

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Eikev



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Eikev

Reward

This parashah begins with the words, והיה עקב, "This shall be the reward when you hearken to the laws..." and the Torah discusses wealth, health, and children. Many *brachos* will come for keeping the Torah.

The reward for keeping Torah and mitzvos is discussed in other locations in this week's parashah (see 8:1, 11:8-9, 11:13-15, 11:20-21, 11:22-25).

The following story became renowned some years ago during a shemitah year. There was a family whose goyta (non-Jewish maid) one day told them that she was going back to her family in Romania. The mother of the family gave her some apples to take with her on her trip.

When her husband came home and heard that she gave the goyta some apples, he said, "But those were shemitah apples, and it is forbidden to give fruits of shemitah to non-Jews. Furthermore, it is forbidden to take fruits of shemitah out of Eretz Yisrael!"

He quickly got into a car and drove to the airport to take the fruit back. His wife and children came along for the ride.

The goyta saw the family approaching, and she became very afraid. She raised her hands and said, "You caught me. I will give everything back. But please, I beg you, don't report me to the police."

This is what happened.

Before leaving her employer's home, she emptied out the balabusta's

jewelry cabinet to bring back with her to Romania.

We learn from this story several lessons:

(1) The yetzer hara says that it wants you to transgress "just one thing," just one small aveirah, but he really wants to take much more. He knows that a tiny aveirah will lead to many other aveiros. As we see with this Romanian woman. She left the home, making the impression that all she wanted to take with her was apples, but she took so much more.

(2) The family was at fault for trusting her. If the family would suspect that she might be a thief, they would have been more cautious. They would have locked the jewelry cabinet. Let this be a reminder that we should never trust the yetzer hara. He seems to be your friend, but never let your guard down. He is out to catch you.

(3) Most importantly for this week's topic, we learn

from this story that one earns a lot when he is cautious with mitzvos. The father of this family was careful with the laws of shemitah, and due to his caution, they got the stolen jewelry back. We only gain from keeping the Torah.

Sometimes we think abiding by Torah and mitzvos is bad for us because it limits us and prevents us from enjoying life to its fullest extent, but it isn't so. In so many ways, life is better, even in this world when we keep the Torah.

Reb Avraham
Mordechai Malach Shlita
told the following story:

A dove was born without wings. She was jealous of her friends and family who spent their days flying high in the sky while she stayed behind alone in her nest or wobbling along on the street.

At nighttime, the birds would return to their nests

and discuss the wonderful rivers and mountains they saw as they flew in the sky, and this made the handicapped dove even more brokenhearted.

She prayed and cried to Hashem, and Hashem answered her tefillos. One morning, she awoke with full-grown wings at her side.

The problem was that she didn't know that the protrusions on her body were wings. So, she continued hopping along on the ground, unaware she could fly. And now, it was even harder because she had two heavy loads on either side.

She was more upset than before.

A bas kol called out and said, "Don't feel bad. You aren't carrying a heavy load. Open your arms wide, and you will see that you can fly."

This story reminds us that the heavy load of

Torah and mitzvos are our wings. They aren't cumbersome. The heaviness is making our life very sweet. Our lives will be far more pleasurable, even in this world, because of the "heavy loads" we carry. Keep all the mitzvos, embrace them, and you will fly to very high levels.

There was a chasid who would annually buy the rights to collect the tolls of a particular bridge. The rights were auctioned off yearly, and he was always the highest bidder. He earned a good living from the toll booth.

One year, he heard that there were people who planned to outbid him at the auction, no matter the price. Concerned with the future of his parnassah, he traveled to Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke to receive a brachah.

As he waited in line to speak to the rebbe, he told the chasidim around him about his predicament.

Suddenly, the rebbe opened the door of his room and announced, "Someone needs three hundred rubles for hachnassas kallah. Who can help?"

The chasid immediately approached the rebbe and gave him a bag with three hundred rubles. The Rebbe thanked him and returned to his room.

A couple of minutes later, the rebbe came out of his room again and said, "We need another three hundred rubles for hachnassas kallah. Who can give it?"

The chasid gave the Rebbe another bag filled with three hundred rubles.

The episode happened a third time. The Rebbe asked for three hundred rubles and the chasid gave it to him.

When it was the chasid's turn to speak with the rebbe, the Rebbe said, "There is a chamber in

heaven called 'above nature.' When a Yid gives tzedakah above and beyond his nature, Hashem does miracles for him that are above and beyond nature."

The chasid felt confident that he would have a yeshuah, so he didn't even tell the Rebbe about his predicament. He gave tzedakah beyond his nature, so miracles beyond nature would happen to him.

He went to the auction and bought the rights for the toll collection, as he did every year. There was no opposition.

His opponents arrived at the auction after the bidding was over. They said, "Which rebbe did you go to? For three hours, we got lost, and we couldn't get to the auction on time!" (B'Yeshishim Chachmah p.218).

People wonder, what is the purpose of life? We come to the world, live

seventy, eighty years, and then leave. So what is the purpose?

We will explain with a mashal:

A visitor to a barn was surprised when he saw the farmer feeding his cows milk. He asked the farmer, "What is the purpose of milking cows if you feed them milk? You aren't earning anything!"

The farmer explained, "I feed the cows three buckets of milk, and when I milk them, I receive fifteen buckets of milk. Also, I feed them *chalav akum*, and I get from them *chalev Yisrael*! So I am gaining."

The nimshal is that during our lives, we study Torah and mitzvos, and the profits are enormous. Furthermore, we enter the world like a goy (with animalistic drives) and leave as a Yid (because we purify ourselves with our good deeds). This makes living worthwhile.

