

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Shemos



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Torah Wellsprings - Shemos

The Purpose of Creation

שְׁמֹוֹת, the name of this week's parashah is roshei teivos for חַכְלִית מַעֲשֵׂי שָׁמַיִם וָאָرֶץ, "The purpose for creating Heaven and earth." The purpose of creation is emunah, and indeed, throughout Sefer Shemos, the Torah teaches us emunah. It tells the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim and kriyas Yam Suf, the wonders of matan Torah, and how Hashem resided with the Yidden in the Mishkan. Also, the many details and *meforshim* on Sefer Shemos strengthen our belief that Hashem created and leads the world, that we should trust in Him, alone, and pray to Him for all our needs.

Everything is in Hashems Hands

It states (2:12) וַיַּפְנֵן פֶּה וְכֵן, that Moshe looked to both sides to make sure that no one was watching. Yosher Divrei Emes (על התורה) writes that כה means כה מִן הַשְׁמִים, it is this way, because this was decreed from Heaven. He explains that every person should implement כה, into their lives as follows: If something good happens to him, he should say, כה מִן הַשְׁמִים, this is from heaven. And if it is chas v'shalom not good, he should also say כה מִן הַשְׁמִים, it is this way from Heaven.

The *Or haChochma* quotes this lesson and adds from his mechutan, Reb Mordechai, that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 144:15) אֲשֶׁרִי הַצָּם שְׁבָכָה לוֹ כה. They know that whatever occurs to them is bashert.

The Mitzrim hated the Jewish nation vehemently, as it states (1:12) נִיקְנָו מִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "They were disgusted from Bnei Yisrael" (as Rashi explains). After they suffered the ten makos from Bnei Yisrael, we would assume that their hatred increased. However, it states (3:21-22) וַיַּתְהִיתִי אֶת חַן הַצָּם הַזֶּה בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרָיִם וְהַיְהִי תְּלִכּוֹ לְאָתָה תְּלִכּוֹ רִיקְם, וְאֲשֶׁר אָשֶׁר מִשְׁכַּנְתָּה וּמִגְּרוֹת בִּתְהָבֵל כֶּסֶף וְכֵלִי זָהָב וְשָׁמְלָת וְשָׁמְפָם עַל בְּנֵיכֶם וְעַל בְּנֵתֵיכֶם וְנַצְלָפָם

את מִצְרָיִם, "I will put this people's favor in the eyes of the Mitzrim, and it will come to pass that when you go, you will not go empty handed. Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and from the dweller in her house silver and gold objects and garments, and you shall put on your sons and on your daughters, and you shall empty out Mitzrayim."

The *meforshim* (see also Or Yechezkel vol.3) ask why they would want to lend things to Bnei Yisrael? How did it occur that חַן הַצָּם בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרָיִם, that the Mitzrim found *chen* in Bnei Yisrael and wanted to help them? What happened to their years-long hatred?

Also, Hashem could have told Bnei Yisrael to take these items from the Mitzrim against their will! Why did it have to occur in a manner that they found favor in the Mitzrim's eyes?

The answer is that Hashem wanted to teach the Jewish nation a lesson in emunah. Hashem showed the nation that hatred is from Hashem's decree, and He can take away the hatred in a moment.

A proof to this lesson is in Tehillim (105:25) הַפְּךָ לְבָם לְשָׂנָא עַמוֹּ, "He turned their hearts to hate His people..." The long-time hatred in Mitzraim came from Hashem's decree. Therefore, Hashem can turn it around and *וַיַּתְהִיתִי אֶת חַן הַצָּם בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרָיִם*, Hashem can place into the hearts of the Mitzrim to love Bnei Yisrael.

When a person knows that everything is from Hashem, he lives a tranquil life. If someone harms him, he isn't angry at the person because he knows that (Shmuel 2, 16:10) הִ אָמַר קָלְל, that it was from Hashem. Even when a person harms himself because of an unwise decision, he won't eat up his heart with feelings of guilt because he knows that his choices are also destined and planned

from heaven.¹ As it states in this week's parashah (4:11) מִי שֶׁם פֶּה לֹאָדָם אוֹ מִי יְשׁוּם אֶלְםָ אוֹ חֶרְשָׁ (Who gave man a mouth, or who makes one dumb (mute) or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, Hashem?) One translation of פֶּה (seeing) is wise, which is what Hashem told Moshe is from Him. One isn't clever on his own. His intelligence is from Hashem. Therefore, when he makes a clever financial investment, for example, he shouldn't feel proud of himself. He should praise Hashem for giving him the wisdom to make this choice.

Also, if one should have spoken up, but he kept quiet, and due to his silence, he suffered a loss (spiritual or financial), let him remember that הַלְאָ אָנֹכִי הָ (Who gave dumb (mute)... it is I, Hashem.)

It was destined from Hashem that it be this way, that he be silent at this time. With such thoughts in mind, he will always be happy with his life, never angry with himself or with others, never worried about the

future or the past. He knows that everything is exactly as Hashem wants it to be.

It states (1:8) וַיָּמָלֵךְ חָדֵשׁ עַל מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יְדַע (A new king arose over Mitzrayim who did not know of Yosef.) The Kli Yakar explains that if he had known Yosef and his history, he would have known that it is impossible to go against Hashem's will, and he wouldn't have tried to harm the Jewish people. Yosef dreamt that he would be the king over his brothers, and that they would bow down to him, and his brothers did whatever they could to prevent Yosef's dreams from materializing. This is the reason they chose to sell Yosef as a slave to Mitzrayim. They thought that this would certainly disable the message of the dreams from happening. But all their attempts didn't help. On the contrary, because Yosef was in Mitzrayim, this resulted in them bowing to him. Pharaoh didn't know this story. Had he known about it, he wouldn't have tried to override Hashem's plan and hashgachah

1. It states (1:22) וַיֹּצֵא פְּרָעָה לְכָל עַמּוֹ לְאָמַר כֹּל הַבָּן הַיָּלֹד הַיָּאָרֶת תְּשִׁלְבָּחוּ וְכֹל הַבָּת תְּחִזֵּן (Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every son who is born you shall cast into the Nile, and every daughter you shall allow to live.'

