

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Re'eh



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Re'eh

Elul - A Time to Prepare

The Zohar calls the yom tov of Rosh Hashanah- היום. This parashah - parashas Re'eh begins with the words, ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום, which can be translated as, "See that I am giving you days before Rosh Hashanah (לפניכם היום), so you can prepare yourselves on these days for the great judgment of Rosh Hashanah.¹

When a person driving a car, presses on the brakes, the vehicle doesn't stop instantly. Instead, the wheels still turn slowly, and the car will gradually stop. But the vehicle will stop short if someone pulls the emergency hand brake.

There are times when teshuvah can be compared to someone pressing the breaks on a car. He has not yet changed his ways (the wheels are still turning) but is on the road to improve. This is the typical path of teshuvah. But there are times when gradual change isn't sufficient. Sometimes it is time to put an immediate stop to bad deeds. This is compared to someone who pulls the hand breaks. Rosh Chodesh Elul is such a time. Although change is generally done in a gradual, step-by-step manner, Elul is a time to make an abrupt change and to improve one's ways.

The renowned and revered Lubavitcher chasid, Reb Mendel Futerfass zt'l, was imprisoned in a Soviet camp. He relays that when the evil Stalin died, life in the camps became more bearable for the inmates, and one inmate celebrated his partial freedom by demonstrating his talents as a tightrope walker.

He tied a thick rope to two buildings that were ten feet high. The first two times he tried to walk across the rope, he fell. But he knew how to fall, like a cat, and he didn't get hurt. He tried a third time and succeeded. He danced back and forth on the rope to the rhythm of the crowd's clapping, who had gathered to watch the stunt.

After the show, the tightrope walker asked Reb Mendel Futerfass, "When I told you that I know how to walk a tightrope, you didn't believe me. But now you saw it with your eyes."

Reb Mendel congratulated him on his abilities and asked how he does it. He replied, "I focus on where I am going and never think about falling. The hardest part is when I get to the other side and have to turn around. That is the hardest moment because you lose sight of the goal for a second when you turn around."

This anecdote teaches us several lessons. One lesson is to keep your eyes on your goal, don't get sidetracked. If your goal is to serve Hashem, don't forget that ultimate goal, not even for a moment, so you don't fall, and so you don't lose sight of your primary mission.

Lesson number two is to recognize the difficulty of turning around. The tightrope walker knew that the hardest part of his stunt was turning around, and the same is for those who do teshuvah. The hardest part is telling yourself to stop your previous ways and to turn around and begin a new path. That turning point is the most challenging aspect of teshuvah.

¹ The Baal HaTurim notes that the final letters of (11:27) תור"ה spell את הברכה אשר תשמעו. This indicates that if you want to do teshuvah, begin by studying Torah.

Two weeks after their chasunah, a woman came to the Rav, saying that she wanted a divorce. "I don't want to be married to someone who doesn't keep kosher," she explained. "Yesterday, after eating a fleishig lunch, my husband asked me to make him a coffee with milk. I told him, 'You certainly mean soy milk.' He said, 'No, I want coffee with regular milk.' I couldn't believe my ears. How can I remain married to such a person?"

The Rav said, "I can't arrange a *get* before I hear the other side of the story."

Her husband came to the Rav, and the Rav gradually broached the subject. Finally, the Rav said, "You certainly meant that she should make you a black coffee, or a coffee with parve milk."

"No," the husband said. "I asked her to serve me coffee with regular milk."

"Have you lost your mind?" the Rav rebuked him. "That's forbidden! It is *basar b'chalav!*"

The yungerman replied, "You don't understand. I've been married for two weeks and know my wife a little. When I ask her for something, it takes her six hours before she serves it to me. So, I asked her for a coffee right after we finished the fleishig meal, knowing it won't be ready for another six hours."

The nimshal is about teshuvah. We change our ways ever so slowly. When we are inspired to do teshuvah, it might take about six weeks until there is actual change. There are less than six weeks until Rosh Hashanah. We blow shofar from Rosh Chodesh Elul. Hopefully, by the time Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur come around, we will be able to do teshuvah.

A starving man arrived at a public kitchen hungry and ready to eat. He came in and asked for a meal. The man at the desk replied, "We are very organized here. You can't just come in and receive a meal. You

have to go to the second floor to room 245 and tell them what type of meal you want."

He was hungry and exhausted and just wanted to eat a meal, but he had no choice, so he climbed the stairs and asked for a meat meal. They replied, "This is a very organized place. First, you must tell us what type of meat you want to eat. We have cooked chicken, fried chicken, stuffed chicken, and schnitzel, with different kinds of meats and turkey. You have to specify what type of meal you want."

He told them what he wanted.

"Go to the third floor to room 342," they instructed him.

He dragged himself to room 342, assuming that a meal would be prepared for him there, but the secretary at room 342 said, "We don't serve meals here. This is the room where you order the side dishes. There are several options. Tell us what you want so that we can prepare it for you. You can order rice, potatoes, green beans..." He decided on his menu, and they told him to go down to the first floor, room 111, where he would be served his meal.

When he reached room 111, he saw a sign, "Exit. Thank you for coming."

He rushed to the secretary (the first one he met there) and said, "Why do you call this place a hachnasas orchim? You don't give anything."

