

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Shoftim*



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Table of Contents

*Torah Wellsprings - Shoftim*

A Yid is Never Alone.....	4
Bitachon .....	5
Bitachon in Spirituality .....	7
Chinuch.....	9
Humility.....	11
Yiras Shamayim.....	13
<i>Temimus</i> .....	14
Elul.....	15

# Torah Wellsprings - Shoftim

## A Yid is Never Alone

It states (Avos 3:4) **וְהַמְהִלָּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ יְחִידִי... הָרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ**, "If a person is going on a road alone... he is guilty with his life". The Ra'v Bartenura explains that there are thieves and other dangers on the road. If one walks on the road by himself, and he isn't thinking Torah (which would protect him), and then he is killed by thieves, r'l, he is at fault for not being more cautious. The Toldos Aharon Rebbe zt'l gave another explanation for this Mishnah. **וְהַמְהִלָּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ יְחִידִי...** which means that if a Yid thinks he is alone, and he thinks Hashem isn't with him, **הָרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ**, he is guilty with his life. This is because a Yid must always know that Hashem is with him. If he thinks no one is with him, he is **חַיִּיב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ**, because Hashem is always with a Yid. (Divrei Emunah, Likutim 30)

It states in this week's parashah (20:1), **כִּי תֵצֵא לְמִלְחָמָה עַל אוֹיְבְךָ וּרְאִיתָ סוּס וּרְכָב עִם רַב מִמֶּךָ לֹא תִירָא**, "When you go out to war against your enemy and see horses, chariots, a nation larger than yours, don't be afraid of them, because Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of Mitzrayim, is with you." This pasuk reminds us that Hashem is always with us. With this level of emunah, we aren't afraid.

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:32) writes that although the Torah discusses wars, the lesson applies to all matters that people fear. He writes, "The Torah is telling us that if one sees trouble approaching, his heart should rely on Hashem's salvation." For all worries, and all types of life's struggles, the Torah tells us, **לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם... אֵל יָדְךָ לְבִבְכֶם... כִּי ה' אִלֵּיכֶם עִמָּכֶם**, "Don't be afraid... Don't be fainthearted because Hashem, your G-d, is with you."<sup>1</sup>

Megilas Eichah begins with the words **אֵיכָה יָשְׁבָה בְּדָד**, "Alas – she sat in solitude." We can explain that all the tzaros bemoaned in Eichah begin when one thinks he is alone, and he forgets that Hashem is always with him.

It is the nature of a poor person to feel proud when he has a wealthy relative. When he speaks to his friends, he loves speaking about this wealthy connection. It makes him feel important. But a wealthy man isn't proud of his poor relative, and he won't generally speak about him. However, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is different. He expresses pride in being close to us. This is written in Yalkut Shimoni (תתכ"ה): "In this world... the poor are proud when they are related to the wealthy, but the wealthy aren't proud that they are related to the poor. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu is proud to be close to the Jewish nation. As it states (Devarim 4:7) **כִּי מִי גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ אֱלֹהִים קְרִיבִים אֵלָיו**, "For which is a great nation that has a god that is close to it, as is Hashem, our G-d, whenever we call to Him?" It doesn't state **אֲשֶׁר קְרִיב לְאֱלֹהִים**, 'For which is a great nation who is close to Hashem...', rather it states that Hashem is close (קְרִיב) to us. Hashem makes us the most important."

The Rebbe of Toldos Aharon zt'l was talking to a chasan before his chasunah, and said, "Remember this for the rest of your life: You should have a location, or a room, in your home where you go when you want to pray. Go there when you want to request something from Hashem. Speak to Him from the depths of your heart. Speak to Him **בְּלִשׁוֹן נֹכַח** (with emunah that Hashem is directly before you). Say, 'My Father, only You can save me.

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1. In reference to war, it states **עִם רַב מִמֶּךָ**, and Rashi writes, "In your eyes, they are a large nation, but in my eyes, they aren't a large nation. **סוּס וּרְכָב**, I see them as though they have only one horse and rider." Our problems and difficulties are enormous and unsolvable in our eyes, but in Hashem's eyes, they are easy and simple to resolve.

Please help me.<sup>1</sup> Do this and you will see wonders." (Zechor l'Avraham). The explanation is that a Yid is never alone. He can be in the privacy of his home, and he can turn to speak with Hashem, and Hashem will answer the tefillos.<sup>2</sup>

### Bitachon

It states (Tehillim 13:6) וְאֲנִי בְּחֶסֶדְךָ בְּטַחְתִּי יְיָ לִבִּי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ, "I have *bitachon* in Your kindness. My heart rejoices in Your salvation." With these words, Dovid HaMelech expresses that he is happy with the salvation, even before the salvation comes. He has *bitachon* and is certain that Hashem will help him, so he can rejoice immediately.

We can compare it to when a poor person receives a check for \$100,000 from a wealthy person. He is happy right now because he knows that all his debts will be covered. Upon seeing his ecstasy, someone asks him, "Why are you happy now? You don't have the money yet. All you have is a check!"

