

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

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Bo



לזכות רפואה שלמה,
מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית
יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה,
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Parshat Bo

Yetzias Mitzrayim - in the merit of Bitachon

The Kad HaKemach from Rabbeinu b'Chaya (*Bitachon*) writes, "We were freed from Mitzrayim because the nation had *bitachon*, they trusted Hashem would save them. As it states in *Midrash Tehillim* (22), אֵלֶיךָ זָעָקוּ וּנְמַלְטוּ, "They shouted out to You and they were saved because בְּךָ בִטְחוּ וְלֹא בּוֹשׁוּ in You."

Hashem told the nation to eat the *korban Pesach* (12:11), מִתְנִיכֶם חֲגוּרִים, נְעָלֵיכֶם בְּרוּגְלֵיכֶם, וּמְקַלְכֶם בְּיָדְכֶם, "Your belts girded, wearing shoes, your staffs in your hands" as though they would be leaving Mitzrayim any minute. The *Seforno* explains, "They were demonstrating their firm *bitachon* in Hashem, without

any doubts." They were saved because of their *bitachon*.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (12:13) writes, "It wasn't the blood [of the *korban Pesach*, which they put on the doorposts] which protected them from *makas bechoros*, and it wasn't refraining from placing the blood which caused death. Rather, whoever had *bitachon*, and trusted in Hakadosh Baruch Hu with complete faith, and wasn't afraid of Pharaoh and his decrees, and courageously *shechted* Mitzrayim's *avodah zarah* – the sheep – in public, and put the *korban Pesach*'s blood on the doorposts and lintel, he was a *tzaddik*. He trusted in Hashem and he deserved to be saved." ¹

1. The Rosh asks, why did the *resha'im*, Dasan and Aviram, live through *makas choshech*?

He answers, "Although they were *resha'im*, they didn't despair from redemption."

The night prior to *yetzias Mitzrayim* is called (12:41-42) לַיְל שִׁמּוּרִים לָהּ, "The night that Hashem was waiting for."

Rashi explains, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu was waiting for this night, to keep His promise to take them out of Mitzrayim."

Because Hashem promised the *avos* and Hashem promised Bnei Yisrael that He will save them from Mitzrayim, and now Hashem was happy that He could keep His promise.

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz *zt'l* of Mir (*Daas Torah* p.109) asks, Hashem could have taken them out of Mitzrayim without promising them that He will save them. Why were the promises necessary?

Reb Yeruchem explains that this is the way Hashem runs the world: A person's optimism, his *emunah* and his *bitachon* in the upcoming salvation is what causes it to happen. The Jewish nation trusted that they would be redeemed as per the promise

Hashem made, and that *bitachon* brought on the results.

As Reb Yeruchem writes, "This is Hashem's way, and it is from the fundamental ways Hashem leads the world: First Hashem promises. The purpose of the promise is so the person will believe and trust that it will be so. And this causes it to happen. We are discovering a new revelation about Hashem's ways, and it is a great foundation: A person first passes through a stage of having *emunah*, and this will make it occur. This is what Hashem did with our holy forefathers: He promised them, they believed, they trusted in Hashem and had complete *bitachon*, and that brought about *yetzias Mitzrayim*... If even a little bit of *emunah* was to be missing, it wouldn't have happened."

As soon as Moshe began speaking with the nation about the redemption, they believed

in Hashem's promise. As it states (*Shemos* 4:31), וַיֵּאמֶן הָעָם, וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי פָקַד ה' אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ, "The nation believed..." Nevertheless, the redemption didn't happen immediately. It occurred several months later, and by

that time they had fallen to the 49th level of *tumah*. Perhaps this is because they had to attain *emunah* that Hashem will save them even when they are at such a low level. When they had that *emunah*, *yetzias Mitzrayim* occurred.²

Doing the Mitzvos Promptly

It states (12:17), וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֵת הַמַּצּוֹת, "Guard the matzos."

comes your way, perform it right away."

Rashi explains, "Be cautious with the matzos that they shouldn't become chametz... Reb Yoshiyah says, 'Don't read it matzos, read it mitzvos. Just as you don't let matzos become chametz, similarly you shouldn't let the mitzvos become chametz. If a mitzvah

Let us now study the *pasuk*. It states, וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֵת הַמַּצּוֹת כִּי בַעֲצָם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הוֹצֵאתִי אֶת עַבְדֹתֵיכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, "Guard the מצות because in the midst of this day, I took you...out of Mitzrayim."

There is an association between guarding the מצות and

2. These ideas give encouragement for people who are waiting a long time for their *yeshuah*. Some people say to Hashem, "You want to heal us, and I trust with *emunah sheleimah* that it will happen, but why is it taking so long? The doctors are sharing the darkest prognosis..." Others say, "I believe that you will give me *parnassah*. But it's been a long time, and the salvation hasn't come yet..." A third category of people are saying similar things about *shidduchim*. However, it could be that the salvation is dependent on the Yid's strong trust, his *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem's salvation, even when the doctors lose hope, the *shadchanim* stop calling, and *parnassah* becomes even harder. Nevertheless, he continues trusting in Hashem, and that is when the *yeshuah* will come.

yetzias Mitzrayim. What is the connection?

Following Rashi's first explanation, the *pasuk* is urging us to be cautious that the matzos shouldn't turn chametz. This is related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, because we eat matzah to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

However, according to Rashi's second interpretation, *that מצות* means mitzvos, and the *pasuk* is urging us to keep the mitzvos, as soon as we have the opportunity. How is that related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*? The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* answers

the *pasuk* is saying, ושמרתם את המצות, don't push off performing a mitzvah. When you have the opportunity to do a mitzvah, do it right away. כי בעצם היום הזה הוצאתי את צבאותיכם מארץ מצרים, because Hashem took you out of Mitzrayim swiftly. Because if the Jewish nation remained in Mitzrayim for a moment longer, they would fall into the fiftieth gate of impurity, and then there would be no hope for their salvation. The redemption had to be immediate — not a minute later. This should be our inspiration to do the mitzvos immediately, because every moment counts.

