

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Vayechi*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Table of Contents

## *Torah Wellsprings - Vayechi*

Bitachon .....	4
Be Strong - Chazak.....	5
Growing from our Defeats .....	6
<i>Vayechi Yaakov</i> .....	6
We are Rewarded for the Battle.....	8
Hashem's Pleasure is from the Battles .....	9
The Joy of Battle .....	10
<i>Shovavim</i> .....	10
Salvation that Come from Toiling in Torah .....	12
Kedushah and Bitachon.....	13
Rebbe Moshe Lelover.....	15

# *Torah Wellsprings - Vayechi*

## **Bitachon**

In all circumstances we must have Bitachon, as it says in the Midrash, "Everything can be attained through bitachon. If you suffer yesurim (afflictions), have bitachon. To merit Hashem's compassion, have bitachon. If you want forgiveness, have bitachon. For the redemption (from galus), have bitachon, as it states (49:18) 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'', 'For Your salvation, I trust, Hashem.'"

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l and a Lubavitcher chasid were detained in a Soviet prison. One day, an officer informed them that in another twenty-four hours, they would be hung. Reb Yechezkel was very afraid, and the Lubavitcher chasid questioned him about that. Reb Yechezkel replied, "Why shouldn't I be worried? The clock is clicking, and time is moving along!"

The chasid replied, "The clock is ticking, time moves on, but the Ribono Shel Olam is always here!"

They were saved. Advocates from different countries pressured the Russian government to free these two men. Reb Yechezkel Abramsky would say that he learned bitachon from this Lubavitcher chasid.

Rebbe Moshe Kobrinier zt'l saw a Yid who was very worried and asked what was

bothering him. The man told the Rebbe his problems. The rebbe replied, "When a Yid has a tzarah, he must say (49:18) 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'', 'For Your salvation, I hope for, Hashem.' If the tzarah is greater, he should say, 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה''. And if the problem is even greater, he should say 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'."

Reb Pinchas Koritzer zt'l says, "Someone who lives with emunah and trusts in Hashem will have yeshuos and be saved in ways he never imagined." Perhaps we say 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'' in three forms (לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה', קוּיִי ה' לִישׁוּעָתְךָ, ה' לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה') to hint that the salvation might come from the right, and maybe from the left, and it can come from a third place, too, from a place you never imagined.

Notice that each time one says 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'', Hashem's name comes closer to him. The first time, he says 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'', where Hashem's name appears as the third word. The second time, 'קוּיִי ה' לִישׁוּעָתְךָ, "Hashem" is the second word. Finally, the third time, we say 'ה' לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'', and Hashem's name is said first. This hints that the more we think about Hashem and trust in Him, Hashem comes closer and closer to us.

Reb Shlomo Kalish zt'l was with Reb Chaim Brisker for a shalosh seudos, and he related that for twenty minutes, Reb Chaim repeated the words 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה''. This is because emunah and bitachon require constant reinforcement.<sup>1</sup>

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1. In the Sefer Torah, where it states שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד, the אחד is written with a large dalet. The Baal HaTanya zt'l said that the large dalet appears like a hammer because we have to hammer the emunah into our consciousness. We do this system to attain bitachon, too. We say 'לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוּיִי ה'' three times, and we speak about bitachon, until we acquire it.

Someone once bought a lottery ticket, and the grand prize was one hundred thousand dollars. The man said, "I am certain I will win the money because I have bitachon."

Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l told him, "I will buy your ticket from you for thirty thousand dollars."

The man was overjoyed with this offer. However, Reb Yisrael Salanter told him that it meant he didn't

## Be Strong - Chazak

It is a good omen to finish a sefer on a positive note, but Chumash Bereishis doesn't seem to end positively. The final words of the sefer are (50:26) וימת יוסף בן מאה ועשר שנים ויחנטו אותו וישם בארון במצרים "Yosef was niftar at the age of one hundred ten years, and they embalmed him, and he was placed into the coffin in Mitzrayim." Why do we end on this sad note?

Even if we translate the pasuk according to *remez*, the question remains. Yosef represents the spirituality of a Yid. וימת יוסף, means that the Yid fell to very low levels. וישם בארון במצרים, "he was placed into the coffin in Mitzrayim" further expressing just how low he fell. He fell so far from kedushah, and we wonder why the Chumash ends like this.

However, immediately following these words, everyone listening to Kriyas Hatorah stands up and announces חזק חזק ונתחזק. If a person can fall to such low levels and still stand up and shout, "I will strengthen myself strong and become good again," it marks and symbolizes a happy ending.

This week, we say חזק at three places. First, it states (48:2) ויחזק ישראל וישב על המטה "Yisrael summoned his strength, and sat up on his bed."

The second time we say חזק is when we finish the parashah. Everyone stands up and says חזק חזק ונתחזק.

The third חזק is in the haftarah. It states (Malachim 1, 2:2-3) וחזקת... ללכת בדרכיו "You shall be strong...to walk in His ways."

Reb Moshe Mordechai of Boyan zt'l points out that the first חזק is written when

Yaakov Avinu was lying in bed and then sat up. The second is when we sit and then stand up. The third time while standing and then beginning to go.

Reb Moshe Mordechai explains that this is telling us to take one step in the right direction. If you are lying down, sit up. If you are sitting, stand up; if you are standing, begin walking. Take one step towards improvement.

This is the lesson of Chanukah- the first night we light one candle. The second night we light two. On the third night we light three. Growth happens slowly, by taking small steps. Similarly, when we tell someone חזק, to be strong, we mean that he should take even just one step in the right direction. That one good deed will lead to others. Begin with something small and grow from there.

