

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

Terumah



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Terumah

## Hashem is the *Baal HaBayis*

The only time the Torah uses the word *Baal Habayis* is in Parashas Mishpatim (*Shemos* 22:7), ונקרב בעל הבית אל האלקים, and it refers to a *shomer*, a guardian, someone who is watching an object for somebody else. We would expect the *Baal Habayis* to be the item's owner, not the one guarding it! This is a reminder for all people who feel proud that they are the *Baal Habayis* and have wealth, to know that they are nothing more than a guardian. It states (Chagi 2:8) לי הכסף ולי הזהב נאום ה', "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says Hashem." Hashem gave you the money to support your family and to help others, but everything belongs to Him.<sup>1</sup>

Generally, when someone asks for money for a donation, he begins the conversation by explaining why he is asking for money. For example, he will say, "I have a child to marry off, and I need money to make the chasunah." Or, "I have a yeshiva of one hundred *bachurim*, and the yeshiva needs

money." First, the need is explained, and then comes the request for money.

But in this week's Parashah, Hashem asks Bnei Yisrael to donate, and at first, Hashem doesn't give the reason. Then, eight pesukim later, Hashem reveals the reason He is asking for money (25:8) ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם, "They shall make me a Mikdash, and I will dwell in their midst."

Reb Moshe Feinstein (Darash Moshe, Tazria, p.87) explains that it is written in this unusual manner to remind Klal Yisrael Who is the true owner of their wealth. If you would give someone money to guard and then approach that person and say, "Please give me back the money I gave you," that should be sufficient. It is your money. You don't need to provide a reason for your request.

Hashem wanted the Yidden to know that their money was His. Therefore, he told them to give "Gold, silver, copper..." They have no choice in the matter because the money isn't theirs. And therefore, only at

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1. There's a special Yid in Boro Park, who runs a large business, and his door is always open for tzedakah. He spends a couple of hours each morning studying Torah and then goes to work. Meshulachim come all the time, and he gives everyone a donation. On his office door, there was a white plaque, and written on it was the word "Owner." Most meshulachim recognize how busy he is, so they accept what he gives them without speaking to him for long. However, one meshulach from Yerushalayim felt he had to say something. He said, "Why do you write that you own this business? You aren't the baal habayis! Hashem is. Everything you have is Hashem's, and you are nothing more than a guardian."

The *owner* accepted the rebuke, and that day, he changed the sign on his door to "Manager."

There are cameras throughout the building, and one day, he saw on a screen that one of his non-Jewish workers was playing with her iPhone instead of working. He promptly fired her.

The next day, her tall and strong husband came to the business, and he went to the door that said "Manager," and asked, "Who is the boss? Where is the owner of this business?"

The owner replied by pointing up to the sky. He intended that Hashem was the boss. The man left in a hurry and scrambled upstairs, where he thought he would find the owner of this business.

The businessman felt uncomfortable with this sudden scene, and after checking the screen, he saw that this man was carrying a gun in his pocket. He called security. It was eventually discovered that the husband came to kill the owner of this business for firing his wife. He was saved by the awareness that Hashem, and not he, is the boss and owner of the company.

the end Hashem told them that their donations were for the building of the Mishkan. The nation shouldn't think they are doing Hashem a favor when they give money to build the Mishkan.

We do our hishtadlus to earn money, which tricks us into thinking that we earned money on our own. But it isn't so. Consider the following mashal:

Yungerleit were putting on a play l'kovod Purim, and one of the men played the role of "Moshke, the merchant." He put his heart and soul into playing his part and was a superb actor. After the play, someone came over to him and said, "Moshke, when will the store be open again? I need some items." The yungerman replied, "I am not Moshke, and I don't own a store. It was just a play." This is how we should view our hishtadlus. We think that we have a store, a business, and a source of *parnassah*, but the true source of *parnassah* is Hashem's generosity. We didn't earn it on our own.

When one works for someone else, he should be diligent with his work because being lax and lazy might be considered *gezel* (theft), depending on what was agreed upon and understood between the boss and the worker. Yaakov Avinu described to Lavan how he worked for him as a shepherd with honesty and *mesirus nefesh*. He said (Bereishis 31:40) *הייתי ביום אכלני חרב וקרר בלילה ותדד שנתי מעי* "I was [in the field] by day when the heat consumed me, and the frost at night, and my sleep wandered from my eyes."

However, when one works for himself, tzaddikim often recommend that he should have a slightly lax attitude, as this will remind him that *parnassah* comes from Hashem and not from his work. The Yesod HoAvodah *zt'l* (Slonim), for example, would tell his chassidim to go late to the market so

that they can remember that *parnassah* comes from Hashem.

Reb Tzvi Meir Zilberberg Shlita asks that isn't hishtadlus a mitzvah, since it is Hashem's will that we do hishtadlus, and a mitzvah must be performed with *hislahavous*. So, it seems that we should do *hishtadlus* with *hislahavous* and place our heart and soul into *hishtadlus*.

But this isn't what tzaddikim taught us.

Reb Tzvi Meir answers that each mitzvah has its details on how it is performed. For example, Tefillin must be black, a *lulav* must be four *tefachim* tall, and so on. The mitzvah of *hishtadlus* also has its rules and details on how it should be performed, and one of the details is that it should be done with coldness and detachment, and with trust that *parnassah* comes from Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

When someone has trouble with his heart, the doctor will take his wrist to check the pulse. The ill person says, "Why are you checking my hand? The problem is my heart."

