

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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*Ki Sisa (Parah)*



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

## *Ki Sisa - Parah*

### **Parnassah is from Hashem**

A person is mistaken if he thinks that his wealth is a result of his business acumen, smart decisions, and the like. One must believe that everything he has is from Hashem. The Alter of Slabodka zt'l explains that when a person believes that everything he has – his wealth, his success, etc. – is from

Hashem, and he thanks Hashem, Hashem will bestow more kindness onto him. However, if he feels that he earned his wealth, etc., on his own, and that he doesn't have to praise Hashem, this can chalilah cause the bounty to stop.<sup>1</sup>

When one realizes that his earnings and assets are a kindness that Hashem provides

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1. Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita tells the following story:

Baron Rothchild had a clever manager who took care of all the Baron's businesses. The Baron became extremely wealthy due to this manager's counsel and skills. Naturally, the Baron promoted him to a very high position. There was a problem, though. The manager understood the Baron's success was due to his management, and he became haughty. He treated his boss, Baron Rotchild, with so much disrespect that it appeared as if the Baron was working for him!

Initially, the Baron accepted this situation. He figured it was worthwhile for him to suffer some humiliation from his manager if his businesses were prospering. But as time went on, matters became worse. The manager almost entirely disregarded the Baron's opinion and did what he felt was better.

The Baron fired him.

The manager wasn't afraid of that. He was certain that many other wealthy people would hire him to run their businesses. He had a lot of experience, and he had made the Baron wealthy; who wouldn't want to hire him?

But he remained unemployed for months. No one was hiring him, and he didn't know why. He began to advertise that he was looking for a position, but it didn't help. His savings were shrinking, and he felt the need to find a position, quickly.

After investigating, he found out that when wealthy people considered hiring him, they would speak to Baron Rothchild to ask about him. The Baron would reveal to them that with time, the manager will begin to feel like he is the boss and will begin making his own decisions. Furthermore, he will totally disregard and humiliate his boss. This report prevented him from being hired.

The manager told his family what was happening to him. They replied, "The Baron is renowned for being a kind person. He certainly doesn't hate you or want to take revenge on you. It must be that he knows that if you are hired, you will be fired soon afterwards because no one can possibly tolerate your behavior. The Baron figures that your emotional well-being shouldn't be hired to another position, rather than to be hired and fired soon afterwards."

The family said, "Therefore, you shall do the following: Tell the Baron that you recognize what you did wrong, and that from now on, you will always recognize your place, that you are merely a hired worker, and you won't act like the boss. When you tell him this, you will see that he will speak favorably about you to others. Even more, he will hire you once again because the Baron knows, more than anyone else, the good job you can do."

Let us learn from this story the following concept: Many times, a person finds that he isn't succeeding, not

him with, and that he received it because he was worthy, then he will strive to be deserving of Hashem's bounty and blessings. However, when one thinks that he earned it all on his own, he won't be afraid of sin.

The Alter of Slabodka zt'l says that this is alluded to in this week's parashah (33:19) וְהִנֵּיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶחָוֶן וְרַחֲמֵי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶרְחַם, "I will show favor when I choose to show favor, and I shall show compassion when I choose to show compassion." The Alter explains this pasuk slightly differently:

וְהִנֵּיתִי, Hashem says that He will show favor, אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶחָוֶן upon the people who *believe* that Hashem shows favor. Hashem says וְרַחֲמֵי, that Hashem will show compassion אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶרְחַם, upon those who *believe* Hashem shows compassion.

In other words, when a person believes that everything he has until now is Hashem's compassion, he will receive more. But when one thinks that the strength of his hand earned everything he has, this closes the fountain of blessings.

Although we make *hishtadlus*, we must believe that the *parnassah* comes from Hashem. To think that the *parnassah* came from the *hishtadlus* can be viewed as a lack of *emunah*, and in a certain way, it can resemble *avodah zarah*, *chalilah*. Reb Shimon Zelichover zt'l hy'd (mashgiach of Yeshivas Chachmei

Lublin) says that this lesson is taught to us from the *rishonim*, who explain the *aveirah* of the *egel*. The *rishonim* explain that the nation wasn't literally worshipping *avodah zarah*, *chas v'shalom*. No one considered the golden calf to be a deity, or anything like that. The Ramban writes, "They weren't seeking an *egel* to be their god, who kills and who gives life. Rather, they wanted the *egel* to take the place of Moshe, who was their leader." (See also the Ibn Ezra and other *rishonim*.)<sup>2</sup>

On a deeper level, the *rishonim* explain that they thought they needed an image for Hashem's bounty to come through to them. They believed in Hashem, they prayed solely to Hashem, but they thought that they needed a physical image, for the goodness to be channeled to them.

Reb Shimon Zelichover teaches that according to this error, we can say that the *aveirah* and the test of the *egel* is in all generations. When one thinks that his *hishtadlus* brings him *parnassah*, he lacks awareness that *parnassah* comes from Hashem.

