

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Re'eh



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Torah Wellsprings - Re'eh

Hashem's Children

We are Hashem's children, as it states (14:1) בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d." The Alshich HaKodesh explains that each Yid, individually, is Hashem's child. Not only as a group are we considered and referred to as Hashem's children, but each of us, individually, is called Hashem's child.

What will be if we don't act as a Yid should and transgresses the laws of the Torah? Are we still called Hashem's children?

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 36.) states, "When you act like [Hashem's] children, you are called 'children.' If you don't act like [Hashem's] children, you aren't called children. This is Reb Yehudah's view. Reb Meir says, בין כך ובין כך אתם קרוים בנים, regardless of whether the Jewish nation is acting properly or not, they are always called Hashem's children."

The Rashba (*teshuvoah* 194) writes that although we generally follow Reb Yehudah's view over Reb Meir's, in this instance, the halachah is like Reb Meir, and regardless of how we act, we are always Hashem's children.

Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l said that this is alluded to in the word אתם (in the pasuk בנים אתם) because the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25.) says, אתם אפילו שוגגין אתם אפילו מזידין אתם אפילו מוטעין, that the word אתם implies to when you sin by accident, on purpose, or when you make mistakes. We can therefore explain

that בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם means at all times, no matter what you do, you are Hashem's children.¹

When we know and believe that we are Hashem's children, this will result in an improvement of our actions and mindset or how we view things.

One example is the belief that everything is for the good. Sometimes, a parent must take his child to a doctor or dentist. It hurts the child, but the child trusts his parents that it is for his benefit. This is how we should be with our trust in Hashem.

The Ibn Ezra says that this is the meaning of the pasuk בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגדדו ולא תשימו קרחה בין עיניכם למת, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d. You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead." The Ibn Ezra writes, "Now that you know you are Hashem's children, and you know that Hashem loves you more than a father loves his son, do not injure yourself when something distressing occurs because everything is for the good. If you don't understand, it can be compared to a child who doesn't understand the ways of his parents but, nevertheless, relies on them. That's how you should be with your *emunah* in Hashem."

Knowing that we are Hashem's children also encourages us to daven to Him. A child knows that he can always turn to his parent, and we can also always turn to Hashem.

1. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Rishon L'Tzion*) writes on the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 31:19) הבן יקר לי אפרים that when a foul odor emanates from a person, others keep their distance from him. However, when their own baby needs a diaper change, parents have no issue holding the child and playing with him. They kiss and hug him and almost don't even sense the odor because of their intense love for the child. We are Hashem's children, and Hashem says that even if we smell of sin, we remain הבן יקר לי אפרים, Hashem's beloved children. Hashem plays with us and enjoys us, as a parent plays with his child even when the child isn't clean. אם ילד שעשועים, Hashem plays with us and enjoys us, as a parent plays with his child even when the child isn't clean. כי מדי דברי בו זכור אחרנו עוד, in every situation, רחם ארחמנו נאם ה', Hashem loves us and has mercy on us.

Binah l'ittim (Drush 61) writes, "The segulah of tefillah is wonderful... With tefillah, a person can attain all his needs, regardless of whether he is righteous and deserves that his tefillos be answered or not. His tefillos will never be returned emptyhanded. Even if a person is a sinner, if he davens to Hashem, his tefillos won't return empty."

This is written in the pasuk (Tehillim 22:25) *כי לא בזה ולא שקץ ענות עני... ובשועו אליו שמע*, "For He has neither despised nor abhorred the cry of the poor...and when he cried out to Him, He hearkened." This refers to someone poor in deeds. Even so, when he calls out to Hashem, Hashem will answer his tefillos.

In parashas Korach, Moshe prayed to Hashem (Bamidbar 16:15) *אל תפן אל מנחתם*, "Don't heed their offering." (This refers to the 250 people who rebelled against Aharon HaKohen, and they wanted to be the kohen gadol.) The Ramban explains that Moshe prayed that Hashem shouldn't accept the ketores and that Hashem shouldn't listen to their tefillos.

Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l says that we learn from this that Moshe was afraid that Hashem might accept their tefillos, although they were sinning and were asking for something that wasn't Hashem's will. This reveals to us the greatness of tefillah. One can be wrong; his tefillos can be ill-intended, he might be perpetuating one of the gravest sins of history, and yet, even then, Hashem might accept his tefillos. This is the power of tefillah. Hashem listens, regardless of who is davening and what he is davening for.

It states (Tehillim 34:17-18) *פני ה' בעשי רע... צעקו*, "Hashem's face is to the evildoers... They cry out, and Hashem hearkens." The Pele Yoetz says that the pasuk is referring to *צעקו*, to people who sin. Even to them, when they call out to Hashem, Hashem listens.

There was a person named Reb Berele Cohen, and some of his children were niftar. Reb Pinchas Koritzer told him, "Meiner (dear friend), how do you allow this to continue? Don't you believe that even the greatest rasha, if he invests in tefilla, can receive everything he wants?"

