

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראל בן מרדכי ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Shemos



לזכות רפואה שלמה,
מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית
יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה,
ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה

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Parshat Shemos

Reviewing the Parashah

שנים *is roshei teivos* for שמו"ת
מקרא ואחד תרגום.

sings it with a beautiful voice,
he will live long..."

The Baal HaTurim on the first *pasuk* of the *parashah* teaches the following lesson from *roshei teivos*:

ואלה שמות בני ישראל' תיבות אלו
נוטריקון (ראשי תיבות) ואדם אשר לומד
הסדר שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום, בקול
נעים ישיר, יהיה שנים רבות ארוכים
לעולם. "A person who studies
the *parashah*, the *pasuk* twice
and *Onkelus* once, and he

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 285:2) states, "A person who learns the *parashah* with Rashi, it is as if he learned it with *Targum Onkelus*. A *yarei Shamayim* should read the *parashah* with *Targum* and with *Rashis*."

Tzaddikim add that studying the *parashah* מקרא ואחד שנים together with *Rashi* is *mesugal* for *yiras Shamayim*.

Yiras Shamayim

Miriam and Yocheved worked as midwives, and Pharaoh commanded them (1:16) אם בן הוא והמיתן אתו, "if the child born is a male, kill him." They didn't obey. In fact, ותחינה את הילדים, they gave water and food to the children (see *Rashi*). Pharaoh summoned for them and asked, מדוע עשיתן הדבר, "Why did

you do this? Why do sustain the children?"

They explained that the Jewish women have children on their own, without a midwife, and Pharaoh accepted their response.

In their merit (1:20), וירב העם, "The nation increased and became very

great," but they weren't rewarded for that. They were rewarded for their *yiras Shamayim*. As it states, ויהי כי יראו המיילדות את האלקים ויעש להם בתים, "and it was when the midwives feared Hashem, Hashem made for them houses [of *kehunah*, *leviyah*, and *malchus* – *Rashi*]." They were rewarded that *cohanim*, *levi'im*, and kings came from them, because they feared Hashem. It doesn't state they were rewarded for increasing the numbers of Klal Yisrael.

Imagine you are at a ceremony celebrating a hero who saved the lives of many people during the war. Saving even just one person's life is like saving an entire world (as Chazal tell us). Certainly then, someone who saved *many* lives deserves immense respect. You are expecting to hear many stories of his bravery, and to hear about the lives he saved. But as you listen to speaker after speaker, you become upset, because no one is speaking about his

heroic acts and about the lives he saved. They are discussing his *yiras shamayim*! You don't understand. Why are they discussing his *yiras shamayim*? There is so much more to honor him for! You feel they are insulting him, because they are discussing a secondary factor, and they aren't discussing his primary praise.

But in this week's *parashah* we learn that the primary praise is for fearing Hashem. Miriam and Yocheved were rewarded for their *yiras Shamayim*, it doesn't state that they were rewarded for saving lives.

Indeed, *yiras Shamayim* isn't easy to come by. It is a great undertaking. The Shem MiShmuel (*Hoshana Rabba* תרע"ד) writes, "My grandfather, the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* said, 'It's easier for a human being to accept on himself any type of *סניגור*, affliction, than to accept the burden of Heaven. There is nothing harder for a

human body than to be under the Kingship of Heaven and to do all his deeds according to the Torah."

Reb Shmuel Vosner *zt'l* (*Rachmei HaRav, Gevurah*) writes, "Yocheved and Miryam were extremely righteous women. They came from a holy lineage, they were prophets, and they feared Hashem since their youth. Nevertheless, this is the first time it states that they feared Hashem. This is because a person's *yiras shamayim* isn't proven until he overcomes his fear of humans to do Hashem's will, or until he overcomes his temptations to serve Hashem. Only then does he earn the title '*yiras Hashem*.'"¹

In ברוך משלם we say, שבר מוב ליראיו, "Bless the One who gives a good reward to those who fear Him." To explain the significance of this phrase, we give an analogy about a yeshiva that wants to attract very good *magidei shiurim* (teachers). They advertized that they are paying double the average wage, to encourage the good teachers to join their yeshiva. Similarly, we are told that there is a שכר טוב, a great reward for fearing Hashem, so the wise will take advantage of the offer.²

Fearing Hashem is not easy. We must overcome our fear of people and our desires for the pleasures of this world, to do Hashem's will. But consider

1. The Gemara (*Pesachim* 113.) states, שלשה מכריז עליהן הקב"ה בכל יום, "There are three people Hakadosh Baruch Hu publicizes [to reveal their praise] every day. They are: a *bachur* who lives in a city and doesn't sin; a pauper who returns a lost object; and a wealthy person who tithes in privacy." Because these deeds are difficult and that shows our devotion to Hashem.

2. Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitz *zt'l* said, "If someone knows Torah but he doesn't have *yiras shamayim*, it is like a *talis kattan* without tzitzis attached to it.

the reward, consider the good you will enjoy, and that will give you strength to follow the path of *yiras Hashem*.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz ז"ל said that *יראת שמים* means you are afraid to sin, so the bounty of heaven won't be withheld from coming down.³ *יראת ה'* is when one thinks about Hashem's greatness until he fears Hashem. And *יראת חטא* means to fear doing something that isn't befitting for him.⁴

Approximately one hundred *bachurim* were learning in Tzanz, listening to the Tzanz Rav's (Rebbe Chaim of Tzanz, ז"א) *shiurim*, but it wasn't an official yeshiva.

Someone asked the Divrei Chaim, "The *bachurim* are learning here anyway. Why shouldn't we make it official,

and open a yeshiva for them?"

The Divrei Chaim answered, "Running a yeshiva is a great responsibility. It means accepting accountability for the *bachurim's* spiritual growth. It means being liable if a *bachur* falls into the *yetzer hara's* clutches. I don't want to carry this responsibility."

The man asked, "But hasn't the Chasam Sofer opened a large yeshiva in Pressburg?"

