

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Behar - Bechukosai



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Behar - Bechukosai

Rely Only on Hashem

In this week's parashah, the Torah (25:25) tells us that if a person sells his property due to poverty, a relative can buy back the property for him, and the owner of the field must allow the relative to do so. Then the Torah says, (25:26) וְאִישׁ כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה לוֹ גֹאֵל, "If a man will have no redeemer, but his means suffice, and he acquires enough for its redemption..." He didn't have a relative who could buy the field back for him, but he managed to raise the money, and he may buy his field back.

The Chasam Sofer explains that the fact that he doesn't have any relatives to support him is what helps him find a way to get his money to buy back the field. He explains that when a person relies on someone for assistance, his trust is in that person and in Hashem.

When he sees that no one is helping him, he begins to only trust in Hashem, and that is when he has his redemption and salvation. This is the meaning of the pasuk (quoted above), וְאִישׁ כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה לוֹ גֹאֵל, "If a man will have no redeemer", he realizes that no one can save him from his tzaros, then, וְהִשְׁיגָה יָדוֹ, "he acquires enough for its redemption..." Because when he sees no one can help him, he trusts in Hashem, and that is when he will have his salvation. This applies to all matters (and not only to have money to buy back his field). One's salvation comes when he trusts in Hashem.

Similarly, the Netziv on this pasuk writes, "The pasuk is teaching us mussar. If a person doesn't have a redeemer, this will result in וְהִשְׁיגָה יָדוֹ, that he will attain his needs. This is because when a person has a גֹּאֵל,

someone to help him, he abandons his bitachon in Hashem. However, if he doesn't have anyone to rely on, he relies on Hashem. Hashem knows those who rely on Him, and then Hashem will grant him, וּמָצָא, כְּדִי גְאֻלָּתוֹ, the redemption that he needs."

The Divrei Yisrael (Modzhitz) zt'l teaches: This is a great rule for attaining parnassah: When a person recognizes that his parnassah isn't dependent upon his deeds or his talents, and that his parnassah is from Heaven, decreed from Above, then the gates of parnassah will open wide for him, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu will bestow onto him parnassah with an open, holy hand. However, when a person thinks that he earns his parnassah by the strength of his hand and from his wisdom, this will distance his parnassah from him. Now we understand the

אִם בְּחֻקְתִּי תִלְכוּ תִלְכוּ... (26:3-4) וְנָתַתִּי גֶשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַתְנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִי, "If you will follow My decrees... then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the trees of the field will give its fruit..." בְּחֻקְתִּי means "My decrees" and it can also be translated as parnassah, because the Gemara (Beitzah 16a) tells us that חֶק represents parnassah. So, the pasuk is saying that if a person believes that his parnassah is Hashem's decree, then וְנָתַתִּי גֶשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַתְנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִי, "I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the trees of the field will give its fruit..." This means that due to his belief that בְּחֻקְתִּי, his parnassah is from Hashem's decree, he will have parnassah in abundance. But if he thinks that parnassah comes from the work of his hand, this limits the extent of his parnassah.¹

1. The Nesivos Shalom adds that this explains the custom that a

The Torah tells us that when people will keep the Torah, they will be rewarded with successful crops and a lot of cattle. As it states (26:3-4) **אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ תִלְכוּ... וְנָתַתִּי גֶשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַתִּי הָאֶרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיִּי**, "If you will follow My decrees... then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit..." and in parashas Eikev it states (Devarim 7:12-13) **וְהָיָה עֲקֵב תִּשְׁמָעוֹן אֵת הַמְּצַפְּטִים הָאֵלֶּה וְשִׁמְרָתָם וַעֲשִׂיתָם אֹתָם... וְנָהֲבֶךָ וּבִרְבֶּכָה וְהִרְבֶּכָה וּבִרְבֶּכָה פְּרִי בָטֶנְךָ וּפְרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ דָּגָנְךָ וְתִירְשֶׁךָ וְיִצְהָרְךָ שֹׁגֵר אֲלֶפֶיךָ וַעֲשִׂיתָרָת זֶאֱמָנָה**, "This shall be the reward when you hearken to these mitzvos, and you observe and perform them... Hashem will love you, bless you and multiply you, and

He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain, your wine, and your oil, the offspring of your cattle and the clocks of your sheep."

We can ask, if Hashem wants to give wealth, why doesn't He give gold and silver? Why is the reward specifically crops and cattle? (Becoming wealthy with a lot of gold and silver doesn't necessarily need to be a miracle beyond the rules of nature. Hashem can have them find goldmines on their properties, and the like, and they will become wealthy according to the rules of nature.)

Reb Shimshon Pinkus (Tiferes Shimshon, Bechukosai, p.320) answers that Hashem wanted to give a brachah that will require them to turn their eyes to Hashem

chasan comes to the chuppah with nothing in his pockets. This is to tell the chasan on the day he begins on his new path in life: "Take note that you don't have anything in your pockets. You have nothing, and Hashem, alone, will help you. Don't think that you have talent, wisdom, or other assets that will help you succeed in life. A person is weak and feeble on his own. He is entirely dependent on Hashem's compassion. This realization is the key to attaining success in life.

continually. When people have a lot of money, they tend to forget Hashem because gold and silver never rot. Even in times of hunger, the wealthy can take their money and move to another land. But when one's wealth is dependent on his cattle and on his crops, his eyes are constantly turned to Hashem. He will daven that the cattle don't catch an epidemic and die, and he prays that the rain should fall at the right times so that the crops will grow well. After the crops grow, he turns his eyes to Hashem, to pray that people should buy from him. He will always be close to Hashem, and that is the greatest gift. As it states (Tehillim 73:28) וְאֵיךְ

קִרְבָּת אֱלֹקִים לִי טוֹב, "But as for me, Hashem's nearness is my good."

