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HAVINEINI



**פרשת
חיי שרה**

תשפ"ה

YEAR 3

ISSUE 99



SHIURIM OF

HARAV SHIMON
SPITZER SHLIT" A





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The Proper Approach to Money in All Circumstances

The Avodah Zarah of Pursuing Money

Pursuing Money Excessively Is Like Avodah Zarah

We find a *yesod* in the Rishonim, elaborated upon in the *sifrei chassidus*, stating that **the yetzer hara of the pursuit of money is just like the yetzer hara of avodas zarah, R"l.**

A well-known *sefer*, *Orchos Chaim l'HaRosh* contains *mussar* teachings from the holy Rosh. In Chapter 29, the Rosh writes, אל תשים זהב, do not make money your security, for this is the beginning of avodah zarah.

A similar teaching is espoused by **Rabbi Chaim ben Bezalel**, a brother of the **Maharal**, who writes in *Sefer HaChaim* (Ch. 5): כי עכשיו ספו תמו: העבודות הזרות אשר היו מימי קדם, וחדשים מקרוב באו, כגון עבודת הכסף והזהב, שגם הוא, for now the avodah zarahs of the past have ceased, and new ones have come in their place – such as the toil for silver and gold, which is also considered avodah zarah.

The Yetzer Hara of Avodah Zarah Has a New Mission

Furthermore, **Rabbi Elazar of Lizensk**, a son of the *No'am Elimelech*, asked regarding the Gemara (Yoma 68b) which states that the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah killed the yetzer hara of avodah zarah, **how can an angel**—composed of pure *ruach*—**be killed?** And Rabbi Elazar answers that indeed, **the malach wasn't killed; he only received a new mission**

(thus, he for all intents and purposes, he ceased to exist)! He was given the mission of luring people into mindlessly pursuing wealth and money. *This is the new mission of the yetzer hara of avodah zarah* — because **the ta'avah for avodah zarah is similar to that of the pursuit of money.**

That is, the angel continues to do a similar mission. It was simply changed a little bit... but it's a similar mission.

The Root of *Ta'avah* for Money Is Lack of Reliance on Hashem

Indeed, this is brought from *talmidim* of the Ba'al Shem Tov that *avodah zarah* and pursuing money both stem from the same root, and if we learn *Chovos HaLevavos*, we see this clearly: **The essence of *avodah zarah* is to rely on forces and entities other than the Ribbono shel Olam, instead of relying solely on Him.**

And the same applies to someone who pursues money excessively. **Instead of relying on the Ribbono shel Olam for one's needs, he relies on his money for security.** That's essentially what he is doing.

It's frightening to say it, because we're so connected to this *inyan*. But it is the truth. **When we pursue money, we place our trust in inanimate objects... as though money will help us in life.**

***Ta'avah* for Money Is a Major *Nisayon* in Our Generation**

The problem is that we don't think about the great pitfall that lies in the pursuit of money. When we speak of the *nisyonos* of our generation, we will invariably address many other *nisyonos*... but not money. Some will even wonder: **Money? Please talk about something else...this is not the problem of our generation!"**

But the *Chovos HaLevavos* isn't so sure... he tells us: **If people would be close to the Ribbono shel Olam, all the *nisyonos* of the generation would fall away!** If we would stop running after money, then we would draw our *chiyus* from the *Aibishter*, and automatically the other *nisyonos*

would be taken care of. Because when we're close to Hashem, and we receive our *chiyus* from Above, we aren't dragged down. But if our *chiyus*, *chas v'shalom*, comes from other sources, of course the body will be dragged down to forbidden things... because he is drawing sustenance from *avodah zarah*, R"l.

The Two *Ta'avos* Are Interconnected

It is for this reason, the *sefarim hakedoshim* tell us, that the lust for money and the *ta'avah* for forbidden things are connected. We saw this regarding Bila'am, and with others: The two *ta'avos* are similar and connected—their root is the same.

And the explanation for it is very simple: When a person wants to calm himself and draw some *chiyus* when he's stressed, **if he draws his serenity from the Source of Life**, then wonderful, that's the right way to live! But **if he draws his security and serenity from other sources**, such as his money, such a person can easily be dragged to other *ta'avos* as well.

When It Comes to Money, The Inner Essence Is Revealed

This is the reason that Chazal tell us (*Eruvin* 65b) that **the character of a person is revealed when it comes to his money, his drink, and his anger**—because here is where his essence is revealed.

When a person engages in Torah discussions, it's a wonderful thing, but this is still not where his *essence* is revealed. **If you want to know where a person is truly holding, look at how he acts when it comes to money.** You will see if he draws his strength from *bitachon* in the Ribbono shel Olam or whether he places his trust in his money in the bank. **The topic of money is connected to the deepest aspects of the *nefesh*.**

The *Chovos HaLevavos* establishes the following rule: If you want to be an *ehrlicher Yid*, you will only be able to do so through *bitachon*! Whether or not you have money—the first and most important thing is to have trust in Hashem Yisbarach.

Drawers May Be Filled with Money, But in the Heart— Not a Penny

The Proper Attitude Toward Money

A person may ask: *l'maiseh*, we all need *parnassah*; we need money with which to support our families. There is so much need, and it requires a *shefah* of money.... To answer this, we turn to an incredible *vort* from Rav Shimon'1 Zelichover¹ (*Naharei Aish*, Ch. 227): “**In a *Yid-dishe* drawer, there should be lots of money—but in his heart, there shouldn't be even a penny.**”

With this one line, the tzaddik has illuminated our eyes to be able to understand properly the *peshat* in the *Chovos HaLevavos*: No one is suggesting that a *Yid* shouldn't have money in the bank. No one is advocating, *chas v'shalom*, a life of poverty. **We're discussing the heart of a person! Upon what are you reliant?**

We constantly *daven* that we shouldn't need to rely upon the gifts of גידול הנהנה בשר ודם *humans comprised of flesh and blood*.... Chazal tell us that גדול הנהנה כפו יותר מירא שמים, *one who lives off his own hard work is greater than a yerei Shamayim* (*Berachos* 8a). **Surely, a *Yid* must have his needs fulfilled with great breadth**—for the effects of poverty can, *chas v'shalom*, destroy a person's peace of mind, and he won't be able to serve Hashem properly through Torah and *tefillah*.

