

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

ליזכות רפואה שלמה: מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית, יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה, ואברהם יחודה בן שרה רבקה.

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
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Pinchas

THIS WEEK!  
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07.11.20  
פרשת פנחס

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## Torah Wellsprings - Pinchas

### You are Important to Hashem

Every *avodah zarah* is disgusting, but Peor is probably the worst of all of them.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 64.) tells:

A non-Jewish woman was once very sick. She made a promise that if she recovers, she will worship every *avodah zarah* in the world. She became well, and she worshipped every *avodah zarah*. When she came to the *avodah zarah* of Peor she asked the priests, "How do you serve it?"

The priests told her, "You eat *tardin* (a vegetable), and you drink freshly fermented beer (these cause an upset stomach), and you relieve yourself in front of the idol Peor."

She replied, "I would prefer to be sick again than to worship this idol."

A Jewish man called Savta from Alis would drive people around

with his donkey. Once, a non-Jew hired him, and when they came to Peor she said, "Wait for me here; I want to go in for a moment." When she came out, he told her, "Now wait for me; I also want to go inside."

She said, "But you are a Jew!"

He replied, "What difference does that make to you?"

He went inside and relieved himself over the *avodah zarah* Peor, and then he wiped himself, using Peor's nose as a tissue. The priests praised him. They said, "We never saw someone serve Peor as well as you!"

(The Gemara says that although he intended to disgrace Peor, it was a sin because Peor is worshiped this way.)

What was the logic in this kind of worship? At the end of last's week's *parashah*, it states (25:3), ויצמר ישראל לבעל פעור, "The

Jewish nation cleaved to Peor." **וַיִּצְמַד** means they were very attached to this type of worship, like a **צִמְדִּי**, bracelet, which cleaves tightly to one's arm. What was so appealing about it?

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Pinchas* **עֵינֵי פִּעוֹר**) explains that this service was done to express how lowly and mundane a human being is. When a Jew would perform this service, he concluded that he couldn't serve Hashem. How can a human being, like himself, serve Hashem? With that thought in mind, he served the idol instead. That was the message of this ugly service.

The Navi (*Yehoshua* 22:17) states, **עוֹן פִּעוֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִטְהַרְנוּ עַד הַיּוֹם**, "Until today, we haven't cleansed ourselves from the sin of Peor." The Chasam Sofer explains that this means they

still attached themselves to the philosophy that Peor taught. He writes, "The rationale behind the *avodah zarah* of Peor [that Hashem doesn't want our service] entered the hearts of many of Bnei Yisrael, and they believed in this heretical concept until they said 'Let's worship Peor.' ... Therefore, it states (in *Yehoshua* *ibid.*) that 'We haven't cleansed ourselves from it until today.'" Because it is tough to shed oneself from the negative feelings of detachment from Hashem.

This negative view about ourselves is the most significant prevention to serving Hashem. Hashem desires us even more than the *malachim* because of our humanism. It is the *yetzer hara* and the human drive that we must deal with, which raises our *avodas Hashem* to the highest levels.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Gemara (*Chulin* 91:) states, "Bnei Yisrael are more beloved to Hashem than the *malachim* in heaven... The Jewish nation say Hashem's name after two words, as they say, **שְׁמֵעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל ה'**, and the *malachim* say Hashem's name after three words, **קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ ה'**."

It states (25:5), הנצמדים לבעל פעור, people were attached to the *avodah zarah* Peor. The word *צמיד* expresses a very tight bond. Rashi writes that it is like a lid that is placed over a utensil and then covered with wax to keep it on even more firmly. This is the type of connection the Jewish nation had with Peor. Whereas about the Jewish nation's attachment to Hashem

it states (*Devarim* 4:4), ואתם, הדבקים בה' אלקיכם, "And you who are attached to Hashem..." דבקים is not as strong an attachment as *צמיד* (as the Gemara teaches). The Chasam Sofer explains that the reason the Jewish nation isn't completely attached to Hashem is that they are attached (*צמוד*) to the philosophy of Peor, and they perceive themselves as unimportant people.

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There are three places where we say Hashem's name after two words:

(1) In every *brachah*, as we say: ברוך אתה ה'

(2) שמע ישראל ה'

(3) ואהבת את ה' אלקיך

The first Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov *zt'l* said that in a dream he was told that these three times are hinted to in the *brachah* *Ahavas Olam*, which we say before Shema. We say: וקרבתנו מלבנו לשמך הגדול סלה באמת

"You brought us close to Your great name" because we are closer than the *malachim*, for we say Hashem's name after two words. The *brachah* continues, להודות לך וליחדך באהבה ולאהבה את שמך, "To praise you, to proclaim Your Oneness, and to love Your name." This hints to the three times we say Hashem's name after two words. להודות לך, "To praise you" refers to the *brachos*. ליחדך means the Shema. ולאהבה. ואהבת את ה' אלקיך is as we say

And then, all three are practiced immediately. Because after we say, וקרבתנו מלבנו לשמך הגדול, that Hashem brought us close to His holy name we say, ברוך אתה ה' הבוחר בעמו ישראל באהבה, and we say Hashem's name in this *brachah* after two words. Then we say, שמע ישראל ה' and ואהבת את ה'.

For example, they don't place all their concentration into *tefillah* because they think, "What can a person like myself accomplish with my *tefillos*? Why should Hashem – Whose holiness and greatness is unfathomable – want to listen to my words?

Thus, it is this philosophy of Peor which stands at the root of people's weak connection with Hashem.

To correct this, we must increase awareness that Hashem wants our service. As the Mishnah states, עשה לך רב, and רב can mean important, great, because a person must consider himself great. As the Avodas Yisrael writes, "A person must strengthen his heart in *avodas Hashem*, as much as he can, so he can reach high levels. He shouldn't focus on [his lowly levels], because that discourages him from serving Hashem. This is the intention of the Mishnah (*Avos* 1:16), עשה לך רב, which means consider yourself great (as in *Bamidbar* 16:7 רב לכם בני

לוי). A person must have pride so that he can always reach higher levels in *avodas Hashem*."

