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The Power of Loving a Struggling Child

In the previous *shiur*, we spoke at length about how parents whose children are struggling with *Yiddishkeit* can accept the situation with love. Now we will examine issues of *emunah and bitachon* that will (with Hashem's help) complement and complete the previous *shiur*.

In *Maseches Berachos* (10a) we find a dialogue between Chizkiyahu Hamelech and Yeshayahu Hanavi.

Yeshayahu said (*Yeshayahu* 38:1) "Give instructions to your household, because you will die and not live." (*You will die – in this world, and not live – in Olam Haba.*)

Chizkiyahu asked Yeshayahu, "What is the reason for this?"

Yeshayahu answered, "Because you did not engage in *piryah v'rivyah*; you decided not to marry and have children."

Chizkiyahu explained, "It is because I saw with *ruach hakodesh* that unworthy children would descend from me."

Yeshayahu told him, "What business of yours are the secret concerns of the Merciful One? You must do what you are commanded to do, and Hashem will do what He wants."

Chizkiyahu now asked Yeshayahu, "Give me your daughter as a wife; perhaps the combination of your *zechus* and mine will allow me to have worthy children."

Yeshayahu insisted, "It has already been decreed that you will die!"

Chizkiyahu retorted: "Ben Amotz, finish your *nevuah* and go! I have a tradition from my grandfather, Dovid Hamelech, that even if a sharp sword rests on a person's neck, he should not refrain from praying for mercy."

In the end, Chizkiyahu's *tefillah* to cancel the decree was accepted. He married Yeshayahu's daughter, and two wicked sons were born to them, Menashe and Ravshakeh. Menashe is known as the wicked king who sinned and caused others to sin, to the extent that Chazal said he has no portion in *Olam Haba*.

The story teaches us a very important principle. **There are *neshamos* that must come into this world. There are *cheshbonos* in *Shamayim* and we have to right to interfere.**

The commentaries on *Ein Yaakov* note that even after Chizkiyahu saw with *ruach hakodesh* that his children would be wicked, that knowledge is still called "the secrets of the Merciful One." He didn't know Hashem's reasons for sending those *neshamos* into this world. Yeshayahu reminded him that Hashem knew that the child would sin and cause others to sin. *Nevertheless, He wants that child to be born, and you shouldn't try to prevent it. You must fulfill your obligation, and Hashem will do what He wants.*

Rav Eliyahu Schick, in his sefer *Ein Eliyahu*, presents two ways to explain how the birth of a *rasha* can bring *nachas* to Hashem. The first approach is that this child may have descendants who will be *tzaddikim*. We find that even though Amon and Moav were born through an *aveirah*, it was valuable to Hakadosh Baruch Hu because it led to the eventual birth of Dovid Hamelech. So too, even though Chizkiyahu's son Menashe was a *rasha*, his son Amon was the father of Yoshiyahu, who was righteous and was called *Meshiach Hashem*.

The second approach is that the child himself can eventually do *teshuvah*, paving a new path of *teshuvah* that never existed before.

In *Maseches Sanhedrin* (103a), R' Yochanan said:

When Menashe was suffering and davened to Hashem, it says, וישמע לו ויחתר ה' Hashem listened and He 'dug for him.' Why does it not say simply ויעתר לו, He answered him? This teaches us that Hakadosh Baruch

Hu created a tunnel in the heavens, to receive his *teshuvah* despite the *Middas HaDin*.

The *Pesikta* says similarly: the *malachim* closed all the windows of *teshuvah*, until Hakadosh Baruch Hu dug a tunnel in the heavens and received his *teshuvah*.

Menashe brought a new conceptual pathway of *teshuvah* into reality.

