

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

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Vayishlach



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Parshas Vayishlach

Focus on the good – Be Happy with your lot

In *birchas hamazon* we say, הרחמן הוא יברך... אותנו ואת כל אשר לנו כמו שנתברכו אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב בכל מכל כל “The Merciful One should bless...us and everything we have, as our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were blessed with כל מכל כל, everything...”

Avraham was blessed with כל, as it states (*Bereishis* 24:1), ויה' ברך את אברהם בכל. Yitzchak was blessed with מכל, as it states (*Bereishis* 27:33), ואוכל מכל, and Yaakov was blessed with כל, as it states (in this week's *parashah*, 33:11), יש לי כל. The *avos* had כל, everything, and we request that Hashem should also bless us with everything.

When we study each of these three sources, we find that at those times the *avos* said

they have everything, they were lacking something.

For example, the *pasuk* says ויה' ברך את אברהם בכל, “Hashem blessed Avraham with everything.” This *pasuk* was said shortly after Sarah was *niftarah*; Avraham still didn't have a *shidduch* for Yitzchak, and he had a son, a *rasha*, Yishmael. Is this called being blessed with having everything?

When it states about Yitzchak ואוכל מכל, the beginning of that *pasuk* states, ויחרד יצחק חרדה גדלה, “Yitzchak was extremely afraid” and Rashi explains, ראה גיהנם פתוחה מתחתיו, “He saw Gehinom opened under him.” Because when Eisav came before Yitzchak, Gehinom came along with him. Is having such a son called being blessed with everything? He was also blind

at the time, yet it states he had “everything.”

Yaakov said, *יש לי כל*, “I have everything.” He said this to Eisav, when he was trying to appease him, to save his life. Yaakov most certainly had a very hard life, as Yaakov said to Pharaoh (*Bereishis* 47:9), *מעט ורעים היו ימי שני חיי*, “My life was short and bad.” How can we call such a life having “everything”?

And why do we request that we should have “everything” as the *avos* had, if the *avos*’s ‘everything’ was lacking?

The answer is, the *avos* focused on what they had, and therefore they were always happy with their lot. They always felt they have everything, because they were so happy with whatever they did have.

In *birchas hamazon*, after asking for the blessing of the *avos* we request, *כן יברך אותנו*, *כלנו יחד בברכה שלמה*, “So shall you bless all of us with a perfect blessing.” The attitude

of focusing solely on the good, and being happy with one’s lot is a *ברכה שלמה*, “A perfect blessing.” It is the ideal way to live in this world. Things were missing, but they didn’t think about those. They thought about what they did have, and this attitude is a perfect blessing.

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 17.) states, “There are three people who tasted a trace of Olam HaBa in this world. They are: Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, for it states about them that they had *בכל מכל כל*.”

According to our lesson, the Gemara is saying that when one is happy with the good Hashem gave him, and he feels he has “everything,” he lives a life with a flavor of Olam HaBa. The *avos* excelled in this outlook, and therefore the Gemara counts them as the three people who tasted Olam HaBa in this world.

When one says his life is good, Hashem will make his life even better. Hashem

promised Yaakov (32:13), היטב, איטב עמך, “I will do kindness to you.” Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozhmir *zt'l* explained the double expression of היטב איטב: If a person will say היטב, that

his life is good, Hashem will reply, “Do you think your life is good? איטב עמך, I will show you what is truly a good life” and Hashem will bestow on him even greater kindness.

***Hakol Letovah* - Hardships are for the Good**

We must know that even the hardships we endure are also ultimately good, because good will come from them.

The Chovas HaLevavos (introduction to *Shaar HaBechinah*) writes that we should praise Hashem for all *yesurim* and hardship we endure, because great kindness will come from it – a kindness that is far greater than the hardship a person endures. Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 118:5), מן המצר קראתי קה ענני, במרחב קה. The Rokeiach explains that a person calls out to Hashem and says מן המצר, that he is in a *tzarah*. ענני, Hashem responds, במרחב, you aren't in a *tzarah* at all. Everything is just fine. What you are going through is for your best interests.

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* said in the name of Reb Leibel Kutner *zt'l* that the promise היטב איטב עמך was said solely to Yaakov. Yet from all the *avos*, Yaakov had the most painful and difficult life. He had *tzaros* from Eisav, Lavan, Dinah, and he lost Yosef for twenty-two years, etc. This teaches us that we don't know how to measure “good years.” Sometimes we think we are going through bad years, but they are really extremely good years. From all of Yaakov's struggles he established the twelve *shevatim*, and Klal Yisrael. So, they were good years. It was היטב איטב עמך, Hashem performed so much good for him.

As the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* (שם) (עולם, שער שמירת השבת ג' בהגה"ה

writes, “Since a person’s mind is so weak and small, one should never question the ways Hashem leads the world. One must have *temimus* and believe that everything Hashem does is for the person’s good... If a person will believe this, he will merit seeing that what he thought was bad was really for his benefit...”¹

1. There was a woman who was particular about the clothing she bought for her children. She wanted only the best quality, and she was specific about the styles too. Her husband tried to convince her to buy cheaper brands, because they really couldn’t afford her high standard, but she wasn’t persuaded.

Yom tov was approaching and she had in mind a certain kind of clothing for her children, but after checking out three stores she didn’t find what she was looking for. She came into the fourth store, almost ready to give up, when she joyfully found the exact type of clothing and quality she was searching for.

