

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Eikev*



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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could save him and his future generations; therefore, he didn't want the conversation to be stopped in the middle.

They spoke for another two hours, and it was already an hour before Shabbos when their conversation ended. Reb Chaim Shimon then sought a way to go to the mikvah. The bulletin board had a listing of several numbers for taxis. He called them, but they all told him that it was late, close to Shabbos, and they weren't working. At one of the numbers that he called the wife answered the phone. She gave the phone to her husband, who said, "Where are you? I will pick you up right away." He took him to the mikvah (which was just a well or a stream of water).

As they rode to the mikvah, the driver said, "Do you know why I am taking you, so close to Shabbos?"

Reb Chaim Shimon said, "I assume that it is because you need the *parnassah*."

The driver said, "Why should I work for *parnassah* so close to Shabbos? I will tell you the reason. There is only one bus from Yerushalayim to Zichron Yaakov on Friday. It leaves at twelve, noon, and the ride is three hours. I was waiting for the bus at the bus stop together with my five-year-old son. When the bus arrived, the bus driver said there was only room for one person. I took my son and boldly climbed up the stairs of the bus. The bus driver shouted at me, "Either you or your son. There isn't room for both of you."

I said, "How can one of us remain here the entire Shabbos?" I moved further into the bus, but the bus driver shouted that he wouldn't drive, and he forced us to get off the bus. I was wondering where I would stay for Shabbos. I already imagined myself sleeping on a bench in Zichron Moshe Shtibalach.

And then, my wife woke me up and told me that someone needed a ride. I realized that it was all just a dream. I wasn't in Yerushalayim. I was in my home, in Zichron Yaakov. But after experiencing what it means

to need a ride and not to have one, I felt that I had to help you this time, and that is why I accepted to take you to where you want to go."

Reb Chaim Shimon learned from this story how Hashem leads the world with *hashgachah pratis*. Hashem arranged that someone should sleep very deeply and dream about the hardship of not having a ride on erev Shabbos so that he would have a ride to the mikvah. This is the way Hashem leads the world, with marvelous and unfathomable *hashgachah pratis*.

Reb Yosef Liberman zt'l, author of *Mishnas Yosef*, talks about how he was saved from the Nazis during the Holocaust.

In the year 5699, he was nine years old, living in Pressburg, Hungary. His father was a prosperous wine merchant, and he had *parnassah* in abundance. One day, nine-year-old Yosef was walking down one of the streets in Pressburg, and a young *goy* came by and smacked him with all his strength on his face. Yosef began to cry. He was hit in public for absolutely no reason, and it came from a low-class gentile. He was humiliated. When his father heard about it, he said, "If a child can smack someone for no reason, this is a sign that antisemitism has taken root in our country. Our place isn't here, anymore. We will go to Eretz Yisrael."

The family asked, "What are you saying? There is no food in Eretz Yisrael. How can we move there? Here, we have *parnassah*."

But the father's decision was final. He sold his property and moved with his family to Eretz Yisrael.

A smack from a *goy* saved an entire family. A patch from Hashem will certainly bring salvation.

The following story was heard from Reb Dinner Shlita, Rav of *beis haknesses* Divrei Shir, Bnei Brak:

Reb Yitzchak Hirsh zt'l, a member of his *kehillah*, was *niftar* a couple of months ago

when he was 102 years old. Reb Yitzchak came to Eretz Yisrael from Germany when he was sixteen. It was in the year 5698. He chose to move to Eretz Yisrael at that time because antisemitism was increasing, and there were harsh decrees established against the Jewish community. One of the *gezeiros* was against shechitah. It became forbidden to shecht meat in Germany. Reb Yitzchak's family wanted meat for Shabbos and yom tov, etc., so they would defy the law and they shechted in concealment. Someone revealed this to the German authorities, and they were summoned to court. The court ruled that they must leave Germany.

In retrospect, we know that this episode saved their lives. Initially, they viewed their banishment from Germany as a very heavy blow. They had to leave their community, their family, and their friends and move to Eretz Yisrael without any money. But this ended up saving their lives. They came to Eretz Yisrael before the gates were closed.

Another lesson from this story is as Chazal say, אין שומע לי ומפסיד, Hashem says, "No one listened to Me and lost." They were *moser nefesh* to honor Shabbos and Yom tov and to eat kosher meat, and they didn't lose out from it.

### Tefillah

Reb Moshe Wolfson zt'l said that there are three categories of people who daven shacharis: some consider Shacharis as the introduction to the day, others consider it as part of the day, and there are the fortunate people who consider tefillah to be the peak of their day.

He explained: Some wake up in the morning and remember that they have about twenty things to do. But they know they can't begin taking care of all these chores before they daven shacharis. So, they quickly go to beis medresh to daven so they can "begin their day."

The next level, a higher level, is those who consider shacharis as part of their day.

It is one of the twenty things that they want to do this day. It has equal importance, to all the many other things that they want to accomplish.

