

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Terumah





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## Parshas - Terumah

**R**ashi (25:31) writes, “Moshe didn’t understand what the menorah should look like, so Hashem told him, השלך הכבר לאור והיא נעשית מעליה, throw the gold into the fire and it will become a menorah on its own.”

**ככר** in this *pasuk* means a measure of gold. However, **ככר** often means a bar of bread as in **ככר לחם** and implies *parnassah*. The Divrei Yisrael *zt'l* teaches that Rashi is hinting at a lesson about *parnassah*. Many times one doesn’t understand how he will earn *parnassah*. Even if he has a source of income, it isn’t sufficient to cover all his expenses. The Torah advises him, השלך הכבר לאור, throw your *parnassah* onto Hashem, trust in Him, and He will support you.

As Rebbe Mendel of Vitepske

*zt'l* taught, “Don’t think about how Hashem will give you *parnassah*, because that *chas veshalom* limits the *parnassah*.”<sup>1</sup> Instead, make *hishtadlus*, but throw your responsibilities onto Hashem at the same time. Trust in Him, and He will support you.

Reb Shalom Shwadron *zt'l* once saw Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* in an aura of immense joy, and he asked him about it. Reb Yechezkel said, “When I was the *mashgiach* of yeshivas Mir (Lithuania) the paycheck didn’t always come on time, thus I was forced to place my trust in Hashem. When I came to Eretz Yisrael, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman offered me the position of *mashgiach* in the Ponevezh yeshiva. I was happy with his offer, because I naively thought that the Ponevezher Rav has a lot of

1. Rebbe Mendel Vitepske’s words, as quoted in *Likutei Amarim*, are: לא יחשוב האיך יזמין לי השם יתברך ויתעלה פרנסתי, כי בזה ח"ו מצמצם פרנסתו.

money, and my paycheck would finally come on time. I was only worried about my *bitachon*. Because when I was in Mir, I had a constant reminder to trust in Hashem, but how would I have *bitachon* in Ponevezh, when I'm earning a comfortable living? I've been in the yeshiva for eight months now, and I see that here too, money doesn't come on time. I have to trust in Hashem once again, and therefore I'm so joyous."

Lavan told Yaakov (*Bereishis* 30:28), נקבה שכר על ואתנה, "State your wages and I will pay." The Radak (30:31), explains that Lavan wanted to pay Yaakov a fixed wage for tending his sheep, as one pays a hired worker (שכיר). But

Yaakov didn't want that because such a *parnassah* wouldn't force him to turn to Hashem. He would rely on his set wage. Therefore, he requested that his wages should be all the sheep born עקורים מלואים ברודים, with spots and blotches. With this arrangement, he is totally dependent on Hashem. He understood that he might work all week, month, and even years, without any profit at all. If all sheep were born white, he wouldn't get any payment. He preferred it that way over a pre-arranged salary so he would be continuously turning his eyes to Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir *zt'l* says that this is the reason animals give birth painlessly,

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2. The Radak writes, לא תתן לי שום דבר קצוב בשכרי, אלא יהיה שכרי דרך מקרה, וטובת הא-ל כמו שיזמין לי, "[Yaakov said] 'Don't pay me a set wage. My payment should come by chance, by Hashem's kindness, as Hashem arranges it for me.'"

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* said, "The employee and his boss both trust in "1", the difference between them is which "1" they trust in. The employee trusts on the 1st of the month, when he gets his monthly paycheck, while the boss is waiting on the "1" Hashem to help him earn his *parnassah*."

while humans must endure childbirth pain. He explains that humans place their trust in the midwife to help them give birth and to lessen their pain. They don't place their trust in Hashem, alone. Therefore they endure pain. In contrast, animals give birth without any help at all. The animals turn solely to Hashem. Thus, Hashem helps them give birth without any pain at all.

Chapter 107 in *Tehillim* discusses four people who must praise Hashem: (1) Those who crossed a desert. (2) Those who sailed the seas. (3) The ill who became well. (4) Those freed from jail. The Malbim takes note of the different expressions of prayer and the ultimate salvations stated in this chapter. About the first two categories (those who crossed a desert or a sea) their prayers are called ויזעקו, and the salvation is called יצילם or יוציאם. Whereas, by the second pair (the ill who were healed, and the imprisoned who were freed from jail) their

*tefillos* are called ויזעקו, and their salvation is called יושיעם. The Malbim explains that people traversing a sea or desert know that no one can help them but Hashem. They wandered in a desert, not knowing the way out; or they were at sea, and the stormy sea threatened to capsize the ship. Who can save them at these times other than Hashem? Their totally devoted prayers are called ויזעקו, and since their devotion in prayer is complete, their salvation is also complete, as implied by יצילם. In contrast, those who were ill or imprisoned rely somewhat on their doctors or on their lawyers to save them. They don't recognize that they are totally dependent on Hashem. Such a prayer is called ויזעקו. The prayer lacks utter devotion. They call to Hashem, but they feel that their salvation can come from other sources. Their *tefillos* are incomplete, and therefore their salvation is also less perfect, as implied by יושיעם.

