

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

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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ISSUE #919 - MONSEY: Candle Lighting 4:46 - Shabbos Ends 5:49 - January 25, 2019 - 25 Shevat, 5779 - 85" D

PARSHAS YISRO

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Parshas Va'eschanan

On Shabbos Nachamu Hashem consoles us on all the *tzaros* we endure in *galus*. **אִמְרוּ**, “Console my nation, says Hashem...” **יֵאמֶר** is in future tense because Hashem consoles us in every generation.¹

The *haftarah* says, **נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי**

1. *Sefer Minhag Tov* (first printed in תרפ"ט/1929 from an old manuscript written by an Italian *gadol*) writes, “It is a good custom that one doesn’t take a haircut before *erev* Shabbos Nachamu, and when *erev* Shabbos Nachamu arrives, one is obligated to take a haircut, and to be happy, and to welcome Shabbos with joy and a good heart, and he will be consoled with many consolations, and Hashem will console us with the redemption of Yerushalayim.”

Similarly, the Mahari'l states that on Shabbos Nachamu, **יִשְׂמְחוּ כָּל הָעָם וַיְבַטְחוּ**, בנחמת הגואל, "The entire nation shall be happy, and trust in the consolations of the redemption."

On the Mishnah (*Taanis* 26:) it states, **לֹא הָיוּ יָמִים טוֹבִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כַּחֲמֵשָׁה עָשָׂר**, באב, "The Jewish nation never had such good *yomim tovim* as the fifteenth of Av [and Yom Kippur]," the Ritvah writes, **וּמִפְּנֵי זֶה נִהְגוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת סְעוּדָה בְּשַׁבָּת**, שאחר תשעה באב, "Therefore they are accustomed to have a festive meal on Shabbos after Tisha b'Av."

בן שויעב, student of the Rashba, writes, **מִצְוָה לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ כִּיּוֹם טוֹב**, it's a mitzvah to celebrate it like a *yom tov*.

The Chasam Sofer (*Masay*) teaches, in the name of the Yerushalmi that after Tisha b'Av, a new month begins. Until the 9th it's Av, afterwards it's Menachem.

Several times, in the Chasam Sofer's *teshuvos*, he refers to Av as "the month Menachem".

It states (*Yeshayah* 66:23), **וְהָיָה מִדֵּי חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדְשׁוֹ**, this implies that there's a month that begins in the middle of the month. The Chasam Sofer says that this is Menachem, which begins in the middle of Av. The *pasuk* continues, **וּמִיָּדֵי שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבְּתוֹ**, this is referring to Shabbos Nachamu. The *pasuk* concludes, **יָבוֹא כָּל בָּשָׂר לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לִפְנֵי אֲמֵר ה'**. The Chasam Sofer explains, we

But how can we be consoled? We go through so many *tzaros* in life and in *galus*. How can we possibly be consoled? The answer is, **יאמר אליכם**. Believe that everything happens by Hashem's decree, and it is all certainly for the good.

As Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin (quoted in *Yesod HaAvodah*, (מכתבי קודש נ"ג) *zt'l* teaches, "One must believe with *emunah sheleimah* that everything Hashem does...is for man's benefit. And [when the *tzaros* are great and] and people can't perceive how it can possibly

be good, then the good is certainly even greater..."²

Sometimes people think that only they are lacking. "Everyone has *parnassah* only I don't," or "Everyone has children, except for me," or, "Everyone has *nachas*, except for me," and so on. One must know that what you lack is for your benefit. Perhaps what you lack is granting you life or some other form of goodness. Don't be angry or upset with your fate, because everything is for your good.³

will be redeemed from *galus* at this time of year, and we will bow down to Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash.

2. People are repulsed by a *rasha nistar*, someone who has evil plans and schemes, only he conceals them and pretends he is a *tzaddik*. In contrast, they love a *tzaddik nistar*, a person who conceals his righteousness from others.

When Hashem does kindness in a concealed way, it is like a *tzaddik nistar* (צדיק ה' בכל דרכיו) and the kindness is even greater.

3. Right before the start of the Holocaust, chassidim of the Imrei Emes *zt'l* went to his *tisch* on Friday night (the last *tisch* the Rebbe led in Poland before the Holocaust) hoping they would survive in the Rebbe's merit.

The Rebbe gave *shirayim* to a row of his chassidim, and they saw it as a good omen. There was one person in that row – Reb Yoesf Meir Seidel *zt'l* – who, for some reason didn't get *shirayim*, and he was very concerned

According to Rabbeinu Tam, up until 72 minutes after *shekiyah* it is still day. It is totally dark outside, yet it's still day (according to this opinion). This reminds us that at times everything appears dark, but believe that it is still day time and everything is good.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* said

that a special, G-d fearing Yid is called in Yiddish "a *hechere* Yid — a higher Yid." He is so called because when there is a wall, a taller person can see over the wall and further than a short person. Similarly, the *hechere* Yid is able to see further and recognize how everything is for the good.⁴

about that. After the *tisch* was over he told Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* (who was also present at that *tisch*) that he fears it might be a bad omen, since he didn't get any *shirayim*. Reb Gad'l encouraged him. "The main thing is that the Rebbe has you in mind and he will daven for you. It doesn't make a difference whether you got *shirayim* or not." As it turned out, Reb Yosef Meir Seidel was the only person in that row who survived the war. The others were executed or deported soon after that Shabbos.

4. What should one do if gets stuck in a traffic jam? Should he wait and let his car inch past whatever is causing the trouble, or should he turn off the road, and seek an alternative route?

