

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Bamidbar



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Torah Wellsprings - Bamidbar

Emunah - The Foundation of the Torah

The *Aseres HaDibros* begins with אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, "I am Hashem, your G-d..." This mitzvah is to believe in Hashem. The Maharsha (Makos 24a) writes that this mitzvah is the root of all mitzvos of the Torah. He writes, "All mitzvos are included in the first mitzvah, which is emunah, which we heard from Hashem."

The Maharsha brings the pasukim (Tehillim 119:86) וְצִדִּיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ (Chavakuk 2:4) וְכָל מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֶמְוֶנָה and וְהָיָה, to show that all mitzvos are rooted in the mitzvah of emunah.

It states (at the beginning of the Aseres HaDibros) וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְאֹמֶר, אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. The Noam Elimelech explains, וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת, Hashem gave us the Torah with all its mitzvos, לְאֹמֶר, so that a Yid can have the emunah to say, אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, that everything is from Hashem.

We say in *musaf* of Rosh Hashanah, ובתורתך כתוב לאמר שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד. Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir explained, ובתורתך כתוב, the purpose of everything written in the Torah, is לאמר, so people can say ה' אחד, I believe in Hashem.¹

1. When a Yid lives with emunah and bitachon, miracles will happen to him, as it states (Tehillim 32:10) וְהַבְּטִיחָה "And one who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him."

This year, before Pesach, the silver candlesticks of a financially struggling family broke in a way that it was impossible to repair. They could exchange them and get money for the silver value, but then they would have to add a lot of money to buy new candlesticks. The poor youngster went to the gaon and renowned posek in Yerushalayim, Reb Meir Sirota Shlita, and asked him what to do. Reb Meir quoted the Chazal that Hashem says, לוו עלי ואני פורע, "Borrow on my account, and I will repay." When it comes to honoring Shabbos, you may borrow, and Hashem will repay the debt. The Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah refer to this concept, and therefore, Reb Meir Sirota advised them to follow it.

The youngster borrowed money to buy new candlesticks, trusting that Hashem would help. (We are not writing this as a *psak halachah*, as every situation is different. So, when a *shailah* like this one arises, it is recommended to speak to your own rav.)

As soon as the youngster left the silver store with his new purchase in his hands, he bumped into a person whom, a couple of months earlier, he had helped purchase a property. Often, when someone helps another person buy a property, there is a charge – similar to commission paid to a real estate broker, etc., but this person didn't think he owed this youngster anything for the service he received. The youngster disagreed. When they met, in front of the silver store, they decided they would go to a rav, to decide once and for all. The rav ruled that he should pay two thousand shekels. This person paid up immediately. Now the youngster was able to *begin* to pay off the debt.

Three or four months before this story took place, this *youngster* called a family to suggest a shidduch for their older son. Both families were interested in the shidduch, but something got in the way, and it was pushed off. This occurred a couple of times during the past three to four months. On the day after he purchased the silver candlesticks, the father of the boy called up, saying that he was now prepared to proceed with the shidduch. Two days later, the shidduch was finalized, and the shadchanus money he received was enough to cover the remainder of the loan he took out in honor of Shabbos, with some money left over for himself and his family. Additionally, since then, his mazal has been constantly improving, and things are becoming better for him financially. He trusted in Hashem, and Hashem helped him.

Reb Moshe Dovid Tennenbaum z"l related that while on vacation in a city in Eretz Yisrael, he was approached by a non-religious man and asked if he could join him to complete a minyan. Reb Moshe Dovid asked him why he needed a minyan, and he said, "My son is having a bris today, and we are

missing a 10th man for a minyan." Reb Moshe Dovid went with him.

Everyone else at the bris appeared to be irreligious. After the bris, the father of the boy came over to Reb Moshe Dovid to thank him and said, "My father is very old; he didn't even have the strength to come to the bris. He lives nearby. I would appreciate it if you visited him and asked him how he is doing."

Reb Moshe Dovid did so and wished him "mazel tov!" on the birth of his grandson. The old man asked Reb Moshe Dovid which chassidus he belonged to, and Reb Moshe Dovid answered that is a chasid of Stolin-Karlin. The old man exclaimed, "Day and night, I think about Karlin!"

The old man explained that he was born to religious parents, but he had left the path of Torah he fell to lower and lower levels, r'l. He lived in Berlin, where he married and had a child.

One day, it became known that the "Yanuka" of Stolin zt'l (also known as the "Frankforter"; one of the rebbes of Karlin-Stolin) was coming to Berlin for medical reasons and planned to conduct a tish on Shabbos. The idea humored the locals. Whoever heard of a Chasidic tish in Berlin? "We all decided to attend the tish to witness this unusual sight."

The Yanuka came for Shabbos parashas Kedoshim. At the end of the tish, the Yanuka said, "It isn't my custom to say divrei Torah during a tish, but since I am a guest here, and people want to hear divrei Torah, I will say something."

He read from the beginning of the parashah: וְאִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d. Every man: Your mother and father you shall revere, and My Shabbos shall you observe, I am Hashem, your G-d."

