

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Shlita*

Noach



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Torah Wellsprings - Noach

Emunah and Bitachon Result in Chen

It states (Bereishis 6:8) וַיִּבַּח מִצַּח הַן בְּעֵינֵי ה', "And Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem." The Or HaChaim writes, "Noach wasn't saved [from the flood] because of his good deeds. At this time, Hashem decided to [return the creation to nothingness and to begin anew], and being a tzaddik wouldn't save him. Noach was saved because he found favor in Hashem's eyes. Noach attained this *chen* through the mitzvos he performed. For you must know that there are mitzvos that have a segulah to draw *chen* onto a person – three or four mitzvos have this segulah. Hashem didn't tell us the benefits we earn from the mitzvos, as Chazal tell us (Tanchuma Ekev 3), because then everyone would run after those benefits.¹ Noach merited and found [the mitzvos that result in] *chen*. His name also tells us [that Noach had *chen*] because נח are the letters הן."

Although the Or HaChaim doesn't reveal to us which mitzvos, or good deeds, bring *chen*, there are hints in the pasuk.

One approach is that וַיִּבַּח מִצַּח הַן בְּעֵינֵי ה', "Noach found favor... because he believed that everything is בְּעֵינֵי ה', in Hashem's eyes", under His surveillance. In other words, the emunah that Hashem sees all is mesugal for *chen*.

Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 1:1) begins, "Tehillim 16:8) שׁוֹיֵתִי ה' לְנֶגְדֵי תְמִיד 'I have placed Hashem before me constantly.' This is a great rule of the Torah and it is the levels of the tzaddikim who go before Hashem. When a person thinks that the great King, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Whose honor fills the world, is standing before him and watching what he does, as it states (Yirmiyahu 23:24) אִם יִסְתֵּר אִישׁ אֶת פְּנֵי ה' בְּמִסְתָּרִים וְאֵי לֹא אֶרְאֶנּוּ נַאֲם ה' 'Can a man hide in secret places that I should not see him?' says Hashem,' he will immediately attain fear and humbleness and shame before Hashem, constantly." If a man has the awareness that Hashem sees all, he will achieve *chen* in Hashem's eyes.²

It is not only *emunah* that is mesugal for *chen*. The Ben Ish Chai (*Ben Yehoyada, Beitzah 16.*)

1. Midrash Tanchuma explains with a mashal the reason Hashem didn't reveal the reward of the mitzvos:

It can be compared to a king who hired workers to plant trees in his orchard. The king didn't specify how much he would pay for each type of tree because if they knew, they would only grow the most profitable ones, and the orchard would be lacking. Similarly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't reveal the reward of individual mitzvos. If He did, people would focus on some and neglect others. They would focus on the mitzvos offering special segulos (such as wealth, *chen*, etc.) and slack off on the others.

2. A man approached Reb Nota Tzeinvert zt'l with a bright smile and said, "Today, I discovered that Hashem is kind and performs kindness."

Reb Nota responded with a story of a person who struggled to understand a particular section of the Gemara. After toiling over the Gemara for some time, he discovered that Tosfos asked his question. He read Tosfos's answer, and it resonated with him. On the margin of the Gemara, he wrote next to the Tosfos, "Also, me, Yankele from Yerushalayim, agrees to Tosfos's answer."

With this humorous story, Reb Nota taught this person that it is obvious and known that Hashem is kind; Hashem doesn't need his *haskamah*.

The man replied, "Is it forbidden to say that I saw that Hashem is kind?"

Reb Nota replied, "Is it forbidden for me to tell you a story?"

Regarding our topic, perhaps it is known that Hashem sees everything. That might be akin to saying, "I,

writes that [also] *bitachon* is *mesugal* for *chen*. The hint is that the word בטחון is comprised of two words: חן-טוב. "With בטחון, one merits חן and טוב, *chen* and Hashem's kindness."

This is hinted in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 84:12), חן וכבוד, "יתן ה' לא ימנע טוב להולכים בתמים", "Hashem will give *chen* and honor; He will not withhold good from those who go with bitachon."³

Yankele, also agree..." Nevertheless, we should talk about these matters repeatedly until we feel in our bones the truth that Hashem sees everything, knows everything, and all other principles of our emunah.

There was a person who would recite the Shema for a very long time, every day. People were already finishing Shemonah Esrei, and he was still in the middle of the Shema. His rav asked him why he said the Shema so slowly. He replied that when he says the Shema, he concentrates on the kavanos that the Arizal instructed mekubalim to think during Shema. There are many ideas, and going through them takes him a long time. The rav asked him, "Do you also think about Hashem when you say the Shema?"

He replied, "Oy, I forgot that kavanah." The lesson is that sometimes a person is so occupied with mitzvos, he can forget before Whom he is performing the mitzvos. We must remember that we are performing the mitzvos before Hashem, Who sees all.

There is also a story of a person who was always busy with Torah, tefillah, and mitzvos. One day he woke up and announced that he saw Hashem in his dream. He said that he was afraid that he would die, because it states (*Shemos* 33:20) וחי לא יראני האדם וחי, "for man shall not see Me and live."

His friends calmed him. "It isn't a real dream. It is just that you think about Hashem all day long when you learn and daven, and this causes you to imagine you see Hashem in your dreams."

