

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Vayishlach



בס"ד

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Vayishlach

Yaakov's Fear.....	4
The Correct Perspective	6
Overcoming Fear	9
Fear Causes It to Occur.....	11
Fighting the Yetzer Hara without Fear.....	14
Brazen.....	18
Tefillah in our Times	20
Hashem's Salvation	22
After Davening, There Is Nothing to Fear	23
Tefillah is <i>Hishtadlus</i>	27
Saying the Words	28
<i>Tehillim</i> קי"ט.....	29
<i>Bitachon</i> and Confidence.....	30

Torah Wellsprings

Vayishlach

Yaakov's Fear

When Yaakov Avinu heard that Eisav was approaching with four hundred warriors, he was afraid, as it states (32:8), וַיִּירָא, "And Yaakov became very afraid and distressed."

Daas Zekainim m'Baalei HaTosfos says we should translate the *pasuk* as follows:

וַיִּירָא, Yaakov was very afraid, וַיִּצַר לוֹ, and he was upset with himself for being afraid. Hashem promised that He would protect Yaakov, as it states (28:15) וְהָיָה אֲנִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכָל, "Behold I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go," and now Yaakov was afraid of Eisav. Yaakov asked himself, "Why am I afraid? What happened to my strong emunah and bitachon that I used to have?"

Yaakov said (32:11), כִּי בִמְקָלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשֵׁנִי מִחַתּוֹת, "I crossed this Yarden with my staff, and now I have become two camps." Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* explains that also in this *pasuk*, Yaakov is lamenting that he lost his *bitachon* and trust in Hashem. כִּי בִמְקָלִי עָבַרְתִּי, Yaakov said, "My *bitachon* used to be so strong that all I had to do was place my staff in the Yarden, and the waters split before me. וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשֵׁנִי מִחַתּוֹת, but now I've divided my camp into two groups to prepare myself for war. What happened to my *bitachon*?"

The Degel Machaneh Efraim *zt'l*, a grandson of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*, tells us in this week's parashah about a miracle that happened to his grandfather. The Dnieper is a mighty and large river that cuts through the Ukraine. The Baal Shem

Tov once crossed the Dnieper without a ship or physical contraption. The Baal Shem Tov said he didn't use Hashem's name (practical kabbalah) either. He crossed the river with emunah peshutah, simple emunah in Hashem. He believed Hashem could do anything, so he put his belt onto the water (I think he sat on it) and crossed the river.

This is because when one has emunah in Hashem and doesn't consider nature to be a deterrence for Hashem, miracles will happen for him.

The Gemara (Taanis 25.) tells us that one Friday night, Reb Chanina ben Dosa saw that his daughter was sad. He asked her, "My daughter, why are you sad?"

She replied, "I accidentally used vinegar instead of oil to light the Shabbos lights."

Reb Chanina ben Dosa replied, "My daughter, why should you care? The One who said that oil should

give light shall say that vinegar should give light."

The Shabbos *lecht* remained lit for 25 hours, and they used those lights for Havdalah.

This is because Hashem can do anything. He can have vinegar give light like oil, and He can split a river. With emunah peshutah that Hashem can do everything, miracles can occur.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim writes that this could be how Yaakov Avinu crossed the Yarden. It states in the pasuk (32:11), כי במקלי, "I crossed this Yarden with my staff..." He crossed the Yarden with his emunah. He believed that Hashem could do anything, Hashem can split the river before him, and that is what occurred.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim writes that במקלי is gematriya יעקב. The pasuk is saying כי במקלי עברתי את הירדן הזה, that he crossed the Yarden with his name, "Yaakov,"

which represents the attribute of *emes* and the attribute of *emunah*. במקלי, עברתי את הירדן, "I crossed over the Yarden."

The Correct Perspective

As we wrote (quoting the Daas Zekeinim), Yaakov Avinu was upset that he was afraid because Hashem told Yaakov that He would protect him.

Furthermore, we wrote (quoting the Degel Machaneh Efraim) that Yaakov Avinu had perfect *emunah*. He even once split the Yarden with his *emunah peshutah*. So, why was he afraid of Eisav? When one has perfect *emunah*, miracles will happen to him.

We cannot understand the ways, nor the emotions, of the holy Avos, nevertheless, the Torah tells us details of their lives so

we can learn lessons for ourselves. We therefore have a right to ask, at least for our own personal growth, what is the Torah teaching us when it states that Yaakov Avinu was afraid?

But really, it isn't a question because everyone experiences ups and downs. Our hearts aren't always at the same level. There are times when *emunah* shines brightly, and there are times when it is at a lower level.

But it is essential that even when we are at a low moment, we remain with the correct perspective and *hashkafah* that we know we should be feeling in our hearts. Perhaps the *emunah* and *bitachon* aren't "shining" with clarity as they had during other times, maybe we are afraid, but our minds should know how we should ideally feel.¹

1. Once, Reb Avraham Genichovsky zt'l accidentally dropped his watch, and it stopped working. He brought it to a watchmaker,

Yosef told his brothers (Bereishis 45:5) ועתה אל תעצבו ואל יחר בעיניכם כי מכרתם אתי הנה "But now do not be sad, and let it not be disappointing in your eyes that you sold me here."

Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsh zt'l asks, is disappointment related to the eyes? Aren't all emotions in the heart? So why did Yosef say ואל יחר בעיניכם "let it not be disappointing in your eyes."

Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsh answers that sometimes we can't control our emotions. Our heart has

a "mind" of its own, and even when we know there is no reason to be angry, disappointed, sad, or worried, the heart doesn't comply. Yosef told his brothers, "I understand that you might not be able to control the feelings of your heart, but at least, אל יחר בעיניכם, let your eyes, your outlook, see things correctly. Let your minds, at least, know that there is no reason for you to be upset, as Yosef said, כי למחיה שלחני אלקים לפניכם, "Hashem sent me to Mitzrayim so I can support you and give you food. You

but the repairman told him all it needed was a new battery. Reb Avraham asked, "Isn't it an unusual coincidence that the battery should stop working the moment the watch fell? It would seem more likely that the fall caused something to break inside."

The watchmaker explained that when the watch fell, it stopped working for a moment. The battery was weak. It had enough power to keep the watch working but not enough strength to get it to start again.

Reb Avraham Genichovsky repeated this story to his students and explained that their emunah should be so strong that if for a moment, they fall, they should have enough strength to pick themselves up and continue with their emunah. Chas v'shalom, if their emunah is weak, when they fall and have questions, they might have trouble getting back to themselves and their emunah.

aren't guilty; it was destined from Above."

This concept can also be applied to fear. Sometimes, we are afraid. That is fine. We can't always control our hearts' emotions. But אל יחר בעיניכם, the mind should perceive the truth of what and how we should be feeling.

Lately, many people are following the news much more closely than they generally do due to the war occurring in Eretz Yisrael and related subjects. There are several problems with the news outlets that people often listen to. One problem is that these stations don't mention Hashem's name. They make it appear as if things are happening on their own. Another problem is that they feed emotions, mostly fear, and don't allow you to think independently. We are left without our own perspective, without the proper perspective.

It states (Shemos 18:1-11) וישמע יתרו כהן מדין חותן משה את כל

אשר עשה אלוקים למשה ולישראל עמו, כי הוציא ה' את ישראל ממצרים... "Moshe's father-in-law, Yisro, the chieftain of Midian, heard all that Hashem had done for Moshe and for Yisrael, His people that Hashem had taken Yisrael out of Mitzrayim." Yisro knew the news. He was updated. He heard about yetzias Mitzrayim and about all the miracles that occurred.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l asks, if so, why did Moshe tell him about yetzias Mitzrayim again, as it states ויספר משה לחותנו את כל אשר עשה ה' לפרעה ולמצרים על אודת ישראל, "Moshe told his father-in-law about all that Hashem had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians on account of Yisrael..." Why did Moshe tell this to Yisro? Yisro already knew!

The answer is that Yisro heard the news on the radio or from his neighbors, and Moshe repeated it, expressing what occurred in the light of emunah. It was the same story, but now

Yisro heard it in a manner that he never heard before.

Yisro said, עתה ידעתי כי גדול ה', "Now I know that Hashem is greater than all gods." Now that I listened to the story as Moshe described it, I know of Hashem's greatness. I heard about it before, but it was from a different perspective, that of people who lack emunah and yiras Shamayim. Moshe repeated Hashem's miracles without minimizing them, and then Yisro discovered Hashem's greatness.

Tehillim chapter (20) begins with יענך ה' ביום צרה, "May Hashem answer you on a day of distress..." and ends with יענונו ביום קראנו, "answer us on the day we call." The day is referred to in two ways. It is first called ביום צרה, "a day of distress," and then it is called ביום קראנו, a day of calling out to Hashem. We can explain that the day might begin as "a day of distress," but if one uses this problem to arouse himself to tefillah, the day

becomes "a day of calling out to Hashem."

Someone told me that he went to the hospital with an ill relative. At first, he thought it was a ביום צרה, a distressful day, a sad day, but after he spent the day full of emotional tefillos to Hashem, he considered the day ביום קראנו, as a day of tefillah.

We are living in difficult times, and these days can be viewed as ביום צרה, days of distress, or they can be viewed as ביום קראנו, days to daven to Hashem, and to become close to Him through Torah and tefillah. It is up to each individual to decide how to utilize these days. We must choose to take the correct perspective and to perceive life correctly.

Overcoming Fear

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuvah 3:32) says it is an obligation from the Torah not to be afraid. The source is the following pasuk (Devarim 20:1): כי תצא למלחמה על

אויבך וראית סוס ורכב עם רב ממך לא תירא מהם כי ה' אלקיך עמך המעלך מארץ מצרים "When you go out to war against your enemies, and you see horse and chariot, a people more numerous than you, you shall not be afraid of them, for Hashem, your G-d is with you Who brought you up out of the land of Mitzrayim."

The Rabbeinu Yonah writes, "This tells us that when a person sees a *tzarah* approaching, he should have trust in Hashem's salvation in his heart. This is as it states (Tehillim 85:10) אך 'קרוב ליראי'ו יעשו 'Certainly, His salvation is near to those who fear Him.' And it states (Yeshayah 51:12) מי את ותראי מאנוש 'מוות', 'Who are you that you fear man who will die...'"

The Rambam (Hilchos Malachim 7:15) writes, "When a person enters a war, he should trust on the Hope of Yisrael, the One who saves them at every time of *tzarah*. If one thinks about thoughts that make him afraid at war, he is transgressing a

prohibition, for it states (Devarim 20:3) אל ירך לבבכם אל תראו "Let your hearts not be faint; you shall not be afraid, and you shall not be alarmed, and you shall not be terrified because of them."

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* (Emunah u'Bitachon 2:7) writes, "*Ruach hakodesh* rests upon a person who has *bitachon*. He attains a spirit of courage that assures him that Hashem will surely help him."

