

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Mattos - Massei



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Mattos - Massei

"No Person Listens to Me and Loses." (Devarim Rabba 4:5)

This week's parashah (Masei) discusses the nesi'im of Bnei Yisrael. As the pasukim explain, it was their obligation to help Bnei Yisrael divide the land (when they conquered Eretz Yisrael) so each family, and each individual, would get a portion in Eretz Yisrael.¹

There is another mention of nesi'im, in parashas Shelach. They were the meraglim² sent to spy on the land. It is noteworthy that most of the nesi'im of these two parshiyos changed (with one exception). There are two reasons for this. One is that the nesi'im of parashas Shelach died in a plague.³

1. The nesi'im were commanded to divide the land, and help each family identify their portion of Eretz Yisrael. As it states (34:17-19) אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יִנְחִלוּ לָכֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ... וְנָשִׂיא אֶחָד וְנָשִׂיא אֶחָד מִמִּטֶּה תִּקְחוּ לִנְחֹל אֶת הָאָרֶץ, "These are the names of the men who shall inherit the land on your behalf... You shall take one nasi from each tribe to acquire the land..."

This is because Eretz Yisrael was first divided into twelve portions, one for each shevet, and then it was divided into smaller parcels, a lot of land for each individual. Everyone was granted a parcel of land. Setting the boundaries and designation the parcels was the role and mission of the nesi'im, as expressed in this week's parashah.

2. The meraglim were the nesi'im. As it states (Bamidbar 13:2) אִישׁ אֶחָד... אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטֶּה אֲבֹתָיו תִּשְׁלָחוּ כָל נָשִׂיא בְּהֶם... "You shall send one man each for his father's tribe; each one shall be a *nasi* in their midst..."

3. The meraglim (who were the nesi'im) died in a plague, as it states (Bamidbar 14:37) וַיָּמָוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים מוֹצְאֵי דְבַת הָאָרֶץ רָעָה בַּמִּגְפָּה לַפֶּגֶז ה' "The men who

Therefore, new nesi'im had to be appointed.

Furthermore, the Zohar explains that it was initially decreed and planned that the nesi'im of the desert wouldn't be the nesi'im in Eretz Yisrael. The Zohar explains that this is the reason the meraglim sinned, and spoke negatively of Eretz Yisrael, causing the nation to fear that they couldn't conquer the land. This was because the meraglim knew, through their ruach hakodesh, that when they entered Eretz Yisrael, they would no longer be nesi'im. They didn't want to lose their position, so they tried to prevent the nation from entering Eretz Yisrael.

כָּלֵב בֶּן יִפְנֶה was an exception to the Zohar's generalization, since he was a nasi in the desert, and later, in Eretz Yisrael. As it states in this

week's parashah (34:19) לְמֹטֶה יהודה כָּלֵב בֶּן יִפְנֶה, the nasi of shevet Yehudah was כָּלֵב בֶּן יִפְנֶה. He was also a nasi in parashas Shlach, and again in this week's parashah.

This arouses a difficulty, as stated in טעמא דקרא from Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l. כָּלֵב received great rewards for standing firm, and for not being influenced by the meraglim. As it states (Bamidbar 14:24) וְעַבְדִּי כָלֵב עֲקֵב הִיָּתָה רִיחַ אֲחֶרֶת עָמָל וְנִמְלָא אֲחֶרִי וְהִבִּיאֵתוּ אֵל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בָּא שָׁמָּה וְזָרְעוּ יִירָשְׁנָה "But as for My servant Kalev, since a different spirit was within him and he followed Me wholeheartedly, I shall bring him to the land to which he came..." This means Kalev would inherit Chevron, the land אֲשֶׁר בָּא שָׁמָּה, "to which he came". (He went to Chevron to daven for strength to pass the test of the meraglim. He was rewarded by receiving the city of Chevron.)⁴ Asks Reb Chaim

spread the evil report about the Land died in the plague, before Hashem."

4. There are other praises and rewards alluded to in this pasuk. It

zt'l, according to the Zohar, why did Kalev deserve reward? The other nesi'im (meraglim) had a great test. They knew that they would lose their high-ranking position when the Jewish nation entered Eretz Yisrael. They failed this difficult test. But what test did Kalev have? Behold, he was an exception. He was to retain his position in Eretz Yisrael. Why shouldn't he want to enter Eretz Yisrael? He had no bias to remain in the desert. So why did he deserve a reward for not following the meraglim?

Reb Chaim zt'l answers that we have to say that,

initially, it was decreed upon Kalev, as well, not to remain a nasi in Eretz Yisrael. The original plan was that all nesi'im of the desert, including Kalev, would be replaced in Eretz Yisrael. Kalev knew this through his ruach hakodesh, and thus, he had the same temptation as all the meraglim. He ignored his personal interests to do Hashem's will. For that, he deserved an immense reward.

And one of Kalev's rewards was that he became an exception. The rules changed for him, and he

states in this pasuk וְעַבְדִּי קָלֵב, "My servant Kalev." The Or HaChaim writes, וְזֶה כָּל שִׁיקְרָא עֲבַד ה' כְּמֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשְּׁלוֹם, "Kalev merited to be called עַבְדִּי, similar to Moshe Rabbeinu a'h."

