

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Voeschanon

Rejoicing in Hashem's Promise

*Minhag Tov*¹ writes, "It is a good custom that one shouldn't take a haircut before erev Shabbos Nachamu, and on erev Shabbos, it is a mitzvah to take a haircut, לשמח גופו, ולקבל השבת בשמחה ובטוב לבב, ויתנחם בגחמות מרובות, so his body will be happy, and he will receive the Shabbos with joy and with a good heart, and he will receive many condolences..."

The Mahari'l states that on Shabbos Nachamu, ישמחו

כל העם ויבטחו בנחמת הגואל, "The entire nation shall be happy, and they should have bitachon that Hashem will redeem them."

Shabbos Nachamu is a joyous Shabbos because Hashem consoles us from the Three Weeks, from the Churban, and from the tzaros of galus. Furthermore, it is the Shabbos close to the 15th of Av, which the Gemara (Taanis 26b) states, לא היו ימים טובים, "לא באב ישראל כחמשה עשר באב", "Klal Yisrael didn't have such a happy holiday like the 15th of Av.² The Ritvah writes,

1. *Minhag Tov* is a sefer written years ago by one of the scholars from Italy. This old manuscript was first printed in תרפ"ט.

2. The Chasam Sofer (*Masei*) quotes the Talmud Yerushalmi that Av is a month comprised of two months. It is Av until Tisha b'Av, and after Tisha b'Av, a new month begins, called Menachem.

It states (*Yeshayah* 66:23), והיה מדי חודש בחדשו. The words חדש בחדשו imply that there's a month that begins in the middle of the month. The Chasam Sofer says that this refers to Menachem, which starts in the middle of Av. Several times, in the Chasam Sofer's *teshuvos*, he

ומפני זה נהגו עשות סעודה בשבת שאחר
 ותשעה באב, "Therefore, there's
 a custom to make a seudah
 on the Shabbos after Tisha
 b'Av."

this Shabbos, we sing a lot
 of piyutim and songs. It is
 proper to have pleasure on
 this Shabbos, more than all
Shabbosos of the year."

Yosef Ometz (תתצ"ד) writes,
 "This Shabbos is named after
 the haftarah – שבת נחמו. On

מהר"י אבן שוועיב (Drashos, end of
 parashas Va'eschanan, a student of the
 Rashba) writes, "When one

writes the date "the month Menachem." It isn't Av. It is a new
 month, a month of consolation and compassion.

Tzaddikim said that on the 15th of Av, one can hear how they are
 moving and preparing the chairs in heaven for the judgment of
 Rosh Hashanah. It is customary in many chassidic courts to begin
 wishing one another חתימה וחתומה טובה from חמשה עשר באב. Indeed,
 they have the same *gematria*.

The creation of the world began on the 25th of Elul. (Rosh Hashanah
 is when Adam HaRishon was born, on the sixth day of creation, but the world
 began on the 25th of Elul.) Forty days before 25 Elul is the 15th of Av.
 Chazal say that forty days before a child is formed, his destiny is
 decreed in heaven, as well as who the child will marry (see *Sotah* 2.).
 The Kedushas Levi says that this is the specialness of the 15th of
 Av. It is a beginning stage of the creation, when the purpose of
 creation is decreed.

It states (*Devarim* 10:12), ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך, "Now, Yisrael,
 what does Hashem ask from you? Only to fear Hashem, to love
 Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and soul. To observe
 His mitzvos."

The Bas Ayin explains מה represents the forty-five days from the
 15th of Av until Rosh Hashanah. The *pasuk* is saying that Hashem
 is asking that during these forty-five days we should love and fear
 Hashem and follow in His ways; this will prepare us for a good
 judgment on Rosh Hashanah.

eats and drinks on happy days, or on the yomim tovim, there is a kedushah similar to the fast of Yom Kippur. It is serving Hashem, and it is holiness. Therefore, the custom is to celebrate the Shabbos after Tisha b'Av like a yom tov, and this is a great mitzvah, for it is the day of our נחמה. Although it isn't actually a Yom Tov, we make it like a Yom Tov, in honor of Shabbos near the 15th of Av. When Shabbos is on the 15th of Av, it is literally a yom tov. Whoever is happy on this Shabbos will merit the נחמה and the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash... Speedily in our days!"

The haftarah states
(Yeshayah 40:1) נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר

אלקים, "Console, console My people," says your G-d."

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayah 445) states that the Yidden asked Yeshayahu HaNavi whether he consoles solely the Yidden who live in his lifetime – the people who experienced the Churban, or whether he consoles all future generations, as well. Yeshayahu replied, "I console all generations. It doesn't state אמר אלקים, "Hashem said", it states יאמר אלקים, "Hashem will say." Hashem will speak to all future generations. In each generation, Hashem consoles us and promises us that it will become good for us once again, with the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash.³

3. A great נחמה is felt when we understand that everything that occurs is for our good. With this emunah, we are never distressed. Whatever occurs, we know it is for our benefit.

Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l, the renowned mashgiach of Ponevezh, related that he was orphaned from his mother at a very young age. When he turned bar mitzvah, his father sent him to work as a delivery boy for a flower store. Parnassah was very

tight at home, and his father wanted his son to help cover the expenses. Reb Yechezkel recalled how hard he worked those days. For a long time, he delivered flowers to people's homes, while earning a pittance.

Reb Yechezkel tells the following: "I saved up some money, with the goal of opening my own flower shop. Certainly, as a storeowner, I would earn much more than as deliver boy. One day, on erev Shabbos, I had all the money that I saved to open my own store with me, and I went to the mikvah. When I left the mikvah, I realized that someone had stolen all my money, which I had saved with so much toil.

"My first thoughts were that my world was destroyed. I went about depressed and broken. All my hard work of many months were lost in a second. Soon afterward, I decided to leave work and go to yeshiva. I said to myself: 'I saw that a person can lose months of hard work in a moment. Isn't it foolish to work so hard to gain money? Is it worth working one's entire life and then losing it all in a moment? I will be better off to invest in something eternal, in merchandise that can never be taken from me.' I went to yeshiva and, Baruch Hashem, I was successful in my studies."

