

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Beshalach



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Torah Wellsprings - Beshalach

Knowing We Are Powerless Without Hashem

When going through a hard time, *r"l*, one feels relieved knowing that there is at least one route he can follow that will save him from his *tzarah*.

For example, a poor man who needs money to pay for an upcoming chasunah feels somewhat relieved knowing he has a relative who might help him.

The Kedushas Yom Tov teaches that it would be better if one didn't know of any solution at all. For at such times, he will turn his eyes only to Hashem to save him.

When Bnei Yisroel left Mitzrayim, Hashem wanted them to travel through the desert, and not through the land of the Plishtim, as it states (13:17-18) וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרַעֲוֵה אֶת הָעָם וְלֹא נָחַם אֱלֹהִים דְּרַךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא... כִּן יִנָּחֵם הָעָם בְּרֹאֲתָם מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצְרָיִם, וַיִּסַּב אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָעָם דְּרַךְ הַמִּדְבָּר, "It came to pass when Pharaoh let the people go, that Hashem did not lead them by way of the land of the Plishtim for it was near... Lest the people reconsider when they see war and return to Mitzrayim. So, Hashem led them around by way of the desert..."

The Kedushas Yom Tov explains that if they would travel through the Plishtim, and be attacked, they would think they could save themselves by returning to Mitzrayim. As it states, כִּן יִנָּחֵם הָעָם בְּרֹאֲתָם מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצְרָיִם, which can be translated to mean that when they see war, they will say that they can return to Mitzrayim and be safe. This thought process would indicate that they relied on their hishtadlus, not Hashem.

Hashem, therefore, preferred that they travel through the desert. If they were confronted with a war, they would have nowhere to escape, and they would pray to Hashem. For when one doesn't have any plan or idea of how to save himself, it is the

best scenario because then he trusts in Hashem alone.

It states (Devarim 7:17-18) כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְּךָ רַבִּים הַגּוֹיִם הַאֵלֶּה מִמֶּנִּי אֵיכָה אוּכַל לְהוֹרִישָׁם, לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם, "If you say to yourself, 'These nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out? You shall not fear them...' Binah L'ittim (drush 24) explains that it is fortunate when the Jewish people say that the nations are stronger than them because then they will rely on Hashem. When you recognize that the nations are stronger than you, לֹא, תִירָא מֵהֶם, "You don't have to be afraid of them." You will place your trust in Hashem, so you have nothing to fear. But if you feel that you are strong and that you can fight with the goyim with your strength, you have reason to be afraid.

The Shlah HaKadosh zt'l (letter 33) also teaches this lesson from the same pasuk (Devarim 7:17-18). We quote: "כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְּךָ, if you will admit to the truth that by the rules of nature you can't win the war because רַבִּים הַגּוֹיִם הַאֵלֶּה, the goyim are more numerous, and you know that will only succeed with Hashem's help, then, לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם, you need not fear them because Hashem will help you. But if you will say (Devarim 8:17) כְּחֵי וְעֶזְרָם, that you have might and strength - you have reason to fear them."

The end of this week's parashah discusses the war against Amalek, which Klal Yisrael won. The Ksav Sofer zt'l says that one might think that the Yidden won the war because they were mightier than Amalek. For that is the way of war, the stronger army wins. To correct this train of thought, Moshe Rabbeinu built a mizbeiach and called it (17:15) ה' נִסִּי, "Hashem is my miracle." Rashi writes, "Whoever mentions the name of the mizbeiach remembers that Hashem performed a miracle." The Ksav Sofer zt'l explains that Hashem performed many miracles, and Moshe didn't feel it necessary to build a mizbeiach and to name it ה' נִסִּי to

remind people that the miracle was from Hashem. Why did Moshe do it this time? It is because people tend to think a war is won according to the rules of nature. To correct this error, Moshe called the mizbeiach ה' נְסִי מִצֵּבֵיחַ, "Hashem is my miracle," to remind people that a miracle occurred.

It states (17:11) וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים יָדוֹ וְגַבַּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִנִּיחַ יָדוֹ וְגַבַּר עַמְלֶק, "It came to pass that when Moshe would raise his hand, Yisrael would prevail, and when he would lay down his hand, Amalek would prevail." The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 29.) asks, "Do Moshe's hands make or break a war?" Why should Moshe's holding up his hands cause them to win the war? "Rather, this tells you that when Yisrael looked towards heaven, they bound their heart to their Father in heaven, and they prevailed..." Rebbe Yechezkel of Alexander zt'l explains that they "looked" with their intellect "to heaven" and recognized that they were fighting with Hashem's strength, not their own. When they realized that, they succeeded in the war.

In the Tachanun that is said on Mondays and Thursdays, we say טְהוֹר יִשׁוּעַתְנוּ קְרוּבָה יִגְעֵנוּ "... We toiled and we didn't have respite." We can explain that this is discussing a person who made *hishtadlus*, but his attempts didn't bring about any results. That is good, because now he will know to rely on Hashem. Then it will be טְהוֹר יִשׁוּעַתְנוּ קְרוּבָה, that the salvation is near. For when one relies on Hashem, he will succeed.

Another hint is from Avos (4:4) תְּקוּת אָנוּשׁ רָמָה, which can be translated as, "When is there hope for man? When he knows that he is רָמָה, nothing but worms. When a person realizes this, he will trust in Hashem

and then he will receive his salvation (Imrei Emes, written in Imrei Kodosh Likutim p.283).

Reb Moshe of Kobrin zy'a taught (15:26) כִּי אָנִי ה' רֹפֵא, when you know אָנִי ה', that Hashem is present and that Hashem helps us, that is the greatest cure and the best counsel for all issues.¹

Lessons of Bitachon from the Manna

There was a measurement of manna that everyone was supposed to collect, as it states (16:16) עֹמֶר לְגִלְגָּלֶת מִסֶּפֶר נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אִישׁ לְאִשׁוֹ בְּאֶהְלֹו תִקְחוּ, "An omer for each person, according to the number of persons... in his tent..." If there were five people in one's family, then he should gather and bring home five omers – an omer per head.