But when she went to the cash register to pay, her credit card didn’t work for some reason. She told the salesperson, “Please keep these clothes near you, and don’t sell them to anyone else. I will come in tomorrow morning to pay for them in cash.”

The salesperson promised to keep her purchases until the next morning. But when she came to the store the following morning, there was another salesperson working there. This salesperson didn’t know that the clothes were put away intentionally, and she sold them to someone else. And they didn’t have any more of those clothes in stock. The salesperson apologized for the mistake, and promised that she would call her the moment a new stock comes in.

Later that week, the salesperson called her. The clothes came in. She immediately came to the store (this time with cash and with her credit card) and was happy to see that the clothes were on sale for half price.

At that moment she realized that everything that happened was for her benefit. First, the credit card didn’t work, then the clothes she set aside were sold to someone else, and there were no more like them in stock. All this occurred so she could buy the clothes for half price, which was more within their budget.

When Yaakov Avinu traveled from Be'er Sheva to Charan, the sun set two hours earlier than it was supposed to. As it states (*Bereishis* 28:11), יָלַן שָׁם, “He slept there because the sun set” and Rashi explains, “The sun set suddenly, before its time, so he should sleep there.”

Twenty-two years later, when he was injured by the *malach*, the sun shone two hours longer than usual, to heal him. As Rashi (32:32) writes, “The hours the sun set early for him when he left Be'er Sheva quickly shone for him [to heal him]...”

Reb Nosson Adler *zt'l* (quoted in *Shevet Sofer*) explains that the setting sun implies hardships. Twenty-two years later, Yaakov benefitted from that early sunset. This is a reminder that hardships are always for the good. If we

keep our eyes open, we can often see it.

Reb Nachum Zev of Kelm *zt'l* requested in his ethical will that no praises should be said about him after his demise. The only praise they can say is, “He enjoyed thinking thoughts of *emunah*.”

Let us also take a moment to think about *emunah*: We will ask a question, and we should seek an answer through the prism of *emunah*:

The question is: When someone says mean, embarrassing words to his fellow man, what should he think so that the harsh words won't destroy him? He should think that he will benefit so much from this shame. Reb Tzvi Hirsh Brody *zt'l* (quoted in *Michtav MeEliyahu*) compares it to a shoe store owner who is busy taking off people's old shoes, and putting on new shoes for them to wear. Isn't it embarrassing to do such

Because in retrospect, we can often see how everything happens for the best.

a thing? But he is happy to do it because he is earning money. Similarly, when one suffers shame (or any other kind of *yesurim*) one can be happy with it when he believes that he is gaining so much from this ordeal.

It is important to think about these ideas, to acquire this *emunah*. Just like Reb Nachum Zev of Kelm, let us enjoy thinking thoughts of *emunah*, until we acquire the belief that everything is truly for the good.

Everything is Hashem's Kindness; There's Nothing to Fear

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 45) states that Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed Moshe the treasuries of reward that are in heaven. Moshe [pointed to one treasury] and asked, "For whom is this treasury?"

Hashem replied, "It is for those who give *tzedakah*."

"And for whom is this treasury?"

"It's for those who raise orphans."

Moshe saw a very large treasury. "For who is this treasury?"

Hashem replied, "When someone deserves reward because of his good deeds, I give him his reward that's due.

But when one doesn't have merits, and he doesn't deserve kindness, I give him a free gift. As it states, וְהִנֵּנִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר אֶחְוֶה, 'I do kindness to whom I want to do kindness,' וְהִנֵּנִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר אֶרְחֶם, 'and I have compassion on whom I want to have compassion.'" Hashem gives them kindness and compassion from that treasury of free gifts.

We perform Torah and mitzvos, and we hope that we should deserve and be worthy of Hashem's compassion and kindness. When one doesn't deserve it, Hashem may still bestow His kindness on him, giving from the treasury of free gifts.

We say, מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט. When one is worthy, he receives במשפט, by law. When one doesn't deserve, he receives צדקה, charity from Above.

Hashem promised Yaakov (*Bereishis* 28:15), ושמרתיך בכל, אשר תלך, "I will watch over you, wherever you go."

Yet, when Yaakov was about to meet with Eisav, he was afraid. As it states (32:8), וירא, יעקב מאד. Why was Yaakov afraid after Hashem promised that He will protect him?

The Gemara answers that Yaakov thought, "Perhaps when Hashem promised me protection, I was worthy of it. But since then, many years passed. Perhaps I sinned and I'm not worthy of Hashem's protection anymore?"

Avraham was different, because when Hashem promised him children, he trusted it will be. He wasn't afraid that his sins might get in the way of receiving those promises.

Hashem said to Avraham (15:4-6), לא יירשך זה, "Eliezer won't be your inheritor, כי אם, אשר יצא ממעדך, rather the child that will come from your loins... ויוצא אותו החוצה ויאמר, הבט נא השמימה וספר הכוכבים, Hashem took Avraham outdoors and said, 'look at the sky and count the stars... ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך, Hashem told him, "So many will be your children." והאמין בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה, Avraham believed in Hashem..."

What is the difference between Yaakov and Avraham? Why was Yaakov afraid that Hashem's promise may cease due to sins, while Avraham wasn't afraid?

