

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Pinchas



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Pinchas

Bein HaMetzarim

The Gemara (Shabbos 31) says that when a person is niftar, one of the first questions that heaven will ask him is צפית לישועה, "Did you hope for Moshiach?"

Reb Yaakov Emdin zt'l (Siddur Beis Yaakov, Tisha b'Av 6:16) writes, "If our only sin were

that we don't mourn over Yerushalayim, it would be sufficient to prolong our *galus*. In my opinion, this is the primary cause of all the terrible destructions - beyond comprehension - that befall us in *galus*. We are pursued, and we don't have peace... All because the mourning has left our hearts."¹

1. Reb Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld zt'l related how the simple people in Pressburg waited for Moshiach. "I once heard two women speaking. One asked the other, "What did you prepare for lunch today."

She replied that she had prepared beans.

"And what will you make tomorrow?"

The woman replied, "Sha! Sha! אל תפתח פה לשטן. Don't even consider it. But if chas v'shalom Moshiach doesn't come, I will cook potatoes."

A businessman came to the Apter Rav zt'l to ask for business advice. The Rebbe gave him wise counsel, and then the rebbe emitted a deep moan and said with a broken heart, "A great tragedy happened today."

"What happened?" the man asked.

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

In the Chasam Sofer's yeshiva, they would recite Tikun Chatzos together and mourn the churban in the afternoons of the Three Weeks. Generally, the tzaddik, Reb Fishel Sofer *zy'a*, was the *chazzan*, and he would cry bitterly as he said it.

One day, Reb Fishel wasn't in yeshiva, and a young *bachur* with a sweet

voice was chosen to lead *Tikun Chatzos*. This *bachur* didn't cry; it sounded more like a yom tov *tefillah* than kinos. When he finished, the Chasam Sofer said, "We must verify whether this *bachur* doesn't belong to Shabtai Tzvi's *sr'y* group. Because how can one relate to the *churban* Beis HaMikdash with such ease and comfort?"²

During the Three Weeks, a certain tzaddik visited the Sfas Emes of Gur *zt'l*. "What brings you here?" the Sfas Emes asked. "You live very far from here!"

"We didn't bring the *korban tamid* today..." and then the Apter Rav cried copiously.

Someone 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. The father cried, "If one has a heart, 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 pain because of the *churban* Beis HaMikdash."

2. The Chasam Sofer said, whoever mourns over the Beis HaMikdash during the Three Weeks, will merit good children.

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

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

The Sfas Emes rarely traveled, but he frequently reminded himself that he wasn't *home*. We aren't where we ought to be. This realization should never leave our consciousness.

Close to Hashem

It states (Eichah 1:3) כל רודפיה כל רודף י"ה, השיגוה בין המצרים, "all her

pursuers overtook her between the boundaries."³

The Koznitzer Magid zt'l (Avodas Yisrael, *Avos* 2:14) writes that כל רודפיה means כל רודף י"ה, whoever pursues Hashem השיגוה, can attain a connection with Hashem, בין המצרים, in the days of Bein HaMetzarim. During these days, it is easier for a person to become close to Hashem than the rest of the year.

Interestingly, it is different than what we would assume. We think that during these days of mourning, we are distant from Hashem when actually, it is during this time of year that we have the greatest potential to become close to Hashem.

3. According to its simple meaning, the pasuk discusses our troubles in *galus*. The goyim pursue and persecute us, and we have nowhere to escape. It is like there is a boundary on both sides of the road (בין המצרים), and we have nowhere to run.

Rashi adds that *bein hametzarim* can also refer to the days between the 17th of Tamuz and Tisha b'Av. At the time of the Churban, between these two metzarim, times of grief, the Jewish nation suffered persecution.

He brings a hint to this from the pasuk (Shemos 3:14) *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנָי*. The gematria of *אֲדֹנָי* is 21. Thus the pasuk can be translated, *אֲדֹנָי*, Hashem says, "I will be with the Jewish nation *אֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנָי*, during the 21 days of Bein HaMetzarim.

Why is it easier to become close to Hashem these days? The Koznitzer Magid explains with a mashal:

"When a king is in his palace, it is hard for people to reach him. Guards surround the king and keep people from coming near. [Furthermore, if he is granted an audience with the king], he will need to present the king with a precious gift. But when the king is traveling, it is easy to get to the king, and a small present will be in the king's eyes like a large gift... The king will accept the present with a happy countenance, and this is because he is traveling... Therefore, the Tana says *הוּי שְׂקוּד לְלַמּוּד תּוֹרָה*. *הוּי* is gematria 21. This hints at

the 21 days of Bein HaMatzerim."

So, the Three Weeks is a time for Torah study, a time to come closer to Hashem.

In another place (Parashas Masei), the Avodas Yisrael elaborates on the importance of studying Torah on these days. "Although we should be sad on these days and mourn the churban Beis Hashem, nevertheless, we must be strong and purify our hearts to serve Hashem through Torah and tefillah *with joy*, especially when offering praises to Hashem [such as pesukei d'zimra and the like]. This can be explained with a mashal. It is the way of a human king to possess many things that can make him happy – singers, drums, dancing, flutes, and harps. When the king is happy, he doesn't need the singers and musicians. He is happy without them. However, when he is sad, he calls for his musicians to sing and play before him and to make him happy. The nimshal is

keviyachol with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The malachim in heaven sing and praise Hashem; however, at the time of the churban, there is sadness in the outer chambers, and someone who cares about Hashem must strengthen himself and enter the inner chambers to shed from himself all sadness, and make the honored King happy."

