

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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Re'eh



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# Torah Wellsprings - Re'eh

## Emunah

The *parashah* begins with the words ראה אנכי. The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l* explains that this means one should heed the first of the Ten Commandments, אנכי ה' אלקיך, which is the mitzvah of *Emunah*.<sup>1</sup>

The Nesivos Shalom writes that with his interpretation, we can answer the Ohr HaChaim's question: Moshe is telling the nation that they will receive *brachos* for keeping the Torah, and they will receive the opposite for transgressing it. The nation heard Moshe's words; they didn't see anything. So why did Moshe tell them ראה, see?

The Nesivos Shalom explains that the *pasuk* is hinting to the mitzvah of אנכי, the mitzvah of *Emunah*, and *Emunah* needs to be as clear to a person as the matters he sees with his eyes. Therefore, the Torah writes ראה אנכי.<sup>2</sup>

It states, ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה, את הברכה אשר תשמעון אל מצות ה'... והקללה אם לא תשמעון. The Nesivos Shalom explains that the *pasuk* is saying, if you will have *emunah*, you will keep the Torah, and then you will receive the *brachos* and bounty that come from keeping the Torah.

We can also explain that living with *Emunah* is the greatest blessing because when someone lives his life with *Emunah*, he lives with joy and with tranquility. He is never worried because he knows that Hashem is taking care of him. He is never upset because he realizes that everything that happens is for the good. When one doesn't have *Emunah*, that itself is a curse. All his days are dark because he doesn't have any thoughts that can console him when he is going through hard times.

The words אני מאמין can be read forwards or backward. If you place the first letter (the א) at the end of מאמין, and then you read these two words backward, you will read it אני מאמין. This hints to us that when things are happening in a straight way, and even when everything seems to be going backward (which represents hardships), אני מאמין, I believe that it is from Hashem and for the good.

The Yesod Emunah *zt'l* (a student of the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*) explains the *pasuk* as follows: ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום, Hashem gives us the ability of היום, to think about today and to not worry about tomorrow. When one focuses on *today*, he lives a tranquil and calm life. He doesn't have any worries. (Even if he understands that he must prepare for the future, he does so without worry, because he trusts in Hashem

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1. The Nesivos Shalom bases his interpretation on the Baal HaTurim who says that ראה אנכי means that one should seek to keep the *Aseres HaDibros*. As he writes, ראה עשרת הדברות שפתח באנכי ותקיים אותם כי כל המצות כלולות בהם, "Keep the *Aseres HaDibros*, which begins with אנכי, because all mitzvos are inclusive in them."

2. One of the miracles of *matan Torah* was that people saw what usually is heard. As it states (*Shemos* 20:16), "The entire nation saw the voices...and the sound of the shofar..." This is because *emunah* must reach the level of seeing, and one should be as certain with his *emunah* as he is regarding matters he sees with his eyes.

and knows that Hashem will give him everything he needs.)<sup>3</sup>

they boarded the wagon, they agreed on a price with the gentile wagon driver.

### The Vision from Above

Chassidim were once traveling with Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l*, and before

The wagon driver looked back and counted the people in the wagon, and he complained, "We agreed on a price for six passengers, but there are seven passengers in the wagon."

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3. Reb Yisrael Harten tells that when he lived in Warsaw before World War II, he saw an old Yid, a glazier, carrying a very heavy pane of glass. Reb Yisrael offered to help. The old man replied, "Listen young boy: I'm over ninety, but I'm still strong, and I don't need your help. And I'll tell you why I'm so strong. Many years ago, I once did a favor for Rebbe Punim of Peshischa *zt'l*. The Rebbe asked me which *brachah* I desire. I requested the standard: to marry off all my children easily. The Rebbe replied, 'My *brachah* to you is that you should never worry, because Hashem doesn't give to those who worry. He gives to those who ask.' That *brachah* has helped me my entire life. I married off all my children with ease, and without worries. And as you see, I also have strength to work. I attribute it to the *brachah* I received."

Someone told the Tchebiner Rav *zt'l* that he has older children, and he hasn't yet found a *shidduch* for them. He was worried about that. The Tchebiner Rav told him the following story: "One Erev Yom Kippur, before dawn, a person was walking to do *kaparos*. He held a chicken in one hand, his other hand held the *machzor*, and then his eyeglasses slid off his nose to the ground. What should he do? How could he pick up his eyeglasses? If he puts the chicken down for a moment, it will run away. He certainly can't put the *machzor* on the ground. So, he stood there perplexed, not knowing what to do."

"So, what did he do?" the man asked.

"I don't know," the Tchebiner Rav replied. "But one thing I'm certain of; he's not standing there anymore."

With this story, the Tchebiner Rav was telling him that life goes on. There are hurdles, there are challenges, but they pass. The difficulties aren't forever.

Reb Yehudah Rabinovitz *zt'l* (a student of the *gaon* of Tchebin) told the following *mashal*:

When you look at the horizon, you think that the horizon is the end of the world, and there is nothing after that. However, if you travel there, you see that the world continues onward. Now, the end of existence seems to be several miles ahead. If you go *there*, you will see that the world goes on, and there is still more to go.

