

Parashas
Bereishis

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כ"ט תשרי תשפ"ז

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י"ל ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

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טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

האמונה שהכל לטובה

טיב המערכת

ואתה תמשל בו

Yet you will rule over it

In the previous generation, there was a Jewish man who came to Eretz Yisrael. He was one of those few who had managed to escape from the communist regime that ruled Russia. When he arrived in Eretz Yisrael, he continued to conduct himself as though he were still in Russia, under the watchful eyes of the KGB. He spoke very little, and whatever he was compelled to say, he said in a whisper and with extreme brevity. With people he did not know, he was especially careful to avoid speaking. Once, his acquaintances asked him why he behaved this way. After all, he was already in Eretz Yisrael, among Jews! He answered them, "You do not know the KGB. They are everywhere..."

Kayin was jealous of his brother, and ultimately he killed him. It is difficult to understand how such a thing could have happened—that he killed his own brother. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows, and He says to him (4:7): 'הלא אם תיטיב שאת ואם לא תיטיב לפתח חטאת רובץ' - "Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be uplifted, but if you do not improve yourself, sin crouches at the door; its desire is toward you, yet you will rule over it." It is true that these words were said after the incident, and according to their simple meaning they refer to repentance. But in truth, there is a profound secret hidden here, and it is the answer to our question of how such a thing could have happened.

In order for us to understand this, we must examine the explanation of Rashi HaKadosh: "'And its desire is toward you'—the desire of sin. This is the yetzer hara, which is constantly yearning and desiring to cause you to stumble." "'And you shall rule over it'—if you wish, you can overcome it."

There are two important principles here: A. You must know that the yetzer hara is always lying in wait for you in order to cause you to stumble, and it is always there, even when you do not see it. B. If you wish, you can overcome it. The Torah reveals these two principles to us so that we will know them, in the spirit of "Know your enemy."

We all know and are familiar with the feeling of frustration: "How did this happen to me?" How can it be that time and again I fall into the same things? I woke up in the morning with the intention of praying, and in the end I found myself arriving late for davening. Then I listened to this person and had a conversation with that person, and I am embarrassed to think about what my davening looked like. But if we remember that the yetzer hara is worse than the KGB—that it is always present everywhere and is constantly trying to bring us down—then we will also know to be more careful. Perhaps this sounds frightening, but the Torah tells us that defeating it is not difficult. It depends only upon our will: "If you wish, you can overcome it!"

- Tiv HaTorah - Bereishis

The belief that everything is for the best

וַיִּתְּהֵלךְ חֲנוֹךְ אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים וַאֲיָכָנוּ כִּי לָקַח אֹתוֹ אֱלֹקִים: (ה, כד)

And Chanoch walked with G-d, then he was no more, for G-d had taken him. (5:24)

...

Rashi explains: And Chanoch walked – he was a righteous man, but light in his mind (not firm enough in his convictions) so that he might regress to doing evil. Therefore, HaKadosh Baruch Hu acted quickly and removed and put him to death before his time. This is why the Torah deviated regarding his death by writing 'then he was no more' in the world to fill out his years.

Had it not been for the words of Rashi, we would not understand the meaning of the posuk. For if Chanoch merited conducting himself according to the will of the Creator, why should this be a reason to take his life? Especially since he lived in a generation of wicked people, and he had to exert tremendous effort not to be drawn after the people of his generation. This should have been a reason to increase his merit, not to shorten his life. Furthermore, it would seem to have been a humiliation for this righteous man to be taken away before all the wicked people of his generation. However, Rashi enlightens our eyes and teaches us that we do not always see what is good with our physical eyes. With our physical eyes, we see only what the present seems to justify, but HaKadosh Baruch Hu also sees the future, and therefore He truly knows what is good for a person. Consequently, it sometimes appears that HaKadosh Baruch Hu deals with a righteous person with the attribute of strict judgment, when in truth it is nothing other than mercy.

This was the reason for Chanoch being taken away before he reached half of his years. HaKadosh Baruch Hu saw how he was struggling tremendously with his yetzer. The people of his generation continued to spread impurity in the world through their sins, and this caused even him to develop a desire to do evil. Nevertheless, he exerted tremendous effort to overcome his yetzer.

But HaKadosh Baruch Hu also saw that he would not be able to endure indefinitely. The impurity increased from day to day, and he was already finding it impossible to withstand that attraction toward evil that existed in the world at that time. HaKadosh Baruch Hu knew that it was not right to leave this righteous man in the world any longer, after he had suffered so much throughout his life in order to remain righteous. If he lived longer, he would no longer be able to strengthen himself. Therefore, the Creator did what was good for him and raised his soul before its time.

