

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Achrei



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

## Achrei

### Take Yom Tov with You

People asked a Stoliner chassid who had just returned home from celebrating *yom tov* with the Stoliner Rebbe, the Beis Aharon, "How did the *yom tov* pass?"

He replied, "*Yom tov* didn't pass. It went inside me."

We just celebrated the joyous *yom tov* of Pesach. It didn't pass. It became a part of us. Now we should try to keep the inspiration alive.

Every week, a miracle occurred with the *lechem hapanim* (the twelve loaves of bread placed on the *shulchan*) in the Beis HaMikdash. The Rambam (*Hilchos Tmidin u'Musafin* 5:1-3) writes, "It is a *mitzvas asei* (positive commandment) to arrange the *lechem hapanim* on the *shulchan* every Shabbos, as

it states (*Vayikra* 24:8), ביום השבת ביום השבת יערכנו הכהן 'Each and every Shabbos he shall prepare them...' The loaves on the *shulchan* from the previous Shabbos were removed and replaced with fresh loaves. The old loaves were then divided among the *kohanim*. Chazal (*Chagigah* 26:) tell us that the loaves of bread on the *shulchan* miraculously remained fresh and hot all week long. The Gemara calls it סילוקו כפידיורי, "Taking away was like arranging them." The twelve loaves removed from the *shulchan* were as hot as when they were first placed on the *Shulchan* a week earlier.

During the three *yomim tovim* (Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos), *kohanim* would lift the *shulchan* to show the nation the hot loaves of bread. "See how much Hashem loves you! The

loaves of bread are as hot as when they were put on."

The Imrei Emes *zy'a* asks, this wasn't the only miracle in the Beis HaMikdash. The Mishnah (*Avos* 5:5) lists ten other miracles that took place. What was special about this miracle that it was demonstrated to the nation during the holidays?

The Imrei Emes explains that the miracle of the *lechem hapanim* carries a message. The *lechem hapanim* remained hot and fresh the entire week. This lesson taught the nation that they should stay warm and not depart from the inspiration they acquired on *yom tov*.

Probably, over *yom tov*, there were moments when we had thoughts of *teshuvah*, times when we felt in our heart that we didn't want anything in the world other than to serve Hashem and be close to Him. We should take those feelings with us.

It states in this week's *parashah* (16:2), ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש, "He shall not come at all times into the Kodesh." Rebbe Reb Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l* explained that people enter the realm of *kedushah*, they begin to desire Torah and *avodas Hashem*, and then they leave. Now they have to return to the *kedushah* again. They keep entering into *kedushah* and leaving it again. The Torah tells us, don't keep coming into the *kedushah*. ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש. Go into the *kedushah* once and stay there!

This is the lesson we are discussing. We were inspired over *yom tov*; we had plans to improve our ways. So let's keep that momentum going.

This is the lesson of the *lechem hapanim*, to let the heat of Yiddishkeit and *avodas Hashem* keep burning in your heart, don't neglect it.

Chazal say, "A maidservant at the sea saw

more than Yechezkel ben Buzi." This means that at *kriyas Yam Suf*, everyone reached tremendous high levels in kedushah. However, at Matan Torah it was different. When Hashem gave the Torah, Klal Yisroel was divided according to their different levels. Rashi (*Shemos* 19:24) writes, "You [Moshe] are in one area by yourself, Aharon was in his place, and the *kohanim* were in their place. Moshe was closer [to Matan Torah] than Aharon, and Aharon was closer than the *kohanim*, and the rest of the nation wasn't permitted to leave their place to go up on the mountain."

The Rebbe of Tchartkov *zy'a* asks, why were the people separated according

to their level by Matan Torah, but there were no divisions at *kriyas Yam Suf*?

He answers that the amount of Torah a person can acquire is dependent on his level. Some people know more than others. However, when it comes to *emunah*, everyone has the potential to reach the highest levels. With *emunah peshutah*, simple faith, even simple people can be great like the greatest tzaddikim.<sup>1</sup>

In the merit of Pesach and all its mitzvos that we performed, our *emunah* is undoubtedly at a higher level. Let's take that along with us for the entire year.

### Like a Yid

The end of the *parashah* discusses forbidden

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1. Rebbe Aharon Roth *zt'l* (Shomer Emunim) said something similar about *simchah*. With most *middos tovos*, the greater the person the more perfection he can acquire in *middos*. You can't expect a simple person to have the levels of *anavah* that a tzaddik can acquire, and so on. The exception is *simchah*. Everyone can have *simchah*, regardless of his level.

marriages, and there seem to be five *pesukim* introducing this subject. It states (18:3): כמעשה ארץ מצרים אשר ישבתם בה לא תעשו, וכמעשה ארץ כנען אשר אני מביא אתכם שמה לא תעשו, "Do not perform the practices of the land of Mitzrayim in which you dwelled, and do not perform the practice of the land of Canaan to which I am bringing you."

Rashi explains that Mitzrayim and Canaan were the most corrupt *goyim* in the world, and the *goyim* who lived in the same cities as the *Yidden* were even worse.

