

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Ki Seitzei



בס"ד

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Ki Seitzei

Grasping the Final Moments of Elul.....	4
Battling with the Yetzer Hara	7
Holding on to Positive Influences	10
Happy with His Lot	15
Compassion.....	18
Caution from the Internet.....	22
Boundaries and Safeguards	26

Torah Wellsprings

Ki Seitzei

Grasping the Final Moments of Elul

The parashah begins with the words (21:10) **כִּי תֵצֵא** למלחמה על אויבך, "When you go out to war against your enemies." The Imrei Elimelech of Gradzisk zt'l says this refers to the war we wage on Rosh Hashanah against the Satan. The Satan prosecutes against us, and we battle with him and seek to attain Hashem's compassion.

The question is, why does it say **כִּי תֵצֵא** למלחמה, "When you go out to war," if on Rosh Hashanah, we are already on the battlefield? The Imrei Elimelech explains that we begin the war in Elul, and the pasuk refers to the war we wage already then.

He writes, "This pasuk refers to Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment when

mankind stands before Hashem in judgment. But, on Rosh Hashanah, the day of the war, one can't say **כִּי תֵצֵא**, that he goes out to the war because he is already in the midst of the battle. Rather, the pasuk alludes to going out to the war *before* the day of judgment arrives. It refers to when we prepare for the war with teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah. If we prepare, we will win and be found worthy in the judgment. The Torah promises us ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך, Hashem will give us success [and we will be acquitted] on the day of judgment."

The Torah also hints at Elul in this week's parashah with the words (21:13) ובכתה את אביה ואת אמה ירח ימים, "She shall weep for her father and her mother for a full month." The Zohar (Zohar Chadash 72.) states, "This pasuk refers to the month of Elul," the

month we do teshuvah with tears.

Reb Chaim Vital (Eitz HaDaas, או ירמון) writes, "The primary time for teshuvah is in Elul, called ירח ימים, because that is when your tefillos are answered."

Chasam Sofer (Sefer Zikaron, Drashos Chasam Sofer Erev Yom Kippur) writes, "Elul is called ירח ימים, which is the same gematriya as שי"ח, which means prayer.¹ This implies that during this month, one should pour his heart out in prayers before Hashem, and Hashem will accept his tefillos. There are forty days from rosh chodesh Elul to Yom Kippur. If you add the מ' (gematria forty) to שי"ח, it becomes משי"ח, because this brings the redemption near." We understand from this that we should daven for Moshiach in Elul.

It states (Shemos 21:13) והאלקים יוציא לידו ושמתי לך מקום אשר ינוס שמה,

"...I will make a place for you to which he shall flee." The holy sefarim write that the roshei teivos of אנה לידו spell out the word ושמתי לך. אלול. These are the days we can flee and escape from the yetzer hara and begin on a new path.

In Shu't Divrei Chaim (Yorah Deiah vol.1 33), Reb Chaim of Sanz responds at length to someone's halachic *shaila*. The person who sent him the question also wrote to him a pilpul, not related to halachah. The Divrei Chaim didn't comment on that part of the letter. Instead, he wrote, ולפלפולא בעלמא אין הזמן גורם כי צריך לבדוק חדרי משכיות לבב בימים נוראים הללו אלול תרי"ז, "Just to discuss pilpul, this isn't the best time, because we have to check the corners of our hearts in these awesome days of Elul, 5617."

What could be better than discussing divrei Torah? The Divrei Chaim

1. See (Bereishis 24:63) וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׂוּחַת בְּשָׂדָה, "Yitzchak went out to pray in the field."

certainly did discuss divrei Torah all day long, also in Elul. Nevertheless, he didn't have time for pilpul because he needed time for self-reflection, to think about his deeds, and to seek how to improve.

The Rebbe Rashab of Lubavitz zt'l said, "Elul is the season for saying Tehillim." (He said this when he sent his gabbai to buy him a Tehillim in Elul.)

Shaar HaMelech (1:2) writes, "I saw a good custom in many communities, and

my parents also told me about this good custom. From rosh chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur, immediately after Shacharis, they say Tehillim with tears and sweet voices. I decided to bring this good custom to our city. Tehillim is needed because our primary goal this month is to remove the *mastinim* (*mekatrigim* who speak against us)... and nothing stops them as well as when we say Tehillim. Tehillim is called *mizmorim*, which also means to shear, because the Tehillim shears away all thorns² [of the mekatrigim]."³

2. The Shaar HaMelech concludes:

"So, recite Tehillim with kavanah and tears, and say the tefillah after each sefer of Tehillim. There should be ten people saying Tehillim, and they should also say the thirteen attributes of mercy until the end of the prayer. If you know of a place or city that doesn't know of this good custom, you should inform them of it so that every day of Elul we will be with the Tehillim. Our Tehillim will be precious to Hashem as though we had studied the laws of negaim and ohalos, and the merit of Dovid HaMelech a'h will protect us, to receive a good judgment, for life and peace."

3. The Nesivos Shalom zt'l (Slonim) was very ill at the end of Av, and the doctors recommended emergency surgery. The Nesivos Shalom wanted to postpone the operation until after the yomim noraim. He explained that we believe that Rosh Hashanah is when

Battling with the Yetzer Hara

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh, Rebbe Reb Bunim of Peshischa zt'l, and others say that (21:10) **כִּי תֵצֵא** למלחמה על אויבך, "When you go out to war against your enemies," also alludes to the war we wage against the yetzer hara.

