

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Shlita

Beha'aloscha



בס"ד

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Beha'aloscha

Lighting the Menorah	4
<i>Simchas Chasan v'Kalah</i>	12
It Will Pass.....	16
Working Hard	17
Desire.....	19
Toil in <i>Avodas Hashem</i>	21
Tefillah	26

Torah Wellsprings

Beha'aloscha

Lighting the Menorah

The Skulener Rebbe (Noam Eliezer) zt'l explains the unique significance of the Yom Tov of Chanukah with the following mashal. A large office tower was constructed in downtown Manhattan. Although the structure was complete, the interiors were completely dark - the electricity was not yet connected. Until there is light, the building is incomplete. So too, from Rosh Hashanah through Simchas Torah, Hashem recreates the world. But it is the light of Chanukah that illuminates and completes the world.

We can say the same about the Mishkan. The Mishkan was built with gold, silver, and other precious materials. While it was a splendid edifice, it was incomplete. Hashem's

holy light shining into the Mishkan is what completed it.

The parashah begins (8:2) דבר אל אהרן ואמרת אליו בהעלתך את הנרות... יאירו שבעת הנרות, "Speak to Aharon and say to him: When you kindle the lamps... the seven lamps will cast light." The menorah's light represents the light of kedushah that shone in the Mishkan. This light completed the Mishkan.

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 15:2) states, "When people install windows in their homes, they build them narrowly on the outside and wide on the inside so that the sunlight should come into the house. However, when Shlomo built the Beis HaMikdash, he didn't form the windows in this fashion. Inside, the windows were narrow, and outside, the windows

were wide so that the Beis HaMikdash's light should shine outside." The entire world received holiness from the light of the Beis HaMikdash. This light burst forth when the kohen lit the menorah.

A Jewish home is also a Mishkan, for it is where the Shechinah resides. The newlywed couple is excited about their new apartment and pretty furniture, but these things don't make their home complete. They need to bring in the light of kedushah, and then their home is complete.

What is this light of kedushah that the couple should ignite inside their home?

It can be expressed in various ways, but presently we explain that it is the light of good middos. Good middos bring the kedushah they need for their marriage's success.

Someone asked the Tchebiner Rav *zt'l*, "My

daughter is in shidduchim. What should we look for?"

The Tchebiner Rav replied, "Look for three things: middos, middos, and again, middos."

The Steipler Gaon *zt'l* asked someone to gather information about a certain *bachur* suggested for the Steipler's granddaughter. The *shaliach* returned and relayed the beautiful things he heard about the *bachur*. He said, "I heard that he learns eighteen hours a day. He is a giant *talmid chacham*."

"What about *middos*?" the Steipler asked.

The *shaliach* didn't know anything about the *bachur*'s *middos*. He replied, "How could he possibly have bad *middos*? He's always learning Torah!"

The Steipler replied, "Until now, all he had to deal with was his *shtender*. When he marries, he will have to deal with a wife. You must find out whether

he has good *middos*. Without good *middos*, it is a disaster."¹

Reb Moshe Unger *zt'l* wrote to his father-in-law, the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* about a *bachur* suggested for his daughter. The Divrei

Chaim responded, "You wrote about the *bachur*'s many qualities, but you forgot the key point. You didn't write whether he is a *mentch*. The Torah (*Devarim* 22:16) states, "את בתי נתתי לאיש," I gave my daughter to a *mentch*."²

1. I know a *yungerman* who has terrible *middos*. Just as an example, he refuses to turn off the lights at home. He claims that this is his wife's job, and he doesn't have to do it. In short, he only thinks about himself. Not surprisingly, the marriage didn't last. He is a scholar, but without good *middos*, there was no foundation.

2. Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* would tell *bachurim* before their wedding, "There are *yungerleit* who want to become *malachim*, and the first thing they do is to become *אויס מענטשן*, (not a *mentch*)."

Once, many people were waiting in line to receive a *brachah* from Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l*. One person didn't want to wait in line, so he cut in before the others and stretched out his hand to Reb Shlomo Zalman. Reb Shlomo Zalman told him, "I give you a *brachah* that you should be a *mentch*."

To cushion the insult, Reb Shlomo Zalman asked him, "Why don't you wish me, *וכן לי* (that I too should become a *mentch*)?"

A *yungerman* came to Reb Shlomo Zalman with a *shalom bayis* problem.

He told Reb Shlomo Zalman that as a *bachur*, he departed from the traditional Yerushalmi *garb* (where even *bachurim* wear a *streimel*), choosing to wear European-style clothing.

But when he began *shidduchim*, he understood that he won't find a regular *shidduch* dressed as he did, so he put back on the

Rebbe Avraham mark a number 1 in your
 Elimelech of Karlin *zt'l* notebook. Every other
 would say that when you quality you hear about him
 inquire about a *bachur* and is a zero. Place those zeros
 hear he has good *middos*, next to the one, and it

Yerushalmi clothes. Nevertheless, he continued to go without a streimel.

He got married, lived a Jewish life in Yerushalayim, but still didn't wear a streimel.

One day, he came home with a \$2,000 *shtreimel*. He thought his wife would be pleased, but she wasn't. She said, "I am used to you without a *shtreimel*. I don't need the *shtreimel*."

"But I paid two thousand dollars for it!"

