

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Behar·Bechukosai



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Torah Wellsprings - Behar - Bechukosai

Everything is for the Good

Every Shabbos, the Baal HaTanya zt'l would serve as the *baal korei* in his *beis medresh*, to read the *parashah* of that week. One week, the Baal HaTanya was travelling, so someone else read the Torah in his *beis medresh*. It was *parashas Bechukosai*, and the Mittele Rebbe (the Baal HaTanya's son) fainted. When he awoke, he said, "The *tochachah*! The *tochachah*! I never heard the *tochachah* like this before! When my father reads the *tochachah*, I hear only *brachos*, and I don't hear any curses at all."

How can it be that the exact words can be a *brachah* and a curse? When the Baal HaTanya read the *tochachah*, the Mittele Rebbe heard *brachos*, and when another person read the same words, he heard curses. How can that be?

This is because blessings and curses largely depend on how one perceives them. When you believe that everything Hashem gives you is for the good, you see everything as a blessing. Even the *tochachah* is a blessing. When one forgets this truth, many things can appear to be a curse.

We can compare this concept to a solar eclipse. When there is a total eclipse, the sun is entirely covered by the moon, and the world goes dark. But usually, the eclipse isn't complete. Perhaps it is slightly darker on Earth, but it goes almost unnoticed. Most people don't realize that it is darker. The sun shines brightly in areas the moon didn't cover, and the world is bright.

Furthermore, even during a total eclipse, it is unsafe to gaze at the sun. The sun shines brightly wherever the moon isn't. Nevertheless, one can look at the eclipse when wearing special dark glasses.

We can learn a great lesson from this. A person should focus on Hashem's kindness. Hashem is constantly bestowing His

kindness upon us; even when there are hardships in his life, he almost shouldn't see them. They go unnoticed due to his focus on the good he enjoys.

Furthermore, as we explained, even the hardships are Hashem's kindness, only they are concealed. And when one focuses on all the revealed good, he enjoys in life, he almost doesn't know about the hardships.

However, like at an eclipse, if a person puts on dark glasses and focuses on the troubles, he will see the eclipse – he will see his problems. But when he removes the black glasses and focuses on the good, he will see Hashem's *brachos* and kindness, and he won't feel the darkness at all.

This week's *parashah* discusses the *mitzvah* of *מעשר בהמה*, tithing the animals that were born that year, to bring them as a *korban*. It states (27:32) *וְכָל מַעֲשֹׂר בָקָר וְצֹאֵן כָּל אֶשֶׁר יֵצֵא תַחַת הַשֹּׁבֵט הָעֲשִׂירִי יִהְיֶה קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה*, "Any *maasar* of cattle or flock of all that pass under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to Hashem."

Rashi writes, "When one comes to tithe them, he lets them out [of the pen] through the gate, one by one, and he strikes every tenth animal with a rod painted with red dye, so that it is identifiable as the tithe. So he must do with every year's lambs and calves."

One may ask, why do we not color the other nine sheep and leave the tenth one clean? This would also be a way to identify and keep separate the *maasar* animals!

Furthermore, why was it necessary to "hit" the animal with red dye (as Rashi writes, *והעשירי מכה*, "he hits every tenth animal")? Why can't he paint the animals calmly, without striking them?

The Ostrovtzer Gaon zt'l answered, "The Torah is teaching us that it is always this way. Someone who is a *קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה*, holy for

Hashem, he is hit, he endures yesurim and tzaros, and through these problems, he grows and becomes even holier" (Beis Meir, Likutim).

The "maasar animal" walks around and wonders, "Why is my portion worse than all other animals? They are all well, and nothing bad happened to them, while I was hit with a stick, and I didn't do anything wrong!"

The animal asks this question solely because it is an animal. If it had intelligence, it would recognize that this "potch" made it holy, קָדָשׁ לֵה. It isn't worse than the others, on the contrary, it merited to rise to high levels.

Therefore, let us not be like shortsighted animals, and let us understand that every wound and problem has an immense goodness in it; with them, we become more *kadosh*.

The Steipler zy'a (Kryna d'Igarta vol.1 10) writes, "Whoever is more fitting to be a great gadol in Torah, he endures more hardships. When he is strong and grabs onto the Tree of Life (the Torah), the yesurim will eventually leave him."

It is known that וְהָיָה is an expression used for happy occasions. וְתִמְוֹרְתּוֹ means the exchange, which can mean the exchange and the opposite of good occasions. It states (27:10) וְהָיָה הוּא וְתִמְוֹרְתּוֹ יְהִיָּה קָדָשׁ.¹ The Divrei Yisrael explains that the pasuk is saying וְהָיָה הוּא וְתִמְוֹרְתּוֹ, whether Hashem leads you in a manner of happiness, with revealed kindness, or whether Hashem leads you in the opposite, *exchanged* manner – which means

you go through hardships – either way, וְהָיָה קָדָשׁ, you should act in a holy manner. This is because you believe everything is *b'hashgachah pratis*, for your good. You aren't upset and angry with your portion, no matter what, because you believe it is for your good.