The Bank Account Full—The Heart Empty

The holy Chozeh of Lublin would storm the Heavens so that *Yidden* would have valises filled with money. The Rebbe Rebbe Mendel of Rimanov said Torah on *Parashas Haman* for twenty-two years in order to effect a *shefah* of *parnassah* for *Yidden*. Did these holy and illustrious tzaddikim want *Yidden* to fall prey to the *avodah zarah* of money, *chas*

1. Rav Shimon Engel of Zelichov was the Rosh Yeshivah of the legendary Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin following the passing of its founder, Rav Meir Shapiro. He was beloved and revered by the students in the yeshivah.

v'shalom? Of course not! *Yiddishe* drawers should *always* be filled with money.

In our times, when cash is not used as much on a daily basis, we need to say it a bit differently: *Yiddishe* bank accounts should be filled with money. But the idea of *bitachon* is that *the heart* should be completely empty of money! A *Yid* must toil with a great *avodah* to remove money—and thoughts and preoccupation with money—from his heart. **The *ba'al bitachon* doesn't possess even a penny in his heart!**

Bitachon Brings Shefah

To the contrary: **The more you will remove the thoughts and preoccupation with money from your heart—the more your drawers and bank accounts will be filled with money.** This is the way the Ribbono shel Olam created the world; as long as a person's heart is “filled with money,” he can't properly be connected with Hashem, and he shuts the conduits of *shefah*... thus, the money can't arrive in his account.

Says the *Chovos HaLevavos*: **do yourself a favor and have *bitachon* in Hashem.** Work on your heart to have *bitachon*, and then you will have a *shefah*, and you'll be able to organize your life and your affairs with peace of mind! You must grasp the idea that you can't be a proper *Yid* without being a *ba'al bitachon*—not only because without *bitachon* you will be submerged in the pursuit of money: **Without *bitachon* you won't have money to marry off your children; for *bitachon* is the conduit for *shefah*!**

Work on Your *Bitachon*—Because You Need Money!

One will say, “Please don't tell me all these *Chovos HaLevavos* concepts right now.... Do you know that I am making a wedding *next week*?! I have to run to work and roll up my sleeves... I have to do my *hishtadlus*!”

Says the *Chovos HaLevavos*: ***Tzaddikel*! You can't do things this way ... because you need to marry of your child!** If you won't have *bitachon*, you won't have a *shefah*! Run away from these silly thoughts... *change*

your heart! **If you need money, change your heart, and you will have all your needs...** and you'll be able to serve Hashem with a clear heart and peace of mind.

When we *daven* the words וטהר לבנו לעבדך באמת, *purify our hearts so we may serve you with truth*, what do we have in mind? Usually, we think of *kedushah* matters or other impediments to *avodas Hashem*. But the truth is that we need lots of cleansing of money from our heart! **It is impossible to serve Hashem properly when the heart is filled with such an *avodah zarah*!**

The First Rule: Reiterate Thoughts of *Bitachon*

So, what is the *eitzah* for us to work on our hearts? Surely, the answer is *not* to stop working for our *parnassah*. That would be contrary to everything the *Chovos HaLevavos* has taught us! **If someone neglects his *hishtadlus*, it means that he hasn't grasped the idea of *bitachon*!**

So, what is the *avodah*? Simply to learn *Chovos HaLevavos* and review thoughts of *emunah* and *bitachon* in our minds, which will have the effect of strengthening us in the right approach: The mind will influence the heart.

The Second Rule: *One Is Shaped by His Actions*

But this alone is not sufficient, because we find ourselves in a "world of action," and the heart is very strongly influenced by the actions that we take: אדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו ואחר הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות, *one is shaped by his deeds, and the hearts are drawn after one's actions* (*Sefer HaChinuch*, Mitzvah 16).

You want your heart to be cleansed of money? Do you want to merit a true וטהר לבנו לעבדך באמת? Then you must take actions that will influence your heart. What kind of actions?! For this, we have a Gemara and a piece of *Kedushas Levi* that explains it.

Distributing One's Money Is an Expression of *Bitachon*

Chazal tell us, אם רואה אדם שמוזנותיו מצומצמין, יעשה מהן צדקה, *if one sees that money is tight, he should [take the money that he does have and] give it away to tzedakah* (Gittin 7a). **Yes, take your little bit of money and give it away to others. This will help you!**

Why is it this way? Says the holy *Kedushas Levi* (*Pirushei Agados Bava Basra Perek HaSefinah*)—one of our great masters and teachers in the area of *bitachon*, who elucidated and explained many ideas of *bitachon* in his teachings—it is very simple: **When a Yid distributes his money generously, he performs an action that illustrates that he is not reliant upon his money for his security.** He needs *more* money, but instead he gives away the little that he *does* have—a counterintuitive action—because he believes that he doesn't need money in order to achieve his *yeshu'ah*.

This person does an action of *bitachon*, and through this he becomes connected with the *Aibishter*, and once he is *davuk* in the *Ribbono shel Olam*, he makes room for the *berachah* to come. With this *yesod*, the *Kedushas Levi* explains the words of Shlomo HaMelech: יש מפזר ונוסף עוד, *there is one who scatters and gathers more* (*Mishlei* 11:24). Sometimes, when a person scatters his money with *bitachon* in Hashem, he ends up gathering more—for this is the source of all the blessings— and he is blessed with blessings and *shefah*.

