

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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*Lech Lecha*



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## Parshas Lech Lecha

### **Chesed - What You Do onto Others, You Do onto Yourself**

**T**ana d'Bei Eliyahu (22:2) states, “Everyone is obligated to say, ‘When will my deeds resemble the deeds of my forefathers.’ This means, everyone must strive to be like Avraham Avinu and the other *avos*. When we study the ways of Avraham Avinu: his *chesed*, his *emunah*, his uprightness, his unwavering devotion, etc., these are models for us to follow. Avraham’s tent had four entryways so from whichever side one approached Avraham’s tent, he immediately found an entrance. Avraham cared that his hungry, thirsty, and tired visitors shouldn’t have to make the extra effort to find the door.<sup>1</sup>

Most probably, Avraham had a large tent to host all his guests, but that still wouldn’t make it too hard to find the entrance. But Avraham compassionately wanted his hungry, thirsty, and tired guests should enter right away. It is our obligation to learn from Avraham’s ways, and to seek ways to prevent even the slightest pain from our fellow man.

Hashem told Avraham, **שָׁא נָא עַיִּיךְ מִן הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שָׁם צְפֻנָּה וְנֶגֶב וְקֶדֶמָה, וְיָמָה**, “Raise your eyes from the place where you are there: to the north, south, east, west...” (13:14). Why does the *pasuk* add, **מִן**

הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שָׁם, “from the place you are there”?

The Or HaChaim explains, “A great miracle happened to Avraham. He was able to look to the north, south, east, and west, without needing to turn around.”

Perhaps Hashem spared Avraham from the slight discomfort of needing to turn around because Avraham always strived to spare his guests the slightest discomfort.

Certainly then, he who follows in Avraham’s ways, and has compassion on his fellow man, he will be rewarded immensely. Hashem will shower him with compassion and kindness, sparing him the slightest pain.

There is a saying, “What you do onto others, you do onto yourself.” It follows that if you do *chesed* for others, Heaven will perform *chesed* for you.

The following story is an example:

There’s a vacation resort in the north of Eretz Yisrael that has a few small cottages on the grounds for families to rent.

One family from Yerushalayim, consisting of four families (four

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1. The Torah begins with the letter 'ב', which is *gematriya* two, not with an 'א', which is *gematriya* one. This implies that the basis of the Torah is 'ב', two, to think about what you can to do for others. One shouldn't be 'א', one, self-centered, only thinking about himself.

brothers/brother-in-laws, with their wives and children) called to rent the resort for a long weekend. “We only need four cottages, but we want the entire vacation resort to be reserved solely for us. Just for that weekend, don’t rent cottages to anyone else.”

The owner agreed.

Thursday, the first day of their stay, the men spent the morning swimming in the pool. Just as they were getting ready to leave the pool area, another family from Bnei Brak came to swim in the pool.

“What are you doing here?” the family from Yerushalayim asked. “These are private grounds, and only we have a right to them.”

The family from Bnei Brak replied that they also rented a cottage here so they have a right to use the pool.

The Yerushalayim family spoke with the owner of the resort, and complained that he didn’t keep his word. “You promised that only our family would be here for the weekend. Send that family back to Bnei Brak. You can’t renege on the agreement.”

The family from Bnei Brak waited uncomfortably, to see how this matter would play out. They were embarrassed, but they really weren’t at fault. How should they know about other people’s agreements?

One of the brothers (from Yerushalayim) asked the new family, “How long were you planning on staying.”

This Yerushalmi said to his siblings, “Let them stay. It’s only for a day, and we already went swimming today. They will be leaving tomorrow morning.”

This was a deed of *chesed* and *rachamnus* that one brother did for another family. But when one does for others, he does for himself. He was a recipient of *chesed* and *rachmanus* from heaven very soon. That Thursday evening one of his young children fell into the pool. The Bnei Brak family heard the child struggling in the water. One of them newcomers performed CPR, and saved the child’s life.

Because when you are compassionate (to others), Heaven deals compassionately with you.

Reb Elazer Tzaddok Turchin *zt'l* was a giant in Torah. (He wrote the *sefarim Shoneh Halachos* together with Reb Chaim Kanievsky *shlita*.) As a *bachur*, learning in the Chevron Yeshiva, he would finish another *mesechta* of Gemara every few days. The *mashgiach*, Reb Meir Chadash *zt'l*, saw how his student, Reb Elazar Tzaddok, was finishing one *masechta* after the next, and suspected that he was learning on a very superficial level. He tested him and saw that Reb Elazar Tzaddok knew everything perfectly.

Nevertheless, Reb Meir Chadash advised him to study more in depth. He said, “To learn a *masechta be’iyun*, one needs more than just a few days.”

Reb Elazar Tzaddok didn’t heed this counsel. He couldn’t. He was succeeding

so much in his learning; he couldn't stop the momentum. He became a great *talmid chacham*. The entire Torah was on his fingertips.

In his older years he would tell his students to pick any page of Gemara, and any line (for example, "Daf ט"ז in Pesachim, the third line) and he would tell them what's written there. He would even tell them what Rashi and Tosfos (and other commentaries printed in the margin of the Gemara) wrote on that line. It was absolutely amazing.

But Reb Elazar Tzaddok wasn't always so wise and quick in his learning. When he first came to the Chevron Yeshiva he toiled hard to understand the Gemara. It took him a long time to finish a page. What changed? He said that it changed with a *brachah* he received from the Tepliker Rav of Yerushalayim. This is what happened.

One *erev* Yom Kippur he was rushing to the beis medresh to say *Tefillah Zakkah* before Kol Nidrei. As he passed the Tepliker Rav's *zt'l* home, the Rav called to him, "*Bachur'l! Bachur'l!* I need some help. I need someone to clean up my home."

