

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Re'eh



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Re'eh

Hashem's Children

We have the great privilege to be Hashem's children, as it states (14:1) בנים לה' אלקיכם, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d." One might think that collectively, we are Hashem's children. The Alshich HaKodesh therefore explains that Hashem considers each Yid, individually, as His beloved child. This is a great honor, so great that it is hard to grasp its magnitude.

Even when we transgress the Torah, chalilah, Hashem views us as His children. This is Reb Meir's view in the Gemara (Kiddushin 36.) Reb Yehudah says that we are

only called Hashem's children when we act correctly, but the Rashba (*teshuvah* 194) writes that the halachah is like Reb Meir. Regardless of how we act, we are always Hashem's children.¹

It states, בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגדדו ולא תשימו קרחה בין עיניכם למת, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d. You shall neither cut nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead." Ibn Ezra writes, "Now that you know you are Hashem's children, and you know yourselves that Hashem loves you more than a father loves his son, do not injure yourself when

1. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l said that this is alluded to in the word אתם (in the pasuk בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם), which the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25. regarding *kiddush Levanah*) says אתם means even when you make a mistake or err deliberately. So, בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם implies that in all situations, you are Hashem's children.

something upsetting occurs because everything is for the good. Although we don't always understand how it is for the good, we trust that Hashem, our Father only does what's best for us. This can be compared to a child

who doesn't understand his parents' ways but relies on them. That's how you should be with your *emunah* in Hashem." One should trust that Hashem is leading us in the best way, as a father would lead his children.²

2. The Minchas Yitzchak (Gaavad of the Eidah HaChareidis, Yerushalayim) related what happened to him during the holocaust (written in Kuntress Pirsumei Nisa, end of Shut Minchas Yitzchak 1).

Year 7504, he lived in Arad, Romania. After a lot of effort, his brother's son secured for him and some other people tickets on a ship called מפקודות that was sailing from Bucharest to Eretz Yisrael. The Minchas Yitzchak and the group hoped that this route would save them from the Nazis, ym's.

They rode by truck from Arad to Bucharest. That leg of the journey was perilous because they would be traveling through areas swarming with Nazis.

In the middle of the way, the truck encountered engine trouble and stalled. To their dismay, everyone had to leave the truck. The group stood at the side of the road for an entire day in the sight of the passing officers and soldiers. Miraculously, the soldiers didn't harm them. When they finally reached Bucharest, they heard that the ship had already left - they arrived too late.

It is impossible to describe their great disappointment and despair at that moment. All their planning hopes, and the tremendous risks they took led to nothing, seemingly due to a faulty truck engine.

Later, they found out that the ship they were supposed to board was blown up by a Nazi mine. All passengers perished, hy'd. But their group, who didn't reach the boat in time, survived and reached Eretz Yisrael.

Like the Love of a Father to His Son

Reb Eliezer Eichler zt'l, Rav of the Boyan yeshiva in the United States, tells the following story. Before that, he was the Rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Tosh, in the Tosh neighborhood of Montreal.

There was a bachur in the Tosher yeshiva that wasn't acting properly, to put it mildly, and his bad behavior was steadily deteriorating. The Rabbaim of the yeshiva gathered to decide how to deal with him. Unanimously, they agreed that they had no choice but to expel the bachur from the yeshiva. They knew that the Tosher Rebbe was against sending a bachur out of the yeshiva, but they felt an exception had to be made this time.

How could this bachur remain in the yeshiva?

The Rosh yeshiva came to the Rebbe and told him what was happening and that the Rabbaim unanimously decided to send the bachur out of the yeshiva.

The Rebbe listened to everything the Rosh Yeshiva said but didn't respond. The Rosh Yeshiva asked, "And what does the Rebbe say?"

The Rebbe replied, "If the story you tell me was about my son, Elimelech'l,³ I would tell you that you can't send him out of the yeshiva. What can I do? I feel that this bachur is my Elimelech'l. How can I agree with you to send him out?"

The Rosh yeshiva says, "I left the Rebbe's room and

They then discovered that the broken truck, which they thought was a terrible tzarah, was their salvation. Let us learn from this story that whenever we think we see a problem, it is really disguised good.

3. Rebbe Elimelech Shlita is the present Tosher Rebbe.

immediately called the bachur to tell him everything that occurred. I told him about the yeshiva's staff meeting and conclusion, and I told him, "The Rebbe basically agreed with us that you should be sent out, but he said that you are special to him like his Elimelech'l, and he can't agree to have you sent out of the yeshiva."

This conversation changed the bachur. In a moment, he became a new person. If the Rebbe loves and respects him like his own precious son, Elimelech'l, and doesn't want to see his faults, then he should improve his ways and be worthy of this praise.

Every Yid is Hashem's precious child, and therefore Hashem doesn't want to think about our faults. It states (Bamidbar 23:21) **לֹא הִבִּיט אֶון** (לא הביט און), **בִּיעֵקֵב... ה' אֵלֵקֵינוּ עִמּוֹ וְתִרְוַעַת מִלֵּךְ בּוֹ...** (ביעקב... ה' אלקינו עמו ותרועת מלך בו...), "He doesn't look at the sins of Yaakov... Hashem His G-d is with him, and he has the King's friendship." When we know this, we will improve our ways. We will

see to it that we make ourselves worthy of Hashem's praise.

