

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Mishpatim*

*Shekalim*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Mishpatim

## Even Nature is from Hashem

When the sun shines, and the snow on the ground melts, we think that it is the rule of nature that the sun melts the snow. However, the pasuk tells us that the snow melted because Hashem *decreed* on that day that the snow should melt. It states (Tehillim 147:16-18) הַיָּהוָה שֶׁלֵּג בַּצֶּמֶר כַּפּוֹר בְּאַפֵּר יַפְזֹר, מִשָּׁלֵיךְ קָרָחוּ רַחֲמָיו, "He Who gives snow like fleece, He scatters frost like ashes. He hurls His ice like crumbs – who can stand before His cold? He issues His command, and it melts them..." We see that the snow and the ice melt only because of Hashem's decree, and not because of the rules of nature.

The Sfas Emes from the Rebbe of Brezhan zt'l (beginning of Noach) writes in the name of the Saraf of Strelisk zt'l that if a person thinks that water extinguishes fire because Hashem created this nature, that water has the power and ability to put out fire, his emunah isn't yet complete. A person should believe that each time water and fire meet, Hashem decrees once again that it should extinguish fire. Without this decree, it wouldn't occur.

Pirkei Avos (5) states, בְּעֶשְׂרֵה מְאֻמֹּת נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם, "The world was created with Hashem's

ten statements..." Hashem created the world and desired for it to be run according to the rules of nature, as it states (Devarim 14:29) לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָי אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה, "In order that Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your handiwork that you may undertake." And it states (Tehillim 104:23) יֵצֵא אָדָם לַפֶּעֶל וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ, "Man goes forth to his work, and to his labor until evening."

However, *chalilah* that a person should think that nature has a strength on its own. We must believe with emunah sheleimah that everything is Hashem's will, and there is no "nature" at all.<sup>1</sup> When one makes hishtadlus, he must believe that it isn't through hishtadlus that we receive our needs. Everything happens by Hashem's will and decree. When Hashem desires that someone have parnassah, it will occur even without his hishtadlus. And when Hashem desires that he shouldn't succeed, all hishtadlus in the world won't change that reality. It is forbidden to think that the rules of nature have their own strength, because that would be equivalent to believing in forces other than Hashem, which is the essence of avodah zarah, worshipping other gods, *chalilah*.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The question arises, since nature also works by Hashem's decree, as we are explaining, then what is the difference between miracles and nature? Both are directed by Hashem's word. The Chazon Ish (Igeres 35) describes nature as being the רצון תמידי, "Hashem's continuous desire". In other words, nature, too, is dictated entirely by Hashem's will, at each moment, and not by any cycle or power that functions on its own, *chalilah*. The only difference between miracles and nature is that nature is the way Hashem generally wills things to function. Hashem will almost always decree that water should extinguish water, and heat should melt snow, and so on. A miracle, on the other hand, is when Hashem decrees something out of the ordinary to occur.

2. It states (21:19), וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא. Chazal (Bava Kama 85a) learn from these words that doctors are permitted to heal. The holy sefarim add that another lesson from the words וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא is to teach people that they should go to doctors when they are ill. Nevertheless, one mustn't think that the doctors have the ability to heal. Hashem is the true healer. We go to doctors to fulfill the Torah decree of hishtadlus of וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא, but Hashem brings the refuah.

The holy sefarim (brought down in Divrei Eliyahu from the Vilna Gaon zt'l) add that וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא only permits doctors

to heal, but they were never given permission to discourage patients and to tell them that there is no cure for them. Besides, all refuos come from Hashem, and not from doctors. Even when doctors seem to heal, it is from Hashem. Hashem can do anything, so how can doctors decide there is no cure?

The Shiltei Giborim (end of the eighth chapter of Sanhedrin, daf 18b in the pages of the Rif) writes, כי הרבה נידן למיתה בעיני הרופאים, often doctors condemn a person to die, but his cure is actually near."

Also the Meiri (בספרו מגן אבות הענין הי"ט) writes, כמה שערים יש למקום הרפאות מה שאינן נראות, "Even when doctors tell him that his only cure is through one particular way, behold, Hashem has many gates to heal, which the doctors are unaware of."

The following are some segulos and counsels for refuos.

Obviously, the first and foremost counsel is to daven to Hashem for a refuah. Yesod HaAvodah (end of sefer) writes, "After all the counsels, there is no greater counsel than to ask and to plead before Hashem yisbarach, and to trust and to rely on Him and on His kindness, and on His great love to His nation, Yisrael."

Another counsel for refuos is to daven with a minyan. It states in this week's parashah (23:25) וְעִבְדְּתֶם אֶת ה' וְעָלֶיְכֶם וְהָיָה כִּי תִשְׁמָע ה' בְּקוֹלְכֶם וְהָיָה כִּי תִשְׁמָע ה' בְּקוֹלְכֶם וְהָיָה כִּי תִשְׁמָע ה' בְּקוֹלְכֶם, "You shall serve Hashem, your G-d, and He shall bless your bread and your water and I shall remove illness from your midst." The Rebbe of Radoshitz zt'l explains that וְעִבְדְּתֶם refers to tefillah, which is called עבודה שבכל, the service of the heart. It is written in plural as an indication to tefillah b'tzibur. The pasuk says that if you will daven b'tzibur, וְהָיָה כִּי תִשְׁמָע ה' בְּקוֹלְכֶם, Hashem will bless your parnassah and remove illness from your midst.