Moshe was born, and the Torah tells us (2:2-3) וְתִצְפְּנָהוּ שֶׁלְשָׁה יְרֵחִים, וְלֹא יִכְלֶה עוֹד נָאכְפִּינוּ וְתַקְהַ לֹּו תְּבַתְּ גַּמְאָ וְתִמְמָרָה בְּחַמֵּר וּבְזַפְתָּ (She hid him for three months. She could no longer hide him, she took for him a reed basket, smeared it with clay and pitch, placed the child into it, and put it into the marsh at the Nile's edge.)

Rashi writes, "The day Moshe was born, the stargazers told [Pharaoh] that the savior of Yisrael was born today... And we see [from the stars] that in the end, he will be punished by water.¹ Therefore, they decreed... כֹּל הַבָּן הַיָּלֹד, that every child born should be cast into water... They didn't know that in the end, [Moshe] would be punished with מִי מְרִיבָה, the waters of dispute [when Moshe hit the stone; and he wasn't harmed by the Nile]."

The Gemara (Sotah 12b) states that after Moshe was placed into the River, the stargazers told Pharaoh, "The savior of Bnei Yisrael was born, and he was thrown into the Nile." Thus, Pharaoh abolished the decree, and no more Jewish children were thrown into the Nile.

Let us now think about how Yocheved, Moshe's mother, felt at this time. When Moshe was born, she hid him in her house for three months. When she couldn't hide him anymore, she had no choice but to place him in the river. Soon afterwards, the decree was annulled. Yocheved could have berated herself, "Why couldn't I wait just one more day? Had I waited, I could have kept Moshe home! I cast Moshe into the Nile for no reason, because the decree was annulled a day afterwards!" Actually, the decree was canceled because Moshe was placed in the Nile. If he hadn't been placed in the Nile, the decree would have continued.

Let us learn from this that a person shouldn't say, "I should have waited longer... I should have done this or that..." because a person doesn't know anything. Everything is in Hashem's hands, and praise Hashem that He is leading you in the best possible way.

pratis. Pharaoh decreed (1:10) פָּרַבָּה. His goal and his ambition were to prevent the Jewish nation from growing and from increasing in number. He didn't know that it is impossible to go against Hashem's plan. Hashem said (1:12) כִּי־רַבָּה, that they will increase. In fact, the more Pharaoh tried to lessen them, the more they increased in number. As it states (1:12) וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֶתְּנוּ כִּי־רַבָּה וְכֹן יִפְרֹץ. The Kli Yakar writes, "Whatever Pharaoh did to go against Bnei Yisrael, that reversed itself to be negative for the Mitzrim." Rashi writes that six children were born at each birth. And this is because it is impossible to go against Hashem's plan.

Pharaoh decreed that all newborn male children should be cast into the Nile. He made this decree to kill the savior of Bnei Yisrael.

But this decree resulted in Pharaoh saving the savior of Bnei Yisrael. As the Torah tells us, Pharaoh's daughter Basyah found Moshe's *teivah* in the Nile, she saved him, and Moshe was raised in Pharaoh's own home! The Steipler Gaon zt'l (Birkas Peretz) gives this as an example to show that it is impossible to go against Hashem's plan. The more you try to go against it, Hashem will take what you did to enable His will to occur.

Hashem tells Moshe to throw his staff to the ground (see beginning of perek 4). Moshe did so, and it became a snake. The בָּارְ מַשָּׁה of Ozerov zt'l explains that a staff represents one's support, the matters that one relies on.

Sometimes the matters one relies on can turn around and become like a snake. The people he trusts to help him might turn around and become his enemies. The staff turning into a snake reminds us that trusting in others is weak, and how important it is to rely on Hashem.

After this, Hashem told Moshe to grab onto the snake, and it became a staff. This taught Moshe, and all of Bnei Yisrael, that even what we think is against us, these matters can turn around and become our staff, our support. Everything is in Hashem's hands, and He can turn our enemies and opposition around to become our support.²

For the Good

It states (1:12) וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֶתְּנוּ כִּי־רַבָּה וְכֹן יִפְרֹץ, "As much as they would afflict them, so will they multiply and so will they gain strength." This phrase is written in the future tense. Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorka zt'l (quoting Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l) explains that this refers to all future generations. When their enemies afflict them, the Jewish nation grows even stronger, and they become even more successful than before.

For it is known that מפי הָעָלִין לֹא תַצֹּא הַרְעָה, nothing bad comes from Hashem's mouth (see Eichah 3:28). When something appears bad, it is merely preparation for a greater good that will come from it.

וְאֵת שְׁפָרְעָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת הַגְּנָשִׁים בְּעַם (5:6-7) It states (5:6-7) וְאֵת שְׁפָרְעָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת הַגְּנָשִׁים בְּעַם לְאָמֵר, לֹא תָאַסְפֵּן לְתַת תְּבַן קָלָם לְלִפְנֵן הַלְּבָנִים

2. It states (Tehillim 116:6) שְׁמַר פְּתָאִים ה', "Hashem protects the fool." The Radak teaches that since the fool doesn't do anything to protect himself or to succeed in life, Hakadosh Baruch Hu has compassion on him, and therefore, שְׁמַר פְּתָאִים ה', "Hashem protects the fool."

The Radak adds that a *very* wise person realizes that this is the preferred path. What could be better than Hashem saving him? He does hishtadlus because a person is obligated to make hishtadlus, but he doesn't trust in hishtadlus. He trusts in Hashem to save him because he knows that he is like a fool who doesn't know how to take care of himself. And when Hashem sees that he considers himself to be like a fool, Hashem will take care of him.

The end of the pasuk states, זֶלְעָתִי וְלִי הַוַּיִּעַש, "when I was poor, He saved me." The Radak explains that when a person knows that he is poor in intellect and that he can't manage on his own, Hashem will save him.

Therefore, let us place our trust in Hashem, for He helps those who trust in Him.

