

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Beha'aloscha





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Torah Wellsprings - Beha'aloscha

The Correct Way to Earn Parnassah

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabba* 15:6) associates the *pasuk*, בהעלתך את הנרות, "When you will light the lamps of the menorah..." with the *pasuk* (Tehillim 34:10), יראו את ה' קדושי כי אין מחסור, "Fear Hashem, His holy ones because those who fear Him lack nothing."

What is the connection between these two *pesukim*?

The Tiferes Shmuel of Alexander zt'l explains that some people steal, cheat, and commit other *aveiros* in their quest to earn their *parnassah*. Others don't learn Torah every day or don't daven in shul because they feel that they need every moment of their time to earn *parnassah*.

The *pasuk* urges us, יראו את ה', fear Hashem. Conduct your business with honesty and set aside time for Torah and tefillah. Don't be afraid that you won't earn enough money, because אין מחסור ליראי, those who fear Him lack nothing. Your *parnassah* won't suffer due to your set times of Torah and tefillah.

We learn this from the נר מערבי, the western lamp of the menorah. This lamp had the same amount of oil as all the other six lamps, and yet, every day, this western lamp remained lit for many hours longer than the others. How was this possible?

Because it was Hashem's will.

Hashem decides how long oil burns and how much money one earns; the number of hours invested in work is irrelevant. He can work less and earn the same amount.

The menorah teaches us that we can work fewer hours, and our *parnassah* won't be negatively affected.

Regarding the *mon*, it states (11:8), שמו העם, ולקטו וטחנו... ובשלו, "The nation went out, gathered, ground...and cooked the *mon*." The *Zohar* (vol.2 62-63) explains that שמו comes from the word שטותא, foolishness. The people in the desert worked hard to gather and prepare the *mon*, but it was foolish. Had they worked less, the *mon* would have fallen at their doorstep, and they would have *mon* ready to eat.

Similarly, it states in this week's *parashah* (11:23), היד ה' תקצר, "Do you think that Hashem's strength is limited?" Hashem has the strength to sustain us, and we must not doubt that.

It has been tried and tested by thousands of people. *Parnassah* comes from Hashem, so working less doesn't necessarily mean you will earn less money. Devoting time for Torah and tefillah brings *brachah*, and you can earn the same amount in less time and with less effort.

The Best Place to Be

Rashi (*Devarim* 6:5) says, שלא יהא לבך חלוק על המקום. The Beis Aharon translated it as follows: "Don't have complaints on the מקום, place."¹

Every place is a good place. If Hashem put you there, it must be the best place for you.

Sometimes, when people aren't happy with where they are, it leads them to reach higher levels. We aren't referring to that scenario. We refer to when Hashem places you in a situation where you don't want to be, and you can't change that due to the circumstances. Rashi says, לא יהא לבך חלוק על המקום, don't complain about the place. You

1. The literal translation of this *posuk* is that one shouldn't have complaints on Hashem.

can serve Hashem wherever you are. If Hashem wants you to be here, it is the best place for you.

Imagine arriving with your family at a new destination, and you don't know how long you will stay there. It might be just a day or two, and you will travel on, or it could be that you will remain at this new destination for a few months or even years. What should you do? Should you unpack and get settled in this new location? Should you register your children in the local school? Or maybe it will be a short stay, and it isn't worth all the effort.

These were the type of questions every household had to deal with in the desert because they never knew how long they would remain at the camp. As it states (9:17), ולפי העלות הענן מעל האהל ואחרי כן יסעו בני ישראל ובמקום אשר ישכן שם הענן שם יחנו בני ישראל, "When the cloud disappeared from above *Ohel Moed*, the Jewish nation traveled. And where the cloud resided, Bnei Yisrael camped. As long as the cloud was over *Ohel Moed*, the nation remained [encamped]."

The *pesukim* elaborate:

ויש אשר יהיה הענן מערב עד בוקר, sometimes the cloud resided solely from morning until the morning, או ימים או חודש או ימים, and it could be for two days, a month, or a year. בהאריך הענן, על המשכן... יחנו בני ישראל ולא יסעו, as long as the cloud was over the Mishkan...the Jewish nation camped, and they didn't travel."

They never knew how long they would be at a location, making it difficult to organize themselves.

There was another hardship the Yidden endured in the desert, and that is they didn't

have the freedom to go wherever they wanted. Sometimes, they were unhappy at a location and wanted to move on and travel elsewhere, but they couldn't do so until Hashem told them to travel.

Other times, they became comfortable at a specific location and wanted to remain there, but if the cloud over *Ohel Moed* vanished, that meant it was time to move on.

The nation couldn't vote and decide whether to leave or to remain. Hashem controlled their movements.

Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsh writes, "We learn from this that we must follow in whatever direction Hashem leads us, even when we don't understand. Sometimes, Hashem has people leave the situations they love, and sometimes, Hashem tells people to remain in a place they don't want to be. It isn't easy, but we accept it loyally and with joy. Following Hashem's direction always bring us good fortune."²

Confrontations with the *Yetzer Hara*

Reb Yitzchak of Volozhin *zt'l* (son of Reb Chaim of Volozhin *zt'l*) teaches that each of the forty-two locations that the Jewish nation dwelled in the desert represented another type of *yetzer hara*. When the Jewish nation came to those locations, they had to battle with the *yetzer hara* that this locale represented. For example, perhaps one location was the origin for the *yetzer hara* for anger (כעס), another location roused the *yetzer hara* for laziness (עצליות), and so on.

