think about his greatness and specialness because that will help him overcome the yetzer hara.

Yosef HaTzaddik used this tactic when he was tested by *aishes* Potiphar. He said to her (Bereishis 39:9) אֲנִי גָדוֹל בְּבֵית הַזֶּה מִמֶּנִּי, "There is no one greater in this house than I." It is explained that he was building up his ego to believe in his greatness because that is how one can overcome his challenges.¹⁰

It states (Rashi Bamidbar 1:49) כְּדֹא הוּא לִגְיוֹן שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ לְהִיּוֹת נִמְנָה לְבָדּוּ, referring to Levi not being counted together with all Yidden. They were counted separately because "It is proper that the King's close servants should be counted

separately." What made the Levi'im so precious and special? It is because they didn't sin by the *eigel*.

However, for the most part, Klal Yisrael also didn't sin! All in all, only three thousand people made the *eigel*. Out of 600,000 Yidden (and more), three thousand people are a tiny percentage. So, what makes Levi so special?

The Sfas Emes answers that it is because Moshe called out (Shemos 32:26) מִי לֵה' אֵלַי, and Levi came forward. The ability to pick oneself up after falling is what makes him precious in Hashem's eyes.

10. The Ruzhiner zt'l explains that at times one must think that he is great to overcome the yetzer hara, and at times he must think that he is small so that he will be humble. He must react according to the situation. This is alluded to in the words (Bereishis 4:7, 12) הָלוֹא, אִם תִּשְׂכַּח שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תִשְׂכַּח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ, "If you think you are good, you can fall into the trap of gaavah, but if you think you aren't good, that can lead to sin." Therefore, the solution is נֶע וְנִד תְּהִיָּה בְּאֶרֶץ, pivot between these two thoughts. There are times for humility and times for pride.

What Others Think

The *meraglim* told Klal Yisrael about the giants who lived in Eretz Canaan. They said (13:33), וַנְּהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים, “We felt like grasshoppers, וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְעֵינֵיהֶם, and that is how they perceived us.”

The Midrash states, “Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgave them for saying ‘We felt like grasshoppers,’ but Hashem didn’t forgive them for saying וַנְּהִי בְעֵינֵיהֶם, ‘that’s how they perceived us.’ Hakadosh Baruch Hu told them, ‘How do you know which impression I had them think of you? Perhaps they thought you are angels?’”

This is a crucial lesson. Many people have a low self-image and think everyone looks down on them. Other people’s opinions are very important to them, and when others think negatively of them, it hurts them immensely. But one never knows what others are thinking. Perhaps Hashem put into the hearts

of others to look up to you and to consider you special. Maybe they even think you are like a *malach*. Why do you think so poorly of yourself?

Thinking good about yourself is essential because this will encourage you to act in a proper way. If you think lowly of yourself, you will likely fall to sin and bad *middos*.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that the negative image of the people in the desert was their primary sin, which caused them to sin with the *meraglim*. Therefore, Moshe told the *meraglim*, וְהִתְחַזְקֶתֶם, “strengthen yourselves...” Moshe understood that they have negative self-esteem, and they have to strengthen themselves and think better of themselves.

The Sfas Emes (תר”מ) asks that the Gemara (*Sotah* 35.) states that the *meraglim* heard the Canaanites say, “We see people; they look like ants, crawling in the

vineyards.” It seems that it wasn’t only the *meraglim*’s imagination. They actually heard the Canaanites looking down at them, thinking of them like insects.

The Sfas Emes answers that the problem began with their negative self-perception. This influenced others to look at them. “Since they were small in their own eyes, and they consider themselves like grasshoppers, this caused others to see them that way.”

This happens often. The way one views himself is what he portrays to others. Since they considered themselves small, this caused others to see them as small.

Had they believed in themselves, the Canaanites would have respected them more. Perhaps they would even consider them like *malachim*. But they looked down at themselves, which is how others viewed them, too.¹¹

11. Rashi (*Bereishis* 32:6) writes, “[Yaakov Avinu said] Although I lived with Lavan, I didn’t learn from his bad ways.” The following Rashi begins, ויהי לי שור וחמור, I had oxen and donkeys...”

Someone told the Brisker Rav zt”l: How did Yaakov live with Lavan for twenty years without being influenced by his evil ways? It’s because he considered Lavan and his friends as though they were שור וחמור, animals, and not people worth emulating.

