

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Bechukosai



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Torah Wellsprings - Bechukosai

Emunah: A Segulah for Parnassah

The parashah begins with the words אִם בַּחֲקֵי תִלְכוּ. The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz explains that חֵק refers to *parnassah* (as in *הַטְרִיפְנִי לַחֵם חֻקִּי*, *Mishlei* 30:8). The pasuk is saying that if you believe your *parnassah* is from Hashem, וְנִתְּתִי גַשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם, you will have an abundance of *parnassah*.

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz *zt'l* writes, "There is nothing better for *parnassah* than *emunah*."

Reb Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* said that a businessman must believe that every aspect of his business dealings is from Hashem. What he buys, the items he sells, and the prices are all decreed from Above. When one has this *emunah*, he will succeed in all his ways.

Reb Yaakov Kopel *zt'l* (a student of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*) was called "The Shevisinik" by people because as he did business, he would always say the pasuk (*Tehillim* 16:8) שׁוֹיֵתִי ה' לִנְגְדִי "I have set Hashem before me always." He was constantly thinking of Hashem as he worked.

Reb Yaakov Kopel also had a very accurate scale, as the Torah obligates (*Vayikra* 19:36) מֵאֻנֵּי צֶדֶק "You shall have correct scales." The Jewish merchants would borrow his scale at the marketplace to benefit from his accurate weights. On a day that Reb Yaakov Kopel didn't come to the market, the merchants said to each other, "We can't do business today because the Shevisinik isn't here." They meant: (a) In Reb Yaakov Kopel's absence, they don't have an accurate scale. (b) In general, it is impossible to do business without Shevisi, without the awareness of שׁוֹיֵתִי ה' לִנְגְדִי תמיד, that everything comes from Hashem.

In his younger years, Rebbe Moshe of Kapishnitz *zt'l* was a diamond merchant in Manhattan. There was a *tekufah* where

several weeks had passed without a single sale. He told his father, Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heshel *zt'l* of Kapishnitz, אֵיךְ מֵאֵךְ, גַּאֲרֵנִישׁט "I'm making nothing."

His father replied, "You said it correctly. You can't do anything. Hashem decides whether you will earn *parnassah* or not."

One Erev Shabbos, after another unsuccessful week, he returned the diamonds to his home safe and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I see that I really can't do anything." Just then, the house phone rang. On the phone was a merchant who needed to buy a large number of diamonds. Reb Moshe made more money at that moment than he hoped to earn during all the weeks he didn't make a sale. This is because when one believes that everything comes from Hashem, he will see tremendous *siyata dishmaya*. *Emunah* is mesugal for *parnassah*.

On the other hand, thinking that you can earn *parnassah* on your own, without Hashem's help, results in failure. The Mishnah (end of *Kiddushin*) states, "Why do animals have their *parnassah* without difficulty, while I must struggle for my *parnassah*? It is because my deeds aren't good. My aveiros caused me to lose my *parnassah*."

The Mishnah's words are קִפַּחְתִּי אֶת פְּרִנְסַתִּי, which means I chopped away at my *parnassah*. We can also explain that the word קִפַּחְתִּי contains the same letters as פִּקְחָתִי, which means wisdom. The Mishnah is saying that I forfeited my *parnassah* because I thought I was wise and that I could earn *parnassah* with my clever ideas. That is a formula for failure. When a person realizes that he can't make *parnassah* without Hashem's help, he is already on the path to success.

An old, blind priest was selling a forest for an excellent price, and a Chortkover

chasid planned to buy it. His friends and business advisors all told him that it was the deal of a lifetime, an opportunity he couldn't pass up. He can earn millions.

He told Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Chortkov zt'l about the immense wealth he would soon earn from this phenomenal venture. Very surprisingly, Rebbe Dovid Moshe advised him not to purchase the forest.

But the chasid didn't listen to his rebbe's counsel. How could he give up such a deal? He bought the forest and immediately sent workers to begin chopping down trees. They returned with the sad report that the trees were all rotten.

He lost all his money in this business venture.

He returned to Rebbe Dovid Moshe two years later and cried, "I know I was wrong. I should have listened to the Rebbe's ruach hakodesh."

The Rebbe replied, "It wasn't ruach hakodesh. It is just that when you spoke to me about your business venture, you didn't once say *im yirtzeh Hashem*. You were confident you would succeed and didn't think you needed Hashem's help. And I know that when one does business with that attitude, he is set for failure. That's why I advised you against buying the forest.¹

Emunah: A Segulah for Success

When it comes to any endeavor, there is a greater likelihood that one will succeed when he approaches it with emunah.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin zt'l (Toras Avos, Emunah u'bitachon 46) said, "The Lechovitzer told me to build a house. He said, 'If you build it on the earth, it will stand. But if you build it on your head, it won't last.' [He meant that he should build the home with emunah and bitachon.] 'It is a mitzvah to tell balabatim how much siyata dishmaya I saw from following this counsel.'"

The Gemara (*Brachos* 8.) says that when someone got married in Eretz Yisrael, people would ask the chasan מוצא או מוצא.

מוצא is as in the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 18:22), מוצא אשה, "One who has found a wife has found goodness." מוצא טוב, "מוצא is as in the *pasuk* (*Koheles* 7:26), ומוצא אני מר ממות את האשה, "I have found, more bitter than death, the woman." They were asking the chasan whether his wife, for him, was like finding goodness or whether his married life was more bitter than death.

This Gemara arouses some questions. Firstly, why is it their business whether his wife is good or bad? Secondly, it seems that the question will cause lashon hara. (The Chofetz Chaim [1:13] discusses why this conversation doesn't involve *lashon hara*.) Furthermore, the chasan just got married. How should he know whether his wife is good or bad?

