



PART 1 - THE DEPTH OF MISHPAT HASHEM

THE LEADING EXAMPLE OF HASHEM'S CHESSED

Chazal say in *masechta Eiruchin* (8b), אמר רב פפא, Rav Papa says, it says, צדקתך כהררי אל-אל, “Your benevolence is like the mighty mountains” (Tehillim 36:7). Hashem’s *tzedakos* are like tall mountains. What does that refer to? The *gemara* says אלו נגעי אדם, these are *nega'im* discussed in this *parshah*, that come upon people. That’s צדקתך, amazing *tzedakah*. The end of the *pasuk* ends off with, משפטך תהום, רבה, which means, “Your judgment is like the great deep.” The *gemara* says this refers to *negei batim*. Rashi explains that *negei adam* are clarified - whether they’re *tamei* or *tahor* - after one week. The *kohen* comes and checks him out after one week, and then they know if he’s *tamei* or *tahor*. Rashi says, וצדקה גדולה היא זו, this is a big *tzedakah* from Hashem that in one week a person gets his response. But *negei batim* take three weeks. That’s the second part of the *passuk*. משפטך תהום רבה, Hashem’s judgments are very deep.

Now, the obvious question on this *Chazal* is, couldn’t *Chazal* figure out a different *chessed* and *tzedakah* that Hashem does, other than the fact that the *metzora* only gets quarantined for a week to see if he’s *tamei* or *tahor*? That’s the best example of Hashem’s *tzidkus*? It says in the *passuk* הארץ מלאה חסד, the *chessed* of Hashem fills the whole world. Hashem’s *chessed* has no limit. So why does it use *tzara’as* specifically as an example to show that the *tzidkus* of Hashem is amazing?

The second part of *Chazal* is משפטך תהום רבה. What’s the deepest *mishpat* of Hashem? *Nega'im* that come upon houses. That’s the worse you could think of?! A *nega* on a house for three weeks? I’m sure we’ve all heard of worse things happening. What’s the lesson we can learn from this?

IF YOU INSULT MY CHILDREN, YOU INSULT ME

My *zeida’s rebbi* was Rav Isaac Sher (1880-1952). He was the *rosh yeshivah* of Slabodka in Europe when his father-in-law, the Alter, went to Eretz Yisrael and opened up the Chevron Yeshivah, Slabodka in Chevron. Later on, Rav Isaac came to Eretz Yisrael and he took over as the *rosh yeshivah* of Slabodka. Rav Isaac was a very unique person. My grandfather told me about the time when he met him, Rav Isaac had come to America where he spoke. My grandfather was in Yeshivas Yitzchak Elchanan at the time, and he was mesmerized by him. He was completely overcome. The *emes* is people in his presence felt very special. He had a way of elevating people. He was a brilliant person. He understood people amazingly. He knew how to speak to each person on his own level. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, the Mirror Rosh Yeshivah, in his *hesped* on him, said an amazing statement. He said, “Whenever you were within Rav Isaac’s *arbah amos* you felt a *ta’am* Gan Eden when talking with him.” Very interesting statement. His *ma’amarim* that he wrote himself also are very insightful. He had great clarity.

So Rav Isaac Sher wanted to explain this *gemara*. He said, “First of all, let’s analyze why the *aveirah* of *lashon hara* is so serious. The *gemara* in *Eiruchin* says that *lashon hara* is so great it makes *aveiros* reach *ad laShamayim*. Not just *stam* little sins. We’re talking about *aveiros* which reach into the highest of heavens. The Torah was *machmir* on the punishment of *tzara’as* in a very interesting way that we don’t find with other *aveiros*. You have to push this guy away from the community. He has to be quarantined. He has to go into mourning. He has to tell people, ‘I’m a *tamei*.’ Even Miriam Haneviah, the greatest of the great, Moshe’s sister, who spoke against her brother *beshogeg*, accidentally, without any intent to put him down and degrade him, *chas veshalom*, she was punished in such a severe manner with all of Klal Yisrael knowing it.”

What would you think before I tell you Rav Isaac Sher’s *sevara*? Give it a moment of thought. What would you think is the reason why Hashem is so *machmir* about this *aveirah* of *lashon hara*? It’s not like you bloodied him. It’s not like you destroyed the person. Does anybody have a thought?

(Participant: We’re all Hashem’s children and when somebody speaks badly, he’s talking about Hashem’s children. So, when you speak badly, it reflects on Hashem. Rabbi Brog: You’re a blessed man! You’re *gebentched*. You’re speaking *divrei chachmah* and I’m very proud to hear it from you. You were *mechaven* to the words and the thoughts of the great Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Isaac Sher!)

