

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Tekev





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Email: Mail@torahwellsprings.com

Parshas Eikev

It states in this week's *parashah* (7:16), **והסיר ה' ממך כל חולי**, "Hashem will remove all illnesses from you ..." The Yerushalmi explains that this means Hashem will free us from all our worries.

Rebbe Ben Tzion of Bobov *zt'l hy'd* writes in a letter, "I received your letter...and I understand you are very worried about your *parnassah*... I rebuke you lovingly that you shouldn't let these matters ruin your peace of mind. Trust in Hashem who gives *parnassah* to all creations. One is obligated to work, as it states, **וברכתך בכל אשר תעשה**, 'Hashem will bless you with everything you do,' but...doesn't mean one should worry and moan, for that won't help anyway. If a person worries all day long, it won't earn him a penny. It will only confuse him... Hashem decreed that the yoke of *parnassah* should be on people's shoulders. Therefore they must fulfill His will, do business, and buy wisely, and all of this is *avodas hakodesh*. One should do it swiftly and with a whole heart to do Hashem's will. But who gave you permission to worry?"

One might ask, "But what shall I do? I have many worries: I worry about *parnassah*, the children's chinuch, health issues, disputes among family or neighbors. How can I remove all these worries?"

The solution is (8:18), **וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי**, "Remember Hashem, because He gives you strength

to succeed..." All successes come from Hashem. When one has this awareness, he knows he is in "good hands" and he doesn't have to worry.

Furthermore, it states (8:3), **כי על כל מוצא פי ה' יחיה האדם**. The Maharit'z Dushinsky *zt'l* explains, **כי על כל מוצא פי ה'** whatever happens to a person (כל המוצאות אותו), it is Hashem's decree. With this awareness, **יחיה האדם** a person receives *chiyus*, vigor. Even if he goes through hard times, he knows it was destined and planned, and therefore he is o.k. with it.

דאגה, worry, has the first few letters of the alef beis in it. There's an *alef*, a *gimel*, a *dalet*, and a *heh*. The *beis* is missing, because when there's *bitachon* (represented by the *beis*) there are worries.

Yiras Shamayim

The Mishnah (*Avos* 3:1) states, **הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואי אתה בא לידי עבירה**, "Look at three דברים, things, and you won't come to sin..." The Rav of Biksad *zt'l* explained that **שלשה דברים** hints to the third *parashah* of *sefer* דברים. Study the third *parashah* of *parashas Devarim*, which is *parashas Ekev*, and you won't come to sin, because this *parashah* elaborates on the importance of having *yiras Shamayim*.

Many say *parashas haMan*, *parashas haYira* and *parashas haTeshuvah* each day, because saying these *parshiyos* are *mesugal* for attaining *parnassah*, *yiras shamayim*, and doing *teshuvah*.

Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* taught that to say *parashas haMan* on the Tuesday of *parashas Beshalach* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. I similarly heard that it is recommended to read *parashas haYira* on the Tuesday of Shabbos *parashas Ekev*.

Parashas haYirah begins with the words, ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקינו שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה ה', "Now Yisrael, what does Hashem request from you? Only to fear Hashem..." (10:12).¹

The Gemara learns from these words, הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים, "Everything is in Hashem's hand except for *yiras Shamayim*." Hashem does everything. All He asks from us to fear Him.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* clarifies that actually, even fear of Hashem is in Hashem's hand. What is in our hand is to *desire* and to *pray* for *yiras shamayim*. And then Hashem will give it to him.²

1. Rebbe Boruch of Mezhibuzh *zt'l* taught: ועתה ישראל teaches us a lesson in *teshuvah*. One should think, ועתה, from now on I will be better. ועתה ישראל, from now on I will act like a Yisrael should.

The following words of the *pasuk* are, שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה. Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuzh explains that this means when a Yid has *yiras Shamayim*, Hashem considers it שואל מעמך, as though he borrowed you (because שואל also means to borrow).

This statement means Hashem will protect you from all harm. There are four types of *shomrim*, guardians. The highest level, and most responsible *shomer* is one who *borrow*s an item. If something happens to that item, the borrower is accountable, on almost all accounts. Hashem says if you have *yiras Shamayim*, I borrow you. This means I am responsible to take care of you.

Thus, when one has *yiras Shamayim*, he is awarded an extra dose of protection. Hashem protects him from all harm.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* teaches: יראו את ה' קדושו כי אין מחסור ליראיו, fear Hashem, because אין מחסור ליראיו, those who fear Hashem don't lack anything at all — not spiritual and not material.

Every Yid intrinsically has *yiras Shamayim*. All he has to do is to bring it forth. A hint to this concept is found in the words שואל מעמך and it doesn't state שואל ממך. This means, you have fear of heaven already, it is עמך, you just have to bring it forth.

2. The Rebbe of Kotzk explained: הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים means whenever one davens, it is בידי שמים in Hashem's hands to decide whether to answer his *tefillos* or whether not to. For example, when one prays for wealth, Heaven may decide that it isn't good for him and withhold from giving it to him. חוץ מיראת שמים, the exception is when one davens for *yiras Shamayim*. *Yiras Shamayim* (and success in Torah and mitzvos) is certainly good for him, and therefore, Heaven will certainly answer his *tefillos* and give it to him.

Reb Elimelech Ashkenazi *zt'l* said that once, on a weekday, he heard Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* say *birchas hashachar*. When the Rav came to the words, לא לידי חטא ולא לידי עבירה ועון, "Don't bring me to sin..." he cried and he pleaded to be saved from sin, like a child begs his father.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "It is certain that *yiras Shamayim* is also in Hashem's hands, because without Hashem's help one wouldn't attain a 1/1000th of the fear he has. (Except for the very great tzaddikim, like the *avos* and Moshe Rabbeinu, who didn't need support to attain their fear of heaven)... Man's free will is to yearn and to pray for *yiras shamayim*. The desire isn't given from Above. One must attain that on his own..."