We can also ask about the words במערה אמרי "in Eretz Yisrael they would say [to the

1. The Beis HaLevi was once near a forest in Brisk, and he heard a businessman say, "Forest! It is because of you that I lost all my money." The Beis HaLevi replied, "You didn't lose your money because you bought this forest. You bought the forest because it was destined that you should lose your money."

People often say, "These are hard times for *parnassah*. In the past, it was easier, but now we came upon hard times." Their mistake is that they think the "time" is the problem when in truth *parnassah* is dependent on the extent of *emunah* one has. As it states (*Yeshayah* 33:6), והיו אמונת עתיד, the times (good or bad) are according to your *emunah*.

Reb Yitzchok of Neshchiz zt'l asked, since *parnassah* and bounty depend on *emunah*, why are there people who don't believe in Hashem, and yet they have *parnassah*? The answer is that Hashem has *rachmanus* on them because it is truthfully difficult to have *parnassah* without *emunah*.

chasan] מוצא or מוצא." Since they were asking a question, it should state במערבא שאלו, "In Eretz Yisrael, they would ask."

We can answer that מוצא אשה is when he believes Hashem helped him find his wife. In contrast, מוצא אני, "I found" is when one thinks he found his wife on his own. If he believes he found his wife on his own, it will be מר ממות, more bitter than death. This is because emunah brings success in shalom bayis, parnassah, and all aspects of life. One must never forget that it is never מוצא אני, "I found." Whatever he has, Hashem gave him.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l (Imrei HaRim Beshalach) says that when we pray, ותקנונו בעצה, טובה מלפניך, "Prepare us with good counsel" what we are really asking for is *emunah*, as we say (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) עזתו אמונה. When we have *emunah*, we will automatically find the right solutions, and Hashem will direct us on the best path.

Chazal (Shabbos 31.) say, אמונת זה סדר זרעים, that the tractate Zeraim (in Shas) is about *emunah*.

Zeraim discusses the halachos of agriculture. Why is it called *emunah*? Tosfos writes, שמאמין בחי עולמים וזורע, "It is because he believes in the Creator of the worlds, and plants." How does planting demonstrate that he believes in Hashem?

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l (Sefer HaZechus) explains that the highest level of *emunah* is when one does hishtadlus, knowing that the hishtadlus doesn't bring the results, only Hashem's kindness does. The test is to believe in Hashem even when you plant, and you do hishtadlus. Nevertheless, be aware that the results are from Hashem, not your hand's strength. And with your *emunah*, you will succeed.

Emunah: A Life of Happiness

A person with *emunah* will generally have parnassah and success in all his endeavors, as discussed above. In the merit of his *emunah*, he will enjoy success in his

life. But even if the segulah didn't work for some reason, and despite his *emunah*, he lacks parnassah and has no success, chalilah, nevertheless, he earns another wonderful benefit from his *emunah*. He earns happiness. This is because he has *emunah* and knows everything is for the good.

The Torah writes the *tochachah* twice. Once is in this week's *parashah*, and again in *parashas Ki Savo*. A difference between the two *tochachos* is that this week's *parashah* contains some words of comfort to the Jewish nation. For example, it states (26:44-45), ואף גם, זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלותם... "Despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them...because I am Hashem, their G-d..." Whereas the *tochachah* in *parashas Ki Savo* doesn't include any comforting words.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that the *tochachah* of *parashas Ki Savo* doesn't need comforting words because Hashem's name is mentioned with almost every affliction. As it states (28:21-25) ידבק ה' בך הדבר, "Hashem will attach the plague to you... יככה ה', Hashem will strike you... יתגך ה' נגף לפני אויבך, Hashem will cause you to be struck down before your enemies," and so on. And when one remembers that all the hardships are from Hashem, that awareness comforts him. He believes that nothing is by chance; it is from Hashem and, therefore, certainly for his good.

Yaakov Avinu wanted to tell his children when the galus would end, but when his children arrived, the Shechinah left him, and he could not tell them. The Sfas Emes zt'l (Vayechi 5631) explains that Yaakov wanted to tell them that Hashem would be with them even in galus, but he wasn't allowed to reveal that to his children because if they knew that Hashem was with them, there would be no galus. All troubles disappear when we know that everything comes from our Father, Who loves us.

Nevertheless, the Sfas Emes writes that although we cannot *know* that everything is from Hashem, we can *believe* it, and this belief gives us solace.²

Serve Hashem with Joy

Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah (p.199 from the older edition) writes, "The primary service of man to Hashem is the joy in his heart for Hashem and His mitzvos. This joy can be

felt at any time and any moment and no one knows about it but Hashem, Himself. And this is the primary avodas Hashem.

The importance of joy for the mitzvos is expressed in the tochachah of parashas Ki Savo, as it states (Devarim 25:47) תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב. This means that the entire tochachah came to be because we didn't serve Hashem with joy.³

2. One Chol HaMoed Succos, Rebbe Shlomo Leib Lenchana zt'l led a *tish* and shared with his chassidim the following idea: "The entire world isn't worth a *krechitz*. Our destiny is Olam HaBa. Therefore, we shouldn't be upset when we lack worldly matters; they are trivial. We should keep our focus on the goal, on Olam HaBa."

Just then, a bench collapsed from the weight of the many people standing on it. Some of the chasidim fell and were injured, and the Rebbe was also injured from the incident. The Rebbe emitted a *krechitz* from the pain.

One of the chassidim asked, "Why is the Rebbe *krechitzing*? Didn't the Rebbe say this world isn't worth a *krechitz*?"

