

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Bo



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Torah Wellsprings - Bo

Hashem is Always with Us

When the Yidden went down to Mitzrayim (parashas Vayigash) they were a community of seventy people, as it states (Bereishis 46:27) **כָּל נַפְשֵׁי הַבָּיִת יַעֲקֹב הַבָּאִה מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַעִים**, "All the souls of the house of Yaakov who came to Mitzrayim were seventy." The Torah lists their names, and Rashi (46:15) notes that the Torah lists only 69 names and not seventy. One name was missing.

When they left Mitzrayim, they were 600,000, as it states in this week's parashah (Shemos 12:37) **וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצְרַיִם בְּמֵוָה אֶלְפֵי רִגְלֵי הָעֲבָדִים לְבַד מֵאֵף**, "Bnei Yisrael journeyed from Ramses to Succos, about six hundred thousand on foot, the men, besides the young children." This time, as well, one was missing from the number. Yalkut Shimoni (Vayigash 152) states, "When they went down to Mitzrayim, they were missing one to the number seventy, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu

filled the number, as it states (Bereishis 46:4) **אֲנִי אֶרְדָּה עִמָּךְ מִצְרַיִם**, "I will go down with you to Mitzrayim," and when they left Mitzrayim, one number was missing to the number 600,000, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu completed the number, as it states (Bereishis 46:4) **וְאֲנִי אֶעֱלֶךָ**, "I will also go up".

Let us learn from this that when things don't seem to add up, and the "calculation" seems wrong, bring Hashem into the picture, and everything will work fine. Remember that what is happening to you is from Hashem. Serve Hashem and connect yourself to Him. Bring Hashem into the calculation, and you will see that everything will work out well.¹

Another lesson is to remember that Hashem is always with us. When we go to Mitzrayim, when we leave Mitzrayim, in good times and hard times, Hashem is always with us to help, lead, and protect us.²

1. We recently received a letter from a chashuve Yid from *chutz l'aretz*. He ran into trouble with the tax department, who dealt with him harshly and sent him to prison. The government froze his bank account, and his family had to borrow money just to buy food for his children. He hired the best lawyer and brought in *askanim*, but nothing helped. Wherever he turned, he failed to escape the quagmire he fell into.

One day, he realized that no one could help him other than Hashem. His *hishtadlus* wasn't accomplishing anything. He turned his eyes to heaven and said, "Father in heaven, no one can help me, but You. Please, save me. Get me out of prison and save me from my troubles."

A day or two afterward, he was released from prison, his bank account was reopened, and the entire case against him was dismissed. Indeed, no one was able to help him, only Hashem. He answers our tefillos, especially when we turn to Him with the realization that only He can help.

2. When a chasan and kallah go to their chuppah, the mechutanim escort them while carrying torches. This is to teach the chasan and kallah that they are never alone. Hashem is always with them, leading them. The "light" of this awareness will illuminate their way, b'gashmiyus and b'ruchniyus, their entire life.

Before the Divrei Yoel of Satmar zt'l went to the chuppah, his father, the Kedushas Yom Tov zt'l, told him that a chuppah is conducted outdoors so the chasan and kallah should look up to heaven and remember to rely on Hashem.

The Chidushei HaRim (Imrei HaRim, Shelach, העריות) said, "We follow Hashem Yisbarach like sheep following a shepherd." Hashem is always with us, leading us each step of the way.

The custom in Nadvorna is to sing אחד יחיד ומיוחד when *peckelach* are thrown on the chasan after his *aliyah* on the Shabbos before his chasunah. This is because there are three partners in the creation of man:

Lessons for Bnei Yisrael

It states (Shemos 7:5) 'וידעו מצרים כי אני ה' "The Mitzrim should know that I am Hashem." It seems from this pasuk that the purpose of the makos was that the Mitzrim should know Hashem.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim (Va'eira וגם ד"ה) writes in the name of this grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh, "My grandfather z"l asked that it seems strange that Hashem would do all these wonders and miracles above nature only so that Mitzrayim should know Hashem. In my humble opinion, it is clear that the pasuk is referring to Yisrael, the Jewish people, those who [were at very low levels and] acted like the Mitzrim. They had sunk into their falsehood. Hashem said that He will become so revealed (with the ten makos) until even they [the Yidden who act like Mitzrim] will know Hashem, and they will know that there is nothing but Hashem."

We say in the Ani Maamins, אני מאמין, באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים והוא לבדו עשה ויעשה לכל המעשים "I believe with emunah sheleimah that the Creator, bless be His name, He created and He leads all creations, and He alone did,

does, and will do all deeds." This is the emunah that Hashem taught us through bringing the ten makos.

Two Lessons from Makas Bechoros

Hashem said to Moshe (11:1) עוד יגוע אָהָד אָבִיָא, "I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Mitzrayim..." It seems that *makas Bechoros* had two purposes: for Pharaoh and for Mitzrayim.

Reb Shimon Sholom of Amshinov zt'l explained that פרעה represents the tumah of *avodah zarah*, for it is known that Pharaoh made himself an *avodah zarah* (see Rashi Shemos 7:15). He said (Yechezkel 29:3) אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לִי יְאֹרִי וְאֲנִי, "My river is my own, and I made myself."

