

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Eikev



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Torah Wellsprings - Eikev

Everything is for the Good

We have discussed many times the importance of knowing and believing that everything that occurs to us is for our good. We take this further this week and express that it is a *mitzvas asei* to think so. It is a Torah obligation to believe that everything that happens to us is for our benefit.

The Smag (mitzvah 17) writes, "It is a positive command (*a mitzvas asei*) to think that everything that happens to you is just and correct. About this, it states (8:5) וידעת עם לבבך 'כי כאשר יסר איש את בנו ה' אלקיך מיסרך', 'You shall know in your heart, that just as a man chastises his son, so does Hashem, your G-d, chastise you.' I taught this *mitzvah asei* publicly."

The Smag adds, "If a person does teshuvah, and still, things become worse for him, it is a *mitzvas asei* to realize that things changed for his benefit. A tzaddik or a baal teshuvah who thinks that what is happening to him isn't for his benefit, about him the pasuk states (הושע ז, טו) ואני יסרתי חזקתי זרועותם ואלי 'יחשבו רע', 'But I chastised them, I strengthened their arms, yet to Me they attribute bad.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'I gave him *yesurim* in this world, so he should be strong in Olam HaBa, and they think it is bad. They should have realized that (Mishlei 3:12) כי את ה' יסר יאבה ה' יוכיח', 'For Hashem chastens the one He loves.'"¹

אל תקראנה (1:20) Naomi said in *Megilas Rus* לי נעמי קראן לי מרה... אני מלאה הלכתי וריקם השיבני ה'

1. In retrospect, we sometimes see how everything was for our good. The following story is an example:

There are Hatzalah volunteers in every area of the Catskills, and when there is a medical emergency, a dispatcher will call on the volunteers closest to the scene and ask them to respond.

Last summer, a dispatcher erred and called Hatzalah members from a different location. Two volunteers were closer to the site of the emergency, but for some reason, the dispatcher sent the members who were twenty minutes away. Baruch Hashem, despite his error, the person in need was treated in time, and nothing serious happened. Nevertheless, when the dispatcher realized his mistake, his conscious rebuked him harshly. He realized that this time he was lucky, and no one was hurt, but it could have ended differently, r'l.

The two Hatzalah members who were closer to the emergency heard the call on their radio and felt betrayed. "We are closer to the scene; why didn't the dispatcher call us? Does he think we aren't capable and professional?"

So, three people were disappointed. The dispatcher was upset that he made this error, and the *yungerleit* felt slighted and disrespected, but it was for everyone's good, as we will see.

This is what occurred:

The two *yungerleit* figured that if they weren't called, for whatever reason, they don't have to go to the emergency. So, instead, they went to the *beis medresh*. Suddenly, a woman entered the *beis medresh* with an infant in her hands, shouting that her child had stopped breathing. The two *yungerleit* worked on the infant child for a long time, and b"H saved his life.

Now it was understood why it was arranged from heaven that they be in the *beis medresh* (and not at the other call). The other emergency could wait twenty minutes, but every moment is critical when an infant stops breathing.

The lesson is that when you think something went wrong, it isn't so. Hashem plans and arranges everything precisely as it should be.

"Do not call me Naomi (pleasant); call me Marah (bitter)... I went away full, and Hashem has brought me back empty."

The Vilna Gaon zt'l offers an innovative explanation of these words, very different than their simple meaning. He explains that Naomi used to be wealthy, and people thought that she was Naomi, which means pleasantness. They thought that in those financially successful years, Naomi was leading a good life. Naomi informed them that when she had money and prestige, life was bitter for her because where did her wealth and success lead her to? It led her to leave Eretz Yisrael. This is the intention of *אני מלאה הלכתי*, when everything was good, I left Eretz Yisrael! So, despite how it appeared, it wasn't a good time for me at all. In contrast, *וריקם השיבני ה'*, when I was *ריקם*, poor, without money, Hashem helped me to return to Eretz Yisrael. So, the good times are now and not then.

According to this explanation, this means that when someone is poor, it isn't necessarily a bad time. How he deals with his tests and

challenges determines when life is good or the opposite.

The *churban* of the first Beis HaMikdash appeared to be very bad, but there, too, there was a silver lining. Hashem says (Yirmiyahu 29:11), *כי אני ידעתי את המחשבות אשר אני חושב עליכם, נאם ה' מחשבות שלום ולא לרעה לתת לכם אחרית ותקוה*, "For I know the thoughts that I think about you, says Hashem, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Hashem's plans for the Churban were *מחשבות שלום*, thoughts of peace, *ולא לרעה*; they weren't for our detriment. Everything Hashem does for us is for our benefit.

Rashi writes, "This that you will be in galus for seventy years, it is for your good because this will humble your foolish heart, and then you will return."

Toras Bikurim (student of the Rashba) quotes this pasuk and the pasuk (Hosheia 7:15) *ואני יסרתי חוקתי וזרועותם*, "But I chastised them, I strengthened their arms, yet to Me they attribute evil," and the Toras Bikurim explains, "All punishments that Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings to Bnei Yisrael is solely to grant them Olam HaBa. I punish them to

Reb Menachem and his wife live in Bnei Brak and were away one Shabbos. That Shabbos, their home was robbed. Among the stolen items were checks Reb Menachem received from his customers, jewelry their daughter received as a gift for her upcoming chasunah, and a hundred thousand shekel, money Reb Menachem had just borrowed to pay for the wedding!