Sefer Ha'Ikrim writes, "*Bitachon* in Hashem is greater than all praises that one can say to Hashem." This is because one can say that Hashem can do everything, that He loves us and helps us, but it may be that his heart doesn't believe what he is saying. But, when one has *bitachon*, that proves he believes in all the above. He believes that Hashem loves him, cares for him, and will help those who rely on Him. *Bitachon* is the greatest praise because he

lives and practices what he believes in.

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l suffered many troubles in his life. (Many of his children died, among other hardships and strife.) People who knew his life story asked him how he managed to be happy. He explained to them that he attaches himself to Hashem Above, and when one is bound to Hashem, he is always happy.

He expressed it with an analogy. When there is an earthquake, people run and seek to escape. But why do they run? The earth is shaking over there as well! The solution would be to tie themselves with a strong string above because then your feet won't fall. When you are bound from above, you are safe.

A stuntman jumped to the ground from three floors high, and all the spectators were amazed. The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l took the stuntman aside and asked him how he did it. The stuntman showed

him that there was a thin iron rope going down. He held on to it as he descended. It looked like he was jumping down but was using the rope for support.

The Ropshitzer Rav said that this tells us that when one is attached from above, he won't fall below.

Fear Causes It to Occur

When one is afraid, the fear itself makes it more likely for that which is feared to occur, r'l.

Think of a person walking through a very dangerous part of the city. There are bandits and murderers on every corner. If the person walks erect, confidently, and without fear, the bandits will leave him alone. They figure that if he is so confident, perhaps he has a weapon on him. Maybe he really has no reason to fear. In contrast, think of a person who is afraid and timid by nature. When he hears someone walking behind him in this

dangerous neighborhood, his pace quickens and he nervously looks behind him to see if that person wants to harm him. He is calling attention to himself, declaring that he is afraid, and that encourages the bandits to steal from him and harm him.

The Maharal says that when you are afraid of something, it means that you consider the matter greater than you and are subjugated to it. This gives the matter strength to rule over you.

The Maharal (*Chidushei Agodos Bava Metzia* 33) writes, "The Rishonim say: When one is afraid that he might fall, that fear itself can cause him to fall.

"Place a wooden plank across a river and walk across it. You will likely fall into the river. Now place the plank on the ground and walk over it. You won't fall off. Because when you are above a river, you are afraid of falling, which

causes it to happen. This is also true when one fears becoming poor. Thinking about this causes it to happen... As it states in *Iyov* (3:25), 'That which I was afraid of, came to me.'"

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 33.) says, כל המקיים בעצמו כך בא, ל"ד, "Whoever is always afraid that he might become poor, he will become poor." The Maharal explains, "When one is afraid of poverty, he is giving poverty the ability to affect him and to reach him... When one is afraid of something, he is making himself small before that matter that he is afraid of, which gives the matter strength to affect him. This is especially true regarding poverty. When one is afraid of poverty, the thought causes an effect on the person, and he will receive the poverty."

The Gemara (*Brachos* 60.) also tells us that fear can cause troubles to occur. The Gemara tells that Rav Hamnuna once heard his

student Rav Yehudah bar Nasan moan. Rav Hamnuna told him that the moans are bringing about difficulties unto himself, as it states (*Iyov* 3:25), כי פחד פחדתי ויאתני ואשר, 'I was afraid, and it happened. The matter I

was worried about came to me."

The Riv'a (from the *Baalei HaTosfos*) teaches that Yaakov lost his protection because of his fear, which is why the malach was able to smite Yaakov.²

2. Seforno explains that as long as Yaakov Avinu thought about Hashem, he was protected. The moment he lost focus, the *malach* could smite him on the thigh. "Because of Yaakov's constant *deveikus* in Hashem through his thoughts and speech, the *malach* couldn't harm him. But when the *malach* told him about the nation's future sins (תודיעו החטא העתיד במדריכי עמו), this upset Yaakov and his *deveikus* ceased, and [that's when the angel hit him and] his thigh got dislodged."

The Zutche Rebbe zt'l offered another explanation of how Yaakov was wounded, even after Hashem promised to protect him.

He explains that the Sar of Esav didn't harm Yaakov. He couldn't because Hashem was protecting Yaakov. Instead, *Yaakov hurt himself*. Wrestling necessitates strenuous, unusual body movements. As Yaakov battled with the angel, his thigh dislodged because of those maneuvers.

The Zutcha Rebbe explains the *pasuk* as follows: וירא כי לא יכול לו, "The *malach* saw that he couldn't harm Yaakov" because Hashem was protecting him. ויגע בך ירכו, "So he touched Yaakov's thigh." This means that he held onto Yaakov. That he could do. He didn't have permission to harm Yaakov but could grab Yaakov. If Yaakov had realized that angel couldn't do more than that, he wouldn't have been afraid and wouldn't have reacted. However, Yaakov was afraid and struggled and wrestled with the angel, and ותקע בך, "Yaakov's thigh dislodged, due to his own actions and movements in the struggle.

Fighting the Yetzer Hara without Fear

When a country sends its army to war, they don't just teach the soldiers how to shoot and then tell them, "Go to the front!" The great minds of the army prepare (hopefully) wise strategies and tactics to outmaneuver and win the opposing army.³

The war against the yetzer hara is compared to a

fight between countries.⁴ And since the battle against the yetzer hara is a war, we need strategies to win our war with the yetzer hara. About this, Chazal (Brachos 17.) say, לעולם יהא אדם ערום ביראה, "A person should be clever with his yiras Shamayim." One must be clever to be successful in this great battle.

