

THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION
IN MEMORY OF CLARA CHOPP A"H

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE
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IN MEMORY OF CLARA CHOPP A"H

חיה ריזל בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה

In Memoriam

טוב שם משמון טוב ויום המוות מיום הולדו

לזכר עולם יחקק בספר את נשמת

רבי פינחס בן גרז שלבי ז"ל

"We should remember that **this entire institution was started by one man - Pinchas Shelby**. He was the one who thought this up, from the very beginning. ... And it was his initiative to spread the tapes to the world. **The tapes spread across the world because of him**. It was his vision from the beginning; he thought about it before anyone else did. ... **Our thanks, our gratitude and our blessings go out to Reb Pinchas Shelby; we wish him and his family hatzlocha and brocha le'orech yomim tovim.**"

-Rav Avigdor Miller: Tape 300 (February 1980)



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WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

LEARNING FROM SUBSTITUTES

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Part I. Fear and Premonition

What's Bothering Rashi

I want to begin by quoting a possuk in this week's *sedrah*. Hashem is speaking to Moshe Rabbeinu, and He tells him what's going to happen as the *makkos* unfold. “אֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה אֶת לֵב פַּרְעֹה” – *I’m going to make Pharaoh’s heart hard*” (Shemos 7:3). I’m going to make him stubborn, and that’s going to bring even more troubles upon him.”

Now, Hashem didn’t do that right away. In the first five *makkos*, it doesn’t say that Hashem strengthened Pharaoh’s heart; he was an *akshan* all by himself. וַיַּחֲזֶק לֵב פַּרְעֹה – *Pharaoh strengthened his own heart* (*ibid.* 22). וַיַּחֲזֶק לֵב פַּרְעֹה – *and he strengthened his heart* (*ibid.* 15). Again and again, he sinned on his own. And finally Hashem said, “That’s enough. From now on, וַיַּחֲזֶק ה’ אֶת לֵב פַּרְעֹה” – *I’m*

going to harden his heart (ibid. 9:12). Even if he would want to submit, I won't let him."

Now Rashi is bothered by that; he wants to know if that's fair. Is there a *yosher* to make Pharaoh's heart hard and then make him suffer for it? You, Hashem, are the One Who made his heart hard. You didn't let him change. So where is the *yosher* to punish him?

A Forever Plan

So listen to what Rashi says about that. He says that it was for the benefit of the Am Yisroel. **מֵאַחֵר שֶׁהָרָשָׁע וְהַתְּרִיס כִּנְגְדִי** – Since Pharaoh was such a big *rasha* until now and he rebelled against what I told him to do, **וְגַלְיָי לִפְנֵי שְׂאֵין נִחַת רוּחַ בְּאוֹמוֹת** – and I know that there's no hope anymore from him, **לָתֵת לִבּוֹ שָׁלוֹם לְשׁוֹב** – to come back in *teshuvah*. Pharaoh is already too tough in his wickedness and therefore **טוֹב לִי שֶׁיִּתְקַשֶּׁה לִבּוֹ** – it's better for Me to make his heart hard from now on, **לְמַעַן הָרְבוֹת בּוֹ אוֹתוֹתַי** – in order I should bring extraordinary punishment upon him, **וְתִכְּיֶרְוּ אֶת גְּבוּרָוֹתַי** – and you will recognize My mighty acts.

And it's not a one time thing, says Rashi. **וְכֵן מִדְּתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** – That's what *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* does always. **מְבִיא פּוֹרְעָנוּת עַל הָאוֹמוֹת** – He brings misfortune on the nations, **כִּי שִׁשְׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל** – so that Yisroel should listen, **וְיִירָאוּ** – and they should be afraid.

Who Are You Really?

Now, what is the purpose of this fear? So we'll introduce the subject with a Gemara in *Mesichta Megilla* (3a). They quote there a *possuk* from Daniel: **וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי דָנִיֵּאל לְבַדִּי אֶת הַמַּרְאָה** – I, Daniel, alone saw a certain vision, **וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עִמִּי לֹא רָאוּ אֶת הַמַּרְאָה** – and the men who were with me did not see the vision. **אֲבָל חִרְדָּה גְּדוֹלָה נָפְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם** – But even so, a great trembling fell upon them, **וַיִּבְרְחוּ בְּהַחֲבֹא** – and they fled into hiding (10:7). Daniel is relating that he was once in the company of three important men when a vision appeared to him and not to them. And still, even though his companions didn't see anything, a great fear fell upon them.

So the Gemara asks, **מָאי טַעְמָא אֵיבַעֲיָתוּ** – if they didn't see, **וְכִי מֵאַחֵר דְּלֹא חָזוּ** – why were they frightened? If you don't see a danger, you can't be afraid.

And the Gemara answers, **אֲפִי עַל גַּב דְּאֵינְהוּ לֹא חָזוּ** – even though they didn't see, **מִזְלִיהוּ חָזוּ** – their *mazal* saw.

