

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Shlita*

Pinchas



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Torah Wellsprings - Pinchas

Hashem Arranges Everything for The Good

In this week's parashah, the shevatim are counted,¹ and we find the count of Shevet Levi (see 26:57-62) to be much less than the other shevatim. The Rishonim asks, "Why should they be a smaller tribe than the others"? (The next smallest shevet is Shimon, numbering 22,200. Levi had 23,000, but even so, Shimon was a larger tribe than Levi because Shimon was counted from the age of twenty, while Levi was counted from one month old.)

The Meshech Chachmah answers that the immense growth of the other shevatim was miraculous. Shevet Levi, however, multiplied according to the rules of nature, which is why they were a smaller tribe. The Meshech Chachmah writes that this was for their benefit. He explains, "In my opinion, it could be that Hashem designed this since Shevet Levi won't own their property in Eretz Yisrael. Instead, they will live in the arei miklat, spread out throughout Eretz Yisrael. If Shevet Levi grew to be a large tribe, they would complain, 'Why don't we have a portion of land?' And it would also be a burden on Bnei Yisrael to support such a large tribe. Therefore, Hashem in His wisdom made sure that they don't become miraculously large (like the other shevatim); rather, they increased according to the rules of nature and became twenty-three thousand, counting from a month and up."

The Meshech Chachmah says that this lesson is alluded to in the following words (26:62): "ויהיו הפקודים שלשה ועשרים אלף: (26:62): "And those counted of [Levi] were twenty-three thousand." They were the smallest tribe,

even smaller than Shimon's, because כל זכר מִבֶּן חֹדֶשׁ וּמֵעֵלָה, they were counted from a month, unlike Shimon, who was counted from twenty years old. So, their 23 thousand was a smaller tribe than Shimon's 22 thousand. The reason they were a small tribe is because "כי לא ניתן להם נחלה בתוך בני ישראל," no inheritance was given to them among Bnei Yisrael." They weren't granted a portion of land but will live in *arei miklat*. If they multiplied and become a large *Shevet* like the others, they would be distressed that they don't have their own land. It would also be a great burden for Bnei Yisrael to support them. It was for everyone's benefit that they did not increase miraculously, like the other shevatim.

Let us learn a great lesson from this. Sometimes, people think that they lack something and wonder why they can't have what others have, but each person always receives the portion that is best for him. Everything that happens is always for our good.

When counting and naming the family of Reuven, the *pasuk* writes (26:8) "ובני פלוזא אליאב פלוזא," "And the sons of Palu were Eliav." פלוזא means concealed (see Devarim 17:8). Which hints at the times that Hashem's kindness is concealed and darkness covers the earth. When we don't understand how the matters that are happening to us are for our good, then we must believe that אֱלֹהֵינוּ, it is from my G-d, from my compassionate Father. Even if we don't see how it is good right now, everything will turn around very soon,

1. Rashi (26:1) explains two reasons for this count: "This can be compared to a shepherd whose flock was attacked by wolves who killed some of the sheep. After the attack, the shepherd counts them to know how many survived. [Similarly, after so many Yidden died in the mageifah, Hashem instructed Moshe and Elazar HaKohen to count the survivors.] Another interpretation: When the Yidden left Mitzrayim and were put in the care of Moshe, they were delivered to him with a number. Now that he was close to his petirah and had to return his flock, he returned them with a number."

and we will see how it was all Hashem's compassion.²

These topics are appropriate for this time of year when we mourn the *churban Beis HaMikdash*. The mourning is intense, but at the same time, we know that everything that occurred is our good. The Midrash (Eichah Rabba 4:14) states the *churban* was a great favor for Bnei Yisrael. Hashem poured out His wrath on wood and stones and not on His nation, *chalilah*.

Rebbe Yitzchak of Neshchiz zt'l (Toldos Yitzchak) writes, "During the days of Bein HaMetzarim, each year, a clear manifestation of Hashem's chesed is revealed. For it is known that it was all for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. Hashem poured out His anger on wood and stones and didn't destroy Bnei Yisrael. This occurred because Hashem's love for Bnei Yisrael was aroused from a very high place in the upper world. This occurs every year during this time. When these days arrive, Hashem's immense love

for us is awakened, and Hashem's kindness and compassion come to us and all Yisrael."

The Arizal teaches that each month of the year represents a part of the face, and the months Tamuz and Av are represented by the two eyes. Imrei Noam (Masai ר"ה ויציא) says that this tells us that Hashem is watching us and caring for us, even during these challenging times. "We shouldn't think that Hashem abandoned His *hashgachah pratis*, His compassion, and His caring eye during these days. The root of [the *churban*] was a lot of compassion, only it is concealed and isn't revealed to all."

It is this emunah that we must hold onto and remember through everything that happens to us. Sometimes our situation appears full of *midas hadin*, but it is always for our good. The *churban* was for our good, פלויא, those concealed matters בני אליאב, are from our compassionate Father, and as we discussed, we saw from Levi's small family that it was for their benefit.³

2. Rebbe Chaim Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l (Dvar Chaim) teaches a similar lesson on the words in our parashah (26:54) לרב תרבה נחלתו ולמעט תמעט נחלתו. He explains that נחלתו can mean distress and worry (see Amos 6:6). לרב, over important matters, such as the length of the galus, or your lack of growth in avodas Hashem, תרבה נחלתו, you should increase your worry and distress, as it states in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 1:3) רצוי "It is proper for every yirei Shamayim to be upset and worried about the *churban Beis HaMikdash*." ולמעט, but for relatively minor problems, issues related to this world, תמעט נחלתו, you shouldn't worry that much. Instead, trust that Hashem will help you.

