

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Shlita*

Devarim - T"B



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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Devarim - T" B

<i>Emunah</i>	4
Benefits of <i>Yesurim</i>	5
The <i>Yesurim</i> of the Churban was for our Benefit	7
<i>Yesurim</i> Prepare us for the Next World.....	8
<i>Yesurim</i> are Not the End of the World	9
Everything is from Hashem	11
<i>Hishtadlus</i>	12
<i>Chumash Devarim</i>	14
<i>Shabbos Chazon</i>	15
Waiting and Mourning	17
Building Yerushalayim with Tears.....	19
Benefits of Mourning	20
Mourning and Joy.....	21
Daven for Mashiach	22
<i>Sinas Chinam</i>	27
A Good Eye and <i>Ahavas Chinam</i>	28

Torah Wellsprings - Devarim - T"V

Emunah

Moshe Rabbeinu says in this week's *parashah* (3:15) וּלְמַכִּיר נָתַתִּי אֶת הַגִּלְעָד "To the family of Machir [the son of Menashe] I gave the Gilaad [as an inheritance]."

This pasuk can be explained in two ways (בדרך רמז):

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zy'a advised his chassidim not to study the Arizal's *sefarim* before they merit *giluy Eliyahu*. Years later, some people saw the Ruzhiner Rebbe's grandson, the Husiatener Rebbe zy'a, studying the Arizal's *sefarim*. They assumed he merited to see Eliyahu HaNavi because his grandfather said one must see Eliyahu before learning these *sefarim*!

But the Husiatener 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, וְאַתָּה מוֹשֵׁל בְּכָל, that Hashem rules over everything is worthy of learning kabbalah."

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

As Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen zy'a teaches, וּלְמַכִּיר, for the one who recognizes Hashem,

the one who knows that there is Hashem in the world, to him נָתַתִּי אֶת הַגִּלְעָד, I will send him Eliyahu HaGiladi. He deserves to meet Eliyahu HaNavi.

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l explained the *pasuk* as follows: לְמַכִּיר, to recognize whether a person believes in Hashem, נָתַתִּי, I give you the following sign: גִּל-עַד. The translation of גִּל is happiness. His happy disposition, even when things don't go his way, is his עֵד, testimony that he believes in Hashem. He is happy because he knows everything is for the good.

It states in this week's *parashah* (1:32), וּבְדַבַּר הַזֶּה אֵינֶכֶם מֵאֱמִינִים בְּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "With this matter, you don't believe in Hashem your G-d." The Bnei Yissaschar (*Igra d'Kalah*) explains that Hashem performed many miracles for the Jewish nation (the *mann*, the well, the clouds of glory) in the desert. The *pasuk* says, וּבְדַבַּר הַזֶּה when you believe in Hashem because of these wonderful revelations, אֵינֶכֶם מֵאֱמִינִים בְּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, it isn't belief. That is דַּעַת, knowing Hashem. With these miracles, one clearly sees Hashem taking care of him, and there is no test. It is knowledge, not *emunah*. *Emunah* is to believe in Hashem even when we don't see His kindness. Even when things are difficult, we believe that it is all for the good.¹

1. 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] for 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 didn't see such joy on him, not even when he davened on Simchas Torah. Throughout the year, on Shabbos, Reb Noson Adler would take the *aliyos* of *kohen* and *maftir*, and on the Shabbos of the *shiva* (which was פרשת וירא), he didn't change his custom. When he said the *haftarah*, one tear fell from his eye, and he caught it in his hand. But then he took hold of himself and showed no more signs of distress. Since then, he never mentioned his daughter's name and didn't have another child."

He didn't allow himself to be sad because he believed it was *bashert*, and therefore, it was certainly for the good, regardless of whether he understood it or not.

The Churban resulted from a lack of emunah in Hashem. Rebbe 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 gematriya ². הו"ה אהד. These fasts are to reestablish our emunah in הו"ה אהד, and in the zechus of our emunah, the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt.

Benefits of Yesurim

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

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos, Brachos* ch.9) says we shouldn't be too happy when good things happen, and we shouldn't be overly sad when bad occurs because we don't know what will come from them. Only time will tell. Sometimes a bad experience ends up being the greatest favor, and

sometimes something good results in a problem.

The Mishnah (*Brachos* ch.9) states, חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שמברך על הטובה, "One must praise Hashem for the bad just as he praises Hashem for the good."

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos, Brachos* ch.9) explains, "When bad things happen to you, be happy and have a good heart. Don't be angry. Say the *brachah* דיין האמת with happiness, just as you would say the *brachah* הטוב והמטיב. The wise understand the logic of this concept, and even if the Torah didn't obligate us to thank Hashem for the bad, they would understand on their own to do so. This is because many things appear good initially but are very bad in the end. The wise don't feel startled and lost when confronted with hardships because one doesn't know what will come from them. You also shouldn't be overly happy when something good happens because you don't know if this good will be forever."³

2. 10 (Teves) + 3 (Tishrei) = 13, the numeric value of אהד.

17 (Tamuz) + 9 (Av) = 26, the numeric value of הו"ה.

3. The following stories remind us not to be upset when something doesn't work out because only good will come from it.

I heard the following story from the *baal hamaaseh*, Reb Shlomo Pinchas Shwimmer *shlita* of Monroe, N.Y.

One evening, Reb Shlomo Pinchas noticed a sixteen-year-old *bachur* wandering on the streets. It was obvious that he had lost his way. Reb Shlomo Pinchas approached him, "Tzaddik, how can I help you?"

The *bachur* replied, "I live in Monsey, and I go to yeshiva there. For the summer, my yeshiva is in a camp at 441 Schunnemunk Rd, Monroe. I had to return to Monsey to visit my doctor because I was experiencing pain in my arm. The doctor didn't find anything, and I took a taxi back to camp. The driver couldn't find 441 Schunnemunk Rd, so he dropped me off on the corner of Schunnemunk Rd. and Bardichov St., and I don't know where to go from here."

Reb Shlomo Pinchas said, "Come in, I'll drive you there." Reb Shlomo Pinchas entered the address in his GPS, but it didn't show up. After some investigation, he realized that Schunnemunk Rd. is a very long street, and the address the *bachur* was looking for was far down the street, over in Highland Mills. (That is why he didn't find it on the GPS. They were searching in Monroe, but this address was in another town.)

But, apparently, Schunnemunk isn't an easy road to follow, and they couldn't find #441.

The *bachur* said, "Every morning, we use the *mikvah* on Koritz St. Please take me there because from there I know a shortcut to the camp."

The Mishpat Tzedek⁴ (*Avos* 5) writes, "It is an error to think that matters are bad because the parts you think are bad are the root of the good that will follow. Therefore, it states (*Tehillim* 118:21) *אודך כי עניתני ותהי לי לישועה*, 'I praise

You because You afflicted me, and the affliction itself became my salvation.' And it states (*Shoftim* 10:15), *והטוב בעיניך עשה*, 'Do what's good in Your eyes.' Because a person prays to Hashem that he should be granted this or

When they arrived at Koritz St., the *bachur* showed Reb Shlomo Pinchas where to go, and soon they arrived at the camp. Reb Shlomo Pinchas was never in this area before. He was impressed by the camp's old but large building with a beautiful lake in the background.

The next day, the *bachurim* of that yeshiva went boating on the lake. One of the boats turned over and four *bachurim* fell into the water. Three of them swam to shore, but one *bachur* couldn't get back. By the time friends were able to bring him to shore, he was unconscious. Hatzalah of Monroe received the call, and they were told to go to 441 Schunnemunk Rd. The Hatzalah volunteers didn't know where this address was, but Reb Shlomo Pinchas (a Hatzalah member) was able to direct them. They saved the *bachur* just in time.

