

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Devarim - T"B



בס"ד

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Devarim - T''B

Hashem's Enduring Love, Even During the Churban	4
<i>Shabbos Chazon</i>	10
A Limit to the Tzaros	14
Escape from the Yetzer Hara	17
Sinas Chinam	26
The Yesurim of the Churban were for our Benefit	28
The Obligation to Mourn	31
Building Yerushalayim with Tears	35
Benefits of Mourning	37
Connecting to Hashem with Mourning	38
Daven for Mashiach	40

Torah Wellsprings

Devarim - T"V

Hashem's Enduring Love, Even During the Churban

Chazal tell us that whenever it uses the term *וְהָיָה* in Tanach, it is an expression of distress, and when it states *וְהָיָה*, it expresses joy. The Midrash (Esther Rabba Psichta 11) poses many questions to this rule and answers them. The Midrash asks on the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 38:28) *וְהָיָה בְּאֶשֶׁר נִלְכְּדָה יְרוּשָׁלַם*, "and it was when Yerushalayim was conquered," why does it state *וְהָיָה*, if *וְהָיָה* is an expression of joy?

The Midrash replies that *וְהָיָה בְּאֶשֶׁר נִלְכְּדָה יְרוּשָׁלַם*, "and it was when Yerushalayim was conquered," is a happy pasuk. The Midrash explains, "...on this day, Moshiach was born... and the sins of Yisrael were forgiven... as it states (Eichah 4:22) *תָּם עֲוֹנָךְ בַּת צִיּוֹן*, "Your sins are atoned, daughter of Tzion." It states *וְהָיָה* because,

despite the great sorrow, very good things occurred at the destruction. One is that Moshiach was born, and the upcoming redemption began.

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zt'l says that this is hinted in the pasuk (Tehillim 30:6) *כִּי רָגַע בְּאַפּוֹ תַּיִם בְּרָצוֹנוֹ*, "For His anger endures but for a moment... תַּיִם בְּרָצוֹנוֹ, Hashem desires Moshiach's name *תַּיִם*. " (see Or HaChaim Devarim 15:7). The pasuk is referring to a "moment of anger" *רָגַע בְּאַפּוֹ*, and there is no greater moment of anger than Tisha b'Av, the day that Hashem destroyed the Beis HaMikdash. And yet, even at that time, it states *תַּיִם בְּרָצוֹנוֹ* that Hashem desires Moshiach, whose name is *תַּיִם*. This hints that Moshiach will be born on Tisha b'Av.

It is written in sefarim that every year, Tisha B'Av is mesugal for the birth of Moshiach, and it is the

preparation for the upcoming redemption.

The holy sefarim explain that we are told that Moshiach will be born on Tisha b'Av, so we will know that even during the hardest and most challenging times, Hashem loves us. We shouldn't think the tzaros are a sign that Hashem has abandoned us, chalilah. His love for us is very much present.

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk shows another indication that Moshiach will be born on Tisha b'Av from the pasuk (Eichah 3:1) **אֲנִי הַגֵּבֶר רָאָה עָנִי**, **בְּשָׁבַט עֲבָרְתִּי**, "I am the man who has seen poverty by the rod of His anger." **עָנִי**, the poor person mentioned in this pasuk is Moshiach, because Moshiach is called (Zecharya 9:9) **עָנִי וְרֹכֵב עַל חֲמֹר**, "a poor man riding upon a donkey" (see also Sanhedrin 98a). **אֲנִי הַגֵּבֶר רָאָה עָנִי** means that the Navi Yirmiyahu saw the day Moshiach will be born. It will be on the day of **בְּשָׁבַט עֲבָרְתִּי**, when Hashem exposes the rod of His anger – which

is on Tisha b'Av. This is another indication that Moshiach is born on Tisha b'Av.

It states (Eichah 2:8) **חָשַׁב ה' לְהַשְׁחִית חוֹמַת בֵּית צִיּוֹן נֹטָה קוֹ**, "Hashem resolved to destroy the wall of the daughter of Tzion. He stretched out the line..." The pasuk is saying that at the time when Hashem planned **לְהַשְׁחִית חוֹמַת בֵּית צִיּוֹן**, to destroy the Beis HaMikdash, at this time, **נֹטָה קוֹ**, Hashem began preparing the third Beis HaMikdash. He was **נֹטָה קוֹ הַבְּנִין**, preparing the new building.

It has to be so (that at the Churban Hashem prepared the third Beis HaMikdash) because it states in the Gemara (Bava Basra 3b) **לֹא לִיסְתוֹר אִינִישׁ בִּי כְּנִישְׁתָּא עַד דְּבָנִי בִי כְּנִישְׁתָּא אַחֲרִיתִי**, it is forbidden to knock down a beis medresh before another beis medresh is built up." If a community wants to build a new beis medresh, they must first prepare the new beis medresh, and then they can take down the old one so as not to be left without a beis medresh to daven in.

So, we understand that the second Beis HaMikdash couldn't be destroyed before the third Beis HaMikdash was prepared.

With the understanding that Hashem never abandoned us, and that at the hardest times, He prepares the salvation,¹ we glean insight into the positive aspect of Tisha B'Av.

This lesson also applies to every individual. There are times when one falls from his spiritual level, or when one is going through a difficult period, financially or any other problem. He needs to know that Hashem didn't abandon him, and the salvation was prepared

before the problem arrived. The "fall" and the "trouble" doesn't mean Hashem lost interest in us, chalilah.

When we say the brachah of אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם each morning, we express two levels of Hashem's love to us. First, we say, אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם אֶהְבֶּתֶנּוּ ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ, "You have loved us, Hashem our G-d, with an everlasting love." Then we say תְּמַלֵּא גְדוּלָה וִיתֵּן חֲמֻלָּה עָלֵינוּ, "You have bestowed upon us an abundant and exceeding measure of compassion." The Vilna Gaon zt'l (Siach Yitzchak in siddur Ishei Yisrael, and Biur HaGra, Shir HaShirim 1:16) says that these two statements refer to two different times. The first statement, אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם אֶהְבֶּתֶנּוּ ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ, is that Hashem loved

1. It is written in sefarim that the churban Beis HaMikdash was a great chesed because שֶׁכָּךְ חֲמָתוֹ עַל הָעֵצִים וְעַל הָאֲבָנִים, Hashem poured out His wrath on wood and stones, thereby sparing our lives. The second Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov zt'l said that it can be compared to a father who sees a stone breaking off the top of a mountain, and the stone is hurling towards his son. The father jumps in front of his son, so the boulder should hit him, saving his son's life. Similarly, Hashem allowed His house, *keviyachol*, to be destroyed to save His children.

Bnei Yisrael in the days of the Avos, and Hashem loved us when we left Mitzrayim. The next phrase, חֶמְלָה גְדוֹלָה, וַיִּתֶּבֶה חֶמְלָתָּ עָלֵינוּ, is that Hashem loved us even after the Jewish nation made and worshipped the egel. The second love is greater than the first one. In the words of the Vilna Gaon, שהשפעת עליו, עוד יותר טובה מבראשנה "Hashem bestowed on us even more goodness than before.... להיות שוכן בינינו, for Hashem dwelled among us. שלא היה לנו, מקודם, we didn't have this beforehand." This means Hashem's love for us increased after the *egel*, more than before. The Mishkan was built, and Hashem dwelled in our midst. After the aveirah, we received more goodness than before, more compassion than before, more love than before.

To understand this, we tell the following story:

The Nesivos Shalom (*Michtivei Kodesh* p.148) writes in a letter, "Hashem opened my eyes to understand Hashem's

immense compassion when there are severe *tzaros*. A father's love for his son can be demonstrated on three levels. (1) The lowest level is a father who has immense love and pleasure being near his son, so he gives his son a gift to express his love. (2) The love is even more pronounced at the times when the son is distant from his father. The father can't see his son; he can't enjoy being near him, and his heart melts with love and yearning. He is thinking about his son. (3) The highest degree of love is when the child needs surgery to save his life. The compassionate father must hold onto the child during the operation so that the child won't jump during surgery. Sometimes, there is no choice, and the father himself performs the surgery. Words cannot describe the great love the father has for his son at this time. His heart is bursting with love, but to others, it may appear that he is doing something cruel to his son.

The letter concludes, "Compassionate Father, no one can comprehend Your compassion and love, and when You have to act with...

the attribute of *din*, who can describe Your immense love, which becomes greater, specifically at that time."²

2. Year תשי"ג, the Nesivos Shalom zt'l had contracted tuberculosis and was coughing and spitting up blood. To avoid spreading the disease to others, *chas v'shalom*, no one was allowed to come into close contact with him. His young two-year-old daughter wanted to climb and sit on her father's lap, to be close to him, but he wouldn't let her. The daughter cried, but he didn't take her. The Nesivos Shalom said, "She certainly thinks that I don't let her come close to me because I don't love her. She doesn't know that it is specifically because I love her that I distance her from me."