The Tiferes Shlomo writes (beginning of this week's parasha):

"There are righteous people who battle against their yetzer hara and win, and a few days later, the yetzer hara returns, and they must wage war with

the yetzer hara once again! This confuses them, and they ask, 'What is this all about? I already fought this war with the yetzer hara before, and I triumphed!' They think they were finished with the yetzer hara, but the yetzer hara returns. They wonder what will be with them. The Torah discusses this situation and explains, **כִּי תֵצֵא**, the reason you came down to this world, למלחמה is for war. This is your life's mission. For this, you were created." You cannot win the war once and for all and be at peace with the yetzer hara because then life wouldn't

decrees are passed, and we can daven and merit a good year.

The family realized that the Nesivos Shalom was firm with his resolve and asked the doctor to come to him. The doctor told him how to take care of himself throughout this waiting time. He told him what he should eat, how much to sleep, etc.

The day after Yom Kippur, he was brought in for surgery. The doctors checked him and saw that he no longer needed the surgery. One doctor commented, "Time was good for you." The Nesivos Shalom replied that it was indeed the "Time" that helped him. The days of Elul and the yomim noraim were good for him because he changed his destiny with his tefillos during this time.

have a purpose. There are always new battles to be combated. כי תצא למלחמה, you came to the world for these battles.

The Ruzhiner Rebbe *zt'l* said, "A *patch* for a *patch*, the main thing is that *you* give the final *patch*." Sometimes the *yetzer hara* wins a battle, and sometimes you win. The main thing is that *you* should win in the end.

Reb Yitzchok Hutner *zt'l* writes in a letter, "When we discuss the greatness of *tzaddikim*, we have a bad habit to begin at the end of their lives and to discuss the great levels the *tzaddikim* reached. We skip the many years they struggled with their *yetzer hara*. We think they were born *tzaddikim*. Everyone praises the Chofetz Chaim's caution with speech, but who speaks about his struggles and the ups and downs he encountered until he reached this level? This is just one example among a thousand. Leaving out this chapter of their lives creates a problem. When a *bachur*

has a strong desire to grow in *avodas Hashem* and is confronted with a challenge or a downfall, he thinks he will never reach the levels of the *tzaddikim* he wishes to emulate. He thinks that if he has challenges, there is no hope for him. But that is ridiculous. Know, my friend, you will fall time and again, and there will be battles that you will lose. But in the end, you will emerge victorious and wear the crown of success on your head. The wisest of all men said, שבעה, 'פול צדיק וקם', 'A *tzaddik* falls seven times and rises.' The wise understand that the *tzaddik* rises *because* he fell seven times [and kept lifting himself up again]. I beg you, don't think of *tzaddikim* as people who are at peace with their *yetzer tov*. Rather, when the *yetzer hara* burns within you, and you're struggling to overcome the *yetzer hara*, those moments are when you are most similar to the *gedolim*, even more than when you are at peace with the *yetzer hara*."

In wars of this world (such as when one country battles with another), winning a single battle isn't so significant because only winning the war counts. The small successes in the middle of the war don't mean anything if they don't lead to victory. But our war against the *yetzer hara* is different. Each and every single moment of success is worth celebrating.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* taught, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves *hischazkus*, when one strengthens himself to do Hashem's will, even if it lasts only for a moment."⁴

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* writes, "One should rejoice

immensely with every good deed he does for *avodas Hashem* because they are all priceless. He should make up his mind that he won't sell this mitzvah for all the money in the world. Even if it only lasts a moment, every word, thought, or deed will never be lost. It is valuable for him and perhaps for all Yisrael. Can there be a greater joy than carrying out the mission for which one was created? He should do whatever he can. He should seek to do more and more small deeds and great deeds. As the saying goes, 'whatever one grabs at a sale is worthwhile.'"

4. Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil *zt'l* asked someone why he wasn't going to a *mussar drashah* that many people were attending. The man replied, "I know myself. Even if the speaker inspires me to do *teshuvah*, the *teshuvah* won't last. All too soon, I will return to my old ways."

The Rebbe replied, "If someone swims up to a person drowning at sea and says, 'I can save you for half an hour, but then you will fall back into the sea again,' would he accept the offer? Of course, he would. So why shouldn't you also seek to do *teshuvah*? It is worthwhile, even if it will only last for a short while."

Holding on to Positive Influences

When one experiences an uplifting spiritual experience, a moment of *ruchniyus*, studying Torah, or being involved in a mitzvah, that should make an imprint on him. Even after the mitzvah is completed, the imprint should remain. The holy days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succos, and Shemini Atzeres are approaching, and these days should have an impression on us. Even after the yomim tovim leave, their *hashpaah* should remain.

It states in Parashas Vayakhel (35:1) וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶדְתְּךָ, "Moshe assembled the entire nation of Bnei Yisrael..." and he taught them to donate towards the building of the Mishkan. After Moshe completed this lesson, it states (Shemos 35:20) וַיֵּצְאוּ כָּל עֶדְתְּךָ, "All of Bnei Yisrael left Moshe's presence."

Isn't it evident that if they left the assembly, they left מֹשֶׁה מִלִּפְנֵי, "Moshe's presence?" (See Or HaChaim, who provides three answers to this question.)

