

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Vayikra



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Torah Wellsprings - Vayikra

Hashgachah Pratis

Many people think that the snow melts when the sun comes out and the world becomes warm. They say that this is nature. But the pasuk states (Tehillim 147:16-18) הַנֶּחֱלֵג יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּמְסֻם בְּצִמּוֹר כְּפוֹר כְּאַפֵּר יִפּוֹר... יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּמְסֻם "He gives snow like wool... He sends His word and melts them..." The snow doesn't melt from the sun; it melts from Hashem's decree. יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּמְסֻם, "He sends His word and melts the snow."

Similarly, everything occurs by Hashem's hashgachah. There is no concept of nature acting on its own, *chalilah*. The rules of nature conceal what is truly happening.

The Sfas Emes (written by the Rebbe of Brezhan zy'a, beginning of Noach) writes in the name of the Saraf, Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zy'a, that when a person thinks that the reason water extinguishes fire is because Hashem created this nature, he still doesn't have *emunah sheleimah*. Rather, *emunah sheleimah* is to believe that each time water and fire meet, the Creator *yisbarach shemo* commands that this water should put out this fire.... Without

this command, the fire wouldn't be extinguished by the water..."¹

We find a similar concept in the Igros Chazon Ish (35). He writes שהטבע רצון תמידי של "הקב"ה, "Nature is Hakadosh Baruch Hu's constant desire." The difference between miracles and nature is that miracles are when Hashem chooses, for a short time, to act in a certain way. Nature is the standard path with which Hashem leads the world, but both are examples of Hashem's will. Also, nature is that Hashem desires it and leads it with hashgachah pratis.

It states at the beginning of the parashah, וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו, "He called to Moshe and Hashem said to him..." According to the standard way a pasuk is written (and according to the standard way people speak), "Hashem" should be written at the beginning of the pasuk, like this: וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו, "Hashem called to Moshe and said to him." Why does it say "He called to Moshe and Hashem said to him..."

Also, why is וַיִּקְרָא written with a small *alef*?

1. Two people came to Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zy'a, saying that they wanted to become his chassidim. Rebbe Uri replied that he only accepts people into his group who possess *emunah sheleimah*. "Do you believe that everything happens with hashgachah pratis, that even matters that seem trivial and unimportant are from Hashem? For example, do you believe that even the place where a stalk of straw falls was destined from heaven?"

They admitted that they weren't on this level and left.

Some days later, they returned and said that they do believe that everything is b'hashgachah pratis, including the most trivial matters.

Rebbe Uri asked, "What made you change your minds?"

They replied, "When something major occurs in the world, we always believed that it is certainly from Hashem and not by chance. We understood that major things couldn't have happened by accident. However, after giving it more thought, we realized that even the most important matters in this world can be considered insignificant in comparison to Hashem's endless greatness. Nevertheless, we are certain that these "major" events happen with hashgachah pratis. So, by the same token, we can believe that even matters that seem trivial to us were planned and destined by Hashem."

The Beis Avraham explains that the small *alef* tells us that you can read ויקרא with or without the alef. With the alef, ויקרא means calling. Without the alef, ויקר means happening. The pasuk is saying when things happened to Moshe (ויקר אל משה), he understood that Hashem was speaking to him (וַיְדַבֵּר ה'). He knew that things don't happen by chance, *chalilah*.²

The Mabit (Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah 16) writes, "In galus, a person should contemplate that whatever happens to him in this world is all from Hashem. [In fact] when we are in galus, Hashem's *hashgachah* upon us is

greater than when we live in our land, with our kingdom. Only, in galus, Hashem's *hashgachah* upon us is in a concealed manner, until the sinners among us find reason to doubt that perhaps it didn't happen from Hashem. We see this happening in our times... But the wise person will understand and know that whatever happens to us in galus, for the individual and the community, it is all Hashem's *hashgachah* upon us."³

We must remember that even those matters that appear like nature are all Hashem's *hashgachah* pratis.⁴

2. Reb Nochum Yasser zt'l once said to his friends, "I heard a *bas kol* this morning." His friends asked him what he meant. He told them that he couldn't find his shoes when he woke up in the morning. "I felt like a *bas kol* was telling me that my mission now is to search for my shoes. Ten minutes later, I heard another *bas kol*. It said to me that I didn't have to search for the shoes anymore, because I had already found them. Indeed, when one believes that everything is *bashert*, he knows that all situations and obligations, challenges and tests that come his way are precisely what Hashem wants him to go through at that moment. He can consider it like hearing a *bas kol*, telling him to deal with this issue.

3. The holy Rizhiner zy'a sent money to Eretz Yisrael to build the "Tiferes Yisrael" shul in the old-city Yerushalayim (known as "Reb Nisan Beck's Shul").

When the beis medresh was completed, an artist from chutz l'aretz was brought in to paint and decorate the walls of the shul.

The neighborhood children would come to the shul to watch the artist at work and would laugh because they didn't see any beauty or design in his artwork. The artist drew a line here, a circle there, using one color here and another color there. On one wall, he poured a generous amount of black ink, and next to it, he placed an orange spot. The children would say, "We could have done a better job. Why did they have to bring an artist from chutz l'aretz to scribble on the walls?"

