

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Ki Sisa - Parah





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For subscription & comments
Email: **Mail@torahwellsprings.com**
TEL: **718-484-8136**

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Torah Wellsprings - Ki Sisa - Parah

Avoiding Avodah Zarah

This week the sin of the *egel*, the golden calf, is discussed.

Chazal (*Yoma* 69:) state that in the days of Ezra and Nechemya, the *chachamim* prayed, "Woe Woe! This is the *yetzer hara* that destroyed the Beis haMikdash, and burned the *heichal*, killed all the *tzaddikim*, sent the *Yidden* into *galus*, and the *yetzer hara* is still dancing around us. You gave us the *yetzer hara* so we can earn reward [when we don't listen to him]. We don't want him, and we don't want the reward."

A notelet fell from heaven. It had Hashem's seal and signature on it, אמת. This meant Hashem agreed that the *yetzer hara* isn't good for us.

They fasted for three days and three nights, and the *yetzer hara* came out of the *Kodesh Kadoshim* appearing like a fiery lion. The *Navi* said to *Bnei Yisrael*, "This is the *yetzer hara* for *avodah zarah*..."

They captured the *yetzer hara*, and from then on, we don't have a *yetzer hara* for *avodah zarah*. The *yetzer hara* entices us with other temptations, but no longer for the sin of *avodah zarah*.

The *Mishnah* (*Sanhedrin* 90.) states, "There are three kings who lost their portion in *Olam HaBa*: *Yeravam*, *Achav*, and *Menasheh*." Rav Ashi's *yeshiva* was studying the *Gemara Sanhedrin*. When they were about to study this *Mishnah*, Rav Ashi told his students, "Tomorrow we will speak about our friends (referring to *Yeravam*, *Achav*, and *Menasheh*), and what happened to them" (see *Sanhedrin* 102:).

Menasheh came to Rav Ashi in a dream and said, "You say that I'm your friend, so let's see how wise you are in *Torah*. When a person has a loaf of bread, on what part of the bread does he say *Hamotzi*?"

Rav Ashi admitted that he doesn't know.

Menasheh said, "If you don't even know this, why do you call me your friend? [I'm far greater in *Torah* than you.]"

Rav Ashi replied, "Please tell me, on what part of the loaf does one make the *brachah*, and I will teach it to the students tomorrow in your name."

Menashah replied that the *brachah* is said on the part of the bread that is baked best.

Rav Ashi asked, "If you are so wise in *Torah*, why did you worship *avodah zarah*?"

Menasheh replied, "If you were there, you would pick up the edges of your coat and run after me [to worship *avodah zarah* together with me]."

The next day, Rav Ashi started his class, "Let us begin discussing our teachers."

This *Gemara* proves to us that we can't understand the *yetzer hara* of the past generations. They had an intense craving for *avodah zarah*, which *baruch Hashem*, we don't have anymore, and we can't understand anymore.

Nevertheless, although we don't have the *yetzer hara* for *avodah zarah*, some *aveiros* are "like *avodah zarah*," and we must be cautious to stay away from them. When we read about the *egel*, it's the right time to think about those *aveiros* and to try and cleanse ourselves from them.

For example, Anger. The *Zohar* cautions, *כל הכועס כאילו עבוד עבודה זרה*, "Whoever becomes angry, it is like he worshiped *avodah zarah*." Logically, we can understand this, because when one believes everything is from Heaven, there is no reason to become angry.

The *Zohar* also compares *atzvut*, being sad, to *avodah zarah*. The *Maor VeShemesh* (*Behaloscha*) writes, "A great foundation in

avodas Hashem is to distance oneself from *עצבות ומרה שחורה*, (from being sad,) as far as possible because *atzvus* is like *avodah zarah* (שמץ עבודה זרה). The reason is that when one is gloomy, he has thoughts of *avodah zarah* in mind. Therefore, one must be very distant from *atzvus*. It leads to all kinds of *aveiros*."

The Tanya (*Igeres HaKodesh* ch.11) writes, "A person should be happy and rejoice every moment. His *emunah* in Hashem, Who gives him life and kindnesses at every moment, should invigorate him. When one is in a bad mood, this shows that his life isn't perfect, that he lacks some goodness. Thinking so is *kefirah*, heresy, *chas veshalom*. Therefore, the *chachamim* of kabbalah warn against *atzvus* immensely..."

The Importance of *Simchah*

There are other sins that are considered subcategories of *avodah zarah*. Before we discuss some of them, let's focus on the last theme: the importance of being happy.

Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin *zy'a* wrote in a letter, "*Atzvus* isn't a sin, but the greatest sin doesn't create *timtum haleiv* (a closed, uninspired heart) as *atzvus* generates."

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* once noticed that his son was unhappy, and he rebuked him for that. The son asked, "Why do you rebuke me specifically for this? Why don't you rebuke me for all my other faults?"

The Beis Aharon replied, "You know your faults on your own, and I'm certain you will improve. But you aren't aware of the grave severity of being unhappy. That's the reason I rebuke you specifically in regards to *simchah*."

The Beis Aharon was called the "*freilecher tzaddik* – the happy *tzaddik*" because he was noticeably a very happy person. *Tzaddikim* said that this wasn't his nature. Naturally, he had a tendency towards *atzvus*. But he taught himself always to be happy.

Segulos of Simchah

When a person is happy, many good things will happen to him. Here are a few benefits:

Protection

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* taught, "If a person will be happy simply because he's a Yid, I guarantee that nothing bad will happen to him - neither *beruchniyus* nor *begashmiyus*."