A man is driving his car when a small red light begins flashing on the dashboard. He doesn't know what it means, but the blinking bothers him. It feels intrusive, unsettling. So he asks a friend to "take out the red light." The friend removes it, and now the man drives in perfect peace. No flashing, no disturbance, no warning.

But soon afterward, the car breaks down completely.

Only then does he discover that the flashing red light was a warning signal—an alert that something inside the car needed attention. Instead of addressing the problem, he silenced the warning. Instead of fixing the issue, he removed the reminder. And now he must face the consequences.

The lesson is that at times, people go through hardships. This is a warning that something is wrong and something needs fixing. If we pay attention to the warning signs and improve our ways, everything will be fine, but if we insist on ignoring the warning, we lose.

The following mashal illustrates this idea beautifully.

A man becomes gravely ill. If the doctor warns him—"Eat this,

This is as the Midrash states, "There were no holidays for the Jewish nation like Tisha b'Av." This is because of Hashem's immense love for us, which is expressed at this time.

There is a concept that one should end on a positive, happy note. As the Rema (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 138:1) writes regarding kriyas haTorah, וַיִּבְנוּ שְׁנֵיתֵיהֶם לְקִרְאָה וַיִּבְנוּ בְּדִבְרֵי טוֹב, "[When you read from a sefer Torah] plan it that you will always begin reading, and always end reading something good." Therefore, we wonder

why Megillas Eichah ends with the pasuk כִּי אִם מָאֵס קִצְפָּתָה עָלֵינוּ עַד מָאֵד, "For even if You have utterly rejected us, You have raged exceedingly against us." Shouldn't the sefer end on a happy note?

Rabbeinu Yonah (Brachos 22b) answers that the pasuk should be read as though the pasuk is asking a question: כִּי אִם מָאֵס מְאַסְתָּנוּ, "Were You ever disgusted with us?" The Churban wasn't due to reject, hatred, and disgust; rather, it was anger, as the pasuk concludes, קִצְפָּתָה עָלֵינוּ עַד מָאֵד,

avoid that; do this, don't do that"—the patient knows there is hope. The very fact that the doctor is giving instructions means the situation is treatable.

But if the doctor says, "Eat whatever you want," the patient understands the terrible truth: the illness has progressed so far that there is no longer anything to be done. The absence of warnings is not comfort—it is a sign of despair.

The nimshal is clear. When Hashem sends *yesurim*, it is not a sign of abandonment. It is a sign of care. It means Hashem has not given up on Klal Yisrael. He is still guiding them, still correcting them, still preparing them for a brighter, elevated future. The "warnings" show that He is working to bring us back to where we belong.

"You were very angry with us." The worst situation is when there is disgust, rejection, hatred, but the pasuk clarifies that it was never that. As it states **כִּי אִם** **מֵאֵם מְאַסְתֶּנּוּ**, "Were you ever disgusted with us?" There was anger, *r'l*, as it states **קִצְפָּתָה עָלֵינוּ עַד מְאֹד**, "You were very angry with us", but anger can be softened, and Hashem can once again accept us.

The pasuk before it states: **הֲשִׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְנִשְׁכַּח חֲדָשׁ** **כְּמִינֵי יָקָדֶם**, "Bring us back to You, Hashem, and we shall return, renew our days as of old." The final pasuk of Eichah is telling the reason that Hashem should accept us back. It is because **כִּי אִם** **מֵאֵם מְאַסְתֶּנּוּ**, Hashem was

never disgusted with us. He never hated us. There was always love. If there were hatred and disgust, it could have, *chalilah*, led to eternal separation and division. But it was anger, and therefore, the separation can be reconciled.³

Shabbos Chazon

This Shabbos is named after the *haftarah*, **חֲזוֹן יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ**, which discusses the Churban. Why is this Shabbos named after a sad event? As the Kedushas Levi (*Eichah* ואומר אבד ר"ה) writes, "Why is this Shabbos called Shabbos Chazon? It isn't praise for Yisrael!"

The Kedushas Levi answers (*Drushei Tzemech Tzaddik*,

3. Reb Chaim, the Maharal's brother, notes in **אגרת הטויל** that the name **אלקים** isn't mentioned in Megillas Eichah. The only name mentioned is **הו"ה**, which is Hashem's name for compassion. **אלקים** isn't mentioned in Megillas Eichah because there was never *din*. Hashem's compassion was always with us, even during the Churban. He writes, **לְהוֹדִיעַ כִּי בְרוּגָם רַחֵם תִּזְכּוֹר**, **כִּי לֹא בִשְׁטֶף חֲמָה יִשְׁפּוֹט עִמּוֹ**, "This tells us that when Hashem was angry, He remembered His compassion, because Hashem doesn't judge His nation with obsessive anger..."

Eichah) that according to the meaning of the word חֲזוֹן, which means to see, on this Shabbos, every Yid can see the future world, how it will appear when the third Beis HaMikdash is built.⁴

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "לֹא אֲשֶׁר שֶׁבַת חֲזוֹן הוּא יוֹתֵר גָּדוֹל בְּמַעֲלָה מִכָּל שִׁבְתוֹת הַשָּׁנָה", "We can say that Shabbos Chazon is the greatest Shabbos of the year."

We would think that Shabbos Chazon is the lowest Shabbos of the year. According to halachah, there

are even aspects of mourning on Shabbos Chazon. How can this Shabbos be the greatest Shabbos of the year?

The Gemara (*Yevamos* 62: ד"א) says that before there is a separation, the love between those separating increases. The Ohev Yisrael explains that at the time of the destruction, the love between Hashem and the Jewish nation was very great, for it was a moment before separation. This describes the specialness of Shabbos Chazon, which is

4. The Kedushas Levi gives the following *mashal*:

A king gave his son expensive clothing – clothes befitting a prince – but the boy wasn't careful and tore and soiled them. The king ordered another set of clothes. The young prince ruined those clothes, as well. The king ordered a third set of royal clothes. But this time, he showed the clothes to his son and said, "When I see you can take care of your clothing, I will give them to you."

One day each year, the king would take out the beautiful garments and show them to his son. He would remind his son, "When you are responsible and ready, I will give them to you."

This occurs every year on Shabbos Chazon. Hashem shows us the third Beis HaMikdash and what life will be like at that time. Hashem tells us, "When I see you are ready, I will make this world yours."

higher than all Shabbosim of the year.⁵

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 99.) teaches that when the Yidden served Hashem, the *keruvim* in the Beis HaMikdash faced one another. When the Yidden didn't serve Hashem, the *keruvim* turned away from each other. They were gold figures, and they miraculously moved on their own, in accordance with the degree of connection that existed between Hashem and the Jewish nation.

Chazal (*Yoma* 54:) say, "When the goyim entered

the Kodesh Kadoshim, they found the *keruvim* embracing one another"! The *Rishonim* ask: shouldn't it have been that at the time of the Churban, the *keruvim* be turned away from one another? The nation was guilty of the three cardinal aveiros of idolatry, murder, and adultery. Why were the *keruvim* facing and embracing one another?

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l answers that the goyim came into the Beis HaMikdash on Shabbos when Hashem's love for us is always perfect. Therefore, the *keruvim* faced one another.⁶ (We know they entered the

5. The Ohev Yisrael says that therefore, the Midrash says, לא היה יום מועד לישראל כיום שנחרב בית המקדש, "There wasn't a holiday for Yisrael like the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed." How can Tisha b'Av be called a holiday? The Ohev Yisrael answers that it is because of the closeness to Hashem we attained at that time – the moment before separation.

Tzaddikim of Bobov zt'l advised that one should accept Shabbos early on Shabbos Chazon so that we can turn some of the mourning into joy.

6. The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 28:2) writes, "The *mussaf* of Shabbos doesn't have a *korban chatas*. This is unlike all other holidays [when a

Beis HaMikdash on Shabbos because the Yerushalmi [*Taanis* 4:5] says the

korban chatas was brought]. This is because Kneses Yisrael is like Hashem's spouse, and everything is peaceful." This Ramban's words contain deep kabbalistic meaning, but on a simple level, the intention is that there are no sins on Shabbos; Hashem doesn't see our faults; therefore, a *korban chatas* isn't necessary on Shabbos.

It states, *ביום שמחתכם* and Chazal (*Sifri* 19) say, *ביום שמחתכם אלו השבתות*, "The day of your happiness is Shabbos." We understand from this the need to be rejoice on Shabbos.