Additionally, Hashem said וְהִבֵּיתִיו אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בָּא שָׁמָּה, "I shall bring him to the land to which he came." This means he would enter Eretz Yisrael, and that was approximately forty years later! The Or HaChaim writes, הָרִי הוּבְטַח בַּחַיִּי אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה מִזֶּה שֶׁלֹּא נַעֲשֶׂה לְשׁוּם צַדִּיק בְּעוֹלָם, "He was promised in his lifetime to live another forty years, and this was not promised to any other tzaddik in the world." Kalev received this praise and gift because he passed this difficult test, and didn't follow in the ways of the meraglim.

was able to remain nasi in Eretz Yisrael.

Reb Chaim Kanievsky says that we learn from this the important concept, which is stated in the Midrash (Devarim Rabba 4:5) אִין אָדָם שׁוֹמֵעַ לִי וּמַפְסִיד, "No person listens to Me and loses." If you do Hashem's will, you will never lose. Kalev did Hashem's will, ignoring his own interests, and he earned more than all the others. He

lived and remained a nasi in Eretz Yisrael, while those who went against Hashem's died in the desert.

The rule of the Midrash is monumental, and we must always remember it. Sometimes, we think we will earn honor, money, or other benefits by deviating from the Torah, but it is never so. When we perform Hashem's will, we merit success and siyata d'Shmaya.⁵

5. The Pnei Menachem zt'l found an apartment he wanted to buy. Speaking with the seller, they settled on a price. The seller added that he couldn't sell the house immediately, as he needed to stay there a bit longer... The Pnei Menachem agreed to wait until close to Pesach. "But by Pesach time, the house must be vacant, and then I will pay you for the house."

However, sometime later, the Pnei Menachem found out that it would be difficult for the seller to move out before Pesach, and also that he needed money. So, the Pnei Menachem did two acts of kindness to the seller. He sent him a message that he didn't have to vacate the house specifically before Pesach. "If necessary", the Pnei Menachem said, "you can remain in the apartment for a couple of months after Pesach." The second kindness the Pnei Menachem did was that he paid for the apartment two months before Pesach! The Pnei Menachem understood that the seller needed money, so he paid the money early.

Sometime later, the Pnei Menachem met the seller, and the Pnei Menachem told him of the miracle that had happened to him. The Pnei Menachem said, "It states (Tehillim 37:37) שְׁמֵר תָּם וְיִרְאַה יֵשׁוּר, and my

father, the Imrei Emes zt'l explained that when a person is נְשָׂמָה, goes with temimus, and acts לפניו משורת הדין, beyond the letter of the law – this means he does kindness when he isn't obligated to do so – וְנִצָּחַהּ יְיָ, Hashem will guide him on the straight path, and show him exactly what he should do, so that he should be successful. This is what happened to me. I had money prepared to buy the house, and I was keeping the money with a certain merchant. To help you, I withdrew the money from the merchant, and I prepaid you for the apartment. Shortly afterward, this merchant lost all his money, including all the money people held with him. My money was saved because I took it out early to pay for the apartment. Had I not taken back the money early, I would have nothing." Because he was נְשָׂמָה, acting with temimus, going beyond the letter of the law to help his fellow man, וְנִצָּחַהּ יְיָ, Hashem guided him on the correct path, and his money was saved. (written in Pnei Menachem, p.234). This story is another example of how one gains by following the path of Torah.

A medical student in Russia attended medical school for seven years to become a doctor, and then another seven years to become a brain surgeon. One of the draconian Russia laws is that the graduates must come in person on a specified date to receive their diplomas. If a student doesn't come on that designated day, he won't graduate, and he must redo the entire seven-year cycle. Therefore, everyone makes sure to be there. Even a bride or groom on the day of their wedding, and even someone who is ill in the hospital, will do whatever they can to be at the graduating ceremony, so they can graduate and receive their diplomas. If they fail to do so, many years and much money will be wasted.

The medical student of our story was beginning to become religious. When he entered university, he wasn't religious yet, but with time, he gradually became increasingly religious. He discovered that the day chosen to give out the diplomas was on the yom tov Shavuot, and he didn't know what to do. He went to Reb Berel Lazar Shlita (chief rabbi of Russia) to ask him whether there was a solution or a leniency. Reb Lazar said, "Why is this a problem? You can rent a room at a nearby hotel and can pick up the diploma." The student explained that it isn't so simple. Part of the process included the graduate signing several documents.

Without signing, they won't give me the diploma."

Reb Lazar said, "If that is the case, I don't have a solution for you. אין עצה ואין תבונה נגד ה' when it comes to Hashem's laws, there are no counsels and no tricks that can be done to avoid them."

The student was in turmoil; he didn't know what to do. He asked himself, "Perhaps I should be lenient this one time? So much money and so much time will go to waste if I don't pick up the diploma." But then he strengthened himself and said, "No! It is yom tov, and I won't transgress it! It is forbidden for me to pick up the diploma."

That Shavuot, the diplomas were given out, and he wasn't there to receive his.

After yom tov, he went to the Ministry of Education, to plead before them that they should make an exception and give him the diploma. He explained to them that he had a holiday on graduation day and that it was forbidden for him to come that day. They replied, "The law is law. There are no loopholes. You will have to study for another seven years. There is no way out." The student had no choice but to accept with love that which was decreed upon him.

