

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Vayeitzei



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Vayeitzei

Every Tefillah Helps

Here is a story that began last year, on the night of Purim Kattan, תשפ"ד when some yungerleit from Ashdod went to Kever Rachel to daven for their friend, a very special yungerman, Reb Chananya Gross z'l, who was ill, r'l. Their tefillos didn't save Reb Chananya, who was niftar on Tisha b'Av, however, two of the yungerleit who davened for him had their own, personal salvations nine months later. One of them was married for four years and didn't yet have children. The other was waiting for more children, as his youngest was already seven. They davened for their friend on Purim Kattan at the kever of Rachel Imeinu, and on the day of Rachel Imeinu's yahrtzeit, nine months later, they each had a child.

This story is a reminder to us that tefillos always help. Sometimes, tefillos are used for another purpose, but tefillos are always effective.

Reb Meir Weissmandl Shlita (Rav of Nitra, Monsey) learned in Lakewood Yeshiva when he was a bachur. During one of the days of selichos, a bachur approached him to ask if he wanted to say the selichos with the Ribnitzer Rebbe zt'l. Reb Meir had already begun reciting selichos. He had said Ashrei and the first three pasukim that begin with לך ה' הצדקה. However, since he wanted to daven with the Rebbe, he closed his selichos and waited to travel with the other bachurim to the Ribnitzer Rebbe.

Before beginning the selichos, the Rebbe asked the ten people who were at his minyan whether any of them had already said selichos. (The rebbe was *makpid* to say selichos with a minyan that had not yet said the selichos.) They all replied that they didn't say selichos. The Ribnitzer Rebbe asked them again, "Did anyone say selichos today?" They replied that they hadn't. The rebbe went to the *amud* and opened the selichos, but didn't begin.

He turned around again and asked whether anyone had already said selichos. Again, they all replied that they hadn't.

The Ribnitzer Rebbe went over to Reb Meir and asked, "Are you sure you didn't say selichos today?"

Reb Meir replied, "The truth is that I began to say selichos, but I stopped after three pasukim because I wanted to come with my friends to say selichos with the Rebbe."

The Ribnitzer Rebbe replied, "Nu, if so, you have already said selichos."

The main part of selichos that needs a minyan is the י"ג מדות, and Reb Meir hadn't even said סלח לנו, the parts of teshuvah that are in the selichos. He had hardly begun. Nevertheless, he said something; he said a drop and the Ribnitzer Rebbe could sense that he had already said selichos. We learn from this story how every tefillah helps, every small tefillah creates an impression.

Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky zt'l told a story that occurred one hundred and twenty years ago. An orphan girl lived in Mir, Poland, and wanted to marry a ben Torah, someone who would devote his life to studying Torah. She didn't have a father to help her find a shidduch, and she didn't have money to pay for a dowry. So, although years passed and all her friends had already married, she remained single. She could have married someone who wasn't so devoted to Torah, but she refused to give up on her dream.

She worked in a library and saved the money she earned for the dowry. The money was accumulating slowly, but it wasn't nearly enough for a dowry. One day, she sat in the library, feeling sorry for herself. She realized that she wouldn't succeed on her own to raise enough money for a dowry and that only Hashem could help her. She began to daven, with much sincerity. Of course,

she had davened previously for a shidduch. She davened for a shidduch and for a dowry every day, but this was the first time she davened with all her heart and soul because she now understood that Hashem was her only hope. As an orphan, she pleaded to the אבי היתומים, the Father of orphans, that He help her.

She came up with an innovative idea. She took out a paper and a quill and wrote a letter to Hashem. In her letter, she described the distress and the yesurim she went through daily: being a lonely orphan, waiting for her shidduch, without enough money for a dowry. She wrote, "I want to marry a chasan who will study Torah, someone with good middos, but what can I do if I don't have a father to help me? Should that prevent me from having a home immersed in Torah?"

At the end of the letter, she wrote, "You are Hashem, and You can do anything. You don't lack money, and You don't lack good bachurim. You can help me. I rely on You alone.

"Your daughter who is devoted to You, Sheina Miriam."

She placed the folded letter in an envelope, and she addressed the envelope to "My Father in Heaven."

Then she went to the forest outside the city of Mir. She held the letter above her head and waited for a strong wind. When the wind arrived, she let go of the letter and watched her letter fly in the wind. She returned home with *emunah* that the letter reached its destination. Hakadosh Baruch Hu would take care of the matter.

A few days later, one of the best bachurim of Mir was trying to understand a deep concept in the Gemara. He decided to take a stroll in the forest, outside the city of Mir, and in that setting, he would try to attain clarity. Suddenly, he saw a letter tucked inside a bush. "Who does this belong to?" he wondered. "Perhaps I can return it to the owner." He took the letter out of the bush and was astonished to see that the letter was

addressed to "my Father in Heaven"! He opened the letter and read it several times. He was impressed by the girl's sincerity. She wasn't seeking a talmid chacham due to peer pressure. He understood that it was her genuine desire to marry a talmid chacham.

He returned to yeshivas Mir and spoke to the Rosh yeshiva, Reb Eliyahu Baruch Kamai (who later became the rav of Mir). He told him about this shidduch that came to him from "heaven". The process and inquiries began, and the shidduch transpired. She was six years older than him, but that didn't prevent the shidduch from happening.

