

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Shemos



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Torah Wellsprings - Shemos

Emunah - The Purpose of Creation

תכלית מעשה שמים is roshei teivos for שמו"ת, "The purpose for the creation of heaven and earth."

The Kotzker zt'l said that we should learn the parshiyos of Shovavim in depth (b'iyun), and perhaps one reason is that Sefer Shemos teaches us the lessons that are תכלית מעשה שמים, the purpose of creation. The purpose of creation is to know Hashem, and Sefer Shemos, with the miracles that occurred, teaches us that Hashem created and leads the world.

The parashah begins with the words ואלה שמות בני ישראל. The Baal HaTurim writes that the letters of these words are the roshei teivos for the following words: ואדם אשר לומד הסדר שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום בקול נעים ישיר יהיה שנים רבות ארוכים לעולם, "A person who learns the parashah, twice the pasukim and once the commentary [Onkelos] and sings it with a sweet voice; he will live many, long years."

The Gemara (Brachos 8) states, "A person should always complete the parashah, twice the pasuk and once the commentary [Onkelos] together with the community... Whoever does so, his days and years will be lengthened."¹

But there is also a way to explain this concept allegorically. We read each pasuk of the parashah twice. This represents our life experiences. Sometimes life is pleasurable, and sometimes it is the opposite. However, there is only one targum, one commentary, one way to look at what happens to us, and

that is that all situations are for the good. These are among the lessons we learn in Sefer Shemos and this week, in parashas Shemos.

Defying Logic

It states (2:23) ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבדה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה, "During those many days, it happened that the king of Mitzrayim died, and Bnei Yisrael moaned because of the work and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to Hashem."

Why did they cry out to Hashem specifically now? The answer is, until now, they thought that Pharaoh was their problem. They figured that when Pharaoh died, their lives would improve. But Pharaoh died, and they were still enslaved. They still needed a *yeshuah*. That is when they realized that their problems weren't from Pharaoh but from Hashem's decree, and their salvation would come when they shouted out to Him.

When one believes that everything is from Hashem, he knows that the natural rules of logic don't necessarily apply. Logic told them that matters would be better for them when a new king ascended the throne, but when there was no improvement, they discovered that the decree came from Hashem. And when it is from Hashem, it is logical that the problem will remain even after Pharaoh dies.

ויאמר אליו ה' מזה בידך ויאמר מטה, ויאמר השליכהו ארצה וישלכהו ארצה ויהי לנחש, "Hashem said to Moshe 'What is in your hand?' and he said,

1. Ben Yehoyada explains that lengthened "years," means to live longer. Lengthened "days" means to receive Hashem's chesed each day.

Another explanation of "lengthened days" and "lengthened years" is that he will find time in the day and in the year to accomplish a lot. His days and years won't pass by without him accomplishing what he has set out to do.

'a staff.' Hashem said, 'Cast it on the ground.' He cast it on the ground, and it became a snake..."

A *matze*, a staff, represents something one relies on and leans on. People rely on various things: money, talent, wisdom, *mazal*, etc. Moshe's staff became a snake to indicate that when you rely on anyone or anything that isn't Hashem, the matter you depend on will harm you like a snake. You think it will help you, but you will be disappointed. The only one to rely on is Hashem.

Hashem told Moshe to do this miracle before the Jewish nation so they would know to rely solely on Him.

Hashem told Moshe to perform a second miracle before the Jewish nation to help them believe in Hashem. It states. (4:6-7) ויאמר ה' לו עוד, הבא נא ירך בחיקך ויבא ידו בחיקו ויוצאה והנה ידו מצרעת כשלג, ויאמר השב ירך אל חיקך וישב ידו אל חיקו ויוצאה מחיקו והנה שבה כבשרו Hashem said further to Moshe, 'Bring your hand to your bosom.' He brought his hand to his bosom, then he withdrew it, and behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. Hashem said, 'Return your hand to your bosom.' He returned his hand to his bosom; then he removed it from his bosom, and behold it reverted to be like his flesh."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l asks, to heal Moshe, why did Hashem tell Moshe to place his hand back into his bosom? Hashem could have healed Moshe without him needing to return his hand to his bosom.

The Chofetz Chaim answers that Hashem wanted to show that the same deed that brought about illness can create the cure. It defies logic. How can a bosom create illness and a cure? But this is because it isn't the bosom that afflicted Moshe's hand with *tzaraas*; it was Hashem's decree, and Hashem can heal him the same way he became ill.

It states (3:21-22) ונתתי את חן העם הזה בעיני מצרים והיה כי תלכו לא תלכו ריקם, ושאלה אשה משכנתה ומגרת "I shall grant this people favor (*chen*) in the eyes of Mitzrayim,

so that it will happen that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. Each woman shall request from her neighbor and from the one who lives in her house silver vessels, golden vessels, and garments..."

These pesukim are discussing a scenario that indeed occurred, but totally defies worldly logic. At the beginning of the parashah, the Mitzrim hated the Jewish nation. (1:12) ויקצו מפני בני ישראל "They became disgusted from Bnei Yisrael."

Rashi explains that ויקצו means they became disgusted with their lives. The Mitzrim's lives had no meaning to them whenever they thought of Bnei Yisrael. Another explanation, Rashi says, is that they considered the Jewish nation to be like thorns (קוצים) in their eyes.

