

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Vayikra





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# Torah Wellsprings

## Vayikra

### Everything is from Hashem

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* once watched a stuntman jump off the roof of a three-story house and land safely on his feet. The Ropshitzer Rav asked him how he managed to accomplish such a feat. The stuntman showed him a very thin, transparent rope that hung from the roof to the ground. He didn't really jump off the roof. He slid down the rope, to the ground.

This story is a reminder that there are strings attached. Everything people do below is caused by the strings that are being pulled from Above.

The letter *א* represents the idea that everything that happens in this world is directed and planned by Hashem from Above. This is because the *א* is comprised of three letters: a *י"ד* on top, a *י"ד* below, and a *ו"ו* that connects them. The Baal

HaTanya *zt'l* taught that the *י"ד* above alludes to Hashem, the *י"ד* below is this world. The connecting *ו"ו* symbolizes that everything that happens in this world is from Hashem Above.

The first word of the *parashah* is, *וַיִּקְרָא*. It can be read as *וַיִּקְרָא*, "Everything that happens is from Hashem, the *Alufo shel Olam*." The *א* is small and it hints that even the small things in life - that we think are trivial and unimportant - are from Hashem Above. Everything, down to the smallest details, comes from Hashem.

One wintry Friday night, Rebbe Yechiel of Moosh *zt'l* came home and wanted to warm his hands by the stove before saying kiddush. He got up on a small stool near the stove, but the stool fell and he broke his arm. For the rest of his life, he suffered from this accident.

He said, "When people go to dangerous places, they pray to Hashem that they should succeed and come out safely. But when one does something that doesn't seem dangerous, he relies on himself, and doesn't pray. But we see that we always need Hashem's help. I did something relatively easy, but fell and hurt myself..."

### Humility

The Baal HaTurim (1:1) writes, "The ם of ויקרא is small. This is because Moshe wanted to write ויקר, as it said by Bilaam (see *Bamidbar* 23:16) so it would appear that Hashem came to Moshe by מקרה, chance. Hakadosh Baruch Hu instructed him to add an ם, so he wrote it small."

Thus, the small ם is one of the allusions in the Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu's outstanding humility.

In contrast, it states (*Devarim* 33:19), אשריכם ישראל "Fortunate are you, Yisrael" with a large ם, representing pride. Because there is a

time for humility and a time for pride.

One should be proud that he is Hashem's servant. As Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen taught, "Just as one must believe in Hashem, one must believe in himself - to believe that Hashem is interested in him." One must believe that when he speaks to Hashem, Hashem listens. When he performs a mitzvah, Hashem rejoices. One must carry this pride and joy in his heart.

In the town of Peshischa, there was a tailor who enjoyed an excellent reputation. The clothing he sewed was slightly more expensive than those of the other tailors, but people paid the extra money, to get his better-quality clothing.

The *poritz* (landlord) heard everyone praising this Jewish tailor, so he asked him to sew him a suit. "I will pay you well. Just make certain you do a good job."

"Can I make something that isn't good?" the tailor replied.

A week later, the tailor brought the suit to the *poritz*, proudly holding it in his hands. The *poritz* frowned. "This isn't what I had in mind. I'll ask my wife."

The *poritz's* wife said, "I can't even look at it. It simply doesn't have any *chein* (charm)."

People started saying, "The *poritz* understands quality. If he doesn't like the tailor's work, it must be the garments aren't as special as we thought they were." They stopped coming to him.

The tailor was losing business, and he felt humiliated. He told all of this to Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zy'a*. The Rebbe advised him, "Undo the seams of the suit, and sew it up again - exactly as before. This time, the *poritz* and his wife will like it."

The tailor followed his Rebbe's counsel, though it didn't make any sense. Why should they like the suit this time, if they didn't like it before? But he trusted his

Rebbe and followed his advice.

When the *poritz* saw the new suit, he said, "Now *this* is the type of suit I like." He showed it to his wife, who was very happy with it as well.

Why did the *poritz* and his wife change their mind?

Rebbe Bunim explained to the tailor, "It states (*Mishlei* 3:34), ולענוים יתן חן, 'Hashem gives *chein* to the humble.' When you made the suit the first time, you were arrogant, therefore the *poritz* and his wife didn't like it. The second suit was made after you suffered shame and humiliation. Something produced with humility contains *chein*."

It states (*Devarim* 31:9), ויכתב משה את התורה הזאת, "Moshe wrote this Torah..." The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 47:6) says that after writing the Sefer Torah, there was a drop of ink leftover in Moshe's quill. Moshe put it on his head. This caused his face to shine. As it states (*Shemos* 24:30), והנה קרן עור פניו,

"behold the skin of [Moshe's] face was radiating."

There's another Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 3:12) that says that Moshe's radiance came from the extra ink that was in Hashem's quill. Because when Moshe was on Har Sinai, Hashem wrote a *sefer Torah*, so Moshe could copy it. The Midrash describes the *sefer Torah*:

"The parchment was made of white fire; the letters were written with black fire... and [Hashem] wiped the [extra ink left in His quill] onto Moshe's hair. This caused Moshe's face to shine."

So, we have two sources for the glow on Moshe's face. It was either from the leftover ink in Moshe's quill, or from the leftover ink in Hashem's quill.

The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* asks, why is there ink left in the quill? This question is especially difficult according to the Midrash that says that Hashem had extra ink in his quill. Why should this be? A human scribe doesn't know how much ink he will need,

so there is leftover ink in the quill. But Hashem knows from the onset how much ink is needed. Why would there be extra ink in the quill?