The Brisker Rav praised the *vort*. He said that although this isn’t Rashi’s intention, the idea is true and correct. When one is among bad influences, it is helpful to recognize that with their bad ways, they are acting like animals, not human beings, and there is no reason to emulate them.

Reb Mordechai Chaim of Slonim zt”l was walking through Tel Aviv, dressed in the traditional Yerushalmi garb. Someone asked him, “Aren’t you embarrassed to walk the streets dressed like that?”

Hashgachah Pratis

Rashi at the beginning of the parashah translates (13:2) לך, לדעתך, to mean שלך לך, that if you want to send spies, send. It isn't an obligation.

Yet, the following pasuk states (13:3) וישלח אתם משה ממדבר יה, פארן על פי ה', "Moshe sent forth [the meraglim]... at Hashem's command." This seems to imply that Hashem commanded them to send meraglim. So which is it? Were they obligated to send meraglim, or was it their choice?

In the answer lies a great foundation in emunah and hashgachah pratis. They weren't obligated to send meraglim. They had free choice whether or not to send them. But they chose to send the meraglim. Now, we have to believe that this was Hashem's plan. So, in a way, they were obligated to send meraglim.

To explain, we quote the Meor Einayim (V'eschanan):

"A Yid must believe with everything he does, whether it is with gashmiyos, his work for parnassah and other gashmiyos pursuits, or in regards to ruchniyos, his avodas Hashem, he must believe that the idea that came to his mind before he did that deed was sent to him from heaven to direct him so he should succeed and earn money. Because it was Hashem's will at that time that it should be so [that he should succeed in that business venture]. Or the opposite, chas v'shalom. When Hashem wants to bring him to a loss, Hashem places in his heart an idea and a desire to do a deed that would result in a loss..."

So, although a person has free choice, it is Hashem who places thoughts and ideas into one's mind, and everything is from Hashem.

He replied, "And if I walk into a barn, should I dress like a cow?"

The Meor Einayim teaches this lesson from the pasuk (Devarim 8:18) וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא נתן לך כח לעשות חיל, "You shall remember Hashem, your G-d: that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth."

Onkelos writes, ארי הוא יהב, "Hashem gave you the counsel to buy property...." Onkelos translates עצה as counsel. He is explaining that the success came from Hashem because Hashem put into his mind what to do and what to buy.

The Yesod HaAvodah zt'l teaches this lesson from this week's parashah (15:39), וזכרת את כל מצות ה'. He translates כל מצות ה' to mean that everything is Hashem's command. Remember that everything that occurs, even when the person himself decided it, was from Hashem.

We are granted free will. Each person can choose which cheder to send his child to, the doctor he wants

to use for refuah, which parnassah he should work in, and various other details, but he must believe that what he does is Hashem's will. He made his decision because that is the decision Hashem wanted him to make.

Therefore, the idea of sending the meraglim was their own choice, but it was what Hashem wanted and commanded. The two statements aren't a contradiction. Before one does something, he is granted free choice, but after he makes the decision, he has to know that the choice was destined from above, and it wasn't really up to him.

Chazal say רשעים מלאים חרטה that resha'im always regret their actions. Reb Pinchas Koritzer zt'l asks that if they regret their actions, they aren't resha'im!

He answers that this means they are always second-guessing themselves. The rasha asks himself,

"Why did I make this mistake? Why wasn't I wiser?" It isn't proper to think so because one must believe that what occurred, and even his decisions, were Hashem's plan.

One week, at shalosh seudos, the Be'er Mayim Chaim went up to heaven and saw many neshamos protesting in heaven. These neshamos had to return to this world as a gilgul, and the neshamos begged not to be sent back to the world. They explained that they feared they would return to this world and sin again, so what would they gain from coming down to this world as a gilgul? They will need to return again and again many times. What is the purpose?

The court in heaven told them that the judgment has become easier nowadays, and they shouldn't be afraid to come down to the world. Heaven explained that in our generation, every good deed makes a great impression in heaven.

Additionally, in our times, the main thing is to have emunah. If you have emunah, you passed the test of life.