The Yaavitz writes, "The purpose of man is to go in Hashem's ways... Therefore, just as the Creator is נאה גאות לבש, He dresses in [holy] *gaavah*, similarly, the Jewish nation, dressed in this base world, must follow in Hashem's ways...". They must also have holy *gaavah*, pride, by believing in their greatness.

The Chosid Yaavitz (*Avos* 5:5) writes, "*Parashas Balak* expresses Hashem's love for Bnei Yisrael, more than any other *parashah*. It can be compared to a person who hears that someone wants to harm his friend. So, he girds himself with weapons and goes out to fight against the enemy. The Jewish nation was living in peace, [unaware that] Bilaam and Balak were plotting against them. Hashem brought Bilaam and Balak down, and all their plans failed. Hashem saved them with

His love and righteousness. As 'Remember Balak's counsel... so it states (*Michah* 6:5), זכר נא מה, you will know Hashem's יעץ בלק... למען דעת צדקת ה', righteousness.'"2

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2. Bilaam said (23:9), הן עם לבדד ישכון ובגוים לא יתחשב, "The nation dwells alone and they aren't counted among the gentiles." This is wonderful praise of the Jewish nation, how they live a spiritual life, above and uninfluenced by all nations of the world, and they aren't influenced by them. The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 15:7) writes that the word הן, which is the beginning of this encouraging *pasuk*, also indicates to the concept that the Jewish nation stands alone. This is because the letters ה"ן are letters that don't have partners. As the Midrash states: "All letters have a partner. The exception is these two letters (ה"ן). For example, the letters א"ט is *gematriya* 10. Similarly ה"ב is *gematriya* 10. ג"ז is 10. ד"ו is 10. But the ה' remains alone. The same is with the ג'. It doesn't have a partner. Because י"צ is *gematriya* 100. כ"פ is 100. ל"ע is 100. מ"ם is 100. But the נו"ן remains alone. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Just as these two letters can't join with any other letter, similarly, the Jewish nation can't connect with the gentile nations.'"

It states in (*Shir HaShirim* 4:1), הנך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך, "You are beautiful, my friend. You don't have a blemish." These are the words Hashem says to praise the Jewish nation. The *passuk* begins with the words הנך because these letters mean that we are alone, uninfluenced by the nations of the world. We already showed (from the Midrash) that letters ה' and ג' are lone letters. It is also so with the letter ה'. Because it is known that the letters מנצפ"ך (letters that have a double) also have a numerical value, a *gematriya*. The value of ה' is 500 (for it is the next letter after ת' which is 400). ב' is 600, ג' is 700, ד' is 800, and ה' is 900. Each of them can join with another letter to become a thousand. The ה' with the כ' are 1000. ה"כ is a thousand. ש"ן is a thousand. ת"ם is a thousand. But the ה' remains alone. Therefore, it states הנך יפה, because that is the beauty of the Jewish

### Humility

Although one must have pride and believe that he is precious to Hashem, one must also be humble before Hashem and before his fellow man. Someone once complained to Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* that people are trampling on him. Reb Yisrael replied, "Stop spreading yourself out in the

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nation: They remain alone, uninfluenced, and not mixed with the nations of the world.

Sometimes the beauty of the Jewish nation (or of an individual Yid) is concealed, but that is a temporary status. Soon their bright light will shine through.

Once, people wanted to say קדוש לבנה, but the moon was covered with clouds. Someone came into the beis medresh and said, "There is no moon." Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* corrected him. "The moon is there, it is just that we can't see it."

The Lubavitzer Rebbe said that the Jewish nation is compared to the moon (see *Succah* 29.) to hint that the spark of the Jewish person is always there, only sometimes it is covered and not seen. With Hashem's help, there will come a time when our sheen will come forth.

I heard from the *magid* Reb Moshe Weinbach *shlita* that when it is time to say *kiddush levanah*, and the moon is covered with clouds, often people will go outside again a half hour later, hoping that perhaps now the moon came out from under the clouds. This reminds us that we should believe in every Yid. Even if right now he is covered with "clouds" and his bright light isn't shining, don't lose hope on him. Expect that very soon the clouds will move and his good and his merits will shine forth.

The Sfas Emes (וארא תרס"ג ד"ה וידבר) teaches, "The truth is, just as we must believe in Hakadosh Baruch Hu even when we don't understand His concealed ways, so too, we must believe in Bnei Yisrael, even when they appear ugly. As it states (*Shir HaShirim* 1:5), שחורה אני, ונאורה, 'I am black and I am beautiful.'"

width and the breadth, and people will stop treading on you."

In other words, if you won't be so haughty, you won't feel that everyone is trampling on you and disgracing you.

Reb Elyah Roth (gabbai of Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l) would sit on the floor of the bus. He explained, "From the floor one can't fall." Once again, the lesson is: If you are humble, you won't feel that people are knocking you down.

Driving down a highway, a truck driver saw a sign that said, "Bridge ahead. Eighteen feet!" His truck was exactly eighteen feet, which meant that he should have stopped and not driven through. But he was in a rush to finish his job. Who knows how long it would take him to detour?

"Furthermore, " he thought, "These signs always exaggerate, just to be on the safe side. I am exactly eighteen feet, so I should be able to drive through."

He tried, and his truck got stuck. The truck couldn't drive through. He was holding up traffic. A wise person told him, "Take some air out of your tires, and then you will be able to drive through."

The nimshal is, if you feel that you are stuck in life and you aren't getting places, it might be because you have too much arrogance. Lower your gaavah, and everything will fall into place.

Reb Nochum, the son of the Trisker Magid zt'l, was building his new home in Cotalana, a village near Brisk. As customary, before moving into the new neighborhood, where he planned to open a beis medresh and a chasidic court, he asked permission from the Brisker Rav – the Beis HaLevi zt'l. The Beis HaLevi granted him permission and was especially friendly to Reb Nochum. A close friendship developed between them. When Reb Nochum's house was fully built, the Beis HaLevi came to

visit. The Beis HaLevi was shocked at the size of the house. He said, "This house is so small!"

