

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

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Bechukosai



לזכות רפואה שלמה מלכה בת רחל ומינאל בן שלי

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## Parashas Bechukoisai

This week's *parashah* begins with the words, **אם** בחוקותי תלכו. The Divrei Yisrael *zt'l* explains: **הק** means *parnassah* (as in **הטריפני להם חוקי**, *Mishlei* 30:8). **חוקים** are also mitzvos that we don't know their reason. The *pasuk* is implying that the concept of working for *parnassah* is a *chok*, a matter that isn't understood. For, work doesn't bring *parnassah*; *parnassah* is from Hashem. So why must one work? What does work accomplish? It's a *chok*, a not understood rule that everyone must do.

The Divrei Yisrael adds, **אין טוב** לפרנסה כמו אמונה, "There is nothing better for attaining *parnassah* than *emunah*."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes people say, "Years

ago, *parnassah* was easy. But now things have become difficult..." We must know that it is never the "time" or the "generation" that's the problem. Hashem is always giving *parnassah*. Only, it is up to us to have *emunah*, to attain the *parnassah*.

This is alluded to in the words, **והיה אמונת עתך** (*Yeshayah* 33:6). It isn't **עתך**, the times or the generation, that is the problem, rather the **אמונה**, the lack of *emunah*. If we increase *emunah*, *parnassah* will also increase.

We say, **ותקננו בעצה טובה מלפניך**. Literally, these words mean, "Establish us with good advice..." **עצה** also means *emunah*, as we say in the *piyut* (Rosh Hashanah) **עצתו** אמונה, "His counsel is

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1. Rebbe Henoch of Alexander *zt'l* teaches that in the *shemittah* year, when farmers leave the land barren, they think they are losing their *parnassah*. Actually, leaving the land barren because of their belief in Hashem will only increase their *parnassah*. Because *emunah* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

*emunah*." Thus, ותקנונו בעצה טובה means that Hashem should place into our hearts *emunah* to know that everything is from Hashem.

The Sefer Chassidim (309) explains that when Hashem wants to give someone wealth, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu sends *malachim* to place into the hearts of the merchants to import merchandise to the location where that person is located. The *malachim* also place a desire in that person to buy their merchandise. Then the *malachim* place into the hearts of consumers to go to him to buy the merchandise, or the angels will place into the person's heart to go to them." We see from this wonderful quotation that the thoughts that come into one's mind of what to buy, where to go, etc. are all from Hashem. Everything is destined and planned, down to the smallest

details. This is how people earn money (and this is how people lose money). Nothing happens if it isn't dictated from Above.

When one knows that everything is from Hashem, he realizes that some steps of *hishadlus* for *parnassah* are totally unnecessary. For example, Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl ז"ל taught that adding another door to a store, thereby having an entrance to the main street and not solely on a side street, is unnecessary *hishtadlus*.

The Chazon Ish (*Emunah u'Bitachon* 5) writes, "Humility is the trademark trait of those who have *bitachon*. They aren't proud of themselves that they have *bitachon*. They cry that they don't have enough *bitachon*. Actually, their *bitachon* is at a very high level."<sup>2</sup>

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2. The Meor Einayim (Rebbe Nachum of Chernobyl zy'a) was an orphan from both parents, who was raised by his uncle. His uncle was more generous with his own children than with the Meor Einayim. For

**"One Doesn't Touch that which is Destined for Others..."**

Chazal (*Yoma* 38:) say, אין אדם, נוגע מן המוכן לחבירו אפילו כמלא נימא, "One doesn't touch that which is destined for his friend, not even a hairsbreadth."

The Ben Ish Chai zt'l (*Ben Yohayada*) expounds on the word נוגע, touch. He explains that not only will Hashem prevent others from taking away your *parnassah*; they

won't even be able to touch it. That is how distant they will be held away from taking your *parnassah*.

The Ben Ish Chai tells a story, "A jug filled with precious stones was buried and concealed under the ground in a vacation resort. Every summer many people camped in that field to enjoy the fresh air. They would insert large pegs deeply into the ground,

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example, he gave his children bread with butter, and for Reb Nachum, he only gave bread.

Once, there was a can of cement on the table. Reb Nachum thought that it was some kind of spread, and he put it on his bread. Afterwards, obviously, he couldn't eat the bread. He said, "I learned from that episode that when one takes what isn't his, he loses his own, too."

Once, a wealthy person sent his butler to deliver wine to the Meor Einayim. (In that era, it was common for chassidim to send wine or other gifts to tzaddikim, because the Gemara compares it to bringing *bikurim*.)

The Meor Einayim asked the butler, "Did you wear tefilin today?"

The butler said that he hadn't. "I woke up late today, and I had to rush to work. After working for some time, I needed to eat something. After eating, I thought, *what good is it if I wear tefilin now, after eating?* So I didn't put on tefilin today."

The Meor Einayim told him that he should put on the tefilin anyway.

After he left, the Meor Einayim told his students, "This man is obviously unlearned. His knowledge and appreciation for tefilin is apparently very shallow. The kashrus of his tefilin is also questionable. Yet, I was able to discern that he hadn't worn tefilin today. Because the impact of mitzvos on the soul, no matter how they are performed, is extremely profound.

and put up tents. This happened countless times. Sometimes, the pegs were only a *tefach* away from the treasure, but no one ever actually hit the jug, and it remained concealed.

“One year, a newcomer came to the field for a vacation. As he was pushing his peg into the ground, he hit something hard in the ground. He dug some more and found the treasure. This is the meaning of, אין אדם נוגע מן המוכן לחבירו אפילו, במלא נימא, ‘A person doesn’t touch that which is destined for his friend, not even a hairsbreadth.’ The jug with the treasure were destined for him, and therefore, all the others who came to the field never touched the place where the jug was buried.”