The man replied, "It isn't as you say. Believe me, I am so busy with my Torah, tefillos, and mitzvos, I don't have time in the day to think about Hashem. And that's why I am so afraid. The dream must be real; why else would I suddenly think about Hashem in my dreams?"

But we are teaching that we should always remember Hashem, and then we will find favor in Hashem's eyes.

3. It states (8:11), והנה עלה זית טרף בפיה, "The dove had an olive leaf in its beak." Rashi says that טרף has two translations. It means either snatched or food.

The Divrei Yisrael explains that both translations of טרף (snatch or food) allude to how people earn their *parnassah*. There are people who "snatch" their *parnassah*. This means they grab the first job opportunity that comes their way without checking whether it is good for them and suits their needs. They are so worried about their *parnassah* that they snatch and grab without paying attention to what the job entails. Such people find their pursuit of *parnassah* to be very bitter.

Then there is the path of bitachon. Those who follow that path choose a *parnassah* compatible with their abilities and talents and a job that leaves them with time and mind space for *avodas Hashem*. Such people find sweetness in their pursuit of *parnassah*.

I heard the following story from Reb A. S. Freund Shlita, who is one of the *baalei hamaaseh*:

For about a year, a woman was ill with 'the disease' (cancer r'l), which eventually took her life. Her widower was left to care for their five young children, and he accumulated huge debts for his late wife's medical care.

One *erev Shabbos*, he was walking towards the Kosel for *kabbalas Shabbos* and discovered he had two thousand dollars in his pocket. He received the money from a *baal tzedakah*, which was all he owned then. He had forgotten to take out his wallet before heading towards the Kosel.

Shabbos was fast approaching. What should he do? He didn't know anyone who lived near the Kosel. If he left the money at a random address, how could he be sure he would get it back on *motzei Shabbos*?

"Perhaps there is a *heter* to keep the money in my pocket on Shabbos?" he wondered.

It is known that bitachon is mesugal for good things to occur, as it states (Tehillim 32:10) *והבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו*, "For him who trusts in

Hashem, kindness will encompass him."⁴ Something similar occurs when one has emunah.

But on second thought, he decided to listen to his *yetzer tov* and knocked at the first door with a mezuzah. The person who answered the door was new to Yerushalayim and spoke only English. They had a hard time communicating, but the point was conveyed. The sun was setting; it was almost Shabbos, and he needed a place to store the money.

On Motzei Shabbos, he returned to that address and was happy that the money had been returned to him. Once again, they struggled to communicate. The widower expressed his gratitude, and the benefactor wanted to tell him something, but they didn't understand one another.

So the widower wrote down the man's phone number, and later that night, he had someone who spoke English call this man from the Old City.

The Yid from the Old City explained on the phone, "I want to give him tzedakah because I realize how needy he is. Please give me his bank information, and I will transfer another two thousand dollars."

The lesson: A person only gains by following halachah and doing the right thing.

4. I heard the following story on bitachon from the baal hamaaseh (the husband):

After he got engaged to be married, his parents gave his kallah a gold necklace, which she cherished immensely. But somehow, she lost the gold chain, which caused her much distress.

One erev Shabbos, her husband went to the jewelry store to look for another necklace, but the prices were beyond his financial abilities. His wife told him, "Don't worry. Our Father in heaven gives us *parnassah*; He will send us the money. One day, you will be able to buy me the necklace."

He wanted to strengthen himself with bitachon, so when he came home, he took a Chovas HaLevavos and studied Shaar HaBitachon for about an hour.

Then he left his house, and saw a package lying on the sidewalk, in front of his house. He returned home and asked his wife whether she had ordered a package, but she said that she hadn't. He asked the neighbors about the package, but they all said it wasn't for them.

So he opened the package, hoping to figure out who was the intended recipient. He discovered that the package was for them. Inside the package was a check for five hundred shekels, with a letter offering a *brachah* for a happy Shavuot, the yom tov that was approaching. The letter stated, "May the merit of Torah protect you and be with you."

They were extremely happy, having witnessed the benefit of learning about bitachon. He had just strengthened his bitachon, and the benefit came right away. They received a gift of five hundred shekels!

This episode inspired them to continue learning about bitachon and practicing living with trust in Hashem. The husband continued studying about emunah and bitachon for the next two and a half weeks.

And then his wife saw a *hashavas aveidah* notice. The note said that someone had found a necklace, which would be returned to whoever provided a valid *siman*.

She called the number and gave the *siman* that she knew. She said that the clasp was broken. The *siman* was sufficient, and the necklace was returned. The necklace was lost two and a half years before, but only now, for some reason, did the finder decide to advertise it.

For when one has bitachon, wonders happen. The precious gift was returned to them.

Another lesson from this story: She was upset that the clasp was broken when she received the gold necklace. They were angry with the salesperson who sold them damaged merchandise. But now, it was revealed that this aggravation was for their benefit because it gave them a *siman* to get the necklace back.

So, we have two lessons: One is trust in Hashem, and you will see wonders. Secondly, when something

In this week's parashah, Rashi (7:7) writes, אף נח מקטני אמונה היה, מאמין ואינו מאמין שיבא המבול, "Noach also had weak *emunah*. He believed, and he didn't believe that the *mabul* would come. This is why he didn't enter the *teivah* until it began to rain and was forced to go inside because of the flood."