The Kotzker *zt'l* replies, that when Moshe wrote his *sefer Torah*, he wrote ויקרא with a small alef, and he also took out the letter yud [of עניי] from the *passuk* (*Bamidbar* 12:3) משה עני מאוד, "Moshe was very humble." Hashem wrote His Torah in the same manner. The extra ink in the quill was the ink that was supposed to go to the alef and/or to the י"ד in עניי. This extra ink was brushed into Moshe's hair, and became the source of, קרן עור פני משה, the radiance on Moshe's face.

Similarly, the *Or HaChaim* (*Shemos* 34:29) writes, "The Midrash says that when Moshe wrote the Torah, he had a drop of ink left in the quill and he put it on his head, and that caused his קרני הוד, radiance. This meaning of this Midrash is very concealed and hidden. Perhaps the intention is... the Torah (*Bamidbar* 12:3)

testifies that Moshe was עני מכל אדם, the humblest person. When Hashem told him to write in the Torah that he is humble, he wrote עני without the י"ד. This was due to his humility. In reward, he merited the קרני הוד, the radiance of holiness that shone from him. This is the intention of the Midrash. A drop of ink was left in the quill. That ink was for the letter י"ד... but Moshe didn't write it because of his great humility, and therefore he merited this [recognition]."

Accordingly, Moshe's face radiated because of his humility.

### Do the Best You Can

It states (2:1), ונפש כי תקריב, ונפש כי תקריב, "And if a soul brings a *minchah* offering to Hashem, his sacrifice should be of flour..."

Rashi writes, "It doesn't state נפש, soul, by any of the *korbanos*, only by the *minchah*. [This is because] who brings a *minchah*? A poor person. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'I consider it as though he sacrificed his soul for me.'"

Why is a poor man's *korban* more precious than the *korbanos* of the wealthy?

It is because, financially, it is harder for the pauper to bring the meal offering than it is for the wealthy man to bring oxen and sheep. This makes his *korban* so precious. Hashem considers it as though he sacrificed himself.

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* explained this concept with a *mashal*:

Important dignitaries and wealthy people were lined up to give a gift to the king in honor of his birthday. None of them gave the gift to the king himself. They gave the gift to the king's secretary, and later the king would look at the gifts and rejoice with them.

This year, a simple pauper was also waiting on the line. He was holding a ring. It wasn't the most beautiful ring, but it was the best he could afford. "I will give it to the king, himself," he told the people next to him.

They told him, "Apparently, this is your

first time here, so you aren't familiar with the protocol. We give our presents to the king's secretary. No one brings their gift directly to the king!"

The poor man told them that he knows about that, but he is certain that it will be different for him. "When the secretary sees my ring, he will usher me right into the king."

They looked at the simple ring and wondered why he thinks the king will be more interested in his present than all their grand gifts.

The poor man was correct. When it was his turn in line, and the secretary saw the ring in his hand, he told him to go directly to the king, and to bring the ring to him.

When he came out of the throne room, his face beaming with joy, the others asked him, "How did you know you would get to go to the king?"

He replied, "The value of my gift isn't the gift itself. The ring isn't so precious – certainly it isn't precious for

the great king. The value of my gift is solely the *mesirus nefesh* (sacrifice) I had to buy it. Every day, for an entire year, I put away some money from my meager earnings, because I wanted to bring a gift to the king. Some days I skipped a meal, and I set aside that money for the king's gift. There were days when money was tight, and I was tempted to take from the savings, but I didn't. This money was put aside for the king's gift, and I wouldn't touch it. The king wanted to hear all these stories. That gives value to the gift. "

This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, *כי לא בזה ולא שקץ עונה עני*, "Hashem doesn't despise the gift of the poor." The reason is, *ולא הסתיר פניו ממנו*, "Hashem doesn't conceal His countenance from him." This means, Hashem will meet him, and pay attention to the *mesirus nefesh* he had to bring this *korban*. And that is what makes the pauper's gift special.

The Dubno Magid explains that this is the specialness of the *korban*

*minchah*. The actual korban is not expensive, but it came with *mesirus nefesh*, and with devotion for Hashem.

There are also *korbanos* of fowl. *Rashi* (1:17) writes, "It is written, רִיחַ נִחוּה לַיהוָה, 'a pleasing scent for Hashem, by the fowl *korbanos* as it states רִיחַ נִחוּה by the animal *korbanos*. This teaches us אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין את לבו לשמים, 'Both one who does a lot and the one who does a little bit are the same. The main thing is that his heart's intention should be for Heaven."

Because the value of a *korban* isn't measured by how much it costs, rather by the devotion in the heart of the one who brings it.

This lesson applies to all areas of *avodas Hashem*. Hashem doesn't measure the worth of the deed, rather He looks at the devotion and the *mesirus nefesh* that went into accomplishing this deed.

