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A WELLSPRING OF CHIZUK

שליט"א של רבי יסאכר יהודה ברקו
Rav of Pardes HaTorah



פרשת מטות-מסעי

WEEKLY PARSHA • TWO MINUTE TAKE-AWAY • SHABBOS KODESH
DEEPER INSIGHTS • WAYS OF OUR TZADIKIM

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פרשת מסעי

Discovering Treasures Even in the Darkest Moments

THE MEM BAIS MASUOS ARE EXTRAORDINARY

In *Parshas Masei*, the Torah recounts *Klal Yisroel's* travels through the *midbar*, meticulously chronicling the *Mem Bais Masuos*, the forty-two distinct locations where they encamped.

The Torah intends for us to derive a vital lesson from these journeys, serving as a spiritual roadmap for our daily *avodas Hashem*.

These forty-two journeys contain profound hidden secrets. The *Magen Avraham* (Siman 588) cites the *Sefer Tzeror Hamor*, explaining that these locations correspond to the forty-two letters within the *tefillah* of *Ana BeKoach*.

Beyond their mystical roots, the *Mem Bais Masuos* possess immense spiritual potency and function as a remarkable *segula*.

The *sefer Zevach Tzedek* notes that the renowned *mekubal*, Reb Shamshon Ostropola, taught that reciting the names of these forty-two travelers provides powerful protection. Consistent recitation every morning and night can shield one from suffering and injury; specifically, the *sefer* emphasizes its efficacy during times of epidemics.

The *Zevach Tzedek* adds supporting insights from the famous *mekubal* Reb Yoel Baal Shem. He stresses that these teachings are to be taken with the utmost seriousness, as Reb Shimshon Ostropola received them directly from Eliyahu HaNavi.

Thus, these forty-two journeys are of such spiritual significance that merely reciting them acts as a *segula*. Some editions of the *Haggadah shel Pesach* even include it and other related *tefillas* at the beginning.

HOLY SPARKS OF THE NESHAMA GET LOST WHEN COMMITTING AN AVEIRA

The *Ohr HaChaim* and the *Maggid of Koznitz*, quoting his *rebbe*, the *Maggid of Mezritch*, explain a fascinating concept from the *Zohar* and the *Arizal* known as "*Birur HaNitzotzos*": the extraction of holy sparks from within the darkness.

They explain that hidden treasures of holiness are scattered throughout the world, and our mission is to delve into dark places to retrieve them. When a holy spark is redeemed, it returns to its source and connects to a *Yiddishe neshama*, inspiring it toward prayer and study. This reconnection allows a person to feel a tangible closeness to Hashem.

How do these sparks end up in such places, and what force holds them captive?

To understand this, let's explore how the *yetzer hara* operates.

The *Ohr HaChaim* and the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* explain that the *yetzer hara* constantly entices a person to transgress, whether through *lashon hara*, forbidden sights, or poor *middos*. Since we know the *yetzer hara* ultimately leads to a bitter end, why would anyone succumb?

The answer lies in deception: he makes the *aveira* appear tempting and enjoyable; he makes it look as if we'll derive satisfaction and happiness from doing it.

If the *yetzer hara* is a *malach* created by the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, how can he make an act of rebellion feel pleasant? Where does he get permission to make an *aveira* seem attractive?

In simple terms, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* allows the *yetzer hara* to "steal" temptation from *kedusha*. He takes fragments of our own *neshama*, the true source of pleasure, and temporarily embeds them within the *aveira*. Using this stolen energy, he makes even *lashon hara* seem "sweet."

In reality, he's deceiving us, as these *aveiros* are inherently repulsive. They only seem tempting because he has temporarily placed sparks of holiness from our own *neshamos* into the transgression.

Furthermore, when a person commits an *aveira*, that holy spark from their *neshama* falls into captivity, landing in hidden, dark places across the world.

This is why we *daven* daily for Hashem to "gather us from the four corners of the earth." The *Arizal* explains that this refers to the fragments of our *neshamos* scattered through sin. We yearn to reunite them, and when this process is complete, *Moshiach* will arrive.

BNEI YISROEL TRAVELED THROUGH THE MIDBAR TO REDEEM THE LOST SPARKS OF THEIR NESHAMA

The *Ohr HaChaim* explains that *Bnei Yisroel's* travels in the *midbar* served a specific mission. Before entering *Eretz Yisroel* and building the *Beis Hamikdash*, they had to liberate all captive holy sparks. Empowered by the Torah and the leadership of Moshe and Aharon, 600,000 strong, they possessed the strength to reclaim this holiness.