Emunah - Hashgachah Pratis

The Torah says the *korban Pesach* should be *בן שנה*, one year (12:5), *בבית אחד יאכל*, eaten in *one* house (12:46), and it is forbidden to break any of the bones into two. The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* ch.60) explains that these laws are to remind us that everything comes from the One Hashem.

There is a famous Ramban, at the end of *Bo*, which teaches fundamental lessons in *emunah*. We will quote some phrases from this Ramban. The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (Stolin) told his chassidim to study this *Ramban*, each day.

The Ramban writes, "Ever since the generation of Enosh,

when people began dabbling with *avodah zarah*, people became confused with the fundamentals of *emunah*. There were those who thought the world always existed, and they denied that Hashem created the world. There were others who thought Hashem doesn't know what's happening in the world. As it states (*Tehillim* 73:11), ויש רעה בעליין, 'Is there awareness Above?' A third category of people were aware that Hashem knows everything, but they didn't believe that Hashem is constantly involved

with this world, leading it with *hashgachah pratis*... But when Hashem desires an individual or a community, and He performs miracles for them, beyond the rules of nature, all their false ideas are disproven. The wondrous miracles reveal that (1) Hashem created the world, (2) Hashem knows what's happening in the world, (3) Hashem is constantly involved with this world leading it with *hashgachah pratis*, (4) and He has the strength and ability to do so..."³

3. The Teshuas Chein (ד"ה והפלתי *Va'eira*) writes, "Pharaoh, the ruler of Mitzrayim, didn't believe in *hashgachah pratis*... He proclaimed that everything happens by the forces of nature... The Jewish nation living there was definitely influenced by Pharaoh's philosophy. Although they believed in Hashem they said that since Hashem is so great and holy, it isn't proper that He should look down at this lowly world. Indeed, the Rambam, in *Morah Nevuchim*, writes that the Jewish nation in Mitzrayim was confused in this matter. To some extent, we are still confused. The *yetzer hara* dances among us, causing us to think that things happen by chance. Therefore, we have the mitzvah to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim* each day. That habituates us to recognize that everything happens by Hashem's decree..."

It states (*Shmuel* 20), מקרה הוא בלתי טהור הוא, The Teshuas Chein explains "מקרה הוא, if you think matters happen by chance and you don't believe that everything is Hashem's *hashgachah*, בלתי טהור הוא, that means you aren't pure..."

Pri HaAretz (Bo) from Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk *zy'a* teaches that Pharaoh believed Hashem created the world, but he thought that Hashem doesn't know what is happening in the world, and he thought Hashem isn't leading the world with *hashgachah pratis*.

As he writes, "Pharaoh believed in Hashem. He believed that the world was created on purpose and not by accident. But he didn't believe in *hashgachah pratis*. He followed the belief of many heretics, to think that Hashem abandoned the world after creating it, and gave the world over to the *mazalos* and the stars of heaven. This is the reason all gentile nations worship the stars and the *mazalos*, as this is known (though we prefer not to elaborate on that)..."

The *Pri HaAretz* explains that the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish nation to prove a point. They wanted to prove that Hashem left the world. Their

evidence: He doesn't help the nation who believe in Him and trust in His *hashgachah pratis*. They said that the Yidden's enslavement proves Hashem doesn't intervene with what's happening in the world.

As the *Pri HaAretz* writes, "It states, ויעבדו את בני ישראל בפרך, the Mitzrim enslaved the Jewish nation with hard labor. The Mitzrim did this to support their belief [that Hashem abandoned the world]. They didn't know that slavery was Hashem's gift to the Jewish people. [They were destined to be in exile for four hundred years, but due to the קושי השיעבוד, slave labor, the years were deducted to only 210 years.] The slave labor helped complete the quota of four hundred years they were destined to be in exile. This is the explanation of the *pasuk*, בא אל פרעה, 'Come to Pharaoh' and Rashi writes, והתרה בו, 'and teach him כי אני הכבדתי את לבו, that I hardened his heart.' Hashem was telling Moshe that he should explain to

Pharaoh that even enslaving the Jewish nation wasn't Pharaoh's own choice. Thus, the slavery isn't a sign that Hashem abandoned the world. On the contrary, it is an example of Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* [to help the Yidden be redeemed earlier from Mitzrayim]."

The Pri HaAretz concludes that it is very hard for *resha'im* to attain true awareness that everything happens by *hashgachah pratis*. He writes, "The truth is, it is very far and distant for *resha'im* to believe in ...*hashgachah pratis*; that a person doesn't hurt his finger if it wasn't decreed in heaven (as it states in *Chulin* 7), and that there isn't a grass that dries up and falls [without His plan]. And that a stone isn't thrown, only at the time and place that it was destined for. As it states (*Koheles* 11:3), אל מקום שיפול העץ, the place where the tree falls, שם יהיה, that is where it was destined to fall..."

Bringing the Emunah from the Brain Down to the Heart

The kings of Mitzrayim were called פרעה, whose letters spells הערף, the neck. The neck separates the mind from the heart. This describes the ways of the Egyptians. They wanted to divide the heart from the mind. The mind sees *emunah* clearly, but they wanted that the heart should carry doubts. יציאת מצרים can be translated "going out of the narrow straights." This means to go out of the narrow neck and to allow the ideas of the brain reach the heart.

