



פרשת מקץ

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Bitachon: A Heart of Flesh

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Part I. A Stony Heart

Yetzer Hara Goes Incognito

In Mesichta Sukkah on *daf nun beis amud alef* the Gemara talks about the various names by which the *yetzer hara* is known in the *kisvei hakodesh*. There's a list there of names, seven names of the 'evil inclination' that we find in our holy Scriptures.

What's the purpose of the Chachomim giving us that information? It's because the *yetzer hara* is a subject which the world ignores, and that's exactly what the *yetzer hara* prefers. Imagine a spy is trained in Moscow and now he comes to America. He doesn't want any headlines announcing his arrival because he succeeds only when he is incognito. And that's why the *yetzer hara* likes when people don't talk about him; that's when he's most successful.

And that's why you find so much in the *divrei Chazal* that is spoken about him. Because the more we think about him, the better off we are; the more we know about him, the more suited we are to

protect ourselves. And so if our Sages are telling us names of the *yetzer hara* it's not merely letting us know information, like a concordance going through the Tanach and saying various names. Each one is a big *limud*, a very important lesson about how to deal with this enemy, how to defeat him.

The Real Enemy - Not the Arabs

Just to give an example: *שְׁלֹמֹה קָרָאֻ שׁוֹנֵא* – *Shlomo Hamelech called him 'enemy'*. What does that mean? It means that the *yetzer hara* is the enemy and that you have to get your mind off of all other enemies. If you think you have other enemies in this world, you're making a mistake. And if you waste your efforts hating anybody or fighting anybody, you are expending efforts that could have been better utilized if you had recognized the real enemy.

I remember I was once in the little town of Tzitavyan in Lithuania on Tishah b'Av. We had just finished saying *kinos* and the Shavler Rav was present, and he was speaking to us unofficially,

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informally. At that time they were making protest demonstrations all over the world against the Arabs for something that the Arabs had done, some atrocity against the Jews. And the first thing he said then was that we need to make protest demonstrations against the *yetzer hara*.

Youthful Arrogance

Now I was a young man, just recently married, and I thought I knew a lot. And so when I heard those words, even though I respected the dictum of this great man, but actually it didn't enter my head. It was something interesting, a witty remark, but I didn't really accept it so much.

But as the years went by I began to understand more and more that it's not just words, that it's actually so – the *yetzer hara* is the real *sonei*. Because whatever happens in this world it's the *yetzer hara* that's manipulating it. If not for the wickedness that people were moved to do because of the *yetzer hara*, there never would have been any Arabs making trouble; they wouldn't have done anything. And so the Shavler Rav wasn't just saying something cute; he was saying the truth the way it is.

But that's not our subject now; we'll take up that name one day but right now I just wanted to bring you an example of why it's important to know the *yetzer hara*'s names; each name is intended to guide us, to make us aware of who the *yetzer hara* is. Now we don't have time for each one tonight but one of them, one that's connected to our *sedrah*, we'll talk about now.

The Stony Heart

The Gemara says יְחִזְקֵאל קָרָאוּ אֶבֶן – the Navi Yechezkel called it a stone. He's talking there about the days to come when the *yetzer hara* won't be in power anymore; and he says in the name of Hashem, וְהִסְרֵתִי אֶת לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם – I am going to remove the stone heart from you, וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בְּשָׂר – and I'll give you instead a heart of flesh (Yechezkel 36:26). So we see that where there's a stone heart the *yetzer hara* is in power.

Now, if that name, 'stone heart', is what the *navi* calls the *yetzer hara* so we understand that there hangs in that name a very great *mussar haskel* that we have to study; at least we should make an attempt to understand what that name is teaching us.

Now, people who live only by superficialities and they translate Torah words into gentile idioms, so to them a 'stone heart' means somebody who is cruel. And when they see such a *possuk* they think it means, "I'm going to remove the cruel heart and in its place I'm going to give you a *lev* of *basar*, a soft heart." They imagine that that's what's promised *leasid lavo* – in the 'days to come' you're going to have a kind heart.