Reb Nochum replied, "There is an easy solution for that. We humble and lower ourselves, and then the house has plenty of room."

As the Beis HaLevi were traveling back to Brisk, he said to his students, "Today, I learned in one moment what I didn't learn all the years I studied with my rebbes, the Geonim."

Reb Mendel of Vorke zt'l (called "The Shtiller Rebbe – the silent Rebbe," because he hardly spoke) once said, *ואהבת לרעך*, במוך, "Love your fellow man like yourself?" (He said these words in a question.) He answered, במוך, "Like yourself!"

The Rebbe didn't explain his intentions, but the chassidim tried to explain what he meant, and several explanations were given. Reb Berel of Biala zt'l said that the following was the Rebbe's intention:

The Torah obligates us to love our fellow man as we love ourselves. Alluded to in these words is that one must love himself, too. The problem is, if he loves himself, he won't have room in his heart to love anyone else!

The Rebbe answered במוך. This means: The amount you can love yourself less, that is the amount you can love your fellow man. The pasuk is saying *ואהבת לרעך*, love your fellow man, and the degree of your love will be במוך, according to how much you can lessen your self-interest.<sup>3</sup>

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3. There is a joke that tzaddikim said: *בלק* is *roshei teivos* *ואהבת לרעך*. And if you will ask that it doesn't fit, the answer is that is the whole test; to love your fellow man even when things aren't perfect in the relationship and it is hard to love your fellow man.

## Tefillah

Earlier, we wrote that we must believe that Hashem wants our tefillos. We shouldn't follow the philosophy of Peor, which tells people that Hashem is so great, He isn't interested in us.

The korban tamid is discussed in this week's parashah (28:2). As it states, *את קרבני לחמי לאשי ריח*, "My korban, bread for My fires, My pleasure, be cautious about bringing it at the right time..." (28:2). *תשמרו*, "be cautious" also means to wait (see Bereishis 37:11 *ואביו שמר את הדבר*). The pasuk is saying that we should wait for the moment when we can bring the korban. The Sfas Emes (5647) explains that this is an obligation for all generations. When the Beis HaMikdash stood, the mitzvah was to wait for the moment the korban tamid was offered – once in the morning and once in the afternoon. In galus, the mitzvah is to wait for the time when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt,

and we can bring the korbanos once again.

Additionally, in galus, the mitzvah is to wait for those moments that we stand before Hashem in tefillah, because in galus, tefillos are a substitute for the korban tamid.

The Sfas Emes adds, "The entire day should be *מפל*, secondary, to tefillah. The main part of one's day should be when he davens."

The Kuzari (3:5) writes, "For a chassid, the times of tefillah is the 'heart' of his day. All other moments are like roads leading to that moment. He yearns for those times, for that is when he is closest to spirituality and is most distant from animalistic behavior."

The *Kuzari* adds that the *tefillah* should be like breakfast, lunch, and supper. Each meal satisfies him until the next meal. So too, the prayers in the morning should give him spiritual sustenance until the next tefillah.<sup>4</sup>

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4. A poor unemployed person spent a morning in the post office, and

### Tefillah with Joy

*Tefillah* must be said with joy. It states (*Midrash Shochar Tov, Tehillim* 100) "Rav says, 'When you daven, have a happy heart, because you are davening to Hashem, and there is no One like Him.'"

Similarly, it states (*Sefer Chassidim* 18), "The root of *tefillah* is a joyous heart.... Therefore, Dovid, the King of Yisrael, would play the harp when he davened. He did this so he could fill his heart with joy and with love for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And therefore, his *tefillas* were answered."

Similarly, the Ben Ish Chai (*Aderes Eliyahu, Mishpatim*) writes, "It is known that *tefillah* must be said with joy, and then the *tefillas* will be answered. It is also known that the word וְהָיָה connotes joy. Thus, the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 22:26) says, וְהָיָה כִּי יֵצֵק, אֲלֵי, if you will be happy when you daven to Me, וְשָׁמַעְתִּי, I will listen to your prayers."

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* (introduction to *Shaar HaKavanos*) writes, "It is forbidden to daven with sadness. If one does, he won't be able to receive the divine light that

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watched the goings on. He saw people giving small amounts of money to the clerks, and in exchange, the clerks gave them very expensive packages. The poor man thought to himself, "I didn't know that expensive items are sold for cheap in the post office."

He collected some money, gave it to one of the clerks, and asked for a diamond ring in exchange.

The clerk laughed at him.

"But I see that other people pay you a small amount and you give them expensive packages?"

The clerk explained, "They are paying for the delivery. Before that, they paid for the package."

The *nimshal* is, if one thinks his *hishtadlus* brings him *parnassah*, he is like the fool in this story, who thinks that expensive items are

comes down when he is davening. (However, when he says the viduy, then it is good to say it with a broken heart.) One must indeed show Hashem immense humility and fear. Nevertheless, he should have immense joy – as much as he can. This can be compared to a slave who is serving his master with immense joy. If the servant is sad, the service is not appreciated by his master. The ability to attain *ruach hakadosh* is almost entirely dependent on this factor (davening and performing mitzvos with joy). Don't be lenient with this topic, because its reward is very great."

How does one daven with joy? If one believes that Hashem listens to his *tefillos* he will daven with kavanah and joy. What greater joy is there than to speak directly to Hashem, Who desires to hear our requests?

The Mesilas Yeshtarim (19) writes, "One must imagine that he is truly standing before the Creator and is conversing with Him – even though he can't see Him. This is the hardest imagination to acquire because we don't have anything similar to it that can help us imagine it. Nevertheless, someone who has a straight mind can establish this truth in his heart with some thought and focus; to know that he is literally speaking to Hashem... Hashem listens to him, similar to when one speaks to his friend, and the friend listens to him."

A non-religious Yid was once visiting at yeshivas Kfar Chassidim while they were davening *Minchah*. Afterward, people asked him what his impressions were. He replied, "I saw *bachurim* swaying back and forth, but there was this elderly man, standing near the front

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acquired with a few pennies. *Parnassah* comes from *tefillah*, when one pours his heart out before Hashem, while *hishtadlus* are the few coins to pay for the delivery.

wall, and it appeared that he was truly speaking to someone." That man was Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l*.