As his name denotes, Reb Dovid Saltzer would sell salt for his *parnassah*. When a competitor opened a salt store, Reb Dovid was worried he might lose his *parnassah*. He knew his fear was unfounded

because *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and no one can take away what is destined for him, nevertheless, he was afraid. He went to his Rebbe, Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz *zt'l*. He didn’t go to his Rebbe for a salvation, that the Rebbe should bless him with *parnassah* despite the competition. On the contrary, he came to the Rebbe with a broken heart, and said, "I need a *brachah* or a counsel to attain *emunah* and *bitachon*, because I see that I’m very distant from having genuine *emunah* and *bitachon*. Ever since a competitor opened up another salt store in my city, I am worried that I might lose my *parnassah*, although I know *parnassah* comes from Hashem and there is nothing to fear..."

Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz spoke with Reb Dovid Saltzer about *emunah* and *bitachon*, and fortified his trust in Hashem. They spoke at length, until Reb Dovid Saltzer felt he had sufficient ideas to focus

on, to strengthen his *emunah* and to believe that he won't lose any money, despite the competition.

Sometime later, he returned to the Rebbe of Lechovitz, and said, "Baruch Hashem, my *emunah* and *bitachon* have increased. I'm no longer concerned about the competition. When I see people going into the other salt store, I know that no one is taking away my *parnassah*. However, I can't say that I'm happy that people are going to the other salt store — and this is the reason I came back to speak with you. When I see people going to other shops — such as the fish store, shoemaker, baker, tailor, etc. — I'm happy for the shopkeepers. I'm glad they're making *parnassah*. How can I reach the level that I should be happy when I see people going to the other salt store? Apparently, my *emunah* and *bitachon* are still not perfect." Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz spoke with Reb

Dovid Saltzer some more about *emunah* and *bitachon*, until Reb Dovid Zaltzer reached the level that he was happy when consumers went to his competitor, to buy salt.

The Beis Avraham (Slonim) repeated this story to someone who told him that competition was taking away his *parnassah*.

The man asked the Beis Avraham, "What reward did Reb Dovid Saltzer receive for passing this test?"

The Beis Avraham answered, "First of all, just to be on this high level — to be happy when your competition is earning money — is already reward. Secondly, Reb Dovid Saltzer's daughter married the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim!

Isn't that a great reward?"

Reb Shlomo Cohen had a printing shop in Bnei Brak. A competitor opened another printing shop on the very same street as his store! But Reb Shlomo wasn't upset. In fact, he helped his competitor with

hands-on advice, to help him advance his business. The Chazon Ish was very impressed by this and alluded to this episode in his *sefer*, *Emunah u'Bitachon* (5). He writes, "Someone who has *bitachon*...will not be afraid when someone opens up another store in his neighborhood. He will even try to help him and offer good counsel. How much *kedushah* is increased in the world when one does kindness for his competitor! This validates the praise of the G-d fearing Yidden! He is fortunate, and fortunate is his generation."

Someone came to Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* lamenting that a competitor opened a store directly across the street of his own store. He was very concerned about it.

Rebbe Shlomke listened silently and didn't respond.

The man told Rebbe Shlomke, "There was once a tzaddik who wanted to help a pauper, so he broke off a

piece of wood from his table, put it into water, and the splinter began to grow fruit. This meant the chassid would become wealthy. Perhaps the Rebbe can do that for me too?"

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "We are not obligated to believe that the story you told me is true. Many stories are rumors, and never happened. But we are obligated to believe that no one can take away the *parnassah* that is destined for you. But I see you believe in what you don't have to believe in, while you don't believe in what you must believe in..."

### **Becoming a Human Being**

On the second day of Pesach, the *korban omer*, made of barely, is sacrificed. Barley is generally animal food. We then count fifty days until Shavuos, when the *shtei halechem* are brought. The *shtei halechem* are made from wheat flour, which is flour fitting for humans. This hints that during the fifty days of

the *omer*, we can rise from being like an animal to being a human being (see *Aruch HaShulchan* 489:3).

What makes a person “human”?

In *Shacharis* we say, מותר האדם מותר הבהמה אין... These words can be translated that the quality of man over animal is man's ability to say אין, no.

Animals act by instincts, they can't control themselves. But מותר האדם מן הבהמה, man's greatness over animals is אין, that he can shout "no" to whatever isn't Hashem's will.

The Rebbe of Ishbitz זt'l taught:

The head of human beings rests on top of the body. This indicates that his mind rules over his actions. By an animal, the head and the body are on the same plane, which implies that the mind can't control its corporeal instincts.

If a person has intelligence, but he doesn't follow his

conscience, he is essentially the same as an animal.

When the railroad system was invented, the Shinover Rav זt'l explained that people used to be greater than animals, and therefore they rode on animals. Today, they aren't greater than animals anymore, but they are greater than *domeim*, inanimate objects. So they ride on metal trains, but they don't have the right to ride animals.

A *bachur*, whose spiritual level was declining, asked Reb Shalom Shwadron זt'l for permission to travel to a certain place not appropriate for a yeshiva student. Reb Shalom Shwadron replied, “If you can answer my questions, you can go there.”

Reb Shalom asked him, "Is it better to be a human being or an animal?"

The *bachur* replied that it is obvious that the human being is a more elite race. "Animals eat outdoors, they rummage through the garbage, they never wash up..."

Reb Shalom told him there is another way to look at things: Animals lead tranquil lives. They find their meals wherever they go. They never get into *machlokes*. They never have to take medicine... In contrast, human beings have financial problems, they get into disputes, one day with one person, the next day with someone else..."

