

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

Vayakheil · Pekudei



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Torah Wellsprings

Vayakheil-Pekudei-HaChodesh

Try, and Hashem will Help

It states (*Shemos* 35:27), והנשיאים הביאו את אבני השהם ואת אבני המלוואים לאפור ולחשן, "The *nesi'im* brought the *shoham* stones and the [filling] stones for the *eifod* and for the *choshen*." Where did the *nesi'im* obtain these precious gems? Did they own them? Were they found in the desert?

Targum Yonoson writes, "The clouds of glory went to Pishon and picked up precious stones...to be placed in the *eifod* and *choshen*."

The Gemara elaborates (*Yoma* 75.): When the *mon* rained down from the sky, precious stones came down together with the *mon*. The *nesi'im* gathered those precious stones and donated them to the Mishkan (for the ¹בגדי כהונה).

We learn from this the power of desire. When one yearns to serve Hashem, Hashem helps him succeed. Hashem commanded that the *בגדי כהונה* have precious stones. Where will they get them? How can they find them in the desert? But when there's a will, Hashem

1. There are two definitions to נשיאים:

- (1) The *nesi'im* are the leaders of the nation.
- (2) *Nesi'im* also means clouds.

Both definitions are correct. והנשיאים הביאו את אבני השהם ואת אבני המלוואים, the clouds and the *nesi'im* brought the precious stones to be used for the *kohen gadol*'s clothing.

helps. The ענני הכבוד delivered the stones to them.

As the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (Toras Moshe, Terumah אשר ירבנו לבו) writes, "When one desires to donate, but he doesn't have enough money [Hashem will help him achieve his wish]. This happened to the *nesi'im*. They wanted to donate the stones for the *kohanim's* clothing, but they didn't own gems. Hakadosh Baruch Hu brought the gems to them in the clouds. When they collected the *mon*, they collected the gems. This teaches us that when a person desires to do something, but he isn't able to... I will enable him to do so."

The Gemara (*Yoma* 38) relates that Niknor transported two beautiful doors from Alexandria, Egypt, to Eretz Yisrael to donate to the Beis HaMikdash. However, a major storm at sea forced the sailors to toss all heavy objects overboard. They also threw one of the doors

overboard. They were about to throw in the other one when he jumped onto the second door. Hugging the door, he proclaimed, "If you throw this door into the water, throw me in too." As soon as he uttered those words, the storm subsided.

Naturally, Niknor was upset about the lost door. When the boat docked in Eretz Yisrael, they found the missing door floating beside the ship. (According to another opinion, a fish swallowed the door and spat it up on shore.)

Those doors were installed in the Beis HaMikdash, and the doorway was named Shaar Niknor (Niknor's entrance). The doors were made from copper, and they shone like gold. Eventually, all the Beis HaMikdash doors were switched to gold, but the *chachamim* said that Niknor's doors should remain because of the miracles that happened with them.

Let's analyze this story: Niknor was *moser nefesh* to bring even one door to the Beis HaMikdash. What good would one door serve if two doors are needed for the gate?

The answer is that Niknor was *moser nefesh* to do what he could, even when it seemed that one door is not enough, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu helped him. Because when a person tries, Hashem helps, and both doors were installed in the Beis HaMikdash.

We add that also, when it comes to praying for the coming of Moshiach, we must do the best that we can do.

As the Mesilas Yesharim (19) writes, "If one asks, who am I, and how important am I really, that

I should daven for [the gathering of] the galus and for Yerushalayim? Could it be that because of my tefillah, the galus will end, and the redemption will sprout? The answer is, as Chazal (Sanhedrin 37.) say, man was created alone, to demonstrate 'The world was created for me.' Hashem has pleasure when His children pray for this matter. Even if the prayers cannot be answered (because the time hasn't come yet, or because of some other reason), nevertheless, they did their share, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with them... We are obligated to pray, and we shouldn't refrain from a lack of strength. As Chazal (Avos 2) say, לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ואי אתה בן חורין, 'You are not obligated to finish, but you don't have the right to refrain...' ¹¹²

2. My father zy'a told me that when he was a child living in Tel Aviv, there was one night when there was no running water in their home. Every night, my father and his brothers would prepare *negel vasser* next to their beds before going to sleep, but that night

To Toil in Avodas Hashem

It states (37:1-2), וַיַּעַשׂ בַּצֹּלָאֵל אֶת הָאָרֶן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים... וַיַּצְפּוּהוּ זָהָב מְהוֹר, "Betzalel made the aron from *shittim* wood... and covered it with pure gold, inside and outside.

The *pasuk* is saying that there were three *aronos*, one inside the other. The innermost box was gold, the outermost was gold, and the middle was made of wood.

This represents the three stages of *teshuvah*:

(1) The golden era is the beginning of one's *teshuvah*. That is when Hashem is helping him, and he is succeeding in his *teshuvah* process.

(2) Then comes the struggle because it isn't easy forever. Hashem takes away the initial euphoria and "light" that prevailed at the beginning of the *teshuvah*, and now the person must walk on his own. He is confronted with hardships and tests. He isn't confident he can succeed.

(3) If he keeps trying, he will reach the golden, third era. He will succeed in his *teshuvah*.

These three stages also exist when one desires to grow in Torah. At the beginning of his resolve to learn Torah, he is interested, inspired, and excited. The Torah is sweet to him.

they went to sleep without preparing water. Their father, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l, asked them, "Why didn't you prepare *negel vasser*?"

They replied, "We couldn't. There's no water."

"That's true," their father replied, "but why didn't you at least place the empty *negel vasser* utensils near your bed?" Because a Yid must do what he can, and then Hashem will help.

Then comes the challenging times: He doesn't understand; he is not keeping up with the pace he initially set for himself. He wonders whether success in Torah is possible for him.

But if he keeps trying, he will reach the third stage, which is when he truly loves Torah and he understands it. The Torah will now be sweeter to him than ever before.

