

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

Tazria



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail@TorahWellsprings.com  
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# Torah Wellsprings - Tazria

## Bitachon and Parnassah

The parashah begins (12:2) אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר, "When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male..." Onkelos translates this as, זכר, אתתא ארי תעדי ותליד דכר. The Divrei Yisrael zt'l explains Onkelos's words through *remez-אתתא*, a wife, referring to the Jewish nation. אתתא means an adornment or jewelry. אתתא ארי תעדי -the means to how the Jewish nation can adorn themselves and become beautiful before Hashem is also in the word תעדי, which stands for bitachon, as it states (Yeshayah 26:4) בטחו בה' עדי עד, "Trust in Hashem forever." עדי עד is their bitachon, their adornment and jewelry, which makes them beloved before Hashem.

What will be the result of their bitachon?

Onkelos writes ותליד זכר, "gives birth to a male." The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 23:11) says that when the Torah uses לשון זכר, masculine tense, it represents the coming of Moshiach, the future redemption. So, with Onkelos's translation, the pasuk is saying, אתתא ארי תעדי, ותליד זכר, when the Jewish nation has bitachon, Moshiach will come.<sup>1</sup>

זכר also means parnassah. The Gemara (Nidah 31:) states, "When a male child is born, he comes with his bread. זכר stands for כר, and כר means a meal.... בא ככרו בידו, [He is born] with his bread in his hand. When a female child is born, she doesn't have

anything with her. This is alluded to in the word נקבה, which stands for נקייה באה, she comes clean [and empty], until she davens for parnassah, as it states (Bereishis 30:28) נקבה שברך עלי ואתנה, 'State your reward for me, and I will give it.'" This Gemara is explained in various ways. One popular explanation is that a male is born with a mazal for attaining parnassah. In any event, we see that זכר is associated with having parnassah.

So, with Onkelos's translation, the pasuk is saying, אתתא ארי תעדי ותליד זכר, when the Jewish nation has bitachon, they will have parnassah and all their needs.

The Midrash (Shocher Tov, Tehillim 92) says that a student of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai went to *chutz l'aretz* to do business, and he returned with a lot of money. The other students were jealous. They also wanted to go to *chutz l'aretz* to do business. Reb Shimon took his students outside and said בקעה בקעה, "Valley! Valley! Fill up with money." The entire valley became filled with precious coins. He told his students, "Everyone can take his portion, as much as he wants. But know that whatever you take will be deducted from your reward in the next world."

They all replied (Tehillim 92:5) כי שמחתני ה' בפעליך במעשי ידיך ארנן, "You have made me happy, Hashem, with Your work; with the work of Your hands I shall exult." They said

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1. We quote the Midrash: "When a shira (song to Hashem) is written in feminine form, it is to express that just as a female becomes pregnant, gives birth, and later becomes pregnant and gives birth again, such are the tzaros that befall the nation. After one tzarah passes, another one comes. This occurred when Bavel, Maday, Yavan, and Edom stood up against the Jewish nation. The Yidden sang shira when they were saved from one oppressor, but soon, the next oppressor arose. But in the future, there will be no more tzaros... Then the shira will be said in masculine form, as it states (Tehillim 98:1) שירו לה' שיר חדש, "Sing to Hashem a new song..." This time, it states שיר and not שירה. It will be sung in masculine form because it will be the final redemption, and no more galus will follow.

Therefore, when the Torah says וילדה זכר, or as Onkelos writes ותליד דכר, "gives birth to a male," it alludes to the future redemption, which is expressed in masculine form. It is a redemption that doesn't have any tzaros following it. Because in the merit of bitachon, we will merit the ultimate redemption.

they are happy with Torah and mitzvos more than all the money in the world.

Why did Reb Shimon take his students outdoors to perform this miracle? He could have performed a miracle indoors, as well! Reb Shimon was teaching them the means with which to earn parnassah. בק-עה, which means valley, represents two numbers: ב"ק whose gematria is 102, the same as אמונה. And ע"ה is gematriya 75, the same as בטחון. So, אמונה בטחון בקעה stands for אמונה בטחון. Reb Shimon told his students that if they have emunah and bitachon, they will also have a lot of money.<sup>2</sup>

About kriyas Yam Suf, it states (Shemos 14:22) והמים להם חומה "The waters were to them as a wall." The Imrei Boruch of Vizhnitz zt'l says that והמים (with the kollel) is gematriya אמונה, and להם is gematriya בטחון. So, והמים להם means "with emunah and bitachon," להם חומה "they will have a wall that will protect them." With emunah and bitachon, one can pass through all the seas and troubles of life.

The Vilna Gaon zt'l would go to galus (self-imposed exile). Once, he was at the home of a simple person, an innkeeper, and the Vilna Gaon was very impressed by the bitachon that this person exuded. The innkeeper couldn't keep up with the rent. The poritz warned him that if he didn't pay the rent by a specific date, he and his family would be thrown into a dungeon, which was ultimately a death sentence. The Vilna Gaon was in their home when this problem arose and was surprised to see that his host was calm. He trusted that Hashem would help somehow. On the day the debt was due, the Vilna Gaon followed the innkeeper, as he went to the poritz. He wanted to see the

miracle Hashem would perform for the innkeeper.

They waited outside the poritz's home until the person inside finished his appointment with the poritz. The innkeeper never saw this person before and didn't know what was taking him so long to finish up with the poritz.