3. A few weeks ago, Thursday parashas Korach, a young bachur, a tzaddik, contracted an infection in his blood, and his medical condition deteriorated in a very unusual and dangerous manner. The infection reached his heart, and he was in grave danger, r'l. He had to remain in the hospital to await emergency heart surgery, r'l. His friends came to liven up their friend and give him encouragement and hope. They planned to conduct a "leil shishi" Thursday night kumzitz, with music and a good meal, combined with divrei Torah, chizuk, and words of emunah and bitachon. The problem was where to make this meal. The hospital said that it was impossible to have the party in the hospital because it would be after visiting hours. But the doctors permitted the bachur to leave the hospital to celebrate with his friends in a hall nearby.

The friends sought a hall near the hospital, but everything they tried was already taken. They tried chesed organizations, thinking they would open their doors for them, but that didn't work out either. Everything was prepared, the meal was ready, but they didn't have a venue for the party.

Among the group were three melamdim, who taught in three different chedarim near the hospital. Each of them called their principals to ask permission to use the school dining room, but none of the principals answered the phone. It seemed like they all made a taanis dibur that night!

They were at a loss, not knowing what to do until one of the melamdim came up with an idea. Since the cheder in which he taught was in the neighborhood, this meant that the children he taught lived nearby.

Tefillah in Your Own Words

The Klausenberger Rebbe *zt'l* heard the following story from his father, Reb Tzvi of Rudnik *zt'l*:

There are two cemeteries in Krakow. Many ancient scholars are buried in the older cemetery, such as the Bach, the Megaleh Amukos, and the Rema. A local woman wanted to be buried in the older cemetery, but it was almost impossible to fulfill her wish. For hundreds of years, no one was buried in the old cemetery. Even the Rabbanim of Krakow were buried in the new cemetery. But this woman didn't give up. Three times a day, during *shacharis*, *minchah*, and *maariv*, she came to the *beis knesses* and davened that Hashem have compassion on her and that she be buried in the old cemetery. She was so obsessed with this desire that all the children in Krakow knew to greet her, "Good morning, aunt. May you be buried in the old cemetery," as she had trained them to say.

At the weddings of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, she would ask the *chasan* and *kallah* to bless her that she be buried in the old cemetery.

It seemed insane and peculiar to everyone why this was so important to her. Furthermore, it was almost impossible to be buried in the old cemetery. But she was persistent and stubborn with her desire.

On the day she left the world, there was a heavy snowstorm, and the ground was covered with high piles of snow. The *chevrah kadisha* couldn't carry her to the new cemetery, so they buried her in the old cemetery.

Reb Tzvi of Rudnik commented about this story, "This taught me that even when one davens for something insane, Hashem will listen to his tefillos and answer them. So great is the power of tefillah!"

The Gemara (*Brachos* 21.) says, וְלוֹאֵי שִׁתְּפַלֵּל אָדָם, כָּל הַיּוֹם כּוּלּוֹ, "*Halevay* a person would daven all day long!" How does one do that? Doesn't he have many other things to do?

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zy'a* says that this means to daven for everything that one is doing. One must recognize that he can't do anything without Hashem's help; therefore, he should daven for success before each deed he tries to do. It will then be considered like he davened all day long.

So, he called a parent of one of his students and asked whether he could host their event in his home.

The father was a baal chesed and agreed to host the party in his home. He even generously offered to foot the bill for the entire meal. They arrived at his home with all the food and prepared a beautiful meal there. There was a lot of joy, ahavas chaverim, and the fulfillment of the mitzvah bikur cholim. It was an exceptional, uplifting experience for all attendees.

During the meal, the host asked what was the reason for this party, and they told him about the bachur who will soon need to undergo a complicated surgery, and the danger he fell into. He replied, "Someone in this building went through the same thing!" He called this neighbor to come over. The neighbor came and was able to give concrete advice and told them what to expect, as he had already gone through the process. This was a great relief for the patient and his family because it was a very rare situation, and there was almost no one to speak to about it. Now, they could discuss the condition with someone who went through it, and he could guide and encourage them throughout the process.

At that moment, everyone understood the great hashgachah pratis that occurred. It was from heaven that they shouldn't find a proper hall. They had to make the meal in this building so the patient and his family could meet up with this individual who gave them much support and guidance.

Let us always remember that everything is for the good. Sometimes, things seem difficult, but it is all for the good. The hospital didn't allow them to make the meal, they didn't find a hall, the principals didn't answer the phone, but it was for the good. The party took place exactly where it was best for the patient.

When he goes to work, he davens for success. Before performing *chesed*, he davens that his deed should have the proper impact on the recipient, and so on. When one prays for all the trivial and significant things he does, he will be davening all day long.

