

מאת מוה"ר ברוך הירשפלד שליט"א
ראש כולל עשרת חיים ברוך קליבלנד הייטס

Rabbeinu Avodah Zarah 3b, Avos D'Rebbi Nosson 23:3)
Yonah on Avos there, explains that one who is "מפסיק ממשנתו" - interrupts his *Torah* study, is akin to a human being who is talking to a great and mighty king, when he suddenly pauses in the middle of the conversation in order to ask a friend who is walking by to buy him something at a local store. Would a person do something like that in front of a king? How much more so when one is in the midst of learning *Torah*! Such an act degrades the honor of the *Torah* and the honor of *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*, the Giver of the *Torah*. One must always recognize and remember that the success and maximum holiness of *Limud HaTorah* is found in uninterrupted learning ⁽¹⁾.
Practical Halachos. One should not interrupt his learning to talk to another person - definitely not for idle gossip. He can do so only for something genuinely needed, such as a *chessed* that came his way, which requires some talking. Even a one word interruption ⁽²⁾ in Hebrew ⁽³⁾ must be avoided. Even stopping his learning to just listen to a bit of idle talk that others are saying is transgressing the *issur* of "מפסיק ממשנתו". And yes, even to stop and wish "*Tzu Gezunt*" to a person who sneezed, or to praise *Hashem* for a beautiful tree in the middle of learning, is prohibited, as mentioned from the words of Rabbi Shimon in Avos, in the previous paragraph. It is important that one therefore chooses his place of learning, to the extent that he is able, to be a spot where he will not be interrupted ⁽⁴⁾.

(1) חזון איש אגרות אג (2) י"ד רמזיו (3) כף החיים רסכ"ב (4) פסחים קיב.

הלכה למעשה

A SERIES IN HALACHA LIVING A "TORAH" DAY

The Greatest Mitzvah of All (94) - "תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם" Torah Study Throughout the Year: Bitul Torah (cont.).
Last week, we began a discussion about the prohibition of *Bitul Torah*, not using one's available time for *Torah* study. We mentioned a number of scenarios related to this *issur*, including one who is able and capable of learning but does not; one who has a genuine need to talk about news and what's going on in the world, finding it difficult to balance this with his learning schedule; one who only chooses to learn "shallow" or easy topics, instead of challenging topics. There is a related, but independent, prohibition that is mentioned, regarding a person who is "מפסיק ממשנתו" - interrupts his learning without a genuine need. The *issur* of *Bitul Torah* is such that even if the sum total of his *Torah* learning time will be the same - he will not actually "lose" time - whether he does it now or later, he should still not be "מפסיק" - interrupt his learning right now, but instead wait till later when he is anyway not learning.

Nature of the Issur. The *Gemara* in a number of places stresses the sin of interrupting one's learning for mundane gossip. This idea is presented clearly in *Pirkei Avos* (3:7), where we are taught the famous words of Rabbi Shimon: "*He who is walking on the way and repeating his studies (learning Torah), and interrupts his studies to say, 'How lovely is this tree! And how lovely is this newly plowed field!'*" - *the Torah considers him as if he is liable to forfeit his life.*" (See also

הוא היה אומר

R' Moshe Greenwald zt"l of Chust (Arugas Habosem) would say:

"Give me the merit of sitting (in the sukkah) and being protected in the shade of Your Presence ... and be protected from flooding rains." This is an allusion to the warning in the *Torah* not to add or subtract any *mitzvos* in the *Torah*. There are 248 *mitzvos asei* - corresponding to the 248 limbs in a person's body. The word 'אדם' is one less than 248, while 'מטר' is one more than 248. Thus, we recite that by fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, we ask *Hashem* to allow us to fulfill all the *mitzvos* and He should protect us from possibly sinning by adding or subtracting even one iota of a *mitzvah*."

R' Moshe of Premysl zt"l (Matteh Moshe 557) would say:

"The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Avraham: '*I am One in the world, and you are one in the world. I will set aside for your children a special day on which I will forgive their transgressions. If Rosh Hashanah will not atone for your children, let Yom Kippur do it. If not, let it be done on Hoshana Raba.*'" Why is this promise specifically to Avraham Avinu? Counting from Adam Harison, Avraham was born and his light began to shine after the world existed for twenty-one generations. Thus, *Hashem* promised Avraham that by *Hoshana Raba*, the twenty-first day of the new year, *Bnei Yisroel* will certainly be forgiven, and their light will be allowed to shine."

A Wise Man would say:

"People were created to be loved. Things were created to be used. The reason why the world is in such a state of chaos is because things are being loved and people are being used."

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י"ג, ט"ז-כ"ג תשרי תשע"ט – Sept. 22 - Oct. 2, 2018

הגה"צ רבי גמליאל הכהן רבינוביץ שליט"א
ראש ישיבת שער השמים בירושלים ע"ה"ק

טיב התבלין

רעיונות ופירושים לעורר את האדם לעבודת
השלי"ת והתחזקות באמונה ובטחון מאת

הלה' תגמלו זאת עם נבל ולא חכם הלא הוא אביך קנך הוא עשך ויבנגך. זכר ימות עולם בינו שנות דר ודר

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך וגו' (לב-ו:ו) - ללמוד מן העבר על העתיד

ומעשה אבות הוא סימן לבנים, רואים אנו כבר בדברי יעקב לבניו רמז להנחה זו. היה זה אור כשיבקש מהם לרדת שנית למצרים לשבור אוכל, והם מיאנו בכך עד שיסכים לשלוח עמם את בנימין, ואחר דין ודברים שהיה לו עמם הסכים יהודה לקחת עליו את האחריות על בנימין, ואז אמר לאביו (בראשית מג, י) 'כי לולא התמהמהנו כי עתה שבנו זה פעמיים' ואחר אלו הדברים אמר להם יעקב (שם, יא) 'אם כן זאת עשו' וגו', ודברי יעקב הלא מוסכים על כל דבריו של יהודה, ויש צורך להבין מהי הכוונה באמרו 'אם כן' על דבריו האחרונים של יהודה, [כי על הערבות אכן שייך לומר זה הלשון אבל לא על מה שהתלונן על השחיתות] ואפשר שכיוון בכך יעקב להורות ש'אם כן' אם מתבוננים אתם על העבר, ומכידים אתם כי הפסדתם את הזמן, 'זאת עשו' מעתה את לכם להתמרמר על העבר מבלי לעשות מאומה, אלא עליכם ללמוד מן העבר הנפסד איך לנצל את ההווה והעתיד עדיין כדבעי, והיינו שמן העבר תלמדו על להבא כי אין ממשות בכל מניעותיו של היצר.

ויסוד זה הוא עצה לאדם בכל מצב ובכל מיני נסיונות, אם זה בנסיון של עבירה בפועל או בנסיון בעניני אמונה ובטחון, בכל עת שרואה האדם שהיצר מנסה להעבירו מחובתו עליו להתבונן על העבר ומשם ישאב את חיווקו, וכפי מה ששמעתי אומרים בשם הרה"צ רבי מאיר שפירא מלובלין ז"ל, שפירש את המשא ומתן שהיה בין משה להקב"ה אחר חטא העגל, או חילה משה את פני קונו וביקש, (שמות לג, יח) 'הראני נא את כבודך', משה לא כיוון על עצמו בלבד בבקשה זו כי אם על כללות האומה הישראלית, וכה היו דבריו לפני הקב"ה, מי גרם להם לישראל שיחטאו בחטא כה חמור, הלאו ההסתר הגדול, כי היה זה אחר שהטעה אותם השטן, והראה להם את מיטתו של משה פורח באויר, והם ראו אז ממש בחוש את מנהיגם מוטל כמת, ומדוב תוגה על אשר אבדו את היקף להם מכל בקשו למנות להם מנהיג חדש, וכתוצאה מכך יצא העגל הזה, על כן מן הראוי שלא לנסות את ישראל בעתיד בהסתרים כעין אלו, ובכל עת כשהיצר יבוא להצר את צדיהם יכירו מיד את כבודך, תיכף יכירו באור פניך, וידעו כי הנך נמצא לידם ומשגיח עליהם, וממילא לא יכשלו בשום חטא.

