

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Pekudei



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Pekudei

Overcoming Financial Worries

The kohen gadol's clothing contained gold threads. It is uncommon to use gold as thread. How do you create gold threads? The Torah states (39:3) וירקעו את פחי הזהב וקצץ פתילים לעשות בתוך התכלת ובתוך הארגמן ובתוך תולעת השני "And they hammered out the sheets of gold and cut threads from them to work [the gold] into the blue wool, into the purple wool, into the crimson wool, and into the fine linen, the work of a master weaver." Sheets of gold were hammered until they were very thin, then cut into threads and woven into clothes.

The Divrei Yisrael zt'l (Modzhitz) teaches that פחי הזהב, "sheets of gold," can also be translated as "traps of gold," referring to financial worries, the trap that many people are caught in. They are worried about how they will pay their debts, marry off their children, etc. Their fear causes them to lose their peace of mind, and they are thus unable to focus on Torah and tefillah. They don't have time for Torah and tefillah, either, because they feel they need to use every free moment to earn more money.

The advice is וירקעו, which means to thin it out (see Unkelos and Rashi). Make your financial worries small in your eyes. Tell yourself, "I will manage, somehow. I have been in this situation before, and things have worked out. It will work out this time, too."¹

Another way to understand the word וירקעו is - heaven, which means to trust in our Father in heaven. With these two counsels - to consider the problems small and to trust in Hashem - one is saved from the trap of financial worry.

The *lechem hapanim*, the twelve loaves of bread that were always on the Shulchan in the Mishkan, were a reminder to rely on Hashem's support and not to worry. The word תמיד is written by the *lechem hapanim*, as it states (Shemos 25:30) ונתת על השלחן לחם פנים לפני תמיד, "You shall place on the Shulchan the *lechem hapanim* before Me at all times (*tamid*)."

When the Torah writes תמיד it doesn't always mean "constant." For example, regarding the mitzvah of lighting the menorah, it states (Shemos 27:20) להעלות נר תמיד, "To kindle the lamps continuously." Rashi writes that the menorah wasn't lit 24 hours a day. It wasn't constant. Rather, תמיד means consistently, every night. Similarly, Rashi writes that the korban tamid is called תמיד not because it is constant but rather because it is every day.

However, Rashi writes that when the Torah discusses the *lechem hapanim* and states *tamid*, it is literal. The breads were on the Shulchan 24/7. In fact, on Shabbos, when a new set of *lechem hapanim* was placed on the Shulchan, the kohanim didn't take off the old bread before they put on the new bread because then there would be a moment that the Shulchan would be without its bread. Instead, as the kohanim gradually pulled off the old bread, other kohanim stood opposite them, pushing on the new bread. As the Mishnah (Menachos 11:7) states, אלו מושכין ואלו מניחין וטפחו של זה כנגד טפחו של זה שנאמר לפני תמיד, "These [kohanim] pull and these kohanim place...as it states לפני תמיד, "before Me at all times."

Why is the תמיד of the *lechem hapanim* different than all other times it states תמיד?

1. Metzudos Dovid on (Mishlei 12:25) דאגה בלב איש ישחנה, writes, 'If there is worry in a man's heart, let him consider it smaller than what he thinks it is.' This counsel is for all problems in life, and specifically, adds the Divrei Yisrael, for פחי הזהב, financial worries.

Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l explains that a person is constantly worried about his *parnassah*. Hashem tells him, לחם הפנים לפני תמיד, "The bread of the Shulchan is constantly before Me. You don't have to worry about *parnassah* because your needs are constantly before Me."

The merit of *lechem hapanim* brought *parnassah* to the Jewish nation. The *lechem hapanim* were constantly on the Shulchan, so there was no need to worry over *parnassah*.

The Gemara (Yoma 21.) writes נס גדול היה נעשה בלחם הפנים סלוקו כסדורו. A great miracle occurred with the *lechem hapanim*. The loaves remained hot the entire week! Each Shabbos, fresh, hot breads were placed on the Shulchan, and a week later, they were still fresh and hot, just as they were when they were first placed there!

This miracle is discussed in Navi (Shmuel 1, 21:7). לשום לחם חום ביום הלקחו, "to place warm bread on the day it was taken." Rashi writes, "They were as warm on the day they were taken as they were on the day they were arranged."

Reb Shlomo Kluger says that the purpose of this miracle was to remind people that if you have *parnassah* today, it was destined from before. It was determined on Rosh Hashanah. It appears fresh today, brand new, but it was decided earlier.

It states (Shemos 20:20) לא תעשון אתי אלהי כסף ואלהי זהב, "Gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves." Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains, "When you stand in *tefillah* before Me, don't think about your gold and silver. If you do, I will consider it

like you made me into a god of gold and silver." We shouldn't think about gold and silver when we daven. They don't help us. Hashem helps us. When we believe that Hashem helps and supports us, we don't need to look for any other source of *parnassah*.

Rav Yekusiel Yehuda Meisels zt'l, the longtime Rav in Seagate, was recently niftar at the age of 95. The Rav zt'l, a holocaust survivor, told the following story to his family at the seder.

In the concentration camps, the inmates used to clean the planks where they slept to ensure there weren't lice on their "beds." Once, a person cleaned his spot and asked his neighbor (the Rav of Seagate) to guard his place while he went to the bathroom.

When he returned, he saw that someone had taken the place. The rav told him he tried to prevent this person from lying there, but he didn't cooperate. He added, "I will help you clean another place."

