

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Shemos



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Torah Wellsprings - Shemos

Bitachon

The Sefer Ha'Ikrim (4:49) writes, "Having *Bitachon*, trust, in Hashem is greater than all praises that one can say to Hashem Yisbarach." This is because when we praise Hashem, we express talk about Hashem's compassion, strength, and abilities, but when we have *bitachon* we *live* with these truths. The tranquility that results from trusting in Hashem is a manifestation of Hashem's praises.

It states (*Tehillim* 65:2), לך רומיה תהילה, "For You, silence is praise..." How can one praise Hashem with silence? It is when one

possesses *bitachon*. He isn't uttering a word of Hashem's praises, but his lifestyle expresses Hashem's praise. A person can say Hashem's praises and not mean it, but when one lives by the fundamentals of *bitachon*, that is a unique form of praising Hashem.

As it states (*Tehillim* 71:15), ואני תמיד איחל והוספתי, על כל תהילתך, "I always trust in Hashem, and that is greater than praise."

And when one lives with *bitachon*, Hashem helps him. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* says, "When one lives with *emunah* and *bitachon*, Hakaodsh Baruch Hu will help him in ways he never imagined."¹

1. A *yungerman*, who worked as a locksmith, moved to Lakewood. In the city where he came from, he had *parnassah*, but after two months living in Lakewood, he hardly had any income at all. He followed the counsel that he received from his friends on how to break into the locksmith field in Lakewood, he advertised in the local newspapers, but he hardly got any jobs.

One day, someone called him, "Are you Mr. So-and-so?"

"Yes."

"I found your wallet. You can pick it up at my home."

"I don't know what you are talking about, because I didn't lose my wallet."

"It appears to me that you did. I have it right here. It's filled with credit cards, business cards, and more."

The locksmith drove over to his address and saw that it was his son's wallet. It had seven dollars in it, and several expired credit cards, because his son was playing businessman. The locksmith laughed when he saw the wallet and thanked the man for returning it.

"Are you a locksmith?" he asked. "I see from the business cards that you are a locksmith."

"That's right. That is my field."

"Do you have *parnassah*?"

"I used to, but ever since I came to Lakewood, I have almost no business at all."

"I'm a developer, and I'm currently working on many large projects, and I need a locksmith. By me you can have as much work as you want."

This man thought he would earn *parnassah* by advertising, and by following the other counsels that he received from his friends. Who would have imagined that his *parnassah* would come from a lost wallet, from the mitzvah of *hashavas aveidah*, and from a young child who was pretending to be a businessman? Because, as Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer taught, when one has *bitachon*, Hashem helps him in ways he didn't imagine.

The Ramchal (דרוש בענין הקיוו) writes, "When one has *bitachon*...*malachim* will take him out of Gehinom. *Bitachon* purifies like a *mikvah*, because *bitachon* elevates a person to a high level, where there are no sins..."

It states (*Tehillim* 121:1), אשא עיני אל ההרים מאין, "I raise my eyes to the mountains; from where will my salvation come? My salvation comes from Hashem, creator of heaven and earth." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that at times it looks like there is no solution. One shouts, מאין יבא עזרי, "From where will by salvation come?" There is no logical solution. But Hashem can do anything. He can save you. Hashem created heaven and earth from nothing, and therefore, if necessary, Hashem will create יש מאין, and send you salvation.

Be Certain that Hashem will Help

Many people say they have *bitachon*, but it isn't necessarily sincere. It requires intense effort to implant in one's heart the truth that "I rely on Hashem, because Hashem wants to help me, and He will help me."

To know whether your *bitachon* is sincere, measure your tranquility. If your *bitachon* and trust in Hashem are genuine, you won't be worried or stressed. It states (*Yirmiyahu* 17:7), ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בה' והיה ה' מבטחו, "Fortunate is the person who trusts in Hashem." How do we know that he has *bitachon*? The answer is והיה, an expression of joy. As the Divrei Yisrael (Modzhitz) *zt'l* writes, "Joy and *yishuv hadaas* are signs of genuine belief in Hashem."

Similarly, the Chovas HaLevavos (*Shaar HaBitachon* ch.1) writes, "*Bitachon* means to have מנוחת הנפש, tranquility. He relies that Hashem will do what is best for him."

The Sefer Ha'Ikrim (4:49) writes, "Don't have any doubts at all...because Hashem can bring salvation, and no one can prevent

Him... Your *bitachon* should be like someone who is waiting for morning to come..." At nighttime, everyone knows that morning will come. This is how certain we should be that Hashem will help.²

A baal darshan was lecturing on the terrible trait of anger. Everyone in the audience was inspired, as the speaker supported his lesson with midrashim, mussar, and true-to-life anecdotes. "Even if you have good reason to be angry," he hollered, "it's never an excuse. One must learn to control his anger at all times. There should never be a moment when one loses himself."

Just then, someone walked up to the podium to give him a cup of coffee. But that man wasn't careful and placed the coffee on the slanted lectern. The hot coffee spilled all over the speaker's new suit.

"You're such a fool," the speaker shouted at him. "Why can't you be more careful? And this isn't the first I am experiencing your incompetence. You always do things like this..." The speaker carried on and on, unable to control his anger.

But didn't he just say that there is never a valid reason for anger? The answer is that there is a gap separating the mind and the heart. As tzaddikim of Slonim *zt'l* said, "The distance between the mind and the heart is longer than the distance between heaven and earth." His mind knew that there was no reason to get angry, but his heart didn't, and his heart was angry.