Reb Yechezkel would often say how grateful he was to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for arranging for him to lose all his money. That helped him conclude that one's purpose in life is to acquire Torah and to toil in avodas Hashem.

Even if we aren't on this high level, to totally abandon all concerns of Olam HaZeh and be totally dedicated to studying Torah, nevertheless, we can learn from this story that everything is for the good. Even when we suffer a loss, it is for our benefit. Something very good will come from it – either b'ruchniyus or b'gashmiyus. Reb Yechezkel Levenstein became one of our gedolim, and his story began with a loss. At the time, it seemed like a tragedy, but it was all for the good.

A similar story is told about Reb Moshe Soloveitchik zt'l. He was the father of the Beis HaLevi, grandfather of Reb Chaim Brisker, the patriarch of the Brisker dynasty.

Reb Moshe Soloveitchik was fabulously wealthy. He owned many

forests, sold the wood, and gave lots of money to tzedakah. One day, everything turned around, and he lost all his money. This was very surprising. Reb Moshe was extremely generous with his money. People couldn't understand why it was bashert that he lost his wealth? Reb Chaim Volozhiner zt'l established a beis din to see if they could discover the reason Reb Moshe suffered this great loss. After careful checking, the beis din concluded that they couldn't find any fault in Reb Moshe's ways. If anything, they said, it was because Reb Moshe gave away too much money to tzedakah. Chazal caution against giving away more than a fifth to tzedakah, and Reb Moshe gave much more than that. But Reb Chaim Volozhiner refused to accept that explanation. "From tzedakah one doesn't lose. He helped so many people from Bnei Yisrael! This certainly isn't the reason he lost his wealth."

Now that Reb Moshe lost his money, he had no reason to return to work, so he began going to beis medresh. When he was working, he would place all his vigor and energy into his work. Now, he displayed a similar passion and desire in his dedication to studying Torah. He was totally involved in the study of Gemara. He was extremely bright, and therefore, he became among the lomdim, the great scholars of the beis medresh.

When he would go to beis medresh, he brought his children along with him, and they also became great talmidei chachamim. Thus began the שושלת בית בריסק, the great dynasty of Brisk, from the Beis HaLevi, to Reb Chaim Brisker, to the גרי"צ, the Brisker Rav, who have enlightened the world with their chidushei Torah and *tzidkus*.

Years later, Reb Chaim Volozhiner noted, "Now I understand why Reb Moshe Soloveitchik lost his money. Heaven wanted to award Reb Moshe for his generosity, but what should they give him? More money? Is that a reward for his good deeds? Certainly not. Heaven decreed that generations of talmidei chachamim should descend from him. For this to occur, all his money had to be taken from him, and then he and his children became devoted to Torah study.

Once again, the lesson is that even when something appears bad, it is for the good. Reb Moshe lost all his money; it seemed negative, but there isn't a greater blessing that could have happened to him.

Studying Torah

Reb Shmuel of Slonim
(the Divrei Shmuel) zt'l said that

when he has a worry or problem, he studies Gemara for an hour, and that pushes away his worries. If the

Noson Strauss was a generous Jew from America who would come at times to visit Yerushalayim. (There is a street in Yerushalayim called Strauss, named after him). On one of his trips, he saw how the many poor people in Yerushalayim struggled, and he felt very bad for them. He used his money to open a soup kitchen to feed the poor and hungry, to provide medical services for the ill, as well as fund other organizations that helped the poor of Yerushalayim.

Once, in תרע"ב, he came to Yerushalayim and visited his soup kitchen. He fell there and broke his foot. Everyone was surprised when this occurred. A person who gave so much tzedakah to feed the poor, how could it be that he broke his foot precisely at the location of his generosity, where he provided daily meals for so many needy people?

Noson Strauss began his trip home. He traveled from Eretz Yisrael to England. From England, he had planned to travel by boat to the United States. He was scheduled to sail on the Titanic, the "unsinkable" boat, on its first voyage. But (Mishlei 19:21) רבות מהשבויות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום, "There are many thoughts in a man's heart, but Hashem's plan shall stand." On its first voyage (כ"ג ניסן תער"ב), after four days at sea, it collided with an iceberg, the ship sank, and 1,500 passengers died. (Noson Strauss's brother also died in this accident.) Now, everyone knew the answer to the question of why Noson Strauss broke his foot, specifically at the soup kitchen, where he did so much chesed. This was his reward for all the kindness he had done. Due to his broken foot, he didn't board the Titanic, and his life was saved. His foot broke at the soup kitchen, so it should be known that his life was saved due to his kind deeds. The lesson for us is to know that everything is for the good. When we acquire this awareness, נחמו נחמו עמי, we become consoled. Because whatever happens to us, we know it is for the good.

problem is greater, he studies Gemara for two hours, and then he is happy again. When there is a very great problem, he studies Torah for three hours. After studying Torah for three hours, he said, nothing in the world can disturb him. He is so happy that all problems disappear.⁴

A big נחמה comes from studying Torah. The joy of

studying Torah pushes aside all worries. As it states (Tehillim 119:92) לִילִי תוֹרַתְךָ שְׁשָׁשְׁעִי אֲזֵי אֶבְרָתִי בְּעָנִי, "If it weren't for Your Torah, my pleasure, I would have perished in my affliction."

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zy'a, explains that this is the reason the Aseres HaDibros are written in this week's parashah. Hashem wants to

4. Rav Shach zt'l tells that in year 5700, when he was in Vilna, his daughter was murdered, r'l. Reb Chaim Ozer zt'l (author of אדמו"ר) came to be מנחם אבל and told Rav Shach that he also lost his only daughter, r'l, when she was twenty years old. Reb Chaim Ozer said, "What can I say? (Tehillim 119:92) לִילִי תוֹרַתְךָ שְׁשָׁשְׁעִי אֲזֵי אֶבְרָתִי בְּעָנִי, "If it weren't for Your Torah that I cherish, I would have been lost in my affliction."

