

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Ki Sisa



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Torah Wellsprings - Ki Sisa

Emunah

There are many levels in *emunah* that a person can achieve. This week, in Parashas Ki Sisa, when Bnei Yisroel sinned with the egel, it caused a *pgam*, an imperfection in *emunah*, so now is an ideal time to strive to attain a purer *emunah* in Hashem.

A Yid with a broken foot was brought to Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz zt'l. He was in great pain. The Lechovitzer said, "Repeat after me," and he read to him the second brachah of *Shemoneh Esrei*, pausing after each phrase so the person can repeat after him: ... מחיה מתים אתה... רב להושיע... ורופא חולים. The man repeated after the Lechovitzer Rav, phrase after phrase. The Lechovitzer Rav asked him, "Do you believe in everything we just said?"

The ill person said he believed it. The Lechovitzer Rav rebuked him, "Don't lie to me. We will say it again," and they repeated the *brachah* a second time. The man recited each verse after the Lechovitzer, concentrating intensely, trying to internalize each phrase. When they finished, the Lechovitzer asked again, "Do you believe?"

"I do," he almost shouted.

The Lechovitzer Rav rebuked him again. His *emunah* wasn't perfect yet.

They repeated the *brachah* a third time. This time the sick person repeated each phrase with even greater *hislachavus* than before and when they were finished, he shouted, "I believe! I believe!"

The Lechovitzer said, "Get off the bed," and he got off.

Now that he believed that Hashem is רופא חולים he was healed.

The Lechovitzer told him that he wanted to conceal the miracle and that although he was healed, he should remain in bed for twenty-four hours, as if he was still ill, and only then leave the bed.

The man later said it was hard to remain in bed for twenty-four hours since he was completely healed (*Toras Avos, Maasei Avos*, 55).

The Divrei Shmuel of Slonim zt'l tells us how this miracle occurred:

"Someone who has true *emunah*, his *emunah* becomes like his hand – literally. Just as a person can perform his needs with his hands, so can he do things with his *emunah*. The Lechovitzer Rav performed miracles, and he helped people because he had a very high level of *emunah*, and he imbued every Yid who came to him with clear *emunah*. With *emunah*, miracles beyond nature occur."

He says that this is implied in the words (*Shemos* 17:12), ויהי ידיו אמונה עד בא השמש, "His hands were with *emunah* until sunset." The connection between *emunah* and hands is that just as people do things with their hands, one can also achieve things with *emunah*. This occurred in the story we brought up above. With *emunah sheleimah*, the man was healed.

Therefore, *emunah* is *mesugal* for everything. *Emunah* is *mesugal* for having children, too. A hint to this is that the *gematriya* of אמונה is בנים¹. All *yeshuos* can come with *emunah*.

1. The Shamni couple, after being childless for twenty years, reached out to an adoption agency with the hope of adopting a child. There was a list of questions that they had to answer to determine their suitability. One of the questions was: "State, in order of preference, the five things you love most." Reb Eliyahu Shamni wrote on top of the list "Hakadosh Baruch Hu" and then filled out the other four.

Reb Refael Auerbach *zt'l*, brother of Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l*, met with an elderly Yid who had been by the Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* for shalosh seudos, and this is what he heard the Rebbe say:

In the generation before Moshiach comes, the *yirei Hashem* will be disrespected and on a low social standing, whereas sinners will have power and be successful. This situation will be so distressing, such a disgrace for the religious Jews, that if the students of the holy Baal Shem Tov had lived at that time, they wouldn't have been able to tolerate it. Rebbe Elimelech compared the situation to a pot cooking on the fire. The unwanted flour rises to the top and is removed, and the good food remains in the pot. This is what will occur at the end of days. The *resha'im* jump to the top; they take power and control, while those who fear Hashem are trampled on at the bottom. But those sinners will all be removed, and only the righteous people will remain. In the final generation before Moshiach comes, it will be like Hakadosh Baruch Hu spreads out a long rope from one side of the world to the other, and all Yidden will grab onto the rope. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will shake the rope forcefully, and the fools will take that to mean that Hashem wants them to leave Him. But the wise will say, "This is a test. We must hold on with all

our strength. Whoever holds on tightly will be saved. This is called *חבלי משיח*, the ropes of Moshiach.

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zy"a* once spoke to his students about how everything is destined from Hashem, and nothing happens by chance. He told his students that even the place where an animal drops its waste is also planned from Heaven.

One of his students thought to himself, "Why would it make a difference to Hashem where an animal drops its waste? This seems unrealistic."

The following day, this student was walking near a high cliff and slipped on the ice. Fortunately, there was a lump in the ice, which stopped him from skidding off the cliff. He looked to see what saved his life. It was frozen manure.

He returned to Rebbe Elimelech to tell him that he saw firsthand that the Rebbe's lesson was accurate. However, he didn't have to say anything because as soon as he entered, Rebbe Elimelech greeted him and said, "Nu? Now do you believe that even the place where animals drop their waste is also planned from Heaven?"

Once, two Yidden came to Rebbe Uri of Streisk *zy"a*. They told him that they are

The agency wasn't pleased with his response. They asked Rabbi Shamni, "If you adopt a child, will you love that child more than the five items you listed here?"

Reb Shamni answered, "I will never love anyone or anything more than HaKadosh Baruch Hu!"