Something similar is related about one of the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov zy"א, who passed away in the prime of his life. His passing from this world was attributed to his prayers, because this righteous man was accustomed to praying with tears and asking Hashem Yisbarach to protect him from every sin. He

further asked that if HaKadosh Baruch Hu knew that one day he would chalilah, stumble in some sin, HaKadosh Baruch Hu should take his life before that day arrived. Since his prayer was accepted, he was taken to his eternal home while he was still young. We see from this that sometimes it is beneficial for a righteous person to have his departure from this world hastened.

After seeing Rashi's explanation and looking again at the wording of the posuk, we can also discern from the very words of the posuk that Chanoch's departure was through the attribute of mercy. The posuk does not use the expression "death," as it does regarding wicked people whom HaKadosh Baruch Hu caused to die before their time. [For example, see the incident of Er and Onan (below, 38:7-10), where it says, 'וימיתוהו' - "and Hashem put him to death," and 'וַיָּמֵת גַּם אוֹתוֹ' - "and He put him to death as well." Here, however, it says, "And he was not, for Elokim took him." His departure from this world was not in the category of "punishment." Rather, he was removed from this world because HaKadosh Baruch Hu brought him close to Himself, to be with Him in the higher Gan Eden.

These words of Rashi are a foundation for everything that occurs in this lower world. Whenever a person sees a world turned upside down—"a righteous person who suffers, and a wicked person who prospers"—he must believe that everything is in the hands of Heaven, and that there is a precise accounting for

everything. They did not scrutinize the righteous person in order to cause him harm, but rather for his benefit.

Therefore, we should never come with questions against the Creator. We must simply believe with complete and clear faith that whatever the Merciful One does is for the best.

Perhaps this is what Dovid HaMelech meant when he said in Tehillim (107:1), 'הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ' - "Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good, for His kindness is eternal." Even in a time of suffering, one is obligated to give thanks, just as he gives a blessing for something good (Berachos 54). This obligation itself is proof that even the suffering is good, because if it were not so, what reason would there be to give thanks for it?

However, a person who sees only the present with his physical eyes finds it difficult to give thanks for such a thing. In order to comfort him and strengthen him, Dovid says, "Give thanks to Hashem"—give thanks to Hashem, Who conducts Himself with you through the attribute of mercy, which is alluded to by the Name Hashem. In other words, even what appears in your eyes to be din, strict judgment, is truly mercy, and you must give thanks for it. And the reason is "for He is good"—because we must believe that goodness is hidden within it, for evil does not come forth from Hashem. And if you were to say, "But in actuality, the goodness is not apparent," the answer is "for His kindness is eternal." The attribute of HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not like the attribute of flesh and blood. A

person sees only what is before him in the present, and therefore he can err and think that certain events are, chas v'shalom, din. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu's kindness is eternal. He knows everything that will happen from this moment and throughout eternity, and according to His knowledge, so is His chesed. In other words, according to His knowledge, He knows that precisely this scene that appears to us as din is truly chesed.

We must know that in the future, all the kindnesses that were hidden within all the concealments that the entire Jewish people experienced will be revealed. Likewise, every individual will find an answer for all the concealments that were his personal portion. Then each person will recognize how abundant HaKadosh Baruch Hu's mercy was upon him, and how greatly He sought to benefit him.

However, as long as we are in exile, we have the opportunity through these concealments to engage in the mitzvah of emunah and to implant it deeply within ourselves by repeatedly reminding ourselves that everything is in the hands of Heaven, and that everything is for our benefit.

As the holy Rebbe of Kobrin said regarding the posuk (Tehillim 116:10), 'הֵאֲמַנְתִּי כִּי' - "I believed because I spoke": The merit of attaining "I believed" comes when "I speak"—when I repeat words of emunah to myself. For only through this can we merit implanting emunah firmly within our hearts.

'תפילת רבים'

'Prayer of the masses'

On Friday, Erev Shabbos Kodesh, I learned in the Zohar HaKadosh about the tremendous importance of tefillah betzibbur—not specifically tefillah with a minyan, but rather the power of praying together as a large group. At that exact time, a large group of Chassidim from the United States was organizing to pray together, en masse, in a special tent, with more than two thousand people davening together in one minyan.

I greatly desired to daven together with them, since I had just learned about the importance of this matter. However, because I did not know anyone among the people there, and the places had been arranged in advance, I did not know how I would manage to get a place among this tefillah betzibbur.

While I was still thinking about it, someone tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Warm regards from your sefarim! I use them, and they are truly bringing vitality to people's souls!!!"

