

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

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Shlita

Mishpatim

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



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# Torah Wellsprings - Mishpatim

## **Yesurim - The Source of Hardships**

A person brought the hands of his watch to a watchmaker and said, "Please fix the hands of my watch. They aren't working."

The watchmaker said, "Where's the watch?"

"I left the watch home. The watch isn't the problem. The problem is the hands. They aren't moving."

This man didn't realize that if the hands don't move, it means there's a problem with the mechanism of the watch.

This *nimshal* is, when a person is going through hard times, he attributes his hardships to natural matters, according to his understanding. He doesn't realize that there are reasons and behind what he sees and knows.

The source of all hardships and suffering is sins. As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 55) states, אין יסורים בלא עון, "there isn't affliction without sin." *Aveiros* stand at the root of the problem. People see the problems (someone humiliated them, or there's an illness, or a financial loss, etc.) and they think that it is because of this person or that person, or because of this reason or that reason. They forget that the source of their problems is sins.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 49:) says that before Moshiach comes, פני הדור בפני הכלב, "The face of the generation is the face of a dog." When someone hits a dog with a stick, the dog's tendency is to bite the stick that hit it. The dog doesn't realize that the person holding the stick hit him. This describes the generation before Moshiach. They attribute everything that happens to them to the

exact cause they see. They don't realize that everything comes from Hashem, consequent to their bad deeds.

The Chinuch (*Mitzvah* 241) writes, "The mitzvah of לא תקום is to think that everything that happens to him - the good and the bad - was destined by Hashem. If it weren't for Hashem's decree, your fellow man couldn't do anything to you. Therefore, when someone harms you or causes you distress, believe that it is because of your sins. Hashem decreed it. Don't consider taking revenge, because that person isn't the root of the problem. Sin is. As Dovid HaMelech said (*Shmuel* 2, 16:1), הניחו לו ויקלל בי 'Let him curse, because Hashem told him to do so.' He attributed it to his sins, not to Shimi ben Gara [who cursed him]..."

### Even Natural Matters are From Hashem

The Chozeh of Lublin ז"ל (הנהגות) teaches, "It is good to remember that everything is from Hashem. As Chazal (*Chulin* 7:) say, 'A person doesn't hurt his finger unless it was decreed in heaven.' Even when a person is hurt by man, who has free will (א בעל בחירה), it is also from Hashem. When a person lives with *emunah* he will be able to overcome his anger easily, because he believes with all his heart that no one hurt him. And when he hurts himself, it isn't his negligence, etc. Everything was destined from above. With these thoughts...he will always remember Hashem. As it states, שויתי ה' לפני, 'I place Hashem before me, constantly.' Wherever he turns, he only sees that Hashem is doing with him."<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Or HaChaim in this week's *parashah* (22:6) writes, "There isn't an hour or a moment that Hashem isn't doing something for a person; both for his body and for his needs."

Even those who attribute everything that happens to them to Hashem's decree, they often fail to realize that this is also so when a person hurt them. They think, "He has free will, and he chose to harm me. If it weren't for him, nothing bad would have happened." We have sources from this week's *parashah* that prove that even when you are hurt by your fellow man, it is also from Hashem. It wouldn't have happened, if it weren't for Hashem's decree.

For example, people who have *emunah* believe that when they fall ill, it is *bashert*. But what about when someone hits his fellow man and sends him to the hospital? Is that also from Hashem?

It states (21:18-19), והכה איש את רעהו..... רק שבתו יתן ורפא ירפא, "If someone hits his fellow man...he must pay for the doctor."

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85.) writes, מכאן שנתנה רשות לרופא, "This is the source

that a doctor is permitted to heal the ill."

Why do we need a source? Why would we think that a doctor can't heal an ill patient?

Rashi explains that Hashem had a reason for this person to become ill. It is because of his sins. How can a doctor go against Hashem's plan and heal him?

As Rashi writes, "Hashem smote him and I will heal him?" Therefore, the Torah has to clarify that a doctor may heal the ill.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* asks, the *pasuk* isn't discussing when a person falls ill by Hashem's decree. The *pasuk* is discussing a wound that occurs from people who are fighting. As it states (21:18-19), וכי יריבון אנשים והכה איש את רעהו באבן או באגרף... ורפא ירפא, "If people are fighting and someone hits his fellow man with a stone or with a fist...he must pay for the medical bills." His

wound came from man - not from Hashem. Why does the Torah have to teach us that the doctor may heal him?

The Chofetz Chaim replies that this proves that even when one injures his fellow man, it is also from Hashem. If it weren't for Hashem's decree, it wouldn't have occurred. Because even when matters can be explained according to the laws of nature, and even when something happens by a person who has free will, it is also from Hashem, Who acts in the world within the rules of nature.

It states (22:8), על כל אבידה, "For every lost object that a person says, אשר יאמר כי הוא זה, "I saw in a contemporary *sefer* (*Devarim Achadim* p.11) that when something gets lost, people tend to blame the person who lost it for their negligence. They say, כי הוא, "It is because of him," or זה, "this person lost it." The Torah corrects them and says, עד האלקים יבא דבר שניהם,

attribute what happened to Hashem. Instead of blaming others, recognize that it was *bashert*. Because even things that people do are also from Hashem.

Perhaps the following is the most explicit *pasuk* on this topic. It states (21:13): והאלקים אנה לידי, "Hashem brought it onto his hands." The *pasuk* is discussing someone who killed his fellow man accidentally. The *pasuk* states, והאלקים אנה לידי "Hashem brought it onto his hands." Who killed him? Wasn't it a person, with his negligence? The *pasuk* says that no, this too was predestined by Hashem.