On Motzei Shabbos, one of the children had to get something from his parent's home, and he was the first one to see what occurred. He called his father to tell him what happened. (He thought it would be easier for his parents to know beforehand rather than come home and find everything turned topsy-turvy.) Reb Menachem immediately parked his car at the side of the road and covered his face with his hands. He couldn't drive; he was too distressed. Eventually, he calmed down, and they arrived home.

His wife entered the house and said, "Ribono shel Olam! I believe everything is from You, and everything is for the good, although we don't understand why. In the merit of my emunah, I request that my two children beget children of their own." Two of their married children didn't yet have children. One was nine years after the chasunah, and the other was six years after the chasunah.

She added, "Furthermore, Ribono Shel Olam. In the merit of our belief that even this is for the good, may our divorced son find his *shidduch*..."

Her tefillos were answered. It didn't take a year, and her two children had children of their own, and her divorced son was engaged and married.

We learn from this story that when one keeps this mitzvah and believes that everything is for the good, he is rewarded immensely.

strengthen their arms in Olam Haba, as it states (Yeshayah 33:2) 'היה זרועם לבקרים', 'Be their arm every morning.' It seems negative, but the purpose is to make us befitting for Olam HaBa.

Hashem promised Avram children at the Bris Ben HaBesarim and said they would inherit Eretz Yisrael. Hashem said to Avram (Bereishis 15:13) ידע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם "You shall surely know that your children will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and oppress them, for four hundred years..." Yishmael and Eisav were also descendants of Avraham, yet they didn't become the chosen nation and didn't inherit Eretz Yisrael. This is because they didn't suffer in Mitzrayim. Only those who paid the bill mentioned in the Bris Ben HaBesarim, earn the benefits promised at the Bris Ben HaBesarim.

The suffering in Mitzrayim seemed so negative, but how much good came from it! This is what we must remember whenever we go through a difficult time. Hashem has a plan, and even that which appears bad today is perfect for us.

Happiness

We must train ourselves to always be happy. It states (8:19) והיה אם שכח תשכח ה' אלקיך, "And it will be, if you forget Hashem your G-d." Chazal tell us that whenever it states והיה, it implies happiness. The Ruzhiner zt'l explained, והיה אם שכח, if you forget to be happy, תשכח ה' אלקיך, you will forget Hashem.

שכח also means שכיה, common, frequent. The Ruzhiner explained that the *passuk* is hinting, והיה אם שכח, if you will be happy frequently, תשכח ה' אלקיך, Hashem will always be with you.

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l teaches, "Someone who desires that the *Shechinah* always be with him should always be happy."

When one internalizes the lesson stated in our discussion above, he will always be happy because when one believes that everything is from Hashem and everything is for his good, he will be joyful in every situation.

(. כי על כל מוצא פי ה' יחיה האדם). It states,8:3) Maharit'z Dushinsky zt'l explains, על כל מוצא, for everything that happens to you, if you know that it is מוצא פי ה', Hashem's decree, יחיה האדם, this will grant you life, vigor, and joy.²

2. Once, when Rebbe Yosef Meir of Machnovka zt'l was six years old, he came to his grandfather, Rebbe Yitzchak of Skver zt'l. His revered grandfather asked him, "What did you do today?"

The boy replied, "I heard that Eliyahu HaNavi was in the marketplace, so I went there to find him. I searched all over. I even climbed a high post, but I didn't see him. However, I did gain something. I watched the cattle merchants beat and bind the wild cattle, the ones trying hard to get away, while the tame, passive animals were left to pasture in peace. I realized that in life, when going through hard times, it's better to accept life serenely than to fight back. Fighting back just makes life more miserable."

The Rebbe told him, "You didn't see Eliyahu HaNavi today, but I'm certain that Eliyahu HaNavi saw you because of your good thoughts."

Life is much more satisfying and tranquil when one trains himself to be happy with his portion.

Rosh Hashanah תרל"ג, Reb Asher of Stolin zt'l (son of the Beis Aharon zt'l) was about to make Kiddush. (This was his first Rosh Hashanah as Rebbe.) Before saying Kiddush, he asked a *yungerman* near the window on the other side of the beis medresh to come forward. He whispered something in his ear and then made Kiddush.

Some time afterward, this *yungerman* explained, "A foolish *yetzer* got into me at that time. I was having

Another pathway to acquiring true joy is *emunah* and *bitachon*.

Someone recognized that his neighbor, Rebbe Shlomo Karliner zt'l, was a great *tzaddik*. (This was before Rebbe Shlomo became a renowned rebbe and Chasidic leader.) The neighbor asked, "What do you do for *parnassah*?"

(It is necessary to write in Yiddish what Rebbe Shlomo Karliner replied so that the story will be understood). Reb Shlomo told him that his *parnassah* comes from two *kees*, which in Yiddish means two cows. The neighbor instructed his wife to buy milk and cheese by Rebbe Shlomo Karliner because he wants to help this poor *tzaddik*.

The following day, his wife knocked at Rebbe Shlomo Karliner's door. Rebbe Shlomo's *rebbetzin* answered the door, and the neighbor handed her a bucket. "Please fill it with milk."

The *rebbetzin* said, "But we don't have any cows!"