Tzaddikim would speak about armies and how they

3. It states (Mishlei 28:26) בוטח בלבו הוא כסיל והולך בחכמה הוא ימלט, "One who trusts his heart is a fool, and one who walks with wisdom will escape." The Rablag explains, "The fool doesn't make plans and strategies before he sets out to attain his needs. He trusts his heart and instincts that he will take the correct actions. Such a person fails. However, when one goes with wisdom, he will be saved from all bad and obstacles placed in his way because he planned how to deal with these situations and obstacles when confronted with them."

The Metzudos Dovid says והולך בחכמה means that if he is wise and knows that he should trust in Hashem, he will succeed.

4. The Chovas HaLevovos (Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh 5) teaches, "A chasid met warriors returning from battle. It was a tough war [and they rejoiced that they won]. The chasid told them, 'You returned from a small war.... Be prepared for the great war.'"

They asked him, "What is this greater war?"

The chasid replied, "It is the war against the yetzer hara and his army."

won wars and battles and learn strategies that we can use against the yetzer hara.

One primary strategy of war is to be courageous and fearless.

A general once told Napoleon that he foresaw that they would lose a particular battle. Napoleon replied, "If you thought we could win, we would have. But since you were pessimistic, we will lose."

The Yesod HoAvodah zt'l tells about a general who said to his wife, "I just received a telegram that tells terrible news. It predicts that we are losing at a certain battle."

His wife responded, "I just received another telegram. It came this moment; it tells of an even greater problem. It says you lost your courage, which is the greatest problem."

The same is true when we fight with the yetzer hara. We must be courageous and fight with confidence

that with Hashem's help, we can win and overcome the yetzer hara.

Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter *shlita* explained the power of courage with an analogy:

When you are among a pack of dogs and show them you are afraid, they'll run after you. But if you show them you aren't scared, the dogs will leave you alone.

Reb Yaakov Meir explained that this is also how it is with the yetzer hara. If you show fear and meekness in front of the yetzer hara, the yetzer hara can overpower you. But if you show confidence and courage, the yetzer hara leaves you alone.

Czar Nikolai's army would fight during the day and drink at night. One soldier drank too much, and he was still asleep when his troop moved on. Upon awakening, he knew he had to catch up with his battalion

quickly, but first, he wanted something to eat.

It was Friday night. He came to a Jewish home and helped himself to the pot of steaming *cholent*. He mounted his horse, placed the pot of hot *cholent* on the horse's mane, and set off to find his division. The hot *cholent* burned the horse's back, which spurred the horse to run quickly. It didn't take long before he reached his battalion, but his horse, *on fire*, kept charging forward, straight towards the front.

The enemy soldiers saw him charging full speed towards them, and they were afraid. They assumed he surely had a powerful weapon since he wasn't scared to face them alone. They fled in panic. In this manner, Czar Nikolai's army won the war without firing a single gunshot. Reb Mendel Futerfas *zt'l* told this story and explained that it is the same with our battle against the *yetzer hara*. If one shows courage and *hislahavus*, the *yetzer hara* will be afraid of him and leave him alone.⁵

5. Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* taught how to banish a *dibuk*: "Know that the most important factor is that you should strengthen your heart like a warrior without fear. Don't be weak because then the spirit will be strong, and he will not heed your words."

This concept leads us to the following story about the Turei Zahav. The story was told by Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l*, who read it in the *pinkas* (ledger) of a *chevrah kaddishah*:

A *dibuk* became attached to a girl, and people rushed to the Turei Zahav to ask for assistance. The Turei Zahav went to the home of this afflicted girl. As soon as he entered the room, the *dibuk* turned around, faced the wall, and announced, "*Baruch haba Rabbeinu Hagadol baal Turei Zahav* (welcome, the great Rav, author of *Turei Zahav*)."

People asked the *dibuk*, "Why do you call him 'Rabbeinu Hagadol,'

The Tanya (ch.26) writes, "There is a great rule that I must tell you: When two people are wrestling if one of them is lazy and moves about heavily, he will fall, even if he is the stronger one. The same is true with the war against the *yetzer hara*. You can't win this war with laziness and heaviness, which are the product of sadness and a closed heart – a heart as hard as a stone.

You only win the battle with *zrizus*, which comes from a pure heart that is alert, clear from all worldly worries and sadness." Because it isn't always the one who is stronger that wins a war. Zerizus and courage are major factors in the battle's outcome.

Shulchan Aruch begins *יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבקר*, "Be mighty like a lion to awaken in the morning."

and why did you turn and face the wall?"

The *dibuk* replied, "A *rasha* isn't permitted to look at the face of a *tzaddik*, therefore I turned around. And I know his name is Rabbeinu Hagadol baal Turei Zahav because that's how he's called in heaven."

The Turei Zahav said, "If this is how I'm called in heaven, I demand that you leave this girl immediately." The *dibuk* complied and left.

The girl's parents were wealthy and wanted to reward the Turei Zahav with a large sum of money to express their gratitude, but the Turei Zahav refused to accept the gift.

The Turei Zahav wore a very old, worn-out talis. The father assumed he would accept a new talis because it's a mitzvah. So he bought him a new talis, but the Turei Zahav didn't accept that either. He explained, "I want to wear my old talis, and I want to be buried in that talis because my talis can testify before the heavenly court that I never uttered a word of *tefillah* without *kavanah*."

Also, in *Pirkei Avos* (5:20) it states הוי... גבור כארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים, "Be mighty like a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven."

What is unique about a lion? It isn't its strength. There are animals stronger than a lion. The lion's strength is its courage.