The poor man explains that he has the check in his hands, and he is certain that he will soon have this money. He doesn't suppose the check will bounce.

Similarly, and endlessly more so, a person can be sure of Hashem's salvation. Even before the salvation comes, he trusts in Hashem, and he rejoices in the upcoming yeshuah.<sup>3</sup>

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2. We received the following letter from Reb Boruch Levine Shlita from Golders Green, London. Recently, he was invited to a chasunah, and the invitation included a note inviting him to the seudas mitzvah of the chasunah. (Generally, in London, only relatives and very close friends are invited to the meal. Others come to the dancing.) Reb Boruch was surprised that he was invited to the seudah because he wasn't particularly close to the baal simchah. But he figured that since he was invited to the meal, he would attend, although it wasn't exactly easy for him to do so.

He was lonely at the meal because he didn't know the people around him, and he was silently wondering to himself what he was doing there. When the dancing began, Reb Boruch was ready to leave. But then he saw something that shook him up. The baal simchah fell, and his eyeglasses fell to the ground and shattered into many pieces. The baal simchah couldn't see without those glasses because the number of his lenses was #10, which is very high. (In some countries, it is called #1000). He couldn't see anything without his eyeglasses.

Reb Boruch Levine owns an optical store. He immediately remembered that in his car, he had eyeglasses, #10, which he had prepared for a customer. He ran to his car, got the eyeglasses, and gave them to the baal simchah. This saved the day, and the chasunah continued as planned.

Sometime after the chasunah, the baal simchah met with Reb Boruch and thanked him for saving the simchah with the eyeglasses. Reb Boruch took the opportunity to ask him why he invited him to the meal. The baal simchah replied, "Actually, I don't know why I invited you. It was probably a mistake."

See the wondrous hashgachah pratis. Weeks before the chasunah, an invitation was sent to someone who has an optical store. The invitation was sent by accident, and he "happened" to have the correct type of eyeglasses in his car, so the baal simchah would have eyeglasses at the chasunah and be able to see and celebrate his child's chasunah! Similarly, we must be aware of the many miracles that Hashem performs for us. Recognize that you are never alone. Hashem is constantly with us, performing miracles and wonders for us.

3. The *Sefer Ha'Ikrim* teaches: Just as we are confident that the sun will shine tomorrow morning, that is the degree of certainty we must have that Hashem will help us.

Once, in the beis medresh of the Brisker Rav in the city of Brisk, the *yungerleit* were animatedly discussing something that had occurred the previous night in their city. The Brisker Rav zt'l asked them what they were discussing. They told him about the *chillul Hashem* and the disgrace of Torah that took place in their city. Non-religious Jews in Brisk conducted a play, acting out a Jewish war. A large number of soldiers

The Rebbe of Toldos Aharon zt'l was once on a vacation (either in Switzerland or in Teveria) and was talking about the people who buy insurance (which people call בטוח in Eretz Yisrael). He discussed life insurance, health insurance, fire insurance, and so on. He said, "I understand these people who buy insurance. They are afraid that something terrible might occur, and they want to be insured..." He spoke about this for several minutes, and then the Rebbe said, "I also have insurance (ביטוח)." The people listening were surprised to hear that, and they wanted to hear which company he uses and what type of insurance he has. He said, "My insurance is *ני על רחמך*, 'We trust in Your immense compassion.' I sleep well, I have no worries, because I know that I have insurance. My insurance is Hashem's compassion." (Written in Zechor l'Avraham, quoting from one of the students).

In *Yedid Nefesh* we say, *אז תתחזק ותתרפא*, "Then we will be strong and healed." We can explain that *תתחזק* means that if we are strong with *bitachon* in Hashem, *תתרפא*, we will be healed, and we will receive salvations (Birkas Avraham, letter 65, quoting his father, the Divrei Shmuel).

My father-in-law, the Zutchke Rebbe zt'l, teaches (Yeshayah 1:1) *חֲזֹן יִשְׁעֶהוּ בְּן אָמוֹן*, which can be translated, *חֲזֹן יִשְׁעֶהוּ*, if you want to see your *ישועה*, salvation, *בְּן אָמוֹן*, strengthen yourself with *bitachon*.

The Baal Shem Tov zy'a teaches that when Hashem sends *yesurim* to a person, Hashem first causes the person to become sad. (ד"ה כל מדוי מצרים, Ekev, (Degel Machaneh Efraim, Ekev).

Similarly, the Toldos Yaakov Yosef (Mishpatim ד"ה ואלה writes, "I heard from my teacher, the Baal Shem Tov, that when Heaven wants to punish someone who deserves punishment, first, their level of *bitachon* is taken away. Therefore, a person should daven that he be strong with *bitachon*."

The Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l (Shefa Chaim, Chumash Rashi, Bishalach, תשנ"ב) says, "When a person is in a great *tzarah*, and he understands that according to the rules of nature, no person, and no counsel can help him, only Hashem, alone... that is when he will certainly receive his salvation. [This is because he knows that only Hashem can help him, so he places his trust entirely in Hashem.] All he must do is wait silently, with *emunah*. His *emunah* will help him more than *tefillos*. But as long as a person thinks that the *tzarah* isn't so great, and that he can be saved with his own strength, then he won't receive this extent of *Hashgachah* from above, and he won't have salvation. [This is because he isn't entirely reliant on Hashem]... Chazal say קשין מזונותיו של אדם, *בקרעת ים סוף*, a person's *parnassah* is as difficult as *kriyas yam Suf*. This means that when one thinks *מזונותיו של אדם*, "the food of man", is *של אדם*, up to the work of man, it

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stood at attention, and the general announced, "Whoever built a new house...should return home", and some of the soldiers left. (See this week's parashah, 20:5, which discusses this procedure.)

Then the general announced, "Whoever planted a new vineyard should return home," and a few more soldiers left.

"Whoever is newly married should return home," and a few more soldiers left.

Then the general said, "Whoever is afraid of war should go home," and everyone ran away. Only two, very old, hunchbacked soldiers remained, and they were honoring each other to take the "first shot."

The people in the beis medresh were upset that the irreligious Jews were making fun of the Torah, because, as we wrote, they were mocking the procedure of war stated in the Torah.

The Brisker Rav told them, "Actually, everything they acted out was correct. It was exactly so, only they left out the main part. Those two elderly Yidden won the war!" When we fight a war with Hashem's help, anything is possible.

will be קשין בקריעת ים סוף, difficult for him to attain parnassah like the miracle of Kriyas Yam Suf. As Rebbe Elimelech teaches, lacking *bitachon* prevents parnassah. But if a person believes that parnassah is from Hashem, all he must do is a small hishtadlus, and he will receive parnassah easily. He won't need to work hard to attain it.<sup>4</sup>

"I heard my father zy'a once say, 'May Hashem help me that I should be able to bestow on people parnassah as easily as I can be פוקד עקרות, to give blessings and salvations for the barren to bear children.' I tell the truth; I never understood my father's holy intention. פוקד עקרות, for the barren to bear children, requires a miracle beyond nature. How could this miracle be easier for him to perform than to bestow parnassah to people? But based upon the above, it is understood. When one is barren, he doesn't rely on any doctor or on any person. He knows with certainty and without doubt that there is no one upon whom he can rely other than Hashem alone. Therefore, he prays a lot, and he says chapters of Tehillim with tears, before the One who can help him bear children. It is easier to bring such a person salvation. However, if he trusts even a little bit in doctors, it won't be easy to bring him salvation.

"However, when it comes to parnassah, a person works many hours, inside the house and outside in the field. He trusts in his abilities and wisdom, and he thinks that if he works a few more hours, he will have more parnassah. To such a person, it is very hard to give a brachah and a salvation for parnassah. For this person, parnassah is as hard to attain as kriyas Yam Suf, and even harder than that."

## Bitachon in Spirituality

It states (20:1), "כי תצא למלחמה על אויבך, 'When you go out to war against your enemy.' Who is this enemy? The Or HaChaim writes, 'The *pasuk* alludes to the war against the *yetzer hara*, and the *pasuk* tells us not to be afraid, although עם רב ממך, the *yetzer hara* is stronger than us."

How is the *yetzer hara* stronger than us?

The Or HaChaim explains, "There are two aspects that make this war so difficult: One is that man isn't trained for warfare, while the *yetzer hara* is a trained warrior. And the second is that the human body desires everything the *yetzer hara* offers: to steal, to be arrogant, to eat everything one desires, etc. Furthermore, when a person transgresses the Torah many times, the *yetzer hara* becomes even stronger. Hashem tells us, 'כי תצא למלחמה וראית בעיניי שכלך סוס ורכב, 'When you go out to war, and in your mind's eye you see a horse and chariot.' The horse represents the *yetzer hara*, who is trained in warfare, unlike man, who isn't. רכב, chariot, represents האדם, man's makeup because he naturally desires those things that the *yetzer hara* offers. Additionally, עם רב the *yetzer hara*'s strength has increased, ממך, because of your many sins. Nevertheless, Hashem comforts us and says, לא תירא מהם, don't be afraid, כי ה' אלקיך עמך, Hashem is with you.

"It is true that if you were to fight this battle with your own strength, you would lose the war. But since Hashem is with you, and His strength is great, He will save you. Because when a person desires to be pure, Hashem accepts him with his right hand, and Hashem weakens the strength of the *yetzer hara*. המעלך מארץ מצרים... Yetzias Mitzrayim is your proof because just as Hashem saved

4. At the Yam Suf, before the sea split, the nation sought solutions, what to do to get rid of their pursuers, the Mitzrim. At that time, they trusted in their abilities. But then Nachshon ben Aminodov jumped into the sea, and the sea reached his neck, and he knew that only Hashem could save him. When the bitachon was completely in Hashem, that is the moment they were saved.

you from Mitzrayim, He will help you win the war against the *yetzer hara*.<sup>15</sup>

needs, and we will experience miracles and salvations.