People said similar things about the *tefillos* of Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l*. People had the impression that if they disturbed him in the middle of his *tefillos*, he would respond, "Don't you see I'm in the middle of speaking with some-One."

The following *marshal* is repeated in the name of the Dubno Magid *zt'l*:

A king once announced, "Whoever has a request should come to my palace, and I will fulfill his wish."

This generous announcement turned out to be a problem because one person kept returning to the palace to speak to the King for no particular reason at all. He was bothering the King with nonsense. The King appointed guards at the palace's front door to prevent him from entering. But the man entered through a side entrance.

The King set up guards there too, but the palace had many entryways, and despite the many guards, this man always found a way to get inside.

A wise man told the King, "Instead of placing guards in all your doorways, appoint one guard to stand in front of that person's house. He won't be able to go out, and then he won't be able to come to your palace."

The *nimshal* is: The *yetzer hara* wants to prevent people from davening properly, so he sets up many guards to stop them. In one *beis medresh* he has people speaking during davening so that it will be hard to daven there with *kavanah*. (Even if one does daven with *kavanah*, the speaking can prevent the *tefillah* from going up). In another *beis medresh* the *yetzer hara* arranges that people should daven so quickly that it's almost impossible to daven there with *kavanah*. Some people feel that they have no place to daven, other than at a *kever* of a *tzaddik*. But when they go there,

they find someone who disturbs them or laughs at them, and now they can't daven there, either. In short, wherever one wants to daven, the *yetzer hara* placed a guard there, to prevent him from davening properly.

But then the *yetzer hara* became cleverer. He says, "Why should I set up so many guards? I will

appoint one guard and have the guard stand in man's heart." The guard tells the person that Hashem isn't interested in his prayers, and then he won't be able to daven. But we can banish this *yetzer hara* with the awareness that Hashem desires our tefillah. Then we will be able to daven to Hashem with proper concentration and joy.

### ***Tefilah B'tzibur***

The Gemara (*Brachos* 7:) tells us that Reb Yitzchak asked Rav Nachman, "Why didn't you come to the beis kneses to daven?"

Rav Nachman replied, "I wasn't able to." (Rashi explains that he was weak, and therefore he stayed home.)

Reb Yitzchak advised him to gather ten people to his home so that he could daven with a minyan in his home. Rav Nachman replied that this would require too much effort, and it was hard for him to do that.

Reb Yitzchak said, "You should ask someone from the beis

knesees to come and tell you when the congregation is davening, so you can daven along with them, from your home."

Rav Nachman saw that it was crucial, in Reb Yitzchak's opinion, that he should daven with a minyan, so he asked, מאי האי בולי, "Why is it so important?"

Reb Yitzchak replied, "Reb Yochanan taught in the name of Reb Shimon bar Yochai: It is written (*Tehillim* 69:14), ואני, תפילתי לך ה', I pray to You, Hashem, עת רצון when You desire the *tefillos*.' When is the *eis ratzon*, the time that Hashem

desires the *tefillos*? It is when the community (minyan/*tzibur*) is davening."

The Gemara brings some more sources showing how special it is to daven with a minyan:

"Reb Yosi ben Chanina said it could be derived from the *pasuk* (*Yeshayah* 49:8), כה אמר ה' בעת, רצון עניתיך, 'So says Hashem: I will answer you at the desired time.'

"Reb Acha b'Reb Chanina says that it can be derived from the following (*Iyov* 36:5), הן א"ל בביר, ולא ימאס, which means that when there are many people (בביר means a large congregation) לא ימאס, Hashem is never disgusted from their prayers. Furthermore, it states (*Tehillim* 55:19), פדה בשלום נפשי בקרב לי כי ברבים הו' עמדי, 'Redeem my soul in peace ...because I davened with many people.'

... Hashem says, whoever studies Torah and does deeds of kindness and prays with a minyan, I consider it as though he redeemed Me and My

children from among the nations of the world.'

Reish Lakish says, "Whoever has a beis kneses in his city and doesn't go there to daven is a bad neighbor... And not only that, but he causes exile for himself and his children... People told Reb Yochanan that there are old people in Baval. He was surprised, because the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 11:21) says, למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על הארמה, which implies that people will live long in Eretz Yisrael, and not in *chutz le'aretz*. But then people told him that they come early to the beis medresh and they leave late. Reb Yochanan said, "This is what helps them. As Reb Yehoshua ben Levi taught his children, 'Come early to the beis kneses and leave late so that you will live long.'"

The Beis Ahron taught, "*tefillah b'tzibur* helps for all matters. *Tefillah b'tzibur* is as powerful as the *tefillah* of the greatest tzaddik of the generation."<sup>5</sup>

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5. The Beis Ahron *zt'l* was very cautious to daven with a minyan.

It is well known that the Meor VeShamesh says that davening with a minyan is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. The Radishitzer *zt'l* says davening with a minyan is *mesugal* for *refuah*. As it states, ועברתם את ה' אלקיכם ובירך את לחמך, ואת מימך והסירתי מחלה מקרבך, "Serve Hashem [with *tefillah* with a minyan – because ועברתם which often means *tefillah* is written in plural tense], and Hashem will bless your bread and your water, and He will remove illnesses from you."

In a letter to his chassidim, the Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* writes, "I encourage the businessmen to daven in the beis chassidim (beis medresh) every morning and every evening with a minyan.

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Once, he needed to undergo surgery, so he scheduled it for the early afternoon. That way, he would be able to daven *Minchah* with a minyan before the procedure and he could daven *Maariv* afterwards. Ten people were asked to postpone davening *Maariv*, so they could daven *Maariv* together with the Beis Aharon when he awakens from the surgery.

But when it was almost midnight, and the Rebbe was still sleeping, the chasidim davened *maariv* and they went home.

Later that night the Rebbe woke up. He immediately asked, "What about *Maariv*? Is there a minyan?"

The *gabai* said, "Ten people are waiting outside the Rebbe's room. They will daven there, and the Rebbe can daven along with them from this room."

