

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Mishpatim



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail@TorahWellsprings.com  
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# Torah Wellsprings

## Mishpatim

### Whatever People Do is from Hashem

As believing Jews, we know that everything is from Hashem. When a person lives with awareness, he remains relaxed and upbeat through the trials and tribulations of life.

But what about when someone else harms you? Is that also from Hashem? Wasn't that action done through that person's free will?

The Rishonim shed light on this question and teach us that even what other

people do to you comes from Hashem.

This week's *parashah* discusses someone who was negligent and murdered his fellow man by accident, *r'l*. The Torah writes (21:13) והאלקים אנה לידו, "Hashem caused it to come to his hands."<sup>1</sup> Don't blame it on negligence; rather, this was Hashem's plan.

Similarly, it states (21:18-19), וכי יריבן אנשים והכה איש את רעהו, "באבן או באגרוף... ורפא ירפא ורפא ירפא", "If men quarrel and one strikes his fellow with a stone or a fist... He shall provide for healing." The words ורפא

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1. Rashi explains that the person who died deserved to die, because he previously killed someone intentionally, but there were not witnesses to convict him. And the person who killed him accidentally, deserved to go to *galus*, because another time, he had killed someone by accident and there weren't witnesses to obligate him to go to *galus*. "Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings them both to the same place," so each one receives the punishment that's due to him.

ירפא teach us that one who hits his fellow man must pay the medical bills.

Another lesson is learned from these words. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85.) says, מכאן שנתנה רשות לרופא, לרפאות, "This is the source that doctors are permitted to heal the ill."

Isn't it obvious that doctors may heal the wounded?

Rashi explains that a doctor might say, "Hashem smote, and I shall heal!" The doctor might think that healing the ill is going against Hashem's will Who decreed that this person be sick for a purpose. Therefore, the Torah reveals that doctors are permitted to heal.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* asks since the wound came about from a fight (as it states, וכי יריבן אנשים והכה איש את... רעהו באבן או באגרוף... "If men quarrel and one strikes his fellow with a stone or a fist...), it seems that it wasn't

Hashem who decreed that this person get injured. It resulted from a fight. So, why does the Torah have to tell us that doctors may heal him? The doctors aren't acting against Hashem's will because Hashem didn't decree that he get wounded.

The Chofetz Chaim answers that this teaches us that even an injury caused by a human being, in reality, comes from Hashem. Therefore, although man has free will, whatever he does is from Hashem.

There are other sources in the Torah that teach us the truth about this concept.

For example, Yosef was sold to Mitzrayim, but he was never angry with his brothers for doing so, because he believed it was orchestrated by Hashem. As Yosef told his brothers (*Bereishis* 45:8) ועתה לא אתם שלחתם "And now: It was not you who sent me

[to Mitzrayim], but Hashem."

When Shimi ben Geira cursed Dovid HaMelech, Dovid said (*Shmuel* 2, 16:10), כי ה' אמר לו קלל את דוד ומי יאמר מדוע עשיתה כן, "He is cursing because Hashem has said to him, 'Curse Dovid.' Who can then say, 'Why have you done this?'"

The Tanya explains that Shimi was punished for being the *shaliach*, but what happened was destined by Hashem's will.

When you know that everything - including what people do to you - comes from Hashem, you will not be angry at others, and you will never consider taking revenge because if it weren't this person, someone else would do it, so why be angry? Whatever happened was destined to be.

The Chinuch (*Mitzvah* 241) writes, "One of the reasons for the mitzvah of לא תקום (the prohibition against

taking revenge) is so that people should take to heart that everything that happens to them - the good and the bad - is destined by Hashem. When someone harms you or causes you distress, believe that it is because of your *aveiros* that Hashem decreed it. Don't take revenge; your fellow man isn't the cause of your suffering. The cause is your *aveiros*."

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* (הנהגות) writes, "It is important always to remember that everything is from Hashem. As Chazal (*Chulin* 7:) say, 'A person doesn't hurt his finger unless it was decreed in heaven.' Even when a person is hurt by a human being with free will, this was also from Hashem. When a person lives with this *emunah* it is easy for him to overcome anger because he believes with all his heart that no person can hurt or harm him."

Now, let's pay close attention to the following

words that the Chozeh writes because it is a *chiddush*. He writes:

"And even when a person harms himself, it wasn't because of his negligence, etc. It was destined from above. Keep these thoughts in mind, and you will always remember Hashem."<sup>2</sup>

People are upset when they make a poor financial decision or do something that causes them harm and heartache. The Chozeh reveals that even what he did to himself, with his own free choice, was decreed in heaven. So, don't be consumed with guilt because precisely what happened was destined to be.

Once, Reb Michael Ber Weismandl *zt'l* complained to Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch (the Riyatz) *zt'l*

that he could have saved thousands of people from the Holocaust, but evil people prevented him from succeeding. Even though it wasn't his fault, he couldn't come to terms with the loss of the Kedoshim, which he felt were within his reach to save. The Lubavitcher Rebbe heard him out and then said, "And who did all of that?" In other words, who sent these evil people to impede your rescue efforts? This reminded Reb Weismandl that everything comes from Hashem.

These ideas are hinted at in this week's *parashah*, as it states (22:8), על כל אבידה אשר יאמר כי הוא זה. *Devarim Achadim* (p.11) explains, אשר יאמר, people say, כי הוא, that this person is responsible for what occurred. Or they say זה, this other party is guilty. The Torah corrects them and says, עד האלקים יבא

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2. The Or HaChaim in this week's *parashah* (22:6) writes, "There isn't an hour or a moment that Hashem isn't doing something for a person; both for his body and for his needs."