The *Ba'al Bitachon* Remains Calm When He Needs to Spend on Unexpected Expenses

A Story of Broken Glasses

The *yesod* of the *Kedushas Levi* must be taken a step further, applying it not only to *tzedakah*, **but to every time an expense comes up. We should spend the money on these expenses with an open heart**—knowing that we don't rely on our money.

For example: A person finally gets his hands on a sum of money,

which he thinks will give him a financial breather for some time. But then, a child comes home with a note that they must bring \$20 to school for a gift; another few minutes go by and his wife informs him that she needs money to buy a pair of shoes for one of the children; and then his son comes home and announces that he was playing wildly in yeshiva and his glasses broke!

Now, the father loses it completely. It's **בכיסו ובכעסו** all at once! "Where's your responsibility?! Can't you be careful?! Didn't I *just* buy you these glasses?!", He yells at the hapless boy.

"Losing It" Emanates from Lack of *Bitachon*

Let's understand what happened here. The reality is that this child is... a child. And children can often be wild, and sometimes break things mistakenly.

Now, is there any question about the fact that we must buy him new glasses?! No, there is no doubt about it. **And the reason the father became angry is *not* because he wanted to be *mechanech* his child.** Proof of this is that if all three requests for money had not come at the same time, he wouldn't have become so upset. The only reason why this person lost himself is because **מזונותיו מצומצמים**, *his money is tight*, and he can't handle the fact that when he finally has a few dollars, he already has to spend it.

Spend the Money with a Smile

No one is blaming this person. We understand that he's only human, a person of flesh and blood, who feels reliant on money. We're simply giving him good advice. **The advice is: Spend the money without a word.** *If a person sees that his money is tight, he should give it away to tzedakah.*

Give the money to your child with a smile, and say, **"We're going to buy you new glasses, and they're going to be better and stronger than the ones you had until now."** If you want to be *mechanech* your child not to be so wild, we can speak about that tomorrow. Notwithstanding

the fact that, in most cases, it's not even the child's fault... **the most important thing right now is to perform an action that will demonstrate to you, and imbue in your heart the feeling, that you're not dependent on your money.**

Everyone "Has Money" to Some Extent

The *Chovos HaLevavos* tells us that *bitachon* also applies to a person who is a בעל ממון, *he possesses money...* and the *bitachon* ensures that the בעל ממון will spend his money on Hashem and on his fellows with a willing soul and a generous spirit—because he isn't tethered to his money, and he doesn't rely on it for his security.

And in truth, every person is a בעל ממון in some sense, when it comes to *his* affairs. He may have debts and he may live on a meager budget, but when he needs a vacation, he will find the money. However, when it comes to other expenditures that he isn't so excited about—like the expenses of his wife and children—then he's tight... and everyone in the household is reprimanded about why they were so generous with *his* money....

The Problem Is When We Have *Bitachon* in Our Money

At the end of the day, everyone has *some* money. He's just not interested in parting with it on expenses that he didn't expect and he didn't budget for. And this is why he becomes upset about those expenses—because he has *bitachon* in that money. It gives him security. And he can't part with it.

Says the *Chovos HaLevavos*, a person who is a *ba'al bitachon* will spend the money with a willing soul and a generous spirit, and this action will in turn influence him to become a calm person in his heart and in his mind, with *bitachon* in Hashem, and not in his money.

The *Ba'al Bitachon* Doesn't Scrimp on Necessary Expenses

This applies even to a Kollel *yungerman* who struggles to finish the

month as he pushes to be able to remain in Kollel for another year. He does everything that he can to minimize expenses so he will be able to continue learning—and this comes from a pure place. *Even he* should nevertheless part with his money on necessary expenses, such as buying his wife a gift for Yom Tov, as it is written in *Shulchan Aruch*, “in order to bring joy into the home.” He should hand his wife money, saying, “Don’t be frugal this time! I want you to be truly happy!”

And surely, one would never be so misguided as to hold back from purchasing the traditional Shabbos food because he wants to save. It won’t even occur to him to cut back on delicious food for Shabbos.

This is the proper way for the *ba’al bitachon*. On the one hand, **he doesn’t go overboard in his *hishtadlus* for money**, and on the other hand, **he is generous when it comes to expenses that Hashem wants him to spend on**. A *Yid* who lives this way will always remain steadfast in his *bitachon*! Even when—thanks to his *bitachon*—he will be blessed with *shefah*, **he will never become connected and tethered to his money. He will always feel in his heart that only the Ribbono shel Olam provides all his needs.**

Never Tethered

We find that among the tzaddikim, there were two schools of thought when it came to having money. There was the *derech* of Rav Uri of Strelish, for example, whose chassidim were all paupers. And when the Rebbe once said that this moment is a time when everyone can ask for whatever they want, it didn’t occur to a single *chassid* to ask for wealth... they would rather feel a deeper pleasure in a *Baruch She’amar*.

At the same time, there were many tzaddikim—beginning with Rabbeinu HaKadosh—who were very wealthy.

The common denominator between all the tzaddikim is that they had no connection to their money; it didn’t reside in their hearts.

Tzaddikim Were Extremely Distant from Money

Simpleminded people who are obsessed with money may wonder, “How is it befitting for a tzaddik to have wealth?” This is so silly. **Do you know why this tzaddik had money? Because he wasn’t *davuk* in his money, but in Hashem!** He draws his *chiyus* and strength from the *Aibishter*, and automatically his conduits of *shefah* were wide open.