We see that every Yid can daven to Hashem, and his tefillos will be answered. To a large extent, this is because we are Hashem's children, and a father wants to do the will of his children and grant them their requests.²

The realization that we are Hashem's children results in other behaviors and lessons, and we will discuss some of them in the upcoming section.

Distribute Your Wealth

This week's parashah discusses the mitzvah of tzedakah. (15:7-11) *כי יהיה בך אביון... לא תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפץ את ירך מאחיד האביון, כי פתח תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפץ את ירך לו*, "If there will be among you a needy person...you shall not harden your heart, and you shall not close your hand from your needy brother. Rather, you shall open your hand to him..."

Giving tzedakah is based on the awareness that we are Hashem's children. The Gemara

2. The segulah of tefillah is that Hashem also listens and answers the tefillos of goyim. Kal v'chover that Hashem listens to the tefillos of His children, the Jewish nation.

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l (*Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim* vol.2, 25) writes, "When goyim have a need, such as when someone is sick, or they need *parnassah*, I think that at these times they are *obligated* to pray. Don't ask, if so, why isn't prayer among the seven mitzvos of Bnei Noach? It is because [one of the seven mitzvos is to have emunah, and] emunah means to believe that Hashem alone gives *parnassah* and heals the sick, etc. When one doesn't turn to Hashem with *bitachon* and prayer, this means he doesn't believe in Hashem and believes in other powers ch"v. Even non-Jews are obligated to believe in Hashem. Therefore, they must also turn to Hashem for *parnassah*, *refuah*, and all their needs."

(Bava Basra 10.) tells us that Turnesrofus the Rasha said to Reb Akiva, "You will go to Gehinom for giving tzedakah, and I will explain myself with a mashal: A king got angry at his slave, so he put him in jail and commanded that no one give him food or drink. If someone disobeys the king and gives him food and drink, won't he be punished?"

Reb Akiva replied that this is true regarding the king's slaves, but the Jewish nation is Hashem's children. Reb Akiva said, "I will answer you with a mashal: A king became angry with his son and put him in jail, and he commanded that no one is to give his son food or drink. Someone disobeyed and gave the son food and drink. When the king heard about it, he gave him a present for doing so. And we are called Hashem's children, as it states *בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם*."

So, the concept of giving tzedakah is based on the fact that we are Hashem's children. And there is more on this topic. We begin with the Gemara (Bava Basra 131:), which states that if a father writes in a document that all his money and possessions should go to one of his sons, we understand that he meant that this one son should be the manager (apitropus) over his money, and he should distribute it equally between all the brothers. We don't assume that the father wanted only one son to get the money because why would he do so? He loves all his children; why would he want to give one child and let the others suffer poverty?

The Chida (Pnei Dovid, Re'eh) zt'l takes this further. We are Hashem's children. In fact, as the Alshich tells us, every Yid, individually, is Hashem's child. Is it logical that Hashem would want some of His children to be wealthy and some of them not? It is clear that Hashem gave more money to some because He wanted them to be apitropsim, money managers, to distribute the money among Hashem's children.

The previous Skulener Rebbe zt'l explains this lesson with an analogy of people seated at a table at a chasunah, and a waiter comes by and places a tray full of meat next to one person. Will anyone think that the entire tray was intended for him alone? Everyone understands that it is for all those seated at the table. The same occurs when one person is blessed with wealth. Hashem's intention is that he should share his good fortune with others.

This can explain why the Torah writes in double *lashon* (15:10) *נתן נתן לו*, "Give you shall give him." It is written in double because the giving should occur twice because Hashem gave to you so you can give to others. *ולא ירע לבבך*, "your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him," because the money was given to you to distribute to others. One doesn't really deserve a reward for giving tzedakah. All he did was allocate the money to where it was destined to be. Nevertheless, the Torah promises, *כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך*, "For this Hashem your G-d will bless you in all your work and all your endeavors."³

3. A boy worked as the bell ringer in a train station. He rang the bell, and people began boarding the train. Five minutes later, he rang the bell again, and those who didn't board the train at the first call boarded the train now. When he rang the bell a third time, the train departed the station.

A man stood at the side, watched the bell-ringer boy, and said, "You must be a very important person! Everyone does your bidding. You are in charge of everything that happens here at the train station. It is my great honor to meet you."

The boy replied, "I am not a big man here. I am at the bottom of the totem pole. I just ring the bells."

The Chofetz Chaim said this story as a mashal. We see influential, wealthy people and are amazed at their strength and power. We forget that they are pawns in Hashem's world, fulfilling the missions that Hashem sent them to do. They give a lot of tzedakah because Hashem gave them the money to distribute it to others.

The Ben Ish Chai tells about a donkey that was decorated with beautiful roses, and when it went through the street, everyone came near it to smell the wonderful scent of the roses. At nighttime, the donkey returned to its barn and told his friends about the honor it received. The donkey said, "Everyone was so excited to see me. They oohed and aahed and ran to me as I walked through the streets."

The next day, the donkey was carrying garbage on his back. Everyone kept their distance from him.