Whose sparks were they liberating? To whom did they belong? To *Klal Yisroel* themselves.

While in *Mitzrayim*, spiritual failings led to fragments of their *neshamos* being scattered throughout the *midbar*. Consequently, they had to journey through the wilderness to seek out these dark places and retrieve their holy sparks.

The *Ohr HaChaim* further asks: why did the *Yidden* rest in some locations for years, yet others for only a day or two?

He explains that the duration depended on the volume of captive sparks in each location. A few sparks required only a brief stay, but a place with many captive sparks demanded a long encampment, sometimes for a year, or even twenty.

How did visiting and resting in a certain location accomplish their mission?

When a *Yid* lives in a place and engages in study, prayer, or *brachos*, those sparks are released. Furthermore, when one faces a *nisayon* during dark times and struggles to find enthusiasm, that is the war he must engage in to reclaim our hidden sparks of holiness, the parts of our *neshama* that are being held captive.

This is what *Klal Yisroel* accomplished in the *midbar*.

Reciting the forty-two journeys is an incredible *segulah* because it facilitates the reclamation of these lost parts of our *neshama*. Once the sparks are redeemed, a person returns to their true self, and everything the *yetzer hara* took captive is restored.

BEIN HAMITZARIM – AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED IN RESTORING OUR NESHAMA

The *Kozhnitzer Maggid* reveals that the three weeks of *Bein HaMitzarim* comprise twenty-one days and twenty-one nights, totaling forty-two periods. These correspond directly to the forty two travels of *Klal Yisroel*, presenting an extraordinary opportunity for growth.

Serving Hashem during these dark three weeks, as we mourn the *Beis HaMikdash* and refrain from joy, we

have such an opportunity to demonstrate profound *mesiras nefesh*. By strengthening our service to Hashem despite the restrictions of the Nine Days, we prove to the *yetzer hara* that we will not yield.

This means battling with extreme dedication, digging into those dark places to retrieve the holy sparks that the *yetzer hara* took captive and scattered across the world.

This is the essence of the forty-two journeys. During this time, extra effort in learning, prayer, *tznius*, and guarding our speech becomes a spiritual offensive to reclaim the captive sparks of our *neshamos*.

Although it might be harder during these dark three weeks without music, **לפום צערא אגרא** - *according to the effort is the reward*. Because it's more difficult, we will retrieve those holy sparks of our *neshamos*.

The *Maggid* offers a hint from the *posuk*: *All her pursuers overtook her between the straits*. While the literal meaning refers to our enemies destroying the *Beis Hamikdash*, the *Maggid* suggests that **כל רודפיה** is an acronym for "*one who pursues Hashem*." Whoever seeks Hashem and wants to restore their *neshama* can reach Him most effectively during these three weeks.

Once we restore our *neshamos*, spiritual success will be followed by success in *gashmius* - be it in finances,

health, or *nachas* from children.

This explains why *Tishah B'Av* is said to be even greater than *Simchas Torah* by Reb Pinchas Koritzer and the *Kozhnitzer Maggid*. After twenty-one days of intensive reclaiming of holy sparks, we will surely merit a spiritual *shefa* that transcends even the joy of *Simchas Torah*.





TWO MINUTE TAKE-AWAYS: CHIZUK FOR YOUR TABLE

No Unfeasible Challenges

Many people sometimes feel that it's impossible to move forward in life. They compile a list of grievances, enumerating all the trauma and pain which they have endured. And they conclude that it's impossible to lead a joyful, happy life.

Some people focus on their current state. They assess their abilities and decide they simply cannot manage. Whether it's learning Torah, *davening*, singing *zemiros* at the *Shabbos* table, or raising children, they feel inadequate. They believe they lack the necessary strength. They claim to be honest with themselves, telling the *Ribono Shel Olam* that they lack the required capabilities.

The *Alter Rebbe of Alexander*, in his *sefer Maoran Shel Yisrael*, cites the *Gemara* in *Kesubos*. The *Gemara* recounts the well-known story of Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya, who let themselves be forced into the fire

as a *kiddush Hashem*. Yet, the *Gemara* also suggests that had they been subjected to torture, they might have succumbed to serving the *avodah zarah*.