Later, the neighbor asked Rebbe Shlomo Karliner, "Why did you lie to me? Why did you tell me that your *parnassah* comes from two *kees*? You don't have any cows."

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner replied, "When I said my *parnassah* comes from two *kees* I was referring to the two כִּי of the *pasuk* (Tehillim 33:21) בִּי בּוֹ יִשְׂמַח לִבּוֹ כִּי בִשְׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ בִּטְחוֹנוֹ, 'For our heart will rejoice in Him, because we hoped in His holy name.'" In other words, his *parnassah* came from his *bitachon* and his joy. Those were his two *kees* (כִּי) that were the root of his *parnassah*.

Rebbe Yankele of Pshevorsk zt'l repeated this story, and one of the listeners challenged, "I also have those two *kees*. I also say בִּי בּוֹ

יִשְׂמַח לִבּוֹ כִּי בִשְׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ בִּטְחוֹנוֹ. Why don't I have *parnassah*?"

Rebbe Yankele replied, "True, you have the *kees*, but you must milk them."

In other words, if we invest in acquiring *emunah* and *bitachon*, in knowing that Hashem will support us, then we will have *parnassah*. It isn't enough to say the words; one must live with the ideas.

Getting Along with Others

Yet, another counsel for joy is to learn to get along with others. This will save you from much pain and hardships.

Reb Avraham Genachovsky zt'l once said to someone who recently became *rosh yeshiva*. "Do you know what the job of a *rosh yeshiva* is? His job is to swallow nails and not let it be known to anyone that he swallowed them." And he gave him a *brachah* that he shouldn't need to swallow too many nails.

He meant to say that there will be hardships, people will give him a hard time, and he should accept and swallow the troubles. No one should know of his struggles, and he should be kind and pleasant to everyone.

He said this about being a *rosh yeshiva*, but the rule applies to every parent. There are things parents must swallow. Children aren't perfect; they don't always behave as their parents want. Sometimes, parents should be *mechanech*, speak to them, etc. But often, the parents should just swallow and look the other way.

And it isn't solely about being a *rosh yeshiva*, teacher, or parent. The same lesson is needed for all relationships between

doubts that Hashem leads the world with *hashgachah pratis*. The Rebbe called me over and said, 'You see that I know what you're thinking. If a human being can know your thoughts, then Hashem, who created the world, surely knows what you think and what you do, and He leads the world with *hashgachah pratis*.'

We must strengthen our belief in *hashgachah pratis*, with the realization that everything is from Hashem and for our best. And as we explained, when one has this *emunah*, he will always be happy.

people. Neighbors can be difficult, and family can be difficult. There are many nails that we need to swallow, but that is the best way.

Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* once stooped down to enter a taxi and commented, "If you want to go anywhere in this world, you must bend your head."

Baalei mussar tell the following parable:

There was a deer whose antlers were constantly getting caught in the branches and the foliage. One day the deer decided it was time to remove all the branches. It began bucking the trees with its antlers and hind feet to clear the forest from all deterrents so it could run freely. A wise animal stood by watching and said to the deer, "Even if you work your entire life, you won't succeed in knocking down all the trees. Instead, I advise you to cut off your antlers, and then you can run through the forest unimpeded."

The *nimshal* is, instead of trying to improve others, change yourself. Train yourself not to let things bother you. That is a better approach than trying to train others.

Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l* once said to Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *z'l*: "When trying to place two planks side by side, and one of them has a knob jutting out, instead of cutting out the knob, make an indentation in the other plank to make room for the knob." This means don't try changing others, rather become a person with a heart that can accept other people's idiosyncrasies. Let the other person have his way, and you can run through life unhindered.

Tefillah B'tzibur

Some people told the Ksav Sofer *zt'l* that they chose to daven *b'yachidus* (without a minyan) because they found that *tefillah b'tzibur* takes away from their *parnassah*. They explained that when they daven

b'yachidus, they can daven whenever they want. But a minyan has a set time, and it might be at a very busy and lucrative part of the day.

(We add that when one davens with a minyan, it takes time to get to the minyan, to wait for the minyan to begin, *chazaras hashatz*, etc. Therefore, some people think davening *b'yachidus* is better for their livelihood. But they are mistaken. One won't lose *parnassah* from doing Hashem's will. The Midrash (Devarim Rabba, Re'eh) states, אין אדם שומע לי, ומפסיד, "No one ever listened to Me and lost out.")

The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* told them that this lesson is alluded to in this week's parashah. It states (11:13) וּלְעַבְדוֹ בְּכָל לַבְבְּכֶם וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁכֶם, "to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." The pasuk is written in plural tense, and Rashi writes that it refers to a *tzibur*. The Ksav Sofer adds that the pasuk refers to *tefillah b'tzibur*, davening with a minyan.³ The next words are וְנָתַתִּי מִטֶּר אֶרְצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ, "I will give the rain of your land at its time." The Ksav Sofer explains that this indicates that *parnassah* comes from being cautious about davening with a minyan.

The Ksav Sofer writes, "It is a great mitzvah, and it is precious to Hashem when one davens with a minyan. Therefore, it states בְּכָל לַבְבְּכֶם וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁכֶם in plural, to tell us to daven together with a community. When you do so, the Torah promises וְנָתַתִּי מִטֶּר אֶרְצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ, 'I will give the rain of your land at its time.'"