Following the Torah and mitzvos brings refuos. As it states in parashas Beshalach (15:26) וַיֹּאמֶר אִם שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמָע, "If you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, and you do what is proper in His eyes, and you listen closely to His commandments and observe all His statutes, all the sicknesses that I have visited upon Egypt I will not visit upon you, for I, Hashem, are your healer." Rebbe Itzikel of Skver zt'l commented that this is a difficult remedy (שארפע רעזעפט). One must keep the entire Torah, and then he merits *refuah*.

In parashas Yisro it states that when the nation received the Torah everyone was healed. But that is also a difficult prescription for a *refuah*, to accept the yoke of the entire Torah.

But in parashas Mishpatim, there's an easier method. It states (21:19) רַק שָׁבְתוּ יֶתֶן וּרְפָא יִרְפָּא, all one needs to do is שָׁבְתוּ יֶתֶן, to keep Shabbos, וּרְפָא יִרְפָּא, and he will have a *refuah*.

Particularly, being happy on Shabbos is a segulah for refuah. Shem MiShmuel (*Shelach* 5677) writes in the name of his father, the Avnei Nezer zt'l, "Even if someone has an ill person in his home, if he can refrain from complaining and from thinking about his troubles, he will certainly be healed." This is based on the Gemara (*Shabbos* 12.), "When one visits the sick on Shabbos... he should say יכולה היא שתרחם, that the merit of Shabbos will arouse Hashem's compassion and the sick person will be healed. Rashi explains, "If you honor Shabbos, by not having tzaar on this day," it will result in refuos. The Gemara (ibid.) also says that one should say, שבת היא מלועזק ורפואה קרובה לבוא, "Shabbos one doesn't shout, and the refuah will come soon." So, avoiding tzaar on Shabbos is a catalyst for yeshuos and refuos.

Eliyahu Rabba says that this is *midah kneged midah*. He blocks out his tzaar on Shabbos, so Hashem removes the cause of his tzaar and distress. This applies to all troubles a person deals with r"l. Chazal tell us that on Shabbos, one should feel כאילו כל מלאכתך עשויה, as if you have nothing to take care of, and everything is perfect in his life (Rashi, *Shemos* 20:9). When one thinks that way on Shabbos, it becomes so.

Masuk m'Dvash (Reb Yitzchak Parchi 6) writes, "We saw with our own eyes people who had a *tzarah* before Shabbos, and on Shabbos they forgot about their *tzarah* entirely, and were happy with Shabbos, as it is proper to be happy on Shabbos. They didn't have any distress or worries on Shabbos despite their *tzaros*, and they merited that they were saved from their troubles in miraculous ways."

Tiferes Shlomo teaches that the foods of Shabbos are a segulah for refuah. He found a hint to this in the Mishnah (*Shabbos* 14:3) כָּל הָאֲכָלִין אוֹכְלִין אֶתְּם לְרִפּוּאָה, "All foods a person eats for a refuah..." The Tiferes Shlomo explains that this refers to the foods of Shabbos kodesh. They have the ability to bring refuos. This is

With these ideas, we can explain a pasuk in this week's parashah. It states (23:13) וְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֶמְרָתִי אֲלֵיכֶם תַּשְׁמְרוּ וְשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ לֹא תִשְׁמַע עַל פֶּיךָ, "Be careful regarding everything

I have said to you. The name of the gods of others you shall not mention, nor shall your mouth cause it to be heard." We ask the following questions:

alluded to in the pasuk וְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֶמְרָתִי אֲלֵיכֶם תַּשְׁמְרוּ. This hints that if you keep Shabbos with the meals of Shabbos, there will be refuos.

Reb Shalom of Shatz zt'l said that וְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֶמְרָתִי אֲלֵיכֶם hints to a person who spends money to honor the Shabbos. This will result in וְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֶמְרָתִי אֲלֵיכֶם, refuos. (See also Arugas HaBosem).

Heichel HaBrachah from Rebbe Isaac of Kamarna zt'l writes that the letters רפ"א spelled out ר"ש פ"א אל"ף is gematria שב"ת. This is another hint that keeping Shabbos results in refuah.

Chasam Sofer teaches that living in harmony with others, without machlokes, is mesugal for refuos. A hint to this is the pasuk (Yeshayah 57:19) שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְרָחוֹק וְלִקְרוֹב אָמַר ה' וְרָפָאתִיו "Peace, peace, for the far and near," said Hashem and I will heal him. "In contrast, in this week's parashah it states (21:18-19) וְכִי יִרְיֹבוּ אֲנָשִׁים וְהִכָּה אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ בִּשְׁלֵטָה אוֹ בְּאֶבֶן אוֹ בְּחֹמֶק אוֹ בְּחֹמֶק אוֹ בְּאֶבֶן אוֹ בְּחֹמֶק .. כִּי שָׁבַתוּ יִתֵּן וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא "If men quarrel and one strikes his fellow with a stone or a fist... he shall provide for the healing." The Chasam Sofer asks why it begins with וְכִי יִרְיֹבוּ אֲנָשִׁים, that there was a fight between people? It could have just said וְהִכָּה אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ, that someone hurt his fellow man, regardless of whether it was intentional or accidental, or whether they were quarrelling or not. Either way, he must pay for the damages he caused. Chasam Sofer answers that if there weren't a fight, no one would be ill, and no one would get hurt. Illness stems from a dispute. Had there been peace, everyone would have remained healthy and well.

The Gemara (Horiyos 14a) relates that there was a dilemma in Bavel, who should serve as rosh yeshiva, Rabba or Rav Yosef. Each had their individual holy qualities, and the question was who was a better choice to be the rosh yeshiva. They sent their question to the scholars who lived in Eretz Yisrael. The response was that Rav Yosef should be crowned rosh yeshiva.