The Divrei Chaim explained, "How can you compare me to the Chasam Sofer? Because of the Chasam Sofer's holiness, if he merely looks at a *bachur* when he gives his daily *shiur*, that *bachur* will not be able to sin, even in private. By merely looking at a *bachur*, he fills him up with *yiras Shamayim*. I'm not on that

3. *השקיפה ממעון*, (Devarim 26:15), *שמים* can mean bounty. As it states "קדשך מן השמים וברך את עמך את ישראל", "Look down from your holy abode from *שמים* and bless your nation Yisrael..."

4. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 37) says, "Everyone is obligated to say, *בשבילי נברא העולם*, the world was created for me." He should recognize his importance, and this will help him steer clear from sin.

level, and therefore I'm afraid to take the responsibility."

Serve Hashem in Concealment

A sign that you fear Hashem is if you serve Hashem when nobody sees.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 5:) tells that Reb Eliezer was ill and Reb Yochanan came to visit him. It was dark in the room, so Reb Eliezer rolled up his sleeves, and the room became illuminated by his brilliant beauty. The question is, his face was already revealed. Why didn't the shine of his face illuminate the room? (*Bederech tzachus*) it's because it is specifically the concealed deeds that shine the most.

A craftsman was fixing a couch for the Husiataner Rebbe *zt'l*. The Rebbe showed him that he forgot to mend a tear on the back of the couch.

"No one looks there" the tailor replied.

The Rebbe said, "We were taught that where no one sees,

that's where it must be the most perfect."

The *Shaar Bas Rabim* (from Reb Chaim Aryeh Leib *zt'l* of Yadvamba, printed in תר"נ) writes, "It states in *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (ch.51), לעולם יהא אדם, "A person should always fear Hashem, in public and in concealment... Because even when one is concealed in a room within a room, and no one is there but Hashem Himself, he should fear Hashem over there... As Chazal (*Avos* 2:5) say, במקום שאין אנשים, if you are in a place where nobody is around, השתדל, try to be an איש, a tzaddik (a *rasha* isn't an איש, rather he's a בהמה). Also it states (*Avos* 2:13), אל תהי רשע בפני עצמך, even when you are alone, all by yourself, don't be a *rasha*, because Hashem's honor fills the world, and He sees the revealed and the concealed. As it states (*Yirmiyahu* 23:24), אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו, 'If a person hides in a concealed place, won't I see him?'"

A true *yirei Shamayim* serves Hashem in public and in private. There are people who fear Hashem in their homes but they aren't so righteous when traveling. For example, there are those who are embarrassed to wear talis and tefillin on a plane among many goyim. There are also people who serve Hashem solely outdoors, so people will praise them, but in the privacy of their home, they don't serve Hashem. Therefore, it states in *Shir HaShirim* (4:1) הַגֵּן יָפָה הַגֵּן יָפָה, רַעֲיִתִי הַגֵּן יָפָה, "You are beautiful, my friend. You are beautiful..." What is the double expression of יָפָה, "beautiful" implying?

The Midrash (*Tanchuma* תְּנֻחָה הַגֵּן יָפָה בְּבֵית הַגֵּן, הַגֵּן יָפָה בְּשָׂדֵה) explains, "You are beautiful in your homes; you are beautiful outdoors."⁵ Because

we are beautiful when our fear of Hashem permeates all our deeds.

There is a *mezuzah* on the outside door of our homes. Whenever we go outdoors, we put our hand on the *mezuzah*, kiss it, and remind ourselves that we should be loyal to Hashem outdoors. There are *mezuzos* on the doors inside the home, too. Even if someone has a hundred rooms, one after the next, the last room will also have a *mezuzah*. This is to remind us that Hashem is in the privacy of our homes, too, and we should serve Hashem there, too.

The Targum Yonoson translates the words (2:25), וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹקִים as follows: "Hashem saw the *teshuvah* they were doing when no one else knew about their *teshuvah*..."

5. According to the simple reading of the Midrash, it is referring to the mitzvos that Yidden perform in their homes and in the field. "You are beautiful in your home with the mitzvah of *mezuzah*, and you are beautiful outdoors, where you do the mitzvos of *terumah*, *maasar*, *leket*, *shickcha*, and *peah*."

Teshuvah done in concealment is precious before Hashem. This *teshuvah* brought about the salvation. Therefore, immediately after it states, וידע אלקים, the Torah tells the story of the burning bush, and that Hashem told Moshe to redeem Bnei Yisrael.

Guard Your Eyes

While outdoors, one must have *yiras shamayim* and be cautious with his eyes.

The Skvere Rebbe *zt'l* would often explain the *pasuk* (5:7-8), לֹא תֹאסִיפוּן לִתֵּת לָהֶם תֶּבֶן לְעַם לְלֶבֶן כְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁם הֵם יִלְכוּ וְקוֹשְׁשׁוּ "[Pharaoh said] we will no longer give hay to the

nation so they can make bricks, as we've given until now. They will now go by themselves to gather straw..." The question is, if Pharaoh wanted to make it harder for the Jewish nation, he could have simply asked them to produce more bricks. But Pharaoh said, וְאֵת מִתְכֹּנֶת הַלְּבָנִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם עוֹשִׂים תְּמוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁת מִתְשִׁימוּ עֲלֵיהֶם, that they must make the same amount of bricks as before, only now it will be harder because they must also gather the straw. It seems he could have continued the process of supplying straw, and the suffering would be that they must produce more.⁷

6. It seems it should state, לֹא תוֹסִיפוּן, without an א'.

We don't have much *divrei Torah* from Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l*, all got lost, but the following is one of the few *divrei Torah* that remained. Rebbe Dovid Lelover explained that לֹא תֹאסִיפוּן means, "You may not gather." The Jewish nation used to get together in Mitzrayim to discuss *emunah*. Pharaoh feared these gatherings, and he decreed לֹא תֹאסִיפוּן, that they aren't permitted to gather together.

Rebbe Dovid Lelover said he is certain that when Moshiach comes, Moshe Rabbeinu will thank him for explaining correctly the reason there's an extra לֹא תֹאסִיפוּן in א'.