Reb Yochanan blessed his students, **יהא מורא שמים עליכם כמורא בשר ודם**, "You should fear heaven as much as you fear people, made of flesh and blood."

His students asked, "That's all? Shouldn't we fear Hashem even more than we fear people?"

Reb Yochanan replied, "*Halevay* you should reach that level of fear! The proof is, when one commits an *aveirah*, he says, 'I hope no one sees me.'"

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* says that hinted here is that one should fear Hashem as much as he fears for his **בשר ודם**, flesh and blood, for his health. People are very concerned about their health. They wouldn't go to a place where there is a slight chance they may catch a disease and become deathly ill. We should be as cautious with our *yiras Shamayim*. We

shouldn't go to places that can jeopardize our *yiras shamayim*.³

Being cautious with your *yiras Shamayim* also means to be careful who your friends are.

A father complained to Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* that his son was having a spiritual decline. The Belzer Rav replied, "Check out who his friends are."

The father called the *rosh yeshiva*, the *mashgiach*, and the *magid shiur*. They all told him that his son only has good friends. "There are no bad *bachurim* in the yeshiva" they assured him.

The father returned to the Belzer Rav and told him what he heard. Once again, the Rav replied, "Check out who his friends are."

The father obliged, and this time he dug deeper. There was one boy in yeshiva who seemed to have *yirei Shamayim*, but the father found out that he was rotten inside. The father told his son to keep away from that boy, which he did. Soon afterwards, his son's learning and *yiras Shamayim* returned to be as before.

The father told the Belzer Rav about the improvement. The Rav replied, "This isn't surprising. A bad friend is trouble. Twice in *birchas hashachar* we daven to be saved from a bad friend: **והרחיקני... מאדם רע ומחבר רע**. This

3. Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* once fell into a manhole. Since then whenever he walked on the street he would look ahead, to make sure there was no hole in the road. If there was, he crossed the street. That one time that he fell made him cautious for the rest of his life. Let us learn to be cautious from all different types of spiritual pitfalls.

shows us just how hazardous a bad friend can be."

Someone had a job offer. There weren't any halachic problems with this job per se. There wouldn't be *yichud*, theft, *chilul Shabbos*, and the like. The problem was that he'd be working among gentiles and non-religious Yidden. He asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l* whether he should take the job, explaining that he feared he may be influenced by his co-workers, and that might result with *kaltkeit*, coldness, disinterest, in his *yiras Shamayim*.

The Chazon Ish replied, "*Kaltkeit* in *yiras Shamayim* is יִהְיֶה וְאֵל יַעֲבֹר." This means, it is preferable to die, than to weaken one's *yiras Shamayim*.

The Shlah taught, if your friend, your חבר, is a חרב, a dangerous sword, run away from him. But if he is בחר which means chosen/elite, for he has *yiras Shamayim* and does good deeds, then be his חבר.

The *Shach al HaTorah* teaches that בני גר wanted to live on the other side of the Yarden River because they didn't want to live near *shevet* Shimon. In the desert, *shevet* Shimon dwelled between Gad and Reuven (see *Bamidbar* 2:10-14). Shimon's tribe sinned with the daughters of Moav. They weren't the best company to be around. The tribes of Gad and Reuven were concerned that when they enter Eretz Yisrael their properties may once again border with Shimon. They didn't want a bad influence, so they chose to live in the territories of Sichon and Og, on the other side of the Yarden.

Rebbe Ben Tzion of Bobov *zt'l* asked a *bachur* of his yeshiva, "In *Shemonah Esrei* we say, והודים מהרה תעקר ותשבר ותמגר, ותבלם ותשפילם ותכניעם במהרה בימינו, 'and the *resha'im* should soon be uprooted, destroyed...humbled, subjugated, speedily in our days.' Most of the words are understood, but what does ותמגר mean?"

The *bachur* said he didn't know. The Rebbe replied, "I also don't know. But I can tell by its neighbors that it isn't something good." The Rebbe was hinting that one's friends indicate who you are and who you will become. Therefore one must be extremely cautious with his choice of friends.

On Succos it was very cold in Belz. The *gabai* brought in the soup, but by the time it reached the Rebbe's table, it was cold. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* asked his *gabai* why the soup was cold. The *gabai* answered that he brought it outdoors, and it cooled off. The Rebbe said, "If soup gets cold by going through the city streets, what happens to a Yid who goes through the city streets?" The bad influences he sees and hears might cool off his *yiras Shamayim*, *chalilah*.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* said to a Yid from Warsaw, "To be in Warsaw and to not be there, is an investment in Olam HaBa." He earns stocks in Olam HaBa by living in Warsaw and yet not becoming influenced by the negative cultures.

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* writes, "I heard from someone who heard it directly from the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*, "To hold back,

even just once, from walking in the streets of a big city, is a *keren* (capital fund) for Olam HaBa."

Technology

Today, to be cautious with one's *yiras shamayim* means to be cautious indoors as well. Therefore, the *gedolei Yisrael* set guidelines and precautions to protect us.

However, there are some who feel they are smarter than everyone else. They say they are able to use the internet and it won't harm them.

They claim:

- a. They are cautious. They don't go to sites they shouldn't.
- b. There are many good buys to be found on line, and it will be a shame to miss out on them.
- c. I learn with the Iphone. I say *birchas hamazon* with it. There is so much good there. Why should it be forbidden?
- d. I only buy an Iphone (Smartphone/Galaxy etc.) with a *hechsher*. I don't care whether the *hechsher* is under the guidance and supervision of *gedolei Yisrael* or not.