The Rebbe replied, "True, the world isn't worth a *krechitz*, but when it hurts, one shouts and *krechitzes* from pain." The Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l repeated this story and explained that it is a natural reaction to *krechitz* and shout when in pain. But even then, his mind and intellect should remember that this world isn't so important that we should moan over it. Feelings remain feelings, and when one is in pain, he shouts; nevertheless, deep in his heart, he should remember that it is all for the good. When a father brings his son to the dentist, he expects his son will cry during the treatments. The father isn't upset at his son for crying because it is natural for a child to cry when in pain. But if the son says to his father, "Why did you bring me here? Why are you doing this to me?" the father will become upset. The son should trust that everything his father does is for his benefit.

Doctors informed Reb Leibke Glauberman zt'l of Yerushalayim that his legs needed to be amputated r"l. After the amputation, one doctor admitted to Reb Leibke's children that they had made a mistake – the amputation wasn't necessary, after all.

The children were very angry with the doctors. They made their father lame for no reason. They repeated to their father what they had heard. Reb Leibke replied, "The doctors erred; they shouldn't have amputated. But what happened to my legs wasn't a mistake. In my younger years, I heard from the Yanukah (Rebbe Yisrael of Stolin zt'l) that to say, 'If only things were different' is apikorsos because it couldn't have been different."

Reb Michoel Ber Weissmandl zt'l saved many people during the Holocaust. He had plans to save tens of thousands more Yidden, but cruel people prevented him. Devastated, Reb Michoel Ber poured out his heart to Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch zy'a (the Rayatz). The Rebbe replied, "And Who did all of this?"

The Rebbe reminded him that, ultimately, what occurred was decreed from heaven. Reb Michoel Ber said that the Rebbe's words changed his entire outlook.

3. The next pasuk states ועבדת את אויבך, "You will serve your enemy." Reb Chaim Volozhiner zt'l explains that when one works for someone he doesn't love, it feels like a chore. Now, since he didn't serve Hashem joyfully, he had a similar feeling to serving an enemy. Therefore, מדה כנגד מדה, his punishment is that he must serve his enemy.

Someone asked the Magid of Chernobyl zt'l to be sandek at his son's bris. The Magid asked him, "Will

The Chareidim writes, "The Arizal revealed that everything he perceived, his

there be a seudas mitzvah after the bris milah?"

The man replied that he was very poor and couldn't afford a seudah.

The Chernobyler Magid replied, "If you want me to be the sandek at the bris, you have to guarantee me that you will keep the minhag to make a seudah," and the Chernobyler Magid advised him to borrow money from his employer.

The Magid explained, "Eisav's malach is כמא"ל. This is roshei teivos for סעודת מילה אין לעשות, don't make a seudah for a bris milah. סעודת מצוה אין לעשות, don't make a seudas mitzvah. סיום מסכת אין לעשות, don't make a seudah for a siyum masechta. The yetzer hara tries hard to prevent us from conducting these three meals. Unfortunately, when it comes to a siyum, the yetzer hara succeeded. But I won't let him succeed to prevent us from making a meal by a bris. This is why I am so insistent that you make a seudah after the bris milah."

The Bas Ayin zt'l was present when this conversation took place. Sometime afterwards, the Bas Ayin explained the reason the Satan cannot stand the seudos held in honor of a siyum masechta, a mitzvah, or a bris milah. The Satan goes before Hakadosh Baruch Hu and says, "Ploni did this aveirah... And Ploni did that aveirah..." Malach Michoel immediately responds, "Take a look at their broken hearts, even as they performed the aveirah. They don't want to perform the aveirah. In contrast, look at a Yid who finished a masechta, performed a mitzvah, or made a bris milah for his son. Look at how happy he is. He will even throw a party to rejoice in his good fortune."

This claim silences the Satan, which is why he tries so hard to prevent us from making a seudas mitzvah.

Chazal (Chagigah 27.) say, פושעי ישראל ממלאים מצות כרימון, the sinners of Israel are filled with mitzvos like a pomegranate is filled with seeds. Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk zt'l (Pri Ha'Aretz, letter 22) asks, if they perform so many mitzvos, why are they called פושעי ישראל? It is because they perform the mitzvos without joy! This greatly diminishes the value of their mitzvos.

Someone told Rebbe Avraham of Sochochov zy'a, "We are the same age; I learned with you in cheder. I also learn Torah with all my strength and know as much Torah as you. So how did you become the gadol hador while I am considered a regular person?"

The Rebbe of Sochochov replied, "When were you extremely happy, happier than any other time?"

The man replied that this occurred years ago when he won the lottery. The Sochotchover replied, "You never again had this great joy? Not even once again? Know that each day, when I stretch out my arm to put on tefillin, I am so happy, a thousand times more than when you won the lottery."

The man replied, "Then you are right. You are the rebbe! You are the rebbe!"

On a related note, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l would tell about "a Yid from Zvhil" that when he put on tefillin in the morning, his joy and pleasure were greater than the pleasure and joy of the lowest resha'im of the city when they performed their aveiros. (It is known that when Rebbe Shlomke told a story about "a Yid in Zvhil" he was referring to himself.)

A Jewish soldier once came to the tish of the Yesod HaAvodah, and the soldier's face shone brightly. The Yesod HaAvodah asked him what he does. He replied, "I am a soldier in the king's army. On the first night of Succos, I was standing guard, but I desired immensely to sit in the succah. I risked my life. I left my post and dashed to a succah. I said the brachah, ate a kezayis bread, and returned to my post."