Who was that *bachur*? It was the *bachur* Reb Shlomo Pinchas had helped the day before. His arm hurt, so he didn't have the strength to swim ashore. Had Hatzalah arrived a minute later, there would be no one to save.

This story is a lesson that even when something seems bad, it is really for the good. The taxi driver dropped the *bachur* off at the wrong place, and the *bachur* was lost. But this problem turned out to be what saved his life the very next day.

The next Shabbos, the *bachur* benched *הגומל* in public, thanking Hashem for the miracle.

A *chasunah* was scheduled in Bnei Brak when many demonstrations occurred in Eretz Yisrael. The protests caused traffic jams, and the musicians (who live in Yerushalayim) couldn't get to the *chasunah* in Bnei Brak.

But there were other wedding halls in the same building, and one of the *baalei simchah* kindly connected the cables, so the music playing at their *chasunah* could be heard at the *chasunah* where the musicians didn't show up.

As customary, when the *chasan's rosh yeshiva* come into the hall, the band played *ימים על ימי מלך תוסף*. At the same time, a great-uncle was dancing with the *chasan* in the hall without the live music. He thought that this song was played especially for him. In his pocket, he had prepared a five-hundred-shekel check for the *chasan*. (That was the amount he typically gave at the *chasunos* of his relatives.) But due to the honor he received, he quickly ripped up that check and wrote out another one for fifty thousand shekels. It became obvious that the "problem" proved to be a "solution."

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

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

He always enjoyed art, but he never had the time or courage to devote himself to it. But since he now had a lot of extra time and a dire need to do something for *parnassah*, he picked up a paintbrush and began painting.

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

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

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

that, and he thinks that this will be good for him, but it isn't always so. Therefore, we pray, 'Ribono Shel Olam, do what You know is best.'" Our vision is limited; only Hashem knows what's best for us.

It states (*Tehillim* 42:8-9), ובלילה שירה עמי תפילה, לקל חי. The Malbim explains that even when it is dark, and there are *tzaros* I sing to Hashem because I am certain that good will follow soon afterward.

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

Bnei Yisroel cried and panicked, but there was nothing to fear because Hashem fought the wars for them, and they inherited the Holy Land, Eretz Yisrael.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 29) states, "That night was Tisha b'Av. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם ואני קובע לכם בכיה לדורות, 'You cried for no reason; I will give you a reason to cry for all generations.'" Every year, we cry on Tisha b'Av for the two Batei Mikdash that were destroyed on this day.

The Churban came because we cried for no reason, and as we are discussing, we must recognize that everything, and even what appears terrible, is for our good.

The Yesurim of the Churban was for our Benefit

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

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

Eizor Eliyahu (from Reb Eliyahu Lerman zt'l, a student of the Kotzker zt'l) writes, "Hashem only bestows good and kindness on Bnei Yisrael. However, before the good comes, sometimes hardship and troubles must precede it, for this is Hashem's way so that the good that will come after it will be in the best manner. When one doesn't understand this, he thinks that Hashem, chas v'shalom, is doing bad to him, but it isn't so.

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

When the Jewish nation believed the meraglim and was afraid to go to Eretz Yisrael, they said (1:27) בשנאת ה' אותנו הוציאנו ממצרים, "Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim because He hates us." The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 16:2) writes that this claim had consequences. Since they said that Hashem hates them (Yirmiyahu 12:8) על כן שנאתיה, therefore, Hashem hated them, r'l.

The Sfas Emes explains, "Hashem was acting solely for our benefit, but since they said Hashem hates them, this caused Hashem to hate them."

We learn from this (a) everything Hashem does is for our benefit. (b) It is a grave aveirah to suspect that Hashem hates us and is acting against our best interests. (c) If we say Hashem hates us, this can cause it to happen, chalilah.

Hashem loves us and seeks our good. We must believe that, and then we will see how everything is for our good.

Yesurim Prepare us for the Next World

Among the benefits of yesurim are (a) they arouse us to do teshuvah, (b) they cleanse us from our aveiros. When we remember that our primary place and purpose is Olam HaBa, we understand that these wake-up calls, and the atonement and purification we get from the yesurim are certainly for our benefit.

The Dubno Magid zt'l told the following mashal:

A child had just injured himself, and the doctor instructed the parents to do everything they could to keep the child awake. If he fell asleep within the next hour, he might never awaken.

The parents spoke to the child to keep him awake, but the child was tired and began to close his eyes. The father took away the pillow from under the child's head and talked to the child some more. 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 torturing him.

When the child began falling asleep again, the father hit him.

It seemed cruel, but it was kindness – to keep the child awake.

The *nimshal* is that Hashem gives us wake-up calls. They are the yesurim we endure in life. If we don't wake up, the yesurim might become more painful. It is Hashem's compassion, so we don't sleep in galus and forget our purpose in life.

Consider one more *mashal*:

A father comes 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 open, and a child is sleeping near the window. The father takes a pole and pokes the child. The child cries, and soon the entire household is awake and alarmed. "Who is outside trying to hurt them?" they wonder. If they knew that the person poking them was their father, who only wanted to come inside to be with them, they would open the door for him. 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 directly from the Rav mentioned in this story:

Ten Yidden in Russia were accused of doing illegal business, which is punishable either with exile to Siberia or execution. The judges' antisemitic leanings directed them to condemn the prisoners to death r'l.

After the judges announced their verdict, a high-ranking priest entered the courtroom and told the ten 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 ask you for your decision five days from now."

The Russians knew that when Yidden are together, they strengthen one another in their emunah, so they divided the ten prisoners into ten different cells. Each prisoner was alone, and the priest and others would come to them to try to convince them to convert to save their lives.

No Yid was permitted to visit the prisoners except the Rav himself. Before the Rav of their city came to them, the priest told the Rav about his offer. He figured the Rav would have compassion for his people

and convince the ten men to convert to Christianity.

When the fifth day arrived, the Rav told his 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 take a tenth candle because one of the accused was a young orphan who only had a mother. The Rav figured he 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 died.

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*. Right now, my only hope is that my son shouldn't fail the test and remain with his *emunah*."

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 of the orphan rejoiced over her son's sacrifice. Everybody watched this woman's joy, and they understood that her strong love for Yiddishkeit was passed down to her son, which empowered him to pass this difficult test.

Reb Yankel Galinsky told this story as a lesson in chinuch. When parents show 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. When we know that the real world is the future world, we are less fazed and distressed by *yesurim*. They are for our benefit, to prepare us for the next world.

Yesurim are Not the End of the World

R'l, when someone is very ill, people who love him cry, but they generally cry silently. They don't raise their voices. But when someone dies, people cry loudly. As a rule, a loud cry is a sign of *yeush*, that it is over, and nothing can be done. This is the nature that Hashem has placed in the world.

The Yidden cried when they heard the Meraglim's report. In parashas Shlach (Bamidbar 14:1), it states, 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. Also, in this week's parashah (1:34) it states, וישמע ה' את קול דבריכם ויקצוף..., "Hashem heard the sound of your words, and He became angry..." Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l says that their primary *aveirah* was that they raised their voices, which is a sign that they had lost hope of ever coming to Eretz Yisrael.

According to this explanation, their *aveirah* wasn't that they cried or were worried. A person is only human, and it is natural to be concerned and afraid. Their *aveirah* was that they raised their voices and cried. They lost hope, and that isn't permitted.

