

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראל בן מרדכי ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Vaeira



לזכות רפואה שלמה,
מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית
יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה,
ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה

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Parshat Vaeira

The Ultimate Purpose - To Know Hashem

Hashem promised (6:6), והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים והצלתי אתכם מעבדתם וגאלתי אתכם בזרוע נטויה ובשפטים גדלים ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלקים, "I will take you out from the suffering in Mitzrayim, save you from the slavery, redeem you with an outstretched arm...take you as My nation, and be your G-d."

The purpose of all of the above is, וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם, "So you will know that I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Mitzrayim."

As the Sfas Emes (וארא תרל"ד) writes, "We see that the reason for *yetzias Mitzrayim* is so it will be known that Hashem took us out from Mitzrayim..."

Generally, Hashem performs as few miracles as possible,

but by *yetzias Mitzrayim*, a new system was set in place, because many miracles occurred. This is because the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* served a different purpose compared to most miracles. Usually, the purpose of a miracle is to save a Yid, or to save Klal Yisrael from oppressors and from those who want to harm them. But the purpose of the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is to know Hashem, and therefore the more miracles the better.

It states (*Yeshayah* 44:6), אני ראשון ואני אחרון, "I am first and I am last." Reb Hershel of Ziditchov זt'l said that the first letters of these words spell וארא. Because the purpose of *parashas* וארא is to bring awareness that "I am first and I am last" and everything happens by Hashem's decree.¹

1. The next words of the *pasuk* are, ומבלעדי אין אלקים, "besides for Me

Without *emunah*, there wouldn't be *yetzias Mitzrayim*. In last week's *parashah*, Moshe Rabbeinu said to Hashem (5:22), למה הרעת לעם, "Why did you do bad to this nation? Why did you send me?" Moshe was saying that now that the slavery has become harder (they must gather straw on their own) it is a challenge for the Jewish nation to believe in Hashem. Without *emunah*, they won't be redeemed from Mitzrayim, so why did you send me?"

The Toldos (*Mishpatim* ד"ה

וואלה) teaches, "I heard from [my teacher, the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*], when [Heaven] wants to punish a person who deserves punishment, Heaven first takes away his *bitachon*. Because as long as one believes in Hashem and in *hashgachah pratis*, nothing can harm him."

Similarly, the Sfas Emes (*Terumah* תרל"ד) writes, "The more one trusts in Hashem, the more good things will happen to him. *Bitachon* itself brings great salvations to a person."²

there is no god." The first letters of those words are ווא"א, which are also found in the word ווארא. This is because the purpose of *parashas* ווארא, and the miracles we study, is to know that Hashem leads the world and "besides for Me there is no god."

2. Reb Mendel lives in Yerushalayim, and supports his large family by dealing in antique *sefarim*. His primary *hishtadlus*, though, is his *bitachon* and his *tefillos*. As the Ramchal (*Derech Hashem* 4:5) writes, "A person should stand before Hashem Yisbarach, to ask all his needs and to trust in Him. This is the first and the primary *hishtadlus*..."

On the night before his daughter's *chasunah*, Reb Mendel gathered his family and told them that he needs twenty-five thousand dollars for the night of the *chasunah*, and he didn't know how to get it. "But I'm not worried. I trust in Hashem. Somehow, Hashem will help..."

While the family was still converged around him, Shimon, an antique dealer

Differences between a Yid and a Goy

In this week's *parashah* Hashem says (8:19), ושמתי פדות ושמתי פדות "I will separate My nation from your nation [the Egyptians]." How are they different? The *pasuk* clarifies: למחר יהיה האות הזה, they are different by the way they look at "tomorrow."

The Rav of Branov ז"ל

(*Chamra Tava*) explains: When a *tzarah* befalls a Yid, *chalilah*, he believes that 'tomorrow' things will become better. He trusts in Hashem, and he believes that Hashem will take all his troubles away. The non-Jew, however, doesn't have this trust, so he thinks his problems will remain forever.

Another difference between a Yid and a goy is how they

for rare *sefarim*, knocked at his door, and asked whether there was a new antique *sefer* up for sale.

Reb Mendel replied, "Actually, I recently bought a three-hundred-year-old *Rambam* for fifty dollars. Clearly, it was once owned by a scholar, as it has handwritten notes along the margins. I tried to figure out who this scholar was, but I couldn't figure it out. Without knowing the name of the scholar, the set doesn't have any retail value. In fact, I offered it to someone for fifty dollars, but he declined."

Shimon perused the *sefer*, and by Shimon's expressions, it was noticeable that he though he knew who originally owned the *sefer*.

Reb Shimon asked for permission to take the *Rambam* home, so he can figure out who it had belonged to.

Reb Mendel and Reb Shimon made an agreement that one sixth of the sale would go to Reb Shimon.

Shimon discovered that this *Rambam* had belonged to the Pri Chadash. (He deduced that by the handwriting and by the very same *chiddushim* that are also printed in the Pri Chadash). The next morning, Shimon brought the *Rambam* to a collector. He paid thirty-thousand dollars for the set. Shimon kept a sixth for himself (five thousand dollars) and gave twenty-five thousand dollars to Reb Mendel, the amount he needed for his daughter's *chasunah*, to be held later that day.

perceive the present. A Yid believes that the present is good, because everything that happens to him is for the best. A goy doesn't have that encouragement.

Reb Yitzchak Eizak of Kamarna zt'l writes, "Believe me, if I didn't believe in Hashem's *hashgachah* over every detail, I would be lost from the world long ago. I suffered greatly from poverty, distress, exile, humiliation, and despair was worst of all. But Hashem helps me and I don't feel all these matters. Hashem helps me every step of the way that I shouldn't suffer at

all from these matters..." Because when one believes everything is from Hashem, and for the best, he is happy in every situation.