Now the word '*mazal*' we can explain perhaps as the alter-ego; there is another personality that everybody has, a subconscious personality. You're a dual personality, what you think you are and what you really are. And what you really are can sometimes sense things that your conscious being cannot sense. And so their second personality – you can call it 'intuition'

if you want, but that doesn't really tell the whole story – this intuition told them there was something to be very much afraid of.

Undiagnosed Trembling

Now, **אָמַר רַבִּינָא** – when Ravina heard this whole story, he said, **שָׁמַע מִינֵהּ** – *we hear from this* a certain lesson: **הָאִי מֵאֵן דְּמִבְּעִית** – *If a man is frightened,* **אִף עַל גַּב דְּאִיהוּ לֹא חָזִי** – *even though he doesn't see why he should be afraid;* he doesn't know what it is that's causing this fear, **מְזַלִּיהּ חָזִי** – *but he should know that his mazal sees something.* His second personality senses that there's something to be afraid of.

Now, I have to say this Gemara only with the utmost caution because people who are a little bit emotionally disturbed can misinterpret this and get off balance. So don't worry about it unless you're a very capable person; otherwise forget about it.

This is said only to people with solid good sense – if something comes to you as a premonition, you don't know why you have a certain feeling of something to be afraid of, you should know there is something to be afraid of.

Dealing with Fear

The question is, **מַאי תַּקְנִיתָהּ** – what should you do about it? If you saw the peril, then you would know what to do; but if you don't see it, what should you do?

So the Chachomim give us three alternatives. You understand that the first is the best, the second is the second-best option, and the third is the number three.

Number one is **לִיקְרִי קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע** – *let him say Krias Shema.* It's the very best. The first thing to do in a time of peril is to remember Hakadosh Baruch Hu. **שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל** – *Pay attention! Think about this,* **יִשְׂרָאֵל** – *Hashem is our Elokeinu!* That's most important. Think about Hashem. **ה' אֶחָד** – *He's the only One; anything that happens, He's the One Who made it happen.*

Now we have to understand that in the following way. Why does Hakadosh Baruch Hu cause things to happen to people? Only for one purpose, in order to remind them that He is still around. When everything goes smoothly, after a while, you forget about Hakadosh Baruch Hu. So if you keep reminding yourself always, you don't have to be nudged. But if you forget, sometimes Hakadosh Baruch Hu has to remind you, and you cry out to Hashem. “Oh,” Hashem says, “if you remember Me, you reminded yourself about Me, then I don't mind listening to you.” As long as you cry

out, He'll listen to you. So the purpose of everything that happens in this world is to make you cry out to Hashem, to be reminded about Him.

Happy Crying

Now, people who are regular customers here know, there are two ways of crying out to Hashem. If you cry out to Hashem in happiness, it's even better. If you cry out to Hashem when things are going well — let's say you have no headache and you cry out to Hashem, "I thank You, no headache!" Or "I thank You. No heart trouble. I thank You, I have two good kidneys. I thank You for so many things," and you keep on thanking Hashem, so He says, "Well, if you're reminding yourself about Me, I don't have to remind you."

But people who forget sometimes have to be reminded. So they have a pain in the side and they go to the specialist and he says, "You need a biopsy. I have to send you for a scan." Ooh, that's a *pachad*! So you get busy crying out to Hashem that it should turn out right. You have to know that was the purpose — the only purpose is to make you cry out to Hashem.

And therefore, when a man finds himself in a situation that he doesn't understand, he feels a premonition of *sakanah*, *chalilah*, and he doesn't know what, let him remind himself about Hashem.

The Second Prescription

But suppose, the Gemara continues, that you can't do that. וְאִי קָאָם – *בְּמָקוֹם הַטָּמֵא* – Suppose you're standing in a place that's not clean, where you cannot say *divrei Torah*. You can't say Krias Shema, so what should you do? What's the second-best remedy? How can he ward off the danger that is fast approaching? לְנִשּׁוֹף מִדְּכַתָּה אַרְבַּע גֵּרְמִיּוֹת – *Let him leap four amos away from where he's standing.*

How does that help? Well, that in itself is only the beginning because when somebody wants to save himself, he has to improve — he has to make a change in his way of life. But at least one of the changes that he should consider is moving, *golus*. גָּלוּת מְכַפֶּרֶת – Exile is a *kaparah* for everything, the Gemara (Berachos 56a) says.

Now if you live in a neighborhood where all the people are *shomrei mitzvos*, don't think of exiling to a different place far away from a Jewish neighborhood. No, that kind of exile is just the opposite. But suppose you live way out in Long Island, then you should go into *golus* and go to a *frum* neighborhood. Go into exile to Flatbush. Even better, go to Boro Park. It's very important to understand that.