בְּתַּּיְלָנְדָה, "On that day, Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying: 'You shall not continue to give stubble to the people to make the bricks like yesterday and the day before yesterday. Let them go and gather stubble for themselves.'" Moshe complained to Hashem, "Why are things becoming harder for the Jewish nation, instead of better?" Hashem replied (6:1) עַתָּה תִּרְאָה אֲשֶׁר לְפָרָעָה כִּי בִּיד תֹּזְקָה יְשָׁלָחָם וְבִיד תֹּזְקָה יְגַשֵּׂשָׂם מִפְּרָעָה, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out, and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land."

The Kli Yakar explains that Hashem told Moshe that things were becoming better. The hardship of the workload that was increased would help them leave Mitzrayim. This is because it was decreed that the Yidden should be in galus for four hundred

years. Due to the hard work, the decree was minimized, and they would leave Mitzrayim after living there for 210 years. What appeared like hardships was for their benefit.³

It states (1:14) וַיִּמְرֹדוּ אֶת חַיִּים, that the Mitzrim embittered the lives of the Jewish people. This refers to the slavery and hard work in Mitzrayim. The trop on these words are קָדְמָא וְאַזְלָא, which is surprising, because קָדְמָא וְאַזְלָא is a happy tune. Why should there be a happy tune when the words describe the bitter galus in Mitzrayim? Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke zt'l explains that this is because the bitter work enabled them to leave Mitzrayim after 210 years, instead of the initial plan, to be in Mitzrayim for 400 years. קָדְמָא וְאַזְלָא can be translated literally as "they left early". This was due to וַיִּמְרֹדוּ אֶת חַיִּים, the bitter slavery.

3. It states (3:18) גַּלְכָּה אַתָּה קָרְבָּן שְׁלָשָׁת נַּיִם בְּמִדְבָּר וְנַבְּחָה לְהָאָלֶקְיִם, "Let us go for a three days' journey in the desert and offer up sacrifices to Hashem, our G-d." Why is there an emphasis on three days? Wasn't the plan that the Jewish nation should leave from Mitzrayim for good?

Reb Yaakov Kaminetzky zt'l (Emes l'Yaakov) explains that the original plan was that Bnei Yisrael should be in galus in Mitzrayim for four hundred years. As it states (Bereishis 15:13) וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָהָם יְדֹעַ כִּי גַּרְגָּחָה וְרֹעֵן בָּאָרֶץ לֹא, "[Hashem] said to Avram, "You shall surely know that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and oppress them, for four hundred years." Rashi writes, "From the birth of Yitzchak until they left Mitzrayim was four hundred years." However, that wasn't the original plan. Ideally, the galus in Mitzrayim itself should have lasted four hundred years. If it had been so, there would be no need for any other galus or tzaros afterwards. However, the Jewish nation couldn't stay in Mitzrayim for the full four hundred years. They fell to very low levels, and they were at risk of falling even lower. Had they remained in Mitzrayim any longer, they would never be able to leave. This is why Hashem took them out of Mitzrayim 190 years early.

There was, however, a solution that would have enabled the Jewish nation to remain in Mitzrayim for the full term of 400 years. That is, if they would leave Mitzrayim for three days. During this respite, they would have the opportunity to cleanse themselves from the impure ways of the Mitzrim and accept the yoke of heaven. That respite would have strengthened them so much that they would be able to return to Mitzrayim and complete the full 400-year term. Only, Pharaoh didn't permit them to go for three days, and therefore, this opportunity was lost.

We learn from this vort the great benefit of even a short period of spiritual growth. The yetzer hara comes to a person and says, "A moment of ruchniyus is so small. What will you gain from it?" But it isn't so. If Klal Yisrael had had three days of spiritual elation, that would have strengthened them with enough resistance to last them 190 years in Mitzrayim.

Now, during the days of Shovavim, the yetzer hara also says, "What will it help a drop of ruchniyus on these days? Anyway, by next year, you will be back to your old self." But it isn't so. Every moment of ruchniyus is of tremendous significance.

When things appear bad to our eyes, it is really concealed kindness.

Tefillah

The Mitzrim ruled over the Yidden in Mitzrayim with an iron fist, subjugating them to painful labor and slavery. They even cast the Jewish male children into the Nile. Despite all of this, we don't find in the first perek of the story that the Jewish nation cried, complained, or prayed to Hashem. The first time we find this is in pasuk (2:23), where it states, **וַיִּמְתַּחַטֵּת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם וְאַנְחָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן** (2:23), "The king of Mitzrayim died, and Bnei Yisrael moaned from the labor, and they cried out..." Since the Torah doesn't mention any crying or complaining until this pasuk, it seems that until now, the Jewish nation didn't protest. But why is that? Is it because they accepted Hashem's decree of galus with love, with the belief that Hashem was leading them in the best way? If so, what happened now that they began to shout and cry out to Hashem?

Reb Yitzchak of Volozhin zt'l explains that the Jewish nation didn't shout, cry, and pray at the beginning of their slavery because they thought that their problems were only for a limited amount of time, just until Pharaoh dies. But then Pharaoh died, and their tzaros only increased! That is when the Yidden realized that their tzaros were sent from Heaven. They prayed to Hashem, and immediately their salvation started. As it states (2:23-24) **וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַרְבִּים הָם וַיִּמְתַּחַטֵּת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם וְאַנְחָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הַעֲבָדָה וַיַּעֲשֵׂה וַיַּתְּלִיל שׁוֹעַת אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים מִן הַעֲבָדָה, וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת נְאָקָתָם וַיַּפְּרֹא אֱלֹקִים אֶת בְּרִיתָנוּ**, "Now it came to pass in those many days that the king of Egypt died, and Bnei Yisrael moaned from the labor, and they cried out, and their cry

ascended to Hashem from the labor. Hashem heard their cry, and Hashem remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov." The pesukim after this say that Hashem appeared to Moshe in a burning bush and told him to extract the Yidden from Mitzrayim. The salvation came immediately after they turned to Hashem in prayer. We conclude that if the Jewish nation had realized from the onset that their tzaros were sent from Heaven, and they had prayed for their redemption, their salvation would have begun then, and they would have avoided years of suffering.