Hashem guides the person and places in his heart what *hishtadlus* he should do. This is to enclothe the *parnassah* in nature. But one must believe that if one *hishtadlus* ends, another *hishtadlus* can take its place. Hashem has many ways to send the bounty. The root

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in *ruchniyus* and not in *gashmiyus*. Whatever he tries to do, fails. He doesn't have Torah, *tefillah*, *kedushah*, or good *middos*. He doesn't have *parnassah* or *nachas*, not *shidduchim*, not *yeshuos*. The person should make a *cheshbon hanefesh* with himself. He must first understand that it is obvious that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves him. The reason he is suffering is that Hashem wants him to know that success is in His hands. He had made the mistake that so many others have, to think that his successes and his *parnassah* come from his hard and clever work skills. He forgot that everything is from Heaven. Hakadosh Baruch Hu took away His *siyata d'Shmaya*, so the person will recognize that he needs Hashem's help, and without it, he has nothing at all. The person who recognizes this will do *teshuvah* and express his regret for his error and misunderstanding. He will say out loud, "I recognize my fault, and from now on, I will remember that everything is from You." Hakadosh Baruch Hu will accept him immediately, with both hands, and Hashem will bestow upon him a lot of bounty and kindness, and everything will work out for him.

2. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l would refer to the *egel* as an "*untergevorffene maaseh*," meaning they weren't guilty of this *aveirah*. They were set up to fail this test. Chazal (Avodah Zarah 4:) say, לֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיוּ רְאוּיִים לְאוֹתוֹ, *מעשה*, which means that Bnei Yisrael wouldn't have committed this *aveirah* of the *egel*. It only happened to teach Klal Yisrael, for all generations, that no matter what *aveirah* we did, we can do *teshuvah*.

of the *parnassah* is from Hashem, and not the *hishtadlus*.

We understand from this that if a boss fires someone, he shouldn't fulfill the pasuk (33:4) וַיִּתְאַבְּלוּ, to mourn and be sad. He should believe that *parnassah* is from Hashem, and Hashem has other means of sending it to him.<sup>3</sup>

## The Great Error

Chazal (Brachos 33b) say, הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת, שמים, "Everything is in Hashem's hands other than yiras Shamayim." This means the only thing a person must attain on his own is yiras Shamayim. *Parnassah*, and all other needs, are from Hashem.<sup>4</sup>

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l says that people make two mistakes. One is in relation

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3. The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l says that the aveirah that Klal Yisrael did with the egel was וַיִּתְאַבְּלוּ, that they were sad after they committed the aveirah. They didn't believe that Hashem would accept their teshuvah. They lost sight of their holy neshamah and didn't consider that everything can be rectified.

It is important to regret aveiros bitterly. This is called מרירות. But sadness and losing hope, called עצבות, is never the correct approach.

Rebbe Aharon HaGadol of Karlin zt'l explained that the difference between עצבות (sadness) and מרירות (bitterness) is that when one is בעצבות, he feels very heavy, he goes to sleep because he loses hope. He doesn't tolerate himself or others. But when one has מרירות he can't fall asleep because he recognizes that he didn't begin. He grabs tefillos and mitzvos, and he takes the Gemara and begins learning from it.

As people say, *atzvus* is when a person says, "I don't have anything. There is no hope for me." *Merirus* is when one says, "I don't have anything yet, and therefore I will begin from today to seek to acquire more and more."

The Maor VaShemesh (*Behaloscha*) writes, "A great foundation in *avodas Hashem* is to distance oneself from עצבות ומרה שחורה, from being sad, as far as possible, because the *Zohar* says that *atzvus* is like *avodah zarah* (שמים). The proof is that when one is sad, he has thoughts of *avodah zarah*. Therefore, one must be very distant from *atzvus*. It can lead to all *aveiros*." This week, when we seek to cleanse ourselves from all aspects of *avodah zarah*, it is an excellent time to strive to be happy and to cleanse ourselves from *atzvus*, which the *Zohar* says is like *avodah zarah*.

The Tanya (*Igeres HaKodesh* ch.11) also teaches that sadness is like *avodah zarah*, and he explains that this is because sadness means one doesn't believe that everything is for the good. He writes, "When one is sad, this means he thinks his life isn't perfect and is lacking something he needs. But to think so is *kefirah*, heresy, *chas veshalom*. Therefore, the *chachamim* of kabbalah warn against *atzvus* immensely..."

The women didn't sin by the egel. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l explains that this is because the women danced at *kriyas Yam Suf*, as it states (*Shemos* 15:20), ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן את התוף בידה ותצאנה כל הנשים אחריה בתפים, "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aharon, took her drum in her hand and all the women went forth after her with drums and with dancing." Since they danced then, they didn't dance with the egel. But the men didn't dance at *kriyas Yam Suf*, and they ended up dancing with the egel, as it states (32:19), וירא את העגל ומחולות, "And Moshe saw the egel and the dancing." So, we see the importance of being happy with *kedushah* and *ruchniyos*, and then we won't be tempted to seek happiness in the *tumah*. We see that happiness will protect us from *avodah zarah*.

4. This is also written in the pasuk (*Devarim* 10:12) וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁאֵל מַעֲבֹד כִּי אִם לִירְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d..." Hashem asks from us only one matter: Fear of heaven. The rest Hashem gives.

This is also alluded to in the Chazal (*Megillah* 6b) וְעַתָּה וּמִצַּעֲתֵי תַאֲמִין, if someone says that he toiled and he succeeded, you can believe him. This means if someone toiled in Torah and yiras Shamayim, he could attain it. However, when it comes to matters of this world, the Gemara says that it isn't dependent on one's toil. סיעתא הוא מן שמיא, it is entirely up to Hashem's decree.

to *parnassah*, and the other mistake is for *yiras Shamayim*. *Parnassah* is from Heaven, as Chazal say, "A person's *parnassah* is determined on Rosh Hashanah until the upcoming Rosh Hashanah." In contrast, *yiras Shamayim*, one must acquire it himself, as it states וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁאֵל מְעַמְךָ בִּי אִם לְיִרְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d..." Fear of Hashem is the only matter that a person must acquire on his own. Everything else is destined and given to him from Above.

