

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Shelach*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# *Torah Wellsprings - Shelach*

## **Joy – Under All Circumstances**

The Chazon Ish zt'l said, "It is impossible to pass through this world without troubles. The difference between people is how they accept them. Some people pass through the world laughing, and some pass through the world crying. It is better to pass through the world with laughter."

In other words, to focus on the "half-cup that is full." Of course, there is always something lacking, something to mope about. But you can focus on the good; if you do that, you will live a happy life.

A chasan breaks an empty glass at his chuppah. This reminds him that from now on, he shouldn't think about what is empty and lacking. He should only focus on what is full. This is good advice for Shalom bayis, as well as for all matters of life. Focus on the good in your life; you will be happy, and everything will become good.

It is also possible to be happy for no reason at all. One can put all his worries aside and be happy.

When the Yidden heard the Meraglim's report about the strength of the nations living in Eretz Canaan, it states (14:1) וַתִּשָּׂא כָל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בְּלֵילָה הַהוּא, "The entire community raised their voices and shouted, and the people wept on that night."

Chazal (Taanis 29) says, "That night was Tisha b'Av. Hakadosh Baruch Hu told them, 'You cried for no reason (בְּכִיָּה שֶׁל חֵנָם), I will establish this day for crying for generations (בְּכִיָּה לְדוֹרוֹת).'"

The Imrei Emes zt'l noted that if crying for no reason resulted in crying for generations, when one is happy for no reason (שְׂמֵחָה שֶׁל חֵנָם), that will result in joy for salvation. Laugh and be happy, even if you think you have no reason to be happy. This will result in many reasons to be happy.

The Holy Rizhiner zt'l told the following story:

A wealthy person was going through hard times,<sup>1</sup> and he moaned and krechted about his tzaros. Heaven said, "You think your portion is bad? We will show you what is bad." He lost all of his money. Now, he had to collect food door-to-door. He moaned about his bitter portion. Heaven said, "Do you think this is bad? We will show you what is bad," and he came down with tzaraas (leprosy). Due to the tzaraas, people didn't want to see him at their doorstep, afraid they might catch his disease. So he couldn't collect money anymore. He continued to moan and complain about his misfortune. Who can blame him? He was falling lower and lower. But Heaven wasn't happy with his sadness. Heaven said, "You think your situation is bad? We will show you what is bad," and he became a hunchback, and he couldn't eat. At that point, he said, "Well, at least I'm alive. Baruch Hashem, I'm alive! Many people in my situation aren't alive anymore. Baruch Hashem, I am alive." He changed his tune. Now, instead of complaining, he was praising Hashem. Heaven said, "You think that your life situation is good. We will show you what is good," and his hunchback was healed, and he was able to eat regularly again. With much joy, he thanked Hashem for this

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1. It shouldn't surprise us that wealthy people have troubles because wealth doesn't resolve all of life's issues. Perhaps the rich don't worry about how they will pay the grocery bill, etc.. Still, there are other frustrations, worries, and disappointments in life, which affect the wealthy the same way they affect the poor, and these are often matters that money can't resolve.

salvation. Heaven said, "Do you think this is good? We will show you what is good!" and his tzaraas was healed. Now he could collect door-to-door again. He was delighted with his good fortune and praised Hashem with all his heart and soul. Heaven said, "Do you think this is good? We will show you what is good." A wealthy person lent him a large sum of money, which he invested, and he became rich again.

The Rizhiner told this story to his daughter when he heard his daughter krechitz. He told her, "Don't moan because one krechitz brings on the next one, and one joy and praise to Hashem brings more happiness and goodness."

This was the error of the Jewish nation when they moaned and cried when they heard the meraglim's report. Crying and moaning bring on more sorrow, while joy results in Hashem's salvation.

And there is always a reason to be happy. There is always the half-cup that is full, which we should focus on.

### **Be Content with Your Level of Ruchniyos**

It states in Pirkei Avos (4:1) *אזהר עשיר השמח* בחלקו, "Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his portion." The Sfas Emes zt'l notes that this also refers to your portion of ruchniyos. Even for ruchniyos, one should focus on the half-full cup. You indeed wanted to learn more Gemara, to daven with more kavanah, etc., but think about what you already did accomplish and rejoice with it. Compare yourself to lower achievers than you, and you will be happy with your accomplishments.

A fly was buzzing around the Shabbos tish of the Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l, bothering the gathered people. One person was particularly agitated, and when it landed on the table before him, he slammed his hand down and crushed the fly. The bang on the table was loud, and it caught everyone's attention. Everyone looked up at him, including the Rebbe. The man was very

embarrassed and distraught. He realized he was just mechalel Shabbos in public! But suddenly, to the man's relief, the fly, which everyone thought was dead, came back to life and began flying again. The Beis Yisrael commented, "Chazal say the yetzer hara is like a fly. Sometimes, we think we have killed the yetzer hara, but then it raises its ugly head and returns to life."