The words על המטה, "on the bed," appear twice in Tanach. Once, in our parashah, parshas Vayichi, when Yaakov was ill, he strengthened himself and sat on his bed. The other time is in Megillas Esther (7:8) והמן נפל על המטה, "Haman fell on the bed."

The Baal HaTurim (48:2) writes, "This shows us that tzaddikim strengthen themselves even when they are weak, and reshaim collapse even when they are strong."

The intention is that tzaddikim make themselves strong to serve Hashem. They don't say they are weak, so they can't go to daven, etc.

But there is another lesson here; when a tzaddik falls from his level, he gets up again. He strengthens himself emotionally. He refuses to remain in that fallen state.

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truly trust that he would win. If he trusted that Hashem would grant him the one hundred thousand dollars, he wouldn't have sold it for thirty thousand dollars.

This story reminds us that sometimes we say we have bitachon, but we are fooling ourselves. We aren't genuinely relying on Hashem. But if we focus on thoughts of emunah and bitachon, the emunah can become more real to us.

This is as we say in (Tehillim 20:9) המה כרעו "They kneel and fall, but we rise and gain strength." And it states (Mishlei 24:16) כי שבע יפול צדיק וקם ורשעים יכשלו ברעה "For a righteous man can fall seven times and rise, but the wicked shall stumble upon evil."

### Growing from our Defeats

The Midrash states, "The Jewish nation isn't called Reuveni or Shimoni, only Yehudi. [We are named after Yehudah and no other tribe.] This is because Yehudah admitted to his aveirah (see Bereishis 38:26).

Why is admitting to an aveirah so significant that we are all named Yehudah because of this attribute? Certainly, every tribe had its qualities, so why aren't we named Reuveni, Shimoni, etc.?

The Chiddushei HaRim zt'l explains that if the past can't be rectified, it is hard to admit to a sin. Yehudah believed in teshuvah. He believed that teshuvah with love, can turn aveiros into mitzvos. This is the reason Yehudah was able to admit his sin.

We are called Yehudim (or Yiddin) after Yehudah because he teaches us that the past can be fixed.

Yaakov blessed Yehudah (49:9) כרע רבץ "He crouched, rested like a lion, and like a lion, who will rouse him?"

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that when a lion lies down, it is still a lion. This was Yehudah's trait. He was always strong like a lion. Even during times of yeridah, spiritual falls and setbacks, he was ready to bounce back like a roaring lion to serve Hashem. He didn't let the past prevent his growth in the future. To a large extent, this is because he believed that the past could be rectified. We are Yehudim because we also know that everything can be atoned for.

Furthermore, based on the principle ירידה עליה, one reaches higher levels precisely due to the falls and errors of the past.

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 59.) says, אוקירו לנושייכו כי היכי דתתעתרו. This means, "Honor your wives so you will become wealthy."

The Degel Machaneh Efraim explains this Chazal b'derech remez. He says לנושייכו can mean to forget, as it states (Bereishis 41:51) כי נשני אלקים, Hashem helped me forget... The idea of forgetting represents one falling to lower levels. So the Gemara says, אוקירו לנושייכו, "Honor your yeridos, give respect to those times when you fall to low levels, כי היכי דתתעתרו, because it is from those times that you will become wealthy spiritually. These lower times are opportunities for spiritual growth.

With these ideas, the Degel explains the following pasuk (48:19) ואולם אחיו הקטן יגדל ממנו. According to its simple meaning, אחיו הקטן, the younger brother, Efraim, יגדל ממנו, will be greater than him (Menasheh). So, יגדל ממנו means "greater *than* him."

The Degel Machaneh Efraim, however, says we should translate יגדל ממנו "greater *from* him."

He explains metaphorically that Menasheh, which means forgetting (כי נשני), represents the lower levels. Efraim, which means offspring (פרה ורבה) represents growth. The pasuk is saying, אחיו הקטן, Efraim's growth, יגדל ממנו, will sprout *from* the lower times because we grow even higher from the lower times.

It states (49:2) הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם, "Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisrael, your father."

The Degel Machaneh Efraim explains, בני יעקב refers to the madreigah of Yaakov, the lower level [in comparison to Yisrael, which represents a higher level]. When you are at a lower level, שמעו, understand that this is so, ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם, so you can attain the higher level [called Yisrael]."

### Vayechi Yaakov

Before the start of every parashah, there is a space in the Torah. This helps us know



where the last parashah ended and that a new parashah began. Parashas Vayechi is the only exception. There is no space before it.

Rashi asks, "Why is this *parashah* סתומה, closed? [Why isn't there a space separating the two parshiyos?] He answers that it is because when Yaakov Avinu was niftar, the eyes and the hearts of the Jewish nation closed due to the *tzaros* of enslavement."

In the place where there should have been a space are the words ויחי יעקב, "And Yaakov lived."

This seems like a contradiction. The beginning of the *parasha* is closed (סתומה) to indicate *tzaros*, and yet in that same place, the Torah writes ויחי יעקב, "Yaakov lived" and flourished.

Reb Tzaddok HaKohen says that this shouldn't surprise us because the Jewish nation excels and reaches its full potential, specifically during hard times.

Yosef HaTzaddik reached his high levels because of the hardships he endured in his life. He was hated by his brothers, sold as a slave, withstood difficult tests with Photiphar's wife, and was in jail for twelve years. He became the leader of Mitzrayim, which certainly came along with a new array of spiritual challenges. It is precisely because he was tested repeatedly and so intensely that he reached his high spiritual levels.