The next pasuk (16:17) states, וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּלְקְטוּ הַמְרִבָּה וְהַמְמַעֵיט, "Bnei Yisrael did so: They gathered, both the one who gathered much and the one who gathered little." Rashi explains, "Some gathered too much manna, and some gathered too little, but when they came home, they measured... and they found that the one who had gathered too much had not exceeded an omer for each person who was in his tent, and the one who had gathered too little also had an omer per person. This was a great miracle that occurred with the manna."

We learn from this episode three essential lessons related to the pursuit of *parnassah* and rules of *hishtadlus* and *bitachon*:

(1) Everyone must make *hishtadlus*. As it states (Bereishis 3:19) בְּזֵיעַת אַפְיֶךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם, "With the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread." And it states (Tehillim 104:23) יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפַעְלוֹ וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַד עֶרֶב, "Man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening."

1. It states in this week's parashah (17:12) וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֱמוּנָה, "His hands were emunah..." Emunah is in the mind and the heart, not in the hands! Rather, the pasuk teaches that even when a person does *hishtadlus* with his hands, he must simultaneously know that everything is from Hashem.

Chazal (Shabbos 31.) say אֱמוּנָה זֶה סֵדֶר זֵרַעִים, the tractate of Zeraim, which deals with the laws related to agriculture, represents emunah. This is because even as one plants and works the field, he knows the resulting crop's quality is entirely in Hashem's hands.

We learn about the obligation of making hishtadlus from the manna because why was everyone obligated to gather an omer per head? Even if he collected less, in the end, he would find an omer per head in his home?! The answer is that one is obligated to make *hishtadlus*!

(2) Some people didn't make sufficient hishtadlus. They were obligated to collect an omer per head, but they collected less. Even so, they didn't lose manna because of that. When they came home and measured the amount of manna that they had, they found a manna per head. They discovered that the hishtadlus isn't the root of their parnassah, and each person receives what is destined for him.

(3) It states (16:18) וַיִּמְדוּ בְעֹמֶר וְלֹא הֶעֱדִיף הַמֶּרְבֵּה, "They measured with an omer, and whoever gathered much did not have more..." This taught the nation that doing extra hishtadlus won't result in having more.

Hishtadlus

The Chofetz Chaim asks: Why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu split the sea only after Bnei Yisrael entered it? This is a lesson for all generations: A person must do hishtadlus; he must jump into the sea. He mustn't be idle. And then Hashem helps him.

Bnei Yisrael entered the desert without preparing food for the trip, as stated in last week's parashah (12:39) גַּם צִידָה לֹא עָשׂוּ לָהֶם, "They had not made provisions for themselves."

Rashi writes, "This is to tell the praise of Yisrael. They didn't say, 'How can we go to the desert without food prepared?' They believed and went."

But one can ask, what about the obligation to make *hishtadlus*? The answer is that if they were going for three days to the desert, there would be an obligation to make hishtadlus. They would have to bring along enough food for the trip. But they were going to be in the desert for a prolonged time. It was impossible to prepare enough food for the

entire journey. Therefore, they were exempt from the obligation to make hishtadlus.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l asked an older bachur what was the issue that was holding him back from getting engaged. The bachur explained that he sought a shver who would support him for the first five years after his chasunah.

The Chofetz Chaim asked, "How many years do you think you will live?"

Startled by the question, the bachur replied that he hopes to live until he will be seventy or eighty years, as it states in the pasuk (90:10), יְמֵי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ... שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה וְאִם בְּגִבּוֹרוֹת, "The days of our years because of them are seventy years, and if with increase, eighty years."

The Chofetz Chaim said, "You want your father-in-law to support you for the first five years of your marriage, but who will support you for the decades after that?"

The bachur replied that he had bitachon that Hashem would support him.

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "If you believe that Hashem will support you for forty, fifty years, why don't you believe that Hashem can support you for the first five years after your chasunah as well?"

The Chofetz Chaim said that Dasan and Aviram made a similar mistake. The manna fell in the morning - enough for one day - and it was forbidden to leave it overnight for the next day. What will be for breakfast the next day? People placed their trust in Hashem, and every day, more manna fell.

Dasan and Aviram, however, were afraid they wouldn't have manna the following day, so they left it overnight. Their manna spoiled. Their *hishtadlus* didn't help them. The Chofetz Chaim explains that part of the problem of Dasan and Aviram's way of thinking was that even if their attempts would have helped them have breakfast the following day, how would it help them eat supper, and how would their attempts help

them the next day or the next week? They anyway had to rely on Hashem, so they should have immediately placed their trust in Hashem and not worried about the next day.

The Chofetz Chaim explained to the bachur that his fears were similar to Dasan v'Aviram's. Because even if he can somehow guarantee parnassah for five years, he can't guarantee his entire life. He will anyway need to place his trust in Hashem, so he can begin trusting in Hashem today.²

The Hishtadlus of Tefillah

When it comes to performing hishtadlus, people invest all their energy; however, less so when it comes to tefillos. A hint to this is from the pasuk (Tehillim 104:21) הַיְלֵוֹת יִשְׁאָגוּ לְטָרֵף, "The young lions roar for prey and to request their food from Hashem." When it comes to prayers, it is וְלִבְקֹשׁ מֵאֵל אֲקַלֵּם, "To request their food from Hashem." But when it comes to hishtadlus, הַיְלֵוֹת יִשְׁאָגוּ לְטָרֵף, the lions roar!

We say in Selichos השתדלו והרבו תחינה ובקשה. We can explain b'derech tzachus, השתדלו והרבו, we should make a lot of hishtadlus. What type of hishtadlus should we make? תחינה ובקשה tefillos and requests. For that is the primary hishtadlus. (The Maor v'Shemesh writes in the name of Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz zt'l, one can fulfill his obligation of hishtadlus with tefillah.)

