

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Pinchas



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Pinchas

Remember the Miracles	4
From Hashem	6
Everyone Can Trust in Hashem	8
Serving Hashem Beyond Your Nature.....	8
The Potential of Teshuvah	11
The Three Weeks.....	13
Tefillah in Your Own Words.....	14

Torah Wellsprings - Pinchas

Remember the Miracles

Just a few weeks ago, Klal Yisrael experienced many miracles and salvations. Through great *nisim*, Hashem saved them

from powerful missiles. We mustn't forget, and we mustn't attribute it to nature. We have to continue praising Hashem for the miracles that occurred, which saved so many lives of Bnei Yisrael.¹

1. Exciting could be felt in the air as the inauguration of the new Chelm train station drew near. Everyone in Chelm was excited and proud that Chelm finally made it onto the map, with a train station of its own. The first train was scheduled to leave the Chelm station at 2:00 p.m.

A large crowd gathered at the station to witness the historic event.

However, a group of Chelm intellectuals decided that instead of staring at the train, they preferred to understand how a train works. So, they went to the home of Reb Zemele, the rosh hakahal and wisest man in Chelm. They were sure he would be able to explain to them all about the invention of the locomotive. But when they came to Reb Zemele's home at 00:1 p.m., Reb Zemele wasn't there.

He finally got home at 3:00 p.m., sweaty and exhausted. He told his visitors that he was coming from the new train station, where he had gone to try to understand the workings of a train.

"That is exactly why we came to you," the people exclaimed. "We want to understand how a train works."

Reb Zemele replied, "Baruch Hashem, I understand 95 per cent. There are still some minor details I don't understand, but 95% I figured out."

The people were excited. They asked the rosh hakahal to tell them what he had discovered.

This is what he told them:

I saw the train: A giant piece of iron with large wheels, but I looked for the horses that would pull the train, and I couldn't find any. So, I went over to the conductor and asked him where the horses were. He shouted rudely at me and told me to leave him alone. So I told him firmly, 'You don't know who I am, but I am a rosh hakahal. And not a regular rosh hakahal, but the rosh hakahal of Chelm.'

He wasn't impressed. He shouted at me again to get away, so I did so, and I studied the train from a distance, and that's when I solved the mystery. I saw that the train is made of many wagons, with metal cables connecting the wagons. Wagon #19, for example, is connected to wagon car #18, and #18 to #17, and so on. Now I understand how the train works. Each wagon is pulled by the wagon in front of it, and in turn pulls the wagon behind it. So, 95% of the mystery I figured out; I just don't know how the first wagon moves."

Our dear rosh hakahal thinks he understands, but if he doesn't know how the first wagon moves, he understands nothing at all.

We tell this mashal because of the important lesson we can learn from it.

When a war is won, some say it is thanks to sophisticated and powerful weaponry. Some give credit to a third country that helped. But they are seeing nothing at all. They are like the rosh hakahal who saw how wagon #19 pulls #18. We must remember that wars and their outcomes are determined by the "locomotive", by Hashem, the singular power in the universe!

The mashal isn't only relevant during wartime. It relates to all areas of life. For example, when it comes to shidduchim, the shadchan thinks that his talent and clever thinking brought about the shidduch. The parents think that they chose well, and that brought about the shidduch, etc. But these are solely the external wrappings. Everything occurs because Hashem is in charge.

The Or HaChaim (8:18) writes, "The *yetzer hara*'s first ploy is to cause people to forget [Hashem's kindness], and this destroys them. This can be the translation of the next pasuk, והיה אם שכח, 'If you will forget that Hashem does kindness to you, תשכח ה' אלקיך, you will forget Hashem...'

Reb Shmuel Tchuliner *zt'l* (a student of Reb Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l*) once experienced a *chesed* from Hashem, and he didn't stop speaking about it. His family asked him why he kept repeating the same story. Reb Shmuel replied, "The Or HaChaim says 'The *yetzer hara*'s first ploy is to cause a person to forget Hashem's kindness,' therefore I'm repeating it many times so that I won't forget."

Similarly, we were receivers of Hashem's miracles, and we must not forget them.

It states (Bamidbar 21:27) על בן יאמרו המושלים באו, "Regarding this, the poets would say: Come to Cheshbon...." Sichon, the king of Emori, conquered the city of Cheshbon from Moav. Sichon thought he had conquered Cheshbon due to his strength. Sichon was a mighty warrior, and he thought that his strength enabled him to win Cheshbon. Bilaam said that Cheshbon (the city of Moav) was conquered because he cursed Moav. Everyone had his explanation on how the war was won. באו המושלים, but let us make a true cheshbon, to understand what truly occurred. It wasn't Sichon's strength, and it wasn't Bilaam's curses. It was from Hashem.

Rashi explains that Hashem wanted Sichon to conquer Cheshbon and take it away from Moav. This is because the Jewish nation isn't permitted to conquer any lands from Moav, as it states (Devarim 2:9) אל תצור את

מואב, ואל תתגר בם מלחמה, "You shall not distress Moav, and you shall not provoke war with them..." Therefore, Hashem enabled Sichon, the king of Emori, to conquer Cheshbon from Moav. After it was conquered, Cheshbon didn't belong to Moav, and the Jewish nation was able to conquer it. So, the war was won by Hashem, and we must remember that.

It states in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 219:1) ארבעה צריכים להודות, יורדי הים... והולכי מדברות... ומי שהיה חולה ונתרפא... ומי שהיה חבוש בבית האסורים, ויצא. "Four [categories of people] must praise Hashem: those who travelled by sea, those who traversed a desert, those who were ill and became well, and those freed from jail." "Four *must* praise Hashem" is an unusual expression. The word צריכים, 'must', isn't common in Shulchan Aruch and in halachah. A more common expression would be ארבעה חייבין להודות, "Four are *obligated* to praise Hashem."