The *aron's* three boxes represent these three stages. But notice that the *aron* is called, ארון עצי שטים, an *aron* of wood. It isn't called ארון של זהב, "a golden *aron*." To teach that the essential

stage and the real purpose is the struggle (represented by the wood).³

When the Torah lists the items that Yidden donated to the Mishkan, they are listed in the order of the most precious to the least expensive. As it states (35:5), זהב וכסף ונחשת, gold, silver, and copper..." and so on.

But then it states (35:9), אבני שהם ואבני מלואים, the precious gems that were to be used for the בוגרי כהונה. These gems were the most precious items – more precious than gold and silver – but they are listed at the end of the list. Why?

3. Chazal tell us that Moshe understood how all the utensils of the Mishkan should appear, but Moshe didn't understand how the menorah should appear. Therefore, Hashem told Moshe to throw the gold into fire, and it miraculously became a menorah. Which aspect of the menorah didn't Moshe understand?

The menorah was made from pure gold; it didn't have any wood at all. Wood represents the *yetzer hara*, challenges. Moshe didn't understand why Hashem would have a *nachas ruach*, pleasure, from any mitzvah that is perfect like gold, without any challenges or *yetzer hara* at all.

The same question appears in *parashas Terumah* when Hashem told the Jewish nation to donate these items to the Mishkan. The *pasuk* begins with *זהב, וכסף, ונחשת*, (Shemos 25:7) listing the items in the order of most precious to the least expensive. And then, at the end of the list, the precious gems are listed. As it states (25:9), *ואבני שדה ואבני מלאים לאפוד ולחשן*.

The Or HaChaim (*Terumah* 25:7) asks:

"We have to understand why *אבני שדה ואבני מלאים* are written only after the eleven items. Since the stones were more precious, it would be proper to write them first, before *זהב וכסף ונחשת*."

One of the Or HaChaim's answers is that these precious stones were brought without toil since they came down with the *mon*. The *nesi'im* only had to pick them up. Although they were the most expensive, the donation

ranked lower because they were brought without toil. They didn't compare to the donations that people gave from their own pockets, even when those donations were of a lesser value.

This is an important lesson for us. If you find *avodas Hashem* difficult, be happy with that because that is how *avodas Hashem* is meant to be.

There was a soldier in Czar Nicholai's army who enjoyed drinking, and when he ran out of money, he gave all of his weapons to the owner of a tavern, as collateral, in exchange for drinks. To appear that he was armed with weapons, he carried a large bag around, so people would think his weapons were inside the bag.

One day, Czar Nicholai visited the army base. He was pleased with the order and discipline he saw. But then he called over this soldier and asked him to open the bag. It was filled

with straw, and he was punished severely.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin zy'a repeated this story and asked: How did Czar Nicholai know to ask specifically this soldier to open his bag? Other soldiers were going about carrying their bags, and the Czar didn't suspect them. What was it about this soldier that roused his suspicion? The Czar didn't have *ruach hakodesh* to know that he was carrying straw.

The answer is, the Czar saw that the soldier was carrying his bag without difficulty. That aroused the Czar's suspicion because weapons are heavy.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin said that similarly, *avodas Hashem* is meant to be a challenge. If it is easy, that's a sign that something is wrong. There should be struggles. One should feel like he's working hard, putting in an effort. If it is

too easy, something is lacking.

If *avodas Hashem* is easy, the reward is far less.

As it states in *Avos d'Reb Noson* (3:6), "Performing the mitzvos once with *tzaar* is equivalent to a hundred times without hardships."

And *Sefer Chassidim* (145) states, "When one triumphs over his *yetzer hara*, the reward will be greater than the reward given for a hundred mitzvos, performed without hardships."

And as Chazal (*Avos* 5:23) say, לָפֹם צַעֲרָא אִגְרָא, "the reward is in accordance with the hardships."

Pirkei Avos is *Mishnayos*, which are written in *lashon hakadosh*. So why does it say (*Avos* 5:23), לָפֹם צַעֲרָא אִגְרָא in Aramaic?

Tosfos (*Brachos* 3.) writes, "We say Kaddish in Aramaic because it is a beautiful praise, and we don't want the *malachim* to

understand what we are saying and be jealous of us." Similarly, the phrase *לפום צערא אנרא* is written in Aramaic, because it is a great praise when a Yid overcomes his challenges to serve Hashem. We don't want to rouse the *malachim's* jealousy. Therefore, it is written in Aramaic.⁴

A group of chassidim complained to the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* about their *yetzer hara*. The Chidushei HaRim told them, "What purpose would there be to life if there wasn't a *yetzer hara*?"⁵

The Yidden in the desert complained (*Shemos* 16:3), מִי יֵתֵן ... בָּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁבְתָּנוּ עַל סֵדֶר הַבָּשָׂר

4. Rebbe Mordechai Nadvorna *zt'l* said, "There's a *malach* that has a thousand tongues. When he sings, the music is outstanding. But Hashem has greater pleasure from a Yid when he puts his hand behind his ear and sings *zemiros* Friday night."

Although the *malachim* serve Hashem better than we can, but our *avodas Hashem* requires effort (for example, to sing, one has to consciously make an effort to put aside all one's worries, and get involved in praising Hashem) and that is why it is way more precious to Hashem than the perfect *zemiros* of the *malachim*.

Chazal (*Yoma* 69:) tell us that the Anshei Kneses HaGedolah succeeded to abolish the *yetzer hara* for *avodah zarah* and from the *yetzer hara* for *arayos* among family members.

It seems that this was a wonderful accomplishment. However, the Chazon Ish *zt'l* said that these matters aren't anything to be proud of. It would be better if we had the *yetzer hara* and then triumph over the *yetzer hara* with our good choices.

5. When a person makes a *brachah* on an esrog and lulav, the *pitom* is down. In Yiddish this is called, מִיט די פֿיטום אראפ, which is also an expression used for someone who is going through hard times. But we make a *brachah* specifically when the *pitom* is down because challenging moments are the most significant moments of our life.

באכלנו לחם לשובע, "If only...we were in Mitzrayim, where we sat near the pot of meat, and we ate bread to satiation." According to the simple meaning, they complained that they didn't have meat any longer and that they didn't have bread.