Indeed, sometimes we think we have conquered a certain yetzer hara, and it won't bother us again. But the yetzer hara is still there; only it is dormant. It can come back to life anytime, so we must always be on guard.

We can also learn a different lesson from this story. Some people think that due to their aveiros, they have destroyed their neshamah, and there isn't any good left in them. It isn't so. Their neshamah is very much alive, and deep down, it still yearns for ruchniyos. Perhaps, right now, they aren't actively engaged in the Torah and mitzvos, but they can turn on in a moment. The holy neshamah that's in them can be awakened.

This is one of the thoughts we should remember when we are upset with our spiritual level. Remember, there is much spirituality within us, waiting to be ignited and to come to life.

The Tanya (ch.29) writes, "Initially, the Yidden said (13:31) *כי חזק הוא ממנו*, that the goyim living in Eretz Canaan were stronger than the Yidden, and they didn't believe that Hashem had the ability to bring them into Eretz Yisrael. But soon afterwards, they said (14:40) *הננו ועלינו*, 'We are ready to go up to the place of which Hashem spoke.' How did they get their emunah back in Hashem's abilities? Moshe Rabbeinu didn't perform any miracles at that time..." So, if the Jewish nation didn't believe in Hashem and were concerned that they couldn't conquer Eretz Yisrael, how and why did they change their mind and were willingly prepared to fight this battle?

The Tanya writes, "The answer is certainly that the nature of a Yid is to believe in Hashem. They are believers, children of believers. It is just the yetzer hara within them that had overpowered the kedushah of their souls." Yidden believe – that is their essence. Of course, there are tests, and at times the yetzer hara gains the upper hand, but deep down, a Yid believes in Hashem.

The Tanya concludes, "We can learn from this that whenever one has questions in emunah, he must know that it is just the Sitra Achara [the yetzer hara] fighting his soul. But the nature of a Yid is to believe. In fact, the Sitra Achara also believes, and there are no doubts in its emunah, only Hashem gave it the strength to confuse people with falsehoods to increase the reward of those who conquer the yetzer hara."

These ideas can give us chizuk. We do believe in Hashem. The neshamah is alive within us. There are tests, but our essence is holy and special. So, instead of focusing on what we do wrong, we should focus on who we are, at our essence, and everything we do right.

It states *ואחרי עיניכם*, "Don't wander after your hearts and after your eyes..." Reb Eizik of Zidichov zt'l, quoting the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l, says that the key word here is *אחרי*, after. *After* you gazed where you shouldn't have, and *after* you let your thoughts drift, even then, remain loyal to Hashem. Although you had a spiritual descent, pick yourself up again. Don't focus on your faults. Focus on the half-cup that's full and on your holy neshamah and continue serving Hashem.

The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitz zt'l says, "Think good, and it will be good." In Yerushalayim, people would say, "And if you don't think at all, that is even better." This can be alluded to in the words *שלה לך* אנשים, and the Baal HaTurim writes that the final letters spell *חכ"ם*, wise. If you want to be wise, *שלה לך*, stop thinking about all these disappointing thoughts – whether regarding gashmiyos or ruchniyos. Think positive

thoughts about yourself and your life, or be even wiser and *שלה לך*, send away even your wise (*חכ"ם*) thoughts and don't think anything at all.

## Fear

The meraglim's sin (and the sin of the Jewish nation who accepted their report) was caused by unwarranted fear. The nation said (14:3), *ולמה ה' מביא אתנו אל הארץ הזאת לנפל בחרב, נשינו וטפינו יהיו לבז*, "Why does Hashem bring us to this land to fall by the sword; our wives and children will be as spoils?"

Fear is an instinct to protect us from danger, but when we use fear at the wrong times, it is a deterrent from doing what is right. The nation said (Devarim 1:28) *אנחנו עליהם אחינו המסו את לבבנו לאמר עם גדול ורם ממנו ערים גדולות*, "Where shall we go up? Our brothers have discouraged us, saying, 'A people greater and taller than we; cities great and fortified up to the heavens, and we have even seen the sons of Anakim there.'"

ואמר אלכם לא תערצון ולא תיראון מהם, ה' אלקיכם לפניכם הוא ילחם לכם ככל אשר עשה אתכם במצרים לעיניכם, "And I [Moshe] said to you, "Do not be broken or afraid of them. Hashem, your God, Who goes before you, He will fight for you, just as He did for you in Mitzrayim before your very eyes."