A Mind That Feels

But that's not the *pshat* at all because first of all in Tanach the word *lev* has nothing to do with kindness or cruelty. In *lashon kodesh* the word *lev* means mind. You'll soon hear why that's so but it's an important piece of information you're hearing now: The Torah language doesn't express 'thought' by the word מוֹחַ, brain; it's *lev*, that's the mind.

And what is a stony heart? Why is the *yetzer hara* compared to a stone and why is the *yetzer tov* compared to a heart of flesh, *lev basar*?

The answer is a stone has no feelings, and successful living comes from feeling. To actually sense things, to *feel* the Torah ideals, that's the summit of achievement in this world. And that's precisely the reason that in Torah vernacular all thinking is with the *lev*; it's because a person must train himself to *feel* his thoughts. The brain after all is just a computer; it's the *heart* that measures the amount of feeling you have, how much your cold logic is translated into warm impulses.

The Jewish Heart

It's the heartbeat that matters – the heart beats faster when you're feeling – and therefore our language expresses 'thought' by the heart because the heart will indicate how much a person is involved, how much he feels the idea. An idea

without heartbeat is nothing to us. A person who can teach, who can say lofty ideas from the lips outward but in his mind he doesn't have it – he doesn't feel it, he doesn't sympathize with those ideas – among us Jews he has no place.

Let's say you have in the university somebody who is talking about social justice. He's teaching a course on political science and he's talking about the importance of affording every stratum of society opportunities to live with the maximum pursuit of happiness; and he's preaching to his students about how the wealthier have to share their wealth with the downtrodden who have been pushed underfoot by the higher class, the capitalists. And this man is so enthusiastic about his ideals that he's gushing; he waxes poetic without end on his subject. And of course, his gullible students swallow it hook, line and sinker.

As he walks out after finishing his lecture, he's going to his car and he's wiping his lips in happiness – 'Oh boy, did I give it to them tonight' – a poor man comes over to him. "Sir, I'm hungry. Maybe you can spare me a dollar and I'll buy myself a sandwich." So what does this paragon of social justice do? He gives him an angry look and he runs into his car and slams the door.

The Generous Poor

Now, how could such a thing be? He's not ignorant about the plight of this poor fellow. The answer is that he has a mind of stone; he never assimilated the ideals that he himself speaks about. He knows all about it; he can explain very well the ideals he claims to believe but he hasn't the slightest interest in practicing it. Actually he is only working for export. That's called a 'stone heart', when you don't translate your ideals into feeling. It's cold knowledge, that's all. When we talk about a *lev* of *basar*, however, a heart of flesh, it means not only to know but to *feel* and to *live* the great ideals.

That's why when Jews learn about *tzedakah*, they don't talk about it; they do it. I can prove it. Walk into a yeshivah. A yeshivah is not a place where millionaires' sons come. It's mostly poor

boys. Now here walks in a man from Eretz Yisroel who has to marry off his daughter. He goes over to the *mashgiach* and tells him his plight so the *mashgiach* appoints two boys and they go among the poor yeshivah boys. Now, what do they have already? Not much. Maybe a little allowance that they need for themselves; they need sometimes to take a bus or maybe buy a snack. But they take out their money and he leaves with hundreds of dollars from that *beis hamedrash*; hundreds of dollars from poor boys.

How could such a thing be? That college professor, he studied much more about the plight of the poor than these boys. He's written a thesis on the subject!

The answer is that these boys are trained to *live* their ideals. It's not only in their minds, in their stony hearts; they've already softened their hearts to the idea that *tzedakah* means giving.

The Printer's Chiddush

You know *tzedakah* can mean righteousness too. Ahh! Righteousness; such a beautiful word. But you forget that it means 'giving'. That's why in the *machzor* when it says the three things, תְּשׁוּבָה, תְּפִלָּה וְצְדָקָה, that will rescue you from punishment, so what did the printer do? On top of the word *tzedakah* he put *mammon*. Not righteousness – *mammon*! Actual greenbacks.