מְצָרִים represents the tumah of *arayos* (forbidden marriages) because מְצָרִים is called עֲרוֹת (see Bereishis 42:9). Hashem said, עוד יגוע אָהָד אָבִיָא, one more *makah* to break the *kelipos* of *avodah zarah* and of *arayos*. As we wrote above from the Baal Shem Tov, the purpose of the makos was mostly for Bnei Yisrael to know Hashem. Here, too, the primary objective was to purify the Jewish nation from these sins and

Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the father, and the mother (Kidushin 30:). The bachur was accustomed to eating at his parent's table; they cared for all his needs. But who will take care of him now? The gathered sing אחד יחיד, to remind him to trust in Hashem. Even if *peckelach* are thrown at him, don't worry. Hashem is with you; the "*peckelach*" are filled with sweets and goodies.

Sefer שחר (Shu"t 37) tells that his uncle, Rebbe Yechiel of Moosh zy'a, came home one Friday night to make kiddush. It was very cold, so Reb Yechiel stood on a small stool near the oven to warm his hands. The low stool slipped from under his feet, and Reb Yechiel fell and broke his hands. (For the rest of his life, he had *yesurim* from that fall.) When they picked him up, people heard him say the pasuk (Tehillim 23:2) בְּנְאוֹת דֶּשָׁא, "He causes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters." He explained: "When one travels through the immense sea, and his ship is about to capsize, or when one walks on a shaky bridge over a river, he will daven that he should survive. But when one is בְּנְאוֹת דֶּשָׁא, in green pastures, or standing at בְּנְאוֹת דֶּשָׁא, calm peaceful waters, he doesn't think he needs a miracle to pass through successfully. To correct us, Dovid haMelech says בְּנְאוֹת דֶּשָׁא רִבְעִינִי עַל מֵי מְנוּחוֹת יְהוָה, Hashem helps us even when we are in green pastures, and besides peaceful waters. One needs Hashem's help at every step, and one should always pray to Hashem to save him from all tzaros and problems.

Reb Yechiel of Moosh said, "Who would think it is dangerous to climb up onto this low bench? Who would imagine that one could break his hands if he did? (Tehillim 16:8) שׁוֹיִתִּי לְנֶגְדֵי תְּמִיד, "I have placed Hashem before me constantly" and I always daven to him to protect me because there isn't a moment that I don't need His help.

tumos. As the Zohar (vol.2 p.36.) explains the pasuk (Yeshayah 19:22) וְנִגַּף ה' אֶת מִצְרַיִם נִגּוּף וְרִפּוּא "Hashem shall plague Mitzrayim, plaguing and healing." The Zohar explains that each makah was a plague for Mitzrayim and a cure for the Yidden. Because in addition to being a punishment for Mitzrayim, the makos healed and taught lessons to Bnei Yisrael. As we explained, פרעה is avodah zarah and מִצְרַיִם represents עֲרֹת הָאֲרֶץ, the aveiros of arayos. The makos were to teach Bnei Yisrael to improve in these areas.³

A wise person, a tzaddik, shared with me a beautiful thought. We understand that Klal Yisrael needed to be purified from the tumah of arayos,⁴ but why did they need to be purified for *avodah zarah*? Who was so foolish as to worship idols? Pharaoh said לִי יָצַרְתָּ נַיִל וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי, implying that he thought he created the Nile and that he created himself. No rational thinking Yid would ever think such a thing (unless he needs to be locked up in an asylum)! So why did the Jews need the makah to cleanse them from avodah zarah?

The answer can be found in Rashi's commentary on Yechezkel (29:3) on the words לִי יָצַרְתָּ נַיִל וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי "My river is my own, and I made myself." Rashi writes, לִי יָצַרְתָּ נַיִל וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי לְעֵלְיוֹנִים כִּי יֵשׁ לִי יָצַרְתִּי מִסַּפֵּיק כָּל צְרִכִי.

Translation: "I don't need heaven because I have the Nile for all my needs." He was

saying that he doesn't need Heaven to give him rain and water because he has the Nile.

He also said, וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי. בְּגִבּוֹרָתִי וּבְחִכְמָתִי הִגְדַּלְתִּי, גְּדוּלְתִי וּמִמְשַׁלְתִּי

Translation: "With my wisdom and strength, I became great and made my kingdom powerful." Once again, Pharaoh thought that he, with his wisdom and strength, built up his kingship in Mitzrayim, and he didn't realize that everything was from Hashem.

The Midrash (Osiyos d'Reb Akiva) writes, "Pharaoh said to Moshe and Aharon, 'You say Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings rain, I don't need His help, I already have the Nile River.' Such thinking can creep into our minds as well. These thoughts are a mild form of avodah zarah because it is believing in one's ability and believing in nature. Even the Jewish nation needs chizuk in these matters. With makas Bechoros, Hashem brought the Jewish nation to clearly recognize and undoubtedly know that everything is from Hashem. Even when things appear to happen naturally or with the strength of man, everything is from Hashem alone.