Before the Torah lists the prohibitions of the forbidden matrimonies, the Torah says that we shouldn't commit the *aveiros* they saw in the corrupt lands of Mitzrayim and Canaan.

The Sfas Emes (תל"ה) (ותרל"ה), however, says that there is no need for an introduction since each forbidden marriage is

discussed in the upcoming *pesukim*.

Rather, the Sfas Emes says, the *pasuk* refers to the permitted deeds of all mankind, and the Torah is urging us to perform them in a Jewish way, not in the manner that the Egyptians and Canaanites would perform these same deeds.

There is a Jewish way of eating, working, relaxing, vacationing, etc. Often, these acts are necessities. But nevertheless, do them as a *Yid*.

For example, when a *Yid* works and earns *parnassah*, it differs from *l'havdil*, how a *goy* works.

The Rambam says that when the Avos (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov) tended to their sheep, they worked with their hands, but their hearts were with Hashem.

It is written: (*Devarim* 23:21) למען יברכה ה' אלקיך בכל משלח ירך, "So that Hashem, your G-d, will bless you wherever you place your

hand." Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zy'a* says that this *pasuk* tells us that only one's hands should be occupied in *parnassah*. The mind should be thinking about Hashem and His Torah, even while one is working.

Similarly, it states (*Shemos* 31:4), לחשוב מחשבות לעשות בזהב, ובסף ובכחשת. Rebbe Mendel of Kotzk *zy'a* explains: Think thoughts of Torah and *emunah* as you work to earn gold and silver.

And it states (*Tehillim* 128:2), יגיע כפיך כי תאכל, "When you eat the labor of your hands." The Kotzker Rebbe explains that your hands should work for *parnassah*, but the mind should be thinking loftier thoughts.

The Mishnah states: (*Avos* 2:2) יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ. The Satmar Rebbe *zy'a* explained that it is good when one thinks about Torah, even when he is involved in making *parnassah*.

The Steipler Gaon *zt'l* was fixing something in his house. A grandson said, "Zeide, let me do this."

The Steipler Gaon replied, "It is better that you continue studying Torah."

The grandson responded, "One of us will need to stop learning Torah to fix it. Why shouldn't it be me?"

The Steipler replied, "While I'm fixing it, I'm thinking Torah. It isn't *bitul Torah* for me. But I'm concerned that you won't be able to focus on Torah while you fix it, so I prefer to do it myself."

Pesach, we acquired *emunah*, and with *emunah*, everything we do is uplifted, special, and performed in ways that are pleasing to Hashem.

### ***Emunah***

In his youth, Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l* was hospitalized for an



extended period of time in a Lithuanian hospital. Before leaving the hospital, he asked the chief doctor, "Is there any remedy that doctors are certain of?"

The doctor replied, "There is one thing we are certain about. The patient's optimism that he will get better can cure him. His optimistic, cheerful thoughts are very conducive for recovery."

At that moment, Rebbe Moshe Kobriner decided that he would work to excel in *emunah* and *bitachon*, so that his optimistic thoughts and trust in Hashem would heal him.

When Rebbe Moshe Kobriner was on his deathbed, he said, "Now that I'm at the end of my life, I will reveal something I never said before. I can swear that I believe that when a person moves a finger or when his eyes move, it is only with Hashem's power." Anyone

can say these words, but he truly believed that it is so. He acquired this level because he devoted his life to focusing on *emunah*.

The Rebbe of Kobrin *zy'a* would say, א"ל" אדון על כל המעשים, Hashem is the Master of everything that happens" is the answer to all questions.

As a young man, the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander *zt'l* visited Warsaw and spent most of his time studying Torah in one of the chassidic batei medrashim in the city. The local scholars were very happy because he was a great scholar, and he would speak with them in all areas of the Torah.

One day, people saw the Yismach Yisrael read something in a *sefer* and became extremely happy. He paced back in forth in the *beis medrash* with a fiery countenance.

Later that day, when the chassidim were eating

a meal together, someone asked him, "What *vort* excited you so much?"

He said that he read a lesson from Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l*: It is written, *ואמונתך סביבתך* (*Tehillim* 89:9), which can be translated, *מיט אמונה נעמט מען דיר ארום* "When one has *emunah*, Hashem hugs him."

People say, "If things don't go the way you want them to, begin wanting the way things go." Make peace with the situation and learn to appreciate your life as it is.

The Rebbe of Kobriner *zy'a* said that he thinks the saying should go as follows: "If you desire the way things are, things will be as you desire." Because accepting the situation as is, is a *segulah* that everything will work out well for you.

A tzaddik told Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin that he wanted to visit him for a Shabbos, but Rebbe Moshe Kobriner told him not to come. He explained, "We have a very different approach towards helping the people who come to us for salvations. We aren't on the same page. When someone comes to you for a salvation, you find some logical and natural solution to help the person. But I don't offer any solutions. All I do is strengthen him in his *emunah* and *bitachon*, and with *emunah* and *bitachon* he has a salvation. You help people with wisdom, but wisdom has a limit. I help them with *emunah*, which has no limits."

The tzaddik replied, "I should be as healthy as you are correct!" After that, they spoke amicably and were friends from then on.<sup>2</sup>

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2. A person with *emunah* and *bitachon* is never worried.