These are very encouraging thoughts. We can't win against the *yetzer hara* on our own, but with Hashem's help, we can overcome the *yetzer hara*. Therefore, we should have *bitachon*, also for our spiritual

As the Yismach Yisrael (*Vayishlach* 5) writes, "Even when, according to man's perception, there is no cure to the ills of his soul, nonetheless, he should believe and trust in Hashem's divine kindness and the Creator's endless greatness. With His compassion,

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5. A *yungerman* from Ashdod told me the following story. One night, he was visiting his parents in Bnei Brak, and it was well after eleven o'clock when he got into his car to drive back home. He immediately realized that his cellphone wasn't with him. "It is certainly somewhere in my parents' home, because I used my phone there tonight." He returned to his parents' home, but after searching for his phone for quite some time, he couldn't find it.

It was already very late at night, so he left, asking his parents to contact him when they found the phone. When he sat down in his car, the telephone fell out of his pocket! It was with him all along, only he didn't realize it.

As he began the drive home, he noticed a *bachur* standing at the bus stop. He stopped and asked, "Which bus are you waiting for?" He knew that few buses were running at that late hour.

"I live in Ashdod, and the last bus just left."

"Come with me. I'll take you there."

During the ride, the *bachur* told his story, "Until recently, I was addicted to the iPhone. My parents hired a professional *yungerman* from Bnei Brak to help me overcome my addiction. I go to him once a week. He helped me; I'm just about cured. Last week, I threw away my iPhone, and I've been clean ever since.

"I was with my mentor tonight, too. He cheered my success and encouraged me to keep it up. I boarded the last bus to Ashdod, and I saw that my friends were on the bus too. They all have iPhones. I knew that if I were together with them, I'd be drawn to look at their devices. So I immediately turned around and got off at the next stop. My friends were astounded; they didn't understand what happened to me.

"You arrived just as I got off the bus, and I was contemplating where to go."

In retrospect, we understand why this *yungerman* couldn't find his phone. It was so he could help this *bachur* get home.

We learn from this story that Hashem helps those who seek to do teshuvah. He arranges everything for them, from getting the help they need to a ride home, to ease their path of teshuvah.

As we wrote from the Or HaChaim, the war against the *yetzer hara* is very difficult to win because (a) the *yetzer hara* is trained in warfare, while you aren't. (b) The *yetzer hara* sells what you desire. (c) The sins of your past make it even harder for you to loosen the *yetzer hara's* grip. All these factors apply to the lure of the internet. (a) "The *yetzer hara* is trained in warfare, while you aren't." Genius minds create and control the popular websites. They are skilled and advanced in their abilities to keep people glued to the internet for hours on end. The average person doesn't possess the talent and skill that these software engineers possess and has never learned strategies on how to avoid addiction. How can he expect to outsmart the system and remain protected from the negative aspects of the internet? (b) The *yetzer hara* and the internet are selling items that the human body desires. (c) "Your past sins make it hard for you to abandon the *yetzer hara's* grasp. This is particularly true regarding technology. The more one becomes accustomed to it, the harder it is to leave it. But when one desires to detach himself from the bad and to overcome the *yetzer hara*, and he trusts in Hashem, he will succeed.

Hashem will help even me – the lowest person of all."<sup>6</sup>

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Mishlei* 3:6) states the benefits that are earned from *bitachon*. He writes, "In addition to the reward you will receive for your *bitachon* in the next world, which is very great, you will succeed in everything you do."<sup>7</sup>

### Chinuch

The Torah tells us that Hashem loves Avraham Avinu, and the reason is that he teaches his children to go in Hashem's ways. As it states (*Bereishis* 18:19) *כִּי יִדְעֵתִי לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְנֶה אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָכַי לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט*, "For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him

that they keep the way of Hashem, doing *tzedakah* and *mishpat*."

This is what Hashem wants from every parent: to teach their children to follow the ways of the Torah.

The Ramban (*Devarim* 6:7) writes *pesukim* in the Torah that show how Hashem wants the religion to be passed down from parent to child, throughout all generations. The Ramban writes, "The Torah commands us (*Shemos* 31:17) *בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִיא לְעוֹלָם*, 'Between Me and Bnei Yisrael, it is a sign forever...' And it states (*Bereishis* 17:10) *וְאֵת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין זֶרַעְךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ*, 'This is my bris which you shall keep between Me and you and your offspring after you...' But how will our children know the mitzvos if we don't teach them? This is the reason we have

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6. Someone said to Reb Yisrael Salanter *zy'a*, "I don't think I'll ever do *teshuvah*. I'm set in my ways, and I can't change."