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* says the answer lies in the words ויחשבה לו צדקה. Avraham humbly thought that everything Hashem gives him is *tzedakah*, charity, a gift from Hashem's treasury of free gifts, and not because he truly deserved it due to his good deeds. Therefore, when

Hashem told him he would bear children he was certain about it. Sins wouldn't get in the way; he wasn't blessed with children because he deserved it, but because of Hashem's kindness and compassion that has no limits.

But Yaakov understood that Hashem grants him kindness as a reward for his good deeds. When Hashem promised him, **ושמרתך בכל אשר תלך**, "I will watch over you wherever you go" Yaakov thought that this was because he deserved this protection. Now he was afraid that perhaps he sinned and forfeited Hashem's promise of protection.

In *Nishmas* we attribute all the good we enjoy in life to Hashem's compassion and kindness, not because we earned it with our good deeds. As we say, **עד הנה עזרונו רחמך ולא** "Up until now Your compassion has helped us, and Your kindness never left us."

And since everything is Hashem's compassion and kindness, we are certain **ואל תמשנו ה' אלקינו לנצח**, that the kindness will continue and never cease. If we received all our blessings in life because of our good deeds, we can be afraid that perhaps we aren't worthy anymore. But since we receive solely by Hashem's kindness, it will be forever.

This lesson is taught by the Vilna Gaon (*Mishlei* 25:15) which we quote here, briefly:

"In *Nishmas* we say, **עד הנה עזרונו רחמך ולא עזבונו חסדיך**, everything we have is Hashem's kindness and compassion... Therefore, we are certain **ואל תמשנו ה' אלקינו לנצח**, that Your kindness will continue forever... This is also the meaning of the *pasuk*, **הנה א-ל ישועתי אבטח ולא אפחד**, 'Hashem is my savior, I trust and I am not afraid..' (*Yeshayah* 12:2). The name **א-ל** signifies *chesed*, kindness. When my salvation is from

א-ל, Hashem's kindness, אבטח, I trust, ולא אפחד, and I am not afraid, even if I sin... But when one receives goodness because he deserves it due to his good deeds, then he can be afraid that the kindness might end... Therefore, Yaakov was very afraid that perhaps sins made him unworthy of receiving Hashem's promise..."

The Negative Side of Fear

The Torah (32:8) tells us that when Yaakov Avinu heard that Eisav was coming towards him with an army of four hundred men, וירא יעקב מאד ויצר לו "Yaakov was very afraid and he was distressed."²

The Daas Zekanim MiBaalei HaTosefos explains "fear and distress" in the following way:

"He was distressed that he was afraid of Eisav after Hakadosh Baruch Hu promised [that He

would protect him]." Thus, the Daas Zekanim reads the *pasuk* as follows:

וירא יעקב מאד, "Yaakov was very afraid, ויצר לו, and that distressed him, because he should have trust in Hashem's promise.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* explains that Yaakov Avinu thought about his past, how he used to trust in Hashem with all his heart, and that now he lost his *bitachon*.

He said (32:11), כי במקלי עברתי את הירדן הזה, "I crossed this Yarden with my staff" and Rashi explains that he split the Jordan River with his staff. When he travelled to Charan and came upon the Jordan River he wasn't deterred. He courageously placed his staff in the river and it split before him. ועתה, but now, twenty years later, הייתי לשני מהנות, "I

2. Rashi writes, וירא שמא יהרג, "He was afraid that he may be killed, ויצר לו, and it distressed him if he will have to kill others." Rashi is defining the two words וירא – ויצר, fear and distress. He was afraid for his life, and distressed if he has to kill others.

divided my family into two camps. If Eisav attacks one, the other will escape.”

When one is afraid, that alone can cause bad things to happen to him. As the Gemara (*Brachos* 60.) states:

Reb Yehudah bar Nasan was walking behind Rav Hamnuna, and Rav Hamnuna heard Rav Yehudah moan from fear and anxiety. Rav Hamnuna said, “You are bringing troubles onto yourself. As it states (*Iyov* 3:25), *‘בי פחד פחדתי ויאתני*, ‘I was afraid and it happened. *וואשר יגרתני יבא לי*, the matter I was worried about came to be.”

The Maharal (*Chidushei Agodos Bava Metzia* 33) writes: “The Rishonim say: when one fears that he is going to fall, the fear itself causes him to fall. If someone takes a long wood plank and places it over a river to walk from one side to the next, there is a very good chance that whoever walks over this beam will fall into the river. But place this same plank on

the ground and no one will fall off. This is because when he is walking above the river, he is afraid that he might fall, and this fear causes it to happen... This is also true when one is afraid that he might become poor. Thinking about this causes it to happen.... This is as it states in *Iyov* (3:25), “That which I was afraid of, came to me.”

This also happened to Yaakov Avinu. The Riv’a (from the *Baalei HaTosfos*) teaches that since Yaakov was afraid of Eisav, he lost his protection. As it states (32:26), *ותקע כף ירך*, “Yaakov’s thigh was dislodged when he wrestled with [the *malach*].” How did this happen? What happened to Hashem’s promise that He will protect him? The answer is, Yaakov’s fear caused it to happen.