By *makas bechoros*, Moshe said (11:4), בחצות הלילה, that the plague will come "around midnight." He didn't say it will happen exactly at midnight. As Rashi writes, "Perhaps Pharaoh's astrologists will err [in the clock] and they will say that Moshe is lying."

If *makas bechoros* took place before or after midnight (according to their clocks), the Egyptians would say, "Moshe said it will happen

at midnight and it didn't happen at midnight." To prevent that, Moshe said *בהצוה*, "it will happen sometime around midnight."

Let's think about this for a moment:

Until now, all of Moshe's warnings were proven to be real, and nine plagues afflicted the Egyptian nation. And now (11:6), והיתה צעקה גדולה בכל ארץ מצרים אשר כמוה לא נהיית וכמוה לא תוסיף, "There was a great cry in all Mitzrayim, as it never was before and will never be again." And yet, they would make an issue about *chatzos* and suspect that Moshe lied?!

The Brisker Rav *zt'l* says that this demonstrates that when one doesn't want to believe in Hashem, everything can be

clear, and he won't recognize it. As we expressed it, the heart refuses to accept what the mind knows. In contrast, Yidden believe in Hashem even when Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* is concealed. They see Hashem's hand, even when they must look below the surface to recognize it.

By *makas barad*, Pharaoh said (*Shemos* 9:27), ה' הצדיק, ואני ועמי הרשעים, "Hashem is the *tzaddik*. I and my nation are the *resha'im*." He knew the truth, but he didn't change his ways. Because what he knew in his mind didn't change his deeds.⁴

There was a *bachur* who was slipping off the *derech*. The Divrei Shmuel of Slonim *zt'l* spoke with him,

4. This was Eisav's attitude, too. The Shem MiShmuel (ויחי תרע"ח) writes, "Eisav was not synchronized with his intellect. Many holy *neshamos* were in his mind, as this is known, but his heart was distant from them. As Rebbe Bunim of Pershischa *zt'l* expressed it: Eisav guarded his heart that it shouldn't receive any influence from the intelligence of his mind.' ... Therefore, his head was separated from his heart, and only his head was buried in מערת המכפלה..."

and understood that the rumors of this *bachur's* decline were correct.

The Rebbe told the *bachur*, "Since you are among our *chasidim*, I'm certain you won't leave the world without doing *teshuvah*."

Once, this *bachur* was swimming in the ocean. Suddenly a current pulled him away from the shore. People swam out to save him. When they were near him, they heard him shout "*Teshuvah... Teshuvah...!*"

After he recovered, they asked him what he meant with "*teshuvah...teshuvah...*" He replied, "The Rebbe promised me I would do *teshuvah* before I die. I shouted, 'I'm not doing *teshuvah*! I'm not doing *teshuvah* yet! It is still too early to take me from this world.'"

This story is about a person who had *emunah*. He believed one hundred percent in his Rebbe's promise. But despite

his *emunah*, he continued living like a Goy. This is because one must bring *emunah* to the heart. When *emunah* is only in the mind, it doesn't affect one's deeds to act accordingly.

The Chazon Ish (*Emunah u'Bitachon* 2:3) describes the ways of a person who has *bitachon* in his mind but doesn't have *bitachon* in his heart. He writes, "Reuven is a man of *mussar*. The songs of *bitachon* are always on his lips. He always expresses his distaste for those who overdo their *hishtadlus* and chase after *parnassah*. However, Reuven speaks this way when he is very successful, and his store is filled with customers. He doesn't need to make a lot of *hishtadlus*. He loves *bitachon* because *bitachon* is shining its face on him. But then, surprisingly, we hear Reuven anxiously whispering to his friends and advisors, 'What should I do? Someone is opening a store that will compete with mine!' Reuven is

very depressed. At first, he keeps these thoughts to himself, because he is embarrassed to admit his fears. His friends might mock him for losing his *bitachon*. He makes *hishtadlus* and tries to convince his competition that he shouldn't open a store in his area. When the standard *hishtadlus* didn't accomplish anything, he begins doing crooked *hishtadlus*. Shame has disappeared from his heart. He does disgusting things openly. The competition between the two shopkeepers becomes a topic of conversation among the neighbors. Unashamed, he makes up false claims to prove that he is acting correctly. And he explains that he is doing this *leshem shamayim*, according to *mussar*, etc."

What happened to Reuven's *bitachon*? Why did he lose it? The reason is because he only had *bitachon* in his mind, and that is not sufficient. *Emunah* and *bitachon* must reach the heart.

Reviewing the Miracles

A doctor asked the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* what he does for a living. The Divrei Chaim replied, "I build bridges." The doctor was shocked. The Divrei Chaim explained, "I build bridges so the ideas that I know in my mind should reach my heart." These bridges are built with review. When we study and review *emunah* in our mind, it will reach the heart.

The Ramban writes, "Hashem doesn't perform miracles in every generation for every *rasha* and non-believer. Therefore Hashem commanded we should constantly remember what we saw, and we should tell our children, and they in turn, will tell their children, and this chain should continue until the final generation. The Torah is very strict about this matter. Therefore, one receives *kares* for eating chametz on Pesach or for not bringing the *korban Pesach* [because these mitzvos remind us of *yetzias*

Mitzrayim]. He also obligated us to write everything we saw on our arms and on our heads, and on our doorposts, and to speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim* every morning and every night. As *Chazal* (*Brachos* 21) say, saying the *brachah* אמת ויציב is a Torah requirement, as it states, למען תזכור את יום צאתך, מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך, 'So you shall remember *yetzias Mitzrayim* all days of your life.' We must build a *succah*, and there are many other mitzvos to remind us of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, so that in all generations we won't forget the miracles, and no one will deny Hashem..."