The Divrei Yisrael concludes, "When one believes that everything is good, he will merit to see that it is so. The pasukim hint to this because it states (27:14) וְהָעֵרִיכוּ הַכֹּהֵן בֵּין טוֹב וּבֵין רָע בְּאֲשֶׁר יַעֲרִיךְ אֹתוֹ הַכֹּהֵן בְּיוֹם, "The kohen shall evaluate it whether good or bad. As the kohen evaluates it, so shall it be." The Zohar (vol.1 150a) states that kohanim represent the attribute of chesed. The pasuk is saying וְהָעֵרִיכוּ הַכֹּהֵן, a person should measure and know, בֵּין טוֹב וּבֵין רָע, regardless of whether his life appears good or bad, he believes הַכֹּהֵן, that it is Hashem's chesed. בְּאֲשֶׁר יַעֲרִיךְ אֹתוֹ הַכֹּהֵן, if he will believe that it is chesed, בְּיוֹם יְקוֹם, he will merit to see the chesed that is there.

Following the Divrei Yisrael's lesson, we can also explain, וְהָיָה, the greatest joy is וְהָיָה, is when one believes that whatever happens to him, the good and the exchange, they are all for his good. No one is happier than the person who believes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is leading him with kindness. How much distress and pain, heartache and anger, are avoided when one believes this with emunah peshutah.²

Yishuv HaDaas and Humility

The Beis Avraham notes that the first *tochachah*, curse, written in this week's parashah is (26:16) וְהִפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה, "I will

1. Literally, the pasuk is saying that when one does תְּמִוְרָה (he says that the kedushah of his korban should be transferred to another animal), both animals become kadosh. He wanted to remove the kedushah from one animal and to place it on another, but he didn't accomplish this. On the contrary, now both animals become kadosh like a korban.

2. It states, לָמָּה לֵאמָרֵי הַגּוֹיִם (Tehillim 115:2). We can explain the pasuk as follows, *bederech tzachus*: לָמָּה "Why is this happening to me?", לֵאמָרֵי הַגּוֹיִם, that is something that goyim ask. They have questions and complaints about Hashem. They ask, "Why do I deserve to suffer?" Whereas, (Tehillim 144:15) לֵאמָרֵי הָעַם שְׂכָרָה לֹא "Fortunate is the nation who says בָּרָךְ, 'Let it be this way.'" They say this because they believe that Hashem is leading them in the best way.

order, upon you, confusion." This is because there is nothing worse than confusion.

We say in the Hoshanos, הושענא נפש מבהלה, that Hashem should save us from confusion. This *Hoshanah* is written after הושענא דגן מדלקת... חטטה מחוגב, "Hashem, save the crops from fire... and the wheat from locust..." The Chofetz Chaim explains that just as fire and locust totally consume a crop, similarly, confusion can completely destroy a person.

Someone once asked the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law which trait of his father-in-law he was most impressed by, and he replied that it was his calmness. He always maintained peace of mind, even during hard times.

The Gemara (Yevamos 121a) states: Rabban Gamliel said: "Once I was sailing on a ship, and I saw another ship, which broke in the sea. This caused me distress because I knew that there was a *talmid chacham* on that ship. I knew that Reb Akiva was on that ship. When I reached dry land, Reb Akiva was there, and he discussed halachos with me. I said, 'My son, who saved your life?' He replied, דף של ספינה נודמן לי, וכל גל וגל שבא עלי נענעתי, 'I managed to grab onto a board of the ship, and every wave that came towards me, I bent my head.'"

This Gemara is repeated as a mashal and good counsel as a way to overcome all tzaros of life. One must bend his head, let the hard time pass, and in this manner, you will survive. Don't let the problems destroy your *yishuv hadaas*, and don't panic. The time will pass, and matters will become better again.

Tzaddikim of Yerushalayim added that the word גל, which literally means a wave, also alludes to the "gall," a limb in a human body. In Torah sources, the gall often represents troubles and problems. (An example is the expression *moreh shechorah*, which literally translated means "the black gall", and it represents depression.) There is also the green gall, which represents troubles. For each גל, for each trouble, bend your head, and let the moment pass. Believe

that it is all for the good, and things will become better for you, with Hashem's help.

We can tell a mashal of a truck driver who wanted to drive under a bridge. Before coming near the bridge, there was a sign that stated the height of the bridge, how tall the bridge is above the ground. This truck measured the exact height of the bridge, and the truck driver foolishly thought that this meant he could drive under it.

He got stuck midway. He couldn't go frontwards or backwards. Someone told him, "Let air out of your tires, and you will be able to pass through." The same is true for all people who are stuck in their lives. Take out some air, humble yourself, accept Hashem's hashgachah, and you will be able to pass through all your challenges.

Reb Menachem Nachum zt'l (the son of the Magid of Trisk zt'l) wanted to live in Kutlana, a town near Brisk. He first came to Reb Yoshe Ber zt'l (the Beis HaLevi), the Rav of Brisk, to ask permission to move to Kutlana. From that moment, a close friendship developed between them. When the Kutlana Rebbe's home was completed, Reb Yoshe Ber came to visit him. The Beis HaLevi told Reb Menachem Nachum, "The house is very small..."