And what does emunah mean? It means never to say, *איך וואלט*, "I should have..." Don't say, "If only I did this..." or, "If only I didn't make that error..." Believe that what occurred was Hashem's will. If you can go through the world with this emunah, you have passed the test of life, and your neshamos will be rectified.

Their Rectification

Their punishment was (14:35) *במדבר הזה יתמו ושם ימותו*, "In this desert, they will perish, and they will die there."

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (תורת משה ד"ה במדבר) explains that *יָתֵמוּ* hints that they would return to their *temimus*, their perfection, and that will rectify their sin.

He explains that in *sefer Devarim* (9:2), Moshe

announced to the nation the great powerful nations that live in Eretz Canaan, but this time, it didn't frighten them. Moshe told them, עם גדול ורם בני ענקים, "A large nation...the children of giants..." but they weren't afraid.

The Chasam Sofer explains, "Moshe wasn't concerned they would be frightened and that they won't want to go into Eretz Yisrael because by that time Moshe was already their leader for forty years, which is when students perceive the lessons of their teacher (as Rashi writes *Devarim* 29:3). And when one understands Moshe's teachings and he understands the holiness of Eretz Yisrael and the holiness of each Yid's *neshamah*, he is *moser nefesh* and gives away all his money even just to see Eretz Yisrael.

"The generation of the *meraglim* didn't attain that perception yet. Therefore,

they said, לו מתנו במצרים או במדבר, הוזה, 'If only we would die in Egypt or in this desert.' Dying in the desert wasn't a punishment for them because that is what they requested: לו מתנו, 'If only we could die in the desert.' Each person lived until he was sixty, and by that time, they attained their *sheleimus*, *temimus*, and perfection. At that age, they perceived the holiness of Eretz Yisrael, and they had immense distress knowing that they would die in the desert and not go up to Eretz Yisrael. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, במדבר הזה יתמו, you will live in this desert until you attain *temimus* and perfection, and you will perceive the holiness of Eretz Yisrael, ושם, and after you attain perfection, ימותו, you will die, and you will be upset that you are dying [before going into Eretz Yisrael]. Their regret will be their punishment, and thereby they will merit Olam HaBa."

The Preciousness of Time

It states (14:34), במספר הימים אשר תרתם את הארץ, ארבעים יום יום, “For the number of days you spied the land – forty days – a day for a year, a day for a year.” The *meraglim* scouted Eretz Yisrael for forty days. Therefore, the nation was punished by remaining in the desert for forty years. Their punishment was that for each day, they were punished for a year.

The comparison between a day and a year is also seen in the following Gemara (*Chagigah* 5:), which states, “Whoever sins even just one day a year, it is as though he sinned the entire year.”

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches:

Based on the principle that reward is 500 times greater than punishment,¹² if

one serves Hashem just one day a year, it is considered that he served Hashem for five hundred years!

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 94:) states that the distance between heaven and earth is a five-hundred-year walk. With this information, the Chasam Sofer explains the *pasuk*, למען ירבו ימיכם... כימי השמים, על הארץ, “So your life will increase... like heaven is above earth.” Because for serving Hashem even just one day, it will be like he served Hashem for five hundred years, the number of years that heaven is above the earth.

If he serves Hashem for another day, it will accumulate as though he served Hashem one thousand years, and so on. The reward will definitely be in Olam HaBa because the six thousand years of this world are too few to bestow this

12. Chazal say, מדה טובה מרובה על מדת פרעניות חמש מאות פעמים, “The attribute of kindness is five hundred times stronger than the attribute of punishment.”

large reward that is due for him.

When we think about these concepts, we grasp the preciousness of time. Even for just a few moments of serving Hashem, how much we will gain from it! So we should look forward to each day because it carries so much potential!

Early one morning, the Rebbe of Radoshitz *zt'l* said, "A special guest arrived today, it's his first visit, and he won't be here again, so I want to honor him properly. The guest is Today. It came today, and it will never come back..."¹³

Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* compared time to a travel

13. Someone was waiting for a train at a Swiss train station. The train arrived, but he didn't board it. His friend asked him, "Why don't you board the train?"

The man replied, "This train is uncomfortable. The next train is luxurious. Every passenger gets their own table and a bed to sleep in... I'm waiting for that train."

"But that train won't be here for many hours..."

He replied, "That's ok. It's worth the wait."

