

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Shelach



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail@TorahWellsprings.com
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Torah Wellsprings - Shelach

With Emunah, There are No Worries

The *meraglim* told the Jewish nation that they won't succeed to conquer Eretz Yisrael. Upon hearing that, everyone panicked. Kalev and Yehoshua told the nation that there was nothing to fear. Hashem would bring them into Eretz Yisrael, safe and sound. They said to the nation (14:8-9) אַם הַפֶּחַץ בְּנֵי ה' וְהָבִיִּיא אֶתְנֶנּוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְנִתְּנָה לָנוּ אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הוּא זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבָשׁ, אַךְ בְּה' אֵל תִּמְרְדוּ וְאַתֶּם אֵל תִּירָאוּ אֶת עַם הָאָרֶץ... "If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this land and give it to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. But you shall not rebel against Hashem, and you shall not fear the people of that land... Hashem is with us; do not fear them."

It is known that the Torah is eternal. Everything discussed in the Torah applies today as well. Indeed, for the pesukim we

quoted above, there is an important lesson in *bitachon*, which is applicable in our time and in all generations. A person should always remember: ה' אִתְּנוּ אֵל תִּירָאִים, "Hashem is with us, do not fear..." When you need something, ה' אִתְּנוּ, remember that Hashem is with you, and He knows your needs. When you ask Him for something, He hears you, and He will help you. Always remember, ה' אִתְּנוּ אֵל תִּירָאִים, Hashem is with us, and therefore, there is nothing to fear.¹

It states (Yeshayah 28:16) הַמֵּאֲמִין לֹא יִחְיֶשׁ. The Beis Aharon zt'l said in the name of his father, Rebbe Asher zt'l, that this can be translated as "The one who has emunah, he isn't afraid." Why should he be afraid? Hashem loves us, and only good will be given to us.

Emunah protects and grants life.² This is because one is afraid only of someone who

1. The Baal Shem Tov told a *mashal* about a queen who broke the law, and according to the laws of the land, the penalty she deserved was to be exiled. The king was a just ruler, as it states מֶלֶךְ בְּמוֹשֶׁפֶט יַעֲמִיד אֶרֶץ, a king rules by the law. So, he informed his wife that she must go into exile, and he sent her on a ship, on a very long journey.

Those days, ship crews at sea weren't under any rule, and no one could tell them what they could or couldn't do. This was one of the reasons that made sea travel so dangerous in the olden days.

When the queen saw the crew on her ship, she became very afraid. They weren't people she could trust at all.

What she didn't know was that her husband, the king, was also on this ship. He was the ship's captain! The king had to send his wife into exile due to her transgression, but he wouldn't abandon his queen at the mercy of the rough sailors, so he made sure to be on the ship with her. Had she known that the king was there, looking out for her, she wouldn't have been scared.

The *nimshal* is that Hashem sent us into *galus*, but we don't need to be afraid because Hashem is here in *galus* together with us.

If we believe that Hashem is with us, as it states, עֲמוּ אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה, then, ultimately, we aren't in *galus*.

As Chazal (*Brachos* 33.) say, כֹּל אָדָם שֵׁישׁ בּו דְּעָה כְּאִילוּ וְנִבְנָה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בִּימֵיו, "Whoever has *daas*, it is like the Beis HaMikdash was built in his lifetime." With *daas*, he will live calmly in *galus*, without fear and worry, just as when the Beis HaMikdash stood.

2. Several children of Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l (the *rav* of Yerushalayim) were niftar young, r'l. People asked him how he manages to stay so happy all the time, despite the tragedies that befell him. He replied as follows:

has strength. Dovid understood that no one had any power other than Hashem. No one can harm him without Hashem's decree, so why should he be afraid?³

The Rambam (Hilchos Malachim 7:15) states:

"When a person goes to war, he must rely on Hashem, Who saves us in times of danger... He mustn't be afraid... Whoever begins to think about the war and allows himself to become afraid, he is transgressing an aveirah, as it states (Devarim 20:3) אַל יִרֶךְ לְבַבְכֶם וְאַל תִּירְאוּ וְאַל תִּהְפְּזוּ וְאַל תִּעְרָצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם, 'Let your hearts not be faint; you shall not be afraid, and you shall not be alarmed, and you shall not be terrified because of them.' ... And he who fights the war with all his heart, without fear, and his intention is solely to sanctify Hashem's name, he is guaranteed that no damage will befall him, and nothing bad will happen to him..."

It states (Tehillim 140:8) סִפְתָּה לְרֹאשִׁי בְּיוֹם נֶשֶׁק, "You shall protect my head on the day of battle." With these words, Dovid davened that his head should be protected at war, and nothing should happen to his head.

The question is, why did he pray specifically for his head? His entire body needed protection, not only his head!

Rav Shach zt'l answers that Dovid was davening that he shouldn't lose his peace of mind during war. Generally, when there is a war, there is a lot of confusion in the world. People need *siyata d'Shmaya* to remain with their *yishuv hadaas* and with their emunah. This is the reason Dovid prayed for the protection of his head; then, automatically, he will be protected at war. In the merit of his emunah and bitachon, Hashem will save him.