The Skulener Rebbe, Reb Eliezer Zusia zt'l, and the Ribnitzer Rebbe, Reb Chaim Zanvel zt'l, were friends from their youths when they were chasidim of the Rebbe of Shtefinesht zt'l. With time, they both began their own courts and moved to America.

One morning, the Skulener Rebbe was informed that the Ribnitzer Rebbe will be coming to visit him. Therefore, the Skulener Rebbe decided to daven Shacharis quicker than usual that morning to be ready to greet his distinguished guest when he arrived.

Reb Chaim Zanvil, the Ribnitzer Rebbe, arrived just as they completed Shacharis. The Skulener Rebbe said, "Chaim Zanvil, I didn't know that you were coming until this morning, and there wasn't time to prepare special food and drink to honor you, so I will honor you with a nigun," and he sang the famous Skulener song,

זכר דבר לעבדך... זאת נחמתי... זדים
הליצוני.

When he finished the song, the Ribnitzer Rebbe asked, "Leizer Zusia, did you compose this song on your own?"

"Yes, I did," the Skulener Rebbe replied, and then he sang the song a second time.

When he finished, the Ribnitzer asked again, "Tell me, Leizer Zusia, did you compose this song on your own?"

"Yes, I did."

"Do you not have anything better to do with your time than to compose songs?"

The Skulener Rebbe replied, "Chaim Zanvil, you didn't understand me. I don't compose songs; I compose explanations and peirushim. This song explains the pesukim that I'm singing," and then he sang the song a third time.

The Ribnitzer Rebbe said, "Leizer Zusya! You told me you are explaining the pesukim, but I didn't hear any explanation! I heard a song, not a peirush!"

The Skulener Rebbe said, "Chaim Zanvil, I will explain it to you. זדים are the reshaim. הליצוני, they make leitzonus of me. They mock my religious piety. They say, 'Why do you serve Hashem עד מאד, which means to extremes, being cautious with every detail of Jewish law? Why don't you compromise and round corners here and there?' But the answer is מתורתך לא נשיתי, I don't want to abandon the Torah, and the only way to be cautious is to keep every law, without compromise. When you begin to compromise, you don't know where you will end up."

The Ribnitzer Rebbe replied, "Leizer Zusia, you're right. Now I understand pshat!"

Birkas HaMazon

It states in this week's parashah (8:10), ואכלת ושבעת, וברכת את ה' אלקיך, "You will eat and you will be satisfied and bless Hashem, your G-d." This refers to the mitzvah of benching after eating bread. We discussed that every mitzvah earns us reward, in this world and the next world, and birkas hamazon is an

excellent example of this truth.

Many brachos come from being cautious with birkas hamazon.

The Chinuch (*Mitzvah* 430) writes, "I learned from my teachers that whoever is careful with *birkas hamazon* will have *parnassah* in an honorable manner his entire life."¹

1. One of the halachos of *birkas hamazon* is that one must *bench* where he ate. If he leaves the house where he ate and goes elsewhere, he should return to bench where he ate.

This is Beis Shamai's view, and this is one of the few times that the halachah follows Beis Shamai, and not Beis Hillel (see Orach Chaim 184:1).

The Gemara (Brachos 53:) relates that Beis Hillel said to Beis Shamai, "If someone ate on top of a tower and he went down without benching, will you obligate him to climb all the way up to the top of the tower to bench?"

Beis Shamai replied, "If someone forgot his wallet on top of the tower, wouldn't he climb up to fetch it? If he will do so for his own honor, certainly he should do so for Hashem's honor."

The Gemara continues, "There were two students: One did like Beis Shamai [he returned to *bench*] and he found a wallet filled with silver coins. The other did like Beis Hillel [he didn't return to *bench*] and was eaten by a lion."

The Gemara relates another episode:

The Zohar (vol.2 218.) writes, "*Birkas hamazon* is precious to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. When one benches with joy, Hashem will bestow blessings on him with joy and a good eye. Therefore, don't bench with sadness, only with joy."

When people are happy, they become generous. We are urged to bench with joy because then Hashem will bestow His blessings on us with happiness and in abundance.

The Chida (Nitzotzei Oros) explains the pasuk (Mishlei

10:22) ברכת ה' היא תעשיר ולא תוסיף עצב בה, that *birkas hamazon* makes people wealthy, but there is a condition: ולא תוסיף עצב בה, we must bench without sadness.

Birkas hamazon is also a protection.

The Be'er Heitev writes (in the name of the Bach) that there is no ך in *birkas hamazon* because ך represents שני קנף and חרון אף (wrath and punishment) and whoever is careful with *birkas hamazon* will be protected from those matters.²

Rabba bar bar Chana was traveling with a caravan. They stopped to eat, and when everyone finished eating the caravan began moving again. Suddenly, Rabba bar bar Chana remembered that he had forgotten to *bench*. He thought to himself, "If I tell my travel companions that I forgot to bench, they will tell me to bench here. They will say, 'Hashem is everywhere. *Bench* where you are.'" He wanted to go back to bench, so he told them, "Wait for me. I forgot a dove of gold."

He returned, benched, and found a יונה דהבא, a dove of gold.

These stories demonstrate that when one is cautious with *birkas hamazon*, he merits wealth.

2. *Birkas hamazon* saves us from punishment in the grave, too.