Half a year later, on Chanukah, תשע"ה, Jewish community leaders were having their annual Chanukah party in the Kremlin with the president of Russia. The chief rabbi of Russia, Reb Berel Lazar, was present, and like every year, he delivered the keynote speech. This year, he spoke about the *mesirus nefesh* of the Chashmanaim, who fought a war, רבים ביד מעטים, a few people against many. Reb Lazar added that the attitude of self-sacrifice, *mesirus nefesh*, continues until today, and he told a story of a new baal teshuvah, a student of university, who forfeited receiving his diploma because the graduation ceremony took place on Shavuot. He said, "I am speaking about someone I know personally. He is a Jew who is still at the early stages of becoming religious. After investing so much to become a doctor, he gave it all up for the kedushah of the Jewish holiday. He didn't take the diploma on the designated date, because that would entail transgressing the holiday. Tell me, please, is there a greater self-sacrifice than this!"

After his speech, the president of Russia called Reb Lazar over and asked him, "Is the story you told true, or was it made up?"

The rav replied, "It is a true story! I know the story firsthand, because he came to me to ask me what he should do. His name is So-and-So, and he lives..." The president wrote down the details. When the president left the Chanukah celebration, he immediately contacted the Ministry of Education. He instructed them to prepare a diploma for student So-and-So and to send the diploma to him. They should also send the student to him because "I want to hand him his graduation diploma personally."

This student became a brain surgeon and eventually moved to Eretz Yisrael. The diploma proved useful in Eretz Yisrael, and he eventually rose to become the deputy head of neurosurgery at Shaarei Tzedek Hospital in Yerushalayim. This story demonstrates that אין אדם שומע לי ומפסיד, "No person listens to Me and loses." One doesn't lose from keeping the Torah. This student thought he had forfeited seven years of studies because he kept yom tov. Actually, he graduated with great honors and reached top positions in the medical field.

Let us learn two lessons from this story:

1) This student passed a very difficult test, demonstrating an amazing level of mesirus nefesh. He didn't show up to receive his diploma, knowing that he was discarding years of study and invested money, in order not to desecrate the yom tov. His heart challenged him. He was wondering whether he was doing the right thing or not. After all, the whole concept of keeping yom tov was new to him. But in the end, he passed the test, and he wasn't mechalel yom tov.

Baruch Hashem, the holy nation Klal Yisrael, who were raised with Torah and yiras Shamayim, wouldn't even carry a doubt. We know that chillul yom tov is forbidden, under all circumstances, and we wouldn't consider being lenient, even if it meant forfeiting seven years of study and a lot of money. Nevertheless, we can learn from this story to be very firm in *avodas Hashem*, for the tests that are applicable to us. This story reminds us that *avodas Hashem* requires mesirus nefesh. Even if one will lose a lot of

The Purpose of Hardships

Chazal tell us, כל דעבד, כל רחמנא לטב עבד, everything Hashem does is for the good. Although we often don't know why something is good, we believe that it is so. People generally don't understand why the hardship they are facing is good at the time it is occurring. Nevertheless, in retrospect, when the trouble passes, and they look back, they can often discern the reason. They can understand that it was Hashem's kindness.

Sometimes, we won't ever understand how it is for the good in this world, but in the next world, we will understand. We can look back at what occurred

in this world and see Hashem's kindness.

The 42 travels of Bnei Yisrael in the desert (called מ"ב מסעות) are written in this week's parashah, telling from where they traveled, and where they went. The introduction to this section states: (33:2) וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת מִצְעָיֵהֶם לְמִסְעֵיהֶם עַל פִּי ה' וְאָלָה מִסְעֵיהֶם לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם, "Moshe recorded their starting points for their journeys according to the word of Hashem, and these were their journeys with their starting points."

There are two obvious questions:

1) The "journeys" and the "starting points" are written twice in this pasuk, and it seems superfluous.

money and time, that isn't a reason to transgress Hashem's will. The obligation to make hishtadlus doesn't grant us the right to transgress any mitzvah of the Torah.

2) According to the rules of nature, it seemed that this student would have to wait another seven years to receive his diploma. However, Hashem helped him in a miraculous manner. Let this remind us that אין אדם שומע לי ומפסיד, "No person listens to Me and loses." One never loses by keeping the Torah.

2) Why does the Torah change the order of the expressions, first writing, מוצאיהם למסעיהם, "their starting points for their journeys," and then מסעיהם למוצאיהם, "These were their journeys with their starting points."

There are several answers in the holy sefarim.

The Piacezna zt'l (Eish Kodesh) answers the question, using the translation "purpose" or תכלית, for the word מוצאיהם, and the pasuk is discussing the "purpose" for the tzaros of life. It is worth noting that the Piacezna said this dvar Torah during the Holocaust, when Klal Yisrael were going through the hardest times ever. His answer gave chizuk to his followers in the Warsaw Ghetto, and it will give chizuk to us, as well. He explains that one translation for מוצאיהם is "the purpose". So, מוצאיהם למסעיהם means "the purpose for the travel." Each travel and location Klal Yisrael went to in the desert had its share of struggles. They came to פי

החירות, and they watched the Mitzrim pursuing them. They came to מרה, and they didn't have potable water. Nevertheless, it was all for the good. Each travel had a purpose – a lesson that Hashem wanted to tell them, or a salvation to grant them. Looking back, after the tzaros ended, they could make sense of what occurred, and they understood how it was all for their benefit.

