

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Behar - Bechukosai



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Torah Wellsprings

Behar - Bechukosai

Hashem's Eternal Love

It states in this week's *parashah* (26:44), ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתים ולא בגעלתים לבלותם, "Despite all this, when they will be in the lands of their enemies, I will not be disgusted with them, to destroy them."

The *Zohar* (vol.3 115:) explains this *pasuk* with the following *meshal*:

The perfume market is a place that everyone likes to visit. The blend of aromatic scents is intoxicating. Even after leaving the market, the scents remain on his body and clothing.

There are many other markets in town. The most unpleasant one is the tannery market (called שוק של בורסקי) because the merchants use dung to soften the leather. No one wants to

pass through the tannery market, even if by doing so he will reach his destination faster. The stench is just too strong.

There was once a man who married a woman who lived in the tannery market. Had his wife not lived there, he would never go to the tannery market. But since his wife lives there, to him it feels as if it is a perfume market, where the best smells of the world are sold.

The *Zohar* tells this *meshal* to explain the reason Hashem agrees to go to *chutz le'aretz*, (places outside of Eretz Yisroel) although the smell of *chutz le'aretz* is disgusting for Hashem. It is because the Jewish nation lives in *chutz le'aretz*, and Hashem wants to be with them wherever they are.

We don't smell the stench of *chutz le'aretz* because our spiritual sense of smell is very weak. You can say, our noses are stuffed. But, *keviyachol*, for Hashem being in *chutz le'aretz* is a very disgusting experience. However, since the Jewish nation lives in *chutz le'aretz* and Hashem wants to be with them, Hashem feels like He is coming to a perfume market.

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ ואויביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכולותם, "Despite all this, when they will be in the lands of their enemies, I will not be disgusted with them..." Hashem's love for us prevails.

As the *Zohar* (vol.2 p.5:) states, "If the Jewish nation knew how much Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves them they would roar like a lion and run after Hashem."

A *bris* is a pact, an agreement and pledge

between two parties. The following question arises. The bond of love between Hashem and the Jewish nation that is established by a *bris milah* (circumcision) takes place when the child is but eight days old, and he doesn't know what's going on. Wouldn't it be better to make a pact with Hashem when one is old enough and intelligent enough to understand the significance of what he is doing? How can one make a treaty if he's not aware of what he is doing?

The answer is that it is of particular importance that the union should be established when the child doesn't understand the connection that is being made. There will be times, later in his life, when he will feel detached from Hashem. So, we tell him, your bond with Hashem began when you didn't know about the connection. Know, that although you don't feel connected, a strong alliance is still in

place between you and Hashem.¹

1. After serving in the army, a Yid who fell very far off the path of Torah, went to India where he practiced all kinds of *avodah zarahs* and foolishness. A Chabad *shaliach* met up with him and said, "You can wear your kippah and you can take off your kippah. But no matter how you appear, Hashem is waiting for your *teshuvah!*"

The conversation didn't go much further. Unbeknown to both at the time, these words penetrated deeply into this man's heart, and from then on, he went from one teacher to the next, seeking ways to do *teshuvah*.

He is now a complete *baal teshuvah*. The *shaliach* who brought him back still doesn't know what his true words accomplished. He told him that no matter how far one falls, he is always close to Hashem.

There was once a child who unfortunately went off the *derech*. His distraught parents invested a lot of money – hiring tutors and role models – to bring their child back. After many tears, prayers, and efforts, the child returned. The father asked him, "Which dollar brought you back?" The father meant, "I paid a lot of money for *mechanchim* and tutors. Which one had the greatest influence on you; which one brought you back?"

The *bachur* replied, "It wasn't because of the *mechanchim* that you hired. Rather, once, a certain rav greeted me with a happy countenance. I said to him, 'Do you know who you just greeted?' and I told him about my sins. The rav replied, 'It doesn't make a difference. Hashem loves you regardless and He is waiting for your return.' I told him about some of the graver sins that I was committing, and the rav replied, 'Even so, Hashem is still your Father, awaiting your return.' Then the rav kissed me on my forehead and left. This occurred just as I was about to do a very severe sin. This episode turned me around. I returned to my Father in heaven..."

When you feel detached from Hashem, perhaps you won't be able to do too much in Hashem's service, but nevertheless do what you can. For example, say one chapter of *Tehillim*, learn one halachah. Do something because the bond of love still exists. Remember that sometimes, the little bit that you perform is more precious to Hashem than a lot that others do.

The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 3:5) tells a story about Agrifas HaMelech who said to the *cohen gadol*, "I want to sacrifice one thousand *korbanos* in one

day. Therefore, for one day, offer only my *korbanos*."

On the day the *cohanim* were busy offering the king's thousand *korbanos*, a pauper asked the *cohen* to sacrifice two birds (תורים) for him. The *cohen* explained that by the king's orders, only the king's *korbanos* could be brought that day.

The pauper said, "Every day, Hashem helps me catch four birds (תורים). I bring two as a *korban*, and I keep the other two for myself, for my *parnassah*. I'm afraid that if the two birds won't be sacrificed today, Hashem might not

The Meil Tzedakah adds, "Once, there was someone who was going through very difficult times, and was planning to commit suicide. I spoke with him a lot and consoled him and gave him encouragement. Some days later he told me that if I wouldn't have spoken with him, he would have committed suicide. Therefore, be generous with your words when you encounter a poor person or anyone going through difficult circumstances. Don't be stingy with your words. Appease him with many words. Even if you are suffering from worries of your own, it shouldn't prevent you from encouraging and consoling the poor, the worried, and the people who are brokenhearted."

grant me four birds tomorrow."

The *cohen* acquiesced and sacrificed the pauper's *korban*.

