

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

Bo



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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## Torah Wellsprings - Bo

### Hashgachah Pratis

The Ramban at the end of Parashah Bo writes that the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* proved to Bnei Yisrael and the world that (1) Hashem exists, (2) He knows what is happening in the world, and (3) He leads the world with hashgachah pratis. The Ramban writes, "The wondrous miracles show that the world has a Creator Who created it from nothing, He knows, directs, and can do everything. And when miracles occur as a result of the Navi's word, that he quoted in Hashem's name, it confirms the truth of nevuah, that Hashem speaks to His prophets and tells them His will."

The Teshuas Chein (*Va'eira* ד"ה והפלתו) writes, "Pharaoh didn't believe that the world runs with *hashgachah pratis*, by Hashem's righteous judgment. As the Jewish nation lived under his rule, they were influenced by Pharaoh's philosophy. The sweet poison of heresy gradually caused the Yidden to adapt to his way of thinking. They believed in Hashem, but they said, 'Hashem is so great and so holy, and His *malachim* are holy, it doesn't make sense that Hashem will look down into this lowly world.' Indeed, the Rambam, in *Moreh Nevuchim*, writes that the Jewish nation in Mitzrayim was confused with this topic. And the truth is, to some extent, we haven't totally rid ourselves of this *tumah*. The *yetzer hara* dances among us and brings into our hearts the belief that matters happen by chance. To pull us out of these doubts, Hashem gave us the mitzvah to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim* every day. The miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim remind us that everything happens by Hashem's decree. A person doesn't stub his toe if it wasn't so decreed from Above. Everything that happens to us is directed by Hashem."

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l was telling his students that everything happens

by Hashem's hashgachah pratis, and even where an animal drops its dung is also planned by Hashem. A student heard this but didn't believe it. "Why should Hashem care about such matters?" he wondered.

Soon afterward, he slid on icy snow and almost fell off a cliff, but something bulging in the snow stopped his fall. He checked and saw it was animal dung frozen in the snow.

When he came to Rebbe Elimelech, his Rebbe immediately said with a smile, "Now do you believe that even the place an animal drops its dung is also planned by Hashem?"

Two chassidim came to Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zt'l and told him they wanted to join his chassidus. Rebbe Uri informed them that he only accepts chassidim who believe that everything is b'hashgachah pratis, and that even where straw falls is destined by Hashem.

The chassidim said they don't think Hashem's hashgachah is over such minor details, so they said goodbye and left. They felt unfortunate that they couldn't be counted among his chassidim.

But a couple of days later, they returned to Rebbe Uri and said, "Now we believe that even where straw falls, and even the direction the straw faces, are all b'hashgachah pratis."

The Rebbe asked them what caused them to change their mind. They replied, "If something drastic would occur in the world, for example, wild animals would come out of the forest and harm people, we would believe that Hashem knows about it and that it is directed by Hashem. Something of that magnitude, we understand, wouldn't happen by chance. But then we realized that compared to Hashem's greatness, anything that happens in this world is ultimately small and unimportant. And if we can

understand that Hashem knows major events that occur in the world, why shouldn't we believe that Hashem knows and directs even the minor matters of the world?"

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* ch.60) shows how many aspects of the *korban Pesach* represent the number One. For example, it must be (12:5) בן שנה, one year old; (12:46) בבית אחד יאכל, eaten in *one* house; and it is forbidden to break any of the bones into *two*, which means the bones must remain *one*. The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* ch.60) explains this because the *korban Pesach* reminds us that everything comes from the One Hashem. Nothing happens by itself without Hashem.

### Hishtadlus and Bitachon

Bnei Yissaschar writes that when one thinks everything happens naturally, when it comes to *parnassah*, "he will have to work by day and night. He is enslaved to his wife and to earning *parnassah* because he doesn't know that it is impossible to earn more than the amount that was decreed for him to receive. Such a person is still enslaved to *Mitzrayim*."

Reb Shlomo Friedman works as a taxi driver in Eretz Yisrael. He is different from the standard taxi driver who takes people for a short ride. Instead, Reb Shlomo advertises in the USA and England. When people come to Eretz Yisrael for a visit, they call him to be their personal driver throughout their stay. He drives his clients to *tzaddikim*, *kivrei tzaddikim*, interesting sites, and wherever they want to go. Once, Reb Shlomo was driving an American travel agent. Reb Shlomo said, "Please, do me a favor: When someone orders a ticket to Eretz Yisrael from you, tell them about me. Give them my business card." The Yid agreed, and Reb Shlomo gave him a stack of business cards.

Reb Shlomo thought this would bring in many calls, but surprisingly it didn't. Two or

three weeks passed, and Reb Shlomo still didn't receive any calls from this *hishtadlus*.

But then, he got a call. The caller told him he would be landing in Eretz Yisrael the next day, and Reb Shlomo made up to pick him up at the airport. The phone call ended, and Reb Shlomo wondered how this man had heard of him and which *hishtadlus* brought on this job.

When they met, the traveler's bag fell; among other items, a business card fell out. It was the business card that Reb Shlomo had given the travel agent.

The traveler said, "Ignore that card. I received it from a travel agent, but I'm not planning on calling that number. I want to go only with you. My brother-in-law gave me your number and highly recommended you, so I want you and no one else."

This traveler didn't realize that the phone number he received from his brother-in-law and the phone number on the business card was the same. He thought they were two different people.