After that time, whenever Rav Shach came to Reb Chaim Ozer, Reb Chaim Ozer would say to him, "Rav Shach Rav Shach, לִילִי תוֹרַתְךָ, If it weren't for the Torah..."

The Pnei Menachem zy'a also lost his son, r'l, and he wrote that his only solace was the study of Torah. He writes, "My son, Reb Yehudah Aryeh zt'l, was brought up to the yeshiva in heaven when he was only twenty-seven years old. I was filled with agony until I became ill. Nevertheless, even when I was ill, and it was difficult for me to keep all my scheduled shiurim, I tried, as much as possible, to at least continue with the shorter shiurim. With them, I kept the pasuk (Tehillim 119:92) לִילִי תוֹרַתְךָ שְׁשָׁשְׁעִי אֲזֵי אֶבְרָתִי בְּעָנִי, and Baruch Hashem, through Hashem's immense kindness, I became healthy again."

console us after the great sorrow and distress from the *churban Beis HaMikdash* and from all the *tzaros of galus*. But the question is, how can we be consoled when we are still during the bitter *galus*? The answer is by studying Torah. This is the reason the *Aseres HaDibros* are written in this week's parashah, to console us through studying Torah and performing its mitzvos.⁵

As it states (Tehillim 119:50)
וְזֹאת נִחְמָתִי בְּעָנְיִי כִּי אִמְרֹתֶיךָ הִצִּילֵנִי,
"This is my consolation in my affliction, for Your word has sustained me."

אִמְרֹתֶיךָ is Torah and mitzvos. They give us hope and joy. That is our *נחמה*.

It states in the haftarah (Yeshayah 40:1), נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי יְאֹמַר,

אלקיים, "Console, console My people," says your G-d." If a person asks, "But how can I have a *נחמה*? The *tzaros of galus* are so great!" The pasuk answers, יֹאמַר אֱלֹקִים, accept upon yourselves the yoke of heaven. Study Torah and perform the mitzvos; these will grant you joy in *galus*.

It states (Mishlei 12:25) דַּאֲגָה בְּלֵב אִישׁ יִשְׁחָקָהּ וְדָבָר טוֹב יִשְׂמְחֶהָ, "If there is concern in a man's heart, let him cast it down, and a good word will make it cheerful."

Rashi explains, "If a person is worried about something, יִשְׁחָקָהּ, he should take it out of his mind and not think about it. [Furthermore], וְדָבָר טוֹב יִשְׂמְחֶהָ, he should study Torah. That

5. The Beis Yisrael said that we read the *Aseres HaDibros* after Tisha b'Av, because of the rule of יום יומיים אעובד, "if a person neglects the Torah for one day, it (the Torah) will neglect him for two days." (Yerushalmi Brachos 9:5). We didn't study Torah on Tisha b'Av, so there is a danger that this will result in more days without Torah. Therefore, we read the *Aseres HaDibros* and restart learning again. We renew our commitment to the Torah so that the one day shouldn't extend into more days.

will bring him joy, and he will be saved from his worries..."⁶

It states (Devarim 6:7) וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבַבְכֶּם וְדַבַּרְתֶּם בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּכֶם בְּבֵיתְכֶם וּבְלֶקְחְכֶם בְּדֶרֶךְ, "You shall teach [Torah] to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk

on the way..." It is b'hashgachah pratis that we read these words at this time of year, when people are traveling to their vacation places. The Torah reminds us that also then, we should be occupied with the study of Torah and with keeping the Torah.⁷

6. We quote Rashi's words: דאגה בלב איש ישחנה. ישיחנה מדעתו: ודבר טוב שמחנה. יעסוק בתורה והיא תשמח את הדאגה שבלבו ותצילנו ממנה

7. A mashal is said about a person who has difficulty walking. As long as he is learning Torah in the yeshiva, together with all the other students, no one can tell that he is different than the rest. The yeshiva students are all sitting and learning, and he is doing the same. But then comes the end of the day, and everyone is going home. But this student lingers behind because he can't walk well. Then it is noticeable that he has a problem. The same can be said about bein hazmanim. As long as the yeshiva students are in beis medresh throughout the year, no one can tell the difference between the students. But when they go on vacation, then it becomes clear who has acquired genuine yiras Shamayim in yeshiva, and who hasn't.

One place people go to during vacation is the zoo. They want to see the lion – the king of the animals. They want to understand, from up close, what it means יתגבר כארי, to awaken like a lion. They want to hear the roar of the lion, to understand the meaning of fear, as it states אריה ישאן מי לא יירא "When a lion roars, who won't be afraid?" It is enjoyable to see a lion; however, everyone understands that the joy is only when the lion is safely in his cage. Chas v'shalom, if the lion breaks free, there is a great danger. We can use this mashal to teach us the following lesson:

In Av, many people go on vacations, and there are benefits that

Chazal tell us that דברי תורה צריכין חיזוק בכל עת ובכל זמן, "The pursuit of studying Torah needs constant chizuk, at all times." This is especially so during *bein hazmanim*. Although people need time to rest, to garner renewed

strength to serve Hashem, it is obvious that this doesn't absolve a person from his obligation to study Torah. Certainly, a day shouldn't pass by without any Torah study at all.⁸

people gain from it. They rest up and regain their strength to continue with their avodas hakodesh. But vacation is only beneficial when one carries with him the yoke of heaven, and the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. These are like his chain and his cage, which protect him. The mazal of the month of Av is אריה, a lion, and woe to those who don't tie down their lion. But if they go on vacation with fear of heaven, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will help them acquire מנוחת הנפש, tranquility. However, if they do not have any boundaries, it can be dangerous, chalilah.

It is said about a rosh yeshiva that was holding a cup of ice-cold cola in his hand, as he studied the sefer החושן קצות. Someone asked the rosh yeshiva, "Is that how one studies Ketzos?" The rosh yeshiva replied, "No. But this is how a Yid drinks cola." So, even if a person feels that he needs to "drink cola" or he needs to rest up in some other way, or to go on a vacation, he must remember how to do that, without ever abandoning the Torah and mitzvos.