This can be alluded to in the words (Tehillim 102:2), תפילה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך שיחו, "A prayer for a poor man when he enwraps himself and pours out his speech before Hashem." With everything he does, he encircles it with a tefillah for Hashem. He knows he can't do anything without Hashem's aid, so he wraps all his deeds with tefillah.

The Divrei Chaim *zt'l* uses this pasuk to discuss a higher madreigah. He explains that even when one speaks to his fellow man, he can intend a prayer to Hashem in

his words. He wraps all his conversations in a prayer. That level might be beyond us, but we can daven before everything we do, with the recognition that we need Hashem's help for success, and then it will be like we are davening all day long.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* (*Likutei Amorim* 10) teaches, "In addition to *Shemonah Esrei*, which one says three times a day, one should daven from the depths of his heart when he is alone in his house. The daily *Shemonah Esreis* is said by rote, and people don't think about what they say. But when a person is alone and thinks about his life and struggles, he will pour his heart out like water before Hashem and daven with *kavanah*. It will be a tefillah from the depths of his broken, humble heart, and such *tefillos* never go unanswered."⁴

4. The following story happened with the rebbetzin of Reb Chaim Sarna *zt'l* at the beginning of the holocaust, when she was still a young girl. (Reb Chaim Sarna was the rosh yeshiva of Chevron-Geulah, Yerushalayim.)

When the Holocaust began, whoever could escape did so, and this young girl tried to save her life by running into the forest. She came to a large field, and from the distance, she saw a large, beautiful house. She was very happy. The house was far from the city, and it might be safe for her to hide there. She hoped that the people in this home would take pity on her and save her. With her final strength, she rushed through the courtyard, arrived at the house, and knocked at the door, shouting, "Good people, save me! Save me!"

The appearance of the man who opened the door frightened her. The man wasn't wearing an army uniform, but his mustache was styled like those of the German *resha'im*. This man was the Nazi commander in that area. The girl immediately realized the trouble she had fallen into. The man laughed a rolling laugh as he shouted, "A Jew!"

She almost fainted and had to hold onto the doorpost for support. He said to her, "Foolish Jew. You ran all this way to fall in my hands... I can kill you in a moment."

But suddenly, he became serious and said, "Tell me, young girl, how did you get to my door?"

She showed him the path she took to reach his home. It was through the field, at the edge of the forest, and then through the courtyard. The man said, bewildered, "I have many dogs guarding my home. Why didn't they attack you? How did you pass them and remain alive?"

The girl looked back and saw tens of dogs. All of them had murderous teeth. She hadn't noticed them earlier. She wouldn't have risked passing through the courtyard if she had seen them earlier. But the fact is that she did pass this courtyard, and she was alive and well!

The man thought that perhaps she had mystical strengths, maybe witchcraft. He told her, "Look, today you can sleep here. But tomorrow morning, I will send you out of here, and obviously, you will need to pass through the courtyard where I keep my dogs. And then I will see. If the dogs do their job... nothing will remain of you (*chas v'shalom*). But if you survive, I will know that you are protected from above, and then I give you my word that I will take care of you until the end of the war."

Tefillah – The Peak of the Day

להקריב לי במועדו, "Be scrupulous to offer [the korbanos] to Me in its appointed time."

It states in this week's parashah (28:2) תשמרו

The rebbetzin said, "Don't ask how I passed that night because the night didn't pass! I cried and prayed the entire night, knowing what awaited me in the morning. I saw in my imagination hungry dogs eating me alive, ripping me to pieces. When it was daybreak, I prayed to Hashem, אֲנִי ה' הוֹשִׁיעָנָא נָא! "Save me, Hashem. Please, Hashem, I am a young girl. I place my life in Your hands; please save me."

The rasha sent her out into the courtyard. She walked calmly; she didn't rush. She wasn't afraid. She focused on אין עוד מלבדו; there is no one in the world other than Hashem. Hashem was with her, and the dogs didn't touch her. They didn't even bark. The man, who was a high-ranking Nazi officer, witnessed the miracle and had no choice but to keep his promise. He protected her until the end of the war.

This story teaches us that even wild animals can't cause harm, if Hashem didn't decree it.

This isn't solely with regards to dogs. It also applies to human-dogs, dogs who appear like humans. No one can harm you unless Hashem commands so. (Mishlei 16:7) וברצות ה' דרכי איש גם אויביו ישלים אתו "When Hashem accepts a person's ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him." As in this story, the cruel nazi saved this girl and protected her throughout the war.

She was saved because of her emunah and because of her tefillos. Tefillah can turn everything around and save a person's life.

Tefillah can also be used in our war against the yetzer hara. Each person has his "dogs," his share of tests and yetzer haras, which desire to swallow him alive. A person should daven (Tehillim 22:21) הצילה מחרב נפשי מיד "Save my soul from the sword... from the grip of the dog." We are always at war with the yetzer hara, who wants to tear us apart. (Tehillim 37:32) צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו "The rasha watches for the tzaddik and seeks to put him to death." But just as this young girl was saved from wild dogs with her emunah and tefillos, certainly whoever davens will be saved from the hands of the yetzer hara – including the snare of technology which rips and tears the neshamah of a Yid. Hashem will hear his tefillos and save him from the yetzer hara, and he will be saved and live well.

