

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

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Matos



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

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Parshas Mattos

The final *pasuk* of this week's *parashah* states (32:42) ונבה הלך וילכד את קנת ואת (32:42) ובניה ויקרא לה נבה בשמו, "Novach conquered Knas and its suburbs, and named it Novach, in his name" (32:42).

Rashi writes, לה in this *pasuk* is written without a dot in the 'ה (אינו מפיך ה')...because this name didn't last.... It is read like לא, 'no', [implying that this name, נבה, didn't last]..."

When a *heh* has a dot in it (called a *dagesh*) the grammatically correct way to read it is somewhat forcefully, until the letter *heh* is pronounced. Without a dot it sounds like לא. There is no dot in the *heh* of this *pasuk* to imply that the name נבה didn't remain.

The *Pnei Menachem zt'l* taught that a dot in the middle of a ה hints to the heart, which is in the middle of the body. The *pasuk* is teaching that whatever is done without the

ה' מפיך, without heart, it doesn't last. In contrast, when one does a *mitzvah* with all his heart, that *mitzvah* will remain forever. The merits of that *mitzvah* will remain with him, and with his children, for generations to come.

Obviously, the primary place for the heart is by *tefillah*, the עבודה שבלב. One should accustom himself to pray with all his heart.

For killing accidentally, one must flee to *arei miklat* and remain there until the *cohen gadol* dies. The *Mishnah* (*Makos* 11) states, "The mothers of the *cohanim gedolim* would supply food and clothing [to the fugitives in the *arei miklat*] so they shouldn't pray for their son to die."

The murderers who fled to *arei miklat* were tempted to pray that the *cohen gadol* die, because his death frees them from living in *arei miklat*. To

prevent such prayers, the mother of the *cohen gadol* supplied food and clothing. She wanted them to feel content and satisfied in *arei miklat*, so they wouldn't pray for her son's death.

We can ask: the *arei miklat* were like prisons. The murderers living there couldn't travel; go to a relative's wedding; go on a business trips, etc. How were the food and clothing parcels sufficient to placate them, that they weren't interested in leaving the *arei miklat* anymore? Wouldn't they still pray for the *cohen gadol's* death, so they could go free?

The answer is, they still wanted to leave the *arei miklat*, but at least now, with the care packages they were receiving, life was bearable for them. Now, even if they pray that the *cohen gadol* should die, they won't pray with a complete heart.

The *cohen gadol's* mother knew that the most powerful

tefillah is a *tefillah* said with all one's heart. Those were the *tefillos* she succeeded to thwart, with her care packages.

In the desert, every year on Tisha b'Av, Klal Yisrael would dig for themselves graves and sleep in them overnight. In the morning, those who survived climbed out of the grave, and those who died were already in their grave. This was their punishment for the sin of the miraglim.

The nation had 600,000 men, and they were all destined to die 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 the last year they lived in the desert, they received a "discount." That year, on the night of Tisha b'Av, 15,000 people lay in their graves. They thought they would all die, because they were the last

15,000 people from the generation of the miraglim. Surprisingly, they all woke up alive and well, in the morning. They were granted a gift of life.¹

We can explain that on that final year, they were saved because of their *tefillos*. Each year, when they climbed into their graves, they knew that 15,000 people will die during the night. Everyone prayed, but they didn't pray with all their hearts. Each person felt that his life might not be in danger, because they knew 15,000 people will die and everyone else will survive. But in that final year, fifteen thousand people climbed into their graves. They knew they were all destined to die. When they prayed that night, one can only imagine the *tefillos* they prayed. They prayed with all their heart. And when one prays with all his heart, his *tefillos* are answered.

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

It's because when one is travelling and it starts to rain, he knows he has nowhere to turn other than to Hashem. And when one knows that only Hashem can help, his *tefillos* are very focused and very powerful. It is impossible to negate such sincere *tefillos*. Only the *tefillos* of the *cohen gadol* on Yom Kippur in the Kodesh Kadashim can prevent such *tefillos* from being answered.

When one prays for a *refuah*, he thinks perhaps the doctors can cure him and he can be

1. According to Rabbeinu Tam, the celebration of the 15th of Av is that they were granted life, and spared from the original decree.

healed by the rules of nature. Therefore, he doesn't put all his *kavanah* into his *tefillos*. When one knows that only Hashem can help, then he prays with all his heart. That is a perfect *tefillah*, which brings on wonders.

Reb Eliyashiv's mother was childless for several years. She and her husband, Reb Avraham, traveled for two weeks to the medical center of Vienna, to find a *refuah* so she could bear children. The doctors told her, "There's nothing we can do." She made herself strong and she didn't cry during their trip home. But when she came home to Humla, she went to a silo where she could be alone, and cried copiously. Then she went into the house.

Her father (author of *Leshem*) saw that her eyes were red. He asked her about that. She gave an excuse, but her father wanted to know the real reason. She told him what the doctors said. She said she held

back from crying for two weeks and now she was pouring out her tears.

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 with truth.' What does it mean, to pray to Hashem with truth? When one knows there's nowhere to turn other than to Hashem, that is a true prayer. Then 'קרוב ה', Hashem is close and He listens to your *tefillos*..."