He told this *mashal* to explain how it is in regards to *chasunos*. People think, "I have money for the upcoming *chasunah*, but how will I manage the next ones? I still have several children; how will I manage? Where will I get the money from?" But when one reaches the horizon, he discovers another horizon before him. Similarly, when one passes one hurdle, Hashem will help him pass the others as well.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 2) says: Forty days before a child is formed in its mother's womb, a *bas kol* announces, ... *בה פלוני לפלוני, בית פלוני לפלוני, שדה פלוני לפלוני*, to whom the child will marry, which house he will buy, and which field will be his.

Why is this announcement necessary? The Ra'n explains that it used to be the custom that the *kallah's* parents gave a field for a dowry. This large expense was a source of worry and concern for the parents. How will they afford to buy a field for each son-in-law?

The Gemara comforts them and tells them that forty days before the child was formed, a *bas kol* decreed and announced his *zivug* with the field that he will receive. The Gemara is saying that parents don't need to worry. His portion is already decreed and destined for him, and we can rely that somehow Hashem will help the *kallah's* parents.

Rebbe Naftali Ropshitzer *zt'l* got off the wagon and counted the people in the wagon. "You see, there are only six people in the wagon, as we agreed upon."

The wagon driver was appeased, and Rebbe Naftali climbed back on the wagon. Sometime later, the wagon driver looked back again, counted the passengers and said, "There are seven people on the wagon! We agreed on a price for six people!"

Once again, Rebbe Naftali got off the wagon, counted the people on the wagon, and showed the wagon driver that there were only six people on the wagon.

The wagon driver didn't ask any more questions and brought them to their destination.

Rebbe Naftali told his chassidim, "Things look different from below than from above."<sup>4</sup>

This is a lesson about life: When we look from below, with human eyes, we see suffering and the like. But if we could see from above and see things as Hashem sees them, we would understand that everything is for the good.

Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter *shlita* expressed it this way:

In this world, things seem to be without order: One sees a small house; next to it, there's a tall building. What's the order?

He looks at the trees: Some places have trees, some don't. Some are fruit trees, and some aren't. He doesn't understand the patterns.

Then he contemplates people, and he is totally confused. One person is poor, and the next is rich. Why? It doesn't seem fair. Where's the justice?

But when we look up at the heaven, everything seems orderly. The sun comes

out on time and goes according to its cycle, and so does the moon. The stars go to their places. Astrologists know beforehand what we will see in the sky, because everything is orderly and precise.

And when one is sitting on an airplane, looking down, everything seems orderly. However, when he is on earth, he sees the details of life and he doesn't understand why there are so many differences.

And certainly, when one has *Emunah*, and sees matters as Hashem sees them from Above, he discovers that everything is the way it's supposed to be. Even if he doesn't see it that way, he believes that everything is exactly as it should be.

A *tzaddik* is called "a *derhoibener Yid*," a higher *Yid*. Why? The Chofetz Chaim said that it could be compared to people walking near a high wall. They don't see what's on the other side. But then a tall person passes by, and he can see over the fence. Similarly, a *derhoibener Yid* is someone who understands more. He sees from above, he looks at things from Hashem's perspective, and he believes that everything is for the good.

The Yalkut Gershuni (*Mishlei* 31) writes that the poor are jealous of the wise. They wish they were born with brains like the wealthy because then they could also make lucrative business deals and become wealthy. The wealthy think, "I'm so fortunate that Hashem created me with a good mind. I made wise choices, and therefore I got to where I am in life."

But then the pauper and the wealthy person meet, they discover that the pauper is wiser! As it states (*Mishlei* 22:2), עשיר ורש נפגשו, when a wealthy person meets with a pauper, they discover עושה כולם ה', that Hashem does everything. It wasn't because he was wise,

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4. There was no prohibition of theft or deceit in this story, *chalilah*. To express it halachic terms, it was טעות גזל עכו"ם and not גזל עכו"ם.

or that he was foolish. Everything happens according to Hashem's plan.

Some poor people make very wise investments and choices, yet nothing becomes of them. All their efforts fail. Instead of earning money, they lose money. There are wealthy people though who make one foolish investment after the next, and yet they prosper. This is because, עושה כולם ה', everything happens according to Hashem's decree. There is an order, and there is a plan, and it is directed from Above.

### Hashem's Hand

The last *pasuk* of this week's *parashah* discusses the *korbanos* we bring on *Yom Tov*, and it states (16:17), איש כמתנת ידו כברכת ה' אלקיך אשר, נתן לך "Each person, as much as his hand can afford, according to the blessing that Hashem grants you."

The *pasuk* is juxtaposing the person's hand and Hashem's blessings. Rebbe Yitzchak Eizik Kahana *zt'l hy'd* explains that when a poor person receives money from the hand of a *baal tzedakah*, or a worker receives his paycheck from the hand of his boss, he will not thank the hand. He will thank the person who gave him the money. And when one thinks a drop deeper, he realizes that it wasn't the *baal tzedakah* or the boss who gave him the money. He received his money from Hashem. The boss or the *baal tzedakah* is like Hashem's hand; the means Hashem used to send him His blessings. Therefore, his primary gratitude should go to Hashem.

(It is important to have *hakaras hatov* to the giver, but to know at the same time that our primary thanks go to Hashem.)

The same is true when someone hurts you, *chalilah*. Remember that the person is acting as an extension of Hashem's hand.

There is no reason to be upset at the messenger.<sup>5</sup>

This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, איש כמתנת ידו, just like when a person gives with his hand, the gratitude goes to the person and not to the hand, so too, כברכת ה' אלקיך, recognize that really, it isn't the person either. It is Hashem Who is bestowing His blessing.

