

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Mattos - Massei





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Torah Wellsprings - Mattos - Massei

Emunah

The concept of "cause and effect" is well known. However, tzaddikim tell us that, in truth, the "cause" and "effect" are the opposite of what people think they are.

For example, when one has a hole in his pocket and loses money, he thinks that the hole in his pocket causes the monetary loss - the effect. However, the Brisker Rav *zt'l* explains that the opposite is true. The cause was Hashem's decree that he should lose money, and therefore he had a hole in his pocket so that Hashem's command can be fulfilled.

Another example: A group of people were discussing how they can help a particular poor person. One member of the group said, "Why should we help him? If he weren't so lazy, he would have plenty of money."

The Chofetz Chaim was present. He replied, "According to the standard rules of nature when people actively seek *parnassah*, they often succeed. What, then, does Hashem do when it is destined that someone be poor? Heaven pours "lead" onto him (makes him lazy) so that he won't earn a living."

The Chofetz Chaim explained that the laziness wasn't the cause; it was the effect. It was destined for him not to have money, and this resulted in him being lazy.

Someone once bought a forest and lost lots of money with his investment. Whenever he was near it, he said, "Forest, because of you, I lost most of my money." The Beis HaLevi *zt'l* once heard him say that, and he corrected him. "The investment didn't cause you to lose money. On the contrary, Hashem decreed you should lose money, and therefore you invested in this bad venture."

These ideas are alluded to in this week's *parashah*, *parashas* מסעי, which discusses the forty-eight places where the Jewish nation set up camp in the desert. In some places where they camped, there wasn't water, yet there were other problems in other locations. Some thought the traveling caused the circumstances. But it was the opposite. When Hashem wanted to test them with thirst, he brought the nation to a place devoid of fresh water. So it wasn't the place that caused the problem, rather, Hashem planned this test, and therefore they came to that destination.

Similar things happen to us, too. We go someplace and have a bad experience. We think, "I wish I didn't go there. If I hadn't gone there, I wouldn't have suffered the shame (or the loss of money, etc.)." Actually, it is precisely because we needed that experience that we went there. Hashem put into our heart to go there because we needed that embarrassment (or other hardship that we endured there).

At the beginning of *parashas* מסעי it states (33:2), ויכתב משה את מוצאיהם למסעיהם על פי ה'... ואלה, *מוצאיהם למסעיהם*, the words *מוצאיהם למסעיהם* are written in two different sequences in this *pasuk*. This is alluding to the confusion people have regarding travels. They think, *מוצאיהם למסעיהם*, that what happened to them is due to the place they traveled to. However, the truth is, *מסעיהם למוצאיהם*, they traveled to those places because these events had to happen to them.

מוצאיהם means what happened to them (see *Yehoshua* 2:23). We must know that *מסעיהם*, על פי ה', that the travels were destined by Hashem, *למוצאיהם*, because these things were meant to transpire.

Everything's for the Good

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (end of *Shemos*) writes, "When the end of days will come, there will be many *tzaros*, one after the other. That is a sign that the Redemption is near." It seems that we are living in such times. One *tzarah* ends, and another one begins, *r'l*. May this be a sign that the Redemption is near.

It states (*Tehillim* 92:3), להגיד בבוקר חסדיך ואמונתך, בלילות, "To tell Your kindness in the morning and Your *emunah* at nights." Notice that morning is in the singular (בבקר), and nights are plural (בלילות). The night hints at the struggles and hardships. The *pasuk* is urging us to have *emunah* even בלילות, when there are many problems, one after the other. Even at such times, we must remain firm in our *emunah*.

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz *zt'l* needed to have surgery done in Berlin, Germany, and due to the circumstances of his illness, it had to be performed without anesthesia. While they were operating on him, he looked out the window and saw the beautiful buildings of Berlin. He was inspired to compose a song on the words, אזכרה אלקים ואהמיה בראותי כל עיר על תילה בנויה ועיר האלקים מושפלת עד שאול תחתיה, "I remember, Hashem, and I moan, when I see every city built upon their mountains, while the city of Hashem (Yerushalayim) is lowered to the lowest levels." This beautiful song composition has thirty-two stanzas. He composed it during the operation without anesthesia.

In the next room, the very same type of surgery was taking place. That patient was able to have anesthesia, but he was withering and shouting in pain.

The doctor asked Reb Yisrael of Modzhitz how he was able to take the pain so well.

The Rebbe replied, "Do you think I'm not human? I also feel the pain. But I turn each sensation of pain into a song for Hashem."

This is the way of a Yid who believes that everything is from Hashem, and everything

is for his good. The pain is felt, it isn't easy, but it is transformed into beautiful praises of gratitude to Hashem.

When Eisav discovered that Yaakov Avinu received the *brachos* instead of him, he shouted bitterly. As it states (*Bereishis* 27:34), ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה עד מאוד "[Eisav] shouted a very great and bitter shout." The Midrash (*Esther Rabba* 8:2) says that since Yaakov caused Eisav to shout bitterly, Eisav had the right to take revenge. Later on in history, a descendant of Eisav was granted permission to cause a descendant of Yaakov Avinu to shout bitterly. This happened in the days of Mordechai and Esther, as it states (*Esther* 4:1), ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה, "Mordechai shouted out a great, bitter shout."