Remember The Landlord

But even if you're in the *frummet* neighborhood and even if you're the *frummet* person, but when a man is settled and comfortable, even in a good place, he forgets. He forgets that he is not the *baal habayis*. He's only a visitor. Even though we have a beautiful home and it's paid up, the whole mortgage, it's not yours. **כִּי גֵרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים אַתֶּם עִמָּדִי** – “You're only strangers and tenants with Me,” Hashem says (Vayikra 25:23). **כִּי לִי הָאָרֶץ** – “The world belongs to Me.”

And so when you move four *amos*, that's at least a beginning. The place where you're standing is a comfortable place. It's your *daled amos* and you feel like a *gavra*, a boss, in your place. No, that's not conducive to *teshuva*. So move. At least a little bit move away from your place and that should remind you that you're not an owner in this world; you're only a visitor.

The Interesting Segulah

And now we come to the third option, and we'll see soon it's the story of the Rashi we began our talk with. **וְאִי לֹא** – Suppose you can't do that either. Suppose, besides for being in a dirty place, he's also in prison – the good old prison where he has a heavy iron ball and chain on his feet – and now he has a premonition of some *sakanah chalilah*. But he can't jump, he can't move. And he can't say Krias Shema either; it's dirty. I once went to visit a man like that. He was in the hospital and he couldn't *daven* or say Krias Shema because the room was dirty. There was a dirty bedpan there. And he couldn't move either – he was bedridden.

So what should you do? **לֵימָא הָכִי** – As the last resort, the third prescription, he should do this. He should say, **עֵיזָא דְּבִי טְבָחִי שְׂמִינָא מְנָאִי** – The goat that's in the slaughterhouse is fatter than I am.”

It means, “Why are You looking at me? Aren't there others who can be punished instead of me? Isn't there someone who's already been fattened for the slaughter whom you can go to?”

It's an interesting thing, a queer *eitzah*. You're worried about some trouble coming your way – maybe you deserve a punishment for something – and this is a good way to save yourself from trouble. You can say, **עֵיזָא דְּבִי טְבָחִי שְׂמִינָא מְנָאִי** – The goat that's in the slaughterhouse is fatter than I am.”

Part II. Fear and Punishment

The Sensible Segulah

Now some people imagine that it's just a charm, a *segulah*. When a man feels that there is a sword hanging over his head only he doesn't see it, so he should say these words, "There's a nice fat goat that You can slaughter instead of me" and somehow, by means of this secret formula, he'll be saved. That's how we might think.

However, we should always give credit to our Chachomim for being wiser, more sensible, than we are. And therefore it pays to investigate it a bit more and to explain what's really doing here.

So pay attention now. Who's the 'fat goat' that we're talking about here? It means "Find some guilty *goy* please instead of me." Now, before you put up a protest and start calling me at all hours of the night to yell at me, listen well. Because of course, if it's a quiet, innocent *goy*, let him alone. We're not interested in innocent *goyim* suffering; on the contrary, we want them to be happy and healthy. Why not? Nothing wrong.

The Good Italians

We're very grateful to all of the Italian firemen. Here he is speeding through the streets with the siren screaming, and he's coming. Tony is coming to the rescue. And so we're happy with all the Tonys. We like the gentile roofers too. The fact that they're around causes competition; it causes the price to go down. The Jewish roofers would take a lot of money if the Italians weren't around. And the plumbers too. Sometimes on *erev Shabbos* in the afternoon it's hard to find a *frum* plumber. And the toilet is overflowing. So we need all the good *goyim* and we want them to live well. They shouldn't catch colds. They should get along with their wives and children. Yes, absolutely; all the good gentiles should be well.

But there are plenty of not so innocent ones too — look outside the window; there are plenty of *reshaim* — and we're asking Hashem that He should pick one of them. He should select one of the goats that are already in the slaughterhouse who deserve it anyhow.

Like the wicked fellow, a *rasha*, who drove by the yeshiva last year in his roofing truck and he threw a stone at the yeshiva boys; so him, the world would be better off without him.

And so when you have a bad premonition, an unexplained fear, you can think how good it would be if he would have a crash-up next block. Instead of me, even if it's something I, *chas v'shalom*, deserve, let *him* get hurt.

Stimulating Suffering

Now what's the *svara* in it? So we go back to the important principle: We should never forget that Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings trouble for one purpose — in order that people should become better; they should remember Hashem and become better.

The world must have a certain amount of suffering in order that people should be stimulated to repent. Without *yissurim*, without any kind of misfortunes, there would be no movement to become better, to change. And therefore, it's inherent, it's part of the procedure of life that Hakadosh Baruch Hu must send *yissurim* upon the world for people to look and listen and repent.

Now sometimes the *yissurim* is sent on that person himself, he should do *teshuvah*. And sometimes it's sent on him to cause others to do *teshuvah* when they look at him. Therefore, this man requests of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that He should send a punishment on someone else — someone who deserves it anyhow — in order that people, including this Yisroel who is frightened, should learn from him when they see the punishment that comes and they should come back in repentance to Hashem.