As she had hoped and prayed for, her husband was truly a tzaddik and talmid chacham. His name was Reb Yitzchak Yechiel Davidovits zt'l, and he served as the mashgiach of yeshivas Minsk. He was the rebbe of Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky, Reb Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, and Reb Avraham Kalmanovitz zt'l.

The lesson here is that tefillos help. When we invest in tefillah, there will be results.

Tefillos and Hishtadlus

It states (30:14) ותאמר רחל אל לאה תני נא לי מדודאי בנך, "And Rachel said to Leah, 'Now give me some of your son's *dudaim*.'"

The Imahos did their hishtadlus to bear children, as is discussed in this week's parashah. One hishtadlus was when Rachel acquired from Leah the דודאים flowers, which were mesugal for bearing children. Another hishtadlus was when they gave their concubines to Yaakov. The Siforno (30:16) writes, "The Imahos's hishtadlus were pleasing before Hashem, that they brought concubines and the story of the dudaim. Therefore, Hashem heard their tefillos. Because it is proper for a tzaddik to perform natural deeds of hishtadlus, from what is available for him to do to attain his desire, and together with this, he should daven... As Chazal tell us, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the tefillos of tzaddikim.'"

This Siforno is a rule in life. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants a person to go out to work and earn his bread with the work of his hands. All his needs, he should attain through natural deeds of *hishtadlus*.¹ However, together with his *hishtadlus*, he should acquire the *emunah* that he can't attain anything through his strength, and the result is a gift from heaven.²

It states (11:), ויקח מאבני המקום וישם מראשתיו, "[Yaakov] took from the stones of the place, he put them around his head, and slept in that place."

Rashi writes, "He laid the stones in a semi-circle around his head because he feared the wild animals. The stones began arguing. One said, 'The tzaddik should place his head on me.' Another said, 'The tzaddik should place his head on me.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu immediately consolidated them into one stone, as it states (28:18), ויקח את האבן, "אשר שם מראשתיו." He took the *stone*..."

The Maharam Shik *zt'l* explains that *אבנים*, stones, represent *אבני יסוד*, foundations. There are two competing foundations: *hishtadlus* and *bitachon*. The stones argued with each other: The foundation of *hishtadlus* claimed that *hishtadlus* is the means through which

one earns *parnassah*, and the foundation of *bitachon* claimed that *it* is the means for *parnassah*.

What is the truth?

Hashem took the stones and forged them into one big rock. This means Hashem took the two foundations of *hishtadlus* and *bitachon* and showed them that they function in unison. We do *hishtadlus* because it is Hashem's decree, but we must know that *parnassah* comes directly from Hashem. Even our ability to do *hishtadlus* comes from Hashem.

Calmness with Bitachon

The Sfas Emes (5634) writes that Rivkah told Yaakov (27:43) קום ברח לך, "Arise and flee", as well in the haftarah it states ויברח יעקב, and Yaakov fled from Eisav. Nevertheless, the Torah uses passive expressions (28:10) ויצא יעקב, "And Yaakov left Beer Sheva, and he went to Charan." It doesn't state וירץ, that he escaped and ran. The Torah's expressions make it sound like he left without hurry, without panic. This tells us that even when escaping to save his life, he didn't lose his *yishuv hadaas*. He went calmly and with *bitachon*.³ He wasn't afraid

1. A hundred years ago, in Yerushalayim, people talked about someone who had recently died from hunger. Rebbe Nochum of Rachmistrivka *zt'l* said, "He didn't die from hunger. He died from pride because it was beneath his dignity to stick out his hand and ask for help."

2. A yungerman played the role of "Moshke" in a play. He ran a tavern and paid rent to the Poritz. It was a typical scene, and he played his part perfectly. During an intermission, someone approached the actor and asked, "When will your tavern be open? I want to buy some drinks." He replied, "Who do you think I am? I am not Moshke who runs a tavern. This is just a show. The play is over in two hours, and I will be a typical yungerman, just like you." When he acted like Moshke, he felt like Moshke and played his role to perfection. Nevertheless, he knew deep down that he wasn't Moshke.

This *maschal* teaches us the essence of *hishtadlus*. When a person does *hishtadlus*, it appears like the *parnassah* is entirely dependent on these deeds. But simultaneously, he must know that it is just a "play." Hashem gives *parnassah*; only it is Hashem's will that we should put up this "show" of *hishtadlus*.

3. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 68:2) states, "When Yaakov went to Charan... to marry a wife, Eliphaz the son of Eisav ha'rasha came and took everything Yaakov had. Yaakov despaired, saying... 'When Eliezer came to get Rivkah, he came with ten loaded camels [carrying a lot of wealth], but I don't even have one ring or bracelet! Then Yaakov said, 'What? I am losing my trust in my Creator? Chas veshalom! עוזי מעם ה' my help will come from Hashem.'" He strengthened himself with *bitachon*.

but trusted in Hashem.⁴ He knew that no one could harm him if it wasn't decreed above. So why should he escape with worry and confusion?⁵

The Sfas Emes writes that this is the intention of the following Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 68:1):

It states in Mishlei (3:23-24), אז תלך לבטח דרךך, "Then you shall go with bitachon on your way." The Midrash says that this refers to Yaakov, as it states ויצא יעקב, "And Yaakov went out..."