There are people who are at war and are afraid, but they strengthen themselves with bitachon until they aren't afraid anymore. These people *know* there is something to fear but turn their minds away from their worries and strengthen themselves with bitachon in Hashem. However, Dovid HaMelech was on a higher level. He didn't even think that there was a reason to be afraid. He says (Tehillim 27:1) לְדוֹד ה' אֹרֵחַי וְיִשְׁעֵי מִמִּי אִירָא, ה' מְעוֹז חַיִּי מִמִּי אֶפְתָּח, "Hashem is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Hashem is the stronghold of my life; from whom shall I be frightened?" He didn't say לֹא אִירָא... לֹא אֶפְתָּח, that he isn't afraid. He asked a question, as though he didn't understand why he should be afraid at all. Hashem is with me, so why should I be afraid?"⁴

When there is an earthquake, people run from one place to another. He said, "I always wondered, why do they run? Do they think that over there, the earth isn't shaking? A better option would be to tie themselves with a rope, suspended above the earth."

The *nimshal* is as follows: When one ties himself with Hashem, he is safe. He is protected. He is in Hashem's hands. And even when hard times come, he trusts that everything is for the good.

My father זצ"ל אאדמו"ר זצ"ל said that with this story, we can explain the *zemiros Shabbos* (אסדר לסעודתא בצפרא דשבתא) צרורא דלעילא דביה חיי כולא. This can mean that when one ties himself above, he will have life. (צרורא means tied, and דלעילא means above. So, when one is tied from above, דביה חיי כולא, this will grant him life.) As it states, וצדיק באמנתו יחיה, through emunah, one merits true life.

3. At weddings, people sometimes dress up in a bear costume to be משמח חתן וכלה. When a child sees the bear dancing, he gets scared. He thinks it is a real bear and begins to cry. The father will show the child that it is a costume, with a person underneath, so there is nothing to fear. This is what Dovid meant when he said (Tehillim 27:1) ה' אֹרֵחַי וְיִשְׁעֵי מִמִּי אִירָא, ה' מְעוֹז חַיִּי מִמִּי אֶפְתָּח, Hashem is my savior and light, Hashem is my strength. There is no other force in the world other than Hashem, so I fear no one else.

4. Reb Gad'l Eisner zt'l said that people think that when they encounter difficulties, they must strengthen their emunah, so that they can get through their challenges. Actually, the opposite is true. Hashem wants us to strengthen our emunah, and therefore, He tests us. He wants to see whether we will have emunah

It states in פניי יחזקאל that when Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l lived in London, at a time when the Nazis were dropping bombs on them, he found chizuk putting on his talis. At this time, he would be בצל כנפיך יחסיין, which means that when we wear tzitzis, we are protected under the shadow of Hashem's wings. He said that when he wears the talis and says these words, he feels safe, literally. As he put on the *talis*, he would say, "I am wrapping myself with the Creator of all worlds."

It states in פניי יחזקאל as follows:

"Fifty years ago – may it never occur again – there were frightening bombings in London. [Reb Yechezkel Abramsky] would say, 'Every morning, when I put on the talis, and I say the pasuk (Tehillim 36:8) מִהַיְקָר הַסֶּדֶךְ אֱלֹהִים וּבְגֵי אָדָם בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ יִחְסִיין, "How precious is Your kindness, Hashem. People will take refuge in the shadow of Your wings", I say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that the *talis* hints that Hashem is my shield. It is like I have a bomb shelter. Where is my protection? Under the wings of the Shechinah. When I say this in the morning, I am certain that nothing bad will happen to me all that day. Even if bombs fall, I am under the protection of בצל כנפיך יחסיין, the shadow of Hashem's wings." (For bachurim, who don't wear a *talis*, it is a *talis katan*... The main point is the concept, to recognize that he is under the protection of Hashem's care.)

even during those trying times (חיבת העבודה).

When there is a bris milah, it often happens that the father of the child loses some of his yishuv hadaas. Perhaps the *mohel* or the *sandek* (or someone else whom he must wait for) didn't show up yet, and he is anxious about that. Sometimes, it is because he is unsure whom to give the kibudim. But then the bris begins, and the father says שמע ישראל (as is the minhag in Eretz Yisrael at a bris milah). I heard that this is the "bris" that every Yid has with Hashem. Even when going through turbulent and confusing times, never forget אלהינו יהוה אחד. This emunah shall always remain with us.

After the bris, everyone says כשם שנכנס לברית כן יכנס לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים, "Just as he entered the bris, so shall he enter into Torah, chuppah, and good deeds." We are saying that just as at this bris, the father didn't lose his bris and covenant with Hashem. He remembered that he is always with Hashem. We wish the same for the child, when he goes on to Torah, chuppah, and good deeds. No matter what is going on in his life or in the world, he should always remain strong in his emunah of אלהינו יהוה אחד.