One day, after months of work, the artist said, "In two days, I will finish my artwork, but I can't work when children are jumping around. I need silence so I can concentrate." So, for the next two days, the beis medresh was locked, and the artist completed his work. He connected all the loose lines, filled in the ink where needed, and everything became gorgeous. When the children were permitted back into the beis medresh, they were astounded by the beauty they saw. There were pictures of fruit trees, flowers, and other beautiful scenes, which they previously thought were merely scribbles and sketches on the wall. The children realized that the artist knew what he was doing all along, only *they* failed to recognize its beauty until it was complete.

Chazal (Brachos 10) say אין צייר כאלקינו, "There is no artist like our G-d". (This is based on a pasuk in Shmuel [1, 2:2], אין ציור כאלקינו.) Why is this a praise for Hashem? From the story we just told, it is understood: A person looks at the world, and he thinks about what happens to people, including himself, and wonders, "Where is the beauty of the world? There is so much strife and hardship! Here's a person who lacks *parnassah*, there's a person who struggles with *shalom bayis*," and so on.

We tell him, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the great artist, אין צייר כאלקינו. You're looking at only half the picture. Give it some time, and when the picture is complete, you will see that there are no abstract lines, random circles, and blotches of ink. Soon, you will see that they are all part of a beautiful painting. Soon you will understand the beauty of Hashem's ways.

4. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l was teaching his students that everything that happens is Hashem's

This is the lesson of Pesach: to learn from the revealed miracles that everything that happens to us is miraculous. As the Ramban (end of Bo) writes, ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים שהם יסוד התורה כלה, שאין לאדם חלק בתורת משה רבינו עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקרינו שכלם נסים אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם, בין ברבים בין ביחיד, אלא אם יעשה המצות יצליחנו שכונו, ואם יעבור עליהם יכריחנו ענשו, "From the revealed miracles, a person believes in the concealed miracles, for that is the foundation of the entire Torah. A person doesn't have a portion in Toras Moshe Rabbeinu until he believes that everything that happens to him is miraculous, without nature and 'the way of the world.' This is true for the community and the individual... Everything is by Hashem's decree."

Parnassah comes from Hashem, not through Nature

When one earns a livelihood, his success is from Hashem's hashgachah, not from the rules of nature.

It states (Shemos 23:13) וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֵלֶיכֶם תִּשְׁמְרוּ, "Concerning all that I have said to you, you shall beware to keep..." The pasuk doesn't clarify what Hashem said to us, and which command Hashem warns us to keep.

At the end of the pasuk it states וְשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ לֹא יִשְׁמַע עַל פִּיךָ "The name of avodah zarah you shall not mention; it shall not be heard through your mouth." How does the end of the pasuk connect with the beginning of the pasuk?

Orach l'Chaim (from the Rebbe of Zlotchev zy'a) answers: Hashem obligates us to make

hishtadlus, so everything will appear to be happening according to nature. This is the reason it states (Devarim 14:29) לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה, "Hashem your G-d will bless you in all the work of your hand that you will do." The pasuk is telling us that Hashem will give us *parnassah*, but the pasuk adds אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה, that you must do. The Sifri (Re'eh) learns from these words that we must do *hishtadlus*, so the world will appear to be running according to the rules of nature.

Similarly, it states (Tehillim 104:23) יֵצֵא אָדָם לַפֶּעֶל וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַד עֶרֶב, "Man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening." A person is obligated to make an effort. There are many other *pasukim* like this.

Orach l'Chaim warns that a person should not think that the rules of nature have strength in and of themselves. For example, one mustn't think that "if I employ this method of hastening, I will succeed, and if I don't, I won't succeed." Instead, we must believe with *emunah sheleimah* that Hashem gives *parnassah*, and not nature.

If a person thinks that the rules of nature have some strength, it is as if he is saying that there is a power other than Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the Creator of all worlds. It is like he believes in the strength of אלהים אחרים, *avodah zarah*, *chas veshalom*.

With this introduction, Orach l'Chayim explains the pasuk we began with: וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֵלֶיכֶם תִּשְׁמְרוּ. The *pasuk* is obligating us to believe that everything that occurs, אֲמַרְתִּי, it was Hashem's decree. It didn't happen due to the rules of nature.

hashgachah pratis, and nothing happens by chance. He gave an example that even where an animal drops its waste is destined by Hashem.

One of the students laughed to himself when he heard this. How could something so trivial be planned by Hashem? Soon afterwards, the student slipped on the ice and his life was in danger because he was near a cliff. Fortunately, his foot got caught on something in the snow, and that saved his life. He looked to see what saved him. It was animal waste that had been frozen, covered in snow.

He went to Rebbe Elimelech to tell him what occurred. Before he said anything, Rebbe Elimelech told him, "Nu? Now do you believe that even where an animal drops its waste is destined by heaven?"

We now go on to explain the end of the pasuk, וְשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ לֹא יִשְׁמַע עַל פִּיךָ, "The name of elohim acheirim (avodah zarah) you shall not mention; it shall not be heard through your mouth."

