

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Vaeira

## Even When Bnei Yisrael are at a Low Level, Hashem Loves Them

The Torah refers to the Jewish people in two ways: "ישראל" and "עם".

Chazal (Bamidbar Rabba 2:23) tell us that when the Torah calls the Jewish people "ישראל", it is **לשון שבח**, a positive expression, recounting their praises. However, "Whenever it states **עם**, it is **לשון גנאי**, derogatory."

Avnei Nezer zt'l (quoted in Shem MiShmuel p.70) explains that **עם** means nation but can also be translated as extinguished coals (see Yechezkel 31:8, **אֲשֶׁר לֹא צָהָב**). Coals that aren't hot anymore. **עם** is a negative description of the Jewish nation because a Yid should serve Hashem with a fire in his heart, with *hislahavus*, and not with disinterest and lacking emotion.

It states in this week's parashah (6:7) **וְקָרַחְתִּי**, "I shall take you for Me, to be a nation." This pasuk is saying that Hashem chose the Jewish people, made them His nation, and gave them His Torah. So why is **עם** used to describe Bnei Yisroel in this pasuk?

Avnei Nezer answers: ...**בְּשׁוֹרָה הִיא לָהֶם**... "The Torah is telling them good tidings. Even when they have **קְטָנוֹתָה** (smallness), which means their hearts and their minds are uninspired, nevertheless, **יְהִי נָרִים**, they will be desired by Hashem, and their good deeds will be appreciated. Their good deeds will accomplish [great things] in the upper and lower worlds."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the Torah calls them **עם** in this pasuk to tell us that even when they

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1. Moshe and Aharon brought the plague of **דָם** to Mitzrayim, and then the **חרטומי מצרים** (sorcerers) also produced blood. The Torah states (7:23) **וַיַּפְנֵן פְּרָעָה וַיָּבֹא אֶל בֵּיתוֹ וְלֹא שָׁת לְפָנָיו גַּם לְזֹאת** (Pharaoh turned away and came to his palace, and he did not take this to heart either.)

Sifsei Tzaddik (**אֶת כ"ג**) writes that **פְנֵן** can also mean to test and to consider. An example of this is how the Zohar (vol.1 234a) explains the pasuk (Tehillim 102:18) **פָנָה אֶל תְּפִלַת הַעֲרָשָׁר**, "He will have turned to the prayer of each devastated one".

The Zohar states that **פָנָה** means that Hashem takes the tefillah of a person who davened **בִּיחִידוֹת**, without a minyan, and considers whether to accept it or not.

So, **פָנָה** means to reflect, to consider, to judge, and to weigh. Therefore, when the Torah states (7:23) **וַיַּפְנֵן פְּרָעָה** (Pharaoh turned away and came to his palace, and he did not take this to heart either.)

But the Torah reveals that, at least for a moment, Pharaoh was considering doing the right thing. The Torah tells us about this to tell us that Pharaoh deserved credit for that.

This is a great lesson for us. Sifsei Tzaddik writes, **לִימּוֹד גָדוֹל, שְׁהָרְהָר טָב אֶפְ שְׁלָא תִּקְוָן אֵין שְׁכָה בְשָׁמִים**, "This is a great lesson. It teaches that a good thought, even if it doesn't lead to action, isn't forgotten in Heaven." The Torah writes the moment of virtue that Pharaoh had. **וַיַּפְנֵן פְנָעָה**, he considered letting the Yidden out of Mitzrayim, and a good thought is never forgotten.

Kal v'chomer, Hashem accepts and remembers every good thought and desire of a Yid, especially when his thoughts and desires lead to the performance of a good deed.

are in their lowest state, Hashem chose them and desires them and their mitzvos.

Tehillim (148:14) states, **לְבָנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם קָרְבָּנוּ הַלְלוּ יְהוָה**. Yesod HaAvodah zt'l explains that **לְבָנִי** is from the word **בִּיה**, understanding. **לְבָנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל** means the Jewish nation understands, **עַם**, that even when they are on the low level of **עַם**, which means that they lack emotion, and they serve Hashem coldly, like extinguished coals, even then **עַם קָרְבָּנוּ**, they are close to Hashem. They are always close to Hashem because they are **חָלֵק אֲלֹוֹהִים**, a part of Hashem. Therefore, **הַלְלוּ יְהוָה**, praise Hashem.

Similarly, it states (Yeshayah 55:6) **קְרָאָהוּ בְּהִיּוֹתָו קָרְבָּנוּ**, "Call upon Him when He is near." The Yesod HaAvodah notes that the beginning of the phrase contradicts its end. **קְרָאָהוּ** means to call out. One calls out to those who are far away, not to someone who is nearby. Why does the pasuk say, **קְרָאָהוּ בְּהִיּוֹתָו קָרְבָּנוּ**, "Call upon Him when He is near"?

Yesod HaAvodah answers that the pasuk is discussing a person who *feels* that he is very far away. He should tell himself, "From my perspective, I am far from Hashem. But from Hashem's perspective, I am very close to Him. I call out to Hashem because I think He is far away, but Hashem is always near to me."

We must acquire this mindset. We must recognize that Hashem always loves us, and He accepts our Torah and mitzvos.

It states in next week's parashah (12:39) **וַיֹּאֲפֹו אֶת הַבָּצָק אֲשֶׁר הָזִיאוּ מִמְּצָרִים עֲנֹתָ מְצֹוֹת בַּי לֹא חִמְצָן כִּי נֶרְשָׁו מִנְּצָרִים וְלֹא צִילָו לְהַתְמִיכָה מֵהַגָּם אֲזָה לֹא עָשָׂו לְהַמְּלָאָם** "They baked the dough that they took out of Mitzrayim into matzah cakes. They could not be chametz, for they were driven from Mitzrayim, and they could not delay, not had they made provisions for themselves."

