

## SERENITY AMIDST THE WAR OF LIFE

### GIFTS, PRAYER, AND WAR

In *Parshas Vayishlach*, Yaakov sends messengers to Esav to his brother as he is heading towards Seir, in the land of Edom, Esav's territory.

Rashi says that Yaakov Avinu prepared himself with three things: *doron* (gifts), *tefillah* (prayer), and *milchamah* (war). He prepared gifts for Esav in case Esav will act towards him like a brother; he prepared for war in case Esav is still vengeful against him and wants to kill him. His preparations through prayer, though, can be understood in several ways. In his prayer to be saved from Esav, he was praying that his gifts will succeed, and he was also praying that he should succeed in war against him, if there will be a war. So he was not merely *davening* that the gift will succeed or so that he will win the war.

From a deeper perspective, one really needs these three things in every task he encounters. There are

the six days of the week for work, and there is Shabbos, for rest. The weekday is a time for hard work. One who merits it can have his work hard in Torah study, and if he does not merit it, he has to work hard in making a living, during the week. In either case, the six days of the week are a time of exertion and hard work. *Shabbos Kodesh*, though, is the time to rest from the six days of the week – it is a time for *menuchah* (serenity), where there is no exertion.

In our soul as well, we have an ability of *milchamah*/war/exertion, as well as an opposite power: *menuchah*/serenity, where we abstain from work and exertion. These two abilities are parallel to the six days of the week (exertion) and Shabbos (serenity)

When Yaakov was preparing for Esav, he was preparing through gifts and war. The gifts represent *menuchah*/Shabbos, for the Gemara says that Shabbos is called a 'gift'<sup>1</sup>;

and the war represents the weekday/work/exertion; for the six days of the week are for work, exertion, "war".

In our soul as well, there is a power of "war" – exertion - and there is also a power we have of "gift": serenity. The *Mesillas Yesarim* says that all of life is a test, whether one is wealthy or poor, and there is constantly a "war" in one's life. We are constantly in a 'war' in our own lives, for we are always encountering some kind of test or difficulty.

Since we are always in some kind of difficulty in our life, it seems that life should always be about 'war'. However, there can be a deeper perspective towards life. 'War' is but one side of our life. The other side of our life which we need is *menuchah*/serenity, or the ability of "Shabbos" in our soul. Our life cannot be entirely spent in a state of 'war' – we need some serenity too, some respite from the wars we fight in our life.

### TOO MUCH "SERENITY" VS. TOO MUCH "WAR"

If we think about the situation of people today, most people do not deal with that much 'war' in their lives; it is mostly serenity which people are actively pursuing.

However, this serenity is usually not a genuine kind of serenity, because it does not come after hard work and exertion. It is not the kind of serenity that is like the 'gift' that is

called Shabbos. It is rather a kind of lethargy, a sleepiness, a laziness, which stems from the element of earth, which wants a 'serenity' in the form of laziness. So with most

1 *Shabbos 10b*

people, exertion is pushed aside for the most part, and it is mainly serenity which people want; but it is not the real serenity - it is just laziness.

Others have the opposite issue than this. They are constantly battling all kinds of [spiritual] difficulties in their life. Some people have constant fears due to their sins, which causes them to always feel like they are in a state of anxiety, but this is a low place which the soul can fall into. When the power of 'war' is used correctly, a person constantly fights his *yetzer hora* and he has exertion in Torah study, all the time. There are people who will always say something like,

"That is the advice of the *yetzer hora!*" or "This is the *yetzer hora!*" or "This is *Samael!*" and other such expressions. Life to them is one big war with the *yetzer hora*, which never stops.

It seems that this is the correct way to live. After all, the *Mesillas Yesharim* says that life is always a test. It seems that we must be always in a war. We need to be like a 'seasoned warrior', from constantly fighting our *yetzer hora*; to always push ourselves to review our Torah learning, to always fight strange thoughts that may enter our minds when we *daven*, and to always fight the *yetzer hora* and all of its many henchmen, which comes in all

kinds of forms, every day of our life.

But the truth is that our soul cannot always feel like we are in a state of war. We cannot live that way. Although all our life is a test, which means that we always have to fight and overcome, we also need some rest. We see that even when people are fighting a war, they need to take breaks, or else they will not have any strength to go on fighting. The Gemara says that a person cannot go for more than three days without sleep, and if he swears that he will not sleep for more than three days, he is punished for making a false oath.