7. Rebbe Yitzchak Vorker *zt'l* answers that Pharaoh wanted to destroy their peace of mind. Working extra hours, but knowing what's

The Skvere Rebbe explained that Pharaoh's main plan was, *הם ילכו*, that the Yidden should go out and walk around Mitzrayim gathering straw. He wanted them to leave the four cubits of their insular environment and to see the rest of Mitzrayim, and to get accustomed to their culture. He wanted to ruin their eyes, because he knew that then he would be able to rule over them.

It states (*Yeshayah 27:6*), *יִצִיץ* ופרה ישראל. Tzaddikim explain, when a Yid is *יִצִיץ*, peeks and looks where he shouldn't, ופרה ישראל, the holiness of Yisrael that was in him flies away (see *Beis Aharon* *ד"ה יִצִיץ*).

It states (*Yeshayah 59:18*), *שאי*

סביב עיניך וראי כולם נקבצו באו לך. Tzadikim explained, *שאי סביב עיניך*, if you turn your eyes away from seeing forbidden things, *וראי כולם נקבצו באו לך*, you will see that many *malachim*, created by your good deed, are gathered around you to protect you.

We say in Kiddush, *אשר קדשנו* *במצותיו ורצה בנו*, "Who made us holy with His mitzvos and He desires us..."

It seems it should say, *רצה בנו* וקדשנו במצותיו, "He desires us, so He made us holy with His mitzvos." My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* said that the order is accurate and exact, because Hashem wants us because we make ourselves holy.

expected from him, is easier than to do something you've never done before. By this time, the Yidden knew how to make bricks. Forcing them to make more would certainly be hard, but it wouldn't ruin their peace of mind, because they knew the process. But they didn't have experience gathering straw. They didn't know where to go, or how to begin. Such matters destroy one's peace of mind, which was Pharaoh's goal.

Don't Lose Hope

The Arizal teaches that the Jewish nation stooped to the 49th gate of impurity, and they couldn't remain in Mitzrayim another moment. One more second in Mitzrayim, they would have fallen to the 50th gate of impurity, from where there is no return. Therefore, *yetzias Mitzrayim* was *בהפזון*, rushed.

The question remains, why was it necessary to wait for the last second? They could have been freed well before, and then they wouldn't need to rush out.

It was to tell us that even when one is at the lowest possible level, he can rise up from there and reach the highest level. Just as the

Yidden who left Mitzrayim left the lowest level possible, and in fifty days were able to receive the Torah, we can also reach high levels, regardless of which level we are at the present.

In this week's *parashah* it states (1:6), *ויוסף היה במצרים*, "Yosef was in Mitzrayim," and in *parashas Lech Lecha* it states (*Bereishis* 12:6), *והבנעני אז בארץ*, "The Canaanites were then in the land." These *pesukim* tell us that one can be living in Mitzrayim, and be like Yosef HaTzaddik, and one can live in Eretz Yisrael and be like a Canaanite. It isn't the place that makes the person, but his determination to serve Hashem with all his strength, and under all circumstances.

Lashon Hara

Rashi (2:14) writes, "[Moshe said], 'I always wondered: What did Bnei Yisrael sin worse than the seventy

nations, that they should be punished with *עבודת פרך*, extremely difficult labor. But now I see that they deserve it."

Moshe discovered that the suffering came because they spoke *lashon hara*, slander, and had *sinas chinam*.

Later, when Hashem told Moshe that he wants to save Klal Yisrael. Moshe was surprised that they should deserve to be freed. He said, (*Rashi* 3:11), *מה זכו ישראל שיעשה להם נס ואוציאם ממצרים*, "What merit does the Jewish nation have that a miracle will occur, and I will take them out of Mitzrayim?"

Notice the irony: At first (*Rashi* 3:2) Moshe couldn't understand why they were being punished. And now (*Rashi* 3:11) Moshe doesn't understand why they should be saved.

The Sfas Emes (5641) explains that this shows us the severity of *lashon hara* and *sinas chinam*. As the Sfas Emes writes, "This is letting us know that one loses

all his merits by the sin of *lashon hara*..."

The Kli Yakar (3:2) says that the burning bush represents *sinas chinam*, vain hatred. *סנה* comes from the word *שנאה*, hatred. The fire burning in the bush represents the *tzaros* of *galus*, which are the result of *sinas chinam* and *lashon hara*.

The Kli Yakar writes, "And this is the primary reason Yidden are in *galus*. It is all because of hatred and jealousy that is between them — more than it exists by other nations... Therefore Hashem's fire [of punishment and anger] burns in them..."

The *pasuk* concludes, *והסנה אינה אוכל*, "the bush wasn't consumed." The Kli Yakar writes, "This implies that despite all the hardships and strife, *sinas chinam* continues in every generation. It is never consumed."⁸

8. A cup is broken under the chuppah to represent the *luchos*, which were broken by Mattan Torah (as many customs of a *chasunah*

The Egyptian culture encouraged *lashon hara*. As the Zera Kodesh writes, "The *avodah zarah* of Mitzrayim is called (*Shemos* 14:2), *פי ההירות*, [literally, "free mouth"] because the Egyptians spoke whatever they wanted, without restraint. As if they were free to speak whatever they desire. As it states (*Tehillim* 12:5), *אמרו ללשוננו נגבר שפתנו אתנו מי אדון לנו* "They said: ...Our lips are

ours. Who rules over us...' Hashem told Bnei Yisrael (14:2), *וישבו וידעו לפני פי ההירות*, ... "שבו" means they should do *teshuvah* and be cautious with their words..."

The Pri Megadim (end of *siman* 685) teaches that during Shovavim we complete our exodus from Mitzrayim. Although we were redeemed, some of the impurity of Mitzrayim remained with us.

symbolize Mattan Torah). The Satmar Rebbe said that it is very important to remember the broken *luchos* at a *chasunah*, because Chazal tell us that forgetting comes from the broken *luchos*, and forgetting is very important for the success of a marriage. Because many times you must forget the wrongs your spouse did to you, so there will be *shalom bayis*.