Health

It is written (*Mishlei* 18:14), רוח איש יכלכל מחלהו, "רוח נכאה מי ישאנה, " The Vilna Gaon explains, רוח איש יכלכל מחלהו, this heals him. רוח נכאה, but when one feels low, מי ישאנה, who can carry it? The illness overwhelms him.

As the Vilna Gaon writes, בשמחתו יבטלנו, "His happiness will cure the illness."

Pure Thoughts

Being happy is a *segulah* for pure thoughts. The Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l* said that the Yiddish phrase, אויף געראמט means someone who is happy and in good spirits, and אויף געראמט also means cleaned up. The Beis Yisrael explained: When one is אויף געראמט, cheerful and in good spirits, he will be אויף געראמט, full of clean and pure thoughts.

Spiritual Insurance

Chazal tell us that the women didn't sin with the *egel*.

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zy'a* explains that at *kriyas Yam Suf*, the women danced. As it states (*Shemos* 15:20), ותקח מרים אהות אהרן התוף, "Miriam, Aharon's sister, took the drum in her hand, and all the women went out after her with drums and dances."

The women danced. The men sang *Oz Yashir*, but they didn't dance. The women were happier, and that is what protected them from worshiping the *egel*.

Later, dances were happening around the *egel*. As it states (32:19), וירא את העגל ומחולות,

"Moshe saw the *egol* and the dances." But the women who had danced earlier were safeguarded, and they didn't dance with the *egol*.

The Levi'im didn't sin with the *egol* because Levi'im serve Hashem with music (in the Beis HaMikdash). Where there is music and joy, one doesn't fall into the trap of *avodah zarah* and sin, *chalilah*.

We are still in the month of happiness. משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה. The holy *sefarim* teach us that the happiness of this time brings happiness to the entire year.

The son of the Rav of Smaloyi *zt'l* writes (in the introduction to *אבן שלמה*) that before his wedding, his father told him, "My son, you know I had a very difficult life. I never had a peaceful day. Nevertheless, did you ever see me depressed or sad? Never! I was always happy. Remember this."

A God made of Gold

וישב משה אל ה' ויאמר אנא חטא העם, (32:31), "Moshe returned to Hashem and said, 'This nation sinned severely, and they made a god made of gold.'" This *pasuk* hints to the *avodah zarah* of money. When one trusts in his money, and doesn't put his trust in Hashem, he can be considered worshipping the *אלהי זהב*, the god of gold.

ואל ואל, (Rosh *Orchos Chaim* 2:9) writes, "Don't trust in gold, because it is the beginning of *avodah zarah*."

The wealthy Baron Rothschild accidentally locked himself inside his vault. No one knew he was there, and he died from hunger. With his blood, Baron Rothschild wrote on the walls of the vault, "The richest man in the world died from hunger." This story is a reminder that without Hashem, we are helpless.

A wealthy person visited Teveria during a famine in Eretz Yisrael (circa World War I).

Everyone was awed by the wealthy man's presence. They told Reb Moshe Klirs *z'tl* (the Rav of Teveria) that this wealthy man came to Teveria with five thousand silver napoleons!

Rav Moshe Klirs replied, "If you would show me a donkey loaded with five thousand napoleons, should I honor the donkey too?"

We should honor the wealthy. As the Gemara (*Eiruvin* 86) states, רבי מכבד עשירים, ר' עקיבא, מכבד עשירים, "Rebbe would honor the wealthy. Reb Akiva would honor the wealthy." But this is because of the *tzedakah* and *chesed* they do with their money. In that merit, the world exists. As it states (*Tehillim* 61:8), ישב עולם לפני אלקים, "The world exists before Hashem, חסד ואמת מן, because of the people who do *chesed* with their money." This was the reason why Rebbe and Reb Akiva would honor the wealthy. Not because of the money they own, stored away in their banks.

It's *Bashert!*

Another aspect of committing the sin of *avodah zarah*, *chas veshalom*, is when one doesn't believe that everything that happens is with Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*.

One of the Baal Shem Tov's students was disturbed by a mosquito in the middle of the night. He reminded himself that this was *bashert* from Heaven, so as not to upset himself. He sat up to wash his hands, but the *negel vasser* spilled. Once again, he said, "This was planned from Above." He washed his hands with the leftover water that was still in the cup, and he got out of bed to see whether the spilled water caused any damage. He discovered that the mosquito that kept him awake, and the spilled *negel vasser* were both miracles, saving him from immense financial loss, and possibly saving his life. A hot coal was burning on the floor near his clothes. If it weren't for the spilled water, the clothing and the entire house could have caught fire. He praised Hashem for the miracle.

He wanted to return to his bed, but before he got there, a heavy rafter fell from the roof

onto his bed. Had he been in bed, it would have fallen on him. He praised Hashem for that miracle, too.

In the morning, he told the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* about the miracles that happened to him. The Baal Shem Tov said he merited these miracles because he remembered that everything is from Hashem.

Take it in Permitted Ways

Reb Avraham Yitzchak Rothstein *z'l* bought a large plot of land together with a business partner and hired a construction company to build an industrial park on it. They planned to rent out several sections of the complex to other industries and to utilize one part of the complex for their own business, which was manufacturing curtains. They would earn money from the rent, plus an income from their curtain factory.