That night, Agrifas had a dream. He was told that the pauper's *korban* (of two small birds) was more precious to Hashem than the thousand *korbanos* (of cattle) that he brought.

Agrifas called the *cohen gadol* and he asked him, "Didn't I tell you that you should only sacrifice my *korbanos*?"

The *cohen gadol* explained, "My master and king, a pauper came with two birds and he asked me to sacrifice them. I explained to him that the king commanded that only the king's *korbanos* should be offered that day. The pauper replied that he catches four birds each day and sacrifices two of them. He said that if I don't sacrifice his birds, I'm jeopardizing his *parnassah*.

I had no choice but to bring them."

Agrifas replied, "You acted correctly."

So, we see that quality is more important than quantity. The pauper's *korbanos*, brought with *emunah* and devotion, were greater than the thousand *korbanos* that Agrifas brought. Therefore, one should do what he can. The little he does might be even more precious than a lot that others do.

In last week's *parashah* it states (*Vayikra* 22:32), ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל, 'Sanctify Me in the midst of Bnei Yisrael.'" From these words, we learn that *Kedushah* and similar holy words must be said ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל, only among a group. One can't say ברבנו or קדיש when he is alone. But how many people must there be in order for it to be considered a group?

The Gemara (*Megillah* 23:) says that we need a *minyan* of ten people. The source

for this is the ten *meraglim* (spies) who spoke *lashon hara* about Eretz Yisrael.² Hashem calls these ten people a congregation, as it states (*Bamidbar* 14:27), עד מתי לעדה הרעה הזאת, "How long will it be so with this bad congregation..." So, we see that a minyan constitutes ten people.

The Gemara also mentions Korach's supporters as well (see footnote).³ From these sources, the Gemara understands that a minyan is ten people.

Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* finds it strange that the laws regarding a minyan should be derived

2. There were twelve *meraglim*, one from each tribe. Yehoshua and Kaleb didn't sin; that makes ten *meraglim* who spoke *lashon hara*.

3. The Gemara states as follows:

חייא בר אבא א"ר יוחנן דאמר קרא ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל כל דבר שבקדושה לא יהא פחות מעשרה מאי משמע דתני ר' חייא אתיא תוך תוך כתיב הכא ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל וכתיב התם הברלו מתוך ההעדה ואתיא עדה עדה דכתיב התם עד מתי לעדה הרעה הזאת מה להלן עשרה אף כאן עשרה:

Translation:

It states (*Vayikra* 22:32) 'Sanctify Me among Bnei Yisrael.' This means every statement of *kedushah* [to answer *Kedushah*, *Kaddish*, and the like] one needs a congregation of at least ten people.

How do we know that ten people are needed? We know it from a *gezeirah shavah* from the word תוך. It states ונקדשתי בתוך, and it states [about the supporters of Korach] הברלו מתוך העדה הזאת (*Bamidbar* 16:21) 'Separate yourself from this group.' And we have a *gezeirah shavah* with the word עדה, because by Korach it states הברלו מתוך and [by the *meraglim*] it states (*Bamidbar* 14:27), עד מתי לעדה הרעה הזאת. Just as there [by the *meraglim*] there were ten, also here [in regards to ונקדשתי] it is with ten."

from the *meraglim* and from Korach's supporters. Shouldn't the source for a holy minyan be taught from tzaddikim? Why is it taught from groups who committed two very severe *aveiros* (sins)?

The answer is that it is to teach us that even such congregations, like the *meraglim* and like Korach's, can sanctify Hashem's name. Even through such people it can be said, ונקדשתי ונתקדשתי, בתוך בני ישראל, "And I will be sanctified from the midst of Bnei Yisrael."

The explanation is, בתוך בני ישראל, when you look deep inside a Yid (בתוך), you will see that he is pure and that he wants to serve Hashem. Therefore, regardless of his errors, he is precious to Hashem.

Once again, it states (26:44), ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ, אויביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לבלותם.

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* (ורא ד"ה וידבר משה, *Zera Kodesh*) explains: ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ, אויביהם, when they (Bnei Yisroel) are distant from Hashem, as far as can be, לא מאסתים ולא געלתים I am never disgusted by them. לבלותם, because they yearn with all their heart and soul to serve me. לבלותם alludes to בלות, הנפש, yearning with all your soul). The essence of a Yid is always pure.

Immediately, following the *tochachah* (rebuke) comes the *parashah* of ערבין (chapter 27).⁴ What is the connection between the *tochachah* and *eiruchin*?

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* explains that after hearing the *tochachah*, one might feel that Hashem is angry with him, and that he doesn't have any self-value. The Torah put the *parashah* of *eiruchin* directly after to let him know that

4. ערבין means when one vows to give his own ערך, worth, to the Beis HaMikdash (or the worth of someone else).

everyone is valuable. Don't say you are worthless because Hashem loves every Yid like a father loves his son.

Teshuvah

After knowing that we are always precious to Hashem, we can understand that it is never too late to do *teshuvah*, no matter what we did wrong. To prove this let us study what happened to Menasheh, the king of Bnei Yisrael (*Divrei HaYamim* 2, ch.33):

"Menasheh was twelve years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Yerushalayim for fifty-five years. He did evil in Hashem's eyes, following in the corrupt ways of the nations whom Hashem banished before Bnei Yisrael. He rebuilt the *bamos* (altars for *avodah zarah*) that his father, Chizkiyahu, destroyed, and he established altars for the Baal (*Avodah zarah*). He made *asheiros* (trees for *avodah*

zarah), and he bowed down to all the stars in heaven and he served them. He built altars in the Beis HaMikdash, where Hashem said that He wants to reside forever. He built altars in both courtyards of the Beis HaMikdash for all stars in heaven. He passed his children through fire in Gei Ben Hinom, and he performed witchcraft, as well as several other sins, which are bad in Hashem's eyes..."