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

Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 219) teaches, ארבעה צריכים להודות, "Four people must praise Hashem: יורדי הים כשעלו ממנה, those who sailed the seas and came to dry land. והולכי מדבריות, those who traversed a desert and reached civilization, ומי שהיה חולה ונתרפא, one who was healed, ומי שהיה חבוש בבית האסורים ויצא, someone who was released from prison.

also not the same. For those who sailed the sea or traversed a desert, the pasuk states ויצילם, Hashem saved them. But for the ill and imprisoned it states וישעם, which is a lesser salvation than יצילם. Since they prayed with less intensity, therefore the salvation was imperfect.

וְיָזְכְּרוּם וְכָל הַחַיִּים יוֹדֵךְ סֵלָה [to remember these four] is the pasuk: 'every living being should praise You, always.' חַיִּים is *roshei teivos* for ח'בוש, י'סורים, י'ם, מ'דבר, imprisonment, illness, sea, and desert."

Shulchan Aruch explains that they are obligated to say the *brachah* הגומל לחייבים טובות שגמלני כל טוב.

The source for their obligation is *Tehillim* (107) which discusses these four categories of people, and the pasuk obligates them, יודו לה' חסדו, to praise Hashem.

The *Malbim* (107:6) notes that when the *pesukim* discuss those who were sailing overseas or traversing a desert, it states ויצעקו אל ה', they shouted to Hashem. In contrast, for the ill and for the imprisoned, the pasuk states ויצעקו. This is also a shout of prayer, but it isn't as intense as ויצעקו.

The results of their tefillos are

The *Malbim* teaches us from these *pesukim* that the salvation comes in accordance to the intensity of the tefillos that preceded it. But why does *Tehillim* show the more devoted and intense tefillos by those who travel overseas or traverse a desert, while the weaker tefillos are mentioned for those who are ill or imprisoned?

This is because when people are lost in a desert, and similarly, when people are being tossed about on a ship in a storm, they know no one can save them other than Hashem. Their tefillos are intense, as implied by ויצעקו, and results

with יצילים, a complete salvation. Those who are ill, and similarly, those imprisoned in jail, think a good doctor or a professional lawyer may be all they need. Their prayers are on the level of וייעקו, not wholesome (because they don't realize they need Hashem exclusively), so the salvation is also only the level of וישעם, an incomplete salvation.²

The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitch zy'a told the following story: There was a very simple Yid who lived in a village near Yerushalayim. He would come to Yerushalayim every week to

sell his produce. Before returning to his village, he went to one of the rabbanim of Yerushalayim, and ask him to show him what to daven during the upcoming week. (The rabbi would tell him, for example, that *rosh chodesh* will be that week, and show him what to say on *rosh chodesh*, etc.)

Once, this simple farmer came to Yersuhalayim and all the stores were closed. "Is it Shabbos today?" he wondered. "Did I make a mistake in counting the days?" He saw people carrying their talis and tefillin, so he knew it wasn't Shabbos.

2. Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l said that there was a time when he thought it would be better if we didn't have three *tefillos* each day, because then people won't daven by rote. "But then I realized, if there aren't three daily *tefillos*, people would get into the routine of not davening at all."

The Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l said that the first halachic question someone asked him came from someone who was wearing his *tefillin shel yad* and holding his *tefillin she rosh*. He asked, "I don't remember whether I'm putting on tefillin, and I'm before *Shacharis*, or whether I'm taking the *tefillin* off, and have already finished the *davening*."

The Rebbe told him that he can put on the tefillin and daven *Shacharis*, because even if he did daven, it was obviously not with much *kavanah*...

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

"It's a fast day today," the person replied. "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 a fast day."

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

The villager was shocked. "For a 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 I ask Hashem for rain, and it immediately begins to rain."

"Do that now," the rav said.

The villager raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father! Your children need rain. Is it

possible You will let Your children die from thirst?" Clouds gathered and it began to rain. His *tefillos* were answered immediately.

One of the translations of יהל is hope, as it states (*Tehillim* 130:7), יהל ישראל אל ה', "Yisrael, hope to Hashem..." Rebbe Isaac of Kamarna *zt'l* uses this translation to explain the *pasuk* (30:3), לא יהל דברו ככל, היותא מפיו יעשה. The *pasuk* can be translated, לא יהל דברו, one shouldn't *hope* that his *tefillos* be effective. One should be *certain* that Hashem will answer his *tefillos*. One should approach *tefillah* with conviction that his *tefillos* will make a difference. When one approaches *tefillah* with that attitude, ככל היותא מפיו יעשה, whatever he requests will be answered.

ככל היותא מפיו יעשה literally כל, "all his *tefillos*" יעשה, will be answered, even those *tefillos* said without *kavanah*. Because one must believe that יהל דברו, ולא, his

words aren't mundane, rather ככל היוצא מפיו, whatever he asks for, יעשה, Hashem will do.

Tefillah is always essential.

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

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

The Apter Rav זt'l had a *kollel* in his beis medresh, and on Rosh Chodesh he would give out the 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."

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 stack of money finished. 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 stood patiently at the end of the line. The Apter Rav returned and gave out money to the *yungerleit*, but when this *yungerman's* turn came, there was no more money left.

The Rebbe said, "Every month, Hashem gives me exactly the 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 needs *tefillah*, because *parnassah* comes from *tefillah*.

When you daven, ask for a lot. Don't be stingy with your requests, because Hashem can give you everything and anything you need.

