

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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*Mattos-Massei*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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## Torah Wellsprings - Mattos - Massei

### The Joy When One Believes in Hashgachah Pratis

It states in *parashas Massei* that when the Yidden were leaving Mitzrayim, the Egyptians were busy burying their dead, as it states (33:3-4) מִמִּצְרַיִם הֵפֶסְחָ וַיָּצֵאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד רַמָּה, "לְעֵינֵי כָל מִצְרַיִם וּמִצְרַיִם מְקַבְּרִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר הָקָה ה' בָּהֶם," On the day after the korban Pesach, Bnei Yisrael went forth with an upraised hand, before the eyes of all Egyptians. The Egyptians were busy burying because Hashem had struck down their firstborn..."

Rashi writes, טרודים באבלם, "They were occupied with their mourning."

Why does the Torah tell us this information? What difference does it make whether the goyim were באבלם or not?

טרודים באבלם doesn't only mean "occupied with their mourning". It means that they were bothered, upset, and consumed with their mourning.

Or HaMeir explains that the pasuk and Rashi are teaching us the difference between the Jewish nation who believe in Hashem, and l'havdil the goyim who don't believe in

Hashem, and the great joy of life that comes with emunah, and the suffering that comes from not believing in Hashem.

He writes, "The pasuk is praising the people who trust in Hashem. Engraved upon their hearts is the emunah that everything that happens to them – the good and the bad – is all from Hashem's hashgachah pratis. Deep in their souls, they know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu runs the world and leads every detail with hashgachah pratis. When Hashem bestows upon them His kindness, they praise Hashem for it. If it is the opposite, and they suffer, they believe that this, too, is from Hashem, a *tikun* (rectification) that Hashem decreed and planned.<sup>1</sup>

"When troubles befall them, the wise think, 'Behold it is the nature of the good to perform good. [Hashem is good and only wants to perform good; therefore, it is undoubtedly for my good.] Also, as the saying goes, more than a calf wants to nurse, the cow wants to give milk. [This saying, stated in Chazal, means that Hashem longs to bestow His kindness even more than we want to receive it.] Therefore, it is certain that the hard times I am going through are good and will

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1. Someone shared with me the following episode. He was having a phone conversation with a person going through challenging times. The conversation lasted quite long, with the other person elaborating on his hardships and challenges he was going through. He listened to him, hoping that his listening would somehow give his friend some chizuk.

In the middle of the conversation – it was already 2:00 am – the man (who was suffering) suddenly exclaimed with alarm, "What do I see here? A young child walking alone on the street at two in the morning! This is so dangerous! What can I do to help?"

However, a few moments afterwards, he calmed down and said, "The child isn't alone. I didn't realize that his parents were walking just a few steps behind him. They are watching over him and protecting him."

The next day, this man called again and said, "I couldn't fall asleep last night. I kept turning over and over in bed, thinking about the wonderful hashgachah pratis Hashem showed me. Last night, I was crying to you on the phone, feeling alone in the world. I felt like the two-year-old child walking down the street alone, without any care, without anyone helping me. But the child wasn't alone; his parents were walking behind him. I too must realize that I am not alone. Hashem is with me, caring for me, and protecting me from all harm.

eventually result in goodness. As it states (Yirmiyahu 30:7) וְנָעִת צָרָה הִיא לְיַעֲקֹב וּמִכְנָה יִשָּׁע, 'It is a

time of distress for Yaakov, and a salvation will come specifically from this hard time.'<sup>12</sup>

2. (Mishlei 19:21) רַבּוֹת מִחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּלֵב אִישׁ וְנִעְצָת ה' הִיא תִקּוּם, "There are many thoughts in man's heart, but Hashem's plan shall stand." One explanation of this pasuk is that Hashem uses the "thoughts in a man's heart" for His own plan. There are times that resha'im plot against the Jewish nation, also, there are times when a cruel person plans to harm his fellow man, and Hashem uses the wicked deeds themselves to bring about salvation.

Reb Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi zy'a, the rav of Toltchava, was the Yetev Lev's father-in-law. (At the end of his life, Reb Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi zy'a moved to Eretz Yisrael and lived in Tzfas.) Toltchava is a town near Uhel, where the Yismach Moshe zy'a lived. Once, the Yismach Moshe said that he had a dream that it would be suitable for his grandson, the Yetev Lev, to marry the daughter of Reb Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi, the rav of Toltchava.

The shidduch was finalized, and the rav of Toltchava agreed to provide a large dowry, as befitting for such an outstanding chassan. However, the rav of Toltchava was poor. (The Yetev Lev would say that the only thing he received from his father-in-law was a hole in the mikvah. This was because the mikvah, where they lived, was frozen, and the ice on top of the mikvah needed to be broken to tovel there. His father-in-law, who would awaken before him, broke the ice of the mikvah to tovel there. When the Yetev Lev got there, he didn't have to break the ice. He would say that this is the only gift he received from his shver.)

The custom at that time was that the date for the chasunah was decided after the father of the kallah paid up the dowry he promised to provide. The Yismach Moshe waited for the Toltchava rav to send the money for the dowry, but it never arrived. So, he wrote a letter to the Toltchava rav, asking him when he planned to send the dowry, because they wanted to begin planning the chasunah.

However, the Toltchava rav had no idea how he would get money for the dowry, so he didn't respond to the letter.

The region where the Yismach Moshe and the Toltchava rav lived, in Hungary, is known for the quality grapes that grow there, which are good for winemaking. Wine merchants would produce the wine and sell it all around the world. But to sell to Yidden, the merchant needed a letter from a rav confirming that the wine was made 100% according to halachah.