So, it is the opposite of what people think. They fear that davening with a minyan will minimize their *parnassah* when it actually increases it. The Ksav Sofer writes, "Tefillah with a minyan takes a person away from his work. When one davens *b'yachidus*, he davens whenever he wants, but he can't do so when he davens with a *tzibur*. However, Hakadosh Baruch Hu won't allow financial losses due to this. Hashem will send His *brachos*, and he will succeed with everything

3. Chazal say לעבדו alludes to *tefillah*, the עבודה שבלב.

he does. I elaborated on this point when it was necessary."

In a letter to his chassidim, the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander zt'l writes, "I encourage that also the businessmen should daven in our beis medresh every morning and evening together with a minyan. Even if they must wait until the minyan gathers, they should wait. In the meanwhile, they can learn some Torah. I promise they will not lose money because of this. On the contrary, they will be blessed with *parnassah*."

Rebbe Yissaschar Dov of Radoshitz zt'l found another pasuk that teaches us that davening with a minyan will grant us *parnassah*. It states (Shemos 23:25) "ועבדתם את ד' אלוהיכם ובירך את לחמך ואת מימך והסירתי מחלה מקרבך", "And you shall serve Hashem, your G-d, and He will bless your food and your drink, and I will remove illness from your midst." "ועבדתם", "You shall serve," refers to *tefillah* because *tefillah* is עבודה שבלב, the service of the heart. (Indeed, the Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvos 5, quotes this pasuk as a source that we are obligated to daven.) The Radoshitzer said that the pasuk is written in plural (ועבדתם), because it alludes

to *tefillah b'tzibur*. The pasuk says ועבדתם, when you daven with a minyan, ובירך את לחמך, there will be *parnassah* מחלה מקרבך and there will be healing.

The Beis Ahron taught, "Of this, I am certain: *Tefillah b'tzibur* helps for all matters. *Tefillah b'tzibur* accomplishes as much as the *tefillos* of the greatest *tzaddik*."

The Maor v'Shamesh (Mishpatim) also uses the pasuk (Shemos 23:25) ועבדתם את ד' אלוהיכם ובירך את לחמך ואת מימך והסירתי מחלה מקרבך, as a source that davening with a minyan is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. He writes, "It's true that however a person serves Hashem, if his intentions are to heaven, it is certainly accepted before Hashem *yisborach*. However, the preferred *avodas Hashem* is to serve Hashem as a group, as a community. This applies both to Torah study and to *tefillah*. One shouldn't be alone... A person must be very cautious to daven together with the *tzibur*. If he does so, he will certainly have *parnassah* in abundance every day, and there will be *brachah* in his work. With *tefillah b'tzibur*, he can annul all harsh decrees, r'l..."⁴

4. The Ponovitzer Rav zt'l was in *chutz l'aretz* raising money for the Ponevizh Yeshiva. A wealthy donor told him to meet him at the train station at 7:45 in the morning. He explained that he was taking the 8:00 train, so they could speak for a quarter-hour before he left the station.

That morning, the Ponivezher Rav woke up much later than planned – at 7:00 AM. "Perhaps I should daven *b'yachidus*," he thought to himself. "It is for the yeshiva's sake. If I daven with a minyan, I will miss the appointment!"

But then he told himself, "I will daven with minyan. I will not sell this mitzvah for money."

He finished *Shacharis* at 8:30, forty-five minutes after the time of their appointment and a half-hour after the train had left. Regardless, he went to the train station. There was little hope, but he thought that just maybe he would find him there.

The Ponevizher Rav arrived at the train station at 8:40. No one was around. As he turned to leave, he saw the wealthy man rushing in. "I am so sorry I am late," and handed the Ponovitzer Rav a generous check.

The Ponovizer Rav showed the check to his students of the yeshiva. It was enough to support the yeshiva for half a year. The Ponovitzer Rav told them, "Chazal say, 'No one ever listened to Me and lost out.' I didn't lose anything by davening with minyan. But it is much more than that. I want you to realize that one *gains* when he listens to the halachos of the Torah. Had I sped through davening *b'yachidus*, I would have arrived at the train station on time by 7:45, and after a half-hour or so, I would assume that I missed him and left. I wouldn't wait an hour for him to come. But because I davened with a minyan, I earned so much..."

The Gemara says that when we daven with a minyan, it is more likely that our tefillos will be answered. It states (Tehillim 69:14) וְאִנִּי תַפְלִיתִי לְךָ ה' עַתָּה רִצּוֹן, "May my prayer to You, Hashem, be in a desirable time (*eis ratzon*)."

And it states (Yeshayah 49:8) כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּעֵת רִצּוֹן עֲנִיתִיךָ, "So said Hashem, 'In a time of favor (*eis ratzon*) I answered you.'

The Gemara (Brachos 8.) states, "When is it an *eis ratzon* (an auspicious time for tefillah, a time when our tefillos are answered)? It is when the community is davening (tefillah b'tzibur). The Gemara confirms this from the pasuk (Iyov 36:5) הֵן אֵל-לֹבֵבִים וְלֹא יִמָּאֵס, which indicates that Hashem doesn't despise the tefillos of the many, and it states (Tehillim 55:19) נִפְשִׁי מִקֶּרֶב לִי כִי.

בְּרַבִּים הָיוּ עִמָּדִי, "He redeemed my soul with peace because of the many [people who] were with me."