How can we understand this Rashi? The Torah testifies that Noach was a צדיק תמים, a perfect tzaddik. So, how could it be that Noach "believed and didn't believe"?

The Apter Rav (Ohev Yisrael) *zt'l* writes in the name of Rebbe Michel of Zlotchov *zt'l* that the nature of *emunah* is that it causes things to happen. This is because אמונה also means to raise, as it states (*Esther* 2:7), ויהי אמן את, הדסה, that Mordechai raised and reared Esther.

This indicates that belief can cause matters to occur.

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "Noach certainly believed in Hashem with all his heart and soul, but concerning this matter, he was afraid to believe in Hashem with all his heart. He feared that his belief might cause the flood to occur. This is Rashi's intention, מאמין ואינו מאמין. He genuinely believed, but he was afraid to believe with a complete heart that Hashem would bring the *mabul* because perhaps that belief would cause the *mabul* to

happen. Therefore, he waited until the flood began, and only then did he enter the *teivah*."⁵

Tranquility

We can also explain that Noach found *chen* in Hashem's eyes because he was always calm and tranquil. The Chareidim (*Mitzvas Asei* 1) writes, "The Midrash explains that Noach's calm and tranquil attitude endowed him with *chen*. Tranquility comes from *kedushah*, and anger comes from *tumah*."

The Chareidim explains that נח means calm and tranquil, without any anger. Since the Torah doesn't tell us how Noach received *chen*, the answer must be hinted in his name. It was this attitude that gave him *chen* before Hashem.

How does one attain such an exalted level of always remaining calm and tranquil and satisfied with his portion? The trick is to focus on the cup that is half full (to focus on the good you have) and not on the empty half. The wise do so. Therefore (*bederech tzachus*), חכ"ם is *roshei teivos* חצי כוס מלאה, the half full cup.⁶

Noach was extremely wise. The Torah states (6:9) אלקים התהלך נח, and the Baal HaTurim writes that the final letters of these words spell חכ"ם, indicating Noach's wisdom. He contemplated Hashem's kindness, focusing on what he had and not on what he lacked.⁷

seems like a problem, remember that every problem is actually a concealed chesed.

5. Teshuvah and tefillah can change a decree. Noach was afraid to believe that the *mabul* would come, because the belief itself might bring on the destruction, and it might have otherwise been averted through teshuvah or tefillah.

6. A hint is from the pasuk (*Tehillim* 107:43) מי חכם וישמר אלה ויתבוננו חסדי ה', "He who is wise will keep these in mind, and they will ponder the kind deeds of Hashem." The חכ"ם, the person who thinks about the חצי כוס מלאה, the full half-cup, will always contemplate the חסדי ה', Hashem's kindness.

After the chuppah, the chasan brings down his foot and breaks an empty cup. This hints to the chasan as he begins his new life, "Don't think about the half-empty cup. Think only about the half-full cup, and you will be happy with your portion."

7. The Divrei Yisrael writes that this is also alluded to in the pasuk (*Mishlei* 10:9) הולך בתם ילך בטח, "He who walks with *temimus* walks securely." The final letters spell חכ"ם, indicating that the greatest wisdom is *temimus*.

The Gemara (Taanis 22.) states that Rav Broka Chazoa found Eliyahu HaNavi in the marketplace of Lefet⁸ and Rav Broka asked him, "Is there anyone in this market who is a בן עולם הבא? Eliyahu showed him two people and said, "בני עולם הבא!"

Rav Broka Chazoa approached them and asked them what they did. They replied, "We are happy people; we make sad people happy. Also, when we see that people are in a dispute, we work with them until there is peace among them."

When we read this Gemara, we wonder why Rav Broka Chazoa wanted to know who in the marketplace was a בן עולם הבא. Was he seeking with whom to make a shidduch?

Also, how could Eliyahu HaNavi tell him with certainness that these two people will merit Olam HaBa? Behold it states (Iyov 15:15) הן בקדושו לא יאמין, "He does not believe in His holy ones." No one is guaranteed that he will receive Olam HaBa! Even if a person is righteous now, the present doesn't guarantee the future.

We can explain that Rav Broka Chazoa was asking, "Who is living in this world as if he is already living in Olam HaBa?" Eliyahu showed him two happy people and told him that these people were בני עולם הבא. They live in this world as if they are already in Olam HaBa.

The Gemara says that these two people made sad people happy and they helped people overcome machlokes and disputes. We can explain that they did so by teaching their approach on life to others.

They were always happy because they lived with emunah. Although there is strife,

machlokes, and disappointment in this world, when one has emunah in Hashem's hashgachah pratis, every situation is good for him. They were at peace with everyone because they understood that no one could take away from them the portion destined for them. And they taught this way of life to others. This is how they made the sad happy and taught them to avoid machlokes. They trained others to live in this world like they were already in Olam HaBa!

Noach lived with this emunah, and therefore he was always נח, at peace and tranquil. Every situation was good for him, because he knew that it was from Hashem.

Everything is for the Good

Many people don't enjoy food that is "too sweet." But some appreciate even very sweet foods and enjoy them immensely. This is a mashal describing the hardships of this world. Challenges are sweet because lots of good comes from them, but most people can't appreciate this level of sweetness. At least let us believe that even when facing difficulties, they are for our benefit.