A few days before Pesach, a *melamed* told his class to review the

material they were learning, while he went to the hallway to call home.

He asked his wife, "You told me this morning that you were going to throw out all the old clothing when you clean for Pesach. Did you do it already?"

His wife answered that she had.

"Is it possible to take the clothing out of the garbage?"

"No," she replied. "The garbage truck came already."

The teacher returned to his classroom and continued teaching his class with enthusiasm, as if nothing happened.

During the lunch break the principal caught up with the *melamed*.

"I saw you left your class today, although you know I don't permit it."

The *melamed* explained that it was an emergency.

"I overheard the conversation," the principal said, "it didn't sound all that important."

The *melamed* answered, "My son's *chasunah* is approaching, and I borrowed a large amount of money from a *gmach* to help me cover the expenses. This morning my wife told me that she will clean the closets and throw out all old clothing. I forgot at the time that I hid the borrowed money in a pocket of my old suit. I remembered during the class, so I quickly called home to tell her not to throw out the suits."

"Did you call her in time?" the principal asked with concern.

"No. She had already thrown out the clothing, and there is no way to get it back."

"So how did you continue teaching? Most people would be too distraught to teach after losing so much money. I listened from behind the door, and you were learning enthusiastically with the children like nothing happened."

The *melamed* replied, "I'm a student of Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l*. He drilled into us the awareness that man came into the world to pass

## Internalizing Lessons of *Emunah*

יודע, "Who knows one?"

Towards the end of the Seder, people sing אָהרן מִי

We can say that this holy *piyut* is like a test to see whether we internalized

difficult tests such as this one. And anyway, everything is for the best, so why shouldn't I be happy?"

A few days before Pesach, a Gerer chasid came to his Rebbe, the Pnei Menachem *zt'l* and told him that he had a surgery scheduled for a day after Pesach. This person had a phobia of operations. He told the Rebbe, "I don't know how I can be happy over *yom tov*. I'm so anxious and worried. Even at the Seder, I won't have peace of mind."

The Gerer Rebbe told him, "Call your doctor and cancel your appointment. You don't need an operation. Hashem will heal you without it."

Motzei Shevi'i shel Pesach, the Pnei Menachem told the chasid to call his doctor to reschedule the appointment because it really was necessary.

The chassid said, "He is a very popular doctor. The slot was certainly taken by someone."

"Call anyway," the Rebbe said. "Perhaps the date is still available."

He called and indeed the date was still available. He had the operation the next day.

This is what actually happened:

Before Pesach, the Pnei Menachem called the doctor and told him that even if this chassid cancels the appointment, he should keep the slot open for him.

In this manner, the chassid was able to have an anxiety-free Pesach, and after Pesach he had the operation that he needed.

the lessons of the Seder. The test is, "When you hear 'one' what is the first thought that comes to your mind?" If you answer that the number one makes you think of one dollar, or something similar, then you didn't internalize the message of the Seder. The goal of the Seder is that *emunah* should be so real and alive to you until the first thing you think of when one says 'one' is, אחד אלקינו שבשמים ובארץ.<sup>3</sup>

The Gemara (*Menachos* 43) states, "*Techeles* [blue-dyed tzitzis] is similar to the

color of the sea, the sea is akin to the color of the sky, and the sky is comparable to the color of the *kisei hakavod* [Hashem's throne]. Therefore, when one looks at the *techeles* he will remember the *kisei hakavod*.

There are a number of steps between *techeles* and the *kisei hakavod* (*techeles* = sea = heaven = *kisei hakavod*). How will one immediately associate *techeles* with the *kisei hakavod*?

The answer is that when something is on one's mind, even the slightest

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3. The Hagaddah ends with Chad Gadya, and since this is the end of the Seder, it seems that this piyut is the climax, the highest point of what we accomplish at the Seder (similar to Neilah, which is the climax of Yom Kippur). In what way does Chad Gadya encompass the lessons of the Seder?

Chad Gadya is a demonstration of justice being meted out. When we see the cat eat the goat, we wonder: Where is justice? Why should the cat enjoy a meal while the goat suffers? But in the end, the cat received her payback when the dog bit her. Likewise, we live in this world, and we don't see justice. We don't see the baalei aveirah punished and tzaddikim receiving reward. But there will come a time when Hashem's justice will be revealed, and it will become known that Hashem alone leads the world.

suggestion and hint of that thing will jog and rouse his imagination. When *emunah* is important to you, even a remote association is sufficient to remind you of Hashem.

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 20) states that a man shouldn't gaze at women's clothing hung on a clothesline because it might rouse improper thoughts. Once again, this is because a person's mind associates with what it desires. When a person desires to think inappropriate thoughts, the slightest trigger will prompt his mind in that direction.

And when one seeks *yiras shamayim*, a distant reminder is sufficient to rouse him to remember Hashem.

Therefore, we say 'one' at the end of the Seder to see what he will come up with. If he associates one with the One Hashem, the lesson of the Seder has been internalized.

Baruch Hashem, everyone in our community knows the foundations of *emunah* and believes in them without a doubt. They know that Hashem is present, does everything, and listens to our prayers. But there are different levels of understanding.