אני is **roshei teivos** **לדודי ודודי לי**, "I am my Beloved's, and my beloved is mine." This means there is immense love between Hashem and the Jewish nation, especially in the month of Elul, and this love spurs us to do teshuvah.

Distribute Your Wealth

This week's parashah discusses the mitzvah of tzedakah. **כִּי יִהְיֶה בְךָ (15:7-11) אֶבְיוֹן... לֹא תִאֲמָץ אֶת לִבְךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת יָדְךָ מֵאֶחֶיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן, כִּי פֶתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת יָדְךָ** (כי יהיה בך אביון... לא תאמץ את לבך ולא תקפץ את ידך מאחיד האביון, כי פתח תפתח את ידך), "If there will be among you a needy person...you shall not harden your heart, and you shall not close your hand from your needy brother. Rather, you shall open your hand to him..."

Giving tzedakah is based on the awareness that we are Hashem's children. The Gemara (Bava Basra 10.) tells us that Turnes Rufus the Rasha said to Reb Akiva, "You will go to Gehinom for giving

tzedakah, and I will explain why with a mashal: A king got angry at his slave, so he put him in jail and commanded that no one give him food or drink. If someone disobeys the king by giving him sustenance, won't he be punished?"

Reb Akiva replied, "I will answer you with a mashal: A king got angry at his son and put him in jail. He commanded that no one is to give his son food or drink. Someone disobeyed the decree and gave the son food and drink. When the king heard about it, he gave the man a present for doing so. We are Hashem's children, as it states **בנים אתם** **לד' אלקיכם**."

The premise of giving tzedakah is based on the fact that we are Hashem's children. Even when Hashem punishes someone by making him poor, He wants and hopes that others will have compassion and help him.

The Gemara (Bava Basra 131:) states that if a father writes in a document that all his money and possessions should go to only one of his sons, we don't assume this to mean literally that only one son should receive his wealth because why would he do so? He loves all his children. Why would he want to give one child and let the others suffer in poverty? We understand that the father meant that all children should receive an equal portion of his wealth, and the son he mentioned should be the manager (the *apitropus*) over his money.

The Chida (Pnei Dovid, Re'eh) *zt'l* learns from this a lesson in tzedakah. We are all Hashem's children. In fact, as the Alshich tells us, every Yid, individually, is Hashem's child. Is it logical that Hashem would want some of His children to be wealthy and some to suffer poverty? It is clear that Hashem gave more money to some because He wanted them to be *apitropsim*, money

managers, but they must distribute the funds among Hashem's children.

The previous Skulener Rebbe zt'l gave a mashal: At a chasunah, a waiter comes by and places a tray full of meat next to one person at the guest table. No one thinks that the entire tray was intended only for him. Everyone understands that it was intended for all those seated at the table. The same occurs when one person is blessed with wealth. Hashem intends for him to share his good fortune with others.

This can explain why the Torah writes in double *lashon* (15:10) נתן תתן לו "Give you shall give him." It is

written this way to imply that Hashem *gave* to you so you can *give* to others. ולא ירע, לבבך, "your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him," because the money was given to you to distribute to others. Why should you feel bad when you give tzedakah? It was never meant to be your money. A person doesn't really deserve a reward for giving tzedakah. All he did was allocate the money to where it was destined. Nevertheless, the Torah promises, כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך ובכל משלח ידך, "For this Hashem your G-d will bless you in all your work and all your endeavors."⁴

4. A very wealthy person didn't have time to speak to all the poor people and fundraisers who came to solicit him, so he hired a gabbai tzedakah to distribute money for him. The wealthy person gave his gabbai tzedakah basic guidelines on how much to give to each type of cause, and the gabbai loyally fulfilled his job.

The wealthy man had a soft spot for orphans and was particularly generous in supporting them. Once, fundraisers for an orphanage approached the gabbai tzedakah, and he gave them a very generous sum.

A few months later, the gabbai tzedakah received a call from the orphanage. They informed him they were doing a fundraising dinner and wanted the gabbai to be their guest of honor. The gabbai protested, "It isn't me. I just write the checks. It's my employer who deserves the honor."

So the heads of the orphanage called the wealthy donor to invite him to be the guest of honor at their dinner in recognition of his generosity. The wealthy donor replied, "I don't deserve the honor either. I am also just a gabbai tzedakah. Hashem gave me the money to distribute to those in need."

A poor man from Kerestir complained to Rebbe Shayale Kerestirer *zt'l* about his poverty. Reb Shayale advised him to start a new business. He did so, and in a short time, he became very wealthy. A year later, he returned to Rebbe Shayeale. This time he complained that his friends, family, and even strangers kept coming to him to ask for money, and they bother him at all times of the day. They all wanted his money.

The Rebbe explained to him that when Heaven gives someone money, he becomes an *apitropus*, a custodian over the money, and his role is to distribute the money to others. The Rebbe said, "I see you aren't a loyal *apitropus* because you aren't distributing the money as it was intended. Therefore, we will find someone else to be wealthy, someone more suitable for the job." The wealthy man became terrified, realizing he was about to lose his wealth.

The Rebbe said, "We will make a *gorel* to decide who will be the next wealthy person of Kerestir. If you do *teshuvah* and commit to helping the poor, you will win the lottery..."