The Alter of Kelm zt'l (quoted in Darkei Mussar p.138) answers that the pasuk is telling us that even when they left the presence of Moshe, they remained מִלִּפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה before Moshe. Moshe's presence so influenced them that even after they left, the influence remained. Someone who saw them could immediately tell that they were students of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Some people learn in yeshiva, or in kollel, and then, due to circumstances, have to leave and go to work. Even after they leave the *beis medresh*, it should be obvious where they came from.

The same is true for a ben Torah who goes on a vacation. Even on vacation, the imprint of who he is should be apparent. In all situations, and throughout

their lives, it should be seen on them that they were in a beis medresh. Their middos, yiras Shamayim, connection to Torah, should be in a deeper way than others who never entered a beis medresh. The good influences shouldn't depart.

Rav Yosef said (Pesachim 68b) אִי לֹא הָאֵי יוֹמָא כַּמָּה יוֹסֵף אֵיכָא בְּשׁוּקָא, "If it wouldn't be for this day (of matan Torah), how many Yosef's would be in the marketplace." We can explain that if it weren't for matan Torah, he would have many personalities. He would be one person when in the market, another personality at home, a third personality while traveling, etc. This is how it is with the goyim, l'havdil. There are goyim who go to what they call "houses of worship." When they are in the "house of worship", they might act with respect, but when they leave, they immediately have another personality. They become standard goyim, like all goyim with split personalities, one at

home, one in the worship house, one in the business place, and so on. Rav Yosef said that if it weren't for matan Torah, there would be many Yosefs. This means his personality and behavior would change, depending on where he was at the moment. But now that we have received the Torah, we always remain with the imprint of Torah. The aura of a Ben Torah remains with us wherever we go, and whatever situation we are in.

It states (Tehillim 34:12) לָכוּ בָּנִים שְׁמָעוּ לִי וְיִרְאַת ה' אֶלְמֻדָּכֶם, "Go, my sons, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of Hashem."

The Skulener Rebbe zt'l asks why the pasuk doesn't write בּוֹאוּ בָּנִים, "Come my sons?" Wasn't Dovid Hamelech calling to his sons, to teach them the path of yiras Shamayim? Why does it state לָכוּ בָּנִים, "Go my sons"?

The Skulener Rebbe answered with a story that happened with the Apter

Rav. The Apter Rav zt'l once came to a city, and the leaders of the city invited him to daven Shacharis in their large beis medresh. The next morning, the Apter Rav walked towards their large beis medresh accompanied by many people of the city, but the Rav didn't go inside. He said that he sees that the beis medresh is full of Torah and tefillah. The leaders of that beis medresh were happy and proud that the Apter Rav praised their beis medresh, but they didn't understand why he wouldn't go inside. The Apter Rav explained, "Generally, when people leave a beis medresh, they take their inspiration with them for the rest of the day. But I see that when the people here leave the beis medresh, they forget everything they gained, and everything remains in the beis medresh. There is no room for me to enter. The beis medresh is filled with Torah and tefillah, since everyone leaves them behind when they go out."

This is what Dovid HaMelech said, לְכוּ בָּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי, וְיִרְאַת ה' אֲלַמְדְּכֶם, "Go, my sons, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of Hashem." He was teaching them to act with yiras Shamayim, especially when it is לְכוּ, when they are leaving the beis medresh.

The words לְכוּ בָּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי אֲלַמְדְּכֶם וְיִרְאַת ה' were inscribed on the building of the beis medresh of Reb Meir Shapiro's yeshiva, "Chachmei Lublin". It was a reminder for the bachurim that their yiras Shamayim should remain with them when they leave the beis medresh.

We can give a mashal of a student who limps while learning in a beis medresh. As long as everyone is sitting and learning Torah, no one recognizes that one of the students is different than the others. But when they walk home, and this student limps as he goes out, then it is noticeable that he is different than the rest. The same can be said about those who go to the beis

medresh. As long as they are there, no one sees the differences between the students. But when they leave the beis medresh, some remain strong with yiras Shamayim and some are weak. Then it is noticeable who truly acquired yiras Shamayim in the beis medresh and who didn't.

Chazal (Shabbos 116a) say that the two pesukim (Bamidbar 10:35-36) וַיְהִי בְנוֹסוּעַ are a sefer unto itself. This is the reason there are two נס surrounding these two pesukim, to show that it is its own sefer.⁵ Tzaddikim (it is also told in the name of the Yeitav Lev zt'l) explain (b'derech tzachus) that וַיְהִי בְנוֹסוּעַ means "When journeying..." This means the whole idea of traveling is a large *sugyah* that needs to be studied well. An entire sefer can be

written on the topic of travel. This is because there are challenges in yiras Shamayim and cautiousness with the mitzvos that come up during traveling, that one might not encounter when at home. When traveling, one has to strengthen his yiras Shamayim, so it will always be with him.

After the parasha of *Akeidah*, which we say in the morning, there is a tefillah called "Ribono Shel Olam...". In Belz, the custom is that on a day when there is even a minor holiday, they wouldn't say the tefillah "Ribono Shel Olam". Once, there was a minor holiday, and one of the *mispallelim* announced, "Today, we don't say Ribono Shel Olam". Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l immediately corrected him. "Don't say it that way. Say,

5. In this sense, there aren't only five sefarim in the Torah, rather seven, because sefer Bamidbar is divided into three: the beginning of Bamidbar, the two pesukim וַיְהִי בְנוֹסוּעַ, and then the rest of the Sefer Bamidbar. This is alluded to in the pasuk (Mishlei 9:1), הִצְבֵּה, עֲמוּדֶיהָ שִׁבְעָה, "She carved out her seven pillars."