Someone once said to his rebbe and mentor, “I feel lost, detached, because I don’t know how to support myself. I don’t have any source for *parnassah*.”

His rebbe replied, “You feel detached?! There is no one more attached than you, because due to your circumstances, you are attached to Hashem! You put your trust solely in Him.”<sup>3</sup>

From Hashem’s perspective, we are never detached from Him. As the Or HaChaim (*Shemos* 22:6) writes, אין לך שעה ורגע שאין השי"ת עושה פעולה עם האדם בין בבחינת גופו בין בבחינת צרכיו, “There isn’t a minute or a moment when Hashem isn’t doing something for the person, for his bodily needs and for all his other needs.” Hashem is always thinking about us, helping us, the

question is only how attached are we to Him?

Shach al HaTorah (*Tazria*) states that there used to be an old *minhag* to hang an ostrich egg in a beis kneses. The purpose of this custom was to remind people to be totally devoted to Hashem, and to turn their eyes solely to Him. When an ostrich lays an egg, the ostrich mother stands at a distance, looks at the egg, and by that incubates it. If an animal comes between the ostrich and the egg, the ostrich will kill that animal, because the egg needs to be seen by its mother the entire time in order to incubate. Thus, an ostrich egg represents a strong, steady connection. An ostrich egg in the beis kneses implies that our focus should be solely on Hashem, constantly, without interference.

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3. In Hebrew a paystub is called תלוש משכורת. I heard someone say that it is appropriate that it is called תלוש, detached, because when one trusts on the weekly paycheck and not on Hashem, he is detached from Hashem.

A *mashal* is told about a person who fell deeply into debt. His friends told him, “In X there lives a wealthy person. If you can meet with him, he will pull you out of debt and free you from your struggles. The problem is, it is very difficult to secure a meeting with him. You must seek ways to make an appointment with him.”

He asked many people, “How can I get an appointment with this philanthropist?” but no one had advice for him. The only feedback he got was from several people who tried to secure a meeting but failed. He decided to travel to that country, and from there seek a way to make an appointment.

After his first *shacharis* in the local beis medresh of that country, he saw a respectable person, who seemed to be kind and easy to approach. He asked him what he'd been asking many people for the past few weeks. “How can I get an appointment with the

wealthy philanthropist...?”

The man replied, “I know him well and I will arrange a meeting for you...” As they spoke, it dawned on him that this person was that wealthy person himself! He no longer needed people's help to secure a meeting with this wealthy person; he is speaking to him directly!

The *nimshal* is, when one has a problem, his mind jumps from idea to idea, from solution to solution, as he seeks a way to resolve the problem. Even while saying *Shemonah Esrei* his mind is searching for a solution. We tell him, “Now, when you are davening *Shemonah Esrei*, don't let your mind wander. Right now, you are speaking directly with the One who can help you! Keep your focus solely on Him, and you will receive your salvation.

**לא לחכמים לחם, Wealth Isn't  
Attributed to Wisdom**

It states in *Mishlei* (22:2), עשיר ורש נפגשו, עושה כולם ה' the rich

and the poor meet. Everything Hashem made.”

Rashi explains, “When a poor person [meets with a wealthy person] and requests, ‘Give me *parnassah*’ and the wealthy person replies with harsh words, ‘עושה כולם ה’, Hakadosh Baruch Hu creates them anew, and the wealthy one becomes poor and the pauper becomes wealthy.” This is the wealthy man’s punishment for insulting and not caring about the pauper that came to him for help.

The Metzudas David has another explanation. The *pasuk* prior states, נבחר שם מעשר, רב, מכסף ומוזהב חן טוב, “A good name is better than wealth. Charm (חן) is better than gold and silver.”

The Metzudas David explains, “One doesn’t deserve to be praised for being wealthy, and

one shouldn’t be disgraced for being poor, because that is simply Hashem’s decree that came upon them. For Hashem decreed wealth for this one and poverty for that one. עשה כולם ה’, Hashem did it. The wealthy person didn’t become wealthy because of his business savvy [and the pauper isn’t poor because he is senseless]. Whereas one’s good name and charm are the consequences of man’s accomplishments and free choice.”

According to the Metzudas David, the *pasuk* is read as follows: עשיר ורש נפגשו, the reason wealth reaches the wealthy and poverty reaches the poor is because עושה כולם ה’, that is Hashem’s plan.<sup>4</sup>

A third explanation of this *pasuk* is stated In *Yalkut Gershuni* (as he quotes

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4. The Metzudas David writes, כי העושר לא ישובח והעוני לא יגונה כי מה' יצא, הדבר בגזרה היורדת מן השמים ופגשה בהם, “One shouldn’t be praised for his wealth, and one shouldn’t be disgraced for his poverty, because this was Hashem’s plan, that came down from heaven and reached them...”