The *bachur* changed his mind. "Perhaps it is better to be an animal. I wish I was created an animal..."

Reb Shalom told him, "You don't have to worry about it. You're a perfect animal..."

A person, whose mind doesn't rule over his body, and is unable to say "no" to sins, is ultimately like an animal that functions by instinct without intelligence.

There was once a priest who claimed it's possible to train animals to be exactly like humans. Reb Yohonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* disagreed, and told the priest, "You can train

an animal, but its essence remains an animal. It doesn't become human-like."

The priest said they should debate the matter in public. The priest would bring out his trained animals, and Reb Yonoson Eibshitz should try to prove that they aren't becoming human, despite their very human behaviors.

Shortly before the debate, Reb Yonoson Eibshitz was learning Torah and a mouse jumped into his open snuffbox, without Reb Yonoson realizing it. When he closed the box, the mouse was caught inside.

At the debate, a lavish meal was served by cats who were trained to walk on two feet! The cats were carrying trays and serving the guests! It was a truly outstanding feat.

Reb Yonoson took out his snuffbox to sniff some tobacco, and the mouse that was caught inside jumped out. When the cats saw the mouse

they immediately dropped their trays laden with food and ran wildly after the mouse. It was proven that cats remain cats; they don't change their essence despite their training. Hakadosh Baruch Hu arranged it that the truth of Reb Yonoson's view should be revealed.

An animal remains an animal, but a person can change. Even if a person acts like an animal, he can become a 'human being' if he wants to.

He can say "no" when it isn't Hashem's will, because מותר אין, a person's quality over an animal is his ability to say "no" to sins.<sup>3</sup>

### **Hakadosh Baruch Hu's Gan Eden**

After a person finishes his life, he goes to his reward in Gan

Eden. Hashem also has His own Gan Eden. The Divrei Yisrael ז'ל writes, Hakadosh Baruch Hu's Gan Eden is a Yid's heart.

The Divrei Yisrael ז'ל writes, "The Gan Eden of Bnei Yisrael is in heaven and Hashem's Gan Eden is within a Yid. As it states (*Shemos* 25:8), ושכנתי בתוכם 'I will dwell within them.' Hashem dwells within the heart of the Yid who turns his heart away from the foolishness of this world, and who gives his heart over to his Father in heaven."

It states, והתהלכתי בתוכם, "I will walk within your midst..." and Rashi explains, אטייל עמכם בן, ערן, "I will walk with you in Gan Eden..."

Where is this Gan Eden?

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3. Chazal say, אדם ניכר בכוסו בכיסו ובכעסו, "A person's nature is identified with his cup, his wallet, and anger." This means, people can hide their true personality, but (1) when he drinks, (2) when he deals with money, and (3) when he becomes angry, his true personality comes forth.

We can also explain that by acting properly in these three matters, אדם ניכר, he is recognized that he is indeed an אדם, a human being and that he isn't an animal.

The Divrei Yisrael explains, “Rashi is saying Hashem will be within the Yid, because that is where Hakadosh Baruch Hu’s Gan Eden is located.”<sup>4</sup>

Also, the Or HaChaim HaKadosh writes (in this week's parashah), “ונתתי משכני... בתוכם... Hashem’s primary dwelling place is within the *neshamos* of His holy nation. ולא תגעל נפשי ‘I will not be disgusted from you’... Hashem feared that Bnei Yisrael will say that the human mind doesn’t understand why Hakadosh Baruch Hu will dwell with us. How could the endless holiness dwell within a human being, made from flesh and blood... In response, the Torah says, ולא תגעל נפשי אתכם,

‘I will not be disgusted from you.’ ... והתהלכתי בתוכם means that it isn’t only that Hashem won’t be disgusted from you. He will derive pleasure residing within you... והתהלכתי represents a pleasure stroll [within the Jewish people]...”

What does a person have to do, so Hashem will dwell within him? The Divrei Yisrael replies, “Hashem dwells within the heart of a Yid who turns his heart away from the foolishness of this world, and who gives his heart over to his Father in heaven.”

We live in a *gashmiyos*, material world, and the heart desires the mundane pleasures. When a Yid turns away from all those

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4. Similarly, the Avodas Yisrael *zt'l* (this week’s *parashah* on the words, (והתהלכתי בתוכם) writes, “Hashem’s טיול בגן עדן (stroll in Gan Eden) is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu derives pleasure from the *neshamos* of tzaddikim. Even before Hashem created the world, Hashem derived pleasure, every day, from the *neshamos* of tzaddikim. Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world for them. As the Midrash states, נמלך הקב"ה בנשמות הצדיקים וכו' ‘Hakadosh Baruch Hu took counsel from the *neshamos* of tzaddikim and created the world.’ ...This is the translation of והתהלכתי בתוכם...”

temptations, and instead focuses on serving Hashem, he is preparing a Gan Eden for the Creator in his heart. As astonishing as it sounds, Hashem will dwell there!

Reb Eliyahu Roth *zt'l* said, “When a person finishes his life in this world and goes up to heaven, the court of heaven will ask him, ‘What did you bring with you from that world?’ If he answers that he brought *ahavah* and *yirah*, love and fear of Hashem, the *malachim* will answer, ‘Listen to your right, and hear the *malachim* say, קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבא-ות with immense love. Listen to your left and hear the *malachim* say, ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו with great awe and fear. You didn't have to import love and fear all the way from the world you call ‘Olam HaZeh.’ Love and fear is a common commodity here in heaven.