Rebbe Menachem Nachum replied, "There is a simple solution to that problem. We make ourselves small, and then the house is huge."

Returning to his home in Brisk, the Beis HaLevi told his students, "Today, in one moment, I learned a lesson from Reb Menachem Nachum that I didn't learn from all the years I studied with my Rebbes."

The Mishnah (Nega'im 12:1) states, בית עגול אינו מטמא בנגעים, "A round house doesn't become tamei with tumas *nega'im* (tzaraas)". I heard the following explanation from a clever person: Some people resemble a square. They have their ways, limits, and personalities, and don't deviate from their ways. Then, some people don't have sharp corners, and they can compromise and change their style when

the situation requires it. The Mishnah hints that someone with the latter personality, flexible, doesn't become tamei. He can learn to get along with everyone. Whereas those who are very exact about how life should be suffer and always find problems in their lives.

Connecting to Hashem Through Mitzvos

Parashas Bechokosei begins with the assurance from Hashem that if we keep the mitzvos, He will bestow much kindness on us, and (26:11) וְנִתְּתִי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, "I will place My dwelling in your midst..."

Rashi writes, זה בית המקדש, the pasuk is referring to the Beis HaMikdash. If we keep the mitzvos, Hashem will place His dwelling among us in the Beis HaMikdash.

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh has another explanation. He explains that if we keep the mitzvos, Hashem will place His dwelling place within the *neshamah* of a Yid. He writes that this is based on the pasuk (Tehillim 78:60) אֱהָל שְׁכֵן בָּאָדָם, which means that Hashem dwells within man. The Or HaChaim writes, שְׁעִיקָר מִשְׁכְּנוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ הוּא תוֹךְ נִשְׁמוֹת עַם קְדוֹשׁוֹ, "The primary dwelling place of Hashem is within the *neshamos* of His holy nation."

It states at the beginning of *parashas Bechukosai* (26:3) אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ, וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם, for studying Torah and for

keeping the mitzvos, many brachos will come, and among them is וְנִתְּתִי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, "I will place My dwelling in your midst..." This is literal. Hashem will dwell within the *neshamos* of Klal Yisrael.

Chazal say that when a person studies Torah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu studies opposite him. This reveals that learning Torah is a time when we connect to Hashem. Similarly, the Zohar HaKadosh (vol.2 82b) calls the 613 mitzvos 613 תרי"ג עיטין, counsels, because they are counsels on how we can connect with Hashem.

Therefore, ideally, we should study Torah and perform the mitzvos with a desire to unite with Hashem. If we perform the mitzvos because of mere obligation, without interest in connecting to Hashem, then a primary purpose of the mitzvos is lacking.

Chazal (Avos 4:22) say, וְעַל כְּרִיכָה אֵתָהּ חַי... וְעַל, וְעַל כְּרִיכָה אֵתָהּ עֲתִיד לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, "Against your will you live... and against your will you are destined to give a judgement and accounting before the King, King of all kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu." I heard from a talmid chacham that if you study Torah and perform mitzvos in a mode of וְעַל כְּרִיכָה, against your will, for this there will be a judgment. Because a person should desire the connection with Hashem that the mitzvos create.³

3. There is a Yid in Beit Shemesh, an *askan*, who assists families in need. Once, a woman told him that her husband doesn't appreciate her. She cried that she does so much, and he doesn't show any *hakaras hatov*.

The *askan* asked the husband to come see him. When they met, he explained that a wife is human and needs *hakaras hatov* for her *chiyus*.

"From now on, make sure to express *hakaras hatov*. It is crucial for her."

The *yungerman*, a reasonable person, understood that this was important and promised to improve.

Some days later, the woman returned to the *askan* and complained that there was no improvement. The *askan* called the husband again and said, "We spoke about your obligation to show *hakaras hatov*! Why didn't you do as you promised?"

The *yungerman* replied, "I don't know what she is upset about. I filled up a closet with many expensive and less expensive gifts. Gifts of various sizes and purposes. I also put in the closet several letters of *hakaras hatov*. With a happy countenance, and with all my heart, I told her, 'I can't remember your birthday, or our anniversary date. I also don't know which days you work extra hard, or when you work less. I also

don't know when you give birth to a baby. Therefore, whenever you need some appreciation and *hakaras hatov*, take out of the closet the appropriate present and the suitable card. Take it when you want, when you need, and that is my expression of *hakaras hatov* to you."

We understand that this wasn't the *hakaras hatov* she was hoping for.

For our topic, some people say to Hashem, "I have filled up the 'closet' with many good deeds. I studied many hours of Torah, and I said thousands of chapters of Tehillim, and I davened Shacharis many times... They are all prepared before You. Take from them whatever You want, whenever You want, whenever there is a need." It is wrong to think in this manner. The purpose of our mitzvos and good deeds is to connect with Hashem. This is the meaning of וְעַל כָּרְחֶךָ אֶתָּה ה' if you don't perform the mitzvos with desire and will, and it is a burden on you, then for this, אֶתָּה עֲתִיד לָתֵן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבֹן, for this, you will be brought to judgment. It is the *chiyus* and the desire to connect with Hashem which is the primary goal of *avodas Hashem*.