However, the Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that they couldn't have eaten the meat because it wasn't kosher. They were saying that they remember how it was in Mitzrayim, על בשבתנו, when we sat next to the Egyptians who were cooking pots filled with non-kosher meat, באכלנו לחם, but we didn't partake in the non-Kosher foods. We passed the test, and we ate bread alone.

They were reminiscing how it was in Mitzrayim when they were faced with great tests. They missed the tests because passing them is the purpose of life.⁶

Chazal (*Brachos* 54.) say, "When one sees the stone that Moshe sat on when Yehoshua was fighting the war with Amalek, one must praise Hashem."

We can explain this as follows:

Moshe held his hands high in prayer to win the war. When Moshe's hands were heavy Aharon and Chur supported his arms. But how could they reach his arms? Moshe was very tall. At those times, Moshe sat on a low stone. That way, Aharon and Chur

6. The Chesed L'Avraham (Radomsk) writes a similar interpretation as the Chasam Sofer. But instead of discussing non-kosher meat, he refers to kosher meat. The Yidden didn't want to eat the kosher meat, because they didn't want to be indulging in the pleasures of this world. He writes, "The intention of the *pasuk* is that... although they were right near a pot of meat, they didn't want to eat it and give in to temptation. They chose instead to eat bread."

were able to reach his arms and to help him spread them out in *tefillah* (see Ha'amek Davar).

Thus, the stone signifies a weak moment when

Moshe couldn't hold up his hands in prayer by himself. And it is those challenging moments that are the most extraordinary. Therefore, this stone is so significant.⁷

7. People asked the Ateres Yehoshua of Djikov *zt'l* why he had *parnassah*, while his father and grandparents were all poor.

The Ateres Yehoshua answered with a *mashal*:

A pauper passed a theatre, where a long line of people were waiting to buy tickets.

"How much does a ticket cost?" he asked one of the people in line.

"A regular seat costs a hundred dollars. There are better seats, which cost up to three hundred dollars a seat."

The pauper was shocked. "A hundred or three hundred dollars just to see a show?! What's the show about?"

"It's about a pauper collecting money."

Now the pauper was totally confused. He said, "I'm a pauper and I collect money all the time, and all I get is a few coins!"

The man explained to him that people aren't interested in watching this in real life. They want to see a show, played by actors..."

With this *mashal* the Ateres Yehoshua explained to his chassidim, "My father and my grandfathers were true Rebbes, therefore they only received a small amount of money. But I'm an actor, copying what they did, therefore I get more money."

The Ateres Yehoshua said this due to his immense humility, but we can learn a lesson from it: Why do people pay more money to watch actors? It's because the actors show talent, expertise, years of training, hours of hard work. People value that and are willing to pay money to see it. But when something comes naturally it loses its value in people's eyes. Hashem desires to see us doing

Growth from the Struggles

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* told the following *meshal*:

A father once told his son, "There's a king who lives far away, and I want you to have the privilege of seeing him."

The son walked a long distance to get to the king's palace, but there was no sign that he was getting closer. He was considering going back home, but he thought, "I walked so far, I'm certainly near." He

continued walking towards the king's palace. Suddenly, he saw soldiers carrying weapons. He became afraid and ran back home.

His father admonished him, "When you saw the soldiers, that meant you were right near the king's palace."

The lesson is that when you encounter tests and struggles, that is exactly when you should keep on serving Hashem because you have reached Hashem. Keep on trying, and you will achieve high levels.⁸

deeds that require effort, talent, and willpower. That is why we have challenges. For these deeds we will be rewarded immensely.

8. When a fish escapes a net, it swims beneath it. When a bird escapes a trap, it flies above it. Dovid HaMelech (*Tehillim* 124:7) said, נפשינו כציפור נמלטה מפה, "We were saved like a bird escaping its trap..." This means when we are tested, we soar high. We reach the highest levels due to the tests.

Once, an orphaned *bachur* complained to the Pnei Menachem of Gur *zt'l*, "Why can't I be like all my friends who have a much easier life than me?"

The Pnei Menachem answered with an analogy. He discussed the differences between cars and tanks.

As far as an easy, comfortable ride is concerned, a car is a better

The Midrash (*Koheles* 3:15) states, "טוב is the *yetzer tov* and טוב מאד is the *yetzer hara*."

How can the *yetzer hara* be ,טוב מאד very good?

The Ketzos (*Shev Shmatsa, hakdamah* 6) quotes the Mahara'm Almushneinu, who explains that the most outstanding geniuses are those who have a drop of foolishness in their thinking process. They have to get around and circumvent the foolish part of their mind, which makes them very wise.

The Mahara'm Almushneinu writes that a similar thing can be seen when a drop of water is dripped over a large bonfire. The fire becomes more vigorous. The water doesn't weaken the fire because the bonfire works very hard to overcome the water that tried to extinguish it. Similarly, we see that people who have straight minds are often not the smartest. But those who have a problem with their thinking process are forced to overcome that obstacle, which makes them even wiser.

vehicle. It drives quickly, smoothly, and comfortably. You can lean back, put on music, and enjoy the ride. This isn't the case with the clumsy, large and heavy tank.

However, a tank can drive over rocks, uneven earth, and plants. It can drive through unpaved mountains and through sandy deserts. Cars can't do that. The tanks' heavy and clumsy apparatus, which is its handicap as far as speed and comfort are concerned, are its advantage when it comes to crossing tough terrain.

The Pnei Menachem said to the *bachur*, "You are going through hardships now, but things will turn around and these will all turn around and become your strong points. The obstacles you endure will make you stronger, and one day, you will have strengths that others don't have."

This is alluded to in the *pasuk* (Koheles 10:1), יקר מחכמה, "A person who is respected because of his wisdom and honor it is due to a drop of foolishness."

The Mahara'm Almushneinu explains that the Torah calls the *yetzer hara* טוב מאד because it makes the person טוב מאד, very good. The *yetzer hara* places obstacles in a person's way, and when one overcomes them, he becomes טוב מאד.