The nimshal is that people honor the wealthy or those in important positions, but

the rich should know it isn't about them. The honor is because of what they are carrying.

Michtav m'Eliyahu compares it to a child imagining that he is a ship captain as he pushes a box floating on the water. When people become older, they are still imagining that they are playing, but since they are older, the toys become more sophisticated. Ultimately, it is all an illusion, a game, and not a real reason to feel honored.

Kind Words

Many phrases that discuss tzedakah are written in double. For example, (14:22) עשר

We will explain this concept with another mashal:

A very wealthy person didn't have time to speak to all the poor people and fundraisers who came to solicit him, so he hired someone to be his gabbai tzedakah and distribute money for him. The wealthy person gave his gabbai tzedakah basic guidelines on how much to give to each type of cause, and the gabbai loyally fulfilled his job.

The wealthy man particularly liked to support orphans.

Once, fundraisers of an orphanage approached the gabbai tzedakah, and he gave them a very generous sum.

A few months later, the gabbai tzedakah received a call from the orphanage. They told him they were making a fundraising dinner and wanted the gabbai to be the guest of honor. The gabbai protested, "It isn't me. I just write the checks and don't deserve any praise. It's my employer that deserves the honor."

So the heads of the orphanage called up the wealthy donor and told him to invite him to be the guest of honor at their dinner because he so generously supported the orphanage. The wealthy donor replied, "I don't deserve the honor either. I am also just a gabbai tzedakah. Hashem gave me the money to distribute to people in need."

A poor man from Kerestir complained to Rebbe Shayale Kerestirer *zt'l* about his poverty. Reb Shayale advised him to start a new business. He did so, and in a short time, he became very wealthy.

A year later, he returned to Rebbe Shayele. This time he complained that his friends, family, and even strangers keep coming to him to ask for money, and they bother him at all times of the day. He said, "It is my money, I don't owe them anything. I don't want to give them money."

The Rebbe explained to him that when Heaven gives someone money, he becomes an *apitropus*, a custodian over the money to distribute to others. The rebbe said, "Why does one need wealth if not to distribute money to the poor? I see you aren't a loyal *apitropis*. You aren't giving the money where it is intended to go. Therefore, we will find someone else to be wealthy, someone more suitable for the job." The wealthy man became very afraid, realizing he might lose all his wealth.

The Rebbe said, "We will make a *gorel* to decide who will be the next wealthy person of Kerestir. If you do teshuvah and commit to helping the poor, you will win the lottery..."

Indeed, his name came out in the *gorel*.

נתן תתן (15:10), תעשר (15:8), פתוח תפתח את ירך, and the reward is also doubled as it states (15:4) כי ברך יברוך ה' אלקיך. The Kli Yakar (14:22) writes, "All phrases about tzedakah are doubled because one can give charity with one's hand and say kind words with one's mouth. This is the meaning of פתוח תפתח, open your hand and open your heart. For both aspects of tzedakah, he will be rewarded. Therefore, it states כי ברך יברוך."⁴

The Gemara (Bava Basra 9:) states, הגותן פרוטה, לעני מתברך בשש ברכות והמפייסו בדברים מתברך בי"א ברכות, "One who gives a prutah to the poor receives six brachos, and if he says kind words to appease him, he is blessed with eleven brachos." (Tosfos explains that if he does both, he gives tzedakah and says kind words, he will receive eighteen brachos.)

The Rambam (Matnas Aniym 10:4-5) writes, "Whoever gives tzedakah with a melancholy face, and he looks down to the ground, even if he gave him a thousand gold coins, he lost his reward. Rather, give money with a kind face and with joy and moan together with him over his tzar, as it states (Iyov 30:25) אם לא בכיתי לקשה יום עגמה נפשי לאביון, 'Whether I did not weep for one who had a difficult time, or whether my soul was [not] grieved for the needy.' Speak with him words of comfort

and chizuk, as it states (Iyov 29:13) ולב אלמנה ארנן, 'I would make the widow's heart sing for joy.' If a poor person asks from you, and you have nothing to give him, appease him with your words. It is forbidden to shout at the poor or to raise your voice at him because his heart is broken and humble. It states (Tehillim 51:19) לב נשבר ונדכה אלקים לא תבזה, 'A broken and crushed heart, Hashem will not despise.' And it states (Yeshayah 57:15) להחיות לרוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים, 'to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed.' Woe to the person who shames the poor. Woe is to him. Rather, be like his father, both with compassion and with words, as it states (Iyov 29:16) אב אנכי לאביונים, 'I was a father to the needy.'⁵

It states, (15:11) כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ על כן אנכי מצוך לאמר פתח תפתח את ירך לאחריך לעניך ולאביוןך, "For there will never cease to be needy within the land. Therefore, I command you, saying, you shall surely open your hand to your brother, the poor, and the needy in your land." Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zt'l says that the pasuk can be read as על כן אנכי מצוך לאמר, I command you to tell the poor, פתח תפתח the day will yet come when you will be the one who is opening up your hand to help the poor."⁶

4. It states (Mishlei 31:21) לא תירא לביתה משלג כי כל ביתה לבוש שנים, "She fears not for her household for snow, for all her household are dressed in crimson."