We'll give an example:

Someone is discussing politics and says, "If the president does this, such and such will happen. And if this country does that, the following will happen."

Someone might tell him, "How do you know what will be? Everything is in Hashem's hands, and He can turn every situation around."

"I know that. But I'm saying what will be..."

In the same sentence, he said he believes and doesn't believe. This is how people are. They say they believe in tefillah - and they genuinely do. Why else do they daven every day? Yet,

why do they mumble the words without *kavanah*? It is because their awareness isn't solid and clear enough.

The Dubno Magid speaks about a *melamed* who was walking with his students through a forest. "Don't be afraid of dogs," he told them. "If you see dogs, just say, *ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב לשונו*, and nothing bad will happen to you."

Soon after, dogs began chasing them and the *melamed* fled from fear.

The students asked him, "Why were you so afraid? You said all we must do is say the *pasuk* and fear nothing!"

The answer is that he believed in this *segulah*, but not enough to erase his fears.

There are several other examples of people who know something but don't know it. They know it in theory, but they can't connect with the ideas in practice.

A young man was confined in a mental asylum because he thought he was a mouse. His wealthy parents hired a psychologist to speak with the lad every day. The psychologist's technique was to have the young man repeat, "I'm not a mouse" several times each day.

Three months later, the psychologist called the parents and told them that they could take their son home. He doesn't think he's a mouse anymore.

The glad parents picked up their son and were happy to see that everything was well with him. "I'm not a mouse," he proudly told his parents. "I'm a human being. Isn't that right that I'm not a mouse?"

"That's correct" the relieved parents exclaimed, happy that their son was cured.

They came to the parking lot, and in a moment, their son ran off.

They found him crouching under a car.

"Why are you under the car?" the parents asked.

"I saw a cat," he replied.

"Why does that bother you? You aren't a mouse. Remember? You're a human being!"

The boy replied, "Yes, I know I'm not a mouse. But the question is whether the cat knows that?"

What happened in this story is that the child wasn't entirely cured. He knew he wasn't a mouse, but he wasn't convinced.

He knew, but he didn't know it enough.

The same is with *emunah*. For example, we know that Hashem will help us but still worry. Obviously, our knowledge and awareness aren't yet strong enough.

Someone was having nightmares; he dreamed

that someone was speaking *lashon hara* about him.

His wife told him, "It's just a dream. Don't worry about it."

But the nightmares continued. Once, he told his wife, "I had such a frightening dream. So many people were saying the worst things about me. Their *lashon hara* was intolerable."

His wife told him, החלומות, שזוהו ידברו, dreams don't mean anything. He replied, "I know that it's just a dream, and I know that dreams are nothing but nonsense, but how does that help me? People are still speaking badly about me!"

Intellectually he knew that it was just a dream, but his heart didn't know it.

A lecturer was once talking about the severity of getting angry. "There is never a good reason to get angry because everything is for the good," he shouted.



Just then, a man came up to the podium to bring him a cup of coffee. The lectern was slanted, and the coffee spilled all over him. The orator got annoyed and shouted, "Why are you so careless? Can't you see the lectern was slanted? You are such a fool!"

One second. Why did he get angry? Wasn't he in the midst of lecturing about the futility of getting angry?

The answer is that when ideas are known but without clarity, they won't help during a test.

It reminds us of when the Tchebiner Rav's watch fell to the ground and stopped working. The watchmaker said it just needs a new battery. The Tchebiner Rav asked, "The watch worked well before dropped. Doesn't that mean that the fall caused it to break? If it were the batteries, wouldn't it have stopped earlier? Is it a

coincidence that the battery died when the watch fell?"

The watchmaker explained, "The battery was weak, but it was still strong enough to keep the watch going. But when it fell, the watch stopped for a moment. The battery was strong enough to keep the watch going, but not restart the watch and get it going again."

The Tchebiner Rav said that this is a good *mashal* for *emunah*. People have *emunah*, and that is enough to keep them going. But when a difficult test arises, and their *emunah* pauses for a moment, now is the test of whether their *emunah* is strong enough to rekindle itself.

### Reward for a Mitzvah

Now that Pesach has passed, it is time to reflect upon and rejoice with the many mitzvos we performed. The following story will help us understand this idea:

Pesach was approaching in the concentration camp, and two chassidic young men were plotting how to get matzos for the Seder.

There was hope. It was near the end of the war, and the bakery was bombed by American planes, so it was possible to get inside and find wheat kernels and perhaps turn them into matzos.

One of them secretly climbed into the bakery, found some wheat kernels, ground them into flour with two stones, added water, and baked a large matzah over a hot plate.

It was a rather thick matzah, but it was kosher and had several *kezeisim*. He hid this large matzah under his shirt and rushed back to his barrack, but before he arrived, a SS soldier asked him, "What are you hiding under your shirt? Raise your hands." The young man did so, and the matzah fell to the ground. The Nazi stomped

on it with his boots, and then he kicked and hit the Yid until he fell to the ground.

When the SS soldier finally left, the young man gathered the crumbs from the ground and brought them back to his barrack. Then he fainted.