There was another religious couple in the agency at that time. They were also applying for adoption. They told Reb Shamni, "It's just a procedure. Tell them what they want to hear. You don't have to tell them the truth."

Reb Shamni replied emphatically, "I love Hashem more than everything in the world, and I refuse to say differently."

The Shamni's were disqualified.

Nine months later, the Shamnis had twins.

The other couple they met at the agency was approved, but after nine months, they were still waiting for their opportunity to adopt. By this time, Reb Eliyahu Shamni and his wife were blessed with their own set of children. Reb Eliyahu Shamni told me, "When one doesn't give up on the *One*, he ends up with two."

looking for a Rebbe and are considering joining his chassidus. Rebbe Uri said to them that he only accepts chassidim who believe in *hashgachah pratis*.

The chassidim told him that they believe in *hashgachah pratis*.

The Rebbe asked, "When a piece of straw falls off a wagon, do you believe this was destined from Heaven?"

The chassidim replied that they don't have that level of *emunah* because why would Hashem care about such trivial matters?

A few days later, they returned and said that they believed that even if a straw fell off a wagon, it was planned by Hashem.

"Why did you change your minds?" the Rebbe asked.

The chassidim explained, "We used to think that Hashem only cared about the major episodes of our life. We understood that something major wouldn't happen by chance. However, we thought that unimportant details of life happen by chance, and Hashem had no reason to be involved in them. But then we realized that for Hashem, what we consider major is also, in a way, insignificant. We told ourselves, "If we believe Hashem has *hashgachah* over matters we consider major, we should also believe that Hashem's *hashgachah* is over matters we consider insignificant."

Two friends came to the Husiatiner Rebbe *zt'l*: One asked for a *brachah* for *parnassah*, and the other asked for a *brachah* for *yiras Shamayim*.

After receiving the Rebbe's *brachos*, they shared a taxi home. The one who received a *brachah* for *yiras Shamayim* got off first and paid the taxi driver his share. The friend who received a *brachah* for *parnassah* traveled on, and when he arrived at his destination, he gave the taxi driver a large bill and asked for change.

"I'm not a bank or a money changer," the driver said. "Go to a store and ask them to change it for you."

The closest store was a kiosk that sold lottery tickets and other items. The storekeeper said, "If you buy something, I'll give you change." So, he bought a lottery ticket...and won!

The friend who asked for *yiras Shamayim* returned to the Husiatiner Rebbe and said, "I see that the *brachah* you gave my friend had quicker results than the *brachah* you gave me. He received a *brachah* for wealth, and in less than an hour, he became wealthy. But a week has passed, and I haven't received *yiras Shamayim* yet."

The Husiatiner Rebbe replied, "When you want *yiras Shamayim* as much as your friend wants wealth, your *brachah* will be answered, too."

Similarly, we add that if you really want *emunah*, you will be able to lead your life with the fundamentals of *emunah*. There are endless levels of *emunah*, and you can always rise to the next level of *emunah* in Hashem.

This week's *parashah* discusses the *aveirah* of the *egel*, which was *avodah zarah*. Baruch Hashem, we are not tempted to worship *avodah zarah* anymore. Chazal (*Yoma* 69:) tell us that the Chachamim abolished that *yetzer hara*. Yet, although we are not tempted to worship *avodah zarah*, there are *aveiros* that Chazal tell us are comparable to *avodah zarah*, and we must be wary of them.

Rebbe Leibele Eiger *zt'l* says that the lesson of this week's *parashah* is that even after committing the severe *aveirah* of *avodah zarah*, Hashem accepted Moshe's tefillos and the teshuvah of Bnei Yisrael, and the *aveirah* was forgiven. This tells us that no matter what *aveirah* we fall into, *chas v'shalom*, we remain Hashem's children. There is always hope for us.

Therefore, when we discuss the *aveiros* that Chazal compare to *avodah zarah*, we remember that just as Hashem forgave the

Jewish nation for the *egel*, all aveiros can be forgiven, and we remain eternally Hashem's children and precious nation.

Untruths

Chazal compare telling a lie to *avodah zarah*. The Yalkut Shimoni (Toldos 115) states, "Whoever changes his words [and tells an untruth], it is like he worshipped *avodah zarah*."

Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa *zy" a* said that the severity of telling a lie is alluded to in the Torah from the words (*Shemos 23:7*) מדבר שקר תרחק, "Distance yourself from falsehood..." This is the only *aveirah* that the Torah emphasizes that we must distance ourselves from transgressing it.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zy" a* (Imrei Pinchas 6:78) toiled his entire life to acquire the trait of *emes*. He would say, "We should consider telling an untruth to be as severe as *arayos* (adultery, etc.) When Klal Yisrael will be so cautious with saying the truth, Moshiach will come and redeem us."

What is the connection between telling the truth and the coming of Moshiach?

Rebbe Refael of Barshid *zt'l* (a leading student of Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz) explains that Moshiach will come when we do *teshuvah*, and we need to tell the truth to succeed to do *teshuvah*. Otherwise, we become confused, and cannot tell the difference between a *mitzvah* and an *aveirah*.