While cleaning another plank, the man said, "My father left me \$30,000 in the bank (a lot of money at the time). I don't have *emunah*, so I know I won't survive the war. But you have *emunah*, so you might survive the war. I will give you the account information so you can withdraw the money after the war."

At this point, the Rav of Seagate turned to those gathered around the table at the seder and asked, "Do you think I memorized account information? Of course not! I told him, 'If I believe that Hashem can take me out of here, I also believe that He can support me. I don't need your account information!'"¹²

2. Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz zt'l related the following story:

A baal darshan (speaker) once spoke about *bitachon* and said that when one trusts in Hashem, he will not have to run after *parnassah*. His *parnassah* will run after him, coming straight to his doorstep.

A simple man who heard this drashah came home and told his wife that he was stopping to work. Hashem would supply all their needs. She tried to persuade him to continue working for his *parnassah*, but he insisted that Hashem would help. He remained home, he kept busy with his *Tehilim* and *Ein Yaakov*, trusting that Hashem would provide his needs.

Jealousy

Those who have jealousy, suffer.

The *Reishis Chachmah* writes, "Someone who has *kinah* (jealousy) is 'robbing' himself. He is always sad. Everyone finds sweetness in life, except for the person who suffers from jealousy. He cannot enjoy his food if someone else has something good."

The Rosh (Orchos Chaim) writes, "Jealousy is a disease that doesn't have a cure."

The *Mesilas Yescharim* writes, "There are people who are so foolish, that when they see their fellow man has something good, they become very distressed and upset about it. Because of their sorrow, they don't enjoy anything that they do have... There are others who aren't so upset, but they also have some amount of remorse. They aren't calm when they see someone reach a level that is above them... Most people are at this level..."

Any degree of jealousy destroys one's level of enjoyment in life, as it says (Mishlei 14:30) וּרְקֵב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְיָה, "Envy brings rotting of the bones." If we could free ourselves from

this illness, we would lead much happier and more satisfying lives.

Think about the people you are angry at, the people about whom you are tempted to speak lashon hara. And now ask yourself, "Perhaps you are jealous of them?" Is your anger rooted in jealousy, because you think they have what should be yours?

The Rebbe of Kotzk zy"l said: Most bad *middos* begin later in life, but jealousy begins when a child is born. One-year-old children get upset when someone gets something they don't have.

Once, chassidim of various courts were speaking together, each one was discussing an aspect of the greatness of his Rebbe. Rebbe Moshe Minder zy"l, from the esteemed Slonimer chassidim, was also present. Someone asked him, "Reb Moshe? Why are you silent? Tell us something about your Rebbe."

Reb Moshe Minder replied, "All I can tell you is that the three *middos*, *kinah*, *taavah*, and *kavod*, which the entire world chases after, my Rebbe runs away from them like from fire." If we understood how much we

His *parnassah* was to buy fresh produce on the wholesale market and resell them on the retail market. When his suppliers noticed his absence, they brought the produce directly to his door, and when his customers couldn't find him in the marketplace, they also came to his house to buy fruits and vegetables.

His *parnassah* came to his doorstep because he understood that Hashem is the One who provides.

The Rebbe of Lechovitz concluded, "This merchant wasn't a scholar. He was a simple Yid. But he trusted in Hashem, and therefore Hashem helped him."

Eyeglasses can be costly, yet members of a specific *kupat cholim* plan in Eretz Yisrael can purchase eyeglasses for only one hundred shekels. There was a person who didn't qualify for this benefit, so he borrowed a friend's documents and ordered the glasses. However, his conscious began gnawing at his heart soon after placing the order. He asked a *rav* whether it was theft and if he should cancel the order. The *rav* answered in short, "This isn't the *hishtadlus* Hashem wants from you. Hashem can help you in other ways."

So he canceled the order and got back his hundred shekels. Needing new glasses, he went to the local optician. To his surprise, when he entered the store, the owner told him, "I have been waiting for you for a year! You bought eyeglasses here a year ago, but I didn't sell you good quality. I wanted to refund you, but I lost your contact information. But now that you came back, I want to refund you."

He received a brand-new pair of eyeglasses free of charge. It didn't even cost him a hundred shekel.

The lesson is that Hashem gives us *parnassah*, and we don't have to pursue it in unusual ways.

lose from kinah, how it eats away from our enjoyment of life, we would also run away from it as we run away from all matters of life that harm us.

The *Agra D'Kalah* (from the Bnei Yissaschar) zy" explains that the *Aseres HaDibros* are a synopsis of the entire Torah, and the tenth of the Ten Commandments (which implies the culmination and the most important of the *Aseres HaDibros*) is לא תחמוד, the prohibition of jealousy. This prohibition, therefore, is the heart of the entire Torah. He explains that it is the primary point of the Torah because the main lesson of the Torah is emunah, and overcoming jealousy means believing that each person receives the portion that is bashert for him. With this emunah, he won't be jealous of others.

The *Orchos Tzaddikim* shows how one can transgress all of the *Aseres HaDibros* due to jealousy. Because due to his jealousy, he will break into his neighbor's home to steal on Shabbos, violating the Shabbos and the aveirah of לא תגנוב. When he is rebuked for his theft, he will kill, transgressing לא תרצח. His parents will rebuke him and he will hit them. He will swear that he didn't steal, and thus, transgress לא תשא. When he is caught with his aveiros, he will leave the Jewish people because of his embarrassment and become a goy who worships avodah zarah. So he can transgress all of the *Aseres HaDibros* (and the entire Torah) all because of לא תחמוד, jealousy.