In a beis medresh in Chaifa, a Yid was contemplating what to do. He had a debt due that day, but he had no cash. He could take money out of an ATM machine, but it was in the middle of the summer, and going to the bank posed challenges with *shemiras einayim*. He preferred to avoid being outdoors when possible.

He decided to daven for *siyata dishmaya*. Hashem has ways of sending him money without needing to go outdoors.

So, after *Minchah*, he said a tefillah in his own words, asking Hashem to send him the money he needs, without him having to leave the beis medresh. He expressed in his tefillah that his intentions were *leshem shamayim*, to safeguard his *kedushah*.

After saying this tefillah, he went into a side room, put his hat on the table, and put down his head for five minutes. When he woke up, precisely the amount of money he needed to pay his debt was lying there. Somehow, the money was lying in his hat. The person to whom he owed the money was also in the beis medresh at this time, so he could pay back the debt immediately.

Wanting to know how the money got there, he checked the shul's camera system and saw a stranger – someone he had never seen before – enter the beis medresh, place the money inside his hat, and leave. Apparently, he wanted to give *matan b'seser*, tzedakah in a concealed manner.

His tefillos were answered!

By akeidas Yitzchak (Bereishis 22:7) it states, ויאמר יצחק אל אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני בני "Yitzchak spoke to Avraham, his father, and he said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Divrei Yisrael *zt'l* says that this conversation set a precedent for all times. Whenever a Yid shouts out to Hashem, אבי, "Father!" Hashem replies, הנני בני, "I am here to help you!"

The Sfas Emes (5647) says that תשמרו can also be translated as waiting (see Bereishis 37:11). תשמרו להקריב לי במועדו means we should wait the entire day for the time when we can bring the *korbanos*. Today, tefillah takes the place of *korbanos* (see Brachos 26:). Therefore, Sfas Emes writes, "The entire day should be of secondary importance; a person's focus should be tefillah." תשמרו, wait for those times of tefillah. Tefillah should be the highlight of your day, with the rest of the day utilized to prepare for this important time.

Reb Aryeh Leib Epstein zt'l wrote the following letter to Reb Yonason Eibshitz (printed in *Pardes*, year 5519), "I heard that on Rosh Hashanah your *Shemonah Esrei* takes two hours, almost until *kriyas haTorah*, but on a regular weekday, people told me, you don't daven long. Therefore, I request that you teach me your ways so I will know how to conduct myself."

Reb Yonason replied in a letter, "It is true [that during a regular weekday] due to my obligation to study Torah and many other obligations throughout the day, I need *rachmei Shamayim* and a lot of effort to daven properly... Nevertheless, my davening isn't that quick. Generally, when the congregation says Kaddish after *Aleinu*, I'm still in the middle of *Shemonah Esrei*. Although some young people laugh at me, I'm not ashamed. From all my toil and everything I do, the highlight of my day is the hour I stand before the One Who hears all prayers."

Reb Yonason Eibshitz was a genius in all areas of the Torah. We have many *sefarim*

from him (כרתי ופלתי, אורים ותומים, יערת דבש) and several others). Nevertheless, he testifies that the peak of his day was that hour he stood before Hashem in tefillah. This is what the Torah tells us, תשמרו, we should await those special moments of tefillah.

The Kuzari writes (3:5), "The time of tefillah should be the heart and the fruit of your day. The rest of the day should be paths leading up to this time. Yearn for these special moments when you become spiritual and distant from *gashmiyos* [when you stand before Hashem in tefillah]. Food nourishes you from one meal to the next. Similarly, tefillah should nourish your soul from one tefillah until the next."⁵

The standard definition of the word לחם means bread or war, but לחם has another translation. It also means to connect. (For example, הלחמה means to solder, to connect.)⁶

It states (*Yeshayah* 55:7), יעזוב רשע דרכו ואיש און, "The rasha should give up his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and he shall return to Hashem, and Hashem will have mercy on him."

The Midrash (*Vayeira Rabba* 3:3, see *Matnos Kehunah*) says that we should read וירחמהו as וילחמהו, connect, and the *pasuk* says that when one does teshuvah, he becomes connected to Hashem.

The *korbanos* are called לחמי because the *korbanos* connect the Yid to Hashem. Today, the לחמי are our tefillos. It is when we turn our eyes and hearts to Hashem for all our needs and connect to Hashem.⁷

5. The Brisker Rav zt'l said to his son, Reb Refael zt'l, "I hope that in the merit that I toil all day in Torah that I will be able to daven well."

6. Bread is called לחם because it connects the body to the soul, so they don't detach from each other. Likewise, the *korbanos* are called לחמי because they connect Klal Yisrael to their Father in heaven.

7. A poor, unemployed man didn't have anything particular to do with his day, so he spent a morning in the post office. He watched someone give a clerk a relatively small sum of money, and the clerk gave him an expensive package. Such exchanges occurred several times that morning. The poor person decided he would do the same. He collected some money, gave it to the clerk, and asked for an expensive package.

The clerk laughed at him. "This isn't a store. People aren't buying packages here. They paid the store to send the merchandise. They are paying for the delivery, not for the items."