On Shabbos, Chol HaMoed Succos, Rebbe Shlomo Leib Lenchna zt'l was at his tish, explaining to his chasidim that "the entire world isn't worth one *krechtz*." Our ultimate goal is to merit a good portion in Olam HaBa. Whether or not we have a good Olam HaZeh shouldn't make a big difference, especially since everything is for the good. So, why should one moan and be upset about matters of this world?

As he spoke about these ideas (due to the large crowd gathered in the succah), the rebbe was injured. The rebbe *krechted* from the pain.

One of the chasidim asked the Rebbe. "Didn't the Rebbe just tell us that this world isn't worth a *krechtz*?"

The Rebbe replied, "That is correct. Nevertheless, when one is hurt, he krechtes."

The Beis Yisrael zt'l explained that Rebbe Shlomo Leib was saying that it is okay to moan from pain. That is the natural response to pain, and we can't expect everyone to be on the level that they won't even moan and krechtz. However, one must simultaneously remember that it is for his good. In the back of his mind must remember that, ultimately, there is no reason to cry in this world.

We can compare it to a father who brought his son to the dentist. The father isn't upset with his son when his son cries or moans from fear or pain. It is only natural to be afraid and to cringe from pain. But the father won't accept it if his son says, "Why are you harming me? Why don't you care about me? If you would, you wouldn't put me through this!" The son should know that his father only means his good.

Similarly, although we can cry and moan, we must never say it is bad for us. We must know, at least intellectually, that everything is for our good, and this will help us overcome our worries and pain and rejoice in Hashem's kindness.

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. The Torah doesn't forbid crying, because by nature, a person will cry when a loved one leaves or travels away, also when alive..."

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 מדאי,

that one may not mourn for a dead too much."

A few years ago, at the end of a shivah, a Rav showed his family a milk bottle and told them to look at the expiration date. He explained to them, "When the expiration date arrives, we stop drinking the milk because that is when it begins to spoil. The same is with mourning. There is a time for crying, but when the shivah is over, things begin to become spoiled if we continue crying excessively. There is a time and place for everything, and the time for crying and intense mourning has passed."

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

It states (Bereishis 27:34) ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה "[Eisav] cried out an exceedingly great and bitter cry." He shouted bitterly because Yaakov received the brachos. Surprisingly, the Midrash (Esther Rabba 8) states that Yaakov was punished for causing Eisav this anguish. Years later, Yaakov's descendant Mordechai shouted bitterly due to Haman, Eisav's descendant, as it states (Esther 4:1) ויצעק צעקה גדולה ומרה, "He cried a loud and bitter cry."

However, we can ask that by Eisav it says he shouted מרה עד מאוד, an exceedingly bitter scream, whereas it doesn't state עד מאוד by Mordechai's shouting. It seems that the punishment wasn't equal.

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

It states (Tehillim 119:8) אל תעזבני 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.

Everything is from Hashem

In the Kovno ghetto, Reb Mordechai Pegrimansky zt'l asked some friends why they appeared sad. They didn't understand his question. Of course, they were sad! Their lives and the lives of their families were at stake twenty-four hours a day.

Reb Mordechai proved to them that Hashem was protecting them. He said, "The SS soldiers hate you and want to kill you. Do you agree?"

His friends agreed. This they knew too well.

"Do you also agree that if they kill you, no one will punish them or even ask them why they did so?"

His friends agreed. It was certainly so.

Reb Mordechai Pegrimansky told them, "The SS soldiers saw you today. Why didn't they kill you? They had nothing to stop them from pulling the trigger. It must be that Hashem said 'No.' They can't do anything without Hashem. They are in Hashem's hands and can't do anything without Him."

The friends agreed that it was so.

All of these friends survived the war and said they always remembered Reb Mordechai's lesson. It gave them chizuk throughout those difficult times.

With a bitter heart, Reb Michoel Ber Weismandl zt'l came to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rayatz zt'l, and told him how he had a plan in place to save thousands of Yidden from the Holocaust, but cruel people stopped him and foiled his plans.

The Rayatz gave him a piercing look and asked, "And who did all of this?"

Reb Michoel Ber said that these words changed his entire outlook. He was angry at the people who stopped him and ruined his plans, and suddenly he remembered that everything is in Hashem's hands. For reasons no one can understand, Hashem said 'No,' which is why his rescue plan didn't materialize.

During the Holocaust, some survivors managed to reach Eretz Yisrael, and at a Rabbanic gathering, one of the survivors discussed the atrocities taking place on European soil. With a bitter heart, he shouted, "The Germans are doing all of this, and He remains silent."

Reb Issar Zalman Meltzer zt'l immediately stood up and said, "The Germans are doing this?! He is doing!" This is because everything is from Hashem, for reasons that only He knows.

This is as it states (Eichah 3:37) *מי זה אמר ותהי* "Who said and it occurred if Hashem didn't command." Rashi explains that we can't say that the Churban happened by chance because the good and the bad are from Hashem.

It states in this week's parashah (2:13) *ועתה קומו ועברו לכם את נחל זרד*, "And now get up and go over the Zered Brook." The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 19:24) says that *זרד* comes from the word *זרת*, which means *amah* (six tefachim). The river was called *זרד* because the river was only one *amah* wide. Nevertheless, the Midrash writes, "For thirty-eight years they couldn't pass over this river, as it states (2:14) *והימים אשר הלכנו מקדש ברנע עד אשר עברנו את נחל זרד שלושים ושמונה שנה*, 'The days that we traveled from Kodesh Barneia until we crossed Zered Brook were thirty-eight years.'"

This is because without Hashem's help, one cannot pass over a river whose width is the size of an *amah*. On the other hand, with

Hashem's help, one can cross a sea on dry land.

Hishtadlus

We are obligated to do *hishtadlus*, and a primary source is from this week's parashah. The *Yalkut Shimoni* (808) states, "Perhaps Hashem will send you blessings even if you sit idle and do nothing? The *pasuk* says (2:7), כי ה' אלקיך ברוך בכל מעשה ידיך, 'Hashem your G-d has blessed you in all that you do.' If one does, he receives Hashem's blessing. If one doesn't do, he does not receive."⁵

The *Mesilas Yesharim* (ch.21) writes, "Technically, a person could do nothing, and the decree [of how much *parnassah* he will earn] would transpire, if it weren't for the קנס, tax, that was placed on all mankind, בזעת אפיק 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 like a tax⁶ that all humanity must pay; it is one that no one can escape. But it isn't the *hishtadlus* that helps. It is an obligation. After he did *hishtadlus*, he fulfilled his obligation, and Heaven's blessings can come. He doesn't need to spend all of his days seeking *parnassah*."

HaMaspiq L'Ovdei Hashem (Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam zt'l, *Bitachon* 8) writes, "To trust that *hishtadlus* brings *parnassah* is כפירה נסתרת (concealed heresy). He says that he believes in Hashem, but deep in his heart, he thinks *parnassah* depends on how much *hishtadlus* he does and that *refuah* depends on doctors and medicine. Dovid HaMelech

שנאתי השומרים הבלי שוא, ואני אל ה' בטחתי, 'I hate those who trust in foolishness. I trust in Hashem.'"

In this week's parashah, Moshe Rabbeinu says (1:12), איכה אשא לבדי מרחכם משאכם וריבכם, "How can I carry all your disputes all by myself?" Rashi says משאכם means they were *apikorsim*.

In what way were they *apikorsim*, and why does משאכם mean that they were *apikorsim*?

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

To explain, we share the following popular *mashal*:

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

The king replied, "I'm carrying your package, regardless, because you and your package 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

5. The next words of the *pasuk* are, ידע לכתך. The *Yalkut Shimoni* writes, "לכתך is similar to the word לכלוך, dirt. ידע לכתך Hashem knows the filth you go through to earn your *parnassah*." This refers to the great tests people endure trying to earn *parnassah*. How, indeed, does one pass these tests?