Finally, the man came out and immediately told the innkeeper, "The poritz offered me an excellent business deal, but he refuses to agree to my terms. And just as he didn't want to bend to my terms, I refused to agree to his terms, although I know that even with his terms, it is a good investment. It isn't my way to bend and break under pressure. I wouldn't agree to his terms. Nevertheless, I want you to speak to the poritz and work as my middleman. Agree to the poritz's offer, and I will pay you a percentage for making this deal. I will give you a down payment now."

The down payment he received was exactly the amount he needed for the rent. He trusted in Hashem, and Hashem helped him.

### Bitachon for Everyone

One of the wonderful aspects of emunah is that it is available for everyone. Learning Torah is dependent on one's level; some people know more than others. But when it comes to emunah, a simple person can have emunah sheleimah at the same level as the greatest tzaddikim.

The Tchortkover zt'l explains that this is the reason there were various boundaries put at matan Torah. Moshe stood closer than

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2. The Yerushalmi (Brachos ch.9) seems to say that whenever Reb Shimon needed money, he would say בקעה בקעה התמלא דינרי זהב "Valley, valley, fill up with gold coins, and it would occur." We can explain that the Yerushalmi doesn't contradict the Midrash that says that Reb Shimon instructed his students not to take the coins of the valley. Because it all depends on how one receives the money. If one gets the money with emunah and bitachon, it won't be deducted from his portion in the next world. When Reb Shimon said בקעה בקעה, he was intending to אמונה בטחון, and when parnassah comes in that way, it is not deducted from his Olam HaBa.

others, Aharon was closer than the rest, and so on (see Rashi Shemos 19:24). This is because people have different levels of Torah knowledge, and not everyone is equal. But at kriyas Yam Suf, a maidservant saw the same prophecy as Yechezkel ben Buzi (see Rashi Shemos 15:2). This is because when it comes to emunah, the smallest person can have emunah like the greatest people of the nation. The same applies to bitachon. A simple person can have bitachon equal to the greatest tzaddikim.

"It states (Tehillim 34:23) וְלֹא יִאֲשָׁמוּ כָּל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ, "They will never regret, all those who trust in Him." The Vilna Gaon zt'l emphasized the word כָּל. He told his student, Reb Chaim Volozhiner, zt'l, "The pasuk doesn't state Eliyahu or Chaim; it states כָּל, whoever trusts in Hashem will be saved."

At times, Chazal say that כָּל means כָּל דְּהוּ, a drop. We can say כָּל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ implies that even a drop of bitachon is significant. We shouldn't think that it is either perfect bitachon or it has no meaning at all. Even a bit of bitachon will accomplish so much.

In *Shoshanas Yaakov*, we sing להודיע שכל קויד לא יבושו, "To declare that all those who trust in You won't be embarrassed." The Degel Machaneh Efraim (Purim) writes that כָּל means כָּל דְּהוּ, a drop. He translates להודיע to reveal שכל קויד, that even with a drop of bitachon, לא יבושו, he won't be embarrassed. A drop of bitachon is sufficient, and there will be salvations.<sup>3</sup>

One Purim, Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l, was collecting money for poor yeshiva bachurim so they could buy clothes and other basic needs. At the home of an elderly, wealthy person, the rich man's children stood at the door to ensure that people didn't come to their father more than once on Purim. Their father was old and wouldn't notice if someone came twice, and they

didn't want people to take advantage of that. Reb Yankele went to this home and received two thousand rubles – a very large donation. Before leaving, Reb Yankele intentionally left his umbrella behind.

Later that day, Reb Yankele returned. At the door, the wealthy man's children told him, "You were here once today. You can't come in again."

Reb Yankele replied, "I just came to pick up my umbrella."

"OK," they replied. "You can take your umbrella, but don't ask for money."

"I won't ask for money," Reb Yankele repeated. "I will just take my umbrella."

When he was inside, he told the old man that he had come to pick up his umbrella.

"And what about money?" the old man asked. "Don't you need money?"

Reb Yankele said that he does. He said to himself, "I promised that I wouldn't ask for money, but I didn't say that I would lie. He asked if I need money, and I need money."

He received another two thousand rubles.

When he came to the yeshiva, Reb Yankele spoke with the bachurim and showed them the four thousand rubles he received from this wealthy person. Always a person to teach a lesson, Reb Yankele told the bachurim, "You have to know where to place things."

You have to know where to place your trust. You will earn immensely if you place your bitachon in the right place.

Reb Sholom Tzvi Shapiro z'l came to Reb Chatzkel Levinstein zt'l and told him that he needed five thousand pounds for the upcoming chasunah of his oldest son. Reb Chatzkel was pensive for a few minutes,

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3. This lesson applies to all areas of avodas Hashem. We desire to serve Hashem with perfection, but we must be satisfied with a little, too. Even a little is a great accomplishment. A drop of bitachon is a lot. A drop of simcha is a lot. A drop of Torah study is a lot. Desire more but value every bit.

and then he said, "Hashem knows that you need five thousand pounds." He implied, "Hashem knows what you need. Trust in Him. He will help you."

Years later, Reb Sholom Tzvi told his youngest son, Reb Aryeh Leib Shlita, "When I told Reb Chatzkel that I need five thousand pounds, I hoped he would give me money. He didn't give me money, but he gave me something far more valuable. He taught me to trust in Hashem. If he would give me five thousand pounds, it would help me for that chasunah, but it wouldn't help me for all the other chasunos I made. Reb Chatzkel taught me to have bitachon, and that counsel helped me pay for all the chasunos!"

### Bitachon with Confidence

A person bought a lottery ticket, saying that he had bitachon he would win the grand prize of a hundred thousand rubles.

Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l asked him, "Would you please sell me your ticket for fifty thousand rubles," and the man agreed.