The Alter of Navorduk *zt'l* taught the following parable:

A worm was inside the neck of an oil lamp, and it didn't know where it should go. When the worm went up, it felt the heat from the flame that was lit above the lamp, and it backed down. But as it went down, it met with the oil, which is also not an option. Eventually, the worm fell into the oil and drowned.

This parable reminds us that we shouldn't back down when there are struggles. We should face them because through them we reach the highest levels.

As the Vilna Gaon said, העקשן יצליח, "Those who are stubborn [in the war against the *yetzer hara*] will succeed."

One Hundred *Brachos* Daily

It states (38:27), ויהי מאת כתר, הכסף לצקת את אדני הקדש... מאת אדנים, "The one hundred *kikar* of silver should be used to make the holy *adanim* – one hundred *adanim*..." These were the 100 silver foundations of the Mishkan.

The Baal HaTurim writes, בנגד תקנו ק' ברכות בכל יום, "Corresponding the one hundred *adanim* the *chachamim* established one hundred daily *brachos*."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that Hashem resided on the Mishkan,

and today Hashem resides in Yidden. The Mishkan in our generation is every single Yid, when he merits that Hashem resides in him. The original Mishkan had one hundred *adanim* for its foundations. The foundations of today's Mishkan are the one hundred daily *brachos* we recite. They are called **אֲדָנִים** because with them we become aware that Hashem is the **אֲדֹנָי**, master of the world.⁹

Protection and Blessings

The *Tur* (Orach Chaim 46) writes, "Every day, one hundred people of Bnei Yisrael died, and they didn't know why this was happening. Dovid HaMelech investigated, understood with his *ruach*

hakodesh, and instituted that Klal Yisrael should recite one hundred *brachos* every day. Therefore, the *chachamim* established *birchas hashachar* [the *brachos* said in the morning at the beginning of the *tefillah*] to fill the quota of one hundred daily *brachos*".

The Prishah explains, "When a hundred people were dying each day, Dovid established that we say one hundred daily *brachos*, because that will stop the deaths... Dovid taught the secret of one hundred *brachos* to the Sanhedrin, so they should institute the *brachos* as they see fit. They established the *brachos* with their wisdom..."

9. During the weekdays it isn't difficult to get to one hundred *brachos*. If you daven three times a day, and wash twice each day for bread, you will reach one hundred *brachos*. On Shabbos, when *Shemonah Esrei* is shorter, the *Shulchan Aruch* (290:1) states, "One should eat fruit, sweets, and smell *besamim* to complete the quota of one hundred *brachos*."

How did the one hundred *brachos* stop the daily one hundred deaths?

The Levush explains that Hashem does much kindness with the Jewish nation, but people take it all for granted, and they don't express their gratitude to Hashem. Dovid HaMelech realized that this was the source of the plague, so the solution was to praise Hashem. The solution proved to be correct because "from the time Dovid instituted this *takanah*, the plague ceased."

The *sefarim* say that just as one hundred *brachos* daily saved us in the past, they continue to grant protection in all generations.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* explained the concept of one hundred *brachos* with the following *mashal*:

When two people are not getting along with each other, *chalilah*, the problem can often quickly be resolved when one greets

the other with happiness and friendship. It is hard to bear hard feelings towards someone who is kind to you. Dovid HaMelech realized with his *ruach hakodesh* that there's a need to appease Hashem, *keviyachol*, to improve the 'relationship' between Yidden and Hashem to stop the deaths. And he realized that *brachos* would turn everything around.

The *Zohar* (vol.1, 76:) calls the one hundred *brachos* "one hundred keys." They open Hashem's treasury of goodness. We have the keys in our hands; we just have to use them.

Compare this to a person who has permission to take whatever he wants from the king's treasury, but he finds the treasury locked. He stands outside the treasury and cries. Why doesn't he open the doors? He has the keys! The king gave them to him so that he can open the treasury. He can get so much; he just needs to open the doors!

Someone who doesn't take advantage of the one hundred daily *brachos* is the same. The opportunity is available for him, but he has to use the keys to get it.

Hints to the 100 Brachos

The *Tur* (Orach Chaim 46) writes, "It states (*Shmuel* 2, 23), הוֹקֵם עַל, 'Dovid established עַל' and עַל is *gematriya* one hundred."

It also states, לָךְ... וְאִבְרַכְךָ, "Go...and I will bless you..." The *Zohar* (vol.1, 76:) notes that לָךְ is *gematriya* one hundred. By reciting one hundred *brachos*, וְהָיָה בְרַכָּה, one merits receiving Hashem's *brachos*.

It is written (*Tehillim* 128:4), הִנֵּה כִּי בֶן יִבְרַךְ גֹּבֵר, "So will be a man blessed ..." The *Sefer HaManhig* teaches that כִּי בֶן is *gematriya* one hundred because by saying one hundred *brachos* daily, he is blessed with all types of blessings.

The Torah lists ninety-eight curses for those who

transgress the Torah, and the Torah adds another two. As it states (*Devarim* 28:61), "גַּם כָּל חָלִי וְכָל מַכָּה..." Also, (1) all diseases and (2) all plagues, [which are not stated in the Torah, Hashem will bring them up onto you, until you are destroyed]." Together, these are one hundred curses. The one hundred *brachos* nullify these one hundred curses.

The Baal HaTurim writes, "The *tagin* on the *kuf* of (*Devarim* 6:7) וּבִקְוֹמְךָ, implies that when one awakens in the morning, he should say one hundred *brachos* [ק' is *gematriya* one hundred and וּבִקְוֹמְךָ means 'when you wake up']. And then he will be saved from the ninety-eight curses, plus two others, inferred in the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 28:61), "גַּם כָּל חָלִי וְכָל מַכָּה...."

The Levush writes, "This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, ... מָה ד' אֵלֶיךָ שׁוֹאֵל מִמֶּךָ, 'What does Hashem ask from you?' Chazal say don't read it מָה, read it מֵאָה,

that Hashem is asking for one hundred *brachos*..."

just as they did in Dovid HaMelech's time.

One of the benefits of the one hundred *brachos* is to help us remember Hashem. As the Rambam (*Hilchos Tefillah* 1:3) writes, "The Chachamim established many *brachos*... so we can remember the Creator, always."