הטבע, nature, is gematriya אלקים (86). When one believes in nature, it is like he believes in אלקים אחרים, avodah zarah. The pasuk states וְשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ לֹא יִשְׁמַע עַל פִּיךָ. Be cautious that you don't believe in nature, for that is like believing in אלהים אחרים, avodah zarah, r'l.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l explains that when a person trusts in his work as an entity on its own and thinks that he will earn his livelihood from it, that is akin to worshipping avodah zarah. What is the difference between him and an idol worshipper? Idol worshippers also believe that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world, but they think that the stars have the power to bring bounty, parnassah, and their other needs (as the Rambam writes). It is the same when someone trusts in his work. Essentially, he worships his work. He thinks that his salvation comes from his labor. A person should believe that his work is a channel and a means through which Hashem provides his sustenance. But he will receive everything that he needs, regardless of whether he works or not. Only he is obligated to make hishtadlus, and act according to the ways of the world.

These ideas aren't limited to mussar sefarim and similar works. We can also find these ideas in halachah. Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Hilchos סי' קנ"ו ס"ב) writes, "A person must be cautious when he does business that he doesn't tell a lie, as it states (Vayikra 19:36) וְהָיָה צֶדֶק יְהוָה לָכֶם, that when he says הן, yes, it should be true, and when he says לאו, no, it should be true (see Bava Metzia 49a). Whoever tells a lie (in his business), it is like he worshipped avodah zarah."

Why should telling a lie in business be like serving avodah zarah?

The explanation is that his dishonesty proves that he doesn't believe that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives parnassah. He thinks that he earns parnassah with his hishtadlus. This is the reason his lies can be compared to worshipping avodah zarah, r'l.

Panim Yafos zy'a (ד"ר אהרן כהן Mishpatim) writes that there are wealthy people who don't want to help the poor, claiming that poor people are lazy, and that if they were more energetic, they would be able to earn a living on their own. "So, why should I support them?"

Panim Yafos explains that these wealthy people are mistaken because when it is *bashert* that someone should be poor, Hashem arranges for them to be lazy. It isn't as the rich people think, that they are poor because they are lazy. It is the opposite. Because it was decreed that they be poor, Hashem made them lazy and inactive in their pursuit of making a living. They aren't at fault; this was the decree that was placed on them.

On the same token, those who earn a lot of money are also due to Hashem's decree. Part of the decree is that they should be energetic when it comes to earning money.

The Panim Yafos says that this is hinted to in the pasuk (Devarim 8:18) וּזְכַרְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנִיחָךְ לֵךְ כַּח לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל, "You must remember Hashem, your G-d, for it is He that gives you strength to make wealth." Hashem gives the wealthy כח, strength, and zerizus, to earn money.

The Panim Yafos adds that in the order of the *alef beis*, the letters before the letters that spell כס"ף are עני"י (poverty), and the letters after כס"ף in the alef beis are עצל"ל (laziness). Hashem decrees to give someone כסף, money, and together with this decree, Hashem gives him strength, to enable the person to earn the money. When Hashem decrees that a person shouldn't have כסף, the letters to the right and the left spell עני"י, poverty and laziness. Hashem decrees on him laziness so that he will be poor.

The Zohar (vol.3 61a) states that Chiram, the king of Tzur, considered himself god, as he said about himself (Yechezkel 28:2) מוֹשֵׁב אֱלֹקִים יֹשֵׁבִתִּי, "I have sat in the seat of G-d."

The Bas Ayin (Shabbos Chol HaMoed Pesach) asks how Chiram made this foolish mistake, to think that he is god? Even the greatest fool knows how helpless he is, and that שֵׁם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם אִי אֶפְשֵׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם אִפְּלוּ שְׁעָה אַחַת, that if one of his inner organs close or open, he won't survive. So, how could he think he is god? The Bas Ayin answers, "He didn't think he was god, but he saw that he was very wealthy, wise, and had a lot of honor, and he thought that he earned it all with his own strength. Therefore, the pasuk considers it as though he made himself a god."

Healing is from Hashem, not from Doctors and Medication

When it comes to *refuos*, medications, we must believe that *refuah* comes from Hashem. A person must take medications, consult doctors, etc., because he is obligated to act according to the laws of nature; however, he must simultaneously believe that Hashem is healing him. When he engages in natural means of *refuah*, he attains *refuah from Hashem*, and not directly from the means of *hishtadlus* he undertook.

Sefer Chut HaMeshulash, written by the grandson of the Chasam Sofer zy'a, tells the following story:

"When the Ksav Sofer zt'l (a son of the Chasam Sofer) was six years old, he was very sick, and the doctors predicted he would die. The *chevra kadisha* was summoned to prepare for what they thought was the inevitable. The *chevra kadisha* lit candles and davened the prayers that are said at such times. The doctors sat in the room and spoke with my grandfather, the Chasam Sofer. They said, 'We know you are a holy man of G-d, but

your prayers won't be able to save your son this time. Nothing can save your son.'

When the Chasam Sofer heard those words, he stood in a corner of the room next to a box of his handwritten divrei Torah and he said a short tefillah, and the child shouted Shma Yisrael...! Just moments earlier, the child was so weak, he couldn't say a word, and now he shouted Shma Yisrael! Hashem answered the father's and son's tefillos. The doctors said, "Now we know that you are a man of G-d! According to our understanding, it was impossible for this to occur!"

The Chasam Sofer said, "I never lost hope, not even for a moment. There is no limit to Hashem's kindness." The Chevra Kadisha extinguished the candles they had lit and went home.