Kalev and Yehoshua also addressed the nation's fear. They said (14:9) *אתם אל תיראו את עם הארץ כי לחמנו הם סר צלם מעליהם וה' אתנו אל תיראום*, "You shall not fear the people of that land for they are as our bread. Their protection is removed from them, and Hashem is with us; do not fear them." But the nation was afraid, resulting in their rebellion and grave sins, and we are still in galus because of it.

Mesilas Yesarim (ch.9) writes, "One of the matters that cause people not to have *zrizus* in avodas Hashem is fear. Sometimes people are afraid of the cold, and sometimes of the heat. Sometimes they are afraid of dangers, illnesses, and so on. About this, Shlomo a'h says (Mishlei 26:13) *אמר עצל שחל בדרך*



ארי בין הרחובות, 'The lazy man says: There is a lion on the road, a mature lion between the streets.' Chazal mock this attitude and consider these people sinners. The proof is from the pasuk (Yeshayah 33:14) פחדו בציון חטאים, אחזה רעה חנפים, 'Sinners in Zion were afraid; trembling seized the flatterers.' [So bad is fear that] one of the Tanaim saw someone who was afraid and told him חטאה את, 'You are a sinner' (Brachos 60.). The correct attitude is as states (Tehillim 37:3) בטח בה' ועשה טוב, 'Trust in Hashem and do good...'"

Haman ym's knew that the way to conquer the Jewish nation was to make them afraid. This is as it states (Esther 9:24) להומום ולאבדם, "To terrify and destroy them."<sup>2</sup>

But there is no reason to panic or to fear because Hashem is always with us.

Young children play hide-and-go-seek. When the child hides, the other children ask, "Are you ready?"

The child replies, "I'm ready." The children hear the child's voice, follow the sound, and find the child. Rebbe Mendel of Vorke zt'l said that this is how we find Hashem. Hashem hides from us (Devarim 31:18) אנכי הסתר אסתיר, "I will hide My face." There are hardships in life. But when we see the hardships, it is as if Hashem is shouting, "I am here," and then we can find him. Hashem is with us within the hardships, so everything will be good. There is no reason to worry.<sup>3</sup>

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2. There's a species of fish that shoots out dark dye into the water to confuse other fish. When the fish are confused, the predator attacks and eats them. Reb Avraham Ginichovsky zt'l says that the yetzer hara acts in a similar manner. For example, a life situation can appear bleak and worrisome, leading a person to panic, and at this time, the yetzer hara can devour him and lead him to aveiros.

Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita says that he read in a sefer about a snake that sits at the bottom of a tree with its mouth wide open. The snake looks up at a bird perched high on a tree branch. The snake cannot climb the tree, but the bird doesn't know that. The bird and the snake stare at each other until the bird becomes paralyzed in fear and falls off its branch, right into the snake's mouth. This is what the yetzer hara does to us. He causes us to panic and to feel paralyzed regarding some matter, and then he can capture us.

3. The Baal Shem Tov told a *mashal* of a queen who transgressed one of the kingdom's rules. The king was a man of judgment (מלך במשפט יעמיד ארץ), so he banished his wife and sent her away on a ship.

Those days, the crew at sea weren't under any rule; no one could tell them what they could or couldn't do. When the queen saw the unscrupulous crew on her ship, she became terrified. What she didn't know was that the king was also on board, disguised as the ship's captain. He had to send his wife to exile due to her transgression, but he didn't want her alone at sea, so he came along with her. Had she known the king was with her, she wouldn't be afraid at all.

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

If we believe that Hashem is with us, then, ultimately, we aren't in galus. Chazal (Brachos 33.) say, כל אדם שיש בו דעה כאילו נבנה בית המקדש בימיו, "Whoever has *daas* (awareness of Hashem), it is like the Beis HaMikdash was built in his lifetime." For he will live calmly in *galus*, without fear and worry, just as when the Beis HaMikdash stood.

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

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

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

The meraglim described Eretz Yisrael as (13:32) ארץ אוכלת יושביה היא, "A land that consumes its inhabitants." Rashi explains, "Wherever we passed, we found them burying dead people. Hakadosh Baruch Hu orchestrated this for their benefit, to keep them occupied with their mourning so they should not notice them [the spies]." But when the meraglim saw everyone in the land occupied with levayos, they became afraid. They thought it meant something was wrong with the land. But it was all Hashem's hidden hand – for their benefit.

The meraglim also reported (13:33) שם ראינו את הנפילים... ונהי בעינינו כחגבים וכן היינו בעיניהם, "There we saw the giants... In our eyes, we seemed like grasshoppers, and so were we in their eyes."

Rashi writes, "We heard them telling each other, 'There are ants in the vineyard that look like people.'"

These words scared the meraglim, and they proceeded to frighten the entire Jewish nation with their report, but this too, explains the Chasam Sofer, was for the nation's good.