The Meraglim's Error

The Yidden confined in the Warsaw Ghetto sought ways to escape the *Gehinom* on earth, where hunger and illness were rampant, random shootings and murders were everyday occurrences, and there were periodic deportations to concentration and extermination camps. But how does one escape a tightly guarded prison?

Desperation breeds ingenuity, and many clever plans came up, but most of these attempts failed. Then came deep disappointment because their small rays of hope were extinguished.

The Rebbe of Piacezna zt'l (*Eish Kodesh*), who was in the Warsaw Ghetto, advised his students and followers that they should stop searching for solutions and instead place their trust in Hashem.

He told them, "Hashem can save us. He has ways. We don't know how, but we don't need to know how. Therefore, I advise you to stop seeking solutions, which ultimately result in despair and gloom. Just place your trust in Hashem, Who can do anything."

He based this counsel on the story of the *meraglim*. The *meraglim* told Bnei Yisrael (13:28-29), "The nations living in the land are strong and fierce. Their cities are fortified, and we saw giants living there. Amalek resides to the south..." The *meraglim* explained to the nation, with clear logic, that they can't conquer the land.

Kalev replied, עלה נעלה וירשנו אתה כי יכול נוכל, "We will go up, and we will conquer the land because we can."

Kalev didn't offer a plan for conquering the land; he didn't respond to the gloomy facts that the *meraglim* mentioned. He just said, עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה, we will conquer the land. Hashem has His ways, and we must trust in Him. We don't need to know how He will save us.

The Piacezna Rebbe taught that this is what everyone should do when they have a problem without a known solution. He should place his trust in Hashem because Hashem has ways to save him. The options are endless.

Sometimes life seems impossible and the problems unsolvable. The Torah tells us (end of *parashah*), לא תתורו אחריו... עיניכם, "Don't stray after your eyes," and the Sfas Emes (שלה תרל"א ד"ה) explains, don't be influenced by how you perceive things, because Hashem sees things differently. You may think there is no way out, but Hashem has a solution.

It states (*Tehillim* 121:1), אשא עיני אל ההרים מאין יבוא עזרי, "I raise my eyes to the mountains, from where will my salvation come? עזרי מעם ה' עושה, My salvation comes from Hashem, the creator of Heaven and earth." He created the world from nothingness, יש מאין, so He can create a brand-new solution for me and save me.

On the words (*Devarim* 1:8), באו ורשו, Rashi writes, "You can conquer the land, and no one will stop you. You don't even need weapons...! If they hadn't sent *miraglim*, they wouldn't need weapons." Because where there's *bitachon*, everything is possible.

The Sfas Emes (*ibid.*) writes in the name of his grandfather, the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l*, "It was impossible for the Yidden to conquer Eretz Yisrael, but if they would believe in Hashem... the belief itself would have elevated them above the boundaries of nature..." and in the merit of their *emunah* and *bitachon*, they would be able to conquer Eretz Yisrael.⁵

Bitachon for Everyone

A year before the story of the *meraglim* took place, the Jewish nation witnessed the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf*, *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the ten *makos*, and *mattan Torah*. Why was it hard for them to believe that Hashem would bring them into Eretz Yisrael? Why did the *meraglim's* report of the mighty people in the land frighten them?

The Sifsei Tzaddikim (from Rebbe Pinchas Madinovitz *zt'l*) replies that after they sinned with the *egel* (and other *aveiros*, such as the *בתאוניים*), they didn't feel worthy, and they didn't believe Hashem would perform miracles for them to bring them into Eretz Yisrael.

The Sifsei Tzaddikim teaches that Hashem *wanted* them to send *meraglim* so that the Yidden would know about the Canaanites' mighty strength and fortified cities. Thereby, they will know that they won the war with great miracles because Hashem loves them unconditionally, even after all the *aveiros* they committed.

But the *meraglim* had the belief that Hashem would not perform miracles for them, and that was the root of their error.

5. The Chazon Ish would often say, "Hashem helps at the moment a person doesn't see any natural means for his salvation." Because when he doesn't see any way out, that's when he places his trust solely in Hashem, and that's when he will be saved.

Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrivka *zt'l* explained: ישועת ד' כהרף עין, when people have הרף עין, which means they stop looking to people for help, that is when they experience תשועת ד', Hashem's salvation.

Teshuvah

Chazal (Brachos 59a) says, לא נבראו רעמים אלא לפשט עקמומיות שבלב. This means that thunder was created to straighten out the crooked heart. (The simple meaning is that when there is thunder, people are afraid, they do teshuvah, and thereby, the

crookedness of their hearts is straightened out.) This also applies to the frightening moments that transpire, such as when there are wars or dangers. Their purpose is to arouse us to teshuvah,⁶ and so that we should take on good *kabbalos*.⁷

6. The Gemara (Brachos 5a) states, "if a person sees that yesurim are coming upon him, יפשפש במעשיו, he should investigate his deeds" and do teshuvah. Tzaddikim say that we can translate יפשפש במעשיו that Hashem sent the yesurim because Hashem wants to check the person's deeds and ways, to see how he will react at such a time. Will he remember to turn his eyes to Hashem? Will he remember that everything is from Hashem? Hashem sends the yesurim to יפשפש במעשיו, to test the person and see how he will deal with the challenges.