Our question is, what did you bring to this world that we don't have up here? Tell us about the times you were tempted to be angry at someone and you overcame your anger? Tell us how you overcame temptation and jealousy? These are commodities *malachim* don't have in heaven and we yearn to hear about them.”<sup>5</sup>

When a father travels far away for several weeks, he will often return with presents or nosh for his children. He will look for items that can't be bought near his home, because if they can be bought near his home, the gifts won't be unique for the children. Similarly, heaven wants to receive gifts that are unique, and they are our battles against the *yetzer hara*. Those are the unique and precious commodities in heaven.

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5. Obviously, our love and fear of Hashem are also extremely precious in heaven. But their specialness is when we acquire them with toil, by overcoming the *yetzer hara*. That is something that doesn't exist in heaven.

**Tochachah**

There is a principle called, מדה טובה מרובה, Hashem's attribute of kindness is at least five hundred times greater than His attribute of *midas hadin*, harsh justice.

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* asks, why then is the *tochachah* so long in this week's *parashah* (from 26:14 to 26:46) while the *brachos*, stated in this week's *parashah*, are far shorter (from 26:3 until 26:13)? Shouldn't the *brachos* be longer, because of the מדה טובה מרובה rule?<sup>6</sup>

The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 35:1) writes that in a way, there are many more *brachos* than *tochachah*. This is because the *brachos* begins with the letter א (as it states אם) and concludes with the letter ה (as it states ואלך). The *brachos*

traverse all the letters of the alef beis.

In contrast, the curses of the *tochachah* begins with the letter ו"ו and ends with the letter ה"ה. It begins with, ואם, the first letter is a ו"ו, and ends with ה' את משה, the final letter is a ה"ה. This means the *tochachah* traverses letters ו"ו to ה"ה, which are two letters right next to each other in the alef beis. Thus they are far less potent than the *brachos*.

The Midrash adds, ולא עוד אלא, "Furthermore [the two letters of the *tochachah* – ו"ו and ה"ה] are also in reverse order. The *tochachah* begins with a ו"ו and goes back to the letter ה', unlike the *brachos* that are in order, from א' to ת'.

Why are those two letters in reverse order symbolic of fewer curses?

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6. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Netzavim*) writes that there are 147 chapters of *Tehillim* (according to the *Gemara Pesachim* 117.) and there are 147 curses (forty-nine in *Bechukosai* and ninety-eight in *Ki Savo*). The 147 chapters neutralize all the 147 curses.

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* answers with a *mashal*:

There was a wealthy person who bought an expensive suit for his son. At first, the son was careful his clothes shouldn't become dirty. But after the novelty of the expensive clothing wore off, the son became negligent and every night, new stains were seen on his clothing.

The father told his son, "From now on, wear your suit inside out. When I see you are being careful with your clothing, you can wear them right side out again."

Obviously, he didn't appear beautiful with the clothing turned inside out. Seams and patches were seen, the colors didn't match, but at least the son's clothing remained clean.

Someone saw the boy with his unusual clothing, and he went over to the wealthy father to rebuke him. "Why is your son dressed this way? You can afford it. You should buy nice clothing for your son."

The father replied, "When I see my son being careful with his clothes, he can wear them the right way. Right now, he's wearing his clothes inside out so they don't become ruined."

The *nimshal* is, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave us the wonderful gift of Torah. All *brachos* are in it. But when Yidden aren't guarding the Torah, Hashem turns the *brachos* of the Torah inside out, and now they appear like *klalos*, curses. As the Midrash states, ולא עוד אלא שהן הפוכות. The *klalos* are essentially the *brachos* turned inside out so they appear like *klalos*. When Hashem sees us repenting and ready to keep the Torah, Hashem will dress us in the Torah and mitzvos in the right order, and the curses will turn into blessings.

The Dubno Magid's lesson gives us immense encouragement, because when one is suffering, he shouldn't think the blessings are far away. They are right there,

only in the wrong order. When he repents, everything will turn around and become good.

### The Purity of Torah

The *parashah* begins, אַם בתורה, בחוקתי תלכו, and Rashi explains, שתהיו עמלים בתורה, “You shall toil in Torah.”

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh ז"ל has forty-two explanations on these words.

One of his explanations is אַם בתורה, בחוקתי, if you will toil in Torah, תלכו, you will rise from your level to a higher level. Even a person who is on a very low level can rise to the highest levels by studying Torah.

This is as the Or HaChaim teaches in *parashas Emor* (22:12), “Even if a person is at the lowest level, and there is no level lower, he can reach the highest levels. His growth will be in accordance to the extent he toils in Torah.”

In the Or HaChaim’s 18th explanation the Or HaChaim writes, “The Gemara (*Succah*

45:) teaches that there are three levels of tzaddikim. Some see the *Shechinah*, but not clearly (באםפקלריא דלא נהרה). A greater level is those who see Hashem clearly (באםפקלריא דנהרה). [The highest level is] like a slave who has permission to come before their master whenever he wants. These are the tzaddikim whom Hashem gives them permission to enter before Him whenever they choose. How do they merit that high level? Hashem replies, אַם בתורה, בחוקתי, תלכו, they have permission to go and enter without asking permission.” Because by learning Torah, one reaches the highest levels.

(The Gemara writes that Reb Shimon bar Yochai reached that level.)

Chazal (*Yoma* 85) say, מזה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל, “Just as a *mikvah* purifies those who are *tamei*., Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael.”

Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen ז'ל explains that Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael when a Yid is connected to Torah. But one must be totally attached to Torah. Just as the *mikvah* purifies when one is entirely immersed in the *mikvah*, similarly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael when they are totally immersed in studying Torah. The Torah is called לְבוּשׁוֹ שֶׁל הַקֹּדֶשׁ, Hakadosh Baruch Hu's clothing, and by studying Torah one becomes united with Hashem and pure from all *tumah*.

