

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Vaeira

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Parshas - Vaeira

The power of *tefillah*

Many people wonder why their *tefillos* should be answered. They know their sins and faults, and it's hard for them to imagine that Hashem is interested in their *tefillah*. The following Midrash will encourage them. It is written, (8:16) "Hashem said to Moshe, rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh [to warn him that מכה ערוב was coming]..." Why did Moshe have to go to Pharaoh early in the morning? The Midrash (*Shmos Rabba* 11:1) explains that Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, "Go to Pharaoh before he goes out to pray," because after Pharaoh prays for a salvation, the plague won't come.

This Midrash shows us that everyone can access power of *tefillah*. Pharaoh enslaved hundreds of thousands of Yidden; he used to kill Jewish children daily to bathe in their blood; he was a terrible, wicked *rasha*. Nevertheless, Hashem would have listened to his prayer and withheld the *makos*, if Moshe hadn't prevented him from praying. If that's the case, we can be certain that our *tefillos* will be accepted by Hashem. As lowly as a person considers himself, he isn't lowlier than Pharaoh!

The Sefer HaIkrim (4:16) teaches the uniqueness of everyone's *tefillah* from King Menasheh. Menasheh was a sinner, but when he prayed to Hashem, Hashem accepted his *tefillah*.

The *Navi* (*II Malachim* 21) states, "Menasheh did the bad in Hashem's eyes;

the abominations of the nations... He set up altars for the Baal, made an *Asheirah*...bowed down to all stars in the heaven, and he served them. He made altars for the stars, offered up his son into fire, performed witchcraft... and did many bad things in Hashem's eyes to anger Him. He placed an idol for the *Asheirah* in the [Beis HaMikdash]... He also murdered many innocent people..."

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 103:) adds some other terrible sins to this long list. Nevertheless, when he was captured by Ashur, and placed in a copper pot over a fire to die an agonizing death (see *Sanhedrin* 103:), he prayed to Hashem and Hashem saved him. As it states (*II Divrei HaYamim* 32:12-13) "When he was in trouble, he prayed to Hashem, his G-d, and he humbled himself very much before the G-d of his fathers, and he prayed to Him, and Hashem answered him. Hashem heard his prayers, and returned him to Yerushalayim, to his kingdom."

The Sefer HaIkrim says that we should learn from this that if Menasheh's *tefillos* were answered, then anyone can pray and their *tefillos* will also be answered.

Reb Yeshayah Barkdaki *zt'l* was on a ship, headed to Eretz Yisrael. The ship wrecked not very far from Yafo. He held on to his son and daughter, and started swimming with them ashore. But he felt he didn't have enough strength, and if he continues to swim with both children, they would all three drown. What should

he do? Which child should he save and which one should he leave behind? After a quick review of the halachos, he said to his daughter, with a very broken heart, that he didn't have strength to take both of them ashore, and according to halachah, the son's life comes before hers. When she heard this, she started to cry, "Father! Don't let me drown in the sea! Have mercy on me!"

Her heartbreaking calls ripped his heart. Reb Yeshayah Bardaki prayed and felt miraculously rejuvenated. With renewed strength, he swam with both of his children to Eretz Yisrael.

Years later, before Reb Yeshayah's *petirah*, he reminded his daughter about that time. He said, "Do you remember when your life was in danger, and you called out to me and my compassion was aroused? My daughter, whenever you're in a difficult situation, call out to Hashem. Say, 'Father! Save me!' and you will be answered. I am a human being, my compassion and my strength is limited, but I couldn't refuse your cries. Certainly then, when you call out to our Father in heaven, whose compassion and whose abilities are limitless, you will be saved..."

Shouts

It's written in this week's *parashah* וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל אשר מצרים מעבדים אותם ואזכר את בריתי נאקתם. (6:5). נאקתם means shouts (see *Rashi* 2:24), thus the *passuk* is saying that Hashem heard our

shouts and saved us. A shout is a form of *tefillah*. The shout doesn't necessarily need to be loud, it can even be silent. It's when one feels overwhelmed by his problems, and his heart shouts out to Hashem. This form of *tefillah* saved Bnei Yisrael from Mitzrayim.

The unique benefit of shouting is that it's a prayer that only Hashem hears. When one prays with words, the *malachim* hear the prayer, and they can prevent the *tefillah* from going up to Heaven, due to the person's sins. But when one shouts, the prayer is mostly in the person's mind and heart. According to many opinions, the *malachim* don't know the thoughts of man. Therefore these shouts go up to Hashem, undisturbed.

The Meor VeShomesh (*Shmos*, ויחי בימים) elaborates on these ideas. He writes, "The Midrashim and the *Zohar* discuss the greatness of *tefillah*, how *tefillah* is similar to the *korbanos* [and greater than good deeds]. However, there are times that the *tefillah* can't go up to Heaven because there are מקטרגים (prosecuting angels) who erect an iron wall [preventing the *tefillah* from going up]. As it states (*Yeshayah* 59:2) כי עוונותיכם מברילים, 'Your sins separate...' The solution is, as it states in the *Zohar*, to shout from the very depths of your heart — to shout, without words. This is a form of *tefillah* called זעקה or שעה. The מקטרגים aren't aware that this shout is a *tefillah*. Only Hakadosh Baruch Hu pays attention to it, when the shout emanates from the depth of one's heart, and He answers them. Shouting has a benefit

over prayers with words, because the *malachim* understand a prayer with words, and they can prosecute [and prevent the *tefillah* from going up], however when one shouts, without words, only Hashem Himself knows people's thoughts and intentions. He understands their desires, and Hashem will give them their needs... [Therefore] when there is a קטרוג (prosecuting angels, impeding the *tefillah*) the counsel is to shout wordlessly, and Hashem will listen to his *tefillah*..."¹