Sefer Chasidim (945) writes:

לפי שאצל הקב"ה לב שאינם פקחים בדורות אחרונים כלב פקחים שהיו בדורות הראשונים, "In Hakadosh Baruch Hu's eyes, those who aren't so wise in the later generations are equal to the very wise scholars of the earlier generations. שאם לא תאמר בן יוכל כל דור לומר למה לא נבראתי בימים הראשונים שהיו חכמים גדולים והייתי לומר, "Because otherwise, every generation can say, 'Why wasn't I born in the early generations when they were very wise and I would have learned a lot of Torah?' אמור לו מה איכפת לך 'אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, Tell him, 'Why does this make a difference to you? A person who learns a lot and a person who learns a little are the same, as long as their heart's intentions are for Heaven. ולא ישב בטל אלא יהנה בכל עת שיכול אף על פי שאין לבו חריף כל כך, don't sit idle. Study Torah every moment, even if you aren't so wise." Because Hashem doesn't measure success, rather, he measures devotion and toil.<sup>1</sup>

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1. There were two merchants who were very devoted to learning

**Korbanos**

Before *Shacharis* and before *Minchah* we recite the *korbanos*, which discusses the *korban tamid* and the

Torah. They came from Turkey settled in Yerushalaim, and they studied together every morning, before going to work. They did this for many years, and never missed a day.

They made a pact that whoever dies first would come back to this world to tell the other what he saw in heaven.

One of them died, and after quite some time, he came to his friend in a dream. He said, "A human being made of flesh and blood, living in the world of falsehood, can't understand what happens in heaven. But there is one thing that I can tell you: I was brought to the heavenly court. At my side were my parents and grandparents. Good *malachim* placed my mitzvos on the scale. Demons (*malachei chavalah*) piled my sins on the other side of the scale. Hakadosh Baruch Hu was the judge. The scale tipped towards the side of sin. I was very afraid. Suddenly, an iron wall went up and it protected me from the demons. A *bas kol* announced that I should go to Gan Eden.

"I asked the *malachim*, 'Why am I permitted to go to Gan Eden? This is the world of truth. How were my sins overlooked? And why did an iron wall separate me from the demons?'

"The *malachim* answered, 'The wall was created by your *kviyas itim l'Torah*. You had a set time to learn Torah, which you never missed. That became the iron wall that protected you. If you had missed occasionally there would be breaches in the wall and the *malachei chavalah* would be able to pass through those breaches. But since you never missed, you had a strong protection, and now you can go to Gan Eden.'

The friend added, "I didn't come earlier because it's difficult to get permission to leave Gan Eden to come to Olam HaZeh. But I kept asking for permission so I could keep my promise, and at last they allowed me. Heaven decided that it is good I should return

*ketores* (incenses of the Beis HaMikdash), which were offered twice a day. After *Shacharis*, many say the *ketores* again by אין באלקינו.

The *Zohar* teaches that saying *korbanos* is *mesugal* for silencing the prosecuting *malachim* (angels). Saying *ketores* is *mesugal* to stop the *malach hamaves* (angel of death) when he is on a rampage, in a time of a plague.

The *Zohar* (vol.1 100:) states, "Reb Pinchas tells, 'Once, while traveling, I met Eliyahu HaNavi. I asked, 'Tell me something that will help people.' Eliyahu replied, 'In heaven there are *malachim* whose mission is to tell the sins of the Jewish nation before Hashem's throne. When Bnei Yisrael say the *korbanos*...with *kavanah*, those *malachim* must now say good about them.

"Furthermore, when there is a *mageifah* (plague),

Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes a *bris*, (a pact) and it is announced in heaven that if Hashem's children will enter the *batei midrashim* and the *batei knesiyos* and say the *ketores* with *kavanah* the *mageifah* will cease..."

So we see that saying the *korbanos* is a *segulah* to silence the prosecuting *malachim*, and there's an added benefit in saying the *ketores*, for it stops plagues.

Ideally, we want to perform the mitzvos of *korbanos* and *ketores* in the Beis HaMikdash. When we don't have a Beis HaMikdash, we earn their *segulos* by saying (and by studying) the *korbanos* and *ketores*.

The *Zohar* (vol.1 100:) states, "When a person says the *korbanos* in the *beis kneses* (shul) with *kavanah*, it is certain that the prosecuting angels...will now only do good for him. It states, והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עלי, 'Three *malachim* were

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to tell you what happened, so people will know how important it is to have set times to study Torah every day."

standing above Avraham.' עליו (above) implies they came to judge Avraham.<sup>2</sup> When [Avraham saw this] וימהר אברהם האהלה, 'Avraham rushed to the tent.' This means he rushed to the beis medresh. He said, מהרי שלש, 'Quickly, three *sa'ah* of flour...' this refers to the *korbanos*.<sup>3</sup> He said it with *kavanah*... And then the *malachim*...couldn't harm him." As we explained, the *korbanos* silence the

prosecution. Avraham used this *segulah* and was therefore protected.

The *Zohar* explains that Avraham's words, מהרי שלש סאין "quickly..." refers to the *korbanos*. The proof is because when there was a plague by the *machlokes* (dispute) of Korach, Moshe told Aharon, ושים קמורת והולך, מהרה, "Place the *ketores* and go quickly" (see *Bamidbar* 17:11).<sup>4</sup> There, too, it states

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2. We generally understand that the *malachim* came to heal Avraham, and to promise Avraham and Sarah that they will bear children. According to the *Zohar*, they came to check Avraham's deeds, to find some fault in his ways, and to prosecute him.

3. Apparently, this is referring to the *korban minchah*, which is made from flour (and sometimes from exactly שלש סאין קמה, three *sa'in* of flour).

4. The concept of מהרי, quickly, is essential.

As the *Zohar* explains, "This is the way of a tzaddik. When he sees that the *malachim* are checking his deeds, he doesn't wait. He immediately does *teshuvah* and he prays and he fasts..." He immediately fixes the situation.

During the first twelve days of Nisan we read the *korbanos* the *nesi'im* brought on these days, to dedicate the Mishkan.