Reb Elazar Tzaddok put aside his aspirations to be in beis medresh early, and helped the elderly Tepliker Rav. When he completed the deed, the Tepliker Rav told him, "I know you have many things to do and you helped me with *mesirus nefesh*. In this merit, Hashem will surely help you this year beyond the rules of nature."

Reb Elazar Tzaddok Turchin says that after this incident he became like a new person. He would learn thirty pages of Gemara a day, in depth, and he didn't forget anything.

Reb Elazar Tzaddok did a favor for the Tepliker Rav, but ultimately, he did himself the greatest favor. His good deeds were returned to him, with interest. A few years ago, on the first night of Chol HaMoed Pesach, the renowned *magid*, Reb Moshe Weinbach *shlita* of Beitar, was traveling to the *levayah* of Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* (who was *niftar* on the first night of Pesach). Reb Moshe missed the last bus from Beitar so he traveled by taxi. He didn't want to miss the opportunity to be at the *levayah* of one of the *gedolei hador*.

Reb Moshe arrived when they were about to bring the *niftar* out of the beis medresh. Reb Moshe always tries to be among the people who carry the *aron*. (He admits that he ripped many jackets and lost many buttons, due to his devotion to keep this mitzvah.) Reb Moshe rushed quickly towards the beis medresh, hoping to merit carrying this holy *niftar*. But then he heard someone shouting, "I need air! Help me! I can't breathe."

Reb Moshe Weinbach's first thought was, "There are others who hear this man's shout. Let them help him. I have my own mitzvah to do. I have to get to the *aron*, to carry this holy *niftar*. I didn't travel all the way from Beitar to Bnei Brak and pay 250 shekels for the trip, to help this man." But Reb Moshe

realized that this thought came from the *yetzer hara*. His *yetzer tov* told him, "When a Yid is shouting for help, you should do what you can to help." He looked to see who was calling for help. It was the Zlotchever Rebbe *shlita*. He extended his hand to the Rebbe, and led him away from the crowd.

Reb Moshe Weinbach did a *chesed* for the Zlotchever Rebbe, but he actually did a *chessed* for himself. *Rachmana litzlan*, at this *levayah*, two people were trampled to death due to the overwhelming crowd. Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent Reb Moshe an opportunity to do *chesed*, to help someone else and to be helped himself. For whenever one helps others, he is the one who is being helped the most.

Sixty years ago in Yeshivas Ponovezh of Bnei Brak, there was a rebellious *bachur*. He wasn't learning, he was chutzpadig to the rebbe'im, and if he suddenly showed an interest to interact with the rebbe'im or with the other students, it was generally to disagree with them and with their *hashkafos*.

He was angry with the yeshiva, and angry with religion. Everyone knew that he was at the verge of becoming irreligious, *chas veshalom*.

Once, he acted totally out of place. When the rebbe was in middle of teaching the Gemara, this rebellious *bachur* made a paper airplane, and sent it on a flight. He aimed it to the side, but a wind from the back window picked up the plane and the paper airplane crash-landed on the rebbe's face.

The rebbe was very angry. He said, "Who threw the airplane?"  
No one stirred.

"If you don't tell me who threw the airplane, I will punish everyone. Now tell me, who threw the airplane?"

No one responded.

The rebbe said, "Whoever threw the airplane should get up right now and leave the yeshiva. He can't come back."

No one stirred. Then Reb Nachman Galinsky *zt'l* (son of the *magid*, Reb Yankele Galinsky *zt'l*) stood up and left the room. Matters in the classroom settled down.

Reb Nachman Galinsky didn't throw the plane. But he accepted the blame, to save another *bachur* from shame.

(A couple of days later, his father, Reb Yaakov Galinsky *zt'l* spoke with the roshei yeshivos and with the rebbe, and settled the matter so that Reb Nachman could return to yeshivah.)

That rebellious *bachur* witnessed the outstanding *middos* that Torah can bring into a person. He knew that Reb Nachman's compassion to help him came from the Torah. This gave him a new impression on Torah and on religion, and he began studying Torah. He changed entirely. He became a *talmid chacham*, and eventually he became a *rosh yeshiva* in America, with a large *kollel* for his alumni.

Years later, Reb Nachman Galinsky *zt'l* became ill with cancer and needed a lot

of money for his medical care. His friends traveled to America to collect the funds for him. They arrived at a yeshiva, and explained to the Rosh Yeshiva why they came. "Can we collect money among the *kollel* students?"

The *rosh yeshiva* readily agreed, and asked for the name of the ill man, so he could also pray for him. When he heard the name of the *choleh*, he asked them, "Is his name Reb Nachman Galinsky?" "Yes! How did you know?"

He told them, "You don't have to do anything. I will raise all the money you need."

He gathered his entire student body and said, "If it weren't for Reb Nachman Galinsky, I wouldn't be a *rosh yeshiva* today. I wouldn't even be religious today" and he told them his story. "That is why I decided to raise all the money needed for this tzaddik's recovery."

This story is another example of how doing onto others is doing onto himself. Reb Nachman helped the rebellious *bachur*, and years later the *chesed* was repaid.

So, let us go in Avraham Avinu's ways and have compassion on others. Ultimately, we will be the ones who will gain the most. Because when one does *chesed* for others, Heaven does *chesed* for him.

#### **Sparing Others from Shame**

Another form of *chesed* is to save our fellow man from shame.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* and Rebbe

Hershele Liska *zt'l* were at a *sheva brachos*. When the *chasan* stood up to say a *dvar Torah*, he began by asking a good question. As customary, Rebbe Hershele began to sing. The Chasam Sofer said to Reb Hershele, "I want to hear his answer."