Towards the end of the *parashah*, the brothers came to Yosef and pleaded for forgiveness for having sold him. They said (50:1) , שֵׁא נָא פֶשַׁע אֲחִיךָ וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי רָעָה גִמְלוֹךְ "Please forgive the sins of your brothers because they did bad to you..." Tzaddikim<sup>2</sup> teach us that what they were saying to Yosef was, "We sinned to you, we sold you. But please

forgive us because you only gained from everything you went through. You merited to become part of Hashem's throne because of us."

How is Yosef part of Hashem's throne, and where is this alluded to in their words?

They said שֵׁא נָא. The letters שֵׁא נָא are *roshei teivos* for אֶדֶם, נֶשֶׁר, אֶרֶיָה, שֹׁר, (ox, lion, eagle, man) – the four faces that are engraved on the *Kisei HaKavod*, Hashem's throne. שֹׁר represents Yosef as it states, בְּכֹר שְׁוֹרוֹ הָדָר לוֹ, (Devarim 33:17). Yosef merited to have his symbol on the *Kisei HaKavod* because כִּי רָעָה גִמְלוֹךְ "...your brothers did bad to you." These tests enabled Yosef to grow until he became "Yosef HaTzaddik."

The brothers, the שבטי יִשְׂרָאֵל, said to Yosef, וְעַתָּה שֵׁא נָא לַפֶּשַׁע עֲבַדֵּי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ, "and now please forgive the sins of the servants of the G-d of your fathers." אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ is *roshei teivos* אֵי לֹא הָאֵי יוֹמָא כְּמָה יוֹסֵף אֵיכָא בְּשׁוּקָא "If not for this day, how many Yosef's are in the marketplace!" (see Pesachim 68:). The brothers hinted to Yosef that if it weren't for all the hardships and tests he endured, Yosef would be a regular person. He wouldn't have attained his outstanding stature.<sup>3</sup>

It states ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרי שנה, "Yaakov lived in the land Mitzrayim seventeen years..." and the Or HaChaim explains that these were the best years of his life. Before that, he suffered so much from Eisav and Lavan and distress from what happened to Dinah and Yosef. But in Mitzrayim, finally, life was tranquil and good.

Reb Shamshon Rafael Hirsh zt'l also points out that the last years of Yaakov Avinu's life were the most serene period. Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsh adds that one

2. The Gevuras Aryeh of Kishinev zt'l said this commentary to the Apter Rav, zt'l, who praised it immensely. It was also taught by other tzaddikim

3. As long as the Chanukah dreidel is spinning, no one wins. When the Chanukah dreidel falls, someone gains. This is the way of the world. Growth and gains follow falling and hardship.

may think those years were also the *most important* years of his life. To disprove this, the *parashah* is סתומה, closed, and it appears to be a continuation of parashas Vayigash. This shows that these last seventeen years weren't any more significant than the years before.<sup>4</sup> It was mainly the hard years of his life that were his prime. This is because people grow from their struggles.

Until this point, we discussed the spiritual gains one earns from hardships, but many worldly gains come from it.

Consider what happened to Yosef: He suffered immensely, but the result was that Yosef was able to support his family during the hunger. Yosef told his brothers (50:20) ואתם חשבתם אלי רעה אלקים חשבה לטובה למען עשה כיום "Indeed, you intended evil against me, [but] Hashem designed it for good, to bring about what is at present to keep a great populace alive."

The Baal HaTurim (50:15) writes, "*Halevay* Yosef should only hate us in his heart. And if he wants to punish us, he should do it in the mode we did to him. What did we do to him? We caused him to become a king! We sold him, and this resulted in his becoming a king. Therefore, he should give us such retribution!"<sup>5</sup>

Because one gains a lot from the hardships in this world and the next, b'ruchniyos and b'gashmiyos.

### We are Rewarded for the Battle

Reb Elimelech of Lizensk zt'l explains the pasuk (49:14) יִשְׁכַּר חֲמוּר גֵּרם, to mean that יִשְׁכַּר, why is there reward, חֲמוּר גֵּרם, it is because of the chomriyos, the gashmiyos of human beings. If avodas Hashem was easy, we wouldn't deserve reward. Even if we perform Torah and mitzvos, we wouldn't deserve reward because we didn't begin to pay back

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4. If the final years were better, the Torah would make a division, to indicate that the final seventeen years were better and incomparable to his life before.

5. An anti-Semite once entered a restaurant in good spirits, but his heart soon turned to rage when he saw a Yid sitting in the restaurant. His only respite was to taunt him. In a loud voice, he announced, "Waiter, I am in a generous mood tonight. Serve your best appetizer to everyone present. I'll pay the bill. Serve it to everyone, but don't give anything to that Jew!" Everyone cheered and came over to thank him after they had eaten their portions. The Yid also approached the anti-Semite and thanked him as well. The anti-Semite was confused. Why was the Jew thanking him?

He decided to try once again. He raised his voice for everyone to hear, "Waiter, serve your most expensive main dish to everyone present." Then the *rasha* pointed to the Yid and said vehemently, "Serve it to everyone, but don't serve anything to that Jew sitting over there."

After enjoying their meals, everyone came over to thank him. He was content. But then, once again, the Yid stood in line to thank him as well. It didn't make sense.

He decided to try a third time. This time he announced: "Drink as much as you want. I will pay. Drink any brand you want. It's all on the house. Everyone can have. Everyone that is, except for the Jew."

The cheers were even louder this time.

When they had all drunk to their heart's content, they lifted the *rasha* and sang songs of gratitude. After they finally put him down, the Yid went over to him and thanked him.

"Why are you thanking me?" the cruel man finally asked. "I humiliated you."

The Yid replied, "I am grateful because I own the restaurant."