The Yanuka said, "At home, when I am among my *chassidim*, all I have to say is וְאִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ, 'You shall be holy,' and that is sufficient. I don't have to add anything to that. These words are enough to inspire them. But there are places where these two words don't suffice... There I have to say, וְאִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ, 'Your mother and father you shall revere.' This means they should keep the traditions of their parents and follow in their parents' footsteps. But sometimes I am among people where I can't even say that, because their parents have also left the path of Torah. To them, I say וְאֶת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ, 'My Shabbos shall you observe.' At least, keep Shabbos!"

He concluded, "But here, in Berlin, I can't say that either. The only thing I can say אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם Believe in Hashem."

As the Yanuka said this, he banged his hand forcefully on the table. Again and again, he repeated, אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם...

The old man said to Reb Moshe Dovid, "These words entered my heart with immense force. Although I didn't change my ways, I always remember Hashem. When my son wanted to marry a non-Jewish woman, I told him that he couldn't do that. This isn't proper for the nation of אֲנִי ה'. That is when I decided that we must leave Berlin and move to Eretz Yisrael. That was my only hope to have Jewish grandchildren."

The old man concluded, "Although I didn't change my ways much, if you saw my grandson today entering into the bris of Avraham Avinnu, know that it is in the zechus of that tzaddik who shouted אֲנִי ה'."

It is a beautiful story. Now, let us see what we can learn from it. Baruch Hashem, we all know the meaning of וְאִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ, and we know about וְאֶת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ. There is a lot of kedushah, honoring parents, and Shabbos observance among Klal Yisrael. But there is a place where we need chizuk, and that is to believe in אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. To remember Hashem

An example is a person who runs out of the beis medresh immediately after *Aleinu*, rushing to his parnassah. But didn't he just said וְאִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ, that Hashem gives parnassah?! He also just said in Shemonah Esrei, בְּרַךְ עֲלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם הַזֵּאת, that Hashem should bless us with parnassah. Why is he in such a rush? The answer is that emunah didn't become part of his everyday life. He has emunah, but when he does things, he forgets... So, we need chizuk in אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, and with אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, stated at the beginning of the Aseres HaDibros. We need to develop a genuine and active recognition of Hashem, Who leads us and does everything for us.

One day, a wife said to her husband, "Whenever I look outside, and I see the neighbors' laundry hanging on the line, the laundry seems dirty, with black spots on the white clothing! In my opinion, she doesn't know which detergent to use. I hope to speak to her and give her some tips."

Her husband said, "It isn't your business. Better not to get involved. Many disputes began with good intentions, such as yours..."

The next time her neighbor did her laundry, she looked out the window and saw that the laundry was clean. When this happened a second time, she told her husband, "I think the neighbor learned how to wash the laundry. The last two times I looked, the neighbors' clothing was clean."

Her husband told her, "I recently cleaned our window. It was very dirty. The neighbors' laundry appeared dirty to you because you looked through a dirty window."

The lesson is that when one sees faults in his fellow man, it could be that it is because he himself is impure. He sees his own faults, which blind him from seeing the cleanliness and beauty of his fellow man.

Chesed

Another primary foundation of the Torah is chesed, helping one's fellow man.

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* taught: When one wants to know what a *sefer* is about, he reads the first page and the last page, and then he knows the goal and objective of the *sefer*. The Torah begins and ends with *chesed*. As the Gemara (*Sotah* 14.) states, "The Torah begins with *gemilus chasadim* and ends with *gemilus chasadim*. It begins with 'Hashem made clothing for Adam and Chavah, and He clothed them...' (*Bereishis* 3:21), and the Torah concludes with 'Hashem buried Moshe...' (*Devarim* 34:6). Therefore, since the beginning and the end of the Torah are *gemilus chasadim*, it shows us that the essence of Torah is *gemilus chasadim*.²

One of the reasons we read *Rus* on Shavuot is to teach us the significance of *gemilus chasadim*. The Midrash (*Rus Rabba* 2:14) states, "*Megillas Rus* doesn't discuss the laws of *tumah* and *taharah*, or the laws of איסור והיתר. So why was it written? To tell us the reward given to those who do deeds of loving-kindness." *Rus* did *chesed* for her mother-in-law, and she was rewarded with a descendant who was Dovid HaMelech.

The Pele Yoetz (*Yomim Tovim*) discusses the mitzvah to be happy on *yom tov* and he writes, "An aspect of the mitzvah is to bring joy to the poor. Therefore, one should give *tzedakah* to the poor before *yom tov*, each person according to his abilities. The holy *Zohar* is very strict with this obligation. The *Zohar* says: Hakadosh Baruch Hu visits the

2. The first five commandments, written on the first tablet, are *halachos bein adam lamakom*, between man and Hashem. The second tablet has five laws *bein adam lechaveiro*, between man and his fellow man. Many more words were written on the first tablet than on the second one. The Mabi't explains that for both *luchos* to appear symmetric, the fewer words on the second tablet had to be written in larger text.

Large letters are used to catch people's attention. It is like the words are shouting, לא תרצח, "Don't murder!" לא תגנוב, "Don't steal!" etc.

This idea emphasizes the importance of *bein adam lechaveiro*. It is just as important as *bein adam lamakom*.