"Forget about that for a moment," the secretary said, "and just think about how orderly we are. Each department does its part. Did you ever see such an efficient organization?"

The nimshal is that there are people who listen to many mussar drashos in Elul and are certainly encouraged to do so. However, if change doesn't occur, the primary purpose is lacking.

Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe of Zhvil zt'l asked a yungerman why he isn't going to a drashah of mussar (which many people were going to). The yungerman replied, "I know myself,

and although I know I will be inspired to do teshuvah, but in the end, I will remain the same as before, so what is the purpose?"

Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe replied with a mashal: "If someone is drowning in the sea and someone swims up to him and says, 'I can save your life for an half-hour, but afterwards you will fall right back into the ocean again,' will the drowning man accept the offer? Of course, he would. A half-hour of life is invaluable. The same is when you go to a mussar drashah. As you listen to the drashah, you are inspired to teshuvah. You saved your neshamah for this amount of time. Even if afterwards you go back to your bad ways, it was worthwhile for the time you did teshuvah, even if it was just when you were listening to the drashah."

Never Too Late to Change

It states in this week's parashah (13:5) אַחֲרֵי "You shall follow Hashem, your G-d...and cleave yourself to Him." Whenever the Torah writes the word אַחֲרֵי it means nearby, and when it states אַחֲרֵי it means further away (see Rashi, Bereishis 15:1).

The Chofetz Chaim and the Imrei Emes traveled together by train to the Knesiyah HaGedolah (תרפ"ג) The Chofetz Chaim asked, "Why does the Torah tell us to follow Hashem אַחֲרֵי, from far behind?"

The Chofetz Chaim answered his own question. Even if you are far from Hashem because of your sins, do what you can and follow after Hashem. Never say that you are too far away to follow Hashem."

The Imrei Emes added that the end of the pasuk states וּבו תִּדְבֹקוּן, "cleave yourself to Him" telling us that if we follow Hashem even when we feel distant from Him, it will elevate us to very high levels and then we will be attached to Hashem.

Many people feel it is too late to change their ways. They say, "Do you know how old I am? Do you have any idea how many times I tried to change my ways and failed? Change, unfortunately, isn't for me." But this isn't true. Teshuvah is for everyone, change is possible at every stage of life, and all aveiros will be forgiven.²

Some sources tell us that Moshe Rabbeinu was born with bad middos, but he worked on himself until all of his bad middos became pure and holy and good (see Or Pnei Moshe, Korach). Reb Moshe Midner explains that Moshe Rabbeinu told the nation, רֵאֵה אֲנִי "Look at me, and learn from me that you can do teshuvah. If I could choose good and turn myself around, you can do so, too. Don't lose hope. No matter who you are and what you do, regardless of your age, you can turn everything around."

The sefarim say that the mouth is "the pen of the heart" (קולמוס הלב). The Toldos (Ben Poras Yosef) teaches that if one has a speech impediment, this is a sign that his heart isn't one hundred percent pure. The mouth expresses the heart, and if the heart isn't pure and perfect, the heart's pen, which is the mouth, will also be impaired.

When Hashem told Moshe to be the leader of Bnei Yisrael and to take the Yidden

2. If one does teshuvah out of love to Hashem, all of his aveiros become mitzvos. Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor (Bernhard) was a renowned baal teshuvah and tzaddik. As he lay on his deathbed, the Tiferes Shlomo came to visit him and heard Reb Chaim Dovid krechtz. He thought that he was distressed over his early years of life when he was distant from Torah. The Tiferes Shlomo told him that he shouldn't worry about those days, ימים הראשונים יפלו, the early days will fall away and become like nothing.

Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor replied, "Chas v'shalom! I am not mevater on one day." He didn't want to lose his past because he did teshuvah and turned his past faults into merits.

This is as Chazal (Yoma 86:) say, "Teshuvah is great, because sins committed on purpose become merits." The Gemara adds that this occurs when he does teshuvah through love.

out of Mitzrayim, Moshe refused because he was an ערל שפתיים, speech impaired. The Toldos explains that Moshe was saying, "My impaired speech proves that my heart isn't pure and perfect. So why should I be the leader of Bnei Yisrael?"

Hashem explained to Moshe that it isn't so. Moshe's heart was one hundred percent pure and holy; technically, he should be able to speak fluently and well. He has a speech impediment to remind people of Moshe Rabbeinu's imperfect past. Moshe's impaired speech reminded Bnei Yisrael that although he was born with bad middos and the faults of his heart were expressed in his stuttered speech, he changed his ways and became Moshe Rabbeinu.

Be Happy, It's Elul Today!

Every year, we read parashas Re'eh either on rosh chodesh Elul or during the week of rosh chodesh Elul. Therefore, the roshei teivos of ר"א is ראש אלול היום, "Today is the beginning of Elul." This means it is a time of immense joy when we begin to purify ourselves before Hashem. Just see how many times the word שמחה is mentioned in this week's parashah!

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l said that a person could earn parnassah and even become wealthy if he works with simchah. What he does doesn't matter as much as his happy disposition. If he is happy, he can sell sawdust and splinters and become incredibly wealthy.