The Skulener Rebbe zt'l said about *bein hazmanim*, "Could a person go a month without food? So, how can he go a month without Torah, which is חיינו ואורך ימינו, our life?

8. It is known that Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l would advise bachurim and yungerleit to study a new section of Torah during *bein hazmanim* (like a new Masechta or a new sugya), so they will have the yoke of Torah also on these days.

Chazal (Shabbos 116a) say that the two pasukim (Bamidbar 10:35-36, starting with ויהי בנקסו הָאָרֶץ) are like their own sefer. The Gemara says that

The obligation to study Torah increases when we reach the 15th of Av because Chazal (Taanis 31a) say, מוכאן, "ואילך מאן דיוסף יוסיף", "From this time [the 15th of Av] onwards, whoever studies more will live longer." Rashi explains, "If a person will add to study at night, in addition to the daytime, יוסיף חיים על חייו, days will be added to his life."

The rule of Chazal is, ואחד, "המרבה ואחד הממעיט", "the same is for the one who does a lot as for the one who does a

little." Each person does what he can, but the main thing is to add some time, even if it isn't much more than before. A drop more Torah, starting from this day, is essential. We shouldn't think a drop more Torah is insignificant, because each bit of Torah is precious, and with that amount, he will perform the words of Chazal כאן ואילך מאן דיוסף יוסיף, to study more Torah from the 15th of Av onward, and his days will be lengthened.

this is the meaning of the words (Mishlei 9:1) הָעֶבֶדָה עֲמוּזֶיהָ שִׁבְעָה "She has hewn her seven pillars."

So, Sefer Bamidbar is divided into three sefarim. The first sefer is the beginning of Bamidbar until the two pasukim of וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָאָרֶץ... Then, there are the two pasukim of וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָאָרֶץ... That is the second sefer. The third sefer is from there until the end of Sefer Bamidbar. Together with the other four sefarim of the Torah (Bereishis, Shemos, Vayikra, Devarim), it can be said that the Torah consists of 7 sefarim, the seven pillars.

We can explain that the two pasukim וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָאָרֶץ... וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָאָרֶץ are like a complete sefer to hint to us that when one travels, וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ, it is a complete sefer, which needs to be studied. One shouldn't think that when he travels, he doesn't have to learn anymore. On the contrary, now it is like a new sefer, a complete sefer, which needs to be studied. Torah study must go on, even during vacation.

Chazal say that the 15th of Av is a *yom tov*, and several reasons are given. One reason is that *יום שפסקו מלכרות עצים למערכה*, it was the day they finished cutting wood for the *mizbeiach*. Why is this considered a special day, worth celebrating?⁹ Rabbeinu Gershom (Bava Basra 121b) explains: When they were cutting wood for the *mizbeiach*, they had less time to study Torah. "On the

day they completed cutting the wood, they made it a Yom Tov because they were able to study more Torah."

Although until now they were occupied with a special mitzvah, and according to halachah they were exempt from studying Torah, nevertheless, fortunate are those who merit studying Torah. There is no greater joy than that!¹⁰

9. The Rashbam explains that they were celebrating the completion of this great mitzvah.

10. In the beis medresh of Rebbe Mendel Riminover zt'l, if a person missed a day of Torah learning from the fifteenth of Av onwards, the rebbe didn't want him to be the baal tefilla on the *yamim nora'im*.

This is recommended for all chazzanim who will daven before the amud on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They should be careful not to miss even one day of Torah from the fifteenth of Av onwards so that they will be worthy baalei tefilla on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

We add that this recommendation applies to everyone, and not only to chazzanim. The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.2 p.356) teaches that in the past, the community would rely on the chazzanim to plead for them before Hashem. In the merit of the chazzanim, the community received a favorable judgment on Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur. However, says the Chasam Sofer, in our times, *אנשי אמונה נאבדו*, people aren't as righteous as they used to be. We can no longer rely on the chazzanim. Everyone has to plead for

Tefillah for "Underserved Gifts"

It states (3:23) וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֶל ה' בְּעֵת הַהוּא, "I entreated Hashem at that time, saying..."

The *Or Hachaim HaKadosh* teaches that a condition for tefillos to be answered is to pray in the form of תַּחֲנוּנִים, as it states וְאֶתְחַנֵּן, which means pleading as a poor person pleads before someone wealthy, requesting his help. תַּחֲנוּנִים is a prayer said when

one recognizes that he can't do anything on his own, without Hashem's aid. As it states (Mishlei 18:23) תַּחֲנוּנִים יְדַבֵּר רֵשַׁע, "A poor man speaks with supplications."

Also, Rashi in our parashah writes (3:23) אֵין חַנוּן בְּכָל מָקוֹם אֲלֵא לְשׁוֹן מִתְּנַת חֵן, "The translation of חַנוּן, in all areas [such as in our parashah, וְאֶתְחַנֵּן] is when one asks for מִתְּנַת חֵן, a gift, which he doesn't deserve to receive." It is when one feels that he

themselves. Therefore, everyone should consider himself like he is the "chazan".

Primarily, the Chasam Sofer refers to the recommendation of the poskim that chazzanim should prepare themselves for three days before the Yomim Noraim. During these three days, they should seclude themselves and be occupied in teshuvah and avodas Hashem so that they will be worthy *chazzanim*, and their tefillos will be answered on behalf of the community. The Chasam Sofer says that in our times, everyone should prepare themselves for three days before the Yamim Noraim, because in our times, everyone must plead for himself. Everyone is like a chazan.

We add to the Chasam Sofer's holy lesson the concept taught by Rebbe Mendel of Riminov. In addition to preparing oneself three days before the *yomim noraim*, people should be vigilant to study Gemara every day, from the 15th of Av until the *yomim noraim*, because in our times, everyone is like the chazan, pleading for himself.

doesn't have good deeds and he doesn't deserve to receive Hashem's kindness. But he pleads that Hashem should grant him goodness, nonetheless.