In the gentile prayerbooks, the printer wouldn't have the nerve to do such a thing. It's 'righteousness', that's all. Don't bother me with the results of righteousness. And therefore when somebody comes to those righteous people and asks for charity, he's directed to go to this and this address. "That's where the headquarters are. They'll take care of you. The organization handles that. Don't bother us."

And therefore when we talk about ideals we understand that it doesn't mean only to know the right ideas. Of course, that in itself is also a very big thing. To know the right ideas is not a small thing but if it remains so, if it doesn't soften up your

heart too, then you're remiss in your function in this world because your heart is a stone heart.

Getting a Fleeshy Heart

Now, we won't say it's easy. It's a big job because *tzedakah* is only one example. There are so many things, so many Torah attitudes and ideals, and if you only learn it in a stony way then it has no effect on life at all.

Even if you're very learned, maybe you studied many *seforim*, but if you learned it just intellectually and you never practiced *feeling* what you learned, so you're left with a stony heart, and a stony heart is not capable of functioning.

And therefore it's of the utmost importance to take all of the great Torah ideals and make them part of your personality; to feel the ideals, to live them, that's a *lev basar*. To make your heart a 'fleshy heart' means that it feels the great thoughts that you say with your mouth and it reacts to the world with those feelings and emotions.

Part II. Yosef's Heart of Stone

Living Bitachon

Now, among the many areas of life where people are living with a stony heart, without softening their hearts to the great ideals, one of the most important ones is *bitachon*, reliance on Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

You might have learned about the fundamental principles of *bitachon*; you know it, you say it. But is that enough? The fact that you say it? You can even be a good *darshan*; you can make *drashahs* like I'm saying to you right now. So what if I'm saying it? It doesn't mean that I've assimilated it; it doesn't mean that it's become part of my personality.

That's what it means *leiv ha'even*. A person has a mind, yes; he knows all about it. But it hasn't penetrated his personality yet. He hasn't softened his stony mind enough to feel *bitachon* in a way that it becomes part of his personality.

Planning a Prison-Break

Now the Medrash Rabah (89:1) at the beginning of Mikeitz talks about this problem. It's talking there about Yosef Hatzaddik, how he was sitting in prison. It wasn't his fault and he was waiting to get out. And he tried. When he interpreted the dream for one of his fellow prisoners he said, "Remember me when you get out. Remember me and see that I get out of here because I don't belong here. I'm an innocent man."

But the man went out and nothing happened. וְלֹא זָכַר שׁוֹר הַמְשָׁקִים אֶת יוֹסֵף – *the wine bearer didn't remember Yosef*, וַיִּשְׁכַּחְהוּ – *and he forgot him*. He didn't remember him means he didn't put it into his mind; once in a while, at the beginning, it occurred to him but he kept on postponing. "I'll do it but now is not the right time. Later." And finally וַיִּשְׁכַּחְהוּ – *he forgot all about it*.

Stopping a Prison-Break

So now Yosef was sitting in prison and time was going by. Days, weeks, months, and Yosef was still waiting for the good news. Eventually two years went by and וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתַּיִם יָמִים – *it was at the end of two years and finally things began to move*.

Now the words 'And it was at the end of two years,' seem conspicuous for those familiar with *lashon kodesh*. We would have expected the more familiar phrase, וַיְהִי אַחֲרַי שְׁנַי שָׁנָיִם, 'And it was after two years.' And the Medrash makes note of this unusual phrase and tells us that there must have been an 'end' to something here. וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ means that the end of a certain period of time had arrived. And that's something the Sages want us to understand.

