

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

Yisro



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Yisro

## Segulos for Emunah

The entire Torah, with all its mitzvos, was given so that a Yid should believe in Hashem.

The Maor v'Shemesh (ד"ה איתא במדרש Yisro) writes in the name of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l, וידבר אלקים את כל הדברים האלה לאמר, "Hashem spoke all these words, to say: "I am Hashem your G-d." This means, Hashem spoke, וידבר אלקים, את כל הדברים האלה, all the mitzvos of the Torah, לאמר, so that a Yid should say, אנכי ה' אלקיך, and believe in Hashem.

The Tiferes Shmuel of Alexander zt'l (נשאד) writes, "Emunah is the primary preparation for receiving the Torah- וצדיק באמונתו יחיה, with emunah, one gives *chiyus* to all his limbs to become proper vessels for receiving the Torah. About this, Dovid HaMelech said (Tehillim 119:29) בחרתי דרך אמונה בהרתי, "favor me with Your Torah, for I have chosen the path of emunah."

The Chazon Ish zt'l (Kovetz Igros 3:1) "A lack in emunah is the root... to thinking unimportant and improper thoughts."

The Rebbe of Toldos Aharon zt'l (introduction to Divrei Emunah) explains the pasuk כל מצותיך שקר רדפוני עזרני אמונה, "All your mitzvos are emunah, they pursue me with falsehood, save me." This pasuk refers to the final generation when there will be a lot of falsehoods in the world. As Chazal (Sanhedrin 97.) say, during the *ikvisa d'mishicha*, the final generation before Moshiach comes, האמת נעדרת, it will be hard to find truth. Currently, we need extra siyata d'shmaya to remain strong. The solution is כל מצותיך אמונה, to be firm with our emunah when שקר רדפוני, falsehood prevails in the world.

The Or LaShamayim of Apta (Parashas Bo ד"ה היום) teaches, "In the previous generations, the rectification of the soul was achieved through afflictions. These broke the *kelipos* and removed the covers that separated us from the neshamah. But in the generation before Moshiach, the correction is easy. We don't need afflictions, but rather emunah in Hashem."

## Ratzon/Desire

Ratzon, a desire to serve Hashem, is a very high level, and many blessings and much success come from it.

It states (19:9) ויגד משה את דברי העם אל ה', "Moshe relayed the words of the nation to Hashem." Rashi explains that initially, the plan was for Hashem to teach the Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu, as the nation would stand by and watch this great revelation. Then Moshe would repeat the lessons of Torah that he heard from Hashem to Bnei Yisrael. However, the nation argued that they wanted Hashem to speak directly to them. They said, "There is no comparison between one who hears from the mouth of the *shaliach* to when one who hears from the mouth of the King.... רצוננו לראות את מלכנו, We want to see our King."

Hashem instructed the nation that they must sanctify themselves. Rashi explains that since Hashem would speak to them, as they requested, they needed to prepare for this significant revelation.

We can learn from this episode the strength of desire. The Jewish nation desired to hear the Torah directly from Hashem's mouth, and Hashem agreed to do as they requested.<sup>1</sup>

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1. In the end, the nation heard the first two of the Aseres HaDibros directly from Hashem, and then they requested that Moshe should give over to them the remaining eight Commandments. The revelation was too overwhelming for them.

The Midrash (Yalkut Yeshayah 391) states, "It will occur in the future that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will come to Har Tavor and Har Karmel to build the Beis HaMikdash on them." The Satmar Rebbe zt'l (Shavuos p.127) explains that there's another Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 99:1) that tells us that Har Tavor and Har Karmel *desired* the Torah to be given on them.<sup>2</sup> This desire would be paid off in the future because the Beis HaMikdash will be built on them.

Here is a kal v'chomer: If a דומם, an inanimate object, merits greatness because of desire, certainly a human being will receive very high levels for his good desires to keep the Torah.

Chazal (Shabbos 86:) say, "On the first day [that they came to Midbar Sinai] Hashem didn't tell them anything because they were weak from the travel (חולשא דאורחא)." The question is, why were they tired? The clouds (the ענני הכבוד) went before them to make the journey easy and comfortable. Why were they tired?

Sifsei Tzaddik (Shavuos #59) explains that חולשא דאורחא means they were חולת אהבה, ill from love, which is a very high and precious level before Hashem. Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't want to interrupt or disturb their yearning and love, so He pushed off the preparations for matan Torah until the next day.<sup>3</sup>

Rashi (19:1) writes, "We should consider the Torah new as if it was given just today." When we study Torah and keep the mitzvos,

they shouldn't seem like old information or old rituals given to us years ago. We should imagine that Hashem gave us the Torah and mitzvos today.

This is why the Torah states (19:1) ביום הַזֶּה, "On this day, they arrived in the desert of Sinai," instead of ביום ההוא, "On that day". "This day" means we should consider the Torah new each day.<sup>4</sup>

This lesson is also a lesson in *ratzon*, the desire to serve Hashem. Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen zt'l points out that the pasuk (19:1) ביום הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי, "On this day, they arrived in the desert of Sinai" refers to six or seven days before matan Torah! Rebbe Tzadok explains that although the Torah wasn't given on that day, the nation desired the Torah on that day. So should we create a new desire for Torah each day.

Reb Tzaddok HaKohen supports his lesson from the Psikta on this pasuk (19:1) בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי, "In the third month of Bnei Yisrael's departure from Egypt, on this day they arrived in Midbar Sinai." The Psikta explains that בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי stands for בא חדש, comes new. This means that on this day, Klal Yisrael had a new desire for the Torah. This desire is what we want to be renewed every day.

Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen writes, שתמיד יהיה לישראל חשק זה כמו היום הזה שבאו למדבר סיני שהיה להם החשק הנפלא, "Yisrael should always have this desire, like the day that they came to Midbar

2. The Midrash states, "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu came to give the Torah in Sinai, mountains ran and fought with one another. This one said, The Torah should be given on me. Another said The Torah should be given on me.... Tavor came... Karmel came... Hakadosh Baruch Hu said... Avodah zarahs were placed on all of you. I desire to give the Torah on Har Sinai because it never had avodah zarah on it."

3. We can also answer that Hashem wanted to wait another day for the sinners who were banished from the clouds of glory. They were tired from the travels because they didn't have the clouds of glory to assist them. From this we learn how much Hakadosh Baruch Hu cares about every Yid. They are all beloved before Him; therefore, Matan Torah was delayed for a day so these people could properly rest up and be prepared for kabbalas haTorah.

4. In birchas haTorah, we say נותן התורה, "Who gives the Torah," in the present tense. The Taz (Orach Chaim 47:5) explains that this is because Hashem gives us the Torah every day.

Sinai, that they had a wonderful desire [for Torah]."

### ובא לציון

The Gemara (Sotah 49.) states: What keeps the world in existence? It is the קדושה דסדרה, the kedushah that we say in ובא לציון."

Kedushah is a very lofty tefillah. Sefer Heichalos (quoted in Tur, Orach Chaim 125) teaches, "When Bnei Yisrael say kedushah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'I don't have a pleasure in the world like that time when their eyes are raised to my eyes, and my eyes look into theirs.'"

Shulchan Aruch (1332:1) states, "You have to be very cautious to say it with kavanah," and the Zohar Hakadosh discusses great things regarding this tefillah.

Reb Asher of Stoln zy'a (Seder Hayom, written in Beis Aharon) says, "Be very cautious with (קדושה דסידרה) ובא לציון to say it with a lot of kavanah, because it is a tikun for the entire day, that everything should be מסודר, organized."

We say kedushah in the brachah יוצר אור before Kriyas Shma, again at Shemonah Esrei (חזרת הש"ץ) and a third time in ובא לציון.

Actually, we say kedushah twice in ובא לציון because we say קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' and ברוך ה' ממוקומו, and then we also repeat these verses in the Targum, in Aramaic.

שבלי הלקט (quoted in Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim 132) teaches the history of the establishment of kedushah in ובא לציון. "They established another kedushah to be said in ובא לציון. This was because there was a time that they couldn't say kedushah in the tefillah because the goyim issued a decree that forbade them from saying kedushah, and spies were stationed in the beis knesses to ensure compliance. After the tefillah, the spies left, and then the community would say the kedushah and the targum (the translation in Aramaic) because of their love for it, so it would be like they said kedushah twice. Once corresponding to the kedushah of יוצר

אור (in the brachos of kriyas Shma) and a second time corresponding to the kedushah that is said in חזרת הש"ץ of Shemonah Esrei. Although in our times, we say kedushah amid the tefillah, the custom to say kedushah in ובא לציון remains because they were concerned that perhaps the resha'im will reenact the gezeirah due to our sins (and once again, it might be forbidden to say kedushah in the tefillah)."

Let us repeat the שבלי הלקט's lesson in our own words. The goyim stood in the beis knesses to prevent people from saying kedushah. The community didn't lose hope; they weren't *mevater* on saying the kedushah. They said, "No! No! We refuse to give up! We won't be *mevater* on the kedushah!" With *mesirus nefesh*, as soon as the *resha'im* left the beis knesses, their hearts burst forth with a shout קדוש קדוש קדוש, and they said it twice to compensate for the two kedushos that they missed.

So, we can explain that the specialty of the tefillah ובא לציון is that it expresses the deep desire of the Jewish nation to serve Hashem and to be sanctified with Hashem's kedushah. The Jewish people didn't say, אונם, רחמנא פטריה, it was an אונם, we have no choice." They sought opportunities and ways to say the kedushah with *mesirus nefesh*.

One of the על הטא's that we say on Yom Kippur is על הטא שחטאנו לפניך באונם וברצון, "For the sins that we committed before you by with an אונם and willingly." The question is why we are asking for repentance for the aveiros that we committed באונם, which means the aveiros that were forced onto us. Those aveiros weren't our fault?!

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos 166) explains that the phrase should be read together, באונם וברצון, and we are asking for those aveiros that we committed by accident, באונם, and we were happy that we were able to transgress (ברצון). We are repenting that we had a רצון, desire and satisfaction, to be forced to sin באונם.

The kedushah we say in ובא לציון demonstrates that we aren't like the people

who are happy to be exempt from performing a mitzvah. We seek and find ways to keep the Torah.<sup>5</sup>

### Kabbalah Tovah

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 3.) states that in the future, the goyim will come to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and ask, "Why do you give reward solely for Bnei Yisrael? How do you know that they kept the Torah?"

Hashem replies, "Heaven and earth will testify that the Yidden kept the Torah."

The goyim say, "Heaven and earth aren't valid witnesses because they are נוגעין בעדות; they have a personal bias in claiming that the Yidden keep the Torah. This is because Hashem made a condition with heaven and earth that if the Yidden don't keep the Torah, heaven and earth will be destroyed. They

certainly are interested in saying that the Jewish nation kept the Torah, and their testimony is rejected.

Tosfos asks, isn't the existence of heaven and earth sufficient proof that the Yidden keep the Torah? Even without their testimony, the fact that heaven and earth exist proves that the Yidden keep the Torah. Otherwise, heaven and earth would have turned into nothingness.