The ideal level is those who feel that tefillah is the most crucial part of their day. When they awaken in the morning, they don't have twenty things to take care of. Right now, their only need and interest is to daven. When they finish davening, they will then pay attention to the other things they want to accomplish.

Reb Zalman Leib Ustelin was a chassidische Yid in Communist Russia. Later he moved to Bnei Brak, Eretz Yisrael. Even in Communist Russia, his goal was always to teach Torah and to do for Hashem's honor, despite the great dangers involved. He was punished and afflicted by the authorities, even losing one of his legs. Among his students in Russia were Reb Gershon and Reb Yaakov Eidelstein zt'l. They gave hespedim at his levayah. Reb Gershon said in his hesped, "All of our Torah and yiras Shamayim come from Reb Zalman Leib."

On the first Shabbos morning that Reb Zalman Leib was in Eretz Yisrael, his host in Bnei Brak brought him to the Itzkovitz shtiblach and told him he should daven there. "I will be davening somewhere else," the host said. "And when you finish davening, you can go home yourself." His host gave him directions on how to return to his apartment. Reb Zalman Leib paid attention to the details and understood.

But when his host came home from the tefillah, Reb Zalman Leib wasn't there. Two or three hours passed, and Reb Zalman Leib didn't return. The host felt guilty. "Probably, he got lost on his way to my home. I shouldn't have left him alone."

He went to look for him in Itzkowitz. He found him sitting there, totally enjoying himself. The host asked him what happened. He replied, "I feel like I am in Gan Eden. Why should I want to leave Gan Eden?" He explained that in Russia, there was barely a

minyan. But in the Itzkowitz shtibalach, many minyanim were going on at the same time. He can answer kedushah and *amen yehei shmei rabba* many times. Why should he want to leave? "As long as there are minyanim, I am not able to leave," he said.

Although we aren't on that level, at least in the minyan that we daven in, let us recognize the great joy of tefillah. And if the tefillah is a drop longer than expected, don't feel like you are in Gehinom. Instead, feel like you are in Gan Eden. Utilize this opportunity to answer kaddish, kedushah, and barchu with all your heart and kavanah.

Obviously, this benefit comes from davening with a minyan. You won't be able to answer amen, barchu, and kedushah if you daven in your own home or in a beis medresh without a minyan.

The importance of tefillah b'tzibbur is alluded to in this week's parashah.

It states (11:13) *ולעבדו בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם*, "to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." The pasuk is written in plural tense, and Rashi writes that it refers to a *tzibur*. The Ksav Sofer explains that the pasuk refers to *tefillah b'tzibur*, davening with a minyan. The following words are *ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו*, "I will give the rain of your land at its time." The Ksav Sofer explains that this indicates that *parnassah* comes from being cautious about davening with a minyan.

The Ksav Sofer writes, "It is a great mitzvah, and it is precious to Hashem when one davens with a minyan. Therefore, it states *בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם* in plural, to tell us to daven together with a community. When you do so, the Torah promises *ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו*, 'I will give the rain of your land at its time.'"

So, it is the opposite of what people think. They fear that davening with a minyan will minimize their *parnassah* when it actually increases it. The Ksav Sofer writes, "Tefillah with a minyan takes a person away from his work. When one davens *b'yachidus*, he

davens whenever he wants, but he can't do so when he davens with a *tzibur*. However, Hakadosh Baruch Hu won't allow financial losses due to this. Hashem will send His brachos, and he will succeed with everything he does. I elaborated on this point when it was necessary."

Rebbe Yissaschar Dov of Radshitz zt'l found another pasuk that teaches us that davening with a minyan will grant us *parnassah*. It states (Shemos 23:25) *ועבדתם את ד' אלוהיכם ובירך את לחמך ואת מימך והסירתי מחלה מקרבך*, "And you shall serve Hashem, your G-d, and He will bless your food and your drink, and I will remove illness from your midst." *ועבדתם*, "You shall serve," refers to tefillah because tefillah is *עבודה שבלב*, the service of the heart. The Radoshitzer said that the pasuk is written in plural (*ועבדתם*) because it alludes to *tefillah b'tzibur*. The pasuk says *ובירך את לחמך והסירתי מחלה מקרבך* and there will be *parnassah* and there will be healing.

The Beis Ahron taught, "Of this, I am certain: *Tefillah b'tzibur* helps for all matters. *Tefillah b'tzibur* accomplishes as much as the *tefillos* of the greatest tzaddik."

The Maor Vashemesh (Mishpatim) writes, "It's true that however a person serves Hashem, if his intentions are to heaven, it is certainly accepted before Hashem *yisborach*. However, the preferred *avodas Hashem* is to serve Hashem as a group, as a community. This applies both to Torah study and to tefillah. One shouldn't be alone... A person must be very cautious to daven together with the *tzibur*. If he does so, he will certainly have *parnassah* in abundance every day, and there will be brachah in his work. With *tefillah b'tzibur*, he can annul all harsh decrees, r'l..."