The Chazon Ish (Maaseh Ish vol.7, 103) said that the primary hishtadlus is tefillah. Sometimes, a person must also do a hishtadlus of action, but if one only does hishtadlus of actions and doesn't do the primary hishtadlus, which is tefillah, he certainly didn't fulfill his obligation of hishtadlus.³

Parashas HaMan

The Meor Einayim (Likutim ד"ה כשרצה) writes, "Whoever needs parnassah should read parashas haman every day, and he will receive Hashem's kindness from parashas haman."⁴

Every Shabbos, for twenty-two years, Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Riminov zt'l would teach lessons from parashas haman to bring parnassah for Bnei Yisrael.

It is repeated in the name of Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Riminov zt'l that reading parashas haman on Tuesday of parashas Beshalach is mesugal for parnassah.

The Chidushei HaRim writes in a letter: "Rosh Chodesh Nisan, 5612: I thought of an idea: I should make a chiddush in parashas haman each day, and thereby my parnassah will come from the Torah. As the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 97:3) states, פרנסה בכל יום, every day has its parnassah..."

Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 1:5) states, טוב, לאמר... פרשת המן... "It is good to say...parashas haman." The Mishnah Berurah writes, "The

2. Chazal (Pesachim 9.) tell us that after one cleaned and checked his home for chametz, he need not be concerned that perhaps a weasel dragged some chametz from another house to his house, or from another town to his town. This is because אין לדבר סוף, there is no end to the possibilities that might occur. So, when it is impossible to be cautious, you are exempt from hishtadlus. The same applies to parnassah. If, anyway, you can't protect and sustain yourself entirely, and you must rely on Hashem, you should rely on Hashem in the first place.

3. Bnei Yissaschar related that when someone came to his father for a brachah for parnassah, his father would tell him to invest in Torah study because then he would receive the brachos from all of Klal Yisrael. This is because after kriyas haTorah on Shabbos, we say, מוֹנוֹי רוּיחָא... יְהֵא לְהוֹן... יהא להון... באורייתא... "For all those who study Torah... they should have... parnassah in abundance.

4. The Meor Einayim explains that the source for parnassah is in parashas haman, and the source for refuah is the words (Shemos 21:18) וְיִפְאֵר יִפְאֵר. Similarly, the root of all salvations are in the area of Torah that discuss that subject.

Yerushalmi says that whoever says *parashas haman* every day is guaranteed that he won't ever lack *parnassah*.⁵

The Tashbatz quotes this Yerushalmi and adds *ואני ערב*, "I guarantee it."

עומר לגלגלת (16:16) can be translated to mean that the *parnassah* comes from the *emunah* that is in a person's mind. When one says *parashas haman*, he strengthens his belief that Hashem gives him *parnassah*, and this *emunah* is *mesugal* for attaining *parnassah*.

It states (Yirmiyahu 7:28) *אבדה האמונה ונכרתה מפיהם*, meaning Hashem is complaining that the nation lost their *emunah* (אבדה האמונה). They don't even speak about *emunah*.⁵ (ונכרתה מפיהם)

The Beis Avraham says that the *pasuk* is hinting, *אבדה האמונה*, if you lost your *emunah*, *ונכרתה מפיהם*, food isn't in your mouth. A person might lack *parnassah*, *chalilah*, because he lacks *emunah*.

There is a custom to give birds food on Shabbos Shirah. The Yismach Yisrael explains that when you feed an animal, such as your cow or horse, the animal feels it deserves the food because it works for you. But birds don't do anything for you. When they are fed, they understand that this is an underserved gift. We, too, seek to attain the awareness that Hashem doesn't owe us anything, and if we have *parnassah*, we should thank Hashem for His *chesed*.⁶

Tefillah

There are two types of *tefillah*. One is the *tefillah* established by Anshei Knesses HaGedolah – the Shemonah Esrei. The other

form of *tefillah* is the *tefillos* that one says in his own words.

It states (Bereishis 48:22) *בחרבי ובקשתי*, "with my sword and with my bow" (Yaakov Avinu conquered Shechem with his sword and bow). Unkelos translates these words as *בצלוחי ובבעותי*, "with my *tefillah* and with my requests."

"Tefillah" (בחרבי, sword) represents Shemonah Esrei, and the "requests" (בקשתי, arrow) represent the *tefillos* that one says in his own words.

The Meshech Chachmah (and also the Brisker Rav zt'l) explains that a sword has the potential to kill because its blades are very sharp and its tip is pointy. An arrow doesn't have the power to kill on its own, but when one pulls back the arrow in its bow with strength, it flies out of the bow; it becomes powerful and can cause damage.

This is the difference between *תפילה*, the *tefillos* written in the siddur, and *בקשה*, the *tefillos* one says in his own words. When one says the nusach of the *tefillah* of Shemonah Esrei, the words themselves accomplish so much and have the potential to annul all decrees. (See at length Nefesh HaChaim, Shaar 2, ch.11 and onwards). The words were established by Chazal with deep *kavanos* and *ruach hakodesh*, and therefore, the *tefillah* accomplishes so much, even when one's *kavanah* is absent or minimal. Whereas a *בקשה* is a *tefillah* in one's own words. It doesn't have this intrinsic strength, but since the *tefillah* comes from the depths of his heart, it is like an arrow pulled far back. It has the power to pierce the heavens.

5. The Lechovitzer zt'l said that talking about *emunah* helps us attain *emunah*. A hint to this idea is in the *pasuk* (Tehillim 116:10) *האמנתי כי אדבר*, which can be translated as, "I believe *because* I speak." The words we quoted above are another indication. *אבדה האמונה ונכרתה מפיהם*, which can be translated as, "They lost their *emunah* because they stopped speaking about it."