One wine merchant asked the Toltchava rav for such a letter, but he refused to give it to him. (He didn't refuse because he didn't know him; rather, on the contrary, he refused because he did know him, and he knew that he couldn't be trusted.) And since the wine merchant didn't receive this letter, he couldn't sell his wine.

This wine merchant was very angry at the Toltchava rav and decided to take revenge.

He heard about the shidduch and that the date of the chasunah was not yet set because the rav hadn't paid the dowry. This cruel man decided to use this as a weapon against the Toltchava rav.

He traveled to Uhel and went to the Yismach Moshe zt'l. The Yismach Moshe gave him shalom aleichem, and asked him where he is from. The man replied that he lived in Toltchava.

"In Toltchava?" the Yismach Moshe said. "Do you know my mechutan, the rav of Toltchava?"

The man replied, "I know him very well. He is extremely poor. Even if he sold all the items of his poor home, he wouldn't be able to provide the dowry." The wine merchant's evil intention was to tell the Yismach Moshe to forget about ever receiving the dowry money, and to call off the shidduch. The Yismach Moshe, however, reacted differently to this information. He immediately called his rebbetzin and said, "We have here a testimony from Toltchava. Our mechutan is very poor; he cannot pay the dowry. So, let's begin preparing for the chasunah. Waiting won't accomplish anything, because he won't have money for the dowry anyway. I will write a letter to the mechutan now, to tell him that we are setting a date for the chasunah."

So, it was מִחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּלֵב אִישׁ, this man had plans to ruin a shidduch, but נִעְצָת ה' הִיא תִקּוּם, Hashem used this person's plans, for the exact opposite of his evil desires.

"Similarly, it states (Tehillim 117:2) כִּי גִבֹר עָלֵינוּ הַחֶסֶד, 'For His kindness has overwhelmed us.' [The word גִּבֹר represents gevurah, midas

hadin, harsh judgment.] This means that, at times, Hashem leads His nation in a mode of גְבוּרָה, harsh judgment. Even so, I know

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Consider the following:

Someone wants to buy fresh fish and poultry for Shabbos, but the stores near his home don't carry fresh produce. The only store that sells fresh fish and poultry is far away, at the other end of town. He goes there in the heat of the day and buys a large order. He could barely walk home, under the weight of his purchases and due to the heat. He struggles to carry his precious fish and poultry, purchased in honor of Shabbos. When he got home, to his chagrin, he realized that he had taken someone else's order. His order was still in the store. Now he had to carry it all back... and then carry his own order home.

Woe to the person he meets on the way... He is so upset.

But how would he feel if, when he got home, Eliyahu HaNavi knocked on his door and asked him to deliver the package of fish and poultry to a house on the other side of town, and to bring home a different package? He would gladly do so. He would feel honored to fulfill the request of Eliyahu HaNavi!

Well, now he has an even greater opportunity, because he is fulfilling a mission for Hashem. It wasn't by chance that he brought home the wrong order, and now he has to make another trip to and back from the store, while carrying a heavy load. Hashem planned it, and for his good.

As he struggles under the heavy burden, he should feel privileged to be doing Hashem's will. What greater joy is there than that?

When we realize that everything is from Hashem, we become happy with our lot, including our spiritual portion. Some people are upset that they can't serve Hashem (in what they perceive to be) a better manner. But if they knew that Hashem planned their situation, they would be happy with the avodas Hashem that they can do. We will explain this with a parable:

Someone came to the king and said, "I admire the great king immensely, and I want to serve you. Send me on any mission, and I will fulfill it."

The king handed him an envelope and asked him to deliver it to the king of a faraway country. The loyal citizen is excited by the opportunity to serve the king and is determined to deliver the letter as quickly and as proficiently as possible. He calculates that the quickest route is by sea, but when he arrives at the port, he sees that the ship has just pulled out of the harbor. He calls to the sailors to return, but they ignore him. The next ship to that country is scheduled to leave in half a year.

Having no choice, he sets out for the distant country on horseback.

He feels devastated as he rides to the other country. He wanted to do the king's bidding, and now he must travel by land, which takes much longer.

Throughout the trip, he moans, "If only I had arrived at the port a few minutes earlier. If only I'd been swifter, I would have been able to do the king's will in the best way."

Now, let's change the story a bit. The king gave the letter to his loyal citizen and said, "I don't want you to travel by sea (although it's the shortest route) because there might be thieves on board, who might steal the letter from you. I want you to travel by land and deliver the letter..."

How would he feel during the long land journey? He would be happy with each part of the journey. Although it is far away, he knows he is carrying out the king's will with every leg of the journey.

The moral of the story is to believe that everything that happens to a person is *bashert*, planned from Above. One thinks, "If not for my circumstances, I would be able to serve Hashem better," but Hashem wants you to serve Him amidst your hardships and struggles. The situation you are in is the one that Hashem planned and chose for you.



that Hashem's chesed is concealed within the *gevurah*, because Hashem's way is to do kindness, and not bad, chas v'shalom. This is the meaning of *פי גבר*, even when Hashem is performing deeds of *gevurah*, harsh justice, *עלינו חסדו*, Bnei Yisrael know that for them it is Hashem's chesed. Within the *gevurah* is concealed Hashem's chesed. They know that (*Yirmiyahu 30:7*) *וְעַתָּה צָרָה הִיא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל*, even when they go through hard times, *וּמִמֶּנָּה יִשְׁעַע*, a salvation will emerge from the difficulties themselves.