A person who isn’t *davuk* to his money had an amazing life ברוחניות. But it is an incredible *avodah* to truly untether ourselves from thoughts and preoccupation about money. There were tzaddikim—such as the Sanzer Rov—who never went to sleep at night when there was a penny left in the house, because **they were afraid that if a penny remained with them, they may become reliant on that money.** They preferred to begin each day with a new boost of complete reliance on Hashem. They ran from the minutest whiff of reliance on money.

We are surely not on the level of these tzaddikim. But we must at least know the truth, and we must attempt to follow their example... to seek to untether ourselves from our *deveikus* to money. The *Chovos HaLevavos* teaches us: Good times are afoot. Learn and review the tenets of *bitachon*, and everything will fall into place, *be’ezer Hashem!*



The Torah Attitude to *Shidduchim*

Tefillah and Efforts That Chase Away Negative Forces

Drawing Down *Shefah*

This *parashah* discusses the incredibly important issue of *shidduchim*, and this is an opportune time to see what we can do to help the *mat-zav*.... *Yiddishe kinder* need great *yeshu'os*. Thus, we must look to Chazal for insights, *eitzos*, and understanding that will illuminate this sensitive topic that is so close to all our hearts.

One of the *yesodos* we know is that when it comes to drawing down a *yeshuah*—every *yeshuah* comes from Above. A *yeshuah* doesn't come simply because a person decided that it should occur. This is because a *yeshuah* is a matter of *shefah*—and *shefah* comes only from Above. However, **no *shefah* can come from Above without first being aroused by us below.** Therefore, in order to draw down *shefah*, we must first engage in a spiritual arousal of that *shefah*, such as learning Torah, reciting *tefillah*, or performing a mitzvah action.

As it relates to *shidduchim*, the action of the mitzvah is to engage in the *parashah* of *shidduchim* and assist people in finding their *zivug*. The Gemara tells us (*Shabbos* 31a) that one of the questions a person will be asked when he comes before the Heavenly Court is, “Did you engage in פריה ורביה?” *Maharsha* (ibid.) explains that this refers to *shidduchim*; that is, whether a person engaged in making *shidduchim*. And through engagement in this mitzvah, a person is *mevatel* himself to the Ribbono shel Olam who commanded us to do this mitzvah—and he thereby arouses *shefah* from Above.

The Torah Perspective on a Delay in *Shefah*

We know that when there is, *chas v'shalom*, a blockage in the *shefah*—something that prevents it from coming down to us—it means that **the Heavenly prosecutors are standing in the way and are blocking the *shefah* or otherwise preventing it from coming down.** Therefore, when a person engages in Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvos—the three pillars that bring *shefah* to the world—and the *shefah* still doesn't arrive, he can conclude that he isn't properly carrying out his Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvos, and the מקטרגים are able to interfere with his *shefah*, R"l. This is how a *Yid* views the matter.

He doesn't attribute it to a lack of wisdom or talent, and he doesn't ascribe the delay in *shidduchim* to the fact that he doesn't have enough money to promise to a prospective *chassan* or to the fact that someone gave negative information. He ignores all this noise—for they are not the true reasons for the delay in the *shefah*. These reasons may sometimes be the *outer levush* for the blockage in *shefah*. But **the true reason for the hindrance in *shefah* is the מקטרגים who prevent it from coming down.**

Like the Splitting of the Yam Suf

Chazal discuss this concept extensively, stating that every time it comes to making a *shidduch*, the מקטרגים have a special interest in thwarting it. Chazal (*Sotah* 2a) tell us, קשה זיווגו של אדם בקריעת ים סוף, *the zivug of a person is as difficult as the splitting of the Yam Suf*. Now, the actual splitting of the sea could not have been difficult for Hashem, for He has created the entire world and He continues to give it life at every moment. What difficulty would there be for Him to split the sea? The difficulty was due to the מקטרגים, the Prosecutors, who complained that, הללו עובדי עבודה זרה והללו עובדי ע"ז, *they [the Egyptians] worship false idols, and they [the Jewish People] worship false idols*—there is no difference between them. **The מקטרגים sought to stymie the *shefah*, the *yeshuah*, and hence it was “difficult” to split the sea.**

The same takes place when it comes to *shidduchim*—when two *ne-shamos* attempt to come together, to find each other and create a tremendous *yichud*, a holy union, a *kiddush Hashem*, and the fulfillment of

the purpose of creation. Since it involves a *shefah* of great benefit to the *Shechinah*, the מקטרגים have every interest in thwarting it.

The event of קריעת ים סוף was the greatest *kiddush Hashem* through which the entire world saw the wonders of Hashem and spoke about it. It brought Klal Yisrael to a level of prophecy of זה א-לי ואנוהו, to be able to literally point to Hashem... and this is why the קטרוג was so strong. The same occurs regarding *shidduchim*.

Battling the “Other Side” for *Shidduchim*

A person must look at this matter as a great battle between the side of *kedushah* and the side of the *Sitra Achara*. The side of *kedushah* wishes to make more *shidduchim*, to establish new homes in Klal Yisrael—as Chazal liken the building of a Jewish home to rebuilding the ruins of Yerushalayim. We see from this that there is great השראת השכינה in a Jewish home; thus, it is no wonder that the *Sitra Achara* does everything in its power to prevent it.

So, what is the *eitzah*? **The *eitzah* is to engage in those things that bring *shefah*—as mentioned above—to engage in actions of *chessed*, *tefillah*, and toil in Torah.** The truth is that just as people engage in *shidduchim* to help people find their *zivug*, and just as we understand that *tefillah* hastens the *yeshuah*—so too, people should open *kollelim* in which the *zechus* of the learning will go towards those in need of *shidduchim*! This is *pashut*. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh and other *sefarim* teach us that the more Torah, the more *shefah*.