אם תשכב לא תפחד, "If you lie down, you shall not fear." The Midrash says this means he wasn't afraid of Eisav or Lavan.

ושכבת וערבה שנתך, "When you lie down, your sleep shall be sweet." The Midrash says that this is as it states (Bereishis 28:11) וישכב במקום ההוא, "He lay down at that place." He wasn't afraid, because he trusted in Hashem.

It also states (Tehillim 34:1) לדוד בשנותו את טעמו לפני אבימלך וגרשהו וילך, "Of David... he banished him and he walked." Avimelech banished Dovid, but Dovid didn't run. He walked. He went calmly, without distress, without confusion.⁶

4. The city of Warsaw sustained heavy air attacks and artillery shelling, from the Nazis, ym's, in the year of ת"ש. The residents didn't know what to do to protect themselves. Some ran to bomb shelters, but that was also dangerous because when buildings collapsed, the debris might block the exits, trapping everyone inside. During this time, the Brisker Rav zt'l lived in Warsaw, and he carefully considered his options. He decided that since both options were risky, he and his family should remain at home.

During those days, the Brisker Rav was completely calm and slept well and peacefully. When he was asked how he managed to remain calm when every moment could be the final moment, he replied, "Dovid HaMelech was in danger of his life from Avshalom, his son, and he sang in Tehillim (3) מזמור לדוד בברחו מפני (3) 'אבשלום בנו... אני שכבתי ואישנה הקיצותי כי ה' יסמכני and slept; I awoke, for Hashem will support me.' He fell asleep right after lying down because he trusted in Hashem and had no fear."

Someone pressed the Brisker Rav, "But generally, you have a tendency to be very cautious and afraid. How are you so calm now?" He replied, "My usual caution stems from Hashem's command that we guard our lives. It isn't my well-being that I am concerned about; rather, I fear that maybe I haven't fulfilled my obligation to guard my health. Perhaps there is more that I can do. But this time, I know I did whatever I could. I completed my obligation to Hashem, so I can be calm." (HaRav m'Brisk vol.1 p.391).

5. The Gemara (Bava Basra 28.) states, שמעתי מהולכי אושא, "I heard from those who went to Usha...". This is a reference to the Sanhedrin, which went to galus. The Gemara calls them הבורחים לאושא, not הולכי אושא, those who escaped to Usha. Because even when they had to escape, they went calmly, without worry or confusion.

6. The Imrei Emes of Gur zt'l was a big masmid and very careful not to waste time. When he had to travel somewhere, he told his gabbai that he should remind him just moments before they needed to leave the house to catch the train. The Imrei Emes would prepare himself quickly, and they would go.

Once, the gabbai was helping the Imrei Emes prepare to leave the house because it was late. Due to the rushing, some items fell out of the gabbai's hands. The Imrei Emes asked him, "Why are you rushing so much?"

The gabbai motioned as if to say, "I am rushing because the rebbe is rushing."

The Imrei Emes replied, יאך יאך זיך נישט, איך מאך שנעל, "I do not rush; I am quick." Even when he did things quickly, he did them calmly, without losing his peace of mind.

Another indication of this concept is (Tehillim 119:60) חשתי ולא התמהמהתי לשמור מצותיך, "I hastened and did not delay to keep your mitzvos." The words חשתי ולא התמהמהתי, "I hastened and did not delay" seem to be repetitive because when one rushes, obviously he isn't delaying! The answer is that Dovid was saying that

Calmness with Emunah

Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l said that when he was seventeen, his father and the Chazon Ish zt'l began looking for a shidduch for him. He ended up marrying the daughter of Reb Eliyashiv zt'l when he was twenty-three, and his kallah was seventeen years old. Reb Chaim said that when he began shidduchim, his bashert was only twelve years old. This story is a reminder that one doesn't have to worry. When the right time arrives, it will be. When a person has emunah and bitachon, he lives a tranquil life, without worries.

When the time came for Yaakov to marry Rochel, Lavan tricked Yaakov Avinu. It states (29:25) וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה הוּא לֵאמֹר, "It came to pass in the morning, and behold she was Leah!" But the pasuk doesn't state that Yaakov was angry at Lavan. He complained and asked him why he tricked him, as it states וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל לָבָן מָה זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עַבְדָּתִי עִמָּךְ וְלָמָּה רָמִיתִנִּי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל לָבָן מָה זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עַבְדָּתִי עִמָּךְ וְלָמָּה רָמִיתִנִּי, "[Yaakov] said to Lavan, 'What is this that you have done to me? Did I not work with you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?'" but it doesn't state וַיֵּחָר אַף יַעֲקֹב, that he became angry with Lavan. He knew this was from heaven, so why would he become angry?

And indeed, it was from Hashem, and many good things came from it. Yaakov suspected Lavan might switch Rachel, so he gave her simanim. When Leah was taken in her place, Rachel, concerned that Leah would be embarrassed, revealed the simanim to her. Rachel was blessed with children

because of this kind, selfless deed, as it states (30:22) וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת רָחֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת רָחֵל וַיִּפְתָּח אֶת רִחוּמָהּ, "Hashem remembered Rachel, and Hashem hearkened to her, and He opened her womb." Rashi writes that Hashem remembered the merit that Rachel gave the simanim to her sister.