If he owns a GPS, that will help him make a decision.

Two cars were traveling to the same destination and hit a traffic jam. Car A turned off the road to take an alternative route; Car B remained in the traffic jam. Car A traveled at a good clip through side streets, while Car B hardly moved. In the end, Car B arrived at their destination first.

This is because Car B had GPS, which advised him to remain in the traffic jam. It was just a matter of five or ten minutes until the traffic jam cleared up.

The owners of Car A didn't have a GPS, so they saw solely from below. From below, it looked like it was wiser to take an alternative route. The GPS sees from above, and it can tell which route is quicker.

The *nimshal* is, when one hits a hard life situation, some wish they could escape it. However, if we could have the view from Above, he would see

The Or HaChaim (*Bereishis* 37:13) asks: Yosef was doing the mitzvah of *kibud av* when he went to his brothers. How did it happen that Yosef was sold as a slave at that time? Isn't there a rule, שלוחי מצוה אינן נזוקין, "People traveling to do a mitzvah aren't injured"?

The Or HaChaim replies, ל"ל שנוק שתכליתו הטבה ומעלה גדולה אינו חשוב נזק, "Damage that leads to a greater favor isn't called damage." Yosef was sold as a slave, but this led to him becoming the leader of Mitzrayim. It was all for his benefit, and for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. Therefore, it isn't considered damage.

Similarly, everything that happens to us is ultimately for the good. When we attain this *emunah* we are consoled.

In the Mind

It states in this week's *parashah* that we should place the *tefillin shel rosh*, לטומפות בין

עיניך, between the eyes. The *apikorsim*, the *tzedokim*, misconstrue this *pasuk*, and say the tefillin must be placed on the nose, between the two eyes. *Lehavdil*, the *chachamim* teach that it is placed on the head, במקום שמוחו של תינוק רופם, up until the soft spot on top of an infant's head.

The difference between the *tzedokim* and *le'havdil* the *chachamim* is that the *apikorsim* only believe in what they see. They want the tefillin between their eyes because they want to see first and then believe. In contrast, the *chachamim* say to place the tefillin on the head. Because we believe, even when we don't see with our eyes.

The tefillin is placed right below the soft spot, indicating our belief in Hashem is like a child who trusts fully in his parents. We don't have to see, and we don't have to

that this may be the preferred situation. Other routes seem rosier, but in the long run, this route, and this struggle, is the ideal way for you to go.

understand. We believe that everything is for the good.

Among the recent great *roshei yeshivos* there was a debate how to delve into the intricacies of the Gemara. One approach was to understand “why.” One should be able to explain why every *chiddush* should be that way. Other *roshei yeshivos* felt that “why” isn’t important, just “what.” One must understand “what” the Torah tells us; it is not our job to think about the reasons.

The Brisker Rav *zt'l* was once learning with the Ponovezher Rav *zt'l* a very deep Torah subject, and in the heat of their discussion, the Ponovezher Rav said, “We have to understand why!”

The Brisker Rav replied, “We don’t have to understand *why*. We have to know *what* is written.”

Some people want to understand, “*Why* is Hashem doing this?” But that isn’t as important as “*What* does

Hashem want from me? *What* should my reaction be to this situation?” A Yid doesn’t have to understand why, just what. We don’t always understand why, but we know that Hashem wants us to accept each situation with *emunah* that it is all for our benefit and good.

Signs that it is for the Good

As we stated, we wear tefillin on the head because we don’t have to see that things are good to believe that it is so. We believe that everything is Hashem’s kindness even when matters appear the opposite. Nevertheless, when we merit seeing Hashem’s *hashgachah pratis*, it becomes easier for us to recognize that everything is for the good.

I recently spoke to an ill *yungerman* from America. He told me about the *hashgachah pratis* he sees, even as he struggles with a grave illness.

He expressed it this way: “A doctor carries a knife, but so does a thief. How can one

know whether the person carrying the knife is a murderer or a doctor? If he is cautious where he cuts, he is a doctor. But if he doesn't care so much where he cuts, he is a murderer.

Another sign is how he handles the knife after he finished using it. If he is cautious to store it in a place where it won't get even slightly chipped, he is a doctor who cares about his patients. If he carelessly handles his knife, and he doesn't mind if it gets chipped, that means he is a murderer.

If a person is seriously ill, and he sees that he is being handled from Above in the best way, and he sees many aspects of *hashgachah pratis* to help him within this illness, that convinces him that these hardships are for his good. He becomes aware that Hashem is our passionate Father Who wants to help us and cure us, and not the opposite, *chalilah*. Someone complained to the

Chazon Ish *zt'l* that he has several sick children. He said that if the disease would be solely in one child, it would be better. Why do all of his children need to be ill?

The Chazon Ish explained that this is actually a kindness. The Chazon Ish explained, "Sometimes a very serious illness is destined for one child. But if that would be unbearable for the child and for the parents. Hashem's compassionately changes this decree, and instead, several children become ill, but to a lesser degree."

A similar statement can be said about those who suffer from many problems simultaneously: An ill child, *shalom bayis* is rickety; there are financial struggles, *nachas* problems, and so on. One wonders why he is smitten on so many fronts. Wouldn't it be better if he had only one problem? But it could be that this is for his benefit. If it weren't for all these, relatively

minor problems, he would have one very severe trouble, which would be too difficult to bear.

A simple, G-d fearing Yerushalmi brought his chicken to a *shochet*. The *shochet* slaughtered the chicken and said it was kosher.

