

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
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Vayechi







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# Table of contents

## Parshas Vayechi

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Torah .....                     | 1  |
| The Correct Focus .....         | 9  |
| Kedushas Einayim .....          | 10 |
| Chazak Chazak v'Nischazek ..... | 12 |
| Honor Your Fellow Man .....     | 13 |
| Rebbe Moshe Lelover .....       | 15 |

## Parshat Vayechi

### Torah

The *parashah* begins, ויהי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה ויהי ימי יעקב שני חייו שבע שנים שנה ושבע עשרה שנה, "Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim seventeen years. His entire life was 147 years."

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh asks, "Why is it important for us to know how long Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim? A second question: We know that Yaakov was 130 years old when he came to Mitzrayim (see 47:28) and that he was 147 when he was *niftar*. So we can figure out on our own that Yaakov lived 17 years in Mitzrayim. Why does the Torah have to spell it out for us?"

The Or HaChaim answers that the Torah is telling us that the final years of Yaakov Avinu's life were the best years of his life.

As the Or HaChaim writes, "Yaakov had a very hard life... He was born together with his archenemy, Eisav... Those problems weren't over, and he had to deal with Lavan. He had tzaros with Dinah, and then he lost Yosef. It states, ויהי יעקב בארץ מצרים, 'Yaakov lived in the land Mitzrayim...' Those were the days of his life that he was *alive*." He was together with his entire family, everyone was well. Therefore, ויהי יעקב, those were the best years of his life.

The Tzemech Tzedek *zt'l* asked his grandfather, the Baal HaTanya *zt'l*,

"Yaakov was living in the impure land of Mitzrayim. How could those years possibly be counted as the best years of his life?"

The Baal HaTanya replied, "Yaakov studied Torah in Mitzrayim. As it states (46:28), ואת יהודה שלח לפניו אל יוסף להורות, and Rashi explains that Yaakov sent Yehudah ahead, לתקן לו בית התלמוד שמשם תצא הוראה, 'to set up a beis medresh, from where Torah will come forth.' And where there's Torah, one can live anywhere and his life is good."

Chazal teach that the words on the *luchos* were perforated, through and through, and could be read from both sides. Miracles had to take place to be able to read the *luchos*.

One of the miracles was with the letters ם"מ and ם"מ. Since the *luchos* were perforated from side to side, the final ם"מ and a ם"מ would appear like a hole in the *luchos*, and not as a letter. Miraculously, Hashem had the middle of the 'ם and 'ם suspend in place, and not fall, so those letters will also be in the *luchos* (*Megillah* 2:).

Perhaps this is hinted at in the *pasuk* (49:14-15), יששכר חמור גרם... ויהי למם עובר. The word למ"ם means that the letters 'ם and 'ם stood miraculously. This is alluded to by Yissachar, because Yissachar is dedicated to Torah study.

Many people fear that dedication to Torah will lessen their *parnassah*. The *pasuk* is hinting that just as the middle of the letters מ"ם and כמ"ך were miraculously suspended in place, Hashem will help those who devote themselves to Torah that their *parnassah* will miraculously stand and exist.

They won't lose money, due to their devotion to Torah. As the Rambam (end of *Hilchos Shemita VeYovel*) writes, "Every person of the world...who devotes himself to stand before Hashem, to serve Him and to know Him...and throws off the yoke that most people of the world carry, becomes holy — *kodesh kadashim*. Hashem is His portion and Hashem will grant him *parnassah*..."

The first Mishnah of *Peah* states, אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא, "These are the things that one enjoys the fruit in this world, and the primary reward is reserved for Olam HaBa. They are: Honoring parents, doing kind deeds, increasing peace, and תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם, more than all the others, the greatest reward is reserved for studying Torah."

The Klausenberger Rebbe *zt'l* said that it should state, תלמוד תורה מעל כולם that Torah study is above all. Why does it state כולם כנגד? This means that by studying Torah, one is able to do to all the other matters stated in this list. By setting times to study Torah, one will be able to honor his parents, do deeds of kindness, and increase peace among

people. Without Torah study, one will fail in all his pursuits.

Another benefit of studying Torah, especially studying Mishnayos, is that it protects us from Gehinom. Yaakov blessed Asher (49:20), מאשר שמנה לחמו. The word שמנה have the same letters as משנה. The *Midrash Talpiyos* explains that Asher stands at the entrance to Gehinom and he saves all people who know Mishnayos.

Based on this Midrash, the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* encouraged people to study Mishnayos.<sup>1</sup>

#### A *Daf Gemara*

Tzaddikim would speak about the importance of studying at least a *daf* of Gemara, each day.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* would always praise Yidden. It was rare to hear him say something negative. Nevertheless, once, he was so upset, he couldn't contain himself and he said, "People come to me, requesting that I should daven for them, and their faces look like animals. And that is because they didn't learn a *blatt* Gemara that day..."

Rebbe Shmuel Kaminka *zy'a* was once speaking with his students about the importance of studying a "*blatt* Gemara." He said: "With a *blatt* Gemara, one goes out of the *blotta* [the mud – the *yetzer hara*]."

1. When one knows Mishnayos by heart he will be able to study Torah at all times, when he travels, when he is lying in bed, and whenever he has a free moment.

One of the students quickly went into the adjacent room. He sought a Gemara to study. He didn't find a Gemara, but he found a Mishnayos. He studied a chapter, and then returned to hear more Torah from Rebbe Shmuel Kaminka. Rebbe Shmuel said, "He thinks he can cleanse himself with a chapter of Mishnayos and attain the same purity that comes from a *daf* Gemara."