Some say the *brachah* אֱלֹקֵי נִשְׁמָה in the morning after saying *birchas HaTorah*. This was the custom of the Chidushei HaRim ז'ל. He explained that he first thanks Hashem for giving us the Torah and then he thanks Hashem for life, because “If not for Torah, what purpose is there to life?”

When the Rebbe Reshab of Lubavitz ז'ל was ill, his son,

the Rebbe Riyatz ז'ל, asked the Chofetz Chaim ז'ל, the Or Someiach ז'ל, and the Rogechever Gaon ז'ל to daven for his father. People asked him why specifically asked these three tzaddikim.

He replied, “What can I do? Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves a mouth that speaks a lot of Torah.”

The Rebbe of Kotzk ז'ל said, there are many paths to become close to Hashem (through *chesed*, *tefillah*, *mitzvos*, etc.) but the safest path, from which one will not fall off, is through Torah study. This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Shir HaShirim* 1:2), בִּי טוֹבִים דוֹדִךְ מִיַּיִן. We can translate בִּי טוֹבִים, the best way, דוֹדִךְ, to become close to Hashem (who is called דוֹדִי, Friend) is מִיַּיִן, by studying Torah (יִינָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה).

*Hasmadah* in Torah also increases *emunah*. As it states (*Megillah* 6:), יִגְעַתִּי וּמִצְאָתִי, if you toil in Torah, תִּאֱמִין, you will believe in Hashem.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Matos, Haftarah*) writes in the name of the Hafla'ah *zt'l*, "Torah purifies the soul and connects a person to his Father in heaven. If we will study Mishnah and Talmud, the lessons of Ravina and Rav Ashi, and if we study the works of the *rishonim* and *acharonim* *zt'l*, the holiness and purity of these holy scholars who wrote these *sefarim* and are presently in Gan Eden, will come down to us. This unites us to Hashem and to His Torah."

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said to his grandson, Rebbe Moshe (son of Rebbe Aharon of Belz) *hy'd* *zt'l*, "By learning a *daf* Gemara, one can become so pure until he can see through a cement wall."

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 91) states, מכאן לתחיית המתים מן התורה.<sup>7</sup> The Chidushei HaRim

*zt'l* explained, one can reach the level of *techiyas hameisim*, to resurrect the dead, מן התורה, by studying Torah.

### Toil in Torah

The Torah says (26:3), אם בחקותי תלכו, and Rashi explains שתהיו עמלים בתורה, "You shall toil in Torah."

Every year, before Shavuos, we read אם בחקותי תלכו, because toiling in Torah is an ideal preparation for Torah.

Rashi writes, "Perhaps אם בחקותי תלכו means to keep the mitzvos? [That can't be, because the following words] state ואת מצותי תשמרו. Mitzvos are mentioned. So what is the translation of אם בחקותי תלכו? It means to toil in Torah, שתהיו עמלים בתורה."

We can still ask, how does Rashi know that the *pasuk* is referring specifically to *toil* in Torah. ? Perhaps the *pasuk* is referring to studying Torah.

7. Literally, מכאן לתחיית המתים מן התורה means "This is a source from the Torah to the resurrection of dead."

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* answers that Rashi understood it from the word בחקותי, which comes from the word חוק. A *chok* is a mitzvah that we don't know the טעם, the reason. Thus, the *pasuk* is referring to someone who learns Torah even though he doesn't have a טעם, taste, reason, and pleasure in studying Torah. That is toiling in Torah.

There are several forms of toil in Torah. One form of toil is to study Torah even when you don't want to, even when you don't have any טעם, taste and interest in studying Torah.

There are people who generally enjoy studying Torah, but after they reviewed a certain section of Torah several times, and they know it well, they aren't inspired to review it again. To review once again is toil. There are also those who don't understand Torah and therefore they don't appreciate Torah. Whatever the case, if they toil in Torah regardless,

they will earn all the blessings stated in the *parashah*.

Furthermore, if one toils in Torah even though he doesn't want to, he will love the Torah in the end. As it states (*Avos* 4:9), כל המקיים את התורה מעוני סופו, לקיימו מעושר, "Whoever keeps the Torah in poverty [and this also means spiritual poverty, because he doesn't want to study Torah] will ultimately keep the Torah in wealth" spiritual wealth, because he will begin to understand and love to study Torah.

The purpose of Creation is to toil in Torah. The Gemara (*Nidah* 30:) states, when a child is in its mother's womb, a *malach* teaches the child the entire Torah. At the birth, a *malach* touches the child on the lips so he will forget the entire Torah. Why must he forget? Isn't it better that he should remember the Torah? It's because the purpose of life is to acquire Torah through toil.

When Rivkah Imeinu passed a beis medresh, Yaakov wanted to leave her womb. Why? Wasn't it good to study Torah in his mother's womb, together with a *malach*? The answer, once again, is that the purpose is to acquire Torah through toil.

A *bachur* told the Chofetz Chaim that he wasn't succeeding in his Torah studies. The Chofetz Chaim told him, "Who says learning Torah is about succeeding? Learning Torah is about toiling, and you can toil and do the best you can..."

It states (*Bereishis* 49:15), וירא מנוחה כי טוב ואת הארץ כי נעמה ויט שכמו לסבול. Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke *zt'l* (quoted in *Yismach Yisrael, Naso* 4) explains that מנוחה is Torah, and את הארץ are the pleasures of this world. וירא כי טוב, the true goodness is to study Torah. ואת הארץ כי נעמה, the *gashmiyos*, material pleasures, are superficially sweet but not actual goodness. People are drawn to superficial

sweetness. The wise, however, ויט שכמו לסבול, accept the yoke of Torah, which is the ultimate goodness.