Reb Hershele was quiet. The *chasan* stood up to speak again, and once again, Rebbe Hershele began to sing.

The Chasam Sofer once again asked the *chasan* to continue his *derashah*. When this pattern repeated itself a few times, the Chasam Sofer asked Rebbe Hershele, "Why are you singing? I want to hear the *chasan's* answer."

Rebbe Hershele replied, "I have a secret reason why I'm interrupting him."

"Perhaps you can let me in on this secret?" the Chasam Sofer asked.

"It's a secret *one cannot say*."

Rebbe Hershele was hinting to the Chasam Sofer that the *chasan* "couldn't say" the *derashah*. He only prepared the question, and was relying on the custom that people will interrupt. Rebbe Hershele Lisker was protecting the *chasan* from shame, and that is a tremendous *chesed*.

The Bobover Rebbe *zy'a* lived in Tchebin for four years. Once, the Tchebiner Rav invited the Rebbe to join them at his daughter's *sheva brachos*. The Bobover Rebbe arrived with his son-in-law (Reb Moshe Stempel *zt'l*) and gave his son-in-law money to buy *l'chayim* drinks for the guests.

The Tchebiner Rav said, "Why is this necessary? I'm the host. You don't have to bring drinks."

The Bobover Rebbe answered, "Tosfos says that it is customary for guests to bring drinks to the meal."

The Tchebiner Rav was knowledgeable in every *Tosfos* in *Shas*, and said "There is no such *Tosfos* in the entire *Shas*."

The Bobover Rebbe kept silent.

Sometime later, the Tchebiner Rav was learning Gemara with *baalei batim* (*Kesubos* 57:) and came across a *Tosfos* that states, "Guests often bring the drinks, to curry favor with their host."

The Tchebiner Rav interrupted his *shiur* to tell his students about the perfect *middos* of the Bobover Rebbe. "The Rebbe knew that I was mistaken, but he didn't tell me, because he didn't want to embarrass me."

(The Tchebiner Rav repeated this story to Reb Leibel Stempel and concluded, "People tell *mofsim*, miracles, that the Bobover Rebbe performed. But I consider this demonstration of perfect *middos* to be the greatest *mofes* of all.")

Similarly, Reb Chaim Ozer *zt'l* was once teaching his *chidushei Torah* to his students, and one *bachur* kept on interjecting, "*Tosfos* says differently! *Tosfos Bava Basra* (49) states the opposite..."

Reb Chaim Ozer answered, "*Tosfos* doesn't contradict what I'm saying."

The *bachur* quickly went over to the bookcase for a Gemara *Bava Basra* to

prove his point, but Reb Chaim Ozer didn't allow him to take out a Gemara. "Don't take out a Gemara. But I'm telling you, *Tosfos* doesn't disagree with me." Later at home, the *bachur* looked up the *Tosfos*, and saw that Reb Chaim Ozer was correct. Had the *bachur* looked up the *Tosfos* in front of the class, he would end up being very ashamed. Reb Chaim Ozer knew this, and wanted to spare the *bachur* from shame.

#### **Compassion for each and every Individual**

When people do *chesed* on a large scale and help many people, it sometimes happens that they lose sight of the needs of the individual. Their goal is to help the masses, and one individual person doesn't seem as important for them.

But Avraham's way was to help the individual – and with his passion he ended up helping multitudes. He cared about each individual without getting distracted by his global mission of doing *chesed* with the masses.

As we strive to follow in Avraham Avinu's ways, our goal should be to help each individual person, because each and every person is precious to Hashem.

In Eretz Yisrael people begin saying תַּחַנְנָה וּמִתְפָּרֵךְ on תְּשִׁוּבָה. What is the significance of this date? It seems that a more ideal time is תְּשִׁוָּה for that is the date for the first rains.

The Mishnah (*Taanis* 1:3) explains that people came to the Beis HaMikdash for Succos, and some people are still on the way back home on the 3rd of Cheshvan. It isn't proper to daven for rain when

some people are traveling on the roads. Therefore, we wait until the 7th of Cheshvan, because by then even those who live at the furthest tip of Eretz Yisrael (near נהר פרת) have arrived home.

Only now we can daven for rain.

This halachah portrays ideal *ahavas Israel*, caring for every single Yid, without exceptions. When all Yidden are safe and sound at home, that is when we begin davening for rain.

After the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed we don't have the mitzvah to be in the Beis HaMikdash for Yom Tov. So why is the halachah still in place? Why do the Yidden in Eretz Yisrael begin saying וְחַשׁוֹן טָל וּמִטָּר on תְּנֵן and not on the more ideal date, נֵן חַשׁוֹן?

Perhaps it's to remind us to be compassionate for the wellbeing of every single Yid. Saying וְחַשׁוֹן טָל וּמִטָּר on תְּנֵן reminds us of this great principle, so we observe this halachah even when the reason behind this halachah doesn't actually apply.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told the following story:

There was a blind, poor widow who would walk through the streets of Vilna, led by her dear son. Most people didn't pay attention to them. At best, they would cluck their tongues when they saw this unfortunate sight, and then continue on their way. But the Dubno Magid *zt'l*, who cared about every Yid, greeted them. They told him about their great poverty, how their home was cold because they couldn't afford firewood,

and they told him that they didn't have food, either. The Dubno Magid took them into his home, so they could warm up by the fire and eat dinner. The Dubno Magid noticed that the son was very wise, so he hired a *melamed* to teach him Torah.