Another benefit of this form of prayer is that sometimes a person can't pray with words. He can mumble the *tefillah* — that's always possible — and he should attempt to daven with *kavanah* to the best of his abilities, yet can't put his heart into it. This is either because of his sins, which distance him from the service of *tefillah*, or because of his troubles, which confuse his mind and weaken his heart, and prevent him from

concentrating on *tefillah*. Nevertheless, he can still shout. He can still moan. He can still yearn.²

The Yismach Yisrael (*Shmos* 2) writes, "The holy *sefarim* state that [when the Jewish people were in Mitzrayim] they weren't able to pray [with *kavanah*] but they shouted, 'oy vey!' This cry... was heard before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, because He was aware of their low level, and how much effort was required until they could emit even this groan to their Father in heaven... Therefore this groan was precious before Hashem. This should give *hizchazkus* for all Yidden who because of their sins and hardships, almost aren't able to open their mouths in prayer before Hakadosh Baruch Hu... Nevertheless, we shouldn't lose hope. Let's shout and pray to Hashem with all our might. Even if from the entire prayer, *chas veshalom*, the only benefit is a single sigh from the depths of the heart, Hashem, who knows the thoughts of

1. One way to overcome the *mekatrigim* who are preventing the *tefillah* from going up, is to say *pesukei dezimrah* with *kavanah*.

At the very first *drashah* that Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* gave as *mashgiach* of Ponovezh yeshiva, he said to the students, "It's known that when one says *pesukei dezimrah* with concentration, it abolishes *mekatrigim*, persecuting angels, who prevent the *tefillah* from going up to Hashem. I see there are many *bachurim* saying kaddish in the yeshiva; there are many *yesomim*, many *tzoros*, *rachmana litzlan*. Therefore, my recommendation is that we make פסוקי דזמרה in the yeshiva longer, so we can say it with more *kavanah*. In this manner, the *tefillah* will go up and the *tzoros* will end..."

2. The Magen Avraham *zt'l* (*Balak*) writes, "My father [Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl *zt'l*] said in the name of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* that when someone is busy all day long doing business - in the market and on the streets - and he almost forgets that there is a Creator, and then, when it's time to daven *Minchah*, he sighs deeply as he thinks about how he spent most of his day engaged in the foolish matters of this world, and then he rushes to an alley to daven *Minchah*, although he doesn't know what he's saying, that *Minchah* is also very precious and special for the Creator. And his sigh ripped open the heavens..."

man, will take into consideration the poverty, the bitter life, the lowliness and the [low] generation that causes the confusion. With Hashem's immense compassion, He will listen to this one moan and save us."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* teaches that the Yam Suf split because of those shouts and sighs, as it states ויראו מאד ויצעקו בני ישראל אל ה' "They were very afraid and Bnei Yisrael shouted to Hashem" (*Shmos* 14:10). It also states ה' ילחם לכם ואתם תהרשו, "Hashem will wage war for you, and you remain silent" (14:14). The *Mechilta* explains that ואתם תהרשו "you remain silent," implies that even when you're not able to pray to Hashem, and you remain quiet, Hashem will save you. This is because Hashem will listen to your shouts, to the call of your heart. The Chidushei HaRim writes, "And it was intended that they shouldn't be able to daven at that time, so this should be known for generations that even when one is unable to pray, he should shout out, and Hashem will save him."

The holy *sefarim* tell that in Mitzrayim, the *דבור* was in *galus*, which means that the Jewish nation weren't able to pray to Hashem. The Zera Kodesh (*Va'era* ד"ה וידבר משה) asks that when we read the *pesukim*, we find several times that the Jewish nation prayed in Mitzrayim, and Hashem saved them. So apparently, they were able to pray in Mitzrayim! Apparently, *דבור* wasn't in *galus*, since they were able to pray. The Zera Kodesh writes, "It is written in *sefarim* that the exile in Egypt came because the speech

[of the Jewish nation] was in *galus*. And therefore, the holiday which celebrates *yetzias Mitzrayim* is called פה-פה, פה-פה, because the mouth began to speak. But this needs explanation, since it states ויצעקו ותעל שוועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה, 'They shouted and their prayers when up to Hashem, from their work.' So we see that [they were able to pray] so why do we say that their speech was in exile?"

The Zera Kodesh answers that they weren't able to pray, however they *desired* to pray, and that is also very precious to Hashem. Furthermore, they prayed to Hashem that they should be able to pray. By these merits, Hashem answered their *tefillos*. The Zera Kodesh writes, "A Jew should never lose hope. He should never say that ...I'm unable to pray with pure thoughts, and... my prayers can't go up to Hashem. Don't lose hope, because Hashem doesn't allow anyone to abandon Him eternally [as it states, (כי לא ידה ממנו נדה)... Even when a person is at a very low level, and he is totally unable to pray properly, nevertheless, he must know that... Hashem sees he's yearning to pray properly, and his yearning is precious to Hashem. And one can make a prayer about that itself. He can shout and plead before Hashem that he has [fallen and has] become so distanced from Him, until he is unable to pray before Him. He can ask Hashem for compassion that Hashem should help him pray, so he can express himself fully before Hashem... This is how they were redeemed from Mitzrayim, although they didn't have their speech at all..."