This is how much they hated the Jewish nation. Now, after the Yidden caused them to suffer ten makos, we would assume that the Mitzrim would hate the Jewish nation so much more! But it was the opposite. ונתתי את חן העם הזה בעיני מצרים Hashem granted *chen* to the Jewish nation in the eyes of the Mitzrim. Now, they wanted to give them gold, silver, and more. Suddenly, they wanted to help the Jewish nation, and this was after they suffered so much from them! It defies all logic!

But the answer is that everything is in Hashem's hands, and therefore, when Hashem takes away the *chen*, they are hated, and when Hashem gives them *chen*, they are loved. If the Jewish nation would work with logic, they would ask, "How can I ask them for favors? They hate me!" But at this point, they discovered that everything is in Hashem's hands, and Hashem can turn it all around. Because with *emunah* that everything is from Hashem, logic doesn't play a role; only what Hashem desires occurs.

It states (105:37) ויוציאם בכסף וזהב "He took them out with silver and gold..."

The Malbim explains, "They should have hated the Yidden because their first-born

children had just died. Nevertheless, Hashem gave *chen* to the Yidden, and the Mitzrim were prepared to lend them anything they asked for."

This shouldn't surprise us because also the hatred came from Hashem, as it states (Tehillim 105:25) הִפֵּךְ לִבָּם לְשׂוֹאֵי עִמּוֹ, "He turned their hearts to hate His nation..." Rashi writes, "Hashem caused them to hate His nation." Therefore, Hashem can also turn it around and cause them to love the Jewish nation, even after the ten plagues occurred.

Some people trust in their wisdom and abilities to attain *chen* by others, but it will not work. It is in Hashem's hands, and no matter what you do, you can't attain *chen* on your own. And even when you do something that according to logic should take away your *chen*, it can increase it, if that is what Hashem wants at this time.²

This is as the Midrash states (regarding Yosef's brothers), "When You wanted, you placed hatred in their hearts, and when You wanted, you placed love in their hearts." Everything is in Hashem's hands.

The Kli Yakar explains the pasuk (1:8) וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ עַל מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדָע אֶת יוֹסֵף, "A new king arose over Mitzrayim who did not know of Yosef." "This means Pharaoh didn't know what happened to Yosef. The brothers tried with all their efforts to destroy Yosef, so his dreams wouldn't materialize, but all their attempts didn't help because Hashem wanted to make Yosef great and Hashem's plan will always transpire. Similarly, Pharaoh's plan of (1:10) פֶּן יִרְבֶּה, to prevent the growth of the Jewish nation was contrary to Hashem's plan of (1:12) כִּן יִרְבֶּה, that they should increase. Pharaoh made plans, but they didn't succeed, as Yosef's brothers failed. Whatever he did to go against Bnei Yisrael,

that itself returned to be negative for the Mitzrim."

He didn't know the story of Yosef, which showed that it is impossible to go against Hashem's plan. And if you try, Hashem will take your attempts and use them to bring about His will. The brothers sold Yosef to Mitzrayim so he wouldn't become king, and Hashem used this situation to make Yosef king. Similarly, Pharaoh initiated the slavery to stop the increase of the Jewish nation, and that only caused a greater increase in the Jewish people. Rashi writes that six children were born at one time. And this is because it is impossible to go against Hashem's plan. Logic might be on your side, but when Hashem wants otherwise, rules of logic do not apply.

The Gemara (Shabbos 119.) tells that there was a man called Yosef Mokir Shabbos (Yosef who honors the Shabbos). His neighbor, a non-Jew, was extremely wealthy. An astrologist told the neighbor, "All your wealth is destined to go to Yosef Mokir Shabbos."

To prevent this, the neighbor sold all his properties, bought a very expensive diamond, and inserted the diamond in his hat. Rashi writes, "He made himself a cloth hat, and he decorated it with [small] boxes (מִשְׁבָּצוֹת) of gold, and in those boxes, he inserted diamonds. This precious diamond was placed there together with the others."

He planned to keep his eyes on his wealth, so Yosef Mokir Shabbos shouldn't be able to get it.

Once, as he crossed a bridge, a wind picked up the hat from his head and blew it into the river. A large fish swallowed the hat. Fishermen caught the fish and brought it ashore to sell. It was late Friday afternoon; everyone had already bought and prepared

2. It states (Tehillim 84:12) הוֹן וְכְבוֹד יִתֵּן ה', "Chen and honor does Hashem bestow." It is explained that Hashem does everything, but in particular הוֹן וְכְבוֹד, Hashem gives honor and *chen*; there is no hishtadlus on our behalf. One can't make hishtadlus to attain honor or *chen*. When Hashem desires to give it, we receive it, and Hashem can give us *chen* at times and in ways that defy logic.

their Shabbos meals. The fishermen were disappointed. "Who will want to buy this fish now?" they asked.

They were advised to go to Yosef Mokir Shabbos's home and ask him if he wanted to buy it. The fishermen did so, and Yosef Mokir Shabbos purchased the fish. As he cut open the fish to prepare it for Shabbos, he found the diamond. He sold the diamond for an enormous amount of money. (Thirteen flights filled with gold coins.) Yosef Mokir Shabbos met an old person³ who told him, "When one borrows money to buy for Shabbos, Shabbos will pay back his debts."

The Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yehoyada) asks that it seems that the purpose of this Gemara is to teach that when one honors Shabbos, he will earn wealth and success. If this is the case, the Gemara could have been written in a far shorter manner, starting from the fact that Yosef Mokir Shabbos bought a fish late Friday afternoon and found a diamond in it.

The Ben Ish Chai answers that the Gemara's elaboration teaches us that when something is bashert, there is nothing one can do to prevent it from occurring. The wealthy man's money was destined to go to Yosef Mokir Shabbos, and all his attempts to avoid it just helped it happen.

Moshe Rabbeinu's Younger Years

When we study Moshe's life, we find many examples and lessons in emunah.

Pharaoh told the midwives, Shifrah and Puah to kill all male children. Rashi (1:16) explains, "He was only concerned about the male children because the astrologers told him that a son would save them."

When Moshe was born, Pharaoh increased the severity of the decree. Now, even the non-Jewish children were to be killed. It states (1:22) ויצו פרעה לכל עמו לאמר כל הבן היולד היארה

תשליכוו וכל הבת תחיון, "Pharaoh commanded his entire nation, saying, 'Every son that will be born, in the river shall you throw him! And every daughter you shall keep alive!'"

Rashi explains, "The day that Moshe was born, the astrologers told Pharaoh, 'Today, the savior of the Jewish nation was born, only, we don't know whether he is Egyptian or Jewish. But we do see that he will be punished with water.' Therefore, Pharaoh decreed on that day, also for the Egyptians [that they should be thrown into the Nile]."

Pharaoh's daughter, Basyah, found Moshe in the Nile and took him to her father's home to raise him there.

We discover from this episode that Hashem does as He wants with His world, and all our plans that contradict His will, fail. Pharaoh's efforts couldn't eliminate Moshe. Hashem wanted Moshe to live, and Pharaoh's attempts actually helped Moshe survive.

When Moshe was placed in the Nile, the astrologers told Pharaoh that the savior of the Jewish nation was already smitten in water. Pharaoh thought he had succeeded in destroying the savior of the Jewish nation, and he retracted the decree.

Let us contemplate how Moshe's mother, Yocheved, felt when she heard they were no longer obligated to throw the children into the Nile. When Moshe was born, Yocheved hid him for three months (see 2:2). She couldn't hide him anymore because the Mitzrim were searching for their child (see Rashi 2:3), so she placed him in the Nile. Almost immediately afterward, the decree was abolished. How did Yocheved feel at this time? She could have been sick with guilt, saying, "I hid him for three months. Had I held on to him for one more day, he would have been saved!"

We are all familiar with that painful feeling of regret when one asks himself,

3. Some say the old person was Eliyahu HaNavi.

"Why did I do that? It could have been so much better if I had done something else." However, with the foundations of emunah, we know that what needs to occur happens.

This story is an example. Yocheved didn't realize that had Moshe remained at home, the decree wouldn't have been abolished. It was abolished only because Moshe was placed into the Nile, and the astrologers thought the savior of Bnei Yisrael had already been punished with water. (They didn't know that Moshe would be punished in the future with the *מי מריבה*, when he hit the stone to bring forth water.)

This reminds us that we shouldn't be bitter with regret over our decisions in life because matters aren't in our hands, and Hashem leads the world as He desires it.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 1:26) tells us how it occurred that Moshe had a speech impediment. When Moshe was a young child, growing up in Pharaoh's home, Pharaoh would kiss and hug Moshe, and Moshe would take Pharaoh's crown off his head and put it on his own head. Pharaoh's sorcerers and advisors said, "We fear this is the child that will take away your kingdom in the future." Some of his advisors advised Pharaoh to kill or burn Moshe, r'l. At this time, Yisro was one of Pharaoh's advisors. He said, "He is just a child. He doesn't know what he is doing. We can test it. Place a tray with gold and hot coals before Moshe. If he takes the gold, that's a sign that he has intelligence and knows what he is doing. But if he takes the coals, that proves he is acting as children do, and the fact that he takes the crown doesn't have significance."

The Midrash writes, "Moshe stretched out his hand to take the gold, and Malach Gavriel pushed Moshe's hand to grab the coals. Moshe put his hand to his mouth and burned his tongue. This caused Moshe's speech to be impaired.

When this story occurred, it seemed like a tragedy for the child. His hand hurt, his tongue hurt; he was maimed for life. He

probably cried. However, this was a great chesed and an incredible miracle. It saved Moshe's life. This reminds us that we only see half of the picture when something seems bad for us. If we knew the whole story, we would understand that it is good for us.

Hashem told Moshe to be the leader of Bnei Yisrael and to take them out of Mitzrayim. Moshe responded that he isn't fitting for this position (4:10) *כי כבד פה וכבד לשון*, אנכי, "for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech."

Drashos HaRan (Drush 3) teaches that Moshe's speech impediment caused him to be the most fitting candidate to be the redeemer of Bnei Yisrael. If Moshe spoke well, there would be room for mockers to claim that he succeeded in convincing the Jewish nation that he was the redeemer, even if it wasn't true. And this is because people get swayed by a polished speaker and believe everything he says, even when he preaches falsehoods and foolishness. In contrast, people tend to disbelieve those who don't speak well.