His friend poured water on him and revived him. When he could finally speak, he told him what had happened. "It was a large matzah. It would have been enough for both of us. But now all I have is one *kezayis* of crumbs, and it is only enough for me."

His friend pleaded for the matzah. He said, "I never missed eating matzah before. I lost my entire family. I saw my wife and three children murdered in front of my eyes. So please, allow me to eat the matzah."

The other replied, "I risked my life to bake the matzos, and I was beaten for this mitzvah, and now

you want me to give it to you? You're not the only person who suffered in this war. I also lost my wife and three children, and I too, never missed eating matzah before."

The friend replied, "I know the Hagaddah by heart. I also know *Shir HaShirim* by heart (customarily said after the Seder). If you give me the matzah, I will make the Seder together with you, and you can say the entire Hagaddah after me, word for word."

He replied, "I will give you the matzah crumbs, and in exchange, you will help me with the Hagaddah. But there is one condition. The reward for this mitzvah goes to me. That I am not giving away."

They celebrated the Seder together that night, and it was a Seder that whoever wasn't there cannot fathom. The sweetness of the holy mitzvos, performed under

the threat of the Nazis, is something that only those who experienced it can understand.

In the morning, they went out to work as usual. They davened quietly while they worked. But then the one who had eaten the matzah crumbs at the Seder was so happy that he had the opportunity to eat matzah, he couldn't contain his joy, and he began shouting *Hallel* at the top of his lungs.

A startled SS soldier didn't wait to figure out what was happening and shot him. *Hy'd.*

The other Yid survived the war and merited to rebuild his home in Bnei Brak.

One night, he saw his friend in a dream, and his friend was begging him to grant him the reward for eating that matzah. In his dream, he heard himself answer, "I was *moser nefesh* to bake the matzah. I was

beaten by a German SS man. Why should I give you the reward? I was *mevater* on the mitzvah and gave you the matzah because you begged for it, but I wasn't *mevater* on the reward, and I won't be *mevater*."

His friend didn't let up and kept begging him for the reward of eating that matzah.

In the morning, he didn't know what to do. He davened in Bnei Brak in the beis medresh of Reb Yosef Shlomo Ungar, *zt'l*, with many other Holocaust survivors, and he told Reb Ungar the entire story.

Reb Ungar told him, "I am a Rav. This is a question for a Rebbe. I'm not qualified to answer such questions. However, the Machnofke Rebbe lives nearby - go ask him and tell me what he said."

The Machnofke Rebbe listened to the story and answered that it would be

proper that he grant his deceased friend the reward.

"But why?" the survivor asked. "I was *moser nefesh* for the matzah, and I only gave it away on condition that I get the Olam HaBa."

The Rebbe replied, "Your friend was killed while saying *Hallel*, and can no longer perform any mitzvos. But you are alive. You remarried and rebuilt your family. You wear tefillin and perform mitzvos each day, and you have children who also perform mitzvos. Since this episode, you've eaten matzah many times. Your friend doesn't have these opportunities. Therefore, I think it is proper that you grant him his wish and gift him the reward for the matzah."

The survivor replied, "I accept the Rebbe's ruling, and I grant him the mitzvah of matzah."

The Rebbe said, "It is insufficient just to say that here, in this room. Take these keys, one is for the

beis medresh, and one is for the *aron kodesh*. Open the *aron kodesh*, place your head inside, and remind yourself of everything that happened in the camp on that *erev Pesach*. Remind yourself of the *mesirus nefesh* you had for baking the matzah and think about the Seder you had with your friend. Also, think about how your friend was murdered while saying *Hallel*. Remember all of this, and then say, 'I grant my friend the reward for matzah.'

The Yid did exactly as the Rebbe instructed. With his head inside the *aron kodesh*, he reminded himself of everything the Rebbe said and much more. All the terrible memories of the camps that he tried so hard to erase resurfaced. He cried a lot. He couldn't stop crying. Finally, he shouted, "I give the reward of the *achilas matzah* to my friend!" He closed the *aron kodesh*, locked the beis medresh, and rushed out,

emotionally exhausted. He gave the keys to the Rebbe's *gabbai* and said, "Tell the Rebbe that I will come to him tomorrow."

He was emotionally spent. He rushed home and fell asleep as soon as he hit the pillow.

He had another dream that night. His friend came to him to thank him. He was already receiving the reward for the matzah.

He returned to the Machnofke Rebbe in the morning and told him what had happened. The Rebbe told him, "I knew your friend. He was an exceptional man, a descendant of many tzaddikim and chassidic rebbes. Even if he had some sins, they were certainly wiped away when he was murdered *al kidush Hashem*. He is surely in a very high place in Gan Eden. And yet, see how important it was for him to get some more reward in Olam HaBa. He came to you like a pauper, begging you to

grant him the reward for matzah. We must learn from this to value each mitzvah. If this young man descended from the highest places in Gan Eden to beg for the reward of one more mitzvah, how much must we value every mitzvah we do. We should be cautious with our time because each moment is another opportunity to do a mitzvah.<sup>14</sup>

### Beginnings

It is crucial for beginnings to be strong.