But when it comes to *parnassah*, everyone runs after it, and they think they must acquire it alone.

Whereas, when it comes to *yiras Shamayim*, people suddenly have *bitachon*, and they rely on Hashem.

An example of this is when someone goes to a place where there are tests in *yiras Shamayim* (or when one sends his children to such a place). They say that they trust in Hashem that nothing bad will happen to them. Suddenly, they have *bitachon*. They don't have this *bitachon* when it comes to *parnassah*. It should be the opposite. For *parnassah*, you can trust in Hashem, but מָה לְיִרְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁאֵל מְעַמְךָ בִּי אִם לְיִרְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, the only thing Hashem requests and requires from us is to acquire *yiras Shamayim*.<sup>5</sup>

It states in Pirkei Avos (5:10) שְׁלִי וְשִׁלְךָ וְשִׁלְךָ וְשִׁלְךָ, שְׁלִי, עַם הָאָרֶץ וְשִׁלְךָ וְשִׁלְךָ שְׁלִי, עַם הָאָרֶץ "[if a person says] 'Mine is yours and yours is mine,' he is an unlearned person."

Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l explains that שְׁלִי are the factors that are *my* obligation to attain. This refers to *yiras Shamayim*, as it

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5. When the Satmar Rav zt'l became the rav of Kroli, he checked the *kashrus* of the city. When he was at the place where the meat is shechted and prepared, he discovered that two people had a key to the area: the *mashgiach* and the butcher (who owned the premises and the business). The Satmar Rav disapproved. There should only be one key. The *mashgiach* stamped the kosher meat, and only the *mashgiach* had the stamp. Nevertheless, the Satmar Rav insisted that the butcher shouldn't own a key. The Satmar Rav explained himself with the following story:

From time to time, the Satmar Rav would visit the city of Muzhai. Once, before Shabbos, some of the respected *baalabatim* of Muzhai came to him and said that when he gives the *drashah* on Shabbos before the community, he should mention the problem that they have in their city. A river passes through the city, and it causes problems with *tznius* and *shemiras einayim*. They requested that the Satmar Rav arouse the community to fix this problem.

The Satmar Rav spoke to the other people from the city, trying to understand more about the problem. He heard two opposite opinions among the community. Some said that there was a *tznius* problem that needed fixing, and there were others who said that it was fine, and there wasn't any problem at all. Those who said that it was o.k. explained that there is a place where the river is narrow, and they put up a *mechitzah* to separate the men from the women. There is no mixing, and there is no problem.

The Satmar Rav didn't know what to do after hearing contradictory reports, so he decided that he would speak with a simple person who would be able to speak to him and tell him the situation, the way it was. This simple man replied, "Rabbeinu, the situation is like this: If a person *wants*, he *can* see what he shouldn't. And since he *can* see, he will *want* to see" (and therefore, the situation needs to be rectified).

The Satmar Rav explained that this is the reason he took away the key. If the butcher has the option to come here when no one sees, the *yetzer hara* is there to encourage him to do so. Therefore, we have to be cautious and have only one key in the hands of the *mashgiach*."

The lesson applies to everyone. There are places where people go, and they say that there is nothing to worry about. Although if they want to see what they shouldn't, they will be able to. As long as there is an option available, the *yetzer hara* might encourage them... and no one can know what will be in the end.

states, ועתה ישאל משה את ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d..." But this person says ושלך, that this obligation is up to You, Hashem, to give it to me. And in contrast, he says, ושלך, which means those matters that are Hashem's role to give – this is referring to parnassah, he says ושלך, it's my obligation to attain. This person is an עמ הארץ. He is ignorant of the ways of the world. He has turned things entirely around. For parnassah, he can be calm and rely on Hashem. For yiras Shamayim, he should toil to attain it.<sup>6</sup>

## Tefillah

Moshe was the humblest person as it states (Bamidbar 12:3) והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל האדם, "Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth!"

Avos d'Reb Noson (9:2) writes, "There are twenty-four types of מוכי שחין, and Moshe felt humbler than all of them." מוכי שחין is a skin illness. People who have this disease are generally humble because they appear disgusting, and people stay away from them. There are twenty-four types of this disease,

6. Rashi in parashas Terumah (25:5) writes (quoting a Midrash Tanchuma), "Yaakov saw with ruach hakodesh that Yisrael were going to build a Mishkan in the desert, therefore, he brought ארזים, acacia wood, to Mitzrayim and he planted them. He commanded his children to take them with them when they leave Mitzrayim." With this lumber, Yaakov built the Mishkan. One can ask that Hashem gave them all their needs in the desert. He gave them the manna, their clothes never became worn out (שמלתך לא בלחה), so Hashem could have also given them עצי שיטים, the acacia wood in the desert. Hashem could have made this miracle. Why did Yaakov need to plant עצי שיטים? The answer is that this tells us that when it comes to *gashmiyus*, one can rely on Hakadosh Baruch Hu to supply all his needs. However, for *ruchniyus*, a person must take action on his own.

Chazal (Brachos 33b) say, הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים, "Everything is in Hashem's hands, aside from yiras Shamayim." הכל בידי שמים, "Everything is in Hashem's hands," is alluded to in the word בקשה, written in (Shemos 13:13), because the letters of בקשה are the roshei teivos of הכל בידי שמים. This pasuk discusses פדיון פטר חמור, redeeming a first-born donkey by giving a בקשה, a sheep, to a kohen. A new-born donkey represents wealth. His property is growing. He is becoming wealthy. He must remember הכל בידי שמים – בקשה, that it is entirely from heaven.