דבר שניידם, attribute what happened to Hashem. Instead of blaming others, recognize that it was *bashert*.

### The Source of Hardships

A person brought the hands of his watch to a watchmaker and asked him to fix them.

The watchmaker said, "Where's the watch?"

"I left the watch home. The watch isn't the problem. The problem is the hands. They aren't moving."

This foolish man didn't realize that the problem didn't begin with the watch's hands. There was something wrong with the watch.

This *nimshal* is that when a person goes through hard times, he attributes his hardships to natural causes. He doesn't realize that there are reasons behind what he sees and knows.

The source of all hardship and suffering is *aveiros*. As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 55) states, אין יסורים בלא עוון, "There isn't affliction without sin." *Aveiros* stand at the root of the problem. People see the problems (someone embarrassed them, or there's an illness, financial loss, etc.) and think that it is due to this person, that person, or some other reason. They forget that the source of their problems is their *aveiros*, and with *teshuvah*, everything will become better.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 49:) says that before Moshiach comes, פני הדור כפני הכלב, "The face of the generation will be like the face of a dog." When someone hits a dog with a stick, the dog bites the stick. The dog doesn't realize that he was struck by the person holding the stick. This describes the generation before Moshiach. They attribute everything that happens to them to the cause they see, not realizing that their



*aveiros* are the root of their suffering.

## Compromises

Parashas Yisro contains *matan Torah* and the Ten Commandments, and then comes *parashas Mishpatim*, which discusses monetary laws.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* asks: Since monetary laws were taught right after *matan Torah*, why doesn't *Shulchan Aruch* follow that same order and begin with *Choshen Mishpat*? Why does *Shulchan Aruch* begin with *Orach Chaim*?

The Satmar Rebbe answers that a primary principle in *Choshen Mishpat* is the concept of compromise, פשרות. As it

states (*Choshen Mishpat* 12:2), "It's a mitzvah to tell the litigants, 'Do you want *din* [the exact law] or do you want to compromise?' If they choose to compromise, the court will work out a compromise for them. A court that facilitates compromises is praised."<sup>3</sup>

The Satmar Rebbe explains that *Shulchan Aruch* didn't want to begin with *Choshen Mishpat*, because then the concept of compromise would be introduced, and *Shulchan Aruch* didn't want to start with compromises. Compromises are only applicable in monetary matters. But in all other areas of the Torah, the precise laws need to be followed.

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3. The *poskim* explain that compromises are preferred because it increases peace. Each party feels validated and happy that they received a fair share.

The Baal HaTurim says that the word משפטי"ם is *roshei teivos* מצווה, "It is a mitzvah [for the judge] to attempt to work out a compromise, rather than to pass judgment."

Therefore, *Shulchan Aruch* begins, יתגבר כארי, "Rise like a lion..." This sets the tone of halachah. One must be like a lion, prepared to keep all the mitzvos of the Torah without compromise.

### Boundaries

It states in this week's *parashah* (see 24:3), ויספר לעם את, כל דברי ה' "Moshe told the nation all the words of Hashem," and Rashi writes, מצות פרישה והגבלה, Moshe taught them the mitzvah of the boundaries.

At *Matan Torah*, the nation wasn't permitted to ascend the mountain, and Hashem set boundaries up to where they may stand.

As it states in last week's *parashah* (19:12), והגבלת את העם, סביב לאמר השמרו לכם עלות בהר ונגע בקצהו, "You shall set boundaries for the people around the mountain, saying, 'Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge.'"

And Rashi writes, "He set boundaries for them, a sign that they shouldn't go past that boundary."

The boundaries were a prerequisite for receiving the Torah.

The explanation may be because to keep the Torah, one must make boundaries for himself, how far he may go, and where he must draw the line.

Mesilas Yesharim (ch.13) writes, "*Prishus* means to keep far away... To avoid permitted things so that you won't transgress a prohibition itself. The idea is to separate from anything that might lead you to an *aveirah*..."

When the nation left *Mitzrayim*, Hashem led them on a longer indirect route, so the nation won't be tempted to return to *Mitzrayim* if they encountered difficulties along the way (see *Shemos* 13:17). The *Shlah Hakadosh* writes, "Recognize and

understand how much a person must contemplate and make boundaries and fences for himself so that he shouldn't sin. Behold, Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself distanced the nation so the nation won't return to Mitzrayim."

The Shlah adds that this is implied in the *pasuk* (*Yeshayah 57:19*), שלום שלום לרחוק, ולקרוב, "Peace, peace, to the distant and to the close." This suggests that someone who stays רחוק, distant, from an *aveirah*, is קרוב, close to Hashem.

It states (*Shemos 19:23*) הגבל את ההר וקדשתו, "Set boundaries to the mountain and sanctify it." There is a great hint here. הגבל את ההר hints to the letters that boundary on the word הר. The letter before ה is ד and the letter after ה is ו.

The letter before ו is ק, and the letter after ו is ש.

Now take all the bordering letters, and it spells קדוש.

This is hinted in the words of הגבל את ההר וקדשתו: Make boundaries around the laws of the Torah that you received on הר סיני, and then וקדשתו, you will be holy.

Why are boundaries important? You will understand from the following story:

Reb Shmuel Minkas *zt'l* once visited an elderly woman and saw that she had a special siddur that he wanted to own. It was a rare siddur, called *Siddur HaRav*. This siddur contains the Baal HaTanya's commentary printed around the sides of the pages. Today, this siddur is available for purchase, but it wasn't easy to come by in those days. Reb Shmuel Minkas, a student of the Baal HaTanya, pleaded, "Please sell me the siddur. I will pay you well, and I will buy you another siddur with larger letters, which will serve you better."

