

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Bereishis

קריאת אגני ביטח



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Torah Wellsprings - Bereishis

Hashem Leads the World

Tzaddikim explain, בראשית, the first thing that one must know is ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ, that Hashem created the world, and He leads it with hashgachah pratis. In particular, we must remember this at this difficult time, when there is a war in Eretz Yisrael, and the tragedies are too numerous to count and too painful to tell, and there is fear and uncertainty everywhere. We must remember that Hashem is leading the world. We mustn't think that the war began because of a government error or due to soldiers' carelessness, or to think that it happened by nature due to the Arab's nature to be bloodthirsty. בראשית, our emunah, which we must always remember, is that everything is happening with hashgachah pratis for reasons that Hashem, alone, knows, and that is our comfort.¹

We must remember that (Tehillim 148:8) רוח עז, when there are stormy winds outdoors, they are עושה דברו, doing Hashem's will. Everything is with Hashem's hashgachah pratis, and nothing is by chance.

A group of bachurim went with a jeep to Har HaZeisim to daven. The jeep had two sections. The back was where the passengers sat, and the driver sat in a box (called a crew cab), by himself. As the bachurim sat in the jeep, it suddenly began to roll downhill. The bachurim began to panic. One of the bachurim looked towards the driver's place, and saw that the driver was there. Everyone called down. The bachurim were calm because they knew that the driver was leading them.

Let this be our reminder that Hashem is leading us, and therefore, there is nothing to fear.

The Gemara (Succah 53.) tells that Shlomo HaMelech saw the malach hamavas, the angel of death, and Shlomo asked him why he appeared sad. The malach hamaves replied that he has to take the souls of two of King Shlomo's scribes, Elicharaf and Achiya, and he is having a hard time taking their lives.

Shlomo called sheidim (demons) and told them to carry Elicharaf and Achiya to the city Luz. He did this to protect them from the malach hamaves because the malach hamaves didn't have any power in Luz, because it was a city where no one ever told a lie. However, when the sheidim were with Elicharaf and Achiya at the front gates of Luz, the malach hamaves succeeded to take their lives.

The next day, the malach hamaves was happy. Shlomo asked him why he was so happy. He replied, "It was decreed that I should take their lives at the gates of Luz, and that is exactly where you sent them."

Shlomo exclaimed, רגליו דבר איניש אינן ערבין, "People's feet are their arev (guarantors). To the place that one has to go, his feet will bring him there." It was destined that they go to the gates of Luz, and their feet brought them exactly where they had to be.

Two questions:

(1) It wasn't their feet that brought them to the gates of Luz. The sheidim (demons) brought them there.

1. בראשית means the world was created for Bnei Yisrael (see Rashi 1:1). The Yesod HaAvodah (Torat Avos) explains that the world was created for Bnei Yisrael who are repeatedly saying with their mouths and in their thoughts, ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ, that Hashem created the world.

(2) Why did the malach hamaves return to Shlomo HaMelech? The first time he came was because he was seeking counsel and ways how he can bring Elicharaf and Achiya to the gates of Luz so he could take their lives, but what was the purpose to come again to Shlomo HaMelech?

We can explain that the malach hamaves was teasing Shlomo HaMelech, and trying to cause Shlomo HaMelech to feel broken and responsible for the deaths of his two scribes. Shlomo had sent them to the exact place where the malach hamaves could take their lives, and the malach hamaves wanted that Shlomo should feel responsible for their deaths. Shlomo replied, "Their deaths isn't my fault. If I wouldn't have sent them to Luz, their feet would have brought them there, because one's feet are his guarantors to bring him where he has to go. So, you won't succeed to give me a guilty conscious. I am not responsible for their deaths. Everything occurs with hashgachah pratis."

People asked Reb Mendel Putterfas zt'l how he managed to maintain his emunah even as a prisoner in Siberia. He told that he learned emunah from a non-Jewish tightrope walker and from his daughter. He explained that on a day that there was less security in the camp, a non-Jewish tightrope walker made a show for the inmates, and he showed them that he is able to walk tightrope.

The tightrope artist asked the audience, "Do you believe that I can go over the rope while pushing a wagon?"

The audience said that they are certain that he can. "We don't know how you walked on the rope. But if you can walk on the rope, you can do so while pushing a wagon, too."

"Does anyone volunteer to sit in the wagon barrel as I push it and walk on the rope?"

No one volunteered. But then a young girl came, she sat down in the wagon, and the tightrope artist pushed the wagon with the girl in it over the rope. Everyone gasped from fear, and were relieved when they finally came down, safe and sound.

People asked the girl why she wasn't afraid. She replied, "The tightrope artist is my father. When my father is leading me, I am not afraid." This is our encouragement. Hashem is leading us, and therefore we are not afraid.

Hashem is with Us

The Or HaChaim (Shemos 22:6) writes, שאין לך שעה ורגע שאין ה' עושה פעולה עם האדם בין בבחינת גופו בין בבחינת צרכיו, "There isn't an hour or a minute that Hashem isn't doing something for man: either for his body or for his needs." Hashem is with us, always, and therefore, we need not be afraid.²

2. When you look in the peephole on a door, and you see that it is dark, you know that someone is standing there on the other side of the door. This alludes to when times are difficult and dark, be aware that Hashem is there.

A story is told of a person who was walking through a forest, frightened from the wild animals, and he sees two sets of footprints beneath him. One is his own, but whose footprints are the second pair?

A bas kol says, "The second set of footprints is from Hashem. Hashem is walking with you through the forest."

He was relieved, Hashem was with him. There was nothing to fear.

But then, he met up with a lion, and now he doesn't see Hashem's footprints. He shouted, "Hashem! Why did you leave me when I need You most?"

The Bas Kol replied, "You only see one pair of footprints because Hashem is carrying you on your shoulders!" Because Hashem is closest, when we are going through challenges.