The Yesod HaAvodah replied, "You did a great mitzvah. You performed a mitzvah with mesirus nefesh. Nevertheless, that isn't the reason your face shines so brightly. There must be another reason."

The soldier said, "When I returned to our camp, I was so happy that I was able to perform this mitzvah, I began to dance with immense joy."

The Yesod HaAvodah told him that this was the merit that brought this shine onto his face.

ruach hakodesh, and great revelations in the secrets of Torah, were all a result of the endless happiness with which he performed every mitzvah."

It states (Shir HaShirim 3:11) ביום התגלותו וביום שמחת לבו. The Zohar (Chadash, Bereishis 15:) asks, "What is the day one can perform the mitzvos of the Torah, for that day is a great joy for tzaddikim. When is that day? It is when he becomes thirteen. It is an obligation for tzaddikim to celebrate that day like the day that one goes to the chuppah."

The Chasam Sofer (ויחי ד"ה וירא) writes, "I said that happiness is the first mitzvah a bar mitzvah bachur performs when he becomes bar mitzvah. It is his joy to accept the yoke of heaven. This joy is a *mitzvas asei*, a positive command of the Torah, for we must serve Hashem כל מרוב לבב בטוב ובשמחה. I explained that the Torah doesn't explicitly write that we should rejoice on the day one becomes bar mitzvah, just as the Torah doesn't write explicitly that one should be happy on Shavuos, the day we receive the Torah. This is because the Torah can't command us to be happy because perhaps the mitzvos are perceived by the person as a yoke.⁴ And then the mitzvah to be happy will be yet another yoke on our shoulders. Rather, Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't command it, and we are happy on our own, happy with receiving the yoke of Torah and happy with the bar mitzvah."

People make a grand celebration by a chasunah, which is the fulfillment of the first mitzvah of the Torah (פרו ורב), and at a hachnasas sefer Torah, which is the final mitzvah of the Torah (ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת). The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that we should really make a great celebration for each mitzvah we perform, but it would be

impossible. Therefore, we make a celebration solely for the first and the final mitzvah of the Torah.

Another pasuk that speaks about our obligation to serve Hashem with joy is (Tehillim 100:2) עבדו את ה' בשמחה. The Rambam (Hilchos Lulav 8:15) states, "The joy that a person has when he performs a mitzvah, and his love to Hashem Who created him, עבודה גדולה, is a great avodah, a great service to Hashem."

Each mitzvah has its segulah, and yet, sometimes, we perform mitzvos but don't see the segulos coming through! Reb Chaim Vital zt'l (Hakdamah l'Shaar HaMitzvos) addresses this problem and explains why. He writes, "We see people performing mitzvos, but we don't see the words of Chazal, which discuss the reward even in this world, happening. The primary factor for this is that when one does a mitzvah, he shouldn't consider it like a yoke, something that he wants to finish as soon as possible. Instead, he should think that he is earning millions (אלף אלפים דגרי זהב) with every mitzvah he performs. He should be very happy with the mitzvos, and perform them with great desire, as though he is actually earning the millions for each mitzvah he performs."

Similarly, Orchos Tzaddikim (Shaar HaSimchah) writes, "Whoever performs a mitzvah with joy, his reward will be a thousand times more than those who perform the mitzvos as though they are a heavy load."

The Gemara (Shabbos 30:) states that the Shechinah resides solely where there is joy. And the Vilna Gaon zt'l (Oros HaGra, Simchah) writes, "Atzvus is a mum, a blemish, and whoever has a blemish, can't come to

4. A financial debt is called a חוב. Any obligation is also considered a חוב. A humorous tale is told about a poor person who complained to his rebbe about his debts (חובות) that he owes. The tzaddik told him, "A person must serve Hashem with joy."

The poor man said, "Oy! Now I have another חוב, obligation. Until now, I had a חוב of money, and now I have a חוב to be happy, too!"

kedushah. This is the reason one needed to be happy in order to come to the Beis HaMikdash.⁵

How can one acquire this great joy? A person should think about this tremendous opportunity that he, a human being, can serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the King of all kings. The Orchos Tzaddikim (Shaar HaSimchah) writes, "When you perform the mitzvos, be happy in your heart that you have the merit to serve the Divine King, to Whom the malachim bow down."

To better explain the great joy that is required when performing mitzvos, let us look at the Or HaChaim HaKadosh (Shemos 12:3) on the pasuk ויקחו להם איש שה, which is talking about the sheep that the Yidden took for the korban Pesach. In this pasuk, the word איש seems extra. איש represents Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as Chazal (Sotah 42:) tell

us אין איש אלא הקב"ה. This was the Yidden's first mitzvah, and at this time, Hashem wanted to show them what they would attain when they performed the mitzvos. ויקחו איש, it will be like they are taking Hakadosh Baruch Hu because when a Yid performs a mitzvah, Hashem resides on the Yid who performs it. This is also the intention of (Shemos 22:2) ויקחו לי תרומה... The word לי is extra, and the Midrash Tanchuma (3) writes that this means we should take Hakadosh Baruch Hu with the mitzvah. For this is what occurs when we perform the mitzvos. We become connected with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This is also the intention of the pasuk (Devarim 28:10) וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך, because of the mitzvos, it will be noticed that Hashem resides with Yisrael.

Thinking about these wondrous ideas will undoubtedly fill our hearts with joy when we perform the mitzvos.⁶

5. Rebbe Tzvi Hirsh of Ziditchov zt'l said that שמייכל, smile, is roshei teivos for לעבדתו יתברך, "Everyone should be devoted to Hashem's service." This devotion is a reason for joy, as indicated by the roshei teivos, שמייכל, smile. Although the letters of the phrase aren't in the order of the letters שמייכל, that is because the trick of being happy is even when things aren't happening directly in the correct order. To be happy even when things seem out of place, is true service of Hashem.