"This is the way of the true *tzaddikim*, who are loyal to Hashem in their hearts. Whatever happens to them, whether it is good or bad, they don't say that their wisdom gave them success, or that the troubles that happened to them were because they lacked wisdom. They are bound to Hashem, the One Who decrees, with their 248 limbs and with their 365 sinews.

"However, those people who lack this *emunah* attribute their success to their intelligence. They think that their savviness brought them their success. And when the

wheel turns against them, and they suffer *r'l*, they forget that this, too, was from Hashem. They say that it happened because they weren't cautious enough. They attribute their problems to their poor choices.

"Therefore, it states in parashas *Masei* (33:4) *וּמִצְרַיִם מְקַבְּרִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר הָקָה ה' בָּהֶם* "The Egyptians were busy burying because Hashem had struck down their firstborn..." and Rashi clarifies *טרודים באבלם*, "They were occupied and totally involved and disturbed with their mourning."

Rashi is saying that the *Mitzrim* didn't realize that their suffering was from Hashem. They forgot about that. Their entire focus was on their *tzarah* and their mourning. But the truth is (*Yeshayah 63:9*) *בְּקָל צָרָתָם לוֹ צָר*, "In all their trouble, Hashem has distress."

Therefore, Rashi writes *טרודים באבלם*, they were occupied in *their* mourning. In comparison, *tzaddikim* aren't focused at all on their *tzaros*. Their focus is that the *tzarah* came from Above, and with that perspective, it is good for them in this world and the next.<sup>3</sup>

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3. In fact, many *Yidden* leaving *Mitzrayim* were also mourning because, as it states (*Shemos 13:18*) *וְהַמָּשִׁים עָלָיו* *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֲרָץ מִצְרַיִם*, and Rashi writes that *וְהַמָּשִׁים* teaches us that only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of *Yidden* left *Mitzrayim*. Others say that only 1/50, or 1/500 of *Yidden* left *Mitzrayim*. The remaining died during *makas choshech*. So, there were many *levayos*, and *Yidden* were in mourning. But they weren't *טרודים באבלם*, consumed in their mourning, as the *goyim* were. They kept the *halachos*, but didn't lose their peace of mind.

The *Yismach Yisrael zy'a* asks why the Torah obligates us with the laws of *aveilus*. Even without the *halachos* that the Torah and Chazal established, everyone would mourn. *L'havdil*, even *goyim* mourn at such times.

He answers that Hashem wants us to be happy at all times. Therefore, Hashem made mourning a *mitzvah*. And it says, (*Tehillim 19:9*) *פְּקוּדֵי ה' יִשְׁרִים מְשִׁמְחֵי לֵב*, "The *mitzvos* of Hashem are upright, causing the heart to rejoice." Now that mourning is a *mitzvah*, one can do it with the joy of a *mitzvah*.

At a *nichum aveilim*, the *Avnei Nezer zt'l* said that *אב"ל* is *roshei teivos* for *איך בין ליסטיג*, "I am happy." People asked him for a source, and he replied that the source is Rashi in *Gemara Succah*. He was referring to *Succah* (25a, Rashi *טרדה דרשות*). Rashi writes, "Although one is obligated to practice the laws of *aveilos*, such as not wearing shoes, and not washing to show honor to the dead, one isn't obligated to feel distress."

The *Chazon Ish zt'l* said the following in the name of the *Brisker Rav zt'l*: It is known that prophecy can come to *navi* only when he is happy. So, how did *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* receive the *nevuah* of *Megilas Eichah*? How could he receive and say the sad words of *Megilas Eichah*, and be in a state of *simchah*? This proves that mourning isn't necessarily a contradiction to happiness.

The *Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh* said that each person goes through the 42 journeys in his life, similar to the

The word צִיר has several translations. One interpretation can mean a *shaliach*, messenger (see Mishlei 25:13, צִיר נִשְׁלָח לְשִׁלְחָיו). A second translation of צִיר is pain (see Yeshayah 21:3, עַל כֵּן מָלְאוּ צִירִים אֶת־אָזְנוֹי קְצִירֵי יוֹלָכָה). This hints to us that the painful things we go through are messengers sent from Hashem, and their purpose is for our good. Then we merit the third translation of צִיר, which is a door hinge (see Mishlei 26:14, הִדְלָקָה צִיר). This means to know that all tzaros and hardships are a messenger, for our good. This awareness will open up all doors of salvation.<sup>4</sup>

### The Three Weeks

Chazal (Eichah Rabba 4:14) say that the Churban was very beneficial for Klal Yisrael because

"Hashem poured out his anger on wood and stone," and not on His holy nation, *chalilah*. This is related to our discussion above. With belief in hashgachah pratis, we understand that everything is for the good. Even the terrible Churban was good for Bnei Yisrael, as it granted them existence, until today.

The Arizal teaches that the months of Tamuz and Av correspond to the eyes. The Imrei Noam zt'l (ד"ה ויצא Masei) writes that this is to tell us that Hashem is always watching over us. His hashgachah never leaves us, not even in Tamuz and Av, at the time of the Churban, r'l.<sup>5</sup>

Rebbe Yitzchak of Neshchiz zy'a (Toldos Yitzchak) teaches, "Each year, during the days

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Jewish nation in the desert, who had 42 מסעות, travels (see Degel Machaneh Efraim, Masei). However, the Torah warns us (Vayikra 18:3) לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יֹשְׁבֵיהֶם בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ. "Like the deeds of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelled, you shall not do." This means don't be like them. They go through the life-journey טרודים באבל, occupied with their mourning. But the Jewish nation passes all situations with emunah in Hashem. They go through the trials of life with bitachon, yishuv hadaas, and joy.

