

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Shlita*

Devarim - T"B



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Torah Wellsprings - Devarim - T"V

The Tax of Hishtadlus

We are obligated to do *hishtadlus*. The source for this obligation is found in this week's parashah.¹ The Yalkut Shimoni (808) states, "Do you think that Hashem will send

you blessings even if you sit idly and do nothing? The pasuk says (2:7), *כי ה' אלקיך בריך*, 'Hashem your G-d has blessed you in all that *you do*.' If a person does, he receives Hashem's blessing. If he doesn't act, he will not receive."²

1. 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 isn't a better *mussar sefer*!" (*Shem MiShmuel*, *Devarim* 5675; *Pri Tzaddik*, *Devarim* ד"ה אלה).

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*."

The Shlah (*Va'eschanan*) writes, "Why do we seek *mussar*? The entire *sefer Devarim* is filled with *mussar*."

Chazal (*Yevamos* 4.) say אפילו למאן דלא דריש סמוכים בעלמא במשנה תורה דריש דהא ר' יהודה בעלמא לא דריש ובמשנה תורה דריש. The Kotzker zt'l said סמוכים means to be close to Hashem. The Gemara is hinting, "Even Reb Yehudah, a 'Reb Yid,' a simple Jew – who is distant from Hashem throughout the year can become סמוכים, close to Hashem when *sefer Devarim* is read."

The first *pasuk* of *sefer Devarim* states, אלה הדברים אשר דיבר משה אל כל ישראל, "These are the words that Moshe spoke to every Yid." The Chozeh of Lublin zy'a stresses that אל כל ישראל, "to every Yid" is literal. Moshe Rabbeinu addressed this *Chumash* to every Yid, including those living thousands of years later. In *sefer Devarim*, Moshe speaks to us and teaches us the *mussar* we need to hear.

Chazal note that Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest *navi*. All *nevi'im* say, כה אמר ה', "Hashem said like this," while Moshe said, זה הדבר, "This is what Hashem said." Moshe had a clear vision of prophecy and could repeat Hashem's messages exactly as Hashem said them. Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen zt'l explains that Moshe said his *nevuah* the moment he received it. As he spoke to the nation, he would tell them זה הדבר; this is the prophecy that I am receiving *right now*. The Torah is eternal, and therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu's *mussar* is for us, as well. Moshe speaks to us today, and he tells us, זה הדבר אשר צוה ה', this is what Hashem is telling you right now. This is the message you must hear, right now, so you can improve your ways. We receive these prophecies and discover the lessons and messages that apply to us when we study the *parshiyos* of *sefer Devarim*.

2. The Midrash (*Eichah Pesichta* 24) quotes the tefillos the Avos prayed at the time of the Churban. Avraham Avinu said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Ribono shel Olam, when I was one hundred years old, you gave me a son. When he was a thirty-seven-year-old scholar, You told me to sacrifice him on the altar, and I bound him on the *mizbeiach*. Won't You remember that merit? Won't You have compassion on my children?"

Yitzchak Avinu said, "Ribono Shel Olam, when my father hinted to me that I would be sacrificed, I didn't protest. On the contrary, I allowed him to bind me on the *mizbeiach*. I stretched my throat out to the sword. Won't You remember that merit? Won't You have mercy on my children?"

Yaakov Avinu said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I lived in Lavan's house for twenty years, and then I met up with Eisav, who wanted to kill my children. I was *moser nefesh* to save them. And now, my descendants are in the hands of the enemy, like sheep to the slaughter! I raised them like chicks; I suffered so much to raise them. I worked so hard to raise them my entire life. Won't You remember all of that and have compassion on my descendants?"

Avraham and Yitzchak spoke about their *mesirus nefesh* at the *akeidah*, and Yaakov spoke about his *mesirus*

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.21) explains the purpose of *hishtadlus*: "Technically, a person could do nothing, and he will earn the amount of money that was decreed in heaven, if it weren't for the קנס, the tax, that was placed on all mankind, בועת אפיך תאכל לחם, 'By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.' Due to the decree of the Exalted King, everyone must do *hishtadlus* for his *parnassah*. It's a tax³ that all humanity must pay, and it is one that no one can escape. But it isn't the *hishtadlus* that helps. It is an obligation. After one does his proper *hishtadlus*, he has fulfilled his obligation, and Heaven's blessings can come down. He doesn't need to spend all his days seeking *parnassah*."

In this week's parashah, Moshe Rabbeinu says (1:12), איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם משאכם וריבכם,

"How can I carry all your disputes all by myself?" Rashi says משאכם implies that they were *apikorsim*.

In what way were they *apikorsim*?

One way to translate משאכם is "your heavy loads." This alludes to those who think they carry the heavy load of life all by themselves. This is *apikorsus* because they are not alone. Hashem carries the load together with them.⁴

It states in this week's parashah (1:32), ודבר, "In this matter, you do not believe in Hashem, your G-d." The Rebbe of Stetin (*Degel Machenah Yehudah*) zt'l explains that if a person thinks his *parnassah* will come בדבר הזה, specifically in *this way*, and not in any other way, he doesn't believe in Hashem. One must believe that Hashem can provide *parnassah* in many ways.⁵

nefesh to raise his family. From here, we learn that *mesirus nefesh* to raise a family is as great a sacrifice as the *akeidah*.

The Nesivos Shalom zt'l repeated this Midrash to a father who complained how hard it was to support his family. The Nesivos Shalom explained, "Raising a family is the greatest deed and supreme sacrifice. It is comparable to the *mesirus nefesh* of the *akeidah*. But don't worry. Do your *hishtadlus*, and with Hashem's help, everything will work out."

3. Based on this *Mesilas Yesharim*, Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l taught that one who does excessive *hishtadlus* can be compared to a merchant who has already paid his taxes yet chases after the tax collector to give him more money.

HaMaspik L'Ovdei Hashem (Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam zt'l, *Bitachon* 8) writes, "To think that *hishtadlus* brings *parnassah* is כפירה נסתרת (hidden heresy). This is because, although he says he believes in Hashem, deep in his heart, he thinks *parnassah* depends on how much he does *hishtadlus*, or that *refuah* depends on the doctors and medicine. Dovid HaMelech said about such people, שנאתי השומרים הבלי שוא ואני אל ה' בטחתי, 'I hate those who trust in foolishness; and I trust in Hashem.'"

4. A poor man was walking down the road carrying a heavy pack on his shoulders. A king, riding by in his chariot, offered him a ride. The poor man climbed into the wagon but continued carrying his heavy load. The king asked him why he didn't put his bag down. The poor man replied, "Honorable king. I'm thankful that you took me on your wagon. I don't want to burden you to carry my bag too."

The king replied, "I'm carrying your load, regardless. Both you and your pack are on the wagon. So, you may as well put your bag down."

People are similar. Hashem carries them and supplies them with all their needs. If they feel משאכם, that they need to carry their needs on their shoulders, that is *apikorsus*.

5. When the Nazis were approaching, the Brisker Rav zt'l considered his options thoroughly to determine how Hashem wanted him to proceed, and he concluded that he and his family should escape to the forest. He understood that this was the correct *hishtadlus* for them at the time. However, he instructed his family not to take food along with them. They would go into the forest and trust in Hashem to sustain them.

Indeed, Hashem helped them. A family prepared a meal for a chasunah, but since the chasunah celebration was called off due to the war, the father of this family went to the forest to distribute food to those escaping through the forest.

The Brisker Rav asked some questions regarding the kashrus, and when he was satisfied with what he heard, he told his family that they could eat as much as they wanted. But once again, he warned them that after the meal, they shouldn't take any food along with them. They would trust in Hashem, as before.

The next day, they met another person, carrying baskets filled with food. He had also prepared a wedding meal, which was cancelled due to the war. Everything was there, meat, bread, food for the best of times, but there was no dessert. No one really cared. There was plenty to eat. But the Brisker Rav was upset. It wasn't the dessert that bothered him – he never took particular interest in the foods he ate. He asked his family, "Did anyone save something from yesterday's meal?"

They were all silent. He asked again, "Did anyone keep food from yesterday's meal?"

One young child admitted that he was afraid he wouldn't have what to eat today, so he saved some dessert for today.

The Brisker Rav said, "See Hashem's wonders. The boy kept some dessert, and therefore, that is exactly what is missing today."

Someone complained to Rebbe Hershele of Lisk zt'l about a competitor who opened up shop near his store. He was worried that it would hurt his *parnassah*.

Rebbe Hershele Lisker responded with a *mashal*:

There was once a person who owned a chicken, and every day he threw some crumbs into the coop.

One day, he bought another chicken and placed it in the coop. The first chicken, worried that the "newcomer" would eat all his food, pecked at the newcomer and ripped out its feathers.

The owner watched this and thought to himself, "Foolish chicken! Why don't you understand? I know two birds are now in the coop, and I will put in enough food for both of you."

Rebbe Hershele Lisker zt'l explained, "Hashem provides *parnassah*. And now that two people are in the same business, Hashem will send a bigger portion. He will provide for both of you. There is no reason to worry."

Someone saw two partners working in a field; one dug holes in the ground, and the other filled those holes with earth again.

He asked them, "What are you doing? What is the purpose of digging holes if you immediately fill them?"

They replied, "We usually work in groups of three. One digs a hole, the second puts in a sapling, and the third covers it with earth. Today, the partner that usually places the sapling into the earth didn't show up, but we understand that just because he isn't here doesn't mean we shouldn't do our job."

This story reminds us that we have a Partner in everything we do. We can't do anything on our own. We do our *hishtadlus*, but all work is futile without Hashem, the primary Partner.

A businessman once had an important meeting scheduled in the Nine Days. He asked Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l whether he may shave his beard to look presentable at the meeting.

Reb Moshe ruled that shaving is forbidden during the Nine Days. A business meeting does not make it permitted.

But the businessman feared his unshaven face would ruin his chances of closing the deal, so he shaved.

The meeting started well. They were about to sign a contract when one of the non-Jewish businessmen asked, "How do we know we can trust you? Can you prove your honesty in business?"

The Yid replied, "You don't have to worry. I'm a religious Jew, and I follow the Torah. The Torah mandates stringent business ethics, so you can trust me."

Crying for No Reason

When the nation heard the negative report from the meraglim, they panicked and cried. As it states in this week's parashah (1:27), ותרגמו באהליכם ותאמרו בשנאת ה' אותנו הוציאנו מארץ, "You spoke lashon hara in your tents and said that Hashem hates you and therefore He took you out of Mitzrayim to give you over to the hands of the Emorites..." And it states (Bamidbar 14:1), ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא, "The entire community raised their voices and shouted, and the people wept on that night."

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.'"

Their crying for no reason resulted in the Churban. Many times, people cry for no reason. They are upset with their lot, they think their life isn't good, and they don't believe that everything is in their best interest. They should remember what crying for no reason caused and train themselves to believe that everything is for their good.⁶

"You're a Jew?" another non-Jewish participant interjected. "I know Jews don't shave this time of year. But you are clean-shaven. If you aren't loyal to your religion, how can we trust you will be honest in business?"

The deal fell through. This is an example of what occurs when one tries to do business while ignoring the primary Partner.

6. I received the following letter from a member of our chaburah, from Beis Shemesh:

"I will begin with a mashal: There was a great, powerful king who ruled over a large country. As was common in the days of yore, the king waged wars with the neighboring countries to conquer land and amass greater wealth.

Once, the king got a report from one of the fronts that his general there was struggling against a mighty army of the enemy. To help his general, the king decided to send him a massive sum of money. The general would use the money to feed his army and to purchase better weapons. He also sent him maps and other supplies critical to succeeding in battle.

The question was how to send all of this. Bandits followed what was happening in the king's palace. They would hear about the gift, wait in ambush, and take the money for themselves.

