

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Bereishis



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Torah Wellsprings

Bereishis

Tishrei the Entire Year

The *meforshim* ask: Why do we read *Bereishis* on the Shabbos after Simchas Torah? Wouldn't it be more befitting to read *Bereishis* on the first Shabbos after Rosh Hashanah?

The Shinover Rav *zt' l* and Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt' l* explain that people often look back at Tishrei and are upset that they didn't take advantage of these days. We tell them בראשית, don't worry about the past. You can begin now.

A Yid from Lelov was traveling to his Rebbe in Lublin. He wasn't familiar with the directions, but he was told that he would see a road sign with four arrows on it when he gets to a fork in the road. One arrow says Lelov and points in one direction, and another states Lublin and

points to another direction, and so on. All he has to do is follow the arrow that points to Lublin, and he will reach his destination.

But there was a snow storm not long before he set out on the way, and the road sign fell. There was no one around to ask directions, and he didn't know which road to take. He searched for the sign and found it buried under the snow. But he still didn't know how to erect the sign. If he sets it in the wrong direction, the arrows will be pointing the wrong way, and he still won't reach Lublin. However, this man was clever, and he thought, "I know the road that leads to Lelov, it is the road I took to get here! All I have to do is direct the arrow that says Lelov towards that road, and then I will see how to get to Lublin.

This story was told at a *sheva brachos*. The wise speaker said to the chasan, "You are beginning a new life, charting new waters, and you are afraid because you don't know the path. But you do know where you came from. Remember the house you were brought up in and the *chinuch* you received, which will help you find your path in your new life.

We can use this *mashal* as a direction for this time of year after the *yomim tovim* have passed. Let the past be our guide. We had wonderful, inspiring *days of yom tov*. Many people made *kabalos* for the new year too. Let these be your guide to help you figure out how to lead your life this new year.

Reb Eizik Yekel's was a very poor person who lived in Krakow. (He was *niftar* about 370 years ago, in ה'ת"ק). One night he dreamed about a great treasure hidden under a bridge. In the morning, he went to

the bridge and began to dig and search for the treasure. A policeman standing nearby mocked him, "I also had a dream. I dreamed that under the oven of a Jew called Eizik Yekel's there's a great treasure. Do you think I went there looking for the treasure? Dreams don't mean anything."

Reb Eizik Yekel's didn't tell the policeman that this was his name. He promptly went home, dug under his oven and found the treasure. With the money that he uncovered, he built a beautiful beis medresh called Eisik's shul.

This true story is repeated by many *tzaddikim* and is used as a *mashal* for several lessons. The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zt'l* said that many people look forward to the *yomim tovim*, because they think that it is then that they will find the treasure, which will help them serve Hashem properly. When *yom tov* arrives, they

discover that the treasure is inside of them. They take upon themselves *kabalos*, which enable them to continue searching and finding the treasure and their success in *avodas Hashem* throughout the year.

We want the inspiration and the *kedushah* we had during this month of Tishrei to remain with us. As hinted to in the *zemiro*s that the Arizal wrote (אומר בשבחין), יהא רעווא קמי דתשרי על עמיה, "May it be Your will that the influences of Tishrei will remain with the nation the entire year."

But how does one do that? One way is by making *kabalos*, which he will keep throughout the year.

Another approach is taught by the Arugas HaBosem (*Brachah* וישבן ר"ה). The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 95:) tells us that Yaakov Avinu came to Charan, and he remembered that he didn't daven on Har HaMoria. He said, "How could I have passed the place where my

parents prayed and not pray there?" He turned around to go back, and מיד קפצה לו הארץ, the earth immediately jumped for him, and Har HaMoria, the place where the Beis HaMikdash will be built, came to him.

The Arugas HaBosem says that the same occurs when a yid passes a holiday and realizes that he didn't take advantage of the goodness there. On Rosh Hashanah we can collect fear of Hashem for the entire year. Yom Kippur, we gather thoughts of *teshuvah* for the whole year. Succos, we gather buckets of joy. But in later generations, it happens that these great days pass without any inspiration. The person feels terrible. "How could I have passed these days without taking advantage of what was there?" When one thinks these thoughts, the days jump back to him, and he can gain all the benefits of the *yom tov* right then.

If he yearns for Rosh Hashanah it becomes Rosh Hashanah. If he pines for Yom Kippur, it becomes like Yom Kippur, and he can receive the fear, the feelings of *teshuvah*, and the joy throughout the year.

Emunah

בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ. This can be translated as heaven and earth were created for ראשית. What is ראשית?

There are several explanations in Chazal and the *sefarim*.¹

The Yesod HaAvodah says that the world was created for the tzaddikim who are constantly repeating to themselves, בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ, that Hashem created the world.

In other words, Hashem created the world for the Yidden who have *emunah*.

Many people say they believe in Hashem, but there's a sign to know whether that's true. The sign is joy and tranquility. If they are worried about the future or upset about the present, their *emunah* isn't perfect. They don't believe that they are in Hashem's hands, Who is leading them in the very best way.

It states (4:15), וישם ה' לקץ אות, לבלתי הכות אותו כל מוצאי. The Lechovitzer zt'l translated this pasuk to mean" Hashem gave an אות אמונה, a dose of *emunah*, and therefore, לבלתי הכות אותו כל מוצאו, his heart doesn't pound within him for every hardship that he endures".

