

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Mattos-Massei



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Torah Wellsprings - Mattos-Massei

Miracles through Tefillah

It states (31:4), אֶלֶף לַמִּטָּה אֶלֶף לַמִּטָּה לְכָל מִטּוֹת, "A thousand for each tribe, a thousand for each tribe, from all the tribes of Israel you shall send into the army" to fight and to take revenge on Midyan. It states twice אֶלֶף לַמִּטָּה, "a thousand for each tribe," though it seems it would be sufficient to write אֶלֶף לַמִּטָּה, "a thousand for each tribe," one time. The Baal HaTurim writes (and it is based on a Midrash), "For each tribe, two thousand people were sent. That is twenty-four thousand people who went to war, corresponding to the twenty-four thousand who died [in the plague, see Bamidbar 25:9]."¹

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 22:2) teaches that one thousand people actually went out to war, and the other thousand davened for the soldier's success. They even came to the war in pairs, one person to daven and one person to fight the war.

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* asks:

(1) One can daven from a distance. However, here it states תְּשַׁלְּחוּ לַצֶּבָא, that also those who were davening were sent out to the battlefield. Why was that necessary?

(2) Why was it necessary for a thousand people to daven? Why did each soldier need someone to pray exclusively for him?

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* answers that miracles were needed to win this war. It was twelve thousand people against an enormous army. And from the entire Jewish nation, not even one person was captured at battle, as it states (31:49) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה עַבְדֶּיךָ נִשְׂאוּ, "את ראש אנשי המלחמה אשר בידנו ולא נפקד ממנו איש", "[The officers of the war] said to Moshe, "Your servants counted the soldiers who were in our charge, and not one man was

missing." The nature of people is to think that they do things on their own. Therefore, in order for the warriors not to think that they were succeeding in the war with their own might, Hashem commanded each soldier to have a partner, someone davening for him, standing near him on the frontlines. This would remind the warriors that Hashem is fighting for them, and their success comes from Him.

Daven with All Your Heart

We can offer another reason why those appointed to daven were required to be at the site of the war. It was so they should daven with all their heart and soul. Yes, they could daven from afar, but if they didn't see the danger before their eyes, their tefillos wouldn't be with the same passion and fervor.

It states (32:42), וַנְּבַח הַלֵּךְ וַיִּלְכַּד אֶת קִנְתָּ וְאֶת בְּנֵי תֵיָה, "Novach conquered Knas and its surrounding villages and named it Novach, after his name." Rashi tells us that this name didn't last. The hint is that לָהּ is written without a *mapik heh*, which means the heh isn't pronounced. "It is read like לָא because this name didn't last."

The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* teaches that a dot in the הָ hints at the heart, which is in the middle of the body. The *pasuk* teaches us that whatever is done without heart doesn't last. This is why placing our heart and soul in tefillah is important. Indeed, tefillah is called עֲבוּדַת שֵׁבֶלֶב, the service of the heart.

In *parashas Masei*, we study the laws of someone who accidentally killed his fellow man. He must flee to *arei miklat* and remain there until the *kohen gadol* dies. When the *kohen gadol* dies, he goes free (see 35:25).

1. The Baal HaTurim concludes, "The pasuk begins with an א, and ends with an א to tell us that they all had לב א, one heart for their Father in heaven."

Rashi explains (in his second explanation) that the murderer's freedom depends on the *kohen gadol's* life because the *kohen gadol* is somewhat responsible for the murder that occurred inadvertently. Rashi writes, לפי שהיה לו לכהן גדול להתפלל שלא תארע תקלה זו לישראל בחייו, "The *kohen gadol* should have davened that such a calamity shouldn't occur in his lifetime."

The Mishnah (*Makos* 11) states, "The mothers of the *kohanim gedolim* would supply food and clothing [to the murderers who escaped to *arei miklat*] so they won't pray that their son die." She wanted them to feel content and satisfied in the *arei miklat* so they wouldn't pray for her son's death.

However, we can ask about this mishnah, how would the food and clothing parcels appease them? Being detained in *arei miklat* was like being in prison. Wouldn't they still daven for the *kohen gadol's* death regardless, so they could go free?

The answer is that they will still daven for the *kohen gadol's* demise, but due to the care packages they received, they wouldn't pray with all their heart and soul, and such a *tefillah* is less effective.

Rashi (*Bava Basra* 121.) writes, "The Midrash Eichah states that every Tisha b'Av evening [in the desert], it was announced that everyone must dig a grave and lie in it. In the morning, it was announced that the living should separate from the dead. They discovered that fifteen thousand people died

each year. This is what occurred for forty years. In the final year, they checked and saw that everyone remained alive. They said, 'Perhaps we counted the dates wrong [and it isn't yet Tisha b'Av]. They lay in their graves on the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth [of Av] until the moon was full. When the moon was full, they said, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu annulled this harsh decree from us,' and they celebrated with food and drink and made a *yom tov*."