The *nimshal* is that people think their *hishtadlus* brings them their *parnassah*. Parnassah comes from *tefillah*, when one pours his heart out before Hashem. The *hishtadlus* can be compared to the few coins we pay for the delivery.

The following *mashal* is repeated in the name of the Dubno Magid *zt'l*:

There was once a kind king who permitted his citizens to come to him to request their needs from him. Anyone could come to the palace to speak to the king.

A problem arose when one person kept returning to the palace, disturbing the king. So, the king instructed his guards not to let this man in anymore. The guards were stationed at the palace's main entrance, but this man found an unguarded side entrance; he just entered through that door.

The king set up guards at the second entrance, but the palace had many entryways, and despite the many guards, this man always found a way to get inside.

A wise man told the king, "Instead of posting so many guards at the palace, appoint one guard to stand in front of that person's house, to prevent him from leaving his house. He won't come to the palace if he can't leave his house."

The *nimshal* is that a person wants to come to the King of the world with *tefillah*; he wants to come every day. The *yetzer hara* tries to prevent this, so he sets up guards that prevent the person from davening. The guards take on various forms. In one *beis medresh*, the *yetzer hara* arranges that people should speak during the *tefillah*, and he can't daven there with *kavanah*. In another *beis medresh*, the *yetzer hara* has them daven very quickly, and he doesn't succeed in davening there with *kavanah*, either. When he goes to a *kever* of a *tzaddik*, hoping that perhaps he can daven with *kavanah* there, the *yetzer hara* will make sure that he meets his enemy there – someone who disturbs him or laughs at him – so he won't be able to daven there either. In short, wherever one wants to daven, the *yetzer hara* placed a guard there, to prevent him.

But then the *yetzer hara* is clever. He says, "Why should I set up so many guards? I will appoint one guard and have the guard stand in the man's heart. I'll prevent him from opening his heart to Hashem, and then he won't be able to daven.

Everyone has this guard standing in his heart, but there is hope. When one davens with *hislahavus* and fervor, even if it is just external fervor, it pushes away the guard and enables his heart to open up in prayer before Hashem.

On this note, we share the following story from the Or HaChaim Hakadosh, which Reb Elyah Roth *zt'l* told:

The Or HaChaim was once a guest in the home of simple people who excelled in the mitzvah *hachmasas orchim*. The Or HaChaim felt an aura of *kedushah* in their home and was curious to know the source of that *kedushah*. As he was contemplating on that, the family was reminiscing over one of the guests that used to visit their home, and the Or HaChaim overheard the following:

Occasionally, an old, wealthy man would come to their home. The family honored him immensely – as they honored all their guests – and the old person would give them expensive gifts.

The way of this family was to serve Hashem with fervor, loud *tefillas*, and excitement, and the old man didn't appreciate it. He didn't think it was necessary. On one of his visits, the old man said, "Why do you say *birchas hamazon* so loud? Hashem hears quiet *brachos* too. Your zealous ways make your guests uncomfortable. They feel that they aren't as *frum* as you are. In my opinion, it is wrong to say *birchas hamazon* loudly..."

The family accepted his *mussar*, and they benched in silence. The old man was pleased that they listened to him, and he gave each of them another gift.

Sometime later, the old man returned, and as always, he gave gifts to each family member. On Friday night, the family began to sing *Shalom Aleichem* joyously and loudly...and the old man became anxious

Bein HaMetzarim

The Gemara (Shabbos 31) says that when a person is niftar, one of the first questions that heaven will ask him is צפית לישועה, "Did you hope for Moshiach?"

Reb Yaakov Emdin zt'l (*Siddur Beis Yaakov*, Tisha b'Av 6:16) writes, "If our only sin were that we

didn't mourn over Yerushalayim, it would be sufficient to prolong our *galus*. In my opinion, this is the primary cause of all the terrible destructions – beyond comprehension – that befall us in *galus*. We are pursued and don't have peace... all because the mourning has left our hearts."⁸

and edgy once again. "There's no reason for all this fervor!" he said. "Say it silently!" and the family obeyed. The old man gave them some more gifts.

The old man reappeared on *erev Pesach*, and the host invited him to the seder. The old man said, "I will only join your seder if you agree to be silent at the Seder. Do as I teach you: Keep the enthusiasm in your heart. Don't show it on the outside."

The *baal habayis* said he'd have to ask his wife. She said, "When he stole from our children the *birchas hamazon*, I kept quiet. Then he took away our *Shalom Aleichem*, and I also forgave him. But I refuse to give away the Seder night."

The old man became angry and said, "I shouldn't have given you all those presents since I see that you don't listen to me."

The *baal habayis* was worried the old man would ask them to give back all the precious gifts, but his wife saw things differently. She told her husband, "Gather all the presents and return them to him. I don't want them, and I don't want his false rebukes."

The Or HaChaim listened in astonishment and said, "Now I understand why there's a holy aura in your house. That man was the *yetzer hara*, trying to uproot your *temimus*. The חכמת נשים, the wife's wisdom, בנתה ביתה, saved your home."

The lesson is that external fervor is helpful as it rouses inner emotions. There are those who want to skip the enthusiasm, thinking it is not authentic and unnecessary, but this external fervor is important, as it helps us daven and perform the mitzvos properly. It might be external initially, but it arouses our hearts and helps us daven and perform mitzvos correctly.

8. Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l, who studied in the Ksav Sofer's yeshiva in Pressburg, said, "I once heard two women of Pressburg speaking. One asked the other, "What did you prepare for lunch today."

"I prepared beans," she said.

"And what will you make tomorrow?"

The woman replied, "Sha! Sha! אל תפתח פה לשטן. [Don't even consider that tomorrow will be a regular day.] But if chas v'shalom Moshiach doesn't come, I will cook potatoes." Reb Yosef Chaim repeated this story, to show how simple people in Pressburg awaited and believed in the coming of Moshiach.

A businessman came to the Apter Rav zt'l to ask for business advice. The Rebbe gave him wise counsel, and then the rebbe emitted a deep moan and said with a broken heart, "A great tragedy happened today."

"What happened?" the man asked.

"We didn't bring the *korban tamid* today..." the Apter Rav cried copiously.

Someone came to the Kotzker Rebbe zt'l, complaining that his son-in-law had become a Kotzker chassid. He told the rebbe that his daughter was very upset about this, and the father cried, "If one has a heart, how could it not burst from pain because of my daughter's sorrow?"

The rebbe replied, "If one indeed has a heart, how could it not burst from pain because of the *churban* Beis HaMikdash."

In particular, we should mourn the churban Beis HaMikdash during the Three Weeks. The Magen Avraham (551:45) writes, "The Arizal taught that one should mourn during these days [of the Three Weeks] after midday and cry for around a half-hour." Generally, Tikun Chatzos is said after midnight, but these days, it can also be recited in the afternoon.

In the Chasam Sofer's yeshiva, during the Three Weeks, they would recite Tikun Chatzos together and mourn the churban every afternoon. Generally, the tzaddik, Reb Fishel Sofer *zy'a*, was the *chazzan*, and he would cry bitterly as he said it. One day, Reb Fishel wasn't in yeshiva, and a young *bachur* with a sweet voice was chosen to lead Tikun Chatzos. This *bachur* didn't cry; his recitation sounded more like a *yom tov tefillah* than *kinos*. When he finished, the Chasam Sofer said, "We must verify whether this *bachur* doesn't belong to Shabtai Tzvi's *sr'y* group. Because how can one relate to the *churban* Beis HaMikdash with such ease and comfort?"⁹

During the Three Weeks, a certain tzaddik visited the Sfas Emes of Gur *zt'l*. "What brings you here?" the Sfas Emes asked. "I know that you live very far away from here!"

"My family's tradition is to travel during the Three Weeks," the tzaddik explained. "Hashem is, *kivayachol*, in *galus*, so it is our custom to go into *galus* during this period."

The Sfas Emes replied, "The main thing is to remember that we aren't home." The Sfas Emes rarely traveled, but he frequently reminded himself that he wasn't *home*. We

aren't where we ought to be. This realization should never leave our consciousness.

Close to Hashem

It states (Eichah 1:3) כל רודפיה השיגוה בין המצרים, "all her pursuers overtook her between the boundaries."¹⁰ The Koznitzer Magid *zt'l* (Avodas Yisrael, *Avos* 2:14) writes that כל רודפיה means כל רודף י-ה, whoever pursues Hashem, השיגוה, can attain a connection with Hashem, בין המצרים, during Bein HaMetzarim. During these days, it is easier for a person to become close to Hashem than the rest of the year.

Interestingly, it is different from what we would assume. We think that during these days of mourning, we are distant from Hashem when, in fact, it is during this time of year that we have the greatest potential to become close to Hashem.

He brings a hint to this from the pasuk (Shemos 3:14) אלהי-ה אשר אלהי-ה. The gematria of אלהי-ה is 21. Thus, the pasuk can be translated as אלהי-ה; Hashem says, "I will be with the Jewish nation אשר אלהי-ה during the 21 days of Bein HaMetzarim.

Why is it easier to become close to Hashem these days? The Koznitzer Magid explains with a *mashal*:

"When a king is in his palace, it is hard for people to reach him. Guards surround the king and keep people from coming near. And if he is granted an audience with the king, he must present the king with a precious gift. But when the king is traveling, it is easy to get to the king, and even a small present will be considered in the king's eyes like a large gift. He will accept it with a

9. The Chasam Sofer said that whoever mourns over the Beis HaMikdash during the Three Weeks will merit good children.

10. According to its simple meaning, the pasuk discusses our troubles in *galus*. The goyim pursue and persecute us, and we have nowhere to escape. It is like there is a boundary on both sides of the road (בין המצרים), and we have nowhere to run.

Rashi adds that *bein hametzarim* can also refer to the days between the 17th of Tamuz and Tisha b'Av. At the time of the Churban, between these two *metzarim*, times of grief, the Jewish nation suffered greatly.

happy countenance, and this is because he is traveling. Therefore, the Tana says *הוי שקוד* *הוי* is gematria 21. This hints at the 21 days of Bein HaMatzerim." The Three Weeks is a time for Torah study, a time to come closer to Hashem.