7. The Mishnah in Nazir (1:7) states that a standard length of *nezirus* is thirty days. If a person says that he accepts upon himself to be a nazir, he becomes a nazir for thirty days. If he says that he will be a nazir twice, he must keep *nezirus* for two terms of thirty days each. If he accepts upon himself ten times *nezirus*, he must be a nazir for 300 days ($10 \times 30 = 300$). If he commits to being a nazir as many times as there are days in the year, he must keep 365 terms of *nezirus*. This is because there are 365 days in a lunar year. This is $30 \times 365 = 10,950$ days. (It will take him at least thirty years to complete.) The Mishnah continues that there was a person who made this neder; he said that he would be a nazir for as many days as there are in a year, and immediately after he completed all the *nezirus*, he was niftar. The Yerushalmi notes, "This person should have died much earlier, but in the merit of his *nezirus*, he was granted life. We can learn from this the power of a kabbalah tova. In addition to giving the person strength to keep his resolves, kabalos tovos can also grant life.

The truth is, after seeing how much one can gain from kabalos tovos, everyone should take upon themselves a kabbalah for long periods of time, even for their entire life, because that will grant them long life and success. Only the yetzer hara prevents them. The yetzer hara says to a person, "It is very good to make a kabbalah tova - I am glad that you are inspired to make this undertaking - but you have to think it through carefully before you take something on. You surely know the importance of having yishuv hadaas, thinking things through, and then making a wise kabbalah. First, think about this for a few days, make sure you really want to do this, and then make the kabbalah tova." The yetzer hara says these words to a person, and the person follows his counsel. After a few days pass, his initial inspiration wears off, and he is no longer interested in the kabbalah tova. Therefore, often the best counsel is to jump in and make the kabbalah at the moment of inspiration.

The Mishnah (Masechet Sanhedrin 61a) tells a mashal of a murderer, a thief, who had committed many terrible crimes. He used to stand at the fork of a road in the forest and steal from innocent people and then kill them. When he was arrested, the king said that he wanted to attend the trial because he wanted to see this terrible person being brought to justice.

In the presence of the king, the judges ruled that this person should be hanged in public, so people should hear about his terrible crimes and the severe punishment that comes from them.

A stage was built for the judges, the thief was also held there on the stage, and there was a special platform for the king, who had come to watch the justice. Many people were gathered below to watch the proceedings.

The hangman stood up and announced, "This person will be hanged for his theft and murders. But according to the rules of our country, we grant him the right to make three final requests: (1) Before his death, he can request any food of his choice, and we will give it to him. (2) He can also choose any drink he wants. (3) And finally, he can request to be buried wherever he desires."

Then the hangman turned to the thief and said, "Therefore, tell us what you want to eat, and we will bring it to you. When you finish eating, we can go on with the hanging."

The thief replied, "My favorite food is watermelon. I want to eat watermelon before I die."

The Gemara (Zevachim 7b) tells us that almost always, when a person is obligated to bring two korbanos – a korban chatas and

a korban olah – the korban chatas is brought first, and then the olah. The Gemara explains that this is because the korban chatas brings

The hangman said, "But we are in the middle of winter! I'm sorry, but there are no watermelons!"

The thief replied, "I have patience. I can wait."

There was an uproar among the people gathered. Could he make such a request? If this request is granted, the thief would live another half – year.

The court and the king began searching through their books of law to check whether this thief had the right to make this request. They didn't find any rule that forbade the thief from making his request, and he *does* have the right to ask for any food he wants, and this right must be upheld. So, he was taken off the stage and returned to jail. When it becomes summer and there will be watermelons, the case will resume.

Six months later, there were finally watermelons. A stage was built again, and a large crowd gathered again to watch the hanging. Once again, the king was present. He wanted to watch this evil person receive what he deserved. The hangman said in a loud voice, "This man will be hanged for his murders and thefts. But according to our rules, he has a right to ask for any food he desires. He asked for watermelon, so now he can have his watermelon, and then we will proceed with the hanging."

They brought him several watermelons, and he ate all of them patiently. He was in no rush. The hangman announced, "According to the law, the thief has permission to ask for any drink he wants. So, what drink do you want, and we will bring it to you, and then we will go on with the hanging."

The thief replied, "I want to drink melted snow."

There was an uproar among the assembled. It was in the middle of the summer. There wouldn't be snow for another half-year. The hangman said, "Why do you make this unreasonable request. You know that there is no snow!"

The thief replied, "I have a lot of patience. And I have time. I can wait." The king and the judges didn't check their rule book this time because they already knew that he had permission to ask for this.

The thief was removed from the stage and returned to jail. He was granted another half-year of life.

In the middle of Kislev, there was a heavy snowstorm, and once again, a stage was built. Once again, the thief was brought out. The king was also there to finally see this criminal be brought to justice.