They made the *gorel*, and his name came up in the *gorel*!

The Ben Ish Chai tells about a donkey decorated with beautiful roses. When it went through the street, everyone came near it to smell the wonderful scent of the roses. At nighttime, the donkey returned to its barn and told its friends about the honor it received. The donkey told his friends, "Everyone was so excited to see me. They oohed and aahed and ran to me as I walked through the streets."

Kind Words

Many phrases that discuss tzedakah are written in double. For example, (14:22) עֶשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר, (15:8) פְּתוּחַ תִּפְתָּח אֶת יָדְךָ, (15:10) נָתַן תִּתֵּן, and the reward is also doubled as it states (15:4) כִּי בָרַךְ יִבְרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ. The Kli Yakar (14:22) writes, "All phrases about tzedakah are doubled because one gives charity with his hand and he says kind words [to the poor] with his mouth."

The Gemara (Bava Basra 9:) states, הַנּוֹתֵן פְּרוּמָה לְעַנִּי מִתְבָּרַךְ בִּשְׁשׁ בְּרוּכוֹת וְהַמֵּפִיִּסוֹ בְּדַבְרִים מִתְבָּרַךְ בִּ"א "One who gives a

prutah to the poor receives six brachos, and if he says kind words to appease him, he is blessed with eleven brachos." (Tosfos explains that if he does both, he gives tzedakah and says kind words, he will receive eighteen brachos.)

The Rambam (Matnas Aniym 10:4-5) writes, "Whoever gives tzedakah with a sad face, he looks down to the ground, even if he gave him a thousand gold coins, he lost his reward. Rather, give money with a kind face and with joy and moan together with him over his *tzaar*, as it states (Iyov 30:25) אִם לֹא בִּנְיִיתִי לִקְשָׁה

The next day, the donkey carried a load of garbage on his back. Everyone kept their distance from it.

The nimshal is that people honor the wealthy or those in influential positions, but the rich should know it isn't about them. The honor is due to what they are carrying.

The Noam Elimelech (Devarim) writes, "The Poskim say that the Avos didn't keep the mitzvah of tzedakah with perfection because there were no Yidden around them to give tzedakah. [They could only give tzedakah to goyim.] When a person gives tzedakah, he can reach even higher levels and accomplish all salvations [because he gave tzedakah to Yidden]. Through tzedakah, he can arouse immense compassion Above, without needing to come onto the merit of the Avos..."

יום עגמה נפשי לאביון 'Whether I did not weep for one who had a difficult time, or whether my soul was [not] grieved for the needy.' Speak with him words of comfort and chizuk, as it states (Iyov 29:13) וּלְב אֶלְמָנָה אֲרִנָּה, 'I would make the widow's heart sing for joy.' If a poor person asks from you, and you have nothing to give him, appease him with your words. It is forbidden to shout at the poor or to raise your voice at him because his heart is broken and humble. It states (Tehillim 51:19) לֵב נִשְׁבֵּר וְנִדְכָּה אֱלֵקִים, 'A broken and crushed heart, Hashem will not despise.' And it states (Yeshayah 57:15) לְהַחְיֹת רוּחַ שְׁפִלִים, 'to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed.' Woe to the person

who shames the poor. Woe is to him. Rather, be like his father, both with compassion and with words, as it states (Iyov 29:16) אֲב אֹנִי לְאִבְיוֹנִים, 'I was a father to the needy.'"⁵

It states, (15:11) כִּי לֹא יִחְדַּל אֲבִיוֹן מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ עַל כֵּן אֹנִי מִצֹּד לֵאמֹר פֶּתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת יָדְךָ לְאִחִיךָ לְעִנִּיךָ וּלְאִבְיֶיךָ בָּאָרֶץ, "For there will never cease to be needy within the land. Therefore, I command you, saying, you shall surely open your hand to your brother, the poor, and the needy in your land." Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zt'l says that the pasuk can be read as עַל כֵּן אֹנִי מִצֹּד לֵאמֹר פֶּתַח תִּפְתָּח, as follows, "אֹנִי מִצֹּד לֵאמֹר, I command you to tell the poor, פֶּתַח תִּפְתָּח the day will yet come when you will be the one who is opening up your hand to help the poor.""⁶

5. The Bas Ayin zt'l brings in the name of the Kedushas Levi zt'l that אֶחָד stands for אֶחָדִיל, to be the brother of the poor; to feel that you are his brother, and do whatever you can to help him.

6. The Matteh Efraim zt'l was very wealthy and owned a bank. Once, a poor person came to the bank and asked for a large loan. The Matteh Efraim gave him a form to fill out and told him he would need two co-signers, *areivim*, to guarantee the loan. The

The Chinuch (mitzvah 479) writes, "Now, my son, don't think tzedakah is only to give to the poor, people who

don't have bread or clothing. The Torah wants us to be kind and help people in any way we can. Whoever helps

poor person couldn't find *areivim* because people feared that he wouldn't be able to repay the loan. So, the poor man wrote on the line designated for the *areivim*, *לִי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב נֹאמֵר ה' צְבָקוֹת*, "I have silver and I have gold, says Hashem..." implying that Hashem would guarantee the loan.

The Matteh Efraim had *rachmanus* on him and lent him the money.