In fact, they might even be more important. In the morning we say, אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן אליו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהן בעולם הבא, "These are the things one eats the fruits of the reward in this world, while the main reward is stored for Olam Haba..." and the Mishnah lists several examples of *chesed*. Why is *chesed* rewarded in this world? The Rosh (*Pei' ah* 1:1) explains, כי הקב"ה הפץ יותר במצוות שיעשה בהם גם רצון הבריות מבמצוות שבין אדם לקונו, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the mitzvos that involve helping a fellow man, more than the mitzvos that are solely for Hashem."

poor on *yom tov*. If they don't have enough food, Hashem cries for them. The *Zohar* says, 'If a person is happy all by himself, and he doesn't give to the poor, his punishment is great... About him it states (*Malachi 2:3*), וזריתי פרש על פניכם פרש חגיכם 'I will spread dung onto your faces – the dung of your holidays.' Therefore, please don't forget to give *tzedakah* to the poor before each *yom tov*, and give in accordance with the amount Hashem gave you. Don't be satisfied with giving a little, because, as the saying goes, לפום גמלא שיחנא 'load a camel according to its strength' (*Kesubos 67*). So, give according to your wealth and abilities. After you give to the poor, be happy, rejoice, and nothing bad will happen to you. There will be peace in your home..."³

One year, before Shavuos, the Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* of Radomsk went to Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozhmir *zt'l*. The Rebbe of Kozhmir asked him, "Why did you come here for Shavuos? You have your own chassidim, and they want you to be with them."

The Tiferes Shlomo replied that he also needed a Rebbe. He also wanted to grow in *avodas Hashem*. If he is always leading his congregation, when will he grow?

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozhmir wasn't pleased with this response. He explained to the Tiferes Shlomo that the role of a leader is to help others, even at the expense of his own growth. This is what Moshe Rabbeinu did. As Rashi (*Shemos 19:14*) writes, שלא היה מושה פונה לעסקיו, אלא מן ההר אל העם "Moshe didn't tend to his own business. He went straight from the mountain to the nation."

What business did Moshe have? The answer is, עסקיו "his business" means his personal spiritual quests. Moshe also wanted to prepare for *mattan Torah*, but he sacrificed his own desires for the sake of Klal Yisrael. He went straight to the nation to help them prepare for *mattan Torah*. This is the obligation of a leader: to forgo his own growth to help others.⁴

3. The mitzvah to give *tzedakah* to the poor before *yom tov* applies to all *yomim tovim*, however, the Torah mentions it specifically by the *yom tov* Shavuos (see *Devarim 16:10-11*, and *Rashi*). Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains, "This obligation applies to all holidays. One should give *tzedakah* and invite guests for the *yomim tovim* according to one's generosity and abilities. The Torah writes it by Shavuos because Pesach and Succos are for seven days, but Shavuos is only one day. One might think that it isn't as important to give *tzedakah* for Shavuos as it is before the other holidays. Therefore, the *pasuk* emphasizes that we shouldn't be lenient... We are obligated to give charity for Shavuos, as we give for all other holidays..."

Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* writes that on *erev* Shavuos, one should give *tzedakah* to a poor *talmid chacham*, the amount of 104 (twice the *gematriya* of ב"ן). This rectifies severe sins and is a *segulah* for the barren to bear children.

4. The following story happened in the yeshiva of Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l*. An elderly person felt weak before Neilah on Yom Kippur, and he went to rest in a side room, near the beis medresh. Reb Elyah asked a bachur to stay with the old man and to take care of him. The bachur replied that he would rather stay in the beis medresh during Neilah, and to be part of the *hislahavus* of this high time. Reb Elyah Lopian replied, "Taking care of another Yid is greater than saying Neilah."

Chazal (*Yoma 66b*) say מיקרי ירושלים היו מלוים ביום הכיפורים את מי שהולך את השעיר לעזאזל "The esteemed people of Yerushalayim would accompany, on Yom Kippur, the person who was bringing the goat to Azazel." They went with him, to help him, and to keep him company. But we wonder why they are referred to as יקרי ירושלים, the precious and esteemed people of Yerushalayim?

It is because, naturally, they preferred to be in the Beis HaMikdash, to witness the Kohen Gadol do his *avodah*. When people are prepared to sacrifice their own spirituality for the sake of helping others, they deserve to be called מיקרי, precious.

The mitzvah of (Vayikra 19:18) וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ is kept primarily within the home, when one has good middos towards his spouse.

When there is וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ, love among Yidden and they do favors for one another, Hashem says, וְאָנִי ה', I too will act in this manner, and I will do favors and kindness for Klal Yisrael.

Reb Yitzchok of Vorka zt'l said that the purpose of marriage isn't for יְשׁוּב הָעוֹלָם, so there will be people in the world. If that was the whole purpose, Hashem could have arranged a system in which people would be born in another manner. הַרְבֵּה דְרַבִּים לְמוֹקוֹם, Hashem has many other paths to take. Rather, it must be that the main purpose of marriage is to amend the middos.⁵

The Divrei Shmuel (Slonim) zt'l said, "We have to know that when one gives his time to listen to a Yid who desires to pour out his heart before you, to tell what he is going through, and then the listener offers him some words of encouragement and gives him a good feeling, this is greater than a thousand times saying *Nishmas*." (*Siach Zekeinim*, vol.3).

The Bardichover Rav zt'l once went to visit a person that the doctors said only had moments left in this world. When he came into the room, the sick person began to cry. He said, "I am about to go up to heaven to stand in judgment, but I don't have any merits at all. What will happen to me?"

