

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Bereishis



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Bereishis

Shabbos Bereishis

Reb Moshe Gross z'l from Switzerland wanted to be in Tel Aviv with the Belzer Rav (Reb Aharon of Belz zt'l) for Simchas Torah, but the trip took longer than expected, and he only arrived at the shores of Haifa on Hoshana Rabba in the afternoon. He was forced to spend Simchas Torah in Haifa and only came to the Belzer Rav for Shabbos Bereishis.

It's a Belzer custom to sing the *piyut* אמונים אשר נאספו three times on Shabbos Bereishis. (The *piyut* is printed in *machzorim* before the *Shemonah Esrei* of Shacharis on Shmini Atzeres.) While the chassidim sang this song, Reb Moshe was lamenting over the fact that he didn't arrive earlier.

When they finished singing, the Rebbe whispered into his ears, "Shabbos Bereishis is also associated with the *heilige teg*"- Shabbos Bereishis is also part of the holy yomim tovim.

Indeed, on Shabbos Bereishis, many people eat round challah dipped in honey, and all shuls still have a white *paroches* over the aron *hakodesh*. Shabbos Bereishis is like a transitional phase, closing the yomim tovim and transporting the inspiration into the rest of the year.

Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succos, and Shemini Atzeres have passed, holy days filled with much *avodah*, days of worry (from the judgment) and of joy, of spiritual heights and even some spiritual descents (as the pattern of growth goes with ups and downs). We went through a lot during these days, and now on Shabbos Bereishis we transmit what transpired into the rest of the year.¹

If we could look into one's heart at this time, we would probably find three different emotions- regret, yearning, and relief.

(1) On Shabbos Bereishis, one can feel regret, since the yomim tovim is a time we draw fear of Heaven, *teshuvah*, and joy for the entire year. From these days, we receive Hashem's bounty and blessings for the year to come. We regret that we weren't more cautious with our time. We could have received so much more. (2) There is also a feeling of yearning because we don't want to part from these holy days, leaving the greatest heights to descend to the lowest levels. Many people wish that they could remain so spiritual the entire year. (3) Unfortunately, some people feel relieved that these days are finally over. Those who don't connect to this holy time find these days stressful and are happy that these days have finally come to an end.

1. Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin taught: Everything in the Torah is contained in *chumash Bereishis*. [The average person doesn't recognize it, but concealed within the words of *chumash Bereishis* are all the halachos and lessons stated in the other four *chumashim* that follow it. Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin continued and said]: Everything in *chumash Bereishis* can be found in *parashas Bereishis*. And everything in *parashas Bereishis* is contained in the very first *passuk* of the *parashah* (בראשית ברא אלקים, etc.) Everything that's in this first *passuk* is concealed in the first letter of *Bereishis* (the letter ב). And everything that is in the ב is found in a drop of ink at the edge of the ב. And that drop of ink represents a Torah that is so high and so concealed.

The Tzemach Tzedek zt'l taught that Hashem is very happy on Shabbos Bereishis. His joy can be compared to the joy of a father when he brings his son to cheder for the first time to learn Torah.

Many have a mixture of all three emotions, but each person will have a different dominant one.

Let us discuss these three emotions to discover the Torah-true way of thinking.

Regret

For those who truly regret not taking advantage of these days, realize that you can still access and tap into its spirituality.

Rashi (*Bereishis* 28:17) tells us that Yaakov Avinu said, "How could I have passed the site where my parents davened and not daven there?" Yaakov Avinu began to return to Har HaMoriah, and the mountain came to him! Rashi writes, "והזר עד בית אל וקפצה לו הארץ", "Yaakov returned until Beis El and the earth jumped towards him..." Har HaMoriah came to him so he could pray there (see *Sanhedrin* 95).

The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* says this is how it always is when it comes to *ruchniyus*. When you yearn for it, it comes to you.

The Arugas HaBosem explains that after the yomim tovim, people ask themselves, "How did I let these holy days pass without taking proper advantage of them?" This feeling of regret is mainly found in the later generations. Many feel guilty that they didn't do more and let these days pass without sufficient inspiration. But do not despair. When you yearn for these days, the days come back to you. You can find yourself in the middle of the year and still experience Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, or Succos.

On Rosh Hashanah, we attain *yiras Shamayim*, on Yom Kippur, we have feelings of *teshuvah*; and on Succos, we draw buckets of joy and love for Hashem. Hashem knows that in the later generations, we will not make use of the yomim tovim, and we will think back and ask ourselves, "How did I allow these special days to pass without fear, *teshuvah*, and joy? I hardly accomplished what I wanted to. I wish these days were here again." When you have those thoughts, the holy days come back to you.

There is another important lesson that we must discuss. Even if you did lose out and didn't take advantage of the gift of the yomim tovim that Hashem gave us, don't despair and don't give up. Instead, make the future better.

Crying over the past won't get us anywhere. Making the future better will.

This is why we read *Bereishis* on the Shabbos after Simchas Torah, although it seems more appropriate to read it on the first Shabbos after Rosh Hashanah. The Shinover Rav *zt'l* and Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* explain that since we may look back at Tishrei and be upset that we didn't take advantage of these days, we are told בראשית, don't worry about the past, we can begin serving Hashem now.

The first letter of the Torah is a ב"ת. It is closed from all three sides and opened in front. This tells us that our focus should be on the future. We block out the past and focus on improving the future.