So, these are days to study Torah and to daven to Hashem with joy. This is a time when we need to, keviyachol, bring joy Above.⁴

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 could he put aside all the pain and devastation and delve into Torah study?

He replied, "People asked my father-in-law this same question during World War I. People couldn't understand how he had the peace of mind to study Torah then. He explained that during hard times it's even more important to study Torah. The Mishnah says, 'When a person is in pain, the *Shechinah* says, 'My head hurts. My arms hurt,' which means Hashem suffers together with us. We live in a time when Klal Yisrael is in distress, and Hashem is certainly suffering together with us. It's our obligation to make Hashem happy,

4. The Three Weeks are also mesugal for tefillah. The Avodas Yisrael (Masei הקדים ד"ה ונבר הקדים) writes, quoting the Magid of Mezritch zt'l, "When a king is out of his palace and passes through the marketplace and the streets, he is close to all those who call out to him, and he listens to the shouts of those who call his name. Similarly, we must know that at this time [during the Three Weeks], at a time when it is like a bird who left its nest [Hashem is in galus], everyone has permission to come close to the King of the world, and He answers all."

and nothing brings more joy to Hashem than a Yid studying Torah."⁵

So, how does a Yid combine mourning with joy?

Mourning or Joy?

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 so during the Three Weeks. Yet, this doesn't mean we should be sad. A Yid must always serve Hashem with happiness.

Rebbe Shmelke of Nikelsburg zy'a answers with a *mashal*: A king was forced to run away from his palace. He arrived at a distant land and stayed at the home of a good friend. The king noticed that his host's mood alternated between happy and sad. Bewildered, the king asked him, "Are you happy or sad? If you are happy, why do

5. Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l taught that when a Yid learns Torah, he isn't in *galus*. This is why one may eat meat and drink wine at a *siyum* during the Nine Days. Where there is Torah, there is no *galus*.

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l said: Halachah states that at a *bris* in the Nine Days, only ten people may partake in the meat and wine at the meal. But at a *siyum* in the nine days, more than ten people can have meat and wine at the meal. There is no limit to the participants. The Chozeh explains that the *churban* came about because they weren't studying Torah as they should, as it states (*Yirmiyahu* 9:11-12) על מה אבדה ארץ נצתה כמדבר מבלי עבר, ויאמר ה' על עוונם את תורתתי "Why is the land ruined (and) withered like a wilderness, without anyone passing through? Hashem said, '[It is] because they have forsaken My Torah.'" When one finishes a *masechta* and makes a *siyum* he amends the root and the cause of the *churban*. The scent of the *ge'ulah* is in the air, and therefore, all participants can partake in the meal.

you cry? And if you are sad, why do you appear happy?"

The host replied, "I am happy, and I am sad. I am sad because the king had to leave his palace and come here. And I am happy because I have the privilege to host the king in my home."

Reb Shmelke of Nikelsburg explains that this describes our emotions during the Three Weeks. We cry bitterly, and we mourn because the *Shechinah* is in *galus*. But we also rejoice because the *Shechinah* is with us.

Furthermore, we can explain that mourning and happiness aren't contradictions. In fact, the mourning becomes the foundation of our happiness. This is because when one mourns the Beis HaMikdash, he draws an element of the Beis HaMikdash to himself. The Beis HaMikdash was a place filled with joy (as we sing in the Shabbos zemiros, למקדשך תוב ולקדש קודשין אתר די ביה

יחדון רוהין ונפשיין, "Return to the Beis HaMikdash and to the Kodesh Kadoshim, a place where the souls rejoice") and with his mourning, he draws this immense joy to himself.

Some people are afraid to mourn because they don't want to be sad, failing to realize that mourning results in the greatest joy.

Shulchan Aruch (554:25) states, כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה, ורואה בשמחתה "Whoever mourns over Yerushalayim merits and sees in its joy." זוכה ורואה is written in the present tense. The Kedushas Levi and other *sefarim* explain that when one mourns the Beis HaMikdash, he immediately experiences the joy of the redemption. The Kedushas Levi (*Eichah*) writes, "When one thinks about holiness and mourns Yerushalayim.... he immediately perceives an element of the joy of Yerushalayim, of how it will be in the future."

At a *chasunah*, we break a glass under the *chuppah*, we

say the *brachah* שוש תשיש – a tefillah for the *geulah*, and the *chassan* wears ashes on his head, etc. These customs help us remember Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash. The Sfas Emes (*Ki Savo* 5653) explains that the purpose of these customs isn't to get us to mourn at a wedding; rather, they perfect the joy of the chasunah. We want the joy of the chasunah to be complete, but how can any happiness be complete in galus? So, we mourn, and the mourning draws the light and the joy of the era of Moshiach, which completes the joy of the *chasunah*.

The Sfas Emes writes, "At every *simchah*, one must remember the Beis HaMikdash... When the Beis HaMikdash stood, the *simchah* was complete. Today, we merit this *simchah* through mourning and yearning for the Beis HaMikdash. As it states (*Yeshayah* 66:10) שישו אתה משוב כל, המתאבלים עליה, exult her in exultation, all you who

mourned for her.' ... Through his mourning, he will merit the joy of Yerushalayim."

The Yomim Tovim

This week's *parashah* discusses Shabbos, *rosh chodesh*, and the *yomim tovim*.

Regarding the greatness of Shabbos, Rebbe Shlomek Zvhiller *zt'l* said, "An hour of *avodas Hashem* on Shabbos is like five hundred weekday hours."

The Ben Ish Chai says an hour on Shabbos is like a thousand weekday hours.

The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* says that an hour of *avodas Hashem* on Rosh Chodesh causes the entire month to be holy like Rosh Chodesh. As the saying goes, "The body follows the head."