When the simple man began cleaning the chicken, he found its head covered with lice. He quickly brought the chicken back to the *shochet* and asked him whether this was a problem. The *shochet* assured him that it wasn't.

But this simple man was concerned that perhaps there was a problem, so he brought the chicken to a rav. The rav told him that lice on the feathers aren't a problem.

The owner of this chicken was still concerned that there might be some problem, so he asked the Rav of Yerushalayim, the Maharil Diskin *zt'l*.

The Maharil Diskin told him

to open the head, and they found its head was rotten.

The Maharil Diskin explained that this wasn't *ruach hakadosh*. All chickens have lice, but the chickens shake their heads to cast off most of the lice. "This chicken was covered with lice. I suspected that this was a sign that it wasn't shaking its head, and indeed it wasn't."

Everyone has "lice" in their heads. The "lice" are the foolish thoughts that disturb people's peace of mind. Each person has their own kind of "lice". For some it is, "That person insulted me..." Others are worried about their *parnassah*, or other kinds of worries that disturb their peace of mind. The cure is to fill your head with *emunah*. Because if you believe everything is planned from Hashem, then what other people say or think doesn't bother you. You won't be worried about your *parnassah* either, because you believe Hashem will help.

If one isn't able to shake those bad thoughts, it a sign he is a *treifah* (unkosher).

Hashgachah Pratis

The Lebowitz brothers *shlita* were in the Catskills for the summer, and one day, they had to drive in to the city to meet with a lawyer. Reb Mendel Lebowitz was driving the car. His brother reminded him to take the right lane, because they would soon need to turn right.

Reb Mendel said, "I know that," and he took the right lane. But somehow, when he was supposed to take the right turn, he continued driving straight ahead, and they missed the exit.

They feared they may be late for their very important appointment.

They wanted to take the next exit to get to the other side of the highway, but there was a deer lying on the road, preventing them from taking that exit.

By now the Lebovitz brothers were even more concerned they would miss their very important meeting.

Reb Mendel Lebovitz took the next exit, and saw someone waving for them to stop. At first, they couldn't tell whether he was a Yid or a goy, but as they came closer, they saw it was a Yid.

They were in a hurry, but how could they leave this person stranded in the middle of nowhere? Reb Mendel rolled down his windows and asked, "What's the matter?" "Water!" That's all he said. He didn't have strength to speak more.

They gave him a bottle of water. He drank almost all of it in one shot. (It was a miracle they had a bottle of water in the car. It was left over from the Lebowitz family's Chol Hamoed Pesach trip, a few months earlier.)

He joined them in the car and told them his story, "I'm a counselor in a camp. Another

counselor I and went hiking through the woods; we sought a suitable trail to take the campers on. We decided to split up – he took one trail, and I another – so we could find the best route for the boys. We made up to contact each other with our cell phones. But there were two problems: One is that I got lost and couldn't find my way out of the forest. Our second mistake was that there is no reception in the forest. We weren't aware of that.

"I finally got to this road, and I'm waiting a long time for a car to stop for me. I've been in the sun for hours. As you saw, I was thirsty and exhausted. I was on the verge of collapsing when you arrived. You saved my life." When the Lebowitz's finally got to the lawyer's office, they discovered they erred on the date. The appointment was for the next day! It wasn't like them to make such a mistake. They are generally very

organized people, but that is what happened.

See how many things arranged by Hashem so they could save a Yid. (1) They travelled on the wrong date. (2) Reb Mendel forgot to turn off at the exit. (3) A deer prevented them from taking an earlier exit. All of this was pre-planned so they could save a Jewish life.

One Shabbos, not too long ago, , I spoke with a yeshiva *bachur*, a *yarei shamayim* and *talmid chacham*. He told me his difficult life story and the wonderful *hashgachah pratis* that happened to him. This is what he told me:

"When I became bar mitzvah, my parents went off the *derech*. I wanted to go to yeshiva, so I had to find one, and pay for it on my own. Most yeshivos didn't want to accept me — either because I couldn't afford to pay the tuition or because of my family history.

"The yeshiva Torah v'Daas in Ramot accepted me. Due to my financial situation, they lowered the tuition from 900 shekels per month to 600 shekels per month. I paid for the first month, but I didn't have money for the next month. I feared I would be thrown out of yeshiva.

"On Tuesday, י"ג תמוז תשע"ט, I took the 402 bus from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak. (My brother lives in Bnei Brak and recently had twin girls. One of the babies had to remain in the hospital's incubator, so I was going to Bnei Brak to help my brother in the hospital.) There was an accident, and the traffic on the highway weren't moving. Some people got out of their cars to daven *Minchah*. Others stood on the highway, speaking Torah with each other. I went up to the bus driver to speak with him.

"After speaking with the bus driver for some time, I returned to my place. I was

sitting next to a *yungerman* from London. He asked me, 'Why did you speak to the non-religious bus driver?'

"I told him my life story, and that the bus driver is my father's friend. I added that I don't have money to pay the next month's tuition for the yeshiva. He gave me a hundred pounds, and said I should give it as a gift to my brother who just had twins. And he asked me for my *rosh yeshiva's* phone number.

"This man also told me that he came to Eretz Yisrael, to be at the Viznitzer Rebbe's *shlita's* grandson's *chasunah*. His plan was to attend the *kabalas panim* and then to quickly return to the airport, because he had an important meeting back in London that same night. But due to the traffic, he wasn't able to go to the *chasunah* at all. Not even to the *kabalas panim* to say *mazal tov*. He had to get off the bus near the airport, and go straight to his plane.