The Gaon Reb Aharon Toiseg Shlita repeats the following story from Reb Mendel Futerfas zt'l:

Reb Mendel Futerfas related that when he was a young bachur, he saw an elderly chasid, a great *oved Hashem*, who was sad and worried about something. Reb Mendel says that he acted childishly because he dared ask the elderly man why he was feeling down. This was out of place because the elderly chasid was over eighty. But he wanted to know, so he asked anyway.

The man wasn't taken aback by the question. He replied patiently, "שמה בחור בילדתיך, you are young. Your whole life is before you. You should be happy. But my beard has turned white. Soon, I will be required to give a reckoning and judgment before the heavenly court. This is why I worry."

Reb Mendel asked, "Why should you be afraid of the judgment? *Halevay*, all Yidden can give a *din v' cheshbon* like you can."

The elderly *chasid* replied, "What do you know about the type of judgment and reckoning I must give? I will tell you what I am taking to the next world. Listen well. Every day, I open a new bag (שק) to store my good deeds. When I wake up and say Modeh Ani, this good deed goes into the bag. I wash *negel vasser*, and the good deed goes into the bag. I say ברכת התורה, and it goes into the bag. I say ברכת השחר, and it goes into the bag. I teach Torah, and the merits go into this bag. I wear talis and tefillin, and where does it go? Into the bag. I daven shacharis, wash for breakfast, eat and bench, learn with a chavrusah, give shiurim, and encourage others to perform mitzvos. It all goes into the bag. I daven minchah and maariv, into the bag. Another shiur Torah, into the bag. Cheshbon hanefesh, kriyas Shma al HaMittah, into the bag. At night, I make a knot on the bag so that I can take it with me. The next morning, I open a new bag and begin filling it with good deeds. I've done this 365 days a year for the past eighty years. Every day, I open a new bag and fill it with good deeds. Now tell me, what do I have to bring to heaven?"

The bachur, Reb Mendel, was stunned and surprised that this elderly Yid opened up to him. But he didn't understand what the old man was saying. Reb Mendel asked, "If you have so many good deeds, why are you afraid? You have a fabulous treasure! Why do you say you have nothing to take to heaven?"

The old chasid replied, "I am worried because I placed all these good deeds in a bag. Why didn't I place them within me?!"

It is a wonderful story, and it is something everyone should ask themselves. I have so many good deeds, but did they become a part of me? Did it change who I am? Did they sanctify me, or did they go into a bag?

I heard a similar story about a renowned *mashpia*. At the end of his life, he could only eat the yolk of an egg. He couldn't eat any other food. A student asked him how he felt, and the elderly *mashpia* replied, "Baruch Hashem! Baruch Hu! *Halavay* my *ruchniyus* should be as good as my *gashmiyus*!"

The student was surprised to hear this. What was so good about his *gashmiyus*? All he could eat was the yolk of the egg. And his *ruchniyus* was very rich and full.

The elderly man replied, "It's true that I only eat part of an egg, but that food goes into all my 248 limbs and nourishes all my 365 sinews. The food becomes a part of me. But can I say the same about my Torah and tefillah? Can I say that they have become part of me?"

Zrizus

מעלות המדות writes, "Know my son, zrizus is a מדה חשובה, an important attribute. From the beginning of creation, man was created so he will be a *zariz* (swift to do good deeds) as it states (Bereishis 2:7) וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה. The word חַיָּה [written regarding the creation of man] means that he should perform his deeds with zrizus..."

The Shlah Hakadosh (Shaar HaOsiyos מעלות המדות) quotes this lesson from זריזות, and teaches that there are other places that it states the word חי in the Torah, and the intention is the same.

For example, it states (Vayikra 18:5) וְשִׁמְרֶתֶם - אֶת חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּםָהּ הָאָדָם וְחַי בָּהֶם - You shall observe My mitzvos... and live by them." The Shlah HaKadosh explains that וְחַי בָּהֶם means that a person should perform mitzvos with zrizus and with joy.⁴

The Gemara (Taanis 20b) tells that some students asked Reb Ada bar Ahavah which of his merits granted him a long life. Part of his answer was that he never slept in a beis medresh. We can explain that he was saying that he was never tired and sleepy in beis medresh. He always served Hashem with *chiyus*.

It is important to study Torah with *chiyus*, with joy. The Avnei Nezer zt'l (Abir HaRoim 113) said, "All poverty and tzaros that Yisrael

have, all over the world, r'l, are all because they learn Gemara like a person who wants to sleep - שלופעדיג. If people listen to me and study Gemara with *chiyus*, I guarantee Yisrael won't lack parnassah."

The Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh zt'l zy'a was once near a river that froze over, and goyim were drawing a cross on the ice. The Baal Shem Tov said, "Nothing is purer than a river. It purifies all those who are tamei, and it can't ever become tamei (see Pesachim 16a). Yet, when it is frozen, goyim can engrave a cross on the ice, which is a great tumah." The lesson is how much we must be cautious from קרירות, being cold and unmotivated in avodas Hashem. We should serve Hashem with *hislahavus*, with *chiyus*, passion, and joy.

