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# A WAR DIARY

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מלחמת שמיני עצרת תשפ"ד



## Introduction

The year תשפ"ד really began on Shmini Atzeres (October 7<sup>th</sup>) and has been a year of tragedy and triumph for all of us. The shock and sadness over the events of that day and ever since, the terrible deaths of both hostages and soldiers. The destruction of a wide swath of Eretz Yisrael and displacement of a large portion of the population. I "publish" this as we reach the one year anniversary, the Yahrzeit , of that terrible event.

There have been amazing moments of open miracles, incredible גבורה heroism displayed and expressed as never before and the understanding that we are at a momentous crossroads in history.

On a personal level it has been difficult. I have had two kids serving in support roles in the army since the very beginning, and Talmidim and friends serving in combat.

When I wrote the first of these emails, I wanted to share the communal shock and anguish we were all feeling, and try and give some perspective, if possible, but maybe, more importantly it gave me a venue to share my feelings with people whom I care to share them with. I didn't know I would keep writing throughout the year, but the response was positive and maybe it was a way for me to cope as well, by sharing some very deep feelings about the situation. Later I heard about a Sefer Zikaron of the Chasam Sofer written during Napoleon's siege of Pressburg in 1809, describing the miraculous fate of the Jewish population of Pressburg, and it added inspiration to me to write as well.

At the very beginning of the war, I cried quite a bit, and throughout during shiurim and conversations about the war I continue to do so. One of the things I have tried to share is the amazing importance of the historical present we are now in.

The Navi tells us in the Haftara of Shabbos Hagadol from Sefer Malachi:

אֲזַנְדַּבְרוּ יִרְאֵי יְהוָה אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּקְשַׁב יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן לְפָנָיו לְיִרְאֵי יְהוָה  
וּלְחֹשְׁבֵי שְׂמוֹ:

It is important to speak to each other. To have the conversation and through these conversations change happens, slowly, but it happens. These email essays are my effort to further these conversations. I hope they have been meaningful to you; made you think and gain perspective on what is happening to us and around us.

Thank you to all who have been reading and responding and sharing. We should be Zoche to see a true ישועה and a גאולה שלימה במהרה בימינו.

## Essay #1

כ"ג תשרי תשפ"ד

October 8, 2024

Most of you will be reading this as you finish Yom Tov, my guess is that you are already aware of the terrible news from Eretz Yisrael.

Over Simchas Torah in Yeshiva we were surprised by an air raid siren just as we were beginning davening. At first we did not think much of it, but then another and another. We were forced to move our Tefilla and Hakafos out of the Beis Medrash, which is too exposed, downstairs to the dining room where half of the room is underground. We were able to complete our Yom Tov and anxiously awaited to check the news Motzei Shabbos/Yom Tov.

When we did, we were in complete shock, our vaunted military and intelligence had a massive failure and the stories and the tragedy is overwhelming and ongoing.

**ארץ אשר יהוה אלהיך דרש אתה תמיד עיני יהוה אלהיך בה מרשית השנה ועד אחרית השנה**

*It is a land which your God looks after, on which your God always keeps an eye, from year's beginning to year's end.*

Things do not happen in Eretz Yisrael without a reason! It is heartbreaking, and awful what happened and what is still happening . Today Shuls are open with people learning all day, Yeshivas, including Derech Etz Chaim are canceling Bein HaZmanim and beginning the Zman immediately. Thousands of Israelis are trying to get back into the country to be part of the general call up (including one of my children who went out of the country for Sukkot) . I have two children who are called up (in support roles) and we have numerous Talmidim here in Israel who are in rocket fire range. One who is a doctor in the hospital that is taking in the casualties. We have many friends and several

Talmidim who have been called up to the army some going to Gaza others up north to Lebanon.

This is not a simple situation. We begin תשפ"ד feeling very very vulnerable. And that is clearly what הקב"ה wants us to feel. Your Tefillos and learning are more important now in this time of great need for Klal Yisrael then ever .

We should hear בשורות טובות

## Essay #2

October 10, 2024

כ"ה תשרי תשפ"ד

Following my initial email after Yom Tov I received a very large amount of heartwarming messages. Thank you for having all of us in your thoughts.

I think everyone's main question always is "How are you doing and how is the Yeshiva doing?"

To answer the second question first, those of our Alumni receiving this email who were here through all the various crises of the last 25 years, wars, Covid, etc, know how special a time it is in Yeshiva during "Crises mode". The Tefillas are a bit more intense, the learning is special, the time spent together comforting. We had to preemptively start the Zman early (yesterday) and keep everyone in Yeshiva. Neighborhood Alumni and others are joining the Beis Medrash . We have safe areas when sirens interrupt our day, but B"H no rockets have actually reached Yerushalayim, though from our Har Nof lookout we get quite a fireworks show at night.

How am I doing? I think like most of us in Israel it is a very emotional time. On the one hand great concern, not only on a local level but as the Rambam says:

רמב"ם הלכות תעניות פרק א  
ודבר זה מדרכי התשובה הוא, שבזמן שתבוא צרה ויזעקו עליה ויריעו ידעו הכל שבגלל  
מעשיהם הרעים הורע להן ככתוב עונותיכם הטו וגו', וזה הוא שיגרום להם להסיר הצרה  
מעליהם .  
הלכה ג

**אבל אם לא יזעקו ולא יריעו אלא יאמרו דבר זה ממנהג העולם אירע לנו וצרה זו נקרה  
נקרית, הרי זו דרך אכזריות וגורמת להם להדבק במעשיהם הרעים, ותוסיף הצרה צרות  
אחרות, הוא שכתוב בתורה +ויקרא כ"ו+ והלכתם עמי בקרי והלכתי עמכם בחמת קרי, כלומר  
כשאביא עליכם צרה כדי שתשובו אם תאמרו שהוא קרי אוסיף לכם חמת אותו קרי .**

*This practice is one of the paths of repentance, for when a difficulty arises, and the people cry out [to God] and sound the trumpets, everyone will realize that [the difficulty] occurred because of their evil conduct, as [Jeremiah 5:25] states: "Your sins have turned away [the rains and the harvest climate]." This [realization] will cause the removal of this difficulty.*

*Conversely, **should the people fail to cry out [to God] and sound the trumpets, and instead say, "What has happened to us is merely a natural phenomenon and this difficulty is merely a chance occurrence," this is a cruel conception of things, which causes them to remain attached to their wicked deeds. Thus, this time of distress will lead to further distresses.***

*This is implied by the Torah's statement [Leviticus 26:27-28]: "If you remain indifferent to Me, I will be indifferent to you with a vengeance." The implication*

*of the verse is: When I bring difficulties upon you so that you shall repent and you say it is a chance occurrence, I will add to your [punishment] an expression of vengeance for that indifference [to Divine Providence].*

It is a very contemplative time , one to look for real Teshuva and realize this צרה is a response to Klal Yisrael's state.

At the same time, we hear daily of the tremendous acts of גבורה and goodwill that are going on in Eretz Yisrael that are very moving. Amazing people and an amazing country. The thousands of Israelis pouring into the country to join their units. The tremendous Emunah in the נצחיות of עם ישראל. Every story brings me ממש to tears. There is no place I want to be more than right here right now.

One last message to the Derech Etz Chaim family. We have five Talmidim in active duty near Gaza and on the Lebanon border. I worry about them every moment of every day. Please put them in your Tefilos. We have tens of Derech Etz Chaim families in the south and areas where the rockets are landing and causing damage and harm. This is your family, please daven for them to stay safe.

It is a time for at the very least to begin דרכי תשובה . Daven more and better. Learn more and better. Be a better person. Be a better person to others.

Wishing all בשורות טובות בקרוב

## Essay #3

### Bereishis

October 17, 2023

ב' מרחשון תשפ"ד

We are now more than 10 days into the war and more than a week removed from the terrible tragedy that occurred on Shmini Atzeres. While we wait for the army to invade Gaza, and with nothing else to report, the news here has documented every detail of every single horrific event of that day and has also reported in great detail the tremendous heroism, so that more and more details are known while we wait and wait not knowing when and what is going to happen next. In the meanwhile, as much as the world is officially supporting Israel the level of antisemitism in the street and the changing of the narrative around the world is growing every day.

The Yeshiva is still learning, Talmidim are still working on their Torah learning and personal growth, but we have also taken time to get involved on whatever level possible with the many volunteer opportunities available. This week, time was spent making Tzitzis for soldiers and putting together baked goods to send to the troops. We also began an online Hilchos Teshuva Shiur which was nicely attended by Talmidim dating back over 20 years. I look forward to next Sunday!

In the midst of all this I was Zoche to have a grandson, born Erev Shabbos which gave us the opportunity to be together with Talmidim and Rebbeim, Friday night for the Shalom Zachor and to inject some good news, and some time together into the world at a very dark time.

It also led me to think of something that I wish to share with you.

Parshas Bereishis begins with the well-known Rashi

רש"י בראשית פרק א פסוק א  
בראשית - אמר רבי יצחק לא היה צריך להתחילא [את] התורה אלא מהחודש הזה לכם,  
ומה טעם פתח בבראשית, משום (תהלים קיא), שהיא מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו בה [ישראל  
(ו) כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים, שאם יאמרו אומות העולם לישראל לסטים  
אתם, שכבשתם ארצות שבעה גוים, הם אומרים להם כל הארץ של הקדוש ברוך הוא  
היא, הוא בראה ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו, ברצונו נתנה להם וברצונו נטלה מהם ונתנה  
לנו

***What is the reason, then, that it commences with the account of the Creation? Because of the thought expressed in the text (Psalms 111:6) "He declared to His people the strength of His works (i.e. He gave an account of the work of Creation), in order that He might give them the heritage of the nations." For should the peoples of the world say to Israel, "You are***

***robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan”, Israel may reply to them, “All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased. When He willed He gave it to them, and when He willed He took it from them and ”gave it to us***

There are two striking things from that Rashi. We have spoken in the past about how the initial Bereishis is ultimately expressed in Klal Yisrael living in Eretz Yisrael. But the other message of that Rashi, is that it is built into the Torah that there will always be those who will fight our claim to Eretz Yisrael, and we will always have to fight for that claim.

Just two weeks ago on Chol Hamoed Sukkos I took part in a guided trip, coordinated with the army, to the other side of the security fence on the northern border of Israel, next to Lebanon to Har Dov (that is where the present fighting in Northern Israel is taking place). Har Dov has a tradition (I do not know if it is reliable) as the place of the **הקב"ה** the place where promised Avraham Avinu and us Eretz Yisrael.

In the Hagada Shel Pesach in Maggid we discuss the ברית and we say:

עומדים **והיא** שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו ולא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לכלותינו אלא שבכל דור ודור עלינו לכלותינו והקב"ה מצילנו מידם

The **והיא** refers to the ברית so that it is built in that the ברית has to include being saved over and over from destruction, meaning the attempts to destroy us are built into that Bris as well.

Part of the promise and challenge of that Bris is the development of Klal Yisrael throughout all of the Galuyos that we traverse in terms of gaining more and more of our identity of Yisrael. Every one of the crises we go through on the way towards that ultimate identity, are meant to allow for growth and change within Yisrael.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יד עמוד א  
ויסר המלך את טבעתו אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא: גדולה הסרת טבעת יותר מארבעים ושמונה נביאים ושבע נביאות שנתנבאו להן לישראל, שכולן לא החזירום למוטב, ואילו הסרת הטבעת החזירתן למוטב .

*The verse states“ :And the king removed his ring from his hand” (Esther 3:10) .  
Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: The removal of Ahasuerus’s ring for the sealing of Haman’s decree was more effective than the forty-eight prophets and the seven prophetesses who prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people. As, they were all unable to return the Jewish people to the right way, but the removal of Ahasuerus’s ring returned them to the right way ,since it brought them to repentance.*



Here in Israel there is a clear Teshuva having been done, an amazing paradigm shift being communally experienced and shared with all those living here. If felt very much like:

ואילו הסרת הטבעת החזירתן למוטב

It is clear to everyone. It has been reported on the news! Talked about and written about in endless articles. The strong sense of identity of Yisrael is clear, both among religiously observant and non-observant jews. The identity of Yisrael is strong and the commonality and values of Yisrael is strongly present and the connection to the land being expressed in the thousands who got on over-packed planes and came home. (Maybe the only country in the world that every runs to during war). In many ways it makes the situation here more bearable. More understandable.

Outside of Israel the focus has been Israel in so many incredible ways, but what that has done is not given room necessarily for internal contemplation of what paradigm Teshuva needs to address right now. I have had a number of conversations with Talmidim who are frustrated and feel lost. How does one focus on Teshuva? How do I not "just move on" from the greatest tragedy of the Jewish people since the Holocaust. How do I not "just" stand on the sideline and root for the good guys.

I do not have a great answer. What advice I can give each person on a personal level is to examine their life and make sure that they are living it based on values not on circumstances. How will that effect the Klal?

The Navi tells us

מלאכי פרק ג:ט"ז  
אֲז נִדְבְּרוּ יִרְאֵי יְקֹוֹק אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּקְשֹׁב יְקֹוֹק וַיִּשְׁמַע וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זְכוֹרֹן לְפָנָיו לְיִרְאֵי יְקֹוֹק  
וּלְחֹשְׁבֵי שְׁמוֹ

*In this vein have those who revere GOD been talking to one another. GOD has heard and noted it, and a scroll of remembrance has been written at God's behest concerning those who revere GOD and esteem the holy name.*

Simple conversations, serious conversations can change the world.

We should have a week of בשורות טובות

## Essay #4

### The War of Words

October 25, 2023

“ מרחשון תשפ”ד

Since my last email I was Zoche to have the Bris of my newest grandson Eliyahu Nechemiah in the Yeshiva this past Friday. It was an interesting experience having two of my children, as well as some of the guests, come in uniform directly from their base. (and return to base for Shabbos) I think everyone enjoyed the break of a Simcha amongst the tension of the past weeks .

We also have met twice on-line for our new Hilchos Teshuva shiur, it is great learning with everyone every Sunday. If you want to be added to the Whatsapp group and get the link for the 8:45 AM EST Sunday morning shiur let me know.

The Yeshiva keeps the learning going, our Kollel has grown and B”H the Beis Medrash is doing its part. A number of DEC Alumni have joined the Beis Medrash throughout the day as they are working from home or university is suspended. The Yeshiva’s Talmidim went to volunteer at Hadassah hospital with Rav Mendel this week, as well as preparing meals and special Shabbos treats for families moved away from Southern Israel into temporary hotels in Yerushalayim. There are so many opportunities for Chesed in this difficult time we are trying to give the Talmidim the opportunity to do their part.

We are now several weeks into the war and as steadfast as the governments of the world have stayed with Israel, the tide in terms of the media and the protest rallies, and antisemitism etc. have begun, and we have not even begun the inevitable and necessary ground incursion into Gaza. I am sure it is a very mutual emotion we all share of “what are we waiting for”. Certainly the army is ready to go, the country is ready to go, the waiting is the hardest thing even though we know how dangerous it is going to be.

(Many of the ideas I share with you are garnered from conversations and learning with others, please be aware I cannot always give the proper attributions)

In last weeks Haftara it says:

ישעיהו פרק נד:ט”ז

הן הִנֵּה אֲנִי בְּרֵאתִי חֶרֶשׁ נֹפֵחַ בְּאֵשׁ פָּחַם וּמוֹצִיא כְּלִי לְמַעֲשֵׂהוּ וְאֲנִי בְּרֵאתִי מִשְׁחִית לְחַבְּל:

*It is I who created the smith, to fan the charcoal fire, and produce tools for each purpose; So it is I who create, the instruments of havoc (the מחבלים- terrorists)*

(ז) כָּל־כְּלִי יוֹצֵר עָלַיךָ לֹא יִצְלַח וְכָל־לְשׁוֹן תְּקוּמֵי־אַתָּךְ לְמִשְׁפָּט תִּרְשָׁעִי זֹאת נִחְלַת עַבְדִּי יְקִיָּקָה וְצִדְקָתָם מֵאֵתִי נְאֻם־יְקִיָּקָה: ס

*No weapon formed against you Shall succeed, **And every tongue that contends with you you shall defeat.** Such is the lot of GOD's servants, Such their triumph through Me –declares GOD.*

We tend to view the propaganda war. The war on the narrative, as being solely supportive of the "real" war on the ground with the troops, but the Navi tells us that an aspect of that war, of what we are fighting and what we are fighting for is כָּל־לְשׁוֹן תְּקוּמֵי־אַתָּךְ לְמִשְׁפָּט , literally those who will bring us to court (the Hague) is a war in itself. One we must fight and must win, just as much as the battle on the ground with weapons.

The reason this is true is that the fight Yisrael must fight, and it is always fighting, is not "only" to protect ourselves physically from our enemies. Every war of Yisrael, is one where we are the side of truth fighting the side of evil.

The origin of "Evil", the eating from the Etz HaDas as explained by the Rambam that the טוב ורע is the ability to bring into the world a subjective reality disconnected from ultimate truth **to the point that רע can be considered good!**

The fight over the narrative is just as much the purpose of the war Yisrael must be ready to fight. Yisrael does not just fight wars to protect ourselves, we fight for GOOD, for TRUTH. This is even recognized to some extent by those supporting Israel. There is an understanding, a necessary understanding, that this is a war of GOOD vs EVIL and therefore we must win.

Consider this in our own lives. Can we live this way? Do we look at our place in the world this way?

B'Ezras Hashem we will be successful, and in being so, bring us closer to ultimate Geula .

We should hear only בשורות טובות

## Essay #5

### Mutuality and Malchus

October 27, 2023

י"ב מרחשון תשפ"ד

Yesterday I was speaking with a DEC Talmid in the US, and it became clear to me that what is going on in Israel right now is not completely comprehended by those of you not here. So, I want to share a story from yesterday to try and give you a sense.

According to this morning's paper there are 125,000 people removed from their homes in the north and south of Israel, basically 125,000 refugees!

My wife saw on a Whatsapp group that there are empty apartments that are being made available to these refugees, but they need furniture. We happened to be getting rid of a high riser which they happily picked up. We also advertised on a group that we had a refrigerator to give away. Almost immediately we were contacted by a group of soldiers who required a fridge on their make shift base, and they would happily come and pick it up. My wife then broadcast that these soldiers were coming, and if anyone had food or other stuff that they wanted to send for Shabbos they could drop it off. We were immediately inundated with baked goods to go with the fridge to the soldiers.

Yesterday a woman reached out to my wife that they are from the Yishuv Naveh, a Yishuv in the south not far from Aza that was evacuated (they B"H were not directly attacked but did spend 48 hours in a safe room until the army evacuated them in armored vehicles via the Egyptian border), they are presently being housed in the Shalom Hotel in Bayit Vegan (if anyone is familiar with it, it is not a very fancy place) and they do not have a refrigerator even to have milk for their children throughout the day! She wanted to know if the refrigerator was still available. Being as we had already promised ours away to the soldiers, we started calling around to see if anyone else had one. We did not find one so we just decided to go to the appliance store and purchase one for them (not a big expense only 925 shekel). In the store the conversation came around to why we were buying it and when we told them, everyone in the store starts asking if they can pitch in for the purchase!

We delivered the refrigerator to the hotel, and needless to say they were very thankful, but oddly, I found myself thanking them. There are hundreds of families in essentially a refugee camp called the Shalom Hotel. They are there with all their children and have no idea when they will be able to go back to

their homes. As we were standing there in front of the hotel, cars one after the other were pulling up to bring things for the families. These refugees are from families with many many children.

We are familiar with the Chazal in Rus, יותר ממה שהבעל הבית עושה לעני העני , עושה לבעל הבית , "more than the Baal HaBayit does for the poor person the poor person does for the Baal Habayit". That idea is an expression of the mutuality of Klal Yisrael, that ultimately is expressed in Malchus, when the body of Yisrael acts as one organism.

I totally experienced that yesterday. Not just the good feeling of giving, but they literally were doing me a favor allowing me this opportunity to give them something and participate.

The conversation with this Talmid began, and I realized his lack of understanding, because he asked how the football team was doing. You want to know how they are doing? Go to this web site , those of you who remember Gidon, Moshe Shear and Bucky will be proud of them.

<https://www.soldierssavealives.org/about-2>

<https://www.soldierssavealives.org/gidon-hazon-yon-fox-news>

Rav Asher drove up north to the Golan last night to deliver beef jerky and other Shabbos food to soldiers getting a Shabbos away from the front lines but still up north (sorry Yishai he didn't go farther than Natur). Today we are sending platters from the Yeshiva to hotels with refugee families (thank you to the sponsors).

Signs all over Israel say

### **בעזרת ה' יחד ננצח**

It is not just a nice slogan, the נצח ישראל is pounding every minute here. The feeling of one, of mutuality, has never been stronger than it is right now, which is amazing after what we were going through the last five years here in Israel.

Have a wonderful Shabbos - I wish you were here! You are really missing out

## Essay #6

### The Rambam on War

November 1, 2023

י"ז מרחשון תשפ"ד

I write this having just returned from the Levaya of סמ"ר לביא לפשי ז"ל at Har Herzl. He was one of the sixteen soldiers who were killed in the battles ongoing in Gaza.

As a Kohen, I do not often attend Levayas, but if I could go to all of the soldiers Levayas I would. They gave their life in order for me and my family to be able to live in Eretz Yisrael, it is the least I can do in return. Also, because as will be clear by the end of this email, the incredible Chashivus of those who fight for Yisrael.

Har Herzl is usually about a 5 minute drive from the Yeshiva , so I left accordingly, I did not take into account that thousands of other people would feel as I did. The Levaya was massive, every type of person, old, young, with black hats, not religious, everyone who could come did. Unfortunately, I do not think it will be the last one I will be attending.

I want to share something I was preparing for a shiur on the Rambam and war and dedicate and make this Dvar Torah L'iluy Nishmas the 16 soldiers who have given their lives. Halevai they should be the last casualties.

(I ask that you bear with me, I had prepared this for a shiur so it is not short. I mention as I have in the past that not all ideas are my own but it is difficult to attribute where each idea comes from.)

The Rambam gives an incredible insight into war in Hilchos Melachim

רמב"ם הלכות מלכים פרק ז הלכה טו

מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב כמשמעו, שאין בלבו כח לעמוד בקשרי המלחמה, ומאחר שיכנס בקשרי המלחמה ישען על מקוה ישראל ומושיעו בעת צרה וידע שעל יחוד השם הוא עושה מלחמה וישים נפשו בכפו ולא יירא ולא יפחד ולא יחשוב לא באשתו ולא בבניו אלא ימחה זכרונם מלבו ויפנה מכל דבר למלחמה, וכל המתחיל לחשוב ולהרהר במלחמה ומבהיל עצמו עובר בלא תעשה, שנאמר אל ירך לבבכם אל תיראו ואל תחפזו ואל תערצו מפניהם, ולא עוד אלא שכל דמי ישראל תלויין בצוארו, ואם לא נצח ולא עשה מלחמה בכל לבו ובכל נפשו, הרי זה כמי ששפך דמי הכל, שנאמר ולא ימס את לבב אחיו כלבבו, והרי מפורש בקבלה ארור עושה מלאכת ה' רמיה וארור מונע חרבו מדם, וכל הנלחם בכל לבו בלא פחד ותהיה כוונתו לקדש את השם בלבד, מובטח לו שלא ימצא נזק ולא תגיעהו רעה, ויבנה לו בית נכון בישראל ויזכה לו ולבניו עד עולם ויזכה לחיי העולם הבא, שנאמר כי עשה יעשה ה' לאדוני בית נאמן

כי מלחמות ה' אדוני נלחם ורעה לא תמצא בך וגו' והיתה נפש אדוני צרורה בצרור החיים את ה' אלהיך.

*To whom does the phrase 'Is there a man who is afraid or faint-hearted?' refer? The phrase should be interpreted simply, as applying to a person whose heart is not brave enough to stand in the throes of battle.*

*Once a soldier enters the throes of battle, he should rely on the Hope of Israel and their Savior in times of need. He should realize that he is fighting for the sake of the oneness of God's Name. Therefore, he should place his soul in his hand and not show fright or fear.*

*He should not worry about his wife or children. On the contrary, he should wipe their memory from his heart, removing all thoughts from his mind except the war.*

*Anyone who begins to feel anxious and worry in the midst of battle to the point where he frightens himself violates a negative commandment, as it is written (Deuteronomy 20:3 : 'Do not be faint-hearted. Do not be afraid. Do not panic and do not break ranks before them'.*

*Furthermore, he is responsible for the blood of the entire Jewish nation. If he is not valiant, if he does not wage war with all his heart and soul, it is considered as if he shed the blood of the entire people, as ibid 20:8 states: 'Let him go home, lest he demoralize the hearts of his brethren like his own.' Similarly, the prophetic tradition explicitly states: 'Cursed be he who does God's work deceitfully. Cursed be he who withholds his sword from blood.' Jeremiah 48:10*

*In contrast, anyone who fights with his entire heart, without fear, with the intention of sanctifying God's name alone, can be assured that he will find no harm, nor will bad overtake him. He will be granted a proper family in Israel and gather merit for himself and his children forever. He will also merit eternal life in the world to come as I Samuel 25:28-29 states: 'God will certainly make my lord a faithful house, for my lord fights the wars of God and evil will not be found with you... and my lord's soul will be bound in a bond of life with God'.*

The Rambam begins by quoting the Pasuk: מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב

That Pasuk is actually the closing description of what happens to someone who is terrified of war. The Rambam brings that Pasuk, to a degree out of context. He essentially asks "What does that mean" or "in terms of what?" The Rambam says It means exactly what it says. **כמשמעו**, המלחמה בקשרי

He is feint hearted, he does not have the inner strength to stand in the wrestling of war, the direct contact in the war, The Rambam continues: ומאחר שיכנס בקשרי המלחמה once he has actually gotten into the actual fight of the war, ישען על מקוה ישראל he must depend on that which represents the hope of Yisrael, the Mikva to be מטהר Yisrael, ומושיעו בעת צרה, and he who saves Yisrael בעת צרה .

and he must know that he is fighting for the 'יחוד השם הוא עושה מלחמה and he must know that he is fighting for the 'יחוד that is what he is fighting about.

and he should take his life in his hands and offer it, ולא יירא ולא ולא יפחד no fear no terror, ולא יחשוב לא באשתו ולא בבניו he should not spend a moment thinking about his wife and his children

Extremely harsh language, do to the memory of our wife and children what we do to Amalek, wipe out thoughts of your wife and your children, turn aside from any thoughts whatsoever other than war, and anyone who starts thinking about other things, worrying about other things, ומבהיל עצמו and makes himself terrified **he is עובר on a לא תעשה** as it says **אל שנאמר אל לא תעשה** . ירך לבבכם אל תיראו ואל תחפזו ואל תערצו מפניהם

You normally would have read those Pesukim to be assurances that you have nothing to fear. **The Rambam says it is not just assurances, it is a לא תעשה you cannot have those thoughts.**

Not only that but if you do have such thoughts, ולא עוד the blood of the entire nation is on this one soldier's neck, ואם לא נצח ולא עשה מלחמה בכל לבו ובכל נפשו, הרי זה כמי ששפך דמי הכל , if he doesn't put in everything needed to win, and he doesn't throw his entire heart and life into that war, it is as if he murdered the entire country.

he should not melt other people the way he has melted.

As we know in the Navi , cursed is he who does G-d's work without his full belief , and cursed be he who doesn't pull the trigger. Who doesn't get his sword covered with blood.

and anybody who throws himself into a battle with his entire heart, without any fear and all he wants on a personal level is, his drive is: לקדש את השם בלבד

**He is guaranteed, nothing can happen to him.** No damage, no evil can touch him. he will build a absolutely wonderful home in Yisrael, and he will be Zocheh not only for himself but also for his children forever, ויזכה לו ולבניו עד עולם

**and he is guaranteed Olam Habah. How do we know this?:**



שנאמר כי עשה יעשה ה' לאדוני בית נאמן כי מלחמות ה' אדוני נלחם ורעה לא תמצא בך וגו'  
והיתה נפש אדוני צרורה בצרור החיים את ה' אלהיך

Avigail said this to Dovid HaMelech. "HKB"H has his wars, and my master Dovid is waging these wars, therefore no evil can be found in you etc."

This sounds like a near impossible call, for bravery on an unreasonable level of responsibility for every individual for all? דם כל ישראל עליו , and the most incredibly harsh language of how you are supposed to look at your own affairs? Is this indeed the meaning of the Rambam?

Lets look at the context, and how unbelievably powerful his words are and how they affect every one of us whether you are at the front lines or you are behind the lines.

First the context, the words the Rambam is talking about, come as an unbelievable contrast to the point of being incredulous, to the other introductory Pesukim, to the **מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב** where the Torah says:

דברים פרק כ

וּמִי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־נָטַע כָּרְם וְלֹא חָלְלוּ יְלָךְ וַיָּשֶׁב לְבֵיתוֹ פֶּן־יָמוּת בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְאִישׁ אַחֵר יַחְלְלֵנוּ:

וּמִי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אַרְשׁ אֶשָׁה וְלֹא לָקְחָהּ יְלָךְ וַיָּשֶׁב לְבֵיתוֹ פֶּן־יָמוּת בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְאִישׁ אַחֵר יִקְחֶנָּה:

וַיִּסְפוּ הַשְּׁטָרִים לְדַבֵּר אֶל־הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ מִי־הָאִישׁ הַיָּרֵא וְרֹךְ הַלֵּבֵב יְלָךְ וַיָּשֶׁב לְבֵיתוֹ וְלֹא יָמָס אֶת־לֵבֵב אָחִיו כָּל־בָּבוּ

If you just built a new house you can't go out to war, why? What happens if something happens to you in the war? What do you mean what happens? Rashi says

רש"י דברים פרק כ

**ודבר של עגמת נפשת הוא זה -ואיש אחר יחנכנו**

**That would be sad.**

We were talking about wiping out the memory of your wife and children and we are worried that if you built a house and someone else moved in that would be sad?! And if you planted a new vineyard etc.

Also the entire Parsha that introduces this speech by the **משוח מלחמה** to the troops is all about a tremendous commitment to life. It comes in the context of **בל תשחית**

דברים פרק כ

(יט) כִּי־תָצוּר אֶל־עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְּסָהּ לֹא־תִשְׁחִית אֶת־עֵצֶיהָ לְנֹדֶם עָלֶיךָ גְּרָזוּן  
כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל וְאֵתוֹ לֹא תִכְרֹת כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה לְבֹא מִפְּנֵיךָ בַּמָּצוֹר

*When in your war against a city and you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city?*

The Torah says, “just because you at war and killing thousands of people you think you have a reason to tear down trees?!”

What's more is the Rambam quotes a Pasuk at the beginning of the Halacha which is a reason not to go to war. It is not how to act in war! The Torah is saying if you are this way “don't go to war!”.

דברים פרק כ

מִי־הָאִישׁ הַיָּרֵא וְרַךְ הַלֵּבב יֵלֶךְ וְיָשֹׁב לְבֵיתוֹ

**Go home!**

So the Rambam takes those words and turns it into “you better put your whole life into this!” He doesn't say that's what the Pasuk means, he just says “who is that guy?”. **Then the Rambam takes “who is that guy?” and tells me “Don't be that guy”.** But the whole meaning of the Pasuk in the Torah is, if you are that guy, you shouldn't be here. So what is the Rambam saying?

It appears that Rambam is saying and presenting the alternatives and **what it is that war offers**. The Rambam is saying “you know what the Torah is saying when it says מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב

**That he does not get the privilege to go to war and he is sent home.** Who is that?

Once you understand who that is המלחמה, I want you to ask yourself **is that what you are?** Is that what you want to be? Is that how you want to define your life as always halfhearted? As to coward to do what needs to be done? As inadequate? As always vacillating, irresolute, nervous, feint hearted, ineffectual, inadequate! Is this what you want to be? This is the person who doesn't go to war. Is that what you want?! The Rambam is saying, you want to know who the מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב means?

So then what the Rambam in the Halacha is really saying is, first he is spelling out the inconceivable demands that are made on a soldier, what it means to be a member of the צבא ישראל what it means to be a member of a צבא ה', **in reality he is spelling out the incredible gifts and privileges of war!**

We know that even the simplest Goy from the slums, who is put out there into a war, that person feels like the thing he is doing is the most incredible thing he could ever have done with his entire life. The "Greatest Generation". That everything that he had ever lived for could be expressed in that one moment. That it makes a difference, that he is fighting for the life of the world.

How does that happen. Says the Rambam, let me tell you what a Ben Yisrael is talking about, because it is not just "join the army and learn to be a man", **for a Ben Yisrael it is a privilege that can change us forever.** That can build our families and lives in magical ways, it is opportunities that are totally transformational that are open to all who engage, and not only to the soldier in the field, and be יבנה לו בית נכון בישראל ויזכה לו ולבניו עד עולם ויזכה לחיי העולם הבא .

**The Rambam understands the אל ירך that the Torah says not as assurances, rather he holds that is the חיוב!!**

Let us take a look at the entire issue in a broader way.

דברים פרק כ:ב

וְהָיָה פְּקֻדְבְּכֶם אֶל-הַמִּלְחָמָה וְנִגַּשׁ הַכֹּהֵן וְדַבֵּר אֶל-הָעָם

Before you join battle, the Kohen shall come forward and address the troops.

The Torah is talking about the appointing of a Kohen - a Kohen?! Who needs a מלחמה why do we need a Kohen at all? Let a General talk to the troops?! **The point over here is this is an עבודה it is something that requires a Kohen.**

פסיקתא רבתי (איש שלום) פיסקא ב - מזמור שיר חנוכת

ואף על פי שחשב לבנותו בא נתן הנביא ואמר לו לא תבנה לי הבית למה כי דמים רבים שפכת ארצה [לפני] כיון ששמע דוד נתיירא אמר הרי נפסלתי מלבנות בית המקדש אמר רבי יהודה בר אלעאי אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא דוד אל תירא חייך כך הם לפני כצבי ואיל לכך נאמר שפכת ארצה ואין ארצה אלא צבי ואיל שנאמר [הטמא והטהור יאכלנו כצבי וכאיל רק הדם לא תאכלו] על הארץ תשפכנו כמים (דברים י"ב ט"ו וט"ז). [דבר אחר] אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא חייך כל דמים ששפכת היו לפני קרבנות שכן כתיב כי דמים רבים שפכת [ארצה] לפני אמר ר"ש בן יוחאי אין לפני אלא קרבנות שנאמר ושחט את בן (ויקרא א' ה) 'הבקר לפני ה

That Medrash tells us that *נתן הנביא* comes to *דוד המלך* and tells him he cannot build the *בית המקדש* because he is a *שופך דמים*, says the Medrash that is the meaning of the *רבים שפכת* *בית כי דמים רבים שפכת* *לי*, *האתה לא תבנה לי*, so Dovid HaMelech is *נתיירא* he became terrified. Says HKB"H to him "do not fear all the blood you spilled is like a Korban before me."