A visitor at Reb Shimon bar Yochai's *kever* was shouting, "Five hundred dollars! Just five hundred dollars, that's all I'm asking for." His shouts were disturbing a wealthy person, standing next to him. So the wealthy person asked him what he was praying for. The man replied that he owes five hundred dollars rent, and if he doesn't pay it he will be thrown out of his apartment. The wealthy man gave him five hundred dollars and added, "Stop asking for five hundred dollars. People here are asking for much much more than that, and your being satisfied with five hundred

dollars is lowering the rates for all of us."

This humorous story is just a reminder that we shouldn't only ask for small matters. Hashem can give so much, so we might as well *הרהב פיך* *וואמלאהו*, ask for a lot, and Hashem will fulfill our requests.

There was a wealthy, childless couple. The husband sent his wife to Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* to ask for a *brachah* for children. He told her to tell the Rebbe that he is ready to sacrifice all his wealth, if need be, as long as they can have children.

When the woman came to the Rebbe, she stumbled on her words, and accidentally she said, "My husband said he agrees to remain wealthy, as long as we can have children." The Rebbe laughed, as he grasped what she really wanted to say. Then the Rebbe said, "But you spoke correctly. Because Hashem is able to give both: children and

wealth too. Why should we limit ourselves?³

What You Do for Others, You Do for Yourself

A *chasan* was riding the bus and overheard a conversation of another *chasan* seated in front of him. "My *chasunah* is next week" the *chasan* in the seat in front was saying. "I

want to go to tzaddik *ploni* for a *brachah* before my wedding, but despite all my attempts, I wasn't able to get an appointment..."

The *chasan* that was seated behind, tapped him on the shoulder and said, "I apologize, but you were speaking loudly and I overheard your conversation. I

3. 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 give it.

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

A member of his *beis medresh* owns a large furniture factory, and he always came late for *Shacharis*. The *gadol* explained to him that it's proper to come on time to davening, and to make *tefillah* his first priority. The *gadol* explained that *parnassah* comes from *tefillah*, so why should he be lax with *Shacharis*?

The factory owner replied, "If you would know the low level I'm on, you would understand that even coming to *beis medresh* to daven is a great accomplishment for me..."

The *gadol* didn't press the issue anymore, because why should he speak to 'deaf ears'.

Sometime later, there was a fire in the furniture factory.

The owner told the *gadol*, "I know why it happened. It's because I come late to davening."

"How do you know?"

"If the fire department would have come on time, everything would be saved. But they came late, and everything was lost. I understand that this was my punishment for coming late to *Shacharis*."

understand you want to meet with tzaddik... My uncle is that tzaddik's son-in-law. I can ask him to make an appointment for you. You can meet with that tzaddik, still this week."

The other *chasan* was very thankful, and they began speaking. They discovered that they were both getting married on the same night, in the same hall!

"I didn't know there were two halls in the Atzulah?" said the *chasan* from the front seat.

"I didn't know either" said the other *chasan*.

When the *chasan* (who sat behind) came home, he told his father about the conversation and said, "I went with you to Petach Tikvah to see the Atzulah hall. There is only one hall in the building. How can there be two weddings in that hall, on the same night?"

The father quickly called the Atzulah. The manager explained, "You never gave us

a deposit, so we booked the hall with someone else."

It was just a week before the wedding, they had already sent out invitations, and they didn't have a hall...

Askanim got involved and arranged that the *chasunah* be held in an auditorium, two streets away from the Atzulah.

The lesson of this story is: When you do *chesed* for others, you are doing *chesed* for yourself. One *chasan* (from the back seat) overheard another *chasan* yearning to get a *brachah* from a certain tzaddik. He could have kept to himself and not get involved. But he went out of his way to do a *chesed*. Because of that he had time to prepare another hall to celebrate his own *chasunah*. Otherwise, his wedding might have been in the hallway of the Atzulah hall, if that much...!

There were two distant cousins who both got engaged about the same time. They

also booked the same wedding hall. One booked the hall for the 15th of Sivan, and the other booked it for the 16th of Sivan.

The family that booked the hall for the 16th of Sivan had a problem. The *mechutan's* mother had *yahrtzeit* on the 16th of Sivan (for her mother) and halachah states that one shouldn't go to a wedding, and the like, on the day of a *yahrtzeit*. (There are definitely leniencies, but they felt uncomfortable having the wedding on that night, and wanted to change the date.)

The father said to his cousin, "My *mechutan* remembered that the 16th of Sivan is his grandmother's *yahrtzeit*, and he feels uncomfortable making a wedding on that date. Is it possible to exchange dates with you? Can your son get married on the 16th and we'll take the hall for the 15th?"

He wasn't asking for a small favor. It wasn't only an issue of changing the date. It meant

calling the photographer, caterer, musicians, etc., and asking them to come a day later.

The relative's first thought was, "Why do I need this headache shortly before the wedding? I have plenty of other things on my mind. It is so complicated to exchange dates...and it might not even work out..."

But then he decided to go out of his way to do a *chesed* for his cousin. He made all the phone calls, and everything worked out. They exchanged dates.

He did a *chesed* for someone else, and discovered he had done a *chesed* for himself. Because when he was in London, shortly before his son's *chasunah*, he told someone that his son would be getting married on Sivan 16. The man he was speaking to became very excited. "My son is also getting married on the 16th of Sivan! And I want *zechusim* for the success of my

son's *chasunah*; I'm offering to pay for your entire *chasunah*: for the hall, the caterer, the musician...The entire *chasunah* is on me!" The cousin realized that by doing someone else a favor he really did a favor for himself.