ועל זה השיבו הקב"ה 'לא תוכל לראות פני, כי לא יראני אדם וח'י', כלומר, הרי תכלית הבריאה היא ה'בחירה', וכדי שתהיה בחירה יש הכרח בהסתר, כי רק אז ראוי האדם בשכרו על אשר עמד מול פיתוי היצר, ועל כן כל עוד שהאדם הוא בעולם הזה אינו ראוי להכיר באור השי"ת באופן תמידי, אבל זאת איעצך,

פ"רש"י: עם נבל - ששכחו את העשוי להם: ולא חכם - להבין את הנולדות שיש בידו להטיב ולהרע: בינו שנות דור ודור - דור אנוש שהצ"ף עליהם מי אוקינוס ודור המבול ששטפו. דבר אחר לא נתתם לבבכם על שעבר. בינו שנות דור ודור להכיר להבא שיש בידו להטיב לכם ולהנחיל לכם ימות המשיח והעולם הבא: שאל אביך - אלו הנביאים שנקראים אבות, כמו שנאמר באלהיו (מלכים ב' ב, יב) אבי אבי רכב ישראל: זקניך - אלו החכמים: ויאמרו לך - הראשונות: עד כאן דבריו הקדושים של רש"י

הנה מבורך שדברי רש"י אלו הם הדרכה להאדם הא"ץ עליו להתחכם וללמוד את חובתו בהווה מימות העולם שעברו וגם ממה שעתידי להיות, כי כשהיצר בא אצל האדם לפתותו לעבור את ציווי השי"ת מוטל עליו להתבונן על ימות העולם שעברו, שבסופם הוכר הטוב שהיהוה אחרית הצדיקים שמיאנו ברע, ואת הפרועניות שהיהוה מנת חלקם של הרשעים שהלכו בשירות לבם, ועל ידי זה יבוא להקיש ולהבין גם את הנולדות, שגם בעתיד יש בידו של הקב"ה להעניש את העברים על מצותיהם, ולהטיב לאלו ההולכים בתמים. ואלו הדברים יסייעו בעדו לעורר היראה בלבם, ויסייעו בעדו לתת מעצור להרוח שטות שנתעורר בו וימנע מלהוציא את מאוויי האוויליים אל הפעל.

כשם שנתנה עצה זו על עניני העבר והעתיד הכללי, כך ישנה לעצה זו בעניני הפרט, כל אדם באשר הוא יכול להתבונן ממה שעברו עליו בימי חייו הפרטיים ועל ידם יתחזק ללכת בדרכי ישרים, כשיתבונן האדם איך שבזמנים עברו כשהשכים היצר לפתחו והתחיל לבלבלו ולשבש את בינתו הדי גם יזכר במה שבחר לבסוף, ועצם הבחירה הזו היא אשר תסייע כעת בידו, כי אחר שביצע את בחירתו הפסיק היצר שוב לבלבלו באותו ענין, ואז ראה כי כל ההרים והגבעות שהעמיד היצר מול עיניו נעשו כאפס וכאין, ואם היתה או בחירתו לטובה הרי היה שמח שמחה גדולה אל אשר לא נתפתה לו ליצרו, ואם ח"ו נתפתה לו הרי היה כאבו גדול, אחרי אשר ראה כי לשוא היתל בו יצרו, ולא היה לו שום רווח ממאוויי האוויליים, ואם כן מה לו כעת להתפתות לו שוב, הרי גם אז העמיד היצר לפניו ק"ץ טעמים להחיד את העוון ולבסוף ראה שלא היה שום ממשות בדבריו, ואם כן גם כעת אין בדבריו ממשות, ואף אם לעת עתה נראים שדבריו חיים וקיימים יבין האדם כי כאז גם עתה, ואחר שיעבור זעם - הוא זמן הנסיון, יזוכח בכך, והכרה זו תסייע בעדו לעבור בשלום את הזמנים הקשים אשר בהם הוא מתמודד בנסיונות קשים.

ז'ראית את אחורי, היינו, שכשיהיה האדם במצב של הסתר יביט מאחור, בימים שבהם כבר עבר נסיונות כעין אלו, ואחר שעמד בהם נתגלה אליו כבודי וראה בחוש כי כל מה שעבר לא היה כי אם מחמת ההסתר הקשה, ומשם ישאב את

לקחי חיים ודברי התעוררות **נסדרו עפ"י פרשיות השבוע**

חיוזוקן ותקותו כי גם זה ההסתר יפוג בעתו, ואז יכיד שוב בחמלת השי"ת עליו כשיחלצו מכל המצרים ויאיד שוב את עיניו בדרכי העבודה והאמונה. יה"ד שלא נבוא לידר נסיון והשי"ת ישמור עלינו מכל צרה וצוקה ונגנע ומחלה אכ"ר.

מאת הרב שלום פערל שליט"א
מגיד מישרים בק"ק בית שמש

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון (של חג הסוכות) פרי עץ הדר כפות תמרים וענף עץ עבות וערבי נחל ושמתם

לפני ה' אלוֹקֵיכֶם שבעַת יָמִים וגו' (ויקרא כג- ט) - בעניין הנרמז בלקיחת 'ארבעַת המינים'

וממונם, ומחזיקים בממונם את אלה העוסקים כל הזמן ב'עבודת ה' וב'תורתו' [וכמו ה'הדס' שענפיו חופין את עצו'-מגנים על העיסוק בתורה שעליה נאמר 'עץ חיים היא וגו', שגם לכן 'הרואה הדס בחלום, נכסיו מצליחין לו' (ברכות כ"ג)] כדי שיוכל להחזיק בהם את אלה העוסקים כל הזמן בתורה [ע' **ב'דעת סופר** -לחג הסוכות ד"ה הרואה הדס וכו', שביאר עד"י]] **ואין בהם תורה, וערבי נחל-אלו ישראל, מה ערבה זו אין בה טעם ואין בה רית, כך הם ישראל יש בהם בני אדם שאין בהם לא תורה ולא מעשים טובים** (ואולם הם עוסקים ב'יישובו של עולם'), ומה הקדוש ברוך הוא עושה להם, לאבדן אי אפשר (שהרי גם הם בניו אהוביו), אלא אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא, יוקשרו כולם אגודה אחת והן מכפרין אלו על אלו (וירדמוזו אותם), ואם עשיתם כך אותה שעה אני מתעלה, הדא הוא דכתיב 'הבונה בשמים מעלותי' ואימתי הוא מתעלה כשהן עשויין אגודה אחת שנאמר 'ואגודתו על ארץ יסדה', לפיכך משה מזהיר לישראל 'ולקחתם (את ארבעַת המינים, שהן כנגד) לכם (עצמכם) ביום הראשון'.