War is literally an עבודה. The literal עבודה of war is the ארור of the one who doesn't want to bloody his sword.

ארור עושה מלאכת ה' רמיה וארור מונע חרבו מדם

As was told to Avraham Avinu in the first world war

בראשית פרק טו

(א) אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְבַר־יְקֹנֶק אֶל־אַבְרָם בַּמַּחְזֶה לְאמֹר אֶל־תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנִי מִגֵּן לְךָ שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד

Some time later, the word of יהוה came to Abram in a vision :“Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you;Your reward shall be very great”.

רש"י בראשית פרק טו

אחר שנעשה לו נס זה שהרג את המלכים והיה דואג ואומר שמא קבלתי שכר על כל צדקותי, לכך אמר לו המקום אל תירא אברם אנכי מגן לך מן העונש שלא תענש על כל אותן נפשות שהרגת, ומה שאתה דואג על קבול שכרך, שכרך הרבה מאד

*AFTER THESE THINGS means: after this miracle has been wrought for him in that he slew the kings and he was in great anxiety, saying, “Perhaps I have already received, in this God-given victory reward for all my good deeds” - therefore the Omnipresent said to him ,FEAR NOT ABRAM, I AM THY SHIELD against punishment: for you shall not be punished on account of all these people whom you have slain. And as for your being anxious regarding the receipt of any further reward, know that שכרך הרבה מאד THY REWARD WILL BE EXCEEDING GREAT*

**The deepest שכר , and what the Rambam is describing is war as an עבודה .**

It requires a special Kohen, it is an עבודה which goes beyond the עבודה of the קרבנות. Here is an עבודה that raises an individual life into transcendence over all the simple concerns for the rapidly passing moments of generic living. Minds that are absorbed in all sorts of fear and struggles and timidity, and struggles with success and what will people say, living unbelievably small lives.

Here in war is the description of an expanded consciousness of the enterprise of life itself.

ומאחר שיכנס בקשרי המלחמה ישען על מקוה ישראל ומושיעו בעת צרה וידע שעל יחוד השם הוא עושה מלחמה

The explosive discovery of a מלחמה which is שעל יחוד השם הוא עושה מלחמה as the pinnacle achievement of human consciousness, the experience of life in its ultimate visions of being a חיים .

והיתה נפש אדוני צרורה בצרור החיים את ה' אלהיך

Recognizing what the totality of life is about. **All the local elements of success and survival are ancillary outgrowths of that life.** That is what Avigail is saying to Dovid Hamelech. The moment we talk about 'יחוד ה' .

In order to achieve all this the Rambam says it is recognizing ישען על מקוה ישראל ומושיעו בעת צרה this is the fullest antithesis of that fear. Where does the fear of the איש הרך הלבב come from? It comes from the mistaken belief that there are things that are really ours, some sort of control that we think we have. Here is the facing of truth knowing that the things that are truly ours are never under our control!

Amalek comes to fight us in order to strip away our significance, and that was exactly what Hamas wanted to accomplish in its attack. This, what war is to a Ben Yisrael, is exactly the opposite, strip away the generic and taste the ultimate significance, the ultimate building of creation, the 'יחוד ה'. There is not a single generic personal moment in that kind of war.

I described in my last email the amazing response of an Am Yisrael acting as one, that underlying power comes exactly from this. As terrible as war is, and as terrible as this war is, nobody wants to go back to "normal". We all need to be ready to face whatever it takes, whatever pain is necessary to win this war.

## Essay #7

### A Nation Alone

November 9, 2023

כ"ה מרחשון תשפ"ד

First a quick Yeshiva update. The Sunday morning on-line Hilchos Teshuva shiur is going great! We are in the middle of the Second Perek discussing the Inyanim of Selicha U'Mechila. If you have not joined and wish to, please let me know. It takes place every Sunday morning 8:45 am EST. It is truly wonderful seeing and learning with everyone every week.

Yeshiva is going strong. The guys are learning and growing every day. A few of the boys who were initially taken home by their parents at the beginning of the war have returned. Yesterday the Yeshiva went south towards Aza to Tzomet Gilat and volunteered at a site that was set up to refresh soldiers on their way in and out of combat in Aza. <https://swordsofiron.org.il/>

The site was set up spontaneously at the very beginning of the war, hosts up to 20,000 soldiers a day and makes and serves an average of 10,000 hamburgers a day! We joined them to help support our חיילים for an afternoon. It gave us all a big Chizuk.

I want to share with you something that I know many of us are thinking about due to recent events.

Chazal Tell us

מדרש תנחומא פרשת שלח כא

שבכו העדה בליל תשעה באב, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אתם בכיתם בכייה של חנם, אני ומן אותה שעה נגזרה גזירה על בהמ"ק ליחרב, אקבע לכם לילה הזה בכייה לדורות ושיגלו בני ישראל לבין האומות

*Because the congregation wept in the night of the ninth of Av, the Holy One has said: You have wept for nothing. I shall establish this night for you as a night of weeping for future generations, and from that hour a decree on the Temple was ordained for it to be destroyed and that the children of Israel would go in exile among the nations.*

The state of Aveilus that Yisrael lives with on Tisha Ba'Av and more recently, is the opposite of a life of חנם which I will translate for now as meaninglessness, but comes from the word for free, or what we often mistake for freedom.

Recently, what has come as an immense shock to all of us, is the sudden discovery, that there exists in the world the desire for the exact opposite. A completely unadulterated חנם. The most recent development in the momentous events that we are experiencing, is the great, horrifying and frustrating shock of discovering the depth of the visceral hatred of Yisrael . It is absolutely shocking! Intelligent people all over the globe realize this is not normal. This is not normal racism, it is not “I don’t like blacks, I don’t like Jews” it is nothing like that, **it is not old fashion antisemitism**. Everywhere commentators are attempting to understand what it is really about, and they have no idea. This is something that is so visceral, instinctive **and it is anti-rational** and it is difficult to identify it precisely, because it is an underpinning for what was once thought of as racism.

Why should we care about the reason for the hate? I think this has been an incredible experience for many. The very shock of discovering that the people you work with loath you, and that the Ivy League that one once thought of as enlightened, is actually part of the darkest blot on human civilization, those who thought that the leftist ideologies would set you free, are nothing but flights of absurd fancy, it imprisons your ability to think and even to survive! That needs to be appreciated as an incredible and wonderful event.

The Navi Yechezkel tells us:

יחזקאל פרק כ  
 (לב) וְהֵעֵלָה עַל־רוּחְכֶם הִיוּ לֹא תִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים נְהִיָּה כַּגּוֹיִם כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָרְצוֹת  
 לְשֵׁרֵת עֵץ וְאֶבֶן  
 : (לג) חִי־אֲנִי נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְקֹוֹק אִם־לֹא בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזִרְעֵ נְטִיָּה וּבְחִמָּה שְׁפוּכָה אֶמְלוֹךְ עֲלֵיכֶם  
 : (לד) וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָעַמִּים וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָאָרְצוֹת אֲשֶׁר נְפֹצְתֶם בָּם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה  
 וּבְזִרְעֵ נְטִיָּה וּבְחִמָּה שְׁפוּכָה  
 : (לה) וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־מַדְבַּר הָעַמִּים וְנִשְׁפַּטְתִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁם פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים  
 : (לו) כְּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁפַּטְתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּמַדְבַּר אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כִּן אֲשַׁפֵּט אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְקֹוֹק  
 : (לז) וְהִעֲבַרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם תַּחַת הַשָּׁבֶט וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּמִסְרֵת הַבְּרִית

*And that which comes into your mind shall never come about, that you say, **We will be like the nations, like the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.***

*As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with anger poured out, will I be king over you:*

*and I will bring you out from the peoples and will gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with anger poured out.*

*And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will remonstrate with you face to face.*

*As I remonstrated with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Mizrayim, so will I remonstrate with you, says the Lord God*

*And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the discipline of the covenant:*

The Navi is saying that in our response to wanting to be like the Goyim, HKB"Y will drag us back into the Bris!

This desire to be like all of the גויים, even amongst the Frum, there is a need in the back of the minds of all to be even a little bit like the גויים. To be accepted. To wear our baseball caps, and hair coverings, and eat (glatt kosher) hot dogs at football games. To be American! That says the Navi הקב"ה will not allow! We will always be drawn back to the ברית.

Even in the origins of the State of Israel was the idea that once we are a "normal" independent nation Jews will be accepted. **What they did not take into account was that the renewed idea of Yisrael as opposed to Jews, was itself going to be a thorn in the nation's eyes.**

בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת לך לך פרשה מב

ר' עזריה בשם רבי יהודה בשם ר' סימון שהמרה פנים באברהם בשעה שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לאברהם לימול הלך ונמלך בג' אוהביו, אמר לו ענר כבר בן ק' שנה אתה ואתה הולך אמר לו, אמר לו אשכול מה את הולך ומסיים את עצמך בין שונאך, ומצער את עצמך ממרא אלהיך שעמד לך בכבשן האש ובמלכים וברעבון והדבר הזה שאמר לך למול אין אתה שומע לו, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אתה נתת לו עצה למול חייך שאיני נגלה עליו לא בפלטיין של ענר, ולא בפלטיין של אשכול, אלא בפלטיין שלך הה"ד (בראשית יח) וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא.

*Rabbi Azarya in the name of Rabbi Yehuda in the name of Rabbi Simon: It is because he was brazen-faced regarding Abraham. When the Holy One blessed be He told Abraham to circumcise himself, he went and consulted with his three friends. Aner said to him: 'You are already one hundred years old and you are going to bring pain upon yourself?' Eshkol said to him: 'What, are you going to put an end to yourself in the midst of your enemies?' Mamre said to him: '[This is] your God who stood by you [during your ordeal] in the fiery furnace, and during [your war with] the kings, and during the famine, and in this matter that He has said to you, to circumcise yourself, you do not heed Him?' The Holy One blessed be He said to him: 'You gave him counsel to circumcise himself; by your life, I will not appear to him in Aner's palace, nor in Eshkol's palace, but only in your palace.' That is what is written: "The Lord appeared to him in the palace of Mamre"*

What was being said to Avraham Avinu by Eshkol was not because of some physical mark he was putting on himself. In fact who would see it?! **ברית This makes you by definition the "OTHER".**

אדם אתם, אתם קרויין אדם, ואין העובדי כוכבים קרויין אדם



**“And you My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are men] adam ”[Ezekiel 34:31), from which it is derived that you ,the Jewish people ,are called men] adam [but gentiles are not called men] adam.**

The idea of

**הַיְדָרְעָם לְבַדָּד יֵשְׁכֵן וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב**

*It is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.*

גויים sense in us an alien mind that thinks less of them. An alien mind and a people that have a different level of what it means to live. We experience life in a way that makes them feel like a lesser נברא. Avraham Avinu and Bris Mila make you different, the truth is that it is deeply profound and deeply true.

There is a flip side that we have been seeing as well. An incredible need by those who are sane to speak out on behalf of Yisrael. In Israel there has been a phenomenon of גרות , people who want to be מגייר especially in the army, those who if they die now want to do so as a Ben Yisrael. Those people want to be connected to a deeper level of humanity. It is after the Bris Milah that ultimately Avraham becomes the אב המון גויים . Now humanity can connect to being human on its ultimately level.

Our deep hunger to be part of the broader world, to be exactly what the Navi Yechezkel is talking about, to be ככל הגוים on some level, is our wish to be open to their love and to keep the pool of experience open. It is exciting and meaningful to all of us, the drive for just enough חינוך to be able to feel good. To escape and hide from the tension of being in Eretz Yisrael and being a Ben Yisrael where only reality matters. Running away gives me a taste of what it is like to be part of an open world.

In the Torah, the initial definition of the nature of war is with Moav because of what they did with the Bnos Moav. **Yisrael is meant to be different. To have a different mind and different consciousness and live a different life.** Many of the mistakes Yisrael has made over the past 75 years have been because of our need for the “love” of the Goyim. Yes there were diplomatic and political reasons, but Oslo, withdrawal from Gaza , our inability to fight Hamas even though they were lobbing missiles at us regularly, to some extent came from our need to be loved by the Umos HaOlam . We, and I mean both those of us living in Israel and those not, were not really ready to fight. We were not ready to conquer a land that we know is ours. Now we are, and that is one of the major changes that has taken place since Shmini Atzeres. (By the way, I am not sure the political leadership is as ready as the nation is.)

What we are looking at in these anti Yisrael rallies is **the desire and ability to discover the ultimate חינוך**. The hatred of Yisrael is not שנאת חינוך, this is the

hatred with the most basis! It is the mirror image of what Yisrael is fighting for. Nobody wants to view the world the way Yisrael does.

There is an opportunity here for us. Knowing yourself better, recognizing and realizing they hate you for the ultimate reason. This is not something to frustrate you or to be shocked at, **this is the clarity of the recognition of the העולם of your value in a way that we are just beginning to perceive.** Knowing that experience of that hatred is a direct experiencing of אדם אתם , that is why it is so difficult to be explained, that is why it seems to be so visceral and so sinister.

This War began on Shmini Atzeres (and would be more correctly called the Shmini Atzeres War not the Simchas Torah war) Amazingly the Medrash says this is what עשרת ימי תשובה is all about.

במדבר רבה (וילנא) פרשת פינחס פרשה כא

ביום השמיני עשרת ימי תשובה (תהלים קט) **תחת אהבתי ישטנוני** ואני תפלה את מוצא בחג אמרו ישראל רבון העולמים הרי אנו, ישראל מקריבין לפניך שבעים פרים על שבעים אומות מקריבין עליהם שבעים פרים והיו צריכין לאהוב אותנו והם שונאין אותנו שנא' תחת אהבתי ישטנוני, לפיכך אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא עכשיו הקריבו על עצמכם ביום השמיני עשרת ימי תשובה לכם [כט, לו]

*"On the eighth day...an assembly" - that is what the verse said: **"In return for my love, they hate me; I am prayer"** (Psalms 109:4). You find that on the Festival, Israel sacrifices seventy bulls on behalf of the seventy nations. Israel said: 'Master of the universe, **we sacrifice seventy bulls on their behalf, and they should love us; but they hate us, as it is stated: "In return for my love, they hate me."** Therefore, the Holy One blessed be He said to them: 'Now, sacrifice on your own behalf: "On the eighth day it shall be an assembly for you".'*

This experience will BE"YH become the beginning of עמו גויים הרנינו because of seeing the נקמת ה' and ultimately their admiration for how we experience it as the love of דין

דברים פרק לב

(מג) הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עִמּוֹ כִּי דָם־עַבְדָּיו יִקּוּם וְנִקָּם יִשְׁיב לְצַרּוֹ וְכִפֹּר אֶדְמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ: פ

Rejoice, O nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries and will forgive his land, and his people.

Essay #8

The Long Road

November 16 2023

ג' כסליו תשפ"ד

As always I want to open up this email with a short Yeshiva update. The Talmidim volunteered again this week in Hadassah hospital (at the hospitals request!). But otherwise a regular learning week with a beautiful Rosh Chodesh Kislev davening led by R' Shmuel Kornfeld.

I am sure many if not all of you attended the rally in Washington. It looked like it was amazing and I hope it had meaning for you.

I look forward to seeing so many of you on Sunday at the on-line Hilchos Teshuva shiur. We are beginning the 3rd Perek this week. If you wish to join send me a message and I will send you the link. 8:45 AM EST every Sunday.

I will be traveling to the US next week and at the end of the email I give details of my trip with the hope to see as many of you as possible.

My musings this week.

במדבר פרק כא:ד

וַיֵּצְאוּ מִהַר הָהָר דֶּרֶךְ יַם־סוּף לְסַבֵּב אֶת־אֶרֶץ אֱדוֹם וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשֵׁי־הָעָם בַּדֶּרֶךְ

*They set out from Mount Hor by way of the Sea of Reeds to skirt the land of Edom. But the people grew restive on the journey,*

The people lost patience with the process.

I started sensing the other day, and we spoke about this this past Sunday after shiur, that people are starting to lose patience with the "situation" and internally asking themselves "when will this be over and things will get back to normal?". (I notice a drop in open rates for my emails too!)

I was speaking with Rav Sheftel the other day about his trip to the US and I said to him that probably when my father ZT"l was running away from the Nazis and Russians in the 1940s he probably was thinking to himself, "when will this be over so things can get back to "normal" again." (Which of course never happened.) It seems to be part of the human condition and a sense I am getting from people, is that we are all anxious for this to get over and to get back to "normal".

**This desire to get things done quickly brings with it several levels of danger.**

We know, especially here in Israel, when they waited three weeks to begin the ground invasion, everyone was edgy, “when are we going to get going?”. We know now that the patience they had before going in has saved countless lives, and prepared the way, with G-d's help, for the army to be successful thus far. Now that the ground war has begun, we all scroll through the news over and over to see what has advanced, we all think to ourselves “lets get moving!”.

There are times when Klal Yisrael responds with what Chazal call “Avraham's Zerizut” we are meant to respond instantly and do what needs to be done. That Zerizut always powers the openings during momentous times like these. But Yakov Avinu has a very different response to the challenges of meeting up with Eisav and the challenges of confronting the West. His approach is:

בראשית פרק לג:יד

וְאֲנִי אֶתְנַהֵלָה לְאִטִּי לְרֶגֶל הַמְּלֹאכָה אֲשֶׁר־לִפְנָי

*while I travel slowly, at the pace of the cattle before me*

Go slowly and take the long way home. To the extent that he gives Eisav the offer of

יַעֲבֹר־נָא אֲדֹנָי לִפְנֵי עַבְדִּי

*Let my lord go on ahead of his servant*

He is willing to let Eisav go first!

Yakov's approach colors the relationship described in the Gemara between Rebbe and Antoninus as well as the Rome and Yisrael.

You see this as consistent with Yakov's personal interrelationships as well.

: בראשית כט:כ

וְהָיָה בְּעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֹתָהּ

*So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.*

His love for Rachel and his vision maintained the intensity of the moment over seven years of waiting!

The Umos HaOlam , all of our friends and so called friends of the nations of the world are trying to push that this should be over quickly. That is terribly dangerous for Yisrael.

From the very beginning every political and military leader in Israel has said it will be a long and dangerous war. With a stress on the long. There is no pushing for quick responses when sometimes one has to learn Yakov Avinu's response. When it seems nothing is happening, things are going on, just slowly. At that point the sense of momentousness and meaning of the time we are in begins to dissipate.

What does that imply?

People are still looking for a quick mechanically achievable result? "It will be over soon right?"

Many years ago the Yeshiva visited Moshav Nov in the Golan for Shabbos. (Where my son lives now!) We had the opportunity for the Yeshiva to meet with Effie Eitam a former General, and at the time we met with him he was serving as a minister in the Israeli government and a member of the Security cabinet. Those of you that were there may remember that meeting. Grandmom A"H was with us and she speaks up and says to him "what is going to be!" what are we going to do about this and that!" Effie Eitam turns to her and says "things take time, 100 years in Jewish History is a very short period of time!"

Klal Yisrael has always been accepting of the long way home.

Every morning we make the Bracha in Birchas Hashachar כח הנותן ליעף . In Halacha it is not clear where this Bracha comes from.

בית יוסף אורח חיים סימן מו:ט

ועוד ברכה אחת יש בסידורי אשכנז הנותן ליעף כח ונתקנה על שאדם מפקיד נשמתו בערב אף על פי שיש סמך יפה לברך ברכה זו מאחר שלא נזכרה בתלמוד איני יודע איך . וכו' היה רשות לשום אדם לתקנה ומצאתי שכתב האגור (הל' ברכות סי' פז) שראה מקטרגים עליה מטעם זה והרמב"ם וסמ"ק והרוקח לא הזכירוה והכי נקטינן

*There is one additional Bracha in Ashkenaz Siddurim, He gives strength to those who are tired... even though there is what to rely on for the blessing being as it is not mentioned in the Talmud I do not know how anyone had the right to set it up.*

The Shulchan Orech says:

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות ברכות השחר ושאר ברכות סימן מו סעיף ו

יש נוהגין לברך הנותן ליעף כח, ואין דבריהם נראין. הגה אך המנהג פשוט בבני האשכנזים לאומרה

*There are those who have the practice to bless "who gives strength to the weary", but their words do not appear [to be correct]. Rem"a: but the common practice for Ashkenazim is to say it*

The Beis Yosef points out that the Bracha has no source in the Gemara and you cannot just make up Brachos! The Rama Paskens that we say it and the Minhag in all of Yisrael is to say the Bracha. The Shaarei Teshuva brings the source as an Arizal to add a 19th Bracha Kneged למלשינים which was added to Shmoneh Esrei.

האר"י מבאר (שער הכלול, א, ו, אות י"א) שברכת "הנותן ליעף כוח" נתקנה כנגד הברכה כלומר: יחד עם הזעקה על צרות הגלות "וכל". "ברכת "ולמלשינים אל תהי תקווה ה"י"ט לכן תקנו. עלינו להודות על הכוח שה' נותן לנו לעמוד בכל אותם הצרות, "הרשעה בשנות גלות, כהודאה לקב"ה על הכוח המיוחד שנתן לעם ישראל, הגאונים ברכה זו וחורבן, בשנים שבהם אומות העולם עומדות עלינו לכלותנו, והקב"ה נותן בנו כוח, לעמוד איתנים ולשרוד גם בשעות צרה וצוקה

וכך עולה ממקור הפסוק בנבואת ישעיהו, וכפי שביאר הרד"ק שם (ישעיהו מ', כ"ט): "והוא . יתן כשירצה כח ועצמה לישראל שהם בגלות ויעפים ויגיעים מאין אונים

(I apologize for not translating the source literally, but here is the gist):

It would seem to not be humanly possible to last through the years of Golus and everything Am Yisrael has endured. The Bracha we say is that HKB"Y has given us a special Koach, special energy to stand up and last through all of the Tzaros and years of Galus, through the ages of the Umos standing up to destroy us.

The Gemara in Kesuvos speaks of the שבועות Klal Yisrael made:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת כתובות דף קיא עמוד א

אינך - שלא יגלו את הקץ, ושלא ירחקו את הקץ, ושלא יגלו הסוד לעובדי כוכבים.

***The other three oaths are as follows :That those who know should not reveal the end of days ;and that they should not distance the end of days by saying that it is still distant ,and that they should not reveal the secret of the Jews to the nations.***

Rashi learns that

רש"י מסכת כתובות דף קיא עמוד א

ושלא ירחקו את הקץ - בעונם ל"א שלא ידחקו גרסינן לשון דוחק שלא ירבו בתחנונים על כך יותר מדאי

ושלא ירחקו את הקץ - בעונם ל"א שלא ידחקו גרסינן לשון דוחק שלא ירבו בתחנונים על כך יותר מדאי:

Rashi says that the proper Girsas is שלא ידחקו את הקץ meaning do not rush the קץ.

### **Don't try to rush things, rushing is dangerous.**

When we do not rush things it mitigates against artificial actions that don't measure up to the required דרישה (search) that Klal Yisrael requires.

Look at what happens to Moshe Rabainu when he is in a rush. He gets upset!

שמות פרק ה

וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְקֹנָק וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּה לָעַם הַזֶּה לָמָּה זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי

וּמֵאֵז בָּאתִי אֶל־פְּרַעֲה לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ הִרַע לָעַם הַזֶּה וְהִצַּל לֹא־הִצַּלְתָּ אֶת־עַמְּךָ

שמות פרק ו

(א) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנָק אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עַתָּה תִּרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפְרַעֲה

רש"י שמות פרק ו

(א) עתה תראה וגו' - הרהרת על מדותי, לא כאברהם שאמרתי לו (בראשית כא יב) כי ביצחק לפיכך עתה, יקרא לך זרע, ואחר כך אמרתי לו (שם כב ב) העלהו לעולה, ולא הרהר אחרי תראה. העשוי לפרעה תראה, ולא העשוי למלכי שבעה אומות כשאביאם לארץ

Moshe Rabainu says "nothing is happening!" HKB"H says to him "You think nothing is happening?" HKB"H says "so you will see what is happening now but not what will ultimately happen".

For this Moshe Rabainu loses going into Eretz Yisrael, when he is in a rush! Klal Yisrael needed that full year post the פקידה to be fully capable of the יציאה that could lead to coming into Eretz Yisrael. It was not possible to see it and understand it in the midst of local events.

The point of being Yisrael is to be the opposite of Eisav's need for instant gratification הֲלֵעִיטְנִי נָא. Give it to me now!

The dangers of rushing lead to the building of the Eigel (עגל) means to rush (בעגלה). Look what happens to Shaul when he doesn't wait for Shmuel. That leads directly to Amalek.

There is another danger of rushing, one attempts to understand things too early before you can actually have a full perspective. Before all the data is in. You end up with premature conclusions. You may know something is right, but you may end up applying it too quickly, in the wrong circumstances, before the understanding of all of the pieces that need to be there.

A number of years ago I met Rabbi Berl Wein and he said to me in a conversation "the Golus is closing" . I was Zoche to come to Eretz Yisrael over 40 years ago. I saw a backward 3rd world country develop into an economic and military world power. I saw the change and the move of the center of Torah to Eretz Yisrael . I saw the population triple from 3 million to 9 million, just in my adult lifetime! As slowly as things move, things have been moving remarkably quickly.

I think we all know, and I think we all hope, that things are not going back to "normal" anytime soon. **In fact they are not going back to "normal" ever.** We are together on a long road that will reach its objective BE"H soon. While we cannot and should not try to draw conclusions while in process, we need to pay attention to what is going on around us and prepare for a new normal.

I am traveling to the US next week to attend Oliver Miller's wedding in NY where I hope to see many of you. I will be spending two nights in Chicago where we are planning to get together and then I will be Shabbos with my wife in Dallas (If you want to join us contact one of the Dallas guys) . I hope we can use these opportunities to discuss some of the issues I have shared with you, share ideas, feelings and help prepare ourselves for the long road yet to come.



## Essay #9

### Gal Gadot and Choosing Life

December 9, 2023

כו' כסליו תשפ"ד

This past week many of the DEC Talmidim who are presently serving in the IDF gathered for the wedding of Yakov Goldson at an army base in the north. There have been tens of weddings on bases, run by the army since the beginning of the war as soldiers cannot get out, and there is no reason to push off the weddings for an unknown amount of time. This commitment to building families during this time led me to think about the following idea which ties into Chanuka.

Also this past week, one of the Rebbeim in Yeshiva, Rav Hadar Margolin, lost his father. I went today to be Menachem Avel with the Talmidim and he told us a story from which one can learn, and that has many appropriate and timely lessons. Rav Hadar grew up in NY but his father, R' Michael Z"L was born in Yerushalayim, so I asked him how and when the family came to Eretz Yisrael. Rav Hadar told us the following story:

R' Hadar's grandfather lived in a town in Lithuania and he and his wife did not bear any children. All he wanted was to have children, so he spent sums of money he did not have to travel as far as Moscow and Berlin to see the top doctors of the time, but they had no answers. He returned depressed, childless and in debt, to his town. He had a friend, who was a Chassid who suggested to him that he visit his Rebbe. As a strong Litvak he was really not interested, but after several refusals his friend the Chassid pointed out to him that if he was willing to travel to Moscow and Berlin and spend a fortune of money to try everything possible, then why not at least go to the Rebbe, who is local and see if he can help?! Eventually he convinced him. So, he goes into the Rebbe and the Rebbe tells him open up that Chumash and read the first Pasuk that you open to. It opened to:

לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך: ואעשך לגוי גדול

The Rebbe then tells him to read the Rashi:  
שם אעשך לגוי גדול כאן אי אתה זוכה לבנים

So the Rebbe says that is your answer! Go to Eretz Yisrael and you will have children.

Back in the 1930s it wasn't easy to get to Eretz Yisrael. Besides the transport expenses and issues, he needed permission from the British to enter, which is a story in itself how he managed to get a certificate to allow him to enter Eretz

Yisrael. And so, after another long part to the story, they got to Eretz Yisrael, one year later they had a girl and year after that Rav Hadar's father was born, and a year later another child.

Rav Hadar's father told him that when they were cleaning up the grandfather's home after he was Niftar, they found letters he had written to his family in Lithuania in 1938 urging them to join him in Eretz Yisrael, to get out of Europe now. In their letters they replied that they will shortly, but they time to sell their businesses and make various arrangements. The end of the story is predictable, that from the entire extended family, they are the only surviving line, the rest having been wiped out by the Nazis **שמם**.

(You realize that had his grandfather even had one child in Lithuania he too would have been wiped out!)

We have begun Chanuka. Chazal have defined Chanuka as a time **להודות ולהלל**. The Gemara says that Leah was the first person to give **הודאה** :

ברכות ז

וא"ר יוחנן משום ר"ש בן יוחי מיום שברא הקב"ה את עולמו לא היה אדם שהודה להקב"ה עד שבאתה לאה והודתו שנאמר הפעם אודה את ה'

***And Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: From the day the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the world, no one thanked the Holy One, Blessed be He, until Leah came and thanked Him, as it is stated " :And she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and she said ' ,This time I will give thanks to God ',and thus he was called Judah" (Genesis 29:35).***

The reason she gives **הודאה** we are told is:

בראשית לט:לה

**שנטלתי יותר מחלקי מעתה יש לי להודות** הפעם אודה את ה' רש"י

She gives **הודאה** specifically on having more children.

There has always been a contrast of the cult of death that the Arabs aspire to, unlike Yisrael who always value life, to the point that the Arabs know how to take advantage of us for it. Yisrael does not only value life it is committed to life!

This week Gal Gadot , a movie star (who does not only count on her acting skill to make her living), announced that she is expecting her 4rth child! In Israel this makes perfect sense. Israel is the advanced country with the highest birthrate in the world. In fact, it is the only first world country producing children beyond replacement level. The commitment to life that is Yisrael

comes from a clarity of the most basic issue - life itself. Something the west cannot even grasp as they disappear by not even having children!

We are told by Moshe Rabainu before his death that there is only one issue to sum up all of human choice:

דברים ל

(טו)ראה נתתי לפניכם היום את החיים והטוב ואת המות ואת הרע

*See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;*

(יז)... וחיית ורבית וברכך ה' אלוך בארץ אשר אתה בא שמה לרשתה

*then thou shalt live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land into which thou goest to possess it..*

(יט) ...החיים והמות נתתי לפניך הברכה והקללה ובחרת בחיים למען תחיה אתה וזרעך

*that I have set before thee life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*

The choice of LIFE is what the Pesukim say is our ultimate claim to Eretz Yisrael and is so amazingly applicable today.

In our Hilchos Teshuva shiur we discussed in the third Perek about the idea of a בינוני . There the Rambam explains that there are three states of being , צדיק , רשע and בינוני . There is not a determination on that state until there is a determination of the רוב , of their being an effect of a majority of ones actions impact on the person, at which point their state can be determined. That determination comes through a שיקול which is the result of דין.

We lead our daily lives generally in a state of Benoni. A state of being in between, being non determinate, avoiding the need to have to make absolute choices (or even decisions) and hoping things will fall into place. "Benoniism" is a very comfortable way to lead our life. No need to face up to or have to make hard choices.

אף על פי שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזירת הכתוב רמז יש בו כלומר עורו ישינים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם, אלו השוכחים את האמת בהבלי הזמן ושוגים כל שנתם בהבל וריק אשר לא יועיל ולא יציל

*Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying:*

*Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth in the vanities of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity*

*and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts.*

The Shofar of Rosh Hashana is meant to wake us up. A time of war, a time of דין is a wake up call.

One of the inescapable issues one has to grapple with in war is the utilization of דין . It comes up daily in a soldier or in a central command center when determining how many civilian casualties are acceptable to accomplish the needed outcome. If I have to blow up this building to kill one person, there is a necessity to make a choice, no longer to be wishy washy. Do I focus on hostages or on destroying Hamas? Survival is based on my need to choose, and choosing is a necessity of my need to survive.

The Rambam we discussed (in Essay #6) pointed out how one has to forget about living to focus during war:

ולא יחשוב לא באשתו ולא בבניו אלא ימחה זכרונם מלבו

This particular war and the fallout from it (everyone is aware of the statements made by the university presidents at the hearing in congress this past week) should lead those of us not on the front lines to also confront reality, to have to choose life.

I just returned from a trip to the US, and was reminded what a country that focuses on **choosing to live** instead of focusing on **choosing life** looks like. B"ח here in Eretz Yisrael there has been an awakening of a choice of life over all else. **Life which we are willing to die for.** A realization throughout the entire society that we lost our way, we were focused on living and through that this great tragedy occurred to wake us up to focus on LIFE. Israel as a country is facing a serious life and death situation and the society as a whole has jumped into focusing on LIFE , Halevai it will last.

Moshe Rabainu tells us in his last day that the only way to be זוכה to ארץ ישראל is through that crystal clear commitment to life over living. In this time especially it is a message to all of us.

We should all be זוכה this Chanuka to realize the הודאה we need to express as having been זוכה to יותר מחלקי and to be able to focus on choosing life.

Chanuka Sameach, Besuros Tovos

Essay #10  
Drive time radio and Hallel

December 13, 2023

ר"ח טבת תשפ"ד

At the very end of this email I am throwing in a couple of technical issues that I need to share as well so please finish until the end.

I was in the car listening to the radio on the first night of Chanuka (most Israeli radio is news and talk radio - especially now during the war) and the broadcasters began the evening by saying חג שמח and then had a discussion if it was an appropriate greeting with over 100 people still hostages and soldiers dying daily, they concluded they would use the greeting because in spite of the local context the חג exists on a different level and needs to be one that is recognized as שמח in spite of the local present time issues. And they explained this as they greeted each of their guests that they interviewed including a father of a hostage and soldiers from the field.

It is indeed an interesting question. In Israel there has been an unspoken pact that people do not greet each other with מה שלומך or מה נשמע (How are you) since Shmini Atzeres. This being the first Moed to occur since those events brings up a bit of a paradox which I realized is actually expressed in terms of the main issues of Chanuka.

Chazal were מתקן the Avoda of Chanuka ולהלל. In fact Hallel is such an expression of Chanuka that the Rambam brings the Halachos of Hallel in Hilchos Chanuka.