This is the meaning of the pasuk ויכתב משה את מוצאיהם למסעיהם, "Moshe recorded their מוצאיהם for their journeys. This means he wrote down the reasons for their travels, the reasons for their hardships during the forty years they lived in the desert. This is because Moshe wrote the forty-two travels *after they were completed*. The nation was looking back at what occurred, and in retrospect, they were able to understand מוצאיהם, the reason for the trips and the reasons for the hardships. However, as they were amid the forty-two

travels, they still didn't understand the purpose of all their suffering. Therefore, about that time, it states וְאַלֶּה מִסְעֵיהֶם לְמוֹצָאֵיהֶם. This means that at the time of their travels and struggles, they believed that it was all for a purpose, לְמוֹצָאֵיהֶם, only they didn't know yet what it was. It doesn't state לְמוֹצָאֵיהֶם first, because the reason wasn't yet known.

The Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh zy"a (quoted in Degel Machane Efraim, Massei) writes that every person goes through forty-two journeys in his lifetime. This means he goes through forty-two situations in life. Many times, a person wonders, why do I need this hardship? What is the purpose of these difficulties? What physical and/or spiritual gains will come from it? The answer is that there will come a time when you will understand how it was all for the good. You will understand מוֹצָאֵיהֶם לְמִסְעֵיהֶם, the purpose of the travels. Therefore, be strong and believe that all your

travels and struggles are על פי ה', by Hashem's decree. Be patient, and you will understand מוֹצָאֵיהֶם, the reasons why it had to be so, and how it was beneficial for you.

We quote here a letter that we received:

Approximately six years ago, the daughter of Reb Kopshitz of Ramat Shlomo was suddenly niftarah, when she was still young 1"l. (She went to sleep and didn't wake up). During the shivah, many people came to be menachem avel, and I also came. People were discussing the girl's special yiras Shamayim and high spiritual goals. I heard something there that completely changed me. It changed me for life. The father, להבדבח"ה Shlita quoted the Gemara (Brachos 60b) לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד "A person should always be accustomed to say, 'Everything Hashem does, it is for the good.'" He noted that Chazal don't say that a person should always חושב,

think, that everything is for the good; he should say it. Shulchan Aruch (230:5) quotes this Gemara, using the same term לומר. Not to think, nor believe. The key is to **say**. This means that a person should get into the habit of saying that everything is good, even if he doesn't fully believe it in his heart. He should at least say it. "It is for the good." That will help him believe it, too.

At the nichum aveilim, they said that this girl wrote on her notepad that she accepts upon herself a kabbalah to say כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, that everything Hashem does, it is for the good. She wrote on her pad that she would say it even when it is hard for her to believe it. Nevertheless, she would say it.

This idea made a deep impression on me, and I decided I will do the same, bli neder. It is a fairly easy thing to do, and the benefits are great. All that is needed is to say the words, and that is easy enough to do. It is

performing what is written in Shulchan Aruch, *to say* that everything is for the good.

I remember that soon after I made this kabbalah, I missed a bus. I said to myself, כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, "Everything Hashem does, it is for the good." Immediately afterward, I understood why it was for my good. This is because immediately after I said these words, another bus came, a better bus for me... I notice such things every day. It is now years later, and I can say that this kabbalah changed and improved my life. There are many benefits: (1) When one says it, he trains himself to think in this manner. (2) When one says this, he merits immense siyata d'Shmaya. (Almost every time one says it, he discovers and understands clearly the reason why it was for his good. There were several times that I forgot to say that it was for the good, and as soon as I remembered, and I said the line, things worked out and became better.) When a person has

bitachon in Hakadosh Baruch Hu that everything He does is for the good, he will see Hashem's salvation and kindness.

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef (Vayechi) writes, "From the story of Nachum Ish Gam Zu (who always said גם זו לטובה) we learn that it all depends on how a person perceives things. If he believes that what happens to him is for the good, it truly becomes good – immediately."

Similarly, the Maharal (Nesiv HaBitachon 1) writes, "Reb Akiva would say כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב, everything Hashem does is for the good. This means that he trusted in Hashem that it is certainly for the good. And because of his bitachon, the matter

that appeared bad became good for him."⁶

Everything is From Hashem

The Torah tells us about the immense wealth of Reuven and Gad, as it states (32:1), ומקנה רב היה לבני ראובן ולבני גד, "The children of Reuven and the children of Gad had abundant livestock – very great."

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabba* 22:6) on this pasuk states, "Three gifts were created in the world. If one possesses even one of them, he has all the goodness in the world. If he has wisdom, he has everything; if he has power, he has everything; and if he has wealth, he has everything. This is true when the gifts come from

6. The parashiyos מטות מסעי hint that when a person is מטה, lowers and humbles himself and accepts what Hashem sends his way, מטות, things will flow smoothly for him. (As there is a saying regarding a person that everything is working out well for him, אלעם פארט איהם גלאט, loosely translated, "he travels smoothly.") מטות, everything goes well because מטה, he humbles himself, and accepts that whatever happens is all for his benefit.

Hashem. However, when wisdom, wealth, and power come from man, it is worthless."

The Chidushei HaRim asks that everything comes from Hashem. How can any wisdom, power, or wealth come from man?

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* answers that the Midrash refers to how people interpret what happens to

them. If they believe their wealth, strength, or wisdom are their own acquisitions, they don't have anything because it might be taken from them. On the other hand, if they recognize that their wealth, power, and knowledge are gifts from Hashem, they will remain with them.⁷

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* said (*Toras Avos, Emunah*

7. We say in Aleinu אמת מלכנו אפס זולתו. People know that אמת מלכנו, that Hashem is true and that He rules the world, but they ask, "Where is my place in the world?"

