

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Shlita*

Toldos



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Toldos

Positive Thoughts

The Torah tells us that Yitzchak dug wells, and then the Pilishtim came and claimed the well was theirs. This happened twice, but when Yitzchak dug the third well, it states (26:22) וַיֵּצֵק מַיִם וַיַּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלָיָהּ, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחוֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי עַתָּה הִרְחִיב ה' לָנוּ וּפָרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ, "He moved away from there, and he dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. He named it Rechovos, and he said, 'For now Hashem has made ample space for us (הִרְחִיב), and we will be fruitful in the land.'" What did Yitzchak do differently this time that he was able to keep his well?

Mishmeres Issamar zt'l writes that the key lies in the words וַיֵּצֵק מַיִם, "He moved away from there." It means that he moved his thoughts away from his tzaros. He didn't think about the troubles that the Pilishtim were causing him. That enabled him to receive his salvation. For when one thinks about tzaros, it draws the tzaros onto him, and when one ignores them, they disappear.

This is an important segulah to remember. If one wants to remove all tzaros, he shouldn't focus on them. Mishmeres Issamar writes that he learned this concept from his Rebbe, the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l. It states (Shemos 14:15) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה מֶה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי דִּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּסְעוּ, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them travel.'" The nation was at the Yam Suf, and the Mitzrim were pursuing

from behind. The Zohar explains that at this time, Hashem said to Moshe, "Why are you praying to Me? בעתִּיקָה תִּלִּיָּה מִלִּתָּה, the matter is dependent on Atika."

The Chozeh explained that Atika is to turn the mind away from thinking about the *tzarah*. It is similar to the words וַיֵּצֵק מַיִם, "He moved away from there." Hashem told Moshe to stop thinking about his fears, and the nation would be saved. This is how the tzaros ended, and the sea split for the Jewish nation.

This is because focusing on problems and worries enhances and increases them, and when one pushes the thoughts out of his mind, salvation can come.

Chazal say that parnassah is compared to Kriyas Yam Sum. What is the similarity between the splitting of the sea and parnassah? The Chozeh explains that the sea split when the people stopped thinking about the tzaros. This is also the segulah for parnassah. When one is worried about his financial situation, it can cause the problem to intensify. But when one doesn't focus on the problems, things can become better, and salvation can come.¹

People ask, "How can I take my mind off my tzaros? They are so great!" Answer them, "Since you believe that everything is for the good, think about the good that will come, and don't focus on the tzaros of the present."²

1. Everyone has good and bad in their lives. A wise person focuses on all the good and keeps his mind off his tzaros. Everyone has lots of goodness in their lives to focus on.

2. Chazal (*Brachos* 54.) say, חַיִּיב אָדָם לְבָרֵךְ עַל הָרָעָה כְּשֶׁהוּא מְבָרֵךְ עַל הַטּוֹבָה, "One is obligated to bless Hashem for the bad [just as joyously as] he blesses Hashem for the good."

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg and his brother, Rebbe Pinchas, the Hafla'ah, asked the Magid of Mezritch zt'l, "How can one bless Hashem for the bad that befalls him with joy? How can he be happy with the bad?"

The Magid instructed them to ask Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli zt'l their question.

The emunah that everything is for the good will help the person take his mind off his tzaros, and he will be able to receive the salvations that will come.³

Rebbe Zusha was sitting in the Magid's beis medresh, and they asked him their question.

Rebbe Zusha replied, "I don't understand why the Magid sent you to me? I never experienced anything bad in my life. I recommend that you find someone who has experienced bad and ask him. But how should I know? I never experienced anything bad."

Rebbe Shmelke and the Hafla'ah received their answer. If you don't see the bad, you will be able to praise Hashem with joy. Rebbe Zusha was extremely poor, and there were days when he went hungry. He didn't have an easy life. Nevertheless, he couldn't identify any bad in his life.

How did Rebbe Zusha reach that level? How does one not see the bad?

We'll answer that in two ways. One is with *emunah*. When you have *emunah* that everything is pure *chesed*, you never complain.

Or, because he was so focused on the good, that he hardly saw the bad.

We will explain this concept with a *meshal*:

There was a person who always complained. He focused on the half-cup that was empty. Nothing was ever good enough for him.

His mentor, wanting to help him change his outlook on life, handed him a cup of water and threw in a handful of salt. "Drink it," he instructed.

"I can't," the student replied. "It's bitter."

The mentor then brought the student to a river, threw in a handful of salt, filled a cup with water from the river, and said, "Drink this," and this time, the student drank it.

"I don't understand," the mentor said. "I put the same amount of salt into the river as in the cup. Earlier, you refused to drink the water, but now you drank it happily. What's the difference?"

The student answered that a handful of salt is a lot in a cup of water. But in a large river, that amount is insignificant."

The mentor explained that the same is true with life. A person who focuses on all the good in his life will not be bothered by bitter experiences as much. The bitterness will be *batel* and almost indiscernible among all the good.

3. It states (Tehillim 19:3) יוֹם לַיּוֹם יְדַבֵּר וְלַיְלָה יְדַבֵּר אִמְרֵי יְיָ, "Day to day utters speech, and night to night tells knowledge." What does one night tell the other? I heard from a talmid chacham that לַיְלָה יְדַבֵּר means that one night speaks to the next night, and it tells the night, "I was here yesterday. It became night, and it was dark for me, too. But then the morning came, and everything became light. Now you are worried because it has become dark. Don't worry. Soon it will be morning, and the night will disappear."