She refused. The siddur wasn't for sale. She explained, "Sometimes, the edges of the pages fray and tear. If that happens to my siddur, it will tear at the commentaries, and I will still be able to read all the tefillos. I don't want another siddur. If that siddur tears, I won't see the words of the tefillah!"

Reb Shmuel Minkas repeated this story and said that we learn the importance of making *gedorim* and *siyagim*, fences and boundaries. These boundaries distance us from *aveiros*. And even if we transgress a boundary, we didn't touch the *aveirah* itself. But if we don't have any limits, we are liable of *chas veshalom* transgressing the mitzvos themselves.

Here's another story that will help us understand the importance of boundaries:

A chassid of the Kedushas Tzion of Bobov *zt'l hy'd* was engaged to

get married. His fiancé told him that she didn't want him to wear a *streimel*, and the chassid repeated her request to his rebbe, the Kedushas Tzion. The Kedushas Tzion told him that he should at least wear a *streimel* when he says Kiddush Friday night.

The chassid understood that his Rebbe wasn't happy that he wasn't going to wear a *streimel*, so he came up with the following idea: He wore the *streimel* throughout the week of *sheva brachos*, and after the week was over, he continued wearing the *streimel* – even on weekdays. His wife reminded him that she didn't want him to wear a *streimel*. So, he compromised with her. He agreed that he would only wear a *streimel* on Shabbos and *yom tov*, never during the week. She agreed and was satisfied with the compromise.

This story helps us understand why it is wise to add to the minimum

requirements. Because even if you cut down a little bit, you are still distant from aveiros. But if your line is the aveirah itself, you don't have any room for error.

What would you do if you were on the roof of a skyscraper that doesn't have a fence around the edges? Would you go to the edge to look down? Most people wouldn't. They are afraid. They would keep a healthy distance from the edge. This is how we should deal with aveiros. Keep your distance, so that you will stay safe.

The Brisker Rav *zt'l* preferred to keep away from the burning *Shabbos lecht*, so that he won't come to touch them on Shabbos. Some people considered this custom extreme and mocked it. But those mockers, themselves, would stand far away from the edge of a roof. So, it all depends on what you are afraid of. If you are fearful

of sin, you will make boundaries so that you don't stumble.

Some people don't make boundaries, and automatically, at times, they commit aveiros. Sometimes they keep the Torah, and sometimes they don't. The Atzei HaChaim of Siget *zt'l* said about them, "Those who sometimes go this way and sometimes the other way with Torah observance are like the *tumah* of a cross." A cross, a *שתיוער*, goes in both directions, and they do the same. Sometimes religious other times not. And this can occur, *chalilah*, when people don't make boundaries.

Dr. Bick was a *maskil* (a follower of the Enlightenment movement), and he said to Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l*, "Why do you take the extreme route? Wouldn't it be better if you compromised a little and followed the middle path?"

The Rebbe took him to the window and showed him that horses ride in the middle of the road while people walk on the sidewalk. The Rebbe explained, "Animals take the middle road. I don't want to be like them."

So, it is a more extreme route, but the benefits are enormous.

Chazal tell us that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim because we didn't change our names, clothing, and language. Of course, some people would call that extreme. They might have asked, "Why can't we dress like the nation where we live? Why can't we speak their language and use their names? Why do we have to stand out all the time?"

However, our clothes, language, and names create walls and boundaries. It is a constant reminder of who we are and where we want to be. It is how we keep far away from intermingling

with the goyim among whom we live.

It is important to add that those who make boundaries for themselves lead happy lives. Don't think that these boundaries of *kedushah* lessen their enjoyment of life.

Reb Shalom Shwadron *zt'l mussar drashos* were mixed with humor, as he would comically mock destructive behaviors. Some people thought it was *letzanus*, and they told him that it isn't proper to speak that way.

Reb Shalom Shwardon went into the Chazon Ish *zt'l* to ask his opinion on the matter. The Chazon Ish said, "Give me an example of what you say at your *drashos*."

Reb Shalom Shwardon decided to make a full performance. He took a *shtender* and spoke exactly as he would before many people. The Chazon Ish laughed and said, "You

should always speak that way. Your humor is important. In this manner, you will save Bnei Yisrael! In Lithuania, there were great *talmidei chachamim*, and they were outstanding *yirei Hashem*, too, nevertheless, many youths fell to the Haskalah. Because the *maskilim* had joy, while we didn't. We

need joy today. We need to serve Hashem with joy" (*Maasei Ish* vol.5 p.130).<sup>4</sup>

### ***Tzedakah u'Mishpat***

Every country has its monetary laws because a society cannot function without them. But the *mishpatim* of the Torah are of a completely different

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4. There are often large, ten-passenger taxis waiting outside the airport in Eretz Yisrael. One taxi goes to Bnei Brak, another one to Yerushalayim, and so on. The taxi driver waits until he has ten passengers, and then goes on his way, and another van comes and waits to get filled.

This year, on the twelfth of Teves, a member of our *chaburah* was in one of those taxis at the airport. There were nine people in the taxi, and the taxi driver wouldn't go to Yerushalayim before a tenth man came.

But the tenth person was a woman, and the only place for her to sit was next to this *yungerman*.

For the sake of *kedushah*, he didn't want to sit next to a woman, so he removed his suitcase and went to wait for the next taxi.