Some people think that being happy on Shabbos is a *madreigah*, solely for great *tzaddikim*, and not for the average person. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* proves that it isn't so. He said: If someone is *mechallel* Shabbos, *chalilah*, he is *חייב מיתה*. So, the aveirah of transgressing the Shabbos is applicable to all Yidden, of all levels. Therefore, just as every Yid – including the simplest Yid – is associated with the severity of desecrating the Shabbos, he is certainly also associated with the happiness of Shabbos. He shouldn't think that being happy on Shabbos is a *madreigah*, solely for the great *tzaddikim*. He is totally related to Shabbos, with the prohibitions and with the joy of Shabbos.

A chassid was traveling to be with Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa for Shabbos, but he was delayed and arrived after Shabbos. Rebbe Bunim was glad that he had arrived after Shabbos, because this person had a tendency to be sad, and Rebbe Bunim wanted to be happy on Shabbos.

When the man arrived, Rebbe Bunim said the following *vort*:

Shabbos honors her guests. When the guest is *rosh chodesh* (meaning when it is both Shabbos and rosh chodesh), Shabbos honors her guest and gives her the *haftarah* and the *mussaf*. When the guest is *yom tov*, Shabbos gives it all the *tefillos*. (All the *shemonah esrei*'s of Shabbos Yom Tov are of *yom tov*.) When the guest is Yom Kippur, Shabbos also gives away the Shabbos meals. But when Tisha b'Av is the guest, Shabbos tells Tisha b'Av to come after Shabbos. Shabbos doesn't welcome sad guests. It is a day of joy.

Babylonians entered the Beis HaMikdash on *rosh chodesh Av*, and Tisha b'Av, the day of the Churban, was on Sunday. If we make the calculation of Tisha b'Av being on Sunday, we know that *rosh chodesh* was a week before, on Shabbos. This explains the reason they entered the Beis HaMikdash and found the keruvim in an embrace.)

A Limit to the Tzaros

Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l says that some people cry out of *yeush*, they lose hope, and some cry from distress and pain, but still have hope. The difference can be discerned by the tone of the crying. When one cries because he lost hope, he cries loudly. When one cries out of distress, he cries silently.

R'l, when someone is very ill, the people who love him cry silently. They won't raise their voices. But when someone dies, the relatives and friends cry out loud. A loud cry is an expression of *yeush*, when one feels that it is over and nothing can be done.

The Yidden cried out loud when they heard the *Meraglim's* report. As it states in parashas Shelach (Bamidbar 14:1), ותשא כל העדה ויתנו, את קולם ויבנו העם בלילה ההוא, "The entire community raised their voices and shouted, and the people wept on that night." The Torah emphasizes to us that they raised their voices and shouted, to know that they cried from *yeush*.

Also, in this week's parashah (1:34), when it discusses the story of the *meraglim*, it once again mentions that they cried out loud, as it states, וישמע ה' את, קול דבריכם ויקצוף... "Hashem heard the voice of your words, and He became angry..." קול "The voice of your words" is taking special notice of the loud sound of their cries. Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l says that their primary *aveirah* was that they raised their voices and cried, since it is a sign that they had lost hope of ever coming to Eretz Yisrael.

According to this explanation, the aveirah of the nation with the meraglim wasn't that they cried. A person is only human, and it is natural to be afraid. It is hard to have perfect *bitachon* and feel no fear at all. Their primary aveirah was that they raised their voices and cried, since it is forbidden to lose hope.⁷

7. One year, on Shabbos Chol HaMoed Succos, Rebbe Shlomo Leib of Lenchna zt''l was sitting at his tish, explaining to his chassidim that "the entire world isn't worth one krechtz." He elaborated on this important theme, explaining that our goal is to serve Hashem, and our destination is Olam HaBa. Whether our journey in Olam HaZeh is comfortable or not shouldn't take a major place in our minds. Anyway, Rebbe Shlomo Leib continued, everything is for the good. So, why should one moan and be upset about worldly matters?

There was a large crowd gathered in his succah as he spoke, and due to the large crowd, a bench broke. A piece of the broken bench hit the Rebbe, injuring him. He moaned and *krechted* from the pain.

One of the chassidim asked Rebbe Shlomo Leib, "Didn't the Rebbe just tell us that this world isn't worth a krechtz?"

Rebbe Shlomo Leib replied, "That is correct. Nevertheless, when it hurts, one *krechtes*."

The Beis Yisrael zt'l explained that Rebbe Shlomo Leib was saying that it is okay to moan from pain. That is the natural response to pain. However, one must simultaneously remember that it is for his good. Intellectually, at least, one must realize that there is no reason in the world to cry or to moan.

We can compare this to a father who brings his son to a dentist. The father isn't upset with his son when he cries or moans from the pain. It is a natural reaction to pain. But the father won't accept it if his son says, "Why are you hurting me? Why did you bring me here? Don't you care about me?" The son should know that

When Eisav realized that Yaakov received their father's brachos, it states (Bereishis 27:34) ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה "Eisav] cried out an exceedingly great and bitter cry." The Midrash (Esther Rabba 8) states that Yaakov was punished for causing Eisav this anguish. Therefore, years later, something similar happened to their descendants, only this time, Haman's descendant caused Yaakov's descendant to shout bitterly. This occurred when Haman made an evil decree against the Jewish nation. Mordechai shouted bitterly, as it states (Esther 4:1) ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה, "He cried a loud and bitter cry."

However, we can ask that by Eisav it says he

shouted מרה עד מאוד, "an exceedingly great and bitter cry." It doesn't state עד מאוד by Mordechai's shouting. It seems that the punishment wasn't equal. Yaakov caused Eisav to shout מרה עד, and Mordechai never shouted עד מאוד.

The answer is that a Yid never shouts bitterly עד מאוד. His anguish is always limited because he knows that Hashem is in charge and everything is for the good.⁸

It states (Tehillim 119:8) אל תעזובני עד מאוד. With these words, Dovid davened that Hashem should never take away his emunah until he feels that his tzaros are עד מאוד, exceedingly great, beyond what he can endure.

his father only means his good.

Similarly, even when we cry and moan, we must never say it is bad for us. We must know, at least intellectually, if not in our hearts, that everything is for our good.

8. The Gemara (Moed Katan 27:) says that one should not mourn the dead excessively." The Ramban says that it is permitted to cry; the problem is when it is יותר מדאי, excessive. Because no matter what occurs, we know that it is from Hashem and for our good.

With emunah and bitachon, a Yid never shouts עד מאוד, exceedingly.

yetzer hara (see Succah 52a). The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains the pasuk with a mashal:

Escape from the Yetzer Hara

It states in this week's parashah⁹ (2:3) רַב לָכֶם סָב אֶת הָהָר "You have circled this mountain long enough; turn northward." A "mountain" represents the

If a person is being pursued by his enemy who seeks to kill him, he shouldn't go into hiding because the person who hates him will eventually find him and kill him. Rather, he should kill his enemy before the enemy kills him.

9. This week, we begin reading Sefer Devarim.

The Yid HaKadosh of Peshischa zt'l studied *Chumash Devarim* every day of the year and encouraged his chassidim to do the same. He said, "There is no better *mussar sefer*!" (*Shem MiShmuel*, Devarim 5675; Pri Tzaddik, Devarim ד"ה אלה).

The Shlah (Va'eschanan) writes, "Why do we seek *mussar*? The entire *sefer Devarim* is filled with *mussar*." It is the *mussar* that Moshe Rabbeinu told Bnei Yisrael before his *petirah*.

The Satmar Rebbe zy'a said, "When people travel to their summer homes, it is hard to carry along many *mussar sefarim*. But they take along a *Chumash Devarim*, which is sufficient because *Chumash Devarim* is the best *mussar sefer*."

Chazal (*Yevamos* 4.) say, אפילו למאן דלא דריש סמוכים בעלמא במשנה תורה דריש דהא, ר' יהודה בעלמא לא דריש ובמשנה תורה דריש. (Literally, the Gemara is discussing the concept of *semuchim*, which is when two apparently unrelated topics are placed together in the Torah to learn halachos from each other.) The Kotzker zt'l said סמוכים also means to be close to Hashem. The Gemara is hinting, אפילו למאן דלא דריש סמוכים בעלמא במשנה תורה דריש, "Even those who aren't close to Hashem throughout the year, they can become סמוכים, close to Hashem when we read *sefer Devarim*."

The nimshal is that the yetzer hara, our greatest enemy, tries to kill us, chas v'shalom. As it states (Tehillim 37:32) צִוְפָה רָשָׁע לְצַדִּיק וּמִבְקָשׁ לְהַמְוִיתוֹ, "The rasha [which is the yetzer hara] watches for the tzaddik and seeks to kill him." The spiritual murder is to take us away from Torah and mitzvos, and to have us perform aveiros, chalilah. There are those who try to hide from the yetzer hara, to avoid facing tests. This is very good and important, but it isn't sufficient, because there will be times when they will fall into the yetzer hara's hands, and then what will they do? Therefore, one should cleanse oneself entirely from the yetzer hara. This means not to want aveiros. He should train himself to be disgusted with everything the yetzer hara is suggesting. Then, when he is tested, he will be prepared to pass the test.