The Gemara in Pesachim 117a explains when one should say Hallel

והלל זה מי אמרו נביאים שביניהן תקנו להן לישראל שיהו אומרים אותו על כל פרק ופרק ועל כל צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהן ולכשנגאלין אומרים אותו על גאולתן

Hallel is meant to be said on every צרה וצרה! and indeed if you pay attention, what we say in Hallel expresses those ideas in the Teffila. Some examples:

אפפוני חבלי מות ומצרי שאול מצאוני צרה ויגון אמצא  
מן המצר קראתי י"ה ענני במרחב י"ה

And many many more Pesukim ultimately culminating with the Pesukim that here in Eretz Yisrael people are crying out:

אנא ה' הושיעה נא

אנה ה' הצליחה נא

We desperately require Hashem's ישועה and his support in being ישראל (I received a bumper sticker in my weekend newspaper מצליח בה !' בטח בה

This confrontation began on Shmini Atzeres, the day of differentiation from the Umos HaOlam and Chanuka comes as the time where we fought a war waged for values, very similar to what this war is about (the presidents of Harvard, MIT and Penn didn't get the memo) . The tefilla of Hallel which we say every day of Chanuka expresses the deepest wishes we could have during our present situation. The amazing Chasadim HKB"ח has done for us and our desperate need for his ישועה . The Simcha we have this Chanuka is in the opportunity and ability and willingness to fight for what is right מי לה' אלי That is an amazing opportunity and an amazing Simcha that one needs to be מהלל for.

Israel sent 800 Menorahs to Aza for the soldiers to light. The metaphor is lost on no one. The light destroying the darkness. And as we unfortunately mourn every single day the soldiers who are giving their lives, they knew and we know that they are fighting and giving their lives for the most valuable thing one possibly can live for.

אנה ה' הושיעה נא, אנה ה' הצליחה נא

נקם נקמת עבדיך מאמה הרשעה כי ארכה לנו השעה ואין קץ לימי הרעה

Chanuka Sameach and we should hear Besurot Tovot.

### **Announcements:**

We wish Mazal Tov to Rav Sheftel and Tova Weinberg on the engagement of their son Shmuel Yakov !

I will be traveling in the US at the end of December.

will be visiting Miami December 25,26 - we will be having a gathering and shiur December 26th in the evening.

I will be in NY December 27-28 (where I will be attending the wedding of Meir Weisel) we will be having a gathering and shiur in Queens the night of December 27. I also hope to see as many of you in person and make individual times as well so please be in touch.

## Essay #11

### Time to be scared (Asara B'Teves)

December 20, 2023

ח' טבת תשפ"ד

One of the Talmidim in the Yeshiva innocently asked me Sunday morning "how are you Rebbe?". It hit me at that point how hard the last few days had been. And I guess I use these emails to share my feelings, and worries with you, so please bear with me.

FYI the feedback I get is helpful and lets me know someone out there is reading these.

This past week the Derech Etz Chaim family had a horrible tragedy. One of our Talmidim, Jonathan Degani Z"L passed away suddenly, leaving an Almana, and three children. I was in the middle of davening Maariv after having lit Chanuka Licht and my phone starts buzzing with a call from a DEC Alum from the US (who unfortunately does not call me often) and from someone in Israel over and over. I dodged out of Maariv to find out what happened and to my absolute shock I am told that Jon Z"L has been Nifter. Jon came to the Yeshiva in year 4 and stayed awhile, and moved back to Eretz Yisrael after college, was the Yeshiva dorm counselor, got married here (I was Mesader his Kiddushin) and settled in Petach Tikva. I know his family, and he was a major part of the DEC EY group, called often and visited Yeshiva from time to time. As an original thinker and deep person we often exchanged ideas. A young vibrant man, who was suddenly no longer with us. Rebbeim and Talmidim attended his Levaya (including a DEC Alum who did not know him, but lived in the area and came as it was a DEC family member who had died).

I went to be Menachem Avel to his Almana, mother and sister sitting Shiva this past Friday and as I got up to leave and to say the traditional **המקום ינחם אתכם** , בתוך שאר אבילי ציון וירושלים , his Almana says to me "we are in a time with many אבילים for Tziyon and Yerushalayim". Mrs. Degani who lost her son, Mrs. Degani who lost her husband and the Degani children who lost their father, are among many who over the last two months have lost their sons, husbands and fathers.

Then Motzei Shabbos I turn on the news to find out the terrible tragedy of the hostages who were mistakenly killed by the army, and then every single day waking up to the names released of the soldiers killed in battle the previous day. Every single day. Every single day. These Chayalim who are Moser Nefesh and ready to fight and die as Tzadikim Gemurim having made it possible for Am Yisrael to survive. It's hard, it's difficult, sad and scary.

I am very scared that at this rate hundreds of soldiers will Chas Veshalom die.

I am very scared that we are hanging on by one vote in the UN ultimately dependent on a (close to senile president and) politics to survive.

I am scared that when Aza is finished, we will have to deal with Hizballah and ultimately Iran in a never ending war that is going to make Eretz Yisrael a not so pleasant place. Not pleasant to live in, visit and most importantly for investors, so I am scared about the economy and its ability to withstand never ending war.

I am scared that we will revert to stupid politics as the leadership seems to be completely out of touch with the citizens of Israel.

I am scared that Yisrael living abroad doesn't get it and what the ramifications of that might be.

### **But who says being scared is a bad thing?**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת גיטין דף נה עמוד ב

אמר רבי יוחנן, מאי דכתיב: **אשרי אדם מפחד תמיד** ומקשה לכו יפול ברעה? אקמצא ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים, אתרנגולא ותרנגולתא חרוב טור מלכא, אשקא דריספק חרוב ביתר

The Pasuk tells us it is a good thing to always be scared, and Rav Yochanan brings that Pasuk to describe what was missing at the time of the Churban.

Tisha Bav which is the Moed of Aveilus (mourning), and the day on which we are meant to grow by experiencing Aveilus is seen by the Gemara as a result of the inability of Klal Yisrael to be scared. I think everyone is familiar with the continuation of that Gemara . The outcome is meant to express that the inability to see beyond the expected, and to be scared of the unexpected, ultimately lead to the Churban Bayis . As R Yochanan concludes:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת גיטין דף נו עמוד א

אמר רבי יוחנן: ענוותנותו של רבי זכריה בן אבקולס, החריבה את ביתנו, ושרפה את היכלנו, והגליתנו מארצנו

Aveilos is the ultimate reality check. The painful thing about losing someone is that it is the only problem, no matter how much you want to, you cannot fix or think that you can fix. It is final. Nechama means more than comfort, it means to move on from a new perspective.

בראשית פרק ו

(ו) וַיִּנְחָם יְקֹוֹק כִּי־עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֱלֹהִים:

רש"י בראשית פרק ו



וכן כל לשון נוחם שבמקרא לשון נמלך מה לעשות (במדבר כג יט) וכן אדם ויתנחם, (דברים לב לו) ועל עבדיו יתנחם, (שמות לב יד) וינחם ה' על הרעה, (שמואל א' טו יא) נחמתי כי המלכתי, **כולם לשון מחשבה אחרת הם:**

In Israel every single soldier or hostage that dies and every single Levaya is attended by hundreds who never knew the person but understand that all Aveilos is for all of us. It all connects to the ultimate Aveilos בתוך שאר אבילי ציון. It is a universal Aveilos on things not being right, on a world that is not working.

This week is עשרה בטבת the first stage of the fast days that keep us focused on the Churban Bayis. The Tzom of Asara B'Teves is the only one that can fall on an Erev Shabbos as it does this year, and is considered חמור (serious) enough that there are those who hold Halcha L'Maaseh that if it fell on Shabbos we would keep it on Shabbos as well!

The Rambam in Hilchos Taanios explains the reasons for Fast days in general and for Asara B'Teves in particular.

רמב"ם הלכות תעניות פרק ה

יש שם ימים שכל ישראל מתענים בהם מפני הצרות שאירעו בהן כדי לעורר הלבבות ולפתוח דרכי התשובה ויהיה זה זכרון למעשינו הרעים ומעשה אבותינו שהיה כמעשינו עתה עד שגרם להם ולנו אותן הצרות, שבזכרון דברים אלו נשוב להיטיב שנאמר +ויקרא כ"ו+ והתודו את עונם ואת עון אבותם

The Rambam stresses that the point of a Taanis is to be aware זכרון of not only our מעשים but of those of our אבות, our predecessors. And he brings a pasuk to back it up. Meaning that it is not enough to just focus on our own actions but that we have to realize that we are repeating the mistakes of אבותינו, our predecessors, so that the צרות we experience are the same as theirs and are for the same reason. Amazing thing to say! Don't we have enough problems of our own that we need to focus in the past! What the Rambam is pointing out is that the paradigms that led to the previous generations problems are the same ones we are dealing with, and we are trying to, and need, to overcome today!

What happened on Asara B'Teves:

רמב"ם הלכות תעניות פרק ה

ועשירי בטבת שבו סמך מלך בבל נבוכדנאצר הרשע על ירושלם והביאה במצור ובמצוק

This Taanis is a very חמור (stringent) fast to the point that we have it this year on Erev Shabbos and there are those that hold it could even take place on Shabbos! Why? Because it is the התחלת דפורענותא the beginning of the tragedies.

Lets think about it and see how the Taanis addresses very contemporary issues:

At the time of Asara B'Teves, Klal Yisrael is living in Yerushalayim with a Beis HaMikdash. They essentially have passed through several centuries where HKB"H took them out of Mitzrayim, brought them to Eretz Yisrael, they settled, raised a Malchus and a Beis Hamikdash. Were their problems? Sure, but how significant could they be? They told themselves *"seriously do we have to worry that something is going to happen? The point of all of history since Bereishis is for us to be here. Those Neviim are a little over the top, things are not perfect but they will work themselves out"*.

Then you wake up one morning and you come home from Shacharis and you sit down for breakfast on your Veranda with a beautiful view of the Judean hills and you look up and you see the most powerful army in the world outside the gates of the city laying siege! It's a shock! Can't happen!

Following this event there was still time to do Teshuva before ultimately the break through the city walls and ultimately the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

Until this past Shmini Atzeres we could not fathom what happened happening. We had our barrier, our strong army. A music festival could be held on the Gaza border with no worries. Since that tragedy the world has turned against us. The hatred of Yisrael that has come to the fore, the Umos HaOlam teaming up against us. The very raising of the doubt of Israel's being a "good" nation, or maybe "we" are the ones committing genocide?!

אמר רבי יוחנן, מאי דכתיב: **אשרי אדם מפחד תמיד ומקשה לבו יפול ברעה**

So the answer to the Talmid's innocent question of "how are you?" is I am scared and I am sad, not melancholy sad, but Aveilos sad.

This state of Aveilos of Yisrael should lead us, **as it must** to new perspectives. And to seeing things for what they really are. Not sliding into sentimentality, but rather being able to be מפחד תמיד and acting in accordance with a reality that we may not yet believe could possibly happen.

ישעיהו פרק לה

(י) ופְּדוּיֵי יְקוֹק יִשְׁבוּן וּבְאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה וְשִׂמְחַת עוֹלָם עַל־רֹאשָׁם שֶׁשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה יִשְׁיגוּ וְנָסוּ יִגוֹן

## Essay #12

What's your perspective?

January 5, 2024

כ"ד טבת תשפ"ד

I just returned from my second trip outside of Israel since the beginning of the war and there were some significant changes since my earlier trip that I noticed, and I wish to share my feelings about those changes with you.

But first an update. The Yeshiva participated in an amazing volunteer effort going on in Matersdorf, the most Chareidi neighborhood in Yerushalayim. There, in the bottom of an educational building, are a group of Chasidishe Yidden who spend a week preparing Shabbos food for soldiers in the field. 16,000 portions, high end Shabbos food that the military sends trucks every Erev Shabbos to pick up and distribute to soldiers on bases and out in the field. Our Talmidim got to help out one day and look forward to participating again soon.

We had tremendously good news today with the destruction of our enemy Deputy Hamas chief Saleh al-Arouri. But it does not offset the daily news of brave Jewish soldiers being killed, being Moser Nefesh to protect Yisrael.

I want to thank all of you for the feedback on my last (and previous) emails. It is encouraging and gives me the motivation to keep sharing, so please keep it up.

When I was in the US, I found that some people seemed to have lost patience in staying focused for such a long time on such a momentous and troubling event, this war. One person told me he doesn't read my emails as they are "too serious" and he cannot handle them, another "they are too long". At a wedding I attended I led Tehillim under the Chuppa for our soldiers which I was told made the Chuppa "too long".

Another question people were asking is what are we looking forward towards? Of course hanging over all of what is going on, and over all of us here in Israel is what is going to be the "day after".

Personally, I think it is amazing how the Israeli public and Yisrael in general can stay focused and motivated to do what is necessary without knowing when or what will be the conclusion! And in truth not knowing that conclusion seems to be a necessity for Yisrael when we speak about ultimate ישועה.

In last weeks Parsha we find

בראשית פרק מט פסוק א

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֶסְפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

רש"י בראשית פרק מט פסוק א

(א) ואגידה לכם - בקש לגלות את הקץ ונסתלקה שכינה ממנו

Yakov wanted to tell over the קץ and was prevented from doing so. **It seemed to be necessary for us not to know the conclusion.**

The Rambam stresses **that this is the way things are:**

רמב"ם הלכות מלכים פרק יב הלכה ב

יראה מפשוטן, אמרו חכמים אין בין העולם הזה לימות המשיח אלא שיעבוד מלכיות בלבד של דברי הנביאים, שבתחילת ימות המשיח תהיה מלחמת גוג ומגוג, ושקודם מלחמת גוג ומגוג יעמוד נביא לישראל ולהכין לבם, שנאמר הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליה ואינו בא לא לטמא הטהור, ולא לטהר הטמא, ולא לפסול אנשים שהם בחזקת כשרות, זוגו ולא להכשיר מי שהוחזקו פסולין, אלא לשום שלום בעולם, שנאמר והשיב לב אבות על בנים, ויש מן החכמים שאומרים שקודם ביאת המשיח יבא אליהו

*From the plain words of our prophets it would appear that the war of Gog and Magog would form the inception of the era of Messiah; and previous to this war, a prophet would arise to reform Israel, and prepare their hearts for the coming event; (Malachi 3. 23). The mission of this prophet, I shall send you Elijah for it is said will not be to pronounce defiled that which is pure; neither the reverse; neither to but his sole mission, vice versa declare illegitimate those that are legitimate, or Behold, I send you Elijah the will be to make peace in the world; for it is said prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the father to the children, and the hearts of the children to their (Malachi 3. 24). Some of the sages state that Elijah will appear previous to, fathers the advent of Messiah,*

What the Rambam says is that יראה מפשוטן **the simplistic way of understanding things**

**Rather he continues:**

שדברים סתומין הן אצל, וכל אלו הדברים וכיוצא בהן לא ידע אדם איך יהיו עד שיהיו אלא לפי הכרע הפסוקים, ולפיכך יש, גם החכמים אין להם קבלה בדברים אלו, הנביאים ועל כל פנים אין סדור הויית דברים אלו ולא דקדוקיהן עיקר, להם מחלוקת בדברים אלו בדת, ולעולם לא יתעסק אדם בדברי ההגדות, ולא יאריך במדרשות האמורים בענינים אלו וכן לא יחשב, וכיוצא בהן, ולא ישימם עיקר, שאין מביאין לא לידי יראה ולא לידי אהבה אלא יחכה ויאמין בכלל הדבר כמו, אמרו חכמים תפח רוחם של מחשבי הקצים, הקצין שבארנו

*They were even a mystery to our prophets, and the sages had no tradition thereon. Their sole guide was the tenor and construction of some verses; and this is the source of the various opinions prevailing on these subjects. However, the definition of the matter in question forms no article of faith. Man ought not to study much the words of the Agadoth, neither dilate on the exposition regarding the Messianic advent, as they do not lead to any fear or love of the Lord; neither should man compute the end of Israel's dispersion. The sages said: Death should overtake those who attempt to compute the end; but we ought confidently and faithfully believe in the restoration of Israel as explained*

**They are תומין they are hidden and no one will know until they happen.**

This is how Yisrael is meant to operate throughout the Galus

ישעיהו פרק לג פסוק ו

וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עַתִּידָהּ חֶסֶן יְשׁוּעַת חֲכָמַת יְדַעַת יְרֵאת יְקוּקָהּ הִיא אוֹצְרוֹ

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף לא עמוד א

אמר רבא: בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין, אומרים לו: נשאת ונתת באמונה? קבעת עתים לתורה? עסקת בפרייה ורבייה? צפית לישועה? פלפלת בחכמה? הבנת דבר מתוך דבר? ואפילו הכי, אי יראת ה' היא אוצרו - אין, אי לא - לא.

*Rava said: After departing from this world, when a person is brought to judgment for the life he lived in this world, they say to him in the order of that verse: Did you conduct business faithfully? Did you designate times for Torah study? Did you engage in procreation? Did you await salvation? Did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom or understand one matter from another? And, nevertheless, beyond all these, if the fear of the Lord is his treasure, yes, he is worthy, and if not, no, none of these accomplishments have any value.*

One of the questions a person has to answer when he is taken into Din after he dies is צפית לישועה. People generally think that means did you wait for Mashiach, like לו אחכה to await. Or it means to look forward to ישועה.

But צפית לישועה is more than that, it defines what the nature is of **our general sense of perspective of what ישועה is all about**. צפית is like a מצפה, a "look out", the idea of a lookout is a place you can gain a perspective, the idea of צפית is perspective.

So that the deeper meaning of the question of צפית לישועה is: **were you able to maintain a perspective of ישועה throughout your life**, not the same as אחכה לו looking forward. And in the context of the Gemara the question is, is it actually part of the description of the humanity of the person who is asked this question. In the same way you are asked לתורה קבעת עתים באמונה, נשאת ונתת באמונה. **What type**

## **of human being are you? Are you someone who had a perspective of ישועה in your life?**

That implies that you cannot talk about an אמונה in Mashiach based upon just the first part of the Pasuk of והיה אמונת עתך אמונה it is not just a function of אמונה, a function of belief, faith, it is a function of being actively aware and sensitive to all the stages that are involved, and to have a perspective of how each stage presents a new challenge, there is no real comprehension מלכתחילה of what you would look forward to in the first place! It demands a level of perspective and sensitivity. צפית plays a profound part of our ability to achieve and gain from the actual experience of our lives.

Knowing the outcome (or thinking that we know the outcome) has the danger of looking forward to a mechanical solution כחי ועוצם ידי, that is something that could prevent or push off the ישועת ה' for those who are not yet ready to accept a real לישותך קיויתי ה'

The problem with only dealing with things mechanically or thinking mechanically, is that **you are by definition dealing with things simply**. Because mechanics are simple and that ultimately hurts your sensitivity to complexity, and leads you to think that your job in life is to deal with mechanics.

When the Rambam says דברים סתומין הם he means **that by definition they will emerge without you being able to define them**, but the more that you are aware of the patterns and the stages and the possibilities and the potentialities and what is called upon you, and the more you work not to simplify things, the more possible it is to get close to being part of and experiencing that emergence.

**The צפית לישותה is one of the six questions you are asked, it is מחייב us**, it is one of the fundamental questions. If a person cannot answer that question he is in big trouble.

You actually address this issue every day when you daven Shmone Esrei:

### **י'כף החיים קי"ח:ח**

**בברכת את צמח כשתאמר כי לישותך קוינו כל היום תכוין לצפות ולקוות בכל יום ויום לישותנו ית' כדי שלא תתבייש בעת פטירתך כשיעמידוך לדין ושאלוך צפית לישותה כמ"ש רז"ל במסכת שבת פ"ב, שער הכוונ' שם, פרע"ח שם, בי"ע שם, בן א"ח שם, ואמרו בהקדמת הזוה"ק ס' בראשית, דף ד' ע"א מאן דלא מצפא דא בכל יומא בההיא עלמא לית ליה חולקא הכא, והביאו הרו"ח ס"ס קי"ט, וכתב הצמ"ח בפרע"ח שם וז"ל וגם אני מכוין לצפות לישות ה' שעושה עמנו להצילנו מכמה פגעים רעים בכל יום ובכל רגע ומצאתי תועלת גדול כמה פעמים בכל זה עכ"ל והביאו החיד"א בקש"ג סי' טו"ב או' י"א, בי"ע אות ב':**

**Were you constantly לישותה?**

## Did that define you as a human being?

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יז עמוד ב

ומה ראו לומר גאולה בשביעית? אמר רבא: מתוך שעתידין ליגאל בשביעית - לפיכך קבעוה בשביעית. והאמר מר: בששית קולות, בשביעית מלחמות, במוצאי שביעית בן דוד בא! מלחמה נמי אתחלתא דגאולה היא.

*And why did they see fit to mention redemption seventh? Rava said, "Because we are, in the future, to be redeemed on the Sabbatical [year]; therefore they set it in seventh." And didn't a Master say, "In the sixth year, voices, in the Sabbatical [year], battles, and after the Sabbatical [year] the descendant of David comes [and so the redemption is after the Sabbatical year]?" The battles are also the beginning of redemption.*

רש"י מסכת מגילה דף יז עמוד ב

אתחלתא דגאולה היא - ואע"ג דהאי גאולה לאו גאולה דגלות היא אלא שיגאלנו מן הצרות הבאות עלינו תמיד דהא ברכת קיבוץ ובנין ירושלים וצמח דוד יש לכל אחת ואחת ברכה לעצמה לבד מגאולה זו אפילו הכי כיון דשם גאולה עלה קבעוה בשביעית:

The Gemara asks why is the Bracha of Geula the 7th Bracha in Shmone Esrei? The Gemara concludes that ultimately Geula will take place in Shviis and therefore it was set as the seventh Bracha. Rashi points out that this Bracha of Geula is not actually referring to the ultimate Geula, for that Rashi points out we have other Brachos in Shmone Esrei , (ברכת קיבוץ ובנין ירושלים וצמח דוד) rather this Bracha refers to our personal Geula regularly. Even so he says, being as it shares the name Geula they put it as the seventh Bracha.

What this means is that each individual, **every individual life, requires a גאולה** and that that is part of the concept of the overall גאולה , which means every individual in terms of the **צפית לישועה** in terms of where his life is going, what the possibilities and the potential of his own life's גאולה , his vision of his personal גאולה is directly connected to the **צפית לישועה** !

If all a person's vision is that he should win the lottery, or to be rich and comfortable, and that is the **ישועה** of his life, then he is living a life that has nothing in common with what **צפית לישועה** is about. As the Kaf HaChayim said:

**וגם אני מכוין לצפות לישועת ה' שעושה עמנו להצילנו מכמה פגעים רעים בכל יום ובכל רגע ומצאתי תועלת גדול כמה פעמים בכל זה עכ"ל**

"When I am מכוין to the **צפית לישועה** I am מכוון in terms of where my own life goes, the things that HKB"H does for my life every day **and it has made my life a different life, an important life.**"

I have done my best both through these emails and in meetings with Talmidim to give over the momentousness of the events we are going through and how

one needs to have an awareness in order to appreciate and participate in these events and ultimately be able to grow through them.

I have no idea, in fact nobody has any idea what the end looks like they are by definition דברים סתומין . There is no way to know. Right now what needs to be done by each and every one of us is צפית לישועה and our own personal Geula, and an Avoda to be prepared to accept the full identity of Yisrael that will allow for the רוחו של משיח .

**P.S.** Yesterday the community of Kibbutz Nir Oz that was destroyed and whose members were butchered on Shmini Atzeres were temporarily relocated to vacant apartments in Kiryat Gat. The ENTIRE city came out to welcome them. They furnished their apartments, down to house plants, and pictures from local children hung on the refrigerators . It was an amazing showing of this amazing nation. Watching it could make you cry.

This morning it was announced that a member of the Kibbutz assumed kidnapped was actually killed and his body was taken by the animals called Hamas into Gaza.

This is the rollercoaster of feelings and experiences that Israeli society is going through daily. We should have a ישועה speedily.



## Essay #13

### Who is the Victim

January 18, 2024

ח' שבט תשפ"ד

Yeshiva continues to learn strong. I am really impressed by the Talmidim, some may have gotten started late, but they are all getting stronger as the year progresses.

It recently got seriously cold here in Israel. With one of my children and several Talmidim based up north, it is getting more difficult waiting to see what is going to go on with the northern front.

This week while the world court in the Hague put Israel on trial for war crimes, my daughter as part of her assignment in the spokespersons unit of the army, guided a group of 40 international reporters to Kerem Shalom, on the edge of Gaza, where Israel continues to supply our enemies with humanitarian aid. Go figure.

One last story from this week. Six years ago a very Chasuv and close Talmid of Derech Etz Chaim unfortunately passed away. At the time great effort was made to recover his Tefillin, which B"H was successful. I was contacted a few weeks back by the parents of this Talmid who wished to give the Tefillin to an Israeli Chayal who required Tefillin. When we put out the word we were inundated by many requests. One story was of a soldier whose vehicle came under attack in Gaza and was forced to abandon it with his Tefillin inside. This week we were able to give him these Tefillin in Gaza, we daven they should continue to protect him in his Holy efforts.

In Hilchos Teshuva we learn:

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ה

אל יעבור במחשבתך דבר זה שאומרים טפשי אומה"ע ורוב גולמי בני ישראל שהקב"ה גוזר על האדם מתחלת ברייתו להיות צדיק או רשע, אין הדבר כן אלא כל אדם ראוי לו להיות צדיק כמשה רבינו או רשע כירבעם או חכם או סכל או רחמן או אכזרי או כילי או שוע וכן שאר כל הדעות, ואין לו מי שיכפהו ולא גוזר עליו ולא מי שמושכו לאחד משני הדרכים אלא הוא מעצמו ומדעתו נוטה לאי זו דרך שירצה, הוא שירמיהו אמר מפי עליון לא תצא הרעות והטוב, כלומר אין הבורא גוזר על האדם להיות טוב ולא להיות רע, וכיון שכן הוא נמצא זה החוטא **ולפיכך ראוי לו לבכות ולקונן על חטאיו ועל מה שעשה לנפשו**, הוא הפסיד את עצמו וחזר ואמר הואיל ורשותנו בידינו, **וגמלה רעה, הוא שכתוב אחריו מה יתאונן אדם חי וגו** ומדעתנו עשינו כל הרעות ראוי לנו לחזור בתשובה ולעזוב רשענו שהרשות עתה בידינו הוא **שכתוב אחריו נחפשה דרכינו ונחקורה ונשובה וגו**.

*Let it not occur to your mind that God decrees at the birth of a person that he shall be good or evil, a notion expressed by foolish non-Jews and most of the stupid individuals among the Jews. It is not so. Every human being is capable of becoming righteous like Moses or wicked like Jeroboam, wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, niggardly or generous; and so with all other traits. **There is no one to compel him or to decree what he is to do, no one to pull him in either direction; it is he who directs himself deliberately toward any course he desires. This is what Jeremiah means when he says: "It is not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil comes" (Lamentations 3:38); that is to say, the Creator does not decree that a man shall be either good or evil. In view of this, it follows that the sinner causes his own ruin; he should therefore weep and lament because of his sins and the resulting evil he has brought upon himself***

Those who are learning Hilchos Teshuva with us every Sunday morning know that the Rambam begins Hilchos Teshuva specifically dealing with the external realities that confront a human and require us to do Teshuva in order to address those realities which we have violated. In the fifth Perek he introduces the idea of man as chooser, and creator, and that his choices are completely up to him, and that ultimately he creates himself via those choices and therefore bears complete responsibility for his own life.

As straightforward as that idea sounds to us it is the complete antithesis of how much of the western world and certainly the Arab world view life.

We watched this past week a situation which seems almost Midrashic if it wasn't so ridiculous: The world having a court to judge Yisrael if we have committed genocide. It is mind boggling in its logic. We have lived through months where society has backed a Palestinian society that looks at them as fools and shares no value for them nor shares any values with them. We saw "Queers for Palestine" and a women's movement that could not care less about the atrocities committed to the women in Israel by Hamas.

The west has created a world where you are defined by that which is outside of you. The #METOO movement was more concerned with being portrayed - or even more so, defined as victims then caring about the women . The Queers view their identity as defined by victimhood and for that reason alone identify with the ultimate victims, the Palestinians who have made their national identity (which doesn't really exist) as THE VICTIMS.

Yisrael, the most victimized people in history have never allowed ourselves to be defined as victims. Defining ourselves as victims would be allowing something outside of ourselves to define our being. The Jewish people should be the largest refugee problem of the century having been expelled from every single place we were living less than 100 years go. Yet there are no Jewish

refugees. The Palestinians on the other hand have been defined since their conception by what happened to them.

Yishmael and Hagar begin this trend by they themselves crying out about their victimhood.

War and fighting and the mobilization of society is the ultimate form of taking absolute responsibility for ourselves. I was at a wedding here last night and I had the opportunity to speak with some young men who grew up in Israel who are in the army, in Yeshiva, or in basic training. They have a level of maturity and personal responsibility and thoughtfulness that is completely alien to others their age in any other place in the world. They have a sense of self of purpose and focus that propels them.

I got to see another friend of mine who just came back from Chan Yunis in the heart of Gaza where he had been fighting for weeks. As part of a longer conversation, he told me how impressed he was by the Hesder Yeshiva soldiers who in their free time between missions opened a Gemara to learn! Even in the midst of a war we did not choose to start, and would rather not have to be in, we do not let the enemy define us. Rather these young men define their own lives. "I am in Yeshiva, at the moment I have to fight a war and be a soldier, but I still need to learn!"

This war is a war of Shmini Atzeres. Shmini Atzeres is THE DAY that defines the difference between Yisrael and the Amim.. The Rambam actually used that language:

**אל יעבור במחשבתך דבר זה שאומרים טפשי אומות העולם**

Don't make the mistake that the rest of the world makes. Understand that our identity comes from within. We will never allow ourselves to be defined by others. Yisrael will not be a victim, and that will drive everyone else mad.

The deepest Teshuva one can do is exactly this issue:

**ולפיכך ראוי לו לבכות ולקונן על, וכיון שכן הוא נמצא זה החוטא הוא הפסיד את עצמו, חטאיו ועל מה שעשה לנפשו וגמלה רעה, הוא שכתוב אחריו מה יתאון אדם חי וגו**

What have I made of myself? What have I made of my life? What have we made of Yisrael?

I was asked today by one of the participants in the Hilchos Teshvua shiur, how can I make sure the things that I have begun to take more seriously since this war began remain with me, being as they were only triggered by an external event.

The answer in terms of internalizing them is one that one must ask themselves. Am I living a life that is looking for that level of internalization? Am I living a life which is looking for Teshuva. If you are, then the internalization will be automatic. The trigger wasn't the cause, it was just the catalyst. The ingredients have to be there already.

This war, this endeavor, this chapter in Yisrael's history and what we are experiencing is going to go on for, I believe quite a long time. As we have spoken about in earlier emails, this is an opportunity for Yisrael as an Am and for each and every one of us as individuals. Let us use that opportunity .

Recently when people ask me how I am doing I have a new response. I am worried. I am worried about what we are presently and are about to go through, and I mean seriously worried. At the same time I am optimistic, maybe even very optimistic, about the ultimate outcome and a Yisrael that can achieve a level of self defined identity to propel ourselves forward.

## Essay #14

### A Very Bad Day

January 23, 2024

י"ד שבט תשפ"ד

Today is a very bad day. Today is a tragic terrible day. Upon finishing Shacharis I check the news and find out that 21 soldiers were killed when two buildings collapsed on them in Aza. 21 Kedoshei Yisrael. It is a hard day for everyone around. In the street, on the radio, in the news. These were all Miluimiikim (reserves) . People who stopped their regular life, some as old as 37 years old, to fight the most necessary fight in Yisrael's history.

Someone commented to me recently that it feels like a "Vietnam style conflict in terms of fighting, with a WW2 purpose". Even in Israel people, especially on the left, are getting tired of the war and wondering if it is a fight we can win. I have been preaching for months that the United States ultimately will not let us win.

There is a feeling here of absolute total chaos with no end in sight. It is clear to everyone that we will have a war in Lebanon come the spring. It is pretty much clear to everyone (except maybe Joe Biden) that Israel is going to have to occupy and fight off a guerrilla war in Aza for another few years at least.

And the background to all this are the hostages. That there are over 100 jews being held in captivity, just for being Jewish . Girls being raped, people whose health deteriorating, and there is nothing we can do (in spite of what the hostage families think). The UN or the US could do something, Israel can just keep fighting and hope they find some alive.

So where does that leave us today.

I was thinking today as I listened to the Mothers of the fallen soldiers on the radio of what we say in the Hagada and is timely in terms of this weeks Parshiot.

In the declaration of our right to Eretz Yisrael that we say in the Hagada and at the bringing of Bikurim we say in ארמי אובד אבי:

דברים פרק כו

(ז) וּנְצַעַק אֶל־יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְיִשְׁמַע יְקֹוֹק אֶת־קִלְנוּ וְיִרָא אֶת־עֵינֵינוּ וְאֶת־עַמְלָנוּ וְאֶת־לְחֻצְנוּ

We are דורש it in the Hagada:

וּנְצַעַק אֶל־יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ

כמה שנאמר

שמות פרק ב פסוק כ

וְיִהְיֶה בְיָמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל שְׁוַעְתָּם  
אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה

וְאֶת־עַמְלָנוּ

אלו הבנים כמה שנאמר: שמות פרק א

(כב) וַיֵּצֵאוּ פְרַעֲוֶה לְכָל־עַמּוֹ לְאֹמֶר כָּל־הַבָּן הַיְלֹוֹד הַיְאָרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל־הַבַּת תִּחְיוּן: ו

וְאֶת־לְחֻצֵנוּ

זה הדחק כמה שנאמר: שמות פרק ג

(ט) וַעֲתָה הִנֵּה צַעֲקַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאָה אֵלַי וְגַם־רָאִיתִי אֶת־הַלְחָץ אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לְחֻצִים אֲתֶם

What does HKB”H need to hear before he can respond?

וַתַּעַל שְׁוַעְתָּם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה

Specifically **מהעבודה** from the work. When it comes to **עמלינו** it is the **בנים** the children. And then you have this strange line of **לחצינו** the pressure. Look what is going on. Yisrael is enslaved for over two centuries. They have been killing the children and with that I have to worry about a little pressure in their lives?

The common theme in the response of HKB”H in Mitzrayim is not a response to pain, not a response to Stam crying out that its hard. **It is once we cried out for what was preoccupying our lives, מן העבודה** that I have to be involved in this type of work instead of an Avoda of my own life! That my efforts are my children, that's **עמלינו** not Stam the pain of children dying. The **לחץ**! That is what prevents everyone from moving forward. You cannot think! More and more pressure!

**To that HKB”H can respond.** It is the realization that our lives, that Yisrael as a nation's life is preoccupied with survival and the problem with that is that in being preoccupied with survival you cannot build a true Avoda. You cannot build period! To that HKB”H can respond.