Chazal say, "Whoever is greater has a greater *yetzer hara*." Reb Yechezkel Levenstein *zt'l* taught that this also applies to times. On the more important days

of the year – such as Shabbos and *yom tov* – there is a greater *yetzer hara*, which is why some people find it hard to serve Hashem on those days. But if we make an effort, we can accomplish so much on those days.⁶

6. The Dubno Magid *zt'l* told the following story:

A large border city passed hands several times between its two neighboring countries, both countries claiming the city as theirs.

After many years of war and bloodshed, both governments decided that the dispute had to be settled once and for all. They decided to conduct one final battle, and the winner will own the city forever.

They also decided that this time, large armies won't fight the war as in the past. Only one warrior from each country will come to the battlefield this time. The mighty warriors will wrestle in a field near a cliff, and the one who throws his opponent off the cliff wins.

The day of the great battle arrived. The kings of both countries and many spectators came to witness this decisive battle.

At the start, one of the warriors was far more successful than the other. It seemed that he would win. The countrymen of the winning team cheered their wrestler on as the warrior dragged his opponent towards the cliff.

Suddenly, when they were mere steps away from the cliff, the warrior of the other country jumped up from the dust, overpowered his opponent, and threw him over the cliff.

At the victory celebration, the king told the mighty wrestler, "We were so worried. We were certain you would lose. How did you end up winning?"

"I purposely allowed my opponent to drag me all the way to the cliff because I wanted to tire him. By the time he dragged me to the cliff, he was exhausted, and I was strong – it was easy to win the battle."

The Joy of the Yomim Tovim

The Chinuch (Mitzvah 488) explains the mitzvah of being happy on yom tov. He writes, "The Torah states (Devarim 16:14) ושמחת בהגיד, 'You shall rejoice in your festivals.' Chazal (Chagigah 8.) say, 'Be happy in various ways,' with eating meat, drinking wine, donning new clothes, giving fruits and sweets to the children... Chazal (Pesachim 109.) says, 'One must be happy on yom tov, together with his wife and children and family members... How do you make them happy? Men with that which is fitting for them - with wine. Women with what is fitting for them - beautiful clothes. The Torah [also] obligates us to

bring into our homes the poor, gerim, and the [socially] weak [so they can also rejoice with us on the yom tov]. [It is a natural need for] people to be happy at times. This isn't less important than our need for food, rest, and sleep. Hashem wanted to grant to us, His sheep [the ability to turn this natural need into a mitzvah], so he commanded us to be happy for His name... Hashem established several times throughout the year as yomim tovim to remember the miracles and the kindness that Hashem performed for us, and at these times, Hashem commanded us to be happy. This is a great cure - to be happy for Hashem's name. This protects us from straying too far from the

This story is a reminder that we must be strong and fight the battles that are most important. We shouldn't arrive at Shabbos and *yom tov* exhausted. Those are moments of critical and decisive battles.

There were tzaddikim who encouraged sleeping on erev Shabbos, so we can have the strength to serve Hashem on Shabbos. In Stolin there is a saying, "Six days we rest up, and on Shabbos we work."

correct path. Someone who thinks about these matters, without trying to disprove it, will see the logic of my words."

Last week it states (22:28) ויפתח ה' את פי האתון ותאמר לבלעם מה עשיתי לך כי הכיתני זה שלש רגלים, "Hashem opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Bilaam, 'What did I do to you that you struck me these three times?'" Rashi writes, רמז לו, אתה מבקש לעקור אומה החוגגת שלש רגלים בשנה, "The donkey was hinting to Bilaam, 'You are trying to uproot a nation that celebrates three *yomim tovim* a year!'"

The Jewish nation performs many mitzvos. The donkey could have said, "How dare you try to uproot a nation who puts on tefillin and keeps Shabbos," or something like that. What is unique about the *regalim*, the *yomim tovim*, that the donkey told Bilaam that he would fail in hurting the nation that celebrates the three *yomim tovim*?

The Kotzker zt'l explains that it referred to the immense joy that the Jewish nation has on the *yomim tovim*. This is an exceptional merit for the Jewish nation, a pleasure that the *goyim* can't comprehend.⁷

7. Someone asked the Noda b'Yehudah, "How did you become the *gadol hador* and not me? We learned together in the same *cheder*, and I don't remember that you were so much smarter than me."

The Noda b'Yehudah asked him, "Were you ever extremely happy?"

The man replied that it happened once that he was extremely happy - when he won the lottery.

The Noda b'Yehudah responded that he has that degree of joy every time he puts on tefillin.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l said, "There was a *Yid* in Zvhil who

The Joy of Shabbos

The pasuk states (*Bamidbar* 10:10), *וביום שמחתכם*, "On your day of joy..." Chazal (*Sifri* 19) say that this refers to Shabbos.

We should be happy every day of the year, as it states (*Tehillim* 100:2), *עבדו את ה' בשמחה*, "Serve Hashem with joy,"⁸ but there is an added importance to being happy

had more pleasure from putting on tefillin than the greatest baal aveirah has with his aveiros." (Chasidim understood that Rebbe Shlomke was referring to himself.)

8. A child was choking on a coin, and his face was turning blue. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* exclaimed, "The only solution is to bring the child to the Ponovitzer Rav because the Ponovitzer Rav is an expert in getting coins out of people, even from the tightest places..."

Everyone laughed, including the child. The laughter dislodged the coin, and it made its way out. The Chazon Ish said about this incident, "Happiness saves people from all *tzaros*."