From the *nesi'im*, we learn the importance of being swift in Hashem's service.

When the Torah discusses the donations for the Mishkan, the Torah (*Shemos* 35:27) calls them נשאים, without a וי"ד.

מהרה, so we understand that both stories are connected. Therefore, just as with Aharon it was a *korban* (the *ketores*) that saved the nation, so too with Avraham, it was a *korban* that saved him."

The Zohar writes, "Not only do tzaddikim annul decrees, but they are also blessed afterwards...." This happened to Avraham. After Avraham recited the *korbanos*, which silenced the prosecution, the *malachim* blessed Avraham and said, שוב אשוב אליך בעת חיה והנה בן לשרה, *שוב אשתך*, that in a year's time, Sarah will bear a child.

So, by saying the *korbanos*, one silences the prosecution, and one receives *brachos*. What is the next step?

The Zohar states that the prosecuting angels go to the *resha'im*, to prosecute them. We quote:

"[And then] the *malachim* go to the *resha'im* to judge them and to punish them. As it states, ויקומו משם האנשים, [the *malachim*] got up from [Avraham] and they looked at Sedom to judge them..."

Because when the prosecuting *malachim* don't succeed to hurt the

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Rashi explains, "The *nesi'im* said, 'Let the public donate what they want [for the Mishkan] and we will give whatever is missing.' The public brought everything that's needed... The *nesi'im* said, 'What's left for us to do?' ... And since they were initially lazy, they lost a letter from their name, and it states נשאים."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that specifically a י"ד was missing from their title because they lacked *zrizuz*, which is the foundation of being a Yid (א י"ד).

People's nature is that one failure brings on the next failure. The *nesi'im* were different. They were accused of laziness and lacking devotion with regards to donating for the Mishkan. But at the next opportunity they improved. When it was time to dedicate the *mizbeiach*, the *nesi'im* were the first ones to bring *korbanos*.

tzaddikim, they turn their efforts towards harming the *resha'im*. Therefore, after Avraham stopped their prosecution, they went to destroy the sinful city of Sedom.

### **Ketores**

As mentioned above, saying the *ketores* has an added *segulah*: it stops a plague.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 89.) relates that when Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai, he convinced the *malachim* that it is proper that the Torah should be given to the Jewish nation, and not to the *malachim* in heaven.

The Gemara says, "All the *malachim* immediately became his friend and gave him presents... The *malach hamaves* (angel of death) also gave a present to Moshe..." The present was that he taught Moshe that the *ketores* stops plagues.

This *segulah* was used to stop the plague by the *machlokes* of Korach, as it states (*Bamidbar* 17:11):

ויאמר משה אל אהרן קח את המחתה...  
 ושם קטורת והולך מהרה אל העדה וכפר עליהם כי יצא הקצף מלפני ה' החל הנגף, ויקח אהרן כאשר דבר משה וירץ אל תוך הקהל והנה החל הנגף בעם ויתן הקטרת ויכפר על העם, ויעמוד בין המתים ובין החיים ויכפר על העם, ותעצר המגפה  
 "Moshe said to Aharon, "Take the pan...and place *ketores* in it, and go quickly to the nation and atone for them, because Hashem's anger has emerged'... Aharon...ran to the congregation... He placed the *ketores*, and atoned for the nation....and the plague stopped."

The *Zohar* (vol. 100:) states:

Rav Acha came to Tarsha and went to his lodging. The people of Tarsha whispered among themselves, "A great person came. Let's go to him."

They told him, "Don't you have *rachmanus* on us? We're dying."

"What happened?" He asked

"For seven days now, there is a plague in the city, and each day it gets worse, and it isn't stopping."

Rav Acha replied, "Let's go to the beis kneses where we will daven for *rachmanus* (mercy) from Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

As they were walking to the beis kneses, people were coming towards to them. They relayed, "Ploni died...."

"Ploni and Ploni are about to die."

Rav Acha said, "I see there is no time. We'll do the following: Choose the forty most righteous people of the city. Divide them into four groups of ten. I will also join them. Each of the groups should go to one of the four corners of the city, and they should say with concentration the *ketores* that Hakadosh Baruch gave to Moshe. Afterwards, they should say the other *korbanos*."

They said it three times... Rav Acha told them, "Now go to those who fell ill and are about to die. Say the *ketores* in their homes. When you finish, say the *pesukim* (*Bamidbar* 16), ויאמר משה אל אהרן, קח את המחתה תן עליה אש ... ויקח אהרן

..., which relays how Aharon brought the *ketores* to stop the plague that happened in his times."

When they did this, the plague stopped.

Rav Acha heard a heavenly voice say, "Great secrets happened here. Secrets that were revealed years earlier [when Moshe received this *segulah* as a gift from the *malach hamaves*]. There is no plague here, because they know how to abolish it."

Reb Acha became ill, and he fell asleep. He heard [in his dream] that [heaven] was telling him, "You've done this, and you should now do more. Encourage the community to do *teshuvah*, because they've sinned before Me!"

Rav Acha roused them to *teshuvah sheleimah* (complete repentance). They accepted on themselves to never stop learning Torah." The name of the city was changed from מרשא to מהסיא [which means that Hashem had compassion on the city].

