

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Tazria - Metzora



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Torah Wellsprings - Tazria - Metzora

Bitachon and Parnassah

The parashah begins with (12:2) אשה כי תזריע "When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male..." Onkelos translates these words as, אמתא ארי תעדי ותליד דכר. The Divrei Yisrael zt'l explains Onkelos's words as follows: אמתא a wife, which refers to the Jewish nation, who are called Hashem's bride, תעדי can be translated to mean adornment/jewelry, and bitachon, as it states (Yeshayah 26:4) בטחו בה' עדי עד "Trust in Hashem forever." Their bitachon is their adornment and jewelry, which makes them beloved before Hashem.

Onkelos is hinting at the following lesson: אמתא ארי תעדי - how does the Jewish nation adorn and beautify themselves before Hashem? The answer is with their bitachon, their jewelry that makes them beloved before Hashem.

Onkelos writes ותליד זכר, "gives birth to a male." The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 23:11) says that when the Torah uses לשון זכר, masculine tense, it represents the coming of Moshiach,

the future redemption. So, with Onkelos's translation, the pasuk is saying, אמתא ארי תעדי, ותליד זכר, when the Jewish nation has bitachon, Moshiach will come.¹

זכר also means parnassah. The Gemara (Nidah 31:) states, "When a male child is born, he comes with his bread. זכר stands for זכה כר, זכה כר means a meal.... בא ככרו בידו, [He is born] with his bread in his hand. When a female child is born, she doesn't have anything with her. This is alluded to in the word נקבה, which stands for נקייה באה, she comes clean [and empty], until she davens for parnassah, as it states (Bereishis 30:28) שקבך עלי ואתנה, 'State your reward for me, and I will give it.'" This Gemara is explained in various ways. One popular explanation is that a male is born with a mazal for attaining parnassah. In any event, we see that זכר is associated with having parnassah.

So, with Onkelos's translation, the pasuk is saying, אמתא ארי תעדי ותליד זכר, when the Jewish nation has bitachon, they will have parnassah and all their needs.²

1. We quote the Midrash: "When a shirah (song to Hashem) is written in feminine form, it is to express that just as a female becomes pregnant, gives birth, and later again becomes pregnant and gives birth again, such are the tzaros that befall the Jewish nation. After one tzarah passes, another one comes. This occurred when the Yidden were exiled to Bavel, Madai, Yavan, and Edom... They sang shirah when they were saved from one oppressor, but soon, the next oppressor arose. But in the future, there will be no more tzaros... Then the shirah will be said in masculine form, as it states (Tehillim 98:1) שירו לה' שיר חדש "Sing to Hashem a new song..." This time, it will be a שיר, and not שירה because it will be the final redemption, and no more galuyos will follow.

Therefore, when the Torah says וילדה זכר, or as Onkelos writes ותליד דכר "gives birth to a male," it alludes to the future redemption, which is expressed in masculine form. It is a redemption that doesn't have any tzaros following it. In the merit of bitachon, we will merit this ultimate redemption.

2. The Midrash (Shocher Tov, Tehillim 92) relates that a student of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai went to *chutz l'aretz* to engage in business. He was successful and returned with a lot of money. The other students were jealous. They also wanted to go to *chutz l'aretz* to do business. So, Reb Shimon took them outside and proclaimed: בקעה בקעה, "Valley! Valley! Fill up with money." The entire valley became filled with precious coins. He then told his students, "Everyone can take as much as he wants. But know that whatever you take will be deducted from your reward in the world to come."

They all replied (Tehillim 92:5) כי שמחתני ה' בפעליך במעשי ידך ארנן "You have made me happy, Hashem, with Your

Bitachon for Everyone

One of the wonderful aspects of emunah is that it is available for everyone. Learning Torah is dependent on one's level; some people know more than others. But when it comes to emunah, a simple person can have emunah sheleimah at the same level as the greatest tzaddikim.

The Chortkover zt'l explains that this is the reason there were various boundaries at

matan Torah. Moshe stood closest, Aharon was closer than the rest, and so on (see Rashi Shemos 19:24). This is because when it comes to Torah, people are on different levels. But at Kriyas Yam Suf, a maidservant saw the same prophecy as Yechezkel ben Buzi (see Rashi Shemos 15:2). This is because when it comes to emunah, the smallest person can have emunah like the greatest people of the nation. The same applies to bitachon. A simple person can have bitachon equal to the greatest tzaddikim.

work; with the work of Your hands I shall exult." They said they are happy with Torah and mitzvos more than all the money in the world.

The question arises, why did Reb Shimon take his students outdoors to perform this miracle? He could have done the same thing indoors. A possible explanation is that Reb Shimon was teaching them the means with which to earn parnassah. בק-עה, which means valley, represents two numbers: ב"ק whose *gematria* is 102, the same as אמונה. And ע"ה is *gematriya* 75, the same as בטחון. So, בקעה represents אמונה בטחון. Reb Shimon was teaching his students that with emunah and bitachon, they will have abundant money.

The Yerushalmi (Brachos ch.9) seems to say that whenever Reb Shimon needed money, he would say בקעה בקעה, "Valley, valley, fill up with gold coins", and it would occur. We can explain that the Yerushalmi doesn't contradict the Midrash that says that Reb Shimon instructed his students not to take the coins of the valley because it all depends on how one receives the money. If one gets money with emunah and bitachon, it won't be deducted from his portion in the next world. When Reb Shimon said בקעה בקעה, he was intending to strengthen his אמונה בטחון, and when parnassah comes in that way, it is not deducted from Olam HaBa.