Half a year later, the Matteh Efraim wasn't feeling well, so he asked his wife to run the bank that day. That night, the Matteh Efraim and his Rebbetzin were discussing what happened in the bank that day, and she told him that she lent money to a *poritz*. The Matteh Efraim asked, "How did you have money to lend? There wasn't any money left in the bank!"

She replied, "Someone came in the morning and repaid a debt."

He checked his records and remembered that the poor man's debt was due that day. The Matteh Efraim asked his wife, "Did the poor man pay up the debt himself, or did someone come in to pay on his behalf?"

She answered that someone had come and paid the debt on his behalf.

The Matteh Efraim understood that Hashem sent Eliyahu HaNavi to repay the loan. Hashem was the *areiv*, so He sent Eliyahu HaNavi to repay it. The Matteh Efraim thought, "Why did I not merit to see Eliyahu HaNavi?"

He understood it was because he initially asked the poor man to provide *areivim*. "I should have lent him the money immediately without bothering him to find *areivim*. I knew how hard it would be for him to find *areivim*" Since he caused him distress, he didn't merit to see Eliyahu.

his friend with money or in any other way, such as with kind words, is considered to have given tzedakah, and his reward is great."

The Chinuch reveals a wonderful *chiddush*: Tzedakah isn't just with money, and it isn't only for the poor. You can give tzedakah by sharing kind words, compliments, good counsel, and even a smile can be counted as tzedakah. Tzedakah means to help your fellow man in any way you can.

A hint to this lesson is that the pasuk that discusses tzedakah states *הדבר*, which can be translated as *דיבור*, speech. It states (15:10) *נתון תתן* "You shall surely give him [tzedakah]... *כי בגלל הדבר* *הזה* for because of your *דיבור*,

יברך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשך ובכל משלה ידך, Hashem your G-d will bless you in all your work and all your endeavors." The brachos from giving tzedakah aren't only when we give money. It is also when we share kind, helpful, friendly words with our fellow man. Many people are missing this, and to give it to them is like giving them tzedakah.⁷

The Shevet Mussar writes that he once spent a long time speaking to a broken-hearted person to give him hope and *chizuk*. A few days later, the man told him that if it weren't for that conversation, he would have committed suicide. The conversation saved him. Therefore, Shevet Mussar encourages everyone to be generous with their words

7. Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Deiah 253:4) says that when a wealthy man travels without money, he has the halachah of a poor person and may receive financial support from tzedakah. So, we see that it is possible for a wealthy person to be considered poor when he needs something and doesn't have a way to attain it. We can take this further to other needs, such as a kind word. If someone lacks it, and we give it to him, it is a form of tzedakah.

and give chizuk to broken-hearted people. He calls it "tzedakah that doesn't cost money."

Reb Gad'l Eisner said, "I studied the sugyah of 'man' in-depth, and discovered that one kind word could turn a person around. Everything can be fixed."

There are many lonely people, and with some kind words, we can help them so much. This is also a form of tzedakah.⁸ In Parashas Eikev (10:19), it states, וְאַהַבְתֶּם אֶת הָגֵר, which discusses the mitzvah to love *geirim*- converts. The

Chinuch (431) innovates that this mitzvah also means to help and befriend anyone who feels like a stranger, such as someone in a new neighborhood. He writes, "We derive from this precious mitzvah to have compassion on a person in a city that isn't his homeland and whose family doesn't live there. The Torah gives us a hint for the reason this command was given because it states כִּי גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. The Torah reminds us that we once experienced the great distress of being alone, among strangers, in a foreign land. When we remember

8. As we know, it is very painful when people speak lashon hara about you. No one wants to be the topic of town. But there is something even more painful than that - when no one speaks to or about you, and you feel abandoned and alone. This is a very painful experience. Many people prefer to be talked about, even negatively, rather than ignored as if they don't exist.

Chazal say מצורע חשוב כמת, a metzora is considered dead. This is because the metzora is banished from the camp and dwells alone. (Vayikra 13:46) בְּדֵד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבוֹ, "He shall dwell isolated. His dwelling shall be outside the camp." He lives alone, distant from people, and that loneliness is very painful.

There are so many lonely people, and with a smile and a kind word, you can make their day and much more than that!

that feeling, we can also have compassion on others."⁹

Giving Encouragement

Recently (this year, on erev Shabbos Korach), one of the great teachers of Klal Yisrael was niftar, Reb Shaya Greenbaum zt'l. He wrote the famous set of sefarim "Siyata d'Shmaya" on Chumash and Mishnayos, which are studied by tens of thousands, and he gave thousands of shiurim. He attributed all his spiritual successes to a friend of his youth, Reb Yisrael Falkowitz Shlita. Sixty-four years ago, Reb Yisrael Falkowitz gave him chizuk and encouragement, which was needed then. This story wasn't known until recently. In the year 5781, Reb Yisrael Falkowitz was in the hospital, sick with Covid and with much yesurim. Reb Shmaya Greenbaum called him on the phone to

perform the mitzvah of bikur cholim. (As many will remember, during COVID-19, it was forbidden to visit patients with contagious COVID-19, so bikur cholim was performed over the phone.) Reb Shmaya told him that he recently was also hospitalized in the same hospital with Covid, and he had recovered and returned home. Reb Shmaya gave him many brachos for refuah and success, conveyed from the depths of his heart and with much love. Reb Shmaya's children overheard this conversation and felt something was out of the ordinary. They asked him how he knows Reb Yisrael Falkowitz, and why he feels so close to him. Reb Shmaya replied, "I attribute all my successes in life, all my sefarim, and all my shiurim, to Reb Yisrael Falkowitz. I owe him lots of hakaras hatov. Everything I have is from him."