The Bardichover Rav told him, "Don't worry. I will give you half of my Gan Eden", and they made a kinyan to formalize the transfer of the Olam Haba to this person. A few hours later, the ill person was niftar. He was niftar with a calm heart, knowing that he would receive a large portion in Gan Eden.

The students of the Bardichover asked, "You knew that he was about to die. You helped him feel better for a short time. Was it worth giving him half of your Olam HaBa just for that?"

The Bardichover Rav replied, "It is worthwhile to give away one's entire Olam HaBa, if it will prevent one *krechitz* from another Yid."

5. Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l would give the following counsel to young men who were about to get married: "All problems that you have: your rosh kollel shouted at you, the chavrusah left you, etc., that should only disturb your happiness until you get home. But when you get home, be happy. There should be no sign of distress when you are home. The walls of your home should dance with happiness."

Until his final days, he was always happy. When he came home, he would dance a קאדטשקע (a common Yerushalmi dance) in front of his family, so there should be happiness in their home. His children related that even when there was immense poverty in their home, and they went to sleep hungry, there was always a lot of happiness in the home.

The following story happened with a twenty-eight-year-old bachur, who was having a hard time finding his shidduch. He had four siblings in shidduchim age, and despite his father's many attempts to convince the older bachur to allow his siblings to skip him and to begin shidduchim, he stubbornly refused. He wanted to go first.

In תשפ"ד, this twenty-eight-year-old bachur traveled to Kerestir at the yahrtzeit, to daven at the kever of Reb Shayale Kerestirer zt'l. At this time, a good shidduch was suggested for one of his brothers. The older bachur's father called him and asked whether he would allow his younger brother to go before him. It wasn't a quick telephone call, because the older bachur wasn't certain. The conversation went back and forth several times, until he finally agreed, with a full heart, to allow his brother to proceed. A couple of days later, his father called him with the good news. His brother was a chasan. Obviously, he was very happy about this, but he was also upset that he was still single, while his younger brother was getting married.

The next day, the bachur went to the kever of Reb Shayele, and with tears, he poured out his broken heart. He said, "Holy Rebbe, I was *mevater* because I know that this is what you would have done if you were in my situation. Now that I have gone in your ways, and I am here, at your tzion, please take care of me,

Hatred and Jealousy

Every year on Shavuot morning, right before *kriyas haTorah*, Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zy'a* would tell the following story, which happened approximately three hundred years ago:

Reb Shimshon Wertheimer *zt'l* of Vienna was a wealthy *gadol* who was close to the king. Once, the king of Austria asked Reb Shimshon, "Why are the Jewish people persecuted more than any other nation?"

Reb Shimshon replied, "They are being punished for their hatred and for their jealousy."

The king wasn't satisfied with that answer. He said, "I'll give you three days to tell me the real reason the Jews suffer so much. If you don't give me a satisfying answer in three days, I will banish every Yid from Vienna."

That night, Reb Shimshon Wertheimer made a *שאלת חלום*. (Something one does to receive answers in a dream.) In his dreams, he was told, "Don't retract your words. You answered correctly. Yidden suffer in *galus* because of hatred and jealousy. Soon, the king will recognize that you told the truth."

At that time, it was the beginning of winter. The king went with his officers to hunt in the forest. When the officers wanted to return, they looked for the king but didn't find him. They assumed that the king had already gone home with other officers, who had left earlier, so they also left the forest. The king was left alone in the forest, deeply engrossed in his hobby. He didn't realize that he was alone in the forest until it turned into nighttime.

In the dark night, he couldn't find his way out of the forest. He tried to find a path home, and he reached a river. He saw lights on the other side of the river, which meant that there was a town nearby.

The king knew how to swim, so he took off his coat, left his horse behind, and swam across the river.

The king knocked on the first house he encountered and asked permission to come in. They refused to let him in. They thought he was a demon. The same occurred at the other homes the king knocked on.

He decided to look for a home with a *mezuzah*. He thought, "The Jewish people are a compassionate nation. They will surely help me." He found such a home and was given dry clothing and a satisfying meal. The king was still cold, so the Yid lent him his fur coat.

The wife suspected that the king was a thief. She told her husband, "Send this man out of the house before he steals everything we own - including the fur coat you just gave him to wear." The husband replied that he didn't suspect his guest, but just in case, he would remain awake all night and make certain that the guest didn't steal anything.

In the morning, the king asked his host how far it was to Vienna and how much it would cost to hire a wagon to get him there.

The host said that he could drive him there for four forties (a currency). The king agreed to the price and said, "Please let me wear your fur coat until we arrive, because I'm still under the weather." The Yid agreed.

The wife whispered to her husband, "He won't pay you. He'll kill you in the middle

and arouse Hashem's compassion on me, that I should have my *yeshuah*."

After the *yahrtzeit*, the *bachur* returned home, to America, and a *shidduch* idea came up for him (by the organization *וישבת*). At this time, the *bachur* was wearing a cast because he fell in Kerestir. But that didn't prevent the *shidduch* from occurring. It took only two weeks, and he was a *chasan*. By the end of that year, his siblings (who were in the age of *shidduchim*) were married.

of the way and take your coat. Why are you taking him?"

But he wasn't concerned.

As they approached Vienna, he asked his passenger where he wanted to go. The king asked to go to the king's palace. (He didn't yet reveal that he was the king, because he was sure that no one would believe him.) The Yid said, "We could get in trouble if we go to the king's compound without an invitation."