This is a lesson for each person, with the issues and tzaros that he goes through - because every person has challenges in life. It is important to recognize that everything comes from Hashem. With this realization, he will turn to Hashem to request salvation. And when he does so, it will come quickly, b'ezras Hashem.⁴

It states (1:9) **הִנֵּה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי וּעֲצָzos מִנְפָשָׁת**, "Behold, the people of Bnei Yisrael are more numerous and stronger than we are." Aryeh d'Bei Iloya zt'l (quoted in Divrei Yechezkel from Reb Y. Frankel, at the beginning of parashas Vayeira) teaches that the word **מִנְפָשָׁת** is also written regarding the meraglim. It states there (Bamidbar 13:31) **וְהַנְּגָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עַמּוּ אָמְרוּ לֹא נִכְלַל לְעַלּוֹת אֶל הָעָם כִּי חִזְקָה הוּא מִנְפָשָׁת**, "But the men who went up with him said, 'We are unable to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.'" Rashi writes that when they said **כִּי חִזְקָה הוּא מִנְפָשָׁת**, they meant that the people living in the land are stronger than Hashem! Aryeh d'Bei Iloya says that the same can be explained in the pasuk of this week's parashah. **עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי וּעֲצָzos מִנְפָשָׁת**, "The people of Bnei Yisrael are more numerous and stronger than Hashem." This is because Hashem decrees, and the

4. We say in shacharis, **וְעוֹנוֹה לְעַמּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵת שׁוֹעֵם אֲלֵינוּ**, "Hashem answers our tefillos *at the time* we call out to Him." Reb Don Segal Shlita explains that in our generation, there is a concept called "voice mail." This means that someone calls now, and the other party listens to the message later on. But Hashem listens to our tefillos, **בְּעֵת שׁוֹעֵם אֲלֵינוּ**, at the time we call out to Him. Literally, at the time we call out to Hashem, Hashem hears and answers our tefillos.

Jewish nation annuls the decrees with their tefillos.

Help Your Fellow Man

It states (2:25) **וַיַּרְא אֱלֹקִים אֲתָת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּדַּע אֱלֹקִים** "Hashem saw Bnei Yisrael, and Hashem knew." The Shach (al haTorah, from the students of the Arizal) teaches, "I heard that there is a Midrash that says, 'What did Hashem see? He saw that they had compassion for one another. If one person finished his quota for the day, he would go over to another person who hadn't yet finished his quota, and he would help him finish his work. When Hashem saw this, He said that they deserve that I have compassion on them. For there is a rule: Whoever has compassion on others, he receives compassion from Above. As it states (Devarim 13:18), **וַיַּנְתַּנוּ לְךָ בְּחִמֵּים וְרַחֲמֵךְ**, and the Gemara (Shabbos 151b) explains **כָּל הַרְחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיות מַרְחָמֵין**, **עַלְיוֹ מִן הַשְׁמִים וְכָל שָׁאוּן מַרְחָמֵין עַלְיוֹ מִן הַשְׁמִים**, "Whoever has compassion on others, Heaven has compassion on him. Whoever doesn't have compassion for others, Heaven doesn't have compassion on him."

When Moshe asked Hashem what he should tell Bnei Yisrael when they ask for Hashem's name, Hashem replied (3:14) **אֲתָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲתָּה**. The Ramban on these words writes, "As you are with Me, that is how I will be with you. If they will open their hands and do tzedakah, I will also open My hand."⁵

Moshe helped Tzipora with the sheep, as it states (2:17) **וַיַּקְרֵם מֹשֶׁה וַיַּשְׁׁזֹּעַ וַיִּשְׁׁקַּת נָגָם** "Moshe arose and rescued them and watered their flocks." Later, Tzipora helped Moshe Rabbeinu, ultimately saving his life, as it states (4:24-26) **וַיַּהַי בְּדָעַ בְּמִלְוָן וַיַּפְגַּשׁ הַמִּתְּרוֹן וַתַּחַז אֶפְרַיִם צָר וַתְּכַרְתֵּת אֶת עֶרְלָת בָּנָה וַתַּגְעַע לְנַגְלִי... וַיַּרְא מֹשֶׁה** "Now he was on the way, in an inn, that Hashem met him and sought to put him to death. So, Tziporah took a sharp stone and severed her son's foreskin and cast it to his feet... Then He released him."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l says that this teaches us that when one does good for others, in the end, goodness will be returned to him. He will receive his deserving reward. Moshe helped Tzipora, and then Tzipora helped him and saved his life.

וַיַּרְדֵּת בְּתַ פְּרָעָה לְרַחַץ עַל הַיָּם וַיַּעֲשֵׂה תְּחִזֵּקָה
הַלְּכָתָה עַל יָד הַיָּאָר וַתַּרְא אֶת הַתְּבָה בַּתְּנֵקָה כְּסֻוף וַתַּשְׁלַח אֶת
אַמְתָּה וַתַּקְרַב, "Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe, to the Nile, and her maidens were walking along the Nile, and she saw the basket in the midst of the marsh, and she sent her maid servant, and she took it." Rashi quotes the Gemara (Sotah 12b) that **אַמְתָּה** means arm. Her arm grew several *amos* long, and she was able to reach Moshe's basket. The Chofetz Chaim (ש"ת) writes, "Basya knew the length of her arm, and she knew that she wasn't able to reach the *teivah* with it. Nevertheless, she put out her arm to save him, and her arm grew long, and she was able to save him. This teaches us that one shouldn't say that he isn't able to help his fellow man. Even when, according to the rules of nature, it seems impossible for you to help others, nevertheless, don't stand distant and don't lose hope. Do what you can to save your fellow man, and then the salvation will occur, possibly in a miraculous manner. All miracles occur in this manner. They begin with a hishtadlus according to the ways of nature and end in a miracle."