The first twelve days after Simchas Torah are special days. Reb Chaim Palagi (*Sefer Chaim siman* 36) writes, "It's the custom of chassidim to be cautious with their thoughts, speech, and deeds during these twelve days [following Simchas Torah], for they correspond to the twelve months of the year. The righteous stay home on these twelve days and review what they studied, and this is a big *segulah* to receive Hashem's *siyata dishmaya* every day of the year, from the beginning of the year until its end. He will succeed with everything he does, whether in Torah, chassidus, or business."

If a person despairs and gives up after Simchas Torah, he loses the blessings from the following twelve days. So, let this be a reminder for us that we should never give up. We wanted the best and to experience the yomim tovim on a spiritual high, but if we didn't, be happy with what was and make the future better.

There is more to talk about on the topic of regret because regret is a very common

reaction, which leads to sadness and despair that weakens and lessens our avodas Hashem. We will speak more about this subject later in this booklet, but first, let's discuss the other two emotions we feel after the yomim tovim pass.

Yearning

Another common feeling we can have when the yomim tovim pass is a yearning to remain on a spiritual high, not wanting to leave our closeness with Hashem. To this, we respond, "So don't leave. Take the yom tov with you for the entire year."

In the yom tov *tefillos* we say, והנחילנו ה' אלקינו ... מועדי קדשך ידה רעוא קמיה, "You gave us as an inheritance Your holy holidays..." An inheritance is something one takes with him. Now that the holidays are over, we are left with the inheritance to take along with us for the rest of the year.

We say (*zemiros* Friday night), יהא רעוא קמיה, דתשרי על עמיה. Hinted in these words is a request that דתשרי על עמיה, the mitzvos of the month of Tishrei should remain with the Jewish nation for the entire year.

Someone asked a Karliner chassid who merited being with his Rebbe for yom tov, "How did the yom tov pass?"

The chassid replied, "The yom tov didn't pass. It went inside me." We take the lessons and the inspiration of yom tov with us throughout the year.

Chazal say that after the seven days of Succos, Hashem asks the Jewish nation to stay and celebrate one more day (Shemini Atzeres) because קשה עלי פרידתכם, "It is hard for Me when you leave."

One translation of פרידה is a mule, which is an animal that can't bear children. We can explain that Hashem says, קשה עלי פרידתכם, it is distressful for me when you don't take the yom tov with you to act upon the inspiration you received, and you act like a mule that doesn't bear fruit.

It states (*Tehillim* 118), אסרו חג בעבותים, tie down the holidays with ropes. We must tie it down and keep it with us the entire year.

The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* said, "People try hard to tie the yom tov to them. Actually, the yom tov never leaves us. The problem is that we leave the yom tov. Our goal should be to bind ourselves to the yom tov. This is the meaning of אסרו חג בעבותים; we should attach ourselves to the yom tov."²

2. A landlord in Golders Green, London, was always careful to lease his apartments to people he trusted would pay rent. If the person applying for an apartment appeared to be untrustworthy, he would find an excuse not to rent it to him.

But there was a time, ten to twenty years ago, when there were many vacancies in the Golders Green area, and he realized that he couldn't be too picky. If he found a potential tenant, he accepted him, even if he feared that he might not pay.

At least with one of his tenants, his fears materialized, and the tenant refused to pay rent.

The landlord summoned him to court, but he feared that he will lose the case because in England, the renter is favored in court over the landlord. The judge asked the tenant why he hadn't paid the rent. He replied, "He leased me a deficient apartment. The heating and air conditioning didn't work, and there are also problems with the plumbing and electricity. I asked the landlord numerous times to fix these problems, but my requests fell on deaf ears. I had to pay tradesmen to come fix my apartment. So, why should I pay the rent, too?"

The landlord feared he would lose the case because he had no proof with which to disprove the tenant's claims.

The purpose of the yomim tovim isn't only for the yom tov itself. The goal is that it should be good afterwards, too.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* compared it to a *chasan* who went home after his *chasunah* and didn't take his *kallah* with him! People asked the *chasan* why he didn't take the *kallah* home. He replied, "The main thing is that it was a nice *chasunah*."

How foolish is his answer! The *chasunah* is the introduction to married life, but it isn't an end to itself.

Similarly, the yomim tovim are meant to bring us to higher places, to an improved *avodas Hashem*. When the yomim tovim pass, we aren't finished with our service. We need to go on further.

Someone driving along the highway stopped at a gas station to fill his car with gas. After his tank was filled, he parked on the side of the gas station and said, "I like it here. It's a good place. There is a good view and plenty of shade. People come and fill up their cars with gas... Why leave?"

Someone explained to him, "The purpose of a gas station is to travel further, not to stay in that spot."

We just had a Tishrei, we did great mitzvos, and we climbed to greater heights. The purpose isn't to remain there forever. It's time to move on and draw on the inspiration we acquired the rest of the year.

Reb Eizek Yekel's of Krakow (*niftar* 370 years ago, ת"ג) dreamed that there was a large treasure under a bridge. He went to the

bridge and dug there to find it. A police officer arrived and asked him what he was doing. Reb Eizik told him the truth. "I dreamed that there's a great treasure under this bridge."

The officer replied, "Why do you take dreams literally? I also had a dream. I dreamed that there's a great treasure under the oven of a Yid called Reb Eizik Yekel's of Krakow. Do you think I searched for a Reb Eizik Yekel's of Krakow to search under his oven? I'm not crazy enough to do such a thing. It was a dream, and dreams don't mean anything."