He says as follows. Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves every one of His *kinderlach*. He loves every Jew, and even though it’s hard for us to imagine, Hashem *mamash* feels each one is a beloved son. Hashem gave him a *neshamah*. He gave him *koach*. Just like any father who wouldn’t rest if he saw somebody degrading and putting down his child or talking negatively about his child and he would do all efforts to protect his child, when a person, a *Yid*, talks badly against another Jew, you have to know Hakadosh Baruch Hu gets very upset and Hakadosh Baruch Hu demands His *kavod*. Even though the one saying the *lashon hara* is also a dear child, but through this guy’s bad words, you know what he does? He’s disattaching himself from his Father *baShamayim*. If a person could speak against another child of Hashem, he becomes detached from Hashem!

The *gemara* says in *Eiruchin* (15b) אמר מר עוקבא, anybody who is *mesaper lashon hara*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, אין אני והוא יכולים, לידור בעולם, he and I cannot live in the world together.¹ That means Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes away the *kesher* from this person until he does *teshuvah*. You know how severe that is? That’s very serious. If you put that thought into your mind, maybe you would think twice before speaking *lashon hara*.

BITTEN BY A SNAKE

I saw an amazing story that Rav Aryeh Levin (1885-1969) related, which scared him from talking *lashon hara*. What was the story? The Chafetz Chaim once came into a *shul* and saw that the glass that usually covers the words תמיד on the *amud* was missing there, and it was right next to the fire. The Chafetz Chaim was afraid that it would get burned. He asked somebody, “How come there is no glass?” The guy said, “That man’s the *gabbai*. He doesn’t want to put a glass.” The Chafetz Chaim looked like he was bitten by a snake. “*Lashon hara!*

¹ ואמר רב חסדא אמר מר עוקבא כל המספר לשון הרע אמר הקב"ה אין אני והוא יכולין לידור בעולם שנאמר (תהלים קא, ה) מלשני בסתר רעהו אותו אצמית גבה עינים ורחב לבב אותו לא אוכל אל תיקרי אותו לא אוכל אלא אתו לא אוכל ואיכא דמתני לה על גסי הרוח.

Lashon hara mamash!" Rav Aryeh Levin said the Chafetz Chaim gave *aza shrei* and showed such a reaction, he was convinced the Chafetz Chaim was bitten by a snake. The Chafetz Chaim ran out of the *shul* and said he's never going back there because he doesn't want to know the *gabbai*, in order that he shouldn't be *nichshal* in *lashon hara*.

Another story. The Chafetz Chaim walked into a *shul* and spoke to a few of the *chevra* there. He noticed a lot of the *siddurim* had torn pages. They were still in the right place but they were torn. So he gave a whole *shiur* about how you have to be careful on Shabbos not to put the papers together to be able to read it because it's a *shaylah* of writing. Even though there are *shitos* that hold it's okay, the Chafetz Chaim was careful about it. He said that writing on Shabbos is a serious thing. You don't want to come to write on Shabbos.

So one of the people there said, "Every *shul* has ripped *siddurim*." The Chafetz Chaim said, "Oy vey! Oy vey iz mir! You're telling *lashon hara* on all the *shuls*?! You're talking *lashon hara* on all the *shuls*?! All my life I've been careful about *lashon hara*. What are you doing to me?" That's how careful he was. You're saying about Hashem's *kinderlach* that they are *nichnas* into a *chashash* of *chillul Shabbos*. It's a *pelah* - the sensitivity. It's *mavhil al hara'ayon*.

DEEP JUDGMENT ON EACH WORD

Rav Isaac Sher said that this is the reason why Hashem punishes someone who speaks *lashon hara* with *tza'aras*. He takes him out of the camp. He has to sit alone. He's considered like a *meis*. The *psak* of *tzara'as* is the *psak* of *misah*. When Miriam got *tza'aras* you know what Aharon came and begged Moshe? *אל נא תהי כמת*, don't let her be like a dead person (Shemos 12:12). Rashi says because a *metzora* is *chashuv kemeis*. You know why Hashem gives this unique *onesh* to someone who speaks *lashon hara*? Because Hashem wants you to contemplate and think and do *teshuvah*, be *mesaken* your ways and fix yourself up and see how you can get reconnected to your Father in *Shamayim*.

Rav Isaac Sher says the depth of judgment you *davka* see from *tzara'as*. You know why? Generally, if you go to a person and say, "You know, you talked *lashon hara*," what's the person going to answer you? He's going to say to you, "Listen, did I do anything to him? Did I lift a finger against him? Did I touch him? No. I just said a few words." So people already think, "What did I do already?! I just spoke. I just said a few words." The Torah is teaching you the depth of *mishpat*, of judgment. The depth of justice. That even just a small word that comes out of the speaker's mouth can cause him to fall from his lofty post of being a dear child of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and he could get pushed away *עד רבה תהום* so much so that he's going to be considered a *meis*. Unbelievable!

And the whole process of him coming back to Klal Yisrael, to the group, is a very tough process. *Mamash*. It's a long tedious process. He has to bring birds. He has to get a haircut. He has to get himself sprinkled with *shemen hamishchah* and other things. There are whole *gemaros* about it. You know what this shows? It teaches us that to come back to Klal Yisrael is not just as easy as having the punishment, and then boom you're back.