Hashem said to Moshe (Shemos 10:1-2) בֹּא אֵל פַּרְעֹה כִּי אֲנִי הִקְבַּדְתִּי אֶת לְבוֹ וְאֶת לֵב עַבְדֶּיךָ לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְתִּי אֵלָה בְּקִרְבּוֹ, וְלִמְעַן תִּסְפַּר בְּאָזְנִי בְּנֶגְדְךָ וּבֶן בְּנֶגְדְךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלִיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת אֶתְתִּי אֲשֶׁר שְׂמַתִּי בָם וַיַּדְעֵתֶם כִּי אֲנִי ה' "Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart

3. I heard the following story from the baal hamaaseh. He is a chashuve yungerman from Yerushalayim, a masmid, and a talmid chacham. In the year תשפ"ג, Iyar, he had a difficult test related to his cell phone. He had a phone that is called תומך, which isn't "the most kosher phone". He knew he should change it, but there were certain benefits this phone had, and it was hard for him to discard it.

One day, he decided to overcome his yetzer hara, and threw away his old phone and bought a new one, which is endorsed by Gedolei Yisrael. A few days later, he was riding his electric bike on Bar Ilan in Yerushalayim, and a large car, speeding through a red light, smashed into him. The *yungerman* flew halfway across the street. Amazingly, he stood up. Hatzalah came, but after seeing how well he appeared they told him he didn't even have to go to the hospital for a checkup. People who witnessed the accident thought he wouldn't survive. He says he was saved from certain death because he overcame this great nisayon.

4. Reb Hershel of Riminov (Be'eros Mayim) teaches: (13:2) בְּקִדְשׁ לִי כָּל בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר כָּל רֵחֶם "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first issue of every womb..."

The pasuk is hinting לִי בְּקִדְשׁ, when a person sanctifies himself (פֶּטֶר means open), this opens כָּל רֵחֶם, Hashem's compassion. The gates of Hashem's compassion open up in heaven.

and the heart of his servants, in order that I may place these signs of Mine in his midst. And in order that you tell into the ears of your son and your son's son how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, and [that you tell of] My signs that I placed in them, and you will know that I am Hashem."

What "mockery" did Hashem perform in Mitzrayim? The Ramban writes *וטעם התעללותי*. "כי אני מצחק בו, שאני מכביד את לבו ועושה הנקמות בו" The mockery was that I made a joke of Pharaoh because I strengthened his heart and took revenge on him."

Pharaoh thought it was his decision when he said he wouldn't let the Yidden out of Mitzrayim, but it wasn't his choice. As the pesukim tell us, Hakadosh Baruch Hu hardened Pharaoh's heart and the heart of his servants. When the time of redemption arrived, Hashem turned Pharaoh's heart

around, and he wanted to send the Yidden out of Mitzrayim. Pharaoh was like clay in Hashem's hands, which was the mockery that Hashem made of Pharaoh. Pharaoh thought he was in control, but he wasn't.⁵

Tefillin Reveals Hashem's Oneness

The end of this week's parashah discusses the mitzvah of tefillin.

Shulchan Aruch (25:5) states, "When you wear tefillin, you should think that Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to wear on our arm and head these four parshiyos (קדש, והיה כי) that tell Hashem's oneness and yetzias Mitzrayim. The purpose is so we will remember the miracles that Hashem performed for us, Hashem's oneness, and that Hashem has the strength to rule over the upper and lower worlds, and to act with them as He desires."⁶

5. The following story was sent to us by the *baal hamaaseh*:

This person had recently moved to Rechasim (in Northern Eretz Yisrael). To receive a reduction in the annual property tax (called *arnona*), he had to present various documents to the city council to prove that he doesn't earn much and has many expenses, a big family, etc. After much headache and toil, he managed to gather all the required papers. He placed the documents in a folder, planning to bring them to the city council the following morning, to request a deduction. But the following day, he couldn't find the papers! He knew he had put everything on the table, but it wasn't there! He turned over the house, but it was as if they were swallowed up in the earth. The following day, he searched again, without success. He almost lost hope of finding the folder.

Later that day, after putting the children to bed, he and everyone in the home heard a loud sound coming from the dining room. He immediately recognized it as the sound of a cricket. He understood that until he chases this creature out of the house, no one would be able to fall asleep. He followed the sound to the couch, and the creature seemed to be under the couch. He bent down, looked under the couch, and found two things there. A cricket was sitting on top of the folder of documents he had prepared.

Because when Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants an item to be lost, searching for it won't help. It will remain concealed. The moment Hashem wants it to be found, it will be found. Hashem sends His messengers to help the person find the lost item.

Another lesson from this story is that when something appears to be a problem, it can be the root of salvation. The cricket bothered the family, but that disturbance was, in fact, their salvation.

6. A person was very concerned that the tefillin should be precisely in the right place. He used to ask four or five people whether his tefillin were directly between the eyes. One person told him, "The tefillin is in the right place; now put your head to the tefillin." This meant that he should think about the lessons the tefillin teach. The purpose of tefillin is to recognize Hashem's oneness in the world and to remember the miracles He performed when He took us out of Mitzrayim. It isn't enough that the tefillin are *on* the head. They must be *in* the head. Their message must penetrate our minds.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l tells a mashal of a wealthy person who owned a beautiful mansion, and his most

precious item was an exotic bird. He spent a lot of time listening to this bird sing. Once, he had to travel and hired someone to take care of his mansion while away. Notably, he warned him to take care of his precious bird. He wrote instructions on how to care for the bird and ordered him to read the list daily.