The solution is ה' אלקיך עמך know that "Hashem is with you" at the workplace. If you will remember that לא חסרת דבר, you will pass all tests.

6. Based on this *Mesilas Yesharim*, Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l taught, someone who does too much *hishtadlus* is like a merchant who already paid his taxes yet runs after the tax collectors to give them more money.

7. Literally, an *apikores* is someone who doesn't respect the *chachamim* (see Rashi).

they feel מְשָׁאֵם, that they need to carry their needs and obligations on their shoulders, that is apikorsus.

It states in this week's *parashah* (1:32), וּבְדָבָר, "In this matter, you do not believe in Hashem, your G-d." The

Rebbe of Stretin (*Degel Machenah Yehudah*) zt'l explains that if a person thinks his *parnassah* will come בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה, specifically in *this way*, and not in any other way, he doesn't believe in Hashem because Hashem can provide *parnassah* in many ways.⁸

8. Someone complained to Rebbe Hershele of Lisk zt'l that a competitor opened a store near his shop and is worried that his *parnassah* will suffer.

Rebbe Hershele Lisker responded with the following *mashal*:

A person owned a chicken, and every day he threw some breadcrumbs into the coop.

One day, he bought another chicken and put it in the coop. The first chicken worried the "newcomer" would eat up all the food, so it pecked at the new chick and ripped out its feathers.

The owner watched this and thought to himself, "Chicken! Why don't you understand? I know that two birds are now in the coop, and I will put in a double portion, so there will be enough for both of you."

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

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

He asked them, "Why are you doing this? What purpose is there in digging holes if you fill them again?"

They replied, "We usually work in groups of three. One digs a hole, one 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 figured that just because he isn't here doesn't mean we shouldn't do our job."

Hashem is our partner in everything we do. We can't do anything on our own. Without the primary partner, all work is futile.

A businessman 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 it is forbidden to shave during the Nine Days. A business meeting doesn't make it permitted.

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

Initially, the meeting went well. They were ready to sign a contract, but then one of the businessmen asked, "How do we know that we can trust you? Can you prove to us your honesty in business?"

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

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

The deal fell through.

This happens when one tries to do business while ignoring the primary Partner.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov zt'l told the following story:

There was a generous *baal tzedakah* who served hot, satisfying meals to anyone who knocked on his door.

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 wise man of thirty-seven, You told me to sacrifice him. [I did as You commanded.] 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 compassion on my children?"

Yaakov Avinu said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I was 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 nefesh* to raise his family. From here, we see 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 complaining about how hard it was for him to support his family. The Nesivos Shalom explained, "Raising a family is the greatest deed and the supreme sacrifice. It is comparable to the *mesirus nefesh* of the *akeidah*. But don't worry. Do *hishtadlus* and Hashem will help that everything will work out."

Chumash Devarim

We've seen many important lessons on *emunah* alluded to in this week's parashah, and the truth is, the entire Chumash Devarim

A poor person heard about this and went there to receive a meal. However, accidentally, he knocked at the neighbor's door.

"Can I have a meal?" he asked.

The stingy neighbor immediately understood what occurred and decided to take advantage of the situation. He answered, "Certainly, you can have your meal, but first, you must do some work for me."

The neighbor gave him hard work around his house, and when he finished, he said, "You did well. Now you can receive your reward. Go next door. A good meal awaits you there."

As he ate, he commented to the kind host, "It was hard work, but it was well worth it."

The host asked him, "Where did you work hard?"

He answered, "In your house, next door."

The host corrected him. "You worked for free, and you're eating for free."

This story teaches us the essence of *hishtadlus*. We work in one place and earn *parnassah* from another. Because it isn't the work that brings *parnassah*. Work is a tax that must be paid to be eligible for *parnassah*. After we do *hishtadlus*, Hashem sends *parnassah*.

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* sent Reb Shalom Shwadron *zt'l* on a trip to London to raise money for Pe'ilim (a *kiruv* organization). Reb Shalom wasn't successful on that trip and didn't make much money in London. When he returned, the Chazon Ish showed him a five-hundred-dollar check (a princely sum in those days) and said, "I received this check from a baal tzedakah in Brazil for Pe'ilim. You did *hishtadlus* in London, and the *yeshuah* came from Brazil."

is filled with wonderful mussar and lessons for the Jewish nation. It is the mussar that Moshe Rabbeinu told the nation at the end of his life. 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* ⁹ ד"ה אלה.)

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

Chazal (*Yevamos* 4.) say, אפילו למאן דלא דריש, דמזכירי בעלמא במשנה תורה דריש דהא ר' יהודה בעלמא לא סמוכים ¹⁰ The Kotzker zt'l said דריש ובמשנה תורה דריש. *sefer Devarim* 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 we read *sefer Devarim*."¹¹

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 explains that אל כל ישראל, "to every Yid" is literal. Moshe Rabbeinu addressed this *Chumash* to every Yid, including the Yidden alive thousands of years later. In *sefer Devarim*, Moshe speaks to us and teaches us the mussar we need to hear.

Chazal say 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." This means Moshe had a clear vision of prophecy and could repeat Hashem's messages exactly as Hashem said them. Rebbe Tzaddok 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 for you *right now*. Moshe didn't talk to us three thousand years ago. Moshe speaks to us today, and he tells us, זה הדבר אשר צוה ה', this is what Hashem is saying to you right now. We can receive these prophecies and discover the lessons and messages that apply to us when we study the *parshiyos* of *sefer Devarim*.

Shabbos Chazon

The *haftarah* of Shabbos Chazon begins with the words חזון ישעיהו, "Yeshayahu's vision," and therefore, the Shabbos is called Shabbos Chazon. The *haftarah* discusses the churban, and we wonder, why do we name this Shabbos after sad events? As the Kedushas Levi (*Eichah* ד"ה ואומר אבד) asks, "Why is this Shabbos called Chazon? It isn't praise for Yisrael!"

The Kedushas Levi answers (*Drushei Tzemech Tzaddik*, *Eichah*) that on this Shabbos, Hashem shows every Yid how the world will be when the third Beis HaMikdash is built. Shabbos Chazon means the Shabbos of visualization because we can see the future world.

The Kedushas Levi explains it with a *maschal*:

9. 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*."

10. Literally, the Gemara is discussing the concept of *semuchim*, when two apparently unrelated topics are placed together in the Torah to learn halachos from one from the other. Some Tana'im didn't use this derivation, and Reb Yehudah was among them. He didn't learn *semuchim* throughout the Torah. Nevertheless, the Gemara says, in *sefer Devarim*, everyone (Reb Yehudah included) studied *semuchim*.

11. *Chumash Devarim* also has the *tochachah* in it. The Sfas Emes said, "One should take the תוכחה and bring it תוך תוך, deep into his heart."

A king gave his son an expensive set of clothing, but the prince wasn't careful, and he ripped and soiled the clothing.

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

The king ordered a third set of royal clothes, showed it to his son, and said, "When I see you can take care of your clothing, I will give it to you."

Once a year, the king would take out the beautiful clothes and show them to his son. He would tell his son, "When you are responsible and ready, I will give you the clothes."

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, and then Hashem tells us, "When I see you are ready, I will give it to you."

The Tzaddikim of Bobov zt'l say that it is advised to accept Shabbos early on Shabbos Chazon so that we can turn some of the mourning into a time of joy.

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "ל אשר שבת חזון הוא, יותר גדול במעלה מכל שבתות השנה", "There is reason to say that Shabbos Chazon is the greatest Shabbos of the year." He adds that when Shabbos Chazon falls on Tisha b'Av, the Shabbos is even greater.