Nevertheless, Rav Yosef didn't accept the position. To honor Rabba (and to avoid a machlokes and hard feelings), Rav Yosef conferred the prestigious position on Rabba. Twenty-two years later, when Rabba was niftar, Rav Yosef assumed the position of rosh yeshiva.

The Gemara notes an interesting thing: During those twenty-two years, לא חלף אומנא בביתו של ר' יוסף, a doctor never came to Rav Yosef's home. Rashi explains that Rav Yosef would go to doctors when he or someone in his home required medical care, but he never called a doctor to his home. This is because Rav Yosef wanted to clearly establish that he wasn't the rosh yeshiva and didn't deserve special privileges.

There is, however, another explanation (see Tosfos HaRosh and the רמ"ה). They explain that Rav Yosef never called a doctor to his home because Rav Yosef never became ill! When the Gemara says לא חלף אומנא בביתו של ר' יוסף, a doctor never came to Rav Yosef's home, the message is that Rav Yosef never needed a doctor!

This is as the Chasam Sofer explains: When there is peace, there is good health. Rav Yosef went out of his way to prevent machlokes and bad feelings, and he was rewarded that everyone in his home was always healthy and well.

There is another segulah for refuos, written by Reb Chaim Palagi (Refuah v'Chaim 12:74). He writes, כְּשִׁישׁ חוּלָה, "When someone is ill in a person's home, he should be mevater, even to birds of the sky. It is tested and proven that they will pray for him." The birds will pray for him. Certainly, when one is mevater for people, they will pray for him. In this manner, the unwell person will be cured.

We conclude this discussion with the Gemara (Shabbos 32a) that says, "A person should always daven that he never become ill, because if he becomes ill, heaven will say, 'Bring a merit, and you will be cured.' Better than finding segulos and cures for illnesses is when one avoids the illnesses entirely, from the outset. This is accomplished through tefillah.



(a) The pasuk states that we must be cautious to perform "everything I have said to you," but what is this referring to? Which commands of Hashem are we being warned to keep?

(b) What is the connection between the beginning and end of the pasuk?

Based on our opening words (and based on a lesson from the Orach l'Chayim of Zlotchev zt'l) we can explain that *וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֶמְרָתִי אֲלֵיכֶם תִּשְׁמְרוּ*, means that one should be cautious to remember that everything that occurs is *אֲשֶׁר אֶמְרָתִי*, Hashem's words. It was Hashem's command, from the *עֲשֵׂה מֵאֲמֹרָתוֹ* that He created the world. Nothing happens by chance or by nature. It is known that *הַטֶּבַע*, nature, is *גִּמְטְרִיָּה* *א-ל-ה-י-ם*. The end of the pasuk, *וְשֶׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ לֹא תִשְׁמַע עַל פִּיךָ*, is telling us that we shouldn't say that matters happen because of nature. Such words shall never cross our lips. When a person believes in nature it is like he believes in *אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים*, "the gods of others," r'l.

The Zohar (vol.3, 61a) says that Chiram, the king of Tzur, thought he was a god. He truly thought he was an avodah zarah. He said about himself (Yechezkel 28:2) *מוֹשֵׁב אַלְקִים יֹשְׁבִתִּי*, "I occupy the seat of G-d."

The Bas Ayin (Shabbos Chol HaMoed Pesach) asks, how could Chiram make this foolish mistake? Chiram was a wise person. Wasn't it obvious to him that he is nothing more than a human being? Didn't he recognize that *שֶׁאֵם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם*, and so many other examples, that he was just a weak human being?

The Bas Ayin answers that when the Zohar says that he thought he was god it means that he thought he could do things on his own, without Hashem's help. Bas Ayin explains, "He saw that he had an abundance of wisdom, wealth, and honor, and thought he had acquired all that by the strength of his arm. The pasuk considers this as though he made himself an avodah zarah."

The Bas Ayin continues, "Due to our many aveiros, many people fall into this

mistake. They don't recognize the truth, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu feeds and gives parnassah to all, and that He gives them life with his immense kindness... Someone who doesn't think about this truth, he thinks that his parnassah came from his strength and the might of his hand..."

Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Orach Chaim 156:2) discusses the halachah that one must be honest when he does business. He writes there, *כָּל הַמַּחְלִיף אֶת דְּבוּרוֹ כִּאִילוּ עַבְדַּת מוֹכְבִּים*, "Whoever tells lies [when he does business] this is like he worshiped avodah zarah." We can explain that it is likened to avodah zarah because he doesn't believe parnassah is from Hashem. He thinks parnassah comes from his talents, cleverness, and hishtadlus. This is the reason he tells lies, to convince and to trick people into buying his products. But if he believed in Hashem, he would know that parnassah is from Him, and it isn't necessary to trick people to make a living.

It states in this week's parashah (22:7) *וְנִקְרַב בְּעַל הַבַּיִת אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים אִם לֹא שָׁלַח יָדוֹ בְּמַלְאכַת רָעוּהוּ*, "The *baalabus* (householder) should approach the court that he had not laid his hand upon his fellow's property." Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l explained the pasuk as follows: the *בְּעַל הַבַּיִת* is what people today call a *baalabus*. This is a person who spends most of his day earning a living. The pasuk says that he, too, can come close to Hashem, as it states *וְנִקְרַב בְּעַל הַבַּיִת אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים*. The condition is that *לֹא שָׁלַח יָדוֹ בְּמַלְאכַת רָעוּהוּ* that he must do honest business. In the merit of his honesty and emunah, he can reach high levels and become close to Hashem, even as he does his simple chores at work.