9. Elul is the month that young bachurim enter yeshiva. It is a mitzvah for the veteran students to welcome them and to make them feel wanted and at home.

It was hard for the children to get the story out from their father, who had kept it a secret for so many years, but they eventually managed to do so.

Sixty-four years ago, in the year תש"כ, a bar mitzvah was a very significant celebration because it was a sign of the continuation of Klal Yisrael after the destruction of the Holocaust. At the bar mitzvah, the parents would remember the family they left behind in Europe, and they found solace with the young child who was carrying the torch forward. Bar mitzvahs were held in a hall, the bar mitzvah bachur prepared a "pshetel" (dvar Torah), all the bar mitzvah bachurim's friends came and sang songs with the bar mitzvah bachur and they would buy him a present.

Reb Shmaya Greenbaum and Reb Yisrael Falkowitz learned in the same class in the Satmar cheder. Twenty other children were in the class, and their Rebbe was

Reb Yonah Glauber. All the students participated in the great joy and celebration of their friends' and classmates' bar mitzvahs.

But there was one bachur who didn't come to the bar mitzvahs of his friends. His name was Shmaya Greenbaum he had arrived from France. He was a great *masmid*. Even during recess, he studied Torah; he didn't play much with his friends. At night, he would study again. He quickly became the top of his class in Torah, but he didn't have a connection with his classmates. And when there was a bar mitzvah celebration for one of his classmates, he didn't participate. He said it was *bitul* Torah for him to go.

His friends didn't appreciate his behavior. "Why doesn't he come to our bar mitzvahs?" they wondered. (Very possibly, their resentment and anger with Shmaya were influenced by their jealousy of Shmaya's success in his studies.)

The boys decided that no one would participate when Shmaya's bar mitzvah was celebrated. They will give him a taste of his own medicine. They also won't buy a present for him. However, one classmate, Yisrael Falkowitz, protested. He felt very strongly that it was wrong to embarrass a bar mitzvah bachur just because he was a *masmid* and a *yerei Shamayim*. He spoke to all his friends and convinced them not to proceed with their plan. They bought a small *shas* for him to give him as a gift, and they all came to the bar mitzvah. The *simchah* was great, and Shmaya was very happy at his bar mitzvah. His face shone with joy.

Years passed and everyone had already forgotten the episode.

One day, Reb Yisrael Falkowitz came to Reb Yonah Greenbaum's store. Reb Yonah was the father of Reb Shmaya Greenbaum. When Reb Yonah Greenbaum realized that

Yisrael Falkowitz had entered his store, he immediately remembered what this man had done for his son years earlier. He said, "It is in your merit that I have a son, a *talmid chacham*." Reb Yisrael didn't understand what he meant, so Reb Yonah explained, "My son overheard that his classmates weren't planning on coming to his bar mitzvah, and he was very hurt. He asked himself, "Is this the reward for studying Torah? Because of my *hasmadah*, my friends will ignore me, and I will be the only boy in the class without friends?" Due to these thoughts, he almost concluded... (that he should abandon everything).

"But then you came to the bar mitzvah with your classmates, and his eyes lit up. He was so happy. This gave him great *chizuk*. He would have been devastated if you hadn't come. This gave him the push he needed to continue studying Torah with *hasmadah*. And due to

his special intellectual abilities, he became one of the great and renowned teachers of Torah."

Reb Yonah Greenbaum said this before the sefarim *Siyata d'Shmaya* were printed and studied by thousands. All this success is due to the kind deed of Reb Yisrael Falkowitz.

Just think what would have happened if Yisrael Falkowitz hadn't spoken up in *Shmaya's* honor. How great a loss for Klal Yisrael that would have been!

And who knows how many potentially great *gedolei Torah* were stopped in their tracks suddenly because their friends disgraced them?

The main thing is to rectify the future. Be aware that thousands of young children, *bachurim*, and *yungerleit*, are in the midst of their growth. They can become great *Rabanim*, *ovdei Hashem*, teachers of Torah, *roshei yeshivos*, wealthy

baalei tzedakah, people who are active for the community's needs, and so on. But they are at significant risk because a foolish thought or act of some young friends can stop all of this. Therefore, let us remind our children and students how careful they must be with their words. How much the generation can lose because of an unkind word or gesture.

And, in contrast, ...החיים ביד הלשון, speech can give life. We can accomplish so much with a kind word. It builds the future for all of *Bnei Yisrael*. All the good deeds that people will do in the future will be attributed to the merits of this person who encouraged them when it was needed.

Misjudging and Imaginations

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimon ch.45, remez 152) states, "Bilaam was the wisest person among the *goyim*, but he couldn't stand up to the

rebuke of his donkey. Bilaam's donkey said to Bilaam (Bamidbar 22:30) **ההסכן** **הסכנתי לעשות לך כה ואמר לא** "Have I accustomed to do this to you [to stop in the middle of the way]," and [Bilaam] answered, "no."