The Crosswalk Prankster

And so the next time you see a *goy* hopping down the avenue and as you get closer, you see he's missing a leg, make sure to take that lesson from him. It could be that this man, this fat goat, was waiting one time in his car for the red light to change, and he saw a Jew with a beard crossing the street. So while he was waiting, he blew his horn to frighten the Jew. The Jew jumped, and this goat enjoyed it. I saw that once. I was standing in Brownsville and a *goy* was sitting in his car waiting for the light to change. An old Jew was going across the street. He wanted to have some fun, this *goy*, so he caused his car to jump at the old Jew and frighten him.

I looked at him. He acted like he didn't do anything. His wife sitting next to him was laughing at the husband's *chochma*. So I said to Hashem, "I don't want him to die. No. It was a prank; he doesn't have to die for that. But at least his foot should come off above the knee. One foot, I'm satisfied."

Now, I can't tell you what happened, but in case you come across such a *goy*, let me know. It was fifty years ago already, and I saw many *goyim* with one foot. Many. I don't know which one it was, but it could be he's the one you saw coming down the avenue because Hakadosh Baruch Hu maybe said, "Oh, here's a customer. If some Jew will ask me for a *kaparah* for himself, here's one I can use."

Reverse Revenge

Now, it's not merely that we should have revenge and be happy. No! It's something much more important. Of course, we'd like to see revenge on our enemies. Yes. But that's not so important. We're expected to learn to be afraid of Hashem. *Chas v'shalom* it shouldn't happen to us!

If you pass by a man with an empty leg sleeve, you have to learn *yiras Hashem* from that! That's the main purpose. When you see a *goy* like that you have to be afraid because *chas v'shalom* Hashem might say, "You're forgetting about Me even now that I'm trying to remind you? Do you utilize your legs for serving Me? Do you use it to go to the *beis medrash* at night or do you walk into other places? You want *chas v'shalom* I should remind you in a different way?"

I saw a *goy* without any arms a month ago. No arms at all! I shuddered from that! You know what it means to live without an arm? And two of them? Two empty sleeves! You're supposed to learn from that! Hakadosh Baruch Hu is taking vengeance for some wicked act that the person did! And you have to be afraid!

"Ooh, no, no, no. No, please no! I'm going to take a lesson from that *goy*. Oy, Ribono Shel Olam, have *rachmanus* and let me stay whole!" You have to use that *goy* to learn to be afraid of Hashem.

An Ethnocentric Hashkafa

And don't say "What's it got to do with me?". It's an open Gemara in Yevamos (63): **אֵין פְּרַעְנִיּוֹת בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם אֲלֵא בְּשִׁבְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** – No troubles come upon the world unless for the purpose of Yisroel. Oh, that's a statement! You hear that? You might think that man with no leg or the troubles in Bosnia are because that man and the Bosnian people are not *tzaddikim*. No. That's not the reason. That's not the reason! **אֲלֵא בְּשִׁבְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** – it's for us. For us! And Rashi says, **שֶׁיִּדְרֹא** – so that Yisroel should be afraid, **וְיַעֲשׂוּ הַתְּשׁוּבָה** – and they'll become better.

Now you have to understand that well. This world is because of us, and I don't care what people will say. If you're a *ma'amin* in the Torah, you understand that the world is because of the Am Yisroel. There's no question about that. Whatever happens is only because of us, and it's to make you afraid. If you hear troubles in the end of the world, it's for you to be afraid of Hashem!

Psychology of Fear

So you will ask, "Is that a life? To be afraid? You have to respect Hashem. You have to love Hashem. But to be afraid of Hashem? Is that the kind of life to live?"

Yes. Believe me, it's a good life. If you're afraid of Hashem, you're going to live long. **יִרְאַת ה' תוֹסִיף יָמִים** (Mishlei 10:27) – You'll live long because of that! I guarantee! You won't have to go to psychologists because of fear of Hashem. You go to psychologists because you *fress* too much, you talk too much, you waste too much time, you don't work enough. But people who are afraid of Hashem don't need any psychologists. **יִרְאַת ה' תוֹסִיף יָמִים** – You want to live? You want to be well? Be afraid of Hashem.

So next time you see a *goy* in the street feeling his way with a cane, tapping, tapping, you should say, "Hashem is showing me something to make me afraid. I want to keep my eyesight."

And Hashem says, "Well if that's the case, then be careful what you do with your eyes. Don't look with your eyes where you're not supposed to look."

Movies, Smartphones and Magazines

When people go to movies with their eyes, "Oh," Hashem says, "You don't need any eyes. You use your eyes to go to movies; you're better off without eyes. If you use your eyes to sit and look at TV, you're better off without any eyes." Oh, it's a wonderful thing, a blind man. He can't look at the TV! Terrible pictures are on the television shows. Even in the newspapers and magazines, terrible pictures.

