

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראלי בן מרדכי ת.ג.צ.ב.ה.

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Vayakheil - HaChodesh



לזכות רפואה שלמה,
מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שלומית
יעקב משה בן דברה שירה,
אברהם יהודה בן שרה רבבה

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Torah Wellsprings

Vayakheil - HaChodesh

This week's *parashah* discusses the one hundred *adanim*, the silver foundations of the Mishkan. As it states in the passuk (38:27), *וַיְהִי מֵאָה כֹּנֶר הַכְּסֵף לְצַקְתָּה אַתָּה אֲרֹנִי הַקְדָּשָׁה... מֵאָה אֲדָנִים*, "The one hundred *kikar* of silver should be used to make the holy *adanim* – one hundred *adanim*..."

The Baal HaTurim writes, *כִּנְגּוֹד תָּקֻנוּ ק' בְּרָכוֹת בְּכָל יוֹם*, "The chachamim established one hundred brachos every day corresponding to the one hundred *adanim* that there were in the mishkan."

The Torah is eternal, applicable in every generation. The Chidushei

HaRim zt'l says that the Mishkan in our generation is, potentially, every single Yid. In the midbar, Hashem resided in the Mishkan, and today Hashem resides among the Yidden. The original Mishkan had one hundred *adanim* as its foundation. The foundations of today's Mishkan are the one hundred daily *brachos* that we say. They are called *אדנים* because through them we become aware that Hashem is the *אדון*, the Master of the world.¹

Protection and Blessings

The Tur (Orach Chaim 46) writes, "Every day, one

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

hundred people of Bnei Yisrael were dying, and they didn't know why this was happening. Dovid HaMelech investigated and understood through *ruach hakodesh*, that Klal Yisrael should say one hundred *brachos* every day. Therefore, the *chachamim* established the *birchas hashachar* [the *brachos* said in the morning at the beginning of the *tefillah*]... to fill the daily quota of one hundred *brachos*..."

The Prishah explains, "Dovid Hamelech instituted that we say one hundred *brachos* every day to stop the deaths... Dovid taught the secret of reciting one hundred *brachos* to the Sanhedrin, so that they should institute *brachos* as they see fit. They established the *brachos* with their wisdom..."

How does the recitation *brachos* stop death?

The Levush explains that the plague came due to a lack of gratitude that

the yidden displayed towards Hashem's kindness. They were taking for granted all the abundant kindness that Hashem constantly showers upon His world. Dovid HaMelech understood that this was the source of the plague; \, a lack of expressing gratitude. The solution was to praise Hashem. It proved to be correct and effective, because "from the time Dovid made this *takanah*, the plague ceased."

We are living in a time when once again, there is a *mageifah*, a plague, in the world. Perhaps it hasn't reached the severity to be called a *mageifah*, nevertheless, it is a source of concern, *r"l*. Perhaps, now too, the solution is to praise Hashem with one hundred *brachos* each day. The *sefarim* write that just as one hundred daily *brachos* saved us in the past, they continue to grant protection in all generations.

Additionally, we must train ourselves to get into

the habit of recognizing Hashem's kindness. We should focus on all the good that is bestowed upon us and praise Hashem with our brachos, and also with our own words. Through this practice, we will attain kindness from Above.

Tzaddikim taught us that when we thank Hashem for the goodness He bestows upon us, Hashem says, "Do you think *this* is good? I'll show you what good is!" and Hashem sends much more kindness his way.

However, when one complains about his life, Hashem says, "Do you think *this* is bad? I'll show you what bad is", chas veshalom.

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

When two people don't get along with each other, *chalilah*, the problem can

often easily be resolved when one of them decides to greet his fellow man with happiness and with friendship. It is hard to bear hard feelings toward someone kind to you. Dovid HaMelech realized with his *ruach hakodesh* that there's a need to appease Hashem, *keviyachol*, to improve the 'relationship', to stop the deaths. He realized that the *brachos bnei yisroel* will recite have the power to turn the situation around. When we praise Hashem joyously and thank Him for *everything* He does for us, His love will once again be openly revealed.

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

Compare this to a person who has permission to take whatever he wants from the king's treasury.

The king also gave him the keys to open the treasury. When the man arrived and found the treasury locked, he stands outside and cries. Why doesn't he open the doors? He has the keys! He can receive so much: he just needs to open the doors!

A person who doesn't take advantage of the one hundred daily *brachos* is acting in the same way.

The *Zohar* writes, "When a soul is about to descend to this world, Hashem makes it swear that it will keep the mitzvos and do Hashem's will, and Hashem gives the soul one hundred keys..." The *Zohar* explains that the keys are the one hundred *brachos* that we say daily. These keys open the doors for all blessings.

The *Zohar* adds, "When a Yid recites a *brachah*, there are no doors or angels that will stop it. They proclaim, 'This is a gift for the King!' And the *brachah* brings blessings."

Hints to the 100 *Brachos*

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

It also states, 'לְךָ... וְאָבָרְכָךְ... אַגְדָּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וְהִיָּה בָרָכָה' "Go...and I will bless you..." The *Zohar* (vol.1, 76:) notes that 'לְךָ' is *gematriya* one hundred. By reciting one hundred *brachos*, 'וְהִיָּה בָרָכָה', one merits receiving Hashem's *brachos*.

It is written (*Tehillim* 128:4), 'הֲנֵה כִּי יָבֹרֵךְ נָבָר' "So will be a man blessed ..." The *Sefer HaManhig* teaches that 'כִּי כִּן' is *gematriya* one hundred, because by reciting one hundred *brachos* daily, he is blessed with all types of blessings.

The Torah lists ninety-eight curses for those who transgress the Torah, and the Torah adds another two. As it states (*Devarim* 28:61), "...גַם כֹּל חֲלֵי וְכֹל מַכָּה" "Also, (1) all diseases and (2) all plagues, [which are not stated in the Torah], Hashem

will bring them up onto you, until you are destroyed]." Together, there are one hundred curses. The one hundred brachos nullify these one hundred curses. The Baal HaTurim writes, "The *tagin* on the *kuf* of (*Devarim* 6:7) וּבְקָוֶת, implies that when one awakens in the morning, he should say one hundred *brachos* [פ' is *gematriya* one hundred and מ' means 'when you wake up']. And then he will be saved from the ninety-eight curses, plus two others, inferred in the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 28:61), נִמְכַר חֲלֵי... וְכֹל מִכְהָה...."