Don't be Jealous of the Wealthy

A very wealthy person sent his two sons to a distant land, and occasionally, the father would send them gifts or money. Once, the father sent only one jacket, and he didn't say which son it was for. When such matters occurred, the brothers generally found an amicable way to choose which brother would get the item. The other brother was mevater. But this time, a costly diamond was in the jacket's pocket, and each brother claimed that the jacket was sent specifically for him. It turned into a major fight. Their loud voices were heard outside the home, and neighbors came in to offer their opinions.

After this went on for some time, someone came in and asked what the commotion was all about. They told him about the jacket, the precious diamond in its pocket, and the uncertainty of whom the father intended to send the gift. The person replied, "It isn't hard to figure out who their father intended it for. Just see which brother fits into the jacket."

The thin brother put on the jacket and it fit him perfectly. The heavyset brother didn't even try to put it on. He admitted that their father intended to send the gift to his brother.

The nimshal is that sometimes we see wealth by others, and we think that it should be ours. But it wasn't intended for you. It doesn't suit you. And therefore, there is no reason to be jealous.³

3. The first letters of the alef beis א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י ק ל מ נ ס ע פ קצ ר טו זא חזי זאל זין are roshei teivos for וייל דער באשעפער האט געוואלט אזוי זאל זין "Because Hashem wanted that it should be so." Why does that person have wealth and not me? Because that is what Hashem wanted. If you ask why the words of this *remez* are out of order of the alef beis, we reply that this is the entire purpose, to believe in Hashem even when things seem out of order.

There was a time when Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita had to spend a lot of time at home, cleaning and caring for the children. One Friday afternoon, he came to beis medresh and saw his friend, the tzaddik Reb Shmuel Shapiro zt'l, saying Shir HaShirim in a sweet tune. He had been saying the Shir HaShirim in this manner for two hours straight. Reb Yaakov Meir commented, "Hashem wants Reb Shmuel to say Shir HaShirim for two hours on erev Shabbos, while He wants me to clean and mop for two hours on erev Shabbos."

Everyone has their service to do for Hashem. You don't have to be jealous of the service of others; just do what Hashem wants from you.

Besides, why should you be jealous of the wealthy? How do you know who got the better deal? How do you know that their grass is greener? You might have received the better portion, and if anything, the wealthy should be jealous of you!

We will explain this in a couple of ways. We begin with a story:

A woman from a wealthy family married a kollel yungerman. She understood that this would mean she would need to live on a much lower budget than what she was accustomed to. When they had a baby, she wanted to buy the most expensive baby carriage, but she knew this wasn't in their kollel-family budget. She didn't have the heart to buy the simplest brand of carriages, so she allowed herself to buy a level above the lowest.

As she was in the store making this purchase, another couple also bought a carriage for their newborn baby, and they went straight to the most expensive carriages. They didn't even look at the cheaper models. When the kollel woman saw this, she couldn't help feeling jealous. She wished she would be in that section, too.

She then watched as they quickly moved on to the cribs section. Once again, the couple only looked at the most expensive

models. The kollel woman watched from a distance with jealousy. She wished this was her portion.

But then the husband asked his wife, "Will there be room in the baby's room for this crib and for the respirator?" When the kollel-woman heard this, her jealousy vanished in a moment. Although she bought a simple carriage, baruch Hashem, she had a healthy child. She realized that there is no reason to be jealous of others because it could be that she has the better portion.

Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l said that this is hinted at in the words *לא תחמוד... וכל אשר לרעך*. The final words *וכל אשר לרעך* mean that when you are jealous of your fellow man, think about receiving *כל אשר לרעך* the entire package, everything your fellow man has, the good and the bad, and then it is likely that you won't want his portion.⁴

Furthermore, we shouldn't be jealous of the wealthy because many good things come from being poor. The Gemara (Bava Basra 10:) says that Reb Yosef, the son of Reb Yehoshua ben Levi, was niftar for a short time, and when he returned to this world, he said that he saw *עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה*, "The people above are below, and the people below are above." Rashi explains, "Those who are considered great in this world because of their wealth, I saw that there they are at a

4. Reb Meir Tzvi Roth Shlita told me that years ago when he lived in Bnei Brak, he owned a sefarim store, which many gedolei Yisrael would frequent. Once, the Steipler Gaon zt'l was in his store to buy sefarim, and Reb Meir Tzvi tied them up in a bundle so it would be easier for the Steipler to carry home. (There were no plastic bags in those days.)

Someone offered the Steipler to carry home his bundle.

The Steipler wittily replied, "Every person carries his own bundle." Each person carries his personal package of tzaros, and no one can carry it for him.

At airports, many suitcases lie around, and often, no one is watching. Why don't people just pick up a stranger's suitcase and take it home? Perhaps they will find expensive items inside.

The answer is that they are worried, "Who knows what is in this suitcase? Maybe I will be caught at customs control carrying contraband."

The nimshal is that sometimes you see someone else's package, it appears beautiful from the outside. But you don't want it because you don't know what is really inside.

low level in heaven. And I saw the poor, who we considered to be low in this world, that they are honored there."

His father told him, "You saw a true world."