The Sdei Chemed writes (vol.5 *klal* 54) writes, "In תרנ"ט I was in Yerushalayim, and I was invited to a *pidyon haben*. I didn't go. People told me that partaking in a *pidyon haben* is like fasting פ"ד תעניתים, 84 fasts. I never heard of that before. I think that there is no source for this; it is just something nice that people say."<sup>2</sup>

When the *Sdei Chemed* was printed, the people of Yerushalayim were wondering: Could it be that something they knew for generations – that partaking in a פדיון הבן is like פ"ד תעניתים - doesn't have any source at all? This was discussed at a *pidyon haben* in Yerushalayim, and someone said, "Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld is with us by this *simchah*, he is an expert in all *sefarim* — the old and the new. Let's ask him whether there's a source for this idea.

He told them that there is no source. Nevertheless, he said that a source can be found in the *roshei teivos* of a *pasuk* that discusses *pidyon haben*. It states וכל בכור אדם בן בן יד תפדה. This is *roshei teivos*

for: אם דבר מה בפדיון בן נהנית יחשב כאילו תענית פ"ד התענית, "If you eat something at a *pidyon haben*, it will be as though you fasted eighty-four fasts."

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld added, "פ"ד תעניתים. There is another way to get פ"ד תעניתים. That is by studying a ד"ף gemara, because ד"ף is also *gematriya* eighty-four. For some reason, this *segulah* isn't sought after as a *pidyon haben* is..."

This week's *parashah* discusses the Yissachar/Zevulun alliance. As it states (49:13), זבולון לחוף ימים ישכון והוא לחוף אניות, and Rashi writes, "Zevulun's portion is on the sea, where ships dock, loaded with merchandise. Zevulun would do business with them [buy their products and sell them throughout Eretz Yisrael] and with the profits they supported the tribe of Yissaschar who studied Torah. As it states (*Devarim* 33:18), שמה זבולון בצאתך ויששכר באהלך, that Zevulun goes out with merchandise, and Yissachar is in the tents of Torah."

On this note, we share the following story:

There's an old man in Manhattan called Reb Nachman. He learns daily with his *chavrusah* of a similar age. In תשע"א, after twenty years of study, they completed the entire *Talmud Yerushalmi*. A wealthy person heard about this, and offered Reb Nachman a half million dollars to buy the merits of twenty years of Torah study.

2. There are sources for this idea. It was taught by Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* [*Likutei Imrei Pinchas, Shaar Kedushah*] and by Rebbe Mordechai of Neschiz *zt'l* [*Ilana d'Chaya*].

At this time, a *mikvah* was being built in Kiryat Gat and due to lack of funds, the construction ceased. Reb Nachman was very upset about that, so he told this wealthy person to give the \$500,000 towards building the *mikvah*, and then he will agree to sell his twenty years of studying *Yerushalmi*.

The wealthy man agreed to those terms, but he first wanted to make certain that it is possible to buy someone's merits.

They asked Reb Shmuel Vosner *zt'l*.

Reb Vosner replied that it states in *Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Deiah 246:1)* that one can make such a deal with someone *before* he learns, but not after the fact. As it states, "If someone doesn't know how to study Torah, or if he is very busy and he doesn't have time to learn Torah, he should support people who study Torah and it will be counted as if he is learning. A person can make such a deal with his fellow man. He tells his friend to study Torah, and he will support him, and then they will divide the reward between them. However, [this deal is only possible before he learns Torah]. If he already studied Torah, it is impossible to buy those merits..."

Thus, since Reb Nachman had already studied for twenty years, those merits can't be sold.

Nevertheless, Reb Vosner *zt'l* said, after he studied the entire *Yerushalmi*, he is a new person, at a much higher *madreigah*. Now, when he performs a *mitzvah*, it will be a person who studied the entire *Yerushalmi* performing the

*mitzvah*! And that raises the value of the *mitzvos* exponentially.

Reb Vosner explained that he can't sell the Torah that he studied, but he can sell the additional worth of the *mitzvos* that he will perform. Because the value of all his *mitzvos* increased, now that he is a person who studied the entire *Yerushalmi*.

Sometimes, people are discouraged when it comes to learning Torah. They feel, "So what will be if I learn a *daf* of Gemara? I will forget it soon afterwards? What did I gain?" Let this story remind him that he will become a new person with every page of Gemara he learns. It doesn't just go into oblivion. The Torah comes along with him, wherever he is.

#### Hard Work

Studying Torah isn't easy. It requires toil. Especially for those who aren't accustomed to studying Torah. But it is worthwhile to do so. He will gain immensely, in this world and certainly in the next world.

It states about Yissaschar (49:15), וִירָא מְנוּחָה כִּי טוֹב... וַיֵּט שִׁכְמוֹ לְסִבּוּל "He saw that resting is good... So he bent his shoulders to endure the toil..." Rashi explains that he bends his shoulders to bear the toil of Torah.

This *pasuk* seems to contradict itself, because if Yissaschar sees "that resting is good" why does he take on the yoke of Torah?

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* explained that the pleasure of resting is solely after

working hard. The *pasuk* says that Yissaschar valued the pleasure of resting, and therefore he took upon himself to toil in Torah. Because then he will truly appreciate the breaks that follow. Because resting, without toil, is just boredom.

Reb Yehudah Leib HaLevi Ashlag *zt'l* answered the contradiction of the *pasuk* based on the following *Rambam (Hilchos Isurei Mizbeiach 7:11)*: "The person who wants to do what's right, he should rule over his *yetzer hara* and be generous, and bring *korbanos* from the nicest of that species... This applies to everything one does for the good G-d. He should use the most beautiful, the best. When he builds a *beis kneses*, it should be more beautiful than the home where he lives. When feeding the hungry, he should give the pauper from the sweetest and best foods that are on his table. When he clothes the poor, he should give his best clothing. When he brings *korbanos* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, he should bring from his best and most beautiful possessions. As it states (*Vayikra 3:16*), "כל חלב לה'."

