

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Shelach





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Torah Wellsprings - Shelach

The Meraglim's Error

The Yidden confined in the Warsaw Ghetto sought ways to escape this Gehinom on earth, where hunger and illness were rampant, random shootings and murders were everyday occurrences, and there were periodic deportations to concentration and extermination camps. But how does one escape a tightly guarded prison?

Desperation breeds ingenuity, and many clever plans came up, but most of these attempts failed. Then came deep disappointment because their small ray of hope was extinguished.

The Rebbe of Piasnesca *zt'l* (*Eish Kodesh*), who was in the Warsaw Ghetto, advised his students and followers that they should stop searching for solutions and instead place their trust in Hashem.

He told them, "Hashem can save us. He has ways. We don't know how, but we don't need to know how. Therefore, I advise you to stop seeking solutions, which ultimately results in despair and gloom. Just place your trust in Hashem, Who can do anything."

He based this counsel on the story of the *meraglim*. The *meraglim* told Bnei Yisrael (13:28-29), "The nations living in the land are strong and fierce. Their cities are fortified, and we saw giants living there. Amalek resides to the south..." The *meraglim* explained to the nation, with clear logic, that they can't conquer the land.

Kalev replied, *עלה נעלה וירשנו אתה כי יכול נוכל*, *לה*, "We will go up, and we will conquer the land because we can."

Kalev didn't offer a plan for conquering the land; he didn't respond to the gloomy

facts that the *meraglim* mentioned. He just said, *עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה*, we will conquer the land. We don't need to know how. Hashem has His ways, and we trust in Him.

The Piasnesca Rebbe taught that this is what everyone should do when they have a problem without a known solution. He should place his trust in Hashem because Hashem has ways to save him. The options are endless.

Sometimes life seems impossible and the problems insolvable. The Torah tells us (end of *parashah*), *לא תתורו אחרי... עיניכם*, "Don't stray after your eyes," and the Sfas Emes (*שלח תרל"א*) explains, don't be influenced by how you perceive things, because Hashem sees things differently. You may think there is no way out, but Hashem has a solution.

It states (*Tehillim* 121:1), *אשא עיני אל ההרים מאין*, "I raise my eyes to the mountains, from where will my salvation come? *עוזי מעם*, ה' עושה שמים וארץ, My salvation comes from Hashem, the creator of Heaven and earth." He created the world from nothingness, *יש*, so, if needed, He can create a brand-new solution for me and save me.

On the words (*Devarim* 1:8), *באו ורשו*, Rashi writes, "You can conquer the land, and no one will stop you. You don't even need weapons..." If they hadn't sent *miraglim*, they wouldn't need weapons." Because when there's *bitachon*, everything is possible.

The Sfas Emes (*ibid.*) writes in the name of his grandfather, the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l*, "It was impossible for the Yidden to conquer Eretz Yisrael, but if they would believe in Hashem... the belief, itself, would have elevated them above the boundaries of nature..." and in the merit of their *emunah*

and *bitachon*, they would be able to conquer Eretz Yisrael.¹

Bitachon for Everyone

Bitachon is for everyone, even those who have committed *aveiros*. When they place their trust in Hashem, Hashem helps them.

A year before the story of the *meraglim* took place, the Jewish nation witnessed the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf*, *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the ten *makos*, and *mattan Torah*. Why was it hard for them to believe that Hashem could bring them into Eretz Yisrael?

The Sifsei Tzaddikim (from Rebbe Pinchas Madinovitz *zt'l*) replies that after they sinned with the *egel* (and other *aveiros*, such as the *מַתְאֲוִנִים*) they didn't feel worthy, and they didn't believe Hashem would perform miracles for them to bring them into Eretz Yisrael.

The Sifsei Tzaddikim explains that Hashem wanted they should send *meraglim* so that the Yidden will know about the Canaanite's mighty strength and fortified cities. Because then, when they win the wars, they will acknowledge that it was a miracle, and they will know that they won the war because Hashem loves them unconditionally, even after all the *aveiros* they committed.

But the *meraglim* and the nation didn't believe that Hashem will perform miracles for them, which was the root of their error.

Accepting Hashem's Will

Thus far, we saw two explanations on the *meraglim's* error.

(1) They lacked *bitachon*.

(2) They thought that after sinning with the *egel* and other *aveiros*, they became unworthy of Hashem's miracles.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* tells us of a third error the *meraglim* made:

"The *meraglim's* intentions were for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. The Yidden were living in an ideal setting. Moshe Rabbeinu was their teacher; clothes and food were provided for free, and everyone was preoccupied with *avodas Hashem*. The *meraglim* felt it would be a shame for this ideal lifestyle to cease. Why should they enter Eretz Yisrael and need to toil over the land and be left without much time for Torah and *tefillah*? The *meraglim* knew that they were sinning but they sacrificed their souls for the benefit of the Jewish nation. Their plan was successful, and the Jewish nation remained in the desert for forty years.

1. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 7:) says that when a city builds a protective wall around the city, or when they are purchase weapons for protection, all city residents must contribute to cover the cost, however, the *talmidei chachamim* of the city aren't obligated to pay. This is because they study Torah, and the merit of their Torah study protects them. They don't need walls or weapons for protection.

The Chazon Ish says we can explain the Gemara in the following way:

Torah study trains people to have *bitachon*, and those who have *bitachon* don't need any other means of protection. They are protected with their *bitachon*!