The Zohar (Vayakhel p.218) elaborates on the specialness of the *ketores*:

"The *ketores* breaks the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) from all its sides... There is nothing that is more beloved before Hakadosh Baruch Hu than the *ketores*... This is the *bris* (promise) that Hashem made: Whoever studies the sacrifice of *ketores* each day, will be saved from all bad things...from all harm, from bad thoughts, from punishment, and from death. He won't be harmed that entire day... Reb Shimon said, 'If people knew how special the *ketores* is before Hashem, they would take each word and pin it on their heads like a crown made of gold' ... If a person says the *ketores* each day, he is a *ben Olam HaBa* (son of the world to come, meaning he has a portion in the next

world). Death will be removed from him and from the world, and he will be saved from all troubles... The *ketores* atones for the *yetzer hara*, for *avodah zarah*... Someone who has *din* (punishments) chasing him needs the *ketores*, and he needs to do *teshuvah* before his Creator, because then the *dinim* will leave him. Saying the *ketores* in the morning and in the afternoon...gives existence to this world and to the world above."

May we merit to say and study the *ketores* with joy and *kavanah* (concentration).<sup>5</sup>

### New Beginnings

Nisan is the time to turn over a new leaf and to serve Hashem as never before.

This isn't easy. People prefer to remain the same.

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5. Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* said that saying the *korbanos* before *minchah* is a *segulah* that he won't need to go to a doctor.

Some people say they don't have the five minutes to say the *korbanos*. But remember that five minutes is not a very long time. It is a lot quicker than having to wait for treatments in the hospital *chalilah*.

They don't want to leave their comfort zone, the lifestyle they are accustomed to and familiar with. But change and improvement are essential. We can't remain the same forever. Furthermore, it is a great joy when a person is successful in changing and improving his ways.

There is something about soldiers that doesn't seem to make sense, and the Baal HaTanya zt'l asked a soldier about it. Soldiers know there is a high likelihood that they will be killed in war, and yet they enlist willingly. They want to join the army. The Baal HaTanya asked him, "If these soldiers were ill, they would do whatever they could to cure themselves. They are prepared to spend a lot of money on medicines even when the cure isn't definite. Which means that they want to live. So why do they willingly sign up for the army?"

The soldier replied, "Rebbi, the joy of winning the enemy is greater than the joy of living." They go to war to win the war, which

to them is a greater pleasure than life itself.

The Baal HaTanya repeated this conversation so we can recognize the great joy of winning the war against the *yetzer hara*. It isn't easy, but it is possible, and the victory is the greatest joy imaginable.

Reb Ahron Gradya zt'l became a *baal teshuvah* under the influence and guidance of the Magid of Mezritz zt'l. Once he complained to the Magid that his *yetzer hara* keeps coming back to him, enticing him to do sins that were fitting for his previous life, when he was irreligious, and not appropriate for him today.

The Magid told him the following *mashal*:

Someone earned his *parnassah* (livelihood) from operating a tavern. But the rowdy drunkards who patronized his inn disturbed him. His tavern often needed repairs, because of the havoc and damage the patrons wrought.

So, he decided to close his inn and turn it into a

fabric store. The drunks, however, kept coming back. They knocked on his door in the middle of the night, begging for drinks.

The former tavern-keeper would holler out of his window, "The restaurant is closed. This is a fabric store now. The tavern you're looking for doesn't exist anymore. Go away!"

The Magid said, "When the *yetzer hara* comes to you, tempting you to do sins, that aren't fitting for you anymore, tell him that he came to the wrong address. You are no longer the Ahron Gradya of your youth. You are a new person, and he should therefore go elsewhere."

We can all use this counsel to succeed in *teshuva*. When the *yetzer hara* comes to entice you to return to your old ways, tell him that you aren't the same person as before. You are no longer a person who does such things.

Elephant trainers tie their elephants to beams at night, so they won't run away. The

elephants are heavy and powerful, and they can easily break free if they try. But the elephants don't try. Why not? Because when the elephants were young babies, they tried to pull away from the post and couldn't. Since then, they don't try again. Now they are heavier and stronger, and if they wanted to break away, they could, but they rely on the attempts and failures of their youth, and don't try again.

The lesson is, although, in our youths, we may have failed in our attempts to improve our ways, if we try again, it is possible that this time we will succeed. Don't let the failures of the past convince you that it is futile to try again.

### **Bitachon**

During the Holocaust, while Mrs. Markowitz was standing in line for a "selectzia" she kept repeating over and over again, לישעוּתְךָ ה' קִוִּיתִי ה', "Hashem, I look forward to Your salvation."

A soldier heard her say קִוִּיתִי, which in Hungarian

means "Who can take me out of here?!" and he had compassion on her. He replied, *ehm kevisi'em*, "I will take you out of here."

She understood that he was telling her that she can run away, and he will pretend that he doesn't see. She ran as fast as she could. She reached a non-Jewish laundromat and asked if she can work for them. She was hired and remained there until the end of the war.

Hashem heard her cries, קיית, and saved her.

The *brachah*, אשר נתן לשכוי, בינה להבחין בין יום ובין לילה, means, "Hashem gave the rooster wisdom to differentiate between day and night." What is so unique about the rooster? All animals know the difference between day and night. The uniqueness of a rooster is that even when it is still dark, the rooster can perceive that the light is about to come. It senses the smallest change in the darkness and can tell that the morning is approaching.

This is the reason a rooster also crows at midnight. It senses that there is a change, and that the light of dawn is approaching.

One should strive to pick up this sensitivity. Even when life is dark, and he has many problems, he should perceive the rays of a better future that are approaching from the distance. It is still dark, but he senses that something has changed, and things will soon become better.