We would think that Shabbos Chazon is the lowest Shabbos of the year as it is in the Nine Days and moments before the destruction of the holy Beis HaMikdash. Furthermore, according to halachah, there are aspects of mourning on Shabbos Chazon. How can this Shabbos be the greatest Shabbos of the year?

The Gemara (*Yevamos* 62: הוינא לדרך) says that the love between people increases before 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 specialness of this Shabbos, greater than all Shabbosim of the year. It is a time of closeness with Hashem.

The Midrash says, "לא היה יום מועד לישראל כיום, שנחרב בית המקדש", "There wasn't a holiday for Yisrael like the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed." How can Tisha b'Av be called a holiday? The Ohev Yisrael answers that it is because of closeness with Hashem that we experienced during this bitter time of separation.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 99.) teaches that when Yidden served Hashem, the *keruvim* in the Beis HaMikdash faced one another. When Yidden didn't serve Hashem, the *keruvim* turned away from each other. It was a miracle because they were gold figures, and they moved on their own, in accordance with the connection between Hashem and the Jewish nation.¹² Chazal (*Yoma* 54:) say, "When the goyim entered the Kodosh Kadoshim [to destroy it], they found the *keruvim* embracing one another!" The *Rishonim* ask, 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?

One answer can be that it was a sign of the love that precedes separation.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l answers that the goyim came into the Beis HaMikdash on Shabbos, and on Shabbos Hashem's love to

12. Reb Chaim Volozhiner (*Nefesh HaChaim* 1:8) writes, "It is known that one *keruv* represents Hashem and the other the Jewish nation. The degree of closeness and connection of the Jewish people to Hashem — or *chas veshalom* the opposite — could miraculously be observed by the positions 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 away or turned slightly to the side, that would immediately be mirrored by the *keruvim*. If *chas veshalom*, they turned away entirely, the *keruvim* would completely turn away from each other."

us is always perfect.¹³ We know it was Shabbos because the Yerushalmi (*Taanis* 4:5) says the Babylonians entered the Beis HaMikdash on *rosh chodesh Av*, and Tisha b'Av was on Sunday. So, if Tisha b'Av was Sunday, *rosh chodesh* was on Shabbos. This is the reason the keruvim were seen in an embrace.

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. Because what connection does a regular person have with Shabbos? But they are mistaken. If someone is *mechallel* Shabbos, he is חייב מיתה. So, just as he is associated with the severity of desecrating the Shabbos, he is also associated 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 had a tendency 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* (Shabbos *rosh chodesh*) Shabbos honors her guest and gives her the *haftarah* and the *mussaf*. When the guest is *yom tov*, Shabbos gives it all the *tefillos*. When

the guest is Yom Kippur, Shabbos also gives away the Shabbos *seudos*. But when Tisha b'Av is the guest, Shabbos tells Tisha b'Av to wait until tomorrow. Shabbos doesn't accept this guest because Shabbos is a day of joy.

It states, *וביום שמחתכם* and Chazal (*Sifri* 19) say, *ביום שמחתכם אלו השבתות*, "The day of your happiness' refers to Shabbos." Therefore, rejoice with Shabbos. Eat tasty foods, sing *zemiros*, daven well, and make it a special day. Do so every Shabbos, including the Shabbosim of the Three Weeks, and even on Shabbos Chazon.

Waiting and Mourning

A group of people spoke with the Brisker Rav *zt'l* about the tzaros the Jewish nation was undergoing at the time, and then 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 a Yid say such a thing?"

The Brisker Rav took out a Rambam and read to him, "Whoever doesn't believe in Moshiach and doesn't await his arrival, not only doesn't he believe in the Nevi'im – he doesn't believe in Moshe Rabbeinu's Torah as well."¹⁴

13. The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 28:2) writes, "The *mussaf* 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."

This Ramban is kabbalistic, but the intention is that there are no sins on Shabbos. Therefore a *korban chatas* isn't necessary.

14. There was a city whose residents were waiting for Moshiach. They hired someone to stay awake every night, and if Moshiach arrived in their town in the middle of the night, he would blow a shofar and ring bells to wake everyone to go out and greet Moshiach.

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

The *meshulach* said to this man, "I see you are talented. Come with me, and we can collect money together."

The man replied, "No way! I am staying at my post! If I go collecting with you, I will have a good source of income for a few years, but what will I do when I get old, and it becomes too hard for me to go around?"

We must develop a longing and anticipation for Moshiach.

Reb Shmuel Vosner zt'l notes that the Rambam begins his sefer (יד החזקה) with the obligation to believe in Hashem, and he concludes the sefer with our belief in Moshiach, and in 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 wanted the Beis HaLevi zt'l to be their Rav, but the Beis HaLevi turned down their offer. Representatives from Brisk came to the Beis HaLevi and pleaded, "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 about this episode, "The Beis HaLevi didn't want to turn down 25,000 Yidden. If thousands of Yidden yearn and request for Moshiach, Moshiach will certainly not turn them down."¹⁵

Rebbe Nochum Chernobyler zt'l once stayed at the home of a simple couple. At midnight, Reb Nochum cried and mourned for the Churban Beis HaMikdash. The simple

But in this position, I'll have *parnassah* for many years!"

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

15. 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."

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 truly 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 demonstrates how to wait for Moshiach. Every day, we should hope this will finally be the day Moshiach will come.

The Shaarei Teshuvah (118) writes, "When one says *לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוִינִי כָּל הַיּוֹם* in *Shemonah Esrei*, one should think, 'I am from the people who wait for Moshiach,' because after one's demise, he will be asked whether he waited for Moshiach. 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 for her son and remembered that all of these *tzaros* were because of the Churban.

man asked Reb Nochum why he was crying so much, and he explained that he was crying over the Churban and asked his host, "Don't you also want Moshiach to come and return us to Yerushalayim?"

The simple man replied, "I'm not certain. Let me ask my wife about that."

He returned and said that his wife didn't want to go to Yerushalayim because who would care for their hens and livestock if they moved to Yerushalayim?

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

Once again, the simple Yid went to get his wife's opinion. He returned and said, "My wife says that Hashem should take the goyim to Yerushalayim."

This story illustrates for us and reminds us that the mourning has left our hearts, and we don't even know why we mourn.

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

Reb Shimshon Pincus zt'l (Galus v'Nechamah p.147-151) writes, "If someone isn't able to mourn and cry during Bein HaMetzarim for the Churban Beis HaMikdash and Galus HaShechinah, he should sit on the floor and cry bitterly about his 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."¹⁶

The Yaavatz zt'l (Siddur Beis Yaakov, Tisha b'Av, 6:16) writes, "If our only sin were that we aren't mourning sufficiently for Yerushalayim, that would be reason enough 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 never have respite from the Goyim, wherever we live. And this is because the mourning has left our hearts."¹⁷

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l (Yaaras Dvash vol.1, p.253) writes, "We don't feel the Churban. We are like a fool that doesn't feel his pain. Some tzaddikim had a complete understanding and recognized the dire loss caused by the Churban. If we understood how much we lost, the lack in our perfection, etc., we wouldn't want to eat or drink, rather. We would roll in the earth from distress."

Someone from our chaburah who lives in Beit Shemesh has been a widower for four years. His sixteen-year-old daughter told him, "I feel bad for my younger siblings. Before Mother was niftarah, I was old enough to appreciate her love, and I know what I'm missing now. But the younger siblings hardly know their mother's love; they don't know what they are missing."

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

Building Yerushalayim with Tears

Our mourning and our tears will rebuild the Beis HaMikdash.