The Chazon Ish would often say, "Hashem helps the moment a person doesn't see any natural means for his salvation." Because when he doesn't see any way out, that's when he places his trust solely in Hashem, and that's when he will be saved.

Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrifka *zt'l* explained: *ישועת ד' כהרף עין*, when people have *הרף עין*, which means they stop looking to people for help, that is when they receive *תשועת ד'*, Hashem's salvation.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* writes in a letter, "I don't feel that it's necessary to repeatedly ask for people to help you. I follow the Chofetz Chaim's counsel. He would often say, 'From a human being, one doesn't ask excessively.' Because what is man? Only Hashem can help."

"Nevertheless, this wasn't Hashem's will. We must know that whichever way Hashem leads us, it is for our benefit. Their sin was that they came up with this idea on their own. They should have trusted in Hashem's *hanhagah*."

Hashem knows what's truly good for us, and we should trust in His *Hashgachah*.

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* said, "Wanting to learn Torah, and to daven well, are excellent aspirations. But to want what the Ribono Shel Olam wants, that is something else entirely."

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* writes that this idea is alluded to in the song "יה אכסוף" - when we say "פתח להם נועם ורצון לפתוח שערי רצונך", which can be translated, "Open their hearts that they should want, שערי רצונך, what You want." Sometimes Hashem wants something we would not expect (like Hashem preferring to bring the nation into Eretz Yisrael rather than live in the desert), but we must trust that Hashem has a plan, and He knows what's best for us.

A chassid of the Birchas Avraham of Slonim *zt'l* had to be in America for Rosh Hashanah. He wrote a letter to his Rebbe, expressing his disappointment that he can't be with his Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah.

The Birchas Avraham wrote back, "Wherever a Yid is, Hashem prepares a ladder for him, and with this ladder he can reach the heaven. For example, Yosef HaTzaddik's ladder was in the impure land of Mitzrayim, and from there he reached his great levels. Now that you must be in America for Rosh Hashanah, you can be certain that Hashem prepared a very tall ladder for you. It is anchored in the depths of the ground, and it rises up to the highest levels. Therefore, accept your situation with love and joy."

Too Much Wisdom

In review, we saw three approaches to explain the *meraglim's* sin:

(1) They didn't have *bitachon* in Hashem, Who can do anything.

(2) They didn't believe Hashem would do miracles for them after they sinned with the *egel*.

(3) They preferred the spiritual setting of the desert.

All three explanations can be placed into one category – they lacked *temimus*, which means they thought they were wise and that they had an understanding in these matters. They didn't realize how insignificant their mind is in comparison to Hashem's thoughts.

Therefore, Hashem swore and said (14:35), "במדבר הזה יתמו", and the Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe* ד"ה במדבר) explains, that Hashem said they must remain in the desert until, יתמו, they regain their *temimus*.

As explained above, the *meraglim's* sin was:

(1) They didn't have *bitachon* in Hashem, Who can do anything.

They made this error because they used their common sense. With cold logic, they explained to the rest of the nation that it is impossible to conquer the land. They forgot Hashem could perform miracles for us, beyond nature and logic.

The second explanation was:

(2) They didn't believe Hashem would do miracles for them after they sinned with the *egel*.

Once again, their error was they were using their common sense. They said, "How can it be that after we stooped so low, and betrayed Hashem, that He will still perform miracles for us. They failed to appreciate that Hashem's love for His children transcends the boundaries of humanly perceived logic.

Our third explanation:

(3) The *meraglim* thought it was preferable for the Jewish nation to remain in the spiritual setting of the desert.

Once again, they lacked *temimus*. They should have realized that their wisdom and understanding of good are minimal, and they should trust Hashem's decision. Hashem wanted to bring them to Eretz Yisrael, so that was undoubtedly the best path for them.

The Baal HaTurim writes that the final letters of **שְׁלַח לְךָ אֲנִישִׁים** spell **חכם**, wise. The *meraglim* were too wise; they wanted to understand everything. Whatever did not fit into their perception of logic, they didn't believe.

The *meraglim* said (13:29), **עַמְלֵק יוֹשֵׁב בָּאֶרֶץ הַנֹּגֵב**, "Amalek dwells in the south." The Chidushei HaRim (*Likutei HaRim*, *Shlach*) explains that the south represents wisdom. As Chazal (*Bava Basra* 25:) say, **הַרוּצָה לְהַחֲכִים יֵדְרִים**, "If you want to be wise, daven facing south." The *pasuk* is hinting that Amalek utilizes wisdom. He tells people, "Think rationally, don't be unrealistic," and that is the *yetzer hara*, because our rational minds cannot understand everything. We have *temimus*, and we believe what the Torah tells us, even when it doesn't make sense to us.

The Gemara (*Makos* 24:) tells that after the Churban, *chachamim* saw foxes running out of the Kodesh Kadoshim. Some explain that it was specifically foxes because foxes are known to be clever animals. This was a hint to the Yidden that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because they were too clever, and they didn't have the attribute of *temimus*.

At the end of the *parashah*, we are taught the mitzvah of tzitzis. This mitzvah shows us that we don't understand Hashem's ways.

The Torah forbids wearing *shatnez* (a garment of wool and linen), yet for performing the mitzvah tzitzis, *shatnez* is permitted. How can that be? It doesn't make sense to our logical minds. If *shatnez* is bad, why is it okay in tzitzis? We see from this mitzvah how little we understand Hashem's ways.