A Staff in Hashem's Hand

Pharaoh claimed he was god, and he created the Nile. He called himself התנינים הגדול הרובץ בתוך יאוריו, "the great sea serpent that crouches in the Nile" (see *Yechezkel* 29:3). Therefore, Hashem told Aharon to cast his staff before Pharaoh and the staff turned into a serpent. This hinted to Pharaoh that he isn't "the great serpent"; he is nothing more than a staff in Hashem's hand. As the Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe, Hagadah shel Pesach, והאותות*) *zt'l* teaches, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed Pharaoh, who considered himself 'the great crouching serpent' that he's merely a staff in Hashem's hands..."

Being a "staff in Hashem's hands," is the awareness that man is powerless without Hashem, and that all one's achievements and circumstances are directed by Hashem.

In New York City, there's a wealthy *baal tzedakah*, who sees *meshulachim* in his factory, since that's where he spends most of his day. The plant is like a miniature city, with many wings, rooms, and corridors. The *meshulachim* coming from Eretz Yisrael often got lost while searching for his office. (Due to the language barrier, they aren't able to ask the personnel for directions.) To help them, the owner put up signs in *lashon hakadosh*, to direct the *meshulachim* to his office. The signs read: למשרד הבעל הבית, "to the *baal habayis's* office" — with an arrow, showing the way.

Once, a *meshulach* came to his office and said, "Why do the signs call you the *baal habayis*? You're not the *baal*

habayis! Hashem is the *baal habayis*! You're just a pawn in His hand."

The factory owner didn't get angry with this insolent man, and even gave him more than the usual donation. He also said he would correct the signs. On the following day, the signs read מנהל, *manager*, instead of בעל הבית, *owner*. He no longer called himself *baal habayis* or CEO. Hashem is the *baal habayis* — not he. He also removed the plaque that read CEO from his door, and put up a sign that read Manager, instead.

A few days later, a water pipe that runs along the ceiling of the plant's warehouse, burst. The products stored there were getting ruined. The manager saw this on his surveillance camera. He also saw that the female employee, who should have been organizing the items, was busy with her smart phone and oblivious to the damage the burst pipe was creating. He quickly tried to contact her through the PA system, but she was so engrossed in her phone she didn't hear anything. As a result of her negligence, the warehouse sustained lots of damage. Understandably, that employee was fired.

When this employee's husband heard that she was fired, he was outraged at the thought of losing their source of income. He loaded his gun and went down to the plant, intending to murder the CEO. Upon entering the plant, he was dumbfounded by the many wings and corridors— the great maze of the factory. His wife had told him to go to the door that said CEO on it, but he didn't know where to find it. He asked one of the

employees for directions to the CEO's office. When he finally reached the office, however, he read the sign on the door. It said Manager. *This isn't the CEO's office*, he thought. He knocked, "Where's the boss? I want to speak with the CEO."

The CEO pointed upwards. His intention was, "Hashem is the boss. I'm just a staff in Hashem's hands." But the man misunderstood; he thought the CEO was on the next floor.

The CEO suspected foul play, so he followed that man on the surveillance cameras, and understood that he had come to kill him. He called the police, the man was arrested, and sent to prison. The manager's life was saved because he proclaimed, "Hashem is *the baal habayis*. I'm just the manager. I'm just a pawn in Hashem's hands."

It states (*I Malachim* 17:9) קום לך צרפתה אשר בצידון וישבת שם הנה צויתי שם אשה אלמנה לכלכלך, "[Hashem said to Eliyahu] 'get up and go to Tzarfas that's in Tzidon, and live there. Behold I have commanded a widowed woman [who lives there] to support you...'"

The Chofetz Chaim (*Shem Olam, Shaar Shemiras Shabbos* 3) asks, when did Hashem command the woman to support Eliyahu? She wasn't a נביאה! The Chofetz Chaim answers that Hakadosh Baruch Hu can speak with people in ways

humans can't. When a human wants to speak with another person, he speaks to him face to face, or he sends a letter. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu can speak with someone by putting a desire into his heart. Hashem placed into the widow's heart a desire to support Eliyahu, and this was how Hashem commanded her to support Eliyahu.

This is an example to the extent we are a staff in Hashem's hands. Even our thoughts are given to us by Hashem. Sometimes one thinks, "It's good that I had a sensible financial plan. Because of it, I earned a lot of money," and he forgets that Hashem gave him the idea, because Hashem wanted him to succeed. Or he thinks, "I made a foolish choice, and therefore I lost money," and he forgets that Hashem planted this idea, which failed, in his mind (because Hashem knew that in this manner he will recognize Hashem, or for some other reason). Everything is from Hashem. We are like a staff in His hands.³

One may ask, so how does free will come into the equation? To answer this question, let's study the Tanya *zt'l* (*Igeres HaKodesh* 25), a lesson that he taught in the name of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*: "Chazal say, 'Whoever becomes angry, it is like he worshiped idols...' The reason is understood to the wise: When one becomes angry, he lacks

3. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 84:18) which discusses the relationship of Yosef and his brothers states that everything that occurred was pre-destined by Hashem: "When You wanted it, You placed in their hearts to love. And when You wanted it, You put it in their hearts to hate..."

emunah, because if he would believe that what happened was from Hashem, he wouldn't be angry at all. Even if a human being, who has free will, cursed him, hit him, or caused him financial damage — and therefore that person will be obligated in the court of man and in the court of heaven [to pay and to be punished] for his bad choice — nevertheless, the damage that occurred was pre-destined from Heaven, and Hashem has many messengers (הרבה שלוחים למקום)... As [David] said (*II Shmuel* 16:10) לֹא קָלַל בִּי ה', 'Hashem told [Shimi ben Geira] to curse [me].' But when did Hashem tell this to Shimi? The thought that fell into Shimi's heart and mind came from Hashem..."