The *gabai* left the room, and pretended to be the *chazzan*. He said *Barchu*, *Kaddish*, and so on, and the Rebbe davened along.

Several days later, when the Rebbe recovered, the *gabai* told the Rebbe that he only pretended that there was a minyan. The *gabbai* said, "I'm afraid that I sinned, because I said *Barchu* and *Kaddish* without a minyan..."

The Rebbe told him, "You did well. It was a situation of *pikuach nefesh*. I just got up from the operation, and had I known there was no minyan, I wouldn't be able to endure the distress."

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### In Your Own Words

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* (*Likutei Amorim* 10) teaches, "In addition to *Shemonah Esrei* that is recited three times a day, one should pray from the depths of his heart, when he is alone in his home. The reason these *tefillos* are so important is that the three daily *Shemonah Esreis* are often said by rote. One doesn't think so much about what he is saying. But when a person is by himself and makes a *cheshbon hanefesh*, he reflects on his poverty and troubles...he will pour his heart out like water before Hashem, and that *tefillah* will be said with *kavanah*. It will be a prayer from the depths of his broken, humble heart. That *tefillah* will never be returned unanswered."

According to this counsel, there are many opportunities for prayer. In addition to the three daily *tefillos*, we have to find

more times to pray to Hashem. The Gemara says, "If only a person would daven the entire day!" Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zy'a* taught that this could be accomplished by davening for each thing you're about to do. For example, on the way to work, pray that you be successful. When you're about to learn Torah pray that you should understand what you learn. Before cooking dinner, pray that it should turn out well. Pray for the major and the minor aspects of life. Pray for everything, and you will be praying the entire day.

It is written, תפילה לעני כי יעטוף, "The *tefillah* of a poor person who wraps himself and pours his speech out before Hashem." The Divrei Chaim *zt'l* explains that one should יעטוף, wrap his *tefillos* within the conversations he

speaks during the day. Even as he speaks to someone, he can, in his heart, be saying a prayer to Hashem.

Generally, one needs to be on a high level to create such a *tefillah*. It isn't a simple matter to have a conversation with someone and conceal a prayer within the words. Therefore, let's translate, תפילה לעני בי יעמוד that

the *pasuk* is saying that one should wrap his *tefillos* around everything he does. As Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa taught us, whatever you're doing, pray to Hashem.

If a person applies these counsels, he will be praying many times a day. As Reb Yochanan said, "If only a person prays the entire day!"

### Teshuvah

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos Pesach* (תקס"ד ר"ה בהפטרות רס"ה) writes, "Even the greatest *rasha*, if guaranteed that [if he tries to do teshuvah] he will succeed and he will come close to Hashem will be ready, and he will joyously accept the bitterness of keeping the Torah. He will keep the Torah with all of its boundaries and safeguards (*gezeiros*). The problem is that he loses faith in himself because thinks he won't succeed in his teshuvah, and that since he is anyway not a *tzaddik*, he might as well follow the calls of his heart.

This is as the Or HaChaim teaches (last week's *parashah* 23:10) on the words תמות נפשי מות ישרים, "Let me die the death of the righteous."

The Or HaChaim explains, "We can explain that Bilaam was saying that on the day he dies, he wants to improve and change his bad deeds. Bilaam was the greatest *rasha* of his time, and the story about his donkey testifies to that (see *Avodah Zarah* 4:). Nevertheless, on the day that he dies, he wanted to be like the righteous gentiles. This is because Bilaam

recognized his bad nature and evil ways and that it was impossible for him to become good, so he prayed that at least on the day that he dies, he should be righteous. In a similar vein, many *resha'im* told me outright that if they would know that they will die immediately after doing *teshuvah*, they would quickly do *teshuvah*. The problem is that they know [they won't die immediately, and they know that] they can't maintain their righteous ways for a long time because the foolish, old King (the *yetzer hara*) rules over them..."

Bilaam's mistake was that he didn't value even just a second of *teshuvah*. Even if *teshuvah* doesn't last, a moment of

*teshuvah* is also infinitely valuable.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 85.) rules that we are obligated to save a person's life, even on Shabbos, even if the act of chillul Shabbos will only prolong the person's life for a moment longer. The Imrei Noam says that if a moment of life for the body of a Jew is so precious, how great and special it is to save the *neshamah* of a Yid for even just a moment. With this awareness, we understand the value of *teshuvah*, even if it lasts only for a moment.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, each time we do *teshuvah* we weaken the *yetzer hara*. Even if one returns to his old ways, he will be somewhat better than before. The *yetzer*

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6. Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil *zt'l* told someone, "If you were drowning, and someone tells you that he can save your life for a half-hour, and then you will have to be thrown back into the sea, would you agree to those terms? Of course you would, because even a half-hour of life is precious. (Especially, since it is possible that once you are saved, you will live longer)."

Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe said this to a person who wasn't going to a *mussar shiur*, because he knows that even if he does *teshuvah* during

*hara* won't be as strong as it previously was.

The Beis Avraham says that this is hinted at in Chazal's lesson (*Brachos* 3:), אין הבור מתמלא, מחוליתו, which means that when a pit is dug, and the earth that was taken out is returned to the pit, it will not fill the pit. "The pit never becomes filled by the earth that was taken out of it." This hints that when one leaves the בור, the hole of sins he fell into, and he does *teshuvah*, even if it doesn't last, the *yetzer* isn't

as strong as before. Therefore, every attempt at *teshuvah* is a great accomplishment.

After the great sins of Peor and Bnos Moav, it states (25:6), והמה, בוכים פתח אהל מועד, "and the Targum Yonoson writes, ואינן, בבין וקורין שמע, "They were crying and reading the Shema." They cried for their *aveiros*, but at the same time, they continued with their *avodas Hashem*. Because even as one corrects the sins of the past, he should forge forward, and improve his future.

### Sin Doesn't Pay

One of the paths for *teshuvah* is to recognize that it doesn't pay to sin.

Pinchas was rewarded for stopping Hashem's anger and for saving the Jewish people from the plague. As it states (25:12), "ולא בליתי את בני ישראל בקנאתי, I didn't wipe out Bnei Yisrael due to My anger."