## THE NEED FOR MENCHAH/SERENITY

A person needs *menuchah* (serenity); it is not possible to survive without serenity. This is true in the superficial sense, but in more inner and clearer terms, every person must form a space in his soul where he can find serenity, like a state of 'Shabbos' in the soul. From there a person needs to derive his vitality in life.

Shabbos is called "the source of all blessing", and it is also the time for *menuchah*. When a person has exertion in Torah, at first there is the "war of Torah" - as the Gemara says, when learning Torah with another, at first they are like enemies towards each other. But even amidst

the very "war of Torah" in one's Torah learning, there must also be *menuchah*. The Sages teach that the verse "And he saw that serenity was good" is referring to "bearing the yoke of Torah"; so *menuchah*, serenity, is not to be understood as the inevitable result from exertion, but part of how a person must live, and a way towards acquiring Torah.

There are some people who are perplexed when they hear about the need for *menuchah*. After all, we know that a person must have exertion all the time in learning Torah; he must always the fight the *yetzer hora* in the morning when it tells him to lie in bed; he

must fight the *yetzer hora* when he is *davening* and he is having disturbing thoughts, and he must fight the *yetzer hora* not to waste time from learning Torah - so when is there time for *menuchah*?! And even on Shabbos and Yom Tov, we must learn Torah, for Chazal say that "The Shabbos and the festivals was not given to the Jewish people except to learn Torah". It appears that we must always be exerting ourselves in a war against the *yetzer hora*, and that there is never a time to have *menuchah* from all of this war.

But if we have a deeper understanding of life, war with

other forces is the only from the point in our soul that feels opposition, but there is a deeper point in the soul which is above

opposition, and that deeper point is where *menuchah* comes from. In other words, all fights and wars exist on the outer layer of our soul.

But in the inner layer of the soul, we have a deeper place in ourselves, where there is only harmony there, and no possibility of opposition.

## THE POINTS OF FREE WILL (WAR), BELOW FREE WILL (SERENITY) AND ABOVE FREE WILL

In clearer terms, Rav Dessler explains that there are three points in our soul, regarding our *bechirah* (free will): there is a point of free will, a point below free will, and a point above free will.

The point “below” free will is the area in which one does not face a battle with the *yetzer hora* in, and these are areas where one can naturally avoid the temptations to sin. The “point of free will”, above that, represents the areas in which we face a battle with the *yetzer hora* in; we are engaged in an equal struggle between good and evil when it comes to these areas, and we have the free will in these areas to choose correctly [which we

are rewarded for, if we overcome the struggle]. Above that point is the point “above” free will, which are the areas in we have almost no possibility to overcome the *yetzer hora*. That area usually does not include any of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah, which are clearly obligatory to us; rather, it usually concerns what kinds of levels we can or cannot reach in our *Avodas Hashem* at this point.

One who lives all the time in his “point of free will” will always be in a ‘war’. His entire life will be a war; he always lives within the perspective of the “six days of the week” – work, exertion, war. He will live only in the outer layer of

the soul, where there is a battle between the *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hora*, (which each exist in the two different sides of the heart); that means he will always be fighting between his *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hora*, with no place for respite.

But when a person has inner understanding about life, he knows that the point “below free will” is a major area that one needs to use to aid him in his *avodah*. The proper way to go about life is to sometimes be at the point of free will (fighting the *yetzer hora*), and sometimes to be “below” it - where he is naturally connected to good, to holiness, to Hashem and to His Torah.

## THE BALANCE BETWEEN EXERTION (ASPIRATIONS) AND SERENITY (ACCOMPLISHMENTS)

One needs to constantly be progressing back and forth between these two areas of his soul, trying to acquire more holiness (the point of his free will), and the point below free will, which are the areas that he has already acquired; that is the area that he can get *menuchah* from at times. This is also the depth of the concept of being “*someiach b'chelko*” (happy with one’s lot).

When one is not clear about this

perspective, he is not clear what he has already acquired and what he is working hard to acquire, and he is not clear of which points are beyond his current level which he cannot reach at this point.

When one lives with a clearer perspective towards life, he knows which levels are above his level, which areas are within his *bechirah*, and which areas he has already acquired and which are the areas

that he doesn’t have to work hard in right now. Sometimes he merits to have perfected those areas due to a previous lifetime, or he was born already perfected in that area. Either way, these are areas which a person doesn’t have to work hard for this point - and he can derive his *menuchah* from these areas.