Reb Moshe Shmuel Shapiro *zt'l* repeated this Midrash and added a *vort* he heard from his rebbetzin.

Rebbetzin Shapiro's question was that regarding Eisav's shout it states, צעק צעקה גדולה ומרה עד מאוד, which means it was a *very bitter shout*. On the other hand, regarding Mordechai's shout, the words עד מאוד aren't written. It just says ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה which seemingly denotes that Yaakov caused Eisav much more distress than Eisav caused Yaakov.

Rebbetzin Shapiro replied saying that a Yid never shouts עד מאוד. There is a limit to how bitter he will cry because he knows that everything comes from his father in Heaven. Even when the hardships are the same, Eisav shouts bitterly עד מאוד, while Yaakov and his descendants restrain because they know that it is all for their good.

Dovid HaMelech says (*Tehillim* 119:8), את חוקיך אשמור אל תעזבני עד מאוד. He prayed that his *emunah* should be strong, and he should never scream and shout עד מאוד.

Peace

It states (*Masay* 33:38), ויעל אהרן הכהן אל הר ההר על פי ה' וימת שם בשנת הארבעים לצאת בני ישראל מארץ מצרים בחדש החמישי באחד לחדש "Aharon HaKohen

went up onto Har HaHar according to Hashem's command and was *niftar* there, in the fortieth year after Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim, on the first day of the fifth month."

Aharon was *niftar* on *rosh chodesh Av*. Aharon is renowned for his love of his fellow men. As it states in *Avos* (1:12), *הוּוּ מִתְלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם רוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמִקְרָבָן לְתוֹרָה*, "Be from Aharon's students: love peace, chase peace, love people and draw them to Torah."

His *yahrtzeit* is *rosh chodesh Av*, the month that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*. We rebuild the Beis HaMikdash by following Aharon's ways of seeking peace.

There's a rav in Bnei Brak who travels to a nearby city every erev Shabbos to answer halachic questions in the beis din of the community. He travels there by taxi. One week, the taxi driver was a new *baal teshuvah*, and he was listening to a religious radio station.

The rav liked to use this traveling time to study Torah, and the radio disturbed his concentration. But he figured that the taxi driver might need the *divrei chizuk* that was being played over the radio, so he decided not to ask the driver to turn off the radio.

He heard a listener call in, and say, "Today is *בִּגְדֵי טָבָה*, the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, and I want to share a wonderful story of *ruach hakodesh* and of *middos tovos* that I heard with my own ears and saw with my own eyes."

When the rav heard this introduction to his story, he put down his *sefer* and focused on what the person was saying.

The man said, "I was present at Rebbe Moshe Mordechai's Friday night *tish*, and someone new came in; someone who was never before at Reb Moshe Mordechai's *tish*. The Rebbe called him over immediately and whispered something in the man's ears. And then the man rushed out of the beis medresh.

"I was a *bachur* at the time, and my friends and I wanted to know what this was all about, so we followed this man, and we asked him to tell us what the Rebbe told him. He didn't want to say. But we insisted, and this is what he told us:

"My wife and I have an old debate regarding where to light the Shabbos *lecht*. I say that it is better to light the *lecht* on a shelf in the dining room (because then there is more room on the table and there will be fewer halachic *shaalos* related to the *lecht* and *muktzeh*). But my wife wants to light the *lecht* on the Shabbos table because that's where her mother *tzinds lecht*.

"Every week, I prepare the *lecht* on the shelf and then I go to shul. And every week, she takes the *lecht* off the shelf, places them on the table, and lights them there. It makes me very angry.

"This week, before I left, I told her that if I come home from shul and find the *lecht* on the table, I won't make Kiddush, and I won't eat the *seudah*.' (Obviously, by doing so, he will only be hurting himself: no *seudah*, no Kiddush. But that is the nature of *machlokes*; one harms himself more than he harms anyone else.)

"Tonight, I came home and saw the *lecht* on the table. I immediately left the house and went to a beis medresh.

"As I sat in the beis medresh, I heard *zemiros* coming from Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov's beis medresh. I decided to go there. I anyway didn't have a place to be. The Rebbe immediately called me over and whispered in my ear that the purpose of lighting the Shabbos candles is for the sake of peace. If you make a *machlokes* over it, the purpose is forfeited. I'm stunned by the Rebbe's *ruach hakodesh*, and now I'm going home to bring peace to my home."

The taxi reached the destination, and the rav left to go to the beis din. He was glad that he heard this inspirational story of *ruach hakodesh*, which teaches us to avoid *machlokes*.

That day, as the rav sat in the *beis din*, a man came in and said, "I have an old debate with my wife regarding where it's better to light the Shabbos candles. I say that it's better to light the candles on a shelf attached to the dining room wall, and my wife wants to light the candles on the table, just like her mother does. What does the rav say? Where should we light the candles?"

The rav was astounded by the *hashgachah pratis*! It was the same question that he heard in the taxi! He told the man that he doesn't know the answer regarding where it is better to light the candles, but of one thing he is certain: The purpose of Shabbos *lecht* is for peace, and therefore that factor should be given great consideration.