The Or HaChaim (25:17) teaches that three plagues were occurring at this time. One aspect of the plague afflicted only Shimon's tribe. As the Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabba* 20:25) states, "The twelfth miracle [that happened to Pinchas] was that when Pinchas came out [of the tent where he killed Zimri, the *nasi* of Shimon]

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the *drashah*, immediately afterwards he will go back being his old self. Rebbe Gedalya Moshe told him that even *teshuvah* for a short time is also worthwhile to attain.

members of Shimon's *shevet* wanted to harm him. A *malach* came down and started a *mageifah*." 24,000 people died in that *mageifah* (see 25:9).

A second *mageifah* was intended to harm the people who sinned with the daughters of Moav (and also for those who had forbidden thoughts related to the daughters of Moav, even if they didn't actually sin – *Or HaChaim*).

Many people didn't sin, yet also deserved punishment. They were the people who had thoughts of *avodah zarah* (even if they didn't actually worship it) and, ultimately, all of Bnei Yisrael, due to the concept of *ערבות*, which means all Yidden are responsible for the sins of their fellow men. Thus, since a portion of Bnei Yisrael strayed after the daughters of Moav and worshiping Peor, everyone was held responsible.

In review, the plague was intended:

(1) For the tribe of Shimon, to prevent them from harming Pinchas.

(2) For the people who sinned with the daughters of Moav.

(3) For those who had thoughts of *avodah zarah*, and because of *ערבות*.

The first plague took the lives of 24,000 people and then ceased. When Pinchas killed Zimri and Kozbi, the *Or HaChaim* says, the third aspect of the plague stopped. But the second plague, for the illicit deeds and thoughts (and for the *avodah zarah* that came along with it) didn't yet have atonement, and people were still dying.

For their atonement, Hashem tells Bnei Yisrael (25:17), *צור, את המדינים והכיתם אותם*, "Hate the Midianites and smite them." It wasn't yet time for this war. The war would be held sometime later (see *Bamidbar* 31:2, when Hashem commands them to wage this war). But for the time being, they had a mitzvah to *hate* the Midianites and to *desire* to smite them when the opportunity would arise. This hatred would atone for their sins

and be a protection against the plague.

The Or HaChaim explains, "Whoever tastes sins, it is hard for him to leave it. Even if his attachment to sins is merely in his thoughts, it is hard for him to abandon them. And since he is attached to sin, it is difficult for him to attain atonement. In our episode, Bnei Yisrael tasted the sweetness of sins – some by deeds, and some in their thoughts. and Hashem wanted to heal them and to end the *mageifah*... Hashem said, צרור את המדינים, "Hate the Midianites." This means to hate the people and to hate any sweetness and good that they have. [When you go to war, you must] cut down the fruit trees and to ruin all freshwater fountains... because they caused you to do bad... And if you will hate them, you will be disgusted by the temptation for sins... This will atone for you...and the plague will end.

"This is the explanation of the *pasuk*, צרור את המדינים, this

means you should consider them your enemy, and you should hate them... This is one of the paths of *teshuvah*. It states צרור in the present tense, which means your hatred should become your nature [and at any given moment, when you think of the Midianim, you should hate them].

והביתם אותם means that you should wait for the moment when you will be able to smite them..."One of the paths of *teshuvah* is to train oneself not to *want* bad, which will make it easier for him to abandon it.

The Mesilas Yesharim (15) discusses this point:

"The best way to acquire *prishus* (separating from pleasures he doesn't need) is when a person thinks about the revoltingness of the pleasures of this world...and the bad that is likely to come from them. Because the reason one's nature pulls him to these pleasures...are his eyes, which entice him that they are good and sweet. But when a person clearly knows that the

"good" is a total farce, an imagination, and the bad is real, and it will cause a lot of trouble, then he will undoubtedly be disgusted, and he won't want them at all. Therefore, this is all that a person has to do: To train himself to recognize the feebleness of these pleasures,

their falsehood, and then he will be disgusted by them on his own, and it won't be hard for him to leave them."

A person should recognize that sin isn't good for him. The more this is clear to a person, the easier it will be for him to leave it.

### Everything is for the Good

It states in this week's *parashah* (26:8), **וּבְנֵי פְלֹאֵי אֱלֹהִים**. Tzaddikim explain that **פְּלֹאֵי** means concealed, hidden, and it hints to the times when Hashem's *chesed* is concealed, and a person is going through difficulties. He must know that even then, **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, Hashem is his father, and the problems came to him for his benefit. And when one believes that it is good, it will become good.

redemption, and the problems go away.

The Torah says that tefillin are to be worn **בֵּין עֵינַיִךְ**, between the eyes. The *apikorsim* (in the time of Chazal) took these words literally, and they wore their tefillin on the nose, between their eyes. The *Chachamim* teach that it means to wear the tefillin on the head, above the area "between the eyes."

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* taught: When one inserts the letter **א** in **גּוֹלָה**, exile, it becomes **גּוֹאֵלָה**, redemption. This hints that when one remembers Hashem amid his *tzaros* (and he remembers that everything is for the good), it turns into

We can explain that the non-believers want to wear tefillin between their eyes because they only want to believe in what they see. If their eyes don't see something, they don't believe in it. But we place our tefillin on our head because

even when we don't see, we can know the truth by using our intellect. This lesson also applies to *emunah*, believing that everything is for the good. Even if we don't see how everything is good, we believe it with the eyes of the intellect.<sup>7</sup>

The Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* ch.18) writes, "Baruch Hashem Whose compassion never leaves Bnei Yisrael. Even when they sin and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is angry with them, nevertheless, Hashem's compassion is on them every day, constantly. Hakadosh

Baruch Hu says, 'with every distress that Yisrael endures, I am with them.' As it states, בבל צרתם לו צר, 'With all their distress, He is distressed.' ..."

In fact, Hashem is closer to those who are in a *tzarah*. Think about a father who loves all his children. But when one of his children is in the hospital in the operating room, the father's thoughts are now exclusively on that child. The *nimshal* is, when someone is going through a hard time, that is when Hashem is even closer to him.