Menasheh didn't sin alone. He caused others to sin with him. As it states, "Menashah caused Yehudah and the dwellers of Yerushalayim to sin even more than the nations Hashem destroyed before Bnei Yisrael. Hashem spoke to Menasheh and to his nation, but they didn't listen. Hashem sent them army troops of the Assyrian king, and they captured Menasheh, put him in chains and brought him to Bavel. When things got very bad for Menasheh he

prayed to Hashem, his G-d, and he became very humble before the G-d of his forefathers. He prayed to Hashem, and Hashem answered his prayers, and returned him to his kingdom in Yerushalayim, and Menasheh knew that Hashem is the king..."

In Menasheh's younger years, he had many opportunities to repent, but he refused to. Hashem had even spoken to him, telling him to repent, but he didn't listen. He did *teshuvah* later in his life when his life became unbearable. Nevertheless, Hashem accepted his *teshuvah*. Because it is never too late to do *teshuvah*. Regardless of age, deeds, and history, Hashem always wants our *teshuvah*. Our connection with Hashem is eternal, and therefore it is always possible to come back.

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 103.) states, "Reb Yochanan said in the name of Reb Shimon bar Yochai: Why

does it say (*Divrei HaYamim* 2, 33:13), וישמע אליו ויחר לו, 'Hashem heard Menasheh's *tefillos* and Hashem dug for him'? It should say ויעתר לו, that 'Hashem heard Menasheh's *tefillos* and Hashem accepted the *tefillos*.' What does ויחר לו 'dug for him' mean? These words are written to teach us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu dug a *מחורה*, secret entryway in heaven, to accept Menasheh's *teshuvah*, concealed from the *din*."

In other words, after Menasheh sinned so much, the Middah of *din* claimed that it wasn't proper for Hashem to accept his *teshuvah*. So, Hashem opened a *מחורה* for him, a secretive passageway in heaven, to accept Menasheh's *teshuvah* before the *din* realized what happened.

As Rashi writes, "The Middah of *din* was protesting that Menasheh's *teshuvah* shouldn't be accepted. Hakadosh Baruch Hu opened an opening in

heaven, stretched out His hand, and accepted Menasheh's *teshuvah*, without the *din* knowing about it."

Similarly, everyone can do *teshuvah*. If he turns to Hashem, Hashem will find a way to accept his *teshuvah*.

As it states in *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (*Rabba* 22) "Even if a person committed a hundred *aveiros*, each one worse than the previous, and then he does *teshuvah*, [Hashem says] 'I am compassionate. I am with him and I accept his *teshuvah*.' Even if a person blasphemies and disgraces Hashem (בחרף בלפי מעלה) and then he does *teshuvah*, You, Hashem, will forgive everything."

The *Psikta* (שובה ישראל) tells the following *mashal*:

There was once a prince who was one hundred *parsah* away from his father. He felt that he can never return to his father, the

king. The journey was too far away for him.

People told him, "Go as far as you can. The king will meet you there."

The *nimshal* is, people feel that it is too hard for them to repent. Our reply is do what you can. Hashem will meet you and help you complete your *teshuvah*.

Chazal (*Bava Kama* 9) say הידור מצוה עד שליש. Rashi explains, "If someone finds two *sifrei Torah* for sale, and one is more beautiful than the other, he should add a third to his money and buy the more beautiful one. As it states (*Shabbos* 133:), זה א"ל ויאגודו, do beautiful mitzvos before Hashem. Make a beautiful *sefer Torah*, a beautiful *lulav*, a beautiful talis, beautiful *tzitzis*.... If the smaller [less beautiful] one is sold for six *dinars*, add two *dinars* [and pay eight *dinars*], because two is a third of six, and buy the more beautiful one."

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* asked, Hashem keeps the entire Torah (see *Brachos* 6). How does Hashem keep the concept of adding a third onto the *mitzvos*?

The Sar Shalom replied, a Yid battles with the *yetzer hara* and completes 2/3rds of the battle. Hashem completes the final third of the battle for him. As the Gemara (*Succah* 52:) states, יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו כל יום ומבקש להמיתו ואלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו אינו יכול לו, "The *yetzer hara* attacks a person every day and tries to kill him. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu wouldn't help him he wouldn't win the battle." Hashem helps him by completing the final third of the battle.

The Sar Shalom taught this lesson on Lag b'Omer, and he added: *Sefiras ha'omer* is 49 days, and on the 33rd day, (ל"ג בעומר), two-thirds of the *omer* has passed. We purify ourselves two-thirds of the *sefiras ha'omer*, and now Hashem will complete the mission

for us, and totally purify us before Him.

(Rebbe Shalom Kaminka *zt'l* and the Sanzer Rav *zt'l* were present at the Sar Shalom's Lag b'Omer *tish* when the Sar Shalom taught this lesson, and for the next forty-five minutes, they were thinking about this *vort* with a lot of *hislahavus*. Throughout this time, the Sanzer Rav leaned on the table, with his two hands over his forehead, and Rebbe Shalom of Kaminka cried copiously.)

Reb Shimon Bar Yochai

Until here, we've seen that Hashem's love for us never abates, and He awaits our *teshuvah*.

Now we will illustrate this idea with some lessons from Reb Shimon bar Yochai that hint to these concepts:

Chabakuk (3:2) said, ה' שמעת שמעך יראתי, "Hashem I heard You and I was afraid..." Reb Shimon bar Yochai said, "They should be afraid. אנן בתכיבותא תליא

מלחא, but we are about love" (Zohar). Reb Shimon introduced the path of love to the world, to teach that we are never abandoned by Hashem. Hashem loves us, and we are precious to Him.

