

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Tetzaveh



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Torah Wellsprings - Tetzaveh

Speech and Happiness

It states (Mishlei 15:23) שְׂמֵחָה לְאִישׁ בְּמַעֲנֵה פִּי, "A man has joy with the response of his mouth."

This pasuk can be explained in several ways. With proper speech, we will discover how one can be happy and make others happy.

1. The Power of Speech

No one is happier than someone who believes in Hashem. Wouldn't you be happy if the greatest king of the world talked to you, loved you, and desired your good deeds? How would you feel to speak with this king every day? How happy and proud

would you be if this great king was your father? Multiply this joy infinite times (because Hashem is infinite), and that is the joy of emunah.¹

This great joy is the portion of those who have emunah and understand a drop of Hashem's endless greatness. The joy is enormous.

Furthermore, when one believes in Hashem, he knows that everything is for the good. Someone who doesn't believe in Hashem doesn't have that comforting thought. The believer also relies on Hashem to provide him with all his needs. The non-believer is full of worry, not having from where to draw hope.²

1. Someone asked the Avnei Nezer zt'l, "We learned in the same cheder. You weren't smarter than me. How is it that you became a gadol b'Yisrael and not me?"

The Avnei Nezer replied, "Were you ever extremely happy?"

The man replied that he had once won the lottery, which made him extremely happy. The Avnei Nezer told him he had that degree of joy every time he puts on tefillin.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l would say, "There was a Jew in Zvhil who had more pleasure putting on tefillin each morning than the greatest baal aveirah has with his taavos." It is known that when Rebbe Shlomke said, "There was a Jew in Zhvil" he was referring to himself.

2. The Ben Ish Chai discusses the difference between the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim and the Purim miracles. People died, r'l, in Mitzrayim. It wasn't a salvation without pain. The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 1:34) writes that Pharaoh became afflicted with tzaraas, and his sorcerers said that his only refuah was to bathe in the blood of one hundred and fifty Jewish children daily. Furthermore, the Midrash (Tanchuma) states on the pasuk וְהַמָּשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל that only one in five Jews left Mitzrayim. According to other opinions in the Midrash, only one in fifty people or one in five hundred people left Mitzrayim. The majority perished during the makah of choshech.

In contrast, the salvation of Purim was complete. Not one Yid died.

The Ben Ish Chai explains that this is because, by the miracle of Purim, the Yidden relied on Hashem alone. They didn't make hishtadlus because there was nothing they could do. At first, they relied on Esther to save them. But when Esther invited Haman to her party, they lost hope in Esther and trusted in Hashem alone. The Gemara (Megillah 15:) says, "Why did Esther invite Haman to her party? So that the Yidden shouldn't say, 'We have a sister in the king's house,' which would cause them to forget to daven and rely on Hashem's compassion."

And when they trusted in Hashem, they were saved.

The Ben Ish Chai adds that the concept of bitachon is mentioned in Shoshanas Yaakov: שְׂכַל קוּיָד לֹא יִבְשׁוּ כָל הַחוֹסִים בְּךָ, "Whoever trusts in You won't be shamed - all those who trust in You."

Additionally, someone who believes in Hashem knows he has a mission in life, and that he is important. Someone who doesn't believe in Hashem struggles to understand why he is more significant than a monkey or a spider.

So, the joy of a Yid is immeasurable. If we increase our emunah, we have increased our happiness. How can we improve our emunah? One way is to speak about emunah. Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz zt'l taught

(Tehillim 116:10) **האמנתי**, "I believe in Hashem, כי **אדבר** because I speak about it."

The Slonimer tzaddikim zt'l said that one is permitted to speak about levels of emunah that he hasn't attained yet because by talking about those levels, he will achieve them.³

We can, therefore, translate the pasuk **שמחה לאיש**, a person is happy, **במענה פיו**, when words of emunah are spoken. These conversations strengthen his emunah, and then he can have the incredible joy that is the portion of those who believe in Hashem.⁴

The mazal of Adar is a fish, which teaches us a lesson in bitachon.

We would assume that a fish found in a larger fish's belly would have its tail in front and its head towards the back because the larger fish probably swallowed the fish as the small fish tried to swim away. We would assume that they were swallowed tail first. But, actually, fish are found with their heads first. It seems that they were swallowed from their head side.

Rebbe Meir Yechiel of Ostrovtze zy'a explains that this is because the fish's eyes are always open. Fish aren't afraid of being caught from the head because they figure that if they detect a big, hungry fish, they will know of the danger and swim away to safety. The fish fears being caught by the tail because a large fish can lurk from behind and quickly snatch the fish.

So, the fish trusts in itself for the head side, and for its tail side, it trusts in Hashem. This is the reason fish aren't caught from the tail side. They trust in Hashem, so Hashem protects them. They are caught from the head side because they trust their abilities there and don't rely on Hashem for protection.

Reb Avraham Genichovsky zt'l said that there is a fish which shoots out black die into the water. This confuses the fish in the vicinity, enabling this fish to consume them. This is also how the yetzer hara operates. He confuses people, makes them worry, and then the yetzer hara can capture them.