One needs to move back and forth between the point of free will (war) and the point below

free will (*menuchah*). One needs to try exerting himself in the areas which he is trying to acquire, but he also needs to keep returning to *menuchah*, by finding serenity in his previous accomplishments and in

the areas which he knows he doesn't have to work hard in. There should be a constant shifting between *bechirah*/war/bearing the yoke of Torah, with *menuchah*/serenity.

Life should be a constant war with the *yetzer hora*, but that is only one side the coin. At the same time, a person needs a point where he derives *menuchah* from; where he can be "*someiach b'chelko*" in.

## CONNECTING TO SHLEIMUS (PERFECTION) AMIDST IMPERFECTION

In different terms, if a person is only at his "point of free will" all the time (not that this is actually possible - only in his fantasies is it possible), all of his life will be a constant war, with no peace. But if a person can also access his point "below" free will, he is in a place of *shalom* (peace). The *avodah* of a person is always to place in himself where there is *shalom* (peace) and *shleimus* (perfect), in spite of all that is currently lacking and imperfect right now.

This sounds like a contradiction. How can a person be in a place of *shleimus*, when *shleimus* comes only at the very end of our *avodah*, as the *Mesillas Yeshtarim* says? The answer is, of course, that only individuals of the generation have reached *shleimus*; but one can delight in the areas of *shleimus*, relatively

speaking, in the levels that he has already reached. That his own level of *shleimus* right now - and that is his *shleimus* right now. This is where a person can be "*someiach b'chelko*" in and find *menuchah* in; this is where one can find *shalom* (peace) in himself, amidst all of the wars and struggles of his life.

This picture of life, in which one is clear of what he has already reached, as well as what he still needs to reach and he needs to wage war in - this is the picture towards life that one needs to be clear about. When one is clear about this perspective and he knows that there are times in which we must battle evil as well as times in which we must draw forth serenity - this is the sensible way to approach life, and it enables one to have the proper balance, to move back and forth between 'war' and

peace, to move between aspirations and feeling inner content, to move between exertion and serenity.

Most people who feel content in their accomplishments, though, have not arrived there from actually feeling serene in their accomplishments, but because they prefer to be sleeplike and lethargic, rather than push themselves further. It is not because they have reached "*someiach b'chelko*", and it does not come from being connected to the power of *shalom* (inner 'peace') *shleimus* (self-perfection) or *menuchah* (serenity). When one has the correct outlook, he knows that on one hand, there must always be war, exertion, and aspirations in his life - and at the same time, there also needs to be serenity.

## HOW MUCH SERENITY, AND HOW MUCH EXERTION?

How much serenity does one need, and how much exertion does one need? How much should a person feel fine with his accomplishments, and how much should he push himself further? This

needs to be thought about carefully, because if a person becomes too content, he will not work as hard and his aspirations will decrease.

But if a person goes in the other extreme and he tries too hard, he

is always trying to go above the point of his free will, so he will get all of his vitality from 'war' alone, which is not the deepest and holiest resource available. Even more so, when one feels like he is struggling

all the time, the soul cannot be calm, because the inner world of a person requires *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity of the soul). In Kelm, and in other places, they stressed the importance of *menuchas hanefesh* as one of the fundamental keys to one's inner, spiritual world.

How indeed can a person reach *menuchas hanefesh*?

For one, if a person is the type

who has a strong intellect that is very in control of his emotions, he is a person whose “mind controls the heart”, and he will have a much easier time getting *menuchas hanefesh*. This is certainly true, but there is a more fundamental approach of how one can acquire *menuchas hanefesh* [as follows].

When one is only within his “point of free will” – meaning that

he is always in a state of fighting his *yetzer hora* - it will be very hard for him to have *menuchas hanefesh*; but when a person moves back and forth between his challenges and his serenity in his current attainments, his attainments will become a basis of *menuchas hanefesh* to him. This will also enable him to fight his ‘wars’ better, because he will have gained more *yishuv hadaas* (settled mind).

## FINDING SERENITY AMIDST EXERTION

If a person finds himself in a situation where he is mainly trying to overcome struggles and he is exerting himself, and he feels like he

has nowhere to get serenity from at the moment, he should ‘return’ to his current level – the point ‘below’ his free will; to revel in the bliss of

his previous accomplishments - and he can feel serene there.