Reb Chanoch Orenstein z'l was a chasid of the Sfas Emes zt'l. His emunas chachamim was exemplary. His every move was in accordance with his rebbe's guidance. When the Sfas Emes was niftar and his son, the Imrei Emes zt'l, became rebbe, it was, at first, difficult for Reb Chanoch to get used to the new rebbe and his style of leadership, but he adapted well and became a fiery chasid of the Imrei Emes.

Once, Reb Chanoch was presented with a lucrative business opportunity. An enormous glass manufacturing plant became available for sale. Reb Chanoch had several other businesses. He would have to sell them all and also borrow money from the bank to buy the glass factory. But if the glass business succeeded, he stood to become fabulously wealthy, among the wealthiest people in the world.

His friends advised him not to take the risk. They argued, "If this opportunity were as lucrative as it seems

to be, why is the owner selling it? Apparently, the owner knows that the business will soon go bankrupt."

Reb Chanoch, who excelled in emunas chachamim, asked his rebbe, the Imrei Emes, how to proceed. The Imrei Emes encouraged him to take the risk and to buy the factory. "It is a great opportunity", the Imrei Emes said. "Sell all your businesses, borrow money, and jump into this venture." He did so, but soon afterwards, the warnings of his friends came true. The glass project was a flop.

He went to the Imrei Emes, and the Imrei Emes accepted him warmly. Reb Chanoch told the Imrei Emes what occurred. The Imrei Emes said, "Sell the factory, and pay up all your debts. With the money that's left over, move to Eretz Yisrael and begin your life anew there."

Shortly afterwards, the gates of Poland were sealed. Hundreds of thousands of Yidden living in Poland were burned and murdered *al kiddush Hashem*. Reb Chanoch was miraculously spared because he was living in Eretz Yisrael. Had Reb Chanoch and his family remained in Poland with his old businesses, he would have been one of the first victims because the Germans targeted the wealthy people first.

Let us learn two lessons from this story: One is that we don't know what is good and what is bad. Reb Chanoch thought that it was a bad thing that he bought the factory, but it turned out to be his salvation. Secondly, let us learn the trait of emunas chachamim. One gains immensely by asking and following the counsel of our chachamim.

A Sephardic Yid, a ben Torah, lived in Har Hof, Yerushalayim, and studied in kollel. One day, a fire broke out in his apartment. Renovations would cost more than two hundred thousand shekels. He went to the home of the gaon Reb Ovadia Yosef zt'l and poured out his heart before him. He said, "I can barely pay the mortgage. How will I pay for the renovations?" The rav felt very sorry for him and offered to write a letter (המליצה) to encourage people to help him. The man replied, "How will a letter help me? Maybe I will raise ten thousand shekels from the letter, but I need twenty times that amount!"

As they were speaking, a very wealthy person walked into the room. He told Rav Ovadia that he had his first grandson, and he wanted to invite the rav to be the sandek at the bris. Reb Ovadia graciously accepted and asked where the bris would be held. The man replied that it will be in Bnei Brak. Reb Ovadia Yosef said, "Please forgive me, but I made a kabbalah not to leave Yerushalayim to attend a bris. I am busy with the community, preparing shiurim, and writing sefarim. I don't have time to travel outside the city. Do you have any idea how much Torah I will lose if I take on such a trip?"

The man tried to convince the rav to make an exception, and the rav replied, "I understand that this is important for you, and I feel your distress, but tell me: Do you really want to cause me so much bitul Torah for this bris?"

Then Reb Ovadia made him an offer. "In the next room, there is a special yungerman, a talmid chacham, who studies all day in beis medresh. His apartment was ruined in a fire, and he needs a lot of money to fix it. I wish I could help him, but I am not able to. I don't have that kind of money. If you agree to pay for the entire project, I will come to the bris. I will go wherever you call me."

The man asked, "How much will the renovations cost?" The rav replied, "Two hundred thousand shekels."

The man replied immediately, and joyously, "I will give it. I will pay for all the renovations."

Reb Ovadia was surprised when yungerman came into the room, shaking his head, and saying, "I don't want to take the money." The yungerman's response was shocking. Reb Avodyah and the wealthy man expected him to dance for joy. Just think about the hashgachah pratis! The wealthy man came just as the yungerman was expressing his financial problems, and the wealthy man agreed to cover the bill. Yet, the yungerman declined to accept the money!

He explained, "I saw the rav's tears, his disappointment that he would lose precious hours of Torah study. Just because I have a problem, why should the rav suffer bitul Torah?"

So, Reb Ovadia suggested to this yungerman that he should sell his apartment in Yerushalayim and buy one in Beit Shemesh. (The story occurred when Beis Shemesh was in its infancy). The money from the sale will be enough to buy the apartment, and you will have money left over, too."

Hashem Loves the Mitzvos of All Yidden

It states (27:6-9) וַרְבֵּקָה אָמְרָה אֶל יַעֲקֹב בְּנֶה... לֵךְ נָא אֶל הָצֹאן וְקַח לִי מִשָּׁם שְׁנֵי עֲזִים טְבִים וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אֹתָם מִטְעָמִים לְאָכְלִיךָ כִּי־אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה בְּאֶשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, "Rivkah said to Yaakov, her son... Go now to the flock and fetch me from there two choice young kids of the goats, and I will make them delicacies for your father, as he loves." The Tiferes Shlomo asks why is it important to know that Yaakov went to fetch the two goats?