וַיַּרְא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲכַן נָדַע הַדָּבָר "Moshe became frightened and said, 'Indeed, the matter has become known!'" On the words **וַיַּרְא מֹשֶׁה**, Rashi writes, "He was worried because he saw that there were resha'im in Yisrael who speak slander. He said, 'Perhaps now they won't deserve to be saved.'"

We see from this how severe the aveirah of slander is. For this aveirah, Moshe feared that they wouldn't be worthy of salvation.

5. The Yid HaKadosh zt'l said that when a Yid does teshuvah and says, **אֲהִיה**, I will be better for now on, Hashem says, **אֲהִיה**, I will be with this person. This is how he translated the words **אֲהִיה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיה**.

The Nachal Yitzchak of Zutchka zt'l explains the severity of slander in the following way:

He begins with a lesson from the Kedushas Tzion of Bobov zt'l hy'd. Aharon and Miriam spoke lashon hara on Moshe, as it states (Bamidbar 12:1) **וְתַדְבֵּר מְרִים וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמִשְׁׁהָ**, but only Miriam received tzaraas. What is the reason for this? The Kedushas Tzion explains that Aharon excelled in *ahavas Yisrael*, as can be proven from when Moshe was appointed to be the leader of Bnei Yisrael. Instead of Aharon, reacting with anger or jealousy, he was actually happy for Moshe, as it states (4:14) **וּרְאֵךְ וְשִׁמְחֵה כָּלְכָל**, "when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart." Also in Avos (1:15) it states **הַיְיָ מַפְלִמִּידָיו שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן אָנוּכָב שָׁלוֹם וּרְוֹאֵף שָׁלוֹם, אָנוּכָב** **הַתָּבוֹה אֶת הַבְּרִירֹת וּמַקְרָנו לְתֹורָה**, "Be among Aharon's students: Love peace, chase after peace, love people and draw them to Torah."

Due to Aharon's elevated level of *ahavas Yisrael*, when he saw his sister Miriam with tzaraas, he pitied her, and he felt as though he himself had received the tzaraas. The Kedushas Tzion explains that, therefore, Aharon didn't have to receive tzaraas. He received an equal (or even greater) punishment just by seeing his sister in distress.

Nachal Yitzchak explains that when Moshe saw that there were slanderers among

Bnei Yisrael, he realized that they weren't compassionate to one another. Moshe thought: "If they had compassion for one another, every person would feel the pain of all of his 600,000 brothers who are in slavery together with him. Each person would have his own tzaar, and in addition, he would feel the tzaar of all other Yidden. In a short time, they would have suffered enough, and they would merit redemption. But now that Moshe saw that there was slander, and people aren't caring about others, and they certainly don't feel the pain of others, it might take much longer before they will merit to be redeemed from Mitzrayim.⁶

Above, we quoted from the Yosher Divrei Emes that when the pasuk states (2:12) **וַיַּפְנֵן כֶּה**, "He turned this way and that way," it teaches a person to accept the good and the bad as decrees from heaven. He should say **כֵּה מִן הַשְׁמִינִים**, so was decreed from Heaven, and it was for the good. The **אור החכמיה** adds that this should be one's attitude regarding the good and bad that happens to *him*. He should say that it is all for the good. But when other people have tzaros, one shouldn't say, "It was bashert, and it was for the good." He should feel that the situation is bad, and he should do whatever he can to help his fellow man.⁷

6. The Midrash (Yalkut Shemoni, Mishlei 14, **התקי**) writes that Moshe sent Yisro back to Midyan before matan Torah. The proof is that it states (Shemos 18:27) **וַיַּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה אֶת חَתָּנוֹ וַיָּלֹךְ לוֹ אֶל אֶרְצָו**, "Moshe saw his father-in-law off, and he went away to his land." And the next pasuk is **בְּחַדְשָׁה הַשְׁלִישִׁי לִצְאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצְרָיִם בַּיּוֹם כִּי-בְּאֹמֶר סִינִי**, "In the third month of Bnei Yisrael's departure from Mitzrayim, on this day they arrived in Midbar Sinai", and it tells the story of matan Torah. The Midrash explains that Yisro couldn't be present at Matan Torah because it states (Mishlei 14:10) **לֹא תַעֲנֵב זֶה בְּשִׁמְךָ תְּחִנֵּת נַפְשׁוֹ וּבְשִׁמְךָ תְּחִנֵּת לְבָבְךָ**, "One's heart knows the bitterness of his soul, and in his joy no stranger shall mingle." Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "My children were enslaved, forming bricks and working with tar, while Yisro lived peacefully in his home. Now he wants to come to see the joy of Torah together with My children?" Yisro couldn't be at matan Torah because he didn't suffer with them.

Reb Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi zt'l asks that the **רַב רַב** had permission to be present at matan Torah, although they also weren't enslaved in Mitzrayim!

He answers that it wasn't necessary to be actually enslaved in Mitzrayim. But one did not need to be "peaceful in his home". When suffering was occurring to some, even those who aren't enslaved should at least feel their pain and distress. If they didn't, they couldn't participate in matan Torah.

7. It states (Tehillim 41:2) **אָשָׁר מִשְׁבֵּיל אֶל כָּל**, The apikorsim were called **מִשְׁכְּלִים**. The Dubno Magid zt'l taught that

With this idea, he explains the pesukim וַיַּהֲיַי בְּיָמִים הָהֶם וַיַּגְּדֵל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֲחֵי וַיַּרְא (2:11-12) "It came to pass in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers and looked at their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Jewish man of his brothers. He turned this way and that way, and he saw that there was no man; so he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." This means that he went away from the approach of כה, saying that everything is for the good, and instead, he smote the Mitzri.

This is because one can say that everything is for the good when it happens to him. However, if he thinks this way in regard to other people's tzaros, he won't feel obligated to help them. Therefore, one should feel that it is bad and do whatever he can to help others.