Let's see where they err.

They say they are cautious what they watch and what they don't look at. Even if this is true, they won't be as guarded

and protected as those who have a strong filter in place. What they are really saying is, a slight slip here and there isn't so bad.

And that's where they are mistaken.

Compare it to someone who jumps off a hundred floors skyscraper and says, "I won't die, because I'm jumping down one floor only." The problem is, after he falls one floor, he won't be able to stop his descent. Similarly, when one breaches the *takanos*, and he has occasionally glitches, what will stop him from falling all the way down to the bottom?

It states (*Koheles* 10:8), פּוֹרֵץ גֶּדֶר יִנְשַׁכּוּ נָחָשׁ, "Whoever breaks the gates should be bitten by a snake." The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* asks, why specifically by a snake? Why doesn't it state יִנְשַׁכּוּ אֵרֵי, "a lion should bite him"?

When a lion bites, one immediately knows the damage that was done. However, when a snake bites, he doesn't realize he was deathly wounded. The poison spreads slowly through his body, and then he discovers what happened to him. The *pasuk* says that when one transgresses the boundaries the *chachamim* established, he should be bitten by a snake. This is because the damage grows gradually. At first, one feels still very strong with his Yiddishkeit. However, this breach can lead to his spiritual descent.⁴

4. In *Moaz Tzur* we discuss how the Yevanim פּרְצוּ חוֹמַת מַגְדֵּי, breached the walls of my fortress (Beis HaMikdash)..." The Yevanim did several worse matters. Among them placing an *avodah zarah* in the Beis Beis HaMikdash, forbidding the Yidden from studying and keeping the Torah, etc. However, we mention that they broke the walls of the Beis HaMikdash, because breaking through the border is the source of all troubles.

As stated above, one of the reasons some refuse to follow the counsel of the rabbanim regarding the internet is because they want to take advantage of the good buys that are found on-line. We have to realize that we aren't the first generation that the *yetzer hara* uses this tactic to lure people to sin.

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 106.) tells, "Bilaam advised the people of Moav, 'The Yidden desire linen clothing'... When the Yidden were eating, drinking and happily strolling through the marketplace, an older woman called out to them, 'Don't you want to buy linen clothing?' The older woman quoted the real price, and a younger woman quoted a lower price. They would do this two or three times. Then she would say, 'You are like a resident here. Sit and choose on your own.' There was wine there [and נסך יין non-Jewish wine, wasn't yet forbidden]. She said, 'Do you want to drink a cup of wine?' After he drank, the *yetzer hara* burned in him..."

Two things we learn from this story:

1) The good deals one can buy online, plus the availability of products, is not a new test. The daughters of Midyan offered them a rare product: linen clothing at a good price. And that led them to sin.

2) The Gemara tells us, had the prohibition of נסך יין been enacted, they would be protected from this grave sin. This teaches us the importance of following all the *takanos* of Chazal, and likewise the *takanos* of the *gedolei*

Yisrael of our generation. Keeping their rules safeguards us from sins.

Some people feel the internet is important, so they can learn Torah, daven, and the like. This brings to mind the following story:

A widow came to the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l*. Crying copiously, she said, "Lately, my daughter's husband is studying *avodah zarah!*"

The Divrei Chaim explained to her that her son-in-law is learning *masechta Avodah Zarah*. He isn't learning *avodah zarah*. He is learning Gemara!

In this story, someone was learning about *avodah zarah* from the Gemara. Today, people learn about Gemara from the *avodah zara*. The internet has *avodah zara* (among other sins) on it, and yet people use these gadgets to learn Gemara!

We mentioned the people who use a filter, but aren't particular to seek one that is supported and endorsed by the leaders of the generation. They should consider the following analogy:

Someone in a foreign country was looking for a place to eat. He came across a store that had Hebrew letters on it. "Apparently, I can eat here," he decides. He goes inside and sees they are selling *chazir*. He asked the storeowner, "You sell pig here?!"

The storeowner replied, "Not exactly. You see, it's not exactly pig. It's kind of pig, but not really... And you see we have a *hechsher* hanging on the wall..."

There are technologies that have “*hechshers*” but who is giving the *hechsher*? Is it reliable? And is it meant for you, or is it meant specifically for people with special needs? Sometimes it can be compared to selling unkosher foods, and claiming that it is o. k. because there is a *hechsher* on it.

Not every *hechsher* means it’s kosher, and not every *hechsher* is meant for you. Rabbinic guidance is therefore always recommended.

Good in this World

Those who follow the *chachamim*’s guidelines gain in this world and in the next world.

What are the gains in this world?

The *parashah* begins, והיה עקב השמעון את המשפטים האלה ... ואהבך וברכך והרכך וברך... והסיר ה' ממך כל חולי המצוות... Hashem will love you and bless you and increase your numbers... He will remove all maladies...” Because one always gains by keeping the Torah.

In particular, when one is cautious with *kedushah* it is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

A poor Yid from Yerushalim came to Monsey, New York, and collected money for his family. Before returning back to Yerushalayim, he called up one of his friends from Boro Park, and told him that he would be soon returning to Yerushalayim. The friend told him, “Prolong your ticket for four days and I will go with you to wealthy *baalei tzedakah* in Boro Park.”

The Yerushalmi Yid wasn’t sure he

wanted to prolong his trip. His family wanted him back home. “How much money do you think we can make in four days?”

“Five thousand dollars, at least.”

“For five thousand dollars, it’s worth to prolong the ticket.”

They made up that to meet Sunday morning in Boro Park.