6. Birds raise their heads between sips while drinking. This signifies how we should behave when it comes to *parnassah*. As we engage in *hishtadlus*, we should raise our heads to heaven to remember that everything is from Him.

Therefore, a person can use both forms of tefillah and daven at all times.⁷ A soldier on the battlefield must always hold his arrow and sword. A Yid can't be without his tefillos either even for a moment. Sometimes, tefillos are represented by the sword (Shemonah Esrei), and sometimes, tefillos are represented by the bow and arrow (personal requests), but his tefillos must always be with him.

Even a fool not concentrating on his weapons, waving his sword and pulling back his bow and arrow produces results. Perhaps tefillah is compared to an arrow and a sword to teach us that regardless of how one davens, it accomplishes so much.

It states (Tehillim 18:4) *מהולל אקרא ה' ומן אויבי אושע*, "With praise I call to Hashem, and from my enemies I will be saved." *אבני זכרון*, quoting from the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*, teaches that *מהולל* can mean confusion. This pasuk discusses when one davens with a confused, unsettled mind. Even then, *ומן אויבי אושע*, he will be saved.

Thinking About the Present

The parashah begins *וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת הָעָם*, "And it came to pass when Pharaoh sent the nation..." The Gemara (Megillah 10:) says, "Whenever it states *וַיְהִי*, it is an expression of tzaar, distress," and when it states *וַיְהִי*, it is an expression of joy.

The Or HaChaim asks why an expression of *וַיְהִי*, distress, is used here. Wasn't it a very happy moment when Pharaoh sent out the Jewish nation from Mitzrayim?

The Or HaChaim explains that the distress is that Pharaoh would soon chase after the Jewish nation, which caused much tzaar and fear for the Jewish nation. Furthermore, the anguish is about the deaths of the Mitzrim, when they drowned in the sea. This was upsetting for Hashem, as Chazal (Megillah 10:)

tell us, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "The work of My hand are drowning in the sea, and you are singing shirah?" Therefore, the parashah begins with *וַיְהִי*, with an expression of tzaar.

Had Pharaoh known that Hashem sent Bnei Yisroel out of Mitzrayim and not he, he would have realized that he had no power to bring them back. He would have understood that if Hashem overruled his desires and sent them out against his will, how could he bring them back? But Pharaoh mistakenly thought that *he* sent out the nation. This resulted in him chasing them to get them back, which resulted in his own army dying in the sea, and *l'havdil*, it resulted in the tzaar the Jewish nation had when they saw the Mitzrim chasing after them. The Torah says *וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת הָעָם*, that Pharaoh thought that he sent out the nation, and this resulted in *וַיְהִי*, in much distress.

Chazal say that *וַיְהִי* is an expression of tzaar and *וְהָיָה* is an expression of joy. We can explain that this is because *וַיְהִי* is in the past tense. It means "it was." Focusing on the faults of the past can lead to sadness. *וְהָיָה* "it will be" is to think about the possibilities of the future, and such thoughts cause joy.

It states (Bereishis 48:20) *וַיְבָרֶכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר*, "He blessed them on that day." We can explain *וַיְבָרֶכֶם* that Yaakov blessed them *בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא* to focus solely on that day (see Beis Aharon p.143. quoting Rebbe Asher of Stolin).

The following story is said in the name of the Baal HaSulam *zt'l*:

A mighty king wanted to show *hakaras hatov* to one of his subjects who did a great favor for him. He gave him the key to his treasury and said, "You have two hours, starting from this moment. Go to the treasury and take out whatever you want - gold, silver, precious stones, diamonds..."

7. He can also recite Tehillim because tzaddikim said that Tehillim has tremendous power, even when said without kavanah.

The first thing the man did was prepare himself with two large, sturdy bags, to have where to place the treasures. When the bags were packed, he carried them out of the treasury and across the grounds. When he reached the outer gates, the soldiers shouted, "Why did you steal from the treasury? Leave everything here!"

He tried explaining that the king gave him permission, but they didn't want to hear about it. They forcefully took the bags and spilled the contents onto the ground.

The man went to the treasury again. He filled his bags with treasures a second time. Once again, when he tried to leave, the guards stopped him at the gate and poured out everything he had collected. This happened a third and a fourth time, too. He wouldn't give up because he knew he had a right to receive the treasures.

When he filled his bags the sixth time, the two-hour limit had arrived. He left the treasury to go home, hoping the guards would believe him and allow him to pass this time. He was shocked when the guards allowed him to keep everything in his bags. Moreover, the guards had prepared everything he had taken until then. The treasures were packed neatly into boxes, and he was allowed to bring them all home.

He returned home with all the precious items he had collected over the two hours full of joy.

He then rushed to the king's palace to thank him for his generosity. He couldn't contain his curiosity, and asked, "My master and king, why did you tell the guards to stop me at the gate and to take everything away? And why did you finally change your mind and give it all back to me?"

The king explained, "My dear friend, I have *hakaras hatov* to you for what you did for me, and I wanted you to receive many treasures. But I knew that once your bags were full, you would feel wealthy and wouldn't feel it necessary to take more, even if the two hours hadn't yet passed. So I told

the guards to pour out everything you gathered. When you saw that you had nothing, I knew you would quickly return to the treasury to fill your bags again with the treasures. The guards took the wealth away from you five times, and each time you felt that you had nothing, and this spurred you to keep trying. This went on for two hours, and now you have two hours' worth of precious, collected treasures from my treasury."

From this *mashal* we learn one of the reasons people fall from their levels. They were collecting good deeds, grabbing a lot of mitzvos, which will be their reward and portion in Olam HaBa, and then, suddenly, they fall from their level and feel that they lost everything. This happens so that we should feel that we have nothing, and be motivated to begin and try again. Otherwise, we might feel satisfied with our accomplishments and stop seeking more mitzvos and rewards. Hashem wants us to periodically feel that we have nothing, which will encourage us to grasp more opportunities to serve Hashem. We will think, "Maybe this time I will finally succeed in making a nachas ruach for Hashem. Maybe this time I will succeed to do a good deed."