Reb Eizik Yekel's didn't tell the goy that his name is Eizik Yekel's. He immediately went home, dug under his oven, and found a great treasure. With a portion of the money, he built a beautiful shul in Krakow called "Eizik Shul."

One year, after Yom Kippur, the Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zt'l* (*Likutei Imrei Chaim, Motzei Yom Kippur*) told this story. He explained that people think Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the treasure because on these days, we reach high spiritual levels. But when these days arrive, they discover that they have the treasure within *themselves*. They have so much potential. They have so many talents. There is so much that they can do.

On the yomim tovim we find our personal treasure, and after the yomim tovim pass, we need to make use of the treasures we found. There is a lot to do. The yomim tovim may be over, but we have our work cut out

However, the judge asked the tenant, "Did you pay rent for at least one month? If you didn't even pay rent the first month, that proves you never intended to pay rent." He hadn't paid even the first month, so the judge ordered him to pay up entirely.

Reb Elchanan Halprin *zt'l* of Radumishla told this story and said that it is a lesson in *kabбалos tovos*. Sometimes people have excuses why they didn't keep their *kabбалos*. But the Heavenly court will ask, "Did you keep your *kabballah* at least once? Did you begin the year adhering to the *kabбалos* you took on? If you didn't even begin with your *kabбалos*, that shows you weren't serious, and you never truly intended to keep them.

for us in avodas Hashem, which we should invest in throughout the year.

We must take the yom tov with us. We must live the year with the inspiration we received on the yomim tovim. But it isn't an easy task to do so, as we will explain.

After Adam HaRishon ate from the Tree of Knowledge, Hashem asked him (3:9), אִיכָהּ, "Where are you?" Hashem said, "Before you sinned, you were higher than the *malachim*. What happened to you? How did you fall so low?"

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* writes that on Shabbos Bereishis, everyone should ask himself (3:9), אִיכָהּ, "Where are you?" There was a Rosh Hashanah, the holy Yom Kippur, Succos, Hoshana Rabba, very high, exalted times. You did *teshuvah*. You made *kabbalos* to become better. But where are you now? How did you fall so suddenly?"

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* talks about a chassid who stood in the marketplace in Warsaw and watched the masses rushing around, everyone trying to earn some money. The chassid raised his eyes to Heaven and asked, "Ribono Shel Olam, where are you, and where am I?"

This is how people feel when the yomim tovim pass and they return to the marketplace. They had such high times, learning Torah, davening, sitting in the *succah*, taking the four *minim*, etc., and suddenly they are back in the workplace, often among goyim, and they ask themselves, אִיכָהּ, "Where am I? What happened to my connection to Hashem? How did I fall so drastically?"

And most importantly, one should ask himself, "What can I do to keep the spirit of the yomim tovim with me throughout the year?"

A Yid from Lelov was traveling to the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*, but he didn't know the way. He asked for directions.

"Walk down the main road until you reach an intersection. You'll see a pole with

four arrows at its tip, directing to four cities. Go in the direction that points to Lublin."

When he arrived at the fork in the road, he didn't find the sign. He looked around for it and found it buried in the snow. The sign was knocked over in a snowstorm. He picked up the wooden pole with four wooden arrows at its tip. One said Lelov, one said Lublin, etc., but he didn't know how to erect the pole with its arrows! How can he know which road goes to Lublin?

But then he suddenly came up with a clever idea. He knew which road led to Lelov since he had just come from there. He pointed the arrow that read Lelov to the road he came from, which helped him determine which arrow pointed to Lublin.

The first time I heard this story was at a *sheva brachos*. The speaker said to the *chasan*, "You are beginning a new life, chartering new waters, and you are afraid because you don't know the path. But you do know where you came from. Remember the house you were brought up in, the *chinuch* you received, and that will help you find your path in your new life.

We can use this *mashal* for this time of year after the *yomim tovim* have passed. Perhaps your inspiration has dwindled. It isn't the same as when it was Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succos, and Simchas Torah. But you know where you came from. You know the thoughts and ideas you had then. Let those be your guide for the upcoming year. Follow your inspiration to know what you should do in the future.

There was a town fool whom everyone called "Motel Naar" (Motel the Fool). People saw Motel crying on his wedding day and asked him about that. He replied, "Now, people call me 'Motel Chasan,' but when the week of *sheva brachos* ends, I know that people will call me "Motel the Fool" once again. That's why I'm crying."

Rebbe Hershel Ziditchover *zt'l* told this *mashal* and expressed that this is what happens to people after yom tov passes.

They were wise for seven or eight days; they felt connected to Hashem and used their days wisely. But as soon as the yomim tovim pass, they return to their foolish selves again.

It states (*Yeshayah* 1:6), מכף רגל עד ראש אין בי, "From the sole until the head, I have no perfection." The Noda b'Yehudah explains that כף רגל alludes to Simchas Torah (which Chazal call רגל בפני עצמו) and ראש is ראש השנה. The *pasuk* thus says, מכף רגל עד ראש from Simchas Torah until next year's Rosh Hashanah אין בי, "I have no perfection. All the inspiration and good *kabbalos* I had during the yomim tovim were forgotten; I no longer have perfection. However, we must strive that it shouldn't be so. We must strive that the influence of the yomim tovim, with their *emunah* messages, remain with us throughout the year.