Similarly, the Toldos Yaakov Yosef explained

1. Rashi writes, בשביל התורה שנקראת ראשית דרכו ובשביל צדיקים שנקראו ראשית תבואתה, the world was created for the Torah (which is called ראשית) and for tzaddikim (who are called ראשית)."

the *pasuk* (Tehillim 144:14), אלופינו מסובלים, when one believes in the Alufi Shel Olam, and he believes that everything is from Him, he can be סובל, endure and accept everything that happens to him.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* taught that the *roshei teivos* of ברך שאמר והיה העולם בשוה, because when one knows that Hashem runs the world, good and bad are שוה, the same to him because when one is in Hashem's hands, one knows that everything is perfect.

I heard the following story from the *baal hamaaseh*:

A family wanted to be with their Rebbe for Simchas Torah (in תשע"ט) but they were having a hard time finding an apartment to rent nearby. (The people in the Rebbe's neighborhood weren't accustomed to traveling elsewhere for Simchas Torah, so there weren't many apartments available for rent.) He found one apartment, but the price was too high. His

chassidus recently set a limit on how much money one can spend to rent an apartment (to keep the prices down), and this person was asking one thousand shekels above the accepted price. The man said he would look elsewhere because he didn't want to break the *takanah* and be responsible for raising the apartment rentals' prices.

Days passed, Simchas Torah was approaching, and they still didn't find an apartment. Nevertheless, he and his wife had *emunah* and *bitachon*, certain Hashem would help them.

Hoshanah Rabba, he went to beis medresh for *Mishnah Torah* and to say *Tehillim*. By the time he came home, it was already 1:00 am. His wife greeted him at the door and told him joyously, "Baruch Hashem, we found an apartment for Simchas Torah!"

Just then, the phone rang. "Who could be calling

so late at night?" they wondered. It was the person who they dealt with earlier, who wanted one thousand shekels more than the chassidus's guidelines. He said he is willing to rent it out for one thousand shekels less.

The husband was about to explain to him that they already found another apartment, but his wife quickly stopped him, and she explained that she never found another apartment. She only said that they found one because she was certain Hashem would help.

They took that apartment and were there for yom tov. The joy and the inspiration of that Simchas Torah remained with them the entire year.

For days, they were firm with their *bitachon*, and the *bitachon* reached its peak on Hoshanah Rabba night when his wife said with certainty that they already had an apartment. It

culminated with the phone call of the willing chassid to rent out his apartment for an affordable sum. Because when one has *bitachon*, he rejoices in the salvation even before it comes.

The *gematriya* of ואתחנן, prayer, is שירה, singing (Baal HaTurim). This is because a person should trust in Hashem so much until he sings to Hashem, even before the salvation actually arrives.

The Nazis were approaching, and after deep contemplation, the Brisker Rav decided that they should escape to the forest. That was the correct *hishtadlus* to do, under the circumstances. However, he told them that they shouldn't take food with them. They would go into the forest with trust in Hashem.

A few hours later, they found a person carrying two large baskets filled with food in the forest, and

he offered the Brisker Rav and his family to take them. The Brisker Rav checked the kashrus, and when he understood that everything was okay, he told his family that they can take his baskets of food. He asked the man why he was carrying all this food. The man replied, "I was supposed to make a *chasunah* today for one of my children. Everything was already cooked, but the *chasunah* is pushed off for better times due to the situation. But why should all the food go to waste? You can have all of it."

The Brisker Rav told his family to eat as much as they want, and they shouldn't leave over anything for later. When they need food again, Hashem will help them.

After the meal, they continued walking in the forest. The next day, they met another person, carrying baskets filled with food. He also was supposed to make a *chasunah*, the

food was all cooked, and the wedding was pushed off. Everything was there, meat, bread, food for the best of times, but there wasn't a desert. No one really cared. They had plenty to eat. But the Brisker Rav was upset. It wasn't the desert that bothered him – he anyway never took a special interest in the foods he ate. He asked his family, "Did anyone save something from yesterday's meal?"

They were all silent. He asked again, "Did anyone leave over any food from yesterday's meal?"

A young child said that he was afraid that there wouldn't be food today, so he put away some dessert.

The Brisker Rav said, "See Hashem's wonders. The boy kept some desert, and therefore, that is exactly what is missing today."

Because with *emunah* and *bitachon*, all one's needs are given to him.

Yiras Shamayim

As we wrote above, *ראשית ברא אלקים* means the world was created for *ראשית*. But what is *ראשית*? The *Zohar* says *ראשית* means *yiras Hashem*, as it states, *ראשית חכמה יראת ה'*.

Similarly, Chazal (*Brachos* 6:) say, *כל העולם לא נברא אלא לצוות לזה*, "The world was created solely to accompany those who have *yiras Shamayim*." The purpose of the world is for people to fear Hashem.

There are many levels of *yiras Shamayim*, but the most basic level is to take Hashem's decrees seriously. Hashem's mitzvos and the laws stated in *Shulchan Aruch* aren't merely good advice, something to do when you are in the mood of it. They are obligations, and *yiras Shamayim* means to recognize that.

The snake told Chavah (3:1), *אף כי אמר אלקים לא תאכלו ממנו...* The *Chidushei HaRim zt' l* explains that the snake was telling Chavah, "So what if Hashem said you can't eat from the tree?! Does that mean you have to obey?"

The *yetzer hara* comes to us with similar words. We can learn a halachah and think, "So what? Does that mean I have to keep it?" *Yiras Shamayim* means yes, Hashem decreed, and therefore we must obey

It states (*Koheles* 12:13), *את האלקים ירא...* "Fear Hashem... for that is the essence of man."