The king came up with a solution. He placed the treasure into old, used bags and covered them with garbage. He took one of his servants, dressed him in dirty clothes, and told him to deliver the bags to the general on the front. The servant did so, and no one suspected anything. He appeared to be delivering garbage.

When the servant arrived, and the bags were opened, their terrible scent almost suffocated the general. If the general were a fool, he would become very upset and say, "Isn't it enough that I am risking my life and fighting with all my might to help the king and his nation? Why did the king embarrass me with this offensive delivery?"

However, a wise general would stop and think, "Who is sending this to me? It is the king whom I love, and who loves me. I am certain that he didn't mean to embarrass me. There must be something precious hidden within these bags."

The search began, and mixed within these smelly bags was a great treasure. The general was happy with the treasure and glad that he had the intelligence to realize that within the concealment was a gift from the king.

Let this be a lesson for us. When we go through difficult times, remember Who sent it to us. It is from the King Who loves us. It is indeed for our benefit. Concealed within these troubles is tremendous compassion.

The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* (*Drashos*, 7 Av, p.326) says that the Churban was for our good. He 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 we could survive']. We should be praising Hashem on Tisha b'Av. This is the reason Tisha b'Av is called *mo'ed* (a holiday).⁷ The crying and the mourning are for the *new* tragedies that happen every

year. Because of our many sins, the curses and the *tzaros* become worse each day..."⁸

The brother of the Maharal (Reb Chaim zt'l, *Igros HaTiyul*) notes that throughout Eichah, the name אֱלֹקִים, Hashem's name of harsh judgment, isn't used. Instead, the name הו"ה, the name of compassion, is written. This teaches us that even the Churban was an act of Hashem's mercy in order to save the Jewish nation.⁹

7. Rebbe Shmelke of Nikolsburg *zy'a* related the following *mashal*:

A king had to flee from his kingdom. He came to a distant land and stayed at the home of one of his loyal friends. The king noticed that his host was sometimes sad and other times happy. The king asked him, "Are you happy or sad?"

The host replied, "I'm both. I'm sad that you had to leave your palace, and I'm happy because the king is in my home."

Kabbalah seferaim teach us that the head of the letter ט is bent into itself to hint טובא גניז בגויה, that the good is concealed within it. The Apter Rav (Ohev Yisrael, Pinchas) explains that the Churban occurred on the ninth of the month, ט ט, to hint that a lot of goodness is concealed within this day. Now we see the suffering, but it will turn around in the future, and we will find all the good that was concealed in this day.

8. The Chofetz Chaim told a *mashal* to explain why the galus has become so difficult in our times. The Chofetz Chaim compared it to a wholesaler who sells merchandise to store owners. The small stores don't have the funds to pay for the merchandise, so they pay for part of it, and the rest they take on as a loan. The following year, after selling the merchandise and having earned some money, they can make a payment on the loan. They buy more merchandise, and once again, they take it on loan. This goes on for many years; they pay back a bit but borrow more, and each year, the debt grows steadily higher and higher.

One year, the wholesaler says to the smaller enterprises, "The game is over. This year, everyone has to pay up in full, every penny they owe."

Everyone was in shock. "We had such a great system in place! What happened all of a sudden, that you want full payment?"

The wholesaler explained, "It's simple. I am retiring. Until now, I was in business, so I agreed to get paid at a later time. But now I am old, I am closing the business, so everything has to be paid up in full."

The Chofetz Chaim continued with the *nimshal*. When Yidden have aveiros, r'l, they pay back their debts with the hardships of galus. So, although the debt increases from year to year, Hakadosh Baruch Hu compassionately pushes off the debt for another year... and He does so every year. Some of the debts were paid off with the *tzaros* of galus, but a large part of the debt remained.

But now, the galus is reaching its end. Now all the debts have to be paid in full.

So, when we go through tough times in our times, this should encourage us and give us hope because it means that we are reaching the end of galus. Soon we will be redeemed, speedily in our days.

9. The Dubno Magid zt'l gave the following *mashal*:

The doctors in the hospital gave strict instructions to the parents of a sick child to do everything they could to keep their child awake. They warned that if the child falls asleep within the next hour, he may never awaken, r'l.

The parents tried to engage their young child in conversation to keep him awake, but the child was tired, and his eyes were drooping. So, the child's father took the pillow away from under the child's head and talked to him some more. It was uncomfortable for the child, and this helped him stay awake.

Just when he was about to fall asleep again, the father placed the child on the cold floor. The young child didn't understand why his father was doing this to him.

Even on the floor, the child began falling asleep, so the father hit him. "Why is he hitting me?" the child thought. "Why does he torture me?" But it wasn't torture, and it wasn't cruel. It was the greatest kindness. It was saving the child's life.

The Dubno Magid explains that one of the purposes of yesurim is to arouse us to do teshuvah. The yesurim are wake-up calls that we should improve our ways. If we don't wake up, the yesurim might become more painful. But it is all Hashem's compassion, so that we don't fall asleep in galus and forget our purpose in life.

Consider another *mashal*:

A father gets home late at night and finds the front door locked. He knocks on the door and the windows, but the family is fast asleep. One of the windows is slightly open, and a child is sleeping near the window. The father takes a pole and pokes the child. He wants the child to wake up and let him in. The child cries. Soon, the entire household is awake and alarmed. "Who is outside their home, trying to hurt them?" Had they known that the person poking them was their father, who only wanted to come inside to be with them, they would have opened the door. This is hinted at in the words (*Shir HaShirim* 5:4), דודי שלח ידו מן החור, "My Friend sent His hand through the window..."

Hashem is calling us, and it is always for our good.

Reb Yaakov Galinsky *zt"l* repeated the following story. He heard it from the rav mentioned in the story:

A group of ten Yidden in Russia were accused of engaging in illegal business. If found guilty, the sentence would be either exile to Siberia or execution. (Most likely, execution, considering the Russian judges' antisemitic leanings.)

After the judges announced their verdict – execution – a high-ranking priest entered the courtroom and said to the prisoners, "I will give you a chance to live. If you convert to Christianity, you will be pardoned. You can return home like nothing happened. Think it over. I will return for your decision in five days."

The Russians knew that when Yidden are together, they strengthen each other in their emunah, so they separated the prisoners, placing them in private cells. Each prisoner was alone, and the priest and others came to them to try to convince them to convert. They stressed that this was the only way they would be saved.

The only Yid allowed to visit the prisoners was the rav of the city. The rav arrived at the jail to see the prisoners. However, the priest was there, waiting for the rav. The priest assumed the rav would be on his side. Wouldn't he want to save the lives of these men? He asked the rav to convince the men to accept the offer and convert to Christianity *r'l*. Of course, the rav disregarded the offer and tried to strengthen those poor Jews.

When the fifth day arrived, the rav told the community, "Let's gather and daven for our ten brothers that they remain strong and pass this difficult test. They shouldn't exchange eternal life for life in this fleeting world."

After heart-rending *tefillos*, the Rav lit nine candles *l'iluy nishmos* the nine men who certainly chose death over conversion. He didn't light a tenth candle because one of the accused was a young orphan who only had a mother. The rav believed that this young man wouldn't pass the test and leave his mother alone. He also didn't want to distress the poor mother, the widow, with the thought that perhaps her son had been killed.

The mother, watching from the women's section, stood up and announced, "Light a candle for my son, too. I'm certain he will be *moser nefesh*. It is my only hope that my son should pass this test and remain with his *emunah*."

It is Okay to Cry – With a Limit

In parashas Shlach, when talking about the meraglim, the Torah writes (Bamidbar 14:1), "ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא", "The entire community raised their voices and shouted, and the people wept on that night." The Torah emphasizes that they raised their voices and shouted. Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l says that their main aveirah was that they raised their voices.

According to this explanation, their aveirah wasn't that they cried. A person is only human, and it is natural to be concerned and afraid. Their aveirah was that they raised their voices when they cried, which demonstrates *yeush*, despair. Their aveirah was that they lost all hope. This is also implied in this week's parashah, as it states (1:34), "וישמע ה' את קול דבריכם ויקצוף...", "Hashem heard the sound of your words, and He

became angry..." Hashem was angry with the loud cries, the fact that they had lost hope.¹⁰

It states (Devarim 14:1-2), "בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגודדו ולא תשימו קרחה בין עיניכם למת כי עם קדוש אתה לה' אלקיך", "You are children of Hashem, your G-d. You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For you are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d..."

The Ramban writes, "The pasuk is saying that you are a holy nation, Hashem's chosen nation... It isn't proper for you to cut yourselves or to cause baldness due to death, even if someone died young. [However], the Torah doesn't forbid crying, because by nature, a person will cry when a loved one leaves or travels a distance, even when alive..."

The rav lit the tenth candle.

Shortly afterward, a *shaliach* from the court arrived and reported that all ten men were killed *al kiddush Hashem*.

The mother rejoiced over her son's sacrifice. Everybody watched this woman's joy and understood that her intense love for Hashem was passed down to her son, empowering him to pass this challenging test.

Reb Yankel Galinsky told this story as a lesson in chinuch. When parents display their love for Yiddishkeit, this love will be passed down to the children. Another lesson is the awareness of what is truly important in life. A moment of life in Olam HaBa is more pleasurable than the entire Olam HaZeh.

10. One Chol HaMoed Succos, Rebbe Shlomo Leib Lenchana zt'l led a *tish* and he taught his chassidim the following idea: "The entire world isn't worth a *krechitz*. Our destiny is Olam HaBa, and therefore, even when we lack worldly matters, they are trivial by comparison. We should focus on the goal. This world isn't worth a *krechitz*."

Just then, a bench collapsed from the weight of the many people standing on it. Some of the chasidim fell and were injured, and the Rebbe was also injured from the incident. The Rebbe emitted a moan from the pain.

One of the chassidim asked, "Why is the Rebbe *krechitzing*? Didn't the Rebbe say this world isn't worth a *krechitz*?"

The Rebbe replied, "True, the world isn't worth a *krechitz*, but when it hurts, one *krechitzes* from pain." The Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l repeated this story and explained that it is a natural reaction to *krechitz* and to shout when in pain. But even then, his mind and intellect should remember that this world isn't so important that we should moan over it. Feelings remain feelings, and when one is in pain, he shouts; nevertheless, deep in his heart, he should remember that it is all for the good. When a father brings his son to the dentist, he expects that his son will cry during the treatment. The father isn't upset at his son for crying because it is natural for a child to cry when in pain. But if the son says to his father, "Why did you bring me here? Why are you doing this to me? Don't you care about me?" the father will get upset. The son should trust that everything his father does is for his benefit.

The Ramban clearly tells us that crying is permitted. The problem is when it becomes excessive. The Ramban quotes the

Gemara (Moed Katan 27:), באסרם להתאבל על נפש יותר, מדי, "one may not mourn the dead too much."¹¹

11. The Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l lost his wife and eleven children in the Holocaust hy'd, r'l. He said (Tehillim 33:9), כי הוא אמר ויהי צוה ויעמוד, the Ribono Shel Olam Who commanded the tzarah to come, also commanded ויעמוד, that we should pick ourselves up from mourning and move on with life.

It states (Bereishis 27:34), ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה עד מאוד, "[Eisav] cried out an exceedingly great and bitter cry."

L'havdil, Mordechai HaTzaddik also cried, as it states (Esther 4:1), ויצעק זעקה גדולה ומרה, "He cried a loud and bitter cry." But this time, it doesn't say עד מאוד, that it was an exceedingly bitter cry. Because a Yid knows that everything comes from Hashem, and therefore, nothing is terrible for Klal Yisrael.

Yaakov caused Eisav to cry when he took the brachos. Years later, Haman caused Mordechai to cry with his gezeirah. The Midrash (Esther Rabba 8) says that Yaakov was punished for causing Eisav to cry, and therefore, years later, Eisav's descendant (Haman) caused Yaakov's descendent (Mordechai HaTzaddik) to cry. Nevertheless, Mordechai's crying was less; it wasn't עד מאוד, because a Yid knows that everything is for our good.