6. A messenger of a wealthy person once brought a barrel of fine wine as a gift to Rebbe Nochum of Chernobyl zt'l. The messenger explained that his boss wanted to send this gift because Chazal say that a gift to tzaddikim is like bringing bikurim.

The Meor Einayim looked at the messenger and said, "Did you wear tefillin today?"

The man admitted that he hadn't. He explained, "I woke up late today, and before I put on tefillin, my boss called for me to do something for him. When I finished the job, I was hungry, so I ate breakfast. I learned in my youth that one must wear tefillin before eating, so I figured that after I ate, there is no purpose to wear tefillin anymore."

Reb Nochum explained to him that he is correct that ideally, the meal should be after wearing tefillin. However, even if you have already eaten, you should still put on tefillin.

After the man left, Rebbe Nochum said to his holy students, "This messenger isn't the wisest person, and from his deeds, it is obvious that he doesn't know much Torah. Perhaps he doesn't even know that when one wears tefillin, one has to be cautious to have a clean body. Nevertheless, since he didn't wear tefillin today, his neshamah lacked this light, and I could perceive that he didn't wear tefillin yet. We learn from this that every mitzvah, even one not performed with perfection, makes an imprint on the person and grants him a great light."

There was an eighty-year-old man in Teveria who suffered from pain and illnesses. He told Rebbe Avraham of Kalisk zt'l that he no longer had the will to live. Reb Avraham Kalisker asked him if he wore tefillin that day, and he replied that he had. Reb Avraham exclaimed, "It is worthwhile to live eighty years with the yesurim that you have now just to put on tefillin once! And even to put on tefillin as you had done

Preparing for the Mitzvos

Shavuot is approaching, and it is time to prepare for this great *Yom tov*.

The Chayei Adam (65:25) writes, "A person shouldn't perform a mitzvah suddenly, without preparation. He should take time to prepare himself. He should first contemplate on what is the best way to perform the mitzvah." He writes that this is implied in the pasuk *שומר מצוה לא ידע דבר רע* because the word *שומר* can be translated as "to wait" (see Bereishis 37:11, *וַיִּשְׁמֵר אֶת הַדָּבָר*). So, the pasuk says one should wait and prepare for a mitzvah. The Chayei Adam writes that it is also

implied in the pasuk (Shemos 12:17) *וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֵת הַמִּצְוֹת*, which can be explained that a person should wait before he performs a mitzvah. He should plan on how to do the mitzvah in the best way possible.

The Chayei Adam writes, "This is the reason it was established to say before performing a mitzvah *הִנְנִי מוּכָן וּמוֹזְמָן לְקִיּוּם הַמִּצְוָה*," "I am prepared to perform the mitzvah...." This means I have prepared myself, and I am ready to perform the mitzvah. This is also implied in the pasuk (Amos 4:12) *הִבֹּן לְקִרְיַת אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרָאֵל*, 'Prepare yourself to meet Your G-d, Yisrael.' This means you should prepare

today. (Kisvei Reb Moshe Minder 492.)

There is a mashgiach kashrus who lives in Toronto, and works in – and lives – in a food factory in Toronto. This factory is a forty-five minute drive from the nearest Jewish community. Every day, he awakens early and travels all this distance to daven with minyan. He used to leave his tefillin in the beis medresh, so he wouldn't have to bring it each day. One morning, he awoke to a blizzard. Driving to the beis medresh was impossible due to the high snow.

A state of emergency was declared, and passenger cars were banned from the road. The only way to get to the beis medresh would be by hiring a special jeep, which cost ten thousand dollars. He called his rav, and asked whether he was obligated to pay that amount of money to get to his tefillin.

The rav replied, "Halachah states that one must give away a fifth of his money to do a mitzvah. If you have fifty thousand dollars in your bank, you must pay ten thousand dollars for the mitzvah."

He had more than fifty thousand dollars, so he hired the jeep and just managed to say the brachah on the tefillin moments before shkiyah. He told me that the next day, when he put on tefillin, he put it on with an extra simchah. He had a deeper appreciation for the great mitzvah of tefillin.

A rav from the previous generation (who eventually lived in America) related that during the holocaust, he escaped with his brother into a forest, where they joined a group of non-Jewish partisans. Their family name was Yaffe. Generally, partisans were groups of either exclusively Jews or non-Jews, but this time, the two brothers were the only Jews. Everyone else were goyim.

The partisans would appoint a guard who sat on a tall tree to watch whether the resha'im were entering the forest. One day, a guard saw soldiers approaching. He immediately told his fellow partisans about the impending danger. They all ran deeper into the forest. Also, the two Yaffe brothers ran into the forest.

When they arrived at a safer place, they realized that in their haste, they had forgotten to take their tefillin with them. So, now they had a dilemma. The partisans told them that it was dangerous to return, as they would certainly be caught by the Germans if they returned. But they knew that if they didn't return, it was likely that they wouldn't have the opportunity to put on tefillin for who knows how long.

They decided to take the risk. They returned to their previous camp. They went through roundabout paths, where they figured they were less likely to be caught. They were happy to find their tefillin exactly where they had left them and that there were no signs of the enemy soldiers. They davened Minchah joyously and then went back through the forest to catch up with their fellow partisans. They found all of their friends dead, cast over the dirt. None of them survived. They were killed by the Nazis, who found them in the forest. From the entire group, only the Yaffe brothers survived. The merit of tefillin saved their lives.

yourself for the mitzvah. You shouldn't perform the mitzvah suddenly without thinking about it beforehand.