When we don't understand how something is good, the benefits are even better. It is so good that it is beyond human perception. The time will come when we will discover the good in all situations.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l (quoted in Yesod HaAvodah, (מכתבי קודש נ"ג) writes, "One must believe that everything that occurs is from Hashem Who is good to all, and it is certainly for man's good. And when he doesn't understand how it is for his good, he should believe it is an even greater favor for man."

The Tanya (Igeres HaKodesh 11) writes:

8. The Sfas Emes (Berzhan, Noach) zt'l writes, "קבלה בידני", "We received [from our teachers] that Eliyahu is often in the marketplace (see Taanis 22.)... This is because people merchants have difficulty remembering that even in the marketplace, everything happens through Hashem's hashgachah. People think that טבע, nature, rules there. Eliyahu is in the marketplace to rouse people to remember that everything happens through Hashem's hashgachah."

"When a person contemplates this idea, and he thinks about the reality that he is literally being created every moment, יש מאין, a being from nothingness, then how could he think that life is bad for him or that he has yesurim from his children, his health, or from his parnassah, or any other kind of yesurim? Behold, he is being created from אין, nothingness [and nothingness is a very high level]. This is because חכמה, Hashem's wisdom, is called אין, nothingness, and חכמה is the source of all life, all goodness, and all pleasures. It is עדין, which is higher than Olam HaBa. Only, it is because the good cannot be perceived, which causes people to think that it is bad and yesurim. But the truth is that nothing bad comes down from Above, and everything is good, only we don't perceive it because the goodness is so massive.

"This is the primary emunah, for which man was created: To believe there isn't a place where Hashem isn't there... and therefore, עוז וחדוה במקומו, there is only joy. Everything is always solely good.

"So, the first thing is that a person should be happy all the time, and he should believe in Hashem Who gives life to all creation, and He does kindness to His nation at every moment.

"When someone is sad, and he moans, he is showing that he has a small amount of bad and yesurim, and that he lacks something good, and that is *kefirah, chas v'shalom*. Therefore, the chachamim of kabbalah are so strict with us that we shouldn't have any *atzvus*. But when one believes in Hashem, he isn't upset about any yesurim concerning any matter in the world. No and yes are the same to him - truly the same."

It states (Devarim 28:3) ברוך אתה בעיר וברוך אתה בשדה, "You shall be blessed in the city, and you shall be blessed in the field." The Daas Zekainim m'Baalei HaTosfos explains that ברוך אתה בעיר refers to the city Yerushalayim, which is called עיר הקדוש, the holy city, and ברוך אתה בשדה refers to Tzion, as it states (Michah 3:12) ציון שדה תחרש, "Tzion shall be plowed as a field."

Reb Simchah Wasserman zt'l asks, why is it referred to as ברוך when Tzion is destroyed? How is this situation a blessing?

Everyone knows that a plowed field is the beginning of the growth that will come. Therefore, even when Tzion is plowed, it can be a blessing because it prepares for the restored times that will develop and prosper. (Simchas Elazar, vol.2 p.15).

Therefore, whoever feels that he is in a situation of "plowed" should know that much good will develop from this situation.

A hint to this idea is mentioned in (Eichah 3:10) אריה במסתרים, "A lion in hiding." אריה is gematria גבורה, which represents the matters that are difficult for a person, times that seem to be bad for him. But אריה is also gematria three times חסד because we must know that even that which appears terrible is solely Hashem's chesed.

Reb Chaim, the brother of the Maharal of Prague, in his sefer אגרת טיול takes note that throughout Megillas Eichah (which discusses the Churban), the only name of Hashem mentioned is Havayah - Hashem's name of kindness. אלקים, the name of judgment, isn't written in Megillas Eichah at all. He explains that this is to tell us that the Churban, and all matters that seem difficult for us, are all for our good and our benefit.

Galus

The Tiferes Shlomo (Rosh Hashanah ד"ה ויאמרו) writes that in the future, we will discover the goodness that was concealed in the galus, and the hint is (Tehillim 96:11) ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ, "The heavens will rejoice and the earth will exult." The word ותגל spells גלות.

Reb Elchanan Wasserman zt'l hy'd was asked in the Kovna Ghetto a few days before his petirah, "Why did Hashem do this? What is the purpose of all this suffering?"

Reb Elchanan replied with a mashal:

A man from the city approached a farmer and asked him to teach him the ways of

farmers. The city person had no idea what farmers do and was interested in learning. The farmer said, "I will teach you, but you must be a patient student. The lessons and teachings of farmers will take lots of time. It isn't something that I can teach you in just one day."

"I will be patient," the student replied.

"Then come out with me to the field," the farmer said.

They went outside, and the farmer asked his new student, "What do you see?" The student replied that he saw a field covered with high grass.

The farmer took a plow and plowed and ripped out the grass and beautiful flowers growing wildly in the field. Now, the field was empty, with many holes from the plowing. The shocked student asked, "Why are you ruining the field with your own hands? It looked better before! You call yourself a farmer? You only ruin fields."

The farmer replied, "Patience. I told you that you need patience to understand farmers' ways. You won't understand in one day."

The next day, he called his new student, and they went out to the field again. The farmer took a bag filled with wheat kernels and asked the student, "What do you see today?"

