

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Shoftim



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Shoftim

No Worries

The pesukim with Rashi's commentary in Parashas Shoftim describe the terrifying experience Bnei Yisroel may encounter when they go to war against their enemy.

Rashi (20:3) writes, "[The opposing army] clash their cymbals, make their horses gallop and neigh loudly, they shout and blow horns." These aren't minor matters. They fill a person's heart with fear.

Furthermore, the Torah states, עַם רַב מִמֶּךָּ, "a people more numerous than you." We are outnumbered when we go out to war.

To top things off, the passuk states לַמִּלְחָמָה and Rashi writes, "Consider the opposing side to be your enemies. Don't have compassion on them because they won't have compassion on you."

The description of war seemed to be petrifying. There were frightening sounds, massive numbers, and barbarous nations. Yet the Torah urges us (20:1-3) לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם כִּי ה' אִלֶּיךָ וְלֹא תִירָא אֶל הָעָרֹץ מִצְרַיִם... אל ירך לבבכם אל תיראו ואל תחפזו ואל תערצו מפניהם כי ה' אִלֶּיכֶם הַהֹלֵךְ עִמָּכֶם, "Don't be afraid of them, because Hashem, your G-d, is with you Who brought you up out of the land of Mitzrayim. Don't be fearful, don't panic, and don't break before them because Hashem your G-d, is going with you to fight the wars to save you."

Rashi writes, "They come with the strength of man, and you come with the power of Hashem."

עַם רַב מִמֶּךָּ, Rashi writes, "To your eyes, they are a large nation, but in My eyes, they aren't a large nation. סוֹם וְרֶכֶב, I consider them as though they have just one horse."

When Klal Yisrael is courageous and fearless because it trusts in Hashem, they will win the war. But when they don't trust in Hashem's strength, they are at risk.

The Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:32) says that this lesson isn't only regarding war. He writes, "The Torah is telling us that if one sees trouble approaching, his heart should rely on Hashem's salvation." So, if one is worried about his parnassah, he should trust in Hashem. If he is concerned about finding a shidduch, he should trust Hashem. The same applies to health issues¹ and all other kinds of problems. One should be fearless and worry-free because he trusts in Hashem, and Hashem will save him.

The problems seem tremendous and overwhelming, but remember, Hashem is greater than the problems, and He can free you from all your troubles. Concerning war, the Torah (20:1) reminds us הַמַּעֲלֵךְ מִצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם, "that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, and He will save us now, as well. We should similarly think about the numerous times Hashem saved us in the past, and that will strengthen our hearts to trust in Hashem to save us from the issues we deal with in the present."²

1. The Noam Eliezer of Skulen zt'l explains that in the brachah of יוֹצֵר הַמְּאֻרֹת we don't say, בְּרָא רְפוּאוֹת, that "Hashem created remedies" (in the past tense). We say בּוֹרֵא רְפוּאוֹת, that Hashem creates refuos even now. Always, new refuos are being created. Therefore, even when doctors say there is no known cure, don't lose hope. Trust in Hashem because Hashem is constantly creating new remedies.

2. There was a bachur who suffered from phobias for a very long time. The Rebbe of Bahush zt'l had in

In Brisk, the non-religious put on a play (ch.20) to show how Yidden go out to war (based on ch.20 in this week's parashah). Someone stood before the soldiers and announced, "Whoever built a home and didn't yet live in it should return home and not go to war." Some of the soldiers left the troop.

Then the man announced to the soldiers, "Whoever planted a vineyard and didn't yet eat its fruits should return home," and a few more soldiers left.

Finally, the man announced, "Whoever is afraid should go home," and everyone ran home. Only two older, bent-over men remained. Each of them was honoring the other one to take the first shot.

The morning after the play was performed, the religious Yidden in Brisk were very upset as the play was intended to poke fun at the Torah. The Brisker Rav saw the commotion in his beis midrash and inquired about it. They told him about the chillul Hashem caused by the play. The Brisker Rav replied, "Everything they showed in the play was true. The only part they left out was to show how the two elderly men won the war!"

Those afraid of war were told to go home from the battlefield. What were they afraid of? Rashi states two explanations:

(1)Rebbi Akiva explains, "He cannot stand in the closed ranks of battle and look upon a drawn sword." In other words, he is afraid of war.

(2)Rebbi Yosi HaGlili says that the passuk refers to someone afraid of his aveiros, that because of his sins, he may die at war.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 44.) says, even if someone spoke between *tefillin shel yad* and *tefillin shel rosh* he can return home. This aveirah is enough reason to be afraid of war, and he may return home.

However, a few *pesukim* earlier (20:3), the officer who speaks to the nation begins with the words שמע ישראל, "Listen Yisrael." Rashi writes, "Even if you have no merit other than that you say the Shema, you are worthy that Hashem will save you."