This is the portion of those who tell lies. Their perception of truth and reality becomes confused until they don't know what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. Reb Refael of Barshid explains it on a deeper level. He says that *malachim* tell lies to the people who lie. The *malachim* tell them that a *mitzvah* is an *aveirah* and that an *aveirah* is a *mitzvah*. And when one doesn't know, he won't be able to do *teshuvah*. Moshiach will come when we do *teshuvah*, and we will only succeed in repenting our wrong ways when we know which deeds need rectification. This becomes known when we are cautious to tell the truth.

The Imrei Emes of Gur *zy" a* would say: Everyone should choose one *mitzvas aseh* [one positive command] and one *lav* [one prohibition from the Torah] to keep to perfection with *mesirus nefesh* [under all circumstances].² The Imrei Emes said that he chose the *mitzvah* of *kibud av v'eim* [honoring parents] for his *mitzvas asei*, to excel in, and keeping away from speaking falsehoods for his *lo saaseh* [prohibitions]. He explained that he chose specifically these two because they are the hardest to keep.³

The Shlah Hakadosh (Shaar HaOsiyos 4) writes, "Here, in Yerushalayim, may it speedily be rebuilt, there was a very great chassid from the Sephardic community who would come to me often. For all the money in the world, he would never say anything that wasn't one hundred percent true. He

2. This counsel is written in sefarim and can be traced back to the following Rambam (Pirush HaMishnayos, end of Makos): "When a person keeps one of the *mitzvos* of the Torah properly, without any ulterior motive... and he does the *mitzvah* l'shem shamayim and with love, he will earn through it Olam HaBa."

3. The Beis Yisrael of Gur *zy" a*, once asked one of his close chasidim to buy him a kosher l'mehadrin lulav for Succos. That year, there was a shortage of lulavim, and the shaliach searched for many hours until he found the type of lulav his rebbe wanted.

The rebbe was very happy with the lulav and asked, "How much did it cost?"

On second thought, the Beis Yisrael said, "Better don't tell me." He realized that his shaliach might say a lower price than he actually paid in order not to upset him. So, the Beis Yisrael told the shaliach, "It is better that you don't answer this question." He preferred that over causing him to lie.

told me how his father trained him and his brother in this trait. When they were young and would come to their father complaining [about something the other one did], the father would say to them: 'Whoever tells the truth and admits when he is guilty, I will forgive him, if he promises not to do it again. However, the one who denies and says that he didn't do anything wrong, and later I discover that he lied, I will punish him severely.' And our father would do just that. For the child who admitted he did something wrong, our father would give him some coins to reward him for telling the truth. And he severely punished the one who lied. In this manner, he raised his children with the trait of *emes*. This is as it states: (Mishlei 23:23) אמת קנה, 'Purchase truth.' With money and presents, he trained his children to tell the truth until the truth became their second nature. Similarly, all wise people should devise strategies on how to raise their children with good middos and to do good deeds."⁴

Sadness vs. Joy

The Maor VeShemesh (*Behaloscha*) writes, "A great foundation in *avodas Hashem* is to distance oneself from עצבות ומרה שחורה, from being sad, as far as one possibly can because the *Zohar* says that *atzvus* is like *avodah zarah* (שמץ עבודה זרה). The proof is that when one is sad, he has thoughts of *avodah zarah*. Therefore, one must be very distant from *atzvus*. It can lead to all *aveiros*."

The Tanya (*Igeres HaKodesh* ch.11) also teaches that sadness is like *avodah zarah*, and he explains that this is because sadness means he doesn't believe that everything is for the good. He writes, "When one is sad, this means he thinks his life isn't perfect and is lacking something he needs. But to think so is *kefirah*, heresy, *chas veshalom*. Therefore, the *chachamim* of kabbalah warn against *atzvus* immensely..."⁵

So, this week, when we seek to cleanse ourselves from all aspects of *avodah zarah*,

4. The Shlah's counsel isn't only for teaching children not to lie. Parents should seek to train their children with good behaviors, and parents should think up ways and techniques that will help their children grow in the right way.

5. It states (*Tehillim* 19:9), פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב. The word פקודי can mean lacking (see *Bamidbar* 31:49) and פקודי ה' can be translated as you should know that פקודי, whatever you lack, ה', is from Hashem. משמחי לב, and you will be happy because since it is from Hashem, you are sure that it is for your benefit.

When the Rambam omits a halachah from his sefer, scholars study it in depth to understand why the Rambam left it out. No one suggests that perhaps the Rambam simply forgot that halachah when he wrote his sefer. A talmid chacham once said to a sad person, "If we are certain that the Rambam didn't omit anything by accident, and there is a reason and a purpose for him doing so, why don't you believe that when Hashem leaves something out from your life, that there is a reason for that, and it didn't happen by chance?"

Someone complained to Rebbe Sholom of Kaminka about his bitter lot in life. Rebbe Shalom told him, "Everything is sweet. You just think that it's bitter."

The man replied, "How can you say my life is good?"

Rebbe Sholom answered, "Alcohol tastes bitter for those who aren't accustomed to it. But this bitter drink leads to joy... Similarly, although things seem bitter, it is really joyous. Something good will come from it."

This can be compared to a person lost in a forest for a long time. Finally, after wandering for days, he notices a clearing in the distance. He rushes there and sees that it is a cemetery. He is overcome with relief because he knows he is near an inhabited area.