The Arizal explains that the Jewish nation had fallen to the 49<sup>th</sup> gate of tumah. If they stayed in Mitzrayim even a moment longer, they would have fallen into the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of tumah, which is a place of no return. This is the reason they had to leave Mitzrayim very quickly.

We still need to understand why Hashem waited for the last moment to take them out of Mitzrayim? Hashem could have taken them out of Mitzrayim a few days earlier, when they could leave peacefully and tranquilly, with prepared food for the trip.

But the answer is that Hashem wanted to give chizuk to the Yidden of our generation. They shouldn't think that Hashem isn't interested in them, and that Hashem won't perform miracles for them. Just as Hashem performed miracles for Klal Yisrael in Mitzrayim when they were at the 49<sup>th</sup> gate of tumah, Hashem will save them today, no matter what level they are on. Hashem will save them from their struggles and from their troubles, and Hashem will bring them Moshiach.

### Even When They Fall to the Level of Animals, Hashem Loves Them.

There is a sefer called **ספר קושיות**, written by one of the holy *Rishonim* (a student of the Maharam of Rottenberg). He writes a wondrous idea. "You might ask, why do the goyim call the Jewish people dogs?"<sup>2</sup> The answer is that it states (Devarim 14:1) **בְּנֵיכֶם לְהָאָלָקִיכֶם**, "You are children to Hashem, your G-d." **כַּלְבִּים** is gematria (102), dogs. Also, it states (Vayikra 25:55) **כִּי לְיִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** "For Bnei Yisrael are My servants," and the first letters spell **כַּלְבִּי**, My dog."

Chazal (Avos 3:14) say, **חֲבִיכֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנַקְרָאוּ בְּנֵים לְמִקְומָם**, "The Jewish people are beloved for they are called **בְּנֵים**, Hashem's children."

2. As is known, not long ago, at the entrance to many stores and areas, there was a sign that read: "No dogs or Jews allowed."

The Gemara (Shabbos 155b) states, **לֹת דָּעֵנִיא מַכְלָא**, "There is nothing poorer than a dog and nothing wealthier than a pig." Rashi explains that a dog doesn't have much food, and it is often hungry. Therefore, it is the poorest animal. In contrast, a pig always finds food, so it is called wealthy. This is Rashi's explanation. But we still wonder, why does the Gemara tell us this? What lesson are we supposed to learn from this information?

Kli Yakar (in his sefer, **שְׁמִינִי שְׁמִינִי**) explains that **לֹת דָּעֵנִיא מַכְלָא**, "There is nothing poorer than a dog" refers to the Jewish nation. They are called **מַכְלָא**, "dog" because it states (Vayikra 25:55) **כִּי לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים** ("For Bnei Yisrael are servants to Me.") The roshei teivos of **כִּי לִבְנֵי** spells **כַּלְבָּ**, dog. Chazal says that the Jewish nation is the poorest of all. This is because they don't always have food. Most foods aren't kosher. When they come to a non-Jewish house, they can't eat. Even if the food itself is kosher, since it was cooked in a non-kosher pot, the food cannot be eaten.<sup>3</sup> The Kli Yakar writes, "This is the praise of Bnei Yisrael..." and he elaborates on this point.

Surprisingly, we have seen from the Kli Yakar and from that the Jewish people are called **כַּלְבָּ** (and they prove it with pesukim). We wonder, is there no better way to describe Bnei Yisrael than as a dog?

But based on our discussion above, the answer is simple and beautiful. The Torah wants to tell us that even when a person feels that he is on a very low level, like a dog, he is still a Yid, and Hashem says about him, **בְּנֵים אַתֶּם לְהָ אֶלְקִיכֶם**, that he is Hashem's child. Hashem says, **עֲבָדִים هֵם**, they are My servants. Hashem says, "You are mine, and I want you."

Moshe told Pharaoh that they have to go three days into the desert to serve Hashem.

Moshe explained (Shemos 10:9) **בְּנֵשְׁלָמֵינוּ וּבְקִינְנֵינוּ גַּלְעֵן** ("With our youngsters and with our elders shall we go; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flock and with our cattle shall we go, because it is a holiday of Hashem for us.") At first, Pharaoh didn't agree to this entire list. There were times that he didn't want anyone to go out of Mitzrayim, and there were times that he didn't want the children to leave Mitzrayim. But after **מָקָא חֹשֶׁךְ**, Pharaoh finally agreed to the entire list, except for the flock and cattle. As it states (Shemos 10:24) **וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֻעָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר לְנֵזֶה אֶת יְהָהָה רְקֵצָתְךָ וּבְקָרְבָּן יְאַגֵּן** ("Pharaoh summoned Moshe and said, "Go - serve Hashem. Only your flock and cattle shall remain behind. Even your children may go with you.") Pharaoh finally agreed to Moshe's request that all Yidden may leave Mitzrayim. He was just stubbornly refusing to allow the animals to leave. Therefore, Hashem brought on **מִתְּהִלָּה בְּכוּרֹת**. We wonder, why was it necessary to make this great **מָקָה**? Pharaoh more or less agreed to Moshe's request. Why was it so important that the animals also leave Mitzrayim?

Reb Shlomo Kluger answers that this was to teach a lesson to the generation before Moshiach. There are people in our generation who have fallen to very low levels, **r'l**, and they have reached the level of animals. Hashem showed them that He is ready to perform miracles and wonders to save the animals of Bnei Yisrael from Mitzrayim. Therefore, the people at low levels today should know that no matter what level they are at, Hashem won't forget them. Hashem will redeem them.