Overcoming Anger

During the Three Weeks and the Nine Days, we try to increase peace because that will hasten the coming of the Redemption. A primary counsel for attaining peace is to avoid anger. When angry, people say things they regret afterward, but a rift has already been created by that time. Therefore, train yourself not to speak when you're angry.

It states (31:14-15), ... ויקצף משה על פקודי החיל... "Moshe became angry at the officers of the army... and Moshe said to them, 'Did you let any of the females live?'" Why is Moshe's name written twice in these *pesukim*? It could have said, ויאמר אליהם, "and he said to them..." and we would understand that it was Moshe who spoke since Moshe's name was written just before.

Reb Zalman Sorotzkin *zt'l* (*Oznayim l'Torah*) explains that Moshe's name, written twice, implies that the two *pesukim* shouldn't be read in one breath. In *pasuk* (14) Moshe became angry, and he knew that if you speak when you are angry, you are liable to say something you will later regret. Therefore, he took a break before responding to the issue that upset him. He waited a moment to calm down. Therefore, Moshe's name is written a second time, as the two *pesukim* didn't happen at the same time.

There were *baalei mussar* who would only get angry while wearing a specific suit. When something roused their anger, they didn't speak before putting on that designated suit. This gave them time to calm down and to think things through.

The *segulah* of Lelover tzaddikim is to put water in the mouth and to hold it there. The main thing is to push off responding for a later time when you are calmer.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* writes in a letter to his grandson (before his grandson's *chasunah*), "Don't be angry and don't carry any complaints in your heart against any person. Certainly, don't show your anger towards others. With patience, one gets what he wants much more and much easier than what one accomplishes with force."

The Mishnah (*Avos* 5:11) says, ארבע מדות בדעות, that there are four types of reactions to anger. The best behaviour renders the man a chassid. That is קשה לכעוס ונה לרצות, those who don't become angry easily and can quickly be appeased.

The Chesed l' Avraham (the Chida's grandfather, in *Ahavah b'Taanugim* on *Avos*) asks, why doesn't the Mishnah state an even better behaviour: a person who doesn't get angry at all?

The Chesed l'Avraham answers that Hashem didn't create the world for *malachim*. He made the world for people who have bad tendencies, and work on improving themselves. A person who never gets angry is a *malach* (and not a chassid). Therefore, the ideal situation is for someone to be קשה לכעוס, rarely getting angry.

We repeat this to encourage people and to remind them that they are human, and anger that arises occasionally is to be expected. The world was created for people like you. And everyone must strive to reach the level of a chassid.

Happiness

Before going out to war, the מִשּׁוּחַ מִלְחָמָה, the *kohen* in charge of the army, would say, and the officers (שׁוֹטְרִים) would announce (Devarim 20:5), מִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בֵּית חָדָשׁ וְלֹא חָנּוּךְ יָלַךְ, "Whoever built a new house and didn't yet live in it, should return home, lest he die in the war and someone else will live in his home."

Rashi explains, ודבר של עגמת נפש הוא, "This is disappointing." It is stressful to build a home and then have someone else live there.

The Maharal (Gur Aryeh) explains, ובשביל חלש דעתו עליו איתרע ליה מזליה ומת במלחמה ודבר זה גורם המיתה, "And if he feels bad [that someone else might live in his home], this will create a bad mazal for him, which can cause him to die at war. His negative feelings can cause him to die..." Because negative feelings create bad mazal, and positivity and happiness generate good mazal.

Therefore, avoid anger and be happy. It will be better for you. Your mazal will be strong, and you will accomplish a lot in life.

"Before Hashem"

Moshe wasn't happy with the idea that Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven remain to live בעבר הירדן, on the other side of the Yarden River, because he thought that they wouldn't join the nation in the conquest of Eretz Yisrael. He said (32:6), האחים יבאו למלחמה ואתם תשבו פה, "Will your brothers go to war while you live here?"

Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven promised that they wouldn't live on their properties before Eretz Yisrael is conquered for the entire nation. They said (32:17), ואנחנו נחליץ חשים לפני בני ישראל עד אשר אם הביאנו אל מקומם, "We will lead the war with weapons before Bnei Yisrael until they are brought to their property..." לא נשוב אל בתינו עד התנחל בני ישראל איש נחלתו, "We won't return to our homes before all of Bnei Yisrael receive their inheritance in the land."

It seems that it would be sufficient for the Torah to write, "And Moshe agreed to those

terms," but the Torah uses many more words.

As it states ויאמר אליהם משה אם תעשון את הדבר הזה, אם תחלצו לפני ה' למלחמה... ונכבשה הארץ לפני ה' ואחר Moshe told them, תשובו והייתם נקיים מה' מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, "If you will do so; if you gird yourselves with weapons and go before Hashem to war...and if you conquer the land before Hashem, and only then will you return to your homes, you will remain upright in the eyes of Hashem and in the eyes of Bnei Yisrael..."

Why is this elaboration needed? It could have simply stated that Moshe agreed to their terms.

Furthermore, after Moshe expressed his conditions, the Torah elaborates that Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven repeated that they would go with the Jewish nation to conquer Eretz Yisrael. As it states (32:27), ועבדיך יעברו כל, חלוצים צבא לפני ה' למלחמה כאשר אדני דבר, "Your servants will go to war before Hashem, as you commanded. Didn't they say that initially? Why does it have to be repeated?"