The Levush writes, "This is the meaning of the *pasuk*... מה ר' אלקי שואל מך, 'What does Hashem ask from you?' Chazal say מאה, don't read it מה, read it מאה, that Hashem is asking for one hundred *brachos*..."

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

So, we see the wonderful benefits that can be gained by reciting one hundred *brachos* daily.² They rouse

2. Those who say their *brachos* absentmindedly are often asking themselves, and they ask others, "Did I make the *brachah*? I don't remember. Did you hear me say a *brachach*?"

However, those who say their *brachos* with *kavanah* don't have this problem. They remember whether they made a *brachah* or not, because each *brachah* is said properly.

When one says *Viduy Maasros* in the Beis HaMikdash, one of the phrases is, לא שכחתי, "I didn't forget" (*Devarim* 26:13). Rashi explains, ולא שכחתי מלברך "I didn't forget to bless You..." *Bederech tzachus*, we can explain that by *Viduy Maasros* one says, "I say *brachos* properly,

Hashem's love to us, they open up His treasury, they remove the one hundred curses, they help us remember Hashem, and so much more. It was Dovid HaMelech's insight, and they help us today, just as they did in Dovid HaMelech's time.³

How to Say the *Brachos*

Now that we've seen the importance of saying

one hundred *brachos* each day, it is time to study how one should recite a *brachah*.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 47.) says, לא יזרוק ברכה מפיו "One mustn't throw the *brachah* out of his mouth." Rashi explains that when one rushes through the *brachah*, it appears that he wants to get it over with. Instead, he should say the *brachah* serenely, without rushing to finish it.⁴

and therefore, I don't forget and I don't have any doubts afterwards whether I said the *brachah* or not."

3. Rebbe Uri (the *Saraf*) of Strelisk zy'a said: בָּרוּךְ שָׁאַמֵּר, "When one says a *brachah*," וְהִיא הָעוֹלָם, "this creates worlds."

Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech zy'a of Dinev (*Derech Pikudeicha* mitzvah 30, *machshavah* 3) writes, "The entire creation with everything in it was created with Hashem's name. Therefore, when one says Hashem's name he is creating something new, and the creation is according to the *tefillah* he is saying that time." For example, if he is saying, בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ר' רֹפֵא הָלִי עִמוֹ יִשְׁרָאֵל, this creates *refuah*. It's a new creation, a need that is filled with his *brachah*.

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

"Why not?" "It is written in halachah that, 'One should say the words of *Pesukei Dezimrah* like someone who is counting money' (*Darkei Moshe* 51). I saw how quickly you davened this morning. If

The Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah (*HaAshmuros* 2) writes, "The wisest of all men [Shlomo HaMelech]... with his brilliant words tells us (*Koheles* 5:1), **אל תבהל את פיך ולבך אל ת מהר להוציא לפנֵי האלקים** 'Don't be hasty and impulsive with your mouth and heart to say something before Hashem...' Therefore, beloved brothers and friends, before you [say a *brachah*] think about before Whom you are speaking."

"Remember this rule for every *brachah*: When you say, **ברוך אתה**, 'Blessed are You' imagine that Hashem is before you and you are speaking directly to Him. That is the translation of **ברוך אתה**. Think this every time you speak before Hashem. Don't say any prayer by rote, *chas veshalom*. You are speaking directly to Hashem, whose presence fills the world.

"When a person doesn't realize that he is speaking to Hashem, every wise person understands that it is as though he didn't say the *brachah*. He will be punished severely because he didn't keep Chazal's dictum to say the *brachah*. [Since he didn't say it properly, and it is like he didn't say it.] Furthermore, he is withholding from Hashem His pleasure..."

There's a *machlokes* in the *Yerushalmi* whether **אתה** is part of the *brachah*. Rav says that we should say **אתה** and Shmuel said that we say **ברוך ד' אלקינו מלך** "... 'Bless Hashem...' and omit **אתה**. The halachah is like Rav, and we say **אתה**. Thereby, we have a reminder in the *brachah* itself that we are speaking directly to Hashem, Who listens and enjoys our praises. It is essential to have this focus

you're going to count money in this manner, you're better off remaining home."

when you say *brachos* and praise and *daven* to Hashem.

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

When you say, תְּמִלָּה, contemplate that everything is led with *hashgachah pratis*, down to the smallest detail. As the Baal Shem Tov teaches: Even a piece of straw that falls off a wagon, where it falls, and the angle it falls, etc. is all planned by Hashem.

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

"That's correct."

"How are things for you in that world?"

"Extremely good!"

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

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

"What are you wearing on your head?"

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

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

and then he will merit Gan Eden."

These words of the Or Zarua teach us the mode we should say the *brachos*. Say them sweetly, in a pleasant voice. You will be greatly rewarded for this.

Brachos on Food

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

Shabbos HaChodesh

This Shabbos is the fourth of the four Shabbosim: Shabbos HaChodesh.

We say in *Ashrei* (*Tehillim* 145:12), להודיע לבני האם גבוריו, "To inform people of His strength."

The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* explains, להודיע לבני האדם גבוריו is referring to the greatness of the Jewish nation. להודיע, we must reveal, לבני אדם גבוריו, to the Jewish people, גבוריו, just how special they are.

When do we reveal to Yidden just how special and powerful they are? One primary time is when we read *parashas Hachodesh*.

Parashas HaChodesh teaches us that the Jewish nation, through its Beis Din, determines when it will be Rosh Chodesh and when there will be a leap year, and Hashem gives His consent. As the Midrash (*Shemos* 15:2) states, "The malachim ask Hakadosh

Baruch Hu, 'Master of the World. When will You make the *yomim tovim*...?' Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'I and you will agree with whatever the Jewish nation decides...' Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Bnei Yisrael, 'In the past, it was in My hands... From now on, it's in your hands. When you say yes, it will be yes, and when you say no, it will be no. Whatever you decide, *החודש הוּא לְכֶם*, the new month is up to you. And if you want to make a leap year, I will accede to your decision...'''