The hint is from this week's parashah (16:15), כי יברכך ה' אלקיך... ובכל מעשה ידיך והיית אך שמח, "Hashem will bless...all the work of your hands, and you will only be happy." Hashem will bless your deeds, regardless of what you do. The condition is that you must be happy.

Therefore, ideally, one should work in a field that he enjoys and finds pleasure in because when he does this, it will be easier for him to be happy with his work, and simchah is mesugal for parnassah in abundance.

Rebbe Elimelech expressed it this way, "One can even become wealthy working with sawdust and splinters. But that is only if he isn't disgusted with this work. If he doesn't like this type of work, there won't be a blessing in it.

The Targum Yonoson translates (16:15) וְתִהְיוּן בְּרַם חֲדָוִן בְּאַצְלֹחֹתָא, וְהִיית אַך שְׂמֵחָ like this: "You will always be happy with your success." This means that הצלחה is synonymous with שמחה.

Similarly, Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir zt'l quotes Rashi on (Devarim 33:18) שִׂמְחָ וּזְלוּן בְּצֵאתְךָ, "Rejoice Zevulun on your departure," Rashi writes, הצלח בצאתך לסחורה, "Succeed when you go out to trade." Once again, we see that simchah and success are the same words, and this is because joy brings success.

Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander zt'l teaches that the roshei teivos of שמח והיית אך שמח spell שו"א, which translates as a lie. This tells us that when it comes to being happy, one may lie and pretend that he is happy, even when he isn't. Generally, we avoid acting. A person must be real. However, when it comes to being happy, you can pretend because that leads to genuine joy.³

In a letter to his son, the Beis Aharon writes, "A person must work on simchah more than all other good middos." Once, the Beis Aharon rebuked his son for not being happy. His son asked, "I have other faults, and you don't speak to me about them? So why do you rebuke me specifically about happiness?"

3. The pretending in the lie is at the beginning, in the roshei teivos. But when people see that he is happy, they will be happy with him, he will have many friends, and he will become genuinely happy in the end.

The Beis Aharon replied, "You have Yiras Shamayim, and when you do something wrong, I know you will regret it, even if I don't tell you. So, there is no reason for me to rebuke you in those areas. But you think that being sad isn't so severe. Therefore, I have to train you in the importance of always being happy."

Recognizing the Origin

The parashah begins (11:26) ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה, "Behold I give before you today a brachah and a klalah (curse)." This tells us that all blessings and r'l, all the opposite of blessings, are from Hashem. This knowledge is a great comfort and chizuk because we know that nothing happens by chance. Everything is exactly as it should be.

Therefore, we say (Minchah Shemonah Esrei of Shabbos) כי ידוע כי מאתך - היא מנוחתם, which can be translated, "When you know everything is from Hashem, היא מנוחתם, that is your menuchah and comfort" (Beis Avraham). We spoke above about the importance of being happy. You will always be satisfied when you know everything is from Hashem.

When one has wealth, it is from Hashem. A source for that is from the final pasuk of this week's parashah (16:17) איש כמתנת ידו כברכת ה' אלקיך אשר נתן לך, "Every man [shall bring sacrifices to the Beis HaMikdash] as much as he can afford, according to the blessing Hashem, your God, which He has given you."

The pasuk mentions מתנת ידו, which literally translated can mean, "The gift of His hand." Reb Eizik Kahanah hy'd zt'l explains: Let's say someone gives you a gift, do you have hakaras hatov to the person, or do you have hakaras hatov to the hand that gave it to you? Obviously, you understand that the hand is like the messenger that gave it to you, and your hakaras hatov is to the

person. Similarly, when you receive something you enjoy, recognize that your primary hakaras hatov should go to Hashem. The means that brought it to you is merely Hashem's messenger, Hashem's hand, and the primary hakaras hatov should be to Hashem.

Also, in regard to the hardships we endure in life, we must remember the source. It wasn't this person's hand or that person's bad idea. Ultimately, everything is destined and planned. This is a happy thought because when we know it is from Hashem, we know it is solely for our good.

The Chofetz Chaim told the following mashal:

A person came to the train station for the first time in his life and watched as an officer rang a bell to let the passengers know it was time to board the train. The first time he rang his bell, many people rushed aboard. Five minutes later, he rang the bell again, and the lazy people boarded the train. The train began to go when he rang the bell a third time.

The man watching all of this was amazed. He said, "See what he does?! Everyone does his bidding. He is such an important person!" He then approached the bell man and said, "It is an honor to meet you, a person who runs the entire train system."

"You have it all wrong," the bell man replied. "I am a small man here. I'm just a worker. The man in the office upstairs is the true boss here."

The Chofetz Chaim says that when we see influential people, wealthy people, and so on, we are amazed at their strength and power. We forget that it isn't them. They are pawns in Hashem's world, fulfilling the missions that Hashem sends them to do.⁴

4. Rebbe Hershele Lisker zt'l arrived at a certain city, and didn't have where to sleep, so he went to a beis medresh to study Torah. But he couldn't focus on his studies because in addition to being tired, he was hungry, too.

Giving Tzedakah

This week's parashah discusses the great mitzvah of giving tzedakah. There is a type of tzedakah that everyone can do. One doesn't need money to perform it.

