



קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart



נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of

R' Dovid Steiman shlit"א

Strange Signs From Heaven



Hashgacha & Dveikus



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THE WAYS OF MY HEART · WEEKLY SERIES

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN SHLIT" A

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — *The Ways of My Heart* is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlita in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R' Dovid Steiman shlita teaches emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*, and for nearly two decades has shared his Torah — in English and Russian — with talmidim and readers around the world. He taught at Ohr Somayach and today teaches at Yeshiva Toras Dovid, both in Monsey, New York. He is the author of the sefer *The Ways of My Heart* / נתיבות לבי.

DEDICATION

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Strange Signs From Heaven

On reading the messages Hashem is always sending — and the dveikus that Bilaam could not curse

Someone once asked me a question. If Hashem sends a person a message — a real sign from Shamayim — and he does not follow it, is he going to be held accountable for having ignored it? It is not an easy question, and thinking about it, there is something I want to share.

We live in what I would call a generation of knowledge. The generation in the midbar was called the *Dor Deah*, the generation of knowledge — they knew Hashem, they saw Him in everything: the *ananei bakavod* around them, the *mahn* falling from Shamayim every single day. And still, with all of that, they somehow came to the *cheit ha'egel*. How that happened is almost a mystery; but that is how the *yetzer hara* works — the greater a person is, the greater his *yetzer hara*, and it does not let anyone off the hook so easily.

We are certainly nowhere near that generation. And yet, in one way, we too are a generation of knowledge — because knowledge has never been so available. There is AI; there is Google; you can ask

any question and have an answer in a moment. I don't know if it's right, but the answer is here. What is *not* so available to us is the one thing that matters most: to work on ourselves, to actually change. That has become the hard part. And our society has a ready answer for it — take it easy, don't be so hard on yourself, whatever you do is fine, stay the way you are. Somewhere in all of that we have lost some of the *mamashus*, the realness, of the connection to the Ribono shel Olam that earlier generations had. They worked hard — I don't mean for bread and butter, I mean on *themselves*. The ones who truly knew Torah knew it because they had first worked on themselves to become worthy of it; as we know, first come *middos* and *derech eretz*, and only then Torah.

Let me tell you two stories. You can hear them on TorahAnytime, told by great rabbanim — but I want to draw out my own point from them.

..... **The siddur that fell to the men's side**

A woman once came with her family to Tzfas, and on Shabbos morning she went to daven in the old shul. She had a beautiful leather siddur that her husband had given her as a present. Her little boy, five years old, was with her, and he had no interest in her davening — he wanted her attention. He began to cry and to kick, until the siddur flew out of her hand and dropped all the way down to the men's side. She took another siddur and finished davening; she could not go down to retrieve her own, the shul was full of men. Afterward she sent her son down to bring it back.

The boy came back up — beside a tall young man with long hair, holding the siddur. "Is this your siddur?" he asked her. "Yes." And he said: let me tell you a story. He is originally from a chassidishe family, and Shabbos morning something had clicked in him. And you understand — that "something" is itself a message from Shamayim: *Hashem wants me back*. He was in Tzfas, and he decided he would go down to daven in that old shul. But it was full — everyone wanted to daven there — and he could not find a siddur. So he said: Ribono shel Olam, if You give me a siddur, I will stay and daven; and if not, I am leaving right now. And at that very moment — *boom* — a

siddur dropped straight into his hands. Her siddur.

That is open *hashgacha pratis*. Is it clear that Hashem wanted him back? I think it is more than clear.

..... **The message we almost skip**

Does it happen that openly every time? No. Some people have to go through far more. I heard of a man who was in a war in Eretz Yisrael. He saw friends fall beside him, killed, and he saw *hashgacha pratis* after *hashgacha pratis* that Hashem wanted him to stay alive — because Hashem wanted him back. And it did not click. Do you know when it finally clicked? When he came home, far away, and had a terrible accident, and barely survived — and then, Baruch Hashem, recovered completely. Then it clicked.

That is the point. We should not have to wait until the message comes crashing in like that. Hashem is constantly sending us the messages; He wants all of us back. The only question is how we read them — whether we read them at all, or simply skip them.

..... **The deal with Hashem**

Here is the second story. Another family came to Tzfas for Shabbos. As they were leining the Torah in the morning they

found a problem — one of the letters was no longer kosher. There was no second sefer Torah. They remembered that about twenty minutes away there was a shul a few hundred years old, which surely had a kosher sefer Torah. So some fifteen people set out together on foot to that shul, just so they could have the *kriah*.

They opened the door and found the Rav of that old shul standing at the Aron Kodesh, the key already in the lock. He turned around, saw fifteen people standing there waiting, and burst into tears. What happened? Before we begin, he said, I have to tell you the story.