Rashi explains:

"What is the *pasuk* discussing? There were two people: one killed someone accidentally and one intentionally killed someone, and there were no witnesses for either episode. Therefore (the one who purposely killed) wasn't killed, and (the one who killed accidentally) didn't go to

*galus*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings them to the same hotel. The intentional murderer sits under the ladder and the person who accidentally killed someone climbs onto the ladder. He falls on the person who deliberately killed someone, and kills him. Witnesses testify that he accidentally killed someone and he goes to *galus*. Thus, the unintentional murderer goes to *galus* and the intentional murderer was killed."

### Adar

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* taught that it's a great *segulah* to say *Tehillim* on *rosh chodesh Adar*.

Reb Sariyah Dibletzky *zt'l* (*Davar Nechmad*) writes, "Reb Eliyahu Cohen and Reb Chaim Abulafiyah *zt'l* heard from Reb Chaim Vital's students that one... should recite the entire *Tehillim* on *rosh chodesh Adar*. This will fix his *neshamah* [from his sins]. And there are other secrets

[and gains, earned from saying *Tehillim* on *rosh chodesh Adar*]. It is proper that those who fear Hashem should get together and make this *tikkun*."

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* says that on *rosh chodesh Adar*, one should daven that all the *tefillos* he said up until that day should go up to Hashem.

Because, the holy sefarim write that *tefillos* that weren't said properly don't go up before Hashem. But at a good moment, they can also ascend before Hashem. The Chozeh of Lublin teaches that a *segulah* to raise the lost *tefillos* is to pray on *rosh chodesh Adar* that Hashem should accept and answer all those *tefillos* that we said until now, and couldn't go up before Hashem. Pray that all these *tefillos* should ascend before Hashem, and arouse Hashem's compassion.

The Chozeh *zt'l* (*Divrei Emes, Terumah*) teaches this lesson from the Gemara



(Beitzah 16:), הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו, "If one is seeking counsel how to ensure that his property will remain with him, he should plant an *adar*."<sup>2</sup>

The Chozeh of Lublin explains the Gemara allegorically. He explains that נכסיו, "his property" means Torah and mitzvos, because these are a person's primary property. These remain with him forever. Everything else will not be taken with him when his time comes. *Tefillah*, especially, is a person's נכסיו property. This is because one of the translations of נכסיו is *concealed*, and *tefillah* is *concealed*. As Chazal say, דברים העומדים ברומו של עולם, "*Tefillah* is from the things

that stand in the highest places of the world, [concealed from man's sight in this world]."

Furthermore, the primary *tefillah* is *Shemonah Esrei*, which is said silently. Therefore, נכסיו refers to *tefillah*.

"Thus, Chazal are saying, הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו, if a person wants that his *tefillos* should be answered, יטע בהן אדר, he should pray for that on *rosh chodesh Adar*. [He should pray that all the *tefillos* he has said up until that day should go up before Hashem]. And then his prayers will go up [before Hashem]... and everything becomes *chesed* and compassion."<sup>3</sup>

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2. Rashi explains, "An Adar is an אילן חשוב, a noble tree, and people hear about it from far and wide. People say 'Ploni has an *adar* tree in his field' and that causes that the field be called on his name. Even if he travels to another land, and someone moves in on his property...there will be many people who can testify that this was once his field. If he would have sold it, people would have heard about it..."

3. So *rosh chodesh Adar* is an ideal time to daven that all the

The entire month of Adar is an ideal time for *tefillah*. As the Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* teaches, אדר is *roshei teivos* רעוא דרעון אשתכח, "immense desire and love is found." Thus, in Adar, Hashem's love to us is prominently revealed, and it is an ideal time for *tefillah*.

### **We are in Hashem's Hands**

The miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim taught the world that Hashem can intervene and change the rules of nature *when He wants to*. But people thought that whenever the world runs by the rules of nature, Hashem isn't involved. The revelation of the Purim miracle taught that Hashem is always leading the world.

As the Bnei Yissaschar (Adar 1:8) teaches:

"In Nisan, with its revealed miracles, everyone saw that Hashem can turn over nature. However, people didn't know that Hashem is leading the world according to His will and that His providence is over each detail, also when the world is run by the rules of nature. (Only the *bnei Torah* knew about Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*, but it wasn't known to most people.) They thought Hashem gave the world over to the forces of nature, the stars and constellations, and that these lead the world according to nature. And solely when Hashem desires it, He changes the order of nature and He performs miracles. However, this notion changed when the miracle of the month of Adar happened to the Jewish nation. The miracle was within nature, the rules of

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tefillos of the past should go up to heaven and be answered. In footnote (8) we will write that on Shabbos Shekalim, we can daven that all the future tefillos (until next year around this time) should be answered.

nature weren't changed. Nevertheless, the entire world knew that Hashem performed the miracle. No one had any doubts, and no one thought that it happened by chance. That is when everyone knew that nature is also run by Hashem's wonderful *hashgachah*. Everything that happens in the world - whatever a person buys, and the wealth and property he owns - it is all Hashem's *hashgachah*. Therefore, if one works a lot, he won't earn more money, and if one works less, he won't lose. It isn't (*Devarim* 8:17), כחי ועוצם ידי עשה, 'לי את החיל הזה and power earned me my wealth.' One does natural attempts for earning *parnassah*, through business and sales, but it is Hashem's *hashgachah* within nature that grant him strength and courage and ability to earn wealth. This realization became revealed to us from the miracles of Adar, because that was a miracle within the rules of nature and yet everyone saw that it was by

Hashem's wondrous *hashgachah*."