2. It states (*Mishlei* 13:12), תוחלת ממושכה מחלת לב, "A prolonged hope causes heartache." This means when people hope and wait for a salvation for a long time, they end up with anxiety and frustration, because they don't see their salvation coming. The Sefer Ha'Ikrim explains that *bitachon* is different. He won't end up frustrated, even if he is waiting for a long time, because he is certain that the salvation will come. As the Sefer Ha'Ikrim writes, "*Bitachon* won't make him anxious. He will be happy. He experiences now the joy of the future. This type of *bitachon* is good."

It states (*Tehillim* 37:3-4), והתענג על ה' ויתן לך משאלות לבך, This is referring to *bitachon*. He is certain that Hashem will help him, and therefore, והתענג על ה', he finds pleasure in his trust in Hashem. When one reaches this level of *bitachon*, ויתן לך משאלות לבך, Hashem will certainly grant him his heart's desires.

The Dubno Magid zt'l told a mashal of a teacher who was walking with his students through a thick forest. "Don't be afraid of the wild dogs," he told his charges. "If you see dogs, all you have to do is say ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב לשונו, and the dogs will scatter."

Suddenly, a group of large dogs approached them, and the teacher was the first to run, with the entire class running after him. When they calmed down, the students asked, "Why were you so afraid? You told us that we just need to say the pasuk and the dogs won't harm us."

The melamed replied, "When I heard the dogs barking, I became so frightened that I forgot the pasuk." He believed in the segulah intellectually, but not in his heart. Therefore, he was afraid. The same is true with bitachon. One can know the ideals of emunah and bitachon intellectually, but if the heart doesn't feel it, the concepts of emunah will not change the way he perceives life and the way he reacts to its challenges.

A doctor once asked the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz zt'l what his occupation is. The Divrei Chaim replied, "I build bridges."

The doctor couldn't imagine that the rabbi seated before him was an engineer. The Tzanzer Rav explained, "I'm busy building a bridge that spans my mind and heart, so the thoughts of my mind will affect my heart." Because the mind can know concepts, but it requires constant review until the heart internalizes them. This lesson applies to bitachon, too. We can speak about trusting and relying on Hashem; however, we must invest thought and practice until we attain this level.

The Alshich once gave a drashah, describing the power of *bitachon*. He said that if one trusts in Hashem, he doesn't have to work at all; Hashem will support him.

A simple person present at the *drashah* decided to put it into practice. He sold his donkey and wagon to an Arab, and he spent his days in the beis medresh learning Torah. One day, the Arab (to whom he sold the donkey and wagon) found a treasure in a cave at the

foot of a mountain. He loaded the treasure onto the wagon, and he went one more time into the cave to make sure that he took everything. At that moment, the cave collapsed, and he was trapped inside, under the rubble.

His donkey decided that it was time for dinner, so it left on its own. It followed the route it knew best, straight to the home of the Yid (who used to be its owner). He became immensely wealthy, and everyone saw that when one trusts in Hashem, Hashem helps him.

A student asked the Alshich, "We also have *bitachon*. Why don't miracles happen to us as they happened to him?"

The Alshich explained to him that there are different levels of trust in Hashem. When one honestly and sincerely has *bitachon*, miracles will occur.

A special rabbi goes weekly to prison to encourage and inspire the Jewish inmates to improve their ways. One of the inmates did *teshuvah* in jail due to the rabbi's influence, and he asked the rabbi to bring him a *sefer* on *hilchos Shabbos*.

The following week when the rabbi visited the inmates, this prisoner said to the rabbi, "I will be leaving the prison soon."

"How can that be?" the rabbi asked. "You still have many years before you complete your jail term."

The prisoner replied, "I read the *sefer* you gave me. It states the Chazal that when Klal Yisrael keeps two Shabbosim, we will be redeemed. The *sefer* adds in the name of the Chidushei HaRim (p.284) that this also applies to the individual. When one keeps two Shabbosim properly, he earns his personal redemption. He will be saved and redeemed from his difficulties. I kept one Shabbos, and the next week I will keep the second Shabbos, and then I will be redeemed from prison."

The rabbi explained that things are never so simple. Many people keep two Shabbosim, and they remain caught in their troubles.

But this Yid didn't want to hear about it. He trusted with a full heart in what he read in the sefer. He said, "I will leave jail next week. You will see. I will keep Shabbos, and Hashem will save me."

Two weeks later, the rabbi came to the prison, and the inmate was no longer there. He was freed.

What happened?

The judge who sentenced this prisoner was about to retire. He was an honest person, so he reviewed all the harsh sentences meted out during his tenure; he didn't want to retire with sins on his hands. When he checked this particular Yid's case, he realized that there wasn't sufficient evidence to convict him, so he rescinded his ruling and freed him from prison.

This is a story of genuine *emunah* and *bitachon*, believe without doubts. The rabbi tried to discourage him. He told him that it doesn't always happen, etc. But when one

believes, without doubts, Hashem will certainly help him.³

Try!

We discussed the importance of attaining genuine *bitachon*. It shouldn't be lip service; the heart should genuinely believe and trust in Hashem. But how does one reach this level?

The answer is simple: Try!

We can accomplish much more than we think we can. All we must do is try, and Hashem will help us succeed.

It states in this week's parashah (2:5), ותרד, בת פרעה לרחוץ על היאור... ותשלח את אמתה ותקחה, "Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe in the Nile... She put out her hand and took [the basket where Moshe lay]." The basket was far from her, but she tried, she did what she could, and her arm grew many *amos*, and she was able to reach Moshe and save him.