The Alexander Rebbe questions this: Why mention this at all? Is the *Gemara* attempting to diminish the level of these great men? We recognize their ultimate *mesiras nefesh*, and by *Selichos* we cry out: *מי שענה לחנני' מישאל ועזרי' הוא יעננו* (He who answered Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya, should answer us!). They are the pioneers of *Klal Yisroel*. Why highlight something that appears to lower their spiritual standing?

He provides a profound answer based on the *Gemara* in *avodah zarah*: *אין הקב"ה בא בטריני' עם בריאותיו*. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* doesn't deal unfairly with His people; He never presents a person with a *nisayon* or a challenge that exceeds their capacity to succeed.

If Hashem has given you this specific challenge, this trial, or this difficult background, He's certain that you can overcome it. Not only can you survive it, says the Alexander Rebbe, but you can reach the highest levels of success through it.

Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya were granted the specific strength to jump into the fire. However, they were not given the particular strength to endure

torture; therefore, Hashem didn't test them with that specific *nisayon*.

The *Gemara* teaches us that the *Ribbono Shel Olam* only presents you with trials that you are equipped to withstand, allowing you to succeed and excel. No matter what you have gone through, or have, what you claim to be, inadequate capabilities; you always have the specific strength you need to move forward.

We Have A Great Yichus

The *posuk* in *Shir Hashirim* declares, "השמיעני את קולך." The *Ribbono Shel Olam* says, "I want to hear your voice." *כי קולך ערב ומראיך נאווה* - for your voice is sweet, and your appearance is pleasant. I wish to see you.

When the *Bais Hamikdash* stood, there were three times a year when Hashem said, "I want to see every *Yiddishe* child." And so, *Klal Yisroel* was *oleh regel* and brought *karbanos*. It was an extraordinary, joyful time.

In our days, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* also calls to us three times - not just throughout the year, but three times every single day: "I want to see you. I want to hear your voice. I want you to daven."

The high point of davening is *Shmoneh Esrei*. When davening *Shmoneh Esrei*, you enter the innermost chambers of the King. You're stepping into the central part of the majestic palace.

There are specific *halachos* regarding how one should conduct themselves during *Shmoneh Esrei*. Standing before the *Melech Malchei Hamlachim Hakadosh Baruch Hu* requires the right demeanor.

When davening *Shmoneh Esrei*, we wish to pour out our hearts in *tefillah*. But sometimes we might feel conflicted. On one hand, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* specifically wants our *tefillos*. On the other hand, "Who am I?" We're well aware of our flaws and the *nisayonos* we failed to overcome. So, what's the solution?

The *Anshei Knesses HaGdolah*, who composed *Shmoneh Esrei*, provided us with encouragement at the start of the *tefillah*. As we begin the first *bracha*, we mention our three *Avos* - Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov.

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Berachos* (דף אין קורין (ט"ז, עמוד ב

'אלא לשלשה' - אבות - that the title "Avos" is reserved only for these three. Meaning, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov are not merely ancestors; they are our fathers. The *Gemara* continues that the title "*Imahos*" is reserved only for four: Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah. They're not called grandmothers, they're our mothers.

What does this teach us? When we begin *Shmoneh Esrei*, we tell Hashem, "Do You know who I am? Do You see my lineage? My father was Avraham, who endured the greatest *nisayonos*. Yitzchok stood at the *akeidah*, and Yaakov persevered through years of hardship - from his hard labor to being pursued by Esav, to fleeing his parent's home and raising the *Shevatim*. I am their child. I am like one of the twelve *shevatim*."

When a person understands what he's saying and actually feels this way, they will gain the courage to *daven* and ask Hashem for whatever they might need. As we say in *Shmoneh Esrei*, "וְיָחִידֵנוּ"

"חֲסִדֵי אֲבוֹת וּמִבִּיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם" - Hashem remembers the kindness of the Avos and brings a redeemer to their children's children. *Ribbono Shel Olam*, please remember their *zechus* and bring *geulah* to Your children!

We should carry this powerful *chizuk* with us throughout the entire day, not just during *davening*. Whenever we have a need, we should turn to Hashem and say, "I am a child of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. I have such *yichus*." Then, you can ask Him for anything.

When faced with *nisayonos*, we should tell the *yetzer hara*, "Excuse me, I'm a child of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. This behavior is beneath my dignity."