Davening for One Another

Now, let us direct our attention to a specific aspect of *shidduchim*. After one engages in the *chessed* aspect—to *redt* and suggest *shidduchim* without hesitation or embarrassment—and after one engages in *tefillah*, if we see that the *yeshuah* doesn’t arrive... **what can we do to weaken the power of the מקטרגים who block the *tefillas* and *chessed* activities for *shidduchim*?** After all, we see that, unfortunately, they have some success in this! It is so painful to see people struggle with *shidduchim*,

and we have no choice but to do everything in our power to weaken the מקטרגים.

And so, there's a well-known *yesod*, a great *yesod*, but it must be properly understood. Everyone knows the Chazal (*Bava Kamma* 92a) כל המבקש *one who davens for a friend, and he needs that very same thing, he will be answered first* – and the Gemara cites two sources for this.

When You're Out of the Picture

Showing Favor to the Unworthy

To understand the depth of this concept, let us learn the holy words of the *Tiferes Shlomo* (*Parashas Ki Sisa*) on the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 33:19) וחנתי *I shall show favor when I choose to show favor, and I shall show mercy when I choose to show mercy*. Chazal tell us (*Berachos* 7b) that Hashem will show favor and mercy even to those who aren't worthy—such is the *middah* of חנון ורחום to which the *pasuk* refers. (The חנון expression of Hashem's kindness is one that goes beyond *chesed* and *rachamim*. We invoke it over and over, in *Selichos* and in the *Kedushah* of *Kesser*, because this *middah* grants favor and mercy even to those who don't deserve it.)

Says the *Tiferes Shlomo*: From this Gemara we can infer that **Hashem will show favor and answer the *tefillos* of one who davens for his fellow, even if he isn't worthy—and Hashem will show mercy towards the one who is being davened for, even if he isn't worthy.** There is a special provision for being heard when davening for *someone else*.

Davening for Others Invokes Mercy

In general, when a person *davens* for himself, he may be told, "Who are you to even *daven* before Hashem?" **Every time a person *davens*, he needs *siyatta diShmaya* to chase away the מקטרגים.** We see this from the fact that every time we *daven*, we invest so much *avodah* into the section of פסוקי דזמרה in order to cut away the מקטרגים.

The **Beis Aharon of Karlin** teaches similarly (*Parashas Chayei Sarah*) that we repeat the *pesukim* of the *ketores* after *davening* is to once again chase away the מקטרגים—for it is after *davening* that we receive the *shefah*, and we need extra protection so that they shouldn't be able to steal it.

Explains the *Tiferes Shlomo*: When a person *davens* for his fellow, even if he himself is unworthy, his *tefillah* will nevertheless be accepted—for Hashem says; וְחַנְתִּי אֶת אִשְׁרֵךְ וְרַחֲמֵתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם; **when you're davening for someone else, even if both of you are unworthy, the tefillos will be accepted** (and now we will explain why).

Davening for Someone Else Chases Away the Prosecutors

In his *sefer Imrei Aish*, **Rav Shmuel Eliyahu of Modzitz** quotes his grandfather, **Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir**, who explained **why it is that when davening for another person, he is answered first.** "It is because, when a person *davens* for himself, there are many מקטרגים who seek to thwart his *tefillah*."

We have already learned in the past a famous segment of *Me'or Einayim* (*Parashas Va'eschanan*) containing many important *yesodos* in *bitachon* and in *Yiddishkeit*. In it, the *Me'or Einayim* explains that when a person *davens*, he is in essence asking for the *shefah* to come down to This World from Above. Now, how can such a great light—the *shefah* from the Ribbono shel Olam—come down to our lowly world? Only through the process of צמצום—contraction or constriction of Hashem's light. In order to effect צמצום, we must arouse the מידת הדין, and thus **through our davening for shefah, we are also arousing the מידת הדין.** Therefore, whenever a person *davens*, he is in need of *siyatta diShmaya* that the *shefah* shouldn't be stolen by מקטרגים.

Who Are These Prosecutors?

When we say that there are מקטרגים who seek to rob and thwart the *tefillos*, it means simply—as Chazal have explained—that the forces of the *klipah* come with complaints that a person did such-and-such and so-and-so... and thereby they seek to rob him of the *shefah*. These מקטרגים are

aligned both against the person who *davens*—so that his *tefillah* shouldn't be accepted—as well against the person in need of the *shefah*, so that it shouldn't come to him.

However, when one person *davens* for another person, such a *kitrug* does not exist—because there is no one to complain about. The person who is *davening* is not the one in need of the *shefah*, and the one in need of the *shefah* is not the one who is *davening*... thus, *kitrug* wouldn't stick in any case. When a person *davens* for himself, however, they say to him, “You want *shefah*, you want a *shidduch*, you want money... let's see if you're worthy.” And in this way, the מקטרגים are awakened.

This, explained the **Kuzmire Rebbe**, is the superiority and preference of *davening* for others as opposed to *davening* for ourselves.

Targeting Our *Tefillos*

We will explain a bit deeper—for we aren't talking here about a mere *segulah* or a cute *vort*, but about a major *yesod*: **When the *tefillah* of a person is of a high caliber, the way it *should* be, there is no doubt that it will bring *shefah* to the person.** But it is not simple for a person to attain a level where his *tefillah* is perfect.