First, they gave him melted snow, as he requested, and he drank his heart's content. Then the hangman said, "You have received your choice of food and drink. Now tell us where you want to be buried, and we can go on with the process."

The thief pointed to the king and said, "I want to be buried next to the king's grave."

Another uproar among the assembly.

The hangman said to the thief, "But the king is alive. He doesn't have a grave yet."

The thief replied, "I have patience. I can wait."

In this manner, the thief saved himself from the judgment.

The *מיתוק האור* tells this story to demonstrate how pushing things off can often cause them not to happen at all.

Therefore, when one desires to make a good kabbalah, pushing it off might mean that he will never get to it. But if he grasps the moment of his inspiration and makes an immediate kabbalah, he will grow immensely from it.

atonement, and a korban olah is like a gift (דיווח) to Hashem, to arouse Hashem's love and compassion. As long as the aveirah is still upon a person, it wouldn't be proper for him to bring a korban olah, a gift to Hashem. It is like someone who has sinned against a king, and he brings a gift to him. It doesn't feel right. First, he must attain atonement, and then he can give a gift. This is the reason that the general order is a chatas first, and then an olah.

But when it comes to avodah zarah, the Torah made an exception. The pasuk mentions the olah first. As it states in this week's parashah (15:24) וְהָיָה אִם מֵעֵינֵי הָעֵדָה נִעְשְׂתָה לְשִׁגְגָה וַעֲשׂוּ כָּל הָעֵדָה פֶּר בֶּן בָּקָר אֶחָד לְעֹלָה לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה... וְשִׁעִיר עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת, "If because of the eyes of the assembly it was done unintentionally, the entire assembly shall prepare one young bull as an olah for a satisfying aroma to Hashem... and one goat as a chatas." The pasuk is discussing a time that an entire community of Bnei Yisrael worshipped avodah zarah by accident. They bring a korban olah and a korban chatas, and the olah comes first!

What is the reason the Torah made an exception this time?

The pasuk writes לְחַטָּאת, without the letter alef. (It doesn't state לְחַטָּאת, with an alef.) Rashi writes, חסר א', שאינו כשאר חטאות, שכל חטאות שבתורה הבאות עם עולה החטאת קודמת לעולה, שנאמר ואת השני יעשה עולה, וזו עולה החטאת קודמת לעולה, "An alef is missing. This is because it isn't like most korbanos chatas. Always, when a korban chatas comes together with a korban olah, the chatas comes first. As it states (Vayikra 5:10) ואת השני יעשה עולה, 'He shall make the second one an olah.' This time, the olah comes first." Once again, the question is why is avodah zarah an exception to the rule? Why does the Torah tell us that this time, the korban olah should come first?

The Chida (Nachal Kidumim, quoting from Reb Shmuel Istarik zt'l) says that the Torah wanted to show us the power of teshuvah. This person hasn't yet brought the chatas, but he certainly has a broken heart, and he regrets what he

did. Hashem says that this is sufficient teshuvah, and he can bring a korban olah as a gift (דיווח) to Hashem. It isn't the same as when a sinful or rebellious person brings a gift to a king, because he regretted the aveirah, and the aveirah was removed. He can begin with the korban olah.

The Torah wanted us to know how much Hashem loves the Jewish nation and that He accepts their teshuvah. Therefore, the Torah gave one example of an exception to the rule. For the aveirah of avodah zarah – the most severe aveirah of the Torah – the korban olah comes first. This shows us that Hashem atones for their aveiros even without the korban chatas. Their broken hearts and regret for the aveirah performed are sufficient, in Hashem's eyes. The Torah chose to teach this lesson from the halachos of avodah zarah – the very severe aveirah – so we can know that even then, Hashem accepts our teshuvah, and we can bring the olah, the gift, before the korban chatas is sacrificed for the total atonement.

This lesson is especially important for people who have committed severe aveiros and feel distant from Hashem. They think that they can't do any good deeds before they do a complete teshuvah, with all its details. But let this halachah, which discusses the very severe aveirah of avodah zarah, strengthen their hearts. They certainly regret their aveirah; they feel bad and bitter about it, and that is sufficient to attain atonement. Hashem will accept their good deeds.

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l taught this lesson from another pasuk in this week's parashah (15:39) וְלֹא תִתְּוּרֵי אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינַיְכֶם וְלֹא תִתְּוּרוּ, "Don't undo the knot. Don't think that the knot was opened. You are still connected to Hashem." We are bound in a knot with Hashem. The Torah says that even if a person sinned, r'l, וְלֹא תִתְּוּרוּ, don't undo the knot. Don't think that the knot was opened. You are still connected to Hashem.

On the topic of teshuvah, we add that a moment of teshuvah is precious to Hashem, even if it doesn't last. It states (14:24) וְעַבְדֵי קָלֵב עָקַב הִיָּתְהָ רֵיחַ אַחֲרֵת עִמּוֹ וַיְמַלֵּא אַחֲרָי וַהֲבִיאתֵנִי אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר

בא שְׁמָה וְזָרְעוֹ יִרְשְׁנָה "My servant *Kalev*, because a different spirit was with him and he followed Me wholeheartedly, I shall bring him to the land to which he came, and his offspring shall possess it."