The Gemara (Brachos 8.) says that when we daven with a minyan, it is more likely that our *tefillos* will be answered. The source for this is in (Tehillim 69:14) *ואני תפילתי לך ה' עת רצון*, "May my prayer to You, Hashem, be in a desirable time (*eis ratzon*)." And it states (Yeshayah 49:8) *כה אמר ה' בעת רצון עניתיך*, "So said Hashem,

'In a time of favor (*eis ratzon*) I answered you.' And the Gemara explains that the *eis ratzon* is when the tzibur davens with a minyan.<sup>1</sup>

So, davening with a minyan has many benefits, and it is a shame not to take advantage of them. It isn't always easy, and it is time-consuming, but לפום צערא אגרא the reward will be given in proportion to its difficulty.

### Honoring Hashem

One of the benefits of tefillah b'tzibur is that it brings honor to Hashem. It is a public expression of our belief in Hashem. The Rambam (end of Bo) writes, "The purpose of all the mitzvos are that we should believe in Hashem and praise Him for creating us. For this purpose, the world was created. We don't know of any other reason for the creation, and the exalted Hashem has no interest in the world below except for when a person praises His G-d for creating him. This is why we raise our voices in prayer, and this is why we go to the beis kneses [to daven], and this is the specialty of tefillah b'tzibur. People should have a place where they gather to praise Hashem for creating them and bringing them into existence. They announce it in public, and they say, 'We are Your creations!'

This is the greatness of tefillah b'tzibur, and this is also the specialty of every mitzvah

that one does in public. It is a kiddush Hashem; it sanctifies Hashem's name.

Someone told Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l that he was called to perform a bris milah on Shabbos in a certain area, and all the people who live there are *mechalel* Shabbos. Reb Moshe (see Igros Moshe Yorah Deiah 156) told him that according to halachah, it is forbidden to be in a place with *chillul* Shabbos. The proof is from the Gemara Yoma that when the kohen gadol did the avodah on Yom Kippur, Bnei Yisrael came to watch him do it. This is because when a mitzvah is performed in public, it adds beauty to the mitzvah. So, it is also true the other way around. To be among people who are doing aveiros gives strength to the aveiros that are being performed there. (Therefore, Reb Moshe advised that he come and perform the bris milah, and to immediately leave afterwards.)

Just as there is a concept of ברוב עם הדרת מלך, to perform a mitzvah in public, and this brings honor to Hashem, there is also a concept of בזיון למלך, a disgrace for Hashem's honor.

Therefore, a person shouldn't go to a place where there are problems with the yiras Shamayim (such as where people speak lashon hara or where there is a problem with *shemiras einayim*). A person shouldn't say, "I won't sin. We have the lesson from Reb Moshe Feinstein that there is a prohibition to merely be in such a

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1. The Gemara adds, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Whoever studies Torah, does kind deeds, and davens with a minyan, I consider it as if he redeemed me and my children from amidst the nations of the world.'"

In contrast, the Gemara says, "Whoever has a beis medresh in his city and he doesn't go there to daven, he is called שכני רע, a bad neighbor. And he causes galus for him and his children."

When Reb Yochanan was informed that there were old Yidden living in Bavel, he was surprised because it states in this week's parashah (11:21) למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה, "So that your days may increase and the days of your children, on the land which Hashem swore to your forefathers to give them." This pasuk indicates that long life is granted in Eretz Yisrael. However, when he heard that the people of Bavel arrive early to the beis medresh and leave late, he said, "This is the merit that helps them.' As Reb Yehoshua ben Levi told his children, 'Come early to beis medresh and leave late, so you will live long...'"

Maharsha explains that the Gemara (Megillah 29.) states that the *batei midrashim* and *batei knesiyos* of Bavel will, in the future, be re-established in Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, even now, in galus, they have a connection to Eretz Yisrael, and those who frequent them are considered to be in Eretz Yisrael, and will live long.

place. Being there, increases the *chillul Hashem*, the disgrace to Hashem's name that is happening there.

### You Have the Potential

It states (10:12) ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל ממך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך ללכת בכל דרכיו ולאזהבה אותו, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to go in all His ways, love Him, and serve Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and soul." The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 6:6) says about this pasuk, אין ועתה אלא לשון תשובה, the word ועתה, now, refers to teshuvah. This is because the concept of teshuvah is to begin now. It doesn't make a difference what was until this moment. Now you can turn over a new leaf. Perhaps you committed severe aveiros in the past, and maybe you spent many years of your life in foolishness. It doesn't make a difference. You can begin your teshuvah now. Rebbe Boruch of Mezhibuz *zt'l* taught: ועתה ישראל implies that one should think: what was, was. ועתה, but from now on, ישראל, I will act like a Yisrael, and I will be cautious with all the mitzvos.

Furthermore, some people think they are missing something essential, preventing them from doing teshuvah. They say, "If I would have parnassah, I would have more time on my hands to daven and to learn, but how can I do teshuvah in my present situation?"

Or they say, "If I had brains like that person's, I would study Torah and do teshuvah, but as I am, how can I do teshuvah?"