"Don't worry about that. I'll take care of it," the king replied. When they arrived in front of the king's palace, the king jumped out of the wagon and ran into the palace.

The Yid sat in the wagon, shocked. "My wife was right, after all," he thought. His passenger didn't pay him for the trip, and he ran off with his fur coat, too. His biggest problem was that he was on the palace grounds without an invitation.

Just then, an armed officer arrived and said that the king wanted to see him in the palace. The Yid shuddered, wondering what libel would be thrown on him.

When he stood before the king, the king asked him, "Do you recognize me?" He didn't. The king was dressed in his royal clothing, sitting on his throne, and he didn't look at all like the same person he had saved the previous night.

"Well, I know you very well. I even know what your home looks like," and he described the house he had slept in the previous night.

"Who can compare to the king's wisdom!" the Yid replied.

"It isn't wisdom, I was there last night. I'm the person you saved. I didn't tell you before that I was the king, because I knew you wouldn't believe me. But it is true, I am the king of Austria, and I want to reward you for hosting me and for helping me. I will grant you whatever you want."

The Yid was silent.

The king said, "If you want a forest, I will give it to you. If you want an entire city, it's yours. Anything at all, ask for it, and I'll give it to you."

The Yid was quiet.

The king became impatient. "If you aren't going to tell me what you want, I will just pay you the four forties you asked for, and that's all."

The Yid replied, "There is something I want. I'm a traveling merchant. I go from town to town selling my wares. Recently, someone began competing with me. I request that the king should decree that this man may not go to the cities where I work."

The king said, "Your request is granted. Your competitor will no longer go to the cities you are accustomed to going to. But you must know that I never saw a greater fool than you! You had the opportunity to ask for so much more, but because of your jealousy, all you care about is that your competition shouldn't make money."

The king summoned Reb Shimshon Wertheimer, and he said, "You were right. The Jewish people are punished because of their jealousy and hatred."

Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* would say this story every year before reading the Torah on Shavuos morning. The foundation of the Torah is middos tovos, and we must cleanse ourselves from hatred and from jealousy, and in their place have love toward our fellow man, to have a good eye, and to help our fellow man.

Tefillah

Several years ago, in Eretz Yisrael, there was a yungerman who worked on a non-religious kibbutz. He only returned home to Bnei Brak once every few weeks. He would spend a Shabbos at home and then return to work for the next few weeks.

Over there, he became friendly with a non-religious bachur and invited the bachur

to come with him to his home in Bnei Brak. The bachur expressed concern that people in Bnei Brak would be hostile towards him because he wasn't religious, and this was immediately noticeable by his dress. The youngster told him that he had nothing to worry about, and everyone would be happy to see him.

When he came for Shabbos, the youngster made sure to show his guest the beauty of Bnei Brak, the special Chassidic courts and yeshivos, and he also brought him to the Chazon Ish. The bachur was particularly impressed by the Chazon Ish, and he began his path towards Torah and mitzvos. Some weeks later, he didn't wait for an invitation. He told the youngster that he wanted to come to his home for Shabbos. He went again to the Chazon Ish, and he did teshuvah sheleimah.

It didn't take long, and the bachur was wearing a large kapel (*yarmulke*) on his head. His father was angry, and he asked his son who was influencing him so much. The bachur was confused, not knowing what he should say, and what not, so he said the truth, that the Chazon Ish influenced him.

The father said, "Who? Reb Avraham Yeshayah from Kassavah?" (He knew him from years before.) I will show him who is stronger than whom."

He got into his car and rushed off to Bnei Brak. "Where is the Chazon Ish?" he shouted from the car window. "Where is the Chazon Ish?" He was directed to the Chazon Ish's home, where he asked angrily, "Are you the Chazon Ish? Are you the Chazon Ish?"

"Yes," the Chazon Ish replied, "What do you want?"

"Do you think you can do whatever you want to my son?" he said angrily.

"I will make sure you are arrested. I won't let this happen. All your attempts to make my son *frum*, and all the tefillos and tears of my parents that prayed that their children go in the religious way, won't help you," and he said other foolish things like this.

The Chazon Ish didn't reply. He allowed the father to pour out his heart. When he calmed down, the Chazon Ish told him, "Know that your parents' tefillos will certainly be effective. Every tear and every tefillah makes an imprint. You have *bechirah*, you have free choice, and therefore, Heaven didn't stop you when you wanted to follow the yetzer hara. But your son is a *תינוק שנשבה* (he never had free choice because he was raised irreligious and didn't know differently). Therefore, your parents' tefillos will help him.

After some years, the father became religious... because the tefillos had finally taken effect.

There is a renowned tefillah for good children, which the Shlah recommends that people say on erev rosh chodesh Sivan. He writes, "My heart tells me that the best time to say this tefillah is *erev rosh chodesh Sivan*, the month we received the Torah and became Hashem's children. Parents should fast on this day and do teshuvah, and they should cleanse their home [from aveiros] in the areas of *isur v'heter, tumah v'taharah*, and all matters. They should also give tzedakah to worthy, poor people."⁶

The Chasam Sofer zt'l said at the chasunah of one of his children, "Believe me, every day I shed tears that Hashem should grant me that my children should become greater than me. It should be (*Devarim 30:5*), *והטבך והרבך*, *באבותיך*, that your children will be better than their father."