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 222:3) states, "One is obligated to bless Hashem for the bad with full concentrate and with a lot of feeling the same way he blesses Hashem for the good that happens to him. For those who serve Hashem, blessing Hashem for the bad is their joy and pleasure...because by accepting the bad, they are serving Hashem – and that is their joy."³

3. Accepting Hashem's decree with love saved us from Mitzrayim.

On the *pasuk*, והצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים, "I will take you out from the suffering in Mitzrayim," the Tiferes Shlomo (ד"ה והוצאתי) asks why the Torah calls the hard work of Mitzrayim סבלות מצרים, while the more popular term, עבודה קשה isn't used here.

"The answer is, the Torah is teaching us the primary reason they were redeemed from Mitzrayim. It is because Bnei Yisrael, Hashem's chosen and holy nation, enslaved and afflicted, didn't ask questions on Hashem's *hashgachah*. They didn't ask, 'Why are we suffering more than all nations of the world?' ...The entire time [they lived in Mitzrayim] they accepted Hashem's decree with love, because if it is good in His eyes, it is good in their eyes too. This is the explanation of the *pasuk*, ויצא משה אל אחיו וירא, ביצאתו, 'Moshe went out to his brothers and saw their suffering.' ...The

The Mishnah Berurah explains, "*Yesurim*, suffering, either on one's body or with one's money, atones for all his sins, and now he won't be punished in Olam HaBa, where the punishments are far greater. As the Midrash states, 'Yitzchak requested that there should be *yesurim* [because *yesurim* in this world is better for people than the great punishments of the future]... Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'I swear, you are requesting wisely, and I begin the *yesurim* with you. As it states, 'וייהי כי זקן יצחק ותכהינה עיניו מראות, it was when Yitzchak was old and his eyes were weak.' ...Similarly, Dovid HaMelech said, סמר מפחדך בשרי ומשפמך, 'My [skin became hard

and the hair of my body stood up] because of my fear of Your judgment.' Dovid requested that he have *yesurim* to purify him from his sins, and then he won't have anything to fear."

The Rebbe of Shotz *zt'l* writes in a letter (towards the end of his life): "My hands, feet, and digestive system aren't working as well as they used to. But since my youth I prayed, אל תשליכני לעת זקנה, that in my old age, I should have a clear mind, and my eyes should see well, so I could learn Torah. Baruch Hashem, Hashem helped me in this regard. I am able to learn with *yishuv hadaas*. And about the other limbs...let them worry about it."

intention is that Moshe saw with his *ruach hakadosh* that Bnei Yisrael have the attribute of סבלנות, acceptance of Hashem's decree. They bent their shoulders to accept everything with love. וירא, he looked well and saw their attribute of *savlanus*. They didn't ask questions on Hashem and therefore they merited redemption ..."

The Tiferes Shlomo concludes that this is the explanation of the *pasuk* (6:7), והוצאתי אתכם ממצרים, "I will take you out of Mitzrayim because you are טובל, and you accept Hashem's decree."

Yet another difference between a Yid and a goy is that a Yid davens for salvation, and Hashem answers his *tefillos* and he is relieved from all his troubles. As it states (*Devarim* 4:7), כִּי מִי גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֱלֹהִים קְרוּבִים אֵלָיו, "Who is a great nation, who has Hashem close to him, like Hashem our G-d, whenever we pray to Him?" Although non-Jews can also pray, they don't share this close relationship as we do.

away from them. But that doesn't always work. As the Toldos (בשלה ד"ה ויצעקו) writes, "I heard from my teacher [the Baal Shem Tov זt'l] when someone tries to escape from his *tzaros*, his *tzaros* chase after him. It can be compared to a woman in childbirth who goes to another place to escape her labor pains. Her pains will just come along with her. The counsel is to pray, and then he will be saved from his distress."⁴

Moshe's Staff

When people go through hard times, the tendency is to run

Why was Moshe's staff an integral part of the *makos* and

4. I heard the following story first hand, and it demonstrates the power of *tefillah*:

A ten-year-old son asked his father to buy him a bike. The father told him that he doesn't have money for that, but "if you want a bike, daven for one."

The son said, "I don't know how to daven for a bike."

The father replied, "Repeat after me: 'Hashem, please give my father money so he can buy me a bike.'"

They had this conversation while walking down the street. Shortly afterwards, the father was walking on that same street again, and right where the child had previously davened there was 350 *shekels* on the ground (there was no obligation of *hashavas aveidah*). The father quickly went home to bring his son to the bike store. They bought a bike that cost exactly 350 *shekels*.

yetzias Mitzrayim? When you hit a dog with a stick, the dog will bite the stick. It thinks the stick is the root of his problem; it doesn't realize that a stick can't do anything. It's the person holding the stick that is responsible for the deed.

We are smarter than that. We know that the stick isn't the culprit. Nevertheless, we make that same error when someone, or something, causes us a loss or distress. We think that the person etc. is guilty for what happened. We forget that they can't do anything on their own. They are just a stick in Hashem's hands.⁵

Similarly, we shouldn't be proud and haughty with our successes, because Hashem does everything. We are just a staff in Hashem's hands.

Aharon threw the staff before Pharaoh and it became a snake. The Chasam Sofer (תורת משה הגש"פ ד"ה אותות) explains that a cane represents our humble awareness that we are merely a staff in Hashem's hand. The snake represents haughtiness, the false notion that everything is in our hands.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "The Gemara (*Shabbos* 97.) says that a נם בתוך נם double miracle occurred, because Aharon's cane turned back into a cane again, and then it swallowed the other canes. The question is, what was the purpose of this miracle? Why didn't it swallow the other canes when it was a snake?

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to show Pharaoh that although he considers himself to be 'the התנים הגדול הרבץ בתוך יאריו

5. Therefore, when someone bothers you, insults you, etc. don't be angry at that person. Recognize the origin from where everything comes.