They became part of the Dubno Magid's household. This child became Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l*, one of the *gedolei hador*, whose Torah illuminates the world until today.

The Chofetz Chaim would say: Many people saw the blind widow and her son walking around the streets of Vilna. They shook their heads and said, '*'nebach!* What a *rachmanus*!' and that's about all. But the Dubno Magid took action. He fed them, paid for a tutor for the child, and earned the merit of raising one of the *gedolei hador...*" One must have generosity and do *chesed* even for the individual, because one can never know who that individual is and what can become of him.

Rebbe Aharon HaGadol of Karlin *zt'l* had a large sum of money that he kept in his house for ten years, and he never touched it. One can never know what the future will bring and when there will be an emergency that will require money immediately, and that money was stored for that purpose.

But once, a widow came to him crying that her daughter's wedding was approaching and she doesn't have any money at all. Rebbe Aharon's compassion was roused, and he gave

her a large sum of money, from that special savings.

A few weeks later she returned. This time she explained that her daughter got this crazy idea in her head that she wants a *shtern tichel* (an expensive head covering). "How can I afford it?"

Rebbe Aharon gave her the rest of the money.

Rebbe Aharon's *rebbetzin* asked him, "We were saving that money for so long for a time of need. Why did you change your mind and give it away? And if you wanted to give *tzedakah*, I can understand that, but then you could have divided it among twenty poor people. Why should you give all of it to one widow?"

Rebbe Aharon replied, "I also asked myself that question. Why should I give all the money to her, when it could be used to help so many poor people? But then I realized that I never considered distributing this money to the poor before. We were saving it for ourselves. So I asked myself, why when I'm about to give *tzedakah* does the idea of distributing the money to many poor people, suddenly come to my mind? I realized that this was the *yetzer hara*, and I gave all the money to this *almanah*..."

There are halachos about these matters. Sometimes it's better to give *tzedakah* to one person, and often it's advised that one should divide his *tzedakah* money among several paupers. We will not get into those halachos now. What's important for our discussion is the focus and ideal that one should care about each

individual. Each Yid is precious, and we should seek to help each individual Yid.

The Torah says, וַיֹּצֵא אָחָת הַחֹצֶה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבְּט נָא הַשְׁמִים כִּי יִהְיֶה וּדְעַן וְסִפְר הַכּוֹכְבִים... כִּי יִהְיֶה וּדְעַן, "Hashem said, 'Look up at the heaven and count the stars... So shall be your children" (15:5). According to the simple meaning of the *pasuk*, Hashem was telling Avraham that he will have countless descendants.

The Sfas Emes explains that Hashem was telling Avraham that he will have children *similar* to the stars, as the Midrash states, "The Jewish nation is compared to stars..." Just as a constellation of stars appear beautiful to us, and also helpful, because they provide light for us at night, and other benefits. But when we look at each star individually, each star appears tiny and insignificant. In reality, each star is magnificent and huge. Similarly, some people respect the Jewish nation as a group, but fail to see their importance and value when they look at each Yid, individually. But from Hashem's prospective, in heaven, every Yid is prominent, and seen in all his splendor and luster.

Rebbe Shalom Ber of Lubavitch *zt'l* once praised a certain community. A chassid remarked, "They seem quite regular to me. Why do you praise them so much?"

The Rebbe didn't respond.

That chassid was a jeweler. The Rebbe asked that he show him some of his precious gems. After looking at a few, the Rebbe said, "They seem regular to me."

The chassid replied, "To understand the value of a gem, one needs to be a *מפני* (someone who understands how to evaluate them)."

The Rebbe replied, "To understand the value of a Yid, one needs to be a *מפני* too."

### ***Chesed – the correct perspective***

When Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* was ill he traveled to Germany, to seek a cure from the doctors there. The students and followers of Reb Yisrael Salanter hired someone to travel together with Reb Yisrael, to take care of him and his needs as he traveled. But during the trip this aide took ill, too. Not only didn't he have strength to take care of Reb Yisrael Salanter, Reb Yisrael Salanter was taking care of him!

This man felt bad that the great scholar and tzaddik was taking care of him. Reb Yisrael replied, "Hashem's ways are concealed from us. Who knows? Perhaps I became ill just so I could take care of you. Because if you would be alone in your home, who would take care of you? Baruch Hashem, I have many people taking care of me, but you might be left without any help. Perhaps that was the entire purpose of my illness. And when

you become better, perhaps I will be healed, too."

Dr. Bernstein lived near the Divrei Yoel of Satmar *zt'l*. When someone needed a doctor on Shabbos, the Satmar Rebbe would suggest that they go to Dr. Bernstein. Once, the Rebbe apologized to Dr. Bernstein that he disturbs his Shabbos and Yom Tov by sending him many patients. But he also added that he is really giving him a very special and great merit, because it is a great mitzvah to heal people. The Satmar Rebbe said to Dr. Bernstein, "You know what my Hoshanah Rabba looks like. [The Satmar Rebbe would daven with a lot of *kavanah* for many hours, together with his *kehilla* on Hoshanah Rabba]. I'm willing to exchange the reward that I will receive for my Hoshanah Rabba if you will give me the reward for your 'disturbed and disrupted' Shabbosim."

Dr. Bernstein replied, "Now that you put it that way, I don't want to make this exchange."

Another time the Satmar Rebbe said, "*Halevay* my *shemirus Shabbos* should be as precious as your *chillul Shabbos*." (Because the doctor's *chillul Shabbos* was saving people's lives).