וב'מנחת המאור' (שם ריש הפרק השישי) ביאר את דבריו, "אלו הארבעה מינים הן מפורדי טעם ובריה כמו אצל קהל ישראל, **כי האתרוג יש לו טעם ורית, ודומה לצדיק וחכם שמריחין בני אדם ריח מעשיו, וחכמתו הוא הפרי ללמוד ממנו בני אדם, וזהו השלם בכל, ועל כן הוא ראשון במקדא, וניטל יחידי לפי שאדם כזה הוא יחידי בדורו, והלולב עושה פירות ואין לו ריח, כמו שיש אדם אשר יש לו חכמה בלא מעשים טובים, וההדס יש בו ריח ואין בו אוכל, כמו שיש בני אדם שיש בהם מעשים בלי חכמה אלא בהרגל מידות טובות, והערבה אין בה טעם ולא רית, כגון אותם שאין בהם לא תורה ולא מעשים טובים, ואף על פי כן נקבצים אלו עם אלו, ומתפללים ביחד, והקדוש ברוך הוא שומע את תפילתם'.**

ועל דרך זה אנו אומרים בפיוט 'אקחה בראשון וכו' (לחזרת הש"ץ של תפילת שחרית של יום הראשון של חג הסוכות), "בהדר לכנות שלמים תממים (כפרי עץ הדר, כנגד הראויים לכנותם שלמים במעשיהם ותממיהם בתורתם, בכפות לכנות בעלי מעשים נעלים (בכפות תמרים, כנגד הראויים לכנותם בעלי מעשים נעליים), בעבות לכנות ישרים במצוות חתומים (בענף עץ עבות [בהדסים קלועים], כנגד הראויים לכנותם ישרים, אשר במצוות התורה הינם קבועים ומושרשים וחתומים), בערבה לכנות בשמצה כתומים (בערבה, כנגד הרשעים שראויים לכנותם מוכתמים בדברים מגונים), וכמו בעץ הדר ריח וטעם, כן בעם זו בעלי מצוות ודע (וידיעת) נועם (התורה הנעימה, וכמו שנאמר אודותיה 'דרכיה דרכי נועם'), וכמו בכף תומר טעם ולא ריח, כן בעם זו בעלי מצוות בלא דת וריח (שאין בהם ריח התורה-הדת), וכמו בעבות ריח וטעם מר, כן בינימו הוגי דת וחיים (-ודיבורם עם הבריות כאשר הם עוסקים עמהם ב'משא ומתן') מר, וכמו ערבה בלא טעם וריח, כן בינימו עקשים אטומים מלהריח (בריח תורה ומעשים טובים), וכמו עץ פרי (הלולב שבא מעץ שמגדל תמרים) על סרק (הערבות שאינן באות מעץ המגדל פירות) מחפים, כן ישרים על רשעים מחופפים (במעשיהן הטובים).

וכמו הם אגודים אלה באלה, כן תלויים אלה באלה, למשוך אלה (הצדיקים) את אלה (הרשעים, אל החיים ושפע הגשמי), ולכפר אלה (הצדיקים) על אלה (הרשעים), לעשות אלה (הרשעים) כאלה (הצדיקים, על ידי שיחזור בתשובה), להנעים (לשורר בנעימות) ומידות אלה, (לה' שעליו נאמר 'שאו מרום עיניכם וראו')מי ברא אלה'".

קול מבשר מבשר ואומר....

בעבורו אל תמנע מים ... (תפילת גשם לשמיני עצרת)
The *Gemara (Taanis 7a)* states: *“Great is the day of rain as the day the Torah was given.”* The simple explanation is that rain is of such great importance to the world for it causes plants to grow, and reservoirs to fill, that clearly the day it rains is a “Great Day.” The **Kozhnitzer Maggod, R’ Yisroel Hopstein זט”ל (Avodas Yisrael)** writes that this “Great Day” is referring to *Shemini Atzeres*, the day we recite *Tefillas Geshem*, the prayer for rain. Thus, *Shemini Atzeres* is a day of tremendous holiness and greatness.

When a *ben Torah* says *Tefillas Geshem*, adds **R’ Moshe Wolfson *shlit”a***, he is not referring to rain that falls from the sky, but rather a spiritual rain. - "אין מים אלא תורה." *“There is no water except Torah.”* That is what we are *davening* for from the *Ribono Shel Olam* when we ask for *Geshem*. The **Zohar (tikkun 13)** writes that on *Shemini Atzeres*, the fountains of *Torah* open. We *daven* to *Hashem*, "אל תמנע מים" - *“Do not withhold water from us.” Ribono Shel Olam*, give us *Torah* so we can come close to You. We have to put our full effort into *Tefillas Geshem*. It is part of the *avodah* of *Shemini Atzeres*, of drawing close to *Hashem* and His holy *Torah*.

The success of the whole year lies in the days of *Hoshana Rabbah, Shemini Atzeres*, and *Simchas Torah. Tzaddikim* would say that the world stands on these days. Whatever we did not accomplish over *Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkos*, can be completed during these days. But we must have the wisdom and foresight to properly prepare for them. **(Why We Tremble)**

May the *Ribono Shel Olam* give us the wisdom and *Siyata D’shmaya* to be inspired on the “Great Day” of *Shemini Atzeres* and to make the most out of this awesome day in our *davening*, learning, and *simchas HaTorah*.

מרשות חבורת צדק עדה המאושרה, זקנים ונערים בכל שורה ושורה. קבוצים פה היום לשמחת התורה ... (רשות להתן בראשה)

Every year, on *Simchas Torah* during the *hakafos*, the **Satmar Rebbe, R’ Yoilish Teitelbaum זט”ל**, would address the assembled *chassidim*. “The **Zohar** in *Parshas Pinchos* tells us that when *Yidden* make a *simcha* here on earth, their ancestors in Heaven come down to take part in the festivities. This includes *Brissim*, weddings and even today as well. Is there a greater *simcha* then when *Yidden* rejoice with the *Torah* and with *Hashem*? Surely on *Simchas Torah* our ancestors come down from their heavenly abode and join in with our festivities!”

The *chassidim* would relate that one year, on the night of *Simchas Torah*, the **Divrei Chaim, R’ Chaim Halberstam זט”ל of Sanz**, walked into the *Beis Medrash* and stopped. He stood in his place for quite some time and refused to move forward to his seat at the front. When his

son, **R’ Dovid K’shanover זט”ל**, asked him for a reason, he explained as follows, “When I came to the *Beis Medrash*, I saw the **Rebbe of Ropshitz** and the **Rebbe of Ziditchov**, along with a host of other *Rebbes* who had come down from their high perches in the *Olam Haemes* (World of Truth) to enjoy the *hakafos* and rejoice with us. I stayed close to the entrance, for in the presence of these holy men I dared not move forward to the front of the *Beis Medrash*.” (**Gedulas Yehoshua**)

ולאשר אמר ברוך מבנים אשר יהי רצוי אחיו ... (דברים לג-כד)
When the renowned *mechaneches, Rebbetzen Vichna Kaplan a”h*, started the *Bais Yaakov* movement in the United States, she turned to **R’ Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz זט”ל**, the legendary founder of *Mesivta Torah Vodaas*, for advice on where to lay the main stress in the education of Jewish girls. He answered that the main stress should be on “*Histapkus*” - being content with little, because everything evolves from that. If this characteristic can be implanted, the rest will eventually fall into position of its own accord.

R’ Pesach Eliyahu Falk *shlit”a* in his *sefer Oz V’hadar L’vusha*, elaborates on this premise. If a Jewish daughter has the positive attribute of *histapkus* - of being satisfied with what she is and what she has, she will thrive on the fact that she need not concern herself with her looks. She will occupy her mind and time with things that are far more valuable than external looks and will develop into a fine *Bas Yisroel*. However, if a girl is lacking in this *middah* and is often not satisfied with what she has or is, the combination could prove to be a recipe for disaster. Lacking personal satisfaction, it could drive her to want to beautify herself even further, even if it is unnecessary. She might do so to such an extent that her appearance will lack *tznius* and prove to be a stumbling block to others.

Asher, the tenth son of *Yaakov Avinu*, was the personification of “*Histapkus*” - satisfaction. His very name “*Asher*” comes from "מאושר" - to be content and satisfied with his lot (*Bereishis 30:13*). It is interesting to note what is said about the daughters and granddaughters of such a father. On the *posuk*, “*Asher is blessed with children,*” **Rashi** writes: “*His daughters were good-looking and married Kohanim Gedolim.*” Although they were particularly pretty, worthy of being mentioned by Rashi, they developed into the finest and purest *Bnos Yisroel*. They were chosen to be wives of the *Kohanim Gedolim* who could only marry maidens and would look for girls of the highest caliber. This substantiates what has been said; with the trait of *Histapkus*, external features do not prevent a girl from becoming a fine and outstanding young lady. On the contrary, it can help her become a valuable person and a pride to the Jewish people.

למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות הושבתי

האוינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי ... (לב-א)

Moshe Rabbeinu calls upon two entities - Heaven and Earth - to bear witness: “*Give ear, Heavens, and I will speak; and may the Earth hear the words of my mouth.*” Why is there a difference in expressions regarding the heavens and earth? **Chacham Rabbi Dovid Chanania Pinto *shlit’a*** explains that “giving ear” and “hearing” are two different acts. “Giving ear” denotes listening through concentration. One “gives ear” when he does not want to miss a single word. “Hearing,” on the other hand, does not demand one’s full attention.

Tzaddikim are lofty, compared to the heavens. They have hardly any connection to earthliness, while ordinary people are called “inhabitants of the land - *amei ha’aretz.*” Whereas *Tzaddikim* are spiritually inclined, the rest of the nation is bonded with physicality. In order for the *Tzaddikim* to hear what is said by the ordinary people, they must pay undivided attention, for they are far removed from the goings-on on earth. Moshe turned to the “heavens,” i.e., the *Tzaddikim*, and instructed them to come closer to “earth.” He asked them to give heed to these things, and bear witness to them. *Tzaddikim* are considered living even after death (*Berachos 18a*). Therefore, they are fitting witnesses to what transpires on earth.

On a journey to the Ukraine, where he visited various synagogues and gravesites of *Tzaddikim*, Chacham Pinto discovered an interesting phenomenon. World-famous *Tzaddikim* often prayed in small, unassuming synagogues. One would expect such holy personalities to have prayed in majestic edifices, together with huge congregations. Why did they choose, instead, to frequent simple structures? It was due to the humbleness of their heart. The closer they came to *Hashem*, the more they appreciated His greatness and their own insignificance. They did not seek honor and prestige, only to serve *Hashem* with submissiveness and subordination.

It is to these giants of our nation whom Moshe turns, requesting that they leave their place on High and hear what is being said below. They are the witnesses for us, who dwell on earth, that we keep the *Torah* perfectly.

ובצל כנפך תסתירנו כי א-ל שומרנו ומצלנו אתה ... (תפלת מערב)

The Jewish year is full of holidays, each with its own theme. On *Pesach*, we celebrate freedom. On *Shavous*, we received the *Torah*. On *Rosh Hashana*, we crown *Hashem* as King. On *Yom Kippur*, we pray for forgiveness. However, on *Sukkos* we have many things to celebrate: the *sukkah* - the dwelling place for *Bnei Yisroel*, the *Arba Minim* (four species) which represents the harvest at the end of the season; the Clouds of Glory; the *Hoshanos*, etc.

Why are there so many themes by *Chag HaSukkos*, unlike by all the other holidays?

R’ Simcha Bunim Berger *shlit’a* finds a common idea between these parts of the *Sukkos* holiday. Unlike the other holidays which commemorate a singular event, like *Yetzias Mitzrayim* on *Pesach*, *Sukkos* reflects a way of life. The *sukkos* (booths) were the homes that the Jewish people dwelled in while in the desert. This was their lifestyle for forty years. As such, we could celebrate this any time of the year. However, the *Torah* commanded this *mitzvah* to be done right after *Yom Kippur*.

In our daily evening prayer of “*Hashkivenu Avinu,*” we ask *Hashem* to, “*Remove the Satan from before us and behind us, and spread Your sukkah of Peace.*” We pray and recognize that the *sukkah* allows us to free ourselves from the grasp of the evil *Satan*. As the sun sets and darkness settles in, we look for an extra protection. The simplicity of the *sukkah* provides us a safe haven, removing ourselves from our constant pursuit of possessions. This is done on a daily basis.

Once a year, however, we physically leave our homes and move out into the *sukkah*, so that we may ACTUALLY feel *Hashem’s* protection. We leave the comfort and safety of our homes, and live “in the wilderness” so to speak, where we have no one else to depend on other than *Avinu Shebashamayim* (our Father in Heaven). Therefore, we celebrate *Sukkos* right after *Yom Kippur*, the day that we have been cleansed from the *Satan*. The purpose is to allow us to keep the *Satan* away.

In a similar vein, the *Lulav* and the other species represent the good that *Hashem* has provided us in His world. The *Medrash* explains that every one of the *minim* hint to our connection to *Hashem*. The word “*Lulav*” is a compound of two words: “*ל*” - to him, “*לב*” - heart. In other words, we give our heart to *Hashem*. The *Esrog* is referred to as “*הדר*” which literally means “*who lives*” - referring to *Hashem* Who lives amongst us. “*Aravos*” is the name of one of the seven celestial heavens. The last is known as *Hadassim*, as it says, “*And he stands amongst the Hadassim.*” Every one of the four *minim* hints to a different kind of relationship with *Hashem*.

As we are well aware, the custom is to make “*Nanuim*” and wave these four species in all directions. Why? The *Talmud* explain that this is done in order to keep away the evil spirits. The *Talmud* adds that Rav Acha would say, “*With this, I blind the Satan.*” Here again, we find the common theme of *Sukkos* - keeping the *Satan* away.

We confused him on *Rosh Hashana*, we defeated him on *Yom Kippur*, and we keep him away, thanks to the power - and the numerous themes - of the holiday of *Sukkos*.

מחשבת הלב

בסכות תשבו שבועת ימים - כל שבועת ימים צא מדירת קבע ושב בדירת עראי (סוכה ב.)

According to *halacha*, one of the most basic requirements when building a *sukkah* is that its walls should not be higher than twenty *amos* (approx. 35 feet). The **Mishna Berura** explains the reason for this disqualification. Our holy Sages determined in their wisdom, that walls higher than this height would be considered a “דירת קבע” - permanent housing, and would thus require additional support and a firmer, more solid foundation. Consequently, this would not be considered a “דירת עראי” - temporary dwelling, which is what a *sukkah* must be. The lesson therein is that each and every person must realize that this world - *Olam Hazei* - is nothing more than a temporary dwelling, only a vestibule before *Olam Haba* - the World to Come. This understanding will motivate us to spend more of our limited time in this world pursuing spiritual goals and worthwhile attainments.

In the course of speaking on many occasions at *simchos* and *Batei Medrashim*, I once said a *machshava* to explain the words of the above *Chazal*. Occasionally, one meets a person whose entire life revolves around himself. He is constantly thinking about his own needs, his own desires and pleasures. His permanent dwelling - “דירת קבע” - is his own mind, which is focused solely inward. But what he does not realize is that his mind is not meant to be

ולכל חיד החוקה ולכל המורא הגדול אשר עשה משה לעיני כל ישראל (דברים לד-יז. שיד לשמחת תורה)

The *Torah* concludes with a stirring *hesped* of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Each of the last *posukim* is interpreted by **Rashi** to recall a specific aspect of his greatness leading up, step by step, to the climax of the *hesped*: how Moshe had the courage to break the *Luchos* in full view of *Bnei Yisroel*. What was so magnificent about this act that it transcended all the great miracles that he performed previously?

The **Ateres Mordechai** offers a profound insight, saying that when we begin a project, we can be critical and objective about it, but once the project is finished, we no longer want to entertain any critical thoughts. Can we imagine how *Moshe Rabbeinu* must have felt when he came down the mountain with the two *Luchos*? He had just spent forty days in Heaven, without food or drink, fending off the angels who wanted to keep the *Torah* up in *Shamayim*! This was his great life’s work. Now he comes down and sees the people worshipping the *Egel*, the Golden Calf. He realizes that the people are not worthy and he decides that he must smash the *Luchos*, which were his life’s work. In truth, he could have rationalized and said, “Maybe I should keep it for later, when the people are ready?” But EMES, pure unadulterated truth demanded that Moshe break them now, setting aside all

focused on himself; it must be a “דירת עראי” - a temporary dwelling. In other words, it is meant to focus on others.