An End to the Stone

And so they apply to our story a *possuk* in Iyov, a mysterious *possuk*, that we're going to study: קָץ שָׁם – *Hashem made an end ... אֶבֶן אֶפֶל – to the stone of darkness (28:3)* and they say that it's talking about our protagonist, about Yosef's stony heart. Yosef Hatzaddik? A stony heart? What does that mean?

You know Yosef left home at the age of seventeen. He was a *yeled zekunim*, a child of his father's old age, and the Targum says he was a *chakim*, a wise child, because of that. You know, if your father is already an old father when you're born, that's the best father to have. If you have a young father of nineteen, let's say you're the first child, so your father doesn't know much yet. As he grows older he becomes a better father. But if he fathers you at the age of sixty then you have a better father, no question. And Yaakov was already well on his years when he had Yosef so he was the best kind of father.

But despite all that he put into his son, Yosef after all was only a young man of seventeen years. Seventeen is not thirty and Yosef needed a lot of training yet; and therefore when he was in prison he made an error.

The Error of Reliance

Now we call it an 'error' only relatively; for us it wouldn't be called an error. But for a great man like Yosef Hatzaddik, on his *madreigah* it was called an error.

What was the error? He said to the *sar hamashkim*, "You should remember me."

"You should remember me"? A sin?! What's such a big sin? Even a small sin, it doesn't seem to be.

And the answer is that there's a sentence that the Navi Yirmiyah said: אָרוּר הַגֵּבֵר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בְּאָדָם – *Cursed is the man who puts his trust in human beings*, וְשָׂם בְּבֶשֶׂר זִרְעוֹ – *and he makes his strength in flesh* (17:5).

Human Beefs

What are human beings? Human beings are only meat. If you pass by a butcher shop, will you put your trust in a side of beef? A *sar hamashkim* is a side of beef, that's all. And Yosef made an error by putting his hope in a side of beef.

Now there was nothing wrong in trying to get out. Certainly he should try; he must! But it depends

how much he *relies* on it. It depends on how much your heart is actually softened to the ideal of true *bitachon*, of genuine reliance on Hashem. And Yosef's heart needed some more softening. To a certain extent Yosef was וְשָׂם בְּבֶשֶׂר זִרְעוֹ – *and he made his strength in a piece of meat*.

Beefy Senators

It's a lesson that a person has to learn over and over again. You can't know it too much. *Nobody can help you*. And therefore when you have, let's say, a banquet of a certain institution and a gentile senator comes down and says a few kind words about the Jewish people and all the people there applaud warmly; their hearts melt with happiness. They know at least there's one good goy in the government who is for them.

Oh no! That's a very big error! First of all, he doesn't even mean it. There's no question that he's insincere. He walks out and he says 'Hah, I gave those Jews a good time tonight.' He doesn't care a lick for the Jews. It's just a bought favor. It's a compliment that you pay for; you'll have to give votes for that. But even if he was a good goy, *lu yetzuyar*, imagine he's a very good goy. You're making a big mistake if you put your trust in him – even a little bit.

Leaning on the Cupbearer

And that's what happened with Yosef. When the *sar hamashkim* left the prison to resume his office as the cupbearer to Pharaoh, to a certain extent Yosef's prayers went along with him. Yosef was always praying to Hakadosh Baruch Hu; but now when Yosef Hatzaddik saw that the *sar hamashkim* was flushed with gratitude – after all, it was Yosef who got him out of that hole – and as he was leaving he said 'Rely on me. Rely on me,' so Yosef caved in a little bit – he relied on that. Oh, that was a big mistake!

Now, Yosef didn't rely on him. It's certain that Yosef didn't put his trust in this man alone; he relied on Hakadosh Baruch Hu. But a little bit he was leaning on this goy; a little bit of his confidence

in Hashem went out the door with this man, this piece of meat.

And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, “Yosef, you left home too early. You were only seventeen. Your education is not completed, and I must teach you a little longer. You still have a stony heart. You’re lacking a little bit of sensitivity to the great principle of *bitachon* that *nobody in this world can help you*.