When a person *davens*, and all his energies in *tefillah* are invested for him to achieve the thing that he wants, *that alone* arouses the מקטרגים—for they will say that he's unworthy. He won't necessarily be denied his request, but the מקטרגים will cause the conduits to be constricted. They will say, **“You want to have this or that... what makes you so sure that you're worthy of it?”** And the moment a person is judged, the *matzav* is already not simple...and we need great *siyatta diShmaya* in order for the *shefah* to reach us. **The less a person dedicates his *tefillos* to insisting on the things he wants, the power of the מקטרגים will be diminished.**

We know from the *sefarim hakedoshim* that **when a person *davens* for the sake of the *Shechinah*—that It should be spared from pain—his *tefillos* are far more potent.** The problem is, in most cases we aren't on the level to feel the pain of the *Shechinah* enough. The reason that such

a *tefillah* is more potent and preferable is because a person takes himself out of it... he doesn't insist on this *shefah* coming to him. **The more a person places himself and his needs and desires into his *tefillos*, the harder it is for the *shefah* to reach him.** Thus, as noted, *tefillos* on behalf of *another* person will be much more effective.

When We Mean Ourselves

People aren't used to hearing such words, but this is what the *sefarim* teach us—and we can all gain by hearing it. We will explain the concept with the following *mashal*:

A person approaches a yeshivah's committee with an overarching proposal to change the curriculum in the yeshivah. He comes with details and charts, and photographs of other yeshivos that have already implemented it, and he provides a truly convincing presentation explaining why this change will benefit the *bachurim* in the yeshivah and change their lives forever. The committee hears him out, and they deliberate. They are convinced by what he said, but then they find out one more detail: the curriculum and the program he is advocating was authored by him, and implementing it requires a set amount of money every month.

Understandably, this changes the entire picture.

This person is not a liar, and he isn't dishonest. He didn't necessarily misrepresent the case. But the picture is entirely changed once we know that he has a vested interest in the program—and they will now take what he said with a grain of salt.

Similarly, when a person approaches the Ribbono shel Olam with his *tefillah*, with the proposal that he should receive this *shefah*... he says, **"It will be such a tremendous *kevod Shamayim*, it will help bring the *Shechinah* to This World, it will be good for all of us... and it will even hasten the redemption."** If this person means primarily himself, he invites a certain level of judgment and scrutiny to see whether he is worthy of what he is requesting.

Taking Ourselves Out of the Picture Saves Us from the Prosecutors

Let us take an example from life. A person is waiting for a certain detail in his life to fall into place. He does everything he can... he *davens*, he visits *kiarei tzaddikim*...and yet he waits for the *yeshuah* to arrive. Now, **in general, when we daven, we're focused solely on the yeshuah that we want—and we daven for our interest.** And while the Ribbono shel Olam is a merciful Father, there are other calculations that come into play. If a person has *aveiros*, *chas v'shalom*, the Ribbono shel Olam may help him cleanse his *neshamah* from them through these *yissurim*.

It's not that HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, "Ah... you're focused on yourself? I will reject your request based on that. I don't care about you...." *Of course*, we retain all the rules that our mothers and grandmothers taught us about how Hashem listens to our *tefillos*—they're all true. However, many times, it is for the ultimate good of the person that his wish not be granted, that he should have to wait a bit for what he wants. **You want your personal good? B'seder. This is for your good!**

However, the moment that a person takes himself completely out of the picture (we know that this is difficult to impossible, but suppose we could press a button and *all* of our biases and personal interests would vanish), then he would *daven* solely for *kevod Shamayim*, without any personal interest. He would say, "For my part, I don't care what happens to me, but I am asking for salvation for the *Shechinah's* sake." **In such a case, there is no place for any judgment against the person—because he's not in the picture.**

How to Gain Hashem's Favor Despite Our Unworthiness

The Attribute of "*Chanun*"

Now let us return to the words of the *Tiferes Shlomo* we learned above. The Ribbono shel Olam has many modes of conduct. There's the conduct of *chesed* and there's the conduct of *din*. There's an attribute of *rachamim*,

and there's a trait of *chanun*—which dictates that a person should receive *shefah* despite his unworthiness. This is not a contradiction to the person having *aveiros*, and it doesn't contradict the fact that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not a *חונן*, he doesn't simply wave away *aveiros*. It is simply that in this instance, the Ribbono shel Olam conducts himself with the trait of *חונן* looking away from the negative, because the person *davening* has aroused that conduct. **The question is which conduit a person opened... and which key did he use to open it.**

Now, usually, when a person *davens*, he knows the truth that he is *davening* with himself in mind. Nevertheless, he must *daven*—because this is what we're commanded to do. It is a *mitzvah d'Oraisa* to *daven* when we're in need. It is not our intention, *chas v'shalom*, to say that if a person thinks about his own needs during his *davening*, he shouldn't even bother *davening*, because the Ribbono shel Olam will reject his *tefillah*. *Chas v'shalom!*

But he must understand that—when *davening* for his *tzarah*—it is possible to *daven* on a higher level. A person must stop and think, **"How can I make my *tefillah* about more than my personal interests and needs?" He will elevate his *tefillah*, and it will become a better *tefillah*, and when his *tefillah* is more elevated, it opens the conduit of *חונן*, and thus, he will be answered even if he isn't worthy.**

Davening with Someone Else in Mind

And this is the point of ... כל המתפלל בעד חברו... *one who davens for someone else and is in need of the same thing will be answered first.* **For when one davens for his fellow, there is no place for מקטרגים because he opens a different conduit—the conduit of *חונן*—since his *tefillah* is of another caliber. It is about another person.**

Similarly, the *Kedushas Levi* (*Rosh Hashanah*) teaches that when a person *davens*, he should never *daven* with the feeling that he is worthy and deserving—he shouldn't even *think* about his mitzvos and positive attributes—rather, he should speak with Hashem and say, "I am nobody. I don't deserve anything... but You are a *חונן*."