There are mitzvos that are kept once a week, such as Shabbos; there are mitzvos practiced once a year, like the *yomim tovim*; but the mitzvah to

remember *yetzias Mitzrayim* is a daily mitzvah — kept once by daytime and once at nighttime. This indicates to us the essential need for this reminder.⁵

The Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz *zt'l* was playing chess with his chassid Reb Dovid Rosenberg *z'l* on the night of *nitel* (many tzaddikim play chess on the night of *nitel*). Reb Dovid won each game. The Ahavas Yisrael said, "I also know how to play chess. The difference between us is that I know the game, but you constantly review it."

A similar story is told about Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin-Stolin *zt'l* when he visited Eretz Yisrael. The Rebbe visited a winery together with a group of his chassidim. One of the

5. We can draw a *mashal* to a doctor who prescribes different kinds of medicines. Some medicines need to be taken once a week, others are taken once a year, and other medicines must be ingested twice a day. Each *yom tov* is once a year; Shabbos is once a week; but remembering *yetzias Mitzrayim* is twice every day, because this is the foundation of the Torah.

chassidim was a talented wine connoisseur. By merely tasting the wine he was able to tell you which year the wine was produced, the type, alcohol level, and other information. Rebbe Avraham Elimelech explained, "Do you know the difference is between you and him? You drink wine, but he reviews it constantly."

The lesson is, it isn't sufficient to know about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, or to know about *emunah*. By constantly studying the topic one becomes an expert.

A doctor prescribed cough candies to a patient who was suffering from a sore throat. Instead of sucking on the candies, this patient swallowed them. Obviously the cough drops didn't help him.

The *nimshal* is, Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with great miracles so we will

believe in Hashem. But we must study *yetzias Mitzrayim*, discuss it, and think about it. A brief reminder that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim won't be sufficient.

Similarly, we must think about *emunah* and we must review it. A fleeting thought on *emunah* is not sufficient.

The Yesod HaAvodah and the Shem Mishmuel *zt'l* teach that the mitzvah of remembering *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*. It isn't only rational — that if one will review the wonders that happened by *yetzias Mitzrayim* his *emunah* will become stronger — it is also a *segulah*. A *segulah* is something that can't be explained scientifically or rationally how it works. On a sublime realm, speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* engraves *emunah* onto one's heart.⁶

6. It states (*Chabakuk* 2:4)., צדיק באמונתו יחיה, "The righteous man lives with his *emunah*." The word יחיה means that *emunah* is his life. *Emunah* is like breathing, which one can't be without, not even for a short

"Come with Me"

When Hashem first told Moshe to save the Jewish nation from Mitzrayim, Moshe replied (*Shemos* 3:11-12), מי אנכי כי אלך אל פרעה, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh?"

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* says that the standard response people give to such a humble claim is generally, "What do you mean 'who am I?' Do you know how special you are? You were chosen because you

are the best person for this mission," etc. etc.

But this wasn't how Hashem answered Moshe. Hashem said, בי אהיה עמך, "I will be with you." The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* explains that Hashem was saying, "Even according to your humble opinion that you aren't worthy, you will succeed, because I will go with you. Everything you do will be successful because I am coming along with you on this mission."⁷

time. One eats a few times a day, but *emunah* is like breathing; it must always be on one's mind.

When one makes hot coffee, he first boils the water on a high flame, and after the coffee is ready, he keeps it hot on a low flame to maintain the heat. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* used that as a *mashal* for *emunah*. There are times when one is actively increasing and strengthening his *emunah*. For example, when one is reviewing to himself the fundamental truths of *emunah*, or when one focuses on the wonders Hashem performs in the world. Even after he finished developing his *emunah*, and right now he is learning Torah, or working, or eating, etc., *emunah* should remain hot. As in the *mashal*, it has to be on a low flame, in the back of his mind, so his *emunah* won't cool off.

7. Sometimes a person wants to do a great mitzvah, or a great deed of *chesed*, and he thinks, מי אנכי, "Who am I? How could I possibly succeed?" But הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו, when one tries to do a good deed, he receives assistance from Above. And when Hashem helps, anything is possible.

Similarly, this week's *parashah* begins with Hashem telling Moshe, **בא אל פרעה**, "Come to Pharaoh." Why didn't Hashem say **לך אל פרעה**, "Go to Pharaoh," which is a more common way of speaking?

The *meforshim* explain, Hashem was saying, "Come with Me to Pharaoh." Hashem said, "I will go with Moshe to Pharaoh," and when Hashem is with us we will always succeed.

When a Yid goes through hard times he must remember that he isn't alone. Hashem says, "Come with Me. I will be there together with you." As it states (*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Rabb* ch.18), "Baruch Hashem, Whose compassion is great over the Jewish nation. Even when they sin and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is angry with them,

Hashem's compassion is always with them... Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "With every hardship that Bnei Yisrael go through, I am with them..."⁸

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai Lelover *zt'l* gave a *mashal* to someone who was thrown into a deep pit, and it is impossible to climb out. But, if there was a long rope hanging from the top of the pit all the way to the bottom, he won't be afraid, because he sees that he has a way out. This is a *mashal* to *emunah*. When one believes that Hashem is with him, he can climb out of every situation.

Hashem Gives *Chen*

In this week's *parashah* it states (11:3), **ויתן ה' את חן העם**, "Hashem gave the nation *chen* (favor) in the eyes of the Mitzrim." Previously, the Mitzrim hated the Jewish

8. A child is afraid to walk alone at night, but when he is with his father he feels secure. People are afraid to walk through dangerous neighborhoods, but when they are with a group of people, or with someone who is very strong, they aren't afraid. Similarly, when we remember that Hashem is at our side, there's nothing to fear.

nation. As it states (*Tehillim* 105:25), הפך לבם לשנוא עמו, "Hashem turned their hearts to hate His nation." But by the redemption, ויתן את הן העם, they found *chen* and favor by the Jewish nation, and they wanted to lend them things when they left Mitzrayim.