The Taz (*Orach Chaim* 1:1) writes, "By its nature, the lion isn't afraid of any animal, as it states (*Yeshaya* 31:4) מקולם לא יחת, '[The lion] isn't afraid of their shouts.' So too, a person shouldn't be afraid of the *yetzer hara*, although the *yetzer hara* is stronger than him."⁶ And with courage, *zrizus*, and

joy, you can win the war against the *yetzer hara*.

Brazen

Another attribute that is needed for our battle is brazenness, as it states (*Avos* 5:20), הוי עז כנמר... לעשות רצון אביך, שבשמים, "Be brazen like a leopard...to do the will of your Father in heaven."

Shulchan Aruch (1:1) says that this means doing what you should and without being embarrassed or concerned about what others say.⁷

This is also needed in a war between countries. Imagine a government

6. The *miforshim* on Nach explain that when a lion attacks its prey, the shepherds gather and shout at it, מקולם לא יחת, but the lion isn't afraid of their shouts.

As a group, the shepherds are certainly stronger than a lion, but the lion isn't afraid of them. It is courageous, and that is its strength.

7. These are the words of Shulchan Aruch, ולא יתבייש מפני בני אדם, המלעיגים עליו בעבודת השם יתברך, "Don't feel embarrassed before people who mock you in Hashem's service."

constantly asking itself, "What will other countries say if I do this and this?" The leaders of a war need to know what is correct and to carry it out brazenly. The same applies to our fight against the yetzer hara. If we only do what others expect from us, we will refrain from doing many good deeds. But when we have the attribute of holy עוזת, brazenness, we can succeed in our war against the yetzer hara.

Once, the Kedushas Yom Tov attended a rabbinic meeting with his son, Reb Yoel (who later became the Satmar Rebbe zt'l). Reb Yoel davened with hand gestures, which helped him have *kavanah*.

One of the rabbanim thought it was funny and asked Reb Yoel, "Is it Purim today?"

The young Reb Yoel replied, "If I knew I would be meeting Haman, I would bring along my *grager*."

Haman and Amalek make fun of *yiras shamayim*. As it states, אשר קרך בדרך, "Who cooled you off when you were traveling on the way." We must serve Hashem with confidence and audacity. We shouldn't be afraid to serve Hashem with fervor.⁸ As is stated at the beginning of Shulchan Aruch, ולא יתבייש מפני בני אדם, המלעיגים עליו בעבודת ה' יתברך, "Don't be afraid when people make fun of you serving Hashem."

8. Once, a chassid cracked a hole in a frozen lake in the winter and was *tovel* there. But he couldn't find his way out, and his life was in danger

People saw this and panicked.

The Yesod HaAvodah zt'l quipped, "Nu, he should say *Nishmas*." He meant that the heat produced from saying *Nishmas* with *hislahavos* would melt the ice, and he would be able to get out.

Tefillah in our Times

The Ramban says the mitzvah of tefillah daily is d'rabanan, whereas the Rambam says it is a mitzvah d'oraysa. However, they agree that when there is an eis tzarah, a time of distress, the mitzvah of tefillah becomes a d'oraysa, a Torah obligation.

This applies to our times. Klal Yisrael needs a great yeshuah, and we must turn our hearts and eyes to heaven. עָנּוּ ה' עָנּוּ כִּי בָצָרָה גְדוּלָּה אָנַחְנוּ.

When the Yidden saw the immense sea of the Yam Suf before them, and the Mitzrim were pursuing them from behind, they were terrified. They shouted out to Hashem, as it states (Shemos 14:10) וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה'.

The Bartenura teaches that there was a fault in their tefillah. The perfect tefillah is when one knows that only Hashem can help him. A weaker tefillah is when one

thinks that possibly he can manage without Hashem's help, but in case he can't, he is turning to Hashem. This is certainly an improper tefilla, but at least he knows he is davening to Hashem! There is an even worse tefillah: when one davens by rote.

The Bartenura (commentary on Rashi) says that Klal Yisrael said this third and weakest form of tefillah this time. They knew from their ancestors, the avos hakedoshim, that when people are in a tzarah, they daven.

So, they also said tefillos, but it was more like a custom (this is what you do at such a time) and not that they understood that Hashem is the root of their salvation. The Bartenura says that this is implied in Rashi's words, תַּפְסּוּ אֳמוֹנוֹת אֲבוֹתֵם, "They grabbed onto the ways of the avos," without recognizing that their salvation comes from Hashem, and only from Hashem.

We live in a time when it is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah. According to all opinions, the obligation of tefillah is from the Torah. So, let us strive to daven properly. Let us recognize that the only one who can help us is Hashem Himself. With that awareness, we will undoubtedly daven properly before Hashem.

During the era of the First World War, a group of women came to the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*, and cried that their husbands had gone to the army, and they hadn't heard from them in a long time. The Chofetz Chaim cried with them and then said, "Why do you cry to me? Go to the *beis medresh*, open the *aron kodesh*, and pour out your hearts out before Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He wants to hear your tefillos."

The Chofetz Chaim told them the *pasuk* (Yeshayah 62:6-7) המזכירים את ה' אל דמי לכם ואל תתנו לו דמי, "Those who remind Hashem, be not silent. Give Him no rest..."

The women asked which prayer or *techinah* they should say.

The Chofetz Chaim answered, "When a child is hungry, he cries and shouts and expresses himself as best as he can. He doesn't have the right words, but his intention comes through. Do the same with your tefillos. Pour your hearts before Hashem in your own words, and Hashem will answer your tefillos (*Sichos Chofetz Chaim*, vol.2 p.21).