Reb Ashlag *zt'l* explains, וירא מנוחה כי טוב, Yissaschar saw that relaxing is good, and therefore he wanted to give that goodness to Hashem. Because one should always give the best that he has to Hashem (as the *Rambam* teaches). Therefore, ויט שכמו לסבול, when he had free time, he toiled in Torah. Thereby, he gave the best of his times to Hashem.<sup>3</sup>

The truth is, we can explain the *pasuk* as it is written, because the greatest relaxation, pleasure, and good is found by those who toil in Torah. They attain serenity and satisfaction that the greatest rest and vacation won't give. Thus, the *pasuk* is understood very simply, וירא מנוחה כי טוב, Yissaschar saw the value of resting, ויט שכמו לסבול, so he took the yoke of Torah. Because no one is more serene, calm, happy, and satisfied as the one who toils in Torah.

The *Gemara (Sanhedrin 99:)* states, "Man was born for toiling. As it states (*Iyov 5:9*), "כי אדם לעמל יולד." There are different types of Torah. The *Gemara* clarifies that a person was born to toil in Torah.

If one doesn't toil in Torah, he will have to toil other ways. As it states (*Avos 3:6*), כל המקבל על עצמו עול תורה מעבירין ממנו עול מלכות ועול דרך ארץ, "Whoever accepts the yoke of Torah, they remove from him the burden of the government and the burden of *parnassah*. וכל הפורק ממנו עול תורה נותנים עליו עול מלכות ועול דרך ארץ, "But whoever removes the yoke of Torah, Heaven gives him the yoke of the government [taxes] and the burden of *parnassah*." Because everyone must have a burden and toil, the choice is up to him, where he wants to use it.

Based on these ideas, Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* explained the *pasuk* as follows, וירא מנוחה כי טוב, if a person seeks to rest, ויט שכמו לסבול, he should take the

3. Someone told this *vort* to the *Chazon Ish zt'l* and he liked it very much. For two months, he was repeating this *vort* to those who came to him. (See *Maaseh Ish* vol.7 p.64)



burden of Torah. Because man was created for toil, and if he doesn't toil in Torah, he will have to toil in other areas. Therefore, Yissachar took on the yoke of Torah, so he would have *מנוחה*, tranquility. He won't need to shoulder the burden of the government and the burden of *parnassah*.

The *Zohar* (*Tikunim* 21-22) tells the punishments that come from severe sins. The *Zohar* concludes, "But whoever studies Torah, about him it is written, *אורך ימים בימינה*, 'Long life is on the right side, *ובשמאלה עושר וכבוד*, "on his left side is wealth and honor." Even if due to his sins he was destined for poverty or even death, with Torah study one merits long life and wealth.

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* repeated this *Zohar* to Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l*, emphasizing that when one studies Torah, he has nothing to fear.

The Noam Elimelech (*Vayechi* ד"ה או יאמר) writes, "Why are we rewarded for keeping the mitzvos? ... The answer is, Hashem gave us a *yetzer hara* who is always enticing us with *taavos*, to think about *aveiros*, etc. And the person fights with the *yetzer hara*, and wages a war against the *yetzer hara* with cleverness. He steers away from *chanifah*, lies, *leitzanus*, *lashon hara*, *taavos*, bad thoughts, etc. He wages a great war against the *yetzer hara*... [And for these battles, one deserves reward.] As it states (*Tehillim* 21:3), *תאווה לכו נתת*, *לו*, the reason Hashem gave a person free will, *וארשת שפתיו כל מנעת סלה*, and the

reason a person has the ability to speak whatever he wants. *כי תקדמנו ברכות טוב*, it is so that he can receive Hashem's blessings and reward... Similarly, it states (*Bereishis* 49:14), *יששכר*, which spells *יש שכר*, there is reward. Why? *חמור גרם*, his base, *gashmiyos* body, *גרם*, causes him to earn reward..."

In conclusion, it is worthwhile to accept the yoke of Torah. With this toil one becomes eligible for reward, he is saved from the burdens of the government and of *parnassah* and all kinds of punishments. Furthermore, he will live the most tranquil and pleasurable life imaginable in this world. Certainly, that will be his portion in the next world.

#### Studying Continuously

The Yesod HaAvodah (3, 5:8) writes, "Studying Torah for five hours straight, without speaking anything else... I think that this is a wonderful matter, and it purifies and brings the person atonement and to complete *teshuvah*."

Once, in the middle of the night, Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrivka *zt'l* asked his *gabai* to awaken all his chassidim, to gather around him. He told them, "I didn't want to speak about it before, but it was just revealed to me the greatness of studying with *רציפות*, without speaking in the middle. This purifies the person immensely. The *רציפות*, studying without interruption, creates a *רצפת אש*, a floor of fire... Therefore everyone should take it upon himself to do so..."

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 12:) states that when one interrupts his Torah studies for idle talk his punishment is to eat גְּחָלִי רְתֻמִּים, fiery coals. The Maharil Diskin *zt'l* explained that if one will eat coals, he will have a bad taste in his mouth, and now, even when he eats delicious foods, it will taste bad to him. This is what happens when one speaks in the middle of learning Torah. He isn't able to taste the sweet words of the Torah.

The Chazon Ish (*Igros* 1:3) writes, "The primary way to learn is that it be constant, without interruptions. Learning this way is the foundation of holiness. One should seek ways to attain this *hasmadah*, and to daven for it constantly."

When the Beis Yisrael *zt'l* gathered the leaders of his community, and he told them, "The *avodah* of every yid is קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִי, to be holy, and it is impossible to be holy without studying Torah without interruption."

Once, the Beis Yisrael saw two of his *kollel yungerleit* talking in the courtyard, and was very upset about that. The Beis Yisrael immediately said to the *rosh kollel*, Reb Rothstein, "Why do you allow the *yungerleit* to go out and speak?"

The *rosh kollel* replied, "But didn't you say that you made this courtyard, so people can speak over there, instead of speaking in the beis medresh?"

The Beis Yisrael replied that he meant that by a rare occurrence, they can speak in the courtyard. But it shouldn't be that

the *kollel yungerleit* spend time there, when they should be learning.

The Beis Yisrael told one of the *mashgichim* of his yeshiva, "If you see someone talking during *seder*, grab him by his jacket, and throw him out of the beis medresh." (I heard this from the *mashgiach*.)