The Gemara (Makos 24) says:

16. Reb Shimshon Pinkus writes that at a levayah, only family members and close friends of the niftar cry. Similarly, during these days of mourning, those close to Hashem mourn and cry, but those who feel detached from the whole matter don't. He writes, "We can measure one's attachment to Hashem by the extent that he mourns over the Beis HaMikdash."

17. 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 Maaravi were crying!"

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 R' Akiva, "Why are you laughing?"

Reb Akiva 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, לך אני מצחק, "That is precisely why I'm laughing."¹⁸

From Reb Akiva's words, לך אני מצחק 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 would build the third Beis HaMikdash.

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

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

Chazal tell us that the third Beis HaMikdash will come down from heaven fully built up (see Rashi on Rosh Hashanah 30. ד"ה ל"ז). Hashem is building the Third Beis

HaMikdash in heaven, and the construction materials are our tears and mourning. For two thousand years, we have mourned and cried for the Churban. Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes all those tears and mourning, and He builds the third Beis HaMikdash in heaven with them, brick by brick, stone by stone. When it is completed, it will come down from heaven.

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

Benefits of 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 sins because people are very broken. This is why after Tisha b'Av, people feel slightly similar to how they feel after Yom Kippur."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l said that those who cry for the Churban merit good children. (Therefore, as one mourns, it is an auspicious time to daven for your children's success in Torah and yiras Shamayim.)

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

Reb Yehudah Asad zt'l would save the tears that fell from his eyes at Tikun Chatzos. Bachurim who were at risk of being drafted into the army would come to him, and he would give them to taste of the tears, and this would help them (Toldos Shmuel, as told by the testimonies of Reb Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky zt'l and others).

¹⁸ Reb Akiva explained to them that when he saw the actualization of the prophecies of the destruction, he felt reassured that the prophecies of redemption would transpire.

The Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* 20 ד"ה פעם אחת) tells us that the nations פרס and מדי came to the world as a reward for Koresh because he cried and mourned when the goyim destroyed the Beis HaMikdash.

According to the Chofetz Chaim's zt'l calculation, Koresh was seven years old at the time of the Churban. A child of seven doesn't fully understand the devastation of the Churban. Nevertheless, he cried, and he was rewarded for his tears. We learn from this how great the reward for the Yidden who mourn and weep for Yerushalayim will be.

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."

Mourning and Joy.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (*Drashos* 7th of Av, 5560, p.307) writes, "It states (*Divrei HaYamim* 1, 16:27) עוֹז וְחֵדוּהָ בַּמָּקוֹמוֹ, that Hashem resides with joy, and Chazal say that Hashem doesn't reside in places where there is sadness. Nevertheless, Tisha b'Av is called יוֹם מָר, a bitter day. Therefore, it is proper for all the bitter and broken people to cry and mourn on these days that Hashem is also mourning. If they do so, their mourning will go up to a very high place. They don't see it, but their mazal does, and they will hear the voice of Hashem crying together with them... בְּכָל דּוֹר 'In every generation, one must consider himself as if he was exiled from Yerushalayim.' This year's mourning shouldn't be the same as

the mourning of last year and years before it. Each year has its own unique set of distress and challenges for which we should mourn. 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 of Koritz zt'l (*Imrei Pinchas* 378, 380) writes, "The place where Hashem resides, all the malachim of heaven are there. On this day, keviyachol, Hashem is crying. Therefore, when a person is also at this place [of mourning], he is protected [because he is with Hashem]. Laughing on Tisha b'Av is סַכְנָת נַפְשׁוֹת, dangerous because when one is with the king he is protected, but when he is distant from the king, he doesn't have protection. And on this day, the Shechinah is keviyachol sitting on the earth [and the only way to connect with Him is with mourning]."¹⁹

We cry and we mourn bitterly these days, but this doesn't necessarily need to be with sadness.

We quoted above the Chasam Sofer zy'a (*Drashos*, 7 Av, p.326), who says, "If I weren't afraid, I would say Tisha b'Av is a happy day because we survived..." Hashem poured out His wrath on stones and wood so that we can survive.

Reb Mordechai Gifter zt'l offers another explanation why Tisha b'Av is called *moed*, holiday.

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

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

A father dropped diamonds into the garbage and asked his son to search the trash, find them, and clean them. It was a challenging and repulsive job. The son will certainly receive a great reward for doing this for his father, more significant than if he would serve his father in other ways. This describes the avodah of the Three Weeks and Tisha b'Av. It is a low time, a difficult period, but the avodah is very precious. The Avodas Yisrael concludes, "What a person can rectify on Tisha b'Av, which is a low day, he cannot rectify even on Simchas Torah."

b'Av is called 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 these days, we *gather* and connect with Hashem through joy, and Tisha b'Av is also called *moed*, because on this day, we connect to Hashem through our mourning.²⁰

Whenever we merit to meet Hashem, it is a reason for great joy.

Rebbe Shmelke of Nikolsburg zy'a explains with a *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 at other times his host seemed happy. The king asked him, "Are you happy or sad?"

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

The Gemara (Shabbos 30:) says, אין השכינה שורה אלא מתוך שמחה, "The Shechinah doesn't reside unless there is happiness." A *navi* needs to be in a state of happiness to receive his prophecy. So, how did Yirmiyahu

HaNavi receive the *nevuah* of Megilas Eichah, since he was certainly crying and mourning as he received this prophecy? The Chazon Ish (Maaseh Ish, vol.4 163, and some say it is from the Brisker Rav zt'l) answers that it must be that one can mourn and cry and be happy at the same time.

Furthermore, mourning results in happiness. *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 because due to his mourning, he merits to experience the joy of the redemption even now.

At a *chasunah* we say the *brachah* of שוש תשיש, when we daven for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. The Sfas Emes zt'l explains that due to the Churban, the joy of the *chasunah* isn't complete. We complete the joy when we mourn for Yerushalayim. The mourning gives us a scent of the joy of rebuilding Yerushalayim, and now the joy of the *chasunah* is complete.²¹

Daven for Mashiach

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

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

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

Hashem and Bnei Yisrael search for each other and yearn to reunite. There are times when we merit that unity. On Tisha b'Av, we unite through mourning; on yom tov, we connect through joy.

21. Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l said that in Kelm, they emphasized the word כל in the phrase וכל המתאבל על ירושלים כל, everyone, means even the people who committed severe aveiros and don't deserve to witness the joy of Yerushalayim when it is rebuilt. Nevertheless, mourning sanctifies and purifies; because of their mourning, they will merit seeing its joy (Beis Kelm, p.396).

with tefillah everything we need. If someone lacks something, a good time for tefillah is on Tisha b'Av, when we sit on the earth."

Obviously, at this time, daven for Moshiach, too. It is always vital to daven for Moshiach.²²

The Tiferes Shlomo (מסעי ד"ה א"י כן מטה השני) writes, "A person should contemplate how due to our many sins, the holy land is under Arab control. This should break a Yid's heart, and he should shout out to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. If Yidden desire the land and the building of the Beis HaMikdash, Hashem will quickly accept their *tefillos*. The Beis HaMikdash is already built and ready in heaven. We only have to request that it come down. Therefore, the Beis HaMikdash is called דביר ביתך (in the *brachah* רצה in *Shemonah Esrei*) from the word דיבור, speech. We have to ask Hashem to build the Beis HaMikdash, and this will bring the redemption quicker."

The Mabit (Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah ch.17) writes, "it is easier for the *tefillos* of the people of the later generations, who are closer to the time of the redemption, [for Moshiach] to be answered, more than the *tefillos* of previous generations," and this is for two reasons:

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

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

The Yaaras Dvash (*Drush* 5) teaches that the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because people weren't davening. As it states (*Tehillim* 14:4), ה' לא קראו, "They didn't pray to Hashem."