Tosfos replies, "Heaven and earth exist because Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah [at Har Sinai]." The condition was that Bnei Yisrael should accept the Torah at Har Sinai, and they did. Even if they don't keep the Torah later, heaven and earth continue to exist in all generations due to their kabbalah in the past.<sup>6</sup>

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5. A Yid and a goy were traveling together and stopped on the side of the road to eat lunch.

"Do you want some wine?" the goy asked.

"No thanks. Jews aren't permitted to drink the wine of gentiles."

"How about a sausage? I have extra."

"No, thanks. We can't eat that either."

"It is delicious. You're sure you can't even taste it?"

"I'm positive. A Jew is only permitted to eat such foods when his life is in danger."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, let's say someone is ill, and a doctor says he has to eat these foods to live."

"Then you would be allowed to eat it?"

"Definitely. Or let's say a goy takes out a knife and says, 'If you don't eat this food, I will kill you,' then we would also be allowed to eat it."

Suddenly, the goy took out his knife and said menacingly, "Eat my food, or I'll kill you."

The Yid, whose life was now in danger, began eating. What could he do? It was *pikuach nefesh*.

A few minutes later, the goy said, "I'm sorry I did that to you. I was just joking. I wasn't going to kill you."

The Yid put down the meat and pushed the wine aside, and said, "I forgive you for playing that prank on me, but I won't forgive you for revealing it was a joke so soon. Couldn't you wait until I finished the meal!?"

But the proper approach should be that we don't want to perform aveiros ch"v, even when we are an אנוס.

6. The Maharsha explains that, nevertheless, the Gemara says that heaven and earth are considered נוגעין בעדות and cannot testify because they benefited from the Jewish nation. Their existence is thanks to the kabbalah tovah that Yisrael made by accepting the Torah. Therefore, the goyim claimed that heaven and earth are biased and *pasul* to testify.

For a moment of a kabbalah tovah (good resolution), when the Yidden received the Torah, the entire world stands.

People may ask, "Why should I make a kabbalah tovah? I know that sooner or later, I will return to my old ways."

But this shouldn't be a deterrent. Remember that heaven and earth stand forever for one moment of a kabbalah tovah. The same goes for you. The world will stand in your merit because of your sincere kabbalah tovah, regardless of whether you ultimately keep it.

Furthermore, if you make a kabbalah tovah, you will likely keep it. As Chazal say, *הבא לטהר מסעיין אותו*, when a person desires to be pure, he is helped. Heaven will help you maintain your kabbalah tovah.

It states (Shemos 15:26) *וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים שְׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמָע לְקוֹל ה'*, the Chasam Sofer explains, "I think it is a guarantee, *אם שמוע* if you make a kabbalah tovah to listen and to obey, I guarantee you that *תשמע לקול ה'* אלקיך, you will listen and keep Hashem's command. Hashem will help you..."

It is known that "all beginnings are hard" (see Rashi 19:5). It is difficult to change one's habits and do ratzon Hashem, which makes avodas Hashem so hard. But after one becomes accustomed to new customs and ways, it isn't hard anymore, and avodas Hashem becomes sweet and easy. Rashi writes this on the pasuk (19:5) *וְעַתָּה אִם שְׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי*, "And now, if you will listen and pay attention to My voice..." Rashi writes, "If you accept it now, the Torah will eventually become sweet for you because all beginnings are hard."

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l teaches that when the "beginning" is a kabbalah tovah, the beginning is easy too. This is because the yetzer hara doesn't know that the person made a kabbalah tovah. The kabbalah tovah

is in his mind, and the yetzer hara – a malach – cannot read people's thoughts. So, his first step, taking upon himself the kabbalah tovah, was accomplished without opposition from the yetzer hara, making avodas Hashem easy for him.

This is hinted in Rashi's words, *אם עתה תקבלו עליכם*, if you will make a kabbalah tovah, *מכאן ואילך יערב לכם*, from now on avodas Hashem will be sweet and easy for you.

### Ben Adam I'Chaveiro

The final words of the Aseres Hadibros are (20:14) *וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ*, "Everything of your friend." Tzaddikim say that this tells us that the pinnacle point of the Aseres HaDibros, which is the purpose of the entire Torah, is that a person should do kindness with his fellow man and be cautious never to embarrass or harm his fellow man, *chalilah*.

It states (20:21) *מִזְבַּח אֲדָמָה תַעֲשֶׂה לִּי וְנִבְחַתְתָּ עָלָיו אֶת אֶת עַלְתֶּיךָ וְאֶת שְׁלֵמֶיךָ*, "A *mizbeiach* of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall slaughter beside it your korbanos..." The Ruzhiner zt'l explains that the pasuk teaches how to bring korbanos even when there isn't a Beis HaMikdash. How? By way of *אֲדָמָה*, which can also mean silence, as in *דְּמִיָּה* (see Tehillim 65:2). The Torah is saying that one should be quiet and not answer back when someone says something harsh to him. If one does so, *וְנִבְחַתְתָּ עָלָיו אֶת עַלְתֶּיךָ*, it will be considered as if you brought a *korban olah*, which is wholly offered before Hashem. Furthermore, with this attitude, you will attain *וְאֶת שְׁלֵמֶיךָ*, perfection (שלימות) in your behaviors.

The Torah (20:13) writes *לֹא תִרְצַח*. The *nekudah* פתח is under the letter צ. This is how it is read when one studies Chumash (and in some communities, how it is read in shul on Shabbos Yisro and Va'eschanan). However, when the Torah is read before the community on Shavuos, it is read *לֹא תִרְצַח* with a קמץ under the צ.