Of course *halevai* our hearts at the age of a hundred and twenty should be as soft as Yosef’s at the age of seventeen. But compared to what Yosef was supposed to be, it was considered a stony heart. And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu said a little more waiting, a little more training, he needs.

Day by Day Disappointments

Now it didn’t happen at once. After the first day Yosef was hoping he’d get good news from the palace. But the day passed and nothing happened.

He went to the overseer of the prison. Any news? Any letters for me? No letters today.

The next day, no letters. Days passed by. And every day Yosef was disappointed. His plans, his hopes, his reliance on the *sar hamashkim*, were being frustrated.

Little by little it dawned on Yosef that the whole thing was only a dream, that the *sar hamashkim* is just a piece of side beef. Months passed. A year passed. And now Yosef was telling himself, “You deserve a kick, Yosef. You should kick yourself! What do you mean by putting your trust in human beings?”

And every day he spoke it over to himself until finally he gave up any shadow of hope that help would come from his plan. At the end of two years it was erased from his heart completely. His hard heart, so to speak of course, was now softened; Yosef had come back to 100% *emunah* and *bitachon*: “Only Hakadosh Baruch Hu can get me out. Whatever will happen; if it’ll be the *sar hamashkim* or something else, it’s not that. Nothing will help except Hashem.”

The Great Chemist

The *Medrash* says Hakadosh Baruch Hu measured out the two years like a chemist in a laboratory. A chemist doesn’t just dish out something; he doesn’t take a bucketful of a certain material and pour it into a bucket. No; he measures it with exactitude; he uses a vessel that has gradations carved into the side. It has to be precise.

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu was **שָׁם קָץ**; He made a limit to how much time, how much disappointment in his plan, Yosef needed in order to soften his stony heart that relied on man. **וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים** – And finally, when it was the end of two years and Hashem saw into Yosef’s heart that he had become exceptional in *bitachon*, that he had purified his heart, now things began moving.

The Ancient Peirush

That’s what it states in Dovid Hamelech’s *peirush* on Chumash. People don’t know that but Tehillim has excellent *peirushim* on Chumash. Not the *peirushim* on Tehillim but Tehillim itself is a wonderful *peirush* on Chumash.

Look in Tehillim *kuf hei* and he describes how Yosef was in the prison: **עָנּוּ בַּבֶּבֶל רַגְלָיו** – they afflicted his feet with iron chains in prison, **בְּרַזָּל בָּאָה נַפְשׁוֹ** – his body came into metal. That means he was tied down with metal chains in the dungeon. Until when? **עַד עֵת בָּא דְבָרֵי** – until the time when Hashem’s word came, **הַ צְרִפְתָּהּ** – the word of Hashem had purified him (Tehillim 105: 18-19).

What does it mean the word of Hashem ‘purified him’? The word of Hashem set him free, that’s all. Where does ‘purify’ come in here?

The answer is Hashem kept him in jail two more years. That was His word. All those days waiting; days of disappointment in man, disappointment in plans gone awry, that’s what purified Yosef from his little bit of non-*bitachon*.

And now, all of a sudden, **וַיָּבֹא אֶל פַּרְעֹה** – he’s standing before Pharaoh (Mikeitz 41:14). He’s thirty years old and he’s talking to the king. Now thirty years is nothing yet; there are many thirty year

olds who have the stony heart of a three year old. But Yosef was different now because he had made use of his disappointments to acquire a *lev basar*. He was prepared with *emunah* and *bitachon*.

Prepared for Good Surprises

And now he was ready for a different type of surprise. Because now there was the surprise of good fortune. At the age of seventeen that good fortune might have knocked him off his feet. "It was me, my interpretation of the dream, that brought me here." But now Yosef was already through the fire. He was tempered in the forge, and he knew that אָרוּר הַגִּבֵּר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בְּאָדָם – *Accursed is the man who puts his faith in a human being*, even if that human being is yourself. "בְּלִעְרִי" he said to Pharaoh. "It's not me. Only Hashem can put the interpretation of your dream in my mouth."