The *Leshem* *zt'l* (*Leshem Shvo Va'achlamah* vol.2, *drush* 4:20:4) teaches that "It was extremely

2. Imagine the following scenario: You are driving home from work on the usual route that you take every day. Suddenly, your GPS instructs you to take an alternate route. You listen to the GPS and change routes. Why? Because the GPS sees from above, and it knows that there is a traffic jam on the road you want to take. Therefore, it sends you on another route.

Similarly, we don't always understand why Hashem is leading us in a certain way, but we must trust that Hashem knows what's best for us, and He is leading us in the very best way.

hard for the Jewish nation when they came to those places in the desert, because they immediately felt the *yetzer hara's* cloak of darkness, and they fell from their *madreigos*, drastically. They wanted to flee from those places like someone running from a fire.

"After they were at the location for some time and they succeeded in purifying the region from the *yetzer hara*, they wanted to remain there [because the *yetzer hara* wasn't disturbing them anymore]. The Torah writes, 'על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו', 'They camped, and they traveled by Hashem's decree.'¹³ They didn't do what they wanted to do; they followed Hashem's will."

When they came to a place where the *yetzer hara* was particularly strong, they had to stay there for a longer time to conquer the *yetzer hara*.

The Leshem writes, "The Torah says, 'ובהאריך הענן', 'When the cloud was at a location for a long time...' They had to remain in that place for a long time because the *tumah* of that location was very strong, and they needed more time to purify that place from the *yetzer hara*. It was extremely hard for the Jewish nation [because they had to deal with a very strong *yetzer hara*]. They wanted to run away; nevertheless, 'שמרו בני ישראל משמרת ה', 'Bnei Yisrael kept Hashem's decree, and they didn't travel.'

"There were places that the cloud stayed only 'מערב עד בקר', 'from nighttime until morning' and the reason is that those places weren't so impure. They wanted to stay there longer. Nevertheless, in the morning, when the cloud left the Ohel Moed, they traveled on."

Be Happy with Your Portion

Until here, we've seen that we must be satisfied with the place Hashem puts us in.

Sometimes, we don't like the location, and sometimes we think it will be better for our spirituality to be elsewhere, but when Hashem wants us to be there (and due to the circumstances, we can't change that), we believe that it is for our best.

We can take this a step further and add that this doesn't only apply to locations. It also applies to situations. We must be *שמה* *בחלקו* and trust that Hashem gave us the situation that best suits our needs.

Sometimes, people want another job, more money, better friends, more *nachas*, improved health, etc. Life isn't as they hoped it would be. Nevertheless, they must be *שמה* *בחלקו*, happy with their portion, because they believe that this is the life Hashem chose for them.

Think: "I have everything I need. The proof is that if I needed something else, Hashem would have given it to me. So, I can be happy with my portion because nothing is lacking in my life."

It states (11:4), 'והאספסוף אשר בקרבו התאוה תאוה', and Rashi writes that the *ערב רב* craved meat.

The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l (*Zera Kodesh*) writes, "Only the *erev rav* craved meat, not the Jewish nation. This is because the Jewish nation believed in Hashem, and those who believe in Hashem, don't lack anything. When they don't have something, they say, 'Apparently, I don't need it.'"

The Ropshitzer Rav elaborates:

Every morning we say the brachah *העושה* *לי כל צרכי*, "Hashem gives me all my needs." This means, if I need something, Hashem will give it to me. And if He doesn't, then obviously I don't need it. So why should I be upset? Why should I cry for meat?

3. The Shlah HaKadosh teaches that we should always say, 'אם ירצה ה' or בעזרת ה'', because we can't do anything without Hashem. This is hinted at in the pasuk (9:20), 'על פי ה' יסעו ועל פי ה' יחנו', the ability to travel and to camp is only, 'על פי ה'', if Hashem decrees it. we can't do anything on our own.

It states (ibid.), והאספסף אשר בקרבו התאוות תאוה, וישבו ויבכו גם בני ישראל *erev rav* craved meat, and Bnei Yisrael were also crying. Why did they cry?

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* taught that when a person sees people committing an *aveirah*, it means that he is also associated with that *aveirah* – in some way. Otherwise, Heaven wouldn't have shown it to him.

The Ropshitzer Rav explains that when Bnei Yisrael saw the *erev rav* complaining that they wanted meat, the Jewish nation thought to themselves, "Why don't they realize that if they needed meat, Hashem would have given it to them. And if they don't have meat, they obviously don't need it? Where is their *emunah*?"

And then the nation had another thought. They said to themselves, "When I see people with a low level of *emunah* that means I also need *chizuk* in *emunah*." וישבו ויבכו means the nation was crying, doing *teshuvah*, and they were strengthening themselves with *emunah*, because they witnessed the low level of *emunah* of the *erev rav*.

Complaining

It states (11:1), ויהי העם כמתאוננים רע באזני ה', the Ramban says their sin was that they complained.