The Kotzker *zt'l* (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh*, end of *Shoftim*) asks that there seems to be a contradiction. One source says that for the slightest aveirah, like speaking between putting on the *tefillin shel yad* and *tefillin shel rosh* one can leave the war, and one source says that just one merit is enough to win the war. So, which one is it? Does one need perfection to merit winning the war, or does one need just one merit?

his possessions the Ruzhiner's *zt'l* snuffbox (he received it as an inheritance) and he gave the bachur to smell from it as a segulah to overcome his fears. Then, the Rebbe said, "For forty days, before going to sleep, say אמר ה' ליעקב את תירא עבדי יעקב (from the *zemiros* of *Motzei Shabbos*), and your fears will go away."

The bachur did so, and he was cured.

Years later, he was already a father of two, and his fears returned. This time, they were stronger than before, and in result, his marriage was in jeopardy. The Bahusher Rebbe wasn't alive anymore, so he went to the elderly *tzaddik*, Rebbe Yitzhak Eizak of Zutchka *zt'l*. The yungerman told the Rebbe about his fears, and the Zutchka Rebbe replied, "I also had many fears, but I overcame them with thoughts of *emunah* and *bitachon*."

The yungerman replied, "I'm not on the Rebbe's level. I won't succeed to get rid of my fears so easily."

The Rebbe replied, "So, then my advice to you is that you say the *motzei Shabbos zemiros*, אמר ה' ליעקב אל תירא עבדי יעקב for forty days before going to sleep, and you will get better."

It is quite incredible that both the Bahusher Rebbe and the Zutchke Rebbe gave the same advice, although it is a very rare and unknown counsel. He followed the counsel and was healed.

The Kotzker replies: There are two ways to win a war. You can win with perfection when you don't have any aveiros, and you can win a war with bitachon. If the nation has *bitachon*, the merit of saying the Shema is sufficient, and they will win the war. If they lack bitachon, they need to be perfect in their deeds, and then they will win their battles.

This lesson can be applied to all *yeshuos* that one needs in life. If he has bitachon, he doesn't need many mitzvos and merits. The merit of bitachon is so great that he will receive his salvation.

Don't Cast Your Fear onto Others

Before going out to war, officers spoke to the army and announced (20:8), *מי האיש הירא ורך*, הלבב ילך וישב לביתו ולא ימס את לבב אחיו כלבבו, "Whoever is afraid and fainthearted should

return home, so he won't cause the heart of his brothers to melt, like his heart." It is known that one frightened person can cast a panic onto many people. Many soldiers can lose their bitachon, and they will begin to run away, which will cause them to lose the war. Rashi (20:9) writes, *תחילת נפילה ניסה*, "Flight is the beginning of defeat." Therefore, we don't want fearful people on the battlefield.³

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l* (*Sichos Mussar* תשל"א) writes that we learn from this that we must be cautious not to weaken other people's *bitachon*. Fear is contagious. If you show that you are worried about your finances or any other matter, people will learn from you to be afraid, too. But if you show trust in Hashem, people around you will learn from you to be calm and to trust that Hashem will help them.⁴

3. There are other people who return home from the battlefield. They are a man who built a new house and didn't yet live in it, someone who planted a vineyard and didn't yet benefit from its fruits, or a newly married man. Rashi explains that we primarily want the people who are afraid to return home, so they don't cast panic on the soldiers in the battlefield. The people who are afraid are those who have committed aveiros and think that because of their sins, they won't be protected by Hashem in the war. However, they might be embarrassed to return home because everyone will know that they committed aveiros. Therefore, the Torah gave others permission to go home, so no one will know the reason they are going home.

4. Pirkei Avos states, "Greet every person with happiness" (Avos 3:12) because joy is contagious, and when you smile at someone, you can make their day. You never know who needs a smile to raise their spirits.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zy'a* taught that someone who goes around with a sour face will be held accountable for all the people who become distressed because of him. Reb Yisrael calls him a *בור בר"ר*, a pit in a public domain. He is damaging others, causing them to be sad together with him. By contrast, those who are happy will be rewarded for all the people who become happy as a result.

The tzaddikim of Ziditchov *zy'a* said that a *שמייל* (smile) is *roshei teivos* for, כולם יהיו משועבדים לעבודתו יתברך שמו, everyone will devote themselves to serve Hashem.

One of the benefits of a happy continence is that when you smile, people smile back at you. The following story demonstrates this:

Mr. and Mrs. S. found a home that was large enough for their needs and in the right location, so they were thinking of buying it. "What about the neighbors?" Mrs. S. asked the seller. "Are they friendly?"

"Of course," the seller told them. "You won't have any problems with them. They are all helpful and caring people."

"Good, otherwise, I don't want to buy it."

A moving truck brought over all their furniture. As Mrs. S. came to the front door, she saw one of the neighbors glaring at her.

The same applies to all areas of life. Don't be afraid, for Hashem will help you. If you are anxious, you are causing others to be anxious, too.⁵

She quickly called the original homeowner and said, "Why did you trick us. You said that we'll have good neighbors, but the neighbors are glaring at us. It is evident that they are upset that we moved here."

The original homeowner told her, "Put a smile on your face, and you will see that the neighbors are good."

She did this, and this time she saw that the neighbor was smiling back at her. She looked closer, and realized that she was looking into a mirror. When she frowned, the mirror frowned back. When she smiled, the mirror smiled back.

The same happens in life. The way we treat others, is the way they will treat us. Therefore, greet everyone with a joyous disposition. It will bring them joy, and we will also benefit, because our kind words and friendly smile will be returned to us.