### ***Hakol LeTovah - The Light that Emanates from Darkness***

The Midrash (beginning of this week's *parashah*) says:

A traveler sees a mansion on fire and makes the following observations: "The mansion was built by a talented craftsman. It is obvious that it didn't

happen on its own. But it seems the owner abandoned the mansion. Because if there's an owner, why isn't he putting out the fire?"

The owner peeked out and said, "I'm the owner of this home."

The *nimshal* is: From the beauty and wisdom found in the world, Avraham knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that Hashem created the world. But Avraham thought about the flood, and the generation of *דוֹר הַפְלָגָה*, how the world was destroyed, and he became confused. He said, "It seems the Creator abandoned the world. Because if the Owner is still there, why does He permit the world to be destroyed?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu peeked out to Avraham and said, "I am the owner of the world. I created the world, and I continue to lead it with *hashgachah pratis*."

Yet, the question remains. In the *mashal*, why doesn't the mansion's owner put out the fire? And in the *nimshal*, why does Hashem let the world be destroyed? The question is also on an individual level, because from the beginning of Creation up until today, every home has its own story of woe. Some suffer poverty, some illness -there are various other kinds of strife. People wonder, if Hashem hasn't abandoned the world, why doesn't He fix all these problems?

The answer is, there is an owner to the mansion and an Owner to the world. And if they allow destruction, that means something even better is being built. Regarding the *mashal*, why would an owner let his mansion burn down? Perhaps he wants to build an even more beautiful mansion on the grounds.

In the *nimshal*, why are there suffering?

Apparently, something even better will emerge from it.

The Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 2:5) writes:

"The person who has *bitachon* should hope, even in the midst of the hardships, that this darkness will bring about light. As it states (*Michah* 7:8), *אל השמחי איבתי כי נפלתי קמתי*. 'Don't rejoice, my enemies. When I fell, I got up again. Though I sit in darkness, Hashem will make it bright for me.' Chazal explain, 'If I had not fallen, I wouldn't have gotten up. If I didn't sit in darkness, it wouldn't become light for me.'"

Hashem is still with us, leading the world with *hashgachah pratis*. Although it is dark, and there are tragedies and destructions, believe that an even greater good will emerge.

The Torah says, *וַיֹּצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחֹזֶת*, Hashem took Avraham outdoors, *וַיֹּאמֶר הַבְּט נָא הַשְׁמִים*, and *וְסָפַר הַכּוֹכְבִים*... *כִּי יְהִי זָרָע*, "Hashem said, 'Look up at the heaven and count the stars... So shall be your children' (15:5).

Hashem told Avraham to count the stars, and then Hashem said (15:5), *כִּי יְהִי זָרָע*, "Your children will be like them."

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* explains, stars are always in heaven, but they shine solely when it's dark. Similarly, the Jewish nation shines from the darkness.

Even if matters seem dark to us, a great light will emerge, and things will turn around and become even better than before.

Reb Yehudah from Beit Shemesh used to be poor. He worked for a renowned *tzedakah* organization in Beit Shemesh, and was paid just barely more than the minimum wage.

His boss would belittle him. Once, at a staff meeting, they were discussing ideas how they could raise more money for the *tzedakah*.

Reb Yehudah told them an idea he thought of. It was a wise idea, it could bring in a lot of money, but the boss laughed at him. He said, "I invited you to the meeting, because I was inviting all staff, and it wouldn't make sense not to invite you. But I have no interest in hearing what you have to say. You can't even do well in the simple, low paying job we gave you."

Reb Yehudah was very embarrassed, and everyone present (aside from the boss) felt uncomfortable hearing the boss's unkind words.

When the meeting sojourned, the staff decided to eat a picnic lunch in a nearby forest (*יער ירושלים*). They hoped that the scenic mountain views, the silence, and the fresh, crisp air, would loosen their tight nerves, which were wound up due to the condescending words of their boss at the meeting.

When they came to the forest, they heard a cat, perched high on a tree, shriek. It was afraid to climb down. Reb Yehudah threw a stone at the cat. The cat chose to jump down rather than to be hit by the stone, and that's how the cat was saved.

Reb Yehudah said, "Sometimes, when stones are thrown at us, it's a good thing." He was referring to his humiliation. Those "stones" would somehow prove to be for his benefit.

Soon after, came the next stone: Reb Yehudah was fired from his job.

He found a job in a real estate office. He was successful in that venue, and Reb Yehudah is now a wealthy man in Bet Shemesh. The humiliation he endured from his boss, and then the distress of being fired from his job, were the darkness before the dawn, the suffering before the great kindness that came to him.

When Avraham and Sarah came to Eretz Canaan there was a famine in the land. People teased them, "Why did Hashem tell you to come here if there's a famine?" It was a moment of darkness for Avraham and Sarah. But this darkness brought forth goodness. Avraham and Sarah went to Mitzrayim to wait out the hunger, and became very wealthy over there. As it states (13:2), **וְאַבְרָהָם כֹּבֶד מִאֵד בְּמִקְנָה בְּכֹסֶף וּבְזָהָב**, "Avram was very wealthy, with cattle, silver, and gold." Because light emanates from darkness.

#### **Seeing the light that emanates from delays**

There was once a *baalabusta* who was very picky about the clothing she chose for her children. It would take her days before she found clothing she thought was good for them. When she finally chose four beautiful *yom tov* outfits for her four children, she was relieved and

happy that this chore was behind her. But when she tried to pay with her credit card, it didn't go through, for some unknown reason. She told the salesperson, "I'll come back tomorrow morning with cash. Keep this set of clothing near you, and I'll buy them in the morning."

When she came back the next morning, a different salesperson was there. She didn't know about the arrangement, and had sold the clothing to someone else.