It took forty-five minutes before the next taxi filled up set off towards Yerushalayim. And then, a traffic jam slowed them down. The traffic jam was caused by a car accident that involved the taxi the *yungerman* refused to take.

This *yungerman's* life was saved in the merit of his *yiras Shamayim*. As it states (*Mishlei* 10:27), "יראת ה' תוסיף ימים", "The fear of Hashem increases days."

nature. They are not manufactured agreed-upon ideas to help society run smoothly. Instead, they are holy mitzvos, given to us by Hashem. Every detail has endless meaning, depth, and beauty, like all other facets of the Torah.

One factor which demonstrates the uniqueness of the monetary laws of the Torah is that they are saturated with *chesed*. As we say in *Shemonah Esrei*, מלך אהב צדקה, ומשפט תzedakah and justice." The laws are *mishpat*, justice, but combined with tzedakah, sensitivity, and compassion for the needs of others.

And when we show sympathy to others and act with kindness, we receive Hashem's blessings.

We'll give some examples.

There's a mitzvah to lend money. As it states (22:24) אם כסף תלוה את עמי,

"When you lend money to My nation..." This mitzvah teaches us to have compassion for people in need.

The *Chinuch* (mitzvah 66) writes, "One of the reasons for this mitzvah is that Hashem wants His creations to be accustomed in the attributes of kindness and compassion, as these are praiseworthy traits. And when they attain these traits, they will be deserving of Hashem's kindness. Because Hashem's kindness and blessings go to good people, and not to those who aren't good..."

The *Chinuch* explains that Hashem could care for the poor Himself, but He makes us His messengers so that we can train ourselves in the traits of kindness and compassion.

It also states in this week's parashah (*Shemos* 23:5), כי תראה חמור שנאך רבץ תחת, משאו וחדלת מעזב לו עזב תעזב עמו, "If you see the donkey of someone you hate



crouching under its burden, would you refrain from helping him? – you shall repeatedly help with him."

This *pasuk* teaches a lesson in *middos* and compassion. You see someone you hate suffering, struggling. You must help him. Don't let past hang-ups stop you from helping someone in need.

*Unkelos* translates the *pasuk* as follows, משבק תשובק, מואי בלבך עלוהי ותפרק עמה, "Drop the negative thoughts you have against him, and help him unload the animal."

*Unkelos'* double expression משבק תשובק is explained in *sefer Bris Menuchah* as follows: משבק if you drop the negative feelings towards your fellow man, תשובק, Hashem will remove you from all your problems.

Heaven interacts with us according to the principle of מדה כנגד מדה, measure for measure. If you forgive your fellow

man and do kindness with him, Hashem will forgive you and do kindness with you too. As it says, עם חסיד תתחסד (*Tehillim* 18), עם חסיד, to the person who does kindness with others, תתחסד, Hashem will do kindness with him.

The *parashah* begins with the laws of the Jewish slave. This mitzvah is also a lesson in compassion. Rashi (21:2) explains that this person stole money and doesn't have enough money to repay the owner, so the court sells him into slavery.

The Chassam Sofer *zt'l* asks, why does this mitzvah follow the *Aseres HaDibros*? We might think that following the great revelations that took place at *mattan Torah*, the Torah would discuss something like Shabbos, *tefillin*, *kriyas Shma*, or other mitzvos that seem to be in sync with the divine and exalted experience of *mattan Torah*. Why does the Torah begin

with the laws related to theft?

The Chasam Sofer answers with an analogy: The father of a sick child will think about this child more than all his other children. Similarly, our Father in heaven is concerned about the child who listened to his *yetzer hara* and stole. Hashem says, "I need to deal with him first because he needs My help." Therefore, immediately after *mattan*

*Torah*, the Torah addresses the thief and what can be done to help him become a righteous person.

Once again, we see the theme of helping others. The laws of the Torah are *tzedakah u'mishpat*, a perfect combination of justice with kindness.<sup>5</sup>

The *parashah* (22:26) also discusses a poor person who borrowed money and couldn't pay it back on time. The Torah allows the

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5. Rebbe Leibele Eiger *zt'l* in *Toras Emes* teaches us a very important idea regarding the *eved ivri*, which is worth repeating here. He writes, "Although the literal laws of *eved ivri* don't apply in this generation, nevertheless, the Torah is eternal and is applicable at all times. The essence of this mitzvah is that a person should be liberated from all sorts of slaveries. He shouldn't be enslaved to anyone other than Hashem. And if he forgets and becomes enslaved, he goes free on the seventh [on Shabbos]...."

He explains that when one knows that everything is from Hashem, he will be enslaved solely to Him.

This is a very important lesson, because many people feel enslaved. They are unable to be themselves and act as they understand they should because they are always trying to please others. The Torah therefore begins parashas *Mishpatim* with the laws of the *eved ivri*, and how he can go free. This reminds everyone to try and free themselves from their slavery, and to be enslaved to Hashem, alone.

lender to collect something as collateral.

However, there are times when the poor person needs that object. For example, if you take a mattress as collateral, he will need it to sleep on at night. Or if you take a coat, he will need it to go out in the cold. In those situations, the Torah requires that you return the object at the times the poor person needs it: (22:26) "Because this is his only coat... Where will he sleep?"

Let us tell a few stories that demonstrate the importance and the reward of this remarkable trait of compassion:

Reb Moshe Klirs *zt'l* was the *rav* of Teveria; he was also the *rosh kollel* of a large *kollel* in Teveria. The *kollel* was supported by wealthy people from *chutz l'aretz*, but there was a time when the money wasn't coming through, and for several months the

*yungerleit* didn't receive their meager stipend.