Reb Elchanan Wasserman *zt' l hy' d* (קובץ p.150) writes, "Don't think fearing Hashem is a quality in humankind, and if someone lacks *yiras Hashem* he is also a human being, just he lacks an important quality. Rather, if a person doesn't have *yiras Shamayim*, he's an animal. He isn't a person at all. As it states, *את אלקים ירא...* כי

זה כל האדם Fear Hashem...for that is the essence of man'... A man's greatness is determined by how much *yiras Shamayim* he has — whether he has a lot of *yiras Shamayim* or a little. If he has a lot, he is a great person, and if he has a little, he is a small person. But if he doesn't have any *yiras Shamayim*, he's an animal who appears like a human."

Hashem said (1:26), נעשה אדם "Let us make man." The *Zohar* explains that Hashem asked the entire creation to give a part of themselves into man's creation. Thus man has the entire kingdom of the wild in himself. This means in man are the traits of bears, snakes, hawks, and all other wild and cruel animals. Since this is man's makeup, he has the potential to act like these wild animals. One needs to tie down a person with iron chains to restrain him from the harm and damage he can cause. The iron chain is *yiras Shamayim*.

As Reb Elchanan Wasserman writes, "When Hashem created man He certainly created a chain to tie him up, so he won't destroy the world. What is that chain? It's *yiras Shamayim*. Only *yiras Shamayim* can control man that he shouldn't act like a wild animal. Nothing else can tame a person. Even if he is an extremely wise philosopher like Aristotle, his wisdom won't control his *yetzer hara*..."

Guard Your Eyes

How does one attain *yiras Shamayim*? A primary way is to guard the eyes. That is why the final words of the Torah are, לעיני כל ישראל, and the first word is, בראשית, which the *Zohar* explains refers to *yiras Shamayim*. Because by guarding one's eyes, he can attain *yiras Shamayim*.

Additionally, the connection between לעיני כל ישראל and בראשית teaches us that we should make

guarding the eyes, בראשית, a first and top priority.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 4:4) writes, "There are five *aveiros* that is very likely that one will never do *teshuvah* for them since people don't consider these *aveiros* severe and the one who transgresses them thinks he didn't do anything wrong. One of them is "looking at *arayos* (women who are forbidden to him). He thinks he didn't do anything wrong. He doesn't know that looking at *arayos* is a very severe sin because it leads to very grave sins. As it states, ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, 'Don't stray after your heart and after your eyes...'"

In this week's *parashah*, Chavah sinned with her eyes. As it states (3:6), וטרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי תאוה היא

לעינים, "The woman saw the tree was good to eat, and it was desirable for the eyes."

Also, it states in this week's *parashah* (6:2), ויראו בני אלקים את בנות הארץ, "The בני אלקים saw the girls of the land..."

According to Rashi's second explanation, בני אלקים means *malachim*, angels.² The *malachim* came to this world, sinned with their eyes, which led them to do sins with the people from this world. This brought on the *mabul*. Because one can be extremely holy like the *malachim*, but if he isn't cautious with his eyes, he will fall very low.

In contrast, ונח מצא חן בעיני ה', "Noah found favor in Hashem's eyes" (6:8) because he was careful with his eyes.³

2. Rashi's first translation of בני אלקים is בני השרים והשופטים, "the children of the leaders and the judges."

3. The Or HaChaim (6:3) teaches that until the generation of the Flood, Hashem spoke with His creations directly, to rebuke them

It Is Possible

Sometimes, people feel they simply must give in to their *taavos* because the urge is so strong, how can they control themselves?

Therefore, the Gemara calls the *yetzer hara* a

mountain, because the *yetzer hara* makes it seem impossible to overcome temptation, as it is impossible to conquer a mighty mountain. But it is possible to win over the *yetzer hara*. As the Kotzker said, "The *yetzer hara* is a lion made of paper. Begin

and to direct them onto the correct path. As it states (*Breishis* 3:14), וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל הַנָּחָשׁ (*Bereishis* 3:16), וְלָאָדָם אָמַר. Hashem spoke with Adam and Chavah, with Kayin, and even with the snake. All creations were prophets, and Hashem told them His messages. However, when people began sinning with adultery, this changed. As the Or HaChaim writes, "When they committed the disgusting and foul sins of adultery... and Hashem is שׂוֹנֵא וִימָה, hates adultery, He stopped speaking with them." *Keviyachol*, it became revolting for Hashem to talk directly with mankind. Therefore, mass prophecy ended.

The Or HaChaim writes that this is the meaning of the *pasuk* (6:3), וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לֹא יֵדוּן רוּחִי בָאָדָם, Hashem says he will no longer talk directly to mankind, and this is because of their sins.

The Or HaChaim adds that there were generations when Hashem continued to speak to the *tzaddikim*, the *nevi'im*, "But when the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, there is no more *nevuah*. Nevertheless, *ruach hakadosh* remained. But [in even later generations] when the eyes of the Jewish nation closed, we don't have רִיחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ (a scent of holiness) and certainly we don't have רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ (a spirit of holiness). This is the greatest distress for Bnei Yisrael — there is nothing worse. They are craving a scent from our Father in heaven, to revive their souls. This curse started from the generation of the *mabul*."

ripping it, and you will see."⁴

If you overcome your temptations and guard your eyes, you will reach very high levels.

One example is Chanoch (who is discussed in this week's *parashah*, 5:24). He was *niftar* at the age of 365 during a time when most people were *niftar* close to a thousand years old. The Torah writes, ואינו כי לקח אותו אלקים, "He was no longer [in this world] because Hashem took him."

There are early sources that say Hashem took Chanoch and turned him into the *malach* מטטרון. Tosfos (*Yevamos* 16: ד"ה פסוק) quotes that opinion and asks from other sources that state the *malach* מטטרון was around

since the six days of Creation, long before Chanoch was born.