3. It states, לוו עלי ואני פורע, "Borrow on my account, and I will pay back." The *Mishnah Berurah* (242:3) explains that this is referring to a person who doesn't have money for Shabbos. Hashem says, "Borrow money and buy your needs for Shabbos. Don't worry about the debt, because I will pay up the debt."

A *bachur* was studying this *halachah*, and soon afterwards, a friend from yeshiva told him, "I'm organizing a Shabbos in Miron. Many *bachurim* of our yeshiva will be going. Do you want to come with us?"

The *bachur* replied, "I don't have money to pay for the Shabbos, but if you lay out the money for me, I will go with you for Shabbos, and with Hashem's help, I will pay you back. As it states, לוו עלי ואני פורע."

Motzei Shabbos, after an uplifting Shabbos in Miron, the organizer announced that every *bachur* must pay 388.60 shekels for the Shabbos, to cover the expenses of room and board. This *bachur* told him, "Ask Hashem for my share because I'm not paying for it. Hashem promised, לוו עלי ואני פורע, that He will pay up the loans for Shabbos. I kept this Shabbos on His account, and Hashem will pay you back."

The *bachurim* argued with him, explaining to him that this *halachah* doesn't exempt people from their obligation to pay back their debts for Shabbos, but their words fell on deaf ears.

Late *motzei Shabbos*, when the organizer of the trip came home, his family told him that on *erev Shabbos*, he received a birthday present from his future in-laws. He opened the present; it was a beautiful wallet, exactly to his taste. The *mechutanim* put inside the wallet every type of bill from the Israeli currency. So, there was a 20, 50, 100, and a 200-shekel bill. From the coins there was a 1-, 2-, 5-, and 10-shekel coin. And from the *agurot/cents*, there was a 10 and a 50. A grand total of 388.60, exactly the amount the *bachur* owed.

The next morning, the *bachur* (who hadn't paid) said to the *chasan*, "I spoke it over with a rav, and he said that I must pay ..."

The *chasan* replied, "You don't have to pay. Hashem has already paid your share."

Imagine what would have happened if Basyah would say, "It is too far away. What can I do?"

The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* said that from this episode, we learn that one must try. Never say something is impossible. Just try. And "If you open up an opening the size of a needle's eye, Hashem will open for you a wide opening, like the opening of the אולם, of the Beis HaMikdash (which was twenty *amos* wide)."

Hashem told Moshe to take the Jewish nation out of Mitzrayim. Moshe replied (4:10) לא איש דברים אנכי... כי כבד פה וכבד לשון אנכי, that he has a speech impediment, and he can't speak properly."

Hashem told Moshe that this isn't a reason to refrain. All Moshe needs to do is to try, and Hashem will help him speak well. Hashem said (4:12), ועתה לך ואנכי אהיה עם פוך, "And now, go, and I will be with your mouth." The Or HaChaim explains, "Until you go, there is no reason to heal you from your speech defect. But you should go on the mission, and when you speak, you will see that your speech impediment will be healed."

Because when we follow Hashem's mission, and Hashem will help us succeed. The same applies to attaining genuine bitachon. It seems impossible, a madreigah beyond our abilities to attain. But if you strive to reach it, Hashem will help you.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 38) teaches us that Niknor transported two beautiful doors from Alexandria, Egypt, to Eretz Yisrael to donate to the Beis HaMikdash. A storm at sea forced the sailors to throw all heavy

objects overboard. They also threw one of the doors into the sea. They were about to throw the second door overboard when Niknor jumped onto the door. Hugging the door, he exclaimed, "If you throw the door into the water, throw me in too." As he said those words, the storm subsided. When they docked in Eretz Yisrael, they discovered the first door miraculously floating alongside the ship.

The doors were installed in the Beis HaMikdash and were called Shaar Niknor (Niknor's entrance). The two doors were made from copper, and they shone like gold. Eventually, all doors of the Beis HaMikdash were switched for gold doors, but the *chachamim* said that Niknor's doors should remain in the Beis HaMikdash because of the miracles that occurred with them.

Let us analyze this story: Niknor was *moser nefesh* to bring even just one door to the Beis HaMikdash. Why did he do that? What good would one door serve if two doors were needed for the entryway? The answer is, Niknor was *moser nefesh* to do what he could, even when it seemed that it wouldn't be sufficient. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu helped him. Similarly, we must do whatever we can in Hashem's service. Never to say it is impossible, and Hashem will help you succeed.⁴

***Emunah* is from Hashem**

The Chovas HaLevavos (*Shaar Ahavas Hashem* 6) tells a story of someone who was sleeping outdoors in the desert. A chassid asked him, "Aren't you afraid to sleep here? There are wild lions in the desert!"

4. My father *zy'a* told me that when he was a child, living in Tel Aviv, one night there was no running water in their house. My father and his brothers went to sleep that night without preparing *negel vasser* next to their beds. Their father, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, asked them, "Why didn't you prepare *negel vasser*?"

They replied, "We couldn't. There is no water."

"That's true," their father replied, "but why didn't you at least place the empty *negel vasser* utensils near your bed?" Because a Yid must do what he can.

The man replied, "I am afraid of Hashem alone. I would be embarrassed before Hashem if I would fear anything or anyone other than Hashem."

In this week's *parashah*, it states (4:3), ויאמר, השליכהו ארצה וישליכהו ארצה ויהי לנחש וינס משה מפניו, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Throw your staff to the ground.' Moshe did so, and it turned into a snake. Moshe fled from it." Why was Moshe afraid of the snake? How does this coincide with the Chovas HaLevavos's lesson that the righteous aren't scared of anything or anyone; they only fear Hashem? The question is especially difficult when we consider that at this time, Moshe was speaking with Hashem. So why was Moshe afraid of the snake?