By the *Bris Ben Hametzarim*, when Hashem showed Avraham the future exiles of the Jewish people, it states (*Bereishis* 15:12) ותרדמה נפלה על אברם והנה אימה חשכה גדולה, גופלת עליו, "A sleep fell upon Avram, and behold, a fright, a great darkness was falling upon him." The *Targum Yerushalmi* says that it was a very deep sleep.

The Ponovitzer Rav *zt'l* asked the following question during the years of the Holocaust: How can Avraham sleep deeply after

seeing the terrible exiles of the future? It must be that this was part of the decree that we would sleep and forget to daven.

But we mustn't forget. We must awaken ourselves and pour out our hearts before our Father in heaven.

Hashem's Salvation

The Malbim (Tehillim 91) explains that there is a difference between when Hashem sends malachim to protect us and when Hashem Himself protects us. When Hashem sends malachim, the malachim keep us far away from the tzaros so we won't be harmed. When Hashem saves us, He brings us close to the troubles and saves us from there. It is a far greater miracle when Hashem Himself saves us because we come close to the dangers, and Hashem saves us.

Hashem does this, so we should recognize Him and His miracles. When we are saved with malachim,

people often think they were saved by nature and don't recognize Hashem.

This lesson is alluded to in the following pasukim (Tehillim 91):

כִּי מַלְאָכָיו יְצִוּהוּ לֶךְ לְשֹׁמֶרֶךְ בְּכָל
דְּרֹכֶיךָ, עַל כַּפִּים יִשְׁאוּנֶךָ פֶּן תִּגַּף בְּאֶבֶן
רְגְלֶךָ, "For He will command
His angels on your behalf to
guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will
bear you, lest your foot
stumble on a stone."

The Malbim writes, "When Hashem commands his malachim to protect you, they will carry you on their hands. They won't let you walk on the ground because they are afraid you might injure your legs, even slightly, and they were commanded to guard you. Therefore, they will carry you on their hands and keep you away from anything that can harm you."

But when Hashem guards us, it is different. We tread on top of the dangers, and we aren't harmed. As it

states על שחל ופתן תדרך תרמס כפיר ותנין "On a young lion and a cobra you will tread; you will trample the young lion and the serpent."

The Malbim explains, "The malachim guard you within the rules of nature, so they keep you far from danger.

But I guard you in a path that is above nature. I won't carry you on My hands, far from danger. You will walk on the earth, and although great dangers surround you, nothing bad will happen. You will be saved with wondrous miracles. You will walk on shachal and fesen, lions and cobras, and you won't be harmed. You will trample on kifir v'sanin, young lions and serpents, and... Hashem Himself will watch you."

The Malbim concludes, "Why does He make a person walk where there are lions and snakes and dangers? Because if he wasn't in danger, he wouldn't call Me, and he

wouldn't recognize that I was with him. He will say that it was all nature... יקראני 'ואענהו, 'He will daven to me, and I will answer him.' He will discover that עמו אנכי בצרה, 'I am with him in distress.' אחלצהו ואכבדהו, I will rescue him and grant him honor."

After Davening, There Is Nothing to Fear

When the Torah lists animals, *tzon* (sheep and goats) are usually mentioned first.

An example is the way the Torah describes the wealth of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Regarding Avraham's wealth, it states (Bereishis 12:16) ולאברם היטיב בעבורה ויהי לו צאן ובקר וחמרים ועבדים ושפחה ואתנת וגמלים, "Avraham...had *tzon* (goats and sheep) and cattle and donkeys and servants and maidservants, and female donkeys and camels." *Tzon* is written first. Regarding Yitzchak's wealth, it states (Bereishis 26:14) ויהי לו מקנה צאן, "He had possessions of *tzon* and possessions of

cattle." Once again, *tzon* is written first. Also, the pasuk that refers to Yaakov's wealth states (Bereishis 30:43), ויהי לו צאן רבות ושפחות ועבדים וגמלים, "He had prolific *tzon*, maidservants and servants, camels and donkeys."

Rabbeinu b'Chayei (32:5) writes, "It is proper to write צאן first because *tzon* is the most honored and preferred type of cattle (מין הנכבד והנבחר מכל) (הבהמות)."

There is one exception, and that is in this week's parashah. Yaakov Avinu sent a greeting message to Eisav, and he said to Eisav (32:6) ויהי לי שור וחמור וצאן, "I have acquired oxen, donkeys, and *tzon*."

Why did Yaakov Avinu switch the usual order and mention *tzon* last?

Rabbeinu b'Chayei answers that Yaakov didn't want the malachim to begin his message to Eisav by telling him about the many *tzon* he acquired, for it was with *tzon* (the two goats that

Yaakov brought to Yitzchak, see 27:9) that Yaakov received his father's *brachos*. Yaakov didn't want to remind Eisav of that incident, as he feared this would arouse Eisav's anger.

However, a few pasukim later, when Yaakov sent animals as a gift to Eisav, *tzon* is mentioned first, before the other animals (see 32:15). Why wasn't Yaakov afraid that the *tzon* would incite Eisav's anger?

Rabbeinu b'Chayei (32:14) answers that Yaakov prepared the gift after he had davened.

He said (32:12), הצילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו כי ירא אני אתו, "Save me from my brother's hand, from the hand of Eisav because I am afraid of him." After the tefillah, Yaakov was no longer afraid.

From here, we learn the incredible power of tefillah. Tefillah totally changes the situation. After the tefillah, Yaakov was no longer afraid of Eisav.