5. More than a hundred years ago, in a *kollel* in Yerushalayim, there was a person who was extremely jealous of his fellow *kollel* student, and was always slandering him, trying to harm him and lower his esteem in people's eyes. The poor student didn't understand why he deserved this treatment, and he complained to his rebbe, Reb Dovid Biderman *zt'l*.

His rebbe advised him to follow Chazal's counsel, *שומעין חרפתן ואינם משיבין*, to be silent and to not answer back.

When his children became of marriageable age, his nemesis was still slandering him, and due to the *lashon hara*, he ruined many potential *shidduchim*.

His rebbe encouraged him to have *bitachon*. "Hashem will help. Eventually, you will see that this is all for your benefit."

His oldest child was a daughter, but due to all the *lashon hara*, she was getting older, and was still single. And then his second child, a boy, was "in the *parashah*" waiting to get married. His opponent worked overtime, because now he spoke *lashon hara* on both children. Many possible *shidduchim* were ruined, *r"l*. Nevertheless, as Rebbe Dovid Biderman taught him, he focused on his *bitachon*. Hashem can do anything. Despite the *lashon hara*, a *shidduch* will go through.

Baruch Hashem, both children got engaged the same night, to the same family. There was another family in Yerushalayim that had an older boy and girl in *shidduchim*, and they made "an exchange" (what the people in Yerushalayim call "a *bayt*"), and their children were engaged to each other.

He traveled to Vienna to collect money for *hachnasas kalah* for the two upcoming *chasunos*, but he hardly made any money. His rebbe taught him not to lose hope, so he said to himself, "I thought I would get money in Vienna, but Hashem can help in other ways, too."

On his last night in Vienna, he went to the hotel's bathroom and found a wallet filled with money. Most guests of this hotel weren't Jewish, so according to halachah he wasn't obligated to return it. He went downstairs to leave the hotel, with the wallet filled with money in his pocket, but the doors were locked. The police had already heard about the lost wallet, and they locked the doors, so no one inside could go out. Everyone would be checked. No one could leave without an inspection.

He mixed the money with his own and threw away the wallet. When the police checked him, they found the money, but the amount wasn't exactly the amount that was lost. The wallet wasn't the same, either.

"How do you have so much money?" they asked him. "You look like a poor person."

"Why do you say so?" he replied. "I have very big businesses in Yerushalayim."

The police sent a telegram to Yerushalayim to find out about this Yid, whether he was indeed wealthy.

The person who received the telegram was none other than his arch-enemy, the one who sought every opportunity to slander him. Once again, he sought to harm his, and he figured that a wealthy person from

There are different levels of bitachon. The *Sefer Ha'Ikrim* explains that the ideal level of bitachon is when a person feels confident that Hashem will certainly help him. Just like a person waiting for the morning is convinced that it will come, so should we wait for Hashem's salvation, feeling certain that it will eventually occur.

When you have this type of bitachon, you will be happy and praise Hashem for His salvation, even before it occurs.

The Brisker Rav said that this is hinted in the following words: *בטח בה'* trust in Hashem, *והתענג על ה'* and experience the joy and pleasure of the salvation, even before the salvation comes because you are certain that Hashem will help you. *ויתן לך משאלות לבך*, in the merit of your *bitachon*, Hashem will grant you all your heart's desires.⁶

Bitachon for Spirituality

We must also have bitachon that Hashem will help us win the war against our evil inclination. Without Hashem's help, we will fail, but don't worry because Hashem is with us, and with His help, we will succeed.

The Ohr HaChaim zt"l (20:1) says that the yetzer hara is stronger than us in three ways:

(1) The yetzer hara is a trained warrior. He knows all the tricks how to lure people into his net. He knows exactly what to do and how to do it. But people aren't as shrewd. We aren't trained in the strategies of this war.

(2) The yetzer hara fights with us by luring us into *matters we desire*. He offers us sins that appeal to us, which we think are sweet and are for our benefit.

(3) We have committed aveiros, and the aveiros give the yetzer hara extra strength. So, we aren't only battling with a yetzer

Vienna wanted to know whether the person collecting money in Vienna was legitimately poor.

"I know him, and he has a lot of money" the evil man replied to the telegram. This convinced the police that the Yid was wealthy and the money he carried was his own. They permitted him to return to Yerushalayim with the money.

We can learn at least two lessons from this story:

(1) Everything is for the good. Reb Dovid Biderman told him that something good will come from his enemy who constantly tried to humiliate him, and that is what occurred in the end.

(2) Have *bitachon* in Hashem and Hashem will help you. This man had a hard time doing *shidduchim* and earning money, but with *bitachon*, everything worked out well. He made *shidduchim* and he had wealth, too.

Our first request in the brachah *ולמלשינים* in *Shemonah Esrei* is *אל תהי תקוה*, that our enemies should lose hope. Afterwards we request their downfall, as we say *תאבדו, תעקר* "May they be lost... uprooted," and so on. But we begin with *אל תהי תקוה*, that they should lose all hope, because losing hope is the root of all the troubles and disasters that follow.