The *Gemara* in *Sukkah* says that the underlying theme of *Chag HaSukkos* is to leave one’s permanent dwelling and settle in a temporary dwelling, meaning we must spend much more time thinking about the needs of others and not be so self-centered, focusing only our own needs. By trying to bring happiness into the lives of those around us, especially the unfortunate and those who have been forsaken, we will bring joy into our own life as well. This is how *Sukkos* will truly become our *Zman Simchasainu*!

Indeed, life is a continuous string of hardship and frustrations, but that is if our lives only revolve around ourselves. We dwell on our personal issues and feel the pain. However, if a person concentrates on others, helping them overcome their *nisyonos* and difficulties, then he himself will feel a sense of joy in his own life!

Helping and always thinking of others is the formula for a life of *simcha*, which is the theme of *Sukkos*. One must leave his permanent dwelling, his own mind, and focus on dwelling in a temporary dwelling - the hearts, minds and needs of others. In doing so, he will find true joy and contentment and he will surely be *zoche* to enjoy a year-round, lifetime of “*Zman Simchaseinu*”!

his personal considerations. The *Torah* tells us: THIS was *Moshe Rabbeinu’s* greatest accomplishment.

Customarily, a glass is broken under the *Chupah*. Most *Meforshim* say it is to recall the destruction of the *Bais HaMikdash*. One explanation, however, connects this to the breaking of the *Luchos*. Why must we be reminded of this event during the special *simcha* of a wedding?

My *machshava* here is that the breaking of the *Luchos* was such a profound act of honesty and integrity on the part of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. The lesson for us is that in order for a marriage to work, there must be that same extraordinary level of honesty on the part of both husband and wife. Both must do what is right, rather than what is comfortable and convenient. Both must be ready to admit their mistakes, rather than stand on ceremony and pride, and both must be willing to face the truth - which is not an easy demand.

The reminder of the breaking of the *Luchos* is meant to give the young couple courage to let go of all their personal needs for the sake of truth, and then this *Chosson* and *Kallah* will be able to find a way to build a marriage, על שנת חיים ארוכים, שלום וטובה ורע"ב and may He grant us a TRUE source of *nachas*, not only to us but also to the

performing in two days hence, R’ Moshe located a willow tree and cut off the longest and most beautiful *Aravos* he had ever seen. That *Chag HaSukkos*, R’ Moshe’s joy knew no bounds as he took his *Arab Minim* in his hands and pronounced the *beracha* of “*Shehechayanu*.”

במקום שאין יין מצוי ... להרא"ש בלילה לא יקדש על השכר אלא על הפת ... (שו"ע זי"ד רעב-ב)

The Strauss Courtyard, or *Chatzer*, was situated next to the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem. The greatest *Torah* scholars, paragons of piety and wisdom, *Tzaddikim* and *Gaonim*, lived there. The *Chatzer* was a bustling center where the *Torah* sages of Jerusalem studied *Torah* in purity and sanctity. This hub of *Mussar* became a commonly recognized spiritual meeting-place, in which the voices of *Torah* study and *tefillah* never ceased. The *Chatzer* provided apartments for the greatest among the *Mussar* sages, and also for many especially illustrious *Torah* scholars, who became legends in their lifetime, known throughout as “*Yakirei d’karta d’Yerushalayim*” (the “precious ones of Jerusalem”).

R’ Yudel Holtzman זי"ל was one of the more learned residents of the Strauss Courtyard in Jerusalem. He was very scrupulous in his *mitzvah* observance, and many interesting and enlightening stories have been told about his piety and righteousness. Once, a *Yerushalmi* tailor needed an expensive operation. It was going to cost sixty *lira*, a fortune in those days. His only option was to send someone from house to house to collect money for his cause. Naturally, the charity collector went to Reb Yudel’s home and told him the tailor’s story.

R’ Yudel sighed. “What can I do? I’ve already given away all of my *tzedaka* money to the many needy people who have come to me. I could say the money I give you will be considered *maaser* of my income for the coming year, as the **Noda B’Yehuda** explains in a *teshuva*, but I’ve already done that too!”

When the charity collector heard this, he got up and left. Before he had gotten far, he heard R’ Yudel calling, “Wait! Come back! Come back!” R’ Yudel said, “I have to help this tailor. Do me a favor. Go and borrow twenty *lira* from the free loan society, and I’ll pay it back at the rate of half a shilling a week.”

How had R’ Yudel come up with the figure of half a shilling? “I sat down and calculated that I spend half a shilling a week on wine for *Kiddush*. On *Yom Tov*, I spend even more. Then, I realized I can make *Kiddush* on *challah*, and as a result, I will have some money left over with which to repay the loan.”

The charity collector followed Reb Yudel’s instructions and was able to secure the loan. Twenty *lira* in those days was a lot of money. All in all, it took Reb Yudel more than sixteen years to pay it all back.

משל למא הדבר דומה

אנל ואשמה בשמחת התורה בא יבא צמח בשמחת התורה תורה היא עין חיים לכולם (סדר הקפות לשמחת התורה)

משל: A simple *chasid*, who came to the **Baal HaTanya, R’ Schneur Zalman of Liadi זי"ל** for the month of *Tishrei*, felt a bit overwhelmed. When it was his turn to talk to the *Rebbe* in private, he had a request: “I don’t understand all the deep discourses that the *Rebbe* gives over regarding the significance of the Jewish festivals. I hear the *Shofar* and I fast on *Yom Kippur* and I sit in a *sukkah*, but more than that I really don’t understand. Please explain to me in simple terms the significance, for instance, about *Simchas Torah*, in such a way that I will also be able to understand and appreciate this holy day.”

The *Alter Rebbe* took the man’s hand in his and said: “A person who likes to drink tea on *Shabbos* usually prepares a vessel with tea essence. Some call it ‘tea-sense.’ Whenever he wishes to have a cup of hot tea, he pours a small amount of the sense into a cup and then adds hot water.”

He looked at his *chasid* and asked, “Simple enough?”

The man nodded. The *Rebbe* continued, “The same goes for *Simchas Torah*. Through our dancing and rejoicing, we prepare *simcha* (joy) for the entire forthcoming year.

The dancing on *Simchas Torah* is the ‘tea-sense.’ Whenever we wish to be happy during the year, we get the power for this from *Simchas Torah*. Thus, the more we dance and the more we rejoice on *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah*, the more joy we will have during the whole year!”

נמשל: The nine days (in *Chutz L’aretz*) from *Sukkos* through *Simchas Torah* are represented by the title, “*Zman Simchaseinu*” - the “*zman*” (period) of joy and happiness. They are not known as “Days of *Simcha*” or even widely referred to as “*Chag Simchaseinu*” - the holiday of joy. Rather, the word “*Zman*” is employed. The **Trisker Maggid זי"ל, R’ Avraham Twerski זי"ל**, elucidates this matter and says that “*zman*” stems from the word “אימן” which means to invite or prepare. During this special period of time, we “prepare” *simcha* for the entire year - “*We can order happiness for the coming year.*” It behooves us to put as much joy as we can into the performance of the special *mitzvos* during this period, so that we may enjoy the seeds of *simcha* that we sow during this holiday.

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרים ... (ויקרא כג-ב)

The *Arba Minim* - four species, are taken on *Chag HaSukkos* in a very unique way. The *Lulav*, *Hadas* and *Arava* are held in the right hand, altogether in a bundle, while the *Esrog* is held by itself in the left hand. At the moment when one makes the blessing on the *Arba Minim*, and when he shakes them, he brings them all together in one bundle encompassing all four species.