Also, when the Yidden went to exile by the churban Beis HaMikdash, they stopped to daven at Rachel's kever (see Yirmiyahu 31:14-16). Rachel davened in heaven, and her tefillos were answered. The Jewish nation was promised that they would yet return to Eretz Yisrael, as it states (Yirmiyahu 31:16) וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים לְגְבוּלָם, "The children shall return to their border."

Metzudas Dovid (Yirmiyahu 31:15) writes, "Hashem told Rachel, 'Now you will be rewarded for your good deed, that you gave the simanim to your sister. Your children will return from enemy land.'"

Also, the Midrash (Agadah) says, "The Avos and the Imahos went to appease Hakadosh Baruch Hu [to atone for] Menashe's sin that he put an idol in the Beis HaMikdash. Hashem didn't accept their pleas. Rachel came before Hashem and said, 'Ribono Shel Olam, who has more compassion, You or human beings? Obviously, Your compassion is greater. Now, behold, I brought in a tzarah (second wife) into my home. Yaakov worked for my father solely for me, and when it was time for my church, they brought in my sister instead. Not only was I silent, but I also gave her the simanim. You should do

he rushes by not delaying. It isn't rushing in the literal sense; instead, he rushes simply by not procrastinating.

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l taught ואבדתם מהרה, that we should abolish the attitude of rushing.

The Moshe Kobriner zt'l once visited the daughter of Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuz, zt'l. Before departing, he asked her to repeat something from her father. She said that her father would often say, "A Yid may not rush!"

Reb Moshe Kobriner immediately instructed his chasidim, who were with him, not to rush. They would leave when they were ready.

When they finally left, they were informed that thieves had been waiting for them in ambush. When they saw that Reb Moshe and his entourage weren't coming out of the house, they left. So, by not rushing, they were saved.

the same. If Your children brought a tzarah (an idol) into Your home, be silent for them." Hashem replied, 'You spoke correctly. You will be rewarded because you gave your sister the simanim.'"

There is another tremendous benefit in Yaakov Avinu marrying Leah. This marriage brought forth many shevatim. So, indeed, there was no reason to be angry. Yaakov had emunah that everything was for the good, including that which initially seemed bad. And with this emunah, Yaakov was able to overcome his anger.

In contrast, we find that Yaakov did become angry at Rachel when she said (30:1) *הבה לי בנים ואם אין מתה אני* "Give me children, and if not, I am dead." *ויחר אף יעקב ברחל ויאמר* "And Yaakov became angry with Rachel, and he said, "Am I instead of Hashem, Who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

It seems strange that Yaakov didn't become angry at Lavan, but when it came to Rochel, he did get angry. However, if we internalize the lesson above, it is understood why Yaakov acted this way. Yaakov knew that Lavan's actions were nothing but a *shlichus* from Hashem and that something good would come from them. But when Rachel Imeinu cried to him that she wanted children, he became angry at her to rebuke her and teach her that she should believe that everything is from Hashem, and everything is for the good.

Imrei Pinchas (Taharas HaMiddos 29) writes in the name of Reb Refael of Barshid zt'l, "A counsel to be saved from anger is to believe in hashgachah pratis... and that everything is for the person's good... He should believe with *emunah sheleimah* that everything is for his good, and then he won't become angry at any person.

Be a Shadchan

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l would encourage shadchanim to do this great mitzvah. He said that this is the greatest

chesed you can do for your fellow man. He said he also spends many hours trying to help people find their bashert and get married.

Someone asked Reb Shlomo Zalman for counsel to be able to bear children. Reb Shlomo Zalman said, "The Chofetz Chaim said that doing deeds of tzedakah and chesed is a segulah to bear children."

The man asked which type of chesed should he get involved in. Reb Shlomo Zalman replied that he should care for an orphan child by paying for all the child's spiritual and physical needs. The man replied that this chesed was too hard for him because he didn't have much money. So, Reb Shlomo Zalman advised him to become a shadchan for older singles, to help them get married and build a Jewish home. He said that this is the greatest chesed.

The man accepted on himself this mitzvah, and it wasn't long before he had a son.

Many people say that they aren't a shadchan and they don't know how to do it. They claim that they don't have the sense to come up with suitable shidduchim, and they are afraid that, at times, people might be insulted if they offer a shidduch that isn't appropriate. They say that even if they come up with a good idea, they don't know how to bring the idea to fruition, how to negotiate, and how to overcome the obstacles that often come up in the shidduch process.

Even so, this doesn't mean that they can't be involved in the chesed of shidduchim. There is always something that they can do. For example, if they have a shidduch idea, they can give it over to a shadchan and let the shadchan complete the job.

Additionally, know that you don't need to be an expert to be a shadchan. Thousands of shidduchim are made through regular people who have good ideas. They give it over to another party, and the shidduch transpires.

Just think about the distress and worry parents endure when they have older children in their home. Think about this, and you will be inspired to do what you can to help them.