Furthermore, when we know that we are all tools of Hashem's Hand, we won't be afraid of people. No one can harm you if it isn't destined Above.

great snake of the Nile' (see *Yechezkel* 29:3) he is nothing more than a rod in Hashem's hand. As it states about Sancheriv (*Yeshayah* 10:6), הוּי אֲשׁוּר שְׁבֵט אֲפִי, 'Woe that Ashur is going to be the staff for My wrath...' Pharaoh is proud. He calls himself 'the snake,' but now Hakadosh Baruch Hu will hand over this staff to Bnei Yisrael. They aren't proud, because they know that they are Hakadosh Baruch Hu's stick; they aren't 'the snake.'"

The Tanya (*Igeres HaKadosh* ch.25) writes, "Chazal say whoever becomes angry it is like he worshipped *avodah zarah*. The explanation is understood to the scholars. Because becoming angry means his *emunah* left him. If he believed that this, too, was from Hashem, he wouldn't be angry. Although the person who angered him has free will...and he will be punished in the court of man and the court of heaven for his bad choice, nevertheless, the damage was pre-destined, and

Hashem has many messengers...

"As Dovid HaMelech said when Shimi ben Geira cursed him, (*II Shmuel* 16:10), ה' אָמַר, 'לוֹ קָלַל', 'Hashem told him to curse.' When did Hashem say this to Shimi? The thought that fell into his heart and mind was from Hashem..."

Similarly, it states (*I Malachim* 17:9), קוּם לְךָ צַרְפֶּתָה, אֲשֶׁר לְצִדּוֹן וַיֵּשֶׁבֶת שָׁם הִנֵּה צְוִיתִי שָׁם לְעִלְיָהוּ, "[Hashem said to Eliyahu] go to Tzarfas of Tzidon, and live there. Behold I commanded a widow who lives there to support you." The Chofetz Chaim (*Shem Olam, Shemiras Shabbos* ch.3) notes that this woman wasn't a *navi*. When and how did Hashem command her to support Eliyahu? The answer is, "Hashem gave her a desire to support Eliyahu."

Because human beings communicate through conversations or through letters, but Hashem has other way to express His will. He

placed in the *almanah's* heart a desire to support Eliyahu, and therefore it can state that Hashem commanded her to support Eliyahu.

Regarding the *machlokes* the brothers made against Yosef, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 84:18) writes, "When You wanted, You placed in their hearts to love, and when You wanted, You placed in their hearts to hate." The Midrash bases this on the *pasuk* (*Yeshayah* 63:17), 'למה תתענו ה' מדרכך, "Why did You cause us to stray from Your ways?" because it was as though Hashem planned that they should create this *machlokes*.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 18:) teaches that Turaynus wanted to kill the two brothers, the tzaddikim, Lulinus and Papius from Lud. Turaynus told them, "If you are from the nation of Chananyah Mishael, and Azaryah, let your G-d save you as He saved Chananyah Mishael, and Azaryah from

Nevuchadnezzar when he threw them into a furnace."

They replied, "Chananyah Mishael, and Azaryah were perfect tzaddikim, and they deserved a miracle. Additionally, Nevuchadnezzar was a proper king, and he deserved that a miracle should happen through him. But you are a regular person, and you don't deserve that a miracle should happen through you, and we deserve to die because of our sins. If you won't kill us, Hashem has many bears and lions in His world who can attack us and kill us. Hashem gave us over into your hands because afterwards He will punish you and avenge our blood."

The Gemara concludes, "Even after hearing these words, Turaynus killed them... Immediately after, two officers came from Rome and they killed Turaynus."

Avos (2:1) states "[Raban Gamliel ben Reb Yehudah] saw a skull floating on the

water and he told it, 'Because you drowned someone, someone drowned you. The person who drowned you will one day be drowned, too.'

The Ra'v Bartenura explains, "You were a *rasha*. You robbed people and then drowned them in the water. As you did to others happened to you. Eventually, the person who drowned you will also be drowned. Because it wasn't his place to kill you. It was the task of *beis din*. Hakadosh

Baruch Hu gave him the ability to drown you, because bad things are given over to bad people. In the end, they will be punished for drowning you."

This episode shows us, once again, how everything is destined from Above, everything happens with *hashgachah pratis*, and we are just tools to fulfill Hashem's will. Everything is directed by Hashem's plan, and everyone gets what they deserve.

The Benefits of Embarrassment

It states (6:13), וידבר ה' אל משה, ואל אהרן ויצום אל בני ישראל ואל פרעה מלך מצרים, "Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to Bnei Yisrael and to Pharaoh the king of Mitzrayim."

Rashi explains, "Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to Bnei Yisrael" means that they must lead the Yidden gently, and they must tolerate them. 'Hashem commanded them to Pharaoh, the king of Mitzrayim' means

they must honor Pharaoh when they speak with him."

Why was it important that Moshe and Aharon honor Pharaoh? Did he deserve honor? The Chasam Sofer (ד"ה ויצום) writes, "Hashem commanded them not to dishonor the king, because if Pharaoh's will be shamed and disgraced his sins will be forgiven, and then he won't be punished."

Enduring embarrassments

would erase Pharaoh's sins and then he won't be qualified for the ten plagues.

We learn from this that one shouldn't be upset when he endures shame and humiliation. Something very beneficial is happening to him. All his sins are being atoned, and he will be freed from all suffering.

Pharaoh enslaved 600,000 Yidden and tortured them bitterly, nevertheless, a little humiliation would clean his slate and he wouldn't be punished with the *makos*. This teaches a *kal vechamor* for every Yid that humiliation totally cleans away his sins. Because no matter who he is, or what he did, he certainly isn't as bad as Pharaoh. His humiliation will therefore save him from all kinds of *makos* and punishments.