However, the danger is that we may feel hopeless and give up. Like in the *mashal*, if the man had given up when the guards took the wealth he gathered, he would go home, mope, and be angry, and he wouldn't have anything. But since he didn't give up, he gained so much.

The lesson is to not focus on the past, on what you lost, but on what you can receive in the present and in the future. Focusing on the past might cause you to lose hope, but focusing on the present will help you earn many good deeds, and a great reward in Olam HaBa.

It is said in the name of Reb Leibele Eiger zt'l:

דָּבַר אֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָשְׁבוּ וְיָחֲנוּ לְפָנַי פִּי (14:2-4) הַהִירָתָּה... וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְּ

them turn back and encamp in front of Pi HaChiros... And they did so."

Rashi writes that the Torah says וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כֵן to express the praise of the Jewish nation. When Moshe told them to return toward Mitzrayim, toward their enemies who were pursuing them, they did so. They didn't say, "How can we go to our pursuers? We must escape. Rather, they said, "We have to listen to the words of [Moshe] ben Amram."

The problem is that even though the Torah wants to praise the Jewish nation, this action resulted in something quite unpraiseworthy! Since they turned back towards Mitzrayim, it spurred Pharaoh and the Egyptians to go out to fight with them, to bring them back to Mitzrayim. The Torah tells that Bnei Yisrael said the following harsh words (14:11-12) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה הַמְבִלִי אֵין קְבָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְמֹתָנוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לָמוֹת בְּמִצְרַיִם מֵהַזֶּה לָּנוּ לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, "They said to Moshe, Is it because there are no graves in Mitzrayim that you have taken us to die in the desert? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Mitzrayim?"

Wouldn't it have been better just to avoid mentioning the entire subject? Why should we praise the Jewish nation (that they listened to Moshe and went back towards Mitzrayim) if soon afterward, the Torah will mention the harsh, improper words that the nation spoke? What do we gain with the words of admiration if they will follow with words that are an embarrassment for the Jewish people?

A similar question can be asked on the pasuk (Shemos 12:39) וְגַם צָדָה לֹא עָשׂוּ לָהֶם, which means they left Mitzrayim without taking along food for the trip. Here, too, Rashi writes that the pasuk wants to tell the praise of the Jewish nation. "They didn't say, "How can we go to the desert without food? "Rather, they believed and went. This is as

it states (Yirmiyahu 2:2) זְכַרְתִּי לְךָ הַסֹּד וְעֹרִיךְ אֶהְבֵּת בְּלֹלְתֶיךָ לְקַתְּךָ אֶחָדִי בְּמִדְבָּר בְּאַרְצוֹ לֹא זָרוּעָה "I remember to you the loving kindness of your youth, the love of your marriage, your following Me in the desert, in a land not sown."

This is certainly a great praise for the Jewish nation, and we say this pasuk in the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah. But we wonder why it is mentioned if together with this comes along something negative for the Jewish nation. The nation complained (16:3) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי יִתֵּן מוֹתֵנוּ בְּיַד ה' בְּאַרְצוֹ מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁבְתֵּנוּ עַל סֵיר הַבָּשָׂר בְּאַחַלְנוּ לָהֶם לְשִׁבְעָה יָמֵי הַזֶּה וְהוֹצֵאתָם אֶתָּנוּ אֶל הַיָּם, הַמְדַבֵּר הַזֶּה לְהַמִּית אֶת כָּל הַקְּהָל הַזֶּה בְּרָעַב "Bnei Yisrael said to [Moshe and Aharon], If only we had died by the hand of Hashem in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat, when we ate bread to our fill! For you have brought us out into this desert, to starve this entire congregation to death." What do we gain by saying their praise if this will result in us telling the negative things that were said in its aftermath?

The answer to these questions is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu values one good deed that a Yid does, even if it doesn't last and even if something negative occurs afterward.⁸

This is an important lesson. One shouldn't say, "What purpose is my teshuvah if it won't last, or if the teshuvah itself might result in some aveirah?" The answer is that every moment of being close to Hashem is precious, every good deed is precious, and Hashem praises us for it. Afterwards, there might be problems or setbacks, but that doesn't mean the good moment was lost. This is a reminder to do teshuvah repeatedly because each teshuvah is precious to Hashem.

8. Rashi (15:2) states that the Mitzrim merited burial because Pharaoh said ה' הצדיק. This requires explanation because immediately after saying ה' הצדיק, he backtracked and refused to let the Yidden go. So, why were they rewarded for a teshuvah that didn't last? The answer is that a moment of teshuvah, from whomever it may be, deserves reward.

The Greatness of Every Yid

After Klal Yisrael left Eretz Mitzrayim, it states (14:3) וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִבְדָּים הֵם בְּאֶרֶץ סָוֵר עָלֵיהֶם הַמִּדְבָּר, "Pharaoh said to Bnei Yisrael, 'They are trapped in the land. The desert has closed in upon them.'" To whom did Pharaoh speak? The Yidden had already left! What does it mean וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, that Pharaoh spoke to Bnei Yisrael? Targum Yonason writes, וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה לְדָסָן וְלְאַבִּירָם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דְּמוֹשְׁתֵּיירוֹן, בְּמִצְרַיִם, "Pharaoh spoke to Dasan v'Aviram of Bnei Yisrael who had remained in Mitzrayim." Dasan v'Aviram stayed behind in Mitzrayim when the Yidden left. The sea split for the Jewish nation, but Dasan v'Aviram weren't there.

Nevertheless, we find Dasan v'Aviram in the desert. How did they join the Jewish nation? Chazal tell us that the sea split for them, as well. They came late to the Yam Suf; the sea had already split and returned to its natural self, and then the sea split again, just for Dasan v'Aviram.