Therefore, after discussing tzitzis, the Torah tells us (15:39), **וְלֹא תִתּוּרֹו אַחֲרֵי לִבְכֶּם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם**, "Don't stray after your heart and after your eyes." The Maaglei Tzedek (from the Rebbe of Dezh zt'l) explains, "Don't stray after your eyes and heart..." Keep the mitzvos as Hashem commanded, and don't ask questions and don't debate matters, because our minds are too small to challenge and question Hashem's ways.

Kalev and Yehoshua Trusted in Hashem

The Torah lists the names of the twelve *meraglim*. The Ramban (13:4) seeks to understand the order that they are listed. He writes, "They are not listed according to their flags... and not in the order they were born. I think the Torah lists them according to their levels, because they were *nesi'im*, and each was at a different rank and level. Some were greater than others in wisdom or honor, and the Torah lists them according to their level."

Kalev is listed third, and Yehoshua is listed fifth. This means that, initially, they weren't the greatest among the group. There were greater people than them. Yet only Kalev and Yehoshua passed the test.

The Imrei Emes zt'l explains that Kalev and Yehoshua passed the test because they were humble, and they didn't think they can pass this test on their own. Therefore, they placed their trust in Hashem, and this saved them.

As Targum Yonoson (13:16) writes, **כִּד חֲמָא, מֹשֶׁה עֲנוּתָא קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּר נֹן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ**, "When Moshe saw Yehoshua's humility..."

Also, Kalev was humble and was scared he will not be able to pass the test. As Chazal (*Sotah* 34:) tell us, Kalev went to **מַעֲרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה**, and he davened at the *kivrei Avos* to be saved from this sin.

They trusted in Hashem to save them from sin, and they didn't rely on their strength and greatness. Therefore, Kalev and Yehoshua passed this test.

The other *meraglim* were also tzaddikim, initially, but they felt that they could conquer all temptations, *yetzer haras*, and tests on their own. They didn't rely on Hashem to save them, and that was the root of their downfall.²

***Siyata d'Shmaya* for the Mitzvos**

The Ponovitzer Rav *zt'l* traveled to the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* in Radin. The Ponovitzer Rav intended it to be a short visit because he had a train to catch. But the Chofetz Chaim spoke to him for a very long time, and he missed the train.

Later, the Ponovitzer Rav heard that the train he hoped to catch had derailed, and many people died.

The Ponovitzer Rav said, "It wasn't that the Chofetz Chaim knew with *ruach hakodesh* that the train would derail. Rather Hashem places into the mouth of an *ehrlicher* Yid the words he should say, at the right time."

The holy Chofetz Chaim yearned with all his heart to serve Hashem and say the right things to help others. Therefore, Hashem always helped him say the right words.

Because when a person truly desires to do Hashem's will, Hashem directs him and helps him succeed with his ambitions.

Once, the Chofetz Chaim asked the Ponovitzer Rav, "How many hours of Torah did you study today? Two hours? Perhaps three hours? I studied for hundreds of hours today. Because I have a yeshiva, where many *bachurim* study Torah! I have a portion in

their Torah study, so it is as if I studied for hundreds of hours!"

At that time, the Ponovitzer Rav was considering closing his yeshiva due to financial hardships. This conversation encouraged him to keep the yeshiva open, despite the difficulties entailed.

Hashem is with Us

The Baal Shem Tov once told a *mashal* about a queen who broke the law, and according to the laws of the kingdom, her punishment was exile. The king was a man of judgment, after all, he was a king, and מלך במשפט יעמיד ארץ, a king rules by the law. So, he told his wife that she must go to exile, and he sent her far away on a ship.

Those days, the crew at sea wasn't under any rule, and no one could tell them what they can or can't do. People were always afraid to travel in that era because one never knew in whose hands he would fall into.

When the queen saw the crew on her ship, she became terrified. They weren't people she could trust.

She didn't know that the king was on board too and that he was no other than the ship's captain. He had to send his wife to exile due to her transgression, but he didn't want his wife to be alone on the sea, so he came along with her. If she knew that the king was with her, she wouldn't be afraid.

The *nimshal* is that Hashem sent us to *galus*, but we don't need to be afraid because Hashem is here in *galus* together with us.

2. The Ibn Ezra (13:2) writes that the *meraglim* were all very strong. As it states, שלח לך אנשים, and אנשים are strong, mighty people. But this time their strength and their righteousness caused them to sin because they didn't place their trust in Hashem.

Yehoshua and Kalev were the only two people in their generation who merited going to Eretz Yisrael. As it states (14:38), ויהושע בן נון וכלב בן יפונה חיו מן האנשים ההם.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said that only they חיו, can be considered living. As it states (*Chabakuk* 2:4), צדיק באמונתו יחיה, because when one has *emunah*, he is alive. When one lacks *emunah*, his life is bitter.

If we believe that Hashem is with us, as it states, עִמּוֹ אֲנִי בְּצֶרֶה, then, ultimately, we aren't in galus.

As Chazal (*Brachos* 33.) say, כָּל אָדָם שִׁישׁ בּוֹ דְּעָה, כאילו נבנה בית המקדש בימיו, "Whoever has *daas*, it is like the Beis HaMikdash was built in his lifetime." He will live calmly in *galus*, without fear and worry, just as when the Beis HaMikdash stood.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* was once speaking to the Toldos *zt'l*, and the Baal Shem Tov told him, "Everything that happens to a person, everything he hears, are all messages from Hashem."