The Chinuch writes, "Give tzedakah with a good heart and give chizuk (support/encouragement) in any way you can. And now, my son, don't think tzedakah is solely for the poor, those who lack bread and clothing. The Torah wants us to do gemilus chasadim and that we should help people in any way that we can. Whoever helps his friend with money, or in any other way, and with kind words, it is considered tzedakah, and his reward is great. "

This is a great revelation. Tzedakah isn't only with money and isn't only for the poor. It means giving of yourself to help others. You can do that with kind words, even a smile, and many other ways.

The hint is (15:10) נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך ובכל משלח ידך, "You shall surely give him, and your heart shall not be saddened when you give to him; for because of this thing Hashem, your God, will bless you in all your work and all your endeavors." We can read the pasuk as -brachos come בגלל הדבר הזה, because of the kind words you share with your fellow man (דיבור, words, speech).

The next pasuk states, (15:11) כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ על כן אנכי מצוך לאמר פתח תפתח את ידך לאחריך לעניך ולאבינך בארצך, "For there will never cease to be needy within the land. Therefore, I command you, saying, you shall surely open your hand to your brother, to the poor one, and to the needy one in your land." The Ruzhiner zt'l said that the pasuk can be read as follows, "אנכי מצוך לאמר פתח תפתח the day will yet come when you will be the one who is opening up your hand to help the poor."

One form of tzedakah is teaching Torah to others.

Reb Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe vol.7) writes, "I paskened that every talmid chacham is obligated to study with others. The proof is from Reb Preida, who taught his student a sugyah 400 times, although, at this time, he could have studied himself. He was rewarded for this and lived until he was four hundred years old. I think that the amount one should devote to teaching others is maasar, a tenth of the time that he studies himself. Perhaps he can give up to a fifth of the time he studies to study with others."

The Shevet Mussar (431) tells a story of a rasha who committed aveiros his entire life. When he was old and almost a gosses (on the verge of dying), the family said, "Why didn't you eat anything today?"

At this time, in this city, there was a mkashe leilad, a woman going through a painful and difficult labor. In a dream, the mother of Reb Hershele Lisker came to the mother of the makshe leilad and said, "If you want your daughter should give birth quickly, healthily, and without pain, go to the beis medresh and give my son a tzenerel."

A tzenerel means a ten. It was a type of coin they used. She immediately went to the beis medresh, found Rebbe Hershele Lisker and gave him a tzenerel, telling him that his mother came to her in a dream and advised her to give this money so her daughter can have an easy birth.

Rebbe Hershele davened for the makshe leiled, and she immediately gave birth to a healthy child.

Now, Rebbe Hershele had money, and he could buy himself something to eat and a place to sleep. He said, "If my mother came down from heaven, why did she ask that they give me a tzenerel? She could have asked for twenty (or more)! But the answer is that if it is bashert to receive ten, I won't get more than that."

He replied, "if you give me a cooked egg, I will eat it."

Before he ate the egg, a poor person came to the door, asking for food. The ill man said to his family, "Give the egg to him."

This was the first time (and only time) in his life that he gave tzedakah. Three days later, he died, and he came to his son in a dream and said, "My dear son, accustom yourself to give tzedakah, and you will merit Olam Haba. I gave tzedakah once in my lifetime, and the mitzvah tipped the scales in my favor, and I merited Olam Haba."

The Shevet Mussar explains how just once giving tzedakah tipped the scale to merit, although this man had sinned for so many years. The Shevet Mussar explains that the poor man who came to his door was on the verge of dying, and if it weren't for the egg he gave him, the poor man would have died from hunger. This means that all the mitzvos this person will do in his lifetime, and all the lives of his children and future descendants who will be born are all to his credit. This is why this deed was so significant; with it, he merited Olam HaBa.

For our discussion, let us be aware that the same can occur when you say a kind word to someone or when you smile at someone. You don't know what you are accomplishing. Perhaps your smile or encouraging words saved someone's shalom bayis. Perhaps you saved someone's spirituality. All the good deeds that will come from your good deed will be attributed to your merits.

The Shevet Mussar tells over that he once spoke to a broken-hearted person for a long time to give him hope and chizuk. Some days later, the man told him that if it weren't for that conversation, he would have committed suicide. The conversation saved him. Therefore, the Shevet Mussar encourages everyone to be generous with their words and to give chizuk to those who are broken-hearted. He calls it "tzedakah that doesn't cost money."

Also, we sometimes encounter children on the fringe, r'l, and a kind word means so much to them. We can literally save a Yiddishe neshamah with words. The reward will be enormous because all the mitzvos he will do afterwards will be to your credit.

Reb Gad'l Eisner said, "I studied the sugyah of 'man' in-depth, and I discovered that with one kind word everything can be fixed." How true this is. How powerful one kind word can be.

It is very painful when people speak lashon hara about you. No one wants to be the discussion of town. But there is something even more painful than that. And that is when no one speaks to you or about you, and you feel ignored and alone. This is a very painful experience. Many people would prefer to be talked about rather than ignored as if they don't exist.