Rebbe Moshe Leib Sasover *zt'l* explained the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 107:17), אוילים בדרך פשעם ומעונותיהם יתענו as follows: אוילים, the fools, בדרך פשעם ומעונותיהם,

because of their sins, יתענו, they fast and afflict themselves. But they are fools, because they don't need to fast. They can attain the same atonement by hearing their humiliation and remaining silent. That's better than a thousand fasts.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 9.) states, גדול המעשה יותר מהעושה, "influencing others to give *tzedakah* is greater than giving *tzedakah* yourself." The Yaavatz explains that this is because of the humiliation people endure when they try to convince others to give *tzedakah*.

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 256) states, "Holy communities have a custom when it is around a half hour or an hour close to Shabbos, the *shaliach tzibur* announces that everyone should prepare for Shabbos. This announcement is instead of blowing the shofar that was blown in past generations [to remind people to prepare for Shabbos]. It is proper to

introduce this custom in every community."

The Mishnah Berurah (256:2) writes, "This announcement is to prevent people from *chilul Shabbos*. In very large communities, where it is impossible to announce, it is very proper that volunteers should go around the streets to tell people to close their stores and to light the Shabbos candles. Today, in some large communities, there are holy groups founded for the motive of increasing *shemiras Shabbos*. Fortunate is their portion, because they are making Yidden righteous before their Father in heaven. Those who always do this mitzvah will merit children *gedolei Yisrael*."

In Radin, where the Chofetz Chaim lived, there was an organization called *מוהרי שבת*. They would go to Jewish storeowners on Friday

afternoon and encourage them to close their stores early, before Shabbos. The Chofetz Chaim urged people to join the *מוהרי שבת* group, and sometimes the Chofetz Chaim himself went with them on Friday afternoons, to speak with the storeowners.

Once, Friday afternoon, the Chofetz Chaim asked his student, Reb Avraham Kalmanovitz *ztl*,⁶ *to join him on such a mission. They walked from store to store, and reminded the shopkeepers to close their stores at the right time.*

At one store, the owner shouted at them for telling him what to do and he smacked them.

The Chofetz Chaim and Reb Avraham Kalmanowitz didn't answer back. They silently left the store and went on to the next store...

6. Years later, Reb Avraham Kalmanowitz became the *rosh yeshiva* of Mir, in America.

A couple of weeks later, someone came to the Chofetz Chaim in a hysteric state. He said that his wife was in the midst of childbirth and she and the child were at risk.

The Chofetz Chaim asked him, "Is your wife careful with the three mitzvos one is tested on, by childbirth?" (The *Mishnah Shabbos* 2:6 states, על שלשה דברים נשים מתות בשעת לידתן: על שאינן זהירות בנדה ובחלה ובהלכת הנר, "For three sins women die in childbirth: for not being cautious with the laws of *niddah*, *challah*, and lighting the Shabbos candles.")

The man said that she is cautious with all of those. The Chofetz Chaim immediately summoned for Reb Avraham Kalmanowitz (who was learning in the yeshiva's beis medresh) and said, "You remember, a couple of weeks ago we were humiliated by a storeowner. Are you willing to give the merits you earned from that humiliation to this man who needs a salvation?"

Reb Avraham granted him those merits.

Moments later, they heard the good news that a healthy son was born. It was evident that the merits of the humiliation saved this woman's life and the life of her child.

After this episode, Reb Avraham Kalmanowitz said to the Chofetz Chaim, "Rebbe, I have two questions: (1) You were also humiliated and you were also smacked by the shopkeeper. Why did you ask me to give my merits? You could have given yours. (2) If the reward for embarrassments is so great, shouldn't I keep it for myself?"

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "I'm an old man, and I went through a lot in my lifetime. At this point of my life, it doesn't bother me so much when someone humiliates me. But you are still young. The disgrace certainly hurt you very deeply. Therefore, I asked you to give him your merits. Your merit is greater

than mine, and it could help this man. Regarding your second question, that you should keep the merits for yourself, I say the opposite: Why do we need merits, if it isn't to help others?"

The following story happened four years ago, in תשע"ו. A woman read one of our booklets (*Torah Wellsprings/Beer*

HaParashah) that discussed the power of *tefillah* that is given to those who were embarrassed and don't answer back. This woman had a son who was still childless seven years after his marriage, so she kept her eyes and ears open for an opportunity to get a blessing from someone who was embarrassed and didn't answer back.

She didn't have to wait long. She heard a woman disgrace her neighbor, and the neighbor didn't answer back. So, this older woman asked the humiliated woman to bless her son with children. She

obliged. A child was born nine months later.

Reb Mendel of Permishlan *zt'l* once made a big *seudas hodoah* (celebration of gratitude). People asked him, "What is the purpose of this *seudah*? Generally, people make such a *seudah* when someone was ill and he became well, but you were well the entire time? Also, people make such *seudos* when they had a miracle, but as far as we know, you didn't have a special miracle recently. So, what is the purpose of this *seudah*?"

Reb Mendel of Permishlan told them that recently, someone embarrassed him in a very dishonoring way, and he is celebrating his embarrassment.

They said, "We understand that you accept the humiliation with a happy heart because you believe everything is for the good, but is that a reason to make a *seudas hoda'ah*?"

Reb Mendel of Permishlan explained, "Let me tell you of a tradition that I received from my father, and he received it from his father, and from generations before him: If, by decree of Heaven, someone must become ill, but he has merits, or he has the merits of his ancestors, the illness is exchanged. Instead of becoming ill, he is humiliated. Recently, someone humiliated me and it was very painful. But if it weren't for this humiliation, I would have become ill. I would go to doctors, people would say *Tehillim*, and there would be a lot of worry and pain. Eventually, after months pass, when Hashem sends me a *refuah sheleimah*, I would make a *seudas hodoah* to thank Hashem. But now, with

a moment of humiliation, I was spared from this entire ordeal. Shouldn't I make a *seudas hodah*?"⁷

The Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar HaAnavah* 3:39) writes, "Reb Avraham HaLevi said that he learned humility from the earth. It is impossible to make an earthenware utensil from raw earth. One must grind the earth first – and the more one grinds the earth, the better. The same is with a person: the more disgrace and humiliation he receives, it is better for him."