So, we see the tremendous benefits that can be had by reciting one hundred *brachos* daily. They rouse Hashem's love to us, they open His treasury, they remove the one hundred curses, and they help us remember Hashem. It was Dovid HaMelech's perception, and they help us today,

How to Say the *Brachos*

Now that we have learned the importance of saying one hundred *brachos* each day, it is time to study *how* one should say a *brachah*.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 47.) says, "לא יזרוק ברכה מפיו" "One mustn't throw the *brachah* out of his mouth." Rashi explains that when one rushes through the *brachah*, it appears that he wants to get it over with. Instead, he should say the *brachah* slowly, without rushing to finish it.¹⁰

10. A banker davened *shacharis* very quickly one morning. The Chofetz Chaim told him, "I don't think you should go to the bank today."

"Why not?"

"It is written in halachah that, 'One should say the words of *Pesukei Dezimrah* like someone who is counting money' (*Darkei Moshe* 51). I saw how quickly you davened this morning. If you're going to count money in this manner, you're better off remaining home."

The Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah (*HaAshmuros* 2) writes, "Remember this rule for every *brachah*: When you say, ברוך אתה, 'Bless are You' picture that Hashem is before you and you are speaking directly to Him. That is the translation of ברוך אתה, 'Bless You.' Think this every time you speak to Hashem. Don't say any prayer by rote, *chas veshalom*. You are speaking directly to Hashem, Whose presence fills the world.

"When a person doesn't picture that he is speaking to Hashem, every wise person understands that it is as though he didn't say the *brachah*..."

There's a *machlokes* in the *Yerushalmi* whether אתה is part of the *brachah*. Rav says that we should say אתה and Shmuel said that we say ברוך ד' אלקינו מלך... "Bless Hashem..." and we leave out אתה. The halachah is like Rav, and we say אתה. Thereby, we have a reminder in the *brachah*

itself that we are speaking directly to Hashem.

When you say אלקינו, "our G-d," remember that Hashem loves us and desires to listen to our praise.

When you say, מלך, contemplate that everything in the world is led with *hashgachah pratis*, down to the smallest detail.

The Or Zarua (42) writes, "One morning, Reb Bunim (an elderly member of the *chevrah kadisha* of Vamsh) awoke early, and he went to the *beis knesses*. He saw someone sitting outside the *beis knesses* wearing a crown made from herbs on his head. Reb Bunim was afraid because he thought he was a *sheid* (demon). Reb Bunim asked, 'Aren't you Ploni, who died recently, and I buried you?'

"That's correct."

"How are things for you in that world?"

"Extremely good!"

"How did you merit this? You didn't seem worthy of this..."

"It is because I would say the *birchas hashachar* in the *beis kneses* in a pleasant voice, every morning. Therefore, I was brought to Gen Eden, and I receive a lot of honor there. Do you see my torn sleeve? This is my proof that it is I. You tore it while dressing me in the *tachrichim* (shrouds)."

"What are you wearing on your head?"

"Leaves from Gan Eden. I put them on my head so that I won't smell the bad odor of this world."

The Or Zarua concludes, "I, the author, write this story so those who fear Heaven will take to heart to say Hakadosh Baruch Hu's praises with a sweet voice and with concentration, and then he will merit Gan Eden."

Brachos on Food

One should be especially careful to say *brachos* over food with *kavanah*. Reb Chaim Vital zt'l (*Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*) writes, "The Arizal told me that the primary way to attain *ruach hakodesh* is to say ברכת נהנין, the *brachos* on food, with *kavanah*. There are *kelipos* in the food, which become attached to the person who eats them. By reciting the *berachos* with concentration, one removes those *kelipos*... [If he is cautious] he will be pure and able to accept holiness. The Arizal would often speak with us about this."

Shabbos HaChodesh

This Shabbos, we read *parashas HaChodesh*, where we see that Yidden determine when it is *rosh chodesh*. This reveals to us that the Jewish nation has immense power and influence. Even the essence of time is in their hands.

As the Midrash (*Shemos* 15:2) states:

Malachim ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Ribono Shel Olam, when will You make *yom tov*?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, "I and you will agree to whatever the Jewish nation decides..."

And Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Bnei Yisrael, "In the past it was in My hands... From now on, it is in your hands. When you say yes, it is yes. When you say no, it is no. החודש הזה לכם, the new month is up to you. If you choose to have a leap year, I accede to your decision..."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains, "Everything was given over to us! Everything is in our hands! If a would appreciate who he is and his potential, he wouldn't waste a moment."

We say in *Ashrei* (*Tehillim* 145:12), להודיע לבני האדם גבורותיו. Literally, this means we should reveal to people

Hashems strength and greatness. However, according to the Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah *zt'l*, גבורותיו "his strength" refers to the strength and greatness of the Jewish nation. Accordingly, the *pasuk* is saying, להודיע לבני אדם, גבורותיו, "reveal to people their greatness." This is taught to us on this Shabbos. We discover that even the essence of time is in our hands.

Nisan

Each moment of Nisan is valuable.

The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* writes in a letter (see *Avnei Nezer, Orach Chaim* 336):

"Shalom to my honored friend, the renowned *gaon*, and genius, Reb Chaim *n'y*, previously *rav* of Moscow:

"I received your letter close to Shabbos, and you asked that I answer some of your questions regarding Pesach. That isn't a small request because these [days

before Pesach] are priceless days — each hour is like a day.¹¹ Nevertheless, since you expressed your strong desire that I answer you, and you wrote that it will be your pleasure and your *simchas yom tov*, I devoted some time to write this letter..."

The Shem MiShmuel *zt'l* testified that in Nisan, his father, the Avnei Nezer, would be *מסובב והולך בעולמות העליונים*, "Walked in the upper worlds." He was more in heaven than on earth (*Avir HaRo'im* 264).

The Shem MiShmuel heard his father say that

during Nisan, he doesn't need to sleep due to these days' holiness (*Avir HaRo'im* 299).

What is so special about Nisan?