The Ramban writes, "Har Sinai was located near settled cities. [This was a comfort for them because they knew that if they need something, civilization was nearby.] But now that they left Har Sinai and traveled into the great, awesome desert for the first time. They said, fearfully, 'How can we possibly survive in this desert? What will we eat? What will we drink? And when will we leave this desert?' The translation of מתאוננים is complaining (see *Eichah* 3:39, and *Bereishis* 35:18). They spoke with bitterness, and that was bad in Hashem's eyes. They should have followed Hashem joyfully because of all the kindness Hashem showed them. But they traveled as though they were

being forced to go, and they were complaining."

This is a critical lesson, which we should never forget: Complaining is רע בעיני ה', bad in Hashem's eyes. Hashem's praises should always be on our lips. It is wrong to complain because everything is for our good.

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* adds that complaining will lead us to many other sins. We see that immediately after the מתאוננים (the sin of complaining) the Torah states, התאוות תאוה... מי, "The nation had a temptation... and they said, 'Who will give us meat.' That is how things go: First, one is unsatisfied and complains, and then he yields to bad temptations.

A generous man once found a young child crying in the bus station.

"Why are you crying?" He asked.

"I don't have money to buy a bus ticket."

"Here's some money. Go buy yourself a ticket."

The child went to the clerk, paid the money, returned with the bus ticket, but he was still crying.

"Why are you crying now?" the man asked.

"When other people come to the clerk, he gives them a ticket and he gives them change as well. But he only gave me a ticket" (because he had paid the exact rate).

This story is a reminder that when people cry, they lose sight of all the good they have. Focus on all the good that Hashem gives you, be happy with your portion, and stay away from complaining.

New Intentions

After the Torah tells us the halachos of the menorah, the Torah states (8:3), ויעש כן אהרן, "Aharon did so."

Rashi explains, להגיד שבחו של אהרן שלא שינה, "The *pasuk* is telling Aharon's praise that he

didn't change." In a literal sense, this means he lit the menorah as he was commanded.

The commentaries ask:

Isn't it obvious that Aharon would do as he was commanded? Why does it need to be mentioned?

Some explain that להגיד שבחו של אהרן שלא שׂינה means Aharon's praise is that he never repeated a deed (because one translation of שׂינה is repeated). Every day Aharon lit the menorah, but he never repeated the deed. Each day, he lit the menorah with a new *hislahaavus* and with new kavanos, and every day was like it was the first time.

It is said about Rebbe Mendel of Vitepsk *zt'l* that he celebrated each Shabbos, thinking that this was his very first Shabbos and his very last Shabbos. With that thought in mind, he kept each Shabbos with renewed joy and energy. It was always new for him.

We should also try to make our *avodas Hashem* new. It shouldn't be repeated, each day the same. For example, we should put on tefillin today with a feeling of newness, and not just a repeat of what we did yesterday and the day before that.

Emunah should also be new each day. When you want to tell someone something new, you say, "Listen to this; I have news to tell you..." Every day when we say the Shema, we begin with שמע ישראל, "Listen Yisrael!" We are telling ourselves, "Listen well, because I have something new to tell you." The news is ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, "Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one." We know that from yesterday, we know that since we were young children, but today I understand it in a way I never did before. Today, I know that "Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one," In a way I never knew before

Finding Individuality

In *parashas Bamidbar*, when the Torah tells us how the tribes camped around the Mishkan, the Torah mentions the flags of the Jewish nation. In this week's *parashah*, again,

the flags are mentioned in reference to the nation traveling (see 0:14-25).

Reb Yitzchak of Radvil *zt'l* (beginning of *Babidbar*) writes, "It is unlikely that the purpose of the flags in the desert was that members of each *shevet* could find their camp, similar to soldiers who use flags as a means to locate their brigade. It cannot be that there was nothing more to the flags than that."

Indeed, we will prove that the flags carried a lot of significance.

The Midrash (*Tanchuma* 14) states, "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu came down on Har Sinai, He came with 22,000 *malachim*, and each group of *malachim* had a flag. The Yidden said, 'Halavay, we too should have flags like the *malachim*. As it states (*Tehillim* 20:6), ובשם אלקינו נדגול, (which implies that the nation wanted נדגול, flags, like the *malachim*). The *pasuk* concludes, ימלא ה' כל משאלותיך, Hashem granted their wish. Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed His love to the Jewish nation by assigning flags for them, as they desired... And in the future, I will redeem you in the merit of the flags..."

It states (*Shir HaShirim* 7:1) שובי שובי השולמית, Rashi explains that the goyim say to the Jewish nation, "Go away from Hashem, and leave your שולמית, perfect *emunah*."

The Jewish nation replies, מה תחזו בשולמית, במחלת המחנים, "What can you give us that can compare to even the flags we had in the desert."

From these sources, we see that the flags were very important. So, what was their purpose?

We can explain that the flags helped people understand their mission in life.

We will elaborate:

The Torah (*Bamidbar* 2) tells us, Yehudah, Yissachar, and Zevulan dwelled to the east of the Mishkan, Reuvan, Shimon, and Gad camped to the south, Ephraim, Menasheh, and Binyamin were on the west, and Dan, Asher, and Naftali were to the north. Every three

shevatim had its own flag. Rabbeinu b'Chaya (תצוה) explains that each flag contained three colors, one for each of the three tribes it represented.