The Concealed Good

The Tzemech Tzaddik zt'l (Noach) explains that concealed within every tzarah and problem is Hashem's kindness. Therefore, he advises that, "When there are dinim on a person, he should say כל מה דעבד רחמנא לטב עבד, 'Everything Hashem does, it is for the good.' The dinim are a levush, a clothing, and within this clothing is Hashem's compassion, to bring goodness to the person." So, everything is for the good, and when we proclaim that it is so, we find the good that's there.

He writes that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 116:13) כוס ישועות אשא ובשם ה' אקרא, "I shall lift up a cup of salvations." כוס is gematriya (68) אלקים, which represents din. One must know that within the din is ישועות אשא, Hashem's salvation. When we know that, it will be אקרא הוי"ה אקרא, the revelation of Hashem's kindness.

He writes, "Noach walked with Elokim." The Tzemech Tzaddik explains that Noach lived with the belief that even when it is אלקים, midas hadin, it is Hashem's kindness. And this is the reason his name was נח, because life was always calm and good for him. He was able to find and reveal the good that is within the tzarah.

When Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l was a child learning in cheder, his melamed once thought he was daydreaming, so he hit

him. The melamed said, "If you will look inside [the sefer] you won't get hit."

Years later, Rebbe Henoch repeated this incident and said, "Regarding all troubles of life, if one looks 'inside' and thinks more deeply about what's happening, he won't feel the distress and pain, for he will understand that everything is for his good."

Rabbeinu Tam says that it is daytime until about seventy-two minutes after shekiah. Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l once asked the Brisker Rav zt'l, "How can we accept Rabbeinu Tam's view? Anyone who looks up at the sky sees clearly that it is nighttime well before."

The Brisker Rav replied, "To determine when it's nighttime one doesn't look at the heaven; one looks in the Shulchan Aruch!"

On a similar note, when one is going through hard times, one should see what the Shulchan Aruch says about it. His own assessment of the situation, whether it's good or bad, is irrelevant. And Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 230:5) tells us, לעולם יהא אדם, רגיל לומר כל מה דעבד רחמנא לטב עבד, "One should become accustomed to say, 'Everything that Hashem does is for the good.'" That is the thought that we must review, and then we will merit to find the good that is concealed within.³

During World War Two, it was forbidden to turn the lights on at nighttime in London,

3. Reb Nissan Stitzberg's z'l son-in-law was niftar without children, and his daughter needed chalitzah, before remarrying. The problem was that her brother-in-law who was in line to do chalitzah was only five years old. She would have to remain an agunah for eight years, until her brother-in-law becomes bar mitzvah and is able to do chalitzah.

Reb Nissan went to his rebbe, the Yesod HaAvodah zt'l, seeking to understand why this tragedy happened to them. In particular, he expressed his distress that his daughter couldn't remarry for eight years.

The Yesod HaAvodah explained to him that it was destined in heaven that his daughter should remarry and build a bayis ne'aman b'Yisrael solely in eight years from now. "So, it is for your benefit that she must wait for her brother-in-law to grow up. For the next eight years, she will know that she has nothing to do, other than to wait. That will be easier for her to bear the pain, heartache, and humiliation of calling shadchanim, being turned down several times, until eight years pass and she finally finds her bashert."

In this manner, he explained to him that everything is for the good.

so enemy planes won't recognize where there are cities and civilians. People who needed light at night would cover their windows with heavy, black material. When the light was very bright and the lightbulb was close to the window, they would place a thicker material to block the light.

Once, Reb Sholom of Shatz zt'l was walking with his son-in-law, the Vidislover rav zt'l, and they passed a house that had a very heavy material over the window. Reb Sholom told his son-in-law that this means there is a very strong light in this home, and the light is near the window. Reb Sholom of Shatz explained to him that the same occurs in life. When there are dark hardships and struggles, this means that there's a very bright light there that will soon be revealed. It seems dark now, but that is concealing the bright light that will soon emerge.⁴

Don't Ask Questions on Hashem

The Midrash (Eichah Rabba 4:10) says that a merchant in Rome was selling a diamond.

But the consumer wanted to test it, to be certain that it was a real diamond. So he put the diamond on a ledge and beat the diamond with a hammer. The ledge and the hammer broke and the diamond remained intact. That proved that it was real.

Tzaddikim explain that the same applies to emunah. How does one know that his emunah is real? When he endures beatings, and he still believes strongly and firmly in Hashem, this proves that his emunah is genuine and precious.

A Holocaust survivor was speaking against Hashem in front of the Chazon Ish. This survivor couldn't make peace with the tragedies he witnessed. The Chazon Ish showed him a Tosfes and asked him to explain it. The man didn't understand the Tosfes.

The Chazon Ish told him, "If you don't understand a few line of Tosfos, how do you expect to understand Hashem's ways?"

4. An antisemite entered a restaurant. He was happy to see that everyone present was gentile, like himself. But then he saw a Yid in the restaurant, and his blood boiled with anger. He decided to do something to make the Yid angry.

When the waiter approached this rasha and asked him what he want to order, he replied loudly, "I order a full course meal for everyone in the restaurant, and it is all for free. Here is the money, I am paying for it. Everyone can have whatever they want... everyone except for that Jew sitting over there. Don't give him anything."

The crowd in the restaurant applauded and cheered, and they enjoyed an expensive meal. Then, they all went over to the wealthy rasha to thank him, and the Yid thanked him as well!

"Something is wrong," the cruel man thought to himself. "The Jew should be devastated and embarrassed. Why is he thanking me?"

The antisemite took out his checkbook and told the waiter that now he offers free drinks for everyone in the restaurant, and then he added in a loud voice, "That is for everyone, except for the Jew."

The applaude were louder this time, and after everyone drank as much as they wanted, they came over to this rasha to thank him. The Yid also thanked him.

The rasha couldn't contain himself any longer, and he asked the Yid, "Why are you thanking me? I didn't give you anything."

"Oh, yes you did," the Yid replied. "I am the owner of this restaurant."

This story is a reminder that when things appear to be bad, it is never so. Everything is for our benefit. May we merit to see that it is so.