Chacham Rabbeinu Elazar Abuchatzzeira זי"ל (Divrei Elazar) finds a *remez* (allusion) here to the manner in which a *Tzaddik* - a righteous *Torah* scholar, engages and interacts with the other segments of *Klal Yisroel*. The *Esrog* represents the righteous people, whereas each of the other four *minim* are lacking in one regard or another. Thus, the *Esrog* - the *Tzaddik*, is somewhat removed from the others in that he learns *Torah*, performs *mitzvos* and remains on a loftier *madreiga* than the others. As such, he cannot be fully attached to the others for he must maintain his purity in order to instruct, exhort and uplift the other segments of the people. At times, he does come together to be part and parcel of the Nation - during the performance of *mitzvos* and when teaching *Torah* - but in general, the *tzaddik* is somewhat removed due to his lofty stature and elevated soul.

However, being removed from the masses of the people does have its disadvantages. The *achdus* of the *Lulav*, *Hadas* and *Arava* are constant and continuous, and *Hashem* loves when the people are unified as one nation with one heart. Thus, the three *minim* take up “residence” in the right hand, the hand that is more valuable in the eyes of *Hashem*, for He appreciates the *achdus* they maintain. On the other hand, the *Tzaddik*, the righteous teacher and leader of the people - he is relegated to the left hand, the weaker and pithy hand, for although he is greater than the others by virtue of his *Torah*, *mitzvos* and overall level of piety, he is lacking in his constant and undivided connection to the rest of the Nation.

Lest a Jew ever feel he is inferior to another due to his perceived shortcomings, let him take solace in the knowledge that he is always “attached” to his people, and as such, *Hashem* looks at him as even more “valuable” than the righteous scholars, with regard to his *achdus* and unification with *Klal Yisroel*.

ובנוענודי אותם תשפיע שפע ברכות מרעת עליהן ... (נפילת לולב)

The **Piaseczna Rebbe, R’ Klonymous Kalmish Shapira זי"ל Hy"d** in *Chovas HaTalmidim* writes: Wouldn’t we laugh at a person who heard about the wonderful qualities of the *Esrog* and grabbed one of the pits or a small non-ripe *Esrog* and bit into it? He might scream, “Oy, the *Esrog* is such a bitter and terrible fruit!” We would consider him a fool. “Wait,” we would say to

him, “until the fruit becomes ripe. Then you will see how truly fit and sweet it really is.”

Even if we see children demonstrating negative *middos* and character traits, like anger and stubbornness, we should never say that the child has a bad character or a bad nature. The holy **Baal Shem Tov זי"ל** already taught us that there is no such thing as a bad character trait in a Jewish child. We must only know how to guide the trait and cultivate it properly so that it will be used for the good. For example, if the student is stubborn, the *Rebbi* or teacher should realize that when this young mind becomes an adult and takes upon himself the yoke of *Torah* and *avodas Hashem*, his service will be with perseverance and resolve, with all the stubbornness necessary to succeed.

It is our responsibility as parents to guide and help our children to become that “*Pri Eitz Hadar*” - that beautiful and unspoiled *Esrog*, eventually raising them to become precious and polished diamonds. And it is primarily through our proactive (not reactive) *chinuch* as parents and as teachers that we will successfully mold them into the very special individuals they are capable of becoming. (**Chinuch in Turbulent Times, by Rabbi Dov Brezak**)

סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האלקים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור ... (יב-ג)

Koheles travels through life and views all the phenomena. He disparages this and he belittles that. Finally, he comes to the end of his dissertation and announces, “*Sof davar*,” what’s the end of all this, the key to the entire puzzle? “*Es Elokim yirah v’es mitzvosav shemor* - Fear G-d and guard His commandments.” He looked at the world and saw that so many unnecessary and seemingly injurious things are actually a deception. “*Sof davar hakol nishma*” - the end of everything is now understood. After 12 chapters and innumerable life lessons, *Koheles* decides that it’s all about Fear of Heaven. Why did he waste all of our time? Why travel through so many chapters? He should have started with the final words and in one minute we could have gotten the message and gone home much earlier!

No, that would have been a big mistake, explains **R’ Avigdor Miller זי"ל**. *Koheles* only informs us: “*Sof davar*” - this is the end. Only if you’ve traveled with me from the beginning of my journey, and together we viewed all the phenomena of the world - we said this is nothing and that is nothing, it’s all “*Hevel*” - only now will you understand this last statement: “*Es Elokim yirah v’es mitzvosav shemor*.” Don’t deceive yourself by thinking that just because you’re born into this world, you will understand what Fear of Heaven is. That is impossible! It’ll never happen. You must understand what the world is all about in order to utilize the opportunities. From these opportunities, you are going to come to the end of all understanding. You will now realize that it’s all about Fear of *Hashem*.

כי יברכך ה' אלהיך בכל תבואתך ובכל מעשה ידך וחיית אך שמח ... (דברים מז-טו)

The great days of *Zman Simchaseinu* are upon us! But *simcha* doesn't come without work! Indeed, we have invested forty days into this joy! We have been saying *selichos*, adding extra *tefillos* in our *davening*, doing *teshuvah* for our sins, banging our chests in remorse. We have been giving extra *tzedakah* and doing many good deeds - all in all, trying to maximize our *ruchniyus* and minimize our *gashmius*! And what do we get in return for all this effort? **SIMCHA!**

Isn't that quite telling? Now, if I were to tell you that we are going to have seven days of supreme happiness and we all will get forty days to get ready and prepare ourselves, what would you do? Well, you might go out and taste all the new wines on the market to find just the right one. You might scour the Jewish papers and magazine ads for the greatest entertainment available. Undoubtedly, you would spend a great deal of time finding the best food and drinks around. Basically, you would focus on the physical pleasures of life thinking that this is what brings happiness.

There can be nothing further from the truth! The reason we feel the joy of *Sukkos* is not because of the physical preparations, but because of our great spiritual accomplishments. This is the first lesson of the year and the most important lesson of life - the *Yetzer Hara* (evil inclination) is constantly trying to delude us into thinking just the opposite! True happiness **ONLY** comes from spirituality. Temporary pleasure comes from physicality, but it is only temporary. Temporary pleasure should be used as tools to put us in a relaxed frame of mind, to contemplate the true reality that real *Simchas Hachaim* comes from being connected to *Hashem*.

There is a beautiful *mashal* that encapsulates the entire period known as the *Yamim Noraim*. A little boy named Yankele went with his father to a big *Arba Minim* market. There were thousands of men searching for the perfect *Lulav* and *Esrog*. Yankele was holding tightly to his father's hand when he suddenly saw a fancy, flashing

sukkah decoration. He figured that he would take a quick look and come right back to his father. For an instant he let go of his father's hand and got easily swept away among the crowd and all the excitement. After a short while he realized that he lost his father and he began to cry. A nice man saw him and took him to the police station where he sat and cried, hoping that his father would come and get him. Suddenly, his *Tatty* came running into the station and Yankele joyfully ran into his father's arms and cried tears of joy. "*Tatty*," he cried, "you don't know how scared I was when I realized I lost you. I was wondering if I would ever find you again!"

The father replied, "You can't even imagine how scared I was when I saw you were missing. My love for you is something that you cannot even fathom. But now we have to go back to the market because I did not get a *Lulav* and *Esrog* yet. But this time, don't let go of my hand!"

Little Yankele shook his head. "*Tatty*, the only way I will go back in there is if you carry me!"

Rabbosai, we are Yankele, explains **R' Shimshon Pinkus זי"ל**, we are that little boy! The entire month of *Elul* we are searching for our *Tatty*; we want to be close to him. Finally, on *Rosh Hashana* we find him. We spend the next ten days feeling that incredible warmth and closeness to *Hashem*. *Yom Kippur* is the pinnacle of that special *kirvas Hashem*, but *Yom Kippur* doesn't last forever and we have to get back to reality! But we are still frightened. We tell *Hashem* that the only way we will manage in this world is if He carries us - if He hugs us and holds us tight! This is the only way we, as a Nation, can go on!