The rosh yeshiva of Chachmei Lublin, Reb Meir Shapiro zt'l, once came to a *cheder* and tested the students. After the test, Reb Meir Shapiro said, "I

It says in *Shach al HaTorah* (a student of the Arizal) that whoever is careful to say *birchas hamazon* with *kavanah*, will not be eaten by worms and insects in the grave. ברוך he writes, is *gematriya* כ"ו (announcement). An announcement goes forth from heaven warning the worms not to eat this person who was careful with *birkas hamazon*. The blessings of *birkas hamazon* counter the curse of worms.

Sefer Chasidim (46) writes, "Someone died young, several years before his time. After twelve months he appeared to his relative in a dream. The relative asked him, 'How are things for you in the next world?'

"I am being judged daily because I wasn't careful to recite *birkas hamazon* and *brachos* over foods with *kavanah*. They tell me that I was eating for my own pleasure."

"But doesn't the judgment in heaven last only twelve months? You were *niftar* more than a year ago."

He replied, "The punishments of the first twelve months were more severe."

When we say *al hamichyah*, we say ברוך עליה בקדושה ובטהרה, "We will bless You with holiness and with purity." However, we don't mention *kedushah* and *taharah* when we say *birkas hamazon*. What's the difference?

Rebbe Aharon of Belz zy'a explains that when one eats bread, he generally eats with holiness and purity because he washes his hands before he eats, he sits, and he says the *brachos* with *kavanah*. However, cake and other forms of *mezonos* are eaten when one is hungry and in a rush. One grabs a piece of cake to satisfy his hunger and eats it on the go. Therefore, in *al hamichyah* we remind people to eat the cake and to bless Hashem ברוך עליה בקדושה ובטהרה, with holiness and purity.

want to give you a present, only I don't have anything with me, so I will teach you a *segulah* instead. If you follow my counsel, you will be successful and lead a peaceful life."

He told them the *segulah* to say *birkas hamazon* with *kavanah*. He quoted the Ba'ch, who says, "Whoever recites *birkas hamazon* with *kavanah*, neither wrath nor destruction will ever befall him." And he told them the *Chinuch*, who says, "Whoever is careful with *birkas hamazon* will have *parnassah bekavod* his entire life." He advised them to bench from a siddur and not by heart.

Shimon, one of the students of that cheder, took the lesson to heart, and he decided right then and there that he would always be careful with *birkas hamazon*.

His friends would *bench* quickly and go to play while he lingered behind, to *bench* properly. It was

challenging, but he didn't want to abandon the wonderful gift Reb Meir Shapiro gave him.

Some years later, the Nazis invaded Poland, and Reb Shimon stood in line for a 'selektzia.' Whoever was short was sent to the left, to the gas chambers and crematoriums. As Reb Shimon stood in line, he prayed the entire time that in the merit of *birkas hamazon* he would be saved from 'wrath and destruction' (חרון אף and שנף קנף). When it was his turn, he stood on his toes to appear taller, and the Nazi signaled him to the right. He understood that his life was saved in the merit of *birkas hamazon*.

Soon afterward, Reb Shimon found himself standing in line again. This time, each person had to tell the Nazi at the head of the line what his trade was. Reb Shimon didn't know what he could say. He was only a teenager, and he had never worked before.

As he waited in line, he prayed, "In the merit of *birkas hamazon*, which is *mesugal* for *parnassah*, Hashem, please support me."

Immediately after he finished his tefillah, the person behind him in the line tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Say that you are a cook and that I'm your helper."

Reb Shimon said this, and they were both sent to work in the kitchen. He was careful with *birkas hamazon*, so he was sent to the kitchen, where there was more food to eat.

In the camps, Reb Shimon continued to be extremely careful with *birkas hamazon*. If he felt he wouldn't have enough time to say *birkas hamazon* properly, he wouldn't eat his bread (a great *mesirus nefesh* during the holocaust).

Once, a Nazi officer saw Shimon working in the kitchen and asked, "What

are you doing here? You look like a young child."

"I work here," Shimon explained. "I'm the cook."

The officer took Shimon outside, behind the kitchen, and gave him a shovel. "Dig a ditch here, two meters deep. It must be ready in two hours, or I'll shoot you."

At that time, the Nazis were building trenches to hide in, in case they would be attacked by the Russians.

However, the task the Nazi gave Shimon was impossible. The ground was covered with heavy rocks, he only had two hours, and he was given a small shovel to work with.

Reb Shimon raised his eyes to heaven and said, "I say *birkas hamazon* with *kavanah*, which is *mesugal* to save me from 'wrath and destruction.' You saved me before, please save me again."

A few moments later a jeep drove by, filled with Nazis. They saw Shimon trying to dig a ditch with a small shovel. To tease him, they threw vegetables at him. Reb Shimon thought wryly, "I see that in the merit of *birkas hamazon*, I once again received the blessing of abundance. Now I need the blessings for protection from wrath and destruction as well."

Immediately afterward a jeep with Russian POWs showed up. When they saw all the vegetables scattered around Shimon, they stopped and asked for some. (They were hungry because the Nazis barely fed these prisoners.) With an authoritative voice, Shimon told the Russians, "When there's a pit two meters deep here, I will give you the vegetables."

The Russians had the right tools for digging. They took them out of their jeep and dug the trench. There were several of

them, and they were able to finish the job in a half-hour.

The Nazi returned and saw that the task was completed. He said, "I always knew that your G-d takes care of you. I just didn't realize to what extent." Reb Shimon was saved once again in the merit of *birkas hamazon*.

When Reb Shimon came to Eretz Yisrael after the war, he always had *parnassah*, and he married off all of his children honorably. He attributes it to the merit of *birkas hamazon*.