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that it isn't only Rosh Chodesh. "Everything was given over to us! Everything is in our hands! If a person knows this and discovers who he is and his potential, he wouldn't waste a moment."

For example, Klal Yisrael was granted the

power of *tefillah*. They can request their hearts' desires – for the greater public and the individual, for significant matters and trivial things – and their *tefillos* are answered. They can also draw down Hashem's kindness and bounty with their Torah study, mitzvos, and good deeds. We are much more influential than we give ourselves credit for. If a person recognized his strength and influence, he wouldn't waste a moment from Hashem's service.

Chodesh Nisan

Shulchan Aruch (429:2) states, "We don't say *tachanun* the entire month of Nisan." The Shlah Hakadosh (*Pesachim, Ner Mitzvah*, 7) explains, "It states *החודש הוּא לְכֶם רָאשׁ הַדָּשִׁים*. This means each day of the month of Nisan is like *רָאשׁ הַדָּשִׁים*. The entire month is Rosh Chodesh.⁵ Therefore,

5. The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* writes, "Don't think that it is only in

the Tur writes that...one doesn't fast during the month of Nisan..."⁶

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

"Motzei Shabbos,
Acharei, ורמ"ו,

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

"I received your letter
erev Shabbos close to

Shabbos, and you asked that I answer some of your questions regarding Pesach. That isn't a small request, because these [days before Pesach] are priceless days — each hour is like a day.⁷ Nevertheless, since you expressed your strong desire that I answer you, and you wrote that it would be your pleasure and your *simchas yom tov*, I took some time to write this letter..."

Nisan. It is also by the other months. Because when Rosh Chodesh is observed properly, the entire month becomes like Rosh Chodesh. As [the saying goes], רגופא בתר רישא אויל, the body follows the head... Therefore, it is proper for the wise to pay attention to Rosh Chodesh to serve Hashem properly on that day, for that will influence and make the entire month good. Even just one hour on Rosh Chodesh, when it is kept properly, the entire month will be good [and imbued with the holiness of Rosh Chodesh].

6. The *Mishnah Berurah* explains that we don't say *tachanun* for another reason. He writes, "The twelve *nesi'im* brought *korbanos* [on the first twelve days of Nisan] and the day one brings a *korban* is his *yom tov*. Then there's *erev Pesach*, and Pesach, and *isru chag* when we don't say *tachanun*. Since most of the month is holy, we therefore make the rest of the month holy [and don't say *tachanun* throughout Nisan]."

7. In the Avnei Nezer's words, אם כי הקשה לשאול כי ימים אלו יקרי הארץ, שעה ליום יחשב

Indeed, the days before Pesach are priceless, שעה ליום יחישב – each hour is as precious as a day. Fortunate are those who utilize them properly.

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

The Shem MiShmuel heard his father say that during Nisan he doesn't need to sleep due to the holiness of these days (*Avir HaRo'im* 299).

The Agra d'Kala (*Pikudei*) teaches (in the name of Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l*) that the first twelve days of Nisan represent the twelve months of the year. The first day represents Nisan, the second day Iyar, the third day Sivan, and so on. Tzaddikim were able to perceive during these days what would happen during

the year, in the corresponding months. Each year, the Chozeb of Lublin *zt'l* would write down what he perceived through his *ruach hakodesh* would happen that year. On the first day of Nisan, he wrote what would happen in Nisan. On the second day of Nisan, he wrote what would happen in Iyar, and so on. On the final year of his life, he wrote what would happen that year up to the month of Av. He didn't write about the remaining months of the year, because he was *niftar* in Av.

Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* (*Pri Tzaddik, HaChodesh* 6) writes, "The first day of the month is called ראש חודש, (the head of the month), and not תחילת חודש (the beginning of the month)." He explains that ראש, head, implies that the entire month is compressed within its first day, based on the principle, נופה בתר רישא, איזיל, the body follows the head. Rebbe Tzaddok

writes, "The holiness of the entire month is in its head, on Rosh Chodesh. One can feel the holiness of the *yom tov* that is in that month, on Rosh Chodesh." This means, tzaddikim can feel the *kedushah* of Pesach already from Rosh Chodesh Nisan.⁸

In 5747, I was at a *chasunah* on the night of Rosh Chodesh Nisan. I was speaking to a relative and expressed my surprise that the wedding was scheduled so close to Pesach, when people are so busy. He replied, "Your grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov, chose this date. The *mechutanim* asked him to suggest a date for the *chasunah*, and he said Rosh Chodesh Nisan is the most beautiful day of the year."

Starting Again

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

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

The *mashgiach* answered in exasperation, "This *bachur* promised me a thousand times that he will improve, and he never keeps his word."

8. We can add that on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Nisan, on Shabbos HaChodesh, tzaddikim are able to feel the holiness of the entire week, Rosh Chodesh, and Pesach.

The Rebbe took hold of his white beard and said, "Throughout the many years of my life, I promised Hashem more than a thousand times that I will improve, and I haven't done so yet. According to your words, I should give up. *Chas veshalom!* As long as a Yid lives, there's hope that he will improve his ways..."

Chazal (*Yerushalmi Taanis* 4:5) say that a fish that can't swim against the current isn't of a kosher species. We also know that fins and

scales, which are the signs of a kosher fish, are the parts of the fish that help it swim against the tide. This hints that a pure person is someone who can go against the current.

People have their routines of how they do things. But don't let your past trends prevent you from growing. You can turn over a new leaf, go against your current, and do what you know you have to.⁹

It states (*Devarim* 16:22),
ולא תקים לך מזבח אשר שנא ה' אליך

9. By *mattan Torah* it states (*Shemos* 24:5), וַיְשִׁלְחוּ נָעָרִים בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲלֹו וּבְחִזְמָנִים שְׁלָמִים, "The youth of Bnei Yisrael sacrificed *korbanos*..." Rashi writes that the נָעָרִים, youths, refer to all the *bechorim*, firstborns, of Bnei Yisrael.