Chazal (Brachos 8) say, *גְּדוֹל הַנְּהִיגָה מִיִּגְעַת כְּפוּ יוֹתֵר*, "Someone who enjoys the work of his hand is greater than a yirei Shamayim." Many ask about this Gemara. How can someone who works for a living be considered so great that he is even greater than someone who has yiras Shamayim? Rebbe Moshe Kobriner explained that it is referring to a person who has the emunah

that Hashem is supporting him, and that his parnassah doesn't come from his wisdom and hishtadlus. This awareness and emunah is a very significant level, and he is greater than someone who has yiras Shamayim but lacks this clarity in emunah.

It states in the Aseres HaDibros (Shemos 20:9) שִׁשִּׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֶאכֶתְךָ, "Six days shall you work, and accomplish all your work." The Rambam, quoted by Rabbeinu b'Chayei, explains, "During the six days of the week, you can serve Hashem while doing your work, like the Avos, who would serve Hashem by taking care of the sheep and other gashmiyus matters." A person can serve Hashem even while being occupied in the gashmiyus world by recognizing that everything is from Hashem.

### Whatever People Do is from Hashem

Everything is from Hashem, including what a person does. Although a person has free will, nevertheless, what occurred was destined by Hashem.

The *parashah* discusses a case where someone was negligent and murdered his fellow man by accident, *r'l*. The Torah writes (21:13) וְהָאֱלֹקִים אֵנָּה לֵידֹו, "Hashem caused it to come to his hands." The person did it, it was his negligence, but the Torah reveals that Hashem caused it to happen. It wouldn't have occurred without Hashem's hashgachah.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, it states (21:18-19) וְכִי יִרְיֹבֵן אֲנָשִׁים וְהָכָה, "If men quarrel and one strikes his fellow with a stone or a fist... He shall provide for healing." The words וְרָפָא וְרָפָא teach us that one who hits his fellow man must pay the medical bills.

Another lesson is learned from these words. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85.) says, מִכָּאן

"This is the source that doctors are permitted to heal the ill."

Isn't it obvious that doctors may heal the wounded?

Rashi explains that a doctor might say, "Hashem smote, and I shall heal?" If Hashem wanted to cause the person to be ill, how can I go against Hashem's plan? Therefore, the Torah had to reveal that doctors are permitted to heal.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* asks on the words וְכִי יִרְיֹבֵן אֲנָשִׁים וְהָכָה אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ בָאֶבֶן אוֹ בִּאֲגוּרָה... "If men quarrel and one strikes his fellow with a stone or a fist.., that it seems that it wasn't Hashem who decreed that this person get injured. It resulted from a fight. So, why does the Torah have to tell doctors that they can cure? The doctors aren't acting against Hashem's will because Hashem didn't decree that he get wounded.

The Chofetz Chaim answers that this teaches us that even an injury caused by a human being is from Hashem. Although man has free will, everything he does is from Hashem.

There are additional sources in the Torah that teach us that everything is from Hashem.

For example, Yosef was sold to Mitzrayim, but he was never angry with his brothers for doing so because he believed it was orchestrated by Hashem. Yosef told his brothers (*Bereishis* 45:8) כִּי וְעַתָּה לֹא אַתֶּם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִי, "And now it was not you who sent me [to Mitzrayim], but Hashem."

When Shimi ben Geira cursed Dovid HaMelech, Dovid said (*Shmuel* 2, 16:10), כִּי ה' אָמַר, "He is cursing because Hashem has said to him, 'Curse Dovid.' Who can then say, 'Why have you done this?'"

3. Rashi explains why this person deserved to die, and why it was destined that specifically this person should kill him by accident (see there). We see how Hashem wondrously orchestrates everything.



The Tanya explains that Shimi was punished for being the *shaliach*, but Dovid understood that what happened was destined by Hashem's will.

When you know that everything, including what people do to you, comes from Hashem, you will not be angry with others, and you will never consider taking revenge. If it weren't for this person, someone else would do it, so why be angry? Whatever happened was destined to be.

The Chinuch (*Mitzvah* 241) writes, "One of the reasons for the mitzvah of לא תקום (the prohibition against taking revenge) is so that people should take to heart that everything that happens to them, the good and the bad, was destined by Hashem. When someone harms you or causes you distress, believe that it is because of your *aveiros* that Hashem decreed it. Don't take revenge. Your fellow man isn't the cause of your suffering. The cause is your *aveiros*."

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* (הנהגות) writes, "It is important always to remember that everything is from Hashem. As Chazal (*Chulin* 7:) say, 'A person doesn't hurt his finger unless it was decreed in heaven.' Even when a person is hurt by a human being with free will, this was also from Hashem. When a person lives with this *emunah*, it is easy for him to overcome anger because he believes with all his heart that no person can hurt or harm him."

The Chozeh adds the following:

"Even when a person harms *himself*, it's not because of his negligence, etc. It was destined from above. Keep these thoughts in mind, and you will always remember Hashem."<sup>4</sup>

People are upset when they make a poor financial decision or do something that causes harm and heartache. The Chozeh

reveals that even what he did to himself, with his own free choice, was decreed in heaven. So, don't be consumed with guilt because whatever happened, it was destined to be.

Once, Reb Michael Ber Weismandl *zt'l* complained to Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch (the Rayatz) *zt'l* that he could have saved thousands of people from the Holocaust, but evil people prevented him from succeeding. The Rebbe heard him out and then said, "And who did all of that?" In other words, who sent these evil people to impede your rescue efforts? This reminded Reb Weismandl that everything comes from Hashem, and he said that this entirely changed his perspective on what occurred.