Reb Yisrael Salanter rebuked him, "Chazal tell us that when we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, the Satan becomes frightened. He fears that our *teshuvah* heralds the shofar of Moshiach. So, you see, even the Satan believes in your ability to do *teshuvah*. Why don't you?"

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* (this week's *parashah*) explains that seeds don't grow in gold or silver, only from the earth. This serves to remind us that when a person is at a low level, down in the dumps, he can grow and flourish. This is hinted at in this week's *parashah* (20:19), *כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה*, comparing humans to trees planted in the ground. You are in the ground, but you can rise from those low levels and reach the highest levels.

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

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

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

"I was devastated. It seemed it would take many years before I demolished the large, sturdy building. My only tool was a small hammer.

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

This story reminds us that sometimes a deed can seem very difficult, but if you set yourself to doing it, Hashem will help you. Therefore, don't be afraid if the path of *teshuvah* seems daunting. Do what you can, and with Hashem's help, you will succeed.

a mitzvah (Devarim 6:7) ושננתם לבניך, 'you shall teach them thoroughly to your children,' the mitzvah to teach Torah to our children."

Someone asked the Satmar Rav zt'l regarding the people who were killed during the Holocaust, whether they can be considered as being killed *al kidush Hashem*. The Satmar Rebbe replied that it is certainly *al kidush Hashem*. He said, "Those who were killed in the Holocaust are kedoshim, but those who survived the Holocaust and raised a family to serve Hashem are *Kodesh Kadoshim*."

One aspect of chinuch is to guard one's children from negative influences. Included in this is knowing who the child's friends are, who he plays with. These are important questions to ask and find out, because a friend is a strong influence.

In parashas Yisro, we read that Yisro came to the desert together with his daughter Tzipora (Moshe's wife) and with Moshe's children, Gershom and Eliezer. They came to join the Jewish nation in the desert. There is an opinion that says that Yisro came to the desert only *after* matan Torah. According to this view, we wonder why Moshe Rabbeinu didn't call his children to come earlier, so they could be present when the Torah was given?

Reb Meir Tzvibel answers that Moshe Rabbeinu didn't want his children to be at Matan Torah without supervision. When he would be on the mountain, receiving the Torah from Hashem, who would watch over them? His children would mingle with the crowd, but with whom? Better for his children to remain in Midyan with his wife Tzipora watching over them, than to be at *matan Torah*, on their own.

What greater merit could there be than to be present at Matan Torah?! Chazal tell us that at this time, the nation became entirely

pure from their tumah, זהומותן. Nevertheless, Moshe felt it wasn't worthwhile, if that meant that his children wouldn't be supervised. *Kal v'chomer* that every parent should seek to know where their children are, with whom they play, etc., because *chinuch habanim* is so essential.

It states (Devarim 4:10) וְאֵת בְּנֵיהֶם יְלַמְּדוּ "They shall teach their children," and afterwards, the next pasuk states, וְהָהָר בָּעֵר בָּאֵשׁ עַד לֵב הַשָּׁמַיִם, "the mountain was burning with fire up to the heart of heaven." This tells us that the way to educate children is when the parent (or the teacher) has a fire in his heart, burning עַד לֵב הַשָּׁמַיִם, up to the heart of heaven.

It states (Devarim 4:9) רַק הִשְׁמָר לְךָ וְשָׁמֹר נְפִשְׁךָ מְאֹד פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וּפְנֵי יָסוּרוֹ מִלִּבְּךָ כִּלְיֵי יָמֶיךָ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וּפְנֵי יָסוּרוֹ מִלִּבְּךָ כִּלְיֵי יָמֶיךָ, "Only be aware for yourself, and greatly be aware for your soul, lest you forget the things your eyes have beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children."

The Tiferes Shlomo asks, if one forgot, how can he teach his children? The pasuk is referring to those who don't daven with kavanah; they just say the words, and they are lax with their avodas Hashem, but they rebuke their children and tell them to go on the right path. How can a parent give mussar if he isn't cautious himself? This is what the pasuk is referring to when it states, וּפְנֵי יָסוּרוֹ מִלִּבְּךָ כִּלְיֵי יָמֶיךָ... וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וּלְבְנֵי בְנֶיךָ. If the parents are lax, how can they teach their children?

Rather the solution is as it states in the next pasuk, וְלִמְדוּן לִירְאָה אֶתִּי כָּל הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם, "so that they shall learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the earth, and they shall teach their children." First, the parents have to fear Hashem, and then they will be able to teach and influence their children.<sup>8</sup>

8. The Imrei Emes hired Reb Shraga Feivel Mandel to teach his son Torah (this son later became known as the Pnei Menachem zt'l of Gur). The Imrei Emes asked Reb Shraga Feivel also to teach his son mussar sefarim.

The Imrei Emes replied, "Mesilas means a path and Orchos means a path. The difference is that Mesilas is one path, while Orchos are many paths (because it is written in plural). Children need to know that there are many paths to each destination, and they shouldn't look down on someone who has a different path in avodas Hashem.