The names of the *shevatim* were engraved on the *choshen* (the *kohen gadol's* breastplate). For example, the *pasuk* (Shemos 28:18) says, המור השני, נפך ספיר ויהלם, "The second row on the *choshen* were *nofech*, sapphire and pearl stones." The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains that Yehudah's name was written on the green *nofech* stone, Yissachar's name was engraved on a bluish (*techeles*) sapphire stone, and Zevulun's name was written on the white pearl called יהלום. Therefore, דגל מחנה יהודה, Yehudah's flag (which was for the tribes Yehudah, Yissachar, and Zevulun) had the colors green, blue, and white, to represent these three tribes.

The color and the stone of each shevet reminded the shevet of its individuality. Each shevet had its unique way to serve Hashem.

The flags of the Jewish nation simultaneously expressed the unity and the diversity of the Jewish nation. 600,000 Yidden, with their families, camped around the Mishkan, which carried the *luchos* that proclaim אנכי ה' אלקיך. This demonstrated that they all believed in the same Hashem, and they all accepted the same Torah. Yet, they also had different flags, and each tribe was represented in a different color. This revealed that there is also individuality in Judaism. Each tribe, and even each individual has its unique way to serve Hashem.⁴

Where your Heart Pulls You

Everyone has a mission in this world, but how does one know what it is?

There are clues to help a person discover his mission.

One way is to follow your heart.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 118:) states, תיתי לי דקיימת ג' סעודת שבת, "I deserve reward because I eat the three meals of Shabbos."

Reb Yehudah said, "I deserve reward because I daven with *kavanah*."

Rav Hunah (son of Rav Yehoshua) said, "I deserve reward because I never walk four *amos* without covering my head."

Rav Sheshes said, "I deserve reward because I keep the mitzvah of tefillin." (Rashi explains, he wouldn't walk four *amos* without tefillin).

Reb Nachman said, "I deserve reward because I keep the mitzvah of tzitzis." (Rashi explains, he wouldn't walk four *amos* without tzitzis).

Rav Yosef said to Rav Yosef, the son of Rabba, "What was your father most careful with?"

"Tzitzis. Once, he was climbing a ladder, and a string of his tzitzis ripped off. He didn't come down until it was fixed."

Abaya said, "I deserve reward because whenever I see a scholar finish a *masechta* I make a *yom tov* for the *chachamim*." (Abaya was the *rosh yeshiva*, and he celebrated with meal each time a students made a *siyum* – Rashi).

Rava said, "I deserve reward because when a Torah scholar stands before me in a *din Torah*, I don't go to sleep until I find a way to exonerate him."

The Netziv (*Haamek Davar*) explains that these scholars talked about the particular mitzvah they excelled in. Similarly, everyone has to look in his heart, see where it calls him, what his yearnings are, which is often a sign of what Hashem wants from him.

The Netziv writes, "If someone would ask you: Which approach of Torah study

4. The Arizal (*Shaar Hakavanos*) taught, just as there were four flags in the desert, there are also four groups in *klal Yisrael*, and each one follows their own customs. They are ספרד אשכנזי אטליי, Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Catalanian, and Italian Yidden. The Shlah adds, אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים, that although each community has their own customs, they all represent the word of the living G-d.

should I follow, and which mitzvos should I focus on the most? Reply (*Koheles* 11:9), והלך בדרכך לבך, 'Follow your heart.' Where your heart pulls, is a sign that your mazal understands that this is a good way for your soul."

This rule also applies to *approaches* in Torah study. As the Shevet Mussar (1:13) teaches, "I'm giving you advice that you should follow. Take this advice as life for your soul and as a necklace around your neck: Your focus of Torah study should always be where your heart most desires. If it is in Gemara, let it be Gemara. If it is in *drush*, let it be *drush*. Or whether it is the path of *remez* or *kabbalah*. As it states (*Tehillim* 1:2), כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' הִפְצֹו. This hints that Torah study is dependent on *הפצו*, what he wants to study. As the Arizal (*Shaar HaGilgulim* 3) teaches: "There are people who desire the area of *pshat* in Torah. Some want *drush*, or *remez*; some are most interested in the study of *gematriyos*; and there are those who want to study *kabbalah*. [These different desires are] dependent on why he came to the world, this time, as a *gilgul*. In his previous life, he completed his soul with the other parts of Torah. It isn't necessary to study all parts of Torah in every *gilgul*."

The Shevet Mussar concludes, "Don't pay attention to those who oppose you when they see you studying *pshat*, or *drash*, etc., and they ask you, 'Why are you spending all your days in this section of Torah? Why don't you study other sections? You came to the world for the parts of Torah that you want to study.'"

Use Your Talents to Serve Hashem

Another primary way to know your life's mission is to be aware of your talents.

It states in the *Aseres HaDibros* (*Shemos* 20:6), לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שֵׁם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְשׁוֹא כִּי לֹא יִנָּקֶה ה' אֶת אִשְׁרֵךְ, "Don't carry Hashem's name in vain..." The Netziv *zt'l* says that this *pasuk* is referring to those who don't use the talents Hashem gave them. Each person has his talents and abilities. Some sing well; some

are good Torah teachers; some are talented storytellers; and so on. A talent is שֵׁם ה', Hashem's name. One mustn't carry with him this talent לְשׁוֹא, for no purpose. כִּי לֹא יִנָּקֶה ה' אֶת אִשְׁרֵךְ, because Hashem won't forgive him for doing so.