Rav Isaac Sher said, there's nothing like *nega'im* - for an *aveirah* that is seemingly so petty, so small. You're not killing anybody. You're not doing *arayos*. You're not doing *avodah zarah*. You just say a few words. *Chazal* say - that's the lesson that shows you *תהום רבה* משפטיך in the sharpest clearest way (i.e. we see the powerful depth of judgment from *Shamayim* because *nega'im* are such a severe punishment for a seemingly small slip up).

But at the same time, you also see the *tzedakah* of Hashem. When a sinner brings upon himself a *nega*, the fact alone that Hashem brings the *nega* and Hashem gives him a warning, that's a tremendous *siyata deShmaya*, a tremendous *hashgachah pratis*. The *rishonim* say that when a person experiences such an experience in Eretz Yisrael - this only happens in Eretz Yisrael - the person understands that he's living with Hashem and that what he experienced was a *nes*.

CLOSENESS TO HASHEM IS A TREASURE

And the Seforno says, *tzara'as* is no natural phenomenon whatsoever. Hakadosh Baruch Hu has *rachmanus* on His observant Jews, so He wants to bring them back close to Him, through *teshuvah*. He wants to arouse them, so He gives them *nega'im*. First, on the houses, and if they don't get the message, He puts it on themselves.

This is all a result of Hashem showing us and guiding us. And only someone who is on a high *madreigah* is *zocheh* to this closeness - where Hashem doesn't show any mercy. Miriam Haneviah was so close to Hashem, we can't even begin to imagine. A little mistake, boom! And she appreciated it, because you should know that any *tza'ar* you have in this world will exempt you from *tza'ar* in the next world.

The Steipler wrote once to an *adam gadol*. The Steipler said that before a person has *yesurim* we wish him he should be healthy and not have *yesurim*. But after he experienced *yesurim*, we never wish him that *halevai* he should never have had them - because *yesurim* is such an asset! It's such a wealth! It's such a great asset to a person that he should never be *mescharet*, regret, what he went through. He's passed the suffering, *baruch Hashem*.

A TWENTY-FOUR YEAR ORDEAL

I had a friend who suffered from multiple sclerosis for twenty four years until he passed away. It was excruciating. But he came to understand, eventually, the *chessed* of Hashem and he did the best he could. He slowly deteriorated until he couldn't walk. He couldn't turn over. He couldn't move his hands. He could barely breathe. That's how he died at the end. Eventually, they lose the power of the muscles needed for breathing. He once asked me, "Do you have a thought of why I'm going through this?" I said, "I do." I said, "I believe you're a big *ben aliyah*." There was a time that he heard about the concept of Yissachar Zevulun. He wasn't a rich man. He said to me, "Do you think I should do it?" I said, "It's up to you." He said, "Do you have any ideas?" I was learning in Eretz Yisrael then, and I told him I know of an *adam gadol*, an *adam kadosh*, a *tzaddik*, a person whom my *rebbe* said, "If you're counting on your five fingers, the five most special people, he's definitely one of them. I don't know if he's the top or second, I'm not sure who the other ones are, but he's definitely in the top five." I told my friend "How would you like to make a Yissachar Zevulun arrangement with that person? My *rebbe* told me, 'You don't have to write out a Yissachar Zevulun. Hashem knows.' If you have a Yissachar Zevulun arrangement, you're in good shape." I arranged it. He gave him \$6000 a year, \$500 a month. His total *parnasah* then was \$65,000 and he had a *mishpachah*. I thought it was a *davar gadol*, big thing.

I said to him as follows: "My dear friend. You think you helped this poor Jew in Yerushalayim, this *tzaddik*. Let me tell you something. You stole the stock market. You bought yourself a stock that was worth more than any bitcoin is worth. Worth \$100,000 a stock, a million dollars a stock. You invested a few pennies and you got the stock for that."

"You're going to come to the next world and you're going to say, 'Listen, I have a partnership.' They're going to say, 'With who? You'll say, 'With *hagaon hatzaddik hakadosh*, Rav Yitzchak Nosson Kupershtok *zecher tzaddik lebrachah*.' You'll say, 'Can I go see him? I want to see

him.' They'll say, 'You know who he is?' 'No.' 'He's like miles and miles up in the highest of the highest places.' He was a *kadosh*. He worshiped Hashem day and night, night and day, through *yesurim noraim*, through poverty.' He was *sameach bechelko*. He was a person... I can't begin to tell you. You can't imagine unless you see him and *baruch Hashem*, I saw him. You'll say, 'But I'm a partner.' They'll say, 'You have to endure a lot of Gehinom to get into shape to go see him.'