The Panim Yafos replies:

Moshe Rabbeinu said to Hashem (4:1), והן, לא יאמינו לי ולא ישמעו בקולי כי יאמרו לא נראה עליך ה', "The Jewish nation will not believe me. They will say Hashem didn't reveal Himself to me."

Hashem told Moshe to throw his staff to the ground. Moshe did so, and, miraculously, it turned into a snake. Hashem told Moshe to perform this miracle before the Jewish nation as a sign that Hashem spoke to Moshe.

The Panim Yafos says there's a deeper intention here:

Hashem was asking Moshe, "Were you afraid of the snake? How did that happen? What happened to your *emunah* in Me? The answer is, I took your *emunah* away, and therefore you became afraid of snakes. Because everything is in my hands, and even people's *emunah* in Hashem comes from Hashem. I give *emunah* to people, and I take it away. Therefore, don't say, 'They won't believe...' because if I want the nation

to believe, I will place *emunah* in their hearts, and they will believe in Me."

Returning to our topic on *bitachon*, *bitachon*, too, is in Hashem's hands. If we strive to attain *bitachon*, Hashem will help us achieve it. Everything is in His hands.⁵

"I am with You"

It states (3:14) אהיה אשר אהיה, "I will be... I will be." Rashi explains אהיה עמם בצרה זאת, אשר, "I will be with the Jewish nation during this *tzarah* in Mitzrayim, and I will be with them throughout the exiles of the other kingdoms."

This means, even when they sin, *chalilah*, even when they are going through hard times, Hashem is always with the Jewish nation. He never abandons them.

Similarly, it states (2:4), ותתצב אחותו מרחוק, "His sister stood from a distance." We can explain: מרחוק, in Mitzrayim, Hashem seemed distant from the Jewish nation, because they suffered there. Nevertheless, ותתצב אחותו, Miryam stood firm with her *emunah*. She knew that even during those difficult times, Hashem was with her.

Similarly, it states (*Yirmiyahu* 31:2), מרחוק ה', נראה לי, "From the distance, Hashem became revealed to me." Even when Hashem seems far away from us, He is always nearby.

During the Apter Rav's *zt'l* lifetime, there were harsh *gezeiros* on Klal Yisrael. The Apter Rav said that after his *petirah*, when he is brought to heaven, he will refuse to enter Gan Eden until the evil decree is annulled.

The Apter Rav was *niftar*, but the decrees continued. They even worsened. People asked Reb Yitzchak Meir of Zinikov *zt'l*, the Apter Rav's son, to explain.

5. Rashi (1:12) writes, "Pharaoh says, פן ירבה, 'lest the [Jewish nation] increase.' I say, בן ירבה, they *shall* increase." The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zt'l* explained that פן is an expression of a question (perhaps). Pharaoh wanted, פן ירבה, that questions should increase among Klal Yisrael. Yidden should have many questions; they should doubt their *emunah*. Hashem replied that it shall be בן ירבה, certainty should increase. People should believe without any doubts.

Reb Yitzchak Meir placed his head on the table, and when he raised it, he said, "My father came to me, and he explained the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 48:10), דימינו אלקים חסדך בקרב היכלך, This can be translated, דימינו אלקים, we thought it was אלקים, *middas hadin*, harsh judgment. However, בקרב היכלך, in heaven, people see that it is all חסדך, Hashem's kindness.

"My father explained that now that he is in heaven, he sees that even the harsh decrees are for our good. So why should he stop the decrees? They are all for our benefit."

The Ramban had a student who had many questions on the way Hashem was leading the world. In his opinion, life should be better for Klal Yisrael.

This *talmid* became ill and was about to die. Now the student had another question: Why did he deserve to die so young?

The Ramban came to the student and gave him a *kameia* (amulet) and said, "Hold on to this *kameia*, and when you die, ask the *malachim* to bring you to a chamber in heaven called כסאות למשפט, 'Chairs of Judgment.' When you get there, ask Hashem why you had to die so young and ask Hashem your questions on the way He runs the world."

The student was niftar, and the Ramban waited to hear what happened.

Once, the Ramban was studying Torah near a window, and the window suddenly opened, and the Ramban saw his student. The student said, "After my death, I showed the *kameia* to the *malachim*, and I asked them to bring me to כסאות למשפט. The *malachim* took me up to this very high chamber. Nothing could stop me from getting to this high place because I had the Ramban's *kameia* in my hand. In this chamber, I was about to ask my questions before Hashem, but suddenly,

all my questions disappeared. They didn't bother me anymore. Because in heaven, one sees that everything is just" (*Mishnas Sachir, Avos* 6).

It states (3:14), אהי"ה אשר אהי"ה. The Chasam Sofer explains, Hashem says אהי"ה, "I will be" אשר אהי"ה, "with the people who I am in their thoughts." Because there's a rule: When you think about Hashem, Hashem thinks of you. The more we think about Hashem, the greater will be Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* upon us.⁶ This *pasuk* applies to every individual. As for the community, even when we aren't thinking about Hashem, Hashem thinks of us. As afterward it states, אהי"ה שלחני עליכם. These words refer to the community (as it says in plural - שלחני עליכם). For the community, Klal Yisrael, it is always אהי"ה, Hashem is with the Jewish nation.