When the Torah discusses the mitzvah of pidyon haben, to redeem a Jewish child, the Torah states (Bamidbar 18:16) ופדונו מִכֹּחַ חֹדֶשׁ תִּפְדֶּה בְּעֶרְבָנָה כֶּסֶף חֲמִשָּׁתַּיִם שֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ "Those that are to be redeemed – from one month shall you redeem... five silver shekels..." The word חֲמִשָּׁתַּיִם is used, and the root of this word, חמ"ש, have the roshei teivos of חוץ מיראת שמים, "aside from yiras Shamayim." This is because when it comes to children, one must educate them to yiras Shamayim, as it states (Devarim 6:7) וישננתם לבניך, "You shall teach [Torah] thoroughly to your children..." and it states (Mishlei 22:6) חנך לנער על פי דרכו, "Train the youth according to his way." When it comes to yiras Shamayim, we must remember חוץ מיראת שמים – חמ"ש, that this isn't from heaven. This is each person's obligation to attain for himself and to give it over to his family.

is roshei teivos for חוץ מיראת שמים. With this information, we can explain the Gemara (Beitzah 15b) which says, הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו יטע בהן אדר, "If a person wants that his properties should remain with him, he should plant in them an Adar."

The word נכסיו, properties, is in plural. This is because it is hinting at spiritual and material successes. As we explained, spiritual success is up to each person to attain, while material successes come from Hashem. How can one succeed in both of these pursuits? The Gemara's counsel is that he should plant an Adar. This hints to בשמחה because Chazal (Taanis 29a) say, מושננס אדר מרבין בשמחה, when Adar arrives, one should have a lot of שמחה. Planting Adar can therefore mean attaining בשמחה. As we wrote, this stands for הכל בידי שמים. In other words, if he wants spiritual and material success, the advice is בשמחה, to know that "Everything is from Heaven aside from fear of Heaven." When it comes to his material goals, he should trust in Hashem; when it comes to his spiritual goals, he should work to attain them on his own, and then he will succeed on both fronts.

one worse than the next, and Moshe Rabbeinu felt humbler than all of them. Nevertheless, Moshe never refrained from tefillah.

In this week's parashah, after the sin of the *egel*, Moshe Rabbeinu prayed (32:32) וַעֲתָהּ אֵם תְּשָׂא חַטָּאתָם וְאִם אֵין מַחֲנִי נָא מִסְפָּרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתָּ "And now if you would but forgive their sin! – but if not, erase me now from Your sefer that You have written." He prayed with mesirus nefesh that Hashem forgive them for making the *egel*.

He davened for the community, and he also davened for the individual, as we find when Miriam had *tzaraas*, it states (*Bamidbar* 12:13) וַיִּצְעַק מִן־הַיּוֹם לְכֹל הַיּוֹם לֵאמֹר אֵל ה' נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ "Moshe cried out to Hashem, saying 'Please, Hashem, heal her now.'"

The Divrei Shmuel said that every Yid should learn from Moshe that regardless of how humble and lowly one considers himself, he should invest in tefillah. He can daven for himself, for others, for the individual, and for the community. This is the reason it states, (*Shemos* 27:2) וְאֵתָהּ תִּצְוֶה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, Bnei Yisrael should learn from Moshe to pray, as it states תִּצְוֶה, which is *roshei teivos* for ותושיע וצעקת הדל תקשיב ותושיע "Hashem listens to the shouts of the poor, and He saves them."

The Rambam (beginning of Hilchos Tefilah) writes, "It is a *mitzvas asei* to daven every day as it states (*Shemos* 23:25) וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם..."

The miforshim on the Rambam ask how the Rambam knows from this pasuk that there is a mitzvah to daven *every day*? The

pasuk says to daven, but it doesn't state how often one should daven!

The Mabit in his sefer *Kiryas Sefer* replies that the Rambam learns this from the end of the pasuk that he quoted. For it state (*Shemos* 23:25) וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּבִרְכַּךְ אֵת לֶחֶמְךָ וְאֵת מִיְמֶיךָ "You shall worship Hashem, your G-d, and He shall bless your bread and your water..." Just as a person eats every day, so, too, a person should daven every day.

We can add, b'derech tzachus, that therefore, Reb Yochanan says (*Brachos* 21a) וְלוֹאֵי שִׁיתְפַּלֵּל אָדָם כָּל הַיּוֹם כֹּל הַיּוֹם "Halavay a person would daven the entire day." This is because people eat all day long. So, it would be proper for them to daven all day long, as well.

### Teshuvah in a Moment

It states (32:5) וַיִּקְרָא אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר חַג לָהּ מָחָר "Aharon called out and said, "A holiday for Hashem tomorrow!" If we were to read this pasuk without Rashi's commentary, it would seem that Aharon was encouraging the nation to make a holiday for the *egel* they just created. However, Rashi writes, "Aharon's intention was for heaven. He was certain that Moshe would come and they would serve Hashem."

This is an indication that a person can turn around in a moment. Today, they worship *avodah zarah*; tomorrow, they can do teshuvah and serve Hashem.<sup>7</sup>

When a person turns around and faces the other direction, everything that was on his left side until now is on his right side. This tells us that with one turn, one

7. One can ask why Aharon said חַג לָהּ מָחָר, that it will be a chag the next day. Which holiday would it be? Even if they do teshuvah, which is a great thing, but what makes it a holiday?