Similarly, Shem MiShmuel (תר"ע) writes, וְאֵתְחַנֵּן means that he knows that Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't owe him anything, but he asks for a מַתָּנַת חַנּוּם, a gift. He humbles himself... like a poor person who stands in the doorway and pleads for help. This is the reason for all the expressions of tefillah that Moshe Rabbeinu a"h prayed specifically in the form of תַּחֲנוּנִים. " This is written in the Torah to tell us how we

should daven. Tefillah should be said with humility. One should plead before Hashem like an עֲנִי בַפֶּתַח, a poor person standing in the doorway. He should have the sensation that he doesn't deserve anything, but he requests Hashem's compassion.

When one prays in this manner, he is guaranteed that his tefillos will be answered. As the Chidushei HaRim zt'l (לקוטי הר"ם) writes, "Moshe Rabbeinu accomplished for us that whoever feels unworthy, Hashem will open up the treasures of heaven for him."¹¹ He writes, "Moshe Rabbeinu accomplished

11. The Arizal teaches that when we say in Shacharis, before Shemonah Esrei, עוֹזֵר דָּלִים, "He helps the poor", we should consider ourselves humble and poor, and with that mindset, we ask our requests in Shemonah Esrei.

The Imrei Yosef (Va'eschanan) writes that when a person thinks that his tefillos deserve to be answered because he is worthy, or because he has done many good deeds, such a thought itself can become a barrier that prevents him from receiving Hashem's bounty. When one prays in this manner, his deeds will be examined in heaven to determine whether he truly deserves that his requests be fulfilled. If his deeds fall short, he won't receive his requests.

with his tefillos for all generations that Hashem will give him a gift... Because, behold, there is a treasury in Heaven for everything in this world. It is the largest treasury, and it

is called אוצר מתנת חנם (treasury for gifts). But why isn't this source given to all people of Bnei Yisrael? The answer is that this treasury is opened solely to the people who know that they don't deserve

Whereas, when a person comes to Hashem and says, "I don't deserve anything, but I request that You bestow Your kindness upon me anyway," this tefillah is more likely to be answered. Even if he is unworthy, he can receive because he asked for a מתנת חנם, an undeserved gift.

Chazal (Bava Metzia 3a) discuss a scenario when someone says to his fellow man, מנה לי בידך, "You owe me a *manah* (a sum of money)" and the other person replies, אין לך בידי כלום, "I owe you nothing." The Gemara discusses the various halachos and nuances of this scenario. We can utilize this discussion for our lesson. Someone says to Hashem, מנה לי בידך, "I need money, and You have money. You owe it to me, so give it to me. I have many good deeds, and I deserve Your help." Hashem will reply, אין לך בידי כלום, "I don't owe you anything at all." Even the good things that you did, it is because Hashem gave you the energy and willpower to do it. Therefore, Hashem says, "I don't owe you anything at all." But when one asks with humility, with a feeling that he doesn't deserve, and asks Hashem to open his אוצר מתנת חנם, treasury of gifts, then he will receive.

Being humble is from the foundations of being a Yid. As it states in this week's parashah (7:7) לא מרובכם מִכָּל הָעַמִּים חִשַּׁק ה' בְּכֶם וַיִּבְחַר בְּכֶם כִּי אֶתֶם "Not because you are more numerous than the other nations did Hashem delight in you and choose you, for you are the least of all the nations." Chazal (Chullin 89a) say that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Bnei Yisrael, חשקני בכם, שאפילו בשעה שאני משפיע לכם, גדולה אתם ממעטם עצמכם לפני "I desire you because even when I give you greatness, you humble yourselves before Me."

to receive anything. It is opened solely for those who know that their deeds aren't sufficient, and they can only receive a מתנת חנם, a free, undeserved gift. To such people, the treasury of אוצר חנם is opened, and they can receive from there."¹²

The Beis Aharon (Chanukah p44) writes, "When a person asks from Hashem yisbarach to save him from *yesurim*,

chas v'shalom, or from poverty, and he knows that he can't do anything other than ask from Hakadosh Baruch for a מתנת חנם, undeserved gift, as Dovid HaMelech said (Tehillim 25:16) פָּנֵה אֵלַי וְחַנּוּנִי כִּי יָחִיד וְעָנִי אֲנִי, 'Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am alone and poor', then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will answer him, every time he calls out to Hashem."

12. The Chidushei HaRim says that this is the meaning of the Midrash (Devarim Rabba, 2:11), "Moshe said to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, 'Ribono Shel Olam, when You see Your children in *tzaar*, and there is no one that can daven for them, answer them immediately...'" This means that Hashem should answer them, even if they aren't worthy, because they know that only Hashem's compassion can help them.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 445:6) explains the pasuk (Shemos 33:19) וְחַנּוּתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן, "I will favor those that I wish to favor." "Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed to Moshe all the treasuries of reward that are prepared for the tzaddikim. Moshe asked, 'This treasury, for whom is it?' Hashem replied that it is for those who perform mitzvos. Moshe asked, 'For whom is this other treasury?' Hashem replied, 'It is for those who raise orphans.' Then Moshe saw a very large treasury, and he asked, 'For whom is this treasury?' Hashem replied, 'Whoever has merits, I reward him. Whoever doesn't have merits, I give him for free, and I give him from this treasury. This is the meaning of וְחַנּוּתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן: I grant kindness to whom I desire. וְחַמְדָּתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲחַמֵּם, 'I have compassion upon those whom I desire to have compassion.'"

All Tefillos are Answered

Chazal (Devarim Rabba 11:9) say that Moshe Rabbeinu prayed תפילות tefillos (515 prayers) to enter Eretz Yisrael, and if he had said just one more tefillah, his tefillah would have been answered. The amount of tefillos is alluded to in the pasuk (3:22) וְאַתָּחֲנֹן אֵל ה' בָּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, because the gematria of וְאַתָּחֲנֹן is 515. Let us learn from this that if one's tefillos weren't answered, he should daven again. Perhaps this added tefillah will be answered. Moshe wasn't permitted to pray again, as Hashem told him (3:26) רַב לָךְ "It is enough! Don't speak to Me anymore about this matter." But if he could have said one more tefillah, his tefillos would have been answered. We, too, should continue praying, and in the end, our tefillos will be answered.