The Midrash (*Koheles* 9) writes, "When Yidden leave the beis medresh a *bas kol* goes forth and says, 'Eat your bread with joy because Hashem has accepted your deeds.'" According to its simple meaning, this refers to every day. After the tefillah, Hashem tells us to be joyous because our tefillos were answered.

Reb Leibele Eiger *zt'l* (*Toras Emes, Simchas Torah*, תרמ"ב) adds, "We can explain that this Midrash refers to Simchas Torah, the day we complete the tefillos of the yomim tovim. A *bas kol* assures the Jewish nation that their tefillos were accepted."

But then the question is, why didn't Moshiach come? We daven for Moshiach, especially so on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos. If our tefillos were answered, why don't we see the results? Also, each person davened for their own personal salvation, be it *parnassah*, *shidduchim*, health, etc. Our tefillos were answered, so why don't we see the results? Why do people sometimes remain with the same problems year after year?

The Yismach Moshe *zt'l* (*Re'eh*) raises this issue from another *pasuk*. After the yomim tovim, Hashem says to the nation (*Yirmiyahu*

31:15), מנעי קולך מבכי ועיניך מדמעה כי יש שכר לפעולתך, "Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tearing, for there is a reward for your work." Hashem tells us that our *avodah* and tefillos were accepted, and we can stop davening.

The question is if our tefillos were answered, why doesn't the *Moshiach* come? Why don't we see the salvation we prayed for?

The Yismach Moshe says that the answer lies in the following *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 31:16), ושבנו בנינו לגבולם, people return to their old ways. Immediately after the yomim tovim, people revert to their old ways, and thereby they forfeit the salvation that was coming to them.

But if we take the yomim tovim with us throughout the year, we will merit the salvation and the coming of Moshiach that we prayed for.

Relief

We now address a third feeling people have when the yomim tovim pass, and it isn't something to be proud of. It is a feeling of relief and joy that yom tov is over and behind us.

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* explained this concept with the following *mashal*:

A simple farmer lived on his farm by himself for many years and didn't know how to daven. When he moved to a larger city and began attending beis medresh, he needed help with where to start, where to end, and what to add on special days.

A friend from the beis medresh took it upon himself to help the farmer. He showed him what to say on weekdays, Shabbos, and special occasions.

When the days of *selichos* arrived, the friend told the farmer, "For a couple of weeks, we will be awakening early and spending more time in the beis medresh."

The farmer wasn't happy to hear that. He didn't like long tefillos.

Before Rosh Hashanah, his friend told him to expect long tefillos. The farmer almost fell off his chair from despair when he heard that. Then came Yom Kippur, and then Succos with *Hallel* and *Hoshanos*. It was all very long and hard for the unlearned farmer.

Simchas Torah was approaching, and he was again informed about the long tefillos and long *hakafos*.

"By the way things are going," said the farmer, "I figure that after Simchas Torah there'll be another long tefillah coming up."

"Actually, after Simchas Torah, things go back to regular," his friend said.

"Baruch Hashem!" the farmer exclaimed with feeling.

That Simchas Torah, he danced with all his might because he was happy that his painful ordeal was reaching its end.

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* said:

Woe to those who are happy when these days pass. The yomim tovim aren't hurdles to pass, but rather opportunities for growth and connection with Hashem.

Motzei Simchas Torah, the Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zt'l* said to one of his chassidim, "Would you want to begin all over again, beginning with the first night of Selichos?" And he started singing *אשרי יושבי ביתך* in the unique tune of the first night of Selichos.

The Imrei Chaim loved the yomim tovim, and when the yomim tovim passed, he was ready to start them all over again.

What can we do to have a better appreciation and love for the yomim tovim, so much that we are upset when they depart? One counsel is to know what is truly important in life. When Torah and mitzvos, fear and love of Hashem are our primary goals, we will be happy with the yomim tovim.

A resort was constructed especially for religious Yidden. Deep green pastures covered the vast grounds, dotted with picnic tables, and there were parks for recreation. The living quarters were comfortable and nicely furnished. There was also a large dining hall with a kitchen. There was a large beis medresh on the grounds, as well.

A visitor to this resort understood that this place is either a yeshiva or a hotel.

The difference between these two possibilities is huge. If it is a yeshiva, the primary room is the beis medresh. Everything else enables the bachurim to devote themselves to Torah study with peace of mind and good health. However, if it was a vacation resort, the primary purpose is recreation, and the beis medresh is secondary.

This is people's quandary when they observe the beautiful world Hashem created. What is the purpose of it all? Is it all for recreation so people can enjoy the various pleasures of life, or is it all for serving Hashem and studying Torah?

The Torah answers this question. The first word of the Torah is *בראשית*, and Chazal explain that *ראשית* alludes to Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and the Jewish nation. The word *בראשית* teaches us that the world was created so the Jewish nation would study Torah and serve Hashem. Everything else is secondary.

With this thought in mind, we will appreciate the yomim tovim, for these days help us reach our primary goals.

The snake said to Chavah, *אף כי אמר אלקים*, "לא תאכלו מכל עץ הגן..." "Did Hashem say that you may not eat from all trees in the garden?" The Chidushei HaRim said that *אף* can be translated, "So what?" The snake told Chavah, "So what if Hashem commanded? Does that mean you have to listen?" The Chidushei HaRim explains that the *yetzer hara* continues to use this method in our generation to cool off people's *yiras shamayim*. He comes to a person and says, "Who says that it's so important to listen to these laws? Is it really so important? What will happen

if you don't listen?" With this conniving approach, he causes people to sin and to transgress Hashem's will.