The Chut HaMeshulash writes that when the Ksav Sofer turned thirteen, the Chevra Kadisha gave him a present, a utensil made of gold. Inside were the thin wax candles they had lit when they thought he would die.

Shiltei Giborim (Sanhedrin, end of Ben Sorer u'Moreh, page 18b in the Rif) states, "Many times, doctors predict that a person will die, but in reality, they soon recover and become better."

The Meiri (Magan Avos) teaches, "Even when doctors tell you that there is limited or just one method with which to heal him, there are many ways to heal him; only the doctors don't see them."

Tzaddikim say: The Torah permits doctors to heal, but they weren't given permission to cause despair. They have no right to say that someone will die. Anyway, how do they know that the patient will die? Hashem can heal the illness in all situations. We should ignore the doctors when they pass these disheartening verdicts and not lose our *bitachon* in Hashem.⁵

5. I heard the following story from the baalei hamaaseh:

Segulos for Refuah

Reb Chaim Palagi (Refuah v'Chaim 12:74) writes, "When there is an ill person in one's home, he should practice וותרנות, to be generous, even with the birds of the sky, and they will certainly daven for him."

Chazal (Shabbos 32a) write, "A person should always daven that he shouldn't become ill, because if he becomes ill, heaven will tell him, 'Bring a merit and you will be cured.'"

Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yehoyada) asks, Why does Heaven tell him הבא זכות והפטר, 'Bring a merit and you will be cured'? Heaven knows if he has merits or not. Why must he 'bring a merit'?

Furthermore, if his merits didn't protect him from becoming ill, how will his merits help cure him?

The Ben Ish Chai replies that when Heaven says הבא זכות והפטר, "Bring a merit and

you will be cured," this means that he should make a *kabbalah tova*. That will be his merit to attain healing.

We quote the Ben Ish Chai:

"When someone is ill, a segulah to be cured from the illness is that he should accept a new mitzvah on himself. It should be something that he wasn't doing previously, and it should be something that he isn't obligated to do על פי שורת הדין, according to the strict halachah. This is what the Gemara means when it says הבא זכות והפטר, bring a new merit, from the will of your heart, that you aren't obligated to do." This will be his merit that will heal him.

We add that the segulah will probably work also when other people in the family make a *kabbalah tova*. This merit can heal the ill.⁶

Several years ago, a group of people traveled to Ukraine for Shabbos Chanukah. They were driving on a narrow road, heading for Mezhibuzh, when a truck came speeding towards them. They turned onto the side of the road, and the car slid onto a mound of snow. The car turned over, the wheels were in the air, and they couldn't get back onto the road to continue on their way. The closest city was forty kilometers away – too far away to walk. It was freezing outside, but the car had heating. However, the heating wouldn't last for long, only as long as they had gas in the car, and it was a matter of *pikuach nefesh* to be in this cold without protection.

They decided to sing songs that would strengthen their emunah and trust in Hashem to help them. They closed their eyes and sang for a long time, until they fell asleep. They don't know how long they slept, but an old man woke them up by knocking on the window of their car. They couldn't communicate as they didn't speak his language. The old man shoveled a path for them and brought the car back onto the road. They praised Hashem because Hashem sent them a messenger to save them in their time of need. Fortunate is the person who trusts in Hashem.

This is a reminder that all salvations are from Hashem. We thank the people who help us, but at the same time, we remember that our primary thanks go to Hashem, because everything comes from Him.

6. A middle-aged man was blind in one eye ר"ל, and his other eye was weakening, with only 20% vision remaining.

After a surgery, matters became even worse – he couldn't see at all.

His children gathered to see what *kabbalah tova* they could take on as a merit for their father, that he be cured. They decided that three times a day, they would be extra-careful to have an עין טובה, good eye, and they prayed that in the merit of their עין טובה their father should have a good eye and see well.

The children discussed examples of *ayin tova*, so they would know exactly what they needed to do. One said, "For example, if a neighbor is building or adding on to their home, have a good eye and be happy for them." Don't be jealous. Another example: If someone gets engaged, be happy for them. Don't be

The most effective approach for attaining *refuah* is through *tefillah* and *bitachon*.

The Yesod HaAvodah writes (end of his sefer) "After all the counsels (how to heal someone) the best counsel is to pray to Hashem and to rely on Him, on His kindness, and His immense love to Bnei Yisrael."

Dovid HaMelech said chapter (30) of Tehillim (מזמור שיר תננת הבית לדוד) after he was healed from an illness. It states in this chapter (30:3) *שָׁוַעְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי*, "I have called out to You and You have healed me," and there are other lines in this chapter that discuss the miracle of Dovid's *refuah*. For example, it states in this chapter (30:12), *הִפַּכְתָּ מִסְפְּדִי לְמַחֲוֹל לִי*, "You have turned my *hesped* into dancing for me." The Malbim explains, "People had already gathered to say a *hesped* [for Dovid] because they thought he died. Suddenly, his *neshamah* returned to him, and the people who had gathered to say *hespedim*... began to dance in circles."