A mother-in-law once insulted her son-in-law and rebuked him harshly just a couple of weeks after their *chasunah*. The young man went to his mentor, Reb Elyah Roth *zt'l* and told him what happened.

Reb Elyah asked him, "Does anyone know about this?"

"No one knows. It just happened, and no one heard..."

"Then forget about it. Pretend it didn't happen."

A couple of weeks afterwards, the mother-in-law asked forgiveness for her outburst. He replied, "What are you referring to? Nothing happened. It must have been a dream. I don't remember anything."

She tried to remind him what happened and he replied, "If that happened, everyone would have known about it, and there would be a lot of trouble. But no one knows about it, so apparently it never happened."

The mother-in-law allowed herself to be talked into it, and peace was restored. Today, that young man has close to twenty children, and many grandchildren. This all came because of his ability to forget and to move on.

We cleanse ourselves from it during Shovavim. One way we do that is by being cautious from *lashon hara*.

He writes that this is hinted at in the beginning of *parashas Shemos*, *וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*. He explains that *אלה* is *roshei teivos* *לְשׁוֹן דְּרַע אֵבֶק*, the dust [even the smallest type of] *lashon hara*, which we must be cautious from. And *שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים* is *roshei teivos* *שְׁבִיָּה*, captivity (as the Baal HaTurim writes). Because we become free from the captivity and influence of Mitzrayim when we are cautious with our speech.

Benefits of Cautious Speech

The Trisker Maggid *zt'l* (*Magen Avraham*, beginning of *Lech Lecha*) teaches that *lashon hara* and other forms of forbidden speech contaminates the air and is the root of diseases, *rachmana litzlan*.

It states (*Bamidbar* 9:20), *עַל פִּי ה' יִחַד וְעַל פִּי ה' יִסְעוּ*. This can be

translated, *עַל פִּי ה' יִחַד*, due to the mouth, Hashem will dwell with you. And *עַל פִּי ה' יִסְעוּ*, because of his mouth, Hashem departs. It all depends on how one uses his speech.

One should also avoid *דְּבָרִים בְּטְלִים*, idle talk (when it doesn't serve a good purpose) because it takes away so much precious time from *avodas Hashem*.

On the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 23:10), *וְהִבַּאתֶם אֶת עֹמֵר רֵאשִׁית קִצְרֹכְכֶם* the Noam Elimelech writes, "*עֹמֵר* is like *אֹמֵר*, speech... *וְהִבַּאתֶם אֶת עֹמֵר* means one must fix his *devarim beteilim* and elevate them to holiness... Idle talk is called, *רֵאשִׁית קִצְרֹכְכֶם* because they result in *קִצְרֵי*, shortcomings [in *avodas Hashem*]. They are *רֵאשִׁית*, the beginning of the shortcomings."

Some people brought a *kvittel* to the Beis Yisrael *zt'l*, and asked him to daven for the wife of Reb Avraham Schreiber of London, who was ill.

The Beis Yisrael didn't even look at the *kvittel*. He said, "Someone like Reb Avraham, who guards his eyes and his mouth, can take *kvittelach* on his own."

When this was repeated to Rebbe Yankele of Pshvorsk *zt'l*, he said, "The Beis Yisrael just revealed the secret of being a Rebbe. Because how does one have the ability to read *kvittelach* and to bring *yeshuos* to Yidden? It is dependent on being cautious with your eyes and with your mouth."

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zt'l* said that holding back from forbidden or unnecessary talk is equivalent to fasting 84 days. Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* added, "And I say, **לֹא יִשְׁכַּח**

לֹא יִשְׁכַּח (it is even more than 84 fast days)."

It is for our own benefit to be cautious with our speech. It saves us from *machlokes*, shame, and so much more. As the wise saying goes, "Before you speak, you rule over your words. After you speak, your words rule over you;" it is too late to take back what you said.

As Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* once said, "Everyone agrees, that if everything you spoke this year — in public and in private, by day and at night — was recorded and read to you during the days of *teshuvah*, you would hide from shame." So for many reasons, it is wise to be cautious with your speech.⁹

9. A cold donkey (as Chazal say, a donkey is cold even in the summertime) found the skins of a lion, so it put it on himself to warm up. The animals of the forest saw the donkey dressed in the lion's hide and couldn't figure out what it was. The animal was larger than a lion, but it looked like a lion. Even the lions of the jungle were afraid of this strange creature. The animals called an emergency meeting to see what they could do.

The fox said he has a solution. With a slingshot, the fox threw some stones at the 'lion.' The lion brayed like a donkey, and then they all knew it was

Proper Speech

The *Midrash Tanchumah* (*Vayeitzei*) teaches:

Binyamin knew the *shevatim* sold Yosef, but he didn't tell Yaakov, because he didn't want to speak *lashon hara* on his brothers. Because of Binyamin's silence, his name is engraved on the *ישפה* stone of the *choshen*. *ישפה* spells *יש לו פה*, "He has a mouth – and he remains quiet..."

We wonder, doesn't *יש לו פה* "He has a mouth" sound like he speaks a lot? Why should it imply that he is quiet? The answer is, being cautious with speech doesn't mean that we become silent. It means speaking when we should and what we should. with *יש לו פה* means he controls what he says. He rules over his mouth. He says what he should, and

he is silent when that's the right thing to do.

The *תנ"ש"ם* (*מעיל צדקה*) writes, "There is a *tzedakah* that is easy to do, and the reward is immense. This *tzedakah* is to be generous with your words, so you can pacify the poor, bring joy to those who are worried, and to increase peace. All these can be accomplished by speaking a lot."

The *Meil Tzedakah* adds, "Once, someone who was going through very hard times contemplated on committing suicide. He spoke with me about his problems. I spoke with him for a long time, and I consoled him and encouraged him. Some days later he told me that if I hadn't spoken with him, he would have committed suicide. Therefore, be generous with your words when you

a donkey. When the donkey was silent, the animals were afraid of him. But when he opened its mouth, they knew he is just a donkey.