*Meshivas Nefesh*), he explains that the poor person sits at home and thinks, “It is a pity that I was born with a weak, foolish mind, and I wasn’t born with a clever mind like the wealthy. They know how to do business. They are crafty businessmen and use their intelligence to gain wealth. But I am unwise, and therefore I’m poor.” The wealthy person is sitting in his home and is thinking around the same lines, in reverse. He tells himself, “I am much wiser than the poor, and therefore I am wealthy.” עשיר ורש נפגשו, but when the poor and the wealthy meet, they discover that it isn’t as they had originally thought. They discover that the pauper is wiser than the wealthy one. At that time, they realize that עושה כולם ה', that the poor are poor and the wealthy are wealthy because that was Hashem’s will.

There are people who make very wise, financial decisions, but somehow these wise ideas caused them to lose money.

And there are people who make very foolish choices, and they become wealthy. The explanation is Hashem decreed that this person should be wealthy and that person should be poor, and that is the cause for everything that happens in the world.

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 92.) states, כל אדם שיש בו דעה בסוף, מתעשר, “Whoever is wise will become wealthy.” It seems that wealth is dependent on one’s wisdom. The Maharasha asks, what happened to the renowned concept, לא לחכמים להם (Koheles 9:11), that *parnassah* isn’t attributed to wisdom. The Maharsha answers that the דעה, wisdom, stated here is the knowledge that *parnassah* is earned by praying for it. As Chazal (*Nidah* 70:) say, “What should a person do to become wealthy? ... He should pray to the One Who wealth is His...” This is the Gemara’s intention, “Whoever has wisdom will become wealthy.” It means when he is

wise to know about *tefillah*, he will become wealthy.<sup>5</sup>

### Adar

Chazal (*Taanis* 29.) state, *משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה*, “When Adar arrives we increase joy.”

Although this is the halachah, it isn't stated in *Shulchan Aruch*, only in the Gemara. This is different than the dictum stated about the month Av, *משנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה*, “When Av comes we decrease joy.” This halachah is stated in the Gemara and also in *Shulchan Aruch*. What is the difference? Why doesn't *Shulchan Aruch* also state, *משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה*, that we must increase joy when Adar arrives?

Perhaps it's because there

aren't instructions regarding how one should “increase joy.” For Av, we have precise halachos and *minhagim* that tell us what we must do to decrease joy.

We refrain from eating meat and drinking wine. We don't listen to music and we don't dance. Cutting the hair and marriages are forbidden, etc. The laws of mourning are spelled out for us quite clearly. However, there aren't any halachos or *minhagim* telling us how to increase joy in Adar. It is left for each person to figure it out himself. Perhaps, because there aren't any direct guidelines, it isn't mentioned in *Shulchan Aruch*.<sup>6</sup>

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5. The Maharsha explains that at first, he tries to earn *parnassah* through working hard, or through clever ideas, and he doesn't succeed. This teaches him that the only solution is prayer. When one attains that wisdom, he will become wealthy.

6. *Bederech tzachus*, we can give another explanation why the law *משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה* isn't stated in *Shulchan Aruch*. Chazal say, “Whoever studies about the *korbanos*, it is as if he sacrificed the *korbanos*.” This is the reason we say in the morning, after reading about the *korbanos*, “May it be Your will that our speaking about the *korbanos* be considered

But we still have to understand the reason one should be happy the entire month. Purim was on the 14th and 15th of Adar. We should begin being happy then. Why are we happy starting from the beginning of the month?

The *Yerushalmi* (1:5) states, “One may read the *megillah* the entire month of Adar. As it states (9:22), החודש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה, “the month that turned over for them, from distress to joy.”

*Shulchan Aruch* (*siman* 688:7) states, “If someone is planning to set sail, or is about to travel through a desert, and he doesn’t have a *megillah* to take along with him, he can read the *megillah* on the 13th, 12th, or the 11th

of Adar (without a *brachah*). If he must travel earlier, some say he can read the *megillah* already from the beginning of the month, and that is the custom.”

The Mishnah Berurah explains, “This is learned from the *pasuk*, החודש אשר נהפך מיגון לשמחה, ‘the month that turned over from agony to joy.’” Thus, we see that the entire month of Adar is associated with the joy and the miracles of Purim. This is the reason one should be happy already from the beginning of Adar (and this year, already from the beginning of Adar Rishon). But the question still remains: Why indeed should one be happy at the beginning of Adar, before the miracles occurred? What does the

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before You as if we sacrificed them...” If the halachah that one should be happy in Adar was written in *Shulchan Aruch*, one might do the same. He might study the halachah, and then say a prayer, “May it be Your will that speaking and studying about being happy be considered before You as if I was happy.” Therefore, this halachah isn’t written in *Shulchan Aruch*, so people shouldn’t take this shortcut, and simply read about being happy. Rather, we should find ways to be literally happy.

beginning of the month have to do with Purim?

