

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראל בן מרדכי ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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Parshas Maase'i

This week's *parashah* discusses the *arei miklat*, the cities of refuge, where unintentional murderers find asylum. There were six main cities of refuge, plus an additional forty-two cities. As it states, *שש ערי מקלט... ועליהם חתנו* ארבעים ושתיים עיר.

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "The Torah is eternal; therefore this mitzvah must be applicable in our times too... The explanation is, someone who accidentally committed *aveiros*, in a sense, has murdered his own soul. For his rectification, he should do the following: When he recites the first six words of Shema, he should accept on himself the 'yoke of Heaven' with love, *mesirus nefesh*, and devotion, because these are his six cities of refuge. He should add another forty-two cities. This is the paragraph of *ואהבת*, which has forty-two words. [When saying those words] he accepts on himself, with all his

heart and soul, to love Hashem and His Torah. Due to his *mesirus nefesh*, with all his heart...he will acquire *kaparah* for accidentally hitting his *neshamah* [with *aveiros*]..."

In conclusion, in our generation, Shema is the *arei miklat*. One says Shema with *kavanah*, and resolves to serve Hashem and to love Him, and that atones for his sins.

Saying Shema also protects us from the *yetzer hara*. The Gemara (*Brachos* 5) says, "When one is confronted with the *yetzer hara*...he should say Shema..." Fortunate are those who say it with *kavanah*.

Shame

Another source for atonement is to accept shame in silence. If someone is disgraced and humiliated, and he remains silent, that atones even for the severest sins.

Sometimes, the shame exonerates him from death.

With these benefits in mind, there is no reason to be upset when someone embarrasses you.

Once, someone embarrassed Rebbe Moshe Leib Sassover *zy'a*. Reb Moshe Leib told him, "May Hashem grant you reward because you removed a *gzar din* of death from me."

Rebbe Aharon Leib of Premishlan *zy'a* once found his Rebbe, Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zy'a*, lying on the ground, his arms were flailing, and he was crying bitterly. He asked his Rebbe why he was acting this way. The Rebbe told him that a bitter *gezeirah* hovered over the Jewish nation and he was trying to rescind it with *tefillah*.

Reb Aharon Leib said, "I can help you with the *tefillas*." They exchanged places. Rebbe Michel stood up and Reb Aharon Leib lay on the ground and cried and prayed. When he finished, Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev told him, "The *gezeirah* is almost annulled.

We just need some embarrassments, and it will be totally abolished."

The next morning Rebbe Michel and Rebbe Aharon Leib were traveling. They came to an inn around midday, and Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev began to daven *Shacharis*. The innkeeper shouted and berated Rebbe Michel for davening so late. Rebbe Michel accepted the shame, because he knew that this shame would abolish the harsh decree. His student, Reb Aharon Leib, also didn't stick up for his Rebbe's honor because he understood that this embarrassment was going to save the Jewish people.

The innkeeper raised his hand and was about to strike Rebbe Michel but Reb Aharon Leib stopped him. He said, "We needed embarrassment and you gave that to us. But we don't need to be hit..."

The Chofetz Chaim said, "If a person could know that during the day he will undergo embarrassments, it would be

worthwhile for him to go to the *mikvah* beforehand. He is about to receive immense purity with his shame.

A *mashal* is told about a person who owned an old horse. The horse's upkeep cost more than what he earned from the horse. Nevertheless, he kept the horse out of *hakaras hatov*, appreciation, for all the horse did for him in the past.

Due to its old age the horse wasn't cautious, and it fell into a deep pit. The owner thought that the time finally came to bury the horse. He began pouring dirt into the pit, to bury the horse. The horse looked up with pleading eyes, not understanding why his master was throwing earth on it. But the owner didn't want to look at the horse's eyes. He was determined to finish the horse's life, so he kept pouring dirt quickly into the pit.

He thought he was killing his horse, but the horse, even in its old age, still had brains. As

more and more earth fell into the pit, the horse climbed on top of the dirt, until it was able to leave the pit.

The *nimshal* is, sometimes people harm you, they speak against you, and they, allegorically, throw dirt at you. Don't worry about that, because you will just climb higher and higher from each insult and mean word thrown your way. You will only grow and gain from each humiliation.

Rebbe Meir of Permishlan once made a *seudah*, to thank Hashem for the embarrassment he endured. He explained, "This embarrassment saved me from being ill. If I had been ill, and then recovered, I would make a *seudas hoda'ah*. So, for sure I should make a *seudah* after being shamed and saved from that entire ordeal.

Tests and *Yesurim*

Many *bachurim* from *chutz le'aretz*, studying in Yerushalayim, would come to Rebbe Menachem Monderer

zt'l home for the Shabbos meals.