The doctor replies, "I know, but from checking the hand, I can know what is happening in your heart."

Similarly, from the way one does hishtadlus (with his hands), we know what is happening in his heart. By his hishtadlus, we can determine whether he believes *parnassah* is from Hashem or from his work.

This also applies to the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. When one gives *tzedakah* generously, this proves that his heart is in the right place. This is alluded to in the words, *מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את תרומתי*, "From every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering." This pasuk can be translated like- *לבו*, if you want to know what

2. The Mishnah (*Avos* 5:5) states, *עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רווחים*. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* explains *עומדים צפופים*, when a person feels that he is standing on his own and he thinks he doesn't need Hashem's help, his *parnassah* will be tight and limited. On the other hand, *משתחוים*, if a person bows to Hashem because he recognizes that everything comes from Hashem, *רווחים*, he will have *parnassah* in abundance.

is doing in his heart, תקחו את תרומתי, see how he gives tzedakah. If he is generous, this means that he has a spiritually healthy heart.

### Investing in Avodas Hashem

The Divrei Yechezkel (Shinov) zt'l writes that by watching how people are involved in their *parnassah* with all their heart and soul, you can learn how you should be devoted to *avodas Hashem*. This is the meaning of the words ויקחו לי תרומה. The Torah is urging every Yid that he should elevate himself and become more spiritual. (תרומה means to elevate oneself.) But how can one do so? How can one train himself to be devoted to *avodas Hashem*? The answer is מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו, copy the people who vigorously pursue their *parnassah*. They work so hard, by day and by night. You should do the same in *avodas Hashem*. They are working to succeed in this temporary world, so you should certainly work as hard to do *avodas Hashem*, whose reward is eternal.

The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Ki Seitze, ד"ה אוי"מ) writes this lesson on the words (Tehillim 119:98) מאויבי תחכמי מצותיך כי לעולם היא לי. The Chasam Sofer writes, "The mitzvos are לעולם, forever... So, if for a tiny pleasure – nothing more than a moment and then it is gone – a person works so hard to attain it, certainly one should toil to earn a mitzvah, for it is eternal."

### Avodas Hashem is for Us

We can accomplish great things with our *avodas Hashem*, far greater than we can imagine.

The Zohar (Chadash 7:) writes, "Klal Yisrael gives *parnassah* to their Father in heaven." The Nefesh HaChaim (2:6) explains that just as food makes the connection between body and neshamah (and without food, the neshamah departs), similarly, the Zohar teaches, Hashem's connection to the world is from the mitzvos that Klal Yisrael perform.

The Divrei Yisrael zt'l (Kedoshim) writes in the name of his grandfather, Rebbe Yechezkel

of Kozmir zt'l that this Zohar refers to our generation as well. Even today, we (keviyachol) give Hashem *parnassah* with our good deeds.

"Whoever doesn't say so is a fool. We are running Hashem's store. In the past, it was a big store, and there was *parnassah* in abundance. (This means that in the days of the Beis HaMikdash, and the era of the Rishonim, etc., the good deeds of tzaddikim keviyachol brought a large *parnassah* to Hashem). But today, it is up to us to give Hashem *parnassah*. If not us, from where does Hashem get His *parnassah*? From the Arabs? From the descendants of Eisav? But we must know that nowadays, we give a minimum *parnassah*. Nevertheless, we also give *parnassah*, keviyachol, to Hashem today."

On the words (25:2) ויקחו לי תרומה, the Saraf of Mogalentza zt'l explains that Hashem requests that we should elevate Him (keviyachol) with our good deeds. (keviyachol means to elevate.) And don't think that Hashem asks this only from the great tzaddikim. Rather, מאת כל איש... תקחו את תרומתי, Hashem wants to be elevated by every Yid. The Saraf of Mogalentza explains that Hashem knew from the beginning of time that this generation would come to the world, and He wanted our *avodah*. This tells us that every Yid and every generation has the potential to elevate Hashem (keviyachol) when they perform His service.

We've seen that Klal Yisrael, up until this very day, can keviyachol give *parnassah* to Hashem and elevate Hashem. Perhaps we don't know exactly what this means, but it reveals our preciousness before Hashem, our connection with Hashem, and Hashem's desire for us.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 34:1) writes on the pasuk (25:10) ועשו ארון עצי שיטים, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu never...requests from His creations more than they can do. When Hashem gave them the Torah on Har Sinai, He came to them in accordance with their strength. This is as it states (Tehillim 29:4) קול ה' בכה

each individual. Also, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe to build a Mishkan, Moshe wondered, 'Hashem's honor fills the upper and the lower worlds, and He is asking for a Mishkan?! [How can we possibly build a Mishkan sufficient for Hashem to dwell there?].' Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'I do not intend as you think. I am asking for twenty kerashim (planks) on the north side, twenty on the southern side, and eight to the west. And...I will bring the Shechinah to dwell within a square amah (of the Kodesh HaKadoshim).'<sup>113</sup>

This is a wonderful lesson: Hashem doesn't ask from us more than we can do, and our minimal abilities are sufficient in Hashem's eyes.

The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe אשר ידבנו ד"ה) discusses the *nesi'im* who wanted to bring precious stones for the *choshen* (which were needed for the service in the Mishkan), but how could they possibly get these gems in the desert?