There was a couple – they happened to be Jewish, Mr. and Mrs. Wax – who were involved in publishing a dirty magazine. I was thinking once that they deserve to go blind. That would be a lesson of *yiras Hashem* if these wicked people would lose their eyes! And Hashem did even more! There was a party given for them in Los Angeles on Friday night and they were traveling in a plane to go to that party – of course they were traveling on Shabbos. But they never got there. They crashed.

You know what we have to think when we hear that. Hashem hates *zimah*; He hates those things and the Waxes were a *kaparah*. They were Jewish fat goats. Of course we're not guilty of such wicked crimes, but still, there are plenty of sins. Don't we use our eyes for things we shouldn't?

Self Reflection

All of these things should remind us of our own sins. Point the finger this way (*the Rav pointed at himself*). So therefore, when you see as you walk in the street early in the morning a wreck of a car smashed up against a telegraph pole, and now the people inside are not there anymore. They were driving very early or at nighttime, probably inebriated, drunk; they probably were not especially great *tzaddikim*. They were out for a good

time at night and who knows what kind of good time it was. And now either they're in the morgue or they're in the hospital.

So we shouldn't let that opportunity go lost and we should say, "Hashem! I'll take the lesson! I'll do *teshuvah* right now!" Don't think it can't happen. Yes. We ride in cars too. *Chas v'shalom*. Everybody that drives in a car and those that don't drive in a car too, even pedestrians have to be afraid. We're constantly in danger. **כָּל הַדֹּרְכִים בְּחֻזָּקת טַבָּה** today. No question about it. Some say even when you start out, when you're still in the city, you say *tefillas haderech*. Some say that. It's a *sakanah* even in the city today.

And so when you see such a thing you have to be very much afraid of Hashem. You should be *meharher b'teshuvah*. If a man said something to his poor wife and hurt her heart by saying a mean word, *ona'as devorim*, it's a terrible sin to hurt his wife's feelings. The poor woman is working all day long with children and she's busy. He comes home and says something mean, it's like a knife in the heart! Oooh!

Think about that now. "Ribono Shel Olam, never again! I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, Ribono Shel Olam! I'm afraid!" Don't just look at the crushed car and think that it's an interesting sight. Oh no, there's nothing interesting about it unless you make use of it. You have to make those victims your **עֵיזָא דְּבֵי טַבָּה** and learn *yiras Hashem*.

Part III. Fear in Egypt

The Egyptian Goats

And so we come back now to the words of Rashi on our *possuk*, that **כֵּן מֵבִיא פְּרָעוֹת** – *this is the way of Hakadosh Baruch Hu* – **עַל הָאֲמוֹת** – *He brings misfortune on the nations*, **וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִירָא** – *so that Yisroel should listen, – and be afraid*. And we understand that the *makkos* were intended primarily for us, for the Bnei Yisroel, only that the Mitzrim were the fat goats in the slaughterhouse. It means that the entire story, the whole *sedrah* of Vaeira, is an example of **עֵיזָא דְּבֵי טַבָּה שְׂמִינָא מִנָּאִי** – *“Go to the goat in the slaughterhouse that is fatter than I am.”* The Mitzrim had been fattened up with sins anyhow and so, let them be butchered.

Now you might say that 'the fat goat is better than me' implies we should have gotten the *makkos*; that the Mitzrim were serving as a replacement for the difficulties that were meant to come on the Bnei Yisroel. And actually, that's exactly what it means. You hear that *chiddush gadol*? The Bnei Yisroel in Mitzrayim should have received the *makkos*!

Actually we don't hear it so much. It's a very queer thing because we were the innocent ones, the victims. So what does it mean that we needed the *makkos* and Pharaoh is a fat goat instead of us?

The Beneficiaries

The answer is this: The Bnei Yisroel were the ones who would *benefit* most. Pharaoh doesn't get any benefit; he won't get better anyhow. The Bnei Yisroel however, they would get better from seeing the Hand of Hashem; they are the ones who would respond best to treatment. And therefore they should get the treatment. Let's say if somebody is sick, *chalilah* and he needs chemotherapy treatment. Will he send his brother-in-law or his employee to get the treatment? He needs it, not his brother-in-law, not his employee. So Hakadosh Baruch Hu should have sent the chemotherapy upon the Bnei Yisroel.

Oh yes, if they had suffered all these *makkos*, they would have gotten better. They'd know what to do. They'd *daven*. They'd discuss the reasons. They'd learn lessons and become better, absolutely. They'd have *kinnusim*, meetings about doing *teshuvah*. Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon Hakohen would speak — Miriam would speak to the women — and there would be a revolution of *teshuvah*, of becoming better.

And that's the truth. Absolutely, they'd get very much better. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu, why should He do it that way? There's a fat goat anyway who is waiting in the slaughterhouse. Let that goat be a *kaparah*. If the Bnei Yisroel will look and study what they see by the fat goats, they'll become better that way. I'll save My children in that way.