The truth is, every situation in life is a test. As the Mesilas Yesharim (1) writes, "Everything in the world, the good and the bad, are tests for mankind. Poverty on one side, and wealth on the other..." One can grow from every situation. But there are certainly benefits to being poor.

When the Chofetz Chaim's rebbetzin was niftar, the Chofetz Chaim requested that she be buried next to a poor woman. He explained, "In *Tehillim* (109:31), it states, כִּי יַעֲמֹד לִיְמִין אֲבִיּוֹן, "For Hashem stands at the right-hand side of the poor." The pasuk doesn't say that Hashem stands to the right side of a tzaddik or to the right-hand side of a gaon in Torah. The poor merit it; therefore, I want my wife to be near the poor."

Reb Shlomo Kluger zt"l also requested in his will that they bury him near a poor person, as long as this poor person acted with *kashrus* (yiras Shamayim) in his lifetime.⁵

Kabbalos Tovos

The Pnei Yehoshua writes in the introduction to his sefer, (Tehillim 109:30) אֹדָה מֵאֵד בְּפִי וּבִתְרוֹךְ רַבִּים אֲהַלְלֶנּוּ, "I shall thank Hashem exceedingly with my mouth, and among many people I shall praise Him." I praise Hashem for all the kindness and goodness that Hashem has done for me my entire life. It would be impossible to count them all. How can I express gratitude for even a

millionth of them? But a drop I wrote to serve as a memory...

"I made a neder when I had a tzarah, on the day of Hashem's wrath, the third of Kislev, 5463, in Levov. It began as a peaceful day. I was at home with my students who listened to my shiurim. Suddenly, everything turned around. Many large barrels of gunpowder caught on fire, causing a massive explosion. Large, fortified houses fell. Thirty-six holy Jewish souls died. Among them were my first wife, her mother, and her grandfather. Also, my young and only daughter, whom I loved so much, was niftarah.

"I fell from a high floor down below. The weight of the walls of our house was upon me... I couldn't move my arms or limbs... I feared that my home would become my grave. I was being punished with the four deaths of beis din, *sekilah*, *sereifah*, *hereg* and *chenek* (stoning, burning, beheading, and strangulation) ... But with Hashem's compassion, they couldn't harm me. Fifteen or twenty minutes after things calmed down, we didn't hear the sound of the collapsing, but we heard the many people moving about on the roof... They killed more with their moving about than who died from the explosion. Their intensions were good; trying to save those trapped beneath the ruins. At that time, I realized there was still hope for me to survive. I said, "If Hashem will save me and once again grant me a home where I can teach students, then I make a kabbalah to always be in the beis medresh, and to learn Shas and poskim in-depth, and to study even one subject for many nights. For this is my desire, to go in

5. A *bachur* came to the Chofetz Chaim for advice on a shidduch. He was offered a shidduch with a girl from a poor family, and the bachur described in detail the poverty in their home. The Chofetz Chaim listened attentively and said, "Nu! Tell me another *maalah* [quality]." The Chofetz Chaim considered poverty a plus for a *shidduch*, not a fault.

The Chofetz Chaim told a poor person that when he goes to heaven and stands before the heavenly court, Hashem will be his lawyer, helping him, as it states, כִּי יַעֲמֹד לִיְמִין אֲבִיּוֹן לְהוֹשִׁיעַ מִשׁוֹפְטֵי נַפְשׁוֹ, "Hashem stands at the right side of the pauper to save him from judgment..." What can be better than that?

the ways of my grandfather, the renowned genius, the light of the exile, Reb Yehoshua, after whom I am named, who was the Rav and rosh yeshiva of Krakow, author of Meginei Shlomo... At that time, the sefer wasn't printed yet, but we heard about it, and I wanted to go in his ways. As I was thinking these thoughts, Hashem heard my voice, and then I saw a pathway, literally, and I was able to escape unscathed. I knew this was a miracle, and then I decided that my primary study would be sugyos of Shas and poskim.

"And now I bow and praise Hashem, the G-d of heaven, Who brought me to where I am today. May Hashem still show me wonders from His Torah, and I should merit to do good for Klal Yisrael with other sefarim that I hope to print. May I see children and grandchildren...all learning Torah l'shema who fear Hashem, and may Hashem return Klal Yisrael to Yerushalayim...amen."

I quoted a large portion of the introduction because of its many lessons. Primarily for our purposes, his discussion tells us that when one makes a kabbalah, Hashem grants him salvation. The Pnei Yehoshua made a kabbalah *tovah* to be devoted to the Torah, and then Hashem enabled him to leave the ruins.⁶

The Chasam Sofer zt'l teaches that a benefit of a kabbalah *tovah* is that when one makes a kabbalah to do a good deed, it's mesugal that he will merit to fulfill that good deed. Let's say a person makes a kabbalah to learn a *masechta*; in the merit of his kabbalah, he will have *siyata d'Shmaya* and succeed in finishing the *masechta*. If he makes a kabbalah to do a *chesed*, the kabbalah itself will grant him strength and *siyata d'Shmaya* to succeed in doing the *chesed*.