Nevertheless, intelligence and common sense is needed. Not every idea that comes to your mind should be spoken. The shidduch must make sense, or someone may likely become insulted. When in doubt, you can always ask a professional shadchan for their opinion.

Here is a recent story of shidduchim, and hashgachah pratis. It occurred this past Tamuz, and came to its happy ending this year, in Cheshvan:

There were two older single sisters, both in their thirties. They took care of their ill father, who needed constant care and help. At one point, the younger sister was involved in a shidduch that seemed promising, and her older sister was waiting to hear good news from her. However, one day, she noticed that her younger sister was subdued. After inquiring why this was so, her younger sister explained that the shidduch fell through due to finances. She said that she only saved up 150,000 shekel to give towards the dowry. Since their father was ill, he would not be able to contribute, and the girl would be responsible for herself. The other side didn't think this would be enough to support the couple, and the shidduch fell through.

The older sister replied that she has 500,000 shekel saved up and is willing to give all her savings to her so that the shidduch could proceed. The younger sister refused to accept this gift. She said that her older sister needs the money for her own shidduch. However, her sister said Hashem can help her get married even if she doesn't have money. "Besides," she said, "I am getting older and don't know if I will get married. At least you should get married, so our family will have a continuation."

The younger sister immediately called back the shadchan and said she had 650,000 shekel, and the shidduch was quickly finalized.

The chasan was very emotional and happy at his engagement, and he called one of his friends in America to receive a brachah and to tell him the good news. He also told him about the older, single sister who so selflessly gave away her half a million shekel so that the shidduch could happen.

The person on the phone replied, "I know an older single boy who is about the same age as this older sister. I don't know who this older sister is, but the story of her mesirus nefesh impressed me, and I think my friend will also be impressed. I will call him and suggest the shidduch."

Indeed, his friend was interested. This friend was wealthy; he didn't need money for a dowry. He immediately took a flight and came to Eretz Yisrael. The process of the shidduch began. The older sister was worried that the issue of money might come up and ruin the shidduch because she didn't have any money. She didn't know the bachur had heard about her mesirus nefesh to help her sister. So, right away, she let the boy know that she doesn't have money. The bachur replied that he knew and heard the story, which is why he was interested in the shidduch.

This shidduch transpired, as well. They just got married now, in Cheshvan. This story teaches us the trait of vitur, because it was her vitur that brought about the shidduch. It also teaches us the way Hashem makes shidduchim. Sometimes, a lack of money becomes the reason a shidduch will transpire! And it is a reminder to keep your fellow single friends in mind. This friend wasn't a professional shadchan, but he had an idea. He tried, and a family was saved and created. The chesed of shidduchim is the greatest chesed one can do.⁷

The Trap of *Parnassah*

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 3:16) say, מצודה פרוסה על כל החיים, "A trap is spread out before all people." The Mishnah, however, doesn't reveal what the trap is.⁸

The Baal Shem Tov said that the trap is the pursuit of *parnassah*. פרוסה often means a slice of bread (כדי אכילת פרס). So, מצודה פרוסה means that food is a trap that is before all people. In other words, the pursuit of *parnassah* is a trap. People are so involved in their work

that they don't find time for Torah, tefillah, and other parts of *avodas Hashem*.

The Bas Ayin writes, "The pursuit for *parnassah* is a trap. People become immersed in their work and don't leave room in their hearts for *avodas Hashem*. But when one contemplates... that Hashem kindly sustains the entire world and believes that Hashem will sustain him... then he will find room in his heart for Torah and mitzvos. And then when he studies Torah, Hashem will shine onto him a holy light...and he will rise from level to level..."

7. A few years ago, a family from Lakewood came to Eretz Yisrael for the chasunah of one of their sons. After the final sheva brachos, as they were driving to the airport, a shadchan called to suggest a shidduch for their next daughter in line. The father replied, "I wished you would have called me earlier, but now I am on my way to the airport, and there is no time."

When they arrived at the airport, they were informed that their flight had been canceled due to a snowstorm in New York. They were told to contact the airline in a couple of days to reschedule their flight.

As he was driving back to his hotel in Yerushalayim, he called the shadchan and told him that he was staying for now and that he could look into the shidduch.

By the time the snow in New York melted, the shidduch was finalized.

This is as the Sefer Chasidim teaches, sometimes Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings wars to the world so that a shidduch should happen. Great wonders occur, so shidduchim should occur.

A girl was in shidduchim for a long time. There were several offers, but the other side always said "No." She came to the Chazon Ish zt'l and cried, "Am I such a nobody that no one wants me? Every shidduch that comes my way is turned down sooner or later."

The Chazon Ish replied, "I want to ask you something. Suppose I need to send a letter to the Friedman family who lives on Reb Akiva 2, and I give you the letter and ask you to bring it to them. You arrive at Reb Akiva 2, but there are no mailboxes or names on the doors. There are three apartments in the building, and you don't know which one is Friedman, what would you do?"

She hesitantly replied that she would knock on a door and ask them if they were Friedman. If they reply that they aren't, that they are Itzkowitz, she will ask them where Friedman lives. They tell her that they live on the third floor, and she will go there and hand them the envelope.