This is alluded to in the pasuk, רַב לָכֶם סֶבֶאֱת הָהָר הַזֶּה, for a long time you are going

around the yetzer hara, trying to hide from him. Now do more than that. Don't just escape from him. פָּנוּ לָכֶם צִפְנָה, turn to the thoughts that are צִפּוֹן, concealed within your heart. Take a moment to recognize the foolish ideas the yetzer hara is telling you, and train yourself not to want them. You shouldn't desire taavos, you shouldn't want corruption, you should be disgusted with *machlokes*, and so on. If you amend your heart, even when tested, you will be able to overcome the yetzer hara.

There are other ways to battle the yetzer hara, which are all good and praised. One can (and should) avoid being in contact with the yetzer hara (as we will elaborate), and one can battle with the yetzer hara and not listen to his counsels. However, these strategies aren't foolproof. There will be times when one won't be able to hide from the yetzer hara, and there are times when one loses a battle. Therefore, an

even better path is פָּנּוּ לְכֶם, צַפְנָה, purify the heart. The heart should understand that it doesn't want forbidden *taavos*, *machlokes*, laziness, and any other advice from the yetzer hara. Recognize that they are bad for you, and disregard his ideas.

One should fill his heart with love and fear of Hashem by studying a lot of

Torah and performing many good deeds. He should purify his heart, and then he won't be influenced by the yetzer hara.

In short, these are the steps one should take in his battle against the yetzer hara: (1) Avoid being in areas and situations where the yetzer hara has strength over him.¹⁰ (2) Cleanse your

10. The need to avoid the yetzer hara is expressed in the following Gemara (Bava Basra 57b). It discusses a person who goes down a street that has a problem with tznius, where there are things forbidden to see. He guards his eyes the entire way, but the Gemara calls him a rasha because there was a דרכא אחרת, another route he could have taken that didn't have these tests. In other words, it isn't sufficient to "battle" the yetzer hara. One must circumvent the yetzer hara. If there is a way to entirely avoid the test, one must choose that option.

Tzaddikim say that if the Shulchan Aruch had been written in our times, it would have contained several simanim on the topic of guarding the eyes: When it is permitted to go outdoors, and when it isn't. What is considered a sufficient need to permit going outside, as well as the details and halachic application of דרכא אחרת, having an alternate option.

Certainly, for vacations, one should choose a place where there won't be tests for the eyes, r"l.

This topic is particularly essential regarding the "forbidden devices". One must ask himself whether he isn't allowing himself to be confronted with serious tests, without sufficient reason to do

so. I am referring to even when the utensils come with a hechsher and filter. Much worse is when there is no hechsher, because then the risks are so much greater.

In the Musaf of Rosh Hashana (זכרונות) we say כי זכר כל היצור לפניך בא מעשה (זכרונות) איש ופקודתו ועלילות מצעדי גבר, מחשבות אדם ותחבולותיו ויצרי מעללי איש. The word מעללי means actions, so ויצרי מעללי איש means the yetzer hara that a person brought onto himself through his own actions. An example is when one uses "forbidden devices". With his own actions, he is drawing onto himself the yetzer hara. We can explain the verse, מחשבות אדם ותחבולותיו ויצרי מעללי איש, that this refers to someone whose thoughts are constantly thinking forbidden thoughts, and his heart is closed from all thoughts of kedushah. The reason is ויצרי מעללי איש, he drew the yetzer hara onto himself with his own actions. He is guilty for what happened to him, because with his recklessness, he invited the yetzer hara into his life. Eichah (3:51) states, עֵינֵי עוֹלָהּ, וְיָנֶפֶשׁ, which can be translated as "through the carelessness with his eyes, he sullied his eyes. He did it to himself.

On Yom Kippur we say in viduy, אל חטא שחמאנו לפניך ביצר הרע, for the sins that we committed with the yetzer hara. What is that referring to? Aren't all aveiros committed with the yetzer hara? The Sfas Emes (written by Reb Yaakov Yisrael of Kremnitz zt'l, printed year תקמ"ח on Mishlei 1:10) answers that it is referring to someone who draws the yetzer hara onto himself. It refers to a person who went to a place where the yetzer hara has power over him.

Someone came to his rav and sought counsel for מחשבות זרות, foreign thoughts that come to his mind during the tefillah. He wants to focus on the davening, but his mind flies to many different places. His rav replied, "These aren't מחשבות זרות, foreign thoughts, at all. Let's think about what you do each day. After waking up, the first thing you feel you must do is to read the newspaper, and you go through it from cover to cover. Then you feel you must listen to the news on the phone. (In case something important happened at night, that wasn't yet printed in the paper.) Then you take care of some chores, and then you go to daven. Obviously, your thoughts will wander during the tefillah. These aren't foreign thoughts, מחשבות זרות. They aren't foreign at all. You created them with what you did in the morning.

heart so that it doesn't want what the yetzer hara sells. (3) When there is a battle, be strong and fight with all your strength.¹¹ With these paths, and with Hashem's help, one can succeed over the yetzer hara.

We will now elaborate on the importance of escaping the yetzer hara.

It states (2:2-4) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלַי לֵאמֹר... וְאַתָּה הָעָם צִוִּי לֵאמֹר, אַתֶּם עֲבָרִים בְּגִבּוֹל אֲחֵיכֶם בְּגִי עֲשׂוּ הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשׁוּעִיר Hashem spoke with me, saying... Command the people, saying, 'You are about to pass through the boundary of your kinsmen, the children of Eisav, who dwell in Seir, and they will be afraid of you. Be very

"Had you woken up in the morning, and prepared yourself for the tefillah, and then when you daven, thoughts suddenly enter your mind, those I would call foreign thoughts, מחשבות זרות. But for you, these thoughts are natural."

11. The Kaf HaChaim (in his sefer Yagel Yaakov) discusses the pasuk we mentioned above (2:3) רַב לָקֵם כִּבְּ אֶת הַקָּהָר הַזֶּה פָּנוּ לָקֵם צִפְנָה, and he shows that this pasuk is a counsel on how to be strong in one's fight against the yetzer hara. The pasuk is saying that if a person feels overwhelmed with the constant battle against the yetzer hara, and he asks himself, רַב לָקֵם כִּבְּ אֶת הַקָּהָר הַזֶּה, "For how long will I have to battle the yetzer hara? I don't have the strength for this constant struggle." The person should פָּנוּ לָקֵם צִפְנָה think about Olam Haba. When he remembers the great reward of the future, he will feel the strength to stand up to this constant battle.

Olam Haba is called צִפְנָה, as it states (Tehillim 31:20) מִזֶּה רַב טוֹבָךְ אֲשֶׁר צִפְנָתָה לִי, "How great is Your goodness that You have hidden for those who fear You." This means how great is the reward of Olam Haba, which Hashem prepared for every mitzvah one performs, and for each time one overcomes the yetzer hara. Therefore, פָּנוּ לָקֵם צִפְנָה, focus on the reward of Olam Haba, and that will give you strength to fight.

cautious." Why did they have to be *וְנִשְׁמְרֶתֶם מְאֹד* "very cautious"? The Panim Yafos explains that whenever one is among goyim, one must be very careful and cautious that he won't be negatively influenced. Just *seeing* goyim can cause a person to draw after them and after their ways. Hashem commanded the nation (2:6), *אֲכָל תִּשְׁבְּרוּ מֵאֲתֵם*

בְּכֶסֶף וְאֵכְלֶתֶם וְגַם מַיִם תִּקְרוּ מֵאֲתֵם בְּכֶסֶף "You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat, and also water you shall buy from them with money, that you may drink." They shouldn't receive any gifts and favors from Eisav, not to be influenced by the goyim. *וְנִשְׁמְרֶתֶם מְאֹד*, "Be very cautious."¹²

12. The Panim Yafos asks why the Torah emphasizes that Eisav is related to Bnei Yisrael, as it states *אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים בְּגְבוּל אֶחְיָם בְּנֵי עִשָׂו* "You are about to pass through the boundary of your *brothers*, the children of Eisav." Panim Yafos answers that the strength of Eisav, which represents the yetzer hara, is when Eisav appears to us like a brother, a friend, someone who loves us. When this occurs, people are more influenced by his ways, and they want to be like him. In truth, the yetzer hara isn't our friend at all. He hates us and wants to harm us, but we don't always recognize that. We think he is a relative, a friend, someone who sincerely cares about us, and wants to give us good advice.