L'havdil, in the world, when one gives a gift to someone he loves, he wants the gift to draw them closer together. He obviously doesn't want the gift to distance them. The same is when Hashem gives us His presents. He wants the bounty to draw us closer to Him. Therefore, Hashem rewards us with gifts of crops and cattle, matters that require us to rely on Hashem constantly and to turn to Him for help. This is the most ideal gift, better than money, which can cause people to forget Hashem.²

2. The Beis Aharon zt'l said, "We like it very much when a young couple has a baby in the first year after their *chasunah*. This is because when newlyweds run out of something in their home, they need some bread or something else, they run to their in-laws' house and get whatever they need. They forget to place their trust in Hashem. But after a child is born, they don't run as quickly to their parents' home anymore. For example, when it is very cold outside or very hot, they won't run out. They prefer to stay home with their baby. Now, where will they receive their needs? They will turn their eyes to heaven, to ask their Father in heaven to

Tefillah

When a person realizes that only Hashem can help him, he will turn to Hashem for all his needs.

It states (Tehillim 91:15) יְקַרְאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ, "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him." The Birkas Avraham (Slonim) zt'l said "Dovid HaMelech is telling us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu announces, יְקַרְאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ, 'Daven to Me, and I will answer you.' So, why does it occur that people daven, and yet, they don't receive their wishes? It is because they didn't call out to Hashem!"

The explanation is that even if they davened to Hashem, they didn't do so with the awareness that only Hashem can help them. Their tefillos weren't as they should be. They davened by rote, and, primarily, they trusted in their hishtadlus. But if they daven correctly,

knowing that only Hashem can help them, and that their tefillos are their main hishtadlus, their tefillos will be answered.

Chazal (Brachos 28b) tell us ר' נחוניא בן הקנה היה מתפלל בכניסתו לבית המדרש וביציאתו תפלה קצרה אמרו לו מזה מקום לתפלה זו אמר להם בכניסתי אני מתפלל שלא יארע דבר תקלה על ידי וביציאתי אני נותן הודאה על חלקי Reb Nechunya ben HaKanhah would daven a short tefillah when he came into the beis medresh and when he left. People asked him, 'What is this tefillah about?' He told them, 'When I come to the beis medresh, I daven that I shouldn't cause something bad to happen, and when I leave, I praise Hashem for my portion.'

The Ra'v Bartunara explains, "When I come into the beis medresh, I daven that I shouldn't cause something bad to happen: As the Breysa explains, 'I shouldn't make a mistake in

provide them with their needs. There is nothing better for a person than to place his trust in Hashem."

halachah, which will result in my friends laughing at me. That is the 'bad' that can result from me, because I will be causing them to be punished.'

"When I leave the beis medresh, I praise Hashem for my portion: I thank Hashem for the good portion He gave me, that I study in the beis medresh."

The Meiri writes, "This teaches us that a person should create new tefillos for every matter that he understands that he needs

Hashem's help. Then his mind will always be attached to Hashem's service. Chazal tell us that this *chacham* (Reb Nechunya ben HaKaneh) would daven when he entered the beis medresh that he shouldn't cause any harm due to his teachings. When he left, he praised Hashem for granting him a portion together with the talmidei chachamim. For every matter, he realized that he needed Hashem's help. He would daven for it, and his prayers were answered."³

3. When a new problem or gezeirah arose, the Chazon Ish zt'l would often say, "Nu, Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants that we should daven for this." (Maasei Ish vol.1, 152, quoted by the gaon, Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l).

I heard the following from the *baal hamaaseh*: Some weeks before Pesach, his son told him that he wanted a silver becher for the seder that year. The father replied, "You go to *yeshiva ben hazmanim*, and every day there is a *gorel* (raffle). One day, the *gorel* will be for a silver *becher*. Daven that you should win the *gorel*."

The father then told his son a story that he read in one of these pamphlets (Be'er Haparasha/Torah Wellsprings): The rosh kollel Reb Y. A. Goldhirsh wanted to encourage his kollel students to come on time to learning during Chanukah, so he told them that on Chanukah, for those who arrive before 9:30 a.m., there will be a *gorel* for one hundred dollars, each day. On the first three days of

Chazal (Brachos 21a) states, daven all day long." The Ben
ולואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום כולו, Ish Chai (Benayahu, Brachos 6b)
 "Halavai a person would asks how it is possible to

Chanukah, the same person won the *gorel*! His name is Reb Meir. People asked Reb Meir, "Why is it that you win the *gorel* each time?" They suspected that perhaps the *gorel* was rigged, and that something was unfair with the *gorel*.

He replied, "Did you daven to win the *gorel*? I did!"

He davened, and Hashem answered his tefillos. Therefore, the father told his son, "Daven that you win the silver becher, and with Hashem's help, your tefillos will be answered.

The son did so. Instead of asking his father for the becher, he now directed his requests to his Father in heaven.

The son won the *gorel* and had a silver becher at the seder.