Tzaddikim Prefer not to Look at the Tzaros

Moshe saw the burning bush and immediately concealed his face because he didn't want to see it. As it states (3:6), ויסתר, משה פניו כי ירא מהביש אל האלקים, "Moshe hid his face because he was afraid to look at Elokim." Why was he afraid?

The Tiferes Shlomo (*Lech Lecha*) explains that אלקים is Hashem's name that represents harsh punishments, and the burning thornbush means the pain that the Jewish nation was enduring in Mitzrayim. Moshe concealed his face כי ירא מהביש אל האלקים, "because he was afraid to look at Hashem's attribute of harsh justice." Why was he afraid? He feared that if he focuses on all the suffering of the Jewish nation, he might come to question Hashem's ways. He might ask, "Why do You let the Jewish nation suffer?"

6. Hashem watches over the entire world, down to the smallest details, however, there are different levels of Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*. When one remembers Hashem, Hashem's providence over him increases.

Similarly, it states (*Mishlei* 3:6), בכל דרכך דעהו והוא ישר דרכך, "Know Hashem with everything you do, and He will set your path." The Chasam Sofer explains, "If you will remember Hashem with everything you do, Hashem will take care of you..."

He didn't want to carry such thoughts against Hashem in his heart.

Similarly, in *Chayei Sara* it states (*Bereishis* 23:2) ויבא אברהם לספור לשרה ולבכותה, "Avraham arrived to eulogize Sarah and to cry over her." But the Torah doesn't tell us the *hesped*. The next *pasuk* says, ויקם אברהם מעל פני מתו וידבר אל בני חת... "Avraham stood up from his deceased and spoke to the children of Cheis." Avraham cut the eulogy short and immediately began arranging Sarah's burial. Why were the mourning and the eulogy cut short? Once again, the Tiferes Shlomo answers that Avraham didn't want to delve on that might cause him to question Hashem. He didn't want to ask, "Why did the *tzadekes* Sarah die? Why did she deserve this?" Therefore, he kept his mind off this topic.

The Midrash says, מלאך המוות מתרים כנגדו, the *malach hamaves* was teasing Avraham, trying to get Avraham to ask, "Sarah was a *tzadekes*, why should she die?" Avraham avoided hearing those questions by turning his thoughts to other matters.

This lesson of the Tiferes Shlomo helped many people during the Holocaust. People had questions on Hashem. "How could He let this happen?" One of the solutions was to focus on other matters. They tried to avoid thinking of the *tzaros* because they feared bearing questions on Hashem.

Shovavim

The *roshei teivos* of the next six *parshiyos* (שמות וירא בא בשלה יתרו משפטים) spell שובבים, and the Arizal teaches that they are six weeks for *teshuvah*, which atone for very serious *aveiros*. In the past, people would fast during these days, and they would afflict themselves in other ways. This approach isn't recommended anymore, because the holy *sefarim* write that people have become weaker, and fasting isn't good for them.

So, what can we do to attain atonement? Because let it be clear, we need *Shovavim* in our generation, just as it was necessary in the past. We also have severe *aveiros* that need atonement. The fact that we aren't able

to fast doesn't mean that we don't need *Shovavim*.

We can do things in *Shovavim* that will grant us the same purity that fasts used to accomplish generations ago.

One route is to practice *Taanis HaRaavad*. The Raavad taught that when a person is eating, and pauses in the middle, it counts like a fast.

When a person is in the midst of a good meal and wants to devour everything on his plate, he can hold himself back for a moment for Hashem's sake. He waits a moment and then continues eating, or, at times, he stops the meal at that point. This isn't easy to do, and it is counted as a fast. He won't become weaker from doing this, and he gains the atonement of *Shovavim*.

What else can one do to attain the atonement of *Shovavim*?

Tzaddikim say that the primary solution is to study Torah – specifically, study without interruptions of idle talk or other matters. This purifies immensely. This is *Shovavim* in these generations.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that studying Gemara with *Tosfos* in depth is the atonement of *Shovavim*.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said, "Learning Torah purifies more than fasting and other physical afflictions."

The Yesod HaAvodah (3:5:8) writes, "I think that studying without interruption for five hours straight is a wonderful thing; it atones and leads a person to *teshuvah*." Those who aren't able to study for five consecutive hours should do whatever they can. Every little bit is excellent and purifies immensely.

Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* said to a Torah scholar who was fasting during *Shovavim*: "You know how to learn. So why are you choosing the lesser purifier of fasting when you can take the greater purifier of studying Gemara and *Tosfos*?"

Once, in the middle of the night, during *Shovavim*, Reb Yochanan Rachmistrifke *zt'l*

told his *gabbai* to wake up all his chasidim. When the chasidim gathered in the beis medresh, he said, "In the past, I didn't want to speak about these matters. But just now it was revealed to me that when one learns Torah ברציפות, without interruption, this creates a רצפת אש, a floor of fire that banishes all *aveiros*."

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 21:) states, כל הפוסק מדרבי תורה ועוסק בדברי שיחה מאכילין אותו גחלי רתמים, "Whoever interrupts his learning and engages in idle talk will be fed fiery coals." The Maharil Diskin said that this isn't exclusively a punishment. It also means that he will lose his taste for Torah. Torah is extremely sweet and pleasurable; however, when one interrupts his learning to make conversation, he won't feel the sweet taste of Torah. This is alluded to eating coals, because after one eats coals, even if one eats the best foods in the world, it will be tasteless.

Speech

The *parashah* begins, ואלה שמות, and the Pri Megadim (end of 685) writes that אלה is *roshei teivos* for אבק לשון הרע. This is hinting that during the days of *Shovavim*, we must be extra careful to avoid speaking lashon hara.