When we understand what is essential in life, we will know that there is nothing worse than *aveiros* and nothing more important than Torah and mitzvos.

Regret Leads to Despair

Let us now return to the problem of regret that so many people struggle with. There are cert times when regret is praiseworthy. One must regret his wrong deeds. Nevertheless, such thoughts are productive only during times designated for teshuvah. As a rule, instead of regret, we should focus on improvement.

Gemara (*Yoma* 29.) says, הרהרי עבירה קשו, מעבירה, and the Chazon Ish *zt'l* explained, "Being depressed about *aveiros* is worse than the *aveiros* itself."

The Kotzker *zt'l* taught, "More than the *aveirah*, the *yetzer hara* wants the despair that comes after the *aveirah*."³

It states (6:5-7), וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ וכל יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל היום וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם בארץ ויתעצב אל לבו ויאמר ה' אמהה את האדם אשר בראתי.⁴

The Chebiner Rav *zt'l* repeated a wonderful explanation on these words following the path of *remez*. He heard the lesson איש מפי איש from the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*:

וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ, Hashem sees the many bad deeds that people commit, but Hashem isn't angry with them because Hashem understands that וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום, people have a *yetzer hara* – it isn't their fault. How could they stand up against such a strong *yetzer hara*?

וינחם ה', Hashem regrets creating the *yetzer hara*. The Gemara (*Succah* 52) lists four things that Hashem regrets, one of them is creating the *yetzer hara*, as it states (*Michah* 4:7), אשר אדיר, "I did bad," and the Gemara (*Brachos* 32) explains that Hashem takes responsibility

3. Reb Gad'l Eizner *zt'l* said, "I'm not afraid of the *aveirah*. I'm afraid of עבירה גוררת עבירה, of what this *aveirah* can lead to." Because *aveiros* bring people to feel despair, which leads them to worse *aveiros*.

4. The pasuk is saying that Hashem saw man's sinful ways, therefore, ויתעצב אל לבו. There are different explanations to these final three words (see Rashi who says two explanations). The Imrei Emes of Gur *zt'l* says that the pasuk is saying that Hashem decided to make mankind sad. Hashem wanted that there be problems in life, because that keeps everyone in place.

He bases his explanation on the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 109.), אנשי סדום לא נתגאו אלא בשביל טובה שהשפיע להם הקב"ה, "The people of Sodom were haughty because of the goodness Hakadosh Baruch Hu bestowed on them." They had so much goodness that they thought nothing bad could ever happen to them.

The pasukim elaborate on the good they had:

It states (*Iyov* 21), "There was no fear in their homes, and Hashem's punishment didn't come to them. Their bulls impregnated without fail, and the cows didn't miscarry. They sent their children out like sheep, and the children would dance about. They raised their voices like drums and harps, and they rejoiced to the sound of a flute. Their days were spent with goodness, and their years were pleasant... [They said to Hashem], 'Go away from us. We don't want to know Hashem's ways. Who is Hashem that we should serve Him, and what bad will happen to us if we rebel against Him?'"

This is the reason Hashem decided to give troubles to mankind. This keeps in them place, and they won't do everything they desire.

Furthermore, there's a rule that when one is happy nothing bad can befall him. Therefore, ויתעצב אל לבו, Hashem made mankind sad, so affliction could befall them.

for Yidden's *aveiros* because He created the *yetzer hara*.⁵

However, ויתעצב אל לבו, if a person becomes sad and upset that he did so many *aveiros*, and loses hope, then ויאמר ה' אמוחה את האדם אשר בראתי, Hashem says He will destroy man. This is because man must be happy, no matter what. There is nothing worse than *yeush* and falling into *atzvus* because there is no knowing how far he will fall because of that.⁶

Hashem asked Kayin (4:6), למה נפלו פניך, "Why did your face fall?" The Seforno explains, "Whenever one is faced with a problem that has a solution, it isn't proper to be upset about what happened. Instead, one should look to the future and try to rectify it." Hashem told Kayin that if he didn't bring a good *korban*, it was a problem, but there

was a solution. There would be another chance for him to be *makriv* a better one. And when something can be fixed, there is no place for sadness.

Tosfos (*Sanhedrin* 70:) says that Adam wanted to cover himself with leaves, but the trees didn't permit him to take from their branches. Instead, they rebuked him, calling him a thief, etc. Only the fig tree permitted him to take her leaves. Adam wrapped himself with the fig leaves.

One opinion states that the Tree of Knowledge was a fig tree, and only this tree permitted Adam to take its leaves.

In Yiddish, a fig is called *a faag*.

A faag is also a Yiddish expression that means something like, "I don't care what

5. The grandson of Rebbe Henoch of Alexander *zt'l* had his bar mitzvah on Shabbos Bereishis. The Rebbe of Alexander told his grandson that בראשית is *gematriya* תרי"ג.

The bright bar mitzvah *bachur* immediately asked, "But בראשית also has a 'ש'!" The letters of בראשית, without the תרי"ג are *gematriya* תרי"ג, but there's a *shin* there, too.

The Rebbe replied that ש is *gematriya* יצר, the *yetzer hara*. בראשית implies that when one rids himself from the יצר הרע, he will be able to keep the תרי"ג mitzvos.