That's the result of being disappointed and using that letdown to create a softer heart, a heart that is softened to the great ideals required for creating a Torah mind. That's the greatness of וְהִסְרֵתִי אֶת לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׂרְךָ – *removing the stone heart*, וְנִתְּנִי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר – *and acquiring instead a heart of flesh* (Yechezkel 36:26).

Part III. Our Heart of Stone

Book Smarts

And that brings us to the great statement of the Chovos Halevavos. The Chovos Halevavos puts down the following principle and it's very important for us to study that. It will be very useful in life so pay good attention now.

He says that sometimes unexpected things happen to us, all kinds of unexpected things. And they're not accidents. It's a system that Hashem follows with man in this world – the system of surprises, of the unexpected. It's one of Hashem's methods of refining us in this world; one of the ways we acquire a *lev basar*.

You know, a person can refine himself by studying *mussar seforim*. If a person takes the

Chovos Halevavos and learns the *Shaar Habitachon* there's no question that it's going to redound to his benefit. The ideas begin to percolate in his mind and he becomes a different person. No question about that.

But it's not easy. It takes work. You have to study the words again and again. And even when you do that, it doesn't always enter into your bones; it doesn't always go into your *kishkes*. Even if you learn a good *mussar seder*, it takes work for it to seep in; to make your heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

Street Smarts

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is on the job however. He won't let you remain a nothing and so He gives you opportunities; He plans surprises that are intended to wake you up from your stony stupor. And one of them, the Chovos Halevavos says, is unexpected bad news *chalilah*, unexpected misfortunes.

Here is a man, a stockbroker and he's flourishing. Things are going well. He has customers. He has many friends. And he's dreaming now of a big fortune because he sees how it's piling up. All of a sudden there's a crash, and he's wiped out. Not only he lost all of his money but he lost his job too. Nobody is buying any stocks.

Now this man was a sporty fellow. He was cocky, secure in his situation. He was sitting on top of the world and now suddenly he's upended. He can't even pay his rent. A true story. He can't even pay his rent. He's sitting now on a dung heap. He's ruined.

A Life of Disappointments

That's one kind of sudden surprise, the Chovos Halevavos says, and it happens to everyone. Not like that, hopefully; not as drastic as that, but Hashem sends disappointments to everyone. Not they *happen* – they're being *sent*. It's a system that Hashem follows in order that you should learn the great lesson that He is in full charge of all the affairs of your life; that you are not the one who is the author of your fate.

And it hurts sometimes; it's no fun to have your plans go awry. But that's the purpose, so that the mind of a person should be stirred into motion. He should be stimulated into thinking, "What is going on here?!" Otherwise, you'd never think.

So although you made a certain arrangement and you hoped that it would turn out a certain way, Hakadosh Baruch Hu sometimes does you a favor and He upends your plans. He's teaching you a very valuable lesson, the lesson that "I am the *Melech*. I am the King. I am in charge, not you. And so, don't rely on your plans. Don't rely on other people. Don't rely on other things. Whatever you do – and you *must* do – remember that it's all Me!"

It's worth good money, that lesson, and Hashem is not charging you for it, so you should be happy. You thought that you're the one running the show here, that you're the *macher* here. So Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "No, no. Forget about that. I'm the only *Macher* around!" He's softening your heart just like He did to Yosef Hatzaddik.

Bitachon in Manhattan

Here's a man; he has to go to a specialist. He's a big doctor and you had to make the appointment months in advance. And then when the day comes, you have to take the day off from work and your boss is not so happy about that. You took off for *chol hamoed* and this and that. But what can you do already? It has to be done and you've been waiting a long time for this appointment.

So you get into a taxi and make the trip to Manhattan. And when you get to the office the secretary sitting behind the desk tells you – without even looking up she tells you that the doctor had an emergency and won't be coming today. "You'll have to go home and call the office tomorrow to reschedule," she tells you.