One Friday night, after the *bachurim* had already left, a *bachur* arrived and asked for a meal. Reb Monderer served his late guest.

The next week and the week after, this *bachur* arrived at the same late hour. Reb Monderer told him, "The ideal time to come is immediately after *Maariv*. That is when everyone else comes. When you come late, it is hard for me."

The *bachur* replied, "Rebbe, I'm your *nisayon* (test)."

Reb Monderer would repeat this story to remind people that everything that occurs in life is a test. When we view it that way, it is easier to pass the tests of life.

The Gemara (*Menachos* 29) says, עתיד ר' עקיבא לדרוש על כל קוץ, וקוץ תילי תילים של הלכות, "Reb Akiva will teach 'mountains' of halachos on each crown in the *sefer Torah*". Reb Akiva was

able to derive many halachos from each קוץ, drop of ink, in the *sefer Torah*.

קוץ can also mean pain or pierced. The Or LaShamayim explains that Reb Akiva was able to derive תילי תילין של הלכות, 'mountains' of halachos, in the merit of every קוץ, hardship he endured. He accepted the hardships with love, and this merit purified him and enabled him to know many mountains of halachos.

An opponent of the Rebbe of Gustantin zy'a became ill, and the Rebbe davened lengthily and fervently for his *refuah*. Someone asked the Rebbe, "Do you really need him so much?"

The Rebbe replied, "If it is decreed on me that I must endure opposition, it will happen. If the opposition won't come from him, it will come from someone else. I am accustomed to his style of *hisnagdus* (opposition), therefore I prefer that he live on, rather than to have to deal

with someone else's opposition, which will be challenges that I'm not accustomed to...."

Forty-Two Journeys

Parashas Maase'i lists the forty-two journeys of the Jewish nation. The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* says every person must go through forty-two journeys in his lifetime. As the Degel Macheneh Efraim *zt'l* (*Mase'i*) writes, "I heard from my grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a*] that the forty-two journeys happen to each person: from the day he's born until [the day] he returns to 'his world' [in heaven]. The explanation is, the day he was born is like *yetzias Mitzrayim*, as this is known. From there he travels from trip to trip until he reaches ארץ החיים העליונה [the next world]..."

Each location and situation one reaches in life is קדושים וטהורים, pure and holy (the Degel Macheneh Efraim writes) because from each

place and situation, one can potentially reach very high levels. Each location has its challenges, but if he will serve Hashem from that place, he will become holier and purer.

Therefore, one of the forty-two sojourns was to קברות ההאווה, "burying temptation" (33:16). The Degel Macheneh Efraim writes that he heard from his grandfather (the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*, who quoted the *sefer Bris Menuchah*) that potentially, they could have buried their temptations there. They could have attained high levels of *deveikus* with Hashem, until they wouldn't desire the temptations of the world. Only, they didn't take advantage of that option, and they fell into *taavos* and they wanted to eat meat (see *Bahaloscha* 11).

Similarly, every life situation and location has potential for immense growth or for a descent. It is forty-two stages, from his birth until he returns his soul to heaven, and one

must seek to make the most of these circumstances.

The location where a person finds himself is definitely pre-planned by Hashem. It is the *מסע* trip and destination that Hashem planned. As it says (*Bamidbar* 10:18), 'על פי ה' יסעו בני ישראל ועל פי ה' יחנו בני ישראל', "by Hashem's word, Bnei Yisrael would travel, and by Hashem's word, Bnei Yisrael would encamp..." To express this point, we share the following true story:

Rabbi Cohen of Bnei Brak received a phone call from Mr. Cohen from Tifrach.

"Hello. My name is Mr. Cohen. I live in Tifrach. Am I speaking with Rabbi Cohen from Rechov Rashbam, Bnei Brak?"

"Yes."

"Well, my brother-in-law is getting married next week. The *oifruf* will be in the Lederman Shul on Rechov Rashbam. I'm seeking to exchange apartments for Shabbos. I know that this is an

unusual request from a stranger, but would you agree to exchange apartments for a Shabbos?"

Rabbi Cohen asked, "Why are you calling me, particularly?"

"I know your son studies in the Tifrach yeshiva, so I thought you may want to be in Tifrach for Shabbos, to be near your son."

Rabbi Cohen agreed.

Rabbi Cohen called his son and said, "We have a surprise for you. We are coming to Tifrach to be with you for Shabbos!"

The *bachur* said, "But it's an 'off Shabbos.' I was hoping to come home to Bnei Brak."