We learn from this story how a person should daven to Hashem. He should daven like a child asking something from his father.

Also, we can learn from this story the power of *sipurei tzaddikim*, telling stories of tzaddikim, and of good Yidden who serve Hashem. Every parent wants their children to daven for all their needs, but how can parents train their children to do so? One way is by telling them stories of tzaddikim who davened, and Hashem answered their tefillos.

The stories don't have to be about tzaddikim of the past. The "tzaddikim" can be regular people, of our times, people like ourselves, who are "tzaddikim" in their own simple way, as they seek to do Hashem's will and to believe in Him. Like in the story mentioned above, a righteous Reb Meir davened to win the raffle and succeeded three days in a row.

In fact, stories about regular people are often more influential on children because it is easier for them to relate to the stories. The lessons and the messages go straight into their hearts.

daven all day long? When will he study Torah? When will he work for parnassah?

The Ben Ish Chai answers that the Gemara means that he should daven *in his heart*. He won't be able to daven with words all day long, but he can daven in his thoughts, in his heart. His heart will always be saying silent tefillos to Hashem.⁴

The following are examples from the Ben Ish Chai, showing how a person can daven silent prayers constantly from his heart: A goldsmith who has gold before him also has all the

tools he needs to turn the gold into jewelry or into some other item. He shouldn't think, "According to the rules of nature, I will certainly complete this work. It can be considered done already, because what will prevent me from making it?" One shouldn't say this because everyone is entirely dependent on Hashem. Instead, he should think true thoughts: that if Hashem doesn't give him strength and ability, he won't succeed in his work. Therefore, at every moment, even as he is working, his heart should be saying silent prayers to Hashem. He

4. The Ben Ish Chai writes, "With Hashem's help, I found a *remez* that a person should constantly pray in his mind." He learns this from two words: אדם לב, man heart. These two words hint that a person should always pray in his heart. He explains that the letters that spell אדם when they are spelled out in full, like this: אֶלֶף דָּל"ת, מ"ם, the *miluy* (all the added letters, without their primary letters of אדם) spell מתפלל. This hints that an אדם, a person, should pray. How often should he pray? The answer is found in the word לב. When the letters ל"ב are spelled out fully, like this: לֶמֶד בֵּי"ת, the *miluy* (all the letters without the primary letters of לב) spells תמיד, constant. These words (אדם, מתפלל, לב, תמיד) teach us that a person should constantly daven *with his heart*! A person can't daven with words all day long, but he can always engage in silent tefillos, in his heart.

should be thinking, "Please, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, help me make this gold item that I am working on. I won't succeed without Your help, and therefore, please help me so that it turns out in the best way."

Another example is a store owner who owns a very large store, as large as a city block, in a good location. Thousands of people pass the store daily, and the items in the store are things that people need to buy. He shouldn't think, "I will certainly earn a large profit. According to the rules of nature, I will certainly succeed." Rather, he should think that he won't succeed without Hashem. With this awareness, his heart will continually be praying silent tefillos to Hashem, pleading with Hashem to send people into the store, to buy the merchandise. The Ben Ish Chai writes, "Every moment, he should pray to Hakadosh Baruch Hu in his heart that He give him strength, *chen*

and *hatzlachah*, so he will be able to sell and earn a profit."

Ben Ish Chai writes, "Another example is a person who is walking to the marketplace or to his business. He shouldn't say, 'Behold, my feet are walking without pain, my eyes can see where I must go, and the way is straight and safe. According to nature, I will certainly get to the place where I must go, and there won't be any disturbances or delays. Even more, even if he is seated at a table, and a dish with prepared foods is brought before him, and he fills a spoon with the food, and brings it to his mouth, he should daven with every swallow that Hashem give him strength to swallow, and it should go peacefully down to his stomach. This is what a person should do with all matters, in the house and outdoors. The same is for *ruchniyus*. The same is when he sleeps or when he is awake. He sees that everything is prepared

before him and nothing is lacking; nevertheless, he should daven to Hakadosh Baruch Hu in his thoughts for what he needs, and for what he plans to do... About this it states (Devarim 8:18) וַיִּזְכֹּרְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנָּה לָךְ כָּח לַעֲשׂוֹת הָיִל, 'You shall remember Hashem, your G-d: that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.' We must remember in our hearts that strength is from Hashem, parnassah is from Hashem, and we can't do anything alone, without His help.

"About this, Chazal say, 'Halevay a person should pray the entire day.' This doesn't mean to pray with words, but rather to pray with one's thoughts. This means to hope to Hashem that He will give strength at every moment, to be able to do what he wants to do. This applies to spiritual and

worldly deeds... This is the tefillah Chazal referred to when they said 'Halevay a person should pray the entire day.'"