Fifteen thousand people died each year. 15,000 x 40 years in the desert equals 600,000. It was destined that 600,000 people die. This was their punishment for the sin of the *meraglim*. However, in the final year, they were granted forgiveness. No one died that year.

We can explain that when the men climbed into their graves each year, they didn't daven with all their might to be saved. They knew that 15,000 people would die that night, but they thought that perhaps others would die and not them, so they didn't daven with all their heart and soul. But in that final year, the last fifteen thousand people of the previous generation (who sinned with the *meraglim*) climbed into their graves, knowing they were all destined to die. We can be certain that on that night, they davened for salvation with all their heart. And when one davens with all his heart, his *tefillos* are answered. This might be the reason that this time they all survived.²

2. Rav Eliyashav zt'l's parents were childless for many years. Once, they traveled to the medical center in Vienna for treatment, but the doctors informed Rebbetzin Eliyashav that there was no cure. "There's nothing we can do."

She didn't want to cry on the train ride home, but when she arrived home, she went into a silo where she could be alone and wept copiously.

Her father, noticing her red eyes, asked her what happened. She gave some lame excuse, but the father wouldn't buy it. Finally, she admitted that her tears resulted from the devastating news the doctor delivered. "I didn't cry throughout the two-week trip home, and now I am letting my tears flow freely. I am pouring out my heart before Hashem."

Her father told her, "It states (*Tehillim* 145:18), קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, 'Hashem is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him with sincerity.' When does one pray sincerely? When he knows that he has

Davening with Joy

The Gemara (Brachos 5.) tells us that Reb Eliezer was ill, and Reb Yochanan came to visit him. The room was dark, so Reb Yochanan revealed his arm, bringing light to the room. Rashi explains that Reb Yochanan's skin shone because he was beautiful. Reb Yochanan saw that Reb Eliezer was crying. Reb Yochanan asked him, "Why do you cry? If it is because you [feel that you] didn't study enough Torah, behold Chazal tell us, אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, "the person who does a little is equal to the person who does a lot, as long as their intention is for heaven.' If it is because you aren't wealthy, not all people merit two tables [wealth and Torah]. And if it is because you don't have children, behold, here is the bone of my tenth child." Reb Yochanan kept a tiny bone of his tenth child to show people his suffering so they won't feel so bad about their own suffering (Rashbam). (Rashi says that he held the bone due to his distress.)

Reb Eliezer replied *האי שופרא דבלי בארעא*, "I am crying because of your beauty that [one day] will be decomposed in the earth."

Reb Yochanan replied, "This is certainly a valid reason to cry," and they cried

together. The Maharsha explains that the Gemara (Bava Metzia 84.) states that Reb Yochanan's beauty was the very last remnant of the beauty that was in Yerushalayim during the glorious times of the Beis HaMikdash. When Reb Yochanan would be niftar, this last memory of the Beis HaMikdash would end, which is why Reb Yochanan agreed that this is certainly a reason to cry.

Then Reb Yochanan asked Reb Eliezer, "Do you like your *yesurim* [your illness]?"

Reb Eliezer replied, "I don't want them, and I don't want their reward."

Reb Yochanan said, "Give me your hand." Reb Eliezer gave him his hand, and Reb Yochanan healed him.

We return to Reb Eliezer's words, *האי שופרא דבלי בארעא*, "I am crying because of your beauty that [one day] will be decomposed in the earth." The Be'er Mayim Chaim says that these words also allude to tefillah. *האי שופרא*, how beautiful tefillah is. *דבלי בארעא*, the problem is that it becomes decomposed and ruined in earth, which represents sadness.³ The best tefillos are said with joy in the heart, and the great beauty of tefillah loses its luster when said with sadness.

nowhere to turn to other than Hashem. And since you said such a tefillah, I'm confident you will soon bear a child."

A year later, she gave birth to Reb Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv *zt'l*, who illuminated the world with his Torah.

There's another story on how this righteous woman merited bearing a holy son, Reb Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv.

One day, in Yerushalayim, Rebbetzin Eliyashiv hung up laundry to dry, and a neighbor purposely cut the ropes, toppling the clean laundry into the mud.

Rebbetzin Eliyashiv didn't complain, although she would have to clean all the clothes again by hand. She didn't even tell her husband about it.

Late that night, there was a frantic knocking at their door. There stood the neighbor in tears. Her child suddenly developed a high fever, and she came to ask forgiveness for the laundry incident. The husband, who had answered the door, was surprised to hear about the event. His wife immediately and wholeheartedly forgave the woman and wished her child a full and speedy recovery.

About a year later, this righteous woman gave birth to a special son — Reb Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, *zt'l*, one of the leading rabbanim of Yerushalayim.

3. Sefarim explain that it is the element of earth *עפר* within us that draws people to sadness.

Ask for a Lot

When you daven, ask for a lot. Don't be stingy with your requests because Hashem can give you everything you need in abundance.