The Tiferes Shlomo answers that we can say the Torah is teaching us a lesson *b'derech*

remez. Rivkah represents the Shechinah, and Yaakov represents a Yid. The Shechinah says to a Yid, "Go and perform the mitzvos as best as you can, 'and I will make them delicacies for your Father in heaven.'" This is because when a person wants to study Torah or to perform mitzvos, he is often afraid that it won't be accepted. After all, he knows his low level. For example, when a person wants to put on tefillin, he knows there are many profound lessons about tefillin, and he doesn't know any of them. He thinks to

The yungerman didn't really like the idea. In those days, there were few very religious Yidden living in Beit Shemesh, and it was hard to find a good cheder. His kollel and his wife's job were in Yerushalayim, and now they will have to go into galus, to a new city, and to start all over again? But he had emunas chachamim, and he did as the rav advised him.

He moved to Beit Shemesh, and at first, it wasn't easy. In the community where he lived, there was no Sephardic beis medresh for him to daven in. He had to walk to the old section of Beit Shemesh, where there were Sephardic batei midrashim. One day, he met a wealthy Yid, and as they spoke together, the conversation was about the many Sephardic Yidden who had recently moved to Beit Shemesh. They didn't have a Sephardic beis medresh to daven in, in their neighborhood. The wealthy person said, "Speak to the city council and arrange a plot of land. I will build a beis medresh on it." The Sephardic yungerman worked with all his energy on the project, and with Hashem's help, succeeded. The wealthy man kept his side of the promise and paid for the beis medresh.

Naturally, our yungerman became the rav of the beis medresh. He was a talmid chacham, a yarei shamayim, and was the one who arranged the plot and helped build it. Since he was now the rav of a community, he had to give shiurim and become an expert in practical halachah because all shaalos were now coming to his door. Years passed, and he became a very respected and scholarly rav.

Now, this rav says: "When Reb Ovadia told me to leave Yerushalayim, I felt my world go dark. Going to Beit Shemesh, for me, was like going to galus. I asked myself: 'Is this my reward for my mesirus nefesh? I had the opportunity to receive two hundred thousand shekels to fix over my home, and I was mevater for the rav's sake, and for his Torah. After so much mesirus nefesh, why do I deserve to suffer so much?' But now I see how much I gained from it, and how much Torah I learned because of this move. I became a rav of a large community, where I teach torah and yiras shamayim."

Let us reflect upon this story. This yungerman seemed to go from one problem to a worse one. His apartment was damaged in a fire, he had to pay for the renovations, and ended up going into galus. He left behind his kollel and his wife's job. They moved to a place where there wasn't even a suitable beis medresh for him. He had to live in a neighborhood with not-so-religious people. But it was all for his benefit. He earned so much from it. Had he stayed in Yerushalayim, he would have remained a regular yungerman, but due to his responsibilities as a rav of a kehillah, he reached very high levels.

Also, we can learn from this episode the benefit of vitur, especially vitur for the sake of Torah. This yungerman sacrificed a lot for the sake of Reb Ovadia's Torah, and he was rewarded immensely. So, too, there are times when a person is mevater on his needs for the sake of kedushah, and he will gain immensely. For example, let's say there is a store that sells items for cheaper than other stores, but there are challenges with shemiras einayim at that store. He is mevater on the financial gain, and he doesn't go to that store. He is mevater for his kedushah, but he won't lose at all. Because when one is mevater for kedushah, he earns immensely.

himself, "How can my mitzvah be pleasing to Hashem?"

The Shechinah tells the Yid, "Do the best you can, and the Shechinah will turn it into a delicacy for Hashem." This is hinted in the words *וְרִבְקָה אָמְרָה אֶל יַעֲקֹב בְּנָה*, the Shechinah says to a Yid, *בֶּנִּי*, do what you can. Perform the mitzvah as best as you can, *וַאֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה אֹתָם*, and I will make it pleasant and a delicacy for Hashem. When you do the best you can, it will be as if you had all the kavanos when you performed the mitzvos.

This is an important lesson for all those who feel that they can't succeed in avodas Hashem. Let them know that Hashem doesn't seek success and perfection from us. Hashem wants us to do the best we can, *וְהָבָא* and when one wants to be pure, Hashem helps him. With this awareness, everyone can serve Hashem with renewed energy and hope, knowing that all his mitzvos will be accepted in heaven.

It states (25:28) *וַיֶּאֱהָב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צִיד בָּפִיו וְרִבְקָה*, "Yitzchak loved Eisav for game was in his mouth, but Rivkah loved Yaakov."

The famous question is, how did Yitzchak err and think that Eisav was a tzaddik?

Tzaddikim answer this question with a story that happened with the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l. There was once a rasha, a moser, who caused a lot of tzaros for the Jewish community. Chasidim brought a kvittel with this moser's name to the Chozeh of Lublin. They hoped that the Chozeh's tefillos would stop this rasha from his evil ways and from harming the Jewish community.

The Chozeh looked at the kvittel and said, "Behold, he shines in all worlds!" The chassidim were shocked when they heard that. The Chozeh had pure eyes. He could see from one side of the world to the other. How could he make this mistake and think that this moser "shines in all worlds"?

However, later it was understood. At the time that they gave the kvittel to the Chozeh,

the moser was lighting Chanukah lecht and his soul shone brightly with kedushah. They wrote another kvittel and gave it to the Chozeh. This time, the Chozeh saw his corrupt deeds.

People think that from this story we learn that when one lights Chanukah lecht, his neshamah shines in all worlds. Actually, this occurs with all mitzvos that one performs, and not only with Chanukah lecht. When one is performing any mitzvah, his neshamah shines brightly.

We now understand why Yitzchak thought Eisav was a tzaddik. Whenever he saw Eisav, Eisav was serving him, performing the mitzvah of kibud av. When one performs a mitzvah, his neshamah shines, regardless of who he is the rest of the time.