“The following day my *rosh yeshiva* told me that when he was giving his *shiur*, his phone kept ringing, again and again. After he completed his *shiur*, he called back. It was that Yid from London. He paid for my tuition for the next few years.”

This man thought he came to Eretz Yisrael to be at a *chasunah*, but as it turned out, the purpose of his trip was to help a yeshiva *bachur* with tuition. Many *hashgachah pratis* took place: (1) There was an accident on the highway. (2) The bus driver was the yeshiva *bachur's* father's friend. (3) The yeshiva *bachur* sat next to this wealthy person from London. (4) They had a conversation. All this occurred, so he could continue in his yeshiva.

Chazal say that after Creation, Hakadosh Baruch Hu's primary occupation is to make *shidduchim*. Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* explained that *shidduchim* doesn't solely

mean *shidduchim* for marriages. Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings people together, such as in the story above, so one can help the other.

Hashem's *Hashgachah Pratis* is Greater for those who have *Yesurim*

Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* is greater for those who have *yesurim*. This is logical, as we will demonstrate:

There was a father who loved all his children. He spent the same amount of time with each child. Then one day, one of the children became ill... Now, all his thoughts and time are devoted to that one child.

Another example: Once, a father was walking with his son to buy him a present. The father's mind was fifty percent on the present, because he had immense joy giving presents to his son. But he wasn't thinking only about the present. He had other matters on his mind. But then his son jumped into the busy street. The father's mind was now 100% focused on saving his

son from harm. He had nothing on his mind, other than to save his son.

These examples help us understand that Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* and care increases when a person is going through a hard time. He is in great need for Hashem's aid, and therefore Hashem, *keviyachol*, is very occupied and focused to help him.

This lesson is hinted at in the Torah. The Mabit (*Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah* 1) proves it from the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 23:25) ועברתם את ה' אלקיכם וברך את לחמך ואת מיםיך, והסירתי מחלה מקרבך, "You shall serve Hashem your G-d, and He will bless your bread and water, and I will remove illness from within you." The Mabit notes that when the *pasuk* discusses removing illnesses, it states והסירתי, "I will remove illness" and when it discusses Hashem's blessings it states וברך את לחמך, "He will bless your bread." Hashem is called "I" in this

pasuk in reference to removing illnesses/sufferings, because that is where Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* is most revealed.

Similarly, the Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* 18) on the *pasuk* (*Yeshayah* 63:9), בכל צרתם לו צר, writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, with every distress that Klal Yisrael goes through, I am with them. Don't read it לו צר, read it לי צר [because Hashem suffers together with Bnei Yisrael]."

A Counsel for Anger

There was a *bachur* who was having difficulty controlling his anger, so he asked the *mashgiach* of his yeshiva for counsel.

The *mashgiach* told him the following *meshal*:

A band of robbers boarded a ship, pretending to be regular passengers. When the ship was deep at sea, they eavesdropped on the captain's cabin to determine whether it was a good time to hijack the ship. The ship's officers were

debating whether they should make a short stop at a nearby island or continue on to their primary destination. They disagreed noisily and even angrily, as some sailors desired the stopover so they could go shopping, while others were in a hurry to get back home.

The thieves considered this a good time to take over the ship. They entered the cabin and within moments the captain and his crew were handcuffed, their mouths sealed.

The *mashgiach* asked the *bachur*, "In your opinion, were the sailors still angry with each other?"

The *bachur* said that they weren't angry with each other anymore.

"What changed?"

The *bachur* couldn't pinpoint the reason, so the *mashgiach* explained: At first, they thought *they* run the ship, and

each one felt that he should have the final word. But now, they understood that the ship isn't in their hands, and there opinions aren't significant anymore...

The *mashgiach* concluded, "Similarly, when you know that Hashem is running the world and not you, there's never a reason to be angry. Perhaps you wish matters were different, but you aren't in charge. You're not running the world; Hashem is. He made the circumstance, so why should you be upset and angry?"

Once, Reb Nachum Yasser *zt'l* (a chassid of the Rebbe of Shtefanesht *zt'l*) said, "This morning I heard a *bas kol*... The *bas kol* said, 'Reb Nachum, I want you to look for your shoes!'"

He couldn't find his shoes that morning, so he considered it as though he heard a *bas kol* telling him he must look for his shoes.

Reb Nachum said, "Then I heard another *bas kol*. It said I don't have to look for the shoes anymore," because he already found his shoes.

Something trivial, like misplaced shoes, can cause someone to become angry. However, if one believes that the shoes are lost because that was Hashem's plan, then he won't be upset.

Another minor issue that often rouses people's anger is arriving at the bus stop just in time to see the bus leaving. But if one will remember that everything is planned by Hashem, and this is how it must be, he won't be angry.

Reb Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb *zt'l* of Yerushalayim said, "I never missed a bus, only sometimes I came early for the next bus." For if it was destined for him to take the next bus; he didn't miss the bus that was meant for him.

By practicing this perspective, you can overcome anger.

Mitigating the *Din*

There is a formula that turns around all difficulties and troubles so they become good. The formula is to combine *din* with *chesed*. The difficult situation is *din*, harsh justice. When one believes everything is *chesed* and ultimately for the good, this combines *chesed* with *din*. This combination mitigates the *din*, the problems are resolved, and everything becomes good.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119) hints to this idea when it says, "Whoever says ויכולו [in Kiddush] with a כום it is as though he became a partner with Hashem in Creation."