About kriyas Yam Suf, it states (Shemos 14:22) והמים להם חומה, "The waters were to them as a wall." The Imrei Boruch of Vizhnitz zt'l says that והמים (with the kollel) is *gematriya* אמונה, and להם is *gematriya* בטחון. So, והמים להם means "their emunah and bitachon," להם חומה, "were to them a wall of protection." Through emunah and bitachon, one can pass through all stormy waters and troubles of life.

The Vilna Gaon zt'l had a practice to go in galus (self-imposed exile). Once, he was at the home of a simple person, an innkeeper, and the Vilna Gaon was very impressed by the bitachon that this person had. The innkeeper couldn't keep up with the rent. The poritz warned him that if he didn't pay the rent by a specific date, he and his family would be thrown into a dungeon, which was ultimately a death sentence. The Vilna Gaon was in their home during this time of crisis and was surprised to see how calm his host remained. He trusted that Hashem would help him. On the day the debt was due, the Vilna Gaon followed the innkeeper as he went to the poritz. The Vilna Gaon wanted to see the miracle Hashem would perform for the innkeeper.

When they arrived at the poritz's home, someone was inside speaking with the poritz, and they waited until their conversation ended. The innkeeper had never seen this person before and wondered what was taking them so long to finish up.

Finally, the man came out, and he immediately approached the innkeeper and said, "The poritz offered me an excellent business deal, but he refuses to agree to my terms. And just as the poritz didn't want to capitulate, I dug in as well, even though I know that even with his terms, it is a good investment. It just isn't my way to bend and break under pressure, so I didn't agree to his terms, although it is a worthy investment. Therefore, I want you to speak to the poritz and agree to the poritz's offer. You will be working as my agent, and as commission, I will pay you a percentage of the sale. I will give you a down payment now."

The down payment he received was exactly the amount he needed for the rent. He trusted in Hashem, and Hashem helped him.

"It states (Tehillim 34:23) **וְלֹא יֵאָשְׁמוּ כָּל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ**, "They will never regret, all those who trust in Him." The Vilna Gaon zt'l emphasized the word **כָּל**. The Vilna Gaon said to his student, Reb Chaim Volozhiner, zt'l, "The pasuk doesn't state Eliyahu or Chaim; it states **כָּל**, everyone. Whoever trusts in Hashem will be saved."

At times, Chazal say that **כָּל** means **כָּל דָּהוּ**, a drop. We can say **כָּל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ** implies that

even a drop of bitachon is significant. Even a bit of bitachon will accomplish so much.

In *Shoshanas Yaakov*, we sing **לְהוֹדִיעַ שְׂכַל קוּיךָ**, "To declare that all those who trust in You won't be embarrassed." The Degel Machane Efraim (Purim) writes that **כָּל** means **כָּל דָּהוּ**, a drop. He translates **לְהוֹדִיעַ** to reveal **שְׂכַל קוּיךָ**, that even with a drop of bitachon, **לֹא יֵבוֹשׁוּ**, he won't be embarrassed. A drop of bitachon is sufficient, and there will be salvations.³

3. This lesson applies to all areas of avodas Hashem. We desire to serve Hashem with perfection, but we must be satisfied with a little, too. Every bit is a great accomplishment. A drop of bitachon is a lot. A drop of simcha is a lot. A drop of Torah study is a lot. Desire more, but appreciate every bit.

One Purim, Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l, was collecting money for poor yeshiva bachurim, so they could buy clothing and other basic needs. He arrived at the home of an elderly, wealthy person. The rich man's children stood at the door. They were making sure that people didn't come to their father more than once during Purim. Their father was old and wouldn't notice if someone came twice, and they didn't want people to take advantage of that. Reb Yankele went to this home and received two thousand rubles - a very large donation. Before leaving, Reb Yankele left his umbrella behind. He did this intentionally.

Later that day, Reb Yankele returned. The wealthy man's children were at the door. They said, "You were here once today. You can't come in again."

Reb Yankele replied, "I just came to pick up my umbrella."

"OK," they replied. "You can take your umbrella."

When he was inside, he told the old man that he had come to pick up his umbrella.

"And what about money?" the old man asked. "Don't you need money?"

Reb Yankele said that he does.

He received another two thousand rubles.

When he came to the yeshiva, Reb Yankele spoke with the bachurim and showed them the four thousand rubles he received from this wealthy person. Reb Yankele told the bachurim, "You have to know where to place things."

You have to know where to place your trust. You will gain immensely by placing your bitachon in the right place.

Reb Sholom Tzvi Shapiro z'l came to Reb Chaztkel Levinstein zt'l and told him that he needed five thousand pounds for the upcoming chasunah of his oldest son. Reb Chaztkel was pensive for a few minutes, and then he said, "Hashem knows that you need five thousand pounds." In other words, "Hashem knows what you need. Trust in Him. He will help you."

Years later, Reb Sholom Tzvi told his youngest son, Reb Aryeh Leib Shlita, "When I told Reb Chaztkel that I needed five thousand pounds, I was hoping he would give me a nice sum of money. He didn't. Instead, he gave me something far more valuable. He taught me trust in Hashem. Had he given me five thousand pounds, it would have helped me for that chasunah, but it wouldn't have helped me for all the other chasunos I made. Reb Chaztkel taught me to have bitachon, and that counsel helped me pay for all the chasunos!"

A person bought a lottery ticket, and he said that he had bitachon that he would win the grand prize of a hundred thousand rubles.

Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l countered, "Sell me your ticket for fifty thousand rubles," and the man agreed.

Reb Yisrael Salanter replied, "Your actions prove that you don't really believe you will win the grand prize. If you were sure you would win a hundred thousand rubles, you wouldn't sell it for half its value!"

It states (Bereishis 34:25) ויבאו על העיר בטח, "They came upon the city with confidence..." Shimon and Levi were confident they would win the war against Shechem. Their bitachon reached the level of confidence and certainty that Hashem would help their plan succeed.