Kaparos with Goats

And that's what it says in Yeshaya; it's a *possuk* we have to study. כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֵלֶיךָ קְרוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעֶךָ – I am Hashem, the Holy One of Yisroel, and I am your Helper. How am I your *Moshia*? נָתַתִּי כִפְרֵךְ מִצְרַיִם – I have given as your redemption *Mitzrayim*; they are your *kaparah*. The Navi is telling us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu, because He is the *Moshia*, the Savior of Yisroel, He makes the gentile nations the atonement for us. It means He brings upon them things for our benefit. He wants to stir our hearts to think about Him and to be afraid of Him, but instead of sending things upon us to awaken the *yiras Hashem*, He substitutes *Mitzrayim* instead of Yisroel. A *kofer* means they're a substitute for Yisroel. And from the troubles that come upon the *Mitzrim*, the Bnei Yisroel should learn to fear Hashem.

So now you can sit home in your houses and you're talking about the news of the day, "You hear what happened? The Nile turned into blood. Hashem punishes. He means business!"

And when the land became covered with frogs that were everywhere underfoot, it came into the Egyptian bedrooms, into their bake rooms, every place, their kitchens, so the Bnei Yisroel saw the *yad Hashem* and they trembled. And they became great. They became great as a result of seeing these things.

Kriyas HaTorah Thoughts

And so, when you're listening to the *baal korei* on Shabbos, think, "Ay yah yay! Kinnim!" You know what *kinnim* means? *Kinnim* is one of the most terrible things. The word *kinnim* comes from the word *ken*; *ken* means 'it is so'. And it comes from the word *konen*, to establish. And so *kinnim* means the lice were established; entrenched. They put their claws into the Egyptian and you couldn't move them. Lice sometimes get embedded in the body, you know. When they're entrenched in the head, you can't do anything. You have to shave off all the hair and then you have to boil the head constantly because they're set in place.

וְתָהִי הַכְּנָם בְּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה – They were firmly established in their bodies and all the Egyptians, from the top to bottom, were scratching all day long. And they're all bleeding from the scratching. The wealthy ones lay all day long with their heads in the laps of their servants and their servants are pulling them out of their hair, pulling lice out of their hair all day long. But there was no end to it. Their garments were so full of lice that even though they boiled their garments constantly, they couldn't get rid of them.

And then disease began to spread. *Kinnim* bring sickness. Sometimes when there is an infection of lice, some armies lose as much as 70% of the soldiers as the result of diseases caused by *kinnim*. And so the Egyptians were dying like flies because of the plague.

But among the Bnei Yisroel, they didn't have any infection of *kinnim* and they were enjoying it to no end—why not? Their persecutors were being persecuted finally. But they were supposed to not only enjoy it, they were supposed to be afraid! And they were afraid. Because how did they know it wouldn't spread to them? After all, the *kinah* doesn't know anything. It'll keep on going. It might come into our homes too. And they were waiting all the time, how long will it take before it comes to us? But it didn't come to them. It stopped. So now they were supposed to fulfill, אָךְ, תִּירָאִי – that they would be afraid of Me, תִּקְרָאִי מוֹסֵר – and take mussar (Rashi *ibid.*, Tzefania 3:7).

A Fearful Nation

And they did. Don't think they weren't afraid. They fulfilled their side of the deal and they learned and they learned. That's why you find

later in the Torah, in the *tochachah*, when Hashem is threatening to bring misfortune in case the Am Yisroel would disobey the Torah, He says “וְהָשִׁיב יְהוָה אֶת כָּל מַדּוּהַ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִגְרֹת מִפְּנֵיהֶם (Devarim 28:60). You hear that? It says openly, אֲשֶׁר יִגְרֹת – you were afraid. They didn’t just sit there and talk about it and enjoy what happened to Egypt. They were afraid.

Oh, you’re afraid? That’s wonderful! That’s a fulfillment of the purpose, to learn to be afraid of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

And if not, אִם תֵּלֶכְנוּ עִמִּי קָרִי – if you don’t come back to Me in *teshuvah*, then יִכָּבֶה ה’ בְּשֹׁחִין מִצְרַיִם – Hashem will smite you with the *shchin* of Mitzrayim, the boils that you saw in Mitzrayim (*ibid.* 28:27). So you’ll say, what’s it got to do with us, ‘*shchin* Mitzrayim’? The answer is, why didn’t you look at the *shchin* in Mitzrayim and learn from it so it should never happen to you. And if you’re going to be careless with the Torah, יִכָּבֶה ה’ בְּשֹׁחִין מִצְרַיִם – from not learning from the *shchin* Mitzrayim, it’ll come upon you.