The Chofetz Chaim (Likutei Amarim 10) writes, "A person shouldn't suffice with the three times we daven Shemonah Esrei, each day. Rather, several times, each day, a person in his home should pour out his heart before Hashem from the depths of his heart. This is because the three daily tefillos are fluent on his lips, and he doesn't pay too much attention to what he is saying... But when a person creates his personal tefillah for his personal needs, he will pour out his heart like water before Hashem, and the *tefillah* will be said with deep *kavanah* and with a broken heart, and such a tefillah will certainly be answered."⁵

5. It is recommended that a person should make a *kabbalah tovah*, that at least once, every day, for a few minutes, he should pour out his heart before Hashem, to daven for all his needs. This will

The Mishnah (Brachos 5:1) states, אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך, כבוד ראש, one doesn't daven without a feeling of seriousness, kavanah and fear of Hashem. This means that one should prepare himself for Shemonah Esrei so that he will daven correctly. The Bnei Yissaschar (Magid Taalumah, Brachos 30b) teaches, "The preparation is needed solely for Shemonah Esrei, but the tefillos that a person asks spontaneously for his needs don't need preparation. On the contrary, about these tefillos it states (Devarim 4:7) בְּה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בָּבֶל קָרָאנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, '...As is Hashem, our G-d, *whenever* we call to Him'... On the contrary, this expresses the Yid's emunah in Hashem, when he davens immediately for everything that happens to him. This expresses *emunah* that nothing happens by chance, everything is with *hashgachah pratis*, and that tefillah helps to turn

around and to annul the *gezeirah* to good and for salvations."

Becoming a Mishkan for the Shechinah

Parashas Bechukosai tells the brachos that come from keeping the Torah. Among them is (26:11) וְנִתַּתִּי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, "I will place My Sanctuary among you..." Rashi explains that this means the Beis HaMikdash will be in our midst.

The Or HaChaim translates וְנִתַּתִּי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם to mean that the Shechinah will reside in the heart of every Yid. The Or Hachaim quotes the pasuk (Tehillim 78:60), אֹהֶל שָׁכַן בְּאָדָם, "The tent that He dwelt within man." This means it will be like there is a Beis HaMikdash within every Yid. Or HaChaim adds that this is the meaning of the words (26:12) וְהִתְחַלַּקְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, "I will

lead him to feel very close to Hashem, and in addition, his requests will be fulfilled.

walk among you." The Or HaChaim explains that this means Hashem will walk with us because of His love for us. He writes that Hashem says, "I have pleasure when My Shechinah is with them... It is a טיול הערב, a pleasure walk."

י"ה רבון עלם, In the song of
למקדשך תוב ולקדש קודשין, we say
"Return to Your Mikdash, and to the Kodesh Kadoshim." According to the simple meaning, we are requesting that Hashem return to the Beis HaMikdash and to the Kodesh Kadoshim. However, we can also say that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is requesting from every Yid that *he* should return to his kedushah. Hashem says, למקדשך תוב, "Return to your kedushah. There was a time when your neshamah was pure, and you were like a Beis HaMikdash for the Shechinah. Go back to those days."

The custom of Rebbe Yiddele of Dzikov zt'l was to sing מזמור לדוד (Tehillim 23) three times during shalo

seudos (as this is the custom of many tzaddikim). Between each time, he would sing another song. Once, he sang the song, ועינינו תראנה מלכותך, "May our eyes see Your Kingship", and he became very emotional. People thought he was praying to merit seeing when Hashem reveals His Kingship to the entire world with the coming of Moshiach, but he said that he had another intention. In his mind, he was translating the words ועינינו תראנה מלכותך as follows: "May our eyes see and know that Hashem is King." This was a prayer for kedushah of the eyes. When a person knows that Hashem is the king over his eyes, he will use his eyes solely as Hashem permits him. This is the meaning of ועינינו תראנה מלכותך, our eyes should know that Hashem is their King, and they must obey what Hashem says.

We can add that both explanations of ועינינו תראנה מלכותך go together. According to Rebbe Yiddele Dzikover's explanation, that our eyes

should recognize that Hashem is their king, when that will be known, and the eyes are guarded, then we will merit the second explanation of וְעֵינֵינוּ תִּרְאֶנָּה מְלִכֹתֶיךָ. For we will see the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

for the eyes to look wherever they want, and it is hard for a person to control them. But he must know that he will gain much more pleasure, and many other benefits, when he guards his eyes, and when he is cautious with other areas of kedushah.

Kedushah causes people to lose some pleasure in this world. For example, it is fun

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil⁶ would say that when a

6. This week (on the sefirah of יסוד שביסוד) is the yahrtzeit of Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller. Before Rebbe Shlomke was niftar, he suffered immense yesurim. He held onto the sides of the bed while his body trembled from pain. Doctor Cook (a renowned doctor in Yerushalayim) told him that with a procedure, he could remove the liquids from his body and his pain would subside. When Rebbe Shlomke heard where the procedure would be done, he replied, "Not on this body."

The doctor said, "I will wear gloves," but Rebbe Shlomke refused, and this is how he was niftar.

The Beis Yisrael said that according to halachah, the procedure could have been done because it was a matter of pikuach nefesh. However, Reb Shlomke was moser nefesh for kedushah, and it is permitted to do so, as the Gemara (Nidah 13:) says, "Rather the stomach should burst than to go to Gehinom."

The Beis Yisrael zt'l said, "Rebbe Shlomke was niftar due to his yiras Shamayim, and therefore, his kever is mesugal for yiras Shamayim." Indeed, the Beis Yisrael would go to Rebbe Shlomke's kever. He added that it is a mitzvah to speak about Reb Shlomke's yiras Shamayim.

person makes himself holy, and he loses pleasure in this world, he is paid back immensely because instead of physical pleasure, he will now receive the pleasure of *ruchniyus*, which is a far greater pleasure. He will experience the joys and pleasures of Gan Eden in

this world. Furthermore, the *tzaar* he has due to his *kedushah* will free him from needing to suffer other forms of *tzaar*. For example, when a person has *tzaar* from his toil in Torah, this will save him from needing to suffer other forms of distress.⁷

The Mahartiz Dushinsky said the kedushas hayesod of Reb Shlomke was similar to that of the Tana'im and Amoraim.