### Not by the Strength of Your Hand

Just as we must know that it isn't the person's hand, but rather the gift from Hashem, we must also know that our own hands don't hold power, everything is from Hashem. It is easy for a person to err in this matter, as it states (*Devarim* 8:17), ואמרת בלבבך כחי, ועצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה "You will say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my hand earned for me all this wealth.' וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל, remember Hashem because he is the one who gave you strength to earn your wealth."

The Chovas HaLevavos (*Bitachon*, ch.7) writes, "A chassid had a scribe who worked for him in his home, and the scribe's *parnassah* came from his writing. One day, the chassid asked him, 'How are things going for you?'

"The scribe replied, 'As long as my hand is healthy, everything will be well.' That night he hurt his hand in an accident, and he couldn't write for the rest of his life. This was his punishment from Hashem because he put his trust in his hand," and he forgot that everything comes from Hashem.

The *Imrei Noam* (*Terumah* 20) writes that the hands, legs, and tongue are the limbs that move about the most. Yet, everyone understands that they can't move without the heart. If the heart isn't pumping, the limbs don't function.

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5. When someone hits a dog with a stick, the dog will bite the stick, because he thinks that the stick hurt him. He doesn't realize that he was hurt by the person wielding the stick. The same are the people who become angry at those who harm them, and they don't realize that everything is destined from Above.

Similarly, we must know that everything happens by (*Tehillim* 73:26) *צור לבני וחלקי לעולם*, the Heart of the world – by Hashem's *hashgachah*. Without Hashem, he can't move his hands, and he can't earn his *parnassah*.

In *parashas Terumah* it states (*Shemos* 25:2), *מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו יקחו את תרומתי*, and *tzaddikim* explain: if you want to measure לבו someone's heart, *יקחו את תרומתי*, check his generosity. If he is generous and wants to help others, you know that he has a good heart.

Someone had a heartache, *r'l*. A *hatzalah* member answered the call, arrived immediately, and began checking the patient's pulse. The patient said, "Why are you taking my hand? My hand is fine. The problem is with my heart."

The *Hatzalah* member replied, "Yes, you're right. The problem is in the heart, but by examining the hand we can know what's going on in the heart."

The *nimshal* is, by looking at someone's hands, one can know what's doing in his heart. If one is generous with his hands, that shows that he has a generous heart.

The heart also represents one's thoughts, and one can tell by one's hands what he is thinking in his head. If someone works with his hands all hours of the day, without leaving ample time for Torah and *tefillah*, this shows that he thinks *parnassah* is from "the work of my hands." He doesn't believe that *parnassah* is from Hashem.

### Hashem's Children

Hashem says, *בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם*, "You are Hashem's children..." (*14:1*). Hakadosh Baruch Hu has an infinite number of

*malachim* who serve Him, and He is King over the entire world, but we are the people who are most on His mind, the people who Hashem help and grant His kindness upon. We are His children.

Think about a powerful king who has advisors, officers, and millions of loyal subjects. But it is his children who are mostly on his heart. Similarly, it is the Jewish nation, which is Hashem's primary focus.<sup>6</sup>

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25.) says that the word *אתם אפילו שונגין אתם אפילו מזידין* means, *אתם אפילו מוטעין*, "even when you make a mistake, and even when you err purposely, and even when others fool you." The Gemara is referring to a *beis din* that establishes *rosh chodesh*. Nevertheless, Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught, we can also explain the *pasuk*, *בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם*, "You are Hashem's children" that this means even if you err, and even if you sin on purpose, you always remain Hashem's children.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 36.) teaches:

Reb Yehudah said: When they act like children – this means that they perform the mitzvos – they are called *בנים*. When they don't act like Hashem's children – and they don't keep the mitzvos – they aren't called *בנים*.

Reb Meir disagreed: *בין כך ובין כך קרוין בנים*, regardless of whether they keep the mitzvos or they sin, they are always Hashem's children.

The Rashba (*teshuva* 194) writes that generally we follow Reb Yehudah's view when it differs from Reb Meir's. But in this instance, the Halachah is like Reb Meir. At all times, Yidden are Hashem's children.<sup>7</sup>

6. It is known that *מקצת שבתו בפניו*, when speaking directly with a person, one only tells him part of his praise. He doesn't tell him his full praise. Hashem tells us, *בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם*, that we are His children, which means that this is only a partial praise. The connection between Hashem and the Jewish nation is even greater than that!

7. When one needs a *yeshuah*, there's a custom to give *tzedakah* and to say *אלוהי דמאיר ענני*, "The G-d of Reb Meir should answer me." The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* explains this custom:

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zy'a* said, "It is a mitzvah to publicize this Rashba," so everyone will know that no matter what they did, they are still Hashem's children, and Hashem loves them.

Those who understand what this means and the great privilege they have to be Hashem's child will always be extremely happy. Words fail to express the great joy. To appreciate a drop of this great joy, consider the son of a human king: He will rejoice over his special privilege, although his father is a human king with limited power, and his kindness towards his children is also limited. But Hashem's greatness doesn't have a limit, and His love for us is perfect. Words cannot express the great joy we will have when we perceive this.<sup>8</sup>

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* tells over that when he was young, he was at a *chassidish*. He tried to come close to the Rebbe, but he was told that he couldn't stand so close. From afar, he saw a young child come very close to the Rebbe. The child even sat down at the Rebbe's table, and no one sent the

child away. Reb Shimshon asked one of the Chassidim about that, and the chassid explained, "This child is the Rebbe's grandson." Reb Shimshon Pinkus said that at that moment he understood what it means to be a relative.