Counsels to Bench with Kavanah

The Magid of Mezritz zy'a (quoted in Toldos Aharon, Zitomer, Shoftim ד"ה ראשית) said that we should be more cautious with *birkas hamazon* than with *Shemonah Esrei* because *Shemonah Esrei* is d' Rabanan,

while saying *birkas hamazon* is from the Torah.³

Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l said that he doesn't understand why there is a long break in yeshivos from after Shacharis until first seder begins. He said, "All you need is five minutes to eat some bread and fifteen minutes to bench."

1] A counsel to bench with kavanah is to bench out loud.

The Mishnah Berurah (185:3, quoting Eliyahu Rabba) writes, "It is good to bench

in a loud voice because הקול מעורר הכוונה, a loud voice rouses concentration."⁴

2] Another way to have kavanah is to bench while seated and not while walking around or standing. This is written in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 183:9).

After *birkas hamazon*, most people have the custom of saying the הרהרמן. These are wonderful tefillos, and we are fortunate to be able to say them. The Kaf HaChaim writes that just as we don't move from our spot when

3. The Yaavatz (Chasdei Hashem, במאמר אשרי האיש פ"ג, *belashon tzachus*) writes that each mitzvah has its mazal. Everyone is careful with the prohibitions of *chametz* on Pesach and *basar be'chalav*, and the mitzvos of Purim. These mitzvos have a good mazal, and no one even considers transgressing them. But when it comes to *birkas hamazon*, people become lax. They mumble the words, sometimes they don't say the words correctly, and they say it without *kavanah*, although it is a mitzvah from the Torah.

4. Someone came to the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander, zy'a, and complained that his son wasn't *benching*. "

"Don't worry about it," the Rebbe replied. "If you will say *birchas hamazon* out-loud your son will follow suite."

we daven Shemonah Esrei until we reach the words עושה שלום במרומיו, and we take three steps back, so, too, we shouldn't move from our place when we say the Harachamans. We should remain seated until we reach the words עושה שלום במרומיו.

Incidentally, we say the Harachamans because after benching, it is an *eis ratzon* for our tefillos to be answered. The meforshim (Rabbeinu b'Chaya, Yisro 19:3, quoted in Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim 263:1) say that after a woman lights Shabbos lecht, "She should daven to bear children who will shine in Torah because tefillos said when one performs a mitzvah are heard more." The Chofetz Chaim zt'l says that this is why people have the custom to say Harachamans after birkas hamazon. After performing the mitzvah of birkas hamazon, it is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah.

3] Yet, another counsel for kavanah during birkas

hamazon is to read it from a siddur or a bencher and not to say it by heart. This counsel comes from the Bach. The Be'er Heitav, quoting the Bach, writes, "Those who are careful will always say the *birkas hamazon* from a siddur and not by heart."

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zy'a taught that saying *birkas hamazon* with *kavanah* and from a text (like from a siddur or *bencher*) is *mesugal* for having children and grandchildren *yirei shamayim* and *talmidei chachamim*.

From the age of 16, Reb Menachem Zekback zt'l made a *kabbalah* that he wouldn't bench by heart, only from a *bencher*, and if there wasn't a *bencher* around, he wouldn't eat bread. This is how strict he was with his *kaballah*. Sometimes, he was at a *chasunah*, or a family *simchah*, but he wouldn't eat bread if he didn't have a *bencher*.

One day, his extended family went on a trip to *kiorei tzaddikim*. They hardly ate the entire day. When they finally washed for a meal, Reb Menachem was searching for a *bencher*. He wouldn't eat bread without it.

R'l, Reb Menachem Zekbach zt'l was among the 45 *niftarim* of the Meron tragedy. During the *shivah*, the family printed thousands of *benchers*, *l'iluy nishmoso*, and distributed the *benchers* to those who came to be *menachem avel*. They urged their visitors to make the same *kabbalah*, as Reb Menachem Zekbach made, to always bench from a *bencher*.

One of the people who came to be *menachem avel* was a *sofer*, and he made a *kabbalah* to bench only from a *siddur* or *bencher*.

At that time, the *sofer* was looking for a *safrus* job. He had recently completed writing a *sefer Torah* and was looking for another

job. So he called a broker for *Sta"m* and asked if someone ordered a *sefer Torah*.

The broker replied, "You write nicely. It's noticeable from the way you write that you have years of experience. But what can I say? Your writing needs improvement. The letters lack a finishing touch. The letters need to be sharper, more beautiful. That's what goes today."

Generally, this *sofer* eats at home. But since he had just paid a *shivah* visit, he bought a roll in a bakery and brought it to the *sofrim* room, where he works. He was about to eat it when he remembered that he couldn't eat bread if he didn't have a *bencher*. So he looked around the room for a *siddur* or a *bencher*. He found an old handwritten *bencher* written by a *sofer* who had worked there several years before. He blew off the dust and saw that the letters were beautifully written.

As he benched, he paid attention to the beautiful letters, and he realized that this was the "finishing touch" he needed to learn. For the next three hours, he wrote the first page of his next *sefer Torah*, paying careful attention to write each letter beautifully. He copied the style he saw on the handwritten *bencher*.

When he completed the first page, he received a call from a friend, who said, "We are organizing forty-five *sifrei Torah* to be written *l'iluy nishmas* the forty-five people who were *niftar* in Meron. Do you have a sample of your work? Send it to me, and I will forward it to the people in charge of hiring. Perhaps you will be hired for the job."

The *sofer* took a picture of the page he just completed and sent it to his friend. The next day he was hired for the job.