4. At the end of parashas Masei, it is noted that the parashah contains 132 pasukim, and that the siman is מחלה (which is gematriya 132). The siman provided is unusual. Couldn't a happier siman have been used? Why use a siman which means illness? מחלה חולה are two words for illness!

Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l answers that מחלה isn't translated as "illness". It refers to one of the Bnos Tzelafchad, mentioned at the end of parashas Masei, as it states (36:11) ותהינה מחלה ותרצה וחלגה ומלכה ונעה בנות צלפחד. The pasuk tells us that the daughters of Tzelafchad (including Machlah) married their cousins.

Also, חולה doesn't mean illness, it means dancing, as Chazal tell us that on the fifteenth of Av, the girls would go out dancing במחול, in a circle. So, מחלה חולה, means Machlah got married and there was dancing.

Let us learn from this that when we think something is bad, an illness, or any other tzarah, r'l, be aware that if you look deeper, you will understand that it could be a reason for happiness.

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz zt'l needed to have surgery done in Berlin, Germany, and due to the circumstances of his illness, it had to be performed without anesthesia. While they were operating on him, he looked out the window and saw the beautiful buildings of Berlin. He was inspired to compose a song on the words, אזכרה אלקים ואהמיה בראותי כל עיר על תילה בנויה ועיר האלקים מושפלת עד שאול תחתיה, "I remember, Hashem, and I moan, when I see every city built upon their mountains, while the city of Hashem (Yerushalayim) is lowered to the lowest levels." This beautiful composition contains thirty-two stanzas. He composed it during the operation without anesthesia.

The doctor asked Reb Yisrael of Modzhitz how he was able to take such unfathomable pain so well.

The Rebbe replied, "Do you think I'm not human? I also feel the pain. But I turn each sensation of pain into a song for Hashem."

This is the way of a Yid who believes that everything is from Hashem, and for his good. The pain is felt, it isn't easy, but it is transformed into beautiful praises of gratitude to Hashem.

5. The Gemara (Taanis 21a) says that Nachum Ish Gam Zu was blind in both eyes. He was called Ish Gam



of the Three Weeks (Bein HaMetzarim), a very high level of chesed is revealed, for it is known that it was all for the good of Bnei Yisrael. Hashem poured out His wrath on wood and stone, and He didn't destroy Bnei Yisrael, chas ve'shalom. Immense love was aroused upon them, emanating from the uppermost, high worlds. Therefore, every year, once again, when these days arrive, this immense love is aroused and Hashem's love and compassion come to us and all of Bnei Yisrael."

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 23:1) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells them, all the forty years that you were in the desert, I protected you, and you never had to run and escape. I had your enemies fall before you... There were many snakes and scorpions in the desert, as it states (Devarim 8:15) נָחָשׁ וְשָׂרָף, 'snakes, vipers and scorpions', but I didn't allow them to harm you. Therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, 'Write down their travels, where Yisrael traveled in the desert, so they will know about the miracles I performed for them in the desert.'"

The Ruzhiner zt'l said that his father, Reb Shalom Shachna of Prohibitsh zy'a, said that from the three weeks, he knows how the *yomim noraim* will be. And I say that the Three Weeks are like the diamonds that grow under the mountains of darkness. Although there is darkness, they shine brightly. When Moshiach comes, and the moon will shine as brightly as the sun shines, the Three Weeks will be *yomim tovim*. This is because the Three Weeks correspond to the שלש רגלים. Hashem yisbarach knows that when I was young and I had strength, each day of the Three Weeks, I felt a new light.

Chazal (Brachos 60b) say, כל מה דעבד רחמנא לטב, עבד, that everything Hashem does is for the good, and their intention was regarding the Three Weeks. These are days of yeridah for Yisrael, but it is all for the good."

### "According to the Word of Hashem"

In this parashah, the forty-two stops the Yidden made in the desert are recorded, as it states (33:2) ויכתב משה את מוצאיהם למסעיהם על פי ה', "Moshe wrote..." מסעיהם, where they traveled to, מוצאיהם, and from where they traveled.

מוצאיהם means the departure location, from where they traveled. But מוצאיהם can also be translated as "what happened to them" (see Yehoshua 2:23). Accordingly, we can explain the pasuk as follows: People think that what happened to them (מוצאיהם) is due to their travels (מסעיהם). If they travel somewhere and succeed, they attribute their success to traveling there. The Torah corrects them. מוצאיהם... על פי ה', what happened to them was due to Hashem's decree. It wasn't because of their travels.

To explain, we give the following example. One of the forty-two travels and stopovers the Yidden made in the desert was in Marah (see 33:8). Marah means bitter. It was called Marah because of the bitter, undrinkable water that was there (see Shemos 15:23). They thought they didn't have potable water because they came to Marah. But the truth is, they didn't have drinkable water because it was bashert for them not to have it. It wasn't *the place* that caused them the difficulty, rather, it was the decree, planned from Above. It was because of that decree

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Zu because he always said גם זו לטובה. The Darkei Teshuvah (Munkatch) zy'a quotes from mekubalim that the months of Tamuz and Av represent the eyes. In these months occurred the great churban, but it was undoubtedly for the good. Only we are like the blind who don't see and don't understand. Now, we only see the tremendous suffering, the bitter galus, etc. But in the future, we will see with our eyes the great chesed that was concealed within these tzaros. Nachum Ish Gam Zu was blind in both eyes, and he always said גם זו לטובה. This is a *remez* that even during the months of Tamuz and Av, which represent the eyes, and even if we are now blind and don't see Hashem's kindness, but he should nevertheless proclaim with emunah sheleimah גם זו לטובה, this too is for the good.

that they arrived at Marah. Their next stop brought them to Eilam. The Torah says in this week's parashah (33:9) ובאים שתיים עשרה עינת מים ושבעים תמרים ויהנו שם "In Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there." Here, they had plenty of water. Hashem could have brought them initially to Eilam, but it was all planned from above that they must first suffer the test of thirst.