The *Sfas Emes* (*Mishpatim* 5645) asks: Firstborns are older than their brothers. Why does the Torah call them נָעָרִים, youths? Furthermore, some *bechorim* are old. So why does the Torah call them נָעָרִים, youths?

The *Sfas Emes* answers, "*Bechorim*, firstborns, indicate to us the attribute of **כח ההתחדשות**, the power of renewal. They are called נָעָרִים, youths [because they are young in spirit, ready to change and improve their ways].... Bnei Yisrael are called 'My son, My firstborn, Yisrael' (*Shemos* 4:22), because they...have the ability to start again."

A **מצוּבָה** is something that is fixed and doesn't change. **הַשְׁנָא אֲשֶׁר**, Hashem hates that. Hashem loves those who are ready to change and improve their ways.

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

These sources are reminders that a Yid should seek to improve his ways and change. What was, was. But let's make the future better. It is possible to change if only we want to.

Shabbos HaChodesh, and the month of Nisan, are ideal times for this *avodah*. This is hinted at in the words **הַחְדָּשָׁה לְכֶם**, which can be translated, "The ideal of becoming new is in your hands."¹⁰

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

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

The Shinover Rav replied, "Good. It's very

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

important for one to be with his rebbe on Shabbos HaChodesh. On this Shabbos, one has the potential to become a new person.¹¹

Reb Lazar would often speak nostalgically about that Shabbos. He said it's impossible to repeat what he saw that Shabbos, and only revealed one thing. While davening אהבה רבה in *Shacharis*, he was suddenly overcome by emotion. He left the beis medresh and cried profusely from *deveikus* (*devotion*). He felt as if he became a new person.

This mitzvah of החרוש היה לם was given to the Jewish nation when they were in Mitzrayim, at the 49th level of impurity. Even from that lowly place, Hashem

commanded them to start anew because it's never too late.¹¹

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

Nosson was a sinful man. Once, he had the opportunity to commit a terrible sin, but he controlled himself. A few days later, Rabbi Akiva saw him riding a donkey. Rabbi Akiva noticed that Nosson's face was shining like the midday sun, and above his head, there was a halo of holiness. Rabbi Akiva asked his students, "Who is that man?"

"It's Nosson, the lowly sinner," they replied.

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

"Do you see anything above his head?"

"No. We don't see anything."

"Bring him to me, quickly," Rabbi Akiva commanded.

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

Nosson responded that he didn't give in to his temptations, and he held back from transgressing a grave sin. He had committed many sins before, but this time he controlled himself.

Reb Akiva was stunned that Nosson had the willpower and strength to do this, and he said to him, "Indeed, you did a great deed, and Hashem, therefore, placed an aura of light above your head. This is in this world. In the next world, you will most

certainly become much holier and greater because of this good deed. Now, my son, listen to me. Sit before me, and I will teach you Torah."

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

This amazing story teaches us that a person can change his ways. He doesn't have to remain the same forever.

Growth from Struggles

The story of Reb Noson Tzutzisa also demonstrates the good one earns as a reward for overcoming his challenges because we reach high levels when we pass the tests Hashem places before us.

Once, an orphaned *bachur* complained to the Pnei Menachem of Gur *zt'l*, "Why can't I be like all my

friends, who have much easier lives than me?"

The Pnei Menachem answered with an analogy:

Cars drive smoothly and quickly, whereas armored tanks can hardly move. In a race, a car will definitely win against a tank. Still, the armored tank with its caterpillar tracks and heavy body can go anywhere. It can drive up mountains and cut through sandy deserts; it can charge right through obstacles that are blocking its path. It can do all that because of its heavy and clumsy apparatuses. The tank's handicaps are also its advantages.

"You too must realize that although you're going through many hardships, these obstacles are making

you very strong in certain areas, while your friends stand far behind you. Your struggles will eventually prove to be your assets..."¹²

It is written (*Bereishis* 1:31), וירא אלקים את כל אשר עשה, "Hashem saw everything He created and behold it was *very good*." The Midrash (*Koheles* 3:15) states, "טוב (good) is the *yetzer tov* (good inclination). טוב מאד (very good) is the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination)."

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

The Ketzos (*Shev Shmatsa, hakdamah* 6) quotes the Mahara'm Almushneinu who explains that the greatest geniuses are those who have a drop of foolishness in their thinking process.

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

The Mahara'm Almushneinu compares it to a drop water that's added to a large fire. The fire flares up and becomes even stronger because it wants to overcome the water. Similarly, people with straight minds are often not the greatest geniuses. Those who have a problem with their thinking process are forced to overcome that obstacle, and that makes them even wiser.

This is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Koheles* 10:1), קָרְבַּתְמֵה וּמִכְבוֹד סְכֻלָּת מַעַט, "a person

who is respected because of his wisdom and honor, it is due to a drop of foolishness." The drop of foolishness in his thinking process is the source of his wisdom.

The Mahara'm Almushneinu explains that the Torah calls the *yetzer hara* טוב מאד טוב מאד because it makes the *person* טוב מאד, very good. The *yetzer hara* places obstacles in a person's path, and when one overcomes them, he becomes טוב מאד.¹³

וַיַּעֲשֶׂה בְּצַלָּל It states (37:1-2), וַיַּעֲשֶׂה בְּצַלָּל אֶת הָאָרֶן עַצְיוֹ שְׁתִים... וַיַּצְפָּהוּ וְהַבְּ טָהוֹר

13. People asked the Ateres Yehoshua of Djkov zt'l why he had *parnassah*, while his father and grandfathers were all poor.

The Ateres Yehoshua answered with a *mashal*:

A pauper passed a theatre. There was a long line of people waiting to buy tickets.

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

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

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

"It's about a pauper collecting money."

בצלאל, מבית מהוזר, "Betzalel made the *aron* from *shittim* wood... and covered it with pure gold, inside and outside.

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

This represents the three stages of *teshuvah*:

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

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

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

The Ateres Yehoshua said this due to his immense humility, but we can learn a lesson from it: Why do people pay more money to watch actors? It's because the actors show talent, expertise, years of training, and hours of hard work. People value that, and are willing to pay to see it. But when something comes natural it loses its value in people's eyes. Hashem desires to see us doing deeds that require effort, talent, and willpower. That is why we have challenges; they help us grow, and such deeds will be rewarded immensely.