It is now the period of Shovavim, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu calls out to every Yid **שׁוּבוּ בְּנֵים שׁוּבְנִים**, requesting from us to do teshuvah. It states **שׁוּבוּ בְּנֵים** because we are Hashem's children, and a father never forgets

3. When a non-Jew travels anywhere in the world, he always has food. He enters a restaurant, scans the menu, and orders whatever he desires. A Yid needs to take food along with him, and if he doesn't, he might be very limited with what he can eat. Therefore, the Yid is considered the poorest.

his child. Even if a person feels that he is on the level of a **כלב** (gematria נ) or on the level of a **בָּהָמוֹה** (also gematria נ) Hashem wants him to return to Him. Hashem tells him **שׁוּבוּ בָּנִים**, that His children should return to Him.<sup>4</sup>

## Salvation Comes from Suffering

Hashem told Moshe to perform the makah of **דָם**. Hashem said (7:15-17) **לֹךְ אֶל פְּרֻעָה** (7:15-17) "בַּבְּקָר... וְהַמֶּפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר נָהָפֵךְ לְנַחַשׁ תַּקְהֵבֵר, אַמְרֵת אַלְיִי... הַהָּא אֲנָכִי מִכְּה בְּמַפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר בַּיּוֹד עַל הַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בַּיּוֹר וְנַחֲפֵci לְדָם "Go to Pharaoh in the morning... that staff that was turned into a snake you shall take in your hand. You shall tell him... 'I shall strike the waters that are in the river, and they shall change to blood.'"

The Berzhaner Rav zt'l (Techeles Mordechai) asks that Hashem could have said simply, **וְהַמֶּפְתָּח תַּקְהֵבֵר**, "Take your staff in your hand". Why was it important, at this time, to say, **וְהַמֶּפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר נָהָפֵךְ לְנַחַשׁ תַּקְהֵבֵר**, "that staff that was turned into a snake you shall take in your hand."

The Berzhaner Rav's answer is based on the Gemara (Bava Basra 16b): "This **אֵילָה**, her womb is narrow. When she squats to give birth, I prepare a snake to bite her." She isn't able to give birth; her womb is too narrow. She shouts in her labor pains (as Rashi writes on the words [Tehillim 42:2] **גָּאֵל תְּשַׁׁגַּבְתָּ**). Hashem has compassion on her, and a snake bites her womb. When this occurs, the **אֵילָה** thinks that Hashem isn't helping her. She thinks that Hashem is adding more yesurim to her already painful birth pains. **יָסַר יְסִירִי יְהָה** she feels that Hashem sent her *yesurim upon yesurim*. Actually, the snakebite on her womb is her salvation. This opens her womb, and she can give birth.

Hashem told Moshe, **וְהַמֶּפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר נָהָפֵךְ לְנַחַשׁ**, "The staff that was turned into a snake you shall take in your hand". I want you to remember the snake, and what it does for the **אֵילָה**. The same happens to you. When I sent you to Pharaoh to tell him to send the Yidden out of Mitzrayim, Pharaoh increased

4. It states (Mishlei 24:16) **כִּי שְׁבַע יָפֹל צָדִיק וְקָם**, "For though the tzaddik may fall seven times, he will arise..." Reb Don Segal Shlita explains that the number seven specifically is used here because seven represents nature (there are seven days in a week, and many other aspects of nature are divided into seven parts). The pasuk discusses a person who falls from his spiritual levels so many times that it seems that it is in his nature to fall, again and again. Even so, **וְקָם**, he can get up and rise to high levels. In fact, **שְׁבַע יָפֹל צָדִיק** tells us that he is called a tzaddik, even when he falls. That is, if in the end he is **קָם**, and rises again.

Before World War Two, a yeshiva student left Europe and came to Bnei Brak, Eretz Yisrael. In Europe, he was a student of a Novardoker mussar yeshiva, and therefore, he trained himself to view all aspects of life through the prism of mussar.

In those days, Bnei Brak was a small town, and for pennies, one could purchase large plots of land. 20-30 years later, the small town became the metropolis of Bnei Brak. People who bought property in Bnei Brak in the early years made a fortune when they sold years later and became extremely wealthy.

Once, this Novardok student was sitting with his children and grandchildren, and the family spoke about a particular person who earned a fortune in this manner. They asked their father and grandfather why he didn't buy property in those good years.

He replied, "That is a good question, and I don't have an answer. If I were wise then, I would buy land. But now I think to myself that a similar question will be posed to me after 120. In heaven, I will be asked, "You were in this world (**עוֹלָם עַשְׂיוֹת**), and you had many opportunities to acquire eternal merit with small deeds. With every time you say **אָמַן יְהָא שְׁמֵיהָ רְבָא**, and every time you guarded your eyes, etc., you acquired large estates in Gan Eden. Where were you all those years? Why didn't you take more advantage of these opportunities?"

We ask ourselves the same question during these days of Shovavim. We can achieve so much; why don't we take advantage of the opportunity?

the workload. You thought it was bad for the Jewish nation. As you said (Shemos 5:22-23) **וַיִּשְׁבַּת מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָרָעָתָה לְעַם הַזֶּה לְמֹתָה זוֹהַר** .... 'Why have you done bad to this nation? Why did you send me? From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he did bad to these people, but You did not rescue Your people.' You thought that more yesurim came. Currently, I want you to remember the snake that bites the **אֱלֹהָה** and helps her bear her child. She thinks the snakebite is bad for her, but it saves her life and enables her to bear a child. So, too, be aware that all yesurim Yidden go through are a step towards the salvation that will come afterwards.

Pharaoh is called **תַּנִּינָה**, a snake (see Shemos Rabba 9:4). He was the snake that bit Yisrael when they were suffering. It seemed that matters worsened, but this is what brought about the salvation.