7. See Biur Halachah (494:1) for a detailed explanation of the two modes for reading the Aseres HaDibros.

The sefarim teach that when the Torah states the prohibition of murder, it includes not hurting your fellow man with words, for that is also a form of murder. Chazal say, דאזיל סומקא ואתי חוורא, that when a person gets embarrassed, and his rosy complexion leaves him, and he turns white, the color of the dead, it is like murder. Chazal also say (Eiruchin 15:) that speaking lashon hara kills three people... Therefore, לא תרצח is written with a פתח, implying that one shouldn't kill his fellow man בפתיחת פיו, by opening his mouth to speak against him.

Sometimes, one can "kill" his fellow man by *not speaking*. Many people need a kind word, counsel, and the like, and holding it back from them is likened to murdering them. About this, לא תרצח is read with a קמץ. The קמץ can mean to be closed, representing that when one closes his mouth, it might also be a form of murder, *rachmana litzlan*. (A similar lesson is written in Kol Eliyahu [Yisro #64] in the name of the Vilna Gaon zt'l.)

### Praising Hashem

The Ramban in this week's parashah (20:13) explains the mitzvah of לא תרצח. He writes, השמר פן תחבל מעשה ידי ותשפוך דם האדם אשר בראתי לך, לכבודי ולהודות לי, "Be cautious that you don't harm the work of my hands to spill the blood of a human, whom I created to honor me and to praise Me." It's a wonderful lesson, worth thinking about. The reason one is forbidden to kill is because it will cause the loss of a Jewish soul who would otherwise praise Hashem. Keviyachol, the murderer caused Hakadosh Baruch Hu to lose the pleasure of man praising Him.

Similarly, the Ramban writes at the end of parashas Bo, שאין לנו טעם אחר ביצירה הראשונה ואין לא"ל עליון חפץ בתחתונים מלבד שידע האדם ויודה לאלוקיו, "We don't know of any other reason for the creation of the world, and Hashem has no other interest in the world below, other than that man should praise His G-d and praise Hashem who create them..."

Dovid HaMelech davens for life, and he explains the reason Hashem should answer his tefillos (Tehillim 30:10) מַה בָּצַע בְּדַמִּי בְּרִדְתִּי אֶל שָׁחַת, "What gain is there in my blood, in my descent to the grave? Will dust thank You; will it recite Your truth?" Notice that he didn't say that if he turns to earth, he won't be able to perform the mitzvos, or if he turns to earth, he won't be able to daven before Hashem. He said that if he turns to earth, he won't be able to praise Hashem. This tells us how precious our praises are before Hashem.

### Tefillah

It states (20:3) לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פְּנֵי, "You shall not have the gods of others in My presence."

One translation of אֲחֵרִים is "of strangers". Rashi explains that the gods of the goyim are אֲחֵרִים, "Strangers to those who serve them. The people shout out to them, and they don't answer them. They are like אַחַר, a stranger who never knew them."

The Imrei Emes zt'l said that we learn a contrast, that Hashem isn't a stranger to us. We call out to Hashem, and Hashem answers us. As it states (Devarim 4:7) כִּי מִי גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ, "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as Hashem our G-d is at all times that we call upon Him?"

The Birkas Avraham (Shvi'i shel Pesach) teaches that when the Yidden suffered slavery in Mitzrayim, it appeared to them that their tefillos weren't going up to heaven. But it wasn't so. Hakadosh Baruch Hu took them out of Mitzrayim before the destined time because of their tefillos. Furthermore, when they stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, the nation saw the voices, as stated in this week's parashah (20:15) וְכָל הָעָם רָאִים אֶת, "All the nation saw the voices." This means that they saw the tefillos that they had davened earlier. They understood that they were now receiving the Torah in the merit of those tefillos.

### Starting Over Again

A person came to the Yismach Yisrael zt'l and cried, "Holy Rebbe! I owe money to the entire world! To all my friends and banks! My business is collapsing. What will be with me?"

The Yismach Yisrael replied, "What are you planning to do?"

The man said, "I thought to do what everyone else in my situation would do. I will declare bankruptcy."

The Rebbe replied, "But how will that help you? You need parnassah!"

The man replied, "I will open a new company. It will have another name. The new company didn't do anything wrong to anyone; it doesn't owe money to anyone. It doesn't have a past that is positive or negative. I will take on new loans from the bank and build from the beginning again."

The Rebbe smiled, "You just helped me understand something I wondered about for a long time. Yisro had seven daughters (see Shemos 2:16), and Yisro had seven names (see Shemos 4:18, Rashi). I always wondered why the Torah tells us this... but now I understand.

Each time Yisro made a chasunah for one of his daughters, he took it upon himself to give a large dowry. To pay for the dowry, he had to borrow money from many people. The day after the chasunah, he didn't have money to pay back the debts. So he declared bankruptcy and called himself a new name, and this new "person" didn't owe money to anyone."

In our context, the yetzer hara comes to a person and says, "You are so deeply in debt (in a spiritual sense). You committed this aveirah and that aveirah... There is no more hope for you."

A wise person will reply, "It isn't as you say. I have just declared bankruptcy! I'm finished with my past. I am a new person." As the Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuvah (ch.2), "From the paths of teshuvah is that a person... should change his name."

Therefore, it is often taught that when one does teshuvah, he is כתינוק שנולד, like a newborn child, without any connection to the past.<sup>8</sup>

It states (19:1) ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני, "On this day, they arrived in the desert of Sinai." These words hint at the first step for receiving the Torah. It is to focus on ביום הזה, this day.<sup>9</sup>

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8. It states in this week's parashah (19:5) וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֵגֻלָּה, "You shall be to Me a segulah/treasure".