So, what occurred is the following: Reb Shlomo did *hishtadlus*, and Hashem helped from a different place. This is because Hashem gives *parnassah*, and we are obligated to do *hishtadlus*, but there isn't always a connection between *hishtadlus* and *parnassah*. As the *Mesilas Yesharim* (21) writes, "A person is obligated to do *hishtadlus* for his *parnassah* because that is the decree from the Divine King. It is like a tax on mankind that cannot be avoided. But *hishtadlus* doesn't help; *hishtadlus* is a must. So, after a person does *hishtadlus*, he fulfilled his obligation and can now receive Hashem's blessing."

The man did *hishtadlus*, and Hashem showed him that the *parnassah* came from another place. *Hishtadlus* was necessary, but it wasn't the source of the income.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Chazon Ish zt'l once sent Reb Sholom Schwadron zt'l to *chutz l'aretz* to collect money for *Peilim* (a *kiruv* organization). Reb Sholom didn't succeed on this trip; he came back emptyhanded. A week afterwards,

It states (*Yirmiyahu* 17:7), 'ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בד', והיה ד' מבטחו "Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem; Hashem shall be his trust.

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l explains that this pasuk isn't repetitive. The first part of the pasuk refers to people who trust Hashem will send them parnassah through a specific means they prepare. However, blessed is the person who understands that Hashem can give parnassah in other ways, too. His trust is in Hashem and nothing else.

Shabbos is the *mekor habrachah*, the source of blessing and parnassah for the entire week, but on Shabbos, we don't work, and in the desert, on Shabbos, the manna didn't fall. This proves that parnassah doesn't come from work but from Hashem's blessings.

The Alshich HaKadosh *zy'a* was once teaching his students about bitachon. He said, "When one has bitachon, he doesn't need to do any hishtadlus. His parnassah will descend from heaven, just as the Jewish nation received manna in the desert."

A simple, G-d fearing person was present at the *shiur* and thought, "I work so hard for my parnassah, and I hardly have time for Torah and tefillah. What's the purpose? I can trust in Hashem and earn the same parnassah without all that hard work."

He sold his horse and wagon, which he used for his parnassah, and spent his days in the *beis medresh*, rejoicing with the Torah.

His wife would ask him, "How will we manage?"

He replied that Hashem would undoubtedly help them.

In the initial period, they lived off what they earned from selling the horse and wagon. When this money ran out, his wife again urged him to do something for parnassah.

"Don't worry, Hashem will help," he assured her and continued spending his days and nights in the *beis medresh*.

The goy who bought his horse and wagon also took over this G-d fearing Yid's parnassah, which was to hew out large stones from a mountain to be used for construction. One day, the goy removed a massive rock from the mountain and discovered a cave opening. He went inside and found a treasure. He was exhilarated with his good fortune and loaded the treasure onto the wagon. He returned to the cave one more time to make sure he didn't leave over anything, but just then, the cave collapsed, and the gentile died underneath the rubble.

After a while, the horse decided he had waited long enough for his master to come out of the cave. It was time to go home and have dinner. So the horse trekked back up the mountain and followed the route it knew best, right to the previous owner's house. The Yid's eyes opened in amazement when he saw the wealth he had just received from Heaven.

This created a *kiddush Hashem*, as people saw that Hashem helps those who trust in Him.

The Alshich's students asked the Alshich, "We also have bitachon. Why don't miracles like this happen to us?"

The Alshich answered, "This simple man was certain Hashem would help him, and therefore Hashem did so. However, when I speak with you about bitachon, you have questions. You wonder if your level of bitachon is sufficient and whether you are deserving of Hashem's kindness... and you have other doubts. Therefore, miracles don't happen to you."

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the Chazon Ish told him that he had just received a check for a lot of money from someone who lived in a different country. "You made hishtadlus in one place, and Hashem helped from somewhere else."

We aren't on this level, and therefore we must do hishtadlus. But it is important to know and to appreciate the power of bitachon – how much it can accomplish!

### The Value of Just One Moment of Avodas Hashem

Those who work sometimes think, "How much time do I have to study Torah? An hour a day? Perhaps two hours? Is it worth anything? It is such a short time!"

Bochurim can have similar thoughts. Although they have more time to study, they often feel that as much as they study, it is paltry and insignificant.

So, let us discover the importance of even one moment in avodas Hashem.

Reb Gedalyah Moshe zt'l told a mashal of a person drowning at sea. A savior suddenly appears and says, "I can only save you for a half-hour. Afterwards, I won't be able to bring you to the shore. You will fall back into the sea." Would he accept the offer? Of course, he would! A half-hour of life is also precious. And perhaps, he will end up living longer.

If a prisoner is given a furlough for the one day of Yom Kippur or the first days of Pesach, would he turn it down? Of course, not. A moment of freedom is priceless. It could leave memories that will last a long time.

The same concept applies to avodas Hashem. A moment of connection with Hashem is precious and eternal. So, certainly, one should learn an hour a day or more. It is very significant. It is a moment of connecting with Hashem.

Tanya (34) writes, "It is known that the avos are the Chariot because their entire lives they didn't disconnect from Hashem, not even for a moment. And so it was with the *nevi'im*, each one according to his level. Moshe Rabbeinu was on the highest level of *nevuah*; the *Shechinah* spoke from his throat. Since the Churban Beis HaMikdash,

Hakadosh Baruch Hu resides solely in the four cubits of halachah. One should think... I will make a Mishkan, a dwelling place for Hashem. This is done through learning Torah, by day and at night, each person according to the amount of time he has. Chazal say, 'Even just one chapter in the morning [and one chapter in the evening].' He should rejoice and thank Hashem that he has the opportunity to be a dwelling place for the Mighty One twice every day, with the time he has."