Oh, are you disappointed! All your plans, all of your preparations for nothing.

No, it's not for nothing! It's a great opportunity that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving you. Why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu make this whole story? In

order to remove your *leiv ha'veen* and teach you the great lesson that when you make plans, when you do anything, don't rely on anything. It's only Him! Nobody else!

Imitating Yosef Hatzaddik

So as you walk away from the secretary's desk, instead of that disappointment and anger – a man told me this story; he said he wanted to strangle the secretary – instead of foolish and stupid thoughts like that, you remind yourself that this is a great opportunity.

It's your great opportunity to think about what Yosef thought about for two years. "What was I thinking, just going through the motions, without always remembering that it's not the *sar hamashkim*, it's not the doctor in Manhattan; it's only Hakadosh Baruch Hu." Of course you have to ask the *sar hamashkim* for help, and of course you have to find the best specialist but what are you thinking in your head – that you need Hashem for everything – that's what matters most.

And a person can do this tens of times every day. Many tens of times each week. Because there are always things that don't go exactly as you expected and every small disappointment is the opportunity for learning this lesson of *bitachon* again; the lesson that Hashem is the Boss and that He's the One. To think like Yosef did: "Why did Hashem disappoint me? To teach me this important lesson that I have to rely on Hashem and that He is everything."

A Big Little Bit

It doesn't mean that it's easy. It's not always easy to respond in the right way because actually you *are* disappointed. And now you have to take your natural emotions and accord them with your intellect, with the principle we're talking about now, that this disappointment is the plan of Hashem to teach you *bitachon*. It's not easy.

But the answer is he should continue to utilize the opportunity and knock it into his head again and again that this was one of the purposes of his

disappointment, to teach him reliance on Hashem. Because he'll never think about it again otherwise. It could be he'll read about it sometimes in a *sefer* or he'll hear a *darshan* speak about it but his heart is still quite stony. Only now that he lost some money or he missed his ride, it's an opportunity to soften his heart.

So even though the hurt of disappointment might rankle in his mind, the lesson can be learned anyhow. He can bring home to himself again and again the thought, "This is an opportunity for me. I can acquire *bitachon* just because of my disappointment."

It doesn't mean you're going to sing and dance because you lost money. It's unnatural. But if a little bit of *bitachon* will enter your awareness – "Maybe I should grow in *bitachon* because of this," – then you are already successful. If you already say, "maybe" then you already have achieved something big. A little bit you learned that only He is the Author of your fate, and a little bit of *bitachon* is something big.

Better Surprises

Now, even though we're talking tonight about disappointments – that's the story with Yosef after all – there's another type of surprise that happens to people.

You know, when I was a youngster I once picked up a book of Ripley's Believe It or Not and I want to tell you something I read there because it's a true story and it explains perfectly what I want to tell you. It's about two people who died in one day because of the same story but for opposite reasons.

There was once a wealthy man in Paris and one day his accountant came to him with a long face: "I have terrible news to tell you" he said. "Your finances have been shipwrecked, and from all of your millions you only have 100,000 francs left." When the man heard that news he was seized by a heart attack and he died immediately. 100,000 francs? Do you know what that means? He's a

pauper now. He died on the spot from disappointment.

Well, immediately his lawyer looked in his papers and found his will. This man had no heirs except one relative, a very poor nephew. The nephew was *mammish* a beggar, a shiftless fellow with no source of income. He didn't know where the next meal would come from.

So they sent a messenger quickly to tell the nephew that he inherited 100,000 francs. When he heard the good news he had a heart attack and he died. That's on the authority of Ripley – believe it or not.

Soft Hearts, Not Heart Attacks

So here we have sudden surprises of different kinds. One is a great misfortune and one is a great success. And listen to the words of this great man, the Chovos Halevavos; he's our great *rebbe* and we have to listen to him. He says that both surprises have one purpose and the purpose is not to give heart attacks but to give you a *leiv basar*; to soften your heart and teach you that your affairs are not under your own control; that it's Hakadosh Baruch Hu and not you Who's running the show.