When they first invested in this venture, they didn't realize how much everything would cost. As construction continued, they had to take more loans to cover the expenses. Their debt was growing, and they regretted getting involved in this enterprise. But at this point, they couldn't back out.

When the construction was finally completed, they couldn't find any businesses interested in leasing their space. Months passed and the property remained empty. Their creditors were pressuring them for payment, and they feared they might have to declare bankruptcy.

Finally, a large firm contacted them. They expressed interest in renting the entire complex, but they were *mechalelei Shabbos* (not Shabbos observant). Reb Avraham Yitzchak Rothstein, who always took counsel from the Chazon Ish *zt'l*, asked the Chazon Ish whether they should make the deal. The Chazon Ish ruled they should not lease to them.

An additional three months passed, with the property remaining vacant. Reb Avraham

Yitzchak's partner suggested, "maybe we should go back to the previous offer?"

Reb Avraham Yitzchak did not feel the need to ask the Chazon Ish again, as he had already received an answer. But for his partner's sake, he went to ask again.

He explained their predicament to the Chazon Ish and asked whether, under these circumstances, he could make an exception and allow them to rent the space to the firm that showed interest, even though they weren't *shomer Shabbos*.

The Chazon Ish repeated his *psak*: They shouldn't lease it to them, and he told them the following *mashal*:

A man had to travel through a desert. He took along with him enough supplies to get him to his destination. However, he lost his way, and his water supply ran out. He feared that he might die from thirst.

At last, he heard a trickle of water from the distance. He followed the sound and reached the water, only to discover that the water was contaminated. He knew that if he drinks the water, he will become sick. But having no other choice, and he drank until his thirst was quenched. He continued on his way, knowing that he has to get to a hospital as soon as possible. As he was thinking these thoughts, he came across a freshwater fountain. He didn't drink from its water, because he had already quenched his thirst with the contaminated water. He was upset with himself: "Had I had waited a little longer, I would have this good water to drink without contaminating my body with that dirty water."

The Chazon Ish told Reb Avraham Yitzchak, "These people's money is like contaminated water because they earn their money by desecrating the Shabbos. Why should you rent your property to them? If you wait just a little longer, you will find *shomer Shabbos* renters..."

Shortly afterward, they successfully leased a large section of the building to one

company, and another section was leased to another factory – both of them *shomrei Shabbos*. Reb Avraham Yitzchak and his partner turned the third section into a curtain factory, according to their original plans. They were able to pay back their loans and earn a respectable living.

The Chazon Ish's blessing that they would soon find tenant wasn't necessarily *ruach hakadosh*. Because when it's *bashert* for someone to earn money, he will earn it. If the money doesn't come from one venue, it will come from another. There is no reason to rush and drink from the impure waters.

The *gabai* of Rebbe Yitzchok Vorker *zt'l* was extremely poor. He didn't even own a pair of boots. He was forced to walk through the high snow with ripped shoes. The Rebbe spoke to his wealthy chassidim and raised enough money for the *gabai* to buy boots. The Rebbe placed the money in a bag which he kept in his room.

A short while later, while the *gabai* was alone in the Rebbe's room, he noticed the packet of money. Not knowing that the money was designated for him, and unable to overcome his *yetzer hora*, he took the money.

When the Rebbe found out, the Rebbe told him, "Had you waited just a little bit longer, you would get the money in a permitted way. Why did you rush and take it through theft?"¹

1. The prohibitions of the Torah are written in the future tense. For example, the translation of *לא תגנוב* is "you will not steal." It isn't "don't steal." The Rema MiPano explains that the Torah is saying with a certainty, and with trust in Bnei Yisrael, *לא תגנוב*, "Yidden will not steal."

The *Amud HaAvodah* (*drush bitachon* 9-13) asks, behold people do steal?

So he offers another explanation: The Torah is saying, "You will not steal," because, in a way, it is impossible to steal. When Reuven steals a thousand dollars from Shimon, it seems that Reuven gained a thousand dollars, but the truth is, Reuven didn't gain anything. If he didn't steal the money, he would receive the thousand dollars via a permitted venue. It seems that Shimon lost, but, if Shimon hadn't lost the money through theft, he would lose the money some other way.

The *Amud HaAvodah* writes that these ideas apply to giving *tzedakah*. The donor doesn't lose money when he gives *tzedakah*, and the pauper doesn't profit from accepting the donation. Each one receives the amount destined to him on Rosh Hashanah.

Shame

After the Yidden sinned with the *egel*, Moshe went two thousand *amos* (*cubits*) outside the camp, and teach Torah from there. As Rashi (33:7) states, *אמר מנודה לרב מנודה*, *להלמיד*, "Moshe said: If *klal Yisrael* are banned from Hashem, they should also be banned from His student, Moshe."

As it states (33:7), *ומשה יקה את האהל ונפה לו מחוץ*, *למחנה הרחק מן המחנה וקרא לו אהל מועד והיה כל מבקש ה' יצא*, "Moshe took his tent and pitched it outside, far from the Jewish camp. He called it Ohel Moed. Whoever wanted to know Hashem's word [His *halachos*] would go to the Ohel Moed that was outside the camp."

The next *pasuk* states, *והיה כצאת משה אל האהל*, *יקומו כל העם ונצבו איש פתח אהלו והביטו אחרי משה עד באו*, *האהלה*, "When Moshe went out to the tent the Jewish nation would stand, each person at the entryway of his tent, and they looked at Moshe until he reached his tent."