It states in Tehillim (102:18-19) פָּנָה אֵל תְּפִלַּת הָעֲרֵעַר וְלֹא בָזָה אֶת תְּפִלָּתָם, תִּפְתָּב וְזֹאת לְדֹר אֲחֵרֹן וְעַם נִבְרָא וְהִלָּל יְיָ, "He has turned to the prayer of those who cried

out, and He did not despise their prayer. Let this be inscribed for the latest generation, and a newly created people will praise Hashem.

The Beis Avraham zt'l teaches that there are people who pray a lot, but their tefillos aren't answered. This goes on for some time until their hearts break from anguish, and they lose hope from tefillah. But there is no reason to lose hope. There isn't a good deed that a Yid does that is lost. Every good deed makes an impression in heaven. This rule is certainly true regarding tefillah. Therefore, it states, פָּנָה אֵל תְּפִלַּת הָעֲרֵעַר. An עֲרֵעַר is a dry tree in the desert that has no moisture. Even if a person is like this tree, totally dried out, without good deeds, nevertheless, וְלֹא בָזָה אֶת תְּפִלָּתָם, Hashem doesn't despise his tefillah. תִּפְתָּב וְזֹאת לְדֹר אֲחֵרֹן, write this for the final generation, the generation before Moshiach, when there is a great *hester panim*, and many people

pray, and their tefillos are not answered. Let them know that they shouldn't lose hope. Let them know that Hashem accepts every tefillah, and with this encouragement, וְעַם יִבְרָא יְהִלָּל, they will continue praising and davening to Hashem. Behold, even Moshe Rabbeinu prayed 515 tefillos, and his tefillos weren't answered. Nevertheless, they made an impact. They weren't in vain. His tefillos became part of the Torah! Besides, according to סוּד, the secrets of the Torah, Moshe's tefillos were answered. This is because Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him (3:27) עֲלֵה רֹאשׁ הַכִּסֵּה וְשֵׂא עֵינֶיךָ יָמָה וְצָפָנָה וְתִימָנָה, "Go up to the top of the hill and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward and see with

your eyes..." Because of his tefillos, he was permitted to see Eretz Yisrael, and all the *tikunim* and benefits that he wanted to attain from going to Eretz Yisrael, he attained by looking at the land.

Additionally, as we wrote, Hashem told Moshe רַב לָךְ אֵל תּוֹסֵף דַּבֵּר אֵלַי עוֹד בְּדַבֵּר הַזֶּה, "It is enough! Don't speak to Me anymore about this matter." Hashem told him to stop praying, but if he had said one more tefillah, he would have entered Eretz Yisrael. This shows us that each tefillah brings salvation closer. Sometimes, there is a number of tefillos that must be said, and when the number is accomplished, the *yeshuah* comes. Therefore, never lose hope from tefillah. Continue davening, and the salvation will come.¹³

13. The Rebbe of Toldos Aharon zy'a once said to a chasan, before his chasunah, "Remember the following advice for your entire life: Have a place, or a room, in your home, and go there to daven to Hashem yisbarach for anything you need. If you do so, you will be able to accomplish a lot with your tefillos."

The Zohar states that Moshe Rabbeinu had a kabbalah that when one says the word **א** twice in his tefillah, it will certainly be answered. The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* (Divrei Eliyahu) says that we see in this tefillah that Moshe said **א** once. He said, **אָעֲבֹרָה אֶת הָאֲרֶז הַטּוֹבָה**. He wanted to say **א** one more time. He wanted to say, **אָעֲבֹרָה**, and then his tefillos would certainly be answered.

But Hashem immediately stopped him and said, **רַב לָךְ** **אֵל תּוֹסֵף דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים עוֹד בְּדִבְרֵי הַזֶּה**, "It is

enough! Don't speak to Me anymore about this matter," and Moshe couldn't say **א** again.¹⁴

Moshe davened 515 tefillos, and yet his tefillos weren't answered. He could have thought Heaven wasn't paying attention to his tefillah, for that is what many people think after they daven numerous times without seeing the gain and benefit. Therefore, Hashem told him, "I hear your tefillos, and the proof that I hear your tefillos is that I know

14. The Chida (Nachal Kidumim, Bahaaloscha) discusses Moshe's tefillah for Miryam, when Moshe said (Bamidbar 12:13) **אֵל-לֹא אֶנִּי רֹפֵא אֶלָּא**. He said **א** twice in this tefillah because he received the kabbalah that by saying twice **א** in a tefillah, the tefillah will certainly be answered. The Chida writes, "I heard in the name of early scholars (*kadmonim*) that Moshe Rabbeinu received this secret when he was in heaven. When one prays and says twice **א**, his tefillah will be answered. Therefore, he said **אֵל-לֹא אֶנִּי רֹפֵא אֶלָּא**, and Hashem answered his tefillah.

Perhaps we can explain this with the Chazal that says, "If a person sees that his tefillos weren't answered, he should daven again, as it states (Tehillim 27:14) **הוֹפֵה אֶל ה' חֲזַק וַיִּצְמַח לְךָ וַיְשׁוּבָה אֶל ה'**, 'Hope to Hashem, be strong and He will give your heart courage, and hope to Hashem.'"

Similarly, when one says **אֵל-לֹא אֶנִּי רֹפֵא**, and he davens "again," this is mesugal that his tefillos will be answered.

that you prayed 515 times. I counted each tefillah. Only, I have a reason why I am not answering you, but each tefillah is kept in My treasury in Heaven..."

It states (Va'eschanan 4:29), ובקשתם משם את ה' אלקיך ומצאת, "From there [in galus] you will seek Hashem, your G-d, and you will find Him..." The Baal Shem Tov zt'l says the Torah is alluding to Yidden who are at very low levels. ובקשתם משם, "From

there, from that low place, you will pray to Hashem and Hashem will answer your tefillos."