(1) The golden era of the beginning of one's *teshuva*. That is when he feels Hashem is helping him immensely and he is succeeding in the *teshuva* process. His hopes that he will change his ways are high.

(2) Then comes the struggle, because it isn't easy forever. Hashem takes away the initial euphoria and light that prevailed at

the beginning of his *teshuvah*, and now the person must walk on his own. He is confronted with hardships and tests. He isn't certain that he will succeed.

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

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

Then comes the challenging time. He doesn't understand. He isn't keeping up with the pace he initially set for himself and he is wondering whether success in Torah is possible for him.

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

The *aron*'s three boxes represent these three stages. There is the golden first and final stage, and the wooden, struggling stage in the middle.

But notice that the *aron* is called, אָרוֹן עַצְיָשִׁיטִים, an *aron* of wood. Because the primary purpose is the struggle. Hashem created us with the purpose of overcoming struggles, and do His will. It is through these struggles that we soar to the highest levels.

There was a soldier in Czar Nicholai's army who gave all his weapons to a bartender, as collateral, in exchange for drinks. He carried a large bag around, so people would think his weapons were inside it.

Czar Nicholai visited the army base and was pleased with the order and discipline he saw. Suddenly, he called over this soldier and asked him to open up the bag. The straw was discovered and

the soldier was severely punished.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin zy'a repeated this story and asked: How did Czar Nicholai know to ask this particular soldier to open his bag? Other soldiers going about carrying their bags, but the Czar didn't suspect them. What was it about this soldier that roused his suspicion? The answer is, he saw the soldier carrying his bag without difficulty. That aroused the Czar's suspicion. Weapons are heavy.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin explains that this is a lesson in *avodas Hashem*. *Avodas Hashem* should be hard. If it is easy, that's a sign that something is amiss. There should be struggles. One

should feel like he's working and putting in an effort. If it is too easy, something is lacking.

A group of chassidim complained to the Chidushei HaRim zt'l about their *yetzer hara* that was constantly disturbing them from serving Hashem. The Chidushei HaRim told them, "What purpose would there be to life, if there wasn't a *yetzer hara*?"¹⁴

The Yidden in the desert complained (*Shemos* 16:3), מִי יְהִי ... בָּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשֵׁבֶת נָנוּ עַל סִיר הַבָּשָׂר בְּאַכְלָנוּ לְחֵם לְשׁוּבָע, "If only...we were in Mitzrayim, where we sat by the pot of meat, and we ate bread until we were satiated." The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that they were reminiscing how it was in Mitzrayim, when they sat alongside the non-

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

Jews who were cooking a pot of meat. They smelled it, desired it, but passed the test and they didn't eat it because it wasn't kosher. They only ate the bread/matzah. That is the good memory they wished they could have again because they appreciated the value of overcoming tests.¹⁵

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

What is the significance of this stone?

Moshe held his hands high in prayer to win the war. When Moshe's hands were heavy Aharon and Chur supported his arms. But how could they reach his arms? Moshe was very

tall. At those times, Moshe sat on a low stone. That way, Aharon and Chur were able to reach his arms, and to help him raise them in *tefillah* (see Ha'amek Davar).

Thus, the stone signifies a weak moment, when Moshe couldn't hold up his hands in prayer without help. And it is those challenging moments that are great, and therefore this stone carries so much significance.

The Alter of Navorduk *zt'l* told over the following parable, a worm was once in the neck of an oil lamp, and it didn't know where it should go. Above the worm, there was a lit wick, and below it was oil. When it went up, it felt the heat from the flame, so it inched down. But then it met with the oil. Eventually, the

15. The Chesed L'Avraham (Radomsk) writes, "The intention of the *pasuk* is that they passed their tests. Although they were right near the pot of meat, they didn't want to eat it and give in to temptation. Instead they ate bread."

worm fell into the oil and drowned.

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

As the Vilna Gaon said, הַעֲקָשֵׁן צִלְלָה, "Those who are stubborn [to win the war against the *yetzer hara*] will succeed."

To Help Your Fellow Man

The Gemara (*Me'ilah* 16) states that the *me'il* (from the clothes of the *kohen gadol*) atoned for *lashon hara*. "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Let something that makes sounds [the bells on the bottom of the *me'il*] rang when the *kohen gadol*

walked] atone for the sounds [of *lashon hara*]."

One might say that it would be better if the *me'il* was silent. The sin was speaking *lashon hara*, so the atonement should be silence!

But the explanation is, our goal isn't to be silent, rather to abstain from words that harm others, and to speak only words that will benefit others. As the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* taught, "Most mitzvos of the Torah are about bringing joy to your fellow man."¹⁶

The Maharil Diskin *zt'l* had many *chumros* (stringencies) with his matzos for Pesach, to ensure they wouldn't become chametz. After grinding the wheat, he would give the bags of flour to his student, Reb

16. Moshe Rabbeinu said (*Devarim* 3:24), אַתָּה הַחִילוֹת לְהַרְאֹת אֶת עֲבֹדֶךָ וְאֶת נְדָלֶךָ, "You began to show your servant your greatness..." Rashi writes, נְדָלֶךָ וְמִרְתָּחָב, "Your greatness refers to Hashem's attribute of kindness." We see that the ultimate level of greatness is to do *chesed*.

Eliezer Don Ralbag *zt'l*, to watch them. Reb Eliezer Don hung the bags from the ceiling. That way, they would always be in sight, and he could protect them from chametz.

When Reb Eliezer Don was *niftar*, students of the Maharil Diskin advised him to store the flour elsewhere. They said, "Reb Eliezer Don's wife is a good woman, but she certainly isn't as vigilant as her late husband was."

The Maharil Diskin replied, "Ultimately, all my cautions are a *chumrah*; they aren't halachah. And *chumros* don't have any importance to me if they will cause an *almanah* (*widow*) to let out a sigh and say, "Alas, not only was my husband taken away from me, but I'm not trusted with the rav's flour, either."