Generally, finding a graveyard isn't a joyous occasion, but for this person, it was a joyous sign because it signified he was near civilization.

it is an excellent time to strive to be happy and to cleanse ourselves from atzvus.

The renowned maggid of Yerushalayim, Reb Sholom Schwadron zt'l, would use humor in his drashos to help bring out mussar points. Once, during his weekly Friday night drashah in the Zichron Moshe Shtiblach, a person got up and announced, "This is leitzanus, light-headedness. It is improper to speak this way."

Reb Sholom took the rebuke to heart. He feared that perhaps this man was right, so he went to the Chazon Ish for advice. The Chazon Ish asked for a demonstration so that he could decide whether he should continue speaking in his humorous fashion.

Reb Sholom wanted the Chazon Ish to experience his drashos, so he demonstrated his manner of speech as if he were speaking before a large audience. The performance found favor in the Chazon Ish's eyes, who laughed and said he should continue speaking this way. He explained, "In Lithuania, there was a lot of yiras Shamayim, but the joy was by the maskilim, and that is why so many youths fell away." This story is another indication of the importance of joy and how the lack of it can result in heresy or avodah zarah, r'l. When there is happiness by us, children won't look for happiness in other places.

The women didn't sin by the egel. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l explains that this is because the women danced at *kriyas Yam Suf*, as it states (*Shemos* 15:20), ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן את התוף בידה ותצאנה כל הנשים אחריה בתפים ובמחולות, "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aharon, took her drum in her hand and all the women went forth after her with drums and with dancing." Since they danced then, they didn't dance with the egel. But the men didn't dance at *kriyas Yam Suf*, and they ended up dancing with the egel, as it

states (32:19), וירא את העגל ומחולות, "And Moshe saw the egel and the dancing." So, we see the importance of being happy with kedushah and *ruchniyos*, and then we won't be tempted to seek happiness in the *tumah*.

The Levi'im also didn't sin with the egel (see 32:26). This is because Levi'im serve Hashem with music and joy in the Beis HaMikdash, and where there's joy, one doesn't fall into the trap of *avodah zarah*.

As we wrote, this week, when the egel is discussed, it is an opportune time to be strong and to keep away from *atzvus*. It is Adar, after all, and Chazal say, משוננס אדר, מרבין בשמחה, "When Adar arrives, we increase joy." בשמחה is *gematriya* שנה, year. The Ohev Yisrael teaches that the happiness of Adar brings joy to the entire year.

בשמחה is also the letters of מחשבה. Because when one thinks positive thoughts, he will be happy.

Advice for Happiness

It states (*Tehillim* 16:4), ירבו עצבותם אחר מהרו. The Beis Aharon zt'l discussed this *pasuk* at his *tish*, and he explained that the *pasuk* is urging us to be happy. After the *tish*, he called over three of his chassidim and asked them to repeat what he said. Surprisingly (and miraculously) each of them heard something else.

One of them repeated, ירבו עצבותם people are sad because, אחר, the *parnassah* that is destined to come to them later on, מהרו, they are in a rush to attain it now.

Another said, ירבו עצבותם אחר מהרו means that one sadness brings on another one. אחר מהרו, the next sadness is quick to come after the first sadness.

The *nimshal* is that people don't generally associate hardships with happiness. Nevertheless, when you know that the difficulties are a sign that something very good will follow, you will be happy with the hardships too.

The third said *ירבו עצבותם*, when people are sad, *אחר*, it is like they are giving a present to the Satan. (*מהר* means present, see *Shemos* 22:15).

The Beis Aharon replied that all three translations were correct (*Divrei Aharon*).

Perhaps we can offer a fourth explanation: *ירבו עצבותם*; people are sad because *מהר*, they are always rushing, and they don't have time to think about all the good they have in their lives.

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover *zt'l* and the Berditchever Rav's son, Reb Yisrael of Piko *zt'l*, were collecting money together for *pidyon shevuyim*. One winter night, they slept in a poor man's home. The roof was broken in several places, icicles hung down, and when the *baal habayis* turned on the oven, the icicles began to melt. Water dripped onto Reb Yisrael's bed. These accommodations disturbed Reb Yisrael immensely.

Rebbe Moshe Leib told him, "I have thirteen reasons to be happy: (1) My right side doesn't hurt me, so I can lie on my right side. (2) My left side doesn't hurt, either, so I can sleep on my left side, too. (3) My back doesn't hurt..." He counted thirteen reasons why he was happy and they danced from joy. (*Maamar Mordechai* vol.2 p.117).

There is a lot to be thankful for, but to do so, one needs time and peace of mind. *ירבו עצבותם*, people are sad, *אחר מהר*, because they are always rushing to the next thing and lack the peace of mind to focus on the good they have now.

Another counsel for attaining happiness is to avoid thinking about the matters that upset you. You control your mind, and you can choose to think happy thoughts and avoid negative thoughts. Thus, avoid thinking about your tzaros. You can think about them tomorrow or next week, you don't have to think about them all the time. Focus on the good, keep your mind off the bad, and you will be happy.

The Gemara (*Chulin* 139:) asks, "Where is Haman alluded to in the Chumash?"