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir zt'l said that a chasid is like the dough of matzah. As long as people are rolling out the dough, it is a yom tov. Leave it alone, and it becomes chametz. The lesson is that one should always be active in avodas Hashem.

Magen Avraham (131:4) writes in the name of the Shlah that when one says in tachanun פושעי ישראל לא נדע, he should say it while sitting, and when he says מזה נעשה, he should stand up. We can explain that a person shouldn't sit lazily in his chair and ask מזה נעשה, what can I do? First stand up, be ready to do

Chazal (Chagigah 27a) state, פושעי ישראל מלאים מצוות כרימון, "The sinners of Yisrael are filled with mitzvos like a pomegranate." There is a renowned question: If they are full of mitzvos, why are they called פושעי ישראל, sinners?

The answer is that they are מלאים מצוות, filled with mitzvos. They are filled with mitzvos like a full bag, but the mitzvos didn't become a part of them.

4. We quote the Shlah HaKadosh: "We can explain... that וְחַי בָּהֶם means he should perform mitzvos with *chiyus* and *zrizus*, and not laziness. When a person is lazy or sad, feelings that come from the *chitzonim* (tumah), and all of his limbs feel heavy - he doesn't have strength to get out of bed, to wake up for Torah and tefillah, or to perform other mitzvos - then it is like his limbs are dead. However, אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּםָהּ הָאָדָם, He should be strong like a lion, and due to his connection with the living G-d, it will be וְחַי בָּהֶם.

"We find a similar idea in Rashi (Brachos 51a), when he discusses the laws of כוס של ברכה (the cup filled with wine used for mitzvos). One of the halachos is that the wine should be חי. Rashi writes פרישק"ו בלע"ז (fresh) - healthy wine, whose taste wasn't ruined. It is all the same concept."

something, and then ask *מה נעשה*, what can be done?⁵

Hashem Desires the Heart

Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov zy'a said in the name of his holy father, the Kedushas Tzion zy'a hy'd, that there is a Midrash (it is also written in the sefer Emunas Yisrael, Avodah #8, printed year 5580) that talks about a boy who was an orphan from a very young age. He wasn't raised among Yidden, so he knew nothing about Torah and mitzvos. But he remembered that he was a Yid. He also remembered one word from his father's home – "tamei." His father told him this word is *lashon hakodesh* – from the holy language.

When the child became older, he felt an intense desire to serve Hashem, but he didn't know how. So, every day, he would jump over a well, and as he did so, he shouted "Tamei! Tamei!" He did this for a long time until he was exhausted and couldn't continue.

Once, this child met with one of the *tana'im*. The *tana* asked him why he did this. The child replied, "I do so every day because I very much want to serve Hashem, and this is the only holy word I know. I learned it in my father's home."

The *tana* replied, "You are doing a very great deed, but 'tamei' isn't an ideal word. It isn't a word of 'praise'. It is a negative word.

I will teach you something else to say: a word of praise." He taught him to say "*tahor*". He advised him to continue his avodah jumping over the well, saying "*tahor*."

The lad wasn't very clever, and it took him a long time until he could say *tahor*. Then the *tana* blessed him and went on his way.

Sometime later, the child forgot the word *tahor*. He knew that *tamei* wasn't a good word, so he couldn't say that, but he also couldn't say *tahor* because he forgot the word. He didn't know what to do, and he was very distressed.

Also, the *nachas ruach* that this child brought to heaven with his "avodah" was lacking.

Heaven revealed to the *tana* that he should quickly tell the lad to return to his avodah with the word *tamei*, as he had done until then. Heaven told him that if he didn't give over this message, the child's life would be in danger.

The *tana* immediately passed on the message to the lad, and the lad returned to his old avodah, jumping over the well as he shouted *tamei*. Once again, he brought a *nachas ruach* to Heaven with his avodah.

The Bobover Rebbe zt'l concluded, "If this child accomplished so much by shouting *tamei*, how much *nachas ruach* does Hashem

5. There is a mashal of a person who was pulled over for driving under the influence of alcohol. The police officer tested his blood alcohol level and issued him a summons. The officer warned him that it is illegal for him to drive in his state. A few minutes later, the same policeman gave him a ticket again. This happened a third time, too. The driver said, "Why do you keep following me to give me more tickets? Why can't you allow me to go home? What did I do to you? You should go after real criminals, not me!"

The policeman explained that he didn't go after him at all. He stayed in one place, only it was the drunk driver who kept coming back to him. This is because he was located at a roundabout (as exists in many cities to control traffic), and due to the drunk driver's condition, he didn't realize that he was driving around in circles, around the same place. The officer said, "Stop going around the island, and I will leave you alone."

The *nimshal* is that sometimes a person feels that the *yetzer hara* keeps coming after him. Wherever he goes, the *yetzer hara* catches up to him and causes him trouble again, always tempting him with the same aveiros and bad middos. Actually, the person is guilty because he keeps returning to the same thoughts and the same challenges. Move away from there, and free yourself from the *yetzer hara*!

receive when one shouts, 'I want to be clean and tahor before Hashem!' How much nachas ruach this will bring to our Father in heaven!" (Especially when it is done in our times, year תשפ"ה.)