The Ran writes, "Hashem doesn't do things by accident. Everything is for a purpose. So, too, Moshe's speech impediment wasn't by chance. It was part of Hashem's perfect plan. It was by hashgachah pratis that Moshe should have a speech impediment so that no one should think that Klal Yisrael and their *gedolim* were drawn after Moshe because he spoke well. For it is known that a good speaker, even when he speaks falsehoods, people accept what he says as truth. But when one has a speech deficiency, they won't accept what he says, even when he tells the truth, until he proves it. It was by Hashem's hashgachah that Moshe should be hard of speaking. It wasn't by chance..."

Hashem replied (4:11), *מי שם פה לאדם או מי ישום אדם או חרש או פקח הלא אנכי ה'* "Who gave man a mouth, or who makes one dumb or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, Hashem?" The answer was that Hashem does

everything, and nothing is by chance. Moshe's inability to speak was also planned precisely for his needs and for the mission he was sent to perform.

This is an encouraging thought for everyone who wishes their life was different. They say, "If my life was as I want it to be, without the challenges I go through, I could serve Hashem much better."

Be aware that your challenges aren't by chance. They are exactly what you need to bring you to the perfection that Hashem wants from you.

Everything for the Good

In reference to the slave-work in Mitzrayim, it states (1:14) וימררו את חייהם בעבודה קשה, "They embittered their lives with hard work." We would assume that these words are chanted in a bitter, sad tune, but the trop on these words is קדמא ואולא, which is a happy tune. Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke zt'l explains that this is because the bitter work freed Bnei Yisroel from galus. They were supposed to be in Mitzrayim for 400 hundred years, but because of the hard labor, they were freed from Mitzrayim after only 210 years. קדמא ואולא can be translated as "they left early." This is the reason that וימררו את חייהם, "they embittered their lives," is said in a happy tune. This is an example of when we think something is bad, but it is for the good.

At the end of the parashah, Moshe asks Hashem (5:22) למה הרעתה לעם הזה, "Why have You done bad to this nation?"

Hashem replied (6:1) עתה תראה אשר אעשה לפרעה, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out..."

The key word here is ועתה, "Now you will see." The hardships the Jewish nation is enduring are so they can be redeemed *now*. Otherwise, they would have to wait another 190 years.

Moshe was punished for complaining and for saying למה הרעתה לעם הזה, "Why have You done bad to this nation?"

Hashem said (6:1), עתה תראה אשר אעשה לפרעה, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out, and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land." Rashi writes, "You have questioned My ways [of running the world]... Therefore, עתה תראה, now you will see. You will see what will be done to Pharaoh, but you won't see..." the miracles I will perform for the Jewish nation to conquer the seven kings living in Eretz Canaan.

Moshe complained to Hashem, and his punishment was that he couldn't enter Eretz Yisrael. The Ohev Yisrael zt'l (beginning of Va'eira) explains that this, too, was for Moshe's benefit.

The Ohev Yisrael explains:

If Moshe had come to Eretz Yisrael, the seven nations would have fallen before the Jewish people without saying a word, and Moshe would immediately build the Beis HaMikdash. If Moshe had built the Beis Hamikdash, it would never have been destroyed (see Sotah 9.). But we needed the option of the Beis HaMikdash being destroyed because that is what saved us when we sinned. As Chazal explain, שפך חמתו, "Hashem poured out his wrath on the wood and stones of the Beis HaMikdash, and the Jewish nation survived." Therefore, it was for our benefit that Moshe couldn't come to Eretz Yisrael. Moshe knew all of this and was at peace with the decree forbidding him entry to Eretz Yisrael.

So, once again, what seemed to be a tragedy was for the good, and it is always that way.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 1:32) says, "Yisro was a *komer*, a priest for avodah zarah, and he recognized that avodah zarah was all foolishness. He decided to do teshuvah. He

came to this realization before Moshe arrived. He called together the people of his city and said, 'Until now, I served you, but now I am old. Choose another priest.' They put Yisro in *cherem* [because they understood that he no longer believed in their avodah zarah]. They decreed that no one take care of his sheep or work for him. He sought shepherds to tend to his sheep but couldn't find any. So, his daughters had to take out his sheep. They would go out early because they were afraid of the shepherds."

Therefore, it states (2:16-17) ולכהן מדין שבע בנות ותבאנה ותדלנה ותמלאנה את הרהטים להשקות צאן אביהן ויבאו הרועים ויגרשום "And to the kohen of Midian was seven daughters, and they came and drew [water], and they filled the troughs to water their father's flocks. But the shepherds came and drove them away." It seems that things were going bad for Yisro and his family. He didn't have sons. His daughters were the only people working for Yisro, and they constantly struggled with the shepherds. But good came from it. Yisro became Moshe Rabbeinu's father-in-law because of these problems. As it states (2:17) ויבאו הרעים ויגרשום ויקם משה וישען וישק את צאנם, ותבאנה אל רעואל אביהן ויאמר מדוע מהרתן בא היום, ותאמרן איש מצרי הצילנו מיד הרעים וגם דלה דלה לנו וישק את הצאן, ויאמר אל בנתיו ואיו למה זה עזבתן את האיש קראן לו ויאכל לחם, ויואל משה לשבת "The shepherds came and drove them away. Moshe got up and saved them and watered their sheep. They came to...their father. He said, 'How could you come so quickly today?' They replied, 'A Mitzri saved us from the shepherds, and he even drew water for us and watered the sheep.' He said to his daughters, 'Then where is he? Why did you leave the man? Summon him and let him eat bread. Moshe desired to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Tzipporah to Moshe."