Not only the *makkos* in Mitzrayim. וְכֵן מִדְּתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא – This is the way of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. מְבִיא פְּרָעוֹנוֹת עַל הָאֻמוֹת – He brings misfortune on the nations, כִּי שִׁישְׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל – so that Yisroel should listen, וְיִירָאוּ – and be afraid. And so not only כָּפָרְךָ מִצְרַיִם but נִתְּתִי כָפָרְךָ מִצְרַיִם but כּוֹשׁ וּסְכָא תַחְתִּידָךְ. I made Kush, Ethiopia and Svah, another gentile country – we call it Sudan – instead of you. Even today you can take a look at Sudan and Ethiopia and see what’s doing there. It should be a *kaparah* instead of Yisroel. And if we look and are afraid it will be.

Current Events

Therefore, even today if you see that two gentile nations are battling against each other, don’t just ignore it. People are dying. Many people are suffering as a result. Invasions. Kuwait was occupied by Iraq. Lawlessness, murder. They do whatever they want. They’re wicked people and their victims are certainly suffering. Probably they deserve it too. But we shouldn’t let that incident go lost. I’m sure there are many purposes why Hashem does it, but one of the most important of all purposes is that we should learn *yirah*.

And that’s the plan of Hakadosh Baruch Hu; from the troubles that come upon all nations, we should learn to be afraid of Him. And therefore, when we see how the nations were destroyed all the time – the Huns came and destroyed Rome. They slaughtered all the Patricians and took away their wives and took away their property. And Greece was destroyed. And Bavel was destroyed. And so we learn from them to be afraid of Hashem.

History Lessons

That's what life is for. Everything in life is for the purpose of recognizing Hakadosh Baruch Hu. All history — when you read what happened to Carthage, Carthage was a very wealthy city in the days of old; a powerful city. It conquered the nations around. It was full of wealth and luxury and palaces. And then Rome came and conquered and destroyed Carthage; they made a *churban* of Carthage.

Now, the *churban* of Carthage should have been a preview of the *churban* Beis Hamikdash. They should have thought, "If Carthage can be destroyed, the Beis Hamikdash can also be destroyed." But they didn't learn. They were thinking that it's a far away story, that it can't happen here. They missed the point, the whole purpose of *churban* Carthage.

They were thinking like all of us here are thinking that it's nothing to worry about when you see in Bosnia all the trouble there. Or in Columbia when there was a big mudslide and thousands of people were killed. *Chas v'shalom*. We should be afraid! If an entire nation could be destroyed, who said America is forever? You have to be afraid!

Now that's far from our thoughts because *yiras Shamayim* in general is a subject that has to be learned. But that's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu expects of us and that's why He makes it happen that we see others who don't have these gifts, it's sent upon them as a *kaparah* for you. That's the great lesson we're talking about.

The Secret Formula

And therefore, we come back to the little formula. It's easy to remember: *עֵיזָא דְּבִי טְבֹחִי שְׁמִינָא מְנָאִי*. Memorize that; five words only. *עֵיזָא דְּבִי טְבֹחִי שְׁמִינָא מְנָאִי*. It's a good *tefillah*. "The goat that's in the slaughterhouse is fatter than I am." Say it like this, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, whatever you want to send on me, send on these *reshaim* and let me see from what happened to them and I'll become better as a result."

And when you do see it — when you see or you hear about a *rasha* or *reshaim* that got it in the head or in the leg, or whatever it is, make sure to fulfill your side of the deal and remember Hashem.

Of course, don't forget the other ways too. *Shema* is a very good reminder! All the time, try to remind yourself about Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad. Sometimes you can *לִנְשׂוּף מִדְּבַתָּה אֲרַבֵּעַ גְּרָמִיךְ* – *move away from where you're standing*, to remind yourself that you're only a visitor in this world.

And so there are ways and means of encouraging yourself in remembering Hashem and a good *frum* Jew can make use of all of them.

But never forget the third prescription too: There are Pharaohs and Hitlers and Arafats — there are a lot others too; I won't say their names because maybe some people who listen to these tapes will get upset — who are fat goats and so we ask Hashem to have *rachmanus* on us and send it instead on them. They deserve it anyhow, and we'll do our part by being more and more afraid of Him. To be afraid of Hashem and become better and better, that's what He wants most from us in this world.

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Let's Get Practical

Learning to Be Afraid

In this week's parsha, we learn that the makkos in Mitzrayim were not meant only to punish the Egyptians, but to teach the Am Yisroel how to recognize Hashem's hand and develop *yiras Shamayim*. Again and again, Hashem brought fear into the world so that His people would listen, become afraid, and grow — by watching what happened to others instead of experiencing it themselves.