Shev Yaakov answers that Shulchan Aruch is telling us that praising Hashem for the salvations is so important, we *must* do so, even if it wouldn't be an obligation. This is because Chazal tell us that when a miracle happens to a person, he loses some of his merits. His mitzvos become like currency, spent in exchange for the miracle that occurred. However, when he praises Hashem for the miracles that happened to him, he doesn't have to pay for the miracle with his mitzvos.

Therefore, if a miracle happens to a person, צריכים להודות, he must praise Hashem. He must do so, even if it weren't an obligation. It is for his own good so that he won't lose his mitzvos.²

2. The Alshich HaKadosh (Vayikra ch.7) teaches that if ארבעה צריכים להודות, "Four must praise Hashem", because their lives were in danger, and Hashem saved them, certainly those who Hashem spared and were never in danger in the first place must praise Hashem. They are even more obligated to praise Hashem because Hashem gave them His kindness, without them experiencing any worry or distress.

A similar explanation: Everyone should praise Hashem. There are so many things to be thankful for. Even for the basics, like life, health, etc., are sufficient reasons to praise Hashem constantly. However, people lose sight of this. However, when a miracle occurs to them, then they praise Hashem. Sometimes, Hashem

There was a plague in the era of the Rishonim. Thousands of people died, but the Jewish nation wasn't affected. The goyim put out a rumor that the Yidden purposely caused the disease so that the goyim would die. Their proof was that the Jewish nation remained healthy, while so many goyim died. This resulted in terrible pogroms, r'l. Mobs of angry goyim attacked the innocent Jewish community.

Rabbeinu Peretz (from the Rishonim) was one of the gedolim who lived in that era. He said that the pogroms were a punishment to the Jewish nation for not praising Hashem. It states (Bamidbar 23:24) *הִנֵּה עַם כְּלָבִיא יָקוּם וְכִצְּאוֹ יִתְנַשֵּׂא*, "Behold the nation will arise like a lion cub, and arise itself like a lion," referring to the powerful wars the Jewish nation will wage to conquer Eretz Canaan.

The letters *כְּלָבִיא* are found in roshei teivos three times in Tanach.

1. (Shmuel 1, 2:9) *כִּי לֹא בִכְחַל יִגְבַּר אִישׁ*, "For not through strength does man prevail."

2. (Tehillim 44:4) *כִּי לֹא בַחֲרֶבֶם יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ*, "For not by the sword did they possess the land."

3. (Devarim 9:6) *וַיַּדְעֶתָ כִּי לֹא בַצְדִּיקוֹתַי י-ה-ו-ה' אֶלְלִיקֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ*, "You shall know that not because of your righteousness does Hashem, your G-d, give you this good land."

These pasukim teach us how Klal Yisrael wins wars. Sometimes people think that a war is won due to their strength or powerful weapons. And sometimes they recognize that it was a miracle, but their mistake is that they think they deserve the miracle. These pasukim tell us that it isn't so. (Shmuel 1, 2:9) *כִּי לֹא בִכְחַל יִגְבַּר אִישׁ*, "For not through strength does man prevail." They don't win wars due to their physical strength.

(Tehillim 44:4) *כִּי לֹא בַחֲרֶבֶם יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ*, "For not by the sword did they possess the land." They

don't win wars because they have powerful weapons.

(Devarim 9:6) *וַיַּדְעֶתָ כִּי לֹא בַצְדִּיקוֹתַי י-ה-ו-ה' אֶלְלִיקֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ*, "You shall know that not because of your righteousness does Hashem, your G-d, give you this good land." This means that they don't win wars because they are righteous.

Instead, they win wars because this is Hashem's will. As it states (ibid. Bamidbar 23:24) *וְכִצְּאוֹ יִתְנַשֵּׂא*, "and it will arise itself like a lion," and *וְכִצְּאוֹ* is roshei teivos for (Devarim 4:31) *כִּי י-ה*, "For Hashem your G-d is a merciful G-d." It is due to Hashem's compassion and due to His love for Klal Yisrael. As the pasuk (Devarim 4:31) concludes, *לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתֶךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח אֶת בְּרִית אֲבֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָשָׁבַע לָהֶם*, "He will not abandon you or destroy you, and he will not forget the covenant of your forefathers that He swore to them." This is how wars are won for Bnei Yisrael.

From Hashem

It states in Pirkei Avos (2:3) *הָיוּ זְהִירִין בְּרִשּׁוֹתַי, שְׂאִין מְקַרְבִּין לִי לְאָדָם אֶלָּא לְצַדִּיק עֲצֻמָּן. נִרְאִין כְּאוֹהֲבִין בְּשִׁעַת שְׂאִין מְקַרְבִּין לִי לְאָדָם עֲוִימָדִין לִי לְאָדָם בְּשִׁעַת דְּחִקוֹ*, "Be careful from the government because they do not befriend someone unless it is for their own benefit. They appear like they love, when it is good for them, but they don't stand by the person when he needs help."