The response is אפס זולתו. You don't have a place. Hashem does everything.

A young child was observing a truck on the road. The child was too short to see the person sitting in the driver's seat, and it looked to him like the truck was riding on its own. Afraid that the "driverless" truck might crash into him, he asked his mother to get out of the truck's way. He also asked his mother how the truck knows, on its own, when to stop and when to slow down or speed up.

The mother explained that when he is taller, he will be able to see the driver sitting in the driver's seat.

The *nimshal* is that it sometimes seems to us that the world is running on its own with no One in charge. But when we become greater and taller (in a spiritual sense), we recognize that nothing happens on its own. Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* leads everything.

u'Bitachon 45), "When one goes to the marketplace to buy something and believes that the item he decides to buy and the price they agree upon is Hashgachah pratis, I guarantee that Hashem will grant him success with everything he does."

Because everything, down to the smallest detail, is from Hashem, and nothing is from man. When we understand this, we will succeed.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119.) states, "In what merit do people become wealthy in *galus*? It is because they honor the Shabbos."

The Gemara tells that Reb Chiya bar Abba was at a wealthy man's home and was stunned by his wealth. The heavy table, which took sixteen people to carry, was made of gold; sixteen silver chains were attached to it, laden with all types of foods and incense. Reb Chiya bar Aba asked him, 'My son, how did you merit this?' He replied, 'I was a butcher.

Every good animal that I had, I kept for Shabbos.' I told him, 'Baruch Hashem for giving you all this!'"

Reb Shimon Sofer *zt'l* explains that wealth generally has its ups and downs. As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 151:) says, גלגל החזור בעולם, "It is a cycle that goes around in the world." Reb Chiya bar Abba was shocked that this man was so wealthy and looked like his *mazal* was always good. He wanted to know how that happened.

The wealthy man told him that he honors Shabbos. Shabbos was his weekly reminder that everything comes from Hashem. Those who honor Shabbos merit immense wealth because they have a weekly reminder that everything is from Hashem. Their wealth will be long-lasting, without any financial dips.

The Midrash teaches that each shevet sent two thousand people to Midyan. One thousand soldiers to fight the war and one

thousand people to daven for their success. Therefore, the Torah says (31:4), אֶלֶף לַמָּטָה, תִּשְׁלְחוּ לְצִבָּא, a thousand people to a tribe, a thousand to a tribe...send to the army." Why are the words אֶלֶף לַמָּטָה repeated? One thousand warriors per tribe, and another thousand who were sent to the front war, to daven for the fighters' success.

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* asks:

(1) *Tefillah* can be done in a *beis medresh*. Why were they sent to the front to daven?

(2) Why was it necessary for a thousand people to daven? Wouldn't a *minyán* be sufficient? Why was each soldier matched with another person to pray for him?

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* answers that miracles were needed to win this war. There were only twelve thousand people against an enormous army, and to win

the war, they had to acknowledge that their successes were from Hashem. However, the nature of people is to think that they are doing things on their own. Therefore, it was possible that when the warriors would win battle after battle, they would think they were succeeding with their own might. Therefore, Hashem commanded someone to pray for each soldier on the frontlines. This would remind the warriors that Hashem is fighting for them. And when one recognizes Hashem and knows that his success comes from Hashem, he succeeds.

Maharsha (*Sanhedrin* 92.) asks: The Gemara says, כֹּל שִׁישׁ בּוֹדֵעַ לְסוֹף מֵתַעֲשֶׂר, "Whoever has wisdom will become wealthy in the end." But the *pasuk* (*Kohles* 9:11) says, לֹא לַחֲכָמִים, לֶחֶם, "Bread doesn't go to the wise." So, does wisdom lead to financial success, or does it not?

The Maharsha answers that it depends on the type

of wisdom. Good business deals and wise investments don't guarantee wealth. Many wise people struggle financially. However, the wisdom of knowing that everything is from Hashem will grant you success.

Another contradiction is found in Mishlei. It states (*Mishlei* 18:22), מִצָּא אִשָּׁה מִצָּא טוֹב, "Someone who found a woman found goodness," and it states (*Koheles* 7:26), וּמוֹצָא, אֲנִי מֵר מִמּוֹת אֶת הָאִשָּׁה, "I find, more bitter than death, the woman..." The difference between these two *pasukim* is the word אֲנִי. When you think that you found your wife with your wisdom and cleverness, then it is more bitter than death. However, מִצָּא אִשָּׁה, when you are aware that you can't marry without Hashem's help, מִצָּא טוֹב, you will find goodness.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 8.) says that in Eretz Yisrael, people would ask *chasanim* whether it was מִצָּא or מוֹצָא, based on the two *pasukim* mentioned above. They wanted to know whether it was מִצָּא אִשָּׁה מִצָּא or whether it was מוֹצָא אֲנִי טוֹב. We can explain that they hinted to the *chasan* that it is all up to him. If he realizes that the marriage is from Hashem, he will have *siyata dishmaya* and will succeed. If he thinks he married through his own wisdom, it can be more bitter than death, *r'l*.