This explains why the yetzer hara is called *צִפּוֹן*, hidden (see Succah 52a), and the source is from the pasuk (Yoel 2:20) *וְאַתָּה הַצִּפּוֹנִי אֶרְחִיק מֵעֲלֶיךָם* "the *הַצִּפּוֹנִי* (hidden one) I will distance from you." This is because the yetzer hara conceals himself; he makes us think that he is our friend, and we don't know that he is cruelly trying to harm us. If we saw the yetzer hara's true colors, we wouldn't listen to him. This is hinted at in the pasuk (2:3) *רַב לָכֶם סָב אֶת הָהָר הַזֶּה פָּנוּ לָכֶם צִפּוֹנָה*. As we explained, *הוּא* represents the yetzer hara. The pasuk is saying that the battle against the yetzer hara is a great struggle, and as we explained, this is because he pretends that he is giving us good counsel for our benefit, and we believe him. The solution is *פָּנוּ לָכֶם*

In parashas Nitzavim (29:15-17) Moshe warned the

יִצְהָר. Recognize that the yetzer hara is hiding his true intentions from you. (יִצְהָר means hidden). Search for him, find where he is hiding, see his true colors, and you will be careful to avoid him.

The Pnei Menachem zt'l gave a mashal of a baby rat who was about to go outside and see the world. Its mother said to the baby rat, "Just be cautious of our enemy who wants to eat us."

Later that day, the baby rat returned home and said that he had seen a frightening creature. "What did the creature look like?" the mother asked.

"It was very tall, and it walked on two feet..." The mother told the rat, "Oh, that is a human being. They don't like us too much, but they don't have time to catch us. You don't have to be too afraid of them."

The next day, the baby rat returned and described another large creature it saw. "That is a lion," the mother told him. "You don't have to be afraid of this creature, either. The lions look for larger animals. They aren't particularly interested in us."

Every day, the rat returned home with a description of another creature it saw, and each time the mother rat told him not to worry since the danger wasn't pertaining to rats.

One day, the baby rat returned to its home and told its mother that he found a friend who wanted to play with it the next day. The mother asked what this "friend" looks like. The baby rat said that this animal is smaller than the other animals it had seen. It has fur, and it looks majestic...

"That isn't a friend," the mother told her child. "That is a cat. It is the enemy I told you to be cautious of. Don't play with him tomorrow."

This mashal explains the tactics of the yetzer hara. We think it is a friend, but it is our enemy, and all of its "friendly advice" is to harm us increasingly.

nation not to worship avodah zarah, and he explained that he had to warn them about this because they saw the goyim worshipping avodah zarah, and that might influence them to do the same, chalilah. It states, כִּי אַתֶּם יִדְעֶתֶם, אֵת אֲשֶׁר יֵשְׁבֹנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר עֲבָדוּ בְּקֶרֶב הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עֲבַדְתֶּם, וְתִרְאוּ אֵת שְׁקוּצֵיהֶם וְאֵת גִּלְלֵיהֶם עֵץ וְאֶבֶן כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב אֲשֶׁר עֲמָדָם, כֹּן יֵשׁ בָּכֶם אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה אוֹ מִשְׁפָּחָה אוֹ שִׁבְט אֲשֶׁר לָבְדוּ בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה מִזֶּמַּן ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לָלֶכֶת לַעֲבֹד אֵת אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם, "For you know how we dwelled in the land of

Egypt, and how we passed among the nations through which you passed. You saw their abominations and their repugnant idols of wood and stone, silver and gold which were with them. Perhaps there is among you a man, woman, family, or tribe, whose heart strays this day from Hashem, our G-d, to go and worship the deities of those nations." Just seeing *Avodah Zara* has an influence, from which we must be very wary and cautious.¹³

13. Reb Shalom Schwadron zt'l discussed the three manners that avodah zarah is mentioned in these pesukim: First, the avodah zarahs are called "abominations" and "repugnant idols," as it states וְתִרְאוּ אֵת שְׁקוּצֵיהֶם וְאֵת גִּלְלֵיהֶם, "You saw their abominations and their repugnant idols." Then Moshe calls them "wood and stone" as it states עֵץ וְאֶבֶן. Finally, Moshe calls the avodah zarah "silver and gold" as it states כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב אֲשֶׁר עֲמָדָם. Reb Shalom Schwadron tells a story that he said happened to him. (It is likely that this story never actually occurred; rather, it is a mashal, and due to his great humility, he said that the mashal happened with him.) This is the mashal, as he told it:

The first time I traveled by ship from Eretz Yisrael to America, the ship passed Venice, Italy. The captain announced loudly, and with a lot of emotion, "We are passing Venice, and you can see the city from the ship's deck." Everyone rushed to the deck, trying to get a good place, near the banister, so that they could get a better view of Venice. I didn't understand what was so exciting about seeing Venice, and why everyone – young and old – was rushing and

pushing to have the privilege of seeing it, so I asked what this was all about. They explained to me that Venice is a very interesting city, because it is built on water. It is a city made of many islands, and to get from one house to another, the people have to travel by ship.

Reb Shalom said that he looked at them like they were crazy. What was so interesting about that? Why is it important for them to see it?

On the return boat ride from America to Eretz Yisrael, the boat passed Venice again. Once again, everyone – young and old – was pushing and rushing to get a good view of Venice. This time, Reb Shalom said, "I still think that it is foolish to rush and to push others to be able to see Venice, but now I do understand that it is interesting. A city on water is rare, and it would be nice to see it."

The third time Reb Shalom traveled to America, the ship passed by Venice, and this time, Reb Shalom said he also ran to get to the ship's banister, to get a good view of the city.

Reb Shalom explained that the first time he was on a ship passing Venice, he thought it was insane to want to see the city. The second time, he already understood that it was interesting to see Venice, but he wasn't going to run and push others to see it. On his third voyage, he said he also rushed to get a good look at Venice.

With this mashal, Reb Shalom explained the pasuk, how people gradually became interested in avodah zarah. The first time they saw avodah zarah, they considered it to be "abominations" and "repugnant idols" as it states **וַתִּרְאוּ אֶת שְׁקוּצֵיהֶם וְאֶת גִּלְלֵיהֶם**. This is because avodah zarah is truly disgusting and ugly to the eyes of a Yid. The second time they saw avodah zarah, they were getting used to the idea, and they were not revolted by it, like before. Therefore, this time, they called it "wood and stone" as it states **עֵץ וָאֶבֶן**. When they saw the avodah zarah a third time, they became so accustomed to it that they even began to like it. Therefore, this time, they called it "silver and gold" as it states **כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב אֲשֶׁר עֲמָדָם**.

We learn from this the reason we must be cautious not to see the ways of the goyim. Each time we watch their ways, we lose some

Obviously, this lesson applies to our days, as well. We must be "very cautious" וְנִשְׁמְרֶתֶם מְאֹד, and we must minimize the influence that we might receive from the gentiles.

Sinas Chinam

The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*, vain hatred, and correcting it should be our focus. That will rebuild the Beis Hamikdash.

Tzaddikim have said that all tzaros come from *sinas chinam*. It is a problem that is still with us, and that we haven't cleansed ourselves of yet.

The Chidushei HaRim (Likutei HaRim, Bein HaMetzarim) writes, "We must toil these days to get rid of vain hatred, which is when one has a bad eye towards his fellow man. Even not to have an עֵין טוֹבָה, good eye,

towards one's fellow man, is also *sinas chinam*. Any generation in which the Beis Hamikdash is not built, it is like the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed (Yerushalmi Yoma, 1:1). וְטוֹב עֵין הוּא יִבְרָךְ, with a good eye, the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt."

The Shefa Chaim, the Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l said, "We need to shout in all streets in a loud voice that all tzaros come from vain hatred. We cannot hide this and say it silently, like someone whispering into his sleeve. This needs to be announced until the heart understands."

Why is it called שנאת חנם, hatred for no reason? Behold, hatred is never for nothing. Someone did something to you, which aroused your anger and hatred. Reb Mattisyahu Solomon zt'l (Mashgiach of Lakewood Yeshiva) explained this with a mashal:

of our sensitivities to their abominations, until we think their ways are normal, and even good, chalilah.

A *melamed* was teaching a class of students. There was one child who wouldn't stay calm for a moment. He was disturbing the other children, standing up and walking around the room, throwing items to all sides, and passing notes. The *melamed* was furious and hit him with a wooden stick that had a sharp knife attached to it. The knife cut the child's arm. The parents were very angry when they discovered what happened, and they shouted at the *melamed*, "Why did you hurt our child for no reason at all?"

He replied, "You say it was for no reason? You should have seen what your son was doing in the classroom. He was disturbing everyone. He deserved the punishment he received."