### ***Bein HaMetzarim***

We have reached the Three Weeks when we mourn the Churban. Even while we mourn the Churban, we shouldn't forget to hope for Moshiach.

The Gemara says, "When a person is brought to judgment

[in heaven] he is asked, 'Did you deal honestly in business? Did you designate set times for Torah study? Did you have children? Did you await the salvation? Were you *mifalpel* (study deeply) the Torah?' (*Shabbos* 31). One of the

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7. According to Rabbeinu Tam, until 58.5 minutes after *shekiyah* it is daytime. It is very dark outside, but those who follow this opinion say that it is still daytime. Let's take this as a sign that sometimes things appear dark, as though it is night, but it is really daytime, and everything is good.

primary questions asked is whether we waited for His salvation.

Similarly, the Rambam writes, "Moshiach will come and reestablish Dovid HaMelech's kingdom, build the Beis HaMikdash, and gather the dispersed of Israel. All *mishpatim* (judicial laws) will return as they were beforehand. There will be *korbanos*; and we will observe *shmitah* and *yovel*... Anyone who doesn't believe in Moshiach or who isn't awaiting his arrival, not only doesn't he believe in the *Nevi'im*, he also doesn't believe in the Torah and in Moshe Rabbeinu" (*Hilchos Melachim* 11:1).

Therefore, during the Three Weeks (and throughout the year) we should be mourning and yearning; mourning the Destruction, and yearning for a better future.

Someone once asked the Apter Rav *zt'l* advice regarding his business. The Rebbe gave him some wise advice. Then the

Rebbe emitted a deep sigh, and with a broken heart, said, "A great tragedy happened today."

"What happened?" the man asked, concerned.

"We didn't bring the *korban tamid* sacrifice today..." and then the Apter Rav cried copiously for Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash.

Someone once came to the Kotzker Rebbe *zt'l*, complaining that his son-in-law had become a Kotzker chassid. He told the Rebbe that his daughter was very upset about this (not to mention that so was he, the father-in-law). He cried, "Whoever has a heart understands me. How could it not burst from pain because of my daughter's sorrow?"

The Rebbe replied, "If one indeed has a heart, how could it not burst from the pain of the Churban Beis HaMikdash."

During the Three Weeks, a tzaddik visited the Sfas Emes of Gur *zt'l*. "What brings you here?" the Sfas Emes asked

since he knew that this tzaddik lived far away.

"My family's tradition is to travel during the Three Weeks," the tzaddik explained. "Hashem is, *kivayachol*, in *galus*, so we go into *galus* too."

"The main thing is to remember that we aren't home," the Sfas Emes replied.

The Sfas Emes rarely traveled, but he always remembered that he wasn't *home*. We aren't where we should be.

Reb Yaakov Emdin *zt'l* (*Siddur Beis Yaakov*, Tisha b'Av 6:16) teaches, "If our only sin were that we aren't mourning for Yerushalayim, it would be

sufficient to prolong our *galus*. In my opinion, this is the primary cause for all the terrible tragedies that befall us in *galus*. We are pursued, we don't have peace... It is all because the mourning has left our hearts."<sup>8</sup>

The Magan Avraham (551:45) writes, "The Arizal taught that one should mourn during these days [of Bein HaMetzarim] after midday, and cry for around a half-hour."

In the Chasam Sofer's yeshiva, after midday, during the Three Weeks, they would read the *Tikun Chatzos* publicly and mourn the Churban. Generally, the tzaddik, Reb Fishel Sofer *zy'a* was the *chazan*. He cried

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8. The three Haftaros of Bein HaMetzarim are called **תלתא דפרענותא** (three punishments) and the seven subsequent haftaros are called **שבעה דנחמתא** (seven condolences). The Ateres Moshe of Makave *zy'a* asks that since the opposite of **נחמה** is **אבילות**, it seems that a more fitting name for the haftaros of the Three Weeks would be **תלתא דאבלתא** (Three of Mourning).

The Ateres Moshe answers that **פרענותא** can also mean 'to pay back.' Reb Yaakov Emdin taught that the tzaros of *galus* is because people aren't mourning sufficiently. When we read the haftaros of the Three Weeks, we are **פרענותא**, paying up our obligation.

bitterly, and the community would cry along with him.

Once, when Reb Fishel wasn't in yeshiva, and a young *bachur*, with a sweet voice, was chosen to lead *Tikun Chatzos*. This *bachur* didn't say it in a sorrowful voice, like Reb Fishel.

It sounded more like a *yom tov tefillah* than lamentations. When he finished, the Chasam Sofer said, "We have to check to see whether *this bachur* belongs to Shabtai Tzvi's *sr'y* group. For how can one relate to the Churban of the Beis HaMikdash with such ease?"<sup>9</sup>

### **Mourning versus Joy**

The Shulchan Aruch teaches, "One may not fill his mouth with laughter in this world" (561:5). The Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah teaches that this is especially true during the Three Weeks.

However, we must clarify that this doesn't mean that we should be sad on these days. A Yid should always serve Hashem with happiness.

How does one combine mourning with joy?

Rebbe Shmelke of Nikelsburg *zy'a* answers this question with

a *mashal*: A king had to flee from his palace, and he ended up in a very distant land. He stayed in the home of one of his close friends. The King observed his host and saw that sometimes he cried bitterly, and at other times he was extremely happy. The King asked him, "I see you crying, and I see you happy. So, are you happy, or are you sad?"

The host replied, "I'm both. I'm sad because you needed to leave your palace and come here. And I'm happy because I have the privilege of hosting the King."

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9. The Chasam Sofer said, whoever mourns for the Beis HaMikdash in the Three Weeks, will merit good children.

During the Three Weeks, we cry because the *Shechinah* is in *galus*, but we are also happy because the *Shechinah* is with us. The *sefarim* explain that it is possible to become closer to Hashem during the Three Weeks than throughout the year. It is illustrated with a *mashal*: It is hard to come near to a king when he's sitting in his palace. But when he is in exile, whoever wants to come close can do so.