The answer is, when something good happens in a month, it sets the tone for the entire month. Chazal say that Haman drew lots for the 13th of Adar, and he was happy because Moshe Rabbeinu was *niftar* in Adar. Why was Haman happy? Moshe was *niftar* on the 7th of Adar, and Haman's lots fell on the 13th of Adar. Why did Haman consider his lots to be a good omen? It didn't fall on the same day, only in the same month! We see that Haman

considered Moshe's *petirah* in Adar as a sign of distress and trouble for the entire month. Because if something negative happens in a month, it affects the entire month. Certainly, when something good happens during that month, it gives a positive turn to the entire month. Since the Purim miracles took place in Adar that means the entire month of Adar is a time of miracles. With these ideas in mind, we understand that we should be happy the entire month, already starting from the beginning of Adar.<sup>7</sup>

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7. The "Krakover Shikur" would get drunk every day of Adar. He explained that there is a great question on the *rasha* Haman: Why did he plan to kill the Yidden in one day? Isn't that cutting it short? What will happen if he doesn't succeed? What will he do if some Yidden went into hiding, and the Persian army would have to go seeking after them? The *gorel* fell on the month of Adar; he should have decreed that the entire month of Adar is the time for his "final solution" *rachmana litzlan*. The answer is certainly that Haman knew that if he fails and the Jewish nation survives, they will turn his decree into days of celebration. Haman couldn't entertain the thought of the Jewish nation celebrating for an entire month, therefore he concentrated his efforts to destroy them in one day. The Krakover Shikur concluded, "Should we allow Haman to have his way? Certainly not! We should be happy the entire month!" Rebbe Avraham of Sochotchov *zt'l* praised this *vort*.

### Praise

Reb Shaul Yedidiah of Moditz *zt'l* gives yet another explanation why we increase joy from the beginning of the month. Whenever a *tzarah*, troubles and misfortunes, come to the Jewish nation – either to the individual or to the entire community, *chalilah* – they trust in Hashem’s compassion and believe that Hashem will help them.

For example, by *kriyas Yam Suf* it states (*Shemos* 15:20), ותצאנה כל הנשים אחריה בתופים ובמחולות, “all the women went after [Miryam] with drums and dances.” How did they have drums at this time? The Midrash states that they brought the drums with them from Mitzrayim because they were certain that Hashem would perform miracles for them.

Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 106:44), וירא בצר להם בשמעו את רנתם, “He saw their distress, when he listened to their praises.” It doesn’t state that He listens to their **prayers**, it

states that He listens to their **praises**. This *pasuk* is implying that even in times of distress they praise Hashem for the miracles that will certainly occur. In the merit of their *bitachon* and praises, Hashem performs miracles for them.

Rebbe Shaul Yedidiah *zt'l* explains that at the time of Mordechai and Esther, the Jewish nation was happy, even before the miracles actually occurred.

When Achashveirosh granted the Jewish nation permission to protect themselves, it states (*Esther* 8:15-16), והעיר שושן צהלה, ושמחה, וליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר, ובכל מדינה ומדינה... שמחה וששון ליהודים, “The city of Shushan rejoiced. To the Yidden there was light and joy and glory. In every country... there was joy and celebration for the Jewish people...” All of this was still before the salvation occurred, when they were still at risk from the great war that would take place on the 13th of Adar. They didn’t

know who would win. Indeed, we fast on the 13th of Adar, to commemorate the fast of the Jewish people right before this war. As the Mishnah Berurah (686:2) writes, “We fast on the 13th of Adar, because in the days of Mordechai and Esther, the nation gathered on the 13th of Adar to fight and to save their lives. They had to request Hashem’s compassion and they had to say supplications that Hashem should help them avenge their enemies. We know that the Jewish nation fasts on a day of war, as Chazal tell us that Moshe Rabbeinu fasted when he fought against Amalek. Certainly then, in the days of Mordechai, they fasted that day. Therefore, the custom is to fast on the 13th of Adar. It is called Taanis Esther. It is to remind us that Hashem sees and hears each person in distress when he fasts and does *teshuvah* before Hashem with all his heart, as it happened in those days.”

So we understand that the war wasn’t a simple matter. They had to pray for their salvation. They did *teshuvah* as well. But nevertheless, they were happy, because they trusted that Hashem would save them. To commemorate that concept, we are happy from the beginning of Adar. Even before the miracles actually occurred, we are already happy and already praising Hashem for the miracles that will certainly occur.

The nation found it in their hearts to be happy when they saw the first steps of their salvation stirring, when Achashveirosh allowed the Jewish nation to fight back by the war! They saw the beginning of their salvation, and this emboldened them to praise Hashem for the salvation that Hashem would certainly perform for them.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches that Esther was on a higher level, for she was happy and rejoiced with Hashem’s

salvation from the very beginning, when Haman and Achashveirosh ratified their evil decree. This is the reason she sent clothes to Mordechai when he put on sackcloth, and this is the reason she made parties. She sought to save the Jewish nation with her joy, and with her trust that Hashem will certainly perform miracles for them. This is the attitude that we too should adapt. It is a recipe for attaining the salvations that Hashem wants to give us.