Rabbi Cohen told his son that he had already made up with Mr. Cohen of Tifrach to exchange apartments with him and he doesn't want to back down on his word.

Mr. Cohen was happy to see that Rabbi Cohen's home was a comfortable six-room apartment. One of Mr. Cohen's

brother-in-laws also came to Bnei Brak for the Shabbos *oifruf*, but the apartment that he got was very cramped quarters, and not practical for his wife and him, and their nine children. He asked Mr. Cohen if they could exchange apartments. Mr. Cohen said, "I agree, but I have to ask permission from the owner of this apartment."

Mr. Cohen called up Rabbi Cohen (who was already in Tifrach) and asked if he permits somebody else to stay in his home instead of them. Rabbi Cohen replied, "Why should I mind? I don't know either of you. Either way is fine for me."

That Friday night, Reb

Zalushinsky *zt'l*, one of the great *talmidei chachamim* of Bnei Brak was *niftar*. Reb Zalushinsky lived in the same apartment building as Rabbi Cohen. If Rabbi Cohen had been home, he would need to leave (because a *cohen* may not be in a building with a corpse). Had Mr. Cohen been there, he would also have to leave. Their Shabbos would be disturbed. In merit of their *chesed* and *vitur*, and with *siyata dishmaya* by the One Who arranges everything, they were all able to enjoy a peaceful Shabbos. They were in the right place for that Shabbos, because where a person goes to is planned by Hashem.¹

1. The place where a person will have *parnassah* is also pre-planned by Hashem, as the following story demonstrates:

A group of people knocked on the door of Reb Moshe Jakobovitz during the days of Selichos and said, "We spoke once before on the phone, and now we came to speak with you in person."

Reb Moshe didn't know what they were talking about.

They explained, "We live in the village nearby, and we put up signs that we are looking for a *baal tefilah* for the *yomim nora'im*. Someone by the name Moshe Jakobovitz applied for the job, and you are the only Moshe Jakobovitz from this city, so it must be you."

Sometimes, a person travels somewhere, and has a bad experience. He meets someone there who hurts him, or he has some other kind of loss. He regrets ever going to that place. But to a large extent, it wasn't his decision to go there. It is part of the forty-two travels that Hashem destines for every person.

In the desert, they went to Marah and found bitter waters. As it states (*Shemos* 15:23),

"They weren't able to drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter." Then they came to Eilim, about which it states (*Bamidbar* 23:9), "In Eilim, there were twelve water fountains and seventy date palms, and they encamped there." There were locations where there was no water at all. Similarly, each place had its own story. One might think that since they came to those places, therefore these adventures happened to them.

Reb Moshe explained that it wasn't him, but it just happens to be that he is a very good *baal tefillah*. He was hired to daven on the *yamim naraim*. They were so happy with him, they had him come every Shabbos, to daven there.

Additionally, Reb Moshe taught them *shiurei Torah*, and raised the spiritual level of their community immensely. This went on for many years, and Moshe Yakobovitz earned a fine living.

One day, someone approached Reb Moshe and asked, "Do you still lead the davening in that city?"

"Yes I do."

"It is in my credit."

"What do you mean?"

"They put up signs that they were looking for a *baal tefillah*, so I called up, but I was young and wasn't really planning to take the position. I was just teasing them, pretending to be a candidate. When they asked me my name, I said that I am Moshe Yakobovitz. I chose this name by random, I didn't even know that there was a real Moshe Yakobovitz in this city..."

In wondrous manners, Hashem arranges *parnassah* for all mankind.

But it is quite the opposite. Because these incidences were destined to take place, that is why they were destined to go there.

Many commentaries discuss the order of the words מוצאיהם vs. מסעיהם stated at the beginning of the *parashah*. As it states, ויכתב משה מוצאיהם למסעיהם על פי ה', ואלו מסעיהם למוצאיהם.

We can explain that מוצאיהם means happenings (as in *Yehoshua* 2:23, ויספרו לו את כל המוצאות אותו, "They told Yehoshua everything that happened to them").

Thus, the *pasuk* is saying, מוצאיהם למסעיהם, people attribute what happens to them due to their travels. They think, "Since I traveled there, I had this struggle..." Actually, ואלו מסעיהם למוצאיהם, they traveled there, because this struggle had to happen.

When they were destined to be tested with thirst, they came to Marah. When they were

destined to have plenty of water, they came to Eilim. The place didn't cause the test, rather the destined test determined where they would go.

Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch *zt'l*, *rosh yeshiva* of Telz, lived in Telz before WWII. At a demonstration against *chilul Shabbos*, Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch smacked a man who kept his store open on Shabbos. This man eventually entered politics and was appointed to a high governmental position. Reb Bloch feared he would take revenge on him for smacking him, and now he would be able to, due to his government position. So Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch took his family and fled to America. They lived in Cleveland, Ohio, and Reb Eliyahu Meir opened there the Telz Yeshiva of Cleveland.

At the *chanukas habayis* of the yeshiva, Reb Eliyahu Meir told the crowd that initially he was upset that he

and his family had to run away from the bastion of Torah and *mussar* of Telz to come to America. But looking back, he understood Hashem was sending him to America to save his life. His entire extended family, and almost all members of the yeshiva, perished in the Holocaust. He and his family were from the only people who survived, as he was safe on American shores.

Reb Bloch added: The *Navi* tells that Yohonoson told Dovid (*I Shmuel* 20:22), לך כי ה' שלחך, "Go because Hashem is sending you." He was warning him that he must escape from his father, Shaul, who wanted to kill Dovid.

Two questions: It seems

Yohonoson should have said, ברח escape, and not לך, go. Furthermore, he should have said, "Escape because my father wants to kill you." Why did he say, "Go because Hashem is sending you"?

The answer is, Yohonoson and Dovid understood that even if Dovid must run away from Shaul, Hashem was sending him to go somewhere else. Because every trip one takes is by Hashem's plan.

Reb Eliyahu Bloch said he thought he fled Telz because he was afraid of a government official. Actually, Hashem sent him to save his life, and so he could open a Telz Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio and disseminate Torah in America.²

2. Rashi writes, שלא יהיה לבך חלוק על המקום (*Devarim* 6:5). Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin *zt'l* explains, one should never say that it is impossible to serve Hashem from this place or situation, because Hashem arranged this place and circumstance because He desires you serve Him particularly from there.

The following allegory expresses this point well:

If a king gave a letter to one of his loyal citizens and asks him to deliver it to someone who lives very far away, the loyal citizen will be overjoyed

The Chemdas Shlomo zy'a *bachur* at length, and were sent some of his students to find a *shidduch* for his daughter.

The students arrived at a certain city and found a young scholar who was constantly learning Torah. They stayed for Shabbos, spoke with this

impressed by his wisdom and *yiras shamayim*. After Shabbos, they spoke with the boy's father, and proposed the *shidduch*. "The Chemdas Shlomo has a very good daughter, as you can imagine. She is a *bas talmid chacham* of the highest caliber. Will

to do the king's bidding. He will calculate the quickest route, so he could deliver the letter as quickly as possible. If the quickest route is by sea, he will travel by sea, and deliver the letter.

But how will this citizen feel if he comes to the port and sees the boat has set sail, just moments before he got to the port? He will shout to the sailors to come back, but to no avail. He will ask when the next boat is leaving to this destination and hear that there won't be another boat leaving for another six months.

He will feel devastated. He wanted to do the king's biddings in the best manner, and now he has to travel by land, which takes much longer.

Throughout the trip he will be moaning, "If only I came to the port a few minutes earlier. If only I'd been swifter, I would be able to do the king's will in the best way. Now I'm traveling for many weeks, and it is all for nothing."

Now let's tell this story slightly different. The king gave the letter to his loyal citizen and said, "I don't want you to travel by sea (although it's the shortest route) because there are thieves on board, and they may steal the letter from you. I want you to travel by land and to deliver this letter..."

How will he feel on his trip? He will be happy with each part of the journey. It is far away, but with every leg of the journey he knows he is carrying out the king's will.

The moral of the story is to believe that everything that happens to a person is *bashert*, planned from Above. One thinks, "if not for these circumstances, I could serve Hashem better," but actually, Hashem wants you to serve Him from amidst these hardships and struggles.

you agree that your son marry her?"

The father said it would be an immense honor for them, and the *shidduch* was finalized.

During their return trip, excited by their accomplishment, they told the wagon driver that they found a fitting *shidduch* for the Chemdas Shlomo's daughter.

"Who did you choose?" the wagon driver asked. "I know everyone in this city."

They told him the name of the *bachur*. The wagon driver replied, "I guess you didn't realize he's hunchbacked."

"What are you talking about?" the students replied. "We spoke with him for hours. He is totally healthy."

"You are scholars, so you only see the good. Besides, you were testing him in Torah, and you didn't pay attention to anything else. But take it from me, Shraga the wagon driver: He's hunchbacked. And I don't think the Chemdas Shlomo

and his *rebbetzin* will be happy when they find out."

The students insisted he is mistaken, but deep down they worried, perhaps it was true.

On the way, they passed through Lublin, and the students stopped at the Chozeh's home, to speak with him and to receive his *brachos*.