## EXAMPLE 1 – FINDING SERENITY WHEN LEARNING TORAH

To give an example of this, if a person is learning in *yeshiva* and he's poring over a *sugya* of the Gemara and trying to understand what he is learning, as he delves into it in-depth - on one hand, he needs to exert his mind as he learns the *sugya*, trying to figure out the basic understanding of it (the *pshat*), as well as exertion in the areas of *cheshbon*, *diyuk* and *sevara*.<sup>2</sup> But can he really exert all of his mental energy every moment as he's learning? Only a few rare individuals can do that. A person can work hard trying to understand a *sugya*, as much as he can

understand, and at a certain point, after he feels like he can't exert his mind anymore, he should return to a simpler kind of thinking, and let the mind revel in whatever he has understood thus far. The soul will be calmed from this. Then he should return to exerting his mind in the *sugya*, and repeat the cycle.

Of course, if one is in the beginning stage of learning and he tries to think about all of the above as he is learning, he will not succeed. We must always begin working with a small point, and slowly it can become a way to live life.

Some people, when they learn, don't exert their minds that much to begin with. They are fine with a small level of understanding, a little bit of listening to what another has to say about the Gemara, and a little bit of talking about the Gemara with others, and it doesn't bother them that much if they aren't exerting their minds trying to understand it well. This is not *menuchah* (serenity), but a complacent kind of sleepiness, which doesn't amount to anything.

Others, though, have the opposite problem – they exert their minds too much as they

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the Rav's derashah of Tefillah 0167 Torah of Life

learn the Gemara, and they never allow their minds to become calm and enjoy anything that they've learned and understood so far. This often happens with teenagers and adolescents, who tend to aim very high in their aspirations, so they exert their minds greatly when learning, and then they become mentally exhausted afterwards. It is impossible for a person to stay that long in a state of exertion.

But when a person has the inner perspective that we described, he makes sure to exert his mind as he should, trying as much as possible to understand what he's learning; but at a certain point, he makes sure to return to *menuchah*/serenity, by allowing himself to revel in the joy of what he has already understood so far. He thinks: "What didn't I understand before, and what do I understand now? What wasn't as clear to me beforehand, and what has become clearer?" He develops a space in his soul where there are no oppositions, where the points that hadn't been clear before are now clearer to him. This is a place of *menuchah* in one's soul.

Part of a person's *avodah* is to keep returning to this place of *menuchah*, to feel serenity in the areas that he has already reached, understood, and accomplished. This serenity is not reached through exerting the mind to get there, by reviewing and clarifying what one has already learned; rather, it is about simply enjoying and reveling in whatever you have understood so far in your Torah learning, so that it becomes absorbed in your innards, where it becomes sweet and pleasant to you, where there is only 'peace' there and no possibility for 'war'/opposition/exertion.

If a person only has exertion in Torah, if he can only argue about it with another and he isn't finding any serenity amidst his exertion in his Torah learning, he will never find the words of Torah sweet to him. Although there is always a certain sense of sweetness as one exerts himself in his learning, the true sweetness and pleasure of Torah learning is only felt when one can feel serenity after he has exerted his mind; when he revels in the pleasure of the words of Torah that

he has merited to comprehend so far. He should review those words of Torah, verbally and mentally, and he should realize that what hadn't been clear to him beforehand has now become clearer to him; it has become more absorbed in him. Then he can truly find pleasure in Torah learning and he connects himself to it.

When the soul of a person has absorbed this kind of pleasure from Torah learning, it becomes satisfied, and after feeling that serenity, one should then return to exerting himself in his Torah learning. When a person keeps to this formula, he is constantly "advancing and retreating", back and forth, between two places in the soul that are necessary to traverse: from exertion to serenity/pleasure/comprehension, and from serenity back to exertion, repeating the cycle. One who does this will become a true *ish menuchah* (man of serenity), who has *yishuv hadaas* (a settled mind) and *menuchas hanefesh*.

## EXAMPLE 2 – FINDING SERENITY WHEN DAVENING

This is not only a concept that applies to learning Torah, which was a fundamental example. It is also true when it comes to *tefillah* (prayer). When a person is *davening*, he has to 'wage war' against various bothersome thoughts that enter his

mind while *davening*. These strange thoughts can be stemming from his actions, thoughts or words which weren't pure, which come to haunt him as he is *davening* and don't let him concentrate. However, one cannot approach *davening* as if it

is entirely a 'war' with bothersome thoughts. If he has this approach, he will surely find it too difficult to be in a 'war' with his thoughts for all 19 blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

On one hand, a person must

certainly fight the unwanted thoughts that enter his mind during *davening*, as much as he can. But at the same time, a person must be able to return to calmness, by speaking simply to Hashem, and to enjoy the very act of talking to Hashem, while *davening*. After a person feels an enjoyment in simply talking to Hashem, he should then return to concentrating his mind on the words and fighting the unwanted thoughts, so that his *davening* will flow from the depths of his heart, with true yearnings. But this is only one part of the *davening*, and it should not be the entire attitude towards *davening*.