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Mishlei*, תתקל"ב) says:

"Reb Elazar Hakapar's nephew, Chiya, had a beautiful voice. Reb Elazar Hakapar would tell him, 'Chiya, honor Hashem with the talent He gave you. [Remember what happened to Navos.] Navos had a beautiful voice, and when he went to Yerushalayim for the *yomim tovim*, everyone would gather around him to listen to him sing. One year, he didn't go to Yerushalayim, and dishonest people accused and testified falsely against him, and he was killed (see *Melachim* 1, ch.21). Why did this happen to him? It's because he didn't go to Yerushalayim to honor Hashem with the beautiful voice He granted him."

Reb Meir Shapiro was a chassid of Rebbe Yisrael of Chortkov *zt'l*. One Shabbos, when Reb Meir Shapiro was in Chortkov, the Rebbe asked him to daven at the *amud* (שֹׁבֵת מְבָרְכִים and *mussaf*). After the *tefillah*, the Rebbe invited Reb Meir Shapiro to eat the Shabbos *seudah* with him.

When the meal was over, and Reb Meir left the Rebbe's home, people saw that Reb Meir was beaming with joy. They asked him what had happened at the meal that made him so happy.

He told them that the Rebbe praised him for the tefillos he said at the *amud*. The Rebbe was saying, "Ah! Reb Meir! Your tefillah! Your *rosh chodesh benching*! The *mussaf*! It was so beautiful."

Reb Meir Shapiro said to the Rebbe, "If the Rebbe enjoys my tefillah so much, perhaps I should leave Sanik, where I'm the *rav*, and I should become the *chazan* here, in Chortkov?"

The Chortkover Rebbe explained to Reb Meir Shapiro that everyone has his life

mission. "You are a *talmid chacham*, a talented teacher, and you have all the talents to be a *rosh yeshiva*. Therefore, this is your life's mission."

Soon afterward, Reb Meir Shapiro opened the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, where he channeled all his abilities to teach Torah. He understood that this was his life's calling, and he invested all his energies to succeed on his path.

Once, Reb Meir Shapiro was asked to represent the Jewish community in the Polish parliament. Reb Meir Shapiro asked Rebbe Yisrael of Tchortkov *zt'l* whether he should accept this position.

The Rebbe replied in a letter, "I received your letter, and I will tell you my opinion:

"A person can determine his life assignment and the service that Hashem wants from him based on the talents Hashem endowed him with. Hashem granted you a sharp mind, the acuity to delve into Torah and to draw out beautiful diamonds, and to teach students... You have already established many outstanding students. If you accept this government position, it will take away from your *avodas hakodesh*. On the other hand, in this political role as a representative, you will be able to do a lot of good for the Jewish community. Therefore, my advice is the following: Don't do any *hishtadlus* towards attaining this governmental position. But if the Agudah committee asks you to take on the position, accept it."

Tefillah

We should daven for the *siyata dishmaya* that Hashem direct us on the correct path, and we should discover and do the individual service that Hashem wants from us.

The Mishnah Berurah (115:1) quotes the *Seder HaYom*:

"We say in *Shemonah Esrei* אתה חונן לאדם דעת... This is a request for wisdom and intelligence [to know what we should do],

because if one doesn't have *daas* (wisdom), it would be better if his mother had a miscarriage, and he was never born. Therefore, you should have a lot of *kavanah* when you say this *brachah*, because this is the most important request that a person should ask from Hashem. You should pray for a straight mind, so you will know to be disgusted from bad things and to choose good."

The Seder Hayom elaborates, "When a person is lacking *daas*...he blunders. He doesn't know what the right way is... Therefore, the main request that a person should ask from Hashem is that Hashem grant him a straight mind to know what he should do and which path he should follow. He has to have the wisdom to be disgusted with bad and to choose good because many people have two paths before them, and they don't know which path is better. They don't know which path will find favor in Hashem's eyes and which path is correct before Hashem. The *brachah* concludes, ברוך אתה ה' חונן הדעת, because Hashem gave wisdom [to the tzaddikim] of previous generations, such as to Yosef in his generation, Moshe in his generation, Shlomo in his generation, and so on, in each generation."

Motzei Shabbos is when we say this *brachah*, we add a prayer of *Havdalah*, אתה חוננתנו, which has a plea that we remain clean from all sin. Because after one knows what is good and what is bad, he has the potential to choose good. But when one doesn't know good from bad, he can't guard himself against sin.

The next *brachah* in *Shemonah Esrei* is השיבנו. The Mishnah Berurah explains that this *brachah* follows אתה חונן because, כי מתוך הדעת נותן לבו על חטאו, when one has *daas*, awareness of good and bad, he will know his sins. Without wisdom, it is impossible to do *teshuvah*, because he doesn't realize that he is doing anything wrong.

Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* once asked the renowned *baal teshuvah*, Reb Uri Zohar *shlita*, "Who influenced you to do *teshuvah*?"

Reb Uri Zohar replied, "What difference does it make?"

Reb Chaim Brim replied, "I'm asking because I also want to do *teshuvah*. Tell me who helped you do *teshuvah*, and I will go to him. Perhaps he can influence me to do *teshuvah*, as he influenced you."

Reb Uri Zohar told him that he was influenced by Reb Yitzchak Shlomo Zilberman *zt'l*.