I asked him, "The red books or the blue ones?" (The red ones are the sefarim on Kabbalah, while the blue ones deal with Nigleh.) He answered, "The red ones!!! I study Shaar HaKavanos and all your sefarim on the various Yomim Tovim!!!"

I asked him whether there was any possibility that they would let me come inside and daven together with them in the tent. He

began to laugh. I told him that I was somewhat older and needed a chair... He

brought me inside and made sure that I received the best and most comfortable place for davening that I could have asked for. I was privileged to pray a moving and uplifting tefillah, with a multitude, as Rabbi Shimon had spoken about.

Since we are speaking about tefillah, I will relate another story of hashgacha pratis. I needed a siddur with Krias HaTorah included, and a young man saw that I was looking for something and asked me what I was looking for. He immediately brought me a siddur exactly as I wanted.

I thanked him very much, and after the tefillah I saw that he wanted to speak with me. I opened a conversation with him and gave him the chizuk that he needed.

It turned out that he very much wanted to initiate a conversation with me, but he was embarrassed to approach me. What did Hashem do? He arranged that I would need his help, and that way it was comfortable for him to speak with me!!!

Even the siddur that I was looking for was through special hashgacha pratis!!!

סיב ההשגחה

Moreinu HaRav shlit"a

He was never seen crying or shedding tears of sorrow over anything in the world. There are several testimonies and sacred stories about this that have been published in various sefarim.

One such occasion was at the passing of his eldest son, the holy Rebbe Rav Meir zy"u, author of Kesser Torah, who, as is well known, was one of the great talmidei chachamim and ge'onim of his generation. Even when, chas veshalom, his son's body lay before him, he did not shed a tear, as is recorded in the Toldos printed at the end of Kedushas Levi.

On the contrary, he walked behind the bier as though dancing, and said to those close to him who surrounded him on all sides: "A pure neshamah was entrusted to me, and a pure neshamah I am returning."

Thus he conducted himself like a faithful servant who stands and serves his Master with joy, paying no attention to the various events and occurrences that took place around him.

Only once a year was he seen shedding three tears: during the awesome Vidui prayers on Erev Yom Kippur. Only then did he shed three measured tears of teshuvah—and no more than that! (See the first perek of Chagigah (5b), "These three tears—why?" and carefully ponder the comparison between a creature and his Creator.) He was never seen crying except for those three measured tears of teshuvah on the eve of the holy day.

There is a very lofty level reflected in this manner of conduct, and it is the highest and most exalted level in avodas Hashem. The Berditchever reached all the highest levels in his avodah through the joy he had in his avodas Hashem.

Indeed, he writes this several times in his holy sefer, that the finest and most exalted way to merit attaining an awareness of Hashem and drawing close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu is through the trait of simchah, as he explains there. This was what brought him to the wondrous and awesome enthusiasm that he constantly displayed in Torah and mitzvos.

From him we can learn the proper path in the service of Hashem: a Jewish person should feel and experience great joy, inner satisfaction, and the pleasurable delight of his pure neshamah each time he merits engaging in Torah and tefillah and fulfilling Hashem's mitzvos—like one who has found great treasure!

A Gaze That Protected from the Yetzer Hara

Maran, the holy Rebbe, the Chasam Sofer zt"l, would deliver his daily shiur in the great yeshivah in the city of Pressburg. The shiur was delivered by this giant of Torah before a distinguished group of tzaddikim and ge'onim, the talmidim of the Chasam Sofer, who sat

טיב והמעשיות

The Three Tears of the Kedushas Levi

The holy Rebbe Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev zy"u, author of Kedushas Levi, served Hashem with tremendous joy and fiery enthusiasm, as is well known and celebrated among the holy Jewish people. He was constantly attached and cleaved to the holy Shechinah, with a profound deveikus to the Living God, and with a soul aflame with fiery fervor, he was always joyful and delighted to stand and serve and fulfill the will of his Creator.

Just as it is said concerning Hashem (Divrei Hayamim I 16:27) עֹז וְיָדָהּ בְּמִקְרָבּוֹ - Strength and joy are in His place—so too was this exalted tzaddik constantly attached to the joy of Hashem, Baruch Shemo.

before him with awe and trepidation and drank thirstily from his holy words which constantly flowed like a wellspring that never ceased, encompassing every area of Torah, as is well known.

Many stories became associated with those shiurim—stories of great spiritual impact, concerning what this holy and exalted tzaddik accomplished and brought about through the influence of his holy and pure Torah, in the upper and lower worlds.

One of these extraordinary stories concerns an unfamiliar Jewish man from the city of Pressburg who had established a regular custom of entering the daily shiur of the Chasam Sofer, in the great yeshivah, for a brief moment each day.