This is because everything is in Hashem's hands. As it states, לב מלכים ושרים ביד ה', "The hearts of kings and officers are in Hashem's hands." This also applies to the hearts of all mankind.

Someone asked Reb Yechezkel of Kozmir ז"ל, "I have an opportunity to do something, which will give me *chen* (favor) in the *poritz's* eyes. Should I do it? I'm asking because I know someone who found *chen* by the *poritz* and he receives many financial benefits from their relationship. If I find *chen* by the *poritz*, I can also get those favors..."

The Rebbe replied, "It states (*Tehillim* 84:12), הן וכבוד יתן ה',

'Hashem gives *chen* and honor.' This *pasuk* seems to be saying something simple and obvious, because doesn't Hashem give everything? But this *pasuk* is teaching us that when it comes to *chen* and *kavod*, one shouldn't even do *hishtadlus* to attain it. Hashem gives *chen* and *kavod*, when He wants and to whom He wants, and it is impossible to attain it on one's own."

A man was riding on his donkey, and his son was walking alongside him. They met someone on the road who said to the father, "It isn't proper that you are riding and you let your young son walk." The father realized that this was true, so he got off the donkey and began to walk, and his son rode on the donkey.

They met up with another person who said to the son, "It isn't proper that you ride while your father walks. You are young, you are strong, you should walk."

The son realized that this is true, and he wanted to exchange places with his father. The father said, "Someone already rebuked us when I was riding and you were walking, so I don't want to do that again. Let's ride together on the donkey."

They met up with a third person who said, "It isn't proper that you are both riding the donkey. It's *tzaar baalei chaim!* The donkey can't carry such a heavy load."

They realized he was correct, so they got off the donkey and they both walked alongside the donkey.

They met up with a fourth person who said, "If you have a donkey, why don't you ride it?"

The moral is, if you try to find *chen* with people, you will never succeed. Rather you should do what you know you should do, and 'תן וכבוד יתן ה', Hashem will give you *chen* in people's eyes.

Simcha - Joy

The *makos* created laughter and happiness among the Jewish communities in Mitzrayim. As it states, אשר התעללתי במצרים, and Rashi writes שחקתי. The Toldos Adom (*Rebbe Hoshei'a Ostreva zt'l*) explains that they needed this joy to be redeemed, because Hashem wouldn't redeem a nation steeped in *atzvus*.

The Beis Aharon once rebuked his son because he wasn't happy. The son asked, "Father, there are so many other things

I do wrong. Why do you rebuke me specifically because I'm not happy?"

The Beis Aharon replied, "I know you have *yiras Shamayim*, and you will improve your ways even without my rebuke. However, when it comes to happiness, people don't recognize its importance. You may think that it isn't so bad if you are sad... Therefore I encourage you to always be *b'simchah*."

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* said that one accomplishes more with a *tefillah* said with *simchah* than with a *tefillah* said with tears.

Once, Rebbe Bunim saw someone fall into the sea and he almost drowned. Rebbe Bunim called out to him, "Send regards to the *levyason!*" The man found a floating beam in the sea, and he was able to save himself. Rebbe Bunim explained that the man was panicking and distressed, and I realized that he doesn't have peace of mind to save himself. So I said a joke, and lightened the atmosphere. He was able to think clearly, and he found a way to save himself.

Someone told the Lev Simchah (Gur) *zt'l*, "I'm married for many years, and we are still childless."

The Lev Simchah replied, "Be *b'simchah* and there will be a *simchah*."

But the man felt that being

happy, in his situation, was close to impossible. How could he be happy when his home is empty, his wife is crying, and all the neighbors are building families?

This man's mentor went to the Lev Simchah and said that the counsel he gave was too difficult. "How can he possibly be happy?"

The Lev Simchah replied, "What can I do? Heaven loves *simchah*."

The man followed the advice. It wasn't easy for him, but he knew that his future depended on him being happy. Nine months later, they bore their first child.

Immediately following the *levaya* of Rebbe Moshe Lelover *zt'l*, Reb Elozor Mendel Lelover *zt'l* said, "Everyone, bring me *kevitalach* with your requests, because there is a lot of joy in heaven right now, and the *tefillos* and *brachos* will be answered."

The chassidim assumed that the joy in heaven is because Rebbe Moshe Lelover joined the *yeshiva shel maalah*. But Reb Elozor Mendel told them that he was referring to another source of happiness. He explained, "My father went up to heaven, and the *malachim* are asking one another, 'Who will take Reb Moshe Lelover's place? Who will be the next Rebbe?' When they heard that I will be the next Rebbe, they started laughing. They found it hysterical that I will be filling my father's place. So now there's a lot of joy in heaven, and it's a good time for *tefillah*."

It states (*Tehillim* 126), אז יאמר, בגוים הגדיל ה' לעשות אם אלה

Elozor Mendel explained: In the future, the goyim will ask, "Why is Hashem giving the Yidden so much honor?"

We will answer, הגדיל ה' לעשות, עמנו, the reason Hashem is doing so much goodness with us, היינו שמחים is because we are always happy. Even in *galus*, and despite all the hardships, Klal Yisrael push themselves to be happy. Therefore we deserve to receive Hashem's kindness.

It states (126:6), הלך ילך ובכה, נושא משך הזרע, "When a person serves Hashem with sadness and with crying, he will receive reward. בוא יבא ברנה, נושא אלומותיו, he will carry packages filled with Hashem's bounty.

Ahavas Yisrael

Rebbe Dovid Lelover *zt'l* said, "I am not able to give counsel how to attain *yiras Shamayim*. However, I can give you counsel how to attain *ahavas Hashem*. If you

will love your fellow man, you will love Hashem."