It states (Shemos 15:26) ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך... כל המחלה אשר שמתו במצרים לא אשים עליך, "He said, If you hearken to the voice of Hashem...all the sicknesses that I have visited upon Mitzrayim I will not place upon you, for I, Hashem, heal you."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that the pasuk is saying that אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך, Hashem guarantees that you will succeed to perform His mitzvos. In the merit of your kabbalah *tovah*, תשמע, Hashem will help you succeed. Furthermore, כל המחלה... לא אשים עליך, Hashem will remove all illnesses from you and all matters that prevent you from success in serving Hashem. Hashem will remove all barriers so you can succeed.⁷

6. I found it very inspiring that the Pnei Yehoshua felt so much gratitude to Hashem, expressing that he couldn't even thank Hashem for a millionth of all the kindness he received, while immediately after writing that, he describes the devastation he endured, r'l. May Hashem save us all from tzaros, but this is an example of how a Jew thinks. They focus on Hashem's kindness. Some people cry and complain their entire lives. They have complaints instead of gratitude. But here we have a great person who went through terrible times, and yet he saw the good and felt that he couldn't praise Hashem enough. This is a lesson in gratitude that everyone should keep in his heart.

7. Once, on Purim, a tippy *bachur* said to the Chofetz Chaim that he wanted to be with him in Gan Eden. The Chofetz Chaim thought for a moment and said, "If you undertake never to speak or listen to *lashon hara*, you will be with me in Gan Eden."

The boy didn't respond. The Chofetz Chaim turned to the other *bachurim* present, "Take him away from me. He had Gan Eden in his hands and didn't take advantage of it."

The *bachur* probably thought it would be too hard for him to be cautious his entire life, but it isn't. If he made a kabbalah, he would gain extra strength and *siyata d'Shmaya* to succeed.

A middle-aged man was blind in one eye, and in his other eye, he had only 20% vision.

After operating on his eye, his condition deteriorated, and he completely lost his vision.

People wonder, "How can I possibly succeed in Torah? When do I have time for it?" And they wonder the same regarding tefillah, chesed, or other good deeds that they want to do, and they think it is impossible. The answer is, make a kabbalah, try your best, and Hashem will help you succeed, and Hashem will remove all matters that prevent you from achieving. You can make the kabbalah *bli neder*, but be sincere about it, and Hashem will help you succeed.

In Reb Chaim Kanievsky's zt'l younger years, he asked someone whether he wanted to learn with him *b'chavrusah*. The other replied, "It would be a great honor, but I get ill often, forcing me to lie in bed for weeks at a time. Why should you have a learning partner who will hold you back? You would be better off with a healthy learning partner."

Reb Chaim replied, "If you make this kabbalah to learn together, how do you know you will become ill? Perhaps in the merit of the kabbalah, you will be healthy?" Indeed, they learned together for a very long time and the partner didn't become ill. But then the *chavrusah* took a day off for what he claimed was an important reason.

Soon after that, he became ill, and the *chavrusahshaft* ended.

The lesson is that when you make a kabbalah, Hashem helps you perform your kabbalah. You will be saved from illness and all troubles, so you can keep the kabbalah that you accepted on yourself. But

you must be sincere and try your best, and then you will succeed.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l explained that there is a rule that beginnings are hard. When the yetzer hara sees you turning over a new leaf, he immediately tries to stop you. The counsel is to begin with a kabbalah *tovah*. A kabbalah *tovah* is in the mind, and the yetzer hara can't read your thoughts. He doesn't know that you have begun your process of improvement. And then, when you actually perform good deeds, it isn't the beginning anymore.

This is implied in Rashi (Shemos 19:5), אִם עָתָה תִּקְבְּלוּ עֲלֵיכֶם יַעֲרֹב לָכֶם מִכָּאן וְאֵילֶךְ שֶׁכֵּל הַתְּחִלּוֹת קָשׁוֹת, "If you make a kabbalah, it will become sweet for you from now on, because all beginnings are hard."

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 3.) discusses the jealousy the goyim will have toward Bnei Yisrael when they see the great reward the Jewish nation will receive in the future. The goyim will say, "It is true that the Jewish nation received the Torah, but what is the proof that they kept the Torah?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu will say, "I say testimony that they kept the Torah!"

The goyim will not accept that. They will say, "Bnei Yisrael are Hashem's children as it states, it states (Shmos 4:22) בְּנֵי בְכוֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'My firstborn son is Yisrael.' How can a father give testimony on his children?"

The children gathered to see what *kabbalah* they could take on as a merit for their father. They decided to work on having an עַיִן טוֹבָה, good eye, and prayed that in the merit of their עַיִן טוֹבָה, their father's eyes should be healed, and his vision restored.

The children said, "For example, if a neighbor is building an addition to his apartment, have a good eye and be happy for him. Don't be jealous. Another example: If someone gets engaged, be happy for them. Don't be jealous just because someone in our family has difficulty finding their bashert."

They began this *kabbalah* shortly after Purim, and after Pesach, their father's vision returned and he was able to see well from one eye. The family decided to continue their *kabbalah*. A few weeks afterwards, the father's other eye, which hadn't functioned for twelve years, was healed.

They were doubly rewarded for their good eye.

Hashem will then say, "Heaven and earth will testify." Once again, the goyim will argue that the testimony is invalid. (They will say that heaven and earth are נוגעין בעדותן, they have reason to say testimony for the Jewish nation because their creation was dependent on the Jewish people keeping the Torah.)

After that, Hashem will say, "You will say testimony." The goyim themselves saw the Jewish nation's mesirus nefesh to keep the Torah through the generations. They will come forward and testify that we kept the Torah!"