"Today we don't say the **וְהָאֵלֹהִים**."

(There are several pesukim that begin with **וְהָאֵלֹהִים** in this tefillah.) But one should never say "there isn't Ribono Shel Olam Today" because we must always

remember that the Ribono Shel Olam is with us. Regardless of where one is – inside or outside the beis medresh – the Ribono Shel Olam is always with him.⁶

6. Once, a piece of non-kosher meat fell into a pot in the kitchen where kosher meat was cooking. The father-in-law immediately asked his son-in-law the halachah. The father-in-law was an am ha'aretz, and his son-in-law was a talmid chacham, so he relied on his son-in-law to give the correct psak. The son-in-law replied that since more than a 1/60th of non-kosher meat fell into the pot, the entire pot became *treif*.

Sometime later, non-kosher meat was being cooked, and a large piece of kosher meat fell into the pot. The father-in-law said, "This time, I don't have to ask my son-in-law. I already know the halachah. If a non-kosher piece of meat can make the entire pot non-kosher, a piece of kosher meat will certainly have the power to make the entire pot kosher." He explained this based on the principle of **טובה מרובה**, that the good is more powerful than the bad. So, if the bad can ruin the pot, the good can certainly fix the pot.

The son-in-law heard this psak and shouted, "Chas v'shalom. A piece of kosher meat doesn't make the entire pot kosher."

The same is true regarding the advertisements for hotel vacations that loudly proclaims there will be shiurei Torah, a good chazan, etc. That, in itself, doesn't make it an ideal place to go. One must check what else is happening there. If it isn't a good place, a drop of good won't fix what isn't "kosher" there.

One of the halachos of Shabbos is the halachah of **הזרה**, how and when one may return a pot of food to the stove on Shabbos. We won't go through all the halachos here, but Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 253) states the following three conditions that must be met to return a pot: (1) One must have planned to return the pot to the

Happy with His Lot

In the mornings, we say the brachah *שעשה לי כל צרכי*, "Who made for me all my

needs." This brachah is in the singular tense, unlike all of the other *birchas hashachar*, which are in plural tense. *פוקח עורים*, for example, is

stove when he took it off. (2) The pot must remain in his hand the entire time it is off. Once he puts it down, he can no longer return it to the stove. (3) The food must still be hot when he returns it.

Reb Gedalyah Eisman, mashgiach of yeshivas Kol Torah, said that these three conditions also apply to bachurim leaving yeshiva for bein hazmanim: (1) they should leave with the intention to return. (2) They can rest up, but they shouldn't settle down in that mindset. Like the pot, it can't be *placed down* elsewhere. (3) The bachur must remain hot. He shouldn't become cold and lose his *hislahavus* for Torah and avodas Hashem.

Some bachurim wanted to go swimming at the beach. They said to Reb Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt'l, "Why did Hashem give us the ocean, if not to go swimming?"

Reb Ben Tzion Abba Shaul replied, "Hashem didn't give us the ocean. He *created* the ocean. He *gave* us the Torah." (We repeat this not to say whether one should or shouldn't go to a kosher beach, rather to remember what Hashem gave us as a gift, and where our primary focus should be.)

Someone saw a rosh yeshiva learning Ketzos while holding a cold cup of Coke in his hand. He asked, with chutzpah, "Is that how one learns the Ketzos?" The rosh yeshiva replied, "No, but this is how one drinks a cup of Coke." The lesson is that even if one feels he needs a Coke, or he needs to air out a bit during a vacation, he should remember that there is a way to do it, never departing from the Torah.

Reb Mendel of Rimmonov zt'l set a rule that chazanim for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur must learn every day, from the 15th of Av onwards. He said that he received this from Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l.

praising Hashem for giving eyesight to all mankind. But *שעשה לי כל צרכי* is thanking Hashem for the needs Hashem gives specifically to the person saying the brachah. The brachah isn't *העושה צרכי בני אדם*, "Who grants *people* with their needs", expressing gratitude to Hashem for giving mankind all their needs. Rather, the brachah is *שעשה לי כל צרכי*, "Hashem gave *me* all my needs."

I heard from a tzaddik that *שעשה לי כל צרכי*, "Hashem gave *me* all my needs," teaches each person a very important lesson. It teaches them to say, "I am not jealous of others who have more than I, because Hashem gave me everything I need. I don't want more, because if I had more, it wouldn't be good for me."

If he had more, it wouldn't help him in any way. It would only hold him back. This is the reason Hashem didn't give it to him. Therefore, one shouldn't be jealous of

others, because each person receives what is best for him. This is the lesson we receive from the brachah *שעשה לי כל צרכי*, "Hashem made for me all my needs." I have everything I need; nothing is lacking.

Hashem promises that in the future (Yechezkel 36:26) *וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׁרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר*, "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 34:15) states that *לֵב בָּשָׂר* can be read as *לב בוסר*, which means a heart that despises. The Midrash explains that this means people will want what they have, and they will be disgusted by the portion of someone else. They see others who have more money than they do, more success, etc., and they become disgusted. That isn't what they want for themselves. They want exactly what they have. If they were given the portion of others, they would be disgusted with their portion.