Don't Ask Questions

The end of the parashah (ch. 5) discusses the *korban olah*, which is a *korban chatas*, brought for certain aveiros. The *korban* is one animal, either a sheep or a goat, as it states (5:7) *וְהָבִיֵּא אֶת אֲשָׁמוֹ לְה' עַל חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא נִקְבָּה*, "he shall bring his *chatas* to Hashem for his sin which he had committed, a female animal from the flock either a sheep or a goat..."

When a poor person brings this *korban*, he brings two *korbanos*, an *olah* and a *chatas*, as it states (5:7) *וְאִם לֹא תִגְיַע יָדוֹ דֵּי שָׂה וְהָבִיֵּא אֶת אֲשָׁמוֹ* *אֲשֶׁר חָטָא שְׁתֵּי תָרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בָנִי יוֹנָה לְה' אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת וְאֶחָד לְעֹלָה*, "If he cannot afford a sheep, he shall bring as his *chatas* for that sin that he had

committed, two turtle doves or two young doves before Hashem, one for a *chatas*, and one for a *korban olah*."

The Torah allows the poor person to bring birds, instead of a sheep or goat. This is the reason the *korban* is called *עולה ויורד*, because the cost of the *korban* is according to how much the person who committed the *aveirah* can afford to pay. However, we still need to understand why a poor person brings two *korbanos*, an *olah* and a *chatas*, while a wealthy person brings solely one *korban*, a *korban chatas*?

Ibn Ezra says that since he is poor, he might have had a negative thought (אולי עלה על) (רוחו מוחשבה). The Ibn Ezra doesn't explain the negative thought, but the *meforshim* clarify that when the poor person sees that he can't bring an animal for a *korban* like the wealthy do, he might have had a complaint against Hashem, *chalilah*. He is upset that he can't also afford to bring an animal, like the wealthy people bring. For this negative thought of complaint about his financial situation, he must bring a *korban olah*, because a *korban olah* atones for the sins that one commits with his thoughts (as it states in the Yerushalmi Yumah 8:6).

But the question is, Chazal (Kiddushin 39b) say, *מחשבה רעה אין הקב"ה מצרפה למעשה*, when a person has an evil thought, Hashem doesn't consider it as if it were performed. So, why does he need a *korban olah* to atone for his negative thoughts?

The answer is that there is one exception. Chazal (ibid.) say that when it comes to *avodah zarah*, one is punished for thoughts, as well. This poor person was lacking *emunah* in Hashem. He didn't believe that Hashem was

jealous, because there is someone in our family who is having a hard time getting engaged."

They began this kabbalah tova shortly after Purim, and after Pesach, their father's eyesight in the weak eye returned, and he could see well. The family decided to continue with their kabbalah. A few weeks later, a miracle occurred. The father's other eye, which hadn't been functioning for twelve years, was healed.

They were rewarded doubly for their good eye and kabbalah tova.

leading him in the best way. He had complaints about Hashem for not making him wealthy like others. He felt that Hashem wasn't treating him correctly. These thoughts are *apikorsus*, which is a type of *avodah zarah*. Therefore, he needs atonement for his negative thoughts, which is why he brings a *korban olah*.

Rebbe Hirsh of Riminov zt'l said before his petirah, "The central point of the holy Torah is to believe that Hashem is **א"ל אמונה ואין עול** (Devarim 32:4)." This means to believe that Hashem's judgment is true, and that Hashem leads us in a proper and good way, and there is no reason to have complaints about Hashem, *chalilah*.

I heard a *mashal* of a young child who was crying because he was hungry. The child was holding onto his bottle. The father took away the child's bottle so he could fill it with formula to satisfy the child's hunger. When the father takes the bottle away, the child cries even more bitterly. The child doesn't understand that the father is preparing his needs. This is a *mashal* for what occurs when Hashem takes something away from a person, such as when he loses money and the like. The person thinks he has lost, but it is just preparation for the bounty that Hashem will give him. It is a moment of disappointment, but only good will come from it.

Another example of this concept is a jigsaw puzzle. A puzzle piece has an indentation at its edge, allowing it to connect with other pieces. The *nimshal* is that when a person lacks something in his life, he feels like he has a hole in his life. He doesn't realize that this deficiency will help him reach the perfection he needs to attain. The lack is a step towards completing the picture that Hashem is creating for him.

Reb Fishel Schachter Shlita, a renowned magid in New York, says that when Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz zt'l first opened his yeshiva and cheder in Torah v'Daas, he spoke to many people, trying to convince them to join the yeshiva or cheder.

He had neighbors who had once been religious, but when they came to America, they stopped observing Torah and mitzvos. They had a child, who wasn't religious, but he would often play with the Jewish children in the neighborhood. Reb Shraga Feivel found an opportunity to speak to this child and told him that it would be good for him to join the cheder. It will be good for him in both this world and the next. The child was convinced and told his parents that he wanted to attend cheder. His parents tried to dissuade the child. They told him that it wouldn't be good for him, but the child was stubborn; he fought for his rights, and his parents had no choice but to agree to send him to the cheder.

Once a month, Reb Shraga Feivel would test the children, and he would give every child a candy, which was a unique gift in those days (almost a hundred years ago). Once, after testing the children and distributing the candies, he ran out of candies. He was missing just one candy to give to this new student, who had joined the cheder with *mesirus nefesh*. Reb Shraga Feivel told him that he would give him a candy from his office the next day.