*Keviyachol*, we are קרוב, a relative to Hashem, as it states (*Devarim* 4:7), כי מי גוי גדול אשר, לו אלקים קרובים אליו, etc., and therefore we can go to very high places. We are not only mere relatives, but we are also Hashem's children, and the privilege is enormous.

It states (*Yirmiyahu* 31:19), הבן יקיר לי אפרים אם ילד, שעשעים כי מדי דברי בו זכור אזכרנו עוד על בן המו מעי לו רחם ארחמנו נאם ה'. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Rishon L'Tzion*) explains the *pasuk* as follows:

People keep their distance from someone who has a bad odor. However, when your baby has a bad smell because he needs a diaper change, parents don't have any aversion holding him and playing with him. They can kiss him, and they can hug him. They almost don't even smell the bad odor because of their love for the child.

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The Gemara says (*Eiruvain* 13:) "It is revealed and known to the One who created the world that there was no one equal to Reb Meir in his generation. So why is the halachah not like Reb Meir? It's because his colleagues couldn't fully grasp his thoughts."

However, Heaven certainly understands Reb Meir's view, and therefore in heaven, the halachah is like Reb Meir. Therefore, in heaven, the halachah is בין כך ובין כך קרוין בנים, no matter what Yidden do, they are Hashem's beloved children.

When one gives *tzedakah* and says אלוך רמאיר ענני, "The G-d of Reb Meir should answer me," this prayer is saying: "In heaven, Hashem follows the view of Reb Meir, and even if I sinned, I am still Hashem's child. Therefore, I pray that since I'm Hashem's child, Hashem should have compassion on me and save me..."

On Rosh Hashanah, we say, אלוך רמאיר ענני עד שתחננו ותוציא כאור, "The G-d of Reb Meir should answer me, and even if I sinned, I am still Hashem's child. Therefore, I pray that since I'm Hashem's child, Hashem should have compassion on me and save me..." The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* (*Divrei Yoel, Rosh Hashanah*, 36) explains: If we are אלוך רמאיר ענני, we can certainly expect that Hashem will have compassion on us and grant us a good year. אם עבדים, if we are like slaves because of our sins, אלוך רמאיר ענני we ask that Hashem see us in His view (לוך, as You see us). For in Hashem's view, we are His children. And we request that He inscribe us for a good year.

8. Since we are Hashem's children, Hashem listens to our *tefillas*.

The Midrash (*Shochar Tov* 4) states, "Reb Pinchas taught in the name of Reb Yehudah: *Avodah zarah* seems to be nearby, but it is really far away. As it states (*Yeshayah* 46:7), "You carry him on your shoulders, and you put it down...". It is with him in his house. But when he shouts to it, it doesn't reply (*ibid.*) But Hakadosh Baruch Hu is different: He appears distant...but nevertheless, He dwells with the humble. A person comes to the beis kneses and he whispers his *tefillah* and Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens..."

We are Hashem's children, and Hashem says that even if we smell badly from sins, we remain **הבן יקר לי אפרים**, Hashem's beloved children. **אם ילד שעשעוים**, Hashem plays with us and enjoys us, just as a parent plays with their unclean child .. **כי מדי דברי בו זכור אוכרנו עוד** .. in any situation that My children are in, **רחם**, Hashem says that He loves us and will always have mercy on us.

### Everything is for the Good

The *pasuk* states, **בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגדרו**, "You are Hashem's children. Don't inflict yourselves and don't shave your head for the dead."<sup>9</sup>

The Ibn Ezra writes, "After you know that you are Hashem's children and that He loves you more than a father loves his son, do not injure yourself [out of agony] for things that occur, because everything is for the good. If you don't understand [how matters are good], compare it to a child who doesn't understand the ways of his parents. But he relies on them. Do the same..."

The Ibn Ezra is teaching us that no matter what occurs, remember that Hashem is our father, who only has our best interests in mind. When we internalize this truth, nothing in the world will upset us.

A *rosh yeshiva* in America of the previous generation tells that in the Holocaust, he and his brother escaped to the forest and joined a partisans' army. There were Jewish partisan groups and non-Jewish ones, and generally, they didn't mix. This time, these two Yidden joined a non-Jewish partisan group. They were the only Yidden among them.

The partisans always had a person hiding up in a tree, to see whether the Nazis were approaching. Once, he came down and told the partisans that soldiers were approaching. They immediately escaped deeper into the forest, and the two brothers went along with them. But then they remembered that they forgot to take their tefillin with them. They didn't know what they should do. If they wouldn't go back to get the tefillin right then, who knows when they would have another opportunity? On the other hand, their partisan friends were telling them that it was dangerous to go back; their enemies would surely find them.

They decided to go back for the tefillin. They didn't want to lose out on this great mitzvah and wanted to act with mesirus nefesh. They went back using alternate routes (and not through the regular paths in the forest) to avoid detection by the enemy. When they got to their old camp, they found their tefillin where they left them. With immense joy,

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9. The Seforno writes, "It is improper to show extreme grief for a relative who died, if there remained a better relative - better in worth and in benefit [who is able to help you]. Therefore, you are Hashem's children Who lives eternally. Therefore, it isn't proper to worry and to mourn extensively for the dead.