The *nimshal* is easily understood. As long as one is quiet, you might think he is wise. But when he opens his mouth, you discover who he really is.

encounter a poor person or anyone going through difficult times. Don't be stingy with your words. Appease him with many words. Even if you are suffering worries of your own, that shouldn't prevent you from encouraging and consoling the poor, the worried, and those who are brokenhearted."

The Yeitav Lev *zt'l* says that Moshe Rabbeinu was (4:10) a *כבד פה וכבד לשון*, and the Targum writes *ארי יקר מכלל*. This can mean that speech was *יקר*, precious to him. Moshe merited *nevuah* and his high levels because he understood the priceless value of words, how much good words can accomplish, and how much

havoc words can cause when used haphazardly.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 9) says, "Those who give *tzedakah* to the poor are blessed with six *brachos*. Those who say kind words to the poor are blessed with eleven *brachos*." The Maharal explains that when one gives food to the poor, the benefits last for a short while. After the food is consumed, the enjoyment is over, and the pauper is hungry again. But when one says kind words to the poor, the words can replay in his mind and they give him encouragement for a very long time. Consequently, saying kind words is a greater kind of charity.¹⁰

10. When kind words are accompanied with a shining countenance, the benefits are even greater, as the following true story illustrates:

A father invested a lot of money, paying for *mechanchim* and experts, to help bring his son back to *Yiddishkeit*. Eventually, the child returned.

The father asked him, "Which dollar brought you back?" Meaning, "I paid a lot of money for *mechanchim* and tutors. Which one had the greatest influence on you? Which one brought you back?"

The *bachur* replied, "It wasn't the *mechanchim* you hired. But once a rav of a beis medresh greeted me with a happy countenance. I told him, 'Do you know who you just greeted?' and I told him all about my sins.

Think Before You Speak

We are in the days of Shovavim. In the past these were days of many fasts, to purify ourselves from all impurities. In our generation fasts aren't recommended, but there are other solutions. One is to be cautious with our speech:

The Mishnah Berurah (571:2) writes, "When one wants to fast, it is better to fast from speech than from food, because this will not harm his body, nor his soul, and it won't make him weak. The Vilna Gaon writes in a letter, 'A person must afflict himself. But not with fasting and *sigufim*, rather by

controlling one's mouth and one's temptations.'"

In our generation, to refrain totally from speaking doesn't work out well for people, for several reasons. However, there is something people can do, and with Hashem's help will be beneficial. I recommend that on each day of Shovavim, for one hour, think before you speak and decide whether the words you desire to say are beneficial and permitted. This practice will develop into being cautious with one's speech the entire day.

It states in *Tehillim* (45:3), הַרְצֵק חֵן בְּשִׁפְתֶיךָ, "Your lips are soaked with *chein*."¹¹ The Sfas Emes

"The rav replied, 'It doesn't make a difference. Hashem loves you regardless.' "I told him about even graver sins I was committing, and the rav replied, 'Even so, Hashem is your Father, waiting for your return.' I had this conversation with the rav just at the right time, because I was about to commit a very severe sin, but due to this conversation, I refrained, and I returned to my Father in heaven..."

11. According to Rashi, this chapter of *Tehillim* is praising the Torah scholar. All of his words are soaked with *chein* and charm. The Metzudas David and the Radak say this chapter is referring to the praises of Moshiach.

asks, why are specifically the lips mentioned in this *pasuk*? The letters, אהע"ה come from the throat, גיכ"ק are said with the palate, דמלנ"ת are expressed with the tongue, the sounds of זמשר"ץ come from the teeth, and with the lips one says the letters בומ"פ. So why does the *pasuk* single out the *chein* that come from the lips?

The Sfas Emes answers that the *pasuk* is hinting to the *chein* of someone who closes

his lips and he doesn't speak unnecessary words.

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zy'a* said to someone who was talking a lot: "Why do you speak so much? You can think all these thoughts, too. It must be you are speaking because you want to benefit the other person with your wisdom. But then you should ask them whether they are interested. It could be they don't want to hear what you want to say."¹²

Emunah

On one of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk's *zt'l* travels, he overheard his hostess say, "How long will we be eating kasha (buckwheat)? When will we finally eat lokshen (noodles)?" Rebbe Elimelech turned her words into a prayer. "How long will Yidden have קשיא, questions in *emunah*?

When will it finally be לאקשין - לא קשין, no questions, and *emunah* will be clear and certain to them?"

Our goal is to attain perfect *emunah*, to believe without certainty, without any doubts.

Pharaoh said (1:10), פן ירבה, "Lest they increase..." and

12. In Poland people would say about someone who speaks a lot, non-stop, that he has a hole in his head, and all the words in his head are tumbling out.

The problem is that his constant rambling creates a hole in other people's heads, too.

Hashem replied, (1:12) בן ירבה,
"So shall they increase."

בן also means "maybe" and represents doubts. The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz ז"ל explains that Pharaoh wanted בן ירבה, that uncertainties and doubts in *emunah* should increase among the Jewish nation. Hashem replied בן ירבה. This means we should say with conviction and confidence בן, "Definitely there's Hashem! Unquestionably the world is run with *hashgachah pratis!*" etc. We shouldn't have any doubts at all.¹³

It states (*Devarim* 29:17), בן יש בככם שרש פרה ראש ולענה. Tzaddikim explained בן יש בככם, the doubts and uncertainties that you have, שרש פרה ראש ולענה, are the root and the source of your *yetzer hara*.

As the Chovas HaLevavos (*Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh* ch.5) writes, "The *yetzer*

hara's strongest approach is to have you doubt those matters you are certain about..."

In contrast, definite, clear, and certain *emunah* is the source of all good *middos* and for success in *avodas Hashem*.

Therefore, we should strengthen ourselves in *emunah*, and believe in Hashem without any doubts at all.

One of Hashem's names is ודאי, as it states, ודאי שמו בן תהלתו, "Hashem's name is ודאי..." The Arizal said that this name is hinted by, ויברך דוד את ה' because the *roshei teivos* of these words spell ודאי. Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 34:5), דרשתי את ה' וענני, "I beseeched Hashem and He answered me." These words are also *roshei teivos* ודאי (*Yosef Tehillos*).