We'll add that the boy wasn't really happy. He was laughing because everyone else was laughing. But that was enough to save him. When a person is unable to be truly happy, he should pretend to be happy because that will also bring *yeshuos*.

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* said that a hint to this is in the words (*Devarim* 16:16) *והיית אך שמח*. The first letters of the three words spell *שוש*, falsehood, hinting that a person should pretend to be happy and have false joy because false joy will eventually lead to true joy.

There was a Slonimer Chasid who lived in Teveria called Reb Mordechai (Motke) Leider *zt'l*. From time to time, Reb Motke traveled to Slonim, Lithuania, to be by his Rebbe, the Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l*. In those days, this was an extremely long trip.

Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim, asked him why

on Shabbos, as it is שמוחתכם יום, "Your day of joy."

As we say in the *zemiros*, ביום השבת קודש שישו ושמחו כמקבלי מתן נחליאל, "Be happy and joyous on Shabbos as those who received the Torah."

It states (*Devarim* 28:47), תחת אשר לא עבדת את השם אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב. The Bnei Yissaschar (*Igra d'Kalah*) explains that תחת

אשר can be translated as "under [or after] the letters "under [or after] the letters "אש"ר."In the order of the alef beis, the letters after "אש"ר are "ש"ב"ת. So the Torah teaches us that the *tochachah* comes when you don't serve Hashem with joy on Shabbos.

Hashem told Moshe, "I have a good gift in My

he undertook these long journeys and what was lacking in his *avodas Hashem* in Teveria.

Reb Motke replied:

The Mishnah (end of Sotah) states, משמת ר' מאיר בטלו משלים, "When Reb Meir was *niftar*, it became *batel*, annulled, people who knew how to tell parables. משמת בן עזאי בטלו שקדנים, when ben Azay was *niftar*, it became *batel* diligent Torah scholars, who study with *hasmadah*..." The Mishnah lists other things that became בטל over time. Then the Mishnah writes, משמת רבן גמליאל הזקן בטל כבוד התורה ומתה טהרה ופרישות, when Raban Gamliel the elder was *niftar*, the honor of Torah was *batel*, annulled, and purity and *prishus* died." Notice that by the final words, the Mishnah doesn't say that *prishus* became *batel*, rather that it died. This means טהרה ופרישות is still existent but in a dead state.

Reb Motke explained, "This is because there are people who practice purity and *prishus* (which means they detach themselves from unnecessary pleasures), but they do so with a heavy, sad heart. They don't really want to give up the pleasures of this world. I travel to Slonim because over there I learn how to have *taharah* and *prishus* with *simchah*. Because *prishus* should be alive and practiced with joy."

treasury, Shabbos is its name; I want to give it to the Jewish nation. Go and inform them" (*Shabbos* 10).

The Chidushei HaRim says that this wasn't a one-time event. Every week, before Shabbos arrives, Moshe speaks to every Yid's *neshamah* and says, "Hashem told me to tell you that He is giving you the great gift of Shabbos."

Yidden feel uplifted on Friday, Kabalas Shabbos time when Shabbos comes in. The Chidushei HaRim writes, "Even a person alone in a room will experience the holiness of Shabbos as it arrives" because that is when he receives Moshe Rabbeinu's encouraging message. He tells them about the beautiful gift Hashem is giving them.

There are two components to Shabbos: the halachos of Shabbos and the joy of Shabbos. Both aspects of Shabbos are important.

Some people only keep its laws. They would never consider moving something *muktzah*, cooking, carrying, etc., and they should be commended for this. However, if they don't experience the joy of Shabbos, they are missing a fundamental aspect of Shabbos. Although there is no explicit obligation to be happy on Shabbos as there is on *yom tov*, nonetheless, that is the spirit of the day, as it states (Bamidbar 10:10), *וביום שמחתכם*, "On the day of your joy" and Chazal say that this refers to Shabbos.

We sing on Shabbos *כל מקדש שבת כראוי לו, כל שומר שבת כדת מחללו שכרו הרבה מאוד.* Rebbe

9. The Chazon Ish said, "If a non-Jew knew the enjoyment of learning a *daf* Gemara before *Shacharis* on Shabbos morning, he would convert just to experience it."

The Midrash (*Beshalach* 25) says that when a person keeps Shabbos,

Henoch of Alexander *zy'a* said that this song refers to the two aspects of Shabbos. Some keep Shabbos, כראוי לו, as is fitting and proper, with joy and pleasure. Others keep it only כדת מחללו," according to the law - not to desecrate it."

The following words are שכרו הרבה מאוד, "his reward is very great." Reb Henoah notes that the reward follows the words כדת מחללו, which refer to the people who only keep the laws of Shabbos. Why doesn't the *zemiros* mention the reward for those who keep Shabbos correctly, which

means that he has joy and celebration on Shabbos?

Rebbe Henoah explains that the purpose of this song is to encourage people to keep Shabbos. Those who experience the joy of Shabbos don't need encouragement. They are motivated to keep Shabbos because they know just how beautiful, pleasurable, and joyous Shabbos can be. Only the people who don't yet experience the joy of Shabbos must be encouraged and enticed by the promise of receiving reward.

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover *zy'a* told the following *mashal*:

"even if Hashem makes a *gezeirah*, he can annul it." In the merit of keeping Shabbos, one's *tefillos* are answered, and he can annul harsh decrees. This is hinted at in the words (Tehillim 37:4) והתענג על when you have oneg Shabbos, Hashem will answer your *tefillos* and grant all your heart's desires.