I continued telling him: "Now, it says in the *sefarim*, any punishment and any suffering you suffer in this world is a billion times better than getting it in the next world. So Hashem gave you this. You're going to come to the next world after all you're suffering, you're going to be purified and you're going to enjoy the *shutfus*, the partnership. You're going to walk into the *Shamayim* and *shmei Shamayim*. You'll walk into the highest of the highest *batei medrash* in the *Shamayim*. You're going to walk in there and you're going to think to yourself, 'What am I doing here?' They'll say, 'No, you have a partner. You have a *shutaf*.' They're going to sit you down next to the *shutaf*. The problem is, you're going to be a mute. You're going to be a *cheiresh*, אִינוֹ שׁוֹמֵעַ וְאִינוֹ מְדַבֵּר." But I said to him: "No, don't worry about it. It says in the *sefarim* that when you go to the next world, they're going to teach you the Torah from your partner. You're going to have a *chavrusa* like you never had in your life. By me, it's clear that's what happened, of why you suffered in this world."

Afterwards, we asked somebody who knew these things, and they said the same thing.

YESURIM ARE A BARGAIN DEAL

But the *pelah* is when a person goes through something in this world, it's nothing compared to getting it in the next world. You're getting away with bargains. The way Rav Isaac expressed it, he said, when a Jewish person, who is *zocheh* that the shine of Hashem's face shines upon him, when he forgets for a moment that his friend about whom he spoke is also a dear child and a favorite son of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and then *nega'im* come upon him because he became disconnected from the *Shechinah* and His Father spit in his face, Hashem spit in his face, like it says by Miriam, still in all, he sees and he knows that it's his father. It's his father telling him, "You're also a beloved son, and I want you to be restored to your proper place. And because I love you, I'm being *metapel* with you". It says in the *passuk* אַתְּ אֲשֶׁר יֵאָדָב ה' יוֹכִיחַ, for whom Hashem loves He gives *tochachah* (Mishlei 3:12).

That means to say, that while we see משפטיך תהום רבה - for the *pegiah* in the *kavod* of a son of Hashem - from there itself, you see וצדקתך אל כהררי אל. For doing such a terrible, terrible thing, in only one week's time the person's status of being *tamei* or *tahor* is determined - and if he does *teshuvah*, he's back in Hashem's graces.

This is what a person has to know, that whatever you experience in this world, Hashem wants to bring you closer to Him. Hashem wants you to acknowledge, there's not one mistake.

R' POGRAMANSKY: "GIVE MORE"

Now, there are some people who have to suffer *yesurim* like you can't imagine. *Mamash* you can't imagine the *yesurim* some people have to suffer. There was a famous *talmid* from Telz, Rav Mottel Pogramansky (1903-1950). He was a *tzaddik*, an *iluy*, a very unique man. At the end of his life, he suffered terribly and if people would *chap* him in the room, *besh'a's* he was in terrible pain, you know what he would say? They would hear him say, "*Gib nach, gib nach, give more, give more.*" He was in *geferliche* pain but it was *klor* to him that he's not going to get one bit of pain in this world that he doesn't deserve, and whatever he's getting in this world is going to cleanse him for the next world, and the next world is where it counts. You have to consider this.

Hashem wants to wake us up. I've read about that *tzaddik*, I mean, the *kedushah* of that *tzaddik*. The *mesiras nefesh* that he did for Yiddishkeit. What he gave up to become a *talmid chacham muflag* is unbelievable. I'm thinking what did he do wrong already? I can't imagine. I can't imagine. The man was so careful in *mitzvos*. He was crazy *medakdek* in *mitzvos*. The fear of heaven. Whenever he ate in the summer months in Europe, he would create a circle of water around his food because maybe a small bug would cross and climb into his food without him noticing. He once got a new hat. He took the hat and he ripped out the inside. Someone said, "What are you doing?! You're destroying the hat!" He said, "I'm not sure if it's *shatnez*." The *kedushah* was amazing!

He never had children but he married a very big *tzadeikis*. After his *petirah*, this *tzadeikis* married a very, very *chashuve chassidische* Yid, a *heilegeh* Yid, a Rebbe. I met the Rebbe's son who told me that his mother told him that even though Rav Mottel Pogremanski was a Litvak, his *kedushah* made the great chassidische rebbe... He had nothing to be ashamed of. He had *kedushah* like from the *heilegeh chassidim*. The *prishus*, the *chassidus* that he had, was unbelievable.

R' ZONNENFELD: "BARUCH HASHEM IT WAS AN ORANGE"

The *passuk* says אֹדֶךָ כִּי עֲנִיתִנִי, "I praise you for You have answered me" (Tehillim 118:21). The word '*anisani*,' can be read '*inisani*,' You afflicted me. I thank You, Hashem, for You have afflicted me, וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה, and it was to me a salvation. After a person goes through something from Hashem and he sees the *yeshuah*, then he's *modeh* to Hashem even for the affliction, because he understands that this affliction was what he needed to endure to bring the *yeshuah*. The *avodah* of a Yid is to thank Hashem at the time of *anisani*. 'אֹדֶךָ ה', when I'm getting afflicted, before I see the *yeshuah*. That will bring me to the *yeshuah*.