The chasid who saw this figured that the Rebbe was reminding himself of the war years, when all of his family was killed hy'd. The Beis Yisrael recognized that a chasid was watching him, so he turned to him and told him his intention. When a person walks around with his nose in the air (feeling gaavah in his heart) and he feels **אני מלאה הלכתי**, that he has everything, then **וריקם השיבני ה'**, Hashem has him return empty, and he learns that he has nothing.

This means that when a person is arrogant, Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes his hashgachah pratis away from him, r'l, and then he will certainly have a downfall. Because there is a rule: When a person feels that he can take care of himself, and he doesn't need Hashem's help, Hashem says, "O.K. So, you think you can manage on your own? Let's see what you can do without My help." Obviously, this will result in problems and tzaros. When that occurs, he will become humble. He will raise his eyes to heaven to save him. When he does so, he will now be worthy of Hashem's hashgachah pratis and salvations.

The Arizal says that when one says **עוֹזר דלִים**, "Hashem helps the poor", before Shemoneh Esrei, he should consider himself to be poor, and in this state of mind, he stands to daven Shemonah Esrei (quoted by the Chida, Machzik Brachah 98:2).

It states (Eichah 2:19) **שִׁפְךָ בַּמַּיִם לִבְךָ נִכַּח פָּנֵי ה'**, "Pour out your heart like water in the presence of Hashem."

Tefillah is compared to pouring water (and not wine or any other liquid) because water is compared to humility, as Chazal (Taanis 7a) say, "Just like water leaves a high place and goes to low places..." This means that one should daven with humility.

The Beis Aharon (Chanukah p.44) writes, "When a person davens amidst yesurim and poverty, and he knows in his heart that he doesn't have any merits, and he asks from Hashem **מִתְנַת חַסֵּד**, which means he requests that his tefillos be answered even if he

doesn't deserve it, as Dovid HaMelech said (Tehillim 25:16), **כִּי יָחִיד וְעָנִי אָנִי**, 'for I am alone and afflicted,' then Hashem will answer him, every time we turn to Him."

The Imrei Yosef zt'l (Va'eschanan) writes that when a person requests from Hashem, and he wants to be answered due to his merits, his deeds will be checked, and he might be found unworthy. But when one asks for a **מִתְנַת חַסֵּד**, to be granted help, even when he doesn't deserve it, his tefillos will be answered. The person didn't ask to be answered because of his good deeds, so even if he doesn't have good deeds, it won't prevent his tefillos from being answered.

The Navi tells us that Eli HaKohen saw Chanah davening, and didn't hear her voice, so he figured that she was drunk, as it states (Shmuel 1, 1:13) **וַחֲנָה הָיָא מְדַבֶּרֶת עַל לִבָּהּ כִּי רַק שִׁפְתֶיהָ נִעוּת וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא יִשְׁמָע וַיַּחֲשֹׁבָה עָלֶיהָ לְשֹׁכְרָה**, "Chanah was speaking to her heart – only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard – so Eli thought she was drunk."

Chanah explained to him that she was davening and that she was brokenhearted. Eli replied (ibid. pasuk 17) **וַיַּעַן עָלַי וַיֹּאמֶר לִי לְשָׁלוֹם וַיֹּאמְרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְּנוּ אֶת שְׁלֹתְךָ אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתָּ מֵעַמּוֹ**, "Eli then answered and said, 'Go in peace. The G-d of Yisrael will grant the request you have made of Him.'" The Imrei Emes asked his father, the Sfas Emes, how Eli changed his mind so quickly. At first, he thought that she was drunk and that she wasn't davening at all, and afterwards, he was certain that her tefillos were answered!

The Sfas Emes zt'l told him that the students of the Rebbe Reb Bunim of Pshischa zy'a asked this question. They explained that Eli was able to see what was happening in heaven, and he didn't see her tefillos. This surprised him, because a krechtz of a Yid goes straight up before Hashem's throne. He concluded that she wasn't davening sincerely. He thought that she was pretending to pray, but it wasn't so. This was the reason Eli suspected that she was drunk. After Chanah explained that she was brokenhearted, he understood that she was praying sincerely.

So why didn't he see her tefillos? He understood that he didn't see her tefillos in heaven because they were already answered! Therefore, he told her that she need not worry, her tefillos were answered.

This is because there is nothing more potent than a tefillah said from the depths of the heart.

It states (Devarim 7:7) **לֹא מִרְבָּבָם מִכָּל הָעַמִּים הָשֵׁק ה'** "Not because you are more numerous than all the peoples did Hashem desire you and choose you. **כִּי אַתֶּם הַמְעַט מִכָּל הָעַמִּים**, for you are the fewest of all the nations."