He said what he saw. "I see a bag of wheat kernels."

The farmer planted the kernels in the field, in the holes he prepared yesterday, and then covered them with earth.

The student was shocked. "Isn't it enough that you ruined the field yesterday and got rid of all the grass that was growing in it? Now you are being even more foolish. You are taking good wheat kernels, which could be cooked or baked and eaten, and you are burying them in the ground! Why do you waste your money?"

The farmer replied, "Remember what I told you. You need patience."

A few months later, the farmer called his student and told him it was time to return to the field again. Together, they went out to the field, and the student saw orderly rows of growing wheat. "What do you see now?" the farmer asked. The student replied, "I realize I was wrong for doubting you earlier. Now, the field is much more beautiful than it was before."

The farmer replied, "The process isn't over yet. You will still need a lot of patience. There will be more questions and surprises before you learn the ways of farmers."

After some more time passed, the farmer called for his student and they went out to the field again. The wheat had grown very high, and the wheat stalks were filled with seeds. The farmer began cutting the grain with a sickle.

The student shouted, "Why are you ruining your field?! I don't believe what I see! You finally have a good field, and you ruin it again!"

The farmer replied, "*Savlanus*. Patience. You will understand, but you need to practice your patience."

The farmer placed all the cut stalks into a pile and began hitting them with a hammer. (This is called *דש*, threshing. It separates the kernels from the stalks). The student watched in surprise. He held himself back from asking all the burning questions inside him.

Afterward, using a shovel, the farmer threw stalks of wheat into the air, and the wind blew the stalks away to the distance while the kernels fell to the ground. (This is called *וורה*, winnowing.)

The student was quite upset with what the farmer was doing to his field but forced himself to remain silent. However, when he saw the farmer grinding the wheat kernels into "white dust," he couldn't contain himself any longer. He didn't realize that this "white

dust" was flour. He shouted, "Why did you turn your wheat into dust? What purpose is there to grinding your beautiful wheat?"

As he expected, the farmer replied, "*Savlanus*. Patience. Be patient, and you will see.

The student was in for some more surprises. The farmer mixed the "white dust" with water and made dough from it. In the student's eyes, this was a useless "mud" mixture. But when the farmer formed the dough into bread, the student began to understand. There was purpose and meaning to what the farmer was doing. He was creating bread.

But then the farmer took the form of bread and placed it on the fire. The student couldn't control himself any longer. He shouted, "For months, you worked and finally began to make something. You finally created a loaf of bread! But then you throw it into the fire? Don't you care about your time? Don't you care to accomplish something in your life? Why do you throw your hard work into the fire?"

The response was once again, "*Savlanus*, patience."

Soon, the bread was taken out of the oven, and the smell was heavenly. He invited the student to a meal and gave him a slice of bread. The farmer said, "Nu, now do you understand?"

The *nimshal* is that we don't understand Hashem's ways. We wonder and shout, "Why is Hakadosh Baruch Hu throwing everything into the fire? Have *rachmanus* on your creations." But when Moshiach comes, we will understand why all of this had to occur. And until then, we must wait patiently. The time will come when we discover all the

good we gained from the galus. (Kobetz Maamaim v'Igos, vol.2 p.224).

Shemiras Einayim

It states (6:8) וַיִּנָּח מִצַּח הַן בְּעֵינֵי ה', "And Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes." The Beis Avraham *zt'l* taught that Noach found *chen* בְּעֵינֵי ה' because he was cautious with his eyes.

The Torah (9:23) tells us that Shem and Yefes covered their father, Noach. For performing this good deed, Yefes was rewarded that his descendants were brought to burial, and Shem was rewarded with the mitzvah of *tzitzis*.

When Shem and Yefes went to cover Noach, they walked backward so they wouldn't see Noach unclothed. While covering him, they had to turn towards their father to do so, but they were cautious that at least their faces should be turned away.

Rashi (9:23) explains that this is why it states אַחֲרֵיכֶם, backward, twice in this *pasuk*.⁹ One time refers to when they entered the room, and the other אַחֲרֵיכֶם is when they were covering their father. Their bodies faced Noach to cover him, but they turned their faces away. This is how cautious they were to guard their eyes and not to disgrace their father.

The Alshich HaKadosh asks, why didn't they simply close their eyes? The Alshich answers that even facing an *ervah* creates a *p'gam*, a blemish, on one's soul.

In contrast, the Torah (9:24) tells us, וִירָא חָם, "And Cham, the father of Canaan saw his father's *ervah*." Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 70) reveal other terrible sins that Cham did to his father, but from the literal words of the *pasuk*, it seems that Cham's sin was that he saw his father's *ervah*. The Beis

9. The *pasuk* (9:23) states: וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם וַיִּפֹּת אֶת הַשְּׂמֹלֶה וַיִּשְׂמְרוּ עַל שְׂכָם שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵיכֶם וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת עֲרוֹת אֲבֵיהֶם וּפְנֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵיכֶם וְעֲרוֹת אֲבֵיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ, "Shem and Yefes took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and they walked backwards (אַחֲרֵיכֶם), and covered their father's nakedness; their faces were turned away (אַחֲרֵיכֶם), and they didn't see their father's nakedness."