Two thousand dollars was a lot of money for them, and he was upset that he spent so much on a s streimel that he didn't need. Their *shalom bayis* began to waver over the *shtreimel*, and this is the reason he came to Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* for advice.

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "You have a good wife. In her merit, you improved your ways. You shouldn't allow two thousand dollars to ruin your *shalom bayis*."

"But what should I do about this loss of money?"

Reb Shlomo Zalman said, "I want to buy your streimel for myself," and he gave the yungerman two thousand dollars. The streimel didn't fit perfectly on Reb Shlomo Zalman, and his rebbetzin said, "It is very good that you helped this couple with their *shalom bayis*, but why must you embarrass yourself by wearing a *shtreimel* that is too big for you?"

He replied, "I am very happy with this *shtreimel*. I would even have wanted to be buried with it because buying it restored the *shalom bayis* between a couple."

becomes a large, impressive number. However, if there are many qualities but

good *middos* are lacking, all you are left with are many zeros.³

3. *Pirkei Avos* discusses good *middos*. Why is this *masechta* written in *Seder Nazikin*, which discusses financial damages? The Tzaddikim of Belz *zt'l* explain: The greatest damages occur when people have bad *middos*.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* said: When one goes around with a sad face, he is a בור ברשות הרבים, like a pit in a public domain, which causes people to fall in and get harmed. His sad disposition makes others sad too.

We can add that a sad face at home is like a שור נגזן, a goring bull.

After his *chasunah*, Reb Yehudah Ades *shlita* (*rosh yeshiva* of Kol Torah, Yerushalayim) asked his rebbe, Reb Shlomo Zalman, what time a *yungerman* should come home each night. Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "The question isn't when you should come home, rather how you should come home." He taught him to come home with a happy disposition and with kind words. The small things can make all the difference.

It states (*Avos* 1:5), אל תרבה שיחה עם האשה, "Don't speak excessively with your wife" and there was a *yungerman* who hardly spoke with his wife after the marriage, as he understood that this is how one keeps this rule from chazal. His wife however was very insulted by his silence. The Maharil Diskin *zt'l* heard about the problem, and he asked that the *yungerman* to come see him. The *yungerman* arrived and waited in the Maharil Diskin's study, but the Maharil didn't raise his eyes to greet him. The man stood there, waiting a long time, and the Maharil Diskin continued to ignore him. After a long time passed, the Maharil Diskin looked up from his Gemara, acknowledged him and said, "Now you know how it feels to be ignored. That is how your wife feels. I hope you learned your lesson."

Good middos illuminate the marriage. Just as the windows of the Beis HaMikdash shone outside the Beis HaMikdash, a marriage with good middos will shine kedushah and goodness to all people around them. They become a beacon of light, and their ways will inspire people around them.

Reb Yosef Liberman zt"l writes the following story in the introduction to his *sefer*:

There was a person who made some excellent business investments after his wedding and with Hashem's help, became very wealthy.

He also had *nachas*. One of his children married the child of Reb Shimon Sofer zt"l.

Someone asked him, "How did you become so successful?

This is what he answered:

"The first Shabbos after my *chasunah*, I came to my in-law's home, and saw that my mother-in-law lit her Shabbos *lecht* in an earthenware utensil. I asked my father-in-law why his wife lights in earthenware candlesticks while he gave me beautiful silver candlesticks.

"My father-in-law replied, 'The silver candlesticks you now own were once ours. We gave it to you because we promised it when you were engaged.'

"And why is your dining room set in such poor condition?"

"Your dining set was also once ours. I gave it to you for your dowry."

"I inquired about some other utensils that were missing in their home, and the answer was the same: They gave everything to us to keep their promise."

After Shabbos, the son-in-law said to his wife, "We are giving everything

back." He couldn't enjoy what he had, knowing that his in-laws were suffering because of it. He returned the dining room set, the *laichter*, and everything they received from his in-laws.

But now, they needed these basic items for themselves, so he took a loan. With the loan, he bought everything their home needed, and invested the remaining money in business. In the merit of his good deed, the investments prospered, and within a short time, he paid off the loan and became wealthy.

Reb Yosef Liberman tells this story to encourage young people to have their in-laws in mind. He says, "The children shouldn't only give back the *laichter*,

they should give back their in-law's heart as well," because in-laws sometimes feel that they are giving their hearts away to marry off their children, and the children should have compassion and take this into consideration. Doing so will bring them success in their life. The man in our story earned a lot more by returning the items to his in-laws than if he had held onto them.

Each case is different. A young couple is starting a new life, and sometimes the help they receive from their parents is crucial. But compassion is in place, and the hardships that the parents go through should be taken into consideration. This is the light of good middos, the foundation of a Jewish home.⁴

4. There were two fathers who wanted to become mechutanim, that their children marry each other, however, the father of the girl demanded four hundred liros for a dowry, and the father of the boy was worried that he might not be able to give so much money. They came to the Chazon Ish zt'l.

When a person hires a contractor to build a house, he plans precisely how many rooms he wants, how they should be set up, the type of windows, floor, light fixtures, and so on, but he doesn't discuss with the contractor how strong the foundation should be. This is because it is obvious and self-understood that the house needs to be built on sound, firm foundations. Without good foundations, nothing can be built.

Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* said that this is why the

Torah has 613 mitzvos but doesn't explicitly state that we must have good *middos*. Good *middos* are the foundations which don't need to be discussed because without good *middos* there is nothing at all.