Whether you're the rich uncle or the poor nephew, whether the surprise was disappointment or happiness, that's one of the purposes, so that you'll acquire a soft heart.

The Surprise Shidduch

You know it happens to everybody sudden good news. I look back on my little life, a lot of times sudden good news came to me, a surprise. I remember when I wanted a *shidduch* for my daughter and I was sending to *shadchanim* everywhere but nobody was answering. I was trying but nothing. All of a sudden, a beautiful *shidduch* comes up from an unexpected corner. A Rosh Yeshiva called me up himself and offered me one of his best boys. I was afraid he was going to ask me for money, a tremendous amount of money. He called me up another time after they were married about something else. And when my wife

heard he was on the phone, that he was calling us, she was afraid that he was going to ask for money.

So I was looking in one direction and it came from an entirely different direction. That's an opportunity! The surprise of happiness! Don't let it go lost! Everybody has good surprises in his life and you have to make use of that. Don't let it go by because it's given for that purpose, so that you should sit on it. You should suck out all of the *bitachon* you can from it; study it and remind yourself about Who is the Author of your fate. "Look, I didn't even aim for it, but He was aiming and that's what matters."

That's how life is – all types of unexpected surprises come our way – and we have to make use of all of them because we're here in this world to soften up our hearts, to learn the lesson of *bitachon*. And like Yosef we're expected to use both the disappointments and the successes to remind ourselves of Who's really in control of our lives.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Softening Your Heart Every Day

Yosef Hatzaddik's heart was changed into a 'heart of flesh' by Hashem's direction. All disappointments and successes are measured out by Hashem with precision in order to give us the opportunities to soften our hearts to the great ideal of *bitachon*. This week, I will *bli neder* spend a minute every day thinking about an event – whether a disappointment or a success – that didn't go as planned. And I will consider the lesson that Hashem wants me to take away from what happened and thereby soften my heart.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

R-19 - Happy Mind | 47 - Reliance on Hashem

185 - The Easier Way | E-119 - Seven Names of the Yetzer Hara

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



What can we learn from the desecration of Kever Yosef by the Arabs?



We can learn that the Arabs are here to destroy everything that they can.

I'll tell you a little story. Once upon a time there was a rabbi who said that the Prime Minister of *Medinas Yisroel* is a *rodef*; by yielding so much to the Arabs he's causing us to lose a great deal of Jewish lives so he's a *rodef*. So somebody put one and one together and shot the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister of *Medinas Yisroel* was shot and killed by someone. And now the whole world was up in arms against this rabbi. "Look what you did! You caused a man to shoot the Prime Minister!" They don't realize, however, that the rabbi was right.

At that time the Prime Minister had begun to yield to the Arabs. He was willing to give them certain concessions in order to appease them so that they shouldn't commit acts of violence against Jews, that they should make peace. That was a terrible mistake. You don't make concessions with violent people in order to achieve peace. Let the other side make the concessions. "First you behave," the Arabs have to be told. "If you behave, then we'll see." Don't make any concessions until they behave. But he made concessions and they weren't behaving yet. And he went further and further and further and today they're willing to give away almost everything. Barak is willing to give away parts of *Yerushalayim*. And therefore, today, the Arabs see that it pays to make trouble. The more they commit acts of terror, the more they can gain opportunities to bargain. And the *goyim* go along with this. The *goyim* like the idea of taking away from the *Am Yisroel* and giving to the Arabs.

Now, I don't say that you have to make a *milchamah* but you have a right to protect the security of your citizens. I'm not a patriot of *Medinas Yisroel* but it's wrong to yield. Don't give away any land until you see that they, first of all, behave. If they behave, then we'll see what to do. But before that, while they are still committing acts of terror, there can be no kind of concessions at all. TAPE # E-229 (October 2000)