As they were speaking, a goy who worked as a handyman came by, and he said to the Baal Shem Tov, "Srulik, do you have anything that needs fixing?"

The Baal Shem Tov told him that he doesn't.

The goy replied, "Srulik! Srulik! If you seek well, you will find something that needs fixing."

The Baal Shem Tov said to the Toldos, "Did you hear the *bas kol* I just received? If I search well, I will find something that needs fixing. I will discover where I need to do teshuvah."

The Toldos replied, "I can't believe that what the goy said was a *bas kol* from heaven."

The Baal Shem Tov told him, "It isn't that you *can't* believe. You don't *want* to believe."

Later that day, as the Toldos was traveling, he met a goy whose wagon overturned, and all the hay was on the ground. The goy said, "Help me pick up the hay."

The Toldos was in the midst of contemplating deep thoughts, and he didn't want to interrupt to pick up the hay. He said, "The job is too hard for me. I can't do it."

The goy replied, "It isn't that you *can't*. You don't *want* to."

The Toldos remembered that the Baal Shem Tov used the exact words earlier, and he now realized that the Baal Shem Tov was correct. What one hears and sees, and even when one hears a goy speaking, these are all messages from Hashem, calling him to come closer to Hashem. He immediately returned to the Baal Shem Tov, and he became one of the Baal Shem Tov's closest disciples.

A powerful king, ruler over a large country, started a war with a neighboring country, wanting to annex that country to his own. The battle was vicious and brutal, and the king sent his general to the front.

The army ran out of food and supplies, so the king took a large sum of money from his treasury to send to the general so that he can buy everything the army needs.

He also wrote up maps and strategies, so his general can effectively direct his army in battle and win the war.

The problem was, how to send it all to the general at the front? The enemy had many spies, and the king was afraid that the spies might discover that he is sending maps, plans, and money, and they will get their hands on it before the general receives it.

What did the king do? He had one of his servants dress up like a beggar, with dirty, ripped clothing. Then, the king filled a bag with smelly garbage and stuck the money and maps together with the trash. He instructed the messenger to deliver the bag to the general. No one would suspect that inside the smelly "beggar's" bag is a fortune of money, maps, and secret information.

When the messenger delivered the bag, the general opened it and smelled the terrible stench. His first thought was, "Why is the king humiliating me? First, he sends to the front, on this tough battle, and we are left without supplies, and now he is disgracing me, too."

But on second thought, he said to himself, "The king is always kind to me. There is

certainly a good reason why the king sent me this smelly bag."

He rummaged through the bag and discovered its valuable content inside.

The *nimshal* is, at times, people shame and humiliate their fellow man. The victim wonders, "Why do I deserve this? Isn't my life hard enough? Do I have to suffer this humiliation, too?"

But upon second thought, they realize that it was sent to them by Hashem, and there certainly is a concealed blessing within it. Because everything that happens to a person, including humiliation, is for the good.

Honor Your Fellow Man

The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 1:32) notes that when the Torah lists the *meraglim*, and it discusses the two shevatim that come from Yosef – Ephraim and Menasheh – the Torah mentions Ephraim first, as it states (*Bamidbar* 13:8) למטה אפרים הושע בן נון, 'For the tribe Ephraim [the spy was] Hosheia bin Nun.

A few pesukim afterward, it states (13:11) למטה יוסף למטה מנשה גדי בן סוסי, "For the tribe Yosef, for the tribe Menasheh, Gadi ben Susi." So, Menasheh is mentioned second, but he is explicitly associated with the head of the shevet, Yosef HaTzaddik.

The Ramban explains that the Torah wanted to honor both shevatim – Ephraim and Menasheh – that they should both feel equal. Ephraim is honored by his tribe being mentioned first. Menasheh is honored by the Torah associating him Yosef HaTzaddik.

This reminds us to be cautious to honor our fellow man; we shouldn't make anyone feel like he is second class. When we are careful to honor our fellow man, we will earn immense reward.

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak Weiss *zt'l* (the Rav of Yerushalayim, author of *Minchas Yitzchak*) was married three times. This is his inspirational story, which he related:

When he was young, a *shidduch* was suggested for him. Since the girl and her family lived far away, his parents sent a *shaliach* to check out the girl and her family and determine whether the girl was a fitting match for their son. The *shaliach* returned and said it was a good match, and Reb Yaakov Yitzchak was engaged from a distance.

As the wedding date drew near, the Weiss family traveled to the *kallah's* hometown for the *chasunah*. When Reb Yaakov Yitzchak's mother saw the *kallah* for the first time, she was very disappointed. It wasn't a proper match for her son at all. She wanted to terminate the *shidduch*. (According to halachah it was permissible because the *shaliach* was sent to make a fitting *shidduch*, but this wasn't a proper *shidduch*) but Reb Yaakov Yitzchak said, "Perhaps with time I will divorce her. But right now, I don't want to embarrass her."

They were married and had one son, Reb Berish.

His wife was killed in a war. Reb Yaakov Yitzchak remarried the daughter of the Rav of Vasloy *zy'a*. Afterward, he married the daughter of the Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zy'a*, but he didn't have children from either of them. His only child was Reb Berish, born to the woman he didn't want to shame.

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak testified, "Doctors told me that I couldn't bear children. Berish was a miracle. I am certain I merited this child as a reward for not embarrassing a Jewish girl."