The explanation is: If you're approaching with a sense of being deserving, you will be judged on whether you are truly deserving. But **if you come with the understanding and the attitude that the Ribbono shel Olam is a חנון, the prosecutors don't check whether you're deserving, because you didn't come with the attitude of being deserving.**

Arousing Heavenly Conduct

When a person *davens* before Hashem, the question always is, "Where are you coming from?" **This will determine how the *tefillah* will be viewed On High, and which Heavenly conduct he will arouse.**

If he comes with the attitude that he's entitled, that's the lowest level—for **they will then open the books to determine whether he's indeed worthy...** and this will not be very optimal for him.

If he comes from a place of deep pain, **he is appealing to the attribute of Heavenly mercy**, simple *rachmanus*—that's *one way* to approach.

Then there's a person who approaches with a position of "I may deserve pain, and I am not asking due to my pain... but I am a child of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov." **This person is taking another course; arousing *zechus Avos*.**

Opening the Heavenly Chambers

These attitudes in our *tefillos* and petitions to Hashem aren't only a matter of what we *say*—but our thoughts, attitudes, and *avodah* are really the determining factor in which Heavenly conduct we will arouse, and which *Heichal*, which Heavenly Chamber we will enter. Whichever chamber he opens in his heart—through the thoughts and attitudes in his *tefillah*—is the *heichal* that he will be able to access Above. We must keep this in mind.

And there are many Heavenly Chambers that a person can open in his heart. He can open the chamber of joy when he contemplates the goodness of Hashem.... He may open the chambers of Heavenly mercy, and he may access the chamber of *zechus Avos*, as we have just explained.

And when Chazal said that one who *davens* for others is answered first... it is because he has opened a new and unique Heavenly Chamber.

Opening the Chamber in Which They Do Not Judge

The *Tiferes Shlomo* tells us: When a person *davens* for himself, he arouses Heavenly conduct of one sort, and when he *davens* for his fellow, he arouses Heavenly conduct of another sort—*והנותי את אשר אחון*, *I shall show favor when I choose to show favor*. It is a different mode of Heavenly behavior entirely. **The chamber that is opened in *Shamayim* when a person *davens* for his fellow is one in which they don't examine the person's worthiness—because he didn't approach out of a sense of worthiness.**

You have a connection to that person, because you're both *Yidden*. His pain is *your* pain. And **when a person feels the pain of another *Yid*, it is the closest he can come to the level of feeling the *Shechinah's* pain.** When a person feels his own pain, it means that he simply wants very much to be comfortable. However, when he feels the pain of another person—it is coming from the same source as feeling the pain of the *Shechinah*. **A *Yid* is in pain... how can I go on as if nothing happened?!** This is a wonderful and proper *Yiddishe* emotion—**and when a person *davens* from such a feeling, he opens a new chamber On High, a chamber in which the *מקטרגים* cannot be effective.**

Elevate Your *Tefillah*

And it's not only *tefillah* that is so much more elevated when we *daven* for another person rather than for ourselves. When we learn Torah as a *zechus* for another person, or when we engage in acts of kindness for another person solely because we feel their pain—we likewise open these exalted chambers On High.

When a *shadchan* works on *shidduchim* for his fellow *Yidden*, not for the money, but because *their* pain is *his* pain (and we can see their pure intentions from their conduct and attitudes), these actions have the power to overcome the *מקטרגים* and bring about the *shefah* in its completeness and entirety.

As said, it is dependent on the heart, which controls the actions—enabling the mitzvah to be done with completeness and with pure intentions.

The Incredible Power of *Davening* for Others

Yitzchak and Rivkah *Davened* for Each Other

The *Midrash* in *Parashas Toldos* teaches us an amazing *yesod* regarding the *pasuk* ויעתר יצחק לה' לנוכח אשתו כי עקרה היא ויעתר לו ה', and Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife because she was barren and Hashem allowed himself to be entreated by him. **Yitzchak and Rivkah each stood in a separate corner and davened to Hashem. Yitzchak said, "Ribbono shel Olam! The children that You give me should be from this tzaddekes," and Rivkah said, "The children that You give me should be from this tzaddik."**

Perhaps they each foresaw with *ruach hakodesh* that they would eventually merit children, and they *davened* that the children would come from this marriage. This is the Torah's guidance in this matter. Here they were, struggling with the terrible pain of childlessness, and this was their approach: each *davened* in the merit of the other.

An Unknown Ailment

A powerful story that illustrates the power of *davening* for another:

The *Sfas Emes* of Gur left This World at the age of 56, following an illness that was unknown to the doctors; they didn't know how to treat it. Following this, the *Avnei Nezer* of Sochachov, a friend of the Gerer Rebbe, explained. "In his capacity as a rebbe of thousands of *chassidim*, the Rebbe saw hundreds of people every day. So many of them confided to him about their illnesses, sicknesses, and ailments—and the Rebbe surely *davened* on their behalf. **Since he had davened for all these illnesses, he could no longer be stricken with those illnesses.** It had to be a sickness that wasn't common...that no one ever heard of... and thus, the Rebbe hadn't *davened* for others who suffered from this illness."

Davening for Your Friend's Son and the Pain of the Shechinah

As said, when someone *davens* for his fellow, the potency of his *tefillah* is much greater, because it is a different sort of *tefillah*. And **this strongly applies to the issue of *nachas from children***, so that a person should merit to see his children go on the proper path. Usually, when a person is tested in this regard, it's a very challenging *nisayon*, and he becomes very pained and embarrassed. His *tefillos* for his child will be generally be centered on his own pain and on his thoughts about the future of his generations. It's very difficult to think about anything *but* his pain and embarrassment... but this is a shame, **because the more his *tefillos* will be focused on the Ribbono shel Olam, the more effective they will be.**

It is easy to fool ourselves in this regard. A person will say, "What?! It seems to you that I mean myself?! I am pained over the *chillul Shabbos*... I can't stand to see a person desecrating the holy Shabbos in my own home! I mean the Ribbono shel Olam! After all, I am not asking for money. I am asking for my child to be an *ehrlliche Yid* and to establish a *Yiddishe* home."