So, in retrospect, Yisro gained so much from his "problem." That is how it always is. Hashem only gives us good; even that which appears bad is for our good.

This is a lesson for all people who are going through hard times. We must believe that excellent things will come from our challenges and hardships.

When Yaakov met with Yosef for the first time in twenty-two years, he said (Bereishis 46:30) אמותה הפעם, "Now I can die..." The Shelah Hakadosh explains (b'derech tzachus) that Yosef was going to support his father, and it is embarrassing for a father to be supported by his children. Therefore, he said, אמותה הפעם, "It is like death to me."

But this negative feeling granted Yaakov Avinu so much good. Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l quotes a Midrash that Yaakov Avinu was destined to live for 130 years, but since he suffered the humiliation of being supported by Yosef, he was granted another seventeen years of life and was niftar at the age of 147. Let us learn from this that when things seem bad, they are all for the good.

The Or HaChaim (Bereishis 47:28) writes, "Yaakov never had respite and calm. Immediately when he was born, his enemy Eisav was there. When that problem wasn't yet resolved, Lavan came to the scene to harm him. Then came the episode with Dinah, and he endured the distress of losing Yosef." The Or HaChaim explains that the best years of his life were the final seventeen years when he lived in Mitzrayim with his family. The Or HaChaim writes that those final years made his entire life feel worthwhile. He merited those final years from the hardship and shame he endured because his children supported him.

So, we shouldn't complain when we go through hardships because there is always a purpose. The humility that Yaakov suffered the final seventeen years of his life allowed him to live the best years of his life.

People complain and moan, "Why must it be this way? Why can't I be self-supporting?" But with a deeper look, we can recognize how much he gained from this problem. Let this remind us not to complain, and to believe that everything is all for our good.⁴

Someone told the Steipler zt'l that he doesn't feel a *taam* (joy) in life. The Steipler told him, "I understand that you want to live; only you want your life to be filled with the joy you seek. But one never knows. Perhaps because you are going through these hard times, you were granted more years of life!"

Sinas Chinam – Vain Hatred

It states (3:2) וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש מתוך הסנה אכל, וירא והנה הסנה בוער באש והסנה איננו אכל "A *malach* of Hashem appeared to [Moshe] in a blaze of fire from amid the bush. He saw and behold! The bush was burning in the fire, but the bush was not consumed."

The Kli Yakar says that סנה represents שונאת חנם, senseless and vain hatred. This hatred is the root of all *tzaros* we endure in *galus*. We are punished for the *sinas chinam*, and the *tzaros* of *galus* are represented by the burning fire in the bush. והסנה איננו אכל, the bush was not consumed. This means that vain hatred continues. We haven't yet woken up and realized how much we suffer from the *sinas chinam*.

Kli Yakar writes, "This is the main reason the Yidden are in *galus*; because of hatred and the jealousy between them, more than what exists by other nations."

At first, Moshe Rabbeinu didn't understand why the Jewish nation was destined to suffer in *galus*. As Rashi (2:14) writes, "[Moshe] always wondered, what sin did Yisrael do worse than the seventy nations that they should be punished with עבודת פרך, extremely difficult work? But now I see that they deserve it." After he saw *lashon hara*, *moser*, and *sinas chinam* among Yidden, he understood that they deserved the punishments they endured.

Later, when Hashem told Moshe that he wanted to save Klal Yisrael, Moshe said (Rashi 3:11), "What merit does the Jewish nation have that a miracle should happen to them, that I should take them out of Mitzrayim?" At first, he didn't understand why they suffered, but later, he didn't understand why they deserved to be saved! The Sfas Emes (5641) writes, "This tells us, *chas veshalom*, one loses all his merits by the sin of *lashon hara*..."¹⁵

4. The Or HaChaim (Bereishis 47:28) writes, "Since Yaakov supported Yosef for seventeen years, as it states (Bereishis 37:2) that Yosef was seventeen when he left Yaakov, therefore, for seventeen years, Yosef provided *parnassah* to Yaakov. It is possible that Yaakov's life mission was completed when he was 130 years old, but he lived another seventeen years to grant Yosef the ability to pay back the favor he received...." He had fed Yosef for seventeen years, and therefore, he lived another seventeen years so Yosef could have the privilege to repay this kindness and support Yaakov for seventeen years.

5. The Divrei Yoel of Satmar zt'l pointed out how wedding customs symbolize *mattan Torah* (as discussed by the *Tashbetz*). For example, the torches the *mechutanim* hold at the *chuppah* correspond to the fire that burned on Har Sinai. The seven *brachos* represent the seven קולות heard by *mattan Torah*. A cup is broken under the *chuppah* to represent the *luchos*, which were broken.

The Satmar Rebbe added that it is very important to remember the broken *luchos* at a *chasunah* because Chazal teach us that the broken *luchos* is the root of forgetting, and forgetting is very important for *shalom bayis*. It could be your spouse wronged you, but if you forget – by training yourself to forget – there will be peace in the home.