Reb Dovid Dov Meizlish<sup>8</sup> *zt'l* in his *sefer Or David (Esther 1)* explains that David HaMelech's *sefer* is called *Tehillim*, which means "praises," although *Tehillim* contains many supplications, too. This is because David

wrapped all of his *tefillos* with many praises. His supplications have praises before and after them, because he trusted that Hashem would certainly help him.<sup>9</sup>

Reb Dovid Dov Meizlish adds that this is also implied in the words, *אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל*. The word *אז* means before (see *Tehillim* 93:2, *נכון כסאך (במז)*). Thus, *אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל* implies that they sang to Hashem even before the sea split. Although they were in a dangerous situation: The Yam Suf was in front of them and the Mitzrim were pursuing them from behind. Nevertheless, *אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל*, they praised Hashem, because they were certain that a miracle would occur. Their praises and their *bitachon*

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8. He was the son-in-law of Reb Elazar HaCohen of Palutzk *zt'l* who in turn was the son-in-law of the Chavas Daas *zt'l*.

9. The final letters of *תהילים* are *מזרימה*, and *ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה*. This hints that by the distressful times of Mitzrayaim, they would say *Tehillim*. Similarly, the Midrash states that when Yaakov lived in Lavan's house he said *Tehillim*. Because the Jewish nation praises Hashem even during the hard times, as they are certain that good times are approaching.

caused the sea to split, and the nation walked through on dry land.

It can be compared to a son who knows that whenever he has a problem his father is there to help him. And when he is going through very difficult problems, he is all the more certain that his father will help him, because his father doesn't want him to suffer. With that certainty we trust that Hashem will help us. And we praise Hashem and we sing to Him.

Reb Dovid Dov Meizlish concludes in the name of his father that this is the meaning of the verse (*Tehillim* 56:13), *עלי אלקים נדריך אשלים תודות לך*, "My vows/*nedarim* are to You. I will pay my gratitude to You." Chazal tell us that one shouldn't make a *neder* unless he is in a distress or in danger (see *Tosfos, Chulin* 2). This *pasuk* is therefore certainly referring to a time of danger, because otherwise, David HaMelech wouldn't have

made a *neder*. The following words are, *אשלים תודות לך*, "I will pay my gratitude to You." So we see that David praised Hashem even at this time of distress and *tzarah*, because he trusted in the miracles and *chasadim* that Hashem will surely perform.

Reb David Dov Meizlish had a grandson who survived the Holocaust. This grandson (known as the Binyan Tzvi of Veitzen *zt'l*) writes in his *kuntress* *זר זרה*, that this lesson from his grandfather encouraged him during the Holocaust. He writes, "I find this the right place to praise Hashem for all His kindness, because for about six months I worked at Branshveig as an auto-mechanic. My job was to clean old metals from their rust. I had a *Tehillim* called Tefillah LeMoshe, as it had the commentary of my grandfather, the Yismach Moshe *zt'l*. I hid the *Tehillim* in a cabinet where I was working, and I was able to finish the entire *Tehillim*

approximately twice each day. I did this, although a SS soldier was standing at a distance, and my life would obviously be in danger if he would catch me. The words of my grandfather gave me a lot of *chizuk*, because even at the times of great sorrow, one should sing to and praise Hashem, and trust that Hashem will save us from our troubles. There will yet come the time [of Moshiach] when we will be praising Hashem with peace, with the salvation of Klal Yisrael, speedily in our days, amen.”

### Humility

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* notes that the *keruvim*, which represents the holy *malachim*, were formed in the image of children's faces. This is to hint that even when one is on a very high level, he should humble himself and consider himself simple, like a child.

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said the virtue of humility is hinted at by the seven branches of the

menorah. The middle branch was the smallest branch (because all branches reached the same height, but the outer branches had to extend outwards, as well). The middle branch was also the main branch. As it states, *אל מול פני המנורה*, all six lamps faced the middle one. This indicates that the *Shechinah* resides on whatever is smaller and more humble. There were three branches on either side of this middle branch. Whatever was closer to the middle branch was smaller. Once again, this hints that whatever is smaller and more humble is closer to the *Shechinah*.

The measurements of the *aron* were with halves. For it was *אמתיים וחצי ארכו*, two and a half *amos* long, *ואמה וחצי רחבו*, an *amah* and a half wide, *ואמה וחצי קומתו*, and an *amah* and a half high. The Baal HaTurim learns from this that when one studies Torah, he must consider himself incomplete. The *aron* represents Torah, because the

Torah and the *luchos* lay in the aron. The measurements are halves to show that one should study Torah with humility, with the feeling that he is lacking perfection.

The month of Adar also hints to humility. The Chidushei HaRim ז"ל said that the letters of אלו"ף ד"ר ר"ש stands for Hashem resides on the humble. Adar, Hakadosh Baruch Hu asks everyone to humble themselves, and then He will dwell with them.

### Enduring Shame

Among the traits of the humble is that they are שומעים חרפתם ואינם משיבים, they hear people disgracing them, and they don't answer back. They are silent for the sake of avoiding *machlokes*, and they are silent because they know that they truly deserve the shame they are receiving due to their sins.