Yisrael *zt'l* said that we should learn from this the severity of not guarding one's eyes. For that sin alone, Cham received so many curses.

The final words of the Torah (34:12) are לעיני כל ישראל, "before the eyes of all Yisrael." These words connect with the first word of the Torah, בראשית, to teach us that the foundation and the beginning of the Torah is to be cautious with one's eyes.¹⁰

One of the benefits of *shemiras einayim* is that when we guard our eyes, Hashem's eyes will be on us to protect us from all bad. It states (Devarim 32:10) יצרנהו כאישון עינו, "He protected them like the pupil of His eye." The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu watches a person כאישון עינו, in accordance to the amount that he guards his own eyes. As Chazal say שמור לי ואשמור לך שומר (Bava Metzia 89:). Hashem says to a Yid, שמור לי, guard your eyes as I commanded you, ואני אשמור לך, and I will protect you from all tzaros and troubles. And in addition, you will be a שמור שומר, a paid guard, because you will receive reward in Olam HaBa."

We quoted above the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 33:6) that the dove brought an olive branch from Gan Eden, and that is how Noach knew that the *mabul* had receded. The Ramban (8:11) quotes this Midrash and asks that if the olive branch came from Gan Eden, where there was no flood at all, how did Noach know from the olive branch that the waters of the flood were subsiding?

The Ramban answers that during the *mabul*, the gates of Gan Eden were sealed so the flood waters wouldn't enter there. When Noach saw that the dove could enter Gan Eden, Noach understood that the gates of Gan Eden were open once again. That was his sign that the flood had ended.¹¹

Why were the gates of Gan Eden sealed during the flood? It must be that even Gan Eden was at risk of being affected by the flood. The doors had to be shut so the flood waters wouldn't enter there.

Let this be a lesson for our times that when there is a flood of *apikorsus* and immorality in the world, our homes, which are our Gan Eden, must be locked to keep these foreign influences from entering.

10. On the *pasuk* לעיני כל ישראל, Rashi writes, זו שבירת הלוחות, referring to [when Moshe] broke the *luchos*." The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said that this implies that when one isn't careful with his eyes, that's like שבירת הלוחות, the shattering of the *luchos*, *chas veshalom*.

11. Chazal (*Tanchuma*, *Tetzaveh* 5) state, "Just as the dove brought light to the world, so shall you bring olive oil and light the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash."

Reb Yehoshua Leib Diskin *zt'l* asks: The dove brought "light" to Noach and his family when it showed them the olive branch, a sign that the flood had subsided, but when did it bring light to the entire world?

We discussed the Midrash that the dove took a branch of an olive tree from Gan Eden. But a simpler explanation is that the olive tree was in this world. All agriculture perished in the *mabul*; only the robust and durable olive trees survived the storm. Reb Yehoshua Leib Diskin *zt'l* (*Pekudei*) explains that from the beginning of creation, Hashem created olive trees with a sturdy, all-weather nature, in order to have a way to provide hope and *chizuk* to Noach and his family when they will be in the *teivah*. If all trees, including olive trees, were destroyed, Noach and his family would have no way of knowing that they would soon leave the *teivah*. From the beginning of Creation, Hashem gave the olive trees a durable nature to give hope and encouragement to Noach and his family at the time of the flood.

This is a lesson for all mankind. When going through hard times, know that from the beginning of Creation, Hashem planned ways to help you in your plight, and to give you hope, encouragement, and joy.

The Maharal Diskin explains that in this way, the dove gives encouragement to the entire world. This awareness "brings light to the world."

A large part of *shemiras einayim* is being cautious with unfiltered and/or unneeded technology. We want the *mabul* to remain outside and not enter our homes.¹²

12. The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Behaloscha* 10) states, "The Jewish nation says to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Ribono Shel Olam, you know the great strength of the *yetzer hara*. [How can we possibly overcome him?]' Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'Remove him little by little in this world, and I will remove him entirely from you in Olam HaBa.'" It is true that it is hard to overcome the *yetzer hara* and to guard the eyes. Therefore, sometimes, it is best to take on small *kabbalos* to help us improve, and Hashem will help us succeed.

A group of top bachurim of the Slonimer yeshiva came to the Beis Avraham zt'l after Pesach, and the Beis Avraham said, "Kinderlach, you certainly said the Haggadah", and he repeated the pasuk (Yechezkel 16:7, which is said in the Haggadah) ותרבי ותגדלי ותבואי בעדי עדיים... ואת ערום ועריה "You have increased and grown, and you have come with perfect beauty... yet you were naked and bare." He repeated this pasuk several times, and his intention was clear. He told them they grew up and are getting on in life, yet they are empty of mitzvos. He was silent for a long time and moaned deeply. The bachurim stood there in fear. Then the Beis Avraham completed the verse (Yechezkel 16:5), ואמר לך בדמיון חיי, "I said to you, 'With your blood, live,' and I said to you, 'With your blood, live.'" His message to them was that their fighting with the *yetzer hara*, בדמיון חיי, that will give them life. Their battles with the *yetzer hara* will elevate them to the highest levels.

Some years ago, *erev Shabbos Eikev*, someone was learning in the beis medresh of his bungalow colony when he received a call from another member of this bungalow colony. The caller began the call with: "Baruch Hashem, everyone is well. No one is harmed. Your wife was in an accident, but she is fine. If you want to hear the details, call this number. This person was present when the accident occurred."