This lesson also applies to *shidduchim* and marriage. We seek *shidduchim* for the purpose of building an everlasting edifice, a Jewish home. The foundation of this structure is good *middos*.

The Chazon Ish told the father of the boy, "We see that when one tries, the Eibershter helps." If you will try to give that amount, you will manage. Indeed, he had no problem paying it (*Maaseh Ish* vol.2 109).

Once, two fathers came to the Chazon Ish with a financial disagreement. Their children were about to get engaged, and the question was who would pay which expense. After the Chazon Ish helped them reach a compromise and they left, the Chazon Ish told Reb Shmaryahu Greinaman *zt'l*, "Do you know what they were debating? One was saying, 'About you it shall be written, יצו את הברכה, that Hashem should send the blessing of money,' and the other one was saying, no, 'it should be written about you.'" Because Hashem will help whoever needs to pay, so ultimately the debate was who Hashem should bless with the ability to pay (*Maaseh Ish* vol.2 109).

Simchas Chasan v'Kalah

Reb Yaakov Emdin *zt'l* was planning his fourth hundredth *siyum* on *Shas*, and at the *seudah*, he planned to say, *שהשמחה במעונו*, "the joy is in heaven," because what could be a greater joy than finishing *Shas* four hundred times? His father, the Chacham Tzvi *zt'l* came to him in a dream and cautioned him that, "*שהשמחה במעונו* should only be said at a wedding."

The *simchah* of Torah is enormous — especially the joy of learning *Shas* four hundred times — nevertheless, the term *שהשמחה במעונו* is reserved solely for a wedding because the joy of a *chasunah* is unique.

We are extremely happy at a *chasunah*, and Hashem in heaven rejoices with us.

The first Rebbe of Slonim *zt'l* said: When a *goy* makes a wedding, he is also very happy. But his joy doesn't compare to a

Yid's happiness at a *chasunah*. A Yid is happy that Hashem is happy (*שהשמחה במעונו*), and this joy brings *berachos* to all Yidden.

Rabbeinu b'Chaya (*Terumah*) writes, "Some kabbalists say that there is an eighth heaven (above the seventh heaven) called *מעון*... As we say, *שהשמחה במעונו*, the joy is in *מעון*." This is because the joy of a *chasunah* reaches the highest places in heaven.

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* would at times go into *galus*. (*Galus* means a self-inflicted exile. Tzaddikim would sometimes do so to purify themselves and bring atonement to the Jewish nation.) At these times, the Vilna Gaon would go to weddings to eat a meal (as was the custom of the poor). At one wedding, someone stole some silverware. They didn't recognize the Vilna Gaon, so they suspected him of being the thief and called the police. The police beat and bound the Vilna Gaon

in chains to bring him to the police headquarters for interrogation. As the police were leading him out, the Gaon noticed that the *chassan* was enjoying the spectacle. The Vilna Gaon commented, "My going into exile, the shame, and the beatings, were all worthwhile, just so that the *chassan* should give a bright smile (א לעכטיגע שמייכל)." ⁵

The mother of Rebbe Elimelech of Rudnick *zt'l* was lying on her deathbed. Rebbe Elimelech went to a wedding hall and brought back ten people who were celebrating *simchas chassan and kallah*, so there would be a minyan at her passing. In honor of the *chassan*, Rebbe Elimelech began to dance happily before the *chassan*, and his mother started feeling better! Rebbe Elimelech of Rudnick exclaimed, "Today's

yungerleit don't realize the power of *simchas chassan and kallah*. שהשמחה במעונו, the joy that is in heaven means that it can bring *techiyas hameisim*, resurrection, literally."

One evening, the Imrei Emes *zt'l* asked his gabbai whether there was a *sheva brachos* or a *chasunah* in their neighborhood that night. The gabbai went outdoors to check and returned and told the Rebbe about a *sheva brachos* nearby. The Imrei Emes didn't know the families, but he went there all the same. He explained, "Chazal say that when one brings joy to a *chassan* and *kallah*, he merits Torah. I couldn't understand a *Tosfos* that I was studying, so I came to be *misameach chassan and kallah*. Perhaps now I will understand the *Tosfos*."⁵

5. I knew a talmid chacham who studied in Mir, Poland, as a bachur. Reminiscing, he once said, "In Mir, the *bachurim* wouldn't consider getting married before they were thirty-five or forty years

My father *zt'l* noticed one of his *chassidim* was waking up late after his wedding. The week of *sheva brachos* had already passed, but this newlywed was coming into the *beis medresh* around eleven o'clock in the morning to daven *Shacharis*. My father rebuked him. "This is not how one builds a *bayis*

ne'eman beYisrael. Now that you are married, you should serve Hashem even better than before. You should awaken early like a lion to daven and serve Hashem."

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l* wouldn't begin the *siddur kidushin* before he saw that the *chassan* had cried.⁶

old. It was comical the questions that people asked when a *bachur* got engaged. They would say: (1) How old was he when it happened? (2) Did he suffer for a long time? (3) Was he lucid until the last moment? These are the type of questions that are also asked in a *beis avel* (for a mourner)."

Note the third question "Was he lucid until the last moment?" Indeed, this is an important question because there are young men who are very worried, and they lose their *yishuv hadaas* before their marriage because they fear that they won't be able to support their family. This explains why there is a *mitzvah* to be *misameach chasan v'kalah*. It is because they are concerned with the financial obligations. We need to encourage them with a good dose of *bitachon*, so they will believe that Hashem will support them, and everything will work out well.