What rebuke was said here?

Reb Avraham Pam zt'l (rosh yeshiva Torah Vodaas) answers that the donkey said, "I haven't acted this way to you in the past, so you should have understood that there is a valid reason. Why did you hit me?"

The lesson is that if your friend behaves improperly with you and doesn't generally act that way, don't embarrass him. Don't get angry with him. Find out the reason he is acting this way. Perhaps he is going through a hard time. Now is the time to have compassion and understand what he is going through. You shouldn't rebuke and humiliate him.

And many times, you think that he harmed you, but it is just an imagination. Many machlokes are based on misunderstandings. The Satan doesn't forgo the opportunity to turn "a nothing" into a major issue.

Someone is angry that he wasn't invited to his neighbor's chasunah. This alone can cause a major rift and distance between people. But perhaps it wasn't intentional. Maybe the neighbor forgot, or possibly the neighbor sent the invitation, but it got lost in the mail. Might these "nothings" become significant disputes—all due to misunderstandings and judging the situation wrongly?

People tell a story about a person who needed money. He was walking to his friend's home to ask for a loan. As he walked, he told himself, "He probably won't lend me the money. I think he will give me nothing."

And then he thinks, "How do you know that he won't give me the loan? Maybe he will?" But the first thought is more strongly implanted in his mind. He thinks that his friend probably won't lend him the money. He keeps thinking about it until he is certain of it.

And now he is angry. He tells himself, "I helped him so many times. Why doesn't he want to help me? What did I do to him that he should treat me this way?"

He thinks these thoughts as he continues on his way to his friend's home to ask for a loan. He is now burning with rage. He knocks on his friend's door. When the friend answers the door, he says, "I don't want your help. Don't lend me the money, I don't care. I don't want to know you anymore." He slams the door shut.

The friend has no idea what he is talking about or why he is so angry.

This story is a mashal, but cases like this happen so often. People imagine bad things about their fellow man until they think it is the reality, but it is just an imagination. And if you don't stop yourself from realizing that it is just an imagination, the machlokes can grow and take root.

Keeping Silent during Machlokes

Reb Noson Gestetner zt'l said in the name of the Chazon Ish zt'l, "There are two things that one never regrets doing: (1) Learning Torah, (2) Being silent." You will never regret learning Torah. The time you spend learning Torah is among the best moments of your life. And you will also never regret being silent. As one wise person said, "Before I speak, I rule over the words. After I speak, the words rule over me." Many machlokes are avoided and prevented by being silent.

By the machlokes of Korach, Korach had 250 heads of the Sanhedrin with him. These great scholars sided with Korach and supported him. They claimed that Korach was right for making the machlokes. So, how could a regular person living at that time know who was right and who was wrong? Was Moshe right or was it Korach?

A gadol once replied that the test is simple and easy. You stand on the side and see who is silent. By every machlokes, the one who is quiet is the one who is correct. This rule is so true, even simple people should know it. And following this test, they would know that משה אמת ותורתו אמת, Moshe was correct, and Korach was wrong, because Moshe was the one who was silent by this machlokes. A hint to this concept is in the Gemara (Kiddushin 71:) "The silent people in Bavel are the ones who have good *yichus*."

It states in Avos (1:16-17) עשה לך רב והסתלק מן הספק, "Choose a Rav for yourself and avoid doubts." This can be translated to mean that one should not have any doubts who is the Rav, who are the true tzaddikim. A person might ask, "But I don't have *ruach hakodesh*, how can I know who are the true tzaddikim?" To answer this, the next Mishnah states, אמר ר' שמעון, כל ימי גדלותי בין החכמים, ולא מצאתי לגוף טוב יותר משתיקה, "My entire life I was raised among chachamim, and I didn't find goodness for the body more than silence." He was saying that if you want to know who the true tzaddikim are, check and see who is silent by a machlokes. They are the righteous ones. They are the true tzaddikim whom Hashem chose to lead the nation.

Once, someone came to Reb Naftali Amsterdam zt'l and told him that his *shalom bayis* had dissolved, but due to the circumstances, he wasn't able to divorce his

wife. Therefore, he asked Reb Naftali Amsterdam to sign on the document of היתר מאה רבנים, the leniency of one hundred rabbanim.¹⁰

As this man spoke with Reb Naftali, he began saying lashon hara about his wife. Reb Naftali said, "People are so funny. They seek a היתר מאה רבנים, to permit something that isn't forbidden from the Torah. (It isn't a Torah prohibition to marry another wife, it is a *cherem*.) But lashon hara is forbidden from the Torah, and people speak lashon hara freely, without seeking any היתר, permission." People think everything is permitted when it comes to machlokes and lashon hara. Fortunate are those who train themselves to be silent. They

don't answer back, and they don't speak lashon hara behind other people's backs. This will solve and remove many machlokes.

Elul

The Zohar calls Rosh Hashanah- היום. This parashah – parashas Re'eh begins with the words ראה, אנכי נותן לפניכם היום, which can be translated as, "See that I am giving you days before Rosh Hashanah (לפניכם היום), so you can prepare yourselves on these days for the judgment of Rosh Hashanah. This alludes to the month of Elul when we prepare ourselves with teshuvah and tefillah to merit good judgment for the new year.¹¹

10. There is a cherem of Rabbeinu Gershom that a person shouldn't marry two women, although the Torah permits it. Under very specific circumstances, when one can't divorce his wife, with a היתר מאה רבנים, one hundred rabbanim ruling that he may marry another woman, it becomes permitted.