*Perek Shirah* states that the rooster says, לישועתך קייתי ה'. It awaits the salvation that will come, even when it is presently dark.

The Gemara (*Niddah* 73.) states, "Whoever studies halachos every day will certainly be a ben Olam HaBa. As it states (Chabakuk 3:6), הליכות עולם לו, "Those who study halachah will earn the world of Olam HaBa."

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* said that to study halachah, one needs *Bitachon* (*faith*). He needs to trust in Hashem that the

time spent on Torah study won't lessen his *parnassah*. Thus, the *pasuk* can be translated, הליכות, if someone studies halachos each day, עולם לו this means he knows that the world is His, Hashem's. And therefore, even if he spends time learning Torah, it won't detract from his livelihood.

The mother of a poor family gave some money to her seven-year-old son to buy vegetables, which he did. Before leaving the store, the boy was looking at the candied nuts, wishing he had money to buy some.

The merchant told him, "Take a handful. You can have it for free."

The boy didn't budge.

The merchant urged him again, "Take a handful for yourself." The boy didn't respond. The merchant took a handful of candied nuts himself, put it into a bag, and gave it to the child.

When the boy came home, he told his mother what happened. She asked, "Why didn't you take the

nuts immediately when he offered it to you?"

He replied, "I have small hands. How much can I take? But the merchant has large hands. I was waiting for the merchant to give me his own handful, which is much more."

The *nimshal* is, there are those who say they don't have time for Torah study think that they are earning *parnassah* on their own, but on their own, how much can they take? Their hands are small. But if one will go to a Torah *shiur*, and trust in Hashem, Hashem will be giving him *parnassah*, and Hashem's hands are much larger.

We say in *birchas hamazon*, ונא אל תצרכנו ה' אקלינו לא לידי מתנה בשר ודם כי אם לידך הרחבה המלאה ופתוחה, "Let us not need the hands of man, only Hashem's wide, full, open hand..." We are saying that if we take with our own hands, how much *parnassah* can we take? But Hashem with his wide-open hand can give us unlimited *parnasah*.

Someone told Reb Moshe of Lelov that his *parnassh* was beginning to falter. Rebbe Moshe asked him if he has set times for learning Torah. He admitted that he doesn't. Reb Moshe advised him to make sure to have set times for Torah study and then he will have *parnasah*. As the Gemara (*Taanis* 25.) says, גמירי משמיה, מיהב יהבי ומשקל לא שלקי, which can be translated, when one studies Gemara, heaven will give him *parnasah* and it will never be taken away from him.

Reb Moshe Soloveitchik *zt'l* said, "When I came to Zurich, Switzerland, I decided to invest in a certain product, as *hishtadlus* (effort) for *parnasah*. I thought about who would probably buy the product from me. I told myself, 'This type of person and that type person won't buy it. But these people will.' I invested in that product, but Hashem showed me that He runs the world. I showed the product to the people I thought would buy it, and they weren't even interested in looking at it. I turned my

eyes to Heaven. What will be now? Hashem said, 'You did your *hishtadlus*, that's enough. Now you will see that I give you *parnasah*.' The people who I was certain wouldn't buy the product were the ones who bought it from me."

Reb Moshe concluded, דער אייבירשמער שפילט זיך מיט מיר אויף, צו להבעים, which means that Hashem showed him who leads the world, and that people don't have any strength on their own.

A young man was engaged, and his future in-laws promised him a dowry. They kept their promise down to the last penny.

During his first Shabbos as a married man, in his in-laws' home, he saw something was amiss. The candlesticks were made from clay, the beds were broken, and in general, he saw signs of poverty in his in-law's home. When he questioned his wife, she responded that her parents sold all their utensils, and went into debt, to cover the dowry they promised. He

responded, "We can't let matters remain this way."

On Motzei Shabbos he returned the dowry and gifts. He wouldn't have his wife light Shabbos candles in silver candlesticks, while his in-laws had clay ones. He couldn't enjoy wealth, while his in-laws were suffering poverty on his behalf.

On Sunday morning, he borrowed twenty thousand rubles from a friend. He used part of the money to buy utensils for his home, and he went to the market to see where he could invest the rest of the money. A wealthy merchant offered him a lucrative business opportunity for ten thousand rubles. He invested and became wealthy in a short time.

Due to his wealth, when his children came of age, he made prestigious *shidduchim* (matches). One of his *mechutanim* was Reb Shimon Sofer *zt'l* (son of the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*). At that wedding, in Cracow, a rav asked him how he earned his wealth, and how he merited this

prestigious *shidduch* with Reb Shimon Sofer. He told him his story. He explained that he was willing to forgo his own pleasure and wealth so that his in-laws don't suffer. And just as he did kindness with them, Hashem performed kindness with him, and he earned wealth... and wonderful *shidduchim*.

This story is brought down in *Mishnas Yosef* (*Brachos* 8.) who concludes, "It isn't my way to write stories in this *sefer*, but this story has an important message that wise people can learn. They should be cautious with the money and utensils of their father-in-law, and more importantly, they should be cautious with their father-in-law's heart. And if you will act with kindness, you will receive many *brachos* from Above."

A *chasan* told the Chazon Ish *zt'l*, "My future father-in-law promised me a large dowry, but now he's going through a financial crisis and it is hard for him to keep his word. Right now, I can do something that will

force my father-in-law to keep his word and give me what he promised. Should I take advantage of this opportunity?"