With regards to *hilchos muktzah*, Reb Shimon (Beitzah 40.) teaches:

Even if the barn housing your livestock is far away from your home, the animals aren't *muktzah* on *yom tov*. You weren't planning on eating them because they are so distant from your home. Nevertheless, they don't become *muktzah*. You may shecht and eat them for the *yom tov* meals.

The Munkatzer Rebbe *zt'l* said that "cattle that are very distant" hints to people who are very distant from Hashem. Nevertheless, they are never *muktzah*, they are never eternally cast away. They can return in *teshuva* before Hashem.

Reb Shimon (*Sanhedrin* 71) also taught that there was never a *בן סורר ומורה* and there will never be one. The Torah teaches us the halachos of *בן סורר ומורה* only so that we can learn about it and receive reward for learning about it. But it never happened.

The *בן סורר ומורה* didn't really do anything so terrible. He is a young thirteen-year-old boy who is eating a lot of meat and drinking a lot of wine. He didn't transgress any particular *aveirah* yet. But the Torah knows that his bad habits will eventually lead him to worse sins. When he becomes older, he will certainly steal and kill to get money to satiate his desires. Therefore, he is killed in *beis din*. As Chazal explain, "It is better for him to die innocent than to die guilty."

We can therefore explain that Reb Shimon said a *בן סורר ומורה* never existed. In Reb Shimon's opinion, it is never too late. One can

never write off a person and state with certainty that he will fall to the lowest levels, and that he doesn't have any hope for repentance. Accordingly, Reb Shimon said that the בן סורר ומורה never existed. It was taught to us only so that we can receive reward for studying it.

Bitachon – Hashem will Support Us

There is a great question that people ask in the *shemittah* year. "If we aren't working in the fields, and we aren't planting and harvesting, what will we eat? How will there be enough food for everyone?"

This question is twice as difficult when there's a *yovel* year. When it is *yovel* it ends up being two years in a row (*shemittah* and *yovel*) without doing agricultural work. How will the nation survive?

As it states (*Vayikra* 25:20-21), וְכִי תֹאמְרוּ מָה נֹאכֵל בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית, "If

you will ask: 'What will we eat in the seventh year? We aren't planting and we aren't harvesting?'"

Hashem will respond, וְצִוִּיתִי אֶת בְּרַכְתִּי לָכֶם בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית "I will command My blessings by the sixth year (the year before *shemittah*) and there will be enough produce for three years."

The Sfas Emes (תרל"ז) explains that the *pasuk* is referring to a generation that isn't deserving of miracles. For them, Hashem says He will send His blessings during the sixth year. That year a lot of produce will grow, and for three years the nation will still be eating from it. Ideally, though, Hashem wants to support us during the *shemittah* and *yovel* years in miraculous ways. But if the Jewish nation isn't worthy of miracles, Hashem promises, וְצִוִּיתִי אֶת בְּרַכְתִּי לָכֶם בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית, that He will send bounty during the sixth year, which will

sustain them for three years.

through a somewhat natural means."

The agricultural boom of the sixth year is also a miracle, but it is a miracle concealed within nature. As the Sfas Emes writes, "They will be supported

But they will certainly have food and *parnassah*. They don't have to worry. As Chazal say, מאן דיהיב חיי יהיב, מזוני, "Hashem who gives life also gives *parnassah*."¹⁵

5. When one has an *aliyah*, he begins with ברכו את ה' המבורך and by the *zimun* with a minyan after a meal, one says: נברך אלקינו שאכלנו משלנו. The Tosefos Yom Tov (*Brachos* 7:3) notes that for Torah we say ה', and after eating we say אלקינו.

The Tosefos Yom Tov explains that "Regarding food, it is proper that Hashem should feed His creation, therefore we say אלקינו, which this name represents *din*, doing what is proper and just. [Because it is proper and just that since Hashem created us, that He will sustain us.] However, with regards to Torah, Hashem gave us the Torah by His kindness... Therefore, for blessings for Torah we say Hashem's name ה', the name of compassion." We repeat this lesson to bring out the point that Hashem created us, and therefore it is *din*, the right thing that Hashem should support us. We can be certain therefore that Hashem will feed all living beings, and we don't have to worry about that.

A *mashal* is told of a chicken that lived alone in his coop. Every morning at 6:00 a.m., his owner put enough food into the coop for the day.

One morning, the chicken woke up and saw that his owner put another chicken into his coop. At 6:00 a.m., when the food came, the chicken that was there first pecked at its new neighbor, and didn't let it come near the food. The chicken was afraid that the new member was taking away its *parnassah*.

But if the chicken was be able to think, it would realize that every

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (וארא ד"ה ולקחתי אתכם) says that when Klal Yisrael came to the desert and saw the manna fall down from heaven, they were astounded. They just came from Mitzrayim, and they knew that grains, fruits, and vegetables grow from the ground. How can food fall from heaven? They recognized that it was a wondrous miracle.

However, during the forty years the Yidden lived in the desert, many children were born and raised there. For them, manna was natural. They never saw anything different. As far as they were concerned, food comes down from heaven. When they came to Eretz Yisrael and saw food

growing from the ground, that's when they became flabbergasted and shocked. They considered it a great miracle.

Because nature is also a miracle. As the Sfas Emes *zt'l* (בהרי חרל"ז) writes, "Bnei Yisrael must know that miracles and nature are one and the same. There is no greater miracle than nature. Nature is the greatest wonder that we know about." The difference between the natural world that we witness and miracles is only that nature is familiar with, while those miracles that happen less often are the ones that we call miraculous. But they are both equally wondrous.⁶

day he receives *parnassah* comes from his owner. And the owner knows that now there are two beaks to feed, and that he must provide a double portion. So there will be enough for both of them. There is no reason to worry.