However, the next day, Reb Shraga Feivel forgot to give the child candy, and the child didn't feel comfortable asking him for it. A couple of weeks later, he told his parents what happened. The parents said, "You see, we told you that you won't be happy in the cheder. We told you that it won't be good for you."

But the child didn't take their words to heart, and he continued learning in the cheder. Years passed, and he established a holy Jewish family, who followed the ways of the Torah.

When he was fifty-two years old, he suffered heart problems. He was rushed to the hospital. The doctors in the hospital said that they couldn't do anything, and that he only had a few hours to live. But shortly afterwards, he opened his eyes and was even able to sit up in bed. He was totally

well, as if nothing had occurred. His son, who was in the hospital room, was shocked and asked him what happened. His father told him that he saw his Rebbe, the tzaddik Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz. He was given permission from heaven to keep his promise, to give him the candy that he had promised him. But a candy for a fifty-two-year-old man isn't very much, and not equivalent to the amount he felt he lost when he was a young child. So, in exchange, Reb Shraga Feivel had permission to grant him fifteen years of life.

Reb Fishel Schachter Shlita sums up the story with a lesson we should remember: When someone doesn't receive what others have, he shouldn't ask questions, because he will receive it in the end, and then it will be worth so much more.

Act for Hashem's Honor

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l asked Reb Shimon Shwab zt'l whether he was a kohen. Reb Shwab answered that he wasn't.

"Are you a Levi?"

Reb Shwab said that he wasn't a Levi. "I am a Yisrael," he said.

"It is a great pity on you," the Chofetz Chaim said. "When the Beis HaMikdash will be built speedily in our days, you won't be able to perform the avodah in the Beis HaMikdash. There are also areas in the Beis HaMikdash where you won't be able to go. Do you know why you aren't a kohen? It is because your father isn't a kohen. And your father isn't a kohen because his father and his father weren't kohanim. I am a kohen because my father and grandparents were kohanim. But do you know how it all began? It goes back to the time after the Yidden made the *egel* and Moshe announced (Shemos 32:26) *מי לה' אלי*, 'Whoever is for Hashem, let him come to me!' At that time, my ancestor stepped forward and joined with Moshe. In this merit, his descendants have been sanctified for all generations to this day. But your ancestor remained standing at the side;

he didn't come forward and thereby squandered that great opportunity."

Then the Chofetz Chaim explained to Reb Shimon Shwab the reason he was telling him all of this: "Whenever you hear a cry of *מי לה' אלי*, wanting to do something for Hashem's honor, step forward. Run and be a part of it, because the benefits can be felt for all generations."

There is a remarkable story about Reb Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt'l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, Yerushalayim. For many years, he suffered from Parkinson's disease, r'l, but his *yesurim* didn't prevent him from accomplishing great deeds for Klal Yisrael. With *mesirus nefesh*, he traveled around the world raising money for the yeshiva, which was one of the largest yeshivos in the world. With *mesirus nefesh*, he would give *shiurim* to the bachurim of the yeshiva. One day, he came to the yeshiva to give a *shiur klali*, but the *yesurim* of Parkinson's were overwhelming and he couldn't say a word. He tried with all his might but only succeeded in saying half-words. After trying some more, he realized that he had to accept the fact that he wouldn't succeed this time. He asked that they bring him a pen and paper. He wrote *נסיתי*, "I tried." His students said that although he didn't deliver his wonderful *shiur klali* that day, the one word he wrote taught them an important lesson that they would never forget. A person has to struggle, try and attempt with all his strength, and then he can say *נסיתי*, "I tried."

Regarding our topic, a person should try to do something for Hashem's honor. Hashem will grant him *siyata dishmaya*, and he will accomplish great things. Even if he fails, he will at least be able to say, "I tried," and that is also an impressive accomplishment.

The Yetzer Hara is the Culprit

The Mishnah discusses the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz* and states, "בודקין את החמץ", meaning "we check the chametz." Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l asked, shouldn't it be

written as בודקין את הבית, "we check the house," because it's the house we check, not the chametz?

Years later, his son, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said he could answer the question with a *mashal*:

Two business partners arrived at the market and successfully sold all their merchandise. They put their earnings into a money pouch and headed back to their hometown on foot. Halfway home, they stopped in a field to lie down. They needed a break. Their only concern was what to do with the money pouch. They looked around the area they were in and couldn't spot anyone in the vicinity, other than some cows grazing in the pasture. They hung their moneybag on a branch and went to sleep under that tree.

But they forgot that where there are cows, there is a shepherd nearby. When they were fast asleep, the shepherd took their money.

The shepherd contemplated his options. He couldn't run away because he had a job to do; he was hired to watch the cows. But if he remained nearby, the merchants would drag him to the police.

He decided to fill the money bag with cow manure, so the merchants would not realize that he had stolen the money. By the time they would grasp what had happened, he would be far away from the scene of the theft.

The merchants awoke and were happy to see their moneybag still hanging on the tree. They didn't suspect a thing and continued on their journey home. When they opened their bag and saw that it was filled with manure, they wondered, "How did the cows manage to climb up the tree and put manure inside?" They resigned themselves to their loss because what could they do? You can't quite bring a cow to court, can you?