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

I heard from a tzaddik that the earth is round, without corners, so a person should never feel he got to "the end of the world." No matter what trouble he is going through, there is always hope.

During the Apter Rav's zt'l lifetime, there were harsh gezeiros on Klal Yisrael. The Apter Rav said that after his *petirah*, when he is brought to heaven, he will refuse to enter Gan Eden until the evil decrees are annulled.

The Apter Rav was *niftar*, but the decrees remained. They even worsened. People asked Reb Yitzchak Meir of Zinikov zt'l, the Apter Rav's son, to explain.

Reb Yitzchak Meir placed his head on the table, and when he raised it, he said, "My father came to me and he explained the *pasuk* (Tehillim 48:10), דימינו אלקים חסדך בקרב היכל, This can be translated, דימינו אלקים, we thought it was אלקים, *middas hadin*, harsh judgment. However, בקרב היכל, in heaven, people see that it is all חסדך, Hashem's kindness. My father explained that now that he is in heaven, he sees that even the harsh decrees are for our good. So why should he stop the decrees? They are all for our benefit."

The Ramban had a student who had many questions about the way Hashem was leading the world. In his opinion, life should be better for Klal Yisrael.

This *talmid* became ill and was about to die. Now the student had another question: Why did he deserve to die so young?

The Ramban came to the student and gave him a *kameia* (amulet) and said, "Hold on to this *kameia*, and when you die, ask the *malachim* to bring you to a chamber in heaven called כסאות למשפט, 'Chairs of Judgment.' When you get there, ask Hashem why you had to die so young, and ask Him your questions on the way He runs the world."

The student was *niftar*, and the Ramban waited to hear what happened.

Once, the Ramban was studying Torah near a window when the window suddenly opened, and the Ramban saw his student. The student said, "After my death, I showed the *kameia* to the *malachim*, and I asked to be brought to למשפט. The *malachim* took me up to this very high chamber. Nothing could stop me because I held the Ramban's *kameia*. In this chamber, I was about to ask my questions before Hashem, but suddenly, all my questions disappeared. They didn't bother me anymore. Because in heaven, one sees that everything is just" (*Mishnas Sachir, Avos 6*).

Emunah

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zy'a* advised his chassidim not to study kabbalah before they merit *giluy Eliyahu*. Years later, people saw the Husiatiner Rebbe *zy'a*, a grandson of the Ruzhiner, studying kabbalah. They understood that he merited to see Eliyahu HaNavi. But the Husiatiner Rebbe told them that he hadn't seen Eliyahu HaNavi. He explained, "My grandfather was speaking for his generation. At that time, one had to see Eliyahu HaNavi before studying the Arizal's *sefarim*. Today, anyone who believes, ואתה מושל בכל, that Hashem rules over everything is worthy to learn kabbalah."

In other words, in our generation, believing in Hashem is equivalent to seeing Eliyahu HaNavi.

It states in this week's *parashah* (3:15), ולמכיר, נתתי את הגלעד. Reb Tzadok HaKohen *zy'a* explained, ולמכיר, for those who recognize Hashem (they know that Hashem created the world and that everything happens by Hashem's hashgachah pratis), to him נתתי את הגלעד, I will send him Eliyahu HaGiladi. Because of his emunah, he deserves to meet with Eliyahu HaNavi.

Reb Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* explained the *pasuk* as follows: למכיר, to recognize whether a person believes in Hashem, נתתי, I give the following sign: גל-עד. Happiness is the testimony. (גל or גיל means happiness, and עד is testimony.) גלעד means that a person's happiness is a sign and testimony that he believes in Hashem.

When a person believes in Hashem, he will always be happy. Whatever happens to

him, he knows it is for the best and that it didn't happen by chance. He isn't worried about the future because he trusts Hashem will help him.

Additionally, what greater joy is there than to speak and to serve Hashem, the King and Creator of the world? For these reasons, when one has emunah, he will have joy. If a person is sad and yet claims that he has emunah, his disposition testifies against him. However, גל-עד, one's happiness is testimony to his emunah.

This week's *parashah* describes the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed for the Jewish nation in the desert. For example, it states (1:31), ובמדבר אשר ראית אשר, נשאך ה' אלקיך כאשר ישא איש את בנו בכל הדרך אשר הלכתם 'עד באכם עד המקום הזה, "And in the desert, where you have seen how Hashem, your G-d, has carried you as a man carries his son, all the way that you have gone until you have come to this place." The following *pasuk* states, ובדבר הזה אינכם מאמינים בה' אלוהיכם, "And with this matter, you don't believe in Hashem your G-d." The Bnei Yissaschar (*Agra d'Kalah*) explains that when people see *mann* coming down from heaven to feed the nation, water pouring from a stone to quench their thirst, and clouds of glory surrounding them to protect them, they don't have to *believe* in Hashem. They *know* Hashem. They see His presence in their life. Therefore, the Torah says, ובדבר הזה אינכם מאמינים בה' אלוהיכם, this isn't called emunah. Emunah is to believe in Hashem even when we don't see His kindness and life is hard. To believe, even then, that everything is from Hashem and for the good.¹²

12. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Likutei Teshuvos, Michtavim* 9) relates the following about his rebbe, Reb Noson Adler *zt'l*:

"When I came to my rebbe [Reb Noson Adler *zt'l*] the first time when I arrived in Boskovitz, he had two children – a young son and a twelve-year-old daughter. He loved his daughter immensely because of her good deeds...it is impossible to list all her praises. But due to our many sins, she was *niftarah*. Nevertheless, Reb Noson didn't cry. He accepted Hashem's decree with joy. I never saw such joy on him, even when he davened on Simchas Torah. Reb Noson's custom was to be *oleh* every Shabbos the *aliyos* of *kohen* and *maftir*, and on the Shabbos during the *shiva* (which was פרשת וירא), he didn't change his custom. When he recited the *haftarah*, one tear fell from his eye, which he caught in his hand. But then he took hold of himself and

Reb Menachem Mendel of Patilch zt'l (a grandson of Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zy'a) discusses the dates of the four fast days. They are the 17th (of Tamuz), the 9th (of Av), the 10th (of Teves), and the 3rd (of Tishrei). These dates are gematria 39, the same gematria as הוי"ה אחר. These fasts are to reestablish our emunah in הוי"ה אחר, and in the zechus of our emunah, the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt.

Shabbos in Galus

The Tiferes Shlomo zt'l writes, "It is explained in the writings of the Arizal that in our times, although the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, and we don't have the avodah and the korbanos, nevertheless, nothing is lacking on Shabbos. Shabbos brings us back to the time of Adam HaRishon before his sin. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Vayira 26:2), אֵת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּמִקֹּדְשִׁי תִירָאוּ, 'You shall keep My Shabbos and fear My Mikdash.' This tells us that when you keep Shabbos, it is as if you are in the rebuilt Beis HaMikdash. Shabbos in galus is even greater [than Shabbos during the days of the Beis HaMikdash]... The love is more perfect... When we accept Shabbos properly and with joy, it is considered as though we saw the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. In galus, the Shabbosim are greater than when the Beis HaMikdash stood. This is the intention of the pasuk: אוֹ, in galus, תִּרְצֶה הָאָרֶץ שַׁבְּתוֹתַי, the Shabbosim will be desired... כל ימי השְׁמֵה, all

the days when we are in the desolation of galus..."

In particular, the Shabbosim of the Three Weeks are very lofty and joyous times. The Tiferes Shlomo (Devarim, Shabbos Chazon ב"ה ב"ה בחקותי) writes that this is alluded to in the words (Lecha Dodi) רַב לָךְ שַׁבָּת בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא, which can be translated as, "How great is Shabbos in the Valley of Weeping. He writes, "The days of *bein hametzarim* between the 17th of Tamuz until Tisha b'Av, are the עֵמֶק הַבְּכָא, 'Valley of Weeping,' and it is then that רַב לָךְ שַׁבָּת, that the Shabbosim are so high, even greater than the Shabbosim of the entire year. This is because during the weekdays there is so much *tzaar*, so on Shabbos, there is much more joy in heaven. Our *tzaar* should be that the Shechinah is in galus. However, on Shabbos kodesh, the Shechinah is happy, so we should also be happy. And when we are happy on Shabbos, this causes even greater joy to Hashem *yisborach*."¹³

The highest point of Shabbos is in the afternoon, at *Shalosh-seudos* time. This is because, generally, afternoons are a time of *din* (harsh judgment), and Shabbos turns this time into *rachamim* (compassion). Whenever *din* turns into *rachamim*, it's an exceptional time. The Yid HaKadosh zy'a taught that in the Three Weeks, all twenty-four hours of the day are a time of *din*, and the Shabbos turns the *din* into *rachamim*. Therefore, during the Three Weeks, the entire Shabbos is a special and sacred time, similar to *Shalash seudos* time.¹⁴

showed no more signs of distress. Since then, he never mentioned his daughter's name and didn't have additional children."

13. We say in birkas hamazon אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּנַחֲמֵת צִיּוֹן, "There shall be no distress and worries on the day of our rest. Hashem shall show us the consolement of Yerushalayim..." The Tiferes Shlomo explains that this means that when we keep Shabbos with joy, it is like we saw the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash.

14. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119.) states, "In what merit do people in *galus* become wealthy? It is because they honor the Shabbos."

The Gemara relates that Reb Chiya bar Abba was at a wealthy man's home and was stunned by his vast wealth. The heavy table, which required sixteen people to carry, was made of gold; sixteen silver chains were attached, and all types of foods and incenses were on it. Reb Chiya bar Aba asked him, 'My son, how did you merit this?' He replied, 'I was a butcher. Every good animal that I had, I decided to keep for

Shabbos Chazon

The Shabbos before *Tisha b'Av* is called Shabbos Chazon because the *haftarah* begins with the words *חֹזֶן יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ*, "Yeshayahu's vision." Nevertheless, the name is surprising because why should we name the Shabbos after the *haftarah* that discusses the Churban? As the Kedushas Levi (*Eichah* וְאִמֵּר אֶבְדֵּךְ) asks, "Why is this Shabbos called Chazon if it isn't praise for Yisrael?!"

The Kedushas Levi answers (*Drushei Tzemech Tzaddik, Eichah*) that *חֹזֶן* means a vision, and on this Shabbos, Hashem shows every Yid the vision of how the world will appear when the third Beis HaMikdash is built.

The Kedushas Levi tells the following *mashal*:

A king granted his son a present, a gift that befits a prince. It was an expensive suit. But the prince played outdoors and ripped and soiled his clothing.

The king ordered another set of clothes, but the prince ruined those too.

The king saw that his son was too young to wear these expensive clothes, so he ordered a third set of royal clothes, and he told his son, "When you mature and I see that you can take care of your clothing, I will give it to you."

Once a year, the king would take out the beautiful garments and show them to his son. He did this so his son would desire them and improve his behavior. The king would tell his son, "When I see that you are responsible and ready, I will give it to you."

This is what occurs each year on Shabbos Chazon. Hashem shows us the third Beis HaMikdash and what life will be like at that time. Hashem tells us, "I am showing you the future era on this Shabbos, so you will desire it and yearn for it. When I see that you are ready for it, I will give it to you."

The Tzaddikim of Bobov *zt'l* would advise their chassidim to bring in Shabbos early on Shabbos Chazon, to turn some of the mourning of the Nine Days into a time of joy.

The Ohev Yisrael writes, *לֵאמֹר שֶׁבֶת חֹזֶן הוּא*, "We can say that Shabbos Chazon is the greatest Shabbos of the year." The Gemara (*Yevamos* 62: *היוצא לדרך*) says that the love between people increases right before their separation. The Ohev Yisrael explains that at the time of the Destruction, the love between Hashem and the Jewish nation was at its peak, as it was a moment before a separation. This is the uniqueness of this Shabbos, the greatness of such an uplifting Shabbos. It is a time of incredible closeness with Hashem.