"I have tested it," the Chayei Adam adds, "when I did a mitzvah without preparing for it, I didn't keep it properly. Therefore, one must be cautious with this matter. This can be the meaning of the pasuk: שומר מצוה, when you wait and prepare yourself before you do a mitzvah, לא ידע דבר רע, you will merit to perform the mitzvah in the best manner."

The Chayei Adam is a halachah sefer, and not a mussar sefer. Yet, he elaborates on this topic because this is how to perform mitzvos properly.

It states (Hosheia 14:10) צדיקים ילכו בם ופושעים יכשלו בם. People say that this pasuk is expressing the difference between a tzaddik and a sinner. A tzaddik prepares himself for the mitzvos- ילכו בם; he goes to prepare them. Whereas the פושעים, sinners, יכשלו בם, stumble onto the mitzvos without any prior preparation.⁷

"The Preparation for a Mitzvah is Greater than the Mitzvah."

Tzaddikim said that the preparation for a mitzvah is greater than the performance of the mitzvah.⁸ Proof of this concept is that Chazal (Tanchuma, Emor 2) tell us that the four days after Yom Kippur, we don't have any aveiros. We are occupied by preparing for the mitzvos of the yom tov, and that brings us atonement. However, on the first day of Succos, when we perform the mitzvos, we

begin a new cheshbon, and aveiros are now counted. (This is alluded to in the pasuk, ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון, that we should take the lulav and esrog the first day of succos, and Chazal explain that it is the first day for the reckoning of the aveiros.) We see from this source that we attain atonement when we *prepare* for the mitzvos and not when we *perform* them. And this indicates that the preparation is greater than the mitzvos, themselves.

The Taz (581) asks, how can this be? How can preparing for mitzvos be greater than the first day of Succos, when we sit in succah and take the four minim? How can it be that we attain atonement when we prepare for the mitzvos and not when we perform the mitzvos?

The Sfas Emes writes (Bechukosei 5644), "The chachamim (Yoma 29.) say, הרהורי עבירה קשין מעבירה, thinking about aveiros is worse than actually performing aveiros. The opposite is also true. Thinking about doing a mitzvah is better than performing the mitzvos themselves. The rectification of his soul is based on the extent of his desire and attempt to serve Hashem."

The Imrei Emes (Succos, second night, 5691) proves the greatness of preparing for mitzvos from the שמחת בית השואבה, celebrated in the beis hamikdash. The celebration was to rejoice with the mitzvah of pouring water on the mizbeiach, which is performed on Succos. The Gemara describes in detail this great celebration, and it is evident that most of the celebration occurred before they poured water on the mizbeiach. At the actual time of the mitzvah, music isn't played, and

7. Chazal call the mitzvah of shiluach haken (to send away the mother bird to take the eggs) a מצוה קלה, an easy mitzvah. The Imrei Emes zt'l (Ki Seitzei, 5691) explains that this is because this mitzvah is performed only when it is uncounted unplanned, as it states כי יקרא, and Chazal (Chulin 139.) explain, פרט למוזמן, that the mitzvah cannot be performed when it was planned and prepared. It is called a מצוה קלה, an easy mitzvah, because it is a mitzvah performed without hachanos.

8. In Haggadah shel Pesach we say, אלו קרבנו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן לנו את התורה דיינו, "Had Hashem brought us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah, it would also be sufficient [reason to praise Hashem]." The Chida (Lev Dovid 31) asks, what benefit would we have gained just from coming to Har Sinai without receiving the Torah? He answers that we were at Har Sinai, we prepared to receive the Torah and we attained high levels of perception at that time, just from the preparation, itself.

there isn't much joy (at least not in an external sense). The Imrei Emes zt'l said that this indicates the greatest joy for the mitzvos is when one prepares to perform the mitzvos.

Another indication is from the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash. The halachah is (Yoma 24:, and it is written in Rambam, Hilchos Beis Hamikdash 9:7) that someone who isn't a kohen may light the menorah in the Beis haMidkdash. However, only a kohen may prepare the menorah for lighting it. This shows that the preparation is greater than the mitzvah.

On Yom Kippur, the kohen gadol placed the ketores on the coals in the holiest place, the kodesh hakadoshim. The Tzedokim (the apikorsim) said the kohen gadol should place the ketores on the coals *outside* the kodesh Hakadoshim. We can explain that the Tzedokim felt that the holiest place in the world is not the right place to *prepare* the ketores. Therefore, they thought it better to prepare the ketores outside the kodesh kadoshim. The chachamim, however, prove from pasukim that the ketores should be lit in the kodesh hakadoshim. It isn't a problem to do this deed in the Kodesh Hakadoshim because it is preparing for a mitzvah, which is even greater than performing the mitzvah.

Preparing for the Hislahavus of the Mitzvos

One aspect of preparation is to prepare the heart and emotions for the joy of the mitzvah.

The Yeshuos Moshe of Vizhnitz zt'l said that *הכנה* is gematriya *מח ולב*, mind and heart, indicating that one should first prepare his mind and heart with a desire to perform the mitzvos.

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein zt'l said that two people could perform the same mitzvah.

Although they appear to be doing the same deed, they are as distant from each other as the East is from the West because it all depends on the intention of the heart.