We can now explain the pasuk, ויכתב מִשֶּׁשׁ אֶת מוֹצְאֵיהֶם לְמִסְעֵיהֶם עַל פִּי ה' וְאֵלֶּה מִסְעֵיהֶם לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם מוֹצְאֵיהֶם לְמִסְעֵיהֶם changes their order in this pasuk. It can be explained as follows: People think מוֹצְאֵיהֶם לְמִסְעֵיהֶם, that what happens to them is because of where their travels take them to. Actually, וְאֵלֶּה מִסְעֵיהֶם לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם, it was destined for them to travel there, because this had to happen to them.

When Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch *zt'l* was living in Telz, Lithuania, he would go to the stores on erev Shabbos to encourage the storeowners to close before Shabbos. Once, he smacked a non-religious Yid for keeping his store open on Shabbos. That person was eventually promoted and served in the government. Reb Bloch feared that now that he was a high-ranking official, he would take revenge on him, so Reb Eliyahu Meir fled from Telz to Cleveland, Ohio, and re-established the Telz Yeshiva. At the *Chanukas Habayis*, Reb Eliyahu Meir said, "I thought I was fleeing from the government official, but I discovered that Hashem sent me here to save me

from the Holocaust, and so I can establish a yeshiva in America." He traveled to America for his own reasons, but Hashem had His plan.

Reb Eliyahu Meir added the following *Dvar Torah*:

The *Navi* says that Yonason (the son of Shaul HaMelech) arranged a code with Dovid HaMelech so he would know if Shaul was planning to kill him. Yonason said he would shoot an arrow and send his aide to fetch it. If Yonason tells his aide that the arrow is מִמֶּךָּ, "further away from you," that will be Dovid's sign that he should run away because Shaul wants to kill him. And if Yonason says, "Come towards me, the arrow isn't so far," this would be Dovid's sign that he can return home.

Let's focus on Yonason's words. He said (I Shmuel 20:22), ואם כה אמר לעלם הנה החצים ממך והלאה, "לך כי שלחך ה'." "If I tell the lad, 'The arrows are further away,' go because Hashem is sending you." Yonason didn't say, "Go because my father wants to kill you." Instead, "Go because Hashem is sending you."

Similarly, Reb Eliyahu Bloch explained that Hashem wanted him to flee from Telz so he and his family would survive, and so he could open a Telz yeshiva in America. He thought he was fleeing from the government official, but that was just the tool Hashem used to get him to travel. Ultimately, he traveled because this was Hashem's will.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Someone came to the Rebbe of Kotzk and said, "I used to be wealthy, but I lost all my money, and my wife died. When I was wealthy, I used to buy a lottery ticket every week, and the maid who worked for me would also buy one, and I would check both tickets to see if we won. I continued this habit even after I lost my money. One day, I checked the numbers of our tickets and saw that the maid had won the lottery. Now that she was wealthy, I wanted to marry her to share the wealth. But I realized that if she knew she had become wealthy, she wouldn't agree to marry me. She would want to marry someone wealthy like herself. So, I didn't tell her that she had won the lottery. I kept that a secret and hired a *shadchan* to ask her to marry me. She agreed, thinking that I, at least, had more money than she had. Shortly after the wedding, I told her that she had won the lottery and that we were rich. She replied, 'But what can I do? I sold the rights of that lottery ticket to my father.'

"That is why I came here now," this man explained to the Rebbe of Kotzk. "I only married her because I thought she was wealthy. Now that she is poor, I want to divorce her."

The word והקרייתם is found in this week's parashah (35:11). והקרייתם sometimes means by chance (from the root word מקרה), and in this week's parashah, Rashi writes that it means "prepared."<sup>7</sup> This teaches us that the matters that seem to have happened by *chance* were *prepared* and arranged by Hashem, because nothing happens by chance.

The *Mishnas Chasidim* writes, - כי אמר מקרה - בלתי טהור הוא (I Shmuel 20:26), if someone says that something happened by chance, that person is impure because he lacks the fundamental awareness that Hashem plans and arranges everything.

Tzaddikim said that מקרה, happenings, can be unscrambled to read רק מה, only from Hashem.

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The Kotzker replied, "Haven't you grasped by now how Hashem runs the world? He made you poor, took your wife away, made the maid win the lottery, all so you should marry her, and now you want to divorce her?!"

A yungerman lived in an apartment building where many neighbors were building and adding rooms to their apartments. The constant construction (noise, dust, etc.) disturbed this yungerman's peace of mind so much that he decided to sell his apartment and move elsewhere. But in his new home, his troubles followed him. His neighbors were extremely noisy. Despite his numerous requests, they kept their late hours and noisy lifestyle. He could hardly fall asleep at night from the noise. He regretted selling his first apartment. It was much better there than where he lived now.

So he bought a third apartment. It was small for his family, so he hired a contractor to add another room. But then a new problem arose. One of his new neighbors complained that the added room was blocking his sunlight, so even before he moved in, he already had an enemy in the building.

After trying and failing three times to find a peaceful home, he concluded that it was bashert from Heaven that he must suffer from his neighbors. Moving wouldn't solve the problem because what was meant to happen would happen. It is impossible to escape Hashem's hashgachah. Furthermore, he realized that he shouldn't complain about the place where Hashem put him because if Hashem placed him there, it was best for him. It might be challenging and hard to serve Hashem there, but that is his job, and succeeding at it would lift him to incredible heights.