6. It's important to daven and shed tears before the *chuppah* that everything should go right, and the marriage should be successful in all ways.

An orphaned *chasan* came to the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* on the day of his *chasunah*. The Rebbe put his hands on his head and prayed for a very long time. When the groom left, someone asked the Rebbe

Once, Rebbe Naftali was at a *kabalas panim* before a chuppah. Someone said inspirational thoughts to rouse the *chassan* to *teshuvah* and *tefillah*, but the *chassan* wasn't crying. Rebbe Naftali waited. He wouldn't go to the chuppah before the *chassan* cried.

Rebbe Naftali stood on a chair and said, "My dear *chassan*, let me tell you a story: Once, a deer and a doe met in the forest and fell in love. Suddenly, the deer jumped up and was about to run away.

"What happened?" the doe asked. The deer pointed in the distance. There was a hunter, and his rifle was aimed at them.

"When will we meet again?" she asked.

"I think that the next time we meet will be in the butcher shop. My hide will be lying beside your meat..." and then the *chassan* cried. Rebbe Naftali called to the musicians, "Play joyous music! Let's bring the *chassan* to the chuppah!"⁷

why he prayed so long for this *chasan*? The Rebbe replied, "Generally, parents pray and bless their child before the chuppah, and these prayers and blessings accompany the couple throughout their married life. However, this boy's parents were killed in the Holocaust. There is no one to daven for him. That's why I blessed him at length."

7. My father *zt'l* would repeat this story to *chassanim* at the *kabalas panim*. Once, at a *kabalas panim* before a *chasunah*, there was a speaker (a *grammer*) who was passionately rousing everyone to tears, but the *chassan* wasn't crying. My father went over to the *chassan* and explained that these are very important moments of his life, his future depends on these moments and that he must bring himself to cry. My father told him the *marshal* of the deer and the doe, who knew they wouldn't meet again until they got to the butcher's shop. In the end, everyone meets up there, in heaven.

My father would dance with all his might before the chasan, as though he was the father. He did this even in his older years when he was weak. He also encouraged other people to join in the dancing and not just sit on the side. Everyone had to dance and participate in *simchas chassan v'kallah*.

There was an orphan close to my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*. My father was his *shadchan* and arranged the entire wedding. On the day of the chuppah the *chassan* expressed his concern that there still wasn't a plan for the *sheva brachos* the following night. So my father offered to host the *sheva brachos*. At the wedding, my father danced with the *chassan* until my father didn't have any strength left. It was

genuine *simchas chassan v'kallah*.

It Will Pass

A person once told the Tchebiner Rav *zt'l* that he was distraught, as he had several older children and hasn't yet found a shidduch for any of them. The Tchebiner Rav told him the following story: "Early in the morning on Erev Yom Kippur, someone was going to the shochet to shecht his kaparos. He held the chicken in one hand, a machzor in the other, then his eyeglasses fell to the ground. He stood there, wondering what to do. If he puts down the chicken, it will run away. He certainly couldn't put the machzor on the ground. So how could he pick up his eyeglasses?"

"What did he do?" the man inquired.

My father spoke to him some more and the *chassan's* eyes filled with tears, and couldn't stop crying.

The Tchebiner Rav replied, "That I don't know, but I do know that he is no longer standing there."

With this story, the Tchebiner Rav told him that life goes on. There are hurdles and challenges, but they all pass.

People tell a story about a wise king who said to a smith: "Engrave onto a piece of metal words that will make me happy when I am down, and they will make me somber when I am happy."

The smith didn't know what to do. How could the exact words make someone joyful and sad at other times? The smith asked the king's son, and the wise son replied, "Engrave the letters ג ז י on a plaque."

The smith did so and brought the plaque to the king.

"What do these letters stand for?" the king asked.

"I don't know. I asked your son, and this is what he told me to do."

The king asked his son, and the wise son replied, ג ז י is the acronym for גם זו יעבור, "This too shall pass."

"When you go through hard times, these words will make you happy. And when you are extremely happy about something, these words will calm you. You will remember that situations change, and what is now will not be in the future."

Working Hard

This week's *parashah* discusses the halachos of *lighting* the menorah. Then the Torah mentions the laws of *building* the menorah. As it states, וזה מעשה המנורה "This is how the menorah is made." This is surprising because the making of the menorah was taught in *parshiyos Terumah* and *Vayakhel*. Why is it repeated here?

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* answers that this week's *parashah* focuses on the menorah's light, which represents the spiritual light found in *avodas Hashem*. The Torah hints that Moshe Rabbeinu worked hard to understand all the details of the menorah and that toil became the root of the menorah's light — because toil in *avodas Hashem* is the root of its spiritual light.

About the menorah it states ...מקשה זהב... מקשה היא. Rashi explains that *מקשה* means hammered since the menorah was made from one piece of gold that was hammered into shape.

מקשה also means questions. As Chazal (*Bamidbar Rabba* 15:10) say, נתקשה משה במעשה המנורה, "Moshe had a hard time understanding precisely

how the menorah should be made." He toiled to understand but was unsuccessful. So Hashem told Moshe to throw a block of gold into the fire, and the menorah miraculously emerged, ready-made. As Rashi writes (8:4), על ידי הקב"ה נעשית, מעליה, "The menorah was made by itself, by Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that Moshe's toil to understand the menorah brought out its light because the light of *avodas Hashem* emerges from struggle and toil.