Over Shabbos, this Yerushalmi *yungerman* read a booklet that discusses the importance of guarding the eyes. He read that for being cautious, one gets *parnassah* easily and abundantly. And if one isn’t cautious, he loses the bounty of *parnassah* that was destined for him.

The Yerushalmi Yid thought, “It wasn’t by chance that I read this. It is a sign that I must be cautious with my eyes. In this merit I will earn my *parnassah* easily...” On Sunday morning as he got ready to take the bus to Boro Park, he remembered that the bus passes through Manhattan. He knew he would be tempted to look out the window to see the magnificent buildings and the busy streets. But he was resolved to guard his eyes. So he put his eyeglasses into his suitcase and put the suitcase in the baggage compartment under the bus.

He arrived in Boro Park, hopeful that having passed the test, Hashem will grant him *parnassah* easily.

His friend met him at the bus stop and said, “I was thinking about it. I decided you don’t have to come with me to collect money. Why should you belittle

yourself? I will collect for you. I promise, I will send you \$25,000.”

The *hashgachah pratis* was evident. As he was guarding his eyes on the bus, his friend decided to help him earn his *parnassah* in an easier and more honorable way! Because when one is cautious with his *kedushah*, he will earn his *parnassah* in an easier way, and with a greater abundance.⁵

We can certainly say, "Fortunate are those who follow the counsel of the *gedolim* and use technology wisely." Today, it is no secret how much one loses — socially, financially, emotionally, and certainly spiritually — by using the internet freely, without restraint. By obeying the guidelines set for us, we are fortunate in this world and in the next.

Earth is the Highest

It states in this week's *parashah* (10:14), הן לה' אלקיך השמים ושמי השמים הארץ וכל אשר בה, "Behold to Hashem, your G-d, is the heaven and the upper heavens, the earth, and everything that's in it..." What is the order of the *pasuk*? It begins with the heaven, and then שמי השמים, which are upper heavens. And then back to הארץ, the earth, which is apparently the lowest level.

The Alshich addresses this question. He

writes, "Let's take note how the *pasuk* is out of order, for it should have stated from lowest level to highest: the earth, the *shamayim*, and the *shmei shamayim*; or from highest to lowest, *shmei shamayim*, *shamayim*, and *aretz*. The explanation is, *Chazal* tell us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world because He desires a place to live בתחתונים, in this world. And indeed, when the Beis HaMikdash stood, the primary place of the *Shechinah* was in this world... When we do Hashem's will, this world is the primary world... The *malachim* and the *Shechinah* are primarily here, and the earth becomes higher than all the upper worlds... So the order is from the lowest to highest: First is *shamayim*, where there are the planets. Above them is *shmei shamayim* where the *malachim* dwell. And above that is the earth and everything that's in it... Because when we serve Hashem...the earth is the highest place."

The explanation is, the *malachim* serve Hashem perfectly, but the purpose is specifically people who are tested, and yet serve Hashem. This is where Hashem desires to dwell.⁶

The Beis Aharon (pg.47:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu has millions of

5. Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* once needed to undergo surgery on his eyes and he told the doctor that he doesn't want to lie on his back. He wants the operation to be performed sitting up. (For the sake of *kedushah*, the Rebbe never slept on his back. The doctor told him that he doesn't have experience performing the operation in a sitting position and he cannot guarantee success. But the Rebbe insisted, and this is how the operation was performed.

6. *Chazal* (*Pesachim* 109) say, אין שמחה אלא בבשר. We can explain, Hashem's joy is solely from human beings, who are בשר ודם.

malachim who are constantly praising Hashem... Nevertheless, Hashem's primary desire is that people serve Him from *this world*. This can be compared to a great king who has all pleasures of this world. He has several talented musicians at his service — the best in the world. And he also has a small talking bird that can say “sugar.” The king puts aside all his pleasures and musicians, and delights himself with his bird. People ask him, 'You have singers and musicians, why do you pay attention to the bird?'

“He replies, 'There is nothing unique about the musicians. They are human beings and were trained to play well. But a bird that can talk, now that's unusual...'

“The *nimshal* is the *malachim* are near Hashem, and they see the brilliance of heaven. But Hashem's primary pleasure is from us, because we are in this lowly world, yet we attach to spirituality.”⁷

The Or HaChaim (*Bamidbar* 16:22) writes, "The order of Hashem's desire [are as follows]: First are the praises the *malachim* sing to Hashem. Above them are the praises sung by the souls of *tzaddikim* [in heaven]... Even higher are the praises from the *neshamos* of the people living in this world, because they are in a human body, which prevents them from recognizing Hashem, yet they make themselves strong to love Hashem and to praise Him. This is the highest and most desired by Hashem..."⁸

The *parashah* beings, והיה עקב תשמעון. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains: והיה, there will be joy, עקב, when in the עקבתא דמשיחא (the final generations) תשמעון, the Jewish people keep the Torah.

7. In *Mussaf* we say, משרתיו שואלין זה לזה איה מקום כבודו להעריצו לעומתם משבחים ואומרים ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that when people honor a king in his palace that isn't really כבוד, honor. It is mostly fear, because they *must* honor the king, otherwise they will be executed. However, when people far from the king honor him, that is כבוד. Therefore it states, משרתיו שואלים זה לזה, the *malachim* in heaven ask איה מקום כבודו, "Where is Hashem's honor? How can we give honor to Hashem?" And the truth is, they can't. לעומתם, but people on earth, they can say משרתיו שואלים זה לזה, ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו.

8. The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* and the Imrei Emes *zt'l* were traveling together to Vienna for the *Knesiyah HaGedolah* תרפ"ג. The Chofetz Chaim asked, "Chazal tell us that אחרי means very far away (מופלג) while אחר implies nearby and soon afterwards (see *Bereishis*, *Rashi*, 15:1). So, why does the Torah say אחרי ה' אלקיכם תלכו (*Devarim* 13:8), which implies that one should go after Hashem from the distance? Why doesn't it state אחר that one should follow Hashem nearby?"