The Rebbe added that this is the meaning of the phrase we say on Yom Kippur, לברית הבט ואל תפן ליצר: You can keep the תרי"ג mitzvos (which are *gematriya* ברי"ת with the *kollel*) when you don't pay attention to the *yetzer hara*.

In this week's *parashah* it says, (2:18) ויאמר ה' אלקים לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר כנגדו. The Akeidah explains (ברדך) that the עזר, the helper, alludes to the *yetzer hara*. Hashem says, לא טוב היות האדם לבדו, it isn't good for man to be alone, without struggles and challenges. The primary value of our deeds is when we are confronted with challenges and we overcome them to serve Hashem.

Rebbe Yochanan of Stolin *zy'a* told the following parable: An artist drew a beautiful painting that sold for a lot of money. He also made prints, copies of the painting, and sold those for a fraction of the price of the original painting. The copies are just as beautiful as the original. Why are they worth so much less? The answer is: Art isn't only about beauty. It's about appreciating the effort and talents that went into making the painting. Rebbe Yochanon of Stolin *zt'l* said the same is with *avodas Hashem*. It isn't solely our deeds that Hashem desires. The heart and effort that one puts into the mitzvos are what make them truly valuable.

6. The *Yesod HaAvodah* (vol.2, 6) writes in a letter, "Years ago, in a war, the general received a letter saying that the enemy had broken through their military strongholds. The general became very down.

When he told his wife about it, she replied, "I also just received a letter. It came just this minute. It tells of a greater loss than what you told me."

'Really! What does it say?'

'It says that in addition to losing that fort, you lost your morale (your מורא) and that is the greatest loss.'

you say or what you think; I have my own way."

Reb Ben Tzion Apter *zt'l* explained that the trees were teasing and rebuking Adam for his *aveirah* and didn't permit him to take from their branches. They called him a thief and other derogatory names. But Adam didn't allow himself to be insulted or broken. He took fig leaves. In other words, he responded to the trees, "A *faag*. I don't care what you say. Call me a sinner. Call me whatever you want. I will be happy, regardless."

Adam and Chava took the leaves and fashioned belts, as it states (3:7), ויתפרו עלי תאנה, ויעשו להם חגורות. The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* said that 'belts' is an expression for strengthening oneself. (As we say, אזור ישראל בגבורה, Hashem girds us with strength, and there's a Yiddish expression זיך אונגעגארטלט, which means to put on a belt and make oneself strong). After his *aveirah*, he didn't permit himself to feel down. He girded himself with confidence and joy and was ready to serve Hashem again.

The Ruzhiner Rebbe *zt'l* told the following story:

A Russian Czar suffered from a phobia. He always thought that his enemies were seeking to kill him. When he traveled, he had soldiers scout the area ahead, and when he met up with his soldiers, they would tell him if the area was safe to continue riding.

Once, a loyal soldier checked an area in the forest and determined it safe for the Czar to pass through. He waited at his post for the Czar's arrival.

The sun was shining brightly, and there was a lake nearby. The soldier thought he

had some time before the Czar arrived, so he bathed in the lake and drank the water.

The Czar arrived, and still undressed, the soldier rushed to his post to tell the Czar that the coast was clear and that the Czar could safely ride on.

The Czar barked, "Don't you know it is disrespectful to stand before me without clothing?"

The soldier replied, "I know. But why should the Czar wait because of my negligence in leaving my post? So, I came here as quickly as possible to tell the Czar he can travel."

The *nimshal* is that we shouldn't allow past sins to prevent us from serving Hashem. Even if we have become naked and disgraced because of our sins, it doesn't permit us to become lax from doing our service before Hashem.

Adam said to Hashem (3:10-11), את קולך שמעתי בגן ואירא כי עירום אנכי ואחבא, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I am undressed, so I hid."

He was also spiritually naked because of his sin and didn't feel worthy to stand before Hashem.

Hashem replied, מי הגיד לך כי עירום אתה, "Who told you that you are naked?"

Hashem said, "Who told you that this is a valid reason not to stand before Me? When I summon for you, you must come. Even if you are naked due to sins, that doesn't exempt you from doing what is incumbent upon you."⁷

7. Chazal say, "Whoever says פרק שירה every day, I testify, he is a ben Olam HaBa. He will merit learning and teaching Torah, and he will remember Torah. He will be saved from the *yetzer hara* and merit to see the era of Moshiach."

Why is saying פרק שירה so special?

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* explains, "When a person sins, he loses his *tzelem Elokim* and he appears like a *rachmana litzlan*, בהמה. Sometimes his sins are so great until he takes on the appearance of a rodent

"Let Us Make Man"

After every part of Creation, Hashem declared that it was good. וירא אלקים כי טוב, "Hashem saw it was good." The exception was when man was created. The Torah doesn't say, וירא אלקים כי טוב. This is surprising. The entire purpose of creation was for man, yet Hashem doesn't say explicitly that this creation was good.

The Yismach Moshe *zt'l* (ד"ה א"י ולי מה יקרו) (רע"ך) explains that this is because a person wasn't created "good." He has many faults, and he has a strong yetzer hara. He becomes good on his own, by improving his ways.

Hashem says, נעשה אדם, "Let us make man." It is written in plural because it is the partnership of Hashem and the person that makes a person as he should be. Man must do his part to perfect himself and to make himself good.