We learn from this just how great every Yid is before Hashem, even people like Dasan v'Aviram. They were worthy of having the sea split just for them.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim writes on the pasuk (14:29) וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבֶּשֶׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם, "Bnei Yisrael went on dry land in the midst of the sea." There is a rule: מִיעוּט רַבִּים שְׁנַיִם, when the pasuk discusses a majority, it is referring to at least two people. This pasuk is also written in plural, וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ, and it is referring to two people, Dasan v'Aviram. The sea split for them, and they enjoyed the dry land and the miracles that happened to all of Bnei Yisrael.

It states (Tehillim 136:13) לְגֹזֵר יַם סוּף לְגִזְרִים, "To Him Who cut the Sea of Reeds to slices" and Chazal learn from this pasuk that Hashem split the sea to twelve parts, so each shevet would have its own path to pass through the sea. The Sfas Emes (Pesach 5664) says that this was to show that each shevet was worthy in its own right for the sea to split just for them.

The Sfas Emes adds that the sea split into many smaller parts, as it states (Tehillim 74:13) אֶתְּהָ פוֹרַרְתָּ בְּעֹז יָדְךָ, "You crumbled the sea with Your might." This was so everyone should have his own path to go through the sea. Every Yid was worthy; every Yid is precious to Hashem.⁹

9. The Chazon Ish zt'l often sent Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l on missions for the needs of Klal Yisrael. Generally, when the Chazon Ish wrote him a letter, he began with the words לְכַבוֹד ר' יַעֲקֹב, "In honor of Reb Yaakov." Once he started the letter, לְכַבוֹד יְדִידִיר יַעֲקֹב, "In honor of my friend, Reb Yaakov." Reb Yankele saved this letter, and about twenty-five years ago, when he wrote up his will, he requested that the letter be buried with him. He figured that when the Heavenly Court saw that the Chazon Ish considered him a friend, they would treat him better.

One day, he changed his mind. He explained that when he davened shacharis and said the words וַיְדַבֵּר עִמָּם, "Your friends You passed through the sea...." he realized that every Yid is Hashem's friend. So why should he rely on the friendship of the Chazon Ish? He is Hashem's friend! And he ripped up the letter.

An old person had dementia and forgot his name and home address. A kind person noticed him wandering the streets, completely lost, so he took him into his car and said, "I will drive around. If you see a store or street that you recognize, we'll stop there. Perhaps we can figure out where you live."

As they rode, the driver commented, "It would be good if you had a note with you at all times, with your name and address, so you don't get lost."

The old man remembered that he had such a note, and with that note, he got back home safely.

The same can be said about us. We must remember who we are. We are the beloved children of Hashem yisbarach. Hashem loves us, and we want to serve Him. If we sometimes forget, we need something to remind us, and we return to the path we want to go on.

Tzidkas HaTzaddik (154, from Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen zt'l) teaches, "Just as a person must believe in Hashem *yisbarach*, so must a person believe in himself, to believe that Hashem is interested in him and that he was created for a purpose. He must believe... that Hashem has pleasure from him when he performs Hashem's will. This is the meaning of the pasuk (14:31) ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו, 'They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, his servant.' 'Belief in Moshe' means to believe in Klal Yisrael... They all believed that Hashem wanted them."

At the beginning of the parashah it states (13:17) וְלֹא נָהָם אֱלֹקִים דֶּרֶךְ אֲרָץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא, "Hashem did not lead them the path of the Plishtim, because it was near." Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos explains this pasuk in a wondrous manner: וְלֹא נָהָם אֱלֹקִים דֶּרֶךְ אֲרָץ, Hashem doesn't lead His holy, Jewish nation in the manner that He leads the rest of the world, כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא, because Hashem is close to them, and He loves them. He leads them on a path beyond the rules of nature.

The Mitzrim were worse than Amalek, yet we are obligated to kill every member of Amalek, and not so with the Mitzrim.

The explanation is that Pharaoh didn't believe in Hashem, as he said מי ה', but Amalek was worse because Amalek didn't believe in the Jewish nation, as it states (Devarim 25:18), ויזנב בך כל הנחשלים אחריך, and Rashi explains that Amalek attacked the people who sinned, those who were banished from the clouds of glory. In other words, he caused the people who sinned to feel down and unwanted by Hashem. Amalek's approach was to cause people to lose belief in themselves, which is worse than Pharaoh, who caused people to lose belief in Hashem.

We discussed above that Dasan v'Aviram left over the manna, and we discussed that

this was because they didn't have bitachon that Hashem would give them *parnassah* the next day. There is more to the story. They lacked *emunah in themselves*. They didn't believe they were worthy of the manna to fall for them.

The Ishbitzer teaches this lesson on the pasuk (16:20) וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּתֵרוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִפְּנֵי עַד, בקר גִּרָם תוֹלְעִים וַיִּבְאֵשׁ, "But some men did not obey Moshe and left over [the manna] until morning, and it bred worms and became putrid..."

Rashi writes that these men were Dasan v'Aviram.

The Mei HaShiloach (the Ishbitzer zt'l) explains that their sin was that they had the negative form of humility (ענוה פסולה). They thought they weren't worthy that a miracle should happen to them, and that the manna should fall for them again the next day.

This is why their manna grew worms, which represent humility, hinting that their sin was their negative form of humility.

We must believe in ourselves, no matter what level we are on, and we must know that Hashem loves us and desires our service.

Shovavim

Shovavim is a time for teshuvah, to amend severe aveiros.¹⁰ It is worth recognizing that Hashem accepted the teshuvah of Pharaoh, so we can be certain that Hashem will undoubtedly accept our teshuvah.