We've seen this concept true regarding *parnassah*, finding a spouse, success at war, and for everything else in life. One must be aware that Hashem is the One Who does everything, and then he will be successful.⁸

8. In the zemer of בני היכלא, written by the Arizal and sung during Shalosh Seudes, it states, חֲזוּ חִילִי דְלִית דִּינִין דְּתַקִּיפִין. The Yisa Brachah (ד"ה) explains, חֲזוּ חִילִי, when you know that everything you have is My strength, דְּלִית דִּינִין דְּתַקִּיפִין, there are no troubles, and there will be only good for the Jewish nation.

Heartfelt Tefillah

One of the translations of the word יחל is hope, as it states (*Tehillim* 130:7), יחל ישראל אל, "Yisrael, hope to Hashem..." It states (30:3), לא יחל דברו ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה. The *pasuk* can be translated as, לא יחל דברו, one shouldn't *hope* that his *tefillos* will be effective. One should be *certain* that Hashem will answer his *tefillos*. One should approach *tefillah* with conviction, knowing that his *tefillos* will make a difference. When one approaches *tefillah* with that attitude, ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה, whatever he requests will be granted.

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* (in the name of Reb Yisrael Sruk *zt'l*) explains the *pasuk*: לא יחל דברו, don't think speech is mundane, ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה, because everything you speak creates a *malach*. Each good word (of Torah, *tefillah*, or *chesed*) creates a *malach* that speaks in his defense. Each bad word (*lashon hara*, *sheker*, etc.) creates a prosecuting *malach*.

Even when he davens without *kavanah*, he must believe that his *tefillos* will have an effect. לא יחל דברו, he shouldn't consider his words worthless or weak.

Nevertheless, when one does daven with *kavanah*, the potency of his *tefillah* intensifies, as we will explain.

Almost every time the word לה is found in Tanach, there is a dot in the ה"א, called מפיק ה"א. This dot means that the *heh* should be read a bit forcefully until the sound of the letter *heh* is heard. Without the *mapik*, it is read almost like לא, and you don't hear the letter *heh*.

As we wrote, almost every לה is with a *mapik heh*, but there are three exceptions to this rule. One exception is in the final *pasuk* of *parashas Matos* (see *Rashi* and *Baal HaTurim*):

It states in this *pasuk* (32:42), ונבה הלך וילכד את קנת ואת, בנתיא ויקרא לה נבה בשמו, "Novach conquered Knas and its

suburbs and named it Novach, in his name."

Rashi writes: לָהּ in this *pasuk* isn't written with a *mapik heh*, and it is read like לא נבה because this name didn't last."

The *heh* isn't pronounced, and it can be read as לא נבה, "No Novach." This is because the name נבה, which Novach named the area, didn't last.

The *Pnei Menachem zt'l* teaches that a dot in the ה hints to the heart, which is in the center of the body.

The *pasuk* is teaching us that whatever is done without heart doesn't last.

In contrast, when one does a mitzvah with all his heart and soul, the merit of that mitzvah will remain with him forever and for all generations to come.

The heart is used during prayer because *tefillah* is called עבודה שבלב, the service of the heart. All our deeds should be performed with heart; how much more so *tefillah*! It should be said with all one's heart.⁹

9. The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch zy'a told the following story:

There was a simple, unlearned Yid who lived in a village near Yerushalayim. Once a week, he would come to Yerushalayim to sell his produce. Before returning home, he would visit one of the rabbanim of Yerushalayim and ask him to teach him the *tefillos* for the upcoming week. For example, if Rosh Chodesh or a fast day were approaching, the rav would show him what to say and on which day.

One week, the villager arrived in Yerushalayim and found no one on the street. "What happened?" he wondered. "Is it yom tov today? Did the rav forget to tell me?"

He then saw people carrying their tallis and tefillin, which confirmed that it was a weekday.

"What's going on today?" he asked one of the people of

Yerushalayim. "Where is everyone?"

"It's a fast day today," the person replied, "and all the stores are closed."

The simple villager went to the rav and complained, "Why didn't you tell me there was a fast day today? I've already eaten by mistake. Also, I didn't daven the right tefillah for today."

The rav explained that the fast was decided upon just recently since it hadn't yet rained that winter.

The villager was shocked. "For lack of rain, you declare a fast day?"

"Yes. What do you do if there isn't rain?"

"When my field needs rain, I go outside and ask Hashem for rain, and it immediately begins raining."

"Do that now," the rav instructed.

The villager raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father! Your children need rain. Is it possible that You will let Your children die from thirst?" Clouds gathered, and it began to rain. His tefillos were answered immediately.

This villager prayed to Hashem with all his heart and soul, and his tefillos were answered.

Reb Avraham Eliyashiv zt'l and his rebbetzin were childless for many years. Finally, they traveled to the medical center in Vienna for treatment, but the doctors there told her, "There's nothing we can do."

She strengthened herself and didn't cry during their long trip home. But when she came home to Humla, she went into a silo where she could be alone and wept copiously.

Her father (author of Leshem) saw that her eyes were red and asked her about it. She gave an excuse, but her father insisted she reveal the true reason. She told him that the doctors said there was no cure for her. "I held back from crying during the two-week trip home, and now I broke out in tears and poured out my bitter heart before Hashem."

Due to the sin of the *meraglim*, it was decreed that the entire generation that left Mitzrayim would die in the desert. Each year, on Tisha b'Av, the Jews dug graves for themselves and slept in them overnight. In the morning, those who survived climbed out of the grave. Those who died stayed in their graves.