Understanding the Tunnel

In his *sefer Nesivos Shalom*, the Slonimer Rebbe explains Menashe's *teshuvah* by comparing it to a person's physical and emotional strength. Usually there are set limits to our strength that we can't overcome. However, in times of crisis, people discover strength and abilities that they were unaware of. The same applies to *teshuvah*. Usually, there are limits to *teshuvah*. However, when a person realizes that all the windows of *teshuvah* are closed to him, and he is desperate, new sources of strength enable his *teshuvah* to burst out from the depth of his *penimiyus*. That *teshuvah* will then be accepted via a "tunnel" that Hashem will open in the heavens.

The *Nesivos Shalom* explains that this applies to *aveiros* that cause such severe damage that regular *teshuvah* can't help. This higher form of *teshuvah* (*teshuvah ila'ah*) can help even in those cases. This is what Yeshayahu meant when he told Chizkiyahu not to make Hashem's *cheshbonos*. *Don't refrain from having children because you want to prevent tzaar haShechinah. It may be that in the end, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will have nachas from that child. You must only fulfill your obligation.*

Sometimes parents' pain is amplified because they care about *tzaar haShechinah* when they see their child's involvement in *aveiros*. Even though their pain is so great, they must focus on what Hashem wants them to do now. That should be our general approach to *nisyonos*. We must try to see what Hashem is commanding us to do, and try to fulfill His *ratzon*. We have to leave all other *cheshbonos* to Hashem.

A *baal bitachon* knows that even in the most trying circumstances, once he has done his part, without trying to interfere in Hashem's *cheshbonos*, he can return to his daily routine. Hashem will take care of the results, and good will result even from negative situations.

Happy Endings

Now let us turn to the Mishnah (*Berachos* 9:5), "A person is obligated to make a *brachah* on the bad just as he makes a *brachah* on the good." Initially this seems incomprehensible. Why would someone make a *brachah* on a negative event? The fact that the Mishnah described the circumstances as *ra* tells us that we are talking about true *ra*, as defined by the Torah.

In previous *shiurim*, we discussed the explanation of Rabbeinu Yonah, who says that a person must thank Hashem for the pain in his heart. He is meant to understand that Hashem caused him to experience that pain with an exact *cheshbon*, as a *kapparah* for sins.

Now, let's focus on another reason to thank Hashem for *ra*. We must remember that even if something seems to be bad right now, it is very possible that good will result from it in the future.

This is how the Rambam (*Peirush HaMishnayos*) explains Chazal's instruction to make a *brachah* on negative events.

It means that he should accept them with *simchah*, overcome his emotions, and develop peace of mind, so that when he makes the *brachah* of *dayan ha'emes* he will look the same as when he says *hatov v'hameitiv*. As the *Chachamim* said on so many occasions, כל מה דעביד משמיא לטב - *Everything Hashem does is for the good*. This makes sense to people of understanding, even though the Torah didn't command us to do so. Many things that are considered bad in the beginning bring great good in the end, and many things that are considered good in the beginning can end very badly.

Therefore, it is not befitting for a person of understanding to get upset at the time of a great tragedy or a dangerous decree, because

he doesn't know its purpose. He also shouldn't let himself be convinced to rejoice greatly when something that he views as positive occurs in his life. He doesn't know the final purpose of that event.

Since a person cannot know if an event in his life is bad or good, he must align himself with Hashem's will and do only what he is required to do. If he does so, he can have *bitachon* that only goodness and *chesed* will result from those events.

He can therefore thank Hashem, trusting with *emunah* that this is not bad but good.

Thank You Hashem

In his chapter on *yissurim*, the *Pele Yo'etz* states:

Whenever a person is in a painful situation, he should always say *גם זו לטובה* - *This, too, is for the good*, and *כל דעביד רחמנא לטבא* - *Everything the Merciful One does is for the good*. He should not be like the fools who kick, get angry, and speak blasphemies if they fall or fail. Woe to those people: they get *gehinnom* twice. They exhaust themselves in their suffering, and add to their sins.

On the other hand, those who accept everything with a good heart will find it good in the end. Every event that seems bad to our eyes was intended by Hashem for a good purpose. It is just that sometimes these things are hidden and only known to Hashem. Sometimes they are revealed to us.