The Shelah HaKadosh answers that both sources are correct. During the six days of Creation, Hashem created the *malach* Mitatron. Some generations later, Chanoch was born. He lived in the era of the Flood, when many people were committing severe sins. Despite the challenges and corrupt trends of the time, he remained loyal to Hashem. In that merit, Hakadosh Baruch Hu united Chanoch with the *malach* Mitatron.

Because when one goes against the tide and is cautious with his thoughts and eyes, one can reach the highest levels, even the levels of the *malachim*.⁵

4. Chazal (*Koheles Rabba* 1:32) say, אין אדם מת והצי תאוותיו בידו, *Bederech tzachus*, this can mean, אין אדם מת, you won't die, והצי תאוותיו בידו, if you fight the *yetzer hara* and abstain from a *taavah*. It isn't as hard and as impossible as you might think.

5. The tzaddikim of Chabad say, "A נברל (the *neshamos* of tzaddikim in

Shabbos

The *yomim tovim* passed, but don't feel bad, because every seven days we have a greater holiday than all the *yomim tovim*. It is Shabbos. As it states in this week's *parashah* (2:3), ויברך אלוקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו, "Hashem blessed and sanctified the seventh day." Shabbos is holier than *yomim tovim* (as we say in *Shemonah Esrei* Friday night), וקדשתו מכל הומנים, "You made it holier than all other dates." Shabbos is similar to Yom Kippur, for it is a day of atonement. As Chazal (*Shabbos* 118:) say, "Whoever keeps Shabbos according to halachah, even if he worshiped *avodah zarah* like the generation of Enosh, he will be forgiven."

The *kaparah* we can get on Shabbos is greater than of Yom Kippur. As the

Minchas

(introduction) writes:

Shabbos

"People have immense awe for Yom Kippur because it is a day of atonement, as it states (*Vayikra* 16:30) בי ביום הזה יכפר, 'On this day I will atone...' Baruch Hashem, we have more than fifty Yom Kippurs each year. They are the fifty Shabbosim of the year."

The Taz (*Orach Chaim* 242) describes the attributes of the Shabbos. He writes, "Chazal say that Shabbos atones even for the sin of *avodah zarah*. How can that be? Without *teshuvah*, how does keeping Shabbos help? And if he does do *teshuvah*, why does he need Shabbos to atone for the sin? I think the explanation is that *teshuvah* alone isn't sufficient for his atonement. As Chazal (*Yoma* 86.) say, עבר

Gan Eden and the *malachim*) are jealous of a Yid who lives in this world, and struggles and strives to keep his eyes pure when he walks on the streets."

על בריתות ומיתות בית דין ועשה תשובה
 "If a תשובה ויוה"כ תולין ויסורין ממרקין
 person transgresses a sin punishable by *kares* or the death penalty in *beis din*, and then did *teshuvah*, *teshuvah* and Yom Kippur [begin the process] and *yesurim*, afflictions, totally cleanse him from his sin.' [Because for transgressing *mitzvos asei* (positive commands), *teshuvah* alone is sufficient. For violating לא תעשה (the prohibitions of the Torah), one needs *teshuvah* and Yom Kippur for his atonement. And for the severe sins of the Torah, for which the punishment is *kares* or מיתת בית דין, one needs *teshuvah*, and Yom Kippur, and also afflictions to be cleansed from the sin. However, if one does *teshuvah* and keeps Shabbos according to its laws, that is sufficient for his sins to be atoned for." He doesn't need *yesurim*.

The Minchas Shabbos says that this tells us that Shabbos's atonement is greater than that of Yom

Kippur. If one does *teshuvah* and he has Yom Kippur he still needs *yesurim*. However, if one does *teshuvah* and keeps Shabbos, he becomes cleansed from his *aveiros*. This is the great gift Hashem gave us, fifty times each year.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 89.) states that after Matan Torah, "the Satan asked Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Ribono Shel Olam! Where is the Torah?" The Torah was always in heaven, and suddenly the Satan didn't see the Torah anymore, and he wanted to know where it went.

Tosfos asks, וא"ת וכי שטן לא היה יודע מתן תורה, "Could it be that the Satan didn't know about Matan Torah?"

Tosfos quotes a Midrash that says that Hashem sent the Satan on a mission so he wouldn't know about matan Torah. This was to prevent the Satan from proclaiming, "This nation will sin in forty days from now with the golden calf,

and You want to give them the Torah?" Tosfos adds that the Torah was given in silence, so the Satan would not know about it.

Another answer is found in the teachings of Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash*, *drush* 1). Chazal tell us that the Torah was given on Shabbos, and on Shabbos, the Satan isn't around. As the *Zohar* states, כד עייל שבתא... "When Shabbos arrives, all *dinim* (including the Satan) leave." Therefore, the Satan didn't know about Matan Torah. This is another similarity between Yom Kippur and Shabbos. They are both

days when the Satan isn't around, and Hashem compassionately forgives the Jewish nation's sins.

The Meiri (introduction) explains that the body and the intellect oppose one another. The body wants worldly pleasures, and these pleasures prevent the mind from focusing on the Torah and other holy thoughts. The exception for this discrepancy is on Shabbos. Shabbos, the body says to the intellect, "Ride on me, and think your thoughts," because worldly pleasures don't disturb the mind from thinking higher thoughts.⁶

6. It is a good custom to bring in Shabbos early, called *tosfos Shabbos*. It is a *segulah* for *yeshuos*.

There was a couple that was childless for many years, and when they finally bore a child, he had a hole in his heart, and the doctors didn't see hope for the child's life. The broken parents went to the Chofetz Chaim. He advised them to bring Shabbos in early. This counsel saved the child's life. When the parents went for a follow-up visit, the doctors were shocked. There wasn't a hole in his heart anymore.

Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz *zy'a* once said, "If people would

Shabbos for Everyone

Some people think they aren't on the level to truly connect with the Shabbos. In this section, we will discover that Shabbos is for everyone.

Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* proved this with the following reasoning: If a lowly, most simple yid, who doesn't experience any *kedushas* Shabbos, carried on Shabbos, or did any of the other malachos, it is considered *chilul* Shabbos. If the Sanhedrin were in

power, he would be punished by *sekilah*, stoning. It follows that if he is associated with the punishments of transgressing Shabbos, he is also associated with the *kedushah* of Shabbos.

It states, והייתם לי סגולה מכל העממים. Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* explained that the vowel סגול (three dots in triangular formation) remains a סגול no matter how you turn it. You can turn it upside down or sideways, and you will always have the combination of one dot with two dots, the formation

listen to me, they would make *tosfos* Shabbos and then they wouldn't lack *parnassah* throughout the week."

The rabbanim of Minsk *zt'l* sent a letter to Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz *zy'a*, inviting him to join them for an emergency meeting. At that time, young Jewish children were being conscripted into the Czar's army, and the rabbanim wanted to convene a meeting to search for a solution.

When the messenger carrying the letter arrived, Reb Mordechai was in the midst of saying *Tehillim* with immense kavanah. When he finished, Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz told the messenger, "Tell the rabbanim at the gathering that if they can influence the Lithuanian Yidden to take on Shabbos two hours before sunset, I can annul all *gezeiros* against Bnei Yisrael."

of a *segal*. A Yid is similar, for no matter how he turns over (even when he falls drastically from his levels), he remains a yid, beloved to Hashem. He remains part of the עם סגולה.

At the end of *Lecha Dodi*, some say באי כלה three times, turning to face three different directions. Perhaps this is to hint that we are the עם סגולה, the chosen nation, and no matter how we turn ourselves –even when we are facing the wrong direction – we remain Hashem's beloved nation.

In the Shabbos song יה"ה אכסוף we say that Shabbos is

מתאחדת בסגולתך, unites with its spouse, the holy Jewish nation.⁷

Furthermore, we must know that although we think we aren't experiencing the joy and pleasure of Shabbos, that's not true. Everyone experiences Shabbos on his level.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 10:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, מתנה טובה יש לי בבית גנוי ושבת שמה ואני מבקש ליתנה לישראל לך והודיעם, 'I have a good present in my treasury, and it is called Shabbos. I want to give it to Bnei Yisrael. Go tell them.'" The Chidushei HaRim (*Likutei HaRim, Ki Sisa*) explains, "לך

7. Bederech Tzachus:

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 11:8) states that Shabbos said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Each day of the week has its spouse (Sunday pairs with Monday, Tuesday with Wednesday, Thursday with Friday), but you didn't give me a spouse?"

Hashem replied, "Bnei Yisrael will be your spouse."

Hashem was the *shadchan*. He made the *shidduch* between the Jewish nation and Shabbos. Therefore, we can be certain that it is a fitting *shidduch*. One shouldn't say that he isn't connected to Shabbos, because it's a *shidduch* made in heaven.

להודיעם, 'go tell them' is written in the future tense, because every *erev Shabbos kodesh*, as Shabbos approaches, Moshe Rabbeinu *a'h*, himself, goes to every yid and tells him that it's Shabbos. Even if a person is in a locked room, he will feel the holiness of Shabbos approaching."

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* (*Imrei Pinchas, Likutim, Shaar HaShabbos* 2) writes, "Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said that on Shabbos all lowly things can become elevated. Therefore, there's a custom to eat the foot of an animal (called *p'tcha/gala*). People also eat onions, for it grows low, near the ground, more than other vegetables. Also, people eat kasha (buckwheat), which from the *kitniyos*, grows the lowest... People wear a *shtreimel*, too, because it is made from tails of an animal, and we raise it to the head."

So we see that the lowest levels can reach the highest levels on Shabbos. Therefore, even the Yidden

who are on a very low level, will reach very high levels on Shabbos.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer (*ibid.* 3) adds the following fascinating idea: "The holy *rav*, Reb Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said that a *chazir* wallowing in his mud feels more pleasure and enjoyment when its Shabbos." So, undoubtedly then, everyone gets an *aliyah*, spiritual elevation, on Shabbos – even those on very low levels – and to some extent, they feel their elevation. The food tastes better for them, the Shabbos nap is more enjoyable than a weekday nap. And for many, the *tefillos* and the Torah study is more enjoyable on Shabbos. Shabbos is for everyone, and no one should think that he isn't associated with the *kedushah* of Shabbos.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said, "If a non-Jew knew the pleasure of studying Torah early Shabbos morning, he would convert just to be able to feel that pleasure."

Reb Avraham ben Avraham, the *ger tzedek* Pototsky *zt'l*, chose to renounce his vast inheritance from his wealthy father, and instead became a *vid*. When asked how he was able to give up so much, he said, "Friday night, when the Shabbos oil lamps go out, I have more enjoyment from that scent than from all the wealth in the world." Because every aspect of Shabbos is so enjoyable, and even if we don't experience it much (because we are on a low level), we experience it a little. That is our connection with Shabbos that we feel, and there is much more of a connection happening in the realm of the *neshamah* that we aren't aware of.

