

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

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Behar



לזכות רפואה שלמה מלכה בת רחל ומינאל בן שלי

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Parshas Behar

In this week's *parashah* it states, *שש שנים תזרע שדך...ובשנה השביעית שבת שבתון יהיה לארץ*, "Sow your field for six years...and on the seventh year, it is *shemittah*..." (25:3-4).

The Chinuch (mitzvah 84) explains that we work the fields for six years and rest on the seventh year to remember that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day.

Shemittah also teaches us a lesson in *bitachon*, because for one year, there will be no planting in the entire land. What will people eat? How will they survive? They need to have *bitachon*, and trust that Hashem will support them. They must remember that *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and Hashem has many ways to support them, even if they don't work the fields.¹

1. A simple chassid of Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl *zy'a* came to his Rebbe, and the Rebbe said to him, "Tell me your *seder hayom* (daily schedule)."

The man obliged, and the Rebbe heard that he would first go to work in his store, and then he would daven *Shacharis*.

"This isn't a good schedule," Rebbe Mordechai said. "You should daven first, and then take care of your other needs."

"Rebbe," the man said, "most of my business is done early in the morning. If I daven at that time, how will I earn a living?"

The Rebbe told him a story:

"There once was a *melamed* who couldn't find a job near his home. The only position he found was in the home of a wealthy man who lived far away. He taught there for half a year. When the term was up, the wealthy man paid him in full. The *melamed* carefully counted the money — three hundred silver rubles and eighty *groshen* — and put them into a pouch. He guarded his money very carefully.

On Friday, he was still on the road, so he stopped at an inn until after

The Torah (25:20) addresses מה נאכל בשנה השביעית, הן לא נורע ולא this possible hysteria. ונאסף את תבואתינו וכי תאמרו, "If you will

Shabbos. What should he do with the money? A half-year's work is not something to be negligent about. He was tempted to keep the money on him throughout Shabbos, but his *yetzer tov* won this battle, and with a quaking heart he entrusted his money to the hotel manager, hoping that he wouldn't steal it. If the hotelier wasn't honest, a half-year's work far from home would be for naught.

The entire Shabbos his thoughts were about whether he did the right thing, and if he will ever see his money again. Immediately after Shabbos was over, he asked for his pouch, and the manager gave it to him.

"He sat down and began counting the money. There were three hundred silver rubles, the exact amount. Now, he began counting the copper *groshen*. Someone saw him and shook his head in disapproval. 'You don't have to count the copper coins. If the hotelier is dishonest he would have stolen silver rubles. You can be certain that all the copper *groshen* are all there as well.'"

Rebbe Mordechai Chernobyler concluded, "Every morning, Hashem returns the *neshamos* to you and to your family. Don't you see that He is taking care of you? He is caring for your life, your health, for all the primary matters of life. If He cares for these, you can be certain that he will not abandon you and take away the small 'copper *groshen*, and He will supply you with *parnassah* as well. There is nothing to fear. Daven early in the morning, and then go about your business. Hashem will support you in this way too."

When they were traveling home, the chassidim discussed what they heard from Reb Mordechai of Chernobyl that Shabbos. They never had such an uplifting Shabbos before. It was special. This *melamed* said, "My Shabbos was also spectacular. I never had such a Shabbos before."

The chassidim knew this *melamed* to be a simple person that doesn't understand the deep *divrei Torah* Rebbe Mordechai said, so they wondered why he thought the Shabbos was special. He told them the *mashal* the Rebbe told him, and the chassidim agreed, "You received even more than we did!"

ask, what will we eat in the seventh year? We aren't planting. We aren't gathering in our produce!"

Hashem answers, וצויתי את ברכתי לכם בשנה השישית ועת את התבואה לשלש השנים, "I will command My blessings for you in the sixth year, and the crops will be enough for three years."

The Noam Elimelech *zt'l* writes in the name of his brother, Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l*, that if they don't

ask any questions, and they aren't worried, and they just trust in Hashem, it will be even better. Hashem can support us in many ways.

There is never reason to worry. The *pasuk* is discussing a scenario when the nation falls from their perfect *bitachon*, and are concerned how they will survive. Then Hashem will create a new source of *parnassah* for them. Though it would be better if they asked no questions and place their trust in Hashem.²

2. Everything happens by Hashem's decree. Nothing happens by the rules of nature. Also *shidduchim* is by Hashem's word. As it states, מה' יצא הדבר, "The word (*shidduch*) came from Hashem." This is the reason why a *shidduch* celebration is called a *vort*, because מה' יצא הדבר, it happened by Hashem's *vort* (word).

When the couple marries, the parents walk the *chasan* and the *kallah* to the chuppah. This is to remind them that they don't do anything on their own. They can't even walk on their own. They are led from Above.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches that when the Yidden first came to the desert and saw the *mon* raining down from heaven, they were astounded. Food falls down from heaven? They never saw anything like that before! Their young children were brought up with this miracle, and they didn't consider the phenomenon wondrous.

But when they went into Eretz Yisrael where the food grows from the earth, their children were shocked.

Actually, they are both sensations, only we become accustomed to them and think it's natural.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* gives a *mashal* of a person who had weak eyes. Everything appeared crooked to him. When he lived in a small village, where all houses are one story high, there wasn't a serious problem. But when he moved to a big city with skyscrapers, it appeared to him like the buildings were falling down. He began shouting, "Run for your lives! The buildings are falling." People started to run and there was panic everywhere.