The Chazon Ish asked, "Would you shout at the Itzkowitz's, 'Why aren't you the Friedman's? Why do you say that Itzkowitz lives here and not Friedman?' Of course you wouldn't. You would just go up to Friedman and give them the envelope."

The Chazon Ish raised his voice and said, "Know that when you hear 'No' to a shidduch, this means that this isn't your shidduch. For example, you are supposed to marry Friedman, and the shidduch suggested to you is Itzkowitz, that is why they said no. Is there a reason to shout or to feel bad that they aren't Friedman? This isn't your shidduch, so why should you be upset? When you hear 'No', it only means that this isn't your shidduch. When the Friedman shidduch comes up, everything will flow easily, and the shidduch will happen."

8. The Rambam and Rav Ovadia Bartenura explain that it refers to the trap of *yesurim* and death. These are realities that no one can escape.

There's yet another trap in the pursuit of *parnassah*: theft. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 165.) states, רובם בגזל ומיעטם בעריות וכולם באבק לשון הרע, "Most people sin with theft..."

The Mesilas Yesharim (11) explains, "Although most people don't steal... nevertheless, most people taste the taste of theft in their business..." People are *moreh heter*; they think they are permitted to cut corners, etc. They don't realize that these leniencies may fall under the umbrella of theft.

Towards the end of the *parashah* (31:38-41), Yaakov expressed that he had worked honestly for Lavan for twenty years. Yaakov would repay him with his own money if a sheep were stolen or killed by wild animals. He guarded the sheep in the heat of the day and the cold at night, with little sleep. And Hashem repaid his honesty, for Yaakov became very wealthy. The ways the Avos acted is a lesson for us-לבינים סימן לבנים- the way the avos acted, is a lesson for us. And everyone must say, "When will my deeds come near to the deeds of my forefathers." We learn from Yaakov's honesty in business and strive to do the same.

The Chofetz Chaim (*Shemiras HaLashon*, Shaar HaTevunah ch.11) teaches that when one steals from his fellow man, he is a rasha and a fool. He is a fool because one doesn't gain from theft. This is because it is impossible to earn more money than the amount destined for him on Rosh Hashanah. Furthermore, the money he stole will bring ruin to the rest of the money that he has. As stated in *Derech Eretz* (Zuta 3), "If you take that which isn't yours, yours will be taken away from you." And the Gemara (*Succah* 29:) states, "Wealthy people lose all their money for four reasons" and among the reasons is theft, such as not paying workers. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 8.) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to reshaim, it isn't enough that you steal, you also obligate me to return the theft to the right owner."

The Chofetz Chaim explains that this happened to Lavan. He stole from Yaakov

many times, as it states (31:7), והחליף את משכרתי, עשרת מונים, "He changed my payment tens of times." And everything he stole was returned to Yaakov as it states (31:11-12), וראה כל העתודים, העולים על הצאן עקודים נקודים וברדים. Yaakov Avinu saw in his dream *malachim* carrying away Lavan's sheep and bringing them into Yaakov's territory.

How could the *malachim* do that? It seems like theft! A *malach* explained to Yaakov, כי, ראייתי את כל אשר לבן עושה לך, "I saw everything Lavan did to you." He stole from you, and now it is being returned to you.

New Beginnings

The Gemara (*Bava Kama* 97:) states, "On the coin of Avraham Avinu, there was a זקן וזקנה, an old man and an old woman on one side, and a בחור ובתולה, a boy and girl on the other side. With this mintage, Avraham was teaching that even when one is elderly, it isn't too late. He can begin again, just like a young boy or girl.

Reb Issar Zalman Melzer zt'l once said to his student, Reb Nota Freund zt'l, "I turned eighty today. I must 'take myself into my hands' and begin learning!" He said this with total simplicity, as a young bachur in yeshiva might speak at the beginning of the zman. He realized that despite his age, it wasn't too late to turn over a new leaf.

We heard this story from one of the great talmidei chachamim of Yerushalayim shlita, who had an "open door" relationship with Reb Yosef Shalom Eliyashev zt'l.

Every year, on the night of Rosh Hashanah, he wanted to receive a brachah from Reb Eliyashev because this is the only time, during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, that the brachah is כתיבה וחתימה טובה. After the first night, the brachah is גמר חתימה טובה, but we don't mention the כתיבה anymore.

However, despite his desire, he couldn't go to Reb Eliyashev. By the time he finished the davening and the tish he attended, it was late at night.

But one year in תשע"ט, when Reb Eliyashev was 99 years old, he decided that he would make the effort to receive a brachah. After the tish, at three o'clock in the morning, he went to Reb Eliyashev's home, knowing that Reb Eliyashev would have woken up by that time for the next day. (Reb Eliyashev would always awaken around that time to study Torah at night.) When he arrived, he heard Reb Eliyashev studying with sweetness.

Reb Eliyashev was startled when he saw him. The man explained, "It is nothing serious; it is just that I wanted to receive a brachah from the Rav for a *כתיבה וחתימה טובה*." He explained that although for Reb Eliyashev, it was already morning, a new day, for him, it was still nighttime, and therefore, Reb Eliyashev could give him the brachah for a *כתיבה וחתימה טובה*. Reb Eliyashev blessed him, and then Reb Eliyashev pointed to his Gemara and said, "We began the year with hischadshus!" He was saying that it was a new year, and he was putting in new effort and excitement in studying Torah.