Chazal say מצורע חשוב כמות, a metzora is considered dead. This is because the metzora is banished from the camp and dwells alone. (Vayikra 13:46) בדר ישב מחוץ למחנה מושבו, "He shall dwell isolated. His dwelling shall be outside the camp." He lives alone, distant from people, and that loneliness is very painful.

There are many lonely people, and with a smile and a kind word you can make their day and much more than that!

It states (15:8) כי פתח תפתח את ירך לו... די מחסרו "You shall open your hand to him [and give him] sufficient for his needs, which he is lacking." Rashi explains that the words אשר יחסר לו, "which he is lacking," indicates that we have to restore the poor person to his previous prestige, honor, and pleasure that he was accustomed to in the days when he was financially better off. Rashi explains that if, in the past, he used to ride on a horse and have a slave run in front of him, we must provide him with these things. We aren't obligated to make him wealthy, but we are obligated to restore him to his previous lifestyle.

The Gemara (Kesubos 67:) teaches, "People say about Hillel HaZaken that he had

provided for a poor man a horse to ride on and a slave to run before him [because this poor man was accustomed to this lifestyle when had money]. Once, Hillel couldn't find a slave to run before the poor man, so Hillel himself ran before him for three mil."

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz expresses wonder that the great scholar, Hillel HaZaken, should run before this poor man. "It must be that it is a matter of pikuach nefesh." For a person to lack a level of honor and prestige that he was once accustomed to is like murder for him, and therefore Hillel HaZaken understood that he couldn't be negligent in this poor man's needs.

One day, Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l greeted a sanitation worker throwing garbage into the truck. The man was flattered that the rav acknowledged him, and he said, "I should really be the one riding on the truck, and not the person who runs and picks up the garbage bags to throw them into the truck. But, by nature, I don't pursue honor, and since it was important for my partner to take the more respected job, I let him take it."

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz said that from this conversation he understood the foolishness of those who pursue honor, because even if the garbage man would have received the "more respected job" of riding on the truck instead of running alongside it, he would still be a garbage man, and how much honor is there in this job?

So, if kavod is so foolish, why did Hashem create this nature in people? Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that we should know how important it is to people and honor them.

A baal agalah saw the revered Slonimer chasid, Reb Moshe Midner zt'l, walking on the road, so he stopped near him and asked him to ride on the wagon. "I'd rather walk," Reb Moshe said, but the baal agalah insisted, so Reb Moshe Midner went on the wagon. Reb Moshe asked the baal agalah why he was so insistent on taking him. The baal

agalah pointed to his ears and said, "These ears heard from Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l that a day you don't do a chesed is a dead day. And the day almost passed, and I didn't yet do a chesed. Therefore, I needed to give you a ride."

The Shlah HaKadosh says something similar from the pasuk (Tehillim 52:3) חסד א"ל כל היום, which he translates that every day you should do chesed. כל היום, every day, do a chesed. Don't let a day pass without chesed.

The mitzvah of *tzedakah* is discussed this week, and now that Elul is arriving, we add that giving *tzedakah* is a primary aspect of *teshuvah*.

People wonder why they should give away their hard-earned money to others.

But is the money really yours? Some of the money you own was given to you so you can help others.

The Alshich (נתן תתן, ד"ה א"י *parashah*) explains that wealthy people should consider themselves like *apitropsim*, legal guardians, who were appointed to take care of the money of others and to distribute it to them when they need it.

To explain this point, Reb Eliezer Zusya Portugal, the Sukelener Rebbe zt'l, told the following *mashal*:

Ten people were seated at a large round table at a wedding. The waiter came by, placed a tray filled with meat in front of one person, and began distributing portions to everyone seated at the table. The man who sat in front of the tray said, "What are you doing? This tray of meat is for me!" Everyone understands that the tray was placed before him so that the food will be distributed to the others seated at the table. Similarly, Hashem gives a lot of money to one person so he can distribute it to the others. It was never intended to be entirely his.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 131:) teaches that if someone has several children and he specifies the name of one of his sons in his will to

inherit all of his money, we understand that the father meant that this son should be the *apitropis*, the legal guardian, who is in charge of distributing the money among his brothers. All of his children will inherit equally. Unless we know of a dispute in the family, we don't suppose the father wanted to give all his money to that one child that he specified, because why should he single out one son over the others? We, therefore, explain that he meant that this child should be the *apitropis*.

Based on this Gemara, the Chida (*Pnei David, Re'eh*) writes: Every member of Bnei Yisrael is Hashem's child, as it states, בנים אתם, "You are children to Hashem, your G-d." Therefore, it is illogical for Hashem to want some of His children to be wealthy while His other children should suffer from poverty. Hashem gave extra money to the rich so they can help the poor. They are the *apitropsim*, appointed to allocate the money to the poor.

This is the meaning of the double expression (15:10), נתון תתן לו, Hashem gave you so you can give others. ולא ירע לבבך, Don't feel bad when you give tzedakah because the money you give was never really yours, to begin with.

From our discussion, we understand that one doesn't really deserve reward for giving tzedakah. All he did was allocate the money to where it was destined to be. But, nevertheless, the Torah promises, כי בגלל הדבר, הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך ובכל משלח ידך, "For this mitzvah Hashem will bless all your deeds, and grant you success wherever you put your hand."