The Torah obligates us (*Vayikra* 19:32) *מפני שיבה תקום*, "Stand up for the elderly." *Derech Eitz Chaim* (from Reb Uziel Meizlish *zt'l*, *niftar* (תקמ"ז))

writes that this is because the elderly experienced many Shabbosim in their lifetime, and each Shabbos added on to their holiness.

This is a beautiful lesson, applicable to all elderly Yidden, including those who didn't feel anything special on Shabbos. They may have thought Shabbos was like any other day, only with many added halachos. They may have sung *zemiros*, but didn't feel any spiritual joy. Nevertheless, the Torah tells us that each Shabbos sanctified them, and in their older years, we must honor them for all the *kedushah* they attained.

The *Derech Eitz Chaim's* lesson continues, and he reveals this beautiful idea:

The Torah tells us that to sacrifice an animal, it must be at least eight days old.⁸ The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 27:10) uses a *meshal* to

8. As it states (*Vayikra* 22:27), שור או כשב או עז כי יולד ויהיה שבעת ימים תחת אמו ומיום

explain the reason for this halachah: "It can be compared to a king who came to a country and decreed that no one can come to see him before he sees the queen first. Similarly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says that we may not bring a *korban* before one Shabbos passes [to greet the Shabbos queen, the *Shechinah*] because, in the course of every seven days, there is one Shabbos. [Similarly] we don't do a *bris milah* without Shabbos" so the child can meet with the *Shechinah* before the *milah*.

The *Derech Eitz Chaim* quotes this Midrash to prove that Shabbos is for everyone. If it makes a difference for a newborn who doesn't know anything about Shabbos, it certainly does something for an adult. And if it can even

make a difference for an animal, it certainly means a lot for a yid who observes the Shabbos and tries to keep it in the best way.

Therefore, never feel that Shabbos isn't for you, because Shabbos is for everyone.

The *Zohar* (*Vayikra* p.182:) has a debate: Who is greater, Yidden or *malachim*? The *Zohar* concludes that *malachim* are greater on weekdays, and Yidden are greater on Shabbos. Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz (*Tiferes Yehonoson*, *Balak* ד"ה ועמד מלאך) says that this is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Bamidbar* 23:23), כעת יאמר, ליעקב מה פעל א"ל, this means on Shabbos (which is called כעת, because it is a special time) the *malachim* ask the Jewish nation, מה פעל א"ל, 'What is Hashem doing?' The Jewish nation is closer to Hashem

השמיני והלאה ירצה לקרבן אשה לה, "An ox, sheep, or goat that was born, it shall remain seven days under its mother, and from the eighth day on it is fitting to be a *korban* for Hashem."

on Shabbos, and they know more than *malachim*!

We don't feel this. Our minds aren't attuned to what our *neshamos* are experiencing. But to some extent, we do feel the *kedushah* of Shabbos (such as in the taste of the food, etc.). And even if we don't, we know that it is so. We are connected to and associated with the holy Shabbos. It is our weekly Yom Kippur and holiday, greater than all other days of the year.

Chesed

Initially, Hashem wanted to create the world only with the attribute of *din*, harsh justice. This means that if someone

sinned, he would be punished immediately. But Hashem saw that the world couldn't exist in that mode, so Hashem added the attribute of compassion, *rachamim*.⁹

The Zera Shimshon asks, why can't the world exist with the attribute of *din*? It seems it would be a more perfect world if it were so. Whenever someone sinned, he would be immediately punished, and people would learn to be cautious. Everyone will be afraid to do *aveiros*. Whereas, when the world is created with compassion, people know they won't be punished immediately, causing them to be lax with

9. The Torah begins, בראשית ברא אלקים, and אלקים is Hashem's name for *din*. This describes Hashem's initial plan to create the world with the attribute of *din*. Afterwards it states (*Bereishis* 2:4), ביום עשות ה' אלקים, "The day Havayah Elokim created earth and heaven." This *pasuk* adds the name הו"ה, which represents the attribute of *rachamim*, compassion. Rashi (1:1) writes, "Originally, Hashem planned to create the world with the attribute of *din*, but He saw the world won't exist that way, so he added in the attribute of compassion, and connected it to the attribute of *din*."

the mitzvos. Wouldn't it be so much better if the world was created with *din*?

The Zera Shimshon answers, the Mishnah in *Avos* tells us that the world stands on three pillars,¹⁰ and one of them is *gemilus chasadim*, deeds of kindness. Chazal (*Shabbos* 133:) say, *מה, הוא רחום והגון אף אתה היה רחום והגון*, "Just as Hashem is compassionate and kind, so shall you be compassionate and kind." We learn to be compassionate and kind by emulating Hashem's ways. If Hashem had created the world only with *din*, we wouldn't see Hashem's compassion in the world, and we wouldn't be able to learn from His ways. The result is that no one would help his fellow man. The pillar of *gemilas chasadim* that holds up the creation would be lacking. Hashem

saw that the world can't exist this way, and He created the world also with the attribute of compassion.

From this concept, we derive the importance of *chesed*. The Zera Shimshon explained that if Hashem created the world only with *din*, the world would be a perfect place – as far as *ben adam lamakom* is concerned. Everyone would be cautious with all the mitzvos; everyone would be afraid to sin. However, in the area regarding *ben adam lechaveiro*, things would be very lacking. People wouldn't help their fellow man. Hashem chose to create the world with the attribute of compassion, although Hashem knew that people would serve Him less because of that, so they would learn from

10. As it states in *Pirkei Avos* (1:1), *על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים*, "The world stands on three pillars: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim*."