6. For the most part, fasting isn't recommended in our times. Nevertheless, the other directives from the Shlah to merit good children are applicable at all times. On *erev rosh chodesh Sivan*, parents should daven for their children, examine their deeds, do teshuvah, and give tzedakah to the poor.

Preparation for Shavuos

When travels are discussed in the Torah, it first states *from where* they traveled, and then it states *where they traveled to*. However, when the Torah recounts the story of coming to Midbar Sinai to receive the Torah, It states (Shemos 19:2) בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי, וַיִּסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי, "On this day, they came to Midbar Sinai. They traveled from Refidim, and they came to Midbar Sinai." The Or HaChaim⁷ answers, "Perhaps it is as Chazal (Sanhedrin 105b) say, אהבה מקלקלת השורה, 'Love changes the straight order.' For Rosh chodesh Sivan is the day that the Creator, the Torah, and the world waited for from the day of creation. They waited anxiously, 'When will Bnei Yisrael come to Midbar Sinai?' Therefore,

when Bnei Yisrael arrived, the pasuk couldn't contain itself to tell the order of events, and first came the news that בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי, on this day, they arrived at Midbar Sinai... Heaven and earth rejoiced, for this is the purpose of creation. Afterward, the Torah returned to tell the order of how it occurred."

As is known, the yomim tovim aren't solely to celebrate what happened in the past. In a sense, the events recur each year. Every year, on Shavuos, Hashem gives us the Torah again. And, at this time of year, Hashem's great joy of the Jewish nation becoming ready to receive the Torah, together with the joy of the Torah and the world, reoccurs.⁸

7. Tzaddikim said that these words of the Or HaChaim burn like a large flame, and they wondered how the pages didn't burn from this great fire?

8. Everything connected to the experience of *matan Torah*, including the arousal for kedushah that began on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, repeats itself each year.

As the Avodas Yisrael of Koznitz zt'l (ד"ה ביום) teaches, "The truth is that every year, in every generation, the matters recur as they happened in the past. For example, we left Mitzrayim on Pesach, and every year, some Jewish souls leave Mitzrayim. Also, this month, when we stood before Hashem at Har Sinai, this reoccurs, and a person can come close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and receive the Torah before Har Sinai... Therefore, each year, from Rosh Chodesh Sivan until Shavuos, one should read in the Torah [what occurred on those days in the past], to draw down the kedushah that was revealed on that day."

Similarly, Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen of Lublin zt'l (Pri Tzaddik, Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 2) writes that on this day, when they came to Midbar Sinai, they received a great desire to accept the Torah. Rebbe Tzaddok writes, "Also now, although the Torah has already been given, nevertheless, each year, when this day arrives, a person should feel in his heart a new desire to receive the Torah. Thereby, the Torah will be absorbed in his heart, and he will understand the secrets of the Torah."

The second day of Sivan is called יום המיוחס. The primary reason for this is that on this day, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to the Jewish nation that if they will accept the Torah (19:6) וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מְמֻלְכֵת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ, "You will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation." In other words, it is the day that the *yichus*, special heritage of Bnei Yisrael, was expressed. This occurs each year. Hakadosh Baruch Hu elevates the Jewish nation on this day and calls them מְמֻלְכֵת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ, "a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation."

Shulchan Aruch (494:3) states that we don't say Tachanun from rosh chodesh Sivan until after Shavuos. The poskim (Mishnah Berurah, Magan Avraham) explain that we obviously don't say tachanun on Rosh Chodesh Sivan. Then is יום המיוחס, followed by the three days of שלשת ימי הגבלה, to prepare for Matan Torah, and we shouldn't say tachanun on these days. We understand from these words that יום המיוחס and שלשת ימי הגבלה reoccur every year. They aren't solely a historic event that happened in the past.

The Orach HaShulchan (494:7) says that ב' סיון is called יום המיוחס because Yom Kippur will always be on the same day of the week as יום המיוחס. This is the *yichus* of this day. We add that this means that just as Hashem forgives our aveiros on Yom Kippur, this occurs on יום המיוחס as well. Hashem will call us מְמֻלְכֵת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ, "a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation" this year, as well.

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz zt'l said that יום המיוחס comes before Shavuos and matan Torah to imply that a

Rabbeinu b'Chayei also discusses the five days of preparation for Matan Torah, starting with Rosh chodesh Sivan. He writes that when Hashem appeared to Moshe from within the burning bush, Hashem said (Shemos 3:10) "וְעַתָּה לֵךְ... וְהוֹצֵא אֶת עַמִּי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם" "Now go... and take My people, Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim." It states לֵךְ, with an extra ם"ה (because it could have stated לֶךְ). Rabbeinu b'Chayei writes, על דרך הפשט, תוספת ה"א להורות על חמישה ימים שעתידין שיהנו בהר סיני, מראש חודש סיון עד שישי שבו קבלו התורה, "According to its simple implication, the added letter heh is to hint to the five days that they will encamp at Har Sinai, from Rosh chodesh Sivan until the sixth of Sivan, when they will receive the Torah."