Moshe said to Pharaoh (8:23), דרך שלשת ימים, נלך במדבר וזבחנו לה' אלקינו, "Let us go [for] a three-day journey in the desert and offer sacrifices to Hashem, our G-d, as He will say to us." What was the purpose of this holiday? What would be gained from this short respite?

Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky zt'l explains that this holiday would enable them to connect with Hashem, giving them strength to endure the galus in Mitzrayim for four hundred years. (It would be better for them to be in Mitzrayim for four hundred years rather than leave after 210 years because then there wouldn't be any other galus. But to tolerate the four-hundred-year galus, they needed a significant, uplifting moment, and the three-day holiday could have given that to them.) We understand from this discussion the preciousness of even just a short moment of connection with Hashem. Its influence can be felt for years to come.

We should seek these moments of elevation, whether during davening, learning, or on a Shabbos or yom tov, etc. Don't disregard them because these happy moments are so few and so short. Each moment is eternal and can turn a person entirely around.

It states (*Yoma* 85:) מה מקוה מטוהר את הטמאים אף, הקב"ה מטוהר את ישראל, "Just as a mikvah purifies the impure, so too, Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael."

The Ateres Moshe zt'l of Makave zt'l asks, a מעין, wellspring, is a greater source of purity than a mikvah (see *Mikvaos* 1:1). So, the Mishnah should say, "Just as a wellspring purifies

Yisrael so does Hakadosh Baruch Hu purify Yisrael." Why is specifically a mikvah mentioned and not a wellspring?

There is, however, something special about a mikvah that doesn't apply to a spring. That is, forty *sa'ah* of tap water isn't a mikvah. However, if there's another pit filled with rainwater next to the tap water, and there is a connection between the two waters, the tap water becomes a mikvah. Even if afterwards the connection is closed or blocked, the tap-water pool remains a kosher mikvah. (The connection of the two waters is called *השקה*).

A *mayan* (wellspring) is always a kosher mikvah, so the concept of *השקה* doesn't apply.

The laws of *hashakah* express to us the benefit of a moment of connection. Even if the two pits are united for a moment, the tap water becomes a mikvah. So it is with the connection a Yid has with Hashem. Even if it is just for a moment, that's all that's needed to attain purity.

### Zerizus - Do Mitzvos Right Away

Have you ever seen hand matzos being prepared? There is an atmosphere of *zerizus* in the bakery. Everyone is rushing because they must be made quickly.

This is appropriate because we eat matzah on Pesach to remember that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim quickly; we didn't even have time to let the dough rise. As it states (12:17), *ושמרתם את המצות*, "guard the matzos" to

make them quickly so they don't become *chametz*.

Rashi has another meaning in the *pasuk*. He writes, "Don't read it *מצות*, matzos, read it *מצוות*, mitzvos. Because just as we don't allow the matzos to become *chametz*, we shouldn't let the *mitzvos* become *chametz*. When a mitzvah comes your way, perform it right away."

So, the *pasuk* is telling us to guard the matzos so that they don't become *chametz*, and the *pasuk* is also telling us to perform the *mitzvos* with alacrity and *zerizus*.<sup>2</sup>

Now let us read the entire *pasuk*. It states (12:17), *ושמרתם את המצות כי בעצם היום הזה הוצאתי את, צבאותיכם מארץ מצרים ושמרתם את היום הזה לדרתיכם חקת עולם*, "And you shall watch over the matzos, for on this very day I have taken your legions out of the land of Egypt, and you shall observe this day throughout your generations, [as] an everlasting statute."

The Torah connects our obligation to guard the matzos to *yetzias Mitzryaim*. Now, if we read the word *מצות*, as matzos, like Rashi's first explanation, the *pasuk* is understood. It is saying, "Make certain that the matzos don't become *chametz* to remember that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim quickly."

But, according to Rashi's second interpretation, that *pasuk* is discussing being cautious in performing the mitzvos immediately. How is this associated with Hashem taking us out of Mitzrayim?

The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* explains:

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2. A poor person came to Rebbe Dovid Lelover's *zt'l* door, asking for matzos. At this time, all Rebbe Dovid Lelover had in his home were *שמורה מצה*, matzos that were watched carefully from *chametz*, which was hard to come by in those days. Rebbe Dovid Lelover had planned to use them for the Seder. Even so, Rebbe Dovid gave him those special matzos and decided to use regular matzos for the Seder.

People asked Rebbe Dovid'l, "Why did you give away your own matzos you wanted for the Seder?"

The Rebbe replied, "It states *ושמרתם את המצות*, and Rashi has two explanations: (1) to guard the matzos against *chametz*, (2) to be quick to perform the *מצוות*. This time, I kept Rashi's second explanation, and I gave the poor person my matzos right away."

Chazal tell us that if the Yidden were in Mitzrayim another moment, they would fall into the fiftieth gate of *tumah*, from where there is no return.<sup>3</sup> The *pasuk* says that when an opportunity comes your way, immediately grab it. Remember what happened at *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Hashem had to swiftly take the Yidden out of Mitzrayim because if they waited another moment, they would fall into the fiftieth gate of *tumah*, and then they would never be redeemed. The opportunity would have been lost. Therefore, we should be cautious with the mitzvos to perform them as quickly as possible because if we push them off for later, we might lose the opportunity.

### Small Steps

It states (12:11), ואלכתם אתו בחפזון פסח הוא לה, "Eat it in haste because it is a *korban Pesach* for Hashem." Rashi, in one explanation, writes that the *korban* is called פסח, which literally means "jumping," because "You shall do all of its mitzvos *l'shem shamayim* in a form of jumping and rushing, as it is called פסח."