On the contrary, I want to learn, *daven*, and do *mitzvos* so that my parents - Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, and my mothers, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah - will derive *nachas* from me.

The Misconception of Life

Success - what does it mean? There is a common misconception that life is like a grocery store: the more items you sell, the more successful you are; if the shelves remain full, you have failed.

We often apply this same logic to our spiritual growth. If we work on our *middos* but still struggle with anger or

envy, we feel unsuccessful. If we plan a beautiful *Shabbos* that ends up feeling chaotic - the *davening* lacks focus, the table isn't ready, or the kids misbehave - we conclude that the *Shabbos* was a failure.

This ledger-based view of life, where we constantly calculate pluses and

minuses, is a fundamental mistake.

The *Shem Mishmuel* in *Parshas Ki Sisa* quotes a profound concept from his father, the *Avnei Nezer*, that astounded the Polish Jews of his time.

He taught that if a person sincerely yearns, plans, and strives to be good - Constantly ready to work on negative *middos* and desiring to *daven* with *kavana* - that yearning is so powerful it can release them from *Gehinnom*.

The *Avnei Nezer* personally guaranteed: "Even if a person were to enter *Gehinnom*,

they will fly out like an arrow from a bow.

These words can transform our perspective. We often look back at the week and see only our failures, ignoring the hundreds of positive thoughts and desires we had to improve.

According to the *Avnei Nezer*, those yearnings represent true success. That spiritual ambition has the power to lift you out of the deepest depths. When we realize this, and live by this idea, we can become happy people. And when a person is happy, he becomes energized and can yield much more.

Ayin Tovah

The *sefer Me'ir Einei HaGolah* records that the *Chiddushei HaRim* zt"l davened and labored for seventeen years to attain the middah of *ayin tova*, a good eye. When he accomplished this and felt he had acquired the virtuous middah of an *ayin tova*, he attested that he began seeing wondrous *siyata dishmaya* in all his actions.

He described feeling immense *siyata dishmaya* in his *avodas Hashem*, as if angels were clearing the path for him.

How might we, on our own level, merit even a small measure of this middah? While we may not reach the heights of the *Chiddushei HaRim*, we can strive to cultivate it in our daily lives.

The middah of an *ayin tova* requires great exertion. The *Shem MiShmuel* delivered a discourse on *Rosh Chodesh Iyar* and quoted his grandfather the *Kotzker* zt"l, saying that the middah of jealousy is ingrained in a person from birth, and exists even in a small infant. Additionally, other negative *middos* may appear at a later stage.

If so, how's it possible to attain a good eye? The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* asks: *אִי־הוּ עשִׂיר? הַשְּׂמַח בְּחֻלּוֹ* - Who is considered wealthy? A person who's happy with what was apportioned to him.

However, refraining from being jealous is difficult. When one sees a friend with a large, magnificent house or wonderful children, how's it possible not to envy him?

Consider a food or a color you dislike. If you see a friend eating that food or painting their house in that color, you would not feel envious because it simply doesn't appeal to you.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu conveys this message to every person. The *sefer Chovos HaLevavos* explains that Hashem says to each and every one of us: if I didn't grant you a certain thing, it's a sign that this won't bring you happiness and you won't be comfortable with it.

Therefore, when you see something belonging to your friend, you must know that the same nachas or house he has, had they been yours, you would find no joy or peace with them. Just as you don't envy someone who has a food or a color you dislike, so too, do not

envy your friend for anything else he has, because if it were yours, you wouldn't be comfortable with it.

With Hashem's help, may this advice serve as a helpful tool for us to try to attain the middah of an ayin tovah!



DEEPER INSIGHTS

The Hidden Treasures of the Three Weeks

PART 1

THERE'S SOMETHING PROFOUND ABOUT THE DAY OF TISHA B'AV

The Three Weeks involve a striking paradox. On one hand, there are *halachos* of mourning we must follow, particularly during the Nine Days and on *Tisha B'Av*. On the other hand, the *Shulchan Aruch* notes that we omit Tachanun on *Erev Tisha B'Av* starting from *mincha*, as well as on *Tisha B'Av* itself, as it is called a "*Moed*" - a *yom tov*.

What is the nature of this day? Is it a *yom tov* or a time of mourning? As a

preface to this subject, let's elaborate on two foundations.

Foundation number one: The first and second *Beis HaMikdash* were destroyed on the very same day, *Tisha B'Av*.