6. One plants a tiny seed and it sprouts and becomes a tall, magnificent tree. The tree has luscious fruits, with enough seeds

Rebbe Zusha of Anapoli *zt'l* says that the nation is mistaken when they ask *מה נאכל בשנה השביעית*, "What will we eat in the seventh year?" Why should they ask? Don't they believe that *parnassah* comes from Hashem and Hashem will certainly support them?

We quote the Noam Elimelech who brings this lesson in the name of his brother, Rebbe Zusha:

"When Hashem Yisbarach created the world, He created channels through which to send down bounty to mankind. The bounty never stops. However, when a person... doesn't have *bitachon*...his impure thoughts make a

blemish in the upper worlds... This prevents the bounty from descending. Hashem has to make a new decree [a new track, to send down *parnassah*]... Thus, the *pasuk* is saying, *וכי תאמרו*, if you will ask such questions, *וצויתי את ברכתי*, you are troubling Me and requiring Me to make a new command of a blessing [to bring you *parnassah* through a brand-new channel]. Don't do so. Trust in Hashem with all your heart and the bounty will come down [through the original track that Hashem prepared for you]...and nothing will be lacking."

We are living in a time when many people are asking *מה נאכל*, "What will

to plant an entire orchard. Isn't this miraculous? We just call it nature because it happens all the time, but the wonders are enormous.

If a dead person, rotting in the grave for a long time, suddenly stood up and left his grave, everyone will be astounded by the miracle. This happens when a seed is planted. It rots in the ground and then it sprouts and grows. It is miraculous, but we don't recognize it as so, because we are so accustomed to it.

we eat?" Many people lost their jobs. Many businesses are limping. They wonder, מה נאכל, "How will we manage?"

However, they will be better off if they don't ask this question. As the Noam Elimelech writes, everyone has a never-ending channel of *parnassah*. If one trusts in Hashem and he doesn't ruin the pipes with worry, the *parnassah* will always come down.

And even if he does worry, Hashem will create another channel to bring him *parnassah*. As the Sfas Emes teaches, Hashem can support us in miraculous ways. And if we won't get *parnassah* in a miraculous way, Hashem will grant him *parnassah* in other ways (which appear somewhat natural). But *parnassah* will certainly come. As Chazal say, מאן דהיב חי יהיב מווי, "Hashem who gives life will also give *parnassah*."

Therefore, be strong and courageous and push away

all disturbing thoughts. Trust in Hashem and you will see the wonders that He will perform for you, and for all of Klal Yisrael.

Hashem has performed many miracles to keep the world running until this day, and the miracles won't stop in our generation. There is nothing to worry about.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* said that he has a *segulah* that removes all anxiety, and he invites anyone who wants to take advantage of this *segulah* to feel welcome to do so:

Write down the many kindnesses that Hashem performed for you. When you say מודים praise Hashem for all those *chasadim*. This is a remedy to rid one of all his worries.

When one remembers all the kindness that Hashem performed for him in the past, he will be certain that Hashem will continue doing kindnesses

for him. Thus, his uncertainties about his future will disappear

Lessons in *Emunah*

The Chinuch (*mitzvah* 84) teaches us two lessons of *emunah* that we can derive from *shemita*. One lesson is the belief that Hashem created the world. As he writes, "to remove from our thoughts the false theories that the *apikorsim* say, that the world always existed..." Similar to the lesson of Shabbos, we don't work the earth on the seventh year to remind us that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day.

The second lesson is as follows: "Hashem also commanded that whatever grows in this year of

shemita should be *hefker*. This is to remind a person that produce isn't granted to us through natural means. (It isn't that the earth has the natural strengths and *segulos* to bring forth produce). Rather, there is a Master over the earth and over the owner of the field and when He wants, He tells them to be *mafkir* the produce."

This latter point is true regarding agriculture, and it is also true regarding *parnassah*. It seems that work brings *parnassah*. Work is actually only *hishtadlus*; Hashem gives *parnassah*.⁷

The Orchos Tzaddikim (*Shaar HaSimchah*) explains the concept of *hishtadlus* in a very clear way:

7. Rebbe Yitzchak of Neshchiz *zt'l* said, "*Parnassah* is attained through *emunah*. If you will ask, how is it that there are people who don't believe in Hashem and yet they have *parnassah*? How did that happen? It is because Hashem had *rachmanus* on them and Hashem gave them *parnassah* even though they are lacking *emunah*. But really, the way to get *parnassah* is through *emunah*."

"It can be compared to someone chopping wood with an ax. The iron ax is chopping the wood, but the strength doesn't lie in the iron. It lies with the person who is swinging the ax to cut the tree."

Consider what happens when one hits a dog with a stick. The dog will bite the stick because the dog thinks the stick hit him. It doesn't realize that there's a person wielding the stick. Similarly, we must know that everything that happens in this world is from Hashem. Behind the scenes, and behind everything that is going on, Hashem is the one who controls everything that happens.

When one knows that *parnassah* comes from Hashem, he won't do forbidden deeds in order to earn the *parnassah*.

This week's *parashah* discusses the prohibition of *ribbis* (25:37). The Gemara

(*Bava Metzia* 71.) says that whoever lends money on interest is כופר באלקי ישראל, denies Hashem. Why is that so? What makes this sin more severe than other *aveiros*?

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* explained, "The primary foundation of *emunah* is to believe that *parnassah* comes from Hashem. *Hishtadlus* for *parnassah* won't grant a person even one coin more than what is destined for him. When he lends money for *ribbis*, he is showing that he doesn't believe that his *parnassah* can come through permitted means. He thinks, 'I will do an *aveirah* so that I can earn more money.' This is *kefirah*" (*Maaseh Ish* vol.1 178). *Parnassah* comes from Hashem, alone. Why should one transgress prohibitions in order to earn money? How will it help? This is the reason the Gemara calls it heresy.⁸

8. The Mishnah (*Avos* 5:9) states, גלות באה לעולם על ... שממת הארץ, "Exile comes to the world... because people aren't cautious with the laws

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* (*Toras Avos, Emunah u'Bitachon* 28) taught: The Gemara (*Tamid* 28.) says, יהו"ק באמונה יתירה, that a person should take the path of "extra *emunah*." This means, to speak about levels of *emunah* that are above his level. Although it is generally important to serve Hashem according to one's level, when it comes to *emunah* one should speak about levels of *emunah* that are beyond him.