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 24:9) elaborates on the pasuk (Vayikra 19:2) קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ, that we should be holy. The Midrash asks, יכול כמוי, perhaps a person should be as holy as Hashem? The Midrash answers that it states אֲנִי ה' אֵלֶיכֶם, "for holy am I, Hashem your G-d." This means that Hashem's kedushah is above ours. The question that people ask is, why was this notion even considered? Isn't it obviously impossible for a mortal to ever attain the kedushah of Hashem? Why did the Midrash even consider it? Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l said that after a person knew Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller, and witnessed the great levels of kedushah a human being can achieve, we understood why the Midrash raised the question that perhaps a person could attain the kedushah of Hashem.

7. Rebbe Shlomke's granddaughter (the daughter of Rebbe Shlomke's son, Rebbe Mordechai) showed her grandfather that her shoes were ripped and that she needed new shoes. She was hoping her grandfather would give her money to buy new shoes, but Rebbe Shlomke replied, "It is very good that your shoes are ripped. Continue using them. This pain will save you from the pain of childbirth." His granddaughter was pregnant at the time. Not long afterward, when his granddaughter gave birth, she observed that she had never had such an easy birth.

It states (Devarim 23:18) לא תהיה קדשה מבנות ישראל. In this pasuk, the word קדשה refers to aveiros - the aveiros of *arayos*. We wonder why the Torah calls this aveirah קדשה. Rebbe Shlomke explained that this is to hint to us that when one is careful not to perform *aveiros* - and especially when one is cautious with aveiros related to *arayos* (as the pasuk is discussing there), he will merit experiencing the greatest pleasures of קדושה.

אונאת דברים - Harming Other with Words

It states (25:17) וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עֲמִיתוֹ וְיִרְאתָ מְאֹלָקִיד, "Each of you shall not aggrieve your fellow and you shall fear your G-d..." This pasuk is warning us against אונאת דברים, harming others with words.

Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 338) writes, "It is proper for people to be careful that their words do not insult others, even indirectly. The

Someone came to Rebbe Shlomke and said that he had lost a lot of money, and he wanted a brachah to find the money. Rebbe Shlomke told him, "I say it is better that you don't find the money, and instead, you should have a child." This person didn't have children. It was several years after his chasunah. That year, he had a child.

I heard from my father, אדמו"ר זי"ע, who heard from his father, הרה"ק, that once, someone with special yichus was at the home of Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller, and Rebbe Shlomke noticed that he was seeking honor, due to his yichus. Rebbe Shlomke told him, "When your neshamah came down to this world, it came down with a 'limit' of how much pleasure it would enjoy. The pleasure is divided among the matters a person enjoys, such as honor, parnassah, health for him and for his entire family, nachas, etc. But if a person seeks too much honor, he will lack other important pleasures of this world. Who would be a fool to enjoy honor when he knows that this will be detracting from the health of his family or nachas from his children, etc."

Torah is very stringent with this prohibition. For many people, painful words hurt more than financial harm. One must also be cautious not to harm children with words⁸ (except when it is necessary for chinuch purposes). This applies

to one's own children, as well, and to all people in his household. Those who are soft towards children and do not cause them sorrow will merit life, blessings, and honor."⁹

8. Once, a child was noisily running about the Chazon Ish's room, disturbing everyone. One of the people present told the child, "If you don't stop, I will tell your *rebbe* in cheder." The Chazon Ish admonished this man, saying that one mustn't talk like that to a child. "A child has *tzaar* when he hears such words, and it is a transgression of *לא תנו איש את עמיתו*, the prohibition of saying harsh, unkind words to one's fellow man."

9. In Yerushalayim, there lived a tall, overweight, ignorant man called Yaakov. He wasn't welcome anywhere. He wasn't even permitted to use the local *mikvehs* due to the foul odor that emanated from him. But he was welcome at Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil's home. Rebbe Shlomke said, "If the people of Yerushalayim would permit Reb Yaakov to use the *mikveh*, the Yidden in Europe wouldn't suffer so much [in the Holocaust]."

Rebbe Shlomke's home was open to all. People said that the only thing that demonstrated that he was the *baal habayis* was that when people entered, he would ask them whether they wanted bread with jam.

Once, a person came to Rebbe Shlomke's home, and Rebbe Shlomke offered him bread and jam. The deranged man retorted, "You can eat bread and jam! I want pita with eggs."

Rebbe Shlomke went to the grocery to buy pita and eggs. (This was perhaps the only time Rebbe Shlomke went to the store.) He fried the eggs for his guest, and when the man finished his meal, he said, "And what about the jam?"

The Yerei'im teaches, "Just as there is *onaas devarim* (the aveirah of harming others with words), there is also *onaah* with facial expressions." People understand body language, and they perceive from your facial expressions whether they are respected or not, and therefore, one must be cautious.¹⁰

Rebbe Shlomke brought out the jam and asked him how much he wanted.

"The entire jar," the man replied, and Rebbe Shlomke gave it to him.

There was a *bachur* from Chevron who slept in Rebbe Shlomke's home. He asked the Rebbe to wake him up at six in the morning.

"I can't do that," the Rebbe said.