Rabbeinu b'Chayei also explains the pasuk (ibid. 3:12) בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֹתִי הָהָר הַזֶּה, "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve Hashem on this mountain." Which עבודה, service, will the Jewish nation perform for Hashem? What is the pasuk referring to? Generally, it is understood that it refers to receiving the Torah. However, Rabbeinu b'Chayei says that it refers to the avodas Hashem Klal Yisrael will do during the five days preparing for matan Torah.⁹

The need to prepare becomes even greater when we reach the שלשת ימי הגבלה, the three days before Shavuos, because about these days, the Torah writes explicitly (Shemos 19:15)

"[Moshe] said to the nation, 'Be prepared for three days...'"

Preparing for matan Torah is essential, as it states (19:3) וּמִשָּׁה עָלָה אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים וַיְקַרְא אֱלֹהֵי ה' מִן הַהָר, "Moshe ascended to Hashem, and Hashem called to him from the mountain..." The Or HaChaim explains that Moshe did the first step. He began climbing the mountain, and then Hashem called him to come up. "For you must know that holiness doesn't occur before someone prepares for it, and arouses it. As Chazal (Zohar vol.3, p.92) state, 'When there is an arousal below, there comes an arousal from Above.' ... This is hinted in the word וַיְקַרְא, from the root יקר, precious and honor, for Hashem honored and cherished Moshe because he was a *zariz*, and he was preparing himself for the matter [for Mattan Torah]."

We can make a *kal v'chomer*: The Midrash (Devarim Rabba 11:4) says that Moshe was מחצית אלקים, half G-dly. If he needed to prepare himself for matan Torah, certainly, we must prepare ourselves. If we do so, we will be able to enjoy the holy light of the yom tov and the revelation of Hashem's presence that occurs on Shavuos.

Desire for Torah and for Avodas Hashem Elevates Us Immensely

The Chida (Lev Dovid ch.31) quotes from בעל המכתב that in the desert, when Bnei Yisrael

person can be proud of his *yichus* only *before* the Torah was given. But after the Torah was given, deeds are needed. One shouldn't feel pride and *gaavah* because he is a descendant of great tzaddikim, because now that the Torah was given, if he doesn't keep the Torah and study it, he doesn't deserve to boast. (The Tzanzer Rav said this to a descendant of great tzaddikim, who was very proud of that, but his deeds weren't up to par, as they should have been.)

9. Regarding Sefiras HaOmer, Chazal (Rosh Hashanah 5a) say, מצוה לממני יומי ומצוה לממני שבועי, "There is a mitzvah to count the days and there is a mitzvah to count the weeks." This is why we count the days and the weeks of the Sefirah. However, when it becomes rosh chodesh Sivan, each hour is precious. We are so inspired and excited to receive the Torah that we count every hour, as is hinted at in Rashi at the beginning of parashas Bamidbar (1:1) "Because He loves them, He counts them every hour!" During these days, an hour is precious like many days!

It states in Iyov (1:7) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל הַשָּׂטָן תְּבֹא וְנִעַן הַשָּׂטָן אֶת ה' וַיֹּאמֶר מִשׁוּם בָּאֲרָץ וּמִהֶתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ, "From where do you get the strength to convince people to sin?" The Satan replied, מִשׁוּם בָּאֲרָץ וּמִהֶתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ, it is from people who walk around the streets for no good reason, wasting time. We must be careful not to waste time the entire year, and certainly so during these days.

were preparing themselves for matan Torah during the days of the Sefirah, they perceived secrets and great wonders of the Torah. The Chida says that this is the reason we say in the Hagadah shel Pesach, אילו קרבנו לפני ה' סיני, ולא נתן לנו התורה דיינו Hashem for coming to Har Sinai, even if we wouldn't receive the Torah. But what benefit is there in coming to Har Sinai without getting the Torah? The Chida answers that at this time, they received many secrets of the Torah since they were preparing for matan Torah, and preparing for holiness is a great level.

The Chidushei HaRim (Likutei HaRim, Bamidbar, ד"ה אה) teaches that there are people who try to serve Hashem, but they don't succeed. However, if they will yearn with all their strength to serve Hashem, the iron wall that prevents them from succeeding in avodas Hashem will fall, and they will be able to perform Hashem's service correctly.

It states (Bamidbar 1:49) אַךְ אֶת מִטֵּה לְוִי לֹא תִקְדוּ וְאֶת רֹאשֵׁם לֹא תִשָּׂא בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "But you shall not count the tribe of Levi, and you shall not take a census of them among Bnei Yisrael." The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 1:12) asks: "Why aren't they counted with Bnei Yisrael? It is because the Levi'im are Mine, as it states (Bamidbar 3:12) וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם, 'The Levi'im shall be Mine.' This is because whoever comes close to Me, I draw him close. They came close to me, as it states (Shemos 32:26) וַיַּעֲמֵד מֹשֶׁה בַּשַּׁעַר הַמַּחֲנֶה, "Moshe stood at the gateway of the camp and said, 'Whoever is for Hashem, join me!' and all the Levi'im gathered around him." Therefore, I will draw them near, as it states (Bamidbar 3:12) וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם, 'The Levi'im shall be Mine.'" The Chidushei HaRim brings this as proof of the strength of desire. The Levi'im wanted

to be close to Hashem, and therefore, Hashem drew them close to Him.

