

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## THE FAMILY CIRCLE

One Friday afternoon, Yehuda Bernstein found himself in the pediatrician's office with his 3-year-old son Sholom. Looking at the results of Sholom's blood tests, the doctor ordered them to the hospital. As Shabbos began, Yehuda stood at his son's bedside in a Philadelphia pediatric emergency room. His child had been diagnosed with cancer.

Over the course of a year, Sholom underwent grueling treatments and a bone marrow transplant. One of Yehuda's greatest challenges was coaxing him to take his medication. The child resisted the nurses' efforts and viewed the hospital as a place of suffering.

One Friday, help arrived in the most unexpected way.

The child was refusing his medication when the door to the hospital room opened, and a group of *bachurim* from the Yeshiva of Philadelphia entered. Guitar and song filled the air. The *bachurim* erupted into dance, drawing Sholom into the circle. The boy smiled, and the *bachurim* cheered him on as he swallowed his medication.

The nurses watched in astonishment, wondering how these teens had developed such a rapport with the child, and how they had known to arrive exactly when needed.

"Most teenagers are concerned only with themselves and have a hard time empathizing with others," a nurse remarked to Yehuda. "It is remarkable that these boys can connect with a three-year-old and show him such care and compassion. Mr. Bernstein. You are lucky to be a part of the Jewish family!"

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gem

OF THE WEEK

## LAND OF NO RETURN

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

From the beginning of Jewish history, Egypt was a land of refuge for the people of Eretz Yisrael. Avraham went to Egypt to escape famine. Yitzchak was about to go there for the same reason, and was kept from doing so only by a command from G-d. The *shevatim* travel to Egypt repeatedly to buy food.

The natural richness of Egyptian soil gave it an advantage over other lands, and those lands—particularly Eretz Yisrael—became dependent on it.

This is the meaning of *lo sosifun lashuv b'derech hazeh od*: Do not go from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt as you did in the past, to get things that your nation needs but your own land does not have. Do not become dependent on Egypt.

A Jewish king who glories in building up a mighty military commits two sins. He sins directly, because his true calling is elsewhere, and he sins indirectly, by making his people dependent on Egypt, the supplier of battle horses. If Egypt does not sell him the horses, there will be no mounted troops—so he is forced to stay friendly with it. And so, along with Egyptian horses, Egyptian

*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER

U'KESHARTAM L'OS:  
AWAY GAMES



The Sefer Hachinuch gives us an amazing insight into the mitzvah of *tefillin*. A person's *guf* longs to do all kinds of aveiros; it is only the spiritual strength of the *neshama* that stops it.

But because the *guf* originates from the earth and the *neshama* from heaven, the *guf* is on "home territory," so to speak, while the *neshama* is away. Thus, the *yetzer hara* has a built-in advantage. The *neshama* therefore needs guards to help it in its fight against the *yetzer hara*.

*Tefillin* are one of those *shomrim*.

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*

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## THE SCALES OF HEAVEN

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

In the *beis din shel maalah* stands a scale for every human being. One side holds their merits, the good things they have done; the other side holds all of their sins. Fortunate is the one whose *zechuyos* outweigh his *avonos*! Woe to he whose *avonos* outweigh his *zechuyos*. The Gemara states that a person should always see himself as standing at exactly fifty-fifty: one right move will tip the scale in his favor, and one wrong move will bring disaster. Not only that, we should view the entire world the same way. With one mitzvah, we can tip the whole world to the good; with one sin, to the negative.

The Gemara tells us that every time Rav Yochanan reached a certain *pasuk* in Malachi, he would cry. This *pasuk* describes how Hakadosh Baruch Hu will judge us for the severest sins and even the lighter ones. “A servant whose master counts light infractions like severe ones—is there any hope for him?”

The Mesilas Yesharim explains that the consequences of less severe sins will, of course, not be identical to those more severe. What it means is that nothing will go overlooked. Every action is placed on the scale and weighed accordingly.

When I was a teenager in the Yeshiva of Philadelphia, we hosted Rabbi Naftali Riff, the rav of nearby Camden, New Jersey, for Shabbos. He was a grandson of the Netziv and president of the Ezras Torah charity fund. Despite his advanced age, he always took the charity checks to the post office himself. When asked why he did not send them with someone else, he replied with the famous story of the wife of the Vilna Gaon. She and a friend used to collect and distribute tzedakah. They made a pact that whoever died first would come back to the other in a dream and report on the judgment. When the friend passed away, she appeared to the Vilna Gaon’s wife in a dream. “In Heaven, they calculate every action,” she said. “We were once looking for a certain woman, and I saw her in the distance and waved. I received a reward for that wave.”

Hence, said Rabbi Riff, he wanted to bring the tzedakah checks to the post office, and be rewarded for his efforts.

Nothing we do is overlooked. Our tiniest good deeds will be rewarded. A kind word or a smile, a tiny increase in *kavanah* while saying a bracha—all of it goes on the scale.

So, too, does even the slightest infraction.

This is the system by which we are judged each year, and when it comes time to leave this world. May we all merit that the scales be tipped in our favor, for each of us, for the Jewish nation as a whole, and for the entire world. 🕯

views are introduced to Israel.

The *tochacha* describes the misery that lies in store for the Jewish people if, while living in the land given to it for a mission, it should violate that mission. The picture concludes with a portrayal of utter forsakenness and despair: *v’heshivcha Hashem Mitzrayim ba’aniyos, baderech asher amarti lecha “lo sosifod lirosah,” v’hismakartem sham l’oyvecha la’avadim v’lashefachos—v’ein koneh*. G-d will make them travel to Egypt by ship, as a last refuge in order to survive, to offer themselves for sale as slaves—but there will be no buyers.

Had they been worthy, they would have lived contentedly in their land, independent, and would never have looked to Egypt for any of their needs. But since they were not, their own land will cease to support them. They will find themselves in such misery that the slavery of Egypt will begin to seem attractive. Centuries after G-d rescued them from servitude, they will offer themselves voluntarily!

Thus, the Torah prohibits going to Egypt in times when such travel attests to dependence on it.

As long as the Jewish state existed in Eretz Yisrael, emigration from there to Egypt was strictly prohibited. The settlement of Jews in Alexandria in the time of the Second Temple was in clear violation.

But with the downfall of the Jewish state, it was permissible for Jewish exiles to return to Egypt, and over the centuries many Jewish communities passed through Egypt and settled there. 🕯

*Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.*



## wonder WORLD

### READY TO EAT



### How do fruits know when to ripen?

In Parshas Ki Savo, Bnei Yisrael are commanded to bring *bikkurim*, the first ripe fruits of the *shivas haminim*, as an offering to Hashem. Ripening is caused by a plant hormone called ethylene. This invisible gas tells the fruit it’s time to soften, sweeten, and change color. The plant makes ethylene when the fruit is mature and the seeds inside are ready to grow. As ethylene spreads through the fruit, it triggers enzymes that break down tough cell walls, change starch to sugar, and release smells that attract animals to eat the fruit. Some fruits, like bananas and avocados, keep ripening after they’re picked. Others, like grapes or citrus, stop changing once they’re off the tree. When we bring *bikkurim*, we are showing the results of a beautiful system Hashem designed. 🕯

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