The great Rav Chaim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932) was a *tzaddik*. The *rav* of Yerushalayim, a *heilegeh kadosh* and an *anav not stam*. He was once walking in the Old City and he saw an Arab, a young Arab. What does the Arab do? He picks up an orange and throws it straight at Rav Chaim Sonnenfeld, and it lands right on his head. He was the *rav* of Yerushalayim! *The rav* of the whole city of Yerushalayim. He said, "Ah, *baruch Hashem! Baruch Hashem!*" The fellow who was walking with him asked him, "What's the *baruch Hashem* about?!" He said, "You have to thank Hashem for every single thing. You have to constantly find the good and the *rachamim* that lies in every action." He says, "I am so thankful to Hashem for this situation. You know why? You know what the guy threw on me? An orange. I would have expected him to throw a rock. And the guy had good aim. See, it landed right on my head? And Hashem sent an orange." He said, "Since when do these Arabs, *Bnei Yishmaelim*, these *rotzchim*, throw fruit? These low lives, they don't throw fruit. They throw big sharp stones. If he would have thrown a stone at me, where would I be right now? It would be a *sakanah gedolah*. For that I'm *modeh* to Hashem."

OPPOSITE, YET EQUAL

And he continued and said, "It says in the *passuk* שׁוֹתֵי ה' לִגְדֵי תַמִּיד, "I place Hashem in front of me, always" (Tehillim 16:8). He said a beautiful *vort*. He said, *lenegdi* means when you see Hashem appearing to you as your *neged* opposition - He's against you, you know what you have to do? *Shivisi Hashem*. The word שׁוֹנֵה also means equivalent. I have to view Hashem equally in the same light even when Hashem is *lenegdi*, against me. You have to find the *chessed* of Hashem even in that situation because everything Hashem does is for *tovah* and for *chessed*. I'm very thankful to Hashem for the great *tovos* and the *chassadim* that He has done for me, and that He does for me, and that He's doing for me. I'm thankful to Him very much. In that *zechus* hopefully לִישׁוּעָה וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה."

PART 2 - THE PURPOSE OF CHALLENGES (5782)

Being *sameach* means you feel that you accomplished something. Accomplishment brings *simchah*. If a person is not accomplished, he's just existing. And if he's just getting a stomach-ache from all the matzah he eats, that's not an accomplishment. Accomplishment means you come out from Pesach feeling changed. To some people, it means not fighting with their wives or not getting into a fight with their families - that is a great accomplishment, but that's not a *sameachdike* accomplishment. It's very common when families get together that people misbehave. They don't know their shortcomings. They don't acknowledge their shortcomings, and sadly it ends up being unpleasant, with *chutzpah*, rebuking parents, and other issues. Rather, you should all have a *chag kosher vesameach*.

ONE OF THE GREATEST LESSONS FROM YETZIAS MITZRAYIM

Rabbeinu Bachaye in *Parshas Beshalach* (Shemos 13:17) shares a very interesting insight with us about *yetzias Mitzrayim* and the episodes that happened afterward.² He says, what did Hakadosh Baruch Hu want with every single episode? What was the purpose? There's no episode that a person experiences in his life that's not for an exact purpose. There's usually a general purpose and sometimes there's a more specific purpose. What would you say is the main purpose that Hashem gives you *nisyonos*?

The answer is that Hashem wants you to become strengthened in *emunah* and *bitachon*. Hashem wants you to grow and grow and grow in *bitachon*. Rabbeinu Bachaye writes as follows ודע, you should know, כי כל עניני ישראל ומקריהם במדבר, all the episodes that Klal Yisrael experienced when they left Mitzrayim and in the *midbar*, it was all a *nisayon gamur*, an absolute test, כדי שיגדלו נפשם השכלית במדריגת הבטחון, Hashem wanted them to develop their *seichel*, their inner soul in levels of *bitachon* which is the *shoresh* of *emunah*. You know why? Because that was what was required in order to be *mekabel Torah*.

A person who does not have his *emunah* and *bitachon* down cannot learn Torah, cannot be *mekabel Torah*. He's missing the necessary requirements. And that's why Hashem made *krias Yam Suf* as they came into it and not in one shot. And when they came out of the Yam Suf to the *midbar*, they came to a place called Marah where the sweet water had turned bitter. Then they put a piece of wood in there and it turned back into sweet water. All a *nisayon gamur*. The whole *milchamah* of Amalek - *nisayon gamur*. The whole *mann* falling down was all for a test. They became weak in Torah at some point and as a result Amalek came. *Tzaros* come as a result of *bitul Torah*. And all of these *inyanim*, he says, were because Hashem wanted to implant inside of their souls the *middah* of *bitachon*.