A similar story is written in Sefer Chasidim (אות ד'י). It teaches about the nachas ruach Hashem has from our mitzvos, even when they are far from perfect, because Hashem desires the heart. Furthermore, the story will show us the power of desire, the greatness of wanting to do a good deed before Hashem. We quote the Sefer Chasidim:

"Every mitzvah that a person can do, he should do. And whatever he can't do, he should think that he *wants* to perform the mitzvah. There was a person who worked as a shepherd, and he didn't know how to daven. Every day, he would say, 'Ribono Shel Olam! You know, if You had animals and would give them to me to watch, I would charge everyone, but I would watch Your animals for free because I love You and because I am a Yisrael.' Once, a *talmid chacham* was walking by and heard the shepherd say these words. The *talmid chacham* said, 'Fool, don't daven like that.'

"The shepherd asked, 'So how should I daven?'"

The Chacham immediately taught him how to recite *brachos*, *kriyas Shema*, and *Shemonah Esrei*, so he would stop saying what he was saying until then. But when the *talmid chacham* left, the shepherd forgot everything he was taught, and couldn't daven. He was also afraid to say the prayers he used to, because the tzaddik told him he shouldn't.

"In a dream, the *talmid chacham* was told that he must tell the shepherd to return to his old tefillah. 'If you don't do so, bad will befall you, because you stole away this person's Olam HaBa.'

"He immediately went to the shepherd and asked him which tefillah he was saying lately. The shepherd replied, 'I didn't say any tefillah. I forgot what you taught me,

and you told me that I shouldn't say my previous tefillah...' The *talmid chacham* repeated the dream and told him to return to saying his tefillah, the original one he had been saying.

"This shepherd didn't learn Torah, he didn't perform a mitzvah, but he *wanted* to do a good deed. [He wanted to guard Hashem's animals for free, if there was a need for it]. This desire was considered to be a very great deed, כי רחמנא ליבא בעי, Hashem desires the heart. Therefore, a person should think about doing good deeds before Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

Sefer Chasidim (18) teaches, "Our Creator, who examines the heart of man, doesn't ask from a person more than what his heart should be for Hashem. If he doesn't know how to daven properly, he will receive credit like he davened properly and with kavanah. Also, someone who says *pesukei dezimra* out loud, in a sweet voice and with kavanah, but he doesn't know how to say the *pasukim* correctly, and he says the words wrongly, his prayers will create a nachas ruach, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu will be extremely happy. Hashem will say, 'How beautifully he sings before me, according to his abilities.'"

Sefer Chasidim tells a story about a kohen who didn't know how to say *birkas kohanim* properly. Instead of saying וישמרך (Hashem will guard you), he said ישמרך (which means Hashem will destroy you, *chalilah*). A certain *talmid chacham* didn't permit this kohen to say *birkas kohanim* in *beis medresh* anymore. He explained that not only wasn't he giving a *brachah*, but rather he was giving a curse, r'l.

Sefer Chasidim writes that the *talmid chacham* was wrong for stopping this man from saying *birkas kohanim*. "Heaven showed this *chacham* that he would be punished if he didn't allow the kohen to return to say *birkas kohanim*." The kohen was doing the best he could, and it became a nachas ruach for Hashem.

Similarly, the Ben Ish Chai (Od Yosef Chai, Matos) tells a story about a G-d fearing person

who didn't know *lashon hakadosh*. He didn't understand what the words of the tefillah meant. Once, he was in a beis kneses, and he heard a chazan sing the words אלו ואלו נשרפין בביית הדשן, "Both of them are burned in the place of the ashes."⁶ The simple man assumed that these five words must be a tremendous blessing, which is why the chazan sang these words so beautifully. Therefore, the simple person memorized the words, and when he blessed his children on Friday night, he would say with kavanah אלו ואלו נשרפין בביית הדשן, "Both of them are burned in the place of the ashes."

Once, a talmid chacham, a gadol b'Torah, came to his home for Shabbos, and heard him bless his children with these words. The *talmid chacham* became very afraid. He asked, "Why do you curse your own children that they be burned in the place of ashes? You are cursing them instead of blessing them!"

That night, the chacham was shown in a dream that he didn't act correctly. He shouldn't have stopped this simple person from his custom. He was saying these words with good intention, and Hashem took the words and turned them around to be a brachah. What's important is one's intention, and he wanted to bless his children.

This story is also written in brief by the Or HaChaim HaKadosh (Rishon l'Tzion Mishlei 3), and he writes, כי כל אשר יכוין לבו לרצונו ה', ה' יסיר, "Whoever intends his heart for Hashem's will, Hashem will remove the crookedness and make it straight."

Shemita and Bitachon

It states at the beginning of this week's parashah (25:3-4), שש שנים תזרע שדך...ובשנה השביעית, שבת שבתון יהיה לארץ, "For six years you may sow your field...but the seventh year shall be a complete rest for the land..." This refers to the mitzvah of Shemita. Once every seven years, the agriculture industry in Eretz Yisrael comes to a complete halt. The *Chinuch* (mitzvah 84) explains that the purpose of this mitzvah is to remind us that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.