The visitor was overwhelmed by what Reb Eliyashev said. Here is a ninety-nine-year-old gadol, already an expert in Torah, respected in Klal Yisrael as among the greatest gedolim and poskim. Yet he was beginning anew like a young bachur in yeshiva. On the other hand, you can find many young bachurim, or yungerleit, at the age of 25, and certainly when they reach 50 or 60, they feel that there is no hope for them to succeed in Torah. It isn't so. At any age, you can begin anew and grow in Torah.

The Mishnah (at the beginning of Zevachim) states, "All korbanos that are brought *שלא לשמן* (the person who brought it thought it was a different type of korban) the korban is kosher... The exception is the korban Pesach and a korban chatas (when one thinks it is another korban, the korban becomes pasul).

Why are the korban Pesach and chatas different than all other korbanos?

Pesach was the first mitzvah that Bnei Yisrael received. The first must be performed in the best way, without any *בדיעבד*. Also, the korban chatas is brought by someone doing teshuvah, which means he is beginning his avodas Hashem brand new. And the beginning must be done with perfection.

The Brachah of Torah

My relative, Reb Dovid Biderman Shlita, asked Reb Eliyashev which arm his son should put tefillin on when he becomes bar mitzvah. He explained that his son uses both hands, and he doesn't know which hand is the weaker one.

Reb Eliyashev replied, "When you go home, give your son a stone and tell him to throw it as far as possible. Don't tell him that you are testing him. See which arm he uses to throw the stone. That is his stronger arm, and the tefillin should be worn on the other arm."

Reb Dovid Biderman then asked that Reb Eliyashev give his son a brachah so that he would grow to be a talmid chacham. Reb Eliyashev replied, "A brachah doesn't help for this. If he studies with hasmadah, he will become a talmid chacham."

A few days later, Reb Dovid returned to tell Reb Eliyashev the outcome of the test. He also said, "Regarding what the Rav said, that a brachah doesn't help one become a talmid chacham, I have a question. The Rambam called the Ri Migash his Rebbe,⁹ and about this point, the Chida (שם הגדולים ב') comments that he has proof that the Rambam was only about seven years old when the Ri Migash was niftar! How could he have called the Ri Migash his Rebbe?

9. In several places, the Rambam calls the Ri Migash his rebbe. One example is (Hilchos Shaalah uPikadon 5:6). The Rambam writes, *וכן הורו רבותי הרב רבינו יוסף הלוי*, "This is how my teacher ruled, HaRav Yosef HaLevi (the Ri Migash), and there are other sources.

The Chida answers that before the Ri Migash was niftar, he blessed the Rambam. The Chida writes, "The Rambam was certain that the brachah of the Ri Migash bore fruit!" So, we see a brachah from a gadol to become a talmid chacham helps!

Reb Eliyashev replied, "I don't know about what was said with the Chida, however, one thing I do know. The Chofetz Chaim blessed me as a child that I should become a gadol in Torah, and nothing came from that brachah..."

People seek brachos to become a gadol b'Torah, but the greatest brachah is the Torah itself, and the segulah to become a talmid chacham is to open the Gemara and to study it diligently. As the Baal HaTurim writes, וזאת הברכה is gematria זו היא תורה because the brachos come in the merit of the Torah.

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 1:10) says that the world was created with the letter ב'. The letter א' was complaining before Hashem's throne for twenty-six generations; why wasn't the world created with the first letter of the alef beis? Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, "The world, with everything in it, was created for the Torah. Tomorrow (Matan Torah), I will begin with you, as it states (Shemos 20:2) אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ (the Ten Commandments begin with an alef)."

But there is a reason why the world was created with a ב' and not an א'. The Zohar (vol.1 p.205:) says that ב' is the first letter of ברכה, and א' is the first letter of ארור (curse). So, how could the Ten Commandments begin with an א'?

Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l (Imrei Shefer, beginning of Bereishis) answers that this demonstrates the holiness and greatness of the Torah. The Torah brings forth so much blessing, that all curses become blessings too. There is no

problem to begin the Torah with an א' because there is no concept of ארור in the Torah.¹⁰

You Can

One yetzer hara that come to a person is when someone says, "I can't. It is too hard." But really it isn't too hard. If you try, you can succeed.

Reb Leibel Kutner (a renowned elderly Gerrer Chasid who had lived through the holocaust) tells that the Nazis had him do backbreaking work in a large factory. One day, the most important machine in the workplace broke, and the workers rejoiced. There was no work to be done if that machine wasn't functioning.

When the Nazi officer in charge arrived and saw them rejoicing. Reb Leib told the officer that he was returning to his barracks because there was no work for them to do. The officer, the rasha, shouted, "You aren't going anywhere! You will continue to work."

Reb Leib said, "How can we work? The machine is broken. I can't fix this large machine by myself."

The rasha replied, "You are a Jew. You can!" He was saying, "Don't give excuses. You are a Jew, and a Jew can do anything he puts his heart and mind to."

Indeed, Reb Leib opened the machine and succeeded in fixing it.