Reb Yisrael Salanter replied, "Your actions prove that you don't really believe you will win the grand prize. If you were sure you would win a hundred thousand ruble, you wouldn't sell it for half its value!"

There are different types of bitachon. There are times when one trusts in Hashem, but he can't say that he knows for sure that Hashem will help him. He hopes so; he trusts Hashem can help and wants to help, but he isn't confident it will occur. This is also a good level. According to many, it is the primary form of bitachon.

But there are also times when one feels confident that Hashem will help him. It states (Bereishis 34:25) ויבאו על העיר בטח, "They came upon the city with confidence..." Shimon and Levi were confident they would win the war against Shechem. Their bitachon reached the level of confidence and certainty that Hashem would help their plan succeed.

The Shevet Mussar zt'l (in Shaarei Simchah) writes that this is also the explanation of the pasuk (Tehillim 22:5) בך בטחו אבותינו בטחו ותפלטמו, "Our ancestors trusted in You; they trusted, and You rescued them."

Why does it state בטחו twice in this pasuk? The answer is that by the second בטחו their bitachon reached the level that they were certain that Hashem would help them.

It states (Tehillim 22:6), בטחו ולא בושו, "They trusted in You, and they were not shamed." The Ben Ish Chai zt'l (HaChaim v'HaShalom) explains that there are people who trust that Hashem will make a miracle for them, but they are embarrassed to tell others about it. They fear that people will laugh at them if the miracle doesn't occur. But then some are so certain that Hashem will help, they speak about their bitachon and certainty that there will be salvation. They tell it to others, even before the salvation occurred. ולא בושו, they aren't ashamed to do so because they are sure that the miracle will happen.

The Ben Ish Chai tells a story that happened to Reb Moshe Galanti zt'l. One year, there was a drought in Yerushalayim. The winter passed, and it hadn't yet rained. In Yerushalayim, where there are no rivers or lakes, a lack of rain meant no drinking water and no crops. It was a great tzarah.

Reb Moshe Galanti declared a yom tefillah, with the tefillos to be held at the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik. He told people to go there with raincoats and raingear because "by the time we finish our tefillos, it will be raining."

Together, the community of Yerushalayim marched through the Shaar Shechem gate of Yerushalayim to get to the kever of Shimon Hatzaddik. The Arab guard at the gate laughed when he saw the Jewish community dressed in raincoats and raingear. He asked them, "Is it Purim today? Why are you dressed in costumes?"

They told him that their rav, Reb Moshe Galanti, told them that Hashem would

answer their prayers and it would rain that day. The Arab thought it was preposterous.

When Reb Moshe Galanti passed the Arab guard, the Arab punched him in the face, r'l, because he thought that he was lying to the Jewish community. Reb Moshe Galanti looked at the Arab and didn't respond.

Loud, inspirational tefillos were held by the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik. Throughout this time, Reb Moshe Galanti leaned over the kever, whispering words. Suddenly, it began to pour.

The Arab guard ran to the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik and asked forgiveness from Reb Moshe Galanti. He carried Reb Moshe Galanti home on his shoulders and promised to be his slave forever.

The Ben Ish Chai writes that this story is an example of bitachon without shame. Reb Moshe Galanti was certain that Hashem would answer their tefillos and, therefore, didn't mind telling everyone to come with raingear. He wasn't afraid that people would mock him because he was certain it would rain.

The Gemara says that Choni HaMaagal told the Jewish community to pray for rain, and he added, "Make certain to bring your Pesach ovens indoors so that they won't get ruined from the rain." He wasn't afraid to say this because he was confident Hashem would answer their tefillos.

About this type of bitachon, it states, במדו, ולא בושו, "They trusted in You, and they were not shamed." They weren't embarrassed to express their trust in Hashem because they were certain Hashem would help. This is also implied in Shemonah Esrei when it states ולא נבוש כי כך במחנו; we aren't afraid that we will be embarrassed due to our trust in You.

### **Parnassah is from Hashem**

It states (Vayikra 11:27) וכל הולך על כפיו... טמאים הם, "All animals that walk on its hands are

tamei for you." Divrei Binah zt'l says that כפיו represents when one thinks that his parnassah comes from the work of his hands. This thought is טמא because parnassah comes from Hashem.

After Avraham Avinu emerged victorious from the war against the four mighty kings, he said (Bereishis 14:22) הרמתי ידי, "I raise my hand..." Malbim explains that with these words, Avraham expressed that it wasn't his hands that won the war; his success was from Hashem.

We shouldn't trust in our feet, either. We shouldn't think, "Because I went here or there, I earned money." Rather, Hashem destined for him to go there to receive the money coming to him. Hashem could have given you money here, too. There is no reason to praise your legs for getting you to the "right" place.

Avraham Avinu would offer water to travelers to wash their feet because they worshiped the dust on their feet (see Rashi Bereishis 18:4). The Shinover Rav zt'l asks that we never heard before of an avodah zarah to worship the dust of the feet.

The Shinover Rav zt'l explains that these merchants would credit their feet for getting them to the right place so they could earn money. They thanked their feet, not Hashem, Who advised them where to go and what to do to earn their parnassah.

We must remember that it isn't our hands or feet; everything is from Hashem.

The Kobriner zt'l said that when one goes to the market to do business, he must believe that every detail of the business transaction is by Hashem's hashgachah. This includes the items he decides to buy and the price that was agreed upon. When one lives with these thoughts, says Rebbe Moshe Kobriner, "I guarantee him that he will succeed."