Reb Moshe Charif *zt'l* was the rav of Pressburg. He was getting old, and he couldn't lead the city

himself any longer, so the community of Pressburg advised him to appoint someone to assist him. He agreed, and appointed Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l*, (author of *Mishnas Akiva Eiger*, the grandfather of the famous Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l*).

The people of Pressburg urged Reb Akiva Eiger to say the *drashos* (lectures) that were usually given by Reb Moshe, because Reb Moshe Charif wasn't able to speak loud enough for the entire community to hear him, and they were hungry for Torah. Reb Akiva Eiger refused. He felt it would be disrespectful to the rav of the city, Reb Moshe Charif. But the people of Pressburg spoke to him about it a lot, expressing how important it was for them until he agreed.

When Reb Moshe Charif was *niftar*, Reb Akiva Eiger stood up to give a *hesped*. He stopped in the middle and said, "I'm not able to say anything else. The *niftar* is summoning me to

a *din Torah* (judgment) in heaven."

He tried speaking a second time, but failed. When he came home, he fell ill. A few days afterwards, he passed away (written in *Chut HaMeshulash*).

Although Reb Akiva Eiger didn't intend to upset Reb Moshe Charif, he was still punished. As Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l* said, "If a person places his hand in a fire, even by accident, his hand will get burned. Similarly, if someone harms his fellow man, even by accident, he will be punished."

Ahavas Yisrael

Aharon and Miriam spoke *lashon hara* about Moshe, but only Miriam was afflicted with *tzaraas* (*leprosy*). Why wasn't Aharon also punished with *tzaraas*, like his sister was?

The Kedushas Tzion (Bobov) *zt'l* answers that Aharon excelled in *ahavas*

Yisrael, loving his fellow man. As it states (*Shemos* 4:14), וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Aharon saw Moshe's greatness, and he was happy about it." When Miriam got *tzaraas* Aharon felt her pain. Therefore, Aharon didn't need to get *tzaraas* to be punished. He was afflicted together with his sister's pain.

When Moshe Rabbeinu saw that there was *lashon hara* among Yidden, Moshe Rabbeinu's said (*Shemos* 2:14), וְאַתָּה תֹּמֶן נֹזֵעַ הַדָּבָר, "I now understand the reason for the long *galus*." The Nachal Yitzchak of Zutchka *zt'l* explains that Moshe was saying, that if there was love and friendship among Yidden, each person would feel their own suffering, plus the suffering of their fellow man. There would have so much suffering (because each person would feel his fellow man's pain) that they would be redeemed earlier from Mitzrayim. But when Moshe realized that each person was

thinking only of himself, he understood the reason the galus had to be so long.

Even if your fellow man isn't the greatest tzaddik, you should love him. As it states (*Shemos* 13:2), קדש ל' כל בכור פטר כל רחם בבני ישראל נארם באה. Tzaddikim (*Yalkut Ohev Yisrael* in the name of the Apter Rav *zt'l* and *Irin Kadishin* in the name of the Ruzhiner *zt'l*) explain, קדש ל' if a person desires to be holy, בְּכָרֹן, he should think that every Yid is greater than him. פטר כל רחם, and the first thing is רחם, to have compassion on others. באדם ובבאה it shouldn't make a difference to you whether your fellow man acts like a person or whether he acts like an animal. לא ל' that is something that (Hashem) thinks about. But you

should honor and have compassion on all people, regardless of how they act.

The Gemara (*Yevamos* 62:) states that Reb Akiva's students passed away because they didn't honor one another. Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* explains that the students didn't honor one another because they didn't want to cause each other to have arrogance. But this calculation was an error, because that shouldn't have been their concern. They had to honor their fellow man.

As Chazal (*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Rabba* 28) say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells Bnei Yisrael, 'What do I ask from you? Only that you should love each other and honor one another...'"¹⁷

17. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* asks, how did the Yidden in the desert give *tzedakah*? Everyone had enough manna! No one was lacking food.

He answers that the manna tasted like whatever a person imagined. Those who were wealthy and were accustomed to good foods described to the poor what good foods taste like, so they could also taste it in the manna. This is how the wealthy gave *tzedakah*.

No One Can Take Away Your *Parnassah*

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* earned his *parnassah* (*livelihood*) by selling salt. When another salt shop opened up right across the street from his store, Rebbe Dovid wasn't afraid that he would earn less *parnassah*.

One day, the competing store opened late. Rebbe Dovid told the owner, "You should come earlier. People came to your store today, but you weren't there."

We see that not only did he refrain from fighting with his competitor, he even helped him. This was because Rebbe Dovid firmly believed that no one can take away from him, what was destined for him by Hashem.

A similar story happened with Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l*. He opened the first, and at the time, the only bakery in Yerushalayim. (It is still operating today, on Meah

She'arim Street.) One of his workers betrayed him, and opened his own bakery. Reb Zalman didn't rebuke him, "You worked for me, and now turned against me?!" Rather, he gave him tips how he can bake better and earn more money.

Reb Zalman's children couldn't understand why he was helping the competition.

Reb Zalman Brizel replied, "He isn't taking away my *parnassah*. The amount of money that's destined for me will come to me regardless of what he does. In fact, he is making my life easier. He's taking away some of my customers, who ultimately wouldn't have given me more money. So he's helping me. Shouldn't I have gratitude to him and help him, too?"

Someone once needed dental work (a root canal and a crown) done, and the dentist told him that the procedure would cost him

five thousand shekels. The patient gave a down payment, and set a date for his appointment. Afterwards, he heard of another dentist who charged five hundred shekels less. He asked a rav whether he can go to the less expensive dentist, or perhaps, since he already made a down payment, he has to continue with the first dentist. The rav told him that he can only change dentists if the first dentist gives his consent.

The original dentist didn't agree that he should go elsewhere, but he agreed to lower the charge to four thousand shekels, the same amount as the other dentist would charge.

The next night the patient's washing machine broke. It cost five hundred shekels to fix it. In the end, the amount he had saved at the dentist went to the repairman.