It states (7:20-21) **וַיַּהֲפֹכֵן כָּל הַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם, וְהַדְּגָה אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם מִתָּה**, "All the water that was in the river changed to blood. The fish life that was in the river died..."

Zera Shimshon writes that when this occurred, Bnei Yisrael thought that they had suffered a significant loss because fish was a staple in Mitzrayim. As it states (Bamidbar 11:5) **נִכְרַת אֶת הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר נָאכַל בְּמִצְרָיִם חַטָּם**, "We remember the fish that we ate in Mitzrayim free of charge."

They thought it was bad for them, but it was for their benefit. The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 9:10) states, "From the *makah* of **דָם**, Bnei Yisrael became wealthy. How is that? A Mitzri and a Yisrael were in the same house,

and there was a barrel filled with water. The Mitzri dipped his jug to take out water, and it was filled with blood! The Yisrael was able to drink water from the barrel. The Mitzri said, 'Give me a little bit of your water.' The Yid gave him water, and it became blood! The Mitzri said, 'Let us drink together, me with you, from the same dish.' The Yisrael drank water, and the Mitzri drank blood. However, when the Mitzri paid for the water, he was able to drink the water. This resulted in Bnei Yisrael becoming wealthy."

They raised the prices for water and earned a lot of money.

So, what appeared to be a loss in their *parnassah* (because for a week or so, they couldn't eat fish) was actually a tremendous increase in their *parnassah*. When something appears like a *tzarah* for Bnei Yisrael, it is a brachah in concealment.<sup>5</sup>

It states at the beginning of the parashah (6:2) **וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְيָהוּ אָנִי הָ**, "Hashem spoke to Moshe and said to him, "I am Hashem." Rashi writes, **דִּבֶּר אֵתֶה מִשְׁפָּט**, Hashem spoke justice with Moshe, which means Hashem spoke harsh words. The Ohev Yisrael zt'l explains that Rashi knows this from the word **וַיֹּאמֶר**, which means harsh words (unlike **וַיֹּאמֶר**, which represents kind words). Another indication that Hashem spoke with harshness to Moshe is that it states **וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים** and it is known that **אֱלֹקִים** is Hashem's name when He uses harsh justice, **מִדְתַּת הָדִין**. So, how do we understand the end of the pasuk **וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְיָהוּ אָנִי הָוֵי**?" It is known that both **וַיֹּאמֶר** and the name **הָוֵי** represents Hashem speaking with kindness and with compassion. How does the beginning of the pasuk fit with the end of the pasuk?

5. If a person is fired from his job, he thinks that it is a great problem. He shouts to Hashem, **מַאֲנֵי בָא עֹזֶר**, from where will come my salvation?" But he should strengthen himself with emunah and bitachon and believe that his salvation will emerge specifically from this situation.

It states in Tehillim (118:13) **דָּחַת דָּחַתִּנִי לִפְלֵל**. A person feels that Hashem is causing him to fall, again and again, **וְהַעֲרֵנִי**, but know that Hashem is helping you. You think you are suffering, you think it is bad, but it is the preparation for the good that Hashem will give you.

The answer is that the pasuk is telling us a lesson. When Hashem reacts with strict justice, even then, we must know that it is really kindness and compassion. It appears harsh, the person might be going through hard times, but Hashem hasn't abandoned him. Something very good will emerge from it.

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "When a tzarah befalls a person, *chas v'shalom*, it is for his good, only the good is concealed within it, and it isn't revealed for all to see. Every Yid must believe that everything is for his good. It is from Hashem *yisbarach*, for it is His way to do kindness with His creations, and particularly, for the seed of Yisrael, His chosen nation. Only, for the time being, the

good isn't revealed, and it is presently unknown as to how this is for his benefit. It is concealed because the person isn't yet worthy of receiving this goodness."

With this emunah, one will never be upset with what happens to him in life. There is another great benefit. When one believes that everything is Hashem's kindness, it will put an end to the tzarah. It will go away, and everything will be good for him. Ohev Yisrael writes, "When a person knows and believes with all his heart [that his tzaros are for his good], this emunah and knowledge sweetens the *dinim*, and now he will be able to see the good and the kindness that Hashem did for him."<sup>6</sup>

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6. The Shach al HaTorah notes that אלקים is *gematria* 86. The final words of the *pasuk* are אֱלֹהִים, and their *gematria* is 87. Thus, the *gematria* of אֱלֹהִים is one more than אלקים.

The Shach al HaTorah explains that אלקים expresses Hashem's attribute of harsh justice, which is the root of *dinim*, hardships people go through in life, each person in their own way. We want everything to be with Hashem's compassion, without any *tzaros*. How can we accomplish that? Hashem adds רְחִמָּה, one more, and then אלקים (Hashem's name for harsh justice) becomes אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים, (Hashem's name for compassion, רְחִמָּה), and everything becomes visibly good.

Rebbe Hershele Liska (*Ach Pri Tevuah*) quotes this *vort* and adds, "I think that this is the meaning of the *Shach al HaTorah's* words: When a person goes through difficult times...he must believe that it didn't happen by chance, *chas veshalom*. Everything happens through Hashem's *hashgachah*..." When one truly believes that whatever he is going through comes from the "One" Hashem, this adds one more to the *gematria* of אלקים, and it turns into אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים, and everything becomes compassionate and good.

In other words, the belief that everything is from Hashem and nothing happens by chance sweetens the *dinim* and makes everything good.

Rebbe Hershele Liska asks, "Why did Hashem create *dinim* in the first place? Hashem could have given us perfect *chesed* [without requiring us to sweeten harshness with our *emunah*]."