The *korban Pesach* was associated with rushing, as its name denotes. It was eaten in haste, and it states וזכה תאכלו אתו מתניכם חגרים

ונעליכם ברגליכם ומקלכם בידכם, that we should eat the *korban Pesach* girded in belts, shoes on our feet, and holding the walking stick in our hands to show that we are prepared to leave, immediately.

However, all these *halachos* applied exclusively to the first *korban Pesach*, the one sacrificed in Mitzrayim. All subsequent *korban pesachs* don't have the element of haste.

The Tzidkas HaTzaddik explains that this describes two types of *avodas Hashem*. "When a person begins *avodas Hashem*, he must act with haste as we see that the very first *korban Pesach* had to be eaten in a hurry. All other *korban Pesachs* don't need to be eaten that way. This is because when one begins serving Hashem, one must detach himself from the temptations of this world to which he is so attached. Therefore, when he has a moment of inspiration, he must quickly grasp the opportunity. But afterwards, he should take slow, gradual steps, as is demonstrated by the *korban Pesach* of all the other generations."

So, there are times when a person must jump in and hastily improve his ways. However, the standard rule is that one should grow gradually, step by step.<sup>4</sup>

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3. The Or HaChaim writes that in our generation, we have already fallen into the fiftieth gate of *tumah*, but since we are in the post-*matan-Torah* era, we can be redeemed even from this intense impurity by learning Torah.

4. Hashem didn't command Pharaoh to free the Yidden forever. Instead, he asked that he let the Yidden go for a three-day holiday in the desert to serve Hashem, after which they would return.

This is because Hashem doesn't expect a person to do more than he can handle. Pharaoh wasn't capable of sending out the Yidden from Mitzrayim forever. Therefore, Hashem requested less. Similarly, when we do *teshuvah*, be aware that *teshuvah* is a process, and it takes time. Hashem isn't asking us to do more than we can handle.

A student once saw Reb Binyamin Rabinowitz *zt'l* studying seven hours straight, without interruption, and he asked Reb Binyamin how he attained his *hasmadah*. Reb Binyamin replied, "When I was younger, I made a *kabbalah* that I will learn the first fifteen minutes of *seder* without interruption. After doing this for a while, I took on myself that I won't speak for the first half-hour of *seder*. Then, from time to time, I added on some more time, and now I am up to seven hours straight, without interruption."

There were once two brothers. One was learning Torah amidst poverty; the other, his wealthy brother, would send him eight *zlotas* each month to help him out.

On the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 19:3), אולת אדם תסלף דרכו, ועל ה' יזעף לבו, the Vilna Gaon writes, "A person should seek to grow according to his level, and not jump levels. If he strives to grow according to his *madreigah* he will have *siyata dishmaya* and he will succeed. But when a person doesn't climb up according to his capabilities, he doesn't receive *siyata dishmaya*. This is the translation of the *pasuk*, אולת אדם, because of his foolishness that he wasn't acting with *yishuv hadaas*, and he tried to reach levels that were beyond him, סילוף דרכו, this causes him not to succeed. זועף על ה' למה, לא סייעהו, and he is angry with Hashem, and he asks, 'Why doesn't Hashem help me?'"

Similarly, it states (*Mishlei* 19:2), אין ברגלים, חוטא. The Vilna Gaon explains, "The רגלים refers to good *middos* that one can accustom himself to until they become his second nature. (רגלים or רגילות means to become accustomed to these good *middos*.) However, one must grow from level to level, like someone climbing a ladder. He shouldn't jump to levels that are beyond him. This is the translation of אין ברגלים, when a person jumps to a high level that is beyond him, חוטא, he is sinning and will end up with nothing because he will fall from that level."

Nevertheless, as we explained, there are times when a person must leap and throw himself into *avodas Hashem* beyond his level. This is hinted at by the *korban Pesach* that was sacrificed in Mitzrayim. It was a new beginning, and there was a need to rush.

Afterwards, though, he should take the standard path of gradual growth.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 147) says, "The [good wine from] Porgaysa and the [good bathing] waters of Diomeses caused the ten tribes of Yisrael to be uprooted. Rashi explains, "They were involved in [these] pleasures and weren't studying Torah, and this caused them to go astray."

Reb Elazer ben Arach came to Porgaysa and to Diomeses and partook in the good wine and baths, and he forgot his Torah.

(We cannot possibly fully understand what this means because Reb Elazer ben Arach was from the most outstanding scholars of his time. *Pirkei Avos* (2:8) states that Reb Yochanan ben Zakai said, "If all *chachmei* Yisrael would be on one side of a scale and Reb Elazer ben Arach on the opposite side, the scale would tip in his favor." The Gemara (*Chagiga* 14:) also tells us that Reb Yochanan ben Zakai kissed Reb Elazer ben Arach on his forehead and said, "Fortunate are you, Avraham Avinu, that Reb Elazer ben Arach came from you." The greatness of Reb Elazer ben Arach is far beyond our perception. Yet, we are repeating the Gemara for the lessons we can learn from it.)

The Gemara says that the wine and the baths of Porgaysa and Diomeses were so appealing that Reb Elazer ben Arach indulged in them until he forgot his learning.

Reb Elazer ben Arach returned to his hometown, and read from a *sefer* Torah, but

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Once, the wealthy brother said he wanted a contract to clarify that he would be rewarded in Olam HaBa for the Torah he is supporting.