We say (after *Shemonah Esrei*), ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה. We are asking to be like the earth; with immense humility. This is attained when one is humiliated and shamed, but doesn't answer back.

7. Chazal say, טוב שברופאים לגיהנם, "The best of the doctors go to Gehinom." This phrase can be explained as follows:

When someone humiliates and shames his fellow man, he is the best doctor, because he is saving his fellow man from grave illnesses. Nevertheless, he will go to Gehinom, because he shamed his fellow man. Thus, the best doctor goes to Gehinom.

Ahavas Yisrael

Hashem said (6:5), וּגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי, את נאקת בני ישראל, "I also heard Bnei Yisrael's shouts." A lesson in *ahavas Yisrael* is concealed in these words:

When a Yid in distress cries to you, and you pay attention to his needs and you seek to help him out, Hashem says, "Just as you listen to your fellow man, וּגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי, I will also listen to your shouts and cries, and I will help you."

Rashi (6:26) writes, "Sometimes the Torah writes Aharon's name before Moshe's, and sometimes, Moshe's name is written before Aharon's. This tells us they were equal."

The Shlah HaKadosh asks, how can we say Moshe and Aharon were equal? The Torah testifies, לֹא קָם נְבִיא עֹד, במשה, that there was never a *navi* like Moshe Rabbeinu. So how does Rashi say שקולין כאחד, that they were on the same level?

The Ksav Sofer replies that for a short period of time, when they were going to Pharaoh for the very first time to speak about redeeming Bnei Yisrael, Aharon HaCohen's greatness equaled that of Moshe's. The explanation is as follows:

Aharon HaCohen was the older brother. He was the leader and the *navi* of Klal Yisrael. When the nation needed something from Pharaoh, Aharon spoke with Pharaoh. But now Hashem chose Moshe Rabbeinu to speak with Pharaoh. Now Aharon's mission was to serve as Moshe's aide. Moshe feared that Aharon would be jealous and upset. Therefore, for seven days, Moshe pleaded that Hashem shouldn't give him this mission.

But Aharon wasn't upset at all. The Torah reveals, וְרֵאךְ, ושמה בלבו, "Aharon will see you and his heart will be filled with joy." Aharon's happiness with his younger brother's success is an extraordinary

level of humility and *ahavas Yisrael*. Therefore, at this time, Aharon's greatness equaled Moshe's.

The following story (heard from a renowned *shadchan*) is about a family who had five children in the age of *shidduchim*. Finally, the oldest daughter became a *kallah*. The family rejoiced, and hoped that this was an omen that soon the others in the family would get engaged and married.

But their happiness was short lived, because a couple of weeks after the engagement, for an invalid reason, the *chasan* broke off the *shidduch*.

The *kallah* and her family were devastated. The shame and the disappointment were unbearable.

A few weeks later the former *chasan* found another *shidduch*, but the family of the girl told him that they refuse to let them get engaged before he brings a *shtar mechilah*,

certificate of forgiveness, from the previous *kallah*.

But the previous *kallah*, and her family, didn't want to forgive. Their pain was too raw, too acute, and as we wrote, there wasn't a valid reason for him to break off the *shidduch* so cruelly and abruptly.

People tried to convince her to forgive, but it was just too painful for her to just let go of the wrong that was done to her.

But then, with super strength, she found place in her heart to forgive her former fiancé. She signed the *shtar mechilah*, and he was engaged to somebody else.

Three weeks later, the first *kallah* was engaged again, and presently they are building a *bayis ne'aman b'Yisrael* together.

The moral of the story: You don't lose out by being *mevater*. You only gain.

In this week's *parashah* it states (9:31-32), והחטה והכוסמת, "The wheat and the spelt weren't smitten [by the *barad*, hail] because they are late."

Rashi explains, "They grow late and when the *barad* fell they were still soft, and they can stand before something hard." The hard *barad*/hail just bent the stalks because they were soft and bendable. Whereas the פשתה והשעורה נכתה,

"The flax and the barley were smitten, בני השעורה אביב והפשתה, גבעל, because they were fully grown; they were hard, and they were broken by the hail.

We learn from this that when one is soft, and he bends and he is *mevater*, he will have a better life. Those who are tough and insist that everything be the way they want it, have a hard time in life.

***Kedushah* – Keeping Guard**

The *pasuk* says (9:20), הירא את דבר ה' מעבדי פרעה הנים את עבדיו ואת מוקנהו אל הבתים, "Those of Pharaoh's servants who feared Hashem drove their slaves and cattle into the home..."

The Imrei Chaim *zt'l* taught that this *pasuk* hints to the ways of the יראי ה', those who fear Hashem. They bring their children into the home to save them from the negative influences that are outside.

לכרמא לא תקרב, "Go away! Go away!" we tell the *nazir*. 'Keep away from the vineyard.' There is no prohibition for the *nazir* to walk through the vineyard. Nevertheless, we advise him that he shouldn't even pass through the vineyard, so he won't accidentally eat from the grapes. We must make safeguards for us too, to keep away from what might lead us to sin.

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 40:) states, לך לך אמרינן נזירא סחור סחור

Reb Yehudah HaChosid (*sefer Chasidim* 196) teaches, the

letters 'א 'ב are near each other in the alef beis. This hints that when one is אב, runs away from an *aveirah*, אב, a miracle will happen to him.