לבבסר seems to come from the word בוסר, which means unripe fruit. Unripe fruits are bitter, and when one eats unripe fruit, he might end up vomiting. Accordingly, לב בוסר means that he is disgusted and vomits the portion of others. As glorious and as wonderful as these things may be *for others*, it isn't what he wants for *himself*. He wants what Hashem chose for him because Hashem knows what's best for him. Hashem says, וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׁרְכֶם, וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of בוסר." I will give you a heart that is happy with its portion and despises the portion of others.⁷

Chazal (Avos 4:1) say, אֵיזָהוּ, עֲשִׂיר, הַשְׁמִיחַ בְּחֻלּוֹ "Who is wealthy? It is the person

who is happy with his portion." The Tiferes Shlomo (Ki Savo) explains, "A person must believe that all his parnassah and wealth is from Hashem's hashgachah. With this awareness, he won't be jealous of his friend, because that isn't his portion. Especially since whatever he needs, he has, and it is for certain that he doesn't need more. This is the meaning of וַיֵּשֶׁם לָךְ שְׁלוֹם. Everything is perfect, nothing is lacking, and he doesn't want more. What he has is sufficient. If he doesn't have this attitude, all the blessings of bounty won't help him, because no matter how much he has, he will want more. As Chazal say, 'Someone who has one hundred wants two hundred,' and he won't be happy with what Hashem gave him..."

7. The word (Bamidbar 15:31) בְּזָה, disgrace, disgusted, is translated by Unkelos as לב בוסר. Meforshim explain that לב בוסר is a heart that is בְּזָה, disgraces the portion of others. He is happy with his own portion – the portion Hashem gave him. He doesn't want what others have, because he knows it isn't good for him.

Compassion

One of the mitzvos in this week's *parashah* is (22:10), לֹא תַחְרוֹשׁ בַּשּׂוֹר וְחִמּוֹר יַחַד, "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." Rashi writes that this prohibition applies to all species. Two species may not be bound together while working.

What are some of the reasons for this mitzvah?

Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei HaTosfos and the *Baal HaTurim* explain that when the ox chews its cud, the donkey will think it is eating. The donkey will be upset that the ox is eating while it can't.⁸

The Ibn Ezra says that the ox and donkey have different strengths, making it painful for them to plow together.

The *Chinuch* (550) has another explanation for the prohibition. He writes, "It is known that animals are greatly distressed when they are among other species. For example, birds of the same species flock together. [Why don't they mix with other birds? It is because they enjoy being with their own species.] It is worse when it comes to working. Animals don't like to work together with animals of another species."

This is the nature that Hashem put into the world. Therefore, the Torah forbids us to plow with an ox and a donkey (or any other two species) together. We shouldn't cause animals distress and pain.

The *Chinuch* concludes, "The wise should learn from this a lesson in *mussar* and shouldn't appoint two people of totally different natures to work together.

8. Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l advised, "If you have good children, don't speak about them in front of others because they might not have such good children, and this will cause them distress."

Such as a *rasha* and a *tzaddik*, or to employ someone respectable with someone of a lower class. If the Torah prohibits working with animals of different species, it is certainly much harder for people with intelligence to work with people who are different than them."

There are several other mitzvos in this week's *parashah* that teach us sensitivity to the needs of others.

One example is (23:4-5), לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה' גם דור עשירי לא יבא להם בקהל ה' עד עולם על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ומים בדרך, בצאתכם ממצרים, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not marry into Hashem's nation. Even the tenth generation shall never marry into the community of Hashem. This

is because they did not greet you with bread and water on the way when you left Mitzrayim."

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (561) explains, "The Torah instructs us to hate Amon and Moav in our hearts because they are corrupt and cruel nations. They didn't offer bread and water to a large nation, weary from their travels, when they passed near their borders. Amon and Moav acted in an inhumane manner, and they weren't concerned that other nations would discover their true bad nature. It is impossible for them to repent since their evil ways are ingrained in their essence. Such people aren't fitting to join the holy Jewish nation."⁹

9. The *tzaddik* from Yerushalayim, Reb Zelig Braverman *zt'l*, made a *kabbalah* with his Rebbetzin to bake and distribute *challos* for free on *erev Shabbos* to the poor of Yerushalayim. Once, a poor person came to his door late on Friday afternoon and asked for two *challos*. Reb Zelig replied, "I'm so sorry, but many people came today for *challos*. Nothing is left."

The man became very upset and smacked Reb Zelig twice across

his face. Reb Zelig immediately took the two *challos* that were on his table for his own Shabbos meal and gave them to the poor man.

When the poor man left the house, the family asked Reb Zelig, "Why did you give away our *challos*? We need them for the *seudah*. And does he even deserve to get anything after he slapped you?"

Reb Zelig explained that if this poor man slapped him, he probably needed the *challos* desperately. Reb Zelig understood that the poor man's wife would be angry if he came home without *challos*, and there would be a serious *shalom bayis* problem in their home.

"As for us," Reb Zelig added, "we can manage this week with matzos."

Then, Reb Zelig closed himself in his room, and from outside the door, he was heard saying, "Zelig, why did you need to be slapped twice before you learned that you must give away from your own to others?"

The father of a newborn baby wanted to name his child after his father, but his wife thought that it wasn't a good idea. A child who had the same name was niftar in their building three months earlier. She feared that the name bears a bad omen. The father went to Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt'l for advice.

Reb Shlomo Zalman sided with the wife, but for a different reason. He said to the father, "I agree with you that the name doesn't bear any evil tidings, but I have another reason you shouldn't use that name. You live in the same building as the family who lost a child with that name. Whenever they hear you calling your son's name, they will remember their child, and this will cause them tremendous distress.