The Midrash says, *לֹא הָיָה יוֹם מוֹעֵד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כִּיּוֹם*, "There wasn't a holiday for Yisrael like the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed." Ohev Yisrael explains that this is because of the closeness with Hashem that we experienced before the separation.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 99.) teaches that when the Yidden served Hashem, the *keruvim* in the Beis HaMikdash faced each other. When the Yidden didn't serve Hashem, the *keruvim* turned away from each other. They were gold figures, yet they miraculously moved on

Shabbos.' I told him, 'Baruch Hashem for giving you all this!'"

Reb Shimon Sofer *zt'l* explains that wealth comes and goes. As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 151:) says, *גִּלְגַּל הַחֹזֶן בְּעוֹלָם*, "It is a cycle that goes around in the world." Reb Chiya bar Abba was shocked that this man was so wealthy. It looked like his *mazal* was always good; he didn't have ups and downs, and he wanted to know how that occurred.

The wealthy man told him that he honors the Shabbos. Shabbos is his weekly reminder that everything comes from Hashem. Those who honor the Shabbos merit immense wealth because they have constant reminders that everything is from Hashem.

their own, in accordance with the extent of the connection between Hashem and the Jewish nation.¹⁵ Chazal (*Yoma* 54:) say, "When the goyim entered the Kodesh Kadoshim, they found the *keruvim* embracing one another"! The *Rishonim* ask, that at this time of the destruction, when the nation was guilty of the three cardinal aveiros, idolatry, murder, and adultery, the *keruvim* should have been turned away from each other! Why were they facing and embracing one another?

Ohev Yisrael answers that this was the love that preceded the separation.¹⁶

***Tzipisa l'Yeshua* – Waiting for Moshiach**

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31) teaches:

"Rava said that when a person stands for judgment in the heavenly court, they will ask him, "*Tzipisa l'Yeshua*? Did you anticipate and wait for the salvation?" Every person will be asked if he waited for the coming of Moshiach.

During the days of *selichos*, at the end of the year תשל"ה, a tzaddik said to my grandfather, Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l, "Perhaps we will merit that Moshiach will come next year because Reb Isaac of Kamarna zy'a predicted that Moshiach will come in the year תשל"ו."

My grandfather replied, "I'm still waiting for Moshiach to come in the year תשל"ה."

15. Reb Chaim Volozhiner (*Nefesh HaChaim* 1:8) writes, "It is known that one *keruv* represented Hashem and the other the Jewish nation. The degree of closeness and connection between the Jews and Hashem could miraculously be observed by the position of the *keruvim*. When the eyes of the Jewish nation were turned to Hashem, the *keruvim* faced each other. But if the Jewish nation turned slightly to the side, that would immediately be mirrored in the *keruvim*. If *chas veshalom*, they turned away entirely, the *keruvim* would completely turn away from each other."

16. Reb Yonason Eibshitz zt'l answers that the goyim came into the Beis HaMikdash on Shabbos, and on Shabbos, Hashem's love to us is always complete. (We know it was Shabbos because the Yerushalmi (*Taanis* 4:5) says the Babylonians entered the Beis HaMikdash on *rosh chodesh Av* and that Tisha b'Av was on Sunday. So, if Tisha b'Av was Sunday, *rosh chodesh*, the day they entered the Beis HaMikdash was on Shabbos.)

The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 28:2) writes, "The *musaf* of Shabbos doesn't have a *korban chatas* like all other holidays. This is because Kneses Yisrael is like Hashem's spouse, and everything is peaceful."

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l said: Some people think being happy on Shabbos is a *madreigah* for tzaddikim and not applicable to the average person. They say, "What connection does a regular person have with Shabbos?" But if someone is *mechalel* Shabbos, he is חייב מיתה. So, just as he is associated with the severity of desecrating the Shabbos, so too is he connected with the joy of Shabbos.

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

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

Shabbos honors her guests. When the guest is *rosh chodesh* (when rosh chodesh falls on a Shabbos), Shabbos honors her guest and gives the guest the *haftarah* and the *musaf*. When the guest is *yom tov*, Shabbos gives it all the *tefillos*. 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 wait until tomorrow. Shabbos doesn't welcome this guest because Shabbos is a day of joy.

It states, וביום שמחתכם "The day of your happiness," and Chazal (*Sifri* 19) say that this refers to Shabbos. Therefore, rejoice with Shabbos. Eat tasty foods, sing *zemiros*, daven well, and make it a special day. Do this every Shabbos, including the Shabbosim of the Three Weeks, and even on Shabbos Chazon. We should add "especially on Shabbos Chazon," because the Ohev Yisrael calls it the greatest Shabbos of the year.

The first of the Aseres HaDibros is (*Shemos* 20:2), אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים. The Sma'k says that two mitzvos are hinted at in this *pasuk*: (1) to believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim* and (2) to believe in the coming of Moshiach.

אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים is our obligation to believe that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim. אנכי ה' אלקיך, "I am Hashem your G-d" is our obligation to believe that just as He freed us from Mitzrayim, Hashem remains our G-d, and He will free us from the present *galus*.

Rebbe Dovid'l of Tolna *zt'l* once came late to his *tish* and explained that he was late because he had a conversation with Moshiach. Moshiach asked Rebbe Dovid'l for advice, whether he should come immediately to redeem the Jewish nation or wait until all the Yidden were ready. Moshiach explained his question: "If I redeem the Yidden now, some *neshamos* will never be rectified."

Rebbe Dovid of Tolna advised Moshiach to wait until all *neshamos* were ready.

One of the chassidim at Rebbe Dovid's *tish* asked, "Rebbe, isn't it better that Moshiach comes now? Why should we wait for the few *shleppers* and unfortunate souls who aren't yet ready?"

The Tolna Rebbe answered, "You are one of those souls. If Moshiach comes now, you will never be rectified."

People gathered and spoke with the Brisker Rav *zt'l* about the tzaros the Jewish nation was suffering. Someone said, "We need Moshiach to come quickly to save us."

One of the men present whispered, "Moshiach isn't coming so fast."

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

The Brisker Rav showed him a Rambam, "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!"¹⁷

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* notes that the Rambam begins his *sefer* (יד החזקה) with the obligation to believe in Hashem, and he concludes the *sefer* with belief in Moshiach. Between these two beliefs, he writes all the halachos of the Torah. This teaches us that the entire Torah is dependent on these two beliefs.

The Jewish community of Brisk desired that the Beis HaLevi *zt'l* be their Rav, but the

17. There was a city whose residents eagerly awaited the coming of Moshiach. They hired someone to stay awake every night, and if Moshiach arrived in the middle of the night, he would blow a shofar and ring bells to wake everyone up, so they could go out and greet Moshiach.

Once, he saw someone coming late at night and thought it was Moshiach. He blew the shofar and rang the bells, and the entire city woke up. But it soon became clear that it was a *meshulach*, coming to collect funds.

Later that night, the *meshulach* said to the night watchman, "I see you are talented. Come with me, and we will collect money together."

The man replied, "Nothing doing! I am staying at my post! Collecting money will indeed earn me more money than I earn now, but that is a job for a few more years. What will I do when I become older and it becomes hard for me to walk around, from one city to the next? But with the job I have now, I'll have *parnassah* for a very long time!"

This story illustrates how people wait for Moshiach, but deep in their hearts, they don't expect Moshiach to come anytime soon. We must genuinely wait for Moshiach, and in that merit, Moshiach will come speedily in our days.

Beis HaLevi turned down their offer. Representatives from Brisk came to the Beis HaLevi and said, "Twenty-five thousand people live in Brisk, and they all want you to come be their Rav. Will you turn them all down?" Immediately, the Beis HaLevi agreed to accept the position in Brisk.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l said, "The Beis HaLevi didn't want to turn down 25,000 Yidden. If thousands of Yidden yearn for

Moshiach, Moshiach will certainly not turn them down, either."¹⁸

The Tiferes Shlomo (מסעי ד"ה א"י כן מטה השני) writes, "To properly mourn for Yerushalayim, one must think about how much holiness we lack these days, for we don't have a Beis HaMikdash and *kohanim* doing the avodah. We aren't as close to Hashem as we used to be."¹⁹

18. Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l studied in the Ksav Sofer's yeshiva in Pressburg, and he repeated an episode that shows how the simple people of that city sincerely anticipated the coming of Moshiach.

A woman asked her friend, "What did you prepare for lunch today?"

She replied, "*Beblach* (beans)."

"And what are you planning to cook for tomorrow?"

"Sha sha! *Al tiftach peh l'Satan*. [Don't imply that tomorrow will be a regular day]! But if *chas veshalom*, Moshiach doesn't come, I'll cook noodles."

This is how we should all wait for Moshiach. Every day, we should hope this will finally be the greatly anticipated day Moshiach will come.

Waiting for Moshiach is an obligation. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31) teaches: "When a person is brought for judgment [in heaven], they ask him if he waited for Moshiach."

Shaarei Teshuvah (118) writes, "When one says *לישועתך קיינו כל היום* in *Shemonah Esrei*, he should think, 'I am from the people who wait for Moshiach,' because after one's passing, he will be asked whether he waited for Moshiach. 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 can occur every day and every moment. I often found this to be very beneficial...'"

The Midrash tells us, "There was a woman who lost her young son and cried over him every night. Rabban Gamliel heard her cries, which roused him to mourn for the Churban. He cried so much until his eyelashes fell out. When Rabban Gamliel's students discovered what was happening, they arranged for that woman to move out of the neighborhood."

Why did this woman's tears rouse Raban Gamliel to cry for the Churban? Perhaps it is because all *tzaros* result from the Churban Beis HaMikdash. He heard her crying over her son and remembered the source of all her troubles: the Churban Beis HaMikdash.

19. Rebbe Nochum Chernobyler zt'l once stayed at the home of a simple couple. At midnight, Reb Nochum awoke, sat on the ground, and cried and mourned over the Churban Beis HaMikdash, as he would every night. The simple man asked Reb Nochum why he was crying and how he could help. "I am crying over the Churban Beis HaMikdash," Reb Nochum explained to him. "You probably also want Moshiach to come soon and take us back to Yerushalayim."

The simple man replied, "I'm not sure about that. I'll have to ask my wife."

After consulting with his wife, he told Reb Nochum that his wife said they can't go to Yerushalayim because who would take care of their hens and livestock?

Rebbe Nochum told him, "We suffer from the goyim. Wouldn't it be better to leave and go to Yerushalayim?"

The simple Yid said he would need to ask his wife's opinion. He returned and said, "My wife says that

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 personal churban – which is that he is unable to cry and that he doesn't care and cannot associate with the mourning over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash." He should recognize from this how far he is from where he should be.

The Yaavatz zt'l (*Siddur Beis Yaakov*, Tisha b'Av, 6:16) writes, "If this were our only sin, that we aren't mourning sufficiently for Yerushalayim, it would be reason enough to cause the galus to continue. In my opinion, this is the most logical and obvious cause for all the tzaros we encounter in galus. We are constantly suffering from the goyim in every country where Yidden live. It is because the mourning has left our hearts."²⁰

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l (*Yaaras Dvash* vol.1, p.253) writes, "We don't feel the Churban. We are like a fool who doesn't feel his pain. There were tzaddikim who understood well the terrible loss due to the Churban. If we understood how much we are missing, how much perfection we lack, etc., we would lose our appetite for food or drink, and we would roll in the earth in distress."

Building Yerushalayim with Tears

Our mourning and our tears build the Beis HaMikdash.