Tosfos asks that isn't the world's existence itself a testimony that we kept the Torah? Hashem made a condition with creation that their existence depends on the Jewish people keeping the Torah. Hashem said that if we wouldn't keep the Torah, the world will return to תהו ובהו, nothingness. The very existence of creation proves that Klal Yisrael kept the Torah! How else does the world exist?

Tosfos replies (in one answer) that the world exists because the Jewish nation *accepted* the Torah. The condition wasn't that the Jewish nation performs what's written in the Torah. The condition was that they should accept the Torah.

This is indeed how it appears from the words of the Gemara (Avodah Zarah 3.) אם ישראל מקבלין את תורתנו מוטב ואם לאו אני אחזיר אתכם לתהו ובהו, "If Yisrael *accept* the Torah, it is good. Otherwise, I will return you into void and nothingness." The key word is מקבלין, to accept the Torah, even if they don't practice it after receiving it.

This shows us the greatness of accepting the Torah and the value of a kabbalah *tovah*, regardless, if in the end we do the good deed. The entire world exists on the Jewish nation's decision to accept the Torah.

The Gemara (Taanis 8:) says that in Reb Zeira's days, the goyim made a decree forbidding the Jewish nation to fast. Rashi explains that they didn't want bounty to come to the world in the merit of the Jewish

nation. The Maharsha explains that the goyim were forcing the Yidden to transgress the Torah, and they didn't want the nation to fast and annul the gezeirah.

Reb Zeira found a solution. He told the Jewish nation to make a kabbalah that they would fast as soon as they could. That kabbalah was sufficient to bring salvations.

Reb Zeira said that he learned the strength of a kabbalah *tovah* from the pasuk (Daniel 10:12) אל תירא דניאל כי מן היום הראשון אשר נתת לבך להבין ולתענות לפני אלוקים נשמעו דבריך, "Fear not, Daniel, for since the first day that you set your heart to contemplate and to fast before your God, your words were heard..." The salvation didn't come from actually fasting, but from when Daniel made a kabbalah that he would fast.

The Mabit (Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah, ch.13) explains, "This is because even before trouble and pain occur, a person's nature is to have tzaar and to worry about the distress that is arriving. Therefore, as soon as Daniel made a kabbalah to fast, his tefillos were answered."

In other words, when a person makes a kabbalah that he will fast, he already has tzaar, even before the fast begins. He is worried that tomorrow, or whenever the fast day will be, he will suffer discomfort due to the fast. That feeling of distress (that a fast day is approaching) is also an affliction, and that is what brought salvations in Reb Zeira's and in Daniel's era.

100 Brachos

There is a mitzvah to say one hundred brachos each day. When a person davens three tefillos and washes for bread twice daily, he will almost have the entire quota of one hundred brachos. The one hundred brachos bring brachos and salvation to the world. And obviously, the more kavanah one has when he says the one hundred brachos, the better it will be for him and the entire world.

The *Or Zarua* (42) writes, "I knew an old Yid from Vamsh named Reb Bunim, who worked for the *chevra kadisha*... Once, Reb Bunim awoke early, went to the *beis knesses*, and saw someone sitting outside the *beis knesses* wearing a crown of herbs on his head. Reb Bunim feared that he might be a *sheid* (demon). "Aren't you Ploni, who died, and I buried you?" Reb Bunim asked.

"That's correct."

"How are things for you in that world?"

"Extremely good!"

"How did you merit this? You weren't so special in this world."

"It is because I would say the *brachos* in the *beis kneses* in a sweet voice. I was rewarded for this. They brought me to Gan Eden, and they honored me. Do you see my torn sleeve? This is a sign that it is I. You tore it while dressing me in the *tachrichim* (shrouds)."

"What are you wearing on your head?"

"Leaves from Gan Eden. I put them on my head so I won't smell the bad odor of this world."

The *Or Zarua* concludes, "I, the author, write this story so those who fear Heaven will learn to say Hakadosh Baruch Hu's praises with a sweet voice and with concentration, and they will merit Gan Eden."

The concept of saying one hundred *brachos* each day is hinted at in this week's parashah. It states that the Mishkan was built with one hundred silver אַדָּנִים,

foundations (see 38:27). The Baal HaTurim writes that the Chachamim established that we say one hundred *brachos* each day to correspond to the one hundred *adanim* of the Mishkan.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that just like the *adanim* were the foundation of the Mishkan, the one hundred *brachos* are the foundation of the holiness of a Yid. This is because a Yid should make himself into a Mishkan, a place where Hashem's presence resides. A *mishkan* needs a foundation. The foundation in the *midbar* was the one hundred *adanim* of the *Mishkan*, and the foundation of a Yid is the one hundred daily *brachos* that he says.

The Chidushei HaRim adds, "אֲדָנִים comes from the word אֲדוֹן master because with the *brachos* we testify that Hashem is the Master over the entire creation."

One of the primary reasons for *brachos* is so we should remember Hashem. The Rambam (*Hilchos Brachos* 1:3) writes, "The *rabbanim* instituted many *brachos*...so we will always remember the Creator."

There was a time during Dovid HaMelech's rule when one hundred people died each day. Dovid HaMelech sought the reason behind this epidemic. With his wisdom and *ruach hakodesh*, he understood that the epidemic would end if Klal Yisrael would say one hundred *brachos* each day. The *Tur* writes, "Therefore, the Chachamim established *birchas hashachar* [the morning *brachos*], which praises Hashem for the way He leads the world to fill the quota of one hundred *brachos* daily."⁸

8. Perhaps it is surprising that a hundred *brachos* stopped the epidemic of a hundred daily deaths. A more logical solution would be to fast for a hundred days or to say one hundred chapters of Tehillim. Fasts and Tehillim are more popular practices for bringing salvation. Why did Dovid understand that the solution lay specifically in saying *brachos*?