The students of the Arizal answer that the next day was the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz. In the future, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz will be a holiday. Also, at that time, if the nation would do teshuvah immediately, everything would be rectified, and the next day would be a yom tov.

But another answer is that the next day would be a חַג, because whenever a person overcomes his yetzer hara, that day is a holiday for him.

improvement, one can turn around from being on the left to being on the right. This is the power of teshuvah; it changes the entire reality and situation.<sup>8</sup>

We also find in Megilas Esther that changes can happen in a moment. Haman was at the highest level; the king's servants were all bowing to him, he wore the king's ring on his finger, and Mordechai HaTzaddik was at a very low level, and there was a tall

tree prepared to hang him on. But in one moment, ונהפוך הוא, everything turned around. The king chose to hang Haman on the tree that was prepared for Mordechai, and Mordechai was led through the streets of Shushan wearing the king's clothing. This tells us that things can turn around in a moment. If a person sets himself to do Hashem's service, he will also turn around. He will reach the highest levels.

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8. The Ben Ish Chai (Niflaim Maaseicha 62) writes, "There was once a חיגר, a lame person, standing on the fork of the road. Due to his poverty, he didn't own a horse and wagon to ride on. He walked by foot, and he was hungry and thirsty. He rested in the middle of the forest, at the fork in the road, and he waited a long time for someone to ride by and help him. After a while, Hashem had compassion on him. A kind person riding a horse came by, and he saw the lame person lying on the ground. The horseback rider asked him, "How can I help you?"

The lame person replied, "You see that I am lame. I can't go on with my voyage, and I am hungry and thirsty. I have no strength." The man gave him food and drink, and the man enjoyed it immensely. The rider returned to his horse to continue his way. The lame person begged that he take him on the horse, so they could ride together. The man agreed. The lame person climbed up, with great difficulty, onto the horse, and the rider thought to himself, "How can I allow the lame person sit behind me? He might fall off the horse!" Therefore, he placed the lame person in front, and he sat behind him. He let the lame person hold the reins of the horses and lead the horses to the city.

When they arrived at the city, the lame person said to the owner of the horse, "Reb Yid, we have arrived at our destination. Please get off my horse and let me go on my way." The owner of the horse said, "How great is your *kafuy tovah!* I gave you food and drink, I took you on my horse all this way, and now you want to take my horse away from me?"

The lame person shouted, "Shame on you, for acting this way... I saved you from the forest. I took you on my horse, and now you want to take away my horse with your foolish words?"

The dispute went on and on, both shouting.

Due to the shouts, a large crowd arrived. They didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. Most people thought that the lame person was telling the truth because they saw that he was a great *rachmanus*, he could hardly move, and they figured that the other person took advantage of his weakness, taking away his horse. When the true owner of the horse understood where this was going, he said, "Let us bring this case before the rav of the city."

They came to the rav, each one telling his side of the story. The rav understood the truth of what was going on. He understood that the lame person was taking advantage of his handicap to take away the horse from its true owner. The rav cleverly directed the case until the lame person admitted on his own that he was trying to steal the horse. The horse was returned to its true owner.

The rav said to the owner of the horse, "You saw how hard it was to get your horse back. From now on, be careful and never let someone else sit in front of the horse, and never allow a guest take the reins in his hands."

We learn from this the following lessons: Each person has a body, which is like the lame person, which we have to feed and give to drink. We certainly can't lose sight of the body's needs. However, one must be extra cautious that he doesn't give the body the reins. This means the body shouldn't be the leader. At least one hour a day, show that you are the owner, you are the leader.

This can be alluded to in the Gemara (Megillah 7b) says, חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא עד דלא ידע, בין ארוור המן לברוך מרדכי "A person must intoxicate himself on Purim until he doesn't know the difference between the curse of Haman and the brachah of Mordechai."

We can explain that even a person who is a rasha like Haman can, in a moment,

become great like Mordechai HaTzaddik. It is possible to do teshuvah in a minute. This is the meaning of חייב איניש... עד דלא ידע בין ארוור המן לברוך מרדכי. A person is obligated to be aware that he can go from being like Haman to becoming like Mordechai HaTzaddik without there being a time gap.<sup>9</sup>

#### 9. Rebbe Yankele of Pshevorsk zt'l told the following story:

In the city of Sanz lived a young widow with fourteen young children. One day, she became ill and was near death, r'l. The *chevrah kadisha* was already put on notice... At that time, a *shaliach* came to the Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l, to ask him to daven for this woman. The Divrei Chaim became very afraid. [He once said about himself that he isn't afraid of malachim, but he is afraid of the tears of an almanah and of yesomim.] He stormed into the beis medresh and shouted, "Ribono Shel Olam, Father and King, we can't tolerate this. When a tzaddik decrees, Hakadosh Baruch Hu keeps. Therefore, I decree that You send a *refuah sheleimah* to *plonis bas plonis*." Needless to say, his tefillos were answered, and the widow became well. The Divrei Chaim's son, Rebbe Boruch of Gorlitz zt'l came to his father and said, "Teach us, my father. A few days ago, I heard you say that you are embarrassed to enter the beis medresh because you feel so low due to your aveiros, r'l. And now you claim that you are a tzaddik, a tzaddik who can make decrees that heaven must obey and abide by!"