It states, עשר תעשר and Chazal (*Taanis* 9.) explain, עשר בשביל שתתעשר, tithe your wealth so that you will become wealthy. Reb Shimon Trop *zt'l* asks why this mitzvah specifically is rewarded with wealth, more than all other mitzvos?

He explains the answer with an analogy to a person the king appointed to take care of a small treasure. If he does his job honestly and responsibly, he will be appointed over larger treasures. Similarly, when one tithes his money, he shows that he is a reliable *apitropus*, and knows how he should spend his money. And then Heaven will give him more money. This is the reason giving tzedakah brings on wealth.⁵

A poor man once complained to Rebbe Shayale Kerestirer *zt'l* about his financial plight. Reb Shayale advised him to start a different business. The chasid did as the Rebbe advised and in a short time became extremely wealthy.

A year later, he returned to Rebbe Shayele Kerestirer, and this time, he had another complaint. "Poor people are running after me, and I don't have any respite. So many people are nudging me for money; among them are my relatives, friends, and even people I never knew before. I don't want to give them anything, but they bother me constantly."

The Rebbe replied, "I see you aren't a loyal *apitropis*. We will find someone who will do a better job. Why does one need wealth if not to distribute money to the needy?"

"Here is what I will do. I will write the names of all residents of Kerestir on small

5. One shouldn't serve Hashem על מנת לקבל פרס, in order to receive reward. His intentions should be solely for Hashem. If so, asks the Bnei Yissaschar (*Sivan* 5:14), why does the Torah tell us to give tzedakah to become wealthy?

He answers that the Gemara (*Eiruvin* 41:) says, דקדוקי עניות מעבירין את האדם על דעתו ועל דעת קונו, extreme poverty can cause a person to lose his mind and his *emunah*." Therefore, to want *parnassah* in abundance can be a spiritual quest. Therefore, one may give tzedakah to be wealthy, so he can have *emunah* and serve Hashem properly.

pieces of paper and place them in a box. Your name will be there, too. We will choose one. Whoever is worthy of being Hashem's *apitropis* will be selected by the *gorel*. He will become wealthy and distribute his wealth to the poor. If you regret your ways and are prepared to help the poor, you will win the lottery."

This man did sincere *teshuvah*, and made up his mind to help all the poor people who came to him, and he won the *gorel*.

Collecting Tzedakah

Chazal (*Bava Basra* 9) tell us, גדול המעשה יותר מן, העושה, "Causing others to give *tzedakah* is a greater mitzvah than giving *tzedakah* yourself." This means, in addition to giving *tzedakah*, there is a particular benefit in going around and asking people to give *tzedakah* to those in need.

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zy'a* says, "Going around the four corners of the city to collect money for the poor atones for severe sins that deserve the four deaths issued by *beis din*."

Reb Aharon of Belz *zy'a* said, "Going from door to door collecting money for the poor frees a person from *kares*." The shame one endures by performing this mitzvah atones and purifies.

The Aruch HaShulchan (247:5) writes, "I received a *kabalah* that when one collects money for others, this protects his future generations that they will never need to collect money for themselves."

Reb Getzel Berger *z'l* from London (*niftar* 1977/תשל"ח) was a wealthy Satmar chasid who gave large sums of money for *tzedakah*. The Satmar Rebbe *zy'a* told him that in addition to giving *tzedakah*, he must speak to other wealthy people and encourage them to give *tzedakah*.

Reb Getzel said he prefers to give more money for *tzedakah* than to speak with others, but the Satmar Rebbe insisted that he ask other wealthy people for donations.⁶

Give Tzedakah Wisely

In *Tehillim* (41) it states, אשרי משכיל אל דל. One must be *משכיל*, to think about and contemplate the needs of the poor so that he can help the poor in the very best way.

Someone complained to the Satmar Rebbe *z'l* about his financial struggles; how hard it was for him to support his family and to cover the expenses of an upcoming *chasunah*.⁷ The Rebbe asked, "How much do you need?"

"Thirty thousand dollars."

6. There is a halachah that one must stand up for someone who is doing a mitzvah. Therefore, the Pischei Teshuvah (*Yorah Dei'ah* 256:1) writes, "One must stand up for the *gabai tzedakah* when he collects money for the needy."

Perhaps this is one of the reasons people stand during *ויברך דוד*. Often, during this part of the *tefillah*, the *gabai* goes around the *beis medresh* collecting money. Therefore we should stand for him, as he is performing a mitzvah.

7. Someone in Eretz Yisrael was thinking of moving to America. He explained to the Satmar Rebbe, "When it comes to *chasunos* it is much easier in America. The amount of money the Yidden in Eretz Yisrael have to pay is impossible."

The Satmar Rebbe replied, "The truth is, all *chaunos* – in Eretz Yisrael or abroad – need miracles. According to the rules of nature, it is impossible to earn enough money to make multiple *chasunos*. The difference between Eretz Yisrael and America is that in Eretz Yisrael the miracles are obvious, while in *chutz le'aretz*, the miracles are concealed within the laws of nature. Isn't it better to live in Eretz Yisrael, where the miracles are obvious, than to live in America, where the miracles are clothed within nature?"

The Satmar Rebbe gave him twenty-nine thousand dollars.