One example of this idea is the following:

Reb Akiva taught: לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לאמר כל דעביד רחמנא "A person should accustom himself to saying, 'Whatever Hashem does, is for the good.'" There are times when one doesn't feel in his heart that what's happening to him is good,

but nevertheless he should say it anyway. By speaking the true words of *emunah* the ideas will penetrate.

As the Lechovitzer *zt'l* taught, האמנתי, I believe in Hashem, כי אדבר, because I speak about *emunah*.

Notice that Reb Akiva spoke half of his words (in this statement) in Aramaic. As it states, כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד. Why?

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 12:) states, לעולם אל ישאל אדם צרכיו, בלשון ארמי, "One should never daven for his needs in Aramaic. כל השואל צרכיו בלשון ארמי אין מלאכי השרת נוקקים לן לפי שאין מלאכי השרת מכירין לשון ארמי, Whoever asks for his needs in Aramaic, the *malachim* don't deal with his *tefillah*, because the *malachim* don't recognize Aramaic."

of *shemithah*." Rebbe Henoch of Alexander *zt'l* (חשבה לטובה ד"ה או) explains that when one believes that the land belongs to Hashem, and that we are His servants, Hashem lets us remain on the land. But when we think that everything is ours, and everything is in our hands, Hashem takes it away from us.

The Rosh (ברכות פ"ב ס"ב ומעדני) quotes this Gemara, and brings a question from the students of Rabbeinu Yonah:

"If *tefillos* of the individual must be in *lashon hakadosh*, why does the entire world have the custom that women daven in other languages? They are obligated in *tefillah*, so they should only daven in *lashon hakadosh!*... Also, Tosfos asks, [why does the Gemara say that] the *malachim* don't understand Aramaic. Behold they know even the thoughts of man!" If they know people's thoughts, they should surely understand Aramaic!

The Rosh answers both questions with one answer: The *malachim* know all languages, and they know Aramaic, too. But Aramaic is a disgusting language (in the *malachim's* opinion) and therefore they won't deal with Aramaic *tefillos*.

The Maadanei Yom Tov (7) writes, "This needs

explanation. Chazal say that Aramaic is very similar to *lashon hakodesh*, so why should it be a disgusting language to the *malachim*? Why is it worse than all other languages? I think that because it is similar to *lashon hakodesh*, it is disgusting to them. It is a corrupt language."

The world has many languages; each nation has their own language. The languages aren't corrupt. But Aramaic is like a bad *lashon kodesh*, and therefore the *malachim* don't want to deal with it.

The Maadanei Yom Tov adds, "Therefore, Arabic is probably disgusting to them, because it is a language similar to *lashon hakaodesh* and the Rambam writes, 'It is *lashon hakodesh* משובש, a construed, changed *lashon hakodesh*.'"

לשון ארמי, Aramaic, comes from the word רמאי, crookery, cheating, because the language isn't a real language, rather a

construed version of *lashon hakadosh*, and therefore the *malachim* don't want to deal with it.

With these ideas we can explain why Reb Akiva taught this halachah – that people should say כל העביר רחמנא לטב עביר that "Everything is for the good" – in Aramaic. Reb Akiva used שפה משובש, an imperfect language, to imply that even if when one says, "Everything is for the good," although his *emunah* is imperfect, and the words aren't real to him, he should nonetheless speak this way. Because it is important to speak about *emunah*, even when it is beyond his level. If he will accustom himself to say "Everything is for the good" in the end he will believe it fully, in his heart.

On a similar note, one should speak about how nature is from Hashem. This isn't a simple level of *emunah* to attain. Many people think nature has its own strength. They think that when one works, he earns money because that is the nature of the world. And they think that the earth grows produce, because that is the nature of the earth, and so on. But we know that it isn't so. Everything is from Hashem. And we speak about these true concepts, even when our heart isn't there yet, because by speaking about it, eventually these truths will enter our hearts and we will genuinely believe that everything is from Hashem.⁹

9. Parents walk the *chasan* and *kallah* to the chuppah. This is to hint to the couple who are about to build their own home that they don't take even one step by themselves. Wherever they go, and whatever they do, they are being led from Above."

Becoming a Human Being

On the second day of Pesach, the *korban omer*, made of barely, is sacrificed. Barley is animal food. We then count fifty days until Shavuot, when the *shte halechem* are brought. The *shte halechem* are made from wheat flour, which is a grain that is fitting for humans. This alludes to the period of the fifty days of the *omer*, when we rise from being animalistic to acquiring the fine characteristics of a human being (see *Aruch HaShulchan* 489:3).

What makes a person "human"?

In *Shacharis* we say, מותר מותר... האדם מן הבהמה אין. These words can be translated as the quality of man over an animal is man's ability to say אין, no.

Animals act by instincts only. They can't control themselves. But מותר האדם מן הבהמה, man's greatness over animals is אין, that he can

shout "no" to whatever isn't Hashem's will.

The Rebbe of Ishbitz *zt'l* taught:

The head of a human being rests on top of the body. This indicates that his mind rules over his actions. By an animal, the head and the body are on the same plane, which implies that the mind can't control its corporeal instincts. It can't say "no" to control what its body wants.