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Adar* 1:8) adds that when one knows everything is from Hashem, he will succeed. But if he thinks that nature rules, he will fail.

"This is Chazal's intention, הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו ישע, בהן אדר, 'If one is seeking to ensure that his property will remain with him, he should plant an *adar*.' Remember that a wondrous miracle occurred [in Adar] within the rules of nature, so everyone will know that everything that happens in the world is happening with wondrous *hashgachah pratis*..." This *emunah* is conducive ויתקיימו נכסיו, that his property will remain with him.

Perhaps this is the reason *tefillah* is so precious during Adar. In Adar we discover that Hashem is with us, always. As the Meor Einayim teaches, א-ד-ר means the Aluf shel Olam dwells in this

world.<sup>4</sup> And the recognition that we are in Hashem's hands, totally dependent on Him, is a *segulah* that Hashem will listen to his *tefillos*.

It states (22:21-22), כל אלמנה ויתום לא תענון אם ענה תענה, אותו כי אם יצעק אלי שמוע אשמע צעקתו, "Don't afflict a widow or orphan. If you will, and he will shout to Me, I will hear his shouts..."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains, "When people are embarrassed or aggrieved, they go to someone who can help them. But the orphan and the widow are weak; no one helps them. Therefore, they trust in Hashem, alone... Therefore, the *pasuk* says, they are helped more than anyone else."

Similarly, the Ramban (ibid) writes, "[Hashem says] 'I save everyone from

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4. The custom of the tzaddikim of Ziditchov was that they wouldn't say *tachanun* the entire month of Adar. The Yeshuos Yaakov *zy'a* (the Rav of Lemberg) met with Rebbe Eizik of Ziditchov *zy'a*, and said, "Do you have a source for this custom? Don't tell me a source from kabbalah or from chassidus. I want to hear a halachic source."

Rebbe Eizik Ziditchover answered, "The entire month Adar is a *yom tov*, and we don't say *tachanun* on *yom tov*."

"Why do you say the whole month of Adar is *yom tov*?"

"It states, והחודש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה, ומאבל ליום טוב, 'the month that turned over from distress to joy, from mourning to *yom tov*...' (Esther 9:22). So we see that the entire month of Adar is a holiday."

Obviously all those who aren't part of the Ziditchover court should continue saying *tachanun* in Adar as they've done until now. We brought this to understand better the specialness of the month of Adar. The days of Adar are like a holiday, because we become aware that the *Alef* resides here, and the world is run with *hashgachah pratis*, down to the smallest detail.

who is stronger than them. Also, the widow and orphan, I listen to their shouts. They don't trust in themselves, and therefore they trust in Me."

The orphan and widow know that no one can help them except for Hashem. And when one shouts to Hashem with that mindset, they will certainly be helped. Everyone gets this awareness in Adar, in the month we discover that everything happens by Hashem's hashgachah, and that we are entirely in His hands.

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* taught:

Animals give birth easily, without pain, while humans have a more difficult birth. This is because humans trust

their doctor or midwife. Their *bitachon* isn't complete. But an animal doesn't have anyone to help it give birth. Therefore, the animal places its trust solely on Hashem, and when one places his trust solely in Hashem, everything becomes easier.

The *pasuk* (21:13) says, והאלקים אנה לידו ושמתי לך מקום אשר תנום שמה, "Hashem brought it into his hand, and I will give you a place where you can escape." We can explain that the *pasuk* is saying that if you believe that everything happens by Hashem's *hashgachah*, ושמתי לך מקום אשר תנום שמה, you will escape from your troubles.<sup>5</sup>

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5. There used to be a custom to hang an ostrich egg in a beis kneses. The Shach (al HaTorah, תוריע ד"ה ואם) explains that this was to remind people to place their trust in Hashem alone. An ostrich lays its eggs in a high spot, and then it stands at a distance, and incubates the eggs by looking at them. (The heat of the ostrich's eyesight warms the eggs.) If an animal steps between the ostrich and the egg, the ostrich will kill the intruder, because it is preventing the ostrich from incubating the egg.

### **Parashas Shekalim - "Raise the Heads"**

The Midrash teaches that Hashem swears that every year when we read *parashas Shekalim*, Moshe will stand among us and raise the heads of Bnei Yisrael... As it states (*Shemos* 30:12), **כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** "When you raise the heads of Bnei Yisrael."<sup>6</sup>

A raised head means that we are similar to the *malachim*. As the Gemara says, "People are similar to the *malachim* in three ways: (1) they have intelligence like to *malachim* (2) they walk erect like *malachim* (3) and they speak in *lashon hakadosh* like *malachim*."

In contrast, an animal's head is the same height as the rest of its body. Man is greater than an animal because he has the ability to think. But doesn't use his mind, he is more or less like the animals. So, Shabbos Shekalim, our heads are raised, and we can use our minds to think about Hashem, about Torah, and about *emunah*.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* writes that **כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ** can mean to look at the letters after **רֹאשׁ**<sup>7</sup>. The letters after **רֹאשׁ** are **שְׁבֹת**. Every Shabbos, Hashem raises our heads and enables us to contemplate on *emunah* and Torah.