The Divrei Chaim replied, "Why is this a contradiction? That is the way of a Yid. Yesterday, he can be at the lowest level, and today he is a tzaddik gozer [a tzaddik who can decree in heaven]."

The Sanzer Rav's "low levels" are way above our highest levels. But the lesson is important and applicable to all. People change. The way he is one day can be totally different than how he was the day before.

From time to time, the Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l would go to the village Shmaryahu (during the weekdays). Once, he met with a twelve-year-old boy there, and he understood with his holy sense that he could help this boy come close to Yiddishkeit. He asked someone to call the boy to him. When the lad arrived, the Beis Yisrael spoke with him about several topics: what he does, and where he learns. In this conversation, the boy told the Beis Yisrael that he has a great interest in sports. He is an expert in all the soccer teams, and he always checks the news to hear who won, and the like. The Beis Yisrael explained to him that this isn't good for him. "What will you gain from knowing these matters? Furthermore, next year, you will be going to yeshiva. The yeshiva won't accept you if they know that you are so interested in sports." Before the conversation ended, the Beis Yisrael asked the boy to give him his word that he won't follow the sports anymore. The boy said he will try, but he can't promise. The rebbe wasn't satisfied. He wanted the child to give him his word that he won't follow the sports anymore. The conversation went back and forth until the boy agreed, and he gave his word that for the rest of his life, he would no longer watch sports.

When this child had his bar mitzvah, he entered a yeshiva, and he excelled in Torah and yiras Shamayim. He kept his word, and he didn't follow or watch sports. When he reached the age of shidduchim, he found his shidduch from a family in America, and he built a home there, built on the principles of Torah and yiras Shamayim. But years passed, and they still didn't have children. He had already heard from doctors that, naturally, they couldn't have children.

Sometime afterwards, he came to Eretz Yisrael to daven at the holy sites. Perhaps Hashem will have compassion on them, perhaps they will have their salvation. When he came to Yerushalayim, he went to speak with the Beis Yisrael. He brought along a kvittel, which stated what he needed, but he didn't write that he was the child the Beis Yisrael had met in the village Shmaryahu, years before. Also, when he spoke with the Beis Yisrael, he just expressed his distress that he didn't have children, and the doctors lost hope, but he didn't tell them who he was. The Beis Yisrael had compassion on him and gave him a brachah. The man said, "Holy rebbe! A brachah isn't enough for me. I need a guarantee, a promise, that I will very soon bear a child."

The Midrash Tanchumah (11) says, "When Moshe heard that the nation must give money for their atonement for the *egel*, he became afraid. [He feared that it would cost them a lot of money]. Hashem knew what Moshe was thinking, so Hashem told him, "I promise, a *kikar* of silver isn't needed [for atonement], and not a hundred, fifty, or thirty silver coins either. All I ask is a half-shekel."

Another *Midrash* states that *Klal Yisrael* was afraid when they heard they must give money for their atonement. They said, "All

the money that we gathered in Mitzrayim and afterward from the Yam Suf was for nothing because we will need to give it all away for our atonement."

"Hashem knew what they were thinking.... He took a fiery half-shekel from under the *Kisei HaKovod* (Hashem's throne) and showed it to Moshe. "This is what they should give.""

So, when our deeds seem small and insignificant, be aware that for Hashem, even a half-shekel is a lot and can atone for great sins.<sup>10</sup>

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The Beis Yisrael replied, "How can I promise such a thing? I can't promise. All I can do is give a brachah and to daven for you."

But the man repeated that he wants a promise, a *הבטחה* that he will bear a child. The Beis Yisrael refused to grant it.

The man said, "Why then, twenty years ago, did you make me promise, and you weren't satisfied when I said I would try?"

The Beis Yisrael immediately recognized the person who stood before him. He asked, "Did you keep your promise?" The man replied that he did. The rebbe said, "If so, I am *מבטיח*, I give you my word, that you will very soon have your salvation." Less than a year later, he had his first son (despite the doctors' opinion that he wouldn't ever bear a child).

We learn from this that when a person goes beyond his nature to abandon his foolish ways, he will merit salvation *middah k'neged middah*. He will merit miracles beyond nature.

**10.** A bachur was learning to be a sofer, and he wrote a megillas Esther, but it didn't look too good. The letters were slanty and of different sizes; some of the words entered the margin, and so on. No one wanted to buy it, not even for a low price, so his father bought it, hoping that this would encourage his son to continue practicing and trying. After he bought it, the father gave the megillah to a safrus merchant.

"What do you want me to do with this?" the merchant asked. He couldn't imagine that anyone would want to buy it.

"See what you can get for it," the father said. "Any price is better than nothing at all."

One day, a wealthy person asked the safrus merchant to bring several megillos to his home because he wanted to choose one. The rich person added, "Since I am troubling you to come to me, I will pay you \$2,500 for the megillah, even if the price is lower."

The merchant brought along every megillah he had in stock. The wealthy man turned down one after the other. "This isn't what I had in mind," he said simply, although the merchant didn't understand why he wasn't satisfied with his beautiful megillos. Finally, having turned down all the megillos, the merchant began packing up his megillos to leave. The wealthy man said, "One minute. I see you have one more megillah in your box that you didn't show me yet."

"No. It isn't for you," the merchant said. It was the beginner's megillah, and the merchant figured that if he didn't want all the beautiful megillos, he certainly wouldn't want this one. He was embarrassed to show it.

"Please show it to me," the wealthy man said.