His ways to do deeds of kindness.

Rashi (2:7) writes that Adam was made מן התחתונים ומן העליונים, "from the lower world [because his body was formed from the earth of this world] and from the Heavens [his *neshamah* came from above when Hashem blew life into his nostrils]. Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* taught that the difference between the תחתונים ועליונים, the lower and the upper worlds, is that everything in this world is lacking, and one needs the aid of others for completion, whereas whatever is in heaven is complete. Hashem created man from both worlds so that for one's own needs, one should be like the beings in heaven who don't need others' help. Similarly, he should strive to manage on his own without being dependent on others. When

it comes to other people's needs, he should remember that they were created from below, from the earth, which means they need our help.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 88:) states, קשה עונשן של מדות יותר, מעונשן של עריות, "The punishment for having inaccurate weights, scales and measuring cups [thereby tricking people by selling them less than the amount they requested] is worse than the punishment allotted for sins of *arayos* (adultery). The Gemara explains that this is because one can do *teshuvah* on *arayos*, but it is impossible to do *teshuvah* on the sins of *middos* (inaccurate weights and scales, etc.). He cheated and stole from many people, and he doesn't remember who to pay back. How can he correct it?¹¹

11. The Rashbam explains, "*Teshuvah* helps for the sin of *arayos*, if he does a good *teshuvah*. As it states (*Hosheia* 14), שובו בנים שובבים ארפא

Using a play on words, the Chasam Sofer (*Choshen Mishpat* 20) writes about the importance of having good *middos*, כשם שקשה עונשן של מדות מעונשן של עריות כך גדול שכרן של מדות טובות משכרן של אריות בתורה "Just as the punishment for bad *middos* (scales, weights, and measuring cups) is worse than the punishment for *arayos*, similarly, the reward for good *middos* (people who are kind and benevolent towards others) is greater than the reward of אריות, being like a lion, excelling in Torah study." The Chasam Sofer adds that those who have good *middos* create a *kiddush Hashem*. ומה הבריות אומרים פלוני שלמד "What do people say? This person

who learns Torah, fortunate are his parents and teachers..." The Chasam Sofer reveals that good *middos* is a greater level than being great in Torah without good *middos*.

On every day of Creation it states כי מוב, except for the second day. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 4:6) says that this is because division happened on this day. As it states (1:6), ויאמר אלקים יהי רקיע, "Let there be a heaven between the water, to divide between the upper waters and the lower waters," and division isn't מוב.

משובחם, that with *teshuvah*, Hashem will cure and heal his sins... But if someone had inaccurate scales and measuring cups, he stole from many people, and it is impossible for him to do *teshuvah*. This is because his *teshuvah* requires him to (*Vayikra* 5), והשיב את הגזילה, to return what he stole, but he doesn't know to whom he must give back money. Although Chazal say that he should use this money for a public service [like to build a beis medresh or *lehavdil* a bridge, and thereby he will benefit and somewhat pay back those who stole from] nevertheless, this isn't a perfect *teshuvah*, because he isn't actually paying back what he owes. It is just the best he can do under the circumstances."

The Midrash concludes, "If a division for the sake of creation isn't good, a division (*machlokes*) that destroys the world certainly isn't good."¹²

It states (3:23-24), וישלחוהו' אלקים מוגן ערן לעבוד את האדמה אשר לקח Hashem sent Adam out of Gan Eden... and he banished him..." First it states, וישלחוהו', he was sent out of Gan Eden, and then it states, ויגרוש, he was banished from Gan Eden. The Chasam Sofer zt'l (*Toras Moshe* פנ' ישלח ר"ה) explains that after Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, Hashem wanted to banish him from Gan Eden, פנ' ישלח, ידו ולקח גם מעץ החיים ואכל וחי לעולם,

"Lest he...eats from the Tree of Life and he will live forever." Nevertheless, Hashem didn't want to embarrass Adam. Therefore, Hashem sent him out of Gan Eden, like he was being sent on a mission. After he left Gan Eden, the gates of Gan Eden were closed behind him, and he couldn't return. So he was essentially banished from Gan Eden but in a less humiliating way.¹³

We learn from this a great lesson in *middos*. When you must rebuke or punish someone (such as a student or your child), be cautious about doing so in

12. There was a division on the first day, too, for it states (1:4), ויברל Hashem made a division between light and darkness." So why does it say כי טוב about the first day? Chazal tell us that light represents *tzaddikim* and darkness represents *resha'im*. To separate yourself from *resha'im* is a division that is always good.

13. The Satmar Rebbe zt'l wouldn't tell people to leave his room. He would tell them to go to the next room. That is a nicer way of speaking. This is what Hashem did with Adam. He didn't tell him to leave, just to go on a mission somewhere else.

a way that doesn't humiliate.

A similar lesson can be learned in this week's parashah from the *pasuk* (1:16): ואת המאור הקטן לממשלת הלילה, ואת הכוכבים "The smaller light [the moon] to rule by night [together with] the stars." Rashi writes that Hashem wanted to appease the moon because Hashem dimmed its light. To appease the moon, Hashem created stars to shine at night together with the moon.

The truth is, the moon deserved the punishment because he complained that it wasn't good that he and the sun were equal in brightness. Nevertheless, since the moon felt bad and humiliated, Hashem sought to appease it. Once again, this tells us that if you have to punish someone, do it in a nice way, and even try to appease them afterward.

Bereishis: The Beginning of the Torah

When a father brings his son to cheder for the first time, the father is very happy because his son is starting to learn Torah. The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitz *zt'l* said that this helps us understand the great joy in heaven on *Shabbos Bereishis*. It is a new beginning, and Hashem rejoices that His children will be studying the *parashah* each week.