In a beis medresh in Yerushalayim, during Minchah, someone was pouring out his heart in his own words, begging Hashem for money. A wealthy American Jew was in

the beis medresh at the time. After minchah, he approached this poor man and said, "You were davening slightly loud, so I overheard your tefillos. I understand that you need money. Perhaps I can help you."

The Yerushalmi Yid explained that he didn't have money for Pesach. The wealthy man gave him a generous sum of money to cover his grocery bills for months after Pesach.

When the Yerushalmi Yid repeated this marvelous story to his friends, they asked him whether he asked the wealthy American Yid for his address in America, so he could go to him the next time he needed money. The Yerushalmi Yid replied, "Why should I ask for his address? I didn't receive money from him. I davened to Hashem, and Hashem helped me through him. But it wasn't him."

### Everything is from Hashem

Maglei Tzedek zt'l, the son of the Mareh Yechezkel zt'l, writes, "I once saw an amazing thing. My father once hurt his hand while preparing for Shabbos, yet he remained happy! He explained that he was happy to do Hashem's will, and it was Hashem's will that he hurt his finger, as Chazal say, 'When a person hurts his finger, it was decreed in heaven that this should occur.' So, this was Hashem's will and a person should be happy to perform Hashem's will."

We live a calm and peaceful life when we believe everything is from Hashem. We aren't angry at anyone or any situation. We believe everything is always for the best because it is from Hashem. And this emunah turns everything around that it should become good.

Koheles (ch.3) lists the times and experiences of life. עת ללדת ועת למות עת למטע ועת לעקור נטוע, "There is a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot that which is planted..." Fourteen of the times listed are good, and fourteen are the opposite.  $14 + 14 = 28$ , the gematriya of כח, strength.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin zt'l says that this is alluded to in the Chazal which says, "Whoever says אמן יהא שמיה רבא בכל כחו, with all his strength, it annuls harsh decrees." כל כחו alludes to the twenty-eight times (ע"ח) of life. Declaring and believing that all these times, the good and the bad, are from Hashem, that rips up all harsh decrees. The emunah that every situation is from Hashem turns everything around, and the good becomes clear.

A grandson of the Birkas Avraham of Slonim zt'l once krechtzed and said "Oy!" The Birkas Avraham told him, "When you krechtz and say אוי, add the word דו, du, afterward, which means "You." Recognize that everything is from Hashem, even the hardships. Together, אוי - דו, it will sound like אודה, praise. You will praise Hashem because you know that it is for the good."

או" is gematriya 17, the same as טוב. Be aware that even the bad, over which you moan, is also ultimately good. And when you believe that it will become good.

One of the halachos of tzaraas is that if the tzaraas covers one's entire body, he becomes tahor, as it states (13:13) כלו הפך לבן טהור, "He has turned completely white; he is clean."

The Imrei Emes zt'l says that this means that when everything appears dark and stormy, that is a sign that soon things will turn around and become good again. It seems dark, but it is a sign that good times are approaching.

It states (Tehillim 118:7) ה' לי בעוזרי ואני אראה בשנאי. Rebbe Dovid'l Tolna zt'l taught that בעוזרי are my friends and בשנאי are my enemies. Dovid HaMelech said that ה' לי, the perception that Hashem is with me and that He helps me, I wish this perception בעוזרי, to my friends. ואני אראה, the perception that אני, "I do," and I can manage on my own, I wish this outlook בשנאי, to my enemies. Because knowing that everything is from Hashem is a prescription for success in life, and it turns everything around to become good.

## Purifying the Mouth

It says (*Vayikra* 6:9), מצות תאכל במקום קדוש, "Eat matzah in a holy place." The Tiferes Shlomo teaches, where is the place for matzah? It is the mouth of a Yid. He should make his mouth holy by being cautious to avoid lashon hara and non-kosher foods. Then our mouths will be a מקום קדוש, a holy place, a fitting place for the matzos.

Now that we stand before the mitzvah of matzah, it is an opportune time to purify the mouth from these impurities.

Rebbe Berish of Biyala *zy'a* said, "People ask Rabbanim questions on how to *kasher* their utensils, but no one asks how to *kasher* their mouth so it should be a fitting utensil to eat the holy matzos on Pesach."

Klal Yisrael is very cautious with kashrus, even more than with other aveiros. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 155:) teaches, לית דעניא מכלבא ולית דעתיר מכלבא, "There isn't anything poorer than a dog and nothing wealthier than a pig."<sup>4</sup>

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* explains that the Gemara is hinting at the wealthiest and poorest mitzvah. The wealthiest mitzvah means the best-kept mitzvah. The Gemara tells us that this is the prohibition of eating חזיר. Kashrus, in general, is an area where Klal Yisrael is cautious.

The dog is the poorest and least kept mitzvah, which represents the prohibition of speaking *lashon hara*. Despite its severity, people aren't cautious with this prohibition. A dog represents *lashon hara*, as the Gemara says, "Whoever speaks *lashon hara*, it would be proper to throw him to the dogs."

We begin with the importance of eating kosher and then discuss the severity of *lashon hara*.

## Success in Torah and Yiddishkeit with Being Cautious with Kashrus

*Mesilas Yesharim* (11) writes, "One must be very cautious with kashrus... The *aveirah* of eating non-kosher foods is worse than other aveiros because the food enters the body and becomes part of the flesh... If a person has intelligence, he will think of non-kosher foods like poison or food that has poison mixed into it... Even if there's a slight chance that the food contains poison, would he dare eat it? Non-kosher food is the same; it's poison to the heart and soul. Therefore, if he has intelligence, how could he be calm regarding food with questionable kashrus?"