11. The Baal HaTurim points out that the final letters of (11:27) את תור, indicating that if you want to do teshuvah, begin by studying Torah.

When a person presses the brakes, the car doesn't stop instantly. The wheels gradually slow down until the car stops. But if someone pulls the emergency hand brake, the vehicle will stop short immediately and abruptly.

There are times when teshuvah is compared to someone pressing on the brakes of a car. This alludes to the gradual approach to change, where a person gradually stops his past ways and improves his ways. This is the standard path for teshuvah. But there are times when one should make an immediate change. Rosh Chodesh Elul is such a time. Although change is generally done gradually, step-by-step, Elul is a time to make an abrupt change

and improve one's ways. About this, it states (Yeshayah 55:7) יֵעֹבֵד רָשָׁע דְּרָכָו וְאִישׁ אֶון מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ "The wicked shall give up his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and he shall return to Hashem."¹²

It is Never Too Late to Do Teshuvah

Avraham Avinu had his bris milah when he was ninety-nine years old. Masechta Geirim (4:3) says that this was so those interested in converting to Yiddishkeit shouldn't refrain from converting even later on in their lives. If Avraham would have had his milah when he was twenty, people above twenty would think that it is too late for them to convert. But he had his milah at ninety-nine, so they

12. A tightrope walker said that the most challenging part of his stunt wasn't crossing the rope. The hardest part was turning around when he reached the rope's end. Turning around is always the most challenging part. The same is true regarding teshuvah. One must change his path, which is the hardest thing for a person to do.

realize there is always time to convert.

The same applies to teshuvah. You can be later in life, but it isn't too late to do teshuvah. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted that a non-Jew should come under the wings of the Shechinah even in his old years, certainly (kal v'chomer) Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires that His nation, Bnei Yisrael, should circumcise their heart in the later years of their life, because it is never too late to return to Hashem.

Rashi (Bereishis 32:23) teaches that Yaakov Avinu placed Dinah in a box because he feared Eisav might see and want to marry her. Rashi writes that Yaakov was punished for doing so because if Dinah had married Eisav, perhaps she would have brought him to do teshuvah. The punishment was that Dinah was captured by Shechem.

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein zt'l says that this Rashi

shows how much Hashem waits for everyone to return to Him. At this time, Eisav was ninety-eight years old and he was a great rasha. Yet, Hashem was waiting for him to do teshuvah. He is undoubtedly waiting for us to do teshuvah.

The Zohar (Introduction 2: with commentary Masok Midvash) tells that when Hashem was about to create the world, all letters came to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, one by one, and each letter said that the world should be created with it. When the letter tzaddik came and claimed that the world should be created with it, Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied with love that indeed, the world deserves to be created with the letter tzaddik; however, if the world would be created with the letter tzaddik, which represents immense kedushah, people will fall into *yeush*. They will feel that they can't correct what they did wrong if they fall into sin. Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't want to

cause His creations to lose hope. Therefore, Hashem didn't want to create the world with the letter tzaddik, although it was befitting. The main thing is that people shouldn't lose hope.

The Zohar states that the world was created with the letter ב (and this is the reason ב is the first letter of the Torah). The sefarim say that the letter beis is closed from all sides and open on its front side. This hints that a person shouldn't think about what happened in the past; he should focus on the future to make the future better. So, the letter ב represents that we shouldn't lose hope and can improve the future. No matter what was, when we make the future better, everything becomes good, and even the past becomes rectified in the best way.¹³

A rather recent invention is a Shabbos lamp. It is a patent that enables a person to have light on Shabbos when he wants it, and darkness when he wants it. The lightbulb is in a box. When you close the box, you don't see the light, and you open the box when you want the light. Obviously, even when the box is shut, the light is still on; you just don't see it. This is a mashal to a Yid's neshamah. Sometimes you don't see that the neshamah is shining, but the spark is always there. You don't have to create something to turn the neshamah on because it is already shining brightly. It shines brightly and desires only Torah, mitzvos, and a connection with Hashem. All you have to do is to move the disturbance away (the pull to the temptations of this

13. The Chofetz Chaim zt'l said that at the beginning of creation, there was תהו ובהו, confusion and emptiness, and then Hashem said יחי אור. This is a lesson in a person's life. There are times of תהו ובהו, when it seems there is no hope. But suddenly, Hashem will say יחי אור, and everything will become bright and good.

world which prevents us from recognizing the light of the neshamah) and then the light will shine through.

Teshuvah with Joy

Teshuvah should be done with happiness. The Chasam Sofer zt'l says it is a serious aveirah to be sad while doing teshuvah. Perhaps a hint to this idea is in this week's parashah, the parashah that is always read either on rosh chodesh Elul or on the Shabbos *mevorchim* Elul. This is because the word שמחה is written many times in this week's parashah! (see pasukim: 12:7, 12:12, 12:18, 14:26, 16:11, 16:14, 16:15.) In Elul we do teshuvah, and the Torah hints to us that we should do so with joy.