Each *sofer* was assigned a name of one of the *niftarim*

so that he could write the *sefer Torah l'iluy nishmoso*. This *sofer* was instructed to write his *sefer Torah l'iluy nishmas* Reb Menachem Asher HaKohen ben Reb Meir Zekbach!

Rewards for *Kedushah*

It states in this week's parashah (10:12), ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך, "Now, O Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d..."

We discussed above that when performing mitzvos, one only gains. We discussed the blessings that come from reciting birkas hamazon and performing all mitzvos. This is especially true regarding kedushah, for these mitzvos are harder to keep. When one keeps these mitzvos, he receives many brachos from Hashem.

The following story happened in Yerushalayim decades ago.

A young boy was playing with a rope when it mistakenly got caught around his neck. The child lost consciousness and was brought to the hospital in critical condition.

Reb Dovid Frankel (a close student of the Chazon Ish zt'l) who was a friend of the father, called the father and said, "Last night, I had an extraordinary dream. I was in the court in heaven, and they were discussing several people whose lives were at stake. Your son's name was mentioned, and they were judging whether your son will live. Suddenly, a pair of blue scissors appeared and cut the paper with your son's name. The court decided that he will live."

Before the father had time to process the meaning of this extraordinary dream, he received another phone call. This time it was the hospital. The secretary said, "You and your wife must come to the hospital

immediately," but she didn't say why.

They rushed to the hospital, fearing the worst. Instead, they were delighted to find their son awake. "Please give me some water," he requested and fell right back asleep.

As the parents were returning home, the husband told his wife about Reb Dovid's dream and the mysterious blue scissors. She exclaimed, "I know what the blue scissors mean!"

She worked as a seamstress and had gone to a material store to buy material that she needed to mend a dress. She had a hard time cutting a piece from the fabric roll, so she asked the storekeeper to help her.

According to halachah, she was permitted to hand over the scissors to the male storekeeper, but this time, to earn extra merits for her son's refuah

sheleimah, she followed the stricter approach, and she placed the scissors down, and the storekeeper picked up the scissors himself. This is a hidur in tznius.

As she put down the scissors, she whispered a tefillah that in the merit of this act of kedushah, their son should have a refuah sheleimah. "The scissors were blue," the wife explained. "I'm certain those scissors tore up the document at our son's court case!"

The increase in kedushah brought healing to their child.

It states (Mishlei 13:19) תאוה נהיה תערב לנפש, "A temptation broken is sweet to the soul." The truth of this statement is known to those who overcame their unnecessary or forbidden temptations. Initially, it is hard for a person to forgo the temptations to which he has become accustomed. However, when one is

strong and doesn't pursue his desires, life becomes sweet for him because he isn't enslaved to the yetzer hara.

נהיה means to break (see Metzudas Tzion), and it also means "will be." We can also explain תאוה נהיה that when one breaks his temptations, his temptations will be. This means the yetzer hara lures a person with minor, insignificant temptations. If you break those petty taavos, your innermost desires will emerge.

This is as it states (Avos 2:4) בטל רצונך מפני רצונו כדי שיבטל רצון אחרים מפני רצונך. The Ra'v Bartenura explains (according to one commentary) that when you curb your desires to do Hashem's desires, Hashem will fulfill your desires. Your innermost wishes will be fulfilled when you are willing to forgo the forbidden or improper temptations.

Being cautious with one's eyes is mesugal for parnassah. When the Torah prohibits us from seeing forbidden sights, the words are אשר אתם זונים, "which you stray after." The Beis Avraham (Chanukah, Ner 4, ד"ה ולא) says that זונים can also mean מזונות, food. This is because when one isn't cautious with his eyes, he will have less parnassah, and when one is cautious, he will have parnassah in abundance.

Another hint to this concept is (Brachos 20.) זן עיניו, מדבר עבירה, "He satiated his eyes with an aveirah." The word זן, satiated, is used here (and it isn't used in reference to speaking, listening, etc.) because when one is cautious with his eyes, he will have parnassah, and if he is negligent with his eyes, he forfeits his parnassah.

Similarly, it states (Tehillim 145:15) עיני כל אליך ישברו, "The eyes of all look to You with hope, and You give them

their food in its proper time." The word ישברו can be translated as breaking. עיני... ישברו, if you break your eyes (which means you withhold your eyes from seeing forbidden sights) ואתה נותן להם את אכלם, you will have parnassah.

Being cautious with the eyes is also mesugal for a good memory.

Someone asked the Magid of Brisk (Machazeh Einayim, גיא חזיון) for counsel for a good memory. The Magid of Brisk told him, "Why do you ask me for counsel when you say the counsel every day. You say in the Shema, ולא תתורו אחרי, "Do not stray after your heart and your eyes so you will remember." If you are cautious with your eyes and thoughts, you will have a good memory. (He said that this is also known and agreed upon by all doctors.)

The Gemara (Brachos 64.) calls Rav Yosef- Sinai, and Rashi explains that this

was because he was fluent in many braysos.

The Gemara (Eiruvim 67.) also tells us that Rav Sheshes had a very good memory. The Gemara says, "When Rav Sheshes and Rav Chisda would meet, Rav Chisda's lips would tremble from Rav Sheshes's expertise in Mishnayos, and Rav Sheshes's entire body would tremble from Rav Chisda's mastery in pilpul." So, Rav Yosef and Rav Sheshes both had incredible memories, and they were blind! This hints that guarding one's eyes is conducive to good memory.

The Importance of Guarding Your Eyes

The Sefer Chareidim (פס"ו אות קנ"ה) writes, "If a person likes someone and gives him as a gift one thousand slaves, and then he says, 'Give me two slaves back,' if he refuses to return two slaves, is there a more ungrateful person than him in the world?!