This story is a reminder that when things appear to be bad, it is never so. There's always a silver lining. Everything is always for our benefit.



all the kindness Hashem does for us. Hashem rewards us for our struggles and battles against the yetzer hara. יֵשׁ-שָׂרָה, the reward is חֶמֶד גִּרָם, caused and resulted from the chumriyos, the gashmiyos, that makes avodas Hashem so hard for us.

People asked the Ateres Yehoshua of Dzikev zt'l, "Your father and your grandfather were also Chasidic rebbes, but they were poor. But you have a lot of money. People come to you and bring you money. What is the explanation? Why is your mazal different than theirs? "

The Ateres Yehoshua answered with a mashal:

A poor man saw many people waiting in line in front of a theatre, and he asked them what they were going to see.

"The play is about a poor man who asks for money from a wealthy man."

"You are going to watch that in a show?! I do that every day, and no one seems so interested. How much does a seat cost?"

They told him a very high price.

The poor man replied, "I have that life every day, and people give me much less than that."

The men in line explained, "We aren't interested to see this happen in real life. We want to see it in a play."

The Ateres Yehoshua told his chasidim (with his high level of humility), "My father and grandfather were real rebbes, so they got less money. I am making a show, I copy them, so I get paid more."

He said this humbly, but we can learn something from it. In a way, people on lower levels do deserve more reward, because it was harder for them to do avodas Hashem. On the other hand, for the great tzaddikim, avodas Hashem is easy, so they deserve less reward.

(It isn't exactly so because the great tzaddikim also have their areas of difficulty, which they

overcome with mesirus nefesh to do Hashem's will. Nonetheless, the point is correct. For working harder, you deserve more reward.)

### Hashem's Pleasure is from the Battles

The Gemara (Succah 52) tells us that in the future, Hashem will slaughter the yetzer hara, and everyone, the resha'im and l'havdil, the tzaddikim will cry and mourn. The reshaim will cry because they will realize that they lost out on eternal reward because they didn't fight this battle.

But why will the tzaddikim cry?

The Maharsha explains that it is because they lost the opportunity to make a nachas ruach for Hashem. Hashem enjoys the struggle, and when the yetzer hara is slaughtered, avodas Hashem loses its splendor.

Czar Nicolai was scheduled to visit an army base, and the soldiers of the camp prepared themselves for this occasion. Boots were polished, uniforms were pressed and cleaned, and everyone trained well in honor of the czar's visit.

One soldier had a problem. He had given all his weapons to a tavern as collateral for drinks. What will he do when the Czar sees that he has no weapons?

He came up with a solution. He filled his army sack with straw. No one would know that he had straw inside instead of weapons.

Czar Nikolai watched the soldiers bustling about, and he picked out the soldier with the duffle bag and asked him to open it. The soldier was severely punished.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l asked, "From all the soldiers, how did the czar know to suspect him? It was because he saw the soldier carrying the bag without effort. Weapons are heavy. The load should have been heavy. That's the reason the Czar suspected that the weapons weren't inside.

Rebbe Asher explained that the same applies to avodas Hashem. Avodas Hashem

should be difficult. If everything is easy, something is wrong.

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l says, "If a person finds avodas Hashem easy, that's because he didn't accept on himself the yoke of heaven." It is fairly easy to keep kosher because we are accustomed to this from our youth. Similarly, it isn't so hard to perform all the mitzvos we are accustomed to doing. But there are things we didn't yet train ourselves to do, such as, perhaps, (a) davening with kavanah, (b) studying Torah for many hours, (c) overcoming anger, (d) not speaking lashon hara, and so on. (Every person can make his own list). Accepting the yoke of heaven means working on these matters, and then he will see that avodas Hashem is difficult.

### The Joy of Battle

We discussed Hashem's pleasure in our battle against the yetzer hara, and now we will discuss our pleasure.

There is a great enigma: Why do soldiers go to war eagerly? Some soldiers even volunteer to serve in the army. Why would they do so? Don't they treasure their lives? They know that they are risking their lives. If they were unwell, they would run a doctor to save their lives and pay a lot of money. But when there's war, and the risk is just as great, they run into the raging battle. Why is that?

The Baal HaTanya asked a soldier serving in the Russian army this question.

The soldier replied, "Rabbi, you don't understand. Our desire to win is even greater than our desire to live."

The Baal HaTanya said that this is the meaning of the Gemara (Brachos 5) לעולם ירגיז

אדם יצר טוב על יצר הרע, "A person should always battle with the yetzer hara." Combatting the yetzer hara is a battle, a war, and winning that battle is the greatest achievement. The joy of overcoming the yetzer hara is more enjoyable than life itself.

The Vilna Gaon zt'l says, העקשן יצליח, the stubborn one will succeed. When one is determined, he doesn't give up and puts up a battle against the yetzer hara, he will win in the end. And that is a great joy. There is nothing more fulfilling. It is a toil, a struggle, but well worth the effort in this world and the next.

### Shovavim

On Motzei Shabbos of Parashas Vayechi the six weeks of Shovavim begin. The Arizal teaches that during these weeks, we can cleanse ourselves from the gravest sins.<sup>6</sup>

There's a bird called שלך, which means cast away. It is called that way because its wings give off a terrible odor, and the other birds always chase it away.

Once, a *shalach* bird tried to build her nest on a tree, but all the other birds sent her away. They couldn't stand her stench. So, she built her nest on a rooftop. But the people of that home couldn't bear the smell, so they took brooms and banished her. The *shalach* decided it was time for her to try her luck in a different country.

A *duchifas* bird saw the *shalach* flying away. "Where are you going to?" the *duchifas* asked.