But this isn't entirely true, **for if you truly meant *kevod Shamayim*, you can *daven* for your friend's son just as well. To Hashem it doesn't matter which child you're *davening* for.**

Chazal give us an *eitzah*: Take your pain—*because* it is so deep—and *daven* for the pain of the *Shechinah*. And **because it is difficult to focus on Hashem while we're suffering, the *eitzah* is to *daven* for another person... for your friend's son.**

When the Binyan David Davened

The truth is that it goes even further. In the past, we have told the story of Rav Dovid Dov Meisels of Uhel (1875-1944), author of *Binyan David*, who was in danger of being drafted into the army. He came to his rebbe, the Shinover Rav, and the Rebbe told him, "Know that *min haShamayim*, they decreed this *gezeirah* on you because so many Jewish boys are suffering from the same fate, and are in great need of a *yesh-*

uah—and when you will *daven*, and your *tefillah* will be accepted in the merit of your illustrious ancestors, they, too, will be helped. Go and pour out your heart for a *yeshuah*, and you all will be helped!” And, of course, that is indeed what happened: The *Binyan David* *davened* for a *yeshuah*, and he was freed along with a number of other *bachurim*.

A Deeper Understanding of Pain

This incredible *yesod* is not only for people from illustrious stock. A person must view the situation in the following way: **HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave me this pain, and because I have this pain, I possess keys that not everyone else has.** Through my experience, I can *daven* for this *yeshuah* in a way that few others can—because my understanding of it is so much deeper. **My pain... my yearning for the *tzarah* to go away... is felt by me more than by anyone else.** And why did the Ribbono shel Olam give it to me? Aside from the individual calculation for a *tzarah*, there is another *cheshbon*: **Now I can *daven* for this as no one else can, and I have the keys to chambers that others do not.**

Utilizing the Opportunity

Sometimes, we tell a person to *daven* for a certain *inyan*. This person will never be able to *daven* for that the same way a person who understands the pain will *daven*. He will never approach with that brokenness... with that humility before the Ribbono shel Olam, the way a person who has been tested will come.

He doesn't mind *davening* for others. Sure! What's his name? I'll *daven* for him. Often, people go to *mekomos hakedoshim*, and they publicize that people should send names. It's wonderful.... But they don't get the pain that others are going through. They don't have the brokenness, the humility, and the dependence on the Ribbono shel Olam the way someone who has experienced that pain does.

But when someone is in the same *matzav* and he knows the pain, his understanding is very different—and he has the power to open wide the chambers in his heart, and by extension the corresponding chambers Above that others cannot.

For this reason, it is incumbent upon us to utilize this opportunity of the experience to *daven* for others in this situation.

We find that when Sarah Imeinu became expectant, all other barren women were likewise helped. Why is this? Because once the conduit for the *yeshuah* was opened, it was opened for everyone. Thus, we find that when a person is in need of a *yeshuah*, it is a marvelous opportunity to *daven* for another person.

Two Levels in *Davening* for Others

But the truth is that even in *davening* for others, there are various levels. One way to do it is as a *segulah*; to intentionally *daven* for others so that he will merit a *yeshuah*, but the more altruistic way is to *daven* for others solely for *them* to merit a *yeshuah*.

However, from a letter by Rav Akiva Eiger, we learn that even *davening* on the lower level can be effective in producing a *yeshuah*. He writes, "I see from your letter that you're not in the best of health, and I too, sadly, find myself in this situation, and I advise you, if it's not too difficult, to keep me in mind in your *tefillos*, and thus it will be fulfilled '*one who davens for another person will be answered first.*'"

Really Meaning It

The commentaries on the *Shelah HaKadosh* teach us that, ideally, כל המתפלל בעד חבריו means that he shouldn't think about himself *at all*. But one must know that there are levels in this. As we have seen in the *Tiferes Shlomo*, this is not a game... it is dependent upon the heart, and the better one does in this regard, the better the quality of his *tefillah* will be.

One must understand that the more he takes himself out of the picture, the more his *tefillah* will be effective. One may say, "I know myself, and I know that I will think about my own needs." *B'seder*. But he should at least try to do his best to think about others as much as possible. A person should never give up (the perfect is the enemy of the good). He shouldn't say, "Because I know that it can benefit me, I

will no longer merit the benefit of "כל המתפלל בעד חבירו". No. It's not "yes or no." It depends on the heart... meaning that one should care about another person.

An Emissary for Others

When we see that there's a burning need in Klal Yisrael, and Klal Yisrael is in need of *zechuyos* in a given area—namely *shidduchim*—the *Yiddishe* perspective is to conclude that the מקטרגים obviously have a hold on this issue. But how is this possible? There is so much *tefillah* and so much *chessed* in this area!

The truth is, the experts tell us that much more *chessed* is needed in this regard—we must do much better in caring about other people's *shidduchim*, to think about *shidduchim*, and to suggest *shidduchim*. When we operate on a greater level of *l'shem Shamayim*, our actions have more power—and Chazal constantly exhort us to *daven* for others.

When a person finds himself in a state of pain, he should see himself as a *shaliach tzibur*, a messenger to *daven* on behalf of others—to do for them and to *daven* for them—because his *tefillah* will have so much more meaning and power.

As a result of these *tefillos*, the Ribbono shel Olam will surely have *rachmanus* and send *yeshuos* and *refuos* for all Klal Yisrael.