The *meforshim* (see Abarbenel) explain that initially, Bnei Gad and Reuven didn't say that they will fight the war לפני ה', "before Hashem." They just said that they would fight in the war. That's why Moshe corrected them. "You must go to war before Hashem." You need to know that the war is fought with Hashem's help.

And therefore, Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven repeated after Moshe that they will fight "before Hashem." These two words, לפני ה', reminded them that if they fight the war on their own, they will fail. But when they put their trust in Hashem, they will succeed.

Bitachon

The Beis Aharon said:

"We like it very much when a young couple gives birth to their first child a year after their *chasunah*. Because until they have a child, the young couple always return to their parents' homes, and rely on their

parents to support them. When they need money, clothes, food, their parents help them, and they don't train themselves to trust in Hashem. After they have a child, they won't go to their parents as often. Sometimes it is too cold or too hot to take the child outdoors. At times, the circumstances and logistics often prevent them from visiting their parents regularly. We prefer it that way because now when they need money, clothes, food, etc., they will turn to their Father in Heaven."

In the batei midrashim of the Rebbes of Nadvorna, when a *chasan* has an *aliyah* on the Shabbos before his *chasunah*, the congregation sings, אחד יחיד ומיוחד, "the one and only Hashem!" and, as customary, people throw bags of nosh and sweets at the *chasan*. Perhaps this is the reason: Until now, the young man relied on his parents to support him. When he needed new clothes, food, aid, his parents were there to help him. But now, he is on his own. We sing אחד יחיד ומיוחד, and we remind him that Hashem will support him. If he will have *bitachon*, all his needs will rain down on him, and everything will be sweet and good.

Before the chuppah, a *chasan* customarily empties his pockets. The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l* said that this is to tell the *chasan*, "Don't feel secure with your wealth (or with your talents). You don't have anything. Your pockets are empty. Place your trust in Hashem, alone, and He will sustain you."

Which statement expresses more confidence, more *bitachon*:

"I'm not afraid" or "Why should I be afraid?"

The latter expresses a higher level of *bitachon* because it means that there is nothing to fear. When one says, "I'm not afraid," it means that there is something to fear, but I'm not afraid of it. When one says "Why should I be afraid?" it means there isn't anything to fear at all.

It states (*Tehillim* 27), לדוד ה' אורי וישעי ממי, "אירא... ממי אפחד", "Hashem is my light, my salvation, from whom should I fear?" Notice that Dovid HaMelech didn't say, לא אירא... לא, "I'm not afraid." Rather, "From whom should I fear?" This means I am not afraid, and there isn't anything to be scared of.

The following story will help us understand:

To be משמח חתן וכלה (bring joy to the *chasan* and *kallah*) someone came to a *chasunah* dressed up as a bear, and he danced with the *chasan*.

A child thought the bear was real and began to cry.

The child's father lifted the bear's mask to show the child that it is only a costume and that there's nothing to fear.

The son understood, "Why should I be afraid? There's absolutely nothing to be afraid of. It's just a person dressed in costume."

This is what Dovid HaMelech said, ממי אירא... ממי אפחד, "Who should I be afraid of?" When one knows that everything is in Hashem's hands, he proclaims, "Why should I be afraid?" There is absolutely nothing to fear.¹

1. Someone returned from a trip to China, and he told his friends about a gigantic Ferris wheel he saw there.

"Did you ride it?" his friends asked.

"No. I was afraid to. I was afraid that perhaps the chair wasn't screwed in well. Or perhaps the guard bar will break off? I was also afraid that maybe the machine will break when I am at its highest point. I enjoyed seeing this magnificent engineering feat from a distance, but I wouldn't ride it."

Tefillah

It says in this week's *parashah* (30:3), לא יחל, "He mustn't desecrate his words; whatever he said, he must do." Rebbe Isaac of Kamarna *zt'l* translates יחל as hope (as in the *pasuk* [Tehillim 130:7], יחל ישראל אל, ה'). The *pasuk*, therefore, can be saying, לא יחל, דברו, one shouldn't hope that his tefillos are effective. One should be certain that Hashem will answer his tefillah. ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה, and that whatever he requests will be answered.

Siddur Rokeiach writes, "From the time the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't give goodness to Bnei Yisrael without tefillah."

Similarly, the Hafla'ah (*Kesubos* 67:) writes, "It is known to all believers of Hashem's *hashgachah*, that in *galus*, *parnassah* comes solely in the merit of tefillah.

The best tefillos are those said with all one's heart.

The Torah (ch.35) discusses two degrees of murder. One is someone who kills intentionally, as it states (35:21, או באיבה הכהו, "If he hits him with his hand due to hatred and he dies, the hitter shall die, because he is a murderer...

The second is someone who kills accidentally. As it states, ואם בפתע בלא איבה, והשיבו אתו העדה אל עיר מקלטו אשר נס שמה וישב הדפו... וזהו שכתוב, וישב הדפו... וזהו שכתוב, וישב הדפו...

בה עד מות הכהן הגדול, "If he kills by accident, without anger... he returns to the *arei miklat* and he lives there until the *kohen gadol* dies..." He isn't killed, he is only exiled because it happened by accident.