The Shevet Mussar zt'l (in Shaarei Simchah) writes that this is also the explanation of the pasuk (Tehillim 22:5) בך בטחו אבותינו בטחו ותפלטמו, "Our ancestors trusted in You; they trusted, and You rescued them."

Why does it state בטחו twice in this pasuk? The answer is that by the second בטחו their bitachon reached the level that they were certain that ותפלטמו, that Hashem would help them.

It states (Tehillim 22:6), בטחו ולא בושו, "They trusted in You, and they were not shamed." The Ben Ish Chai zt'l (HaChaim v'HaShalom) explains that there are people who trust that Hashem will perform a miracle for them, but they are embarrassed to tell others about it. They fear that people will laugh at them if the miracle doesn't occur. But others are so certain that Hashem will help, they speak about their bitachon because they are confident in their salvation. They tell it to others, even before the salvation occurred. ולא בושו, they aren't ashamed to do so because they are sure that the miracle will happen.

The Ben Ish Chai tells a story that happened to Reb Moshe Galanti zt'l. One year, there was a drought in Yerushalayim. The winter passed, and it hadn't yet rained. In Yerushalayim, where there are no rivers, a lack of rain meant no drinking water and no crops. It was a great tzarah.

Reb Moshe Galanti declared a yom tefillah and announced that communal tefillos for rain will be held at the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik, just outside Yerushalayim. He instructed everyone to come with raincoats and other rain gear because "by the time we finish our tefillos, it will be raining."

Together, the community of Yerushalayim marched through the Shaar Shechem gate of Yerushalayim to go to the kever of Shimon Hatzaddik. The Arab guard at the gate laughed when he saw the Jewish community dressed in raincoats and rain gear. He asked them, "Is it Purim today? Why are you dressed in costumes?"

They told him that their rav, Reb Moshe Galanti, told them that Hashem would answer their prayers and it would rain that day. The Arab thought it was preposterous.

When Reb Moshe Galanti passed the Arab guard, the Arab punched him in the face, r'l, because he thought that he was lying to the Jewish community. Reb Moshe Galanti looked at the Arab and didn't respond.

They all came to the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik, and loud inspirational tefillos were said there. Throughout this time, Reb Moshe Galanti leaned over the kever, whispering words.

Suddenly, it began to pour.

The Arab guard ran to the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik and asked forgiveness from Reb Moshe Galanti. He carried Reb Moshe Galanti home on his shoulders and promised to be his slave forever.

The Ben Ish Chai writes that this story is an example of bitachon without shame. Reb Moshe Galanti was certain that Hashem would answer their tefillos and, therefore, he wasn't scared to tell everyone to come prepared for soaking rain. He wasn't afraid that people would mock him. He trusted it would certainly rain.

The Gemara says that Choni HaMaagal told the Jewish community to pray for rain, and he added, "Make certain to bring your Pesach ovens indoors so that they won't get ruined from the rain." He wasn't afraid to say this because he was confident that Hashem would answer their tefillos.

This level of bitachon is also expressed in Shemonah Esrei when it states ולא נבוש כי בך בטחנו; we aren't afraid that we will be embarrassed due to our trust in You.

Think Positive, Speak Positive

It states (14:3) וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וַרְאֵה הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּצְאָה נִקְמָה הַצָּרָעַת מִן הַצָּרוּעַ, וַהֲגִיה נִקְמָה נִגַע הַצָּרָעַת, "The kohen should go forth to the outside of the camp; the kohen shall look and behold! – the tzaraas plague (נגע) had been healed from the metzora."

The Yeitav Lev points out that the word נִגַע is extra. It could have simply said, וַהֲגִיה, "The tzaraas had been healed." Also, the final words, מִן הַצָּרוּעַ, "from the metzora," seem extra. The pasuk would be understood without those words.

The Yeitav Lev's answer is based upon the concept that situations are the way we consider them, and even more so, things become the way we speak and call them to be. When we have emunah that something is for the good, it becomes that way, in a visible sense. The tzaraas disappear. Especially when we say, verbally, that גַּם זֶה לְטוֹבָה, "also this is good", it becomes good in a manner that we can see and understand.

The Torah says, וַהֲגִיה נִקְמָה נִגַע הַצָּרָעַת, "Behold! – The tzaraas plague had been healed from the metzora." How did this happen? It is because he stopped looking at his disease as a נִגַע, and he began to consider it as עֵינֵי נִגַע, pleasure. מִן הַצָּרוּעַ means that the salvation came from the metzora himself. He changed the way he considered his illness, and this ended it.

It states מִן הַצָּרוּעַ to tell us that the healing didn't come from medicine, or from any other, outer source. The healing came from the metzora himself when he began considering his tzaraas and troubles as something positive and good.

Also, we now understand why the pasuk states the word נִגַע, as it states וַהֲגִיה נִקְמָה נִגַע הַצָּרָעַת, "Behold! – the tzaraas (plague) had been healed from the metzora." This is telling us that the matter that was healed was his thinking that his illness is a נִגַע, something negative. When he changed this perspective and began to think and to say that it is עֵינֵי נִגַע, pleasure, it abolished the disease.⁴

4. Maglei Tzedek zt'l, the son of the Mareh Yechezkel zt'l, writes, "I once saw an amazing thing. My father once hurt his hand while preparing for Shabbos, yet he remained happy! He explained that he was happy to do Hashem's will, and it was Hashem's will that he hurt his finger, as Chazal say, 'When a person hurts his finger, it was decreed in heaven that this should occur.' So, this was Hashem's will, and a person should be happy to perform Hashem's will."