We see that Hashem plants thoughts into people's minds, but people have free will to determine whether to do this deed or not.

When one believes that everything is from Hashem, he will trust solely in Him, as the following story demonstrates:

Three wealthy businessmen from Bucharica came to Eretz Yisrael for a short visit. A pauper approached them, and asked for *tzedakah*. The wealthy men

replied that they don't have too much money with them at the moment, and if he returns the next day, they could give him much more money.

The pauper was very happy, because he was expecting to receive a lot of money on the following day. He went to his friend, who was a pauper like himself, and told him about his good fortune.

Early the next morning, he returned to the Bucharican merchants, but only one of them was there. One merchant had died, the second returned to Bucharica, and the third merchant said that he changed his mind, and he doesn't want to give *tzedakah* anymore.

Distraught, the pauper returned to his friend, and said, "A *passuk* we say each morning describes what happened to me today. We say: תִּצַּח רוּחוֹ יָשׁוּב לְאֶרְצוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֲבָדוּ עֲשָׂתְנוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵעָקֵב בְּעוֹרֵי שְׂבָרוֹ בְּה' אֱלֹקָיו (*Tehillim* 146:4). That's what happened to me, because one of the wealthy merchants תִּצַּח רוּחוֹ, died. The second יָשׁוּב, returned to his homeland. The third אֲבָדוּ עֲשָׂתְנוֹתָיו changed his mind. My only hope therefore is, אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵעָקֵב בְּעוֹרֵי שְׂבָרוֹ בְּה' אֱלֹקָיו, 'Fortunate is the person who...trusts in Hashem.'" ⁴

4. The Shinover Rav *zt"l* said: The way of the world is that when someone lacks a relatively small amount of money, he isn't worried. He's certain that he'll manage. He thinks, "I'll work extra hours; I'll be more careful with my money... I'll manage." But when someone needs a lot of money (for example, before a *chasunah*) he's worried, because he doesn't have a plan how he can get all that money. However, it really should be just the opposite. One should be calm before weddings, certain that Hashem will provide, and worried when lacking a small amount of money. Because when one needs a lot of money, he places his trust in Hashem, because he knows that only Hashem can help him. And since he trusts in Hashem, Hashem

סבלנות – Acceptance and Tolerance

Chazal (*Brachos* 54.) say חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שהוא מברך על הטובה, "One must bless Hashem for the bad just as he blesses Hashem for the good," because everything is from Hashem, and therefore certainly everything is for the good.

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* teaches that when the Yidden were doing עבודה פרך, slave labor, in Mitzrayim, they believed that since this was Hashem's plan, it was certainly for their ultimate good. They accepted Hashem's decree; they didn't complain; they didn't ask questions; in these merits they were redeemed from Mitzrayim.

The Tiferes Shlomo teaches this lesson from the *passuk* (6:6) והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים. Hashem said, "I will take them out of the hard labor of Egypt." The word סבלות in this *passuk* means hard labor. The question is, סבלות generally means סבלנות, tolerance; acceptance (accepting one's fate). When the Torah discusses hard labor it states עבודה קשה and not סבלות. The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* therefore teaches that we can read this *passuk* using the standard translation of סבלות. Hashem said והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים because; סבלות מצרים you *accept* the hardships of Egypt." In the merit that you accept Hashem's decree, with faith that this is certainly for your good, you were redeemed from Mitzrayim.

Similarly, it states (in the next *passuk*

6:7) וידעתם כי אני ה' המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים. This can be translated 'ידעתם כי אני ה' המוציא אתכם Hashem who is taking you out [of Mitzrayim]." And why am I redeeming you? it is because סבלות מצרים you were סובל, and you tolerated the hardships in Mitzrayim."

There were many questions that the Jewish nation could have asked. Such as, why do we suffer while all other nations live peacefully? We are a holy nation and we serve Hashem. Do we deserve this? They didn't ask these questions. They believed that since this is Hashem's will, it's certainly for their good, and in this merit, they were redeemed.

The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "The Torah is teaching us the key *segulah* by which the Jewish nation merited to leave Mitzrayim: The Jewish people are descendants of Yaakov who was chosen by Hashem; they are a holy nation. Even so, when they were in Mitzrayim...and the Egyptians made them work all types of hard labor, they remained faithful to Hashem. They didn't ask questions. Why should Bnei Yisrael be poorer and more afflicted than all other nations? Why are we destined to slavery? Is it because we have a loftier *yichus* and because we are descendants of the holy *avos* that we must be slaves to the lowly Egyptians?! Throughout the exile, they accepted everything that happened to

will help him. But when one needs a small amount of money, he thinks he can manage on his own. He should be afraid, because if he doesn't trust in Hashem, how will he get that money?

them with love. They accepted Hakadosh Baruch Hu's decree, because 'if it is good in His eyes, it is good for us as well.' ... This is how the sentiments of a man who believes in Hashem...should be... And even if he undergoes hardships in life, *chalilah*, which interfere with his ability to serve Hashem and to learn Torah, while his friend, who is smaller than him, has wealth and tranquility, he shouldn't feel bad and ask why does Hashem chase me with anger for no reason, while to my friend, who is lower than me, He gives all kinds of goodness? Wouldn't it be better to give me goodness, since my intention is solely to sit in the house of Hashem, in the tents of Torah, and these hardships are preventing me [from serving Hashem], because perhaps Hashem is testing you, to see whether you will have questions on Hashem... Don't ask questions on Hashem, as we find by Hillel that he once heard shouting in the city, and he said, 'I am certain these shouts aren't coming from my home.' How was he certain? He had a life of poverty and affliction! [So how did he know that the shouts weren't coming from his house?] The answer is, he knew that the people of his household weren't accustomed to shouting even during misfortunes, *chalilah*, because in the houses of *tzaddikim* they practice *savlanus*, tolerance, all their days... It was this *savlanus* that saved our fathers from Egypt..."