One wise person didn't run. "There is no reason to run. All we need is an eye doctor. Is there an eye doctor around?" People didn't understand how an eye doctor would stop the buildings from falling down, but when the eye doctor came, the wise person told him to check this man's eyes. It was

discovered that his eyes were the source of the problem.

The *nimshal* is, people have warped eyes. They see the world in twisted, untrue ways. They panic, they don't understand how they will support themselves, etc., but it is all because they don't see matters correctly.

For example, people see that when you work for a living, you have money. If you don't work, you don't have money. That is why they think *parnassah* is entirely in people's hands. But this is people's incorrect perception. There will come a time when our eyes will be healed, and we will perceive that everything happens by Hashem's word, and not by chance, and not by the might of our hand. *Hishtadlus* creates the vessel, but

If a dead person suddenly climbed out of his grave and walked around, everybody will be shocked and surprised. Yet, this miracle happens daily. Wheat kernels rot in the ground, and then they germinate, sprout and grow. From death comes life. It is a miracle, and likewise, all sources of *parnassah* are miraculous. It isn't as natural as it seems.

parnassah comes from Hashem. To explain this point, we tell the following *mashal*:

There was once a pauper who spent a morning in the post office. He saw people go up to the clerk, pay a small amount of money, and the clerk gave each of them a valuable package.

The pauper thought that he could do the same. He just has to collect some money, give it to the clerk, and he will receive valuable merchandise. He figured that he could sell the merchandise and become wealthy. He finally found a way to pull out of his poverty.

He spent the next morning collecting money, and then he brought the money to the post office. Upon giving the money to the clerk, he asked for an expensive package.

The clerk laughed and explained to the pauper that the few coins people pay is only for the delivery. Before that, they paid in full for the merchandise.

The *nimshal* is, people do *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*. Someone watching from the side might think *hishtadlus* brings *parnassah*. But *hishtadlus* is like the delivery fee. It isn't the source of the *parnassah*. *Parnassah* comes from Hashem, alone.

When the Or HaChaim HaKadosh *zy'a* lived in Morocco, he taught his community, "The week has six workdays. It's sufficient to work on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Leave Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday for Torah. I guarantee that your *parnassah* won't be less because of it."

His community followed his advice, and indeed, they had *parnassah* just like before. They saw that they could spend a substantial amount of time learning Torah each week, and Hashem supported them. This went on for many years.

But when the Or HaChaim left Morocco and moved to Eretz

Yisrael, the Moroccan community gradually began to work more. Eventually, they were back to a six day workweek.

But they admitted that that working extra didn't bring them any more money. They were just as well off during the years they followed the Or HaChaim's counsel to *ממנעט דו* *בעסק ועסק בתורה*, "work less and to study Torah."³

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* married when he was fourteen years old, and every day his *rebbeztzin* would go to her father-in-law, Rebbe

Mordechai of Zvhil, and he would give her some money to buy whatever they needed.

One day, Rebbe Shlomke told his wife, "We believe that our *parnassah* isn't from my father, but from Hashem. Therefore, I decided that it isn't good that we take a daily allowance from my father. Let's trust in Hashem, and Hashem will support us."

A few days later, there was no food in the home. Rebbe Shlomke told his wife, "Perhaps I was wrong when I said we shouldn't take *parnassah* from my father.

3. Someone asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l* how much *hishtadlus* should one do. The Chazon Ish replied, "One must make *hishtadlus* until matters become crooked. It can be compared to banging a nail into the wall. One can bang many times, but when the nail becomes crooked, he stops and throws away the nail.

Similarly, when doing *hishtadlus*, and matters become crooked, meaning that the *hishtadlus* he's doing doesn't leave him with time for Torah and *tefillah*, then it is time to stop.

Rebbe Shlomke would say, "The alef beis (א ב) of a Yid is אמונה בטוח, to believe that everything happens by Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*."

Reb Yitzchak of Neschiz *zt'l* says *parnassah* comes from *emunah*. Although there are people who don't have *emunah* and still have *parnassah*, that's because Hashem has *rachmanus* on them.

Hashem chose to support us that way, who am I to say I want my *parnassah* to come a different way.”

She came to her father-in-law for some money. He said, “I noticed you won’t here for a few days, so take a silver ruble this time.”

Later that day, two wealthy chassidim came to visit Rebbe Mordechai, and afterwards they went to Rebbe Shlomke’s home, to wish him *mazal tov* on his recent *chasunah*. As they spoke with him, one of them took out a silver ruble, and was playing with it. Rebbe Shlomke understood that he

was planning to give him the ruble as a *chasunah* gift. But when they finished their conversation, the man forgot about the gift, and returned the coin to his pocket.

Rebbe Shlomke understood that if they hadn’t taken money from his father and trusted in Hashem, they would have received that silver ruble. Because *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and Hashem has many ways to support us.⁴

Ona’s Devarim

The Torah (25:17) states, **וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עֲמִיתוֹ וְיִדְאֵת מֵאֱלֶקֶד אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם**, “Don’t harm your

4. There was a *yungerman* from Beitar who worked in Ramot, Yerushalayim. To get there he had to take two busses — approximately a two hour trip. It wasn’t pleasant at all. To make matters worse, sometimes the busses didn’t come on time. He had *sefarim* with him to study on the way, but by the time he got to his job, he was tired and exhausted. He took the same exhausting routine on his return trip.