רמב”ם הל' תשובה ט:ב

וְאִם עֲזַבְתֶּם אֶת ה' וּשְׁגִיתֶם בְּמֵאֲכָל וּבְמִשְׁתֵּה וּזְנוּת וְדוּמָה לָהֶם מִבֵּיא עֲלֵיכֶם כָּל הַקְּלָלוֹת  
הָאֵלוּ וּמִסִּיר כָּל הַבְּרָכוֹת עַד שִׁיכְלוּ יְמֵיכֶם בְּבִהְלָה וּפְחַד וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לֵב פְּנוּי וְלֹא גּוֹף שָׁלֵם  
לַעֲשׂוֹת הַמִּצְוֹת כְּדִי שֶׁתֵּאבְדוּ מִחַיֵי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא וְנִמְצָא שְׂאֵבְדֶתֶם שְׁנֵי עוֹלָמוֹת. שְׂבִזְמַן שְׂאֵדָם

טַרְדַּד בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּחַלֵּי וּבְמִלְחָמָה וְרַעְבוֹן אֵינוֹ מִתְעַסֵּק לֹא בַחֲכָמָה וְלֹא בַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁבָּהֶן זֹכֵין לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

*if you have abandoned God and become obsessed with food, drink, lewdness, and the like, He will bring all these curses upon you and remove all blessing until you will conclude all your days in confusion and fear. You will not have a free heart or a complete body to fulfill the mitzvot in order that you forfeit the life of the world to come.*

*Thus, you will forfeit two worlds for when a person is occupied in this world with sickness, war, and hunger, he cannot involve himself with either wisdom or mitzvot which allow him to merit the life of the world to come.*

We live in a tragic world, all of us and HKB"Y have רחמים on all those tragedies. This here, **the גלות of שעבוד** is what we are sensing right now. The wasting of the potential. **אלו הבנים** Every day our most precious sons are being lost and being occupied in Avodas HaKodesh and a Milchemes Mitzva, but it is not what we want to be doing. We want to be building an Am, we want to be building ourselves and building Yisrael. Instead the Galus and our enemies have gotten us involved in a never ending mess.

When the צעקה will come from there, not from sentimentality, or from tragedy, HKB"Y will respond. An Am that is seeking, that is not only worthy of a response but is ready to respond to the next steps necessary to end the Galus, just as they were in Mitzrayim.

Let the pain sink in. 21 of our sons were lost yesterday. 21 mothers lost their **עמלם** but so did we. All our work, focused on what?

We must defeat the enemy and with G-d's help we will. But we need to defeat them to move forward. We need this to be over to focus on a real Avoda not on an Avoda dictated to us by our enemy and the situation that history has thrust upon us.

I just want to end off with a letter that was left by one of the fallen **רב אלקנה** רב אלקנה . He left a wife and four children. His wife asked him to write a letter before he went back into Aza:

אם אתם קוראים את המילים האלה כנראה שקרה לי משהו. קודם כל, במקרה שנחטפתי לשבי, אני דורש שלא תיעשה שום עסקה לשחרור של אף מחבל כדי לשחרר אותי. הניצחון המוחץ שלנו יותר חשוב מהכול, אז אנא פשוט תמשיכו לפעול בכל הכוח כדי שניצחוננו יהיה כמה שיותר מוחץ", פתח אלקנה את מכתבו

הוא המשיך: "אולי נפלתי בקרב. כשחייל נופל בקרב זה עצוב. אבל אני מבקש מכם שתהיו שמחים. אל תהיו עצובים כשאתם נפרדים ממני. תשירו הרבה, תיטעו בלבבות, תחזיקו **יש לנו כל כך הרבה על מה להתגאות ולשמח**. האחד לשני את הידיים ותחזקו זה את זה אנחנו כותבים את הרגעים הכי משמעותיים בהיסטוריה של העם! **אנחנו דור של גאולה** שלנו ושל העולם כולו. אז בבקשה מכם תהיו אופטימיים. תמשיכו לבחור בחיים כל הזמן

”חיים של אהבה, תקווה, טוהר ואופטימיות.

*“If you are reading these words, something probably happened to me. First of all, in case I was captured by Hamas, I demand that no deal be made to release any terrorist in order to release me. Our overwhelming victory is more important than anything, so please—just press ahead with all the force until our victory is as overwhelming as possible. Maybe I fell in battle. When a soldier falls in battle it is sad. But I ask you to be happy. Don’t be sad when you part from me. Sing a lot, hold each other’s hands, and strengthen one another. We have so much to be excited and happy about—we are the generation of Jewish redemption! We are writing the most meaningful moments in the history of our people and the whole world. So please be optimistic. Keep choosing life all the time—a life of love, hope, purity and optimism. Look into the eyes of your loved ones and remind them that everything they experience in this life is worth it and that they have a lot to live for. Live! Don’t stop for a moment the intensities of life! I was wounded in ‘Operation Protective Edge [against Hamas in 2014].’ I had the choice to stay behind, but I don’t regret for a moment returning to be a fighter. On the contrary, it’s the best decision I ever made.”*

We should only hear Besurot Tovot



## Essay #15

### Miluim

February 6, 2024

כ"ז שבט תשפ"ד

I am sure everyone is familiar with how Onedrive, Amazon Photos and other services bring up memories annually of pictures from previous years. I have allot of fun distributing pictures from the past 25 years to DEC Talmidim showing them at their "finest" moments (and how much hair they had) when they were much younger.

Last week a picture came up on my phone that was from a conference that my daughter in her role in Dover Tzahal (Israeli spokespersons unit) had sent to me from one year ago. The headline of the conference was "Are reserve forces prepared for the next war?" In Hebrew the title was The Miluim Crises. During the past year while the government was trying to pass the judicial reform, one of the opposition responses was for soldiers to declare that they would no longer serve in Miluim (the reserves). It was the height of the internal conflict in the country.



Of course we all know that when the war broke out on Shmini Atzeres not only did everyone turn up for Miluim but there was a historically high turn out 150% showed up, so that there was actually not enough equipment in storage to help properly equip all that came.

To help you understand some of the details. Some people who go to the army are not assigned to Miluim units for all sorts of reasons. Some are decommissioned due to age or other reasons (I read this Shabbos about a former cabinet minister Tzi Hendel, who was decommissioned when he

became a minister - against his wishes and how he found a unit to fight with) . Even they showed up for Miluim and had to be assigned to units and distributed to where they would help most. And often trained for the specific assignments they were taking on in the army.

When one generally thinks of an army, we focus on the young extremely brave men 18- 21 who are in the "Regular" military service. The surprise of a the "Tik Tok" generation being ready, willing and able to fight bravely and turn into the דור הנצחון as they are being called , is amazing and inspiring. Every single story of every young man killed in battle and his friends can bring you to tears. An amazing people, and amazing country that can raise teenagers like these.

The reserves, the Miluimnikim as they are called, are literally from every walk of life in Israel. Religious, anti-religious, lawyers, doctors, educators, fathers, mothers all working intensely together. Taking 350,000 people out of regular circulation has had a profound impact on everyday life. Two DEC Talmidim working in High Tech say 50% of their workforce is in the army at present. And these Miluimnikim are doing amazingly brave missions . Many have battle experience or have been in Aza in the past. Their age has been shown to be an asset in the military.

This has become the hottest topic at present in Israel as after four straight months in the army, the Miluimnikim are now being decommissioned and sent home. Many being told they will be recalled later. (Most have expressed an extreme lack of enthusiasm for pulling out before they got to finish the job!) Some have businesses that have begun to collapse, all have families with children which are struggling with the father away for four months. They are true heroes to Israeli society and really to the Jewish people as a whole, interrupting their normal life and going enthusiastically to battle for Yisrael. They are greeted in the streets with hugs (my gardeners recently were released and came over to see what repairs need to be done to my garden after months of neglect, we shared hugs, a L'chayim and a very special few moments reconnecting).

That Israel calls its reserve soldiers מילואים has interesting roots. The source of the word is in the Torah where the opening of the Mishkan was called the מִי מְלֹאִים . Rashi gives two different explanations for the word.

In Parshas Truma where the word first appears referring to the stones on the breastplate it says :

שמות פרק כה:ז

(ז) אֲבִי־שֵׁהָם וְאֲבִי מְלֹאִים לְאֹפֶד וְלַחֹשֶׁן

רש"י שמות פרק כה

מלאים - על שם שעושין להם בזהב מושב כמין גומא ונותנין האבן שם למלאות הגומא, קרויים אבני מלואים, ומקום המושב קרוי משבצות

Because they made for them (for the stones) settings in gold – a kind of indentation – and they put the stone there (in it) **to fill the indentation, they were called “filling-up stones”**; the spot where the indentation is (i. e. the hollow spot) is called “**משבצת** setting.”

In Parshas Tetzaveh we have the Korbanos of Miluim:

שמות פרק כט:כב

אֵיל מְלֹאִים הוּא:

רש"י שמות פרק כט

מגיד הכתוב שהמלואים שלמים, **שלמים, לשון שלמות שמושלים בכל** - כי איל מלאים הוא שמימים שלום למזבח ולעובד העבודה ולבעלים, לכך אני מצריכו החזה להיות לו לעובד העבודה למנה, וזהו משה ששימש במלואים, והשאר אכלו אהרן ובניו שהם בעלים, כמפורש בענין

*of) מְלֹאִים usually translated peace-offerings (שלמים) meaning “full”, so that מְלֹאִים is synonymous with – (מלא) “perfection something that is perfect in all respects. Scripture informs us that the מְלֹאִים are to be regarded as שלמים sacrifices, in that they, like the שלמים, promote peace (שלום) between the altar and him who carries out the sacrificial rite (the priest) and the owner of the animal (the worshipper who brings the sacrifice)”. Therefore, says God, in this case I make it a condition that the breast shall belong as a portion to him who performs the sacrificial rite, viz., Moses, who officiated at the installation into office (cf. v. 26). – The remainder, Aaron and his sons ate because they were the “owners”, as is expressly set forth in this section*

I recently read that what may have been part of Hamas's miscalculation is that Israel, as a western, advanced, comfortable country would never be able to muster the courage and determination to fight back as ferociously as we

have. That is an understatement . It is one thing to think of what is called in Israel יסדיר the regular army, but even those in Miluim have been more than willing, to drop everything and go to battle.

The most famous Miluimnik, Idan Amedi (the Fauda and music star) after being seriously injured in Aza gave a press conference when he was being released with two main messages. First that everyone should realize what the Miluimnikim are doing and keep supporting them as they are being released and two, that he hoped G-d would give him the strength to recover and go back to fight.

The Yimei HaMiluim of the Mishkan are the days of dedication of the Mishkan. The Miluim may be there to “fill in” (as the stone in Parshas Terunma) but they are by far the most Shalem members of the Jewish people and of Israeli society, which is proving every day to be so much more deeper and high quality then anything anyone could of conceived. And there is no need to mention in terms of dedication!

As the Miluim were being released this week, mostly being told to refresh and get ready to go back in in a few month's time, the army has begun to deal with its manpower issues, which are going to be difficult over the long term, as this war is nowhere near over. To do so they requested that those Yeshiva Talmidim in Mechinot and in Yeshivot Hesder advance their draft date. In the Hesder Yeshivot they are not yet drafting all of the Talmidim, which has lead to an interesting dynamic where the Roshei Yeshiva have to choose which Talmidim will stay in Yeshiva and which must go now to the army.

To anyone who is not completely tone deaf in the Charedi community, the message is clear that they also are going to have to make some choices and take upon themselves the responsibility for defense of the country. It is a complicated issue that my son Yoni, because of his position in the army, is very involved in, and it is not as simple as saying “we are going to close all the Yeshivas” - we are not . But with many Hesder Talmidim falling in battle it begs the question of what makes their learning less important?!

There are going to be some changes in society in Israel as a whole , there are already changes underway. And those changes are going to affect and penetrate the Chareidi society as well. (Derech Etz Chaim has been given the opportunity to be involved in those changes and more on that front will be coming out soon.)

Klal Yisrael has really shown itself and what it is capable of as a people. Self-sacrifice, Arvus, and care for each other. It is palatable throughout the country every single day in almost every interaction. Halevai that we can build on this to where Yisrael needs to be at to achieve its ultimate identity and end the Golus for real, once and for all.

My Broken Heart

February 21, 2024

י"ב אדר א' תשפ"ד

For those who have yet to hear the news, and even for those who have, I wish to dedicate this edition to a personal "war" of sorts, both in order to keep a diary of my "wartime" experience and also because I think there is something to be learned, and I might just save a life as mine was saved, by providing some basic information. I also want to express my appreciation for the unseen Miracle I was somehow *זוכה* to.

I am going to start at the very beginning. At the end of November I went to the US for a wedding and to visit Talmidim in Dallas for Shabbos. While at the wedding I found myself unusually winded after dancing with the Chosson and again as I dashed through the airport in Dallas to catch my flight home.

You have to know something about me for the story to make sense. I am in very good shape. I have never smoked or been overweight, I work out twice a week with a personal trainer and run on a treadmill several times a week, so it was odd to me that I should be so winded and out of breath so easily.

So like a "man", rather than going to a doctor, I increased my aerobic training. Spending more time on the treadmill at a faster pace and higher incline. (Later I learned how I almost killed myself in the process).

Returning to the US for another wedding at the end of December I stayed by a dear Talmid's home in FL, Dr. Peter Tepler. We can spend hours shmoozing on topics of deep meaning and as we often do, we exchange ideas on new books that one of us might like. He recommended a book - that I now recommend to everyone, call "Outlive" by Peter Attia, MD. I downloaded an audio copy and ordered the book version via Amazon and had it before Shabbos.

Dr. Attia writes "*When I was in Medical school my first year pathology professor liked to ask a trick question. What is the most common presentation of heart disease? It wasn't chest pain, left arm pain or shortness of breath, it was sudden death. You know a patient has heart disease because they just died from it*". He continues in the chapter to go through all the myths of what we think of when one thinks of heart disease, and why that fully half of all heart attacks occur in people under the age of 65! He explains very scientifically and extremely clearly the way calcium is moved through the bloodstream and can cause sclerosis in the heart and in surrounding chambers and that numbers such as blood pressure and Cholesterol level (which on me were fine) are not as relevant as we think. He

even brought a story of a friend in perfect condition, and like I, had no high blood pressure or other obvious issues. That led me to think that maybe what he was talking about was the issue here.

So for the first time in too long a time I went to see my doctor to whom I described my episodes of lack of breath . He listened to my heart and heard a murmur and sent me for an Echo. (I had just booked a third session a week with my trainer.) Immediately upon seeing my Echo the technician told me to STOP everything. Stop doing anything more than walking to shul and even that he said I needed to be careful. I set up an appointment with a Cardiologist.

Upon the recommendation of a close friend who is a high-level doctor here in Israel, I made an appointment to see Dr. Ofir Amir, he is the head of Cardiology at Haddasah Ein Karem. He looked over everything did his own check up and before he finished writing up the summery had already scheduled me for a procedure called the TAVI, (transcatheter aortic valve implantation procedure, in the us they call is the TAVR , Transcatheter aortic valve replacement), a procedure that replaces a diseased aortic valve. Haddasah has some of the top people in the world to do this procedure. So.... Now knowing I had a ticking bomb in my bosom I very carefully went about my business returning to the hospital on Thursday for the pre procedure preparation including an Echo and a CT as well as blood work preparing for the Tavi and a few days in the hospital to recover.

What I had was Aeortic Stenosis, What Is Aortic Stenosis? Your aortic valve keeps blood flowing from your heart's lower left chamber (left ventricle) to the aorta which is the main artery bringing blood from the heart to the body. Aortic stenosis occurs when the aortic valve narrows and blood cannot flow normally. It is caused by a build up of calcium around the Aeortic valve that leads it to wear down and not open properly. It is not a rare situation, just that I was only 59 and that was rare. (Remember no high blood pressure no high cholesterol no overweight - basically no way of knowing without a calcium test or echo which is rarely done in younger people). I had the stenosis due to the congenital rarity of my having a bicuspid valve as opposed to most people who have tri-cuspid.

I was released for Shabbos and returned on Sunday expecting the procedure, but was met instead by the entire team of Doctors including the heart surgeon, who showed me looking at the CT that it was dangerous to do the TAVI. So the decision was one without a choice of a full blown valve replacement surgery which boils down to open heart surgery. Dr. Amit Korach, the head of Cardiothoracic surgery at Haddasah scheduled the surgery. When he came out after the surgery to report to my wife he told her he had no idea how I was walking much less working out. Simply called it a  $\text{O}1$  that I survived to that point.

I had my complaints against the situation. What's the point of being in shape and caring about ones health if this can happen anyway?! But as the Doctors pointed out to me, L'Hephech, just the opposite, had I not taken care of myself I could have dropped earlier or I would not have noticed the lack of cardio ability had I not normally not had that problem.

I want to mention that not only did Drs. Amir and Korach save my life, and not only were they the top people who could make a lot more money in the US, they came every single day to check on me , even their off days. Seeing how I progressed, how I was doing, being encouraging. When I checked out of the hospital I said to Dr. Amir that he may view what he does as his job but to me it was clear he went מעל ומעבר , well beyond the call. His reply “ this isn't work” . Just last night during dinner several days after my release from the hospital Dr. Korach called to see how I am doing! As shocked as I was, I wasn't surprised.

The Gemara tells us

רק שבתו יתן ורפא ירפא

מכאן שניתנא רשות לרופא לרפאות

In a religious society, one based on Emunah and Bitachon that is a tremendous Chidush and gives us tremendous insight into those two issues. That ultimately HKBH is the רופא כל בשר but we need to do everything we must to make it happen. That is the closest expression of Bris that we ultimately have with HKBH . It is why the Gemara says that :

מה ראו לומר רפואה בשמינית

אמר רבי אחא מתוך שנתנה מילה בשמינית

These issues have allot to do with War and IY”H my next email will address the connection. In the meanwhile I wanted to end with several thoughts.

Doctors save lives. I know that sounds simple but when I speak to Doctors, Peter Tepler, Moshe Stiebel, Jonah Zisquit, Bayruch Goldwasser, Elan Noorparvar, Isaac Manaster and other DEC Talmidim whose names don't come to mind at the moment, I do not know if they themselves realize how Chashuv they are! Several of those Talmidim on the list are practicing in Eretz Yisrael or on their way. WE NEED YOU!

Another part of my experience was in the days following the surgery when I simply did not have the strength to practice simple Mitzvos. The connection of your ability to be a functional part of Olam HaZeh is directly connected to your ability to do and appreciate Mitzvos. We don't really think about how much a part of our physical life they are - until you can't do them. It adds another level to the Rambams:

השמחה שישמח אדם בעשיית המצוה ובאהבת הא"ל שצוה בהן

Lastly and most importantly, take care of your health. I now have firsthand **עדות** on my healthy heart. But Chas V'Shalom things could have gone another way had I not been paying attention.

We should all be **זוכה** to the ultimate Refuah:

ושב ורפא לו

With G-d's help soon.



## Essay #17

### Yeshiva vs Army

March 4, 2024

כד' אדר א' תשפ"ד

I want to begin by thanking all of you who reached out to wish me a Refuah Shleima and for your Tefillos. I am B"H feeling much better, I have a ways to go to feel 100 percent, but feeling better and stronger every day. I was especially thankful for the phone calls and a number of Talmidim who took time on their visit to Israel to come by, and one who drove over two hours from the Golan to be מבקר חולים . Thank you.

The Yeshiva participated in the wedding of Rav Shmuel Kornfeld's eldest daughter this past week and later this week numerous DEC Alumni will be joining Rav Sheftel's son's wedding in Lakewood (I had originally hoped to be there as well until my surgery).

The Yeshiva also went on a WZO/MASA sponsored tour of the Southern Israel, Gaza border communities where Hamas committed its atrocities to see firsthand and hear from survivors what it is that began this war.

My commitment in these essays is to connect you to what is going on during this time in Israel, and try to make you aware of the some of the societal changes that are going on here since the beginning of this war, so even though the topic I am addressing today is somewhat controversial, it is important for you to understand that this is **the topic** that the entire country is focusing on at the moment. It is also something that I hope and believe Derech Etz Chaim can affect positively and be part of the solution.

The Chareidi draft, or the need to draft Chareidim is a is a hot news topic. The government brought a bill to the Knesset with the purpose of meeting the army's increased manpower needs over the coming years - where the assumption is we will be in a constant state of war for a while, the bill will extend regular service from 28 months to 32 and Miluim, reserve duty, to 40 days a year. When the bill was raised the question being asked is "how do we pass a bill to address manpower shortages without addressing the thousands of Chareidim who do not go to the army?". The supreme court issued a ruling asking the Government to justify how they are at present not drafting Yeshiva students and continue to fund Yeshivas even though there is no legal basis at the moment not to draft them. The State has to reply and the attorney general has given the Government until April 1 to begin processing legislation and by June 30 to complete the legislation. (The law which previously existed has expired.)

Before the war the Religious parties were looking to pass a law that would exempt all Yeshiva students from military service, period. They understand that is not a law that can be or should be passed at present.

Another angle is that polls have shown that Chareidim and other populations that supported the Yeshiva exemption, are now more ready to have Chareidi Yeshiva students join the army than in the past, meaning there is an opportunity to be utilized to solve a long standing problem that has created tension within Israeli society.

In order for you to understand the issue better I have to break it down and make it clear what the problem is, and what the issues towards solving it are. First and foremost, nobody in the mainstream believes all of the Yeshivas should be shut down. The need is to balance the allowance for anyone who wishes to learn to be able to do so, while addressing the country's military needs, and the responsibility of Charedi society to the general society in Israel.

When I came to Israel in 1981 I had the privilege of getting to know Rav Yosef Tenenbaum, Z"L the founder of Vaad Hayeshivos which is where (originally) Yeshiva students received their Yeshiva military exemption. He told me of his meeting with David Ben Gurion, the founding prime minister of Israel, to discuss exemptions from the military for students wishing to study in Yeshiva. They came into the meeting expecting a battle with a man who was viewed as a very anti-religious leader. Rav Tenenbaum Z"L told the story that they sat there waiting and eventually Ben Gurion walked in and without hesitation or even having them speak he stated " The Cossacks closed Yeshivas, the State of Israel is not going to do that". End of meeting walked out. From there the Yeshiva military exemption was born. People want to say the problem is in the growth of the numbers from that time of Yeshiva students and Yeshiva exemptions - but that is not the real issue. The problem is the taking advantage of the exemption, and a culture that was created that going to the army was not required or necessary for those who identified as Charedi regardless of whether they were actually learning full time or not. Everyone is aware that even those who are not learning, often utilize the exemption by finding a Yeshiva ready to register them even though they are not learning. There are other methods used to avoid army service. All of them in the "service" of not going to the army.

Lets look at the other side. The Chareidi community has hesitations about sending their sons at age 18 into a completely irreligious environment. It is similar, but in some senses worse than the (justified) discomfort of sending a religious teenager away to dorm in a secular college. It is not necessarily a positive environment for a frum teenager. The army has been addressing that - slowly and not very well for the most part, but they are trying to create environments that Chareidim will be comfortable in. (My son's army position is an officer in the מנהל החרדי which tries to assign Chareidim to appropriate environments for their service).

The other issue, and I think this is the bigger issue, is that most parents do not want to give up on their son getting into learning right after high school. In the Chareidi community Torah learning is the highest value, they would give anything for their son to be a Talmid Chacham. Similar to US parents, they hope a year or two in Yeshiva post high school can inspire their son to get into learning in a serious way. What this has led to in Israel, are what is referred to as ישיבות לנושרים which means for kids who are falling off. Those Yeshivas receive the same level of government support as other higher end Yeshivas, while discouraging their Talmidim from going to the army, and that is where much of the controversy is.

Right now Netzach Yehuda, which is a Chareidi combat unit, is generally full with each draft. Most of those are kids are from Chareidi families, but they themselves have fallen out of Yeshiva, and are not necessarily so from anymore. There are other combat units with higher quality (religiously) kids.

The interim stage, right after High School (Yeshiva Ketana) prior to army service is another place where work can be done. We all want the top Yeshivas to keep functioning. The Talmidim in those Yeshivas (Chevron, Ponovich and others) are learning at the highest levels with serious Hasmada. Think of the most Chashuv Rav you know in your community and multiply that by a Beis Medrash of 1000 and that is what some of these Yeshivas are. A tremendous long-term resource for the Jewish people.

It's the middle, not the top and not the bottom that has to be addressed. The Kippa Seruga (national religious) system has set up numerous tracks for Yeshiva. Some go to Mechina which is a year or two of full time learning then straight 3 years of army. Some elect to go to Hesder which combines 1.5 years of learning with 1.5 years of army, and others go to Yeshiva Gevocha, as in Mercas HaRav and Har Hamor where they are involved in full time learning and push army service off almost indefinitely. It works for two reasons. One is the array of options and choices, and the other, more importantly, is that the community values army service.

The army can come up with solutions and frameworks for Chareidim, but the Chareidi community needs to want to address the imbalance and begin to value army service and see it as an obligation. The latest polls since the beginning of the war, show that army service as a value is on the rise within the Charedi community. Now the question is how to address it.

There are a number of proposals at the moment. One is to draft Chareidim / Yeshiva students at an older age, 24, 25 after they have had time to learn, are less easily influenced by the environment and usually are married and have established families. The service period may be shorter than 32 months but still significant enough to provide value to the IDF.

I propose a two level system of Yeshivas. The “elite” Yeshivas - which have egos and deserve to, will be viewed as a place for lifetime learning and an exemption from army service. Other institutions taking after the US model of students have 2-3 years to spend in Yeshiva before moving on to the army in one of the frameworks that are set up for post yeshiva students. If a student at the end of his time in the 2-3 year Yeshiva can get accepted to the “Elite” yeshiva, and wishes to continue in full time learning, then he can continue learning. These Elite Yeshivas have big egos and lowering their standards to help exempt students from the army is not going to happen.

What I am presently working on with a group of Mechanchim and community activists from the Chareidi community is to create a high-end yeshiva addressing the needs of top boys coming out of the Chareidi Tichons- Chareidi high schools with secular studies. The Talmidim in these high schools have already broken a boundary in Chareidi society by having an academic education. These boys level of learning and seriousness and what they want is in the top echelon of learning, but they plan on integrating into Israeli society, and going to the army (not necessarily combat) is something they are not just open to, but often planning. At the end of their 2-3 years at the Yeshiva they will have options. They can continue in learning at a high-end Yeshiva, or they can go to army into an appropriate framework as first and foremost strong Bnei Torah hopefully in leadership roles. We hope to create not only soldiers but officers! But most importantly Talmidie Chachamim and Ovdie Hashem who will create an incredible Kiddush Hashem wherever they continue on to.

(More information on Derech Etz Chaim’s plans is coming soon!)

This is such a hot button issue that the government may likely fall over the issue shortly as the Charedi leadership is, as most of the leadership in this country is, out of touch with their public . Change will happen ground up and I hope we can be part of the positive change.

It is one of the amazing changes that have come over Israeli society over the past months and as with all changes it will be interesting to see where it brings us - and what effect it has on the US Yeshivish community as well.

I want to share with you three pictures that are worth a thousand words on this topic (If you don’t understand the Hebrew find someone who does it is worth it).

# הודעה

למכת השתוללות הדמים אשר העיפה את כל ערי ארץ הודו וארץ ירושלים  
ועמקת הסכנות המאמירות והעלמות מיהו ליום עיי צוררים אשר אמרו לנו ונבחרים  
קורא מרכז אגדת ישראל צעירים לכל צעירי עמנו ברוך כה הנה הימים החדו  
ברושלים לבוא ולהתייצב איש איש על גשמוניו ואל המידו לרוץ על גפס והקום.

אחרי שהובטחו כל הירושות לשמירת הדת  
במהגות המתפקדים קודשת השבת מאכלי  
בשרות ויצרת איזה דתית על ידי הקמת  
התיבות מיוחדות לצעירים תרדים

קורא מרכז אגדת ישראל  
לכל איש ואיש בירושלים  
בני 17 עד 25 שנה

להתייצב

## כמפקד לשרות העם

שואבנו עליו מטעם כל הישוב נאכשו תחנות איומות להתפקדות העויר  
והעירי אשר תוקעלנה ציי באי כה העבוד החדו ושמוקומן יתפרסם לועד  
עובד המועצות העיר וס על המורים יגזרו ישראל כל כבודו כה פלך מועד  
ובכל בית ישראל לעתיד תצלה לפני רבת העולמים שאמר די לעזות עמי ישראל  
וכתרי דאחנו צאריך מצרים לראש גשמות

תוק ותחוק בעד עמנו ובעד עיר אלוקינו ויה יעשה הכבד בעינת

ועדת המפקד

שע"י

מרכז אגדת ישראל בארץ ישראל

1717

The poster above is from 1948, a call from Agudas Yisrael for Yeshiva students to join the army The poster above is from 1948, a call from Agudas Yisrael for Yeshiva students to join the army



## Essay #18

### Misrad Hahishtadlus

March 8, 2024

כ"ח אדר א' תשפ"ד

Thank you again to all those who have been in touch. B"H I am getting stronger every day. I have begun physical therapy and I am looking forward to being in Yeshiva for Shabbos Zachor and Purim.

We are having an Alumni Shabbos in the Yeshiva for Shabbos Zachor joining together for davening and the Shabbos meals catered by Chef Doron!

The Yeshiva had a Tiyul today to the Dead Sea. We have had a very limited winter of trips due to the war and that much of the country is off limits. I am not sure if you are aware but there are still tens of thousands of Israelis misplaced from their homes in the north.

On a sad note my wife's Grandmother, known to years of DEC Talmidim as Grandmom, passed away at 98 years old this past week. Grandmom would love eating in Yeshiva on Shabbos, making Challa and pancakes for the boys over the years. I have heard from decades of Alumni . She was very much a part of DEC .

One of the things I don't think you hear much about, but here you hear it from soldiers you meet who just came back from fighting in Aza, are the daily Nissim (miracles) that are taking place. As terribly tragic every loss of life has been, the numbers are not nearly where the worst predictions were prior to the ground offensive. These are building to building battles, against an enemy that lurks behind every room and acts like a "civilian" until the moment he pulls out his RPG to fire. The connection between Hishtadlus and Bitachon are being expressed every day in Aza and amongst the brave Chayalim. In Israel the Ministry of Defence is called משרד הבטחון I think a more appropriate name might be משרד ההשתדלות. Let me explain:

This idea is timely as Purim focuses us on these issues of Hishtadlus and Bitachon.

אסתר פרק ד

(ח) וְאֵת פְּתֻשָׁן כָּתַב הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּשׁוּשַׁן לְהַשְׁמִידם נָתַן לוֹ לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת אֶסְתֵּר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ:  
וּלְצִוּוֹת עָלֶיהָ לְבֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַתְחַנֵּן לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו עַל עַמָּהּ

*He also gave him the written text of the law that had been proclaimed in Shushan for their destruction. [He bade him] show it to Esther and inform her, **and charge***

**her to go to the king and to appeal to him and to plead with him for her people.**

Mordechai commands Esther to go and beg for her nation. She replies:

אסתר פרק ד

יא כָּל עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהִמִּית לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת שֵׁרְבִיט הַזָּהָב וְחַיָּה וְאֲנִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם

*“All the king’s courtiers and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any person, man or woman, enters the king’s presence in the inner court without having been summoned, there is but one law for him—that he be put to death. Only if the king extends the golden scepter to him may he live. Now I have not been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days”.*

What is Esther saying? **If “everybody knows” then so does Mordechai!**

Suddenly now for the first time she doesn’t do what Mordechai asks of her?!  
Now she is second guessing him?!

What Esther is saying to Mordechai is “you want me to go in to ask for my life?”

“I would like you to explain to me why I should do this.” “I assume you want me to do this because you think it might help. And if it will help it’s the right thing to do because we do not rely on G-d’s intervention etc...”

We call this השתדלות .

**See if I can influence the situation.** I will be a lobbyist while you pray.  
Hishtadlus and Bitachon

Esther says though that, “There is only one problem. **Hishtadlus means to do something that is at least minimally effective**”. Something that could work. Well, every idiot on the street knows “ask any idiot on the street etc” you have 364 days left to deal with the issues. Why does this plan make any sense at all?!

Esther says “this is not called Hishtadlus it is called dumb” so you are going to have to give me a better reason.

Esther is successful at eliciting from Mordechai the answer she is looking for:

אסתר פרק ד

כִּי אִם הַחֶרֶשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת רֹחַ וְהִצְלָה יַעֲמוּד לַיהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר וְאֵת וּבֵית אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לְעֵת כְּזֹאת הִגְעַתְּ לְמַלְכוּת:

*“If you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis”.*

What Mordechai is telling Esther is: “you are correct there is absolutely no need for your Hishtadlus.” And “I was wrong to imply that there was anything that you could achieve in terms of Hishtadlus. There is no need to cry to the king” and indeed she does not - she invites him to a party.

**This is not a clarification it is a profound change in our understanding of Hishtadlus and Bitachon.**

**What Mordechai is saying, is the most fundamental change of paradigm that has occurred in the history of Yisrael to that point. It sits behind the entire Tikun of Megillas Esther and Purim.**

On the surface it seems like he is saying absolute nonsense. If you are asking someone to do something, and trying to convince them we are “counting on you” the last thing you tell them is, “it will work out anyway”.

**If I can say רֹחַ וְהִצְלָה יַעֲמוּד לַיהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר then I cannot say the second part of the pasuk וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לְעֵת כְּזֹאת הִגְעַתְּ לְמַלְכוּת:**

Is Mordechai convinced that we really do not even need Esther to go in?

What Mordechai says to Esther is **its about you**. If you are quiet at a time like this, then you are not only destroying yourself as an individual, but the entire historical line that has led to this moment. It was the instant that you could address everything that had gone wrong from the time your great grandfather Shaul HaMelech, that had led to the birth of Haman to be born from Agag, and that had the מלכות taken away from him to be given to מנו הטוב which is now given back to you with those same words (see מגילת אסתר א:יט). **Which is offering you - Esther - this unique opportunity.**

Hold on - what opportunity? I thought you just said it will work out anyway? You just said we don’t need you Esther?

**The results are mechanically the same. If you are the one who is the agent of those results then there is a difference.** You will have reinserted the entire line of history that led to this moment and **now no one will notice that there is or ever was an alternative. Because there wasn’t one - you were the alternative.**



This is exactly as war works.