The Bas Ayin (*Emor*, ד"ה בפירוש, רש"י א"י) explains that ויכולו is *gematriya* 72, the same as חסד, kindness. כום is *gematriya* 86, the same as אלקים, Hashem's name for harsh justice, *din*. When one says ויכולו on a כום, which means he recognizes that even *din* is *chesed*, he has combined *chesed* with *din* and made everything good.

Hashem initially wanted to create the world with the attribute of *din*. He saw that the world won't be able to exist like that, so he combined it with compassion.

Therefore, one who says ויבולו על הכוס, is doing what Hashem performed by Creation. He is combining *din* with *chesed*, and is thus a partner with Hashem in Creation.

The Gemara (*Eiruvim* 54.) states, חש בראשו יעסוק בתורה... חש בגופו יעסוק בתורה... חש בכל גופו יעסוק בתורה. This means when one has physical pain he should learn Torah and he will be healed.

We can explain this based on the Vilna Gaon's commentary on *Mishlei* (22:19). The Vilna Gaon teaches: "Hashem gave the Torah to Yisrael, primarily so they will trust in Hashem." The *segulah* of studying Torah and keeping the mitzvos is that they increase and enhance our *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem.

We now understand how learning Torah leads to healing. Learning Torah increases *emunah* and *bitachon*, and that cures.

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* said that saying the *tefillah*, written by the Or LaShamayim *zt'l*, is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. (The Tiferes Shlomo would say this *tefillah* twice daily.) It is surprising that this *tefillah* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*, as *parnassah* isn't mentioned even once in this prayer.

The explanation is, this *tefillah* is about being aware that everything happens by Hashem's *hashgachah*: רבון העולמים ידעתי כי הנני בידך לבד כחומר I know I am in your hands like matter in the craftsman's hands..." And having *emunah* and *bitachon* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

Hashem sometimes mitigates problems by working around them.

For example, if a person must lose one thousand dollars, and

that decree can't be changed, Hakadosh Baruch Hu may send him \$100,000. The person will still lose a thousand dollars, but now it won't bother him so much.

Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 91:11-12), *כי מלאכיו יצוה לך לשמרך*, *בכל דרכיך על כפים ישאוך פן תגוף באבן*, רגליך, “Hashem will send His angels to protect you on all your travels. They will lift you on their hands, lest you hurt your feet on a stone.” One can ask, why do the *malachim* carry him above the stones? They can simply remove the stones from his path. The answer is, everything is by Hashem's *hashgachah*. Even where a stone lies is part of Hashem's plan, and sometimes it can't be moved. The solution is to raise the person above the stones.

Similar wonders happen to people to protect them from distress and suffering, but there is one condition. The condition is to rely on Hashem. One must say, *כי אתה ה' מחסי*, “You are my refuge”

(as stated in this chapter, *Tehillim* 91:9) and then Hashem will help him.

Rashi writes that *כי אתה ה' מחסי* is an abridged *pasuk* because the word *אמרת* is missing. It is as though the *pasuk* states, *כי אתה אמרת ה' מחסי*. Hashem will protect you, and lift you above the stones, “because you say ‘Hashem is my refuge.’”

Also, the Metzudas Dovid writes, “When you say *ה' מחסי*, ‘Hashem is my refuge...and you trust in Him...no bad will befall you...”

This abridged *pasuk* hints that Hashem isn't asking very much from us. You can say the abridged *pasuk*, *ה' מחסי*, “Hashem is my refuge,” that's all that's needed and Hashem will save you from all bad.

It is the small things that make all the difference. It takes a moment to think, “Hashem is my refuge. I can rely on Him,” and it will be so.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* taught that *גולה* exile, becomes

גאולה, redemption, when an א is added. When one believes that Hashem is with him in *galus* (he believes that the א, the אלוּפּוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם is with him) this turns גולה into גאולה. It isn't hard to say בִּי אַתָּה ה' מַחֲסֵי, or to remember that Hashem is with us in exile, and such thoughts changes the exile to be redemption, and removes all problems.

Wedding Dowry

Once, a *shidduch* was almost finalized, but there was a problem, as the girl's father said he doesn't agree to the *shidduch* before the boy's father promises four hundred liras to the couple as a dowry. The boy's father wasn't certain he could afford it.

The father spoke about his dilemma with Reb Chaim Brim ז'ל. Reb Chaim Brim said, "Let's ask the Chazon Ish together."

The father explained to the Chazon Ish that he is afraid he

might not be able to keep this promise. The Chazon Ish ז'ל replied, "We see that if one tries, Hashem helps."

The Chazon Ish asked for his name, so he could pray for him.

The end of the story was that the father was able to pay up the entire sum without any hardships at all (*Maaseh Ish*, vol.2 p.160).

Once, two *mechutanim* came to the Chazon Ish ז'ל. Each of them argued that the other one should pay the lion's share of their children's upcoming.

When they left, the Chazon Ish said to his relative, Reb Shemaryahu Greineman ז'ל, "Do you know what they were arguing about? They were debating who should get Hashem's *brachos*. Each one said the other one should receive Hashem's *brachos*..." (Because Hashem will help the one obligated to pay.)⁵

5. Often, before finalizing a *shidduch*, these ideas are discussed. Only,

Someone came to Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* and said, "My daughter was recently engaged for marriage. But I discovered that the boy was deathly ill with a serious disease when he was a child."

annul the *shidduch*, so what's the problem?"

"It's about the money. I promised a lot of money to the couple. If I knew the boy had an illness with a 1% chance of returning I wouldn't promise so much money."