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* explained it with a *mashal*:

When people don't get along and hardly speak to each other, if one greets his fellow man with a happy countenance and blessings - and will do so several times a day - the other person will be forced to feel

How to Say the Brachos

Now that we understand the importance of saying one hundred brachos daily, let us learn what will help us say them with kavanah.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 47.) says, לא ירוק ברכה מפיו "One mustn't throw the *brachah* out of his mouth." Rashi explains that when one rushes through the *brachah*, it appears as though he wants to get it over with. Furthermore, when he runs through a *brachah*, he probably won't say it with *kavanah*.⁹

Another counsel is to remember before Whom you say the *brachah*. The Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah (*Shaar HaAshmoros* 2) says that this *kavanah* is written directly in the *brachah* because one of the words of a *brachah* is אלה. He writes, "My beloved friends and brothers, think in your hearts, before Whom and to Whom you are saying your *brachos*... Take this rule with you: No matter what *brachah* you are saying, when you say ברוך אתה, recognize that you are saying this *brachah* to the Creator. It is literally so...for this is what ברוך אתה means... When one doesn't picture...that he is speaking to Hashem, every wise person understands that it is as though he didn't say the *brachah*. His punishment is great because he didn't say the *brachah* that the Anshei Kneses Hagdolah established, and he is taking away Hashem's pleasure..."

The *Yerushalmi* quotes a debate whether אלה is part of the *brachah*. Rav says that we should say אלה in every *brachah*, and Shmuel says that it is sufficient to say ברוך ד' אלקינו...מלך. The halachah is like Rav; therefore, we have a reminder in each *brachah* that we are speaking directly to Hashem.

When one says מלך העולם, he can think about Hashem's greatness, and when he says אלקינו we can think about Hashem's love and attachment to us.

Each person should find their way to be inspired to say the 100 brachos with *kavanah*. The Rabbeinu Tam in *Sefer HaYasher* (*shaar* 13) writes, "It is better a little bit that is consistent than a lot that doesn't last." It therefore might be a good idea to choose three or four *brachos* that you wish to say with *kavanah* and say these *brachos* well every day. It is a relatively small undertaking, but it can be sustained for a long time.

When you say three or four *brachos* well and see how easy it is to do so and how enjoyable it is to praise Hashem properly, you will be motivated to say several other *brachos* with *kavanah*. Taking on a small *kabbalah* can lead to saying all *brachos* with *kavanah*.

Indications to the 100 Brachos

There are many hints in Tanach about the 100 brachos, which indicate their importance.

positive towards him. This is what Dovid HaMelech understood through his *ruach hakodesh*. He realized that if we praise Hashem, all barriers that separate us from Hashem will disappear, and salvation will come to Bnei Yisrael.

9. *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 191:3) also states, "It is forbidden to do things while saying a *brachah*." The Mishnah Berurah adds, "One shouldn't even do light work..." Following these halachos, it becomes much easier to say *brachos* with *kavanah*.

One morning, the Chofetz Chaim noticed a banker davening *shacharis* very quickly. The Chofetz Chaim approached him and advised him not to go to work that day.

"Why not?"

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "It is written in halachah that 'one shouldn't skip over words of *Pesukei Dezimrah* or swallow the words. He should say the words like someone counting money' (*Darhei Moshe* 51). If you are going to count money as quickly as you devened, you're better off staying home today."

We have already mentioned the 100 adanim of the Mishkan, which represent the one hundred brachos.

The *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 46) writes, "It states (*Shmuel* 2, 23:1), הוֹקֵם עַל, 'Dovid established על' and על is *gematriya* one hundred."

It also states (*Bereishis* 12:1), לך לך... ואברכך... ויהיה ברכה, "Go for yourself...and I will bless you...and you shall be a blessing." The *Zohar* (vol.1, 76:) says that לך לך is *gematriya* one hundred. By reciting one hundred brachos, ויהיה ברכה, one merits receiving Hashem's brachos.

It is written (*Tehillim* 128:4), הִנֵּה כִּי כֵן יִרְךָ גֹבֵר, "Behold, for so is blessed the man who fears Hashem." The *Sefer HaManhig* teaches that כִּי כֵן is *gematriya* one hundred because by saying one hundred brachos daily, he is blessed with all types of blessings.

The Torah lists ninety-eight curses for those who transgress the Torah, and then the Torah adds another two. As it states (*Devarim* 28:61), גַּם כָּל חָלִי וְכָל מַכָּה... יַעֲלֶם ה' אֵלֶיךָ עַד, השמוך, "Even any illness and any blow... Hashem will bring upon you until you are destroyed." Together, these are one hundred curses. The one hundred brachos nullify these one hundred curses.

In ancient *sifrei Torah*, there were *tagin* (crowns) over the ק' in (*Devarim* 6:7) וּבְקוּמְךָ, "when you rise." The letter ק' is *gematriya* one hundred, and וּבְקוּמְךָ means "when you rise in the morning." The *Baal HaTurim* writes, "The *tagin* on the *kuf* in וּבְקוּמְךָ imply that when one awakens in the morning, we should say one hundred brachos..."