As the Riv’a writes, “HaKadosh Baruch Hu promised, *ושמרתך בכל אשר תלך*, ‘I will watch over you wherever you go,’

nevertheless, the *malach* wounded Yaakov. This was because he was afraid of Eisav. This also happened to Moshe. Hashem told him, **כי אהיה עמך**, 'I will be with you,' yet he was injured in the hotel. This happened because he was afraid of Pharaoh, as he said, **שלח נא ביד תשלח**, 'Send someone else...'"

The Seforno explains that as long as Yaakov Avinu was thinking about Hashem, he was protected. The moment he

lost focus, the *malach* was able to smite him on the thigh.

The Seforno writes, "Because of Yaakov's constant *deveikus* in Hashem with his thoughts and speech, the *malach* couldn't harm him. But when the *malach* told him about the nation's future sins ... (**הודיעו** **החטא העתיד במדריכי עמו**) this upset Yaakov, his *deveikus* ceased, and [that's when the angel hit him and] his thigh was dislodged..."³

3. The Zutchke Rebbe *zt'l* offered another explanation how Yaakov was wounded, even after Hashem pledged to guard him.

He explains that the Sar of Esav didn't harm Yaakov. He couldn't, because Hashem said He will protect Yaakov. Rather, *Yaakov harmed himself*. Wrestling necessitates strenuous body movements. As Yaakov battled with the angel his thigh dislodged because of those maneuvers. The angel didn't do it, but Yaakov's own exertions did.

The Zutchke Rebbe explains the *pasuk* as follows: **וירא כי לא יכול לו**, "The *malach* saw that he couldn't harm Yaakov" because Hashem was protecting him. **ויגע בכף ירכו** "So he touched Yaakov's thigh." This means that he held onto Yaakov. That he could do. He didn't have permission to harm Yaakov, but he was permitted to grab Yaakov. If Yaakov knew the angel couldn't do more than that, he wouldn't have been afraid. However, Yaakov was afraid and he struggled and wrestled with the angel, and **ותקע עמו** **כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו**, "Yaakov's thigh dislodged, due to his wrestling." It wasn't the angel who did it, but Yaakov's wrestling with the angel.

Bitachon

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* (*Emunah u'Bitachon* 2:7) writes, "*Ruach hakodesh* is on a person who has *bitachon*. He receives a courageous spirit that assures him that Hashem will surely help him."

The Sefer Ha'Ikrim reveals that "*bitachon* in Hashem is greater than all the praises one can say to Hashem." This is because *bitachon* means he relies on Hashem's kindness, love, and strength. Carrying that recognition in one's heart is the greatest praise.

As it states (*Tehillim* 65:2), לך דומיה תהלה, "For You, silence is praise." One doesn't have to

say anything. He silently trusts in Hashem that everything will turn out well, and that is the ultimate praise.

Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 71:15), ואני תמיד איחל והוספתי על, כל תהלתך, "I always trust in you, and that is more than all Your praises."

The Ramchal (דרוש בענין הקיווי) writes, "When one trusts in Hashem, his *bitachon* will lift him out of Gehinom... *Malachim* will take him out of Gehinom. *Bitachon* purifies like a *mikvah*, because *bitachon* elevates the person to a high level where there are no sins and blemishes..."

Kibud Av Ve'Em

The Daas Zekenim (32:8) writes on the *pasuk*, וירא יעקב, מאד, "Yaakov was very afraid..."

"He was afraid that Eisav would be helped in the merit of his *kibud av ve'em*. Yaakov

didn't do this mitzvah for over twenty years."

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 31) tells us that the mitzvah of honoring parents is an extremely difficult mitzvah to

keep. Rashi writes, “It is impossible to honor one’s parents sufficiently, and he will be punished because of this.”

A father said to a *rosh yeshiva*: “Maybe you can help me. You know that my son is *baruch Hashem* learning well in the yeshiva, and that he has *yiras Shamayim*. But at home, he doesn’t honor his parents.” “I will see what I can do,” the *rosh yeshiva* promised.

The next day, he met the *bachur* and asked him whether he’d be interested in learning together on Fridays.

“That would be a great honor,” the *bachur* replied, excitedly. “What does the *rosh yeshiva* want to learn?”

“Well, we learn Gemara all week. I was considering to learn halachah.”

“Halachah is fine,” the *bachur* said. “Which halachos does the *rosh yeshiva* have in mind?”

“*Hilchos kibud av ve’em*” the *rosh yeshiva* said.

The *bachur* replied, “*Kibud av v’em*? Shouldn’t we learn halachos that are applicable in our times?”

The *bachur* didn’t know how applicable these halachos are.

The Pela Yoetz writes: “Each mitzvah has its mazal. People are ready to spend a lot of money for the the rights to open the *aron kodesh*, or to be a *sandak*, etc., although these aren’t even actual mitzvos — not from the Torah, and not from the *rabbanan*. They are a *chibuv* mitzvah [a gesture, showing love to the mitzvos]. *Ashreihem Yisrael* [they are fortunate]! However, each time one obeys his father or his mother he is doing a mitzvah from the Torah! But the fools transgress and they will be punished.”

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* used to tell *bachurim* to study *hilchos kibud av ve’em* thirty days before the end of the *zman*. He said, “Just as one must study the halachos of a *yom tov* thirty days before the

yom tov, so too, one should study *hilchos kibud av v'eim* thirty days before going home.

It is written in *sefarim* that when one doesn't honor his parents, he loses his *yichus*. The specialness of Klal Yisrael is our heritage, descendants of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, and the tzaddikim of generations past. But when one doesn't honor his parents, he is cutting away from his own past, and thereby he loses his *yichus*, and this is a tremendous loss.