The Rabeynu Bchaya in his introduction to Parshas Shlach says:

במדבר י"ג:ב'

### סוס מוכן ליום מלחמה ולה' התשועה (משלי כא, לא)

שלמה המלך ע"ה יזהיר כל אדם בכתוב הזה (משלי כא) **שיעשה כל דבר שיצטרך לעשות** ושימסור השאר בידי שמים, כי הנס אינו חל אלא בחסרון, **ובדרך הטבע כל מה שבכוח הטבע, ועיקר יצירת האדם בנוי על מדת הטבע, ועל כן יצטרך שיעשה האדם פעולות וענינים, שיהיו הכנות להשיג בהן חפצו ולעמוד על משאלות לבו,**

*In this verse Shlomo HaMelech warns everybody to do whatever is in his power by using natural means to achieve his success. Beyond that, he must leave things to G'd. **A miracle occurs only when all the natural means have been exhausted and have proven to be inadequate to produce the desired result.** Man was created in such a way that he can cope with most problems by using natural means.*

**כמי שרוצה ללכת למלחמה על אויביו שראוי לו שיכין כלי זיין וסוסים ומרכבות ליום** או כמי שיש לו חולה שהוא ראוי, **מלחמה, שאם אינו מכין ויסמוך על הנס ימסר ביד אויביו** לתקן לו מסעדים וסמים למאכלו, ומאכילו המאכלים המועילים ולמנוע ממנו המאכלים המזיקים, ואחר שעשה לו כל יכלתו והשתדל בכל כחו ועשה בדרך הטבע כל הכנותיו אין ראוי **כי יש אדם שיאבד במלחמה**, לו לבטוח שיגיע אל רצונו רק בשם יתעלה לא בהכנות האלה ויש חולה שימות עם המאכלים המועילים, **עם כל ההכנות ויש שינצל מבלעדיהן**

ויש שתגיע לו רפואה עם המאכלים הרעים המזיקים

*If one plans to secure victory over an adversary in a confrontation one must strive to equip oneself with all of the necessary weapons and the quality of weapons needed to give one an advantage. In other words, in the days of Shlomo HaMelech one needed horses and chariots. (Today it is tanks and aircraft) If one left everything to heaven one will find that heaven does not intervene on one's behalf. If someone is sick and one prays for him to be healed such a prayer is useless unless one has first taken the measures known to help the patient to get well, such as giving him the type of food he needs, Only after one has taken all the measures known to medical science which are capable of curing such a patient does one ask heaven to do its part in curing the sick person at hand*

וא"כ אין עיקר התשועה בענין המלחמה ולא בענין הרפואה להכנותיהם רק בשם יתעלה שכן כתיב (תהילים קמ"ז:ג') הרופא לשבורי לב ומחבש לעצבותם, וכתיב (שם) לא בגבורת הסוס יחפץ ולא בשוקי האיש ירצה, וכתיב (שם לג) שקר הסוס לתשועה

*This is the deeper meaning of Psalms 147,3 **לשבורי לב ומחבש לעצבותם**, "He heals their broken hearts, and binds up their wounds." It is also written in verse 10 of that same psalm that "He does not prize the strength of horses, nor value the fleetness of men." We have a third verse (Psalms 33,17) in which David*

*expressly ridicules those who place their trust in their horses by saying: "horses are a false hope for deliverance, for all their great power they provide no escape."*

**זאת כוונת התורה ורוב הפסוקים מוכיחין כן, ולכך תצוה התורה לישראל להשתדל בהכנות האלה שיצאו חלוצים בעלותם למלחמה על אויביהם ושישימו אורב ושישלו מרגלים בערי האויבים, כי כל הענינים האלה הם הכנות לעשות מה שבכח האדם לעשות ואע"פ שישראל לא היו, בדרך המנהג והטבע, ואחר כן יפעול הנס על כל מעשה הטבע צריכין לזאת לפי שלא היה נצחונן בדרך המנהג והטבע כי אם על פי הזכות והעונש, ואם היו זכאין מעט מהם ינצחו עמים רבים, ואם היו חייבים מעט מן האויבים ינצחו רבים מהם, מכל מקום באה מצות התורה לישראל לעשות כל השתדלותם בהכנות האלה ואחר כך למסור הענין למי שהתשועה לו, כי התורה לא תסמוך על הנס לעולם**

*Bnei Yisrael were right in doing what is humanly possible to gird themselves for war against the Canaanites including spying out how best to invade the land of Canaan. Setting ambushes, sending undercover agents, etc., are all legitimate ways for preparing an invasion and maximizing the chances of success. Once all these steps had been taken G'd would add whatever measure of supernatural assistance was needed to ensure success. The Torah does not make the performance of miracles the cornerstone of its dealings with mankind or the Jewish people. Miracles are exceptions, not norms.*

The Rabeynu Bchaya explains that a person needs to take personal responsibility and do everything in his power to succeed and only then will HKB"H provide that which needs to happen beyond the natural order. The Israeli army needs the best weapons, the best training, the highest motivated soldiers, the best commanders, the best plans. If they are prepared to the 100 percent degree, then HKB"H comes in and makes sure there is success.

If a person does 1 percent less than what is totally necessary, what you have done is "played the odds" and that is Amalek's approach.

The Gemara in Megilla 11a says:

רבי אֶלְעָזָר פֶּתַח לֵה פֶתַח לְהָא פְרָשְׁתָּא מְהֵכָא: "בְּעֵצְלֵיתִים יִמָּךְ הַמְקָרָה וּבְשִׁפְלוּת יְדִים יִדְלוּף הַבַּיִת", בְּשִׁבִיל עֵצְלוּת שְׁהִיָּה לְהֵם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלָא עֲסָקוּ בְּתוֹרָה, נַעֲשֶׂה שׁוֹנְאוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְךָ

**Rabbi Elazar introduced this passage with an introduction from here: "Through laziness the rafters] hamekare [sink in]yimakh ;[and through idleness of the hands the house leaks "(Ecclesiastes 10:18). Rabbi Elazar interprets the verse : *Through the laziness of the Jewish people, who did not occupy themselves with Torah study ,the enemy of the Holy One, Blessed be He ,a euphemism for God Himself ,became poor] makh ,[so that, as it were,***

The Pasuk in Koheles that R' Eliezer opens the learning of the Megilla translates "that through laziness the roofer gets weak".

**But the word המקרה also means the maker of coincidences, the one who uses Mikre.** When one is lazy, even 1 percent lazy, not putting in 100 percent, not taking the opportunities given to you, you make all the coincidences that have added up in your life and throw them out. It כביכול weakens HKB”H

There is a book called “The Biggest Bluff “ by Maria Konnikova in which she uses Poker as a metaphor to life and understanding the relationship of luck (the hand you are dealt) to skill - what you do with the hand you are dealt.

She writes in her introduction:

*That’s the thing about life: You can do what you do, but in the end, some things remain stubbornly outside your control. You can’t calculate for dumb bad luck. As they say, man plans, God laughs. I could definitely detect a slight cackle.*

*My reasons for getting into poker in the first place were to better understand that line between skill and luck, to learn what I could control and what I couldn’t, **and here was a strongly-worded lesson if ever there were: you can’t bluff chance.***

From War we learn how to live. Our lives are lives that are made up of an infinite number of chance happenings, things that come out of the chaos and look like coincidence. If we take our lives seriously, if we take our opportunities and make our choices, only then HKB”H takes over, once we have put in everything necessary. Everything - 100 percent.

## רמבן איוב לו

**ז לא יגרע מצדיק עיניו** - זה הכתוב מפרש ענין גדול בענין ההשגחה , ובאו בו פסוקים רבים. כי אנשי התורה והאמונה התמימה יאמינו בהשגחה , כי האל ישגיח וישמור אנשי מין האדם כמו שכתוב “גדול העצה ורב העלילה אשר עיניך פקוחות על כל דרכי בני אדם לתת לאיש כדרכיו וכפרי מעלליו ואמר דוד: “כי כל לבבות דורש יי” וכל יצר מחשבות מבין ולא בא בתורה או בנבואה שיהיה האל משגיח ושומר אישי שאר הבריות שאינן מדברות רק

שומר את הכללים בכלל ‘השמים וצבאם’  
**ומן הטעם הזה ישמור את הצדיקים , כי כאשר לבם ועיניהם תמיד עמו**

כן עיני יי עליהם מראשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה , **עד כי החסיד הגמור הדבק באלהיו תמיד ולא יפרד , הדבק במחשבתו בו בענין מענייני העולם -יהיה נשמר תמיד מכל**

**מקרי הזמן**, אפילו ההוים בטבע , וישתמר מהם בנס יעשה לו תמיד , כאלו יחשב מכת העליונים אינם מבני ההויה וההפסד למקרי העתים; וכפי קרבתו להדבק באלהיו ישתמר שמירה מעולה. והרחוק מן האל במחשבתו ובמעשיו , ואפילו לא יתחייב מיתה בחטאו אשר חטא , יהיה משולח ונעזב למקרים. ובאו בזה פסוקים רבים: אמר דוד עליו השלום: “רגלי חסידיו ישמור ורשעים בחשך יד מואמר , כי הקרובים אליו - בתכלית השמירה; והרחוקים ממנו מזומנים למקרים ואין להם מציל מן הנזק

ומפני שרוב העולם מן הכת הזאת האמצעית , צותה התורה החלץ הנלחמים , וענין משוח מ לחמה להשיב היראים: “ולא ימס את לבב אחיו כלבבו) “כי אם ראויים הם , יוצאים במעט גוי

ונוצחים בלי נשק, ואילו היו חייבים בנצוח עם, לא יעיל למו; רק הענין, כי ראויים להתנהג בד  
רך הטבע והמקרה. והענין הזה בארו הרב זצ"ל ביאור יפה בספר מורה הנבוכים

The Ramban in his Peirush on Iyov on the Pasuk of "G-d never takes his eyes off of a Tzaddik" explains based on the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim that there is a level where a person is completely close to G-d and does not remove Him from his consciousness for even a moment, then he will be Zoche to absolute protection. But being as most of Klal Yisrael is not there, therefore we require an army that is well trained and can fight and (with the help of G-d) succeed.

With Purim approaching, which is a day of Teshuva and expanded consciousness, it is important for each and everyone of us to examine their lives, their opportunities and their דביקות to HKB"ח, the chaos and coincidences that have led us to the life we now lead and where our conscious lives are in order to be Zoche to HKB"ח's absolute protection.

I want to end with one thought I found this week:

Following the Yom Kippur war, in light of the thousands of families which at that time lost loved ones in the war Rav Chaim Shmulevitz ZT"ל gave over the following thought after giving his Shmooze in the Mir.

**הא' מאמרם ז"ל בב"ב דף י' דהרוגי לוד אין כל בריה יכולה לעמוד במחיצתן ..וכזה אני  
אומר על אלה שמוסרים נפשם עבור הצלתנו שאין כל העולם יכול לעמוד במחיצתם**

**He said based on the Gemara in Bava Basra about the Harugei Lod , two people who gave up their lives in order to save the entire community of Lod , the Gemara says no one in the world can stand in their presence above because they gave their lives for Yisrael.**

**והוא משום שמסרו נפשם בעד ישראל והחיוב שיש עלינו להתפלל עליהם הוא בלי גבול ,  
שהרי רק עבור הפותח פתח לחברו אמרו ז"ל נפשו חייב לו, קו"ח למי שמוסר נפשו  
בעדינו החיוב עלינו בלי גבול הוא**

And the responsibility to Daven for them (the soldiers) has no boundary! As Chazal tell us based on that Moshe Rabainu had to receive permission from Yisro to go down to Mitzrayim out of Hakaras Hatov for him having opened his house to him, Chazal say one's soul is responsible to him, how much greater for those who are risking their lives everyday for us that we owe boundless Hakaras Hatov to .

Much more then a few lines of Tehillim every day - **בלי גבול** ! Boundless.

## Essay #19

### Esther, Dumbledore and the Overton Window

March 14, 2024

ד' אדר ב' תשפ"ד

It is a long standing tradition at Derech Etz Chaim to have "smoking" shiur the night of Purim. It is always amazing to have guys sitting and learning about Purim on Purim, before getting involved the next morning in the Mitzvas Hayom. So I am sending out this update as a Purim shiur, if you have time to read it on Purim - great - if not it is just as applicable the day after.

“וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב הֵמֶן הָרַע הַזֶּה.” אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מְלַמֵּד שְׁהֵיְתָה מְחֻוּהָ כָּלִפִּי

אֶחָשׁוּרוּשׁ, וּבָא מְלֶאךָ וְסָטֵר יָדָהּ כָּלִפִּי הֵמֶן.

*“And Esther said: An adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman) ”Esther 7:6. ( Rabbi Elazar said :This teaches that she was in fact pointing toward Ahasuerus , indicating that in fact he was an adversary and enemy ,and an angel came and pushed her hand toward Haman.*

People don't realize the Importance of that moment. When you read that Gemara it seems that Esther has lost control. She is going to point to Achashveirosh?! She is just about to ask to save the Jewish people, and get Haman killed and now she loses control?

But that is not what is going on here. Esther prepared to point at Achashveirosh knowing precisely what she was doing, and it was courageous and essential for the entire *ישועה* of Purim. It also has profound implications for us present day. What Esther was doing at that moment was **asserting reality** even if it was unpleasant. It is certainly true that the assertion of an essential reality can be a terrible thing, because of the Overton window. But it is nonetheless a fundamental necessity in order to properly define, and properly pursue, and to ultimately win a war.

If Esther felt she needed to assert in that moment the truth, it means to us that the assertion of reality however unacceptable it may be, is a necessity. (Even though she could only assert it for a moment and then it had to stop, that was necessary on a tactical level).

The Overton window is an approach to identifying the ideas that define the spectrum of acceptability of governmental policies. It says politicians can act only within the acceptable range.

What this does is limit the conversation and the imagination and prevents any real confrontation with reality and therefore it prevents any ultimate paradigm shift.

See the following article in the Wall Street Journal Feb 9, 2024

### **America Is Having the Wrong Election**

“Candidates Trump and Biden share an interest in not owning up to the prospect of a global war”.

The article goes on to state: “These are can-kicking answers by can-kicking politicians, understandably, because both know nothing good comes to them from bringing voters the truth. Twice in the last century it cost the U.S. and the world dearly when the U.S. couldn’t get its act together to supply an ounce of deterrence when it was needed. Here we are again.”

Listening to Churchill prior to World War Two could have averted the loss of millions of lives. Except that he was viewed as crazy!

Often, the ones who are saying the truth are seen as crazy.

In the Megilla, until the moment that Esther pointed that finger, everything was defined by חניפה sycophancy.

What is sycophantic behavior? Praising people in authority in a way that is not sincere, usually in order to get some advantage from them. (as in the emperor has no clothes).

We are told in Meseches Megilla is that was exactly what Esther was to Achashveirosh and that was what he loved about her - and she did it without any desire to get anything from Achashveirosh. But Esther could be anything she was expected to be she. She was completely malleable to him and that is why he loved her.

”וַיֵּאָהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל הַנָּשִׁים וַתִּשָּׂא חַן וְחֶסֶד לְפָנָיו מִכָּל הַבָּתוּלוֹת”, אָמַר רַב: בִּיקָשׁ לְטַעוֹם טַעַם בָּתוּלָה - טַעַם, טַעַם בְּעוֹלָה - טַעַם.

*“And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins) ”Esther 2:17. (Rav said :This double language indicates that if he wanted to taste in her the taste of a virgin during intercourse ,he tasted it, and if he wanted to experience the taste of a non-virgin, he tasted it, and therefore he loved her more than all the other women.*

That means that the first time when reality had any place in the farcical events of the Megilla is when Esther pointed that finger. Because of it the Beis HaMikdash came about.

One has to realize that the entire Geula ultimately has nothing to do with the original day of Purim, it only came about from what we call Shushan Purim. Purim was merely ונהפכו it was turning the original letters around.

וְאַתֶּם כָּתְבוּ עַל־הַיְהוּדִים כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחַתְמוּ בְּטַבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־כָתַב אֶשְׁר־  
נִכְתָּב בְּשֵׁם־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִחְתָּמוֹם בְּטַבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין לְהַשִּׁיב:

*And you may further write with regard to the Jews as you see fit. [Write it] in the king's name and seal it with the king's signet, for an edict that has been written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet may not be revoked".*

We can't change anything so write whatever you can that would be acceptable as an interpretation of the original letters. כתבו ליהודים כטוב בעיניכם there is nothing I can do about this. If you are able to manipulate things great. So they threw in the words that "everyone should be ready to fight for their lives etc." That is the meaning of ונהפכו , we were able to shift it back around.

But the entire time, throughout the story in the Megilla, everything was limited by "don't even consider asking for the Beis Hamikdash". Achashveirosh begins the conversation with Esther every single time with those words. That is because that type of political tension we can't handle.

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מֶה בְּקִשְׁתֶּךָ עַד חֲצֵי הַמְּלָכוֹת וְתַעֲשִׂי. חֲצֵי הַמְּלָכוֹת וְלֹא כָּל הַמְּלָכוֹת, וְלֹא דָבָר שְׁחוּצָץ לַמְּלָכוֹת, וּמֵאֵי נִיהוּ -בְּנִין בֵּית הַמֶּקְדָּשׁ.

*"Then the king said to her" (Esther 5:3), to Esther the queen, "What is your wish, even to half the kingdom, it shall be performed "(Esther 5:6). The Gemara comments that Ahasuerus intended only a limited offer: Only half the kingdom, but not the whole kingdom, and not something that would serve as a barrier to the kingdom ,the building of the Temple ;*

The minute she asserts a moment of truth and says איש צר ואויב and points that finger at Achashveirosh was the first moment that he gets up and walks out and needs perspective. He needs to think.

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בְּחֵמְתוֹ מִמְּשֻׁתָּה הַיַּיִן אֶל־גֶּנֶת הַבַּיִת

*"The king rose in his fury from the wine banquet to the palace garden"*

He comes back and kills Haman and then when the day arrives, as he is screaming at Esther about the thousands of casualties He suddenly says, "you know what, it's not about me, it's about you. What would you like?" A sudden turnabout.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה הָרְגוּ הַיְהוּדִים וְאֶבְדוּ חֲמִשָּׁתַּיִם מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְאֵת עֶשְׂרֵת בְּנֵי-הָמֶן בְּשָׂאֵר מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מָה עָשׂוּ וּמִה־שְּׂאֵלְתְּךָ וַיִּנְתֵּן לָהּ וּמִה־בִקְשָׁתְּךָ עוֹד וַתַּעֲשֶׂה:

*“In Shushan alone the Jews have killed a total of five hundred men, as well as the ten sons of Haman. What then must they have done in the provinces of the realm! What is your wish now? It shall be granted you. And what else is your request? It shall be fulfilled”.*

“וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה הָרְגוּ הַיְהוּדִים”. אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ: מְלַמֵּד שְׂבָא מְלֹאָךְ וּסְטֵרוֹ עַל פִּי.

*Rabbi Abbahu said: This teaches that an angel came and slapped him on his mouth*

**This time he doesn't say עד חצי המלכות** why not? Esther is saying you need to give us the primary position in terms of your country. And if it means building a Beis HaMikdash then that is what it is going to take. And Achasveirosh accepted that.

That is why on Shushan Purim it is the first time that we need to define a city based on the נון , ערים בארץ ישראל מימות יהושע בין נון , we need to define the difference of a Shushan Purim which is a totally different focus on the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash and Eretz Yisrael and not just the saving of Yisrael across the world.

רמב"ם הלכות מגילה וחנוכה פרק א  
שושן הבירה אף על פי שלא היתה מוקפת חומה בימי יהושע בן נון קוראין בחמשה עשר שבה היה הנס שנאמר +אסתר ט'+ ונוח בחמשה עשר בו, ולמה תלו הדבר בימי יהושע כדי לחלוק כבוד לארץ ישראל שהיתה חרבה באותו הזמן, כדי שיהיו קוראין כבני שושן ויחשבו כאילו הן כרכין המוקפין חומה אף על פי שהן עתה חרבין הואיל והיו מוקפין בימי יהושע ויהיה זכרון לארץ ישראל בנס זה .

*Why was the matter made dependent on the time of Joshua bin Nun? To give honor to the cities of Eretz Yisrael that were in ruin at the time of the Purim miracle. Although they are in ruin at present, this would allow them to read the Megillah on the fifteenth as do the inhabitants of Shushan, since they were surrounded by a wall at the time of Joshua. Thus the commemoration of the miracle would include a remembrance of Eretz Yisrael.*

This story has many implications. Esther understood that in order to be a total victor in a war, while being limited by that which is acceptable in an Overton window, is doomed to failure. Because then what happens is you are only fighting a proxy war in the sense that you are fighting the wrong issues which are only representing the real issues that actually count. Then you leave the true issues untouched, which means they simply regroup and fight you again stronger. Because all that is happening is “can kicking” instead of war.



If you go along with the Overton window you may win the battle, but you will ultimately lose the war. Esther needed to define that war if there was going to be a *ישועה* and it was only because of that moment of truth when she points that finger, that everything changed.

It also says there is a need for clarity in spite of your options being limited by that Overton window - that is what the Malach is asserting when it pushes her hand away from Achashveirosh towards Haman.

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מִלְּמַד שֶׁהֵיְתָה מְחוּוָה כְּלָפִי אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ, וּבָא מִלְּאָךְ וְסִטְרָה יְדָה כְּלָפִי הַמֶּן.

*Rabbi Elazar said :This teaches that she was in fact pointing toward Ahasuerus , indicating that in fact he was an adversary and enemy ,and an angel came and pushed her hand toward Haman.*

This is not the time, but it needed to be done. What Esther accomplished is she set the entire future conduct of this war against Amalek in place and in the end she actually gets the Beis Hamikdash built.

Fudging the issues is absolutely the wrong way to wage a war. That is represented well in the Harry Potter series by the man names Fudge!

*“Voldemort has returned,” Dumbledore repeated. “If you accept that fact straightaway. Fudge, and take the necessary measures, we may still be able to save the situation. The first and most essential step is to remove Azkaban from the control of the dementors -”*

*“Preposterous!” shouted Fudge again. “Remove the dementors? I’d be kicked out of office for suggesting it! Half of us only feel safe in our beds at night because we know the dementors are standing guard at Azkaban!”*

*“The rest of us sleep less soundly in our beds, Cornelius, knowing that you have put Lord Voldemort’s most dangerous supporters in the care of creatures who will join him the instant he asks them!” said Dumbledore. “They will not remain loyal to you, Fudge! Voldemort can offer them much more scope for their powers and their pleasures than you can! With the dementors behind him, and his old supporters returned to him, you will be hard-pressed to stop him regaining the sort of power he had thirteen years ago!”*

*Fudge was opening and closing his mouth as though no words could express his outrage.*

*“The second step you must take - and at once,” Dumbledore pressed on, “is to send envoys to the giants. ”*

*"Envoys to the giants?" Fudge shrieked, finding his tongue again. "What madness is this?"*

*"Extend them the hand of friendship, now, before it is too late," said Dumbledore, "or Voldemort will persuade them, as he did before, that he alone among wizards will give them their rights and their freedom!"*

*"You - you cannot be serious!" Fudge gasped, shaking his head and retreating further from Dumbledore. "If the magical community got wind that I had approached the giants - people hate them, Dumbledore - end of my career -"*

*"You are blinded," said Dumbledore, his voice rising now, the aura of power around him palpable, his eyes blazing once more, "by the love of the office you hold, Cornelius! ....*

*I tell you now- take the steps I have suggested, and you will be remembered, in office or out, as one of the bravest and greatest Ministers of Magic we have ever known. Fail to act - and history will remember you as the man who stepped aside and allowed Voldemort a second chance to destroy the world we have tried to rebuild!"*

*"Insane," whispered Fudge, still backing away. "Mad. . . "*

*"If your determination to shut your eyes will carry you as far as this, Cornelius," said Dumbledore, "we have reached a parting of the ways. You must act as you see fit. And I - I shall act as I see fit. "*

That is the second teaching of Esther, because she was in the same position. She was unable at that point to be completely open about the entire effort in the direction that she was looking towards, in the end of getting the support of Achashveirosh, but she understood that that did not make her finger pointing moot. In fact if you take a look at the Gemara she was bitterly opposed by the greatest members of Sanhedrin

אמר רב שמואל בר יהודה: שלחה להם אסתר לחכמים: קבעוני לדורות! שלחו לה: קנאה את מעוררת עלינו לבין האומות

*Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda said: Esther sent to the Sages: Establish me for future generations .They sent to her: You will thereby arouse the wrath of the nations upon us*

And at the end of the entire story some of Sanhedrin had separated from Mordechai!

”כי מרדכי היהודי משנה למלך אחשוורוש וגדול היהודים ורצוי לרוב אחיו, ולא לכל אחיו. מלמד שפירשו ממנו מקצת סנהדרין

*“For Mordecai the Jew was second to the king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted by the majority of his brethren” (Esther 10:3). The Gemara comments: The verse indicates that Mordecai was accepted only “By the majority of his brethren,” but not by all his brethren. This teaches that some members of the Sanhedrin parted from him*

The biggest argument we are having with the world and the United States in particular during this war, is over the idea of humanitarian aid - a world of חסד. The real focus of our war is between a world of Yisrael which is עולם חסד and the וחסד לאומים חטאת יבנה

We, Yisrael, view חסד as a commitment to life. To the Shechina to בראשית to an advancement of a world.

They, the Umos, view Chesed:

רבי אליעזר ואמר צדקה תרומם גוי אלו ישראל דכתיב (שמואל ב ז-כג) ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ וחסד לאומים חטאת כל צדקה וחסד שאומות עובדי כוכבים עושין חטא הוא להן שאינם עושין אלא להתגדל בו

חסד the Goyim and the west in particular, need to believe in their moral supremacy in order for them to have a world. Nobody understands that this is primal. It is Yisrael's בהבראם vs the opposite.

The war has boiled down to, do we have a right to abolish terrorism and evil even at the cost of human suffering, or as Sinwar and Hamas are counting on, Israel will be stopped by the West's need for moral superiority, as witnessed this week with Canada putting an arms embargo on Israel, of Biden declaring that an invasion of Rafiach is a “red line”. (B”H the Israeli govt rebuffed the United States and even stated they will go into Rafiach even without the US's backing).

My daughter in her position as part of דובר צה”ל has been escorting and involved in the briefings and the intelligence sharing that the commission sent to Israel to investigate UNWRA and their involvement in terrorism. The people on the commission are outspoken anti-Israel and anti-Yisrael. UNWRA is their way of expressing their Chesed, their care for the poor Palestinians. An organization they need to keep propping up their ability to do חסד to the Palestinians. The worst thing for them would be for the Palestinians to grow up as every nation does, and take responsibility for themselves.

The idea of supporting a people, and a world which cannot function, which is anti-Darwinian, where a species that should not be able to survive - an entire culture that values death above all - is allowed to survive, supported to survive, by those who need to feel their moral supremacy.

What Yisrael learned on Shmini Atzeres is that being **טוהט** with your enemy does not work. It was those who helped the people of Aza, who brought them into their homes who were murdered and kidnapped. We in Israel saved Sinwar's life with a brain surgery! Those who thought that we should give the poor Palestinians a state and that we need to end our occupation.

The world is committed to keeping a people who cannot and should not be able to survive alive through their idea of Chesed. We Yisrael, need to and are committed to life, to a world that works. That is our ultimate war.

Essay #19 - Part Two

Follow up from Purim

March 26, 2024

ט"ז אדר ב' תשפ"ד

We had a beautiful Purim here in Yeshiva as well as an Alumni Purim Seuda in Lakewood.

On Shushan Purim night here in Yerushalayim we had a shiur where we discussed most of the issues brought in my last email #19. Through discussion we expanded on those ideas so before we close up Purim I wanted to share some additions to that dispatch.

Haman says to Achashveirosh

אסתר פרק ג

(ח) וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ יֵשְׁנוּ עִם־אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפָּרֶד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלְכוּתְךָ וְדַתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עַם וְאֶת־דַּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים וְלִמְלַךְ אֵין־שׁוּה לְהַנִּיחָם:

*Haman then said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people, **scattered and dispersed** among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws; and it is not in Your Majesty's interest to tolerate them.*

He says that Klal Yisrael is splintered. Exactly the situation we were in here in Israel prior to Hamas's attack, and Hamas terrorists during interrogation admitted that they felt they could use that to their advantage and they thought that the attack would further polarize Yisrael. Everyone in Israel was so aware of the problem, that immediately at the beginning of the war יחד נוצח became the mantra of the war. Everyone realized כל היהודים לך כנוס את כל היהודים was a must.

The parallels between Amalek and Hamas in some ways seems quite obvious. (The government of Israel was brought to the High Court of Justice at the Hague for having called Hamas "Amalek" as proof that they are interested in Genocide!) but if you think about what Amalek did was attack us not in order to defeat Yisrael but as Chazal tell us to "cool off the bath"

רש"י דברים פרק כה:ח

דבר אחר לשון קור וחום, צננך והפשירך מרתיחתך, שהיו כל האומות יראים להלחם בכם ובא זה והתחיל והראה מקום לאחרים. משל לאמבטי רותחת שאין כל בריה יכולה לירד בתוכה, בא בן בליעל אחד קפץ וירד לתוכה. אף על פי שנכוה,ט הקרה אותה בפני אחרים

*Yet another explanation is that it is connected in meaning with the expression קור in the phrase "קור וחום" cold and heat" and it means: he made you cold and*

*lukewarm after the boiling heat you had before. For all the nations were afraid to war against you and this one came and began to point out the way to others. A parable! It may be compared to a boiling hot bath into which no living creature could descend. A good-for-nothing came, and sprang down into it; although he scalded himself he made it appear cold to others*

Hamas just wanted to show that our deterrence was faulty - and they did. In doing so they wanted to show others how vulnerable Yisrael is and they were incredibly successful at doing that, so that Israel now has to destroy them, in order to rebuild its deterrent capabilities. (Which the United States right now is trying to prevent.)

More than that, I believe it has been difficult for any of us to understand why wiping out Amalek, including women and children would be a Mitzva, but this war has taught us there are no non-combatants.

On the issue of Chesed and morality which we spoke about, the entire story of Amalek's survival came about because as we read in this past weeks Haftarah, Shaul and Klal Yisrael's unwillingness to kill Agag and the animals and any remnant as commanded by HKB"H. They seemed to want to be more moral than G-d Himself. For that Shaul loses the Malchus.

The paradigm of Chesed is Avraham Avinu who plays a large role in the background of the Purim story.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף י עמוד ב

רבי יונתן פתח לה פיתחא להאי פרשתא מהכא: וקמתי עליהם וגו' והכרתי לבבל שם ושאר בני ונכד נאם ה' שם - זה הכתב, שאר - זה לשון, נין - זה מלכות, ונכד - זו ושתי.

*Rabbi Yonatan introduced this passage with an introduction from here: "For I will rise up against them ,says the Lord of hosts ,and cut off from Babylonia name, and remnant, and offspring] nin ,[and posterity, says the Lord "(Isaiah 14:22). "Name," this is the writing of ancient Babylonia that will disappear from the world" .Remnant," this is the language of ancient Babylonia" .Offspring," this is their kingdom. And "posterity," this is Vashti ,who according to tradition was Nebuchadnezzar's granddaughter, and the book of Esther relates how she too was removed from the throne.*

The destruction of Bavel in the opening Perek of the Megilla which sets up the entire story of Purim is the ultimate outcome of the battle between Avraham Avinu and Nimrod - Bavel, and the opposing outlooks towards the development of the world. Nimrod believed in power and control, anti spreading out and anti chaotic development , as opposed to Avraham Avinu who believed in total חירות (freedom) and that the world would ultimately self organize as the Purim story expresses.

Mordechai is the יהודי the Gemara tells us:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יג עמוד א

רבי יוחנן אמר: לעולם מבנימין קאתי, ואמאי קרי ליה יהודי - על שום שכפר בעבודה זרה .  
שכל הכופר בעבודה זרה נקרא יהודי, כדכתיב איתי גברין יהודאין וגו'.

*Rabbi Yoḥanan said a different explanation of the verse :Mordecai came from the tribe of Benjamin. Why ,then ,was he referred to as Yehudi ?On account of the fact that he repudiated idol worship, for anyone who repudiates idolatry is called Yehudi*

This was the original work of Avraham Avinu - fighting Avoda Zara.

The Medrash says יהוד is like יחידי that he brought out the

יחוד (the oneness) of the Shechina in the world. Also Avraham Avinu's Avoda.

It comes out that this fight between a world of Chesed which for Yisrael means to expand life, vs. a world of חסד לאומים חטאת where Chesed is just used as a way to express moral superiority, is a battle that Purim focuses us on as well.

We have Purim in Adar Sheni as the Gemara tells us לסמוך גאולה לגאולה . We should be זוכה soon to an absolute גאולה a building of the Beis Hamikdash that Purim promises, and a world where שקר has no place.

## Essay #20

### PPPP, War, and Freedom

April 10, 2024

ב' ניסן תשפ"ד

It is important to start just by reminding everyone that we are still at war. Four more soldiers were killed just recently and there are over 130 hostages still being held in captivity by Hamas. There are also tens of thousands of residents of the northern part of Israel that are displaced and cannot go home due to the constant bombardment by Hizbullah. It is the first time in a long time that we enter Pesach with Jews who are physically in bondage.

We are presently in the time referred to as PPPP (Post Purim Pre Pesach) sometimes it is used to explain the weakening of the Yeshiva Zman in terms of learning, other times the stress of getting ready for Pesach, but in truth the Gemara sees it as the time of **מסמך גאולה לגאולה**, a time that connects the Geula of Purim to that of Pesach, and becomes the reason we celebrate Purim during Adar Beis.

Like every Moed we experienced this year, with the war going, on and the other issues facing Yisrael because of the ongoing war, Pesach and this period of time gain a tremendous amount of meaning, and gives us new insight into what we can focus on during such a unique and special time.

We began Hagada shiur last week on my Sunday Zoom alumni shiur and we spoke about the question of the **בן החכם**

דברים פרק ו

(כ) כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּנְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם:

(כא) וְאָמַרְתָּ לְבִנְךָ עֲבָדִים הָיינוּ לַפְרָעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ יְקֹוֹק מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה:

(כב) וַיֵּתֶן יְקֹוֹק אוֹתוֹת וּמִפְתֵּיִם גְּדֹלִים וְרַעִים בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּפָרְעָה וּבְכָל־בֵּיתוֹ לְעֵינֵינוּ:

(כג) וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן הִבִּיא אֶתְנוּ לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם:

(כד) וַיִּצְוֵנוּ יְקֹוֹק לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לְיִרְאָה אֶת־יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְטוֹב לָנוּ כָּל־הַיָּמִים לְחַיֵּינוּ כִּהְיוֹם הַזֶּה:

(כה) וַיִּצְדָּקָה תְהִי־לָנוּ כִּי־נִשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּנוּ: ו

The context in the Torah of the **בן החכם**'s question is in terms of what are we supposed to be getting out of these Mitzvos and we are told in the Torah

**לְטוֹב לָנוּ כָּל הַיָּמִים .**

To be good for you.



The Pesach Seder is meant to bring us to achieving חירות. As we are told Pesach is זמן חירותינו, which does not mean the time we were freed, rather it **is the time we achieve freedom**. The Seder is very much set up for us to follow in the footsteps of the founder of the idea of חירות – that being Avraham Avinu the original freedom fighter.