The Gemara (*Taanis* 25.) tells us about Reb Chaninah ben Dosa's extreme poverty. His wife asked him, "How long will we suffer in this world?"

"What can we do?" he asked.

"Pray for Heaven to give you something."

Reb Chanina ben Dosa prayed and a hand appeared and gave him a gold leg from a gold table.

He told his wife, "I saw in my dreams that in the future, *tzaddikim* will be eating on tables that have four legs, but our table will only have three"⁵ because one of the legs of their future reward was given to them in this world.

His wife asked him, "Do you want everyone to be eating on a complete table, and we will eat on a table that's lacking?"

He replied, "But what can we do?" She said, "Pray for Heaven to take the leg back."

He prayed and Heaven took back the gold leg.

The Chassam Sofer explains that the four legged gold table in Olam HaBa signifies the reward for four primary good deeds that Yidden do in their lifetime. They are: Torah, *tefillah*, *chessed*, and *savlanus* (tolerating the hardships of life

5. I followed the *girsah* of the Chassam Sofer *zt'l*. The *girsah* in our Gemara is "All *tzaddikim* will be eating on a table with *three* legs, and you will eat on a table with *two* legs."

with belief that everything is for the good). Since they wanted to be freed from their poverty; they weren't accepting the hardships of life, they lost one leg — the leg that signifies *savlanus*. When they realized this, they went back to being סובל, to accepting Hashem's decree and they got the fourth leg back.

The Chassam Sofer *zt'l* also teaches that in the days of Mordechai and Esther, Mordechai sought to save the nation with prayer, and Esther sought to save the nation with סבל, with joyous optimism, with belief that everything Hashem does is for the good. And Esther's approach was the primary factor of the salvation, because "one סבל is worth more than many *tefillos*."

Yishuv HaDaas

One of the benefits of believing that everything is for the good is *yishuv*

hadaas, which is a very essential and important compartment of the mind.⁶

Another key way towards attaining *yishuv hadaas* is to stop rushing about.

Reb Moshe Klirs *zt'l* was the rav of Teveria. His son, Reb Avraham Mordechai, did the secretarial work for him. Once, Reb Avraham Mordechai said to his brother, Reb Elisha, "The post office is sending letters to *chutz le'arets* today. They won't be sending letters there again for another month. I wrote an appeal to the Yidden of *chutz le'arets*, for the yeshiva. Please rush to the post office to bring the letter. Go quickly! before the mailman leaves..."

Reb Moshe Klirs overheard this conversation, so he came out of his study and said, "Elisha, don't run, don't rush. Go to the post office calmly. If you miss the *shaliach*, so be it. It's worthwhile to

6. Someone told the Baal HaTanya *zt'l* about the hardships he was facing. The Baal HaTanya replied, "You aren't necessarily in a difficult situation. This is just how you interpret your situation."

Another time, the Baal HaTanya *zt'l* taught: Why do people vacation near the sea, or in the mountains? It's because they want to see the world how it appeared when Hashem created it. When they're in the city, they see many things that were made by mankind, and that causes people to think that things happen by people, by chance, by choice. The sight of Hashem's creation reminds them that Hashem is the Creator of everything that happens. This realization calms them, because if it was from Hashem, they know that it was certainly for the good.

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* taught: A person takes thousands of steps every day, and one must believe that each step was pre-destined from Heaven. If one doesn't believe that even where he goes is also pre-destined from Heaven, then when he says the *brachah* המכין גבר מצעדי גבר, "Who prepares the steps of man," it's a *brachah levatalah*.

Therefore, if a person goes someplace and has a negative experience, he shouldn't think, *Why did I go there? I shouldn't have gone there in the first place?* He must believe that his choice was also planned by Hashem, and is therefore certainly for the best.

lose even a hundred thousand pounds, as long as one doesn't lose his *yishuv hadaas*, even for a moment."

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* was once visiting the daughter of Rebbe Baruch of Mezhibuzh *zt'l*. Before he and his entourage were ready to move on, he asked her to repeat something she heard from her great father. She replied, "My father would always say, *א יוד מאר זיך נישט*, 'a Yid mustn't rush.'"

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin and his entourage were rushing to go someplace, but after hearing this *vort*, he told his chassidim not to rush. When they left the house, they discovered that not rushing had saved their lives. There were thieves waiting for them outside the house. If they would have rushed, they would have been ambushed. However, since they didn't rush, the thieves lost their patience and left.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* taught that one should not rush, from the *passuk* *ואבדתם מהרה*. This can also be translated that one should lose the notion of rushing.⁷

(Obviously, there is a time for rushing as well, like to rush to the beis medresh to learn Torah or to daven. Similarly, someone may want to rush to do a lot of mitzvos, or to become knowledgeable in Torah. Nevertheless, one must be

cautious that this doesn't cause him to lose his *yishuv hadaas*.)

Torah

One method to attain tranquility is to study Torah, because Torah is *משיבה נפש*, brings joy and happiness to its students.