The Gemara answers that his name is indicated in the *pasuk* (Bereishis 3:11) *המן העץ אשר* "Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?" Haman is alluded to in this *pasuk* because it is the way of *reshaim* to always regret what they did. They are always focusing on the past, wondering whether they should have done better.

A hint to this is the Chazal (*Nedarim* 9) *רשעים* *מלאים חרטה*, *resha'im* are full of regret. Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* asks, aren't they *tzaddikim* if they regret their evil deeds? Why are they called *reshaim*? He answers that they don't regret their aveiros. They regret their bad choices in this world. They are always eating themselves up with regret that they didn't earn more money, make better choices to attain more honor, and so on.

Tzaddikim, in contrast, train themselves to forget the past and move on. They do so, so they can serve Hashem with joy.

Therefore, the Gemara says that Mordechai's name is alluded to in the *passuk* from this week's parashah (30:23) *קח לך בשמים מר* "Take incenses, *mor dror*..." and Onkelus says *mor dror* is *מריא דכיא*, which spells Mordechai. The *pasuk* is written in the present tense, teaching us that *tzaddikim* think about the present.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 63:) states, *עד כאן דברי יצר טוב*, "Until here are the words of the *yetzer hara*. From here on are the words of the *yetzer hatov*."

The Ksav Sofer explains that when a person thinks about *עד כאן*, what happened up until now, it is the *yetzer hara*. When a person's focus is on *מכאן ואילך*, the future, this is the *yetzer hatov*.

After the Holocaust (WWII), someone asked the Divrei Yoel of Satmar *zy"a* to share his thoughts on the devastating Holocaust. He replied, "A Yid doesn't think about what was."

Rebbe Chaim of Chernowitz, author of *Be'er Mayim Chaim* zy"a and other sefarim, repeated a vision he saw one Friday night. Many *neshamos* stood before the *beis din* in heaven. These *neshamos* were told that they must return to this world as a *gilgul*, and they cried before the court that there needed to be a change in the system. They explained that they had been in this world several times before, and each time, they failed on the mission and were sent again to Olam HaZeh. "What is the purpose of sending us to Olam HaZeh again and again?" they cried. "We will probably fail another time!"

The court replied, "Times have changed. The judgment isn't as difficult as it was in the past. There is a greater likelihood that you will pass the test. You just need to be cautious about one thing: Never say: 'I should have.' If you can avoid saying those words, you have passed the test and will merit Olam HaBa."

According to this vision, the main goal is to go through life without saying "I should have done things differently." Believe that everything is *hashgachah pratis*, including your own choices, and you have passed the test of life.⁶

Advice for Shalom Bayis

Focusing on the present is also a good counsel for maintaining peace because remembering the faults of others leads to anger and contention. When one can let go

and forget what others did to him in the past, there can be peace.

Many of the customs we have at a *chuppah* commemorate *Matan Torah*. Some explain that we break a glass under the *chuppah* to remember the *luchos* that were broken after *Mattan Torah*.

The *gemara* (*Eiruvin* 54.) teaches that if the *luchos* wouldn't have been broken, people wouldn't forget Torah. So, the broken *luchos* represent the trait of forgetting.

The *Divrei Yoel* of Satmar zy"a explains that it is essential that the couple standing under the *chuppah* be reminded of the broken *luchos* and their ability to forget. Because when a couple can forget a past misdeed of their spouse, there can be peace in the home.

Rebbe Moshe Leib Sassover zy"a explained that the past and the future are significant deterrents to *avodas Hashem*. The sins and failures of the past discourage people from trying again, and worrying about the future robs people of their peace of mind. Yaakov Avinu blessed Efraim and Menasha, as it states, *ויברכם ביום ההוא*, "he blessed them on that day..." (*Bereishis* 48:20). He blessed them with the ability to focus on *that day*, without considering the past and the future.

Anger

The *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 105:) teaches, "If a person rips his clothes due to anger, or if he

6. The *gemara* teaches us that the words *ויהי בימי* "It happened in the days..." contains a hint of sorrow. *ויהי בימי* implies that the Yidden suffered under Achashverosh's rule. However, the words *ויהי בימי*, are an expression of joy. What is the difference between these two similar words?

The word *ויהי* is in the past tense, a reference to harping over past difficulties, and is, therefore, an expression of sorrow. Whereas the word *ויהי* is in the present tense, which represents the ability to forget about the past and live in the present. Such a person can live with joy.

Rebbe Shaul Yedidiah of Modzitz *zt'l* always had a smile on his face. During the Holocaust, people asked him how he managed to remain happy. "Aren't you worried about the future?"

He replied, "Of course, I am worried about the future, just like everyone else, only I keep my worries tied up and put away. Once a day, I take out my worries to look at them, and then I immediately tuck them away until the next day. That's how I can stay happy." (*Imrei Shaul*).

breaks an item due to his anger, or if he throws away money because of anger, consider him as though he worships avodah zarah. Because this is the technique of the yetzer hara. Today he tells you, 'Do this,' tomorrow he tells you, 'Do this,' until he tells him to worship avodah zarah, and he does so."

Anger is like serving avodah zarah for two primary reasons. One reason is that he wouldn't have become angry if he believed in Hashem and His hashgachah pratis.

Also, anger is like avodah zarah because, as the Gemara says, the yetzer hara draws him from one sin to the next until he reaches avodah zarah. And it all begins with anger.⁷ Anger leads to sin.