We say in *Tehillim*, מַה גְּדוֹלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂי ה' כֹּלֵם בַּחֲכָמָה, "How great are your ways, Hashem.. A fool doesn't understand them..."

The pasuk says that the fools don't understand Hashem's ways. But, behold, also the wise and intelligent aren't able to comprehend Hashem's ways!

We can answer that the pasuk should be read like this: מַה גְּדוֹלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂי ה', "How great our Your ways, Hashem... איש בער לא ידע את זאת, the fool, however, doesn't know that Hashem's ways are deep. He thinks everything should be logical. And when it isn't, he asks questions on Hashem.

The wise know their limitations of their weak minds, and they understand that they won't be able to understand all of Hashem's ways.

Reading things Correctly

Chazal (*Yoma* 69b) says, "Hashem's seal is *emes*, truth." When you look at a seal, the letters appear backwards. But when the seal is pressed on paper, everything is in the correct order. This is how it often is with "truth." At first glimpse, it might not seem true and fair. But everything is exactly how it is supposed to be. There will come a day when this will be revealed.

The Ramban had a student – a great scholar with a lot of potential – who was niftar young. When the *chevra kadisha* was preparing the niftar for burial, the Ramban came into the room, wrote up a letter, signed it, and put it in the niftar's hand. He said to the niftar, "In heaven, there is a chamber called Kisa'os l'Mishpat (Chairs of Judgment). Hashem resides there. Go to that chamber and ask why you had to die young, and then come back and tell me the answer you receive."

Indeed, the niftar came to the Ramban. He appeared as if he was alive, and he spoke to the Ramban through a window. He said, "With your letter in my hand, signed with

your holy signature, all doors were opened for me. I rose very high up in heaven, and I smelled the wonderful scent of Gan Eden. I arrived at Kisa'os l'Mishpat, but I couldn't ask any questions, because here in heaven, everything is clear and obvious, and I have no questions at all."

Consider the following story, told by the renowned magid, Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l:

When he was a child, women would come to their home on Thursday night, and his mother would read the newspaper to them, because these women didn't know how to read on their own.

Once, the women gathered in their home, as Rebbetzin Galinsky was still in the kitchen, finishing off some cooking for Shabbos. As the women waited for Rebbetzin Galinsky, the women glimpsed through the pictures in the newspaper. One of the women shouted, "Rebbetzin! How can you cook now? A large ship sunk in the sea! How can you ignore this tragedy and cook?"

Rebbetzin Galinsky rushed into the dining room. She looked at the picture and laughed heartedly. She explained, "You don't know how to read Russian, so you didn't realize that you held the paper upside down. The ship didn't sink. This is an article about a new ship that is being built..."

So, when one can't read, he thinks the ship turned over, and when one can read, he sees that a new ship is being built. The same is in life. When we don't know how to read and to interpret what is happening to us, we think things are bad, when actually, everything is for the good.

So, we must know that we aren't able to understand everything. There are times that things appear wrong, unfair, stressful, humiliating, etc. and there are times that are simply frightening. But we are seeing only part of the picture. If we had a better view, we would see how everything is for our benefit, and often, and hopefully, we will see that it is so.

Shabbos Bereishis

Reb Yisroel of Ruzhin taught that everything in the Torah is contained in *Chumash Bereishis*. Everything in *Chumash Bereishis* can be found in *parashas Bereishis*. Everything in *parashas Bereishis* is contained in the first *pasuk*. And everything that's in this first *pasuk* is condensed in the first letter, the letter ב of Bereishis. And everything that is in the ב is found in a drop of ink at the edge of the ב. And that drop of ink represents the entire Torah that is so high and concealed.

The Tzemach Tzedek zt'l taught that Hashem is very happy on Shabbos Bereishis. Hashem's joy can be compared to that of a father who is happy when he brings his son to cheder for the first time to learn Torah.

The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitch zt'l said, ווי מ'שטעלט זיך אוועק שבת בראשית אזוי גייט די גאנצע יאר, "How we act on Shabbos Bereishis, that is how it will be the entire year."

Reb Dovid'l Tolner zt'l said about Shabbos Bereishis, שהיא הכנה לכל שבתות השנה, "it is a preparation for all Shabbosim of the year."

Reb Moshe Gross z'l from Switzerland, wanted to be in Tel Aviv with the Belzer Rav (Reb Aharon of Belz zt'l) for Simchas Torah, but the trip took longer than expected, and he only arrived at the shores of Haifa on Hoshana Rabba afternoon. He spent Simchas Torah in Haifa and got to the Belzer Rav in time for Shabbos Bereishis.

It's a Belzer custom to sing the *piyut* אמונים three times on Shabbos Bereishis. (The *piyut* is printed in *machzorim* before the *Shemoneh Esrei* of Shacharis of Shemini Atzeres.) While the chassidim sang this song, Reb Moshe was absorbed in his disappointing thoughts of not having arrived earlier.

When they finished singing, the Rebbe whispered into his ears, "Shabbos Bereishis is also associated with the *heilige teig*." Shabbos Bereishis is also part of the holy yomim tovim. And that is part of the specialness of this holy Shabbos. The white *paroches* still hangs over the aron *hakodesh*,

and many have the custom of eating round chalos dipped in honey. Shabbos Bereishis can be considered the transitional phase, closing the yomim tovim and carrying the inspiration into the rest of the year.

Keeping the Inspiration Alive

Someone asked a Karliner chassid who merited being with his Rebbe for yom tov, "How did the yom tov pass?"

The chassid replied, "The yom tov didn't pass. It went inside me, and it became a part of me." We must bring the inspiration that we had into the rest of the year.

In the yom tov *tefillos* we say, והנחילנו ה' אלקינו, "You gave us as an inheritance Your holy holidays..." An inheritance is something one takes with him. Now that the holidays are over, we are left with the inheritance to take along with us for the rest of the year.

This is alluded to in the *zemiros* that we say on Friday night, יהא רעוא קמיה דתשרי על עמיה. Hinted in these words is a *tefillah* דתשרי, על עמיה, that Tishrei, and the mitzvos we performed in it, should remain with the Jewish nation the entire year.