"So what's your question?" Reb Shlomo Zalman asked. "Do you want to break off the *shidduch*?"

"No. Doctors say 99% the illness won't return."

"So what's your question? The doctors say the illness probably won't come back, and you say you don't want to

Reb Shlomo Zalman considered this to be very crooked. Uncharacteristically, Reb Shlomo Zalman took a broom, used it in a sweeping motion, and, "Get out of my house! Get out of my house!" Reb Shlomo Zalman, with his correct perception of right and wrong, couldn't bear to hear this person's plea.⁶

for some reason, it is always the one who is asking for the money who brings sources to prove that Hashem helps, and that we can rely on Him.

6. The story about Reb Shlomo Zalman's distress to see bad *middos* and corrupt ideas reminded me of the time Reb Shlomo Zalman saw a father carrying benches Shabbos morning to bring them to a *kiddush* while his older son, a *yungerman*, was watching with his talis draped on his shoulders. Reb Shlomo Zalman asked the son why he allows his father shlep the heavy benches, and why he isn't helping.

The son replied, "I don't hold by the *eiruv*."

Reb Shlomo Zalman became very angry with this *yungerman*. This is another story of Reb Shlomo Zalman unable to bear corruption and bad *middos*.

Shema Yisrael

The Gemara (*Chulin* 91:) states, “Klal Yisrael are greater than *malachim*...because Klal Yisrael say Hashem’s name after two words, as it states ‘שמע ישראל ה’ and the *malachim* say Hashem’s name after three words, as it states, קדוש קדוש קדוש ה’.”

Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov ז”ל (grandson of the Divrei Chaim ז”ל) said that he was taught an explanation on this Gemara in a dream:

We say Hashem’s name after two words. As we say, שמע ישראל ה’. We say Hashem’s name after two words in *brachos*, for we say ברוך אתה ה’. A third location is, ואהבת את ה’ אלקיך; Hashem’s name is said after two words. All of these are hinted at in the *brachah* of רבה said before Shema: וקרבתנו מלכנו, “Our King brought us close to Him” closer than the *malachim*, לשמך הגדול, this is seen by when we say Hashem’s name. For the *malachim* say Hashem’s name

after three words, and we say Hashem’s name after two words. We do so in three places: להודות לך, when we praise Hashem and say ברוך אתה ה’. Also, ולייחדך, when we proclaim that Hashem is one, לאהבה את, שמע ישראל ה’...אחד. And, ואהבת את ה’, when we say

Immediately after stating this we practice it, for we begin with a *brachah*: ברוך אתה ה’, הבוחר בעמו ישראל באהבה and then we go on and Shema and ואהבת.

גן is *gematriya* 13. גן is written 13 times in *Bereishis*, and אש is written 13 times in *Va'eschanan*. The Rabbeinu b’Chaya writes that this indicates that the reward for saying the Shema is (1) Gan Eden and (2) to be saved from the fire of Gehinom.

Another benefit gained by saying Shema is the destruction of Esav. It states (*Ovadyah* 1:18), ובית עשו לקש, Esav’s house [will be consumed in fire] like straw." קריאת לק"ש is *roshei teivos* for

שמע. When Klal Yisrael says Shema properly, Esav (the gentile nations that provoke us) will be destroyed and disintegrated like straw in a fire.

Shulchan Aruch (61:26) states, "Some say the Shema out loud; others say it silently. Regardless, the first *pasuk* should be said out loud, and that is the custom."

In contrast, *Shemonah Esrei* is said in silence. Why is *Shemonah Esrei* different than Shema? We can explain this by means of an analogy:

When one pleads to a king, entreating him for his needs, he doesn't raise his voice. He speaks in soft, beseeching tones. But when a thief enters one's house, the owner shouts and hollers so the thief will run away. When we say *Shemonah Esrei* we are pleading to Hashem for

wisdom, *teshuvah*, salvations, *refuah*, *parnassah*, and so on, and one pleads softly. When we say Shema, we proclaim Hashem is King. At this same time we shout at the *yetzer hara*, "Why do you lure me to sin? There is only Hashem in the world! Don't cause me to forget Hashem!" Therefore, it should be said out loud.

A Torah student was once traversing a forest and was accosted by a thief. The student pleaded for his life, begging for mercy, but the thief didn't care. However, the thief did grant him a final wish. The Torah student said he wants to say Shema.

He closed his eyes and said Shema with total concentration. When he reached the words *אמנתים* 'ה' אלקיכם אמנתים, he opened his eyes and the thief wasn't there.⁷

7. Perhaps he was saved, because *emunah* in *אחד* 'ה' saves a person from all troubles. As the *Nefesh HaChaim* (3:12) writes, "There is a great concept and a wonderful *segulah* to remove and to abolish all *dinim*, hardships, from oneself...and no one can harm him, not even in the

Relieved and joyous, he ran out of the forest and went to his Rebbe, Reb Yehudah Asad *zt'l*. The student asked, "Why did this happen to me?"

Reb Yehudah Asad asked him, "Did you ever say *kriyas Shema* like that before?"

The student said that he hadn't.

"That's your answer. Heaven was showing you how *kriyas Shema* should be said. Now that you know, say it that way every day."⁸

Holding on to Inspiration

The people of Chelm wanted their own train station and locomotive, just like Vilna and

Warsaw and other large cities. So they built a train station and they even built a train, only they forgot to lay tracks, and they also forgot to build the engine.

Everyone in Chelm felt it was a great honor to have their own train and train station, so they all gathered in the new station to see their new train in action. But without tracks, and without an engine, the train wouldn't move. So they asked strong men to push the train.