Chazal tell us the story (*Niddah* 31a) of a man who unfortunately had to have his leg amputated. His travel plans were ruined, as he was unable to board the ship that he had planned to travel on. He cursed his misfortune. In the end, that ship was lost at sea. Then the man began to sing, *אודך ה' כי אנפת בי* - *I thank You, Hashem, for being angry with me!* (*Yeshayahu* 12:1)

Seeing from Behind

The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe, Parshas Ki Sisa*) explains the *pasuk*, וַיֵּרָא אֶת אַחֲרַי וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרָאוּ – *You will see Me from behind, but My face will not be seen.*

Many events take place in our world that lead us to wonder, “Why did Hashem do this?” But after a long time, perhaps even in another generation, when we look back, we see and understand everything. We see how Hashem intended all of these events to prepare the way for something important.

So it was in the miracle of Purim. Vashti was executed, and Esther was taken away to the palace. All the causes and effects that we see in the beginning of the Megillah were actually preparing the *hatzalah* of Am Yisrael. However, before the King’s will is carried out, we cannot understand. We can only believe, never doubting, that everything happens for a deep reason. It is only that the reasons are hidden from us. This *emunah* is very valuable, and for the *emunah* itself, we are rewarded.

The Emunah of Avraham Avinu

In the *Bris Bein HaBesarim* (*Parshas Lech Lecha*), Hakadosh Baruch Hu reveals very frightening future events to Avraham Avinu.

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תְּדַע כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעִבְדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה. – *And He said to Avram: you should know that your children will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and torture them for four hundred years.* (Bereishis 15:13)

Yet afterwards Hashem tells him, וְאַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶל אֲבֹתֶיךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם תִּקְבְּרָ בְּשֵׂיבָה – *And you will come to your fathers in peace; you will be buried in a good old age.*

Rashi explains, “Hashem informed him that Yishmael would do *teshuvah* in his lifetime, and that Eisav would not adopt an evil way of life within his lifetime.”

How did Avraham Avinu earn the reward of finding out that Yishmael would do *teshuvah*, that bad would eventually turn to good? It was because he believed that in *Shamayim* there is an exact *cheshbon* for all suffering and pain. As the *pasuk* says, וַיֵּאֱמֶן בַּה' וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה - *And he believed in Hashem, and it was considered an act of righteousness.*

Tzaddikim have taught us that someone who fulfills Hashem's mitzvos even when he doesn't understand them will eventually have their hidden meaning revealed to him. Why?

If a person only does mitzvos when he understands the reason behind them, he has not totally been *mevatel* himself to his Creator. How, then, can he expect to see the light of the *mitzvos*? In contrast, take somebody who keeps the mitzvos purely as a command, and says, "The deep meanings of mitzvos (*taamei hamitzvos*) are beyond me, but that doesn't stop me from keeping the mitzvos. My only goal is to fulfill Hashem's will." This person is showing complete *bittul* to his Creator. As a result, the mitzvos become absorbed into his very flesh and blood. The light of the mitzvos illuminates his *neshamah*, and it becomes possible for him to comprehend the *taamei hamitzvos*.

This process is deeply connected to the teaching of the *Ohr Hachaim hakadosh*, סמא דיסורי קיבולי - *The cure of suffering is acceptance*. When a person accepts suffering with love, believing that everything is *l'tovah* although the *tovah* is hidden, he forms a deep connection with Hashem. As a result of that bond, and as a reward for his *emunah*, he will be allowed to see the happy ending.

If we only open our eyes, we will see that so many things that seemed entirely bad turned out to be entirely good, looking back from a later perspective.

The Banished Rabbi

The Chafetz Chaim told the following story.