The nation had 600,000 men destined to die within the forty years they were in the desert. 600,000 people divided by 40 years equals 15,000 people. This means 15,000 people died annually on Tisha b'Av.

Rabbeinu Tam (*Tosfos Bava Basra* 121.) teaches that in their last year in the desert, an amazing thing happened. That year, on the night of Tisha b'Av, the final group of 15,000 people lay in their graves. They were sure they would all die because they were the final 15,000 people from the generation of the *meraglim*. Surprisingly, they all woke up in the morning alive and well. Their lives were spared.¹⁰

We can explain that they were saved due to their *tefillos*. Each year, when the men climbed into their graves, certainly everyone

Her father told her, "It states (Tehillim 145:18), קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, 'Hashem is close to those who pray to Him sincerely.' When does one pray sincerely? That he understands that he has nowhere to turn other than Hashem. When one gains that awareness, he prays with all his heart and soul a pure prayer before Hashem. And since you said such a tefillah, I'm confident you will soon bear a child."

A year later, she gave birth to Reb Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv zt'l, who illuminated the world with his Torah.

10. According to Rabbeinu Tam, the joy of Tu B'Av commemorates the fifteen thousand who were granted life and spared from the original decree.

davened to be saved, but they didn't daven with all their might. Deep in their hearts, they thought that perhaps their life wasn't in danger. Surely, 15,000 *other* people will die, and they will be among the survivors.

But that final year, fifteen thousand people climbed into their graves, knowing they were all destined to die. Oh, how they davened that night! And when one prays with all his heart, his *tefillos* are answered, even in the face of a *gezeira* that was sealed 40 years earlier!

The Gemara (*Yoma* 53:) states that when the *kohen gadol* was in the Kodesh Kadoshim on Yom Kippur, he prayed that Hashem shouldn't listen to the *tefillos* of travelers who pray that it shouldn't rain. Why was this prayer so important that it had to be said in the Kodesh Kadoshim on Yom Kippur by the *kohen gadol*?

It's because only such an important *tefillah* (the *kohen gadol*, in the Kodesh Kadoshim, on

Yom Kippur) could counter the *tefillos* of travelers. Travelers know that they have nowhere to turn other than Hashem. No one can stop rain other than Hashem. And with this awareness, they daven with all their hearts. And when one davens with all their heart, only the highest form of *tefillah* can overcome it.`

***Tefillah* is Essential**

Siddur Rokeiach writes, "From the time the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't bestow goodness to Bnei Yisrael without *tefillah*."

The Hafla'ah (*Kesubos* 67:) writes, "It is known to all believers in Hashem's *hashgachah* that in *galus*, *parnassah* comes only through *tefillah*. This is because *tefillah* is in place of the *korbanos* that were placed on the *mizbeiach*. The Gemara (*Kesubos* 10) teaches that מזון comes from the word מִזֵּין, as it gave sustenance to the Jewish people. Now *tefillah* fills this function, as it brings

parnassah and blessings to Klal Yisrael."¹¹

When you daven, ask for a lot. Don't be sparing with your requests, because Hashem can give you everything you need - in abundance.

There was a wealthy couple that didn't have children. The husband asked

his wife to go to Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* to request a *brachah* for children. He told her to tell the Rebbe that he is prepared to sacrifice all his wealth, if need be, if they can have children.

When the woman came to the Rebbe, she stumbled on her words and

11. The Apter Rav *zt'l* had a kollel in his beis medresh, and on every Rosh Chodesh he would hand out stipends to the *yungerleit*. One of the kollel members thought, "I don't have to pray for *parnassah*, since my *parnassah* is given to me by the Rebbe."

That Rosh Chodesh, after *mussaf*, the *yungerleit* lined up in the Rebbe's room to receive their monthly stipend. When it was this *yungerman's* turn, the Rebbe ran out of money. The Rebbe excused himself and left the room to get more money. The *yungerman* also had to leave his place in line for whatever reason, and when he returned, he went to the end of the line.

The Apter Rav returned and resumed handing out money, but when this *yungerman's* turn came, there was, again, no money left.

The Rebbe said, "Every month, Hashem gives me the exact amount of money I need to support the *yungerleit*. There must be a reason you didn't receive your stipend this month. Check your deeds and see whether you can find the reason."

The man understood that it was because he didn't daven for *parnassah*. Even if the Rebbe supported him, he still needed *tefillah* because *parnassah* comes from Hashem.

accidentally said, "My husband said he agrees to remain wealthy, as long as we can have children."

The Rebbe smiled, understanding what she had

wanted to say. The Rebbe said, "But you spoke correctly because Hashem can give you both children and wealth. So why should we limit ourselves? We should ask for a lot."¹²

12. When one prays for worldly matters, such as wealth, Heaven may say that it isn't good for him, because Hashem knows what's truly good for a person. But when one prays for *ruchniyus*, it is undoubtedly good. Therefore, one can ask for high levels of spiritual success, and Hashem will certainly grant his request.

One of the *gedolei hador* told me the following story:

A member of my beis medresh, the owner of a large furniture factory, always came late to *Shacharis*. I explained to him the importance of coming on time to davening. I explained that *parnassah* comes from tefillah, so why should he be lax with *Shacharis*?

The factory owner replied, "If you knew the low level I am on, you would understand that simply coming to beis medresh to daven is a great accomplishment for me."