Reb Nechemya Beker told the Chazon Ish zt'l that his wife suffered complications after childbirth, and the doctors recommended surgery. The Chazon Ish replied, "So, then what's the question? Certainly, she should have the surgery. It is *pikuach nefesh*."

The Chazon Ish asked Reb Nechemyah to remain for Minchah. After Minchah, the Chazon Ish called him over, told him that he thought it over, and decided that his wife didn't need the operation.

Reb Nechemya asked, "Just a few minutes ago, you clearly said that surgery was necessary and that it was a matter of life and death, r'l. Why did the rav change his mind?"

The Chazon Ish zt'l replied, "I said that before I davened Minchah. But now is after Minchah..."

Rebbetzin Beker had another eight children, and she lived past the age of eighty.

It states (Amos 4:13) מַגִּיד לָאָדָם מֶה שִׁיחֹו, "To tell man what his speech is." The Gemara (Chagigah 5:) says that this pasuk refers to Olam HaBa. In Olam HaBa, people will be told about their speech.

What will they be told?⁹

He will be told the power of his speech and how much he could have accomplished with tefillah. When he was alive, he didn't realize just how powerful his speech was. Had he known, he would have invested much more into tefillah.¹⁰

9. Literally, this means that a person will be held accountable for all the forbidden speech of his lifetime.

10. Someone told the Chazon Ish that he suffers from headaches due to his intense concentration in tefillah. The Chazon Ish

The Noam Elimelech (*Haazinu*) writes, "Tzaddikim can bring a person *parnassah* and other bounties with their prayers and pure words. Certainly, this also happens when one prays from the depths of his heart."

The Noam Elimelech implies that when one davens for himself from the depths of his heart, his tefillah is even more potent than the tefillos of tzaddikim.

It states (*Tehillim* 100:2) באו לפניו ברנה, "Come before Hashem with joy." The Malbim explains a difference between how one comes before Hashem to ask his requests and when one asks from a human being. "When a person comes to a human being to ask for something, he asks with tears. He is only happy when and if his request is fulfilled. But when one comes to Hashem, he comes before Hashem with

joy because he knows that his requests will be answered."

It states in this week's parashah (35:26) אלה בני יעקב אשר ילד לו בפדן ארם, "These are Yaakov's [twelve] children who were born to him in Padan Aram." But were Yaakov's children all born in Padan Aram? Only eleven of Yaakov's children were born in Padan Aram. Binyamin was born in Beis Lechem (see 35:18-19). Why does the Torah say that they were all born in Padan Aram?

The Chizkuni (in one approach) answers, "The *pasuk* implies that Binyamin was born through the prayer that Rachel uttered when she was in Padan Aram when she said (*Bereishis* 30:24) יסף ה' לי בן אחר, 'May Hashem grant me another son.' Therefore, the *pasuk* considers it like he was born in Padan Aram."

responded, "What does tefillah have to do with the mind? Tefillah is with the heart!"

Everything happens through tefillah. Rachel's prayer in Padan Aram for another son considers it like he was born there.¹¹

Tefillah is *Hishtadlus*

One of the wonders of tefillah is that it can be considered as *hishtadlus b'derech hatevah* (hishtadlus within natural means) because Hashem put into the rules of nature that tefillah helps.

Rashi (32:9) writes, התקין עצמו לשלשה דברים לדורון לתפלה ולמלחמה, "Yaakov prepared himself [for meeting Eisav]

in three ways: with a gift, with tefillah, and with war tactics." Gifts and warfare are *hishtadlus* within the rules of nature. Tefillah is mentioned among them to tell us that prayer is also *hishtadlus* within the laws of nature.

The Midrash says that one can't be idle and trust that he will have *parnassah*. He must do *hishtadlus*, as it states (Devarim 15:18) וברכך... בכל אשר תעשה, "Hashem will bless you...with everything you do," The Midrash emphasizes that one must *do*, and then he can receive Hashem's

11. Once, on Yom Kippur, a *gabbai* was selling *psichah* for *Ne'ilah* (the privilege to open the *aron kodesh* for *Ne'ilah*). An unlearned man joined the bidding and bought the privilege for a very high price. However, since this man hardly came to *beis kneses*, he didn't know what to do. The *gabbai* showed him how to draw the string so that the curtain would open and how to slide open the doors of the *aron kodesh*. People asked him why he paid so much for the *psichah* since he clearly didn't know what he was buying. He replied, "My father advised me to see where the wealthy and successful people invest their money and to follow their example. I saw how interested the wealthy people of the *beis medresh* were in buying this, so I knew it was a good investment."

Tzaddikim of all generations invested in *tefillah*. We should follow their example and invest there, too.

bounty. Nevertheless, Rebbe Yitzchak of Neshchiz zt'l said that tefillah is also considered doing, as Chazal say, "the movement of the lips is an action." So, although we must make hishtadlus, tefillah itself can be a hishtadlus for parnassah.

Saying the Words

Davening with kavanah is difficult for most people, and this causes many to disregard and disrespect their tefillos. They think, "What value can my tefillos have? They were mumbled without kavanah!" But every tefillah is exceptional, including those said without kavanah.

The Torah (32:9) tells us, ויחץ את העם אשר אתו... לשני מחנות, ויאמר אם יבוא עשו אל המחנה האחת, והכהו והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה, "He divided the people who were with him...into two camps. He said, "If Eisav comes to one camp and strikes it down, then the remaining camp shall survive."

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l explains that Eisav is the yetzer hara, and the two camps are the heart and speech. The *pasuk* is saying that if the yetzer hara smites the heart, and one cannot daven with *kavanah*, at least salvage the other camp, which is your speech. Say the words of the *tefillah*, even without *kavanah*, because those tefillos will also be answered.