The *bachur* woke up at six o'clock and saw that the Rebbe was already sitting at his table, learning Torah.

The following night, the *bachur* asked Rebbe Shlomke once again to awaken him at six in the morning.

"I can't do that," Rebbe Shlomke replied again.

The *bachur* again awoke at six and saw that Rebbe Shlomke was already awake.

The *bachur* asked Rebbe Shlomke why he couldn't wake him, since he sees that the Rebbe is awake at that time. Rebbe Shlomke handed him some money and said, "Buy yourself an alarm clock if you wish, but I won't wake you. Everyone feels a bit of discomfort upon awakening in the morning. Even those who want to wake up early feel uneasy the moment they wake up, and I don't want to cause another Yid distress, even for a short moment."

10. A student once saw Reb Chaim Friedlander zt'l (mashgiach of Ponovizh) looking in the mirror, practicing his smile. The student was shocked, wondering what this was all about. Reb Chaim told

him that he is practicing his smile to make sure that he doesn't show a sad or bitter face when he meets people. At this time, Reb Chaim had cancer in his mouth, and it was hard for him to smile. He worried that people would think his sad face was because he was upset with them, and this would be the aveirah of *anoas devarim*, which includes facial expressions. Therefore, he was practicing his smile.

There was a yeshiva in chutz l'aretz that didn't have its own study hall, so the talmidim would learn in the local beis medresh, which belonged to the people of the city. Everyone in the city agreed to this arrangement. They didn't mind that there was a yeshiva in their beis medresh. On the contrary, they considered it a *zechus*. But there was one person who opposed this arrangement. The gabbai of the beis medresh didn't want the yeshiva bachurim to be there, and he always caused the bachurim trouble. Finally, the gabbai banished the bachurim from the beis medresh. Having no place to learn, they left the city, seeking another place to study.

From time to time, Reb Yechezkel Levinstein zt'l (mashgiach of Ponovizh) would inquire about this gabbai. He wanted to hear what would happen to him and what punishment he would receive. He was informed that this gabbai was niftar suddenly, in the middle of Shemonah Esrei. Generally, when such a thing occurs, the kohanim quickly leave the beis medresh so that they won't become tamei, but this time, the death occurred during Bikras Kohanim. So, instead, people picked up the *niftar* and cast him outside the *beis medresh*.

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein was glad when he heard the end of the story, and how he was punished, *מדה כנגד מידה*, measure-per-measure. He cast the bachurim out of the beis medresh, and when he was niftar, he was also cast out of the beis medresh.

The following story that happened just last year, I heard it from the father: His daughter was a very talented girl, friendly, scholastic, but suddenly, when she entered fifth grade, everything changed. She began doing poorly at school and even forgot how to read properly. She also became an expert in angering her friends. It was never like that before. The parents brought her to psychologists, thinking that perhaps she had an emotional

problem, but the therapists didn't find any problem. The child seemed totally well, emotionally and physically. The parents poured out a lot of money, seeking a solution, and they shed many tears, but they hit a brick wall.

One day, after the parents cried extra hard and prayed with all their hearts for salvation, they received a letter from one of their daughter's classmates. She wrote, "Your daughter ruined my life when we were in fourth grade... It is because of her that I am having such a hard time now..." The parents saw the severity of *anoas devarim*. Their daughter had harmed a classmate, and the punishment was quick to come, and in a very severe manner. Although she was young, nevertheless, the *aveirah* is severe, and there was a punishment.

The family quickly sought ways to appease this girl, and then matters turned around for their own daughter.

The word והכהו, "He hit him," is a palindrome (can be read backward and forwards). The Pnei Menachem zt'l said that this hints that when one harms his fellow man, he is also harmed. What he does to others comes back to him.

Once, a father came to the Pnei Menachem and said that his son had a birthmark on his face, and children in his class made fun of him, and his son was very hurt, and he cried often. The Pnei Menachem said, "The children have to know that they are playing with fire. They might be punished severely for this." He told the parents the *vort* והכהו, that when one harms others, he is harmed. Then the Pnei Menachem, himself, called the *melamed* and told him that he must warn the children to be careful, and he instructed the *melamed* to tell the students the *vort* of והכהו.

People would come to the Pnei Menachem to tell them their tzaros, to ask him to daven for them, and to bless them. Once, the Pnei Menachem said, "Most of the tzaros that people come knocking at my door are because of an *aveirah ben adam l'chaveiro* that was committed when they were young."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l waged a great battle against lashon hara, teaching people to be cautious. The Pnei Menachem said that the

Chofetz Chaim's motivation wasn't so much because he was concerned about the people upon whom the lashon hara was said. More than that, he had *rachmanus* on the people who speak lashon hara, because with their words, they are harming themselves immensely.

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak Weiss *zt'l* (the Rav of Yerushalayim and author of *Minchas Yitzchak*) was married three times. This is his inspiring story, which he himself related:

When he was young, a *shidduch* was suggested to him. The girl lived far away, and it was hard for Reb Yaakov Yitzchak's parents to travel all the way to her family, so they sent a reliable *shaliach* to check out the girl and her family. The *shaliach* returned and reported that it was a good match, and Reb Yaakov Yitzchak was engaged to be married to that girl.