When the wealthy person returned from his trip, he found the house turned over. Obviously, the man he hired hadn't taken care of the home. And then he noticed his lifeless bird, having died from hunger.

He shouted at his worker, "Why didn't you do as I told you? Why didn't you feed my bird?"

The worker responded, "Why are you angry with me? I did exactly as you told me. Every day, when I awoke in the morning, after saying Modeh Ani, I read the list you gave me, carefully pronouncing each word."

The wealthy man replied to the foolish worker that the point wasn't *reading* the list but rather performing the instructions listed there.

The nimshal is that we read pasukim in the tefillah to remember yetzias Mitzrayim, but the purpose isn't to read the words; it is to impart the message into the mind.

And it isn't enough to use the mind. One must place the ideas in the heart, as well. The holy sefarim (Shaar HaPesukim, וישב ד"ה להיות, and other sefarim) teach that פרעה spells הערף, the neck. The neck is the area between the brain and the heart. פרעה, the yetzer hara, stands there and doesn't allow the ideas we know in our mind to reach our heart. מצרים can be translated as narrow, צר being the root of the word. So, יציאת מצרים means that the emunah and awareness of the mind should pass through this narrow section of the neck and reach the heart, and then all of our deeds will be performed with emunah in Hashem.

Once, doctors asked the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz zt'l, "What do you do for a living?"

The Divrei Chaim replied that he builds bridges. The doctor was shocked and asked for an explanation. The Divrei Chaim explained, "I build bridges that connect the brain with the heart."

Yesod HaAvodah zt'l (letter 25) writes, "Reb Leib Madukar zt'l, a student of the Magid of Mezritz zt'l, writes, "Know, my son, that the distance between the emunah of the brain and the emunah of the heart is similar to the distance between heaven and earth."

There was a person in Communist Russia, who refused to make a bris milah for his son. But the mother wanted her son to have a bris milah, so one day, when her husband was traveling, she sent a telegram to the Ribnitzer Rebbe zt'l (who was moser nefesh in Russia to perform bris milah), asking him to come and make a bris milah for her son.

The Ribnitzer Rebbe took Reb Mendel Futerfas zt'l and they traveled to perform the bris milah.

After the bris milah, they were unable to stop the bleeding. The child's life was in danger. But they couldn't call a doctor because the father would find out about the bris milah. Furthermore, the doctor might inform the authorities that they performed a bris milah. The Ribnitzer went into a closed room for a few moments, and when he came out, the bleeding had stopped. No medical procedure was needed. They returned home.

Reb Mendel Futerfas asked the rebbe, "What did you do in that room that caused the bleeding to stop?"

The Rebbe replied, "I prayed to Hashem. I said, 'Father in heaven. I did a great mitzvah. Please, don't embarrass me,' and Hashem accepted my tefillos.

Reb Mendel replied humbly, "When I saw the bleeding, I lost my mind. I know many lessons from Chabad, but when I panicked, I couldn't think about any of them, and I didn't have peace of mind. But the Rebbe, with his emunah peshutah and tefillos, saved the child's life.

This occurred because the emunah of the Ribnitzer Rebbe's mind reached his heart. And when emunah reaches the heart, everything one does and all his thoughts are imbued with emunah.

There is a mashal (brought in Pninei Yosef, p.6) about a simple, unlearned farmer, whose mind was exclusively occupied with his cows, chickens, and other farm animals. He didn't even know how to read or write. As it was the custom of that time, the farmer hired a *melamed* to teach his son some Torah, so he would grow up to be a good Jew.

When the Chinuch (422) discusses the mitzvah of tefillin, he writes, "We are obligated to write the four parshiyos on parchment and to place the tefillin on the head, between the eyes,⁷ and on the arm next to the heart.⁸ These four parshiyos were

Whenever the farmer received a letter from a relative or a business associate, he would ask the melamed to read the letter to him. Once, the farmer's father died, r'l. When the letter with this sad news arrived, he gave it to the melamed to read it to him. The melamed read it coldly, without emotion, and the farmer fainted.

Now, what is the difference between the farmer and the melamed? Why did the melamed read the letter without emotion and the farmer became so emotional? This is a great question, considering that the melamed was far more intelligent than the farmer. So why was the farmer so emotional, until he fainted, and the melamed was unmoved? The answer is obvious. The melamed *knew* in his mind what had occurred, but since he didn't know the farmer's father and had no connection with him, he didn't *feel* anything in his heart. Why should he care that ploni died? Whereas when the farmer heard that his father died, it shook him to the core until he collapsed.

We all know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world, but this knowledge isn't sufficient. One must live with emunah, as it states (Chavakuk 2:4) צדיק באמונתו יחיה. Emunah cannot be external knowledge. Instead, it is like "seeing" that there is a Creator in the world. The emunah must be alive to him.

A mashal is told about a person who was being tried for murder. There were witnesses who testified that they saw the accused murder the victim.

The accused's lawyer got up and announced, "My client is innocent. In five minutes, the true murderer will enter the courtroom and admit that he is the murderer. And then everyone will know that my client is innocent."

The court waited five and then ten minutes. Everyone kept looking at the door to see who would come, but no one came.

Finally, the judge told the lawyer, "You knew that no one would come. Why did you lie to us?"