As known, during World War I, many Yidden became refugees, going from place to place, trying to escape the war. At this time, Rebbe Tzvi Hirsh of Rudnick *zt'l* came to Ratzfort, together with his young son, who in time became known as the Shefa Chaim, the Klausenberger Rebbe *zt'l*. Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* was also in Ratzfort, and he asked the young Shefa Chaim what he was learning. The Shefa Chaim asked, "Are you expecting me to learn even in times like this?"

Rebbe Yissachar Dov replied with a story: *Erev Pesach*, when the house was turned over, no one knew where my grandfather, the Sar Shalom of Belz, was. (The Sar Shalom was still a child at the time.) Eventually, they found him under a bench, studying Torah. Rebbe Yissachar Dov concluded, "Do you understand? Every moment is a good time to study Torah. If you don't study all the time, one grows up to be an *am ha'aretz*."

The Shefa Chaim repeated this story many years later with copious tears. He said, "It seems that even then, Rebbe Yissachar Dov knew that I would grow up an *am ha'aretz* ..."

*Shovavim*

Motzei Shabbos begins the six weeks of *shovavim*, a time when Yidden can acquire immense purity. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said in the name of the Kotzker *zt'l* that the primary rectification and purification of *shovavim* comes from studying Gemara with *Tosefos* in depth.

The Shiltei Giborim writes, "A *talmid chacham* isn't permitted to fast, *שממעט* במלאכת שמים, because this causes him to serve Hashem less." Because when he fasts, he will learn less Torah. This proves that studying Torah is a greater purifier than fasting. Therefore, in our generation, when fasting is difficult (because people have become weaker) the ideal is to take the utmost purity, and to become *tahor* through studying Torah.<sup>4</sup>

As Reb Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said, "More than all fasts and afflictions, nothing purifies a person from sins as much as studying Torah."

The Steipler *zt'l* (*Igra d'Igarta* vol.1 letter 17) writes, "I was shocked when I heard

that you are fasting...! One hour of studying Torah is more precious to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than a thousand fasts." The Steipler adds that if he wants to afflict himself, he can do that by reviewing. Because people don't want to review what they already know, and it will be like a *טיגוף*, an affliction, for him.

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner *zy'a* said that Gemara comes from the word *gumri* [coals] because the Gemara is like burning coals that burn away all impurities and ignite one's heart to Hashem.

The Zera Kodesh (*Bo, ד"ה ויקרא*) writes, the four seasons correspond to the four building blocks of the world: fire, water, wind, and earth. The winter corresponds to fire, and therefore, there is a strong *yetzer hara* in the winter. A fire burns in him, enticing him to do *aveiros*. To control this fire, we were granted the gift of *shovavim* at this time. We extinguish the fire with Torah."

in another location (*Terumah ד"ה ועשו ארון*) the Zera Kodesh writes, "The

4. Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* once said to a *talmid chacham* who was fasting during *shovavim*, "You know how to learn, so why are you taking on the smaller rectification? You can take on the greater rectification of studying Gemara and *Tosefos*!"

I once heard Rebbe Moshe Mordechai say to a bar mitzvah *bachur*, a few days before his bar mitzvah, "You are about to receive a guest — the *yetzer tov*. A host gives his guests what the guests enjoy most, even if it isn't what the host likes the most. Your special guest likes Torah, and it would be proper that you honor your guest with a lot of Torah."

When someone asked him for counsel to guard his eyes he replied, "If you will keep your eyes on learning Gemara, your eyes will be protected from seeing bad."

He would often repeat the Or LaShamayim (*Netzavim*) who explained the *pasuk* (*Breishis* 10:10), ותהי ראשית ממלכתו בבל וארך, as follows: ותהי ראשית ממלכתו בבל, the primary way to accept Hashem's Kingship, בבל, is by studying Talmud Bavli. In this merit, ארך, you will have long life and health. (רך has two meanings: long life and health). .

primary *teshuvah* is studying Torah. As Chazal say, 'If he was accustomed to studying one *blatt*, he should now study two *blatt*.' [Also] the primary chassidus is to study Torah with

*hasmadah*... If you want to be a chassid, attach yourself to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and to Torah, for the Torah is called תורה חסד, and then you will be called a chassid."

### The Correct Focus

It states (*Tehillim* 39:6), הנה מפחות נתת ימי "Like hand breadths you set my days..." Rebbe of Pshischa *zt'l* explained that even a very long rope of seventy *amos*, people measure it by how many *tefachim* (hands breadths) it has. Similarly, we should measure our lives in small increments, "like hand breadths." We do this by focusing on the present, disregarding the past and the future.

Focusing on the present is important, because many of the things that bother us are about what happened in the past, and our forebodings about the future. The errors and sins we committed in the past disappoint us, steal our peace of mind, and prevent us from rejoicing and achieving in the present.

Also, the focus on the future can paralyze us, because one fears that the future will be bleak and unproductive like the past. A wise counsel, therefore, is to focus on the present. This is implied by the *brachah* ויברכם ביום ההוא.

It states (48:20), ויברכם ביום ההוא לאמר... "[Yaakov] blessed [Efraim and Menasheh] on that day..." Rebbe Asher of Stoln *zt'l* (see *Beis Aharon* p.143.) explains, "[He blessed them that] they shouldn't speak and they shouldn't think about tomorrow [or about the past]. They should focus solely on today."

### Recognizing Your Qualities

There's something else we should focus on, which will vitalize us and give us hope. That is to recognize our qualities.

Reb Yerucham Levovitz *zt'l*, the *mashgiach* of Yeshivas Mir, said, "It is certainly very bad when one doesn't know his faults. But it is even worse when one doesn't know his qualities. He is like a professional who doesn't know his tools."

Many people are very talented, they can accomplish so much, but they aren't aware of their abilities, so their strengths lie dormant and they don't accomplish the mission Hashem set from them.