The Ohr HaChayim (*Shemos* 20:12) writes, "The mitzvah of *kibud av v'eim* is *mesugal* for longevity in addition to the reward that Hashem will give

for keeping this mitzvah. There are mitzvos that have wonderful *segulos* to them in addition to the reward that Hashem plans to give for each mitzvah. And for this mitzvah [of *kibud av v'eim*], the Torah revealed [that the *segulah* is long life]."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, "We clearly see that those who honor their parents live long, or they have success and serenity in all their ways." ⁴

The Beis Ahron of Stolin *zt'l* said that he attained his spiritual levels from the mitzvah of *kibud av v'eim*.

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zt'l* was once by the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*. Rebbe Michel said

4. The mitzvah of *kibud av v'eim* was given in Marah, before the Torah was given, and at a time when the Jewish nation had all their financial needs taken care of, due to the manna that fell from heaven, and from Miriam's well. The Kesav Sofer explains that this clarified to them that children are obligated to honor their parents even if they never received Torah from their parents, and even if they never received financial aid (because they were obligated at a time when there wasn't yet Torah, and no one needed financial aid). It is their parents, who brought them into this world, and therefore they are obligated to honor them.

had he been one more Shabbos together with the Baal Shem Tov, Moshiach would come.

“So why didn’t you go another Shabbos?” someone asked him.

Rebbe Michel Zlotchever replied, “My father asked me not to go.”

“Is that a reason not to go?” the man asked. “Wouldn’t it be worthwhile to go against your father’s wishes just this one time, and thereby save *klal* Yisrael from *galus*?”

Rebbe Michel answered, “If I went against my father’s will, I wouldn’t be Rebbe Michel.” In other words, what made Rebbe Michel a tzaddik and worthy to bring Moshiach was his adherence to all the laws of the Torah, among them, keeping the great mitzvah of *kibud av ve’em*. Going against his father’s will and travelling to the Baal Shem Tov couldn’t bring Moshiach.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach

zt’l once saw a father carrying tables and chairs on Shabbos for a Kiddush. His older son was standing nearby wearing his tallis, talking with a friend, and he wasn’t helping. Reb Shlomo Zalman couldn’t understand why he wasn’t helping his father schlep the heavy furniture. He asked the *yungerman*, “Why don’t you help your father?”

He replied, “I don’t carry on Shabbos.”

There was an *eiruv* in Yerushalayim, but they followed the stringent opinions that refrains from carrying.

For the next three days, Reb Shlomo Zalman didn’t say his *shiur* in his yeshiva. He simply couldn’t; he didn’t have peace of mind. What he saw, so greatly disturbed him. It bothered him to see a *yungerman* callously allow his father to work hard due to a *chumrah*, while he did nothing at all.

Humility

Reb Yehudah HaChassid (*Sefer Chassidim* תתרט"ו) states, "Everything that's written in the Torah has lessons that are applicable in all generations. That is why we say *נותר התורה* before and after the reading of the Torah, even when the *parasha* doesn't have any mitzvos, like *parashas Vayishlach*. [This *parasha* only has one mitzvah, the prohibition of eating the *gid hanasheh*. We make a *brachah* because every *parashah* has Torah lessons to acquire.]... From this *parashah* we learn that a person should be humble before his brother..."

The *Sefer Chassidim* discusses how Yaakov honored Esav, and we must learn from that that siblings should honor each other and should be humble to each other. Yaakov showed humility to Eisav, and everyone should learn from that to be humble before his siblings.

One should also be humble

towards his own children. Towards the end of the *Parashas Vayeitzei* it states (31:45-46), "Yaakov picked up a stone, and set it for a monument [as a sign of a peace treaty between him and Lavan]. Yaakov told *his brothers* that they should gather stones..." When we study these words we wonder, who were Yaakov's brothers? Rashi writes, "They were his sons. They were like his brothers because they would help him in times of sorrow and in times of war."

The Chida (*Bris Shalom* 343) explains, "Yaakov Avinu considered his sons to be his brothers, and this is how every father should view his older children — as though they were his brothers. When one does so, there will be peace and tranquility..."

As children get older, the parent-child relationship should become similar to a relationship of friends, like

brothers. Obviously, children must always revere and honor their parents, but at the same time there should be a camaraderie between parent and child, almost as though they were brothers.

(The Chofetz Chaim's son, Reb Aryeh Leib *zt'l*, writes that it was very hard for him and for his siblings to honor their father, because the Chofetz Chaim treated them as brothers, pleasantly and without sternness.)

One should also have humility towards one's wife. As the Shlah HaKadosh writes, "When one wants something from his family it isn't proper to force them — even when he rules over them. Instead, he should persuade them — as best as he can — until they agree with him and want the same as he wants. It's better when they are brought to see things as he does than to force them to obey. See how many words Yaakov Avinu spoke with Rachel and Leah [to

convince them to leave their father Lavan's home] so they should agree to his request happily, even after HaKadosh Baruch Hu commanded him to return home."

Humility, in general, is an important and essential trait we should seek to attain.