The parents shouted back, "For acting up in class, he doesn't deserve to be cut with a knife! Even if it is true that our child deserved punishment, what you did

was totally uncalled for. It was totally out of proportion to the bad he did."

The punishment the *melamed* gave the child can be called **בהנם**, for no reason, because there was no reason to give such a large punishment.

With this *mashal*, we understand the reason hatred among people is called **שנאת חנם**, hatred for no reason. We may wonder if the hatred is really for no reason; nevertheless, when we consider how much trouble vain hatred brings to the world, we understand that the hatred can be called **חנם**, totally disproportionate, and not called for.

When there is hatred among Yidden, *chalilah*, it prevents Hashem's *brachos* from coming to Klal Yisrael. It brings much suffering to the world, and it prevents the building of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Taking all of this into account, we understand that even if there was some reason for

the hatred, it certainly isn't so severe that it should be paid back with *sinas chinam*!

The Yesurim of the Churban were for our Benefit

The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* (*Drashos*, 7 Av, p.326) writes, "If I weren't afraid, I would say Tisha b'Av is a happy day because we survived... [As Chazal say, 'Hashem poured His anger out on wood and stone so that we could survive']. We should praise Hashem on Tisha b'Av. This is the reason Tisha b'Av is called *mo'ed* (a holiday)..."

Eizor Eliyahu (from Reb Eliyahu Lerman *zt'l*, a student of the Kotzker *zt'l*) writes, "Hashem only bestows good and kindness on Bnei Yisrael. However, before the good comes, sometimes hardships and troubles must precede it. This is Hashem's way, as this enables the good that will follow to come in the best manner. When one doesn't understand this, he thinks that Hashem, chas

v'shalom, is doing bad to him, but it isn't so."

He writes that this is alluded to in the Haftarah of Shabbos Chazon (Yeshayah 1:2-3) בנים גדלתי ורוממתי והם פשעו בי ידע שור קוננו וחמור אבוס בעליו ישראל לא ידע עמי לא התבונן "Children I have raised and exalted, but they have rebelled against Me. An ox knows his owner, and a donkey his master's trough, but Yisrael doesn't know; My people don't comprehend." What don't the Jewish people know, and how did they rebel against Hashem? He explains that they don't know that everything is for the good. They think that Hashem wants to do bad things to them. They don't realize that the hardships are a preparation for a much greater good that will come.

It states, אשרי העם יודעי תרועה. The *Noam Megadim* explains that the word תרועה comes from the word רעה, bad. The *pasuk* is saying, "Fortunate is the nation יודעי תרועה, who knows that even the bad is for their benefit."

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos*, *Brachos* ch.9) says we shouldn't be too happy when good things happen, and we shouldn't be overly sad when bad occurs because we don't know what will come from them. Only time will tell. Sometimes a bad experience ends up being the greatest favor, and sometimes something good results in a problem. The Mishnah (*Brachos* ch.9) states, חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שמברך על הטובה, "One must praise Hashem for the bad just as he praises Hashem for the good." The Rambam explains that we should praise Hashem because even the

bad, at first glance, could be extremely good.

The Rambam explains, "When bad things happen to you, be happy and have a good heart. Don't be angry. Say the *brachah* דיין האמת with happiness, just as you would say the *brachah* הטוב והמטיב. The wise understand the logic of this concept. Even if the Torah wouldn't obligate us to thank Hashem for the bad, they would understand on their own to do so. This is because many things appear good initially but are very bad in the end... Also, don't be overly happy when something good happens because you don't know if this good will be forever."¹⁴

14. The following story reminds us that there are situations that seem bad, but they turn out to be a great favor:

Someone with a large family worked as a bus driver. He didn't like his job, and the wages were meager, but it put food on the table to feed his family.

One day, he got into an accident, and his license was revoked. He lost his source of income. How will he support his family?

He always enjoyed art, but he never had the time or courage to devote himself to it. But now he had a lot of extra time and a dire

Mishpat Tzedek¹⁵ (*Avos* 5) writes, "It is an error to think that matters are bad... They are the root of the good that will follow. Therefore, it states (*Tehillim* 118:21) אודך כי עניתני, 'I praise You because You afflicted me, and the affliction itself became my salvation.' And it states (*Shoftim* 10:15), והטוב בעיניך, 'Do what's good in *Your* eyes.' Because a person prays to Hashem that he should be granted this or that, and he thinks that this will be good for him, but it isn't always so. Therefore, we pray, 'Ribono Shel Olam, do what You know is best.'"

It states (*Tehillim* 42:8-9), ובלילה, שירה עמי תפילה לקל חיי. The Malbim explains that לילה represents hardships and tzaros. שירה עמי hints that he praises and sings to Hashem. Dovid said ובלילה, even during the hard times, שירה עמי I sing to Hashem, because I am certain that good will follow soon afterward.

It states in this week's parashah (1:27) ותרגנו באהליכם ותאמרו בשנאת ה' אותנו הוציאנו מארץ מצרים לתת אותנו ביד האמרי להשמידנו, "You spoke lashon hara in your tents and said that Hashem hates you and therefore He took you out of

need to do something for parnassah, so he picked up a paintbrush and began painting.

His paintings sold for \$5,000 a piece. He was successful beyond expectation.

Now, he works in a profession he enjoys and earns far more than before. He discovered that what he thought was bad was a blessing. Losing his bus driver's license was the best thing to have happened to him.

15. The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* loved this *sefer* and held it in high regard. The Steipler *zt'l* advised *jungerleit* going through hard times to study this *sefer*, so they will know that Hashem's ways are just, and that we should accept every situation with love.

Mitzrayim to give you over to the hands of the Emorites..."

Bnei Yisroel cried; they panicked, but there was nothing to fear because Hashem fought the wars for them, and they inherited the Holy Land, Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara (*Taanis* 29) states, "That night was Tisha b'Av. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם ואני קובע לכם בכיה לדורות, 'You cried for no reason; I will give you a reason to cry for all generations.'" Every year, we cry on Tisha b'Av for the two Batei Mikdash that were destroyed on this day.

The Churban came because we cried for no reason. We must check ourselves. Do we also cry for no reason? When there are tzaros and hardships, do we believe that everything is for the good and will

become good? Do we focus on what we have, or on what we lack? Crying for no reason brings on more tzaros. Thanking Hashem and focusing on the *chasadim* turns everything around and makes everything good.

The Obligation to Mourn

Shaarei Teshuvah (118) writes, "When one says לישועתך קונו כל היום in *Shemonah Esrei*, one should think, 'I am from the people who wait for Moshiach,' because after one's demise, he will be asked whether he waited for Moshiach.¹⁶ Mahar"i Tzemech writes, 'In addition, [when I say these words] I have in mind that I am awaiting Hashem's salvation to save us from all bad encounters that occur every day and every moment. I often found this to be very beneficial...'"¹⁷

16. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31) teaches: "When a person is brought for judgment [in heaven], he is asked whether he anticipated the coming of Moshiach."

17. The Midrash tells us, "There was a woman who lost her young

The Rambam begins his sefer (יד החוקה) with the obligation to believe in Hashem, and he concludes the sefer with our belief in Moshiach, and in between, he writes all the halachos of

the Torah. Reb Shmuel Vosner zt'l says that this teaches us that the entire Torah is dependent on these two beliefs: belief in Hashem and belief in Moshiach.¹⁸

son, and she cried and mourned over him every night. Rabban Gamliel heard her cries, and this roused him to cry and mourn for the Churban. He cried so much that his eyelashes fell out. When Rabban Gamliel's students discovered what was happening, they arranged for that woman to move out of the neighborhood."

We can explain that this woman's tears roused Raban Gamliel to cry for the Churban because all *tzaros* are a result of the Churban Beis HaMikdash.

A group of people was speaking to the Brisker Rav zt'l about the *tzaros* the Jewish nation was undergoing at the time. Someone present sighed in desperation, "We need Moshiach to come quickly and save us."

Another person whispered, half to himself, half to others, "Moshiach isn't coming so fast."

The Brisker Rav heard this and became very upset. He called this man to another room and said, "How could you say such a thing? How can a Yid say such a thing?"

The Brisker Rav took a Rambam and read to him, "Whoever doesn't believe in Moshiach and doesn't await his arrival, not only doesn't he believe in the Nevi'im – he doesn't believe in Moshe Rabbeinu's Torah as well."

18. The community of Brisk invited the Beis HaLevi (Reb Yosef Dov Soloveitzik zt'l) to be their rav, but the Beis HaLevi turned down their offer. When the representatives from Brisk said to the Beis HaLevi, "Twenty-five thousand people live in Brisk, they all want

Rebbe Nachum Chernobyler zt'l once stayed in the home of a simple couple, and at midnight, Reb Nochum cried and mourned for the Churban Beis HaMikdash. The simple man asked Reb Nochum why he was crying so much, and Reb Nochum explained that he was crying over the Churban. Then Reb Nochum asked his host, "Don't you also want Moshiach to come and return us to Yerushalayim?" The simple man replied, "I'm not certain. I will have to ask my wife about that."