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* taught (*Imrei Pinchas, Bahaloscha*) "In every Yid

there is holiness and something special that isn't found in anyone else." If you focus on that, you will love your fellow man.

People naturally love themselves because they focus on their qualities, and they tolerate their faults. The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* said that this is how you can love your fellow man. Even if your fellow man isn't perfect, there is a lot of good. Focus on the good, forgive them for the bad, and you will love your fellow man. This is the meaning of the pasuk, *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, "Love your friend like you love yourself." In the same way you love yourself – by focusing on the good, and

not paying attention to the bad – that's how you should love your fellow man.

By *makas choshech* it states (10:23), *לא ראו איש את אחיו*, "A person couldn't see his brother." The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that when one doesn't see the needs of his fellow man, that is the greatest darkness. When Yidden aren't helping each other, that is the plague of darkness.

It states (11:7), *ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ בלב לשונו*. Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zt'l* explained, *ולכל בני ישראל*, when you speak to a Yid, *לא יחרץ*, don't speak sharply, rather *ב-לב לשונו*, like your soft heart, that's how you should speak to your fellow man.

Small Steps

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 147) discusses the luxury cities Porgaysa and Diomeses. The wine of those cities was superb, and the bathhouses were special too. The Gemara tells that these luxuries caused

many people to slack off from Torah study.

Reb Elazar ben Arach was from the greatest *talmidei chachamim*. It states (*Avos* 2:8), "If all *chachmei Yisrael*

were be on one side...and Reb Elazer ben Arach was on the opposite side, the scale would tip in his favor." Furthermore, Reb Yochanan ben Zakay once kissed Reb Elazar ben Arach on his forehead and said, "Avraham Avinu! You are fortunate that Reb Elazar ben Arach came from you" (*Chagiga* 14:).

Nevertheless, the Gemara tells us that Reb Elazar ben Arach came to Porgaysa and Diomeses and forgot his learning. (This is something we can't understand, but we are repeating as it is written in the Gemara.)

Reb Elazar ben Arach returned to his hometown and was reading *parashas* Bo from a *sefer Torah*. When he came to the words, החרש הזה לכם (12:2), he accidentally read it, החרש היה לכם "their hearts were deaf."

The *chachamim* prayed for him and he remembered his Torah again (*Shabbos* 147:).

The Rebbe of Kotzk *zy'a* explains that החרש הזה לכם and

החרש היה לכם are almost the same letters. (A drop of ink on the top right edge of the ך of החרש, and it becomes החרש. Similarly, a drop of ink on the *yud* of היה and it is הוה, and a drop of ink turns לכם into לבם.)

This teaches us that improvement is achieved with small steps. One doesn't have to make major changes in a day. With minor improvements, here and there, he can change from being החרש היה לכם, having a deaf and closed heart, to becoming החרש זה לבם, to be like a brand-new person.

This happened in Mitzrayim: They were on the 49th level of *tumah*, and they performed only two mitzvos and that elevated them to the highest levels.

As the Midrash says, "Hashem promised Avraham that he will take out his descendants from Mitzrayim. The time was ripe for this, but they didn't have mitzvos to merit a redemption. As it says, והנה עתך עת דודים,

'The time for the redemption came... ואת ערום ועריה, but you were unclothed, without mitzvos.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave them two mitzvos to perform: *korban pesach* and *milah*. As it is states (*Yeshayah* 16:6), ואעבור עליך, 'I came over to you and I saw you were wallowing in the blood [of *pesach* and *milah*] ואמר לך בדמיך חיי, and I said, due to your blood [*milah* and *korban Pesach*] you will live [and be redeemed].' In these merits, we were redeemed. So we see that with small steps in the right direction one reaches very great heights.⁹

9. A *bachur* who learned in a Lithuanian yeshiva was traveling is home to Switzerland, and made a stopover in Radin, so he could speak with the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*.

He arrived at the Radin train station at 2:00 a. m. It was snowing, and he didn't know where to go.

There was an elderly Yid at the train station, and he asked him where he wanted to go.

"And who are you?" the *bachur* asked.

"I'm Zvi Levinson." The *bachur* recognized the name. It was the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law.

"I want to go to your *shver*."

"Where are you planning to sleep tonight?"

"I don't know. I didn't make any plans."

Reb Levinson *zt'l* took him to his house and offered him supper.

"I don't need to eat. All I want is sleep."

He covered himself with the warm blankets, and then he remembered that he hadn't yet *davened Maariv*. The *bachur* planned to get out of bed to *daven*, but he allowed himself just one more moment of comfort under the blankets. And as it often happens, he fell into a deep sleep.

In the morning, he *davened Shacharis* and went home with Reb Levinson.

After breakfast, Reb Levinson brought him to the Chofetz Chaim.

The Chofetz Chaim told the *bachur* the following:

"I remember the era of the Czars. There was so much money back then.

By *makas barad*, Pharaoh said (9:27), חטאתי הפעם ה' הצדיק ואני, ועמי הרשעים, "I sinned this time. Hashem is the tzaddik and I and my nation are the *resha'im*."

This was a moment when Pharaoh was righteous. He acknowledged Hashem! His righteousness didn't last for long, though. As soon as the hail stopped, he went back to his old ways and he didn't let the Yidden out. Nevertheless, for the two righteous words, "ה' הצדיק" Chazal tell us the Egyptians merited a burial.

Money fell to the ground and people didn't bother picking it up. But today, when a copper coin falls to the ground, people rush to pick it up...

"I'm telling you this to teach you an important lesson. There were times when there were great tzaddikim in the world (such in the era of the *tana'im* and *amora'im*). There was so much holiness in the world, simple deeds performed by simple people, didn't make such an impression in heaven. But in our generation, when there's a hunger in heaven for some spirituality, every small deed, even those performed by simple people, are precious in heaven. In a time of famine, every morsel is precious. In our generation, when a *bachur* forgets to daven *Maariv*, the void is noticeable in heaven..."