Chazal say that after the seven days of Succos, Hashem asks the Jewish nation to celebrate one more day (Shemini Atzeres) because קשה עלי פרידתכם, "It is hard for Me when you leave."

One translation of פרידה is a mule, which is an animal that doesn't bear children. We can explain that Hashem says, קשה עלי פרידתכם, it is distressful for me when you don't take the yom tov with you to act upon the inspiration you received, and you act like a mule that doesn't bear fruit.

There was a town fool whom everyone called "Mottel Naar" (Mottel the Fool). People saw Mottel crying on his wedding day and asked him about that. He said, "Now, people call me 'Mottel Chasan,' but when the week of *sheva brachos* ends, people will call me

"Mottel the Fool" once again. That's why I'm crying."

Rebbe Hershel Ziditchover *zt'l* said over this *mashal* and expressed that this is what happens to people after yom tov passes. They felt connected to Hashem during the days of Tishrei, and they used their time wisely. But as soon as the yomim tovim pass, they return to their foolish selves again. We must find a way to keep the inspiration alive so that it will remain with us all year.

Perhaps the following *mashal* will help us:

A Yid from Lelov was traveling to Lublin. He wanted to be with the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*. He didn't know the way, but he was told that there would be a sign at the fork in the road pointing to the path that leads to Lublin.

The problem was that there was a snowstorm, and the pole with the signs had fallen to the ground.

When the man arrived at the fork, there were three roads to choose from, and he didn't know which one to take. He found the pole buried in the snow. One arrow read "Lublin," another hand read "Lelov," and so on, but he didn't know how to erect the pole to figure out which direction to take.

Suddenly, he came up with a clever idea. He had come from Lelov, so he knew which road led to Lelov. So he set the arrow which read "Lelov" in the direction he came from, and then he was able to see which hand pointed to Lublin.

I heard this story at a *sheva brachos*. The speaker told the *chasan*, "You are beginning a new life, chartering new waters, and you are afraid because you don't know the path. But you do know where you came from. Remember the house you were brought up in, the *chinuch* you received, and that will help you find your path in your new life.

We can use this same *mashal* for this time of year after the yomim tovim have passed. Perhaps your inspiration has dwindled. It isn't the same as it was on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succos, and Simchas Torah. But you know where you came from. You know the thoughts and ideas you had then. Let those be your guide for the upcoming year. Follow your inspiration to know what you should do in the future.⁵

Reb Eizek Yekel's of Krakow (*niftar* 370 years ago, ת"ק) dreamed that there was an immense treasure under the bridge in Prague. He went to the bridge and dug there to find it. A police officer spotted him and asked him what he was doing, digging

5. The purpose of yom tov isn't only for the yom tov itself. The goal is that it should be good afterwards, too.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* compared it to a *chasan* who went home after his *chasunah* without the *kallah*! People asked the *chasan* why he didn't take the *kallah* home. He replied, "The main thing is that it was a nice *chasunah*."

How foolish! The *chasunah* is the introduction to married life, not an end to itself.

Similarly, the yomim tovim are meant to bring us to higher places, to an improved *avodas Hashem*. When the yomim tovim pass, we aren't finished with our service – we need to go further.

A driver stopped at a gas station along the highway to fill up on gas. After his tank was filled, he parked on the side of the gas station and said, "I like it here. It's a good place. There is a good view and plenty of shade. Interesting people come and go... Why leave?"

Someone explained to him, "The purpose of a gas station is to get further, not to stay at that spot."

We just had a Tishrei, we did great mitzvos, and we climbed to greater heights. The purpose isn't to remain there forever. It's time to move on and draw on the inspiration we acquired for the rest of the year.

under the bridge. Reb Eizik told him the truth. "I dreamed of a great treasure buried under this bridge, and I am looking for it."

The amused officer replied, "You take dreams literally? I also had a dream. I dreamed of a great treasure under the oven of some Yid called Reb Eizik Yekel's of Krakow. Do you think I rushed off to Krakow to search for a Jew called Reb Eizik Yekel's so I could search under his oven? I'm not foolish enough to do such a thing. It was just a dream, and dreams don't mean anything."

Reb Eizik Yekel's immediately returned home. He dug under his oven and found a great treasure. With a portion of the money, he built a beautiful shul in Krakow called "Eizik Shul."

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz *zt'l* (*Likutei Imrei Chaim, Motzei Yom Kippur*) once told this story on motzei Yom Kippur. He explained that people think Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the treasure, but when these days arrive, they discover that they have the treasure within *themselves*. They have so

much potential. There is so much that they can do. They take the inspiration for the entire year.

איכה - "Where are you?"

After Adam HaRishon ate from the Tree of Knowledge, Hashem asked him (3:9), *איכה*, "Where are you?" Hashem said, "Before you sinned, you were higher than the *malachim*. What happened to you? How did you fall so low?"

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* writes that on Shabbos Bereishis, everyone should ask himself (3:9), *איכה*, "Where are you?" There was a Rosh Hashanah, the holy Yom Kippur, Succos, Hoshana Rabba, very high, exalted times. You did *teshuvah*. You made *kabbalos* to become better. But where are you now? How did you fall so suddenly?"⁶

A chassid stood in the marketplace in Warsaw and watched the masses rushing around to earn some money. The chassid raised his eyes to Heaven and asked, "Ribono Shel Olam, where are you, and where am I?"

6. A landlord in Golders Green, London, was always careful to lease his apartments to people he trusted would pay rent. If an applicant appeared untrustworthy, he would find an excuse not to rent it to him.

But there was a time, ten to twenty years ago, when there were many vacancies in the Golders Green area, and he realized that he couldn't be too picky. If he found a potential tenant, he accepted him, even if he suspected he might not pay.

At least with one of his tenants, his fears materialized, and the tenant refused to pay rent.