An example is a new day. Tzaddikim taught that a person's first מחשבה דיבור ומעשה, thought, speech, and deed of the day should be for Hashem. So, when you awaken in the morning, the first thing you should say is Modeh Ani. The first thing you should do is wash *negel vasser*, and your first thought should be your desire to serve Hashem. This sets the tone for the rest of the day.

Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l* would begin the day by

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4. The Rema (Shulchan Aruch, 476:2) writes, "Some have the custom to eat an egg at the Seder."

An egg demonstrates something that hasn't yet reached its perfected state because it didn't hatch and become a chicken. Similarly, we must remember that although we celebrate yetzias Mitzrayim, the redemption isn't complete until Moshiach comes. We are still in the process. We should therefore rejoice with the salvation and pray for the final redemption.

This also applies to each person's spiritual growth. One should rejoice with each accomplishment in avodas Hashem, but at the same time remember that he isn't finished yet. There's a lot of growth ahead that he must realize. Like the egg, he is still in the process, celebrating the past, and praying for the future.

saying, "Good morning to all Yidden."

It is very important to utilize one's first waking moments properly and use them to do good. It isn't a good idea to begin the day by listening to the news, thinking about business, or talking nonsense. The Noam Elimelech (*Hanhagos HaAdam*) writes, "Guard yourself from speaking before tefillah, even one word because this can ruin your *kavanah* when you daven." It is also recommended to learn early in the morning. As much as possible, make the beginning of the day special, and the rest of the day will follow.

The day is very short. It is over before we complete a fraction of what we want to do. But when we work on making the beginning good, there is a better chance we will acquire many good deeds during the day, and we will find that we have time for everything.

There are several types of beginnings. Rosh Chodesh is one new beginning. The beginning of a *seder* (learning session) is a new beginning. For many yeshiva *bachurim* and *kollel yungerleit*, a new *zman* for Torah study is about to begin on Rosh Chodesh Iyar. Each beginning is unique and significant.

Some conduct a *taanis dibur* for the first fifteen minutes of the *Seder*, and speak nothing but Torah during that time. That sets the mode for the rest of the time. Some begin their learning session with shmoozing, and by the time they are ready to learn, they are disappointed at how much time has passed already.

*Bachurim* are encouraged to learn with *hasmadah* at the beginning of the *zman*. Perhaps with time, their *hasmadah* and enthusiasm will cool down, but since they began on a positive note, they will likely

continue learning well for the entire *zman*.<sup>5</sup>

### The Wrong Time for *Teshuvah*

*צידה* has various translations. One is food, and another translation is *teshuvah*. Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Raba (18:61) writes, "[Yehoshua (1:11) said] הכינו לכם צדה כי בעוד שלשת ימים אתם עברים את הירדן הזה לבוא לרשת את הארץ, 'Prepare food for yourselves because in another three days you will be crossing this Yarden to take possession of the land...' But why did the Jewish nation have to prepare food? They ate the manna! From here we see that *הכינו לכם צדה* means that Yehoshua told them they should do *teshuvah*, so that they will merit to enter Eretz Yisrael."

Reb Zev of Stropkov *zt'l* said that if *צידה* in this *pasuk* means *teshuvah*, we can similarly translate the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 12:39), וגם צידה לא עשו, להם, in this manner. According to its literal meaning, the *pasuk* says that the Yidden left Mitzrayim without preparing food. They trusted that Hashem would support them, and they went into the wilderness without food.

However, we can also translate *צידה* as *teshuvah*, and the *pasuk* is telling us that the nation left Mitzrayim without doing *teshuvah*. They didn't want to do *teshuvah* at this time. Hashem praised them for this, as it states (*Yirmiyahu* 2:3), זכרתי לך...לכתך אחרי במדבר, "I remember... your following Me into the desert, into an unsown

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5. One prepares coffee with boiling hot water. He won't drink the coffee at that temperature, though. He waits until the coffee cools off, somewhat. But it is important that at the beginning it should be piping hot.



land." They went into the desert without preparing צידה, *teshuvah*. At that time, they acted correctly. This is because it was a moment of enormous closeness and love between Hashem and the Jewish nation, and it wasn't the correct time to think about all their shortcomings and sins. Now they only wanted to think about Hashem's love to them and their love for Hashem.

We can learn the same idea from this contemporary story:

Ukrainian refugees escaping to neighboring countries were often greeted by *shluchim* waiting at the borders to help the Yidden. They offered food and a place to sleep and taught them some of the basics of Torah and mitzvos. In this manner, some Yidden returned to their heritage.

Now let's focus on one such person who did *teshuvah*. For many years,

he and his family weren't religious. First, there was communism, followed by ignorance, and now, suddenly, he discovered that there is Shabbos, matzah, mitzvos! He didn't know about any of these matters before.

How happy Hashem is with him! How happy he is with Hashem! A lost child returned to Hashem! The joy for the Yid and Hashem knows no bounds. And then the Yid realizes that for years he did *aveiros* due to his ignorance. He is sad. He begins to repent. He is constantly thinking about all the wrongs he did for so many years.

It is obvious that this isn't the right time for remorse. Now the joy is so great, and it is a shame to ruin it with feelings of guilt.