When the railroad system was invented, the Shinover Rav *zt'l* explained that people used to be greater than animals, and therefore they rode on animals. Today, they aren't greater than animals anymore, but they are still greater than *domeim*, inanimate objects. So, they can ride on metal trains, but they don't have the right to ride animals.

This is because if a person has intelligence, but

he doesn't follow his conscience, he is essentially the same as an animal, and he therefore doesn't have the right to have an animal serving him.

A *bachur*, whose spiritual level was declining, asked Reb Shalom Shwadron *zt'l* for permission to travel to a certain place that wasn't appropriate for a yeshiva student. Reb Shalom Shwadron replied, "If you can answer my questions you can go there."

The *bachur* agreed to those terms, and he waited for the question.

Reb Shalom asked him, "Which is better? To be a human being or an animal?"

The *bachur* replied that it is obvious that the human race is a more elite race than that of an animal. "Animals eat outdoors, they rummage through the garbage, they never wash up... It is certainly a greater honor to be a human being."

Reb Shalom told him there is another way to look at things: Animals lead tranquil lives. They find their meals wherever they go. They don't get into *machlokes*. They never have to take medicine... In contrast, human beings have financial problems, they get into disputes, one day with one person, the next day with someone else..."

The *bachur* changed his mind. "Perhaps it is better to be an animal. I wish I was created an animal..."

Reb Shalom told him, "You don't have to worry about it. You're a perfect animal..."

A person has to take control over his body, and to let his mind rule. He should think through what he wants to do, what he wants to eat, when he wants to wake up, and so on, and then follow through with his decisions. If he can't change in a moment, he should make a plan to

change gradually. However, when one is under the control of the body's desires, he is ultimately like an animal. He acts by instinct, without intelligence.

There was once a priest who claimed that he can train animals to be like humans. Reb Yohonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* disagreed. He told the priest, "You can train an animal to do things that humans do, but its essence will always remain an animal. The animal won't become human-like."

The priest said they should debate the matter in public. The priest would bring out his trained animals, and Reb Yonoson Eibshitz should try to prove that they aren't becoming human-like, despite their very human behaviors.

Shortly before the debate, Reb Yonoson Eibshitz was learning Torah, and a mouse jumped into his open snuffbox, without Reb Yonoson

realizing it. When he closed the snuffbox, the mouse was trapped inside.

At the debate, a lavish meal was served by cats that were trained to walk on two feet! The cats were carrying trays and served the guests!

Reb Yonoson took out his snuffbox to sniff some tobacco and the mouse that was caught inside jumped out. When the cats saw the mouse, they immediately dropped their trays laden with food and ran wildly after the mouse. The debate ended right there. Cats remain cats. They don't change their essence despite their training. Hakadosh Baruch Hu arranged that the truth of Reb Yonoson's view should be revealed.

An animal remains an animal, but a person can change. He can say "no" when it isn't Hashem's will, because *מותר האדם מן הבהמה אין*, a person's quality over an

animal is his ability to say "no" to sins.

The Purity of Torah

The *parashah* begins, אִם תִּלְכוּ בְּחֻקֵי תּוֹרָה, and Rashi explains, שתהיו עמלים בתורה, "You shall toil in Torah."

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh *zt'l* offers forty-two different explanations on these words.

One of his explanations is that תִּלְכוּ means to go and to rise from level to level. This happens when one studies Torah. As the Or HaChaim teaches in *parashas Emor* (22:12), "Even if a person is at the lowest level, and there is no level lower, he can reach the highest levels. His growth will be in accordance with the extent he toils in Torah." The *pasuk* alludes to this lesson with the words, אִם תִּלְכוּ בְּחֻקֵי תּוֹרָה, if you will toil in Torah, תִּלְכוּ, you will rise from level to level, moving upward.

In the Or HaChaim's 18th explanation he explains that תִּלְכוּ means to go into Hashem's chambers and to stand before Hashem whenever he desires. He doesn't even have to ask permission to go there. One reaches that level by אִם תִּלְכוּ בְּחֻקֵי תּוֹרָה, studying Torah.

As the Or HaChaim writes, "The Gemara (*Succah* 45:) teaches that there are three levels of *tzaddikim*. Some see the *Shechinah*, but not clearly (באמפקלריא דלא נהרה). A greater level is those who see Hashem clearly (באמפקלריא דנהרה). The highest level is like a servant who has permission to come before his master whenever he wants. These are the *tzaddikim* whom Hashem gives permission to enter before Him whenever they choose. But how does one reach that level? Hashem tells us, אִם תִּלְכוּ בְּחֻקֵי תּוֹרָה, by studying Torah... תִּלְכוּ, they have permission to go and enter without asking permission."

Chazal (Yoma 85) say, מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל, "Just as a *mikvah* purifies those who are *tamei*, so too Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael."

Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* explains that Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael when a Yid studies Torah. And just as a *mikvah* purifies when one is entirely immersed in the *mikvah*, similarly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael when they are totally immersed in the study of Torah.

There are different customs regarding when one should say the *brachah* של אלקי נשמה in the morning. Some say it after *birchas HaTorah*. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explained that one must first thank Hashem for the Torah and then he can thank Hashem for life. Because "If not for Torah, what purpose is there to life?"

When the Rebbe Reshab of Lubavitz *zt'l* was ill, his son, the Rebbe Riyatz *zt'l*, asked the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*, the Or Someiach *zt'l*, and the Rogechever Gaon *zt'l* to daven for his father. People asked him why he specifically asked these three *tzaddikim*.

He replied, "What can I do? Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves a mouth that speaks a lot of Torah."

The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* said that there are many paths to become close to Hashem (through *chesed*, *tefillah*, *mitzvos*, etc.) but the safest path, from which one will not fall off, is through Torah study. This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (Shir HaShirim 1:2), כי טובים דודי, מוין. We can translate כי טובים, the best way, דודי, to become close to Hashem (who is called דודי, Friend), מוין, is by studying Torah (ינה של תורה).