Why were they looking at Moshe?

Rashi writes, *והביטו אחרי משה לשבח*, they were watching Moshe with admiration and respect. They were thinking about how fortunate Moshe is, because, although he is a human being, when he goes into his tent, he knows that the *Shechinah* will go there, too. They said, "Fortunate is the human being who is certain the *Shechinah* will come into his abode after him."

As the next *pasuk* states, והיה כבא משה האהלה, "When Moshe entered the tent, a cloud pillar came down [representing Hashem's presence], stood at the doorway of the tent and spoke with Moshe."

But there are differing opinions in Chazal. Some say they were watching and Moshe and thinking degradingly of him. The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Ki Sisa* ch.27) states, "Reb Yitzchak says, they were looking at Moshe in a negative way. They looked at his back and said, 'Do you see his thick neck and heavy thighs? He is eating and drinking from our money.'"

Moshe heard their rumors, and it was humiliating. But humiliation raises a person to very high levels.

And so, a couple of *pesukim* afterwards, it states (33:11), ודבר ה' אל משה פנים אל פנים כאשר ידבר, "Hashem spoke with Moshe face to face, as one speaks with his friend." This is the first time such complimentary words are said about Moshe Rabbeinu. It is a very high level. He spoke with Hashem face to face, as one speaks with a friend! How did Moshe reach that high level? The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* says that it's because he endured humiliation.

The *pasuk* concludes, ומשרתו יהושע בן נון נער לא, "His aide, Yehoshua bin Nun, was a youth who never left the tent." The Chasam Sofer explains, "Generally, when a rav reaches a higher level, his students go up together with him. But this time, the reason the rav [Moshe Rabbeinu] reached a higher level wasn't due to a greater degree of diligence in Torah. He reached a higher level because of the shame he endured. Yehoshua wasn't part of this, and that is why, לא ימוש מתוך האהל, he remained at his

previous level, and he didn't grow together with Moshe Rabbeinu.

When one is embarrassed, his ruddy, reddish complexion turns white. The Imrei Emes *zt'l* says that this signifies that his sins are atoned. As it states (*Yeshayah* 1:18), אם יהיו, "If your sins will be red, they will be whitened like snow."

The change in a person's complexion, from red to white, which occurs when one is embarrassed, signifies that he has attained forgiveness, and his sins have left him due to the humiliation.²

The Gemara (*Brachos* 12:) states, כל העושה דבר, "Whoever sins, and he is embarrassed about it, attains forgiveness for all of his sins."

Sometimes, one's evil deeds become publicized, and he suffers humiliation and embarrassment. That is planned from Above because this humiliation atones the sin he committed.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 118:) states, "Reb Yosi said, 'Let my portion [in Gan Eden] be with those who were suspected of sinning, but they didn't sin.'"

The Maharal (*Chiddushei Agados*) explains, "When you suspect someone of doing an *aveirah*, and the suspicion is justified, the shame he receives atones for that *aveirah*. All the more so, how great is the reward for suffering unwarranted shame (if he didn't sin)? The source for this idea is from a *sotah*. The Torah says (*Bamidbar* 5:19, 28), ונקתה, "If she didn't sin...she is clean and she will bear children." And the Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabba* 9:25) states, "If she was barren until now, she will now bear children... If she used to give birth with pain, she will now give birth easily. If she had only girls,

2. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 58:) states:

"Embarrassing your fellow man is akin to murder." Reb Nachman bar Yitzchak replied, "Certainly it is so. As we see when one is shamed, the red leaves his face, and he turns white." This represents murder, bloodshed.

now she will have boys. If she used to have black children, now she will have white children. If the children were short, now she will give birth to tall children. If she used to give birth once every two years, now she will give birth every year. If she used to give birth to one child at a time, now she will give birth to twins." This is her reward for enduring humiliation she didn't deserve.

The Maharal continues, "When someone was suspected incorrectly...Hashem will grant him honor in Olam HaBa. He was unjustly humiliated, and therefore Hashem will give him honor in place stead of the shame..."³

The Gemara (*Megillah* 11:) states, "Achashverosh took out the utensils of the Beis HaMikdash and used them [at his party]. Satan came, danced among them, and killed Vashti."

Why did only Vashti die? When Belshazzar used the utensils of the Beis HaMikdash, he died. So why didn't Achashverosh die for this blasphemy? Why did only Vashti die?

Perhaps Achashverosh was saved due to the public embarrassment he endured.

Vashti sent Achashverosh the following, humiliating message: (*Megillah* 12:) "Listen here, the stable boy. (Achashveirosh used to take care of Belshazzar's horses): My father [Nebuchadnezzar] would drink with a thousand people, [a cup with every person] and he didn't become drunk. But you drink a drop of wine and are drunk and you act crazy..." This stinging shame enabled Achashverosh to live, despite his sin of using the utensils of the Beis HaMikdash.

The megillah states that at this party, (*Esther* 1:7) כליים מכלים שונים were used. These were the vessels of the Beis HaMikdash (see *Megillah* 12.). כליים מכלים is similar to the word כלימה, embarrassment. The embarrassment saved Achashverosh from death.

Achashverosh wasn't happy with his humiliation. He wasn't aware that one should accept painful experiences with joy because of all the good that comes from it. Even so, it helped him so much. Certainly, one will profit immensely when he accepts his shame with love and awareness that this will bring him atonement, honor, and only goodness.⁴

3. Regarding the severity of humiliating your fellow man, we quote the following Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 58:):

Abaya asked Rav Dimi, "What are they most cautious with in Eretz Yisrael?"