The same is said regarding Tehillim. Tzaddikim have said that one should say *Tehillim*, even without *kavanah*, because just by saying the words, one brings about salvation and blessings.

Reb Chaim Brim zt'l brought a beautiful source that tefillos, even without kavanah, are effective:

If someone says ותן טל ומטר in the summer, he must repeat the Shemonah Esrei because, in Eretz Yisrael, rain is a curse during the summer. This halachah

applies even if he said ותן טל without kavanah.

How much influence can his words have? He probably has no idea what he said! Yet, it is considered a curse, and he must daven again. We see that all tefillos, including those said without kavanah, accomplish so much!

Obviously, if he can daven with kavanah, the tefillos will be far greater, but let us be aware that every good deed, even tefillah without kavanah, is cherished and accomplishes a lot.

קי"ט *Tehillim*

Tikunei Shabbos teaches that reciting chapter (Tehillim 119) קי"ט banishes the *kelipos*. Included in "kelipos" are our enemies and the yetzer hara. It is therefore very beneficial to recite this chapter. Some say it every day.

It states (*Devarim* 6:19), להדף, "to thrust away all your enemies from before you."

How do you thrust away your enemies? The *Or Pnei Moshe* (ד"ה איתא בתקוני Va'eschanan) says that this is done by reciting chapter קי"ט/119 of Tehillim. להדף is *gematriya* 119, and א"ת is *roshei teivos* for תמוניא אפי, which means "eight phases," alluding to chapter קי"ט of Tehillim, which is called תמוניא אפי because it contains eight *pasukim* for each letter.

The *Or Pnei Moshe* writes, "When one says this chapter often, it causes להדף א"ת כל, the enemies within us to become shattered and removed."

The *Imrei Noam* (אות ט"ז און) writes that before Yaakov Avinu met with Eisav, he said this chapter for protection. A hint is וישלח, and לפניו is *gematriya* 176, and there are 176 *pesukim* in chapter קי"ט of Tehillim. The chapter begins with אשרי תמימי דרך, and Yaakov is called איש תם, as it states (*Bereishis* 25:27), ויעקב איש תם יושב אהלים.

When Yaakov wrestled with Eisav's malach, it states,

וַיִּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ, "a man wrestled with him," and וַיִּאָבֵק is *gematriya* 119. These are all *remozim*, hints, that this chapter helped Yaakov overcome Eisav.

As we wrote, some people say this chapter every day. If it is hard to say it every day, it would be a good idea to say it at least once a month. It banishes all enemies, the enemies outside us, and the enemy within us, the yetzer hara.

Bitachon and Confidence

In this week's parashah (34:25), the Torah tells us that when Shimon and Levi attacked Shechem, they had *bitachon*. As it states, וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵלָּהּ, "They came to the city with *bitachon*..."

Shimon and Levi were two people against an entire city. What were their chances? We would assume that they would be trembling from fear. But the Torah tells us that they came בְּטָח with a feeling of security, confident that Hashem

would help, and indeed, He did.

Rashi writes, "They were confident [they would win the war] because the people of Shechem were in pain [and weak from the *milah*]."

Rashi quotes a Midrash that states another reason they were confident they would win the war. "The Midrash says that they trusted in the strength of the old one (בְּטוֹחִים הָיוּ עַל כַּחוֹ שֶׁל יָקוֹן)."

Who was "the old one" they trusted? Some *meforshim* say that Rashi means they trusted in Yaakov Avinu's strength. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 80) states, "Yaakov Avinu didn't want that his children should [wage this war against Shechem]. But after they did so, he said to himself, 'Will I allow my children to fall into the hands of the goyim?'"

"What did Yaakov do? He took his sword and bow and stood at the entrance of Shechem. He said, 'If the nations will come to fight with my children, I will fight with them...'"

Shimon and Levi were confident this would happen, and they trusted that Yaakov's great strength would save them.

Others explain that Shimon and Levi trusted in Avraham Avinu's tefillos. Because Avraham Avinu davened for them, as it states (*Bereishis* 12:6), ויעבור אברם, בארץ עד מקום שכם, "Avram passed through the land until Shechem." Rashi writes, "Avram went there to daven for Yaakov's children who will fight a war with Shechem."

The avos foresaw the future of the Jewish nation, and they davened for their success. Avraham knew that his descendants would wage a war in Shechem, so he davened for them. Shimon and Levi relied on his tefillos.

The Meor Einayim (*Miketz*) writes, "It is known that the avos davened during their lifetime for what will occur in the future up to when Moshiach will come, may it be speedily in our days."

For example, at *akeidas Yitzchak*, Avraham said (*Bereishis* 22:5), ואני והנער נלכה עד כ"ה, and כ"ה hints to כסלו, the date of Chanukah. The Meor Einayim explains, "Avraham davened they should win the war against the Yevanim in the days of Matisyahu.

"Yosef HaTzaddik spoke to Binyamin and said (*Bereishis* 43:29), אלקים יחנך בני,

יחנך hints to חנוכה. [Yosef davened] that Hashem should perform miracles on Chanukah."

The avos davened for our generation, too. We can be certain that our adherence to Yiddishkeit until today is mainly in the merit of the avos's tefillos. As the Meor Einayim writes, "Our ability to be strong in Torah and mitzvos is all because our forefathers davened for us."

Shimon and Levi trusted that Hashem would help them in the merit of Avraham's tefillah. As Rashi writes, בטוחים היו על כחו של זקן.