Rabbeinu Yonah teaches us essential lessons in emunah and hashgachah pratis in his explanation of this Mishnah. He writes, "The government officials, their love and also their hatred, aren't by their own choice. When a government ruler needs a person, and he shows him love and befriends him, it is arranged by Hashem, and not by the official. Hashem arranged that this ruler should help him. If a person sins, and Hashem wants to push him away... even if the ruler wants to honor him, he won't be able to... This is as it

brings an illness, an imprisonment, or some other trouble, and the purpose is *צְרִיכִים לְהוֹדוֹת*, so people will praise Hashem. They weren't doing so until now, and now, when they praise Hashem for the miracles, they will remember to praise Hashem for all the other kindnesses Hashem constantly performs for them.

states (Mishlei 21:1) פִּלְגֵי מַיִם לֵב מֶלֶךְ בְּיַד ה' כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יִחְפֹּץ יַעֲשֶׂה, 'Like streams of water is the heart of a king in the hand of Hashem. Wherever He wishes, so He directs it.' A person can direct a stream of water to go in any direction he wants. This is also how it is with the hearts of kings. They are in Hashem's hands, and He directs them to do kindness to whom

Hashem desires, or to punish those who deserve punishment... It states לֵב מֶלֶךְ, 'the heart of a king,' and it doesn't speak about other people, although the hearts of all people are in Hashem's hands. The pasuk emphasizes kings because it appears that a king can do as he pleases. But the truth is that he can't do good or bad. It is all Hashem's word."³

3. This year, on Monday, parashas Korach, a sixty-year-old-man was hit by a car on Rechov Binyan Dovid, in Beitar. He was brought to the hospital, and his situation was classified as פְּצוּעַ קָל, which means a mild and minor wound. But when the hospital ran some standard tests, they discovered a growth near his spine and emergency surgery was performed to remove it. The doctors said that if they hadn't caught it then, it would have soon reached his spine, and he would have been paralyzed for life r"l.

He was back home before the week ended, healthy and well!

When he got home, he called the person who had hit him with his car. The man was very anxious as he picked up the call. He already felt guilty for the accident he caused, and he wondered what this man wanted from him now. The sixty-year-old man told him that he wasn't calling to complain or to summon him to court. On the contrary, he was calling to thank him. Because of the accident, his life was saved.

Someone was interested in purchasing an apartment in Kiryat Gat. The owner is an elderly man who lives in Rechovot. The owner told him, "Come to my home in Rochovot, I'll give you the key to the apartment in Kiryat Gat, and you can go take a look at it and see if you want to buy it."

He picked up the key in Rechovot, went to Kiryat Gat, and decided that he wanted to buy the apartment. He returned to Kiryat Gat to return the key to the owner and to begin the purchase process, but when he knocked at the old man's door, no one answered. He went to a neighbor and told him that no one was answering the old man's door. They were worried that something might have happened to the old man. The old man lived alone, and he wasn't in the best of health. They broke the door down, and they found him unresponsive. The Yid (who was interested in buying his apartment) took him in his car to the hospital.

The Yid said, "Apparently I won't be buying the house. It will take the owner a while to recover and be ready to discuss business again. So, my trip to Rechovot, Kiryat Gat and back to Rechovot was to save this Yid's life."

Rav Friedman, the Santiver Rav shlita, from Lakewood, tells the story of Reb Shmuel Dovid Fried, a chasid of the Atzei Chaim. Reb Shmuel Dovid owned a popular restaurant in Belgium, which at the time was the most famous eatery in the city. Yidden and l'havdil goyim ate there. He had a milchig kitchen and a fleishig kitchen. Some goyim ordered milichigs with their fleishig meals, and he would serve it to them. But to make sure that no shaalos arose, he made a rule that any food that leaves the kitchen can't be returned to the kitchen. That would keep the kitchens kosher.

Once, on erev Shabbos, his rebbetzin went to the fleishig kitchen and saw a buttered piece of bread. "How did this get here?" she asked her husband. "Everyone is relying on you to keep the kitchens kosher!" They were both shocked that this occurred, and Reb Shmuel Dovid decided to sell the restaurant. A Yid bought it for a very high price. Now Reb Shmuel Dovid had a lot of cash in his hand, and he wanted to invest it somewhere.

Someone came to Reb Shmuel Dovid Fried and told him that he had diamonds for sale, for a good price. He promised that he would become extremely wealthy from this deal. Reb Shmuel Dovid trusted him and used his entire money to buy the diamonds.

But when he went to a diamond merchant to show him the diamonds, the merchant informed him that they were fake diamonds. All the money was lost.

Rabbeinu Yonah is telling us that everything is from Hashem. It isn't a king's kind heart, and it isn't a friend's kind heart. Like a stream of water, everyone's hearts are in Hashem's hands, and He directs them according to His will.

Everyone Can Trust in Hashem

The Yerushalmi (Brachos 5:1) teaches: Reb Chizkiyahu said in the name of Reb Yehudah, "Never let this pasuk leave your mouth: (Tehillim 46:8) ה' צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׁגֵּב לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה, "Hashem... is with us, a stronghold for us is the G-d of Yaakov."

Reb Yosi said in the name of Reb Yehudah, another pasuk should always be on a person's lips. This is (Tehillim 84:13) ה' צְבָאוֹת אֱשֶׁר־יְיָ אָדָם בְּטִיחַ בָּךְ, "Hashem... praiseworthy is the man who trusts in You."

The Shefa Chaim (Klausenberg Rebbe zt'l) explains that the first pasuk (Tehillim 46:8) ה' צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׁגֵּב לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה, tells us that tzaddikim can trust in Hashem. Therefore, the pasuk mentions אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "the G-d of Yaakov" which refers to tzaddikim. The second pasuk reveals that every person can trust in Hashem, and Hashem will help him, as it states (Tehillim 84:13) ה' צְבָאוֹת אֱשֶׁר־יְיָ אָדָם בְּטִיחַ בָּךְ, "...praiseworthy is the man who trusts in You." This refers to every man, no matter who he is.

The Yerushalmi (Brachos 9:1) tells that Rav went to Teveria, and Roman officers asked him who he was. He told them that he was

close to Safiyanus (one of the Roman officials). They let him go free.