The Seforno is essentially saying that when one comprehends the great joy of being Hashem's child, nothing at all - not even the greatest tragedy - can disrupt his joy.

The Torah also says that one shouldn't shave his head to express his distress over the dead. The Seforno explains, "It isn't proper to have distress and worry about the future of the dead, because you are a holy nation and you will go to Olam HaBa. And the pleasures of Olam HaBa is better than all Olam HaZeh."

The Daas Zekeinim MiBaalei HaTosfos writes, "'You are Hashem's children,' therefore if your human parent was *niftar* don't injure yourself, because you didn't become an orphan. You have a father who lives on eternally, bless His name. However, for the gentiles, when someone dies, they have reason to injure themselves, because they don't have a father other than wood and stones, which can't help them. As it says, **אמרים לעץ אבי אתה ולאבן את ילדתנו**, "They say to wood, 'you are my father,' and to stone they say, 'you gave birth to us.'"

they put them on and davened *Minchah*. Then they went back to the rest of the partisans, and they found them dead. The Nazis had killed them all. Only the two brothers survived, because of their *mesirus nefesh* for tefillin. Hashem performs wonders for His children.

Another story is told about a person who lived in an apartment building in Manhattan. As there was no place to build a *succah*, he asked permission from the owner of the building to build his *succah* on the roof. The owner said that he would rent the roof to him for \$799. The Yid explained to him that there was no reason to charge him for the roof since no one was using it, but this wealthy man insisted that he rent it. As if that wasn't enough, he wanted a signed contract in front of a lawyer that he is renting the roof. The Yid didn't understand why he was making such a big deal about a rental for a week, but he didn't have a choice other than to agree to those terms.

Many things were littering the roof. He spent time cleaning up, so he could have a place for his *succah*, and that's when he found a bag, filled with expensive gems, concealed under an old rotting pipe. He brought the bag to the police so that they can assist in finding the rightful owner. A few days later, the police contacted him that the owner of the gems wasn't alive anymore, and according to the law, all the gems belong to him, the finder.

The owner of the apartment building heard about the treasure that was found on his roof and claimed that since it was found on his roof, it should go to him. The matter went to court, and the court ruled that since the money was found when the roof was legally rented out (and there was a document signed by the parties and a lawyer, legalizing the rental), the money should go to the finder.

Chazal (*Avodah Zarah* 3) call the mitzvah of *succah* מצוה קלה, an easy mitzvah. But this time, it wasn't a מצוה קלה. This Yid went through several hardships and obstacles until he was able to fulfill the mitzvah. For this he was

rewarded, even in this world, for his *mesirus nefesh* to keep the mitzvah. And the primary reward will still be given to him in Olam HaBa.

One morning, a *kollel yungerman* gave 400 shekel to his *rosh kollel* and said, "My father-in-law sent this money. He asked that it be given to one of the scholars of the *kollel*."

There were several *kollel yungerleit* who needed the money, and the *rosh kollel* didn't know to whom he should give it. How does he choose one over the others? For some reason - he himself didn't know why - he chose one scholar and gave him the four hundred shekel.

This was a wonderful *hashgachah pratis*, because earlier that day, this *kollel yungerman* took out four hundred shekel from the bank, as he needed that money to pay a debt. When he went home for breakfast, his wife told him that she needs four hundred shekel. He gave her the money, not knowing how he will pay his debt. And then the *rosh kollel* gave him four hundred shekel, the exact amount he needed for that day.

## Elul

In addition to being Hashem's children, we are also Hashem's friend, *keviyachol*. As it states (*Shir HaShirim* 6:3), אָנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי, "I am to my friend, and my friend is to me." This *pasuk*, whose *roshei teivos* spell Elul, describes the atmosphere of Elul. It is a month of immense love between Hashem and His nation.

The Arizal writes, כִּי אִזְ נִהְפֵךְ הַקָּב"ה לְיָדֵיךָ וְאַתָּה אֵל, האדם השב בתשובה, "On these days, Hakadosh Baruch Hu becomes a friend...to the person who does *teshuvah*."

The Hafla'ah calls these days, יְמֵי הַרְעוּת, days of friendship, as they are days of close relationship between Hashem and the Jewish nation.

Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* asked one of his students, "How are you, cousin?"

The *bachur* didn't understand what he meant, since they weren't cousins. Reb Chaim Brim explained, "In this month, Hashem is like our uncle, as it says, אָנִי לְדודִי, (and a דוד is an uncle). We have the same caring uncle. That makes us cousins."

Many Chassidim came to Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zy'a* for Shabbos Mevorchim Elul. On *motzei Shabbos*, the guests wanted to speak to him, to seek his counsel before they returned home, but the Rebbe said that he didn't have time for that. He explained, "At the end of the year, every merchant reassess his expenses and profits. He needs to see whether his business is losing money or gaining. At the end of the year, every Yid must make a similar evaluation. I haven't made this calculation yet, so I need this time for myself."

The Or HaMeir's sister was marrying off one of her children, and she wanted the Or HaMeir to be present at the *chasunah*. The Or HaMeir told her that it was hard for him to go in Elul, as traveling takes up so much time and there is so much to do. But she insisted that he come.