A *gabai* of a certain community in Lakewood put in a lot of efforts to raise money and build a shul. When

it was finally built, he insisted that no one should speak during davening. Each week before *kriyas haTorah* he would get up on the *bimah* and announce, "In this *beis medresh* we don't speak from the beginning of the *tefillah* until the end." And weekly, there would be a couple of people who would answer, mockingly, "*Yashar koach! Yashar koach!*" They wanted to speak, and they didn't want to hear that announcement. This happened each week. He suffered from their jeering, but he carried on because it was important to him that there shouldn't be speaking during davening.

Their scorn reached a peak on Shabbos, *chol hamoed Succos*. Before *kriyas haTorah*, the *gabai* stood up on the *bimah* like every week, and he announced, "In this *beis medresh* we don't speak from the beginning of the *tefillah* until the end." He girded himself to hear the deriding shouts of *yashar koach* from

the back of the shul, but this time it was far worse. They shouted at him, “Who are you to tell us what to do and when we can speak? Just because you have a loud voice doesn’t make you in charge. I also have a loud voice...”

He descended the *bimah* in shame. After the *tefillah* he went over to his friend, Reb Aharon, who was married for seventeen years without children, and he said, “I give you the merit of the shame that I just endured. May you soon bear children, in the merit of my silence...”

Reb Aharon answered amen.

The following two weeks, the *gabai* continued his announcements, but his heart wasn’t in it anymore. He was very hurt by the humiliation. Finally, he decided that he can’t daven there anymore. Although he built the shul with *mesirus nefesh*, he couldn’t continue davening in that shul.

Nevertheless, he kept up with

his friends of that beis medresh – aside from those two people who ridiculed him weekly. In particular, he kept close ties with his friend Reb Aharon. Once, he told him, “The 3rd of Iyar is the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Shayele Kerestirer *zt”l*, and many people tell the miracles that happen to them, when they go to his grave. Come with me to Kerestir and you can daven at the *tzaddik’s kever* for children.”

Reb Aharon was by then already eighteen years without children, and he had lost hope. The *gabai* tried to convince him. “Perhaps this is what you need to merit children?”

Reb Aharon replied, “If you will make peace with the two people who embarrassed you in your shul, I will go with you to Kerestir.”

This wasn’t an easy request, but since it was very important for the *gabai* that his friend should go to Kerestir, he reached out to those two

people who used to humiliate him each week (and once in a very cruel way). He called them on the phone, and the conversation was friendly. He made up with them, and they, in turned, asked his forgiveness. They asked him to come back to the shul, once again, and they promised not to embarrass him anymore.

Reb Aharon went with the *gabai* to Kerestir, on the third of Iyar, on the *yahrtzeit*. On the 9th of Shevat (just a few weeks ago) Reb Aharon had his first daughter. Reb Aharon says, “Chazal say there are three partners in the creation of man: the father, the mother, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu. But for this child, there are five partners, because it was also in the merit of the *gabai*'s shame, and in the merit of Rebbe Shayele Kerestirer.”

### Hashem Loves Us

The *keruvim* were two golden angelic figures perched on top of the *aron*. Many miracles happened with them. When

Klal Yisrael would daven, the *keruvim*'s wings turned upwards. Often, the *keruvim* would hug each other, to demonstrate Hashem's love for us. The *keruvim* were even able to praise Hashem!

The Tiferes Shlomo (ד"ה והיו) (הכרוכים) writes, “In the entire Beis haMikdash there weren't miracles such as the miracles of the *keruvim*; that inanimate gold should acquire *chiyus*, life! When the Jewish people prayed to Hashem, three times each day, the *keruvim*'s wings turned upwards, as stated in the *Zohar*. This showed the Jewish people that Hashem desires their *tefillah*. Furthermore, Chazal (*Yoma* 54:) say that the *keruvim* were *מעורים זה בזה*, hugging each other. This revealed that Hashem loves us... The *Zohar* states, the *keruvim* would sing Hashem's praises. These ideas give us encouragement... These concepts teach that one shouldn't lose hope. One shouldn't say, *הן אני עץ יבש*, behold I am like a dry piece

of wood.’ Because Hashem showed us with the *keruvim...*” that Hashem loves us and desires our *tefillos*. Regardless of the level you are on, even if you are inanimate like gold, you can praise Hashem, unite with Hashem, and be loved by Hashem.

*Tana d’Bei Eliyahu* (20) states, “Hakadosh Baruch Hu brought Haman into the world in the merit of Agag, who cried and moaned when he was imprisoned [by Shaul HaMelech]. He said, ‘Woe to me, perhaps I will never have children...’” In the merit of his tears and his prayers, he had descendants and Haman came to the world. We see that Hashem’s answers the prayers of the *rasha* Agag.<sup>10</sup> We can draw a *kal vechomer* and be certain that if Hashem listens to the prayers of *resha’im*, He

certainly listens to our *tefillos*.

In addition, Hashem takes into account the lowliness of the generations and the difficult tests that we have to stand up against. With this in mind, Hashem judges us favorably, and He answers our *tefillos*.