We live calm and peaceful lives when we realize that everything is from Hashem. We aren't angry at anyone or any situation. We believe everything is always for the best because it is from Hashem. And this emunah turns everything around, so that matters should indeed become good.

Koheles (ch.3) lists the times and experiences of life. עֵת לִלְדוֹת וְעֵת לָמוֹת עֵת לִטְעוֹת וְעֵת לַעֲקוֹר נְטוּעַ, "There is a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot that which is planted..." Fourteen of the times listed are good, and fourteen are the opposite. 14 + 14 = 28, the gematriya of כַּח, strength. Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin zt'l says that this is alluded to in the Chazal, which says, אִמּוֹן יִהְיֶה שְׂמִיָּה רַבָּא בְּכֹל כְּחוֹ, with all his strength, it annuls harsh decrees." כְּחוֹ alludes to the twenty-eight times (עֵת) of life. Declaring and believing that all these times, the good and the bad, are from Hashem, that rips up all harsh decrees. The emunah that every situation is from Hashem turns everything around, and the good becomes clear.

A grandson of the Birkas Avraham of Slonim zt'l once krechted and said "Oy!" The Birkas Avraham told him, "When you krechted and say אָי, add the word דוּ, du, afterward, which means 'You.' Recognize that everything is from Hashem, even the hardships. Together, דוּ – אָי, sounds like אֹדָה, praise. You will praise Hashem because you know that it is for the good."

אָי is gematriya 17, the same as טוֹב. Be aware that even the bad, over which you moan, is also ultimately good. And when you believe that it will become good.

One of the halachos of tzaraas is that if the tzaraas covers one's entire body, he becomes tahor, as it states

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 16:2) says:

There was a merchant who went around the towns near Tzipori, and he would announce, 'Who wants to buy medicine for life (פס תיים)? Reb Yanay was studying Torah upstairs in his home when he heard this announcement. He called down to the merchant, "Come up here and sell it to me."

The merchant replied, "You and people like you don't need it."

Reb Yanay urged him to come upstairs, and he did so. The merchant took out a Tehillim and showed him the pasuk (Tehillim 34:16) מי האיש ההפץ חיים "Who is the man who desires life?" The answer is (34:17) נצר לשונך מרע "Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit." Being cautious with one's speech will result in life, and a good life, as it states there (34:16) אהב ימים לראות טוב "loves days of seeing good".

Reb Yanay said, "I said these pasukim all my life, and I didn't know their simple meaning until this merchant came and taught me."

Reb Yanay said, "Shlomo also teaches us this lesson, as it states (Mishlei 21:23) שמר פיו ולשונו "One who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from troubles."

The Yeitav Lev explains the Midrash to mean that the way to attain life and to turn all *tzaros* around is נצר לשונך מרע, to guard the tongue from saying that the *situation* is bad. Say that it is good, and it will be so. (Tehillim 34:16) סור מרע ועשה טוב "go away from saying

that something is bad, and that will make it good. Saying גם זו לטובה makes everything good.

Shlomo HaMelech also taught this in Mishlei. שמר פיו ולשונו, if you will guard your tongue from saying something is bad, שמר, מוצרות נפשו, this will save you from many troubles.

The Midrash concludes:

לפיכך משה מזהיר את ישראל ואומר להם: זאת תהיה תורת ה' המוצרע, תורת המוציא שם רע זאת תהיה, תורת המוצרע, these are the halachos of a *motzi shem ra*."

Moshe warned them that they shouldn't be מוציא רע, say that things are bad, because negative words can cause negative concepts to transpire, *chalilah*.

The parshiyos מצורע teach us to be cautious with our speech. If we say that things are good, they will be so.

This lesson is also taught by the Be'er Mayim Chayim (ויגש ד"ה א"י ויבח). He writes, "This is how tzaddikim turn *midas hadin* to be *rachamim*. They proclaim that what's happening to them is Hashem's compassion and not *din*. This is because all *yesurim* are really favors, as we explained. When they say so, *din* becomes *rachamim*, curses become blessings, and *yesurim* become great favors for them. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Tehillim 118:21) אוֹדֶה בְּיְיָ כִּי עָנִיתָנִי וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה, when I praise Hashem for the *tzaros* and *yesurim*, I will have my salvation. Hardships will turn around and become Hashem's compassion, literally."

(13:13) כָּלֹו הִפָּךְ לְבָן טָהוֹר הוּא "He has turned completely white; he is clean."

The Imrei Emes zt'l says that this means that when everything appears dark and stormy, that is a sign that soon things will turn around and become good again. It seems very bleak and dark, but it is a sign that good times are approaching.

It states (Tehillim 118:7) ה' לי בעוורי ואני אראה בשנאי. Rebbe Dovid'l Tolna zt'l taught that בעוורי are my friends and בשנאי are my enemies. Dovid HaMelech said that ה' לי, the perception that Hashem is with me and that He helps me, I wish this perception בעוורי, to my friends. ואני אראה, the perception that "I do," and I can manage on my own, I wish this outlook בשנאי, to my enemies. Because knowing that everything is from Hashem is a prescription for success in life, and it turns everything around to become good.

This is also taught by the Divrei Yisrael in our parashah on the pasuk (14:34) **כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם לְאֶחְזָה וְנִתְתִּי נֹגַע צָרְעַת בְּבֵית אֶרֶץ אֶחְזָתְכֶם**, "When you come to Eretz Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, I will give tzaraas in a house in the land of your possession."

Rashi writes, **בְּשׂוֹרָה הִיא לָהֶם**, Hashem was telling them happy, good news, when He told them that He would give them tzaraas.