The *Levush* writes, "This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 10:12) מִה ד' אֵלֶיךָ שׂוֹאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ, "What does Hashem, your G-d, ask from you? Only to fear..." Chazal say don't read it מִה, read it מֵאֵה, that Hashem is asking from us the one hundred brachos..."

Benefits Earned from Answering Amen

אָפֹד (mentioned in this week's parashah, see 39:5) is *gematriya* אָמֵן, alluding to the mitzvah of

answering amen. The *efod* had a belt called חֶשֶׁב, *מהחשבה*, thoughts. חֶשֶׁב hints at חֶשֶׁב הָאָפֹד indicates that one should think and have *kavanah* when he answers amen. (Rebbe Shmelka of Nickelsburg *zt'l* taught this lesson.)

Before his *petirah*, Rebbe Shmelka of Nickelsburg said that throughout his life he was cautious that someone should answer amen to his brachos. Once, Rebbe Shmelka was traveling to a bris milah and had to say *asher yatzar*, but nobody was around to answer amen. What should he do? He didn't want to make a *brachah* without someone answering amen. Suddenly, he saw two people. They appeared awesome. Rebbe Shmelka recited *asher yatzar*, they answered amen sweetly and with *kavanah*, and disappeared. Rebbe Shmelka asked his attendant what he saw, and he said that he didn't see anyone. Rebbe Shmelka understood that these two awesome-looking people were *malachim* – the *malach* Refael and *malach* Gavriel – sent down from heaven to answer amen to his *brachah*.

Rebbe Shmelka realized that this is alluded to in the *piyut* of the *Yomim Nora'im*, מִי יֵשִׁיבֵנו בְּאֶחָד, when a person is alone, who will answer amen to his brachos? The answer is, וַיַּעַשׂ נֹרָא מְרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ, Hashem will send down awesome *malachim* from heaven to answer amen to his brachos.

Rebbe Shmelka continued his trip to the bris milah and fell asleep on the wagon. In his dreams, it was revealed to him that he had correctly understood what had occurred. The two "people" were *malach* Refael and *malach* Gavriel. They came to answer amen to his *brachah*, and the hint that he found in the *piyut* is a true explanation.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* was also cautious that someone should answer amen to his brachos. Once, he awoke in the middle of the night to study Torah. He needed a drink, but no one was around to answer amen.

Suddenly, a *bachur* came and asked Reb Chaim to explain a *Tosfos* to him. Reb Chaim

asked him to answer amen to his *brachos*, which he did.

The next day, Reb Chaim Volozhiner thanked that *bachur* for being there for him to answer amen, but the *bachur* didn't know what Reb Chaim was referring to. Reb Chaim understood that it was Eliyahu HaNavi. He came down from heaven in the image of that *bachur* to help him say a proper *brachah*.

(That *bachur* was accorded great honor in the yeshiva. They said that if Eliyahu haNavi appeared specifically in the image of this *bachur*, it shows that he is special.)

Some people have become accustomed to mumbling the *brachos* and to mumbling amen. It is far better when one accustoms himself to say *brachos* and to answer amen out loud.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 119:) say, כל העונה אמן בכל כוחו, "Whoever answers amen with all his strength, the gates of Gan Eden open for him."

Korbanos and Ketores

On the topic of tefillah, *brachos*, and amen, we take this opportunity to discuss the importance of saying the *korbanos* and the *ketores* before Shacharis and before Minchah.¹⁰

The *Zohar* (vol.2 218:) states that whoever says the *ketores* with *kavanah*, will be saved from all types of bad things, and he will be protected from bad thoughts. "No harm will befall him the entire day..."

The *Zohar* (*Vayeira*, *Midrash HaNe'elam* 100:) states, "Whoever says the *ketores* with *kavanah* in *beis medresh*, there is a covenant that all of the *malachim* who tell the sins of man won't be able to harm him. They can only do good with him... Once, I was traveling and I met Eliyahu HaNavi *zachur l'tov*. I asked him, 'Tell me what is good for people. [What can they do, that it should be good for them?]' Eliyahu replied, 'There are *malachim* in heaven appointed to tell the sins of people before Hashem's Throne. When Bnei Yisrael say the *korbanos* with *kavanah*, these *malachim* have to say good things about Bnei Yisrael and they must judge them favorably. When there is a plague, *r'l*, an announcement comes forth from Hashem to all *malachim* in heaven that if Hashem's nation gathers in *beis medresh* and say the *ketores* with *kavanah*, the *mageifah* must stop.'"

The Gemara (*Megillah* 16.) tells that on the sixteenth of Nisan, Mordechai HaTzaddik taught his students the mitzvah of *korban omer*. Haman arrived and asked them what they were learning. When he heard, he said, "Your handful of flour pushed away my ten thousand *kikar* of silver coins."

The Chofetz Chaim asks, how did Mordechai have the peace of mind to study Torah with students when the entire nation was in danger? And why did he teach the children specifically about the *korban omer*?

The answer is, says the Chofetz Chaim, that Mordechai wanted to teach them about the *korbanos* because saying *korbanos* silences all prosecuting *malachim* and brings salvation to Klal Yisrael.

10. Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* said that saying *korbanos* before Minchah is *mesugal* not to need to visit a doctor.

For all those who claim that they don't have time to say *korbanos*, let them remember that the few moments it takes to say *korbanos* is a lot shorter than the time people spend waiting for a doctor, *r'l*.