The strength of desire is also seen in Rashi (Shemos 19:9-10). Hashem's original plan was to give the Torah solely via Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe was to say all of the Aseres HaDibros. But the nation insisted that they wanted to hear the Torah directly from Hashem. As Rashi writes, Moshe told Hashem, רְצוֹנָם לְשִׁמּוֹעַ מִמֶּךָ, אֵינוּ דוֹמֵה הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ מִפִּי שְׁלִיחַ, לְשִׁמּוֹעַ מִפִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ, רְצוֹנָם לְרֹאוֹת אֶת מַלְכָּנוּ, "They want to hear from You. It isn't the same when one hears from a *shaliach* as when one hears from the mouth of the King. 'We desire to see the King.'" Hashem agreed to their request, and He told them to prepare themselves for matan Torah, because Hashem would speak directly with them. (This occurred for the first two of the Aseres HaDibros, and then the nation said that the revelation was too great for them, and they asked that Moshe tell them the next eight of the Aseres HaDibros.) In any event, we see the power of desire. The nation wanted to hear the Torah directly from Hashem, and what they wanted occurred.

The Midrash (Yalkut Yeshayah 391) writes, "In the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will stand on Har Tavor and on Har Karmel and build on top of them the Beis HaMikdash." The Satmar Rebbe zt'l (Shavuos, p.127) explains that the mountains earned this privilege because of their desire. They wanted the Torah to be given on them; therefore, they were rewarded that the Beis HaMikdash would be built on them in the future.

We make a kal v'chomer. If this is the reward that will be given to mountains, which are דומם, inanimate items, certainly when a Yid desires Hashem, there will be amazing benefits from that. He will reach very high levels.¹⁰

10. The Zohar (vol.3, p.152b) states, "There is announcement going forth in heaven, 'Whoever wants to see the Queen (the Shechinah) should come and see, before the gates close'. The Zohar explains that this refers to the week of Hod, of Sefiras Ha'Omer. Starting on Pesach Sheini until the end of the week, the doors of heaven are opened, and people can come close to Hashem. But then the doors close. The Avodas Yisrael (Tehillim) asks why the doors of heaven close at the end of the week? It is getting close to Shavuos! The closer we get to the yom tov, the gates should open even wider!

The Avodas Yisrael's answers as follows: The Gemara (Pesachim 6b) says that two weeks before yom tov, שואלים ודורשים בהלכות יום טוב, people ask questions, and there are drashos about the halachos of the upcoming yom tov. This means two weeks before the yom tov, people prepare for the yom tov. The Avodas Yisrael says that this occurs in heaven, as well. After the week of Hod passes, there are another two weeks to Shavuos, and therefore, Heaven is preparing for Shavuos at this time. The Avodas Yisrael writes, "The divine kalah is preparing and dressing herself up during these days; therefore, it is proper for the gates to be closed, because no one has permission to enter, and it isn't derech erez either." We don't know anything about the depths of these holy words, but we learn that the Shechinah is preparing herself on these days for the chasunah, which is on Shavuos.

Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l, the mashgiach of Ponovitz, had a strong desire to open a gemach, to lend out money to people who needed it. When his students from America saw how much their rebbe wanted to perform this mitzvah, they spoke to a very wealthy person they knew. He was happy to supply the funds. He sent a large sum of money to Reb Yechezkel, and Reb Yechezkel immediately opened the gemach.

This wealthy person (who opened the gemach) loved Torah. All of his sons and sons-in-law were learning full-time. They weren't involved in business at all. The wealthy parent supported them because it was important for him that they should grow in Torah.

One day, this wealthy person came to Eretz Yisrael. He came to Reb Yechezkel, and Reb Yechezkel praised him immensely for the great mitzvah he performed, to establish the gemach. He also praised him for his wise approach to life, that he supports all of his children to study Torah. Then Reb Yechezkel asked, "And what about yourself? Do you also set times to study Torah?"

The wealthy man was silent. It was understood that he didn't study too much Torah.

Reb Yechezkel told him, "You must know that if you don't study Torah, you will leave this world empty-handed." (He had many mitzvos, but without Torah, he will have nothing at all.)

The wealthy person became very frightened. He shortened his trip and returned to America. He went to one of the roshei yeshivos and told him what Reb Yechezkel had told him. He said, "Therefore, I want to learn with the rosh yeshiva for two hours every day, before I go out to work." The rosh yeshiva said that he also wants that, only he doesn't have two hours available. The wealthy man said, "So, arrange for me another *chaorusah*. I need this because the Mashgiach told me that if I don't study Torah myself, I will go up to heaven empty-handed."

Hearing that, the rosh yeshiva rearranged his day and found two hours for this wealthy person, and he began learning with him every day.

Years later, this wealthy person said, "The Mashgiach wanted to do me an eternal favor, and therefore, he encouraged me to study Torah. But I never understood the logic behind it. I had many merits, even before I studied Torah. Why wouldn't Heaven grant me reward in Gan Eden? Why would I have nothing if I don't study Torah? But then I saw a lesson, taught by Reb Eliyahu Lopian zt'l (Lev Eliyahu, Bereishis, p.192). He quotes a Zohar on the pasuk (Shir HaShirim 1:8) אִם לֹא תִדְעֵי לֵךְ הַיְפָה בְּנָשִׁים צְאִי לֵךְ בְּעֵקְבֵי הַצֹּאן. The Zohar states that even if you are הַיְפָה בְּנָשִׁים, beautiful with your good deeds, אִם לֹא תִדְעֵי לֵךְ, if you don't know Torah, צְאִי לֵךְ, you must go out. You must leave. You don't have permission to enter Gan Eden without Torah.