Behold, Hashem Yisborach gives each person 248 limbs to use, and He asks for two of them, the heart and the eyes. As it states (Mishlei 23:26) תנה בני לבך ועיניך דרכי תצורנה, 'My child, give your heart to Me, and your eyes will desire My ways,' won't he give them to Me?"

The Yerushalmi (Brachos 1:5) says, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'If you give Me your heart and your eyes, I know that you are Mine.'"

In contrast, Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 22) say, "When the yetzer hara sees someone beautifying his eyes and fixing his hair, he says, 'This man is mine.'"

In the Akdamos we say למחזי באנפא עין כות גירי קשתא, and the Beis Avraham (Shavuos) writes in the name of his father that one should consider למחזי, looking where one shouldn't, as if גירי קשתא, an arrow was shot and the arrow is heading towards him. Just as one would try to escape from the arrow, that is how one

should try to escape from forbidden sights.

A bachur asked the Beis Yisrael for advice on improving in areas of kedushah. The Beis Yisrael zt'l told him to guard his eyes because this would protect him from all aveiros. The Beis Yisrael proves this from the Eglah Arufah. The elders had to establish and declare that they weren't responsible for the murder that occurred, so they say (Devarim 21:7) *ידינו לא שפכו את הדם הזה והוא עינינו לא ראו*, "Our hands didn't shed this blood, and our eyes didn't see." This implies that we didn't sin with our eyes, so we can proclaim *ידינו לא שפכו את הדם הזה*, that we aren't guilty of the murder that occurred. Sinning with the eyes can lead to all aveiros and being cautious with one's eyes is

to be careful with all 248 limbs of the body, which protects from all aveiros.

The Beis Yisrael added (Shemos 21:28) *ובעל השור נקי* and *שו* means looking (see Bamidbar 24:17, *אשורנו ולא קרוב*). *בעל השור* means he rules over his eyes; he doesn't look where he shouldn't. If it is so, *נקי*, he will be deemed innocent in the judgment.

Chazal (Vayikra Rabba 23:13) say, "Whoever sees an ervah [a woman who isn't covered properly] and doesn't permit his eyes to enjoy it, he will merit to receive the face of the Shechinah. This is as it states (Yeshayah 33:15, 17) *ועוצם עיניו מראות ברע... מלך ביפיו תחזינה*, "The one who shuts his eyes from seeing bad... Your eyes will behold the King in His splendor."⁵

5. Careful reading of the Midrash (stated above) implies that the person saw something improper, only he was cautious to immediately turn his eyes away. This is enough to be rewarded immensely. He will merit greeting the face of the Shechinah and *פני השכינה*.

The Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l gave the following counsel to a bachur who wanted to guard his eyes: "Before you leave your home, imagine that you had lost a gold coin somewhere between your home and the place you are going. With that thought in mind, your eyes will be glued to the ground the entire way, and you will guard your eyes properly."

Tefillah

The mitzvah of tefillah is mentioned in this week's parashah. It states (11:13), ולעבדו בכל לבבכם, referring to davening with all one's whole heart (see *Taanis* 2.). This is an important lesson. It isn't enough to daven. One must place all his heart and soul into tefillah.

The Baal HaSulam zt'l explains why this is important: A person can bang on a table for many years, and the table won't break. But if he bangs one time with force, the table will break. This is why we must daven בכל לבבכם with all our hearts. One prayer recited wholeheartedly accomplishes more than many half-hearted tefillos.

Chazal (*Bereishis Rabba* 53:14) say that Hashem listens to an ill person when he davens for himself. The explanation is that the sick person places all of his heart and soul in the prayer, making his tefillah very powerful.⁶

Imagine you were granted the opportunity to stand directly before Hashem's throne, to pray and praise Him. Who

6. Rabbeinu b'Chaya (11:13) writes, וצריך אתה לדעת כי כח התפלה גדול אפילו, לשנות הטבע מן הסכנה ולבטל הנגזר "You need to know that the power of tefillah is very great, even to change nature, to save from danger, or to annul a decree that was already decreed."

wouldn't want to have this privilege?

We all have an even greater privilege than that because we can praise and pray to Hashem from this lowly world – which is very beloved to Hashem.

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Bamidbar* 16:22) lists the levels of pleasure Hashem has from His creations when they sing His praises, from smallest to greatest:

(1)The praises Hashem receives from the *malachim* in heaven.

(2)The next level is the praise of the *neshamos* of *tzaddikim* who sing to Hashem in heaven.

(3)The highest level is the praises of humans who praise and sing to Hashem from this world.

This is the highest level because it is harder than all the others. It means recognizing Hashem from this lowly world and

overcoming many barriers to praise Hashem. It is the highest form of praise and *tefillah*.

It states in this week's parashah (10:14), הן לה אלקים, השמים שמי השמים הארץ וכל אשר בה, "Behold to Hashem, your G-d, there is the heaven and the heavens of heaven, the earth, and everything that's in it."

The Alshich HaKadosh wonders about the order of this *pasuk*: Is it from the highest level to the lowest or from the lowest to the highest? If the *pasuk* is going from lower level to higher level, it should begin with ארץ and then שמי השמים and then שמי. On the other hand, if the *pasuk* is listing from highest to lowest, it should state שמי first, and then שמי and then הארץ.

The Alshich answers that the *pasuk* is listing from the lowest level to the highest. Because the highest level is הארץ, the earth. In Hashem's eyes, the most

beautiful praises are the ones that come from this world.