It was a hot day, the strong men were getting hot (since they were exerting themselves to push the train) so they took

slightest way. The *segulah* is that a person should put in his heart that Hashem is the true G-d, and there is no other force in the world at all... [When one perceives this] he doesn't pay attention and give value to any force that's in the world. He devotes his pure thoughts solely to Hashem, the singular Master, bless Him. Hashem will help him, and all powers will have no power over him. They won't be able to do anything negative to him at all."

8. The Saraf of Novardok *zt'l* was also once in the forest meditating when he was attacked by a fierce dog and fainted. When he came to, he said that when he saw the dog's fiery passion he asked himself, "Do I serve Hashem with such fervor? Did I ever say *kriyas Shema* with so much passion? That's the reason I fainted."

off their jackets, and put it behind them, and went back to pushing the train.

A thief saw the jackets on the ground, grabbed them all and ran off. The men pushing the train looked back and said to each other, "Wow, we pushed this train very far. We can't even see our jackets anymore."

They thought they were far away from where they began, but they were actually very close.

Many times we have a moment of *hisorerus* and *hislahavus*. We are inspired to serve Hashem and to do *teshuvah*. But shortly afterwards we aren't as inspired as before, so we figure we may as well drop the inspiration altogether. Actually, we are still very inspired. We don't realize it, but we are still very close to the inspiration we just had. If we continue doing *teshuvah* according to the *hislahavus* and inspiration we had we could reignite it and enliven it.

This lesson also applies to Shema. We say Shema in the morning and at night. At these times we penetrate into our minds the awareness that ה' אחד. Soon afterwards we forget, but the impression remains. We think that we have forgotten our awareness of Hashem, but we are still near to it. If we want, we can reawaken the awareness, anytime throughout the day.

In the introduction to *Iglei Tal* (written by Rebbe Avraham of Sochotchov ז"ל) it states, "To perform the mitzvah בן יכבד אב, a son should honor his father, I will write...a *vort* I heard from my father ז"ל. The first Mishnah in *Brachos* states, 'When does one say Shema at night? When the *cohanim* [who were *tamei*] come in [at night] to eat *terumah*.' It isn't understood; what is the connection between Shema and *terumah*?

"My father ז"ל explained, a *cohen* who was *tamei* and was in the *mikvah*, must wait until

nighttime to be fully *tahor*, because the impression of the *tumah* remains the entire day. At nighttime, it is start of a new day and the impression of *tumah* wears off. Only then is the *cohen tahor*. *Lehavdil*, this occurs with *keduashah*. When one [says Shema and] accepts the yoke of Heaven in the morning, although later his mind isn't thinking about it, a *reshimu*, an impression, of the *ol machlus shamayim* remains with him for the entire day. At nighttime a new day arrived, the *reshimu*, impression, left, and one must accept the *ol malchus shamayim* again... I found a proof to his words from *Pri Eitz Chaim* [who teaches that] the impression of the Shema of the morning remains throughout the entire day, and that's the reason there is no Shema at *Minchah*..."

In other words, the Shema we say in the morning influences the entire day, imbuing it with *emunah*. Nighttime is a new day, and one needs to "replenish" his

belief in Hashem, so he says Shema again.

A similar commentary was taught by the Dubno Magid *zt'l*. He says that before one goes to work in the morning he says Shema to remind himself that everything that will happen in the workplace is from Hashem. He will find some people being more successful than him; and some seem to be taking away his *parnassah*. If he's successful, he's liable to think that it's by the might of his hand. Therefore, we begin the day with Shema to remember that everything is from Hashem.

At the end of the day, he reflects on everything that happened that day, and once again he is liable to think that everything is natural. Therefore, he says Shema at night, to reinforce his *emunah* and awareness that everything is from Hashem. This is hinted at in the *pasuk*, אֲנִי

רֵאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרָיו וּמִבְלַעֲדֵי אֵין אֱלֹקִים

This can be translated: אֲנִי

ראשון, remember Me the first thing in the morning, ואני אחרון, remember Me at nighttime. If you will do so you will know, אין אלקים, it isn't nature (א-להים is *gematriya* הטבע, the nature). Everything is from Hashem.

Humility

It states (7:6), לא מרובכם מכל העמים חשק ה' בכם ויבחר בכם כי אתם המעט מכל העמים. The Gemara (*Chulin* 89.) explains, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells Bnei Yisrael, 'I desire you, because even when I give you greatness, you humble yourself before Me.'" As it states, כי אתם המעט, I desire you because you make yourself small.

The Rebbe Reb Bunim זt'l said that Yidden are called Yid, because י"ד is the smallest letter, implying humility, the trademark praise of the Jewish nation. If you lengthen the foot of a י"ד it, becomes a יא"ו and if you lengthen its head it becomes a רי"ש. He is a Yid because he remains small.

The Yismach Yisrael זt'l considered himself the worst Yid in Alexander. "So why did they choose me to be the Rebbe?" he asked. "It's because they knew that I wouldn't become a *baal gaavah*. For what do I have to be a *baal gaavah* about? I don't have even one good *middah*. Therefore," he told his chassidim, "please, don't learn from my ways. There is nothing to learn from. But one thing you can learn from me: Although I lack Torah and mitzvos, I keep myself happy all the time. You can learn that from me, for if the lowest person can be happy, you can surely be happy, too!"