Some miforshim explain that שלג, snow, refers to the Gehinom of snow. Her family doesn't have to be afraid of Gehinom because she performs mitzvos that are שניים, double.

The Noam Elimelech (Devarim) writes, "The Poskim say that the Avos didn't keep the mitzvah of tzedakah with perfection because there were no Yidden around them to give tzedakah. [They could only give tzedakah to goyim.] When a person gives tzedakah, he can reach even higher levels [than the avos, because he can give to Yidden], and accomplish all salvations. Through tzedakah, he can arouse immense compassion Above, without needing to come onto the merit of the Avos..."

5. The Bas Ayin zt'l brings in the name of the Kedushas Levi zt'l that אה דל"ת stands for אח"ד, to be the brother of the poor. To feel that you are his brother, so you will do whatever you can to help him.

6. The Matteh Efraim zt'l was very wealthy and owned a bank. Once, a poor person came to the bank and asked for a large loan. The Matteh Efraim gave him a form to fill out and told him that he would have to find two co-signers, *areivim*, to guarantee the loan

The poor person couldn't find an *areiv* because people feared that he wouldn't be able to repay the loan. So, the poor man wrote on the line designated for the *areivim*, לי הכסף ולי הזהב נאום ה' צבקות, "I have silver and I

Another Kind of Tzedakah

The Chinuch (mitzvah 479) writes, "Now, my son, don't think tzedakah is only to give to the poor, people who don't have bread or clothing. The Torah wants us to be kind and help people in any way we can. Whoever helps his friend with money, or in any other way, such as with kind words, it is considered tzedakah, and his reward is great."

The Chinuch reveals a wonderful *chidush*: Tzedakah isn't just with money, and it isn't only for the poor. You can give tzedakah by sharing kind words, compliments, good counsel, and even a smile can be counted as tzedakah. Tzedakah means to help your fellow man in any way you can.

A hint to this lesson is that the pasuk that discusses tzedakah states *הדבר*, which can be translated as *דיבור*, speech. It states (15:10) *נתן לו... תתן לו... כי בגלל הדבר הזה... יברכה ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך, דיבור וכל משלח ידך*, Hashem your G-d will bless you in all your work and all your endeavors." The brachos that come from giving tzedakah aren't only when we give money. It is also when we share kind, helpful, friendly words

with our fellow man. Many people lack it, and to give it to them is like giving them tzedakah.

Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Deiah 253:4) says that when a wealthy man is traveling and doesn't have money, he has the halachah of a poor person and may receive support from the tzedakah. So, we see that it is possible for a wealthy person to be considered poor when he needs something and doesn't have a way to attain it. We can bring this further to other needs, such as a kind word. If someone wealthy lacks it, and we give it to him, it is a form of tzedakah.

The Shevet Mussar says he once spoke to a broken-hearted person for a long time to give him hope and chizuk. A few days later, the man told him that if it weren't for that conversation, he would have committed suicide. The conversation saved him. Therefore, the Shevet Mussar encourages everyone to be generous with their words and give chizuk to broken-hearted people. He calls it "tzedakah that doesn't cost money."

Reb Gad'l Eisner said, "I studied in depth the sugyah of 'man,' and I discovered that

have gold, says Hashem..." implying that Hashem is the *areiv* for this loan.

The Matteh Efraim had *rachmanus* on him and agreed to lend him the money.

Half a year later, the Matteh Efraim wasn't feeling well, so he asked his wife to run the bank that day. That night, the Matteh Efraim and his Rebbetzin were discussing what happened in the bank that day, and she told him that she lent a lot of money to a *poritz*. The Matteh Efraim asked, "How did you have money to lend? There wasn't any money left in the bank!"

She replied, "Someone came in the morning and repaid a debt."

He checked his records and remembered that the poor man's debt was due that day. The Matteh Efraim asked his wife, "Did the poor man pay up the debt himself, or did someone come in to pay the debt for him?"

She answered that someone had come and paid the debt on his behalf.

The Matteh Efraim understood that Hashem sent Eliyahu HaNavi to repay the loan. Hashem was the *areiv*, so Hashem sent Eliyahu HaNavi to pay it back. The Matteh Efraim thought, "Why did I not merit to see Eliyahu HaNavi?"

He understood it was because he initially asked the poor man to provide *areivim*. "I should have lent him the money immediately without obligating him to find *areivim*. I knew how hard it would be for him to find *areivim*" Since he caused him distress, he didn't merit seeing Eliyahu.

one kind word can turn a person around. Everything can be fixed."

A kind of tzedakah and chesed that we can do with words is to help people feel wanted and needed. There are many lonely people, and with some kind words, we can help them so much.

The Kuntress HaSefeikos writes that if a person would go up to heaven, he wouldn't enjoy it until he comes down and tells his friends and family about what he saw there because that is what man is all about. Therefore, one of the favors, tzedakah, and chesed that we can do for people is to hear them out and to listen to them when they want to tell us about their experiences. They might be lonely, with no one to speak to, which hurts them immensely. When we listen to them, it is a great chesed.