It states in Pirkei d'Reb Eliezer (ch.43) that Pharaoh rebelled against Hashem, and he said (Shemos 5:2) מי ה' אשר אשמע בקולו, "Who is Hashem that I should heed his voice?" Later, Pharaoh did teshuvah and said (15:11) מי כמוכה באלים ה', "Who is like You among the powerful, Hashem?" He used the same word מי, once

10. I was once in a coffee room, in a shul, and there was a sign on the wall: "If you made a mess, don't worry, you aren't a malach. But if you don't clean up after yourself, you aren't a mensch." This is our responsibility during Shovavim - to rectify and cleanse ourselves from the errors of our past.

for his denial of Hashem and once when he recognized Hashem's presence and strength. This is a sign that he did teshuvah. Hashem accepted his teshuvah, and he was saved. He didn't die in the sea together with all the others.

Chazal tell us that Pharaoh lived for many more years, and he became the king of Nineveh, the great, sinful city, as it states (Yonah 1:2) *כי עלתה רעתם לפני* "Their evil has come before Me." But he did teshuvah and told the people of Nineveh to repent, and the city was saved.

It states (Devarim 23:8) *לא תתעב מצרי כי גר היית בארצו*, "You shall not despise a Mitzri because you were a sojourner in his land."

The Shach (Al HaTorah, from the students of the Arizal) says that *מצרי* is written in singular tense because it refers to Pharaoh. The pasuk is saying that we shouldn't despise Pharaoh. More accurately, the pasuk is talking to Yonah HaNavi, and telling him that he shouldn't despise Pharaoh, although he had reason to be upset with Pharaoh.

This is because Yonah said a *nevuah* that Nineveh would be overturned, but the people did teshuvah, and the city was saved. Yonah was upset that his prophecy didn't turn out as he had said. He said (Yonah 4:8) *טוב מתי מחיי*, "My death is better than my life."

Pharaoh, the king of Nineveh, inspired the people of Nineveh to do teshuvah, and Hashem saved them. The pasuk speaks to Yonah HaNavi and tells him *לא תתעב מצרי*, don't be upset with Pharaoh, *כי גר*, because he did teshuvah and he converted, and Hashem accepted him.

If Hashem accepts the teshuvah of the great *rasha* Pharaoh and the sinful city Nineveh, Hashem will undoubtedly accept our teshuvah as well.

The teshuvah of Shovavim is primarily about matters of kedushah (guarding the eyes, thoughts, etc.). For this, one needs holy *עקשנות*, holy stubbornness. He will fall and have ups and downs, but with holy stubbornness and

perseverance, he will become *kadosh* in the end.

On a *shtar tana'im* (the document read at an engagement celebration), the guarantors to the money agreements written in the document are called *ערב קבלן*. The document often writes *ערב קבלן* with *roshei teivos*, *ע"ק*.

At the chasunah of Reb Eizik of Kamarna, the two people chosen as *ערב קבלן* were the two *tzaddikim*, the Maor v'Shemesh and the Or l'Shamayim. After everything was signed, the Chozeh of Lublin read the document out loud, as customary. When he came to the *roshei teivos* *ע"ק* he read them, *עקשן קדוש*, the holy stubborn person... (the Maor v'Shemesh) and the holy stubborn person... (the Or l'Shamayim)."

This is because to attain kedushah one needs stubbornness. One attains kedushah by being *עקשן קדוש*, a holy stubborn person. This means stubbornness to continue doing good, even after falling several times.

"I am Hashem, Your Healer"

It states (15:26) *ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך והישר בעיניו תעשה והאזנת למצותיו ושמרת כל חקיו כל המחלה אשר שמת במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך*, "[Hashem] said, 'If you hearken diligently to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, and do what is just in His eyes, give ear to His commandments and observe all His decrees, then any of the diseases that I placed in Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer.'"

There seems to be a contradiction in the pasuk. It states that we won't become ill, and afterward, it states *כי אני ה' רפאך*, that Hashem will heal us. (See Rashi).

The Yaavutz explains that there are illnesses within us every day, but Hashem heals us each day so the diseases don't develop and take over the health of the person's body. Hashem promises that we won't become ill because He is always curing us before we become aware of the illness within us.

The Yaavutz explains that this is the reason we say *רפאונו ה' ונרפא* every day in *Shemonah Esrei*. We need to daven for a refuah every day, because every day we are ill, and every day Hashem heals us.

The Gemara (Yoma 22:) says *כמה לא חלי ולא מרגיש גברא דמריה סייעיה סמוך ומובטח ואין צריך לחלות ולדאג מכל רעה מי שהקב"ה בעזרו*. This means that if you are someone Hashem is helping, you have nothing to worry about. Hashem will take care of all your needs.

Rebbe Pinchas Ustilla zt'l said that we could also translate it as follows: *כמה לא חלי ולא מרגיש גברא דמריה סייעיה*, as long as a person hasn't become ill, and he doesn't realize that Hashem is helping him. He takes his health for granted and doesn't recognize that he must praise Hashem for his health.

Reb Shlomo Tchortkover zt'l (niftar year 5717) was diagnosed on Tu b'Shvat with the known 'disease.' Growths were found on his body. On Shabbos, parashas Bishalach, he said at his tish, "I never understood the pasuk (15:26) *אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך והישר בעיניו תעשה... כל המחלה אשר שמתני במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך*, "If you hearken diligently to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, and do what is just in His eyes...then any of the diseases that I placed in Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem, your healer.' It seems like a small reward for keeping the entire Torah. Why is not becoming ill considered a valid reward for keeping the Torah? But now I understand that being healthy is the greatest reward. When someone is ill, he is prepared to give away everything he owns to become well. He would pay billions to get better. The pasuk concludes *אני ה' רפאך*, because Hashem is healing us all the time, only we aren't aware of it."

This teaches us two lessons: It reminds us that we should daven that we remain healthy, as Chazal teach, one should daven not to become ill. Furthermore, one should

praise Hashem for the health that Hashem gives him.