We are discovering that the essence of man is far lower than we would like to admit. With these thoughts in mind, one won't be surprised when he falls from his levels.

During *minchah* on *Yom Kippur* we read from *parashas Kedoshim*, which discusses the prohibitions of *arayos*, forbidden marriages. Why must we be reminded of these lowly sins at such a holy time? Presumably, people don't have these kinds of tests at this exalted time of *Yom Kippur*.

The answer is, once again, that we shouldn't underestimate the *yetzer hara* or overestimate who we are. Even on *Yom*

Kippur, we have not become angels, and we must be cautious when faced with tests.

But if one passes the tests, he will reach very high levels. This is because the Zohar (vol.2 184.) says, ליכא נהורא דנפיק אלא מגו חשוכא, "Light shines solely from darkness." If it weren't for the darkness, there wouldn't be light. So, man's imperfection is what gives him hope to attain the highest levels.

The *parashah* begins, ... תהו ובהו וחשך... בראשית... ויאמר אלקים יהי אור. The Midrash (see *Bereishis Rabba* 23:5) says, תהו ובהו וחשך, which represents the bad deeds of the *resha'im*. But if one continues serving Hashem, Hashem will say, יהי אור, "Let there be light," and he will reach very high levels in *avodas Hashem*.

Chazal (*Avodah Zarah* 8.) teach, "The day Adam was created, the sun set. Adam said, 'Woe is my portion! The world is turning dark because of my sin. The world will revert to being תהו ובהו, void and emptiness.' He sat and cried all night.

"But then daybreak came. He said, 'This is the way of the world.'" He discovered that there is darkness, but then comes light. This is the way of the world and the reality of a human being (see *Tzidkas HaTzaddik* 11).⁸

The Sign of Emunah

It states (*Bereishis* 9:2), מוראכם וחמתכם יהיה על כל חיה הארץ. This means that naturally, animals fear human beings. But after Kayin killed Hevel, Kayin feared that animals would kill him. He lost the *tzelem Elokim*, the appearance of a true human being, and he

(שרץ) or other non-kosher animals. If he can sing to Hashem from that lowly level for all the kindness Hashem does for him, he deserves all the rewards Chazal list.

For that is the highest level: to pick oneself up and to serve and praise Hashem, no matter which level one falls to.

8. It states (*Yerushalmi Brachos* 8:5), "Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave intelligence into Adam's heart. He took two stones and rubbed them together and a fire came forth, and he made a *brachah* on the fire." Adam didn't wait until daytime came. He made attempts to bring light into the darkness. Similarly, when one falls from his *avodas Hashem* it is possible to enlighten the situation by strengthening oneself to serve Hashem, doing what he can, even at that fallen level, seeking to create light even when it is dark.

feared that animals wouldn't fear him anymore. Therefore (4:15), וישם ה' לקין אות לבלתי, "Hashem gave a sign for Kayin to protect him from being smitten by whoever sees him."

What was that sign?

The Or HaChaim writes that the אות was a mitzvah that Kayin performed. Every mitzvah that one performs becomes engraved on his forehead, and Kayin performed a mitzvah, which was engraved on his forehead, and that was his protection.

Which mitzvah did Kayin do?

The Or HaChayim says it was his Emunah. Kayin said, והיה כל מוצאי ירנגי, "Whoever sees me will kill me." He understood that he lost Hashem's Hashgachah Pratis, and this frightened him. His awareness and *Emunah* that he needs Hashem to protect him was his mitzvah. This mitzvah of Emunah was engraved on his forehead, and that was his protection.

The Lechovitzer zt'l explains that לבלתי, is referring to the heart. "So his heart won't pound for everything that happens to him." When people lack *Emunah*, their heart will pump vigorously whenever a challenge or frightening experience arises in their life.

But those who have *Emunah* aren't afraid. לבלתי הכות אותו כל מוצאו, his heart won't pump and beat heavily within him due to life's challenges and worries.

We would assume that Hevel should have a better future than Kayin. After all, Kayin was a murderer, while Hevel was the one who brought the korban which Hashem

accepted.⁹ But it seems that the world came from Kayin (and his brother Shes), and nothing came from Hevel. It doesn't seem fair. Why should Hevel get less than Kayin.

But let's look at what occurred from a broader perspective:

The holy sefarim tell us that מוש"ה is *roshei teivos* for משה שת הבל. These three had the same neshamah. Hevel was killed and was reincarnated in his brother, Shes, and later in Moshe. From this we can derive that Hevel **did** have descendants. They were born to him when he was reincarnated as Shes.

Kayin, however, was left without any descendants at all. All of his children were destroyed in the flood. Only Noach and his family, descendants of Shes, survived. The Chasam Sofer zt'l discusses these ideas to show how everything is just and correct. Hevel deserved more and Kayin less, and this is what occurred.

Maavir Sedrah

Rebbe Mendel of Kotzk *zy'a* said that on Simchas Torah we don't only celebrate that we finished the Torah, we are also rejoicing in the starting of the Torah again.

Based on this, *Shabbos Bereishis* is an ideal time to encourage fellow Yidden to learn the *parashah* each week of the year and to be *maavir sidra*.

The Shulchan Aruch "(285:2) states, "Although one listens to the Torah reading each week, one is obligated to read the *parashah* himself- twice the *parashah* and once *targum Unkelus*. The *yirei shamayim* also read Rashi's commentary and also the *targum*."