As we know, it is very painful when people speak lashon hara about you. No one wants to be the discussion of town. But there is something even more painful than that. And that is when no one speaks to or about you, and you feel ignored and alone. This is a very painful experience. Many people prefer to be talked about, even negatively, rather than be ignored as if they don't exist.

Chazal say מצורע חשוב כמת, a metzora is considered dead. This is because the metzora is banished from the camp and dwells alone. (Vayikra 13:46) בַּדָּד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבֵוֹ, "He shall dwell isolated. His dwelling shall be outside the camp." He lives alone, distant from people, and that loneliness is very painful.

There are many lonely people, and with a smile and a kind word, you can make their day and much more than that!

In Parashas Eikev it (10:19) states, וְאַהֲבַתְּם אֶת הַגֵּר, which discusses the mitzvah to love geirim, converts. The Chinuch (431) innovates that this mitzvah also means to help and

befriend anyone who feels like a stranger, such as someone in a new neighborhood. He writes, "We can derive from this precious mitzvah to have compassion on a person in a city that isn't his homeland, whose family doesn't live there. The Torah hints at the reason for this command because it states לִי גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. The Torah reminds us that we have once experienced the great distress of being alone, among strangers, in a foreign land. When we remember how we felt, we will also have compassion on this person."⁷

Another kind of chesed we can give people is honor. This is something that many people seek, desire, and lack.

It states that we should give the poor (15:8) דֵּי מַחְסְרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יֵחָסֵר לוֹ, "sufficient for his needs, which he is lacking." Rashi explains that the words אֲשֶׁר יֵחָסֵר לוֹ, "which he is lacking," indicate that we have to restore the poor person to his previous prestige, honor, and pleasure that he was accustomed to when he was financially better off. Rashi explains that if in the past he would ride on a horse and have a slave run in front of him, we must provide him with these things. We aren't obligated to make him wealthy, but we are obligated to restore him to his previous lifestyle."

The Gemara (Kesubos 67:) teaches, "People say about Hillel HaZaken that he gave a poor man a horse to ride on and a slave to run before him [because this poor man was accustomed to this lifestyle when he had money]. Once, Hillel couldn't find a slave to run before the poor man, so Hillel himself ran before him for three *mil*."

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz wonders if the great scholar, Hillel HaZaken, would run before this poor man. He concludes that it must be that it was a matter of pikuach nefesh. For a person to lack a level of honor

7. Elul is the month that young bachurim enter yeshiva. It is a mitzvah for the veteran students to welcome them, to make them feel wanted and at home.

and prestige that he was once accustomed to is like murder, and therefore Hillel HaZaken understood that he couldn't neglect this poor man's needs.

One day, Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l greeted a sanitation worker throwing garbage into the truck. The man was flattered that the rav acknowledged him, and he said, "I should really be the one riding on the truck and not the person who picks up the garbage bags. But, by nature, I don't pursue honor, and since it was important for my partner to take the more respected job, I let him take it."

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz said that from this conversation, he understood the foolishness of those who pursue honor.

So, if kavod is so foolish, why did Hashem create this nature in people? Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that we should know how important it is to people, so we grant them honor.

The Shevet Mussar (431) tells a story of a rasha who committed aveiros his entire life. When he was old and almost a *gosses* (on the verge of dying), the family said, "Why didn't you eat anything today?"

He replied, "If you give me a cooked egg, I will eat it."

Before he ate the egg, a poor person came to the door, asking for food. The ill man told his family, "Give the egg to him."

This was the first time (and only time) in his life that he gave tzedakah. Three days later, he died, and he came to his son in a dream and said, "My dear son, accustom yourself to give tzedakah, and you will merit Olam Haba. I gave tzedakah once in my lifetime, and the mitzvah tipped the scales in my favor, and I merited Olam Haba."

The Shevet Mussar explains how giving tzedakah once tipped the scale to merit, although this man had sinned for so many years. The Shevet Mussar explains that the poor man who came to his door was on the verge of dying, and if it weren't for the egg he gave him, the poor man would have died from hunger. This means that all the mitzvos this person will do in his lifetime and all the lives of his children and future descendants who will be born are all to his credit. This is why this deed was so significant; with it, he merited Olam HaBa.

For our discussion, let us be aware that the same can occur when you say a kind word or smile at someone. You don't know what you are accomplishing. Perhaps your smile or encouraging words saved someone's shalom bayis. Perhaps you saved someone's spirituality. All the good deeds that will come from your good deeds will be attributed to your merits.

Elul

The Zohar calls Rosh Hashanah-ה'יום. This parashah – parashas Re'eh begins with the words ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום, which can be translated as, "See that I am giving you days before Rosh Hashanah (לפניכם היום), so you can prepare yourselves on these days for the judgment of Rosh Hashanah. This alludes to the month of Elul when we prepare ourselves with teshuvah and tefillah to merit good judgment for the new year.⁸

When a person presses the brakes, the car doesn't stop instantly. The wheels turn slowly, and gradually the car stops. But if someone pulls the emergency hand brake, the vehicle will stop short immediately.