Like the *passuk* says in *Mishlei* (22:19) להיות בה' מבטחך, "that you have your *bitachon* in Hashem," הודעתך היום אף אתה, that means to say, that which I told you in the *sefer* of *Mishlei*, *mussar* and *mashalim*, it was all for your benefit, to help you rise up in your *middah* of *bitachon*. This is one of the great lessons that you have to come out of Mitzrayim with.

HANDLE THE TEST WITH BITACHON

Now, we have to realize, the tests of *bitachon* occur daily. I personally was tested yesterday with a test that I think most people would consider a pretty rough test. You see, our plan for this upcoming Pesach was not to be at home. We were leaving early. There was no need for us to clean out the house. Just to get rid of the *chametz gamur* and then close the house and come back after Pesach. Cleaning for Pesach, everybody knows, is not an easy thing. We were going to be spared from the challenge of having to clean for Pesach. In addition, our first granddaughter just became engaged and we felt they wanted us there and we wanted to be part and parcel of that *simchah*. So we decided we're going to go to Eretz Yisrael. Hashem arranged for us to travel in style. Not the economy. Not the economy plus. But to be able to travel at no cost in the best possible manner. Hashem provided for us the right times when I wanted to go. The right time of the day, evening. Hashem arranged for us, He provided a place to stay in Eretz Yisrael, nice accommodations. Hashem arranged a car for me at a very reasonable rate. I had already rented the car. They told me you had to rent it starting two days ago. We rented it from then. I was set to go. I had arranged my matzos. I had Brisker matzos waiting for me over there, as many as I could possibly need which is not an easy thing to come by. It's not easy to get Brisker matzos in Eretz Yisrael. There is a shortage. They give you a few matzos. They don't give you an abundance. But Hashem provided for us the matzos that we needed. I already was picturing being in Eretz Yisrael and enjoying it in Eretz Yisrael, enjoying the *shuls* in the neighborhood. I was looking forward to being in a *beis medrash* that I found last summer there which I really enjoyed. I was looking forward to enjoying being together with my *mishpachah* and with Hashem in Eretz Yisrael.

The big day came and we had to pack. Packing is another one of the challenges of going to Eretz Yisrael, or anywhere for that matter, for a few weeks. You have to pack and you have to make a *cheshbon* to take everything you need and everything you don't need right now. The suitcases were packed. *Baruch Hashem*. We sent our stuff to the cleaners. We were ready to go. I arranged a ride to the airport. Everything was taken care of. We were all set.

As we were getting ready to bring the suitcases to the front door, something came up, nothing major, but we couldn't go. We could have gone but... It came up as a *shaylah* to go or not to go. My wife said to me, "If you really want to, if you really want to go then we'll go." I went into my study and I gave it some thought. I said to myself, "What's going on over here?" It wasn't like some accident happened or some medical emergency happened. It was just that somebody had a *hergesh*, "I don't want to go." I sat down in my study and I thought, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, what do You want me to do? You prepared the trip first class. Not *stam*. You laid everything out. At the last minute, You put a little *ikuv* in the way." Again, I could have gone if I would have pushed, and I said to myself, "I know what I want to do but why did Hashem do that? I think Hashem doesn't want me to go."

So somebody asked me, "Are you very, very, very disappointed?" "No. I accepted it. I accepted it. I know it's from Hashem and it's for the best. If Hashem wanted us to go now to Eretz Yisrael He could have put in everybody's minds - 'We want to go. We should go.'" I knew it was a test. Many years ago, I don't think I would have been so calm about it. We had made the whole plan... My children in Eretz Yisrael said, "Ta, you didn't force the issue? You don't want to be in Eretz Yisrael?" I said, "I do. I think Hashem doesn't want me to be in Eretz Yisrael, for whatever reason. So you have to accept it. I was even bringing my dear talmid, Yosef, from Gateshead to Eretz Yisrael together with his sister so my children would have to host them. I told Yosef, "I'm very sorry." *Im yertzeh Hashem* he's going to be learning in Eretz Yisrael by Rav Tzvi, *im yertzeh Hashem*. I wanted to spend time with them in Eretz Yisrael also, but it's not what Hashem had in mind.