Rebbe Dovid Lelover zt'l explains that the nekudos of a סגל are three dots, like this ❦

Whichever way you turn over the three dots, it remains a סגל. Therefore, it states וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֵגֻלָּה, a Yid is like a סגל, no matter what he does, he remains a Yid... and thus there is no reason to despair.

Seder HaDoros (year 5269) says that Rabbeinu Yitzchak Abarbanel wrote thirteen sefarim, and he writes about himself the following: "All these sefarim I wrote after I left the land in which I was born. Before then, I was busy serving in the chambers of kings, and I didn't have time to study, and I wasn't familiar with sefarim. I wasted my days and years with nothingness to attain wealth and honor. And then the wealth was lost in a bad way. After traveling from one place to another and losing all my money, I began studying Hashem's sefarim."

The Abarbanel didn't say, "I am getting older; I wasted much time and opportunities in my youth; I can't begin again. Besides, what will become of me? How can I become a Torah scholar, starting so late?"

He didn't say that. Instead, he immersed himself in the Torah and became one of the greatest gedolim. This is a reminder that everyone can start, no matter his stage in life, and he can accomplish a lot.

9. Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita (Yom Machmadim p.42) teaches that a segulah for simchah and to feel fulfilled and satisfied is to be *maavir sidra*, to review the *parsha* of the week. This is tested and proven.

Don't allow what happened in the past to prevent you from doing good today. The *meforshim* write that this concept is an introduction to *kabbolas haTorah*.

The Avodas Yisrael in this week's parashah (ד"ה בחודש) writes, "The Midrash says that ועתה, "and now", is an expression of teshuvah. We can explain that Hakadosh Baruch Hu hints to those who come close to Hashem that they shouldn't lose hope or be afraid to come close to Him due to the aveiros of their past. The main thing is to come close to Hashem from today onward and not sin anymore. This is a great chesed. Hashem wants to bring close the people who do teshuvah and not look at their deeds of the past..."

A *bachur* came to the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l and cried over the aveiros he had committed in the past. The Sar Shalom showed him that on the words ביום הזה באו, "On this day, they arrived in the desert of Sinai", Rashi writes שיהיו דברי תורה חדשים עליך כאילו היום ניתנו Torah should be new in your eyes as if the Torah was given just today." The Sar Shalom explained to the *bachur* that he should think the Torah was given just today and not dwell on the faults and aveiros of the past.

### Never Too Late to Do Teshuvah

Sifsei Tzaddik teaches that Yisro wanted to become holy and close to Hashem, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded Moshe to *be mekarev* and help him in the process. The

same will occur to every Yid who wants to come close to Hashem – including those Yidden who are at the lowest levels. They need help, and the "Torah" will help them get close to Hashem.

It states (19:2) וַיֵּסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי, "They journeyed from Refidim, and they arrived in the desert of Sinai." Several aveiros occurred in רְפִידִים. They came to a place without water and complained about why Moshe brought them to the desert to die. Chazal (Sanhedrin 106.) say that the word רְפִידִים stands for רפו ידיהם, מדברי תורה, that they became weak in the realm of Torah study, and they were weak in their keeping the Torah.

This resulted in Amalek coming to them, there in Refidim.

It states (Shemos 17:7) וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם מַסָּה וּמְרִיבָה עַל רִיב בְּיַד בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל נִסְתָּם אֶת ה' לֵאמֹר הַיֵּשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם אֵין, "He named the place Massah [testing] and Merivah [quarreling] because of the quarrel of Bnei Yisrael and because of their testing Hashem, saying, Is Hashem in our midst or not?"

They left Refidim and finally arrived at Midbar Sinai, as the pasuk states (19:2) וַיֵּסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי, "They journeyed from Refidim, and arrived in the desert of Sinai."

Why does the Torah specify that they traveled from Refidim? Isn't it obvious that they traveled from the last location they had encamped?

As Rashi writes, "Why did the Torah have to repeat and explain from where they

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He explains the logic behind this counsel: "Once, I received a letter from a yeshiva *bachur* who sought counsel for happiness. I replied that he should check whether he knows the Gemara, and the shiur taught in the yeshiva and whether he knows the Chumash Rashi of that day... Perhaps that is the reason he is sad... After thinking it through, the *bachur* admitted that it was so. The explanation is that generally, sadness is experienced when a person feels 'out of place.' Therefore, a yeshiva *bachur* who sits between the walls of the yeshiva, if he doesn't study and understand what he is supposed to study, will feel that he isn't in his place. But if he always does what is expected of him, he will feel secure and in his place. The same can be said about studying Chumash with Rashi, the portion of each day. This is a tested *segulah* to cause a person to feel that he is in his right place, and that will give him a feeling of satisfaction and joy".

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l said that it is a tested *segulah* that whoever studies the daily portion of Chumash Rashi won't sin that day.

had journeyed? Did it not already state (Shemos 17:1) that they were encamped in Refidim? It should be obvious that they journeyed from there!" Rashi answers that the Torah wishes to compare their journey from Refidim to their arrival in the Sinai desert. Just as their arrival in Midbar Sinai desert was with repentance, so was their journey from Refidim with repentance.<sup>10</sup>

This episode teaches us an important lesson. We learn that the Jewish nation did teshuvah when they were still in Refidim. They didn't say, "We sinned in this place... Let us wait until we go somewhere else, and we will improve our ways." They also didn't say, "We are having a bad day; let's wait for tomorrow." The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni) says that they sinned for a short time, and they immediately did teshuvah in Refidim.