There was an old lady who touched every bag she saw. Once at a *chasunah* she began touching the bags that belonged to the *kallah*. The *kallah's* mother saw this and shouted at her. "These are the *kallah's* bags. Keep away from them!"

The old woman was very embarrassed. She ran home and cried. Her son, Reb Shimshon, came to visit her, and he was shocked when he saw her crying like that.

She told him what happened. Shimshon replied, "Well, she's right. You shouldn't be touching other people's bags." And he tried to convince her to stop this bad custom.

The old mother said, "Sit down for a moment and I will tell you a story that I never

told anyone, ever before. When I was young, in Poland, the *resha'im* entered our city and cruelly killed my father in front of my eyes. Then he commanded us to leave our homes and to go to the ghetto. Everyone had permission to take along two bags with him, and nothing more.

"I gathered my precious belongings made from gold and silver, and placed them into one bag. In the other bag, I placed my son, Shimshon. I ran together with the throngs of people, leaving the city to go to the ghetto. But then, suddenly, the *resha'im* changed the rules. Now only one bag was permitted. Obviously, I decided to drop the bag filled with precious items, so I could remain with my son, Shimshon. I dropped the bag on the roadside, and I continued on with the throngs of people.

After walking some time, I discovered that I threw away

the wrong bag. I was carrying the bag with gold and silver, and my Shimshon was left on the road, far behind. It was impossible to turn back. Whoever went back was shot... Since then, whenever I see a bag, I open it. I think, 'Perhaps my Shimshon is there.' This is the origin of my unusual custom. When Hashem saved me from the Holocaust and I came to Eretz Yisrael, I adopted a son, and I called him Shimshon, and that's you."

This story was publicized a few years ago. The *nimshal* that I want to take from this story is the awareness that there is only so much one can take into his hands. He can't take everything. One has to choose whether he wants to take his children or technology — because one is on the expense of the other. If he wants good children, he has to be ready to drop those matters that can ruin the *chinuch* of the children.

The Tests make us Special to Hashem

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 113.) says there are three categories of righteous people whose deeds are so special and outstanding in Hashem's eyes, that Hashem proclaims their greatness each day. They are: (1) A bachelor who lives in a city and doesn't sin. (2) A poor person who returns a lost object. (3) A wealthy person who gives *maasar* in privacy, when people don't know about it.

When a person lives with *kedushah*, he is cautious with his eyes, etc. Hashem will proclaim his greatness in all worlds. Even if he isn't perfect, each time he is cautious with his thoughts and with his eyes, it brings great joy in heaven.

Chazal (see *Rashi Vayikra* 20:26) teach, "Don't say you don't like eating *chazir*. Say you enjoy eating *chazir*, but my Father in heaven forbids

it." The Ksav Sofer (*Drashos*) explains that this is because the greatness of serving Hashem is specifically when it is hard.

Chazal say, יכול כמוני ת"ל קדושתו, למעלה מקדושתכם, "Perhaps you should be holy like Me? No. My holiness is above yours."

We can explain that the question is, perhaps a person should be like Hashem, who doesn't have any interest at all in bad things?

The answer is, no, a person should have interest in bad things, because otherwise there is no test at all.

However, let us clarify: although his body desires sins, at the same time his neshamah is revolted by sin. His neshamah doesn't want to have any connection to *aveiros*, because he doesn't want to be separated from his Father in heaven.

On that note, we share the

following *vort* from the Sfas Emes:

The *pasuk* (6:7) says, והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים. One of the translations of סבלות is "tolerance." The Sfas Emes (תרל"א ד"ה והוצאתי) writes (in the name of his grandfather, the Chidushei HaRim ז"ל) that when people live in *galus*, they begin to tolerate sins and the ways of the gentiles. They begin to think that an occasional *aveirah* is o.k. They aren't so upset when they occasionally transgress. That mindset was prevalent in Mitzrayim too. Hashem promised, והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים, I will make it that you can't tolerate sins and the ways of Mitzrayim any longer.

The Sfas Emes writes that when one becomes revolted by *aveiros*, that is the beginning of the *geulah*. *Galus* means tolerating sins, and the beginning of the redemption is when one can't tolerate sins anymore.

Shovavim

Chazal say that a *bas kol* goes out every day and announces, (Yirmiyahu 3:22), שׁוֹבוּ בָנִים, שׁוֹבְבִים, "Do *teshuvah*, rebellious children." During the weeks of Shovavim this call is more clearly heard. We can take advantage of this call to return to Hashem.

The Pri Megadim (*HaMagid*) writes three translations for the word שׁוֹבֵב: (1) rebellious/מַרְדָּ (2) broken/שְׁבִירָה (3) banished/גִּירוּשׁ. The *bas kol* says, שׁוֹבוּ בָנִים שׁוֹבְבִים. This means even someone who rebelled against Hashem, he injured his soul, and became a *baal mum*, blemished, due to his *aveiros*, and was banished from Hashem's presence, a *bas kol* tells him, שׁוֹבוּ בָנִים שׁוֹבְבִים, return to Hashem, אַרְפֵּה מְשׁוֹבְתֵיכֶם, and everything will be atoned, forgiven, and cured.

The Pri Megadim adds a fourth translation for שׁוֹבְבִים. It means "people who have done *teshuvah* several times before." Thus, שׁוֹבוּ בָנִים שׁוֹבְבִים can be

translated, "Do *teshuvah*, you children who have done *teshuvah* several times before."

Last year (and years before that) there was also Shovavim. We tried to do *teshuvah* then. There were also Rosh Hashanahs and Yom Kippurs, and many other days when we were inspired to do *teshuvah*. We repented, made *kabalos* to become better, yet we didn't keep up with our resolves, and we basically remained the same (or *chas veshalom*, we became worse). We feel that it is too late to do *teshuvah* again. The *bas kol* announces, שׁוֹבוּ בָנִים שׁוֹבְבִים, even if you did *teshuvah* many times before, do *teshuvah* again, אַרְפֵּה מְשׁוֹבְתֵיכֶם, and I will accept your *teshuvah*, and heal and cleanse you from your sins.