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An ostrich egg was placed in a beis knesses to remind people that their eyes must be focused on Hashem, alone. They shouldn't lose focus. They shouldn't allow anything interrupt their focus and concentration from their father in heaven.

6. The Chidushei HaRim (*Sefer HaZechus Shekalim*) repeated this Midrash with immense excitement. He said, "This Midrash is telling us something fabulous! Every year when *parashas Shekalim* is read, Moshe Rabbeinu comes and lifts up the heads of Bnei Yisrael!"

7. **רֹאשׁ** means to lift up, to go to the letters above **שְׁבֹת**.

We can also explain that **כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל** "Elevate the heads of Bnei Yisrael" means to become freed from troubles.

When one is going through hard times he's

often hunched over. The troubles of life weigh heavily on his shoulders. But when his problems leave, he stands erect and proud. Moshe raises our head can mean that Hashem will save us from all our troubles.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Shabbos Shekalim is *mesugal* for *parnassah* (see *Ateres Yehoshua, Shekalim*). The Shabbos is also *mesugal* for health and for *nachas*.

In תרמ"ג the brothers, Reb Meir and Reb Zanvil Kahana z'l from Dragmiresht, Romania, came to the Imrei Yosef of Spinka zt'l for Shabbos Shekalim. It was their first time with this great tzaddik. They came because they needed a *yeshuah*. Reb Meir was childless. Reb Zanvil had children, but they were sick and weakly. Reb Meir spoke with the Rebbe on *erev Shabbos*. The Imrei Yosef asked for a *pidyon* of one hundred gold coins, which Reb Meir immediately gave him. The Rebbe promised that he will have children. Reb Zanvil didn't get to speak with the Rebbe on *erev Shabbos*, but at the Friday night *tish*, when people were *shtelling wine* (pledging to pay for the wine used at the *tish*), the Rebbe blessed Reb Zanvil's children with a *refuah sheleimah*.

The Rebbe explained, "Shabbos Shekalim one can pray that all the *tefillos* that he will say in the upcoming year - from Nisan to the next year's Nisan - should be answered. Chazal (*Brachos* 26:) state, תפילות כנגד המדין תקנום, that the *chachamim* established the three daily *tefillos* corresponding to the *korban tamid*. This Shabbos commemorates the preparations for the *korban tamid* for the entire year [because the half shekels funded the *korbanos* of the entire year]. Therefore, this Shabbos is an auspicious time to prepare the *tefillos* for the entire year. On this Shabbos we can pray that the *tefillos* that we will say throughout the entire year be answered, and thereby, your requests for children should also be answered..."

Yet a third explanation, animals face the ground, because they're always searching for *gashmiyos*, physical pleasures. Man stands erect, indicating that he overcomes the material temptations of the *yetzer hara*. He stands erect like the *malachim*, and his eyes are turned to Hashem. On *Shabbos Shekalim* Moshe Rabbeinu lifts our head. This means, on this Shabbos, we have *siyata dishmaya* to elevate ourselves above the lowliness of Olam HaZeh,

and attach ourselves to Hashem.<sup>9</sup>

### Shabbos Shekalim

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said, "I'm anxiously awaiting the four *parshiyos*, when I will meet with Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzin *zt'l* taught: Each of these four weeks represents a letter of Hashem's holy name (יהוה), and it's possible to unite with Hashem during these four weeks.

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Within a year Reb Meir had his first child, and Reb Zanvil's children had a *refuah sheleimah*.

9. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* adds that a person must be cautious that when his head is being raised, that his body goes up too, because otherwise his head will be above alone.

In other words, one shouldn't be satisfied when his mind is thinking exalted, spiritual ideas, but his body remains like before, desiring the mundanity of this world. Rather, he should make certain his body comes along, together with the mind.

The Vilna Gaon explained the *passuk* (*Devarim* 12:23) ולא תאכל הנפש עם הבשר, that although it is permitted to eat meat, one should be careful not to eat his *neshamah* together with the meat. He shouldn't be so into in his food – with all his passion and desire – until it's like he's eating his *neshamah* together with the meat.



In *Megilas Esther* it states (*Esther* 7:8) ופני המן חִפּוּ, "Haman's face was covered." The Alshich HaKadosh explains that the ancient law of Persia (and of many countries) was that if someone sentenced to death saw the king, he was pardoned. When Achashveirosh's anger was aroused on Haman, someone quickly covered Haman's face, so Haman wouldn't see the king's face and be pardoned.

During the four *parshiyos*, when we merit seeing Hashem's face, *keviyachol*, all our sins are forgiven.

The Yerushalmi compares the four *parashiyos* to the four cups of wine we drink on Pesach.<sup>10</sup> Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* understands from that, that the four *parashiyos* also

commemorate the four expressions of redemption (*Shemos* 6): והוצאתי והצלתי וגאולתי, "I will take them out... I will save them... I will redeem them.... And I will take them..."

*Parashas Shekalim* commemorates the first expression of *geulah*, והוצאתי, "I will take you out of the hardships of Mitzrayim." סבולות מצרים is also translated, "the tolerance of Egypt." The first step of redemption is to stop tolerating the sinful ways of Mitzrayim, and to stop being callous and unconcerned about sins.

This Shabbos is an ideal time to pray for the final redemption, may it be speedily in our days, amen.

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**10.** The Yerushalmi says that just as we don't drink wine between the third and fourth cup, there is also no Shabbos *hafsakah*, break, between the third and fourth week of the four *parashiyos*, only between the first and second week, or between the second and third week.