It is brought in sefarim that there is a snake that stands under a tree and stares up at a bird perched on a high branch. The snake can't climb the tree, but the bird is afraid. From fright, it falls directly into the snake's mouth.

When one is afraid, he can't think clearly. He is liable to fall into his enemies' hands. Haman used this technique to try to destroy the Jewish nation. He wanted **להוסיף ולאבדם**, to confuse them, so afterwards, he could destroy them, r'l.

Rebbe Mendel of Vorker zt'l said: Children play high-and-seek. When a child hides, he shouts, "I'm ready!" The sound gives the child away. Now, the one searching for him knows where he is.

Hashem does the same. He conceals himself, as it states **ואני הסתר אסתר**. But when one is in such a situation, Hashem is shouting, "I'm hiding. Find me." And we know exactly where to find Him. He is there in that situation itself.

3. It is written in sefarim that one must be cautious not to speak words of kefirah, not even as a joke. One must also be careful not to read material that can weaken the emunah. Our most precious asset is our emunah, and we must guard it however we can.

4. Reb Efraim Waxman Shlita told me that when he was a child learning in cheder, his melamed, a holocaust survivor, would mumble something incomprehensible whenever the children in his classroom misbehaved. The children were sure that he was cursing them in Hungarian.

2. Speaking Calmly

The Ramban (Igeres HaRamban) writes תתנהג תמיד לדבר כל דברך בנחת לכל אדם ובכל עת, ובוזה תנצל מן הכעס שהיא מדה רעה, "Accustom yourself to speak all your words with tranquility to all people and at all times, and this will save you from anger..."

The Ramban's concise words express that there should never be exceptions to this rule. Always (תמיד), all your words (כל דברך), to all people (לכל אדם), in every situation (ובכל עת), should be spoken with *nachas*, calmly, without anger, without irritation.

Rashi (on Mishlei) explains that this lesson is found in the words שמחה לאיש במענה פיו. Rashi writes, "When a person speaks calmly with people (בנחת), people will love him."

This is undoubtedly true. No one enjoys being barked at. And when they are, it isn't uncommon for them to answer back with harsh words of their own. But everyone enjoys being spoken to with respect, patience, and kindness. And as the Ramban tells us, this manner of speech can be practiced and acquired. One can train himself to constantly speak with *nachas*, calmly, without irritation.

3. Speak About the Good You Have and Not What You Lack

This is an important lesson. We begin the subject by focusing on one's thoughts; then, we will go to speech.

Be aware: You can control your thoughts. You don't need to concentrate on your problems. You don't need to harp on your faults, either. At any moment, a person can remove his mind from everything negative in his life and think about something else.

Sometimes, we meet people who struggle with sorrow and hardships, yet they appear to be the happiest people in the world. How do they do it? One way is that they train themselves to tune out from their problems. They don't allow themselves to think about their troubles, and they are happy. This idea can be compared to a car constantly sputtering and stalling on the road. A mechanic checked it and declared that everything was in order. He asked the car owner, "What gas do you use?" The owner told him that he uses the cheapest brand.

"That's the problem," the mechanic said. "Use better gas, and your car will work fine." The same applies to life. If you feed your thoughts with negativity, always rehashing life's problems, it will be a struggle for you to be happy. Feed your mind with good, positive thoughts, and you will be able to be happy.

At the end of the year, the children asked their melamed forgiveness for causing him such a hard time over the year until he cursed them.

The melamed replied, "Chas v'shalom! I didn't curse you. Did you understand what I would say? I said (28:19) קנכרי טרקיא פנטרי, etc. I repeated Unkelos's translation of the precious stones that the kohen gadol wore on the choshen. I was reminding myself that you are all precious stones of Hashem, holy neshamos, and with this thought in mind, I succeeded to control my anger."

This is an example of using speech to attain belief in the greatness of Jewish children. דיבור, which means speech, can also be translated as to lead. For example, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 8.) states, דבר אחד לדור, "One leader for the generation." (This was when Hakadosh Baruch Hu said that Yehoshua would lead alone and not jointly with the elders. דבר אחד לדור, it is better that one person is in charge.)

So, there are two translations to דבר: speech and leadership. This is because with speech, one leads and directs others, and with speech, one can lead and direct how his mind should think. When he speaks words of emunah and words that describe the greatness of Bnei Yisrael, he leads his mind to think in those terms.

This is the meaning of שמחה לאיש, a person attains joy from his emunah, במענה פיו, through the words he speaks.

A person must train himself also to talk positively. If he speaks constantly about his troubles, he will be sad. If he can talk about other matters, it will help him keep his mind off his problems.⁵

This is another explanation for the pasuk שמחה לאיש במענה פיו. A person becomes happy if he is cautious with what he says.

Let's take this a tiny step further: במענה is referring to a response to a question. So, the pasuk hints that when someone asks you, "How are things?" your response should be, "Baruch Hashem, everything is wonderful." This response will help you be happy. Also, your response will make the listener happy. Your positive attitude to life will teach your fellow man that he can also focus on the good in his life and can be happy with his portion, as well. So, לאיש in the pasuk can be referring to the speaker or the listener. שמחה לאיש, they will be happy, במענה פיו, due to the positive response.