This is the joyous *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos*! It is a time when we find ourselves in the literal embrace of the Almighty! Can there possibly be a greater joy in the universe then feeling hugged and loved by *Hashem*? Let us use this special time to the best of our abilities and together as one Nation, we will surely enjoy a beautiful *Yom Tov*!

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

בנה סכתך וחקם נפולח. יסודותיה לשחת ולבנותה על תלה. צאנך לרעות על משכנותיך להנחילה (ויצרת לליל ב' דסוכות)

Dizengoff Street in central Tel Aviv is one of the city's most iconic streets. Originally described as the "Champs-Élysées of Tel Aviv," Dizengoff Street is one of the most important arteries in Tel Aviv, and has played an essential role in the development of the city. It runs from the Port of Tel Aviv in the north, right through the "*Lev Hair*" - the heart of the city, about 3 kilometers south, until it ends at Rechov Ibn Gbirol. The street is named after Meir Dizengoff, the first mayor of Tel Aviv and was built during the 1920's as part of the original urban development plan of Tel Aviv.

The following story was told by a professor who experienced it first-hand. This professor was not religious and had almost no interaction with religious practices. He ran a clinic on Dizengoff Street and was quite prosperous. His daily routine entailed driving to his clinic every morning where he spent the day, and in the evening, he would drive a few blocks south and visit his elderly father who lived on Dizengoff in the house he grew up in.

Within two hours they were outside the camp. The first person they met was a German peasant woman whose son had been sent to an SS prison camp. She hated the Nazis with a passion. Instead of turning them in, she gave them food. The first Pole they met was a member of the Polish underground and he helped them escape over the border to Slovakia. The first Slovak they met was also a member of the underground and he helped them make contact with the Jewish community in Jernina. And thus was written the famous Vrba and Wetzler Report outside the borders of Auschwitz.

"*Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us; none can compare to You; if I would declare and tell of them, they would be more than can be numbered.*" *Tehillim* (40:6)

Sitting in our *sukkos*, we can't help but think about Vrba and Wetzler sitting in theirs! In life, we may find ourselves inside a hole. The Germans are lifting off the layers of planks. But we are in a better situation than Vrba and Wetzler. Vrba and Wetzler thought they were about to be caught and they were cursing the whole world. They were not able to know that at that very moment *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* was opening the door for their escape to freedom. We, on the other hand, are clearly aware of this, because the parts of the play that we do see are so obviously part of His master plan.

ותהא חשוכה מצות ארבעה מינים אלו כאילו קימתיה בבל פרמיותיה ושרשיה ותר"ג מצות התלויים בה ... (סדר נשילת לולב)

There is a Chassidic legend that goes like this: The famous Emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte, once asked **R' Dovid Biderman זי"ל** of **Lelov** if he would be successful in his conquest of Russia. The *Rebbe* had no choice but to say the truth: he informed the ill-tempered Emperor that he would not win. And so it was. After Napoleon's defeat, he allegedly passed through Lelov again and rather than pour out his wrath on the Jews of Lelov, he was so impressed with the *Rebbe's* intuitive foresight that he gave R' Dovid'l his velvet cloak. The *Rebbe* kept this royal garment in his possession. *Chassidim* say that **R' Moshe Biderman זי"ל**, son of R' Dovid, took the cloak to Jerusalem with him, and made the cover for the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark) in his synagogue from it.

The Lelover dynasty migrated from Poland to Jerusalem when R' Moshe moved there in 1850, during the final year of his life. R' Moshe of Lelov was the son-in-law of the **Yid Hakadosh, R' Yaakov Yitzchok Rabinowitz זי"ל** of **Pshischa**, and was well-known for his love of *mitzvos* and the scrupulous care and attention he gave to the performance of every *mitzvah*. It was said that while on the ship that carried R' Moshe and his family from Europe to the shores of the Holy Land, he prepared many of the *mitzvos* he would require during the months-long journey. He brought along a *shofar* for *Rosh Hashana*, and an unblemished set of the *Arba Minim*, so that he may shake them during the holiday of *Sukkos*. He even *shlepped* some boards of wood, so that he may build a *sukkah* on the ship, in accordance with the *halacha* mentioned in the second chapter of *Masechta Sukkah*.

One major issue that plagued R' Moshe throughout the journey was figuring out how to keep his precious *mitzvos* safe and fresh, so that they will be ready for use on *Yom Tov*. He did his utmost and while the *Esrog*, *Lulav* and *Hadassim* were preserved in almost pristine condition, unfortunately, his *Aravos* did not share the same fate. The day after *Yom Kippur*, R' Moshe removed the *Aravos* from its protective sheath and he found that they were totally dried out. The leaves had fallen off and there was literally nothing left for him to do the *mitzvah* with. He was understandably disturbed by these developments, as he tried everything to keep them fresh. But alas it was not meant to be.

A day before *Sukkos*, R' Moshe was strolling on the upper deck of the ship and he noticed a few small islands off in the distance. He had an idea. He quickly found the ship's captain and he requested that the ship make a quick stop on one of the islands, long enough for him to find some willow branches that he can cut and use for the upcoming Jewish holiday.

The captain looked at him as if he was from another planet. "You want me to dock the ship so you can get some willow branches?" asked the captain, trying to hold back his smirk.

"Yes, yes," cried R' Moshe. "It is very important to me!"

"Well, it's not important to me, or my crew," replied the captain, and turned to walk away, dismissing the Jew and his ridiculous request.

But R' Moshe did not give in. He was determined to get his *Aravos* and do the *mitzvah*. He begged and pleaded. He blessed the ship and the crew. He tried to appeal to the captain's humane side and when that didn't work, he explained how his religion is so important and it required him to get these willow branches.

Nothing seemed to work ... until he hit upon the one thing that the captain craved more than anything: Money. R' Moshe had brought his life-savings with him with the intention of building a new life in the Holy Land. Now, however, he realized that the only way he would be able to get the captain to stop the ship at a nearby island was by offering him a great deal of money.

The captain could not resist and took R' Moshe's money. In return, he steered the ship to a nearby island and allowed the *Lelover Rebbe* to disembark. With a burning zeal that was fueled by his anticipation of the *mitzvah* he would be

Wetzler and Vrba, two Jewish youths from Slovakia, arrived at Auschwitz early in the operation of the camp. Having been witness to the atrocities occurring in the camps, they found themselves in positions as official secretaries of the camp. This job gave them access to files which contained information about all the horrific activities, the torture, and brutality, and of course the murder. They copied down all the information they could lay their hands on, thus endangering their lives. If discovered, the SS would torture them and then murder them on the spot. Yet, they felt it their sacred duty to document the atrocities and publicize the whole story to the free world. Thus they had to escape. But how to escape Auschwitz-Birkenau? Very few were successful in avoiding the guards, and of those few, only a handful actually survived.

Auschwitz-Birkenau was made up of three main camps - Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Buna. Around each one of these main camps was a security ring, an internal double fence of electrified barbed wire. Powerful flood lamps lit up the area each night. For every ten yards, there was a guard tower manned by an SS soldier armed with a heavy machine gun. Each evening the Jews would return from their work and gather inside the outside fence. A count was made. If the number matched the number count from the morning, the guards in the outside towers were released from duty for the night. If one Jew, even one, was found missing, an alarm was sounded and a massive search was commenced, encompassing thousands of personnel, accompanied by two hundred dogs. This continued until either the escapees were caught, or three days passed. In the interim, the watch around the outside fence was maintained day and night. At the end of three days, if the escapees were still not tracked down, the Germans assumed that they would not be found in light of the intensive search that had transpired within the confines of the camps, and the search was handed over to the authorities outside the camps.

Vrba and Wetzler’s plan was simple. They would hide for three days, somewhere outside the inner fence, but within the outer wall. On the third night, after the guards were released, they would slip away under the fence. But how could they hide in a place so well guarded? Where would they hide? How could they evade the intense search that would take place?