A visitor at Reb Shimon bar Yochai's *kever* shouted, "Five thousand shekel! Just five thousand shekel, that's all I'm asking for." His shouts disturbed a wealthy person who stood next to him. So, the rich person asked him what he was praying for. The man replied that he needed five thousand shekels to pay his rent, and if he didn't pay it, he would be evicted from his apartment.

The wealthy man gave him five thousand shekel and said, "Stop asking for five thousand shekels. You are ruining the market. People are here asking for much more than that, and with your being satisfied with five thousand shekels, you are lowering the bar for all of us."

This humorous story reminds us not to ask for small amounts. Hashem can give so much, so we might as well ask for a lot, as it states (Tehillim 81:11) *הֲרֹחֵב פִּיךָ וְאִמְלֵאֶהוּ*, "Open your mouth wide and I shall fill it." Rashi explains that you should open your mouth wide *לשאול ממני כל תאוות לבך*, "To ask of Me whatever your heart desires." We can ask for a lot, and Hashem will grant it to us.

A husband asked his wife to go to Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* to request a *brachah*

for children. They were a wealthy couple, but they remained barren after many years of marriage. He told his wife to tell the Rebbe that he was prepared to sacrifice all his wealth, if need be, as long as they could have children.

When the woman came to the Rebbe, she stumbled on her words and accidentally said, "My husband said he agrees to remain wealthy as long as we can have a child."

The Rebbe laughed because he understood what she wanted to say. The Rebbe said, "But you spoke correctly. Hashem can give you both – children and wealth. Why should we limit ourselves? We should ask for a lot."⁴

Tefillah is Essential

Siddur Rokeiach writes, "From the time the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't give goodness to Bnei Yisrael without tefillah."

Similarly, the *Hafla'ah* (*Kesubos* 67:) writes, "It is known to all believers in Hashem's *hashgachah* that in *galus*, *parnassah* comes solely through tefillah... The Gemara (*Kesubos* 10) tells us that *מזבח* means *מזיין*, sustainer, for it gave sustenance to the Jewish people. Today, tefillah fills this function (because tefillah is in place of the *korbanos* that were placed on the *mizbeich*). Tefillah brings *parnassah* and blessings to Klal Yisrael."⁵

4. In particular, we should ask for success in spiritual matters. When one prays for worldly matters, such as wealth, Heaven may determine that it isn't good for him. Hashem knows what's truly good for each person. But when one davens for *ruchniyus*, it is undoubtedly good, and therefore, one can ask for immense success, and Hashem will grant it.

5. The Apter Rav *zt'l* had a kollel in his beis medresh, and he would hand out stipends to the *yungerleit* every Rosh Chodesh. One of the kollel members thought, "I don't have to pray for *parnassah* since my *parnassah* is given to me by the Rebbe."

That Rosh Chodesh, after *mussaf*, the *yungerleit* lined up in the Rebbe's room to receive their monthly stipend. When it was this *yungerman's* turn, the Rebbe ran out of money. The Rebbe excused himself and left the room to get more money. The *yungerman* also had to leave his place in line for some reason, and when he returned, he went to the end of the line.

The Apter Rav returned and resumed handing out money, but when this *yungerman's* turn came, there

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

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

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz was a genius in all areas of the Torah. We have many *sefarim* from him (שפת דבש, יערת דבש, אורים ותומים, כרתי ופלהי, and others). Nevertheless, he testifies that the highest point of his day is that hour that he stands before Hashem in tefillah.

The Kuzari writes (3:5), "The time of tefillah should be the heart and the fruit of your day. The rest of the day should be paths leading up to this time.⁶ Yearn for these special moments when you become spiritual and distant from *gashmiyos*. Food nourishes you from one meal to the next one. Similarly, tefillah should nourish your soul from one tefillah until the next."

נחלה בלי מצרים is *gematriya* 515 the same as תפילה. This hints that when one davens well during the three weeks of בין המצרים this turns everything around so that there are no more מצרים, boundaries and limits, and everything becomes good for Bnei Yisrael.

was, again, no money left.

The Rebbe said, "Hashem gives me the money I need to support the *yungerleit* every month. There must be a reason you didn't receive your stipend this month. Check your deeds and see whether you can find the reason."

The man understood that it was because he didn't daven for *parnassah*. Even if the Rebbe supported him, he still needed tefillah because *parnassah* comes from Hashem.

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

One of the *gedolei hador* told me the following story:

A member of my *beis medresh* owns a large furniture factory. This man would come late for *Shacharis* every day. When I rebuked him, he replied, "If you knew the low spiritual level I am on, you would understand that simply the fact that I come to the *beis medresh* to daven is a great accomplishment for me."

I stopped pressing the matter because I realized I was speaking to 'deaf ears.'

Sometime later, though, there was a fire in his furniture factory.

The owner said, "I know why the fire happened – because I come late to davening."

"How do you know?" I asked him.

He explained, "The fire department took time to get to the scene of the fire, and therefore everything was lost. I understand that this was my punishment for coming late to *Shacharis*."

Shacharis and all *tefillos* are the peak of our day; therefore, we should come on time and make our *tefillos* special.