The Torah tells us that we can do teshuvah "now." We don't have to wait until any situation changes; we can do it now, the way we are.

Reb Mendel Futerfas *zt'l* spoke about his imprisonment in Siberia. The warden made a rule that the prisoners couldn't play cards. This law was made to break the prisoners' spirits. Some of the prisoners smuggled in a

deck of cards, and they would play in their barracks.

Once, one of the prisoners snitched on them. The guards came to their quarters and searched everywhere for the cards, but they didn't find anything.

This is what happened: One of the prisoners was an expert at pickpocketing. (Maybe that was why he was imprisoned.) He knew how to take a wallet out of another person's pocket, without the person feeling anything. This time, instead of picking a pocket, he used his talents to place the deck of cards into the pocket of one of the guards who was searching the barracks.

The guard looked for the deck of cards under the beds, inside the drawers, and in everyone's pockets but didn't realize it was in his pocket.

Reb Mendel concluded that he learned a lesson in mussar from this episode. Sometimes, a person is searching all over for something and doesn't realize that what he is looking for is right near him.

A person may think that he lacks something essential to be able to do teshuvah. Do not worry. You have all the cards in your pocket. You have all that it takes to do teshuvah. You have the potential, and you can begin your teshuvah right away.

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 17.) tells the story of Reb Elazar ben Durdaya who was a great baal aveirah his entire life. When he finally realized that he must do teshuvah, he went between two mountains and said, "Mountains, daven for me. Ask that Hashem have compassion on me."

The mountains replied, "Before we daven for you, we have to daven for ourselves..."

He said, "Heaven and earth, pray for me."

They replied, "Before we pray for you, we have to pray for ourselves..."

Reb Elazar ben Durdaya said, אין הדבר תלוי אלא בי, "The matter is up to me." He realized

that no one would help him do teshuvah. It was in his own hands. "He put his head between his knees and cried copiously until his neshamah left him. A bas kol came forth and said, 'Reb Elazar ben Durdaya is prepared for Olam HaBa.'

Rebbe cried and said, "Some acquire the world [of Olam Haba after serving Hashem] for many years, and some acquire [Olam HaBa] in a moment." He was referring to Reb Elazar ben Durdaya who merited Olam HaBa in the last moments of his lifetime.

Rebbe added, "It isn't solely that baalei teshuvah are accepted. They are also called 'Rebbe.'" He was called Elazar ben Durdaya his entire life. He wasn't Reb Elazar. But during the final moment of his life, he did teshuvah, and the bas kol called him Reb Elazar ben Durdaya. This is the greatness of teshuvah! His teshuvah was accepted, and he is even called Rebbe.

Rebbe is a title for someone who teaches Torah. What did Reb Elazar ben Durdaya teach us, that he deserves the title Rebbe?

The meforshim explain that he taught us a great lesson. He taught us אין הדבר תלוי אלא בי; the matter is entirely in my own hands. If you want to do teshuvah, don't rely on others to help you.<sup>2</sup>

Baalei Mussar tell the following mashal:

A thief saw someone showing his friends a precious diamond. At that moment, the thief decided that this diamond would become his. He followed the wealthy person wherever he went, and when the rich man bought a ticket to journey on a ship, the thief purchased a ticket on the same ship. He asked the salesperson to sleep in the same room as this wealthy person.

In the middle of the night, when the man was sleeping, the thief got out of his bed and began searching through the wealthy man's bags and clothing. But he couldn't find the diamond.

In the morning, he said to the wealthy person, "I admit my sin. I was searching for your diamond, I wanted to steal it, but I didn't find it. But now please explain to me how that happened. I am an expert thief and have had success for forty years. This is the first time I failed, and I want to know why that occurred."

The wealthy man replied, "I realized you were following me these past few days, and I understood you were interested in my diamond. Therefore, I knew to be cautious of you. So, I hid the diamond where I knew you wouldn't find it—in your clothes!"

The nimshal is that people think the key to their success is the qualities and the good traits they find in others. They don't know that they have the key to their success within themselves.

The Ritvah (end of Pesachim, in his commentary to Haggadah shel Pesach, ד"ה ואתן ליצחק) explains the reason Yaakov and Eisav were born as twins. It was to show us that it isn't the parents, the location, or the mazal that determine whether a child will turn out to be a tzaddik or a rasha. Yaakov and Eisav were born to the same parents; they lived in the same neighborhood and were born with the same mazal. Yet Yaakov became a tzaddik and Eisav a rasha. Therefore, one shouldn't say, "If I had parents like that tzaddik, I would also be like him." Or, "If I had been brought up in the neighborhood where he was, I would be like him." Because the person's

2. B'derech tzachus, there is vitamin B and Vitamin D. Vitamin B means to recognize אין הדבר תלוי אלא בי, that everything depends on בי, in me. Vitamin D is when one says דו ביסט שולדיגט, "You are guilty." (Di in Yiddish means you.) He throws his faults off his conscious by blaming all his faults on others.