These ideas are hinted at in this week's *parashah*, as it states (22:8), על כל אבידה אשר יאמר, כי הוא זה. *Devarim Achadim* (p.11) explains, אשר יאמר, people say, כי הוא, that this person is responsible for what occurred. Or they say זה, this other party is guilty. The Torah corrects them and says, עד האלקים יבא דבר שניהם, attribute what happened to Hashem. Instead of blaming others, recognize that it was *bashert*.

## Tefillah

I heard the following story from the baalei maaseh:

Two people were travelling to Mezhibuzh, Ukraine, where they would spend Shabbos Chanukah. While driving their rented car, they found themselves on a narrow road with oncoming traffic. A truck was driving towards them, forcing them onto the side of the snowy passage. Their car landed on top of a miniature mountain of snow, and they couldn't get down. It was freezing outside, and they didn't have much gas to warm the car. Walking to the nearest town for help was also impossible, because the closest

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4. The Or HaChaim in this week's *parashah* (22:6) writes, "There isn't an hour or a moment that Hashem isn't doing something for a person; both for his body and for his needs."

location of civilization was forty kilometers away.

They realized that they were in a situation of *pikuach nefesh*, and they needed a *yeshuah*. They decided that they would sing songs of hisorerus, to strengthen their emunah and bitachon that Hashem can help them. They fell asleep, and were awoken by a Ukrainian goy, who came with a shovel to help them get out of the snow. They didn't know how long they sang songs or how long they slept. They couldn't communicate with the goy who was helping them because of the language barrier. But they understood that Hashem saved them with the merit of their emunah, bitachon, and tefillos. Hashem sent someone to find them in their predicament, to have compassion for them, and save them from their distress. Indeed, ... אשרי אדם עוז לו כך ... אשרי אדם בומח כך fortunate is the person who trusts in Hashem!

It states (22:26) וְהָיָה כִּי יִצְעַק אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּי כִּי תָנוּן אָנִי, "If he cries out to Me, I shall listen, for I am compassionate." This pasuk refers to a poor person who took a loan and gave his blanket to the lender as collateral. The Torah obligates the lender to return the blanket at night, when the poor person needs it, because if he cries out to Hashem, Hashem will listen to his tears and answer his prayers. Rebbe Shaul Yedidiah of Modzhitz zt'l asks why the phrase begins with the word וְהָיָה, which is a *lashon* of joy. Why would the poor person be joyous in this situation? The Rebbe of Modzhitz replies that when a person has bitachon, he is certain that Hashem will help him, and he shouts with joy because he is certain that Hashem will answer his tefillos and save him. Indeed, in the merit of his bitachon, וְשָׁמַעְתִּי כִּי תָנוּן אָנִי, Hashem will hear his tefillos and save him.

The Ramban discusses the words וְשָׁמַעְתִּי כִּי תָנוּן אָנִי means that Hashem accepts the prayers of every person, even if he isn't worthy. The Ramban writes, "The root of the word תָנוּן is the same as חנם, which means for free, for no reason." Hashem will have compassion on him and listen to his tefillos.

The pasuk is telling the lender that he should return the collateral when the poor person needs it. The Ramban writes, "The concept is that a person shouldn't say that for a tzaddik, I won't hold onto his clothes as collateral, but the collateral of someone who isn't a tzaddik, I will take it, and I won't return it to him. Anyway, Hashem won't listen to his prayers. Therefore, it states וְשָׁמַעְתִּי כִּי תָנוּן אָנִי, Hashem listens to everyone who shouts out to Him."

It states (22:25-26) אִם חָבֵל תִּקְבֹּל שְׁלֵמֹת רֶעֶךָ עַד בֹּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ תְּשִׁיבֵנוּ לוֹ, כִּי הוּא כְסוּתוֹ לְבָדָה הוּא שְׁמָלְתוֹ לְעֶרְוָה בְּמָה יִשְׁקָב וְהָיָה כִּי יִצְעַק אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּי כִּי תָנוּן אָנִי, "If you take your fellow's garment as security, until sunset shall you return it to him. For it alone is his clothing, it is his garment for his skin – in what should he lie down? – so it will be that if he cries to Me, I shall listen, for I am compassionate."

It is repeated in the name of the Sfas Emes that the beginning of these pasukim speaks to the lender, מלוה, and the end speaks to the borrower. This isn't the standard explanation of the pasuk. Most *meforshim* say that both pasukim are speaking to the lender. He should give back the collateral when the borrower needs it. If it is clothing, he should return it to the borrower every morning. And if the collateral is a blanket, he should return it to the borrower every night, if he comes and asks for it because he needs it. The Sfas Emes says that the end of the phrase is speaking to the borrower. It is saying, "Why do you need this *tirchah* (chore), to go every morning to the home of the lender to ask him for your collateral, your clothes, and then at the end of the day, you return it to him. The next day, you do the same. And if the collateral is a blanket, you will have to come every evening to ask for it back, and then you return it to him again, each morning. Why do you need this hardship and toil? It is foolish to do this. Dear borrower, our advice for you is that you should call out and daven to Hashem. This is the meaning of the words, וְהָיָה כִּי יִצְעַק אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּי כִּי תָנוּן אָנִי, "If he cries to Me, I shall listen, for I am compassionate." Daven to

Hashem, ask for bounty, and you will be able to pay up your debts, and you won't need to ask daily favors from the lender.