That night, the officials met with Safiyanus, and they asked him why he protects Jews, and they told Safiyanus what Rav told them. Safiyanus replied, "I don't know who he is. What did you do to him?"

The officers replied that they didn't do anything to him because they thought he was together with Safiyanus. Safiyanus replied, "Good. I am glad you didn't harm him. He relied on me, so he shouldn't be harmed."

The Yerushalmi concludes, "If one is saved by relying on a human being, certainly when one relies on Hashem, he will be saved." This is as it states (Yoel 3:5) וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם ה' יִמָּלֵט, "It will be that *anyone* who calls in the Name of Hashem will escape."

The Shefa Chaim explains that we can learn from this Yerushalmi that everyone can trust in Hashem. Rav was distant from Safiyanus, but he deserved to be saved and protected because he relied on him. So, too, whoever trusts in Hashem, even if he is distant from Hashem (because he isn't cautious with the mitzvos, etc.), nevertheless, since he trusts in Hashem, he deserves to be saved.

Serving Hashem Beyond Your Nature

It states (25:11) פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הִכְהֵן הַשִּׁיב, אֶת חֲמָתִי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael."

Now he had no restaurant and no money; only a family that he needed to support. So, he decided to go to America, find a job, and send money back to his family in Belgium. (At the time, he was so poor that he had to borrow money to buy a ticket to America.)

He arrived in America in תר"פ. Eventually, he saved up enough money, and his wife and children joined him in America. Then the war broke up. Thousands of Yidden living in Belgium were murdered. The person who bought the restaurant was also murdered, hy'd. The man who cheated him with the fake diamonds came to America after years of suffering in Auschwitz. Reb Shmuel Dovid helped him find an apartment and settle down. He even lent him money to help him get started in America. The man said, "Why do you do this for me, after what I did to you?"

Reb Shmuel Dovid replied, "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be alive anymore. In your merit, I am alive!"

Why does the Torah tell us Pinchas's yichus here, that he was the son of Elazar and a grandson of Aharon? (Rashi discusses this issue.)

The Bnei Yissaschar (Agra d'Kalah) explains:

When a person serves Hashem according to his nature, like a person who does chesed because he enjoys doing chesed, it isn't surprising. It isn't such a great chidush that he does those good deeds since he doesn't have to battle with his yetzer hara or overcome his human nature. But when a person serves Hashem in a way that is opposite his nature, it is a great accomplishment. He had to overcome the yetzer hara and his tendencies to do Hashem's will. For this, he is called an עובד ה', a servant of Hashem.

Therefore, Chazal (Brachos 5a) say, לעולם ירגיז, "A person should always have his yetzer tov battle with the yetzer hara," because those deeds are most spectacular.⁴

The Bnei Yissaschar quotes the following Gemara (Chagigah 9b): Bar Hy Hy asked Hillel, what is the meaning of the verse (Malachi 3:18) וְשִׁבְתֶּם וְרִאִיתֶם בֵּין צַדִּיק לְרָשָׁע בֵּין עֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים לְאִשֵּׁר לֹא עֲבָדוּ, "then you will return and see the difference between the tzaddik and the rasha, between one who serves Hashem and one who doesn't serve Hashem."

Isn't a צַדִּיק and עֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים one and the same? He is a tzaddik because he serves Hashem! Why are they mentioned twice in this pasuk? Similarly, לְאִשֵּׁר לֹא עֲבָדוּ and רָשָׁע (a rasha and someone who doesn't serve Hashem) aren't they the same?

Why does the pasuk write the same concept twice?

The Gemara asks this question, and Hillel replies that עֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים לְאִשֵּׁר לֹא עֲבָדוּ "One who serves and Hashem and one who doesn't serve Hashem" are both referring to perfect tzaddikim. "Only it is incomparable a person who studies a chapter one hundred times to someone who studies a chapter 101 times." In other words, עֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים, a servant of Hashem, is someone who studies Torah 101 times. לְאִשֵּׁר לֹא עֲבָדוּ, is someone who studies it just 100 times.

Bar Hy Hy asked, "For one time, will you call him לֹא עֲבָדוּ, that he didn't serve Hashem?"

Hillel replies, "Yes. You can learn this from a market for donkeys. Traveling ten parsah costs one zuz. To travel eleven parsah, costs two zuz."

The Tanya (ch.15) explains this Gemara. In those days, it was standard and routine to review each portion of Torah one hundred times. When one goes beyond the routine and reviews it one time more, it is a fantastic accomplishment. That one time is precious to Hashem, like all the other 100 times, and even more than them. This is because he did something hard, something that was beyond his natural routine and abilities.⁵ When one studies one hundred times, this is called, לֹא עֲבָדוּ, that he didn't serve Hashem. He isn't truly serving Hashem because he isn't applying any extra effort. When one studies just one time more, he is an עֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים, a person who serves Hashem, because he is doing more than he standardly would do.

4. It states (Bamidbar 20:19) כֹּה אָמַר דָּבָר בְּרַגְלִי אֶעֱבֹדָה. Slonimer tzaddikim explain, כֹּה אָמַר דָּבָר, Bnei Yisrael daven to Hashem and say that they have only one request: בְּרַגְלִי אֶעֱבֹדָה, enable me to go beyond my רגילות, standard behaviors, and to serve Hashem beyond my negative tendencies.

5. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 25:1) states, "When a person performs an aveirah, he is חייב מיתה בידי שמים, he is deserving of death from Heaven. What can a person do and live? If he used to study one page, now he should study two pages. If he used to study one chapter, now he should study two chapters." This is because the concept of teshuvah is to change one's routines. As it states (Yeshayah 55:7) יַעֲזֹב רָשָׁע דְרָכּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶנֶן, "Let the rasha forsake his way and let the baal aveirah abandon his thoughts; let him return to Hashem, and He will have mercy on him." Therefore, he should change his nature and study more than before, and this will atone for his sins and place him on the path of teshuvah.