Rabbeinu B'Chaya (35:11) writes, "[When one kills unintentionally] he isn't *chayav misah* (he isn't punished with death) because he didn't kill intentionally. This halachah demonstrates that the heart (the intention) is the main part of man, and it is the primary aspect of all sins and of all mitzvos. For accidentally killing someone, he is punished with *galus*, and not with death, because he didn't want to kill. The same is with mitzvos. They all depend on the heart. If one does a mitzvah, but his intentions aren't *leshem shamayim*, he won't be rewarded for it..."

Primarily, tefillah needs to be said with heart and feeling.

The Mishnah (*Makos* 11) states, "The mothers of the *kohanim gedolim* would supply food and clothing [to the people in *arei miklat*], so the residents of *arei miklat* wouldn't pray that their children die."

Those who unintentionally killed someone must remain in *arei miklat* until the *kohen gadol* dies. Therefore, the mother of the *kohen gadol* would supply food and clothing for the residents of *arei miklat* so that they

Sometime later, he visited London, and when he returned, he told his friends about the Ferris wheel that he saw there. "It was even taller than the one in China!"

"I'm sure you didn't go on it," his friends commented. "You were afraid to ride the Ferris wheel in China, and the one in London is even taller!"

"Actually, I rode it seven times. I wasn't afraid at all."

"But how can that be? Why were you afraid to ride the Ferris wheel in China and you weren't afraid to ride the Ferris wheel in London?"

He explained, "The Chinese are known to cut corners to save a few pennies. Therefore, I didn't trust the engineers, the contractors, and the amusement park's managers. Who knows whether it's safe? But the English people are careful and calculated. I knew I can trust that it was built and maintained properly."

The lesson is to remember that we are in Hashem's hands, and therefore there is nothing to fear. Sometimes things seem scary, but we aren't afraid; Hashem is caring for us.

will feel content living there, and they won't pray for her son's death.

The question is, *arei miklat* is like a prison. Even when food and clothing are supplied, the residents will undoubtedly daven that the *kohen gadol* die so they can go free. What did the *kohen gadol*'s mother accomplish by sending food and clothing packages?

The answer is that due to these care packages, it wasn't all that bad for them in the *arei miklat*. They will daven to be free, but they will daven with less *kavanah*. They won't put all their heart and soul into their prayers. And that is what the mothers accomplished with their care packages.

Reb Eliyashiv's mother was childless for several years. She and her husband, Reb Avraham, traveled for two weeks to get to the medical center in Vienna to find a *refuah* so that they could bear children, but the doctors told her that there's nothing they could do to help her.

Her hopes were shattered, but she didn't cry on her return trip. When she arrived home, she went to the wheat silo to be alone, and she wept copiously. Her father (author of *Leshem*) saw that her eyes were red, and he asked her about that. She gave an excuse, but her father wanted to know the real reason. She told him that the doctors didn't find a solution for her. She explained that

she held back from crying for two weeks, and now she poured her tears out.

The Leshem told her, "It states (*Tehillim* 145:18), קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, Hashem is close to those who pray to Him with sincerity. How does one pray to Hashem sincerely? When one is in a situation like yours, and he knows that there's nowhere to turn other than to Hashem, that is a true prayer. At these times, קרוב ה', Hashem is close, and He listens to your *tefillos*."

A year later, she gave birth to Reb Eliyashiv zt'l, who lit up the world with his Torah.²

London's Jewish community needed a *baal tefillah* for the *yomim nora'im* (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). They had their eyes on a particular candidate, but before finalizing with him, they wanted to check that he had *yiras Shamayim*. They sent the chazan to Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l, so that he can test him. Reb Yechezkel asked him, "ובכן תן פחדך?"

The chazan replied, "We are requesting that Hashem give us His fear, and we request ובכן, that Hashem should bestow His fear on us with הן, with kindness and mercy, and not via frightening perils."

Reb Yechezkel replied, "You didn't get the translation right, but you will be our

2. Another story is told that can be attributed to this righteous woman meriting bearing a holy son, Reb Yosef Shalom Eliyashev.

One day, in Yerushalayim, Rebbetzin Eliyashev hung up laundry to dry, and an upstairs neighbor, purposely cut the rope, sending the clean laundry toppling into the mud.

Rebbetzin Eliyashev didn't complain, although she would have to clean all the clothes again by hand. She didn't even tell her husband about it.

Late that night, there was a frantic knocking at their door. There stood the upstairs neighbor, in tears. Her child had suddenly developed a high fever, and she wanted to ask forgiveness for the laundry incident. The husband, who had answered the door, was surprised to hear about the event. His wife immediately and wholeheartedly forgave the woman and wished her child a full and speedy recovery.

About a year later, this righteous woman gave birth to a special son — Reb Yosef Shalom Eliyashev, zt'l, one of the leading rabbanim in Yerushalayim.

chazan for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." Because more important than the meaning of the words are the feelings and the intentions of the heart.

The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavich *zy'a* told the following story:

There was a very simple Yid who lived in a village near Yerushalayim. He would come to Yerushalayim every week to sell his fruits and produce. Afterward, he would go to one of the rabbanim of Yerushalayim and ask him to teach him what to daven in the upcoming week. The rav would tell him when *rosh chodesh* or a fast day was approaching and show him what he should say.