Furthermore, *Shulchan Aruch* (429:2) states, "We don't say *tachanun* the entire month of Nisan."

Why?¹²

The *Shlah Hakadosh* (*Pesachim, Ner Mitzvah, 7*) explains, "It states, *החודש הזה*, 'This month is for you *rosh chodeshim*.' This means that each day of Nisan is like *ראש חדש*. The entire month is *rosh chodesh*."¹³

11. In the Avnei Nezer's words, *אם כי הקשה לשאול כי ימים אלו יקרי הערך, שעה ליום יחשב*

12. The *Mishnah Berurah* writes the following reason why we don't say *Tachanun*: "The twelve *nesi'im* brought *korbanos* [on the first twelve days of Nisan] and the day one brings a *korban* it's his *yom tov*. Then there's *erev Pesach*, and *Pesach*, and *isru chag* when we don't say *Tachanun*. Since most of the month is holy, we therefore make the rest of the month holy [and we don't say *Tachanun* the entire month of Nisan]."

13. The *Ahavas Shalom zt'l* writes, "Don't think that it is only in Nisan [that the entire month is considered like *rosh chodesh*]. It is

The Agra d'Kala (*Pikudei*) teaches (in the name of Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l*) that the first twelve days of Nisan represent the twelve months of the year. א' ניסן represents Nisan, ב' ניסן represents Iyar, ג' ניסן represents Sivan, and so on. During these days, *tzaddikim* can perceive what will happen in the corresponding months of the coming year.

During the first twelve days of Nisan, the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* would write down what he perceived with his *ruach hakodesh* would happen that year. On א' ניסן he wrote what would happen in Nisan. On ב' ניסן, he wrote what would happen in Iyar, and

so on. The final year of his life, he wrote what would happen that year up to the month Av. He didn't write about the rest of the year because he was *niftar* that year in Av. This story is known among the Chozeh's students.

Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* (*Pri Tzaddik, HaChodesh* 6) writes, "The first day of the month is called ראש חודש (the head of the month) - it isn't called תחילת חודש (the beginning of the month)." He explains that it is called ראש head, to imply that the entire month is compressed within the first day, based on the principle, גופא בטר רישא אויל, the body follows the head.

also by the other months. Because when observes *rosh chodesh* properly, the entire month becomes like *rosh chodesh*. As [the saying goes], דגופא בטר רישא אויל, the body follows the head. [If the head, *rosh chodesh*, is good, this influences the entire month]... Therefore, it is proper for the wise to...serve Hashem properly on *rosh chodesh*, for that will make the entire month good. Even if just one hour of *rosh chodesh* is kept properly, the entire month will be good [and imbued with the holiness of *rosh chodesh*].

Rebbe Tzaddok writes, "The holiness of the entire month is in its head, on *rosh chodesh*. On *rosh chodesh* one should be able to feel the holiness of the *yom tov* in that month." This means that tzaddikim can feel the *kedushah* of Pesach already from *rosh chodesh Nisan*.

We add that tzaddikim can feel the *kedushah* of Pesach starting from Shabbos HaChodesh. This is because Shabbos has in it the *kedushah* of the entire upcoming week. So, from Shabbos HaChodesh, tzaddikim experience the *kedushah* of *rosh chodesh*, and *rosh chodesh* contains the entire month in it. So, on Shabbos HaChodesh, tzaddikim can experience the holiness of *rosh chodesh Nisan* and Pesach.

In 5747 I was at a *chasunah* on the night of *rosh chodesh Nisan*. I spoke to a relative and expressed that I was surprised that the wedding was scheduled so close to Pesach, when people are so busy.

My relative replied, "Your grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov, chose this date. The *mechutanim* asked him to suggest a date for the *chasunah*, and he said *rosh chodesh Nisan* is the most beautiful day of the year."

New Beginnings

Reb Yaakov Eliyahu Lazar *zt'l* was by the Shinover Rav *zt'l* for Shabbos Parah. On Sunday, he came to say goodbye (*gezegenen*), because he wanted to return home. The Shinover Rav asked him, "Are you leaving already? So soon?"

The *gabei* was present, and he understood that the Rebbe wants Reb Lazar to stay longer, so he quickly spoke up for Reb Lazar. "No, Reb Lazar will remain with us for a few more days."

The Shinover Rav replied, "That's good, because it's very important for one to be with his rebbe on Shabbos HaChodesh.

On this Shabbos one has the potential to become a new person."

Reb Lazar would often speak nostalgically about that Shabbos. He said it's impossible to repeat what he saw that Shabbos. He only revealed one thing: When he davened אהבה רבה in *Shacharis*, he was suddenly overcome by emotion and left the beis medresh and cried profusely from *deveikus*. He felt that he had become a new person.

One of the *segulos* of Shabbos HaChodesh is that we can become new. As it states, החודש הזה לכם, the power

of becoming new is in your hands. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* adds that the mitzvah of החודש הזה לכם was given to the Jewish nation when they were in Mitzrayim, at the 49th gate of impurity. Even at that lowly place, Hashem told them that they can start anew.¹⁴

The moon gradually becomes smaller until it isn't seen, and then a new moon appears. This hints that we can also begin anew, and Shabbos HaChodesh and the month of Nisan are ideal times to do so.¹⁵

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* related that he once

14. It states (*Brachos* 4:), "Whoever says *Ashrei* three times each day is a בן עולם הבא; he will certainly merit to be in Olam HaBa. Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* explained that this is because we conclude *Ashrei* with the words, ואנחנו נברך י"ה מעתה, "We will praise Hashem from now..." The key word is מעתה, to begin from now. When one begins anew, three times each day — always seeking to serve Hashem better than before — he will certainly merit being a ben Olam HaBa.

15. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* writes, "החודש הזה לכם ראש", means the month of Nisan is *mesugal* to correct one's ראש, thoughts. Even if his thoughts were filled with temptations or lacking *emunah*, *rachmana litzlan*, he can become like a new person this month."

traveled to Italy with his uncle, Reb Zelig Lieder, an esrog merchant. They stopped at a hotel in Trieste, and they found a small *sefer* there. The *sefer* asks a question on what we say each morning, המחדש במוצאי יום תמיד מעשה בראשית, that Hashem creates the world anew each day. The *sefer* asks, Hashem could have created the world once and for always. Why did there need to be a new creation each day?