It says, בל רודפיה השיגוה בין המצרים, and the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l* explained: Whoever runs to find Hashem (רודף י-ה), השיגוה, will be able to find Him בין המצרים, during the Three Weeks of *Bein Hametzarim*."

*Shulchan Aruch* states, בל המתאבל, על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה, "Whoever mourns for Yerushalayim will merit seeing its joy" (554:25). זוכה ורואה is written in the present tense (it doesn't say ויראה). The *Kedushas Levi* and other *sefarim* explain that when one mourns

for the Beis HaMikdash he immediately experiences the joy of the redemption.

The *Kedushas Levi* (*Eichah*) writes, "When one thinks about holiness and mourns for Yerushalayim.... he experiences a little bit of the joy of Yerushalayim; of how it will be in the future."

The *Sfas Emes* (*Ki Savo* 5653) teaches, "In our generation when one remembers the Beis HaMikdash, he becomes attached to its light. Therefore, at every *simchah*, one must remember the Beis HaMikdash. At a *chasunah*, we say the *brachah* שוש תשיש [and we pray for the *ge'ulah*] because when the Beis HaMikdash stood, the *simchah* was complete. Today, we merit this *simchah* through mourning for the Beis HaMikdash. As it says, שישו... משוש כל המתאבלים, 'Rejoice... all those who mourn.' ... Because of his mourning, he merits to feel the joy of Yerushalayim."

## Shabbos

In the *tochachah* (*Bechukosai*) where it discusses the *galus*, the Torah says, **או תרצה הארץ את** ...שבתותיה (*Vayikra* 26:34). The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* translates this *pasuk* as follows: "או, when Yidden are in *galus*, **תרצה את** ...שבתותיה, Hashem will enjoy the Shabbosim."

The Tiferes Shlomo explains, "The Shabbosim [in *galus*] are more joyous to Hashem than [the Shabbosim] when the Beis HaMikdash stood. This is because...during the week, *keviyachol*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is also in *galus*, as it states, **עמו אנכי בצרה**, 'I am with you in your hardships.' Consequently, when Shabbos comes, Hakadosh Baruch Hu has immense joy...because He leaves *galus*..."

The Shabbosim of the Three Weeks especially are very lofty and joyous times. The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "It states [in *Lecha Dodi*] **רב לך שבת**, 'Shabbos is great, **בעמק הבנא**, in the low times.' This is referring to the

weeks of *Bein HaMetzarim*, between Shivah Asar BeTamuz until Tisha b'Av, for they are **עמק הבנא**, low days. At these times, **רב לך שבת**, the Shabbosim are great. The Shabbosim of *Bein HaMetzarim* are greater than the Shabbosim of the rest of the year. This is because there is greater distress during these weeks, therefore on Shabbos the joy is extra great in heaven... Every Yid should be happy on Shabbos... And when we are happy, it makes Hashem even happier."

The highest point of Shabbos is in the afternoon, at *Shalosh-seudos* time. This is because the afternoon is a time of *din* (harsh judgment), and Shabbos turns it into *rachamim* (compassion) and whenever *din* turns into *rachamim* it's an extraordinary time.

The Yid HaKadosh *zy'a* taught that in the Three Weeks, all twenty-four hours of the day are times of *din*, and Shabbos turns them into *rachamim*, so

the entire Shabbos is unique and sacred during the Three Weeks, similar to *Shalash seudos* time.<sup>10</sup>

### Torah

Rebbe Aharon of Belz said that when a Yid learns Torah, there is no *galus*. An indication of this is that it is permissible to eat meat and drink wine at a *siyum* celebration during the Nine Days. Where there is Torah, there is no *galus*.

Similarly, the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* said: Halachah states that at a *bris* in the Nine Days, only ten people may eat meat and drink wine at the meal. But if there's a *siyum* in the Nine Days, there is no limit to the number of people allowed to participate. Even more than ten people can partake in the meat and wine at the meal. What's the difference?

The Chozeh explains that the Churban came because they weren't studying Torah, as it states, (*Yirmiyahu* 9:11), על מה

אבדה ארץ על עזבם את תורתִי, "Why was the land destroyed? It is because they abandoned My Torah." Therefore, when one finishes a *masechta* and makes a *siyum* he atones the cause of the Churban, and the scent of *ge'ulah* is in the air. Therefore, all participants can partake in the meal.

One of the reasons Torah study is so special and important in the Three Weeks is because during these days, Hashem, *keviyachol*, is sad, and we should study Torah to make Hashem happy.

The Mishnah says, הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה, "be diligent in studying Torah" (*Avos* 2:14). The Avodas Yisrael writes that הוי is *gematriya* 21, corresponding to the 21 days of the Three Weeks.

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**10.** The Zohar (Vaykira 182) debates who is greater: the Jewish nation or the malachim? The Zohar concludes that on Shabbos, the Jewish nation is greater, and on weekdays, the malachim are greater.

"הוי" , during the Three Weeks; שקוד ללמוד תורה , devote yourself to studying Torah." The Avodas Yisrael explains, "It is the way of kings to...have musicians. When the King is happy, he doesn't need a band to play for him, because he's happy regardless. But when the King becomes sad, he will call for his musicians to play music and make him happy. Likewise, *keviyachol*...the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, and there's sadness... Someone who cares should come before the King, free from all depression, and he should make the King happy..." by studying Torah with joy.

During the Holocaust, people were amazed to see Rebbe Pinchas of Ustila zy'a (the son-in-law of Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zy'a) learning Torah with immense *hasmadah*. How did he have the stamina to put

aside all the pain and suffering and delve into Torah study?

People asked him about this, and he replied, "People asked my father-in-law this very same question during World War I. They couldn't understand how he maintained the peace of mind to study Torah. He explained that during hard times it's even more important to study the Torah. Because the Mishnah says, 'When a person has pain... the *Shechinah* says, 'My head hurts. My arms hurt, which means Hashem suffers together with us. We are living in a time when Klal Yisrael is in distress, and Hashem is certainly suffering together with us. We must make Hashem happy, and nothing brings joy to Hashem like a Yid who learns Torah."

May these days of mourning turn into days of happiness, with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days, amen.