Shemita also teaches us that *parnassah* is from Hashem, and not from our toil and labor. How else could the millions of people in Eretz Yisrael survive if all the fields were barren for an entire year?

The Torah addresses this predicament. וכי תאמרו מה נאכל בשנה השביעית, הן לא נזרע ולא (25:20), "If you will say: What shall we eat in the seventh year? Behold, we will not sow and not gather in our crops!"

Hashem answers, וצויתי את ברכתי לכם בשנה, "I will command My blessings for you in the sixth year, and the crops will be sufficient for three years." In other words, Hashem replies that *parnassah* comes from Hashem, not from the work of our hands. Therefore, there is no reason to worry. Hashem has many ways to support us.⁷

6. These words are in the korbanos, in איזהו מקומן. It tells that two types of korbanos are burned outside the beis hamikdash, where the ashes of the mizbeach were deposited.

7. Chassidim spent an inspirational Shabbos with Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl zt'l, and as they traveled home, they reviewed the *divrei Torah* they heard. "We never had such a good Shabbos," they said.

An ignorant chassid nodded his head in agreement. "You're right. I never had such an inspirational trip like this one."

The chassidim wondered what he meant because they knew he couldn't follow the Rebbe's deep *divrei Torah*.

He told them about a conversation he had with the Rebbe. "The Rebbe asked me to tell him my *sefer hayom* (daily schedule). I told the Rebbe that the first thing I do daily is go to the marketplace. When I finish my business, I go to shul to daven. Rebbe Mordechai told me that it isn't proper to do so. He said that a Yid

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* got married at the age of fourteen. Every day, his *rebbeztin* would go to her father-in-law, Rebbe Mordechai of Zvhil, and he would give her some money to buy whatever they needed.

One day, Rebbe Shlomke told his wife, "We know, and we believe that our *parnassah* comes from Hashem, not my father. Therefore, I decided to stop taking our daily allowance from my father. Let's trust in Hashem, and Hashem will support us."

A few days passed, and there was no food in the home.

Rebbe Shlomke told his wife, "Perhaps I was wrong not to accept help from my father. Hashem chose to support us through my father, so who am I to say I want my *parnassah* to come in a different way?"

So she went to her father-in-law for some money. He said, "I noticed you weren't here for a few days, so take a silver ruble this time."

Later that day, two wealthy chassidim visited Rebbe Mordechai of Zvhil. Afterwards, they went to Rebbe Shlomke's home, as well, to wish him *mazal tov* on his recent *chasunah*. While they spoke with him, one of them took

should begin his day with tefillah. I responded that I would lose too much business, since most business is done early in the morning. In response, he told me the following story:

"There was a *melamed* who was looking for children whom he could teach Torah, and earn an income. He couldn't find any children to teach near his home. The only position he found was to teach the children of a wealthy man who lived in a far-off land.

"He went there. After half a year, he put all the money he earned – 300 silver rubles and 80 *groshen* – into his pouch, and guarding his pouch very closely, set out on his long journey home.

"Friday arrived, and he was still on the road, so he stopped at an inn for Shabbos. What should he do with the money? A half-year's worth of wages is not something to take lightly. He was tempted to keep the cash on him throughout Shabbos, but his *yiras Shamayim* didn't permit him to do so. With a quaking heart, he entrusted his money with the hotelier. He didn't know if the hotelier was honest. If he weren't, a half-year's work far from home would be for naught.

The entire Shabbos he wondered whether he did the right thing, and if he would ever see his money again.

"Immediately after Shabbos, he asked the hotelier for his pouch and breathed a sigh of relief when the hotelier handed him the pouch.

"But there was still a possibility that the hotelier kept some coins. So, he sat down at a table in the dining hall and began counting the money. He started with the rubles. He stacked them on a table and counted out exactly three hundred silver rubles, the amount that should be there. Then he began counting the copper *groshen*.

"Someone saw him counting the *groshen* and shook his head in disapproval. This man explained, 'If the hotelier is dishonest, he would have stolen silver rubles. If he didn't, you can be certain he didn't steal your copper *groshen* either.'

"Rebbe Mordechai Chernobyler concluded, 'Every morning, Hashem returns your *neshamah* to you. You see that Hashem is taking care of you. He cares for your life, your health, and all your needs. If He takes such good care of your health and life, you can be certain He will supply you with *parnassah* as well. There is nothing to fear. Daven early in the morning and then go about your business. Hashem will support you in this way, too.'

The chassidim listened to this story in astonishment and agreed that he had an even better Shabbos than they had.

out a silver ruble and played with it. Rebbe Shlomke understood he planned to give him the ruble as a *chasunah* gift. But when they finished their conversation, the man forgot he wanted to give the gift and returned the coin to his pocket.