The landlord summoned him to court, but he feared he would lose the case because the courts in England favor the tenants over the landlord. The judge asked the tenant why he hadn't paid the rent. He replied, "He leased me a deficient apartment. The heating and air conditioning don't work, and the plumbing and electricity are also faulty. I asked the landlord numerous times to fix these problems, but my requests fell on deaf ears. I had to pay tradesmen to come fix my apartment. So, why should I pay the rent, too?"

The landlord feared he would lose the case because he had no proof with which to disprove the tenant's claims.

However, the judge asked the tenant, "Did you pay at least one month's rent? If you didn't even pay the first month, that proves you never intended to pay." He hadn't paid even the first month, so the judge ordered him to pay up entirely.

Reb Elchanan Halprin *zt'l* of Radumishla told this story and said it is a lesson in *kabbalos tovos*. Sometimes people have excuses why they didn't keep their *kabbalos*. But the Heavenly court will ask, "Did you keep your *kabbalah* at least once? Did you begin the year adhering to the *kabbalos* you took on? If you didn't even start with your *kabbalos*, that shows you weren't serious and never truly intended to keep them.

The Divrei Shmuel of Slonim zt'l said that this is how people feel when the yomim tovim pass. They had such pivotal, high moments, learning Torah, davening, sitting in the *succah*, taking the four *minim*, etc., and suddenly they are back in the workplace, and they ask themselves, איכה, "Where am I? What happened to my connection to Hashem? How did I fall so drastically?"

It states (*Yeshayah* 1:6), מכף רגל עד ראש אין בי, "From the sole until the head, I have no perfection." The Noda b'Yehudah explains that כף רגל alludes to Simchas Torah (which Chazal call רגל בפני עצמו) and ראש is ראש השנה. The *pasuk* is saying, מכף רגל עד ראש from Simchas Torah until next year's Rosh Hashanah אין בי, I have no perfection. All the inspiration and good *kabbalos* I had during the yomim tovim were forgotten; I no longer have perfection.

The Midrash (*Koheles* 9) writes, "When Yidden leave the beis medresh a *bas kol* goes forth and says, 'Eat your bread with joy because Hashem has accepted your deeds.'" Reb Leibele Eiger zt'l (*Toras Emes, Simchas Torah*, תרמ"ב) writes, "We can explain that this Midrash refers to Simchas Torah, the day we complete the tefillos of the yomim tovim. A *bas kol* assures the Jewish nation that their tefillos were accepted."

But then the question is, if our tefillos were answered, why didn't Moshiach come? We davened for Moshiach, especially on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos. Our tefillos were answered, so why don't we see the results?

Also, each person davened for their own personal salvation, be it parnassah, shidduchim, health, etc. Our tefillos were answered, so why don't we see the results? Why do people remain stuck with the same problems year after year?

The Yismach Moshe zt'l (*Re'eh*) raises this same question from another *pasuk*. After the yomim tovim, Hashem says to the nation (*Yirmiyahu* 31:15), מנעי קולך מבכי ועיניך מדמעה כי יש שחר, "Refrain your voice from weeping

and your eyes from tearing, for there is a reward for your work." Hashem tells us that our *avodah* and tefillos on yom tov were accepted; therefore, we can stop davening.

The question is if our tefillos were answered, why didn't the *Moshiach* come? Why don't we see the salvation we prayed for?

The Yismach Moshe says that the answer lies in the *pasuk* that follows (*Yirmiyahu* 31:16), ושובו בנים לגבולם, which means that people return to their old ways. Immediately after the yomim tovim, people revert to their old ways, and thereby they forfeit the salvation that was coming to them.

But if we take the yomim tovim with us throughout the year, we will merit the salvation and the coming of Moshiach that we prayed for.

Start Again

It seems that Bereishis should be read at the beginning of the year, but we don't do so. We first read Bereishis after Simchas Torah. The Shinover Rav zt'l and Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l say that this is to encourage the people who made *kabbalos* to become better but fell from their resolves. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, etc. are times that people do teshuvah and they want to improve their ways. When Shabbos Bereishis comes along, they may regretfully find themselves returning to their old patterns again. Therefore, at this time of year, we read parashas Bereishis. Bereishis means "in the beginning," telling people they can begin now.

It states ב' -ראשית, which alludes to two beginnings. Start again, and if you fall from it, start another time, until you succeed with your teshuvah. (It is also possible that you fell from your *kabbalah* because you had taken on too much. If that is the case, Shabbos Bereishis is an excellent time to assess the situation more correctly and to take on a *kabbalah* that is more sustainable.)

The first letter of the Torah is a ב"ת, which is a letter that is closed from all three sides and opened in the front. This tells us that our focus should be on the future that is in front of us. We block out the disappointment of the past (that we failed to keep our resolves) and we focus on improving the future.

The Arugas HaBosem teaches that after the yomim tovim, people ask themselves, "How did I let these holy days pass without taking proper advantage of them?" When they have this feeling, all the yomim tovim return to them. It can be in the middle of the year, but for him, it is Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succos, and/or Shemini Atzeres, because when one yearns for the holidays, the yomim tovim come to him.

The Arugas HaBosem proves this from Yaakov Avinu who was upset that he had passed Har HaMoriah, "the location where my forefathers davened," and he had forgotten to daven there. He decided to go back, and "immediately, the place came to him" (see Sanhedrin 95, and Rashi, Bereishis 28:17). The Arugas HaBosem zt'l writes that this is how it is when it comes to *ruchniyus*. When you yearn for it, it comes to you. So, when one longs for the yomim tovim, including when one yearns regretfully that he didn't utilize the yomim tovim well enough, they return to him. It is in the middle of the year, but for him, it is Rosh Hashanah, or Yom Kippur, or it's Succos. He yearned for the yomim tovim, so they come to him.

The Arugas HaBosem explains:

We attain *yiras Shamayim* from Rosh Hashanah, thoughts of teshuvah from Yom Kippur, buckets of joy and love to Hashem from Succos. Hashem knows that in the later generations, we will not make use of the yomim tovim as we should, and we will ask ourselves, "How did I allow these special days to pass without fear, *teshuvah*, and joy? I hardly accomplished what I wanted to. I wish these days were here again." When you have those thoughts, the holy days come back to you. With your yearning, you have tapped into the times of fear, teshuvah, and

joy, and you can attain the levels you yearned for and the yeshuos you sought.