There was a person who always complained. He focused on the half-cup that was empty.

His mentor gave him a cup of water and threw in a handful of salt. "Drink it," he commanded.

"I can't," the student replied. "It's bitter."

The mentor brought the student to a river, threw in a handful of salt, filled a cup with water from the river, and said, "Drink it," this time, the student drank the water.

"I don't understand," the mentor said. "I put in the same amount of salt as before. You didn't want to drink the water earlier, but now you do. What's the difference?"

The student answered that a handful of salt in a cup of water makes the water bitter. A handful of salt in a river is insignificant."

Having proven this critical point, the mentor advised him to focus on all the good he has in life, and then the bitter experiences won't bother him so much. The bitterness will be *batel* and almost unrecognizable among all the good.

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l asked a watercarrier, "How are things?"

The water carrier put down the buckets and told the Baal Shem Tov about his many problems. "My shoulders hurt from the daily exertion of carrying water. If I were paid as much as I deserve for this job, it wouldn't be so bad, but people pay me pennies, and no one respects me. Lately, competitors began taking away my clients by offering even lower prices..." He went on and on with his complaints.

Another day, the Baal Shem Tov asked the same watercarrier, "How are things?" This time, the watercarrier told him that *baruch Hashem* things were good. He enjoys the job, he earns a salary, and he can put food on his table at home.

The students of the Baal Shem Tov asked their holy rebbe how this watercarrier changed his view on life. The Baal Shem Tov

5. There are times one should think and talk about his problems to find solutions. But as a rule, one is better off keeping his mind on happy matters.

A young woman served in the Israeli army – not an ideal place for a religious woman, to say the least. When she finished her service, she enrolled in a religious school but couldn't focus on her studies. Her thoughts kept returning to the aveiros she committed in the army. She was depressed and was having suicidal thoughts. The Chazon Ish, who was involved in the case, told the principal of the school, "Tell her that Chazal say הרהורי עבירה קשין מעבירה, and this means thinking and rehashing aveiros of the past is a worse sin than the aveiros, themselves. Tell her not to allow herself to think about her past aveiros."

She followed this counsel, and with time, she healed and succeeded in marrying and building a Jewish home.

replied that Chazal say that a person is judged on Rosh Hashanah, and another Chazal says that a person is judged each day. How do we reconcile these two Chazals?

A person is judged on Rosh Hashanah on what will occur that year. And each day, a person is judged on how he will accept it, with joy or complaints.

4. Good Counsel

There is nothing more crucial and satisfying than attaining good advice. The Metzudas Dovid says that the pasuk שמחה פני refers to the joy of receiving good counsel.

The final words of the pasuk are דבר בעתו, "How good is a word in time!" The Metzudas Dovid writes, "Even if he had succeeded with a certain counsel, nevertheless, not all times are the same. His advisors will explain that this isn't a good time to do so." A piece of advice that was right in the past might be wrong in the present.

The Chazon Ish zt'l would invest many hours counseling others. Someone asked him, "Wouldn't it be better if you used this time learning Torah?"

Few people attained the *hasmadah* that the Chazon Ish had, and this person thought that it would be better for the Chazon Ish if he had more time to study Torah. The Chazon Ish replied, "If I had a lot of money, I would spend a lot of time with people, discussing the needs of the community and struggling individuals and distributing tzedakah. But I don't have much money, and this is my way of doing chesed."⁶

Rabbeinu Yonah (3:54) writes, "A person should come up with good counsel to help his fellow man. This is one of the main ways to do chesed."

5. Simchah when Your Tefillos are Answered

The Gemara (Brachos 34:) says that the Tana, Reb Chanina ben Dosa, knew when his tefillos would be answered and when they wouldn't. After his tefilla, he would predict whether the person for whom he davened would live or not. People asked

6. The Chazon Ish's response is an essential foundation in avodas Hashem. There are three pillars of the Torah: Torah, avodah (tefillah), and gemilas chasadim. Some people excel in one pillar more than the others, but everyone must do all three.

This also applies to mitzvah observance. The halachah is that if there is a mitzvah that only you can perform, you must stop learning to perform the mitzvah. It would be a mistake to say at such times, "Learning Torah is more important."

The Baal HaTanya zt'l (Likutei Torah, Shemos) uses the analogy of a person's head compared to his foot. One doesn't disregard the foot because the head is more important. And the Baal HaTanya points out that the feet are more important than the head in some ways. If you want to get someplace, your head won't bring you there; your feet will.

Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised when gedolei Yisrael occupy themselves in what seems to be "smaller mitzvos." Everything is essential and has its place.

The Maor v'Shemesh discusses a scholar learning Torah, and a broken person approaches him. A conversation would lift his spirits. The Maor v'Shemesh says that we shouldn't be rigid and narrow-minded. One should be prepared to engage in other forms of avodas Hashem. Speaking with this distressed person isn't the scholar's general way of serving Hashem, but in some situations, that is what is expected of him.

But, like all matters, one must be wise to know the correct measure, or a person might find himself involved in chesed all day long, when his primary mission in life might be to study Torah.

him how he knew. He replied, אם שגורה תפילתי, "If the tefillah flows easily from my mouth, I know that the tefillah was accepted..."