The lawyer replied, "If you noticed, during these ten minutes, everyone was looking at the door. They all wanted to see who the true murderer was. The witnesses were kept looking at the door. That proves that they are false witnesses, because if they truly saw the murder, as they claim, they would know that no one was coming, for according to them, the murderer is already in the courtroom!"

The judge was impressed by the lawyer's clever proof but argued that he could prove from what occurred that the man on trial did indeed commit the crime. The judge explained, "The only person who didn't look to the door was the accused person, himself. And that proves that he committed the murder. He truly knew no one was coming."

The lesson is that every day a Yid shouts ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, and when he says אחד, he thinks about the oneness of Hashem and his emunah in Hashem. And then, immediately after the tefillah, he looks around to see where his parnassah would come from. Why does he look around? He just proclaimed that everything comes from ה' אחד! This means that his emunah hasn't reached his heart. Because had his emunah reached his heart, he won't look anywhere but to Hashem.

7. The apikorsim (Tzedokim) read the pasuk (Devarim 6:8) ולטוטפות בין עיניך, literally, that tefillin should be worn above the nose, between the eyes. The true chachamim, however, said that the correct place for tefillin is higher up on the head, in the location that corresponds to between the eyes.

We can explain that the apikorsim wanted the tefillin to be literally between the eyes because they don't believe in anything they cannot see with their eyes. The Torah, however, requires that we believe what our mind knows is true, even when we can't see it with our eyes.

We believe in Hashem even when we don't understand Hashem's hashgachah or recognize how difficult situations in life are for our ultimate benefit.

The tefillin is placed on the head, up to the soft spot of the skull on the top of the head. Chazal (Eiruvim 95:) call this spot מקום מוחו של תינוק רופם, "The place the brain of an infant is soft." This halachah hints that we trust in Hashem like an infant trusts in his parents. An infant knows that everything his parents do is for his good.

Reb Mendel Futerfas zt'l recounted that when he was imprisoned in Siberia, there was a goy there who climbed a tall mountain and knocked an iron peg into the top. Then he tied a long rope to the peg. He climbed up another mountain, planted a peg, and tied the other end of the rope onto the second iron peg. Between the two mountains was a deep valley. The goy asked the people gathered below whether they wanted to see him walk the rope from one mountain to the next. They all replied that they didn't want to see it and didn't want him to try. They preferred to perform the mitzvah of gathering his limbs when he came tumbling down. They were certain he would fall and die. Wondrously, he walked over the rope to the other side. (As is known, this is one of the wonders that Hashem has placed in creation, that such stunts are possible to achieve.)

The next day, the goy announced that he would repeat the stunt. Everyone begged him not to risk his life a second time foolishly. "Perhaps a miracle won't occur this time," they told him. But he refused to listen to them. He climbed up the mountain and he succeeded to reach the other mountain. He then announced to the crowd, "Do you believe I can do this a third time?"

They replied they believed.

He asked them, "Do you believe I can cross the rope while pushing a wagon?"

They replied, "We don't know how you managed to cross on the rope, but since you obviously are able to do so, we are also certain that you can do so while pushing a wagon."

He challenged them, "Does any of you want to sit in the wagon, as I push you over the rope?"

Of course, no one volunteered. No one dared risk their life.

A few minutes later, they saw the man walking over the rope for the third time, and this time he was pushing a wagon. To their shock, there was a young child in the wagon! The child appeared relaxed, enjoying the ride. Successfully, they reached the other mountain.

People asked one another, "Who is this child who agreed to go with him on the tightrope?"

When the boy got down from the mountain, the people asked him why he wasn't afraid. He answered, "Why should I be afraid? The tightrope walker is my father."

Reb Mendel concluded, "I learned from this story that when one knows that he is like a child being led by his Father, he is calm and fears nothing. When one remembers this, he lives a fortunate and good life, regardless of whether he is at home or in a Siberian prison. He is in his father's hands and, therefore, has nothing to fear.

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l (תשל"ג כ"ב Sichos Mussar) says that when one travels, he is in one place, and later he is in another place. If someone asked him where he was, he would reply with the name of the city or area he was passing. But when an infant is in his mother's hands, the child feels that he is constantly in the same place. He is in his mother's embrace. This is how we should always feel: We are always in Hashem's hands.

8. The tefillin are placed on the left hand, the weak hand. This is to remind us that man is weak and yetzias Mitzrayim wasn't due to the hand of man. It was solely the hand of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, with His wondrous miracles, as it states (Shemos 15:6) ימינך ה' נאדרי בכח ימינך ה' תרעץ אויב "Your right hand, Hashem, is most powerful. Your right hand, Hashem, crushes the enemy." Bnei Yisrael were compared to a weak hand, יד כהה, and they didn't do anything at all.