"Don't you see that I am not wanted here," the *shalach* replied. "I am going to another country. Perhaps I will be appreciated there."

6. שמות, וארא, בא, בשלח, יתרו, משפטים: stands for the roshei teivos of the parshiyos we read this time of year: משפטים, שמות, וארא, בא, בשלח, יתרו.

Tzaddikim added that it is also roshei teivos for שפע ברכה והצלחה במעשה ידינו, bounty, blessings, and success in our endeavors. And שובב is roshei teivos for שמחים בצאתם ושישים בבואם.

The *duchifas* said, "As long as you have this smell, no one will want you around. Cut off your wings, and others will accept you."

The smell of the *shalach* represents the stench of sin. The only solution is to cut away those evil deeds. We do so during Shavovim. It is a time when we can cleanse ourselves and become pure from sin.

When the Ateres Yehoshua (Dzikiver Rebbe) was in Vienna, he asked a street cleaner, "Why do you clean the streets? Tomorrow, people will again stroll around these streets, and the streets will become messy again."

"I know," the man replied, "but if I don't clean the streets today, tomorrow it will be even worse. The dirt and filth will accumulate. So, I do what I can."

People often ask themselves during Shovavim, "Why should I purify myself from the sins of my past? Within a short time, I will tarnish my soul again."

Shovavim cleanses aveiros related to kedushah, like guarding the eyes and thoughts, etc. People know they won't be perfect and will continue to do aveiros, so why should they exert themselves during Shovavim? They anyway won't stay completely clean.

But the answer is that you must remove the aveiros of the past. Otherwise, the new aveiros will combine with the old aveiros, which will be unbearable.

How does one cleanse himself? What is the prescription for purity during the weeks of Shovavim?

If we look into the sefarim written several hundred years ago, fasts and self-imposed afflictions are recommended. However, tzaddikim of later generations insisted that this path isn't ideal for us. People have become weaker, and fasts and self-imposed afflictions will cause more harm than good.

But that's not to say that we don't need these purifications. On the contrary, we need

them badly; only the old path for purity doesn't work for us anymore.

So, what should one do nowadays?

Tzaddikim say that one of the main counsels is to study Torah – and primarily without interruption. This purifies immensely. This is *Shovavim* in these generations.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that the in-depth study of Gemara with *Tosfos* is the atonement of *Shovavim*. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said, "Learning Torah purifies more than fasts and afflictions."

The Yesod HaAvodah adds (3:5:8), "I think that studying without speaking for five hours straight is a wonderful thing; it atones, and it brings a person to *teshuvah*." Those who cannot study for five hours without interruption should do whatever they can.

Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* once told a Torah scholar fasting during *Shovavim*, "You know how to learn. So why are you engaged in the lesser purifier of fasting when you can take advantage of the greater purifier of studying Gemara and *Tosfos*?"

Once, in the middle of the night, during *Shovavim*, Reb Yochanan Rachmastrivka *zt'l* instructed his *gabbai* to wake up all his chasidim. When the chassidim gathered in the beis medresh, he said, "In the past, I didn't want to speak about these matters. But just now, it was revealed to me that when one learns Torah with *רציפות*, without interruption, this creates a *רצפת אש*, a floor of fire that banishes all one's *aveiros*."

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 21:) states, כל הפוסק מדברי תורה ועוסק בדברי שיחה מאכילין אותו גחלי תתים, "Whoever interrupts his learning and engages in idle chatter, will be fed fiery coals." The Maharil Diskin said that this isn't solely a punishment. It also means that he will lose his taste in Torah. Because the Torah is extremely sweet and pleasurable; however, when one interrupts his learning to make conversation, he won't feel the sweet taste of Torah. This is alluded to by



"eating coals" because after one eats burning coals, he can eat the best food in the world but won't appreciate its taste.

### Salvation that Come from Toiling in Torah

The *Zohar* (vol.3, 216:) writes, "Whoever toils in Torah, his mazal changes." If he had a mazal to be poor, childless, or any other *yesurim*, the mazal turns around and becomes better in the merit of the Torah.

Eighty years ago in Yerushalayim, someone had a *kameiya* (קמיע) (amulet) that was written by the Ta"z. He would lend it to the ill and childless women, and there were many salvations.

Once, a person received the *kameiya* and opened it. He wanted to copy what's written inside, so he could have a *kameiya* of his own.

He was wrong for doing this for at least two reasons:

(1) Even if he copied the Taz's *kameiya*, it wouldn't have healing powers because it isn't solely *what's written* in a *kameiya* that heals, but also *who wrote the kameiya*. The Taz's *kameiya* brought salvations and copying it wouldn't accomplish anything.

(2) He also didn't realize that by opening up the Taz's *kameiya*, the *kameiya* lost its healing powers.

Nevertheless, he opened it, and this is what he found inside the *kameiya*, "I, Dovid ben Shmuel HaLevi, toiled to understand Tosfos (*Chulin* 96.) and in this merit, may Hashem help that all the barren should have a salvation, and all the ill should be healed."

Generally, a *kameiya* has names of *malachim*, but this time, the *kameiya* only said

that he toiled in Torah. The Torah brought salvation.

The Taz had many merits. For example, he could have written that he wrote a leading commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*. But these merits weren't mentioned, only that he toiled in Torah. That alone is enough to bring salvation.

A *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l* whether he should follow the doctor's recommendation to undergo surgery. After hearing the details of the situation, the Chazon Ish advised the *bachur* to go ahead with the surgery.

The *bachur* then said, "Can I speak in learning with the Chazon Ish? I have a question I want to discuss."