The Chasam Sofer (Likutim ד"ה ונהי) explains that the residents of Eretz Canaan were very strong. When they heard that the Jewish nation smote Mitzrayim, that didn't frighten

them because they considered themselves much stronger than the Egyptians. They were convinced they could win a war against the Jewish nation.

But when they saw that the Jewish people were tiny, like ants, they became terrified. Because if little people can win a war against Mitzrayim, this means they wage their battles with the assistance of miracles. And if Hashem performed miracles for the Jewish nation against the Egyptians, He could do the same against the Canaanites.

The Jewish nation thought that appearing like grasshoppers in the eyes of the people of the land was frightening. They thought that the giants living in Eretz Canaan were mocking them, confident that they could trample and destroy the Jewish nation with ease. Actually, the smallness of the meraglim frightened the local population immensely.

The Chasam Sofer adds that Hashem purposely wanted they should see the spies to increase their fear. For the most part, Hashem arranged that the meraglim remain unnoticed. However, once, Hashem wanted the people of the land to see the small meraglim to increase their fear. The problem was that the meraglim were also afraid because they were certain that the people of

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

The Baal Shem Tov asked the Toldos, "Did you hear the *bas kol* I just received? If I search well, I will find something that needs fixing. I will discover areas where I can improve."

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

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

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

The Toldos was preoccupied with deep Torah thoughts and didn't want to interrupt to pick up hay. He said, "The job is too hard for me. I can't do it."

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

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



the land were confident they would beat them.

The Midrash states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgave them for saying וְנָהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים 'In our eyes, we seemed like grasshoppers,' but Hashem didn't forgive them for saying 'and so we were in their eyes.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu told them, 'How do you know how I had them think of you? Perhaps they thought you were *malachim*.'"

When we see something that frightens us, we should wonder whether this is our salvation and it isn't frightening at all.

It states (13:22) וַיַּעֲלוּ בְנֵי נֹחַב וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד חֶבְרוֹן וְשָׁם אַחִימָן וְשֶׁשַׁי וְתַלְמַי יְלִידֵי הָעֵנָק "They went up in the south, and he came to Chevron, and there were Achiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of the giant." The pasuk is difficult to understand because it begins in plural tense, וַיַּעֲלוּ בְנֵי נֹחַב, the meraglim went up in the south, and then it states וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד חֶבְרוֹן, "and he came to Chevron." Rashi explains, "Kalev went there himself [hence the singular "he came"] to prostrate himself on the graves of the avos [in prayer] that he should not be enticed by his colleagues to be part of their plot."

Kalev went to Maaras HaMachpeilah to daven to be saved from sinning together with the meraglim. The Zohar writes that it was frightening for Kalev to go to Maaras HaMachpeilah alone. He was afraid of the goyim of the land. But he didn't let his fear prevent him from going there because he understood that he needed those prayers to enable him to pass this difficult test.

There are times when according to halachah, we must be afraid. In situations where it is הִזְקָא מִצַּי, likely that one would get harmed, one must be cautious. However, not all fears are valid. It is often a trick of the yetzer hara to prevent us from serving Hashem. Certainly, after all the miracles the Jewish nation witnessed when they left Mitzrayim, and after Hashem promised them to bring them into the land, they had nothing to fear. Therefore, the fear was

misplaced. We too, should ask ourselves whether our fears are valid or whether they are the work of the yetzer hara to prevent us from serving Hashem.

### The Meraglim's Error

The Sfas Emes (שלח תרל"א ד"ה ולא) writes in the name of his grandfather, the Chidushei HaRim zt'l, "It was impossible for the Yidden to conquer Eretz Yisrael naturally. Still, had they believed in Hashem, that belief itself would have elevated them above nature." According to logic, the meraglim were right. It was impossible to win the war and conquer Eretz Yisrael. Their fault was because Hashem could bring them into Eretz Yisrael through supernatural means.

עלה נעלה וירשנו (13:30) Kalev told the nation, "We can surely go up and take possession of the land, for we can indeed overcome it."

Kalev didn't offer a plan or strategy because he also didn't have a solution. Logically, it seemed like a very difficult mission because of the mighty nations who lived in Eretz Yisrael. But Kalev told the Yidden that Hashem has ways, and we don't need to know how Hashem will do it. Rashi writes, אפילו בשמים והוא אומר עשו סולמות ועלו שם, "Even if Eretz Yisrael is in heaven and Moshe tells us, 'Make ladders and go up there,' we will succeed in whatever he says." How? No one knows. But Hashem has ways. There is no need to worry. We will succeed.

The Piaseczno Rebbe (Eish Kodesh) taught this lesson in the Warsaw Ghetto when people didn't know how to escape and what to do. He encouraged them to trust in Hashem's salvation; they didn't need to know how Hashem would save them. He told them they might be better off not seeking ways to be saved because when they won't find solutions, they will feel devastated. Just trust in Hashem's salvation because Hashem has ways to save them.