It states (18:8) וַיִּסְפֹּר מֹשֶׁה לְחֹתְנֵוֹ אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה עָלָיו ה' לְפָרְעֹה וְלִמְצָרִים עַל אֹדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Moshe told his father-in-law all that Hashem had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians on account of Yisrael..."

Yagel Yaakov (Mishkoltz) asks on the words וְעַל אֹדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, "on account of Yisrael..." that they seem to be extra. Also that the pasuk states אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' עִמָּו, and at the beginning of the parashah Hashem's name אֱלֹהִים is used, as it states (18:1) וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה ה' עִמָּו, "Moshe's father in law, Yisro, the kohen of Midian, heard all that אֱלֹהִים had done for Moshe and for Yisrael..."

Yagel Yaakov replies that Yisro was surprised when he heard about the makos. Every time Pharaoh had a drop of regret, Hashem took the makah away from him. Why did he deserve this? Pharaoh was just minimally sincere, just a drop of teshuvah. Did he deserve the makah to be removed

from him? Moshe explained to him that it was עַל אֹדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, "on account of Yisrael..." Hashem wanted to teach the Jewish nation that if they have a drop of teshuvah, it is significant in Hashem's eyes, and He will accept it. This is the reason הוֹי"ה, Hashem's name of compassion, is used in this pasuk. Hashem's compassionate manner of treating Pharaoh was to teach the Jewish nation that Hashem would certainly be compassionate with them and accept their teshuvah, even when it is minimal and imperfect.

### Reward in This World

Chazal tell us, שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא, "Reward for the performance of mitzvos is not received in this world." The reward for the mitzvos that we perform is boundless, and therefore, we will enjoy our reward in the world of eternity. This world cannot contain the vast reward.

This teaching might discourage some of us because people want to be rewarded immediately. They are not as motivated to work hard when they know the reward will only come in the future.

Nevertheless, keep the following thoughts in mind, and you will be inspired to fulfill the mitzvos:

(1) Remember that you are investing for the future, and it is the best investment you can make. For each *prutah* that you give to *tzedakah*, the returns in Olam HaBa will be enormous.

(2) With Torah and mitzvos, you can experience the joy of Gan Eden, the pleasures of the world to come. Therefore, you are investing in enjoying a better present. All the physical pleasures cannot compare to

<sup>10</sup> The miforshim explain that their teshuvah was (a) for the bitul Torah in Refidim, and (b) they did teshuvah for their machlokes, as the Torah tells us regarding Har Sinai (19:2) וַיִּתְּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגְדַת הָהָר, "Yisrael encamped there opposite the mountain." וַיִּתְּחַן is in singular tense (as opposed to וַיִּתְּחַנו). Rashi writes, כאיש אחד בלב, אחד, they were like one man, with one heart, but at all other encampments there were machlokes and complaints." This is a sign that they did teshuvah for their machlokes.

the happiness we experience when we perform Torah and mitzvos.<sup>11</sup>

(3) Don't feel discouraged when you hear that you will receive reward for your good deeds only in Olam HaBa, because, although Chazal tell us, שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא, that in this world we aren't rewarded for the *mitzvos*, nevertheless, there are exceptions.

Many of the exceptions are stated in the Mishnah that we say each morning after *birchas HaTorah*: אלו הדברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהם בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא ואלו הן כבוד אב ואם וגמילות חסדים... ובקור חולים... ועיון תפילה והבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו ובין איש לאשתו ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם, "These are the mitzvos that we eat the fruits of the good deeds in this world and the primary reward is reserved for Olam HaBa: honoring parents, deeds of kindness, visiting

the ill, davening with *kavanah*, increasing peace among people...and learning Torah is greater than all of them."

### ***Kibud Av v'Em***

In this week's *parashah* is the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em* (in the Aseres HaDibros). As we wrote, this is one of the mitzvos that are rewarded in this world, as it states (20:12), כבד את אביך ואת אמך למען יאריך ימך, "Honor your father and your mother so you will live long..."

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh writes, "The *pasuk* states, יאריך ימך, 'Your days will lengthen'; it doesn't say, אאריך ימך, 'I will lengthen your days.' Perhaps this implies that longevity is the *segulah* of honoring parents, and this is besides the reward that

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**11.** There were once two brothers who worked together, composing music. Their compositions were sold and enjoyed around the world. Once, as they were working on a particular piece, there was a massive explosion in their studio, and both brothers lost their sense of hearing. One of them decided to leave the world of music and go into another field of work since he could no longer enjoy the music he composed. The other musician continued writing music by heart. Although he could not hear his music, he knew that people worldwide were enjoying it.

Years passed, and significant advances were made in the medical field. The brothers underwent surgery and got back their sense of hearing. The brother who composed songs all along could now listen to and enjoy the beautiful music he created.

The *nimshal* is that even if, at the moment, you are not yet experiencing the joy and the sweetness of *avodas Hashem*, don't stop performing good deeds. Continue doing the mitzvos because eventually, you will enjoy everything you accomplished - in the next world, and even in this world.

When people are ill, they sometimes lose their sense of smell and taste. Eating becomes a chore because they don't enjoy it. But they force themselves to eat because they know they must eat to remain alive. Reb Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlita says that from this we learn that even those who lost their taste and enjoyment in Torah and *tefillah* should continue performing these good deeds, for eventually, they will get their taste back. They will once again experience the pleasure of Torah and mitzvos.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 17.) tells us that when the students of the yeshiva took leave of one another (before returning home, after a prolonged time learning together in yeshiva), one of the blessings they gave one another was, עולמך תראה בחיך, "May you see your world in your lifetime." The Baal Shem Tov explained that they wished each other, עולמך תראה בחיך, "May you see your future world of Olam HaBa in your lifetime." It is possible to experience a taste of the future world in one's *avodas Hashem*.