When Rebbe Yissachar Dov told this story, the chassidim laughed, although they didn't understand how this story answers

the above question of why the Mishnah says בודקין את החמץ (we check the *chametz*) and not that we check the house.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov's son, Rebbe Aharon *zt'l*, was also present, and the chassidim noticed that he was trembling from fear. They asked him why, and he said that he understood his father's intention. He explained that the foolish merchants should have turned their question into an answer. Since a cow can't put manure inside a pouch, it must be that a cow didn't do it; rather, a person did. They should have returned to look for the thief and taken him to court. Perhaps they would have gotten their money back.

Now we can explain why the Mishnah states that we check the chametz. This can mean that we examine our misdeeds and ask ourselves, "Where did they come from?" These aren't the type of deeds I wanted to do. I wanted to do mitzvos. How did I end up with so much evil on my hands?"

After contemplating this, people generally conclude that they are at fault, and it is their responsibility. But the real culprit is the yetzer hara. The yetzer hara tricked you, enticed you, and brought you where you are today. Recognize this, and don't lose hope. Identify the culprit and fight him.

Preparing for Pesach without Anger

The son the *rasha* asks (Shemos 12:26), מָה עֲבוֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם "What is this work for you?" He looks at the seder and calls it עֲבוֹדָה, work - a chore, something he doesn't want to do.

We would understand if he called Yom Kippur עֲבוֹדָה because he doesn't want to fast. We would understand if he asked why you needed the עֲבוֹדָה "toil" of Tisha b'Av. But now it's the seder, and good food is being served; the family eats together in happy spirits. What upsets the *rasha* so much that he doesn't want to take part in it?

B'derech tzachus, the *rasha*'s problem is the tense nerves that people experience

when it comes to being cautious about chametz and when it comes to performing mitzvos properly, according to halachah.

These fears certainly have a positive side; a person should be concerned and cautious. However, we must also be mindful that our concerns shouldn't cause us to lose the joy of the Yom Tov and the joy of the mitzvos.⁷

One year, chassidim of the Bas Ayin wanted to paint their beis medresh before Pesach. The Bas Ayin told them that they shouldn't paint the beis medresh now. He explained that when there is a lot of tension at home due to the cleaning for Pesach, the husband at times needs a calm place to escape. Therefore, the beis medresh needs to remain open all the time, so he can go there when the need arises. The beis medresh can't be closed for painting or repairs.

The Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz zt'l told his family before Pesach, "Believe me, a drop of anger is worse than a drop of chametz."

Tzaddikim say that it is the nature of people who clean for Pesach to become angry. Therefore, when the Torah instructs us to be cautious of chametz on Pesach, it also instructs us not to worship avodah zarah. As it states, (Shemos 34:17-18) אלֹקֵי מִסְכָּה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לָךְ, את חַג הַמִּצּוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר "You shall not make yourselves molten gods. You shall observe

the Yom Tov of Matzos..."⁸ This hints to us that when we prepare for Pesach, we should be cautious of anger, which is a type of avodah zarah. As Chazal say, "Whoever becomes angry, you should consider it like he worshipped avodah zarah."

Tzaddikim say that women could attain ruach hakodesh when they clean for Pesach; only anger prevents it from occurring.

Once at the seder of Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna zt'l, the rebbe's young grandson came into the dining room carrying a beer bottle. The family was shocked. "Chametz by the seder?" (The child had taken the beer from the closet sold for Pesach.)

Everyone lost their calm, except for the Rebbe. The Rebbe told the young boy to put down the bottle, and he covered it with a pot. He did so with joy, to perform the halachah (Pesachim 6): "If one finds chametz on Pesach, he should cover it with a utensil." After covering the beer bottle with a pot, he placed a small tablecloth over it so it would appear respectable in honor of Yom Tov.

He said to his grandson, "Thank you so much! You enabled us to keep a halachah in Shulchan Aruch. How often does one have the opportunity to keep the halachah of covering chametz? This halachah wasn't given to Goyim; it was written for Yidden,

7. One year, as Pesach approached, Reb Nota Zenwirth zt'l told his friends in beis medresh, "I think we should announce a yom tefillah" (a day of tefillah, to daven for salvation).

"What's the problem?" people asked him.

He explained, with good humor, "Pesach is approaching, people are cleaning, and they are worried that the house isn't clean enough." They are overtaken by anxiety, so we should make a yom tefillah!"

A *yungerman* told his rav, "I concluded that women don't clean well enough. They clean the floors by pouring water over the floors, but what about all the crevices!? Chametz can get caught there, and water won't remove it. I asked my wife to clean the floor with a toothpick, to remove all the chametz from the cracks, but she refused to do so. She said that she would do so only if the rav agrees it is important to clean the floors with a toothpick."

The rav replied, "I agree that it is very important to clean the floor with a toothpick. In fact, it is so important, I think you should do so yourself. Don't rely on your wife or anyone else to clean the floors."

8. The Zohar says that the Torah juxtaposes the prohibition of avodah zarah with the yom tov of Pesach to tell us the severity of eating chametz, that it is compared to avodah zarah.

and it is seldom that we get to keep it. You helped us fulfill it."