Rashi explains, אם שגורה תפילתי בפי במרוצה ואני נכשל ותחנותי נובעת מלבי אל פי כל מה שאני חפץ להאריך בתחנונים, "If my tefillah flows and I don't stumble on the words, and my requests go up from my heart to my mouth to express everything I want to say and at length [this is my sign that my tefillah was accepted]."

Sometimes, we daven in our own words, and we have trouble saying the words. There is a large gap between the passionate thoughts brewing in the heart and the words that come forth. We just can't express ourselves adequately, so we ask our requests in short. This is also a very powerful tefillah. Every tefillah accomplishes so much, but this isn't the tefillah that Reb Chanina ben Dosa was referring to. There are times when the heart opens up, and one can express everything that is there. These are extraordinary times, and at these times, there is a greater likelihood that his tefillos will be answered. We aren't on the level of Reb Chanina ben Dosa to know for certain that at these times our tefillah will certainly be answered, but his lesson is an indication of the type of tefillah we should strive to attain. Continue davening; perhaps this time your heart will open, the words will come out with beautiful tefillos, and it will be an *eis ratzon*, an indication that your tefillos are being answered.

On this topic, the Noam Elimelech (Likutei Shoshanah, (ד"ה משלי explains the pasuk שמחה לאיש, which we are discussing. לאיש במענה פיו is a tzaddik. שמחה לאיש, a tzaddik is happy, במענה פיו, when he sees himself davening easily and smoothly. He is happy because he knows that this means his tefillos are desired and accepted by Hashem.

The tzaddik is extremely happy because he knows that the person for whom he davened will have his yeshuah. (And if he is davening for his own needs, he is happy because he knows that he will soon have his salvation.) His

proof is במענה פיו, the words of tefillah are coming so well and easily from his mouth.

6. The Joy of Being Connected to Kedushah

We now write another explanation from the Noam Elimelech on שמחה לאיש במענה פיו.

It is a great privilege and joy to live in Eretz Yisrael, a place where a Yid can reside in holiness. When one invests in Torah and tefillah, he has created Eretz Yisrael in his mouth. His mouth becomes an abode for holiness, and he lives with the kedushah of Hashem no matter where he actually is. מעון. שמחה במענה can be translated as an abode, שמחה, במענה פיו, a tzaddik is happy because he created an abode of kedushah in his mouth because he speaks Torah and tefillah.

The Noam Elimelech writes, "It is known that the main chiyus of the Jewish nation is in Eretz Yisrael. May Hashem quickly gather us there... However, a tzaddik can receive chiyus wherever he is... It states שמחה לאיש, the simchah for a tzaddik, is במענה פיו, when his mouth is his dwelling place. The tzaddik, with his Torah study and pure tefillos, is connected to Hashem. His mouth is his dwelling place, no matter where he is. And this is his joy."

The Joy of Loving Hashem

The Noam Elimelech adds another explanation to the words שמחה לאיש במענה פיו. He explains that שמחה לאיש refers to the wonderful joy of loving Hashem. One attains love for Hashem במענה פיו, when he refrains from speaking what he shouldn't.

The Noam Elimelech writes, "A person shouldn't speak much about matters of this world...and he should always focus on Hashem's greatness...and then he will attain love of Hashem. This is implied from the pasuk שמחה לאיש... How can a person attain the joy of loving Hashem? במענה פיו, by afflicting his mouth (because מענה is from the word עניו, סיגוף, affliction). When a person afflicts his mouth by refraining from speaking matters that aren't related to avodas Hashem...and when he thinks pure thoughts

of Hashem's greatness, he will attain love of Hashem."

7. The Joy of Silence

There is a great joy that comes from being silent. As the wise say, "Before one speaks, he rules over his words, but after one speaks, the words rule over him." He can't take his words back.

The *mazal* of Adar, the month of happiness, is דגים, fish. The Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l explains that this is because fish are silent, and being silent is a great joy.⁷

This can be the translation, שמחה לאיש, it is joyous for a person, במענה פיו, when he afflicts his mouth, and he doesn't speak. His silence will save him from a lot of trouble.

Avraham served the *malachim* tongue with mustard. Why specifically this food? Rebbe Dovid of Tolna zt'l explains that the *malachim* sought to understand why human beings are so precious to Hashem. Avraham gave them the tongue with mustard,

implying that sometimes the tongue is hot and wants to say something sharp, especially when someone insulted you, and you want to answer back. But Yidden know how to hold back and remain silent even then, and that's why Hashem loves us so much.

By *makas tzefardeia* the frogs were *moser nefesh* by jumping into the Egyptian ovens to do Hashem's will (to go into the breads baking in the ovens). They were rewarded for that, and they remained alive. They didn't get burned or baked by the fire (see *Baal HaTurim*, *Shemos*, 8:1). By *makas bechoros* the dogs didn't bark. They too were rewarded, and whenever one has a non-kosher piece of meat, a גבילה, there's a mitzvah to give it to the dogs.