Therefore, we shouldn't be frightened by the challenges we face in *avodas Hashem* because these hardships are the gateway to finding the unlimited pleasurable, spiritual light that's there.⁸

8. Above we discussed finding the holy light in marriage, which we described as the light of good middos. Sometimes, we must toil hard to attain good middos. That shouldn't fluster us, because

Desire

Rashi, at the beginning of the *parashah* writes, "Why does the *parashah* of the menorah follow the *parashah* of the *nesi'im*? Because when Aharon saw the *chanukas hanesi'im* (the *nesi'im* donated *korbanos* to dedicate the Mishkan), he felt disappointed (חלשה אז דעתו) because he didn't participate in this inauguration, nor did his tribe. Hakadosh Baruch Hu consoled him, חייך 'I swear,' שלך גדולה משלהם your portion is greater than theirs, שאתה שאתה מדליק ומיטיב את הנרות for you light and prepare the lamps [of the menorah]."

Rebbe Yitzchak Vorke *zt'l* explains that HaKadosh Baruch Hu was saying, חייך,

the fact that סגייט דיר אין לעבן, that it means so much to you, like your life is depends on it, that you should have a share in the inauguration of the *mizbeiach*, שלך גדולה משלהם, that desire is even greater than their sacrifices." Because desiring to serve Hashem is the ultimate level.

But one shouldn't remain with desire alone. When someone desires to eat, he will not stay with the desire. He will eat. Similarly, one shouldn't say, "I want to serve Hashem," and think that that is enough. Because if you want to serve Hashem, do so. Or at least try to serve Hashem.⁹

the light of our good middos will shine even greater, due to our toil.

9. A wounded soldier will be aided by the country he fought for. They will cover his medical bills and pay him a pension until he gets better.

But that is only if he was wounded while fighting for his country. If he wasn't doing anything at all, he doesn't deserve compensation.

The Chofetz Chaim tells the following *mashal*:

A simple, poor person wished that his daughter should marry the rav's learned and G-d fearing son, so he sent several *shadchanim* to speak with the rav. The rav didn't take these offers seriously. He wanted his son either to marry the daughter of a *talmid chacham* or the daughter of a wealthy person, and this poor man lacked both qualities.

The simple man didn't lose hope and kept sending *shadchanim* to speak to the rav. Eventually, the matter was settled when the rav's son became engaged to someone else.

At the *chasunah*, the simple man sat himself down at the head table.

His friends asked him why he was sitting there, acting as though it was his *chasunah*.

He replied, "I *tried* to be the rav's *mechutan*." His friends laughed because wanting and trying don't carry much significance. The fact is that he isn't the *mechutan*, and he should sit together with the guests.

However, *avodas Hashem* is an exception. In *avodas Hashem*, the most important thing is to try. For the trying itself, one will earn immense reward. As it states (*Tehillim* 105:3), יִשְׂמַח לִבּוֹ מִבְּקֵשׁ ה' "May the hearts of those who seek Hashem rejoice." The goal is to be a מִבְּקֵשׁ ה', a seeker of Hashem, to strive to do His service. That is considered success, even if you fail.

The same is regarding one who fails in *avodas Hashem*. He will be immensely rewarded for fighting the *yetzer hara* and for trying to achieve his goal. But if he doesn't try at all, he doesn't deserve reward.

Toil in Avodas Hashem

A lively child didn't have the patience to study Torah. So the *melamed* brought the child to the rav of the city. "Perhaps the rav could influence the boy to study Torah," he said.

The rav told the child, "I had an interesting *din Torah*, and I want to hear your opinion. The *din Torah* was between a *sefer Torah* and a pair of shoes. The shoes said, 'We both were once cowhide. We grew up in the same barn, ate fodder, and drank water from the same trough. But a *sofer* bought you, turned your skins into parchment, and made you into a *sefer Torah*, whereas a shoemaker bought me and turned me into a pair of shoes. Why did we have such different fates? We used to be the same! Yet, when the *sofer* finished writing on you, they placed a silver crown on your head and carried you to a beis medresh dancing with joy. When you are taken out of the

aron kodesh people, stand up, and hug and kiss you. When you get worn out, you will have a levayah and be buried with honor. But I'm just a pair of shoes. People don't respect me. They tread with me into the mud. When I get worn out, I will be tossed into the trash. Is it fair that we should have such opposite fates?'"

The rav asked the boy for his opinion. The boy sided with the shoes. Indeed, it didn't seem fair.

Then the rav explained that creating a *sefer Torah* requires many hours of hard labor. The *sofer* must write letter after letter until the entire *sefer Torah* is finished. On the other hand, making shoes, *lehavdil*, doesn't take long, and no great toil is involved.

Upon hearing that side of the story, the boy agreed that the *sefer Torah* deserves more respect because so much toil went into making it.

The rav concluded, "My son, if you desire to attain the crown of Torah, and you want people to honor and admire you for your Torah knowledge, then you must toil diligently. You must put in a lot of effort. Otherwise, you will be like a pair of shoes with minimal value."