This is also alluded to in the words על פי פעלו (from the *zemiros Shabbos* quoted above). The Beis Aharon *zy'a* explains (in the name of Rebbe Mordechai of Kremnitz *zy'a*) על פי, whatever this person will pray for, פעלו, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give him, in the merit of his Shabbos observance, and in the merit of his oneg and joy on Shabbos.

Someone wanted to invite a king to his home, so he ordered the best food, professional musicians, comedians, etc. Everything was perfect, but he forgot to invite the guest of honor. He failed to invite the king.

Rebbe Moshe Leib said that this can occur on Shabbos. Before Shabbos arrives, everyone is busy preparing for the holy day. Everyone wants Shabbos to be unique. They cook and clean, wear their best clothes, and prepare *divrei Torah* to tell the family, and they will be immensely rewarded for their efforts. However, when Shabbos arrives, they forget to be happy. It is like forgetting to invite the guest of honor, Shabbos itself. Reb Moshe Leib added that this is hinted at in the *pasuk*, [ענין] וקראת לשבת. Invite the Shabbos as well. Don't forget the guest of honor.

Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* heard a Yerushalmi Yid say, "Ribono Shel Olam, You gave me *challos* for *lechem mishnah*, wine for Kiddush,

and food for the meals. Now, I request that You give me Shabbos for Shabbos." He was saying, "Everything is ready. You gave me everything for Shabbos. Now enable me to experience the joy and holiness of Shabbos.

There is a kabbalistic concept that when one performs a mitzvah, he can merit that a tzaddik from heaven, who in his lifetime excelled in that particular mitzvah, will come to the Yid and help him perform the mitzvah.

The following story is an example of this principle:

Reb Shmuel Azida (a student of the Arizal and author of *Midrash Shmuel* on *Pirkei Avos*) once came to the Arizal, and the Arizal stood up for him. Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* asked the Arizal why he stood up for his student. The Arizal replied, "I didn't stand up for him. I stood up for the Tana Reb Pinchas ben Yair, who entered with him. Reb Shmuel did a mitzvah today

and merited a connection with Reb Pinchas ben Yair."

Intrigued, when Reb Shmuel Azida left, Reb Chaim Vital went out after him and asked him which special mitzvah he performed that day that he had merited this honor. The Midrash Shmuel replied that early that morning, as he was walking to shul for *Shacharis*, he heard cries coming from a house. Inside the house, he found a distraught family that was robbed that night. The thieves stole their money and clothing. "I gave the head of the household my clothes so he could have something to wear. This is the reason you see me dressed in my Shabbos clothing. I gave away my weekday clothes to that poor family."

Reb Chaim Vital returned to the Arizal and told him what he had heard. The Arizal confirmed that this is why Reb Pinchas ben Yair came to him. The Arizal explained, "Reb Pinchas ben

Yair excelled in helping the poor. Therefore, when Reb Shmuel helped this poor family, Reb Pinchas ben Yair came down from heaven to help him perform the mitzvah in the best way."

The kabbalah sefarim explain that this connection of the souls is for the benefit of the person performing the mitzvah and the neshamah in heaven. The person performing the mitzvah benefits from this connection because it helps him complete the mitzvah in the best possible way. The tzaddik in heaven also gains from it because the tzaddik receives an opportunity to perform another mitzvah in this world. The place for performing mitzvos is this world; therefore, tzaddikim in heaven yearn to help a Yid perform a mitzvah.

Based on these ideas, the Chidushei HaRim teaches the following:

Hashem keeps Shabbos as it states, *וביום השביעי שבת*

וינפש, "On the seventh day, Hashem rested." When one observes a mitzvah, he can receive a connection with a tzaddik's soul from heaven who excelled in this mitzvah. Hashem keeps Shabbos. So, when a Yid keeps Shabbos, he can merit that Hashem Himself will help him keep Shabbos properly!

Salvations from Being Joyous on Shabbos

It states in *sefer Masuk m'Dvash* (from Reb Yitzchak Parchi *zt'l* 6), "We saw, with our own eyes, that people who had a problem when Shabbos arrived, but took their minds off their *tzarah* and didn't let their worries enter their heart and rejoiced with Shabbos, that when Shabbos ended, the problem was gone. Everything turned to joy. They were saved from their *tzaros* with wonderful miracles."

Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman *zt'l* was from the tzaddikim who lived in America about a hundred

years ago. He set an example that it was possible to be an *ehrlicher* Yid even in America.

One of the mitzvos that he excelled in was *hachnasas orchim*. Every Shabbos, many guests sat around his table.

Once, his daughter was very ill, and Reb Yaakov Yosef and his Rebbetzin stayed with her in the hospital around the clock.

As Shabbos approached, they decided to go home to perform their weekly mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*.

There was another Herman in the hospital – not related to them – and that Herman was *niftar* on Shabbos. According to American law, the hospital had to notify the next of kin as quickly as possible, so the hospital sent a messenger to the Herman home to tell them the unfortunate news. But accidentally, they confused the two Herman families, and the messenger

was sent to the home of Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman.

When the messenger arrived at the door with a letter, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Herman refused to accept it. It was Shabbos, and Shabbos is a day of joy. They didn't want to hear or see the letter. Today, they would be happy, and that was final.

The messenger left the letter at the home of one of the Herman relatives. That relative came to the Herman home to tell the parents the terrible news, but they refused to listen to what their relative was saying.

After *havdalah*, a second messenger from the hospital arrived at their door. "We're so sorry," he said. "We made a terrible mistake with the last letter. The letter wasn't intended for you. It was written to the other Herman family. Your daughter is doing fine. In fact, over the past twenty-four hours, her health has drastically improved."

Their joy on Shabbos healed their daughter.