He returned to Reb Nochum and said, "My wife says that she doesn't want to go to Yerushalayim because who will care for our hens

and livestock if we move to Yerushalayim?"

Rebbe Nochum told him, "But we suffer from the goyim all the time. Wouldn't it be better to leave all this behind, and to go to Yerushalayim?"

Once again, the simple Yid said he would have to ask his wife first. He returned and said, "My wife says that Moshiach should come and take all the goyim to Yerushalayim. We will remain here." This story is an example of how mourning has left our hearts.

The Tiferes Shlomo (מסעי (ד"ה א"י כן מטה השני writes, "To properly mourn for Yerushalayim, think about how much holiness we lack. We don't have a Beis

you to come be their rav. Will you turn them down?"

Immediately, the Beis HaLevi accepted the position in Brisk.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l noted about this episode, "The Beis HaLevi didn't want to turn down 25,000 Yidden. If thousands of Yidden will yearn and request for Moshiach, Moshiach will certainly not turn them down."

HaMikdash or *kohanim* to do the avodah. We aren't close to Hashem as we used to be..."

Reb Shimshon Pincus zt'l (Galus v'Nechamah p.147-151) writes, "If someone isn't able to mourn and cry during *Bein HaMetzarim* for the Churban Beis HaMikdash and Galus HaShechinah, he should sit on the floor and cry bitterly about his own personal churban that he is unable to cry, and that he doesn't care, and that he cannot mourn the *churban Beis HaMikdash*."¹⁹

The Yaavatz zt'l (Siddur Beis Yaakov, Tisha b'Av, 6:16) writes, "If our only sin were that we aren't mourning sufficiently for Yerushalayim, that

would be reason enough for the galus to continue. In my opinion, this is the most logical and obvious cause for all the tzaros we encounter in galus. We never have respite from the Goyim, wherever we live. And this is because the mourning has left our hearts."²⁰

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l (Yaaras Dvash vol.1, p.253) writes, "Someone who doesn't comprehend doesn't feel the distress of the Churban so much. This is how it is for us, due to our many sins. We don't feel the Churban. We are like fools who don't feel our pain. Some tzaddikim had a complete

19. Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l writes that at a levayah, only the family or those who were very close to the niftar cry. Similarly, during these days of mourning, those who are close to Hashem mourn and cry, but those who feel detached from the whole matter, don't cry. He writes, "We are able to measure one's attachment to Hashem by the extent of his mourning."

20. During the Nine Days, as they were walking home from the Kosel Maaravi, Reb Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l said to his shamesh, Reb Elyah Roth zt'l, "Did you see? Even the stones of the Kosel Maaravi were crying!"

understanding and recognized the terrible loss caused by the Churban. If we understood how much we lost, the lack in our perfection, etc., we wouldn't want to eat or drink. We would want to roll in the earth from distress."²¹

Building Yerushalayim with Tears

The Gemara (*Makos* 24) says:

Rabban Gamliel, Reb Elazer ben Azaryah, Reb Yehoshua, and Reb Akiva traveled to Yerushalayim. When they came to Har HaBayis, they saw foxes coming out of the Kodesh Kodoshim. Rabban Gamliel, Reb Elazer ben Azaryah,

and Reb Yehoshua cried. Reb Akiva laughed.

They asked R' Akiva, "Why do you laugh?"

Reb Akiva asked them, "Why do you cry?"

They said, "The place about which it states והור הקרב ימות (that only *kohanim* may go and anyone else will die) has foxes prancing about it. Shouldn't we cry?"

Reb Akiva replied, לך אני מנחם, "That is precisely why I'm laughing." Reb Akiva explained to them that when he sees that the prophecies of the destruction occurred, he feels confident that the *nevuos* of redemption will transpire.

21. Someone from our chaburah who lives in Beit Shemesh has been a widower for four years. His sixteen-year-old daughter told him, "I feel bad for my younger siblings. When my mother was niftarah, I was old enough to have appreciated her love, and I know what I'm missing now. But the younger siblings hardly knew their mother's love. They will never know what they are missing."

The father broke out in tears and said he now understands the mourning in galus. We lost so much due to the Churban, and yet, we have no idea what we lost!

From Reb Akiva's words, *לכך אני מצחק* "That is precisely why I'm laughing," it seems that he was laughing *because* they were mourning. Rebbe Yisrael of Tchartkov *zt'l* explains that he was happy that Yidden were mourning and crying over the Churban because those tears would build the third Beis HaMikdash. When people cry, that means the process of rebuilding is taking place.

The Shlah HaKadosh (Misechta Taanis, Ner Mitzvah, #33) explains that we don't mourn on Shabbos because mourning builds the Beis HaMikdash, and it is forbidden to build the Beis HaMikdash on Shabbos.

It states (*Tehillim* 147), *בונה ירושלים ה' נדחי ישראל יכנס*, "Hashem builds Yerushalayim, He will gather in the dispersed of Yisrael." The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* (Drush 7th Av, 5599) asks that it seems that the pasuk should state in the future tense *יבנה ירושלים ה'*, "Hashem will build Yerushalayim." Why is it written in the

present tense, *בונה ירושלים*, that Hashem is building the Beis HaMikdash now? This is because Hashem is building the Beis HaMikdash right now. He takes our mourning and tears, and with them, Hashem is building, right now, the Beis Hamikdash.

Chazal tell us that the third Beis HaMikdash will come down from heaven fully built (see Rashi on Rosh Hashanah 30a). Hashem is building the Third Beis HaMikdash in heaven, and the materials for this construction are our tears and our mourning. For two thousand years, we mourn and cry for the Churban. Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes all those tears and mourning, and He builds the third Beis HaMikdash in heaven with them – brick by brick, stone by stone, and when it is completed, it will come down from heaven.

This is the meaning of the Zohar (vol.2 p.12:), "The redemption of Bnei Yisrael depends solely on crying."²²

Benefits of Mourning

Reb Chaim Palagi (Moed l'Kol Chay, Av, #61) writes, "When one mourns for the Churban Beis HaMikdash, his sins are forgiven, he will live a long life, his children won't die in his lifetime, and his children will live long."

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer zt'l (Imrei Pinchas 404) says, "Tisha b'Av atones for sins because people feel very broken. This is the reason that after Tisha b'Av, people feel slightly similar to how they feel after Yom Kippur."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l said that those who cry for

the Churban merit good children. (Therefore, as one mourns, it is an auspicious time to daven for one's children's success in Torah and yiras Shamayim.)

Kav HaYashar (ch.93) writes, "I have received a true *kabbalah*: Whoever is always distressed about the *galus HaShechinah* will merit the crown of Torah."

Reb Yehudah Asad zt'l would save the tears that fell from his eyes at Tikun Chatzos. *Bachurim* who were at risk of being drafted into the army would come to him, and he would give them to taste from the tears, and this would help them

22. The sefarim say that although we mourn and cry, we mustn't fall into sadness, *chalilah*.

The Chazon Ish (Maaseh Ish, vol.4 163, and some say it is from the Brisker Rav zt'l) proves from the Gemara (Shabbos 30:) that mourning doesn't have to be with sadness. This is because Chazal say, אין השכינה שורה אלא מתוך שמחה, "The Shechinah doesn't reside without happiness". A navi needs to be in a state of happiness to receive prophecy. The question is, how did Yirmiyahu HaNavi receive the nevuah of Megilas Eichah? How could he have received the prophecy without joy? He was certainly crying and mourning as he received this prophecy. The answer is that from here we see that it is possible to mourn and cry and be happy at the same time.

(Toldos Shmuel, told by the testimonies of Reb Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky zt'l and others).

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* 20 ד"ה פעם אחת) tells us that the nations פרס and מדי came to the world as a reward for Koresh, who cried and mourned when the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed. According to the Chofetz Chaim's zt'l calculation, Koresh was seven years old at the time of the Churban. A child of seven doesn't fully understand the devastation of the Churban. Nevertheless, Koresh cried, and he was rewarded for his tears.

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 554:25) states, וכל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה, "Whoever mourns for Yerushalayim merits seeing its joy." Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l said that in Kelm they emphasized the word כל in the phrase וכל המתאבל על ירושלים בשמחתה, זוכה ורואה בשמחתה, "Whoever mourns for Yerushalayim merits seeing its joy..." כל, "everyone", means even the people who committed severe aveiros and don't

deserve to see the joy of Yerushalayim when it will be rebuilt. Nevertheless, mourning sanctifies and purifies, and because of their mourning, they will merit to see the joy of Yerushalayim when it is rebuilt (Beis Kelm, p.396).