9. Hevel was killed by his jealous brother Kayin. The Maharal asks, why didn't Hevel's mitzvah protect him from death? Isn't it written (*Koheles* 8:5), שומר מצוה לא ידע דבר רע, "Those who guard the mitzvos won't know of troubles"?

The Maharal answers that Hevel's mitzvah was imperfect, because it says, והבל הביא גם הוא מבכורות צאנו, "Hevel also brought from his first-born sheep" (4:4). גם implies that Hevel was copying his brother Kayin; he wasn't acting on his own.

There are many *segulos* in being *maavir sidra*:

The Gemara (*Brachos* 8) says, "Whoever is *maavir sidra*... his days and years are increased."

The Beis Ahron *zt'l* teaches that from being *maavir sidra*, we receive our *chiyus* (vitality) for all our needs for the entire week.

The Or LaShamayim said that cutting nails and being *maavir sidra* on Friday morning before *chatzos* (noon) is a guarantee that one will not commit severe sins that week.

The Chidushei HaRim, the Sar Shalom of Belz, and others said that those who review the *parashah* with *Rashi* each week will merit being in the yeshiva of *Rashi* in heaven.¹⁰

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* would study *chumash* with *Rashi* daily while wearing his *Rabbeinu Tam* tefillin.

Reviewing the *parashah* with *Rashi* is *mesugal* for *yiras shamayim*. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna *zt'l* once tested the *bachurim* in the *Arugas HaBosem's* yeshiva. After the test, the Rebbe said to the *Arugas HaBosem*, "They are excellent *bachurim*, but if they would be *maavir sidra*, they will have even more *yiras shamayim*."

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* (Imrei Pinchas, Torah 38-39) said that learning Chumash with *Rashi* is *mesugal* for having *Emunah*. He sent messengers to the Jewish communities, telling them to learn Chumash *Rashi* well. He explained that this would protect them from the *Heidemaks*, who were massacring the *Yidden*, who didn't convert to their religion. He explained that since they are raging a religious war, being strong and firm in one's *Emunah* will overcome them, and *Emunah* is attained through studying Chumash *Rashi*.

Tosfos Shabbos

The week was cursed, as stated in this week's *parashah*, *בועת אפך תאכל לחם* "with the sweat of your face, you will eat bread." In contrast, *Shabbos* is blessed and sanctified, as it states (also this week's *parashah*), *ויברך אלוקים*, "Hashem blessed the seventh day, and He sanctified it." The *Chofetz Chaim zt'l* says, why come to *Shabbos* at the last moment and leave it at the first opportunity? Shouldn't we desire to escape the curses of the weekdays and be within the blessings of *Shabbos*?"

Reb Zalman Sorotzkin *zt'l* taught, how do we know when a guest is enjoying the meal? If the guest asks for another portion, it's a sign that he is enjoying. Similarly, Reb Sorotzkin explained that *tosfos Shabbos*

10. A truthful *Yid* from Bnei Brak related that his childhood- friend was *niftar* young (at nineteen years old). He saw his friend in his dreams, and his friend told him that since he died young, he wasn't judged for his sins (see *Rashi, Bereishis* 23:1). At his death, *Rashi* came to greet him and he was immediately brought to *Rashi's heichal* (yeshiva) in heaven. He merited this because he would review *chumash* with *Rashi* each week.

11. When one keeps *tosfos Shabbos*, in addition to being rewarded for the *tosfos Shabbos*, he will also earn a greater reward for keeping *Shabbos*. He is demonstrating that *Shabbos* is important to him - and that's why he is extending it. And since *Shabbos* is important to him, his reward for keeping *Shabbos* increases.

It is written, *ביום השבת ביום השבת יערכנו* (*Vayikra* 24:8). The *Rav* of Biksad *zy'a* in *Shem Eliezer* explains that *ביום השבת* is written twice, as it refers to *tosfos Shabbos* on Friday afternoon and again *motzei Shabbos*. When one does so, *יערכנו* that proves that he values *Shabbos*. His reward will be *midah keneged midah*, *יערכנו*, that *Shabbos* will value him, and he will earn a greater reward for keeping *Shabbos*. Just as a high ranking army official receives better wages than a simple soldier, so will he earn a greater reward for keeping *Shabbos*.

demonstrates that we appreciate the Shabbos and want more of it.¹¹

The Rema writes, "The custom is to say *vehu rachum* and *barchu* with a long and pleasant tune [on the *Maariv* of *motzei* Shabbos] to add from Shabbos onto the weekday."

Rav Hay Gaon teaches us to draw out the *borchu* of *Motzei* Shabbos. He promises that

those who do so will have immense *hatzlachah* throughout the week. "This is בדוק ומנוסה, proven and true." (see *Shaarei Teshuvah* 293:2).

How long can a person stretch out these words? It will probably only be a few seconds longer. We learn from this that even just a few seconds of *tosfos* Shabbos are very precious to Hashem and will grant him many *brachos*.¹²

12. The Rebbe of Lechovitz *zy'a* said, "If people would listen to me, they would keep *tosfos* Shabbos, and they wouldn't lack anything throughout the week."

Rebbe Noach of Lechovitz *zy'a* explained that Shabbos is entirely spiritual, and therefore, one cannot earn material benefits from Shabbos. *Parnassah* comes specifically from *tosfos* Shabbos.