Here's another story that demonstrates "What you do for others, you do for yourself."

One morning, after *shacharis*, as the men were wrapping up their talis and tefillin, one of the *mispallelim* went over to a wealthy person who was in the beis medresh, and told him that his daughter's *chasunah* was a week away, and he still didn't have money to pay for the expenses. "Can you lend me fifty thousand *shekels*?" he asked.

This wealthy man had recently taken fifty thousand *shekels* out of the bank, and he stored all that money in an old jacket, in his basement. He prepared this money for his own child's

upcoming *chasunah*. Technically, he could lend the money, but he wasn't certain he wanted to. How could he trust him to pay the money back? So he answered in the way people often answer when someone asks them to lend money. "I don't know if I can do that now... Maybe... I'll check it out... Call me later..." As he was driving home, he placed himself in the poor man's shoes and felt sorry for him. Only a week before the wedding, without money, without knowing how he would manage... He decided to be *moser nefesh* to help him. He went down to his basement to get the money, but the jacket wasn't there! Trembling, he asked his wife whether she knew where the jacket was. She told him that she threw out the jacket yesterday, because the jacket was old and not being used... She didn't know that there was money inside it.

Fortunately, the garbage wasn't taken away yet, and he was

able to find his jacket with the money inside.

By seeking to help his fellow man, he helped himself. Otherwise he wouldn't know his jacket was thrown out, until it would be too late to retrieve it.⁴

A close relative of someone who was hospitalized in Hadassah Hospital, Yerushalayim, understood that he must speak with the president of the hospital to get the proper medical care for this patient.

But he was a regular person, and couldn't get in contact with the president. So he called Reb Elimelech Firer *shlita* (a famous medical referral agent with fantastic connections). He knew Reb Firer could get him an appointment with the president of the hospital, but Reb Firer wasn't answering the phone.

Driving home later that night, he saw a car on the shoulder signaling for help. At first, he didn't want to stop; he had so much on his mind. But then he

4. A *shidduch* was about to be finalized, but then a finance issue arose.

The girl's parents were asking for the boy's parents to promise four-thousand *liras* to the new couple, and the boy's parents weren't certain they could afford it. They agreed to discuss it over with the Chazon Ish.

The father of the boy said to the Chazon Ish, "I'm afraid to promise so much money..." The Chazon Ish replied, "We see that when one tries, the Eibershter helps." If you will try to give that amount, you will manage." Indeed, he had no problem paying it. (*Maaseh Ish* vol.2 109).

Once, two fathers came to the Chazon Ish with a financial disagreement. Their children were about to get engaged, and the question was who would pay for the expenses. After they left, the Chazon Ish said to Reb Shmaryahu Greineman *zt'l*, "Do you know what they were debating? They were debating who should receive Hashem's blessings. One was saying: The *pasuk*, יצו ה' את הברכה, that Hashem grants His blessings, should be referring to you." The other was saying, "No, Hashem should grant *you* the blessings and you should pay for the *chasunah*" (*ibid.*).

thought, "I have nothing to do right now, anyway. I might as well see if I can help."

He stopped his car and almost fainted when he saw that the owner of that car was the president of the hospital! He didn't need to call Reb Firer anymore. He spoke directly with the president while he helped him get his car started! Because when you help others, you help yourself.

When Reb Chaim Kreiswirth *zt'l* was a yeshivah *bachur*, there wasn't room for him to dorm in the yeshiva's dormitory. He had to walk a long way to and from yeshiva, each day.

Eventually though, he was assigned a bed in the yeshiva's dormitory. He was very excited about that. But before he even had a chance to sleep in the yeshiva, he met a distressed, brokenhearted *bachur*. The *bachur* asked Reb Kreiswirth whether he knew of a place to sleep. Although he didn't say it out right, Reb

Kreiswirth understood this *bachur* was implying that he wants to use his bed in the yeshiva dormitory. Reb Chaim Kreiswirth also realized that sleeping in the yeshiva dormitory would mean a lot for this heartbroken *bachur*, so Reb Chaim gave him his newly acquired quarters, and he returned to his previous arrangement.

Sometime later, the Nazis entered the yeshiva and lined up all the *bachurim*. One-by-one, each *bachur* was brought in front of an open window. A SS man shot the *bachur*, and another soldier tossed the body out the window. The *bachurim* begged for their lives when they stood at the open window, but the cruel Nazis didn't have mercy on them.

Standing in line, Reb Chaim faced the wall, and said the following *tefillah*: "Only You, Hashem, know how hard it was for me to give away my bed. In this merit, save me..."

When it was his turn to stand in front of the window, he begged the Nazi to have mercy on him. Miraculously, he found favor in the Nazi's eyes.

The Nazi said to Reb Chaim:

"Stand by the window, and I will shoot at the wall. Fall down, pretend you were shot,

and you will be thrown out the window." That is how his life was saved. He was the sole survivor from the entire yeshiva.

Once again, this shows us that what one does for another, he is doing for himself.⁵

5. Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* (*mashgiach* of Yeshivas Gur) suffered in Auschwitz and lost his only daughter. His students asked him, "How did you remain with your *emunah* even during those terrible times?"

Reb Gad'l explained that those who sought Hashem during the Holocaust fell from their *emunah*, because Hashem was so concealed and almost couldn't be found. "But I never looked for Hashem, because I always believed in Hashem. I didn't ask questions. I knew Hashem was with me, despite the immense concealment. Only like this was I able to remain with my *emunah*."