Rav Dimi replied, "They are cautious not to shame their fellow man. Because Reb Chaninah taught... 'Whoever goes to Gehinom will eventually leave it, except for three. They go to Gehinom, and they never leave. They are those who sinned with adultery, someone who embarrassed his fellow man, and someone who calls his fellow man by a negative nickname [even if everyone calls him that way]."

"Someone who embarrasses his friend in public doesn't have a portion in Olam HaBa."

Reb Shimon bar Yochai said, "It is better for a person to go into a furnace than to embarrass his fellow man in public."

4. The daughter of Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil ז'ל was ill, and Rebbe Shlomke put on his coat to go outdoors. His Rebbetzin asked him, "Why are you leaving home at a time like this?"

He replied, "I am looking for embarrassment. If I am shamed, our daughter will live."

Rebbe Shlomke used to collect the cheder's tuition fees from the parents of the cheder. There was one family that hadn't paid for a few months. He reckoned that if he asks them for the tuition money, they are likely to insult him and humiliate him, which is precisely what he wanted at that time.

Vitur

Reb Shlomo Klugar *zt'l* offers another explanation of why Achashverosh wasn't punished and killed at his party when he used the utensils of the Beis HaMikdash. It was because Achashverosh was *mevater* (*ceded*).

At this *seudah*, Achashverosh ordered לעשות כרצון איש ואיש, to give every individual as he wants. Achashverosh didn't insist that things be exactly the way he wanted it. This attitude saved him.

As Chazal (*Yalkut Midrashim* ערך רבינו הקדוש, and see *Rosh Hashanah* 17) say: Rav Huna the son of Reb Yehoshua ben Levi fell ill, and his soul went up to heaven for a few days. When he returned to this world, to life, he told his students, "Fortunate is the person who is *mevater*. When I was in heaven, camps of *malachim* spoke in my favor, but their pleas weren't accepted. Then a *malach* said, 'Do you know who he is? He is *mevater*!' I was immediately rescued from death, and I was brought back to life." We see that *vitur* brought him back to life. And since Achashverosh was acting with *vitur*, he was also granted life.

Vashti wasn't *mevater*. It states, עשתה משתה נשים בית המלכות, that Vashti made her party for women in the king's palace. She acted with supremacy, with strength, she wasn't *mevater*, everyone had to listen to her.

Furthermore, she never forgave Achashverosh for calling her to his party. She wasn't *mevater*. She didn't have this merit, so she was punished for using the utensils of the Beis HaMikdash.

The following story happened with two fine *yungerleit* who are business partners,

mechutanim, and also partners in a mitzvah. They noticed that one of their clients, a Holocaust survivor, was lonely. They realized that he is lonely because after doing business with him, he would always remain in their store and speak with them for a long time. They began to invite him for Shabbos and *yom tov*. He would alternate his visits between these two partners.

With time, he felt so much at home that he began giving his opinion about things in the home and mixing into matters that weren't his own. When one of them bought curtains, he didn't hesitate to say that the curtains weren't pretty and didn't add anything to the home.

One Friday, the *baalabuste* brought home flowers and placed them on the table for Shabbos. The guest took them off the table, claiming, "They make the house appear ugly." She almost shouted at him when she said, "Put the flowers back where they were. We are happy when you come here, but this isn't your place to make decisions. Remember, you're only a guest here."

Hearing this, the guest got up and left the house immediately.

When the *baal habayis* came home, he asked his wife where the guest is, and she told him what happened. He sent messages to the guest and tried to appease him. But for the next few weeks, he only wanted to go to the other business partner, whose family was more tolerant.

After a few weeks, he was appeased, and he returned to their home for Shabbosim. In fact, he began coming more often to them than the other's home.

The *baalas habayis* didn't turn him down, "Who are you to tell us to pay for the cheder? It is none of your business." And she embarrassed him with harsh words. Rebbe Shlomke's daughter recovered.

Sometime later, that daughter became ill again. Once again, Rebbe Shlomke walked around the streets of Yerushalaim seeking humiliation but came back disappointed. No one embarrassed him. Shortly after, his daughter was *niftarah*.

When this Holocaust survivor became old and was homebound, he went to live with that family (who had once embarrassed him) until he was *niftar* in their home.

This person wrote three wills. He didn't have family or friends, other than these two business partners, so in the first will, he wrote that he is dividing his assets among these two families. The second will was written when he was angry with one of them (because the wife insulted him). In that will, he gave all his money to the other business partner and only a thousand dollars to the family that offended him. The third he wrote when he made up with the family, and once again, he requested that his money be equally divided between them.

In court, the lawyer for partner #1 presented only the second will. Partner #2 (who provided lodging and cared for the deceased person until his last day) didn't want to make a scene in court and quietly accepted the \$1,000, a tiny fraction of the large estate. Still, he always wondered whether he should summon his partner to a *din Torah* and receive his fair share of the inheritance.

When he visited Eretz Yisrael for a *chasunah*, he posed this question to Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l*. Reb Wosner replied, "You're allowed to."

The man began leaving the room, but then realized that he didn't get a full answer to his question. He wasn't only asking whether he *can* make a *din Torah*; he also wanted to know whether he should. As these thoughts went through his head, Reb Wosner called him back and said, "I said that you can make a *din Torah*, but I didn't say you should. Sometimes it is better to be *mevater*, rather than to fight."