People used to drink hot coffee and hot tea. Today, it became a trend to drink ice coffee and ice tea. They pay money for it, and many times prefer it over hot coffee and hot tea. We can learn from that an analogy. It used to be that Heaven desired solely our very valuable, “hot” deeds, which means when we performed the mitzvos with our heart yearning for Hashem. Today, many people do mitzvos with coldness, detached, disinterest. Nevertheless, in this generation, the generation before Moshiach, Hashem

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10. Similarly, the Midrash states that Hashem told Moshe to come to Pharaoh early in the morning, before Pharaoh prays, because after he prays, he will be protected from the *makos*.

appreciates even those cold and uninspired mitzvos.

The Chesed LaAvraham (grandfather of the Chida) explains with a *mashal*: When a princess is living in her father's home, even if you give her gold and diamonds, it is meaningless to her, because she has those items in abundance. But if she is in jail, and you bring her a bunch of *besamim*, good smelling herbs, she will rejoice with them. Due to our many sins, the *Shechinah* is in *galus*, as though imprisoned, *chalilah*. Therefore all of our mitzvos – no matter how they are performed – are very precious to Hashem.

### The Three Phases

This week's *parashah* states, ועשו ארון עצי שיטים... וצפית אותו זהב וטהור מבית ומחוץ תצפנו "Make an *aron* of *shitim* wood...cover it with pure gold from inside and out..."

The *aron* was made of three cases/boxes. The outer case was gold. Inside that was the

wooden case. The innermost case was another box of gold.

The *Midrash HaGadol* writes, "If the *aron* was covered from inside and outside with gold, why did there need to be wood in between? This teaches us that if it weren't for the *yetzer hara* (represented by the wood) the *talmidei chachamim* (represented by the gold) wouldn't be praised." The *yetzer hara* is essential. If studying Torah would be easy, the Torah scholars wouldn't be praised for their erudition in Torah. It is specifically because they have a *yetzer hara* that attempts to lure them away from Torah study, which makes their strides and successes in Torah so magnificent.

The *mussar sefarim* teach that *teshuvah* has three stages: (1) the golden era of the beginning, (2) the struggles against the *yetzer hara* to keep up with the good resolves, (3) the second and improved golden era.

The first stage is at the very beginning of the *teshuvah*. It is a very special time, because Hashem shines a great light of holiness to ensure that he will continue with his *teshuvah*.

At the second stage, Hashem takes that great light away. Now the person must remain steadfast in his resolves, on his own. That is a very challenging time, and many revert to their old ways.

If one remains steadfast at that trying time, he reaches the third phase, when Hashem helps him once again, and he has more inspiration than before.

These three stages are also present when one studies Torah. When he first begins studying Torah, he loves the Torah. Everything is interesting, inspirational, and sweet for him. But then comes the second phase. He suddenly loses interest. He isn't inspired and he'd rather do other things. If he continues learning

Torah, even by the second phase, the Torah will become sweet for him once again — sweeter than before.

The *aron* was made of three boxes, representing these three phases of *teshuvah* and of Torah study. The outer gold box represents the wonderful first phase. Then comes the struggles, represented by the wooden box. If he remains firm, he reaches another golden era, represented by the innermost golden box.

The challenges are for our benefit. From them, we reach higher levels. Therefore, David HaMelech said, נפשינו כצפור נמלטה מפיח, "Our souls are likened to a bird escaping from its trap..." (124:7). When a bird escapes its trap, it flies above it, whereas, when fish escape, they swim below their trap. Dovid HaMelech compared us specifically to **birds** escaping their trap, and not to fish, because when we escape and pass the tests and traps that the *yetzer* hara sets

for us, we rise even higher than before.

An orphaned *bachur* complained to the Pnei Menachem of Gur *zt'l*, "Why can't I be like all my friends who have a much easier life than me?"

The Pnei Menachem answered with an analogy:

Cars drive smoothly and quickly, whereas armored tanks can hardly move. In a race, a car will certainly win against a tank. Still, the armored tank with its caterpillar tracks and heavy body can go anywhere: it can drive up mountains, it can cut through sandy deserts; it can bore right through obstacles that are blocking its path. It can do all that because of its heavy and clumsy apparatuses. The tank's handicaps are also its advantage.

"You too, must realize that although you're going through many hardships, these obstacles are making you very strong in certain areas,

while your friends stand far behind you. Your struggles will eventually prove to be your assets..."

Rabbeinu Nisim Gaon (quoted in *Seder HaDoros, Tana'im and Amaro'im*, letter ו) tells the following story: There was a lowly, sinful man called Nosson. Once, he had the opportunity to commit a terrible sin, but he controlled himself. A few days later, Rabbi Akiva saw him riding a donkey. Rabbi Akiva perceived that Nosson's face was shining like the midday sun, and an aura was glowing above his head. Rabbi Akiva asked his students, "Who is that man?"

"It's Nosson, the lowly sinner."

"Do you see anything above his head?"

"No. We don't see anything."

"Bring him to me, quickly."

Rabbi Akiva said to Nosson, "My son, an aura of light is glowing on top of your head, so I know that you will merit

Olam HaBa. Tell me what great deed did you do?"

Nosson told him that he didn't give in to his temptations and held back from transgressing a grave sin. He was a 'serial' sinner, and had committed many similar sins before, but this time he controlled himself.