The Importance of Studying Halachah

Chazal (Nidah 73.) say, כל השונה הלכות בכל יום, מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא, "Whoever studies halachah every day, he is guaranteed that he is a ben Olam HaBa."

There are many sections of Torah that we should engage in each day. The father of the Shlah HaKadosh writes that studying Gemara and Tosfos should be as obligatory in our eyes as wearing tefillin each day. It is also important to learn Chumash and Rashi. Tzaddikim taught that learning Chumash with Rashi is mesugal for emunah and yiras Shamayim. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l would study Chumash with Rashi each day while wearing Rabbeinu Tam's tefillin. Furthermore, the Shevet Mussar teaches that a person should learn the portion of Torah that he is most attracted to and interested in. Some people want to study *bekius*, some are drawn to *drush*, and some desire to explore other parts of the Torah. Hashem placed this desire in their hearts because this is the Torah portion destined for them to excel. So, if a person desires to study Nach or to be well versed in Chassidic sefarim, no one should tell him that he is doing something wrong. However, in addition to the above, and perhaps more important than all the others, one must study halachah every day.

It doesn't necessarily need to be for a long time (although, certainly, the more the better). Even just three minutes a day is significant. You will be surprised by how many halachos you will learn in even a short time. Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l would encourage learning kitzur Shulchan Aruch. He would say, "Kitzur Shulchan Aruch teaches us how to live as a Yid. Shulchan Aruch is for when one has a shailah." People who have more time can study Shulchan Aruch, too. There are so many halachos to know.

Learning halachah is essential because otherwise, how will one know how to live, say brachos, and keep Shabbos? But let us be aware that several other important benefits come from studying halachah.

Chazal promise that for studying halachah each day, one is guaranteed a portion in Olam HaBa. This is difficult to understand because we read Pirkei Avos these weeks, and as everyone knows, we begin with the words כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, that every Yid has a portion in Olam HaBa. So why does the Gemara say that solely those who study halachah each day are ben Olam HaBa?

The Aruch l'Ner (Nidah 73) answers, "[If one doesn't study halachah], he will receive Olam HaBa, but after going through a cleansing process. Just like silver and gold are purified from all defects, so will these people need to undergo cleansing to clean themselves from all types of yetzer haras and sins of this world. However, [when one studies halachah] he is a ben Olam Haba. He will merit Olam Haba easily, and he will go to Olam HaBa immediately when he leaves this world. Hashem will lead him there."

This is because there are many discussions (שקלא וטרי) in the Gemara, and there are often several opinions, and one doesn't immediately get to the halachah l'maaseh. One has to toil in Torah to crystalize and define the halachah pesukah. But when one studies halachah he is attaining the crystalized truth, Hashem's will for us. The Aruch l'Ner writes, דכמו שלמד האמת הברור שאין צריך ליבון וצירוף עוד כן לא יצטרך צירוף, לבא לעה"ב. "Just as he studied the clear and decisive truth that doesn't need clarifying and purifying, so he won't need to be purified in Olam HaBa."

So, this is one of the benefits of studying halachah. He is studying the final line, the distilled will of Hashem. He is learning the crystalized truth that doesn't need any fixing, so he won't need fixing in Olam HaBa. He will immediately be brought to his portion in Gan Eden.

It states (Tehillim 100:1) הריעו לה' כל הארץ. The Yismach Yisrael zt'l (Chanukah, p. צ"ה) says that כל הארץ, can be translated as "entirely in gashmiyos." The pasuk alludes to people who are at deficient levels and are entirely immersed in the pleasures and pursuits of

the gashmiyos world. The pasuk proclaims, הריעו לה, they, too, can pull out of their gashmiyos and praise Hashem.

How do they do so?

The roshei teivos of (Tehillim 100:1) הריעו לה spell הלכ"ה כל הארץ. The Yismach Yisrael teaches that the segulah of learning halachah is that it pulls people out of the ארציות, their low levels, and it raises them to higher levels. (One explanation, based on the lessons of the Arizal, is as we discussed above, that halachah has a quality that it is distilled and purified Torah. Although אלו אלו דברי אלקים חיים, all holy ideas of Torah are the word of Hashem, even when they appear contradictory. Nevertheless, not all views are halachah l'maaseh. Learning halachah has a special quality as it is studying distilled Torah, keviyachol, the final word of what Hashem wants from us in this world, and

the segulah of this study is that it will refine, purify and perfect the person.)⁷

The Yismach Yisrael writes, "Someone who studies halachah is chashuv (important) to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as special as the people who have chachmah, binah, and daas who are bnei Olam Haba."