Reb Chaim Brim went to Reb Zilberman and requested that he inspire him to do *teshuvah*, as he brought Reb Uri Zohar to *teshuvah*.

Reb Zilberman replied, "I'm sorry. I'm not able to help you. When I meet someone far from Torah and mitzvos, I can easily show him that he is on the wrong path and that he must change his ways. But you daven, and you learn Torah. You think you are doing everything correctly, so how can I show you where you should improve?"

To do *teshuvah*, one must have daas; he must know whether his deeds are good or bad. Without this awareness, how can he improve?

We must believe that Hashem will answer our *tefillos*. And when we ask Hashem that He direct us on the path that is best for us, He will answer our *tefillos*.

It states (11:1), וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאַוִּנִּים רַע בְּאָזְנֵי ה' "The nation complained in Hashem's ears. וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' וַיַּחַר אַפּוֹ וַתִּבְעַר בָּם אֵשׁ ה' וַתֹּאכַל בִּקְצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה, Hashem heard and became angry. A fire burned them and consumed the [people at the] parameters of the camp..." There are various explanations from the *rishonim* explaining which sin was committed here.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* says that their sin was בְּאָזְנֵי ה', that the nation didn't believe that Hashem hears them and that He listens to their prayers.

People believe that Hashem sees everything, knows everything, and leads the world with *hashgachah pratis*, but it is hard for them to believe that Hashem turns His ears to listen to us when we speak to Him. The nation, at this time, was lacking this *emunah*.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "There is an attribute of עֵינֵי ה', which is Hashem's surveillance on all His creations... However, the concept of אָזְנֵי ה', that Hashem listens to our prayers, and [that our tefillos can] change Hashem's decrees... they were doubtful. They said, 'Although Hashem's eyes are on us to bestow goodness on us, nevertheless, He doesn't hear our tefillos, to change His decree and to grant us our desires.' This is the definition of וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאַוִּנִּים רַע בְּאָזְנֵי ה'. The words אָזְנֵי ה' means they didn't believe that Hashem heard them. SO וַיִּשְׁמַע ה', Hashem showed them that He listens to their complaints, thus, He certainly hears our prayers, and He will fulfill all our desires."

Therefore, when we pray and ask Hashem for direction, to know what we should do in our life and which paths to take, we can trust that Hashem listens and will answer our tefillos.

Segulos for Tefillos to be Answered

Towards the end of the *parashah* it states, וַיִּצַּעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' לֵאמֹר אֵל-ל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ, "Moshe shouted to Hashem saying, 'Please G-d, heal her now.'" The Chida writes that when Moshe was in heaven, he heard that when one says נָא twice in his prayers, his tefillah will be answered. Therefore, Moshe said twice נָא when he prayed for Miriam's recovery from *tzaraas*.

נָא means please. We can explain that saying נָא twice indicates that one should plead repeatedly, and then his tefillos will be answered.

In Monroe, in the parking lot in front of a beis medresh, some *yungerleit* were working on a car, and when they saw Reb

Yoel Weiss *shlita*, who volunteers for Chaveirim, they asked him to help.⁵

A *yungerman* explained the problem to Reb Yoel. "I just backed up, and accidentally, I bumped into this car, which was behind me. The bumper fell out of place. We're trying to fix it before the owner of the car comes out and sees what happened."

"Whose car is it?"

"We don't know, but it shouldn't be hard to get the bumper in place."

They succeeded in doing so.

Just then, the young owner of the car came out of the beis medresh, after completing Minchah. He looked like he was recently married.

They apologized for what happened, and they told him that they already fixed the problem.

The young *yungerman* replied, "*Chas v'shalom*, you didn't ruin the bumper. It was broken several days ago. This is a rented car, and today I have to return it to the rental agency. I prayed at minchah that I shouldn't have to pay for the bumper. I simply can't afford it. I prayed for this many times. And here you are, fixing my bumper! My tefillos were answered!"

Another *segulah* for tefillah is to daven after passing a difficult test, especially when the test was related to matters of *kedushah*. The holy *sefarim* tell us that this is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah, and tefillos said at this time are answered.

There was a *yungerman* who heard about this idea at a shiur he attended. After the *shiur*, he left for the hospital in Be'er Sheva where his young daughter was staying, as her weak body battled with "the disease" (cancer).

The doctors at the hospital told him that his daughter needed a particular medicine, which could only be purchased in Tel Aviv.

The *yungerman* traveled to Tel Aviv to buy the medicine. He got off the bus in Tel Aviv's central bus terminal, and he was promptly faced with a difficult test with *shmiras einayim*. He passed the test. He realized that it was now an *eis ratzon* for tefillah. He went to the side of the bus terminal, and he davened for his daughter.

After the tefillah, while he was walking to the pharmacy to buy the medicine, he received a phone call. It was the doctor back at the hospital. He said, "Your daughter woke up a few moments ago, and after checking her, we see improvement. She doesn't need that medication anymore."

Another *segulah* for your tefillah to be answered is to be careful with your speech.

It states (9:20), על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו. This can be translated, על פי, if a person is cautious with his words, ה' יחנו, Hashem will dwell with him. ועל פי, but if one isn't careful with his speech, ה' יסעו, this causes Hashem to depart from him, *chas veshalom*.