Yitzchak asked Eisav to bring him food to eat, so he would bless him afterwards, as it states (27:3-4) *שָׂא נָא כֶּלֶךְ תְּלִיךְ וְקִשְׁתְּךָ וְצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה וְצוּדָה* *לִי צִיד*, וְעָשִׂה לִי מִטְעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אוֹהֲבָה לִי וְאֵכְלָה, "So, now, sharpen your implements, your sword and take your bow, and go forth to the field, and hunt game for me. And make for me tasty foods as I like, and bring them to me, and I will eat, so that my soul will bless you..." Eisav failed to capture an animal that day, and Chazal say that he killed a dog, instead, and brought it to Yitzchak. That day, he didn't perform kibud av. Besides, Yaakov Avinu had arrived earlier that day, and brought food to Yitzchak, so Eisav didn't perform kibud av, and the Torah tells us (27:33) *וַיִּחְרַד יִצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְּדֹלָה*, Yitzchak was very afraid, and Rashi writes that this means he saw Gehinom opened before him (*וּמִדְרָשׁוֹ כָּאֵה גֵּיהֵנוֹם פְּתוּחָה מִתַּחְתָּיו*). We can explain that since Eisav didn't perform a mitzvah that time, Yitzchak was able to see Eisav, as he truly is. At this moment, when he wasn't busy with a mitzvah, Yitzchak saw the gehinom Eisav was forming with his evil ways.

We speak of these ideas to give chizuk to the people who think their mitzvos have no value because of their low level. However, it isn't so. When they perform mitzvos, their

neshamos shine in all worlds. Even Eisav the rasha shone brightly when he performed a mitzvah. And when the neshamah shines brightly, he will find a way to pull himself out of his quagmire of lowliness and do teshuvah before Hashem.

It states (26:20-21) וַיִּרְיבוּ רֵעֵי גֵרָר עִם רֵעֵי יִצְחָק לְאֹמֶר "The herdsman of גֵרָר quarreled with Yitzchak's herdsmen saying 'The water is ours'..." This happened twice. Yitzchak's shepherds dug wells, and the shepherds of גֵרָר claimed that the water was theirs.

However, the Torah doesn't tell us who won these debates, and who got the water in the end.

The holy sefarim tell us that the wells Yitzchak (and his shepherds) dug represent spiritual concepts (and not just water). When there is a struggle in reference to spirituality, it really doesn't make a difference who won. The purpose is to attempt to serve Hashem in the best way we can, and then Hashem perfects it and it becomes beautiful in His eyes.

Avraham Avinu had eight children. Yitzchak, Yishmael, and six children from קטורה, as it states at the end of parashas Chayei Sarah (25:1-2) וַיִּסַּף אֲבִרְהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וְשֵׁמָּה קטורה, וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת זִמְרֹן וְאֶת יוֹכְשָׁן וְאֶת מִידֹן וְאֶת מִדְיָן וְאֶת יִשְׁבָּק וְאֶת שׁוּאֵחַ. "Avraham proceeded and took a wife whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimron, Yokshon, Midon, Midyan, Yishbak, and Shuach."

From all these children, only one of them went in Hashem's ways. Nevertheless, about Avraham, Hashem said (Bereishis 18:19) כִּי יִדְעָתִי לִמְעַן אֲשֶׁר יַצְוֶה אֶת בָּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת "For I love him because he commands his sons and his household after him that they should keep the way of Hashem to perform tzedakah and justice..."

This is because what's important is that the person should do the best they can. When he does so, the actual results are irrelevant. Avraham is praised for his devotion to teaching his family the ways of Hashem. If most of his children chose to go on another path, that doesn't detract from the greatness of Avraham's deeds and attempts.⁴

4. The Gemara (Brachos 7b) states, קשה תרבות רעה בביתו של אדם יותר ממלחמת גוג ומגוג. This means that having a child "go off the derech", r'l, is more painful for the parents than the sufferings of the war of Gog and Magog. A child who goes off the derech, תרבות רעה, is so painful to parents because the parents feel guilty. They think that if they were better parents, it wouldn't have happened. The guilt is a heavy load to carry. For all other tzaros, r'l, such as illnesses, yesurim, war, people understand and accept that it is from Hashem, and therefore, they don't carry guilt, and they know that it is for the best. But when there is a תרבות רעה, a child who falls off the derech (entirely or partially), parents often feel responsible, thinking that had they been more cautious with their chinuch, it wouldn't have occurred. But it isn't so, because nachas and the opposite ch"v, is all decreed from heaven, for reasons that Hashem, alone, knows.

Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen discusses this in 52:6 (רס"ס לילה). He quotes the Gemara (Brachos 10a) that Yeshayah HaNavi said to Chizkiyahu HaMelech that he will die because he didn't bear children. Chizkiyahu answered that he didn't want to have children because he saw through ruach hakodesh that there would be a wicked person among his offspring. Yeshayah HaNavi rebuked, בְּהִדִּי כִבְשֵׁי דַרְחֵמָנָא לְמָה לָךְ, "Why should you be involved with the secrets of Heaven? Hashem said to bear children, and therefore, that is what you should do. Hashem will do as He sees fit."

Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen explains that the navi wasn't specifically referring to this episode. Rather, all children that don't turn out well are כִּבְשֵׁי דַרְחֵמָנָא, Hashem's secrets. Hashem's plan, which we cannot comprehend.

Because how children turn out is a decree from heaven. This realization will give chizuk to parents. Let them know that it was Hashem's plan, and He knows why it had to be this way.