This is surely the case with the three times of the day when we *daven*, but it is even more applicable to the longer *tefillos* we *daven*, such as the *tefillos* of *Yomim Noraim*. Sometimes we can see people during *Yomim Noraim* who are trying very hard to concentrate on their *davening*, greatly straining their minds in order to concentrate fully on the words. They mean well, but this is not the truthful way to *daven*. When we *daven*, we certainly need to exert our minds in order to concentrate, but there must also be a yearning from our heart as we *daven*, a yearning for more connection with Hashem, which can

only come from a serene and pleasant place in our soul.

It is very possible that in the beginning of one's way, he will not find that much pleasure or serenity when *davening*, because it feels far from him. At that point, one has to pause every here and there in his *davening*, in order to experience the pleasure. But after a person has merited finding an enjoyable taste in his *davening*, his *davening* changes entirely.

## CYCLING BETWEEN SERENITY AND EXERTION

We have spoken here about finding serenity in the areas of Torah learning and *tefillah*, but it applies to all other areas of *Avodas Hashem* as well. The inner, truthful way that life is supposed to look like is to find serenity amidst exertion.

Sometimes we can see certain great leaders and Torah scholars who have reached a very deep *menuchah*, and we have a hard time understanding how

they can be so serene, when it should seem the opposite. Shouldn't their fiery Torah learning and unceasing exertion in Torah cause them to be restless, in their constant pursuit of more and more comprehension of the Torah and to keep growing spiritually? How does this allow them to find any serenity?

But the answer to this is because as we explained earlier, *menuchah*

does not come from sleepiness or lack of aspirations. It comes from a place in the soul that wants to move ahead with precision; from a place of yearning that leads to serenity; from a place of aspiration that leads to inner contentment; from a place of serenity that leads to exertion – and to repeat the cycle.

## IN CONCLUSION

The words here are subtle, perhaps very subtle. If the words here are not absorbed correctly, it might cause a person to weaken his aspirations, and to have less exertion in his Torah learning. But if the perspective described here has been absorbed

correctly, a person on one hand will merit to recognize the constant "war" that we have which surrounds us on all sides, but at the same time, a person will also have a source of *menuchah*/serenity and a pleasurable source of connection in his life; as it

said is in the verse, 'אז תתענג על ה' "Then, you will rejoice upon Hashem."

שיחת השבוע 012 וישלח כח  
מלחמה שבנפש תשע"ז

## QUESTIONS ASKED RECENTLY BY WOMEN IN JERUSALEM- THIS RESPONSE IS SPECIFICALLY FOR WOMEN.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Should we be affected by the most recent tragic events of the war?
2. What should we strengthen after a year of continuous war?
3. How should we prepare ourselves for redemption?
4. How can each one connect to the Jewish point in her?

### ANSWER:

1. *[Regarding the six hostages who were killed by terrorists recently].* Certainly such a major tragic event like this must have an affect *[and be taken to heart]* by every single person.

2. We see that Hashem has arranged events in a way that we *[in Eretz Yisrael]* are found in a war from all sides. This is a message that we are in a war, both externally and internally, from all sides. The physical war taking place teaches us about the internal war we are really in. Just as the physical war is now surrounding us from all sides, so each of us have an internal war that's coming from all sides.

As the Mesilas Yesharim taught: "The war *[with the evil inclination]* is from in front and from behind." The evil in our world, and in this generation especially, surrounds a person from all sides.

In our times, the evil that's hidden in every single thing is revealing itself both in the

mundane and in what's holy.

Therefore, we need to understand the concept of the internal war that's surrounding us. We need to connect ourselves to the good of Hashem's hidden Light that fills all of Creation. We also need to run away from all the evil that's found in our surroundings whether that evil is in mundane matters or whether it's evil that's disguised as something holy. In every single thing, we must search for what's pure and clean from evil. That is the way of the Torah. "This is the way, go in it!"