Another benefit in studying halachah is that he will become joyous, as it states פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב, "The halachos of Hashem are upright, causing the heart to rejoice." When one is happy, he is with Hashem, as it states, (Divrei HaYamim 1, 16:27) עונו וחדוה במקומו, "might and joy in His place." The Chasam Sofer explains that this makes him a proper candidate for Olam HaBa because Olam HaBa is where we bask in Hashem's presence. Chazal say that the Shechinah resides where there is joy, and they say that the Shechinah resides where halachah is studied. The

7. The next pasuk (Tehillim 100:2) states עבדו את ה' בשמחה באו לפניו ברננה, "Serve Hashem with joy, come before Him with praise." How does one serve Hashem with joy? One primary way is by studying halachah, as it states, פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב, "The halachos of Hashem are upright, causing the heart to rejoice." So, this pasuk is also teaching us that one pulls out of ארציות when he studies halachah.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l says it is a grave aveirah for a baal teshuvah to be sad. When one is in the process of teshuvah, one must be b'simchah. He shouldn't mope about his past; rather he should rejoice with his coming nearer to Hashem. Thus, we can explain the pesukim, הרעו לה, that also the people who are at low levels can elevate themselves. How? עבדו את ה' בשמחה, when they serve Hashem with joy.

Another tactic is to demonstrate external enthusiasm for Torah and avodas Hashem. The Yismach Yisrael (Chanukah) writes, "One should shuckel (sway back and forth while davening and learning) with all his limbs, even when the fear of Hashem isn't in the depths of his heart. He should do whatever he can to have kavanah. He should daven with strength, with a loud voice, until the innermost parts of his heart will daven with fervor. One should do as the Baal Shem Tov zt'l teaches on the pasuk (Koheles 9) עשה, כל אשר תמצא ירך לעשות בכחך עשה, that whatever one does for Hashem, he should do it with koach, with all his might. This will arouse the heart...and from the external deeds, he will ignite the inside of his heart."

The Remah (Orach Chaim 48:1) discusses the custom of G-d fearing to shuckel (shake and sway) while studying Torah and during davening. He writes that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 25:10) כל עצמותי תאמרנה ה' מי כל עצמותי תאמרנה ה' מי, "All my bones shall say, 'Hashem, who is like You.'" This view is also stated in the Midrash.

However, the Magan Avraham brings opinions that one shouldn't shuckel by Shemonah Esrei, or perhaps just a bit, at the end of each brachah. And he concludes that either path is valid.

The Yismach Yisrael writes in the name of his father, Rebbe Henech of Alexander zt'l, that to a large extent, it depends on each person's level. Because if one needs the shuckeling and other forms of external movements and expressions of fervor to arouse himself to daven with kavanah and wholeheartedly, he should do so.

With these techniques - studying halachah, forcing oneself to serve Hashem with joy, and showing external hislahavus - everyone can raise themselves from their ארציות, and serve Hashem.

Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that since he was with Hashem in this world, he merits to be with Hashem in Olam HaBa.

The Gemara (Taanis 22.) states, "Rav Broka would come to the market of Lefet, and Eliyahu HaNavi was often with him. Rav Broka asked Eliyahu, 'Is there anyone in this marketplace who is a ben Olam HaBa?' Eliyahu replied that there wasn't. Then Rav Broka saw a person wearing black shoes (which in those days wasn't a Jewish way of dressing) and not wearing tzitzis. Eliyahu told him that this person was a ben Olam HaBa. Rav Broka ran to him and asked him what he did. He replied, 'Don't ask me today. Come back tomorrow.'

"The next day, Rav Broka met this person in the marketplace and asked him, 'What do you do?'"

The man replied that he is a jail guard, and he makes certain that the men and women are imprisoned separately, and he protects the women from the goyim who have their eyes on them. He dresses like the non-Jews, so he can mingle among the goyim, hear about their gezeiros, and tell the rabbanim the harsh decrees they are planning, so they can daven and annul them. "I didn't answer you yesterday because I had just heard of a new harsh decree, and I was rushing to tell the chachamim about it so that they could annul the gezeirah with their tefillos."

As they spoke, two other people came to the market, and Eliyahu told Rav Broka that these two men were also ben Olam Haba. Rav Broka asked them what they did. They replied, "We are happy people and make sad people happy. When we find two people in a fight, we become busy with them [with our jokes and happy spirits] until there is peace between them." Rashi adds that הבאת שלום בין איש לרעהו, increasing peace among people, is one of the mitzvos that is rewarded in this world, and the primary reward is reserved for Olam HaBa.

So, the Gemara tells us of three people who were ben Olam HaBa. One of them was a jailor, who was moser nefesh to help the Jewish women, protect people from aveiros, and helped annul harsh decrees on the Jewish nation. The other two were happy people who made sad people happy and who made peace between rivals. These were the people in the marketplace who were ben Olam HaBa.

The Toras Chaim (Sanhedrin 90.) asks that all Yidden have a portion in Olam HaBa! How could it be that in the entire marketplace, only these three people were ben Olam HaBa?

He answers that most Yidden are granted Olam HaBa, but not because they deserve it. Hashem grants them a מתנת חנם, a gift, and brings them to Olam HaBa, although, according to their deeds, they don't deserve this reward. In this marketplace, only three people deserved Olam HaBa on their own merit.

Those who study halachos each day are also bnei Olam Haba. This means that they will deserve Olam HaBa.