The Gemara elaborates some more on the great deed of davening with a minyan:

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Whoever studies Torah and does deeds of kindness and he davens with a minyan, I consider it as if he redeemed me and my children from amidst the nations of the world.'

In contrast, the Gemara says, "Whoever has a beis medresh in his city and he doesn't go there to daven, he is called שָׂכֵן רָע, a bad neighbor. And he causes galus for him and his children."

Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl zt'l asked one of his simple chasidim to tell him his seder hayom, what he does throughout the day. The chasid said that he goes to the market early in the morning for his parnassah. When he finishes selling, buying, and conducting his business, he goes to beis medresh to daven Shacharis.

Rebbe Mordechai Chernobyler told him, "Your seder hayom isn't good. You should daven Shacharis first before you go to your work."

The simple man replied, "But Rebbe, most business happens early in the morning. If I daven first, I will lose so much money!"

The Rebbe replied with a mashal:

A poor man was traveling home with a sack of silver and copper coins. It was his salary after many hard months at work, distant from his home.

He couldn't reach his home before Shabbos, so erev Shabbos, he went to a hotel. With an anxious heart, he gave over his package of money to the hotelkeeper to hold for him until after Shabbos. He didn't know them, and he was worried that they might steal his money. But what choice did he have? He couldn't keep the money on him, and to leave the money in his bags was certainly too risky.

After Shabbos, the innkeepers returned his package of money. Throughout Shabbos, he was afraid that he had lost all his money, so he was relieved that they returned it to him. However, he was still worried. Perhaps he had kept some of the coins for himself?

He sat down at a table in the dining room and began counting the silver coins. They were all there. Then he began counting the copper coins.

Rebbe Mordechai Chernobyler concluded, "This man was so foolish because he saw that the innkeeper was trustworthy and that he gave back all the silver coins. Why was he worried about the copper coins, which were valueless in comparison?"

Rebbe Mordechai explained to his chassid, "Every night, you give your *neshamah* to Hashem as a *pikadon* to watch (as we say, בִּידוּ אֶפְקֵד רוּחִי). Your *neshamah* is your most precious possession because you can't live without it. When you awaken in the morning and see that Hashem is trustworthy enough to return your precious *pikadon*, how could you not trust Hashem for small matters such as your *parnassah*? Therefore, from now on, daven *Shacharis* first, and then go to work. Trust in Hashem, and He will provide you with *parnassah*."

The source is the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 12:14) כה אמר ה' על כל שכני הרעים... הנני נושטם מעל אדמתם "So says Hashem: Concerning all My wicked neighbors... behold I uproot them from upon their land."

People informed Reb Yochanan that there were old Yidden living in Bavel. Reb Yochanan was surprised because it states in this week's parashah (11:21) למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה "So that your days may increase and the days of your children, on the land which Hashem swore to your forefathers to give them." This pasuk indicates that long life is an attribute of Eretz Yisrael. When he learned that the people of Bavel arrive early to the beis medresh and leave late, he said, "This is the merit that saves them." As Reb Yehoshua ben Levi told his children, 'Come early to beis medresh and leave late, so you will live long... The source is the pesukim (Mishlei 8:34-35) אשרי אדם שומע לי לשקד על דלתותי יום ליום, לישמור מזוות פתחי כי מוצאי מוצא חיים "Fortunate is the man who listens to Me to watch by My doors day by day, to watch the doorposts of My entrances. For he who has found Me has found life."

The Maharsha explains that the Gemara (Megillah 29.) states that the *batei midrashim* and *batei knesiyos* of Bavel will, in the future, be reestablished in Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, even now, in galus, they have an atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael.

Reb Anshil Shwartz of Chaifa *zt'l* would daven *Shacharis* for many hours. And when *Shacharis* was over, he wasn't finished. He spent a long time saying *Tehillim* and other *tefillos* – arriving at his store at around two in the afternoon.

Someone asked, "Reb Anshil, what will be with your customers?"

Reb Anshil replied, "They aren't waiting in the sun."

Reb Anshil was financially well-off. He attributed his success to his devotion to *tefillah*.

The Beis Ahron was very careful to daven with minyan. Once, he needed to have a medical procedure done, so he had it scheduled for early in the afternoon, so he could daven *Minchah* with a minyan before the operation, and then daven *Maariv* when he woke up. He requested that ten people wait for him for *Maariv*.

The rebbe didn't wake up so quickly after the procedure. Midnight was approaching, and the ten people had no choice but to daven alone.

Later that night, the Rebbe woke up and immediately asked, "What about *Maariv*? Is there a minyan?"

The *gabai* said, "Everything is ready. Ten people are waiting outside the Rebbe's room. They will daven there, and the Rebbe can daven along from this room." Really, no one was there. They had all left after they finished their *Maariv*.

The *gabai* went outside the Rebbe's room and pretended he was the *chazzan* (although no one was there). He said *Barchu*, *Kaddish*, etc., and the Rebbe davened along from his hospital bed.

Several days later, when the Rebbe recovered, the *gabai* told the Rebbe that there really wasn't a minyan and that he only pretended there was one. "I am afraid that I sinned," the *gabai* said. "I said *Barchu* and *Kaddish* without a minyan..."

The rebbe calmed him, "You did well. It was a situation of *pikuach nefesh* (a life-and-death predicament). I just woke up from the operation, and if I had known there was no minyan, I wouldn't be able to endure the distress."