6. It states, *השליך על ה' יחבך והוא יכלכלך*, "Throw your package onto Hashem, and He will supply your needs." We'll explain this *passuk* with a *mashal*:

Someone goes over to his friend and says, "Can you watch a bag of precious gems for me?" He refuses. No one would. Who would want to take on this responsibility? Why should one accept responsibility for so much money? But if someone tosses the bag at his friend and as he runs away, he says, "Watch this for me. I'm rushing to catch the train," his friend will guard the bag of precious gems for him. What else could he do? Similarly, the *passuk* is implying that when one flings his bag of worries onto Hashem and he doesn't leave himself with even the smallest worry, it is certain that Hashem will take care of him.

hara, we are fighting a yetzer hara that we fortified with our aveiros.

Considering these three advantages that the yetzer hara has over us, it seems likely that we will lose the war.

We will reread three strengths of the yetzer hara, as the Or HaChaim expresses them:

(1)"Man isn't trained for warfare, while the *yetzer hara* is a trained warrior.

(2)"Another problem is that the human body desires everything the *yetzer hara* offers: to steal, to be arrogant, to eat everything one desires, etc.

(3)"Furthermore, when a person transgresses the Torah many times the *yetzer hara* becomes even stronger..."

So, we've discussed the problem, but what is the solution? How can one win over the yetzer hara?

The Or HaChaim writes:

"Hashem tells us, *כי תצא למלחמה וראית בעיניי*, שכלך סוס ורכב, 'When you go out to war [against the yetzer hara], and you see his horse and chariot.' The horse represents the *yetzer hara* who is trained in warfare, unlike man, who isn't. *רכב*, chariot, represents *הרכבת האדם*, man's makeup, because he naturally desires those matters that the *yetzer hara* offers. Additionally, *עם רב*, the *yetzer hara*'s strength has increased, *ממך*, because of your many sins. Nevertheless, Hashem comforts us and says, *לא תירא ממך*, don't be afraid, *כי ה' אלקיך עמך*, Hashem is with you. If you fight with your own strength, you will lose the war. That is true. But Hashem is with you, and His strength is great. He will save you... *המעלך*. *מאריך מצרים*... *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is your proof because just as Hashem saved you from Mitzrayim, He will help you win the war against the *yetzer hara*."

The War in this Generation

Let us repeat the three ideas the Or HaChaim discusses, the three strengths of

the yetzer hara, and we will see how they associate with one of the primary yetzer haras of our generation, the internet.

The Or HaChaim's first point is that the *yetzer hara* is trained in war strategies while we aren't. This is one of the significant problems with the internet. Internet sites are designed and built by intelligent people, who have studied strategies for years, and their primary motive is to get people addicted to the internet. The average person isn't as wise as all those minds; he never studied addiction avoidance strategies. How can he expect to outsmart the system and be protected from the negative side of the internet?

The second problem the Or HaChaim mentioned is that the *yetzer hara* sells what the human body desires. This also applies to the internet, as we know.

Finally, the Or HaChaim explains that our past sins strengthen the yetzer hara, making it harder to free ourselves from his grip. This is particularly true regarding technology. The more one becomes accustomed to internet technology, the harder it becomes to leave it.

The only way to win this battle is with Hashem's help and by following the guidelines the chachamim of our generation established.

Chazal say, (and the Or HaChaim writes it in this section) *הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו*, "Those who desire to be pure, Hashem helps them." The Yismach Moshe zt'l said that *מסייעין אותו* is written in the plural because Hashem helps us together with the chachamim of the generations. For they tell us how and when to use the internet and when not to use it, and they supply us with helpful tips and advice. Those who follow their counsel will be pure and holy. Those who think they can battle this yetzer hara of our generation on their own will undoubtedly fail.

לא תסור, Rabbinical Guidance

This week's parashah states (17:11) לא תסור "You shall not turn away from the word they tell you, neither right nor left." With these words, the Torah obligates us to obey the lessons, guidelines, and boundaries that the chachamim establish.

The Torah is eternal, and this law also applies to our generation. We must abide by the guidelines established by the gedolei hador.

The Or HaChaim teaches this lesson on the words (Devarim 12:28) שמור ושמעת את כל הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוך למען ייטב לך ולבניך אחרריך עד עולם, "Keep and listen to all these words that I command you, that it may benefit you and your children after you, forever, when you do what is good and proper in the eyes of Hashem, your God."

He explains that שמור is to keep the halachos of the Torah. ושמעת means to keep the gezeiros d'rabbanan, the guidelines they establish. למען ייטב לך ולבניך אחרריך עד עולם, because these guidelines ensure that Torah will remain with us, and our children, forever.

There is a discussion among the poskim regarding which day of the week to keep Shabbos in Japan, which is located beyond the international date line. Some people living in Japan decided that they would keep Shabbos on the first day, and on the second day, they would keep all of the d'Oraysas (Torah obligations) but would be lenient with the d'Rabbanans (Rabbanic laws). But this idea didn't last long because they were soon cooking, carrying, and doing all malachos on the second day, because the rabbanan established their halachos to safeguard Shabbos, and it is impossible to keep Shabbos without their safeguards. One can think that he is smart and intelligent, and he will be able to keep the d'Oraysas without the d'Rabbanans, but it is an attempt that is certain to fail, for it is impossible to keep the Torah without the boundaries the chachamim established.