The *Darkei Moshe* (written by the Rema, *Yorah Deah* 35) teaches a method to check a live animal, to know whether it is a *treifah* or not. He writes, "I found in the name of Reb Yehudah HaChassid that one should move his hand over an animal while it is alive. If the animal lowers itself towards the ground...that's a sign that it is certainly kosher. If doesn't lower itself, it is *treif*. A *siman*: לב נשבר ונרכה, 'a broken and humble heart...' (*Tehillim* 51:19) and עד ושפל רוח להחיות, 'to give life to the humble...' (*Yeshayah* 57:15)."

This test determines that the animal has no internal ailments, which would make it not kosher.

We can suggest that this test can also be used to determine the levels of people. When one bows his head in humility towards his fellow man (and towards his siblings) it's a good sign for him. It's a sign that he's kosher, that he's a holy and proper Yid. But if he raises his head with pride and arrogance, it isn't a good sign. It states (32:14), ויקח מן הבא בידו, מנחה לעשו אחיו. This *pasuk* is referring to the animals

Yaakov chose to give as a present to Eisav. We can explain הבא בידו, that Yaakov put his hand out and the animals passed under it. Any animal that didn't lower its head and bumped Yaakov's hand (הבא בידו), Yaakov understood that it was *treifah*, and he sent it to Esav, his brother. Because arrogance is the way of Esav, but Yaakov's way, and the way of the Jewish nation, is humility.⁵

Tefillah

The Beis Yisrael used to say עגוה פסולה, feeling unworthy to serve Hashem, is worse than arrogance.

approach *tefillah* with feelings of inadequacy, but with faith that Hashem listens to our *tefillah*.

We strive to be humble, but that should never cause us to think our *avodas Hashem* and our *tefillos* aren't precious to Hashem. We shouldn't

Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Dei'ah 123:1) teaches that wine that was touched by a non-Jew becomes נסך, forbidden, because we suspect the gentile

5. Once, someone lifted one of Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler's *zt'l* grandsons, and the child's head bumped on the ceiling. Rebbe Aharon Chernobler said to his grandson, "If you rise too high, you can get hurt." He was hinting to his grandson that one shouldn't raise himself too high, with arrogance, because one only loses. (Years later, this grandson became the renowned Rebbe Yisrael of Chortkov *zt'l*.)

may have used this wine as a sacrifice for his *avodah zarah*. The Rema writes, “In these times, when it isn’t common for gentiles to pour wine for *avodah zarah*, some say that when a gentile touches wine it is only forbidden to drink it, but it doesn’t become forbidden to derive pleasure from it... However, it is better to be *machmir* [to be stringent and not derive pleasure from it, either]...”

Gentiles rarely do this kind of worship today. Even when they do, they don’t truly intend for idol worship. It’s more like a tradition — מנהג אבותיהם בידיהם, a custom that they inherited from their ancestors. Nonetheless, *Shulchan Aruch* concludes that we shouldn’t benefit from the wine. Essentially, this means that since their ancestors performed יין נסך, and today’s *goyim* copy their ways, we deem the wine יין נסך.

A million times *lehavdil*, let’s consider prayer. Many people

consider their *tefillos* to be מנהג אבותיהם בידיהם, a tradition they received from their forefathers. Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and the *tzaddikim* of yore prayed with *kavanah*, and in a way, we are just copying what they did. Could such *tefillos* with so little devotion be valid? We see from the laws of יין נסך that following the tradition of the forefathers gives value to our present deeds. Even if our *tefillos* are said without *kavanah*, our *tefillos* are influential and they create a *nachas ruach* for Hashem.

We therefore begin *Shemonah Esrei* with the words, אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב, and we mention the merits of our forefathers, of the people who truly knew how to pray. Even if our *tefillos* are mostly מנהג אבותינו בידינו, a family tradition, nevertheless, our *tefillos* arouse their merits and Hashem answers our *tefillos*.

Some people think that only when they daven with *kavanah*

do their *tefillos* have value, so they think that when they don't have peace of mind and are unable to daven with *kavanah*, their *tefillah* is worthless. It should be clear that just saying the words of *tefillah* even without *kavanah*, can also bring many *yeshuos*.

The Torah (32:9) tells us that Yaakov Avinu divided his camp into two, so if Eisav will attack one, the other camp will be saved. The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* explained that the two camps correspond to the mind and speech, and Eisav represents the *yetzer hara*. Thus, the *pasuk* is saying, if the *yetzer hara* smites the mind and you aren't able to daven with *kavanah*, at least salvage the other camp, speech, and say the words of the *tefillah*. Even such *tefillos*, said with the mouth, without the heart and mind, will be answered.

Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter *shlita* repeated this lesson

from the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* and added the following story:

There was a *chasan*, a *talmid chacham*, who studied all the laws of the *chuppah*, so he will marry his wife properly, according to all opinions. During the *sheva brachos*, he realized that according to one opinion he didn't have the correct intentions when he gave the ring to his *kallah*. He feared that according to that opinion he wasn't married. His rebbe told him, "Even if you thought you were divorcing your wife when you gave her the ring, you would still be married, because everyone heard you say, 'הרי את מקודשת לי.'" This is an example of how speech even without intention is also very effective.

Tzaddikim therefore said to say *Tehillim* even without *kavanah*, because just saying the words brings salvations and blessings.

