

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Ki Savo



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

Ki Savo

## Hakaras HaTov

The Midrash (Tanchuma Bishalach 25) states, יבוא עמלק כפוי, "Let Amalek, who was *kafuy tovah*, punish the nation who was *kafuy tovah*."

Rashi (Shemos 17:8) explains that the Jewish nation asked, ה'ישׁה' בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ אִם אֵין, "Is in our midst or not?" This question expressed their *kafuy tovah*, their absence in recognizing Hashem's kindness and miracles. They had the *manna* in the desert, the well of Miriam, the clouds that protected them; how could they doubt whether Hashem was with them or not? Therefore (Shemos 17:9), וַיָּבֹא עֲמָלֵק, וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִפְדִּים, "Amalek came and fought with Yisrael in *Refidim*." They were *kafuy tovah*, so they were punished by the nation of *kafuy tovah*.

Rashi writes, "I am always with you. I give you all your needs. And you ask, 'Is Hashem in our midst or not?' I swear that the dog will come and bite you. You will shout to Me, and you will know where I am."

The battle that Amalek waged is written about in parashas *Bishalach*, and once again at the end of last week's parashah (Devarim 25:17), as it states there זְכוֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְךָ מִמִּצְרָיִם, "You shall remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you went out of Mitzrayim." This week's parashah begins with the mitzvah of *bikkurim*, which is the mitzvah of *hakaras hatov*, thanking Hashem for all His miracles and kindness, for giving us the land, and for enabling us to harvest the first fruits of the year.

As Rashi (26:3) writes, **אָמַרְתָּ**, **אֵלַי. שְׁאַיִןךָ כְּפֹי טוֹבָה**, the mitzvah of bikkurim is to announce that you aren't ungrateful, and that you recognize Hashem's kindness. This mitzvah rectifies the attitude of ungratefulness, which brought on Amalek. The sefer Ahavas Tzion (printed year 5399 ט"ז) and other sefarim say that this is the reason the mitzvah of *bikkurim* follows the mitzvah to remember Amalek. The mitzvah of bikkurim reminds us to have hakaras hatov, and to recognize all the wonders and miracles and kindness that Hashem performs with us.

When one brings *bikkurim*, the Torah states (26:5) **וְעִנִּיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לְפָנָי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֲרָמִי אָבִד אָבִי**, "You shall call out

and say before Hashem, your G-d..." and the Torah tells the praises he should say before Hashem at this time. There are various translations for the word **וְעִנִּיתָ**. The Or HaChaim says that it connotes humility, since one should feel humble when he praises Hashem for His kindness. The Or HaChaim writes, "Perhaps **וְעִנִּיתָ** personifies someone who is on a low [social] standing who received a great favor from a king. He will **מַעֲנִי**, make himself very humble before the king, and he will have a broken heart. This is how a person should be humble before Hashem." The Torah tells us **וְעִנִּיתָ**, praise Hashem with humility.<sup>1</sup>

A Holocaust survivor who rebuilt his life after the

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1. A Holocaust survivor came to the Imrei Chaim of Viznitz zt'l to tell him that his wife had just given birth to a son, their first child. He said, **רַבִּי, סִקוּמַט מִי אֶמּוֹל טוֹב**, "Rebbe, I deserve a mazal tov." The Imrei Chaim asked him, "What else do you deserve?" He was reminding him that he received many miracles, and he shouldn't take anything for granted. Miraculously, he survived the war, got married, and now he has a son. He shouldn't say **סִקוּמַט מִי**, I deserve it. He should humbly recognize Hashem's kindness.

war and had children and grandchildren gave a *drasha* at the pidyon haben of one of his grandchildren and said, "The custom at a *pidyon haben* is that the kohen says to the father, בְּמַאי בְּעִית טָמִי, "What do you want more?"<sup>2</sup> He explained that we are telling the father, "What more can you possibly want? You have so much. Recognize the kindness Hashem has given you!"

When bringing bikkurim, one says (26:5) אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי. Chazal (see Rashi) explain that אֲרָמִי refers to Lavan who lived in Aram (לָבָן הָאֲרָמִי). However, the Ibn Ezra and the Siforno say that אֲרָמִי refers to Yaakov Avinu. The pasuk means אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי, "My father, Yaakov, when he lived in Aram, was אֲבִד, poor. He was in a foreign land, without anything at all." וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרָיִמָּה וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם בְּמִתְרַיִם מָצֵט,

"He went down to Mitzrayim and sojourned there with a small number of people..." The pasuk is elaborating on the poverty and low state of Klal Yisrael, at its origin, and we are praising Hakadosh Baruch Hu for elevating us from that lost place to where we are now.

The concept is that when Hashem gives kindness, one should remember the humble beginning, the poor state from where everything began.

Rabbeinu b'Chayei elaborates: "When a person is at a high status and he has peace, he is obligated to remember the days of the past when he was at a very low place." This will help him praise Hashem with a full heart for all the kindness he has now.

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2. The complete nusach that the kohen says to the father of the first-born is: בְּמַאי בְּעִית טָמִי, בְּבִנְךָ בְּכוֹרֶךָ אוֹ בְּחַמְשָׁה סְלָעִים דְּמַחֲבִיתָא לְתַנּוּ לִי בְּפִדְיוֹן בְּנִיךָ: "What do you want more? Your son, the first born, or the five selaim that you owe me for the pidyon of this first-born son?"