The Gemara (Chagigah 15.) states, שובו בנים שובבים חוץ מאהר, which can be translated as "everyone can do teshuvah, except for those who blame others".

decision to serve Hashem will determine whether he will be a tzaddik.

It states (Shemos 1:6) ויוסף היה במצרים, and it states (Bereishis 12:6) והכנעני אז בארץ, so we see that it is possible to live in Mitzrayim and be like Yosef HaTzaddik, and it is possible to live in Eretz Yisrael and be like the Canaanites. More than the location, the primary factor determining who a person is will be the person's free choice to do what's right.

### To Unite the Heart and the Mind to Hashem's Service

This week's parashah speaks about the mitzvah of tefillin as it states (11:18) וקשרתם אתם, "You shall bind for a sign upon your arm and let them be an ornament between your eyes." Tefillin serves several purposes. Among them, tefillin helps us purify our thoughts and desires that they should be solely for Hashem. As we say in the *l'shem yichud* before we put on tefillin, וציונו להניח על היד... שהיא נגד הלב לשעבד בזה תאוות ומחשבות לבנו לעבודתו יתב"ש ועל הראש נגד המוח שהנשמה שבמוחי עם שאר חושי וכוחותי כולם יהיו משועבדים לעבודתו יתברך שמו, "Hashem commanded us to put on tefillin on the arm... which is opposite the heart, to dedicate our temptations and

thoughts for Hashem's service.<sup>3</sup> And we place the tefillin on the head, opposite the brain, so the neshamah in my mind, with all my senses and strengths, should all be dedicated to Hashem's service." So, with tefillin, we leave evil temptations and attain the devotion to serve Hashem.

It is necessary to leave the evil temptations because it is impossible to fully accept the yoke of heaven when one is under the influence of bad temptations and the yetzer hara. The Zohar (vol.3 p.108.) tells us that when one is under the realm of the Sitra Achara, he isn't able to accept the yoke of heaven. Therefore, when we put on tefillin Hashem frees us from bad temptations, from the control of the yetzer hara and Sitra Achara, and then we are able to accept the yoke of heaven.<sup>4</sup>

Another purpose of tefillin is to remember yetzias Mitzrayim. At yetzias Mitzrayim, these two stages occurred. With the many miracles, Hashem freed us from the Sitra Achara, and we accepted the yoke of heaven. The Sfas Emes (5650 Bo) explains that a great miracle occurs when we put on tefillin, a miracle similar to the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim. He writes, "In all generations, so

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3. The Divrei Yechezkel of Shinov zt'l related that at his bar mitzvah when Rebbe Hirsh Riminover zt'l put tefillin on him for the first time, he explained the meaning of the words we say in the שמ יחוד, that the tefillin is לשעבד בזה תאוות ומחשבות לבנו לעבודתו יתברך שמו, to devote the temptations and the thoughts of the heart to Hashem's service. The concept of לשעבד is discussed in Chazal. When someone borrows money, he will sometimes be משעבד his field towards the loan. In other words, he designates a field and says, "If I don't pay you, you can take the field." After making this proclamation, the borrower isn't permitted to sell. He can't do business with it because it is already designated for his lender. We say לשעבד תאוות ומחשבות לבנו, which means that in the morning, we promise that the heart's desires and thoughts will be designated for Hashem. After this designation, we aren't allowed to use our thoughts and desires for our pleasures. We have already promised and devoted them solely to Hashem's service.

We can add that this is the reason bar mitzvah bachurim put on tefillin. At the beginning of their acceptance of the yoke of heaven, they put on tefillin and proclaim that they designate their hearts, thoughts, and temptations to Hashem. And now they can't use them for themselves.

4. The Chasam Sofer (Likutim, end of Devarim) explains the concept with a mashal: People wanted to crown an individual as their king. The would-be king replied, "First, imprison all my enemies who hate me and don't want me to be king, and afterward, make me king." Similarly, every day, when a Yid puts on tefillin, and he wants to declare Hashem as king, Hashem tells him, "My son, first put on the tefillin shel yad, which is near the heart, because the heart, with its taavos, refuses to recognize me as king. And only after he is bound, can you put on tefillin shel rosh, which is for the mind, to coronate me."

that we should be able today to leave the kingdom of the Sitra Achara and of the yetzer hara, Hashem made a reminder of the miracles, and He gave us the mitzvah of tefillin. This arouses again what occurred at yetzias Mitzrayim." This means that miracles, similar to yetzias Mitzrayim, occur each day when we put on tefillin. We are freed from the pull of the bad temptations, of the yetzer hara and Sita Achara, and we are able to accept with a pure mind and with a whole heart the yoke of heaven.

The Sfas Emes teaches: We wear four parshiyos: שמע, והיה אם שמע, קדש, והיה כי יביאך. The first two, (שמע, והיה אם שמע, which discuss Hashem's greatness) help us accept the yoke of heaven. קדש, והיה כי יביאך (which discusses yetzias Mitzrayim) gives us strength to free ourselves from the yoke of the yetzer hara.