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* had a friend who fell ill. Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer came to visit his friend, and Rebbe Pinchas asked him to promise that he would return to this world after his passing to tell him what happened to him in heaven.

The friend promised he would do so.

After his friend's demise, he appeared to Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer and said, "Throughout my lifetime, I never caused pain or distress to anyone. I was rewarded that I also didn't

feel any pain when I left this world. At first, I didn't realize that I was dying. I heard a doctor tell me that I must sleep deeply for a very long time to recover from my illness. I didn't realize that this sleep was my death. Then I heard the doctor say, 'Place him on the floor because he needs to warm up.' As is done to the dead, I was placed on the floor, but I still thought that I was alive. Afterward, the doctor said to take me outdoors to get fresh air. This was actually the *levayah*. Until I was buried, I didn't know that I had died. It was a perfectly painless death. After I was buried in the ground, the angels came. They wanted to punish me because 'there is no tzaddik in the world who...never sinned,' and I also have my share of iniquities. However, since I never hurt another Yid, angels of mercy came and brought me straight to Gan Eden."

Reb Yehudah Neishloss *shlita* relates that he was once walking with Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* through the streets of Yerushalayim, and a woman approached them. By her haggard appearance, it was evident that she had a hard life.

She said to Reb Chaim with excitement, "Perele is a *kallah*!"

"That is such wonderful news!" Reb Chaim Brim proclaimed happily, and with a joyous voice, he said, "Mazal Tov! Mazal Tov! How I was waiting for this day! Thank you for telling me! I'm going to tell everyone; I'm so happy to hear. Who is the fortunate *bachur*?"

She told him. Reb Chaim thought for a moment, and then he said, "Do you know who you are getting for a son-in-law? It's so wonderful! Your daughter will be marrying one of the top *bachurim* of Yerushalayim."

Her face beamed with joy.

"Have you heard of the Chazon Ish?" he asked her.

"Of course!" she replied.

"In my opinion, your chasan is the Chazon Ish of our generation."

He asked her, "Did you hear of the gaon, Reb Akiva Eiger?"

Tears filled her eyes, and they began to fall, one after another. In a voice choked with emotion, she said, "Of course I heard of Reb Akiva Eiger. Everyone heard of the holy tzaddik and gaon, Reb Akiva Eiger."

Reb Chaim told her, "I think your chasan is going to be the Reb Akiva Eiger of our generation."

The woman cried and said, "How did I merit this? It must be in the merit of my parents' and grandparents' tefillos and good deeds."

"No," Reb Chaim told her. "In my opinion, it is in your own merits and the merit of your tefillos."

She left extremely happy.

Reb Yehudah Neishloss asked Reb Chaim Brim, "Who is this woman?"

"I have no idea," Reb Chaim replied. "But I could tell that she is a broken woman, so I thought that if this mitzvah came my way, I should perform it properly and give her a large dose of *chizuk*."

Chizuk, a kind word, goes a long way, as the following story demonstrates:

When the *sefer Leshem* on kabbalah (written by the grandfather of Reb Eliyashiv *zt'l*) arrived in Bagdad, the Ben Ish Chai donned his Shabbos clothing for three days and danced with the *sefer* under a canopy, as if it was a *hachnasas sefer Torah*. So happy was he with this holy *sefer*.

Twenty years later, the author of the *Leshem* heard about the Ben Ish Chai's appreciation for his *sefer*, and he began to cry. When asked why he was crying, he replied, "Look at all these handwritten notebooks that I have in my *sefarim* room. All of these are *chiddushei Torah* that I never got around to printing. If I knew that my

sefarim are so cherished, I would have spent more time getting all my writings to print."³

A Year per Day

If a person spends a day committing an *aveirah*, it is like he sinned an entire year. As Chazal (*Chagigah* 5:) say, "Whoever sins even one day a year, it is as if he sinned the entire year."

This explains why the *meraglim* spying in Eretz Yisrael for forty days were punished with forty years in the desert. As it states (14:34), במספר הימים אשר תרתם את הארץ, ארבעים יום יום, לשנה יום לשנה, "For the number of days you spied the land — forty days — a day for a year, a day for a year." This is because each day of sin is counted as a year of sin.

There is a principle that מדה טובה מרובה על מדה פגמה, "Hashem gives kindness five hundred times more than He punishes."

The Chasam Sofer writes that it follows that if a person spends a day performing mitzvos, it will be considered as if he performed mitzvos for five hundred years, and his reward will be enormous.

The Chasam Sofer says that this is hinted at in the words, למען ירבו ימיכם... כימי השמים על הארץ, "[Keep the mitzvos...] so your days will be lengthened...like heaven is above earth." How much higher is heaven above earth?

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 94:) says heaven is a five-hundred-year walk from earth. So, the Torah is saying, keep the mitzvos, למען ירבו ימיכם, because it will be like you lived very long. For each day you perform mitzvos, it will be like you lived כימי שמים על הארץ, five hundred years.

This information should give you encouragement and hope. For every good deed you perform, you will be rewarded

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

Once, an unstable person came to Rebbe Shlomke's place, and Rebbe Shlomke, as usual, offered him bread with jam. The deranged man replied, "You can eat bread with jam! I want pita with eggs."

That was perhaps the first and only time that Rebbe Shlomke went to the grocery. He bought pita and eggs and fried them for his guest. After the man finished his meal, he asked, "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.