We don the tefillin shel yad before the tefillin shel rosh. The Shaul u'Meishiv zt'l (Divrei Shaul, Matos) explains that the tefillin she rosh represents Hashem's special hashgachah pratis over the Jewish nation. This is implied in the pasuk (Devarim 28:10) וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך "All the people of the world will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you and they will fear you," and the Gemara (Brachos 6.) says that this refers to the tefillin on the head. The tefillin shel Rosh proclaims to the world and to us that

chosen over the other sections of the Torah because these sections discuss accepting the yoke of heaven and tell of Hashem's oneness and that He took us out of Mitzrayim. Reading these *parshiyos* result in believing in creation and Hashem's hashgachah pratis over this lower world, and these *emunos* are the foundation of the Jewish religion. Therefore, we must place these foundations between our eyes and next to our hearts every day. Because according to the wise men of nature, these two limbs (the brain and the heart) are the source of one's thoughts. And when we place these words as a reminder on our brains and hearts, these ideas will resonate stronger, and we will remember Hashem's ways and merit the world to come."⁹

Defining Good and Bad

When we receive good things from Hashem, we say the brachah ברוך אתה ה'... הטוב והמטיב, and when something unfortunate happens, the brachah is דיין האמת. Chazal say that both brachos should be recited with the same amount of joy.

The Rambam (Pirush HaMishnayos, Brachos 9) explains: "This concept is understood to the wise... There are many things that, at first, we think are bad, and end up being very good. And there are many things that we perceive as good and turn out to be very negative in the end. Therefore, a wise person shouldn't have *tzaar* when a great *tzarah* comes... because you don't know what will come of it. Also, don't be too happy when something (you think is) good happens to you

Hashem watches over us with hashgachah pratis. How do we merit this hashgachah pratis? Through learning the lesson of the tefillin shel yad on the left hand. We believe we are powerless and cannot do anything alone. Due to our firm belief and trust in Hashem, Hashem watches over us with hashgachah pratis. This is the lesson of the tefillin shel rosh, which follows the lesson of the tefillin shel yad.

With this information, the Shaul u'Meisiv explains the Chazal (Shir HaShirim Rabba 4:3) that says that if someone accidentally put on the tefillin she rosh before tefillin shel yad, he didn't go out to war against Midyan. The explanation is that they needed Hashem's hashgachah pratis when they went to war. They received this hashgachah pratis by putting on the tefillin shel yad first and remembering they are weak and can't do anything on their own. This is how they merited receiving Hashem's hashgachah pratis and protection at war. But if one accidentally mixed up the order and put on the tefillin shel rosh before the tefillin shel yad, he shouldn't go out to battle. Without a strong awareness of his weakness and total reliance on Hashem, he wouldn't merit the hashgachah pratis, represented by the tefillin shel rosh.

This concept is alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 94:18) אם אמרתי מטה רגלי חסדך ה' יסעדי, which means that if a person says that מטה רגלי, I am weak, and I can't do anything on my own, he merits חסדך ה' יסעדי, Hashem's hashgachah pratis. But when a person trusts in his strength, he will stumble.

9. The Ramban (end of this week's parashah) writes, "A person doesn't have a portion in the Torah of Moshe until he believes that everything that happens to us is all miracles, and there is no nature at all."

It is known that the Beis Aharon would tell his chasidim to read this Ramban every day because of its essential message.

Also, the Rosh (Orchos Chaim 1:26) writes, "Believe in Hashem's hashgachah pratis, and thereby, you will believe...that Hashem's eyes see everything on earth, and His eyes see all the ways of man, and He examines the thoughts of the heart and kidneys. Because if a person doesn't believe in yetzias Mitzrayim, אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים (belief in yetzias Mitzrayim, belief in hashgachah pratis) he also doesn't believe in אנכי ה' אלקיך... and this is the foundation of the Torah."

Degel Machaneh Efraim zt'l (beginning of Eikev) writes, "A great rule of avodas Hashem is to have emunah. My grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov zt'l] would always warn us about this. This is the foundation of the entire Torah and avodas Hashem. About this, Dovid HaMelech said (Tehillim 119:86) כל מצותיך אמונה, "All Your mitzvos are emunah."

because you don't know what will result from it."

Many years ago, there was an old Yid who would always say "Who says...?" When he heard about a bitter situation, he would say, "Who says this is bad? Maybe it is good?" Also, when people told him about something good and happy that occurred, he would say, "Who says this is good? Maybe it is bad?"

This old man owned one horse and had *parnassah* from it (travels and deliveries). Once, early in the morning, his horse ran away and no one was able to find it, and the Yid was left without any source of income. That day, this elderly Yid stayed at home. Why should he go outside if his horse wasn't around to give people rides and deliveries? Everyone in his town came to visit him, to console him of his lost horse, and for the loss of his source of income. They pitied him for suddenly becoming a poor man. The old man replied with his standard line, "Who says this is bad? Perhaps it is good?" The people of his town thought, "Nebach. He is so confused, due to his *tzaros*. He obviously lost his mind and can't reason. He thinks that what occurred to him might be good!

Meanwhile, his horse was frolicking deep in the forest with his newfound friends – other horses who roamed freely, without responsibilities to an owner. The horse was happy with his new friends who had a heart for freedom like himself, but his happiness wasn't for long. A few hours later, the horse became hungry, his stomach was churning for food. It realized that his new friends weren't going to give him even a drop of food. The horse decided it was time to return to its home, to the barn owned by the elderly Yid. When the horse returned, it didn't come by itself. Its friends came along because the horse told them about the good meals he received daily at his master's home.

The entire town was shocked when they watched the horse return, together with four or five other horses! They then realized that the old Yid was correct when he said, "Who

says it is bad? Perhaps it is good?" and they went to tell him how correct he was, and how good it was that he had lost his horse for that short time. Now he had many more horses! His assets increased four times!