It seems that the frogs' deeds were greater than the dogs' because they were *moser nefesh*. Yet the dogs' reward is for all generations, while the frogs were only awarded in that generation. Why? Rebbe Dovid of Tolna zt'l said that this indicates that remaining silent is even harder.⁸

7. Chazal say בשמחה אדר מרבין בשמחה כך משוננס אב ממועטין בשמחה כד משוננס אדר מרבין בשמחה, "Just as when the month of Av arrives, we minimize our happiness, when Adar comes, we should increase our happiness" (*Taanis* 29.). Why does the Gemara compare the months of Av and Adar? It could have simply stated, "When Adar comes, we increase happiness," as this is the primary lesson of the Gemara.

It could be that the Gemara is hinting to us the importance of happiness this month. If you were to see someone listening to music and partaking in a meal of meat and wine in the month of Av, you would probably rebuke him, "It's Av! How can you do that?" The Gemara teaches us to have the same indignation when we see someone frowning in Adar. Being happy in Adar should be just as important to us as the obligation to mourn in Av.

8. I heard the following story from the baal maaseh (the person to whom the story occurred). He told me that at the beginning of last year, תשפ"ג, he leased a fifty-suite five-story hotel in Prague along the Vltava River. He didn't have enough money for the rent, so he borrowed money, which he planned to repay as he rented out rooms in the hotel.

He advertised in Jewish magazines to find renters, describing it as a unique opportunity to enjoy "The picturesque views, tranquil ambiance, and scenic beauty of the river while being close to Prague's attractions."

Several people reserved suites for Pesach... but then a major problem was discovered. The person who leased the hotel to him was a charlatan, a crook. He didn't own the hotel. He took off with the money, and there was no way to get the money back.

The person who *thought* he had rented the hotel called up the people who rented suites and explained to them that he had been cheated and there was no hotel.

Naturally, they demanded refunds. He explained that he didn't have any money to pay them. He used the

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches that the Purim miracle happened because of silence. The Gemara (*Megillah* 13:) says, *ליכא דידע לישנא*, "No one knows how to speak *lashon hara* like Haman." He spoke *lashon hara* on the Jewish nation to Achashverosh, claiming that they weren't loyal subjects. And he said that they aren't dedicated to Hashem, either. Haman said, "Perhaps you will claim that you earn profits from them? They are (Esther 3) *מפורד בין העמים*, like a *פרידה*, mule, that doesn't bear children... *ודתיהם שונות מכל עם*. They don't eat our food; they don't marry our daughters, and they don't give their daughters to us for marriage. *וואת דתי המלך אינם עושים*, they don't

work for the king, as they are always claiming "today is Pesach," "today is Shabbos" [and they say that they can't work]. They eat and drink and disgrace the king. If a fly falls into a cup of wine of one of them, they take out the fly and drink the wine. But if my master, the king, touches one of their cups, they pour it out on the ground, and they won't drink it. *ולמלך אין שוה להניחם*, "The king has no reason to let them live."

The Chasam Sofer explains that we were saved by Mordechai and Esther because they had the trait of silence, which served to annul Haman's *lashon hara*. As the *megillah*

money they gave him to repay the loans he took for this project and was left without money. "I will pay you back as soon as possible," he said.

The renters, thinking he had kept the money for himself, were furious, calling him a thief and a crook. They threatened to humiliate him publicly and ruin his name.

The humiliation was unbearable. A friend who wanted to help him arranged for him and his wife to go to South Africa for Pesach. No one knew him there, and he would be able to celebrate Pesach with peace and quiet.

He was very pleased with this arrangement – he needed a break.

There was another Jewish family at this hotel in South Africa, and they both wondered about each other and why they had come to such a faraway place, but they didn't ask.

After a few days, on the third day of *chol hamoed*, they became friendly and began discussing the reasons they were there. One of them shared that he had been married for nine years and was struggling with infertility, *r'l*. Every *yom tov* was a painful reminder of their situation, and they felt increasingly isolated and lonely. Pesach, in particular, was a time of heightened difficulty and humiliation for them. This year, they decided to spend the *yom tov* somewhere they could celebrate alone, hoping to find some peace and solace.

The other man then shared his troubles. He revealed that he had come to the hotel to escape the shame and humiliation he faced from people who wrongly accused him of stealing their money. He said, "Due to my shame, I understand that I have the power to give *brachos*. I give you my heartfelt wishes and blessings that you merit a child in less than a year."

In response, the other man said, "I am wealthy. If your blessing comes to fruition, I will clear your debts."

They had their first son ten months later (just a few months ago). True to his word, he provided the necessary funds to clear the debts.

They agreed that in the future, they would do business together. They would lease a hotel, and this time, they would be careful to deal only with trustworthy people.

This story shows the strength of a *brachah*, when given after suffering shame and humiliation. In addition, we see Hashem's wondrous *hashgachah pratis*. It was apparently time for this couple to have their first child, but they needed a *brachah* for it to occur. Hashem brought them both to South Africa so the couple could receive the *brachah* and salvation they needed and that the one who fell into debt should be able to clear his name and rebuild.

states (Esther 2:10) לא הגידה אסתר את עמה ואת מולדתה "Esther didn't reveal her nation or her birthplace because Mordechai told her not to tell." The merit of their silence overcame Haman's *lashon hara*, and we were saved.