Bnei Yissaschar explains that the Torah tells us Pinchas's yichus, that he was the son of Elazar and the grandson of Aharon Hakohen. This is to tell us that Pinchas's natural nature from his birth was to seek peace, like his father and grandfather. As it states in Pirkei Avos (1:12) הָלַל אֶת ה' וְרַחֵם שְׁלֹמֹה, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמְקַרְבָן שֶׁל אֶהְרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלֹמֹה וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלֹמֹה, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמְקַרְבָן, "Be from the students of Aharon, love peace, pursue peace, love people and draw them to Torah." The Torah tells us that Pinchas descended from them, and this tells us that peace was Pinchas's nature, as well. So, this time, when he went against his nature to do Hashem's will, it was an extraordinary deed, a deed done with mesirus nefesh.

Therefore, Chazal say, ראוּ שִׁיטוּל שָׂכָרוֹ, Pinchas deserves to be rewarded. Therefore (25:12) הִנֵּה אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלֹמֹה, "Behold I give him My covenant of peace." He changed his nature and went away from the path of peace for Hashem's sake, and therefore, he deserves to be rewarded with peace.

The Ksav Sofer zy'a (ד"ה לכן) writes a similar explanation, and he adds that this is taught by Rashi, as well. Rashi discusses the reason the Torah tells us the yichus of Pinchas, and he writes, לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ הַשְּׁבָטִים מְבֹזִים אוֹתוֹ, הָרְאִיתִם בֶּן פּוֹטִי, זֶה שֶׁפִּיטֵם אָבִי אִמּוֹ עֲגָלִים לַעֲבוּדַת אֱלִילִים, וְהָרָג נִשְׂיָא שְׁבֹט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכֵךְ בָּא הַכְּתוּב וַיַּחֲסוּ אַחֵר אַהֲרֹן, "The shevatim were disgracing Pinchas. They

were saying, 'Did you see this person... whose maternal grandfather (Yisro) would fatten calves to sacrifice for avodah zarah, and he went and he killed a nasi of a shevet in Yisrael!' Therefore, the Torah tells us that his yichus is from Aharon."

The Ksav Sofer explains that the people in the desert knew that Pinchas was a descendent of Aharon, and they nevertheless ridiculed him, so how does repeating to us that Pinchas was the son of Elazar, and grandson of Aharon, stop the people's ridicule?

The explanation is that the people were saying that Pinchas's nature was to get angry and take revenge because he is a descendent of Yisro. The Torah corrects them. He was a descendant of Elazar and Aharon, and he possessed their natures of kindness and seeking peace. When Pinchas killed the sinners, he had to fight his inner instincts. His nature was to pursue peace, and he went against his nature to bring honor to Hashem's name.⁶

Bnei Yissaschar (Agra d'Pirka 24) writes, "The Magid Reb Yechiel Michel of Zlotchev zt'l said that when a person wants to bring a salvation that is beyond the rules of nature, for example, by nature one can't bear children [and he wants to merit bearing children] he should do a great mitzvah that is beyond his nature."⁷

6. There was a person who owned a large stock of bottled drinks. Once, on an exceptionally hot day, he told his family, "Go outside and sell drinks for an enormously exaggerated price."

"Who will pay so much for a bottle of soda?" they asked.

"It's so hot today, and people must drink today, and they are prepared to pay for it. You will earn a huge profit," and that is what happened.

Similarly, heaven desires the mitzvos that are performed with effort. When you do so, you will be rewarded handsomely.

7. A chosid of Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorka zt'l would annually purchase from the government the rights to collect the toll from those crossing over a particular bridge. He earned a lot of money from this endeavor. Once, the chasid discovered that a group of goyim got together and decided to outbid him, and to take this permit away from him. Every year, the right to collect the toll was sold at a public auction. The chasid always presented the highest bid. This year, the goyim were planning to outbid him, no matter the price, just to take the parnassah away from a Yid.

When the Yidden wanted to create an *egel*, Aharon told them (Shemos 32:5) *הָג לָהּ מִקָּהָר*, that tomorrow they will celebrate.

According to its simple meaning, he was saying that tomorrow they will celebrate with the *egel*. But we can also explain that Aharon was saying that by tomorrow, they will succeed in overcoming the yetzer hara (see Rashi⁸) They won't worship the *egel*, and then it will be a real yom tov.

But the question is, what holiday would this be? They would be saved from the aveirah of worshipping avodah zarah, but otherwise, it was a regular weekday. Why would it be a *הָג*?

We can answer that it states in sefarim that the day a person overcomes his yetzer hara is his yom tov. If they had succeeded in avoiding this severe aveirah, it would undoubtedly be a reason to celebrate.

The Potential of Teshuvah

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Toldos, 115) tells that when the Romans wanted to enter Har Habayis, they said that first a Yid should go inside. They said, "Whoever volunteers to go inside, whatever he takes, he can keep for himself." Yosef Meshisa volunteered to be first. He went inside and came out with the menorah. The goyim told him, "It isn't proper for a regular person to have this precious utensil. This is fitting for the king. So go in again, and take out something else for yourself." But Yosef Meshisa didn't want to do so. He said, "It is enough that I angered my Creator once. I will not do so a second time." The goyim tried to bribe him, but he refused. They gave him terrible and painful yesurim, but he refused to go into the Beis HaMikdash a second time.