This was the belief of the Jewish nation when they left Mitzrayim. וְגַם צִידָה, *they didn't do teshuvah*. They were just

redeemed from Mitzrayim, and they were going to receive the Torah. The joy was great. *Teshuvah* and focusing on their previous misdeeds would just weaken their spirits.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches that it is a great *aveirah* for a *baal teshuvah* to be sad. You can do *teshuvah* some other time. Now, when you are beginning to return to Hashem you must be happy.

Reb Yaakov Galinsky *zt'l* related that he was hoping to fall asleep on an overnight train ride in Russia, but someone on board was speaking loudly. This goy was saying, "I'm so thirsty! I'm so thirsty!" Reb Yaakov Galinsky realized that he wouldn't be able to sleep if that person kept complaining, so he went over to him, asked for his thermos, and filled it with water. The man swallowed the contents in a moment. Reb Yaakov thought that now he would fall asleep. But

the goy continued screaming on the top of his lungs, "Boy was I thirsty! I was so thirsty..."

This is how it appears when one is busy with the past.

Let's say someone borrowed a car and is driving on a rocky road. Soon after, one of the tires gets a flat. There are many things he can think about at this time. He can reflect on whether he did something wrong taking the car on this road and if there was a way to be more careful.

But he certainly shouldn't remain in the car contemplating these matters. Now he must fix the tire. Later, he can reflect on what happened to improve his ways in the future.

The Tanya (ch.26) writes, "When one is busy with his business and material needs, and he suddenly becomes upset because of

his *aveiros*, this is certainly from the *yetzer hara*, to draw him to *taavos* - as this is known. Otherwise, how did he attain genuine thoughts of regret, which are the product of love or fear of Hashem, while he is in the midst of his work? He should tell himself, 'This isn't the right time.' There must be a designated time for this."

After the Holocaust, people asked the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* for his overall feelings and impressions on the war, and his view on what happened. He replied, "Yidden don't discuss what was. Their focus is on the future."

### **Bitachon**

It states (*Tehillim* 22:5), כן, בטחו אבותינו בטחו ותפלטמו "In You our fathers trusted, they trusted, and You saved them."

בטחו, "trusted" is repeated twice in this verse, and it seems redundant.

בטח has two translations. It means trust, and it also means confident.<sup>6</sup>

We can therefore say that the *pasuk* says בטחו twice as it is referring to both translations.

The *pasuk* is saying, כן, בטחו אבותינו בטחו ותפלטמו, "In You our fathers trusted, they were confident, and You saved them."

The ultimate level of *bitachon* is to be certain that Hashem will help him.

The next *pasuk* states, כן, בטחו ולא בושו, "In You they trusted and they were not ashamed." The Ben Ish Chai explains that there are people who trust in Hashem, but they don't talk about their level of *bitachon* to others because they fear that people will

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6. An example of בטח meaning confident is in the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 34:25), ויבאו על העיר בטח, "they came upon the city (Shechem) confidently."

laugh at them if their *bitachon* doesn't work out and their hopes aren't met. Dovid HaMelech proclaims that our forefathers trusted in Hashem וַיִּשָׁן בְּיָדָיו, and they weren't ashamed to tell others about it. They were certain they would get their salvation, so they weren't embarrassed to reveal their *bitachon*.

To explain this lesson, the Ben Ish Chai tells the following story:

There was a drought in Yerushalayim. All the wells were dry, and the residents were suffering from thirst. Reb Moshe Galanti *zt'l* declared, "Everyone should come to the *kever* of Shimon HaTzaddik, and we will make a day of tefillah. Come wearing your rain gear because when we finish our tefillos, there will be a great rainstorm."

The Jewish residents of the old city of Yerushalayim put on their boots and raincoats, took along their umbrellas, and headed

together outside the city's walls, to the *kever* of Shimon HaTzaddik.

An Arab officer standing at the gates of Yerushalayim saw the Yidden marching with their boots and rain gear and thought it was ridiculous. The skies were clear. He asked them why they were dressed in this absurd way, and they replied that Reb Moshe Galanti told us that it would rain today.

When Reb Moshe Galanti passed, the guard smacked him on his face. He was angry with him for deceiving the community.

Reb Moshe Galanti just looked at him without responding.

They poured their hearts out at Shimon HaTzaddik's *kever* with loud tefillos. All this time, Reb Moshe Galanti was whispering on top of the *kever*. Suddenly, it began to pour. The guard who mocked and slapped Reb Moshe Galanti rushed

to greet the Jewish community as they jubilantly headed back. He carried Reb Moshe Galanti home on his shoulders. He asked him for forgiveness and promised that he will serve Reb Moshe like a slave as long as he lives.

This story is an example of *bitachon*, to trust in Hashem without shame. Reb Moshe Galanti wasn't afraid to tell everyone to wear their rain gear because he was confident that Hashem would answer their tefillos. He didn't mind risking the chance that the tefillos wouldn't be answered, and he may be terribly embarrassed.

This is what it means, *בך בטחו ולא בושו*, to have *bitachon*, without shame. As we say

in *Shemonah Esrei*, *ולעולם לא נבוש כי בך בטחנו*.