What is Important in Life?

A resort was constructed specifically for religious Yidden. The vast grounds were covered in deep green pastures, dotted with picnic tables, and there were parks for recreation. Additionally, there was a large beis medresh on the premises. A visitor to this resort would quickly realize that it could either be a yeshiva or a hotel. The difference between the two possibilities is significant. If it is a yeshiva, the primary room is the beis medresh, and everything else is to enable the bachurim to have peace of mind and good health, so they can grow in Torah study. However, if it is a vacation resort, the primary purpose is recreation, and the beis medresh is secondary.

This is the same quandary people face when they observe the beautiful world Hashem created. What is the purpose of it all? Is it all for recreation, so people can enjoy the various pleasures of life, or is it all for serving Hashem and Torah study? The Torah answers this question with its first word, בראשית. Chazal explain that ראשית alludes to Torah, yiras Shamayim, and the Jewish nation. בראשית teaches us that the world was created so that the Jewish nation can study Torah and to serve Hashem. That is the ultimate goal and purpose.

The snake said to Chavah, אף כי אמר אלקים, "Did Hashem say that you may not eat from all trees in the garden?" The Chidushei HaRim said that אף can be translated, "So what?" The snake told Chavah, "So what if Hashem commanded that you may not eat from the Tree of Knowledge? Does that mean you have to listen to Him?"

The Chidushei HaRim explains that the *yetzer hara* continues to use this method in our generation to cool off people's *yiras shamayim*. He comes to a person and says, "Who says that it's so important to listen to these rules? What will happen if you don't

listen?" With this conniving approach, he causes people to sin and to transgress Hashem's will.

The solution is when we recognize what is truly important in life. When we know that Torah and mitzvos are the ultimate purpose of creation, we realize that each detail of Hashem's commandments must be kept. What other purpose is there to the world, other than that?

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

A simple, unlearned farmer didn't know the order of how the tefillos are recited and what tefillos are recited on particular days. He had a friend who would always help him and show him what to say.

When the days of *Selichos* arrived, the friend told the farmer, "For a couple of weeks, we will be awakening early and spending more time in the beis medresh." The farmer wasn't happy to hear that. He didn't appreciate long tefillos.

Before Rosh Hashanah, his friend told him to expect very long tefillos. The farmer almost fell off his chair from despair when he heard that. Then came Yom Kippur, and then Succos with *Hallel* and *Hoshanos*. It was all very long and hard for the unlearned farmer.

Simchas Torah was approaching and was again informed about the long tefillos and long *hakafos*.

"By the way things are going," said the farmer, "I figure that after Simchas Torah, there'll be another long day of tefillah coming up."

"Actually, after Simchas Torah, things go back to regular," his friend said.

"Baruch Hashem!" the farmer exclaimed with feeling.

That Simchas Torah, he danced with all his might because he was happy that his painful ordeal was finally ending.

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* said:

Woe to those who are happy when these days pass.

Motzei Simchas Torah, the Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz *zt'l* said to one of his chassidim, "Would you want to begin all over again, beginning with the first night of *Selichos*?" And he started singing *אשרי יושבי ביתך*, in the tune of the first night of *Selichos*.

The Imrei Chaim loved the yomim tovim, and when the yomim tovim passed, he was ready to start them all over again. When we know what is truly important in life, we will be happy with the yomim tovim and not wait for them to pass.

Olam HaZeh vs. Olam HaBa

On the topic of what is most important, let us raise an interesting question. Which world is more important, Olam HaZeh or Olam HaBa? Many people will say that Olam HaBa is the purpose and the more important world. Indeed, that is how it appears from the *Mesilas Yesharim* (ch.1). He writes, "The rule is: A person wasn't created to be in Olam HaZeh; he was created to be in Olam HaBa. The purpose of Olam HaZeh is just a means to reach Olam HaBa. As Chazal say, 'This world is like a hallway before Olam HaBa.'"

However, there is another side to the coin: Olam HaZeh is the world where a person can choose between good and evil. This option doesn't exist in Olam HaBa. And this aspect of free choice makes our avodas Hashem in this world so special. In this aspect, Olam HaZeh is the primary world.

The Rishonim ask why Olam HaBa isn't mentioned explicitly in the Chumash. The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* answers that for Hashem, Olam HaZeh is the main world.

This is a shocking statement. Isn't Olam HaBa the purpose? However, in a way, this world is the primary world because this is the world of challenge. This is the world where avodas Hashem takes place.

Dovid HaMelech davened (Tehillim 61:5) *אגורה באהלך עולמים*, and Chazal explain that Dovid HaMelech was praying that his *chidushei Torah* be repeated in the *batei midrashim* after his demise, because then it is as if he lives forever.

Why was it important for Dovid that people should be repeating his *divrei Torah*? Dovid HaMelech resides in the highest levels of Gan Eden and is the fourth leg of Hashem's throne. The divine pleasures that he enjoys in heaven are far beyond what we can imagine. Why was it important for him that people in this world should discuss his *chidushei Torah*?

The answer is that this world is the world of challenge, where there is the ability to choose between good and bad. Tzaddikim want their *chidushei Torah* to be studied after their passing in this world, and it is also important for them that their children continue their legacies. This is because they know the importance and the significance of this world.

The Gemara (*Kesubos* 103., *Sefer Chasidim* 1127) tells us that even after Rebbe's (Reb Yehudah HaNasi) demise, every Friday night, he would come down from heaven and go to his home, dressed in his Shabbos clothing, and he would make *Kiddush* for his family.⁷

Why was it important for Rebbe to descend from the highest place in heaven to make *Kiddush* for his family on Friday night? Isn't it better to be in Gan Eden?

Once again, the answer is because of the special nature of this world, a world full of challenges, a world of tests, a world of free will, a world where the ultimate form of *avodas Hashem* can take place. Rebbe wanted to be able to serve Hashem from this

place, and therefore, he came all the way from Gan Eden.