They brought him to an olive press, and placed him between the two heavy, grinding rocks, and he was killed with terrible yesurim. He shouted, "Woe is to me that I angered my Creator."¹⁰

The chasid went to Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke, zt'l, to ask for a brachah. As he waited in line to speak to the rebbe, the rebbe came out of his room and announced, "I need three hundred rubles for hachnasas kalah. Who is willing to give it?" The chasid gave the money.

Shortly afterwards, the rebbe came out of his room again and said that he needed another 300 rubles for hachnasas kalah. Once again, this chasid gave the money.

This occurred a third time as well, and the chasid gave the money.

Then the rebbe, Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorka, said, "When a person does a mitzvah beyond his nature, miracles will happen to him, beyond nature." The chasid understood that he didn't have to speak to the rebbe anymore. He had already received his salvation.

On the day of the auction, the goyim didn't show up, and he was able to buy the rights to the bridge, like every year. When the auction was over, the goyim arrived and they said to the chasid, "Which rebbe did you go to? We were supposed to be here three hours ago, and we got lost, and we only arrived now..."

8. Rashi writes, "His intentions were good. He was certain that Moshe would come, and they would serve Hashem." Aharon was delaying, pushing the aveirah off for the next day, and by that time, he was sure that *הָג לָהּ מִקָּהָר*, they would celebrate a true yom tov for Hashem.

9. That day was the 17th of Tamuz. The Arizal's students teach that if they had succeeded in avoiding this severe aveirah, the world would have come to its complete rectification, and the 17th of Tamuz would have been a yom tov, as it will be in the future.

10. It is possible to reach very high levels and accomplish great things, in a very short time, as Chazal say, *יש קונה עולמו בשעה אחת*, a person can merit Olam HaBa in a moment. We have an example of this in this week's parashah. It was a challenging time for Klal Yisrael. A great aveirah was performed by many, and 24,000

The question is, how did Yosef Meshisa pass this test? He was a great *rasha*, as we see from the beginning of the story. How did things turn around for him to become so passionate about Hashem? The Ponovitzer Rav zt'l said that he was in the Beis HaMikdash. The kedushah of the Beis HaMikdash influenced him.¹¹

The beginning of this Midrash tells that when Yaakov came to Yitzchak for the brachos, it states (Bereishis 27:27) וַיַּחֲרֹחַ אֶת רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו "[Yitzchak] smelled the fragrance of [Yaakov's] garments." His clothes had a

scent of Gan Eden. The Midrash says that we should read it, וַיַּחֲרֹחַ אֶת רִיחַ בּוֹגְדָיו, Yitzchak smelled the fragrance of those who rebel, and the Midrash gives an example of Yosef Meshisa. This is because each Yid has a fragrant scent before Hashem, and there is good in every Yid.

Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita teaches: Which time of Yosef Meshisa's life is the Midrash referring to, when it states that Yitzchak smelled the fragrance of the rebel, Yosef Meshisa? If it is referring to after Yosef Meshisa did teshuvah, he was no longer

Yidden died in a plague. Pinchas stood up like a lion, standing up for Hashem's honor. For this, he merited, for him and his children, greatness. As it states (25:13) וְהָיְתָה לְךָ וּלְזֶרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו בְּרִית כְּהֻנָּה עוֹלָם תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר קָנָה לְאַלְקִי וַיִּכָּפֶר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "It shall be for him and for his descendants after him as an eternal covenant of kehunah, because he was zealous for Hashem and atoned for Bnei Yisrael." This tells us that even if a person fell to very low places, r'l, if he picks himself up to do Hashem's will, he will attain Olam HaBa and blessing for himself and his children, for generations.

Some years ago, the following remarkable story became famous. A family living in Eretz Yisrael employed a maid to help with household work. One day, the maid arrived at their house and unexpectedly informed her employer that she was returning to her family in Romania. The baalabuste said an emotional goodbye to her loyal employee. There were some fruits on the table, so she gave them to her to eat on the long trip home.

Shortly afterwards, the husband came home and he heard about the gift. He said, "Those fruits are Shemittah fruits. It is forbidden to give shemittah fruits to a goy. Furthermore, it is forbidden to take them out of Eretz Yisrael!" He quickly ordered a taxi, and they rushed to the airport to retrieve the fruits. The Romanian maid saw them coming from a distance, and shamefaced, she said, "I admit... I am guilty... I will return all the jewelry I took. Just don't call the police. Let me leave in peace."

This was a miracle. She had stolen their jewelry, and when she saw them, she figured that they must be coming to get their jewelry back. So, for keeping the mitzvah of shemittah, they were spared a tremendous financial loss.

We can learn from this story lessons on how to combat the yetzer hara. One is to recognize the enemy. They didn't suspect their maid and didn't know she was a typical Romanian *ganav*. Had they known, they would have been more careful with their jewelry. The lesson is to be cautious with the yetzer hara. Be aware that he is out to harm you, r'l.

Another point is that this Romanian maid pretended that all she wanted to do was to say goodbye to the family, where she had worked. No one knew that she had another intention when she came to their house that day. Similarly, sometimes the yetzer hara comes and you think that all he wants is that one should look once where he shouldn't, or say something that he shouldn't, and he thinks that this is the entire intention of the yetzer hara. But his intention is for much more than that. He wants to bankrupt you, materially and spiritually.

11. It was forbidden for him to be in the Beis HaMikdash. A Yisrael may not go to the place where the Menorah stood. Nevertheless, the kedushah of the place changed him entirely, and he was prepared to be moser nefesh for Hashem.

We add that Shabbos has the kedushah of the Beis HaMikdash. So, every Yid on Shabbos has the potential to elevate himself. Even if he is on a low level, he can rise to high levels and become a tzaddik yesod olam.