The Or HaChaim (Devarim 12:28) writes, הוא דבר המעמיד דורות עם בני ישראל לעולם להבדילם מכל [The chachamim's enactments] is what preserves the generations of the Jewish nation forever, to keep them distant from disgusting matters, and anything like that."

It states (Bamidbar 30:2) וידבר משה אל ראשי 'המטות לבני ישראל לאמר זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' Moshe spoke to the heads of the shevatim of Bnei Yisrael, saying: This is the matter that Hashem has commanded."

The miforshim discuss why this mitzvah was explicitly given to ראשי המטות, the heads of the shevatim.

The Sefer HaChaim (Sefer HaZechus vol.1, ch.2, written by the Maharal's brother) writes, "This is to teach us that the takanos that the heads of Bnei Yisrael establish as safeguards for the needs of the time are included in הדבר אשר צוה ה' Hashem's command." We shouldn't consider the chachamim's laws secondary and less important than the Torah obligations. The passuk tells us זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' "This is the matter that Hashem has commanded." This means the decrees that the leaders of the generations make for Bnei Yisrael in all ages are like a command from Hashem, Himself. We must keep these laws as though we heard them from Hashem.

Chazal (Shabbos 12:) say that it is forbidden to read by a lamp's light on Shabbos. The Vilna Gaon zt'l teaches that when the chachamim first taught this law, they didn't reveal the reason.

The reason it is forbidden to read by lamp light is that sometimes the fire dims, and one might tilt the lamp, so the flame will become larger and brighter. Accidentally, he will have violated a Shabbos prohibition. But for a while, the chachamim waited and concealed the reason for the ban. This is because when people know the reason for a law, they will say, "It won't happen to me. I can read by a lamp and won't tilt it on Shabbos." And then it is likely that they will transgress Shabbos. Therefore, it was the

chachamim's way to teach a prohibition without telling the reason. Now, no one can rationalize and say that it doesn't apply to them because they don't know the reason behind the law. After Klal Yisrael accepted the law and people became accustomed to the prohibition, the chachamim revealed why they enacted it.

Reb Yishmael ben Elisha knew the reason the chachamim prohibited reading by a lamp. Being one of the chachamim, himself, he had the privilege to know the reason for the prohibition before it became public knowledge. And, indeed, he didn't feel he needed the law. He said, "I can read by the lamp light, and I will be cautious not to tilt the lamp."

The Gemara (Shabbos 12:) tells that once, Reb Yishmael was reading by lamp light on Shabbos and was about to tilt the lamp, and at the last second, he stopped himself. Reb Yishmael proclaimed, "How great are the words of the chachamim that they said that one shouldn't read by a lamp's light."

The Vilna Gaon explains that he meant, "How great are the chachamim that they taught the prohibition without revealing the reason. I knew the reason, which almost caused me to desecrate Shabbos!"⁷

We are truly fortunate that the chachamim of our generation have established rules and guidelines on how to use the internet. They are rules we can live by, as they vary according to every person's individual needs.

However, at times, the chachamim of our generation establish a law that doesn't resonate with everyone. Some may consider a particular law extraneous or unnecessary. But, like Reb Yishmael, they say, "I can be careful. I don't need this guideline or boundary."

At times like these, it is best to accept the laws with temimus. It should be like when they didn't know the reason for the takanah and accepted the law blindly.

In our generation, even the goyim l'havdil, understand the terrible consequences of the internet, but they can't control it. The Jewish community is fortunate to have leaders who establish rules, and the community accepts the laws lovingly, knowing that they will save them b'ruchniyos and b'gashmiyos. Our future, and the future of our children, are dependent on these rules. We should certainly consider ourselves fortunate.

Nevertheless, there are details in the guidelines that some people feel are unnecessary or extreme. They think they can be lenient with some aspects, and it won't affect them spiritually.

Perhaps, it would have been easier for them to accept these rules had they not known the reason the chachamim of the generation established them. Because when they don't know the reasons, they cannot claim that they are smarter and know better than the chachamim.

Let's consider the prohibition of basar b'chalav as an example. On a biblical level, the prohibition only applies to a mixture of cattle meat and milk. Chicken and other poultry aren't prohibited. The chachamim, however, forbade cooking or consuming poultry with milk, as they understood that it could lead to the Torah prohibition of basar b'chalav (milk and meat).

Now, imagine if someone would say, "I barbecue meat every day. No one is as expert in meats as I am. And I can confidently say there is no similarity between chicken and meat. They don't look the same, taste the same, or smell the same. I don't know why the chachamim forbid it. I can eat chicken

7. According to one opinion in the Gemara, he tilted the lamp to increase its light, and he wrote on his notebook, "I, Reb Yishmael ben Elisha, read and tilted a lamp on Shabbos. When the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt, I will sacrifice a fat korban chatas."

and milk without coming and won't come to a Torah prohibition!"

Everyone understands that this man is making a terrible mistake. The chachamim understood that eating chicken with milk can lead to eating meat with milk, and you aren't wiser than them. They perceive things better than you why this decree is necessary.