Forbidden speech de-values our Torah and tefillah. Imagine you are bringing a beautiful cake to a king in honor of the king's birthday. You didn't find a dish to put the cake on, but you have a pot, and you realized that the cake would fit in perfectly. The pot is still dirty from last night's supper, but you figure that a little bit of grease and oil won't ruin the cake.

You carry the pot into the king, and sing, "Happy Birthday!"

The holy *sefarim* say that this is what happens when one talks forbidden speech and then speaks Torah and *tefillah* with that same mouth. He is using a sullied vessel to

5. Chaveirim is a chessed organization that helps Yidden when they are having car trouble. Therefore, when they saw Reb Yoel Weiss, they knew he could help them.

bring gifts to Hashem. It isn't surprising if his tefillos aren't accepted.

As the *Kitzur Shlah* writes, "If you want your tefillos to be accepted by Hakadosh Baruch Hu be careful with your mouth because that is your utensil for prayer. Be cautious and don't speak profanely, curse, swear, say *lashon hara*, and the like, because prayer is a gift to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the mouth is the vessel that holds your gift. The vessel can't be dirty... If it is, it is a disgrace for the King, and it is a disgrace for the gift. Rather, speak Torah, tefillah, permitted speech, and nothing else."

The Ben Ish Chai (*Niflaim Maaseicha* 124) told the following story:

Tuvyah the Judge was revered and honored by most of the populace. All judicial matters were settled according to his judgment. But he also had his share of enemies who always tried to harm him.

Eventually, they succeeded. The king believed their slander and decided to fire Tuvyah and punish him for his alleged crimes.

Tuvyah caught on to what was about to happen, so he put on civilian clothing and escaped. People saw Tuvyah passing through the dark streets that night but didn't realize that he was the celebrated Tuvyah, who just a few hours ago was the most influential person in the country, after the king.

Tuvyah exited the city, traversed a desert, and reached a river. The other side of the river meant freedom for Tuvya. But how could he cross the river without a boat or raft? He didn't know how to swim.

Soon the king would discover that Tuvyah escaped, and he would pursue him. Tuvyah stood on the riverside, perplexed and worried.

A peasant recognized Tuvyah the Judge. Tuvyah told him that he needed to cross the river. The villager was short and skinny,

and under normal circumstances, wouldn't consider swimming across the river while carrying a tall, heavy man like Tuvyah. But the villager realized that this was his opportunity to find favor in the eyes of this great judge. He said, "Honored judge, hang on to my back. I will swim with you across the river."

Thinking about the reward and wealth he would receive for doing this, the peasant almost didn't feel Tuvyah's weight.

When they were three quarters across the river, Tuvyah said, "If Hashem will be kind to me, and I become a judge again, I will reward you immensely..."

"You mean you're not the grand judge anymore?"

"That's right," Tuvyah replied. "Corrupt people slandered me to the king, and now I'm escaping judgment."

The peasant dropped Tuvyah in the water and said, "When you become judge again, I will pick you up," and the peasant swam back to shore, alone.

People rebuked the peasant. "If you were able to bring Tuvyah three quarters across the river, you should have brought him all the way."

The peasant replied, "I'm weak and feeble. I can't carry a heavy person like Tuvyah. As long as I imagined the great honor and wealth I would earn for helping Tuvyah, I had strength. I almost didn't feel his weight. But when Tuvyah told me that he was escaping and that he couldn't reward me, I suddenly felt his full weight and didn't have the strength to bring him to shore."

The Ben Ish Chai told this story to teach us that we must be careful with our speech because so many troubles come from unwarranted and bad speech. If only Tuvyah had remained silent, his life would be saved.

Similarly, all forbidden speech, and even unnecessary talk, result in heartache – to oneself and others.⁶

"Educate a Lad According to his Way"

We discussed above that each person has his unique talents, and each person needs to find his individual path and mission in *avodas Hashem*. When it comes to חינוך הבנים, educating children, we must also find the child's unique talents and specialties, which can be developed for Hashem's service.

It states, שם האחד גרשום... ושם האחד אליעזר, "The name of one [of Moshe's children] was Gershom... The name of one was Eliezer." Both children are called אחד⁷ because each one was unique, unlike anybody else, with their mission in life.

Someone has one hundred keys, and he knows that one of them can open up the locked door. He tried ninety-nine keys, but none of them opened up the door. He loses his patience and breaks down the door. Why did he do that? If he had been patient, he would find the right key that opens up the door.

The same is with *chinuch*. If you failed in opening the child's heart, that's because you

didn't find the right key yet. But don't give up. Think about the nature of the child and try to find the key that will work for him.⁸

My father 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 never encountered anything like that before, and he 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 that 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."

Reb Shlomke found the approach that spoke to his granddaughter. Other children will need different techniques. The trick is to find the key that will open each child's heart.⁹

6. A wise person said, "Before I speak, I rule over my words. After I speak, my words rule over me."

7. The pasuk doesn't call the second child השני, to remind us that each child is אחד, one and unique in his own way.

Another explanation is that a parent should treat each of his children as though he was אחד, your only child.

In the *Hagadah shel Pesach* we say, כנגד ארבע בנים דברה תורה אחד חכם ואחד רשע ואחד טמא ואחד שואל יודע לשאול, "The Torah speaks about four children: One is wise, one is a *rasha*, one is a simpleton, and one is the child who doesn't know how to ask questions."