Rebbe Shlomke understood that if he hadn't taken money from his father, he would

have received that same silver ruble from the wealthy chassid. He realized Hashem sent him a lesson that He would indeed support them, even if he didn't go to his father for the allowance. *Parnassah* comes from Hashem, and Hashem has many ways to help us.⁸

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

8. The sefirah of יסוד שביסוד is the yahrtzeit of Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil, *zt'l*. Therefore, we will bring here some stories and lessons from this great tzaddik:

Rebbe Shlomke's compassion for all was legendary.

As a child, Reb Avraham Fisher *shlita* was playing with the cats outside Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil's *zt'l* home. The Rebbe came out and warned him not to hurt the cats.

If we must be compassionate even to animals, even more so, we must be cautious never to cause our fellow man distress or heartache.

In Yerushalayim, there lived a tall, overweight, ignoramus person named Yaakov. He wasn't welcome anywhere. He wasn't even permitted to use the local *mikvehs* due to his foul odor and lack of hygiene. But he was welcome at Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil's home. Rebbe Shlomke said, "If the people of Yerushalayim would permit Reb Yaakov to use the *mikveh*, the Yidden in Europe wouldn't suffer so much [in the Holocaust]."

Rebbe Shlomke's home was open to all. People said that the only thing that showed he was the *baal habayis* was that when people came in, he would ask them whether they wanted bread with jam.

Once, a person came to Rebbe Shlomke's home, and Rebbe Shlomke offered him bread and jam. The slightly deranged man retorted, "You can eat bread and jam! I want pita with eggs."

Rebbe Shlomke went to the grocery to buy pita and eggs. (This was perhaps the only time Rebbe Shlomke went to the store.) He fried the eggs for his guest, and when the man finished his meal, he said, "And what about the jam?"

Rebbe Shlomke brought out the jam and asked him how much he wanted.

"The entire jar," the man replied, and Rebbe Shlomke gave it to him.

A bachur from Chevron Yeshiva slept in Rebbe Shlomke's home. He asked the Rebbe to wake him up at six in the morning.

"I can't do that," the Rebbe said.

The *bachur* woke up at six o'clock and saw that the Rebbe was already sitting at his table, learning Torah.

The following night, the *bachur* asked Rebbe Shlomke again to wake him at six in the morning.

"I can't do that," Rebbe Shlomke replied.

The *bachur* woke again at six and saw that Rebbe Shlomke was already awake.

The *bachur* asked Rebbe Shlomke why he doesn't wake him, since he sees that the Rebbe is anyway awake at that time. Rebbe Shlomke handed him some money and said, "Buy yourself an alarm clock if you wish, but I won't wake you up. Everyone feels a bit uncomfortable upon awakening in the morning. Even someone who wants to wake up early feel discomfort the moment they wake up, and I don't want to cause another Yid distress, even for a short moment."

A person had trouble with his vision; he saw everything slanted. He lived in a small town and thought the houses were collapsing because he saw them on a slant. But they were tiny houses; even if they fell, it wouldn't be a great tragedy.

Then he moved to a large city with skyscrapers. He shouted to people, "Be careful. Run away! The buildings are falling."

People panicked and ran for their lives.

One wise person said, "There is no reason to run. All we need is an eye doctor. Is there an eye doctor here?"

People didn't understand how an eye doctor would stop the buildings from falling. An eye doctor came forward, checked the person's eyes, and discovered that his eyes were the source of the problem. The problem wasn't with the buildings, but rather with his eyesight.

The *nimshal* is that people have crooked eyes. They panic when they don't see how they will support themselves because they don't see things correctly. When you see the world correctly and know that *parnassah* is from Hashem, you will never worry.

When the Or HaChaim HaKadosh *zy'a* lived in Morocco, he changed the workweek

schedule. He said, "The week has six workdays. It's sufficient to work on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Leave Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday for Torah. I promise your *parnassah* won't suffer because of it."

His community followed his advice; indeed, they had *parnassah* just like before when they worked all week long. They discovered they could spend much time learning Torah each week, and Hashem would support them. This went on for many years.

When the Or HaChaim moved to Eretz Yisrael, the Moroccan community gradually began to return to their past habits of working more days. Eventually, they were back to a six-day workweek.

But they admitted that the extra working days didn't bring them greater financial success. They were just as well off when they followed the Or HaChaim's counsel *הוי מומעט בעסק ועסוק בתורה*, to work less and to study Torah. They realized that *parnassah* is from Hashem, and Hashem can support them when they work less, too.

This is the lesson of *shemitah*. To know that Hashem provides support, and *parnassah* comes from Him.

The following story is an excellent lesson in chinuch – chinuch with patience, understanding, compassion, and wisdom. My father *zt'l* was once in Los Angeles, in the home of Reb Eliezer Adler *z'l*. Rebbetzin Adler asked my father, "If your daughter asked for money to go to the theatre, what would you tell her?"

My father had never encountered anything like that before and didn't know what to say.

She said, "When I was growing up, in Yerushalayim, my friends were going to the theatre, and I asked my grandfather, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l*, for money for the entrance fee. My grandfather gave me the money, and as I was about to leave the room, he called me back and said, 'You asked me for money for the theatre, and I gave you. But you should know my heart will break if you go there.' I immediately told my grandfather that I won't go to the theatre, not then, and not ever."

חדש!

הזכיע!

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