Chazal (Sanhedrin 4:) teach that טוטפות is a mixture of two foreign languages. טט בכתפי שתיים, פת באפריקי שתיים, this means that טט means two in the language בכתפי, and פת means two in אפריקי. The Sfas Emes explains that כתפי also means shoulders and alludes to accepting on our shoulders the yoke of Hashem's kingdom. אפריקי also means לפרוק, to unload. This represents freeing ourselves from the load and yoke of the Sitra Achara. This is what occurs when we put on tefillin. We accept the yoke of Heaven and free ourselves from the yoke of the Sitra Achara.

Just as we put on tefillin in this world, Hakadosh Baruch Hu puts on tefillin in heaven. Chazal (Brachos 6.) tell us the parshiyos that are in Hakadosh Baruch Hu's tefillin: (Divrei HaYamim 1, 17:21) מו כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ, and (Devarim 4:7-8) מו גוי גדול אשר לו אלקים קרובים אליו. These parshiyos tell the praises of Bnei Yisrael that they are the children and beloved to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. These correspond to our accepting the yoke of heaven. The following two parshiyos of Hashem's tefillin are (Devarim 4:34) או הנסה אלקים לקחת עם, and (Devarim 33:29) עם נושע בה, which discusses Hashem's saving us. These two pasukim correspond to Hashem saving us from the Sitra Achara.

### Bar Mitzvah and Tefillin

The Maor Vashemesh (Yisro, עור על פסוק) writes, "When a person turns thirteen and he begins to wear tefillin, he receives from heaven divine perception and a great holiness. If he guards this kedushah, the kedushah will remain with him, and he will grow higher every day. The wise should be cautious to grab, with both hands, all the treasures that are given to them. One shouldn't be a fool who loses everything he receives. The Sefer HaPardes has already written, "There is a kabbalah that when a child turns thirteen, and on that night, makes up his mind to serve Hashem, יצמח ויעלה, he will grow and rise to high levels."<sup>5</sup>

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5. In Warsaw, a hardworking baker would begin baking bread at 3:00 am so that people would have fresh bread for breakfast. He worked until late in the morning. Then he would rush to beis medresh, put on tefillin, and daven shacharis at around 11:00 am.

The baker's son was turning bar-mitzvah, and he asked his father, "If you work so late, how will you help me put on tefillin for the first time?"

The father said, "Wait for me at 7:10 am in Beis Medresh. I'll meet you there, and put on your tefillin."

7:10 and 7:30 passed, and the father was not seen. The Imrei Emes zt'l found the boy crying. "What's the matter?" the Rebbe asked.

"Today is my first day putting on tefillin, and my father isn't here to put them on for me."

"I will help you," the Rebbe said. The rebbe brought him into his room and explained to him the concept of tefillin: "In the tefillin, Hashem's holy name is written several times. When one puts on tefillin, he draws down the holiness of Hashem's name onto himself. Do you know how this holiness is drawn down?"

The Zohar (vol.2, 98.) states, "Whoever turns thirteen, he is called בן לננסת ישראל, a son to Knesses Yisrael. This is because before this age, he isn't a בן, and the Shechinah doesn't reside on him... [At thirteen, Hashem says] (Tehillim 2:7) אני היום ילדתיך, I gave birth to you today. Because before this age, he wasn't called בן, and he didn't have the divine soul.<sup>6</sup> But היום ילדתיך, this day [when he turns thirteen] ילדתיך, I gave birth to him, and not the sitra achara."<sup>7</sup>

### ***Yiras Shamayim***

A primary focus in this week's *parashah* is *yiras Shamayim*.

The Mishnah teaches, הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואי אתה בא לידי עבירה, "Reflect upon three things and you won't come to sin..." (Avos 3:1). The Rav of Biksad zt'l explained that שלשה דברים is a hint to the third *parashah* of *sefer* דברים, which is *parashas Eikev*. הסתכל בשלשה דברים, study *parashas* עקב, ואי אתה בא לידי עבירה, and you won't sin, because this *parashah* stresses the importance of *yiras Shamayim*.

I heard that just as reading *parashas haMan* on Tuesday *parashas Beshalach* (*parashas Beshalach* discusses the manna) is a *segulah* for *parnassah*, so too, reading *parashas haYirah* (printed in siddurim next to *parashas haMan*) on Tuesday before *parashas Eikev* is a *segulah* for *yiras Shamayim*.

*Parashas haYirah* begins with the following words: ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקינו דורש מעמך כי אם ליראה

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The Rebbe pointed to the light fixture hanging from the ceiling and said, "The light switch is on the wall. How does the chandelier turn on? The answer is that wires connect the chandelier to the light switch. Similarly, the straps of the tefillin bring down the holiness of the tefillin into the person."

Some tzaddikim would bond the tefillin on the arm of a bar mitzvah bachur with a lot of force. This was to hint to the bachur that he should be bound to the kedushah of the mitzvah with a tight bond.