The Torah tells us (end of *parashah*), ולא תתורו, אחרי... עיניכם "Don't wander after your eyes." The Sfas Emes (שלח תרל"א ד"ה ולא) explains: Don't be influenced by how you perceive things because Hashem sees things differently. You think there is no way out, but Hashem has a solution.

How would Hashem bring us into Eretz Yisrael?

Rashi (*Devarim* 1:8) writes that had they not sent *meraglim*, they would have entered Eretz Yisrael and inherited the land without opposition or war. Rashi writes, באו ורשו ואין מערער בדבר, ואינכם צריכים למלחמה, אלו לא שלחו מרגלים, "Come and inherit the land, and there will be no opposition. You don't need fighting. Had they not sent *meraglim*, they wouldn't need weapons." Because with *bitachon* in Hashem, all options are open.

It states (*Tehillim* 121:1), עזרי מעם ה' עושה שמים, וארץ, "My salvation is from Hashem, the creator of Heaven and earth." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that Hashem created the world from nothing, יש מאין, and He can also create a brand-new solution to help me. מאין, from nothingness, Hashem can create a way and send me His salvation.<sup>4</sup>

The Sifsei Tzaddik *zt'l* says that Hashem wanted to prove to the Jewish nation how much He loves them. So, after the Yidden sinned with the *egel* (and after they committed other *aveiros*), he told them to send spies to Eretz Canaan. Hashem wanted them to hear from the *meraglim* that according to the rules of nature, they couldn't conquer the land, and then, when they conquered the land, they would realize that Hashem performed miracles for them. This would

prove that Hashem loves them eternally, even after they do *aveiros*.

The problem was that after the Jewish nation realized they needed a miracle to conquer the land, they lost hope and refused to enter Eretz Canaan.

Although, Hashem performed miracles for them in the past, and they all witnessed *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the ten *makos*, and the wonders at the Yam Suf, they thought this was in the past. After their severe *aveiros*, they thought Hashem wouldn't perform more miracles for them.

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

### Self-Image

We once again quote the Midrash:

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgave them for saying ונהי בעינינו כחגבים 'In our eyes, we seemed like grasshoppers,' but Hashem didn't forgive them for saying וכן היינו בעיניהם 'and so were we in their eyes.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu told them, 'How do you know how I had them think of you? Perhaps they thought you are *malachim*.'"

The Sfas Emes (תר"כ) asks that Rashi (quoted above) writes that the *meraglim* heard the Canaanites say, ונמלים יש בכרמים כאנשים, "There are ants in the vineyard that look like humans." That is how they knew what the Canaanites thought. So why does the Midrash say that Hashem didn't forgive them for saying that the Canaanites perceived

4. The Chazon Ish often said, "Hashem's help arrives the moment a person doesn't see any natural means for his salvation."

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

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* writes in a letter, "I follow the counsel that the Chofetz Chaim would often say: 'One shouldn't ask too many times from a human being.' Because what is man? Only Hashem can help."

them to be like ants? That is indeed exactly what the Canaanites perceived them to be.

The Sfas Emes answers that the problem began with their negative self-perception. This influenced others to look at them negatively. "Since they were small in their own eyes and considered themselves like grasshoppers, this caused others to see them that way."<sup>5</sup>

This is a very important lesson. So many people have a low self-image and imagine that everyone looks down at them. But you don't know what others are thinking. Perhaps Hashem put into their hearts to look up to and consider you special. But one thing is certain: If you look down at yourself, others will look down at you, too.

A mashal is told about a youngerman who felt insignificant in the world, and he had good reason to feel that way. At work, it was rare that someone should speak to him. When he walked on the street, no one ever stopped him to ask for directions. Young children didn't ask him to help them cross the street. He was like a nobody in a world full of people.

Once, he saw an advertisement for hats being sold at a cheap price. It was years since he bought a new hat, so he took advantage of this sale and bought himself a nice, brand-new hat.

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

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

again, "How was your day?" Again, he pointed to his hat.

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

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

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

As the Sfas Emes teaches, "Since they were small in their own eyes, and consider themselves like grasshoppers, this caused others to see them that way."

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

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

## Humility

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

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



and the Torah lists them according to their level."

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

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* explains that Kalev and Yehoshua passed the test because they were humble and understood they couldn't pass the test without Hashem's help. So, they davened to Hashem, and this saved them. The other spies, however, relied on their greatness, thinking they could pass the test on their own, and therefore they failed.