Reb Issar Zalman Melzer zy'a in an introduction to his *sefer* (Even Ha'Azel, Avodah, vol.2), discusses the chapter (Tehillim 30) קִימוֹר שִׁיר הַנֶּגֶב הַבִּית לַדָּוִד, which praises Hashem for the dedication of the Beis HaMikdash. This chapter also states (30:3) ה' אֱלֹקֵי שְׁעָתִי "Hashem, my G-d, I have cried out to You, and You have healed me." The *miforshim* ask why this sentence is written in this chapter? We are praising Hashem for the dedication of the Beis HaMikdash, why do we mention that Dovid was ill, and Hashem healed him?

Reb Issar Zalman explains: When a person is ill, r'l, it is the only thing that is on his mind. All his tefillos are that Hashem should heal him and that he should have a *refuah sheleimah*. When he becomes better, and he is cured from his illness, he soon forgets about it, and now davens for *parnassah*, because his *parnassah* is tight. Hashem answers those tefillos, and

now he has *parnassah*, as well as health. He has wealth and a large house. When he makes a *chanukas habayis*, he praises Hashem for his wealth and that he merited to buy a beautiful home, but he forgets to praise Hashem for his health. He is only thinking about his wealth and his big house. This is the way of people. When they are saved from a problem, they totally forget about it. But the correct way to praise Hashem is to remember how Hashem saved him in the past, and not to forget to praise Hashem for those salvations. This is what Dovid HaMelech did. When he praised Hashem for the *chanukas habayis*, he remembered Hashem's miracles in the past, when Hashem healed him. The chapter (30) ends, ה' אֱלֹקֵי לְעוֹלָם אֲדָרָךְ "Hashem, my G-d, I will always thank you." He was saying, "I will praise You לְעוֹלָם, forever, for all the kindness You gave me in the past and in the present."

Rashi writes that וַעֲנִיתָ means to praise Hashem in a loud voice. But why should he raise his voice when he praises Hashem? Chazal (Brachos 24b) say, "When one raises his voice in his tefillah, it is a sign that he has a low level of emunah." Rashi explains, "He is showing that he doesn't believe that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will answer his tefillah said in silence." So, why should he raise his voice now when he praises Hashem?

The Beis Yisrael zt'l explains that when he was going through hard times, he shouted out to Hashem. Similar to what it states in this week's parashah (26:7) וַנִּשָּׁעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ "We shouted to Hashem, the G-d of our fathers..." We shouted when we had tzaros in Mitzrayim, and now that we are saved, we praise Hashem for saving us. Just as we shouted when we prayed, we should also shout when we praise Hashem for the salvation.

## Praise Hashem in Elul

The Shlah Hakodesh (אות) on this week's parashah (on the words וַעֲנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ) writes, "Rashi writes that one tells Hashem's kindness. This is the obligation for every person... When Hashem gives him goodness, and any hatzlachah, he should praise Hashem for granting it to him, for it was given to him with Hashem's immense compassion and kindness."

Especially at the end of the year, in the month of Elul, it is time to think about all the kindness Hashem gave us throughout the year, and to praise Hashem. Even if one had an extremely challenging year, r'l, and had many tzaros, he certainly also enjoyed Hashem's chesed throughout the year. As we say in Modim, עַל נִסֶּיךָ, "שְׁבָבְךָ יוֹם עִמָּנוּ", "for Your miracles that are with us each day." Every day, Hashem does miracles and wonders for every person. Why shouldn't he praise Hashem? הַטּוֹב, כִּי לֹא הָיָה רַחֲמֶיךָ, "The kind One, for Your Mercies have not



ceased. הַמֵּרְחֵם, כִּי לֹא תִמּוּ חֲסָדֶיךָ. The merciful, for Your kindness never ended." There are always many reasons to praise Hashem.

The roshei teivos of אלו"ל is אפשר להודות וצריך להודות, we can praise, and we are obligated to praise Hashem.

Also, אלו"ל is roshei teivos for (Divrei HaYamim 1, 29:13) מודים אנחנו לך ומהללים לשם תפארתך, "We give thanks to You and praise Your glorious Name."

The Likutei Maharich says אלו"ל is roshei teivos for (Shemos 15:1) ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לה', "They spoke, saying, 'I will sing to Hashem.'" Because Elul is the time to praise Hashem for all the kindness we received throughout the year.

### For the Good

The parashah of bikkurim concludes with the words (26:11) וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב, "You shall rejoice with all the good Hashem, your G-d, has granted you and your household..." The Imrei

Chaim zy'a (Likutim) teaches that the pasuk is teaching us how we can be happy in every situation. When one believes בְּכָל הַטּוֹב, that everything that happens to him is for his good, he will always be happy.

There is a rule: When things appear to be bad, that is when the good is even greater. The good is so intense, so perfect, that we are unable to appreciate it, and it appears bad to us. An example of this concept is a cup of hot water that has a lot of sugar in it. The water is so sweet, it doesn't taste good. He thinks it is bad, but it is the highest level of sweetness.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l said, "Bitachon means to believe with *emunah sheleimah* that everything Hashem does is all good. Everything is for the good of man. Whatever isn't perceived by the human mind as being good, he should believe that the good is concealed, and that the good is even better."