### A Coin Made of Fire

*Rashi* (30:13) writes, "Hashem showed Moshe מטבע של אש, a coin made of fire; its weight was a half-shekel; and Hashem said, 'This is what they should give.'"

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* tells that he was once in Germany and heard the rav of a beis medresh ask, "Why did Hashem show Moshe a coin made from fire? Why didn't Hashem show Moshe a standard silver, half-

shekel? The answer is, Hashem wasn't only showing the size and weight of the coin, Hashem was also showing the *manner* in which the half-shekel should be given. Hashem doesn't want us to serve Him in a detached manner, devoid of love and emotion. Hashem wants us to serve Him with joy and with passion. The fiery coin exemplified the passion with which Hashem desires we should give the *machatzis shekel* to the Beis HaMikdash."<sup>11</sup>

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**11.** The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* repeated this *dvar Torah* to the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l*, and asked: "How did a German Rav attain this true lesson in Torah?" (Chassidus teaches the importance of fervor in *avodas Hashem*, it was less discussed by the reserved German Jewry, and the Chidushei HaRim was wondering how this Rav perceived this explanation.)

The Kozker Rebbe replied, "They are scrupulous with the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*, and therefore he merited this *chiddush*."

Once, the Kedushas Yom Tov *zt'l* attended a rabbinic convention together with his young son, Reb Yoel of Satmar *zt'l*. One of the rabbanim noticed how the future Satmar Rebbe was praying with great *hislahavus*. The rav came over and asked him whether it was Purim today (because he found his *hislahavus* with unusual gestures comical).

The Satmar Rebbe replied, "If I knew I would be meeting with Haman today, I would have brought along a *grager*." Because being cold by *tefillah* and by *avodas Hakadosh* is the essence of

It states (end of the *parashah*), *ומראה כבוד ה' כאש אוכלת, בראש ההר*, "The vision of Hashem's honored presence was like a burning fire on top of the mountain..." (24:17). The *Kedushas Levi zt'l* explains, "If a person wants to know if Hashem is enjoying his service, this is the test:

"If his heart is burning like fire, and he always yearns to serve Hashem, that's a clear sign that Hashem enjoys his service. He is being helped from heaven and holy thoughts are sent to his heart, because Hashem wants to enjoy his service. This is *ומראה כבוד ה'*, the sign to know ...that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with him is *כאש אוכלת*, if his heart burns like fire [to do Hashem's will]."

The Midrashim teach that Hashem took the coin of fire from under His throne. This is surprising, for why was the coin under Hashem's holy throne?! The answer is, this coin represented the fiery passion the Jewish people should give the *machatzis hashekel*. Fiery passion is very precious to Hashem, and He stores these 'fires' under His throne.

After worshipping the golden calf, the Jewish nation was *הייב מיתה*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'Everyone should give for their atonement...' When the Yidden heard this [they thought that they would need to give all their money away to atone for the golden calf]... Hakadosh Baruch Hu knew what they were

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Amalek, *אשר קרך בדרך*, who instills a cold attitude in *avodas Hashem*.

Someone broke the ice and immerse in a river during the winter. But it was so cold, the water over his head turned to ice before he came out. The Yesod Ha'Avodah heard about it and said, "He should have said *Nishmas*..." The heat generated by the excitement of reciting *Nishmas* would have melted the ice.

thinking. Hashem said to Moshe, 'Tell them not to worry. I am not asking ... for a hundred coins, nor fifty coins, nor ten coins, and not even for one shekel. וזה יתנו, this is what they should give: *one half-shekel*.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu took a half-shekel of fire from under his throne and showed it to Moshe, and said, בזה יתנו, this is what they should give."<sup>11</sup>

How could one half-shekel be enough to atone for their great sin? The explanation is that the

primary atonement came from their *מטבע של אש*, from their passion and joy to donate for the Beis HaMikdash and for the *korbanos*. The amount wasn't as important as the emotions, and therefore, even one half-shekel was sufficient for them to attain atonement.<sup>12</sup>

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* (*Shekalim* תרל"ג) teaches that since the primary aspect of the *machatzis hashekel* was the joy and desire, the mitzvah is applicable in our times as well. The Sfas Emes writes, "The *machatzis*

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**12.** At first, Moshe didn't understand which coin, until Hashem showed him. We can explain that Moshe was also surprised that a small donation could atone for their sins. Hashem showed him a coin of fire, implying that if they do the mitzvah with fiery love to Me, even a half-shekel coin will bring their atonement.

Hashem says, *לי הכסף ולי הזהב נאם ה' צנאות*, "I have the silver and I have the gold, says Hashem..." (*Chagai* 2:8). The amount isn't as important as the desire. As it states, (*Mishlei* 23:26), *תנה בני לבך לי*, "My son, give your heart to me..."

In the *yotzros* we say, *אור פניך עלינו ארון נשא ושקל אשא בבית נכון ונשא*, "The light of Your face should be raised to us, and I will bring a shekel to the Beis Hamikdash..." This prayer expresses our yearning to do the mitzvah, and yearning to do the mitzvah is the primary part of the mitzvah.

*hashekel* is performed in our times as well, and perhaps even more than before, by our longing to donate to Hashem, as they would give the *machatzis hashekel* in the past. The *machatzis hashekel* atoned for sins (see *Yerushalmi, Shekalim* 2:3)... [Similarly, atonement is attained in our generation by people's yearning to bring the *machatzis hashekel*]."

### **Passion is the Antidote for the Yetzer Hara**

When a person serves Hashem with joy and desire, the *yetzer hara* stands on the side. The *yetzer hara* is afraid to start up with a person who is so wholly engaged, with heart and soul, in Hashem's service.