The virtue of silence is hinted at in this week's *parashah* with the kohen gadol's *me'il*.

The Gemara (*Zevachim* 88:) asks, "Why does the Torah juxtapose the *korbanos* with the special clothes of the *kohen gadol*?⁹ To teach you that just as the *korbanos* atone, so do the clothes of the *kohen gadol* atone. The כְּתוֹנֶת, tunic, atones for murder (see *Bereishis* 37:31). The מְכַנְסִים, pants, atones for adultery (see *Shmos* 28:42). The מִצְנֶפֶת, turban, atones for arrogance. Why? Let something that's worn high on the head atone for someone who feels high. The אֲבֵנֶת, belt, atones for the heart's bad thoughts because the אֲבֵנֶת was [wrapped upon the *kohen gadol*'s] heart. The חֹשֶׁן, breastplate, atones for [the courts'] errors in judgment, as it states (28:15) וְעִשִּׂיתָ חֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּט. The מְעִיל, robe, atones for *avodah zarah*... The מְעִיל, robe, atones for *lashon hara*. Why? Let a garment that makes sounds (the מְעִיל had bells along its hem) atone for *lashon hara*. The צִיץ (the gold band worn on the *kohen gadol*'s forehead) atones for *chutzpah*..."

Thus, the *me'il* atoned for *lashon hara*. The bells sewn along its hem atoned for the sounds of *lashon hara*.

The bottom of the *me'il* was decorated with gold bells and wool pomegranates, as it states (28:34) פַּעֲמֹן זָהָב וּרְמוֹן עַל שׁוּלֵי "A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell, and a pomegranate, on the bottom hem of the robe, all around."

The Rambam (*Kli HaMikdash* 9:3-4) writes, "The *me'il* was made entirely from *techeles*... Bring wool...make them appear like

pomegranates...and hang them on the *me'il*'s [hem]. Bring seventy-two bells...so that on the hems of the *me'il* will hang a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate."

When one looked at the hem, he saw a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate, a bell. If one would say that every pomegranate was surrounded by two bells, it would be true. But at the same time, one can say that each bell was surrounded by two pomegranates.

The Alshich HaKadosh asks, why does the Torah (*Shemos* 28:33) write וּפַעֲמֹנֵי זָהָב בְּתוֹכָם, that the *gold bells* were in the middle? It could have just as well stated that the pomegranates were in the middle.

The Alshich answers, "This *pasuk* is *mussar* from our Father in heaven, teaching us that nothing is better than silence. The bells that have a tongue clanging in them signify a tongue that bangs within one's mouth... It's a *mashal*, hinting at speech. The pomegranates... are hollow, with closed mouths, that don't make any sound. They allude to silence. Hashem teaches us that we should not consider it as though the pomegranates are between the bells, [which would imply] one sign of silence between two signs of speech. Rather, [one should view it] as though the bell was between the pomegranates, which means to be silent twice and speak only once. One should be silent double the amount he speaks. After keeping quiet and not saying two things, say one thing, just as there's a bell between two pomegranates.

"For this reason, Hashem gave a person one mouth and two eyes, to teach the person that he should speak only half of what he sees with his eyes. This will be his סִיג,

9. In this week's *parashah*, after discussing the clothes of the *kohanim*, the *pasuk* discusses the *korbanos* of the *shivas yemei hamilu'im*. Also, in *parashas Tzav*, after discussing the *korbanos*, it discusses Aharon and his children donning the *bigdei kehunah*. Chazal explain the connection between the clothes of *kohanim* and the *korbanos*.

prevention, [from speaking forbidden talk]..."

This is also implied by Chazal (Megillah 18.) מלה בסלע משתוקא בתרין, "A word for a sela, and silence for two."¹⁰

This indicates that for every word spoken, be silent twice.

Concealing Good Deeds

This week's parashah discusses the clothes of the kohen gadol, and the *me'il*, which had pomegranates and bells along its hem. According to Rashi, they were successive: a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, etc.¹¹ The Ramban, however, says that only the pomegranates hung off the hem. The bells were inserted *inside* the pomegranates. As the Ramban writes, "the pomegranates were hollow.... and the bells were hidden inside them..."

The Chasam Sofer (*Pekudei*) writes that both explanations are correct (אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים). The bells and pomegranates hung successively on the *me'il* (as Rashi taught) but also as the Ramban taught because each pomegranate had a bell inside it.

So, according to the Chasam Sofer, there were two types of bells. Some bells hung directly off the *me'il*'s hem, and some bells were inserted in the pomegranates.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "If I weren't afraid to say it, I would say that both explanations [Rashi's and the Ramban's] are the words of the living G-d [both explanations are simultaneously true]. A bell was sewn on the *me'il*, and after it, a pomegranate with a bell inside. This was the pattern on the *me'il*."

What do these two types of bells signify?