The Chazon Ish enjoyed speaking in learning with *bachurim*, and they discussed a deep topic in *Kodshim* for about an hour.

The Chazon Ish was impressed by this young man's erudition. As the *bachur* was getting ready to leave, the Chazon Ish told him, "Regarding the operation, I changed my mind. You don't need the surgery."

The surprised *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish why he had changed his mind. The Chazon Ish replied, "When you asked me whether you should have the operation, I didn't know that you are a *talmid chacham*. But now that I see you are among the עמלי התורה, those who toil in Torah, so you don't need the operation because Hashem deals with עמלי התורה in an entirely different manner (*Maaseh Ish* vol.1, p.77).

Some years ago, Reb Malkiel Kotler *shlita*, *rosh yeshiva* of Lakewood, repeated this story, and an elderly person stood up and said, "I am the בעל המעשה." The story happened to him.<sup>7</sup>

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7. The Midrash (see *Chofetz Chaim*, *Toras HaBayis* 13) tells a story of a king who commanded his servant to fill barrels with water. For each barrel he fills, the worker will receive a gold coin.

One of the workers stopped working and sat down on the side. Someone asked him, "Why aren't you

## Kedushah and Bitachon

The Bas Ayin (Bamidbar) teaches that the letters ב"ט"ה have י"ת in them when they are fully spelled out in full. For example, ב' is spelled ב"י"ת, and ט' and ה' are also spelled ח"י"ת ט"י"ת. These are the only letters that when spelled out, have a י"ת in them.

The gematyriya of קדו"ש is ת"י (410), so ב"ט"ה hints to קדו"ש. It tells us that with bitachon one can achieve kedushah. (We will soon explain the connection between bitachon and kedushah.)

בטחון also means cover.<sup>8</sup> So, bitachon hints to kedushah and to cover. This is because the cover of kedushah is bitachon. So, one needs bitachon to get to kedushah.

This is because many forms of livelihood involve tests in kedushah. The internet is an example. When one has bitachon, he will believe Hashem can support him without him sacrificing his kedushah. He doesn't have to go where he shouldn't or see what he shouldn't to earn parnassah. Trust in Hashem that He can support us in other ways, too.

So bitachon is the cover that protects us and enables us to have kedushah. This is the reason the letters ב"ט"ה means cover and when spelled out in full, they hint to kedushah. This teaches us to have bitachon, for it is the cover and guard for kedushah.

The Zohar says that the more kedushah one has, the easier his parnassah will be.

A person was standing on a pier, casting out his fishing rod, when someone came by to see what he was doing. He saw that instead of putting bate on the hook, this person attached a clock. "Why are you casting the clock into the water?" the newcomer asked. "Why don't you put bate on the hook?"

"It is a great secret," the fisherman responded. "I learned it in fishing school."

"What's the secret? Please tell me."

"No. I paid a lot of money to learn this secret, and I will not give it away for free."

"I am willing to pay to learn the secret."

"For a thousand dollars, I will tell you, and believe me, that is a low price compared to the amount I paid to get this information."

The man paid a thousand dollars, and the fisherman said, "Fish always keep their eyes open, and biologists (actually ichthyologists) discovered the reason: There is no clock in the water, making the fish wonder what time it is. This is the reason they swim about, looking for a clock."

"Amazing," said the student. "So, when you put a clock into the water, all the fish come to see the time, and you can catch them."

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working? The king hired you to fill the barrels with water", and the man replied, "All the barrels have holes in them. Even if I fill the barrels with water, in a short time, all the water will seep out. So what's the purpose?"

The man replied, "That's not your problem. You do the job you were told to do, and you will get paid for each barrel you fill."

The *nimshal* is, many people feel that Torah study isn't for them because whatever they study, they forget. We tell them, "Your obligation is to study Torah, and you will be rewarded for each time you do. If you forget what you learn, that won't detract from your reward. So why should you care? Carry out the mission you are obligated to do.

8. The root word of בטחון is טח, which means to cover. Kidneys are called בטוחות (see Tehillim 51:8, הן אמת חפצת) and the Metzudos Tzion explains that this is because בכליות הטוחות ומכוסות בחלב, the kidneys are covered over and concealed under fats.

"Exactly," said the fisherman as he slipped the thousand dollars into his pocket.

"Tell me," said the student, "how many fish did you catch today?"

"Today, I caught eight fish... And you are the eighth one."

The nimshal is that when you open the internet to earn or save money, you think it is all about money. Actually, it isn't money that is being caught. It is you, the watcher. This is the yetzer hara's way of seeing you into its trap. (As in the mashal; it wasn't fish that was being caught, people were caught.)

The Shach's father-in-law once approved the Shach and told him, "I can no longer support you. I want you to try your hand at business."

So when the market came to their city, the Shach engaged in some business activity and was extremely successful.

Now, the Shach could invest his energies again in studying Torah.

Some weeks or months later, the market came to their city again. The father-in-law said, "You did so well last time; I'm certain you will succeed again this time."

"I will not do business this time," the Shach replied.

"But why not? You can be wealthy. You have a good mind for business."

The Shach explained that his initial success came from the yetzer hara, to lure him away from studying Torah. "The yetzer hara wants me to spend much time doing business, and then after he stole all those hours away from me, he will take the money away from me as well."

The Shach added that this is hinted at in the words (Shemos 15:9) *אמר אויב ארדוף אשיג אחלק*. שלל תמלאמו נפשי אריק חרבי תורישמו ידי. The pasuk can be read like this: *אמר אויב*, the enemy is the yetzer hara. He says, *ארדוף אשיג*, I will catch the Yid in my net. How will he do so? First, *אחלק שלל*, the yetzer hara will give him

a lot of money and make him feel like a successful businessman. And then, *אריק חרבי תורישמו ידי*, the yetzer hara will take out his sword and make him poor. He only made him wealthy to pull him away from Torah study. After he succeeds, he will take away the money, too.