Reb Akiva was stunned that Nosson had the willpower. "Indeed, you did a great deed, and Hashem therefore gave you an aura of light above your head. This is in this world. In the next world, you will certainly become much holier and greater because of this good deed. Now, my son, listen to me. Sit before me, and I will teach you a lot of Torah." Nosson became Rabbi Akiva's student. His heart was open for Torah, and within a short time, he became a great scholar, the holy *tana*, Reb Nosson Tzutzisa, brought down in Chazal.

This amazing story teaches us

the good one can earn by overcoming his challenges. Nosson changed from being a great sinner to becoming a holy *tana*. By the same token, we must know that with every test we pass, we grow extremely great.

It is written (*Bereishis* 1:31), וירא אלקים את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב מאד, "Hashem saw everything He created and behold it was טוב מאד." The Midrash (*Koheles* 3:15) states, "טוב is the *yetzer tov*. טוב מאד is the *yetzer hara*. [The Midrash asks]: Is the *yetzer hara* טוב מאד? [Yes, because] if it weren't for the *yetzer hara*, no one would build a home, no one would get married, no one would have children, [and no one would do business]. As Shlomo said, כי היא קנאת איש מרעהו, "It's all about jealousy, one man from the other" (*Koheles* 4:4).

Yet it is still difficult to understand why the Torah calls the *yetzer hara* טוב מאד,

while the *yetzer tov* is only called טוב.

To answer this question, the Ketzos in *Shev Shmatsa* (*hakdamah* 6) quotes the Mahara"m Almushneinu who explains that the greatest geniuses are those who have a drop of foolishness in their thinking process.

The Mahara"m Almushneinu compares it to a drop water that's added to a large fire. Technically, water should put out a fire or at least make the fire smaller. But when some water is added to a large fire, the fire flares up, because the fire wants to overcome the water. Similarly, people who have straight minds are often not the greatest geniuses. Those who have a problem with their thinking process are forced to overcome that

obstacle, and that makes them even wiser.

This is alluded to in the *passuk*, (*Koheles* 10:1), יקר, מחכמה ומכבוד מכלות מעט, "a person who is respected because of his wisdom and honor, it is due to a drop of foolishness." This means that the drop of foolishness in his thinking process is the source for his wisdom.

With these ideas, the *Shev Shmatsa* explains that the Torah calls the *yetzer hara* טוב מאד, not because it's better than the *yetzer tov*, but because it makes a person טוב מאד. The *yetzer tov* directs the person to do Torah and mitzvos, and make the person טוב, but the *yetzer hara* places obstacles in the person's way, and when one overcomes them he becomes טוב מאד.<sup>11</sup>

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11. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said that it isn't praise for Klal Yisrael that the *yetzer hara* for *avodah zarah* was abolished (see *Yoma* 69). Even greater is when they are challenged by the *yetzer hara* and overcome it, because these tests are the purpose of the world.

A chassid of Rebbe Nachum of Rachmistrivka *zt'l* wanted to be like his Rebbe, so he began copying his Rebbe's good deeds. He woke up the

same hour his Rebbe did; said *Tehillim* at the same time his Rebbe said *Tehillim*, and so on. The Rebbe told him, "It would be better if you would copy all that I don't do..." (that he doesn't immerse himself in the pleasures of this world).

Reb Eliyahu Dov Klar *zt'l* learned in the yeshiva of Reb Shlomo Heiman *zt'l* in Vilna, together with eighty other *bachurim*. Reb Eliyahu Dov tells that once, the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* came to Vilna, and all eighty *bachurim* of the yeshiva went out to greet him and to receive his *brachos*. But Reb Eliyahu Dov remained in the yeshiva as per his father's request. His father figured that there would be many people greeting the Chofetz Chaim, and there would be crowds and pushing, and he feared for his fragile son's wellbeing. That day, the beis medresh was filled with only his voice, because all the *bachurim* went to the Chofetz Chaim. The *bachurim* returned, their faces beaming with joy. They said that the Chofetz Chaim blessed them with *arichus yamim*, long life. Reb Eliyahu Dov felt bad that he had lost out from receiving that special *brachah*.

Reb Eliyahu Dov wrote down the names of all the *bachurim* in his yeshiva, and he kept contact with them over the years. When Reb Eliyahu Dov was ninety-five-years-old, he told his grandson about the time the Chofetz Chaim came to Vilna, and concluded, "Today, the last *bachur* who went to the Chofetz Chaim, was *niftar*. Only I remain alive, and I am healthy, and walk without a stick... I have more *arichus yamim* than them, although they received the Chofetz Chaim's blessing and I didn't. This is because I received the Torah's blessings, for the Torah promises that for doing *kibud av va'eim*, למען יאריךון ימיך (*Shemos* 20:12), you will live long." He lived for another three years, and was *niftar* by the ripe old age of ninety-eight. It was hard for Reb Eliyahu Dov Klar *zt'l* to do this mitzvah, and when one does a mitzvah that is hard, his reward is increased immensely.