To demonstrate this point, Reb Gad'l took a bottle cap off the table, hid it in his hands, and asked the students, "If someone comes into this room seeking the cap, will he find it?"

"No," the students replied, because it was concealed in his hand.

Reb Gad'l explained that during the Holocaust, Hashem's presence was so concealed, even those who looked for Him, couldn't find Him.

"Now I have another question for you," Reb Gad'l said. "If someone knows I'm holding the cap in my hands, will he search for it?"

The student replied that he wouldn't, because he knows where it is.

Reb Gad'l explained that he always knew Hashem was present, so he didn't seek for Hashem, and therefore his *emunah* remained strong. If he would search for Hashem, he wouldn't find Him. But he didn't search for Hashem because he knew that Hashem was always there.

Reb Gad'l gave his student another analogy (following a different approach): "If someone lost a diamond, worth billions, in a dark room, will he stop searching for it because it's dark? Of course not! He will crawl on

The Berkowitz family of London usually made Shabbos early during the summer. But one Friday night everything was uncharacteristically late. They missed the early minyan, so they davened at *tzeis hakochavim*. When the Berkowitz's came home from shul, Mrs. Berkowitz said, "We haven't visited my parents for a long time. We should go over with the children, just to say 'Gut Shabbos.'"

They all walked over to their grandparents and by the time they came home it was already late. They were usually sleeping at this time.

Mr. Berkowitz made Kiddush, and they had a quick meal. When they were ready for *benching*, they smelled

smoke. They checked the kitchen and saw the hotplate caught fire and the cabinets nearby were burning.

On a typical Shabbos, they would be long sleeping by then, and their lives would be in danger.

Mr. Berkowitz says he learned two things from this. One: when you do for others, you really do for yourself, because due to their *kibud av ve'eim* they were saved from a fire. Two: when you're delayed, there's always a good reason.

He didn't know why he had to daven *Maariv* so late, and then visit his in-laws. But in retrospect, he realized that all the delays were for their benefit.⁶

his hands and knees and scan the floor until he finds it. Similarly, when darkness covered the earth during the Holocaust, and it was hard to find Hashem, I knew that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was there. So I continued searching for Him, until I found Him."

6. The *Sefer Chasidim* (186) states, "There are people who live solely because of others who benefit from them."

There was a Yid who would dance before Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* every *motzei Shabbos* to the words קדש את שמך על מקדישי שמך, in the tune Count

We've seen that when one helps others, he gains. Why is that?

It states (*Tehillim* 121:5), ה' צל, "Hashem is your shadow." *Chazal* explain, just as a shadow mimics the movements of man, similarly, Hashem is your shadow, and Hashem *keviyachol* mimics a Yid's behavior. Therefore, if you will do kindness to others, Hashem will do kindness for you.

The *Alshich* writes, "When two people befriend each other with perfect love...until each one doesn't consider his own benefits, only the benefit of the other, Hashem reacts in kind. Hashem, *keviyachol*, leaves all other matters and He focuses and reflects, 'How can

I bestow kindness on these people?' As *Chazal* teach, ה' צל, 'Hashem is your shadow,' for in accordance to man's behavior, that is how Hashem acts with him. However, when people aren't united with perfect love — even if they don't hate each other, but each person is thinking only about himself and he doesn't strive to help his fellow man — Hashem will act the same way and not seek their benefit, *chas veshalom*. Therefore, whenever a person is going through a hard time, *chas veshalom*, it is recommended that he befriend someone, or that he befriend many people... *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will in turn seek to do goodness with him, and he will be saved."

Potatzki *zt'l hy'd*, the *ger tzeddek*, composed when he was brought to be burned *al kiddush Hashem*.

This man devotedly took care of his sick daughter, day and night. A month after this daughter was *niftarah*, the father passed away. Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* said, "We thought the father was supporting his daughter. Now we see she was supporting him." He was granted life so he could take care of her.

The Alshich writes that Mordechai and Esther acted compassionately to each other, and that brought on Hashem's compassion to them, and to the entire Jewish nation.

It states (*Esther* 2:22), וידע הדבר למרדכי ויגיד לאסתר המלכה ותאמר אסתר למלך בשם מרדכי, "The matter [that Bigson and Seresh were plotting to kill Achashveirosh] was known to Mordechai. Mordechai told Queen Esther. Esther told the king in Mordechai's name."

The Alshich asks, "Why didn't Mordechai tell Achashveirosh himself...? [The answer is], Mordechai didn't think about what he could gain, only 'how can Esther gain?' When he heard Bigson and Sheresh plotting to kill the king, and as he knew that whoever saves the king will be honored immensely, he told Esther about it. Esther, on her part, only wanted to do kindness with Mordechai, so she reported the information to Achashveirosh in Mordechai's

name. This is the reason Hashem saved them and the entire Jewish nation..."

The Arvei Nachal (*Mikeitz, drush* 1, אמונם) explains that Yosef helped the *sar hamashkim* (although the *sar hamashkim* was a goy) because he wanted to rouse Hashem's compassion. He intentionally had compassion on others, so Hashem would act compassionately with him. The Arvei Nachal writes, "Chazal say, dreams play out according to how they are deciphered. So why did Yosef decipher the *sar hamashkim's* dream in a positive way? Why did he want to do kindness for an Egyptian?"