Reb Moshe Klirs instructed the secretary in charge of the money distribution, "Until the *yungerleit* are paid, don't bring money to my house, either."

Rosh Chodesh came, and Reb Moshe Klir's *rebbetzin* saw that they didn't receive their monthly paycheck. So she said to her husband, "How am I supposed to pay the grocer if I don't receive the stipend?"

Reb Moshe responded, "And what about Reb Chaim Lubiner (one of the scholars of the *kollel*)? He owes money to the grocer. How will he pay it? How will he buy more? I don't want to get paid when my students aren't. Because the students are upset about their stipends, they occasionally speak to me disrespectfully. If I'm also in debt, I will understand their

frustration, and I will be able to forgive them."

Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l* knew of a Torah scholar who didn't do *chesed*. When people criticized him, his motto was, "Talmud Torah *keneged kulam*," learning Torah is the greatest mitzvah.

Rebbe Zusha told him a story:

A wealthy person bought an expensive jacket, and everyone in town was talking about it. A poor person, jealous of all the attention the rich man was receiving, decided to buy such a jacket. He saved up money until he was able to buy the expensive jacket.

He wore it proudly and waited to hear all the compliments, but they weren't forthcoming. In fact, when people saw him, they smirked and tried to hold back their laughter.

He asked his friend, "What's going on? Why are

people laughing at me? Tell me the truth."

His friend replied, "Your jacket is beautiful, but it is only nice when it is worn over a clean shirt, polished shoes, pants without patches, and a new hat. Your shirt is dirty, your shoes lost their color and have holes in them, your pants drag on the ground because they are too long, and your hat is antique. Even your hair and beard are unkempt. The jacket is beautiful, but it needs to be in the right setting."

Rebbe Zusha admonished the Torah scholar, "Torah is the greatest mitzvah you can do, and it is beautiful, but you have to do *chesed*, too. Torah without *chesed* is like wearing a beautiful jacket without suitable clothes to go along with it."

After *birkas haTorah*, we say every morning the following *braysa*, אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהם בעולם הזה and we list the mitzvos that are

rewarded in this world in addition to the next world. Among them are: honoring parents, *chesed*, *bikur cholim*, *hachnasas kallah*... The final line is תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם, studying Torah is more than all of the above."

Rebbe Zusha explained, תלמוד תורה, the greatness of studying Torah is solely when it is כנגד כולם, combined with all the other items mentioned in the *braysa*.

There was a *chasunah* in Teveria some years back; the *mechutanim* were Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* and Reb Werner *zt'l*, who was then the *rav* of Teveria.

In those days, the main course at a *chasunah* was fish, but the fish became spoiled. Reb Shlomo Zalman *zt'l* went to the manager's office and said, "It is possible that my *mechutan*, Reb Werner, will tell you that he doesn't want to pay for the fish since it spoiled. So, I came to you, in the middle of the

*chasunah* to tell you that if he doesn't pay his share, I'll pay the entire bill myself."

The manager smiled and said, "Just a moment ago, Reb Werner was here, and he told me the same thing."

According to halachah, Reb Shlomo Zalman and Reb Werner didn't have to pay. Why should they pay for spoiled fish? They might even have the right to sue the caterer for ruining the meal and not being more careful.

But they went beyond the letter of the law because the Torah expects us to act with *tzedakah u'mishpat*. This means that we don't only do what's right according to *Choshen Mishpat*, but also what is correct in *hilchos middos* and *ahavas Yisrael*.

Motzei Shabbos, we sing *Ish Chossid Hayah*. It tells the story of a chassid who didn't have money to

support his family, and Eliyahu HaNavi z"l came to help him and said, "Pretend that I am your slave and sell me as a slave. You can keep the money."

The chassid did so. He sold Eliyahu as a slave in exchange for eight hundred thousand gold coins.

The man who bought Eliyahu HaNavi ordered him to build a beautiful palace. "When it is finished, you are free to leave."

That night Eliyahu prayed to Hashem, and *malachim* came down from heaven, and constructed a magnificent palace. In the morning, the man (who bought Eliyahu) was shocked. The building was finished in a night! He kept his word and set him free.

Rebbe Shalom Kaminka zt'l asked his Rebbe, the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l: If a miracle was going to happen anyway (angels coming down from heaven to build the palace in one night),

why didn't Eliyahu perform another miracle? He could have miraculously created money and given it to the poor chassid. Why did he need to be sold as a slave?

The *Sar Shalom* of Belz replied: Miracles occur when there is *mesirus nefesh*. First, Eliyahu had to be *moser nefesh*, to be prepared to be sold as a slave to help this chassid, and then miracles can occur.

In Kiryat Sefer, a family with eleven children lived in a two-bedroom apartment. They wanted to add on two rooms, but they needed permission from all the neighbors in their apartment building to do so. All neighbors gave their consent except for one, and that prevented them from going ahead with the extension.

Their refusal caused a dispute between the two neighbors. The wives stopped speaking to each other, and the husbands began davening in different

shuls so that they won't have to meet.

People asked Reb Elizer Turk *shlita* to find a way to make peace. After looking into the details of the dispute, he called up the neighbor who refused to permit the construction.

The wife answered the phone, and when she understood that he is calling about the construction, she immediately said, "Rabbi Turk, you are wasting your time. We will not agree to the building, period. There is nothing to discuss."