Disappointments in life and challenges are not made so that you should push and demand and get your way. You have to be *boteach* in Hashem that Hashem directs all traffic. If Hashem, even though He arranged the whole story, didn't give it His final blessing, you could have

² ודע כי כל עניני ישראל ומקריהם במדבר הכל היה נסיון גמור כדי שיגדלו נפשם השכלית במדריגת הבטחון שהוא שרש האמונה כדי שיהיו ראויים לקבל התורה ולסבה זה קרע להם את המדי עברם לתונן ולא בבת אחת גם אחרי צאתם מים סוף אל מדבר שור ובאו למרה והיו המים מתוקים חזרו ונמררו ועל ידי העץ חזרו למתיקותם וכל זה נסיון גמור וכענין שכתוב (שמות טו) ושם נסוהו גם ירדת המן דבר יום ביומו ולא לימים רבים הכל נסיון גמור כענין שכתוב (שם טז) ולקטו דבר יום ביומו למען אנסנו, גם אחרי היותם ברפידים ורפו ידיהם מן התורה בקבלו במרה ובעונש זה בא עמלק ונלחם בהם, כי בעונן בטול תורה הצרות באות לעולם, כל הענינים האלה היו נסיון גמור כדי לקבוע בנפשותם מדת הבטחון, ועל זה אמר שלמה המע"ה (משלי כ"ב: י"ט) להיות בה' מבטחך הודעתך היום אף אתה, יאמר מה שהודעתך עד היום בספר הזה מן המוסרים והמשלים הכל היה לתועלתך ולהגיע אותך אל שלמות מדת הבטחון כמו שהגעתני אני אליה זהו שאמר אף אתה, באר לנו כי מדת הבטחון עקר גדול ויסוד התורה והמצוה.

your suitcases in your hand, and you go back home. And you don't sit *shivah* and you don't isolate anybody and you don't not talk to anybody. You've got to go on as if nothing happened. I should always be *zocheh* to be able to pass the challenge like I did this time.

EVEN LITTLE DETAILS LINE UP

Somebody called me today. I got a bunch of calls, "Is it true you're not going to Eretz Yisrael?! What? What happened?" I said, "Nothing much. A small issue." "For that you push! You put your foot down and say we're going to Eretz Yisrael." I said, "It wasn't a *chiyuv*." It wasn't a question of eating matzah on Pesach or not eating matzah on Pesach. So now we have to clean the house and *im yertzeh Hashem* by the time Pesach comes, we'll be ready for Pesach.

GALUS TO GEULAH IS BITACHON TRAINING

You have to understand that when Hashem trained us as a nation during the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim, He wanted to awaken and arouse us. Klal Yisrael in *galus* is compared to Klal Yisrael sleeping and when a person is 'sleeping' spiritually, it is as if he's mixed with the *goyim*. He's exposed to their *hashkafos*, to their *kefirah*, to their *ta'avah* and they rely on their own strength. That's the opposite of a person's purpose in this world, which is to be constantly relying on Hashem and being *boteach* in Hashem and to distance himself from all the *goyishe* attitudes and all the *hashpa'ah* and impressions that the *goyim* offer us. That's why in *Shir Hashirim*, the *galus* is referred to as a situation of *sheinah*, of sleeping. We're called *yesheinim*. We're asleep. Hakadosh Baruch Hu He woke us up. You know what He did? He performed *nekamah* on Pharaoh and his entire nation.

You have to know one of the things that Hashem wants us to believe is: don't think the *goyim* are getting away with it. The *goyim* are not getting away with it. Every *goy* who did something wrong will pay the price.

HASHEM ARRANGED VENGEANCE: THE ACCIDENT

I just read a story yesterday, an amazing story. I'll share it with you. There was a couple living in an apartment rental in someone's house. They lived there for seventeen years. One day the *balebus* comes to notify him that he's selling the house and the new owner is going to knock it down and build up a big apartment house. "I'm giving you a heads up to start looking around." So the guy started looking around. One he's driving home from *shul*, and he's on his phone speaking to a realtor. He asks, "Did you hear about any apartments for rent?" The guy was talking on his phone. He's a little caught up and suddenly he sees the light turn red so he slams on his brakes but the car, instead of stopping, starts to do a little wiggle and waggle. It danced a little bit and before he knew it he couldn't stop the car. Suddenly he looks up and he sees right in front of him an elderly couple and his car is going straight for them! Bam! He hits them straight head on, like two bowling pins. A strike. They're both dead. Understandably, the guy feels like dirt and lower than dirt.

At first, the cops let him go. A few days later, they came back to him and they gave him some charges of "vehicular manslaughter," because a witness came forward and said that he saw this fellow going into that red light not stopping. You slammed on the brakes a little too late so that means to say you were discombobulated. You weren't focusing so you caused this death. Then they started a whole court case. The prosecutor laid out the case very, very well. He established the facts, what happened, and he made the guy look very guilty. He couldn't lie to the judge. He couldn't say I wasn't playing on my phone. I couldn't do this. I wasn't right. I had things on my head and I didn't realize. Then his lawyer got up and his lawyer said there's some information you don't know about and that is that a few days ago, there was a truck that had a big oil spill right on that corner and it's not cleaned up yet. You can go there and you can see it. This guy hit that oil patch. So it wasn't that he didn't try to stop. It wasn't his fault. The fact that there was an oil patch there was beyond his control. He wasn't responsible for the oil patch. The judge heard the case and they acquitted him totally!