We have to humble ourselves to the chachamim's perception of matters, even when we don't fully understand their logic. This is how we should consider the rules the chachamim of our generation established for the internet. We shouldn't consider ourselves wiser than the many chachamim who established these rules.

A child riding a bus asked the driver to drive quickly and to zigzag between the lanes.

"Why?" the driver asked.

"I want to see an accident."

"Are you insane?" the driver asked. "Why do you want to see an accident?"

"My mother told me many stories of accidents, so I want to see one."

"I refuse to listen to your foolishness," the driver said. The child cried and begged, but the driver was adamant.

Other people on the bus didn't know what the conversation was about but saw a crying child and a very strict driver. They wondered why the bus driver wasn't more compassionate with the young child.

But had they known what the child was requested, they would have understood that the bus driver was being compassionate. He was saving the child's life (along with all the other passengers).

This story can be used as a mashal for the takanos that the chachamim established in our generation. Some are angry with the chachamim. "Why do they forbid everything?" They ask.

But the chachamim are being compassionate. They are saving us. Those who are asking for more freedom are the foolish ones.

Temimus

In the parashah of ketores (which is said in the morning and afternoon with the korbanos) we say that if there would be honey in the ketores, the smell would be so wonderful that people would fall on their faces from the scent. למָה אֵין מַעֲרִיבִין בֵּה דְבַשׁ, "So why don't we include honey in the ketores? מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה מפני שהתורה אמרה, כל שאור וכל דבש לא תקטירו, It is because the Torah tells us that all sourdough and all honey may not be added in the ketores."

The source of these words is a Yerushalmi, written in an unusual style, by asking a question and then answering it on its own. (It is called a "hypophora," a question that the questioner answers). In hilchos Shabbos, for example, we don't find, "Why can't one light a fire on Shabbos? It is because it states ולא תבערו אש... תבערו אש..." The halachos of Shabbos are expressed straight out (It is forbidden to light a fire on Shabbos). So, why is ketores different?

It is because common sense tells us that honey should be used in the ketores. After all, it would enhance the ketores immensely. However, we do what the Torah says, and that doesn't necessarily follow our common sense. ולָמָּה אֵין מַעֲרִיבִין בֵּה דְבַשׁ, "We don't we put in honey, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה אמרה, because the Torah told us not to."

This attitude is called temimus. It is to keep Hashem's laws as He gave them, without compromises, shortcuts, additions, or subtractions.

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zt'l related the following story:

A G-d fearing man sold furs from his home for his parnassah. At one point, business was slow, and he was sitting with many furs in stock.

Early one morning, someone knocked on his door and said he wanted to buy all of the furs.

But this fur merchant hadn't yet davened Shacharis, and it is forbidden to do business before Shacharis (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 89:3). "Come back in an hour, and I'll sell them to you for a good price."

"No. I need them now. If you don't sell them to me right away, I'll go elsewhere."

His *parnassah* was tight, but halachah comes first. So he quoted the goy an exorbitant price for the furs, figuring that the goy wouldn't pay so much, and he would leave. But the customer was desperate and agreed to that price!

The *yetzer hara* told him, "You can't afford to lose this deal. It is a miracle! He is willing to pay double the market price."

But then he decided he wouldn't go against *halachah*, so he raised the price even further.

The goy replied, "I see that you don't want to sell the furs" and left.

The man lost out on a good deal but kept the halachah. He didn't do business before Shacharis.

The Rizhiner concluded, "You are waiting to hear the end of the story. You want to hear the miracle that occurred and how davening Shacharis made him even more wealthy, but that didn't happen. That was the end of the story. The story demonstrates this man's *mesirus nefesh* to keep halachah."

Most chassidic stories end with a miracle, salvation, but this story ends with a person's loyalty to Hashem. And that was the lesson the Ruzhiner Rebbe wanted to impart into his chassidim: Loyalty to halachah, at all costs. This is called *temimus*.

This lesson is found in this week's *parashah* (18:13), תָּמִים תְּהִיָּה עִם ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ, "Be complete with Hashem, your G-d." *Temimus* means to be loyal to Hashem and unwaveringly keep His laws.⁸

8. Rebbe Mottele Slonimer *zy'a* (*Maamar Mordechai* p.342) told the following story:

There were two tzaddikim who were friends. They made a pact that whoever dies first will come to his friend in a dream and tell him what happened to him in his judgment in heaven.

One of them was *niftar*, and soon afterwards, he came to his friend in a dream. He said, "When the court reviewed my deeds, they saw that everything was perfect. But I had one sin, and for that aveirah, I was told that I would need to go to Gehinom. I told the court that I don't want to go to Gehinom, so they brought me to a very large building, gave me a small hammer, and said, 'Demolish this building with the hammer. When you finish, you can go to Gan Eden.'"

"I was devastated. It seemed it would take many years before I demolished the large sturdy building with my small hammer.