About forty years ago, only a couple of weeks after the wedding, a mother-in-law embarrassed and insulted her new son-in-law. The first person he went for counsel was his mentor, Reb Elyah Roth zt'l. Reb Elyah asked him, "Does anyone know what happened?"

"No, no one knows. It just happened, and no one heard..."

"Then forget about it. Pretend it never happened."

It states (2:13) ויצא ביום השני והנה שני אנשים עברים נצים, "[Moshe] went out the next day and behold! Two Jewish men were fighting. He said to the wicked one, 'Why would you strike your fellow?'"

Who were these two men? Rashi writes, "[They were] Dasan v'Aviram. They are the ones who left over the *mon*."

Dasan v'Aviram are mentioned several times in the Torah, and always in a negative way. Why doesn't Rashi write that Dasan v'Aviram were the ones who joined Korach in the machlokes against Moshe and Aharon? Why does Rashi describe Dasan v'Aviram as the people who left over the *mon*?

We can answer that Rashi wants to show us why Dasan v'Aviram fought. It was because they were the type of people who left over the *mon*. They didn't trust in Hashem that He would support them the next day, so they saved the *mon* from one day to the next. When people don't have emunah, they will also make machlokes. When the emunah is strong, and you know that you have what Hashem wants you to have and that no one can take away from you that which is rightfully yours, there isn't jealousy, and there aren't fights. Rashi tells us that Dasan v'Aviram were fighting with each other, and the reason is that they lacked emunah in Hashem, as we see later in the Chumash when they leave over the *mon* for the next day.

A couple of weeks later, the mother-in-law asked forgiveness for what she said. Son-in-law replied, "What are you referring to? Nothing happened. It must have been a dream. I don't remember a thing."

The mother-in-law allowed herself to be talked into it, and peace was restored to their home. Today, he has close to twenty children and many grandchildren. This was all rescued thanks to the ability to forget, and move on.

6. שמונת, וארא, בא, בשלח, יתרו, משפטים. In a leap year, as this year, the sefarim write that Shovavim continues for another two weeks.

Tzaddikim added that שובבים is also roshei teivos for שפע ברכה והצלחה במעשה ידינו, bounty, blessings, and success in our endeavors. And שובבים is roshei teivos for שמחים בצאתם וששים בבואם, because we should be happy when these days arrive, when we are offered the opportunity to become cleansed from all our aveiros.

Shovavim

The Arizal teaches that during these weeks of Shovavim, we can cleanse ourselves from the gravest sins.⁶

In the past, Shovavim was associated with many fasts. We don't fast excessively in these generations. Therefore, tzaddikim say that in our times, one of the main counsels to become pure during Shovavim is to be immersed in Torah study and, ideally, without interruption. This purifies us immensely. This is how *Shovavim* is practiced in these generations.

The Chiddushei HaRim zt'l said that studying Gemara with *Tosfos* in depth is the atonement of *Shovavim*. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l said, "Learning Torah purifies more than fasts and afflictions."

The Yesod HaAvodah adds (3:5:8), "I think that studying without speaking for five hours straight is a wonderful thing; it atones, and it brings a person to *teshuvah*." Obviously, if a person can't study for five hours straight without interruption, but he can study for one hour without interruption, that is also a great accomplishment, and it will purify him immensely.

Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l once told a Torah scholar who was fasting during *Shovavim*, "You know how to learn, so why are you engaged in the lesser purifier? You can study Gemara and *Tosfos*, which purifies more than fasts."

Once, in the middle of the night, during *Shovavim*, Reb Yochanan Rachmastrivka zt'l told his *gabbai* to wake up all his chasidim. When the chassidim gathered in the beis medresh, he said, "In the past, I didn't want to speak about these matters, but just now, it was revealed to me that when one learns Torah with רציפות, without interruption, this creates a רצפת אש, a floor of fire that banishes all one's *aveiros*."

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 12:) states, כל הפוסק מדברי תורה ועוסק בדברי שיחה מאבילין אותו גחלי רתמים, "Whoever interrupts his learning and engages in idle chatter, will be fed fiery coals." The Maharil Diskin zt'l says that the punishment is also in this world. There is nothing sweeter than the Torah, but when one speaks while learning Torah, he is fed fiery coals, and after eating fiery coals, he loses his sense of taste, and the Torah isn't sweet for him anymore.

The Chazon Ish also writes about the great joy and the sweetness of Torah that comes from studying Torah without interruption. Each additional hour that he studies Torah without interruption increases his pleasure more and more.

A Time to Repent

There was a bachur who was off the derech for ten years, r'l, and then he did teshuvah sheleimah. Someone met him at the kever of the Bnei Yissaschar in Poland, and he was shocked to see this bachur davening with kavanah, like a real *yirei Shamayim*. They spoke, and the bachur told him what brought him to do teshuvah.

Once, someone told him, "Every night, your parents leave the door of their home unlocked, hoping you will return. They don't want you to find the doors locked in the middle of the night."

"I said, if my parents want me so much to come to return to them, I will not disappoint them."

Hashem also leaves the door of teshuvah open for us. The Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (Rabba 31) writes, "I testify heaven and earth that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is sitting and waiting for Yisrael to return to Him more than a father waits for his son to return." Hashem is waiting for us to return, and *Shovavim* is a time that we can make that happen.