ודאי means certain, and the message of this name is to

13. These ideas apply for *bitachon* too. The *shidduch, parnassah*, and all other matters people worry about, train yourself in the path of בן ירבה. Say "Yes! Hashem will help, and everything will be well."

believe in Hashem with certainty, without any doubts.

The *gematriya* of עמלק is 240, which is the same *gematriya* as ספק, doubt, because Amalek fights against clear *emunah*. As it states, אשר קרך, Amalek cools off *emunah*. Amalek doesn't want us to know that everything happens with *hashgachah pratis*, and that no one can take anything away from another unless it was decreed Above, and that *parnassah* is determined on Rosh Hashanah, and that even the place a where one blade of hay falls is also destined and planned by Hashem, etc.

We destroy Amalek when we know that Hashem is always with us. And even when it seems that Hashem is far away, He is watching over us, leading us with care and compassion.

It states, ותתצב אחותו מרחוק, "His sister stood from the distance."

The *pasuk* is praising Miriam, the prophetess, because when her brother was put into the Nile River, and it seemed that Hashem concealed His face and was מרחוק, far away from us, ותתצב אחותו, she stood firmly with her belief that Hashem was with them.

Actually (*Yirmiyahu* 31:2), מרחוק ה' נראה לי, "From the distance, Hashem appeared to me" because when Hashem seems to be from the distance, that's when Hashem is closest.

The Gemara often states the phrase, מאן נימא דמתרצתא היא (see for example *Shabbos* 121:).¹⁴ The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz זt'l said that מאן is *roshei teivos* for אל מלך נאמן.

מאן נימא refers to someone who always says אל מלך נאמן, and he believes that everything occurs by Hashem's decree. מתרצתא היא, this person has answers to

14. Literally, it means, "How do we know the *braysa* was repeated correctly? Perhaps there's an error in the wording."

everything that comes up in his life.

When one is always saying *רלמא*, perhaps, because he has doubts in his *emunah*, *משבשתא* *היא*, nothing makes sense to him, and he is always asking questions.

The Imrei Chaim said this *vort* in Grussvardein, Romania, to students of his yeshiva who were discussing the tragedies of the Holocaust. He was teaching them that *emunah* that everything is from Hashem answers all their questions.

As Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* taught, *א"ל ארון על כל המעשים*, "G-d, the master over everything" is the answer to all questions.

Someone told the Yesod HaAvodah that he has many questions in *emunah*. The Yesod HaAvodah replied, "You aren't the first person to ask questions. Pharaoh also had many questions. He said (5:2), *מי ה' אשר אשמע בקולו*, 'Who

is Hashem that I should listen to Him?' And for each question, he received a *מכה*, a plague from Above. And then he learned that everything is from Hashem."

Rebbe Shimon Yarislover *zt'l* lived to the ripe old age of 91 (a rarity in that era). People asked him the secret of his longevity. He said: When people ask questions on Hashem, Hashem brings him up to heaven, because over there all questions are answered. I never asked questions. I always believed without doubt that everything is just and good. Therefore, it wasn't necessary to rush me upstairs to answer my questions. That's the secret of my longevity..."

Someone asked the Imrei Emes *zt'l* information about a *bachur* for a *shidduch*. The Imrei Emes replied, "But he is a *פקח*, wise."

The man didn't know whether the Imrei Emes was saying a quality and encouraging the

shidduch or a character failing, and was discouraging it. He asked the Imrei Emes's brother, Reb Moshe Betzalel *zy'a hy'd*, to explain to him what the Rebbe said.

Reb Moshe Betzalel replied, "It states (4:11), מי ישום אילם, או, "Who makes the mute, the death, the blind..." In this phrase, פקה is together with a list of tragedies. It seems that being a פקה isn't a good thing." Because one shouldn't be too wise, seeking to understand everything. Rather one should believe with *emunah peshutah* that everything is exactly as it should be.

Methods to Attain *Emunah*

The Lechovitzer Rav *zt'l* taught (*Tehillim* 116:10), האמנתי כי אדבר, "I believe because I speak." Speaking about *emunah* brings *emunah*.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* said that it is even good to discuss levels of *emunah* that are beyond us. For example, if a person doesn't believe that

everything is for the good, he should still say it. As it states (*Tamid* 28.), יחזיק באמונה יתירה, take the path of speaking about levels of *emunah* that are beyond you.

Generally one shouldn't be involved in levels that are beyond him, but when it comes to *emunah* it is permitted and recommended to talk about levels that are beyond you. Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin would therefore speak with his students about very high levels of *emunah*, because all levels of *emunah* are for everyone, and speaking about it helps us acquire them.

Another counsel for attaining *emunah* is to pray for it.

The Baal Shem Tov perceived with his *ruach hakodesh* that one of his students needs *chizuk* in *emunah*, so he traveled to him in the middle of the night and told him, "Also for *emunah* one should pray a lot to attain it" and then the Baal Shem Tov returned home.

This student later said that the Baal Shem Tov came just at the right time. He was having questions in *emunah*, and he followed the Baal Shem Tov's counsel and davened for *emunah*, and then he was able to return to his high levels in *emunah*.

Finally, the path for attaining *emunah* is simply to try to live one's life by the fundamentals of *emunah*, because when one tries, Hashem helps.

It states in this week's *parashah* (3:4) that Moshe was **סָר לְרֵאוֹת**, "he turned to understand the vision of the bush" and then Hashem called to him, and spoke with him. The Seforno writes that this is always the pattern: a person tries, and then Hashem is revealed to him. As Chazal say (*Shabbos* 104.), **הָבֵא לְטָהָר**, "When one wants to be pure, he is helped."

Therefore, when one strives to live with *emunah*, Hashem will help him attain it.

It states (1:8), **וַיִּקָּם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ עָלַי, מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת יוֹסֵף**, "A new king arose in Mitzrayim, who didn't know Yosef."