The brother, the scholar, replied that he needed time to think it over, and he asked Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l*. Reb Chaim Volozhiner said that even without a contract, the wealthy brother would receive reward for the Torah he is supporting. As the Gemara says, נשים במאי זכי, which merit do women have? And the Gemara replies that they earn the merit of Torah because they help their husbands learn Torah. Similarly, the wealthy brother will be rewarded for enabling his brother to study Torah.

Nevertheless, Reb Chaim Volozhiner added, he won't receive the special reward that is given to those who study Torah מתוך הדחק, when one is poor. The wealthy brother has the merit of Torah, but it is without any hardships. The ultimate reward that goes to those who study Torah מתוך הדחק, amidst difficulties and poverty will go solely to the poor brother.

because he forgot his Torah, he made an error. He was reading *parashas Bo*, החדש הזה (12:2) ללבם, and he read it החרש היה לבם "their hearts were deaf."

The *chachamim* prayed for him, and he remembered his Torah.

The Rebbe of Kotzk zy"l explained the difference between החדש הזה לבם vs. החרש היה לבם is very slight. The difference between them is merely a few tiny drops of ink. (החרש,

and החדש are essentially the same letters, just one has a ך, and one has a ך, and reish and dalet are both very similar. The difference between היה, and הזה is also merely a drop of ink. לבם and לבם is also very slight.) This teaches us that to improve oneself and to become a new person (החדש הזה לבם) is achieved through small deeds. With minor changes, he can change from having a deaf heart (החרש היה לבם) to becoming a new person. Small acts of improvement here and there make a difference.<sup>5</sup>

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5. A *bachur*, studying in Lithuania, was returning home to Switzerland. He planned his return trip through Radin to see the Chofetz Chaim zt"l. He arrived in Radin at 2:00 a.m. It was cold and snowing. An older person met him at the Radin train station and asked him where he wanted to go.

"And who are you?" the *bachur* asked.

"I'm Zvi Levinson, the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law."

"I want to go to your *shver*."

"Where are you planning to sleep tonight?"

"I don't have a place."

Reb Levinson zt"l took him to his house and offered him supper.

"I don't want to eat. All I want is to sleep."

Just as he covered himself with the warm blanket, he remembered that he hadn't yet *davened Maariv*. The *bachur* wanted to get out of bed to *daven*, but he allowed himself just one more moment of comfort under the blanket. As expected, he fell asleep.

In the morning, he *davened Shacharis* and went home with Reb Levinson to eat breakfast. Then Reb Levinson took him over to the Chofetz Chaim.

The *bachur* took out a piece of paper from his jacket, where he wrote all the questions that he wanted to ask the Chofetz Chaim, but before he could say anything, the Chofetz Chaim was already speaking. "Bachur'l, I remember the era when the Czars ruled. At that time, there was so much money, even if money fell to the ground, people didn't bother bending down to pick it up. There was no need to; there was so much. But today, when a copper coin falls to the ground, people rush to pick it up."

The *bachur* wondered why the Chofetz Chaim, the leader of the nation, was reminiscing. But he soon found out. The Chofetz Chaim told him, "There was a time when the Ribono Shel Olam had *tana'im*, *amora'im*, etc. If a regular *bachur* forgot to *daven* a *Maariv* in those days, it wasn't so noticeable in heaven because there was so much spirituality in the world. But in our generation, every small deed is precious. When a *bachur* forgets to *daven Maariv*, the void is noticeable in heaven."

The *bachur* later said that he hoped the earth would open up under his feet and swallow him up because the Chofetz Chaim saw with his *ruach hakodesh* that he hadn't *davened* *maariv* that night. But the *chizuk* the Chofetz Chaim gave him was enormous. He discovered that Hashem values his good deeds and waits for them because when there is a lack, every good deed is precious.

The Chofetz Chaim taught him a *Rashi* from *parashas Bo* (12:6). *Rashi* says that the time for redemption arrived, but the Jewish people didn't have merits. Hashem commanded them to circumcise all males and to bring a *korban Pesach*. These mitzvos made them worthy of redemption.

## "Ten Laughs" - Making Avodas Hashem Easy

The Steipler Gaon *zt'l* said, "With ten laughs, one can travel from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim." In those days, the trip from Bnei Brak and Yerushalayim was quite long. The Steipler's counsel was to think of the journey in ten sections. Each tenth isn't all that far. As the Steipler called it, "It's a laugh." You laugh, you jump, and you've traveled a tenth of the distance. Do that ten times, and you traveled the entire way to Yerushalayim without noticing the long ride.

This can be used as a counsel to make *avodas Hashem* appear easy. Let's say a person wants to study Torah for two hours. If he isn't used to it, it seems like a very long time. But if you divide two hours into tenths, it is just twelve minutes for each section. Twelve minutes is "a laugh." It isn't so hard to study for twelve minutes. Do that. And then do another twelve minutes. It's not so hard. Do it ten times, and you've learned for two hours straight.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* gave a similar counsel to a *bachur* who was having a hard time studying Torah for a long time. The Chazon Ish advised him to learn a little from many *sefarim* because many short tasks are more manageable than one giant task.

Here's another example: A person wants to daven with *kavanah*, but that also seems overwhelming to him. So, he can tell himself, "I will say the *brachos* with *kavanah*." A small amount isn't so hard. And then, he takes on the next part of the *tefillah*.

There are many places where one can use this counsel to make *avodas Hashem* easy.