The Chofetz Chaim answered, "The *pasuk* is teaching us that even if a person feels far from Hashem, due to his sins, he should continue going in Hashem's ways. His low level should not stop him from doing what he can. אחרי, you are far away, nevertheless, ה' אלקיכם תלכו, follow Hashem's ways."

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said, "I will answer your question with a chassidic approach: If a person humbly feels that he is far away, that's when he is close to Hashem. אחרי, if you feel far

The Tiferes Shlomo (*Rosh Hashanah*, א"א (אתם נצבים) writes, "It is written in *parashas Ekev*, ואשב בהר ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה, לילה לחם לא אכלתי ומים לא שתיתי על כל המאיתכם '[Moshe said] I stayed on the mountain for forty days and for forty nights [to pray for the nation, after they made the *egel*]. I didn't eat bread and I didn't drink water, because of your sins.' Why did Moshe Rabbeinu complain that he didn't eat bread and he didn't drink water for forty days? During this time he spoke with the *Shechinah*, which is greater than all pleasures of the world! Why did he care that he didn't have food and drink? The answer is, the purpose of Creation is man who lives in this world, with a body and *neshamah* together, and with a *yetzer hara* that lures him, and he conquers the *yetzer hara* and does Hashem's will... As we say [on Rosh Hashanah], ואביתה תהילה, מקרוצי חומר, 'You desire the praises from people scratched out from the earth.' One should therefore praise Hashem for each moment he is living in this world and is able to do Hashem's will and to bring honor to Hashem.

"This was Moshe Rabbeinu's complaint. For forty days he was in heaven like an angel, and he didn't have to battle with the *yetzer hara*. Those days were detracted from the days of his lifetime..."

When Reb Avraham Elimelech of Karlin

zt'l was in Yerushalayim, his chassid, Reb Yaakov Chananyah Bornstein *zt'l*, gave the Rebbe a gift — a handmade paper rose for a *succah* decoration. (In Yerushalayim they typically created roses from many pieces of small papers, for a *succah* decoration.)

The next time Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin came to Yerushalayim he told Reb Yaakov Chananyah that he had to pay a lot of tax on that rose when he passed through the border of his country.

Reb Yaakov Chananyah was surprised, because it was made from paper and didn't have any real value. The Rebbe explained, "In our country, we don't pay according to its value. We pay according to the amount of effort and time that went in to making it." The Rebbe was implying that similarly, the value of *avodas Hashem* is measured in accordance to the hardships and struggles one goes through to do it.

During the Holocaust, the Akeidas Yitzchak of Alexander *zt'l hy'd* was deported to Treblinka. In the dreaded concentration camp, people asked the Akeidas Yitzchak to encourage them.

He told them, it states (*Tehillim* 92:3), להגיד בבקר חסדיך ואמונתך בלילות, "To speak about Your kindness in the morning, and Your *emunah* at night." It should have said וour *emunah* in Hashem, what is "Hashem's *emunah* at night"?

away, and distant from Hashem, then you should now that ה' אלקיכם תלכו [אחרי], you are near Hashem."

As tzaddikim say, "When one thinks he is near Hashem, he is far, and when one thinks that he's far, he's near."

Nighttime signifies difficult tests. Hashem has *emunah* in us that we will pass those tests.

Serving Hashem with *Hislavvus*

The Gemara (*Yoma* 53-54) debates what happened to the *aron* of the first Beis HaMikdash. The *aron* of the second Beis HaMikdash was taken by the Romans to Rome, but what happened to the *aron* of the first Beis HaMikdash? One opinion says that it too was also taken to *galus* by Nevuchadnezzar's soldiers and brought to Bavel.

According to a second opinion, the *aron* of the first Beis HaMikdash is hidden beneath the Beis HaMikdash. Shlomo HaMelech knew the Beis HaMikdash would one day be destroyed, so he prepared a hiding place for the *aron* beneath the Beis HaMikdash.

As the *Navi* (*Divrei Hayamim* 35:3) states, ויאמר ללויים ... תנו את ארון הקדוש בבית אשר, בנה שלמה בן דוד, "[Yoshiyahu HaMelech] said to the Levi'im... 'Put the *aron hakadosh* in the house that Shlomo built...'" The Redak explains, "Chazal say, Yoshiyahu commanded they conceal the *aron* so it won't be taken into exile..."

The Redak elaborates, "[In the Beis HaMikdash] the *aron hakadosh* lay on a stone, on the west side of the Kodosh Kadoshim. In front of it was the *צנצנת* (jug of manna) and *מטה אהרן* (Aharon's staff). When Shlomo built the Beis HaMikdash...he built a place to conceal the *aron*... Together with the *aron*, they concealed Aharon's staff, the

jug of manna, and the *שמן המשחה* (anointing oil)."

Where was this hiding place?

There was a room (a *לשכה*) in the northeast corner of the *ezras nashim* of the Beis HaMikdash called *דיר העצים*, the "wood storage." This room stored the wood that would be placed on the *mizbeiach*. *Cohanim* checked each log, to ascertain it was fitting for the *mizbeiach*. If it had a worm, they would either throw it out (if it was in a fresh plank), or they would remove the worm (if it was in dry wood).

Shlomo built a twisted tunnel beneath this room, which reached under the Kodosh Kadoshim, and that is where the *aron* was concealed.