I heard from a person who works in kiruv rechokim that he was once gave a speech on the topic of being happy on Shabbos, and he repeated stories of tzaddikim who refused to cry or to mourn on Shabbos, even after a great loss, r'l. A person from the audience (not yet religious) became very upset when he heard that. He said, "How can the Torah obligate us to control our emotions? And how can the Torah not permit a person to feel his emotions at a difficult time? Is there no compassion in religion?"

The speaker put a silent prayer to Hashem before answering. He said to Hashem, "This is for Your honor, not mine. Please send me the right words."

Then he answered, "There was a famous actor who was informed minutes before a show that his father had just died. But the show had to go on, so the actor

pushed his sorrow out of his mind and played his part. After the show, the producers announced that the actor had acted superbly, even after discovering moments before the show that his father had died. He had succeeded in overcoming his emotions."

The actor received a standing ovation from the crowd.

In this manner, speaking about topics that the asker could relate to, he imparted that there are times when one must overcome his emotions. Shabbos is such a time. Shabbos is a time of joy.

Here is another person who had his salvation by being happy on Shabbos.

Friday morning, after his checkup, the doctor told him, "Your suspicions were correct – you have a kidney stone. And not just one. You have three kidney stones piled on top of each other. The bottom stone is size 6,

above it is a size 4 stone, and the top stone is size 2. We'll give it a couple of weeks; maybe things will improve. However, if it doesn't, we will need to operate."

It was hard for this *yungerman* to be happy that Shabbos due to his pain and his fear of surgery. His melancholy feelings affected the mood in his home. No one wanted to sing *zemiros*, and the delicious Shabbos food tasted bland.

But suddenly, the *yungerman* jumped up and grabbed a Gemara *Bava Metzia*. He opened it to *daf* 25, and with a shining face, repeated the Gemara numerous times. His family watched on in amazement, not understanding how his mood changed so quickly.

After studying the Gemara a few times, he told his family, "The Gemara discusses a case where someone found three coins of different sizes, one on top of the other. The largest coin

was at the bottom, a medium-sized one in the middle, and a tiny one on top. The Gemara rules that it is evident that these coins didn't fall in this manner. Someone must have placed them there intentionally. Therefore, the finder must announce his find because the formation is a *siman*.

"I suddenly remembered this Gemara and realized that my kidney stones are in the same formation: the largest stone at the bottom, the medium in the middle, and a small stone on top. As the Gemara explains, this formation means the stones didn't get there by chance. Obviously, they were placed there purposely by Hashem. And since it is from Hashem, I know it is for my good. Now I can be happy."

A week later, the stones left his body naturally. The joy of Shabbos brought him a remedy.

The renowned *gabbai tzedakah* Reb Dovid Leib Schwartz *zt'l* was meticulous

about keeping Shabbos properly. Even in the concentration camp, during the War, he kept Shabbos as best as possible.

One week he told his friends he wanted to eat three meals on Shabbos. His friends laughed at him because all they had to eat was a small piece of bread in the morning and nothing else. But he didn't let their teasing prevent him from hoping and aspiring to eat three meals on Shabbos.

Erev Shabbos, the commander of their barrack, gave everyone a loaf of bread and explained, "The bread isn't for today. Sunday, we will be trekking for three days, and this is all you will have. So save the bread for then."

Reb Dovid Leib didn't heed the warning. This was the opportunity he had prayed for. Friday night, he made Kiddush on the bread and ate a piece. He ate another piece in the morning and finished it at *shalashudos*.

He didn't know how he would walk for three days without food, but in the meanwhile, he was happy that he ate three meals of Shabbos.

After Shabbos, their commander informed them there was a change of plans. "Everyone must return the bread. We won't be traveling after all." Everyone returned the loaf of bread except for Reb Dovid Leib, who had already eaten it *l'kovod Shabbos*.

Zemiros

One primary way to be happy on Shabbos is through singing *zemiros*.

Singing songs on Shabbos is an old custom. The Gemara (*Megillah* 12:) states that the Jewish nation sang *zemiros* at Achashveirosh's feast.

We say *kedushah* (in the *chazaras hashatz*) every day, by *Shacharis* and *Minchah*. However, *Tosfos* (*Sanhedrin* 37: *ד"ה מנגי*) writes, "The *Teshuvos*

HaGeonim writes that the people in Eretz Yisrael only say *kedushah* on Shabbos. This is because it states (*Yeshayah* 6:2), *שש כנפים לאחד*, that the *malachim*, the *chayos hakodesh*, have six wings, and it sings a song on each day of the week with one of its wings. When Shabbos arrives, the *chayos* say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'We don't have another wing with which to sing before You.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'I have another wing, which will sing before Me. As it states (*Yeshayah* 24:16), *מנגי*, *הארץ זמירות שמענו*, 'Songs will be heard from the wing that's upon the earth.'" This refers to Bnei Yisrael, who sing songs to Hashem on Shabbos.

We can't begin to comprehend the holiness of the *malachim*. Yet, on Shabbos, we take the place of the *malachim* when we sing to Hashem. In fact, our songs are more precious to Hashem than the beautiful songs of the *malachim*.

The Chidushei HaRim (quoted in *Sfas Emes, Vayikra*, תרי"ח) adds that singing is called a wing because, with song, we fly up to high levels.

As we wrote above, Reb Shlomke Zvhiller *zt'l* says, "Every mitzvah one does on Shabbos is five hundred times greater than a mitzvah performed on a weekday. A *daf* Gemara on Shabbos is equivalent to five hundred *daf* Gemara on a weekday. A chapter of *Tehillim* on Shabbos equals five hundred chapters on a weekday."