With a bitter heart, someone told Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l that his children had strayed from the path

Going The Extra Mile

During the days when the English Mandate ruled in Eretz Yisrael, Reb Aryeh Levine zt'l was the rav of the prison in Yerushalayim. He had a government permit to go to the prison whenever he wanted, to visit the prisoners. These visits were essential for the inmates, as they gave the prisoners a lot of chizuk. Once, Reb Aryeh came to the prison on Shabbos, and two soldiers were standing at the door. One was a non-Jewish English policeman, and the other was l'havdil a Yid. The goy didn't permit Reb Aryeh Levine to enter the prison. The Jewish soldier said, "But this is Reb Aryeh Levine. He has permission from the government to enter whenever he wants. He is the rabbi of the prison!"

The goy replied, "His permit is for regular times, but now there is a curfew, and he isn't even permitted to leave his house. So, he also doesn't have permission to come to the prison."

(It was indeed mesirus nefesh for Reb Aryeh Levine to go out at that time. But he came anyway, to give chizuk to the prisoners.)

The Jewish soldier said, "Why do you care if this old man comes here? He came on his own goodwill to help the prisoners. Let him go inside."

The goy said, "Don't tell me stories. He isn't here to do a good deed. He gets paid for this job. (The guard saw that Reb Aryeh Levine came very often to the prison, and couldn't imagine that he did it for free.) And now that there is a curfew, I won't let him in."

of the Torah. Rebbe Shlomke asked him, "Is it your fault?" The man replied that it isn't.

"So don't think about it," Rebbe Shlomke told him. "It isn't your problem. Every parent has different types of children; some turn out better than others. Also, for our Father in heaven, He wants good children, children who go in the path of Torah..." but it can't always be that way.

Every year, Shabbos parashas Toldos, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l would repeat a counsel for good children, which he heard from the Bilgurey Rav zt'l. The Bilgurey Rav owned handwritten divrei Torah, an inheritance from his holy ancestors, the Rebbes of Belz zt'l, and the following lesson was written there:

Year 5611/1850, Rebbe Moshe Lelover zt'l left Poland to travel to Eretz Yisrael. Before he made this trip, he went to the gedolim of his time, to take leave of them. When he came to the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l, the Sar Shalom told him a *pshat* on the pasuk (Tehillim 115:14) יִסֶּף ה' עֲלֵיכֶם וְעַל בְּנֵיכֶם, "May Hashem increase upon you, upon you and upon your children." The lesson is based upon the concept that the spiritual future of children is largely dependent on the parents' spiritual level (see Or HaChaim Vayikra 12:1). The parents bring the child into the world, so the child's spiritual success is influenced by his parents' kedushah. But even if the parents didn't have kedushah, there is a solution to help the children. The solution is that the parents should do teshuvah *now*. The teshuvah uproots their wrong deeds of the past from its roots. It will be like they never committed them. The children will receive a new heart to serve Hashem. This is hinted in the words יִסֶּף ה' עֲלֵיכֶם וְעַל בְּנֵיכֶם. The pasuk is hinting that if parents will (יִסֶּף) increase their good deeds and do teshuvah, Hashem will help them fix the past, עֲלֵיכֶם וְעַל בְּנֵיכֶם, and this will help the children serve Hashem better.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov would say this vort every Shabbos on parashas Toldos, and he would add that the concept is alluded to at the beginning of the parashah. It states, וְאַלֶּה תוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד, "These are the children of Yitzchak ben Avraham, Avraham begot Yitzchak." The miforshim ask that the pasuk seems to be repeating itself. Isn't it obvious that if Yitzchak was ben Avraham, then Avraham begot Yitzchak!

Based on the above, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai explained, וְאַלֶּה תוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם, even after a child was born, אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד, he can experience a rebirth. When parents do teshuvah and improve their ways, the children become like they were born again, and this time, in a better way.

Reb Aryeh Levine wouldn't give up so easily. He wanted to help the prisoners. He left the front gate and looked for another opening. With Hashem's help, he found a wall that wasn't all that high. He knew that what he was doing was dangerous, because if he was caught, he could be punished, perhaps imprisoned, but he climbed up the wall and jumped into the prison. The non-Jewish guard saw what he did, but then he changed his mind. He wouldn't punish Reb Aryeh Levine, and he let him stay and speak with the prisoners. He said to his partner, the Jewish guard, "Now I agree with you. This Rav isn't getting paid for this job. If he were paid for this job, he would return to his boss and say that he was at the gate, and they didn't let him in. But now that I see that he isn't seeking excuses, and he won't allow anything to prevent him from performing this good deed, it must be coming from his pure heart. He must be a volunteer."

Reb Yehudah Tzadkah zt'l used this story to explain the parashah of the Akeidah. Avraham was ready to sacrifice Yitzchak, and at the last moment, a malach came and stopped him. The malach stopped him, but at this time, the malach didn't bless Avraham. After Avraham brought the ram as a *korban*, that is when the malach blessed Avraham. Why wasn't Avraham blessed before, when he was prepared to sacrifice his son for Hashem?

The answer is that the Akeidah itself wasn't the central part of the test. Avraham and Yitzchak knew that if Hashem wanted to take their lives, Hashem could do so, even without the Akeidah.