The Gemara (Moed Kattan 28a) states, "בני חיי - Children, life, and parnassah aren't dependent on one's merits and good deeds. They are dependent on one's mazal." This means that if a person was born with a good mazal for parnassah, he will have parnassah. The same applies to long life or bearing children. They are not necessarily given to those who deserve them. It depends on one's mazal. But what should a person do if he doesn't have a good mazal? Is he forever doomed, never to attain these matters?

The sefarim give us advice on how a person can change his mazal. One primary counsel is tefillah. The Panim Yafos says that this is alluded to in the following pesukim (23:25-26): וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּבֵרַךְ אֶת לֶחְמֶךָ וְאֶת מִימֶיךָ: וְהִסְרֵתִי מִחֶלְהָ מִקֶּרְבְּךָ, לֹא תִהְיֶה מְשִׁבֶּלֶה וְעִקְרָה בְּאַרְצְךָ אֶת אִשְׁתְּךָ וְהָיָה לְךָ בָּנִים וְאִתְּךָ אֶתְּלָא, "You shall worship Hashem, your G-d, and He shall bless your bread and your water, and I shall remove illness from your midst. There shall be no woman who loses her young or is infertile in your land; I shall fill the number of your days."

Panim Yafos explains that these pesukim are discussing the three matters that are dependent on mazal: בני חיי ומזון, children, life, and parnassah. וּבֵרַךְ אֶת לֶחְמֶךָ, "He shall bless your bread," alludes to מזון, parnassah. וְהִסְרֵתִי מִחֶלְהָ מִקֶּרְבְּךָ, "There shall be no woman who loses her young or is infertile in your land" alludes to בני, having children. אֶתְּלָא, "I shall fill the number of your days" refers to בני חיי, long life. This pasuk is discussing בני חיי ומזון, children, life, and parnassah, and the Torah says that they will be given to those who daven. As it states at the beginning of the pesukim: וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "You shall worship Hashem, your G-d." The avodah (worship) mentioned is tefillah, as the Gemara (Taanis 2a) states, אִיזוּהוּ עֲבוּדָה שֶׁבִלְבָב, "What is the avodah of the heart? It is tefillah." The pasuk is saying that the power of tefillah accomplishes a lot. Even a person who didn't have a mazal for

children, parnassah, or life, can attain these matters with his tefillos.

It states (22:24) אִם בָּסֹף תִּלְוֶה אֶת עַמִּי אֶת הָעֹנִי עִמָּךְ, "When you lend money to My people, to the poor person who is with you, do not act toward him as a creditor; do not lay interest (ribis) upon him."

This pasuk teaches halachos related to lending money. One of the halachos are לֹא תִהְיֶה לוֹ בִּנְשָׁה, "Do not act toward him as a creditor". Rashi explains, "Don't demand the money back with force if you know that he doesn't have money to pay..."

The concept of לֹא תִהְיֶה לוֹ בִּנְשָׁה means you shouldn't keep asking him for the money if you know that he is unable to pay you back.

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l said that the pasuk emphasizes that the prohibition to be a בִּנְשָׁה, someone who asks and asks repeatedly, is specifically for לוֹ, the lender. However, when you want something from Hashem, you can ask and ask many times. Hashem wants us to be like a בִּנְשָׁה. He wants us to turn to Him in prayer and to beg Him again and again.

The Beis Yisrael explained that the reason we shouldn't be a בִּנְשָׁה towards one's fellow man is that he doesn't have money to pay up the debt. You need to be considerate about that, and not place extra pressure on him. However, Hashem can give us. There is nothing Hashem cannot provide. Whatever our requests are, it is in Hashem's hands to give them to us. So, there is no reason we can't ask for it from Hashem, repeatedly.

It states (22:28) מְלֹאֲתֶךָ וְדִמְעָתְךָ לֹא תִאָּחֵר. The Shlah Hakadosh (quoting Reb Menachem HaBavli) explains: מְלֹאֲתֶךָ, when your heart feels heavy due to your hardships and troubles, וְדִמְעָתְךָ, and you pray with tears due to your tzaros, לֹא תִאָּחֵר, the salvation will not come late. In the merit of your tears and sincere tefillos, Hashem will answer your tefillos right away and grant you your needs. As Chazal (Brachos 32b) say, שַׁעַר דְּמְעוֹת לֹא נִנְעָלוּ, the gates of tears



are never locked. Tefillos said with tears are always answered.

### The Holiness of a Yid

Reb Yeruchem of Mir zt'l spoke about the first people who moved to America from Spain and other countries, around five hundred years ago. They rode horses, just as they did when they lived in Europe. To the native Indians who lived in America for centuries, this was a novelty. They knew that there were horses, and they knew that there were people, but they never thought that they could go together, and that a person could ride a horse. Therefore, when the Indians saw the newcomers riding on horses, they thought it was a new kind of creation, something like a human with four feet.

But when they saw the human get off his horse, they discovered that they were two entities, the horse and the human being.

Reb Yeruchem explained that every person is a combination of human and animal. His neshamah and his good desires are his human side, and his physical drives are his animal side. He must know that he isn't a person and an animal. He is a human being, and only a human being. He has lofty desires, and the good that's in him is his genuine self. He was placed together with animalistic drives. Just like a person riding

a horse isn't the horse, the negative isn't a part of his true self.

During Shovavim, a person purifies himself and trains himself to desire ruchniyus. When this occurs, it is compared to when the rider descended from the horse, and it was clear that they were two entities.

It states (24:10) וְיִקְעָצֻם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר, "Like the essence of the heaven in purity."