It is very important to be careful with kashrus because non-kosher food blocks our minds from being able to understand Torah and closes our hearts to genuine feelings of Yiddishkeit.

A mother told Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* that her son suddenly could not understand Torah. Reb Akiva Eiger asked her whether the child ate something unkosher. She replied, "He only eats at home, and we are cautious..."

Reb Akiva Eiger asked to speak with the boy. In their conversation, Reb Akiva Eiger discovered that the boy ate at a particular wedding, which the rabbanim of that generation forbade people from attending.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Rashi explains, "Nothing is wealthier than a chazir because it can eat any food. It finds food on its own, and people feed it plenty." Whereas a dog is poor. Rashi explains, "No one has compassion on a dog to give it much food."

5. The Baal HaTanya wrote a *teshuvah* regarding that wedding (*Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, vol.4, *teshuvah* 39), and he states there that the meat at that wedding will be considered *neveilah*.

The following is the Baal HaTanya's responsa:

"I was frightened to hear what happened nearby... matters that should never happen among Yidden

Reb Akiva Eigar told the boy that this was the root of his problem and urged him to be cautious in the future. Reb Akiva Eigar blessed him to understand the Torah once again.

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Vayikra* 18:2) writes, "I heard that Reb Yitzchak Luria (the Arizal) said that sometimes a person changes and he doesn't know the reason. He wonders, "How did I change so much?" The Arizal taught that it happened because he ate food with bad in it or carried a bad soul of a *gilgul*... When one eats this bad spark or this bad soul, it changes him from being good to being bad. Corruption will increase in him. In contrast, when one refrains from eating forbidden foods, he will desire those matters that are important for the *neshamah*. As it says (*Tehillim* 40:9), לעשות רצונך אלקי הפצתי, "I want to do you will, Hashem," and the reason is תורתך בתוך מעי, 'Your Torah is in my stomach'; I am cautious to eat only kosher foods.

The *Shach* (*Yorah Deiah* 81:26) writes, "When a child eats food that is forbidden from the *rabannan*, according to halachah the father isn't required to stop him (see *Orach Chaim* 343). Nevertheless, the father *should* stop his child from eating such food because it will harm the child later when he gets older. Non-kosher food is מטמאם הלב, shuts off the heart, and גורם לו טבע רע, develops a bad nature in the child."

The *Pri Chadosh* (*Yorah Deiah* 81:26) elaborates on the bad that could occur from eating non-kosher food: "The result will be that he will go out לתרבות רעה and stray from religion. In

our generation, we are not careful with these matters, and that is the reason children go off לתרבות רע, and most of them are עיי פנים שבדור, *chutzpadik*, and their hearts don't fear Heaven. Even if we rebuke them, they can't accept *mussar*... Who was greater than Elisha ben Avuyah (called Acher) who ended up sinning? The *Yerushalmi* (*Chagigah*) says that this happened because when his mother was pregnant with him, she passed a house of *avodah zarah* and smelled what they were cooking there, and the smell entered the child's body like poison. Therefore, one must be careful with these matters."

*Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Dei'ah* 81:7) states, "Whenever possible, you shouldn't hire an Egyptian woman to nurse your child, because the milk of non-Jewish women shuts off the heart and generates a bad nature in the child."

As Rashi (*Shemos* 2:7) writes, "[Basyah] brought Moshe [as an infant] to many Egyptian women to nurse him, but Moshe refused to nurse from them because Moshe would eventually speak with the *Shechinah*."

The *Kedushas Levi* teaches that in the future, every Yid will be a prophet, as it states, ונבאו בניכם ובנותיכם, "Your sons and your daughters will prophesize," and therefore, every Yid must be careful to avoid non-kosher foods.

### **Lashon Hara**

We now discuss being cautious about speaking *lashon hara*, which is one of the

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occurred. A *get* that was *pasul* from the Torah was used [because the wife's name was written incorrectly]. Even if when she was in her crib she was named רחל, nevertheless, now everyone calls her ראשי. Furthermore, it isn't even sure that she was ever named רחל. Therefore, according to the Torah, you must prevent the man who gave the *get* from remarrying, *chas veshalom*, until he gives a kosher *get* to his wife. The divorce shouldn't be given against her will, *chas veshalom*, and all money matters between them should be settled before the divorce. Send forth a decree that there may not be a *chuppah*. [The husband may not remarry until the divorce is given]. Use all the rights and freedom the government has given us [to enforce this]. Also, set forth a decree to the *shochtim* that they mustn't *shecht* cattle or poultry for the wedding, *chas veshalom*. If they won't obey, *chas veshalom*, their *shechitah* will have the *din* of נבילה, as this is the law of those who transgress [see *Yorah Dei'ah* 1:11]. And for those who obey, everything shall be good for them. They shall receive good blessings from the good Hashem..."

primary ways we prepare our mouths to be a place worthy of eating the matzos.

This discussion is of particular importance this week because the parashah discusses tzaraas, which comes from speaking lashon hara.

The Gemara compares *lashon hara* to the three cardinal sins: idolatry, adultery, and murder. The Or Hachaim HaKadosh (14:9) writes, "Nothing distances a person from his Creator like *lashon hara*." Yet, despite its severity, people aren't careful with it. Every mitzvah has a mazal. *Lashon hara* has a poor mazal. Not too many people regard it with the seriousness it deserves. Chazal therefore call lashon hara "the poorest mitzvah."

The punishment of *lashon hara* is *tzaraas* (Rashi 14:4). If someone sees *tzaraas* on the walls of his home, the owner of that home should go to a *kohen* and say (14:35) כִּנְנַע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית, "Something like *tzaraas* appeared to me in the house."