It states (49:28), וזאת אשר דבר להם אביהם ויברך אותם, "This is what their father spoke with them and blessed them. Each one received the *brachah* appropriate for him."

The question is, did Yaakov bless his children? It seems that he just told them their virtues and their character traits, but he didn't bless them.

The answer is, to know who you are is the greatest blessing. This knowledge directs people to succeed. And that is the greatest blessing.



*Kedushas Einayim*

There was a time when *korbanos* were brought in Mishkan Shilo, which is in Yosef's portion of Eretz Yisrael.

The Mishnah (*Megillah* 1:11) states that there was only one halachic difference between Mishkan Shilo and the Beis HaMikdash. *Korbanos* (קָרְבָּנִים קָלִים) and *maasar sheini* could be eaten solely within the walls of Yerushalayim, but in Mishkan Shilo, one could eat *korbanos* and *maasar sheini* בכל הרואה, as far as one can see. One was allowed to eat *korbanos* and *maaser sheini* any place, so long as one can still see the Mishkan from the distance.

The Gemara (*Zevachim* 118:) states the reason: "It states (49:22) about Yosef עלֵי עֵין. The eye that didn't want to derive pleasure from what isn't his [Yosef didn't want to look at Photiphar's wife] will merit that people can eat as far as the eye can see."

The Chidushei HaRim ז"ל (see *Sfas Emes Vayechi* תרל"ח) explains that sins cause a separation between a Yid and his Father in heaven. When one guards his eyes, he removes all those barriers. Therefore, as he removed those walls, the walls surrounding Mishkan Shilo are also removed. Thus, one doesn't have to eat solely within the walls of Shilo. Due to Yosef's *shemiras einayim*, all walls and barriers tumble down.

There are also walls that prevent us from receiving Hashem's bounty. Hashem wants to bestow bounty onto us, but sins

create a wall that separate us from this goodness, and prevents us from attaining the bounty. When one is cautious with his eyes, all barriers are removed, and now the bounty can descend.

Someone told the Beis Yisrael of Gur ז"ל that a kabbalist told him that he is suffering from an *ayin hara*, and he is very worried about that.

The Rebbe repeated the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 107) that says, "Rav entered a cemetery and said that ninety-nine percent of people die from an *ayin hara*, and only one percent die a natural death." The Rebbe said, "This means everyone suffers from a bad eye," from not being cautious with their eyes. That is the root of all problems.

My father's *yahrzeit* is Shabbos, the 14th of Teves, so I will share a story that I heard from Reb Baruch Weisberg.

Reb Baruch owned a candy factory in Tel Aviv, and my father was a *maggid shiur* in my grandfather's yeshiva, in Tel Aviv. Every day they traveled together by bus from Bnei Brak to Tel Aviv.

Once, the *tznius* on the bus was very bad, and my father was very upset about that. He told Reb Baruch that he will never ride on that bus again. From now on, he will go by taxi, to and from Tel Aviv – and that is what he did.

My father wasn't wealthy, and this was a great expense for him, but he wouldn't consider risking the sanctity of his eyes.

He preferred to pay, rather than to be contaminated with improper sights.<sup>5</sup>

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 7) teaches, "When one says that a leg [of an animal] should become a *korban*, the entire animal becomes a *korban*." The *kedushah* spreads from that one limb to the entire animal.

The Rebbe of Radzamin *zy'a* taught that this also occurs when one sanctifies any limb of his body. For example, when one is careful with what he sees, the purity will spread through his entire essence, purifying his entire being.

#### Taking Precautions

Until now we discussed that *shemiras einayim* removes walls and barriers (that separate us from Hashem, and that separate us from the bounty). But there are walls and barriers that we should put up. We are referring to the fences people should erect, that will prevent them from going to places, or doing deeds that might lead to sin.

As a reward for putting up those essential walls, Hashem will remove the walls that separate us from Hashem, and the barriers that block the bounty from coming down to us.

When one spins a *dreidel*, it sometimes fall on the װ and sometimes on the ן, etc. The spinner has no way of controlling how it will fall. This is because there are no boundaries on the bottom of the dreidel directing it where it should go.

The *nimshal* is, a person should make boundaries, which will protect him from *aveiros*. Without boundaries, there is no telling where he will fall. Sometimes he will be a *tzaddik*, and sometimes he will be the opposite. As people say, "One day a *malach* (angel) and one day a *galach* (priest)." Therefore, it is important to put up fences, such as, "I don't go to such-and-such places." And, "I won't even touch non-kosher technology..." etc. These walls help one remain where he wants to be.

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5. My father was very cautious to honor his fellow man. I remember one year, on Rosh Hashanah, after the person blowing the shofar said the *brachos*, he wasn't able to blow the shofar. He tried several times, but hardly a squeak came out.

My father signaled to the *baal tokea* that he wants to try to blow it. My father wasn't able to blow the shofar either, so my father gave the shofar to a third person, who was able to blow the shofar.

I asked my father why he tried to blow the shofar, because I know that he didn't know how. My father replied, "If I would have given the shofar to someone, and he would blow it easily, the first *baal tokeia* would be embarrassed. It would look like everyone could blow the shofar, only he can't. So, I asked for the shofar, tried blowing it and failed. Like this the *mispallelim* thought that the shofar is very difficult to blow. This minimized his shame."

*Chazak Chazak v'Nischazek*

When Yosef came to see his father, Yaakov sat up for him. As it states (48:2), ויתחזק ישראל וישב על המטה, "[Yaakov] made himself strong and he sat on his bed." Rashi explains that Yaakov said, "Although he is my son, he is a king, so I will honor him."

The Baal HaTurim writes that the words על המטה is written twice in Tanach; in this *pasuk*, and another time in *Megillas Esther* (7:8), והמן נופל על המטה. The Baal HaTurim writes, "Because tzaddikim, even when they are weak, they strengthen themselves... And the *resha'im*, even when they are strong, fall..."