Similarly, when we open the *aron kodesh* to take out the *sefer Torah*, it is an *eis ratzon*, an auspicious time, for *tefillos* to be answered. This is because whenever we are about to study Torah, it arouses joy in heaven.

The Pnei Menachem said that a similar joy is aroused in heaven whenever a Torah student takes a Gemara off the shelf to study. This deed is comparable to opening the *aron kodesh* to read from the

Torah. It is a new beginning of studying the Torah, which generates an *eis ratzon* in heaven.

The Pnei Menachem proved this concept from the halachah that one should own his own *Sefer Torah* (see *Shulchan Aruch Yorah Dei'ah* 270:2). The Rosh says that in these generations when people study from *sefarim*, we can keep this mitzvah by buying *sefarim* (such as Gemaras, Mishnayos, etc.). The Rosh writes, "The mitzvah of writing a *sefer Torah* is so one can learn from it... With a Gemara and commentaries, one knows the meaning of the mitzvos and the laws, and he attains clarity. In the same way, by acquiring these *sefarim*, one accomplishes the mitzvah of writing a *sefer Torah*."

Also, when a yeshiva begins to study, there is no greater *eis ratzon* than that! Because new beginnings for Torah create a *nachas ruach* and joy in heaven.

Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* (*Sefer Chaim* 36) says that the twelve days following Simchas Torah are an exceptional time – each day corresponds to one month of the year. "We received the tradition that as one acts during these twelve days, that is how it will be always, this year. The early chassidim have a custom to purify themselves during these days, with their thoughts and speech... On these days they review their studies...and this is a wonderful *segulah* to receive Hashem's aid throughout the year. Wherever he turns, he will succeed – in the realm of Torah, in the realm of chassidus, and also in the realm of all his business ventures."

Reb Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* would say that studying Torah after a holiday creates a vessel to retain all the bounty that one acquired during the holidays.

Begin Again

The Lechovitzer *zt'l* taught, בראשית ברא אלוקים, Hashem created the world for בראשית, new beginnings.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 3.) says, אין אדם עובר עבירה אלא אם כן נכנס בו רוח שטות, "A person doesn't sin unless a spirit of foolishness enters him." When a person is wise and intelligent, he won't sin. Why should he? And therefore, always after one commits an *aveirah*, he regrets it immensely. Only in a moment of the passion for sins is that one loses his logical mind, and all he wants is the *aveirah*.

This happened to Chavah after she ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Rashi (3:6) writes that Chavah wanted Adam also to eat the fruit of this tree because she feared that "she might die and Adam would marry someone else." This means she knew she might die because of her sin. But she didn't think about dying when she ate

it. The Steipler Gaon *zt'l* points this out and explains that one doesn't think logically in the moment of temptation. All he wants is the sin. Afterward, his intellect and his *neshamah* wake up, and he recognizes the foolishness of his deed.

The lesson: When the *yetzer hara* tries to tempt you, don't trust him when he tells you that this is for your benefit. Soon, after the passion fades, you will regret what you did...

However, if you fell for the *yetzer hara's* ploy, and you ate from the tree of knowledge, or committed some other sin, now is the time to focus on the future. You must pick yourself up and forget about what happened.

The *yetzer hara* doesn't want you to do that. He wants you to focus on the past and be very upset about what you did because he knows that being dejected will bring you to do more sins.

After their sin, Adam and Chavah wrapped themselves in the leaves of a fig tree. As it states (3:7), ויתפרו עלי תאנה ויעשו להם חגורות, "They sewed fig leaves and made belts for themselves." The Midrash states (and is quoted in Rashi) that all trees refused to allow Adam to take their leaves. Tosfos (*Sanhedrin* 70: ר"ה ב) explains that Adam tried taking leaves from other trees, but those trees pushed him away, saying, "This is the person who sinned... He is a thief..." Only the fig tree allowed him to take the leaves (according to one opinion, the Tree of Knowledge was a fig tree).

Reb Ben Tzion Apter *zt'l* said that in Yiddish, a fig is called א. פאג. This is also an expression that people say when they want to express, "I don't care what you say and what you think." They put their thumb in between their first two fingers, and they say א. פאג. Reb Ben Tzion Apter says that this is what

Adam and Chavah told all the trees that rebuked them. Adam and Chavah replied, "We don't care what you say. We will not become sad because of you." And that is the correct attitude to have whenever one falls from his *avodas Hashem*, and the *yetzer hara* tells him to give up. One should respond, "I refuse to despair. I will try again."

The leaves were woven into belts, as it states ויעשו להם חגורות. The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* said that this hints to another Yiddish expression: זיך אונטער גענארמל'ט, which means to put on your belt and to make yourself strong and to try again. Because after failure, the only way to succeed is to strengthen yourself with joy and try again.

Kayin also endured disappointment. His *korban* wasn't accepted, and Hashem told him (4:6), למה, נפלו פניך, "Why are you sad...?"

But why shouldn't he be sad? Hashem didn't accept his *korban*!

The Seforno explains, "When there is a קלקול, failure, it isn't proper to moan over the past. One should try to improve the future." This is the road we should take. Moaning over the past only leads to more sins. That is indeed what happened to Kayin. His distress resulted in the

killing of his brother, Hevel.

But if you gird yourself and try again, you will reach very high levels. As Hashem told Kayin, אם תשוב, if you improve your ways, שאת, you will reach even higher levels!

Because that is the nature of *teshuvah*; one can reach a greater level than had he never sinned.

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