Rashi writes that **כִּי אַתֶּם הַמְעַט מִכָּל הָעַמִּים**, is the reason Hashem desires us. Rashi writes, "Since you don't make yourself proud when I give My kindness to you, this is the reason I love you. **כִּי אַתֶּם הַמְעַט**, you make yourself small. Like Avraham said (Bereishis 18:27) **וְאֵנִי** and Moshe and Aharon said (Shemos 16:8) **וְנַחֲנוּ מָה**, 'I am but dust and ash.' And Moshe and Aharon said (Shemos 16:8) **וְנַחֲנוּ מָה**, 'for what are we?'..."

A Jew is called a Yid. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l taught that this is because a yid (yud) is the smallest letter. All letters can be lengthened, and they remain that letter. But a large yud becomes either a vav (if it is long in height) or a reish or dalet (if it is long in the width). A Yid, a Jewish person, is similar, because he considers himself small, **כִּי אַתֶּם הַמְעַט**. He considers himself a tiny dot. He feels that he didn't accomplish much.

If he is proud of himself and arrogant, he is keviyachol leaving his Yid. Similar to the letter Yud, which loses its name when it becomes larger than it should be.

### Yiras Shamayim

There is another reason that the Jewish king should have his own sefer Torah from which he studies constantly. It is that he

should have yiras Shamayim. We repeat the pesukim: (17:18-20) **וְכָתַב לוֹ אֶת מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת... וְהִיָּתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיו לְמַעַן יִלְמַד לְיִרְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהָיו... לְשָׁמֹר אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת...** "He shall write for himself two copies of this Torah... it shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear Hashem, his G-d, to observe all the words of this Torah and these decrees..."

Reb A. Y. Adler Shlita relates (בעל כּוּפֵד, באיאן) tells, "When I was young, my family and I were invited to attend the seder of Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan zt'l. Because of my young age, it was my job to 'steal' the afikomen from the Rebbe. The truth is, that I was young and I didn't realize the significance of this moment. But the חכמת נשים, the wisdom of my mother, helped me. She called me over, and she asked me what I would ask the Rebbe when I return the afikomen. I didn't answer her because I didn't know yet what I wanted to ask. She said, 'Ask for yiras Shamayim.' When I returned the afikomen, the Rebbe asked me, 'What do you ask for?' and I answered, as my mother advised me, that I wanted yiras Shamayim. The Rebbe's face changed, and he appeared to feel uncomfortable. He said, 'Why do you ask for yiras Shamayim? Why don't you ask for a bike...' But my mother motioned to me from a distance, 'Don't be *mevater*! Ask only for yiras Shamayim.' The rebbe asked, 'Maybe a set of Shas is a good present?' But I persisted with my request, 'I ask solely for yiras Shamayim!' The Rebbe held his head in his hands for a few moments, and then he said, 'I can't give you a brachah for yiras Shamayim, but I can bless you that if you want to acquire yiras Shamayim, you should be able to acquire it easily.' (He wasn't able to give a gift of yiras Shamayim, because yiras Shamayim one has to toil on his own to attain. Only, one can request that it won't be too hard for him to attain it.)<sup>9</sup>

9. Similarly, Chazal (Bava Metzia 85a) state, תורה מחזרת על אכסניא שלה, "Torah returns to its lodging." The Gemara explains, "Whoever is a talmid chacham, and his son is a talmid chacham, and his grandson is a talmid chacham, the Torah will never cease from his children, forever."

The Gemara (Shabbos 31a) states, בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו נשאת ונתת באמונה קבעת עתים לתורה עסקת בפריה ורביה, צפית לישועה פלפלת בחכמה הבנת דבר "When a person is brought to judgment [in heaven], they ask him, 'Did you do honest business, did you set times to study Torah, did you perform the mitzvah of bearing children, did you wait for the salvation, did you study Torah in depth... And even if he kept all of the above, if he has yiras Hashem, he deserves reward. If not, he doesn't.' The Ohev Yisrael of Apta zt'l says that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Devarim 10:12) וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׁאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם לִירְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d..." This means that yiras Shamayim is paramount.

### Temimus

The Jewish king must constantly study from his sefer Torah, and one of the reasons is (17:20): וְלִבְלֹתִי סֹדֶר מִן הַמִּצְוָה יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל: "He shall write for himself two copies of this Torah... so that his heart does not turn from the commandment right or left..." This is an aspect of temimus. To accept the Torah as it is, without compromising, without making changes to the right or to the left, when he thinks it will be to his benefit.

This is obviously also the temimus that every Yid should have.

In the parashah of ketores we say that if there were honey in the ketores, the smell would be so wonderful that people would fall on their faces from the scent. למה אין מערבין, "So why don't we include honey in the ketores? מפני שהתורה אמרה כל שאור וכל דבש לא, It is because the Torah tells us that all

sourdough and all honey may not be added in the ketores."

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

It is because common sense tells us that honey should be used in the ketores. After all, it would enhance the ketores immensely. However, we do what the Torah says, even contrary to our common sense. ולמה אין מערבין, "We don't we put in honey, מפני שהתורה אמרה, because the Torah told us not to."