The Yismach Yisrael of Alexander zt'l didn't want his chasidim to watch him light Chanukah lecht. There was one chasid who very much wanted to watch his Rebbe light Chanukah lecht, so he hid himself in one of the closets that were in his room. The chasid watched the Rebbe prepare himself for the mitzvah with a lot of hisorerus and hislahavus. But when the Rebbe lit the Chanukah lecht, it seemed very simple, like any average person would light Chanukah lecht. The chasid was surprised. After seeing the Rebbe's fiery hislahavus when he prepared for the mitzvah, he was sure there would be an even greater ecstasy when he lit the lamps, but it wasn't that way at all! He couldn't ask this question because he was hiding and wasn't supposed to be there!

The next day, the Yismach Yisrael came over to him and said, "A person can arouse himself before he performs the mitzvah, but when he performs the mitzvah, the *hisorerus* is from Above, and it isn't in the person's hands anymore." Generally, when one prepares himself before the mitzvah, Hashem will bestow on him hislahavus and deveikus, but what can he do if he doesn't receive it? He will then perform the mitzvah like a regular, simple person.⁹

Chazal say (Avos 4:2) *מצוה גוררת מצוה*, one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah. Rebbe Yitzchak of Radvil (Yalkut Or Yitzchak, Avos 4) zt'l asks that when a person puts on tefillin in the morning, that mitzvah should lead to the next mitzvah and many others. So, why don't we see people becoming tzaddikim? Why do we sometimes see that immediately after taking off the tefillin, he becomes busy

9. When a person takes meat out of the freezer, he lets it defrost first before cooking it. This can also be a mashal for the need to make preparations. When we are cold from the gashmiyos of this world, we can't immediately jump into the heat of the mitzvos. We begin by preparing ourselves, and then we can perform the mitzvos properly.

with matters of this world and forgets to study Torah and the like?

He replies, "If a person put on tefillin with hislahavus, the mitzvah would have an effect on him." The problem is that the mitzvah is performed without preparation and excitement; therefore, it doesn't change him. He doesn't have the segulah of מצוה גוררת מצוה.

The Mishnah also states עבירה גוררת עבירה, that one aveirah leads to the next one. Unfortunately, that part of the Mishnah we can testify to. We see it happening all the time. People ask, why do we see that one aveirah leads to more aveiros, but we don't see that one mitzvah leads to other mitzvos? But the answer is as we wrote above. If he performs the mitzvos with the hislahavus that people do aveiros, they will also see that one mitzvah leads to many others.

During the days that England ruled over Eretz Yisrael, English officials came to Reb Aryeh Levine zt'l and told him that prisoners in Acco wanted him to come to them to put on tefillin before they were executed. (Reb Aryeh Levine wore tefillin all day long. He would often go to prisons to give them chizuk.) Reb Aryeh Levine arrived and gave the prisoners tefillin to put on. When they performed this mitzvah, which would be their last mitzvah, they cried copiously. Reb Aryeh Levine would repeat this episode and say how he learned from them how to put on tefillin. It should be with deveikus, as if this was the last time he could wear tefillin.

Preparing to Receive the Kedushah

The Or HaChaim (Shemos 19:3) writes, ויש לך לדעת כי בחינת הקדושה לא תקיים אלא למוזמן אותה, "You need to know that kedushah only comes when it is prepared." This is hinted at in the Torah when it states (Shmos 19:3) ומושה עלה אל ויקרא אליו ה' מן ההר, Moshe Rabbeinu went up on the mountain. He did his hishtadlus, and then he merited kedushah. Hashem called to him and taught him the Torah. We see that even Moshe Rabbeinu had to do his *hachanos* (preparations). If Moshe Rabbeinu needed to do so, and he is called by Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 11:4) מהציתו אלקים, half G-dly, certain simple people like us need to prepare ourselves to receive kedushah.¹⁰

It states (Shmos 33:11) ודבר ה' אל משה פנים אל פנים, כאשר ידבר איש את רעהו, "On this pasuk, as well, the Or HaChaim tells us the importance of preparing for the mitzvos. He writes, "The pasuk is telling us that according to the extent that Moshe prepared to greet the Shechinah, that is the extent of perception that he received from Above. This is because in accordance with the amount that one prepares for kedushah, that is the extent that he will receive."¹¹

The Maor v'Shamesh explains that a person has to do his part to come close to Hashem, and then Hashem reciprocates and bestows much shefa from above. Moshe went up to the mountain; he did his part to come close to Hashem, and this is called איתערוותא דלתתא, arousal from below. And then will come איתערוותא דלעילא, an arousal from Above."

¹⁰ When a person goes from a dark place into a great light, he quickly closes his eyes. The light is too strong for him. The same happens when one performs a mitzvah without preparation. The kedushah is too great for him, and he cannot receive the kedushah.

The preparation that precedes the mitzvah helps us create vessels to attain and hold the great light of the mitzvos.

¹¹ This is also alluded to in the pasuk (Esther 1:21) ויעש המלך כדבר ממוזמן, which can be translated, "Hashem did for him in accordance to the extent of his preparation (Beis Aharon).

The Maor v'Shamesh says that this is allude to in the pasuk (Shemos 19:3) ומשה עלה אל האלקים ויקרא אליו ה' מן ההר לאמר כה תאמר לבית יעקב ותגיד לבני ישראל. The word לאמר in the pasuk written above is extra. Generally, לאמר means that what Hashem told Moshe, he should repeat it to Bnei Yisrael, but in the pasuk stated above, the pasuk states clearly כה תאמר לבית יעקב, that Moshe should tell this lesson to Bnei Yisrael, so there is no reason to tell Moshe לאמר, to repeat the lesson because it states explicitly that he should repeat the lesson. The Maor v'Shamesh explains that לאמר means that Moshe should tell the nation that they should do the process that he did. Just as Moshe prepared himself and sought to come close to Hashem, so should the Jewish nation. And when they do so, they will receive immense shefa from Above.