Moshe told Bnei Yisrael that Hashem said He will redeem them from Mitzrayim, *ולא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח ומעבודה קשה*, 'but they didn't listen to Moshe because of their short breath and because of the hard work.'" (6:6-9). This means that they were so oppressed, they didn't have the peace of mind to even listen to the good news of the imminent redemption. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh *zt'l* writes, "Perhaps this was because they weren't *בני תורה*, (they didn't study Torah) and therefore they weren't able to [have peace of mind and] listen. They were therefore called *קצר רוח*, short tempered, for the Torah broadens a man's heart."

The Divrei Shmuel (of Slonim) *zy'a* said, "When I'm concerned about something, I study for an hour, and the worry goes away. If I have greater concerns, I study for two hours, and then I am not worried anymore. And if I am going through extremely difficult times, I study for three hours straight, and then nothing can disturb me. This is the meaning of the Mishnah *ומישב לבו בתלמודו*

7. Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* said that people used to test young people, to see whether they were ready for marriage, by giving them a skein of tangled wool. If they had the patience to untangle the wool, it meant that they were settled, and ready for marriage. But if they were impatient, in a hurry, and couldn't untangle it, it meant that they were still unsettled, and not yet ready for marriage.

(Avos 6:6). One attains tranquility through learning Torah."

A former student of the Tchebiner Yeshiva sent his son to learn in Tchebin. He wanted his son to start off the *zman* well, so he asked his former rebbe, Reb Avraham Genichovsky *zt'l*, to speak with his son, to encourage him to study Torah diligently.

Reb Avraham told the *bachur* the following *mashal*:

There was a king taking a stroll in the forest near his palace, together with his aide and three ministers.

The king became very thirsty, and the aide immediately went to fetch water. The aide returned to the palace, filled a large, crystal cup with water, placed it on a diamond-studded tray, and headed back to the forest.

As he was rushing through the forest, he tripped, the water spilled, and the tray fell into a pit. The aide quickly went back to bring another cup of water.

After the king quenched his thirst, and thanked his aide for his diligence, he sought the counsel of his ministers. What can be done to retrieve the precious tray from the pit? The pit was narrow, so climbing inside wasn't an option.

The first minister said, "We can widen the pit and then climb inside and take the tray out."

The second adviser didn't agree. He said, "We may break the tray while digging. It's also possible that the tray will fall deeper into the pit. I suggest we dig

another pit, next to it. Then we can burrow through, and get to the tray..."

The third advisor said, "That's a costly venture, not to mention time-consuming. I recommend pouring water into the pit. The tray will float, and we can then take it out easily."

Reb Avraham Genichovsky explained to the *bachur* that everyone suffers from something in this world. It's impossible to pass through this world without problems. There are methods that help overcome the stresses of life, and to attain peace of mind. But often, these techniques can cause more problems than good. And even when the attempts do work, the effort is tremendous. But there is one foolproof way to acquire tranquility in this world. That is to learn Torah. Torah is compared to water. When one is immersed in Torah, nothing will disturb him. One can pass through all tests, unscathed, as he will be immersed in the joyous study of Torah.

The Gemara teaches, "Whoever speaks and interrupts his learning, [his punishment will be that he] is fed hot coals." The Maharil Diskin *zt'l* explained: When one eats hot coals, in addition to the pain, it also ruins his taste buds. Even if he eats good foods afterwards, it will taste foul. So too, when one interrupts his studies and speaks idly, this causes him not to feel the good taste and joy of Torah.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* taught that "sometimes a person thinks he uprooted a certain temptation, but he really just

covered it up. Years later, perhaps even in his older years, this temptation may come back again. I say that the way to totally uproot bad temptations is by learning Torah without interruption.”

The Chazon Ish (*Igros* 1:3) teaches, "The main study of Torah is when it's constant, without stopping. Learning without stopping brings holiness. It's recommended that you find tricks and techniques which will help you acquire *hasmadah*. And, one should always pray for *hasmadah*. "

The Ponevezher Rav *zt'l*, HaRav Kahaneman, learned in the Kollel Kodshim that the Chofetz Chaim founded. His *chavrusah* was Reb Elchanan Wasserman *zt'l*, *hy'd*. They would study from eight in the morning until two in the afternoon; six hours every day. (They took no breaks in between.) One day while they were learning, the Ponevezher Rav received a telegram that said his wife was in labor (*maksheh leiled*). He showed the telegram to the Chofetz Chaim, who told him to stay in the beis medrash and continue studying Torah.

Soon, he received another telegram that said his wife had a boy. He put on his *detchekel* (cap) said the *brachah* 'HaTov VeHameitiv,' and continued learning until two o'clock (like every day). At two o'clock, he showed the Chofetz Chaim the second telegram, while stating his plans to attend the bris.

"Are you the mohel?" the Chofetz Chaim asked, and the Ponevezher Rav remained in yeshiva.

The Ponevezher Rav told this story to the Beis Yisrael of Gur *zy'a*, who was very impressed. "This story is fitting for *chassidim*," he said.

This story serves as a demonstration of the *hasmadah* of not too many years ago, and we should try to recapture it, to the best of our abilities. Torah should become the primary focus of our life. By doing so, our life will be uplifted and joyous.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*

In honor of the *yahrtzeit*, of my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov (24th of Teves) we'll share some stories of how he would encourage people to study a lot of Torah:

My grandfather said to a bar mitzvah *bachur*: When one has a guest, and certainly when one has a special guest, he tries to serve the guest what he enjoys. You are about to receive a very special guest: that is the *yetzer tov*, a holy *malach*. You should do *hachnasas orchim* for him. This guest enjoys a lot of Torah. The *yetzer tov* loves it when we study many pages of Gemara. This is the best way to honor your new guest.”