The Or HaMeir decided that he would set off to go to his sister's wedding. If Heaven sent him a sign that he should return home, he would go back.

He had just begun the trip, and he came across a gentile beating an elderly person. "Why are you hitting him?" the Or HaMeir asked.

"This is my father," the man said. "I made a deal with my father that for this month, he would take care of my children, so I could devote my time sowing and working the field. But my father sleeps and sleeps, and he isn't taking care of the children, so I must take care of them. This is the most important month of the year. If we don't plant this month, nothing will grow. Because of my father's laziness, we will have nothing to eat this year"

The hint was obvious. The Or HaMeir understood that Heaven was showing him

that one must take advantage of Elul, or one will lack the entire year. He immediately returned home.

Reb Elimelech of Lizensk *zy'a* didn't want to receive visitors during Elul. One wealthy person, however, felt desperate, so he decided that he would go to the Rebbe even in Elul. His problem was that his son became insane, *r'l*.

As he and his son were traveling to the Rebbe, they met a pauper collecting money. The boy said to his father, "Give this man a generous donation." The father was startled. This was the first sane sentence he heard from his son in a long time. Since he was so pleased with his son's improvement, he gave a half-gold coin to the pauper.

The pauper asked them, "Where are you headed"?

The father told him that his son became insane, so they were going to the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk for a *brachah*.

The pauper replied, "But don't you see that your son is healed? Why should you bother the tzaddik? The Rebbe doesn't want to be disturbed during Elul."

But the father decided that since he had already traveled so far, he would continue.

When he came to Lizensk, he gave the Rebbe twelve golden coins. The Rebbe said, "Am I more special than Eliyahu Hanavi? To Eliyahu you only gave a half-gold coin."

That's when the father understood that the pauper he met was Eliyahu Hanavi.

Reb Yisrael Avraham Tchernostrau (son of Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli and nephew of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk) told this story, and said, "Notice how precious Rebbe Elimelech's Elul was to Hashem. From heaven they sent Eliyahu Hanavi to heal the wealthy man's son, to prevent them from disturbing Rebbe Elimelech's service in Elul."

Throughout the month of Elul, Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zy'a* would sing tunes from

the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*. The fear of the upcoming days was vivid in his behavior. He would say (in this Rosh Hashanah tune) "The Rambam *paskens* that we must do *teshuvah* during Elul, and the *Ra'avad* doesn't disagree. What's going to be..."

Rebbe Avraham Yaakov of Sadugeira *zt'l* taught: ראה is *roshei teivos* ראש אלול היום, today is the start of Elul.

The *parashah* begins, ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום. The Trisker Magid *zt'l* explains, ראה, take note, אנכי נותן I am giving you Elul לפניכם היום, before Rosh Hashanah.<sup>10</sup> Because this month will help you prepare for Rosh Hashanah.

The Panim Yafos *zt'l* teaches: there are twelve hours of daytime. Hashem compassionately considers each hour of Elul to be like a day. Thus, in the thirty days of Elul, one can attain atonement for the entire year. Because  $12 \times 30 = 360$ .

The Vilna Gaon (*Esther* 1:4, רמז רדך) calls Rosh Chodesh Elul, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur the three ימי צער, painful days, for the *yetzer hara*, because people do *teshuvah* on these days.<sup>11</sup>

The Kedushas Levi writes, "On Rosh Chodesh Elul, Hashem reveals to the Jewish people that He is G-d...and that He leads the world."

There was a businessman who would often seek business counsel from the Sfas Emes. Once, the Rebbe told him, "Now it's Elul. The wisest investment is to invest in this month."

### Loans

This week, we discuss the mitzvah of giving loans to people in need. As it states (15:10), נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו כי בגלל הדבר הזה, "Don't feel

upset when you give him the loan, because Hashem will bless you in everything you do, and wherever you put your hand."

The Chinuch (480) writes, "The purpose of this mitzvah is to establish in our hearts the attribute of generosity, and to distance us - as far as possible from stinginess... Anyone who is familiar with the Torah and comprehends, even slightly, its beautiful ways knows with certainty that when one is generous with his money, he will gain more. And whoever refrains will lose. Because Hashem judges people according to their deeds. Being tight with money erects an iron wall that separates the person from Hashem's *brachah*. Generosity is, in itself, brings blessings, and therefore, those who act with kindness, receive [Hashem's] blessings."

The Chinuch is teaching that Hashem commanded us to give loans and to do other deeds of loving-kindness because generosity will bring us many *brachos*.

It states (15:11), כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ על כן אנכי, מצורך לאמר פתח תפתח את ירך לאחריך לענייך ולאביונך בארץ, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to open your hand to your brother, to the poor, and the paupers of your country." The Ksav Sofer translates the *pasuk* as follows:

כי לא יחדל אביון, Hashem will always help the poor. If we don't support the poor, Hashem will. So why does Hashem obligate people to give *tzedakah*? The answer is, על כן אנכי מצורך, "I am commanding *you* to open your hand to...the poor," so you can attain many *brachos*.

The Matteh Efraim *zt'l* was very wealthy and owned his own bank. Once, a poor person came into the bank and asked for a large loan. The Matteh Efraim gave him a

10. The *Zohar* calls Rosh Hashanah היום

11. In parenthesis, the Vilna Gaon adds an additional three days that are ימי צער, painful days, for the *yetzer hara*: "The fast days of the 17th of Tamuz, 9th of Av, and Asarah b'Teves."

form to fill out and told him that he has to find two co-signers, *areivim*, for the debt.