The Zohar (vol.3 p.126.) says, "Every day, a bas kol calls forth (Yirmiyahu 3:22) שובו בנים, "Return backsliding children." The Baal Shem Tov zt'l asks: What is the purpose of the bas kol if no one hears it? The Baal Shem Tov answers that we do hear it. When we have a sudden thought of teshuvah, it comes from the bas kol that our soul hears.

This occurs every day. Suddenly, we get an urge to improve our ways. Where did this urge come from? The Baal Shem Tov says that it is from the bas kol. We hear the call in our minds and souls. During *Shovavim*, the bas kol is certainly heard in our hearts louder and clearer. The bas kol is calling to us, begging us to return to Hashem, and if we listen to the call, we will improve our ways.

The Pri Megadim (*Sefer Hamagid* vol.3 p.160) writes that שובב has three translations: (a) rebellion, (b) breaking, and (c) banishing.

This tells us that even if (a) one rebelled against Hashem, (b) broke himself and made himself blemished (in a spiritual sense), and (c) he became banished from Hashem's presence, the bas kol calls out even to him and says שובו בנים שובבים, that he should return because Hashem is waiting for his teshuvah.

The Pri Megadim adds that it states שובבים in the plural. This refers to a person who has a history of rebelling and then returning to Hashem and then rebelling again and then returning again. Even so, Hashem doesn't

lose hope in him. Hashem awaits his teshuvah.⁷

Salvation Comes from Toiling in Torah

The *Zohar* (vol.3, 216:) writes, "Whoever toils in Torah, his mazal changes." This is important to know. Some people have a mazal to be poor, childless, or some other kind of *yesurim*. Through Torah study, his mazal can improve.

Eighty years ago in Yerushalayim, someone had a *kameya* (קמיע) (amulet) that was written by the Ta"z. He would lend it to the ill and childless women, and there were many salvations.

Once, a person received the *kameya*, and opened it. He wanted to copy what was written inside to have a *kameya* of his own.

He was wrong for doing this for at least two reasons:

(1) Even if he copied the Taz's *kameya*, it wouldn't have healing powers because it isn't only *what was written* in a *kameya* that healed, but also *who* wrote the *kameya*. The

Taz's *kameya* brought salvations; copying it wouldn't accomplish anything.

(2) He also didn't realize that by opening up the Taz's *kameya*, it lost its healing powers.

Nevertheless, he opened it, and this is what he found inside the *kameya*, "I, Dovid ben Shmuel HaLevi, toiled to understand Tosfos (*Chulin* 96.) and in this merit, may Hashem help that all the barren should have a salvation, and all the ill should be healed."

Generally, a *kameiya* contains names of *malachim*, but this time, the *kameya* only said that he toiled in Torah, and this merit brought salvation.

The Taz had many merits. For example, he could have written that he wrote a leading commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*. But these merits weren't mentioned, only that he toiled in Torah. That alone is enough to bring salvation.

A *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l* whether he should follow the doctor's recommendation to undergo surgery. After hearing the details of the situation, the

7. When the Ateres Yehoshua (Dzikiver Rebbe) *zt'l* was in Vienna, he asked a street cleaner, "Why do you clean the streets? Tomorrow, people will again stroll on these streets, and the streets will be messy again."

"I know," the man replied, "but if I don't clean the streets today, tomorrow they will be even worse."

The same applies to Shovavim. It could be that we will sin again, but let us remove the sins of the past so that the new sins don't add on to the past sins and become too many.

There's a bird called שלך, which means "cast away." It is called that way because its wings give off a terrible odor, and the other birds chase it away.

Once, a *shelach* bird tried to build her nest on a tree, but all the other birds chased her away. So, she created her nest on a rooftop. But the people living there couldn't bear the smell, so they took brooms and banished her. The *shelach* decided it was time for her to try her luck in a different country.

A *duchifas* bird saw the *shelach* flying away. "Where are you going?" the *duchifas* asked.

"Don't you see I am not wanted here," the *shalach* replied. "I am going to another country. Perhaps I will be appreciated there."

The *duchifas* said, "As long as you have this smell, no one will want you around. Cut off your wings, and others will accept you."

The smell of the *shelach* represents the stench of sin. The only solution is to cut away those evil deeds. We do so during Shovavim. It is when we can cleanse ourselves and become pure from sin.

Chazon Ish advised the *bachur* to proceed with the surgery.

The *bachur* then said, "Can I speak in learning with the Chazon Ish? I have a question I want to discuss."

The Chazon Ish enjoyed speaking in learning with *bachurim*, and they discussed a deep topic in *Kodshim* for about an hour.

The Chazon Ish was impressed by this young man's erudition. As the *bachur* was about to leave, the Chazon Ish told him, "Regarding the operation, I changed my mind. You don't need the surgery."

The surprised *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish why he had changed his mind. The Chazon Ish replied, "When you asked me whether you should have the operation, I didn't know you are a *talmid chacham*. But now that I see you are among the עמלי התורה, those who toil in Torah, you don't need the operation because Hashem deals with עמלי התורה in an entirely different manner (*Maaseh Ish* vol.1, p.77).