The *sefer* explains that after a person committed *aveiros*, he thinks there is no hope for him anymore. The daily re-creation of the world is his reminder that he can become new each day just as the world is new.

Externally, people look the same as before. But internally, they can become entirely new. Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

There was a small town on the bottom of a mountain

that needed a supermarket. The only place to build the supermarket was on the mountaintop. Every time they wanted to buy something, the townsfolk had to trek up the mountain and then down again. It was inconvenient for them, to say the least.

There was a *baal chesed* in town. He bought a van to help people get to and from the supermarket. He advertised that he will be going up and down the mountain three times a day. Whoever wants can join him, free of charge.

The van filled up to capacity by each trip to the store. He drove them to the store and then back home again.

After some years, the van began showing signs of wear; the seats were ripped in several places, the air-conditioner didn't work anymore, and the engine was weak. Every trip, people had to push

the car from outside to get it running.

The city leaders approached the *baal chesed* and told him, "You did a great mitzvah for our city, but it is time to get you a new van. The city will chip in and buy it for you..."

The man refused. He said that he performed so many mitzvos with the van; how could he stop using it?

The city leaders convened, and they decided that if he doesn't want to change the van, at least they can change the *interior* of the van. The exterior can remain the same, but it will have a new motor, a new air conditioner, etc.

They made up an excuse on why they needed to borrow his car keys for the night, and in the middle of the night, they redid his van.

In the morning, people filled up the van, and the *baal chesed* said, "Some

people have to go outside to push the van" because that's what they would do every morning.

They told him, "No, we don't. Put the key into the ignition and try."

He tried, and he saw that the van was working. He exclaimed, "How did this happen? Yesterday, it was so different!"

He turned on the air-conditioner, and it was working too, and they told him what happened during the night.

The *nimshal* is that every night we go to sleep, and in the morning, we wake up a new person. If we believe that we became a new person, we can serve Hashem with renewed energy, and we might discover that now things are different than before. If before we weren't able to daven with kavanah, or learn well, perhaps now we can. But we won't know unless we try.

This is especially true after a holiday. Recently it was Purim, and we became new people. We may appear the same externally, but we became new people internally. But if you won't make an effort to recognize the changes that occurred, and if you will continue to act as you had beforehand, you may not realize how much you changed.

Similarly, now it's Nisan, a time for change. We must believe in ourselves and let us discover what can become of us.

A *bachur* once came to the Klausenberger Rebbe *zt'l* and told him that he was thrown out of yeshiva. The Klausenberg Rebbe spoke to the *mashgiach* of that *bachur's* yeshiva and asked him why he threw out this *bachur*. The *mashgiach* listed all the bad deeds the boy committed and concluded, "It's impossible to keep him in

the yeshiva if he does these things."

"That's true," the Rebbe agreed, "but I spoke with the *bachur*, and he told me that he's prepared to change."

The *mashgiach* replied in exasperation, "He promised me about a thousand times that he will improve and, so far, he never kept his word."

The Rebbe grabbed his white beard and said, "I promised Hashem more than a thousand times that I will improve, and I haven't done so yet. So, in your opinion, should I give up? *Chas veshalom!* As long as a Yid lives, there's hope that he will improve his ways".

It states (Devarim 16:22), *וְלֹא תָקִים לְךָ מִצְבָּה אֲשֶׁר שֵׁנָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ*. A *מצבה* is something that is fixed and does not change. *אֲשֶׁר שֵׁנָה ה'*, Hashem hates that. Hashem loves those

who are ready to improve their ways.¹⁶

Fins and scales are the signs of a kosher fish. Fish use them to swim against the current. Also, the Yerushalmi (Taanis 4:5) says that if a fish can't swim against the current, it isn't kosher.

This hints to us that the description of a kosher yid is a person who can go against the current. The reason is as follows:

Our surroundings influence us. Therefore, fortunate are those who spend their day among good influences.

But even in the best environments, there will be some things that aren't perfect. You must be able to recognize what is good

and right, and when necessary, swim against the current to do Hashem's will.

Also, a person has his habits. Changing them is like going against the current. It isn't easy but keep trying because it is possible. You can turn over a new leaf, go against your nature, and do as you know you ought to.

Rabbeinu Nisim Gaon (quoted in Seder HaDoros, Tana'im and Amaro'im, letter 'י) tells the following story:

Nosson, a sinful man, once had the opportunity to commit a terrible sin, but he controlled himself. A few days later, Rabbi Akiva saw him riding on a donkey, and Rabbi Akiva perceived that Nosson's face was shining like the

16. When the Pnei Menachem of Gur zt'l was *niftar*, people found approximately 200 siddurim in his possession. He changed siddurim often, apparently to bring freshness into his *tefillos*. The depths of the Pnei Menachem's ways are beyond us, but it is a reminder to constantly seek newness in *avodas Hashem*.

midday sun, and above his head was a halo of holiness. Rabbi Akiva asked his students, "Who is that man?"

"It is Nosson, the lowly sinner."

"Do you see anything above his head?"

"No. We don't see anything."

"Bring him to me, quickly."

Rabbi Akiva said to Nosson, "My son, an aura of light is glowing on top of your head, so I know you will merit Olam HaBa. Tell me, what good deed did you do?"

Nosson told him that he did not give in to his temptations, and he held back from transgressing a grave sin. He had committed many sins before, but this time he controlled himself.

Reb Akiva was stunned that Nosson had the willpower. "Indeed, you did a great deed, and

Hashem, therefore, placed an aura of light above your head. This reward is in this world. In the next world, you will certainly become much holier and greater because of this good deed. Now, my son, listen to me. Sit before me, and I will teach you Torah."

Nosson became Rabbi Akiva's student. His heart opened for Torah, and within a short time, he became a scholar, the holy *tana*, Reb Nosson Tzutzisa, mentioned in Chazal.