The word אחד is repeated four times here to remind parents to consider each child like an only child.

8. We'll add that sometimes you should continue using the same approach of *chinuch* again and again, and in the end, you will succeed. Like a key that sometimes doesn't open the lock the first time you try, but when you jiggle the key around a bit, eventually the door opens.

9. There was a *bachur* who befriended bad friends, and one weekend, when his parents were away, he invited his rowdy friends to his home. The rowdy *bachurim* caused tens of thousands of dollars in damages

A father once asked a *rosh yeshiva*, "Who is the best *bachur* of the yeshiva? I want to know because I want the best *bachur* of the yeshiva to be my son-in-law."

The *rosh yeshiva* replied, "I have seventy best *bachurim*." There were seventy *bachurim* in his yeshiva, and each one was best in his own way.

This is how parents should value each one of their children. They should consider each child their best child since each child is great in his own way.

It states (*Mishlei* 22:6), חנוך לנער על פי דרכו גם כי, "Train the youth according to his way, so when he is old, he will not abandon it."

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* (on this *pasuk*) writes, "A person can't change the way he was born... If a person was born with a sinful nature, he has free will to use his tendencies to be either a *tzaddik*, a *rasha*, or a *בניי* (somewhere in between). As the Gemara teaches, 'A person born in the mazal of *maadim* has the nature of spilling blood... He will either

be a *mohel*, a *shochet*, or a thief.'... He has the negative nature is to spill blood, but he has freedom of choice to choose to be a *tzaddik* and to use his tendency for a *mitzvah*, to be a *mohel*; or he can be a *בניי*, and be a *shochet*; or he will be a thief, someone who spills blood in its literal sense. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, חנוך לנער על פי דרכו, educate a child according to his way – in accordance to his mazal and nature. Accordingly, you should educate him to do *mitzvos*. If you do so, he will not leave it when he is older. But if you steer him away from his nature, he will listen to you now, because he is afraid of you and obeys you, but later, when he isn't under your supervision, he will leave this path because it is impossible for one to change his nature."

Beis Aharon

The 17th of Sivan is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Aharon of Stolin, *zt'l*, the Beis Ahron. The Rebbe of Kozmir *zt'l* called him "the *freilechen tzaddik*" because he was always happy.

to the home. When the father returned home, he told his son, "Leave the house. When you pay for the damages, you can come back home."

The *bachur* moved out, and lived with his friends, which caused him to fall even further away. The father regretted what he said, and he tried to call his son back, but his son remained distant.

The father hired an expert who deals with such *bachurim*, and this *mechanech* succeeded to find an approach that worked for that child.

One day, the *mechanech* reported to the father that there were signs of *teshuvah*. The father couldn't contain his joy. He called his son, but the son didn't accept his call. So, he went to his apartment, and knocked on his door. He saw someone looking through the looking glass, but the door remained closed.

The father asked the *mechanech* to help him get in contact with his son, again.

The *mechanech* told the *bachur* that his father is trying to contact him. The *bachur* replied, "My father told me that until I give him tens of thousands of dollars, I have no reason to go home. I can't go back to my father until I pay back the debt."

The *mechanech* said, "Forget about the debt! Do you think your father wants your money? He wants you! He wants a connection with you!"

This story has a *nimshal*. There are people who withhold from doing *teshuvah* because they think, "I have too many sins. Hashem isn't interested in me. I have to do *teshuvah* and pay up all my debts, and then I can have a connection with Hashem..." But they don't realize that more than anything, Hashem wants the closeness with His children. Hashem says, "Forget about the debts, just be close to Me."

People thought it was his nature to be happy, but the Yesod HaAvodah (of Slonim) zy'a said that by nature, the Beis Aharon wasn't prone to happiness. Not at all. His happiness was the result of his *hischazkus* (his focus on thoughts that helped him be happy all the time).

He also taught his *chassidim* to be happy.

There was one person, though, who was always depressed, hanging around the chassidus. The Beis Aharon told him the following *mashal*:

There was once a family traveling to a *chasunah*. The bride was aboard, and the joy was tangible. A pauper stood on the roadside and asked if he could join them for the ride.

They answered, "If you can be happy together with us, you can join us. But if you are going to be sad, you can't join us because you will ruin the joyous atmosphere."

The sad man understood the Rebbe's words. His sad disposition mustn't ruin the happy atmosphere of the Stoliner chassidim. If he wants to be with them, he must be happy.

Joy is one of the pillars of the Stoliner chassidim.

Another pillar is tefillah with loud, passionate *hislahavos*.

One Shabbos, a rav from a different city was visiting, and he heard the Beis Aharon begin *Baruch She'amar*. He waited for the Beis Aharon to finish the *brachah*, but all he heard were the loud shouts of the prayers from the Rebbe and the chassidim. The rav assumed the custom in this *beis medresh* was that the *chazan* didn't end each piece, so the rav continued to daven at his own pace. When he reached *Yishtabach*, he heard the Rebbe shout with all his might, in the renowned Stoliner *niggun*, יחיד חי העולמים מלך, משובח... So slow and so passionate were their *tefillos*.

When the Beis Aharon was niftar, his son-in-law, the Rebbe of Sadigeira zt'l said, "The יחיד חי העולמים, the one G-d, Creator of the world, has remained the same. But the way that my *shver* would say it won't be heard again until Moshiach will come."