See also the Or HaChaim Hakadosh, who writes that the expression **וְנִתְתִּי**, "I will give," indicates that it is good. Otherwise, it would state **יְהִי נֹגַע בְּקִירוֹת בְּתִיכֶם**, "If there is tzaraas in the walls of your homes..." **וְנִתְתִּי**, "I will give" indicates that this is happy news for the Jewish nation. Why is that?

Rashi writes, "It is good news for them because throughout the forty years that the Yidden were in the desert, the Emorites hid gold in the walls of their homes (see Vayikra Rabba 17:6). Due to the tzaraas, they broke their homes, and they found the gold."

We quote the Midrash:

Reb Shimon ben Yochai taught: When the Canaanites heard that Yisrael were coming to them, they hid their money in houses and in fields. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "I promised their fathers that I would bring their children into a land filled with goodness, as it states (Devarim 6:11), **וּבְתֵימִים מְלֵאִים כָּל טוֹב**, 'houses full of all good things.'

What did Hakadosh Baruch Hu do? He sent tzaraas into the houses. The owners of the houses broke them [as the halachah is that one must break the tzaraas from the walls], and they found the treasure inside.

The Divrei Yisrael asks that after seeing this Midrash, we wonder why *tzaraas* is called **נֹגַע**, plague, instead of **עֵנֶג**, pleasure, since the *tzaraas* will bring immense wealth?

He answers as follows, "To the eyes of man, when a person has to break his home, it is a **נֹגַע**, plague. But when a person believes that everything is for the good, and he trusts in Hashem that everything is good, he will find the treasure, and the **נֹגַע** will become **עֵנֶג**, pleasure."⁵

The Gemara (Brachos 60b) teaches:

"Reb Akiva said, 'A person should train himself always to say **כָּל דְּעֵבִיד רַחֲמֵנָא לְטַב עֵבִיד**, 'Everything Hashem does, it is for the good.'" Once, Reb Akiva was traveling, and he passed a city. He sought a place to stay for the night, but no one in the city invited him in. So, that night, Reb Akiva slept outdoors, in the forest. He had a rooster (to awaken him), a donkey, and a candle. A wind blew out the candle, a cat ate the rooster, and a lion ate the donkey. Reb Akiva said **כָּל דְּעֵבִיד רַחֲמֵנָא לְטַב עֵבִיד**, "Everything Hashem does is for the good."

That night, an army came to the city and captured the people living there. Reb Akiva

5. With these ideas, we can explain the pasuk (14:35) **וּבֵּית אֲשֶׁר לוֹ תִּבְּיֵית וְהִגִּיד לַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר כְּנִגַּע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית**, "The one to whom the house belongs comes and tells the kohen, saying, "Something like tzaraas has appeared to me in the house,"

Rashi explains why it states **כְּנִגַּע**, "Something like tzaraas", and it doesn't state **נֹגַע**, "I saw tzaraas."

Rashi writes, "Even a talmid chacham who knows that this is certainly tzaraas shouldn't say so with certainty. Rather, he should say **כְּנִגַּע**, that it appears to him like a **נֹגַע** of tzaraas."

Why can't he say it with certainty that it is tzaraas? We can explain that this is because a person should never say that something is bad. One should always speak positively. That approach makes everything good.

Even if he is a talmid chacham, and it is the way for Torah scholars to be humble and feel that they haven't served Hashem properly and that they deserve punishment, etc., they, too, shouldn't say with certainty that it is tzaraas. One should always say that things are good, and that it will be good for him and for Klal Yisrael, and then it will be so.

was saved because he didn't sleep in the city that night. Rashi writes, "If he had a lit candle, the army would have seen it. If his donkey would bray or if the rooster would crow, the army would come and abduct him." The matters that appeared bad, at first, were his salvation.

Reb Akiva said to his students, וכי לא אמרתי, "Didn't I tell you that everything Hakadosh Baruch Hu does is for the good?"⁶

The Ben Ish Chai explains that Reb Akiva was telling his students that everything became good because he always said כל מה

שעביד הקב"ה הכל לטובה, "Everything Hakadosh Baruch Hu does is for the good." For that is the power of speaking positively. It turns everything around to become good.⁷

Tzaraas and Lashon Hara

The halachos of tzaraas are to teach people to be cautious about speaking lashon hara. The Rambam (*Hilchos Tumas Tzaraas* 16:10) states, "This [tzaraas] that happens to clothes and to houses, isn't from the natural rules of nature, rather it is a wonder that happened to Yisrael to warn them to be cautious from speaking lashon hara."⁸

6. The Gemara (Nidah 31.) gives the following example that everything is for the good:

Two people left their homes and headed to the port to catch a ship that was sailing overseas. They looked forward to the wealth they would earn on this important business trip. However, one of the two men stepped on a thorn and couldn't walk properly. Due to this, he missed the ship. He cursed and shouted, upset that he lost this lucrative business opportunity.

Sometime afterward, he heard that the ship had sunk. Now he praised Hashem. He discovered ונתתי that the problem (the thorn) was a gift from Hashem to save his life.

The Gemara says that this is the meaning of the pasuk (Yeshayah 12:1) אוודך ה' כי אנפת בי "I will thank You, for You were wroth with me." We praise Hashem for His wrath and anger because, in retrospect, we discover how good it was. As the pasuk continues ושוב אפך ותנחמני, "Your wrath turns away, and You comfort me." We find out that it was all for our benefit.

7. Reb Akiva would customarily say כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, "Everything Hashem does is for the good". These words are Aramaic. Why did he say this specifically in Aramaic? Why didn't he say this statement in lashon hakodesh?

Similarly, Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 230:5) states, לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר: כל מה דעביד רחמנא, לטב עביד, "A person should always accustom himself to say, 'Everything Hashem does, it is for the good.'" We wonder why these words, too, are in Aramaic.