Hasmadah in Torah also increases *emunah*. As it states (*Megillah* 6:), יגעתי ומצאתי,

if you toil in Torah, תאמץ, you will believe in Hashem.

The Vilna Gaon zt'l told his student, Reb Chaim Volozhiner zt'l, that one who studies Torah has nothing to worry about. He proved this from the *Zohar* (*Tikunim* 21-22) which tells of the punishments, and sometimes even death, that come from severe sins, and then the *Zohar* concludes, "But whoever studies Torah, about him it is written אורך ימים בימינה, "Long life is on its right side." ובשמאלה עושר וכבוד, "on its left side is wealth and honor." So even if due to sins it was destined poverty or even death, with Torah study one merits long life and wealth.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (*Matos, Haftarah*) writes in the name of the Hafla'ah zt'l, "Torah purifies the soul and connects a person to his Father in heaven. When we study Mishnah and Talmud, the lessons

of Ravina and Rav Ashi, and the works of the *rishonim* and *acharonim* zt'l, the holiness and purity of the holy scholars who wrote these *sefarim* and are presently in Gan Eden will come down upon us. This unites us to Hashem and to His Torah."

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l said to his grandson, Rebbe Moshe (son of Rebbe Aharon of Belz) *hy'd* zt'l, "By learning a *daf* Gemara, one can become so pure until he reaches the point where he can see through a cement wall."

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 91) states, מכאן לתחיית המתים מן התורה. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explained, one can reach the level of *techiyas hameisim*, to resurrect the dead, מן התורה, by studying Torah.

Toil in Torah

The Torah says (26:3), אם, בחקותי תלכו, and Rashi

explains שתהיו עמלים בתורה, "You shall toil in Torah."

Every year we read אם אדם בחקותי תלבו before Shavuos because toiling in Torah is an ideal preparation for accepting the Torah.

Rashi writes, "Perhaps you would think that אם אדם בחקותי תלבו means keeping the mitzvos? [No, that can't be because] the following words state ואת מצותי תשמרו, thus mitzvos are mentioned. So, what is the translation of אם אדם בחקותי תלבו? It means, שתהיו עמלים בתורה, to toil in Torah."¹⁰

The purpose of Creation is to toil in Torah. The Gemara (*Nidah* 30:) states that when a child is in the

womb, a *malach* teaches the child the entire Torah. At birth, a *malach* touches the child on the lips so that he will forget the Torah. Why must he forget? Isn't it better that he should remember the Torah? The answer is that the purpose of life is to acquire Torah through toil.

When Rivkah Imeinu passed a beis medresh, Yaakov wanted to leave her womb. Why? Wasn't it good for him to study Torah in his mother's womb, together with a *malach*? The answer is that the purpose of one's existence is to acquire Torah through toil.

10. We can still ask, how does Rashi know that the *pasuk* is referring specifically to *toil* in Torah? Perhaps the *pasuk* is referring to studying Torah, even without toil?

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* answers that Rashi understood it from the word בחקותי, which comes from the word חוק. A *chok* is a mitzvah that we don't know the reason, we don't know the טעם. The *pasuk* is referring to someone who learns Torah even though he doesn't have a טעם, taste and pleasure in studying Torah. That is toiling in Torah.

A *bachur* told the Chofetz Chaim that he wasn't succeeding in his Torah studies. The Chofetz Chaim responded, "Who says learning Torah is about succeeding? Learning Torah is about toiling, and you too can toil and do the best you can..."

The difference between worldly pleasures and the pleasure of studying Torah is that the sweetness of worldly pleasures are immediate, but afterwards, they are bitter. Because they aren't truly good and sweet, that is just their enticing outer layer. In contrast, Torah is essentially sweet and good. However, sometimes one doesn't immediately recognize the sweetness of Torah.

It states (*Bereishis* 49:15), וירא מנוחה כי טוב ואת הארץ כי נעמה ויט שכמו לסבול. Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke *zt'l* (quoted in *Yismach Yisrael*, *Naso* 4) explains וירא מנוחה כי טוב, they understood that goodness is studying Torah, ואת הארץ כי נעמה, and they saw the pleasure that

gashmiyos, material indulgences have to offer. Which did they take? ויט שכמו לסבול, they chose the yoke of Torah.

The *Yismach Yisrael* explains, "This *pasuk* (וירא מנוחה כי טוב ויט) is referring to when they aren't enjoying studying Torah, and they nevertheless accept the yoke of Torah. This is as Chazal (*Avodah Zarah* 19.) state, 'One should always study Torah, even if he forgets, and even if he doesn't know what he is saying.' Because when one learns Torah and understands it, and he is able to have *pilpul*, and he enjoys it, this isn't called עבודה ויגיעה ועמל, toil and hard work in Torah... But when one doesn't have peace of mind, and especially when he doesn't understand what he is studying, that is toil in Torah." But they accept that toil, ויט שכמו לסבול, because they know וירא מנוחה כי טוב, that learning Torah is the ultimate good.

And when they do so, they will eventually taste the wonderful joy and sweetness of the Torah.

As the Or HaChaim (Devarim 26:10) writes, "If people tasted the sweetness and the goodness of Torah,

they would go crazy and they would wildly pursue it. They won't consider a world filled with gold and silver as anything at all, because the Torah has in it all the goodness of the world."¹¹

11. The following are the Or HaChaim's holy words:

כאומרם ז"ל (ברכות ה.) ואין טוב אלא תורה, שאם היו בני אדם מרגישים במתיקות ועריבות טוב התורה היו משתגעים ומתלהמים אחריה ולא יחשב בעיניהם מלא עולם כסף וזהב למאומה כי התורה כוללת כל הטובות שבעולם

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