Rashi writes, "Even a Torah scholar who is certain that it is *tzaraas*, shouldn't tell [the *kohen*] with certainty that he saw *tzaraas*. He should say כִּנְנַע נִרְאָה לִי, 'It appears like *tzaraas*.'"

Why can't he say, "I saw *tzaraas* "?

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* explains that one says, כִּנְנַע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית, "I saw something that appears like *tzaraas*..." because he didn't see the actual *tzaraas*. The primary *tzaraas* is on the neshamah. What he saw was just a result of the *tzaraas* of the neshamah.

In this manner, there is also *tzaraas* in our times. It doesn't appear like a white mark on the body or like a red blotch on clothing, etc., but it is present in the realm of the soul.

Furthermore, The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* writes (quoting early scholars) that in our times, the mark of *tzaraas* is poverty, *r'l*. In these ways, *tzaraas* exists in our times.<sup>6</sup>

### Speaking Positively

We wrote above that when a person has *tzaraas*, he is supposed to say to the *kohen* (14:35) כִּנְנַע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית, "Something like a *nega* (*tzaraas*) has appeared to me in the house." The כ at the beginning of כִּנְנַע means that he isn't telling the *kohen* that he saw a definite *nega*, but instead, he says that he saw something that appears like a *nega*.

Rashi explains, "Even a Talmid chacham, who knows that it is a *nega*, shall not say decisively, 'A *nega* has appeared to me.' He should say, 'Something like a *nega* has appeared to me.'"

The Tosfos Yom Tov (Negaim 12:5) writes several reasons one shouldn't say definitively that it is a *nega* of *tzaraas*. Here are a few of the reasons:

The Mizrahi teaches: He doesn't say that it is *tzaraas* to accord honor the *kohen*, to let the *kohen* determine whether it is *tzaraas* or not.

The Maharal teaches: Chazal say that until the *kohen* calls it a *nega*, the *tzaraas*

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6. The Beis HaLevi *zt'l* would often open his *tabak pushkah* (snuffbox) and immediately close it. One of his students was curious about this custom, so when he had the opportunity, he opened the snuff box, and he found the letters שפ"ו שמו"נ written inside. He asked the Beis HaLevi for the meaning of these letters. The Beis HaLevi replied that they are *roshei teivos* for שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו, "Someone who guards his tongue is protecting himself from troubles." The Beis HaLevi would open his snuffbox, read the message, and remember to be careful with his speech. With this clever method, he reminded himself to be cautious about speaking lashon hara.

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zy'a* said, "When one desires to say something forbidden and holds back, it's as though he fasted eighty-four days. Rebbe Ahron of Belz *zy'a* added, "And I say, *nach un nach, un nach*," which means that it's like fasting eighty-four days, and much much more than that.

isn't *tamei*. It only has the tumah of tzaraas once deemed a tzaraas by a kohen. So, it would be untrue to say it is a *nega* because it isn't yet.

Another answer is that the person shouldn't call it a *nega* because this will convince the kohen to see it that way.

The Tosfos Yom Tov then writes his own explanation. It is based on the principle אל תפתח פה לשטן (that one shouldn't open his mouth to the Satan). It is wiser if the person doesn't proclaim that it is a *nega* because this can cause what he says to occur. A *nega* can change colors, turn to a lesser shade of white, and become *tahor*. By the time the kohen sees the tzaraas, it might be *tahor*. But by proclaiming that it is tzaraas and that it will undoubtedly be deemed *tamei*, his words might cause that to occur. This is based on the Gemara (Moed Kattan 18.), ברית כרותה שפתיים, there lies a power in words that whatever one says can occur.

And this isn't only when one says something negative. The power of speech is very significant and saying positive things can also cause good things to happen.

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* says that this is why we say the יהי רצון by the *simanim* on Rosh Hashanah night. We verbalize that it will be a sweet year, and our words create that reality.

The Gemara (Brachos 60:) states, לעולם יהא אדם, רגיל לומר כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד "One should always say, 'Everything Hashem does is for the good.'"

Once, Reb Akiva came to a city and asked for a place to stay overnight, and no one took him in. He proclaimed, "Everything Hashem does is for the good."

Having no choice, he settled down for the night in a field outside the city. He had a rooster, donkey, and candle with him. Before long, a wind blew out his candle, a cat ate his rooster, and a lion ate the donkey. Reb Akiva said, "Everything Hashem does is for the good."

During the night, thieves entered the city, and everyone was taken captive. Reb Akiva was spared because he wasn't in the town and didn't have a donkey, rooster, or candle that would give away his hiding place. Reb Akiva told his students, "Didn't I tell you, everything Hashem does is for the good."

What was Reb Akiva's message to his students?

The Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yehoyada) explains that he was showing them that even if there is a *gezeirah* for something terrible to occur (perhaps it was decreed that he too should be taken into captivity), by saying that it is good, the positive words turn it over and it becomes good.<sup>7</sup>

7. It states (Koheles 9:17) דברי חכמים בנחת נשמעים "The gentle words of the wise are heard." נחת is *roshei teivos* (candle, donkey, rooster). Wise people speak like Reb Akiva and say that everything is for the good, and then it becomes so.

18. When Moshe saw that there are people who speak *lashon hara* among the Jewish people, Moshe said, "Now the matter is understood" (*Shemos* 2:14). Rashi explains, "Now I have the answer to the question I was bothered by. [I wondered], what sin did the Jewish people do more than all the seventy nations that they are punished with back-breaking labor? But now I see they deserve it [because they speak *lashon hara*]."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* explains that Moshe understood that because of their slander, they lost their merits (as the *Chovas HaLevavos* explains) and, therefore, deserved slavery.