"But then I thought: 'Why did I wear tallis and tefillin every day during my lifetime? Why did I study Torah and keep the mitzvos? It was because I wanted to do Hashem's will? And now it's Hashem's will that I destroy this large building with this hammer. Even if it takes many years, I will do my mission with joy.' Joyously, I raised the hammer and swung it at building with all my might. The entire building collapsed, and I was swiftly brought to my place in Gan Eden."

This story reminds us that sometimes a deed can seem very difficult, but if you set yourself to doing it, Hashem will help you.

The story is also a lesson in *temimus*. When it comes to serving Hashem, our goal should be to do what Hashem wants, even when we want something else.

According to an old custom, the תמים of ת is written larger the standard size.

The Baal HaTurim writes that the large ת implies that if you have *temimus*, it is like you kept the entire Torah from א through ת.

The Rebbe of Kotzk zt'l explains that the large ת hints that everyone can have *temimus*. There is room for everyone to enter the large ת of *temimus*.

Happy with Your Portion

Rashi (18:13) writes, התהלך עמו בתמימות... אלא, "Go with Hashem with *temimus*...and whatever happens with you, accept with *temimus*." Accept your portion and believe with a *temimus* that this is best for you.

The Chida (nachal Kedumim) says that תמים עמך, means we should be a tamim עמך, in a place that only Hashem can see, and that is to be a tamim in one's thoughts (because only Hashem sees one's thoughts). This means to accept what Hashem sends your way.

Are you jealous of what others have? Believe me, you don't want other people's portion. They have problems, too. You don't want their package. So rejoice with the portion Hashem gave you.

A chasid of the Imrei Emes zt'l complained about his limited parnassah. The Imrei Emes told him that it states in parashas Shoftim (16:22) ולא תקים לך מצבה אשר שם ה' אלקיך, this can be translated, don't make a demonstration against Hashem (ווידערשטאנד). Believe that if Hashem gave you this situation, it is the best for you.

The Nesivos Shalom zt'l of Slonim zt'l would often say, "Women seem to be deprived from many mitzvos because they don't wear talis and tefillin, etc. However, they received a great present, to say שעשני כרצוני and there is no greater avodah than when one accepts Hashem's plan.

In the name of the Apter Rav zt'l: "When one accepts Hakadosh Baruch Hu as He is, Hakadosh Baruch Hu accepts him as he is."

The Or L'Shamayim of Apter zt'l says that in the past, purity was attained through fasts and sigufim, and today, purity and rectification of the souls occur when one has emunah in Hashem.

Reb Chaim Brisker zt'l taught the following concept regarding Torah study and analysis: "When you have three questions that can either be answered with three different answers or with one answer that answers all three questions, it is preferred to use the answer that answer all questions.

Based on this principle, consider the following questions:

Question One: Reuven doesn't have money, and the question is why. He answers that it is because he didn't do enough hishtadlus.

Question Two: Reuven's son is ill, and the question is why. Reuven answers that it is because his son ate unhealthy foods.

Question Three: Reuven hoped to be appointed to a particular prestigious position, but he was turned down for some reason, and the question is why. He is more eligible than all the other applicants! He answers that it is certainly because he has an enemy who spoke lashon hara on him.

So, Reuven has three questions with three different answers. Wouldn't it be better to have one answer for all questions?

He doesn't have parnassah, his son is ill, and he didn't get the position because that was Hashem's will. This is *temimus*, to believe the portion you have is best.

Part of *temimus* is to focus on the good and to realize that your portion is indeed good.

Chazal (Brachos 57:) say, שלשה מרחיבין דעתו של אדם, "There are three things that broaden the mind of man.

They are: A beautiful home, a beautiful wife, and beautiful utensils."

The simple explanation is that having a beautiful home, a beautiful wife, or beautiful utensils, calms the mind and broadens his thoughts.

The Rizhiner zt'l says we can understand the Gemara as follows: "Broaden your mind and recognize that your home is beautiful, your wife is beautiful, and your utensils are beautiful. Broaden your mind to realize this. It is up to you to think this way, and then you will appreciate what you have.

Someone told the Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l that he thinks the brachah שְׁעֵשָׂה לִי כָּל צָרָי is a brachah l'vatalah, a brachah in vain because he doesn't have everything he needs.

Rebbe Bunim explained to him that he does have everything he needs. "You need to lack things and nevertheless accept Hashem's decree with joy. That is what Hashem wants from you. Everyone has their own set of tests, which is their mission in life. And part of your mission is to lack certain matters and accept Hashem's decree with joy and love. So, you have everything you need to accomplish your mission."⁹

Another approach is to recognize all the good Hashem does for you. Train yourself to appreciate what Hashem gives you, and you will say the brachah שְׁעֵשָׂה לִי כָּל צָרָי with joy.

A princess became ill from depression. Her father, the king, had musicians play music near her bed, and clowns came to

make jokes, but she remained sad. Finally, a wise man told the king that if the princess wore the clothing of a happy person, she would become happy. "But it has to be a person who has no worries at all, or this remedy won't work," the wise man added.

The king was overjoyed that there was a solution. "It shouldn't be hard to find someone who doesn't have worries. She'll wear his clothing and be cured."

He summoned some of his soldiers and sent them on the mission of finding a person in his kingdom who had no worries and to get a garment from him.