In a letter to his son, the Beis Aharon writes, "A person must work on simchah, on being happy, more than all other good middos."

Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander zt'l teaches that the roshei teivos of (16:15) וְהָיִיתָ

שׁוֹ"א אֵךְ שְׂמָחָה spell שׁוֹ"א, which translates as "a lie". This tells us that when it comes to being happy, one may pretend that he is happy, even when he isn't. Generally, we avoid acting and pretending. A person must be honest and truthful. However, when it comes to being happy, you may pretend because pretending leads to genuine joy.

שׁוֹ"א is found in the roshei teivos. We can explain this because he will only need to pretend to be happy initially (like the roshei teivos are only at the beginning of the word). If he pretends to be happy at the beginning, he will be genuinely happy afterward. This is for two reasons: A person's thoughts follow his actions. If he acts like he is happy, he will become happy. Secondly, people enjoy happy people. So, if you are exuding happiness, even if it isn't true initially, your attitude will draw you to many friends, which greatly aids happiness. So, it begins with שׁוֹ"א, fake,

falsehoods, but ends with genuine joy.

Happiness results in parnassah and success. The final letters of והיית אך שמח spell חת"ך, which is Hashem's name for parnassah, as we say in the tefillos of the yamim noraim, החותך חיים לכל חי, that Hashem carves out life and parnassah for all living beings. Also, the final letters of חת"ך spell פותח את ידך, in reference to parnassah, as the holy sefarim tell us. The final letters of והיית אך שמח spell חת"ך to hint that if a person is happy (and even if it begins with an untrue joy), this will result in parnassah.

When we look at the beginning of the pasuk, we see another indication that simchah results in parnassah. It states (16:15), כי יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל תבואתך ובכל מעשה ידיך והיית אך שמח, "Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your produce, and all the work of your hands, and you will only be happy." If you will be happy, Hashem will grant you success in all your endeavors.

Targum Yonason translates (16:15) והיית אך שמח like this: וְתִהְיוּ בְרַם חַדְוֹן בְּאַצְלָחוֹתָא, "You will always be happy with your success." We see the connection between happiness and success.

What One Person Can Accomplish

The Rebbe of Toldos Aharon zt'l would often say the following:

It could happen that a person goes to heaven after 120 years, and they show him a bus filled with religious Yidden and tell him that all these people were saved because of him.

He asks, "How did I save them? I don't even know who they are."

Heaven will tell him, "An Arab came onto a bus, intending to detonate a bomb, and you saved everyone. Because of you, the bomb was found just in the nick of time. All of their lives are to your credit."

The man says to the court, "I never saw that Arab before, and I don't remember being on that bus, either."

The court in heaven will respond, "That's true; you were never on that bus; you were far away from the bus, but nevertheless, you saved everyone. This is because a moment before the bomb detonated, you had a test. You chose to give honor to Hashem, and you passed the test. This merit aroused Hashem's compassion, which saved a busload of people..."

The lesson is that all Yidden are connected. When we have a test, passing it can arouse Hashem's compassion, bringing salvation to Klal Yisrael. When we go up to heaven after 120 years, we will discover all the salvations we accomplished with our good deeds.

Fifteen years ago, in the year 5769, there was a drought in Eretz Yisrael. It first began to rain at the end

of the winter. One of the gedolei hador of the time zt'l said that the rain came in the merit of one person who had a test and he passed it. The gadol added that this person wasn't a great tzaddik, but salvation came because of him. This teaches the merits of those who fear Hashem. In their merits, salvations come to the entire world.

Divrei Binah zt'l writes that this is the reason a tzaddik is called יסוד עולם, a tzaddik, the foundation of the world. The entire world stands on his merit; the entire world has salvation in his merit. Yosef is called צדיק יסוד עולם. He passed a difficult test, and then he became the person who gave parnassah to all Mitzrayim, as it states והוא המשביר לכל עם הארץ. Ruchniyos and gashmiyos come to the world in the merit of a person who passes his tests.

It states (Devarim 23:15) ולא יראה בך ערות דבר ושב מאחרך, "Hashem should not see anything unseemly among

you and would turn away from you." This means that when there are *aveiros* related to *tznius* and *arayos* (ערוות דבר), Hashem turns away from us, and we lose Hashem's hashgachah pratis and protection. This is the root of all troubles in this world.

Many rabbanim and a large crowd of laymen were gathered at a rabbinic convention. They were waiting for the Imrei Emes zt'l, the rebbe of Gur, to join them. He sent a message that he wouldn't come into the hall unless the mechitzah was improved. There were rabbanim present who said that it wasn't necessary. The mechitzah was kosher according to halachah.

They decided to ask the Chofetz Chaim, and they would do as he ruled. The Chofetz Chaim ruled that it

was proper to listen to Imrei Emes's request. The Chofetz Chaim explained that kedushah and tznius bring blessings and protection to the world. When kedushah is lacking, that is a great danger for the Jewish people. Therefore, when someone wants a higher standard of kedushah and taharah, we should take his request seriously.

We add that in our generation, when we need so many salvations, we should be aware of the great importance of kedushah, taharah, and tznius. Even if you are just one person, you can bring protection and blessings to all of Bnei Yisrael. The day will come when you will be shown what you accomplished and saved through your caution in matters of Yiras Shomayim.