Halachah (see *Shulchan Aruch* 606:1) teaches that if someone asks you for forgiveness, you shouldn't be cruel and should forgive them. This also applies to *lashon hara*. If someone spoke *lashon hara* against you, and then asks you for forgiveness, you should forgive him.

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* asks: The *lashon hara* spoken against you redeemed you from all your *aveiros*, and

## The Great Exchange

The *Chovos Halevavos* (*Shaar HaKniah* 7) reveals that an exchange occurs when one speaks lashon hara. The speaker's mitzvos go to the person upon whom he spoke, and the *aveiros* of that person go to the speaker. The speaker loses his mitzvos and receives the other person's *aveiros*, all from speaking lashon hara.

The *Chovos Halevavos* writes, "If someone speaks *lashon hara* on you, tell him, 'Don't speak about me, my brother. Have mercy on your good deeds, so you don't lose them.' It's been told about one of the chassidim who sent a bowl filled with fruits from his country to the person who spoke *lashon hara* on him with a note attached that said, 'The gifts [your mitzvos] that you sent me have arrived. I express my gratitude to you with this bowl...' Another chassid said, 'Many people will come to their judgment (in heaven), and they will be shown their good deeds and find among them many mitzvos that they never performed. They will say, 'We never did these.' They will be told, 'They were performed by the persons who spoke *lashon hara* on you.' And those who spoke *lashon hara* will discover that they are missing mitzvos. They will be told, 'You lost them when you spoke *lashon hara* about this person and that person...' Some people will find *aveiros* they never committed. They will

complain, 'We never did these *aveiros*.' They will be answered, 'These were given to you because of *ploni* and *ploni*, against whom you spoke.'<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, as always, there is a remedy: teshuvah. Even if he lost his good deeds due to speaking lashon hara, they will all return to him when he does *teshuvah*. As it states, זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו (*Vayikra* 14:1). Reb Zvi Kaziglover *zy'a* explains, זאת תהיה תורת המצורע, the Torah and the other good deeds of the *metzora* will return to him, ביום טהרתו, when he does *teshuvah* and accepts upon himself to stop speaking *lashon hara*.

## Yesurim are a Gift

It states (14:34) ונתתי נגע צרעת בבית ארץ אחותכם "I will give tzaraas in the house..." ונתתי sounds like it is a gift. How is tzaraas a gift?

Rashi writes, "It is a good tiding for them that they will get tzaraas. During the forty years the Yidden were in the desert, the Emora'im hid gold in the walls of their homes, and due to tzaraas, these [treasures] will be uncovered."

When tzaraas was found in the walls of their homes, they were required to break open the walls, and thereby they found the gold that the Amora'im hid there. If it weren't for the tzaraas, they wouldn't have found it. In this way, tzaraas was a gift.<sup>9</sup>

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you received the speaker's mitzvos. Who would want to forgive and give up on all that good? Wouldn't it be wiser not to forgive the speaker of *lashon hara* so that you can remain with his mitzvos and he stay with your *aveiros*? Why, then, is it considered cruel to refuse to forgive?

The Ben Ish Chai answers that you will also lose all your *aveiros* by forgiving because the Gemara says, כל המעביר על מדותיו מעבירין לו על כל פשעיו, "Whoever forgives others, his sins are forgiven" (*Yoma* 23). You lost your *aveiros* when someone spoke *lashon hara* on you, but if you forgive him, you will also be cleansed of all your *aveiros*. So, you may as well forgive your fellow man.

When people spoke *lashon hara* on you, they gave you their mitzvos. Nevertheless, you should forgive them. This is called השבת אבידה, returning lost items (because you are returning to the speakers of *lashon hara* all the mitzvos they lost due to their *lashon hara*). The reward for השבת אבידה is in accordance with the value of the item returned. So, when one forgives and gives back all the mitzvos he earned from the *lashon hara*, he will earn a great mitzvah of השבת אבידה.

Therefore, *Shulchan Aruch* advises one not to be cruel and to forgive his fellow man because by forgiving, one doesn't lose anything.

9. Reb Shmuel Vosner *zt'l* asked: If one earns wealth from the tzaraas, why is it called *nega*, a plague?

This doesn't apply only to tzaraas. Whenever a person has a problem, he should know ונתתי, that it is a gift from Hashem.

The Gemara (Nidah 31.) gives the following example:

Two people left their homes and headed to the port to catch a ship that was sailing overseas. They looked forward to the wealth they would earn on this important business trip. However, one of the two men stepped on a thorn, and he couldn't continue walking. He missed the ship. He cursed and shouted, upset at losing out on this business opportunity.

Sometime afterward, he heard that the ship had sunk. Now he praised Hashem. He discovered ונתתי that the problem (the thorn) was a gift from Hashem to save his life.

The Gemara says that this is the meaning of the pasuk (Yeshayah 12:1) אודך ה' כי אנפת בי "I will thank You, for You were wroth with me." We praise Hashem for His wrath and anger because, in retrospect, we discover how good it was. As the pasuk continues ישוב אפך ותנחמני "Your wrath turns away, and You comfort me." We find out that it was for our good.<sup>10</sup>

There's a Midrash that discusses tzaraas and connects this topic to the pasuk אך טוב לישראל, that Hashem does solely good for Yisrael. The Divrei Yisrael explains this because even when things don't appear good, they indeed are.