An opponent of the Rebbe of Gustantyn zy'a became ill, and the Rebbe davened extensively and fervently for his *refuah*. Someone asked the Rebbe, "Do you really need him so much? He is your opponent!"

The Rebbe replied, "If it is decreed on me that I must endure opposition, it will happen. If the opposition doesn't come from him, it will come from someone else. However, I am already accustomed to his *hisnagdas* (opposition). I prefer that he recovers, rather than to have to deal with someone else's opposition, which will be challenges I'm not accustomed to."

We often don't know why we must go through hard times and challenges; however, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l said that in the future, everything will be explained. We will be told why we had to go through what we did. And then we will laugh at how worried and upset we were at the time. Then we will see that everything was for our benefit.

שמור sometimes means to wait (see Bereishis 37:11). Using this translation, Rebbe Boruch of Mezhibuz zt'l taught (*Tehillim* 107:43): מי חכם וישמר אלה: "He who is wise will wait patiently until he understands the reasons behind everything that happened to him." ויתבוננו חסדי ה' "and then he will recognize that everything was Hashem's kindness."

It is written, עוד מעט וסקלני, "a drop more and they will stone me" (*Shemos* 17:4). Stoning, in Yiddish, is באשטיינערן, which sounds similar to פארשטיין, to understand. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l explained, עוד מעט וסקלני, wait a drop longer, and everything will be understood. Right now, you don't understand why things are as they are, but there will come a time when everything will make sense.

7. It states (35:11) והקרייתם לכם ערי מקלט, and Rashi writes, אין הקריה אלא לשון הזמנה, "The translation of והקרייתם is to prepare." So the translation of the pasuk is "Prepare for yourself *arei miklat*."



### Serving Hashem with Hislahavus

It states (Matos 31:23) כָּל דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יָבֵא בָאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ "Whatever is used in fire you shall pass through fire and then it will be clean." After the war against Midyan, the Yidden brought back cooking and eating utensils, and the Torah tells us what the nation had to do to purify the utensils, so that they could use them. One purification process was to purge the utensils in fire.

The *miforshim* add that this process will also purify a person from aveiros.<sup>8</sup> *Siduro Shel Shabbos* explains that fire represents the fire of *hislahavus*. *Hislahavus* purifies a person

and removes all aveiros that he performed due to the fire that is within him, which draws him to aveiros. *Siduro Shel Shabbos* explains that the holy fire to do Hashem's will is the fire of the Shechinah (see Yoma 21b, (ויש אש אוכלת אש דשכינה). This fire consumes all the other fires, the fire of Gehinnom and the fire of the yetzer hara.

We quote his holy words, "This fire [of hislahavus for avodas Hashem] consumes the fire of the yetzer hara and Gehinnom.<sup>9</sup> He will not desire bad *taavos* and aveiros, which he had desired until then. With the hislahavus to serve Hashem, all bad *taavos* and all *kelipos*

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8. The pasuk that begins the discussion on how to purify utensils states (31:21) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן אֶל אַנְשֵׁי הַצָּבָא הַבָּאִים "Elazar the kohen said to the soldiers returning from battle, "This is the law of the Torah that Hashem commanded Moshe." Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l (Darash Moshe) asks why it states וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן אֶל אַנְשֵׁי הַצָּבָא הַבָּאִים, "This is the law of the Torah"? It sounds like an introduction to halachos that have a connection with the entire Torah, but it is exclusively about הַנֶּעֱלָת כֵּלִים, purifying utensils from forbidden foods. Why should this be called הַנֶּעֱלָת כֵּלִים? The answer is that this parashah teaches us a fundamental lesson related to the entire Torah. Just as cooking utensils can be purged and purified from the issur that were in them, so too, can a Yid do teshuvah and purify himself from the tumah that he contracted due to his aveiros.

9. After World War Two, the Brisker Rav zt'l traveled to Eretz Yisrael with his five sons and two daughters (Rebbetzin Feinstein and Rebbetzin Shiff). His rebbetzin and two of his daughters were niftara during the war, r'l. Rebbetzin Shiff, at this time, was seven years old. She missed her mother terribly, and she had only one item from her mother, which she guarded with all her heart. It was a necklace her mother used to wear. The necklace was broken, it couldn't be worn, but the girl kept this necklace with her, near her heart, at all times – when she slept and wherever she went.

The ship that brought them to Eretz Yisrael arrived ten minutes after shkiyah. Obviously, because of the prohibition of carrying on Shabbos, they couldn't carry their belongings off the ship. They all wore as much clothing as they could, and left the rest of their belongings on the ship.

But now came the question of how to convince the young girl to part from the last remembrance she has of her mother. The Brisker Rav, with his wisdom, was able to convince his daughter that keeping Shabbos is more important than the necklace. This is what he said to her (as retold by Rebbetzin Shiff, years later).

First, the Rav hugged her lovingly and spoke with her about the specialness of the memorial item she has from her mother. Then he said, "But we love Shabbos even more than the necklace," and in this way, he warmed up her heart to love Shabbos, and she agreed to leave the ship without her necklace.

Rebbetzin Shiff said, "Are there any words that can convince a young girl to depart from a necklace, which in her eyes was her connection to her mother, whom she loved so dearly? But my father introduced me to the love for Shabbos, and to realize that our love for Shabbos was greater than all other loves. That helped win the battle and keep the sanctity of Shabbos intact.

She added that this is the meaning of the tefillah we say on Shabbos, והנחילנו ה' אלקינו באהבה וברצון שבת קדש, when there is love for Shabbos, והנחילנו, we can inherit and keep Shabbos with all its details.