Just as a concealed tzaddik is greater than a revealed tzaddik, so, too, a concealed goodness is higher and greater than revealed kindness.

אריה is gematria 316, the same as גבורה (strength), and the same as three times חסד (kindness). It states (Eichah 3:10) דב "אֲרִי הוּא לִי, אֲרִי בְּמִסְתָּרִים", "He is to me a bear lying in waiting, a lion in hiding."

It is written אריה, and it is read אֲרִי. The way the pasuk is written represents how it appears to us. The way it is read represents the truth, how it truly is. It appears bad, ארי, like a lion, but know that concealed there is אריה, which is gematria three times חסד, Hashem's kindness.

The *tochachah* is written twice in the Torah, once in

this week's parashah and once in parashas Bechukosai. Parashas Bechukosai has some pesukim that express hope, encouraging us that things will become better and that Hashem will save us. However, in this week's parashah, there aren't any pesukim of comfort and chizuk. The Radvaz (vol.2 siman תשס"ט) explains, "It isn't necessary to write words of chizuk in this week's parashah because Hashem's name is written in every pasuk – the name הוי"ה – and this is the name of Hashem's compassion. (An example is the pasuk 28:20, וְיִשְׁלַח הוֹי"ה בְּךָ אֶת הַפָּאָרָה, "Hashem will send the curses...") This tells us that everything that occurs is from Hashem's attribute of rachamim, compassion. There is no greater comfort and chizuk than that!"<sup>3</sup>

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3. אגרת הטיול (written by Reb Chaim, the brother of the Maharal of Prague, אבות א) writes that throughout Megilas Eichah, Hashem's name of din, strict judgment, אלקים, isn't mentioned at all. Only the name הוי"ה appears. "This is to tell us that, along with the anger, Hashem had compassion. He doesn't judge his nation with uncontrolled anger." The tzaros came with רחמים, compassion. It wasn't punishment

The explanation is that when a person knows that every tzarah that comes to us is from Hashem, he feels consoled. Hashem is the source of goodness and kindness, and no bad comes from Hashem. Also, the matters that appear to our human eyes as bad are truly Hashem's kindnesses; only our minds are too small to

grasp the kindness that is there. Nevertheless, he believes that כל דעביד רחמנא עביד, everything Hashem does is for the good.

When one believes it is good, he will merit *seeing* that it is good. The emunah that it is for the good turns things around, and he will merit Hashem's salvation.<sup>4</sup>

with anger.

It states in this week's parashah (26:15) הַשְׁקִיפָה מִמְּעוֹן קִדְשְׁךָ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לָּנוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר וְשָׁפַעְתָּ לְאַבְתָּינוּ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ, "Look down from Your holy dwelling, from the heavens, and bless Your people Yisrael, and the ground which You have given us, as You swore to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey." Rashi (Bereishis 18:16) writes, "Whenever the Torah writes השקפה, it means to look to do bad. The exception is the pasuk we quoted above, הַשְׁקִיפָה מִמְּעוֹן קִדְשְׁךָ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, "Look down from Your holy dwelling, from the heavens." This השקפה is to look down from heaven to bestow goodness."

אלוֹפֵי יְהוּדָה, quoting his brother Reb Yaakov S. Freund ז"ל, explains that הַשְׁקָפָה can be translated as "perspective." When one looks at what happens in the world from the perspective of people, from this world, there are times when things appear bad. However, when the vision is from heaven, הַשְׁקִיפָה מִמְּעוֹן קִדְשָׁךְ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, he understands that everything is for the good.

4. There is a Torah concept that Hashem takes things that appear bad and negative and turns them into positive and good things. Based upon this principle, Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l (במכתב, הובא בכפר) (הזכרון עמוד קל"ג) teaches, "Hashem turns the curses into brachos. With this thought in mind, I had a thought, if it may be said, following

the path of drush: The tochachos written in the Torah can have two explanations. In addition to their simple meaning, there is an opposite meaning, where the tochachah takes on a form of brachah. However, the second explanation is written in a concealed form. With Hashem's help, when Hashem will help us, speedily in our days, we will clearly see how the entire tochachah is a series of great brachos. But we can try to understand how these pesukim can be explained, בדרך דרוש, even now, and how each of the tochachos are actually expressing brachos. But even when we don't know the drush, the second explanation, which shows that it is all brachos, nevertheless, they are indeed all blessings. This is because even the literal translation of the tochachos are essentially brachos. [Because even tzaros are goodness, in concealment]. When Hashem will gather us from galus, as it states (Tehillim 126:1) וְהִינּוּ בְּחֻלְמִים, שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן, we will see that the tzaros were like a dream. We will understand that the galus and the tzaros were bad solely in the realm of dreams. But in truth, all the tzaros weren't bad at all. They were very good and immense compassion."

It states in this week's parashah (28:3) וּבְרִיךְ אֶתְּהָ אֶתְּהָ בְּשָׂדֶה, "You shall be blessed in the city, and you shall be blessed in the field." Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei HaTosfos writes that וּבְרִיךְ אֶתְּהָ בְּעִיר, "You shall be blessed in the city," refers to Yerushalayim, which is called עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ, the holy city. וּבְרִיךְ אֶתְּהָ בְּשָׂדֶה, "You shall be blessed in the field" refers to Tzion, which is called שְׂדֵה, as it states (Yirmiyahu 26:18) צִיּוֹן שָׂדֶה יִתְחַרֵּשׁ, "Tzion shall be a plowed field."