## Boundaries

It states in the Parasha (12:4), וּלְקַח הוּא וְשֵׁכְנוֹ, הַקָּרֵב אֶל בֵּיתוֹ "He and his neighbor who is near to his house..." Reb Tuvyah Weiss *zt'l*, the *gaavad* of Yerushalayim, asks that the *pasuk* seems to refer to the same concept twice because isn't a neighbor someone who is near his house?

The *pasuk* discusses inviting people into one's home to eat the *korban Pesach*. The Torah warns us to take a neighbor who is close and near at heart. This means someone who fears Heaven as you do. Don't befriend someone with a different level of *yiras Hashem* than you.

(When the goal is *kiruv*, it is often different, but when the purpose is just as a friend, choose your friends wisely. Be friends with those who are near your heart and ideals.)

It states (12:3), שֵׂה לְבַיִת, "a lamb for each household." Chazal call young children שֵׂה, sheep. The Torah tells us שֵׂה לְבַיִת, keep your children at home. Don't have them go to places where there are bad influences.

Chazal say that the Jewish nation was redeemed from Mitzrayim because they didn't change their names, language, and clothing. The Meshech Chachmah (ד"ה וְאֵת) explains that they kept these boundaries to maintain their Jewish identity so that they won't become mixed with the gentiles.

There are Midrashim that say the Yidden were worshipping *avodah zarah* and that they stopped making a *bris milah*. In deeds, they were very lacking. However, they remained a nation, alone, separate from the *goyim*, and in that merit, they were redeemed from Mitzrayim.

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The Chofetz Chaim asked, how are these mitzvos sufficient? At that time, the Jewish nation was at the 49th level of impurity. Can two mitzvos totally change them and make them worthy of redemption?

The answer is, the Chofetz Chaim explained, that precisely because they were so low, their mitzvos were so precious. In a time of spiritual deficiency, every small mitzvah is highly valued and accepted in heaven.

The Meshech Chachmaah writes, "The laws of korban Pesach and chametz have many *gedarim* and boundaries, such as *baal yare'ah*, etc.. This is because we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in the merit that the Jewish nation made *gedarim*. To indicate this concept, the Torah commands (12:22) ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בוקר, 'You shall not go out, any man from the entrance of his house until morning.' The *pasuk* says that each person should make boundaries to guard himself from foreign influences [he shouldn't go outside and be influenced by the goyim]... This is because [as long as] Hashem's light that shines on each Yid isn't revealed to all, there is a danger of becoming mixed within the goyim, and they will lose their identity."

### Shovavim

Rashi (12:6) writes that Hashem said, "I swore to Avraham that I will redeem his children, and the time has arrived..." The problem was that the Yidden needed mitzvos to merit redemption, and the nation didn't have mitzvos. "Hashem gave them two mitzvos: the blood of korban Pesach and the blood of the milah because they circumcised themselves that night..." With these two mitzvos, we merited to leave Mitzrayim.

Why did Hashem particularly give these two mitzvos?

Chazal tell us that from all *mitzvos asei* of the Torah, only two of them are punished with *kares* if they are not performed- Pesach and Milah. These are the only two *mitzvos asei* that are punished in this world. The Bechor Shor (*Bava Basra* 9) writes that just as there is punishment for Pesach and milah in this world, there is also a reward for these mitzvos in this world. Most mitzvos aren't rewarded in this world (שכר מצווה בהאי עלמא ליכא), but the exceptions are korban Pesach and milah.

The Lev Aryeh adds that this is the reason specifically these two mitzvos, Pesach and milah, were given to the Jewish nation to be preoccupied with, so they can merit their

redemption. They needed mitzvos that would grant them reward in this world, and no other mitzvah would grant them reward in this world.

The mitzvah of milah includes being *kadosh* with *kedushas habris*. When we are cautious, the reward is given in this world too.

Kedushah means to be cautious with the eyes and thoughts and to guard one's speech. Guarding the holiness of speech is an essential part of kedushah.

A few months ago (Elul 5782), a certain beis medresh in Eretz Yisrael gathered for a day of chizuk and *teshuvah* because two young children of their kehillah were very ill, r'l. So they hired a *baal darshan* to speak to them and requested that he talk about the prohibition of speaking during davening.

The *baal darshan* roused the entire community to teshuvah, and they all signed a document stating that they won't speak during the davening for forty days. However, there was a bachur there, Daniel Cohen, who wasn't sure he could undertake an entire forty days without speaking, so he signed that he wouldn't talk during davening for fifteen days. (These papers were later brought to Meron as a kvittel).

On the Shabbos between Yom Kippur and Succos, ice cream was served at the Shabbos seudah. Everyone assumed that it was parve. Daniel Cohen also had a portion of ice cream. He is very allergic to dairy and immediately suffered a severe reaction. Everyone realized that they had accidentally eaten *milichigs*, but the greater tragedy was that Daniel Cohen was dangerously ill. He couldn't catch his breath. As he lay in the ambulance on the way to the hospital, fighting for each breath (the oxygen tank wasn't helping much), he said in his thoughts to Hashem that he took on fifteen days to be cautious not to speak during davening and now he extends it to 40 days. After thinking this, he fell unconscious.

On Motzei Shabbos, he awoke totally well. His kabbalah saved him!

And then he made the following calculation: When did he become ill? It was on Shabbos after Yom Kippur, precisely one day after the 15 days that he promised he would be cautious not to speak during the davening. As long as he was careful not to talk during the davening, he was healthy. The day his kabbalah ended, he lost his protection and became ill. Because there is a rule: החיים והמוות ביד הלשון – if you are cautious with your speech, you merit life.