The halachah for someone who said *ותן מל ומטר* in the

summer is that he must pray over again, because rain in the summer is a curse. Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* asked, "How much *kavanah* did this person have? It is quite obvious that if he asked for rain in the summertime, that his mind was somewhere else when he said those words. So why must he daven again? Why are we afraid it will rain? Could such a *tefillah* make a difference? The question is more difficult if you were davening in Eretz Yisrael, where it never rains in the summer. If it rained in the middle of August, that would be miraculous. The skies are blue, there isn't a cloud in the sky, yet we are afraid of rain because of this person's *tefillah* that he said without any *kavanah* at all. This teaches us the power of *tefillah* from every Yid, even without *kavanah*.

The Be'er Heitev (*Or HaChaim* 117:7) discusses someone who was so distracted when he was davening that he made two

mistakes: It was Shabbos, but he said a weekday *Shemonah Esrei*. Another error is that he said וְתָן טַל וּמָטָר in the summer. After he concluded that *brachah*, he remembered that it's Shabbos, and he remembered that he was supposed to say וְתָן בְּרָכָה and not וְתָן טַל וּמָטָר לְבְרָכָה. What should he do now? The Be'er Heitev replies that he must repeat the *brachah* בְּרַךְ עֲלֵינוּ again, so he can say the *brachah* correctly, and then continue with the Shabbos *Shemoneh Esrei*.

He must correct his error. He must break the curse he wrought by asking for rain in the middle of the summer, and afterwards say the *tefillah* for Shabbos.

This is quite hard to understand; why are we so concerned about this person's *Shemonah Esrei*? He obviously had no *kavanah* at all! He hardly knew what he was saying. The answer is, don't underestimate the power

of a Yid's *tefillah*. His *tefillos* are effective even when said in such a manner.

Certainly then, and all the more so when he does daven with *kavanah* – even if he is a simple person. As the Noam Elimelech writes, "Tzaddikim...are able to bring you *parnassah* and *shefa*, bounty, with their pure words of *tefillah*. All the more so, when you pray from the depths of your heart..."

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (433) writes, "מִשְׂרָשֵׁי הַמִּצְוָה, the reason for this mitzvah [of *tefillah*]... The Master of everything who created them desires their welfare... Hashem opened up a door for them, so they can receive all their desires. The path is that they should ask from Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He has the ability to give them whatever they're lacking. He answers them from heaven, to everyone who calls to Him

sincerely. In addition, Hashem also commanded them to ask all their needs and all the desires of their heart from Him, constantly. In this manner, we receive all our hearts' desires..."

The Torah lists the twelve children of Yaakov Avinu (see 35:23-26). Binyamin's name is mentioned too. Then the *pasuk* concludes, אֱלֹהֵי בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר יָלַד לוֹ, בְּפָדֵן אֲרָם "these are Yaakov's children, born to him in Padan Aram." The question is, Binyamin wasn't born in Padan Aram. He was born after they left Padan Aram (see 35:16). The Chizkuni answers, when Yosef was born in Padan Aram, Rachel prayed, יִסְפֶּה ה' לִי בֵן אַחֵר, "May Hashem grant me another son" (30:24). Binyamin's birth came from this prayer, therefore it can be considered as though Binyamin was born in Padan Aram.⁶

6. There was a man who came to a shul for the first time of his life on Yom Kippur, when the *gabai* was selling *psichah* for *Ne'ilah* (the

Chapter קי"ט

Chapter קי"ט in *Tehillim* has many *segulos*, and one of them is to subjugate the enemies of the Jewish nation.

On the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 6:19), להדף כל אויבך מפניך, 'to push away all your enemies from before

you...' the Or Pnei Moshe teaches that להדף is *gematriya* קי"ט (119). By saying this chapter, כל אויבך, all enemies are subjugated...

The Imrei Noam adds that Yaakov Avinu said chapter קי"ט before meeting with Esav, as a *segulah* to be saved from

privilege to open up the *aron kodesh* for *Ne'ilah*). This man joined in the bidding. He kept bidding higher and higher, until he bought the privilege for a very large sum.

Since he never was in a *beis kneses* before, he didn't know what he was supposed to do. The *gabai* showed him to draw the string, so the curtain would open. After that the *gabai* showed him how to open the doors.

People asked him why he wanted *psichah* for *Ne'ilah* so badly, since they realized he didn't know what he was buying. He replied, "In my father's will, he wrote to his children that they should see where the wealthy people are investing, and he advised us to invest our money there as well. I saw that the wealthy people of the *beis medresh* were interested in buying the *psichah*, so I knew that it was a good investment."

The *nimshal* is, *tzaddikim* in all generations invested in *tefillah*. They put all their heart and efforts into *tefillah*. We should learn from them that it is worthwhile for us to invest there, as well.

Today, one often has to put coins into a machine to enter a *mikvah*. If he doesn't put in enough coins, the door doesn't open.

This can be a *mashal* that sometimes we pray many *tefillos*, and our *tefillos* aren't answered. The doors of heaven are still locked. But that doesn't mean our *tefillos* were worthless. Just put in one more *tefillah*, and that may be all that's needed to open the doors of heaven.

Someone told the Chazon Ish that he's suffering from headaches due to his concentration in *tefillah*. The Chazon Ish asked, "What does *tefillah* have to do with the mind? *Tefillah* is with the heart!"