With all their heart, the *nesi'im* wanted to bring this donation to Hashem, so Hashem helped them. Chazal tell us that the gems fell from heaven along with the manna. So, we see that when we want to serve Hashem, Hashem enables us to succeed. The Chasam Sofer said that this is alluded to in the words, אשר ידבנו לבו, all you need to do is to desire and yearn to serve Hashem, and that will be enough. Miraculously, Hashem will grant you *siyata d'shmaya*, and you will succeed.<sup>4</sup>

## The Yetzer Hara

The Yeitav Lev (אותד) writes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the service of mankind more than every other creation because man has free choice, but all other creations don't have the freedom to do as they wish. Only a human can choose to serve Hashem in a mode of *ידבנו לבו*, by his heart's desires and as he decides to act.

It states (25:11) ועשו ארון עצי שיטים... וצפית אותו, "You shall make an ark of wood... and you shall overlay it with pure gold; from inside and from outside you shall overlay it."

The Midrash HaGadol asks: "If the *Aron* is covered with gold inside and outside, why did it need a wooden layer in between? To teach us that if it weren't for the *yetzer hara*, there would be no praise for the *talmidei chachamim*. Their praise is when they conquer their *yetzer hara*." The wood represents the *yetzer hara*, which was inside the *Aron*, to signify that it is the challenge that the *yetzer hara* creates which makes our *avodas Hashem* unique.

It states (25:31) תיעשה המנורה, "The menorah shall be made." Rashi writes that the grammar of *תיעשה* indicates that the menorah was made on its own. Rashi writes, "Moshe found difficulty [figuring out how to form the menorah], Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to him, 'Cast the talent [equivalent to sixty-four pounds of gold] into the fire, and it will be made by itself.'"

Which aspect of the menorah didn't Moshe understand? I heard a *pshat* that it

3. The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l (Zera Kodesh ועשו ד"ה) quotes this Midrash and explains that the aron was made with עצי שיטים, which represents aveiros because Chazal (Sotah 3.) says, "A person doesn't sin unless he received a רוח שטות, a foolish spirit." So, the עצי שיטים represents this foolishness that enters a person when he sins. Furthermore, שטים is gematriya שט"ן, which causes us to commit aveiros. A person thinks he can't correct his aveiros because there are so many. Hashem replies that His expectations of us are in accordance with our strengths and abilities.

4. We can also translate כל אשר ידבנו לבו, that for *avodas Hashem*, give Hashem your heart. Whatever you do, do it *l'shem shamayim*. With this approach, you can eat, speak with people, and work. You seem the same as everyone else, but your heart is with Hashem; you are always serving Hashem.

was the fact that the menorah was made from pure gold, that there was no wood in it that he found hard to understand. It meant that the *yetzer hara* didn't play a role there. Moshe didn't understand why Hashem would have a *nachas ruach* from the menorah because Hashem's *nachas ruach* comes when there is a challenge from the *yetzer hara*.

Sefer Chasidim (145) writes, "When a person overcomes his *yetzer hara*, his reward is more than a hundred mitzvos performed without a *yetzer hara* challenging him."<sup>5</sup>

It states (25:36) מקשה אחת זהב טהור. The Lechovitzer zt'l explains, one difficult deed is gold. Everything that is done with hardship is gold in Hashem's eyes. Avos d'Reb Noson (3:6) writes, "Once with tzaar is better than a hundred times without tzaar."

### "I will Dwell amongst Them."

This week's parashah discusses the halachos of how to build the Mishkan. The Torah applies to all generations, so there is a concept of Mishkan even today.

It says, (25:8) ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם, "They shall make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell in *them*." It should have said ושכנתי בתוכי, "I will dwell in *it*."

The Alshich explains ושכנתי בתוכם, Hashem dwells in them literally in every Yid. Therefore, it is written in plural form, because Hashem wants to reside within every Yid.<sup>6</sup>

This is an amazing revelation and something we should strive to attain. In this generation, there is no Mishkan or Beis HaMikdash, but Hashem wants to reside with us, in the hearts and the *neshamos* of Bnei Yisrael.

Tzaddikim gave a mashal of a king who was banished from his palace and sought a place to be. A loyal subject brought him into his home, served the king dry bread, and prepared a straw bed on the ground at night. The king was pleased with all of this. Obviously, it wasn't fitting for the great king, but the home was clean, and the king needed somewhere to be, so this was good.

The *nimshal* is that when there isn't a Beis HaMikdash, as in our times, it is easier to merit hosting the king. Whoever is loyal to the King and cleans up his ways as best as he can, the king will stay with him. It is easier in these generations to have a close relationship with Hashem than when the

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5. This is encouraging to people who are getting older and didn't yet properly devote themselves to avodas Hashem. They think it is too late. But be aware that it is harder to change and improve one's ways when one is older. So, since it is harder, when you succeed, the reward and the value of your good deeds are a hundred times more than if you were young, and change was easier.

6. There are other sources that in galus, Hashem's dwelling place is where there are Yidden who serve him.

It states (25:9) וכן תעשו לדורות, and Rashi writes וכן תעשו לדורות, "This is how you should build the Mishkan in the future generations." Even today, we should build a Mishkan, but how? The answer is that Hashem dwells in a Yid.

The Midrash (Yalkut, Terumah) says on the pasuk ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם, "Wherever it states לי it is forever." Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l explains that the Mishkan is forever because Hakadosh Baruch Hu resides with a Yid.