The Arvei Nachal replies, "Yosef was in distress [imprisoned]. He sought to fix his problem by befriending someone. However, since Yosef was in Mitzrayim, where they were all *resha'im...baalei gaavah* and *baalei taavah*, he didn't have anyone to befriend. So he chose the best person he could

find. Yosef saw that the *sar hamashkim* was also greatly sorrowed, for his life was in danger. He was humbled; his *gaavah* left him... Yosef considered it an opportune time to befriend [the *sar hamashkim* and *sar ha'ofim*]. They would be saved, and he too would be released..."⁷

In conclusion, we see that when you help others Hashem will help you.

The Power of Speech

The *parashah* begins with the laws of *nedarim*. One says, "This food is forbidden to me," or "this item is forbidden to you" and it becomes forbidden. The food is kosher, but he may not eat it because of the vow he took.

This reveals that words aren't

insignificant, as people think they are. Words have immense powers.

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* (in the name of Reb Yisrael Sruk *zt'l*) explains the *pasuk* (30:3, stated at the beginning of the *parashah*): לֹא יְהִל דְּבָרוֹ, don't think speech is mundane. כָּל הַיּוֹצֵא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה, 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*.

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

7. The Arvei Nachal writes that Yosef wanted to decipher the *sar haofim's* dream in a positive way, too. But the *sar haofim* was afraid, at first, to tell Yosef's his dream, for he feared that Yosef might decipher his dream in a negative way. It states (*Iyov* 3:25) פָּחַד פְּחַדְתִּי וַיֵּאֲתַנִּי, "What I was afraid of happened to me." This means one's fears cause what he fears to occur. So Yosef wanted to help both of them, but due to the *sar haofim's* pessimistic stance, he was only able to help the *sar hamashkim*.

married. Words change the status of a woman, and ultimately bring death to anyone who desecrates the marriage. This demonstrates the power of words.

On the *pasuk*, יוצר הרים ובורא רוח (Amos 4:13), the Rebbe of Ruzhin zt'l explained, יוצר הרים, Hashem created mighty mountains, ובורא רוח, but a wind can uproot mountains, because winds are even stronger than mountains. מניד לאדם מה שיחו, this tells a person how powerful his speech is. Speech is wind, and wind is the greatest strength in the physical world.

The Chida tells a fact of

nature: When grapes are being pressed, all wine in the vicinity quiver and vibrate. Even if wine is stored in a barrel in someone's cellar, it will begin to quiver and vibrate when wine is being pressed. That is the nature of wine.

With this, the Chida explains the *pasuk* (*Shir HaShirim* 1:2), ישקני מנשיקות פיהו כי טובים דודך מין. The *pasuk* is saying, ישקני מנשיקות, פיהו, be cautious with your speech, כי טובים דודך מין, because speech is even more powerful than wine. Wine is effected, even from the distance, words also have immense strengths.⁸

8. The Imrei Noam (הקדמון) explains the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 49:21) נפתלי as follows: "Why was Naftali quick with his feet like an אילה? It is because שלוחה הנותן אמרי שפר, he would say nice words to people. When he traveled, he would greet everyone he met. Therefore no one stopped him, and they let him go on his rushed way. This is the reason [when the brothers wanted to bury their father, Yaakov Avinu, in Mearas HaMachpeilah, and Eisav claimed that the grave was his] Naftali was sent to bring the document [which proved that Eisav sold his share of *Maaras HaMachpeilah* to Yaakov]." Naftali was chosen because he would greet people and this caused him to be liked by all, and they would allow him to rush by.

The Havoc of Words

After discovering that words are very powerful, we must be cautious with what we say.

There was a girl who wanted to marry a *talmid chacham*. She turned down many good offers, as she was waiting for a *bachur* who was exceptional in Torah.

She was becoming older, her parents were getting worried, and then a *shidduch* with a *bachur* that was a *talmid chacham*, was suggested, and they were happily engaged.

A relative of the *kallah* knew the *chasan* from yeshiva, and although he was impressed by the *chasan's* Torah knowledge, he wasn't impressed by his personality. He said to the *kallah*, "You waited all this time for *him*?"

She was extremely insulted. Shortly afterwards, she broke off the *shidduch*.

I met the boy. He is now an older *bachur*, he lives in

Meron. He never got married. His life is shattered.

This story demonstrates the power of words; how much havoc and ruin it can cause.

There was a nice young man who had a touch of Asperger's. He married into a family who was slow, as well, and they didn't realize that something was amiss with their *chasan*.

The family was very happy with this *yungerman* until someone revealed to the father-in-law that his son-in-law was slow, socially. This was the first time the father-in-law heard of it, and he was very upset.

It happened like this: The father-in-law went to the bus station to send a package to his daughter and son-in-law, and he found a *bachur* who was willing to deliver the package. The father-in-law began describing his son-in-law, and where he lives, so the *bachur* could deliver the package. The

bachur said, "Oh, you mean that fool? No problem. I know him."

The father-in-law didn't want his daughter to be married to a fool. Many fights and insults ensued, and the beautiful marriage ended in a divorce.

That *bachur* from the bus stop has no idea what he caused. He thought he just said one mean word. In reality, he ruined a marriage. Such is the power of words.

The Greatness of Words

Words can do a lot of good too. A kind word can give a lot of *chizuk* and inspiration.

The *Zohar* teaches, "Just as one is punished for speaking bad words, so is one punished for the good words he could have said but refrained from saying them."