When the Rebbe's *hoiz bachur* [personal attendant], Reb Shlomo Weinstock *z'l*, became a *chassan*, the engagement celebration was held in the Rebbe's home. On the bottom of the *tena'im* document (which are conditions for the marriage), the Rebbe added the following, "The *chassan* asserted that he will finish *masechtos Brachos, Shabbos, and Kiddushin* before the *chasunah*." The

chassan signed underneath. The Rebbe didn't ask the *chassan* whether he agreed to this. The Rebbe threw this obligation on him, because the Rebbe wanted to push him to learn a lot of Gemara. From time to time, the Rebbe would ask the *chassan* where he was holding in these Gemaros, and whether he was keeping his word. The Rebbe would add, "Shlomo, if you don't finish these three *masechtos*, down to the very last word, you aren't going to the chuppah," because a condition is a condition, and finishing these Gemaras was one of the conditions stipulated on the *tenaim*.

Once, a *chassan*, during the week of *sheva brachos*, was at my grandfather's *tish*, and my grandfather honored him to lead the *benching*. Before *benching*, my grandfather announced, "The *chassan* accepts on himself to study seventy *blatt* Gemara each month."

My brother *shlita*, asked the Rebbe for a *brachah*, because he was to be drafted into the army. The Rebbe replied, "When people come to me with their problems, I recommend that they donate the value of 138 to *tzedakah*, because *הצלחה* is *gematriya* 138. But you are a *bachur* and you don't have so much money. So instead, I request that you study 138 pages of Gemara."

My brother asked, "Should I study these pages with *Tosfos*?"

The Rebbe answered, "Yes. But only those *Tosfos* that explain the Gemara you're learning (and not the *Tosfos* that go on tangents)."

On the day my brother finished the 138th

page, the army informed him that he was exempt from service.

A Slabodker *bachur* asked the Rebbe for advice for *shemiras einayim*. The Rebbe said, "Keep your eyes on the Gemara, and you won't see forbidden things."

Once, in the middle of his *tish*, my grandfather turned to Reb Chaim Yisrael Haltovsky *zt'l* (from the *tzaddikim* in Yerushalayim) and said, "When tax collectors come to someone's house, he conceals his wealth, because he doesn't want them to suspect that he earns more than he reports. But no one hides the bread on the table because who doesn't have bread? Bread is a staple. Similarly, there are righteous people who conceal their good deeds from others. That is praiseworthy, because it is proper to be a *hatzneia leches* (to conceal your good deeds). But one should never hide his passion for Gemara, because learning Gemara is like eating bread — one cannot live without it."

Reb Yitzchok Dovid Grossman *shlita*, the Rav of Migdal Emek, would often come to my grandfather. One time, he brought along a father and son from his community. The boy needed a kidney surgery, and before going to the hospital, he and his father came to Rebbe Moshe Mordechai for a *brachah*.

The Rebbe said to the *bachur*, "If you accept on yourself to study Gemara, you will not need surgery."

The father said, "All doctors say that my son needs surgery and we aren't trying to get out of that. We are only

requesting a *brachah* that the operation be successful.”

The Rebbe ignored the father’s words, and once again said to the boy, “If you will start studying Gemara, you will not need the surgery.” Then the Rebbe blessed him.

After receiving the rebbe’s *brachos*, they immediately went to the hospital. The doctors did another routine check-up before the surgery, and were astounded to see that the young man was fine. The problem had disappeared.

The young *bachur* was overwhelmed by the miracle, and understood that it was because he had made a *kabbalah* to study Gemara. When he was seventeen he finished *Shas*, and now he is an established *talmid chacham*.

Reb Yitzchok Dovid Grossman said, “This story has two miracles: (1) The boy miraculously didn’t need surgery (2) The boy developed into a great Torah scholar. The second miracle is greater than the first, because before this episode, this *bachur* wasn’t a serious learner at all. The Rebbe, with his wisdom, turned this young man into a *talmid chacham*.”⁸

Often, at the *tish*, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai would say, “My only hope is

to do *teshuvah*... It’s time to do *teshvuah*...” His words inspired everyone present to do *teshuvah*.

Friends

As a *bachur*, I studied in Ponevezh. When my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai *zt'l*, would conduct a *tish* during a weekday, many of the *chassidische bachurim* from the yeshiva would come along with me to the *tish*. After the *tish*, my grandfather, already a very old man, would lie down in his room. The *bachurim* would come in, and the Rebbe would take their hands and say, “Learn the *heilige Torah* and be healthy.”

One time, the Rebbe took the hand of one of the *bachurim*, and said, “Why is your hand so cold? What happened to you?” Then the Rebbe said, “Have good friends, study Gemara, and be healthy.”

When the *bachur* left the Rebbe's room, it was noticeable that the Rebbe's words shook him up. The *gabaim* tried to calm him. They said, “The Rebbe is weak and sensitive to cold. Apparently, your hands were cold, and this is what he was referring to.”

The *bachur* replied, “The Rebbe knows exactly what he’s saying!”