The *bachur* was overwhelmed by the Chofetz Chaim's *ruach hakadosh*. The Chofetz Chaim spoke about forgetting *Maariv*, which is exactly what happened to him the previous night (and he had forgotten to daven twice *Shemonah Esrei* in *Shacharis*).

The Chofetz Chaim told him that this lesson is seen in *Rashi* (12:6). Rashi says that the time for the redemption arrived, but the Jewish people didn't have merits. Therefore, Hashem commanded them to do *milah* and *korban Pesach*. These mitzvos made them worthy of redemption.

How are solely two mitzvos sufficient? At that time the Jewish nation were on the 49th level of impurity. Can two mitzvos totally change them and make them worthy of redemption?

The answer is, in a time of spiritual deficiency, every small mitzvah is highly valued in heaven.

After the Mitzrim drowned in the Yam Suf, the sea washed them ashore, and they were buried there. The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* said, "We learn from this the value of a singular, good moment. For that one moment when Pharaoh recognized Hashem, he was rewarded."¹⁰

We don't know the value of our deeds. We think a mitzvah is small and insignificant, but every mitzvah is extremely great. With every small accomplishment, the reward is very great, and we can rise to high levels.

When Esav met with Yaakov,

he kissed him (see *Bereishis* 33:4). Rashi writes, "Reb Shimon bar Yochai said, 'There is a halachah that Esav hates Yaakov, but at that moment, his compassion was roused, and he kissed Yaakov with a whole heart.'" Esav was rewarded for that moment. The Torah tells us about Esav's large family (*Bereishis* 36) and Chazal state that this was his reward for that moment when he kissed Yaakov with all his heart. The Leiv Simchah *zt'l* said, "See how much one can earn in a moment. Esav received great reward for the one time he performed a good deed."¹¹

10. Reb Mottele Slonimer *zt'l* said: There are three things that people hope and pray to have at their demise: (1) that there be a minyan present by *yetzias neshamah* [when the soul leaves the body] (2) to be immersed in a *mikveh* before the burial (3) and that their money should go to worthy causes. The Egyptians earned these three benefits: there was 600,000 Yidden present at their demise! They were in a *mikveh*, as they died in the Yam Suf. And their money went to a worthy cause; it went to the Jewish people. All of this, for two words: ה' הצדיק.

11. Chazal say, לא נתנה תורה למלאכי השרת, "Hashem didn't give the Torah to the *malachim*" (*Yoma* 30). People are human, and therefore, they will make mistakes. Hashem doesn't expect perfection from us. This is the reason even a small accomplishment is so precious to Hashem. If we

Rebbe Gedalya Moshe of Zvhil ז'ל asked someone why he wasn't going to a certain *drashah* of *mussar*. The man replied, "Whenever I go to a *drashah*, I become inspired to become better but after a few days, I return to my old ways. Why should I go if the inspiration won't last?"

Rebbe Gedalya Moshe said, "If someone is drowning in the

ocean, and someone swims out to him and says, 'I can rescue you, and help you live for another half-hour, but I can't save you forever,' would he accept the offer? Of course he would. He would do anything to live another half hour. Similarly, I advise you to go to the *drashah*. Even if your *teshuvah* only lasts for a short while, it is also precious."

Good Desires – The heart of the *Mitzvah*

It isn't solely mitzvos and deeds of *chesed* that Hashem wants from us. Hashem wants our heart, our desire to serve Him.

Moshe told Bnei Yisrael the halachos of *korban Pesach* on *rosh chodesh* Nisan, two weeks before they must bring it. But immediately following Moshe's lessons, the Torah says (12:28) וילכו ויעשו בני ישראל, "Bnei Yisrael went and made [the *korban Pesach*]."

Rashi asks, "Did they make the *korban Pesach* already? It was only *rosh chodesh*! Rather, they accepted on themselves to bring the *korban Pesach*, and the *pasuk* considers it as though they sacrificed the *korban Pesach* already."

Because a good desire is precious to Hashem. Their desire to bring the *korban Pesach* is as though they brought it.

overcame our human limitations and managed to do a good deed before Hashem, it's always exceptional.

Rashi (10:22) writes, "Why did Hashem bring *choshech* on the Egyptians? שהיו בישראל באותו הדור רשעים, ולא היו רוצים לציאת, there were *resha'im* among the Yidden who didn't want to leave. They died during *makas choshech*..."

They were punished because "they didn't want to leave

Mitzrayim." Hashem was calling the Jewish nation out of Mitzrayim to become His nation, to serve Him, to accept His Torah, but these people felt it was good for them in Mitzrayim.

Once again, we see the importance of wanting to serve Hashem.

The Gates of *Teshuvah* are always Open

The Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* taught: When a person is clearing away mud, even if he uses shovels that have very long handles, he will inevitably become dirty.

Therefore, *tzaddikim* don't want to be in the presence of a *rasha*, and they certainly don't want to speak with them. The *rasha's* impurities and immense *tumah* inevitably creates a negative effect on them.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that Moshe was also afraid to go to Pharaoh because of this reason. Pharaoh had already seen seven *makos*, and he was

still holding on to the Yidden. Only an extremely great *rasha* and *kelipah* could act that way. Moshe feared being in his presence.

Hashem told Moshe, בא אל פרעה, "Go do Pharaoh, and don't be afraid of the terrible *kelipah*, כי אני הכבדתי את לבו because he isn't freeing the Jewish nation because I hardened his heart..." If Pharaoh was under his own control, he would have already sent out the Jewish nation.