There was a *bachur* from Chevron who slept in Rebbe Shlomke's home. He asked the Rebbe to wake him up at six in the morning.

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

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

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

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

Again, the *bachur* woke up at six and saw that Rebbe Shlomke was already wide awake.

That night the *bachur* asked Rebbe Shlomke why he doesn't wake him, since he sees that the Rebbe is awake anyway at that time.

Rebbe Shlomke handed him some money and said, "Buy yourself an alarm clock if you want, but I can't wake you up. People feel uncomfortable when they wake up, and I don't want to cause another Yid discomfort, even for a short moment."

immensely, as if you performed it for five hundred years.

This is also a reminder of how cautious we must be with time. For every moment, one can earn so much. Each good day is like five hundred years!

Early one morning, the Rebbe of Radishitz *zt'l* said, "A special guest has just arrived today, and it's his first visit. He will never be here again, so I want to honor him properly. The guest is 'today.' It came today, and a day like today will never come back again."

Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* compared time to a travel bag. If one packs his bag in an orderly fashion, there will be plenty of space for all his belongings. But if one throws in his clothes and items without folding them and without an order, the bag will soon be filled, and there will not be enough space for all his belongings.

Time is similar. If one is cautious and orderly with his time, he will see that there is a lot of time in the day. But if one is careless with time the lets his days slip by, he will not have time for anything.

A student once asked Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* for advice on arranging his daily schedule of learning Torah. Reb Shlomo Zalman advised him to set aside time every day to review everything he had studied until then. The student told Reb Shlomo Zalman that he doesn't have time for that.

Reb Shlomo Zalman took a wrapped bar-mitzvah gift that was on his table, and he took off the rubber band. "See how small it became?" Reb Shlomo Zalman said, holding the small rubber band in his hand. Reb Shlomo Zalman explained to him that time is similar. It can be short, but when one stretches it, he finds plenty of time to do everything he needs to.

Parashas Bechokosai states the rewards for keeping the mitzvos. One of the rewards is (*Vayikra* 26:9), ופנית אליכם.

The Chiddushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that ופנית comes from the word פנאי, which means ample time. The *brachah* is that the tzaddikim are granted ample time so they can accomplish a lot in *avodas Hashem*.

(The Chiddushei HaRim would often say this translation, for it is indeed the greatest gift when one has enough time to do everything he needs to, in *avodas Hashem*.)⁴

Some have the custom to give a gold watch as a gift to a *chasan*. This is to remind the *chasan* that time is precious like gold.

The Lev Simchah *zy'a* added that the gold of the watch is only the trapping of time. The casing is always less valuable than what it holds. If the casing is made of gold, it demonstrates that time itself is far more valuable.⁵

4. When the Torah lists the *tochachah* (curses) it also states (*Vayikra* 26:17), ונתתי פני בכם. According to the Chiddushei HaRim's explanation that פני means ample time, why does Hashem grant sinners with ample time?

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* answers that having time is a blessing for those who use it well and a curse for those who use their time foolishly and for sin.

5. Reb Zalman Brizel (of Yerushalayim) spent a night in Bnei Brak, at his son, Reb Nota's, house. As always, Reb Zalman used his time well, studying Torah diligently.

"Father, it's late," Reb Nota told his father. "You can finish your studies tomorrow."

Reb Zalman didn't respond. He just kept on learning.

The son raised this point a couple more times that night, but each time, Reb Zalman just continued learning. He finished learning around midnight, and found Reb Nota in the kitchen, eating a late supper. Reb Zalman said, "Reb Nota, it's late. You can finish your meal tomorrow."

Don't Get Sidetracked

Time is precious. Every moment, we can earn so much. We just have to be cautious not to get sidetracked from all the things happening around us and to focus on the purpose – Torah and mitzvos.

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

A simple farmer saved the king's life. To reward him, the king granted the farmer permission to enter his treasury for one hour and take whatever he desires.

As the day of the reward got closer, the king began worrying that the farmer will grab too much. The king made some inquiries and found out which foods the farmer liked and the type of music he enjoyed listening to.

The king set up a food stand near the treasury entrance, with a beautiful and lavish display of the farmer's favorite foods. A band was also there, playing the farmer's favorite music.

The farmer couldn't resist partaking in the food, and he also spent some time watching the band play his favorite music. By the time he was ready to enter the

treasury, he shouted in agony, "Only a few minutes left!" The hour almost passed, and he hadn't yet started collecting his reward.

The *nimshal* is that people become occupied in their pursuit of material pleasures, and they forget to take advantage of Torah and mitzvos, which will grant them endless reward.

Someone was waiting for a train in a Swiss train station. The train arrived, but he didn't board it. His friend asked him, "Why don't you board the train?"

The man replied, "This train isn't very comfortable, but the next train is luxurious. Every passenger gets his own table to eat on and a bed to sleep in... I'm waiting for that train."

"But that train won't be here for many hours."

He replied, "That's okay. That train is so comfortable; it's worth the wait."

The train finally arrived, and he boarded it joyously. He enjoyed a good meal at his table. And then, exhausted (from waiting in the sun for hours for the train to arrive), he lay down and slept for several hours. When he awoke,

The message was understood. There are some things that one just doesn't push off for tomorrow.

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* tells the following *mashal*:

There were two wealthy people who were always arguing among themselves about which of them was wealthier. It was important for them to know because whoever was wealthier had the final say in the city. They debated this matter for years, and never reached a conclusion.