The Divrei Yisrael zt'l writes that Bnei Yisrael's Gan Eden is in heaven, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu's Gan Eden is in the soul of a Yid.

The *Zohar* (*Chadosh, Rus* 97:) writes, "There is nothing closer to Hashem than the heart of man. It is more cherished to Him than all *korbanos*."

Beis HaMikdash stood because Hashem is searching for a place to stay.

Let us recognize the holiness of a Yid, especially a Yid who lives according to the Torah and turns himself into Hashem's home in this world.

And it isn't only his self that becomes a Mishkan. Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l says that one can also turn his home into being a Mishkan. A Jewish home is a place where mitzvos are performed, and future generations are raised. The home can become a miniature Mishkan, and this is the Mishkan that is constructed in every generation.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 33:1) teaches that "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Yisrael, 'I sold you my Torah, and *keviyachol*, I was sold together with it.' It can be compared to a king who had an only daughter. A prince arrived and married her, and then he wanted to return to his country. The king said, 'She is my only daughter; I can't be distant from her. But I also can't demand that you remain here. So, please do me this favor. Wherever you go, make a small house so I can live there.'

Similarly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Yisrael... 'Wherever you go, make a place for me to live there.' This is as it states ועשו לי מקדש, "They shall make for Me a sanctuary."

The Beis Aharon would tell yungerleit to study this Midrash because it applies to us today. Wherever you are, and no matter what you do, make a place for Hashem to be there, too. Turn yourself, your home, and everything you do, to be a place for Hashem to reside.

It states (*Shir Hashirim* 3:9-10), אפריון עשה לו, המלך שלמה מעצי הלבנון... תוכו רצוף אהבה מבנות ירושלים, "King Shlomo made himself a Mikdash from the trees of Lebanon... its interior inlaid with love from the daughters of Yerushalayim." The *pasuk* is asking and wondering how it could be built מעצי הלבנון, from Lebanese trees. How could a building made of physical items be where Hashem resides?

The *pasuk* replies, תוכו רצוף אהבה מבנות ירושלים. The Bnos Yerushalayim represent the Jewish nation. The *pasuk* clarifies that the Jewish nation donated the items with love, and therefore Hashem wants to be there.

The Arvei Nachal writes, "It is known that when one makes himself holy with these attributes (love, fear, and desire to serve Hashem), the Shechinah comes to him. Hashem loves these emotions, and wherever these emotions are found, Hashem goes there... Therefore, Hashem commanded that every Yid should donate to the Mishkan. Each Yid donated with as much love as he could muster, and the Mishkan was built from these donations. The Mishkan had the kedushah of the entire nation of Bnei Yisrael, and this drew down Hashem's Shechinah in the most appropriate manner."

We don't have the perfection of the Mishkan/Beis HaMikdash in our times because the ideal Beis HaMikdash is when it is donated by the love of the entire nation. Nevertheless, when a Yid loves and fears and yearns for Hashem, he has made Hashem a place in this world.

When Shlomo Hamelech built the Beis HaMikdash, he davened (Malachim 1, 8:57) יהי ה' אלקינו עמנו כאשר היה עם אבותינו אל יעזבנו ואל ישנו, "May Hashem be with us, as He was with our forefathers; let Him not leave us, nor forsake us."

This seems like a very unusual request. Now that there is a Beis HaMikdash, Hashem will certainly be with them, even more than before!

The Akeidah (quoted in Chasam Sofer, Terumah, haftarah) answers that in the past, Hashem dwelled in the souls of the Jewish nation. Shlomo HaMelech feared that now that the Beis HaMikdash is built and Hashem will live in this house, perhaps Hashem will no longer reside on the good Yidden who make a place in their heart for Hashem. Therefore, he davened that this aspect of Hashem's presence should always remain with us.

## Creating a Mishkan in Your Individual Way

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* (Darash Moshe) clarifies that there is a fundamental difference between Hashem's dwelling place in the desert, in the Mishkan, to Hashem's dwelling place in our times, which is in the neshamah of a Yid or in a Yiddishe home.

He explains that the Mishkan has set laws, exactly how it should appear. However, when one turns his neshamah into a sanctuary for Hashem, and likewise, when one turns his home into a Mishkan for Hashem to dwell there, there aren't set, rigid laws. Each person serves Hashem somewhat differently, and each person, in his individual way, creates a place for Hashem.

This brings us to the important discussion of serving Hashem according to your own way. One shouldn't copy others. Instead, he should recognize the strengths, talents, and abilities that Hashem gave him and use them for *avodas Hashem*.

There's a Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Mishlei*, תתקל"ב) that expresses the importance of serving Hashem according to the talent Hashem gave you:

"Reb Elazar Hakapar's nephew, Chiya, had a beautiful voice. Reb Elazar Hakapar would tell him, 'Chiya, honor Hashem with the talent Hashem gave you. Navos had a beautiful voice, and when he went to Yerushalayim for the *yomim tovim*, everyone would gather around him to listen to him sing. One year, he didn't go to Yerushalayim, and dishonest people testified falsely against him, and he was killed (see *Melachim* 1, ch.21). Why did this happen to him? It's because he didn't go to Yerushalayim to honor Hashem with the talent Hashem granted him.'"