The Yismach Yisrael explains that they accept the yoke of Torah although they don't yet enjoy Torah. He writes, "This *pasuk* (וירא מנוחה כי טוב וכו') is referring to when they aren't enjoying studying Torah, and they nevertheless accept the yoke of Torah. This is as Chazal (*Avodah Zarah* 19.) state, 'One should always study Torah, even if he forgets, and even if he doesn't know what he is saying.' Because when one learns, Torah and he understands, and he has *pilpul* in Torah, he enjoys it. Could that be called עבודה ויגיעה ועמל, toil and hard work in Torah? When one enjoys Torah study, he never feels tired it is never tiresome. But when one doesn't have peace of mind, and especially when he doesn't understand what he is studying, that is *yegiah*, toil in Torah." But they accept that toil, ויט שכמו

וירא לָפְּנֵי because they know מְנוּחָה כִּי טוֹב is the ultimate good.<sup>8</sup>

### The Reward

The Sefer Chasidim (195) states, “When the *yetzer hara* is disturbing him, and he has to overcome the *yetzer hara*, he receives reward one hundred times greater.”

Reb Shmuel Salant זת'ל would often tell the following story:

There were two brothers, one was wealthy, and the other was poor. Every month, the wealthy brother would send

money to his poor brother, so he could study Torah.

One day, the wealthy brother said, “Since I’m supporting you, we should make a Yissacher -Zevulan alliance, so I can share your reward of your Torah studies in Olam HaBa.”

The poor brother replied, “I will ask Reb Chaim Volozhiner.”

Reb Chaim Volozhiner זת'ל told him, “You should certainly sign the contract with your brother. And tell your brother that even without the

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8. The wise will certainly choose to accept the yoke of Torah, because the pleasures of this world are just fleeting, for seventy, eighty years, while the joy and reward of Torah is eternal — in this world and in the next world.

The Alter of Kelm זת'ל would tell his students, “When people hear that someone died young, they are gripped with fear. They fear they might die young too. But when they hear someone was *niftar* at a ripe old age, they say ‘This is the way of the world’ and they aren’t frightened. I’m the opposite. When I hear someone died young, I’m not afraid, because I’m constantly davening that I should live long with *arichus yamim*. But when I hear that an old person died, I am reminded that no one can escape death. It is a fact of life that everyone encounters ... I begin to tremble with fear, and I remind myself that I too will die one day, and I must prepare myself for that world.”

contract he earned fifty percent of the reward, because he was supporting your Torah. Also, tell your brother that he won't receive reward for תורה מתוך הדחק, Torah studied amidst hardships. A special reward is designated for those who study Torah when it is hard for them, and that reward is reserved solely for the Torah scholar himself. The תומכי דאורייתא, supporters of Torah, won't receive those merits."

Reb Shmuel Salant would repeat this story to emphasize the immense reward that will come to those who toil in Torah, and study Torah even when it is hard. As we wrote, there are several types of toil in Torah. Whatever type of toil in Torah you are involved in, you will earn immense reward.

Chazal (*Sotah* 21:) say, עבירה מכבה תורה ואין עבירה מכבה תורה, "An *aveirah* extinguishes the reward of a mitzvah, but an *aveirah* can never extinguish the reward for studying Torah."

The Rebbe of Sokolov *zt'l* explains that this is because mitzvos are performed without toil. Even a goy, *lehavdil*, can technically hold an *esrog* in his hands. It isn't very hard. Therefore, an *aveirah*, which was performed without toil, can extinguish the reward of a mitzvah, performed without toil. But Torah is acquired with toil. An *aveirah*, performed without toil, won't extinguish Torah acquired with toil. The merit of Torah remains eternally.

The *Zohar* (vol.3 28:) states, "Although an *aveirah* can extinguish the reward of a mitzvah, the mitzvos that the *chachamim* do are never extinguished." The mitzvos of *chachamim* are an exception, because no *aveirah* can extinguish the reward.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* explains that this is because the *chachamim* perform mitzvos with toil. Their minds toil on deep and pure thoughts while they performing mitzvos. Thus, the mitzvah is born with

toil and an *aveirah* can't put out its light.

### The Path for Success in Torah

The truth is, the only way to acquire Torah is through toil. By relaxing and studying nonchalantly one can never acquire Torah.

Chazal (*Megillah* 6:) say, יַעֲתִי וּמִצַּאתִי תִאֱמָר, “If one says ‘I toiled in Torah and I found succeeded in Torah,’ believe him. But if he says... לֹא יַעֲתִי וּמִצַּאתִי, but if he says ‘I didn't toil in Torah and nevertheless I attained Torah’ אֵל תִּאֱמָר, don't believe him” because it is impossible to acquire Torah without toil.

The Maharsha says the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 116), הֵאֱמַנְתִּי כִּי אֶדְבַר אֲנִי, also teaches that one must toil to acquire Torah is acquired solely with toil.. The Mahrashah explains, הֵאֱמַנְתִּי, believe me, כִּי אֶדְבַר, when I say, אֲנִי עָנִיתִי מְאֹד, that I toiled a lot in Torah. אֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי בְּחֶפְזִי, but if I say I studied quickly,

without toil, and nevertheless I acquired Torah, כֹּזֵב הָאָדָם כֹּזֵב, man is a liar, and don't believe himme.