When the wedding date drew near, the Weiss family traveled to the *kallah's* town for the *chasunah*. When Reb Yaakov Yitzchak's mother saw the *kallah* for the first time, she was very disappointed. It wasn't a proper match for her son at all, she decided, and she wanted to call off the *shidduch*. (According to halachah, it was permissible to break this *shidduch* because the *shaliach* was sent to arrange a fitting *shidduch*, and this wasn't suitable at all.) Nevertheless, Reb Yaakov Yitzchak said, "Perhaps I will divorce her with time, but right now, I don't want to embarrass her."

They were married and had one son, Reb Berish. Unfortunately, his wife was killed in a war. Reb Yaakov Yitzchak remarried, the daughter of the Rav of Vasloy *zy'a*. When she was *niftarah*, he married the daughter of the Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zy'a*, but he didn't have children from either of those two chasunos. His only child was Reb Berish, born to the woman he didn't want to shame.

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak said, "Doctors told me that it was impossible for me to have children. Berish was a miracle. I'm certain that I merited this miracle as a reward for not embarrassing a Jewish girl."

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer went to visit a sick friend. Rebbe Pinchas had his friend promise that after his passing, he would come back

Rebbe Shlomke Zy"a

Many people would send kvitlach and requests for tefillah, salvations, and counsel to Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil, and he would often

answer them after he immersed himself in a mikvah. His gabbai, Reb Elyah Roth zt'l would read the kvitel to him, and Rebbe Shlomke would toivel and respond.¹¹

down to this world to tell him what happened to him in heaven.

After his friend's passing, he appeared to Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer and said, "Throughout my lifetime, I never caused pain or distress to anyone. It was therefore decreed that I would die without pain.

"When my soul was leaving my body, I heard my doctor say that I needed to sleep deeply for a very long time. I didn't realize that this sleep was my death. Then I heard the doctor say, "Place him on the floor. He needs to warm up." I was placed on the floor, as is done to the dead, but I thought I was still alive.

"Then the doctor told people to take me outdoors to get some air. This was actually my funeral, but I didn't realize that. Until I was buried, I didn't know that I had died. It was a painless and sorrow-free death. This was my reward, because I never caused anyone harm in my lifetime. After I was buried, *malachim* came to punish me. However, since I never hurt another Yid, *malachim* of *rachamim* arrived and whisked me into Gan Eden."

11. Once, someone taunted Rebbe Shlomke for going to the mikvah to answer questions.

Rebbe Shlomke sent his gabbai, Reb Elyah Roth, to bring this person an envelope with money. Reb Elyah returned and reported that the man's face lit up with joy when he received the money. Rebbe Shlomke replied, "I understood that he might need money. I was wondering why he was so upset with me. I never did anything to him, so why was he shouting? I realized he is probably going through a hard time, perhaps financially, so I sent him money."

At Reb Shlomke's first yahrtzeit, there was a yahrtzeit seudah, and

When the kvitel was about someone ill, Rebbe Shlomke would hint in his response whether the person would survive or not, and he was always correct.

Reb Elyah Roth *zt'l* asked him, "How do you know the future? Are you the *urim vetumim*?"

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "We live in a generation of *hester panim* - Hashem's

hashgachah pratis is concealed. This leads people to have questions in *emunah*, and this is a *chilul Hashem*. Therefore, in every generation, Hashem chooses a *tzaddik* for whom the concept of *hester panim* doesn't apply. Through him, awareness of Hashem is revealed in the world." He humbly added, "I am like a hook, on which Hashem placed this mission."¹²

people were reminiscing about all the miracles they experienced firsthand from Rebbe Shlomke. This Yid (who had shouted and humiliated Rebbe Shlomke) stood up at the *yahrtzeit* meal and said, "I also experienced a *mofes* from Rebbe Shlomke. Once, my wife was complaining about the poverty in our home, and she told me, 'Without money, don't come home.' I knew she was serious, and after Shacharis, I came home and found the door locked. I stood outside, wondering what to do, and suddenly, Reb Elyah Roth arrived and gave me an envelope filled with money." (He didn't mention the first half of the story, that he received this gift because he had humiliated Rebbe Shlomke the day before, which helped Rebbe Shlomke understand that he was going through a financially difficult time.)

12. When Rebbe Shlomke first came to Eretz Yisrael, he didn't tell people that he was the Zvhiller Rebbe. He said that he threw the "*rabbistive*" (his role as rebbe) into the ocean on the way to Eretz Yisrael. He wanted to remain concealed. *Tzaddikim* said this might be why Rebbe Shlomke would only answer questions after going to the mikvah. Since the *rabbistive* was thrown into the water, he went to the water to receive answers to the questions posed to him. When Rebbe Shlomke's identity became known, he

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil
 zt'l would say, "When you
 experience *hashgachah pratis*,
 tell it to others! Let people
 know Hashem's wonders."¹³

Once, doctors told a
 woman that they had to
 terminate her pregnancy.
 They said that otherwise,
 she won't survive.

didn't want people to call him "Zvhiller Rebbe." So, the people of Yerushalayim would call him "Reb Shlomke." Once, someone was traveling to Meron and asked Rebbe Shlomke for his mother's name because he wanted to daven for Rebbe Shlomke at Reb Shimon's kever. Rebbe Shlomke replied, "In Meron, you can call me "Zvhiller Rebbe."

13. On this note, we share a *hashgachah pratis* story. The purpose of telling this story is to praise Hashem and to train ourselves to notice the *hashgachah pratis* in our lives.