We all went back to yeshivah. We were still outside the yeshiva building, when

8. A similar story happened to Reb Shmuel Heller, the Rav of Tzefas: In 5597, a powerful earthquake destroyed most of Tzefas. Reb Shmuel’s wife and three children also perished at that time. Reb Shmuel Heller was buried under a layer of debris and he wasn’t able to climb out. Then he shouted, “If I will be saved, I promise that I will study Torah more vigorously.” Miraculously, the stones began to fall to the side, and he was able to crawl out. When one accepts upon himself to study more Torah, it can bring *yeshuous*.

one of his close friends came and greeted him. The *bachur* (coming from the Rebbe) replied, "I was just by Rebbe Moshe Mordechai. He told me that I should have good friends, learn Gemara, and be healthy. This means we cannot be friends anymore."

That friend was corrupt, and the Rebbe was successful in breaking up their bad relationship.

Years later, the corruptive nature of that friend became well known. Then I understood why the Rebbe warned him to have good friends.

The Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz would often say, "One must be good *to* everyone, but not *with* everyone." One must be very careful who his friends are.

The Shelah Hakadosh said that חבר, friend, rearranged, can also spell בחר, to choose, חרב, sword, and ברה, to run away. The Shelah Hakadosh explains: One should be a *friend* to those who *choose* to be good. But to those whose deeds are harmful like a *sword*, one should *run away* and keep his distance. Because just as a good friend can do wonders to help one grow spiritually, a bad friend can wreak havoc.

A renowned educator told me about his younger years in high school. He was a good student, although not always obedient, and there were times the *mashgiach* would throw him out of the yeshivah for a day or so, for some minor infraction. (The *mashgiach* sought to set a standard, where even small violations of the yeshiva's rules wouldn't be

tolerated). One of the times the *mashgiach* had thrown him out of the yeshiva for a few days, he was ambling about the streets when an older *bachur* befriended him. Unfortunately, that older *bachur* was weak in *yiras shamayim* and had a negative influence on him. That *bachur* brought him to places he didn't want to go; places that weren't befitting someone with *yiras shamayim*. He was embarrassed to say anything, because that *bachur* was older than him. Once, they trespassed someone's yard, and the gardener who was there at the time asked them what they're doing. The older *bachur* ran away, but he stayed behind and told the gardener everything that happened to him — that he was thrown out of the yeshiva, and that he was happy to be rid of that *bachur*, who was a bad influence.

The gardener told him his life story: "Before the war, I was a chassidishe *bachur*; I was religious like you are now. But unfortunately, after the war I fell off the *derech*. I became a gardener. Let me show you what I do. [Pointing to some trees, he explained] I pruned those branches, I plowed over there, but over there," he said, pointing to one side of the garden, "I didn't touch. Do you know why? I planted seeds over there, and seeds first rot, and then they begin to bloom. Right now, they are rotting. The slightest movement could ruin them forever."

The gardener was hinting to him that when you're thrown out of yeshiva, you're at the rotting stage. This is the time to be extra careful not to drop from

your level of *yiras shamayim*. Don't change your good behaviors. Don't let bad influences or bad friends cause you to lose all the good you have. Because rotting seeds will eventually bloom and blossom, but if they are mishandled, they are ruined forever. The gardener continued, "Listen to my advice and go back to yeshiva." The young *bachur* listened, and rose to high levels in Torah and *yiras shamayim*. Today, he's a renowned *mechanech* in Eretz Yisrael, helping many struggling *bachurim* going through similar challenges.⁹

In contrast, good friends are very helpful for *avodas Hashem*. It is immeasurable, how much one can gain from a good friend.

Yiras Shamayim

When good Yidden get together, with *ahavas Yisrael*, to serve Hashem, it can be very inspirational, especially when they also sing songs to Hashem at this gathering. The fire that burns inside their heart burns away all the bad. As the Chinuch (*mitzvah* 384) writes, "Nothing inspires a person like a song."

Tzaddikim (from the Ruzhin dynasty) *zt'l* told the following *mashal*: A king desired to build a very large castle, so he told his servants to cut down a forest, to make room for the large edifice. A wise man told the king, "Instead of cutting down the trees, which is time consuming, set the forest on fire. The forest will be cleared in a moment."

9. This lesson also applies to when one falls from his higher, spiritual level. The path of growth, the holy *sefarim* say, is through ups and downs; falling, and then picking yourself up again. The holy *sefarim* call this *ירידה לצורך עליה*, to fall in order to climb to higher. But when in the rut, you must be careful to remain with your *yiras shamayim* and the values you had during the good days. Don't be lax with matters related to *yiras shamayim*, for if you're not cautious at the rotting stage, one can stay that way.

Someone asked the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l*, "We learned together by Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l*. How did it happen that you became a great tzaddik and a renowned Rebbe, and not me?"

The Kotzker replied, "In Peshischa we learned that growth is a process of going up and down. In the words of Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa, *מ'טאנצט מ'פאלט, מ'פאלט מ'טאנצט*, one rises and falls; falls and rises up again. You, however, fell and remained there, while I kept climbing higher.

The friend asked the Kotzker Rebbe, "but how does one get up after falling?"

The Kotzker replied, "We learned by Rebbe Bumin of Peshischa that when a person wants something with all his heart, he doesn't see that it's far from him. This is the reason Pharaoh's daughter stretched out her arm to get Moshe's raft. Her desire to help him was great, and therefore she didn't realize that he was far away from her. Similarly, I so much wanted to serve Hashem that I didn't realize how far I fell. I just picked myself up, and tried again."

The *nimshal* is, instead of uprooting one bad *middah* at a time, which is a long and tedious task, light a fire in your heart for Hashem. Automatically, all bad *middos* will disappear.

The Sefas Emes (*Tzav* 5634) writes, “When one truly loves Hashem all foolish thoughts leave him. This is really the only way one can overcome bad thoughts; by having a constant and true desire to serve Hashem.”