Once, he came to Yerushalayim, and all the stores were closed. "Is it Shabbos today?" he wondered. "Maybe I lost track of the days?" But he saw people carrying their tallis and tefillin, so he knew that it wasn't Shabbos.

"What's going on today?" he asked one of the people of Yerushalayim.

"It's a fast day today," the person replied. "All the stores are closed."

The simple villager went to the rav. "Why didn't you tell me that there was a fast day today? I've already eaten by mistake. Also, I didn't daven the special *tefillah* for a fast day."

The rav explained that the fast was just recently declared because it hadn't rained yet, and it was already late in the winter.

The villager was incredulous, "For lack of rain, you declare a fast day?"

"Yes. Do you have a better idea? What do you do when it doesn't rain?"

He replied, "When my field needs rain, I go outside, and I ask Hashem for rain, and it immediately begins to rain."

"Do that now," the rav said.

The villager raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father! Your children need rain. Is it possible that You will let Your children die from thirst, *chalilah?*" Immediately, clouds gathered, and it began to rain.

A chassid didn't have children, and he repeatedly came to the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l*, requesting that he daven for him to bear children. Once, the Chidushei HaRim told him, "Don't come here again before you have a child."

The man left, brokenhearted. Not only did he not receive a *brachah*, but he lost his Rebbe, too.

Two years passed, and he didn't bear a child. He knew that the Chidushei HaRim told him that he shouldn't return without a child, but he felt he couldn't be away from his Rebbe for so long, so he came.

The Chidushei HaRim told him, "Chazal say, הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים, 'Everything is in Hashem's hands, except fear of Heaven.' Tzaddikim explain that when you pray, it's in Hashem's hands (בידי שמים) to decide whether to grant your tefillos or not. It could be that Hashem will say that it is better for you that your requests aren't fulfilled. חוץ מיראת שמים, the exception is when you daven for *yiras Shamayim*. When you request Torah, mitzvos, and *yiras Shamayim*, it is certainly good for you, and therefore, your tefillos are always answered. I told you that you shouldn't come to me without a child. I was hoping you would pray and say, 'Hashem, I want to go to my Rebbe, but I can't go to him because he doesn't let me come to him without a child. Please, give me a child so that I can go to my Rebbe.' Had you done so, you would have been praying for *yiras Shamayim*, and your tefillos would have been answered. It's a pity you didn't do so..."

Hallel is about praising Hashem. Yet, in *Hallel* there are requests too. For example, we ask אֲנִי ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא אֲנִי ה' הַצְלִיחָה נָא, "Please, Hashem, save me now! Please, Hashem,

grant me success." Why are there requests in *Hallel*?

Consider a poor person who receives a gift of five thousand dollars from a friend. The poor man thanks him profusely. "Thank you so much! How can I express my gratitude? This is just what I needed. And by the way, can you give some more?" This doesn't sound right. While you are thanking, it isn't the right time to ask for more. So how is it that when we praise Hashem in *Hallel*, we ask Hashem for more favors?

We will answer with a *marshal*:

A mountain climber took proper precautions to climb safely. He knocked pegs into the mountain and tied them and himself with rope, so if he falls, it wouldn't be too steep.

Once, however, the peg wasn't inserted deeply enough in the mountain, and when he fell, it couldn't hold his weight. The peg went flying out of the mountain, and the man began falling down the high mountain. There was another climber on the mountain, and he realized what was happening. He stood behind a large boulder, and when the man slid past him with the rope trailing after him, he grabbed the rope and held on to it with all his strength. The boulder helped him not to topple down the mountain together with this man, and with all his strength, he held onto the rope.

The man was hanging in the air, and he shouted up to the man that saved his life. "Thank you! You saved my life. Please! Hold on tight!"

No one will say that he was incorrect for requesting that he hold on tightly to the rope because if the man lets go of the rope, he will fall.

Similarly, we can't manage a second without Hashem. Therefore, even as we say *Hallel*, we ask that Hashem continue to save us. It is completely acceptable. In fact, this is the greatest praise; it expresses our total dependency on Hashem.

Kedushah – Guarding Your Eyes

The following story happened in Paz, Morocco, two hundred and fifty years ago. A hunter would catch wild animals and sell them to the zoo owned by the king of Morocco. Once, he caught a tiny lion cub, and he decided to keep it for himself. When the cub grew larger, the hunter tied a rope around its neck, and he tied the other end of the string to an iron gate that stood between his property and the street. He felt confident this was safe enough and that his pet wouldn't cause any harm.

Once, two Jewish merchants came to Paz and bought clothing material at the market. As they were packing up the material to bring it to their hometown to sell, they realized they needed a bit more rope. "Let's go back to the market. I saw someone selling a roll of rope there."

"I guess we don't have a choice," said the other. "But it is a shame that we have to go all the way back to the market. Also, we will probably have to buy the entire roll, and we only need a few meters. It will be costly."

They started going towards the marketplace. Suddenly, one of the merchants cried, "Stop the horses!" and he jumped out of the wagon, and he checked to see if he saw correctly. Yes, a heavy rope was tied to an iron gate. His partner joined him to see what his excitement was all about.

"I found what we need," the merchant told his friend, and he began untying the rope.

"Chas v'shalom," said the other. "That's *geneivah*."