The Divrei Binah of Biala zt'l explains that the pure heaven is a description of Bnei Yisrael. Although there are times when the sky is covered with clouds, it is a temporary situation. When the clouds part, you see that the heaven is pure. The same is with a Yid. Although, due to aveiros, it can appear that he is covered with clouds and aveiros, the essence of a Yid is always beautiful and pure.

Chazal (Succah 29a) say ישראל מונין ללבנה, that the Jewish nation's calendar follows the path of the moon. This tells us that there is a comparison between Bnei Yisrael and the moon. The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt'l explained that there are times when the moon is covered over with clouds, but it is still there. Similarly, there are times when we don't see the beauty of the Jewish nation since they are covered with aveiros, but the Yid is still there. Just beneath the clouds is a *heilige*, holy Yid.<sup>5</sup>

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5. When people try to recite kidush levanah, but clouds cover the moon, often they will come back out to check the sky a half-hour later. Perhaps the clouds parted. The Magid, Reb Moshe Weinbach Shlita, said that this is a hint to how we should understand a Yid. Sometimes, he seems to be covered over with clouds due to his aveiros, and we don't see his shine. But look at him a half-hour later. Maybe something has changed. Maybe now you will see his nekudah tova, and the good that's within him will shine forth. There is definitely an incredible holy shine in every Yid, only sometimes we must look for it, and sometimes we have to wait until it shines forth.

The same can be said about how each person thinks about himself. He shouldn't think that he is distant from kedushah. He must recognize that there is a lot of kedushah within him. When he removes the "clouds" and seeks the shine of the neshamah, it will burst forth.

A story is told about Baron Rotchild. He once advertised that he was looking to hire an accountant. During the job interview, the Baron asked the first candidate, "How much is ten plus ten?" He replied twenty. The Baron doubled the numbers: "How much is twenty plus twenty?"

"Forty," the man replied.

### Salvations on Shabbos Shekalim

The גוי ישראל from Rebbe Yisrael of Chortkov zt'l writes, "Every Shabbos of the four *parshiyos* brings down bounty to the world... On parashas Shekalim, the bounty for parnassah and wealth comes down..."

Similarly, the Ateres Yeshuah (*Moadim, Mishpatim, Shekalim*) writes, שבת שקלים מסוגל להמשכת, פרנסה, "Shabbos Shekalim is *mesugal* for attaining parnassah."<sup>6</sup>

The Imrei Yosef of Spinka said that since the *shekalim* (which were donated to the Beis HaMikdash)

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"How much is forty plus forty?"

"Eighty," the applicant replied. The Baron informed him that this job wasn't for him. Several other candidates applied for the position, and the same scene repeated itself. The Baron asked the same questions, received the same answers, and rejected the candidates.

One person came for the interview. But before going to the Baron, he asked some of the Baron's employees what had happened at the interviews of the others who came before him.

He heard that the applicants were asked simple arithmetic questions. They answered correctly, but for some reason, the Baron didn't hire them.

When it was his turn for the interview, the Baron asked him, "How much is ten plus another ten?"

The man placed his finger to his mouth to imply that he didn't want to speak in a loud voice. He stood up and shut the windows. Then he returned to his seat, bent over, and whispered to the Baron, "How much do you want it to be?"

The Baron hired him.

This is because the Baron wasn't looking for someone who knows math. He wouldn't need an accountant for that. He was looking for someone to help him grow his wealth, to be creative and innovative, to know how to achieve the desired results even when the reality was less than optimal.

There is a nimshal that we can learn from this story:

It states (Mishlei 24:16) כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפֹּל צַדִּיק וְקָם. This means that a tzaddik will fall seven times, but in the end, he will pick himself up again.

Mathematically, this isn't a great record at all. He fell seven times more times than he picked himself up. However, one must know how to do the math. It isn't easy for a person to pick himself up again, after falling so many times. When he does, that one time is extremely valuable.

In other words, not everything is quantified with numbers. Quality and value are added to the equation. Therefore, a person should value himself, despite his faults, because the good he has may immensely outweigh his faults. Reb A. M. Rutner zt'l said that the pasuk cannot mean that the tzaddik fell seven times in a row because after he fell once and he is on the ground, how can he fall again? It must be that he fell and picked himself up. Then he fell again, and he picked himself up. After every time he fell, he raised himself up again, and this is why he deserves the title of "Tzaddik."

In parashas Shemos (ch.4), Hashem told Moshe to throw his staff, the מִטֵּה אֱלֹקִים, to the ground, and it turned into a snake. Then Hashem told him to pick it up. It returned into a staff. Hashem said that he should perform the miracles, the ten makos, with this staff. I heard from a tzaddik of our generation that we see the greatness of a person who fell, and then rose again. We see it from the fact that initially the staff was called מִטֵּה אֱלֹקִים, but after it fell and was raised, it became a staff with which miracles occurred.

6. The Ateres Yeshuah concludes with a Rashi in the beginning of parashas Mishpatim, and this is how he reads Rashi's words: אמר לו הקב"ה למשה, לא תעלה על דעתך לומר, אשנה להם הפרק, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, 'Don't think it is sufficient that you teach them Torah, alone. You have to be *mashpia* parnassah to them, too, because לֹכֵךְ נֹאמֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּשִּׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם, כְּשֶׁלַּחַן הָעֶרּוֹךְ וּמוֹכֵן לֵאמֹל, אִם אֵין קָמָה אֵין תּוֹרָה, without parnassah, there is no Torah. לֹכֵךְ נֹאמֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּשִּׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם, לפני האדם, You must give them a set table, prepared to eat. You must bestow parnassah on Klal Yisrael."

covered the cost of the *korbanos* for the entire year, similarly, on this Shabbos, we prepare the tefillos for the entire year. This means this Shabbos is *mesugal* for tefillah.<sup>7</sup>

### Time for Change

In the Gemara, the translation of שקל is to take. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l said that Shabbos Shekalim is a *zman* that is *mesugal* for one to take himself with both hands (*Imrei*

*Yehudah*). In other words, it is a time for change—a time for one to take himself in his hands and begin anew.<sup>8</sup>

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer zt'l looked forward to this time of year, when we read the four parshiyos. He would say, "I want to meet with the Eibeshter" (*Imrei Pinchas* 4:225).