And it states (*Eichah* 1:2), ודמעתה על לחיה. The Yaaras Dvash explains that the tears shed by the Churban Beis HaMikdash were because of לחיה, the cheek. The Gemara (*Chulin* 134:) says that the cheek represents *tefillah*. Thus, the bitter Churban was על לחיה because people weren't davening.²³

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Yirmiyahu* 327) says that when the Jewish nation was על נהרות בבבל, on the banks of the Babylon River, en route to galus, Yirmiyahu left them, and everyone began to cry bitterly. They said, "Rebbeinu Yirmiyahu! Will you leave us?"

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

A wealthy person sent his five sons overseas to study Torah. One of them, Reuven, became deathly ill. The doctors determined that the only cure available was extremely costly.

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. Also, Levi's clothes are old and torn. Yehudah owes 450 dinars and has to pay up the debt. Also send money for Reuven because he is dangerously ill, and the treatment costs a fortune."

When the 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 more 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, too. Davening for Moshiach should be our first and primary tefillah.

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

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

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

Nevuzradan followed Nevuchadnezzar's advice. When he brought the Jewish nation into exile, he didn't let them rest. His soldiers cut off the limbs of anyone who stopped walking.

So, even Nevuchadnezzar *harasha* understood that Yidden had the power to thwart the decree of exile with their *tefillos*.

The second Beis HaMikdash was also destroyed because Yidden didn't daven to prevent it.

Chazal (*Taanis* 29) teach, "When the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, it was *erev Tisha b'Av*, *Motzei Shabbos*. The Levi'im were singing *shirah*. They were up to the words, *יִצְמִיתֵם ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ*, "Hashem will demolish them [the enemies of the Jewish nation]" (*Tehillim* 94:23), but they hadn't yet said those words, and that's when the goyim seized the Beis HaMikdash. The same happened by the second Beis HaMikdash."

It seems that had the Levi'im said *יִצְמִיתֵם ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ*, "Hashem will demolish them," the two Batei Mikdash wouldn't have been destroyed. Their *tefillos* would have stopped the Churban.

The Gemara (*Gittin* 56) tells the story of the churban Beis HaMikdash. Many people know the story, so I will relate it here in brief, the parts that are important for our discussion on tefillah. Bar Kamtza told the Roman monarch that the Jewish nation was rebelling against him, and to prove it, he advised the king to send a korban and to see whether the Jews accept it. Bar Kamtza made a blemish on the animal, disqualifying it for a korban. The chachamim in the Beis HaMikdash wanted to sacrifice the king's korban for the sake of peace, but Reb Zecharyah ben Avkulas said that they shouldn't bring it because "people will think that a korban with a *mum* could be brought as a korban."

The chachamim decided to kill Bar Kamtza, so he won't be able to tell the Roman monarch that they didn't bring the korban. Once again, Reb Zecharyah advised against it. He said, "People will think that whoever brings a korban with a *mum* is killed."

The chachamim accepted his views. The korban was sacrificed, Bar Kamtza survived, he reported back to the king, resulting in the churban Beis HaMikdash.²⁴

24. The Gemara (*Gittin* 55) relates that Bar Kamtza was invited to a party by accident. When the host saw him dining at his celebration, he thought, "I intended to invite Kamtza, my friend. I hate Bar Kamtza, and I don't want him here."

The host asked Bar Kamtza to leave. Bar Kamtza pleaded that he let him stay and offered to pay him for the entire meal, but the host sent him out. Bar Kamtza said, "There were rabbanim at the meal. Why didn't they speak up in my honor? Apparently, they consent to me being treated that way. I will slander them to the king."

The Gemara (*Gitten* 57) says, *בא וראה כמה גדולה כחה של בושה שהרי סייע הקב"ה את בר קמצא והחריב את ביתו ושרף את היכלו*, "Come and see [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 because shame and humiliation is a very powerful and difficult experience. This teaches us how careful we must be not to shame our fellow man.

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) One transgresses all *halachos* of the Torah to save a Yid's life. So why didn't they offer the *korban* (or kill Bar Kamtza) to save the Jewish nation?

The Meor Einayim answers that Reb Zecharyah was the *gadol hador*. (The proof is that his position was accepted by all scholars.) He had *ruach hakodesh*, and he knew that the Churban was imminent and that nothing could be done to change that decree. This is why Reb Zecharyah didn't allow the killing of Bar Kamtza or to sacrifice the *korban* with the *mum*. He knew that it wouldn't help. The Churban would occur, regardless. At least, he thought, let the Torah not be forgotten.

Why didn't Reb Zecharyah tell the *chachamim* what he knew with his *ruach hakodesh*? He should have told them, "You're right, it's *pikuach nefesh*. We should do

whatever we can to avoid the king's wrath, but I know with my *ruach hakodesh* that it won't help. The Churban will occur, and we can't change that. Even if we bring the *korban* or kill Bar Kamtza, the Churban will occur. 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 that if he had told them what he knew with *ruach hakodesh*, the *chachamim* would have davened that the Churban shouldn't occur, and they would rouse people to do *teshuvah*, and this would have saved them.

The Meor Einayim writes, "This is the meaning of ענותנותו של רבי זכריה בן אביקילוס 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. He didn't want to reveal [that he has *ruach hakodesh*]."

Had the rabbanim at this seudah known that Bar Kamtza's disgrace would end with the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, they would certainly have instructed the host to allow Bar Kamtza to stay. The host, himself, would have allowed him to stay had he known what was at stake. In retrospect, one is always wiser... 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) אשר אדם מפחד תמיד ומקשה לבו יפול ברעה, "Fortunate is the man who is always afraid, but he who hardens his heart will fall into evil." Rashi explains, מפחד תמיד, "He is afraid of punishment, and therefore distances himself from aveiros."

Chazal (*Gittin* 55:) say, אקמץ ובר קמץא חרוב ירושלים, "Yerushalayim was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza." We understand the connection between the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and Bar Kamtza. He spoked the Jewish nation and roused the wrath of the Roman emperor. But how did Kamtza cause the Churban?

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

Following this approach, we can explain that Kamtza, the father, was also responsible for the Churban because had he trained his son Kamtza to pursue peace, forgive and forget, and remain silent during a *machlokes* and when humiliated, Bar Kamtza would have reacted very differently when he was offended. So Kamtza is also responsible for the Churban.

For our purposes, we see that the Yidden could have annulled the decree of the Churban with their *tefillos* and their *teshuvah*. Teshuvah and tefillah are always effective. It would have prevented the Churban.

Following a slightly different approach, we can explain that Reb Zecharyah humbly didn't believe that he, or for that matter, the Jewish nation had the power of tefillah. He didn't believe in our strength. This is the negative form of humility. It is when one doesn't believe in his strengths. This misplaced humility resulted in the Churban.²⁵

Lack of tefilla caused the Churban, and when we daven, the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt.

The Rokeach writes, "From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't give kindness to Bnei Yisrael without tefillah."

The *haftarah* of Tisha b'Av describes the Churban. Among the descriptions, it states (*Yirmiyahu* 8:13), ... וְאֵין עֲנָבִים בְּגֶפֶן וְאֵין תְּאֵנִים בְּתֵאנָה, "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.²⁶

The *pasuk* says that after the Churban, even fruit won't grow without *tefillah*. When Shlomo was king, it was (*I Malachim* 5:5), אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְאִישׁ תַּחַת תְּאֵנָתוֹ, "Each man under his grapevine and under his fig tree." Because of

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

26. A Holocaust survivor told the story of his survival. He related how he jumped out of a speeding train which was 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!"