Rebbe Hershele Liska replies that Hashem wanted us to turn situations around on our own so that we will be deserving of the good we receive. Otherwise, we would be embarrassed to receive so much goodness from Hashem.

He writes, "Chazal tell us that an *apikores* once asked Reb Akiva, 'Whose deeds are better, Hashem's or man's?' Reb Akiva understood that he was asking why we circumcise ourselves (*bris milah*). Isn't Hashem's deeds [the way Hashem created man] better? Reb Akiva asked a servant to bring in loaves of bread. The loaves, made by man, were obviously an improvement over the wheat that was used to bake the bread. Reb Akiva was teaching that Hashem wants man to improve, elevate, and rectify himself so that we won't be embarrassed to receive His goodness. It shouldn't be shameful bread." Hashem wants us, through our emunah, to make everything good.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 21.) writes that נחום איש נם ז"ה earned his special title because he would always say, "This, too, is for the good."

It seems that the most important word is missing from his name! His name should have been נחום איש ז"ה לטובה, "This, too, is for the good."

It states (Mishlei 27:5) **טוֹבָה תֹּוֹכַחַת מִגְּלָה מֵאֲחָבָה** מִאֲחָבָה. The Ohev Yisrael explains the pasuk as follows:

The **תֹּוֹכַחַת מִגְּלָה**, "revealed rebuke," alludes to the punishment and the hardships people endure. **טוֹבָה**, it is good. The good part is the

**לְטוֹבָה**, "Nachum, the man who says, this, too, is for the good." Why is it **גַם**, omitting the entire point?

Rebbe Hershele Liska *zt'l* answers, "The word **גַם** is an indication that something should be added (see *Bava Kama* 65:). Nachum would add one more to the name **אֱלֹקִים**, turning it into **אֲנֵי הַוַּיָּה**.

Perhaps we can also explain that he would always say **גַם זו**, "This, too, is from Hashem." And due to his belief, everything became **לְטוֹבָה**, good.

Rebbe Aizik of Komarna *zt'l* (*Zohar Chai, Va'eirah*, *ד"ה בטחו כה*) writes, "Believe me, my brothers, if it weren't that I believed that Hashem stands behind everything that happens, and that Hashem's *hashgachah* is over every detail, I would be lost from the world (i.e., depressed and broken) long ago due to all the hardships, distress, poverty, exile, and shame that I endured... But Hashem helped me, and I don't get distressed over these troubles. Because when a person truly believes that there is nothing in the world other than Hashem, all the *dinim* (hardships) are sweetened in the wake of his *emunah*. Even without shouting out to Hashem in prayer, with only *emunah* and *bitachon*, everything will turn into visible *chesed*, immediately."

וַיַּדְעָתֶם כִּי אַנְּיָה אֱלֹקִים הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתְּחַת סְבָלוֹת מִצְרָיִם (6:7). We can read the *pasuk* like this: **הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתְּחַת סְבָלוֹת מִצְרָיִם**, when you believe in Hashem, Hashem will extract you from your troubles.

We find a source for this lesson in *Yalkut Shimoni* (519). It states, "*Emunah* is very precious to the One who created the world... Our forefathers were redeemed from *Mitzrayim* because they had *emunah*. As it states (4:31), **וַיַּאמֵּן הַעַם**, 'The nation believed.'" Similarly, each person merits his personal salvation when he has *emunah* and believes that any situation he finds himself in was planned and arranged by Hashem.

Reb Mendel lives in Yerushalayim, and his hishtadlus for *parnassah* is that he buys and sells antique *sefarim*.

On the night before his daughter's *chasunah*, Reb Mendel was sitting at the table with his wife and children and said, "I need twenty-five thousand dollars for tomorrow's *chasunah*, and I have no idea how I will get it. But I'm not worried. Hashem put me into this situation, and Hashem will take me out. Somehow, Hashem will help..."

While he was talking with his family, Shimon, a dealer of rare *sefarim*, knocked on his door and asked Reb Mendel if he had any antique *sefarim* for sale.

Reb Mendel replied, "I recently bought a three-hundred-year-old set of *Rambam* for fifty dollars. There are many Talmudic notes in the margins. It is obvious that a great scholar once owned it, but I couldn't figure out who that scholar was. Without knowing the name of the scholar, the set doesn't have any financial value. In fact, I offered it to someone for fifty dollars, and he declined."

Shimon perused the *sefer* and became excited. "I think I might know who the original owner was, and if I'm right, it is worth a lot of money. Can I bring it home to study it?"

Reb Mendel replied, "You can bring it home, and you can sell it, too. Give me 5/6<sup>th</sup>s of the sale, and you can keep 1/6<sup>th</sup> for yourself."

Shimon discovered that this set of *Rambam* had once belonged to the *Pri Chadash*. The proof is that the *chidushim* on the margin are the same as are written in the *Pri Chadash's sefer*. Shimon sold it for thirty thousand dollars. Shimon kept a sixth for himself (five thousand dollars), and he gave twenty-five thousand dollars to Reb Mendel, the exact amount he needed for his daughter's *chasunah* that was held later that same day.

Reb Mendel believed that his tight financial state was arranged by Hashem (and he trusted in Hashem), and this opened the gates of bounty, and he received the funds he needed for the *chasunah*.

אַתָּה מִסְתַּנְתָּה, Hashem's concealed love. Because within this tzarah is Hashem's kindness, in a concealed form.

This is the meaning of the words, יִזְבַּח, Hashem spoke harsh words to Moshe because Moshe had complained and said (Shemos 5:22) לְמִנְהָה הַיּוֹתָה לְעַם. Moshe was asking Hashem why things had become harder for the Jewish nation. Ever since Hashem sent him to bring the

nation out of Mitzrayim, Pharaoh only increased the amount of work they needed to do!