One day, he decided that he can’t go on like this any longer. He needs to find a ride that will take him to Ramot daily, for a reasonable price. This wasn’t easy to find, but he did find one person who also needed to be in Ramot in the mornings, and they agreed to travel together a reasonable price.

The first day, he came to work refreshed. Traveling time was cut less than half, and he was freed from the bad odors of the exhaust pipe of old busses, and other discomforts.

fellow man with your words, and one mustn't give bad
fear G-d, I am Hashem." counsel to his fellow man..."

Rashi writes, ולא תונו - כאן הוזהר

על אונאת דברים שלא יקניט את חברו

ולא ישיאנו עצה שאינה הוגנת לו

"The Torah is forbidding *ona'as*

devarim, one shouldn't harm

his fellow man with words,

A few *pesukim* earlier (25:14)

the Torah states, וכי תמכרו ממכר

לעמיתך... לא תונו איש את אהו

"when you sell something to

your friend... don't cheat your

This driver, however, didn't excel in *yiras shamayim*. He would listen to the radio and speak *nivul peh* and *lashon hara*. After some days with this arrangement, the *yungerman* decided that his spirituality was too important, so he told the driver he won't continue.

He returned to traveling on the busses. In the meanwhile, he was contemplating quitting his job, so he wouldn't need to endure the traveling any longer.

One morning, he woke up late and took a later bus than usual, from Beitar to Yerushalayim. When he got off the bus, he saw that another *yungerman* got off together with him. He also noticed that this *yungerman* was waiting at the same bus stop as him. They began speaking, and discovered that they were both taking this long route to Ramot, every day.

"We must find another solution," they simultaneously concluded.

"I used to have a ride, but the driver insisted on listening to the radio, so I dropped that plan."

"I have a driver's license," said the other, "and I can drive us to work. The problem is I don't have a car. Perhaps, we can rent a car together?"

"We can do even better than that," said the *yungerman*. "My father has a car he doesn't use in the morning. He will let us take it. I don't have a driver's license, but you can drive the car."

The arrangement worked out terrifically for both of them. It was also cheaper, because they only needed to pay for the gasoline.

The moral of the story: One should always place *yiras Shamayim* on the top of his priorities and one never loses out from keeping Hashem's mitzvos.

brother..." This is another kind of *אונאה*, cheating your fellow man in business.

Which sin is worse, to harm your fellow man with unkind words, or to cheat financially?

Reb Shimon bar Yochai teaches (*Bava Metziah* 58-59) *אונאת דברים*, to insult and to harm your fellow man with your words is worse than *אונאת ממון*, cheating and harming him financially....

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (*mitzvah* 338) writes, "It is proper for people to be cautious that their

words do not insult others, even indirectly. The Torah is very stringent with this prohibition⁵... For many people words hurt more than being cheated financially... One must also be cautious not to harm children with words — except for the times when it is needed for educational purposes. This also applies to one's own children and to all the people of his household. Those who deal softly with children, and do not cause them sorrow, will find life, *brachah* and *kavod* [honor]..."⁶

5. The Gemara (*Bava Metziah* 59) says, "Shaming someone is comparable to murdering him... Three people go to Gehinom and never leave: Someone who commits adultery, someone who embarrasses his friend in public, and someone who calls his friend with a derogatory nickname.... Those who embarrass others in public, lose their share in Olam HaBa... It is better to be thrown into a furnace than to embarrass your friend in public... One must be particularly cautious from *אונאת אשתו*, from offending his wife, because her tears come easily, so the punishment also comes quickly.... All sins get punished by messengers [angels] aside for *אונאת דברים* [which Hashem Himself punishes...]... All of the gates of *tefillah* are locked, but *שערי אונאה*, the gates of *ona'ah*, if someone insults his fellow man, and that person calls out to Hashem, the gates are opened and his *tefillah* go up to Hashem's holy throne...

6. Once, a child was making a lot of noise and running about the Chazon Ish's room, disturbing everyone present. One of the people

To steer clear from *אונאת דברים* one should get into the practice of speaking kindly to everyone. The Midrash on this week's *parashah* writes, "Rebbi made a *seudah* for his students and served soft tongue and hard tongue. The students chose the soft pieces. Rebbi said, 'My children, also when you speak... choose a soft tongue.'"

The *Yerei'im* teaches, "Just as there is *onaas devarim* with words, there is *onaah* with facial expressions." When you look at someone, that person can perceive whether you respect him or are condescending. He knows whether you love him or hate him, and so on. As the saying goes, *כי באפם דרגו איש*, it's possible to kill someone with

your nose, if you turn your nose in a derogatory manner towards a fellow man.

Therefore one should be cautious to always think positive about others, and then you will not shame or harm them. You won't even show them an ugly face, which can hurt so much, and is also a form of *אונאת דברים*.

Reb Avraham Fisher *shlita* told me that as a child, he was once playing with the cats outside Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhill's home. The Rebbe came out of his house and warned him to be careful not to hurt the cats.