There are many material matters we feel attached to, but if we increase our love for our Father in heaven, this love will give us the strength to overcome all other desires and loves, and do Hashem's will.

that surround him melt like wax. It will be as it states (Ovadyah 1:18) וְהָיָה בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֵשׁ וּבֵית יוֹסֵף לֶהָרֶבֶת וּבֵית עֵשָׂו לְקֶשׁ, "The house of Yaakov shall be fire and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Esav shall become stubble, and they shall ignite them and consume them..."<sup>10</sup>

As we wrote, the nation had to purify the cooking and food utensils they took from *Midyan*. Three forms of purification are mentioned in this section in the Torah (see 31:21-24). They are (1) mikvah, (2) הַגְעֵלָה, purging in boiling water, and (3) לִיבּוֹן, purifying and sterilizing with fire. The Or HaChaim Hakadosh zy'a (Rishon l'Tzion on Mishlei 2:7) writes that these three forms of purifications correspond to the teshuvah we need for the three categories of aveiros. Some aveiros need mikvah, some need a concept similar to הַגְעֵלָה, and some need the concept of לִיבּוֹן, fire.

For example, the Or HaChaim HaKadosh writes, "Tevilah in a mikvah of forty sa'ah will help for bad thoughts, which one shouldn't have thought about. He must immerse himself in forty sa'ah, and that will remove the thought."<sup>11</sup>

For non-kosher foods, he says that the cure and teshuvah is הַגְעֵלָה, which he explains means to fast. "Because with the fast, his entire body becomes hot, he sweats, and that pushes out the *issur* (the forbidden foods that he ate)..."<sup>12</sup>

We will now discuss לִיבּוֹן, which generally means to purify with fire. The Or HaChaim writes, "Anger, and not believing in the words of Chazal, are among the aveiros that are performed with fire... The cure is לִיבּוֹן, which means to study Torah constantly, with toil, because Torah is fire. With the fire of Torah, he will remove the forbidden aveirah that became soaked up into his body, due to his aveirah."

It states in *Shemonah Esrei*, in the tefillah of נחם that we say on Tisha b'Av: כִּי אַתָּה ה' בָּאֵשׁ הִצַּתָּהּ וּבָאֵשׁ אַתָּה עֹתִיד לִבְנוֹתָהּ. This means the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt with fire. We can explain that the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt with the fire of yearning for Hashem that is in the hearts of all Yidden.

Zera Kodesh (Vayeitzei וַיֵּצֵא ר"ה) writes, "(Tehillim 147:2) בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַם ה' "Hashem is the builder of Yerushalayim." It is written in the present tense because Hakadosh Baruch Hu is

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**10.** The Sfas Emes (Vayishlach 5640) writes, "With a person's hislahavus for Torah and avodah, he sends arrows of fire to the enemies of Bnei Yisrael."

The Gemara (Brachos 32b) states, "From when the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, a partition made of iron separates Bnei Yisrael from their father in heaven." We have to tear down this wall, but how? Reb Chaim Alter Panet, zt'l, in his sefer אשׁוּשׁוֹת חַיִּים answers that Chazal teach us that fire can breach strong iron. So, with the fire of hislahavus, we can remove the barrier that separates us from our Father in heaven.

The Kedushas Levi writes that when a person sins, chas v'shalom, he makes a *pgam*, blemish, above, and it gives strength to the Sitra Achara. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Vayikra 21:9) וּבֵית אִישׁ כִּהְיוֹן כִּי תִהְיֶה לְזִנוּת, if a person begins performing aveiros, chalilah, אֵת אִמְיָהּ הִיא כְּחֻלָּה, she brings disgrace to her father in heaven. The solution is בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹף. "Through the hislahavus that one has afterwards while serving Hashem, all the kelipos will burn up."

**11.** The Gemara (Yoma 29a) says, הַרְהוּרֵי עֲבִירָה קָשִׁים מֵעֲבִירָה, "Thinking about an aveirah is worse than performing the aveirah itself." Sfas Emes (Ha'azinu 5634) makes a kal v'chomer. If thinking about an aveirah is worse than performing an aveirah, we can deduce that thinking and yearning to perform a mitzvah is greater than performing the mitzvah itself!

**12.** Tzaddikim taught that in these generations, we have become weak and are unable to fast too much. But we don't have to worry. Hashem arranges other tikunim and rectifications to purify us from all our aveiros.

constantly building the Beis HaMikdash with the good deeds we do. As it states **וּבְנָה** ובנה, that with **יָמֵינוּ**, our days, the Beis HaMikdash is being built, every day. With the mitzvos we perform daily, the Beis HaMikdash is being built up, every day, a little more, until it is entirely built, through our noble deeds in galus.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, the Zera Kodesh (Ki Seitzei **וְהָיָה כִּי תִבְנֶה**) writes, "Every day, when a Yid serves Hashem, he is building up Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash. There is a person who builds an entire row, and there is another who might put up one brick. This is being done by every Yid who serves Hashem, until the Beis HaMikdash will be entirely built up."

Birchas Shalom of Ashlag zy'a, adds that bricks need cement. As it states (Shabbos 102b), "When one person places a brick and another person puts in the cement, the person who places the cement is *chayav*." The one who placed cement is the one who desecrated Shabbos because a brick, without cement, doesn't last. So, if our good deeds are like bricks that build the third Beis HaMikdash, what is the cement, and how do we bring this cement to the wall? The answer is that it's the joy, *chiyus*, and *hislahavus* we have when we perform mitzvos. These connect us to the mitzvos, and connect the mitzvos with one another. This builds the Beis HaMikdash. May it be built speedily in our days.