The following is another example of having *bitachon* without shame (*Taanis* 19):

There was a drought in the days of Choni HaMaagal, and people asked Choni Hamaagal to daven for them.

Choni HaMaagal replied that before he begins to pray, everyone should bring their clay korban Pesach ovens into their homes, so the ovens shouldn't get ruined by the rain.

He was certain Hashem will listen to his *tefillos*, so he wasn't afraid that he would be embarrassed if it didn't rain.<sup>7</sup>

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7. On Purim we sing, *להודיע שכל קויד לא יבושו*, "To reveal that all those who trust in You will not be ashamed." The Degel Machaneh Efraim (Purim) writes that *כל* means *כל שהוא*, even a little bit. Hashem help even those that have only a little bit of *bitachon*.

It states (Vayikra 11:27), *כל הולך על כפיו טמא הוא*. The Divrei Binah explains, *כל הולך על כפיו*, whoever trusts in the work of his hands, *טמא הוא*, is

### For the Good

A man came to Rebbe Hirsh of Riminov *zt'l* and said, "My wife is in labor, and she is *מקשה לילד*. The doctors say that her life is in danger if she doesn't give birth soon."

Rebbe Hirsh Riminover sat deep in thought for a few moments, and then he said, "Give me twenty gold coins, and your wife will give birth."

The man replied, "I'm poor. I don't have twenty gold coins."

The Rebbe replied, "You can sell your wife's jewelry and your furniture. That will get you close. Then, you can borrow or collect the missing amount."

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* was present when Rebbe Hirsh gave this advice and felt terrible for the poor man. So he rushed after him and said, "I will daven for your wife, and she will give birth. Everything will be well. You don't have to pay me anything."

Indeed, the Divrei Chaim davened, and the woman gave birth to a son.

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tamei. Because *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and not by the work of our hands.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* taught that businessmen must believe that everything that happens in their business, including what they buy, the price they pay, are all planned by Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*. He adds that whoever believes in this, "I guarantee that Hashem will grant him success."

It states (Tehillim 118:7), *ה' לי בעוזרי ואני אראה בשנאי*. Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l* explains: *ה' לי*, the belief that Hashem is standing at my side to help me; *בעוזרי*, I wish this level of *bitachon* to all my friends and aides. *ואני אראה*, the notion that I am in control, and matters go according to my decisions; *בשנאי*, I wish this outlook for my enemies.

But a week later, the mother was *niftarah*.

The Divrei Chaim said, "Why did I have to get involved in matters of Rebbe Hirsh Riminover? I saw (with *ruach hakodesh*) that the husband doesn't need to give so much money for his wife to bear a child, but Rebbe Hirsh saw further. He saw that it was decreed for this woman to die, and that with a *pidyon* of twenty gold coins, her life would be saved. עני חשוב כמת, poor are like the dead, and poverty could take the place of her death."

This story tells us that sometimes situations seem bad (like having to pay twenty gold coins) but they are indeed good.

The Noam Megadim (Bo) tells a *mashal* of a king who summoned someone to his palace. It was this person's first time in the king's palace, and he was stunned by the majestic beauty everywhere in the palace. The king began speaking to him, but it was apparent that this man's

mind was still busy with the beauty he beheld, the chandelier, the paintings on the wall, etc.

The king hit him on the head with his stick.

The man understood that the king wasn't punishing him. On the contrary, the king wanted to speak to him, and this bang was intended to get his attention.

So, too, when we go through hardships in life, it is often to help us recognize Hashem. We must not view it as a punishment, rather as Hashem's strong desire to get our attention so we can communicate with Him.

It states (Tehillim 89:16), אשרי העם יודעי תרועה. The Noam Megadim explains that תרועה is from the word רע, bad. The Jewish nation are יודעי תרועה; they know how to interpret the רע, the bad things that happen to them. They know that it is

Hashem's call to them, for their benefit.

The Mabit (*Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah* 16) writes, "In our generation, in *galus*, a person must think that whatever happens to him in this world, even when he stubs a finger, it is all from Hashem. Hashem's *hashgachah* over us during *galus* is greater than Hashem's *hashgachah* when we lived on our land, with our kingdom. Only, now Hashem's *hashgachah* is concealed to the extent that sinners and rebels can

think that perhaps everything does not come from Hashem. However, the wise person understands that whatever happens to us in *galus*, for the general community, and the individual, is all by Hashem's *hashgachah*."

The Rosh (*Orchos Chaim* 69) writes, רצה כאשר ירצה יוצרך, "Want what your Creator wants." Because the episodes and experiences that happen to you are destined by Hashem, they are certainly the best for you.<sup>8</sup>

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8. A wealthy Yid from America told me that he owns many apartments, which he rents out. One day he was inspecting a vacant apartment, and accidentally left there a package containing \$40,000 cash. He also forgot two MP3 players on top of that package.

Thieves broke in that night and stole the MP3 players. Altogether the thieves caused him a loss of five hundred dollars.

Normally he would be upset about losing five hundred dollars, but this time he was happy because they didn't find the forty-thousand dollars.

When people perceive Hashem's love, they know that even the hardships are good.