Reb Turk told her, "According to halachah, you aren't obligated to be *mevater*. However, when one is *mevater*, *yeshuos* happen. So, I ask you: Are you in need of some kind of *yeshuah*?"

She told him they have an older *bachur* at home who can't find his *shidduch*. With a bitter heart she said, "Shadchanim stopped

calling, and we don't know what to do."

Reb Eliezer Turk said, "I'm not a *navi*, but I'm certain that if you will be *mevater*, you will see miracles."

She discussed it with her husband, and they agreed to be *mevater*.

She and her husband went to their neighbor and told them they were ready to sign to permit them to build. Both families asked forgiveness from one another for the terrible dispute that had come between them, and they promised to turn the clock back to the days before the construction issue came up.

As they were speaking, a *shadchan* called. He had an offer for their son, and it sounded right. It didn't take long, and their son was engaged.

The family often repeats this story. They say the

*shidduch* came the moment they were *mevater*.

Once, in the beis medresh of Rebbe Yoel of Satmar *zt'l*, the *baal korei* stopped the Torah reading because he wasn't certain the *sefer Torah* was kosher. He had found an error in the way a word was written.

The Satmar Rebbe came up to the *bimah* and looked at the word in question. He seemed uncertain and requested that they bring him a few *sefarim*. He stood there, at the *bimah*, studying the matter. Finally, he said, "I think it is better to return this *sefer Torah* to the *aron* and take out another one."

Later, someone asked the Satmar Rebbe, "It wasn't a complicated question. The halachah was obvious that the Torah should be changed. So why did the Rebbe ask for *sefarim*, and why did you study the matter?"

The Rebbe replied, "Didn't you see? The *sofer* of this *sefer Torah* was in the beis medresh. If I had said immediately that it was *pasul*, he would be embarrassed. Therefore, I made it appear as if it wasn't a clear-cut case to prevent his shame and anguish."

A simple Jew came to the Imrei Chaim (of Viznitz) *zt'l* with his bar mitzvah son and asked the Rebbe to put on the tefillin on his son. This man wasn't a chassid; he didn't even appear to be entirely religious, but it was important for him that his son have this privilege.

The father brought along cake and *lechayim*, for the chassidim in the Viznitzer beis medresh to celebrate with him. Understandably, the chassidim didn't want to eat this food because they were unsure of the level of this man's kashrus observance.



The Imrei Chaim realized that the father would be embarrassed, so he said in a loud voice, "I am careful not to eat anything between wearing Rashi's tefilin and the Rabbeinu Tam's tefilin. Therefore, I will take some cake and lechayim and put it aside. After I wear the Rabbeinu Tam tefilin, I can have it."

The chassidim followed the Rebbe's lead. They took a piece of cake and a small cup of whiskey and put it aside, so it would appear that they wanted to consume it later. The simple man was satisfied, and he and his son left in good spirits.

Tragically, a young man was *niftar*, and Reb Shlomo Zalman's Aurbach's son was invited to give a *hesped*. He wrote up what he was planning to say and showed it to his father. Reb Shlomo Zalman said, "It's a nice *drashah*, but you won't stop the *malach hamaves* with this. To stop the *malach*

*hamaves* we need to improve in *bein adam lechaveiro*."

The 25th of Shevat is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l*.

Returning from Reb Yisrael Salanter's *levayah*, his students calculated that until Moshiach comes, Reb Yisrael Salanter's *yahrtzeit* will always be during the week of *parashas Mishpatim*. They explained that Rebbe Yisrael Salanter's primary emphasis was to be cautious with *mishpatim*, with the laws of the Torah regarding monetary matters and *ben adam lechaveiro*. Thus it is befitting that his *yahrtzeit* should always be in the week we read about these halachos.

Reb Yisrael Salanter used to say, "Being ethical in business is the highest level possible. There is nothing greater."

A student once asked Reb Yisrael, "Rebbe, in your world view, who is greater: A Torah student

who studies eighteen hours a day or a storeowner who does honest business?"

Reb Yisrael Salanter answered, "Surely the storeowner is on a higher level. However, since he is on such a high level, it is a shame he learns so little. It would be proper for such a great person to study Torah eighteen hours a day..."

Once, Rebbe Yisrael washed his hands for bread, only using a minimal amount of water. The students asked him why he did so because *Shulchan Aruch* (158:10) states, "Although it is sufficient to wash one's hands with a rev'i's, it is preferred to wash with a lot of water. As Rav Chisda said, 'I wash with handfuls full of water, and I will receive handfuls full of goodness.'"

Reb Yisrael Salanter replied, "I don't want to become wealthy on account of a poor woman." He explained that a poor woman was responsible

for drawing water for this household. If he washed with a lot of water, it would require her to draw even more water.

This story is typical of Reb Yisrael's ways. In his time, people emphasized yiras Shamayim and caution with keeping the mitzvos in the best way, but he noticed that when it came to *ben adam lechaveiro*, people were lax. So he established the path of *mussar* to turn the tide around, that people should understand that caring for the needs of others isn't less important than any other mitzvah of the Torah.

The following story inspired Reb Yisrael Salanter to launch the *mussar* movement. A simple shoemaker suddenly became wealthy. When one of his children married into another wealthy family, they prepared a very lavish *chasunah*. As they stood under the chuppah, a jealous person came with a

pair of ripped shoes and asked the wealthy man to fix his shoes.

The wealthy man died from shame on the spot.

Reb Yisrael Salanter was at that wedding, and when he saw how low people could steep due to jealousy and cruelty, he understood that it was time to launch the *mussar* movement.