The test was to see if Avraham *wanted* to perform Hashem's will. This was seen when

Hashem prevented him from carrying out the Akeidah, and even so, Avraham sought a way to perform some good deed. He didn't just leave when the malach told him to stop. Avraham didn't say, "I did what Hashem said. I don't have to do more." Instead, Avraham pleaded with Hashem that he wanted to do something, perhaps just to make a scratch on Yitzchak, as Rashi writes. He only calmed down when he found the ram, caught in the branches. He toiled to untangle the ram, and he sacrificed the ram instead of Yitzchak. These deeds proved that his intention was l'shem shamayim, and he wasn't doing Hashem's will because he had no other choice. Therefore, at this point, the malach came down from heaven to give him brachos. This is the meaning of the words (Bereishis 22:16) *כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ*, "Since you did this thing, and you did not withhold your son, your only one, *כִּי בָרַךְ אֲבִירְכְךָ וְהִרְבֵּה אֶרְבֶּה אֶת זַרְעֲךָ*, That I will surely bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed..." The brachos came because of *הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה*, the final acts of Avraham, with the ram, which revealed how much he wanted to serve Hashem.

The lesson is that a person shouldn't look for excuses and reasons why he doesn't have to do Hashem's service. He should know that his main reward will come specifically from such times. Yes, you can find a way to be exempt from certain mitzvos, but if you will show that you genuinely want to serve Hashem, this will reveal your special desire, and this is very precious in Hashem's eyes.

Examples of this principle are the gedarim (boundaries) that a person makes for himself,⁵ or *קִדַּשׁ עַצְמְךָ בְּמוֹתֵר לָךְ*, to sanctify oneself with that which is permitted. These matters show

5. Yaakov was (25:27) *יֹשֵׁב אוֹהֲלִים*, sitting in the tents of Torah, while Eisav was *אִישׁ שָׂדֵה*, an outdoorsman. The difference between a tent and the outdoors is that the outdoors doesn't have any walls or boundaries.

This accurately describes the difference between Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov erects walls and boundaries to stay inside the realm of holiness, while Eisav lives without any restrictions. In his mind, everything is permitted. The Yeitav Leiv said this in his *hesped* on the Maharam Shik zt'l. He said that the Maharam Shik followed Yaakov's footsteps and didn't breach any boundaries of halachah or tradition.

the devotion the person has to Hashem. He isn't obligated, but he wants to do so, because he knows that Hashem will have nachas ruach. For these matters, he will receive reward also in this world.⁶

Helps, Saves, and Protects

During the last sheva brachos of an elderly father's youngest child (after marrying off ten or fifteen children), he announced, "I married off all my children, and Hashem didn't help me."

The family was concerned to hear him say that. "Is he getting old and losing his mind? What does he mean that Hashem didn't help him?" They were thinking of asking him to stop his speech, but he immediately explained himself. "Hashem didn't help me; Hashem did everything!"

In last week's *parashah*, Eliezer expressed concern that he might encounter difficulties finding a spouse for Yitzchak. Avraham assured him (24:7), *ה' אלקי השמים... הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך*, "Hashem the G-d of heaven...He will send His *malach* before you..." Avraham told Eliezer that he didn't need to worry. A *malach*

will go before Eliezer and arrange *everything*. But when Eliezer repeated Avraham's words to Lavan and Besuel, Eliezer changed the words slightly. He told them that Avraham said (24:40), *ה' ישלח מלאכו אתך*, "Hashem...will send his *malach* with you." The implication is that Eliezer will do his share, and Hashem will help him.

Lavan and Besuel couldn't understand the concept of *לפני*, that Hashem will do everything. Therefore, when Eliezer spoke to them, he told them that Avraham said Hashem would *help him* arrange the *shidduch*. However, in truth, Avraham said that Hashem would go before him and take care of the entire *shidduch*.

We say in *Shemonah Esrei* ומגן עוזר ומושיע ומגן, "A King Who helps, saves, and protects." What is the difference between these three expressions of assistance - עוזר, מושיע, ומגן - "helps, saves, and protects"?

We finish the *brachah* with מגן אברהם. Why do we specifically use the expression מגן, protection, in reference to Avraham? Why not עוזר ומושיע?

Boundaries are essential, especially in this generation. Reb Dov Yafo said that *Yiddishkeit* can't be viewed as אסור אסור אסור, that everything is forbidden. We need to generate in our children a positive view of *Yiddishkeit*. We must show them how good and sweet *Yiddishkeit* is. They shouldn't consider it stifling or limiting. Children should be taught that boundaries and limitations are for their good. They are like gates protecting a great treasure for us.

The *roshei teivos* of ישראל is: יש שישים רבוא אותיות לתורה, "There are 600,000 letters in the Torah". Each member of בני ישראל is represented by a letter of the Torah. The letters of a *sefer Torah* need to be separated with white parchment (מוקף גייל). The white parchment hints at the boundaries, limits, and precautions the Jewish nation accepts for themselves so that they will remain within the realm of *kedushah*.

6. When Rav Shach was old, his wife was ill and bed-bound. She couldn't take care of the house anymore; therefore, every day, Rav Shach would go to the yeshiva's dining room, take a portion of food for his wife, and carry the dish for his rebbetzin.

His talmidim thought it was disrespectful for their esteemed rosh yeshiva to be seen carrying a dish of food through the streets of Bnei Brak, so they offered to carry it for him. That way, the rosh yeshiva won't have to disgrace the honor of his Torah...

The rosh yeshiva looked at them with wide eyes, shocked, and told them, "If you would see me carrying the four minim on Succos through the streets, would you also think it was disrespectful? Of course not! Because you know that it is a mitzvah, and a great zechus to carry the four minim. This is also a great merit for me. I am taking care of the rebbetzin. This is a zechus, and it is neither a tirschah nor a disgrace. It is a zechus to do chesed.