The man's appearance, dress, and manner of walking did not look like those of a talmid chacham at all. He would stand for a moment at the back of the beis midrash, directly facing the holy countenance of the rosh yeshivah, Maran the Chasam Sofer. He would stare deeply and intently at the holy countenance of the Rebbe, fixing his gaze upon him for a long moment, and then, after only a short while, he would leave the beis midrash and go on his way.

Day after day, the same strange scene was repeated. This unfamiliar man would enter the yeshivah hesitantly, specifically while the Chasam Sofer was standing at his lectern in the middle of delivering his shiur. He would fix a penetrating gaze upon the holy countenance of the Rebbe—and then walk outside.

The holy Chasam Sofer himself paid

no attention to him whatsoever. He continued with the shiur in his usual manner, all his holy thoughts absorbed solely in his deveikus to Torah. It was well known that during the shiur he would forget all mundane affairs, even his own physical needs of eating and drinking.

The talmidim, too, seeing that the Rebbe paid no attention to this man, did not dare approach him or remove him from the place, because of their tremendous yiras hakavod for their Rebbe. They always sat before him with awe and reverence because of the great sanctity of his Torah.

Nevertheless, the holy talmidim, who were themselves, as is well known, outstanding men raised above the ordinary, saw this and wondered: What was this empty and insignificant fellow—looking for in the yeshivah? He did not open a single sefer, did not learn, did not daven, and did not even ask any talmid chacham to study a halachah with him. Nothing! He simply gave the Rebbe a penetrating look and walked away. The matter was exceedingly distasteful to them.

After some time, several of the talmidim decided to follow the man, to investigate his character, and to try to discover the reason for his strange behavior.

The next day, they secretly followed him. They saw him leave the Jewish quarter and head toward the city's large commercial district. There he entered the busy marketplace of the gentiles. When he reached the center of the marketplace, he took a key from his pocket and opened his large and magnificent shop. It was an exclusive jewelry store in which expensive and beautiful jewelry was sold to the gentiles of the city. The talmidim concluded that he was a prominent and wealthy man, a successful businessman and one of the city's affluent merchants, who earned his livelihood in the jewelry trade.

Their curiosity only grew stronger. What connection could there possibly be between a wealthy man whose entire life revolved around the business world and the shiur of the Chasam Sofer? And what was the meaning of that deep and penetrating gaze that he directed at the Rebbe every day during the shiur? The mystery troubled them. They waited for an opportunity when the man was free, entered the shop, approached him in a friendly manner, and politely asked him if he would kindly explain the reason for his daily visit to the yeshivah.

The man replied: "Since you are close talmidim of our great Rebbe, I will open my heart to you and explain the reason for my actions. You will then learn how great and exalted is the stature of your holy and awesome Rebbe!"

"Baruch Hashem, I am a wealthy and prosperous man," the Jew began his story. "As you can see, I have a large store here selling extremely expensive jewelry. It is a successful and flourishing business, baruch Hashem. The store is crowded all day with various customers, and the profits are quite substantial.

"Over the years, I have also become a major supporter of tzedakah, and the holy community benefits greatly from the many forms of financial assistance I provide for all the communal needs, through the kindness of Hashem toward me.

"However, one matter has greatly disturbed my peace of mind in this occupation. Since I spend the entire day here in this beautiful store, it is only natural that many women also come in who are interested in purchasing jewelry. I have to show them the size of the jewelry, the way it is arranged, and so on.

"Yet the yetzer hara only becomes stronger through such trials. Various improper thoughts and ideas entered my mind, and there is a great concern that these thoughts that could, chas veshalom, lead to an explicit prohibition of the Torah (Bamidbar 15:39), **וְלֹא תִתְּנוּ אֶחָד אֹתָם לִבְבְּכֶם וְאֶחָד אֹתָם עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲתֶם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם** - And you shall not stray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you go astray.

"This matter greatly disturbed my peace of mind, until I began thinking that perhaps it would be better to close the entire business. Why should I involve myself in a profession that carries the danger of such a grave temptation? "On the other hand, I knew that if I abandoned my business, I would no longer be able to continue my acts of tzedakah, and the many forms of support I provide for the holy yeshivah and for the other needs of the city would come to an end. So perhaps I was indeed supposed to continue working in this profession.

"I therefore went to our Rebbe the Chasam Sofer, who knows me very well from all the tzedakah that I support. I presented my doubts and my confusion to him concerning whether I should continue in this profession.

The holy Rebbe advised me that every day, on my way to work, I should pass through the yeshivah, enter his holy beis midrash while he was delivering his shiur, look very carefully and intently at his holy countenance, and in this way I would be saved from the yetzer hara that causes a person to sin!"