The other merchant replied, "Even if you're correct, and it's an *aveirah*, but it is a minor *aveirah*. How much do you think this rope costs? Besides, the owner probably forgot that it's here. Furthermore," the merchant said, pulling his most convincing argument, "we need it for our *parnassah*!" (People think that for *parnassah* everything is permitted).

"I refuse to have anything to do with this," said the other merchant, and he climbed back into the carriage.

The merchant untied the rope and began pulling it. At first, the rope didn't come easily. He felt a tug; something was holding it back. He figured the rope was under some stones, so he pulled harder. The rope was loosened, and he pulled it until he came face to face with the lion! The lion realized it was free. It ran out of the yard and attacked the merchant.

The merchant in the carriage heard the shouts and the lion's roars. He looked out of the carriage, but it was too late. His partner wasn't alive anymore.

Twenty mourners (the late merchant's wife, his siblings, and his children) sat *shivah* for this merchant. A rav at the *shivah* said, "If we learn a lesson from what happened, it will be *liluy nishmoso* (for his benefit in heaven). He thought taking a rope was a small sin – nothing serious. But this resulted in his demise and twenty mourners. Let's learn from this that every *aveirah* is severe. There is no such thing as a tiny *aveirah*."³

One example of what people call a "small *aveirah*" is when people aren't cautious with their eyes. They think it is a small *aveirah* because they didn't do an action. But actually, it is very severe.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* ch.4) writes, "There are five *aveiros* that when one transgresses them, it is likely he will never do *teshuvah*, because these sins are light in people's eyes, and they think it isn't an *aveirah*. They are... Someone who looks at *arayos* (women who are forbidden to him). He thinks he didn't do anything wrong. He doesn't know that looking with the eyes is a severe sin because it can lead to actual *arayos*, adultery..."⁴

Chazal (*Brachos* 61.) say, אחרי ארי ולא אחורי אשה, "Better to walk behind a lion than to walk behind a woman." The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* (*Imrei Noam*) explains that when one walks behind a lion, he is transgressing the *aveirah* of לא תרצה, of murder because he put his life at risk. When one walks behind a woman, it is לא תנאף, adultery, because it can lead to sin. Chazal say, אחרי ארי ולא אחורי אשה, it is better to walk behind a lion than to walk behind a woman, because לא תרצה, murder, is a more minor transgression than לא תנאף, adultery.

3. There is also no such thing as a "small mitzvah". Each mitzvah is extremely precious to Hashem.

Sefer Chassidim (תקצ"ד) teaches, "People asked an old person, 'What merit do you have that you live so long?'"

"He replied, 'I never spoke idle talk in the bathhouse...nor in the beis medresh, although it is permitted to speak there. והואיל ועשיתי לי גדר ותוספת הוסיפו לי שנותי, and since I created a safeguard and I added boundaries, years were added on to my life.'"

He did what people call "a small mitzvah," something that isn't even an obligation, and he was rewarded with long life.

4. *Bachurim*, chassidim of the Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l*, were making parties on the nights of Chanukah. A *misnaged* didn't understand the purpose of these parties. He asked the Beis Yisrael about it.

The Beis Yisrael told him, "It states in halachah (670:1) יש אומרים שיש קצת מצוה ברבוי הסעודות, 'Some say that there is a bit of a mitzvah to make meals on Chanukah.'"

The *misnaged* replied, "Yes, it is a קצת מצוה, a small mitzvah, but they are making long, big parties. What's the purpose?"

The Rebbe replied, "My chassidim consider a small *aveirah* very great, so they have the right to consider a 'small mitzvah' very great, too."

Most people don't think that way. They consider saving a life the most important mitzvah of the Torah. But Chazal reveal that לא תנאף is a worse *aveirah*. This will help us understand why the "small *aveiros*" related to *arayos* are so severe.

Chazal tell us that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because people didn't guard their eyes. This is alluded to in the *pasuk* (Eichah 1:16), עיני עיני ירדה מים, my eye, my eye, drips water." *Sefer Yetzirah* teaches that each month represents a limb of the body, and the two eyes symbolize the months of תמוז and אב, the months associated with the Churban.

It states (Iyov 31:1), ברית כרותה לעיני ומה אתבונן על, בתולה. (Literally, Iyov is saying that he guards his eyes, so he doesn't understand why he is being punished.)

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickolsberg zt'l said that we can translate the *pasuk* as follows: ברית כרותה לעיני, I am cautious with my eyes in the months of Tamuz and Av, the months represented by the eyes. Therefore, מה אתבונן, "Why should I think about a *besulah*, a virgin?" The virgin alludes to Elul (because the mazal of Elul is *besulah*, virgin). The *pasuk* is saying, I am careful with my eyes in Tamuz and Av, and therefore I am not afraid when Elul comes around. I am confident that I will receive a favorable judgment on Rosh Hashanah.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 24.) says, כלל... כל זמן, שעיניה יפות אין כל גופה צריכה בדיקה, "When a bride has beautiful eyes, she doesn't have to be checked to ascertain her beauty." Her beautiful eyes tell us that she is undoubtedly beautiful.

The Kli Yakar notes that this isn't always so. Some women have beautiful eyes, but they aren't beautiful in other ways. Furthermore, why does the Gemara tell us this?