Rashi writes: "Rav and Shmuel [the meaning of this *pasuk* is debated by Rav and Shmuel]. One said that he was a new king, literally. The other said that he changed his decrees."

Often, when there is a *machlokes* regarding *drush* (the stories of the Torah), there aren't any halachic consequences. But the Toras Chaim (*Eiruvin* 53.) says that this *machlokes* has halachic ramifications.

Someone tells his fellow man, "If you give me a million dollars, I will sell you a new house." The man is interested, and gives the million dollars. The seller gives him an old house.

The buyer says, "This isn't what we agreed on. You said you will give me a new house."

The seller says, "But it's like new, because it is completely renovated, newly furnished, etc. And its value is a million dollars... "

The debate between Rav and Shmuel on the definition of חדש, new, applies here.

According to the opinion that "new" is literal, the seller didn't keep his word. He said he will give him a new house and he didn't. But according to the opinion that new can also be something that is renewed, the sale is valid,

because he sold him something that was refurbished and was "like new".

The lesson that we can take from this is that when a person improves his ways he became new. He isn't the same person as before.

Therefore, when a person turns over a new leaf, and lives his life with *emunah*, we can consider him an entirely new person, because he is now living a new and improved life.

Tefillah

The Yismach Yisrael (*Shemos* 2, quoting his father, Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander *zt'l*) writes, "In Mitzrayim, they weren't able to speak. All they could do is shout 'Oy vay!¹⁵... Those moans went up to heaven, and were very

precious in heaven. This encourages every Yid. There are people who are almost unable to pray to Hakadosh Baruch Hu because of their *tzaros*... Nevertheless, don't lose hope. Call out to Hashem the best you can. Even if your

15. As it states (2:23), ויאנחו בני ישראל... ויצעקו... ותעל שועתם "The Yidden moaned... they shouted...their shouts went up to Hashem." And it states (3:9), ועתה הנה צעקת בני ישראל באה אלי, "And now, the shouts of Bnei Yisrael have come up to Me..." They shouted and moaned, but they weren't able to pray.

tefillah will only produce one shout to Hashem from the depths of your heart, Hashem will take into account your poverty, hardships, lowly state, your place, your situation, and with His immense mercy, He will listen to that one moan and He will save you."

When the Yidden were at the Yam Suf they also weren't able to daven, only to shout, as it states (*Shemos* 14:10), וַיִּזְעֻקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה', "Bnei Yisrael shouted to Hashem" and Hashem saved them.

The Chidushei HaRim ז"ל writes, "It was purposely planned that they won't be able to daven at this time, so for all generations, even when they don't have strength to pray, they should shout to Hashem and Hashem will save them. As it states (14:14), ה' ילחם לכם, and the Mechilta explains that even when Yidden are silent (תחרישון) because they aren't able to pray, ה' ילחם לכם, Hashem will battle their wars for them."

Sometimes, prayer in the form of a shout is the preferred kind of *tefillah*. The *Maor Veshamosh* (ד"ה ויהי שמוס) writes, "We can ask, why does it state (2:23) וַיִּזְעֻקוּ, they shouted to Hashem? Why doesn't it state וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ, they prayed to Hashem...? The explanation is...there are times there are *mekatrigim* (prosecuting *malachim*) who create an iron wall, preventing the *tefillos* from going up... The solution is (*Zohar* vol.2 p.63:), 'To shout from the depths of his heart and with all his *kavanah*.' It is just a sound, without words. This is called זעקה. The *mekatrigim* aren't aware of this prayer, only Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. Hashem Himself turns to these shouts...and He answers those who call to him. It is a far more special *tefillah* than *tefillos* said with words, which the *malachim* understand and can prevent. Only Hashem knows his thoughts and requests that are being expressed through his shouts, and Hashem fulfills them..."

We should yearn and strive to pray properly. As the Zera Kodesh (וארא ד"ה וידבר משה) writes, "[In Mitarayim] Hakadosh Baruch Hu heard the yearning of Bnei Yisrael, how they wanted to pray properly before Him. They prayed and they davened that they should be able to pray. As it states, וינעקו בני ישראל אל ה', they shouted a prayer to Hashem, מן העבודה, because their *tefillah* (which is called עבודה) wasn't as it should be..." But until we are able to daven well, we are encouraged with the concept that our shouts are heard, understood, and answered, and thereby all our needs can be fulfilled.

The Importance of *Tefillah*

Moshe Rabbeinu told Hashem that he isn't fitting to speak with Pharaoh (4:10), כִּי כַבֵּד פָּה וּכְבֹד לִשׁוֹן אֲנֹכִי "because I have a speech impediment." The question is, if that's the problem, Hashem could heal Moshe.

The Ramban offers some answers:

One is: Hashem wanted that Moshe should have a speech impediment and miraculously speak well before Pharaoh. As the Midrash states: "Hashem said: Don't worry about your speech impediment... If I wanted to create you with the ability to speak well, I would have made you that way. But I want to make a miracle through you, that when you speak I will help you and you will speak well. As it states (4:12), וַעֲתָה לֹךְ וְאֲנֹכִי אֲדַבֵּר עִם פִּיךָ, 'Now go, and I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you should say.'"

As the Ramban writes, "Hashem didn't want to take away Moshe's speech impediment, because he wanted a miracle should occur when he speaks with Pharaoh [that suddenly, Moshe would speak well, without any handicaps]."

The Ramban's next explanation is as follows: "Hashem told Moshe...I have the ability to heal you, but

since you don't want to be healed, and you didn't daven to be healed, go and do what I command you, and I will help you..." According to this explanation, Moshe wasn't healed because he didn't pray for it. Because with *tefillah* one can attain anything and everything, but it is up to the person to pray, and then he will receive.

Consider the following *mashal*:

A king gave permission to one of his subjects to take anything he wants from the king's treasury room, and he can take as much as he wants. The man stands in front of the treasury room, but he doesn't have the key to go inside.