There are times when teshuvah is compared to someone pressing on the brakes of a car. This alludes to the gradual approach to change, where a person gradually

8. The Baal HaTurim points out that the final letters of (11:27) אשר תשמעו spell תורה, indicating that if you want to do teshuvah, begin by studying Torah.

improves his ways. This is the standard path for teshuvah. But there are times when one should make an immediate change. Rosh Chodesh Elul is such a time. Although change is generally done gradually, step-by-step, Elul is a time to make an abrupt change and improve one's ways. About this, it states (Yeshayah 55:7) *יעזב רשע דרכו ואיש און מוהשבתיו וישב אל ה'*, "The wicked shall give up his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and he shall return to Hashem."

A tightrope walker said that the most challenging part of his stunt wasn't crossing the rope. The hardest part was when he

reached the rope's end and had to turn around to walk the other way. Turning around is always the hardest part. The same is regarding teshuvah. One must change his path, which is the hardest thing for a person to do.⁹

Happiness

The Chasam Sofer zt'l says that when one does teshuvah, it is a grave aveirah for him to be sad. Now that it is Elul, a time for teshuvah, we should gird ourselves with a lot of simchah. We should be happy that we are returning to Hashem.

9. A hungry man came to a public kitchen, requesting a free meal. The man at the counter replied, "We are very organized here. You can't just come in and grab a meal. Go to the second floor, room 245, and tell them what type of meal you want."

He was hungry and exhausted and just wanted to be served a meal, but he had no choice but to follow the routine. So, he climbed the stairs and requested a meat meal. They replied, "This is a very organized chesed organization. Tell us what type of meat you want to eat. We have cooked chicken, fried chicken, stuffed chicken, schnitzel, various cuts of meats, and turkey. What do you prefer?"

He didn't care. He just wanted a meal, but since they were so particular about it, he told them what he wanted.

"Go to the third floor, room 342," they instructed him.

He dragged himself to room 342, assuming that a meal would be prepared for him there, but the secretary at room 342 said, "We don't serve meals here. This is the office where you order the side dishes. There are several options. You can order rice, potatoes, green beans..." He chose his menu, and they told him to go down to the first floor, room 111, where he would be served his meal.

When he reached room 111, he saw an exit sign saying, "Thank you for coming. Come again."

Fuming, he rushed to the man who sat at the front desk and said, "Why do you call this place a hachnasas orchim? You didn't serve anything."

"Forget about that for a moment," the secretary said, "and just think about how orderly we are. Each department does its part. Weren't you impressed by our efficiency?"

The nimshal is that the primary part of teshuvah is to change. There are various other aspects of teshuvah. There is tefilla, Selichos, studying mussar, hearing drashos, etc. All these steps are essential, but the entire purpose is lacking if it doesn't result in change.

If one does teshuvah out of love for Hashem, all his aveiros become mitzvos. Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor (Bernhard) zt'l was a renowned baal teshuvah and tzaddik. As he lay on his deathbed, the Tiferes Shlomo zt'l visited him and heard Reb Chaim Dovid sigh. The Tiferes Shlomo assumed he was distressed over his early years when he was distant from Torah. The Tiferes Shlomo told him that he shouldn't worry about those days, *ימים הראשונים יפלו*, the early days will fall away and become like nothing.

Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor replied, "Chas v'shalom! I am not mevater on one day." He didn't want to lose his past because he did teshuvah with love, thus turning his past faults into merits. As Chazal (Yoma 86:) say, "Teshuvah is great because sins committed intentionally become merits."

Take note of the many times the word שמחה is written in this week's parashah! (Hint, it is written seven times: 12:7, 12:12, 12:18, 14:26, 16:11, 16:14, 16:15.)

In a letter to his son, the Beis Aharon writes, "A person must work on simchah, on being happy, more than all other good middos."

Once, the Beis Aharon rebuked his son for not being happy. His son asked, "I have other faults, and you don't speak to me about them? Why do you rebuke me specifically about happiness?"

The Beis Aharon replied, "You have Yiras Shamayim. When you do something wrong, I know you will regret it, so I have no reason to rebuke you in those areas. But people think that being sad isn't so severe. Therefore, I have to train you to always be happy."

Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander zt'l teaches that the roshei teivos of שמחה spell שו"א, which translates as a lie. This tells us that when it comes to being happy, one may pretend he is happy, even when he isn't. Generally, we avoid acting. A person must be honest and truthful. However, when it comes to being happy, you may pretend because pretending leads to genuine joy.

שו"א is found in the roshei teivos. We can explain this because he will only need to pretend to be happy initially. Afterward, he will be genuinely happy. This is for two reasons: One is that a person's thoughts follow his actions. If he acts like he is happy, he will become happy.

Secondly, people enjoy happy people. So, if you are happy, even if it isn't true at the beginning, your attitude will draw you to many friends, which greatly aids happiness. So, it begins with שו"א, fake, but ends with genuine joy.