Others would have responded with anger. But what would anger accomplish? It wouldn't enhance the Yom Tov atmosphere,

and it wouldn't increase the child's love for mitzvos. It wouldn't do much for the child's self-esteem, either. Rebbe Yochanan showed him the joy in keeping halachah, the pleasure of Yiddishkeit, and that is a positive lesson that can last for years to come.⁹

9. The Yerushalmi (quoted in Tosfos, Rosh Hashanah 16.) states, "When the Satan hears the shofar [on Rosh Hashanah] for the first time, he becomes somewhat afraid (בהיל ולא בהיל). When he hears the shofar again, the Satan says, 'This is certainly the great shofar of Moshiach. I will be destroyed.' He becomes confused and is unable to speak *kitrug* (slander) on the Jewish people."

The Bardichover Rav zt'l said that cleaning for Pesach creates similar malachim as are created by blowing the shofar. Therefore, we can say that when women clean their homes for Pesach, the Satan becomes somewhat afraid (בהיל ולא בהיל). But when a child comes into the house carrying chametz in his hands, and nevertheless, the parents are careful not to become angry, this is like the second set of blasts of the shofar. The Satan becomes very afraid. Due to his fear, he can't speak *kitrug* against the Jewish people.

A renowned mechanech and tzaddik from Yerushalayim invited some of his students to his home for the Seder. The students were shocked when they entered his house and found a very non yom-tovdig atmosphere. They found the home turned over, and there was no sign that it was the Seder night. (Unfortunately, the wife of this renowned mechanech was emotionally unwell, and things like this would happen in his home.)

Their host told them, "When you go to other people's homes and find the table set, the children dressed in their yom tov clothing, pleasant aromas coming from the kitchen, you think you see freedom. I say you are seeing slavery because they are enslaved to that perfect situation. If a minor detail is out of order, the family doesn't know how to handle it. But in this home, we celebrate true freedom because we accept Hashem's will, whatever it is. If this is what Hashem wants, it is good for us."

Every year, before the Seder, the married children of Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l would come with their families to wish him a gut yom tov. One year, one of the grandchildren accidentally threw down all the matzos. Reb Zalman didn't become upset. He exclaimed, "Hashem gave me grandchildren. Isn't that a reason to be happy?"

Before performing each of the 15 simanim of the Seder, some have the custom to say what the siman is about. For example, before eating Karpas, they say something like, "We take karpas, dip it in salt water, and say HaAdamah, and intend to pater the Marror."

People attending the Tchebiner Rav's Seder related that the Tchebiner Rav would translate the simanim קדש ורחץ כרפס etc. into Yiddish, as customary, but when he got to שולחן ערוך, he didn't say the Yiddish translation, which is, מען גרייט צו די טיש מצה מיט פיש און אלע גוטע זאכן, "We prepare the table with matzah, fish, and all tasty foods."

One year after the Seder, someone asked him why he didn't add the traditional Yiddish phrase. He replied, "When I said קדש, the Yiddish translation is that I should make kiddush. When I said ורחץ, the Yiddish phrase tells me to wash my hands. But when I say שולחן ערוך, I am asking the women to set the table and serve the meal. When asking of others, it is improper to repeat the request. I say it once and briefly, שולחן ערוך, and that's it."

The Tchebiner Rav's second Rebbetzin was a granddaughter of the Chasam Sofer zt'l. To honor her, every day, the Tchebiner Rav would tell her a devar Torah or a story about the Chasam Sofer.

The Chasam Sofer's custom was to eat kneidlach at the Seder. One year, Reb Shmuel Binyamin Schiffer from Vienna was at the Tchebiner Rav's seder, and he asked the Rav why he didn't eat kneidlach, as was the custom of the Chasam Sofer.

The Tchebiner Rav replied, "You are right that we should follow the ways of tzaddikim. Therefore, we must learn their divrei Torah and emulate their holy ways. But we don't have to begin with the kneidlach."

Pele Yoetz (Pesach) writes, "The *mekubalim* write that it isn't solely chametz which is so severe on Pesach, rather every aveirah is far worse when committed on Pesach."

Reb Meshulem Igra *zt'l* was extremely *machmir* and cautious regarding chametz on Pesach. Therefore, he only ate matzah at the seder, and he ate solely the matzah that he baked on his own, with great caution to be free from chametz.

Once, on *erev Pesach*, Reb Meshulam Igra's children were hungry. His rebbetzin wasn't around at the time, and the maid sought something to give the children. The chametz was already burned, so that wasn't an option. She found some matzah, not realizing that these were Reb Meshulem Igra's special matzos, and she gave them to the children.

Soon, the *rebbetzin* discovered what happened, and she was worried that her husband would be upset. So, she left the house and returned home just in time for the Seder. She didn't want to be home when her

husband discovered his matzos were gone because she knew how upset he would be.

She found her husband in happy spirits. "He probably doesn't know yet," she thought. With tears in her eyes, she told her husband that the maid had mistakenly given away his matzos.

He said, "So what's the problem? There are other matzos in the house. I'll use those."

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* repeated this story and expressed his admiration and wonder that Reb Meshulam Igra was able to pass this difficult test. He didn't become angry with the maid (or his wife for not being more on top of things). He believed this was *meant to be*, so there was no reason to be angry.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer's son once became angry with his maid because she had put matzah in the soup, rendering the soup and the matzah *gebroks*. Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer rebuked his son, saying, "Now you can eat this matzah too." He taught his son that getting angry and insulting others is worse than *gebroks*.