Reb Meir Shapiro was a chassid of Rebbe Yisrael of Chortkov *zt'l*. One Shabbos, when Reb Meir Shapiro was in Chortkov, the Rebbe asked him to daven at the *amud* (*Rosh Chodesh benching* and *Mussaf*). After the *tefillah*, the Rebbe invited Reb Meir Shapiro to eat the Shabbos *seudah* with him.

When the meal was over and Reb Meir Shapiro left the Rebbe's home, people saw Reb Meir beaming with joy. They asked him what had happened at the meal that made him so happy.

He told them that the Rebbe praised him for the *tefillos* he *davened* at the *amud*. The Rebbe was saying, "Ah! Reb Meir! Your *tefillah*! Your *Rosh Chodesh benching*! The *mussaf*! It was so beautiful."

Reb Meir Shapiro said to the Rebbe, "If the Rebbe enjoys my *tefillah* so much, perhaps I should leave Sanik, where I'm the Rav, and I should become the *chazan* here?"

The Chortkover Rebbe explained to Reb Meir Shapiro that everyone has his primary life mission. "You are a *talmid chacham*, a talented teacher, and you have all the talents to be a *Rosh Yeshiva*. Therefore, that is your life's mission."

Soon afterward, Reb Meir Shapiro opened the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, where he channeled all his abilities to teach Torah to Yidden. He understood that this was his life's calling and invested all his energies into succeeding in his individual mission.

Once, Reb Meir Shapiro was asked to represent the Jewish community in the Polish parliament. Reb Meir Shapiro asked Rebbe Yisrael of Tchortkov *zt'l* whether he should accept this position.

The Rebbe replied in a letter, "I received your letter, and I will tell you my opinion:

"A person can determine his life's assignment and the service that Hashem wants from him based on the talents Hashem endowed him with. Hashem granted you a sharp mind, the acuity to delve into Torah and draw out beautiful diamonds and teach students. You have already established many outstanding students. If you accept this government position, it will take away from your *avodas hakodesh*. On the other hand, in this political role as a representative, you will be able to do a lot of good for the Jewish community. Therefore, my advice is:

Don't do any *hishtadlus* towards attaining this governmental position. But if the Agudah committee asks you to take on the position, accept it."

### Where your Heart Pulls You

Every person has a mission in the world, but how does one know what it is?

The answer is that there are signs. One sign is to follow where your heart pulls you. If this is your calling, your heart will draw you to it.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 118:) states, תיתי לי, דקיימת ג' סעודות שבת, "I deserve reward because I keep the three meals of Shabbos."

Reb Yehudah said, "I deserve reward because I daven with *kavanah*."

Rav Hunah son of Rav Yehoshua said, "I deserve reward because I never walk four *amos* without covering my head."

Rav Sheshes said, "I deserve reward because I don't walk four *amos* without tefillin."

Reb Nachman said, "I deserve reward because I don't walk four *amos* without tzitzis."

Rav Yosef asked Rav Yosef the son of Rabba, "What was your father most cautious with?"

"Tzitzis. Once, he was climbing a ladder, and a string of his tzitzis ripped. He didn't come down until it was fixed."

Abaya said, "I deserve reward because whenever I see a scholar finish a *masechta*, I make a *yom tov* for the *chachamim*." (Abaya was the *rosh yeshiva*, and he made a celebration meal for the students when there was a *siyum* – *Rashi*).

Rava said, "I deserve reward because when a Torah scholar comes before me to be judged in a *din Torah*, I don't go to sleep before I find a way to exonerate him."

The Netziv (*Haamek Davar*) explains that these scholars were sharing the particular

mitzvah that they excelled in. Similarly, everyone should look in his heart, see where it calls him, and what his yearnings are, which is often a sign of what Hashem wants from him.

The Netziv writes, "If someone will ask you: Which approach to Torah study should I follow, and which mitzvos should I focus on? Reply (*Koheles* 11:9), והלך בדרכך לבך, 'Follow your heart.' Where your heart pulls you is a sign that your mazal understands that that is a good way for your soul."

### When One Doesn't Follow His Unique Path

But often, people don't follow their soul's calling, and they ignore the talents Hashem gave them. Instead, they want to do the good deeds that others do. As a result, they end up unsuccessful in the path they choose (because it wasn't their portion), and they never reach the goal set out for them.

To explain the problem, we will tell a parable:

An ox stood on a mountaintop and watched birds fly by gracefully. "I wish I could fly," the ox said to itself. "I can hardly move. Just look at those graceful beings." Then, just as a strong wind arrived, the determined ox jumped off a cliff and tried to fly...

The lesson is that everyone must serve Hashem in his own way, according to the talent and nature Hashem gave him. If you try to do what others do, you will fail and never accomplish the mission that was explicitly yours.

Reb Mendel Futerfass *zt'l* spoke about a time when he was imprisoned in Siberia. The warden forbade the prisoners to play cards. (There was no reason for this rule other than to break the spirit of the prisoners.) Nevertheless, some prisoners smuggled in a deck of cards and played in their barracks.

Once, the guards heard that there were cards in prison, so they came to the barracks

and searched all over for the cards, but they couldn't find anything.

This is what happened: One of the prisoners was an expert at pickpocketing. (Probably that was the reason he was imprisoned.) He knew how to take a wallet out of another person's pocket without the person feeling anything. This time, instead of picking a pocket, he used his talents to place the deck of cards into the pocket of one of the guards searching the barracks.

The guard looked for the deck of cards under the beds, inside the drawers, and in everyone's pockets, and he didn't realize that it was in his own pocket. On his way out, the pickpocket slid the cards back out of the guard's pocket.