This *baalabusta* was very upset. She toiled so long until she found the perfect clothes for her children, and she already bought other clothes that would match those, and now she wasn't able to buy them. The salesperson apologized, and said that a new shipment of the same clothes would be coming in soon. She will contact her as soon as they arrived.

A few days later, the salesperson called and said that the clothes arrived. The *baalabusta* immediately came to the store (this time with a credit card and with cash, so she would definitely be able to buy the clothes) and she saw that the clothes were now being sold at half price! She discovered that (1) the credit card didn't work, and (2) the salesperson sold it to someone else, and (3) there were no other clothes in stock, so she could buy the clothes later on for half price. We see that every delay is for our benefit.

I was scheduled to give a *shiur* in the Eish Kodesh shul in Bnei Brak, Sunday evening, at 7:45 PM. I planned to be on

time, but many matters beyond my control came up and the *shiur* was postponed until 9:20 PM. Then there was yet another delay, because the hookup system, which Yidden in America and other countries listen to, wasn't ready yet.

We were all wondering why there were so many obstacles that night, but something happened later that night that made us understand that these delays were pre-destined from Above:

There's a *yungerman*, a *talmid chacham*, who lives in Elad and travels every day to Petach Tikvah, where he is a *maggid shiur* in a yeshiva. This *yungerman* likes to attend our *shiurim*, but is rarely able to do so, due to his busy schedule. But this particular *shiur* was held in Bnei Brak during *bein hazmanim*, when his yeshivah was off, and he was finally able to participate. Due to the many delays we had, he didn't get back home to Elad until close to midnight - much later than he originally planned.

This *yungerman* takes a walk at eleven o'clock every night, for his health. That night, he came home at midnight, ate supper, and by the time he was ready for his daily walk it was 1:00 in the morning. At 1:10 he passed an industrial zone where there aren't any homes, only some yeshivos (which were all empty, due to *bein hazmanim*) and some *simchah* halls. The streets were otherwise quiet, so he could clearly hear the shouts and the sound of smashing glass. His first thought was that there must be a thief in the area, but upon remembering that thieves are generally silent, he

decided to investigate. The panic-stricken shouts led him to a dark *simchah* hall. Standing behind the glass front door was a very frightened ten-year-old boy. He was throwing chairs at the door in an attempt to break the glass to get out.

This *yungerman* spoke with the boy from behind the door. The boy said that his family celebrated his brother's bar mitzvah. When they were ready to go home, this boy returned to use the bathroom. When he came out of the bathroom, his family had already left, the lights were turned off, and the doors were locked. They didn't realize that he stayed behind.

The *yungerman* figured that he should first call the manager of the hall, to ask him to bring a key. By *hashgachah pratis*, he heard the name of the manager just a few days before, and was able to find his number and call him.

The next step was to call the boy's parents. It only took twenty minutes for the doors to be opened, and the boy was happily united with his family.

Now everything was understood. The *shiur* was delayed in order to help that ten-year-old boy be rescued. One can never know what would have happen to the boy's emotional health had he spent the entire night in the dark, locked hall.

Let this story remind us that whenever there's a delay, there's a reason for it.

We will now tell another story that shows us that every delay is for the good:

Reb Leibel, a Lubavitcher chassid, lost his talis and tefillin. His name wasn't on the bag, so he assumed he would never find them again. He called Lishkas Halachah LeMaaseh, under the auspices of Reb Landau, and ordered two pairs of tefillin (Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam). Each pair cost five thousand shekels.

Reb Yosef Daskal, the manager at Lishkas Halachah LeMaaseh, called to tell him that he can pick up his tefillin. When he arrived, Reb Yosef Daskal was still putting the straps into the tefillin. The man was impatient. "Why did you tell me to come if the tefillin aren't ready yet?"

"They will be ready in a minute" Reb Yosef told him.

Just then, the phone rang. The man buying the tefillin said to Reb Yosef, "I'm in a rush. Please don't answer the phone. Finish getting the tefillin ready, I'll pay you the ten thousand shekels and I'll be on my way."

But Reb Yosef chose to answer the phone, regardless. The person on the line was from Rishon Letzion. He said that he found a bag of tallis and tefillin near the garbage. "There's no name on the bag, but there's a sticker on the tefillin that says the tefillin were checked by Lishkas Halachah LeMaaseh in Elul two years ago. That's why I am turning to you. Perhaps you can remember whose tefillin it is?"

Reb Yosef said, "Thousands of tefillin come to us for checking - especially in Elul. How can I remember whose it is? Is there any other *siman*?"

"There's a Gemara in the tallis bag. The Gemara doesn't have a name on it either, but there are a couple of pages of handwritten *chidushei Torah* tucked inside the Gemara."

Throughout their conversation, the chassid kept gesturing to Reb Yosef that he was in a hurry, and that he should put down the phone, and focus on getting his tefillin ready. But then Reb Yosef asked the chassid whether there was anything in the tefillin bag that he lost.

"There was a Gemara, and some handwritten *chidushei Torah* tucked in it..." Reb Yosef told him that he should go to Rishon Letzion to pick up his tefillin, and that is exactly what he did.

Now, let's make the calculations: Had the tefillin been ready as soon as he came into the Lishkas Halachah LeMaaseh (as he wanted) he would have left the store before the phone call came in. And if Reb Yosef would have caved in to the pressure and not answer the phone, this man would never find his old tefillin, and pay ten thousand shekels

for two new pairs. The delays were for his benefit.

Here's another story I heard from Reb Shechter, Elad's post-office manager.

Someone came to the post-office to transfer a large sum of money to his brother-in-law who lives in Mexico. Reb Shechter told him that the computers were down that day, and it was impossible to make the transfer. The man became very upset. "My brother-in-law really needs the money... He needs the money now..."