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

Hashem is building the Third Beis HaMikdash in heaven. The construction materials are our tears and mourning, which Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes and builds with them the third Beis HaMikdash in heaven, brick by brick, stone by stone. When it is completed, it will come down from heaven. Therefore, it states (*Tehillim* 147), בונה ירושלים ה', "Hashem builds Yerushalayim." It is written in the present tense. 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." But the answer is that Hashem is building the Beis HaMikdash now, as Chazal tell us, the third Beis HaMikdash will come down from heaven fully built (see Rashi on Rosh Hashanah 30. ד"ה ל"ז). It is being built by Hashem and will come down when completed. The construction material is our mourning and our 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 Kodosh Kodoshim. Rabban Gamliel, Reb Elazer ben Azaryah, and Reb Yehoshua cried. Reb Akiva laughed.

They asked Reb Akiva, "Why are you laughing?"

He asked, "Why are you crying?"

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

Reb Akiva replied, לכך אני מצחק, "That is precisely why I'm laughing." Reb Akiva explained to them that after he saw the

Hashem should take the goyim, and bring them to Yerushalayim." This demonstrates the problem, that the mourning has left our hearts, and we don't realize what we are missing and how much we need Moshiach.

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

actualization of the prophecies of the destruction, he felt reassured that the prophecies of redemption would transpire.

From Reb Akiva's words, *לכך אני מצחק* it seems that he was laughing *because* they were mourning.

Rebbe Yisrael of Tchortkov *zt'l* explains that he was happy that Yidden were mourning over the Churban because those tears will build the third Beis HaMikdash.

As the Zohar (vol.2 p.12:) tells us, "The redemption of Bnei Yisrael depends solely on crying."

Benefits Earned from the Mourning

Many benefits come from 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 sin because people are very broken. This is why after Tisha b'Av, we feel slightly similar to how we feel after Yom Kippur."

Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* said that in Kelm, they emphasized the word *כל* in the phrase *כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה*, "Everyone who mourns for Yerushalayim merits seeing its joy..." *כל*, everyone, means even those who committed severe aveiros. They, too, will merit to experience the happy days when Moshiach comes. This is because mourning sanctifies and purifies and cleanses from aveiros. Therefore, *כל המתאבל*, everyone who mourns, even the sinners, will merit to experience the joy of the geulah (Beis Kelm, p.396).

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 your children's success in Torah and yiras Shamayim.)

The Kav HaYashar (ch.93) writes, "I received a true kabbalah: Whoever is always

distressed about the galus HaShechinah, he will merit the crown of Torah."

Reb Yehudah of Asad *zt'l* would save the tears that fell from his eyes at Tikun Chatzos and give them to bachurim at risk of being drafted into the army. This segulah helped them (Toldos Shmuel, as told by the testimonies of Reb Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky *zt'l* and others).

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* 20 ד"ה פעם אחת) tells that the nations *פרס* and *מדי* were created and came to the world as a reward for Koresh, because he cried and mourned when the goyim destroyed the Beis HaMikdash. The Chofetz Chaim's *zt'l* made a calculation and found that 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, he cried, and he was rewarded for his tears. How great will be the reward for the Yidden who mourn and weep for Yerushalayim!

Psikta d'Rav Kahana (ch.25) writes that Hashem swears, "Whoever waits for My kingdom [which will be revealed when Moshiach comes] I will testify for him for his benefit."

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 554:25) states, *וכל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה*, "Whoever mourns for Yerushalayim merits seeing its joy." The Meforshim (Sfas Emes, Kedushas Levi, and others) explain that *זוכה ורואה*, "merits and sees," is written in the present tense. This is one of the segulos of mourning. When one mourns for Yerushalayim, he immediately experiences and feels in his heart the joy of the redemption.

At a *chasunah*, we say the *brachah* of *שוש תשיש*, which is a tefillah for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* explains that we want the joy of the *chasunah* to be complete. We do this when we mourn for Yerushalayim. The mourning draws down to us a scent of the future joy of Yerushalayim. This completes the joy of the *chasunah*.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* (Imrei Pinchas 380-381) writes, "On Tisha b'Av, when we sit on the floor and daven, we can accomplish

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."

Connecting to Hashem with Mourning

It states (Divrei HaYamim 1, 16:27), עוז וחדוה במקומו, "Might and joy are in His place." Hashem resides in a place of joy. The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Drashos 7th of Av, 5560, p.307) writes, "Hashem resides with joy, and Chazal say that Hashem doesn't reside in places where there is sadness. Nevertheless, Tisha b'Av is called יום מר, a bitter day. Therefore, it is proper for all the bitter and broken people to cry and mourn on this day when Hashem is also mourning. If they do so, their mourning will go up to a very high place. Although they don't see it, their mazal sees, and they will hear the voice of Hashem crying together with them... Chazal say, 'In every generation, one must consider himself as if he were exiled from Yerushalayim.' This year's mourning shouldn't be the same as last year's or years before it. Each year has its unique set of distress and challenges that we mourn for. This is as it states in the Kinos (#24) על חורבן בית המקדש... אספוד כל שנה מספד חדש, "For the Churban Beis HaMikdash...I will mourn and eulogize each year anew."

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer zt'l (Imrei Pinchas 378, 380) writes, "On this day, keviyachol, Hashem is crying. Therefore, when a person is also at this place [of mourning], he is protected. 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 and be with Hashem is through mourning]."²¹

Surprisingly, Shulchan Aruch (559:4) states, "We don't say *tachanun* or *selichos* on Tisha b'Av because it is called *moed*, a holiday." It states (Eichah 1:15), קרא עלי מועד, that Tisha b'Av is a *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 means a gathering place (like אהל מועד). Yomim tovim are called Moed because on yom tov, we *gather* and *connect* with Hashem through joy. Tisha b'Av is called *moed* because we connect to Hashem through our mourning.

On Tisha b'Av, we read מנילת איכה, and the word איכה is repeated at the beginning of many of its chapters. Furthermore, many of the *kinos* that we say on Tisha b'Av begin with the word איכה. In the Torah, Hashem asks Adam HaRishon, איפה, "Where are you?"

Zera Kodesh (Devarim ד"ה במדרש ג') explains that throughout galus, Hashem asks איפה, "Where are you?" Hashem searches for us, wondering why we are so distant from Him. He searches until He finds us, as it states (Hoshea 9:10) מצאתי ישראל, "I found Yisrael." And when Hashem finds us, He sees that throughout the galus we were also constantly searching for Him. We were always asking, איפה מקום כבודו להעריצו, "Where is Hashem so we can exalt Him?"

Hashem and Bnei Yisrael search for each other until they unite. On Tisha b'Av, we unite through mourning; on yom tov, we connect through joy.

Davening for Mashiach

The Dubno Magid zt'l told the following mashal:

A wealthy person sent his five sons to study Torah overseas. One of them, Reuven, became very ill. The doctors said that only

²¹ The Avodas Yisrael (Avos 3:1) writes, "What a person can rectify on Tisha b'Av, which is a lowly day, he cannot rectify even on Simchas Torah." He tells a mashal of a father who drops diamonds in a garbage and then asks his son to search the trash, to find the diamonds, and to clean them. It is a low time, a difficult period, but the avodah is very precious.

one cure was available, but it was an extremely costly one.

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 because Shimon's eyeglasses broke, and he needs a new pair. Levi's clothes are old and worn, and Yehudah owes 450 dinars, and he needs money to pay the debt. Also, send money for Reuven because he is dangerously ill, and the treatment costs a fortune."

When their father received the letter, he was disappointed. He said, "How did my foolish son confuse the order of this letter? He should have written about Reuven first because that is the most important matter."

The Dubno Magid said that this is how it appears when people daven for many things, and then, as an afterthought, they daven for Moshiach. Davening for Moshiach should be our first and primary tefillah.²²

Tiferes Shlomo (מסעי ד"ה א"י בן משה השני) writes, "A person should contemplate how, due to our many sins, the holy land is under Arab control. This breaks 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 bring the redemption quicker."

22. Reb Shalom Keshenmacher (a chassid of Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zy'a*) had a difficult wife who made his life miserable. He would have divorced her, but his Rebbe was very against divorce. So he held out as long as he could.

However, there came a time when he felt that he couldn't cope any longer, and he divorced her. He understood that after having disobeyed his rebbe, he couldn't return to his rebbe.

Sometime later, Reb Shalom couldn't bear watching his children suffer, so he remarried his wife, and then he returned to his rebbe.

Rebbe Asher Stolin said, "Reb Shalom? What brings you back here?"

"I remarried my wife."

"You did? Why?"

"I couldn't watch my children suffer."

Rebbe Asher exclaimed, "Ribono Shel Olam! Shalom Keshenmacher took back his wife, whom he doesn't like, because he couldn't bear to watch his children suffer. Woe to the children [the Jewish people] who were banished from their Father's table." It was a tefillah that Hashem should bring us back so that we won't suffer any more in galus.

The Divrei Yisrael (Shemos ויצעקו ד"ה א"י) writes, "When a person doesn't have a complete daas (intellect), his primary tefillah is like an infant who can't yet speak. He can only shout 'Father! Father!' This is enough to arouse his father's compassion for his son.

"Similarly, the primary tefillah is to be like an infant child who can't speak at all. He can only call out and say the simple words 'Father! Father!' This will arouse Hashem's immense compassion for us."

Many people feel that they aren't able to concentrate on their tefillos, so they think their tefillos are worthless. They must know that their shouts to Hashem will be answered. Even if all they can do is shout "Tatte!" that is significant. That will arouse Hashem's compassion.

The Mabit (Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah ch.17) writes, "When people of the later generations daven for Moshiach, it is more likely that their tefillos will be answered. Their tefillos have greater potential than the tefillos of generations before them." He explains that the later generations are closer to the time of the geulah, so our tefillos have greater potential to be answered. Furthermore, all tefillos of the past two thousand years are still present, waiting to be answered. Their tefillos join with our tefillos. So, it isn't solely our tefillos but the tefillos of all the generations that come together and go up before Hashem.

Yaaras Dvash (*Drush* 5) teaches that the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because people weren't davening.²³ As it states (*Tehillim* 14:4), "ה' לא קראו", "They didn't pray to Hashem." Another source is the pasuk (*Eichah* 1:2), ודמעתה, על לחיה, "Her tears are on her cheek." This pasuk can also be read, "Her tears are *because* of her cheek." The tears of the Churban came because of the 'cheek,' which represents tefillah (see *Chulin* 134:). This means the bitter Churban was על לחיה because people didn't daven. They didn't daven that the Churban shouldn't occur.

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Yirmiyahu* 327) says that when the Jewish nation was על נהרות בבל, on the banks of the 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 Nevuzaradan, 'Their G-d accepts *teshuvah*. If they pray, Hashem will save them. Therefore, don't let them stop walking [when you lead them

into galus], not even for a moment, so they won't have the peace of mind to call out to Hashem.'" Nevuzaradan followed Nevuchadnezzar's advice, and he didn't let them rest. His soldiers cut off the limbs of anyone who stopped walking.

So, we see that even Nevuchadnezzar *harasha* understood the power of tefillah. Their tefillos could have prevented them from going to galus. Also, the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because Yidden didn't daven. If they had davened, they could have prevented the Churban.

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 (*Tehillim* 94:23), יצמיתם ה' אלקינו, "Hashem will destroy them" (the Babylonians), 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." The Levi'im were up to the words יצמיתם ה' אלקינו, "Hashem will destroy them" (this time, referring to the Romans), and before they could say these words, the goyim seized and destroyed the Beis HaMikdash. It seems that had the Levi'im said יצמיתם ה' אלקינו, "Hashem will destroy them," the two Batei Mikdash wouldn't have been destroyed. Their *tefillos* would have probably prevented the Churban.