Connecting to Hashem with Mourning

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (*Drashos* 7th of Av, 5560, p.307) writes, "It states (*Divrei HaYamim* 1, 16:27) עזי וחדוה במקומו, that Hashem resides with joy. Also, Chazal say that Hashem doesn't reside in places where there is sadness. [This means Hashem is always in a place of joy and happiness.] Nevertheless, Tisha b'Av is a יום מר, bitter day [and the sadness and mourning are also for Hashem, on this day]. Therefore, it is proper for all the bitter and broken people to cry and mourn on these days, when Hashem is also mourning. If they do so, their mourning will go up to a very high place. They don't see it, but

their mazal does, and they will hear the voice of Hashem crying together with them."

It states (Eichah 1:15) קרא עלי' מועד, that Tisha b'Av is called a *moed*, a holiday. Therefore, Shulchan Aruch (559:4) states, "We don't say tachanun or selichos on Tisha b'Av because it is called *moed*, a holiday." The question is, how can Tisha b'Av be called a holiday?

Reb Mordechai Gifter zt'l answers (quoting his rebbe, hy'd) that מועד has two translations. It means a gathering place (like אהל מועד), and *moed* are the special days of the year when we *gather* and connect with Hashem. During the yomim tovim, we connect to Hashem with joy, and on Tisha b'Av, we connect to Hashem through mourning.

The Megilah of Tisha b'Av is called מגילת איכה, and many kinos begin with the word אֵיכָה. In the Torah, Hashem asks Adam HaRishon, אֵיכָה, "Where are you?"

The Zera Kodesh (Devarim ג' (ד"ה במדרש ג' explains that throughout galus, Hashem is asking אֵיכָה, "Where are you?" Keviyachol, Hashem is searching for us, wondering why we are so distant from Him? He searches until He finds us, as it states (Hosheia 9:10) מִצֵּאתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "I found Yisrael." And when Hashem finds us, He sees that throughout the galus we were also continually searching for Him. We are always asking, אֵיכָה מָקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְהַעֲרִיצוֹ, "Where is Hashem so we can exalt Him?" We are constantly asking אֵיכָה and אֵיכָה, and we are searching for Hashem.

Hashem and Bnei Yisrael search for one another and yearn for the time when we can unite. On Tisha b'Av, we unite with our mourning, on yom tov we unite with joy; and when the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt, we will unite in its perfect mode, amidst immense joy.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l (Imrei Pinchas 378, 380) writes, "The place where Hashem

resides, all the malachim of heaven are there. On this day, keviyachol, Hashem is crying. Therefore, when a person is also at this place [of mourning], he is protected [because he is with Hashem]. Laughing on Tisha b'Av is סכנת נפשות, dangerous because when one is with the King, he is protected, but when he is distant from the King, he doesn't have protection. And on this day, the Shechinah is keviyachol sitting on the earth [and the only way to connect with Him is with mourning]."

The Avodas Yisrael (Avos 3:1) describes the avodah of the Three Weeks and of Tisha b'Av with a mashal:

A father dropped diamonds into the garbage and asked his son to search through the trash to find them and to clean them off. It was a challenging and uncomfortable job. The son certainly will receive a great reward for doing this for his

father, greater than if he served his father in other ways. This describes the avodah of the Three Weeks and Tisha b'Av. It is a low time, a difficult period, but the avodah is very precious to Hashem. The Avodas Yisrael concludes, "What a person can fix on Tisha b'Av, which is a low day, one can't fix even on Simchas Torah."

Daven for Mashiach

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l (Imrei Pinchas 380-381) writes, "Tisha b'Av, when we sit on the floor and daven, we can accomplish by Hashem yisborach with tefillah everything we need. If someone lacks something, a good time for tefillah is on Tisha b'Av, when we sit on the earth."

Obviously, at this time, we should also daven for Moshiach. It is always important to daven for Moshiach.²³

23. The Dubno Magid zt'l told the following mashal:

The Tiferes Shlomo (מסעי) (ד"ה א"י כן מטה השני) writes, "A person should contemplate how due to our many sins, the holy land is under Arab control. This should break a Yid's heart, and he should shout out to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. If Yidden desire the land and the building of the Beis HaMikdash, Hashem will quickly accept

their *tefillos*. The Beis HaMikdash is already built and ready in heaven. We only have to request that it come down. Therefore, the Beis HaMikdash is called דביר ביתך (in the *brachah* רצה, in *Shemonah Esrei*) from the word דיבור, speech. We have to ask Hashem to build the Beis HaMikdash, and this will

A wealthy person sent his five sons overseas to study Torah. One of them, whose name was Reuven, became deathly ill. The doctors determined that there was only one cure for him, and that was extremely expensive.

The brothers replied, "Money isn't a problem. We will write a letter to our wealthy father, and he will send us money."

This is the letter the oldest brother wrote:

"Dear father, kindly send us a large sum of money because Shimon's eyeglasses broke, and he needs new ones. Also, Levi's clothes are old and torn. There is another expense: Yehudah owes 450 dinars and must pay up the debt. Also send money for Reuven because he is dangerously ill and the medicine costs a fortune."

When the father received the letter, he was angry with his eldest son. He said, "How did my foolish son turn around the order of this letter? He should have written about Reuven first because that is the biggest problem."

The Dubno Magid said that this is how it appears when people daven for many things, and then, like an afterthought, they daven for Moshiach, too. Davening for Moshiach should be front and center in our *tefillos*!

bring the redemption quicker."

up before Hashem, and this can bring Moshiach.

Tzaddikim over all generations davened for Moshiach, but the Mabit (Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah ch.17) teaches that the tefillos of the later generations are more potent and they have greater potential to bring Moshiach. This is for two reasons:

(1) We are closer to the geulah, so our tefillos can accomplish more than the tefillos of years ago.

(2) All of the tefillos of the past two thousand years are still present. Those tefillos join with our tefillos. So, it isn't solely our tefillos, but rather the collective tefillos of all the generations that go

The Yaaras Dvash (*Drush 5*) teaches that the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because people weren't davening. As it states (*Tehillim 14:4*), ה' לא קראו, "They didn't pray to Hashem." Also, it states (*Eichah 1:2*), ודמעתה על לחיה, The Yaaras Dvash explains that the tears shed by the Churban Beis HaMikdash were because of לחיה, the cheek. The Gemara (*Chulin 134:*) says that the cheek represents tefillah.²⁴ Thus, the bitter Churban was על לחיה, because people weren't davening.²⁵

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Yirmiyahu 327*) tells that when the Jewish nation was על נהרות בבל, on the banks of the

24. Among the matnos kehunah (gifts given to a kohen) are the זרוע לחיים והקיבה, the arm, the cheek, and the stomach of cattle. The Gemara explains that this gift represents that Pinchas took a sword in his arm (זרוע), he prayed with his cheek (לחיים), and he killed Zimri and Kozbi by the קיבה, as it states, ואל האשה אל קובתה.

25. The Yaaras Dvash explains that we primarily mourn the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash. (The second Beis HaMikdash was a respite, a break in the long galus, but the primary destruction was the first one.)

Babylon River, en route to galus, Yirmiyahu left them, and everyone began to cry bitterly. They said, "Rabbeinu Yirmiyahu! Will you leave us?"

Yirmiyahu told them, "I testify by heaven and earth that if you had cried just once when you lived in Yerushalayim, you wouldn't have been sent into exile."

The Midrash (*Eichah Rabba* 5:5) states, "The evil Nevuchadnezzar told Nevuzradan, 'Their G-d accepts *teshuvah*. If they pray, Hashem will save them. Therefore, don't let them stop walking [as you lead them into galus], not even for a moment, so they won't have the peace of mind to call out to Hashem.'"

Nevuzradan followed Nevuchadnezzar's advice. When he brought the Jewish nation into exile, he didn't let them rest. His soldiers

cut off the limbs of anyone who stopped walking. We see from this Midrash that even Nevuchadnezzar *harasha* understood that Yidden have the power of tefillah, and they have the ability to end the galus with their tefillos.

Chazal (*Taanis* 29) teach, "When the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, it was *erev Tisha b'Av*, *Motzei Shabbos*. The Levi'im were singing *shirah*. They were up to the words, יִצְמִיתֵם ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ, "Hashem will demolish them" (*Tehillim* 94:23), but they hadn't yet said those words, and that's when the goyim seized the Beis HaMikdash. The same happened by the second Beis HaMikdash." It seems that if the Levi'im had said יִצְמִיתֵם ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ, "Hashem will demolish them," the two Batei Mikdash wouldn't have been destroyed. Their *tefillos* would have stopped the Churban.

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