One day they decided to test it, once and for all. They would both throw precious coins into the ocean, one coin at a time. Whoever stops first, that means he has less money than the other one, since it is hard for him to lose so many coins. The one who is still throwing in coins is unquestionably wealthier.

After a while, one of them stopped. He didn't want to lose all his money. The other one was still throwing in coins. It seemed he had so much money, he didn't care to lose all those coins. Everyone was stunned by his immense wealth.

Later it was discovered that he was tossing counterfeit coins. That's why he didn't mind throwing them all into the sea.

The *nimshal* is, when one throws away time, it is a sign he considers time like counterfeit currency, not valuable, and therefore he doesn't mind wasting it.

he realized he boarded the wrong train, and he traveled in the wrong direction!

It was almost Shabbos, so it was too late to seek a train to bring him home. He didn't even have Shabbos clothes to wear, never mind a place to stay!

This happened because he focused on attaining physical pleasures that he forgot to focus on the most essential detail; the direction the train was headed.

Similarly, in life, we must focus on the destination, and Torah and mitzvos, which are the means that will bring us there. We shouldn't allow the pleasures of this world to distract us from our ultimate goal.

Like Ants and Grasshoppers

When the *meraglim* returned, they described the giants that they encountered in Eretz Canaan. They said (13:33) וְנָהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים, "We felt like grasshoppers, וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, and that is how they perceived us."

They knew what the Canaanites were thinking because they overheard them speaking. As Rashi writes, שָׁמְעוּ אוֹמְרִים זֶה לָזֶה, "We heard them say, נְמָלִים יֵשׁ בְּכַרְמֵי כְּאוֹשִׁים, 'There are ants in the vineyard that look like humans.'"

Why did Hashem allow the Canaanites to see the *meraglim*? Hakadosh Baruch Hu could have arranged it that they don't see them.

The question seems to be even greater when we consider Rashi (13:32) on the words אֶרֶץ אוֹכֵלֶת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ. Rashi writes, בְּכָל מָקוֹם שֶׁעָבְרָנוּ, מִצָּאֵנוּם קוֹבְרֵי מֵתִים. וְהִקְבֵּה עָשָׂה לְטוֹבָה כְּדִי לְטַרְדָּם בְּאֵבֶלָם, "[The *meraglim* said], 'Wherever we went, we saw people burying the dead.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu did this for their benefit so that they will be occupied with their mourning, and they won't pay attention to the *meraglim*."

So, why did Hashem let the giants of the land see them?

The Chasam Sofer (ד"ה וְנָהִי בְּעֵינֵינוּ) answers that the residents of Eretz Canaan were powerful. When they heard that the Jewish nation smote Mitzrayim, that didn't frighten them because they considered themselves much stronger than the Egyptians.

They still thought they could win a war against the Jewish nation.

But when they saw that the Jewish people were tiny and weak like ants, they became terrified. Because if a group of weak people can win a war against Mitzrayim, this means they win their battle with miracles. And if Hashem performs miraculous wars for the Jewish nation, Hashem can do the same against the people of Canaan.

The Canaanites seeing the Jewish people appearing like tiny ants was for their benefit, as that caused the entire populace of Canaan to be terrified of the Jewish nation.

Self-Image

The Midrash states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgave them for saying וְנָהִי בְּעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים 'We felt like grasshoppers,' but Hashem didn't forgive them for saying וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, 'that's how they perceived us.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu told them, 'How do you know how I had them think of you? Perhaps they thought you are *malachim*.'"

The Sfas Emes (תר"מ) asks that Rashi (quoted above) writes that the *meraglim* heard the Canaanites saying, נְמָלִים יֵשׁ בְּכַרְמֵי כְּאוֹשִׁים, "There are ants in the vineyard that look like humans." That's how they knew what the Canaanites thought. So why does the Midrash say that Hashem didn't forgive them for saying וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, that the Canaanites perceived them to be like ants?

The Sfas Emes answers that the problem began with their negative self-perception. This influenced others to look at them in that negative way. "Since they were small in their own eyes, and they considered themselves like grasshoppers, this caused others to see them that way. Because

everything is dependent on man's self-image."⁶

This is an important lesson. Many people have a low self-image and think everyone is looking down at them. But you don't know what others are thinking. Perhaps Hashem put into the hearts of others to look up to you and consider you special. But one thing is certain: If you look down at yourself, others will look down at you, too.

A mashal is told about a youngerman who felt unnecessary in the world. At work, it was rare that someone would speak to him. When he walked on the street, no one ever stopped him to ask for directions. Young children didn't ask him to help them cross the street.

Once, he saw an advertisement for hats being sold at a very low price. It must have been years ago since he bought his last hat, so he took advantage of the sale and bought himself a nice, brand-new hat.

He decided to leave his old hat in the store because he didn't need it anymore, and he would leave with his new hat.

Walking home, he was surprised when someone stopped him and asked him for directions, and that children asked him to help them cross the street. When he got home, his wife greeted him joyously. He was surprised again; that didn't happen often. She asked him about his day. He pointed to his hat, but she didn't understand. So, she asked again, "How was your day?" He pointed to his hat again.

"Is something the matter?" she asked. "Why are you pointing at your hat?"

He took off his hat, and he saw that by accident he was wearing his old hat. He left the new one in the store.

So, what changed wasn't his new look but the way he perceived himself. He thought he looked respectable in his new hat, and his feeling of self-confidence caused others to respect him too.