The Mesilas Yeshtarim (19) writes, "If a person will ask, who am I, and how am I important, that I should daven for [the gathering of] the *galus* and for Yerushalayim? Could it be that because of my *tefillah*, the *galus* will end, and the redemption will sprout? The answer is, as Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 37:) state, man was created alone, so each person will say, 'The world was created for me.' Hashem has pleasure when His children pray for this matter. Even if the prayers won't be answered (because the time hasn't come yet

23. 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.

or for some other reason), they did their share, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with them. We are obligated to pray, and we shouldn't refrain because we don't have the strength. As Chazal (*Avos* 2) say, לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ואי אתה בן חורין לפטר הימנה, 'You are not obligated to

finish, but you don't have the right to refrain...'"

Everyone must do his share towards bringing Moshiach.²⁴ And when one does whatever he can, Hashem helps him.²⁵

24. Reb Shlomo Karliner's son became a chasan. The kallah was the daughter of Rebbe Reb Boruch'l of Mezhibuzh. Reb Shlomo Karliner promised a large dowry – five hundred rubles – and he immediately began saving up. But people were also coming to his door with requests for tzedakah. The money ended up going to tzedakah, and he didn't have any money for the dowry.

His gabbaim decided to get involved. The next time Rebbe Shlomo had a significant amount of money, the gabbaim took it and said they would return it to him when they were traveling to Mezhibuzh for the chasunah.

As they were traveling to the chasunah, Rebbe Shlomo Karliner heard that near where they were, Rebbe Nochum Chernobyler zt'l was in prison. Rebbe Shlomo Karliner went there, bribed the prison guard with one hundred rubles (from the five hundred he had for the dowry) to let him enter, and allow him to speak with Rebbe Nochum Chernobyler.

When Rebbe Shlomo was about to leave the jail, he asked the guard, "How much longer will you be holding Rebbe Nochum here?"

The guard said that in a few days, they will free him from prison.

Rebbe Shlomo gave him the remaining four hundred rubles and immediately freed Rebbe Nochum from prison.

They continued to the chasunah, now without any money. Regardless, the chasunah and the week of sheva brachos passed with peace and joy. When Rebbe Shlomo Karliner was about to return home, his son said, "Father, don't leave me. I am afraid that my father-in-law will ask me for the dowry, and what will I do then?"

His father replied, "Don't worry. If the mechuten, Rebbe Boruch'l, asks you for the money, just go to a corner, and shout 'Oy Tatte' and I will take care of you." (He meant that, from a distance, he would hear his son's call and help him.)

Days passed, and Rebbe Boruch'l didn't ask for the money.

One day, on erev Shabbos, Rebbe Boruch'l was saying Shir HaShirim, and he was repeating several times the pasuk (1:13) צָרוּר הַמָּוֶה דָּוִד לִי, with hislahavus. The young chasan thought that his *shver* was hinting that he wanted the money for the dowry. He thought he was saying, צָרוּר, the package of money, דָּוִד לִי, that my friend, my *mechuten*, owes me...

The chasan quickly went to a private place and shouted, "Oy Tatte".

When Rebbe Boruch'l finished Shir HaShirim, he said to his son-in-law, "Today's yungerleit... Something small happens, and they immediately go running to their father."

Let us learn from this story a lesson regarding tefillah. The Midrash (Tanchuma, 1) states, "When Moshe saw that the Beis HaMikdash would be destroyed... he established that Bnei Yisrael should daven three times each day. Tefillah is more precious to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than all good deeds and korbanos." However, a person may feel that he isn't able to concentrate on the tefillah. Whenever he davens, his mind flies away to a thousand places, and he can't focus. The story above is encouraging. Rebbe Shlomo Karliner heard his son's call "Oy Tatte", and he immediately came (in a spiritual manner) to Rebbe Boruch'l, to help his son. The lesson is that as long as the Beis HaMikdash stood, we received all our needs from Hashem, even without asking for them. But when the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, r'l, we need tefillah. It is very hard for us

The Gemara (*Gittin* 56) tells that Bar Kamtza told the Roman king that the Jewish nation was rebelling against him. To prove it, he advised the king to send a cow to be used as a korban and to see whether the Jews accepted it.

Bar Kamtza blemished the animal, disqualifying it for a korban. The chachamim in the Beis HaMikdash wanted to sacrifice the king's korban despite the *mum* (blemish). They said that they should bring the korban for the sake of peace so that the king wouldn't be angry with them. But Reb Zecharyah ben Avkulas argued that they shouldn't sacrifice

it because "people will think that a korban with a *mum* could be brought as a korban."

The chachamim came up with plan B: They would kill Bar Kamtza so he wouldn't be able to return and tell the Roman king that they didn't bring the korban. Once again, Reb Zecharyah advised against it. He explained, "People will think that whoever brings a korban with a *mum* is killed."

The chachamim accepted his views. The korban wasn't sacrificed, and Bar Kamtza survived. He reported back to the king, resulting in the Churban Beis HaMikdash.²⁶

to focus on tefillah, but even the simplest tefillah of "Oy Tatte!" – and even if it is said without kavanah – that will suffice, and Hashem will immediately take care of all our needs.

In kedushah (*Keser*) we say, הן גאלתי אתכם אחרית כראשית "I will redeem you in the end, as I redeemed you at the beginning." The Yismach Yisrael (*Shemos* #2) writes, quoting his father, Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander zt'l, "In Mitzrayim, they couldn't even speak. All they could do was shout 'Oy! Oy!' (see *Shemos* 2:23) and this shout is extremely precious in heaven..." This is how it will be at the final redemption. We don't have the strength to focus on our tefillah, but we can shout "Oy Tatte!" and Hashem will save us and send us Moshiach tzidkeinu.

25. The Gemara (*Yoma* 38.) says:

"Nikanor sailed to Alexandria, Egypt, to bring copper doors [for the eastern gate of the Beis HaMikdash's courtyard]. During his return trip, a storm threatened to drown them. People took one of the doors and threw it into the sea, but the ship still threatened to capsize. They wanted to throw the other door into the water, but Nikanor stood up, wrapped his arms around it, and said, 'If you will throw this door into the sea, throw me in with it.' Immediately, the sea calmed down.

Nikanor was upset that one door was thrown into the sea. However, when they docked at Acco, Eretz Yisrael, he saw that lo and behold, the other door was there, bobbing up and down beside the ship."

Obviously, the Beis HaMikdash couldn't use one door without the other. So why was Nikanor moser nefesh to bring only one door to the Beis HaMikdash? The answer is that he did what he could, and then Hashem helped him.

When my father was a child, he and all of his brothers and sisters would prepare water near their beds so they could wash negel vasser upon awakening in the morning. One evening, there was no running water, so the children went to sleep without preparing water near their beds. In the morning, my grandfather (Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l) admonished them, "You should have at least placed empty cups near your bed."

A person must do whatever he can, and Hashem will help him do the rest. Similarly, in regard to praying for Moshiach, each person should feel responsible and do what he can. And then Hashem will help us succeed.

26. The Gemara (*Gittin* 55) relates that someone made a seudah, and accidentally his servant invited Bar Kamtza, instead of Kamtza. When the host noticed him dining at his celebration, he thought, "I wanted to invite Kamtza, my friend. I hate Bar Kamtza. I don't want him here."

The host asked Bar Kamtza to leave. Bar Kamtza pleaded to be allowed to stay. He even offered to pay him for the entire meal, but the host sent him out of the hall, and Bar Kamtza was very embarrassed. Bar

Kamtza said, "There were rabbanim present at the meal. Why didn't they speak up in my defense? Apparently, they also feel that I should be treated that way! I will slander them to the king."

The Gemara (Gitten 57) notes, בא וראה כמה גדולה כחה של בושה שהרי סייע הקב"ה את בר קמצא והחריב את ביתו ושרף את היכלו, "Come and learn [from this story] the power of shame. Hakadosh Baruch Hu helped Bar Kamtza, and He destroyed His house [the Beis HaMikdash]..." all because of the shame that Bar Kamtza endured.

Let this be a lesson to be cautious with the honor of our fellow man. The Gemara connects this episode to the pasuk (Mishlei 28:14) מִפֶּחַד אָדָם אִדְּם מִפֶּחַד תָּמִיד וּמִקְשָׁה לְבוֹ יִפּוֹל בְּרָעָה, "Fortunate is the man who is always afraid, but he who hardens his heart will fall into evil." Rashi explains, מִפֶּחַד תָּמִיד, "He is aware and fears the consequences of his actions and therefore distances himself from aveiros."

Here are some stories about gedolim who were meticulous not to cause shame to their fellow man:

Reb Seroya Deblisky *zt'l* came to the Chazon Ish *zt'l* and said that he wanted to be *matir neder*, to annul a vow. There was another Yid in the room, speaking Torah with the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish said, "We're two. Go outside and bring in a third person." Soon, Reb Deblinsky returned with an unlearned person whose religious standard was questionable. The Chazon Ish, with his two guests, annulled the vow.

When the unlearned man left the house, the Chazon Ish said, "Go outside and bring in someone else to be *matir neder*. That man wasn't kosher for the *beis din*."

The Chazon Ish was cautious not to say this earlier, in order not to embarrass the man. Reb Deblinsky learned from this episode how careful we must be not to hurt our fellow man.

At a *hachnasas sefer Torah* celebration, the owner of the new *sefer Torah* honored the Tchebiner Rav to write a letter in the *sefer Torah*. The Tchebiner Rav said, "I don't want to write the letter myself. I'd rather appoint the *sofer* to be my *shaliach* to write a letter for me."

Everyone in the room followed the Tchebiner Rav's lead, asking the *sofer* to write the letters for them.

The Tchebiner Rav later explained that one of the people who came to the *hachnasas sefer Torah* was halachically unfit to write a letter in the *sefer Torah*. So the Tchebiner Rav appointed the *sofer* to be his *shaliach* to write the letter, and this caused everyone present to do the same. In that manner, the *sefer Torah* was written according to halachah without having to embarrass another Yid.

I remember one Rosh Hashanah, in my father's *beis medresh*, the *baal tokeyah* said the *brachos* on the shofar, tried to blow it, but no sound came forth. He kept trying, but to no avail. My father motioned that he wanted the shofar. My father tried blowing the shofar, but he too, couldn't get out a single sound. Then my father gave the shofar to a third person, who blew the shofar well.

I knew that my father didn't know how to blow the shofar, so after the davening, I asked him why he tried to blow. My father replied, "I didn't want the *baal tokeyah* to be embarrassed. If I had given the shofar right away to someone who knows how to blow it, the *baal tokeyah* would be ashamed. Everyone would see that the shofar blows well, and the *baal tokeyah* was the problem. So I also tried to blow the shofar, and failed, and thereby, his shame was less."

Chazal (Gitten 55:) say, אַקְמָצָא וְבַר קָמְצָא חָרִיב יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, "Yerushalayim was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza." We understand the connection between the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and Bar Kamtza. He slandered the Jewish nation and roused the wrath of the Roman emperor. But how did Kamtza cause the Churban?

The Maharsha writes that perhaps Kamtza was the father of Bar Kamtza.

Following this approach, we can explain that Kamtza, the father, also bears responsibility for the Churban. This is because Kamtza never trained Bar Kamtza to avoid machlokes. Had he trained his son to pursue peace, to forgive and forget, and to remain silent during a machlokes and when humiliated, Bar Kamtza would have reacted very differently when he was offended. So Kamtza is also to blame for the Churban.

Yirmiyahu HaNavi advised Tzidkiyahu HaMelech to make a peace treaty with the king of Bavel. Yirmiyahu told him (Yirmiyahu 38: 17-18), "Hashem said, if you go out to the officers of the king of Bavel [to make peace with them], the city [Yerushalayim] will not be burned, and you and your family will live. But if you do

The Gemara concludes, "Reb Zecharyah ben Avkulas's humility destroyed our house, burned the *heichal*, and exiled us from our land."

The Meor Einayim (*Gittin*) asks:

1) Was it Reb Zecharyah ben Avkulas's humility that caused the destruction? It seems that it was his excessive caution in halachah that caused the Churban.