One of the *gedolim* of today told this story at a family *simchah* and said that he was that child in this story who didn't want to learn Torah. The rav told him about the "*din Torah*" to teach him that the crown of Torah is acquired with effort and toil. He added that after this discussion, he began putting all his efforts into Torah study.

The following mashal illustrates the above lesson:

The winner of a large lottery had to pick up the prize in person. So, he hired a coach, traveled to the lottery office, picked up many bags filled with gold coins, loaded the bags onto

the wagon, and began his way home.

Somewhere along the way, the coachman pulled over to the side of the road to rest, and soon, they were both sound asleep. They awoke and continued on their way, but then the wagon driver said, "We were robbed. The money isn't in the wagon anymore."

"How do you know without checking? It would seem that you stole the money because otherwise, how would you know?"

The wagon driver explained that he didn't steal the money yet knew they were robbed. He explained:

"The horses are sprinting. If the wagon was carrying all those gold coins, the horses wouldn't be able to run like this. That's how I know we were robbed."

This parable reminds us that wealth isn't there when things go smoothly. When

things are difficult, when we have to struggle in our *avodas Hashem*, that's a sure sign that we are carrying and earning immense spiritual wealth.

It states (11:1) יהי העם כמתאוננים, that the nation was complaining, and the miforshim differ on what they were complaining about.

Rashi (11:1) writes that the Jewish nation said, "Woe to us! We are going on this long journey for three days, and we haven't yet rested from the tiresome travels.' Hashem became angry and said, 'I intended this for their good so that the nation should enter Eretz Yisrael immediately.'" Their sin was that they were complaining that they were traveling too quickly to Eretz Yisrael without adequate rest.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* asks: If Hashem wanted, He could have brought them to Eretz Yisrael

without any hardship at all! (For example, He could have flown them to Eretz Yisrael on eagles' wings.) Why was this long and challenging journey necessary?

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* answers that an element of hardships was required. As Chazal (*Brachos* 5) tell us, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave three gifts to the Jewish nation, and each gift is acquired solely through *yesurim*. They are Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam HaBa." It is impossible to acquire Eretz Yisrael without hardship. The three difficult days of travel were for their benefit because that hardship would earn them Eretz Yisrael, but the nation thought it was bad for them.

The lesson is: To acquire Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam HaBa, there must be hardships. It is never an easy path. Don't be afraid when things get hard. Keep

trying, and you will succeed.¹⁰

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

The Ateres Yehoshua answered with a *mashal*:

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

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

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

The poor man was shocked. "A hundred to three hundred dollars just to see a show?! What is the show about?"

"It's about a poor man collecting money."

Now the poor person was even more confused. He said, "I am poor and collect money all the time, and all I get is a few coins!"

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

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

The Ateres Yehoshua said this due to his immense humility, but we can learn a lesson from it: Why do people pay so much money to watch actors? It's because the actors display talent, expertise, years of training, and hours of hard work. People value that and are willing to pay money to see it. But when something comes naturally, it loses its value in people's eyes. Hashem, too, *lehavdil*, desires to see us doing deeds that require effort, talent, and willpower.

A soldier in Czar Nicholai's army gave all his weapons to a bartender as collateral in exchange for drinks. He carried around

a large bag, so people would think his weapons were inside.

Czar Nicholai once visited the army base and was pleased with the order and discipline he saw there. But then he called over this soldier and asked him to open his bag. It was filled with straw, and he was punished severely.

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

Rebbe Asher of Stolin taught a lesson in *avodas Hashem* from this story. *Avodas Hashem* should be hard. If it is easy, that's a sign that something is amiss. There should be struggles. One should feel like he's working, putting in effort. If it is too easy, something is lacking.

A group of chassidim complained to the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* about their *yetzer hara* that was constantly disturbing them from serving Hashem. The Chidushei HaRim told them, "What purpose would there be to life, without a *yetzer hara*?"

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

The Yidden in the desert complained (*Shemos* 16:3), *מִי יֵתֵן ... בָּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם*, "If only...we were in Mitzrayim, where we sat by the pot of meat, and we eat bread to satiation." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that they were reminiscing how it was in Mitzrayim, when they sat alongside the non-Jews who were cooking a pot of meat. They smelled it, they desired it, but they passed the test, and they didn't eat it because it wasn't kosher. They only ate the bread/matzah, which was kosher. That is the

Tefillah

It states (11:1), ויהי העם, "The nation complained in Hashem's ears. וישמע ה' ויחר אפו ותבער במ אש, Hashem heard and became angry. A fire burned them and consumed the [people at the] parameters of the camp." There are various explanations from the *rishonim* to explain exactly which sin was committed here.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* says their sin was באזני ה', that the nation didn't believe that Hashem hears them and that He listens to their prayers.

People believe that Hashem *sees* everything, *knows* everything, and *leads* the world with *hashgachah pratis*, but it is hard for them to comprehend that Hashem turns His ears to listen to us when we speak

to Him. The nation, at that time, was lacking this *emunah*.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "The Yidden believed in the attribute of עיני ה', which is Hashem's surveillance of all His creations. However, with the concept of אזני ה', that Hashem listens to our prayers, and [that our tefillos can] change Hashem's decrees, they were doubtful. They said, 'Although Hashem's eyes are on us to bestow goodness on us, nevertheless, He doesn't listen to our tefillos to change His decree and grant us our desires.' This is the definition of ויהי העם, כמתאוננים רע באזני ה'. The words אזני ה' means they didn't believe that Hashem heard them. וישמע ה', Hashem showed us that He listens to our complaints; thus, He certainly hears our prayers

good memory they wished they could have again, because they understood the value of tests in *avodas Hashem*.

and will fulfill all our desires."