The man concluded his amazing story: "That is why I enter every day

in the middle of the shiur, as you have witnessed, and after that penetrating gaze at his supreme holiness, with the holy Shechinah resting upon his holy countenance, I have no more improper thoughts and no more unworthy ideas for the rest of the day. The yetzer hara simply cannot come near me throughout the entire day."

Awesome and incredible! How far does the holiness of the tzaddikim reach! Not only are they themselves Kodesh Hakodashim, whose exalted holiness is beyond our comprehension; even merely looking at their holy countenance has the power to save a Jewish person from sin. Concerning something similar, Chazal alluded to the expression (Bava Metzia 118a and the commentaries there): "With a mere gaze, he acquires."

Two Tzaddikim Who Made their Mark

These two holy tzaddikim, the shepherds of Klal Yisrael, left their mark for all generations, with every Jewish home relying upon them and benefiting from their merit.

The words of Chazal were fulfilled in them, as taught in the first perek of Megillah (11a), in their exposition of the Torah's promise concerning the continued existence of the Jewish people in exile (Vayikra 26:44), **וְאִם גַּם זֹאת בִּהְיוֹתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ אֹיְבֵיהֶם לֹא מֵאַסְתִּים וְלֹא גְעֻלָּתִים לְכַלְתֶּם לְהַפִּיר בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' - אֶלְקֵיהֶם** - Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not despise them and I will not reject them to destroy them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am Hashem, their God.

Chazal expound: "That I established for them the House of Rebbe and the sages of the generations." These and others like them sustain Beis Yisrael and keep it standing firmly on its feet until the coming of Yinon."

The holy Rebbe Rav Levi Yitzchak zy"a, author of Kedushas Levi, departed from this world on the twenty-fifth of Tishrei in the year 5570, and he is buried in the city of Berdichev.

He left behind his great legacy in Torah and chassidus, in both the revealed and hidden realms of Torah, as well as the holiness of his great love, joy, and fiery enthusiasm in his awesome service of Hashem.

He is universally known throughout Klal Yisrael by the title "the Defender of the Jewish People," as is well known from his unique practice of always judging every Jew favorably, whoever he might be.

We, too, should learn from his holy ways to judge every person favorably and strive to cleave to the ways and middos of the tzaddik—to become a sanegor shel Yisrael, a defender of the

Jewish people; to seek out and discover the good point that exists and pulsates within every Jew, and to look and think only about that!

The holy Chasam Sofer zy"a, departed from this world exactly thirty years later, on the twenty-fifth of Tishrei in the year 5600, and he is buried in Pressburg. A special ohel and tziyun were erected over his kever

During the Second World War, when the accursed Nazis, yemach shemam, began destroying the cemetery, one singularly courageous resident of the city, Rav Moshe Aryeh Leib Votitz, hy"d, a merchant and talmid chacham, risked his life. He negotiated with the Nazis and succeeded in bribing them with a large quantity of gold in order to prevent the destruction from continuing and to save, at the very least, part of the section where the rabbanim were buried, including Maran the Chasam Sofer, zy"a.

Today, a memorial plaque stands adjacent to the tziyun of the Chasam Sofer commemorating his efforts. It states:

"In this holy place, the cherished memory and the memory of the righteousness and mighty deeds of this precious man, the first and foremost in every matter of holiness, Rav Moshe Aryeh Leib Votitz, hy"d, one of the distinguished members of the Pressburg community before the destruction, shall be engraved forever. During the years of devastation, he devoted his life ... and invested his entire fortune and strength to save the holy tziyun and resting place of Maran Rabbeinu the Chasam Sofer zy"a, together with the other holy ones buried in this section, from the unclean hands of the wicked murderers."

When, due to the construction of a tunnel for a roadway beneath the fortress, most of the remains from the old cemetery were transferred to a mass grave in the new cemetery, the tziyun was left in its original location together with a small number of other graves, among them the graves of Rav Akiva Eiger zt"l, and his disciple Rav Daniel Prostiz, zt"l. In order to facilitate the construction of the road, the roadway was raised.

The tziyun is today located at an underground memorial site that was established especially to commemorate the entire Jewish community.

His great legacy, too, continues to stand for us throughout all generations. The Torah of Moshe [Sofer] illuminates the eyes of every Torah learner, in every place and in every area of Torah. He was the man who stood firm, establishing the foundations of our religion upon their proper foundation for all generations, waging a holy battle against those who sought to undermine the Torah, and transmitting the mesorah of Yisrael from generation to generation, so that these teachings would shine with the same clarity and illumination with which they were given at Sinai.