He came home, happy with the counsel he received. He didn't want to fight with his *mechuten* and business partner. He would be *mevater* and let it pass. He even burned the third will.

Hashem repaid him for his *vitur*, and he became very wealthy. He earned much more money than the entire inheritance.

When he was in Canada, he heard that Reb Wosner was there for a visit, so he went to speak with him. From a distance, Reb Wosner recognized him and called him. He asked, "Did you see that when one is *mevater*, one is repaid from heaven?"

In Kiryat Sefer there was once a dispute among neighbors.

A family with eleven children, living in a three-room apartment, wanted to add two rooms so that the house would be more comfortable to live in. To do that, they needed permission from all the neighbors in their apartment building. All neighbors gave their consent except for one, which prevented them from going ahead with the extension. This caused a *machlokes* between the large family and the family that refused to let them build.

People asked Reb Eliezer Turk *shlita* to make peace between them. He called the neighbor, and the wife answered the phone. She immediately explained to Reb Turk that he was wasting his time, because they won't permit the construction, and there was nothing to discuss.

Reb Turk told her, "According to halachah, you aren't obligated to be *mevater*. However, it is known and proven that when one is *mevater*, *yeshuos* come about. So, I ask you, are you in need of some kind of *yeshuah*?"

She told him that they have an older *bachur* at home, and they can't find a *shidduch* for him. She added that they weren't even getting calls and offers from *shadchanim*.

Reb Eliezer said, "I am certain that if you are *mevater*, you will see miracles."

After discussing it with her husband, they decided to be *mevater*.

They went over to their neighbor's home, asked forgiveness for refusing to sign their consent until then, and they signed on the

document, permitting the neighbor to build as he desired. They were still in the neighbor's home when they received a call from a *shadchan*. It was the first *shidduch* call they received in a half year. He had an offer for their son. It didn't take long, and their son was engaged.

The family often repeats this story, emphasizing that the first stage of their *yeshuah* came at the moment they were *mevater*.

Shabbos Parah

The *Mishnah Berurah* (685:1) writes, "In the desert, the *parah adumah* was burned close to the month of Nisan....so they could be pure and bring the *korban Pesach* in its right time. We read *parashas Parah* to pray to Hashem that very soon, we too should be purified [and bring the *korban Pesach*]."

Some *poskim* say reading *parashas Parah* is a Torah obligation. The *Avodas Yisrael* says that it is alluded to in the words, זאת חקת התורה, אשר צוה ה' לאמר, this is the rule of the Torah that Hashem commanded to say. (*Bamidbar* 19:1-2). There is an obligation to say this *parashah*.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (658:7) derives the Torah obligation from the words, חקת עולם, an eternal law" (19:21). How is *parah adumah* eternal? How can we observe its laws even today, in our generation? The answer is, by reading *parashas Parah*.

The *Yerushalmi* says, "Parashas Parah is טהרתן של ישראל the purity of the Jewish nation."

The *Beis Aharon* writes, "One must believe that just as the ashes of the *parah*

adumah purify...today, everyone becomes purified when *Parshas Parah* is read – each person according to his level."

The *Sfas Emes* (*Parshas Parah* end 5641) clarifies, "The purity we are referring to is purity from sins."

Similarly, *Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen zt'l* teaches that when we read this *parashah*, we become pure from sin. He proves this from the *haftarah*. The *haftarah* is always based on the weekly Torah reading. This Shabbos the *haftarah* says, וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טמאתיכם, "I will throw the purifying waters on you, and you will be cleansed from all your impurities" (*Yechezkel* 36:25) and it's referring to being pure from sin. This indicates that the Torah portion is also referring to purity from sin.

It states (*Iyov* 14:4), מי יתן טהור ממומא לא אחד, "Who can make purity emerge from *tumah*, if not the one Hashem!" The *Midrash* says this is referring to the *parah adumah*. Because all people who take part in producing the *parah adumah* become *tamei*, yet the *parah adumah* is the source for *teharah*. Only Hashem can make purity emerge from something that creates *tumah*.

We can also explain that מי יתן טהור ממומא is teaching us the process of how someone who is *tamei* with sins can become *tahor*. The procedure is, לא אחד, to say "no" once. Generally, people don't change in a moment. They have ups and downs, and continuously have to remind themselves, "No, I must stop this. I don't want to do this." But there are times when one makes one firm decision that he doesn't want to do this sin again, לא אחד, and that is sufficient.⁵

5. The Torah says, כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך... כי יפל הנפל [so no one will fall off] (*Devarim* 22:8). The *Chasam Sofer zt'l* says this *pasuk* implies the concept of *kabalos*: כי תבנה בית חדש, when you make new resolutions and *kabalos* to improve your ways, ועשית מעקה, build a gate. Limit how much you take on, because if you take on too much, יפל הנפל, you will fall from it, and not do anything.

The *chachmei mussar* say that *Zeresh* wanted to jump to very high levels immediately, and therefore she said, "Prepare gallows, fifty *amos* high" (*Esther* 5:14). This led to their downfall, and *Haman* was hung on that gallows.

Procrastination

The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) quotes *tana'im* and *amora'im* who explain the reason Esther invited Haman to her party.

1) She knew that *resha'im* have their downfall at a party.

2) When she was young and lived in her parent's home, she heard cheder children chanting the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 25:21), "If your enemy is hungry, feed him bread..."