This is as we say in the *yotzros* of *Mussaf* on Shabbos Shekalim, אור פניך עלינו נשא, we

7. The brothers Reb Meir and Reb Zanzvil Kahana z'l from Drogmeresht came, for the first time, to the Imrei Yosef of Spinka in 5643. They came for Shabbos Shekalim. They hoped to get their salvation through this great tzaddik, as they were both *baalei yesurim*.

Reb Meir spoke with the Imrei Yosef on *erev* Shabbos and expressed his distress that he doesn't have children and that his wife is ill. The Imrei Yosef told him to give a *pidyon* of one hundred gold coins, and he will have a *yeshuah*.

Reb Zanzvil wanted to speak with the Rebbe on *erev Shabbos* to tell him that his sons were ill, but there wasn't time to do so. At the Friday night *tish*, the Rebbe blessed Reb Zanzvil that his children should have a *refuah sheleimah*. And the Rebbe added that on Shabbos Shekalim, one can request that all his tefillos should be answered.

Needless to say, both brothers had their salvation, and they became devoted chassidim of the Imrei Yosef.

8. Reb Mordechai is a travel agent who travels often. Once, he had enough points to upgrade to first class by just adding one hundred shekels to the fare. He decided to go for it, as he had always wanted to know what it was like to travel first class.

Reb Mordechai isn't wealthy, but during the flight, he felt like a millionaire. He had a comfortable seat (he kept playing with all the buttons, trying to find just the right position) and was sitting among the wealthiest people on board.

His feeling rich began already in the airport. He didn't have to wait in line with everyone else. There was a special agent for fortunate people like himself who fly first class.

A Yid, flying economy class, was itching to see who was flying in the first-class cabin. Perhaps it was just curiosity, or perhaps it was because he was traveling to America to be *mezakeh* Yidden with the mitzvah of *hachnasas kallah*, and he figured that he may as well begin his mission on the plane. Whatever his motive, he waited for a time when the stewards didn't notice, and he slipped into the first-class section and looked around.

When he saw Reb Mordechai, he said, "Oh, it's just that shlepper!"

Reb Mordechai said that at that moment, he felt like a poor man. All the air emptied from his balloon. He was pretending to be wealthy, and now someone who knew him realized the truth: that he was a poor shlepper.

Reb Mordechai said that he realized then that it isn't sufficient to *pretend* to be wealthy. If you want to feel wealthy, you have to be wealthy. It needs to reflect in your bank account, or people will recognize that you are "just that shlepper."

The *nimshal* is, Shabbos Shekalim is approaching, a time when we can "take ourselves in our hands," to do *teshuvah* and improve our ways. However, if you don't change, and you remain the same, you will remain "just that shlepper."



request that Hashem shine the light of His countenance on us. It is a time when we can keviyachol meet with Hashem. The Ruzhiner Rebbe zt'l said, "In the Shabbosim of the four parshiyos, each Yid can become attached to the *Shechinah* because each week represents another letter of Hashem's name (הו"ה)." <sup>9</sup>

It states in *Megillas Esther* (*Esther* 7:8), ופני המן, "Haman's face was covered." The Alshich HaKadosh explains that the ancient law of Persia (and of many other countries) was that if a person who was convicted and sentenced to death saw the king, he was pardoned. When Achashveirosh's anger was aroused toward Haman, someone quickly covered Haman's face, so Haman wouldn't look at the king's face and be pardoned. As we said above, during the weeks of the "four parshiyos" we merit seeing Hashem's face, keviyachol. As we say on Shabbos Shekalim, אור פניך עלינו אדון, נשא. And when one sees the King's face, all his sins are pardoned.

Furthermore, it states (30:13), זה יתנו כל העובר, על הפקודים... The Yerushalmi writes that כל העובר על הפקודים means "all those who transgressed Hashem's commands" (and sinned with the *egel*), with the *machatzis hashekel*, לכפר על, נפשותיכם, they will have atonement. Similarly, we will attain atonement on this Shabbos.

The Sfas Emes (*Shekalim* תרל"ג) explains that this atonement is also applicable in our times, because we *desire* to give the *machatzis hashekel*, and that is sufficient to attain atonement.<sup>9</sup>

The Midrash (*Tanchuma Tisa* 3) states that Moshe said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Ribono Shel Olam! When I die, no one will mention me!"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, "I swear, just as you are now standing and teaching them *parashas Shekalim*, and you raise their heads, so will it be every year. When the nation reads this parashah before Me, it is like you are standing there, and you raise their heads."

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9. The Sfas Emes (*Shekalim* 5633) writes, "Chazal say that we should read parashas Shekalim now, even though in our times we can't bring a *korban*. It seems that our desire to bring *korbanos* is accepted, just like in the past... The yearning exists until today – and perhaps it's even stronger than years ago, because we want to bring *korbanos* again as we did in the past. This is the entire purpose of creation, to yearn for Hashem from amidst the darkness."