This idea is fundamental because when people suffer from the *yetzer hara*, they are upset about it and wish it wasn't that way. But it is precisely because of their struggles that their *avodas Hashem* is so special to Hashem.

This also applies to increasing peace and avoiding *machlokes*. It is hard, but our attempts to increase *shalom* in the world is a special *avodah* for Hashem.

Also, the same applies when one is going through hard times, *chalilah*. At this time, his service is to believe that everything is for the good and to proclaim *גם זו לטובה*. It isn't easy to do so, but that is the ultimate service for Hashem.

The highest levels in Gan Eden do not compare to the greatness one achieves through wise choices in this world.

Teshuvah

It states (1:4) *וירא אלקים את האור כי טוב*, "And Hashem saw the light that it was good."

And it states (1:10) *ויקרא אלקים ליבשה ארץ*, "And Hashem called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas, and Hashem saw that it was good." For each part of creation, it states *וירא אלקים כי טוב*, "And Hashem saw it was good." The exception is when man was created. The Torah doesn't say *וירא אלקים כי טוב* regarding the creation of man, and this is surprising. The purpose of creation was for man, yet Hashem doesn't say explicitly that this creation was good.

The *Yismach Moshe* *zt'l* (ד"ה א"י ולי מה יקרו רעיד) explains that this is because man wasn't

7. Once, a neighbor found out that Rebbe came down from heaven, and after that, Rebbe didn't come any more "so as not to disgrace other tzaddikim."

Rashi explains, "So people shouldn't say that others aren't tzaddikim since they weren't permitted to come to their homes as Rebbe received this permission."

created "good." He has many faults, and he has a strong yetzer hara. He becomes good when he improves his ways. Hashem says, *נעשה אדם*, "Let us make man." *נעשה* is written in plural form because it is man together with Hashem who makes the person as he should be. Man must do his part to perfect himself, to make himself good.

Chazal (*Avodah Zarah* 8.) teach, "The day Adam was created, the sun set. Adam said, 'Woe is my portion! The world is turning dark because of my sin. The world will revert to being *תהו ובהו*, void and emptiness.' He sat and cried all night.

"But then, daybreak came. He said, 'This is the way of the world.'" He discovered that there is darkness, but then there comes light. This is the way of the world.

The same applies to *aveiros* r'l. Falls are the way of the world, but one need not worry because the past can be rectified.

Hashem asked Kayin (4:6), *למה נפלו פניך*, "Why did your face fall?" Sforno explains, "Whenever one is faced with a problem that has a solution, it isn't proper to be upset about what happened. Instead, one should look to the future and try to rectify it." Hashem told Kayin that although he didn't bring a good *korban*, there would be another chance for him to bring a better *korban*. And when something can be fixed, there is no reason for sadness.

Adam and Chava took the leaves and fashioned belts, as it states (3:7), *ויתפרו עלי תאנה*, *ויעשו להם חגורות*. The Divrei Shmuel zt'l said that 'belts' is an expression for strengthening oneself. (As we say, *אזור ישראל בגבורה*, Hashem girds us with strength, and there's a Yiddish expression *זיך אונגעגארטלט*, which means to put on a belt and make oneself strong). After his *aveirah*, he didn't permit himself to feel down. He girded himself with confidence and joy and was ready to serve Hashem again. This is because there is always the option of teshuvah, and everything can be rectified.

It states (6:5-7), *וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ וכל יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל היום וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם בארץ ויתעצב אל לבו ויאמר ה' אמהה את האדם אשר בראתי*.

The Tchibiner Rav zt'l repeated a wonderful explanation on these words according to *remez*. He hears the lesson *איש איש* from the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l:

וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ, Hashem sees the many evil deeds that people commit, but Hashem isn't angry at them because Hashem understands that *וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום*, people have a yetzer hara – it isn't their fault. How could they stand up against such a strong yetzer hara?

וינחם ה', Hashem regrets, and this means that Hashem regrets that He created the *yetzer hara*, as Chazal tell us (see *Succah* 52).

However, *ויתעצב אל לבו*, if a person becomes sad and upset that he did so many *aveiros*, and if he loses hope, then *ויאמר ה' אמהה את האדם אשר בראתי*, Hashem says He will destroy man. This is because man must always be happy. The sins of the past can be rectified with teshuvah.

Chazal say, "Whoever says *פרק שירה* every day, I testify, he is a ben Olam HaBa. He will merit learning and teaching Torah, and he will remember Torah. He will be saved from the *yetzer hara* and merit to see the era of Moshiach."

Why is saying *פרק שירה* so special?

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l explains, "When a person sins, he loses his *tzelem Elokim*, and he appears like a *בהמה*, *rachmana litzlan*. Sometimes his sins are so great that he takes on the appearance of a rodent (*שרץ*) or another non-kosher animals. If he can sing to Hashem from that low level for all the kindness Hashem does for him, he deserves great reward.

For that is the highest level: to pick oneself up and serve and praise Hashem, no matter which level one falls to.

The Zohar (vol.2 184.) says, *ליכא נהורא דנפיק*, *אלא מגו חשוכא*, "Light shines solely from

darkness." This means that due to the aveiros of the past when he does teshuvah, he reaches even greater levels than before.

Maavir Sedrah

Rebbe Mendel of Kotzk zy'a said that on Simchas Torah we don't only celebrate the finishing of the Torah, we also rejoice in the starting of the Torah once again.

Based on this, *Shabbos Bereishis* is an ideal time to encourage fellow Yidden to learn the *parashah* each week of the year and to be *maavir sidra*.

The Shulchan Aruch (285:2) states, "Although one listens to the Torah reading each week, one is obligated to read the *parashah* himself- twice the *parashah* and once *targum Unkelus*. The *yirei shamayim* also read Rashi's commentary and also the *targum*."

There are many *segulos* in being *maavir sidra*:

The Gemara (*Brachos* 8) says, "Whoever is *maavir sidra*, his days and years are increased."