This is an example of the Rebbe's concern not to hurt anyone or anything — not even the cats. We should also acquire this sensitivity, and be

present told the child, "If you don't stop, I will tell your *rebbe* in cheder." The Chazon Ish told him that he shouldn't have said that to the child. "A child is distressed when you say such things, and it is transgressing *לא תונו* איש את עמיתו, the prohibition against saying harsh, unkind words to one's fellow man."

aware not to harm anyone
with words.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil ז'ל had an open-door policy where everyone was welcome. One of his steady guests was Reb Yaakov, a tall, very overweight, ignorant Yid, who also had a terrible odor. He wasn't welcome anywhere—he wasn't even permitted to use the local *mikvehs* because of the way he smelled. But he was welcome at Rebbe Shlomke's. Once, while World War II was raging, Rebbe Shlomke said, "If the people

of Yerushalayim would permit Reb Yaakov to use the *mikveh*, the Yidden in Europe wouldn't suffer so much."

This is as the *Sefer HaChinuch* writes, "It is impossible to list every type of embarrassment and affront one should be careful from, so everyone should be careful as they understand. Hashem knows every step of man... Chazal gave us several examples [of *onaas devarim*] so we can understand just how careful we should be." ⁷

7. The only way you could tell that Reb Shlomke was the *baal habayis* of his home was that when someone came in, he would ask them whether they wanted bread or jam.

Once, an unstable person came to Rebbe Shlomke's place, and Rebbe Shlomke, as usual, offered him bread and jam. The slightly deranged man retorted, "You can eat bread and jam! I want pita with eggs."

That was perhaps the only time Rebbe Shlomke went to the grocery store. He bought pita and eggs, and fried them for his guest. After the man finished his meal, he asked, "And what about the jam?"

Rebbe Shlomke brought out the jam, and asked him how much he wanted.

"The entire jar," the man replied, and Rebbe Shlomke gave it to him.

There was a *bachur* from Chevron who slept in Rebbe Shlomke's home. He asked the Rebbe to wake him up at six in the morning.

"I can't do that," the Rebbe said.

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak Weiss *zt'l* (the Rav of Yerushalayim, author of *Minchas Yitzchak*) was married three times. This is his inspirational story, as he himself related:

When he was young, a *shidduch* was suggested for him. Since the girl and her family lived far away and it was hard for the *Minchas Yitzchak's* parents to travel there, they sent a *shaliach* to check out the girl and her family to determine whether the girl was a fitting match for their son. The *shaliach* returned and said that it was a

fine match, and Reb Yaakov Yitzchak was engaged from the distance.

As the wedding date drew near, the Weiss's traveled to the *kallah's* hometown for the *chasunah*. When Reb Yaakov Yitzchak's mother saw the *kallah* for the first time, she was very disappointed. It wasn't a proper match for her son at all. She wanted to terminate the *shidduch*. According to halachah it was permissible (because the *shaliach* was sent to make a fitting *shidduch*, but this wasn't a *fitting shidduch*) but

The *bachur* woke up at six o'clock, and saw that the Rebbe was already sitting at his table, learning Torah.

The following night, the *bachur* asked Rebbe Shlomke once again, to awaken him at six in the morning.

"I can't do that," Rebbe Shlomke replied.

Again, the *bachur* awoke at six, and saw that Rebbe Shlomke was already awake.

That night the *bachur* asked Rebbe Shlomke why he doesn't awaken him, since he sees that the Rebbe is awake anyway at that time.

Rebbe Shlomke handed him some money and said, "Buy yourself an alarm clock if you want, but I can't wake you. Upon awakening in the morning, people feel uncomfortable. Even if one wants to wake up early, he feels uneasy the moment when he awakens. I don't want to cause another Yid distress, even for a short moment."

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak said, "Perhaps with time I will divorce her. But right now, I don't want to embarrass her."

have children from either of them. His only child is Reb Berish, born to the woman he didn't want to shame.

They were married and had one son, called Reb Berish. His wife was killed in a war. Reb Yaakov Yitzchak remarried the daughter of the Rav of Vasloy zy'a. Afterwards, he married the daughter of the Imrei Chaim of Viznitz zy'a, but he didn't

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak testified, "Doctors told me that it was impossible for me to bear children. Berish was a miracle. I'm certain that I merited this child as a reward for not embarrassing a Jewish girl."⁸

8. Reb Yaakov Yitzchak (the Minchas Yitzchak, the Rav of Yerushalayim, *zt'l*) would speak *halachah* and *drush* at his *shalosh seudos* meal, but he didn't speak *mussar*. Someone requested that he speak *mussar* at *shalosh seudos*. He humbly replied, "Who am I to give *mussar*?"

Nevertheless, the following week, at *shalash seudos*, he repeated a *mashal* from the *Chovas HaLevavos* (*Shaar HaTeshuvah* 10) and after that, at several occasions, he would repeat this *mashal*.

The *Chovas HaLevavos* writes, "Don't think, 'For so many years, I ignored my obligations to serve Hashem. Most of my life has passed. How can I do *teshuvah* now? Hashem certainly won't accept my *teshuvah*.' Rather, tell yourself the prophecy that was told to Yechezkel HaNavi on this subject (*Yechezkel* 18:21)...For Hashem told Yechezkel, 'All of his sins won't be remembered... Do I want that a *rasha* should die?... Behold I want that he should do *teshuvah* and live...'