Reb Yisrael once saw two children debating who was taller. One of them pushed his friend off the curb and said, "You see, I'm taller." Reb Yisrael rebuked the child for doing this. You don't knock down your fellow man because you want to be taller.

People were saying that a certain niftar was a *tzaddik nistar*, a hidden tzaddik. Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* said, "Perhaps he was a *nistar*, and concealed his good deeds, but if so, he wasn't a tzaddik. Because in this generation, if someone is a tzaddik, he

must reveal himself so that he can help others. People need him."

The Turei Zahav's *yahrtzeit* is on the 26th of Shevat.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l* saw in the *chevrah kadishah* journal the following story:

A *dibbuk* attached himself to a girl, and people rushed to the Turei Zahav and requested his assistance. The Turei Zahav went to the home of this afflicted girl. As soon as he entered, the *dibbuk* turned his face to the wall and announced, "*Baruch haba Rabbeinu Hagadol baal Turei Zahav*" (welcome, our great master, author of the *Turei Zahav*).

People asked the *dibbuk*, "Why did you call him Rabbeinu Hagadol, "our great master" and why did you turn around to face the wall?"

The *dibbuk* replied, "*A rasha* isn't permitted to look

at the face of a tzaddik, and that's why I turned around. And I know that his name is Rabbeinu Hagadol baal Turei Zahav because this is how he is called in heaven."

The Turei Zahav said, "If this is how I am called in heaven, then I order you to leave this girl immediately." The *dibbuk* left.

The girl's parents were wealthy, and they wanted to give a lot of money to the Turei Zahav to express their gratitude, but he refused. So they bought him an expensive talis. They figured he wouldn't refuse a mitzvah, but the Turei Zahav told them he didn't want this gift either. He explained, "I want to be buried with my old talis, because it can testify before the heavenly court that I never said a word of tefillah without *kavanah*."

The Turei Zahav (the Ta'z) had many guests on Shabbos, and many of them were very simple people.

The Taz would recite Kiddush from a siddur. He did so, so that if a guest came late and wanted to say Kiddush, he wouldn't be embarrassed to ask for a siddur. "Even the Taz says Kiddush from a siddur," he would say.

### ***Naaseh v'Nishma***

In this week's *parashah*, the Jewish nation proclaimed the famous words (24:7), כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה, ונשמע, "Everything Hashem commanded we will do, and we will listen." This is an unusual statement because how can one do before he hears.

Hashem said, "Who revealed to My children the secret of the *malachim*?" Because also *malachim* do first, and then they listen. As it states (*Tehillim* 103:20), מלאכיו... עושי דברו לשמוע בקול... דברו, "His angels... do His bidding, to listen to His voice" (*Shabbos* 88.).

But how does one do before hearing? If you

didn't hear, how do you know what Hashem wants from you?

The following *mashal* will help us understand:

A poor family needed financial aid, so relatives, friends, and neighbors gathered to see what they could do to help.

After describing the great need, the person hosting the meeting began giving out jobs: "Reuven, tomorrow go to the *shtiblach* of this city to collect money for this family. Shimon, I want you to speak with the local tzedakah fund. Levi, your job is to find a suitable *parnassah* for the father of this family."

Then the host called out Yehudah's name. Yehudah is a very close friend to the father of this poor family and was waiting the entire meeting for this moment. He wanted to do whatever he could do to help this family. As the host was still talking to him, Yehudah

put on his coat. Before the host finished speaking, he was almost out the door because he was in a rush to fulfill his mission. His actions almost preceded his listening. He was ready to do even before he knew what he was supposed to do.

Here's another *mashal*:

A person wants to renovate his house, so he speaks to architects, reviews catalogs, compares prices, and weighs all the pros and cons. He isn't in a rush to decide because he wants to make the right decision.

However, if his house is on fire, he won't think for long. There's a fire, and he must act quickly. Perhaps he will need to ask people things like, "Where is the fire extinguisher?" Or, "How do you turn it on?" But his doing almost comes before he listens because of the urgency of the moment.

The Gemara says that when the Yidden proclaimed *naase v'nishmah*, they were granted two crowns, one for *naaseh* and one for *nishma*. They were praised for this proclamation, as it demonstrates their deep desire to do Hashem's will.

### ***Bikur Cholim***

It states (21:19) ורפא ירפא, "He should provide for healing." which is the source that doctors may cure the sick. Most of us aren't doctors, but we can still help the ill by visiting the sick and doing *bikur cholim*.

According to some *rishonim*, visiting the sick is a mitzvah from the Torah. As the Gemara (*Nedarim* 39:) says, "A hint from the Torah to the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*: It states (*Bamidbar* 16:29), אם כמות כל האדם ימותון אלה ופקודת כל אדם יפקוד אלה, לא ה' שלהני like the death of all men, and the destiny of all men

is visited upon them, then it is not Hashem Who has sent me." Rava explains, "If they die like all ill people who lie on their beds and people come to visit them..." The רי"א (פסקיו לנדרים ה"ג אות ב) says that this *pasuk* implies that there's a mitzvah from the Torah to visit the sick.

He writes, "It is a great mitzvah. The ill person's life depends on it because the visit lightens the illness. Furthermore, visitors can offer counsel regarding medical treatment, they can encourage and calm him, and these functions grant life. But if no one comes to visit, the sick person becomes bored, the illness becomes unbearable, and he may die. That would be considered murder."