Reb Simchah Wasserman zt'l asks that when Tzion is in a state of שְׂדֵה יִתְחַרֵּשׁ, a plowed field, how can this be a brachah? Why would the Torah write וּבְרִיךְ אֶתְּהָ בְּשָׂדֶה, "You shall be blessed in the field" when the field of Tzion lay in ruins?

But the explanation is that a plowed field is a precursor to brachah. A person plows his field, plants it, and that brings forth beautiful and nourishing fruits and produce. Therefore, it is understood how "You shall be blessed in the field." Even in its form of destruction, it will be a source of growth and goodness.

Whoever feels חרישה, plowing, which means that he feels iron teeth plowing through his body and soul, r'l, due to the yesurim and

Chazal say אין מפסיקין בתוכחה. Literally, this means that when we read the tochachah from the Torah, we should read it all during one aliyah. We shouldn't stop in the middle and give part of the

tochachah to another person to say the brachos on the Torah.

The Sfas Emes zy'a (ראה "אין מפסיקין בתוכחה" 5635) says that "We don't stop in the

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struggles he goes through in life, he should understand that a lot of goodness will blossom from this bitterness, r'l.

On the words (Bereishis 27:28) ויתן לך, Rashi writes, יתן ויחזור ויתן. Reb Shlomo'nu of Sadigura zt'l said, quoting Reb Mordechai of Linitz, zt'l, that יתן ויחזור ויתן means that there are times of יתן that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives to us, and then יחזור, Hashem takes it back. But we don't need to worry, because there will be another ויתן; Hashem will give once again. (Chaye Shlomo, p.256).

Motzei Shabbos, we say ויתן לך, to remind us that even if the previous week appeared to be יתן ויחזור, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu removed His kindness, we don't need to worry, because a new week is coming, and this week can be once again ויתן, that Hashem will bestow His bounty once again.

The Gemara (Brachos 33a) states that Chazal initially established that Havdalah should be said over a cup of wine. When people became poor, Chazal established that Havdalah be said in Shemonah Esrei. When they became wealthy again, Chazal reestablished that Havdalah be said over wine. Nevertheless, the takanah that Havdalah should be said in Shemonah Esrei remained, like before. Hence, we now say Havdalah in Shemonah Esrei and then over wine. The question is, why did Chazal have us continue with the Havdalah in Shemonah Esrei, now that we say Havdalah on a כוס?

The answer is that it is to remind us that even if we go through hard times, we must remember that good will yet come. Our situation will improve. We were once poor, and Hashem saved us, and Hashem can save us now, again, as well.

tochachah" teaches us an attitude we should have, whenever we are going through tzaros. "It means we shouldn't stop and think about the troubles that happen to us. This is the madreigah of השתוות, which is when one is at peace when it is good for him, and also when it is the opposite. Both situations are the same for him." Thinking about the tzaros doesn't make the tzaros go away. In fact, thinking about the tzaros only keeps them with him longer. As the Sfas Emes writes (in this same piece), כי אם אין האדם משתנה בפגעו בו מדת הדין אין לה קיום להקללה וחולפת ועוברת ממנו "If a person doesn't change [and become sad] when he is met with din, the curse won't remain. It will leave him. This is the meaning of אין מפסקין, it means that he shouldn't stop his deveikus and he shouldn't stop his bitachon that he has with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, no matter what he is going through."

This means that he accepts what happens to him with emunah and bitachon and with peace of mind. This destroys and annuls the tzaros entirely. However, if he allows what's happening to bother him and to occupy his mind, he is actually protecting the tzaros, to remain with him.

The purpose of the tzaros is that we should look up to Hashem. When a person does so, Hashem will immediately remove them from him.

In the Selichos of Motzei Shabbos, of מוצאי מנוחה we say the following phrase:

רצה עתירתם בעמדם בלילות, "Desire their prayer, when they awake at night..." The Rebbe of Munkatz (שער יששכר) ז"ל (תשרי, מאמר סליחות מ"ג) why it doesn't say בהשיכמם בלילות, which would mean that Hashem should answer the tefillos of those who *wake up early*, while it is still night. Why does it state בעמדם בלילות, that they *stand up*, when it is still night? It is written this



way to hint at the merit of Bnei Yisrael who are עומדים, stand up to tests on their emunah, בלילות, even when Hashem is concealed from them. In that merit, רצה, we request that Hashem answer our tefillos.

Chazal (Brochos 60b and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 230:5) say, לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לאמר כל מאי, "A person should accustom himself to say, 'Everything Hashem does, it is for the good.'" The phrase is written in Aramaic. Why isn't it written in lashon hakodesh? I heard from a tzaddik שליט"א that it is for the same reason Kaddish is said in Aramaic. Tosfos (Brachos 3a) writes that people say that Kaddish is in Aramaic because "The tefillah is beautiful and it is a great praise. Therefore, it was established to be said in Aramaic so that the malachim won't understand it, for they would be jealous of us." We can therefore similarly say that the concept of כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, that everything Hashem does is

for the good, is a great praise and a high level. We want to conceal what we recognize from the malachim so that they won't be jealous of us.