Esav's wrath. One inference is from the words at the beginning of the *parashah*, וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו. The *gematriya* of לפניו is 176, which is the number of *pesukim* there are in chapter קי"ט. Furthermore, when Yaakov fought with the angel it states, ויאבק איש עמו. The *gematriya* of

ק"ט is ויאבק. So we see that Yaakov Avinu, the איש תם, overcame Eisav, with chapter קי"ט, which begins with the words, אשרי תמימי דרך.

We can add that by saying chapter קי"ט, one can be saved from spiritual enemies as well, which is the *yetzer hara*.

Torah Study

Yaakov Avinu brought his family over the river and remembered that he forgot some small jugs, פכים קטנים, and went back to retrieve them (see 32:25). The Gemara (*Chulin* 91.) says about this, "There are tzaddikim who love their money more than their life..."

them to him for a purpose. So, he went to retrieve them.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that we should learn from this that if Hashem gave you special talents that means you need them, and you should use them for Hashem's service. Hashem didn't give you those talents for nothing.

What was so important about those פכים קטנים?

This also applies to success in Torah. Hashem grants people intellectual abilities, and Hashem gave it to them so they should use them for Torah study.

The Arizal (*Likutei Torah*) explains: If Hashem gave you something that means that you need it. Otherwise, why did Hashem give it to you? Since Hashem gave Yaakov Avinu the small jugs, he knew that he needed them. Hashem gave

The primary protection against Eisav (and against the nations of the world) is Torah study.

As it states (*Bereishis* 27:22), הקול קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו, and Chazal say: When the voice of Yaakov is heard in the beis medresh, the hands of Eisav don't have any power over us.

Yaakov told Eisav (*Rashi* 32:5), עם לבן גרתי, and Rashi explains, עם לבן גרתי ותרי"ג מצוות, שמרתי ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים, "I lived with Lavan, I kept the 613 mitzvos, and I didn't learn from his bad ways."

The Arugas HaBosem explains, "In Lavan's house Yaakov was very much prevented from studying Torah, because Lavan didn't allow him respite for a moment. Yaakov had to constantly come up with ideas how to save himself from Lavan's scheming and deceit. If not for Lavan's dishonesty, Yaakov would be able to devote himself to Torah study, and he wouldn't have humbled himself so much to Eisav. Because when the voice of Yaakov is heard, Eisav's hands don't have any power

over Yaakov. Yaakov sent a message to Eisav, 'Don't be surprised that I'm humbling myself so much before you. Because although I kept the 613 mitzvos of the Torah, לא למדתי, I wasn't able to learn Torah, ממעשיו הרעים, because of Lavan's bad ways. But when I will be able to study Torah, and learn the depths of halachah, Eisav's hands won't have any strength over me.'"

Reb Elchanan Wasserman *zt'l hy'd* asks, why did Eisav's angel, which is the *yetzer hara*, fight specifically with Yaakov, and not with Avraham or Yitzchak?

The answer is, Yaakov represents Torah, and the *yetzer hara's* primary objective is to prevent people from studying Torah. As the Chofetz Chaim said, "The *yetzer hara* doesn't mind if a Yid fasts, cries, and davens, as long as he isn't learning Torah."

This is because the Torah is the antidote for the *yetzer*

hara. When we learn Torah the *yetzer hara* has no strength over us.

Eisav said (*Bereishis* 27:41), יקרבו ימי אבל אבי ואהרנה את יעקב אחי, "The days of mourning for my father is approaching, and then I will kill my brother, Yaakov."

The Kli Yakar explains, "A mourner may not learn Torah... Eisav said he will kill Yaakov when Yaakov is mourning... The Torah won't protect him and I will be able to kill him."⁷

Torah and Wealth

Earning a living isn't easy, and it often seems that there aren't enough hours in the day. Many people don't seem to find time for Torah study. But they are making a mistake, because even if they can't learn for many hours a

day, they can set aside times for learning in the morning and at night, and that won't take away from their *parnassah*. In fact, Torah study will increase their *parnassah*.

As the Or HaChaim (beginning of *Bechukosai*) writes, "If you're lacking *parnassah*, that's a sign you aren't studying Torah, because Torah brings *parnassah*." As it states (*Avos* 3:17), אם אין תורה אין קמה.

Setting aside times for Torah study will increase your *parnassah*.

We'll explain this with a *meshal*:

A young man wanted to open up a business, but he needed a lot of capital for his initial investment. He asked his father for a loan. His father

7. Although someone in mourning may learn the halachos of *aveilus*, and Yaakov could study those halachos during his mourning, nevertheless, the Beis Yisrael *zt'l* explained, it will be Torah without joy, and such Torah isn't sufficient to protect him from Eisav. Only joyful and happy Torah study protects us from Eisav and from the *yetzer hara*.

replied, "If you wear tefillin for three days, I'll lend you the money."

Three days later, the boy came to his father and said, "I wore tefillin for three days, now please give me the money."

The father replied, "Wear tefillin for a week, and then I'll lend you the money."

A week later, the young man asked for the money and the father pushed him off again, "Wear the tefillin for a month, and I'll lend you the money."

The son lost his patience and asked his father why he was

constantly pushing him off, and not giving him the money as he said he would?

The father replied, "I put the money into your tefillin bag on the third day. What can I do if you haven't opened your tefillin bag all this time?!"

The *nimshal* is, Chazal tell us, "Whoever embraces the yoke of Torah, the burden of *parnassah* is removed from him ..." Learning Torah is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. But if you never open the *sefarim*, how do you expect to earn anything?

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