How do we know about this hiding spot? The Gemara (*Shekalim* 6:1, and *Yoma* 54.) tells the story:

"A *cohen* with a *mum* was checking and preparing the wood of the *דיר העצים* for the *mizbeiach* and noticed that one of the stones (on the floor) was [higher] than the others. He called to his friend, 'Come look! There's a tile here that's different than the rest!' He didn't finish checking the matter and he died. That's how they knew for certain the *aron* was buried there. Reb Hoshei'a says the *cohen* hit the stone with a hammer and a fire came forth which burned him.... Reb Yishmael says two *cohanim* with *mumim* were working on a log of wood. The hammer of one of them fell on the stone. A fire come forth and devoured him." From this

episode the *chachamim* understood the *aron* was buried there.

The Mishnah (*Shekalim* 6:1) tells, the *cohanim* would bow down fourteen times in the Beis HaMikdash. Thirteen bows were for each time they passed one of the thirteen gates of the Beis HaMikdash. A fourteenth time was when they passed the דִּיר הָעֵצִים, wood storage. The Mishnah explains that they would bow over there “because they had the tradition from their forefathers that the *aron* was buried there.”

Why did Shlomo choose to build the tunnel specifically from under the דִּיר הָעֵצִים?

To answer this question, let us think about the thoughts of a young *cohen* who lived in the times of the Beis HaMikdash. His aspirations were to one day do the *avodah* in the Beis HaMikdash. How he looked forward for when he would be old enough to bring *korbanos* before Hashem! (Perhaps he had hopes of becoming the *cohen gadol*, too.) Suddenly, there's an accident, and he gets a *mum*. All his dreams are ruined. All he can do is check the logs for worms. (*Cohanim* who had a *mum*, blemish, worked in that room, because this was from the only service they could do.)

As the *cohen* checked the wood, he put all his *hislahavus* into this deed, because he can't do anything else in the Beis

HaMikdash. He carefully checked the wood, celebrating every moment, as he knew he was preparing them for Hashem. His heart was overflowing with emotion. (Maybe his emotions and *hislahavus* were greater than other *cohanim* who could do many *avodos*, and became accustomed to serving in the Beis HaMikdash.) Shlomo HaMelech said, the *aron hakadosh* should be buried by the דִּיר הָעֵצִים, because it is a place where there was so much emotion and devotion for Hashem. That is a fitting place for the *aron hakodesh*.

Tefillah

It states in this week's *parashah* (11:13) וְלַעֲבֹדוֹ בְּכָל לִבְבְּכֶם “to serve Him with all your hearts” and *Chazal* say, “What is the service of the heart? It's *tefillah*.”⁹ The *Chinuch* (433) writes, “The Creator, who created them, wants they should have goodness... Therefore, פָּתַח לָהֶם פֶּתַח שָׁבוּ יְשִׁיגוּ כָּל מִשְׁאֲלוֹתֵיהֶם לְטוֹב, He opened a window for them to get all their needs. That is to ask all their needs from Hashem, because He has the ability to fill all their needs, and He will answer those who call to Him truthfully.”

The *chassidim* of Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* once heard their great Rebbe daven that the maid should return. The *kabbalists* among them sought to understand what this *tefillah* means according to the secrets of *kabbalah*, but they couldn't find an explanation. So

9. The *Zohar* states, אין קרוב לפני המקום כלבו של אדם, “There is nothing closer to Hashem than man's heart. Hashem prefers the heart more than the *korbanos*.”

they asked the Rebbe to explain what he meant by that *tefillah*.

The Rebbe explained, "My wife needs help, and the maid left. I prayed she should return." The lesson is, one must pray for everything, because there is nothing we can attain on our own, without Hashem.

In the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we say, קדוש אתה ונורא שמך ואין, אלוה-ה מבלעדיך. Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l* translated these words as follows: קדוש Hashem, אתה ונורא שמך and awesome. It doesn't seem proper that we should ask from You material things. How can we turn to the holy and great King of the world and request trivial matters?! But, behold, אין אלוה-ה מבלעדיך, there is no other G-d than You. So where should we go when we need matters, if not to You?"

The Mahar'i Abuhav (quoted in *Beis Yosef* 95) teaches that we daven with our feet together to show that we can't go anywhere (like someone who has only one foot) and we can't do anything without Hashem.

The Mahar'i Abuhav writes, רמז שנסתלק ממנו התנועה לברוח ולא להשיג שום חפץ מבלעדי ה' "[The feet together] hints that he doesn't have the ability to run and to get anything without Hashem."

The Gemara says people are מולול, disgrace *tefillah*. My father *zt'l* explained that although everyone davens, and if you will ask them to express their feelings on *tefillah*, they will tell you

how important it is, nevertheless, they are מולול, disgrace it, because they don't appreciate just how much one can gain with *tefillah*.

People are prepared to do many *segulos* to get their requests, but one doesn't need to look far. All one's heart's desires are available for him with *tefillah*.

We can compare it to someone who is prepared to travel all around the world to find a precious diamond. He has already bought plane tickets and is packing up to go. Someone tells him, "Look down and you will see the diamond is right in front of you." Similarly, we have the power of *tefillah*, and anything we want can be attained through *tefillah*. There is no need to seek elsewhere.

We say in *Shemonah Esrei*, כי אתה שומע, תפלה כל פה, "For You listen to the prayers of every mouth." Some read פה with a *pei*, while others say it as a *fei*. The Beis Aharon *zt'l* would say תפלה כל פה with a *pei*, and he explained that the dot, the *pintella*, hints to the *pintella in hartz*, the sincere emotions of the heart. Thus, כי אתה שומע תפלה כל פה means "You hear all prayers when they are said with the *pintella hartz*, emotionally, sincerely." Because Hashem is קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו, close to everyone who calls Him, but the condition is לכול אשר יקראוהו באמת, to call out to Hashem truthfully and sincerely.

Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuz would read תפלה כל פה with a *fei*, and he translated it, בלשון צחות, to be referring to the expression "*feh*," which people say when they see something disgusting. Thus, כי

תפילת כל פה means Hashem listens even to the *tefillos* said without *kavanah*, on which one would want to say "*feh*". Nevertheless, Hashem listens to תפילת כל פה.

Both translations are true. Therefore, before the *tefillah*, remember the Beis Aharon's translation that one must pray with the *pintella hartz*, with full concentration. After the *tefillah*, encourage yourself with Rebbe Boruch's lesson, that Hashem listens to *tefilos kol feh* as well.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18.) states, "Two people were equally ill...one became well the other one died. [Or, another story], two people went to court with the same court case: one was acquitted, the other wasn't. Why did one become well while the other one didn't? Why was one cleared in court, while the other punished? The answer is... the one who davened with *kavanah* was answered. The one who davened without *kavanah* wasn't answered."

How could it be they didn't daven with *kavanah*? Their life was at stake!

The answer is, *kavanah* has several levels. The perfect level of *tefillah* is when one knows that only Hashem can help, and no one else. The person who knew that prayed with all his heart, and therefore his *tefillos* were answered. The other thought that perhaps doctors could cure him, or a good lawyer would acquit him, and therefore he didn't pray with complete concentration.

The Results of a Kind Gesture

Reb M. Y. Horowitz Shlita, *av beis din* of Linsk, Boro Park, took out his cell phone, chose the "contacts feature" and pressed on one of the names. Immediately he realized he made a mistake. He accidentally called someone else with the same last name as the person he was trying to call.

He decided he should let the call go through, just so he could hear how this man was doing.

The person whom he accidentally called davened in his *beis medresh*. He was divorced, and at the time of this phone call, he was in Europe for the summer vacation.

Reb Horowitz greeted him warmly and asked how he was. The man was startled. "It can't be that you called just to ask me how I am." Reb Horowitz insisted that he just wanted to hear how he was.

The next time they met in Boro Park, the man said to Reb Horowitz, "You can't imagine how much you helped me with your phone call. You know that I'm alone in the world, and you know I'm at a low level, spiritual-wise. When you called, I was in a hotel in Italy, at the gateway to Gehinom, ready to commit the worst. And then you called, just to ask how I am. I felt you blew life into me. I felt someone cares about me. This protected me from sinning..."

This story happened three years ago. Today, this man has remarried and is building a *bayis ne'eman beYisrael*.

Let us learn from this story the following points:

(1) Those who are involved in *kiruv* shouldn't feel they aren't succeeding. Sometimes, even a simple phone call can save a person's life. Remember: One can be accomplishing a lot even when he isn't aware of it.

(2) Learn from this story how much Hashem strives to save those who have fallen to low levels. Even at the gateway of Gehinom, Hashem seeks to save him.

(3) A timely phone call was just what this man needed. This is a reminder that Hakadosh Baruch Hu leads the world with *hashgachah pratis*. Everything is perfectly arranged.

(4) And this story is a reminder of the power of a kind word. How far it goes. How much it does for a person.

Encouragement

People can reach very high levels, but they need support. They need to hear that they are on the right path and that they can succeed. They need to hear an encouraging word, and then they will reach their potential.

It states (*Yechezkel* 37) that in prophecy, Yechezkel HaNavi saw many dried up bones. "Hashem said to me, 'Man, is it possible that these bones will one day come alive?'"

Yechezkel replied, "Hashem, You know."

Hashem said to Yechezkel, "Tell a prophecy to the bones. Tell them, 'Dry

bones... So says Hashem, the Lord, I will bring a spirit into you and you will live. I will put sinews and flesh onto you, and cover you with skin. I will place a spirit (*ruach*) into you and you will live and know that I am Hashem."

After Yechezkel said this prophecy, the bones of each person came together and corpses were formed. "I saw sinews and flesh growing on the bones, skin covered from above... The *ruach* came, and they lived and they stood up on their feet, a very large army."

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (פסח תקס"ד ד"ה) (בהפטרות רסח) explains that the bones in this prophecy represents people who are alive, but are living with sins. Hashem asked the *navi* whether he thinks they can do *teshuvah* one day. The *navi* replied, "Hashem, You know." He wasn't certain. It seemed impossible. Hashem told the *navi* that with encouragement, they can come back to life again. The sinews are hard (as Chazal call them קשין כגידין, hard like sinews). These represent the difficulties people go through to keep the Torah. Flesh and skin protect the human being, and represent the *gezeiros*, precautions, set by Chazal to protect the Torah. Hashem told him that they will keep the entire Torah, including the laws of the rabbanim. All this will happen when they are encouraged and they believe that they can succeed in their *teshuvah*.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "Hashem told the *navi* a great rule: Even the greatest *rasha*, if you will guarantee him that he will become close to Hashem, he will

willingly endure the bitterness of upholding the yoke of Torah with all its details. What holds him back is that he doesn't think he can keep the Torah... Hashem encourages those bones, **אני מביא רוח וחיים**, you will live in the end. With that awareness, they will inevitably return [do *teshuvah*]... **ויקבלו עליהם גידים**, they will accept the Torah that is hard like *gidim*. They will accept the precautions of the Torah, which are represented by the flesh and the skin, which surround the Torah to protect it. They will get the **רוח ה'** and they will live the true life."

Because everyone wants to do *teshuvah*. If they could know for certain that they will succeed, they will tread on this path. Only they are convinced that they won't succeed, so they give up. If we can tell them that if they tread on the path of Torah they will merit a true life, a life with *emunah*, a life feeling close to Hashem, then everyone — even sinners — will go on this path.