We similarly say that the yetzer hara enables people to earn or save money on the internet, but that isn't the purpose. Not at all. The yetzer hara doesn't want to make you wealthy. It is *you* he is after. And after one falls into his trap, the yetzer hara might take away all the money. The person will be left with nothing: without money and without kedushah.

Several years ago, a hacker targeted a local real estate firm in Lakewood. For a long time, the hacker quietly analyzed the company's operations and employees to familiarize himself with the inner workings of the company. Finally, when he was ready, he wrote an email to the secretary, making it look like it came from the firm's president, asking the secretary to transfer seventy thousand dollars into the hacker's bank account.

Everything looked standard. The boss often ordered such large money transfers. But the hacker made one mistake. In the email, he addressed the secretary by her first name. The boss never addressed his secretary that way for the sake of tznius. She was ready to transfer the money, but the email alerted her that something was off. The kedushah of this firm saved them a lot of money.

A yungerman travels from Eretz Yisrael to Europe once every two weeks to deliver a shiur in a certain yeshiva. He generally flies on planes that don't have video sets, because he wants to guard his eyes. When the only flights available are with videos, he prefers a daytime flight because then he can immerse himself in Torah study, and he doesn't see anything that's going on around him.



Once, he had to take a night flight on a plane with video sets. He was very upset about that, but what could he do? He had to take this flight. So he took along sleeping pills, and as he davened minchah in the airport, he davened that Hashem help him protect his eyes.

Then a miracle occurred. He sat between two goyim, and both of their screens weren't working. They called over the steward, but he couldn't fix their sets either. His tefilos were answered. He was able to travel without sacrificing his kedushah.

The Gemara (Shabbos 22:) discusses the ner maaravi, the western lamp of the menorah, which miraculously remained lit for 24 hours, while the others only remained lit at night.

The menorah had seven lamps. Which of the seven is "the western lamp, ner maaravi"?

Rashi (Shabbos 22:) explains that it is the second lamp. The menorah stood from east to west. The first lamp is considered eastern, and the next one is western, because it is the first one leading towards the west.

We would think that the furthest west lamp is the ner maaravi, but Rashi tells us that the second lamp is western.

This teaches us that every step in the right direction is precious. Chazal tell us that the Shechinah is in the west. In particular, in the Beis HaMikdash, the Kodosh Kadoshim was on the western side. But one doesn't have to be all the way in the west to be precious to Hashem. Even if one is more to the eastern side but takes one step towards the west, he is special to Hashem.

This can be the reason a miracle happened with this lamp, as the Gemara tells us that the purpose of the miracle was to tell us that the Shechinah resides with Bnei Yisrael. The miracle of this lamp shows us that if you take even one step towards holiness, that is precious to Hashem.

Reb Boruch Weinberg and my father zt'l lived in B'nei Brak. They both traveled together to and from Tel Aviv every day; Reb Baruch ran a candy factory in Tel Aviv, and my father was a magid shiur in his father's yeshiva.

They would both travel by bus, but my father was distraught with this arrangement because, as can be expected, not all women on this bus dressed modestly. So one day, he told Reb Boruch that he would no longer travel by bus. "I will go by taxi." I heard this from Reb Boruch Weinberg, and this was mesirus nefesh on my father's part because taking the bus was much more affordable. But this was his way; he was extremely cautious with his eyes.

The Gemara (Kidushin 7) teaches, "When one says this leg [of the animal] should become a korban, the entire animal becomes a korban." The sanctity spreads from that one limb to the rest of the animal's body. The Rebbe of Radzamin taught that this also occurs when one sanctifies one limb of his body. For example, when one is careful with what he sees. He purified one limb, but the purity extends to his entire essence and being.

May we merit to utilize the days of Shovavim properly to become pure before Hashem.

### Rebbe Moshe Lelover

Before Reb Moshe of Lelov zt'l (*niftar* 13th of Teves, 5611) got engaged, his father, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l, and his future father-in-law, the Yid HaKodesh of Peshischa zt'l, discussed the conditions for the marriage. They agreed on all points, except that Rebbe Dovid of Lelov wanted the *kiddushin* ring to be silver, and the Yid HaKadosh insisted that the ring be gold. They never really resolved this matter, but since they agreed on all the other points, the *shidduch* was finalized.

At the chuppah, the Yid Hakadosh saw the *chasan* holding a silver ring and

proclaimed, "Without a gold ring, there won't be a *chasunah*." A commotion arose. The wedding guests stood by, waiting for a solution.

One simple person realized this was his opportunity to do a great mitzvah. He asked his wife if she was willing to part with her gold ring. She agreed. They sold it to the *chasan*, and the *chasunah* went on.

The couple who sold the gold ring was childless for many years. That year, they had a son. Chassidim say that Rebbe Dovid of Lelov and the Yid HaKodesh deliberately debated over the ring to grant this couple the opportunity to do a great mitzvah and merit a salvation.

Toward the end of his life, Rebbe Moshe decided to travel to Eretz Yisrael because he saw, with his ruach hakodesh, that if he davened at the Kosel HaMaravi, he could bring Moshiach.