Luck had it, that at that time, the Germans decided to build a new camp called “Mexico” in expectation of the Hungarian Jews. In advance of the building they brought long wide boards of wood with which to build the barracks. The boards were temporarily stored in piles. A group of Jews had the job of piling up the wood. With the approaching holiday of *Sukkos* in mind, the Jewish underground arranged that one of the piles would be arranged such that inside was a small compartment, large enough for two or three people to sit, but which could not be discerned from the outside. The pile would look just like all the other piles. It was into that tiny compartment that Vrba and Wetzler crawled and hid.

Night fell, and they heard the Jews returning to the camp; they knew that they were being counted. Then the alarm siren went off, and the search began. For two and a half days, patrols of armed Germans with dogs passed near and on top of their pile. But they weren’t discovered. Even the dogs didn’t detect them? They learned a trick from a Russian officer that Russian tobacco soaked in kerosene confuses a dog’s sense of smell and so the dogs never found them.

Two days passed, then night, and then another half a day. It appeared they were about to succeed. The search parties were tiring. It was the afternoon of the the third day; all they had to do was to wait for nightfall. Suddenly, they heard voices. Two guards were still searching. One said to the other, “Otto, perhaps they’re inside the pile of wood?”

“Yeah, sure!” answered the second German, “and the two Jews are inside listening! Forget it. The dogs were here.”

But they didn’t give up. They kept on trying. Vrba and Wetzler were lying inside, their nerves on the verge of bursting. Many attempts at escape from Auschwitz had failed, and finally they were almost successful in slipping away - and here were two Germans approaching their hiding place. The guards removed one layer of boards. Then, a second layer. There had been 3 layers of boards covering them from the top. Only one layer was left. The two Jewish youths, hiding inside, were preparing their knives as a welcoming gift for the two Germans. But they also realized that even if they kill those German criminals, someone else would catch them. They saw themselves being led up to the gallows, beaten and mutilated. Now at the last minute, right on the verge of their great escape, before their getaway had succeeded, they were about to be caught!

Suddenly, they heard a noise, and the two Germans said to each other, “Ha! They caught them!” and then ran away.

Two hours passed, night fell, and they heard the all-clear signal pass from one tower to the other. They waited another two hours until it was pitch black darkness. All that was left was to lift up the boards, step outside, and slip under the outside non-electrified fence, to freedom. Simple to say, but not for inmates of Auschwitz. They attempted to push up the pile of boards on top of them. Only one row of boards remained, and they found they just didn’t have the strength. For three days they had not eaten or drank. Combined with no sleep and nerve-racking strain, cramped into such a small compartment, Vrba and Wetzler simply didn’t have the strength to lift up the remaining boards.

Out of desperation, they mustered their last remaining ounce of strength, and slowly, slowly they pushed up another inch, another inch, until they finally pushed off the final layer of boards and stepped out of their hiding place. Vrba said to Wetzler, “Imagine what would have been if those two German criminals hadn’t taken off two layers of boards? If we couldn’t remove one layer half a foot thick, then for sure we would’ve had no chance with one and a half feet of wood!”

On behalf of thousands of Shomer Shabbos Jews - www.chickensforshabbos.com - The charity that simply feeds & clothes Shomer Shabbos Jews in Eretz Yisroel with zero overhead

One evening, the traffic getting to his father’s home was unbearable. “There must be some sort of event,” he thought to himself, “which is causing the backup.” When he finally reached the house, there was no place to park. He had never seen this before and he wondered where he could leave his car - even for a few minutes - while he runs in to see his dad.

Then he remembered that while growing up, he would often walk through a back alley to cut out the main thoroughfare in order to reach his house. “Why can’t I leave my car in that alleyway?” he reasoned. He followed the dirt path as he recalled, and he soon found himself in the back alley. He was quite pleased with himself and he parked his car easily.

He began to walk towards the back of his father’s house, when he suddenly heard a voice calling him. “*Selicha Adoni*,” said the voice. “Please, if you don’t mind, we have nine men and we need one more for a *minyan*. We wish to *daven Mincha* which is not a long prayer and we need one more man. Won’t you please join us and complete the *minyan*?”

The professor turned to see an old man standing in front of a tiny little building. “Funny,” he thought to himself, “I never noticed this building before. I certainly never knew it was a synagogue.” As if reading his mind, the old man said, “In over forty years that this small synagogue is in existence, we have never missed a *minyan*. Look, it’s late in the day and will soon be too late to *daven*. You are Jewish, right? Can you please join us?” Perhaps out of pity, perhaps out of curiosity, the professor followed the old man into the little synagogue nestled in the back alley, behind the house he grew up in. He had never prayed before and he didn’t know what to say, so he just sat there and watched. The *minyan* began and the professor sat down in a corner seat. Within a few seconds, though, he began to feel heat rising within him - he couldn’t explain it - his emotions began to boil and his face was turning red from perspiration. “What is happening?” he wondered. “Why am I getting all worked up? I feel like a boiling cauldron and my hands won’t stop shaking!”

He couldn’t explain it. The more he sat and watched the other nine men praying, the more anxious and agitated he became. He shifted from foot to foot and he continuously dabbed at his forehead and the back of his neck to wipe away the sweat. The second the *minyan* was over, he dashed out of the little synagogue as fast as his wobbly feet could carry him, and without even looking back he ran straight to his father’s house. His dad took one look at him and exclaimed, “What happened to you? Why are you so late? And why are you all red and hot under the collar?”

The professor finally calmed down a bit and was able to tell his father about the little synagogue in the back alley, and how he became extremely agitated and emotional, the instant he sat down. He had no legitimate explanation for what happened. This was the first time he had even been in a synagogue and he could not control his emotions which had run rampant throughout his body.

The elderly father sat down in a chair and became pensive. He looked at his son for a few long moments before he spoke in a quiet voice. “My son, I believe I know the reason why you experienced this unusual phenomenon this afternoon. You see, when I was twelve years old, my family emigrated from Poland to the Land of Israel. In those early days, most refugees lived in tents, and our family was no different. My father tried to incorporate us into a normal life, but things were hard in those early days. And then, a few of the religious men decided that they wanted a synagogue where they could pray. Most people laughed at them, but my father was among the handful of Jews who wanted the synagogue. Nobody would help them or provide them with the means to build one, so they took it upon themselves to build it alone. Like the Jewish slaves in Egypt, they created the bricks and mortar, and laid stone upon stone until they built their very own synagogue. A few men had brought a *Torah* scroll and some of the other ritual necessities, and just like that, they had a *shul*. My father was so proud of their handiwork, but I was a carefree youth with no interest in praying and I turned away from religious observance.”

The professor listened in silence as his father’s voice rose with emotion. “I have no doubt that your grandfather up in heaven, saw you, his grandson, enter the synagogue that he built with his own bare hands and he wasn’t going to let this opportunity pass without stirring some emotion inside you, to make you aware of what he accomplished and what we threw away. I am sure he was playing on your emotions, causing you to boil inside, not allowing you to sit still - he was sending you a message! It was no coincidence that you parked where you did - your grandfather wanted you to feel what it was like to be in the synagogue that he built with *mesirat nefesh*!”

Tears welled up in the professor’s eyes and he was overcome by the story he just heard. Indeed, it caused his entire life to be shaken up and he eventually found his way back to the path of *Teshuvah*.

כי יצפנני בסכה ביום רעה וסתירני בסתר אהליו בצור ירוממני ועתה ירום ראשי על איבי מביבותי (תהלים כז-ה.)

One of the most outstanding stories of escape from Auschwitz-Birknau is the story of Alfred Wetzler and Rudolph Vrba-Rosenberg. It took place on April 7, 1944. According to the opinions of several historians, the Vrba-Wetzler Report, often referred to as the Auschwitz Protocol, one of the most famous documents in the free world at that period, was a major contributing factor in multitudes of Hungarian Jews not being sent to Auschwitz.