The Yismach Moshe (*Tefillah LaMoshe, Tehillim* 119, 162) asks that the words יַעֲתִי וּמִצַּאתִי don't seem to go together. Because וּמִצַּאתִי, to find, is when one finds something he wasn't expecting to find anything. How can one toil in Torah and then find it? When one toils in Torah he acquires it. He doesn't find it.

The Yismach Moshe answers, when one toils in one section of Torah, he will be granted the merit to understand other sections of Torah. It will be like he “found” the explanations of those *sugyos* (sections of Torah) because he didn't toil on those *sugyos*, and yet he understands them. In the merit of his toil in one section of Torah, the explanations of other sections in Torah become revealed to him.

## Yisrael

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 33) tells the story of Reb Shimon and Reb Elazar who hid in a cave for thirteen years. When they left the cave, Reb Elazar was very upset whenever he saw people engaged in worldly matters that were void of spirituality. He would look at them negatively, and they would literally get burnt. "Wherever Reb Elazar smote, Reb Shimon healed. Reb Shimon told his son, 'It's enough that there is me and you in the world.'

"One Friday, close to Shabbos, they saw a man running, holding two bundles of *hadassim* in his hands. They asked him, 'What are these for?'

"They're for Shabbos."

"Why isn't one bundle enough?"

"One bundle is for זכור and the other bundle is for שמור.' Reb Shimon said to his son, 'See how precious the mitzvos are for Bnei Yisrael!'

"Reb Elazar was consoled."

To explain this Gemara, we begin with a lesson from *navi* (*Yehoshua* 7). The first war the Jewish nation waged in Eretz Yisrael was on Yericho. Yehoshua decreed that no one should take from the spoils of this war. Yehoshua wanted all the spoils of this first war and conquest in Eretz Yisrael be consecrated for Hashem. Everyone obeyed, except for one sinful person called Achan. Hashem said to Yehoshua, חטא ישראל וגם עברו את בריתי אשר צויתי אותם וגם לקחו מן החרם וגם גנבו וגם כחשו וגם שמו בכליהם. When we translate this *pasuk*, take note to the many וגם, "alsos" in this *pasuk*. We translate:

"Yisrael sinned. They *also* transgressed My covenant that I commanded them. They *also* took from the forbidden *cherem*, and they *also* lied, and they *also* placed [what they took] into their utensils." This *pasuk* is referring to Achan's sins.

The word גַּם is mentioned five times in the *passuk*. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 44.) states, this hints that Achan transgressed the five *chumashim* of the Torah. In addition from taking the spoils of war, he committed many other sins, and the Gemara (*Sanhedrin*) lists them. Nevertheless, Hashem calls him a Yisrael, a Jew. As Hashem told Yehoshua, הַטָּא יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Yisrael sinned."

Yisrael is a special level; it denotes someone who still has a connection with Hashem. The Gemara learns from this, אַע"פּ שְׁחָטָא יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא, "Even if one sins, he remains a Yisrael."<sup>9</sup>

Rebbe Tzaddok Hakohen asks, it isn't the way of the Torah to focus on the bad of the Jewish nation. Why does the Gemara

elaborate and list the many sins Achan committed?

Rebbe Tzaddok Hakohen answers: from Achan we learn the important principle, אַע"פּ הוּא שְׁחָטָא יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא, that even if one sins he remains a Yisrael. Therefore the Gemara desires to pile on as many sins as it can for Achan, for that will show us even more, that even if one commits many sins, he is still a Yisrael, he is still united with Hashem.

The Gemara adds, "This is as people say, a *hadas*, even when it grows among thorns, it's still a *hadas*." Similarly, a Yid, even if he has many sins, he remains a Yid.

In the song *Azamer Bishvachin* sung on Friday nights (before Kiddush) we say, מְדַאנִי אַסָּא לְהַתְקַפָּא חֲלָשִׁין, "two *hadas* branches to fortify the

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9. When Hashem said יִשְׂרָאֵל חָטָא, Yehoshua asked who it was. Hashem replied that he doesn't want to slander anyone. Yehoshua drew lots, and it fell on Achan, who admitted that he took from the booty. Notice, Hashem didn't want to speak *lashon hara* on Achan. Hashem wouldn't reveal who sinned, because a Yid remains a Yid, no matter what.

weak." This hints to our lesson. The *hadas* that grows among thorns gives us strength and encouragement, as it reminds us that regardless of our deeds, we remain a Yid connected to Hashem.

We now return to the story of Reb Shimon bar Yochai and his son Reb Elazar. Reb Elazar was upset with the Jewish nation, when he saw them working the land and involved in matters of Olam Hazei. He saw their faults. But the *hadasim* that grow among thorns are our reminder of Hashem's love for them regardless of their bad deeds. Reb Elazar was consoled when he saw a Yid running with two bundles of *hadasim*, as it reminded him the beauty of the Jewish nation, under all circumstances. This is the meaning of the words, מדאני אסא להתקפא חלשין, "two *hadas* branches to fortify the weak." These branches remind us that a Yid, even if he sins, he remains a Yid, beloved to Hashem.

### Rebbe Shlomke of Zvnil zt'l

Tzaddikim foresaw that it will be very difficult to have *emunah* in the generation before Moshiach comes, and they said that the solution is to tell stories of tzaddikim. Stories of tzaddikim project *emunah* into the hearts of the Jewish nation.

Also, a benefit of telling stories of tzaddikim is so we can get a glimpse of their ways — how they believed in Hashem, how they served Hashem — so we can emulate them.

A third benefit of *sipurei tzaddikim* is that telling them brings salvations. The Rebbe of Ruzhin zt'l said that this is alluded to in the *pasuk*, מגדיל ישועות מלכו ועושה חסד למשיחו (Tehillim 18:51) which can be translated, מגדיל ישועות Hashem performs great salvations, מלכו through the tzaddikim (who are called מלך, kings). And because of those miracles, ועושה חסד Hashem does more kindness, למשיחו, for those who speak about those miracles.