When they spoke with him about the good news, the elderly Yid responded with his standard stanza: "Who says that this is good? Perhaps it is bad?"

The people of his town whispered amongst themselves that the old man must have been severely traumatized when he lost his horse. So much so that he wasn't able to recognize when something good happened to him.

Soon afterward, this old man's youngest son, a seventeen-year-old *bachur*, took a ride on one of the new horses. The *bachur* figured that since there were so many horses, he could ride on another horse every day. After riding on it for some time, the horse, accustomed to its freedom, not to having people ride on its back – stood up on its hind legs and tossed the *bachur* off. The *bachur* fell and broke both of his legs.

The townspeople brought the boy to the hospital. His legs were bandaged and placed in a cast, and then he returned home, where he had to stay for a long time, lying in bed. Everyone in the city came to visit him, and they cried over the terrible episode that occurred. They said to the old father, "You were correct when you said, 'Who says finding the horses is good? Perhaps it is bad.' Now we see that you were right. It was indeed bad. Look at what happened to your son due to the many horses that came to your home!"

The old man replied, "Who says that this is bad? Maybe it is good." The people of the city nodded their heads with pity. "Nebach" they said. "The *tzaros* are so heavy on him that his mind has become confused, and he thinks that the *tzaros* are good for him!"

Two weeks later, Czar Nicolai's army came to their town to draft Jewish boys into the Russian military. Many Jewish lads were

tragically taken by force to the army. When they went to the house of the old Yid and they saw his son lying in bed with bandages and casts, they let the bachur stay at home.

Some weeks later, the news came from the front that many of the bachurim of their town died from hunger. But this bachur was alive and well. Then everyone saw that the old man was correct when he said, "Who says it is bad [when his son broke his legs]? Maybe it is good?!" (This mashal was told by Reb Noach Weinberg zt'l, Rosh Yeshiva of Eish HaTorah.)

The lesson is that humans don't know what is good and what is the opposite. Only Hakadosh Baruch Hu knows. Therefore, let us accept with joy whatever Hashem sends our way, even if it seems to be bad now. Let us trust that Hashem always leads us in the best way.

The **ישרש יעקב** (written by Reb Yaakov Yehudah of Nardizin zt'l, son-in-law of Rebbe Mendel of Vorka zt'l) teaches from Yaakov Avinu's life that when he thought something was bad, it was good, and when he thought something was good it turned out to be bad. Yaakov Avinu escaped from his brother Eisav and came to Lavan's home. He thought it would be good in Lavan's home, but he endured many tzaros there, until he had to escape like a thief. When he traveled away from Lavan, he thought he would have tzaros meeting up with Eisav, but Eisav surprisingly kissed him and spoke kindly with him. So, when he thought it was good, it was the opposite; when he thought things were bad, they ended up being good.

Similarly, when Yaakov Avinu came to Shechem, it states (Bereishis 33:18) **וידח את פני העיר**, and the Midrash states that he gave gifts to the people of the city and he sold them things for cheap because he wanted to befriend the people of Shechem. He thought good times had arrived, but then he soon suffered the tragedy that occurred with his daughter, "צרת דינה".

It also states **וישב יעקב**, and Rashi explains that he wanted to live in peace and then he

suffered with the loss of Yosef, "צרת יוסף." Yaakov learned from these episodes that when one thinks matters are good, it might be the opposite, and when one thinks matters are bad, it might be good. All one can do is trust in Hashem that He will lead us in a good way.

When Yaakov had to go down to Mitzrayim, Yaakov Avinu knew that this was the beginning of the galus and slavery, as Hashem had told him in the Bris ben Habesarim (Bereishis 15:13), **ועבדום וענו אותם ארבע מאות שנה**, "They will enslave them and oppress them, for four hundred years," Nevertheless, he accepted the din, and he went willingly to Mitzrayim. He knew that although it appeared bad, it was really good.

Indeed, the nation increased immensely in Mitzrayim, as it states (Shemos 1:12) **כן ירבה**, "so did they multiply." Also, Chazal (Shabbos 89:) tell us that if Yaakov didn't go down to Mitzrayim, he would have descended to the land tied in iron chains.

ישרש יעקב concludes that the Torah tells us about this because it is a lesson for everyone. "A Yid shouldn't seek tricks and strategies on how to make life good for himself... He should trust in Hashem alone, and be *batel* to Him entirely. As it states (Tehillim 55:23) **השליך** **על ה' יחבך** והוא ילכלך **על ה' יחבך**, 'Cast your burden on Hashem, and He will sustain you,' and with this attitude, he will have his salvation."

Completely Worthy

The Gemara (Pesachim 118:) says, "Moshiach will come either in a generation that is completely **זכאי**, worthy, or completely **חייב**, guilty." Obviously, we hope and pray that Moshiach will come in a completely worthy generation, but we wonder how this could occur. How can it be that Moshiach will arrive in our times when we will be totally **זכאי**, worthy? If Moshiach didn't come in the generations of the Tana'im and Amoraim, Rishonim and Acharonim, how can we expect Moshiach to arrive in our generation in the zechus of our righteousness?