The Chazon Ish told him to study *Shulchan Aruch* (*Even HaEzer* 2:1) which states, "If a lot of money was promised for your wedding, and then your future in-laws back down, don't cause your fiancé to wait like an *agunah* because of that. Don't fight over the money. If you will, you won't succeed and the marriage won't work out well... Rather, whatever your future in-laws give you accept with a good eye, וְאִם יָצְלַח, and then you will succeed."

The Chazon Ish told him, "If you will force your father-in-law to pay what he promised, you won't succeed. Somewhere, somehow, you will lose the money. But if you won't make an issue about the money, *Shulchan Aruch* promises, וְאִם יָצְלַח, you will succeed. And the *Shulchan Aruch's brachah* will certainly materialize."

The Chofetz Chaim would tell people that he married a poor girl, without a dowry, and in this merit, he was able to learn his entire life. His friend, who made a wealthy *shidduch*, went into business shortly after the wedding and lost all his money. "If I married wealthy, it is likely that I too would be drawn to business..."

There was a *bachur* (boy) who was looking for a *shidduch* that promised him full support for five years. The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* asked him, "How will you support yourself after the five years pass?"

The *bachur* replied, "Hashem will help."

The Chofetz Chaim asked him, "So why don't you believe that Hashem can help you the first five years too?"

### **Chesed**

In the beginning of *Hilchos Pesach* it states (429:1), מנהג לקנות חטים לחלקן לעניים, לצורך פסח, "There is a custom to buy wheat and to

distribute it to the poor for Pesach." This is the origin for the renowned custom of *ma'os chitin* (*kimcha d'Pischa*), to give food to the needy for Pesach.

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* would reach very high levels of *ruach hakodesh* each year, by his seder. After the seder, he would tell how other tzaddikim of his time conducted their Seder that year. (With his *ruach hakadosh*, he saw the Sedarim of other tzaddikim, and the impression those Sedarim made in Heaven, and he would speak about that.) One year, he especially praised the Seder of Rebbe Eliezer Mendel of Lelov *zt'l*. "The Seder of Rebbe Eliezer Mendel of Lelov *zt'l* shone this year, more than the Sedarim of all other *tzaddikim*."

This part of the story is known, but I heard an addition to this story:

What was special about Rebbe Eliezer Mendel's Seder that year?

Rebbe Eliezer Mendel lived in Yerushalayim and

he received a large sum of money from a wealthy person in *chutz l'aretz* (*city outside Eretz Yisroel*), to distribute to the poor of Yerushalaim. Rebbe Eliezer Mendel distributed all the money he didn't keep a cent for himself, although he was also poor. This merit elevated his Seder so high.

*Shulchan Aruch* discusses the custom to give *ma'os chittim* and then it states, אין גופלים על פניהם בכל חדרש ניסן, "We don't fall on our face [to say *tachanun*] the entire month of Nisan."

*Bederech tzachus*, we can explain that if one will help the poor before Pesach, he will stand erect, and receive the blessings of Pesach. He won't fall on his face, so to speak, and lose out on the great blessings that come down on Pesach.

## Pesach Preparations

Rebbe Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev *zy'a* once saw women cleaning and scrubbing their homes for Pesach, and he said, "May

the *malachim* that come forth from קשר"ק , which is an acronym for קראצין ש'איערין ר"יבין קערין (different kinds of cleaning and scouring) go up before Hashem's throne and arouse mercy for the Jewish nation." (קשר"ק is also written in the Rosh Hashanah machzor in reference to תקיעה שברים תרועה (תקיעה) . ,

Rebbe Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev *zy'a* also said, "By cleaning for Pesach one should be able to attain *ruach hakadosh*, only anger ruins it."

The Torah warns us that we shouldn't get angry when we clean for Pesach. As it states (*Shemos* 34:17-18), אלהי מסכה לא תעשה לך את חג השמר, המצות תשמר "Don't make

molten gods for yourself. Keep the holiday of Pesach..." What is the connection between keeping Pesach and staying away from *avodah zarah*? Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l* explains that Chazal compare anger to *avodah zarah*.<sup>6</sup> The Torah is telling us to make the holy preparations for Pesach, but simultaneously, to be clean from anger.

Cleaning for Pesach is an atonement for grave sins. As the Kav HaYashar (90) writes, "I received a *kabbalah* that every effort one invests in honor of Pesach, that causes him to become tired and exhausted from that work, kills all the *mazikim*, called נגעי בני אדם (plagues on mankind). When one works for Pesach this rectifies

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6. Chazal (*Shabbos* 105) say, כל הכועס כאילו עובד עבודה זרה, "Whoever becomes angry, it is as though he worshiped idols."

Why is anger compared to idol worship? We can explain that it's because they both don't accomplish anything. One doesn't gain anything from idol worship, as we say in *Hallel*: ופה להם ולא ידברו, "They have a mouth, but they can't speak..." One doesn't gain anything from anger, either. As Chazal (*Kiddushin* 41.) say, "Whoever becomes angry, all that he gains is anger." Nothing else was accomplished.

[severe sins]. The heart knows the bitter truth; almost none of us are clean from grave sins. Therefore, everyone is obligated to fix whatever he can, and Hashem, with His immense mercy and kindness will accept the thoughts of the Jewish people, His nation, and will redeem us quickly."

Before surgery, doctors tell patients not to eat anything, so the body will be clean for the operation. Rebbe Ahron Leib of Permishlan *zy'a* says that Pesach is like a surgery, because our bad will be extracted, and in its place we will be imbued with holiness. Before this operation, we clean our homes from chametz.