It states (2:11) וַיַּגְּדֵל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֲחֵי וַיַּרְא בָּסְבָּלְתָּם "Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers and looked at their burdens." The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 1:27) states, "What does וַיַּרְא mean? What did Moshe see? Moshe saw the Jewish people's suffering, and he cried for them. He said, 'I feel so bad for you. I wish I could die for you, because there is no harder work than to work with טיט, tar.' He bent his shoulder, and he helped every one of them. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'You left your occupations to see the tzaar of Yidden, and you acted with them like you were their brother, therefore, I will do the same with

you. I will leave the upper and lower worlds to speak with you. This is the meaning of the pasuk (3:4): וַיַּרְא הָיָה כִּי סָר לְרִאוֹת, Hashem saw that Moshe was, went away from his businesses, to see their suffering, therefore, וַיַּקְרֵא אֱלֹהִים מִתְּךָ הַפָּנָה "Hakadosh Baruch Hu came to speak with him." We see from this lesson the great merit of having compassion for one's fellow man.

Shovavim

אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (1:1) הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם, "These are the names of Bnei Yisrael who were coming to Mitzrayim..." These words are written in the present tense to teach us that the story of yetzias Mitzrayim isn't about the past, but rather also about the present. It tells the narrative of every Yid who falls into kelipos, and then he is saved and freed, with Hashem's help.

The Rambam wrote the following to his son, Rabbeinu Avraham: "You must know, my son, Pharaoh, the king of Mitzrayim is the yetzer hara. Bnei Yisrael is the human mind – the mind everyone has. That is the origin of where all one's desires and thoughts emerge. Moshe Rabbeinu represents G-dly intelligence, the neshamah of Bnei Yisrael. The land Mitzrayim is the human body, and the heart is the land of Goshen."

In other words, just as in the past, Pharaoh enslaved and ruled over Bnei Yisrael, and Moshe saved them, so too this happens to people, within their minds. The yetzer hara wants to rule over the desires and thoughts

the pasuk is hinting that towards your fellow man, אֲשֶׁר מְשֻׁכִּיל, fortunate are those who act like the non-believers. This isn't the time to have emunah that all is for good. Now it is time to say that it isn't good and seek to help your fellow man.

In parshas Bishalach, when the nation stood in front of the sea and the Mitzrim were pursuing from behind, it states (Shemos 14:15) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים מֹשֶׁה מִי הַצֹּעֵד אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁעָו, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them travel.'

Hashem was telling Moshe that now wasn't the time for tefillah, but rather for having bitachon that Hashem would help them. The Ruzhiner zt'l (quoted in Irin Kadishin, Bishalach) asks why, indeed, was Moshe davening at this time? Why didn't he strengthen himself with bitachon? But the answer is that bitachon is for oneself. One can trust that Hashem will help him. But for your fellow man who is in a tzarah, you have to pray and plead for salvation.

of a person. And just as in the times of Pharaoh, he couldn't rule over Moshe Rabbeinu, so, too, the yetzer hara doesn't have any power over the neshamah, which are the holy, G-dly thoughts within man. This holy part of a Yid is never ruined. With these G-dly thoughts, emerging from the neshamah, a person can overcome his temptations and improper thoughts.

Just as Moshe Rabbeinu saved us from Mitzrayim, with the holy part of the intellect, a person can free himself from the control of the yetzer hara.

Every year, when we read about Bnei Yisrael being redeemed from Mitzrayim, it occurs again for every Yid. During these weeks, the weeks of "Shovavim", we can free ourselves from the grasp of the yetzer hara. We can use the strength of the holy intellect, the neshamah that is within us, to overcome the pull and influence of the yetzer hara.

Tzaddikim would say that גוף, body, is roshei teivos for the taavos of the human being. The roshei teivos of גוף spell, גוף וויל פראען, "The body wants to eat", גוף וויל פוילען, "The body wants to sleep", גוף וויל פארט, "nevertheless, the body wants the taavos." We can add another one: גוף ווועט פאלן, in the end, the body will obey. The strength of the neshamah, which is the holy and G-dly mind that a Yid has, will be victorious over the yetzer hara and the temptations, and the person will act as he should.

The Zohar (126a) states, "Every day, a bas kol comes forth and announces (Yirmiyahu 3:22) שׁׁבוּ בְּנֵים שׁׁוּבְנִים, "Return backsliding children." This occurs every day, but the bas kol is louder and clearer during these days of Shovavim. On these days, Hashem says (Malachi 3:7) שׁׁׁבְּאֵלִי וְאַשׁׁׁבָּה אֲלֵיכֶם אָמַר הָצְבָאָת, "Return to Me, and I will return to you," said Hashem."

Hashem accepts everything we do during Shovavim with love, to purify ourselves from past aveiros. Every hischazkus in overcoming the yetzer hara during Shovavim

is extremely purifying. As the Magid said to the Beis Yosef, והנה עיתך עת דודים, which means that a person's teshuvah during Shovavim is accepted in Heaven with love, and it accomplishes more than if he would do the same teshuvah at any other day of the year.

The Gemara (Chagigah 15a) states, שׁׁבוּ בְּנֵים חֹזֶן מֵאַחֲרָיו. The Rebbe of Valednik, in his sefer She'iris Yisrael (Shovavim 1), explains that this means that in Shovavim, even those who sinned so much that they are called אחריו and חֹזֶן, and they are outside the realm of kedushah, they can do teshuvah, and their teshuvah will be accepted. Even if they transgressed the aveiros that Chazal say Yom Kippur doesn't atone for, they can receive atonement during Shovavim. In particular, he writes, these days atone for aveiros related to speech and kedushah.

Toldos Aharon of Zitomer zt'l teaches that the days of Shovavim are like Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. The tefillos said during these days are answered, as they are answered during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah.

Yismach Yisrael zt'l (5-6) teaches that the concept of Shovavim is hinted at in this week's parashah in the words (1:10) עַלְלָה מִן הָאָרֶץ, "ascend from the earth." This hints that even if a person is steeped in the אָרֶץ, the gashmiyos of this world, he can elevate himself during this time period.