The word נס, miracle, is made up of two letters: נ and ס. These two letters can also be written like this: נ"ן and סמ"ך. As you noticed, when you write out these two letters in full, more letters are added. The נ becomes נ"ן, and the ס becomes סמ"ך. These added letters are called the מילוי, the filling-in letters. The מילוי of נ"ן is also נ"ס. We will prove it: The second letter of נ"ן is also a nun, and the letters of סמ"ך, the final two letters are gematriya 60, the same as ס. This means that if you look at the first letters, you have נס, and if you look at the miluy, you also have נס.

The Ben Ish Chai says this alludes to the revealed and concealed miracles. The word נס refers to the revealed miracles. These are the miracles that we see and know about. The concealed miracles are alluded to in the miluy of נס because the miluy of נס is also נס.

Hashem always performs miracles for us. Sometimes they are concealed, but everything that happens to us is Hashem's kindness.

### The Benefits of Yesurim

We asked above why the person who has tzaraas says כנגע, that it appears like a *nega*. Why doesn't he say clearly that he has a *nega* of tzaraas?

We can answer that it is because, truthfully, it isn't a *nega* (נע). On the contrary, it is *oneg* (ענג), a pleasure, because everything that occurs (even when it seems negative) is for the good.<sup>11</sup>

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Rav Vosner zt'l replied that when there is tzaraas in the walls of the home, one must break them. Breaking the walls of a Jewish home is always a tragedy, even if it leads to immense financial gain.

He was referring to the internet. Some people bring the internet into their homes with the excuse that they need it to earn money. But by doing so, they risk breaching the holy walls of a Jewish home. We tell them, "Even if you gained money if a Jewish home was broken in the process, it is a plague and not a worthwhile investment."

**10.** The Gemara adds that this is also the translation of the pasuk (Tehillim 72:18) עושה נפלאות גדולות לבדו "[Hashem] performs wonders alone." Often, no one knows about the miracles that Hashem performs. Only Hashem alone knows. The Gemara says, "Even a *baal hanes* (the person to whom the miracle occurred) isn't aware of the miracles."

**11.** The Ben Ish Chai teaches: "A person doesn't harm his finger, only if it was so decreed. But it wasn't

Even if a person doesn't fully believe in his heart that the difficult aspects of life are for his benefit, he should nevertheless pretend, speak and act as though he believes that it is all for the good. The Gemara (Tamid 28) states, "What is the good path a person should choose? יחזיק באמונה יתירה, he should have a lot of emunah, as it states (Tehillim 101:6) עיני בנאמני ארץ לשבת עמדי, 'My eyes are to the believers of the land, to dwell with Me.'"

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin zt'l explains that אמונה יתירה means that one should act and speak on a level of emunah that is above his level. Even if he doesn't believe in his heart that it is all for the good, he should act and speak as though he believes it. Doing so will help him attain genuine emunah. Doing so will grant him hashgachah pratis, as it states, עיני בנאמני ארץ לשבת עמדי, 'My eyes are to the believers of the land, to dwell with Me.'"

### Between Purim and Pesach

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Adar* 4:10) writes:

"Chazal tell us that we must learn the laws of Pesach thirty days before Pesach, and the thirty days begins on Purim. This is certainly not a coincidence." There is a connection between Purim and Pesach.

The Bnei Yissaschar writes:

"I think this can be explained with a lesson written by the holy tzaddik, the author of *Chesed l'Avraham*. He explains that every year, thirty days before Pesach, Hashem compassionately redeems His

children. Their souls have sunken into *tumah* because of their sins, and during these thirty days, Hashem takes them out, each day a little more... On the fourteenth of Nisan, they exited from *tumah*, and on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup>, they were totally freed.

"We can now explain why we begin studying the laws of Pesach from Purim. It is because Purim is the day of *mechiyas Amalek*. We heard from scholars of previous generations (and it is written in the *Zohar*) that the war and the destruction of Amalek will occur on *erev Pesach*.

"So now it is understood: The destruction of Amalek begins on Purim and is completed on *erev Pesach*. These thirty days have 720 hours, which is the *gematriya* of עמל"ק three times. This is because we destroy Amalek on all three planes: Amalek's thoughts, speech, and deeds.

"This explains why *bedikas chametz* is on the fourteenth of Nisan, and the Mishnah calls it אור לארבע עשר, 'the light (night) of the fourteenth.' It is called light because this is when we leave the darkness and come into the light.

"*Rishonim* ask why we don't say *Shehechyanu* on the mitzvah of *biur chametz* (see *Tur, Orach Chaim* 432). According to our conversation, it is understood. We say *Shehechyanu* at the very beginning of *biur chametz*, which is on Purim." The *Shehechyanu* that we say on Purim is the *Shehechyanu* for *biur chametz*. *Mechiyas Amalek* begins on Purim and is completed on *erev Pesach*.<sup>12</sup>

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decreed that he should be sad. That he takes on his own. (A hint is ענביהם מעשה בני אדם, *atzvus* is man's doing.) It wasn't decreed from heaven that he should be sad because *atzvus* is disgusting to Hashem, so how can it be that Hashem decreed it on him? One shouldn't even be sad when it comes to *aveiros*... Life's challenges are a test to see if he will accept them joyfully."

**12.** The *Zohar* (vol.2 183:) calls *matzah*, מִיכְלֵא דְאִסְוּתָא, which means food that heals. Rebbe Meir of Premishlan zt'l said that before surgery, doctors generally tell their patients to fast. Similarly, Pesach is like an operation, because we become healed with the מִיכְלֵא דְאִסְוּתָא, the *matzah* that heals us. We must prepare ourselves for this operation, and the preparation begins during these thirty days before Pesach.