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai zt'l, said that his grandfather, Rebbe Dovid Biderman zt'l put tefillin on his arm so tightly that he thought his arm would fall off. He repeated this in his old age and said, "I still feel that time I wore tefillin."

We aren't on that level, but we should strive that when we put on tefillin, the effect should remain with us throughout the day. We should feel the kedushah of the mitzvah in our neshamah.

6. When one turns thirteen, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives him a present: the holy malach called יצר טוב, who will always be at his side to help him serve Hashem and overcome the yetzer hara.

Reb Shimon of Yaroslav zt'l explains the pasuk (Tehillim 119:9) במה יזכה נער את ארחו לשמור כדברך. This means, why does a נער, a bar mitzvah bachur, receive ארחו, his guest, the yetzer tov? The answer is לשמור כדברך, so he will be able to keep the mitzvos.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l said to a bar mitzvah bachur, "It is the way of the world to honor a guest with food and drink. The host gives the guest the refreshments that the guest enjoys. A bar mitzvah bachur also receives a guest. The guest is the yetzer tov. The yetzer tov enjoys a blatt Gemara. Therefore, honor your guest with a lot of Gemara."

Reb Moshe Mordechai would also often repeat the following vort written by the Or Lashamayim of Apta (Netzavim). It states (Bereishis 10:10) ותהי ראשית ממלכתו בבל וארך, which means, the first acceptance of malchus Shamayim is בבל, to learn Talmud Bavli. If he does so, וארך, he will have arichus yamim and health. (One of the translations of ארך is health.)

7. This chapter of Tehillim (2) discusses tefillah, as it states שאל ממני ואתנה, "Ask from Me, and I will give..." This hints at the great power of tefillah that a bar mitzvah bachur has on the day of his bar mitzvah, particularly when he davens for ruchniyos. הוא יפתח לבנו בתורתו, וישם בלבנו אהבתו ויראתו, ולעשות רצונו ולעבדו בלבב שלם. "He shall open our hearts in His Torah, and place in our hearts fear and love of Him, to do His will and to serve him with a complete heart."

אתה ה' "Now Yisrael, what does Hashem request from you? Only to fear Hashem..." (10:12).

The Gemara derives from this that הכל בידי השמים, everything is in Hashem's hands except for *yiras Shamayim*. Hashem does everything, but fear of Heaven is each individual's obligation to acquire on his own.<sup>8</sup>

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* clarifies that even fear of Hashem is in Hashem's hands. It is in our hands to *desire* to fear Hashem and to *pray* for it. And when one desires and prays for *yiras Shamayim*, Hashem will give it to him.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "It is certain that *yiras Shamayim* is also in Hashem's hands because without Hashem's help, one wouldn't attain a 1/1000<sup>th</sup> of the fear he has. (Except for the very great *tzaddikim*, like the *avos* and Moshe Rabbeinu, who didn't need support to attain fear). [If so, why does the Gemara say that fear of Heaven is in man's hands? The answer is that] man has free will to yearn and desire to fear Hashem and to say *tefillos* to request that Hashem help him fear Hashem. That is up to man. The yearning and the desires aren't

given from Above; a person has to work on them on his own. Therefore, the *pasuk* says, 'מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם ליראה אותי כל הימים', 'if only they would always have such a *heart* to fear Me' (*Devarim* 5:26). It doesn't say, 'מי יתן ויראו אותי', 'if only they would fear Me,' because it's the heart and the desire that's up to man, but the actual fear is given by Hashem to those who desire it."

So Hashem does everything, and even fearing Hashem is also from Hashem. But it is our obligation to desire and pray for fear of Hashem. We will add that it is also man's obligation to avoid all matters that can destroy his fear of Heaven.

On the first night of Succos, Rebbe Yissaschar Dov of Belz *zt'l* asked his *gabai* why the soup was cold. The *gabai* replied that the soup was carried outdoors to the *succah*, so it got cold.

The Rebbe commented, "If soup gets cold by going through the city streets, what happens to a man who goes through the city streets?" The bad influences he sees and hears might cool off his *yiras Shamayim*, *chalilah*.

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8. How does one attain *yiras Shamayim*? The Or HaChaim (10:12) says that when a person appreciates the impact of his deeds – how the building and the destruction of this world, and all higher worlds, are in his hands, he will fear Hashem and be cautious with everything he does.

Another primary counsel for *yiras Shamayim* is to pray for it. The Rebbe of Kotzk explained: הכל בידי השמים, all one's requests are up to Heaven to decide whether or not to grant them. חוץ מיראת שמים, the exception is when one davens for *yiras Shamayim*. When one prays for wealth or any other material matter, Heaven may decide that it isn't good for him and not give it to him. But when one prays for *yiras Shamayim*, it is certainly good for him; therefore, Heaven will grant it to him.

Reb Elimelech Ashkenazi *zt'l* said that once, on a weekday, he heard Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* say *birchas hashachar*. When the Rav came to the words, אל תביאנו לא לידי חטא ולא לידי עבירה ועון, he cried, and he pleaded to be saved from sin, like a child begging his father.