The reason we can still do *teshuvah* is hinted in the word בָּנִים, children. If a slave sins to his master many times, his master will banish him, and then there is no way

back. But when a son sins against his father he can always come back. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, שׁוֹבוּ בָּנִים, we are Hashem's children, and Hashem always grants us another opportunity to do *teshuvah*.⁸

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 15.) says, that a *bas kol* announced, שׁוֹבוּ בָּנִים שׁוֹבְבִים חוּץ מֵאַחֵר. The Rebbe of Volednick *zt'l* (*Sha'aris Yisrael Shaar Shovavim, Drush* 1) explains that חוּץ מֵאַחֵר means, even someone who sinned so much until he is חוּץ, outside the

boundaries of *kedushah*, and he is אַחֵר, a totally different person due to his sins, nevertheless, the *bas kol* calls to him, שׁוֹבוּ בָּנִים שׁוֹבְבִים, that he should return to Hashem.

Small Steps

Moshe told Pharaoh, דַּרְךְ שְׁלוֹשָׁתַי, "Let us go on a three-day trip in the desert..." He didn't request that Pharaoh should free the Yidden forever because that would be asking too much from Pharaoh. That would be asking for something that is beyond Pharaoh's abilities. But Pharaoh should

8. If a one-hundred-dollar bill falls in the mud, and people step on it, and it gets wrinkled and muddy, it is still worth a hundred dollars. Similarly, if a diamond falls into mud, its value remains the same. The same is with a Yid. Regardless of where a Yid falls, he can return to Hashem. Despite of what occurred, his self-value was never depreciated. The Rebbe of Savran *zt'l* once accidentally blew out the candles on Shabbos (with his talis), and he was very depressed about that, and he wasn't able to sleep all night. In the morning, when it was time to say *pesukei d'zimra*, he didn't have any joy in his heart to daven. But then he thought, "If this was a sin, I will go to Gehinom. Chazal say that *resha'im* sing *shirah* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu in Gehinom. I will also sing *shirah* to Hashem, here on Earth," and with this thought in mind, he was able to daven properly.

The lesson is that one shouldn't moan on the past, rather to pick oneself up and to begin again.

be able to agree to let them leave for three days.

This is a reminder that the path of *teshuvah* is accomplished by taking small steps of improvement. It is hard for a person to make major changes in, but he can take small steps in the right direction, and eventually he will improve his ways.

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* teaches that when one takes small steps, he will have *siyata dishmaya* to succeed. But when one takes large steps, he doesn't have *siyata dishmaya*, he ends up falling and losing everything.

It states (*Mishlei* 19:3), אולת אדם תסלף דרכו ועל ה' יזעף לבו, "Man's foolish ways ruins his path, and he gets angry at Hashem." The Vilna Gaon explains:

"Chazal (*Shabbos* 104.) say, 'When one strives to be pure, he is helped from Above.' Sometimes, a person begins learning Torah

or to perform a mitzvah and then he stops because it became very hard for him. The reason it became hard is because he didn't get help from Above. וזועף לבו על ה', he becomes angry with Hashem. He asks, 'Why isn't Hashem helping me?' But really, he failed because of his own foolishness. Because a person should seek to grow according to his level; he shouldn't jump levels. If he will go according to his level, he will succeed, and he will have *siyata dishmaya*. However, this person didn't climb up according to his level, therefore he wasn't helped. This is the translation of the *pasuk*, אולת אדם, because of his foolishness that he wasn't acting with *yishuv hadaas*, סילוף דרכו, and he went beyond his level, therefore, וזועף על ה', he is angry with Hashem, why didn't Hashem help me?"

The *pasuk* before (*Mishlei* 19:2) states, אין ברגלים חוטא. The

Vilna Gaon explains, "The *רגלים* means good *middos* that one can accustom himself in these good ways until they become his second nature. However, one must go from level to level, like someone climbing a ladder. He

shouldn't jump to levels that are beyond him. This is the translation of *אץ ברגלים*, when a person jumps to a high level that is beyond him, *הוטא*, he is sinning and he will end up without anything, because he will fall from that level."

Torah

It states (6:9), *וידבר משה בן אל בני ישראל ולא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח ומעבודה קשה*, "Moshe told these matters to Bnei Yisrael [that Hashem said He will redeem Bnei Yisrael from Mitzrayim], but they didn't pay attention to Moshe's [encouraging words] because of their short breath and hard work."

It seems that it was a mixture of *קוצר רוח ומעבודה קשה*, short breath and hard work together, which prevented them from embracing Moshe's optimistic message. They were enslaved in Mitzrayim, working very hard, and therefore they didn't have place in their hearts to accept Moshe's uplifting message. But if they had Torah, the Torah would bring *yishuv hadaas* and comfort, and they would be able to accept Moshe's encouraging words, despite their slavery. But when it was *מקוצר רוח ומעבודה קשה* together, which means they were slaves and they didn't have the comfort that Torah brings, they were

What does *קוצר רוח*, short breath, mean, and how did it prevent them from accepting Moshe's comforting words?

The Or HaChaim explains, "Perhaps, since they weren't *bnei Torah*, they didn't accept Moshe's words. They were *קוצר רוח*, short breathed, because the Torah is *מרחבת לבו של אדם* broadens man's heart."

too confused and down to accept Moshe's words.⁹

person to *teshuvah*, and to complete atonement.

Even if a person finds studying Torah hard, he should keep trying. Eventually, he will understand and he will develop love and desire for Torah.

There were two brothers, one was learning Torah amidst poverty, and his wealthy brother would send him eight *zlotes* each month to help him out.