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover zt'l (*Liktutei HaRemal*) teaches that to be silent when someone shames you is like you fasted one hundred fast days. Also, when one overcomes his anger, it is equivalent to a hundred fast days.

So, during Shovavim, when we want *taharah*, but due to the weakness of people in this generation, we aren't permitted to fast too often, we have other options, such as remaining silent when shamed, and overcoming anger. This isn't like one fast day. Doing so is like fasting one hundred days!

### **Yetzias Mitzrayim was in the Merit of Bitachon**

It states (*Tehillim* 22:6), אליך זעקו ונמלטו בך בטחו, ולא בושו, "They cried out to You and they escaped; they trusted in You and they were not shamed." The Midrash *Tehillim* says that this is referring to yetzias Mitzrayim. They were redeemed in the merit of their bitachon.

Many aspects of korban Pesach depicts bitachon. It states (12:11), וככה תאכלו אותו מתניכם, ומקלכם בידכם, חגורים, נעליכם ברגליכם, "And this is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand..." The *Seforno* (12:11) explains that they ate the korban Pesach in this manner to show that they were certain that Hashem

would take them out of Mitzrayim. It was because of their bitachon that they were redeemed.

It states (12:7), ולקחו מן הדם ונתנו על שתי המזוזות, ועל המשקוף על הבתים אשר יאכלו אתו בהם, "They shall take [some] of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel, on the houses in which they will eat it."

Hashem told them (12:13), וראיתי את הדם, ופסחתי עליכם ולא יהיה בכם נגף למשחית בהכתי בארץ מצרים, "I will see the blood and skip over you, and there will be no plague to destroy [you] when I smite the [people of the] land of Egypt."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (12:13) writes, "The blood wasn't what protected them from *makas bechoros*." Their bitachon protected them. They had to be courageous to place the blood of their avodah zarah on their doorposts. "Whoever trusted in Hakadosh Baruch Hu with perfect belief and wasn't afraid of Pharaoh...and he courageously *shechted* in public...the *avodah zarah* of Mitzrayim...and he put the *korban Pesach*'s blood on the door posts and lintel, he is a tzaddik. He trusted in Hashem and deserved to be saved."

### **Bitachon Brings Parnassah**

The Kad HaKemach (*Rabbeinu b'Chayei, Bitachon*) writes, "Whoever trusts in Hashem is enveloped in Hashem's kindness. This is as it states (*Tehillim* 32:10), הבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו, 'He who trusts in Hashem - kindness will encompass him.' Hashem will prepare his *parnassah* for him, and Hashem has unlimited resources. Eliyahu HaNavi was sustained by crows (see *Malachim* 1, 17:4), fifty-five *nevi'im* (who hid in a cave) were supported by Ovadyah.... Hashem feeds a child in its mother's womb and a bird in its egg, although there is no opening to bring in food. Hashem gives *parnassah* to the birds who fly high in the sky, the fish in the sea, the weak worm, and other small animals."<sup>6</sup>

6. A significant part of the Cohen's monthly income came from Mrs. Cohen's playschool (babysitting service

for toddlers). She earned four thousand shekels per month. Together with her husband's *kollel* stipend, plus some odds-and-ends jobs that he did, they could get by.

When Mrs. Cohen gave birth, she hired a substitute and took maternity leave. Mrs. Cohen told the substitute that she would be paid four thousand shekels a month, without specifying how long she would have the job.

A few weeks later, this issue became a debate. The substitute claimed that she understood it would be a job for three months (as standard maternity leave in Eretz Yisrael is for three months). However, Mrs. Cohen claimed that she needed the income and was planning on returning after two months.

After discussing it with her husband, Mrs. Cohen told the substitute, "The custom in Eretz Yisrael is to have a three-month maternity leave. Therefore, we will let you run the nursery for three months. Hashem will send us *parnassah* some other way."

During those three months, the Cohens repeatedly reminded themselves that Hashem would help them.

Chol HaMoed Succos, a relative came to their succah and admired a particular painting that decorated their succah. "Where did you get this wonderful painting?" he asked.

"We inherited it from our parents."

The guest said he would like to buy the painting from them, so he could give it as a gift to someone he has *hakaras hatov*. "I will give you twelve thousand shekels for the painting."

The Cohens agreed.

That was precisely the amount of money they lost from the maternity leave.

They had bitachon, and Hashem helped them.

The laws of *ribbis* are complex, and in Eretz Yisrael, as the banks and many companies are owned by Yidden, the halachos of *ribbis* come up very often. There are *kulas*, lenient opinions, and many rely on them, but some follow the more stringent views. They are cautious about paying all their bills on time, so they don't need to pay interest to the bank, credit card companies, or the electric company, and so on.

One *kollel yungerman* living in Eretz Yisrael was learning the laws of *ribbis*, and upon seeing the stringent opinions, he made a *kabbalah* to pay all his bills on time. He didn't want to pay interest.

But once he was in America and realized there wasn't enough money in his account to cover his credit card and electric company payments, and he would eventually need to pay them *ribbis*.

There was a solution. He could call the bank and ask them to lend out some money to cover the charges, but that wouldn't solve his problem because then he would need to pay *ribbis* on the loan.

There are poskim that are *meikel*, but he wanted to keep the halachos of *ribbis l'chatchilah*, according to all opinions.

So, he decided to wait until the last hour before the bank closed. If there wasn't money in the account by then, he would call the bank. However, until then, Hashem can help. Perhaps someone will put money into his account?

All day long, he thought thoughts of bitachon, trusting that Hashem could help him.