He connection of Pesach to Avraham Avinu on the most basic level, is that the שיעבוד in Mitzrayim was in response to Avraham Avinu's question of במה אדע, and גאולה is what he is ultimately promised as we say at the pivotal point in the Hagada:

שהקב"ה חשב את הקץ שאמר לאברהם אבינו בברית בין הבתרים שנאמר: ויאמר לאברהם ידע תדע כי-גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו אתם ארבע מאות שנה: וגם את-הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי ואחרי-כן יצאו ברכש גדול:

The central idea of the Hagada revolves around that הבטחה, the promise to Avraham Avinu. The journey we are on at the Seder is Avraham Avinu's journey.

Avraham Avinu's journey begins with לך לך:

We are told:

בראשית פרק יב פסוק א

ויאמר יקוק אל-אברהם לך-לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל-הארץ אשר אראך:

רש"י בראשית פרק יב פסוק א

לך לך -להנאתך ולטובתך

Meaning that the original reason given to Avraham Avinu to listen to the מצוות ה' was in order **for his own benefit**, for him to create his ultimate self. This is the answer given to the חכם in the Torah when he asks "what are these Mitzvos for?" **לְטוֹב לָנוּ כָּל-הַיָּמִים**

The Rambam introduces us to Avraham Avinu's journey in Hilchos Avoda Zara Perek 1:

רמב"ם הלכות עבודה זרה פרק א

ועל דרך זה היה העולם הולך ומתגלגל עד שנולד עמודו של עולם והוא אברהם אבינו.

כיון שנגמל איתן זה התחיל לשוטט בדעתו והוא קטן והתחיל לחשוב ביום ובלילה והיה תמיהה היאך אפשר שיהיה הגלגל הזה נוהג תמיד ולא יהיה לו מנהיג ומי יסבב אותו, כי אי אפשר שיסבב את עצמו, ולא היה לו מלמד ולא מודיע דבר אלא מושקע באור כשדים בין עובדי כוכבים הטפשים ואביו ואמו וכל העם עובדי כוכבים והוא עובד עמהם ולבו משוטט ומבין עד שהשיג דרך האמת והבין קו הצדק מתבוננתו הנכונה, וידע שיש שם אלוה אחד והוא מנהיג הגלגל והוא ברא הכל ואין בכל הנמצא אלוה חוץ ממנו,

Avraham Avinu was much less a religious philosopher than he was a scientist. **He was concerned with discovering truth**. His objection to Avoda Zara is that

it was leading the world away from a search for truth. It was closing their minds off from being able to discover truth.

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק י

אלא עושה האמת מפני שהוא אמת וסוף הטובה לבא בגללה, ומעלה זו היא מעלה גדולה מאד ואין כל חכם זוכה לה, והיא מעלת אברהם אבינו

מה (Notice the stress on Avraham as a child asking questions - just like the מה (נשתנה)

The Rambam continues to explain Avraham Avinu's approach:

וידע שכל העולם טועים ודבר שגרם להם לטעות זה שעובדים את הכוכבים ואת הצורות עד שאבד האמת מדעתם,

Notice it says "that which was causing the mistake was that they worshiped idols", it does not say the mistake was that they worshiped idols. Avraham Avinu, and the Rambam is stressing this, was bothered by Avoda Zara for what it was doing to mankind's ability to think and discover truth. Essentially Avoda Zara was enslaving the mind.

The Rambam ultimately frames the point of יציאת מצרים around this issue :

רמב"ם הלכות עבודה זרה פרק א הלכה ג

עד שארכו הימים לישראל במצרים וחזרו ללמוד מעשיהן ולעבוד כוכבים כמותן חוץ משבט לוי שעמד במצות אבות, ומעולם לא עבד שבט לוי עבודת כוכבים, וכמעט קט היה העיקר ששתל אברהם נעקר וחזרין בני יעקב לטעות העולם ותעיותן, ומאהבת ה' אותנו ומשמרו את השבועה לאברהם אבינו עשה משה רבינו רבן של כל הנביאים ושלחו, כיון שנתנבא משה רבינו ובחר ה' ישראל לנחלה הכתירן במצות והודיעם דרך עבודתו

The Mishna in Pesachim describing the order of the Seder says:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, ודורש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה כולה.

The Gemara expounds:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח מאי בגנות? רב אמר: מתחלה עובדי עבודת גלולים היו אבותינו. ושמואל אמר: עבדים היינו.

Halacha L'Maaseh we do both:

רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה פרק ז

וצריך להתחיל בגנות ולסיים בשבח, כיצד מתחיל ומספר שבתחלה היו אבותינו בימי תרח ומלפניו כופרים וטועין אחר ההבל ורודפין אחר ע"ז, ומסיים בדת האמת שקרבנו המקום לו והבדילנו מן התועים וקרבנו ליחודו, וכן מתחיל ומודיע שעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים וכל הרעה שגמלנו ומסיים בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לנו ובחירותנו, והוא שידרוש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה, וכל המוסיף ומאריך בדרש פרשה זו הרי זה משובח.

(Notice by the way, that the other central tenet of the Hagada is ארמי אובד אבי which is about Avraham Avinu's journey as well.)

Avraham Avinu was the ultimate freedom fighter. When Avraham Avinu asks :

בראשית פרק טו

(ח) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְקֹוֹק בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אֵירֶשְׁנָה:

And gets the answer we bring in the Hagada:

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תְּדַע כִּי־גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעַבְדִּים יַעֲבֹדוּם וְעַנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה: וְגַם אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אֲנִי וְאַחֲרָיִכֶן יֵצְאוּ בְּרַכְשׁ גָּדוֹל:

He is wondering about a basic idea that drives Yisrael, and asking how can it be. What drove Avraham Avinu's journey was his not getting stuck in any preconceived notions, he continually questioned all the "givens", and through that he was Zoche to Eretz Yisrael. What could possibly keep his offspring on that path? He is told according to Chazal:

בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת לך לך פרשה מד

הונה אימה חשיכה גדולה נופלת עליו, אימה, זו בבל... חשיכה זו מדי... גדולה, זו יון... נופלת עליו זו אדום

Chazal tell us that Avraham Avinu was shown all of the Galiyos at the time of the התרים בין הברית the entire history of what Yisrael will endure before ultimately returning to Eretz Yisrael and the ultimate Geula.

Avraham Avinu's fight for freedom - חירות - focuses on two things Liberty and Freedom.

אשמואל's version of מתחיל בגנות of עבדים היינו, focuses on the lack of liberty. The inability to carry out any choice you might make.

ר'ר's version of מתחיל בגנות is מתחיל עובדי ע"ז היו אבותינו focuses on freedom. One's mind is free if they do not worship ע"ז and have not already decided on the truth and bowed down to it. The two are both necessary to achieve חירות and the two were part of Avraham Avinu's quest for חירות.

**Ultimate חירות is the ability to make significant choices and carry them out.**

The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva says:

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ה הלכה א

רשות לכל אדם נתונה אם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך טובה ולהיות צדיק הרשות בידו, ואם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך רעה ולהיות רשע הרשות בידו, הוא שכתוב בתורה הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע, כלומר הן מין זה של אדם היה יחיד בעולם ואין מין שני דומה לו בזה הענין שיהא הוא מעצמו בדעתו ובמחשבתו יודע הטוב והרע ועושה כל מה שהוא חפץ ואין מי שיעכב בידו מלעשות הטוב או הרע וכיון שכן הוא פן ישלח ידו.

The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva is telling us that ultimate freedom as expressed in ultimate choice is in creating yourself.

לך לך -להנאתך ולטובתך

לטוב לנו כל הימים

The Gemara tells us that if Yisrael does not do Teshuva then:

תלמוד ירושלמי (וילנא) מסכת תענית פרק א

רבי ליעזר אומר אם אין ישראל עושין תשובה אין נגאלין לעולם שנאמר [ישעי' ל טו] בשובה ונחת תושעון אמר לו רבי יהושע וכי אם יעמדו ישראל ולא יעשו תשובה אינן נגאלין לעולם אמר לו ר"א הקדוש ברוך הוא מעמיד עליהן מלך קשה כהמן ומיד הן עושין תשובה והן נגאלין

That happened to Yisrael not so long ago, yet it did not help? Hitler ימ"ש was definitely the worst that could happen, yet we did not do ultimate Teshuva why was that?

It would seem to be because in our minds we had something we could go back to. Yisrael was not yet ready to move on, we wanted to rebuild. Rebuild the Yeshivas, the Kehillas in Chutz L'Aretz, rebuild the way of life. Not move forward but rebuild back.

In order to achieve חירות on the level of Avraham Avinu you need to be completely free from any notion of what I would "have to go back to". Complete חירות means I am not held back to prior conceptions, as does complete Teshuva.

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ב

...ומה היא התשובה הוא שיעזוב החוטא חטאו

כל המתודה בדברים ולא גמר בלבו לעזוב הרי זה דומה לטובל ושרץ בידו שאין הטבילה מועלת לו עד שישליך השרץ

On Purim this was the choice that Esther made; a total loss of her past.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף טו עמוד א

וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי - כשם שאבדתי מבית אבא כך אובד ממך.

In her going forward her past was completely lost. Ultimate חירות is that which allowed her to become Esther and create Purim. . This period of time brings us from the accomplishments of Purim to the Geula of Pesach.

It is telling that in Israel, since the war broke out on Shmini Atzeres the new word in the lexicon often used is קונספציה conception. It was the prior conception that was completely wrong, it was the conception that held us back. Everyone in Israel senses that there needs to be a new way forward. No reconstruction of previous paradigms (just this time better) - rather new

paradigms must be constructed (even a quest for new leadership) . Every part of society here feels that way.

See this article in the Atlantic speaking about the changes in US Jewish life.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2024/04/us-anti-semitism-jewish-american-safety/677469/>

This Pesach we can achieve חירות by getting away from the תקונספציה our previous conceptions in our own lives and moving forward. Ultimate freedom means our ability to think anew, to get away from the things that hold us back, our preconceived notions. Our take on “the way things are” . This war has given us all that chance to “wake up” and achieve חירות.

We should be Zoche to complete freedom this Pesach. A freedom of the hostages held in captivity and a more importantly as a nation, freedom of our minds that holds us back from doing ultimate Teshuva.

## Essay #21

### Getting Old

May 1, 2024

כ"ג ניסן תשפ"ד

*I want to apologize for how long this one is. The ideas have been percolating over Pesach and it took a lot to express them.*

I hope you all had a wonderful and meaningful Pesach. I spent Pesach with my children in the Golan on Moshav Nov. Though it was calm, pastoral and a great place to relax (as many of you know from when you were in Yeshiva and we spent a Shabbos in Nov) , you still are aware that there is a war going on. Erev Pesach just hours before the Seder, Hizbullah launched a major missile attack on the Galil which we could hear, and then the Israeli response , we heard the fighter jets bombing . It's a funny thing when even children can recognize those noises for what they are ! B"H no sirens over Chag.

30 members of the Moshav, including my son are in Miluim as the Kitat Konenut, meaning they are in charge of securing the Moshav and are fully armed and in uniform at all times and rotate shifts on security of the Moshav. Every settlement in the Golan is like that, as I saw when I visited Sam Sadoff in Chispin, where I had to drive past the soldiers behind the sandbags protecting the entrance of the Yishuv, (and where I was able to walk through the skeleton of his home that he is building in the Yishuv. More of you should be Zoche to build homes in Eretz Yisrael!)

It has been well stated that בניסן נגאלו בניסן עתידין ליגאל , this year, Nissan 5784, has been extremely conspicuous and important to anyone that has paid attention to the happenings and the effects on Yisrael as a nation. This year the Hagada came alive in a brand new way like never before.

The Hagada says: יכול מראש חודש

The Hagada brings a הוה אמינא that I would have thought the Mitzva of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim begins on Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

החודש הזה ראשון הוא לכם לחודשי השנה

The immense importance of the idea of חודש and newness permeate Nissan and Pesach. It is not only the החודש הזה לכם but also the fact that we bring the קרבן עומר and חדש , the new grain becomes permissible to eat on Pesach. It is easy to understand how newness is connected to חירות . Seeing things new, being able to act in new ways, is an obvious step to getting out of that which holds us back. **(see essay #20)** but it is much more than that.

This is not a small cute issue, because the Torah states the destruction of ארץ ישראל is from ישן. As we read on Tisha B'Av

דברים ד':כה

כִּי־תוֹלֵד בְּנִים וּבְנֵי בָנִים וְנוֹשְׁנֵתִם בְּאֶרֶץ וְהִשְׁחַתְתֶּם וְעַשִּׂיתֶם פֶּסֶל תְּמוּנֹת כָּל וְעַשִּׂיתֶם הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה־אֱלֹהֵיךָ לְהַכְעִיסוֹ:

רש"י

ונושנתם. רמז להם שיגלו ממנה לסוף שמונה מאות וחמשים ושתיים שנה כמנין "ונושנתם", והוא הקדים והגלם לסוף שמונה מאות וחמשים, והקדים שתי שנים ל"ונושנתם", כדי שלא יתקיים בהם כי אבד תאבדון, וזהו שנאמר (דניאל ט') "וישקד על הרעה וביאה עלינו כי צדיק ה' אלהינו - צדקה עשה עמנו שמהר להביאה שתי שנים לפני זמנה (סנהדרין ל"ח; גיטין פ"ח):

The destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and the loss of Eretz Yisrael is in terms of ונושנתם things getting old. If you are living in Eretz Yisrael the same way you were 100 years ago or whenever, you lose it. It must always be new.

This idea that Rashi brings from the Gemara that ונושנתם equals 852 and that the Galus took place 850 שתי שנים להגלותם .

והוא הקדים והגלם לסוף שמונה מאות וחמשים, והקדים שתי שנים ל"ונושנתם", כדי שלא יתקיים בהם כי אבד תאבדון,

**This means that if you get to the state where you are totally ונושנתם there is no recovery!** It is possible for us to get to a state of נושנתם that we are so completely unaware of what is happening, and that our mind is defined by everything that was, so we have lost any ability to think, any ability to be free and any ability to start something afresh, so that there would be no way to get us restarted again - therefore אבד תאבדון! You are totally lost! It is an incredible warning!

Chodesh Nissan 5784 has brought with it a new understanding of both the local situation in Eretz Yisrael, and the overall situation within Klal Yisrael and our history. The attack by Iran at the opening of Nissan against Israel, and the of what we miraculous protection that HKB"H provided was an amazing **spoke about previously in essay #18**

**An open miracle that needs to be appreciated. 100% success against over 350 missiles! Never happened in military history. I personally was shocked to leave the bomb shelter and check the news and hear there was ZERO damage.** But that open miracle, and that attack also allowed everyone to understand that we are not dealing with what initially people could pretend was a local happening, with Israel having to deal with some gang of terrorists, but rather what we are talking about is a global political restructuring, which redefines all of the past seven months and focuses it on the moment far beyond what we understood at the beginning of the war.

Throughout these past months, and as discussed in these essays, we have understood that this is where we were heading. But the events that have happened during Chodesh Nissan have begun to show some incredible changes. Together with the open intervention of the Yad Hashem!

We have now begun to understand and have our own recognition of **בכל דור** **וידור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו** this is an amazing change, so relevant and real. There is almost not a single Ben Yisrael in the entire world, no matter how disconnected, that doesn't understand that actuality. I have been following the news over the past weeks of what is going on in the US on college campuses. In some ways I had thought the anti-Yisrael movement had died down, and you would think after the Iranian attack there would be even more understanding of the position of Yisrael - but the exact opposite has happened. The rhetoric is now much more open "Jews go home" "Kill the Jews", not just Israel which was code for the Jews, but straight forward open antisemitism or even deeper, anti Yisrael. Alan Dershowitz compared what is happening on college campuses to that which took place in the universities in Hamburg and Berlin in 1933 which led to the rise of Hitler י"מ"ש. If HKB" ever wanted to send a message there was no more an appropriate time then Chodesh Nissan, בניסן נגאלו בניסן עתידים, ליגאל .

Understand the implications of these rallies that have spread across the entire US and even Europe. It is literally **לבן ביקש לעקור את הכל** **ארמי אובד אבי**. It was Lavan's approach to put Yaakov on the defensive, that he was the one doing wrong.

Rachel tells Yakov (Gemara Megilla 13b)

אמרה ליה: אין, מיהו אבא רמאה הוא ולא יכלת ליה.

And what does he do every time?:

ויהי בבקר והנה הוא לאה ויאמר אל-לכן מה-זאת עשית לי הלא ברחל עבדתי עמר ולמה רמיתני:

ויאמר לכן לא-יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה:

Or

ויען לכן ויאמר אל-יעקב הבנות בנתי והבנים בני והצאן צאני וכל אשר-אתה ראה ליה הוא ולבנתי מה-אעשה לאלה היום או לבניהן אשר ילדו:

The power of Lavan is to turn the tables. Make you look bad. In the US now Israel is the evil and Hamas are the ones they are rooting for! It's an insane Lavan world!

One has to remember that the idea we speak about in the Hagada of **בכל דור** **וידור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו** **ארמי** **אובד אבי** which is said at the time of **ירושת הארץ**, it is what you declare when



bringing Bikurim, and it becomes the trigger for the entire Avoda of Pesach itself.

משנה פסחים י:ד

מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, וְדוֹרֵשׁ מֵאַרְמֵי אוֹבֵד אָבִי, עַד שְׂיִגְמַר כָּל הַפְּרָשָׁה כְּלָהּ:

רמב"ם הל' חמץ ומצה ז:ד

וְהוּא שְׂיִדְרֵשׁ מֵאַרְמֵי אוֹבֵד אָבִי (דברים כו ה) עַד שְׂיִגְמַר כָּל הַפְּרָשָׁה. וְכָל הַמוֹסִיף וּמֵאַרְיָה בְּדִרְשׁ פְּרָשָׁה זוֹ הָרִי זֶה מְשַׁבַּח:

That is the entire Hagada . that is the Mitzva

That means that the response that we have to the **עומדים עלינו לכלותינו בכל** **בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו יצאה** **בכל דור ודור** which is tied into the **ממצרים** these two are very clearly set, they are juxtaposed.

When it says **בכל דור ודור** it is not just referring to a period of time, it is referring to the concept of a **דור** which is a new level of paradigm. Things that cannot yet be said or understood in a previous **דור** , can now only be understood in a new generation , it is much more than the passing of years. This means there is a tremendous demand on a completely fresh way of experiencing what it is that was experienced at Yitzias Mitzrayim.

Those events of Yetzias Mitzrayim passed through stages. And those stages are so central, that the Torah uses the very beginning of Yitzas Mitzrayim **פן ינחם** to teach us this lesson:

וַיְהִי בְשִׁלַּח פְּרַעֲהָ אֶת הָעָם וְלֹא נָחַם אֱ-לֹהִים דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא כִּי אָמַר אֱ-לֹהִים פֶּן יִנָּחֵם הָעָם בְּרֵאֲתָם מִלַּחְמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצְרָיִם.

מורה נבוכים חלק ג' כד

כי היציאה מן הטורח אל המנוחה יותר ערבה מההתמדה על המנוחה. וידוע שלולא טרחם ועמלם במדבר לא היו יכולים לכבוש הארץ ולא להלחם ביושביה - כבר אמרה ה'תורה זה **"כי אמר אלהים פן ינחם העם בראותם מלחמה וישבו מצרימה, ויסב אלהים את העם דרך המדבר ים סוף"** - כי המנוחה תסיר הגבורה, וצוק הפרנסה והעמל יתנו הגבורה - והיא ה'טובה' אשר באה בזה הענין 'באחריתם'.

*It is indeed a fact that the transition from trouble to ease gives more pleasure than continual ease. It is also known that the Israelites would not have been able to conquer the land and fight with its inhabitants, if they had not previously undergone the trouble and hardship of the wilderness. Scripture says in reference to this: "For God said, **Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt**" (Exod. 13:17, 18). Ease destroys bravery, **whilst trouble and care for food create strength**; and this was [also for the Israelites] the good that ultimately came out of their wanderings in the wilderness.*

The Rambam explains that you cannot ask why doesn't HKBH just give us the ability to face the Plishtim? You cannot ask that, because the nature of the entire Torah is the developmental process of Yisrael at each stage pointing the way to how **you can achieve that** .

Pesach itself we find expressed as a process throughout the Torah , the original message to Moshe Rabainu when Hashem sends him is:

שמות ג:יד

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם:

רש"י

אִי־הָיָה אֲשֶׁר אִי־הָיָה . אֲהִיָּה עִמָּם בְּצִרָה זֶה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה עִמָּם בְּשִׁעְבֹד שְׂאֵר מַלְכוּת . אָמַר לְפָנָיו , רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם , מָה אֲנִי מַזְכִּיר לָהֶם צָרָה אַחֲרֵת? דַּיִם בְּצִרָה זֶה , אָמַר לוֹ יְפֹה אֲמַרְתָּ

What Avraham Avinu is told at the בתרים בין ברית in answer to his question of במה אדע is: אימה חשיכה גדולה which we spoke about in a previous essay, a reference to all of the Galuyos to come. We are told there are stages to our development but that ultimately Yisrael as a nation self-achieves what it must.

Whatever expectations we have of Geula we can expect tough times that will test us and challenge us. Pesach is used as a template by Chazal in the way we experience Geula. בניסן נגאל בניסן עתידים ליגאל which is part of taking Mitzrayim as the אימה as the first step in a process that leads to the נופלת גדולה נופלת that is the closing of Magid in the Hagada , והיא שעמדה שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו

אֲשֶׁר גָּאֵלְנוּ וְגָאֵל אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם , וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה לְאֶכְלֹבּוֹ מִצֵּה וּמְרוֹר . כֵּן !!  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ יִגִּיעֵנוּ לְמוֹעֲדֵי וְלְרַגְלֵי אַחֲרָיִם הַבָּאִים לְקִרְאָתְנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם , שְׂמֵחִים  
בְּבִנְיַן עִירָה וְשָׂשׂוֹיִם בְּעִבּוֹדְתֶךָ . וְנֹאכַל שֶׁמֶן מִן הַזֵּבַחִים וּמִן הַפִּסְחִים אֲשֶׁר יִגִּיעַ דָּמָם עַל קִיר  
מִזְבִּיחֶךָ לְרִצּוֹן , וְנוֹדָה לְךָ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ עַל גְּאֻלְתְּנוּ . וְעַל פְּדוּת נַפְשׁוֹנוּ

**Pesach cannot just be tradition. It cannot just be nostalgia. Avraham Avinu's biggest worry, and the reason he asked the question of במה אדע was exactly for that reason, that is what he is worried about. The conversation leading into the question Avraham Avinu asks HKBH:**

בראשית ט"ו:ג

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה מֵהֲתַתֶּן־לִי וְאֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ עִרְרִי וּבְנֵי־מִשְׁקֵי בֵּיתִי הוּא דֹמֶשֶׁק אֲלֵיעֶזֶר:

רש"י

דמשק .. ובתלמוד דרשו נוטריקון דולה ומשקה מתורת רבו לאחרים:

**is just to repeat it over . That is without any tradition being passed on. That Avraham Avinu understood could happen, that is what he was afraid of happening. How could they be יורש was the**

question, how would Yisrael move forward anew and achieve **real freedom, which nostalgia holds us back from.**

שמות י"ג:יא

וְהָיָה כִּי-יִבְאֶרְךָ יְהוָה אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְךָ וְלֹאֲבֹתֶיךָ וּנְתַנָּה לְךָ:  
רש"י

ונתנה לך. תהא בעיניך כאלו נתנה לך בו ביום, ואל תהי בעיניך כירשת אבות :

The night of the seder:

משנה תורה, הלכות חמץ ומצה ז' ו'

בְּכֹל דוֹר וְדוֹר חֵיב אָדָם לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא בְּעַצְמוֹ יָצָא עִתָּהּ מִשְׁעֲבוּד מִצְרַיִם  
שְׂנַאֲמַר (דברים ו כג) "וְאֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם" וְגו'. וְעַל דְּבַר זֶה צִוָּה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּתוֹרָה  
וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ כְּלֹמֵר כְּאִלּוּ אֶתְּהָ בְּעַצְמָךְ הָיִיתָ עֶבֶד וְיָצֵאתָ לְחֵירוֹת וְנִפְדִּיתָ:

**יצא** means like you **left NOW**. It is clear it doesn't mean see yourself a long time ago as going out of Mitzrayim. That is not the point of the Seder. Rather **translate the original Yetziya into now**. You can only go beyond, not just reviewing. Anything less than that would be a violation of the answer to Avraham Avinu of ידוע תדע , which means you are back asking the question במה אדע כי אירשנה and world view of those who are יורש me. It has to become an internal possession not just the keeping of traditions. The זכירה of יציאת מצרים is not commemorative it is immediate!

The Seder is built in a way to make this point clear. We begin with the מה נשתנה , a child like vision of reality. What I see, not what I think about it. Then go to אפילו כולנו זקנים it needs to be an incorporated reality.

רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר: אין זקן אלא מי ששקנה חכמה, שנאמר: "ה' קנני ראשית דרכו"

Then you have the מעשה of R Eliezer ben Azarya

הרי אני כבן שבעים שנה

תלמוד ירושלמי יבמות א'ו:ה

ראה את רבי לעזר בן עזריה וקרא עליו **נער הייתי גם זקנתי**

He is the only one who is both young and old!

**Eric Hoffer once beautifully said:** In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

**We are presently experiencing these changes**, we need to be "learners", but all the while there is also a growing desperation to inertia. To things not to change. To staying comfortable where we are - both physically and beyond. We need to think about what the implications of that are.

Nissan 5784 is an amazing time. It is a time to actualize and internalize the גאולה העתידה to be ready to move beyond inertia, to be free! HKB"Y showed us his love with the amazing miracle, and he is showing us what we are capable of if we are ready to go through crises.

Any day now Israel has to decide if it will finish the job and go into Rafiach. I personally know soldiers just waiting to go, who have been in Aza for three weeks including Leil HaSeder. Ready to do the job that Yisrael needs to do. All this going on while the hate and distrust of the entire world is breathing down our backs, ready to stop us. Calling us evil. Calling us genocidal. It is time for all of us to wake up, I would like to say it is time for all of us to come home, HKB"Y is calling. Let us not be the ones who at Yetziyas Mitzrayim were so attached to their comfort and inertia that Chas VeShalom:

וְחַמְשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

חַמְשִׁים אֶחָד מִחַמְשָׁה יָצְאוּ

## Essay #23

### Independence

May 13, 2024

ה' אייר תשפ"ד

The 76th Yom HaAtzmaut is a good time to contemplate and review the situation of the State of Israel and how it touches us. Here in Israel, beginning with Holocaust remembrance day, (Yom HaShoah), begins a series of what are called the ימים לאומיים, National Days, with this year every one of them being tied to the present war and the present situation.

This past week on Yom Hashoah, it was not unexpected how the rise of antisemitism in the world, the attack by Hamas, and that there were holocaust survivors who were attacked, both them and their families by Hamas on Shmini Atzeres, were all part of the main story of the day.

Yom HaZikaron, remembrance day for fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism has a more powerful message this year with unfortunately over 2000 new names added to this year's lists of the fallen and terror victims.

Yom HaAtzmaut will not be celebrated with its usual vigor. In Israel there is a saying that the War of Independence is fought here every day, it is truer now more than ever. The fight is the same as it was in 1948, do we, the Jews, have a right to be here - while we proclaim loudly and passionately that the land is ours.

In the orthodox community Yom HaAtzmaut is a demarcation line where underlying feelings about the rise of the secular state of Israel are expressed. One group saying Hallel - even with a Bracha, and the other ignoring it, sometimes proactively so. I grew up in an elementary school where I thought Yom HaAtzmaut was a regular Moed, part of the calendar. Then I went to Yeshiva where I was taught it was one of "the darkest days" in Jewish history. Then I grew up and have lived in our miraculous state for over 40 years and have come to my own conclusions which I shared with Talmidim in Yeshiva over the years, both in shiurim and in discussions. I want to share some thoughts this particular year with our particular situation.

It is ironic and sad, that Israel Independence Day is being celebrated during a week when we have learned just how dependent we are on the United States. When I spoke several times in the US this past November, I turned to my audiences and told them then, that "their government", the government of the United States, would not let Israel win this war, and unfortunately so it has come to pass.

During World War Two a coalition was created amongst divergent countries, including the US, France and Russia to defeat an evil called Nazi Germany. Now in 2024, Israel is fighting alone for the entire free world and being prevented by them from winning, based on basically what boils down to a blood libel (that we are killing innocent civilians) against the State of Israel, the army and the Jewish people. One of the interesting developments over the past 76 years is that when Israel originally gained its independence, it was an amazing miracle that the fledgling state should survive the invasion that we refer to as the War of Independence, and marked the beginning of the Kibbutz Galuyot (ingathering of the diaspora) and the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel .

The day of Yom HaAtzmaut itself that is commemorated, the 5th of Iyar, (which is pushed off this year as it is in most years due to Shabbat concerns) would seem to be a day where very little of significance that happened on that very day. There was a declaration made (in secret) of an independent Jewish State (against the request of the United States government) and the forming of a provisional government. This entity, and the Jews living in Eretz Yisrael, came under immediate attack from five foreign armies with the Jews having very poor odds of victory or survival. That ultimate victory and ceasefire, was the first of many miracles we have experienced since that time, but that ceasefire took many months to achieve (July 20, 1949 - 23 Tamuz) and maybe armistice day should be viewed as THE DAY of Yom HaAtzmaut as we actually gained our independence as a State at that time.

In truth though, there was one major change that happened that day, on the 5th of Iyar. We declared the State of Israel, and not the State of Judea. That day we began to take on the identity of Yisrael for the first time in centuries and slowly began shedding the idea of being just "Jews". There is a major difference in that name.

The Gemara in Megilla tells us that יהודי , Jew comes from the rejecting of Avoda Zara:

מגילה יג:א

רבי יוחנן אמר: לעולם מבנימן קאיתי, ואמאי קרי ליה "יהודי"? על שום שִׁכְפָּר בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה. שְׁכַל הַכּוֹפֵר בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה נִקְרָא "יְהוּדִי", כְּדָכְתִּיב: "אֵינִי גּוֹבְרִין יְהוּדָאִין וְגו'".

*Rabbi Yohanan said a different explanation of the verse: Actually, Mordecai came from the tribe of Benjamin. Why, then, was he referred to as Yehudi ? On account of the fact that he repudiated idol worship, for anyone who repudiates idolatry is called Yehudi.*

What the Jewish people existed for, and provided to the world throughout the 2000 years of Galus, is the development from a primitive world that worshiped

Avoda Zara, to one that advanced towards being a developing world. (see essay #20). But we existed as an entity for what we rejected.

The name Yisrael, is from the meaning of the ability to fight :

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאמָר עוֹד שְׁמִי כִּי אִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-שָׁרִית עִם-אֱלֹהִים וְעִם-אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוֹכַל:

Said he, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, **for you have striven** with beings divine and human, and have prevailed."

רש"י

לא יעקב. לא יאמר עוד שהברכות באו לך בעקבה ורמיה כי אם בשררה וגלוי פנים, וסוף שהקב"ה נגלה אליך בבית אל ומחליף שמך ושם הוא מברכה, ואני שם אהיה ואודה לך עליהן, וזה שכתוב וישר אל מלאך ויכל בכה ויתחנן לו (הושע י"ב - (בכה המלאך ויתחנן לו, ומה נתחנן לו? בית אל ומצאנו ושם ידבר עמנו, המתן לי עד שידבר עמנו שם; ולא רצה יעקב, ועל כרחו הודה לו עליהן, וזהו ויברך אתו שם, שהיה מתחנן להמתין לו ולא רצה:

לא יעקב [THY NAME SHALL] NO MORE BE CALLED JACOB [BUT ISRAEL]- It shall no longer be said that the blessings came to you through supplanting and subtlety but through noble conduct (שררה) and in an open manner. Because later on the Holy One, blessed be He, will reveal Himself to you at Bethel and will change your name. There He will bless you, and I shall be there and admit your right to them (the blessings). It is to this that the passage refers (Hosea 12:5), "And he strove with an angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him" - it means the angel wept and made supplication unto him (Jacob). declared him blessed there", that he begged him to wait and he did not agree to do so (cp. Genesis Rabbah 78:2).

The Rambam in explaining the concept of how and when the Kedusha of Eretz Yisrael is applied states:

משנה תורה, הלכות בית הבחירה ו:ט"ז

ולמה אני אומר במקדש וירושלים קדשה ראשונה קדשה לעתיד לבוא. ובקדשת שאר ארץ ישראל לענין שביעית ומעשרות וכיוצא בהן לא קדשה לעתיד לבוא. לפי שקדשת המקדש וירושלים מפני השכינה ושכינה אינה בטלה. והרי הוא אומר (ויקרא כו לא) "והשמותי את מקדשכם" ואמרו חכמים אף על פי ששוממין בקדשתן הן עומדים אבל חייב הארץ בשביעית ובמעשרות אינו אלא מפני שהוא כבוש רבים וכיון שנגלקה הארץ מידיהם בטל הכבוש ונפטרה מן התורה ממעשרות ומשביעית שהרי אינה מן ארץ ישראל. וכיון שעלה עזרא וקדשה לא קדשה בכבוש אלא בחזקה שהחזיקו בה ולפיכך כל מקום שהחזיקו בה עולי בבל ונתקדש בקדשת עזרא השניה הוא מקדש היום ואף על פי שנגלקה הארץ ממנו וחיב בשביעית ובמעשרות על הדרך שבארנו בהלכות תרומה:

Why do I say that the original consecration sanctified the Temple and Jerusalem for eternity, while in regard to the consecration of the remainder of Eretz Yisrael, in the context of the Sabbatical year, tithes, and other similar [agricultural] laws,

*[the original consecration] did not sanctify it for eternity?*

*Because the sanctity of the Temple and Jerusalem stems from the Shechinah, and the Shechinah can never be nullified. Therefore, [Leviticus 26:31] states: "I will lay waste to your Sanctuaries." The Sages declared: "Even though they have been devastated, their sanctity remains." In contrast, **the [original] obligation to keep the laws of the Sabbatical year and tithes on the Land stemmed from the fact that it was conquered by the Jewish people, as a community.** Therefore, when the land was taken from their hands [by the Babylonians,] their [original] conquest was nullified. Thus, according to Torah law, the land was freed from the obligations of the Sabbatical year and of tithes because it was no longer Eretz Yisrael.*

**When Ezra returned [to Eretz Yisrael] and consecrated it, it was not sanctified by means of conquest, but rather through Chazzakah.** Therefore, every place which was repossessed by the [exiles returning from] Babylon and consecrated when Ezra consecrated [the land] the second time, is sacred today.