The *yetzer hara* is called, בלבין רחציפין, *chutzpadig dogs*. Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter *shlita* explained the analogy:

When you are among a pack of dogs you shouldn't show you are afraid of them. If you're scared and run away, they'll run after you.

But if you show that you aren't afraid, you can stand right next to them, and they will leave you alone. The same is with the *yetzer hara*. If one is meek and afraid of the *yetzer hara*, the *yetzer hara* can overpower him. But if he serves Hashem with fiery excitement and confidence, the *yetzer hara* will respect him, and he won't try to entice him to sin.

Reb Mendel Futterfass *zt'l* told a tale of how Czar Nikolai's army won a war without a single gunshot. His soldiers would battle by day, and drink at night. One soldier drank too much, and when his troop moved on, he was still sleeping. Upon awakening, he knew that he had to catch up with his battalion quickly, but first he was hungry and wanted something to eat.

It was Friday night. He came to a Jewish home and helped himself to the pot of steaming, hot *cholent*. Then he mounted his horse, placed the pot of hot *cholent*

on the horse's mane, and set off to find his division. The hot *cholent* burned the horse's back, which spurred the horse to run quickly. It didn't take long before he reached the rest of the soldiers, but his horse kept speeding onward. He reached the front. The enemy soldiers saw him coming towards them, and they were afraid. They assumed he surely has a very strong weapon, since he isn't afraid to face them alone. They fled in panic. In this manner Czar Nicolai's army won the war, without firing a single gunshot.

Reb Futterfass said that we can learn from this how to battle the *yetzer hara*. If

one shows courage and *hislahavus*, the *yetzer hara* will be afraid of him, and leave him alone.

It is known that at *mattan Torah*, the Jewish nation was freed from their *yetzer hara* (בפסקה זוהמתן) but the *yetzer hara* returned when they worshiped the golden calf (see *Zohar, Bereishis* 52). The *yetzer hara* once again had control over them, and the nation feared he may lead them astray.

Hashem advised them to give a coin of fire. This means that they should serve Hashem with passion. That is how they are protected from the *yetzer hara*.<sup>13</sup>

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**13.** Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* taught how one can banish a *dibuk* (a spirit, a soul, that attached itself to a human being and afflicts him): "Know that the most important factor is that you should strengthen your heat like a warrior without any fear. Don't be weak, because then the spirit will be strong and he will not heed your words [when you tell it to leave]." This is because all *kelipos*, and as we mentioned, all *yetzer hara's*, lose their strength before someone who isn't afraid.

This information leads us to the following story about the Turei Zahav (whose *yahrtzeit* is the 26th of Shevat). The story was told by

## If There is a Will There is a Way

The following story illustrates this concept:

The saying goes, אין דבר עומד בפני הרצון, "Nothing stands in the face of desire."<sup>14</sup>

A tiny, four-seater car was driving down the highway. A policeman

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Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l*, who read it in the *pinkas* (ledger) of a *chevrah kadishah*:

A *dibuk* became attached to a girl and people rushed to the Turei Zahav to ask for his assistance. The Turei Zahav went to the home of this afflicted girl and as soon as he entered the room, the *dibuk* turned around, faced the wall, and announced, "*Baruch haba Rabbeinu Hagadol baal Turei Zahav* (welcome, the great Rav, author of Turei Zahav)." People asked the *dibuk* , "Why do you call him 'Rabbeinu Hagadol,' and why did you turn and face the wall?"

The *dibuk* replied, "A *rasha* isn't permitted to look at the face of a tzaddik, therefore I turned around. And I know that his name is Rabbeinu Hagadol baal Turei Zahav because that's how he's called in heaven."

The Turei Zahav said, "If this is how I'm called in heaven, then I demand that you leave this girl right away." The *dibuk* left.

The parents of the girl were wealthy, and wanted to give a lot of money to the Turei Zahav to express their appreciation, but the Turei Zahav didn't want to accept the gift.

The Turei Zahav wore a very old, worn-out tallis. "He will surely accept a new one, so he could keep the mitzvah of tzitzis in a more beautiful fashion," the father assumed. But the Turei Zahav turned down that offer as well. The Turei Zahav explained, "I want to wear my old tallis, and when I die, I want to be buried in that tallis, because my tallis can testify before the court in heaven that I never said a word of *tefillah* without *kavanah*."

**14.** It isn't a Chazal, rather a maxim quoted in holy *sefarim*.

noticed it, and almost fell off his motorcycle from surprise. The policeman pulled the car over, and nine people tumbled out it!

"This car is meant for four people!" the policeman hollered. "You should be ashamed of yourselves!"

A date was set for the court case.

The judge asked the driver, "What type of business is that, driving with nine people in a four-passenger car?"

The driver said, "Your honor, the story is the fabrication and imagination of the policeman. I never had nine people in my car."

The judge was incredulous. "Do you mean to tell me the cop made up the entire story?"

"Definitely. You know what? My car is outside. Go look at it and tell me whether nine people can fit in that car!"

The judge went outdoors, and it definitely seemed impossible for nine people to fit inside.

The judge asked the nine people of the jury to climb into the car. Only five could get in. With great difficulty, perhaps one more could squeeze inside. But nine was impossible.

The driver said to the judge, "You saw for yourself that it's impossible. I don't know what the policeman is talking about. Maybe he was drinking that day..."

He was acquitted from all charges. He won the case.