Everyone can daven. There isn't a Yid in the world whose prayers aren't effective. We shouldn't think that only great tzaddikim can daven. Every Yid's tefillah is heard and accepted in heaven.¹⁵

Hashem told Moshe not to say another tefillah, but

15. There are many things that people mistakenly believe apply only to tzaddikim and not to them. One example is *deveikus*, which means to always think about Hashem. They think that this is only for tzaddikim, but it isn't so.

In this week's *parashah* it states, ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולם היום, "You, who are attached to Hashem your G-d, are all living today." This pasuk is for all Yidden, people on all levels. Everyone can live their lives, constantly remembering Hashem.

The Rebbe of Bahush zy"a said, when we speak to people about *deveikus* – they make three errors: (1) They think *deveikus* is in Gan Eden, (2) or in this world for the tzaddikim, (3) or for elderly people.

The words of the pasuk חיים כולם היום dispel these theories:

חיים – In your lifetime, not only in Gan Eden.

כולם – for everyone, not only for tzaddikim.

היום – Today, not only when you get old.

Hashem didn't forbid the Jewish nation from praying. The Midrash says that had the nation prayed on Moshe Rabbeinu's behalf, their tefillos would be answered and Moshe Rabbeinu would have been allowed entry into Eretz Yisrael. But the nation didn't pray. They thought, "If Moshe Rabbeinu's 515 prayers weren't effective, what can I accomplish with my tefillah?" They didn't realize that tefillah from every Yid is extremely beloved before Hashem, and they would be answered.¹⁶

Give Chizuk and Plant Hope

The parashah begins with the words, וַתַּחֲנוּן אֵל ה' "And I davened to Hashem at that time."

The Baal HaTurim explains that Moshe was saying, חֲזַקְתִּי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹלֵי יְרַחם, "I gave *chizuk* to Bnei Yisrael. [I raised their morale to believe that Hashem will help them conquer Eretz Yisrael]. Perhaps [in this merit] Hashem will have compassion on me [and answer my tefillos]."

The Baal HaTurim is referring to the pesukim that precede Parashas

16. The Megaleh Amukos teaches: Hashem's name (Yud Keh Vov Keh) is gematria twenty-six. We say Hashem's name twenty-six times in Shemonah Esrei. $26 \times 26 = 676$, the same gematria as the word רעות [hardships]. This implies that by davening the Shemonah Esrei, all forms of suffering and troubles are annulled and disappear.

The Megaleh Amukos writes that this is the intention of the pasuk ומכולם יצילנו ה' רבות רעות צדיק, "Many hardships befall the tzaddik, and Hashem saves him from them all (Tehillim 34:20)." With ה', the twenty-six times it states ה' in Shemonah Esrei, he will be saved from his troubles.

V'eschanan. Moshe said (Devarim 3:21-22), **לֹא תִירָאוּ**, "Don't be afraid. Hashem shall wage war for you. Your eyes have seen everything Hashem did to these two kings [Sichon and Og]; so will Hashem do to all the kings where you cross over [who live in Eretz Canaan]." Moshe gave hope and encouragement to the Jewish nation, and in that merit, Moshe davened **וַתַּחֲנֹן**, that Hashem should have mercy on him and answer his tefillos, and permit him to enter Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe Rabbeinu's merits are countless. He brought the Torah down to the Jewish nation, he saved the nation many times with his tefillos, and he led them out of Mitzrayim and through the desert for forty years. Who can compare to Moshe? Who can count his tefillos? Yet, he didn't ask Hashem to answer his prayers because of all these merits.

His only request was that Hashem answer his tefillos because he gave hope to the Jewish nation.

Hope is inherent in mankind. No matter what people go through, they hope for a better future. Even during the grimmest of moments, there is always, at the very least, a flicker of hope in their hearts. This is undoubtedly a kindness of Hashem.

Nevertheless, despite our tendency to think positively, we worry a lot. People are frightened, "What will happen if the future isn't better? What will happen if I don't find a *shidduch*/*parnassah*/health, etc.?" Therefore, it is a great mitzvah to encourage others, to help them hope for a better future. Moshe Rabbeinu encouraged the Jewish nation, and for this merit, he hoped Hashem would answer his tefillos.¹⁷

17. It states (*Yeshayah* 1:1) **חֲזוֹן יִשְׁעִיהוּ בֶן אֲבוּיָן**. The Rebbe of Zutchkeh *zt'l*

One should be mindful to say a kind word to someone, encourage him, compliment him on his qualities, smile at others, etc. These small, easy-to-do acts are so significant and far-reaching.¹⁸

The Torah tells us (*Devarim* 23:4-7) that a Jewish woman may not marry a גר, a convert from the nations of Amon and Moav (see *Even HaEzer* 4:2).

The Torah tells us that the reason for the prohibition is, על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם, ובמים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים... "It is because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Mitzrayim..." When the Jewish nation was traveling through the desert, Amon and Moav should have greeted them with food and water. The Chinuch explains that people with such bad

said that חזון means to see, ישעיהו means salvation, and בן אמוץ means to be strong. The pasuk is saying, "To see your salvation, be strong and believe in the salvation that will certainly come." When one has hope and doesn't despair, he will merit salvation. Therefore, it is a great mitzvah to give people a feeling of hope. That sensation will help bring the good they hope for.

18. Reb Mordechai Chaim Slonim *zt'l* was once waiting his turn to use a tiny *mikvah* in Teveria. The town's fool was present at the time, and he announced, "Rabboisai! The holy rav is here! Make room so the holy rav can *toivel*!"

After his *tevilah*, Reb Mordechai Chaim said, "Everyone knows that this man is the town's fool, and the *mikvah* isn't the ideal place for honoring others, either. Nevertheless, when he honored me, it felt good."

Reb Mordechai Chaim said, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu placed into the fabric of creation that people enjoy receiving honor, regardless of who is bestowing the honor. It is a natural need, and therefore, we should seek to honor others."

traits don't deserve to marry into the Jewish nation.