3. Our Sages (*Megillah 17b*) taught us that "Wars are the beginning of Redemption". A war is sent to us by Hashem so that we will become clearer about our emunah) – to clarify in whom we really believe in, and on who or what we are really relying on.

We saw clearly that the strength of the Israeli army failed terribly to protect those living here in Eretz Yisrael, on the day of Simchas Torah this past year. We saw that the army does not have the power to fight with all our enemies surrounding us. That is why this war is dragging on for a year already. *[Unfortunately, it seems that]* by the natural way the army functions, this war can drag on for at least several more years – Hashem Yirachem.

On the one hand, this makes us afraid for the future. It is making us feel insecure both emotionally and financially, and it is making us feel insecure about our physical safety, in addition to other fears and concerns.

But on the other hand, this is the time to clarify our level of emunah. We must wonder: In whom do we truly place our trust? We must clarify what level our heart is on: to internalize our emunah in Hashem to the point that we don't just 'know' about it, but that our emunah in Hashem really makes our heart feel serene and calm from our reliance on Him. This is a very internal and truthful clarification to be made!

In order to do this, all those living in Eretz Yisrael have to set aside regular time every day to learn about emunah and how to internalize it practically! This is the duty we have in these times! When everything has become so unstable, Hashem is asking of us to draw forth a higher kind of stability than the stability we know of from the world. This is by having pure emunah (belief/reliance) only in Him. This is the bliss of a Jew's soul – to have pure emunah in Hashem, and this is what our G-dly soul takes pleasure in as it is written: "Then you will bliss upon Hashem."

4. In order for every person to



connect deeply to the strongest point of the “Jewishness” within them, every person has to learn about their personal soul, and to try to see which part of their Jewishness is clearly and recognizably their personal strongest “Jewish” area from all of the other “Jewish” parts within them. Every person has a different strong “Jewish” point within them. By some, their strongest Jewish point is having emunah in Hashem. By others, their strongest Jewish point is their love for Hashem. In others, their strongest Jewish point is their fear of Hashem. Others have a strong Jewish point of talking to Hashem. There are also many other possible strong points.

But the common denominator between all of us is that all of us have a strong point in our Jewishness that's stronger than all the other points within us, and in that point we can feel more our relationship with Hashem each person on their own level. After one becomes clear about their personal strong Jewish point, one should set aside time every day, according to their ability, to further develop this point. It is upon this point that one should build their relationship with Hashem, during this time. And from there, one can discover other additional areas in her relationship with Hashem. But the first thing for each person to do is to strengthen her strongest Jewish

point. That personal point in oneself is the root of one's personal relationship that she has, with Hashem. One needs to treasure it more than anything else to be found in the world. It is upon each person, to strengthen her strongest Jewish point, which is the root of her active and emotional bond to Hashem.

With Hashem's help, all those who merit this will merit both a life of happiness on This World, and an eternal life of bliss in Hashem and in His Splendor.

“**And** as for me, closeness to Hashem is good.” (*Tehillim 73: 28*)

## NEW PERSPECTIVE

### QUESTION:

What did the Rav mean in a recent response that we need to gain a new perspective on what the “main war” is now which we need to be fighting?

### ANSWER:

In the past, we were mainly fighting outside influences that were coming into the Jewish people, which were either being forced on us, such as various laws of the government that were decrees against religious Jewry, and the issue of the “Erev Rav” (*the Israeli government*) mixing themselves in to the world of religious Jewry,

who were trying to convince the religious world into certain things for their own self-gain, so that they [*the government*] would gain more money, prestige, and power – all as a means of influencing their views and lifestyle into the religious Torah world. The leaders of our generation have been fighting these influences for several decades already. But from about the year 5760 (*2000*) and onward, and especially in the last decade, basically all of the tumah (*the terrible culture of our world today*) has entered from the outside into our own inner circles. (*This is a resemblance*

*of how before the sin of Adam, evil only existed outside of man, and after the sin, the evil entered within man, as the Nefesh HaChaim explains*). The tumah that entered the Torah world today is mainly through the media in all of its many different forms. And now, the evil of the 50th level within the 50th level of tumah has, Rachmana Litzlan, entered within our own inner circles, into the world of Torah observant Jewry, and even worse, it has entered into the Torah world itself [*the bnei Torah and the most religious*]. And from this point onward, the war that we face with those who throw away the Torah

is no longer our main war that we need to fight today – though it certainly is raging strongly. And our main problems today are not with neighbors or friends who aren't being so stringent on keeping every last minute detail of halachah who may be a harmful influence on our children, and the like. Rather, the large part of the war we need to be fighting today is within our own homes. Couples are split between their values: One

of the spouses is connected with media/internet or at least wants to be connected to it, or parents want media/internet in their lives and their children don't want it, and vice versa. Or, some of the children want to be connected with media/internet while the other siblings are holding strong not to. This is the realization of the verse, "The enemies of a man are those in his household".