2) It is permitted to transgress most *halachos* of the Torah to save a Jew's life. So why didn't they offer the *korban* with the *mum* or kill Bar Kamtza to save the Jewish nation?

The Meor Einayim answers that Reb Zecharyah ben Avkulas was the *gadol hador*. This is obvious from the Gemara, because all the scholars accepted his ruling. Being a *gadol hador*, he also had *ruach hakodesh*. With his *ruach hakodesh*, he knew that the Churban was imminent and that nothing could be done to change that decree. This is the reason Reb Zecharyah didn't allow them to sacrifice the *korban* with the *mum*, and he didn't allow them to kill Bar Kamtza. Logically, it made sense to do one of these options, to protect the Jewish nation from the king's wrath, but he knew with his *ruach hakodesh* that the Churban was decreed and finalized in heaven, and couldn't be avoided. So, even if they brought the *korban*, and even if they killed Bar Kamtza, the Churban would occur regardless. He therefore decided that we should at least preserve the *halachos* of the Torah.

Reb Zecharyah didn't tell the *chachamim* that he had *ruach hakodesh*, and he didn't tell them that his *halachos* are based on his awareness that the Churban was imminent.

But why didn't he? He should have told them, "You're right, it's *pikuach nefesh*, and we should do whatever we can to avoid the king's wrath, but I know with my *ruach hakodesh* that it anyway won't help. The Churban will occur no matter what we do. Therefore, let us at least preserve the *halachos*." Why didn't Reb Zecharyah tell them this?

This was because of Reb Zecharyah's humility. He didn't want to reveal to them that he had *ruach hakodesh*.

The Meor Einayim writes, "This is the meaning of ענותנותו של רבי זכריה בן אבקיילוס החריבה, 'The humility of Reb Zecharyah ben Avkulas destroyed...' If it weren't for his humility, he would have told them about the Churban, they would have davened, done *teshuvah*, beseeched Hashem to have compassion on them, and the decree would be rescinded. Thus, it was Reb Zecharyah's humility that caused the destruction."

For our purposes, we see from this another source that the Churban could have been prevented with *tefillos*. *Teshuvah* and *tefillah* are always effective. They would have prevented the Churban.

Following a slightly different approach, we can explain that Reb Zecharyah didn't believe *he* had the power of *tefillah*. He also didn't believe that others have the power of *tefillah*, which is the reason he didn't feel it was necessary to tell them about the upcoming Churban. This is an example of a negative form of humility. It is when one doesn't believe in his strengths. This misplaced humility resulted in the Churban.

The *haftarah* of Tisha b'Av describes the Churban. Among the descriptions is (Yirmiyahu

not go to them, this city will be conquered... They will burn it in fire, and you will not survive."

The Rebbe of Kamarna *zy'a* asks, since the decree for the destruction of Yerushalayim was already sealed in heaven, how could Tzidkiyahu's going out to the officers of Bavel help?

The answer is that humility has the power to annul harsh decrees. If Tzidkiyahu had surrendered humbly, it would have protected Klal Yisrael, and the Beis HaMikdash would have been spared.

8:13) אין ענבים בגפן ואין תאנים בתאנה "There are no grapes on the vines, there are no figs on the fig tree." Why is this mentioned? Lacking fruit seems trite and trivial when we discuss the Churban.²⁷

The *pasuk* says that since after the Churban, even fruit won't grow without *tefillah*. When Shlomo was king, it was (*Malachim* 5:5), איש תחת גפנו ואיש תחת תאנתו, "Each man under his grapevine and under his fig tree." Because of the *korbanos*, there was much bounty, and everyone had grapes, figs, and all their needs. But now, after the Churban, everything comes solely through *tefillah*.

The Rokeach writes, "From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, Hakadosh

Baruch Hu doesn't give kindness to Bnei Yisrael without *tefillah*. "The Chofetz Chaim (*Likutei Amorim* 10) writes, "All the many *tzaros* that befall us in *galus* are because we aren't shouting out to Hashem with our prayers. If we daven, our *tefillos* will be answered."

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 38:4) states, "When your forefathers were slaves in Mitzrayim, didn't I save them when they davened to Me? Therefore, be cautious with *tefillah* because there is nothing greater than *tefillah*. It is greater than all the *korbanos*. Even if a person isn't worthy that I should do *chesed* with him, if he prays a lot, I will do *chesed* with him."²⁸

We should daven for the *geulah*, and very soon, the redemption will come.²⁹

27. A Holocaust survivor told the story of his survival. He related how he jumped out of a speeding train headed to the camps.

Someone listening to the story asked him, "Was it a hot or cold day?"

The survivor replied, "I see you don't understand. My life was saved! What difference does it make whether it was hot or cold? I was saved!"

When one's life is at stake, the subject of the weather is irrelevant. Similarly, when we discuss the Churban, it seems irrelevant to mention that there were no fruits on the trees.

28. A granddaughter of Reb Hillel Kalimaya *zt'l* survived the Holocaust. She said that on Tisha b'Av, in Auschwitz, the Nazis forced them to sit on sharp stones and to listen to a musical concert. They did this to break their spirit, robbing them of the opportunity to mourn on Tisha b'Av. This woman was upset by the *chilul Hashem*. She prayed, "Hashem, please answer my *tefillah*, not in my honor nor the honor of Your nation. Answer me for Your honor, which the goyim are desecrating. I pray that it should begin to rain and pour."

The skies were clear that day, but shortly after her *tefillah*, dark clouds rolled in, and it began to pour. The musicians ran for cover, and everybody returned to their barracks.

She said that this episode gave her much *chizuk*. She saw that Hashem listened to her *tefillos* even in Auschwitz.

29. Reb Dovid Friedlander *zt'l* (brother of the Tal Chaim of Liska *zt'l*) was a talmid of the Maharam Shik, a talmid chacham, and an askan during the difficult time when the Hungarian *kehillos* separated. From time to time, Reb Dovid would visit the Kaiser, Franz Yosef, and he had an influence on him.

Once, the Kaiser said to Reb Dovid, "I concluded that the Jews aren't loyal to my kingdom. I work hard to make life comfortable for the Jewish people who live here, but at every prayer, you request to return to Yerushalayim. This is a sign of disloyalty. Isn't it good for you to be here, in my kingdom?"

Reb Dovid understood that the maskilim probably spoke with the Kaiser, trying to put them in a bad light. He thought to himself how to respond, in a way that would appease the Kaiser. Hashem helped him, and he came up with the following idea. He said to the Kaiser, "I will explain it to you with a parable: There was a great king who needed a large sum of money, so he borrowed money from another king, and he

Sinas Chinam

The two Batei Mikdash were destroyed because of aveiros, but the aveiros of these two eras weren't the same. The primary aveiros of the first Beis HaMikdash were avodah zarah, giluy arayos, and shefichas damim. The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of sinas chinam.

There was another difference between the aveiros of these two eras.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 9) states that one of the differences is that "the first Beis HaMikdash, their aveiros were revealed, and therefore, the date when the *galus* would end was revealed to them. During the second Beis HaMikdash, their sins weren't revealed, and therefore, the end of the *galus* was not revealed."

Rashi explains that by the first Beis HaMikdash, people were transparent; they didn't conceal their true selves. Everyone knew who was a tzaddik and who was a *rasha*. They were "revealed," and therefore, it was revealed to them that after seventy years, they would return to Eretz Yisrael (see *Yirmiyahu* 29:10). But by the second Beis HaMikdash, there were *resha'im* who pretended to be tzaddikim. No one knew who was a true tzaddik and who wasn't. They were concealed. Therefore, the end of the *galus* was concealed from them, and they weren't told when Moshiach will come.

Rebbe Yonason Eibshitz *zy'a* (*Yaaras Dovash* 7) has another explanation for this Gemara. "During the first Beis HaMikdash, their sins were revealed." This means the nation knew the reason they were being sent into exile, and the reason for the Churban. The *navi*

gave the king one of his crowns as collateral. Some time passed, and the king wanted to know what was happening with his crown. He went to visit the king who lent him the money, and he saw that his crown was being kept between the wheels of his chariot. The king was distraught that his crown was being treated in this disrespectful manner. It was a disgrace to him, and a disgrace to his kingdom. So he quickly scraped together the money needed to pay up the loan. He got his crown back, and now he had to find another king who was willing to lend him money. He found such a king, and he gave him his crown as collateral. He hoped that this second king would have more respect for the crown.

Some time passed, and he went to the king so he could see what he was doing with his crown. He was glad when he saw that the crown was kept together with other treasures of this king, and he heard that this king enjoyed looking at its beauty.

The king was happy that his crown was being treated correctly. With all his soul, he wanted to pay up the debt and get his crown back, but at least he knew that the crown was in an honorable place.

Reb Dovid said to the Kaiser, "My master and king, Hashem's crown is the Jewish nation. Due to our sins, Hashem had to send us to galus, but Hashem wants that also in galus, the crown should be respected. He looks down from heaven to see who is honoring Hashem's crown, and that is the best place for his crown to be, until the crown is redeemed.

"Hashem brought us to your kingdom because you are a kind king. You deal kindly with Hashem's people, and Hashem is happy for every day that we are in your hands. Obviously, we must pray that Hashem return us to Yerushalayim, because the primary place for the King's crown is in the King's palace, in Yerushalayim. But as long as we are in galus, your country is the best place for us to be in because you honor us – the King's crown."

The Kaiser cried emotionally when he heard this.

We are Hashem's crown, and Hashem's crown needs to be treated with the proper respect. Otherwise, Hashem will have immense tzaar. Therefore, we must pray, א-ל הַבִּיטָה דֶּל כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּגוֹיִם, עד מתי עוֹךְ בְּשָׁבִי, "Hashem, we are Your crown. See how the goyim are mocking us. Come and see what they are doing to Your crown, and save us, speedily, in our days."

revealed to the nation that they were being punished for *avodah zarah*, *giluy arayos*, and *shefichus damim* (as it states in Navi). The Jewish nation knew what their sins were, so they knew how to improve. Therefore, it didn't take them long to improve their ways. Seventy years later, they returned to Eretz Yisrael.

However, "In the second Beis HaMikdash, their sins weren't revealed." There were no *nevi'im* during that era to tell them the cause of their punishment. Although the *chachamim* told them that the destruction was caused by *sinas chinam*, it was hard for the people to accept that because *sinas chinam* doesn't seem to be such a severe aveira. They didn't

know the reason for their punishment, so it was harder for them to do *teshuvah*. Therefore, "the end of the *galus* was not revealed." Without our *teshuvah*, we are still in *galus*, after almost two thousand years.

It is still hard for us to recognize the severity of *sinas chinam*, which is the reason nearly two thousand years have passed, and we haven't yet been redeemed.³⁰

The Chofetz Chaim explains that *sinas chinam*, alone, wouldn't destroy the Beis HaMikdash. When the Gemara says the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam* it refers to the grave aveirah of *lashon hara* (a byproduct of *sinas chinam*). It was *lashon hara* that destroyed the Beis HaMikdash.³¹ Chazal

30. The fifth of Av is the yahrtzeit of the Arizal, and he very much encouraged ahavas Yisrael. Before one davens, the Arizal said that one should accept on himself the mitzvah of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, to love his fellow man as himself.

Towards the end of the Arizal's short life, the Arizal created a *hesger*, an exclusive compound in Tzfas for his ten primary students, where he taught them the secrets of the Torah. He warned them to be very cautious to avoid *machlokes*.

But one Friday, two women got into a fight about something, and then their husbands got involved. Their shouts were heard from a distance.

Before Shabbos, the Arizal, with his students, walked out of Tzfas to be *mekabel* Shabbos in the fields (as was their weekly custom). The Arizal was usually extremely happy at this time, but this week, he appeared sad. Reb Chaim Vital zt'l asked him why, and the Arizal replied, "I heard the *samach mem* (Satan) say, *גם אתם*, 'Also you and your king will die' (*Shmuel* 12:25), and I understand this to mean that I am going to die together with some of my students. And it's all because of the *machlokes* that occurred today. As long as there was peace among you, the Satan couldn't enter our secluded compound."