We understand that if one sings on Shabbos, it is like he sang five hundred songs. And if one sings for an hour on Shabbos, it is like he sang for five hundred hours!

Chinuch

One of the many benefits of singing on Shabbos is that it creates a pleasant atmosphere for the children so that they will love Shabbos and Hashem.

The Maharit (son of the Mabit) writes in his *sefer Tzafnas Paneiach* (*Devarim* 22:6), "There's a bird that stays far away from people, and it only comes near humans when it raises its children. This is the nature that Hakadosh Baruch Hu implanted in this bird. Generally, they [live in the desert], far away from the traps and nets that humans put out to catch them. Whenever humans come near, they fly away. But for their children's sake [who are raised near residential areas], the birds hover over them. And at these times, even if people come near, the birds remain sitting silently over their offspring. They risk their lives and are prepared to die because they are devoted to doing the service that the Creator gave this bird."

This bird's devotion to its offspring is a great lesson for us. People are busy, and there is much to do, but you must be available for your children. Be prepared to be

moser nefesh for your children's sake. Learn with them, speak to them, and spend time with them. An ideal time to do this is on Shabbos when everyone is relaxed and less rushed.

Hashem said to Moshe (*Bamidbar* 27:18), קח את יהושע בן נון, "Take Yehoshua bin Nun, a person who has spirit in him." How do you take him?

Rashi explains, קחנו בדברים, אשריך שזכית להנהיג בנו של מקום, "Take him with words. Say, 'You are fortunate to have merited to be the leader of Hashem's children.'"

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* said that these words weren't only told to Yehoshua. These words are said to each *mechanech*, regardless of whether he teaches Gemara to yeshiva students, alef beis to four-year-olds, or a teacher at a girls' school. A *bas kol* comes forth and tells them, אשריך שזכית להנהיג בנו של מקום, "You are fortunate to have merited to lead Hashem's children."

We add that this *bas kol* is also for parents. Hashem tells them, אשריך שזכית להנהיג בנו של מקום, "You are fortunate to have merited to lead Hashem's children."

Remain in the Jewish Camp

Let us return to the Chinuch's lesson (488), "Hashem commanded us to take care of our bodies need to be happy. This is a great cure - to be happy for Hashem's name. This protects us from straying too far from the correct path."

We discussed the joy of yom tov and the joy of Shabbos. These joys are a cure because if we are happy for Hashem's sake, we won't need to seek joy elsewhere, which can draw people off the correct path.

The women didn't sin with the egel; only the men did. Rebbe Yissaschar Dov of Belz *zt'l* explains that this is because the women sang and danced two months

earlier, at kriyas Yam Suf, as it states (Shemos 15:20) ותצאן כל הנשים אחריה בתפים ובמחלת, "All the women came out after her with timbrels and with dances." The men sang Az Yashir, but it doesn't say that they danced or used musical instruments as they sang. Therefore, at the egel, the men danced, as it states (Shemos 32:19) ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את העגל ומחלת ויחר אף משה וישלך מידו את הלחת וישבר אתם תחת ההר, "Now it came to pass when he drew closer to the camp and saw the calf and the dances, that Moshe's anger was kindled, and he flung the tablets from his hands, shattering them at the foot of the mountain." This occurred on Shiva Asar b'Tamuz (so this discussion is also very timely). The women didn't dance with the egel because they had satisfied their need for joy during kriyas Yam Suf.

A person needs joy – it is a natural need, and fortunate are those who find joy in Torah and mitzvos; they won't seek it elsewhere.

At the beginning of the *parashah*, we read about the tragic sin and plague that befell the Jewish nation. Bilaam HaRasha told the Moabites, אלקיהם של אלו שונא זימה, "The G-d of these (Yinned) hates adultery..." and he advised Moav to cause the Jewish nation to sin with adultery.¹⁰

It states (25:1), וישב ישראל בשטים ויחל העם לזנות אל בנות מואב, "Yisrael settled in Shittim, and the nation began to sin with the daughters of Moav." Shittim/שִׁיטִים is the name of the location, but it also means to stroll (as in *Bamidbar* 11:8, (וישטוהעם)). The Or HaChaim writes, "The *pasuk* reveals the cause of the sin. It was because the nation ventured

10. Bilaam's words, אלקיהם של אלו שונא זימה, can be translated, "Hashem is the G-d of the people who hate adultery" because the Jewish people despise sins, and this is why Hashem chose us above all nations.

outside *machaneh Yisrael*, the Jewish camp [and went to] the daughters of Moav. This resulted in adultery."

This teaches us a practical lesson. It reminds us that we must always remain within the Jewish camp. If you go on vacation, go to a place where there are good Yidden, where you will have minyan and easy access to kosher foods, etc. It is unwise to go outside the Jewish camp where there are negative influences.¹¹ A person has a natural need for relaxation and joy but be wise and engage in these matters in a way that will increase your yiras Shamayim and merits rather than risk decline, chalilah.

The Yetzer Hara's Goal: 'Be Sad'

A poritz once approached Moshke, one of the local

Yidden, and said, "I want to eat a meal with you. Please invite me to your home for a meal."

"It would be my honor," Moshke replied, but in his heart, he was afraid. The poritz didn't treat Yidden well, to put it mildly, and having the poritz in his home was risky business.

Moshke's family cleaned and polished their home and prepared a lavish and delicious meal for the poritz. The poritz arrived, and without sitting down, he surveyed the rich spread prepared on the table.

"Very nice," the poritz grunted. "It is a fairly good meal. But where is the Swiss cheese?"