In many cases, each person as

an individual needs to develop his or her own inner world to live in, within his or her very own house, so as not to be influenced by the rest of the household. This is the secret of the "Yechidah" level of the soul, for the Yechidah level of the soul is found in one's house. And therefore, today the main war we are fighting today is found in our own homes.

## INNER WAR OF GOG & MAGOG

**QUESTION:**

What is the "internal war of Gog and Magog" which "confuses everything" today? What did the Rav mean by this?

**ANSWER:**

Everything contains good and evil within it, which are mixed together. A clear example of this is the device (*kli*) which houses media/internet, which contains good and evil mixed together in it in a very disturbing manner. It is through it

[*internet devices*] that the entire world is being fought against – it fights against each person with his various issues and wishes. And there is also a revealed reality that we can see clearly like the light (*ohr*), in which there are wars, physical suffering and emotional suffering, troubles from every direction.

Corresponding to that [*to the evil kli and ohr which is the revelation of the war of Gog and Magog*] is the ohr, the revelation, of love – an internal

and deep connection of the soul, the opening of the hearts, to become united together. There is also a revelation of simplicity in contrast to complexity. There is also a revelation of simple emunah in contrast to all of the complex chochmah. And, in this generation, it is easier for a person to grasp the oneness of his soul, because of the above reasons.

## ONGOING WAR OF GOG & MAGOG

**QUESTION:**

According to the words of the Rav that we are currently in the midst of the war of Gog and Magog, is

this only in Eretz Yisrael, or is it referring to a spiritual war that is taking place inside us now?

**ANSWER:**

It doesn't necessarily have to be [*either one*]. Either is a possibility.

## BITACHON IN SPITE OF THE RAV'S WARNING

**QUESTION:**

The Rav said that if the

generation doesn't change, either it will have to end with the coming

of Mashiach, or the generation will meet the same end as the

Holocaust, chas v'shalom. Recently the Rav said that there is still a lot of room to suspect that it's able to happen, chas v'shalom. In my humble opinion, this is the most frightening thing the Rav has ever said. With such a possibility, how am I supposed to have emunah and bitachon in Hashem and serve Hashem b'simchah (*with joy*) and have a settled mind when I learn?

I am in a daze from these words because I feel the terror whenever I think about these words and I am unable to concentrate on anything whenever I'm thinking of it, and I think about it often. And it seems the generation is heading more and more towards this possibility of actual destruction, chas v'shalom, due to the generally abysmal state of our ruchniyus today. So am I

asking a simple question: How is it possible for a person not to go crazy from thinking of such a possibility?? How can I not fall into despair over everything from this??

**ANSWER:**

**Feel** Hashem's love for you, and trust in Him that everything He does is good.

## BIRTH CONTRACTIONS PRECEDING THE GEULAH

### QUESTION

It has been told to me in the name of the Rav shlit"א that until now we have been experiencing the birth contractions of the birth pains (*chevlei Mashiach*) preceding Mashiach's arrival and now "the head of the baby is in middle of coming out." Can the Rav elaborate on this? Does this mean that the Geulah has actually started and that there can't be a "stillborn" now that the birth of Mashiach has started? Does the Rav mean that the Geulah is imminent and not in a long time from now, now that the birth has started? The Rav wrote a few weeks ago that the war can drag on for a few more decades chas v'shalom if we are not zocheh now to the Geulah – is the Rav now saying that the Geulah is definitely imminent?

**Also**, can the Rav please explain the role of "Mashiach ben Don"?

### ANSWER

#### PART 1 – THE BIRTH OF MASHIACH'S ARRIVAL

A human pregnancy lasts 9 months which climaxes in birth contractions that can take a few hours or a few days. The pregnancy of the Divine clock of the 6000 year era we are in climaxes in a birth that is able to last several years – but the birth has begun!

**The** time of birth is a time of danger which can either usher in another life, or it can bring about a death, chas v'shalom. The wars taking place now as well are a time of danger, and it can either usher in more life, or it can bring death, chas v'shalom.