Another source for *bikur cholim* is in last week's *parashah* (18:20), והודעת, "Teach them the path on which they should go..." Where do they go? The Gemara

(*Bava Metzia* 30:) explains that "they should go" visit the sick. It alludes to the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*.<sup>6</sup>

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 40.) relates, "One of Reb Akiva's students was ill, and none of the scholars visited him. However, Reb Akiva himself did come to visit him. He swept and washed the floor, which revived the sick person's spirits. The ill student exclaimed, 'Rebbe, you granted me life.'

"Reb Akiva went out and taught his students, 'Whoever doesn't visit the

sick, it is like murder, and whoever visits the sick causes him to live."

The Seder HaYom writes, "*Bikur cholim* is the highest form of kindness, as Chazal (*Nedarim* 39:) say, 'There is no limit [to the greatness of] *bikur cholim*.' Sometimes with clever, encouraging, and kind words, you can revive the ill person, and that will enable him to live. We saw this many times because sometimes a person visits the sick for an hour or two, and the ill person says, 'I feel like a new person. My *neshamah* came back to me.'

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6. For many years, the Ksav Sofer *zt'l* and Baron Rothschild attended the same vacation/health resort, and the Baron would always come to hear *divrei Torah* from the Ksav Sofer.

One year, Baron Rothschild visited the Ksav Sofer, but cut his visit short. The Ksav Sofer asked him why he wasn't staying longer.

The Baron replied, "Chazal call visiting the sick ילכו, 'they should go.' This is because when you visit the sick, you have to know when you should get up and leave. Perhaps your visit is a burden for the ill person or perhaps the ill person is embarrassed to be seen in that state. Therefore, the Torah says ילכו, one must know when to leave..."

The Ksav Sofer often repeated this *vort*.

And we notice that the illness became lighter."

A primary part of *bikur cholim* is to bring joy to the sick person. Positive spirits and hope play a significant role in a person's ability to fight disease. Therefore, Rambam (in his *sefer* on health) writes, "tell a sick person happy stories that will gladden his heart. Tell him interesting news that will take his mind off his illness and make him laugh. (It will make the people taking care of him laugh, too). So, when you choose someone to be with an ill person, choose someone who can make him happy because that is needed for the ill."

Sodi Razyah (attributed to the Rokeach) writes, "When one visits the sick, he should speak to his heart, words of solace."

The Gemara (Nedarim 40.) lists the rewards for *bikur cholim*. They are: You will be saved from the *yetzer hara*, from Gehinom, and affliction. Everyone

will honor you, and you will have good friends who give you good counsel, and you will be protected from bad friends who offer bad counsel.

The *meforshim* explain that these rewards are *midah kneged midah*. For example, he helped the ill person feel better, so he will also be protected from affliction.

We can add that he will certainly be spared from the condition the ill person is going through.

### ***Rosh Chodesh Adar***

The beginning influences everything that follows. Therefore, *rosh chodesh* is an important day. The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* says that if one serves Hashem on *rosh chodesh*, even if it is just for an hour or two, this sends the *kedushah* of *rosh chodesh* into the entire month because the beginning influences everything that follows.



So, let's try to make *rosh chodesh* Adar special.

Reb Sariyah Dibletzky *zt'l* (*Davar Nechmad*) writes, "Reb Eliyahu Cohen and Reb Chaim Abulafiyah *zt'l* heard from Reb Chaim Vital's students that one should recite the entire *Tehillim* on *rosh chodesh* Adar. This will fix his *neshamah*. And there are other secrets [that one gains from saying the entire *Tehillim* on *rosh chodesh* Adar]. It is proper that those who fear Hashem should gather to conduct this *tikkun*."

The rule of spirituality is that if you can't do everything, do as much as possible. So, those who cannot say the entire *Tehillim* on *rosh chodesh* Adar should recite a few chapters of *Tehillim*. *Tehillim* is good every day of the year, with extra benefits on *rosh chodesh* Adar.

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* said that on *rosh chodesh* Adar one should daven that all the *tefillos* he said up to that day should go up to Heaven.

Because the holy *sefarim* write that *tefillos* that aren't said properly don't go up before Hashem. But at an auspicious moment, all those stranded *tefillos* can ascend before Hashem. The Chozeh of Lublin teaches that on *rosh chodesh* Adar, one can pray that Hashem should accept and answer all those *tefillos* that had not yet gone up before Hashem.

The Chozeh *zt'l* (*Divrei Emes, Terumah*) teaches this lesson from the Gemara (*Beitzah* 16:), הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו, "If one wants his property to remain with him, he should plant an *adar*."<sup>7</sup>

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7. Rashi explains, "An *adar* is an אילן חשוב, a notable tree, and people hear about it from far and wide. People say 'Ploni has an *adar* tree

The Chozeh of Lublin explains that נכסיו, "his property" refers to Torah and mitzvos, because those are a person's primary property, which remains with him forever. Tefillah, in particular, is a person's property. Because one of the translations of נכסיו is *concealed*, and tefillah is concealed. As Chazal say, דברים העומדים ברומו של עולם, "Tefillah is from the things that stand in the highest places of the world [concealed from man's sight]."

Furthermore, the primary tefillah is *Shemonah Esrei*, which is said silently in a concealed manner. Therefore, נכסיו refers to tefillah.

"Thus, Chazal say, הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו, if a person wants his tefillos to be answered, יטע בהן אדר, he should pray for that on *rosh chodesh* Adar. And then his prayers will go up, and everything will turn into *chesed* and compassion."

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in his field' and that causes that the field is remembered that it belongs to him. Even if he travels to another land, and someone moves in on his property, there will be many people who can testify that it is his field."