The Gemara (Kesubos 103:) states, "In the merit of Reb Chiya, the Torah wasn't forgotten from Yisrael." The Gemara tells that Reb Chiya would capture deer, feed the flesh to talmidei chachamim, and on the deer's parchment, he wrote the Chumash and the mishnayos. And then he would take the parchment and teach Torah to Yidden.

The Gemara elaborates on how he captured the deer. He first planted flax, created nets, then prepared the parchment and wrote with great toil all of the divrei Torah. Why was all of this toil necessary? It is written in חידושי רע"ז in the name of the Vilna Gaon zt'l that kabbalah teaches the importance of preparing for the mitzvos. The preparations are what bring about success in one's teaching to his students. If you want to teach Torah, and you want there to be success in your efforts, the preparations are an essential part of the process.

The Vilna Gaon adds that just as preparation leads to success in avodas Hashem, so does preparing for evil help in negative ways. He explains that this is why it states about the Dor Haflagah (Bereishis 11:4) הבה נבנה לנו עיר. They understood that to succeed with their evil plots, they must prepare themselves.

Hashem replied (Bereishis 11:7) הבה נרדה, that we will prepare to do good and that will annul their ability to do bad.

Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 56:3) "Why is the knife [that Avraham Avinu brought to the akeidah] called מאכלת? Because the Jewish nation eats the reward [of the akeidah]." The Vilna Gaon asks, behold Chazal (Kidushin 39:) שכר ליכא מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא, that we don't receive reward in this world for keeping the mitzvos. So, how do we get the reward for the akeidah in this world? The answer is that the reward isn't for the actual akeidah but instead for the preparation and toil that Avraham performed to prepare himself for the akeidah. This includes Avraham's travels until he found Har HaMoriah, the place of the akeidah. The Torah tells us about Avraham's zrizus and his preparations for the akeidah because that earns us reward even in this world. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Yeshayahu 6:2) יחיינו מיומיים ביום השלישי יקמנו ונחיה לפניו, The Vilna Gaon explains, יחיינו מיומיים, our reward comes from the first two days of the akeidah, the time that Avraham prepared and traveled to the akeidah. However, וביום השלישי, the third day, the day of the akeidah itself, יקמנו ונחיה לפניו, the reward for that part will be לפניו, before Hashem in Gan Eden. This is because, for the mitzvah itself, there is no reward in this world.

Hashem's Love For Us

At the end of the *tochachah*, the Torah concludes (26:44), ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלותם להפר בריתי אתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם, "Even if the *tochachah* will come to fruition [nevertheless] when they will be in the lands of their enemies, I will not be disgusted with them to destroy them, and to annul my covenant with them, because I am Hashem, your G-d."

Even though we were banished from Eretz Yisrael due to our aveiros, and we now live in non-Jewish lands, Hashem still loves us.

The *Zohar* (vol.3 115:) elaborates on this pasuk:

Rebi Chiya said: "I heard a new lesson from Rebi Elazar: The pasuk writes- לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלתם. The word לכלתם usually is spelled with a וי"ו, meaning 'To destroy them.' In this pasuk, the word is written without a vav, saying לא מאסתים ולא געלתים, 'I will not be disgusted with the Jewish nation'... לכלתם, because I love [Bnei Yisrael, like a כלה, a bride]."

The Zohar continues, "It can be compared to a person who loves a woman that lives in a tannery market [בורסקי, where there are very foul odors]. If she didn't live there, he would never go there. But since she lives there, he considers it like a perfume market, where the best scents of the world are present.

"[This is what the pasuk is saying]: ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם, 'Even when they will live in the lands of their enemies,' which the lands of galus have a terrible stench, like a tannery, לא מאסתים ולא געלתים, I will not be disgusted with her. And the reason is לכלתם, because I love her [like a כלה]. She is my beloved, and she lives there. It is as if the best perfumes in the world are there because my kallah is there.

"Rebi Yosi replied, 'If we came here just to hear this vort, it would be enough.'"

The Zohar (vol.2 p.5:) states, "If the Jewish nation knew how much Hakadosh Baruch

Hu loved them, they would roar like a lion to chase after Hashem." This is the lesson of the pasuk, to know that Hashem loves us. He never abandons us, even when we are in galus.

Another translation of לכלתם is yearning (כלות הנפש). According to this translation, the Ropshitzer Rav zt'l (Zera Kodesh, וראו ד"ה וידבר משה) explains the pasuk as follows: ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם, even when you are very distant from Hashem, לא מאסתים ולא געלתים, I will never be disgusted with you, because לכלתם, you yearn to serve me, with all your heart and soul.¹²

After the tochachah, the Torah teaches the laws of ערכין, which is when a person says ערכי עלי, "I will give my worth to the Beis HaMikdash," or ערך פלוני עלי, "I will give the worth of another person to the Beis HaMikdash." According to age and gender, the Torah dictates the monetary ערך, worth, which he must pay. Why do these halachos follow the tochachah?

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l explains that after reading the tochachah, one might think Hashem is angry with him. He might feel worthless. Therefore, following the tochachah comes the parashah of ערכין to remind us that all Bnei Yisroel have tremendous worth and value before Hashem.

12. The Ropshitzer Rav adds the following words:

"Therefore, a person should never lose hope. He should never say that he is detached from Hashem's holiness... [And if he feels distant], he can turn this feeling into a tefillah. He should shout and pray to Hashem that he became so distant from Him that he cannot even speak before Him properly. He should plead that Hashem have mercy on him, that he should be able to express himself well before Hashem, to say the proper words, and to daven as one should, and Hashem will certainly help him."