Reb Shechter said, "Come back tomorrow. You won't have to wait in line. Come straight to me, and we'll transfer the money."

The following day, he came to the post office in a much happier mood. He told Reb Shechter, "Yesterday, there was a tornado in Mexico, right near the bank. Had we transferred the money yesterday and if my brother-in-law would have gone to his bank to pick up the money, his life would be in danger. The delay proved to be for the good."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. On the topic of *hashgachah pratis*:

Reb Simchah Wasserman (son of Reb Elchanan Wasserman) *zt"l* and Reb Shlomo Lorintz *zt"l* were neighbors in Yerushalayim. They were both Torah scholars, and for many years they learned together as *chavrusos*. Reb Simchah was *niftar* ב' חשוון תשנ"ג, and buried on Har HaMenuchos. Reb Shlomo immediately bought a few burial plots near Reb Simchah, and in his will, he asked his children to bury him there when his time comes. He also requested that when his children come to his grave they should go to Reb Simchah's grave too, and say *Kaddish* there, since Reb Simchah was *niftar* without children.

Reb Shlomo Lorintz was *niftar* seventeen years later, on י"א חשוון תש"ע. Since many people don't go to the cemetery on *rosh chodesh*, his children come to his grave on ב' חשוון, the day of Reb Simchah's *yahrtzeit*, and they say *Kaddish* for him too. It was a wonderful *hashgachah pratis*. Reb Shlomo Lorintz's desire to help his friend was fulfilled.

Indeed, all delays are for the good. If you will be patient and keep your eyes open, you may discover how the delays that happen to you are for your benefit.

### ***Emunah – The Highest Level of Emunah is Emunah Peshutah***

It states (15:6) "וְהָאמֵן בָּה'" "[Avraham] believed in Hashem..." is written without a י. The letter י represents *chachmah*, wisdom (*Zohar*). The Agra d'Kalah and the Heichal Brachah explain that the missing י implies that Avraham believed in Hashem with *emunah peshutah*, with simple faith, without needing chachmos and wisdom to base it upon. For *emunah peshutah* is the highest form of *emunah*.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* taught: Avraham had great revelations, as it states, *אחר הדברים האלה דבר ה' אל אברהם במחזה*, "After these matters, Hashem spoke with Avraham in a vision..." (15:1). And it states, *ויצא אותו החוצה ... הבט נא השמיימה וספרת הכוכבים*, "Hashem took Avram outdoors... [and said] look at the heavens, and count the stars..." Nevertheless, Avraham pleaded *ביהאמין בה* that he prefers to believe in Hashem with all his heart, with *emunah peshutah*, without needing to

have revelations to confirm his *emunah*.

At the Seder night, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* told his young son, "Do you know why we have a כום של אליהו? It's because Eliyahu HaNavi comes to the homes of every Yid on this night. There are tzaddikim who actually see Eliyahu... But there is an even higher level. They are the people who don't see Eliyahu, but they believe that he comes. Having this *emunah* is greater than actually seeing him."

After saying *חמתך חטפוך* by the Seder, the Noda b'Yehudah would walk outdoors, to walk out Eliyahu HaNavi. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* was very impressed by this. He said, "The Noda b'Yehudah didn't see Eliyahu HaNavi, but he believed with *emunah sheleimah* that Eliyahu HaNavi was there. That *emunah* is greater than *giluy Eliyahu* (than actually seeing Eliyahu HaNavi).<sup>3</sup>

3. A woman put onions and oil in a frying pan, and opened a large flame. (Her intention was to lower the flame when they begin to fry.) While the oil was heating up, she went to the laundry room for a moment. But the door shut behind her and when she wanted to leave she found the laundry room's door was jammed shut. She panicked. She imagined the oil catching fire, the entire kitchen burning, the fire spreading through the house, and she was trapped inside...

She tried to bang the door open with her shoulder, but that didn't work. She shouted "*hatzalah!* Help!" but no one was home to hear her. She began to smell the smoke. It was time to say *viduy*. She sat on the floor, and with pure *emunah* she said, "Ribono shel Olam, I did whatever I can. If this is what You want, I accept Your decree with love."

After saying this, she felt calm. She went to the door and tried the knob again. This time it opened, as though there was never a problem. She rushed into the smoking kitchen, and

### ***Hashgachah Pratis***

Above, we quoted the Midrash about the traveler who saw a mansion burning. He thought the mansion didn't have an owner. Until the owner peeked out at him and said, "I am the owner of this mansion. Similarly, Avraham thought Hashem abandoned the world. **הצין עליו בעל הבירה**, Hashem peeked at him and said "I am the owner."

It seems the Midrash should have stated, **הבית עליו בעל הבירה**, "The owner of the mansion *looked* at him." What it is implied by **הצין**, peeked?

In *Shir HaShirim* (2:9) it states, **משגיח מן חלונות מציז מן החרכבים**, "Looks after you from the windows; peeks at you through the cracks..." What is the difference between looking through a window and peeking through cracks? What do we gain by knowing that Hashem looks at us in these two ways?

There is a benefit and a detriment in both ways of looking.

The benefit of looking through a window is that one has a broad range of vision. The detriment is that he doesn't focus on anything in particular.

When looking through a crack, it's just the opposite. The range of vision is minimal, but whatever he does see is with great focus.

Hashem says that He looks at us both

ways, because Hashem sees everything, and everything is in great focus.

The Midrash says **הצין עליו בעל הבירה**, Hashem peeks at us, to bring out that Hashem watches over us with immense *hashgachah pratis*.