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

Incidentally, Pesach is in the spring, so we can remember Hashem's kindness that He took us out of Mitzrayim when the weather was pleasant for travel. This is because when we praise Hashem, we shouldn't forget even the smallest detail.

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 listen to a musical concert. They did this to break their spirit, robbing them of the *luxury* of mourning on Tisha b'Av. This woman was upset by the *chilul Hashem*. She prayed, "Hashem, don't answer me in my honor and nor in the honor of Your nation. Answer me for Your own honor, which is being disgraced by the goyim. I pray that it should begin to pour."

The skies were clear, but shortly after this *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 even in Auschwitz, Hashem listened to her *tefillos*.

the *korbanos*, there was much bounty, and everyone had grapes, figs, and all their needs. But now, after the Churban, everything comes solely with 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 *tefillas* 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. 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."

We've been davening for Moshiach for a long time, and each tefillah helps and brings us closer to the redemption. And very soon, and suddenly, the redemption will come.

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 *shefichus damim*. The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*.

There were other differences 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. In 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, 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, not everyone was transparent. 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 hidden from them. They weren't told when Moshiach would come.

Rebbe Yohonoson Eibshitz *zy'a* (*Yaaras Dvash* 7) explains the Gemara in another way. He explains that "during the first Beis HaMikdash, their sins were revealed," means the navi told them the reason for the exile. The *pesukim* in *navi* reveal that they were being punished for *avodah zarah*, *giluy arayos*, and *shefichus damim*. They 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.

But their sins weren't revealed during the second Beis HaMikdash. There were no *nevi'im* in 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 people to accept that because *sinas chinam* doesn't appear to be a severe aveirah. They didn't know the reason for their punishment, so it was harder for them to do *teshuvah*. It is still hard for us to recognize the severity of *sinas chinam*, which is why nearly two thousand years have passed, and we haven't been redeemed.

The Arizal created a *hesger*, an exclusive compound for his ten primary students, where he taught them the secrets of the Torah. He warned them to avoid *machlokes*.

But one Friday, two women got into a fight about some matter, and their husbands got involved. Their shouts could be heard from the distance.

Before Shabbos, the Arizal with his students walked out of Tzfas to be *mekabel* Shabbos in the fields (as this 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 about this, and the Arizal replied, "I heard the *samach mem* (Satan) say, *גם אתם גם מלכם תספו*, '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."

And that is what happened. Less than a week later, on the fifth of Av, the Arizal and five of his students were *niftar*.²⁷

The Chofetz Chaim explains that when the Gemara says the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam* it refers to *lashon hara*. *Sinas chinam*, alone, wouldn't destroy the Beis HaMikdash. Rather, the severe aveirah of *lashon hara* (a byproduct of *sinas chinam*) is what destroyed the Beis HaMikdash.

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

The Kli Yakar (*Shemos* 3:2) writes, "This is the primary reason for the *galus*, it is because of the hatred and jealousy among them, and in this regard, the Jewish nation is worse

than all other nations. They speak *lashon hara*."

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* once came to a city, and after davening, the community honored him with a *l'chayim*. He refused to drink. He explained that *lashon hara* was spoken in the beis medresh, and this results in the punishment of murder. He said, "When a Yid stabs his fellow man in a beis medresh by speaking *lashon hara* on him, this results in a goy stabbing a Yid." Later they heard that a goy stabbed a Yid in their city (heard from the Rebbe of Narol *zt'l*).

One Yom Kippur night, soon 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 *מוחל*). However, *וירא ה' וינאץ*, "Hashem becomes angry and doesn't forgive, *מכעס בניו ובנותיו*, when someone harms His children."²⁸

A Good Eye and *Ahavas Chinam*

All good *middos* are connected. Therefore, some tzaddikim focused on perfecting a single character trait, and when they attained perfection in that trait, they attained excellence in all other good *middos*.

²⁷. It states in this week's *parashah* (1:12), *איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם משאכם וריבכם*. The Imrei Noam explains, *איכה*, Moshe told the nation that for matters related to the Churban and redemption, *אשא לבדי*, I will take full responsibility. Your job is *טרחכם משאכם וריבכם*, to get rid of *sinas chinam*.

Also, in this week's *parashah*, the *trop* (cantillation) over the words *אחינו המסו לבבינו* (*Devarim* 1:28) are *תלישה קטנה קדמה* and *ואולי*. The Beis Aharon *zy'a* explains: If there is a *תלישה קטנה*, a small breach, *אחינו*, in the friendship, *קדמה ואולי*, the dispute will grow greater and larger, and *המסו לבבינו*, our hearts melt. Therefore, the solution is to be vigilant and avoid even the smallest conflict.

²⁸. The graduating class of a girl's high school in Monsey (class of תשע"ז) gathered to figure out why they were having a hard time finding *shidduchim*. Six girls were engaged, still when they were still in school, but all the others were single, and it was already a year and a half after graduation! They concluded that it could be that they had hurt their teachers. They appointed two girls to call all the teachers and ask for forgiveness in the name of the entire class.

The originator of this idea became a *kallah* a few days later. A couple of days afterward, a few more *shidduchim* were finalized.

For example, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* toiled for at least twenty-five years to acquire perfection in one 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) Together with excellence in that *middah* comes perfection 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 generates perfection in all aspects of *avodas Hashem*.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* toiled for seventeen years, with all his strength, to attain an *עין טובה*, a good eye. He commented 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), which 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 can be considered *sinas chinam*. Chazal tell us, 'A generation that the Beis HaMikdash isn't built up, is like it was destroyed in that generation.' With a good eye, the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt."

Another aspect of *עין טובה* is the attribute of generosity, to give to others and to want to give to others.

A woman took care of her ill husband with devotion for several years. Reb Meir

Brandsdorfer *zt'l* (renowned dayan from Yerushalayim) would call her occasionally to give her *chizuk*.

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

She told him that kind people help her.

Reb Meir said, "Do me a favor, when you light *Shabbos lecht*, tell Hakadosh Baruch Hu 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 Moditz *zt'l* fled from Moditz 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, the war wouldn't be."

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 to others. If people would practice this, this war wouldn't happen."

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

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.'"²⁹

29. The following story is an example of *mesirus nefesh* for the mitzvah *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 also involved in *kiruv rechokim*.

Shulchan Aruch (554:20) states, אין שאלת שלום להכבירו בתשעה באב, "One mustn't greet his friend on Tisha b'Av."

But why not? The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*. It would seem that Tisha b'Av is the ideal time to greet one's fellow man, to increase love and peace.³⁰

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

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

"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 divorced his wife, and 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 didn't transgress an *aveirah* because he married the carpenter's

One day his wife told him that she wanted to donate a kidney to help someone on dialysis. Her husband tried to discourage 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... Should we make the operation now, or shall we 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 the standard battery of tests to verify 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.

She thought she was saving another person's life, but she saved her own. Had the tumor gone undetected, it could have blocked the blood circulation. It was likely she wouldn't live to see her child's wedding. But because of her *ahavas Yisrael*, her life was saved.

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

wife after she was divorced. 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 the cardinal sins."

This is an important concept to keep in mind. There is the spirit of the Torah, the concepts of good and bad, and sometimes these details aren't explicitly spelled out in the Torah. However, the heart of a Yid understands the severity of such matters.

An example of this concept is the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 30:), that 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.

Now, let's return to our question. We want peace on Tisha b'Av, so why don't we greet people on Tisha b'Av?

The answer is that 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. Tisha b'Av, we take a break from greeting our fellow man, reassess, and strive to reach a higher level. We want to go beyond the letter of the law, beyond what's commonly expected, and to develop genuine peace and love among Yidden.

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