בוגדיו, a rebel. It must be that it refers to the time *before* he did teshuvah, when he was still a rebellious, sinful person. Even at that point in his life, Yitzchak perceived that there is potential there, that there is holiness concealed deep within Yosef Meshisa – as this was indeed revealed at the last moments of his life. Yitzchak perceived Yosef Meshisa's potential greatness, even when he was still a sinful person. The potential good was always there, and he smelled a scent of Gan Eden.

This gives chizuk to every Yid, to know that within him lies holiness, begging to come forth, and when it does, it will be with an enormous and powerful light.¹²

The Three Weeks

The Arizal teaches that each month of the year represents a part of the face, and the months Tamuz and Av are represented by the two eyes. Imrei Noam (Masai ויציא) says that this tells us that Hashem is watching us and caring for us, even during these challenging times. "We shouldn't think that Hashem abandoned His *hashgachah pratis*, His compassion, and His caring eye during these days. The root of [the churban] was a lot of compassion, only it is concealed and isn't revealed to all."

During the Bein HaMetzarim, we mourn the *churban Beis HaMikdash*. The mourning is

very bitter and intense.¹³ But at the same time, we know that everything that occurred is ultimately good for us. The Midrash (Eichah Rabba 4:14) states that the *churban* was a tremendous *chesed* for Bnei Yisrael. Hashem poured out His wrath on wood and stones and not on His nation, *chalilah*.

Rebbe Yitzchak of Neshchiz zt'l (Toldos Yitzchak) writes, "During the days of Bein HaMetzarim, each year, a clear manifestation of Hashem's *chesed* is revealed. For it is known that it was all for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. Hashem poured out His anger on wood and stones and didn't destroy Bnei Yisrael. This occurred because Hashem's love for Bnei Yisrael was aroused from a very high place in the upper world. This occurs every year during this time. When these days arrive, Hashem's immense love for us is awakened, and Hashem's kindness and compassion come to us and all Yisrael."

In this week's parashah, the shevatim are counted, and we find the count of Shevet Levi (see 26:57-62) to be much less than the other shevatim. The Rishonim asks, "Why should they be a smaller tribe than the others"?

The Meshech Chachmah answers that the enormous growth of the other shevatim was miraculous. Shevet Levi, however, multiplied according to the rules of nature, which is why they were a smaller tribe. The Meshech Chachmah writes that this was for their

12. The Ari Hakadosh teaches that one should smell hadasim on Friday nights, before kiddush. Perhaps the explanation is as follows: The sefarim say that we should do *teshuvah sheleimah* before kiddush. But when one thinks thoughts of regret and teshuvah, one might feel that he is a בוגד, sinful, and become depressed and upset with himself. Therefore, at this meal, which corresponds to Yitzchak Avinu (as is written in sefarim) we want to remind the person that Yitzchak smelled the goodness in every Yid, even within those who had severe aveiros. He smelled in them the scent of Gan Eden. As it states (Bereishis 27:27) וַיִּשְׁכַּח אֶת רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו, "he smelled the fragrance of his garments", this can be read ריח בוגדיו, the scent of those who rebel, because Yitzchak found in them elements of goodness. With this awareness, one will have chizuk to know that there is good within him, and with teshuvah, he can come close to Hashem.

13. It states (26:54) לרב תרבה נחלתו ולמעט תמעט נחלתו. Rebbe Chaim Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l (Dvar Chaim) explains that נחלתו can mean distress and worry (see Amos 6:6). לרב, over important matters, such as the length of the galus, or your lack of growth in avodas Hashem, תרבה נחלתו, you should increase your worry and distress, as it states in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 1:3) ראוי לכל ירא שמים שיהא מוצר ודואג על חורבן בית המקדש, "It is proper for every yirei Shamayim to be upset and worried about the churban Beis HaMikdash." ולמעט, but for relatively minor problems, issues related to this world, תמעט נחלתו, you shouldn't worry that much.

benefit. He explains, "In my opinion, it could be that Hashem designed this since Shevet Levi won't own their property in Eretz Yisrael. Instead, they will live in the *arei miklat*, spread out throughout Eretz Yisrael. If Shevet Levi grew to be a large tribe, they would complain, 'Why don't we have a portion of land?' And it would also be a burden on Bnei Yisrael to support such a large tribe. Therefore, Hashem in His wisdom made sure that they wouldn't become miraculously large (like the other *shevatim*); rather, they increased according to the rules of nature..."

The Meshech Chachmah says that this lesson is alluded to in the following words (26:62): *ויהיו הפקודים שלשה ועשרים אלף*, "And those counted of [Levi] were twenty-three thousand." They were the smallest tribe, even smaller than Shimon's, because *כל יצר*, *מבן חדש ומעלה*, they were counted from a month, unlike Shimon, who was counted from twenty years old. So, their 23 thousand was a smaller tribe than Shimon's 22 thousand. The reason they were a small tribe is because *כי לא ניתן להם נחלה בתוך בני ישראל*, "no inheritance was given to them among Bnei Yisrael." They weren't granted a portion of land; they resided in *arei miklat*. If they had multiplied and become a large *shevet* like the others, they would be distressed that they don't have their own land. It would also be

a significant burden for Bnei Yisrael to support them. It was for everyone's benefit that they did not increase miraculously, like the other *shevatim*.

Let us learn a great lesson from this. Sometimes, people think that they lack something and wonder why they can't have what others have, but each person always receives the portion that is best for him. Everything that happens is always for our good.¹⁴

When counting and naming the family of Reuven, the *pasuk* writes (26:8) *ובני פלוא אליאב*, "And the sons of Palu were Eliav." *פלוא* means concealed (see Devarim 17:8). This hints at the times Hashem's kindness is concealed. Even then, we must believe that *אלי-אב*, it is from my G-d, from my compassionate Father. Even if we don't see how it is good right now, everything is Hashem's compassion.