That is why the future world is called עולם הבא, which means "the world that comes." When does it come?

The Meor Einayim (*Yisro*, ד"ה בשעה שהקדימו) explains that it comes to every Yid, in this world, when he serves Hashem with joy, fear, and love of Hashem. The Meor Einayim adds that this is the meaning of Bnei Yisrael's famous proclamation, נעשה ונשמע, "We will do, and we will listen." He explains that this means that we will serve Hashem, even without feeling the joy in it, and in the end, we will taste the sweetness of *avodas Hashem*.

Hashem will give us. Because there are mitzvos that have wonderful *segulos*, in addition to the reward that Hashem established for each mitzvah. This time, Hashem revealed that honoring parents is mesugal for a long life."<sup>12</sup>

Rabbeinu b'Chayei teaches, "We see clearly that those who honor their parents enjoy a long life, success, and tranquility in all their ways." This is something that can be seen. This is their reward (and *segulah*) in this world. The main reward will be given to them in Olam HaBa.

Sometimes, by excelling in *kibud av v'em*, you can get all your heart's desires, even before you daven for it. Chazal tell us that Reb Chalafta would always ask himself, "What will my father want? What can I give him that will make him happy?" And he would give it to his father without his father needing to ask for it. His reward was *מדה כנגד מדה*, and Hashem gave Reb Chalafta all his heart's desires even before he davened for them. As the *pasuk* states (*Yeshayah* 65:24), *והיה טרם ויקראו ואני אענה*, "Even before you ask, I will answer you." We can earn a similar reward if we have this devotion to the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em*.

The Seder HaDoros (10) relates that heaven revealed to Reb Yehoshua ben Elam in a dream, "Be happy, rejoice, because you will be in Gan Eden together with the butcher Nanas (ננס הקצב). Your portion and his portion are the same."

Reb Yehoshua ben Elam said, "Woe to me that this will be my portion in Gan Eden! I have been fearing Hashem since my youth. My only occupation was Torah study. I never walked four *amos* without wearing *tzitzis* and tefillin. I have eighty students. Do all my good deeds and Torah equal up only to the butcher Nanas?"

Reb Yehoshua ben Elam and his students immediately set out to discover who this Nanas was and his deeds. After asking many people for directions, they finally arrived at the town where Nanas the butcher lived. Reb Yehoshua asked the city's people to direct him to Nanas's home.

The townspeople said, "It isn't proper for a *talmid chacham* and respected person like yourself to go to Nanas."

Reb Yehoshua said, "Tell him I want to meet him."

The townspeople repeated this to Nanas. He responded, "Who am I that Reb Yehoshua should inquire about me?"

They replied, "The fact is that he wants to speak to you. You should come immediately."

Nanas didn't believe them. "You are just making fun of me," he replied, "I won't go."

The townspeople told Reb Yehoshua what happened. Reb Yehoshua told them, "So I will go to him. I won't leave this town before I meet Nanas."

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**12.** The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos*, vol.2 p.362:) explains that a Torah scholar might think that it is inappropriate for him to spend too much time caring for his parents because it would take away from his Torah studies, and *תלמוד תורה כנגד מולם*, learning Torah is the greatest merit. Therefore, the Torah promises longevity for *kibud av v'em*. The Torah tells him the time spent honoring his parents will be returned to him. He will live long and have plenty of time to make up his studies.

The Lev Simchah of Gur *zt'l* said that each person is born with a quota of days and years he will live. The time one devotes for *kibud av v'em* isn't part of the calculation. He will live extra because those times aren't deducted from the days of his allotment.

Reb Sadyah Gaon *z'l* explains that *kibud av v'em* is a difficult mitzvah to keep, as it is time-consuming and hard work. To encourage people to devote themselves to this essential mitzvah, the Torah promises longevity. This great reward encourages people to keep this mitzvah, despite the hardships involved.

Reb Yehoshua arrived at Nanas's home. Nanas fell before Reb Yehoshua's feet and said, "What is special today that the crown of Yisrael has come to the home of his servant?"

Reb Yehoshua said, "There is something I must speak to you about."

"Please speak," Nanas said.

Reb Yehoshua said, "Tell me your deeds. What do you do?"

Nanas replied, "My master, I'm a butcher. My mother and father are old, and they can't stand on their own. Every morning, I dress, feed, and wash them."

Reb Yehoshua stood up and kissed him on his head. He said, "My son, אֲשֶׁרִיךְ וְאֲשֶׁרִי מֵהַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר, you are fortunate and fortunate is your lot... And I am fortunate that I will merit being your neighbor in Gan Eden."<sup>13</sup>

Reb Moshe Turk davened every morning with the Chazon Ish *zt'l*, and he considered it a *zechus* to receive the Chazon Ish's daily "good morning" blessing. After *shacharis*, Reb Moshe Turk would go off to a cheder in Tel Aviv, where he taught. Once, he brought his class to Bnei Brak to daven *shacharis* with the Chazon Ish.

After *shacharis*, one of the students wanted to ask Reb Moshe a question, but Reb Moshe stopped him. He said, "In the presence of the Chazon Ish, it is *derech erez* to be silent."

The class passed by the Chazon Ish and received his *brachos*. When the child who had a question passed the Chazon Ish, the Chazon Ish asked him what he wanted to ask his Rebbe. The child looked up at Reb Moshe Turk, wondering whether it was *derech erez* to speak now, and Reb Moshe Turk replied, "If the Chazon Ish asks, you may reply."