The Chasam Sofer answers, "The gemara says that the *me'il* atoned for lashon hara. I think that it isn't only *lashon hara* [which the *me'il* atoned], but also for one's pride about the good that he does. [He boasts] 'I did these good deeds,' [because] this is just like *lashon hara*... The bells atoned for *lashon hara*, and the bells within the pomegranates atoned for those filled with mitzvos like a pomegranate and announce their good deeds in public."¹²

It isn't proper to publicize one's good deeds. They should remain concealed and

10. Rashi explains the Gemara, "If you want to buy speech for a sela, instead buy silence for two."

It is customary to give *drashah geshenk*, 'a *drashah* gift,' to a bar-mitzvah *bachur* to reward him for the *drashah* he said. The Rebbe of Ruzhin *zy'a* told his son at his bar-mitzvah, "You received many gifts for your *drashah*, but you should know that you will receive many more gifts for being silent."

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* asked someone, "Is it better to speak or to be silent?"

The man repeated the Gemara that silence is twice as valuable as speaking. The Imrei Emes said, "Eh! You're not a businessman. When you're silent, you get two, and when you speak, you get one. But if you speak a lot, you get many 'ones', and many ones are worth more than just being silent once and earning two." The implication is that speaking good things, such as Torah and *tefillah*, is even better than silence.

11. This is also how it appears from the pasuk, פעמון זהב ורמון פעמון זהב ורמון, "a gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate." (28:34).

12. Once, the Rebbe of Husiaten *zy"a* hired a handyman to repair his sofa. After the repairman finished the job, the rebbe showed him that he missed a tear on the sofa's backside. The handyman replied, "Why are you concerned with the back of the sofa? No one looks there."

The Rebbe replied, "We were taught that it is most important to perfect where nobody sees." The best deeds are those performed away from the limelight because they are performed solely for the sake of Heaven, without seeking other people's respect and admiration.

private between you and Hashem. The Chasam Sofer considers revealing one's good deeds like *lashon hara*.¹³

Tzedakah is an exception to the rule. Sometimes, it is permissible, and even advisable, to publicize the *tzedakah* one gives. The Rashba writes, "Someone who donated an item to *tzedakah*, and wants his name to be on it, so that it will be eternally remembered, we don't prevent him. On the contrary, it is proper to do so. This is the way of *chachamim* and the custom of the righteous, to reward those who do mitzvos" (*Teshuvos HaRashba*, quoted in *Darkei Moshe, Yorah Dei'ah*, 247:1).

The Rema, in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Dei'ah* 249:13) also states, "One shouldn't brag about

tzedakah that he gave. If he brags, not only does he lose his reward, but he is also punished from Above. Nevertheless, when one dedicates something for *tzedakah*, he may write his name on it, so his name will be remembered, and it is proper to do so."

The Chasam Sofer explains that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (Tehillim 112:9) פֹּזֵר נֶתַן לְאֲבִיּוֹנִים, "He distributes [money] to the poor." פֹּזֵר is *roshei teivos* for פֶּעֶמּוֹן זָהָב וְרִמּוֹן, "a gold bell and a pomegranate." The bell rings from within the pomegranate, representing someone who is publicizing the *tzedakah* that he gave, but nevertheless, וְצִדְקָתוֹ עֹמֶדֶת לְעֵד, "his *tzedakah* remains forever." The publicity doesn't ruin it.¹⁴

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov once said that Torah study is an exception. It doesn't need to be done in hiding. He explained, "When a tax collector comes to someone's home, the owner will hide his expensive belongings, so the tax collector shouldn't suspect him of earning more than he declared. However, the homeowner doesn't hide his bread and butter because those are basic staples. The same is in regards to studying gemara. One should hide his good deeds, but Torah study is like his bread and butter. It is the basic essential, and there is no reason to conceal it."

Rebbe Moshe Tzvi Savraner zy"ta taught that when a person knows that everything comes from Hashem, he will not feel pride and *gaavah* from his good deeds.

He bases his lesson on the *pasuk* (Tehillim 45:2) לְשׁוֹנִי עֵט סוֹפֵר מַהֲרִי "My mouth is like the pen of a quick scribe." הוֹצֵק חֵן בְּשִׁפְתוֹתַי "your lips are saturated with *chein* (charm). "this is a blessing from G-d."

The Rebbe of Savran explains: There are excellent speakers. People flock to listen to their *divrei* Torah, but this shouldn't cause them to feel pride since it isn't their talent or righteousness. Their talent comes from Hashem.

When people tell him, "Your words are saturated with *chein*," he should reply, "It is a blessing from Hashem." He recognizes that he is like a pen in the hand of a scribe. The pen writes the most beautiful *sifrei* Torah, tefillin and mezuzos, but it doesn't feel any pride because it understands that the credit goes to the scribe holding the pen. Similarly, the scribe should know, and the speaker should know, that it isn't him; Hashem is granting him these abilities.

13. Perhaps this is because people speak *lashon hara* to feel greater than others. Publicizing one's good deeds accomplishes the same purpose.

14. A story is told about two wealthy people who were extremely stingy with their money. They weren't only tightfisted to others; they wouldn't even spend on themselves. They preferred eating stale bread to spending a few pennies on better food.

One of them realized they couldn't go on like this, so he told his friend, "Our stinginess is causing us to lose both worlds. We don't have This World because we don't spend money even on life's simple pleasures. We will also not earn Olam Haba because we don't give *tzedakah*. We must change our ways."