This story teaches us many lessons. We learn that one should never lose hope, regardless of his deeds. Also, this story teaches us that it is never too late to begin. Despite his late and unfortunate start, Nosson Tzutzisa made a turnaround and became a great tzaddik and scholar.

This is the lesson of Shabbos HaChodesh: A person can change.

A Segulah for Parnassah

Many Yidden follow the custom, established by the Kozhnitzer Magid zt'l, to say the following three stories on Shabbos HaChodesh as a *segulah* for *parnassah*, and specifically to have all their needs for Pesach:

Story #1

A precious ring was stolen from a king, and the king announced that anyone could help in the search, and the king will provide them with the money they need to search for the stolen ring.

A poor Yid realized that this was his opportunity to get the money he badly needed to buy his yom *tov* needs.

He told the king's secretary that he wants to devote himself to find the thief and that he needs money to search. The secretary gave him a bundle of money.

The Yid used that money to buy matzos, wine, meat, and everything his family needed for *Pesach*.

A priest called Dayeinu, who was also a sworn anti-Semite, told the king, "The Yid isn't using the money for the search. A Jewish holiday is approaching, and he is undoubtedly going to use the king's money for his own needs.

"He is guilty of two offenses," Dayeinu explained to the king. "He is stealing the king's money, and he also deserves to be punished for deceiving the king."

The king replied that he wouldn't punish the Yid without evidence.

Dayeinu said, "On the night the Jews celebrate the Seder, we will go to this Yid's home, and you will see for yourself how your money is being spent."

The night of the Seder arrived. The king and

Dayeinu went to the Jewish quarter, and from a distance, the priest pointed out the illuminated house of the Yid.

"The candles to illuminate his home were bought with your money. Now, let's go inside to see the expensive foods he prepared..."

The king said, "Before entering his home, I want to eavesdrop from outside the window."

At that time, the family was singing *Dayeinu*. The father recited each stanza, and the family answered loudly, "*Dayeinu*."

The king told the priest, "You have it all wrong. The Yid is speaking with his family about who stole the ring. And they all agree that you, Dayeinu, stole the ring!"

Then the king shouted, "Soldiers! Quick! Arrest Dayeinu!"

Dayeinu's home was searched, and the diamond ring was found. Dayeinu was hung; so shall all the enemies of Yisrael be lost forever.

"And this Yid had all his Pesach needs in abundance."

Story #2

A *poritz* said to one of his Jewish tenants, "You are fortunate that I rent my tavern to you, so you can earn your livelihood from people who visit the tavern for a meal or a drink. What would you do without my help? Your family would all be hungry. You should thank me."

The Yid replied, "My *parnassah* comes from Hashem. Right now, it is coming via the tavern that you rent to me, but Hashem has other ways to support me. Therefore, my gratitude goes to Hashem alone. Hashem feeds the entire world, from the largest animals to the smallest

creature, and He supports me as well."

The *poritz* replied, "I never saw anyone so ungrateful. I do so much for you, and I don't even receive a thank you. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll rent out the tavern to someone else. If it's Hashem who is supporting you, let's see if He can support you without the tavern!"

This happened shortly before Pesach, and the Yid didn't know how he would have money for *yom tov*. But he trusted that Hashem would provide for him and his family.

The *poritz* had a pet monkey that was always by his side. The *poritz* would sit in his office counting gold coins, with the monkey right next to him, watching.

As the *poritz* counted each gold coin, he would bite it to test if it was gold. The monkey thought he was eating the coins.

Once, when the *poritz* wasn't around, the monkey ate one gold coin after the other until the monkey died.

The *poritz* was very upset when he heard that his monkey died because he loved his monkey dearly. He didn't know why it died. He told his servant, "Throw the dead monkey into the home of the Jew that used to run the tavern." This was to express his anger at the Yid, who didn't want to admit that the *poritz* was helping him with his *parnassah*.

The Yid heard something crash into his house and went to see what it was. He found the dead monkey on the ground, and near it were many gold coins. When the monkey was tossed into the Yid's home, its stomach split, and the gold coins spilled out.

At the night of the Seder, the *poritz* said to his servants, "Let's go to the

Yid's house. I want to see how he is faring. I'm certain he is sitting in the dark, eating almost nothing at all because I'm not helping him with his *parnassah* anymore."

They were amazed to find the house well lit, and fish, meat, and all kinds of tasty foods on the table. The *poritz* couldn't contain his curiosity. He knocked on the door and asked the Yid where he had the money to buy all of this.

The Yid related the story that happened; a dead monkey came crashing through his window, and out of the monkey's belly fell many gold coins. Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent me this fortune, so I should have money for *yom tov*, and there's enough money left over for the rest of the year."

The *poritz* replied, "Now I know that you were correct. Hashem supports you and the entire world with His kindness."

Story #3

There was a very high tax on imported alcoholic beverages in Poland. A Yid was once bringing barrels of spirits into Poland, hoping that he could pass the border without declaring the spirits.

But he was caught, and the barrels were confiscated. A date was scheduled for his trial.

The Yid went to Rebbe Elimlech of Lizhensk, and expressed his worries regarding the upcoming court case.

"You have nothing to worry about," the Rebbe told him. "Tell the court the barrels are filled with water."

At the court case, he said, "Honorable Judge, I don't know why I'm on trial, and I don't understand why I'm being suspected of committing a crime I never committed. The barrels are filled with drinking water."

The judge was surprised to hear this. The barrels' contents were tested, and they saw that it was true; there was only water inside. They let the Yid take the barrels and continue his way.

He returned to Rebbe Elimelech and said, "I was freed from imprisonment and from paying a significant fine, but now I have a great loss. I invested a lot of money to buy the spirits, and now there is nothing in the barrels other than water.

Rebbe Elimelech *zy" a* told him, "You have nothing to worry about. The barrels have spirits in them." The Yid sold the spirits and earned a lot of money.

"He had all his needs for Pesach, in abundance."

So shall Hashem grant us *parnassah b'harchavah*, and we should merit seeing the materialization of the prophecy (*Michah* 7:15) "As you left Egypt, so shall I show you miracles," speedily in our days, amen.



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