The Joy of Mourning

When one mourns the Beis HaMikdash, he draws an element of it to himself. The Beis HaMikdash was a place filled with joy, as we sing in the Shabbos zemiros, *למקדשך טוב*, "Return to the Beis HaMikdash and to the Kodosh Kadoshim, a place where the souls rejoice" and with his mourning, he draws this immense joy to himself.

Some people are afraid to mourn because they don't want to be sad, failing to realize that mourning results in the greatest joy.

Shulchan Aruch (554:25) states, *כל המתאבל על*, "Whoever mourns over Yerushalayim merits and sees in its joy." *זוכה ורואה* is written in the present tense. The Kedushas Levi and other *sefarim* explain that when one mourns the Beis HaMikdash, he immediately experiences the joy of redemption. The Kedushas Levi (*Eichah*) writes, "When one thinks about holiness and mourns Yerushalayim, he immediately perceives an element of the joy of Yerushalayim, of how it will be in the future."

At a *chasunah*, we break a glass under the *chuppah*, we say the *brachah* *שׁוּשׁ תִּשִׁי* - a tefillah for the *geulah*, and the *chassan* wears ashes on his head, etc. These customs help us remember Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash. The Sfas Emes (*Ki Savo* 5653) explains that the purpose of these customs isn't to get us to mourn at a wedding; rather, they perfect the joy of the *chasunah*. We want the joy of the *chasunah* to be complete,

but how can any happiness be complete in *galus*? So, we mourn, and the mourning draws the light and the joy of the era of Moshiach, which completes the joy of the *chasunah*.

The Sfas Emes writes, "At every *simchah*, one must remember the Beis HaMikdash... When the Beis HaMikdash stood, the *simchah* was complete. Today, we merit this *simchah* through mourning and yearning for the Beis HaMikdash. As it states (Yeshayah 66:10) *שִׂישׂוּ* *אתה מושׁוּשׁ כָּל הַמֵּתְאֲבֵלִים עֲלֶיהָ*, 'exult her in exultation, all you who mourned for her.' ... Through his mourning, he will merit the joy of Yerushalayim."

Yomim Tovim

This week's *parashah* discusses Shabbos, *rosh chodesh*, and the *yomim tovim*.

Regarding the greatness of Shabbos, Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller *zt'l* said, "An hour of *avodas Hashem* on Shabbos is like five hundred weekday hours."

The Ben Ish Chai is more generous. He says an hour on Shabbos is like a thousand weekday hours.

The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* says that an hour of *avodas Hashem* on Rosh Chodesh causes the entire month to be holy like Rosh Chodesh. As the saying goes, "The body follows the head."

Chazal say, "Whoever is greater has a greater *yetzer hara*." Reb Yechezkel Levenstein *zt'l* taught that this also applies to times. On the more important days of the year - such as Shabbos and *yom tov* - there is a greater *yetzer hara*, which is why some people find it hard to serve Hashem on those days. But if we try, we can accomplish so much during those days.¹¹

11. The Dubno Magid *zt'l* told the following story:

A large border city passed hands several times between its two neighboring countries, both countries claiming the city as theirs.

Yeshuos from Being Joyous on Shabbos

It states in *sefer Masuk m'Dvash* (from Reb Yitzchak Parchi *zt'l* 6), "We saw, with our own eyes, that those who had a problem when Shabbos arrived, but took their minds off their *tzarah* and didn't let their worries enter their heart and rejoiced with Shabbos when Shabbos ended, the problem was gone. Everything turned to joy. They were saved from their *tzaros* with wonderful miracles."

Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman *zt'l* was from the *tzaddikim* who lived in America about one hundred years ago. He was an example to all that it was possible to be an *ehrlicher Yid*, even in America.

One of the *mitzvos* that he excelled in was *hachnasas orchim*. Every Shabbos, many guests sat around his table.

Once, his daughter took ill, and Reb Yaakov Yosef and his Rebbetzin stayed with her in the hospital around the clock. As Shabbos approached, they decided to go home to perform their weekly *mitzvah* of *hachnasas orchim*.

There was another Herman in the hospital – unrelated to them – and that Herman was *niftar* on Shabbos. According to American law, the hospital had to notify the next of kin as quickly as possible, so the hospital sent a messenger to the Herman home to tell them the unfortunate news. But accidentally, they confused the two Herman families, and the messenger was sent to the house of Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman.

When the messenger arrived at the door with a letter, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Herman

After many years of war and bloodshed, both governments decided that the dispute had to be settled once and for all. They decided to conduct one final battle; the winner would control the city forever.

They also decided that large armies won't fight the war this time as in the past. One warrior from each country will face off at the battlefield this time. The mighty warriors will wrestle in a field near a cliff, and the one who throws his opponent off the cliff wins.

The day of the great battle arrived. The kings of both countries and many spectators came to witness this decisive battle.

At the start, one of the warriors was far more successful than the other. It seemed that he would win. The countrymen of the winning team cheered their wrestler on as the warrior dragged his opponent towards the cliff.

Suddenly, when they were mere steps away from the cliff, the warrior of the other country jumped up from the dust, overpowered his opponent, and threw him over the cliff.

At the victory celebration, the king told the mighty wrestler, "We were so worried. We were certain you would lose. How did you end up winning?"