This week, when I see or hear about misfortune happening to others — whether in the street, in the news, or in passing — I will try not to brush it aside. Instead, I will, *bli neder*, pause briefly and remind myself that I am meant to learn from it: to be more careful with my actions, more grateful for what I have, and more aware that I am a guest in this world. In this way, I will try to turn what I see into *yiras Shamayim*.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

507 – Learning from Others | **810** – Substitute for Suffering
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Preparing for Shabbos with Rav Pincus

Doing It Early: The *Shulchan Aruch* (Siman 250) tells us that Shabbos preparations should begin first thing Friday morning. However, the *poskim* explain that one should first daven *Shacharis*.

The Rav made sure not to push Shabbos preparations off any more than absolutely necessary. True, *Shacharis* precedes Shabbos preparations- but nothing else should come before them! Concerned with doing the mitzvah with proper *zerizus*, the Rav found it difficult to wait until he came home. He settled upon a characteristic solution: When he left the house Friday morning to go daven, he took along the wicks for the Shabbos lights, and right after *Shacharis* he would spend a few moments preparing them, *lichvod Shabbos Kodesh*. This way he was able to prepare for Shabbos immediately after davening, thereby doing the mitzvah as early as possible.

Preparing the wicks in honor of Shabbos was an *avodah* of considerable involvement for the Rav. For it says (*Shabbos* 23b) that whoever is careful about fulfilling the mitzvah of Shabbos lights will have children who are *talmidei chachamim*. And, the Rav would say, "The *segulah* on its own is not enough, and *zechuyos* on their own are not enough. Without *tefillah*, you're missing the key that opens up Heaven's flow of blessing!" So while he was preparing the wicks for the Shabbos lights, his lips would whisper a prayer that emanated from the depths of his heart: that he should merit having children who are *talmidei chachamim* and *ovedei Hashem*!

Polishing the Candlesticks: Not only did the Rav prepare the wicks and set up the lights, he even polished the silver candlesticks himself. Every Friday he put time and thought into this activity. He even came up with "*chiddushim*" in this area, as he did in every facet of his *avodas Hashem*.

The Rav tried various polishing methods. Whenever he heard of a new and more effective way of polishing the candlesticks, *lichvod Shabbos Kodesh*, joy was written all over his face. He would experiment with various techniques aimed at achieving maximum gleam from the candlesticks, so they would shine with all their brilliance.

When the children awoke Friday morning, they would see their father bent over the candlesticks, laboriously polishing their intricate designs. The Rav would explain that in the Beis HaMikdash, besides the actual kindling of the Menorah, there was a special *avodah* of preparing its lights. And so it is with *Shabbos Kodesh*! For *Shabbos Kodesh* is like the Beis HaMikdash. Consequently, there are two separate tasks to be performed: Preparing the lights and polishing the candlesticks corresponds to the first *avodah* of preparing the Menorah of the Beis HaMikdash. This is the husband's job. Kindling of the lights corresponds to the *avodah* of kindling the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash. This is the wife's job.

Shabbos preparations were a form of *avodas ha-kodesh* for the Rav. He invested great thought and energy in them and performed even the smallest act of Shabbos preparation with proper *kavanah*. R' Chanina would declare each *erev Shabbos*: "Come, let us go out to greet the Bride, the Queen!" Shabbos preparations lead up to that magnificent moment, and every step of the way the Rav's deeds declared: Boi' Kallah, Bo'i Kallah, *Shabbos Malkesa*!

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Adapted by R' Y. Levy from *Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh*, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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QUESTION

How can we be happy when we pass by a person with a physical disability? Aren't we hurting that person when he sees us, that we're able to function in a way that he cannot?

ANSWER

And the answer is this. There are two parts to this subject. One part is sympathy; yes. This week I saw two things. I saw first a man without one arm. And I said, "Baruch Hashem, I have two arms." I started shaking my arms like this. You have to appreciate two arms. "Baruch Hashem, I have two arms." One sleeve of this man was empty. It was sent *min haShamayim* to make me aware that I have two arms. Don't forget about it! All your life you forget about that great gift; you have two arms!

Then also this week I saw another thing. A man was in a wheelchair; he had only one foot. "Ooh," I said, "Two feet, what a blessing it is! You can hop, skip and jump. Two feet! What a *chessed* it is!"

And we have to utilize that. We must utilize that and learn how to thank Hashem: "Thank You for what You did to me that I'm not sitting in a wheelchair!" You must think that. That's why He sent it. It was a vision granted for the purpose of making you more aware of how fortunate you are and how much you owe to Hashem.

At the same time, you have to have sympathy. Yes. You have to have sympathy too. It's not a contradiction at all. The happier you are, the more sympathy you have for him. "Look how happy I am, and he doesn't have it. Ah, it is a pity on him." Have sympathy.

What will you do with the sympathy? I can't tell you right now — there may be various ways — but at least you can say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, he looks like a decent man, maybe he's a *shomer mitzvos* even. Let's hope that You'll comfort him and make him happy despite his disability."

So have sympathy, but the sympathy should not rob you of utilizing the opportunity of learning how to thank Hashem and always, always remember to be grateful to Hashem that you have two hands and two feet.

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