(למשיחו) can be read with the letter *sin*, forming the world שיח, to speak).

One explanation of how this occurs is that by retelling the miracles and salvations that they performed, we draw down those salvations once again. This is hinted at in the *pasuk*, נתת ליראך גם להתנוסם (Tehillim 60:6), which can be translated, "You gave miracles for the tzaddikim who fear You so more miracles can sprout forth from them."

Therefore, in honor of Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiler's *yahrtzeit*, on the 26th of Iyar, we will tell some stories about this great tzaddik.

When people would come to Rebbe Shlomke with their troubles and worries, he would often go to the *mikvah*. If it was about an ill person, it was in the *mikvah* where he perceived whether or not the person would survive. By the way he responded after immersing in the *mikvah*, one

could discern what the outcome would be.

Reb Elyah Roth זי"ל (the *gabai*) asked him, "How do you know the future? We see that each time you are correct, but how do you know? Are you the *urim vetumim*?"

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "We are living in a generation of *hester panim*. Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* isn't revealed. This results with people having questions in *emunah*. Therefore, in every generation, Hashem chooses a tzaddik that for him the concept of *hester panim* doesn't apply. Through him, awareness of Hashem is revealed to the world."

Rebbe Shlomke was implying that he was that tzaddik. Through him, miracles would occur and Hashem would be revealed to the world.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil would say in the name of the Magid of Mezritz זי"א that פירות, fame, spells פרי"ם, the fruits of the Satan, because fame can lead people to pride

and haughtiness. Rebbe Shlomke said, "I know that the *pirsum* I receive hurts me, yet I accept it so I can impart *emunah* to Yidden."

A father asked someone to tutor his son. The tutor agreed, but he wasn't certain he should take money for it, since he already had *parnassah*. He asked Rebbe Shlomke for his opinion. The Rebbe replied, "If money was offered to you, this means Hashem is offering you the money, so why shouldn't you accept it? The Rebbe elaborated, "If Rebbe Aharon of Belz (one of the tzaddikim of their generation) would give you an expensive coin as a *segulah* would you accept it? Of course you would. Well, now Hashem is offering you money, why shouldn't you take it?"

One of Rebbe Shlomke's outstanding traits was his carefulness with *kedushah*. (Tzaddikim said that the day of his demise, יסוד שביסוד in *sefiras ha'omer* indicates to

his perfection in יסוד, *kedushah*.)

Towards the end of his life he had fluids in his body and it caused him immense pain. He would lie in bed holding on to the bedposts, his face all red, suffering excruciating pain. Dr. Kook (who treated many *gedolei Yisrael* of that era) told Rebbe Shlomke that he can ease the pain and remove the liquids from his body with an easy procedure, by inserting a catheter. When Rebbe Shlomke heard what the doctor planned to do and where he was going to place the catheter, he shouted, "Not in this body!" The doctor told him that he would use gloves, but the Rebbe didn't want to hear of it. He suffered intense pain until he was *niftar*.

The Beis Yisrael of Gur zy'a heard about this, and said, "According to halachah, the procedure is certainly permitted. However, Rebbe Shlomke went by the Gemara that says (*Nida* 13), 'If one has

a thorn below his belly, it would be better for his belly to burst than to [touch where he shouldn't and] go to hell."

The Beis Yisrael said that since he died because of his *yiras shamayim*, it's a *segulah* for *yiras shamayim* to speak about his ways and to visit his grave. (For the first few *yahrzeits* the Beis Yisrael would go to Rebbe Shlomke's *kever*.)

The Rav of Yerushalayim, Reb Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky *zy'a* said that the *kedushah* (קדושת) (of the *היסוד* of Rebbe Shlomke was comparable to the *kedushah* of the *tana'im* and *amora'im*.)

Every year, at the *yahrtzeit seudah* for Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zy'a* would say that he was present at Rebbe Shlomke's *taharah* (the cleansing before the burial). "Generally there's a bad odor in the room, but this time, we smelled *besamim*." Rebbe Moshe Mordechai asked Rebbe Shlomke's son, Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe (who was also present at the

*taharah*) whether Zvhiller chassidim have the custom to bring *besamim* to the *taharah* room. He replied that there was no such *minhag*, and there was no *besamim* in the room. Yet, everyone present smelled the *besamim*, a sign of the holiness of this great tzaddik.

When the Nazis were planning on coming to Eretz Yisrael, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil and other tzaddikim went to the *kever* of the Or HaChayim HaKadosh on Har HaZeisim and davened for *klal Yisrael*. Their *tefillos* were answered, and for the first time since the war started the Nazis were defeated, in Egypt.

Rebbe Shlomke was *niftar* the 26th of Iyar (יוםוד שביסוד) the day World War II ended. Tzaddikim said that his *petirah* on the day the war ended demonstrates that he was battling against the Germans, with his *tefillos* and with his holy *avodah*. Therefore, when the war ended, he could also leave the world. זכותו יגן עלינו אמן.

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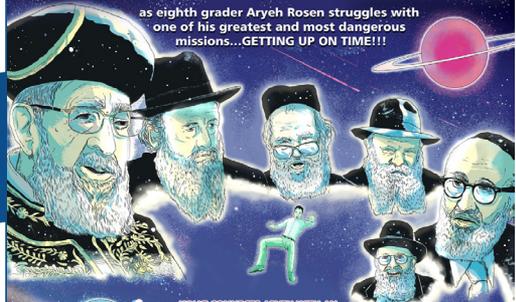
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