It is worthwhile to remember this story when

you are tempted to do something wrong to earn *parnassah*, such as when you want to do *hishtadlus* (*effort*) for *parnassah* at a time that is generally designated for learning Torah. Or, when you want to rush through davening, to earn some more money. Certainly, remember this story if *chalilah* (G-d forbid) you are tempted to steal or to otherwise engage in shady activity to earn money. At those times, remember this story and remember that whatever you earn through improper means may end up going elsewhere. Remember that one never benefits or gains from improper *hishtadlus*.

It states (*Tehillim* 104:21), **הכפרים שואנים לטרף ולבקש מא"ל אכלם**, "Lion cubs shout for food, and they ask Hashem for their meals." We can explain that the *pasuk* is discussing two types of *hishtadlus*: prayer and deeds. The second half of the *pasuk*, **ולבקש מא"ל אכלם**, "To request Hashem for their

"meals" is prayer. The first half of the *pasuk*, הַכְפָּרִים שׁוֹאֲגִים לְטַרְף describes people's aggressive attempts to earn *parnassah*. The *pasuk* expresses that when it comes to prayers, וּלְבָקֵש, people ask nonchalantly. But when it comes to the *hishtadlus* of work, שׁוֹאֲגִים, they shout, they are active and involved. It should really be the opposite, because the primary *hishtadlus* is prayer.

The Maor VaShamesh (בשליח ד"ה ונראה לפреш) teaches, "Someone who desires to accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven needs *Bitachon* (*faith*). He shouldn't run after *parnassah* all day long. He should work less, and be busy with Torah and *tefillah*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will prepare his *parnassah* each day. Although it states (*Devarim* 15:18), 'I, וּבָרְכָתִיךְ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה will bless everything you do,' [which means a person is obligated to do *hishtadlus*] I heard from the holy rav, Rebbe Mordechai of

עִקְמַת Neschiz *zt'l* that also שְׁפֻטוּ הֵי מִעְשָׂה moving one's lips [in prayer] is like doing a deed [of *hishtadlus*]..."

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 65:) says that shouting at an animal in an attempt to stop it from eating in the field while threshing is the transgressing the prohibition of לא תְחַסֵּם שׂוֹר בְּדִישׁו, "Don't muzzle an ox when it is threshing." Although he did this with shouting alone, that is also called doing a deed, and therefore the punishment is *malkus* (*lashes*).

If this is the halachah for doing an *aveirah* (*sin*), certainly then, for doing a mitzvah, such as prayer, it is considered as though he did a deed. Thus, one can complete the obligation of *hishtadlus* with *tefillah* alone. That will also be called, וּבָרְכָתִיךְ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה. His moving his lips in prayer is considered *doing hishtadlus*.

The Maor Veshamesh concludes, "Chazal say that

one receives *malkus*, lashes, for sinning with speech alone. All the more so, for a mitzvah, מְדֵה טוֹבָה מְרוּבָה, to move one's lips in Torah [and *tefillah*], it is considered וּבְרִכַתְךָ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תַעֲשֶׂה, that [you made *hishtadlus*] ... The more *deveikus* (devotion) one has with the Torah and *tefillah*, the more *parnassah* and abundance he will receive... A person can be certain that by moving his lips in Torah and *tefillah*, he will have *parnassah*..."

ח' ל' לא אידא - Words of Chizuk in these trying times

Several sources state that excessive fear of a certain occurrence can cause it to happen.

It is written (*Iyov* 3:25), כִּי פָחָדָתִי וַיָּהִינִי וְאַשְׁר יִגְוַרֵת יְבָא לִ, "I was afraid and it happened. The matter that I was worried about came to me." The Gemara (*Brachos* 60) states that this pasuk tells us that when a

person is afraid, this can cause what he is afraid of to happen.

The Arvei Nachal (ארכז ב' דרוש ב') writes that just as a magnet draws metals, so does fear draw the matter of which he is afraid. This is true regarding good fear, such as fearing Hashem. This fear draws Hashem closer to a person. Negative fear, too, draws negative matter closer to a person.

The Maharal (*Chidushei Agados Bava Metzia* 33.) teaches that when a person is afraid of poverty, he will become poor. The Maharal explains, "By being afraid of poverty, a person is subjugating himself to poverty, and this causes the poverty to rule over him." The Maharal proves this with a comparison. A man is trying to walk on a beam. If the beam is on the ground, he will be able to walk on it. He won't fall off. But if it is over a river, he will probably fall. This

is because he is afraid, and that causes him to fall.

We are living in challenging times. People are asking, "What can we do to protect ourselves?"

Obviously, we should follow the guidance of the Health Department. Additionally, it is important to overcome our fear and worry, trust in Hashem, and be happy.

The Shomer Emunim (Maamar HaBitachon VeHischazkus writes, "The Arizal said that if there is a plague in the city, it won't affect those who aren't afraid. Nothing bad can happen to those who have bitachon (faith) and push away the fear from their heart."¹⁸

The Gemara (Bava Kama 60:) states, "If there's a plague in the city, stay at home."

The Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yehoyada) adds, "But regarding cholera...it is better to run away. It won't help to stay home [where he will hear about the disease and he will be afraid], because this disease affects those who are afraid..."

The Ben Ish Chai explains this with the following mashal:

Once, a cholera plague began spreading in a large city. Someone met with the malach (angel) that was appointed over this plague and he asked him, "How many people are you planning to kill?"

"Five thousand," He said.

However, fifteen thousand people died. The man returned to the malach and said, "You told me that

18. Segulas Yisrael (מערכות מינפה) writes in the name of Reb Chaim Vital, "When there is a plague, keep distant from all kinds of anger, worry, distress. On the contrary, be happy in any way you can."

you were taking only five thousand?"

He replied, "I took five thousand. The rest harmed themselves by their fear."

The Ben Ish Chai concludes, "Therefore, it is best to run far away, so you won't hear and you won't see the disease that's spreading among people, because if you become afraid, you are at risk of being harmed."¹⁹

The Yesod HaAvodah writes in a letter (regarding a plague) "Don't pay attention to the news."²⁰

It states (Mishlei 18:14), רוח איש יכול מהלך and Rashi explains, "When a person

is strong and doesn't worry, and accepts everything that happens to him with joy and with love...he will not be weakened [by illnesses]."