His friend disagreed. "The picture isn't as bleak as you're making it sound. We *do* have *Olam HaZeh* because we derive pleasure from saving money. I'm not worried about *Olam Haba* because I thought of a plan to

Hashem Gives Parnassah

Rashi, at the beginning of the *parashah*, writes, כתיב למאור ולא כתיב למנחות, "Pressed olive oil is used for lighting the menorah, and not for the *menachos*."¹⁵

כתיב (pressed) represents hard work.

The Chasam Sofer zt"l explains, כתיב למאור, one should toil hard to acquire the light of Torah, ולא כתיב למנחות, one doesn't need to toil very hard to earn his *parnassah*.

A wealthy man came to Reb Chaim Brisker zt"l, bragging about how wise he is. He said, "Once, there was a fire on my street, and all the houses were burning down. Someone approached me and said, 'The entire street is on fire. Soon, your house and store will burn down. You will lose

everything. I offer you the offer of a lifetime. Sell me your home and store for half the value."

"Do you think I listened to this crook?" the wealthy man asked Reb Chaim Brisker. "I immediately told him that my property wasn't for sale, and I went to pour another bucket of water on the fire. I'm not a fool. I didn't sell it for half price.

"The fire continued to rage. The businessman approached me again and said, 'The fire is reaching your house. Listen to my offer. I'll buy your property for ten percent of its value.' I didn't sell it to him.

"Ten minutes later, the businessman returned and said, 'The fire has reached one of your walls. It is now or never. Do you want to remain poor your entire life? I'll buy

protect myself. You see, I made a vow that I would never give my hand to another person. So, when heaven asks, 'Why didn't you give *tzedakah*?' I will answer, 'I couldn't. I made a vow. I couldn't stretch my hand out to another person.'

His friend replied, "I doubt this will help you, but if it does work, I want to do the same. Therefore, if you die first, come to me and tell me whether heaven accepted your excuse."

The man agreed.

"Give me your hand in a promise."

"I can't. I made a vow. But I give you my word."

A few months later, he died and came to his friend in a dream. He was wearing ripped clothing; he was bruised and burnt to a crisp.

"Your plan didn't work," his friend said, stating the obvious.

He replied, "Actually, heaven accepted my excuse. But then they said, 'One time, you were swimming in the ocean, and you almost drowned. Someone gave you his hand, you took it, and he brought you to shore. Why did you give him your hand? What happened to your vow?'

"I replied, 'That was *pikuach nefesh*. My life was at stake.'

"Heaven said, 'Why don't you realize that *tzedakah* is also a matter of *pikuach nefesh*. There are people who are hungry, and there are sick people, and *tzedakah* could save them.'

The miser concluded, "So the plan does work. Just don't swim in the ocean, so you won't need to give your hand."

This story demonstrates the foolishness of people who don't recognize the value of *tzedakah*. But *tzedakah* is so precious, that even publicity at times, doesn't taint its inherent value.

15. Rashi writes, "The olives were pressed in an olive press. They weren't ground in a mill because there may not be any pulp [of the olives in the menorah lamps]. After the first drop [of oil] came out, the olives were brought to a mill where they were ground. This second oil is disqualified for the menorah, but is kosher for the *menachos* (meal offerings, made from flour and oil).

your property for five percent of its value. That way, you will remain with at least something. Just sign this document...'

"I took his pen and drew a large X over the document. 'It is not for sale,' I told him.

"Just about then, the fire came under control. Aside from some minor damages, everything was saved. If I would have listened to him, I would have lost everything. But I am not foolish. I kept my wealth for myself."

Reb Chaim said, "You are trying to convince me how wise you are, but I think you acted foolishly. In my opinion, you should have agreed to the businessman's first offer. You could have lost everything in the fire, and he offered you at least half its value. As the fire neared your home, I would

have advised you to agree to his second and third offer. Ten percent and five percent are still better than nothing. So, I don't see that you acted very wisely at all."

Then, Reb Chaim turned towards his *beis din* and said, "But if Hashem wants someone to stay with his wealth, whether he is wise or not, that is what will happen."

This story reminds us that *parnassah* is from Hashem, and His plan always prevails, regardless of what the person does. This is why Chasam Sofer taught that one shouldn't work hard to earn *parnassah*. It is anyway up to Hashem, and Hashem can support us with less *hishtadlus* as well.

Parnassah, the Chasam Sofer taught, doesn't require toil, but Torah study does.¹⁶

16. Even those who don't have much free time for Torah study should designate whatever time they can for this important task.

In Bnei Brak, there was an *ehrllicher yungerman* who worked as a taxi driver. Once, he was driving the Steipler Gaon zt"l, and as he drove the taxi, he moaned and told the Steipler that he works all day and doesn't have time for Torah. Even at night, when he doesn't work, he doesn't go to a Torah shiur because he knows that as soon as he sits down, he will fall asleep by the Gemara.

The Steipler replied, "If you go to the shiur, even if you fall asleep, you will be rewarded as if you heard the entire shiur because you did the maximum you could."