There is one place in the Gemara [ibid.] where these words of Reb Akiva are written in lashon hakodesh. He told his students, כל מה שעושה הקדוש ברוך הוא הכל לטובה. But other times, and in Shulchan Aruch, it is recorded in Aramaic, and this needs explanation.

Rosh (Brachos 2:2, see also Maadanei Yom Tov ibid., 7) writes that Aramaic isn't a real language. It is a mixture of 70 languages, mixed and formed together. רמאי means fallacy, because it is a false language. It isn't an original primary language. We can therefore explain that Reb Akiva would teach this lesson in Aramaic to imply that even when one says with his mouth that it is all for the good, even if he doesn't yet fully believe his own words with all his heart, this is also sufficient to make everything good.

So, even someone not on the level to believe that everything is for the good should still say so, and everything will become good for him.

8. A hint to the connection between tzaraas and forbidden speech is the phrase (Tazria 13:52, and Metzora 14:44) צרעת מן הארץ. Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l (Tiferes Yonoson) and others say that this can be translated as the tzaraas comes from speech, from speaking lashon hara (because the word מן הארץ is similar to the word אמר, speech).

Chazal (Eiruchin 15b) say, כל המספר לשון הרע, כאילו כפר בעיקר, "Whoever speaks lashon hara, it is like he doesn't believe in Hashem." This is because if he believed in Hashem, he would believe that no one harmed him, and there is no reason to be angry with one's fellow man. Everything that happened to him was meant to be destined from heaven, and if it wouldn't be from this person, it would come from someone else. So why should he be angry, and why should he speak lashon hara on his fellow man?

The root of speaking lashon hara is when one feels that someone harmed him in some way, either emotionally, financially, and so on. At times, the lashon hara is because he feels that his fellow man's success took away his own success. Therefore, he wants to calm himself by taking revenge on his fellow man. But if a person believes that no one can harm

him, in any way, if it isn't destined from above, and if a person believes that his fellow man's success came because Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave it to him, and that he didn't take it away from anyone else, then he won't desire to speak lashon hara.⁹

It states (13:3) וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר הַבָּשָׂר... וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְטָמֵא אֹתוֹ, "The kohen shall look at the tzaraas on the skin of his flesh... When the kohen sees this, he shall pronounce him unclean.

The Skulener Rebbe zt'l asks why it states twice that the kohen saw him, וְרָאָה... וְרָאָה? He answers that before proclaiming someone is tamei, or not good, etc., take another good look. Don't rely on your first impression. Look again, maybe you will change your mind. Maybe you will find a way to judge your fellow man favorably.

These days, when we count the omer, we are counting the days following the korban Omer, which the Torah (Vayikra 23:15) calls עֶמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה. The Beis Aharon (אמור ד"ה וספרתם) says that הַתְּנוּפָה stands for תְּנוּ פֶה, "Give the mouth." This hints that we must be cautious with our speech during the days of the Sefirah. This is our *avodah* during the days of Sefirah. The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Vayikra 25:29) teaches that the holiness of these days of Sefiras HaOmer helps us attain this purity of speech.

The Chofetz Chaim (Shemiras HaShemirah 6) writes, "A person must know this fundamental principle: the *yetzer hara* lies in ambush for him constantly, seeking to cause him to stumble. As Chazal say (Kiddushin 30b), "The *yetzer hara* overpowers a person and renews itself against him each day, as it is written (Tehillim 37:32), צוּפָה רָשָׁע לְצַדִּיק וּמִבְקֵשׁ לְהַמִּיתוֹ, "The rasha watches the tzaddik and seeks to put him to death.' It crouches at the opening of a person's mouth to cause him to sin, as it states (Bereishis 4:7), לְפֶתַח הַדְּלָתַי תֵּצֵא רָעָה "Sin crouches at the door." If a person diverts his attention even slightly from guarding his speech, the *yetzer hara* will immediately seize a great spoil, or at least a small one; in any case, he will not emerge unscathed.

The *yetzer hara* goes to the mouth, more than any other limb, because that is the place where one is prone to stumble. A person must be strong and not stop guarding his speech. As it states (Michah 7:5), שְׂמֹר פִּתְחֵי פִיךָ, 'Guard the openings of your mouth.' One should trust in Hashem that He will certainly help him be cautious. As Chazal say, הבא למטה מסייעין אותו, when a person tries to purify himself, he receives aid from Above."

9. When the *Imrei Emes* lived in Yerushalayim, he wrote the following letter to his chassidim in Poland (year תרצ"ו):

"I further ask of you: since troubles have multiplied, from within and without, and we believe in Chazal who say that this *galus* is due to lashon hara and *sinas chinam* – therefore I ask that you strengthen yourselves not to transgress these aveiros. I advise that you study sefer Chofetz Chaim and Shemiras Halashon, at least two days each week. Heaven and earth can testify for me that after I completed these sefarim, I felt that I had changed and become better. The sefer is for people of all levels, including those who are on high spiritual levels. The Midrash tells that Reb Yanay wanted to buy the remedy for "life" and the merchant said, 'This is not for you or for people like you' – and nevertheless, Rabbi Yanay insisted that the merchant should come up to him. Reb Yanay did this to show that everyone benefits from words of *chizuk* that protect us from the aveirah of speaking lashon hara."

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 46:1) states that when Hashem told Moshe that the Yidden made the *egol*, Moshe didn't break the *luchos*. He waited until he saw the aveirah with his own two eyes.

The Midrash explains that Moshe certainly believed Hashem when Hashem told him that the Yidden sinned, but he wanted to teach a lesson to Bnei Yisrael. They shouldn't be quick to jump to conclusions. First, they should check the matter out well and make certain that they heard and understood correctly, and only then should they react.