The Gemara (brachos 29:) states, "Eliyahu [HaNavi] said... 'Don't become angry, and you won't sin.'"

The Maharsha explains, "The yetzer hara works in professional ways to lead the person from a small aveirah to greater ones... When one rips his clothes in anger, he has transgressed the aveirah of baal tashchis..." This aveirah leads to other aveiros until he worships avodah zarah.

The Meor Einayim (Brachos) writes, "All aveiros that a person does on purpose, chas v'shalom, are because he became angry. This is because every Yid has a spark of holiness in him, a part of Hashem, so how does one come to commit aveiros and rebel against Hashem? By becoming angry. Anger causes the Shechinah to leave him. The holiness leaves him, and now he can commit aveiros. This is the reason an aveirah done on purpose is called מזיד. It is from the word (Bereishis 25:29) וייד עקב וייד, "Yaakov cooked..." The word וייד of מזיד means to cook, and it is indeed his hot

and cooked-up attitude which causes him to perform aveiros במזיד, on purpose."

So, anger leads to aveiros, which lead to avodah zarah. The Gemara gives one example of baal tashchis, but there are several others. And each aveirah gradually leads the person to worse aveiros until the yetzer hara incites him to worship avodah zarah, r'l.

The Rambam (Hilchos Deios 2:3) writes, כל הכועס כאילו עובד עבודה זרה, "Whoever becomes angry, it is like he worships avodah zarah."

The miforshim (מהר"ץ חיות) ask that the Gemara states that anger, together with breaking something, is like avodah zarah. It doesn't say that anger alone is like avodah zarah.

Perhaps the answer is that anger will undoubtedly lead to other aveiros. The Gemara gives an example of baal tashchis, but there are other examples. One sin leads to the next, and there is no knowing how far he will fall.

A Counsel to Overcome Anger

A primary counsel to overcoming anger is to push off becoming angry until later.

Some rabbanim say that it is important for the Rebbe/teacher to be in the classroom before the children arrive. There was a devoted Rebbe who followed this counsel. When the children would arrive, he was already at his place in the classroom, ready to greet his students.

He also was cautious to push off anger for later rather than to respond immediately.

One day, the Rebbe came late to his classroom. All the children scurried quickly to their places, but there was one child who

7. We can also say a third explanation, b'derech tzachos. Anger is compared to avodah zarah because they both accomplish nothing. Worshipping avodah zarah doesn't bring a person his needs and neither does getting angry, as the Gemara states (Kiddushin 41.), "Someone who is angry, all that he accomplished is that he became angry."

smiled brightly and pointed to his watch. The rebbe thought, "This is terribly chutzpadik. The child is hinting that I should have come earlier!"

He was tempted to give the child severe rebuke and punishment, but on second thought, he decided to keep his good custom and push off his anger for a later time.

During class, this child repeatedly looked at his watch with a smile on his face. "I don't believe it!" the *melamed* seethed. "The child is at it again! He is taunting me that I came late!"

Nevertheless, the Rebbe continued teaching. "I'll deal with this child later," he told himself. "It isn't good to respond immediately."

As soon as the bell rang, the child ran over to the Rebbe and exclaimed, "Rebbe! Look! My father bought me a new watch!"

How fortunate was the Rebbe that he didn't make an issue about the child's behavior immediately. By waiting, the reality of what occurred was clarified.

And it is like this so often. When you take time before responding, you discover vital information that turns the entire picture around. Often, you realize there was no reason to be angry.

A week after *sheva brachos*, a father-in-law asked his son-in-law to lend him fifty shekels. The son-in-law lent him the money and then whispered to his wife, "We'll see whether this will ever come back." He spoke silently, but the father-in-law heard it and was deeply insulted. "Why does he suspect that I won't pay him back? Does he think I'm a thief?"

The father-in-law's greatest worry was his daughter's welfare. He feared that his son-in-law's lack of trust indicated that he didn't see the world in a healthy way. For the next few weeks, the father-in-law could hardly sleep at night; he was so worried about his daughter. He had thought his

daughter married a good, well-mannered man, but now he suspected that he was emotionally challenged. But the father-in-law didn't say anything; he did not express the anger in his heart.

A couple of weeks later, the father-in-law couldn't contain himself any longer, so he asked his daughter straight-out, "Why did your husband say, 'We'll see whether the money will come back?' Did he suspect I wouldn't pay him?"

The daughter laughed and said, "My husband has a game. He writes his name on his bills. Money goes around. He wants to see whether this bill will ever come back to him again."

By controlling his anger and allowing time to pass, the father-in-law found out what truly happened. He discovered there was no reason to be angry.

The Sefer Chasidim writes, "A story happened with a man who honored his father immensely. Before he passed away, the father said, 'You honored me in my lifetime, honor me after my death, as well. I request that you control yourself from speaking when you are angry. When you become angry, don't do anything until you first sleep a night.'"

"After his father's passing, the son traveled overseas. He didn't know that his wife was pregnant when he left home. He was away for many years.

"When he finally returned to his hometown, he went to his house. [From behind the door] he heard the voice of a man.... He pulled out his sword to kill them both but remembered his father's will, so he returned the sword to its sheath. He then heard his wife say, 'It is many years since your father left me. If he knew he had a son, he would return home to marry you off.'"