Shabbos

It states (Vayikra 26:34) אז תרצה הארץ את שבתתיה כל ימי השמה, which can be translated, "Then, the land will be appeased regarding its Shabbosos during all the days that it remains desolate." The Tiferes Shlomo says that this pasuk refers to the greatness of Shabbos when we are in galus. We quote, "It is explained in the writings of the Arizal that in our times, although the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, and we don't have the avodah and the korbanos, nevertheless, nothing is lacking on Shabbos. Shabbos brings us back to the time of Adam HaRishon before his sin. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Vayira 26:2) את שבתותי תשמרו ומקדשי תיראו 'You shall keep My Shabbos and fear My Mikdash.' This tells us that when you keep Shabbos, it is as if you are in the rebuilt Beis HaMikdash. Shabbos in galus is even greater [than Shabbos during the days of the Beis

HaMikdash]... The love is more perfect... When we accept Shabbos properly and with joy, it will be considered as though we saw the rebuilding of Yerushalayim.⁸ In galus, the Shabbosim are greater than when the Beis HaMikdash stood. This is the intention of the pasuk: אַז, in galus, תִּרְצֶה הָאָרֶץ שְׁבִתוֹתֶיהָ, the Shabbosim will be desired... בְּלִי יְמֵי הַשְּׁמָה, all the days when we are in the desolation of galus..."

The explanation is that when the Beis HaMikdash stood, and all days of the week were good, we didn't appreciate Shabbos as much as when we are in galus. Also, in Hashem's eyes, the joy of the Shabbosim in galus are greater than the Shabbosim of the entire year.

In particular, the Shabbosim of the Three Weeks are very lofty and joyous times. The Tiferes Shlomo (Devarim, Shabbos Chazon ד"ה בפ' בחקותי) writes that this is alluded in the words (Lecha Dodi) רַב לֶךְ שִׁבַּת בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא (Lecha Dodi) רַב לֶךְ שִׁבַּת בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא, which can be translated, "How great is Shabbos in the Valley of Weeping. He writes, "The days of bein hametzarim between the 17th of Tamuz until Tisha b'Av, are the עֵמֶק הַבְּכָא, 'Valley of Weeping,' and it is then that רַב לֶךְ שִׁבַּת, that the Shabbosim are so high. The Shabbosim

of the ben hametzarim are greater than the Shabbosim of the entire year. This is because there is much tzaar during the weekdays, so on Shabbos, there is much more joy in heaven... People's tzaar should be that the Shechinah is in galus. However, on Shabbos kodesh, the Shechinah is happy, so we should also be happy. And when we are happy on Shabbos, this causes even greater joy to Hashem yisborach."

The highest point of Shabbos is in the afternoon, at *Shalosh-seudos* time. This is because, generally, afternoons are a time of *din* (harsh judgment), and Shabbos turns this time into *rachamim* (compassion). Whenever *din* turns into *rachamim*, it's an exceptional time. The Yid HaKadosh zy'a taught that in the Three Weeks, all twenty-four hours of the day are a time of *din*, and the Shabbos turns the *din* into *rachamim*. Therefore, during the Three Weeks, the entire Shabbos is a special and sacred time, similar to *Shalash seudos* time.⁹

Dealing with Problems Vs. Avoiding them Altogether

Many readers have heard of the parable of the bridge that didn't have a guardrail.

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

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

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

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

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

Many people fell off the bridge and were carried to the nearest hospital. The townspeople gathered for an urgent meeting and decided to build a hospital under the bridge. That way, if a person falls off, he can receive immediate treatment. A wise man said, "There's a better solution. Erect a rail alongside the bridge, and people won't fall off anymore."

There are solutions to all problems, but it is far better to avoid the problem in the first place.

On this note, we share another story:

In the wise town of Chelm, there was a large pit in the marketplace. Occupied with their business, the townspeople didn't always see the hole, and some fell in. The fall was dangerous, and in the best scenario, they came out of the pit dirty because there was mud at the bottom. The elders of Chelm gathered to find a solution. After three days of brainstorming and debates, they reached the following conclusions:

(1) The pit should be cleaned, so those who fall in won't become dirty. (2) The bottom of the pit should be covered with cushions to soften the landing of those who fall in. (3) The pit should always be illuminated because the darkness in the pit was very frightening. (4) A ladder should always be in the pit, so those who fall in can climb out.

The townspeople of Chelm rejoiced when they saw a copy of the protocol and immediately implemented all the recommendations.

A few days later, someone fell into the pit, and the people of Chelm joyously noted that he wasn't hurt. "Use the ladder to climb out," they shouted. But it was bright and comfortable down there, so the man decided to stay a bit. He had a newspaper with him, so he could read the news as he relaxed. It would be a break from the hustle and bustle of the marketplace. He was still in the pit a few hours later when the next person came tumbling down. This person came in

headfirst, colliding into the head of the man relaxing there – both were injured. The people of Chelm realized that their troubles had returned.