The student asked a question that only a child can ask. He said, "How did the Chazon Ish become the Chazon Ish?"

The Chazon Ish replied, "It was because I never wasted a moment of my time, and I was always careful with the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em*" (*Maaseh Ish* vol.4, p.198).

The Beis Aharon of Stolin *zt'l* said that he attained his spiritual levels from the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em*.

The Meshech Chachmah teaches that the Beis HaMikdash was built on Binyamin's land because Binyamin was the only brother who did not partake in selling Yosef. He was the only brother who didn't cause his father distress; therefore, the Beis HaMikdash was built on his portion.

(*Succah* 45:) Reb Shimon bar Yochai said he could absolve the entire world from judgment. If he adds on the merits of his son, Reb Eliezer, he can redeem the world from judgment and punishment from the day the world was created until that day. If he added the merits of King יוֹתָם בֶּן עֻזִּיהוּ, he could redeem the world from judgment and punishment from the day the world was created until the end of time.

What was unique about יוֹתָם בֶּן עֻזִּיהוּ? Rashi writes, "He was a humble tzaddik, more than all other kings. And he excelled in honoring his parents. About him it states (*Malachi* 1:6), בֶּן יִכְבֵּד אָב, a son that honors his father. As long as his father had *tzoraas*, and Yosef took his place, he didn't put on the royal crown and passed all judgments in his father's name."

The Gemara teaches (*Kiddushin* 30), "Honoring one's parents is equal to honoring Hashem... Fearing one's parents is equal to fearing Hashem. When one honors his parents, HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, "I consider it as though he honored Me."

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13. We see that for honoring parents, one can earn reward equal to the reward of a holy *tana*. The reward for this mitzvah is enormous.

The Pele Yoetz writes, "Each mitzvah has its *mazal*. People are prepared to spend a lot of money to have the merit to open the *aron kodesh* or to be a *sandak*, although these aren't actual mitzvos - not from the Torah and not from the *Rabbanan*. They are *chibuv mitzvah*, which shows our love for the mitzvos. *Ashreihem Yisrael* [they are fortunate]! However, each time one obeys his father or mother, he does a mitzvah from the Torah. Only fools transgress this commandment, and they are punished."

The Torah (18:3) tells the names of Moshe Rabbeinu's children: שם האחד גרשם... ושם האחד אליעזר, "The name of one was Gershom... and the name of one was Eliezer..." It seems that it would have read easier if it had stated, "and the name of the other one was Eliezer," or "and the name of the second one was Eliezer." This is how it is written by the *korban tamid*: את הכבש האחד תעשה בבוקר ואת הכבש השני תעשה בין הארבעים, "One sheep should be made in the morning and the second sheep should be made in the afternoon." Why does the Torah write about Gershom and Eliezer שם האחד... שם האחד... the name of one... the name of one..."

This is teaching us a lesson in *chinuch*. You should consider each child as though he is your only child. None of your children should be a "second child" or just "another child." Each child is like your one and only child.

If you are devoted like that to your children, one of the benefits is that it will make it easier for them to keep the mitzvah of honoring their parents. As is known, a good relationship between parents and children makes it easier for the child to honor his parents.

### **Hakaras HaTov**

The Sefer HaChinuch (33) writes, "The reason for the mitzvah of honoring parents is that it is proper for one to be *makir tovah* (recognize) and to reciprocate with kindness to those who do kindness to him. He shouldn't act like he didn't receive anything from his

fellow man. That is a bad attitude, which is disgusting before Hashem and man. His father and mother brought him into the world. From when he was a child, they toiled to raise him. He should always remember this and truly honor them in every way possible."

*Hakaras hatov* is the foundation of *avodas Hashem*. The *Aseres HaDibros* begins with אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים "I am Hashem, your G-d who took you out of Mitzrayim, from the house of slavery." The *pasuk* is commanding us to accept Hashem's reign because of the good He bestowed on us; He freed us from Mitzrayim.

When the Yidden stood on the Yam Suf's shore, helpless and scared Hashem saved them by splitting the sea.

The Yidden had weapons, as it states (13:18), והמושיים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים, "Bnei Yisrael came out of Mitzrayim armed with weapons." We also know they had weapons because they used them in their war against Amalek. So why did the sea need to split? They could have raised their weapons and waged war against the Mitzrim.

The Chasam Sofer answers that since the Mitzrim hosted Klal Yisrael, it wouldn't be right to raise weapons against them.

From here, we can learn the importance and necessity of showing *Hakaras Hatov*. The Mitzrim enslaved Bnei Yisroel, and they embittered their lives with hard work. Did they deserve *hakaras hatov*? Apparently, they did.

It states, וישמע יתרו, and Rashi explains, מה שמועה שמע ובה קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק, "What did Yisro hear and therefore come? He heard about *kriyas Yam Suf* and the war against Amalek."

The Ksav Sofer explains that from the war with Amalek, Yisro surmised that the Yidden had weapons. Yisro wondered, "If they had weapons, why did the Yidden need the miracle of *kriyas Yam Suf*? They could have waged war against the Egyptians!"

Yisro understood that not using those weapons was because the Yidden had *hakaras hatov* for the Mitzrim who accepted them into their land.

Initially, Yisro was hesitant to join klal Yisroel, because he thought that perhaps the nation wouldn't accept him. But when he discovered that Yidden possessed the

middah of *hakaras hatov*, he knew they would surely welcome him. After all, he had saved their leader, Moshe, when he escaped Mitzrayim.

Therefore, when Yisro heard מלחמת עמלק וקריעת ים סוף, he came to the desert to be with the Jewish nation.