Tefillah from Beginning to End

On the topic of *tefillah b'tzibur*, it is worthwhile to mention the praise of those who come timely and daven the entire *tefillah* from the beginning to the end. Some people arrive during *Az Yashir* (when we say the words כי בא שום) and leave in the middle of

ובא לציון (ותשאני רוח) and they feel happy that they cut the length of the tefillah in half. But it is a great pity on them because they missed out on the perfection of the tefillah.

The Gemara (Brachos 6:) calls tefillah "Matters that go up to the highest places in the world and yet people are *מזלזל*, disregard them." They don't give it the proper respect. They come late, leave early, skip here and there, and they think that it is okay.

Every part of the tefillah was established for a purpose. Each phrase is a stepping stone toward making a perfect tefillah and bringing Hashem's bounty to the world.

In some siddurim, the words *ירידת השפע*, "the descending of the bounty," are written after *Shemoneh Esrei*, before the second *Ashrei*. This is because during *Shemoneh Esrei* we ask Hashem for bounty and success. Hashem grants our requests when we say *אשרי למנוחה* and the rest of the tefillah. Kabbalah *sefarim* reveal that this is the time of *ירידת השפע*, when the bounty descends. People who leave shul early won't receive it. They asked for many things in *Shemoneh Esrei* but didn't stay in *beis medresh* long enough to receive them.

It is like going to the bank to withdraw cash, and as the banker is preparing the money, you leave.

There is a businessman who awakens early so he can daven, learn Torah, and then get to work on time. One morning, he awoke to a bright sun and immediately understood it was late. He davened quickly in his house (*Shacharis* took about five minutes), grabbed breakfast, and rushed to his car. If he is lucky, and there isn't too much traffic, he can be on time at work.

But when he arrived at his office, he realized he had forgotten his office keys in his haste. He will have to drive home, pick up his keys, and then drive back again.

He thought he would gain time by rushing through the tefillah, but he only lost out.

Reb Ezra Barzel explained that even if he hadn't forgotten his keys, he lost out because tefillah is the key to *parnassah*, and that morning he didn't take tefillah seriously.

Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zt'l once saw someone fixing his wagon while davening *Shacharis* wrapped in his tallis and tefillin. The Berditchever exclaimed, "Hashem, how holy and special is your nation? They daven to You even when they fix their wagon!" So, even an imperfect tefillah is also significant and, to an extent, will bring down Hashem's *brachos*. Nevertheless, fortunate are those who daven from beginning to end with a minyan. Their tefillos accomplish so much!

In Your Own Words

We discussed above the benefits of davening with minyan. It is all true, but don't let this cause you to disregard or disparage the tefillah of an individual, for that is also very significant.

It states (Devarim 4:29) *ובקשתם משם את ה' אלוהיך* "And from there you will seek Hashem, your G-d, and you will find [your requests fulfilled] if you request from Him with all your heart and soul."

The pasuk begins *ובקשתם* in the plural tense and concludes *ובקש* in the singular tense. Rabbeinu b'Chaye explains that if it were written *ובקש* in the singular tense, people would think that Hashem only listens to tefillah b'tzibur, and when a yachid davens, his tefillos aren't answered. Therefore, the pasuk is written in *lashon yachid*, "To teach us that Hashem also listens to the tefillos of the individual, when he turns to Hashem with all his heart and soul."

A special kind of tefillah b'yachidus is a tefillah said in one's own words.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l (*Likutei Amorim* 10) teaches, "In addition to *Shemoneh Esrei*, which is recited three times daily, one should

daven from the depths of his heart when he is alone in his house. *Shemonah Esreis* is said by rote, and people don't always concentrate on what they are saying. But when a person is alone and thinks about his life and struggles, he will pour his heart out like water before Hashem and daven with *kavanah*. It will be a tefillah from the depths of his broken, humble heart, and such tefillos never go unanswered."

One can say these personal tefillos all day long. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l says that before everything you do, daven to Hashem in your own words for success. With this idea, he explains the Chazal (*Brachos* 21.) ולואי שיחפול אדם כל היום כולו, "*Halevay* a person would daven all day long!" How can a person daven all day long? Doesn't he have many other things to do throughout the day? Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zy'a answers that the Gemara means that one should daven for success before everything he does, and

in that way, he will be davening all day long. When he goes to work, he should daven for success; before performing *chesed*, he should daven that he should succeed to help others, and so on. If he davens before everything he does, he will be occupied with tefillah all day long.⁵

It is written, תפילה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך, שיהו "A prayer for a poor man when he enwraps himself and pours out his speech before Hashem." The Divrei Chaim zt'l explains that one should יעטוף wrap his tefillos within the conversations he speaks throughout the day. Even as he converses with someone, he can intend it to be a tefillah to Hashem.

This is a high level. (It isn't a simple matter to converse with someone and conceal a prayer within the words.) Therefore, let's translate תפילה לעני כי יעטוף in a slightly different manner, which will be easier for the average person

5. In Krakow, a poor man sat at the street corner selling homemade bagels. One morning, a wealthy person recognized the poor man and said, "You're a *talmid chacham*, and you come from an illustrious family! It isn't proper that you should do this for your *parnassah*. I will give you a weekly stipend so that you can study Torah in the beis medresh by day and by night."

This agreement lasted a few weeks, but one day, the wealthy man saw him sitting at the street corner, selling bagels again. He protested, "We have an agreement. What happened?"