Once, Reb Alter Shmuelewitz zt'l saw a young girl crying on the curb. "What's the matter?" he asked her.

"My friend said my dress isn't pretty," she said and pouted.

Reb Shmuelewitz replied, "Tell your mother that I said you have a pretty dress."

Some explain that the problem wasn't that they

The girl's face brightened, and she ran home to tell her mother.

Reb Shmuelewitz said to the person who was walking with him, "The Midrash says, 'Just as Hashem removes tears from all faces (as it states *Yeshayah* 25:8, דמעה מעל כל פנים ... ומחה ה') similarly, you shall also remove tears from all faces.' I just fulfilled that by removing tears from this young girl's face."

One week, after immersing in the *mikvah* on Friday afternoon, Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zy'a* asked his *gabai*, Reb Shalom Fogel *z'l*, to bring him cake and coffee. Reb Shalom Fogel *z'l* was surprised because the Rebbe never requested this before. He hardly ate at all.

Reb Shalom brought coffee and cake, and the Rebbe said, "Give it to So-and-So who is in the beis medresh. When I was in the *mikvah*, I heard him say, 'After a hot *mikvah* like this, all that's missing is a cup of hot coffee with a piece of cake,' and I want to fulfill his wishes."

Reb Yaakov of Tolichan *z'l* composed many *nigunim* for Stoliner chassidim. Once, Rebbe Asher Stoliner *zy'a* requested, "Sing me one of your latest compositions."

Reb Yaakov sang a song he recently composed, but the Rebbe told him that he had a different song in mind. Reb Yaakov sang another song, but the Rebbe told him that this too wasn't what he had intended. Reb Yaakov said, "Apparently, the Rebbe has a particular song in mind. Please tell me which song, and I will gladly sing it."

The Rebbe replied, "Last night, at 3:00 a.m., you came into the beis medresh and saw that the beis medresh wasn't heated. You had *rachmanus* on the scholars, so you went outside in the freezing weather and snow and chopped wood for the furnace. As you worked, you sang. That's the song I want to hear." It was a beautiful song because it was composed while he exercised compassion and did chesed for Yidden.

didn't provide bread and water because the Jewish nation didn't lack these staples, as they had *mann* for food, and water from Miriam's well. The problem was על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם, that they didn't greet you with דבר, encouraging words.

Caution from the Internet

Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l tells: "When I was in Bialystok, I passed down a street where there is a hospital for the mentally insane. Two people called me over by my name. I went over to them, and they told me that they are normal, but others said they are insane, and ever since then, they have been interned in this place. They expressed how much they suffer in this hospital, which was not better than a prison, and it was all due to false claims.

Reb Yankele told them that Yosef HaTzaddik was also in prison for twelve years for absolutely no

reason, but then he became the king of Mitzrayim.

They had a pleasant conversation for about an hour, and Reb Yankele Galinsky encouraged them to be strong with their emunah and bitachon. Reb Yankele was convinced that these two men were emotionally sound, and he told them that he would do whatever he could to help them get out of this hospital.

The men thanked him. One of them said, "Please free me as quickly as possible, because as long as I'm here, the *geulah* can't come."

Then he explained himself, "You see, I am Moshiach, and I need to save the Jewish people from galus, but I'm stuck here in prison."

The other person rebuked him, "How many times have I told you, Moshiach can only reveal himself when Hashem tells him to do so,

and I never told you that you can reveal yourself."

Reb Yankele realized that they both were in the right place, after all. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Koheles 12:13) סוף דבר הכל נשמע, in the end, it was understood that they were in the right place.

Reb Yankele Galinsky explained that the yetzer hara is a מלך זקן וכסיל, an old, foolish king. He speaks ridiculous ideas. Even if initially, the yetzer hara seems to say clever words, words of wisdom, but you have to check what the סוף דבר, final result is. If it is אַתָּה יְרָא הָאֱלֹקִים, fear of Heaven, then they are wise words. Otherwise, it is foolishness, and you are better off keeping far away from him.

This is the meaning of the pasuk: סוף דבר הכל נשמע אַתָּה יְרָא הָאֱלֹקִים וְאַתָּה מִצְוָתָיו שְׁמוֹר כִּי זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם, "The end of the matter, when all has been heard: fear Hashem, keep the mitzvos, for that is man's whole duty." Check the end. See whether the counsel

leads to yiras Shamayim or not.

It states (Mishlei 17:12) פְּגוּשׁ דֵּב שְׂכוּל בְּאִישׁ וְאֵל כְּסִיל בְּאֻלְתּוֹ, "Better for a man to be confronted by a bear bereft of its cubs than by a fool in his foolishness." A bear that just lost its children is dangerous, but it is a greater danger to meet with a fool, someone who speaks ideas that can harm your yiras Shamayim.

A person on his deathbed was asked where he wanted to be buried. He replied, "I have one request. I don't want to be buried next to a person who had an iPhone in his lifetime."

The dead aren't using iPhones anymore. Kal v'chomer, one should avoid being near someone alive who has an iPhone. This could be compared to burying oneself alive.

For example, when riding a bus, don't sit next to someone who has an iPhone. There are too many stories of people who had a "one-

time exposure" to the abominations shown on an iPhone and the like, and then they fell to the lowest levels, r'l.