Towards the end of the *parashah* it states, ויצעק משה אל ה' לאמר א-ל נא רפא נא לה, "Moshe shouted to Hashem saying, 'Please G-d, heal her now.'" The Chida writes that when Moshe was in heaven, he heard that when one says נ twice in his prayers his tefillah will be answered. Therefore, Moshe said twice נ when he prayed for Miriam's recovery from *tzaraas*.

נ means please. We can explain that saying נ twice indicates that one should plead, again and again, and then his tefillos will be answered.

In Monroe, in the parking lot in front of a beis medresh, some *yungerleit* were working on a car, and when they saw

Reb Yoel Weiss *shlita*, who volunteers for Chaveirim, they asked him for help.¹¹

A *yungerman* explained the problem to Reb Yoel. "I just backed up and accidentally bumped into this car behind me, and the bumper fell out of place. We're trying to fix it before the owner comes out and sees what happened."

"Whose car is it?"

"We don't know, but it shouldn't be hard to get the bumper back into place."

After a short while, they successfully repaired the bumper.

Just then, the car's owner came out of the beis medresh, after completing Minchah. He looked like he was recently married.

11. Chaveirim is a chessed organization that helps Yidden when they are having car trouble (among other things). Therefore, when they saw Reb Yoel Weiss, they knew they could count on him for help.

They apologized for what happened and told him they had already fixed the problem.

The *yungerman* replied, "*Chas v'shalom*, you didn't ruin the bumper. I damaged it several days ago. This is a rented car, and today I have to return it to the rental agency. I davened at minchah that I shouldn't have to pay for the bumper. I simply can't afford it. I repeated this prayer many times. And here you are, fixing my bumper! My tefillos were answered!"

A *segulah* for tefillah to be answered is to daven after passing a difficult test, especially when the test is related to matters of *kedushah*. The holy *sefarim* tell us that this is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah. Therefore, Tefillos said at this time are answered.

A *yungerman* heard about this idea at a *shiur* he attended. After the *shiur* he left for the hospital in Be'er Sheva where his

young daughter was staying, as her weak body battled with "the disease" (cancer).

The doctors at the hospital informed him that his daughter needed a specific medication that could only be purchased in Tel Aviv.

The *yungerman* traveled to Tel Aviv to buy the medicine. He got off the bus in Tel Aviv's central bus terminal and was confronted with a difficult *shmiras einayim* test. He passed the test. Realizing that it was now an *eis ratzon*, he went off to a side of the bus terminal and davened for his daughter's recovery.

After the tefillah, while walking to the pharmacy to buy the medicine, he received a phone call. It was the doctors back at the hospital. They said, "Your daughter woke up a few moments ago, and after checking her, we see improvement. She no

longer needs that medication."

After one endures shame and humiliation silently, it is also a good time for tefillah. Also, when one is mevater at a machlokes, it is a good time for tefillah. Tefillos said at this time are answered.

Reb Y. Kletzky of Yerushalayim goes to America every year to be a *chazan* for the *yomim nora'im*. One year, in the beis knesses where Reb Kletzky was *chazan*, there was a *machlokes* between the *gabbai* and one of the *mispalelim*. People tried to make peace between them but to no avail.

One of the men involved in the *machlokes* had two older, single children, around thirty years old. Every year he bought the honor of opening the *aron kodesh* for *Ne'ilah*, and he would stand in front of the *aron kodesh* throughout *Ne'ilah* together with his

two sons, hoping that the gates of heaven would open for them. However, this year, because of the *machlokes*, the *gabbai* didn't want to sell it to him.

What did the *gabbai* do? He gathered his friends before Yom Kippur and sold all the *aliyos* and *kibudim* of Yom Kippur. When it was time for opening the *aron* for *Ne'ilah*, it was already sold to someone else.

When Reb Kletzky, the *chazan*, began the quiet *shemonah Esei* of *Ne'ilah*, this man started complaining loudly that he was slighted and tricked and that his *chazakah* was taken away from him.

Reb Kletzky wanted to calm him, but he was already in the middle of *Shemonah Esrei*.

When Yom Kippur was over, Reb Kletzky came to this man's home and said, "As *chazan*, I'm responsible that the *tefillos* of the beis

knesses go up. But due to what happened today, I'm afraid the *tefillos* didn't go up. I beg you, forgive him."

The man refused to forgive and added that he doesn't forgive the entire beis knesses for not standing up for him.

Reb Kletzky found a solution. He said, "You wanted to open the aron for Ne'ilah because you need *shidduchim* for your two children. Be *mevater*. Forgive them. In this merit, by next year, they will both be married."

"I forgive them!" the man exclaimed.

Later that year, Reb Kletzky called the *gabbai* and asked what happened with that person. The *gabbai* replied, "He stopped coming to our shul long ago. However, I heard that in the winter, both of his children were married." This was his reward for forgiving and for making peace.

A *yungerman* told me, "For the first seven years after my *chasunah*, I didn't have children. Once, two women were fighting, and one embarrassed the other mortifyingly. My mother knew that this was her opportunity. She reads Torah Wellsprings and knows that when one is humiliated and doesn't answer back, he has the power of *tefillah*. So she went to the woman who was shamed but didn't answer and asked her for a *brachah* that her son should have children. She gave a *brachah*, and a year later I had my first child."