The Divrei Yichezkel of Shinov zt'l answers that due to our low generation, the little we do is extremely precious to Hashem. Hashem measures our good based on our challenges. Therefore, it is certainly possible that our generation will be deemed **בולו זכאי**, a totally worthy generation, worthy of redemption, even though the generations of tzaddikim in the past didn't attain this title.

It states (Tehillim 116:6) **דָּלוּתִי וְלִי יְהוָה שִׁיעַ**, "I was low, and He saved me." The Gemara (Pesachim 118:) explains, "Knesses Yisrael say before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Ribono shel Olam, although **דָּלוּתִי**, we are at a low level, **וְלִי יְהוָה שִׁיעַ**, we are worthy of being saved."

The Shinover Rav says that it is difficult to understand this pasuk. If we are at a low level, why are we fitting and worthy to be saved?

The answer is that in the past generations, it wasn't a great *chiddush* when someone served Hashem. But when someone serves Hashem in this generation, it is a great *chiddush*, and our Torah and mitzvos are incredibly precious to Hashem. This is the meaning of **דָּלוּתִי**, since I am at a low level, **וְלִי יְהוָה שִׁיעַ**, I am worthy to be saved.

It states (Bereishis 49:1) **הֶאֱסַפוּ וְאָגִידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא**, "Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will *happen to you* in the End of Days." The Satmar Rebbe zt'l explained that **יִקְרָא** also means calling. In the End of Days, Hakadosh Baruch Hu calls to every Yid, a call of love. This is because in these generations, when the yetzer hara is so strong, and the struggles are so great, when

a Yid serves Hashem, Hashem calls to him with love.¹⁰

A human being can't imagine or measure the immense pleasure that our Father in heaven has from every good deed we do when we have challenges and overcome the yetzer hara.

Rashi (12:23) writes that a korban Pesach is called **פסח**, which means **דילוג**, jumping. This is because Hakadosh Baruch Hu jumped over the homes of the Jewish nation to save them during *makas Bechoros*.

Rebbe Moshe Leib Sassover zt'l has an amazing pshat in Rashi. He says that (12:27) **אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם**, means "Hashem jumped and danced above the homes of Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim." Hashem saw that the Jewish nation was moser nefesh to shecht the korban Pesach, the avodah zarah of Mitzrayim, and they were even courageous to place the blood on the doorposts and lintel, as Hashem commanded. Hashem had much joy from this, and therefore, Hashem danced above their homes.

After the *makah* of *Arbeh*, locust, it states (10:16) **וַיַּמְהַר פַּרְעֹה לְקַרְא לְמֹשֶׁה וְלֵאחֶרֶן וַיֹּאמֶר חַטָּאתִי לָהֶם וְלָכֶם**, "Pharaoh hastened to summon Moshe and Aharon, and he said, "I have sinned against Hashem your G-d and you," and Pharaoh asked Moshe and Aharon to daven for him. Why did he mention that he sinned to Moshe and Aharon? The main point is that he had sinned against Hashem because he didn't send Bnei Yisrael.

Reb Yonason Eibshitz (Tiferes Yonason) zt'l answers, "The way of good Jews is that if someone sinned against them, they try even

10. It states (Yechezkel 16:6) **וַאֲעֹבֵר עֲלֶיךָ וְאָרָאךָ מִתְבֹּסֶסֶת בְּדָמֶיךָ וַאֲמַר לְךָ בְּדָמֶיךָ חַיִּי וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדָמֶיךָ חַיִּי**, "Then I passed you and saw you wallowing in your blood, and I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live' I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live.'" Rashi writes, "It states twice (בדמיך חיי) to tell us that through the blood of Pesach and the blood of milah, they were redeemed."

When the avodas Hashem is difficult, as is implied in **מִתְבֹּסֶסֶת בְּדָמֶיךָ**, "wallowing in your blood" and one craves forbidden matters and he holds back with all his might, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, **בְּדָמֶיךָ חַיִּי**, "in your blood, you shall live." That blood of your firm resolve will bring you life. Life includes spiritual life, physical life, and chiyus in avodas Hashem.

harder to do kindness to them. They overcome their yetzer hara not to take revenge. As the Gemara (Bava Metzia 32:) says regarding the mitzvah of טעינה ופריקה (to help to unload or to load your fellow man's donkey), one should help his enemy first before he helps his friend. The reason given is לכוף יצרו, to overcome his yetzer hara. Going against one's yetzer hara and natural inclination creates a great nachas ruach for Hashem.

Pharaoh was concerned that perhaps Moshe wouldn't daven for him. Therefore, he said, חטאתי לה' אלקיכם ולכם "I sinned to Hashem, and I also sinned against you. You have reason to be upset with me for how I treated you, and therefore, you should certainly help me in order לכוף יצרו to overcome your yetzer hara."

This is written in the Torah to teach us what Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires from us. Even Pharaoh the *rasha* understood that if Moshe and Aharon had a valid reason to be angry with him, this should be the reason to daven for him.

These ideas help us understand the value of avodas Hashem, specifically in our times. Today, to serve Hashem, one has to go against his natural inclinations and desires. The tests are very great. But whenever one goes against his tendencies to serve Hashem, it is very precious to Him. Even if we are on a far lower level than the generations before us, due to the challenges and *mesirus nefesh* we have, we can be considered a generation that is כולו זכאי, entirely righteous, and we can merit therein the coming of Moshiach, may it be speedily in our days.