Reb Avraham *zt'l*, the son of the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* says that the three words hint at three levels of *bitachon*. The first level is עוזר, "helps." This is when a person does *hishtadlus* and believes that Hashem will help him and bring blessings into what he does. A higher level of *bitachon* is מושיע, saves. This is when one doesn't even do *hishtadlus*, and he trusts that Hashem will protect and take care of him. Finally, the highest form of *bitachon* is מגן. This is when one does something that can harm himself, but he trusts that Hashem will save him.

מגן was Avraham Avinu's level of *bitachon*. He went into the fire at Ur Kasdim, he fought a war against four mighty kings, and had *bitachon* that, although he was doing something dangerous, Hashem would protect him. Therefore, the *brachah* concludes, מגן אברהם (not עוזר אברהם or מושיע אברהם) because Avraham's level was מגן, completely trusting in Hashem to help him, even when his actions seemed to predict danger.

Kibud Av v'Eim

The Chayei Adam (67) writes, "Honoring parents means to honor them in your thoughts... You should consider your parents to be *gedolim*, from the most important people in the world. This is the primary obligation of honoring parents."

The Torah tells us that Yitzchak had that type of admiration for his father, Avraham. He held his father in the highest esteem, and he therefore tried to resemble his father in as many ways as he could.

The Torah (26:18) tells us, וישב יצחק ויחפר את בארות המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם אביו ויסתמום פלישתים אחרי מות אברהם ויקרא להן שמות כשמות אשר קרא להן אביו, "Yitzchak dug anew the water springs that were dug in the days of his father, Avraham (which the Pelishtim sealed up after Avraham's

death) and Yitzchak called the wells the names that his father called them."

Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains that he didn't change the names of the wells. He wanted to call the wells the names his father called them. "He did this to honor his father. If the Torah tells us about this, it is apparently counted as one of Yitzchak's merits. We should do the same for our parents. Yitzchak didn't even want to change the names that his father gave to the wells. *Kal vachomer*, we should follow our parents' good customs and ways."

Chayei Adam teaches that the primary factor of *kibud av v'em* is to honor one's parents in his heart, and to consider them as the most important people in the world, even if others don't view them that way.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya concludes, "Perhaps this is the reason Yitzchak's name wasn't changed, unlike the other *avos*."

אברהם was changed to אברם; Yaakov became ישראל. Yitzchak's name remained the same. Yitzchak didn't want to change the names his father chose; therefore, his name remained the same, too.⁷

Eisav also honored his father; however, the Yaaras Dvash (*Yaaras Dvash* pg.70) says that he honored him in action and speech, but he didn't honor Yitzchak in his heart.

To prove this, consider that Eisav brought Yitzchak dog meat! As the *Targum Yonoson* (27:31) writes, "Hashem prevented Eisav from finding kosher game. So, he found a dog, killed it, made a meal from it, and brought it to his father. He said, 'Father, get up and eat from your son's game.'"

He wouldn't have done that if he had honored his father in his heart.

7. The Torah tells us that Yaakov Avinu prepared tasty food (27:31) ויבא לאביו "...and brought it to his father." The two words ויבא - אביו have the same letters, only in the opposite order. This hints that if you honor your parents, your children will honor you back. Your good deeds will be reciprocated to you.

Furthermore, Rashi (*Bereishis* 29:11) tells us that Eisav sent his son Elifaz to kill Yaakov! He wouldn't do that if he cared for his parents, for how would they feel if Elifaz carried that out?

And in this week's *parashah* (26:35), it states, ותהיין מורת רוח ליצחק ולרבקה, that Eisav's wives caused Yitzchak and Rivkah much distress because they worshipped *avodah zarah* to spite and to anger Yitzchak and Rivkah. Eisav didn't stop them. He honored his father with his deeds and with his speech, but the primary aspect of honor was lacking.

Yet, Eisav was rewarded for his *kibud av v'eim*. One reward was the strength and power that was passed over to his grandson, Amalek.

Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* writes, "Amalek's power comes from Eisav's merits because he honored Yitzchak. As it states (22:28), ויאהב יצחק את עשו, 'Yitzchak loved Eisav...' But it was all ציד בפיו, from Eisav's glib tongue, because Eisav didn't honor Yitzchak in his heart. He didn't do anything from his heart, only with his mouth..."

And since his honor was only through deeds, we can cancel and revoke Eisav's merits when we honor our parents with our deeds, with our speech, and with our thoughts, too. This perfect form of *kibud av v'eim* will annul and cancel Eisav's merits for his imperfect *kibud av*.

Additionally, Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz says, if we serve Hashem with all our heart (for any mitzvah), we annul Eisav's strength. Eisav's good deeds were only in action; when we serve Hashem with our heart, mind, and soul, it cancels out all of Eisav's credit.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz laments the fact that we lack heart, especially during *tefillah*. He writes, "I talk about this matter all day and all night, and I don't stop speaking about it: A Yid should serve Hashem with his heart, with *kavanah*. He shouldn't serve Hashem by rote, due to custom... especially *tefillah*, because *tefillah* is *avodah shebalev*, the

primary service of the heart. But due to our many sins, people got into the habit of mumbling their *tefillos*... The lips and tongue move by habit, and his heart is thinking about business and other matters. Woe to him for the day of judgment! When he is old, there won't be more than two or three proper prayers that he said with *kavanah* his entire life... The same is with *kriyas Shema*. How many weeks and years pass, and we don't say *kriyas Shema*, the three *parshiyos*, with a whole heart, without interspersing other thoughts?! Woe to us! This empowers our enemies because we are in *galus* under Eisav's domain, and their merit comes from their forefather [Eisav] whose power was with his mouth (ציד בפיו). If we serve Hashem with our hearts, he loses his strength. But if we will be like them and only serve Hashem with our mouths, Eisav's merit remains in its place."