The final words of this week's *parashah* — which are also the final words of *Chumash Bereishis* — are, וימת יוסף... וישם, *בארון במצרים*, Yosef was *niftar* ... and he was placed in a coffin in Mitzrayim. Generally, a *sefer* ends on a happy note. Why does *Chumash Bereishis* end on, what seems to be, a sad note?

Immediately after the *baal korei* reads these words the entire congregation stands up and says out loud, חזק חזק ונתחזק.<sup>6</sup> If after a great tragedy, such as

Yosef's *petirah*, people are able to proclaim, חזק, that they are ready to strengthen themselves, and begin over, that is a happy ending.

It states, וישם בארון במצרים. This can be hinting to people who fall to very low levels. It is as though they are buried in a coffin in the impure land of Mitzrayim. Even they shout חזק חזק ונתחזק. They are prepared to be strong and pull themselves out of the gutter they fell into. This attitude makes it a good ending.

Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan *zt'l* said that the theme of this week's *parashah* is *chizuk*. It states (1), ויתחזק ישראל וישב על המטה, "[Yaakov] strengthened himself and he sat on the bed." (2) When we complete the *parashah* we say, חזק חזק ונתחזק. (3) In the *haftarah* we read that Dovid HaMelech said to his son Shlomo (*I Malachim* 2:2-3), וחוזקת ודוית לאיש ושמרת, "Be strong and be a man and guard Hashem's mitzvos to go in His ways..."<sup>7</sup>

It also states in this week's *parashah* (49:9), גור אריה יהודה כרע רבץ כאריה וכלביא, "Yehudah is like a lion... He crouches like a lion.." The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l*

6. The Levush תרס"ט writes that when the Torah is completed on Simchas Torah, ועונים, ואומרים בקול רם חזק, "They say in a loud voice 'chazak!'"

7. The path for growth is small steps. We can explain that this is hinted at in the three expressions of *chizuk* we discussed. The first was, וישב על המטה... ויתחזק, to sit up. Then there's standing up, as we do when we say, חזק חזק ונתחזק. And Dovid HaMelech told Shlomo, וחוזקת.. "Make yourself strong...to go in His ways." This hints to the gradual growth of sitting up, standing up, and then walking. Similarly, we should seek to grow by taking small steps at a time.

explains that when a lion lies down, it is still a lion, because it is always ready for battle. Yehudah is similar, because even when he falls to the ground, he is ready to pick himself up and battle with the *yetzer hara* again (see *Sfas Emes Vayechi* (תרנ"א).<sup>8</sup>

Chazal (*Gittin* 43.) state, *אין אדם עומד על דברי תורה אלא אם כן נכשל בהם*, "a person doesn't understand Torah unless he makes a mistake in Torah, first." Similarly, the holy *sefarim* say, growth in *avodas Hashem* happens by making mistakes, strengthening oneself, and trying again. By going through this process can one reach very high levels.

### Honor Your Fellow Man

The Midrash (*Psikta Rabsi* 3:10) writes that in Mitzrayim, Yosef didn't visit his father very often, because he wanted to hide from his father that they sold him to Mitzrayim.

We quote:

"It states (48:1), *וַיֹּאמֶר לְיוֹסֵף הִנֵּה אָבִיךָ חוֹלָה*, 'They told Yosef, 'Behold your father is ill.' Who told him that his father is ill? Some say it was Bilhah, who took care of Yaakov. When he was ill she came and told Yosef. Others say it was

Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler *zt'l* taught the meaning of *חֹזֵק חֹזֵק וְנִתְחַזַּק*. If a person strengthens himself once and then he fails, and he strengthens himself a second time, and he fails again. He keeps on trying and the result will be, *וְנִתְחַזַּק*, Hashem will help him succeed.

Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 27:14), *קוּהַ אֵל ה' חֹזֵק וַיִּאֲמֵן לְבָבְךָ*. The Vayageid Yaakov of Pupa *zt'l* (*שו"ת משפטיך ליעקב*) teaches that *חֹזֵק* is when one strengthens himself, and the grammar of *וַיִּאֲמֵן* implies to when someone else strengthens you. The pasuk says *חֹזֵק*, if you will strengthen yourself, *וַיִּאֲמֵן*, Hashem will strengthen you and enable you to succeed.

Binyamin. [Rashi states an opinion that it was Efraim, who used to learn Torah with Yaakov]... Behold all of Yosef's praise is that he was very devoted to *kibud av*. Nevertheless, he didn't go to his father all the time. If no one had come to tell Yosef that his father was ill, he wouldn't know. This teaches us Yosef's righteousness. He didn't want to be alone with his father, so his father won't ask him, 'What did your brothers do to you?' and then his father would

8. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 98:6) states, *אין אדם אומר ראובני אנא, שמעוני אנא, אלא יהודי*, "A person doesn't say, 'I am a Reuveni' or 'I am a Shimoni' rather people say 'I am a Yehudi.'" All of Klal Yisrael are named for Yehudah. This is because Yehudah's uniqueness was that even after he sinned (or at least, it appeared like a sin with Tamar), he strengthened himself. He didn't lose hope. Yidden are called Yehudim because they have this nature, to pick themselves up again even after falling.

The Chidushei HaRim says that *יהודה* spells Hashem's name, with an added *דל"ת*. This implies that even someone who is at a low level, he can do *teshuvah* and to immediately become connected with Hashem.



curse them. Yosef said, 'I know my father's righteousness, everything he decrees occurs. My father said (*Bereishis* 31:32) that whoever took Lavan's gods should die, and that caused my mother to die. If I will tell my father [that my brothers sold me to Mitzrayim]...and he curses them, the world will be destroyed, because the world was created for the *shevatim*. To prevent this, he didn't go very often to his father."

We can also explain that Yosef was also trying to protect his brothers from shame. He avoided being with his father so he wouldn't have to tell him what they did to him. Yosef was *moser nefesh* to protect his brothers from shame.<sup>9</sup>

In last week's *parashah*, the Or HaChaim (48:26) writes, "I was wondering, why didn't Yosef tell his father that he was alive? It could be that when he was a slave, he wasn't able to contact his father, despite his efforts to do so. But after he was king, why didn't he write a letter to his father, and alleviate his father's distress...?"