It states (1:11) נִבְנֵו עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת לְפָרָעָה. The Noam Elimelech explains these words, in a path of mussar. He brings proof that בָּעֵל הַנְּאֹוֹת can be translated as pleasure. When a person is immersed in the pleasures of this world, נִבְנֵו עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת לְפָרָעָה he is building buildings for the yetzer hara. [This means that he is strengthening the power of the yetzer hara.] Whereas, when one holds back from pleasures, he can reach very high levels. The Noam Elimelech says that this is the meaning of the words in the next pasuk (1:12) וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִעַשׂ אֶתְנוֹ גַּו יִרְבָּה וְכֹן יִפְרַץ, "as much as they would afflict them, so did they multiply and so did they gain strength." This means that when there is יִעַשׂ, afflictions, which means he refrains from taking the pleasures

of this world, it will result in a lot of kedushah, as implied in the words **כֵּן יַרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפָּרֶץ**. The kedushah will spread to him and to all worlds.

Tzaddikim tell us that in our generation, the afflictions can also be minor, and this will also be sufficient. For example, the Raavad teaches that when a person is enjoying a meal, and he stops in the middle, it is considered to be a fast. (It is called Taanis HaRaavad). The Kotzker zt'l said that following the halachos of the Torah is the greatest affliction of all because the Torah tells the person what he can do, where he can look, and so on. Accepting the yoke of heaven is yesurim. Learning more than a person is accustomed to is also yesurim. (It is yesurim, in the beginning. Afterwards, when he becomes accustomed to studying a lot of Torah, it becomes his greatest joy.)

Eating patiently, and not quickly, is also a form of *siguf*. As we wrote, tzaddikim say that in our generation, we shouldn't fast anymore (other than the fasts that we are obligated to fast), and one shouldn't take on difficult afflictions. But with mild afflictions, holding back a drop from the pleasures of this world, this will purify him during Shovavim.

"I Love You', Says Hashem" (*Malachi 1:2*)

In this week's parashah, Rashi (1:1) writes, "Hashem counted [Yaakov's descendants] in

their lifetime, and He counted them again after their deaths, **לְהֹדִיעַ**, to make known **לִפְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם** that they are beloved before Hashem..."

The Sfas Emes (תְּרִילִיב) asks about the word **לְהֹדִיעַ**, "to make known to whom?" He answers that the Jewish nation itself needs to know that Hashem loves them. Hashem says, "Do you see that I'm counting you again and again? I do so, so that you should know how much I love you."

The Sfas Emes (אָרוֹא תְּרִסְמָנִי) explains, "Just as we are obligated to believe in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, even if we don't always understand His ways, so too, we must believe in Bnei Yisrael, even when they appear black. As it states (*Shir HaShirim 1:5*) **שְׁחוֹרָה אַיִן וְנֹאָה**, 'I am black, but I am beautiful.'"

Similarly, Reb Tzaddok HaKohen (*Tzikdas HaTzaddik* 154) writes, "Just as one must believe in Hashem, so must one believe in himself. This means he must believe that Hashem is interested in him (שִׁישׁ לְהַקְבִּיחַ עַפְקָעֵנִי). He must believe that his *neshamah* comes from the source of life, Hashem *yisbarach*, and Hashem *yisbarach* derives pleasure when he performs His will, as it states, 'And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.'" Moshe represents all Yidden.⁸

8. The Yismach Moshe told his daughter, Chana, "There are three *shidduch* offers available for you. One is a very wealthy boy, but he doesn't know much Torah. Another boy comes from a middle-class family and is average in his Torah knowledge. The third option is a *bachur* from a very poor home, but he is an outstanding *talmid chacham*. Which *shidduch* do you prefer?"

His daughter replied that she didn't understand the question. "Father just said that there are three *shidduch* offers..." and she repeated her father's words, precisely as he said them. She was cleverly implying, "Of course I want to marry the boy who is a *talmid chacham*."

The *talmid chacham*'s name was Reb Aryeh Leib Lipshitz, who eventually became rav of a large city (Vishnitze) and renowned by his sefer, *Aryeh d'Bei Iloyi*.

As a young scholar, Reb Aryeh Leib wrote a small sefer, and a shadchan showed the *kuntres* to the Yismach Moshe. The Yismach Moshe sent a letter to Reb Aryeh Leib, commenting on some of the points, and a correspondence between the two ensued. This went on for some time until the Yismach Moshe was convinced that he wanted this young scholar for his daughter. But the *shidduch* would require a large dowry - three hundred gold coins. So the Yismach Moshe asked his rebbetzin if she agreed to sell her *shtern-tichel* (a head-covering studded with precious gems) so that they could do this *shidduch*.

Kinah

Why are people sad? It is generally due to jealousy. They would be happy with their lot if it weren't that others have more than they do.⁹

Chazal (Avos 4:21) tell us, **הַקְנָאָה... מַזְאֵין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הַעוֹלָם**, "Jealousy...drives man out of the world."

Reishis Chachmah writes, "Someone with *kinah* is 'robbing' himself because he is always sad. Everyone can find sweetness in life, except for someone who suffers from

jealousy. He cannot enjoy his food if someone else has something good."

The Rosh (Orchos Chaim) writes, "Jealousy is a disease that does not have a cure."

The Mesillas Yesharim (ch.11) writes, "It is foolish to be jealous because what does one gain from it? The only one who loses is him. Some people are so foolish that when they see their fellow man has something good, they become very distressed and upset. Because of their sorrow, they don't enjoy anything they have... Others don't become

The *tichel* was beautiful and precious, and it also had sentimental value, as she received it as a wedding gift from her late father. But for her daughter's sake, and for the sake of this very special *shidduch*, she agreed to sell it.

After the week of *sheva brachos*, the rebbetzin discovered something she hadn't known beforehand. She found out that their *chasan* was married once before! His first wife came from a wealthy home, and it was hard for her to adjust to the lifestyle of being the wife of a Torah scholar and the marriage ended in divorce.

The rebbetzin complained to her husband, "Why did we bring into our home someone whom others threw out? Had I known he was a divorcee, I would never have sold my *shtern-tichel*.