Less than a week later, on the fifth of Av, the Arizal and five of his students were *niftar*.

It states in this week's *parashah* (1:12), *אִיכָה אֵשָׁא לְבָדִי טַרְחַכֶּם מִשְׁאֲכֶם וְרִיבֶכֶם*. The Imrei Noam explains, *אִיכָה*, Moshe told the nation that for matters related to the Churban and redemption, *אֵשָׁא לְבָדִי*, I will take full responsibility. I will arrange that the *geulah* will come. Your job is *טַרְחַכֶּם מִשְׁאֲכֶם וְרִיבֶכֶם*, to avoid *sinas chinam*.

Also, in this week's *parashah*, the *trop* over the words *אֶחָדֵינוּ הִמָּסוּ לְבָבֵנוּ* (*Devarim* 1:28) are *אֶחָדֵינוּ* and *וְאֶחָדֵינוּ*. The Beis Aharon zy'a explains: If there is a *תְּלִישָׁה קְטָנָה*, a minor breach, *אֶחָדֵינוּ*, in the friendship, *קְדָמָה וְאֶחָדֵינוּ*, the dispute will grow greater and larger, and *הִמָּסוּ לְבָבֵנוּ*, our hearts melt. Therefore, the solution is to avoid even the smallest conflict.

31. Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l teaches the following: Fish are caught in two ways, either in a net or with a hook. When caught in a net, the fish know that they've been captured. But when a hook catches them, they think they are still free and that only their mouth has a problem.

The *nimshal* refers to the two ways the *yetzer hara* catches people. There are times when the *yetzer hara* snares people into his net. The people in his net know that they've been caught. But there are times when the person thinks he is free; he believes that he only has a problem with his mouth (because he isn't careful not to speak *lashon hara*). He doesn't realize that he is also trapped and captured by the *yetzer hara*. *Lashon hara* might seem minor to you, but if you are caught, you are in the hands of the *yetzer hara*.

(Eiruchin 15:) say that *lashon hara* is just as severe as the three cardinal sins, עבודה זרה, גלוי עריות, ושפיכות דמים, idol worship, adultery, and murder.

The Kli Yakar (*Shemos* 3:2) writes, "The primary reason for the *galus* is their hatred and jealousy. In this regard, the Jewish nation is worse than all other nations. They speak *lashon hara*..."³²

Ahavas Chinam

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l chose one middah to work on, and he toiled for at least twenty-five years to acquire perfection in that particular *middah*. His students asked him why he focused so much on that *middah*. He replied, (a) Perfection in one *middah*, alone, greatly purifies a person. (b) When one attains excellence in one *middah*, he automatically attains perfection in all other good *middos*.

All good *middos* are connected. Therefore, tzaddikim would focus on perfecting a single character trait, and automatically, they attained excellence in all other good *middos*.

A hint to this concept is the Chazal (Midrash, *Mishlei* 1) "If one keeps one mitzvah perfectly, it is like he kept all 613 mitzvos." This is because all mitzvos and all good *middos* are connected. Perfection in one area generates perfection in all aspects of *avodas Hashem*.

For seventeen years, the Chidushei HaRim zt'l toiled with all his strength to attain an עין טובה, a good eye. He succeeded. He said that no one ever acquired this trait as perfectly as he did.

One aspect of עין טובה is to see only the good in others. When the Chidushei HaRim zt'l became a chassidic Rebbe, he had to see the faults in people (to help them improve). This bothered him immensely.

The Chidushei HaRim writes, "During [the Three Weeks], one must eradicate *sinas chinam* and all aspects of a bad eye. Even if he doesn't look down at anyone, if he doesn't focus on their good, that, too, can be called *sinas chinam*... With a good eye, the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt."³³

32. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l came to a city, and after the tefillah, the people of the city wanted to honor him with a l'chaim, but he refused to drink. He said that *lashon hara* was spoken in the beis medresh, and this resulted with a murder, because a goy murdered a Yid, r'l. Later, they heard that a goy had stabbed a Yid in their city (heard from the Rebbe of Narol zt'l). Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l said, "When a Yid stabs (שטעכט) his fellow man in a beis medresh by speaking *lashon hara* on him, this results in a goy who stabs a Yid."

One Yom Kippur night, shortly after the Holocaust, the Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l said the following *dvar Torah*: (*Devarim* 32:18-19) צור ילדך תשי, people forget all the kindness that Hashem does for them, א"ל מחוללך, and Hashem forgives them for that (from the word מחולל). However, וירא ה' וינאץ, "Hashem becomes angry and doesn't forgive, מכעס בניו ובנותיו, when someone harms His children."

33. The Shem MiShmuel (*Behaloscha* תר"ע ד"ה ולכפר) writes, "The attribute of a good eye purifies a person [from all his sins]."

One year, on Tisha b'Av, Reb Refael of Barshid zt'l was busy helping a couple restore their shalom bayis. People asked Reb Refael, "Is this the right time for this? Can't you take care of this after Tisha b'Av?"

Reb Rafael replied, "On the contrary, Tisha b'Av is the best time to restore shalom bayis. The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*, so shalom will rebuild the Beis HaMikdash."

One woman devotedly cared for her ill husband for several years. Reb Meir Brandsdorfer zt'l (a renowned dayan from Yerushalayim) would call her occasionally to give her *chizuk*.

One erev Shabbos he asked her, "Do people help you, or is everything on your shoulders?"

Shulchan Aruch (554:20) states, אין שאלת שלום, להכבירו בתשעה באב, "One mustn't greet his friend on Tisha b'Av." Why not? The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*. It seems that Tisha b'Av is the ideal time to greet one's fellow man and increase love and peace.

To answer, we quote the following Gemara (*Gittin* 58.):

"There was an apprenticed carpenter whose eyes desired his boss's wife. Once, his

boss (the carpenter) needed a loan. The apprentice said, 'Send your wife to me, and I will give her the money.'

The apprentice detained her in his home for three days. The carpenter came and asked, "Where is my wife?"

"I gave her the money and sent her back right away. But I heard that some youth defiled her on the way."

"What should I do?"

She told him that kind people help her.

Reb Meir said, "Do me a favor. When you light *Shabbos lecht*, tell Hakadosh Baruch Hu about the people who help you because there is nothing more beloved to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than when people say good things about His children."

In 1940/ש"ת, Reb Shaul Yedidiah of Modzitz zt'l fled from Modzitz to Vilna to escape the war. On Shabbos, he led a *tisch*, and the Litvishe people in the area came in to listen to the Rebbe's beautiful, trademark singing. When the Rebbe handed out *shirayim*, it seemed strange to them. They had never seen this custom before. The Rebbe said, "Don't make fun of this custom. If more people would practice it, there wouldn't be this war."

The Rebbe explained, "*Shirayim* means that even when a plate of food is before you, you don't keep it all for yourself. You give away from your own so others will have. If people would practice this, this war wouldn't happen."

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* 28) writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells Bnei Yisrael, 'My beloved children...what do I ask from you? Only that you should love one another and honor one another.'"

The following story is an example of *mesirus nefesh* for the mitzvah of *ahavas Yisrael* and the benefits that can be earned from it. I heard the story from the *baal hamaasah*, a respected rav in America who is involved in *kiruv rechokim*.

One day, his wife told him that she wanted to donate a kidney to help someone on dialysis. Her husband tried discouraging her, but she insisted she wanted this *zechus*.

They went to the Skverer Rebbe *shlita* and sought his counsel.

The Rebbe told the husband to respect his wife's wishes because it is a great mitzvah.

The husband asked the Rebbe, "The sick patient needs the kidney as quickly as possible, but our child's *chasunah* is coming up soon. Should we do the surgery now or wait until after the *chasunah*?"

The Rebbe told them that if the doctor says she will recover in time for the *chasunah*, she should proceed with the surgery now.

They consulted with the doctor, and he agreed to speed up the prep stages and do the transplant as quickly as possible so that the mother would be back on her feet in time for her child's *chasunah*.

The doctors began with the standard battery of tests to confirm that she was a healthy donor candidate. During one of the tests, they discovered that she had a tumor right beneath one of her kidneys, pressing on a primary artery that sends blood to the heart. Had the tumor gone undetected, it could have blocked the blood circulation.

She thought she was saving another person's life, but she saved her own. Because of her *ahavas Yisrael*, her life was saved.

"I suggest you divorce her."

"But her *kesubah* is very large, and it will cost me a lot of money to divorce her."

"I'll lend you the money."

The carpenter borrowed the money and divorced his wife. Then, the apprentice married her.

When the loan was due, the carpenter could not pay his debt, so the apprentice said, 'Work for me, and you will pay off your debt with your work.'

"The apprentice and his new wife ate while the carpenter served them. As he poured them drinks, his tears fell into their cups. That is when the decree for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash was sealed in heaven."

The Yaavatz (Reb Yaakov Emdin zt'l) notes that the apprentice married the carpenter's wife solely after she was divorced, so he didn't transgress an actual aveirah. Yet, because of his deeds, the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed. "From this, we learn that there are aveiros that aren't written explicitly, yet they are extremely grave and despised by Hashem. They are worse than cardinal sins."

An example of this concept is the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 30:), which states, "Yerushalayim

was destroyed because they ruled by the laws of the Torah."

The Gemara asks, "Which laws should they follow, if not the laws of the Torah?"

The Gemara responds, "The [problem was they] followed the laws literally and never went beyond the letter of the law." They failed to consider the spirit of the law as well. They only focused on what is explicitly prohibited or permitted, and that isn't sufficient. A person can commit terrible aveiros, r'l, and it isn't an excuse that the aveirah isn't written explicitly in the Torah.

Now, let's return to our question. For the sake of increasing peace, why don't we greet people on Tisha b'Av?

The answer is that on Tisha b'Av, we seek true peace, not lip service. Throughout the year, people smile at their fellow man and greet one another, but they don't necessarily care about them in their hearts. On Tisha b'Av, we take a break from the mechanical manner with which we are accustomed to greeting our fellow man. It is time to reassess and to strive to reach a higher level of *ahavas Yisrael*. We want to go beyond the letter of the law, beyond what's commonly expected, and to develop genuine peace and love among Yidden.³⁴

34. Year תשכ"ז, there was a war in Eretz Yisrael, and many people came to the basement, dining room of the Mir Yeshiva, because it was also a bomb shelter. The bomb shelter provided some amount of protection, but they were still afraid, and they davened for salvation. After the war ended, they went up to the roof and they found three bombs there. They fell directly on the building, but they didn't explode.

The rosh yeshiva, Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l, said to the bachurim of the yeshiva, "Dear bachurim, don't think that bombs didn't explode in your merit... I will tell you in who's merit the bombs didn't detonate. There is a woman who has been an agunah for some years. Her husband cruelly left her, and she suffers from poverty, hunger, and the responsibility of caring for the children is entirely upon her. She was in the Mir bomb shelter, and I heard her say, "Ribono Shel Olam, if I will call my husband to be judged before You for what he did to me, I know that I will come out in the right. But let us make an agreement. I will forgive my husband for all the tzaar and heartache he caused me, and You should forgive everyone in this holy community, that they be saved from the war and all its dangers." Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz said emphatically, "In her merit, we were saved in this war!"

Reb Yitzchak Zilberstein Shlita added that this agunah was niftar just recently (now, it is about a year ago). She lived up to the age of 110 years. All of her children and descendants are going in the path of the Torah. (She has a son, seventy years old, who learns in Kollel Chazon Ish.) Reb Zilberstein said that it is a mitzvah to publicize this end to the story, so it will be known the immense reward that comes to those who forgive and are *mevater*.

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