"We didn't prepare Swiss cheese for the poritz," Moshke replied in a quaking voice. "We didn't know that

11. We'll add that one should ensure that his home is a *machaneh Yisrael*. Today, one can be in his own house and not be at all within *machaneh Yisrael*, r"l.

Swiss cheese is important to you."

"No," the poritz hollered. "You didn't prepare Swiss cheese because you don't respect me." And the poritz raised his staff, beat Moshke mercilessly, and then left the house.

The following day, the *poritz* met up with another Yid. This time, it was Yiddele, and he said that he wanted to eat a meal with him. "Please come to my home for supper tomorrow," Yiddele replied graciously, with a large smile. "We will prepare a special dinner for you." But Yiddele was worried, well aware of the poritz's evil ways.

As Yiddele's family was cleaning up and cooking for the grand meal, there was a knock on their door. Moshke was there. "I heard that the poritz will be coming to you tonight."

"Yes. You heard correctly. I guess this is a new custom that the poritz is beginning

in town. It may be a good sign. Maybe he wants to get to know us better. I heard that he was in your home, too. How did it go?"

"Don't ask. But let me warn you to serve Swiss cheese. The poritz is crazy over Swiss cheese."

"I'll take care of it right away. We are preparing a fleishig meal for tonight, so I will first ask the rav how to handle serving the Swiss cheese to the poritz together with the meat, and I will buy Swiss cheese."

The first part was easy. He spoke with the rav, who gave him directions on how to serve the cheese; however, finding Swiss cheese in their small town wasn't a simple matter. But after a lot of effort and inquiries, he heard of a wealthy Yid in town who enjoys Swiss cheese, and he agreed to sell him some for the meal.

The house was sparkling, the table was set elegantly, and a large slice of Swiss

cheese was prominently set at the place prepared for the distinguished guest.

Before sitting down, the poritz studied the table. "Good. I see you are serving Swiss cheese. That is a good beginning." The poritz checked all the other items served at this meal and said, "I assume you will serve English Halva for dessert. After a good meal, only English Halva for dessert will do."

Yiddele's smile left his face, and he replied hesitantly, "I'm so sorry, honored poritz. I would have prepared English Halva had I known it was important for you. But how could I know if you didn't tell me?"

"No!" the poritz howled. "You didn't prepare English halva because you don't respect me! You purposely left it out of the menu!"

The poritz marched out of the house in a fury, and immediately, the poritz's

soldiers came in and hit Yiddele cruelly. As they beat him, they said, "You deserve this because you didn't honor the poritz."

The next day, the *poritz* invited himself to a third person's home. This time it was a clever Yid named Berel. Berel went home and asked his family to prepare a special meal and to clean the house well because tonight the poritz was coming.

As the entire household frantically prepared for the night's encounter, Moshke knocked at their door. "Berel, I must warn you to prepare Swiss cheese. The poritz was by me a few days ago. He was upset that I didn't serve him Swiss cheese and hit me mercilessly.

As they were speaking, Yiddele arrived at Berel's door. He joined their conversation, saying, "Swiss cheese is important, but it isn't enough. You must offer English halva as well. I served him Swiss cheese,

but because I didn't serve him English Halva, he called in his soldiers to beat me."

Berel replied, "I see whom I am dealing with. Even if I prepare English halva and Swiss cheese, he will be upset that I'm not serving him French wine, or perhaps he will ask for American pie."

Yiddele and Berel nodded in agreement, wished him the best, and left.

That night, the poritz arrived at Berel's home. His soldiers waited outside, ready to be called in. The poritz entered, expecting to find a lavish meal, but the room was dim, lit only by a small lamp, and nothing was on the table except for stale bread.

"What is this all about?" the poritz asked, totally confused. "Didn't you invite me to your home tonight? Is that how you honor me?"

Berel replied, "You don't want to eat. You want an

excuse to hit a Yid. So, I decided, why should I work in vain?"

The story is a *mashal* that describes what the *yetzer hara* does to people. The *yetzer hara* comes to a person and rebukes him. The person thinks that it is the *yetzer tov* that is speaking to him. He berates him, "Why didn't you come on time to davening? You lost out so much by coming late." It is a valid claim, and it definitely sounds like the *yetzer tov*. But it is often the *yetzer hara* who wants to cause the person to feel like a failure because then he will lose hope and give up. But the person doesn't recognize that it is the *yetzer hara*. He is convinced that his thoughts are from the *yetzer tov*, so he replays these thoughts in his mind, hoping that this will help him improve his ways.

The next day, he woke up on time for davening, however, he did another *aveirah*. He came home after *Shacharis* and got angry

about something. Now, his thoughts are rebuking him harshly for this aveirah. Again, he is sure they are thoughts presented by his yetzer tov, so he pays close attention. The result is similar. After these negative thoughts, he feels very broken and is upset with his spiritual state. "What will be from me if I can't control my anger?"

The next day, he did some other aveirah. He wasted some time that should have been used studying Torah. His *righteous* thoughts return. They are shouting in his brain how terrible and sinful he is. The smart man replies to these thoughts, "When you came to me the first time to tell me that I am bad because I

came late to the davening, I trusted that you meant my good, and I paid attention to your bitter rebuke. When you came the next day complaining about my anger, once again, I thought you were the yetzer tov, and I accepted your rebuke. But now I see that your goal is to cause me to feel bad. It isn't coming late to davening, the anger, or the missing Torah that upsets you. Your rebuke isn't to help me improve. Now I know that your goal is just to break my spirit. This time, I will be wiser and won't pay any attention to your rebuke."

A wise Yid learns to disregard the yetzer hara's follies and serve Hashem with joy.