The servants went straight to the wealthy part of the city, figuring that the rich had no fears and worries. But they were in for a surprise. They discovered that the people there were all very worried and anxious.

So, they tried the musicians and then the comedians, but they were also sad and worried. They went to the doctors. "They heal people, which is a very satisfying job." But they found the doctors to be concerned and sad, too.

The king's servants gave up. If the wealthy, the musicians, the comedians, and the doctors are all sad and full of worries, who could possibly be happy and worry-free?

As they were returning to the king's castle to tell him they had failed in their mission, they passed a very poor section of town. "We won't find a happy here," they quipped.

9. The Chasam Sofer zt'l (*Toras Moshe, Ekev, Shma*) explains that Hashem could have made people without needing anything, but then they would never turn to Hashem. The greatest *chessed*, therefore, is their חסרון, that they lack things because this causes them to remember Hashem.

He teaches this lesson on the *brachah Borei Nefashos*. He writes, "The truth is, this is the greatest kindness in the creation of man. He was created lacking so he will recognize his Creator, serve Him, and earn both worlds. His lacking is therefore the greatest benefit. Thus, one says, בורא נפשות רבות וחסרונם. Hashem created people that lack things, על כל מה שבראת להחיות בהם נפש כל חי, and that is the greatest kindness, because ברוך חי העולמים, with it one merits both worlds.

But then they passed a poor man's house, laughter and music were heard from inside. They couldn't believe their ears. Could it be that happy people live here?" they wondered.

They knocked and were shocked when they saw the family sitting around the table, everyone appearing to have no worries in the world.

"Aren't you worried about anything?" the servants asked.

"No. We have no worries."

"But it looks like you don't have money for tomorrow's meal!"

"We don't, but why should we worry? Hashem always helps us. Often, at the last minute, but Hashem always helps us."

"Please, give us one of your garments," the servants requested. "It will cure the princess."

"We would love to help the princess, but what can we do? We don't have any clothing other than the clothing we wear."

This is because wealth doesn't necessarily bring happiness. In fact, the Mishnah states, מרבה נכסים מרבה דאגה, "The more assets, the more worries."¹⁰ We should therefore be happy with our portion.

Positivity

Tzaddikim taught, טראכט גוט, וועט זיין גוט, "Think positively, and things will be good."

There was a Lubavitzer chasid whose child was sick, and the prognosis wasn't encouraging. So the chasid went to his rebbe, the Tzemech Tzedek, who told him, טראכט גוט, וועט זיין גוט, "Think good, and it will be good."

And that's what happened. The chasid thought positive, happy thoughts, and his son recovered.

Positive thinking is also mesugal for parnassah. טראכט גוט, וועט זיין גוט, trust that Hashem will help you, and things will work out well.

Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk zt'l wrote a letter to his chasidim, "Every year, I've been receiving letters from the Jewish community of Beshinkawitz, and they were always complaining that they don't have parnassah. It was painful for me to read their letters. This year, they didn't mention parnassah, so I'm certain they will be successful."

Their worries were the source of the problem. When they stopped complaining, they had parnassah.

Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk explains: A person is where his thoughts are. When they trust in Hashem, they are attached to Hashem's kindness. When they are worried, they are bound to *din*, to limitation; therefore, that is what they receive.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l wanted to give a brachah to a man who helped him. Rebbe Bunim asked him what brachah he wanted. The man replied, "I want a brachah to have parnassah in abundance."

Rebbe Bunim replied, "I will give you a brachah that you shouldn't worry because Hashem doesn't give parnassah to those who worry. Hashem gives parnassah to those who ask."

The *navi* (Shmuel 1, 1) tells that Chanah prayed for children, and the *navi* states ופניה לא היו לה עוד, "she didn't have a sad face anymore." She trusted that Hashem would answer her tefilos. The Chasam Sofer zt'l

¹⁰ The Klausenburger Rebbe zt'l said, כסף also means shame (see Mishnayos Pesachim 3:5, כאדם שהכסיו פניו, for it's a great shame when one trusts in his money. Instead, one should place his trust in Hashem.

explains that the combination of tefillah and optimism brought about her salvation.¹¹

11. Moments before the Satmar Rebbe's *chasunah*, his father, the Kedushas Yom Tov *zt'l*, told him, "Why is the chuppah performed outdoors, under the open sky? It's to remind the *chosson* and *kallah* to look up to heaven, and to trust in Hashem for all their needs. There are *chasanim* who go to the chuppah thinking that their father or their father-in-law will support him. But that isn't a true thought. The chuppah, under the sky, is a reminder that *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and only Hashem will support them. Therefore, don't rely on anyone, only Hashem."

Right after the week of *sheva brachos*, the Satmar Rebbe's father, the Kedushas Yom Tov, was *niftar*. He certainly couldn't rely on his father anymore, only on his Father in heaven.

The Gemara says, "A person should sell the walls of his home to buy shoes for his feet" (*Shabbos* 129). The Divrei Yisrael of Modzitz *zy'a* explains this allegorically: The walls block one's vision, but when he sells the walls of his home, he can see the heavens, and he can remember that everything comes from Hashem. He will then have shoes for his feet, which indicates that he will be raised above the impurities of this world.