But how did nine people squeezed into that small car? The jury had no special interest in squeezing into the car, so they weren't able to. But those nine people all needed the ride, and when there's a will there's a way. This is the explanation of, אין דבר עומד בפני הרצון.

Some disagree, because good will isn't always enough. "Wanting" won't



make the impossible possible.

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* explains the saying, אין דבר, עומד בפני הרצון, to mean, "Nothing can prevent the person from *desiring*." There are circumstances that prevent a person from *doing* something, but nothing can prevent him from *wanting* to do that deed.

When the heavenly court asks a person why he didn't do the mitzvos, he can give excuses, and his excuses might be accepted. But then the court will ask him, "But why didn't you *yearn* to do the mitzvos? You should have at least wanted to perform them, and you should have felt bad that you couldn't perform them." Because אין דבר עומד בפני הרצון, nothing can prevent you from wanting.

Reb Eizel Charif *zt'l* came to a yeshiva and asked a very tough question in Gemara. He said whoever comes up with the correct

answer can marry his daughter.

All the *bachurim* toiled to find the answer, and some came forward with their hypothesis, but Reb Eizel Charif showed them that their answers weren't satisfactory. After a few days, Reb Eizel saw they couldn't come up with an answer, so he boarded his carriage and left to seek a *chasan* elsewhere.

One *bachur* raced after Reb Eizel's carriage. He caught up and said, "Rebbe, please tell me the answer. I didn't merit being your son-in-law, but at least tell me the answer to the question."

Reb Eizel said, "You will be my *chasan*." He told him, "Primarily, I was seeking a *bachur* who *desires* to know the answer, and you passed that test."

The *bachurim* of the yeshiva didn't understand the crux of the test. They thought the contest was to come up with the right

answer, while really the quest was to find the *bachur* who truly desires to know Torah.

### ***Naaseh v'Nishma***

In this week's *parashah*, the Jewish nation say the famous words (24:7), כל אשר נעשה ונשמע, "Everything Hashem commanded we will do and we will listen." The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88.) says, "When the Jewish nation said נעשה before נשמע (that they will do before hearing) 600,000 *malachim* came down and vested every Yid with two crowns, one for נעשה and one for נשמע.... When the Jewish nation said נעשה before נשמע a *bas kol* emerged and said, 'Who revealed the secret of the *malachim* to My children? As it states (*Tehillim* 103:20), עושי דברו לשמוע בקול דברו (implying that the angels do before they hear)... Why are Bnei Yisrael compared to an *esrog*? The fruits of an *esrog* tree come before the leaves. Similarly, the Jewish nation says they will do before they

hear. A *tzadoki* (heretic) saw Rava learning Torah. Rava's feet were pressing on his fingers; his fingers were bleeding, but he didn't realize it because he was so engrossed in his learning. The *tzadoki* said, 'You are a wild nation, because you accepted the Torah even before knowing what's written in it, and you're still acting in your bizarre ways. You should have first listened and decided whether you are able to keep the Torah.' Rava replied, 'We go with Hashem with trust... We trust in Him that He won't trip us with something we can't do (*Rashi*)...'

One aspect of נעשה ונשמע is that it's an expression of *zrizus*, of running to do Hashem's will quickly. It expresses readiness to do good deeds even before knowing exactly what's expected of you.

To explain this, consider the following *mashal*:

A group of people called a meeting to see what they can do to help a certain pauper. Most people present waited patiently to hear what is expected of them, but one or two people, already put on their coats, ran over to the person in charge, and asked, "Where do we go..." They're almost walking out the door before they know what they'll be doing, and what's expected of them. So excited and eager are they to help. They're doing before they're hearing. That describes the spirit of *נעשה ונשמע*.

*נעשה ונשמע* in practical terms means that when a person has the opportunity to do a mitzvah, he should do it right away. For example, when he wants to learn Torah, he immediately opens the Gemara, and begins to learn joyously. He doesn't wait until he has just the right chair and table, just the right edition of Gemara, and he doesn't prepare a coffee before starting, just in case he'll

become thirsty while learning. He begins immediately, because of his eagerness to do Hashem's will and to study Torah.

We can compare it to a person who wants to renovate his house. He speaks with architects, he studies catalogues, he compares prices and styles, weighs the pros vs. cons. He isn't in a rush. He wants to make the right decision. However, if there's a fire in the house, he rushes to put out the fire. He won't think for long about the best method for putting out a fire, and whether he should use water or chemicals to extinguish it. He doesn't have time to think about these matters. There's a fire, and he must act quickly. This describes how we should approach Torah and mitzvos. We should feel like there's an emergency - the *yetzer hara* is trying to prevent us from doing the good deeds - and we must start right away. If one

delays, he may very well lose the opportunity.

Especially for Torah it's important to begin right away. Chazal teach that the early chassidim (חסידים ראשונים) waited an hour before davening, so they could have proper *kavanah* in their *tefillah*. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* noticed that this was stated only about *tefillah*. It doesn't state that they would wait an hour before they studied Torah. This is because one should begin learning Torah right away.

Chazal say, הוי ממעט בעסק, ויעסוק בתורה, "Minimize your work and study Torah." The Lev Simcha *zt'l* explained that this hints that one should do little preparations for Torah, and he should begin studying Torah as quickly as possible.