"When her husband heard this, he said, 'Open the door, my wife and friend' (*Shir HaShirim* 5:2). Baruch Hashem that He stopped my anger, and blessings to my father who

taught me to control my anger because otherwise, I would have killed you both.'

"They were extremely happy and celebrated with the entire community."

The Reishis Chachmah (Anavah 5:22) writes, "Another counsel to be saved from anger is written by Reb Yitzchak of Acco in his sefer: One Friday night, I was thinking to myself, what can a person do to avoid getting angry. I began to drift off and felt like they were telling me [from heaven], if you don't want to be angry, be wise..."

It states (Koheles 7:9) כַּעַס בְּחִיק כְּסִילִים יָנוּחַ, "Anger in the bosom of fools rests." But with wisdom, one can overcome anger. An aspect of wisdom is to push off becoming angry until later on.⁸

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zy'a (renowned for his wisdom) had an empty *tabak pushkeh* (snuff box) that he often held in his hands and would occasionally open and close its lid. One of his chassidim asked about the box and why he holds onto it. He replied, "Whenever I am aroused to anger, I open the lid of the box and place the anger inside. Two hours later, I open the lid again to assess whether the matter warrants anger or not."⁹

The Ben Ish Chai told the following parable:

A king and his prime minister would often dress up like ordinary people and travel about the kingdom to hear what the common folk were saying.

Once, the king wanted to visit the hospital to hear what the sick people say about the king and the kingdom.

The prime minister didn't think it was a good idea. He said, "What can we hear in a hospital that is important for the kingdom?"

But the king insisted, and they went to the hospital. They visited a person in great pain. "What happened to you?" they asked.

"A wild dog bit me."

"Is there no cure for you?"

"There is a cure. If I eat the liver of the dog that bit me, I will be healed."

"So why are you upset? You can be healed."

The man answered, "The liver needs to be removed from the dog while the dog is alive. But I was so angry at the dog that I threw a stone and killed it. Now, I don't have a cure anymore."

When they left the hospital, the prime minister said, "I told you this would be a waste of time. We didn't hear anything worthwhile here."

The king disagreed. "I heard something beneficial. I learned that if I become angry, I must wait before responding. Because if I act impulsively, I might regret it later, like the sick man who regrets killing the dog. From now on, I will never put to death anyone before taking a night to think things over."

Reb Efraim Margulies zt"l, author of several renowned halachic *sefarim* (Matteh

8. The wisdom that Reb Yitzchak of Acco was referring to was to think about the person who said or did something that upset you. If he is a fool, be wise and realize there is no reason to take his words seriously. And if he is a scholar, you should be thankful that he rebuked you so you can correct your ways.

9. Tzaddikim of Lelov zt'l would advise holding water in the mouth to control anger.

Some baalei mussar wore a special suit when they needed to become angry.

These activities help postpone anger to a later time, a wonderful tactic to control anger.

Efraim, Yad Efraim, and others), was also very wealthy; he owned a bank.

Once, an expensive vase broke in his home. His wife was very upset about this, but he remained calm. She asked him, "How can you be so calm? Do you realize how expensive it was?"

He said, "Ask me this question in a year, and I will explain."

She didn't forget. A year later, on that date, she asked him how he remained calm when the expensive vase broke.

He asked her, "Are you still upset about the vase that broke?"

She said that it doesn't bother her anymore.

He replied, "Your father chose me to be his son-in-law because he said that I am an *iluy* (genius) and I grasp matters quickly. When the vase broke, I immediately grasped how I would feel a year later and didn't let it bother me even then."

We can learn from this a lesson in how to overcome anger. When things anger us, we should ask ourselves, "Will this upset me a year or two from now, or will I be able to look back and laugh at what happened?" Consider how you will feel in the future, and this will help you overcome your anger.

Sometimes, the Torah places a ה"א at the end of a word instead of a ל"מ at the

beginning. For example, it states (*Bereishis* 14:10, 32:4), מצרימה and Rashi teaches that this has the same meaning as למצרים, "to Mitzrayim."

Rebbe Mendel of Vorka *zy'a* (who was called the *shtiller Rebbe*, the silent Rebbe, because of his caution with his speech) asks, why does the Torah prefer to place a *heh* at the end of the word, rather than a *lamed* at the beginning of the word? Either way, there will be the same number of letters, so why is a *heh* at the end of the word preferred over a *lamed* at the beginning?

The Vorka Rebbe replied that this teaches us that the later you can say things, the better. And when you speak later, it will probably be in a calmer tone. This is seen from the *heh* at the end of the word, which is a calmer letter (said with less force) than a *lamed* at the beginning.¹⁰

Tefillah

The Gemara (*Brachos* 32.) says that immediately after Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe that the Yidden made an *egel*, he began praying for Hashem's compassion. Hashem said (32:10), ועתה הניחה לי ויחר אפי בהם, "and now let go of Me, and let My anger flare against them..." The Gemara says, "If the *pasuk* hadn't written it, we wouldn't be able to say it. These words teach us that Moshe grabbed onto Hakadosh Baruch Hu like someone grabbing onto his friend by his clothes and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I won't let go until You forgive them." This teaches

10. Achashverosh never learned the benefits of putting off anger. Therefore, when Vashti insulted him, he killed her immediately (see *Esther* 1:12). Later, he regretted what he did, but, of course, it was too late. Such is the lot of those who react impulsively when provoked.