But the guy came home and the guy still felt terrible. *Lema'aseh* he took two lives. He was happy he wasn't in jail, but he caused the death of two older people! He was very not in a good frame of mind. He decided he's going to write Rav Chaim a letter. He wrote Rav Chaim a letter. Rav Chaim *betzidkuso* writes back one word. Rav Chaim used to answer approximately up to three hundred letters a day. Short and sweet. Anyway, he sends this guy a letter and he writes on the letter *ayin mem lamed kuf*. The guy is trying to figure out what in the world does Rav Chaim mean? *Ayin mem lamed kuf*, what's the answer? I should feel bad? I should feel good? He went to his *rav*. He went to others. Could you tell me? He wanted to see what Rav Chaim was writing. He had no idea what he was talking about.

A little while later, he had to get out of the apartment. His real estate agent calls him up. "There's an apartment available that came up. A decent apartment. I want you to come." The realtor shows him the apartment. He's looking around and he sees a picture on the wall. He looks at the picture again and it looks like the guy whom he ran over. The guy sits down by the desk and he pulls out the drawer and he sees right there a younger version of that guy in an army uniform - but it wasn't an American uniform. It was a Nazi uniform. On the bottom it said, "Treblinka 1942." Most of this *Yid's* own family was destroyed in Treblinka!

Rav Chaim wrote one word, "Amalek." He was telling him, "Don't feel bad. You did a *mitzvah*. You got rid of Amalek." Now, how did Rav Chaim know? It's mind blowing. Rav Chaim was definitely a *tzaddik* who did not have two feet in this world. He definitely had one foot in this world and one foot in the upper world, and there's no question that Rav Chaim was aware of things that most of us don't know of.

I once told you a story about a person who died in an accident and then he went to *Shamayim* and it ended up being a near death experience. He saw himself being judged in the next world. He was judged by two *tzaddikim* who were still alive in the world. He went to them afterwards. They said, "Don't ever say to anybody what you witnessed! Don't ever repeat that! It's very, very private information." The guy *pashut* was judged in the next world by a *rav* that was living in this world! Can you imagine that? Rav Chaim definitely could have been like that.

You have to know the world is not *hefkeirus*. Just because you're living among *goyim*, there's nothing *hefker*. Every single thing is exact. Yesterday's terrorist attack turned out to be five, not four. Hashem is upping the ante. We're sleeping. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu wakes us up. One of the ways He did that in Mitzrayim was by performing vengeance on the *goyim*. Pharaoh had to let the Yidden stop working. Then Hashem took them out. And Hashem kept on going and going and going to lead us to *bitachon*. And Hashem does that with every single one of us and if you accept it and you trust Hashem and you have *emunah* in Hashem and you have *bitachon* in Hashem, then you will be able to focus on the job that you have to do in this world and then you'll be *gebentchte* people. You'll be very *matzliach*.

✧ IN CONCLUSION ✧

Why does *tzaraas* afflicting a person (which as we know is related to the *aveirah of lashon hora*), represent the *tzidkus* of Hashem, צדקתך כהררי א-ל? Rav Isaac Sher explained that the reason why Hashem is so strict with the *aveirah of lashon hora* is that when we speak against another Jew, we literally detach ourselves from Hakodosh Boruch Hu, even with just one, seemingly innocent word of slander! That's why Hashem punished a *ba'al lashon hora* with *tzaraas* and with excommunication. We can now understand how the *p'sak of trazaas* is akin to *misah*, death, since a *ba'al lashon hora* has disconnected himself from Hashem, the source of all life. And that's why the *tikkun* for this *chet*, which is to return to *yishuv* in Klal Yisroel, is a very detailed and meticulous process. Notwithstanding the severity of *nega'im*, they also represent a tremendous צדקתך, a *siyata deShmaya* and *hashgachah pratis* of Hashem's warning a person to return to Him - a process that can only happen in Eretz Yisrael. To be *zoiche* for this revelation - of being reminded by Hashem through the affliction of *tzaraas* and for the closeness that the subsequent *teshuva* can achieve - it must be that the afflicted person is on a high *madreigah*. On a deeper level, this teaches us that when people go through afflictions in life and they are *zoiche* to see the *yeshuah* - as symbolized in Dovid HaMelech's words of אודך כי עֲנִיתָנִי - they are supposed to realize and acknowledge that enduring the affliction is what brought forth their *yeshuah*. And their ultimate *avodah* is to thank Hashem (אודך) at the time of the affliction (עֲנִיתָנִי), before they see the *yeshuah*! May we all be *zoiche* to internalize these messages of the *nega'im*, to understand that, ultimately, all *nisayonos* not only represent צדקתך כהררי א-ל. In preparation for the upcoming Yom Tov of Pesach, I will also try to internalize the message, that everything that happened to Klal Yisroel in the *midbar* (and by extension, all the twists and turns of my own life) were only *nisayonos*, designed to strengthen their bitachon and prepare them for kabalas haTorah.