The keys represent *tefillah*. With *tefillah*, Hashem's treasury opens up for us, and all our hearts' desires can be fulfilled. But without *tefillah*, we lack the keys that open the doors.¹⁶

16. A family once received the dreaded phone call from the nursing home that their mother (grandmother, etc.) was *niftar*. They came to the *levayah*, sat *shivah*, said Kaddish, everything according to halachah. And then, shockingly, one of the daughters received a phone call from her mother, whom they thought was *niftar*, and whom they thought they had just buried! The mother asked, "Why doesn't the family visit me anymore? It's been a week since anyone came." They found out that the nursing home called up the wrong family. It was another woman who was *niftar*. Their mother was fine and well. The nursing home contacted the son of the real *nifteres*, told him the sad news, and apologized for the error that occurred. When the nursing home told him that a different family sat *shivah* for her, etc., he exclaimed in wonder, "My mother always spoke about how she wants a minyan at her *levayah*, that someone should say Kaddish for her, and sit *shivah*, and she prayed for this a lot. I wasn't planning on giving this to her because I'm not religious, but I see her *tefillos* were answered."

And if a person prayed and he didn't get what he wanted, he should pray again. The main thing is not to lose hope.

A great *talmid chacham* of Yerushalayim fell ill and his friends and students prayed a lot for him. Their *tefillos* were answered. He said, "The greatest miracle isn't that Hashem answered the *tefillos*, because that's obvious. Hashem always listens to the *tefillos* of the Jewish nation. The primary miracle is that people didn't lose hope and they continued davening for me, despite the doctors' discouraging prognosis..."

The Radak (*Yonah* 2:2) teaches that two miracles happened to Yonah HaNavi when he was thrown into the ocean and was swallowed by the large fish: "A great miracle occurred, because he was three days and three nights in the fish's stomach and he survived. A second miracle was that he didn't go

into shock [and lose hope and his ability to pray]. Rather he kept his mind and *sechel* and he *davened*."

It states (3:15), ה' אלקי אבותיכם, אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב, "Hashem the G-d of your fathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov sent me to you [to redeem you]." The Ramban writes, "Hashem never forgets His covenant with the *avos*. In all generations, when they say [in davening], אלקי אברהם יצחק ויעקב, Hashem will listen to their prayers and answer them."

We shouldn't solely mention the *avos*. We should remember their righteousness, and rejoice with the privilege that we are their descendants and children.

This reminds me of a story that happened with a *bachur* who wanted to speak with the Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l*. Before going in to the Rebbe, he asked the *gabbai*, Reb Chanina Schiff, to tell the Rebbe his *yichus*.

The *gabbai* told him, "It's not done that way, over here."

But the *bachur* insisted that it was important for him, so Reb Chanina introduced him to the Rebbe, saying, "This *bachur* wanted the Rebbe to know that he is a descendant of..."

The Rebbe replied, "Why should *I* know? *He* has to know!" In other words, he should live up to the standard of his ancestors. Similarly, when we mention the *avos* in *tefillah*, it isn't just to mention it, but to recognize where we come from, to emulate their ways, and with that awareness pray before Hashem.

A High form of Prayer

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (2:23) writes, "It states, *והעל שועתם אל*, *האלקים מן העבודה*, 'Their shouts went up to Hashem from their slave-labor.' It was time for their salvation, but they weren't worthy of the redemption anymore. But

since they prayed a lot to Hashem, their *tefillos* were answered. In this *pasuk* it states twice that they prayed, *מִן הָעֲבֹדָה*, "from their slave-labor."¹⁷ This is to teach us that the most perfect *tefillah* is the *tefillah* that comes forth from distress and suffering. It is more accepted, and it goes up before Hashem. This also happened to the Navi Yonah. As it states (Yonah 2:8), *בְּהִתְעַמֵּף עָלַי נַפְשִׁי אֶת ה' וזכרתני ותבא אליך תפילתי אל היכל קדשך*, 'When I was in distress, I remembered to pray to Hashem, and my *tefillos* came before You...' The Torah is teaching us how to be redeemed from our present *galus*. Our redemption is dependent on *teshuvah* and *tefillah*, just as the redemption from Mitzrayim needed *teshuvah* and *tefillah* before Hashem Who answers at a time of distress.... Because the redemption is dependent on *teshuvah* and *tefillah*."

17. As it states (2:23), *ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה והעל שועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה*.

The Or HaChaim (2:23) writes, "It states (*Tehillim* 118), מן המצר קראתי י"ה ענני במרחב, י"ה, 'When I call to Hashem from a distressful place, Hashem answers me...' Because one of the *tefillos* that are answered is *tefillos* said amidst distress. As it states (*Yonah* 2), קראתי מצרה, 'I called from my distress.'"

Moshe was born on the 7th of Adar. (2:2) ותצפנהו שלשה ירחים, "They hid [Moshe] for three months" ולא יכלה עוד הצפינו... ותשמם בסוף, "They couldn't hide him anymore...and they placed Moshe in an ark, on a swamp." The Rabbeinu b'Chaya makes the exact calculation, and discovers that this happened on the 6th of Sivan, the day Moshe will in the future go up on Har Sinai to receive the Torah.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (2:2) writes, "Moshe was born on the 7th of Adar. The Egyptian were waiting for the ninth month, as this is the way of the world. The nine months

concluded on the 6th of Sivan... The *pasuk* mentions ירחים, moons, and it doesn't state חדשים, months, because these were moon months, which are two months חסר (of 29 days) and one month מלא (of 30 days). $2 \times 29 + 30 = 88$ days, which is exactly the sixth of Sivan – the day of Mattan Torah. That was the day Moshe was placed into the swamp on the banks of the Nile River. The *pasuk* is teaching us that on the day Moshe had *tzaar*, distress, from the Nile, on that day [years later] he went up to heaven and received the Torah on Har Sinai. This is as Dovid HaMelech said (*Tehillim* 138:3), ביום קראתי ותענני תרהיבני, בנפשי עז, "On the day that I called to you [from distress] You answered me and You made me great, and You strengthened my soul."

Because, as we explained, a *tefillah* said from distress is a powerful *tefillah*, and is answered.

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