Reb Leib would say, "Everyone has excuses, why they can't wake up in the morning, why they can't learn, why they can't overcome the yetzer hara. However, even this rasha understood that a Jew can – if he just wants to. If he says he can't, he doesn't want to. Because if he wants, he will find a way."¹¹

10. The letter א' is a person alone, someone who doesn't help others. The ב' is helping others, and that is the brachah. One shouldn't only be busy with א' himself; he should think about the needs of others, too.

11. Rashi (Bereishis 4:7) writes, "If you want, you can rule over [the yetzer hara]."

There is a *midrash pliyah*, a wondrous and not easily understood Midrash: "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu said אָנֹכִי ה' אֵלֶיךָ (at matan Torah) Moshe Rabbeinu replied, שְׁלֹא עֲשֵׂנִי גוֹי, the brachah to thank Hashem for not making him a goy. Many sefarim write about this midrash, and they seek to understand its meaning.

Based on the above, Moshe Rabbeinu saw that Bnei Yisrael were receiving the Torah, they were accepting the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, but he knew that human beings tend to come up with excuses to explain why they can't keep the Torah, etc. Therefore, Moshe said שְׁלֹא עֲשֵׂנִי גוֹי. We are not goyim. A goy can come up with excuses, but there are no excuses for the Jewish nation. If they want to, they can.

Happy with Small Achievements

It states (Devarim 33:18) שְׂמַח זְבוּלֹן בְּצֵאתְךָ וַיִּשְׁשָׁכֶר בְּאַהֲלֶיךָ, "Rejoice, Zevulun, in your departure, and Yissachar, in your tents." The Beis Avraham zt'l explains that Zevulun represents the pursuit of parnassah, and Yissachar represents the pursuit of growth in the Torah. When people go to work, they hope to become wealthy, but they are happy with every prutah they earn. The same is true with the pursuit of growth in Torah. One seeks to grow immensely in Torah, but one should be happy with every drop of Torah he attains.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l (Tiferes Shimshon) told a mashal of a meshulach who came to America to collect money for his upcoming chasunah and his many life expenses. He planned to be in America for several weeks and was prepared to work hard during these weeks.

At the airport, someone told him, "There is a hundred-dollar bill on the ground. You can pick it up, and that will begin your collection." The meshulach replied, "I wasn't planning on working today. I knew I would be tired on the day I arrived in America, so I decided I wouldn't work the first day."

The other replied, "But this isn't work. It is right before you. All you must do is bend down and pick up the bill!"

The nimshal is that people make set times when they study Torah. And then, when an opportunity to study Torah arises out of the set time (and it doesn't interfere with their work or other obligations), they say, "But this isn't my time for studying Torah." But that isn't logical. If you have an opportunity, grasp it. Why shouldn't you take advantage of the good that comes your way? Consider the reward you will earn – far more than a hundred dollars – and take advantage of the opportunity. Sometimes, the opportunity is for five minutes of Torah study, but you can gain so much from it. Why should you refrain?

The following was told by one of the chashuve yungerleit of our chaburah, which he witnessed:

The yungerman saw a sign on the door of a grocery store that it would close at ten o'clock on erev Yom Kippur. Indeed, at ten o'clock, everyone working in the store left to go home. But the store was still filled with customers, so the owner stayed, working at the cash register.

The others left because they wouldn't gain much by staying. But the owner of the store gains from every sale, so he stayed. The same can be said about all opportunities for Torah and avodas Hashem. It might not be your original plan, but when the opportunity to earn immensely arises, you should take advantage of it.

In Ponevezh yeshiva, forty years ago, there was a bachur who wasn't very bright. He wasn't able to learn Torah. But bachurim took turns learning with him, and by the time he was eighteen, he was able to learn Mishnayos on his own. However, despite achieving this milestone, at that same time, he became distressed and upset that this was all he could do.

One of his chavrusos was a grandson of the Steipler. He brought the bachur to the

Steipler so the Steipler could give him some chizuk. The Steipler said, "I can swear to you..." and then the Steipler corrected himself, "I swear to you, when you study

Torah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells the malachim to be silent and that they shouldn't say shirah because Hashem wants to listen to you study Torah."¹²

12. In the beis medresh of Reb Y. T. Dunner z'l, rav of Adas Yisrael London, the custom is that when the sefer Torah is taken out to read from it, the sefer Torah is brought to everyone in the shul so that they can kiss the sefer Torah. (This is the custom in several kehilos. The sefer Torah isn't taken directly from the aron kodesh to the bimah; instead, the person carrying it goes around the benches so that people can kiss it.)

One Shabbos, there weren't too many people in the beis medresh. It was summertime, and many people were in their summer homes. There was one bachur who stood at the back of the beis medresh. He was alone in his corner. This bachur was a very broken bachur. He didn't learn well, and his family wasn't so put together. The rav came to the bachur with the sefer Torah and told him, "Do you see how chashuv you are? The sefer Torah came to you, to your corner. This is because you are so great, because you study Torah, and the Torah is happy with you."

The people of the beis medresh relate that a major change happened to this bachur. Immediately after this episode, he began learning with hasmadah and enthusiasm, and he became a great talmid chacham. He married and built up a beautiful family. And it all came from a word of chizuk from the rav. Let us learn from this how much we can accomplish with a kind word.