"The early scholars compare someone who does *teshuvah* at the end of his life to someone who has many silver coins and he must cross over a large river. So he threw all his coins into the river, hoping that would stop the river, so he could cross it. He threw all his coins in at once, except for one, but the coins couldn't stop the deep river. He took this last coin and

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer's friend — a great scholar in his own right — fell ill, and Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer went to visit him. Rebbe Pinchas had him promise that after his demise he would come back down to this world to tell him what happened to him in heaven.

After his friend's demise, he appeared to Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer and said, "Throughout my lifetime, I never caused pain or distress to anyone. As a reward, it was decreed that I would die without any pain. When my soul left my body, I didn't realize that I was dying. I heard a doctor tell me that to recover from my illness, I must sleep deeply for a very long time. I didn't realize that this sleep was my death. Then

I heard the doctor say, "Place him on the floor, because he needs to warm up." I was placed on the floor, as is done to the dead, but I still thought that I was alive. Afterwards, the doctor told people to take me outdoors to get some air. This was actually the funeral. Until I was buried I didn't know that I had died. It was a perfectly painless and sorrow-free death. After I was buried in the ground, the angels came. They wanted to punish me because 'there is no tzaddik in the world, who never sinned,' and I also have my share of iniquities. However, since I never hurt another Yid, angels of mercy came, and brought me straight to Gan Eden."

The generous deeds of *tzedakah* that Rebbe Shayale

paid a sailor to bring him by boat across the river. He felt he didn't lose anything. He designated these coins to cross the river, which he did.

"A *baal teshuvah*, who spent most of his life doing deeds other than *avodas Hashem*, is the same. When he does *teshuvah* at the end of his life, Hashem will forgive all his bad sins of his life. As it states (*Yechezkel* 18:22) 'All his sins won't be remembered...'"

Kerestirer was involved in are well known. Much money passed through his hands, but he didn't take any of the money for himself. He gave it all to the needy.

Once he was traveling to Tzanz, to be at the Tzanzer Rebbe's grave on the 25th of Nisan. Rebbe Shayale was weak (it was only a few days before he was *niftar*) and his *gaba'im* wanted to rent a car for Rebbe Shayale, so he could travel in greater comfort. He refused, saying, "It's a shame to use Yiddishe *gelt* for that."

In Tzanz, there were many people at the Tzanzer Rav's *kever*, and someone accidentally stepped on Rebbe Shayela's foot. Rebbe Shayale was in great pain, and the *gaba'im* wanted to order a car for the ride back, but once again Rebbe Shayela said, "It's a shame to waste Yiddishe *gelt* on that." And he traveled back in a horse and buggy suffering immense pain.

Back in Kerestir he was very weak. He said, "Don't call a doctor for me because it won't help." He said that in Tzanz, he got an *ayin hara*. "Other Rebbe's and rabbanim were there, and they were jealous when they saw my entourage and people pushing to get close to me." Their *ayin hara* caused him to become weaker.

Rebbe Shayela added, "Last year in Tzanz, there was also a lot of pushing around us, and I got an *ayin hara* then too, but we had trouble entering Hungary, and that annulled the *ayin hara*." The border police Rebbe Shayela's entourage and caught several of them carrying money illegally over the border. Rebbe Shayela's distress during that episode saved him from the *ayin hara*.

See how much one gains from *agmus nefesh*, distress. It cures from an *ayin hara*, and it cures from many other illnesses and problems as well. We must be very cautious not insult or hurt our fellow man in any way.

Ono'as devarim is a very severe sin. On the other hand, if we are on the receiving end of hurtful words, recognize that we gain so much from it. All we have to do is accept the distress with *emunah* that it is all for our benefit.⁹

A rav came to the *tish* of Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l*. This was his first time at Rebbe Shlomke's *tish*, and he wanted to see what it was like.

Many poor and bitter people ate at Rebbe Shlomke's table. One pauper complained that he always gets the smallest portion of cholent, because others take a lot of cholent before him. Rebbe Shlomke

wanted to appease this pauper, so he announced that on this Shabbos, this pauper would take his portion first.

The pot of cholent was placed before him, and the pauper began filling his plate with the cholent. When one dish was filled, he began filling another dish, so he could eat even more. The other paupers were upset, and they rebuked him with harsh words, demanding that he pass on the pot to them. He ignored them, and continued filling up his plates. They rebuked him again, and then the pauper spit into the pot, making the cholent inedible for everyone.

9. Rebbe Shayela Kerestirer *zt'l* excelled in the mitzvah *hachnasas orchim*.

It states (*Breishis* 4:3-4), וישע ה' אל הבל ואל מנחתו ואל קין ואל מנחתו לא שעה, Rebbe Shayale explained, וישע means שעה, hour. אל הבל וישע ה' means there is a שעה, a time, for הבל פיהם, for Torah and *tefillah*. One has set times when he studies Torah and when he davens, and it isn't necessary the entire day. However, ואל קין, which קייען in Yiddish means chewing, לא שעה, there is no designated time. One can't say to a hungry person, "I have a certain time when I do *hachnasas orchim*, and that time passed, so I can't help you now." Rather, for קין to give food for Yidden, לא שעה, be available 24 hours a day to help them.

The rav watched this episode, and was totally disgusted. With chutzpah, he stood up and he said to Rebbe Shlomke, “Is this a *tish*? We didn’t hear any *divrei Torah*. All we saw was bad *middos*.”