At Esther's party, Achashverosh became angry at Haman and killed him immediately (see *Esther* 7:7). He didn't give himself time to think things over.

In the megillah (*Esther* 7:9), Charvonah told Achashverosh about the gallows Haman built and added a few ambiguous words. He said, אשר דבר טוב על המלך. It means that Mordechai spoke well about the king (by foiling Bigsán and Seresh's plan to poison Achashverosh). But in his haste, Achashverosh understood that Haman said that the gallows are טוב על המלך, suitable for Achashverosh, for Achashverosh to hang on it. The Vilna Gaon teaches that this is why Achashverosh killed Haman.

This was the result of acting in anger, impulsively, without taking time to think things through matters.

us the power of tefillah. It can reach a level that is like grabbing onto Hakadosh Baruch Hu and telling Him that you won't let go until He does your will.

After this tefillah, Moshe descended from the mountain, reproved the nation, burned the *egel*, and took other steps to rectify their grave sin. Then Moshe returned to Har Sinai to daven again. He said (32:32), ועתה אם תשא, "And now if You would but forgive their sin! – but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written."¹¹

Rashi explains that Moshe requested that his name be erased from the entire Torah, "So people won't say about me that I wasn't worthy to daven for the nation."

But, behold, Moshe was עניו מכל האדם, the humblest person who ever lived. Why did he think he was worthy of his tefillos to be accepted? Furthermore, due to his humility, why would he care if people ridiculed him and claimed he wasn't worthy of davening for the nation?

The Beis Aharon (*Likutim* 144:) answers that Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to the tefillah of every person – regardless of his level. It was important to Moshe that Hashem answer his tefillah to prove that Hashem listens to the tefillos of even the lowest person. If his tefillos were not answered,

people at low levels would lose their faith in prayer.¹²

The Ben Ish Chai (*Od Yosef Chai*, Matos) tells the story of a simple, G-d fearing person who didn't understand *lashon hakodesh*. Once, he was in the beis haknesses, and heard the chazan sing, אלו ואלו נשרפין בבית הדשן (from איזהו מקומן) in a beautiful tune. The words mean, "Both these *korbanos* are burned in the house of ashes." The simple person didn't know the translation but figured that since the chazan sang them so melodiously, they must be a special blessing. Wanting to bless his children in a beautiful way, he memorized these words, and every Friday night when he *benched* his children, he would say with immense *kavanah* אלו ואלו נשרפין בבית הדשן.

Once, a *talmid chacham* stayed in his home on Friday and heard the simple man bless his children and say, אלו ואלו נשרפין בבית הדשן. Frightened by the implication of these words, the *chacham* said to the simple man, "Why are you cursing your children?" He warned him not to say this "blessing" ever again.

That night, the scholar had a dream, and heaven informed him that he was wrong for stopping this simple man from reciting these words. Because he was saying these words with *temimus*, Hashem would rearrange the letters and turn them into a blessing for his

11. Chazal (*Zohar Chadash*, beginning of *Shir HaShirim*) teach that Moshe's name isn't mentioned in *parashas Tetzaveh* because of Moshe's request (32:32), ועתה אם תשא חטאתם ואם אין מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת, "And now, if You would but forgive their sin! – but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written." Hashem forgave the nation, but nevertheless, Moshe's request was answered, and the result is seen in *parashas Tetzaveh*.

The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l* asks, "Why was Moshe punished? Why isn't his name mentioned in Tetzaveh? He was *moser nefesh* for Bnei Yisrael, and this is his reward?! The answer is that he was punished because he said ואם אין, "but if not..." He said to Hashem, "If You don't answer my tefillos and save the nation, then erase my name from the Torah, implying that he wasn't sure that his tefillos for their atonement would be accepted, and that is why he was punished. We must believe that Hashem listens to every person's tefillah.

12. Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (ch.20) tells us that when Shaul captured Agag, he cried and moaned, "Woe is to me! Perhaps I won't leave children in the world!" Hashem answered his tefillos, and he had descendants. That is how Haman was born.

Reb Chaim Kanievsky Zatzal says that this Chazal reveals the power of tefillah –even the tefillah of Agag the Amaleki, and even when his tefillos were for something negative, Hashem answered his tefillos.

children. (This story is also written briefly by the Or HaChaim HaKadosh, *Rishon l'Tzion, Mishlei 3.*)

Similarly, Sefer Chassidim (18) tells a story of a *kohen* who used to say, - בִּרְכַּךְ ה' וַיִּשְׁמֹדֶךָ - means "Hashem should destroy you ch"v"! The *chacham* of the beis haknesses told this *kohen* that he may no longer say *birchas kohanim* because of this terrible error.

But Hashem wasn't happy that he stopped him. "He was shown from heaven that he

would be punished if he didn't permit this *kohen* to say *birchas kohanim*."

The Sefer Chassidim explains, "The Creator who examines man's heart only wants the heart. Even when he doesn't say the words correctly, it is considered like he said them correctly. And those who say *pesukei d'zimra* in a loud, sweet voice, although they say the words erroneously, they are accepted like sweet incense, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu delights with them."