The Chasam Sofer (נצבים ד"ה) writes that saying Tehillim is a counsel to annul the *tochachah*. The Gemara (Pesachim 117a) states an opinion that there are 147 chapters in Tehillim. These annul the 49 *tochachos* written in parashas Bechukosai and the 98 *tochachos* written in Ki Savo, which together  $49 + 147 = 147$ .

We can explain this with the Chazal we mentioned above, אין מפסיקין בתוכחה, that we don't interrupt the *tochachah*, to give part of it as an aliyah to another person. Chazal explain that when one has an aliyah, he says, ברכו את ה' המבורך, and he blesses Hashem. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "It isn't proper that I should receive brachos when My children are in tzaar." When a person has tzaros, but he nevertheless says Tehillim and praises Hashem,

Hakadosh Baruch Hu will say, "How can I receive your brachos when my children are in tzaar? I will take away their tzaros."

## The Power of Tefillah

It states (26:7) וַיִּזְעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ, "We shouted out to Hashem, the G-d of our fathers, and Hashem heard our voices."

The Chofetz Chaim (ח"ח) writes, "It doesn't state וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ, 'Hashem heard our tefillos,' rather it states וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ, 'Hashem heard our voices.' This teaches us that when one is in a difficult, painful situation, he should shout out to Hashem, and his shouts will be answered immediately. Some tefillos are answered after several days or after several years pass, as this is written in the Midrash (Midrash Shmuel 4), but shouts are answered immediately." Every tefillah helps. Every tefillah takes effect. But some tefillos are answered only after much

time passes. But when one prays with shouts to Hashem, his tefillos are answered immediately.

The Zohar (vol.2, 20a) states, גדולה צעקה מכול, "The highest form of tefillah is shouting with heart. As it states (Eichah 2:18) צָעַק לָבָם אֶל ה' 'Their hearts shouted to Hashem.' ... A shout is closer to Hashem than tefillos or moaning, as it states (Shemos 22:22) כִּי אִם צָעַק וַיִּזְעַק אֵלַי שְׁמַע אֲשָׁמַע צַעֲקָתוֹ, 'If he shouts out to Me, I will surely hear his shout.' ... When Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Shmuel (Shmuel 1, 15:11) נִחַמְתִּי כִּי הַמְלַכְתִּי אֶת שָׁאוּל לְמֶלֶךְ, 'I regret that I have made Shaul king', it states וַיַּחַר לְשִׁמוּאֵל וַיִּזְעַק אֶל ה' כָּל הַלַּיְלָה, 'It distressed Shmuel, and he shouted out to Hashem all night.' He left everything else, and he took himself to shouting, because that is closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than everything else. This is as it states (Shemos 3:9) וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה צָעַקְתָּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנִי אֵלַי, 'And now, behold, the shouts of Bnei Yisrael have come to Me.'"

The Chida (שפה אחת ד"ה שועת) writes that in Nishmas we say two phrases, one after the other, which seem redundant. One is שועת עניים and the other is אתה תשמע. צעקת הדל תקשיב ותושיע. Both say that Hashem listens to the prayers of the poor. But there are significant differences between them. שועת עניים is written in plural form, referring to many poor people, whereas הדל is one poor person. צעקת is a shout, while שועת is a sincere and desperate call to Hashem, but it is without shouting. Another difference is that for the שועת עניים, "the call of the poor," it states אתה תשמע, "You listen," whereas, for the צעקת הדל, "the shouts of the poor," it states תקשיב ותושיע, "You listen and You save." The Chida zt'l explains that the highest form of tefillah is צעקה, shouting out to Hashem. Although there is a special benefit for many people to daven together, however, shouting out to Hashem is so precious that even if a person is praying alone, Hashem will answer

his tefillos, as it states צעקת הדל תקשיב ותושיע, "The shout of the poor You listen and You save." Whereas, when the tefillah is without shouting, even if many poor people are praying, Hashem will listen to their prayers (as it states שועת עניים אתה תשמע, "You listen to the calls of the poor"), but it doesn't state ותושיע, "You save them" because the salvation doesn't come as quickly.

The holy sefarim teach that there is also a shout from the heart, which is as powerful as a shout with the mouth. One shouts this way when he realizes that only Hashem can help him.

It states (Tehillim 81:8) אָעֲנֶה בְּסֻתֵּר רָעַם, "I answered you in secret with thunder." Rebbe Mendel of Vorka zt'l explained that when one's request and tefillah is a shout, like a רָעַם, thunder, and it is also בְּסֻתֵּר, concealed within his heart, then it will be אָעֲנֶה, that Hashem will answer his tefillos.

The Rambam (Matnos Aniym 7:3) teaches us laws of helping

the poor, and from these halachos, Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l teaches us essential concepts related to tefillah.

The Rambam writes, "You must give to the poor according to the extent that the poor person is lacking... If, in the past, the poor person [was wealthy, and he] rode a horse and he had a slave who ran before him, and then he became poor, you must buy him a horse to ride on, and a slave to run before him. As it states (Devarim 15:8) *דִּי מִחֲסָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִחְסֹר לוֹ*, 'You shall give him sufficient for his needs, which *he is lacking*.'" Each person lacks something else. This pauper needs a horse and a servant to run before him because that is what he had in the past. Therefore, the wealthy must give him all of this.