"I don't want to be supported anymore," the poor man replied.

"But a deal is a deal. You can't back out without a *din Torah*."

This unusual *din Torah* was brought to the Megaleh Amukos zt'l. The Megaleh Amukos asked the poor man why he refused to accept the weekly stipend, which would enable him to study Torah without disturbances.

The poor man replied, "When my wife and I were in the bagel business, we constantly turned our eyes to Hashem. As my wife prepared the bagels, she davened to Hashem that the bagels come out tasty and beautiful, and when I was outdoors chopping wood for the oven, I davened that I should find dry wood, which is better for baking. When I sat at the corner, I davened that people should buy from me. We were constantly davening for *siyata dishmaya*. But now that we have a stipend, we daven less. Therefore, we decided to return to our previous lifestyle."

The Megaleh Amukos praised the couple for their devotion to Hashem.

Shortly before this episode, the Megaleh Amukos notified the people of Krakow of his resignation. He never told them the reason he wanted to leave Krakow, and despite their many requests, he refused to disclose the reason. But because of this poor couple's desire to have a constant connection with Hashem, the Megaleh Amukos changed his mind and remained in Krakow. He said he wanted to be among such special people who seek a constant relationship with Hashem.

to achieve. The *pasuk* says one should wrap his tefillos around everything he does. As Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa recommends, whatever we do, we should pray to Hashem. Success is in Hashem's hands, so we should daven to Him for success with everything we do.

Reb Shimshon Pincus wrote a letter (Nefesh Shimshon, Igros u'Mamarim, p.53) to a bachur who was going through difficult times b'ruchniyus and b'gashmiyus. Reb Shimshon wrote, "You are in a situation that is beyond your strength to resolve alone. You made all necessary hishtadlus, and it seems that you need help from elsewhere. Therefore, I will give you a name and address where you can turn for your aid. He is called Hashem yisborach. His strength is without limits. He created everything, and the secret is that he loves you in an individualized, special way and is waiting and yearning that you should turn to Him. There is no problem in finding Hashem's address because Hashem is everywhere. Even as you read this letter, you can turn to Him..."

Reb Shimshon Pinkus related a story that happened to him when he was seven years old. One Shavuos night, he told his father that he wanted to go to beis medresh to study Torah all night long. His father told him he could stay up all night when he was older. But now he would be better off getting into pajamas and going to sleep.

His father went to the beis medresh himself, but when he arrived, he decided to return home and get his son. He told himself, "My son wants to learn Torah. Why should I stop him?"

When he opened the door, he was surprised to see his young son Shimshon fully dressed, prepared to go to beis medresh.

"Why aren't you asleep?"

Shimshon replied, "I davened to Hashem that you should come home to take me to the beis medresh, and I knew that Hashem would listen to my tefillos. I was waiting for you to come get me."

Never Lose Hope from Tefillah

Chazal (Brachos 10.) say, "Even if a sharp sword is on one's neck, he shouldn't stop davening (אל ימנע עמוצו מן הדרחמים)." He should believe that Hashem can have compassion and save him even then.

The Midrash (Tanchuma, V'eschanan 4) writes, "Moshe taught all people of the world that a person shouldn't say that since he is very sick, and he divided all his property, that he should stop davening. He should continue to daven because Hashem never ignores a person's tefillah."

The Meiri (Yoma 29.) writes, "One should always be cautious with tefillah and say it lengthily. Even if he sees that his tefillos aren't answered, he shouldn't lose hope because, eventually they will be answered. He shouldn't think of himself like he is מביד ומטריח, bothering Hashem with his many requests."

The Yerushalmi (Brachos 9:1) states that when you ask too many favors from your fellow man, he will say, "Look how much this person is bothering me." But Hakadosh Baruch Hu isn't so. Even if you bother (ask) many times, Hashem accepts it..." Hashem allows us to daven repeatedly, and ultimately, He grants our wishes. Therefore, we shouldn't lose hope and stop davening.

The Brisker Rav zt'l told the following mashal:

A non-Jew was arrested for committing a severe crime punishable by death. He hired a top lawyer, and there was a major debate in court as the lawyers of both sides battled to prove his innocence or guilt. Ultimately, the evidence that he was guilty prevailed, and the court handed down a guilty verdict.

The man almost fainted from fright when he heard the court's verdict, but he didn't lose hope. He appealed to the higher court.

Generally, it doesn't help to appeal to a higher court, but he felt he had to try. He paid top dollar for even better lawyers, and

they tried with all their might to prove his innocence, but the higher court upheld the lower court's ruling.

The man still didn't give up. He made connections and succeeded in securing an audience with the king. The king could grant him clemency. In the king's palace, he argued his innocence and begged for mercy. He cried that his children and elderly parents depended on him and that he couldn't be executed.

The king wasn't impressed and didn't accept his pleas.

There were only twenty-four hours left before the execution. But he still had hope. He thought that, against all odds, something outside the rules of nature could still occur, and he would be spared.

Then he was brought to the execution station, and the executioner placed his sharpened knife on his neck. Now he lost hope. There is no hope of being saved.