When I was a young man living here in Radin, the son of the *rav* unfortunately got caught up with the *Haskalah*. Because of that,

many people in town complained that he was no longer fit to be the *rav*. Eventually he was forced to leave Radin in shame. I was very upset about this persecution, and felt the pain of this *talmid chacham*, who was banished in such a humiliating way, when he had done nothing wrong.

Fifty years later I saw that even if the community of Radin had bad intentions, Hakadosh Baruch Hu planned it for the good. When that *rav* left Radin and was forced to seek a new position, he became the *rav* in a small village whose Jews were *chassidim*. His children made friends with the *chassidische* children; they were drawn to the *chassidische* way of *avodas Hashem* and lost any interest in the *Haskalah* movement. All of his children grew into wonderful *ovdei Hashem*; they found like-minded *shidduchim*; and his sons became *rabbanim*, continuing their father's legacy.

Stories like this take place every day in the world of *shidduchim*. Someone proposes a *shidduch* for a *bachur*. It seems to be a terrible idea, and his parents do everything in their power to stop it. This is their responsibility: they have to do all they can to help their son. However, this was decreed Above, and eventually this *shidduch* that they were so afraid of actually happens. Five or ten years later, the parents open their eyes and see how their son and daughter-in-law strengthened each other so that they progressed far more than others in their age group.

The Chafetz Chaim presents Shevet Dan as an example. Binyamin had ten sons, while Dan only had one son, Chushim, who was deaf and mute. Try to imagine how difficult it was for Dan to come to a family *simchah* with his handicapped son and watch Binyamin's ten sons dancing joyfully.

However, if we look at what happened in subsequent generations, we discover that Shevet Dan had many more descendants than Shevet Binyamin. (When Bnei Yisrael were counted in *Parshas Bamidbar*, Dan numbered 62,700, while Binyamin numbered 35,400.)

Learning from the Earth

We find another example of this idea in *sefer Arugas Habosem (Parshas Chayei Sarah)*.

Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, served Avraham loyally with all his strength and all of his heart. He was Avraham Avinu's closest *talmid*, and imparted Avraham's teachings to others. He was sure that Avraham would choose his daughter to be Yitzchak's wife. Surely the couple would build a home on the foundations of Avraham Avinu's Torah and *chesed*.

One day, Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak. "And what about my daughter?" asks Eliezer.

Avraham Avinu answers, "You are a descendant of Canaan and therefore, ארור - cursed. The cursed cannot unite with the blessed."

It's hard to imagine what a painful blow this was to Eliezer. The entire future he imagined shattered before his eyes.

How did Eliezer react? He didn't hesitate for a moment, or try to avoid fulfilling his *shlichus*. He immediately travelled to Charan and carried out his mission with outstanding loyalty.

Where did Eliezer learn this exceptional standard of behavior? From the earth. Chazal tell us (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a), "All the creatures of Creation were created לרעתן - according to their conscious agreement." Rashi explains that Hakadosh Baruch Hu asked them if they want to be created, and they all said yes.

When Hashem asked them if they wanted to be created, He was asking them if they wanted to be created in that particular form, with those particular characteristics. It would have made sense for the earth to protest, "Ribono shel Olam, the heavens and all their hosts are spiritual creations that serve You on high. Why should I and my inhabitants have to inhabit this lowly, coarse, material world?"

However, Hashem wanted the world to be created in that particular form in order to fulfill its purpose. The earth therefore did not object to being created in the manner, and with the limitations, that Hakdosh Baruch Hu wanted. Chazal explained that this is the very meaning of the word ארץ. It was called that name because of its desire, רצון, to do the will of its Creator.

Eliezer said to himself: “Although I yearned to become part of Avraham Avinu’s family forever after – if Hashem wants me to serve Him in a different way, that is what I will do. What difference does it make if I serve Him in one way or another? My only desire is to fulfill the desire of my Creator, no matter what.”