The Chozeh told them the following *dvar Torah*: The Navi (*I Shmuel* 9) says that before Shaul was anointed king, he was walking with an aide, searching for his father's donkeys. After three days, Shaul said, "Let's return, lest our father stop worrying about the donkeys and begin worrying about us."

The aide said, "There is a G-dly man in this town and he is much respected. Whatever he says comes true. Let's go to him, אולי יגיד לנו את דרכינו אשר הלכנו עליה, perhaps he will tell us the way to go [to find the donkeys]."

Literally, the words, אולי יגיד לנו את דרכינו אשר הלכנו עליה mean, "Perhaps [the Navi] will tell us *the way we went*." It is written in past tense. It seems it should have stated, "Perhaps he will tell us *where we should go* [to find the donkeys]."

The Chozeh explained, "Sometimes a person travels someplace because he desires to accomplish something, but he ends up failing. It must be that there was some other purpose for this trip. It isn't rational that Hashem sent him there for nothing. The aide was saying, "We are looking for the donkeys for three days, but we can't find them. So, there must be another reason why we had to come here. Let's go to the *navi*. Perhaps he will tell us, אשר את דרכינו עליה, the real reason for this trip." And indeed, the *navi* (Shmuel HaNavi) anointed Shaul as king over Bnei Yisrael. The true purpose of their trip was discovered.

The students continued on their way and came to the Chemdas Shlomo's home. "Baruch Hashem, we succeeded in our mission," they told him. "We found a *chasan*... You can't imagine how scholarly he is. We tested him in several parts of the Torah, and he has perfect clarity. He has a sharp mind, and says wonderful *chiddushim*..." They went on and on, describing the new *chassan*, and they shared the *chidushei Torah* they heard. The Chemdas Shlomo listened with immense pleasure. Then the wagon driver came in. He said, "Mazal Tov Rebbe! Mazal Tov Rebbetzin! L'chayim! Yes, it is all true. The young man is an amazing scholar. The entire city is buzzing about it. But he is hunchbacked too..." "Rebbe, he doesn't know what he's talking about," the students told the Chemdas Shlomo. "We spoke to him for hours. We didn't see anything..."

The Chemdas Shlomo however, realized that his students didn't pay attention to external matters. He feared the wagon driver may be telling the truth.

He did some investigating, and discovered that it was true, and the *shidduch* was turned down.

The students remembered what the Chozeh of Lublin told them, and now they understood he spoke to them with *ruach hakodesh*. They failed that mission, so there must be another purpose for their travels. They returned to the Chozeh and said, אולי יגיד לנו, את דרכינו אשר הלכנו עליה "Perhaps you can tell us the true purpose of our trip."

The Chozeh told them, "The purpose was so you become my students." They became among the Chozeh's outstanding students. The purpose of their trip was revealed.

Sometimes we travel, and we don't know the purpose, but there is always a purpose, for everything is destined from Above.

Rebbe Dovid Lelover zy'a said that in the future it will become revealed to each person the reason for all his travels. He will laugh, because then he will discover that all travels and situations that he thought were bad for him, were all for his good.³

3. Moshe Rabbeinu said, עוד מעט וסקלוני, "a drop more and they will *farshteiner* (stone) me." Reb Mordechai of Nadvorna zy'a explained that *farshteiner* also means *understand*. Wait a little bit longer, and you will *farshtein*, understand, why everything is the way it is. Now you don't understand, but soon you will.

Similarly, it states (*Tehilim* 107:43), מי חכם וישמר אלה ויתבוננו חסדי ה', Rebbe Meir of Permishlan zy'a explains that when something happens, people don't understand why it must be so. However, מי חכם, the wise, וישמר wait (see *Bereishis* 37:11), ויתבוננו חסדי ה', and merit to understand Hashem's kindness that is laced behind everything.

There were forty-two journeys in the desert en route to Eretz Yisrael, but only one of those trips (the final one) actually brought them to Eretz Yisrael. All the other trips didn't bring them to their ultimate goal. But they were all part of the process, bringing them closer to Eretz Yisrael. We also go through forty-two travels in our lifetime, from our birth to the day our souls will be returned to heaven, to Gan Eden. Each of these trips bring us closer to success in that ultimate goal.⁴

Nothing Happens by Chance

In this week's *parashah* it says (35:11), והקרייתם לכם ערים ערי מקלט. Rashi writes, "הקרייתם" means to prepare, לשון הזמנה... The *pasuk* is telling the nation

to prepare *arei miklat* when they come to Eretz Yisrael.

Also, in *parashas Toldos*, when Yitzchak asked Yaakov, "How did you [catch this deer] so quickly?"