About a hundred and fifty years ago, train tracks were being laid down in Lithuania. The Jewish community of Haditch (where the Baal HaTanya is buried) discovered

that the government was planning to destroy the Baal HaTanya's grave to build the railway. The contractor in charge of the project was an irreligious Yid. Jewish community leaders met with him, and explained to him the meaning of a tzaddik and how cautious one should be not to disturb their graves..."

The contractor said, "You don't have to tell me about tzaddikim, because I come from a religious home. My father was religious, and all my brothers and sisters are religious. I'm the only odd ball in my family. In my teenage years I began to rebel, and when I turned twenty I joined the czar's army. My father knew that by joining the army I would totally abandon *yiddishkeit*, but he also knew that he couldn't change my mind. He had only one request: that I go with him to Reb Shlomo Karliner *zt'l*."

"We traveled a long way to Karlin, and we were

immediately brought into the Rebbe's room, because my father was a close chassid of the Rebbe. The Rebbe was pacing back and forth, and didn't say a word. I whispered to my father, 'Nu? Maybe we should leave? It looks like we'll be here forever, and I have to go to the army...' My father silenced me and we waited some more. Suddenly the Rebbe stopped near me, and said passionately, 'אפשר דאך, 'maybe even so...' I understood that the Rebbe was telling me, 'Maybe, despite everything, you should do *teshuvah*?' Then he said those words again, 'אפשר דאך! Maybe I should consider doing *teshuvah*?'

"I trembled in fear before the Rebbe, but his caution didn't stop me. I went to the army anyway.

"Nevertheless, since that day, whenever I want to commit a sin, I hear the Rebbe's words echoing in my mind, 'אפשר דאך, 'maybe I should do *teshuvah*?'

Those words prevent me from enjoying my irreligious life. So, I'll make a deal with you: If you can liberate me from this echo that plays so often in my mind, I agree to help you and I'll have the rail tracks veer from the Baal HaTanya's grave..."

This story demonstrates the power of words (especially, words spoken by a tzaddik). They have the ability to implant deep feeling of remorse and holiness into a Yid's heart.

Words can be used to bring joy to others.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 22.) tells of two jolly people who with their humor and kind words would bring happiness to people. Eliyahu HaNavi said that they were בני עולם הבא because it is a great mitzvah to make people happy.

Words should also be used to encourage others.

Someone from Bagdad came to Yerushalayim and met with

the Leshem *zt'l*. He told the Leshem, "When your *sefer* came to Bagdad, the Ben Ish Chai wore Shabbos clothes for three days, and he celebrated and rejoiced with your *sefer*."

The Leshem said, "If I knew how precious my *sefer* is, I would have made several more."

People often don't recognize how special they are. They don't know their own qualities. If you can help them recognize them, it will encourage them and help them climb even higher.

The Me'il Tzedakah (תתש"מ) discusses the mitzvah of *tzedakah* and then he writes, "There's a form of *tzedakah* that is easy to do and the reward is great. It is to say comforting, kind words to the poor; words of encouragement to bring joy to those who are worried; and words that increase peace... I once met someone who was very concerned about his financial situation, and he was planning

to take his life. He told me about his problems, and I spoke with him for a long time, and I comforted him. A few days later he told me that if I didn't meet him and comforted him, he would have committed suicide. Therefore, one should be generous with his words when he is among the poor and worried, and he shouldn't speak sparingly. He should speak a lot with people, and he should give them a lot of encouragement. Even if he has worries of his own, this shouldn't stop him from speaking a lot to the poor and to support those who are worried and dejected."

A young bar mitzvah *bachur* was newly orphaned from his mother. On the first day after the *shivah*, he came to a beis medresh and davened at the *amud*, for the first time in his life.

After the *tefillah*, people came over to him and complained that he didn't daven at the right speed. One person said,

“Apparently, you will be davening here each day for a year. So you have to learn the right speed — not too fast, nor too slow.”

The boy came home crying.

The boy’s father is a close friend of Reb Yaakov Mendel Yuravitz (from the *beis din* of the Eidah Chareidis) and the father told Reb Yuravitz what happened. Reb Yuravitz replied, "I was also at that *minyán*. I was planning to tell your son how nicely he *davens*. Only for some reason, I didn’t get around to it. Now I realize how much distress I could have prevented had I taken the time to encourage the poor *yasom*." One shouldn’t be stingy with kind words. Words don’t cost money, and they do so much to encourage a fellow man.

Recently, someone was cured from cancer, and he celebrated a *seudas hoda’ah*. He stood up to speak, and said he was going to reveal the secret of

his recovery, which he never told anyone before:

"One day, lying in the hospital, I heard the doctors convening near my bed. My eyes were closed; they assumed I was sleeping. One doctor said, 'According to statistics, he barely has a chance to live. Yet, I'm certain he will survive. I have no doubt about it. He has a very strong desire to live, and because of his willpower, he will pull through.' After hearing those words, I made a strong commitment to remain strong and to pull myself out of the illness. There were many hard times. No one should ever go through the suffering I endured. But the doctor’s encouragement was always on my mind: 'I have willpower to live and I will survive.' That's what pulled me through the long road until my complete recovery. And now I introduce to you my doctor. He’s here at this *seudas hoda'ah*, and he saved my life. Please come forward, Dr. ..."