It states (Mishlei 6:6) לֶךְ אַל וְנִמְלָה עֲצִיל רֹאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וְחָכָם "Go to the ant, you sluggard; see its ways and grow wise." We can explain that ants run around the ground collecting pieces of food, and when someone walks in the vicinity, they run and hide to protect their lives. They don't want to be trampled on. After the person passes, the ants come out again and they crawl about once again, until the next person comes, and they will run for safety again. Why don't the ants learn from the past, that it is dangerous to walk outside? They were almost trampled on in the past. Why do they keep coming out and risking their lives again?

We should learn from the ants' foolishness and be wiser than they are. We shouldn't go to a place where there is spiritual danger. In the past, you experienced the fall that came from not being cautious, so why don't you learn from the past to be careful now?

Avos (4:2) states, וּבִירוֹחַ מֶן הָעֵצְבֵרָה, we should run away from aveiros. Chosid Yaavatz explains that when there is a fire, one should run away from it because a fire can spread. This is how far one should run away from aveiros. This is the reason the expression וּבִירוֹחַ is used. You don't just *walk away* from aveiros, you run away, like someone running for his life.¹⁰

When there is a war, and one country fears it will be destroyed, that is when they

10. Rav Shach zt'l, Rosh Yeshivas Ponovitz, said that seventy years in Ponovitz, Lithuania, didn't have as many tests as one day in Bnei Brak, on Rechov Reb Akiva. If this is how it was in his time, forty years ago, what would be said today?

fight their strongest and they take out their secret weapons. They refrained from using those weapons until now; they saved them for the most desperate moments. But here they know that if not now, it's never. If they don't fight with all their might, they are lost.

The Satan is the same. We are in the generation before Moshiach, and the Satan and his army become even stronger at this time. Weapons that they didn't use throughout galus are now being taken out, to capture Jewish souls, to prevent the geulah from arriving. Chazal (Succah 52a) state that the Satan will be slaughtered when Moshiach

comes, and therefore, he is afraid and he uses all his strength.

This is alluded to in the pasuk (Bamidbar 24:14) לָקֵה אֶעֱצֹךְ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה הָעָם הַזֶּה לְעַמְּךָ בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים, "Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the End of Days." Rashi explains that Bilaam advised Balak to cause the Jewish nation to sin. The counsel was to cause them to sin with *znus* (בנות זנואב) and with *avodah zarah* (בעל פעור). The first two words of the pasuk are understood, לָקֵה אֶעֱצֹךְ, "Come and I will advise you," but what is the meaning of the end of the pasuk, אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה הָעָם הַזֶּה לְעַמְּךָ בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים, "what this people will do to your

Reb Moshe Sternbuch Shlita writes (Moadim u'Zmanim vol.7, siman 143, footnote) that the Beis Yisrael zt'l told him that he wanted to be machmir in all halachos, according to all shitos and poskim, but he couldn't do so (see there the reason). Then the Beis Yisrael said that he chose one great principle for himself: For the generation before Moshiach, the primary chumros and precautions should be with the correction of the attribute of Yesod (kedushah, tznius, avoiding forbidden sights, and related halachos). In these areas, he is very machmir."

people in the End of Days"? The sins of avodah zarah and adultery that the Moabites enticed the Jewish nation happened then, and not בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, at the "End of Days"?!

Baalei mussar explain that Bilaam said to Balak, "I see with my prophecy what will occur at the end of times. In that generation, the yetzer hara will become very strong. The yetzer hara will know at that time that if he doesn't fight then, he will be destroyed. Therefore, at this time, he fights with all his might, bringing forth his strongest weapons. Those weapons are great tests on the kedushah of *Yesod* and on the *emunah*. This proves that these two tests are the yetzer hara's strongest weapons. Therefore, I advise you to use those weapons now against the Jewish nation, to cause them to sin in these manners."

We understand from this the difficult tests of our days. We have to be strong like a wall of fire, not to

allow these tests to enter our homes, not even a hairsbreadth of an entrance. We are at the end, בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, and these are the greatest tests before the arrival of Moshiach.

Boundaries and Safeguards

It states (Koheles 10:8) וּפְרֹץ גֶּדֶר, יִשְׁקָנוּ נָחָשׁ, "He who breaks down a gate will be bitten by a snake." The Chofetz Chaim (Shem Olam ch.6 footnote) asks why it states יִשְׁקָנוּ נָחָשׁ, and not that he will be bitten by a lion, which is a greater pain? The explanation is that when one is bitten by a lion, he knows immediately that he is in danger, and he immediately seeks medical help. However, when one is bitten by a snake, he doesn't realize at first just how serious it is. The poison gradually passes through his blood, and only then does he feel and realize the great danger he is in.

The same applies to one who transgresses one of the gedarim, safeguards,

established by the gedolei Yisrael. At first, he doesn't realize that something terrible occurred. But later he will discover how much he fell, all because he thought he was smarter than the chachamim, and he thought that it wouldn't harm him.

Year (1986) תשמ"ו, there was a nuclear disaster in the city of Chernobyl, Ukraine (which was then part of the USSR). Since then, Chernobyl has been a destroyed city, and it is dangerous to live there. Some foolish people thought that they were wise, and they went to Chernobyl and spent time there. They said that nothing would happen to them, and the warnings of the government are unreal and untrue. When they left, and they were well, they announced, "Look at us. Nothing happened. It's just a conspiracy." They didn't know that the radiation went into their bodies, and gradually they became ill. Even their children, who

were born years later, were ill.