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l (Darash Moshe) says that *Kalev* deserved this reward because he brought the nation to teshuvah. As it states (13:30) וַיְהִי כְּלָב אֶת הָעָם אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר עָלָה נַעֲלָה וְיָרֵשְׁנוּ (13:30) "Kalev silenced the people toward Moshe and said, 'We shall surely ascend and conquer it, for we can surely do it!' The nation accepted his words. They believed Hashem would save them and grant them the land. They were ready to go up to Eretz Yisrael and regretted their fears that they had had a few moments before. Only immediately afterward, the meraglim weakened the hearts of the nation once again. The miraglim said (ibid. 31) וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אָשָׁר "But the men who had ascended with him said, 'We cannot ascend to that people for it is too strong for us.'" This weakened the heart of the nation, and they were afraid once again.

Nevertheless, *Kalev* succeeded in bringing the nation to a moment of teshuvah. For this moment of teshuvah, he was rewarded. Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l proves from this the wonderfulness of a moment of teshuvah, even if it doesn't last in the end.

Shemiras Einayim

Many people think that shemiras einayim, guarding one's eyes, is a good deed, a recommended thing, something fitting for tzaddikim. They lose sight of the fact that it is a Torah obligation, as it states (15:39) וְלֹא תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶם זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם "Don't stray after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray."

Derech Pekudecha (from the Bnei Yissaschar) writes, "Many people think that guarding

one's eyes is only מילי דחסידי, a righteous matter, so they aren't cautious... However, the Rambam (Teshuvah 4:4) writes that among the matters that prevent people from doing teshuvah is this aveirah. [It prevents teshuvah because people don't realize that they committed an aveirah, so they don't repent.] As the Rambam writes, 'He doesn't know that looking with the eyes is a grave aveirah because it causes the aveiros. As it states, וְלֹא תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶם זָנִים, אַחֲרֵיהֶם, 'Don't stray after your heart and after your eyes....'"

Shaarei Teshuvah (3:64) writes, "Many people stumble and are caught with the desecration of the honored senses of sight and of hearing. Regarding the sense of sight it states וְלֹא תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶם זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם, 'Don't stray after your heart and after your eyes.' This tells us that it is forbidden to look at... arayos...."

The Raavad (Baalei HaNefesh Shaar Hakedushah) writes, "The first of all boundaries is to guard the eyes, because when one's eyes are guarded, his heart is guarded, and then he is entirely guarded. But if he doesn't guard his eyes, r'l, he will certainly fall and stumble. As Chazal (Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 10:62) writes, 'The eyes see, the heart desires, and the limbs perform.' As the Isha HaShunamis said about Elisha (Malachim 2, 4:9) וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל אֵישָׁה "She said to her husband, 'Behold I now know that he is a holy man of Hashem who passes by us regularly.'" The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 24:6) states, "How did she know that he is a holy man? Rabbi Ayvon says, 'This tells us that he never looked at her.' [Elisha never looked at his hostess, and thereby, she knew he was a holy man.] From this source, the chachamim say, 'Whoever vows and withholds from arayos, he is called קדוש.' So, you see that everything is dependent on guarding the eyes. If he guards his eyes, he is called holy, and if not, not."⁸

8. Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l told the following wonderful lesson that he heard directly from the Chofetz Chaim zt'l: It states (15:39-40) וְלֹא תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶם זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם, לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם

Furthermore, being cautious with the eyes will remove troubles and yesurim. The Zohar (Tikunei Zohar Tikun 70, p.31a) states, "All *dinim* are because of words and the eyes." This means all *yesurim* come from being careless with one's words and actions. The Zohar states a source from the Chazal (Bava Basra 131a) which say, אין לו דיין אלא מה שענינו ראות, "This tells us that all *dinim* (דיין) come from the eyes that aren't guarded properly, r'l."

In contrast, how great is the reward of those who guard their eyes! Rabbeinu Yonah (Igeres Hateshuvah 19, 20) writes, "A person who doesn't look where he shouldn't will merit seeing the sweetness of Hashem (בנועם ה'), and this is *middah kneged middah*. Similarly, Chazal (Vayikra Rabba 23:13) say, כל הכובש עינו מן, 'Whoever controls his eyes from looking at *arayos*, will merit to see the face of the Shechinah.' As it states (Yeshayah 33:15) עוצם עיניו מראות ברע... מלך בפיו תחזינה עיניך, 'He who closes his eyes from seeing evil... the King in His beauty shall your eyes behold.'"