The Yismach Moshe replied with a *mashal*:

One day, a farmer plowing the earth found white beans in the ground. Happy with his find, he brought them home for dinner. He was anticipating his home to be filled with the pleasing scent of cooked beans, but even after cooking them for some time, the white beans remained hard.

After four or five hours of unsuccessful cooking, he went to his next-door neighbor – a Yid, who he knew was a wise, clever man – and asked him what to do with the white beans that refused to get soft.

"If you want, we can make an exchange," the Yid replied. "I have two bags of beans. I'll give you my beans, and you give me your white beans."

The simple farmer agreed, convinced that he got the better end of the deal.

What he didn't know was that he gave away a fortune of precious gems and rubies.

The Yismach Moshe concluded, "The farmer threw gems out of his home, but that doesn't mean the gems lost their value. The same is with our son-in-law. His first wife didn't recognize the greatness of her husband, and she threw him out, but that doesn't mean he isn't a gem."

Let us learn the following lesson from this story:

When we examine our deeds, we consider ourselves mediocre or perhaps even bad, and we can't imagine that Hashem loves us. But Hashem sees us as precious gems, and therefore, He loves us. Our misjudgment doesn't change the reality of who we really are. We say about ourselves, **שׁוֹרֵה אַנְיָה**, "I'm black." We are aware of our faults and shortcomings, but Hashem says **הַנְּאָה**, you are beautiful.

9. In Eretz Yisrael, there lived a special Yid who was always happy, although he was confined to a wheelchair. People asked him how he managed to be upbeat in his state. He answered, "If everyone were wheelchair-bound like me, no one would wonder how I can be happy. So now that most people are healthy and don't need a wheelchair, is that a reason for me to be sad?"

so upset, but they also have some remorse. They aren't calm when they see someone reach a level above them (unless this person is their very close friend). This describes most people. They aren't *baalei kinah* (constantly filled with jealousy), but they aren't pure from it either..."

It states (Mishlei 14:30) וּרְקֵב עַצְמוֹת קָנָה, jealousy causes one's bones to rot. If we could free ourselves from this illness, we would lead much happier and satisfying lives.¹⁰

This subject also applies to spiritual pursuits. For example, many people are jealous of those who know a lot of Torah, enjoy the spirituality of Shabbos, daven well, are very involved in chesed, and the list goes on. Sometimes, jealousy is beneficial. As Chazal say, קָנָת סּוּפְרִים תְּרֵבָה חַכְמָה, jealousy increases wisdom. But often, jealousy causes people to belittle themselves and to feel bitter and unhappy with the good that they do succeed in doing.

10. Chazal (Avos 4:21) tell us, הַקְנָה הַתְּאָוָה וְהַכְּבוֹד מַוְצָּאֵן אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם, "Envy, lust, and honor remove a person from the world."

The rebbe of Kotzk said:

הַקְנָה - נַקְדָּה וְאָסָם; תְּאָוָה - צָו וְאָסָם; כְּבוֹד - פָּאָרוּוֹן, "Envy – Over what? Lust – For what? Honor – Why?" With a bit of thought, one realizes there is nothing worth pursuing in this world other than Torah and mitzvos. Everything else is futile.

The rebbe of Kotzk zy"a said: Most bad *middos* begin later in life, but the trait of jealousy begins when a child is born." We see even young children of one year old getting upset when someone else gets something that they don't have.

Once, chassidim of various courts were speaking together, each one telling the greatness of their rebbe. Rebbe Moshe Midner zy"a, from the esteemed Slonimer chassidim, was also present, but remained quiet throughout the conversation. Someone asked, "Reb Moshe? Why are you silent? Tell us something about your rebbe."

Reb Moshe replied, "All I can tell you is that the three *middos*: *kinah*, *taavah*, and *kavod*, which the entire world chases after, my rebbe runs away from like from fire."

Once, the Imrei Emes (the Rebbe of Gur) zy"a was a guest, and his host wanted to honor him, but the Imrei Emes was shying away from the honor.

The host said, "Chazal say, כֹּל שָׁוֹמֵר לְךָ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת עֲשֵה, the guest must do everything the host requests. So, since I want to honor you, you must accept it."

The Imrei Emes corrected him: "Chazal say, כֹּל שָׁוֹמֵר לְךָ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת עֲשֵה חֹזֵץ מֵצָא, 'Do whatever your host requests of you, except when he tells you to leave,' and you are asking me to leave. As Chazal tell us, honor drives a person out of this world."

We can overcome jealousy with the emunah that Hashem gives everyone precisely what he needs. So, if someone has a larger house or a nicer car than you, it's because Hashem determined that that person needs it (for his avodas Hashem), and you don't. Therefore, there is no reason to be jealous of others. As a tzaddik said, "If I don't have something, that means I don't need it. Because if I did need it, I would have it."

In regard to spirituality, remember that Hashem wants a different service from each person. Everyone creates a unique *nachas ruach* for Hashem. So why be jealous of others? They aren't doing what you can do.

The following *mashal* brings out this point.

In honor of their father's eightieth birthday, his three sons decided to throw a party. They wanted to lift the spirits of their father, an aging widower.

His oldest son was very wealthy. He bought his father a three-story house. At the party, he presented his father with the contract, together with beautiful pictures of the house.

His second son was a middle-class earner. He bought his father a used car, which was an upgrade from the jalopy their father drove at the time. He gave his father the car keys and showed him pictures of the vehicle.

The youngest son was poor. He couldn't afford a gift. So, he wrote a letter and read it out loud at the party.

The sons were sure their father would be happiest with the house, the car next, and the letter last.

Their father surprised them when he got up and said, "I live alone. I don't need a three-story house. The car is good, but I hardly drive. My old jalopy is good enough for me. But my youngest son gave me the best present of all. His letter expressed gratitude for all I did for him all these years, and that's the best gift of all."

Similarly, we don't know which deed is more beloved by Hashem. You might think your deeds are mediocre or trivial, and you are jealous of those who seem to do much more, but your simple deeds may be the most beloved of all.