The husband immediately called that number and once again heard that his wife was well. "But your van is gone. It was a head-on collision with a large truck. It's a miracle everyone is well."

Generally, when a car is totaled, the passengers do not escape injury, or worse *c'v*, especially when the accident involves a large, heavy truck. The husband was relieved to hear that his wife was well.

He went to the site of the accident. He found his wife and the other passengers standing at the side of the road, together with the large truck that crashed into them. Their van wasn't there anymore. It was towed away.

The couple tried to figure out which good deed they did granted them this miracle, but they couldn't think of anything special.

Some days later, the junkyard called and asked them to come and remove anything they wanted to salvage from the van before they destroyed it.

The couple went to the yard. They saw the van's body torn upwards above the chassis, like the cover over an opened tin can. The wife showed her husband where the truck's fender tore through the car and stopped a centimeter before ramming into her.

They noticed that the truck stopped precisely at the place where they had installed an additional step, some years before.

Thirteen years before, in Lakewood (תשס"ח), there was a large gathering to discuss the importance of *tznius*. The meeting was well attended, and many *roshei yeshiva* and rabbanim spoke. After the gathering, many women discarded their questionable clothing and bought new clothing with a higher standard of *tznius*.

A member of the Hatzalah organization in Lakewood noted that for a week after the meeting, Hatzalah hardly received any calls. And when there was a call, it wasn't anything too serious. And that was starkly different than how it generally was. One wise person said that it is hinted in the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 23:15), כִּי ה' ... אלקיך מתהלך בקרב מחניך להצילך, this *pasuk* discusses *tznius* and it states להצילך, that Hashem is your Hatzalah. Because when there's *tznius*, you don't need Hatzalah. Hashem performs the Hatzalah work for you.

This couple lives in Lakewood, and they attended this inspirational gathering. A few years later, the message of the *asifah* was still on their mind. Therefore, when they bought an eight-seater van (to accommodate

The Gemara (*Succah* 49:) states, "If a person has *chen*, you can be certain that he fears Hashem." This is another explanation as to how Noach attained *chen*. Noach had *chen* because of his *yiras Shamayim*.¹³

Learning Torah is the Beginning of Teshuvah

It states in this week's parashah (*Bereishis* 10:10) וְהָיָה רֵאשִׁית מַמְלַכְתּוֹ בְּבֶל וְאַרְרָךְ, "And the beginning of his kingdom was Bavel and Erech..." The Or L'Shamayim of Apta zt'l explained the pasuk to mean that the beginning of accepting מַלְכוּת, the yoke and kingdom of heaven is בְּבֶל, to study Talmud Bavli. And then one will merit אַרְרָךְ, which means long life (אריכות ימים) and health. Reb

Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l would often repeat this vort to remind people that the beginning of accepting the yoke of heaven is to study Gemara.

Bringing korbanos is one way of performing teshuvah. The Midrash (*Shemos* Rabba 38:4) tells that Bnei Yisrael say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "We are poor, and we don't have money to bring korbanos." Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, "I am only asking that you give Me words. As it states (*Hosheia* 14:3) קְחוּ עִמְכֶם דְּבָרִים וּשְׁבוּ אֵלַי, 'Take words with yourselves and return to Hashem,' and I will forgive all your aveiros." The Midrash explains that "words" means דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה, that they should speak words of Torah. That is how they can do teshuvah before Hashem.¹⁴

their growing family), the wife requested that, for the sake of *tznius*, another step be added so people going in and out of the van wouldn't need to take large strides.

The truck stopped right before that additional step. The couple now understood the root of the miracle. The merit of *tznius* protected them.

13. The Skulener Rebbe of Monsey Shlita related that someone once came to his father zt'l seeking a *segulah* for *parnassah*. The Rebbe told him to say פְּרִשְׁת הִירָאָה (printed after *shacharis* in many siddurim). The man thought the Rebbe misunderstood him, so he repeated that he was seeking a *segulah* for *parnassah*, not for *yiras Shamayim*. The Rebbe replied that it states (*Tehillim* 111:5), טָרַף נֶתַן לִירְאָיו, "'Hashem provided food for those who fear Him.' When you fear Hashem, you will have *parnassah*."

Reb Yehudah of Nasod zt'l was once on a train in a private compartment when an elderly woman boarded. The Rav jumped off the moving train. His students asked him, "Why were you *moser nefesh* to jump out of a moving train? There was nothing to fear. She's an old woman!"

He replied, "I wasn't afraid of her. I was afraid of the *aveirah* of *yichud*."

The Koznitzer Magid zt'l would offer private audiences to men who came to seek his counsel and *brachos*, but he didn't admit women to his room. Once, when the *gabbai* wasn't around, an elderly woman entered the Magid's room. The Koznitzer Magid hurried to the window and was ready to jump out. Fortunately, just then, the *gabbai* returned.

The *gabbai* asked, "The woman was old, and you're ill. What were you afraid of? Why were you ready to risk your life and jump out of the window?"

The Koznitzer Magid replied, "When the *yetzer hara* takes control (קַאמְאנְדֵעוּיט), he can make an old woman appear young and a sick person healthy."