In other words, guarding the eyes is mesugal for experiencing kedushah. Who doesn't want to enjoy a page of Gemara? Who doesn't want to enjoy *Shabbos* and *Yom*

tov? Etc. The people who experience this joy know that there is no greater pleasure. To merit all of this, one needs to guard his eyes.⁹

Accepting Hashem's Will

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l teaches:

"The *meraglim*'s intentions were for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. The Yidden were living in an ideal setting. Moshe Rabbeinu was their teacher; clothes and food were provided for free, and everyone was occupied in *avodas Hashem*. The *meraglim* felt it would be a shame for this ideal lifestyle to cease. Why should they enter Eretz Yisrael and have to toil the land and be left without much time for Torah and *tefillah*? The *meraglim* knew that they were sinning, but they sacrificed their souls for the benefit of the Jewish nation. Their plan was successful, and the Jewish nation remained in the desert for forty years.

"Nevertheless, this wasn't Hashem's will. We must know that whichever way Hashem leads us, it is for our benefit. Their sin was that they came up with this idea *on their*

אָתָּה כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְהִייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "Remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them; and don't stray after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to Hashem." Twice in these pesukim it mentions performing all the mitzvos. It begins with וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי הֵן וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם, "Remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them," and then it states וְהִייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "Perform all My mitzvos." But the expression וְהִייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם, that you will be holy for Hashem is only written after the second time. This is because in between the two it mentions guarding the eyes, as it states וְלֹא תִתְּוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַקֵּשׁ אַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם. Kedushah comes solely from guarding the eyes. If a person keeps the entire Torah, but isn't cautious with his eyes, he can't be called a *kadosh*. "Because keeping all the mitzvos, won't sanctify the person, if he isn't cautious with the boundaries of kedushah."

9. It states (Tzefanyah 3:20) בְּשׂוּבֵי אֶת שְׁבוּתֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵיכֶם אָמַר ה', The Kobriner zt'l explained that if a person desires to do teshuvah, לְעֵינֵיכֶם, he should guard his eyes, and from there he can reach all *madreigos*.

The Yeshuos Moshe of Viznitz zt'l says that this is the reason the minhag Yisrael is to cover the eyes when saying Shema (see Brachos 13b). This is an indication that the foundation of accepting the yoke of heaven is guarding the eyes.

When one isn't cautious with his eyes, this results in aveiros, r'l. It states (Devarim 28:34) וְהָיִיתָ מְשֻׁגָּע מִפְּרֵאָה עֵינֶיךָ, "You will go meshugah from the sight of your eyes that you will see." The sefer חושב מוחשבות (from the author of *Mishnas Chasidim*) writes that this means he will perform aveiros because he isn't cautious with his eyes. He bases his lesson on the Chazal (Sotah 3a) that a person doesn't sin unless a רוח שטות, a foolish spirit, enters him. Thus, וְהָיִיתָ מְשֻׁגָּע means that he has a ruach shtus, which leads to aveiros. What led to this? מִפְּרֵאָה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה, not properly guarding his eyes.

own. They should have trusted in Hashem's *hanhagah*."

Hashem knows what's truly good for us, and we should trust in His *Hashgachah*.

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* said, "Wanting to learn Torah, and to daven well, are excellent aspirations. But to want what the Ribono Shel Olam wants, that is something else entirely."

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* writes that this idea is alluded to in the song *י"ה אכסוף* - when we say *פתח להם נועם ורצון לפתוח שערי רצונך*, which can be translated as, "Open their hearts that they should want, *שערי רצונך*, what You want." Sometimes Hashem wants something we would not expect. Sometimes, Hashem wants people to have difficult tests. But we must trust that Hashem has a plan, and He knows what's best for us.¹⁰

Hashem swore and said (14:35), *במדבר הזה יתמו*. The literal translation is that they will die in the desert. This was their punishment for the sin of the *meraglim*. However, the Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe במדבר ד"ה*) says that the *pasuk* can be translated as follows: "In this desert, *יתמו*, they will regain their *temimus*." Their sin was a lack of *temimus*, and when they would regain it, they would leave the desert and come to Eretz Yisrael.

Temimus means to trust in Hashem's will, even when our logical minds don't understand it. As the Chidushei HaRim explained, they didn't understand why it was good for them to go to Eretz Yisrael, where they would have to work daily for their *parnassah*. We also explained above that it appeared to their logic that they would lose the war, especially after they had

sinned with the *egel* and other times. To sum up their *aveirah* in short, it was that they lacked *temimus*. They lacked the ability to believe in Hashem, even when they didn't understand, and their common sense said differently. Therefore, Hashem told them that they must remain in the desert *יתמו*, until they regain their holy *temimus*.

The Baal HaTurim writes that the final letters of *שלח לך אנשים* spell *חכם*, wise. The *meraglim* were too wise - too wise for their own good. They wanted to understand everything. Whatever did not fit into their perception of logic, they didn't believe.

The *meraglim* said (13:29), *עמלק יושב בארץ הנגב*, "Amalek dwells in the south." The Chidushei HaRim (*Likutei HaRim, Shelach*) explains that the south represents wisdom. As Chazal (*Bava Basra* 25:) say, *הרוצה להחכים ידרים*, "If you want to be wise, daven facing south." The *pasuk* is hinting that Amalek utilizes wisdom. He tells people, "Think rationally, don't be unrealistic." That is the *yetzer hara*, because our rational minds cannot understand everything. We have *temimus*, and we believe what the Torah tells us, what Hashem tells us, even when it doesn't make sense to us.