The poor person couldn't find an *areiv* (because people knew that the pauper would have a hard time paying back the debt) so the pauper wrote on the line designated for the *areivim*, *צבקות* ולי הכסף ולי הזהב נאום ה' צבקות, "I have silver and I have gold, says Hashem..." Implying that Hashem will be the *areiv* for this loan.

The Matteh Efraim had *rachmanus* on him and agreed to lend him the money.

A half year later, the Matteh Efraim wasn't feeling well, and he asked his wife to run the bank for the day.

That night, as they were discussing what happened in the bank that day, she told him that she lent a lot of money to a *poritz*. The Matteh Efraim asked, "How did you have money to lend him? I thought there was no money in the bank."

She replied, "Someone came in earlier and paid-up a debt."

He checked his records and saw that the poor man's debt was due that day. The Matteh Efraim asked his wife, "Did the pauper himself, pay the debt, or did someone come in to pay the debt for him?"

She told him that someone came and paid the debt for him.

The Matteh Efraim understood that it was Eliyahu HaNavi, paying up for Hashem's *arvus* in the loan. He was upset that he missed the opportunity to meet with Eliyahu HaNavi, and he checked his deeds to see what caused him to miss meeting Eliyahu HaNavi.

He realized that it was because he asked the pauper to bring *areivim*. It was very stressful for the pauper to run from person to person, seeking an *areiv*. Since he caused the pauper this distress, he didn't merit seeing Eliyahu.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* wrote *Ahavas Chesed* to teach the importance, and the details, of the mitzvah of giving free loans.

The Chofetz Chaim writes (chapter 5, *hagahah*) "Now, that we are living in a time when the *midas gevurah* [hardships and suffering] reigns in the world, the only solution to be saved from troubles...is deeds of loving-kindness. These deeds will rouse Hashem's attribute of *chesed*... It states in *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (23), when the Yidden lived in Mitzrayim... they got together and made a pact that they would do *gemilus chasadim* with each other... What is the significance of this pact? When they saw they had no way of escaping Pharaoh's decrees and the labor in Egypt was getting harder each day, they gathered and sought counsel: What could they do about this? ... They made a pact that they would do *chesed* with one another. That would arouse Hashem's *chesed* from Above, and automatically Pharaoh's decrees would end.

"Their plan succeeded... As it states, נחית בערך, בחסדך עם זו גאלת נהלת בערך, 'You led them [out of Mitzrayim] with Your kindness...' Chazal explain, נחית בחסדך refers to their *gemilus chasadim*... It also states (*Yirmiyahu* 1), כה אמר ה', 'So says Hashem: I remember the *chesed* of your youth, the love of your nuptials, your following Me into the desert.' Three factors are stated in this *pasuk*: חסד נעורך, means [Hashem remembers] they did *chesed* with each other in Mitzrayim. אהבת כלולתיך, refers to *mattan Torah*. לכתך אחרי במדבר, they followed Hashem into the wilderness..."

### Tzedakah

We discussed that when one gives loans and does kindness to his fellow man, Hashem will, in turn, treat him with kindness. The same occurs with *tzedakah*. When one is kind to the poor, the giver earns the better part of the transaction, because Hashem will give him a lot of *chesed* in return. As Chazal (*Vayikra Rabba* 34:8) say, יותר, "More ממה שבטעל הבית עושה עם העני עושה עם בעל הבית

than the *baal habayis* does with the poor, the poor is doing for the *baal habayis*."

Rus said to Naomi, שם האיש אשר עשיתי עמו היום, בווען, "The name of the person who I helped today was Boaz." She didn't say "the name of the person who helped me..." instead "whom I helped." Because the poor help the wealthy more than the wealthy help the poor.

Rebbe Zusha zt'l of Honipoli would say, "The wise take, the fools give." The explanation: The wise know that when they give *tzedakah* they are taking, earning. The fools think they are giving and losing. They don't realize how much they earn from their *tzedakah*.

It also states (*Shemos* 25:2), ויקחו לי תרומה, "Take a donation..." It should say, "Give a donation." It states, "Take a donation" because whoever donates takes and earns the most.<sup>12</sup>

### When You Do for Others, You Do for Yourself

It states (*Tehillim* 121:5), ה' צלך, Hashem is your shadow," and *Chazal* explain, just as a shadow mimics the movements of man, similarly, ה' צלך, Hashem is your shadow. Hashem *keviyachol* mimics a Yid's behavior. Therefore, if you do kind deeds to others, Hashem will do kind acts for you.

The holy *sefarim* advise that if one is going through a hard time, he should do kindness with others. That will arouse Hashem's kindness on him, and he can be saved from his problem.

The *Arvei Nachal* (*Mikeitz*, *drush* 1, אמנם) elaborates on these ideas. He explains that Yosef helped the *sar haMashkim* to arouse

Hashem's compassion. He purposely acted with compassion with others so that Hashem would act kindly and compassionately with him. Mordechai and Esther would do kindness with one another, and therefore Hashem did kindness with them and with the entire nation. For ה' צלך, Hashem is your shadow, and just as you act, that's how Hashem treats you.

One morning, in a *beis medresh* after *shacharis*, someone approached a wealthy person and said, "My daughter's *chasunah* is next week, and I don't have money to pay for the hall, the caterer, the musicians, etc. Can you lend me ten thousand dollars?"