## Takanos of Chazal and the Gedolei HaDor

**וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל רָאשֵׁי הַמִּטּוֹת לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר זֶה (30:2)** **הַדִּבָּר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'** Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael, saying: "This is the thing Hashem has commanded."

The question is why it doesn't state **וַיְדַבֵּר** at the beginning of this parashah, as it generally does?

Sefer HaChaim (from the brother of the Maharal of Prague *zt'l*) explains, "This is to teach us that the *takanos* that the heads of Bnei Yisrael establish as a **סִיּוּג**, a gate, when the times and the needs require it, are also **הַדִּבָּר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'** Hashem's command."

In other words, Moshe told Bnei Yisrael that when the **רָאשֵׁי הַמִּטּוֹת לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, leaders of Bnei Yisrael, of each generation, establish *takanos* and *gedarim* to protect the holiness of Klal Yisrael, it is as if they were commanded from Hashem, Himself to keep these safeguards, and we are obligated to keep them.

Similarly, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* writes, "Moshe told Bnei Yisrael regarding the **רָאשֵׁי הַמִּטּוֹת**, the leaders of Bnei Yisrael. The Jewish nation should consider their decrees as **זֶה הַדִּבָּר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'** Hashem's command... **כִּי מִסְתַּמָּא**... **רוּחַ ה' נִוְסְסָה בְּרוּעָה צֶאֱן קִדְשִׁים**, We can assume that Hashem's spirit is within the leaders of the holy Jewish nation," and when they make a decree, it was inspired by Hashem. Therefore, we must uphold their *takanos* and *gedarim*.<sup>14</sup>

**13.** Just as mitzvos build the Beis HaMikdash, we understand that aveiros, chalilah, prevent and disrupt the building of the Beis HaMikdash, chalilah. The Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:1) states, **כָּל דּוֹר שֶׁלֹּא נִבְנָה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּיָמָיו**, כֵּאלִילוֹ נִהְרַב בְּיָמָיו, "Every generation, that the Beis HaMikdash wasn't built in their days, it is as though it was destroyed in their days." We can explain this in the manner that the Ropshitzer Rav explained the words, **וּבְנָה** ובנה אותה בקרוב בימיו, that the Beis HaMikdash is built **בְּיָמֵינוּ**, with our days. Similarly, we say that if the Beis HaMikdash wasn't built **בְּיָמָיו**, with the mitzvos he performed in his lifetime, כֵּאלִילוֹ נִהְרַב, it is like it was destroyed, **בְּיָמָיו**, due to what he did with his days.

**14.** In a drashah, someone described how foolish people are when they think they are wiser than the chachamim. He said: "Imagine someone enters a beis medresh and sees on the wall a large sign, a **קוֹל קוֹרָא**, declaring that from now on, it is forbidden to eat chicken with milk, as a safeguard to protect people from eating cattle meat with milk, which is a Torah prohibition.

The person reading the announcement says in a loud voice and a mocking tone, "Did you see what they wrote here? I don't know what the rav knows and what the rav doesn't know, but one thing I do know.



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The rav knows nothing about meat. I ate meat every day. (Even in the Nine Days, I make sure to get to a siyum so that I can eat meat. On a fast day, I ate meat at night.) This has been my custom as long as I can remember. I am an authority when it comes to meat. And I can say confidently that there is no comparison at all between poultry and cattle meat. They are different in taste, texture, sight, and in several other ways. What do the rabbanim want from us?"

Whoever reads this story immediately says, "Woe to this person. Does he consider himself an equal to the chachamim, to feel confident that he can cancel their words when he doesn't understand something? Chazal understood that people will make mistakes and confuse meat with chicken, and therefore they forbade it. Who is he to disagree?"

Everyone understands this. So, why, when it comes to the gezeiros and takanos that are established in this generation, do people consider themselves wiser than the chachamim?

Shem MiShmuel (Moadim, last letter, written at the end of the sefer) writes, "You definitely remember what you heard from me several times. The primary Yiddishkeit is that a person must be *batel* (and to accept) the daas Torah of talmidei chachamim – even when they tell you that your left is your right. This attitude, to be batel to daas Torah is יותר מהכל שווה more valuable than anything else."

It states (32:24) בְּנוּ לָכֶם עָרִים לְטַפְּכֶם וְגִדְרֹת לְצִנְאֵיכֶם, "Build yourselves cities for your children and enclosures for your sheep." גִּדְרֹת alludes to the gedarim, gates that are erected to keep us far from aveiros. The Tzemech Tzaddik (Viznitz) zt'l explains that we learn from this pasuk that due to the gedarim, gates and boundaries, Klal Yisrael are called צֹאנֵי הַשֵּׁם, Hashem's sheep, צֹאן מִרְעֵי.

Chazal say, "Whoever transgresses the words of Chachamim, is *chayiv misah* (deserves the death penalty)." Why are the rules of the chachamim so severe? It is because they are boundaries for the Torah.

Reb Yonason Eibshitz zt'l explains this with a mashal: if someone is speaking with the king, and he had permission to do so, and he suddenly spits in the king's face, he will be arrested immediately, but he won't be put to death. First, there will be a trial. However, if there are gates around the palace, and someone jumps over the barriers to get to the palace, he will be shot on the spot. No one knows where he is going and what he plans to do, so he is considered a grave danger, and he will be shot immediately. This is why it is so severe to transgress the takanos of Chazal. He is liable to fall very steeply, and he is in grave danger. Unfortunately, this is prevalent in this generation. May Hashem protect us and our children, and lead us on the correct path.