It is as the Sfas Emes teaches, "Since they were small in their own eyes, and they considered themselves like grasshoppers, this caused others to see them that way. Because everything is dependent on man's self-image."

The Kotzker zt'l said that the *meraglim's* primary *aveirah* was that they said וכן היינו בעיניהם, that the Canaanites consider them to be like tiny grasshoppers. Because why should other people's opinions make a difference to you?

This famous lesson from the Kotzker is an essential lesson.

Some people are constantly concerned about what others are thinking about them. "Do they respect me? Are they looking down at me? Do they think I'm acting good or bad? Are they impressed with me?" We shouldn't be occupied with these thoughts because our goal is to please Hashem, not people. What others think is irrelevant.

Guard Your Thoughts and Your Eyes

This week's parashah teaches us the mitzvah of guarding the thoughts and the eyes, as it states (15:39) ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, "Don't stray after your heart and after your eyes..."

The Beis Yosef (Even HaEzer 21) writes in the name of Rabbeinu Yonah, "Whoever doesn't look [at women], he will merit seeing the Shechinah, *midah kneged midah...*" He guarded his eyes, and therefore he will merit seeing G-dliness.

6. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that their negative image was their primary sin. Therefore, Moshe told the *meraglim*, והתחזקתם, "strengthen yourselves." Think good about yourselves.

The Gemara (Kidushin 39:) says, מחשבה רעה, אין הקב"ה מצרפה למעשה, when a person has a bad thought, a plan to do an aveirah, he isn't punished for this bad thought. He only transgresses the aveirah when he actually commits the aveirah, not when he thinks about it. The Chida (Kisei Dovid 27.) explains that the *aveirah* of לא תתורו is an exception. He transgresses this *aveirah* when he has bad thoughts.

As the Torah explains, לא תתורו, don't think that your bad thoughts aren't an *aveirah* because it is just thoughts, because אשר אתם, the Torah considers these thoughts like an actual aveirah (זונים, actual adultery). And the reason is אחריהם, what comes after the bad thoughts because bad thoughts can *chalilah* result in bad deeds, r"l.

Reb Shmuel Kaminka zt'l says that לא תתורו comes from the word נותר, to leave over. This is because when a bad thought enters one's mind, it isn't an *aveirah* yet, because that isn't in his control. But once the thought is there, he must push the thought away by thinking about something else. The aveirah is תותירו, perpetuating the thought in his mind.

Similarly, when it comes to forbidden sights, the first sight isn't always in his control. Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin zt'l (Toras Avos לא ד"ה) explains that the aveirah is אחרי עיניכם, after you saw once, don't look a second time (because אחרי means after, another time).⁷

Reb Zelmele of Volozhin zt'l, a student of the Vilna Gaon zt'l, would walk on the side of the streets, where there was dirty sewer water, and it was forbidden to think Torah there. People asked him why he doesn't walk in the middle of the street, where he can think thoughts of Torah. He replied, "Chazal (Eiruvim 18:) say, אחרי ארי ולא אחרי אשה, it

is better to walk behind a lion than to walk behind a woman.' So, I prefer to walk at the side, where other people don't walk."

Once, I was walking with my father, and my father took me through a smelly area with lots of garbage. He chose that route because there was a *shemiras einayim* test on the street. He commented, "It smells better here."

The Inherited Emunah

The Jewish nation heard the *meraglim's* report, and they cried all night, as it states (14:1) ויבכו העם כלילה ההוא. And they said (14:2) לו מתנו בארץ מצרים או במדבר הזה לו מתנו "If only we would die in Mitzrayim or in this desert..."

But they soon understood that they sinned, and they were ready to go up to Eretz Yisrael. As it states (14:40) וישכימו בבוקר, ויעלו אל ראש ההר לאמר הננו ועלינו אל המקום אשר אמר ה', "They woke up early in the morning, went to the top of the mountain, and said, 'We are prepared to go to the land that Hashem said...' All their fears disappeared. This is because a Yid believes in Hashem. It sometimes happens that the yetzer hara confuses them, and they lose their emunah. But the emunah will quickly come back.

As the Tanya (ch.29) explains:

Yesterday, the *meraglim* told them (13:31) "We can't go up [to conquer the land] because they are stronger than us." And as Rashi and Chazal explain, they said that the Canaanites are stronger than Hashem, r'l. The *meraglim* influenced the nation to think Hakadosh Baruch Hu can't bring them into the land.

So how did their emunah and bitachon come back to them? How did they suddenly say הננו ועלינו, "We are prepared to go up to

7. At the beginning of the parashah, Hashem says שלח לך אנשים ויתורו, "Send people to spy on the land..." This was a mitzvah, Hashem's command, but so much heartache came from it. Certainly, when the Torah says לא תתורו, that we are forbidden to תתורו, if people will transgress this halachah, it will be the root of much trouble r'l.

the land"? How did they recapture their emunah?

"Rather, this is proof that Bnei Yisrael's essence is to believe." The yetzer hara confused them, their emunah was wobbly, but when Hakadosh Baruch Hu rebuked them with sharp words (such as [14:23] עד מתי לעדה הרעה הזה, "How long will this bad nation exist?")

this broke the *kelipah*, and Bnei Yisrael automatically and naturally returned to their emunah that they have in them as an inheritance.

The Tanya writes, "This is a lesson for all people when they have doubts in emunah. The doubts come from the *Sitra Achara*, but the Jewish nation believes in Hashem."