When the man left the room, the *gaba'im* asked the Rebbe, "If you gave so much money, why didn't you give him the last thousand dollars more, so he can have the entire thirty thousand dollars he needs?"

The Rebbe replied, "If I gave him thirty thousand dollars, he would be upset that he didn't ask for more. He would tell himself, 'I asked for thirty thousand, so I received thirty thousand. If I had asked for fifty thousand, I would have received that.' Now

he knows that he asked for the right amount and is happy with the amount he received."

This story is an example of *אשרי משכיל אל ל*, to give charity with wisdom, in ways that will make the poor happy and not embarrassed or distressed.⁸

One must be wise when it comes to giving tzedakah. For example, there are halachos regarding whom to give tzedakah. If he has a close relative or neighbor who is poor, halachah states that he is obligated to provide him with more money than what he would give to strangers. Tzedakah is a matter that

8. In honor of the Satmar Rebbe's *yahrtzeit*, which was on the 26th of Av, we will tell a few stories about this great tzaddik.

The Satmar Rebbe would go to his cheder from time to time to test the children. Once, he asked a child a question, but the child stuttered and didn't answer clearly. The Satmar Rebbe repeated his question a second time, and a third time, but he couldn't understand what the child was saying. That is when the Rebbe understood that the child had a speech impediment. (The Rebbe was eighty-six years old at this time, his hearing was beginning to fail, and it took some time until he realized the child had a speech impediment.) The Rebbe feared he had embarrassed the child, so for the next half a year, whenever he saw this child, even from the distance, he would call him over and speak to him.

The Satmar Rebbe was once at a *Kiddush* at the home of one of his chassidim. This chassid was extremely careful with kashrus. Several times during the Kiddush, he emphasized how everything was homemade and perfectly kosher. He asked the Rebbe, "Does the Rebbe want fish? It's *heimish* (homemade). How about some kugel? It's also *heimish* (homemade)."

The Rebbe pointed to the wine and asked, "Is the wine also *heimish*?"

"No. I bought the wine."

The Rebbe said, "That's because *you* were supposed to make the wine."

Making wine is in the man's domain. The Rebbe was telling him that although it's very good to be careful with kashrus, but when extreme caution causes the wife to work extra hard, the chumros need to be reconsidered.

An orphan once came to the Satmar Rebbe before his *chasunah* for a *brachah*. The Rebbe put his hands over the *chasan's* head and blessed him, crying copiously. He blessed him for about twenty minutes. Afterwards, someone asked the Rebbe, "I understand the importance of being extra kind to this *chasan* since he is an orphan - but why for so long?"

The Rebbe replied, "The success of the *chasan* and *kalah* in their marriage are the tears and the *tefillos* their parents shed for them before the *chasunah*. But this *chasan* doesn't have anyone to cry for him, so I cried and prayed for him."

(It is worth remembering this story before leading your child to the chuppah. The children's success in their marriage and in their future life, is largely dependent on the *tefillos* and tears of the parents before the *chasunah*.)

Regarding *shalom bayis*, the Satmar Rebbe taught, "We have a *kabalah* (tradition) that the one who is *mevatar* wins." Sometimes there are differences of opinion between a husband and wife. The one who gives in is the winner.

often needs rabbinic guidance. There was a wealthy person who discussed hilchos tzedakah with the Bach every day, so he should give tzedakah correctly. In conclusion, tzedakah should be performed wisely, as it states אשרי משכיל אל דל.

Free Loans

This week's parashah also discusses the mitzvah of lending money to needy people. As it states (15:10), נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו, כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ד' אלקיך בכל מעשך ובכל משלח ידך, "You shall surely give him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him; for because of this thing Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your work and in all your endeavors."

The Chinuch (480) explains that Hashem wants us to be kind to others and to give tzedakah and loans, because then Hashem will act with us with kindness and compassion, too. He writes, "The purpose of this mitzvah is to establish the attribute of generosity in our hearts and to distance us as far as possible from stinginess. Anyone familiar with the Torah's ways and comprehends its beautiful ways, knows with certainty that when he is generous with his money, he will gain more. And whoever refrains [and doesn't give money to others] will lose. This is because Hashem judges people according to their deeds. Being tight with money erects an iron wall that separates the person from Hashem's *brachos*. Generosity is, in itself, a blessing; therefore, those who act with kindness receive blessings."

The Chofetz Chaim (*Ahavas Chesed* ch.5, *hagahah*) writes, "Now, that we are living in a time when the *midas gevurah* [hardships and suffering] reigns in the world, the only solution to be saved from troubles is to do deeds of loving-kindness. These deeds of kindness will rouse Hashem's attribute of *chesed*. It states in *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (23) that when the Yidden lived in Mitzrayim they gathered and made a pact to do *gemilus chasadim* with each other. Why? They realized there was no way to escape Pharaoh's

decrees, and the labor in Mitzrayim was becoming harder each day, so the nation gathered to seek counsel. They concluded that they must do *chesed* with one another. That would arouse Hashem's *chesed* Above, and Pharaoh's decrees would be abolished. Their plan succeeded as it states, נחית בחסדך, עם זו גאלת, 'With loving kindness You led the people You redeemed,' and Chazal explain, נחית בחסדך refers to the *gemilus chasadim* of the Jewish nation."