It states, בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי את לבו, "Come to Pharaoh because I hardened his heart ..." It seems counter-intuitive.

If Hashem hardened his heart that means Pharaoh will certainly refuse to free the nation, so why should Moshe go to Pharaoh?

The Chidushei HaRim's answers that Hashem said, **בא אל פרעה**, "Come to Pharaoh, and don't think that he is as great a *kelipah* and impurity as you perceive him, **כי אני הכבדתי**, because I hardened his heart. He would have freed the Yidden if it were entirely up to him."

The Chida (*Nachal Kidumim, Bo*) quotes Reb Shlomo Istaruk *zt'l* (a *rishon* in the era of the Ra'n and Ritv'a) who taught that Pharaoh had the option to do *teshuvah*, even after Hashem hardened his heart. It would be difficult, but if he wanted to, he could do *teshuvah*, because the gates of *teshuvah* are always open.

According to his commentary, **כי** means *even* or *although*. Thus, the *pasuk* is saying, **בא אל פרעה**, go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the nation. **כי אני הכבדתי**, although I hardened his heart, even so, the option for *teshuvah* is available for him. If he wants to do *teshuvah* and send out the nation, he will be able to.¹²

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 15.) states that a *bas kol* announced, **שובו בנים שובבים הויך מאחר**, that everyone can do *teshuvah* except for Acher (a great sinner). The Maharshah (and the *שו"ת מהרימ"ט* 8) write that if Acher disregarded the *bas kol* and attempted to do *teshuvah*, he would be able to, because *teshuvah* is always an option.

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 86:) states, "You must do everything your *baal habayis*

12. It states (*Tehillim* 41:5), **רפאה נפשי כי חטאתי לך**, "Heal me because I sinned to you." It seems that the word **כי**, "because," doesn't fit here. Isn't sin a reason that he won't be healed? Dovid Hamelech is praying that Hashem heal him, **כי חטאתי לך**, even if I sinned to You.

(host) tells you to do except himself from Hashem's when he tells you to leave." presence, because he sinned The Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar HaKedushah* 21) explains that too much. One doesn't have to this is hinting to those times listen to that. You listen to the when, *keviyachol*, Hashem (or *baal habayis*, the King of the the lessons stated in holy world, and you follow all His *sefarim*) tell a person that he rules, except for when He tells you to leave, because the gates of *teshuvah* are always open.¹³

13. Reb Yitzchak Dovid Grossman *shlita* tells the following story:

A non-religious *bachur* from Netanyah, Eretz Yisrael, began keeping Shabbos and started coming to the local beis medresh. A *yungerman* who frequented that beis medresh offered to teach him Torah.

The *yungerman* taught him the basics of hilchos Shabbos, kashrus, *tefillah*, and more, and the *bachur* grew in his Yiddishkeit.

There was something peculiar about this boy: Each day he came to the beis medresh with a pocket bulging with sunflower seeds. From time to time, he would take a seed or two from his left pocket and put it in his right pocket. But the *yungerman* decided that he wouldn't ask him about that, and they focused on learning Torah.

One evening, before they began studying, the *yungerman* said, "I didn't eat anything today. Lend me some of your sunflower seeds, so I will have strength to learn with you."

"I can't," the boy replied.

The *yungerman* was insulted. For months he tutored him for free, without asking for a penny. And now, when he asks him for a minor favor, the boy refuses.

They learned for fifteen minutes, and then the *yungerman* said that he had to stop. He felt uncomfortable learning with a *bachur* who obviously didn't appreciate everything he was doing for him. The next day the *yungerman* didn't show up. The day after they learned, but it wasn't with the same enthusiasm and happiness like it used to be. Eventually, they stopped learning altogether.

One day, the *bachur* called up the *yungerman* and said, "You don't owe

One of the popular *kevarim* in Poland is the *kever* of the Bnei Yissaschar *zt'l*. (There is a *hachnasas orchim* there, so people can have a good meal and a place to rest before they continue their travels.) A *yungerman* told me that he was at the *kever* of the Bnei Yissaschar and saw a *bachur* praying with immense *kavanah*. He knew that *bachur*. It was his neighbors' child. He also knew that this *bachur* had fallen off the

derech ten years ago. What turned the *bachur* around? How was he saying *Tehillim* with so much sweetness?

When the *bachur* finished his *Tehillim*, the *yungerman* greeted him, and asked him how he did *teshuvah*. The *bachur* replied, "Someone told me something that totally turned me around. The person who told it to me didn't realize the impact he had on my life. He told me that my parents keep their front door

me anything, but I want you to come to my house for a couple of minutes."

The *yungerman* came, and he saw barrels filled with sunflower seeds! He was wondering what type of psychological syndrome this *bachur* suffered from.

The *bachur* said, "When I became a *baal teshuvah*, I had a very strong *yetzer hara* to revert to my old ways. A rabbi advised me that I should put a lot of sunflower seeds into my left pocket, and whenever I do a good deed, I should place one of the sunflower seeds into my right pocket. When I come home at night, I count my good deeds and I store them in these barrels, so I can remember all the good deeds I'm doing. When you asked me for a few sunflower seeds, I refused, because at that time, all the seeds were in my right pocket and I had to leave them there so I could count them at the end of the day..."

We repeat this story as a reminder that one must focus on the good deeds he does. Don't consider yourself lost from Hashem, because every Yid has many mitzvos. With this focus, you will be able to change your ways and do perfect *teshuvah* before Hashem.

open every night, as they hope that I will return. They don't want me to come to the door and find it locked. That's when I returned home and also to *Yiddishkeit*, after ten years of wandering."

This is as it states in *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (Rabba 31)* "I testify by heaven and earth that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is sitting and waiting for Yisrael more than a father waits for his son to do *teshuvah*."

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