When did Avraham merit that Hashem peeked at him? It was when the "mansion was on fire," when he saw that there were troubles in the world. This hints that Hashem's *hashgachah* increases and intensifies when there are troubles, *chalilah*.

A parent loves all his children equally, but if *chalillah* one of them is ill and in the hospital, all his thoughts are on that child. Similarly, when we go through hard times, *keviyachol* Hashem's eye are more focused on us, with extra love and care, to help us.

If the child's stay at the hospital is for a prolonged time, sometimes the parents cannot be with the child. But if the ill child will plead with his parents and say, "I need you to be with me" the parents will do whatever they can so they can be with their child.

The *nimshal* is that when we go through hard times, Hashem is with us more. And if we add a *tefillah*, requesting that Hashem be with us, He will certainly be with us, looking through the windows, and peeking through the cracks, with *hashgachah pratis* to help us.

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turned off the fire. (She ended up in the hospital because of smoke inhalation, but she was fine. Her life was saved when she was able to tap in to her *emunah peshutah*.

When the Baal Shem of Michelstadt *zt'l* was a mere five years old, people were already talking about his amazing wisdom. These amazing reports reached the count of Michelstadt, and he asked that the child be brought to him. He wanted to see with his own eyes the amazing wisdom of this *wunderkint*.

At the designated time and date, the child approached the count's castle, and took in its magnificence and beauty from the outside, and then the child entered. The child noted that although the castle had many rooms and floors, no one was around. He would have to find the count on his own.

It didn't take long at all, and the child knocked at a door. "Good day, honorable count."

The count was astounded. "How did you know I was here?"

"When I looked at the castle from the outside, I saw that the drapes on all the windows were drawn open, to let in the sunlight. But one room had the curtain closed. I understood that you were there, watching me from behind the curtains."

The count had told all his staff that they shouldn't be around to direct the boy. This was how he wanted to test the boy's wisdom. And the boy passed the test with flying colors.

Years later, the Baal Shem Tov of Michelstadt *zt'l* repeated this story, and he explained, "Whenever one is going through hard times and he feels that the

curtains of heaven were drawn closed, that's a sign that Hashem is watching you even closer."

### **Recognizing Hashem with Toil**

The Rambam (*Hilchos Avodas Kochavim* 1:2) writes, "Avraham was forty years old when he recognized the Creator..."

The Raavad writes, "There is a Midrash that says he was three years old."

Another Midrash states that Avraham recognized Hashem at the age 48.

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said that the opinion that he recognized Hashem by 48 needs explanation. We understand the opinion that Avraham recognized Hashem when he was three years old. When Avraham was at the age of minimal comprehension, he was already able to recognize Hashem. The opinion that he was forty years old is also comprehensive, because at forty, one attains understanding and perception. As Chazal say, *בן ארבעים לבינה*, and at the age of forty, one attains understanding. But what's the significance of recognizing Hashem at age 48?

When Avraham was 48 years old, the infamous Tower of Bavel was completed, to fight and rebel against Hashem. It was a generation of immense heresy. The rule is: when one acquires *emunah* at a time when it's very difficult to acquire it, the *emunah* becomes very deeply engraved on one's mind and soul. We are therefore told that Avraham acquired *emunah* at the age 48, so we can understand the challenges he had to

stand up against, and the depth of *emunah* he attained when he succeeded to acquire *emunah* in Hashem.

Tzaddikim foresaw that in the generation before Moshiach comes it will be extremely difficult to believe in Hashem. Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zt'l* described believing in Hashem in that era to be like climbing up a straight wall.

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* compared *emunah* at that time to people holding onto a long rope that is hanging in heaven, and the rope is swaying quickly back and forth. Only those who hold on to the rope with all their might will survive. Whoever cleaves to Hashem with all their might at that time, will reach great heights and perfect clarity in *emunah*.<sup>4</sup>

4. The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 9.) teaches that the world will exist for six thousand years. The first two thousand years are called *הַמִּתְהָרֵךְ*, void, because there was no Torah in the world. The next two thousand years are called the years of Torah. The final two thousand years is the era of Moshiach because Moshiach will come in these two thousand years. "The two thousand millennia of Torah began when Avraham Avinu was 52 years old. Why don't the two thousand years begin from when Avraham recognized Hashem (which is by the age of 3, 40, or 48, as we discussed above)?

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* answered that when Avraham was 52, Nimrod threw him into the fiery furnace at Or Kasdim because he refused to worship idols. The value of Torah is when it's kept and studied with *mesirus nefesh*. Avraham believed in Hashem earlier, but when he was 52 years old, he kept the Torah with *mesirus nefesh*. That's the beginning of the two thousand years of Torah.

During the Communist regime, it was difficult to find a *moheh* in Russia. One Russian family somehow contacted a *moheh* from Eretz Yisrael, and requested that he come and make a *bris milah* for their child. The *moheh* agreed. When he arrived, he discovered that the "baby" was a six-year-old boy. The *moheh* wasn't prepared to make a *milah* on a six-year-old child, but the parents pleaded with the *moheh* to do it.

"How can I?" the *moheh* asked. "The child will move around. It's dangerous."

The six-year-old child spoke up and said, "Tie me down with ropes, if you have to. I want a *bris milah*. I want to be a Yid."

After the *bris milah*, the mother kissed her child. She said, "For the past six years, I never kissed you, because I didn't want to kiss a goy. Now, I can kiss you."

Think about the *mesirus nefesh* this mother had. For six years, she wouldn't kiss her own son, because he didn't have *milah*. Let this example of *mesirus nefesh* serve as a model, to keep the Torah with *mesirus nefesh*.