Targum Yonoson (13:16) discusses Yehoshua's humility: כד חמא משה ענוותנותיה קרא, משה להושע בר נון יהושע, "When Moshe saw his humility, he called Hoshei'a bar Nun 'Yehoshua.'" He changed his name to יהושע, which means י"ה יושעך מעצת מרגלים, "Hashem should save you from the plot of the *meraglim*." Yehoshua received Moshe's tefillos, and this saved him.

Kalev was also humble and wasn't confident he could pass the test. Chazal (*Sotah* 34:) tell us that Kalev went to מערת המכפלה to daven at the *kivrei Avos* to be saved from this sin. They trusted in Hashem and therefore passed the test.

The other *meraglim* were also *tzaddikim*, at least initially, but they felt they could pass all tests on their own. This is the root of their downfall.

Everyone has their own tests. Be aware that you need Hashem's help. Pray to Him, and you will have a far better chance of success.

### Accepting Hashem's Will

So far, we have seen two explanations for the *meraglim's* error.

(1) They lacked *bitachon* that Hashem could help them conquer the land.

(2) They thought that after sinning with the *egel*, Hashem wouldn't help them.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* writes a third error the *meraglim* made:

"The *meraglim's* indentations were for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. They saw the Yidden living in an ideal setting. Moshe Rabbeinu was their teacher, clothes and food were free, and everyone was steeped in *avodas Hashem*. The *meraglim* felt it was a shame that this ideal lifestyle should cease. Why should they go to Eretz Yisrael, need to toil the land, and be left without much time for Torah and *tefillah*? The *meraglim* knew they were sinning, but they sacrificed their souls for the benefit of the Jewish nation. Their plan was successful, and the Jewish nation remained in the desert for forty years. Nevertheless, this wasn't Hashem's will. It is incorrect to offer advice to Hashem. We must know that whichever way Hashem leads us, it is for our benefit. They should have trusted Hashem's *hanhagah*." They should have trusted Hashem knows what's truly good for us, even when it doesn't seem so.

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

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* writes that this idea is alluded to in the song ו"ה אכסוף when we say פתח להם נועם ורצון לפתוח שערי רצון, which can be translated, "Open their hearts that they should want, שערי רצון, what You want." Sometimes Hashem wants something we wouldn't expect, but we must believe that Hashem has a plan and knows what's best for us.

### Prepare Your Heart, and Hashem will Provide the Words

The Ponovitzer Rav *zt'l* traveled to Radin to speak with the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*. The Ponovitzer Rav intended it to be a short visit because he had another train to catch.

However, the Chofetz Chaim spoke with him for a long time, and he missed the train.

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

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

The holy Chofetz Chaim yearned with all his heart to serve Hashem and say the right things to help others. Therefore, Hashem always helped him say the right words. Because when a person truly desires to do Hashem's will, Hashem directs him and helps him succeed with his ambitions.<sup>6</sup>

It states (Mishlei 16:1) *לאדם מערכי לב ומה' מענה לשון*, "To man belongs the arrangements of

the thoughts in his heart, but from Hashem comes the tongue's reply." The meforshim explain that a person must desire to say the right thing, and then Hashem helps him. The Vilna Gaon (on this pasuk) writes, "When you need to speak with a king or a high-ranking official, all you need is to prepare your heart to Hashem, and Hashem will place the right words on your tongue. The same applies to Torah..." When a person desires to understand Torah or teach Torah, Hashem will help him succeed. He prepares his heart, and Hashem does the rest.

The same applies to chesed. If you want to give chizuk to people, Hashem will plant into your mind effective words. Man's obligation is *מערכי לב*, to prepare his heart with good desires, and then *מה' מענה לשון*, Hashem will help him say the right things.<sup>7</sup>

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6. There was a time when the Ponovitzer Rav was considering closing his yeshiva because he was having difficulty raising funds. The Chofetz Chaim asked the Ponovitzer Rav, "How many hours of Torah did you study today? Two hours? Perhaps three hours? I studied for hundreds of hours today because I have a yeshiva where many *bachurim* study Torah! I have a portion in all their Torah studies!"

This conversation convinced the Ponovitzer Rav that he should keep the yeshiva open.

7. Reb Yehudah Neishloss *shlita* related that he was once walking with Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* through the streets of Yerushalayim when a woman approached them. Her haggard appearance made it obvious she was going through difficult times.

She announced to Reb Chaim with excitement, "Perele is engaged!"

Reb Chaim Brim replied with immense joy, "Mazal Tov! Mazal Tov! How I was waiting for this day! Thank you for telling me! I'm going to tell everyone! I'm so happy to hear that. Who is the fortunate *bachur*?"

She told him the name of the bachur. Reb Chaim thought for a moment and said, "Do you know whom you are getting for a son-in-law? Your daughter will be marrying one of the top *bachurim* of Yerushalayim!"

The woman's face beamed with joy.

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

"Of course!"

"In my opinion, your chasan is the Chazon Ish of our generation. Did you hear of the gaon, Reb Akiva Eiger?"