#### PART 2 – MASHIACH BEN DON

**The** beginning of the war is waged through Mashiach ben Don, and this is the depth of the words of Chazal that "In the seventh (*Shemittah*) year there are wars" – it is a Redemption brought

about through Mashiach ben Don. This began with Chushim the son of Don who killed Esav, and it continued with Shimshon who came from the tribe of Don, and it will be completed by Sherayah (*from the tribe of Don*), as stated in the Zohar (*Balak 194b*). Refer also to the words of the Ramchal in Otzros Ramchal (*Yeshayah 9, 5*) and Kinas Hashem Tzevaos (*98a*). See also Beraishis Rabbah 91:10 where Chazal said that Yaakov thought that Shimshon (*who comes from Don*) will be the Mashiach.

**In** Yaakov's blessing to Don, Don is compared to a lion. Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni Beraishis 49, 160*) said that this refers to Mashiach ben Dovid, who will come from two different tribes – the father of Mashiach comes from Yehudah, and the mother of Mashiach comes from Don. Both Don and Yehudah are compared to a lion in Yaakov's blessing.

**The** root of Mashiach's maternal

roots in Don is Chushim the son of Don. The word Chushim, without the letter Vov, is the same letters as the word Mashiach. (See the commentary of Ben Yehoyada to Talmud Bavli Sotah 13a, sefer Koheles Yaakov on Mashiach, cited in Yalkut Reuveini parshas Mikeitz, and see Pardes Yosef on Beraishis 46:23. Rav Yehudah HaChassid says that the verse “Dan is a serpent lying on the road” is equal in gematria to the word Mashiach.

**The** mission of Mashiach ben Don is described in the Zohar (194b) [following is a summary of the Zohar not a translation]: Mashiach ben Don has the role to assist Mashiach ben Yosef in the final war. Don is compared to a serpent which bites the horse at the heel and causes the horse and its rider to fall backwards. This is what Mashiach ben Don will do in order to aid Mashiach ben Yosef in the war. His name is Sherayah, and he comes from the tribe of Don, and he will come together with Mashiach ben Yosef, and he will take revenge on the nations of the world.

**He** is compared to a snake because he is a spark of the soul of the Mashiach that was concealed within the Serpent. The word “Nachash” (Serpent) equals

“Mashiach”. He is the Serpent on the side of holiness to counter the Serpent on the side of evil. See Heichal Beracha (*Kamarna*) to parshas Vayigash.

**The** Arizal (*Sefer Likutim, Vayakhel 35*) says that Mashiach will come from the tribe of Yehudah, and Sherayah will come from Don. Sherayah will have a special connection to Mashiach ben Dovid who comes from Yehudah, since both Don and Yehudah are compared to a serpent. There is also a special connection that Mashiach ben Don will have with Mashiach ben Yosef. Moshe Rabbeinu said “And this song will answer me forever”, and this is the power of Don who gathers together all the camps. Mosheh is the unification of the two redeemers – he is the middle line between them. Don (*Sherayah who comes from Don*) is also a unifying point between the two redeemers by being a vessel, or the Malchus, through his role of gathering together all the camps. Malchus is connected both with Hod and Netzach, and the Malchus within Hod is where Mashiach ben Yosef is found, and that is also where Sherayah, the Mashiach ben Don, is found. See Pri Tzaddik (*Chanukah 25*) and sefer Koheles Yaakov (on the topic of Mashiach ben Dovid and the topic

*Zaisim*).

**Sherayah**, the Mashiach who comes from Don, is equal in gematria to 515. This is the amount of tefillos which Moshe davened in order to enter Eretz Yisrael. On a deeper level, he was really davening to become connected with Sherayah, the Mashiach ben Don. This is because Moshe is the secret of the upper Daas on the masculine side, while Mashiach Ben Don is the secret of the lower Daas on the feminine side. Thus, Mashiach ben Don is connected to Yehudah, Yosef, and Moshe.

**It** is through Mashiach ben Don that the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt. Mashiach Don is equal in gematria to Bayis, “home” (*referring to the Beis HaMikdash*). Now that we are found in a degree of a war that is the beginning of the Geulah, this is all through the power of Mashiach ben Don, and the beginning of the war is started through him, as Rav Tzadok HaKohen teaches.

**We** should become connected to the concept of Sherayah in our avodas Hashem by way of accessing the power of Sherarah [*princely status of being the chosen people of G-d*] and Shirah [*song – singing to Hashem as a strong expression of emunah*].



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