Some years ago, Reb Malkiel Kotler *shlita*, *Rosh yeshiva* of Lakewood, repeated this story, and an elderly person stood up and said, "I am the בעל המעשה." The story happened to him.⁸

Don't Lose Hope – Try Your Best

The Radak (*Yonah* 2:2) teaches that two miracles happened to Yonah HaNavi: One is

that he was saved after being tossed into the sea. The second miracle is that when he was in the fish's stomach, he didn't lose hope. He prayed to Hashem from within the fish's stomach and was saved. The Radak writes that the second miracle, that he didn't lose hope, is greater than the other miracle.

About twenty years ago, one of the *talmidei chachamim* of Yerushalayim fell ill, and his friends and students prayed a lot for him. Hashem answered their *tefillos*, and he overcame the illness. He said, "The greatest miracle isn't that Hashem answered the *tefillos* because that is obvious: Hashem listens to the *tefillos* of the Jewish nation. The primary miracle is that despite the doctor's discouraging predictions, people didn't lose hope and davened for me.

We must never lose hope. Moshe Rabbeinu, the savior of the Jewish nation, was put in a casket in the Nile River. What were the chances of his survival? But Hashem prepared all the details so that Moshe should live:

Basya became ill with *tzaraas* and bathed in the Nile. She saved Moshe Rabbeinu and raised him right under Pharaoh's eyes. Hashem prepared every stage needed for Moshe to live and for the *yetzias Mitzrayim* to take place. The same is happening today. At times, things seem frightening, like there is no hope. But Hashem has a plan for the redemption, and all steps are set and will transpire (*Sifsei Tzaddik* of Piltz *zt'l*).

8. The Midrash (see *Chofetz Chaim*, *Toras HaBayis* 13) tells the story of a king who commanded his servants to fill barrels with water. The king paid a gold coin for each barrel filled.

One of the workers stopped working and sat down on the side. Someone asked him, "Why aren't you working? The king hired you to fill the barrels with water." The man replied, "All the barrels have holes in them. Even if I fill the barrels, in a short time, all the water will seep out, so what's the purpose?"

The man replied, "That's not your problem. You do as you were told, and you will get paid for each barrel you fill."

The *nimshal* is that many people feel that Torah study isn't for them because whatever they study, they forget. We tell them, "Your obligation is to study Torah and do your best to remember what you learned, and you will be rewarded each time you do your job. If you forget what you learn, that won't detract from your reward. So why should you care? Just carry out your mission.

It states (2:5), ותשלח את אמתה ותקחה, "[Basya] stretched out her arm, and she took [Moshe's *teivah*]." אמתה means arm, and it also means cubits. Rashi writes, ונשתרבבה אמתה אמות הרבה, "Her arm grew many *amos* long." Moshe was out of her reach, nevertheless, she stretched out her arm, and miraculously, she was able to grab onto the *teivah*.

The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* asks, why did Basya try to reach Moshe? Didn't she realize that it was impossible? The answer is that one must try, even when the odds are against him. And when one tries, Hashem will enable him to succeed.

Moshe didn't want to go and speak to Pharaoh because he had a speech impediment. Hashem told him (4:12) לך ואנכי אהיה עם פוך והוריתך "Go, and I shall be with your mouth and teach you what you should say." The Or HaChaim explains that Hashem was telling Moshe that he doesn't have to be concerned about his speech deficiency because if he carries out Hashem's mission, Hashem will heal him.

The Or HaChaim writes, "Hashem said, 'Until you start doing the mitzvah of going to Pharaoh, there's no reason to remove your speech impediment. לך, go and do the *shlichus*, and when you speak, you will see that your speech impediment is cured. This is the meaning of והוריתך אשר תדבר, 'I will show you that you can speak.' It doesn't state, והוריתך את אשר תדבר, 'I will teach you the words you should speak.' It states והוריתך אשר תדבר,

'I will show you that you can speak.' The explanation is, I will show you that you can speak very fluently."

Moshe's speech problem would disappear because all barriers and obstacles are removed when one tries his best to do Hashem's will.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 38.) says:

"Nikanor went to Alexandria, Egypt, to bring copper doors [for the Eastern gate of the *azarah* in the Beis HaMikdash]. When he was returning from Alexandria, a storm threatened to drown them. The passengers took one of the doors and threw it into the sea, but the ship still threatened to capsize. They wanted to throw the other door into the water, but Nikanor stood up, wrapped his arms around it, and said, 'Throw me in the water with it.' Immediately, the sea calmed. Nikanor was upset that one door was thrown into the sea. When they docked in Acco, Eretz Yisrael, the other door was right there, bobbing up and down beneath the ship..."

This story is another reminder that you should do whatever you can, even when the odds are against your success. One of the doors was tossed into the sea. Logic dictates that the Beis HaMikdash couldn't use one door without its pair. So why was Nikanor *moser nefesh* to bring one door to the Beis HaMikdash? The answer is that he did what he could, and indeed, Hashem helped him.⁹

9. When my father was a child, growing up in his father's home (Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*), the children would place water near their bed to wash *negel vasser* upon awakening in the morning. One evening, there was no running water, so the children went to sleep without preparing the water near their bed. When their father, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, saw that, he rebuked them. "You should have at least placed the empty cups near your bed," he said.

Because a person must do whatever he can, and Hashem will help him with the rest.