A wealthy person in Bnei Brak lived on the third floor of an apartment building. He was getting older, and it was hard for him to climb the three sets of stairs each time he came home, so he had an elevator installed in his building. He made an agreement with the neighbors that he would pay for the installation of the elevator, but if the elevator breaks down, everyone would have to chip in to pay for the repairs.

Once, the elevator buttons stopped working. A technician was called in to fix it, and everyone in the building paid their share. It was a significant sum.

The wealthy person was *niftar* a few years ago. Shortly after his *peterih*, the elevator broke down again. This time, the doors opened and closed, but the elevator wouldn't move from its place. The doors worked, but everything else was broken.

The neighbors realized it would cost a lot to fix it. No one in the building really needed the elevator (the one who needed it wasn't alive anymore), so they decided to keep the elevator out of order for the time being.

The wealthy man's first *yahrtzeit* was approaching, and his family

Her husband ran to Rebbe Shlomke and told him what the doctors were saying. Rebbe Shlomke went to the mikveh, and then he had the answer. "Don't touch the child," he said. "The child will live and be well. Just don't make the bris on the eighth day."

The man ran back to the hospital and told the doctors what the Rebbe had said. The doctors were angry

when they heard Rebbe Shlomke's psak, because in their opinion, they had to terminate the pregnancy. They said, "If we don't, no one will survive."

He returned once again to Rebbe Shlomke to tell him what the doctors were saying, but Rebbe Shlomke didn't change his mind. (This was Rebbe Shlomke's way; after going to the mikvah, his responses were final. There was no debating.)

planned to have a *yahrtzeit seudah* in his old apartment. The rich man's son felt that they should fix the elevator since many guests would be coming, including rabbanim and respectable people. He ordered a mechanic to look at the elevator.

The mechanic arrived, opened the door, and found a child inside!

A few hours earlier, this child was playing with the elevator's buttons, opening and closing the doors, when suddenly the doors closed and wouldn't open again. The child shouted and cried, but no one heard the child. The mechanic came just in time to save the child's life.

(The mechanic never fixed the elevator. The cost was too high, and the wealthy man's son decided not to proceed with the repair. Instead, the technician came primarily to save the child and to put a lock on the elevator so that this won't happen again.)

When we hear this story, our hearts shout out, *מה רבו מעשיך ה'*, "How great are Your ways, Hashem!" Indeed, miracles happen all the time; we just need to get into the habit of recognizing them.

What happened was as Rebbe Shlomke had predicted. The child was born naturally, and the child and the mother were in good health.

Now the question was when to perform the bris milah. The doctors claimed that the child was healthy, and there was no reason to postpone the bris, but the Rebbe had clearly told them not to do the bris milah on the eighth day.

The question was brought to Reb Tzvi Pesach Frank zt'l. He replied, "You see that Rebbe Shlomke knows. The doctors wanted to remove the child, and Reb Shlomke rescued the child. So, what do you want? Of course, you should listen to him regarding the bris."

In the afternoon of the eighth day, the child had abdominal problems and needed emergency surgery. Now, they understood why Rebbe Shlomke told them not to make the bris on the eighth day.

The Gemara (Eiruvim 86.) writes, רבי מכבד עשירים, that Rebbe would honor the wealthy. The Gemara explains that he honored the wealthy because the world exists in their merit. The tzedakah and chesed that the wealthy perform give existence to the world.

Rebbe Shlomke zt'l added two other reasons why Rebbe honored the wealthy. (1) Hashem gave them wealth, proving they deserved it. (2) Just as the poor need money, the wealthy need honor. When you honor the wealthy, you give them what they need.

When Rebbe Shlomke's zt'l child was getting married, many poor people showed up to the Shabbos sheva Brachos wearing ripped, worn-out clothing. They were the type of people who made many look the other way when they saw them.

"Who are these people?" the *mechutan* asked.

"These are mine." Rebbe Shlomke always helped the poor and downtrodden and wanted them to eat with him at his simchah.

The people who attended Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller's tish were mostly broken, poor souls who hadn't found success in this world. At the tish, these people were all talking with one another about unimportant matters while Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller zt'l sat there wrapped up in holy thoughts, with a lot of *deveikus*. Someone saw this and asked, "What is the purpose of this? Why do you make a tish? We don't learn anything here."

Rebbe Shlomke said, "We do learn something. Here, we learn *savlanus* (patience)."

Reb Shlomke was niftar a week after Lag b'Omer, and on Lag b'Omer, he was in tremendous pain. Many brought their three-year-old children to his home to cut their hair and make peyos. The gabaim told the people at the door not to come in

because Rebbe Shlomke was in excruciating pain. Rebbe Shlomke heard this and said, "Let them in. Don't stop them from coming. Whoever loves the Father, loves the children."

There was a scholar in Yerushalayim named Reb Moshe Shpiner (Holtzberg). He gave many shiurim. An elderly yid named Reb Yankel would attend the shiurim. He went to every shiur, even in the rain and cold. Reb Moshe Shpiner told him, "You are ninety years old. You must take care of your health. Why do you come in such weather?"

Reb Yankel replied, "I am not afraid because I once did Rebbe Shlomke Zviller zt'l a favor, and out of hakaras hatov, he gave me a brachah that I will see Moshiach."

One day, Reb Yankel told Reb Moshe Shpiner, "I saw Rebbe Shlomke in a dream last night, and there was another person there, shining brightly. Rebbe Shlomke told me that he is *Moshiach*."