The Trisker Magid *zt'l* (*Magen Avraham, Lech Lecha*) writes that when people speak forbidden speech, this contaminates the air, and is the root of all contagious disease.

It states (*Bamidbar* 9:20), על פי ה' יהנו ועל פי ה' יסעו, Tzaddikim explain, it is due to the mouth that Hashem dwells, and it is also due to the mouth that Hashem leaves. If one speaks only holy words of Torah and *tefillah*, Hashem is present.

However, if one speaks forbidden things, Hashem will leave, *chalilah*.

There was a place near Mitzrayim called פי החירות (see *Shemos* 14:2). This can be translated

as "A free mouth." The Zera Kodesh explains that this describes the Egyptian culture. They wanted freedom of speech, to say whatever they wanted.

The Zera Kodesh writes, "The *avodah zarah* of Mitzrayim is called פי החירות, a loose mouth because their mouths were free to speak whatever they wanted. As it states (*Tehillim* 12:5), אמרו ללשונו נגביר שפתינו אתנו מי ארון לנו, They said, 'We will become strong with our speech. Our speech is our own. Who rules over us [to tell us what we can or cannot say]?' The *pasuk* says, וישבו ויחננו לפני פי חירות, which means Hashem told the nation that they must do *teshuvah* (וישבו), and curb their speech, and speak only what is required for *avodas Hashem*."

It states (*Vayikra* 23:10), עומר ראשית קצירכם, the Noam Elimelech writes, "אומר is like עומר, speech... One must improve his speech and even mundane talk and raise it to holiness... קצירכם, being lax with speech causes all shortcomings in *avodas Hashem*. ראשית קצירכם, it is the beginning of all shortcomings."

Hashem appeared to Moshe in a סנה, thornbush (see 3:2). The Kli Yakar says that the סנה represents שנאה הנם, baseless hatred. Because it was baseless hatred and lashon hara which caused the suffering in Mitzrayim. The Kli Yakar writes, "Yidden are in *galus*, primarily because of hatred and jealousy, which they have more than all other nations... It states, והסנה איננה אוכל, 'The bush wasn't consumed.' This means *sinas chinam* lives on... [People don't realize that stopping *sinas chinam* will eliminate all the *tzaros*.]"⁷

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zt'l* said that for refraining from saying something forbidden, it is counted as if he fasted eighty-four fasts. Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* said, "And I say, און נאך און נאך און נאך, it is far more than 84 fasts." So, to attain purity in *Shovavim* we must be cautious with our speech. Each time we

7. The *pasuk* says, והנה הסנה בער באש, "The bush was burning the fire." The Kli Yakar asks that it should say the opposite, "the fire was burning the bush." Rather, the bush, the סנה, hints to *sinas chinam*, and that is what turns on the fire and the strife of *galus*. When we stop *sinas chinam*, we've extinguished the fire.

refrain from saying something forbidden, we gain 84 fasts.

A Daf Gemara

The Sdei Chemed writes (vol.5 klal 54), "In תרנ"ט I was in Yerushalayim, and I was invited to a *pidyon haben*, but I didn't go. People told me that partaking in a *pidyon haben* is like fasting 84 פ"ד תעניתים, 84 fasts. I never heard of that before, and I think that there is no source for this; it is just something nice that people say" (see footnote).⁸

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

Reb Yosef Chaim told them that there is no source. Nevertheless, he said that a reference could be found in the *roshei teivos* of a *pasuk* that discusses *pidyon haben*. It states, וכל בכור א'ד'ם ב'ב'ני'ך ת'פ'ד'ה', This is *roshei teivos* for: אם דבר מה בפדיון בן נהנית יהשב כאילו תענית פ"ד התענית, "If you eat something at a *pidyon haben*, it will be as though you fasted eighty-four fasts."

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

Rebbe Shmuel Kaminka *zt'l* told his students about the purity that comes from studying a *blatt* Gemara. He said, "With a *blatt* Gemara one goes out of the *blotta*" (which is mud in Yiddish). This means, when

one studies a *daf* Gemara daily, he will be saved from the *yetzer hara*.

One student decided to put this advice into immediate use. He went to the next room and looked for a Gemara. He didn't find a Gemara, but he did find a Mishnayos, so he studied a chapter of Mishnayos. When he returned to Reb Shmuel Kaminka's *shiur*, Reb Shmuel Kaminka said, "This person thinks he can get the purity of a *daf* Gemara by learning a chapter of Mishnayos." In other words, the *teharah* that comes from learning a *daf* Gemara is even more significant than the *teharah* that comes from learning a chapter of Mishnayos.

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

Yishuv Hadaas – Equanimity

In one of his letters, Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* writes, כל הון דעלמא לא ישוו לשעה אחת, "All the money in the world doesn't equal a moment of *yishuv hadaas*." If you have *yishuv hadaas*, you can consider yourself to be among the wealthiest person in the world because no one's wealth matches up to what you have.

Someone asked the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law, "Which attribute of your father-in-law impressed you the most?"

He replied, "His *yishuv hadaas*. The Chofetz Chaim had endured many difficult challenges and problems in his life, but he never lost his serenity. And this is all because of his *emunah*. He believed everything is from Hashem, so nothing disturbed him."

8. There are sources that eating at a פדיון הבן is like פ"ד fasts. It was taught by Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* [*Likutei Imrei Pinchas, Shaar Kedushah*] and by Rebbe Mordechai of Neschiz *zt'l* [*Ilana d'Chaya*].