Moshe Rabbeinu rebukes the nation that because of their sin with the eigel, he had to pray for them for forty days in heaven. And throughout those forty days (9:18), לחם לא אכלתי ומים לא שתיתי על כל חטאתכם " I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sins you had committed."

Why was Moshe upset about that? Didn't Moshe consider it a great privilege and achievement to spend time in heaven with Hashem?

The Tiferes Shlomo (*Rosh Hashanah* ד"ה או יאמר אתם נצבים) answers, "The purpose of Creation is for man to live in this world where the *yetzer hara* provokes and entices him to pursue the temptations of this world, and for the person to overcome the *yetzer hara* do Hashem's will. As it states ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים

כולכם היום. Who is attached to Hashem? חיים כולכם היום, the people who live in this world.

"The *malachim*, in higher worlds, aren't as precious to Hashem as human beings. As it states, ואבית, תהלה מקרוצי חומר 'Hashem desires praise from human beings carved out from earth.' Therefore, we should praise Hashem every moment of our lives because this is Hashem's primary *kavod*.

"Moshe complained that for forty days he was in heaven like a *malach*. He considered those days wasted because in heaven there are no physical temptations or the ability to battle the *yetzer hara*. "

Regarding tefillah, it is difficult to daven properly in this world that is full of distractions. One must struggle to have *kavanah*, which is what makes our tefillos most precious of all.

Two Miracles of Creation

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* (צמח מנהם) said that creation consists of two miracles: (1) One miracle is creation, itself. Wherever we look in the world, there is fascinating wisdom, beauty, plan, and order. One can study the wonders of nature, look out for His Hashgachah pratis, and recognize Hashem's presence.

(2) The second miracle of Creation is that people see these wonders all the time and fail to recognize and appreciate them.

Rebbe Bunim says that the second miracle (that people don't recognize the miracles they see) is a greater miracle than creation itself.

These two miracles of creation are expressed in (Tehillim 92:6-7), "מה גדלו מעשיך ה', מאד עמקו מחשבותיך. איש בער לא ידע, וכסיל לא יבין את זאת", "How great are Your deeds, Hashem; exceedingly profound are Your thoughts. [This is

referring to the wonders of creation. And yet a greater wonder is] איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין את זאת, "A boor cannot know, nor can a fool understand this." The fools see the world with all its wonders yet do not recognize Hashem! That is the greatest wonder.

Think of a bustling construction site — hundreds of workers, large cranes, cement trucks, powerful drills, etc.

A person walks through the site, deep in thought. Fortunately, he doesn't fall into one of the many pits and isn't hurt by the machinery. Someone asked him, "What do you say to all this construction? It is quite amazing, isn't it? All the machinery, the many workers, and all."

He replies, "What construction site? I didn't see any construction."

It is amazing, but believe it or not, there are people like that. Perhaps not to the

extent we described, but some people are deep in their thoughts and do not recognize what is around them.

Yet, it is even more amazing that people living in this world can be blind to Hashem's wonders.

This lesson applies to the wonders of nature, and also to Hashem's *hashgachah*. Hashem's *hashgachah* is present wherever we look. Hashem sends us *parnassah*, arranges *shidduchim*, guards our health, and directs us in all aspects of life, yet we take it for granted. We think we acquired everything by the strength of our hands.

It states in this week's parashah (8:17), ואמרת בלבבך, כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה,

"You will say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my arm made me all this wealth.'" This refers to the problem we are discussing. We must open our eyes to the simple reality that should be obvious to us. We need to acquire awareness that all our successes are from Hashem.⁷

The Yesod HaAvodah (vol.2:8) elaborates, "We are commanded to believe that *parnassah* comes through Hashem's providence. Having this awareness is one of the 613 mitzvos. And when one knows this, Hashem will help him. But if he thinks (8:17) כוחי ועוצם ידי עשו לי החיל הזה, that he earned *parnassah* on his own, he won't merit *siyata dishmaya* and he won't succeed, *chas veshalom*."⁸

7. Tzaddikim said that כוחי ועוצם ידי hints to the problem, because כוחי ועוצם ידי hints to עצמת עינים, closing the eyes. People close their eyes, and don't recognize Hashem's wonders.

8. The Chovas HaLevavos (*Bitachon* 7) writes, "A story is told about a chassid whose neighbor was a quick-scribe (סופר מוהיר), and he

The solution is written in the next pasuk (8:18): וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל, "Remember Hashem, your G-d for He gives you strength to make wealth." The Shlah HaKadosh writes, "This is an important rule: When you enjoy success – whether major or minor – praise Hashem who gave you this ability."

The Or HaChaim (8:18) writes, "The Torah tells us that we must pay attention to Hashem's kindness and to know that they are from Hashem. This will bring us always to recognize Hashem and His hashgachah. The yetzer hara's first ploy is to cause people to forget, and this

destroys them. This can be the translation of the next pasuk, והיה אם שכח תשכח, 'If you will forget that Hashem does kindness to you, תשכח, ה' אלקיך, you will forget Hashem...'

Reb Shmuel Tchuliner *zt'l* (a student of Reb Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l*) once experienced a certain *chesed* from Hashem, and he didn't stop speaking about it. He asked whoever came to his home, "Did you hear what happened to me?" and told them about the miracle and kindness Hashem did to him. His family asked him why he kept on repeating the same story. Reb Shmuel replied, "The Or HaChaim says 'The *yetzer hara*'s first

earned his livelihood through writing. Once, the chassid asked him how things were coming along. The scribe replied, 'As long as my hand is healthy, everything is well.' That night, his hand was injured, and he couldn't write with that hand for the rest of his life. This was his punishment for trusting in his hand instead of Hashem Yisbarach."