The Machezeh Einayim (p.6) answers that "beautiful eyes" hints to those who guard their eyes. Chazal teach us that when you meet people who guard their eyes, you don't have to check them anymore to know

whether they are righteous. The beautiful, guarded eyes are a sign that they are beautiful in all ways.

The Gemara adds, עיניה טרוטות כל גופה צריכה בדיקה, "If her eyes aren't beautiful, then she needs to be checked." Because when people aren't cautious with their eyes, there is a strong likelihood that they lack *yiras Shamayim* in other areas too.

It states (*Devarim* 28:34), והיית משוגע מראיה עיניך, "You will become insane from what you see." The Choshev Machshavos (from the *Mishnas Chachamim* zt'l) explains that the *pasuk* is saying, if you aren't cautious with your eyes, you will have a *ruach shtus*, a foolish spirit, a touch of insanity, which is liable to bring you to all kinds of *aveiros*. As Chazal (*Sotah* 3.) say, אין אדם חוטא אלא אם כן נכנסה בו רוח, שטות, "A person doesn't sin unless a spirit of insanity comes into him."

Generally, the order is that the eyes see something, and then the heart wants it. As Chazal say, עין רואה והלב חומד. Thus, if you guard your eyes, you will be protected from many *aveiros*. You will be freed from the temptations that lead to *aveiros*. Yet, we wonder why the Torah changes the order in the *pasuk* (*Bamidbar* 15:39), ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם, ואחרי עיניכם, "Don't stray after the heart and after the eyes." In this *pasuk*, the heart is mentioned first.

Reb Mendel Futerfas zt'l answers that sometimes the heart is the culprit. Because sometimes, the heart desires to go someplace, but it is hard to guard your eyes there. The heart pulls the person to go to that place, and then he sins with his eyes. Therefore, we say, לא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, don't let your heart cause you to sin with your eyes.

We can also explain it this way: It is known that people see what they want to see. Those who don't want to see forbidden things, won't see them. And even if they do, it doesn't affect them as profoundly. So, the order is correct: guard your heart, don't desire to see bad, and then, automatically, you will be able to guard your eyes.

We will explain:

Someone told the Lev Simchah (Gur) *zt'l* that it is hard for him to walk on the streets because it is hard for him to have *shemiras einayim* there. The Lev Simchah replied, "If it is hard for you to guard your eyes on the street, don't go there."

The Rebbe remained silent for a few moments, and then said, "If your thoughts are immersed in Torah, whatever you see won't make an impression on you."

This is as we explained: If the heart wants Torah, it will hardly see forbidden matters. It isn't what he is looking for.

The Lev Simchah added, "When your thoughts are on Torah, these *taavos*, temptations, are disgusting for you, and you don't want them. For example, when you walk on the street, you don't know how many cats there are because it doesn't make a difference. Similarly, when you are thinking Torah, nothing else matters to you. And if you accidentally see something forbidden, it won't affect your heart."

Teshuvah

The warriors who fought the war against Midyan came back with cooking utensils, which needed to be kashered. As the Torah writes (31:23), כל דבר אשר יבא באש תעבירו באש וטהר, "any vessel that was used with fire [such as barbecue utensils] you shall *kasher* it in a fire." And if it became not kosher due to cooking, you have to purge it in boiling hot water, as Rashi explains. The *pasuk* concludes, וכל אשר לא תעבירו באש תעבירו במים, Rashi explains that this is referring to cups and dishes that were used with cold foods. They need to be immersed in a *mikvah*, and they are kosher for use.

This section of the Torah begins with the words (31:21), ויאמר אלעזר הכהן אל אנשי הצבא הבאים, למלחמה זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' "Elazar HaKohen said to the soldiers who came from the war, 'This is the rule of the Torah that Hashem commanded...' These halachos are called חקת התורה, the laws of the Torah. Why? It seems more appropriate to write, חקת הכשרות, the laws of kashrus, or חקת הגעלת כלים, the laws of purifying utensils. חקת התורה implies that these halachos are associated with all halachos of the Torah. But how?

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* (*Darash Moshe*) answers that this *parashah* teaches us how to do *teshuvah*. It is called חקת התורה, the law of the Torah, because *teshuvah* rectifies all sins of the Torah. The counsel for *teshuvah* is: If you sinned with fire, which means you committed an *aveirah* with fiery, passionate temptations, then you should have a fiery desire to return to Hashem. The fire of your passion will burn away the impurity that came from your intense sin. And if your sins were of lesser gravity, like the degree of the heat of boiling of water, then you can have that degree of regret and yearning for Hashem to purify yourself from the sin.

This lesson, with some variations, is also taught by the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (*Rishon l'Tzion, Mishlei 2:7*). He writes, "There are three kinds of *aveiros*. For some *aveiros*, it is sufficient to *tovel*, immersion in a mikvah. There are other *aveiros* that need הגעלה, boiling water, and there are *aveiros* that need ליבון האש, to be cleansed with fire. The following need fire to be cleansed - anger and the sins of those who don't believe in Chazal. Such sins are committed with fire, and to rectify them, one needs to purify himself with fire. This means to study Torah, all the time, and with toil... The fire of Torah will remove the *aveirah* that became attached to his body."