Everyone applauded, and the doctor stood up to speak. He said, "It's true. I remember having that meeting at his bedside. I remember saying the patient will recover due to his strong desire to live. But we were speaking about a different patient. I wasn't speaking about our friend here... His illness was so grave; I thought that even a strong willpower to live wouldn't suffice. I learned from his recovery two things: When one has a strong desire to live, he can triumph over the most severe illness. Two: Encouragement goes a long way. Even when the patient only imagines that the encouragement was intended for him, it helps."

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l*, *rosh yeshivas* Mir, Yerushalayim, once heard that people learning in Mir in America are learning "Reb Chaims." Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz thought they were learning his *chiddushim*. Afterwards, he realized they meant Reb Chaim Brisker's *chiddushei Torah*. Nevertheless, Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz said, the thought for a few moments, that people across the ocean were learning his *chiddushei Torah* gave him a lot of *chizuk* and encouragement, although that isn't actually what they were saying. Because encouragement, even by accident, is also very potent, and helps people bring out their best abilities.⁹

9. When Dovid HaMelech was running away from his son, Avshalom, he praised Hashem, as it states *מזמור לדוד בברחו מפני אבשלום בנו*, "Dovid's praise, when he was running away from his son Avshalom" (*Tehillim* 3:1). The Gemara (*Brachos* 7:) asks, why was he praising Hashem? He should be crying, because his own son was chasing him, to murder him. The Gemara answers that Hashem told Dovid that he would endure some form of opposition and danger. When he discovered that it

The Miraculous War against Midyan

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, "This war was an amazing wonder. From the greatest miracles that happened to the Jewish nation, took place in this war against Midyan. Midyan was a large nation, like the sand on the seashore. The Yidden killed them and took many captives. The Torah testifies that not one Yid was lost in this war. They merited this great miracle because they were righteous. As Chazal say, ולא נפקד ממנו איש, no one sinned."

They had difficult tests by this war, but they passed the tests, and therefore merited the

miracles. The Midrash states, "This was their way in this war: When they would take off the jewelry, they would first cover [the women's] faces with מיט ורפש, tar and garbage, and they took off the jewelry without seeing them."

Similarly, the Targum Yonoson (31:50) writes that the generals [of this war] told Moshe, "When Hashem gave the Midianites into our hands, and we conquered their lands and countries, we came to their houses...and whoever found the Midianite women wearing gold jewelry, they would take the jewelry... But *chalilah* we should raise our eyes! We didn't look at any of

would come from his son, Avshalom, he thanked Hashem, because his son would certainly have *rachmanus* on him.

The Maharsha writes that in retrospect, we don't find Avshalom having compassion on Dovid. Yet, Dovid praised Hashem because he thought his son would have compassion on him.

(To quote the Maharsha's holy words: גם שלא מצינו בקרא שהיה חס על אביו, מ"מ (דוד היה חושב כן ואומר מזמור.)

It's possible that Dovid's joy, and the praises he sang, led to his salvation, because it is known that joy and praises are *segulos* for *yeshuos*.

Dovid's joy and praises were based on a misconception, yet may have led to his ultimate salvation.

them so we shouldn't sin, and so we shouldn't die the deaths of *resha'im* in Olam Haba. May this be remembered on the great day of judgment, to atone for us before Hashem."

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* notes that after this war, we don't find the warriors bringing a *korban* to thank Hashem for saving them. The Chasam Sofer writes, "They didn't need to bring a *korban* for the wonders Hashem did for them, to save them from the sword, because there is no greater *korban* than when a person sacrifices of himself for Hashem... As it states(*Vayikra* 1:2), אדם כי יקריב מכם, 'קרבן לה' 'When a person sacrifices himself as a *korban* for Hashem.'" Their self-sacrifice was their caution from sin.

After this war the Torah (31:54) writes, 'לבני ישראל לפני ה' . The Or HaChaim writes that the warriors of this war were 'לפני ה', "before Hashem", because they passed a great

test, and were therefore fitting to stand before Hashem to do the service in the Beis HaMikdash. As Chazal say, "Whoever refrains from doing an *aveirah*, even if he is a Yisrael, he is fitting to bring sacrifices on the *mizbeiach* like the *cohen gadol*..."

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 64.) however teaches, "Although they didn't sin, they had sinful thoughts." That is the reason they donated gold and jewelry to the Mishkan, as it states (31:50) לכפר על נפשותינו לפני ה' "To atone for our souls before Hashem." This was to atone for their thoughts.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* asks, when they returned from the war, they didn't donate gold and jewelry to the Mishkan right away. Why did they change their minds later on, and decide to bring gold and jewelry to the Mishkan as atonement? The answer is, from among the spoils of war were food utensils. Elazar HaCohen taught them how to

kasher the utensils (see non-kosher food is also 31:21-24) so the taste of the forbidden, they understood the non-kosher Midianite foods, that Hashem wants them to be entirely pure from sin. That is which got absorbed within the sides of the pot, shouldn't when they realized that they enter their food. When the Jewish people saw how severe should cleanse themselves from the slight sin of impure sins are, that even a residue of thoughts.¹⁰

10. Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* said that studying this section (of *kashering* utensils, הגעלת כלים) is *mesugal* for overcoming bad thoughts.

A *bachur* complained to Rebbe Ahron of Belz *zt'l* that he can't keep his thoughts pure. The Rebbe told him that learning two Mahrshah's each day is *mesugal* against bad thoughts. The *bachur* later said that this counsel totally cleansed his thoughts.

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