The train finally arrived, and he boarded it with joy. He enjoyed a good meal at the table. Then, exhausted (partly due to his waiting in the sun for so long), he lay down and slept for several hours. When he awoke, he realized he had boarded the wrong train and had traveled in the wrong direction!

It was too late to take a train home. It was almost Shabbos. He didn't even have Shabbos clothes to wear! He had to seek a place to stay for Shabbos.

This happened because he was focused on physical pleasures and not on what was truly important, such as the direction the train was headed.

When a person's primary focus is on attaining pleasures in this

bag. If one packs his bag neatly, there is plenty of room for all his belongings. But if he throws the items in without folding them and without order, after just a few items are put into the bag, there isn't room for much else.

Time is similar. If one is cautious and orderly with

his time, he will see that there is a lot of time in the day. But those who aren't careful with their time can't find time for anything.

A student asked Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* how to set up his schedule for learning Torah. Reb Shlomo Zalman advised him to set aside time each

world, he will lose sight of the primary purpose for which he was sent to this world, which is to engage in Torah study and mitzvos.

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* tells the following *mashal*:

Two wealthy people were forever arguing over which one was wealthier. This was important to them because the wealthiest person had the final say in the city. They debated this for years and had many disputes on this topic.

One day, they decided to test it, once and for all. They would both throw coins into the ocean, one coin at a time. Whoever stops first means that he has less money since it is hard for him to lose so many coins. The one who would continue throwing in coins is unquestionably wealthier.

After a while, one of them stopped. He didn't want to lose all his money. The other one was still throwing in coins. It seemed he had so much money he didn't mind losing all these coins. Everyone was stunned by his immense wealth.

Later it was discovered that he threw in counterfeit coins. That's why he didn't mind throwing them all into the ocean.

The *nimshal* is that when one throws away time, it is a sign he considers time like counterfeit, of little value, and therefore doesn't mind wasting it.

day to review everything he had studied until then. The student told Reb Shlomo Zalman he didn't have time for that.

Reb Shlomo Zalman had a bar-mitzvah present on his table. It was a wrapped *sefer*, bound with a rubber band. Reb Shlomo Zalman took off the rubber band and showed him how small it became, compared to when it was stretched around the *sefer*. Reb Shlomo Zalman explained to him that this represents time. It seems short. But if one stretches it, one can find that he has plenty of time to do everything he needs to.

In *Parashas Bechukosai*, it states the rewards for keeping the mitzvos. One of the rewards is (*Vayikra* 26:9), וּפְנִיתִי אֵלֵיכֶם. Rashi explains, אֶפְנֶה מִכָּל עֲסָקִי לְשֵׁלֶם שְׂכָרְכֶם, "I will turn away from all my work so I can pay you your reward."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that וּפְנִיתִי comes from the word פָּנִי, which

means ample, extra time. The *brachah* is that the tzaddikim are granted ample time to accomplish a lot in *avodas Hashem*.

The Chidushei HaRim would often repeat this translation, for it is indeed the greatest gift to have enough time to do everything one needs to do.

In the *tochachah* (curses), it also states (*Vayikra* 26:17), וְנָתַתִּי פָנִי בָכֶם. According to the Chidushei HaRim's explanation, that פָּנִי means extra time, why does Hashem grant sinners ample time? The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* answers that having time is a blessing for those who use it well and a curse for those who use time unwisely and for sin.

Some have the custom of giving a gold watch as a gift to a *chasan*. This is to remind the *chasan* that time is precious like gold.

The Lev Simchah *zy'a* added that the gold watch is only the wrapping of time. The wrapping is always less

valuable than what it holds. gold, it shows that time is
If the wrapping is made of far more valuable.¹⁴

14. Reb Zalman Brizel (of Yerushalayim) spent a night in Bnei Brak, at his son, Reb Nota's, house. Reb Zalman was studying Torah diligently.

"Father, it's late," Reb Nota told his father. "You can finish your studies tomorrow."

Reb Zalman didn't respond. He just kept on learning.

The son kept trying a couple more times, but each time, Reb Zalman just continued learning. He finished learning around midnight. Reb Nota was then in the kitchen, eating a late supper. Reb Zalman said to his son, "Nota, it's late. You can finish your meal tomorrow."

The message was understood. There are some important things that one just doesn't push off for tomorrow.