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

The Ruzhiner zt'l once told his chassidim the following story:

A Yid, who sold furs for his *parnassah*, had many furs in stock, but they weren't selling.

Once, early in the morning, someone knocked on his door and said he wanted to buy all the furs.

This was a dream opportunity. However, the Yid didn't daven Shacharis yet. According to halachah, one mustn't conduct business before Shacharis.<sup>10</sup>

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Reb Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l said that this applies to Torah. If there are three generations of talmidei chachamim, the Torah will remain in this family forever. However, when it comes to kedushah and taharah, each person must strive and work to attain them. It isn't passed down as an inheritance.

Also, even if one's parents didn't have high madreigos of kedushah and taharah, the children can achieve it, because *madreigos* in kedushah and taharah depend on each individual's *avodah*.

10. As it states (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 89:3), "One is forbidden to work until he davens Shemonah Esrei."

"Come back in an hour," he said, "and I'll sell them to you for a good price."

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

His *parnassah* was tight, but halachah comes first. So, despite the *yetzer hara's* pleas, he chose to do Hashem's will.

Not wanting to explain to the goy that he doesn't do business before Shacharis, he quoted the goy an exorbitant price for the furs. He figured that the goy would surely refuse to pay so much and that he would leave. But the goy replied that he is prepared to pay that price!

The *yetzer hara* spoke up again and said, "You can't let this deal go. It is a miracle from Heaven. He is willing to pay double the price. How can you pass up on such an opportunity?"

But his loyalty to Hashem came first. So, he increased the price even more.

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

The Ruzhiner Rebbe told this story to his chassidim, and the chasidim were waiting to hear the ending.

The Ruzhiner told them, "I see you are silent. You are waiting to hear the end of the story. But that was the end of the story. I wanted you to hear about this man's *mesirus nefesh* to keep halachah."

Most chassidic stories end with a miracle, a salvation, but this story ends with a person being loyal to Hashem, while foregoing a very lucrative opportunity. And that was the lesson the Ruzhiner Rebbe wanted to impart to his chassidim: Loyalty to halachah, at all costs.

This lesson is discussed in this week's *parashah* (18:13), תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, "Be complete with Hashem, your G-d." *Temimus* means to be loyal to Hashem, and one aspect of *temimus* is to be unwavering in our devotion to keeping halachah.

There is nothing to consider, nothing to debate. We do what Hashem commands.

The ת of תמים (according to an old custom) is written bigger than the standard text in the Sefer Torah. The Kotkzer *zt'l* explains that the large ת hints that there is enough room for everyone. Everyone can live a life of *temimus*. It isn't only for a select few; it is for everyone. Furthermore, the large ת hints that one should be whole with *temimus*, with all his 248 limbs. No part of his body should be without *temimus*.

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

## Elul

The Imrei Chaim said in the name of Rebbe Shmelka of Nikelsberg, that he doesn't want to leave this world, because in Olam HaBa, there isn't Elul, and what is life worth without Elul?

The *parashah* begins שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך בכל שערך, "Judges and police you shall appoint at all your gates."

The Shlah HaKadosh writes, "The *pasuk* is hinting to a *mussar* concept here, based on what's written in *Sefer Yetzirah*: 'There are seven gateways on man: two eyes, two ears, the mouth, and two nostrils.' One must place guards at these gateways to be cautious with what he sees, hears, says, and with the anger that comes out from the nose. He must place שופטים ושוטרים, judges and police, at these gates. This means he must always judge himself [if he should or shouldn't see, hear, say, or become angry]. The Torah, therefore, writes תתן לך, 'Give to you.' [They are for you, on your body]. You must constantly examine yourself so that there aren't any *aveiros*."

אלו"ל hints that we must be cautious with the eyes and with the speech, because אלו"ל stands for אנו לקה ועינינו לקה, "We are devoted to Hashem, and our eyes are turned to Him." The Imrei Chaim (*Re'eh*) writes that this hints

that, especially in Elul, we need to turn our eyes solely to Hashem.

Furthermore, אלו"ל is *sofei teivos* for (*Tehillim* 15:3) לא רגיל על לשונו, "He didn't speak *lashon hara* with his tongue." This alludes to the importance of guarding our speech during Elul.

Rosh Hashanah is fast approaching, and everyone is seeking ways to merit a favorable judgment. The Kedushas Levi advises that we should have a favorable view of others, focus on their good, and judge them favorably. If we do so, Hashem will judge us favorably as well.

On the *pasuk*, שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך, the Kedushas Levi writes, "Rosh Hashanah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu judges the Jewish nation with immense compassion and kindness. We must rouse those attributes of compassion so that Hashem will use them, too. When we act kindly, and when we judge every Yid לכה זכות, favorably, this rouses Hashem to do the same, and He will judge all Yidden favorably.

"This is the translation of the *pasuk*, שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך, you arrange the judgment of heaven... ושפטו את העם משפט צדק, by judging your fellow man favorably. Because the way a person acts towards others, that is how Heaven will act towards him."