A group of friends traveled to Miron to spend Shabbos together. One of them had forgotten to bring his *bekeshe* (Shabbos jacket). It would be very embarrassing for him to spend Shabbos in his weekday jacket (which was thin and not respectful even for the weekdays). A friend saw his dilemma and said, "You can wear my *bekeshe*, and I'll wear my weekday

jacket. That way, I will earn a *chesed*. Of course, I will have humiliation too, and I hereby give that merit to my son, who is getting older and hasn't yet found his *shidduch*."

It took only five days, and his son was engaged.

A prestigious rabbinic family had an embarrassing secret. They tried to conceal it, but sometimes the secret became known.

Their son was in yeshiva, and one day at lunchtime, one of the bachurim revealed the secret in front of all the other bachurim. The son was very embarrassed but didn't answer back. Instead, he said, "I forgive you," and left the lunchroom. He knew he now had the power to give brachos and sought where he could use it. His first thought was to bless an older cousin who learned in a yeshiva nearby and needed a shidduch. So he went to the cousin's yeshiva but couldn't find his cousin.

The *bachur* quickly went home and said to his sister, "You will be a *kalah* within a month."

Shocked, she asked, "How do you know?"

"I have the power of *brachos* now, and I'm telling you that you will be engaged within a month."

She was engaged within a week.

Another *segulah* for your tefillos to be answered is to be cautious with your speech.

It states (9:20), על פי ה' יחנו, ועל פי ה' יסעו. This can be translated, על פי, if a person is cautious with his words, ה' יחנו, Hashem will dwell with him. ועל פי, but if one isn't careful with his speech, ה' יסעו, this causes Hashem to depart from him, *chas veshalom*.

Imagine bringing a beautiful cake to a king in honor of his birthday. You couldn't find a cake dish, but you have a pot in which the cake will fit perfectly.

The pot is still dirty from last night's supper, but you figure a bit of grease and oil won't ruin the cake.

You carry the pot to the king, and sing, "Happy Birthday!"

The holy *sefarim* say that this is what happens when one talks forbidden speech and then he speaks words of Torah and *tefillah* with that same mouth. He is using a sullied vessel to bring gifts to Hashem. We shouldn't be surprised if his tefillos aren't accepted.

As the *Kitzur Shlah* writes, "If you want your tefillos to be accepted by Hakadosh Baruch Hu be cautious with your mouth because that is your utensil for prayer. Be cautious and don't speak profanely, curse, swear, or *lashon hara* because prayer is a gift to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the mouth is the vessel that holds your gift. The vessel cannot be dirty. If it is, it is a disgrace for the King and the gift. Rather, speak Torah, *tefillah*, permitted speech, and nothing else."¹²

12. The Ben Ish Chai (*Nifla'im Maaseicha* 124) told the following story:

Tuvyah the Judge was revered and honored by most of the populace. All judicial matters were settled according to his judgment. But he also had his share of enemies who always tried to harm him.

Eventually, they succeeded. The king believed their slander and decided to fire Tuvyah and punish him for his alleged crimes.

Tuvyah caught on to what was about to happen, so he put on civilian clothing and escaped. People saw Tuvyah passing through the dark streets that night but didn't realize that he was the celebrated Tuvyah, who just a few hours ago was the most influential person in the country, after the king.

Tuvyah exited the city, traversed a desert, and reached a river. The other side of the river meant freedom for Tuvya. But how could he cross the river without a boat or raft? He didn't know

how to swim.

Soon the king would discover that Tuvyah escaped, and he would pursue him. Tuvyah stood on the riverside, perplexed and worried.

A peasant recognized Tuvyah the Judge. Tuvyah told him that he needed to cross the river. The villager was short and skinny, and under normal circumstances, wouldn't consider swimming across the river while carrying a tall, heavy man like Tuvyah. But the villager realized that this was his opportunity to find favor in the eyes of this great judge. He said, "Honored judge, hang on to my back. I will swim with you across the river."

Thinking about the reward and wealth he would receive for doing this, the peasant almost didn't feel Tuvyah's weight.

When they were three quarters across the river, Tuvyah said, "If Hashem will be kind to me, and I become a judge again, I will reward you immensely..."

"You mean you're not the grand judge anymore?"

"That's right," Tuvyah replied. "Corrupt people slandered me to the king, and now I'm escaping judgment."

The peasant dropped Tuvyah in the water and said, "When you become judge again, I will pick you up," and the peasant swam back to shore, alone.

People rebuked the peasant. "If you were able to bring Tuvyah three quarters across the river, you should have brought him all the way."

The peasant replied, "I'm weak and feeble. I can't carry a heavy person like Tuvyah. As long as I imagined the great honor and wealth I would earn for helping Tuvyah, I had strength. I almost didn't feel his weight. But when Tuvyah told me that he was escaping and that he couldn't reward me, I suddenly felt his full weight and didn't have the strength to bring him to shore."

The Ben Ish Chai told this story to teach us that we must be careful with our speech because so many troubles come from unwarranted and bad speech. If only Tuvyah had remained silent, his life would be saved.

Similarly, all forbidden speech, and even unnecessary talk, result in heartache — to oneself and to others.