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

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

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

Two tribes come from Yosef: Ephraim and Menasheh. Both tribes sent a spy. The Torah mentions Ephraim's tribe first. (Bamidbar 13:8) למטה אפרים הושע בן נון, 'For the tribe Ephraim [the spy was] Hoshea bin Nun.

A few pesukim afterwards, it states (13:11) למטה יוסף למטה מנשה גדי בן סוסי, "For the tribe Yosef, for the tribe Menasheh, Gadi ben Susi." This time, the Torah adds that it is Yosef's tribe.

The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 1:32) explains that the Torah wanted to honor both shevatim – Ephraim and Menasheh – so they should feel equal. Ephraim is honored because his tribe is mentioned first. Menasheh is honored because the Torah mentions that he was from the tribe Yosef.

This reminds us to honor our fellow man. It is impossible for a human being to be perfectly cautious, but when he tries his best and his desires are in the right place, Hashem will help him succeed.

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tefillos and good deeds."

"I don't think so," Reb Chaim replied. "In my opinion, it is in your own merits and your tefillos' merit."

She left extremely happy.

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

"I have no idea," Reb Chaim replied. "But I can tell she is a broken woman, so I thought that if this mitzvah came my way, I should perform it well, so I gave her some *chizuk*."

Let's learn two lessons from this story. One: Take advantage of opportunities. Everything is *bashert*. If you meet someone, there is a reason. Try to do something good.

Two: *Chizuk*, a kind word, goes a long way. Give *chizuk* to people. Let them feel important. It is one of the greatest deeds of kindness you can do. All you have to do is try, and Hashem will put the right words in your mouth.

The grandfather of Reb Eliyashiv zt'l wrote a sefer on kabbalah which he called *Leshem*. When this sefer arrived in Bagdad, the Ben Ish Chai put on Shabbos clothing for three days, and he danced with this sefer under a canopy as if it was a *hachnasas sefer Torah*.

Twenty years later, when the *Leshem* heard about the Ben Ish Chai's appreciation for his sefer, he cried. When asked why he was crying, he said, "Look at all the notebooks in my *sefarim* room. All of these are *chiddushei Torah* that I never got around to printing. If I knew that my *sefarim* are so cherished, I would have spent more time getting more of writings to print."

## A Year per Day

The meraglim spied on Eretz Canaan for forty days and were punished for remaining in the desert for forty years. As it states (14:34), במספר הימים אשר תרתם את הארץ, ארבעים יום יום, "Like the number of days that you spied out the land, forty days, a day for a year, a day for a year..."

From this pasuk, Chazal (*Chagigah* 5:) learned, "Whoever sins even one day a year, it is as if he sinned the entire year."

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

The Chasam Sofer explains that this means if a person spends one day performing mitzvos, it is counted in heaven like he performed mitzvos for five hundred years. A day of sin is counted like a year of sin, so a day of mitzvos is considered like serving Hashem for five-hundred years. His reward will be enormous.

The Chasam Sofer says that this is hinted at in the words, למען ירבו ימיכם... כימי השמים על, "that your days will be as many as the days of the heavens."



הארץ, "[Keep the mitzvos...] so your days will be lengthened...like heaven is above earth." The Gemara (*Pesachim* 94:) says heaven is a five-hundred-year walk from the earth. The Torah says, keep the mitzvos, למען ירבו ימיכם, because it will be like you lived long. For each day you perform mitzvos, it will be like you lived על הארץ, five hundred years.

This lesson reminds us of how careful we must be to maximize our time. Every moment is worth so much, so we should use our time wisely.

Early one morning, the Rebbe of Radshitz zt'l said, "A special guest has arrived today. It's his first visit, and he will never return, so I want to honor him properly. The guest is today. It came today, and will never come back, so I want to spend it well."

If one is cautious with his time, he can accomplish a lot in one day. Reb Eliyahu Lopian zt'l compared time to a travel bag. If one packs his bag in an orderly fashion, there will be plenty of room for all his belongings. But if one throws in items haphazardly, the bag will fill before everything is inside.

Time is similar. If one is organized with his time, he will have much time in his day. But if one is careless with his time, the days will pass quickly, and he won't accomplish what he needs to do.

A student asked Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l for advice on arranging his day to maximize his Torah learning. Among Reb Shlomo Zalman's counsels was that he should set aside time every day to review what he had studied throughout his life until then. The student replied that he didn't have time to do that.

On Reb Shlomo Zalman's table was a sefer he planned to give to a bar mitzvah bachur. The sefer was wrapped in decorative paper and held together with a rubber band. Reb Shlomo Zalman removed the rubber band and said, "See how small it became?" Reb Shlomo Zalman explained to him that time is similar. It can be short, but when stretched, one finds he has much time.