The merchant opened the megillah, and the wealthy man loved it. "This is exactly what I wanted," he said,

### Shabbos Parah

Some *poskim* rule that reading *parashas Parah* is a Torah obligation. The Avodas Yisrael says it is alluded to in the words (*Bamidbar* 19:1-2). **זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר**, "this is the rule of the Torah that Hashem commanded to say." This indicates that there is an obligation to say this *parashah*.

The Avodas Yisrael writes, "The Torah is hinting (with **לאמר**) that even when we don't have a Beis HaMikdash and can't prepare a physical *parah adumah*, we must read the *parashah*, and **ונשלמה פרים שפתינו**, our saying the *parashah* will be considered as though we brought the *parah adumah*."

The Torah (*Bamidbar* 19:21) calls *parah adumah* **עולם**, חקת עולם, "an eternal law." How is *parah adumah* eternal? The ashes of the *parah adumah* were available in the times of the Amoraim, and they would use them to purify themselves. But what about our generation? How is it possible to keep *parah adumah* in our generation? The Aruch HaShulchan (685:7) answers that the Torah hints that when we can't make a *parah adumah*, we have a mitzvah to read *parashas Parah*.

The Yerushalmi writes, "*Parashas Parah* is **טהרתן של ישראל**, the purity of the Jewish nation." When we read about the *parashah* of *parah adumah*, we become pure.

The Beis Aharon writes, "One must believe that just as the ashes of the *parah adumah* purify...today, everyone becomes purified when *Parashas Parah* is read – each person according to his level."

The Sfas Emes (*Parashas Parah* end 5641) clarifies, "The purity discussed here is purity from sin."

Similarly, Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* teaches that when we read this *parashah*, we become pure from sin. He proves this from the *haftorah*. The *haftorah* is usually based on the weekly Torah reading. This Shabbos, the *haftorah* says (*Yechezkel* 36:25), **וורקתי עליכם מים טהורים**, "I will sprinkle pure water upon you, that you may become cleansed; I will cleanse you from all your contamination and idols." This indicates that the Torah portion also refers to being *tahor* from *aveiros*.

### Torah Purifies

*Parashas Parah* begins with (*Bamidbar* 19:2) **זאת חקת התורה**, "This is the statute of the Torah..." Why doesn't it state **זאת חקת הפרה**? Why is Torah mentioned? The Rokeiach answers that this teaches us that Torah study purifies like the *parah adumah*.

The Shlah HaKadosh writes, "Even when there isn't a *parah adumah*, by studying Torah with *hasmadah*, one becomes pure."

A non-kosher cooking utensil is *kashered* by immersing it in boiling water (**הגעלה**). An even more powerful method of *kashering* is to scald the cooking utensil in fire (**ליבון**) until the utensil becomes red-hot. The Or HaChaim *zt'l* (*Rishon L'Tzion*) teaches that these two methods of *kashering* represent the paths people take to attain purity from their *aveiros*. One way is through afflictions, such as fasting and the like. This method is compared

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and he paid \$2,500. (This was several years ago, when the prices weren't as high as they are currently).

Afterward, the merchant asked him why he preferred this megillah over all the others. The wealthy man replied, "The other megillos were written perfectly; all letters are uniform, the same height and style. They appear printed. But this megillah is different. It is evident that this megillah was handwritten by a sofer. Each letter is different. This is the type of megillah I like. I see in it the workmanship!"

The father repeated this story to me. It reminded me that Hashem enjoys the work of human beings. It is our imperfection that makes our deeds special. If Hashem wanted perfection, He wouldn't have created us. Hashem wants us, with our faults and human imperfections. Our deeds seem slanted and incomplete, and sometimes we step out of line, but it is precisely due to our human nature that Hashem desires our service.

to boiling water, which cleanses and purifies the utensils from their impure, non-kosher status. Learning Torah, however, is a greater purifier because Torah is compared to fire. As it states (*Yirmiyahu* 23:19), הלא כה דברי כאש, "Behold My words are like fire." Just as fire is a more potent form of cleansing and kashering, so too is learning Torah a preferred way to attain purity from aveiros.

It states (*Bamidbar* 21:28), להבה מקרית סיחון "a flame from the city of Sichon." Targum Yonason translates סיחון as שיחון, speech, and it refers to speaking divrei Torah. The pasuk says that a blazing flame comes forth from Torah study, purifying us.

The passuk says (*Bamidbar* 19:19) והזה הטהר על וטהר, הטמא ביום השלישי וביום השביעי... וטהר "The pure person shall sprinkle upon the tamei person on the third day and the seventh day...and he will become tahor..."

Tzaddikim said that the third and seventh days represent Torah. The third day represents Torah, as the Gemara (*Shabbos* 88.) says, "Baruch Hashem Who gave us a Torah of three (*Torah, Neviim, Kesuvim*) to a nation of three (*kohanim, Leviim, Yisraelim*) by the third (*Moshe Rabbeinu*, who was the third child to his parents) on the third day (of *shloshes yemei hagbalah*), in the third month (*Sivan*)."

The seventh day also represents Torah, as Chazal say, "All opinions agree that the Torah was given on Shabbos." The ashes of the parah adumah were sprinkled onto the person who was tamei on the third and seventh day, teaching us that Torah study purifies.

The word טמא, when the three letters are spelled out in full like this: טית מם אלף is gematriya 610. תורה is one more because תורה is gematriya 611. This is hinted in the yotzros of Shabbos Parah, מן יתן טהור מטמא הלא אחד, that

purity comes from the one more, which is Torah.