Calmly, Rebbe Shlomke replied, “We can learn a lot from this *tish*. Here we learn that even when matters aren’t going the way you want, we accept it and remain silent. We let matters pass.”

Hashgachah Pratis

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* would say, “If a *hashgachah pratis* story happened to you, tell it to others! Let people know Hashem’s wonders.”

On this note, we share a *hashgachah pratis* story. The purpose of telling this story is to praise Hashem, to recognize Him, and to teach ourselves to notice *hashgachah pratis* in our lives.

There was a wealthy person in Bnei Brak, who lived on the

third floor of an apartment building. He was getting older, and it was becoming hard for him to march up three flights of stairs each time he came home, so he had an elevator built in his building. He made an agreement with the neighbors that they don’t have to pay for the elevator, but if the elevator breaks down, everyone in the building would have to chip in to pay for fixing it (because although they didn’t ask for an elevator, they were certainly benefiting from it).

Once, the buttons that operate the elevator doors broke. An elevator technician fixed it, and everyone in the building paid their share — a significant amount of money.

, The wealthy person was *niftar* a year ago. A couple of months after his *peterih*, the elevator broke down, again. This time the doors opened and closed, but the elevator wouldn’t move from its place. It seemed that only

the doors worked, everything else was broken.

The neighbors in the building understood it would cost a lot of money to fix it. Since no one in the building really needed the elevator (the one who needed it wasn't living anymore), they decided that the elevator would remain out of order for the meantime.

The wealthy man's first *yahrtzeit* was approaching, and his family planned to have the *yahrtzeit* meal in his old apartment. The wealthy man's son felt that since many guests would be coming, including rabbanim and dignitaries, it would be proper to fix the elevator. He ordered a mechanic to look at the elevator.

The mechanic opened the door and found a child inside! A few hours earlier, this child was playing with the elevator's buttons, opening and closing the doors, when suddenly the doors closed and wouldn't open again. The

child shouted and cried, but no one heard him. The mechanic came just in time to save the child.

(The mechanic never fixed the elevator, because when the wealthy man's son heard the outrageous amount it would cost to fix it, he decided to forgo fixing it for the meanwhile. As it turned out, the mechanic came primarily to save the child and to put a lock on the elevator so such a tragedy shouldn't happen again.)

When we hear this story, our hearts shout *מה רבו מעשך ה'*, "How great are you ways, Hashem!"

Telling and recognizing *hashgachah pratis* doesn't necessarily mean we will improve our ways. One can see Hashem's wonders, recognize His hand, and yet remain the same as before.

In *parashas Lech Lechah*, the Torah tells the story of how Avraham won a war against

four mighty kings and strong armies. Chazal say Avraham threw earth at them, and the earth miraculously turned into arrows, which destroyed their armies.

The people of Sedom witnessed this miracle, but in *parashas* וירא we still find them sinning and acting corruptly. Reb Eliyahu Lopian ז"ל learned from this that it isn't sufficient to see miracles. One can see great wonders and still remain the same, still stay corrupt.

The solution is to bring the awareness from the mind to the heart. As Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz ז"ל taught, from והשיבות אל לבבך וידעת היום (from knowing in your heart until bringing it to your heart) is a greater distance than heaven and earth.

Shabbos

Hashem told Moshe, "I have a good gift in My treasury כבית (כני) ¹⁰ It's called Shabbos. I want to give it to the Jewish people. Go and let them know." (*Shabbos* 10).

The Chidushei HaRim says that Moshe Rabbeinu is still fulfilling Hashem's decree, today. He didn't tell us only once about the greatness of Shabbos. Each week before the onset of Shabbos, Moshe speaks to every Yid's *neshamah* and says, "Hashem told me to tell you that Shabbos is coming. Hashem is giving you the great gift of Shabbos."

Many people feel uplifted on Friday when Shabbos comes. The Chidushei HaRim explains that this is because they are receiving Moshe Rabbeinu's message. The Chidushei HaRim writes,

10. Tzaddikim explain that Hashem didn't take Shabbos out of His treasury and give it to us. Rather, every Shabbos, Hashem elevates us and brings us into His treasury in heaven to enjoy the Shabbos there.

"Even if a person is alone in a room, he will experience the holiness of Shabbos when it arrives," because of Moshe Rabbeinu's weekly announcement.

Shabbos has two components: there are the halachos of Shabbos, and there is the joy and *kedushah* of Hashem. Both parts of Shabbos are essential. Some people only keep its laws. They would never consider moving something *muktzah*, cooking, carrying, etc. They should be praised for this. However, if they don't experience the joy of Shabbos, something is missing. It is important to tap into the spirituality of Shabbos (to the best of our ability). Those who do tap into the spirit of Shabbos experience Gan Eden every Shabbos! When they daven and study Torah on Shabbos,¹¹ and during the

Shabbos meals, they feel inspired and invigorated, and rejoice with the holy, internal spirit of Shabbos.