*Parashas Bechukosai* states the rewards for keeping the mitzvos. One of the rewards is (*Vayikra* 26:9), ופנית אליכם. The Chiddushei HaRim zt'l explains, ופנית comes from the word פנאי, which means ample time. The brachah is that the tzaddikim are granted plenty of time to accomplish in avodas Hashem.

(The Chiddushei HaRim would often say this translation, for it is indeed the most incredible gift – to have time to do everything one needs to achieve in avodas Hashem.)<sup>8</sup>

Some have the custom of giving a gold watch to a chasan. This is to remind the chasan that time is as precious as gold.

The Lev Simchah zy'a added that gold is only the case, holding the watch that shows the time. A case is always less valuable than what it holds. If the casing is made of gold, it tells us that time itself is far more valuable than gold.

### Guard Your Eyes

It states (15:39) עיניכם לא תתורו אחרי... "You shall not wander...after your eyes."

Rashi writes that תתורו means to spy (as in Bamidbar 13, מתור הארץ). "The heart and eyes are spies for the body. They are its agents for sinning: the eye sees, the heart covets, and the body commits the transgression."

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

The Beis Yisrael zt'l answers that having time is a blessing for those who use it well and a curse for those who use it for foolishness or for committing aveiros.

This isn't an easy mitzvah to keep. There are tests all around. But instead of considering this obligation as a yoke or problem, we should consider guarding our eyes as a constant opportunity to do Hashem's will. Each time we guard our eyes, we perform a mitzvah d'Oraysa.

Rabbeinu Yonah (Igeres HaTeshuvah 19:20; Beis Yosef, Even HaEzer 21) writes, "If a person doesn't look, he will merit, midah kneged midah, to see *בנועם ה'*, the pleasantness of the Shechinah...as it states (Yeshayah 33:15) *עוצם עיניו מראות ברע... מלך בפיו תחזינה עיניך*, 'He who closes his eyes from seeing evil...the King in His beauty shall your eyes behold.'"

Just as one must guard his eyes, he must guard his thoughts, too, as it states, (15:39) *ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם*, "You shall not wander after your heart and after your eyes." Reb Shmuel Kaminka *zt'l* clarifies that the aveirah isn't the first second that one has a bad thought. This isn't always in his control. The aveirah is to prolong the thought in his mind.

The same applies to forbidden sights. The aveirah isn't the first second, rather when one prolongs seeing what he shouldn't.

Reb Shmuel Kaminka explains that this is alluded to in the words *לא תתורו*, which can be translated, "Don't leave over." This means when a bad thought comes to your mind, don't leave it there. Instead, turn your mind away to think about permitted matters.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* (Toras Avos *ד"ה* לא) explains that the aveirah is *אחרי עיניכם*, *after* you saw once, don't look a second time (*אחרי* means after – another time).

Reb Zelmele of Volozhin *zt'l*, a student of the Vilna Gaon *zt'l*, would walk on the side of the streets, where there was dirty sewer water, and it was forbidden to think Torah

there. People asked him why he didn't walk in the middle of the street, where he could think thoughts of Torah. He replied, "Chazal (Eiruvim 18:) say, *אחרי ארי ולא אחרי אשה*, it is better to walk behind a lion than to walk behind a woman.' So, I prefer to walk at the side, where people don't walk."

The Torah connects the mitzvah of guarding the eyes with looking at the tzitzis, as it states (15:39) *והיה לכם לציצית וראיתם אותו וזכרתם* (15:39) *את כל מצות ה'... ולא תתורו אחרי... עיניכם*, "This shall be tzitzis for you, and when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of Hashem...and you shall not wander after... your eyes."

The Or HaChaim explains that it is very hard to keep the mitzvah of guarding the eyes. Therefore, we need the tzitzis. Tzitzis remind us that we are Hashem's servants and cannot do what we please. With that awareness, we will be willing to comply and do as Hashem commands.

Shemiras Einayim is mesugal for parnassah. The Beis Avraham writes that this is the reason the Torah says *לא תתורו אחרי... עיניכם* *זונום* is from the word *מזונות* food. So if you are cautious with your eyes, you will have parnasah, food, and all your other needs.

The Beis Avraham (Bahalscha *ד"ה* והמן) offers another indication that by guarding the eyes, we merit parnassah. About the manna it states (Bamidbar 11:7) *כעין הבדולח*. The manna represents parnassah. When does one have parnassah? The answer is *כעין הבדולח*, when one is cautious with the eyes.

It states (Tehillim 145:25) *ישברו עיני כל עליך ישברו* can be translated as breaking. When one breaks his tendency to look where he shouldn't, then the end of the pasuk states, *ואתה נותן להם את אכלם בעתו*, "You give them their food in its right time."