The same can be said about those people who claim to be wise, and they say nothing will happen to them if they are lax with the takanos of the chachamim of our generation. They proclaim with a loud voice, "You see, I have internet and nothing happened to me." But they don't know that, although they think they are well, they are harming themselves and their children. They think it is nothing, that it is a joke, but they are damaging themselves.

The Gemara (Menachos 43b) states, "Whoever wears tefillin on his head and arm, tzitzis on his clothes, and a mezuzah on his doorpost, won't be quick to sin." These mitzvos will protect him from performing aveiros. Rashi writes, עומד בחוקה שלא יחטא, we can assume that he won't sin. This is as it states (Koheles 4:12) וְחַיִּט הַמְּשֻׁלָּשׁ לֹא יִבָּדָד, "a three-ply cord is not easily severed!" And it states

(Tehillim 34:8) הַנָּגֶה מִלְאָךְ ה' סָבִיב לִי־אֵיּוֹ וְיִחְלָצֵם, "The angel of Hashem encamps around those who fear Him, and He saves them." Rashi writes that Hashem saves them from *aveiros*.

The Maharsha explains that each mitzvah creates a malach, and these three mitzvos, tefillin, tzitzis, and mezuzah, create malachim that הוֹנֵה סָבִיב, encamp around him and protect him from performing aveiros.

The Shevet HaLevi (Reb Shmuel Vosner zt'l, parashas Shlach, תש"ע) asks, "Who from Bnei Yisrael isn't cautious to keep these mitzvos [talit, tefillin, and mezuzah] carefully, and I'mahadrin? So, why aren't they protected from aveiros? Chazal guaranteed us that we will be protected from performing aveiros when we keep these three mitzvos!

Shevet HaLevi explains that although people are cautious with these mitzvos,

they also bring into their homes the tamei and 'cursed devices. So, how will it help them if they have a mezuzah on their doorpost, outside the home, when inside the home there is a tamei device? About this, we can use the words written in the piyut of Yom Kippur before kedushah of Shacharis, אוי לבית אשר מחריביו מתוכו, "Woe to the house that the destructors are within it."

Reb Vosner added that the same is with the tzitzis and the tefillin, which protect from aveiros. However, in his pockets, he carries a non-kosher telephone, connected to all types of tumah, from which one is in danger of falling to the lowest places, with no return. The most precious and *mehudar* tefillin won't protect him, and the most kosher tzitzis won't help him, because there is a tumah within him!¹¹

11. When the Torah warns us to guard our eyes, it states (Bamidbar

15:39) וְלֹא-תִתּוּרוּ, and the trop (טעמים) for those words are אָזַל גָּרַשׁ, which means "goes and banishes". We can explain that when one isn't cautious with his eyes, he banishes the Shechinah, chas v'shalom. He too is punished with גָּרַשׁ, banishment. This applies even more so to the bad devices, which cause one to be מִתְגָּרֵשׁ, banished, from himself and from his family, as it is known. However, if he is careful with his eyes, then it will be אָזַל גָּרַשׁ, which means that the banishment will be sent away.

Chazal tell us that the Emorites hid their wealth in the walls of their homes. Therefore, Hashem would place tzaraas in the homes of the Jewish nation living in Eretz Yisrael. According to halachah, they had to break open the walls where there was tzaraas to cut the tzaraas out of the home. By doing so, they discovered the treasures that were hidden years before, and they became wealthy.

The Shevet HaLevi asks why this is called a נֶגַע, a plague? This tzaraas was for his benefit! But the answer is, if a Jewish home has to be broken, it is a נֶגַע, a plague. Along this theme, we add that those who break their homes for the sake of parnassah – they bring the internet into their homes for parnassah – this isn't a benefit; it is a נֶגַע, a plague.

Reb Elchanan Wasserman zt'l hy'd had a yeshiva, Ohel Torah. The father of one of the bachurim wanted to take his son out of the yeshiva. He told Reb Elchanan Wasserman that (Avos 2:2) יָפָה תִּלְמוּד (Avos 2:2) "Torah is nice when it goes together with working for parnassah." So, he wanted his son to begin working.

Reb Elchanan told him that he could have brought an even better source, for it states in this same Mishnah, וְכָל תּוֹרָה שֶׁאֵין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה סוּפָה, "Torah that doesn't come along with work, in the end he won't be able to continue learning and it leads to sin."

However, Reb Elchanan explained that there is a halachah regarding bris milah, that if the child's brothers died when they had bris milah, the child doesn't receive milah. The great mitzvah of milah isn't performed because it is dangerous to give a bris milah to this child. A father who performs a bris milah regardless would be considered a רוצח, murderer, and not that he performed a mitzvah. So, although you have a good point, that Torah should

The first foundation for hatzlachah with children is that the house should be safeguarded and closed off from all bad things. Even if it is hard to detach from them, r'l, or he thinks that

he needs them very much. He should **open** his heart and have rachmanus on his children that they shouldn't fall into evilness, and **close** the internet.

go together with working for parnassah, but what about all the brothers from Bnei Yisrael who died spiritually when they followed this path? Therefore, just as the bris milah is נדחה, pushed off when there is a danger, so, too, the pursuit for parnassah is נדחה, pushed off in the face of danger.

For our purposes, when one claims that the internet is needed for parnassah, one should remember how many of our brothers have "died" (in a spiritual sense) due to this approach. And then it will be good for them, in this world and in the next.