Happiness is Mesugal for Parnassah

The final letters of חת"ך spell חת"ך והיית אך שמחה, which represents parnassah, as we say in the tefillos of the yamim noraim, החותך חיים, לכל חי, that Hashem carves out life and parnassah for all living beings. Also, the final letters of חת"ך spell חת"ך את ידך, in reference to parnassah, as the holy sefarim tell us. This hints that if a person is happy (and even if it begins with an untrue joy), this will result in parnassah.

We can also prove that simchah results with parnassah from the pasuk (16:15), כי יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל תבואתך ובכל מעשה ידיך והיית אך שמחה, "Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your produce, and in all the work of your hands, and you will only be happy." If you will only be happy, Hashem will grant you success in all your endeavors.

The Targum Yonoson translates (16:15) ותהיוון ברכם חדון באצלחותא like this: "You will always be happy with your success." We see the connection between happiness and success.

It states (Devarim 33:18) שמחה זבלון בצאתך, "Rejoice Zevulun on your departure," and Rashi writes, הצלח בצאתך לסחורה, "Succeed when you go out to trade." Rashi is saying that the translation of שמחה is הצלחה, because, indeed, happiness will result in your success.

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l said, "It is possible to become wealthy from any work one does. One can even become wealthy by selling sawdust and splinters. But that is only if he isn't disgusted with this work. If he doesn't like his type of work, there won't be a blessing in it."

Maasar

We discussed happiness as a segulah for wealth. Another segulah for parnassah and financial success is to give maasar, 1/10th of one's earnings, to tzedakah. It states (14:22) עשר תעשר, and the Gemara (Taanis 9.) states,

עשר בשביל שתתעשר, "Give maasar so you will become wealthy," and the miforshim say that this also applies to tithing one's income.¹⁰

Reb Shimon Trop *zt'l* explains why maasar, more than any other mitzvah, is mesugal for wealth. When one gives maasar, he demonstrates his trustworthiness to fulfill his mission to distribute his wealth to others, and therefore, he can be trusted with more money. It can be compared to someone who was hired to manage money. When he shows he can be trusted, his boss will give him more money to manage.

Derech Moshe (written at the end of Sefer HaGan, day nineteen) writes that he spoke with experts, and they told him that for a funnel to function correctly, its opening must be at least 1/10th of the width of the utensil. If the space is smaller than that ratio, nothing will funnel through.

This is an indication of the importance of giving maasar. If you give a tenth, you become like a funnel, and more will be given

to you. But if you give less than a tenth, Heaven won't provide you with bounty.

The Mikor Baruch (written by Reb Boruch Paitusi, printed year 5550, נח ד"ה וכת הקודמנים) explains, "The early scholars say a nice mashal of two people, one was pouring wine through a funnel, and the other was receiving the wine. As long as the funnel is clear, the pourer continues to pour. But if a stone or something else clogs the funnel on the bottom, the receiver will shout, 'Stop pouring! Everything is landing on the ground.' The nimshal is, the one pouring is Hashem yisbarach, Who bestows His kindness to all, the funnel is the wealthy person, and the receiver is the poor person." As long as the wealthy person gives to others, Hashem will continue to give to him. But if he blocks the funnel, the bounty will end, r'l.

The Mikor Boruch offers another mashal, using a person and his shadow as an example. When the person's hand is open, the shadow's hand is also open. But when your hand is closed, the shadow's hand is also closed. The shadow represents Hashem,

10. It isn't proper to serve Hashem על מנת לקבל פרס, in order to receive reward. One's intentions should serve Hashem for Hashem's sake and not for his own gain. The Bnei Yissaschar (*Sivan* 5:14) asks, so why does the Torah tell us to give tzedakah to become wealthy?

He answers that the Gemara (*Eiruvin* 41:) says, דקדוקי עניות מעבירין את האדם על דעתו ועל דעת קונו, extreme poverty can cause a person to lose his mind and his *emunah*." So, to want *parnassah* in abundance can be a spiritual quest. It is to maintain his *emunah* in Hashem. One may therefore give tzedakah to become wealthy because it is needed for Hashem's service.

Keser Rosh (Hilchos Tzedakah, 123-124) writes in the name of the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* that if one gives a tenth of his earnings to tzedakah, he is guaranteed that his wealth will be protected. If he gives a fifth of his earnings to tzedakah, he is guaranteed to become wealthy.

Once, Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* wasn't sure whether he was obligated to give maasar, so he decided to be lenient and not give maasar. Immediately after making this decision, his bucket fell into a well. He took an iron utensil with hooks and tried to pull up the bucket. But this contraption also fell into the pit. Reb Chaim calculated that the bucket and the iron utensil were worth exactly 1/10th of his earnings, which he had decided to be lenient and not give to tzedakah. He realized that he was being punished for not tithing his earnings. He immediately gave maasar, and the utensil and bucket bloated to the top of the well.