Later (Matnos Aniyim 7:7), the Rambam writes that the wealthy person doesn't have to give so much. He writes, "When a poor person is collecting door to door, you don't have to give him a

large gift. However, you must give him [at least] a small amount. It is forbidden to let a poor man leave empty-handed. "

This seems like a contradiction. First, the Rambam says that you must supply the poor person with all his needs, even with a horse and with a slave to run before him, if he was accustomed to this type of lifestyle in the past, when he was wealthy. Later, the Rambam writes that you can give a small gift, and that is sufficient.

The poskim explain that when a poor person is collecting door to door, he isn't relying solely on one person to help him. He wants to receive his needs collectively from many people. Therefore, it is sufficient to give him a small gift. However, there are times when a poor person relies on one person. He feels that no one can help him but this wealthy person. At such times, this wealthy

person is obligated to help him, as best as he can.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l (Shaarim l'Tefillah, p.96) writes that when we daven, we come to Hashem like a poor person in need. As we say in the piyutim of the Yamim Noraim, לבקש רחמים כעני בפתח, "We ask for compassion, like a poor person at the door." How can we merit for Hashem to listen to our tefillos, and grant us our needs? The counsel is to recognize that no one can help him but Hashem alone. When Hashem sees that a person recognizes that only He can help him, Hashem will help him with all his needs. However, when Hashem sees that the person isn't relying solely on Him, but rather he is also making various types of hishtadlus, relying on others to help him, and he also goes to Hashem with tefillah as one

of his many forms of hishtadlus, then Hashem will react to him in the same manner as a wealthy person acts with a poor person who comes to his door, when he plans to go to many other doors, as well. Hashem will help him, partially, as it is the obligation of every person to help the poor who come to his door. However, if he wants to be helped entirely, he should rely on Hashem alone.

### Shabbos Selichos

The custom is to begin Selichos on a Motzei Shabbos. Leket Yosher (Orach Chaim vol.1 p.118) explains that people are happy on Motzei Shabbos due to the *oneg* Shabbos they just had, and the Torah they learned. A happy mindset is the correct mood for saying Selichos.

We say in the Selichos, באלה פנים ונשפוך שיחים<sup>5</sup>. We can

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5. The literal translation is, "With what face can we pour out our words?" expressing our shame to speak and plead before Hashem, due to our many aveiros.

translate this to mean as follows: באלה פנים, with the face we received on Shabbos, נשפוך שיחים, we can pray before You. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 11:2) states, ויברך, אלוקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו, "Hashem blessed the seventh day..." This means that Hashem blessed them with the shine of His face, and Hashem sanctified them with the countenance of His face.' On Shabbos, our faces shine with joy. With this face, we can approach Hashem and beg for forgiveness.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l gave another reason why we begin saying Selichos specifically on Motzei Shabbos. It is based on the Chazal (Shabbos 119:) that says, "Whoever says ויכלו [at kiddush], becomes a partner with HaKadosh Baruch Hu in creation." A partner in a business has the right to express his opinion, how things should be run. On Shabbos, we become a partner with Hakadosh Baruch Hu in creation, so

we have a right to say our input, on how we want that the world be run. This can explain the reason we say Selichos after Shabbos. We are partners, and our opinions matter.

We can also explain that we begin saying Selichos after Shabbos because in the merit of Shabbos, our aveiros are forgiven.

The *Siduro Shel Shabbos* says that שב"ת is roshei teivos for שבת בו תשוב – on Shabbos you shall repent. The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l (Divrei Emes, Matos) writes that he heard from Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l that Shabbos is the shoresht (origin) of teshuvah. Indeed, the translation of שב"ת is to return to Hashem.

It states (Yeshayah 42:18), החרשים שמעו והעורים הביטו לראות, "Deaf ones, listen! The blind, see!" The Chidushei HaRim zt'l asks, how can the deaf hear? How can the blind see? He answers, "There are moments so lofty that even the deaf hear and the blind see."



Shabbos Selichos is such a time, when everyone is inspired with a holy urge to improve their ways.<sup>6</sup>

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6. The Shaarei Teshuvah (581) writes, "I saw some *rabbanim*, who were always occupied with studying halachah, but during the month of Elul, they would stop a bit from their studies to say *tachanunim* (supplications)."

*Tefillos* are beneficial for meriting a good judgment and also for success in our *teshuvah*. This is the reason people daven a lot and say Tehillim during these days.

One year, before Rosh Hashanah, Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* asked Reb Aryeh Leib Chasman *zt'l*, "What *kabbalah* should I accept on myself for the upcoming year?

Reb Leib Chasman replied, "I want you to decide, but make sure it is something you can keep."

After some time, Reb Elyah Lopian returned and told Reb Leib Chasman what he chose.

"Are you certain you can keep this?"

"I'm certain."

"Then I want you to do only half of it."

This is because a *kabbalah* doesn't necessarily need to be something difficult to keep. It can be relatively small. The main thing is to stick to it without compromise.

A small nail on the wall can hold up a large picture. Similarly, every *kabbalah* accomplishes much more than we imagine. One day, we will look back and see how much we benefited from each small *kabbalah* we took on.

Someone said to Reb Zundel Kroizer *zt'l*, "A miracle happened to me, and I want to take on a new *kabbalah* to express my gratitude to Hashem. Which *kabbalah* do you recommend I take on?"

Reb Zundel advised him to add just one minute of Torah study.