The *nimshal* is, people think the treasure is elsewhere. They want to copy others because they think that others know how to serve Hashem better than they do. But this isn't necessarily true. Each person has his own treasure in his pocket. All he has to do is to discover it and master it.

Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* once asked the renowned *baal teshuvah*, Reb Uri Zohar *z'l*, "Who influenced you to do *teshuvah*?"

Reb Uri Zohar replied, "What difference does it make?"

Reb Chaim Brim replied, "I'm asking because I also want to do *teshuvah*. Tell me who helped you do *teshuvah*, and I will go to him. Perhaps he can influence me to do *teshuvah*, as he influenced you."

Reb Uri Zohar replied that he was influenced by Reb Yitzchak Shlomo Zilberman *zt'l*.

Reb Chaim Brim went to Reb Zilberman and requested that he inspire him to do *teshuvah*,

Reb Zilberman replied, "I'm sorry. I cannot help you. When I meet someone far from Torah and mitzvos, I can easily show him that he is on the wrong path and that he must change his ways. But you daven and learn Torah. You think you are doing everything correctly, so how can I show you where to improve?"

One of the reasons people think they are doing everything correctly is because they copy what they see others do. They say, "I am doing everything others are doing; what could be wrong?" But the problem is that Hashem gave each person an individual mission. We must recognize and use all the talents and abilities Hashem gave us for Hashem's service. And as we wrote above, when we do so, we have created a Mishkan for Hashem in this world, in the neshamah of a Yid.

### Counsels for Attaining Happiness

We have reached the month of Adar and *משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה*. Therefore, it is appropriate to discuss some methods of acquiring joy.

One counsel for happiness is to be happy with your portion. As it states in *Pirkei Avos*: (4:1) *אִיזְהוּ עֹשֵׂי הַשְּׂמָחָה בְּחֻלְקוֹ*, "Who is wealthy? One who is happy with his lot."<sup>7</sup> There's a hint from this week's *parashah*, that everyone can be happy with his lot.

The *parashah* lists the materials the Yidden should donate towards building the Mishkan. One of the materials was *עורות תחשים*, hides from the *tachash*. *Rashi* (25:5) writes, "*Tachash* was an animal that existed only for a short period. It had many colors. *Targum [Onkelus]* translates it as *ססגווא* because it *שש ומתפאר* *שש* *בגווניו* *שלו*, rejoiced and was proud of its colors." (*ססגווא* can be translated *שש*, rejoices, *גווא*, with its colors.)

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7. The Divrei Yisrael writes in the name of an old *sefer* that *חם לה קר ויבש* is *roshei teivos* for *חם*, hot, wet, cold, and dry. This hints that a person should be happy with his lot, regardless of the weather and other circumstances.

The *Zohar* teaches that everything in the Mishkan has a parallel in the human body because the Mishkan was made as a replica of a human being (and as a model of the entire world). Thus, there is an element of תחש in every human being. Where does it manifest? It is a person's ability to be happy with his portion. The תחש was שש ומתפאר בגווניו שלה, happy and proud of its colors. People, too, can be happy with their lot.

In the upcoming sections, we will elaborate on the good in our lives, even when matters don't appear so rosy. Always, everything is for the best:

### Hashem is Near

A story is told of a person who was walking through a forest, frightened by the wild animals and sees two sets of footprints beneath him. He knows one set of footprints is his own, but whose is the second pair of prints?

A bas kol announces, "The second set of footprints is from Hashem. Hashem is walking with you through the forest."

He was relieved; Hashem was with him. There was nothing to fear.

But then, he met up with a lion. He quickly looked down, but to his dismay, he didn't see the second set of footprints. So he shouted, "Hashem! Why did you leave me when I needed You most?"

The Bas Kol replied, "You only see one pair of footprints because Hashem is carrying you on His shoulders!"

This is because Hashem is closest to us when we face challenges.

People asked Reb Mendel Futerfass zt'l how he remained firm with his emunah, even as a prisoner in Siberia.

He replied with the following story: "There was a non-Jew in the Siberian prison; he claimed to be a tightrope walker. Of course, we didn't believe him, as we had never heard of such a stunt. But one day, he

demonstrated his talent. He tied a rope between two high mountains and walked across it.

The prisoners stood in the valley below and watched in amazement. Then, when he got to the other mountain, he asked, "Now, do you believe I can walk on a tightrope?"

"We don't need to believe it. We saw it with our eyes."

"Do you want me to walk back?"

Everyone was afraid he might fall and begged him not to walk back. But he didn't listen to them and turned around and walked back to the first mountain.

He announced to the people below, "Do you believe I can do it a third time?"

Everyone shouted that they believed.

"Do you think I can cross the rope while pushing a wagon?"

Everyone shouted, "We are certain you can. We don't understand how it is possible to tread a tightrope, but you obviously can, so you can surely do it while pushing a wagon, too."

"Does anyone volunteer to ride in the wagon as I bring it across?" he asked.

Everyone was afraid to volunteer, but a young girl climbed into the wagon, and the tightrope master, pushing the wagon, crossed over the valley on the tightrope.

When the girl came down, people asked her how she wasn't afraid. She replied, "The tightrope master is my father, so I'm not afraid."

Reb Futerfass concluded, "At that time, I learned that when one is with his father, he isn't afraid. When your Father in heaven is with you, there is nothing to fear."