Before he began his journey, he went to *gezeigen* (take leave) from several tzaddikim. When he came to Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zy'a, the Ruzhiner said, "Wait for me, and I will go with you."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover pointed to his white beard, implying that he was getting older and couldn't wait any longer.<sup>9</sup>

Rebbe Moshe planned to travel to Eretz Yisrael with a minyan of his followers, and he saved up money to pay for the voyage. But whenever he had enough money, he gave it away to some important *tzedakah*. Then he would start saving up money for the trip once again.

Once, a wealthy, childless woman came to Rebbe Moshe of Lelov and asked for a *brachah* for children. Rebbe Moshe told her that she would have a child if she gave him

money (the amount he needed for the trip). She was prepared to provide the money, but Rebbe Moshe Lelover told her that she must first ask permission from her husband.

Her husband was a chassid of "The Gitte Yid" of Neistadt, and he asked the Gitte Yid whether he should give the money. His Rebbe replied, "If Rebbe Moshe guarantees a child, you can rely on that. However, before you give the money, ask Rebbe Moshe Lelover to guarantee that the child will live long because often, a child born through a miracle doesn't live long."

When the parents placed that condition before Rebbe Moshe of Lelov, he replied, "The years of your child's life will be as many as the days I live in Eretz Yisrael."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover lived in Eretz Yisrael for 74 days, and that child lived for 74 years.

When Rebbe Moshe Lelover was on the boat, he kept saying, *יום לשנה יום לשנה*, "a day for a year," and it is explained that he was saying he would live in Eretz Yisrael for 74 days, as he was 74 years old.

During his voyage to Eretz Yisrael, the ship sprung a hole and started taking on water. Rebbe Moshe placed a cloth over the hole, miraculously stopping the influx of water. (This cloth is now used as a *deck tichel* [veil] for the *kallahs* of Rebbe Moshe's descendants.)

During the trip, the ship docked at a deserted island. Everyone got off the boat, including Rebbe Moshe Lelover and his *gabai*. Eventually, the sailors blew their horns to call everyone back aboard. Everyone returned except the Rebbe's *gabai*. The ship departed, and his *gabai* was left behind! The following Friday night, before saying Kiddush, Rebbe Moshe announced, "I will not make Kiddush until the *gabai* arrives."

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9. The Rebbe of Ruzhin said that if the Yidden in Poland were wise, they wouldn't permit Rebbe Moshe of Lelov to leave them. He found this hinted at in the Mishnah *Shabbos*, אין פולין לאור הניר, "the Polish Yidden aren't wise. They had one brilliant light, and they let him leave."

Immediately they heard a loud sound (boom), and the *gabai* arrived.

The *gabai* told them, "I was captured by the *other side* (*sheidim*/demons). I heard them say, 'The old tzaddik is saying that he won't make Kiddush until his *gabai* comes, but he can't do anything. The *gabai* is with us.' But their leader announced, 'This isn't a joke. If the old tzaddik said that he isn't making Kiddush until the *gabai* comes, we must obey,' and they returned me here."<sup>10</sup>

The ship docked in northern Eretz Yisrael, and Rebbe Moshe Lelover visited the holy tzaddikim living in Tzfas and Teveria, and went to Miron, and other locations where holy tzaddikim are buried. He explained that after he gets to Yerushalayim, he will never leave her.

When he finally arrived in the Old City of Yerushalayim, he became ill. His children debated whether they should bring him to

the Kosel HaMaaravi in this condition. Finally, they decided to take him since his primary goal for coming to Eretz Yisrael was to go to the Kosel and bring Moshiach.

On the way to the Kosel, a group of Arabs began throwing rocks at them, making it impossible to get to the Kosel. Shortly afterwards he was *niftar*. Unfortunately, he never did get to the Kosel....

He said that his *yahrtzeit* is *mesugal* for rain, and it is unnecessary to proclaim a fast day for rain before his *yahrtzeit* passes. Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim, kept this counsel. He wouldn't decree a fast day for rain until the 13th of Teves passed.

Rebbe Moshe also said that whoever does something in honor of his *yahrtzeit* (primarily, to give food to Yidden, such as cake and *lechayim* in beis medresh) will have a salvation with whatever he needs.<sup>11</sup>

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**10.** This remarkable story has a sequel: Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zy'a* (a descendent of Rebbe Moshe Lelover) lived in Germany before World War II. It was dangerous for a Yid to be seen outdoors during those times. Nevertheless, on Friday afternoon, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai left his house to use the *mikvah* because Rebbe Dovid of Lelov taught that a Yid must have *mesirus nefesh* to go to *mikvah*. He passed a group of Germans. They grabbed him and began to beat him. Just then, a chassid, Reb Avraham Frankel *z'l*, passed by. Reb Avraham Frankel was a strong man, and without any trouble he saved Reb Moshe Mordechai. Soon the police arrived and arrested Reb Avraham Frankel!

Later that night, before making Kiddush, Reb Moshe Mordechai was telling the story that happened to his grandfather, Rebbe Moshe of Lelov. When Reb Moshe Mordechai completed telling the story, Reb Avraham Frankel walked in. (When one repeats a miracle that occurred, this causes the miracle to happen again.)

Rebbe Avraham Frankel said that in the police headquarters, an interrogator asked him why he was arrested. Reb Avraham replied that he didn't commit any crime. He only protected a Yid who was harassed and beaten by a gang. The interrogator believed him and set him free. It was miraculous!

**11.** The Gemara (*Taanis* 25.) says, דגמירי דמיהב יהבי מישקל לא שקלי, "We have a tradition that [Heaven] gives, it doesn't take away."

When someone told Rebbe Moshe Lelover that sometimes he earns *parnassah* but then he loses it, he advised him to learn Gemara, because דגמירי, when one studies גמרא then יהבי מישקל לא שקלי, heaven gives him *parnassah*, and doesn't take it away.