The elders of Chelm gathered for an emergency meeting to come up with a better solution. A stranger from another town happened to be in Chelm then, and he advised that they build a gate around the pit so that people won't fall in.

The lesson from this anecdote is that avoiding a problem is wiser than dealing with it. Sure, you can help people who fall into a pit, but it is much better to help prevent an accident.

There was an old wagon driver who served all members of his small town for many years. But he was getting older and couldn't keep up with the needs of the townspeople. They told him that it was time for him to retire, and they would hire a younger wagon driver.

The older wagon driver replied, "I will test your young candidate. If I find him to be wise and clever and capable for the position, I will humbly leave my post to him. However, if I test him and find him incompetent, I refuse to give up my post."

The people agreed to the condition, bringing the young wagon driver to the veteran wagon driver to be tested.

The elderly wagon driver asked the young man, "What will you do if your wagon gets stuck in the mud and you can't get it out?"

"I will tell everyone to descend from the wagon. The wagon will be lighter, and the horses will be able to pull out of the mud."

"Correct answer, but what will you do if that doesn't work?"

"I will have people push the wagon from behind. The horses will pull, and people will push, and together, they should be able to get the wagon out of the mud."

"But what will you do if that doesn't work, either, and the wagon is still stuck in the mud?"

The young wagon driver admitted that he didn't know. The elderly wagon driver said, "If you don't know, then you aren't worthy to be the town's wagon driver."

"I accept your verdict," the young man said. "But please tell me so I will know in the future. What does a professional wagon driver do in such a situation?"

The veteran driver replied, "A professional wagon driver doesn't run his horse into the mud in the first place."

When one finds himself in a quagmire, there are ways and solutions, but how much better it is when this situation didn't come up in the first place?

How and where can we use this counsel?

One place is related to teshuvah. We can correct the past. Hashem established the path of teshuvah, and Hashem accepts those who return to Him. However, אשרי מי שלא חטא, fortunate are those who never sinned!

Another area to consider is chinuch habanim. We relate a story told by Reb Michael Ber Wiessmandl, zt'l:

The tax was high to import merchandise over a border to another country, so some people devised a plan. They placed the contraband in a coffin, walked with it like a levayah, and smuggled the merchandise into the neighboring country.

This worked very well at first, but on one occasion, the border police told them to open the coffin. The police saw the merchandise inside. The guilty people cried and begged the police to free them, and then they asked the police how they knew to check the coffin.

The police replied, "People are sad at a levayah, but at this levayah, no one was crying, and no one seemed sad. That's why we suspected you and asked to see what's in the coffin. But your cries and pleas won't help you now. Had you cried earlier when you brought the coffin across the border, you wouldn't need to cry now. But you didn't cry before, so that's why you cry now."

Reb Michael Ber Weissmandl explained that when it comes to chinuch habanim. Wise parents cry and pray for their children so they won't need to cry later. But those who don't cry and pray first might end up crying in the end, r'l.

There are negligent, unwise parents who expose their children to things they shouldn't be involved in, and then, when there is a problem, they try to fix it. But just as a dam can be fixed much easier when the current is subtle, and when there is a strong current, it is much harder to stop the flow of water, so, too, chinuch is easier before a problem. Prevention is the best cure.

Another aspect to consider is health. It is easier to maintain good health than to heal the ill. The Gemara (Shabbos 32.) says, "A person should always daven that he doesn't become ill, because after he becomes ill, heaven will say, 'Bring a merit to be saved.'" The Gemara says that one doesn't need special merits to remain healthy, but once he becomes ill, he needs greater merits to become well. So, one is advised to daven beforehand not to become sick because afterwards, it is harder to fix.¹⁰

We can also discuss technology. There are solutions for people who use the internet to remain safe and protected. These solutions are helpful when needed, but even then, it isn't perfect. It is probably impossible to use

10. Tzaddikim advised saying Tehillim, even when everything is good and fine. The Tehillim you say now is deposited in your spiritual bank account, and when a need arises, the prayers are already there to help you.

the internet in a 100% spiritually damage-proof manner. Therefore, the preferred solution is to avoid the internet altogether when possible.

A *mashgiach* of a yeshiva told me that he was speaking to a *bachur* about the importance of keeping away from the internet, etc., but the *bachur* argued that he was careful not to go on forbidden sites. As they were speaking, they noticed two people walking down the street. One was wearing a hat, the other was only wearing a *yarmulka*. A strong gust of wind lifted the hat off one of them and the *yarmulka* off the other, and they both went scrambling to pick them up. The *mashgiach* said, "Do you see? The one who had two coverings remained with a covering for his head. The other one doesn't have anything on his head. Because when one adds onto his *kedushah*, he is further away from sin."

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

A poor person knocked on a wealthy man's door and asked to buy one of the pegs hanging in the foyer. The rich man told him it was not for sale. But the poor person kept coming back, again and again, asking to buy the peg until the wealthy person agreed to sell it to him. (He thought that now he wouldn't be bothered and nudged by this poor person anymore, but he was very mistaken.) The poor man paid a large sum, the wealthy man wrote out a contract, and the peg was now his. The next day, the poor man returned and hung some clothes on the peg. The wealthy man understood that it was his peg now, and he had the right to use it as he desired.