## Selichos

The *sefarim* write that the *yamim noraim* begin on the first night of *selichos*. Rebbe Uri of Strelish *zt'l* said that the *כתובה וחתומה* of Rosh Hashanah begins on the first night of *selichos*.

On Motzei Shabbos, we say the *selichos* of *במוצאי* *מנוחה*. Each line begins with a letter of the alef beis, in alphabetical order. The exceptions are the letters *נ"ן* and *ו"ו*, which are written in the same phrase, two words, next to each other, *נא שגבם*, "Please elevate them..." instead of in two phrases.<sup>7</sup> Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* explains that we don't want to separate these letters

because *נ"ס* spell *נס*, and we want to imply that the days of *selichos* are *mesugal* for miracles.

The final line of this *piyut* states *תראם ניסך עושה גדולות*, "Show them Your miracles..." During these days of *selichos*, we ask Hashem to show us His miracles and to grant us all our hearts' desires.

It is the custom of Belzer chassidim to say the entire *Tehillim* on the first day of *Selichos*, in beis medresh, *ברוב עם* (with a large minyan). Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zy'a* said that his *avodas Hashem* on the first day of *selichos* is greater than his *avodah* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.<sup>8</sup>

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"If you generally learn from 9:00 to 10:00, learn until 10:01."

Tzaddikim called the resolutions people make for the new year, "A new garment for the new soul for the new year."

7. Although it states *נא שגבם*, the letter *ש"ן* is interchangeable with *ס"מ*, as they are pronounced similarly.

8. When Rebbe Yissachar Dov was old and unwell, his *gaba'im* tried to convince him not to go to beis medrash for *Tehillim* on the first day of *selichos*, but he came with *mesirus nefesh*. He said, "How could you deprive me of the great *hisorerus* and *hislahavus* of

The Tur (581) writes, "Most people fast on the first day of *selichos*."<sup>9</sup>

In our generation, since we are weaker, most people don't fast. Nevertheless, we

saying the יהי רצון after *Tehillim* together with the congregation?"

9. It is brought down in the Imrei Pinchas (445) that "Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* was very *machmir* to *tovel* on the first day of *selichos*, early in the morning, and on *erev* Rosh Hashanah, early in the morning, and on the two days of Rosh Hashanah... Although he was lenient [with *mikvah*], he was more stringent with the *tevilos* these days."

Reb Yaakov Landau *zt'l*, rav of Bnei Brak, generally contained his emotions. On the first night of *selichos*, he was the *chazan*. When he began *Ashrei*, his voice didn't show any emotion, but when he came to תהילתה, he cried copiously and continued to cry throughout the *selichos*. It was almost impossible to hear his voice through his sobs.

Once, before *selichos*, Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* told the *chazan*, "Hoych! Hoych! Daven loudly because this will rouse the community to say *selichos* with *kavanah* and *hislahavus*. "Don't be afraid of becoming hoarse because others can take your place."

Someone asked Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*, "I'm a *melamed*, and Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Deah 245:17) states that a *melamed* must sleep well. Perhaps I shouldn't go to *selichos* because that would cause me not to get enough sleep."

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld replied, "I don't see any *heter* for you not to wake up for *selichos*."

Leket Yosher (*Hilchos Taanis* 12, p.114) writes, "Once I asked my rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen, to permit me to eat during the days of *selichos*, so I would have the strength to learn as I do all year. He replied that the scholars of the past also knew that fasting causes people to become weak and makes it hard for them to learn Torah. Nevertheless, they instituted the custom of fasting during *selichos*.

Therefore, I cannot permit you to eat."

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l once traveled by foot because he couldn't afford to hire a wagon. Someone stopped his horse and buggy next to Rebbe Dovid and offered him a ride.

When they arrived at their destination, Rebbe Dovid thanked him and said, "I have a beis medresh in Lelov. Come there on the first night of *selichos*."

The man thought, "I did him a favor, and now he wants to take advantage of me and use me to complete his minyan for *selichos*. One thing is certain: I am not going to his beis medresh for *selichos*!"

On the first night of *selichos*, Rebbe Dovid entered his beis medresh and looked around. The person who gave him the ride wasn't there yet, so he returned to his room.

A few times, he entered the beis medresh, looked around, and when he didn't see the person who had given him the ride, he returned to his study.

At this time, the one who gave him the ride was in his home, in a village near Lelov. A thought entered his mind: "Rebbe Dovid is a holy man, after all. He asked me to come to his beis medresh for *selichos*. Why shouldn't I go?"

So, he drove to the Lelover Rebbe's beis medresh. When the Rebbe came out this time, he saw the driver and immediately began the *selichos*.

After *selichos*, he told him, "You did me a favor this year, and I wanted to give you a *brachah*. I asked you to come on the first day of *selichos* since it is a great *eis ratzon* in heaven for *brachos* to take effect. I give you a brachah that you and your descendants should enjoy immense wealth and long lives."

This account was relayed to me by a great-grandson of the recipient of this brachah. He said, "I am a direct descendant of this individual, and I testify that the brachah has been fulfilled. Throughout the subsequent generations, our family has enjoyed prosperity and longevity."

must remember that these are special days, and we should devote them to teshuvah and tefillah to arouse Hashem's compassion.