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 19.) says, כל העוסק בתורה הקב"ה עושה לו חפציו, "Whoever studies Torah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu does his will." The Maharasha explains that he will succeed in all his ways, even without making *hishtadlus*.

Once the wealthy brother said he wants a contract, to clarify that he will get reward for the Torah that he is supporting.

The Yesod HaAvodah writes, "Chazal say that Torah atones, protects, and saves. The fire of Gehinom doesn't affect a *talmid chacham*. Someone who studies for five hours without stopping...in my opinion, this is a great matter. It purifies, cleanses, brings the

The brother, the scholar, replied that he needs time to think it over, and he asked Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l*. Reb Chaim Volozhiner said that even without a contract, the wealthy brother will receive reward for the Torah he is supporting. As the Gemara says, ונשים במאי זכי, which merit do women have? And the Gemara replies that they earn the merit of Torah,

9. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said that when a person has a doubt and doesn't know how to proceed, he should learn a *daf* Gemara, because then he will have *yishuv hadaas*, and he will be able to decide how to proceed.

because they help their husbands learn Torah. Similarly, since this wealthy brother is enabling his poor brother to study, he will get the reward of Torah for this.

Nevertheless, Reb Chaim Volozhiner added, he won't get the special reward that is given for those who study Torah *מתוך הדחק*, when one is poor. The wealthy brother has the merit of Torah, but it is without any hardships. He earns reward for Torah, but not the ultimate reward that goes to his poor brother and to those who study Torah *מתוך הדחק*, amidst difficulties and poverty.

Review until the Ideas Penetrate

Every Friday night, in the beis medresh Zichron Moshe, Yerushalayim, Reb Shalom Shwadron *zt'l* gave a *mussar drashah*. Once, a *bachur* asked his friend whether he would be going that Friday night to Zichron Moshe to hear the *drashah*. The *bachur* replied, "No. I heard his

drashos many times, and the same points are repeated. I know them all by heart."

After saying this, they noticed that Reb Shalom Shwardon was behind them, listening to their conversation.

That Friday night, as Reb Shwardon was saying his *drashah* in Zichron Moshe, Reb Shalom noticed that those two *bachurim* had come after all. So, in his *mussar drashah*, he said the following *mashal*: Someone parked his car in the middle of the road, and began reading the newspaper. The cars behind him were honking, urging him to drive on because he was blocking traffic, but he didn't pay attention to them. Soon, many cars were lined up. They were all honking, and he just sat there, minding his own business, not paying attention to the trouble he was causing.

At one point, he got out of his car and shouted to all the cars, "Why are you honking so much? I heard you already.

Enough! Why do you keep making the same honks over and over again?"

They replied, "We will continue honking until you get our message."

Reb Shalom Shwardon explained that the goal of *mussar* isn't just to know the ideas. Even if you know all the points, if it doesn't cause you to improve, you have to hear them again and again until they make an impression.

In a letter, the Imrei Chaim *zt'l* writes the following to his grandson:

"You requested that I write to you about *yiras Hashem*. Behold [Hashem advised the Mitzrim to bring their slaves and cattle into their homes so the *barad*/hail won't kill them.] it states (9:20-21), הִירָא אֶת דְּבַר ה' מֵעַבְרֵי פְרַעְהָ הַנִּים אֶת עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל הַבָּתִּים וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא שָׁם לְבוֹ לְדַבֵּר ה' וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת מִקְנֵהוּ בַשָּׂדֶה, "Those of Pharaoh's servants who feared Hashem's word quickly drove their slaves and cattle into their homes. But those who didn't

put to heart Hashem's word, they left their slaves and cattle in the field.' We see from this *pasuk* that the difference between those who fear Hashem and those who don't is whether one is שָׁם עַל לֵב, takes the matters to heart..."

It is really very difficult to comprehend why the Mitzrim left their animals and their slaves in the field. Six *makos* have already passed, and all of Moshe's warnings transpired. Why weren't they at least cautious, and bring their slaves and animals into their homes?

The question is even greater when we consider the Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 12:2) which states that Iyov was the only person who was הִירָא אֶת דְּבַר ה', who feared Hashem. Pharaoh and all his servants didn't take any precautions, at all. How can we understand this?

The answer is, if one doesn't think, one can do the most foolish things.

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.2) writes, "Someone who walks

in this world without thinking whether his ways are correct or not is like a blind person walking along the riverside, whose danger is certainly very great. The tragedy that can happen to him is greater than the chances of his survival."

It states (*Devarim* 4:39), וידעת, היום והשבות אל לבבך "Know today, and bring it into your heart..." The Torah is urging us to review emunah. Because without review, it remains in the superficial layers of the mind and doesn't influence deed.¹⁰

Shevat

It states (*Devarim* 1:3,5), ויהי בארבעים שנה בעשתי עשר חדש באחד לחודש... הואיל משה באר את התורה לאמר, "It was in the fortieth year, on the eleventh month, on the first of the month (*rosh chodesh Shevat*)... Moshe began explaining the Torah..."

Tzaddikim said that this

teaches us that on *rosh chodesh Shevat*, new bounties of Torah come down, to help people understand Torah. Moshe's באר, explaining the Torah, brought clarity in Torah for all generations.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* would say that on *rosh chodesh Shevat*, the wellsprings of Torah open. The *chiddushei* Torah of the entire year – for every Torah student – comes from *rosh chodesh Shevat*. The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* (and some say the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l*) said he can tell the difference between his *chiddushei* Torah before *rosh chodesh Shevat* and the *chiddushei* Torah learned after *rosh chodesh Shevat*.

Rosh chodesh Shevat is therefore an ideal time to make a new commitment towards studying and growing in Torah.

10. It states, ראשית גוים עמלק. This hints that Amalek keeps all good ideas in his ראש - ראשית, head, but he doesn't bring it to his heart.

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