3) She wanted Haman to be busy, so he wouldn't have time to take advantage of his success and seek to rebel against Achashverosh.

4) She invited Haman, so no one would suspect that she's a Yid.

5) She did this, so the Jewish people shouldn't say, "We have a sister in the palace." Rather, they should pray for salvation.

6) She wanted Haman near her all the time. Perhaps she could cause him to err in some matter before the king.

7) She invited Haman to arouse Hashem's compassion [that she needs to belittle herself and befriend a *rasha*], so Hashem would perform a miracle and save the Jewish nation.

8) Esther planned to rouse Achashverosh's jealousy, and then both Haman and Esther would be killed. That would save the Jewish people because Persian law says that when one of the people who made a decree dies, the decree becomes void.

9) Achashverosh was a fickle king who always changed his mind. Esther thought, "If I convince Achashverosh to kill Haman, by the time they catch Haman, Achashverosh might change his mind." Therefore, she wanted Haman close by, so he would be killed right away.

10) She wanted everyone to be jealous of Haman. Achashverosh should be jealous of the attention Esther was giving him, and the government officials should be jealous of Haman for receiving extra honors. When everyone has bad feelings towards Haman, it will be easier to bring about his death.

11) לפני שבר גאון (*Mishlei* 16:18). This means that Hashem raises *resha'im* up very high, so their downfall will be even more significant. Therefore, Esther raised Haman's honor as a preparation for his great downfall.

12) Esther knew that when *resha'im* drink they are punished.

After the Gemara lists these twelve opinions, the Gemara concludes that Raba bar Avuha asked Eliyahu HaNavi, "Why did Esther invite Haman?"

Eliyahu replied that it was for all twelve reasons the Gemara enumerates.

We understand why Esther invited Haman to her party, but why was Haman happy about it?⁶ Why didn't he suspect that Esther had ulterior motives?

We can answer that when Haman heard Esther say מחר (*Esther* 5:8) that she will hold her conversation with Achashverosh "tomorrow," Haman wasn't afraid of her anymore. He thought Esther was on his side,

6. We know that Haman was happy, as it states (*Esther* 5:9), "יצא המן ביום ההוא שמח", "That day Haman went out happy"?

And it states (5:10-11), וישלח ויבא את אהביו ואת זרש אשתו ויספר להם המן את כבוד עשרו ורב בניו ואת כל אשר גדלו המלך... ויאמר המן אף לא הביא, "Haman called for his friends and for his wife, Zeresh, and he told them about his wealth, his many children, and that the king made him great... And Haman said, 'Esther didn't invite anyone to the party she made for the king besides from me, and also tomorrow, she invited me with the king...'" Haman was obviously very proud of the honor he was receiving.

because she spoke like an Amaleki, who procrastinates and says, מחר, "Do it tomorrow. Not today." As it states (17:9), וצא הלחם בעמלק, מחר, which can be translated to mean, "go fight a war against Amalek who always says, מחר, I'll do it tomorrow." Since Esther spoke the language of Amalek, Haman didn't suspect that she was scheming against him.

When Amalek attacked the Jewish nation, Moshe said to Yehoshua that they will fight a war tomorrow. As it states (*Shemos* 17:9), בחר לנו אנשים וצא הלחם בעמלק מחר, "Choose people, and go out and fight with Amalek tomorrow."

That was an error because a mitzvah should be performed immediately. It states (17:12), וידי משה כבדים, "Moshe's hands [outstretched in prayer] were heavy..." and Aharon and Chur supported his arms. The Targum Yonoson explains, וידי דמשה יקרין מן בגלל, דעכב קרבא למחר ולא אודרו ביומא ההוא ללפורקנא דישראל ולא הוי דיכיל למוזקפהון בצלוי, "Moshe's hands were heavy because he pushed off the war until the next day and he didn't act swiftly, on the first day, to save the Jewish people. Therefore, he wasn't able to raise his hands in prayer..."

The lesson is: When we are inspired to improve, there's no better time than the present. Don't push it off for later, for that is the way of Amalek.

Anger

There is one matter that should be pushed off for later, and that is anger.

The Sefer Chassidim writes the following story:

"A father once said to his loyal son, 'You honored me in my lifetime, I want you to honor me after my death, as well. As such, my request to you is: Don't speak when you're angry. Don't react until you sleep a night.'

The father died, and the son traveled overseas. He was away for many years. He didn't know that his wife gave birth to a child months after he left.

After many years he returned to his hometown. He went up to his wife's room [and from behind the door] he heard a man speaking to his wife.... He drew his sword, ready to kill them both, but then he remembered his father's will – that he shouldn't become angry immediately. He returned the sword to its sheath. Then he heard his wife say, 'It's many years since your father left me. If he knew he has a son, he would come back to marry you off.'

"When he heard this, he said, 'Open the door, my wife, my friend' (*Shir HaShirim* 5:2). Blessings to Hashem for preventing me from becoming angry, and blessings to my father who told me to control my anger for a night, because otherwise, I would have killed you both.' They were extremely happy and celebrated together with the entire community."⁷

7. The Ben Ish Chai tells the following *mashal*:

A king used to dress up as a civilian, and together with his advisor, walk the streets of the capital to hear what the simple folk were saying. Once, the king said he wanted to go to the hospital. The king's advisor said, "Why should we go there? What could we possibly hear there?" But the king insisted, and the advisor went along to the hospital.

They met there a patient in immense pain, who was bit by a wild dog.

"Isn't there a cure for that?"