Once, the Yismach Yisrael said to his chassid, Reb Moshe Boim זt'l, "People come to me for advice, sometimes about issues related to *pikuach nefesh*. How should I know what to answer? I don't have *malachim* whispering into my ears, telling me the answers. But during *Maariv* I pray,

ותקננו בעצה טובה מלפניך, with
immense *kavanah*."

The great *hislahavus* and *hisorerus* in the beis medresh of the Rebbe of Alexander during *Maariv* was legendary. It was then that the Alexander Rebbe pleaded with Hashem,
ותקננו בעצה טובה מלפניך.

Tefillah

וְאֵתְהַנֵּן is *gematriya* שירה. The Baal HaTurim writes, "Moshe said *shirah*, praises to Hashem, so his *tefillah* would be answered." How does *shirah* help *tefillas* to be answered?

The Imrei Shaul of Modzhitz *zt'l* explains that the praises imply that he is certain that Hashem will help him. So he sings and he praises Hashem even before the salvation occurs. That trust is *mesugal* for his *tefillas* to be answered. As it states (*Tehillim* 106:44), וְיִרֵא, Hashem checks to see whether בְּצַר לָהֶם, when people are going through hard times, בְּשִׁמְעוּ אֶת רִנָּתָם, they are already praising Hashem and thanking

Him for the salvation that will come.

There is a man in one the southern cities of Eretz Yisrael who was having a hard time marrying off his children. His oldest child was twenty-eight, and there were another four children over twenty. For some reason, they weren't finding their *bashert*, and the father was very heartbroken about it.

He also had financial problems, because he mortgaged his house to help his *chavrusah* marry off his children. His *chavrusah* didn't pay the monthly dues, and the bank put up the house for foreclosure.

Once, this man came to Yerushalayim for a wedding. A relative asked him why he looks so down. He told him about his older children and his financial problems. The relative replied, "There's a great *tzaddik* here, in Yerushalayim - the Beis Yisrael of Gur. Tell him your

problems. He will certainly help you."

This man wasn't a chassid, and he didn't want to go to a chassidic Rebbe, but his relative convinced him to go. So he poured his bitter heart out before the Rebbe. The Beis Yisrael asked him, "Do you ever praise Hashem? Praise should be 60% and requests should be 40%."

This man told his relative the counsel he received. The relative said, "You have a lot to thank Hashem for. You have health, a wife and children. You always have food on your table... Focus on the good. Get into the practice of praising Hashem as the Rebbe recommended: 60% praise and 40% prayer."

Two months later, the oldest daughter was engaged. Within a half year, three of his children were married and two more were engaged.

Around that time, his *chavrusah's* mother was *niftarah*, leaving over a large

inheritance. The *chavrusah* immediately paid up the debt, and this man was able to redeem his house from the bank.

This man noticed that in *Hallel* we say יהודי לה' כי טוב six times, while אנא ה' is said four times. This is exactly as the Beis Yisrael advised: 60% praise and 40% requests. That ratio brings *yeshuos*.

The Rebbe of Ruzhin ז"ל once heard his daughter complaining about something. The Rebbe told her, "One groan brings on more *tzaros*, and one praise brings more goodness."

The Rebbe told his daughter the following story: There was a wealthy man who was always complaining about his lot. Heaven said, "If you think your situation is bad, you will be shown what's truly bad," and he lost all his money.

He complained even more. Heaven said, "If you think your situation is bad, you

will be shown what's truly bad," and he became a *metzora*. Now he wasn't even able to go to people's homes to ask for handouts, because people were afraid to catch his disease.

He complained some more, and once again, Heaven showed him that matters could be even worse. He became hunchbacked, and it was hard for him to eat. When he hit this very low level, he said, "At least I'm alive... Baruch Hashem, I'm alive!"

Heaven said, "If you think this is good, you will be shown what's truly good," and his hunched back straightened out. He praised Hashem for this, and he was healed from his leprosy. Now he could speak with people, and ask them for help. He praised Hashem for Hashem's kindness. Heaven said, "If you think this is good, you will be shown what's truly good," and someone loaned him money so he could restart his business

again, and he became wealthy again. Because moaning brings on *tzaros*, and praise brings on goodness.

Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* (one of the *tzaddikim* of Yerushalayim) said to his son, Reb Nota, "Don't even ask, I had such a hard day today!"

"What happened?"

"I awoke in the morning [at two a.m. as was his daily schedule] and I wanted to put on my shoes, but I found them without the shoelaces. Apparently the grandchildren hid them somewhere."

"So what did you do?"

"Don't ask. I looked all over the house for the shoelaces and I found one of them. I thanked Hashem for that, but I still couldn't go anywhere with just one shoelace. I searched the house for the other one, which isn't an easy feat for an old man like me. I finally found the other one, and I went to the *mikveh*. But when I came out of the water, my clothes weren't there.

Someone took them! I considered sending Reb Kalman [a Rav who would often help Reb Zalman] to bring me another set of clothes from the house, but then I decided against it, because your mother wouldn't remain silent if she heard that someone stole my clothes."

"So what did you do?"

"What I did? I'll tell you what I did. I woke up this morning and found the shoelaces in the

shoes. I went to the *mikveh*, and no one stole my clothes. Everything was fine and well."

Let's keep in mind all the good we have in life, thank Hashem for them, and then Hashem will show us what is truly good.

May we merit a complete *nechamah*, with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.⁹

9. Reb Gad'l Eisner zt'l explained that we request Moshiach should come במהרה בימינו, speedily in our days, to exclude that Moshiach shouldn't come speedily in Hashem's days. Because for Hashem, a day is a thousand years. We request Moshiach should come speedily in our days, as we perceive time.

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