The *Arugas Habosem* explains that this is the type of person described by the *pasuk*, עֵינַי בְּנְאֻמֵי אֶרֶץ לְשֶׁבֶת עִמּוֹדֵי – *I look to the loyal ones of the earth to sit with Me*. Hashem is saying, “I only want to sit with simple people who follow the wishes of their Creator without any *cheshbonos*. These are people who are as loyal (*ne’eman*) as the earth.”

Transformed from Cursed to Blessed

The *Arugas Habosem* continues, citing *Bereishis Rabbah* 60:7. When Lavan greeted Eliezer, with the words “בוא בְרוּךְ ה’ – *come, blessed of Hashem!*” (*Bereishis* 24:31), Chazal teach us that Eliezer left behind his “cursed” status and became a person who is blessed. Once Eliezer submitted himself entirely to his Creator and agreed to serve Hashem no matter what he is asked to do, bad was transformed into good. He was now ברוך instead of ארוּר.

The journey of Eliezer’s *neshamah* continued. The Arizal wrote that his *neshamah* entered Kalev Ben Yefuneh via *gilgul*, and Kalev inherited the city of Chevron, which contains the *Me’aras Hamachpelah* purchased by Avraham. By the merit of his unconditional *avodah*, Eliezer received a great inheritance, even though his daughter did not marry Yitzchak.

Rav Menachem Azaryah of Pano in his *sefer Gilgulei Neshamos* explains how each *neshamah* eventually fulfills its destiny and receives

all the good that is prepared for it. Our *avodah* is to develop the *emunah* and *bitachon* that will help us see that future reality even today. Without that *emunah*, our *avodah* will be very difficult.

Sometimes, we are like the little child who cries for a small toy or candy while his parents try to explain that he is receiving something much bigger than the trivial item he is crying about. The child's undeveloped intellect can't grasp that concept. We, too, like little children, don't have the ability to understand the complex *cheshbonos* of Heaven. We must focus on strengthening our *emunah* and *bitachon* so that although we don't understand, we believe that everything that happens to us is for our best. *Emunah* opens a gate by which we will be able, eventually, to see the good that resulted from the troubles that seemed so bad.

A Precious Shlichus

This *emunah* enables a person to experience life as a unique mission, a *shlichus* that Hashem has sent him to perform. The *Chidushei HaRim* (*Parshas Shelach*) quotes the Midrash, "There is nothing as precious before Hakadosh Baruch Hu as a *shaliach* who is sent to do a mitzvah and invests his *nefesh* to succeed in his *shlichus*." The *Chidushei HaRim* adds that someone who is *mevatel* himself to fulfill his mission in life becomes a *shliach mitzvah*. Chazal tell us that שלוחי מצוה אינם ניוקים - *shluchei mitzvah* are protected from damage.

Parents who see their children leaving the path of Torah and mitzvos often think, in pain, "What *shlichus* do we have in this situation? All we can do is follow that teaching of Chazal (*Yevamos* 65b), 'Just as it is a mitzvah to say something that will be heard, it is a mitzvah not to say something that won't be heard.'"

These parents should know that they have a very precious *shlichus*. The *sefer Divrei Meir* brings us a teaching of Rav Meir of Premishlan.

I heard in the name of Rav Feivish of Bradshin an explanation of the *pasuk* וַיֵּאָהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צִיד בְּפִי - *And Yitzchak loved Eisav because he brought hunting to his mouth.*

At first glance, this *pasuk* is a mystery; it seems shocking. How could a holy tzaddik like Yitzchak Avinu, who kept the entire Torah, love Eisav because of the food he brought to him? Chazal's explanation, that Eisav tricked Yitzchak by asking halachic questions, is also difficult to understand. How could Eisav successfully trick someone as holy as Yitzchak Avinu?

Rav Feivish explained this with a story from the life of his Rebbe, Rav Chaim, the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* of Chernovitz, whose only son didn't behave in a way befitting the son of a tzaddik. Despite the boy's behavior, Rav Chaim continued to care for him in every way possible. He provided good meals, expensive clothing and anything else he needed.