Hashem's response comes immediately afterwards. Hashem says אַתְּ הַיְהָ. This is the name that expresses Hashem's compassion. Hashem was saying that also those matters that seem bad are really אַתְּ, Hashem's kindness. Hashem's compassion and kindness are there, concealed within the tzaros.<sup>7</sup>

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7. It states (Yirmiyahu 31:19) "הֲבָנוּ יָקִיר לִי אֶפְנָים אָם יָלְדָשׁ שְׁעִירָבִים כִּי מְדִינָתִי בְּנֵי בָּנָי בָּנוּ זָכָר אַזְכָּרֶת עוֹד עַל כֵּן קָמוּ מַשְׁיָּוֹן וְנַחַם אֶרְחָמָשׁ נָאָם הָהָה. Is Efraim My favorite son or a delightful child, that whenever I speak of him, I remember him more and more? Therefore, My inner self yearns for him; I will surely take pity on him - says Hashem."

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l (Zichron Zos) asks that (דבר רַבְּרִי or) is generally used when one speaks harsh words. So, how should we understand the pasuk? "Whenever I speak [harsh words to a Yid], I remember him more and more... I will surely take pity on him"! The word רַבְּרִי seems out of place in this context!

The Chozeh explains with a *mashal*: When a father hits his child for chinuch reasons, he has immense compassion on his son. He wishes he didn't have to do this. So, too, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu is speaking with harshness and rebuke to us, Hashem has a lot of rachmanus upon us, and therefore, זָכָר אַזְכָּרֶת... "I remember him more and more... I will surely take pity on him!"

Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita related the following story about his brother-in-law, Reb Avraham Cheshin, who was a big yirei Shamayim. He painted homes for his parnassah. It didn't earn him much money, those days in Yerushalayim, but that was all he had to support his family and to bring some food home.

Once, someone from the Givat Shaul neighborhood of Yerushalayim asked Reb Avraham to paint his home. Reb Avraham loaded his hand-pushed wagon with paints and brushes, and whatever else he needed for the job, and began his trek to Givat Shaul. When he arrived, the man of this home came out to greet him and said, "I am sorry. I really wanted to give you the job, but I have a relative who is also a painter. If I don't hire him, there will be a great machlokes. I had no choice but to hire him."

Imagine how Reb Avraham felt at that time, after all the effort he invested to come to Givat Shaul with his tools for the job. Especially, since his family needed the money. Nevertheless, when a person lives with emunah, he knows that parnassah comes from Heaven. And he knows that everything Hashem does is for the best. Reb Avraham decided that he would not complain. He remained silent and began to return home. On his lips were the words the words, גם זו לְטוֹבָה, וְכֹל דַעַמֵּד רְחִמָּנָא לְטַב עֲבֵד, "This too, is for the good... Everything Hashem does is for the good."

As he passed Yeshivas Eitz Chaim, with his wagon loaded with paints and painting materials, the menahal of the yeshiva came out towards him and said, "For a long time, we were looking for a donor who would sponsor a paint job for the yeshiva. Just now, we found a donor who is prepared to pay the entire bill – on condition that the work commence immediately."

Reb Avraham was more than happy to accept the job. He had all his tools with him, and he immediately began the job. And it wasn't a job for one day (as it would have been had he worked for that person in Givat Shaul). It was work for several months.

If his job in Givat Shaul had worked out, he wouldn't have received this opportunity. So, it was through his problem, that he was fired from a job, that he earned much more.

## Tefillah

A wife told her husband, "Our wall isn't soundproof. Our neighbors hear our conversations. We don't have privacy. We need a new wall."

The husband replied, "There is nothing to worry about. The wall is soundproof. No one hears us from the outside."

Just then, there was a knock at the door. It was the neighbor. He came in and said, "Your husband is right. You don't need to construct a thicker wall. I don't hear anything."

The yetzer hara tells us, "Hashem doesn't hear anything. Your tefillos aren't heard." When the yetzer hara tells us that, we know that Hashem does hear out tefillos.<sup>8</sup>

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Last year, a yungerman received a phone call from a particular organization. The person on the phone explained that the organization had fallen into debt, and they needed money to help them establish themselves. The yungerman replied, "Please give me some time to think about it. I have to figure out how much I can give."

This yungerman wasn't especially wealthy. He was simply one of the many people the organization called up randomly, as they tried to help their holy organization.

Not long afterwards, the yungerman's phone rang again. He looked at the number. It was the same organization that called him just before. He said to himself, "I told him I need time to think it over! Why is he calling me back so soon? I won't answer the phone."

Ten times, his phone rang that day, always the same number, and each time, the yungerman became more and more agitated. "Why are they running after me?" he asked himself. "I'm not the city's גביר (wealthy person)!" He was so upset that he decided that he wouldn't give the organization anything at all.

A couple of days later, he figured out what had occurred. The person who called him ten times on that day wasn't the organization asking for a donation. Although the phone numbers were similar - the reason the yungerman confused them - it was actually a friend who was calling him. The friend called ten times to tell him that he was interested in moving ahead with a shidduch which the yungerman had suggested some time ago. But after calling ten times, without any response, he decided to go to a different shadchan to finalize the shidduch.

When the yungerman heard about the shidduch, he called his friend and asked, "Why didn't you come to me, so I could be the shadchan to finalize the shidduch? Why did you take another shadchan?"

The man replied, "Of course, I wanted you to finalize the shidduch. I actually called you ten times for this purpose, but you didn't answer the phone. I had no choice but to take another shadchan. You will receive a third of the shadchanus money, because you thought of the idea. But the rest of the money will go to the shadchan who finalized the shidduch, as this is the halachah of shadchanus."