Tefillah in Your Own Words

The Gemara (*Brachos* 21.) says, *ולואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום כולו*, "*Halevay* a person would daven all day long!" How does one do that? Doesn't he have many other things to do?

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zy'a* says that this means one should daven for everything that he is doing. One must recognize that he can't do anything without Hashem's help.

14. Someone was in America collecting money, and he had a "driver" who brought him to the homes of *baalei tzedakah*. At one home, the *baalabayis* shouted at him and insulted him for collecting money. He said many unkind words, but when he calmed down, he handed him \$300. After giving this money, the wealthy man said, "I want to ask you something. When I shouted at you, you didn't respond, and you didn't even show any sign of being insulted. How did you manage that?"

The person showed the wealthy person a list that he had received from the driver. The list contained little notes, how much to expect at each address. Next to this person's address, he wrote, "He shouts and curses, and then he gives three hundred dollars." "So I wasn't upset when I heard you shouting, because I knew that after this will come three hundred dollars."

The lesson is to believe that something good will come from every trouble we go through. If we believe that after the hardships, embarrassment, and troubles pass, we will receive a check for \$300, or much more than that, we will accept the troubles with joy and patience.

We are a weak generation, and we daven and request that we shouldn't be tested with *tzaros*. But when they come, let us remember this lesson, and know and believe that a lot of good will come from this.

Therefore, he should daven for success before each deed he tries to do. It will then be considered like he davened all day long.

When he goes to work, he davens for success. Before performing *chesed*, he davens that his deed should have the proper impact on the recipient, and so on. When one prays for all the trivial and for all the significant things he does, he will be davening all day long.

This can be alluded to in the words (Tehillim 102:2), תפילה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך שיחו, "A prayer for a poor man when he enwraps himself and pours out his speech before Hashem." With everything he does, he encircles it with a tefillah for Hashem. He knows he can't do anything without Hashem's aid, so he wraps all his deeds with tefillah.

The Divrei Chaim zt'l uses this pasuk to discuss a higher madreigah. He explains that even when one speaks to his fellow man, he can intend a prayer to Hashem in his words. He wraps all his conversations in a prayer.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l (Likutei Amorim 10) teaches, "In addition to *Shemonah Esrei*,

which one says three times a day, one should daven from the depths of his heart when he is alone in his house. The daily *Shemonah Esrei* is said by rote, and people don't think about what they say. But when a person is alone and thinks about his life and struggles, he will pour his heart out like water before Hashem and daven with *kavanah*. It will be a tefillah from the depths of his broken, humble heart, and such *tefillos* never go unanswered."¹⁵

It states in this week's parashah (28:2) תשמרו, להקריב לי במועדו, "Be scrupulous to offer [the korbanos] to Me in its appointed time."

The Sfas Emes (5647) says that תשמרו can also be translated as waiting (see Bereishis 37:11). תשמרו להקריב לי במועדו means we should wait the entire day for the time when we can bring the *korbanos*. Today, tefillah takes the place of *korbanos* (see Brachos 26:). Therefore, Sfas Emes writes, "The entire day should be of secondary importance; a person's focus should be tefillah." תשמרו, wait for those times of tefillah. Tefillah should be the highlight of your day, with the rest of the day utilized to prepare for this important time.

15. The Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l heard the following story from his father, Reb Tzvi of Rudnik zt'l:

There are two cemeteries in Krakow. Many ancient scholars are buried in the older cemetery, such as the Bach, the Megaleh Amukos, and the Rema. A local woman wanted to be buried in the older cemetery, but it was almost impossible to fulfill her wish. For hundreds of years, no one was buried in the old cemetery. Even the Rabbanim of Krakow were buried in the new cemetery. But this woman didn't give up. Three times a day, during *shacharis*, *minchah*, and *maariv*, she came to the *beis knesses* and davened that Hashem have compassion on her and that help her be buried in the old cemetery when her time came. She was so obsessed with this desire that all the children in Krakow knew to greet her, "Good morning, aunt. May you be buried in the old cemetery," as she had trained them to say.

At the weddings of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, she would ask the *chasan* and *kallah* to bless her that she be buried in the old cemetery.

It seemed absurd and peculiar to everyone why this was so important to her. Furthermore, it was almost impossible to be buried in the old cemetery. But she was persistent and stubborn with her desire.

On the day she left the world, there was a heavy snowstorm, and the ground was covered with high piles of snow. The *chevrah kadisha* couldn't carry her to the new cemetery, so they buried her in the old cemetery.

Reb Tzvi of Rudnik commented about this story, "This taught me that even when one davens for something that seems "insane", Hashem will listen to his *tefillos* and answer them. Such is the great power of tefillah!"

Reb Yonason Eibshitz zt'l writes in a letter: "The highlight of my day is the hour I stand before the One Who hears all prayers."¹⁶

The Kuzari writes (3:5), "The time of tefillah should be the heart and the fruit of your

day. The rest of the day should be paths leading up to this time. Yearn for these special moments when you become spiritual and distant from the physical. Food nourishes you from one meal to the next. Similarly, tefillah should nourish your soul from one tefillah until the next."

16. You can hit a table all day long, and it won't break. But if you hit it once with strength, it will break. The lesson is that we daven, and sometimes we don't see our tefillos answered. But if we place more effort and concentration into our tefillos, we will see results.

Another example is a laser beam. The concept of a laser beam is that it takes the light and concentrates it in one place, and then it has extreme power. So, too, when one concentrates his efforts in avodas Hashem, it will be powerful and bring forth powerful results. Many good deeds, and many good tefillos, performed half-heartedly won't accomplish as much as one tefillah said with full kavanah, and good deeds performed with all one's heart.