We quote the Midrash:

"We see that when Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe (Shemos 32:7) לך רד כי שחת עמך, 'Go, descend, for your people... have acted corruptly.' Moshe was holding onto the *luchos*, but he didn't believe that Yisrael sinned. He said, 'If I don't see it, I don't believe. (Shemos 32:19) ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את העגל ומחולת ויחר אף מושה וישלך מידיו את הלוחות וישבר אתם ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את תחת הקר, 'Now it came to pass when he drew closer to the camp and saw the calf and the dances, that Moshe's anger was kindled, and he flung the tablets from his hands, shattering them at the foot of the mountain.' But he didn't break them before he saw the *egol* with his eyes. Woe to the people who say *eidus* for things that they didn't see. How could it be that Moshe didn't believe Hakadosh Baruch Hu when Hashem said כי שחת עמך, 'your people... have acted corruptly'? Rather, Moshe wanted to teach *derech erez*, the correct mannerism for Yisrael. Even if a

person hears something from a singular, trustworthy witness, he must not accept the testimony and react if he didn't see it himself."

If people would follow the counsel of this Midrash, it would save them from many *machlokes*. Also, even if someone sees something himself, he should look again. As the Skulener Rebbe tells us, it could be that his first impression wasn't correctly understood.

There are also people who speak *lashon hara* for no reason at all. The Rambam (Tumas Tzaraas 16:10) וזה דרך ישיבת הלצים הרשעים בתחלה מרבין 'וקול כסיל ברב דברים' "This is the ways of the mockers, the *resha'im*... They speak a lot of foolish words as it states (Koheles 5:2) 'The voice of the fool with many words.'"

This is because they don't think about the great tragedy that can come from their words. They think that they didn't do anything wrong.¹⁰

The Midrash (Vayikra 16:6) states, "The word Torah is written five times in regard to a *metzora*. It states (Vayikra 13:59) זאת תורת נגע צרעת, (ibid. 14:2) זאת תורת נגע צרעת, (ibid. 14:32) זאת תורה ללכל נגע הצרעת, (ibid. 14:54) זאת תורת הצרעת, (ibid. 14:57) זאת תורת הצרעת. This tells us that someone who spoke *lashon hara* has transgressed the five books of the Torah."

Similarly, the Or HaChaim HaKadosh (this week's parashah, 14:9) writes, אין לך דבר שמרחיק, האדם מן קונו כלשון הרע, "Nothing distances a person from his Creator like *lashon hara*."¹¹

10. The halachah is that until the kohen renders the נגע tamei, it isn't tamei. Similarly, when the נגע goes away, the person doesn't become tahor before the kohen proclaims that he is tahor. This is yet another indication of the power of speech. Speech can create tremendous good, and when misused, it can cause immense harm.

11. It states (13:3) ויראה הכהן את הנגע בעור הבשר וישער בנגע הפך לבן ומראה הנגע עמוק מעור בשרו נגע צרעת הוא ויראהו הכהן וטמא אתו "The kohen shall look at the tzaraas on the skin of his flesh, and if hair in the tzaraas has turned white and the appearance of the tzaraas is deeper than the skin of his flesh, it is tzaraas. When the kohen sees this, he shall pronounce him tamei."

In this pasuk, we discover that whiteness is a sign of tumah. As Rashi on this pasuk writes, ששער לבן סימן, טומאה, הוא גזירת הכתוב "White hair is a sign of tumah. It is a *gezeiras hakasuv* (decree from the pasuk)."

Kashrus

Towards the end of parashas Metzora, we learn about the halachos of kashrus. The Or HaChaim teaches that when a person is cautious with kashrus, he receives siyata d'Shmaya. Sometimes people think, "It is probably good, why can't I eat it?" One answer to that is if you are extra cautious, it grants you siyata d'Shmaya, and Hashem will help you to eat solely kosher.

Furthermore, the *Mesilas Yescharim* (11) writes, "One must be very cautious with kashrus... The *aveirah* of eating non-kosher foods is worse than other aveiros because the food enters the body and becomes part of the flesh... If a person has intelligence, he will think of non-kosher foods like poison or food that has poison mixed into it... Even if there's a slight chance that the food contains poison, would he risk eating it? Non-kosher food is the same; it's poison to the heart and

This is surprising because, generally, white is a sign of purity. For example, it states (Yeshayah 1:18) אִם יְהִי אָם יִטְּאִיְכֶם פְּשׁוּנִים פְּשָׁלָג יִלְבִּינוּ אָם יֵאָדְיִמוּ כְּתוֹלָע בְּצָמָר יִהְיֶה כְּשֶׁנֶּחֱרָטוּם וְיִהְיֶה כְּצֹלָה וְיִהְיֶה כְּצֹלָה וְיִהְיֶה כְּצֹלָה, "If your sins prove to be like crimson, they will become white as snow; if they prove to be as red as crimson dye, they shall become as wool."

Also, on Yom Kippur, a red string, placed in the Beis HaMikdash, turned white, to indicate that the aveiros of Bnei Yisrael were forgiven.

So, if white is a sign of taharah, why is it a sign of tumah with tzaraas?

Baalei Mussar explain that the Torah wants to teach us that even a person who is "white", which means he is pure and has Torah and mitzvos, nevertheless, if he isn't cautious with the way he speaks about others, and if he harms others, he is *tamei*.

As it states (Mishlei 13:3) נֹצֵר פִּי שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ, "He who watches his mouth guards his soul". The Vilna Gaon zt'l explains (in his commentary on Mishlei), "The mouth protects the entire soul. As Chazal (Brachos 17a) say, שְׂמוֹר פִּיךָ, מִכָּל הַטָּמֵא, that by being cautious with your speech, you will be cleansed from all aveiros. But when a person speaks what he shouldn't, even if he has a good nefesh, and he performs many mitzvos, because of his mouth, everything is broken."