The Beis Ahron zt'l teaches that from being *maavir sidra*, we receive our *chiyus* (vitality) for all our needs for the entire week.

The Or LaShamayim said that cutting nails and being *maavir sidra* on Friday morning before *chatzos* (noon) guarantees one will not commit severe sins the following week.

The Chidushei HaRim, the Sar Shalom of Belz, and others said that those who review the *parashah* with *Rashi* each week will merit being in the yeshiva of Rashi in heaven.⁸

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l would study *chumash* with *Rashi* daily while wearing his Rabbeinu Tam tefillin.

Reviewing the *parashah* with *Rashi* is *mesugal* for *yiras shamayim*. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l once tested the *bachurim* in the *Arugas HaBosem*'s yeshiva. After the test, the Rebbe told the *Arugas HaBosem*, "They are excellent *bachurim*, but if they were *maavir sidra*, they would have even more *yiras shamayim*."

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l (Imrei Pinchas, Torah 38-39) said that learning Chumash with *Rashi* is *mesugal* for having *emunah*. He sent messengers to the Jewish communities, telling them to learn Chumash *Rashi* well. He explained that this would protect them from the Heidemaks. He explained that since they are raging a religious war (because they only killed the Yidden who didn't convert to Christianity), being firm in one's *emunah* will overcome them, and *emunah* is attained through studying Chumash with *Rashi*.

Tefillah

It states (*Bereish* 2:7) וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, "Adam was a living soul."

Onkelus translates it, לְנֶפֶשׁ מְדַבֵּרֶת, "a speaking soul." But who could Adam speak with? When Adam was created, he was alone in the world, and Chavah wasn't created yet. It must be that man was created to speak with Hashem. That is what we can do at these times, when there is a war in Eretz Yisrael.

The Chofetz Chaim emphasizes that tefillah isn't solely when one davens Shemonah Esrei. At any time of the day, when you have a few moments with Hashem, you can daven for your needs, and for the wellbeing and salvation of Klal Yisrael.

A non-religious Yid walked into the yeshiva in Kfar Chassidim when they were

8. A Yid from Bnei Brak related that his childhood friend was niftar young (at nineteen years old). He saw his friend in his dreams, and his friend told him that since he died young, he wasn't judged for his sins (see *Rashi*, *Bereishis* 23:1). He also revealed that *Rashi* came to greet him, and he was immediately brought to *Rashi*'s heichal (yeshiva) in heaven. He merited this because he would review Chumash with *Rashi* every week.

davening *Minchah*. After davening people asked him what he saw. He said, "I saw *bachurim* swaying back and forth, but there was this old man standing near the wall [that was Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l*] and it appeared that he was truly speaking with someOne..." This is how *tefillah* should appear, with *emunah* and recognition that you are speaking to Hashem.

The Chareidim writes, *אני והו' הושיעה נא*. This means that it's *אני והו'*, only myself and Hashem. For it is true that I am alone with Hashem. Even when I am among other people, nevertheless, no one sees the secrets of my heart other than Hashem, and no one is seeking to help me other than Hashem, and no one can save me from my *tzaros* other than Hashem. Therefore, the people around don't create an interruption...and there is only me and Hashem. As it states (*I Malachim* 17:1) *חי' ה' אשר עמדתי לפניו*, 'I swear to Hashem Whom I stood before Him.' And it states (*Bereishis* 17:1) *התהלך לפני והיה תמים*, 'Go before Me...' This is the implication of *אני והו'*, there is only me and Hashem, *הושיע נא*, and with this recognition, he will bring salvations with one's *tefillah*."

Once, after *Shemonah Esrei*, people heard Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* say, "May it be Your will that the maid should return ..." His students thought that he had lofty intentions with this *tefillah*, but he explained that there were no special secrets concealed in his words. "My wife is old, she needs help, but the maid left. So, I prayed that the maid should return" (*Divrei Shmuel*). We must pray for all our needs, because we can't do anything, without Hashem.

Our strength is our *tefilos*. According to the rules of nature, it often appears that there is nothing we can do, but *tefillah* can save us.

In Pressberg, a servant stole his master's wallet and he hid it in a concealed place in the home of a Jew. He figured that when

people forget about the theft, he will be able to take out the wallet and keep it for himself.

His master discovered that his wallet was stolen, and he told the police to look for it in all homes in Pressberg. The police found it in the home of the Yid, and he was arrested, and a date was set for when he would be hung. The police were certain that the Yid stole the wallet, since it was found in his home.

The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* tried very hard to prove the innocence of this Yid, and he made connections with government officials, but he didn't succeed. The judge, the police, and everyone in government office was certain that the Yid stole the money.

It was the night before the Yid would be hung, and the Ksav Sofer was ready to give up. He tried, he did what he could, but what can he do now?

He saw his father, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* in his dreams. His father rebuked him, "How do you sleep when a Yid from your kehillah is deemed to be hung tomorrow?"

"I did everything. What more can I do?" the Ksav Sofer asked.

The Chasam Sofer told him that he could daven.

It was two o'clock at night. The Ksav Sofer sent his shamash to gather people to the beis medresh, and they davened for the Yid's salvation.

At the court case, the judge suddenly said, "There is one person whom we never questioned, and it is proper that we ask him some questions now. I refer to the servant who works in the wealthy man's home. After all, he is a prime suspect, because it is easiest for him to steal the money. He is always in the wealthy man's home."

The servant wasn't expecting to be interrogated, so he wasn't prepared for the questions. He contradicted himself and then

he finally admitted that he stole the money. The Yid was saved due to the tefilos.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l said that there are tefilos that are answered a week later, and there are tefilos that are answered a day later, but when one shouts out to Hashem, those tefilos are answered immediately. As

it states (Devarim 26:7) וַנִּצְעַק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ, "We shouted out to Hashem the G-d of our forefathers, and Hashem heard our voices."

May Hashem listen to our shouts, and the shouts of Klal Yisrael, answer our tefilos and save us and redeem us, speedily in our days.