Every day the poor kept coming back to the wealthy home to hang up another item, or to take something down. One day, he arrived with a carcass and hung it on the peg. After a few hours, the wealthy residents couldn't stand the stench, and they all fled the house. That's how the entire house became the property of the poor man.

The *nimshal* is, the *yetzer hara* comes to a person and tries to convince him to sin with something relatively small. The person keeps pushing the *yetzer hara* away, but after the *yetzer hara* bothers him so many times, he gives in to that "small thing." He figures that if he gives in, the *yetzer hara* will leave him alone. But now that the *yetzer hara* has a foothold with him, he will keep coming back until he brings very stinking sins and rules over you. This is Chazal's intention (*Shabbos* 105:), "This is the craft of the *yetzer hara*, today he tells you to do this, and tomorrow he tells you to do that until he tells you to worship *avodah zarah*." So, the best solution is to avoid the *yetzer hara* entirely.

The Rebbes of Vizhnitz *zt'l* told a *mashal* of a plot of land that was surrounded with a fence, so animals wouldn't come and destroy the crops. However, there was one breach in the gate. The animals circled the gate until they reached the opening and came inside.

The *nimshal* is that we need to be entirely guarded against *aveiros*. Lowering our guard, even in one area, gives the *yetzer hara* a foothold from where he can cause much more damage.

Gaining Life

The Gemara (*Succah* 52.) tells that in the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will slaughter the *yetzer hara*. To the *tzaddikim*, the *yetzer hara* will appear like a mountain, and they will cry.

Why will they cry?

We can explain it with a *mashal*:

A person was traveling through the desert and needed a drink of water. He came across a home and knocked at the door. An Arab opened the door, and the traveler quickly ran away. He didn't want to take a chance with his life by drinking water in an Arab home.

Later, he heard about another desert traveler who came to that Arab's home for a drink and was murdered. When he heard this, he cried because he realized he was saved from death.

The *nimshal* is related to those who take extra precautions to have *kedushah* and that there be *kedushah* in the family. Some people laugh at them, saying they are being extreme. But when they hear stories of their friends and neighbors who weren't cautious and suffered the consequences, they will cry with immense joy and praise Hashem for giving them the wisdom and foresight to be careful.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* was in a taxi, and the taxi driver complained about the many rules the rabbanim of the generation established for the community. "They won't let us live," he claimed. "Every day, they come up with new rules and strict regulations."

Reb Shlomo Zalman didn't respond. The taxi came to a red light and stopped. Reb Shlomo Zalman said, "The people in charge of the roads don't let us live. They keep making new rules and new regulations. On red, we can't go, only on green. For driving quickly, one receives a ticket. If you don't wear a seatbelt, you will be fined, and there are many other laws. They simply don't let us live."

The taxi driver disagreed. "Why do you say they don't let us live? These laws give us life. People would die if it weren't for these laws."

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "The laws of the *chachamim* are the same. If it weren't for their decrees, there would be many spiritual casualties." It states (Devarim 23:15) *ולא יראה בך ערות דבר ושב מאחריו* "[Hashem] should not see anything unseemly among you and would turn away from you." When there are *aveiros* related to *tznius* and *arayos* (*ערות דבר*), Hashem turns away, and we lose Hashem's

hashgachah pratis and protection. This is the root of all troubles in this world.

So, the laws of the rabbanim don't take away life; they grant us life. Furthermore, the rules and regulations are wisely adjusted according to the needs of each individual. It is up to the individual to be wise and take advantage of this lifeline. Fortunate are those who do.

One only gains by following the counsel of the *chachamim*. The following story, which happened a few years ago, demonstrates this:

Shimon worked as a *mashgiach kashrus* in a restaurant in Poland. A non-Jewish kitchen assistant noticed that Shimon was sitting bent over, seemingly oblivious to his surroundings. She called his name, but he didn't respond. She tossed a large empty pot near him to see his reaction, but he didn't stir. Not wasting a minute, she quickly called for an ambulance. The paramedics arrived and performed CPR without getting any response and were ready to give up. The woman cried out, "He has a wife and family in Eretz Yisrael who are waiting for him. You can't give up!"

The paramedics tried some more, and *baruch Hashem*, Shimon began to breathe. He was flown to Eretz Yisrael, where he fully recovered.

There's a story behind this story: That kitchen assistant enjoys singing, and Shimon asked her not to sing when he's around. She'd often "forget" and begin singing, and Shimon would say, "Sha! Sha!!" and she would stop singing. That day, she was singing and was expecting to hear "Sha!" but it didn't come. Shimon's silence prompted her to see what was wrong, and that ultimately saved his life. Had Shimon been discovered a bit later, it would be too late. This is as it states (*Mishlei* 10:27) *יראת ה' תוסיף ימים*, "fear of Hashem lengthens days."