Yaakov replied (*Bereishis* 27:20), בני הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני, "Hashem your G-d prepared it for me"

Generally, מקרה is something that happens by chance. Now we see מקרה has an opposite meaning, for it also means prepared (which is the exact opposite of something that happens by chance). This reminds us that even those matters that appear to happen by chance, by nature, by coincidence, were actually planned and prepared by Hashem.

Hashem told Moshe, ראית את אחרי פני לא יראו, "You will see My back, but you will not see My face" (*Shemos* 33:23). The Chasam Sofer zy'a explains that the *pasuk* is implying that at first, one doesn't understand why he must go through hardships. But when he looks "back" he sees what he gained from those situations.

4. We can explain מסעי מטות, when one is מטה, bends himself to accept the situations of life that come his way, מסעי, then his life will flow easily and smoothly.

Bederech tzachus, מקרה spells 'רק מה, only from Hashem, because even those matters that appear like chance are only from Hashem.

It states (*I Shmuel* 20:26), בִּי אָמַר מִקְרָה בְּלִתי מֵהוֹר הוּא. The Mishnas Chachamim explains that when one says that things happen by מקרה, by chance, בְּלִתי מֵהוֹר הוּא, he isn't pure. A Yid must know that even those matters that appear accidental were also planned by Hashem.

Someone told the Rebbe of Kotzk זִת'ל his life story. He said, "I used to be wealthy, but my business failed, and I lost most of my money. Adding pain to injury, my wife died.

"Each week I buy a lottery ticket. I began this custom in my wealthy years, and I continue doing so each week. Also, the maid who cleans my home buys the lottery each week, and I check the numbers for both of us to see whether we won.

"One *motzei Shabbos*, I

checked the numbers, and saw that the maid won. She had become wealthy! I didn't want to tell her this right away, because I knew that if she knows she is wealthy, she won't want to marry me. So I concealed this information from her, and asked her to marry me. She thought she was poor and that I was at least middle class, so she was glad to marry me.

"Shortly after the *chasunah* I told her that she won the lottery, and that we were rich.

"She replied, 'Yes, but I sold the rights of that lottery ticket to my father. I told him that if I win, he could take the money...'

"I married her because I thought she was wealthy, but she isn't. The money belongs to her father, and he won't give us any of it. That's why I came here now," the man explained to the Rebbe of Kotzk. "I want to divorce."

The Kotzker replied, "It was destined from heaven you

should marry the maid and Hashem prepared so many steps to enable that to happen. He had you lose your money, your wife died, the maid won the lottery, and you kept it a secret from her. All of this took place so you would marry her, and now you want a divorce?"

This story is a reminder that Hashem is behind the scene of everything that occurs in this world. We think matters happen by מקרה, however, מקרה means prepared, because even those matters that look like nature and chance were prepared by Hashem.

Tzipisa Liyeshua — Waiting for Moshiach

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31) teaches:

"Rava said, 'When a person is brought for judgment [in heaven] they ask him, "...Did you wait for the redemption?"

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l* said that when he was studying in the Ksav Sofer's

zt'l yeshiva in Pressberg, he overheard a conversation between two local women. One said, "What did you make for lunch today?"

"*Beblach*" (beans).

"And what will you cook tomorrow?"

"*Sha sha!* אל תפתח פה לשטן *chash veshalom* Moshiach doesn't come, I'll make noodles."

This demonstrates how people should wait for Moshiach. Every day, one should hope that maybe today will be the day that Moshiach will come.

The *Mesilas Yesharim* (19) writes, "One should wait for the redemption, because in that era, Hashem's honor will be exalted."

The Shaarei Teshuvah (118) writes, "When one says לישועתך קיינו כל היום in *Shemonah Esrei*, one should think, 'I am from the people who wait for Moshiach,' because after one's demise, he

will be asked whether he waited for Moshiach.⁵

During the days of *selichos*, end of year תשל"ה, a tzaddik said to my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov זt'l, "Perhaps we will merit that Moshiach will come next year, because Rebbe Isaac of Kamarna זy'a predicted that Moshiach will come year תשל"ו."

My grandfather replied, "I'm still waiting for Moshiach to come in year תשל"ה." Because we should never lose hope, and we should constantly wait for Moshiach.

The first of the Aseres HaDibros is (*Shemos* 20:2), אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים. The Sma'k says that two mitzvos are hinted at in this *pasuk*: (1) to believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*

and (2) to believe in the coming of Moshiach.

אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים is our obligation to believe Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim. אנכי ה' אלקיך, "I am Hashem your G-d" is our obligation to believe that as He freed us from Mitzrayim, he will free us from the present *galus*.