If you were to describe the last 85 years of Jewish history to a Jew from 150 years ago or earlier, as a predication of the future, he would never believe it! Lets start with the Holocaust, biblically destructive in its nature. But then a small group of non-religious Jews take a hold on the land of Eretz Yisrael, get the Umos HaOlam (the nations of the world through the UN) to declare the Jewish right to the land. Fight a war against five countries armies of millions of people and settle a small sliver of the land - without Yerushalayim. We have an amazing Kibbutz Galuyuos, (ingathering of the exiles) from all over the world including communities that were built for over 2000 or even 3000 years (Iraq, Iran, Yemen). That lasts 19 years as a recognized country **through Chazzakah.** (Both in the time of Ezra and in 1948 we were given permission to return to Eretz Yisrael by the foreign powers.) In 1967 we have another miraculous war to conquer the rest of Eretz Yisrael including Yerushalayim , and that is not recognized as ours by the world (or even by Israeli law) **because it was conquered!** We then have the land flourish, and grow. We grow into a powerful military, and advanced economy. (Oh yes and you would tell this person that millions of Bnei Yisrael would not come to Eretz Yisrael, but rather of their own choice would elect to stay in foreign lands!) And we reach a point that Torah, and the center of Torah learning is once again in Eretz Yisrael after thousands of years!

Imagine telling this story! **It's a fairy tale that we are privileged to live in.** That I can look out the window of the DEC Beis Medrash and see the Neviim's prophecies coming true every day!

This Shabbos the newspaper had an interview with Professor Yisrael Auman, the Nobel prize winner, now 94 years old who lives in Rechavia. He was



speaking about how in spite of the troubles the country is facing at present, how there is still so much to celebrate this Yom HaAtzmaut, and he told over the famous story about how after his son was killed in the first Lebanon war, Rav Yisrael Gutsman ZT"l came over to be Menachem Avel. Rav Gustman had a son killed in front of him by the Nazi's during the Holocaust. He says to Dr. Auman, "our son's are now together in Shmayim but think how amazing it is . My son was killed without the ability to fight back , your son was going and fighting Klal Yisrael's enemies!"

Yisrael's lot is to fight. The amazing thing is that we no longer are fighting just for ourselves, but are literally fighting for the entire western world. We are fighting for everyone's freedom , for the entire world that believes in good and evil. Our boys, our young men are fighting and dying not only for our right to live in Eretz Yisrael, but for the ability of the entire world to survive. That is another level of Yisrael. It is where we grow into our:

לא יאמר עוד שְׁהַבְּרוּכוֹת בָּאוּ לָךְ בְּעֵקֶבָה וּרְמִיָּה כִּי אִם בְּשׂוֹרָה וְגִלְיָ פְּנִים

### **שררה our nobility.**

We are living in amazing times. In an amazing story which will BE"YH have an amazing outcome.

במהרה בימינו!

PS Seven months ago I never heard of Douglas Murray, he has become a vocal advocate for Israel and all that is good in the world. He was recently awarded a prize and his acceptance speech is tremendous. I recommend giving it a listen:

[https://youtu.be/vgHFi\\_wz7rk?si=Bpxe46KvdRasCYb](https://youtu.be/vgHFi_wz7rk?si=Bpxe46KvdRasCYb)

## Essay #24

### Shavuuous

June 9, 2024

ג' סיון תשפ"ד

I did not expect to begin this email with this but I think the joy of all of Klal Yisrael of the hostages amazing rescue gives us so much reason to be MeHallel and Modeh to HKB"Y. It is once again an example that we have spoken about so much, of the miraculous protection that HKB"Y provided was an amazing קיום of what we spoke about previously in email #18 **סוס מוכן ליום מלחמה ולה' התשועה. With the additional thought here of having all of Klal Yisrael's Tefillos answered. Every single day three times a day every single Minyan everywhere in the world davens:**

**אחינו כל בית ישראל נתונים בצרה ובשביה... המקום ירחם עליהם ויוציאם ... משעבוד לגואלה**

**It is not common to see your Tefilla answered so it is a MUST to recognize it when it is.**

I began writing this while on my first trip to the US in several months. I had the privilege of attending Raviv Horesh's amazing wedding with a couple of DECers. The trip was interesting for a number of reasons, and I want to share with you two conversations I had during my travels.

I had a very interesting meeting with a non-jew who has an interest in supporting Torah learning and getting a piece of the Yissachar/ Zvulun deal. He is honestly curious, and I saw that long and sometimes complicated explanations did not faze him, so we had an in depth discussion about the importance of Torah learning. As is the case when you must explain something from scratch, you hit on a number of points that you may not often think or talk about.

It began with an explanation of what is generally learned in Yeshivas, Gemara, and the methodology of it. What Gemara is, Torah Shebaal Peh, and how it is studied. I explained to him that we do not learn Gemara for the conclusions in general, (though we also talked about Halacha and the Shulchan Orech) and the idea of learning Lishmah, just for the fun of it, and that the involvement in learning is the point, not only or even necessarily knowing the information. He was stunned to know the size of Shas and that there are many individuals who know the entirety basically by heart. He was fascinated by the concept that Torah learning is not about the things you learn but that it itself develops the individual into what we call a Gadol, a greater human being.

I pointed out to him that every Orthodox parent who gives birth to a boy, dreams and hopes that their son will be a great Torah scholar (later in life it becomes a question of what one is willing to sacrifice for that to come true) but it is every parent's wish - he found that mind blowing - and when you stop to think about it, it truly is.

This past weeks Parsha

אם-בְּחֻקְתִּי תִלְכוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ וְעִשִּׂיתֶם אֹתָם:

אם בחקתי תלכו. יכול זה קיום המצוות, כשהוא אומר ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם הר' קיום המצוות אמור, הא מה אני מקיים אם בחקתי תלכו? ששתהיו עמלים בתורה (ספרא):

*One might think that this denotes the fulfilment of the commandments; but when Scripture states "and ye shall keep My commandments and do them", it is plain that in this passage there is mentioned the "fulfilment of the commands". How then must I explain אם בחקתי תלכו? As an admonition that you should study the Torah laboriously*

The entire Bris (covenant) is based on , not only keeping Mitzvos, not just knowing Torah, rather Ameilus B'Torah, striving, working, toiling to know Torah. A commitment to being involved, to be Amail - to toil. It is that toiling in Torah, that interest in being involved in Torah, that is demanded from us. It is the only way we can share - Bris - with HKB"Y, as it is the only way we can show that we care about what He cares about. Being curious, wanting to know, and it is through that sharing that we grow into a greater form of Adam.

זאת התורה אדם כי-ימות באהל כל-הבא אל-האהל וכל-אשר באהל יטמא שבעת ימים:

אלא שלא תמצא תורה שבעל פה אצל מי שיבקש ענג העולם, תאוה וכבוד וגדלה בעולם הזה, אלא במי ששמית עצמו עליה, שנאמר: זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל

Are you willing to kill yourself to know? Are you willing to give it your all?

Then we have a Bris, a sharing of reality, a caring about the creation together.

קודשא בריך הוא אסתפל באורייתא, וברא עלמא

*G-d looked into the Torah and created the world.*

Another fascinating conversation I had was at a Shabbos meal by a very wealthy and connected family. Their son is now a Sr. at NYU. He attended a Modern Orthodox Religious Zionist school K-12 then went on to a high-end Religious Zionist Yeshiva. Now he is four years removed, a young man, very bright, his entire life ahead of him. I asked him, as I often ask, is he thinking at all about moving to Israel? He said "when he was in Yeshiva and immediately after, he was more idealistic but now no". I asked "do you see yourself raising your children in the US?" he replied , yes of course, I like America. My daughter who was with me, trying to see how strong a position he had, asked him and if

you met a girl and she wanted to live in Israel would you break up?" he said yes he would.

I know I shouldn't be surprised, but after 14 years of (expensive) Religious Zionist education to have no interest at all in living in Israel is surprising, if not offensive.

Parshas Bechukosai is usually paired with Behar (this year is an exception) and follows the same pattern as Behar both discussing patterns of 6 plus one and patterns of 7. (Just like Shavuot). How the world revolves around sevens and Shemitta. So that even in Bechukosai we learn

אֲז תִרְצָה הָאָרֶץ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ כֹּל יְמֵי הַשְּׁמֵה וְאַתֶּם בְּאָרֶץ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲז תִּשְׁבֹּת הָאָרֶץ וְהִרְצַת אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ:

כֹּל־יְמֵי הַשְּׁמֵה תִשְׁבֹּת אֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁבְתָה בְּשַׁבְּתֹתֶיכֶם בְּשַׁבְּתֹתֶיכֶם עָלֶיהָ:

*Then shall the land make up for its sabbath years throughout the time that it is desolate and you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the land rest and make up for its sabbath years*

That the ultimate result of the Klalaot will be to return the land its years of "rest" that it lost out by our not observing Shmitta.

את אשר לא שבתה. שבעים שנה של גלות בכל הן היו כנגד שבעים שנות השמטה ויובל שהיו בשנים שהכעיסו ישראל בארצם לפני המקום - ארבע מאות ושלושים שנה; שלוש מאות ותשעים היו שני עונם משנכנסו לארץ עד שגלו עשרת השבטים, ובני יהודה הכעיסו לפניו ארבעים שנה משגלו עשרת השבטים עד חרבות ירושלים, הוא שנאמר ביחזקאל "ואתה שכב על צדך השמאלי וגו', וכלית את אלה וגו', ושכבת על צדך הימני ארבעים יום ונשאת את עון בית יהודה", ונבואה זו נאמרה ליחזקאל בשנה החמשית לגלות המלך יהויכין, ועוד עשו שש שנים עד גלות צדקיהו, הרי ארבעים ושש; וא"ת שנות מנשה חמשים וחמש היו, מנשה עשה תשובה שלוש שנים ושלוש שנה, וכל שנות רשעו עשרים ושתיים, כמו שאמרו באגדת חלק, ושל ארון שתיים, ואחת עשרה ליהויקים, וכנגדן לצדקיהו; צא וחשב לארבע מאות ושלושים ושש שנה שמטין ויובלות שבהם, והם שש עשרה למאה - ארבע עשרה שמטין ושנים ויובלות, הרי לארבע מאות שנה ששים וארבע, לשלושים ושש שנה חמש שמטות, הרי שבעים חסר אחת, ועוד שנה יתרה, שנכנסה בשמטה המשלמת לשבעים, ועליהם נגזר שבעים שנה שלמים, וכן הוא אומר בדברי הימים (דברי הימים ב' ל"ו), עד רצתה הארץ את שבתותיה... למלאות שבעים שנה (סדר עולם):

Rashi explains how the 70 years of Galus work out to the Shemitta and Yovel skipped during the time of Bayis Rishon

רמב"ן

וטעם שבת לה' כיום השבת וסוד ימות עולם רמז במקום הזה וכוף אזנך לשמוע מה שאני רשאי להשמיעך ממנו בלשון אשר אשמיעך ואם תזכה תתבונן כבר כתבתי בסדר בראשית (בראשית ב ג) כי ששת ימי בראשית הם ימות עולם ויום השביעי שבת לה' אלהיך (שמות כו) כי בו יהיה שבת לשם הגדול כמו ששנינו (תמיד פ"ז מ"ד) בשביעי מה היו אומרים מזמור שיר ליום השבת לעתיד לבא שכולה שבת ומנוחה לחיי העולמים והנה הימים רמז לאשר ברא במעשה בראשית והשנים ירמזו לאשר יהיה בבריאת כל ימי עולם ועל כן החמיר הכתוב בשמיטה יותר מכל חייבי לאוין וחייב הגלות עליה כמו שהחמיר בעריות (ויקרא י"ח:כ"ח) שנאמר אז תרצה הארץ את שבתותיה

*Now here [in the Torah Kohanim mentioned above, the Rabbis] have roused our attention to one of the great secrets of the Torah. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra has already given us a hint of it when he wrote: "The meaning of a Sabbath unto the Eternal is like that of the Sabbath-day. The secret of the years of the world is alluded to in this place." [Thus far is Ibn Ezra's comment.]*

*Bend now your ear to understand that which I am permitted to inform you about it in the words that I will cause you to hear, and if you will be worthy, you will contemplate them [and understand them]. I have already written in Seder Bereshith that the six days of creation represent [all] the days of the world, and the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Eternal thy G-d, for on it will be the Sabbath to the Great Name, just as we have been taught [in a Mishnah]: "On the seventh day what psalm did the Levites sing [in the Sanctuary]? They sang] A Psalm, a Song. For the Sabbath-day - [a song] for the World to Come, which will be wholly a Sabbath, and rest for life everlasting." Thus the [seven] days [of the week] allude to that which He created in the process of creation, and the [seven] years [of the Sabbatical cycle] refer to that which will occur during the creation of all "the days" of the world. It is for this reason that Scripture was more stringent regarding [the transgression of the laws of] the Sabbatical year than with respect to those guilty of transgressing all other negative commandments, and made it punishable with exile, just as He was stringent with respect to forbidden sexual relations [for which the punishment of the people, as opposed to that of the individual, is also exile]; as it is said, Then shall the Land be paid her Sabbaths, and He repeated this matter many times: As long as it lieth desolate it shall have rest, and it is further said, And the Land shall lie forsaken without them, and shall be paid her Sabbaths. "And so we have been taught [in a Mishnah]: "Exile comes for the delaying of justice, and for the perversion of justice, and for [the neglect of] the year of rest for the Land." [This stringency of punishment is] because whoever denies it [i.e., the law of the Sabbatical year], does not acknowledge the work of creation and [life in] the World to Come.*

Shmitta the Ramban explains is also a commitment to the Bria, to a belief that the world is heading in a direction towards completion. Shmitta is another leg of the Bris, covenant, the relationship with HKB"YH

What I rediscovered on this trip is how amazingly comfortable living in the US is for religious Jews. It is not like I never knew that, but it struck me, and

contrasted greatly to the times and the people I live with at present in Eretz Yisrael. We are all grateful to how amazingly welcoming and comfortable the United States has been for us and how well the Observant community has done both spiritually and financially. The question is are we forgetting what the purpose of doing so well is for? If we lose our underlying commitment to sharing with HKB"ח , to the development of the Bria, to the type of personal growth that really brings us closer to HKB"ח in meaningful ways then what are we doing?

There are no subjects I feel more strongly about than involvement in serious Torah learning and living in Eretz Yisrael, so excuse me if I am coming off to strong. (Maybe it's an age thing).

In a year and a time period where we in Eretz Yisrael are having to reevaluate our entire societal structure. A year where we are seeing immense Mesiras Nefesh and dedication to the Am and to the land. (With a special dedication to ז"ל ארנון זמורה who gave his life during the hostage rescue.)

Shavuot is a time not only of celebrating Kabbalat HaTorah, but on looking inside and reevaluating our personal connection to the Bris of Sinai, the Bris of Ameilus BaTorah and the Bris of Eretz Yisrael.

Chag Sameach

Essay #25

Shiva Asar B'Tamuz

July 11, 2024

ה' תמוז תשפ"ד

With Shiva Asar B'Tamuz approaching, I wished to share some thoughts that may help us all focus and utilize the Taanis in a better manner.

רמב"ם הלכות תעניות פרק ה הלכה א

יש שם ימים שכל ישראל מתענים בהם מפני הצרות שאירעו בהן כדי לעורר הלבבות ולפתוח דרכי התשובה ויהיה זה זכרון למעשינו הרעים ומעשה אבותינו שהיה כמעשינו עתה עד שגרם להם ולנו אותן הצרות, שבזכרון דברים אלו נשוב להיטיב שנאמר +ויקרא כ"ז+ והתודו את עונם ואת עון אבותם וגו'

*There are days when the entire Jewish people fast because of the calamities that occurred to them then, to arouse [their] hearts and initiate [them in] the paths of repentance. **This will serve as a reminder of our wicked conduct and that of our ancestors, which resembles our present conduct and therefore brought these calamities upon them and upon us.** By reminding ourselves of these matters, we will repent and improve [our conduct], as [Leviticus 26:40] states: "And they will confess their sin and the sin of their ancestors."*

The Rambam explains that the point of a Taanis, a public fast day, is not only to look into our own personal need for Teshuva and awareness, rather, **importantly, we have to look into the conduct of our ancestors.** You would think we have enough of our own issues that it's a bit of a Chutzpah for us to start blaming and looking into our ancestors issues, but if you pay attention to the Rambam, he is saying that is the point of the Taanis, **to realize the same mistakes they were making are the ones that we are making now. The Taanis is to deal with the mistaken paradigm** that we have inherited from our ancestors and continue to build on.

***This will serve as a reminder of our wicked conduct and that of our ancestors, which resembles our present conduct and therefore brought these calamities upon them and upon us.***

That is what the Pasuk says is necessary והתודו את עונם ואת עון אבותם **"And they will confess their sin and the sin of their ancestors"**

The Taanis is to make sure we are aware that we are dealing with the same issues! That is a hard idea to grasp because we generally focus on the local problems in Klal Yisrael, but the point of a Taanis says the Rambam, is to make you aware that the local issues are only an outgrowth of the underlying issues, which have been around for a long time and have not yet been dealt with.

The Taaniyos (fast days) are Moadim, meaning they are significant junctures in time, not random commemorative days. This is shown in the Mishna in Taanis:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף כו עמוד א

חמשה דברים אירעו את אבותינו בשבעה עשר בתמוז, וחמשה בתשעה באב. בשבעה עשר בתמוז נשתברו הלוחות, ובטל התמיד, והובקעה העיר. ושרף אפוסטמוס את התורה והעמיד צלם בהיכל.

*Five calamitous matters occurred to our forefathers on the seventeenth of Tammuz, (and five other disasters happened on the Ninth of Av). On the seventeenth of Tammuz the tablets were broken by Moses ; the daily offering was nullified the city walls of Jerusalem were breached; the general Apostemos publicly burned a Torah scroll an idol was placed in the Sanctuary.*

It is not a coincidence that these events all occurred on the same day. The origins of Shiva Asar B'Tamuz are built into the creation, it has to be the day that Moshe Rabianu breaks the Luchos, and so follow the other 4 events.

The common denominator of the five events of Shiva Asar B'Tamuz **is the destruction of givens**. That which we literally considered to be written in stone are broken. This has been a year that Yisrael has learned, or has been meant to learn, that nothing, not even that which is written in stone can be relied on. We literally had our own **והובקעה העיר** the walls were breached - very unexpectedly.

(Consider the similarity in the metaphor. The Roman army is encamped outside of Yerushalayim for months , since Asara B'Tevet, and yet the breach is unexpected. In our days, today, we sat watching a terrorist army prepare to attack us for months and yet we were caught completely by surprise when they did!)

We have discussed throughout the year how we have had to learn to open our minds to possibilities, many of them terrifying. But it has been a year of a breaking of givens. Most of the givens we tend to think of are external. The security in Israel, the anti-semitism in the US and around the world etc. But what we need to focus on, especially with a Taanis coming, is what is changing internally. What givens has Yisrael understood need to be reconsidered.

In our weekly Hilchos Teshuva shiur we recently covered the Rambam in Perek 9. He says the deepest Mussar I think a person can hear, it certainly affected us when we read it:

רמב"ם הל' תשובה ט:ב

הקדוש ברוך הוא נתן לנו תורה זו עץ חיים היא. וכל העושה כל הפתוב בה ויודעו דעה גמורה נכונה זוכה בה לחיי העולם הבא. ולפי גדל מעשיו ורב חכמתו הוא זוכה. והבטיחנו בתורה שאם נעשה אותה בשמחה ובטובת נפש ונהגה בחכמתה תמיד שישיר ממנו כל הדברים המונעים אותנו מלעשותה כגון חלי ומלחמה ורעב וכיוצא בהן. וישפיע לנו כל הטובות



הַמְחִיזִיקוֹת אֶת יְדֵינוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַתּוֹרָה כְּגוֹן שֶׁבַע וְשָׁלוֹם וְרַבּוּי כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב. כְּדִי שְׁלֹא נַעֲסֵק כָּל יְמֵינוּ בְּדַבְרִים שֶׁהַגּוֹף צָרִיךְ לָהֵן אֲלֵא נִשְׁבַּ פְּנוּיִים לְלַמֵּד בְּחֻכְמָה וְלַעֲשׂוֹת הַמִּצְוָה כְּדִי שֶׁנִּזְכָּה לַחַיִּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר בַּתּוֹרָה אַחַר שֶׁהִבְטִיחַ בְּטוֹבוֹת הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה (דְּבָרִים ו' כ"ה) "וַיִּצְדָּקָה תְּהִיָּה לָנוּ" וְגו'. וְכֵן הוֹדִיעֵנוּ בַּתּוֹרָה שְׂאֵם נַעֲזֵב הַתּוֹרָה מִדַּעַת וְנַעֲסֵק בְּהַבְלִי הַזְּמַן כְּעִנְיָן שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים ל"ב טו') "וַיִּשְׁמַן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְעֵט", שִׁדְיָן הָאֱמֶת יִסִּיר מִן הָעוֹזְבִים כָּל טוֹבוֹת הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה שֶׁהֵן חֲזָקוֹ יְדֵיהֶם לְבַעֵט וּמִבִּיא עֲלֵיהֶם כָּל הָרַעוֹת הַמוֹנְעִים אוֹתָן מִלְקַנּוֹת הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא כְּדִי שֶׁיֵּאבְדוּ בְּרַשָּׁעִים. הוּא שֶׁכְּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה (דְּבָרִים כ"ח מ"ז) "תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' וְגו'"; (דְּבָרִים כ"ח מ"ח) "וְעַבַדְתָּ אֶת אֱיִבֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַחְנוּ ה' בְּךָ". נִמְצָא פְּרוֹשׁ כָּל אוֹתָן הַבְּרָכוֹת וְהַקְּלָלוֹת עַל דְּרָךְ זֶה, כְּלוֹמַר אִם עֲבַדְתֶּם אֶת ה' בְּשִׂמְחָה וּשְׂמֵרַתֶּם דְּרָכּוֹ מִשְׁפִּיעַ לָכֶם הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלוּ וּמִרְחִיק הַקְּלָלוֹת מִכֶּם עַד שֶׁתְּהִיּוּ פְּנוּיִים לְהִתְחַכֵּם בַּתּוֹרָה וְלַעֲסֹק בָּהּ כְּדִי שֶׁתִּזְכְּנוּ לַחַיִּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא וְיִיטֵב לָךְ לְעוֹלָם שְׂכָלוֹ טוֹב וְתֹארוֹךְ יָמִים לְעוֹלָם שְׂכָלוֹ אַרְךְ וְנִמְצָאתֶם זֹכִינִן לְשָׁנֵי הָעוֹלָמוֹת, לַחַיִּים טוֹבִים בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַמְּבִיאִים לַחַיִּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. שְׂאֵם לֹא יִקְנֶה פֶה חֻכְמָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים אִין לוֹ בְּמָה יִזְכָּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (קְהֵלֶת ט' י') "כִּי אִין מַעֲשֶׂה וְחֻשְׁבוֹן וְדַעַת וְחֻכְמָה בְּשֵׂאוֹל". וְאֵם עֲזַבְתֶּם אֶת ה' וּשְׁגִיתֶם בְּמֵאֵל וּבְמִשְׁתָּה וּזְנוֹת וְדוּמָה לָהֶם מִבִּיא עֲלֵיכֶם כָּל הַקְּלָלוֹת הָאֵלוּ וּמִסִּיר כָּל הַבְּרָכוֹת עַד שֶׁיִּכְלוּ יְמֵיכֶם בְּבִהְלָה וּפְחַד וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לֵב פְּנוּי וְלֹא גוֹף שְׁלֵם לַעֲשׂוֹת הַמִּצְוֹת כְּדִי שֶׁתֵּאבְדוּ מִחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא וְנִמְצָא שֶׁאֲבַדְתֶּם שְׁנֵי עוֹלָמוֹת. שֶׁבְּזִמְנֵן שֶׁאֲדָם טְרוּד בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּחַלִּי וּבְמִלְחָמָה וְרַעְבוֹן אִינוּ מִתְעַסְק לֹא בְּחֻכְמָה וְלֹא בְּמִצְוֹת שֶׁבִּהְיָ זֹכִינִן לַחַיִּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

*God gave us this Torah which is a tree of life. Whoever fulfills what is written within it and comprehends it with complete and proper knowledge will merit the life of the world to come. A person merits, according to the magnitude of his deeds and the extent of his knowledge.*

*We are promised by the Torah that if we fulfill it with joy and good spirit and meditate on its wisdom at all times, [God] will remove all the' obstacles which prevent us from fulfilling it, for example, sickness, war, famine, and the like. Similarly, He will grant us all the good which will reinforce our performance of the Torah, such as plenty, peace, an abundance of silver and gold in order that we not be involved throughout all our days in matters required by the body, but rather, will sit unburdened and [thus, have the opportunity to] study wisdom and perform mitzvot in order that we will merit the life of the world to come.*

*This [principle is expressed] by the Torah. After [Deuteronomy 6:11-12] promises us all the benefits of this world, it concludes [ibid.:25]: "And charity will remain for us if we take care to perform [all these commandments]."*

*Similarly, the Torah has informed us that if we consciously abandon the Torah and involve ourselves in the vanities of the time in a manner similar to that stated [by Deuteronomy 32:15]: "Jeshurun became fat and rebelled," then, the True Judge will remove from all the benefits of this world which reinforce their rebellion those who abandoned [the Torah].*

*He will bring upon them all the evils which prevent them from acquiring [a portion in] the world to come so that they will be destroyed in their wickedness.*

*This was implied by the Torah's statement [Deuteronomy 28:47-48]: "Because you did not serve God, [your Lord, with happiness,]... you will serve your enemies whom God sends against you."*

*Thus, these blessings and curses can be interpreted as follows: **If you serve God with happiness and observe His way, He will grant you these blessings and***

**remove these curses from you in order that you may be free to gain wisdom from the Torah and involve yourselves in it so that you will merit the life of the world to come. "Good will be granted you" - in the world that is entirely good; "and you will live long" - in the world which is endlessly long, [the world to come].**

**Thus, you will merit two worlds, a good life in this world, which, in turn, will bring you to the life of the world to come.** For if a person will not acquire wisdom in this world and he does not possess good deeds, with what will he merit [a portion in the world to come]? [Thus, Ecclesiastes 9:10] states: "There is no work, no accounting, no knowledge, and no wisdom in the grave."

**[Conversely,] if you have abandoned God and become obsessed with food, drink, lewdness, and the like, He will bring all these curses upon you and remove all blessing until you will conclude all your days in confusion and fear. You will not have a free heart or a complete body to fulfill the mitzvot in order that you forfeit the life of the world to come.**

Thus, you will forfeit two worlds for when a person is occupied in this world with sickness, war, and hunger, he cannot involve himself with either wisdom or mitzvot which allow him to merit the life of the world to come.

There is nothing we take more for granted, nothing more engraved in stone for us, than our comfortable lives. HKB"Y has been amazingly kind to Yisrael over the past 75 years, giving us freedom, wealth and access to Eretz Yisrael like no other time in our history. Do we use it properly or do we take it for granted?

I was conversing with someone after Shul recently, that here, right now, it is incongruous that we can be living our regular lives in Yerushalayim and in other parts of the country, while rockets are reigning down on the north, destroying vast swaths of Eretz Yisrael, killing people and destroying property. It reminded me of this Gemara about the Churban:

גיטין נז.

תַּלְתַּת מֵאָה אֲלִפֵּי שְׁלִיפֵי סִיפָא עֵיִלּוּ לְטוּר מְלָכָא, וְקִטְלוּ בַּהּ תְּלַתָּא יוֹמֵי וְתַלְתָּא לִילוּתָא; וּבְהָךְ גִּיסָא הַלּוּלִי וְחִנְגִּי, וְלֹא הוּוּ יְדְעֵי הֵי בְּהֵי

*Rav Asi says: Three hundred thousand men with drawn swords entered the King's Mountain and massacred its inhabitants for three days and three nights. And at the same time on the other side of the mountain, weddings and other festivities continued to be celebrated, and they did not know about each other, owing to the enormous size of the place.*

I can testify to the fact that those of us living in Eretz Yisrael took our situation prior to Shmini Atzeres totally for granted. We were sure there were no more serious security threats. We were sure of our economic power and growth. We began bickering about internal issues as far as we were concerned the "enemy" no longer was there. "We" even won the last election after 5 tries! These past

nine months, have torn all of that apart. 120,000 people are out of their homes in the northern part of Israel. The north, usually beautiful and full of hikers this time of year is abandoned, burned and mostly destroyed. Yesterday a couple, Noah and Nir Barnes ז"ל from Kibbutz Ortal had a direct hit from a Hizbullah missile strike on their car that killed them and left three Yesomim!

People in Israel are buying generators and stocking up on bottled water for the next stage of the war. All of us need to consider what a war in Lebanon and possibly involving Iran can look like. And everyone learned this year that events in Israel have ramifications to Jews all over the globe.

Shiva Asar B'Tamuz comes, and came before Tisha B'Av, and though we are presently in a state of Churban, destruction, it is not absolute destruction - that is Tisha B'Av, and we still have a chance for Teshuva.

There are no givens, they are earned. If we want a life that is deserved, we have to create it. If we want a world that works, then we need to be aware enough to know how to help make that happen. Is it not crazy that we have had nine months of this terrible tragedy and we barely think about it anymore?!

Here are some thoughts to consider. The State of Israel, and the return of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael is one of the greatest miracles of all time. Having an army being Moser Nefesh to fight off Yisrael's enemies is amazing, incredible and prophetic in nature. Our connection to Eretz Yisrael is not going to be understood or accepted by the Umos HaOlam until we clarify that importance to ourselves. Our security is not to be taken for granted, it is a Bracha given to us to be used to further pursue all the above.

You and all of Yisrael should have a meaningful Taanis.

PS I wanted to share two more things with you. Last night I went to a wedding and saw a new minhag. Prior to the breaking of the glass, the Rav spoke for half a minute about the war and then asked everyone to be משתתף (to participate) in the צער of the hostages and the soldiers and everyone let out at once a very powerful scream of real pain. (Yes I was shocked) but it was quite moving and genuine and something a person really needs to think about during the 2 minutes of Tehillim following davening.

There is a video going around of Rav Asher Weiss, Shlita who tells over a visit he had to a wounded soldier. The young man is a Yeshiva student, a Talmid Chacham and he lost both his legs and part of his right arm in Aza. When he came in to see him the soldier had a number of questions to ask. Which hand to put tefillin on now, how to hold the Arba Minim with a prosthetic, and lastly when to make the Bracha Shehecheyanu; when they put on the prosthetic or when he first uses it?

Rav Asher Weiss pointed out what a Tzadik this guy is. If he became an

Apikoros now, or not frum no one would blame him and instead look what is occupying his mind! How is he going to perform these Mitzvos correctly.

**אשריך ישראל מי כמוך**

Tisha B'Av and Teshuva

August 4, 2024

כ"ט תמוז תשפ"ד

We are living in a very confusing time summed up nicely in this drawing. We wait today for possible WWII, an attack on Israel, a ending of the war, or a Geula. We know things are not right, and we do not know what is supposed to be done or what is supposed to happen. It just feels closer now then it ever has.



רמב"ם ה' מלכים יב:ב

אמרו חכמים אין בין העולם הזה לימות המשיח אלא שעבוד מלכות בלבד. יראה מפשוטן של דברי הנביאים. שבתחלת ימות המשיח תהיה מלחמת גוג ומגוג. ושקדם מלחמת גוג ומגוג יעמד נביא לישר ישראל ולהכין לבם. שנאמר (מלאכי ג, כג) "הנה אנכי שלח לכם את אליהו וגו'. ואינו בא לא לטמא הטהור. ולא לטהר הטמא. ולא לפסל אנשים שהם בחזקת כשרות. ולא להכשיר מי שהחזקו פסולין. אלא לשום שלום בעולם. שנאמר (מלאכי ג, כד) "והשיב לב אבות על בנים". ויש מן החכמים שאומרים שקדם ביאת המשיח יבוא אליהו. וכל אלו הדברים וכיוצא בהן לא ידע אדם איך יהיו עד שיהיו. שדברים סתומין הן אצל הנביאים. גם החכמים אין להם קבלה בדברים אלו. אלא לפי הכרע הפסוקים. ולפיכך יש להם מחלוקת בדברים אלו.

*Our Sages taught: "There will be no difference between the current age and the Messianic era except the emancipation from our subjugation to the gentile kingdoms."*

*The simple interpretation of the prophets' words appear to imply that the war of Gog and Magog will take place at the beginning of the Messianic age. Before the war of Gog and Magog, a prophet will arise to inspire Israel to be upright and prepare their hearts, as Malachi 3:22 states: 'Behold, I am sending you Elijah.' He will not come to declare the pure, impure, or to declare the impure, pure. He will not dispute the lineage of those presumed to be of proper pedigree, nor will he validate the pedigree of those whose lineage is presumed blemished. Rather, he will establish peace within the world as ibid. 3:24 continues: 'He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.'*

*There are some Sages who say that Elijah's coming will precede the coming of the Mashiach. All these and similar matters cannot be definitely known by man until they occur for these matters are undefined in the prophets' words and even the wise men have no established tradition regarding these matters except their own interpretation of the verses. Therefore, there is a controversy among them regarding these matters.*

The Rambam stresses that "nobody knows" the ideas are undefined. And so we see always when referring to the קץ that things are hidden.

בראשית מח:מט

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאִסְפוּ וְאִגִּידָה לָכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים:

*And Jacob called his sons and said, "Come together that I may tell you what is to befall you at the end of time.*

רש"י

ואגידה לכם. בקש לגלות את הקץ ונסתלקה ממנו שכינה והתחיל אומר דברים אחרים:

*He wished to reveal to them the end of Israel's exile but the Shechinah departed from him and he began to speak of other things*

Or by Daniel when he is told the future:

דניאל יב:ט

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ דָּנִיֵּאל כִּי-סֵתֵמִים וְחֵתֵמִים הַדְּבָרִים עַד-עֵת קֵץ:

*He said, "Go, Daniel, for these words are secret and sealed to the time of the end.*

When the Rambam states that :

שְׂדֵדָרִים סְתוּמִין הֵן אֶצֶל הַנְּבִיאִים. גַּם הַחֻכְמִים אֵין לָהֶם קְבֻלָּה בְּדֵבָרִים אֱלוֹ. אֶלָּא לְפִי הַכְרַע הַפְּסוּקִים. וּלְפִיכָּךְ יֵשׁ לָהֶם מַחְלֻקַּת בְּדֵבָרִים אֱלוֹ.

He is basing it on the conclusion of the Gemara as well as the numerous contradictions between Chazal.