An hour before the bank closed, it was time for the phone call. He left the beis medresh, opened the phone, and saw on the screen that his rosh kollel had tried to reach him. He immediately called his *rosh kollel*, and his rosh kollel told him, "I just deposited two months of your *kollel* stipend into your bank account."

He trusted in Hashem, and Hashem helped him. He didn't have to pay *ribbis*, and he was able to keep his *kabbalah tovah*.

The Rabbeinu b'Chayei concludes, "Being that *bitachon* is so important, it is a primary foundation of the Torah. Therefore the Torah is called *bitachon*, as it states (*Mishlei* 21:22), עיר גבורים עלה חכם ויורד עוז מבטחה, which can be translated, 'A wise man (Moshe) ascended... and brought down the Torah, which is עוז מבטחה, the stronghold of *bitachon*.'"

### No Worries

When one trusts in Hashem, he isn't worried. If he worries, that is a sign his *bitachon* isn't perfect.

In a letter to his chassidim, Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk *zt'l* wrote that if they won't worry and be anxious about their *parnassah*, they will have *parnassah*. Worry is דין, restriction, which limits a person's *parnassah*.

Someone did a favor to Rebbe Punim of Peshischa *zt'l*, and the Rebbe asked him which *brachah* he wanted for it. The man asked to marry off his children easily, without debts.

The Rebbe replied, "My *brachah* to you is that you should never worry because Hashem doesn't give to those who worry. He gives to those who ask."

The man later said, "This *brachah* helped me my entire life. I married off all my children with ease and without worry. I attribute it to the *brachah* that I received." (Heard from Reb Yisrael Hartman *z'l* of Bnei Brak, who heard it from this elderly man.)

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l* writes (*Toras Avos, Emunah u'Bitachon* 46): "My rebbe, the Lechovitzer *zt'l* told me to build a house, so I traveled to Lechovitz to hear from his holy mouth the details of how I should build it.

But when I was in Lechovitz, I forgot to speak to the rebbe about the house. So, I sent someone back to Lechovitz to ask on my behalf. The Rebbe sent back the following message, 'If you build the house on the ground, you will succeed. But if you build it on your head, you won't succeed.' [This meant the construction shouldn't take over his thoughts. He should build with *yishuv hadaas*.] I followed this counsel. Whatever could be done after Shacharis, I didn't do it before Shacharis. Whatever could be done a few hours later, I pushed it off until then. It is a *mitzvah* to tell the *baalebatim* how much *siyata dishmaya* I saw in the construction." His relaxed approach increased his success. The same is regarding *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*; when done calmly and without worry, leaving time for Torah and *tefillah*, it leads to great success.

The Bobover Rebbe *zy'a* (the Kedushas Tzion) wrote the following letter to someone struggling and working very hard for his *parnassah*, "If it weren't that we are obligated to do *hishtadlus*, *hishtadlus* would be forbidden. So, we must do *hishtadlus*, but who permitted you to worry?"<sup>7</sup>

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos Brachos* 9) writes, "The fault of worry and distress is clearly stated in the words of the *nevi'im*. It is so well known and unnecessary to mention."

There was a special Yid in Bnei Brak called Reb Shlomo Cohen, who had genuine *bitachon* in Hashem. He had a printing shop for many years when a competitor opened another store directly across the street from his store. Instead of worrying, Reb Shlomo helped his competitor and advised him how to run his business.

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7. The Bobover Rebbe also rebuked this person for working so hard for his *parnassah* that he hardly had time for Torah and *tefillah*. He writes to him, "Torah can be studied on four levels of *pardes*, and the simplest level of Torah (*pshat*) has many explanations. Why did you choose to follow the most extreme explanation of the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 3:19), ביעת אפך תאכל לחם, 'With the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.' Why did you take the harshest *pshat* [which is that one must work very hard and sweat to get his *parnassah*? There are more ways to explain the *pasuk*, which wouldn't require you to work so hard]."

Reb Shlomo's children couldn't believe what they were seeing. They asked their father, "It is indeed very righteous of you not to be angry at this man, but why are you helping him out?"

Reb Shlomo Cohen answered, "*Parnassah* is decreed on Rosh Hashanah. No one can take away what is destined for me to earn. So, this new shop isn't harming me in any way. If anything, it will take away some jobs, enabling me to work less, and in the end, I will earn the same amount, regardless. So, this man is helping me. Shouldn't I repay him with advice?"

The Chazon Ish mentions this story in his sefarim and concludes, "How much holiness one acquires by living with *emunah*."<sup>8</sup>

Another person in Reb Shlomo's shoes would be worried, but when one has

bitachon, he remains calm. Hashem will help. There is no reason to panic.

It states, *בא אל פרעה*, "Come to Pharaoh..." The *Zohar* asks that it should have stated, *לך אל פרעה*, "Go to Pharaoh." The *Zohar* answers that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was saying, *בא עמי אל פרעה*, "Come with Me to Pharaoh." Hashem told Moshe that he doesn't need to be afraid when he goes to Pharaoh because Hashem is with him, and when one is with Hashem, there is nothing to fear.

A child is afraid to walk alone at night, but when his father is with him, he feels secure. Likewise, people are scared to walk through dangerous neighborhoods, but when they are together with a group of people or a strong person, they aren't afraid. Similarly, one may have problems and struggles in life, but he is never alone. Hashem is at his side, and when Hashem is with you, there is no reason to be afraid.

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8. The Chazon Ish attended Reb Shlomo's levayah until the very end because he was so impressed by his ways.