The Gemara (*Makos* 24:) tells that after the Churban, *chachamim* saw foxes running out of the Kodesh Kadoshim. Some explain that it was specifically foxes because foxes are known to be clever animals. This was a hint to the Yidden that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because they were too clever, and they didn't have the attribute of *temimus*.

At the end of the *parashah*, we are taught the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. This *mitzvah* shows us that we don't understand Hashem's ways.

10. A chassid of the Birchas Avraham of Slonim *zt'l* who had to be in America for Rosh Hashanah, wrote a letter to his Rebbe, expressing his disappointment that he couldn't be with his Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah.

The Birchas Avraham wrote back, "Wherever a Yid is, Hashem prepares a ladder for him, and with this ladder he can reach heaven. Yosef HaTzaddik's ladder was in the impure land of Mitzrayim, and from there he reached his great levels. Now that you must be in America for Rosh Hashanah, you can be certain that Hashem prepared a very tall ladder for you. It is anchored in the depths of the ground, but it rises to the highest levels. Therefore, accept your situation with love and joy."

The Torah forbids wearing *shaatnez* (a garment of wool and linen), yet for performing the mitzvah of tzitzis, *shaatnez* is permitted. How can that be? It doesn't make sense to our logical minds. If *shaatnez* is bad, why is it okay in tzitzis? We see from this mitzvah how little we understand Hashem's ways. Therefore, after discussing *tzitzis*, the Torah tells us (15:39), ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם,

"Don't stray after your heart and after your eyes." The Maaglei Tzedek (from the Rebbe of Dezh zt'l) explains, "Don't stray after your eyes and heart..." Keep the mitzvos as Hashem commanded, and don't ask questions and don't debate matters, because our minds are too small to challenge and question Hashem's ways.¹¹

11. A powerful king, ruler over a large country, invaded a neighboring country, with the intention of annexing that country to his own. The battle was vicious and brutal, and the king sent his general to the front.

The army ran out of food and supplies, so the king took a large sum of money from his treasury to send to the general so he could buy everything the army needed.

He also wrote up maps and strategies to help the general direct his army in battle and win the war.

The problem was how to get it all to the general at the front? The enemy had many spies, and the king was afraid that the spies might discover the maps, plans, and money, and they would get their hands on it before the general received it.

What did the king do? He had one of his servants dress up like a beggar, with dirty, ripped clothing. Then, the king filled a bag with smelly garbage and hid the money and maps under the trash. He told the messenger to deliver the bag to the general. No one would suspect that inside the smelly "beggar's" bag was a fortune of money, maps, and secret information.

When the messenger delivered the bag, the general opened it and smelled the terrible stench. His first thought was, "Why is the king humiliating me? First, he sends me to the front to fight this tough battle, and we are left without supplies, and now he is disgracing me, too."

But on second thought, he said to himself, "The king is always kind to me. There is certainly a good reason why the king sent me this smelly bag."

He rummaged through the bag and discovered its valuable contents.

The *nimshal* is, at times, people shame and humiliate their fellow man. The victim wonders, "Why do I deserve this? Isn't my life hard enough? Do I have to suffer this humiliation, too?"

But upon second thought, they realize that it was sent to them by Hashem, and there certainly is a concealed blessing within it. Because everything that happens to a person, including humiliation, is for the good.

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l was once speaking to the Toldos zt'l, and the Baal Shem Tov told him, "Everything that happens to a person, everything he hears, is all messages from Hashem."

As they were speaking, a goy who worked as a handyman came by, and he said to the Baal Shem Tov, "Srulik, do you have anything that needs fixing?"

The Baal Shem Tov told him that he doesn't.

The goy replied, "Srulik! Srulik! If you seek well, you will find something that needs fixing."

The Baal Shem Tov said to the Toldos, "Did you hear the *bas kol* I just received? If I search well, I will find something that needs fixing. I will discover where I need to do teshuvah."

The Toldos replied, "I can't believe that what the goy said was a *bas kol* from heaven."

The Baal Shem Tov told him, "It isn't that you *can't* believe. You don't *want* to believe."

Later that day, as the Toldos was traveling, he met a goy whose wagon overturned, and all the hay was on the ground. The goy said, "Help me pick up the hay."

The Toldos was in the midst of contemplating deep thoughts, and he didn't want to interrupt to pick up the hay. He said, "The job is too hard for me. I can't do it."

The goy replied, "It isn't that you *can't*. You don't *want* to."

The Toldos remembered that the Baal Shem Tov used the exact words earlier, and he now realized that the Baal Shem Tov was correct. What one hears and sees, even words from a goy, are messages from Hashem, calling him to come closer to Hashem. He immediately returned to the Baal Shem Tov and became one of the Baal Shem Tov's closest disciples.