Someone knocked at a door, and as he waited for the door to be opened, he looked through the peephole. It was bright. The lights of the home were shining through that tiny glass window. But suddenly, it turned

dark. At that moment, he understood that the owner was home and that he was looking at him and would soon open the door. The same occurs when we endure hardships. Things appear dark, but that is a sign that Hashem is very close. And Hashem's closeness is our comfort and support.

*Kri v'ksiv* is when a word is written in Tanach one way, but we read it differently than how it is written. Generally, the *ksiv* and the *kri* are very similar, with only a minor difference between how it is written and how it is read. However, an exception is found in the *tochachah* of parashas Ki Savo, where a *kri* and *ksiv* are very different. It is written (*Devarim* 28:27), ובעפלים, and we read it טחורים, and there's another example there (see 28:30) where the *kri* and the *ksiv* are very different.

The Stropkover Rebbe explained that this is because these *pesukim* discuss the *tochachah*, the curses, and we physically see are quite different from *reality*. It seems bad when actually, everything is blessings. We aren't reading things as they truly are.

The *tochachah* in parashas Bichukosei ends with the comforting promise that Hashem will yet redeem us from *galus* but comforting and encouraging sentences do not appear at the end of the *tochachah* of parashas Ki Savo. Why are they different? The Radvaz answers that the *tochachah* of Ki Savo repeatedly contains Hashem's name. When we know that everything is from Hashem, that awareness is our *chizuk* and emotional support. We don't need any other comforting words.

Yet, another example of *kri* and *ksiv* is found in (*Yeshayah* 63:9). The *kri* is בכל צרתם לו צר, "In all their troubles, He has distress," because Hashem suffers together with us in *galus*, and its *ksiv* is בכל צרתם לא צר, which means, "With all their troubles, there is no trouble at all." This is because when we know לו צר, that Hashem suffers together with us, there is no suffering at all.

The Maharil Diskin zt'l, the rav of Brisk, organized a demonstration against *chilul Shabbos*, and the *rosh hakahal* was arrested and imprisoned. Two hours later, the Maharil Diskin was arrested and imprisoned, as well. The *rosh hakahal* commented that he was happy he was imprisoned so he could be together with his rebbe, the Maharil Diskin. This is the meaning of לא צר; there is no trouble at all because לו צר, Hashem is with us in our troubles.

### Acceptance

The word ציר has three translations. It can be צר, trouble, or difficulties. And it can mean messenger, as stated in *Mishlei* (25:13), ציר נאמן לשלחו, "an emissary faithful to his sender." And ציר is the hinge on which a door opens and closes. This hints that when you know that your troubles (צר), are messengers from Hashem to you (ציר as in emissary), this opens all doors (ציר as in hinges). Your realization that your troubles came directly from Hashem is the beginning of the end of your *tzaros*. This is because when you know the *yesurim* came from Hashem, you accept them. And when you accept them, they disappear, as the Gemara (*Brachos* 6b, 62a) says, "The cure for *yesurim* is to accept them."

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l said, "People say, 'If it doesn't go the way you want it to, want the way it goes,' but I say, 'If you want the way it goes, things will go the way you want.'" If you accept Hashem's decree, that will turn everything around, and everything will become good.

When Yaakov Avinu and his children went down to *Mitzrayim*, the male children willingly accepted Hashem's decree wholeheartedly. But his daughters and granddaughters didn't want to go to *Mitzrayim*. The Or HaChaim (*Bereishis* 46:7) expresses that, about his male descendants, it states *ito*, that they went with Yaakov, with the same heart as their father. But about the daughters and granddaughters, it states,

*haivi ito*, that Yaakov had to take them to Mitzrayim against their will.

As long as one of Yaakov Avinu's sons or grandsons who came to Mitzrayim were alive, slavery in Mitzrayim didn't begin. When they were niftar, the bitter decrees began. Some granddaughters who came to Mitzrayim were still alive at that time. Serach bas Asher and Yocheved bas Levi were still alive. But their existence didn't prevent the hard labor from beginning in Mitzrayim. The Or HaChaim explains that because they didn't accept the galus willingly, they could not prevent the hard work of galus from occurring.

The Midrash tells us that a woman called Miriam bas Beises was captured by the goyim, and the chachamim redeemed her and saved her life. She needed new clothing, so the chachamim brought her a set of clothing. As she was washing the clothing in the river, a river current took the dress away. They gave her another dress, and the river current also took that dress away. The chachamim were about to buy her a third dress, but she announced, "Hashem wants it to be so; let it be that way."

Hashem commanded the sea to return the clothes, and both sets were washed onto the shore. This story demonstrates that when you accept Hashem's decree, the hardships vanish. When she accepted Hashem's will, that He didn't want her to have a new set of clothing, the decree ended, and the river brought her back the first two sets of clothing. This is the pattern: When you accept Hashem's decree, the difficulties end.

The Yerushalmi (*Shabbos* 16:7) tells that there was a fire in the courtyard of Ya'isi ben Samui in Shichin, and the goyim from Tzipori came to put out the fire, but Yai'si stopped them. "Hashem wants it this way," he said. Immediately, rain started falling and put out the fire.

Once again, we see that things become better when one accepts Hashem's decrees.

## For the Good

At kriyas Yam Suf, Miriam sang songs and praises to Hashem with a drum. A drum sings when it is hit. When one knows that even when he is hit, it is for his good, that is a great praise to Hashem.