"I purposely allowed my opponent to drag me all the way to the cliff because I wanted to tire him. By the time he dragged me to the cliff, he was exhausted, and I was strong – it was easy to win the battle."

This story reminds us that we must be strong and fight the most important battles. We shouldn't arrive at Shabbos and *yom tov* exhausted. Those are moments of critical and decisive battles.

Some *tzaddikim* encouraged sleeping on erev Shabbos so we could have the strength to serve Hashem on Shabbos. In Stolín, there is a saying, "Six days we rest up, and on Shabbos we work." *Avodas Hashem* is precious on holy days, and fortunate are those who utilize these special moments.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said that if a goy knew the joy of studying Torah early in the morning of Shabbos, he would convert just to experience this joy.

There is so much we can gain on Shabbos and *yom tov*, and we should strive to acquire as much as possible.

refused to accept it. It was Shabbos, and Shabbos is a day of joy. They didn't want to hear or see the letter. It was Shabbos; they would be happy, and that was final.

The messenger left the letter at the home of one of the Herman relatives. The relative came to the Herman home to tell the parents the terrible news, but they refused to listen to what their relative was saying.

After *havdalah*, a second messenger from the hospital arrived at their door. "We're so sorry," he said. "We made a terrible mistake with the last letter. The letter wasn't intended for you. It was written to the other Herman family. Your daughter is doing fine. In fact, over the past twenty-four hours, her health has drastically improved."

Their joy on Shabbos healed their daughter.

I heard from a person who works in *kiruv rechokim* that he once gave a speech on the topic of being happy on Shabbos, and he repeated stories of tzaddikim who refused to cry or to mourn on Shabbos, even after a great loss, r'l. One person from the audience (not yet religious) became very upset when he heard that. He said, "How can the Torah obligate us to control our emotions? And how can the Torah not permit a person to feel his emotions at a difficult time? Is there no compassion in religion?"

The speaker sent up a silent prayer to Hashem before answering. He told Hashem, "This is for Your honor, not mine. Please send me the right words."

Then he answered, "There was a famous actor who was informed minutes before a show that his father had just died. But the show had to go on, so the actor pushed the sorrow out of his mind and played his part. After the show, the producers announced that the actor had acted superbly, even after discovering that his father had died moments before the show. He had succeeded in overcoming his emotions."

The actor received a standing ovation from the crowd.

In this manner, he gave the questioner to understand that there are times when one must overcome his emotions. Shabbos is such a time. Shabbos is a time of joy.

Here is another example of someone who experienced *yeshuos* by being happy on Shabbos.

One Friday morning, after his checkup, the doctor told him, "Your suspicions were correct—you have a kidney stone. And not just one. You have three kidney stones piled on top of each other. The bottom stone is size 6, above it is a size 4 stone, and the top stone is size 2. We'll give it a couple of weeks; maybe things will improve. However, if they don't, we will need to operate."

It was hard for this *yungerman* to be happy that Shabbos due to his pain and his fear of surgery. His melancholy feelings affected the mood in his home. No one wanted to sing *zemiros*, and the delicious Shabbos food tasted bland.

But suddenly, the *yungerman* jumped up from his seat and grabbed a Gemara *Bava Metzia*. He opened it to *Daf 25 and*, with a shining face, repeated the Gemara numerous times. His family watched on in amazement, not understanding how his mood changed so quickly.

After studying the Gemara a few times, he told his family, "The Gemara discusses a case where someone found three coins of different sizes, one on top of the other. The largest coin was at the bottom, a medium-sized one in the middle, and a tiny one on top. The Gemara rules that it is evident that these coins didn't fall in this manner. Someone must have placed them there intentionally. Therefore, the finder must announce his find because the formation is a *siman*."

"I suddenly remembered this Gemara and realized that my kidney stones are in the same formation: the largest stone at the

bottom, the medium in the middle, and a small stone on top. As the Gemara explains, this formation means the stones didn't reach there by chance. Obviously, they were placed there purposely by Hashem. And since it is from Hashem, I know it is for my good. Now I can be happy."

A week later, the stones left his body naturally. The joy of Shabbos brought him a remedy.

The renowned *gabbai tzedakah* Reb Dovid Leib Schwartz *zt'l* meticulously kept Shabbos properly. Even in the concentration camp during the War, he kept Shabbos as best as possible.

One week he told his friends he wanted to eat three meals on Shabbos. His friends laughed at him because they only received a small piece of bread in the morning and nothing else. But he didn't let their teasing prevent him from hoping and aspiring to eat three meals on Shabbos.

On *Erev Shabbos*, their barrack commander gave everyone a loaf of bread and explained, "The bread isn't for today. We will be trekking for three days on Sunday, and this is all you will have. Save the bread for then."

Reb Dovid Leib didn't heed the warning. This was the opportunity he had prayed for. He made Kiddush on the bread on Friday night and ate a piece. He ate another piece in the morning and finished it at *shalosh seudos*.

He didn't know how he would walk for three days without food, but in the meanwhile, he was happy that he had eaten three meals on Shabbos.

After Shabbos, their commander informed them that there was a change of plans. "Everyone must return the bread. We won't be traveling after all." They all returned the loaf of bread except for Reb Dovid Leib, who had already eaten it *l'kovod Shabbos*.