Rebbe Dovid'l of Tolna זt'l once came late to his *tish*, and explained that he was late because he had a conversation with Moshiach. Moshiach asked Rebbe Dovid'l whether he should come immediately to redeem the Jewish nation, or if he should wait until all Yidden are ready. Moshiach explained, "If I redeem the Yidden now, some *neshamos* will never be rectified." Rebbe Dovid of Tolna advised Moshiach to wait until all *neshamos* are ready.

5. The Shaarei Teshuvah adds: 'I have in mind [when I say לישועתך קיוונתך] that I am awaiting for Hashem's salvation to save us from all bad encounters that occur each day and at every moment. I often found this to be very beneficial...'"

One of the chassidim at Rebbe Dovid's *tish* asked, "Rebbe, isn't it better that Moshiach comes now? Why should we wait for those few *shleppers* and unfortunate souls?"

The Tolna Rebbe answered, "You are one of those souls. If Moshiach comes now, you will never be rectified."

Reb Shalom Keshenmacher wanted to divorce his bickering wife, but his Rebbe, Rebbe Asher of Stoln zy'a, was very opposed to divorce, so he held out as long as he could. But it came a point that he couldn't cope any longer, and he divorced her. He understood that having done so, he couldn't return to his Rebbe.

Reb Shalom Keshenmacher, however, couldn't bear to watch his children suffer, so he remarried his first wife. He returned to his Rebbe.

Rebbe Asher Stoliner said, "Reb Shalom? What brings you back here?"

"I remarried my wife."

"You did? Why?"

"I couldn't bear to see my children suffer."

Rebbe Asher turned his eyes heavenward and said, "Ribono Shel Olam, Shalom Keshenmacher took back his wife, who he doesn't love, because he couldn't bear to watch his children suffer. Woe to the children [the Jewish people] who were banished from their Father's table."

Try your Best

The Mesilas Yesharim (19) writes, "If a person will ask, who am I, and how am I important, that I should daven for [the gathering of] the *galus* and for Yerushalayim? Could it be that because of my *tefillah*, the *galus* will end and the redemption will sprout? The answer is, as Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 37.) state, man was created alone, so each person will say, 'The world was created for me.' Hashem has pleasure when His children pray for this matter. Even if the prayers won't be answered (because the time hasn't come

yet, or because of some other reason) nevertheless, they did their share, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with them... We are obligated to pray, and we shouldn't refrain because we don't have the strength. As Chazal (*Avos* 2) say, לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ואי אתה לא תפטר הימנה, 'You are not obligated to finish, but you don't have the right to refrain...' So everyone must strive to do his share, towards bringing Moshiach.

When one does whatever he can, Hashem helps him.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 38.) says:

"Nikanor sailed to Alexandria, Egypt, to bring copper doors [for the eastern gate of the Beis HaMikdash's courtyard]. On his return trip, a storm threatened to drown them. People took one of the doors and threw it into the sea, but the ship still threatened to capsize. They wanted to throw the other door into the water, but Nikanor stood up, wrapped his arms around it, and said, 'If

you will throw this door into the sea, throw me in the water with it.' Immediately, the sea calmed. Nikanor was upset that one door was thrown into the sea. When they docked in Acco, Eretz Yisrael, the other door was there, bobbing up and down beside the ship..."

Logic says the Beis HaMikdash couldn't use one of the doors without its pair. So why was Nikanor *moser nefesh* to bring only one door to the Beis HaMikdash? The answer is he did what he could, and then Hashem helped him

When my father was a child, all the children would put a cup of water near their bed so they could wash *negel vasser* upon awakening in the morning. One evening, there was no running water, so the children went to sleep without preparing the water near their bed. When their father, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *ztl*, saw that, he rebuked them. He said, "You should have at

least placed the empty cups near your bed."

Because a person must do whatever he can, and then Hashem will help him do the rest. Similarly, with regards to praying for Moshiach, and regarding increasing *ahavas Yisrael*, which brings about the coming of Moshiach, each person should feel responsible and do what he can. And then Hashem will help us succeed.

Ahavas Yisrael

The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*, vain hatred, and therefore, one of the ways to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash is to increase our *ahavas Yisrael*. Reb Seroya Deblitsky *zt'l* came to the Chazon Ish *zt'l* and said that he wants to be *matir neder*, to annul a vow. There was another Yid in the room, speaking Torah with the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish said, "We're two. Go outside and bring in a third person." Soon, Reb Deblitsky returned with an unlearned person, whose religious standard was

also questionable. The Chazon Ish with his two guests annulled the vow.