"Chazal (*Bava Kama* 59.) write, 'It's better to throw yourself into a burning furnace than to embarrass your fellow man.' Yosef didn't want to embarrass his brothers in front of Yitzchak, Yaakov, and the rest of the family. Therefore, he let his father remain in distress, rather than to embarrass his brothers..."

The *parashah* (48:13-14) tells that Yosef brought his children Menasheh and Efraim to Yaakov, so Yaakov would bless them. Yosef placed Menasheh, the older son, at Yaakov's right side, and Efraim was brought to Yaakov's left side. But when Yaakov blessed them, *שכל ארת יי*, he switched his arms around, and placed his right hand on Efraim's head.

The Noam Elimelech writes, "The Torah is teaching us *derech erez*, that we should honor our fellow man. Yaakov could have rearranged the children, according to the way he wanted them: Efraim at his right side and Menasheh at his left side – but that would embarrass Menasheh. Therefore he only changed the position of his hands."<sup>10</sup>

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9. The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (50:17) writes, "The brothers asked Yosef *mechilah*, but the *pasuk* doesn't state that Yosef forgave them. Chazal say that if you sin to your fellow man, and you do *teshuvah*, the sin isn't forgiven until your fellow man forgives you. Although it states (50:21), *וינחם אותם וידבר אל לבם* that Yosef spoke kindly with them it doesn't state explicitly that Yosef forgave them... Thus, they died with their sins, without Yosef forgiving them... Therefore, years later, they were punished... with the *עשרה הרוגי מלכות*, the ten scholars who were killed (tortured to death) by the Roman government.

10. Yaakov and Yosef debated which child should get the best *brachah*, with Yaakov's right hand on his head.

The holy *sefarim* teach that on a higher plane, they were actually debating different approaches in *avodas Hashem*. They disagreed regarding where one should place his primary focus in *avodas Hashem*.

Based on this idea, Reb Binyamin Mendelson *zt'l*, the rav of Komemius, took note that

בדרך רמז, Reb Chaim Volozhiner zt'l explains why Yaakov switched his hands:

The right represents strength and the left represents weakness. Generally, when two people are facing one another, one's right side faces his fellow man's left side, and his left side faces his fellow man's right side. This implies how people generally think. Their right side faces their fellow man's left side. This means that the primary focus is on their

fellow man's faults and weaknesses. His left side faces his fellow man's right side. This means he doesn't pay too much attention to his fellow man's qualities.

The solution, and how things should be, is like Yaakov Avinu did it. He put his right hand to the right side, and his left hand to the left side, implying that one's primary focus should be on the qualities and good deeds of others, and a weaker focus on their faults.<sup>11</sup>

### Rebbe Moshe Lelover

A *shidduch* was about to be finalized between Rebbe Dovid of Lelov's zt'l son and the Yid HaKodesh of Pshischa's zt'l daughter. Before finalizing the *shidduch* both sets of parents got together and set conditions for the marriage. They agreed on all points except for one. Rebbe Dovid of Lelov wanted his son to marry

the *kallah* using a silver ring. The Yid HaKadosh insisted that the ring must be gold. They never resolved this point, but since they agreed on all the other conditions the *shidduch* was finalized.

At the chuppah, the Yid Hakadosh saw the *chasan* holding a silver ring. The Yid

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Yaakov didn't rearrange the children. He let them be as Yosef set them, he only switched his hands. This teaches us that when there are different opinions, don't try hard to convince your fellow man to see things how you do. Let your fellow man think the way he wants to, and you change your hands, and you do as you understand.

11. The Chida tells the following story that happened with his Rebbe, the Or HaChaim HaKadosh:

A wealthy *rosh hakahol* once disrespectfully disgraced and embarrassed one of the rabbanim of his city. The Or HaChaim spoke with that rav and advised him that for the sake of peace he should forgive the *rosh hakahol*.

The rav replied, "You don't have to tell me this, because I forgave him from the very beginning. The *Zohar* says that the *aveiros* of the Jewish nation weigh heavily on the *Shechinah* and cause the *Shechinah* distress. Therefore, to save the *Shechinah* from this pain, I immediately forgive all those who sin against me."

The Or HaChaim praised the rav immensely for this.

The Chida writes that therefore Chazal (*Rosh Hashanah* 17) say, המעביר על מדותיו מעבירין ממנו, כל פשעיו, when one forgives others, all of his sins are atoned for. The explanation is, if you forgive others because you don't want the *Shechinah* to have *tzaar*, מדה כנגד מדה, your sins will be forgiven as well.

Hakadosh proclaimed, "Without a gold ring, there won't be a *chasunah*." A commotion ensued.

One simple person who was at the chuppah asked his wife if she is willing to part from her gold ring. She agreed. They sold it to the *chasan*, and the *chasunah* went on.

The couple who gave away their gold ring was childless for many years. That year, they had a son, in the merit of this great mitzvah they performed.

Chassidim say that Rebbe Dovid of Lelov and the Yid HaKodesh of Peshischa's debated over the ring to grant this couple the opportunity to do a great mitzvah, and to merit a salvation.

The name of the *chasan* was Rebbe Moshe of Lelov zt'l (who was *niftar* on the 13th of Teves, 5611).

For most of his life, Rebbe Moshe lived in Lelov, but he perceived that if he will daven at the Kosel HaMaravi, he could bring Moshiach. So at the end of his life, he set out on this journey.

Before he began his journey he went to several tzaddikim, to *gezeigen* (take leave and say goodbye). When he came to Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zy'a*, the Ruzhiner Rebbe said, "Wait for me, and I will go with you."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover pointed to his white beard. He was getting older and couldn't wait any longer.