In the Shabbos *zemiro*s we say, *כל מקדש שבת כראוי לו, כל שומר שבת כדת מחללו שכרו הרבה מאוד*. Rebbe Henoch of Alexander *zy'a* said that this song is referring to the two levels of Shabbos observance. There are the fortunate people who keep Shabbos *לו כראוי*, as is fitting and proper. These people connect with the joy and spirit of Shabbos. And there are others who keep it *כדת מחללו* "with caution not to desecrate it." Rebbe Henoch of Alexander notes that the words *שכרו הרבה מאוד*, "his reward is very great" is stated specifically for those who keep the Shabbos *כדת מחללו* "with caution not to desecrate it." It isn't written for those, who in addition to the keeping of the laws, merit

11. The Chazon Ish said, "If a non-Jew would know the enjoyment of learning a *daf* Gemara before *Shacharis* on Shabbos morning, he would convert just to have the opportunity to experience it."

experiencing the spirituality of Shabbos (שַׁבָּת *שַׁבָּת*). Why is that? Rebbe Henoch explains that the *zemiro* is encouraging people to keep Shabbos. Those who keep the Shabbos together with the spirit of Shabbos don't need encouragement. They are motivated to keep the Shabbos because they know just how beautiful, pleasurable, and joyous Shabbos is. But there are people who haven't yet tapped into the great joy that Shabbos supplies. The song encourages them and makes them aware that a great reward awaits them.

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover *zy'a* told the following *mashal*:

Someone wanted to invite a very important person, whom he admired and revered, to his home. In honor of this guest, he ordered the best foods, hired professional musicians and comedians... Increased the lighting... Everything was perfect... but he forgot to invite the guest of honor.

Rebbe Moshe Leib said that this is what occurs to people on Shabbos. People prepare for Shabbos by cleaning their homes, cooking good foods, wearing expensive clothes, lighting the Shabbos candles; everything is perfect and ready, only they forget to invite the Shabbos itself.

When Shabbos comes, they focus on the food and forget to rejoice with the holy guest, with Shabbos.

Reb Moshe Leib explains that this is the meaning of the *pasuk*, [ענינו] וקראת לשבת. Call Shabbos. Invite Shabbos as well. Don't forget the guest of honor.

Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* said he knew a Yerushalmi Yid who said the following *tefillah*: "Ribono Shel Olam, You gave me challos for *lechem mishnah*, wine for Kiddush and *Havdalah*, and all other things I need for Shabbos. Now I request, give me Shabbos for Shabbos." He prayed to also experience the

joy, the sweetness, and the holiness of the Shabbos. He didn't want to remain solely with the food. "Please give me the Shabbos" as well. When a person does a mitzvah he can, at times, merit that a tzaddik (who is presently in heaven and had excelled in performing this mitzvah during his lifetime) will come and become attached to his soul, to help him perform the mitzvah.

When a person wants to do a mitzvah, he needs help to succeed. Sometimes, he can merit that a *neshamah* who excelled in this mitzvah will come to him, to help him perform the mitzvah in the best way.

For example, the Midrash Shmuel (Reb Shmuel Azida *zt'l*) a student of the Arizal, once came to the Arizal, and the Arizal stood up for him. The Arizal never did that before. Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* asked the Arizal why he stood up for this student. The Arizal

replied, "I didn't stand up for him. I stood up for the Tana Reb Pinchas ben Yair who came in together with him. He did a good deed today, and merited a connection with Reb Pinchas ben Yair."

Intrigued, Reb Chaim Vital asked the Midrash Shmuel for an explanation. The Midrash Shmuel told him that early that morning, he was walking to shul for *Shacharis*, when heard cries coming from one of the houses. He went to see what happened, and found a distraught family that was robbed at night. The thieves took away their money and their clothing. The Midrash Shmuel saw that the head of the household didn't have anything left to wear, so he gave him his clothes.

Reb Chaim Vital repeated what he heard from the Midrash Shmuel to the Arizal. The Arizal concurred and explained, "Reb Pinchas ben Yair excelled in the mitzvah of *pidyon shvuyim* and in helping the poor. Therefore, when the

Midrash Shmuel did his mitzvah of *tzedakah*, Reb Pinchas ben Yair came to him from heaven."

Based on these ideas, the Chidushei HaRim teaches: Hashem keeps Shabbos, as it says, *וביום השביעי שבת וינפש*, "On the seventh day, Hashem rested." When one keeps Shabbos, he can merit that Hashem Himself will come to the person to help him keep Shabbos. It will not only be a *Tana* coming to him; it will be Hashem Himself. This explains the great joy and spiritual elation that people can experience on Shabbos.

The Midrash (*Beshalach* 25) says that when one is *shomer* Shabbos, "Even if Hashem makes a *gezeirah* he is able to annul it." In the merit of keeping Shabbos, one's *tefillos* are answered. Even if Hashem decreed (some form of tragedy) the *shomer* Shabbos Yid can change the decree with his prayers.

This is alluded to in the

above mentioned *zemer*, כל מקדש שביעי... שכרו הרבה מאוד על פי פעלו. The Beis Aharon zy'a explains (in the name of Rebbe Mordechai of Kremnitz zy'a) על פי, whatever this person will pray for, פעלו, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give him, in the merit of his Shabbos observance.

Tefillah

The Megaleh Amukos *zt'l* let the people of Krakow know that he was leaving his post as chief rav of Krakow. He didn't tell them the reason he decided to leave. The community begged him to remain, but he wouldn't be persuaded.

When the day he planned to leave arrived, he told the community that he changed his mind. The people of Krakow were overjoyed, and now even more curious. They asked, "Why did you want to leave, and what made you change your mind?"