When people are worried, it is called לחץ, stress. The letter ה"א represents Hashem's name. When you remember Hashem, you place a ה"א into לחץ and the word הצלח"ה becomes הצלח"ה, success.

ploy is to cause a person to forget Hashem's kindness,' therefore I'm repeating it many times so that I won't forget."

Simchah

We've seen that we must remember that all the good comes from Hashem, and we should praise Hashem for everything we have.

The big question is, how does one remember this.

The answer is through *simchah*.

It states (8:19), והיה אם שכח, תשכח את ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ, the Rizhiner Rebbe *zt'l* explains that והיה is an expression of *simchah*, happiness (see *Bereishis Rabba* 42:3). The *pasuk* is saying, והיה אם שכח, if you forget to be happy, תשכח את ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ, you will forget Hashem, your G-d.

The Rizhiner Rebbe also taught a second approach: שכח and תשכח are similar to the word שכּיח, which means common, frequent. אם

שכח, if *simchah* will frequently be with you, תשכח את ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ, Hashem will be with you frequently.

As the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* (*Zichron Zos*, ד"ה עוד והיה) writes, "If you want the *Shechinah* to reside with you, make it your business always to be happy."

Avos d'Reb Nosson (34:49) states, "There are ten expressions of joy: ששון, שמחה, גילה, ריעה, דיצה, צהלה, עליזה, חדרה, תפארת, עליזה. Each expression represents another type of joy. Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* wonders why we have so many expressions for *simchah*. No other language has so many words that describe joy.

But then again, *l'havdil*, people say that Eskimos have many words for snow, different words for different types of snow. While in *lashon hakadesh*, there are only three words for snow: שלג כפור קרח.

This is because when something is a significant part of your life, you describe it in many ways. Reb Shimshon Pinkus explains that there are ten expressions for joy because joy plays a major role in our lives.⁹

The *Zohar* (vol.3, 219:) says that when a Yid makes a *simchah* (such as a *chasunah*), Hashem sends to the

simchah his parents who are in heaven. The parents and grandparents come to join in the *simchah* of their offspring. The Imrei Emes adds that this also occurs every time one serves Hashem with *simchah*. Hashem sends down the ancestors to celebrate and rejoice together with him.¹⁰

It states (9:15) ואפן וארר מן הרהר, "I turned and descended

9. Someone complained to the Lev Simchah of Gur *zt'l* that he wasn't succeeding to earn *parnassah* to support his family. The Lev Simchah replied, "How do you know that it is the father's/ husband's obligation to bring home *parnassah*? Perhaps your obligation is to bring home joy. Generally, by bringing *parnassah*, you bring joy and stability to the home. But when you can't, continue bringing joy and *bitachon* into your home."

The Lev Simchah, himself, had a very difficult life, but was always happy.

10. The Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah (Shaar HaKollel 15) writes, "A child honors his parents (after their demise) because they come from Gan Eden to see his face on the day of his joy. For example, on Shabbos, *yom tov*, or when he makes a *seudah* for his son's *bris milah*, bar mitzvah, *chasunah*, or any other celebration for a mitzvah. The parents come down from Gan Eden to see the *simchah* and to rejoice with him. The condition is that he must have Hakadosh Baruch Hu join the *simchah*. He accomplishes that by inviting *talmidei chachamim* and poor to his meal. And then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will take his parents out from Gan Eden, as they are partners with Hakadosh Baruch Hu in creating man."

from the mountain." [Moshe descended Har Sinai when the Yidden made the egel.] Rebbe Reb Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* said ואפן can be translated that he changed his face (because פן comes from the word פנים, face).

The explanation is as follows:

When Moshe heard about the grave *aveirah* of the egel, his first reaction was to be sad that such a grave sin occurred. But immediately, ואפן, "I changed my face." He wouldn't allow himself to be sad because *atzvut* is אבי אבות הטומאה, the greatest form of *tumah*. He could have a *לב נשבר*, broken heart, he can feel deep remorse, but he won't be sad.

This isn't the only time the Torah writes ואפן וארד מן ההר. The same words are written when Moshe came down from the mountain with the second *luchos*. The Imrei Emes *zt'l* asks that following Rebbe

Bunim of Peshischa's explanation, we need to explain once again that Moshe changed his face. He was sad for a moment, and he became happy. But why should Moshe be sad at this very joyous time when he is coming down with the second *luchos*?

The Imrei Emes replies that Moshe compared the second *luchos*, which he wrote, to the first *luchos* that were מכתב אלקים, written by Hashem. For a moment, Moshe thought, "We lost so much because of sin." But immediately, ויפן, Moshe changed his face from sadness and girded himself with joy.

After the *eigel*, Moshe davened on Har Sinai for forty days that Hashem forgave Bnei Yisrael. Moshe explained to the nation (9:19), כי יגורתי מפני האף והחמה, "I was terrified from [Hashem's] wrath."

One of the translations of האף is "the nose." Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* says

that Moshe feared מפני האף, that perhaps they would turn their noses down and be sad because of their *aveirah*.

Moshe wasn't afraid of their *aveirah* because they could always do *teshuvah*. He was afraid of their despair. Because if they despair and feel that it is

too late to do *teshuvah*, there is no hope for them.

Rebbe Boruch of Mezhibuz זת"ל explained the *pasuk* (10:12), ועתה ישראל מזה, ה' אלקיך שאול מעמך, that this is what Hashem asks from a Yid: ועתה ישראל, from now on be a Yisrael. The past is gone. What was, was. But from now on, be a proper Jew.