14. The Midrash tells that Klal Yisrael responded, אֵין אֲנִי יוֹדְעִין, that they don't know Torah. Hashem replies, "Cry before me, [daven], and I will accept it. Your fathers were enslaved in Mitzrayim; didn't I save them due to their tefillos? As it states (*Shemos* 2:23) וַיִּגְדַּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעֶבְרָה וַיִּזְעַקוּ. In the days of Yehoshua, didn't I perform miracles for them because of tefillah?"

So, the Midrash has two explanations for קְחוּ עִמְכֶם דְּבָרִים וּשְׁבוּ אֵלַי. One approach is to do teshuvah by studying Torah, and the other is with tefillah. In this section, we are studying the Midrash's first path. We do teshuvah with words of Torah.

The following Midrash is also an indication that the process of teshuvah is to study Torah. The Midrash states (Vayikra Rabba 25:1), "If a person transgresses an aveirah, what should he do and merit life? If he was accustomed to studying one page, he should study two. If he was accustomed to study one chapter, he should study two." This is because the path of teshuvah is through studying Torah.

In Shemonah Esrei, we say השיבנו אבינו לתורתך... והחזירנו בתשובה שלמה לפניך, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah... and bring us back with complete teshuvah before You." The Imrei Emes zt'l notes that a tefillah for Torah study precedes the request for teshuvah because the path to teshuvah is through studying Torah. And this is because the light of the Torah will bring one to complete teshuvah (see Yalkut Yirmiyahu 282).¹⁵

The Torah discusses the teshuvah that Klal Yisrael will do before Moshiach comes. It states (Devarim 30:2) ושבתי עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו, "You will return to Hashem, your G-d, and you will listen to His voice." The Or HaChaim writes, "שמעת בקולו" refers to studying Torah. The Torah doesn't mention [any other step in teshuvah, other than that he will study Torah]. This is the beginning of teshuvah. As Chazal (Zohar vol.3 270.) states, 'In the merit of studying Torah, the Yidden will be redeemed. And it states (Yirmiyahu 9:11-12) על מה אבדה הארץ וגו', ויאמר ה' על עזבם את תורתי, 'Why is the land lost? Hashem said, 'It is because they

have left My Torah.' When they return to the Torah study, Hashem will gather them and bring them to the land they inherited."¹⁶

The Joy and Benefit of Being Tied Down

There was a leaf that hung high on a tree. Every day, it would look up and watch the birds fly by. The leaf also wanted to fly. Why did it need to be tied down to the tree? Hashem heard the leaf's prayer and allowed the leaf to break off from the tree. The leaf joyously tossed around in the wind and swiveled through the air. But then it fell to the ground, dried up, and perished. The leaf discovered it was better to be tied down to the tree.

Let this remind us that freedom can seem full of joy, but sometimes, being "tied down" is our source of life. A bachur in yeshiva is tied down and bound to the rules and regulations that the yeshiva sets down. He can't come and go when he desires, he can't choose when he wants to learn and when he wants to socialize, he can't dress as he wants, and so on. He is in a system and has to follow the rules, which might be hard for him. He doesn't have "freedom" to do as he pleases.

But what is the alternative? The yeshiva is his life source. It is the place where he is protected from the outdoor, negative influences. It is the place where he can grow in Torah knowledge and dwell among G-d

15. Chazal (Tamid 32:) say, "Whoever studies Torah at night, שכניה כנגדו, the Shechinah is opposite him." The Beis Yisrael explained that this refers to a person who is at a low level, represented by לילה. Furthermore, כנגדו, he is rebellious against Hashem, r'l. Nevertheless, when he studies Torah, he merits that the Shechinah is with him.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa taught that when a person sins, his neshamah leaves. He receives his neshamah back when he studies Torah. This is hinted at in the pasuk (Tehillim 19:8) תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש, with the study of Torah, משיבת נפש, the neshamah is returned to him.

16. Rashi (Devarim 32:46-47) teaches, "A person should direct his eyes, heart, and ears to the words of Torah... כי לא דבר רק הוא מכם, you aren't toiling in Torah for nothing, you will receive a great reward for this."

The Or HaChaim (Devarim 32:2) teaches that studying Torah is mesugal for parnassah. He writes, "If words of Torah aren't spoken, Hashem doesn't want to send down rain to them. It states (Avos 3:17) אם אין קמה אין תורה, this means that if you see that there isn't קמה, parnassah, know that it is due to a lack of Torah."

fearing friends. It might be hard to feel tied down, but the alternative is far worse. Think about the leaf, how happy it felt when it broke off from the tree, but how long did that joy last?

When you sift flour, the thin particles fall through the grid, and the rougher, thicker chunks are held above. The flour that fell through might feel jealous of its few friends that are still free, above the grid. It wishes to be like them. But soon, those "free" kernels will be tossed into the garbage, while the thin flour will become a delicious, beautiful

cake. To be free isn't always the primary criterion a person should seek because being tied down has many benefits.

There are responsibilities in life. Holding a job might mean obeying a boss, coming on time, and performing well. Being married also comes with its responsibilities. But these responsibilities give us life! Life would be meaningless without these obligations.

Keeping the Torah is also a responsibility. We don't have the freedom to act as we want to. But it isn't stifling, chas v'shalom. It is our life-source.