The wealthy man had ten thousand dollars cash in his home. He prepared it for his own child's upcoming *chasunah*, and he kept the money in an old jacket, in his basement. But he wasn't sure he wanted to lend the money. So he hemmed and hawed and said, "I don't know. Maybe. I'll check it out. Call me later."

As the wealthy man was driving home, he placed himself in the poor man's shoes, and he felt sorry for him. Just a week before the wedding, without money. He decided to be *moser nefesh* to help him. He went down to his basement to get the money, but the jacket wasn't there! Trembling, he asked his wife whether she knew where the jacket was. She told him that she threw out the jacket yesterday because the jacket was old and not being used... She didn't know that there was money inside it.

Fortunately, the garbage wasn't taken away yet, and he was able to find his jacket and the money.

He realized that by helping his fellow man, he had helped himself. Otherwise, he

<sup>12</sup> In the desert, the Yidden complained about the manna, כלום ראתם ילוד אשה שמכנים ואינו מוציא, "Did you ever see a human being take in without giving out?"

The Satmar Rebbe zt'l (*Divrei Yoel*, *Ki Seitzu*) explains that they were saying: Is it possible to take, without ever giving? One has to give to earn Hashem's bounty.

wouldn't know that his jacket was thrown out until it would be too late to retrieve it. For this is the pattern: When you help others, you help yourself.

A week before his *chasunah*, a chasan was riding on the bus. In the seat in front of him there was another chasan talking to the person seated next to him. They were speaking loudly enough, so the *chassan* from the behind seat was able to follow their conversation, without even trying to do so. That chasan said, "I wanted to go to tzaddik *ploni* for a brachah before my wedding, but it's hard to get in. Despite all my attempts, I wasn't able to get an appointment..."

The *chasan* from the seat behind tapped him on the shoulder and said, "I apologize, but you were speaking loudly and I overheard your conversation. I heard that you want to meet with the tzaddik... My uncle is that tzaddik's son-in-law. I can ask him to set an appointment for you. You can still meet with that tzaddik this week."

The other *chasan* was very thankful, and they began speaking about their upcoming weddings. They discovered that they were getting married on the same night, in the same hall!

"I didn't know that there were two halls in the Atzulah?" said the *chasan* from the front seat.

When the *chasan* (who sat behind) came home, he told his father what happened, and he said, "I went with you to Petach Tikvah to see the Atzulah hall, and there is only one hall in the building. How can it be that there's another *chasunah* in that hall, on the same night?"

The father quickly called the Atzulah. "You never put a down payment, so we booked the hall for someone else," the manager said.

It was a week before the wedding, they had already sent invitations, and they found out that they don't have a hall...

Some *askanim* got involved. They arranged for the *chasunah* to be held in an auditorium, two streets away from the Atzulah.

The *chasan* realized that he gained immensely by doing *chesed*. He agreed to help a *chasan* get a *brachah*, and in reward, he had a hall in which to celebrate his *chasunah*. Otherwise, he would have to have his wedding in the hallway of the Atzulah, if that much...!

### Exchanging a Loss for Tzedakah

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 10) states, "Just as the amount of *parnassah* one will earn during the year is destined on Rosh Hashanah, so is the amount of money one will lose during the year destined on Rosh Hashanah. If he has merits, he will give that money [that he is destined to lose] to the poor. If he isn't *zocheh*, he will give the money to the government..."

The Gemara tells that on *motzei Yom Kippur*, Reb Yochanan ben Zakai dreamed that his nephew will lose seven hundred *dinars* that year. Reb Yochanan ben Zakai came to his nephew several times throughout the year, asking him for *tzedakah*. His nephew ended up giving 683 *dinars* to *tzedakah*.

On *erev Yom Kippur* of the following year, tax collectors came to his nephew. Reb Yochanan ben Zakai told him, "Don't worry. They won't take more than seventeen *dinars*" (683 + 17 = 700).

The nephew asked, "How do you know?"

"I had a dream..." He was told in a dream that his nephew would lose 700 *dinars* that year, and that's why he worked the entire year to have the loss exchanged for the great mitzvah of *tzedakah*.

The nephew asked, "Why didn't you tell me? I would have given the entire seven hundred thousand *dinars* to *tzedakah*."

"I wanted you to give *tzedakah lishmah*."

I heard the following story from the *baal hamaaseh*. He is a generous a *baal tzedakah* who owns chain stores in Eretz Yisrael.

The tax authority audited his business and found that one store didn't report a significant transaction. This made them suspect that more sales weren't being reported, and they fined the company an astronomical half a million shekalim.

The accountant wrote to the tax authority that a fine like that will put them out of business. Upset that their penalty wasn't readily taken, the taxes authority replied, "We will check the books from the last seven years. We will see all the cheating this store

has done in the past. There will probably be even greater fine when we get through."

A month later, the agents came to the accountant to finalize their findings, but he didn't want to speak with them. "I will only speak with the people you work for."

After negotiating the matter over several months, it was decided that the company has to pay 150,000 shekel.

On Purim, this chain store owner gave 100,000 shekels to *tzedakah*. The next day he got a letter saying that a fine of 50,000 shekel is due. Somehow, 100,000 shekalim was wiped off. He saw clearly that the money that went to *tzedakah* saved him from other expenses.