Reb Pinchas ben Yair said (*Avodah Zarah* 20) said, "Torah brings to *zehirus*, *zehirus* brings to *zrizus*, *zrizus* brings to *nekiyus*..." (Torah brings a person to be

cautious with the mitzvos. Being cautious will lead him to being swift to keep the mitzvos. Being swift leads to cleanliness, etc.) Every stage leads to the next one. But the first step is studying Torah, and Reb Pinchas ben Yair didn't state how one gets to that first stage. This is because there is no preparation for Torah study. One just needs to jump in and begin, and the sooner the better.

The following story will demonstrate the importance of taking care of *tzedakah* and *chesed* right away; not to push them off for later:

There was a G-d fearing *baal tzedakah* who was careful to give *tzedakah* according to halachah. He studied *hilchos tzedakah* with the Ba'ch daily.

Once, someone came to the Ba'ch with a personal problem. He ran a tavern, which he rented from a *poritz*, but someone offered

the *poritz* more money and convinced the *poritz* to rent the tavern to him.

The Ba'ch summoned his student, the *baal tzedakah*, and requested him to speak with the *poritz*. "You know the *poritz* well, because you do business with him. You can influence the *poritz* to keep his current tenant." The *baal tzedakah* promised to do all he can.

Outside the Ba'ch's home, the *baal tzedakah* said to the tavern keeper, "I am going now to the Leipzig Fair, but I will take care of it as soon as I return."

The tavern keeper said, "But by that time, he may have already signed a contract with my competitor. Please take care of it before you go to Leipzig."

The *baal tzedakah* replied, "I am liable to lose all my money if I don't go to this fair. I'm sorry, I have no choice. I must go. But don't worry. The fair is only for a week. The contract won't be signed so quickly. As soon

as I return, I will speak with the *poritz*. I won't even go home. I'll go straight to the *poritz*'s home when I return. Everything will be fine."

To encourage the tavern manager some more, he reminded him, "Nothing happens if it isn't Hashem's decree. Your competitor can't take the tavern away from you if it wasn't decreed on Rosh Hashanah..."

The tavern manager was comforted, and went home to tell his wife the good news: "The *baal tzedakah* promised to speak with the *poritz* for me, and everything will be good, *be'ezras Hashem*. He said he will speak with the *poritz* as soon as he returns from Leipzig."

But his wife was worried.

The tavern manager repeated the ideas of *emunah* and *bitachon* he heard from the *baal tzedakah*, but those didn't calm her. She said, "If it was for anyone else, the *baal tzedakah* would have taken care of the matter immediately. But since it's

for you, everyone knows they can push you off. It's your fault! You let people take advantage of you!" She screamed and insulted her husband with her sharp words.

Now, in addition to their worries, their *shalom bayis* was affected too.

A week later, the *baal tzedakah* returned, and even before going home he spoke with the *poritz* as he said he would, and succeeded to convince the *poritz* to keep the old contract.

Years passed, the *baal tzedakah* was *niftar*, and the night after the *levayah*, he came to the Ba'ch in a dream and told him the following:

"I was greeted in heaven with honor and joy, and the court said that I can go to a high place in Gan Eden, where there are many great *tzaddikim*. I headed towards the gate that leads to Gan Eden, but a large, beautiful *malach* stood at the gate and didn't let me pass. I told the *malach* that the court told

me I may go to a high place in Gan Eden, and I pleaded with him to let me pass, but he refused to let me get to the entranceway. He said, 'I was created by your good deed, when you spoke to the *poritz* on this man's behalf. It was a very special deed, which created a beautiful *malach*. But you also did something wrong. You went to Leipzig first. That put a lot of stress on the couple, and it shook up their *shalom bayis* too. Therefore, I request that the celestial court judge you once again.'

"I was brought before the heavenly court a second time. The court ruled that for the amount of days the couple suffered, I would have to stand outside Gan Eden. I am now standing in the corridor outside of Gan Eden, and watching the *tzaddikim* inside. It's extremely painful for me to be here, and not be permitted to enter. Each hour, feels like many years."

In the morning, the Ba'ch gathered the community, and told them his dream. He impressed

on them the importance of doing chessed immediately, without pushing it off for later.<sup>15</sup>

**15.** One of the *zemiros* of *motzei Shabbos* is *איש חסיד היה*.... The *zemiros* tells the story of a poor chassid who spent his days and nights studying Torah. When he couldn't support his family anymore, he sought a *parnassah*.

Eliyahu HaNavi came to him and said, "Go to the market, and sell me as a slave."

The chassid did this, and earned eight hundred thousand gold coins.

Eliyahu HaNavi's buyer said, "Build me a beautiful palace, with halls, towers, and so on. When it's finished, you can go free."

Eliyahu prayed, angels came down from heaven and built the palace. In the morning, the owner was shocked to see that the palace was finished, and he freed Eliyahu.

Rebbe Shalom Kaminka *zy'a* asked, since a miracle occurred for Eliyahu HaNavi (that *malachim* came and built the palace in one night), why didn't Eliyahu make a miracle for the poor chassid and make him wealthy? Why does the story begin with a somewhat natural pattern, that the chassid earned his money by selling Eliyahu as a slave?

Rebbe Shalom Kaminka asked this question to his Rebbe, the *Sar Shalom* of Belz *zt'l*. The Belzer Rebbe replied, "To make a miracle, one needs to first serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*. Eliyahu had to agree to be sold as a slave, because of his devotion to help out his fellow man. Only after this *mesirus nefesh*, could miracles happen.

In reference to our discussion, serving Hashem immediately (saying *בגדשה ויגשבע*), requires a degree of *mesirus nefesh*. But when one serves Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, miracles will happen to him.

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