"There is," the ill patient said. "It's to take out the liver from the dog that bit me, while the dog is alive. If I eat that liver, I will be cured."

At Achashverosh's party, Achashverosh became furious with Vashti, as it states (1:12), ויקצוף המלך מאד והמתו בערה בו, "the king became very angry, and his wrath burned in him." At Esther's party, Achashverosh was angry again, this time at Haman. As it says (7:7), והמלך קם בחמתו, "the king stood up in his wrath..." Achashverosh wasn't familiar with the counsel of pushing off anger for later. When he was angry with Vashti and Haman, he killed them right away. If he had allowed himself some time to think things over, he would have reacted differently.

Rashi (*Bereishis* 14:10, 32:4) writes, "Any word that needs a ל' at its beginning, the Torah instead places a ה' at its end." For example, מצרימה means למצרים, "to Mitzrayim." להרן means להרן, "to Choron." Instead of placing a ל' at the beginning of the word, the Torah places a ה' at its end.

Rebbe Mendel of Vorkesh zy'a (called the *shtiller Rebbe*, the silent Rebbe, because of his caution with speech) asks: Either way – מצרימה or למצרים – they both have six letters. So why does the Torah prefer to write a ה' at the end of the word (מצרימה) rather than to simply place a ל' at its beginning (למצרים)?

The Vorker Rebbe replied that this is to teach us to push off whatever can be said later. Additionally, a ה' has a softer sound

than a ל'. This hints to that by postponing your words; they will probably be spoken in a softer tone later.

If you feel you must rebuke someone, choose to do it later. If you speak immediately, you're likely to get angry. If you push it off, your words will be softer, wiser, better expressed, and there's a greater chance the listener will accept what you are saying.

The megillah (7:9) states, ויאמר הרבונה ... הנה העץ ... אשר עשה המן למרדכי אשר דבר טוב על המלך, "Charvonah said... 'Behold the gallows that Haman made for Mordechai who said good for the king...'"

The Vilna Gaon zt'l explains, "Hashem planned that Haman should express himself this way, so Achashverosh should think that Haman said 'it is good for the king' that Haman said the gallows are even more fitting for Achashverosh."

Due to this misunderstanding, Achashverosh ordered, תלהו עליו, to hang Haman on the gallows. This is the result of reacting in anger, impulsively, without taking time to think things through clearly.⁸

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zy'a (renowned for his wisdom and wit) often held an empty *tabak pushkeh* (snuffbox) in his hands. He would occasionally open and close its lid.

"So why are you so upset? You have a solution!"

The ill patient explained, "When the dog bit me, I was so angry, I killed it right away..."

They left the hospital, and the advisor felt they had wasted a day. "I knew the hospital was the wrong place to go. They don't speak politics there. What did you expect to gain by going to the hospital?"

The king responded that he learned a lot on that outing.

"What did you learn?" the advisor asked.

"Look at what happened to that person who responded immediately with his anger, and killed the dog. He only harmed himself. He ruined his cure. I learned to push off responding until the next day, and not to act hastily in anger.

8. A rebbe in cheder once came into class late, and all the children immediately scurried to their places to learn Torah. There was one child who pointed at his watch with immense excitement. The rebbe thought that the child was rebuking him for coming late. The rebbe wanted to reprimand the child for his chutzpah, but he reminded himself of the ideal of pushing off the anger for later, so he decided to leave it alone for now and speak to the child about it during the break.

One of his chassidim asked him about the box. He replied, "When I'm about to get angry, I open the lid and place my anger

inside. Two hours later, I open the lid again to reassess the issue, and to decide whether the issue warrants anger or not."⁹

The entire time the rebbe was teaching, that child kept looking at his watch, touching it, playing with it. The rebbe understood that the child was once again hinting to him that he came late, but kept his anger under control.

The bell rang, indicating the first break of the day. The child excitedly ran up to the rebbe, pointed at his watch, and said, "Rebbe! Look! My father bought me a new watch!"

The rebbe realized that the child wasn't insolent at all. He was sharing his good fortune. If the rebbe had responded impulsively with anger, the child would be devastated. Time enabled him to learn the real story.

And here's another story, that shows the benefit of pushing off anger until later:

A young couple got married, and a week after the *sheva brachos*, the father-in-law asked the son-in-law to lend him fifty shekels. The new son-in-law gave him the money, and he whispered to his wife, "We'll see whether it will ever come back." The father-in-law was insulted. "Why does he suspect I won't pay him back?"

As a result, the father-in-law started worrying about his daughter's happiness. He thought, "My daughter is married to someone who doesn't think straight." For the next few weeks, the father-in-law didn't sleep well at night.

One day, the father-in-law couldn't contain himself any longer, and he asked his daughter straight-out, "Why did your husband say, 'we'll see whether the money will come back'? Does he suspect that I'm a crook?"

Laughing, the daughter said, "My husband has a game. He writes his name on his bills to see whether they'll come back to him again."

Had the father-in-law angrily reproached his son-in-law immediately, it might have burned bridges and ruined a good relationship –all be because of a misunderstanding. By holding his anger in check, and allowing time to pass, the father-in-law found out what indeed took place.

9. There are other approaches that tzaddikim used to postpone reacting to anger. One method is to fill up your mouth with water so you can't speak. Another approach is to have a special anger suit that is worn only when you are angry. When you feel you just have to rebuke someone, put on that suit first, and by that time, you will have reconsidered.