אמר רב כלו כל הקיצין ואין הדבר תלוי אלא בתשובה ומעשים טובים ושמואל אמר דיו לאבל שיעמוד באבלו

*Rav says: All the ends of days that were calculated passed, and the matter depends only upon repentance and good deeds. When the Jewish people repent, they will be redeemed. And Shmuel says: It is sufficient for the mourner to endure in his mourning to bring about the coming of the Messiah.*

The Gemara continues :

כתנאי ר' אליעזר אומר אם ישראל עושין תשובה נגאלין ואם לאו אין נגאלין אמר ליה רבי יהושע אם אין עושין תשובה אין נגאלין אלא הקב"ה מעמיד להן מלך שגזרותיו קשות כהמן וישראל עושין תשובה ומחזירן למוטב תניא אידך ר' אליעזר אומר אם ישראל עושין תשובה נגאלין שנאמר (ירמיהו ג, כב) שובו בנים שובבים ארפא משובותיכם אמר לו רבי יהושע והלא כבר נאמר (ישעיהו נב, ג) חנם נמכרתם ולא בכסף תגאלו חנם נמכרתם בעבודת כוכבים ולא בכסף תגאלו לא בתשובה ומעשים טובים אמר לו רבי אליעזר לר' יהושע והלא כבר נאמר (מלאכי ג, ז) שובו אלי ואשובה אליכם אמר ליה רבי יהושע והלא כבר נאמר (ירמיהו ג, יד) כי אנכי בעלתי בכם ולקחתי אתכם אחד מעיר ושנים ממשפחה והבאתי אתכם ציון אמר לו ר' אליעזר והלא כבר נאמר (ישעיהו ל, טו) בשובה ונחת תושעון אמר לו ר' יהושע לרבי אליעזר והלא כבר נאמר (ישעיהו מט, ז) כה אמר ה' גואל ישראל וקדושו לבזה נפש למתעב גוי לעבד מושלים מלכים יראו וקמו שרים וישתחוו אמר לו רבי אליעזר והלא כבר נאמר (ירמיהו ד, א) אם תשוב ישראל נאום ה' אלי תשוב אמר לו רבי יהושע והלא כבר נאמר (דניאל יב, ז) ואשמע את האיש לבוש הבדים אשר ממעל למימי היאור וירם ימינו ושמאלו אל השמים וישבע בחי העולם כי למועד מועדים וחצי וככלות נפץ יד עם קדש תכלינה כל אלה וגו' **ושתק רבי אליעזר**

*The Gemara notes: This dispute is parallel to a dispute between tanna'im: Rabbi Eliezer says: If the Jewish people repent they are redeemed, and if not they are not redeemed. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: If they do not repent, will they not be redeemed at all? Rather, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will establish a king for them whose decrees are as harsh as those issued by Haman, and the Jewish people will have no choice but to repent, and this will restore them to the right path.*

*It is taught in another baraita that Rabbi Eliezer says: If the Jewish people repent they are redeemed, as it is stated: "Return, wayward children, I will heal your iniquities" (Jeremiah 3:22). Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: But isn't it already stated: "So says the Lord: You were sold for naught, and without money you shall be redeemed" (Isaiah 52:3)? Rabbi Yehoshua explains: "You were sold for naught" means you were sold for idol worship, which is a sin with no basis. "And without money you shall be redeemed" means you will be redeemed not through repentance and good deeds, but through the will of God.*

*Rabbi Eliezer said to Rabbi Yehoshua: But isn't it already stated: "Return to me and I will return to you" (Malachi 3:7)? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: But isn't it already stated: "For I have taken you to Myself; and I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (Jeremiah 3:14), unconditionally?*

*Rabbi Eliezer said to him: But isn't it already stated: "In ease [beshuva] and rest shall you be saved" (Isaiah 30:15), indicating that redemption is dependent upon repentance [teshuva]? Rabbi Yehoshua said to Rabbi Eliezer: But isn't it already stated: "So says the Lord, Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to him who is despised of man, to him who is abhorred of the nation, to a servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, princes shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, Who is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, Who has chosen you" (Isaiah 49:7), indicating that redemption will come independent of repentance?*

*Rabbi Eliezer said to him: But isn't it already stated: "If you will return, Israel, says the Lord, return to Me" (Jeremiah 4:1), indicating that redemption is contingent upon repentance? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: But isn't it already stated: "And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he lifted up his right hand and his left hand to heaven and swore by the One Who lives forever that it shall be for a period, periods, and a half; when the crushing of the power of the holy people shall have been completed, all these things shall be finished" (Daniel 12:7), indicating that the time for redemption is set and unrelated to repentance? And Rabbi Eliezer was silent, unable to refute the proof from that verse*

We are also all aware of the Chazal:

ואמר רבי יוחנן אין בן דוד בא אלא בדור שכולו זכאי או כולו חייב

*And Rabbi Yoḥanan says: The son of David will come only in a generation that is entirely innocent, in which case they will be deserving of redemption, or in a generation that is entirely guilty, in which case there will be no alternative to redemption.*

So which one is it? Do we need to do Teshuva to bring Mashiach or is it going to happen on its own?

The Rambam states in the seventh perek of Hilchos Teshuva:

כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים כָּלָן צִוּוּ עַל הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְאֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל נִגְאָלִין אֶלָּא בַּתְּשׁוּבָה. וּכְבָר הַבְּטִיחָה תּוֹרָה שְׂסוּף יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה בְּסוּף גְּלוּתָהּ וּמִיָּד הִן נִגְאָלִין שְׁנַיִמָּר (דברים ל א) "וְהָיָה כִּי יָבֹאוּ עֲלֶיךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים" וְגו' (דברים ל ב) "וְשָׁבַת עַד ה' אֶלְהֶיךָ" (דברים ל ג) "וְשָׁב ה' אֶלְהֶיךָ" וְגו':

*All the prophets commanded [the people] to repent. Israel will only be redeemed through Teshuvah. The Torah has already promised that, ultimately, Israel will repent at the end of her exile and, immediately, she will be redeemed as*



[Deuteronomy 30:1-3] states: "There shall come a time when [you will experience] all these things... and you will return to God, your Lord.... God, your Lord, will bring you back ."

Which one is it. Teshuva brings the end of Galus of Geula brings us to Teshuva?

**רבי אליעזר אומר: בתשרי נברא העולם, בתשרי נולדו אבות, בתשרי מתו אבות, בפסח נולד יצחק, בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל וחסה, בראש השנה יצא יוסף מבית האסורין .**

**בראש השנה בטלה עבודה מאבותינו במצרים, בניסן נגאלו, בתשרי עתידין ליגאל.**

**רבי יהושע אומר: בניסן נברא העולם, בניסן נולדו אבות, בניסן מתו אבות, בפסח נולד יצחק, בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל וחסה, בראש השנה יצא יוסף מבית האסורין, בראש השנה בטלה עבודה מאבותינו במצרים, בניסן נגאלו בניסן עתידין ליגאל.**

תנא, רבי אליעזר אומר: מנין שבתשרי נברא העולם - שנאמר: "ויאמר אלהים תדשא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע עץ פרי". איזהו חדש שהארץ מוציאה דשאים ואילן מלא פירות - הוי אומר זה תשרי. ואותו הפרק זמן רביעה היתה, וירדו גשמים וצימחו, שנאמר: "ואד יעלה מן הארץ".

רבי יהושע אומר: מנין שבניסן נברא העולם - שנאמר: "ותוצא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע ועץ עושה פרי". איזהו חדש שהארץ מליאה דשאים ואילן מוציא פירות - הוי אומר, זה ניסן. ואותו הפרק, זמן בהמה וחייה ועוף שמדדוגין זה אצל זה, שנאמר: "לבשו כרים הצאן וגו'"

There is a fundamental difference between R Eliezer and R Yehoshua as to when the Geula is to take place. In Tishrei or in Nissan. These opinions seem to be consistent with their opinions as to how Geula will take place. R' Yehoshua holds that the Geula will take place in Nissan and just as in Nissan we were able to be redeemed from Mitzrayim regardless of our participation so to the future Geula will take place without a need for us to make it happen. R' Eliezer in contrast says the future Geula will take place in Tishrei and Tishrei is a time of Teshuva and Din and those are required for Geula to happen.

The contrast in their opinions is stressed in the seeming contradiction of the Pesukim regarding the creation of the world. R Eliezer is saying in Tishrei the world was created as it says **עץ פרי** trees full of fruit and it says **אד יעלה מן הארץ** at that moment the Torah tells us Adam was required to respond and make the rains happen. R' Yehoshua speaks of a Nissan creation one of **עץ עושה פרי** that that the world responds on its own **ויהי כן** !

Both these levels are nested one in the other in the same way that **ידיעה** and **בחירה** are. Our choices, our actions become part of a self organizing world that expresses HKB"Y's will /Razton. We live in times where we witness this every day. Our actions are small but they add up on a national level to the events that clearly are bringing the **קץ** and the Geula closer.

It is a confusing time, and an appropriate emotion for Tish B'Av

We should all be Zoche to what Chazal say on the Pasuk from Rus:

ליני | הלילה והיה בבקר אם יגאלך טוב יגאל ואם לא יחפץ לגאלך וגאלתיך אנכי סי' יהיה  
שכבי עד הבקר:

If we deserve Geula and do what is necessary טוב and if not wait for the  
morning of HKB"Y's presence is near.

We should be Zoche to come out of the confusion for a Teshuva Shleima and a  
Geula Shleima במהרה בימינו

## Essay #27

### Nechama and Awareness

August 28,2024

כ"ד מנחם אב תשפ"ד

Israel, and all of us that live here are at a strange crossroads. The tension in the country is palatable, and is even being compared to the waiting period prior to the Six day war. There is a very theoretical chance that a deal will be made with Hamas, which is only something the US could think is going to happen - Hamas has not even sent representatives to the meetings! - so no high hopes are being held out in Israel. Having buried six of the hostages this past week who were murdered in cold blood (bullet holes were found in their heads) everyone, especially the US administration needs to understand who we are dealing with.

A break down of the negotiations (which is just a matter of time) will lead to a multi front war against Hizbullah and Iran, and I am fairly certain you do not hear the news of what is going on in the Shomron, where the army is also engaged in full scale operations against terrorists. Last week rockets were fired directly on to homes in Katzrin, my daughter went as part of her position in the army to guide reporters, she tells me it was an absolute miracle nobody was killed, the homes were completely destroyed. Another miracle occurred this past Sunday where Israel was able to destroy and intercept Hizballahs attack. The divine intervention we are seeing continually.

I actually spent last week in the Golan, at my sons house which is a 15 minute drive south from Katzrin, I didn't even hear the missiles, and as odd as it might sound, life there was going on as usual. The Golan is usually filled with families on Bein Hazmanim vacation. It was not full, but there were some. I took a hike to the Mapal HaLavan and there were people there, but not overwhelming as it usually is during summer.

With all this going on three Derech Etz Chaim Talmidim/Alumni picked up this week and moved to Israel! Dr. Elan Norparvar, Gilad Silverman and Aaron Roller. On our DEC EY Whatsapp chat there was great Simcha in having them join the over 50 DECers, and all of us living in Eretz Yisrael . I was at the airport picking up an arrival and Olim from the US were coming off the plane with great joy from the entire Tzibur waiting in the arrivals area!

I also had two interesting conversations with DEC Alumns living in the US. One mentioned to me that his brother in law made Aliyah this summer and he already has a sister living here, and asked what right does he have to not have a plan to get to Eretz Yisrael?! Another DECer asked me "how will we know when

we are in **ימות המשיח**” (I think I misunderstood his question as I thought he meant the period leading up to the **משיח** coming well what I think he meant was the actual time of the **משיח**) in any case I want to share my answer with you as it is **נחמתא** the weeks of **נחמתא** that we are presently in.

There is a necessity on the part of every individual and ultimately for the Yisrael to be aware of the times we are living in. As you pay attention to the Haftarot of Nechama in the coming weeks you will see that the Nevuot have literally come true. We are living in a time where Yerushalayim is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, where a Kibbutz Galiyot has taken place, where Eretz Yisrael is settled and blooming. We are also living in a time when we are presently engaged in the longest war in Yisraels history. Where the Goyim have the chutzpah to take us to world court. The events are historical and Midrashic and one needs to be aware of the historic significance of these times .

If I may offer an opinion, the biggest shortcoming in Klal Yisrael right now stem from a lack of awareness and engagement in the historical present.

The Navi Zecharia

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַד יָשׁוּבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנוֹת בְּרַחֲבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאִישׁ מִשְׁעֲנֵתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מֵרֵב יָמִים:

וּבְרַחֲבוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ יְלָדִים וְיִלְדוֹת מִשְׁחֻקִים בְּרַחֲבֹתֶיהָ:

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת כִּי יִפְלֵא בְעֵינַי שְׂאֵרֵיט הָעָם הַזֶּה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם גַּם־בְּעֵינַי יִפְלֵא נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־עַמִּי מֵאֶרֶץ מִזְרָח וּמֵאֶרֶץ מְבֹאָה הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

וְהִבְאֵתִי אֹתָם וְשָׁכְנוּ בְּתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם וְהָיוּ־לִי לְעָם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים בְּאַמֶּת וּבְצִדְקָה:

רש"י

כי יפלא. בעיניהם החסד הגדול אשר אעשה להם:

It will seem impossible! The Navi Zechariah is telling us we need to be aware and surprised and appreciative of what we are seeing today.

As we head into Elul , the last month of a long year, we look back at a very difficult year for Klal Yisrael. We became **מבזזה מכל העמים** , completely looked down upon by the entire world. Hundreds of soldiers killed, thousands of Yidden are refugees. Cities in Eretz Yisrael in the north completely destroyed. It will take years if not decades to recover.

The times we are living in are not “normal times”.

Are we in **ימות המשיח** , I would like to think so. We should be Zoche soon to see the end of the story, to see the coming of Mashiach and **ישראל** עמו **ישראל**.

Tehuva, Tefilla, Tzedakah

September 22, 2024

י"ט אלול תשפ"ד

The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva says:

הלכות תשובה ב:ד

מדרכי התשובה להיות השב צועק תמיד לפני השם בבכי ובתחנונים ועושה צדקה כפי לחו ומתרחק הרבה מן הדבר שחטא בו ומשנה שמו כלומר אני אחר ואיני אותו האיש שעשה אותו המעשים ומשנה מעשיו כלן לטובה ולדרך ישרה וגולה ממקומו. שגלות מכפרת עון מפני שגורמת לו להכניע ולהיות ענו ושפל רוח:

He introduces a new idea called Darchei Teshuva, which is clearly different and on a lower level than actual Teshuva. Previously in Halacha 2 the Rambam explains:

ומה היא התשובה. הוא שיעזב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמר בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד שגגמר (ישעיה נה ז) "יעזב רשע דרכו" וגו'. וכן יתנחם על שעבר שגגמר (ירמיה לא יט) "כי אחרי שובי נחמתי". ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם שגגמר (הושע יד ד) "ולא נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשה ידיו" וגו'. וצריך להתודות בשפתינו ולומר ענינות אלו שגמר בלבו:

There he explains what Teshuva is and makes it clear that it is dealing with undoing the past. Darchei Teshuva is a desire to move forward even if I am not yet ready to deal with the past. I am not ready to be יעזב .

From where does the Rambam know moving forward without dealing with the past. That Darchei Teshuva without actual Teshuva is still valuable? From:

הלכות תשובה ב:ו

אף על פי שהתשובה והצעקה יפה לעולם. בעשרה הימים שבין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים היא יפה ביותר ומתקבלת היא מיד שגגמר (ישעיה נה ו) "דרשו ה' בהמצאו".

That we find that תשובה וצעקה (which is one thing as he uses the adjective יפה in singular not יפות in plural) . The דרשו ה' בהמצאו that we find during the עשרת ימי תשובה is a time of utilizing the availability of HKB"Y and His openness to relationship to reach out through התשובה to show an interest and desire to connect.

There is a famous מחלוקת between the Rambam and the Ramban regarding if Tefilla is a מצוה דאורייתא

The Rambam counts Tefilla as a Mitzva D'Oraissa (#5) . The Ramban has numerous questions on the Rambam from various Gemaras and concludes it should not be counted in the 613 Mitzvos and then goes on to explain:

ומה שדרשו בספרי ולעבדו זה תלמוד ד"א זו תפלה אסמכתא היא או לומר שמכלל העבודה **שנלמוד תורתו ושנתפלל אליו בעת הצרות** ותהיינה עינינו ולבנו אליו כעיני עבדים אל יד אדוניהם וזה כענין שכתוב **וכי תבאו מלחמה בארצכם על הצר הצורר אתכם** והרעותם בחצוצרות ונזכרתם לפני ה' אלהיכם **והיא מצוה על צרה שתבא על הצבור לזעוק לפני בתפלה ובתרועה** והוא הענין שבאר שלמה ע"ה כמו שכתוב בהעצר שמים ולא יהיה מטר וכתב רעב כי יהיה דבר כי יהיה שדפון ירקון ארבה חסיל כי יהיה כי יצר לו אויבו בארץ שערו כל נגע כל מחלה כל תפלה כל תחנה אשר תהיה לכל האדם לכל עמך ישראל אשר ידעון איש נגעי לבבו ופרש כפיו אל הבית הזה.

That in a time of trouble of Tzaros there is a special Mitzva to cry out in Tefila (and to learn Torah) to HKB"Y

### שנלמוד תורתו ושנתפלל אליו בעת הצרות

So that during a time of trouble, such as war, an עת צרה, there is a special Mitzva according to the Ramban of davening and learning.

The Rambam in Hilchos Taaniyos says:

הלכות תעניות פרק א'

מצות עשה מן התורה לזעק ולהריע בחצוצרות על כל צרה שתבוא על הצבור. שנאמר (במדבר י ט) "על הצר הצר אתכם והרעתם בחצוצרות". כלומר כל דבר שיצר לכם כגון בצרת ודבר וארבה וכיוצא בהן זעקו עליהן והריעו:

ודבר זה מדרכי התשובה הוא. שבזמן שתבוא צרה וזעקו עליה וריעו ידעו הפל שבגלל מעשיהם הרעים הורע להן ככתוב (ירמיה ה כה) "עונותיכם הטו" וגו'. וזה הוא שיגרום להם להסיר הצרה מעליהם:

What that means is that whatever modes of התשובה we have in a normal Aseres Yemei Teshuva, which is mostly a Minhag Klal Yisrael has taken upon itself:

נהגו כל בית ישראל להרבות בצדקה ובמעשים טובים ולעסק במצות מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים יתר מכל השנה. ונהגו כלם לקום בלילה בעשרה ימים אלו ולהתפלל בבתי כנסיות בדברי תחנונים ובכבושין עד שיאזר היום:

These things now, in the midst of a war, have the weight of a Mitzvah **מצות עשה מן התורה**

Recently there has been a new phase the war. Last week it began with finally having something for Yisrael to be proudful about, and even laugh bit, with the genius operation of exploding pagers and walkie talkies. But as I write these words northern Eretz Yisrael, which is gradually moving farther south, is under constant barrage of rocket fire. Last night there was rocket fire for the first time from Lebanon in Tel Aviv! School is canceled in the north and people need to be near bomb shelters. The war on that front is expanding and we are still fighting in Aza where close to 100 captives are still being held! And there is no end in sight!

And though we have greatly enjoyed being נוקם on our enemies. Daily, sadly, names of soldiers being killed in battle are released and we are aware of the sacrifice being given to allow us to retain Eretz Yisrael.

We have spoken in the past about the Rambam in Hilchos Taaniyos:

אָבֵל אִם לֹא יִזְעָקוּ וְלֹא יִרְעוּ אֲלֵא יֵאמְרוּ דְבַר זֶה מִמְנַהֵג הָעוֹלָם אֲרַע לָנוּ וְצָרָה זֹאת נִקְרָה  
נִקְרִית. הֲרִי זֹאת דְּרָךְ אֲכַזְרִיּוֹת וְגוֹרְמֵת לָהֶם לְהִדְבֵּק בְּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם הָרָעִים. וְתוֹסִיף הַצָּרָה צָרוֹת  
אַחֲרוֹת. הוּא שְׂכֵתוֹב בְּתוֹרָה (וַיִּקְרָא כו כז) "וְהִלַּכְתֶּם עִמִּי בְּקִרְיִי" (וַיִּקְרָא כו כח) "וְהִלַּכְתִּי גַם אִנִּי  
עִמָּכֶם בְּחַמַּת קִרְיִי". כְּלוּמַר כְּשֶׁאָבִיא עֲלֵיכֶם צָרָה כְּדִי שֶׁתָּשׁוּבוּ אִם תֵּאמְרוּ שֶׁהִיא קִרְיִי אִוְסִיף  
לָכֶם חַמַּת אוֹתוֹ קִרְיִי:

The Rambam uses a very strong expression on someone who does not respond to צרות it is cruel. To think that this situation is normal, to think that it is just geopolitics that will blow over, to think that we can ignore it and literally pay lip service to it (a few Tehillim every day) **is cruel**.

Several decades ago, I attended the first night Selichos in the Ramban shul in the old city, and Rav Neventzal Shlita spoke for a few minutes prior to Selichos. That year the "first intifada" had begun. That was "only" Arabs throwing stones and bottles at Jewish drivers as they drove by. For us living here at the time it was traumatic, in that until that year we felt there was nothing to fear, the Arabs had always been subdued, and we were here to stay. There was no talk of a Palestinian State, and the PLO was recognized as a terrorist organization that nobody talked to. We all felt this was a passing phase. Rav Neventzal said a few short words, he said "had you known last year before Selichos and Rosh Hashana what this year would look like, think about how much more seriously you would have davened, and would have prepared for Rosh Hashana and the Yom HaDin"

Imagine a year ago, had we even thought the possibility of what happened this year could happen, how we would have prepared and gone into the Yemei HaDin differently, and more seriously. We have entered in to a never-ending war. 1200 people were butchered in one day, then hundreds more killed in the ground operation and thousands injured. Tens of thousands of people from Northern Israel are refugees, not able to return home and villages like Metulla have been completely destroyed, while other places in northern Israel have been severely burned and damaged.

**ותשובה, ותפילה, וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה**

Lets get to work

Kesiva V'Chasima Tova

**תְּכַלֵּה שָׁנָה וְקַלְלוֹתֶיהָ, וְתַחַל שָׁנָה וּבְרֻכּוֹתֶיהָ**

Essay #30

Tekiyas Shofar

October 8, 2024

ו' תשרי תשפ"ה

I want to share with you what was said to the Yeshiva prior to תקועת שופר with some additional comments regarding the October 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary which we just past.

On ערב ראש השנה just as we were about to daven Maariv in Yeshiva the air raid sirens sounded and we all moved to a secure area of the building to daven . I commented to the Talmidim that how come nobody was scared? I am mean nobody at all. I had to keep the guys inside so they would not go outside to watch the "light show" of the missiles incoming and the shooting them down by our side. Why was nobody scared? It is maybe the only time in history that so many ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) were fired from one country on to another. Was everyone so confident in the IDF's technological superiority? You certainly cannot rely on a miracle?!

As we have mentioned so many times this year the Rabeinu B'Chaya on the Pasuk from Mishlei:

**סוס מוכן ליום מלחמה ולה' התשועה (משלי כא, לא)**

**שלמה המלך ע"ה יזהיר כל אדם בכתוב הזה (משלי כא) שיעשה כל דבר שיצטרך לעשות ושימסור השאר בידי שמים, ובדרך הטבע כל מה שבכחו**

We are responsible for complete and total Hishtadlus , so that even missing one horse (or in our case one חץ anti-missile missile), would not allow a place for HKB"Y's Hashgacha. (see essay #18) If so, we have to realize that as terrible a year that we experienced in תשפ"ד , we were also זוכה to the most miraculous year possibly ever! It was a year that sadly created over 800 orphans and thousands of deaths, and was clearly a result of the דין last Rosh Hashana. But the Hashgacha and the ניסים we have seen this year are also part of what HKB"Y gave us over the past year and closed the year with Yisrael being able to once again hold our head high. וירם קרן ישראל עמך . The hatred for Yisrael is not going to disappear, but the admiration for what Yisrael has accomplished over the past few weeks as we closed the year is enormous.

The Rambam explains in the Moreh Nevuchim:

ודע שאתה - ולו היית החכם שבבני אדם באמיתת החכמה האלהית - כשתפנה מחשבתך למאכל צריך, או לעסק צריך, כבר פסקת הדיבוק ההוא אשר בינך ובין האלוה ית' ואינך



**עמו אז וכן הוא אינו עמך, כי היחס ההוא אשר בינך ובינו כבר נפסק בפועל בעת ההיא.** ומפני זה היו מקפידים החסידים על השעות שהיו בטלים בהם מלחשוב באלוה והזהירו ממנו ואמרו: "אל תפנו אל מדעתכם"; ואמר דוד "שויתי יי לנגדי תמיד כי מימיני בל אמוט - הוא אומר איני מפנה מחשבתי ממנו, וכאילו הוא יד ימיני אשר לא ישכחה האדם כהרף עין לקלות תנועתה - ומפני זה לא אמוט - כלומר: לא אפול

*You must know that even if you were the wisest man in respect to the true knowledge of God, you break the bond between you and God whenever you turn entirely your thoughts to the necessary food or any necessary business; you are then not with God, and He is not with you: for that relation between you and Him is actually interrupted in those moments. The pious were therefore particular to restrict the time in which they could not meditate upon the name of God, and cautioned others about it, saying, "Let not your minds be vacant from reflections upon God." In the same sense did David say, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:8); i.e., I do not turn my thoughts away from God; He is like my right hand, which I do not forget even for a moment on account of the ease of its motions, and therefore I shall not be moved, I shall not fail.*

ודע, שמעשי העבודות האלו כולם, כקריאת התורה והתפילה, ועשות שאר המצוות אין תכלית כונתם - רק להתלמד להתעסק במצוות האלוה ית' ולהפנות מעסקי העולם, וכאילו אתה התעסקת בו ית' ובטלת מכל דבר זולתו. אבל אם תתפלל בהנעת שפתיך ופניך אל הכותל - ואתה חושב במקורך וממכרך, ותקרא התורה בלשונך - ולבך בבנין ביתך, מבלי בחינה במה שתקראהו; וכן כל אשר תעשה מצוה - תעשנה באבריך - כמי שיחפור חפירה בקרקע או יחטוב עצים מן היער, מבלי בחינת ענין המעשה ההוא, לא מי שצוה לעשותו ולא מה תכלית כונתו - לא תחשוב שהגעת לתכלית. אבל תהיה אז קרוב ממי שנאמר בהם: "קרוב אתה בפיהם ורחוק מכליותיהם".

*If we, however, pray with the motion of our lips, and our face toward the wall, but at the same time think of our business; if we read the Law with our tongue, whilst our heart is occupied with the building of our house, and we do not think of what we are reading; if we perform the commandments only with our limbs, we are like those who are engaged in digging in the ground, or hewing wood in the forest, without reflecting on the nature of those acts, or by whom they are commanded, or what is their object. We must not imagine that [in this way] we attain the highest perfection; on the contrary, we are then like those in reference to whom Scripture says, "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins" (Jer. 12:2).*

The Rambam here stresses that our connection with HKB"H is dependent on our consciousness of Him. When we are not thinking of Him we are disconnected .

In Hilchos Teshuva the Rambam explains:

**אף על פי שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזרת הכתוב רמז יש בו כלומר עורו ישנים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם... הביטו לנפשותיכם והיטיבו דרכיכם ומעלליכם ויעזב כל אחד מקם דרכו הרעה ומחשבתו**

אֲשֶׁר לֹא טוֹבָה. לְפִיכֶן צְרִיךְ כָּל אָדָם שְׂיִרְאָה עֲצֻמוֹ כָּל הַשָּׁנָה כְּלֵה כְּאֵלוֹ חֲצִי זְכָאִי וְחֲצִי חַיִּב.

*Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying:*

*Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator... Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts.*

*Accordingly, throughout the entire year, a person should always look at himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin. If he performs one sin, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of guilt and brings destruction upon himself.*

The Rambam explains the simplest Pshat in the Torah giving you a Mitzvah to blow a Shofar is that it is an alarm! It is meant to be a wake up call. Wake up look at yourself, is this the person you want to be?! Is this the life you wish to lead?! You ultimately can hear that Shofar the entire year, making you be conscious of the significance of every action and every moment.

The air raid sirens we have experienced this year, and the ones we heard on Erev Rosh Hashana are meant to grab our attention. Call our attention to the miraculous times we are living in. To pay attention to what HKB"Y is telling us. Look around? Think about the world we live in. The miracle that has occurred in Eretz Yisrael over the past 75 years. The miracles that are occurring every single day for those of us who are living here and for all of Klal Yisrael who share in the vision and pay attention to what we are in the midst of.

Someone asked recently what is the end game in this war. The answer is frightening. We are headed to a confrontation with Iran and all that will entail. The awareness that if we are committed to the Bris then we can count on HKBH doing his part. (זוכר הברית) Wake up and realize what the world we are living in is about.

One comment. This week many people commemorated October 7<sup>th</sup> and the horrible events that occurred one year ago. October 7<sup>th</sup> is a day on the non-Jewish calendar. A calendar that differs from ours not only in its counting the solar year but also in the randomness of a day's particular significance. On the real Torah calendar the Yahrzeit is Shmini Atzeres. That is not a coincidence, and we have already discussed that this entire war has been about Shmini Atzeres issues, to reveal to us the differences between Yisrael and the Amim. I am sure in Shul on Shmini Atzeres, especially in Chutz L'Aretz where it is a separate day from Simchas Torah and there is Yizkor, it will be properly commemorated. And though October 7<sup>th</sup> is the popular term, we must remember this is the Shmini Atzeres War with all that implies.

Gmar Chasima Tova and תשפ"ה should be a year of the raising of the קרן ישראל of clarity for Yisrael and a year that clearly brings us closer to Geula Shleima.

## Essay #31

### Sukkos

October 22, 2024

כ' תשרי תשפ"ה

Sukkos is referred to in the Torah as חג האסיף

**וְחַג הָאֲסִיף בְּצֵאת הַשָּׁנָה בְּאֶסְפֹּף אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂיךָ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה:**

The Torah views, this time of the year, Sukkos, as the end of the year, the time of the ingathering. The idea of the time of אסיפה which gives becomes the source of Simcha and זמן שמחתינו is that now at the end of the year you now have “something”, you are able to see the results of the hard work, the totality of the accomplishment of the year. It is now the time of the potential, the “becoming”, turning into the “being” the actualization which can now be seen in terms of its totality. What we now have.

As we approach the year mark from an amazingly painful and inspiring year it is important to take stock and see where we have come to and what we as a natio have become. As I review my essays from the past year, we watched Yisrael move from complete מחלוקת towards a special unity. From vulnerability to being a nation that needs to be feared. From being attacked to revenging against our enemies. We learned just how special a people Yisrael are. We had forgotten the גבורה and מסירת נפש that Yisrael is capable of.

We witnessed over and over again the השגחת הבורא and the love that HKB”H has and continually displays for Yisrael. We understood the עם לבדד ישכון and the שקר of עולם that we are fighting against. If Sukkos is as the Navi tells us the time that the nations need to appreciate Yisrael, and travel to the Beis HaMikdash, then this was a year where the nations failed, they stood against Yisrael, and those who passionately spoke on our behalf will certainly receive the Bracha promised.

It has been a year of tremendous Aveilos, thousands killed, thousands severely injured. Hundreds of widows and orphans. The best of Yisrael giving their lives on the battle fields, very special people whose loss that will be difficult to replace.

Through all this Yisrael remembered who we are and what we are capable of. Not just a start up nation, but a nation that has principles. A nation that cares about the world more than the world cares about itself.

I have cried thinking about the captives. I have cried thinking about the Gevurah of so many. I have cried each time I read about more of the fallen

brave soldiers being מוסר נפש , and more then willingly going to fight Yisrael's enemies and defend the people of Israel.

Recently we have had much to smile and laugh about. (What can you say about the beeper attack that has not already been said, and the one Arab from Aza who was the victim who was killed during the Iranian missile attack!) The war is not over, and no one has any idea how it will end. During Elul in Yeshiva we were מסיים Meseches Makkos . Its ending could not be more appropriate for our times:

כִּיִּן שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְהַר הַצּוֹפִים קָרְעוּ בְּגֵדֵיהֶם, כִּיִּן שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְהַר הַבַּיִת רָאוּ שׁוֹעֵל שׁוֹיָצָא מִבַּיִת קִדְשֵׁי הַקֹּדְשִׁים, הִתְחִילוּ הֵן בּוֹכִין וְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא מְצַחֵק. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִפְּנֵי מָה אַתָּה מְצַחֵק? אָמַר לָהֶם: מִפְּנֵי מָה אַתֶּם בּוֹכִים? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִקּוֹם שֶׁכָּתוּב בּוֹ "וְהִזָּר הַקָּרֵב יוֹמֵת", וְעַכְשָׁיו שׁוֹעֵלִים הֹלְכוּ בּוֹ, וְלֹא נִבְכָּה! אָמַר לָהֶן: לֵכֶר אָנִי מְצַחֵק, דַּכְּתִיב: "וְאָעִידָה לִּי עֵדִים נְאֻמָּנִים אֶת אוֹרְיָה הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת זְכָרְיָה בֶן בְּרַכְיָהוּ" - וְכִי מָה עָבִין אוֹרְיָה אֶצֶל זְכָרְיָה? אוֹרְיָה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ רֵאשׁוֹן, וְזְכָרְיָה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ שֵׁנִי! אֲלֵא: תִּלְהָה הַכְּתוּב נְבוֹאָתוֹ שֶׁל זְכָרְיָה בְּנְבוֹאָתוֹ שֶׁל אוֹרְיָה. בְּאוֹרְיָה כְּתִיב "לֵכֶן בְּגַלְלֵכֶם צִיּוֹן שְׂדֵה תַחְרָשׁ", בְּזְכָרְיָה כְּתִיב "עוֹד יִשְׁבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנוֹת בְּרַחֲבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם". עַד שֶׁלֹּא נִתְקַיְּמָה נְבוֹאָתוֹ שֶׁל אוֹרְיָה הֵייתִי מִתְיָרָא שֶׁלֹּא תִתְקַיְּם נְבוֹאָתוֹ שֶׁל זְכָרְיָה, עַכְשָׁיו שֶׁנִּתְקַיְּמָה נְבוֹאָתוֹ שֶׁל אוֹרְיָה - בְּדוּעַ שֶׁנְּבוֹאָתוֹ שֶׁל זְכָרְיָה מִתְקַיְּמָת. בְּלִשׁוֹן הַזֶּה אָמְרוּ לוֹ: עֲקִיבָא נִחְמַתְנוּ, עֲקִיבָא נִחְמַתְנוּ.

We know we are not far from the ultimate נחמה .