The Megaleh Amukos replied, "I still won't tell you the reason I planned to leave, but

I will tell you why I decided to stay.

“In our city there’s a poor peddler. His wife bakes fresh breads, and he sells them on the roadside to the passersby. A wealthy person recognized the pauper and said, ‘You’re a *talmid chacham*, not to mention that you come from a very prestigious family. You shouldn’t be working like this.’
 “This is what I do for a living.’

“But it isn’t right. I will support you. You can remain in the *beis medresh* studying Torah, and I will give you money...’

“The peddler agreed. This arrangement went on for a couple of months.

“One day, the wealthy man saw the pauper was back on the street, selling breads.

“What happened? We have an agreement!’

“I decided to back out of the deal. I want to earn a living selling breads, as before.’

“But a deal is a deal. You can’t back out without a ruling from *beis din*.’

“Yesterday they came to my *beis din* with this most unusual *din Torah*: The wealthy person wants to continue supporting his friend, but the poor peddler doesn’t want to accept the money anymore.

“I asked the peddler why he wants to renege on the agreement and he explained, ‘Every day my wife and I pray that the dough should rise well and the breads should taste good. We pray that I should find dry firewood (since wet wood smokes and ruins the breads). We daven that the customers should and enjoy the breads so they will want to buy more. In short, as a peddler, our entire day revolves around our *tefillos*...
 But ever since we received a weekly stipend we almost stopped davening, because we didn’t have any worries. We decided to go back to our old lifestyle, so we can retain our

constant connection with Hashem ..." remain here. I want to be near such people."¹²

The Megaleh Amukos finished, "When I heard that there are people like that living in Krakow, I decided to A similar story happened with Rebbe Avraham Dov of Avuritch, the Bas Ayin *zt'l*. He arrived in Eretz Yisrael

12. A princess became ill, and doctors diagnosed her problem as depression. To cure her, the king had musicians play music near her bed, and he hired clowns to come and jest, but she wasn't interested. She remained sad.

A wise man told the king, "The princess will become happy when she wears the clothing of a very happy person. Find someone who is always happy, and who has no worries, and borrow his clothing. She will wear them and she will be cured."

The king sent his servants to find someone who is always happy. The servants figured they should go to the wealthy part of town, because "Who is more happy than the wealthy? What worries could they possibly have?" They started their search at the home of the wealthiest person in the kingdom, but this wealthy man told them, "I'm sorry, and I know that this might surprise you, but I'm not always happy. In fact, I'm always worried that I shouldn't lose my assets due to theft, fire, etc."

They went to the other wealthy people, and they all replied in the same manner. They weren't always happy.

They went to musicians, because their music should make them happy, they went to doctors, because healing people is a joyous deed, but whoever they spoke to had some worry. No one was worry-free.

They were ready to head back to the palace, to tell the king that they couldn't find a happy person. En route to the palace, they passed the poor section of town. They were disgusted by the filth of the slum, and said to each other, "We certainly won't find a happy person here."

There was one tiny house, made from scraps of wood and cardboard, shabbier than all the rest. It was on the verge of collapsing. Surprisingly, happy music was coming from there. They could also hear joyous

around Elul time, and he docked in the north of Eretz Yisrael. His plan was to stay in Tzefas until after the *yomim tovim*, and then to move to Yerushalayim. On Chol HaMoed Succos, he changed his mind and decided to remain in Tzfas.

This change of plans occurred when he heard a woman tell

her son, "On Simchas Torah we will *bench geshem* and I'm certain that Hashem will listen to the *tefillos*. Go up to the roof and bring the mattresses down, so they won't get ruined in the rain."

The Bas Ayin said that he chose to remain in Tzefas, to be among people who believed so faithfully in *tefillah*.¹³

conversations coming from within the house. Is it possible that happy people live here?

They knocked, and the host joyously invited them in. They found a family seated around the table, their faces shining with contentment. The servants asked, "Are you always so happy?"

"Yes. We are always happy with our lot. If we need something, we trust that Hashem will help us, and we pray to Him. We are never worried..."

"The king's daughter is sick. A wise man advised that if she wears the clothes of a happy person she will be cured. Please, lend us one of your garments." The head of the family said, "It would be our honor to give clothing to the king's daughter, but we don't have any clothes other than the ones we're wearing..."

This story reminds us מרבה נכסים מרבה דאגה, "The more assets, the more worries." Wealth and a nice home isn't a guarantee for happiness. *Tefillah* and *bitachon* will.

13. A Yid from Chaifa borrowed two hundred shekels. On the day the debt was due, he didn't have any cash. He would have to go to a cash machine to take out money, but he didn't want to because of *shmiras einayim*, and also because the *shlep* and effort involved. So after *Minchah*, he prayed a short *tefillah* that Hashem should give him the two hundred shekel some other way – knowing that Hashem can do anything – and then he went into a side room, put his hat on the table and put his head down to

rest for five minutes. When he woke up there was a two hundred shekel bill in the ribbon of his hat. Being that the person who loaned him the money was also in the beis medresh, he was able to pay back the debt immediately. But he wanted to know who placed the money there. The shul is under surveillance, so he asked the *gabai* to show him the footage. He saw a stranger enter the beis medresh — someone he never saw before — and watched him place the two hundred shekel bill in his hat, apparently with a desire to give *mattan beseser*.

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