### Studying Gemara Purifies

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner zy" a said that Gemara comes from the word *gumri* [coals] because Gemara is like burning coals that burn away all impurities.

Rebbe Shmuel Kaminka zy" a once spoke with his students about the importance of studying a "blatt Gemara." He said, "With a blatt Gemara, one comes out of the *blotta* (the mud, the yetzer hara)."

One of the students became inspired and quickly went into the next room to find a Gemara. He couldn't find a Gemara, but he found a Mishnayos. So he studied a chapter of Mishnayos and then returned to hear more Torah from Reb Shmuel Kaminka. As he returned, Rebbe Shmuel commented, "He thinks he can cleanse himself with a chapter of Mishnayos with the same purity that comes from a daf Gemara..."

### Chinuch for Torah

*Pirkei Avos* (2:8) says, ר' יהושע בן חנניה אשרי יולדתו, "Reb Yehoshua ben Chananyah, fortunate is his mother!" The Ra'v Bartenura explains, "Some explain that when his mother was pregnant, she went to the *batei midrashim* of her city and asked the Torah scholars to daven for the child in her womb to become a *talmid chacham*. And from the day her son, Reb Yehoshua, was born, she didn't take his crib out of the beis medresh, so his ears would hear nothing other than *divrei Torah*.<sup>11</sup>

Reb Noson Gestetner *zt'l* writes (*vol.1 בן עמרם* 310) that when his mother was in labor with him, his father, Reb Amram *zt'l*, requested from the midwife that she shouldn't speak during the first few minutes after the child

11. The Gemara (*Pesachim* 96: and *Yevamos* 79:) relates that Reb Yehoshua said, "I heard [the following halachah], but I don't know what it means." Reb Chaim Kanievsky *zt'l* (*Derech Sichah Vayeilach*) says that perhaps Reb Yehoshua heard this halachah as a young child when his mother brought him to the beis medresh.

is born because he wanted the first sounds the child hears to be the sound of Torah study. When the child was born, Reb Amram was in the next room studying Gemara out loud. These were the first sounds Reb Noson Gestetner heard as an infant.

*Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Deiah* 245:5) states, "When does one begin teaching Torah to his son? When the child begins to speak, teach him to say תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהילת יעקב, and the first pasuk of *Shema*. Continue teaching him gradually until he reaches six or seven years old, and then bring him to a *melamed*."

Because we want the child's first words that he hears and speaks to be words of Torah.

Reb Yitzchak Hutner zt'l attributed his growth in Torah to his mother, who showed him her love for Torah. Once, her husband bought her a new dress. They were poor, so the dress meant a lot to her, but she saved it to put on for the first time her son made a siyum. This showed her son how much she loves Torah, encouraging him to put all his efforts into knowing Torah.

### Learning Torah is the Greatest Mitzvah

It states (*Mishlei* 8:11), כי טובה חכמה מפנינים וכל, חפצים לא ישוו בה, "For wisdom is better than pearls; all desirable things cannot compare to it." The Gemara (*Moed Katan* 8:) adds, אפילו חפצי, שמים לא ישוו בה, "Even mitzvos don't compare to Torah." Because the greatest mitzvah a person can perform is to study Torah.

This is not the way people generally see things. If you ask unlearned people, "What is the greatest deed a person can do?" many will respond that saving a life is the greatest mitzvah. Indeed, saving a life is a great mitzvah, but Chazal (*Megillah* 16:) say, גדול תלמוד

תורה, יותר מהצלת נפשות, "Studying Torah is greater than saving lives."<sup>12</sup>

The Gemara adds, "Studying Torah is greater than building the Beis HaMikdash... Studying Torah is greater than *kibud av ve'eim*."

*Pirkei Avos* (6:5) states, "Torah is greater than *kehunah* and *meluchah* (kingship)."

The Chofetz Chaim (*Toras HaBayis* ch.5) writes, "My friend, think about the precious value of each moment of Torah so that you won't waste your time. For example, imagine that you once had the merit of saving someone's life. Someone was drowning in the river, and you jumped in and saved him. How proud you would be! You will never forget that moment. For the rest of your life, you will talk about it. And, indeed, it is an incredibly great mitzvah to save a life. As Chazal say, 'Whoever saves a Yid's life, it is like he saved the entire world.' If you saved many lives, your joy will be boundless..."

The Chofetz Chaim continues, "One person saved lives, and another learned Torah. Each acted correctly, according to the situation they were in. If the question is raised, 'Who performed a greater mitzvah?' Everyone will say the person who saved lives performed a greater mitzvah! However, Chazal reveal that studying Torah is greater than saving lives... Although our eyes are covered, and we don't recognize things this way, Chazal revealed this secret. The merit of studying Torah is extremely great. Nothing in the world compares to it. This is why Dovid HaMelech prayed so much for success in Torah (in *Tehillim* 119)".

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 5) says, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu cries for three groups of people each day." One of them is "Someone who has the ability to study Torah and doesn't."

<sup>12</sup> The Taz (*Yorah Deiah* 251:6) writes, "Saving a life always comes first. [If a person has a choice whether to save a life or to study Torah, obviously, saving a life takes precedence.] Nothing stands in the way of *pikuach nefesh*. The Gemara is saying that the *merit* of learning Torah is greater than the merit of saving lives."

Why does Hashem cry for him?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that it is because Hashem is our father. Wouldn't a father cry when he sees his son throwing

away opportunities for attaining extreme wealth? Hashem also cries when He sees us wasting precious time that could have been used for amassing something more precious than gold and diamonds.