But a Yid won't lose hope even then. The sharp sword is on his neck, but he knows he can pour out his heart before Hashem and be saved.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l (Shaarim b'Tefillah, Rinah, p.52) discusses a person who prays to Hashem and says, "Ribono shel Olam! Woe to me! My life is so bitter. I have lost hope. There are no solutions to my problems." It seems like a beautiful tefillah, but he is speaking kefirah. There is a drop of apikorsus in his tefillah. Reb Shimshon Pinkus writes, "He is standing before his Creator and says there is no hope for him! If he truly believed in Hakadosh Baruch Hu and recognized Hashem's immense strength and kindness, he would think, 'Behold, I am speaking to the One who has all the solutions! He certainly has a solution for me!'"

Reb Shimshon Pinkus tells a mashal to express this point.

Someone needed a large loan from the bank, but without credit or assets, the bank refused to give him a loan.

One day, as his financial worries weighed heavily on his mind, he was riding on the bus. He yearned to find someone to speak to, if only just to relieve and unload the heavy burden that pressed on his heart.

A stranger sat down next to him, and after some small talk, the poor man decided to tell the stranger what he was going through. He added, "All my problems could be resolved if I could meet the bank president. If the bank's president would hear what I am going through, he would certainly have compassion on me and give me a loan. But the bank refuses to arrange this appointment for me."

From the way the stranger responded, the poor man realized that the person he was speaking to is none other than the president of the bank himself! He was sitting next to the person who could help him! He was beside himself with joy!

Rav Pinkus explains that this is the joy we should have when we stand in tefillah before Hashem. Behold, we are conversing directly with the One (and only one) Who can help us. How happy we should be!

"His heart should burst with joy. 'What siyata dishmaya! The one whom I am speaking to now in the Shemonah Esrei is the one who can save me from all my problems!'"

Earth is the Highest

It states in this week's *parashah* (10:14) הֵן לֵה' אֱלֹקֵיךְ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם הָאָרֶץ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בָּהּ, "Behold to Hashem, your G-d, belong the heavens and the heavens of the heavens, the earth, and all that is on it..." What is the order of the *passuk*? It begins with the heaven and then שְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם, which are higher heavens. And then back to הָאָרֶץ, the earth, which is the lowest level.

The Alshich addresses this question. He writes, "Let's take note of the *passuk's* order. It should have gone from lowest to highest: the earth, the *shamayim*, and then *shmei shamayim*, or from highest to lowest, *shmei shamayim*, *shamayim*, and *aretz*. The explanation is, Chazal tell us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world because He desired a place to live *בתחתונים*, in this world. And indeed, when the Beis HaMikdash stood, the primary place of the *Shechinah* was in this world. When we do Hashem's will, this world is the primary world. The *malachim* and the *Shechinah* are primarily here, and the earth becomes higher than all the upper worlds. So the order is from the lowest to highest: First is *shamayim*, where constellations exist. Above them is *shmei shamayim*, where the *malachim* are. And above that is the earth and everything on it..." because when we serve Hashem from this world, the earth is the highest place.

The reason is that Hashem desires to reside in a world where there are tests and challenges. *Malachim* serve Hashem perfectly, but derives special pleasure, *keviyachol*, when His service emerges from human beings. Therefore, Hashem desires to dwell here.⁶

The Beis Aharon (pg.47:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu has millions of *malachim* who are constantly praising His name... nevertheless, Hashem's primary desire is for people to

serve Him from this world. This can be compared to a great king who has all pleasures of this world. He has talented musicians at his service – the best in the world. And he also has a small talking bird that can say a single word, "sugar." The king drops all his pleasures and musicians and delights himself with his bird. People asked him, 'You have singers and musicians; why do you pay attention to the bird?' He replied, 'There is nothing unique about the musicians because they are humans and are trained to play. But a bird that can talk, now that is unusual...' The *nimshal* is the *malachim* are near Hashem, and they see the brilliance of heaven. Still, Hashem's primary pleasure is from us, dwellers of this lowly world, who attain a connection to spirituality. When we do mitzvos with the material matters of this world, we draw down holiness..." That is unique and special; therefore, Hashem appreciates our service so much more.⁷

The Or HaChaim (*Bamidbar* 16:22) writes, "The order of Hashem's desires: First are the praises the *malachim* sing to Hashem. Above them are the praises sung by the souls of *tzaddikim* [in heaven]. Even higher are the praises from the *neshamos* of the people living in this world because they are in a human body, which prevents them from recognizing Hashem, yet they love Hashem and praise Him. This is the highest and most desired by Hashem."

6. Chazal (*Pesachim* 109) say, אין שמחה אלא בבשר. We can explain, Hashem's joy is solely from human beings, who are בשר ודם.

The *parashah* begins, ויהי עקב תשמעון. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains: ויהי, there will be joy, עקב, when in the עקבתא דמשיחא (the final generation before the coming of Moshiach) תשמעון, the Jewish people keep the Torah.

7. In *Mussaf* we say, משרתיו שואלין זה לזה איה מקום כבודו להעריצו לעומתם משבחים ואומרים ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו. The Chasam Sofer explains that when people honor a king in his palace, that isn't really כבוד, honor. It is mostly *feia*, because they *must* honor the king, otherwise they will be punished. However, when people far from the king honor him, that is called כבוד. For *kavod* is when one isn't obligated and honors nonetheless. Therefore, it states, משרתיו שואלין זה לזה, the *malachim* in heaven ask איה מקום כבודו, "Where is Hashem's honor? How can we give honor to Hashem?" And the truth is, they can't. לעומתם, but people on earth, they can say ממקומו ברוך כבוד ה'.