### How to Say Selichos

Reb Shalom Schwadron zt'l said that when somebody knocks on your door, you have the choice to answer the door or to ignore it. But when someone pounds on your door, you understand that the person is desperate, so you open to see what is needed. Therefore, we say in selichos, דלתך דפקנו רחום וחנן, "We are pounding on Your door... Don't have us return empty-handed." We are pounding at Hashem's door, desperate for His forgiveness and salvation, and therefore, we plead that Hashem listen to our prayers.

Tzaddikim tell a mashal of a person who was lost in the forest and needed food and water. Finally, he spotted a house. He knocked

at the door, but the homeowner didn't answer. What did the man do? Did he walk away? Of course not. He was in the forest, alone, and he needed help. He knocked again. He pounded on the door, and he begged for mercy because he realized this was his only chance for survival. Similarly, we knock at Hashem's doors, and if they are closed, we knock again, we pound on the door, and we don't go away until our tefillos are answered because we realize we don't have another option.

We say on the first day of selichos, רצה עתירתם בעמדם, בלילות, "Desire their tefillos..." There are several ways to express tefillah, and עתירה is when one davens many, many times (see *Rashi*, Bereishis 25:21 (ד"ה ויעתר)). This is because we don't ask Hashem only once or twice for life, a good year, and atonement. We ask again and again because we are desperate and need Hashem to answer our tefillos.<sup>10</sup>

**10.** The Yeitav Leiv zy'a told the following parable: There was once a king who would drive through his capital city on his birthday, and the townspeople would line the streets to watch the king pass by. As the king's chariot drew near, the townspeople had the opportunity to throw a letter into the king's chariot, stating their requests, which the king would fulfill.

There was one person who would annually throw his letters into the king's chariot, but the king never granted his wishes. He investigated the matter and heard that one of the king's ministers – who rode with the king – hated him. When he would toss his letter into the chariot, this minister would tell the king to ignore his requests, claiming that he wasn't a loyal citizen, unworthy of the king's benevolence.

The following year, this man went to the king's palace *before* the king's birthday to speak with the king directly. Now that his adversary wasn't around, the king agreed to fulfill his request.

At this point in the story, the Yeitav Lev cried and said, “Beloved Yidden! On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem is surrounded by angels who speak out against us, claiming we don't deserve a good year, and we have to grab the shofar to protect ourselves. We are much better off speaking to Hashem face to face now, in the month of Elul, and especially during the days of *Selichos*. Our adversaries aren't around, and there is a better chance that Hashem will give us our desires. Beg Hashem for compassion; ask Him for health, wealth, *nachas*, and all your heart's desires. If we do so, Hashem will have mercy on us and grant us a sweet and successful new year.”

Reb Shlomo Shlissel z'l (founder of *Chasan Mishnayos*) said that when he was learning in Yeshivas Chevron, a *bachur* from Russia joined the yeshiva. Reb Shlissel asked him, "What do the Russian Jews say about Elul?"

The *bachur* replied "Smiths test rusty metal scraps – to know whether the rust is through and through, or whether there is good metal under the rust – by putting a magnet next to it. If the metal is attracted to the magnet, that means there is good metal under the rust. The same is with Elul [and the days of *Selichos*].



### **Viduy Maasros**

The Torah discusses the mitzvah of going to the Beis HaMikdash to proclaim there that you kept all the mitzvos of *terumah* and *maasar* etc. At this time, one says, עשיתי ככל אשר צויתני, "I did everything You commanded" (26:14). Rashi writes, שמחתי, "I was happy and I made others happy." Tzaddikim understand from this Rashi that one of Hashem's primary desires of Creation is that Yidden should be happy. Therefore, if one "was happy and made others happy," he can say עשיתי ככל אשר צויתני, "I did everything You commanded" for he fulfilled one of the primary purposes of Creation.

There are many ways to bring happiness to others. The most simple and easiest manner is to smile to your

fellow man. Chazal (*Kesubos* 111:) state, "Whoever shows his white teeth to his fellow man [in a smile] is greater than giving him milk to drink." You can help the poor by giving them a cup of milk, but an even greater merit is to smile to them and to fill their hearts with happiness.

Someone asked Reb Avigdor Miller *zt'l* how he should prepare for the judgment of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Reb Avigdor Miller replied, "Smile."

He explained, "You think that I'm old, and that I'm not speaking coherently, for how does smiling grant someone a good judgment? But actually, this is very good counsel. I will explain with a *marshal*: Someone owns a chain of stores. At

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Throughout the year, people forget Hashem and their obligations to Him, but when Elul and the days of *Selichos* arrive, one should be inspired to do *teshuvah*. If one remains stagnant even now, that's a sign that he is corroded through and through.

the end of each year he takes inventory, and decides what changes have to be made for the upcoming year. Some stores will need more advertising, some employees will be laid off, and so on. The proprietor's advisor said, "Even if you let go of some employees, don't fire Mr. So-and-so. He always has a smile on his face, which gives the consumers a good feeling. There are people who come to the store just to meet with him..." Similarly, *keviyachol*, at the end of the year Hashem takes inventory, to see how the world is running, and some will be

removed from the world, in the upcoming year. But if there is someone who always has a smile on his face, bringing joy to others, he is an asset to the world, and Hashem will therefore grant him life and a good year so he can continue bringing joy to others.

On a similar note, Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* taught that those who do *chesed* have a better chance for receiving a good judgment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, for even if they don't deserve to live by their own merit, they will be granted life because people need them.