We say in the *Hoshanos* ... הושענא... דגן מדלקת... "Save...crops from fire... wheat from locusts...*nefesh* from בהלה, confusion..." The Chofetz Chaim said fire destroys crops until nothing remains. Locust, too, can consume an entire crop. נפש מבהלה, a confused soul, is similar because it destroys the whole soul.

When one loses his equanimity, he cannot focus on Torah and tefillah, is likely to become angry, tends to act with bad middos, and can make major mistakes without realizing it. Therefore, one must stay away from all things that can rob him of a tranquil and peaceful mind.⁹

Machlokes is one of the things that destroy *yishuv hadaas*. Because when one is involved in a dispute, his mind is always thinking about it, and becomes angry. For this reason alone, it is worthwhile to avoid *machlokes*.

It is written, וירא מנוחה כי טוב... ויט שכמו לסבול, "He saw that tranquility is good...so he bent his shoulder to endure..." (*Bereishis* 49:15). Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorke would often repeat this *pasuk* and explained, וירא מנוחה כי טוב, when one recognizes the benefits of maintaining *yishuv hadaas*, ויט שכמו לסבול, he will bend his shoulders to tolerate others. He will avoid disputes so that he doesn't lose the excellent quality of *yishuv hadaas*.

The holy children of Reb Dovid of Zlatapoli *zt'l* and of Rebbe Yochanan Rachmistrifka *zt'l* were engaged to get married. Rebbe Dovid of Zlatapoli asked Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrifka, "How will you raise the money for the *chasunah*?"

Reb Yochanan of Rachmistrifka answered that he trusts in Hashem, and when there is *bitachon* there are no worries. This brings us back to our discussion on *bitachon*. If one

wants to live a worry-free, anxiety-free life, a life with *yishuv hadaas*, he needs *bitachon*.

Time to Think

How wonderful it is to have *yishuv hadaas*, a clear, lucid mind. Sometimes, a person becomes so confused due to his worries, anger, fear, etc. – he can't even think straight. And then there are milder cases of lacking *yishuv hadaas*. That is when his mind is calm and relaxed, but he isn't comfortable with himself to think about his own life and purpose. When there's a quiet moment, and he can contemplate on his life, he will immediately turn on music, listen to a speech, read a book, anything, rather than to be alone with himself. This is a milder case but is also not *yishuv hadaas*.

Towards the end of the *parashah*, Moshe asks Pharaoh to permit the Yidden to leave Mitzrayim so they can offer sacrifices to Hashem in the desert. Pharaoh forbade them, and he increased the workload. Pharaoh said (5:7), לא תאסיפון לחת תבן לעם ללבון, "We will no longer give straw to the nation so they can make bricks, as we've done until now. From now on, they will gather the straw on their own to make the bricks." They had to make the same sum of bricks as before, and now they also had to gather the straw.

Why did Pharaoh increase the workload? What was he trying to accomplish? We don't need to search for an answer because Pharaoh himself explains his intention. He said (5:9), תכבד העבדה על האנשים ויעשו בה ואל ישעו בדברי, שקר, "Make the work heavy on the people; they should be occupied full time so that they won't have time to think about leaving Mitzrayim."

9. Haman HaRasha wanted להומום ולאברם, "to confuse the Yidden and to destroy them" (*Megilas Ester* 9:24). The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l* explains that Haman understood that he doesn't have the power to destroy Klal Yisrael as long as they have *yishuv hadaas*. Therefore he tried להומום, to confuse them and to frighten them with his evil decrees. He figured that when the Yidden will lose their *yishuv hadaas*, he will be able to destroy them, *chalilah*.

Thinking leads to solutions. Since they were contemplating leaving Mitzrayim, Pharaoh stopped it immediately by not giving them a free moment to think about it.

The *yetzer hara* does the same to us. He keeps us busy, full time. Even when we have a free moment, there are plenty of matters available to occupy our thoughts. The result is that we don't realize what is happening to us. We don't recognize when we are going in the wrong way.

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.2) writes, "To be safeguarded from *aveiros*, a person must think about his deeds, and examine them, to see whether they are good or bad. Yirmiyahu lamented his generation's corruption because they ignored their deeds, to know whether they should keep doing them or whether they should leave and change their ways.

Now that we recognize the problem, it is time to think of solutions. Maybe it isn't good that we are always occupied with reading, listening, and other activities? Perhaps we should allow ourselves some time for reflection? These are moments of *yishuv hadaas*, which enable us to improve our ways.

Rebbe Yitzchak Vorker *zt'l* asks, Pharaoh could have simply decreed that they must produce double the sum of bricks. Why did he change the program and have the Yidden gather the straw?

Rebbe Yitzchak Vorker explains that it takes time to get accustomed to the new routine whenever someone does something new. By this time, the Yidden knew how to make bricks. If Pharaoh forced them to produce more bricks, they would have to work more hours, it would be very hard, but it wouldn't be a strain on their minds and their *yishuv hadaas*. Pharaoh wanted to destroy their *yishuv hadaas*, and therefore he required them to do something they never did before.

Tefillah b'Tzibur

The Gemara (*Brachos* 7-8) tells the following story:

Rav Yitzchak asked Rav Nachman, "Why didn't you come to the beis Hakneses to daven?"

"I couldn't. I was weak."

"You should have asked ten people to come to your home, so you could daven at home with a minyan."

"מריחה לי מילתא" – it was hard for me to do that."

"You should have asked the *gabai* of the beis knesses to let you know when the *tzibbur* is about to say *Shemonah Esrei* so that you could begin *Shemonah Esrei* together with them."

Rav Nachman asked Rav Yitzchak, "Why is davening with a minyan so important?"