The Beis Yosef (ד"רשות מהריק"א, printed in *Or Tzaddikim*) notes that the Yidden didn't need bread or water because the manna fell every morning and they drank the water of Miriam's well. So why are we so strict with Amon and Moav? What was so bad about their behavior?

The Beis Yosef answers, "We can say that על דבר means 'for the words.' They are

punished because they didn't share kind, encouraging words." The nation could have managed without their bread and water, but why didn't they say some words of encouragement? Words are free. Why couldn't they say something nice to the Jewish nation who had just sojourned forty years in the desert? For their lack of kindness, it is forbidden to marry them.¹⁹

19. Amon and Moav were goyim. Who needs their praise and admiration? Who needs their encouragement? Nevertheless, apparently, we could have used it. Their kind words would have helped the nation. And Amon and Moav were punished severely because they refrained from providing this emotional support to Bnei Yisrael.

A wealthy person visiting Eretz Yisrael gave his relative a thick wad of one-hundred-dollar bills and told him to distribute the money to the tzedakah of his choice.

The relative wasn't sure where he should give the money, so he discussed it with one of the *gedolei hador* *zt'l*. The *gadol* replied, "Hire *yungerleit* to give *chizuk* and to smile at *bachurim*."

This isn't a joke. So many people wait for someone to show them respect, smile, and listen to them. Fortunate are those who occupy themselves in this good deed.

It is easy to find opportunities to perform this mitzvah. In every

The Chofetz Chaim once said before a large crowd,

beis medresh, every yeshiva, every girls' school, and every neighborhood, there are people hungry for a kind word. They wait and hope that someone will smile and spend a moment of their time with them. Fortunate are those who can fill this void.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said, "Every *bachur* needs a spoonful of *kavod* each day."

Educators say that often children fall away from Yiddishkeit were missing a kind word, some *chizuk*, a smile, someone who would ask them how they are, and so on.

By performing this mitzvah, you can encourage people and save Yidden from leaving the fold.

There was a boy who was falling away from Yiddishkeit, and his father paid many people to mentor him and to direct him back to the right path. Baruch Hashem, he returned to Yiddishkeit. Afterward, his father asked him, "Which dollar brought you back?" He meant, "I paid many people to help you. Which investment did the trick and brought you back?"

The *bachur* replied, "It wasn't your investments that brought me back. There was a rav who greeted me with a warm smile, and he told me that Hashem loves me, despite all my *aveiros*. He is the one who brought me back to Yiddishkeit."

A rav once accidentally dialed the wrong number. He immediately realized his error, but decided to let the call go through, rather than suddenly hang up. The person he had mistakenly called was a member of his beis medresh but hadn't come to daven for some time. The rav realized that it was *min hashamayim* that he made this mistake, so the rav said, "I called just to hear how you are doing."

The man was so impressed and flattered. This phone call gave him *chizuk*. He was in Italy at that time, contemplating committing an *aveirah*, but this phone call – which showed him care, love, and respect – stopped him.

"In our generation, everyone who has a mouth must use it to give *chizuk* to others." In the Chofetz Chaim's generation, many people were lenient with Shabbos observance, family purity, etc. The Chofetz Chaim encouraged anyone who could do so to give *drashos* and to rouse people to *teshuvah*.

When the Chofetz Chaim went off the podium, he heard people saying, "The Chofetz Chaim is a *tzaddik*! He can speak to people and rouse them to *teshuvah*, but what can we do?"

The Chofetz Chaim overheard them and immediately returned to the podium to add this essential *mashal*:

There was a *poritz* who demanded that his servants serve him purified water. Once, someone brought him regular water to drink, and after taking a sip, he immediately spit out the water. "Why did you bring me dirty water? When you

bring me water, it must be purified first."

Sometime later, there was a fire in the *poritz's* home. "Fire! Fire!" the *poritz* shouted, but the people were slow in coming to extinguish the flames.

"What took you so long?" the *poritz* complained. "By the time you came with buckets of water, half my home burned down!"

"You told us to purify the water first," the servants explained. "We purified the water and came as quickly as we could."

The *poritz* said, "When there is a fire, any water will do."

The Chofetz Chaim said, "The same is with delivering speeches in our generation. There were generations when one needed to be a *tzaddik* before he could speak in public. But now, a fire is raging. Whoever has the ability to speak must do so."

Today, *chizuk* of a different nature is needed. In our generation, people need to hear a good word. It isn't rebuke that people need to hear; they need to hear that Hashem loves us, that they can succeed in *avodas* Hashem, that they are good, etc. Anyone with a mouth must use it to quench this fire and help his fellow man.

This is the comfort and consolation that we receive on *Shabbos Nachamu*. This week, we read in the *haftarah* (*Yeshayah* 40:1), נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר, אלקים, "Console, console My nation, says Hashem." How are we consoled? The answer is אלקים, know that Hashem is your G-d. This awareness is our utmost joy and comfort.

This condolence is reiterated in the *haftarah* of *parashas* שופטים. It states there (*Yeshayah* 51:12), אנכי אני הוא מנחמכם, "I, and only I, am He Who consoles you." Our only comfort is our connection with Hashem, our Father in heaven.

Why does it state אנכי אני twice? It refers to two *pasukim*:

At *mattan Torah* (this week's *parashah*, 5:6), Hashem says, אנכי ה' אלקיך, and in the darkest moments of *galus*, Hashem says (*Devarim* 31:18), ואנכי הסתר, "I will conceal My face..." So, at the happiest moments and at the bleakest moments, Hashem is there.

This tells us that in the darkest times, Hashem is with us, just as He was with us at *mattan Torah*. This knowledge consoles us.

Shir HaShrim (4:8) states, אתי מלבנון כלה אתי מלבנון תבואי. Rashi explains that אתי means "with Me." לבנון is the Beis HaMikdash. Hashem says, אתי מלבנון, "I will be with you when you are exiled from the Beis HaMikdash. אתי מלבנון תבואי, and I will be with you when you return to the Beis HaMikdash.

Rashi writes that also throughout *galus*, Hashem is with us. עמו אני בצרה, He feels and experiences all our pain.