Reb Shimshon Ahron Polanski, the Tepliker Rav *zt'l*, once came to his beis medresh in Yerushalaim a few days before Pesach, and saw that the beis medresh was full. Everyone was learning with *hasmadah* (*dedication*), as though they had no other worries or obligations. He went up to the *bimah*, and announced,

"*Rabboisai!* There are many *almanos* (widows) in Yerushalaim, who need help cleaning for Pesach."

Everyone was ready to help. "Where do we go?" they asked.

The Tepliker Rav told them to go to their own homes. "Your wives need help. Why are you letting them struggle as if they are widows? Why aren't you helping them get ready for *yom tov*?"

The commentaries ask, why are we so cautious with *chametz*? We aren't as cautious when it comes to the other prohibitions of the Torah.

The *Radvaz* (3: 977) writes, "You asked me... why is chametz on Pesach different than other prohibitions of the Torah, that the Torah is so stringent, and requires that we should search for it, burn it, destroy it, and also to annul it in our hearts (*במיל*). The *chachamim* added more precautions onto these prohibitions and required one to search for it in all cracks and crevices of his home, and to banish it

from all your properties. One transgresses *בל יראה ובל ימצא* for owning chametz. Even a drop of chametz is forbidden, and [when it gets mixed in with other food] it never becomes annulled (בטל). Such stringencies aren't found by other prohibitions of the Torah. If you will say that that is because chametz is severe because it is punishable with *kares*, behold *חלב* (forbidden fats) and blood is also punishable with *kares*, and they don't have these strict regulations. And if you will say that it's because we aren't permitted to derive any pleasure from chametz, behold, from *klayim* (כלאי הכרם) and *שור הנסקל*, we are also forbidden to derive pleasure, and they don't have these strict rules...And if you say that it is because *דלא ברילי מיניה*, that people are accustomed to eating bread

and they are not used to abstaining from it, behold, wine for a *nazir*, he doesn't abstain from wine the entire year, and *הרש*, which people are accustomed to eating grains the entire year, and they don't have these stringencies!"

The Radva"z offers a few other answers, but he isn't satisfied with them. Then he writes, "I therefore explain it according to the Midrash that teaches that *chametz* on Pesach represents the *yetzer hara*.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, one must banish the *yetzer hara* from himself, and one must search after it in all corners of his being. Even the smallest drop must be eradicated. This explanation is correct and true, in my humble opinion."<sup>8</sup>

A *kosheren* and *Freilechen* Pesach.

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7. The *Gemara* (*Berachos* 17) states, "Master of the world, it is revealed and known to you that our will is to do Your will. Who prevents us? *שאור שבעיסה ושעבוד גליות*, the sourdough and government oppression." *Rashi* explains: "The *שאור שבעיסה*, sourdough is the *yetzer hara*."

8. The *Mishnah* states, *אור לארבע עשר בודקין את החמץ*, "On the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, we check the chametz."

It seems it should say, בודקין את הבית, we check the house, because it's the house we check!

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* asked this question and left it unanswered. Years later, his son, Rebbe Yissacher Dov *zt'l*, said he can answer the question with a *mashal*:

Two business partners were traveling home together after a successful business trip. They decided to stop and rest in a shady field along the roadside they were traveling on.

They looked around and saw nobody, except for some grazing cows. Thinking it was safe, they hung their moneybag on a low branch, and slept under that tree.

They forgot that where there are cows there is a farmhand nearby. The farmhand watched them hang up the moneybag. When the two weary travelers were fast asleep, he quietly took it.

The farmhand considered his options. "If I run off with the moneybag, the farmer who hired me will be angry with me for abandoning the pasture. If I take the cows with me, the cows will begin mooing – as cows are noisy when they're moved from place to place – and the merchants might wake up." He decided to fill the bag with manure, so the merchants wouldn't realize that their money was stolen.

When the merchants woke up, they were happy to see that their moneybag was still hanging on the tree. They didn't suspect a thing; they took the bag and continued their journey home.

Eventually, they opened the bag and saw it was filled with manure. They wondered, "How did the cows climb up the tree, take the money, and put manure inside?"

They resigned themselves to their loss. They said, "What can we do? We can't bring cows to court, can we?"

When Rebbe Yissacher Dov told this story, his chassidim laughed, but they didn't understand how this story answers his father's question. Why does the Mishnah say, בודקין את החמץ (we check the *chametz*)? It should say, בודקין את הבית, that we check the house.

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Rebbe Yisacher Dov's son, Rebbe Aharon *zt'l*, was also present when his father told this humorous story, and the chassidim noticed that he was trembling in fear. They asked him about that, and he replied that he understood his father's intention. He explained:

The foolish merchants should have turned their question into an answer. Since it's impossible for a cow to put manure inside a pouch, it must be that a person did it. Upon realizing that someone had stolen their money, they should have returned and looked for the thief. Perhaps they could get their money back. Why did they give up so quickly?

Now we understand why the Mishnah states that we check "the chametz." Chametz represents sins. We check our *aveiros* and we ask ourselves, "How did they get there? These aren't the deeds I wanted to do. I only want to serve Hashem. How did I end up with these bad deeds?"

After asking this question, many reach the conclusion that apparently, they aren't as good as they thought they were.

They should turn their question into an answer. They should say, "These aren't the deeds I wanted to do, so it must be that the culprit is the *yetzer hara* who tricks me and convinces me to go in bad ways. I'm not guilty, the *yetzer hara* is. I can and I will change!"