A baal yesurim said to Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l, "The Gemara (*Brachos* 60b) says that when one is going through hard times, he must be happy and accept the yesurim with joy. Can the rebbe explain why I need to be happy, while others who have an easier life don't need to be *b'simchah*?"

Reb Shlomke replied, "If you are in a shul, collecting money, and someone asks you for fifty dollars, you are happy because you understand that he will give you a hundred-dollar bill. But if he asks you if you have seventy-five cents, you are upset because you know that he will only give you a dollar. So, the more change he takes, the more you will receive. The same is with yesurim. When you have a lot of yesurim, you are being asked a lot, which means you will receive a lot. Therefore, someone with yesurim should be happier than others because he will receive very generously. Hashem created the world *l'heitiv lebriyosov*, to do kindness for mankind, so you can be certain that excellent things will come from the pain you are enduring. Others don't have reason to be happy like you do."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l teaches the following lesson:

If someone smacks his fellow man in the face three times in public, it is very humiliating, and the victim probably won't forgive him. If the person who slapped him regrets what he did and says, "I will give you three hundred dollars for each smack," the man will probably reply, "Nine hundred dollars isn't sufficient to make up for the pain and shame you caused me. I won't forgive you."

If the man says, "I will give you a thousand dollars for each potch," it is likely

that he will forgive. Three thousand dollars is a substantial amount.

If the man says, "I will give you one hundred thousand dollars for each potch, he will respond, "Please hit me one more time."

And if the perpetrator promises a million dollars for each potch, he will fall to the floor and beg for another potch.

This mashal demonstrates that although no one wants yesurim, however, when one knows how much he is earning from each potch, he will cherish it. He will fall to the ground and beg for more. If we knew how much we gain from every tzaar we encounter, we would want them.

Hashem said to Avraham Avinu, "*Lech lecha*" and Rashi explains *l'tovoscha v'l'hanascha*, that this trip would be in Avraham's favor and benefit. Hashem told Avraham that he would gain immensely if he passed this test. Before the akeidah, Hashem once again says *lech lecha*, which means that even the akeidah was for Avraham's good. Initially, it seemed bitter, but Hashem promised Avraham that good things would come from it. And that is how it is with all yesurim. They seem bad, but something extraordinary is being prepared.

### Granted Life

There was a family who was deeply in debt. Creditors would come to their home at all times of the day and night, demanding money. The father of this family went to the Sfas Emes and told him what he was going through. He said, "I am considering selling my property. With the money I earn on the sale, I will cover my debts, and there will be some money left to live on."

The Sfas Emes discouraged him from selling his property.

Some time passed, and the debts only increased. He returned to the Sfas Emes, pleading for his blessing to sell his property, but the Sfas Emes once again advised him against it.

The debts were increasing, and the creditors were becoming more hostile. Finally, the man's children felt they must take matters into their own hands. They sold their parents' property, with or without their parent's permission, and paid off the debts.

The financial problems were solved, but two weeks later, their father was *niftar*. The children came to the Sfas Emes and informed him about their father's passing. The Sfas Emes asked, "Did he sell the property?"

They admitted that they had. "We had no choice. The situation was unbearable."

The Sfas Emes replied, "I didn't want you to sell the property because I understood that his financial struggles were the source of his life and that without those problems, he wouldn't be able to live." The Sfas Emes explained that it states (*Pesachim* 113), *חיייהן אינם חיים*, which can be translated, *חיייהן*, there are people whose life comes from *אינם חיים*, from the bitter struggles and hardships they endure, which makes them feel *אינם חיים*, like they aren't alive. These bitter experiences are so good for them because they won't live without them.

A similar story is brought down in *Divrei Shmuel*. He writes that two people came to the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*, one suffering from a difficult marriage and the other from debts. The one in a problematic marriage wanted to divorce his wife, and the one with debts wished to sell his business to have money to cover his debts.

The Baal Shem Tov advised them both not to take such drastic steps.

The man in the difficult marriage followed the Baal Shem Tov's counsel and didn't divorce his wife, but the other man sold his business to save himself from the creditors.

A month afterward, the one who had debts fell ill, and the one who remained married came to the Baal Shem Tov to ask him to daven for his friend.

The Baal Shem Tov asked, "Did he sell his business?"

"He did. He had no choice."

The Baal Shem Tov explained, "I saw that both of you didn't have merits to stay alive. I was glad you have a bad wife because Chazal say that when one has a bad wife who rules over him, his life isn't a life. It was like you were dead, and this enabled you to live. I was also glad that your friend suffered financially. These struggles granted him life. But he escaped his debts, so how can I help him now?"

Someone told the Steipler about his problems. The Steipler told him, "How do you know you were supposed to be alive now? Maybe you are living because of these tzaros!"

A student of Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l had an ill daughter whom he cared for devotedly. The girl was niftarah, and a month afterward, the father was niftar. Reb Yisrael Salanter said, "We thought that the daughter lived because of the father, but now we know that the father lived because of the daughter."

We don't understand Hashem's profound ways. We can't know why someone must endure hardships. But there is one thing we do know: Everything is for the good. You think your troubles are bad for you, but it could be that this trouble is saving you from far worse situations. It could be that you are granted life because you endure these tzaros.

Now it's Adar, a time to increase joy. Remember that everything is for the good, and you will be happy, b'ezras Hashem.