In Even Shlomo (7:1) the Vilna Gaon adds, וְכֹל תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ לְדַבֵּר מִצְוָה מִתְבַּטֵּל עַל יְדֵי זֶה, "All of his desire for mitzvos vanishes, due to this."

In the beginning of parashas Tazria, the pasuk lists the korbanos a woman brings after giving birth. It states (12:6) לְבֵן אוֹ לְבַת תָּבִיא כֶּבֶשׂ בֶּן שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה וְבֶן יוֹנָה אוֹ תֹר לְחֵטְאֵת (12:6), "for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a sheep within its first year for an olah, and a young dove (בֶּן יוֹנָה) or a turtledove (תֹּר) for a chatas." She must bring two korbanos, and they are a sheep for an olah, and one bird for a chatas. The bird is either a dove (בֶּן יוֹנָה) or a turtledove (תֹּר). The Baal HaTurim points out that the dove (בֶּן יוֹנָה) is mentioned first in this pasuk. This implies that it has precedence over a turtledove (תֹּר). If both birds are available, she should choose the dove (בֶּן יוֹנָה).

However, this is surprising, because generally, the Torah writes the turtledove (תֹּר) first before the dove (בֶּן יוֹנָה). This means, generally, the turtledove (תֹּר) is the preferred korban. What happened this time that a dove (בֶּן יוֹנָה) comes first?

The Baal HaTurim answers that generally, a pair of birds is brought as a korban. When this occurs, the Torah writes that turtledoves (תֹּרִים) should come first. However, a woman who gives birth, she brings a sheep for an olah and only *one* bird for a chatas. The second bird, its mate, will remain alone. It is dividing a couple, a union of birds. The Torah says that we should take a בֶּן יוֹנָה first, rather than a תֹּר. This is because the תֹּר mourns and cries immensely when it loses its spouse. The Torah pitied the תֹּר and said that in this case, when only one bird will be sacrificed, it is better to bring a בֶּן יוֹנָה, for its spouse doesn't miss its partner as much as the תֹּר does.

We learn from this halachah how much care and sensitivity the Torah has towards animals. Certainly, for human beings, and even more so, for Hashem's chosen nation, we should never cause tzaar.

soul. Therefore, if he has intelligence, how could he be calm regarding food with questionable kashrus?"

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Vayikra* 18:2) writes, "I heard that Reb Yitzchak Luria (the Arizal) said that sometimes a person changes and he doesn't know the reason. He wonders, "How did I change so much?" The Arizal taught that it happened because he ate food with bad sparks in it, or it carried a bad soul of a *gilgul*... When one eats this bad spark or this bad soul, it changes him from being good to being bad. Corruption will increase in him. In contrast, when one refrains from eating forbidden foods, he will desire those matters that are important for the *neshamah*. As it says (*Tehillim* 40:9), לעשות רצונך אלקי חפצתי, "I want to do Your will, Hashem," and the reason is תורתך בתוך מעי, 'Your Torah is in my stomach'; I am cautious to eat only kosher foods.

The *Shach* (*Yorah Deiah* 81:26) writes, "When a child eats food that is forbidden from the *rabannan*, according to halachah the father isn't required to stop him (see *Orach Chaim* 343). Nevertheless, the father *should* stop his child from eating such food because it will harm the child later when he gets older. Non-kosher food is מטמאם הלב, shuts off the heart, and גורם לו טבע רע, develops a bad nature in the child."

The *Pri Chadosh* (*Yorah Deiah* 81:26) elaborates on the bad that could occur from eating non-

kosher food: "The result will be that he will go out לתרבות רעה and stray from religion. In our generation, we are not careful with these matters, and that is the reason children go off לתרבות רע, and most of them are עיי פנים שבדור, *chutzpadik*, and their hearts don't fear Heaven. Even if we rebuke them, they can't accept *mussar*... Who was greater than Elisha ben Avuyah (called Acher), who ended up sinning? The *Yerushalmi* (*Chagigah*) says that this happened because when his mother was pregnant with him, she passed a house of *avodah zarah* and smelled what they were cooking there, and the smell entered the child's body like poison. Therefore, one must be careful with these matters."¹²

Shulchan Aruch (*Yorah Dei'ah* 81:7) states, "Whenever possible, you shouldn't hire an Egyptian woman to nurse your child, because the milk of non-Jewish women turns off the heart and generates a bad nature in the child."

As *Rashi* (*Shemos* 2:7) writes, "[Basyah] brought Moshe [as an infant] to many Egyptian women to nurse him, but Moshe refused to nurse from them because Moshe would eventually speak with the *Shechinah*."

The *Kedushas Levi* teaches that in the future, every *Yid* will be a prophet, as it states, ונבאו בניכם ובנותיכם, "Your sons and your daughters will prophesize," and therefore, every *Yid* must be careful with kashrus.

12. A mother told Reb Akiva Eigar *zt'l* that her son suddenly stopped understanding Torah. Reb Akiva Eigar asked her whether the child had eaten something unkosher. She replied, "He only eats at home, and we are cautious..."

Reb Akiva Eigar asked to speak with the boy. In their conversation, Reb Akiva Eiger discovered that the boy had eaten at a particular wedding, which the rabbanim of that generation forbade people from attending, and they said that the food at the chasunah would be considered like *neveilah*.

Reb Akiva Eigar told the boy that this was the root of his problem and urged him to be cautious in the future. Reb Akiva Eigar then blessed him to understand Torah once again.

ספר באר החיים

פרקי אבות



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מורינו הגה"צ רבי

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