It states (10:12) ה' אתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה אתה ה' "Now, O Yisrael, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you? Only to fear Hashem..." The word שואל also means to borrow. Notice that the *pasuk* states שואל מעמך (asks from what's *with* you), and it doesn't state שואל ממך (asks from you). This indicates that *yiras Shamayim* is *with* us; all we must do is bring it out. We shouldn't consider *yiras Shamayim* as an unattainable quest because *yiras Shamayim* is within the fabric and makeup of every Yid; we just have to bring it out.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* explains, יראו אתה ה' קדושו כי אין מחסור ליראיו, fear Hashem, because אין מחסור ליראיו, those who fear Hashem don't lack anything at all – not spiritual nor material.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* said to a Yid from Warsaw, "To be in Warsaw, and to not be there [by avoiding strolling unnecessarily on the streets] is to invest in Olam HaBa."

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* writes, "I heard from someone who heard it directly from the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*, "To hold back, even just once, from walking on the streets of a big city, is a *keren* (investment fund) for Olam HaBa."

The Gemara tells that Reb Yochanan blessed his students, *יהא מורא שמים עליכם כמורא בשר ודם*. The simple translation is that they should fear Hashem as much as they fear people. We see that when one sins, he is afraid that people shouldn't catch him. He is more scared of people seeing him doing an *aveirah* than he is afraid of Hashem seeing him.

The Ben Ish Chai adds that *בשר ודם* can also refer to one's own flesh and blood. Thus, Reb Yochanan was blessing his students that they should be cautious with the *mitzvos* as they are with their health.

People are very cautious with their health, avoid dangerous situations, and take other necessary precautions to remain healthy and well. Do the same with regards to *yiras Shamayim*. If there's a place that can be detrimental to your *yiras Shamayim*, or if there's something else that can hurt your *yiras Shamayim*, fear Hashem and avoid it.<sup>9</sup>

### Good Friends

Being cautious with your *yiras Shamayim* also means selecting your friends carefully.

A father complained to Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* that his son was declining spiritually. "He used to learn very well, but lately, when

I test him on his learning, he doesn't know much. He also used to have *yiras Shamayim*, but there are signs of disinterest in that, too."

The Belzer Rav replied, "Check out who his friends are."

The father called the *rosh yeshiva*, the *mashgiach*, and the *magid shiur*, who all told him that his son only has good friends. "There are no bad *bachurim* in the yeshiva," they added.

The father returned to the Belzer Rav and told him what he heard. Once again, the Rav replied, "Check out his friends."

The father obliged, and this time he dug deeper. (He rebuked himself for not trusting the rebbe the first time. If the rebbe said the problem was bad friends, it was undoubtedly so.) He discovered that one boy in yeshiva appeared to have *yirei Shamayim* but was rotten inside. The father advised his son to keep away from that boy, which he did. Soon afterward, his son's learning and *yiras Shamayim* returned to being as before.

The father told the Belzer Rav about the improvement. The Rav replied, "This isn't surprising; a bad friend is hazardous. Twice in *birchas hashachar* we daven to be spared from bad friends: *והרחיקני... מאדם רע ומחבר רע*. This shows us just how dangerous a bad friend can be."

Someone was offered a job that didn't involve halachic issues per se. There wouldn't be a problem with *yichud*, theft, *chillul Shabbos*, and the like. The problem was that he'd be working among gentiles and non-religious Yidden. He asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l* whether he should take the job, explaining that he feared that his co-workers might influence him, and that might result in *kaltkeit*, coldness, and disinterest in his *yiras*

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9. Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* once fell into a manhole. Since then, he would carefully look ahead to see whether there was a hole in the road. He would cross to the other side of the street if there was a hole. That one time he fell into the manhole made him cautious for the rest of his life. We, too, should be careful to avoid all different spiritual pitfalls. Especially if you fell once, *chas v'shalom*, you should know to be cautious in the future.

*Shamayim*. The Chazon Ish replied, "Kaltkeit in *yiras Shamayim* is יהרג ואל יעבור."

The letters חבר, can be rearranged and read as בחר, ברה, or חרב. The Shlah taught that

if your friend is a חרב, a sword, for he is spiritually dangerous to be around, ברח run away from him. But if he is בחר, which means chosen/elite, for he has *yiras Shamayim* and does good deeds, then be his חבר<sup>10</sup>.

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**10.** A *rosh yeshiva* asked a *bachur*, "In *Shemonah Esrei* we say, והודים מזהרה תעקר ותשבר ותמגר ותכלם ותשפילם ותכניעם במהרה, בימינו, 'and the *resha'im* should soon be uprooted, destroyed...humbled, subjugated, speedily in our days.' Most of the words are understood, but what does ותמגר mean?"

The *bachur* replied that he didn't know. The *rosh yeshiva* added, "I, too, don't know, but I can tell by its neighbors that it isn't something good." The *rosh yeshiva* hinted to the *bachur* that one's friends indicate who he is and who he will become. Therefore, one must be extremely careful to have only good friends.