Why did the nations choose this specific date? If their goal was to harm *Klal Yisroel*, they could have chosen any joyful *yom tov*: *Yom Kippur*, *Simchas Torah*, *Pesach*, *Sukkos*, or *Shavuot*. Why pick *Tisha B'Av*, a day that seemingly had no significance during the era of the *Beis HaMikdash*?

Because they recognized something hidden about this particular day: *Moshiach* was born on *Tisha B'Av*. This date was specifically chosen to teach us that while we mourn the burning of the *Beis Hamikdash* on *Tisha B'Av*, there's something profound beneath the surface. If the nations targeted this day specifically because of *Moshiach's* birth, must be it contains a tremendous hidden light.

HAKADOSH BARUCH HU WISHES TO MARRY KLAL YISROEL

The second foundation we will elaborate on is that the period from *Shiva Assar B'Tammuz* onward has held incredible potential since *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The *Alshich HaKadosh* explains that when *Klal Yisroel* was freed from *Mitzrayim*, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* wanted to marry them. This marriage took place at *Matan Torah*, as the *posuk* says, **ביום חתונתו וביום שמחת לבו** - on the day of His wedding and the day of His heart's joy – referring to *Matan Torah*.

The *Alshich* in *Parshas Yisro* cites the *Midrash*, explaining that according to *halachah*, a convert must wait three months before marrying a *Yid*. He affirms that when we left *Mitzrayim*, we were in a state similar to converts. To "marry" the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, we had to wait three months.

The first step of getting married

occurred after *Sefiras Ha'Omer*; in which *Klal Yisroel* worked intensely for forty-nine days. Only after their efforts, did they reach *Matan Torah* which represented the beginning of the "*Nisuin*" - marriage, where we received our "*Kiddushin*."

Following that, *Klal Yisroel* awaited the next stage of their marriage: "*Yichud*." The *Alshich* explains that it couldn't have taken place yet because the three-month waiting period was not yet complete by *Matan Torah*.

The three months only concluded on the 17th of *Tammuz*. That was when *Moshe Rabbeinu* descended with the *Luchos*, marking ninety days since they left *Mitzrayim*.

At that moment, *Hashem* intended to complete the second level of marriage with *Klal Yisroel*. However, on that fateful day of *Shiva Assar B'Tammuz* *Moshe* arrived to witness the *Yidden* dance around the Golden Calf and in his angst, broke the *Luchos*. We unfortunately have never merited the completion of our marriage to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*.

SHIVA ASSAR B'TAMMUZ: THE BEGINNING OF A THREE WEEK YOM TOV PEAKING AT TISHA B'AV

When will we finally merit that long-awaited moment? When *Moshiach* arrives, *Shiva Assar B'Tammuz* will

become the ultimate moment where the marriage between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and His beloved children is finalized.

This "wedding" will span three weeks. There are three major *yomim tovim*: *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Succos*. Each is associated with seven days; (while *Shavuot* is shorter, its *karbanos* could be brought for seven days) which equals in total twenty-one days.

The three weeks from *Shiva Assar B'Tammuz* were intended to be a twenty-one-day *yom tov* commemorating *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Succos*. The climax was to be *Tisha B'Av*, serving as the "*Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah*" of that period. Had the *Lucho*s not been broken in the *midbar*, this three-week *yom tov* would have commenced, peaking on *Tisha B'Av*. Unfortunately, it did not happen.

Nevertheless, we must realize that some sort of hidden light is rooted within *Shiva Assar B'Tammuz* and these three weeks. The peak, the *Simchas Torah*, of *Tisha B'Av*, holds immense *kedusha*. In *gallus*, our task is to uncover this treasure.

The nations have sensed this secret. While they may not have entirely understood it, the power of impurity felt the potential of these days. It was for that reason that they attacked specifically during these three weeks, and *Tisha B'Av*. During this time, we try our best to reveal the ancient treasure and complete the marriage process which began in the *midbar*.

These are the two primary foundations to begin understanding the greatness of the current days. While we mourn because the *Beis HaMikdash* has not yet been rebuilt, we must recognize the immense opportunity these days hold to finalize our bond with the *Ribono Shel Olam*.



WALKING IN THE WAYS OF OUR TZADDIKIM

The Chazon Ish: The Key to Success

The *Chazon Ish* is revered throughout the world, renowned for authoring the profound *sefer* that bears his name - a work found in nearly every *Yiddishe* home. Many assume that his brilliance alone led to his greatness, but that was not the case.