A child once became ill. The parents, who lived in Eretz Yisrael, brought him to an expert doctor in America. The doctor said that it would cost an enormous price to heal their child. The parents had nothing close to that amount of money, and they were on the verge of losing hope. The doctor spoke to the child a little, and the child found favor in his eyes. The doctor said to himself, "Because of money, I will let this child die?" He told the parents that he would heal their child for free, and he did so.

When they were ready to return to Eretz Yisrael, now with their healthy son, the father said to the doctor, "I am unable to pay you with money, but if you ever come to Eretz Yisrael and you need something, call me, and I will do whatever I can to help you."

Some years later, the doctor came to Eretz Yisrael, and he was having trouble with his car in the middle of the night. He remembered that he had a promise from the father of a child he treated that he could call him for any favor. He called him.

At first, the father didn't understand why someone was waking him in the middle of the night, and he responded with harsh words. The doctor told him, "I am the doctor who healed your son. Now I need some help. Won't you help me?"

The lesson is that Hashem does so much kindness for us. He heals us from all our illnesses. There are illnesses within us that we don't even know about and *baruch Hashem*, we are healthy and cured of them. If Hashem asks something from us, won't we do His request? This is implied in the pasuk (15:26) *ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך... כי אני ה' רפאך*, which can be translated, "You should listen to My voice because I heal you. You owe it to me to do what I ask from you when I ask you for a favor."¹¹

11. Reb Noson Gestetner zt'l said he was once by a dentist and noticed that the dentist was a talmid

Joy on Shabbos Shirah

After maariv on Shabbos Shirah, Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l repeated a question he heard from Reb Yitzchak Vorka zt'l. Reb Yitzchak Vorka asked, "Why is this Shabbos called Shabbos Shirah? We generally don't name the Shabbos after what we read in the Torah. Last week's Shabbos (parashas Bo) isn't called 'Shabbos Yetzias Mitzrayim,' and next week's Shabbos (parashas Yisro) isn't called 'Shabbos Matan Torah.' Why, then, is this Shabbos called Shabbos Shirah?"

Rebbe Bunim answered that it is because the Shirah is written in the sefer Torah לבינה ע"ל גבי אריה. (Az Yashir is written in the sefer Torah in a song format, with large spaces after each phrase.) Then Rebbe Bunim said with hislahavus, "Every Yid must be very happy on this Shabbos!"

The Ramasayim Tzofim zt'l (Tana d'bei Eliyahu Zuta 16) offers the following explanation to explain Rebbe's lesson. It is based on the Shlah Hakadosh, who says that the ink of a sefer Torah represents the neshamos, the good deeds, the emunah, and the daas of the Jewish nation. The white of a sefer Torah represents the physical bodies of Bnei Yisrael.¹²

Ramasayim Tzofim explains that when we read about yetzias Mitzrayim in the Torah, the typical Yid doesn't experience the joy of yetzias Mitzrayim, and when we read about matan Torah, the average Yid doesn't experience the incredible joy of matan Torah. Tzaddikim do experience the joy; however,

the average Yid doesn't. This is why we don't call last Shabbos "Shabbos Yetzias Mitzrayim" and next Shabbos "Shabbos Matan Torah."

However, when we read Az Yashir, every Yid can experience the joy of kriyas Yam Suf. There are many white spaces between the stanzas, which means that the bodies of Bnei Yisrael also experience it. The human mind and heart experience the joy of kriyas Yam Suf. It can therefore be called Shabbos Shirah. It is a joy that everyone can experience.

This is why Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa urged every Yid to be happy on this Shabbos. This is a joy that everyone can relate to.

Rashi (Shemos 12:6) writes that for the Jewish nation to leave Mitzrayim, they needed mitzvos, so Hashem gave them the mitzvos of korban Pesach and *bris milah*. The Avnei Nezer asks why a mitzvah wasn't required to merit kriyas Yam Suf. He answers that the Jewish nation served Hashem with mesirus nefesh; they believed in Hashem and walked directly into the deep sea, and when there is mesirus nefesh, no other merit is needed.

The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch zt'l referred to Shevi'i shel Pesach (the day we read the Shirah) as Rosh Hashanah for *mesirus nefesh*." The same applies to Shabbos Shirah.

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l taught that the word א"ז from א"ז ישי" hints at the two days a year we read the Shirah. The letter ז"י is

chacham. "You should be a Rav," Rav Gestetner noted. "Why are you a dentist?"

The dentist wittily replied, "I used to be a Rav, but no one listened to me. So, I became a doctor. As a doctor, people listen to me."

Rav Gestetner said that this is implied in the words (15:26) ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך... כי אני ה' רפאך, which can be understood that we should listen to Hashem's voice because Hashem is our doctor, and people listen to doctors' orders.

12. יש שישים רבוי אותיות לתורה ל"א is roshei teivos of "There are six-hundred-thousand letters in the Torah," corresponding to the 600,000 souls of Bnei Yisrael. A sefer Torah consists of black ink over white parchment. The ink represents the neshamos of Bnei Yisrael, and the white spaces represent the bodies.

gematriya seven, alluding to Shevi'i shel Pesach, and אל"ף, can be translated as to teach or to study (אלופך בינה), alluding to Shabbos Shirah when we learn about *kriyas Yam Suf*. These are days we commemorate the *mesirus nefesh* of the Jewish nation.¹³

Chazal tell us, "Even a maidservant at the Yam Suf saw greater revelations than the *Navi Yechezkel ben Buzi*." This teaches us the power of serving Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*. In a moment, a *mesirus nefesh* Yid is elevated from the lowest to the highest levels.

13. Tzaddikim say that when one serves Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, beyond his nature, he will merit miracles beyond nature.

We received a letter from a couple who was childless for many years. They decided to do something beyond their nature to merit Hashem's salvation. They threw away their iPhones, which was a very difficult step for them. It was *mesirus nefesh*, but they prayed that in that merit, Hashem would perform miracles for them beyond nature. Indeed, they were blessed with a child.