Reb Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe* vol.7) writes, "I paskened that every talmid chacham is obligated to study with others. The proof is from Reb Preida, who taught his student a sugyah 400 times, although, at this time, he could have studied himself. He was rewarded for this and lived until he was four hundred years old. I think that the amount one should devote to teaching others is maasar, a tenth of the time he studies himself. Perhaps he can give up to a fifth of the study time to study with others."

as it states (Tehillim 121:5) ה' צלך, "Hashem is your shadow." This indicates that when your hand is open to give to the poor, Hashem's hand is open to give you. And when you close your hand and don't help the poor, Hashem's hand too.

Generosity

Yet another *segulah* for *parnassah* is to be generous with one's money.

This week's *parashah* discusses the *mitzvah* of providing loans, as it states (15:8) והעבט תעביטנו די מחסרו אשר יחסר לו, "You shall lend him sufficient for his needs, which he is lacking."

The *Chinuch* (480) writes, "The purpose of this *mitzvah* is to establish the attribute of generosity in our hearts and to distance us as far as possible from stinginess. Anyone familiar with the Torah's paths and comprehends its beautiful ways knows with certainty that when he is generous with his money, he will gain more. And whoever refrains will lose. This is because Hashem acts with people according to their deeds. Being stingy with money erects an iron wall that separates the person from Hashem's *brachos*. Generosity is, in itself, a blessing; therefore, those who act with kindness receive blessings."

The *Avodas Yisrael* teaches that when Hashem wants to give kindness to someone, and the person doesn't deserve it, Hashem will arrange that this person should perform kindness to others. This makes him a worthy candidate to receive Hashem's blessings. This is implied in the words (Shemos 33:19) והחנותי אשר אחון, "I will favor whom I wish to favor." This can be translated as והחנותי, I will grant him the opportunity to have compassion

on others so that Hashem can have mercy on him.

דמים means blood, and it also means money. *Sefer HaChaim* (*Parnassah v'Kalkalah* written by the Maharal's brother) explains that one gives blood to receive blood. (He is referring to *הקזת דם*, blood-letting, which is a form of *refuah*. He gives his blood so he will remain alive and have blood.) *Sefer HaChaim* says that the same is true with money. One gives money so that he can have money. When he is generous with his money, Hashem will give him more.¹¹

It states (Vayikra 19:9) לא תכלה פאת שדך. This can be translated as, "Don't cause that your field should become a wasteland and destroyed." *Sefer HaChaim* explains that if you don't give part of your crops to the poor (*לקט שכחה ופאה*), he is destroying his field. He thinks he is protecting his produce by keeping it to himself, but he is destroying everything he has because only by being generous with others will his wealth remain with him.¹²

Sefer HaChaim adds, "Just as you should teach your children the path of *emunah*, so should you also teach them the path of *tzedakah*. As Hashem said to Avraham (Breishis 18:19) למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו, "For I love him because he commands his sons and his household after him, that they should keep the way of Hashem to perform *tzedakah*..."

Raising Tzedakah

Chazal (*Bava Basra* 9) teach us, גדול המעשה יותר, מן העושה, "Causing others to give *tzedakah* is a greater *mitzvah* than giving *tzedakah* yourself." This means, in addition to giving *tzedakah*, there is a particular benefit in

11. *Sefer HaChaim* also explains that blood is the root of life, and money also represents life, as *Chazal* say, שמועמידו על רגליו, money has him stand up on his feet.

12. The *Sefer HaChaim* adds that this is implied in *Chazal's* expression (*Kidushin* 47.) מלוה להוצאה נתנה, which can be translated that all your money is a loan from Hashem, for you to distribute to others. It isn't your money. Hashem gave it to you as an *apitropus*, money manager, to distribute to others.

going around and asking people to give tzedakah to those in need.

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zy'a* says, "Going around the four corners of the city to collect money for the poor atones for severe sins that deserve the four deaths issued by *beis din*."

Reb Aharon of Belz *zy'a* said, "Going from door to door collecting money for the poor frees a person from *kares*." The shame one endures by performing this mitzvah atones and purifies.

The Aruch HaShulchan (247:5) writes, "I received a *kabalah* that when one collects

money for others, this protects his future generations that they will never need to collect money for themselves."

Reb Getzel Berger *z'l* from London (*niftar* 1977/תשל"ח) was a wealthy Satmar chasid who gave large sums of money to *tzedakah*. The Satmar Rebbe *zy'a* once asked him that he should encourage other rich people to donate to *tzedakah* in addition to giving *tzedakah*.

Reb Getzel replied that he preferred to give more money for *tzedakah* than to solicit others, but the Rebbe insisted that he also ask other wealthy people for donations.¹³

13. There is a halachah that one must stand up for someone performing a mitzvah. Therefore, the Pischei Teshuvah (*Yorah Dei'ah* 256:1) writes, "One must stand up for the *gabai tzedakah* while he collects money for the needy."

Perhaps this is one of the reasons people stand during *ויברך דוד*. During this part of the tefillah, the *gabai* often goes around the *beis medresh* collecting money. Therefore we should stand for him as he is performing a mitzvah.