The *Chazon Ish* once shared with Rav Vosner that he would review a single topic forty times before developing a new insight. This serves as a powerful lesson. We often mistakenly believe that our *gedolim* were simply born with

effortless intelligence, failing to appreciate the immense effort they invested. His brother-in-law, Reb Shmuel Greineman, noted that the *Chazon Ish* once spent three months studying a single *Mishnah* in *Maseches Mikvaos*. Similarly, his *talmid*, Reb Shrage Faivel Steinberg, recounted that the *Chazon Ish* spent an entire winter semester studying only the first *perek* of *Maseches Eiruv*, dedicating fourteen hours a day to his learning schedule.

True prosperity is not achieved through intellect alone. The *Chazon Ish*'s tireless dedication demonstrates that growth is possible for everyone, provided we are willing to dedicate ourselves fully. By investing consistent effort, we can, with Hashem's help, overcome challenges like speaking *lashon hara*, find deeper focus in our *tefillos*, lead more joyful lives, and truly experience *Kedushas Shabbos*. Everything depends on our willingness to invest. While we may not reach his level, we can certainly emulate his toil and diligence.



WALKING IN THE WAYS OF OUR TZADDIKIM

The Value of Shalom: Running From Machlokes

Gaon Yisroel and Posek HaDor, HaRav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, ztz"l, was known to be *mevater* on his immense greatness in Torah knowledge and *middos*, and became known as an *ish shalom*. He possessed a certain way about him that made everyone feel incredibly comfortable in his presence.

There is one particular story told by his grandson that illustrates this beautifully. Rav Shlomo Zalman was learning with his *talmidim* and *yungeleit*, with some aggressively shouting and rebuking him over a certain halachic ruling he had issued. They tried to convince him that his psak

was entirely inappropriate. Rav Shlomo Zalman simply sat there and listened to them. After they finished speaking, he politely escorted them out.

When he returned, his grandson asked him, "Wow! Where does *Zaide* find the inner strength to tolerate such public *bousha* from these people? They do not even come close to a millimeter of *Zaide's gadlus*. How could you remain so completely quiet?"

Rav Shlomo Zalman answered: "I want to tell you something. I was raised with an incredible *chinuch* to run away from

machlokes. I was raised in Yerushalayim, Shaarei Chesed to be exact. One day, everyone was overjoyed by the wonderful news. The son-in-law of the Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Aaron Cohen, was moving into our neighborhood. He was arriving from Europe. Everyone was ecstatic.

But then, something strange happened. After two months of his living there, Rabbi Cohen was suddenly nowhere to be found. Everyone grew worried. They went to his house and knocked on the door, but nobody answered. After a while, fearing the worst, they broke open the door only to find the house completely empty. Not a single thing was left behind.

They began searching everywhere and questioning locals until someone mentioned seeing him rent a carriage to travel to the city of Yaffo. They immediately sent a messenger to find out what was happening. When the messenger located him, Rabbi Cohen sent back the following message: 'Before I moved to the Holy Land, I asked my father-in-law, the Chafetz Chaim, where I should live – Yerushalayim, Tzfas or Chevron?

The holy Chafetz Chaim told me, "It does not matter where you live. But I want you to give me your hand and shake on one condition: wherever you go, if a dispute breaks out, just run away. If there is *machlokes*, you pack up and run away that very day." I gave him my hand and made that promise.

I have been here for two months. This past week in the *shul*, elections were suddenly held for the *gabbaim*, and a massive dispute broke out. This person sided with one faction, and that person sided with the other. I immediately remembered the handshake I gave the Chafetz Chaim. That is why I fled

immediately that very day with all my belongings."

Rav Shlomo Zalman turned to his grandson and said, "This is how I was raised. *Machlokes* is a consuming fire. You run away, pack your bags, and leave that very day. That is why, when those young men came here today, if I had answered them back, it would have sparked a dispute. Because I remained quiet, there was *shalom*."

This is a profound lesson for us all. We must realize that even the greatest leaders of our generation did not view *machlokes* as a minor issue. They took it with the utmost seriousness. Even though they had every right to speak up and defend themselves, they restrained themselves because they truly understood the supreme value of peace and the immense destruction that conflict causes.

May we all strengthen ourselves in this area and merit to be true seekers of *shalom*.



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