Hashem's Children

It states in this week's *parashah* (14:1), בנים, אתם לה' אלקיכם, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d."

Hashem's love for us surpasses a parent's love for his children. We will prove that from the following Mishnah (*Avos* 3), חביבין ישראל שנקראים בנים למקום. The Mishnah says that Hashem loves the Jewish nation and calls us His children. חבה יתירה נודעת להם שנקראו בנים למקום, שנאמר בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם, Hashem's love to His nation is even greater than that, because He told them, בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם, that they are Hashem's children, and there's a rule: מקצת שבהו בפניו, that you only tell someone part of his praise. So, if we were told that Hashem loves us like children, we understand that Hashem's love to us is even greater than that.

It states, בנים אתם, and Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* explains that אתם means that we are Hashem's children even if we sin, as the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25.) says, אתם אפילו, שזוגגין אתם אפילו מזידין אתם אפילו מוטעין, (that the word אתם implies that even if you sin by accident, on purpose, or when you make mistakes, you remain בנים, Hashem's children.

Actually, there's a *machlokes* in the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 36.) whether we are called Hashem's children when we sin. According to Reb Yehudah, we are only Hashem's children when we act righteously.

However, Reb Meir says, בין כך ובין כך קרוין בנים, regardless of whether they perform

mitzvos or *chalilah* they do *aveiros*, they are always בנים, Hashem's children.

The Rashba (*teshuva* 194) writes that although we generally follow Reb Yehudah's view over Reb Meir's, in this instance, the halachah is like Reb Meir, and at all times, regardless of how we act, we remain Hashem's children.⁹

It states, בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגדדו ולא תשימו, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d. You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead." Since we are Hashem's children, it is improper that we should inflict ourselves or pull out hair when a tragedy occurs. The Rishonim explain the reason for this prohibition in various ways.

The Ibn Ezra explains that since we are Hashem's children, we are confident that everything Hashem does is for our good. Therefore, there is never a reason for excessive distress. The Ibn Ezra writes, "Now that you know you are Hashem's children and that He loves you more than a father loves his son do not injure yourself

when something sad occurs because everything is for the good. If you don't understand [why bad things are happening to you], it can be compared to a child who doesn't understand the ways of his parent, but he relies on his parents [that they are only doing chesed and kindness with him]. That's how you should be with your *emunah* in Hashem."

Siforno writes, "It is improper to exhibit extreme grief for a relative who died if there remained a closer relative who is more capable of helping you. You are Hashem's children, and He is your eternal father. Therefore, it isn't proper to worry and to mourn excessively for the dead."

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Rishon L'Tzion*) writes on the *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 31:19) הֵבֵן יָקִיר לִי אֲפֵרַיִם that when someone has a foul odor, others keep their distance from him. However, when their own baby needs a change, parents have no problem holding the child and playing with him. They kiss and hug him and almost don't even sense the bad odor because of their love for the child. We are Hashem's children, and

9. When one needs a *yeshuah*, there's a custom to give tzedakah and to say אלוהי דמאיר עניי, "The G-d of Reb Meir should answer me." The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* gives an explanation for this custom:

The Gemara says (*Eiruvin* 13:), "It is revealed and known to the One who created the world that no one equaled to Reb Meir in his generation. So why isn't the halachah like Reb Meir? It's because his colleagues couldn't fully grasp his thoughts." Reb Meir's logic was beyond most people's grasp, and therefore, we don't follow his halachic opinion.

Heaven, however, certainly does understand Reb Meir's view, and therefore in heaven the halachah is like Reb Meir. In heaven, the halachah is בין כך ובין כך קרוין בנים, no matter what Yidden do, they are Hashem's child.

If a person needs a salvation, he gives *tzedakah* and says אלוהי דמאיר עניי. The indication is that Reb Meir holds that no matter what one does, he remains Hashem's child. We give tzedakah and say, "Hashem, I am certain that in heaven the halachah is like Reb Meir. Thus, even if I've sinned, I am your child. Therefore, have compassion on me and help me."

On Rosh Hashanah, we say, אם כבנים אם כעבדים אם כבנים רחמנו כרחם אב על בנים ואם כעבדים עיינו לך תלויות עד שתחננו ותוציא כאור, *משפטינו*... The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* (*Divrei Yoel, Rosh Hashanah, 36*) explains: If we are בנים, we can certainly expect that Hashem will have compassion on us and grant us a good year. אם כעבדים, if we are like slaves, because of our sins, תלויות לך עיינו לך תלויות, we raise our eyes לך, to You, Hashem, because in Hashem's view, we are always His children. עיינו לך תלויות, we request that Hashem view us in His view, that we are always His children, and therefore, we request that He inscribe us for a good year.

Hashem says that even if we smell bad due to our sins, we remain *הבן יקר לי אפרים*, Hashem's beloved children. *אם ילד שעשעוים*, Hashem plays with us and enjoys us, as a

parent plays with his child even when the child isn't clean. *כי מדי דברי בו זכור אזכרנו עוד*, in every situation, *רחם ארחמנו נאם ה'*, Hashem loves us and has mercy on us.