When the unlearned man left the house, the Chazon Ish said, "Go outside and bring in someone else to be *matir neder*. That man wasn't kosher for the *beis din*."

The Chazon Ish however didn't say this earlier, so as not to embarrass the man. Reb Deblitsky learned from this episode the *middos* of the Chazon Ish, and how cautious we must be not to hurt a fellow man.

At a *hachnasas sefer Torah* celebration, the owner of the *sefer Torah* honored the Tchebiner Rav to write a letter in the *sefer Torah*. The Tchebiner Rav said, "I don't want to write the letter myself. I'd rather appoint the *sofer* to be my *shaliach* to write a letter for me."

Everyone else in the room followed the Tchebiner Rav's lead, and they asked the *sofer* to write the letters for them.

The Tchebiner Rav later explained that one of the people who came to the *hachnasas sefer Torah* was halachically unfit to write a letter in the *sefer Torah*. So, the Tchebiner Rav appointed the *sofer* his *shaliach* to write a letter, and this caused everyone present to do the same. The *sefer Torah* was written according to halachah without having to embarrass another Yid.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* once picked up a piece of paper from the ground because he thought it was *sheimos*. As it turned out, it was just a scrap of paper. The Chofetz Chaim placed the paper in his pocket. Someone walking with the Chofetz Chaim asked, "Why don't you just throw it to the ground? It isn't *sheimos*."

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "If I throw it down, the next Yid who passes by may pick it up, thinking it's *sheimos*. Why should I trouble him?"

I remember, one Rosh Hashanah, in my father's beis medresh, the *baal tokeia* said the *brachos* on the shofar, tried to blow it, but no sound came forth. He kept trying, but to no avail. My father motioned that he should give him the shofar. My father tried blowing the shofar, and he also wasn't able to blow it. Then my father gave the shofar to a third person, who blew the shofar well.

I knew that my father didn't know how to blow a shofar, so after the davening I asked my father why he tried to blow the shofar. My father replied, "I didn't want the *baal tokeia* to be embarrassed. If I would have given the shofar right away to someone who knows how to blow it, the *baal tokeia* would be ashamed. Everyone would see that the shofar blows well, and the *baal tokeia* was the problem. So, I also tried to blow the shofar, and failed, and thereby, his shame was less.

Shmiras HaDibbur

The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *lashon hara*, therefore, another mode towards rebuilding the Beis HaMikdash is to be cautious with speech.

Once, the Chofetz Chaim's front door was open and a cow walked in, and it broke things in the home. The alarmed *rebbeztzin* called for the Chofetz Chaim.

When the cow was taken out, the Chofetz Chaim said to his family, "To prevent this from happening again, we need to do two things: (1) the front door should always be closed. (2) If a cow walks in, we need to guard the expensive items so the cow shouldn't break them." The Chofetz Chaim then explained the *nimshal*, the lesson we could learn from this: (1) the first step is to keep the "door closed." This means the mouth should remain closed, only speaking the minimum. This will

protect us from speaking *lashon hara* and forbidden words. (2) When one must speak, and the "door" is open, one must be cautious to guard his words, that there shouldn't be anything forbidden in them.

Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* teaches: Fish are caught either in a net or by a hook. The difference is, when they are caught in a net, the fish know they've been caught. But when they are caught by a hook, they think that they are still free. They think only their mouth has a problem.

The *nimshal* is the two ways the *yetzer hara* catches people. There are times when the *yetzer hara* snares people into his net and they are totally under his influence. At these times, people know that they've been caught by the *yetzer hara*. But there are other times when the person feels that he is free – he thinks that he only has a problem with his mouth. He doesn't realize that if he isn't

cautious with his words, he too is caught in the *yetzer hara's* trap.

The Gemara (*Menachos* 87.) says, "Just as words are good for *besamim*, words are bad for wine." Chazal were aware that speech makes *besamim* smell better, and that speech ruins wine.

Therefore, we say in the *Ketores*, כשהוא שוחק אומר הדק היטב, "When he grinds the *ketores*, he would say, 'grind it well, grind it well,' because the sound of speaking is beneficial for the *ketores's* scent.

In contrast, wine is affected negatively by words and therefore, when the wine barrel for the *nesachim* was

open, the *cohanim* were careful not to speak in front of it.

The Ben Yehoyada *zt'l* explains that this teaches us that words aren't as insignificant as we may have thought. They have influence, and therefore one must be cautious with our words.

Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* teaches that the *haftaros* of the Three Weeks begins with the words, 'דברי' 'שמעו' 'חזו'. These mean, *speech, hearing, sight*. When we will be careful with these three senses, Moshiach will come.

May we merit the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days, amen.

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