This shul is very old, and for years I had struggled to bring a minyan — sometimes there was one, most times there wasn't. I wanted to bring a *ruach* of *taharah* into it, a new *kedushah*, so I decided I myself would donate a new sefer Torah. I collected the money and had it written. Now, you want to bring it in properly — so I put up signs all around the area: come for a beautiful Shabbos, a beautiful kiddush, everyone is invited. Shabbos came, and no one was here. Imagine the disappointment; it looked as though nobody had heard me. And I had made a deal with the Ribono shel Olam: I am bringing the sefer Torah, and You bring the people. I came to shul, and no one showed up. It sounded as if Hashem

had not come through — I had done my part, and nothing.

So I davened, all the way through, until I reached the point of taking out the sefer Torah. I came to the Aron Kodesh and said: we made a deal — what is happening? I put the key in, turned around — and here you are, fifteen people standing and waiting. Hashem had come through. This is also a message from Shamayim.

..... **We live by miracles every second**

We do not see it that openly very often, and there is a reason. If it happened every second, no one would pay attention to it — and no one would ever tell these beautiful stories, the ones that are so moving precisely because Hashem "came through." If it happened every day, all of that would be lost.

But the truth is, *l'maiseh*, these miracles are happening every second. There is a story of Reb Aharon Leib Shteinman zt"l: when he was already a hundred years old, his doctor told him — Rav should know, you are surely living by a miracle. And he answered: Doctor, you are also living by a miracle — you have no idea how many miracles happen every day just so that you should stay alive. We live by these miracles constantly. Our job is only to look for them. And why do we need to look for them? Because the looking itself

is what builds our connection — our *dveikus*.

The trouble is that we live in a kind of rush mode — always running somewhere, unable to concentrate on anything happening around us. And how do we come out of it? Our whole avodah with Hashem is *dveikus*.

..... **Dveikus — cleaving through Torah**

Let me repeat something we have spoken about. The source of *dveikus* is the Torah itself — the only true way to be connected to the Ribono shel Olam is to cleave to Him, and that cleaving comes through Torah. And this is exactly what the *Nesivos Shalom* brings out in Parshas Balak.

..... **What Bilaam could not curse**

Bilaam wanted to curse Klal Yisrael. He tried a number of times, and it did not work; every curse he reached for turned into a brachah. The *Nesivos Shalom* points out that he blessed us *three* times — *shalosh pe'amim* — and asks: what does it matter whether he blessed us three times or once? He explains that the three blessings correspond to three forces that stand against our *dveikus* — and that Klal Yisrael stays attached to Hashem *despite* all three. That is why no nation can ever

overcome us: because we are always *davuk*, cleaving, to Hashem.

The first blessing: מי מנה עפר יעקב ומספר את רבע ישראל — "Who has counted the dust of Yaakov, or numbered a quarter of Israel?"¹ The *Nesivos Shalom* reads it this way: the greatest force that keeps a person from cleaving to Hashem is *taavah* — the pull of physical desire, above all the desire for food and the like. It can carry a person so far that he no longer even notices how it is distancing him from Hashem. So why does the possuk speak of *dust*? Because dust is the earth, and everything grows from the earth — and even when a Yid is busy with the earth itself, working the ground, he remains bound to Hashem. There is no counting how many *mitzvos* are attached to the earth: the *kilayim* you may not plant, *terumos* and *maasros*, the brachos we make on food, and so on. Even at the lowest, most physical level, we are tied to the Ribono shel Olam. That is the "dust of Yaakov" that cannot be counted.

The second blessing: לא הביט און ביעקב... ה' — אלקיו עמו — "He perceived no iniquity in Yaakov... Hashem his God is with him."² Hashem is *with* us — even at the moment of a sin. How can that be? Because a Yid — even when the *yetzer hara* pushes him and pushes him to sin until he stumbles — he feels broken afterward: why did I do that? He has not yet conquered

his *yetzer hara* — that is still the work — but Hashem does not leave him. That is why no curse can rest on us: because Hashem is always with us, even when we sin.

And the third: מה טבו אהליך יעקב — "How good are your tents, O Yaakov."³ The "tent" here is the Beis HaMikdash. In its time, a *korban tamid* was brought every morning to atone for the sins of the night, and every afternoon for the sins of the day — so that Klal Yisrael was always clean from sins. The Ribono shel Olam arranged the very structure of our lives so that we should always be able to return, always stay connected.

..... **You don't need the siddur
to fall into your hand**

So it is really all one idea. If we work every day on ourselves and on our de-

sires, and hold ourselves back from sin as much as we possibly can, and try to conquer the *yetzer hara* even in the small things — that itself is another miracle. That itself is Hashem, here, with us. You do not need to reach the point of standing in a shul and having a siddur fall out of the sky into your hands. Hashem is always looking for us. We do not need the dramatic, almost spooky sign — though Hashem sends those too, and sometimes so precisely that you have to laugh to yourself. You think the Ribono shel Olam has no sense of humor? He does. Sometimes He shows up in a way that makes you smile, just to say: I am here.

May we merit to work on our *dveikus*, and may Hashem give us the strength to fight the *yetzer hara* — and to find Him everywhere we go.