Rav Yitzchak replied in the name of Reb Shimon bar Yochai: "It states (*Tehillim* 69:14), ואני תפילתי לך ה' עת רצון 'I pray to you at the desired time.' When is that desired time? It's when the *tzibbur* is davening." Rav Yitzchak taught this to Rav Nachman, and Rav Nachman certainly davened with immense *kavanah*. Nevertheless, it would be better for him to daven with a minyan, at a time of an *עת רצון*, because that is when the *tefillos* are more likely to be answered.

The Gemara states more sources for *tefillah b'tzibur*, which we quote here:

(*Iyov* 36) 'הן א"ל כביר ולא ימאם 'Hashem is never disgusted from a *tefillah* of the community.'

(*Tehillim* 55) 'פדה בשלום נפשי... כי ברבים היו עמדי 'Hashem saved me...because I prayed with a *minyan*.'

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Whoever studies Torah, does chesed, and davens with a minyan, I consider it as though he redeemed my children and Me from *galus*...'

"Reish Lakish said, 'Whoever has a *beis knesses* in his city and he doesn't daven there, he is a bad neighbor... He causes exile for himself and his children...'"

Yaakov Avinu taught his children to daven with a minyan. As it states (*Bereishis* 49:1), ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו "Yaakov

gathered his children and said, 'Gather...' and the *Zohar* (*Bereishis* p.234.) explains that Yaakov was telling his children to gather and to daven with a minyan.

In states in this week's *parashah* (5:6), לא תאסיפון להת תבן לעם ללקוט straw... "Why is there an extra א in the word תאסיפון? It seems it should state תוסיפון (because תוסיפון means "more/longer" and תאסיפון means "to gather"). Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* explained that Pharaoh decreed, לא תאסיפון, that Yidden may not gather anymore. In Mitzrayim, every Shabbos, Yidden would gather and discuss *emunah*. Pharaoh decreed לא תאסיפון, they may not gather anymore because Pharaoh understood how much they gain from gathering.

(Rebbe Dovid Lelover *zt'l* said that he is confident that when Moshiach comes, Moshe Rabbeinu will greet him and thank him for explaining the correct reason he added the א"ל in this word.)

Something similar occurs when we gather to daven with minyan. It is a very special time, and we should therefore strive to daven with minyan.

Segulah for Parnassah

It states (*Shemos* 23:25), ועברתם את ה' אלקיכם וברך את לחמך ואת מימך. The Maor VeShemesh teaches that ועברתם refers to *tefillah*. It is written in plural tense because it is referring to davening with a minyan. The *pasuk* concludes, וברך את לחמך ואת מימך, "Hashem will bless your bread and your water..." because by davening with a minyan you will earn *parnassah*.

The Meor VeShemesh writes, "Why does the *pasuk* begin in plural tense (ועברתם) and conclude in singular tense (לחמך)? ... The primary way to serve Hashem is together

with the congregation. This applies to all aspects of *avodas Hashem*: for Torah, for *tefillah*, etc. One must be cautious about davening with the congregation. If he does so, he is guaranteed to have *parnassah* in abundance every day. There will be *brachah* in everything he does."

It states (*Devarim* 11:13), ולעבדו בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם. Chazal say this *pasuk* is referring to *tefillah*. The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* says that this *pasuk* is written in plural tense (לבבכם...נפשכם) because it is referring to davening with a minyan. The next *pasuk* states, ונתתי מטר ארצכם ונתתי מטר ארצכם, בעתו... ואספת דגנך... ואכלת ושבעת. "I will give rain... You will gather your crops... You will eat and be satisfied." These *pesukim* hint that if you daven with a minyan, you will have *parnassah* and wealth.¹⁰

The Yismach Yisrael wrote the following letter to his chassidim, "I also request from the business people they should always daven in the *beis chassidim* (*beis medresh*), and they should never miss [a *tefillah*]. Even if they need to wait until ten people come, they should wait, and in the meanwhile, they can study something. I guarantee that this will not cause them any loss, *chalilah*. On the contrary, it will bring *brachah* into their *parnassah*. It will also train their children to go to the *beis medresh* twice daily, and when one goes into a perfume store, he acquires the scent. [Similarly, when one goes to the *beis medresh*, and is among good Yidden, he will be influenced...]"

It states (*Bereishis* 42:3), וירדו אחי יוסף עשרה לשבור, בר, "Yosef's brothers – ten of them – went down [to Mitzrayim] to buy grain..." Why does the Torah specify that they were ten? Isn't that something we can count and calculate on our own? (see *Rashi*).

10. The Ksav Sofer writes, "Praying with a congregation can cause a person to lose some business deals... If he would daven by himself, he would daven before the business meeting or after it. But when [the *tefillah* is at a set time, with a minyan, this could prevent him from making the deal.] Nevertheless, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will not allow him to lose money because of his devotion to daven with a minyan. Hashem will bless all his endeavors; he will succeed. This is the meaning of the *pasuk* ולעבדו בכל לבבכם, which means daven with a minyan. And then, ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו, you will have wealth and success."

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzitz zy'a answers that the brothers traveled to Mitzrayim to earn *parnassah* for their families. *Parnassah* is dependent on *tefillah*

b'tzibur. The Torah emphasizes that they were careful to travel with ten people because they wanted to have a minyan during this trip.¹¹

11. The first word of the *pasuk* is, וירדו. The Divrei Yisrael teaches that this also alludes to *tefillah*, because the person who davens at the *amud* is called in Chazal, וירד לפני התיבה, to go down before the *amud*."