Even Bilaam said (*Bamidbar* 23:10), **ותהי אחריתי כמוהו**, "My end should be like the Yidden." The Or HaChaim explains, "I met *resha'im* who told me straight out: if they could do *teshuvah* and die immediately, they would. Only they know that they can't stay on the path of *teshuvah* for long. They feel they must obey the decrees of the **מלך זקן וכסיל**, the foolish old king, [the *yetzer hara*]."

But they can succeed in *teshuvah*. They just need encouragement. Hashem told the bones, **רוח וחיים**, "You will live. You

will succeed." That message is all people need to hear in order to succeed in *teshuvah*.

A Moment of Life

Those who don't do *teshuvah* are wrong on two counts: One is, they can succeed in *teshuvah*. If they follow its path, they will live a truly holy life. It is in their hands.

Their second mistake is, even if they can't do a long lasting *teshuvah*, nevertheless, it is worthwhile for them to do *teshuvah*, even if just for a short while. One moment of *teshuvah* is invaluable.

A proof to that is the following halachah:

If there is an ill person who has to go to the hospital, you drive him there even on Shabbos. Even if you only save his life for a short while (**חיי שעה**) one is obligated to desecrate the Shabbos to do so. The Imrei Noam zt'l says: If a moment of life for a Yid is so precious that one desecrates Shabbos to save it, certainly a moment of a life with *teshuvah* and good deeds is extremely precious.

One will never regret doing *teshuvah*. The reward for that moment will remain with him for eternity.

On Yom Kippur we say, **אנו מתירין להתפלל עם העבריינים**, "We are permitted to pray with the sinners." This is because on Yom Kippur, everyone is doing *teshuvah*, and that makes everyone precious to Hashem. Even if after Yom Kippur the person returns to his old

ways, that moment of *teshuvah* is special before Hashem.¹⁰

Yahrtzeit

Thursday, the 21st of Av, is the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l*.

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zt'l* said that when one has something to say, but he refrains from saying it, it is equivalent to fasting 84 days. Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* added, "And I say און נאך און נאך און נאך (that it is worth far more than 84 fast days)."

Once, when Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* was bending down to enter a taxi, he said, "If you want to get someplace in this world, you have to bend your head."

As a *chasan*, the Rachmestrivka Rebbe *shlita* (of America) went to the Belzer Rav for a *brachah* and for *hadrachah* (marital advice). The Belzer Rav told him, "In this generation, people are emotionally weak, and therefore one must be cautious never to disregard another person's opinion. Even if you disagree, say, 'I understand what you're saying, but I think things should be done this way.' Don't totally disregard what they say." The Belzer Rav also told him that at the *chasunah* he should be kind to the broken-hearted guests and to serve them cake, etc.

The Belzer Rav would say that one

shouldn't tell others about the goodness of his children, because someone listening may not have such good children, and it will hurt him.

The Belzer Rav would never wake up another Yid except for *kriyas Shema*, because the *Zohar* states that if one misses saying the Shema, he is in *niduy* (ban) by heaven for the entire day.

(The *gaba'im* tell that if one of the *gaba'im* accidentally missed saying Shema, he would be afraid to come in to the Rebbe that day.)

Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* religiously adhered to all the customs and traditions he received from his father. The Belzer Rebbe had a motto by which he lived. He would say, א איד טאר נישט אויס פירן. Loosely translated this means, "A Yid mustn't insist that things go his way." Others have their own opinions about how things should be done, and one must take their view into account. Not everything has to be the way you see it.

These two ideals were sometimes conflicting, and the Rebbe had to choose one over the other.

This happened one *motzei Yom Kippur*. One of his chassidim, who was by him for Yom Kippur, received a telegram on *motzei Yom Kippur* stating that his wife was in labor.

10. Obviously, our goal is to do *teshuvah* that will last forever. The Gemara (*Megilah* 16:) says, צריכה שרטוט כאמיתה של תורה. The שרטוט are the engraved lines in a *sefer Torah*, *mezuzah*, *tefillin*, *megilah*, etc. that a *sofer* uses as a guide to write in a straight line. Hinted in these words is, כאמיתה של תורה, if you want to know whether something is true, צריכה שרטוט, there has to be an imprint, it has to last. Otherwise, it isn't a hundred percent truthful.

This chassid didn't want to come home without receiving a *brachah* from the Rebbe. Especially, now that his wife was in labor, he wanted a *brachah* that it should be an easy childbirth. But he knew the Rebbe doesn't give *brachos* until after the motzei Yom Kipur *Hamavdil tish*. That was the Rebbe's tradition he received from his father, and a tradition the Rebbe didn't want to change.

What should he do? Should he wait until after the *Hamavdil tish*? Could he ask the Rebbe for a *brachah* before the *tish*?

The chassid told his dilemma to Rebbe Moshe *hy'd*, the Rebbe's son. Rebbe Moshe said, "The Rebbe will be coming down in a couple of minutes. Stand by the stairway, and when the Rebbe comes, ask him."

The chassid did that. He told the Rebbe

about the telegram, and that he desires to receive the Rebbe's blessing before heading home.

The Rebbe replied, half to himself and half to the chassid, "My father never wished people a good year before the *Hamavdil tish*, but a *Yid tor nisht ois firen*" (a Yid mustn't insist to always have his way). He repeated these two sides of his dilemma several times, and then he said, "but a *Yid tor nisht ois firen*," and he gave his hand, and wished him a good year, and an easy childbirth.

The Belzer Rebbe *zt'l* would often quote that phrase: *a Yid tor nisht ois firen*. If we adopted that attitude, we will be saved from many disputes. Not everything must be exactly your way.

May we go in his ways, and may his merit protect us and all of Klal Yisrael, amen.