I stopped pressing the matter because I realized my words were falling on 'deaf ears'.

Sometime later, though, there was a fire in his furniture factory.

The owner told me, "I know that the fire happened because I come late to davening."

"How do you know?" I asked.

He explained, "The fire department arrived late to the scene, and everything was lost. I understand that this was my punishment for coming late to *Shacharis*."

The *parashah* begins with the laws of *nedarim*. If a person says, "This food is forbidden to me," it becomes forbidden. The food can be kosher, but he may not eat it because of his vow.

This underscores the immense power of our words. They aren't as insignificant as many people think.

The Rebbe of Ruzhin *zt'l* said we can derive the power of speech from the laws of marriage. One takes a ring and says to a woman, "Behold, you are married to me with this ring..." and she becomes married. Words can change the status of a person.

On the *pasuk*, יוצר הרים ובורא רוח ומגיד לאדם מה שיחו (Amos 4:13), the Rebbe of Ruzhin *zt'l* explained, יוצר הרים, Hashem created mighty mountains, but wind can uproot mountains because winds are even stronger than mountains. מגיד לאדם מה שיחו, this teaches us how powerful his speech is. Speech is

merely wind, yet is the greatest strength in the world.

Guarding Your Eyes

While at war against Midyan, the Yidden were very cautious to guard their eyes. The Or HaChaim (31:54) writes, "This is how the people acted in this war. When they removed the jewelry, they covered their faces with tar and dirt... so they shouldn't gaze at them... Rav Achai bar Yoshia says (Masechta Kalah ch.2), "Whoever turns away from an aveirah, and doesn't do it, even if he is a Yisrael, he is fitting to bring korbanos of Olah on the mizbeiach like the kohen gadol." Therefore, when they brought the gold they gained at war to Ohel Moed, it states וָזָרוּן לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי ה', "a remembrance for Bnei Yisrael before Hashem." The simple understanding of this *pasuk* is that the gold was brought לִפְנֵי ה' in Ohel Moed, which is before Hashem. However, the Or

HaChaim says that the pasuk is saying that the warriors were before Hashem. לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי ה', Bnei Yisrael were before Hashem. They rose to the highest levels because they controlled their eyes.

Targum Yonason (31:50) writes, "They were cautious not to look at the women, not even a slight look so that they won't be *chayiv misah*... This merit will be remembered on the great day of judgment, to forgive all their sins before Hashem."

The Saraf of Strelisk zt'l said that when one guards his eyes, his children will live, he will raise them without distress, and they will be protected from the troubles of life (אמרי קודש דף ק"א). Who doesn't need these segulos?

The Chida (Dvash L'Pi, מערכת ה' says that learning Masechta Makos is mesugal to be saved from forbidden thoughts. Reb Mendel of Rimanov zt'l said that studying the halachos of

הגעלת כלים, kashering utensils, purifies one's mind from forbidden thoughts. Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l said that to learn two teachings from the Maharsha every day purifies one's mind.

Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 85:2) says that it is forbidden to study Torah in the bathroom or in the bathhouse, and where there is a foul smell (מקום הטינופת). The Be'er Heitev writes, "If a person is thinking forbidden thoughts, he should think Torah, even if he is in a place where it is forbidden to think Torah. This is because thoughts of Torah will save him from thinking about an aveirah."

This lesson from the Be'er Heitev needs commentary and explanation, because both thoughts are forbidden. Forbidden thoughts, such as thinking about aveiros, are forbidden, as is thinking Torah thoughts in impure places. Why should one prohibition be transgressed to be saved from the other transgression?

But we can answer that if a person thinks forbidden thoughts, he becomes like a bathroom. His whole mind is now like a מקום טוֹפֵת, disgusting place, and he won't be able to think Torah. Therefore, he is better off thinking Torah now, even in this foul-smelling place, rather than that he, himself, should become foul-smelling (in a spiritual sense).

Chazal (Taanis 9a) say that when one gives maasar, Hashem bestows him with abundant parnassah. About this person, it states (Malachi 3:10) הִבִּיאוּ אֶת כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂיר אֶל בֵּית הָאוֹצָר וִיְהִי טֶרֶף בְּבֵיתִי וּבִחְנוּנִי נָא בֹאֵת אֲמַר ה' צֶבֶע-אוֹת אִם לֹא אֶפְתָּח לָכֶם אֶת אֲרָבוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִרִיקֹתִי לָכֶם בָּרָק עַד בְּלִי דִּי "Bring the maasar into the storage house... Test Me, if you will, with this, says Hashem, master of Legions, see if I do not open up for you the windows of the

heavens and pour out upon you blessing without end." The question is that we often see people who are generous with giving maasar. Still, they don't have the brachah of "blessing without end". Why is this? The Chida (Yosef Tehilos) answers that it is because there is a problem with the person's kedushah, with how he guards his eyes, and the like. Hashem wants to give him bounty, but if he has holes in his utensils, everything will fall out. This is alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 101:5) גִּבֵּה עֵינַיִם וּרְחַב לֵבָב אֹתוֹ לֹא אוֹכֵל גִּבֵּה עֵינַיִם, he doesn't guard his eyes, even if he is וּרְחַב לֵבָב, generous with his money, אֹתוֹ לֹא אוֹכֵל, he cannot remain with the bounty. It is like he has a hole in his utensil, and the bounty doesn't remain with him.