The Yaaras Dvash adds that this is the intention of the *pasuk* (27:22), הקול קול יעקב והידים, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Eisav." This means that if all we have is the קול יעקב, the voice of Yaakov, such as the sound of Torah and *tefillah*, but it is without the heart, then והידים ידי עשו, Eisav still has power over us.

When we serve Hashem with our heart, Eisav's merit will be canceled, and Amalek and the goyim won't have any power over us.

The Reward is According to the Struggle.

The Baal HaTanya's grandson, Reb Nochum, wore an expensive jacket with fur around the collar. He bought it when he got married. The Baal HaTanya didn't like the style (apparently, it wasn't the way most Jews dressed at the time), and he told his grandson that he didn't want him to wear this jacket. His grandson answered that he couldn't stop wearing it.

The Baal HaTanya said, "I'll buy you another jacket."

His grandson repeated that he couldn't change the jacket.

"I will give you money," the Baal HaTanya pleaded, but still he refused. He couldn't part with his coat.

"I'll learn with you." Once again, the grandson refused.

Finally, the Baal HaTanya told him, "If you take off this coat, you will be with me in Gan Eden." This time, the grandson accepted the offer. It was too good an offer to refuse.

People asked the Baal HaTanya how he could guarantee this great reward for his grandson. Perhaps he won't deserve it!

The Baal HaTanya replied, "You saw how hard it was for him to remove the coat. It wasn't just the coat, and it wasn't just the style. A klipah, a tumah, was preventing him from agreeing to my offers. I understood that it was a great test for him. And if he passes this test, he deserves to be brought to a high place in Gan Eden for that merit alone."

We earn the greatest rewards when we overcome difficult tests.

Rivkah didn't understand why she was having so much pain during her pregnancy, as it states (25:22) וִיתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקֶרְבָּהּ, "The children struggled within her." Rashi writes, "When she passed the doorways of Torah of Shem and Ever, Yaakov struggled to run and leave the womb, and when she passed the doorways of avodah zarah, Eisav struggled and tried to leave the womb."

Two questions arise from this episode:

1) Eisav was a rasha even before his birth. Already in the womb, he was rushing to go to avodah zarah. So, how can Eisav be punished for his bad ways? Evil was his nature, in his DNA, even before his birth!

2) Yaakov Avinu was *kadosh* from the womb. When his mother passed the *Beis medresh*, he wanted to go there. Similarly,

we are faced with the same question: why should Yaakov be rewarded for his good deeds? It was natural for him to be good!

Before we quote the Yismach Moshe's answer to these questions, we bring another two questions that the Yismach Moshe asks:

It states (25:26) וַאֲחֵרֵי כֵן יָצָא אֶחָיו וַיִּדּוּ אֶחָזֶת בְּעֶקֶב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב, "After [Eisav was born], his brother emerged. His hand grasped Eisav's heel, and he named him Yaakov." One explanation in Rashi is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Hashem himself, named him Yaakov. We ask two questions:

(1) Why was Yaakov holding onto Eisav's ankle? Eisav was already born. Did he think he could draw him back into the womb?

(2) It seems strange that Yaakov was named for holding onto Eisav's heel, and it was Hakadosh Baruch Hu Who named him! Why was this episode so significant that Yaakov should be named for it?

The Yismach Moshe gives one answer to all the questions. He explains what a special moment it was when Yaakov grabbed onto Eisav's heel. It created a transfer of tendencies between Yaakov and Eisav. By grabbing onto Eisav's heel, Eisav received a drop of Yaakov Avinu's good, and Yaakov received a drop of the bad in Eisav. This created a test for both. Yaakov would have to overcome the tendencies he received from Eisav, and Eisav had to increase the good he received from Yaakov.

With this information, all the questions are resolved. Holding onto the heel was a critical moment because this is what gave them free choice and created the battle.

Why did Yitzchak Avinu want to give the *brachos* to Eisav and not Yaakov? Yitzchak knew that the greatest avodas Hashem is performed through challenge. Such a service generates the greatest nachas ruach for Hashem. Therefore, Yitzchak considered Eisav's potential greater than Yaakov's because Eisav would need to struggle very

hard with his yetzer hara, and his avodas Hashem would bring pleasure to Hashem.

Yaakov Avinu said to his father (27:19) אני עשו בכרך, "I am Eisav, your firstborn." Yaakov said, "I also have an element of Eisav in me. I also have a yetzer hara. Things are not perfect for me. I also need these brachos."

Yitzchok replied (27:22) הקול קול יעקב והידיים ידי עשו, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hands of Eisav." Yitzchak was saying that although Yaakov studies Torah (הקול קול יעקב), he still has an element of Eisav in him (הידיים ידי עשו), therefore, he also needs the brachos.⁸

8. Eisav shouted (27:36) הכי קרא שמו יעקב ויעקבני זה פעמים את בכרתי לקח והנה עתה לקח ברכתי, "Is it for this reason he was named Yaakov? For he has deceived me twice (יעקבני פעמיים). He took my birthright, and behold, now he has taken my brachos."

Rashi writes that when Yitzchak heard Eisav say this, he was relieved and declared, גם ברוך תהיה, that the brachos should remain with Yaakov.

We can explain that when he heard that Yaakov had deceived Eisav, he discovered that Yaakov Avinu also had negative attributes, which means that Yaakov will also have to struggle in his avodas Hashem. Therefore, Yaakov can receive the brachos.