Every day, when Rav Chaim woke up to begin his pre-dawn *avodah*, he began by turning to Hashem with a special *tefillah*.

"Ribono shel Olam! Please look at what I'm doing with my son. Even though he doesn't follow the right path, I treat him with great goodness and *chesed*.

"I am only flesh and blood. You are *Avinu Av Harachaman*, our merciful Father; how much more is it fitting for You to treat us in the same way! Even if we, *chas v'shalom*, don't behave as You would want, please have mercy on us as a father has mercy on his child, and provide us with all we need. Ribono Shel Olam, learn this *kal vachomer* from me."

In *Maseches Shabbos* (89b) Chazal tell us,

In the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will tell Avraham, "Your children have sinned against me."

Avraham answered, "Ribono shel Olam, let them be erased for the *kedushah* of Your Name."

Hashem said: *I will tell Yaakov, who experienced tzaar gidul banim; perhaps he will daven for Me to have mercy on them.*

He told Yaakov, "Your children have sinned."

Yaakov replied, "Ribono shel Olam, let them be erased for the *kedushah* of Your Name."

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said: *There is no taam in the old ones, and no eitzah in the young!*

He said to Yitzchak, "Your children have sinned against me."

Yitzchak answered, "Ribono shel Olam, my children, and not yours?"

"Also, how much have they sinned? How many years does a person live? ...

"If You will bear all of their sins, good; and if not, let half be on me, and half on You. And if you tell me that all should be on me – indeed, I have sacrificed my life before You."

We see that Yitzchak presented many arguments for Hashem to have mercy on his children. It can seem surprising. However, it is important to remember that Yitzchak had a basis for arguing. He could say, "Ribono shel Olam, see that I had a son whom everyone called *Eisav HaRasha*, the wicked. Despite that, I truly loved him and had mercy on him, as a father has mercy on his son. So too, Ribono shel Olam, learn a *kal vachomer*: have mercy on my children, who are Your precious children even if they have sinned."

This is the intention of the *pasuk* that Yitzchak loved Eisav כִּי צִיד בִּפְיִי. Yitzchak's love of Eisav provided his mouth with powerful 'ammunition,' a strong argument in the future, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu would tell him that his children sinned.

First, Yitzchak Avinu loved Eisav simply because he was his son. Once he felt that he truly loved Eisav, he had the wisdom to realize that this love would enable him to present a *kal vachomer* argument that would arouse Hakadosh Baruch Hu's mercy for His children. When he

saw that his relationship with Eisav enabled him to serve Hashem more completely, his love for Eisav kept increasing.

(The Maharsham of Brezhan brings us this story as he heard it from his father, and relates that the son eventually did *teshuvah*.)

Unconditional Love

Someone who knows that his child has a purpose and a destiny, and doesn't involve himself in Hashem's *chesbonos*, knows that he has a special *shlichus* to love his child unconditionally. He should do so not because an expert told him that it would bring his child back to Yiddishkeit. (It is also true that if an expert says it will be beneficial, a parent is obligated to follow his advice.) He should do so because his *shlichus* in the world is to do everything he can to benefit this *neshamah*. He shouldn't be motivated just by the thought that his son will surely do *teshuvah* one day. He should love him and care for him even with the understanding that he may never do *teshuvah*. His *shlichus* is simply to treat his child with true unconditional kindness.

Rav Yitzchak of Radvil said "My brothers! See how precious the Jewish People are to Hashem. One *nefesh* of Yisrael is more precious to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than the entire Torah."

The *Bas Ayin* (in the *Likutim*) writes that one who doesn't believe that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves the greatest *baal aveirah* is defined as an *apikores*.

Rav Shlomo of Karlin said, "I wish that I would be able to love the greatest tzaddik as much as Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves the greatest *rasha*."

This is why parents must love their children even if they transgress every *aveirah* in the Torah. For if Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves their child at that moment, they should also love him, even though it is difficult.



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