After this phone call, the yungerman looked back at his phone calls of that day, and realized that although the numbers were similar, it was indeed his friend who was calling him, and not the organization.

We learn from this story that when you think someone is bothering you, realize that this is all to help you. Something good will come from it. Don't push away the goodness. Accept the kindness Hashem is bestowing upon you.

8. Three years ago, a bachur from a large yeshiva wasn't acting appropriately. His bad ways were negatively influencing other bachurim of the yeshiva. After much deliberation, at a meeting, the rabbanim of the yeshiva decided that the bachur must be expelled from the yeshiva.

A year ago, the rosh yeshiva met up with this bachur. It wasn't a planned meeting, but by hashgachah pratis, they happened to meet, and the rosh yeshiva saw that the bachur was now dressed and behaved like a true ben Torah. The rosh yeshiva was pleasantly surprised to see him this way.

The bachur told the rosh yeshiva that the credit goes to one of the magidei shiurim of the yeshiva. All the

Just think about it. Why does the yetzer hara disturb us from davening? Whenever we want to daven, the yetzer hara distracts us with various thoughts and takes away our concentration. Why? Because the yetzer hara knows the power of our tefillos. The fact that he disturbs us when we daven is our greatest proof that Hashem listens to our tefillos.

Hashem told Moshe (8:16) **השְׁלָמָם בַּבְּקָר וְהַתִּיצְבָּה**, "Arise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh." Why was it necessary to come so early in the morning to Pharaoh?

The Midrash explains that Hashem wanted Moshe to get to Pharaoh *before* Pharaoh davens because Hashem listened to Pharaoh's tefillos, too. If Moshe would get to Pharaoh after he davened, Hashem would save Pharaoh. Therefore, Hashem told Moshe to come to Pharaoh early in the morning.

We see that Hashem listens even to the tefillos of Pharaoh. We can all take a lesson from this and an awareness that Hashem will certainly listen to us when we turn to Hashem in prayer.

The Rayatz of Lubavitch zt'l says, "People think that all they need to do is to wait for

Moshiach, but they forget that in Mitzrayim, tefillah was needed, too, and only then were they saved."

It states (3:15) **ה' אֱלֹקי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹקי אֶבְרָהָם אֱלֹקי** "Hashem the G-d of your fathers: the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov... This is how I should be mentioned in every generation." The Ramban writes that this means, "In all generations when one says **אֱלֹקי אֶבְרָהָם אֱלֹקי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹקי יַעֲקֹב** Hashem will answer his tefillos." This is the reason we begin Shemonah Esrei with these words. When we say them, Hashem listens to our tefillos, since He loves the Avos.

When saying these words in Shemoneh Esrei, one should think about our unique privilege to be descendants of the holy Avos.

A grandson of a chassidic Rebbe was waiting for his turn to speak to the Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l. As he waited, he said to the gabbai, Reb Chaninah Schiff, z'l, "When you bring me to the Gerrer Rebbe, tell him who my grandfather is."

The gabbai replied, "We aren't accustomed to doing that."

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time he was out of yeshiva, the magid shiur would call him a couple of times a week to hear how he was doing. The bachur said, "The magid shiur's concern warmed my heart. His calls made me feel important. I made a cheshbon hanefesh, weighing what is truly important in life, and I chose a life with Torah and yiras Shamayim. Recently, I was accepted into Beis Medrash Govoha in Lakewood."

The rosh yeshiva called the magid shiur to tell him that his efforts had borne fruit, and the fantastic progress this bachur has made. The magid shiur replied, "It's true that I called him a couple of times each week, but he didn't answer the phone, and he never called me back, either!"

Apparently, when the bachur saw on his phone that the magid shiur called him, he knew the magid shiur was thinking about him and cared about him, and that warmed his heart. That gave him the strength to make the right decisions.

How important it is to give people the feeling that you respect and care about them. As in this story, this can turn people entirely around.

In addition, this story teaches us a lesson in tefillah. This magid shiur called every week, and he thought the efforts weren't accomplishing anything, when actually his attempts were accomplishing a lot. The same is with tefillah. Sometimes, we daven day after day, and we don't see results. We wonder what happened to the concept that Hashem listens to **תפילה כל פה**, to every person's tefillah? But do not despair. The time will come when you discover how much your tefillos accomplished.

But the bachur insisted, so when Reb Chanina brought him before the Beis Yisrael, he said, "He wants the rebbe to know that he is a grandson of this-and-this tzaddik."

The Beis Yisrael replied, "I should know? He should know!"

The same is regarding the Avos. We should know our yichus. We should know that we are descendants of the holy Avos. This awareness should fill our hearts with pride and joy, and in their merits, our tefillos will be answered.<sup>9</sup>

9. Every morning, before korbanos, we say, "Who are we? What is our life...? Behold, all the mighty are like nothing before You, the famous are like non-existent.... because most of their deeds are foolishness, and there is no benefit of man over an animal - everything is vain."

אבל אנחנו עםך בני בריתך בני אברהם האבך... אשרינו מה טוב חלכנו ומה נעים גורלנו ומה יפה ירושתנו, "But we are Your nation, the children of Your covenant, the children of Avraham, whom You loved... We are fortunate! How good is our portion! How sweet is our lot! How beautiful is our inheritance!" Reb Noach Chofetz z"l was a close student of Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l. There was a time that they learned b'chavrusah, as well. A couple of years ago, he was ill, and I visited him. He told me that as a bachur, he began to go to a particular chassidic rebbe for Shabbosim, and Reb Yechezkel Levenstein asked him, "What do you get there that you don't have by us?"

Reb Noach replied, "The lessons of מה חיינו, "Who are we? What is life?", I learned very well from you. You taught me that the gashmiyos of this world are nothing. But the אבל אנחנו, that we are Hashem's beloved nation, that I learn by this Rebbe."

Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l praised this answer and said he should continue going to this Rebbe. And then, to himself, Reb Yechezkel repeated many times אָבֵל אֲנָהָנוּ ... אָבֵל אֲנָהָנוּ ...!

Several years ago, in Eretz Yisrael, there were fierce battles regarding **נתוחות מתים**, autopsies. The Israeli Police insisted on performing autopsies on the deceased. The religious community was very against this, because Halachically, a dead body must be treated with utmost honor and buried whole. When it isn't necessary, it is a disgrace for the body to be operated upon.

Once, a person who didn't have children was niftar in his apartment, near a yeshiva dormitory. The bachurim in the yeshiva quickly grabbed the body and brought it to the dormitory, so that it wouldn't be desecrated. The police arrived to claim the body, but the bachurim were prepared for them. They placed benches, tables, and furniture on the pathway, from the entrance to the third floor, to make it difficult for the police to get in and to climb up to the third floor. They even poured oil on the stairs to make it hard for the police to ascend the steps.

But the police didn't give up. It would be humiliating for them to be beaten by yeshiva bachurim. So, they worked for a few hours until they managed to get to the body. They carried the body, covered in a tallis, into an ambulance that was waiting outside.

As the ambulance was riding to the hospital, the police officers noticed some movement under the tallis. The police didn't know what to do, and they began panicking. Then, in front of the eyes of the shocked officers, the "niftar" sat up, jumped out of the bed, opened the ambulance door, and ran off. (Now, the police probably needed an ambulance for themselves, due to the fear that gripped them.)

Where did the actual dead person go? The police saw the barricades going up to the third floor, so they assumed that the dead person was on the third floor. The corpse was actually on the first floor. The bochurim created this obstacle course to fool the police into thinking the niftar was upstairs. There, on the third floor, a bachur pretended to be the corpse, and the police took him into the ambulance. When the police left the site, the bachurim took the niftar (which was lying on the first floor) and buried him next to the dormitory.

Let us learn from the bachurim's prank one of the techniques of the yetzer hara. The police were tricked

into thinking that what they were looking for was on the third floor. The yetzer hara does the same. He tries to trick us into thinking that we are looking for, we will find in distant and forbidden pleasures and desires of this world. We must remember what we should seek. Only Torah and mitzvos will satisfy us. They are the source of our true joy.

Here is another lesson: The police weren't afraid of the bachurim in the dormitory. They trudged through the obstacle course the bachurim prepared for them, without fear, and with confidence. However, when the police saw the "corpse" move under the talis, they melted in fear. This can be used as a mashal. The yetzer hara isn't afraid of a Yid, as long as he isn't moving. However, when a Yid begins to move (with performing Torah and mitzvos), the yetzer hara becomes afraid.

A similar mashal is told by Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita. A chasan came out of the yichud room, looking forward to all the attention he would receive at the chasunah, but saw that there was another "chasan" at his chasunah, dancing in the hall that his family had ordered. This other chasan was receiving all the attention. Music was playing, and everyone was rejoicing with the "new chasan", who took away his chasunah! The true chasan's face fell. He is sad, and the imposter chasan is happy.

People became confused. How did it happen that there are two chasanim at the same chasunah? They checked what was happening on the other side of the mechitzah. They discovered that there is only one kalah there – the kalah of the sad chasan. The question remains who this other chasan is, why he came there, and why he was taking away the chasunah from the true chasan?

It was discovered that this other "chasan" was just a letz, a joker, and a rasha. He thought it was funny to pretend to be the chasan, but he took away all the attention from the true chasan. If the true chasan knew that the imposter was just a joker, he wouldn't be upset, and he wouldn't be sad. He would realize that all the people who came to the chasunah, the band, the meal, and everything else were all for him. If he realized that, he would ignore the other chasan and enjoy his wedding.

The nimshal of this story is that the taavos of this world are impostors, and they want people should think that they are the purpose of the world. Even those who are occupied with Torah and mitzvos may also believe this (to an extent) and accept that they are missing out on the "good world." But the wise know that pleasures and futile pursuits are just impostors, nothing at all, and it is best to ignore them. Instead, they should be occupied with the true "chasan", the true purpose – Torah and mitzvos.

Now, during Shovavim, we seek the true awareness that all the taavos are nothing at all. They are an illusion, and not at all what we are looking for. The true "chasan" is a Yid occupied with Torah and mitzvos. For him, the entire world was created and is sustained. That is the true enjoyment and the true importance. When a person attains this realization, he will dance joyously, because he knows that everything is for him.

Reb Mendel Luria zt'l (who wrote *ביה לדעת*, and was the son of the Avodos Pnim of Slonim) tells that in his youth (approximately a hundred years ago), people from Tveria would often spend the summer in Tzefas because it was very hot in Tveria. Once, Reb Mendel was in Tzefas, and as he went around to see the stores, he came across something entertaining. There were brothers who owned a watch store. Reb Mendel saw that they tied a very thin string (fishing string) to a gold watch and put the watch out on the street. When a passerby noticed the watch and bent down to pick it up, the brothers would pull the string a bit, and the watch came closer to them, and further away from the person who tried picking it up. Inevitably, the person would try again, and they would pull the string once again. This went on until the person was brought into the store, and everyone had a good laugh.

But there is something odd about this prank. Why did people follow the watch when it jumped away from them? Didn't they realize that there must be someone pulling it away? A watch can't move on its own! But the answer is that when a person really wants something, his mind doesn't think rationally. His taavos take over his entire being. This shows us the power of taavos. It takes over a person. Nevertheless, a person has the strength to think even then... so it won't end in humiliation.