The Vilna Gaon translates this pasuk as follows: "When a person is always happy, he will be able to sustain the illness. Even if he becomes ill, his joy will terminate it."

It is interesting to note that the Targum Yonoson on this pasuk writes, רוחה הדבָר תסבֵר כרוניה, "The spirit of man enables him to sustain the corona." He uses the word corona, כרוניה, for illness... The

19. Today, there is nowhere to run. Therefore, we should run to the *Chovas HaLevavos*, *Shaar HaBitachon* and the like...

20. The media earns money by sowing fear and panic. You are better off not following the news all the time, and hearing about all the problems.

It is known that the people who don't follow the news are generally happier people. The Chofetz Chaim zt'l said to his son, "If I read the news, I'd carry the entire world's worries on my shoulders. Therefore, I prefer not to read the news."

antidote against corona is happiness and optimism.

It states (Devarim 7:15), והסיד ה' מנק כל חיל, "Hashem will take away from you all illness." The Yerushalmi (Shabbos 14:3) says, וזה הרעיון, which means Hashem will take away your worries. Because worries can cause illness, r'l.

Reb Akiva Eiger wrote a letter in 1831, during the time of a cholera epidemic. In addition to warning people to be cautious with the disease (he writes that more than 15 people shouldn't be at a minyan, to prevent the disease from spreading) he also writes, שלא תdag ולהרחק כל מני עצבות "Don't worry, and keep far away from all kinds of sadness" (printed in Chidushei Reb Akiva Eiger Nedaram 39:).

When there was an epidemic in the days of Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin zt'l he wrote, "Bitachon is a primary part of the healing. Whenever you feel afraid, the pasuk ה' צבאות should always be on your lips.²¹ Hashem will certainly help because Hashem's sole desire and will is to save you. Beloved brothers, be healthy and strong. Just don't worry (Toras Avos מ"ק ב').

The Yesod HaAvodah writes, "The primary counsel is to trust in Hashem's unlimited kindness, because He protects all those who trust in Him. Say every day, 'I trust in Hashem and I trust in His kindness. I associate myself with all those who fear Hashem and truly trust in Him.'"

21. The Yerushalmi (*Brachos* 5:1) states, "A person shouldn't stop saying the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 46:8), ה' צבאות עמו משגב לנו אלקי יעקב סלה. Reb Yosi says that one shouldn't stop saying the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 84:13), ה' צבאות בותחך." אשרי אדם בותחך."

After writing this, the Yesod HaAvodah gives counsel, according to the paths of refuah (health and wellness), how people can be protected from the plague. He concludes, "But the main counsel is emunah and bitachon. Nevertheless, one must be cautious with the refuah counsels I mentioned." We are obligated by the Torah to be cautious with our health. But the primary solution is emunah and bitachon.

When Reb Aharon of Belz zt'l was escaping the Nazis, he suddenly asked the driver, who was driving him to safety, to stop. The people in the car didn't

understand the reason. They were near Budapest, and it was dangerous to stop there. Nevertheless, they listened to him. He got out of the car and stood at the side of the car for some time before continuing on their way.

Years later, Rebbe Aharon of Belz told Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Boyan zt'l, "They still don't know why I got out of the car. I never told anyone. But I will tell you. I thought to myself, 'What does the Satan want from me now? He wants me to lose my peace of mind.' Therefore, I stopped rushing so I could calm down."²²

22. Rebbe Aharon of Belz lived in Tel Aviv, and *erev Pesach* he would bake matzos in Kfar Chabad. One *erev Pesach*, the *gaba'im* were rushing him, because it was getting late. Rebbe Aharon told them to wait a moment. They heard him say to himself, *הושע נא נפש מבלה*, "Save the soul from confusion and rushing."

The Sanhedrin who had to go to exile are called, *חולכי אושא*, "Those who walked to Usha" (*Bava Basra* 28.). Notice that they aren't called *בורחי אושא*, those who escaped to Usha, rather *חולכי*, because even when they had to run away, they didn't lose their composure. They remained calm, like someone walking to a different place.

When Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin was hospitalized as a child, he heard from a leading doctor the following:

"The attitude of the patient; his courage and positive thoughts are the best refuah. This helps him more than all medicines and medical care."

A mother and her son were traveling from Beitar to Geulah, for an optical appointment. The dispatcher, in charge of the busses, told all the busses

to take a different route that day, due to unusually heavy traffic on the regular route. But this bus driver didn't follow directions, and he went his regular route. After spending an hour crawling in traffic, she called the optician's office and said that she will be late. The optician told her that he had already closed, and she missed the appointment.

This whole ordeal took up so much time. Leaving the house, finding a babysitter for her children

There was a fire in the building where Reb Avraham Ganichovsky *zt'l* lived. Reb Avraham was standing in front of his building, and he didn't appear worried. People were surprised, because Reb Avraham had many handwritten *divrei Torah* in his apartment – tens of thousands of pages of his *chiddushei Torah*. They asked him, "Aren't you worried about your *chiddushei Torah*? They might get burned in the fire."

He told them, **בדאגה**, worry, is only once a week, on Friday. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (260:1), when one cuts his nails for Shabbos, he should cut them in the order of **בדאגה** (which stands for the second finger, then the forth finger, then the thumb... according to the order of letters **בדאגה**). That is the only place where a Yid should have **בדאגה**.

As the Rema writes, "Start with the left hand, the forth finger... the sign is **דבָתָג א**. On the right hand, the order is **בְּדָאגָה ח**."

at home, sitting in traffic for two hours, and then slowly getting back home. She wondered why she had to go through all of this for naught.

Later, she found out why. Someone who had corona was at the optician at the time she was supposed to be there. She thanked Hashem that she was quarantined for a few hours on the bus, rather than having to be quarantined in her house for two weeks...

Incidentally, there were two boys from Ramot who came to a store that day. They themselves didn't know why they entered that store. They never went there before. They were placed in quarantine for two weeks.

We see that everything is planned by Hashem. There is nothing to fear, because Hashem's plan will always endure. May Hashem help that all Yidden be well and healthy, calm and happy, and the virus should quickly be eradicated.



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