The Rebbe of Ruzhin said that if the Yidden in Poland were wise, they

wouldn't let Rebbe Moshe of Lelov leave Poland. He said that this is hinted in the Mishnah (*Shabbos* ch.1), *אין פולין לאור דגזר*, "the Polish Yidden aren't wise. They had one brilliant light, and they allowed him to leave."

Rebbe Moshe's plan was to travel to Eretz Yisrael with a minyan of his chassidim. He was going to pay for everyone's ticket and he was saving up money for this great voyage. The problem was, whenever he had enough money, he would give it away to some important *tzedakah*. And then he started saving up money for the trip once again.

Once, a wealthy, childless woman came to Rebbe Moshe of Lelov, and asked for a *brachah* for children. Rebbe Moshe told her that if she gives him a large sum of money, which he needed for the trip, she will have a child. She said she was prepared to give it. Rebbe Moshe Lelover told her that she must first ask permission from her husband.

Her husband was a chassid of "The Gitte Yid" of Neistadt, so he asked the Gitte Yid whether he should give the money. The Gitte Yid encouraged him to do so, because "You could rely on Rebbe Moshe Lelover's promise." Nevertheless, he advised them to ask Rebbe Moshe Lelover to guarantee that the child will live long. (Because a child born by a miracle doesn't always live long.)

The parents said to Rebbe Moshe Lelover. "We are ready to give the money, but on condition that the child will live long."

Rebbe Moshe of Lelov replied, "The years of your child's life will be as many as the days I live in Eretz Yisrael."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover lived in Eretz Yisrael 74 days, and the child lived 74 years.

When Rebbe Moshe Lelover was on the boat, he kept saying, *יום לשנה יום לשנה*, "a day for a year." Chasidim said he was saying he would live in Eretz Yisrael for 74 days, as he was then 74 years old.

His voyage to Eretz Yisrael wasn't uneventful. The ship sprung a leak and water started seeping in. People aboard panicked. Rebbe Moshe placed a cloth over the hole, and this miraculously stopped the influx of water. (This cloth is still extant, and is used as a *deck tichel* [veil] for *kallahs* of Rebbe Moshe's descendants.)

Another adventure on that voyage was that the ship docked at a deserted island.

Everyone got off the boat, including the Rebbe with his *gabai*. After some time passed, the sailors blew their horns to call everyone back aboard. Everyone came, but the Rebbe's *gabai* was left behind. The ship departed without the Rebbe's *gabai*!

That Friday night, before saying Kiddush, Rebbe Moshe announced, "I won't make Kiddush before the *gabai* arrives." Immediately they heard a loud boom, and the *gabai* arrived.

The *gabai* told them, "I was captured by the *other side* (*sheidim*/demons). I heard them say, 'The old tzaddik is saying that he won't make Kiddush until his *gabai* arrives, but he can't do anything. The *gabai* is with us.' Then, the leader of the *sheidim* came, and he said, 'This isn't a joke. If the old tzaddik said that that he won't make Kiddush until the *gabai* comes, we must obey his request,' and they sent me back. <sup>12</sup>

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12. This remarkable story has a sequel.

Rebbe Moshe Lelover's grandson, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zy'a, lived in Germany prior to World War II. It was dangerous for a Yid to be seen outdoors in those tense times, nevertheless, Friday afternoon Rebbe Moshe Mordechai left his house to go to the *mikvah*. He knew that this was dangerous, but his great-great-grandfather, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l, taught that a Yid should have *mesirus nefesh* to go to *mikvah*.

He passed a group of Germans and they began to beat him. Fortunately, just then, the chassid, Reb Avraham Frankel z'l, passed by. Reb Avraham Frankel was very strong, and he singlehandedly saved Rebbe Moshe Mordechai. Then the police arrived and they arrested Reb Avraham Frankel for beating up the Germans!

Later that night, before Kiddush, Reb Moshe Mordechai repeated the story that took place with his grandfather, Rebbe Moshe of Lelov. He said, "Rebbe Moshe Lelover said that he won't make Kiddush until his *gabai* returns, and immediately his *gabai* returned."

After saying those words, Reb Avraham Frankel walked in. (Telling the story that happened to his grandfather, brought the miracle down again, to save Reb Avraham Frankel.)

Reb Avraham Frankel said that in the police headquarters, he told the interrogator that he



The ship docked in the north of Eretz Yisrael. Rebbe Moshe Lelover visited the tzaddikim living in Tzfas and Teveria, and he went to Miron, and to other *kivrei tzadikim*. He explained that after he gets to Yerushalayim, he will never leave Yerushalayim.

When he arrived to Yerushalayim, he was ill. His children debated whether they should bring him to the Kosel HaMaaravi in this state. They decided they should, since his primary purpose for coming to Eretz Yisrael was to go to the Kosel, in order to bring Moshiach.

On the way to the Kosel, Arabs threw rocks at them, and it was impossible to get to the Kosel. Shortly afterwards he

was *niftar*. He never did get to the Kosel....

He said that his *yahrtzeit* is *mesugal* for rain, and that it is unnecessary to proclaim a fast day for rain before his *yahrtzeit* passes. Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim, kept this counsel. He wouldn't decree a fast day for rain until the 13th of Teves passed.

He also said that those whoever will do something in honor of his *yahrtzeit* (like hosting a meal in his honor – cake and *lechayim* in a beis medresh is also sufficient – or whoever lights a candle, or whoever does something else for his *yahrtzeit*) he will have a salvation for whatever he needs.<sup>13</sup>

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didn't commit any crime. He only protected a Yid who was being harassed and beaten by a gang. The interrogator believed him, and let him free.

13. Sometimes one earns *parnassah* and then he loses it. What counsel can we offer so one will earn *parnassah* and not lose it?

Rebbe Moshe Lelover said that the answer can be found in the Gemara (*Taanis* 25.) that says, דגמירי דמיהב יהבי מישקל לא שקלי, "[Heaven] gives, it doesn't take away."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover explained these words as follows, גמירי, when one studies גמרא then, דמיהב יהבי מישקל לא שקלי, Heaven gives him *parnassah*, and it won't be taken away.