



THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

THE TERUMOS ARE FOR HASHEM; YESURIM ARE FOR OURSELVES

In this week's *parshah*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu begins by talking to Moshe Rabbeinu and telling him "you shall command the Bnei Yisrael, "and they should take for you," "pure olive oil," "crushed," "for the lighting," "for the lighting," (Shemos 27:20).

The author of the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, Rav Shlomo Gantzfried (1804-1886), poses an interesting question, in his sefer on Chumash.¹ He points out that in *Parshas Terumah*, Hashem says to Moshe to tell the Bnei Yisrael they should, 'take for Me' the *terumah*, and in this week's *parshah* Hashem says to Moshe, they should take 'for you Moshe,' *terumah*. So, the question is why in *Parshas Terumah*, which talks about the donations, it says they should take 'for Me' the *terumah*, whereas in *parshas Tetzaveh*, when it's talking about the olive oil for the *menorah*, it says they should take 'for you' olive oil?²

He brings the *medrash* (Shemos Rabbah 36:1) in this week's *parshah* which says: "and you should command the Bnei Yisrael," "they should take for you pure olive oil." The *medrash* says in one place (in *Yirmiyah*), it says: "Yirmiyahu Hanavi tells us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu called Klal Yisrael by the name of a *zayis*. Hashem called Klal Yisrael olives, "beautiful olives." What's the *psht*? The *medrash* asks is Klal Yisrael compared only to olives? We find in *pesukim* that Klal Yisrael is compared to all types of trees and fruits. They're compared to vines. They're compared to figs. They're compared to dates. They're compared to cedars, different kinds of nuts, pomegranates and more. So what was the message of Yirmiyahu when he told Klal Yisrael that Hashem considers your name to be a *zayis*?"

So the *medrash* says Yirmiyahu was telling Klal Yisrael that there is something unique about the *zayis*, over all other trees. The *zayis* produces oil, and that's the main purpose of the *zayis*. Yet in spite of the fact that that's the main purpose of the olive, in order to get the oil out of the olive, it has to go through a very extensive, difficult and tiring process. The *medrash* goes into the details of every step, how you first have to shake the tree to get it to fall down. Then you've got to beat it, and after you beat it, you've got to put it in a press. Then it's a whole job to press it.

I remember the first time I saw olives growing. I saw an old Arab couple with this big tarp spread out under an olive tree. I wasn't even sure what it was that was growing on the tree until it was pointed out to me because I always thought that olives came with those little red things in it, pimentos, and with holes, and when I took one in my hand it was a solid rock! It looked almost blackish. This couple was using these long sticks and banging the tree and then they were shaking it. They were having it all fall on the tarpaulin sheet. I remember picking one up. I remember putting my teeth into it. I remember it was like a rock. There was no juice in it. I always pictured an olive producing oil, so it would be at least like an orange. Okay, maybe not like an orange. Like a grape. But this was like a rock! And the process to produce oil? Finally, I met a guy over there who spoke Hebrew, and he was able to explain to me the extensive process required to produce oil, wonderful oil. Yirmiyahu Hanavi says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu called your name *zayis*, and that's the name of Klal Yisrael.

KLAL YISRAEL ARE HASHEM'S PRECIOUS OLIVE

The *medrash* (ibid.) explains that *goyim* come, nations of the world come, and they throw the Jewish nation around from place to place. They put them first in ghettos, and then they beat them with sticks and straps and they surround them, besiege them with armies. And then, finally, Klal Yisrael does *teshuvah*, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Ah! Now I'm going to answer you." *Chazal* ask how do you know this? The answer is in the *passuk*. When Klal Yisrael cried out from the difficult oppression, ah! Hashem heard them. When it says in the *passuk* "turn to Me," when you're in a tremendous oppressive state and you find these *tzaros* befall you, turn to Me, 'I will answer you.' That's why Hashem said to Klal Yisrael, "You're a *zayis*." The term *zayis* in Klal Yisrael refers to the ability to produce oil after

¹ ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך כתיב למאור וגו'. במדרש [רבה ל"א א'] ואתה תצוה, הדא הוא דכתיב [רמיה "א ט"]. זית רענן יפה פרי תואר קרא ה' שמך וכו', מה הזית הזה עד שהוא באילנות נחבט, ומשחובטין אותו מעליו אותו לגת, ומגרגרין אותו, ואח"כ מורדין אותו ונותנים אותו במטחן, ואח"כ טוחנין אותו ואח"כ מקיפין אותו בחבלים, ומביאים אבנים ואח"כ נותנים את שומן, כך ישראל באין עכו"ם וחובטין אותו וכו' ואח"כ עושין תשובה והקב"ה עונה להם, מנין שנאמר ויאנחו בני ישראל וגו' הוי זית רענן יפה פרי תואר וכו' ע"כ. נ"ל דלכאורה קשה לשון הקרא ואתה תצוה מהו ואת"ה. ויקחו אליך, מהו אליך. ובפ' תרומה כתיב ויקחו לי תרומה, ולמה נאמר כאן אליך. ונ"ל דהא בסוף פ' שמות אמר משה, למה הרעותה לעם הזה למה זה שלחתני, ומאז באתי אל פרעה וגו' הרע לעם הזה וגו', ויאמר ה' אל משה עתה תראה אשר אעשה וגו'. וי"ל עפ"י מ"ש הטעם לשיעבוד מצרים כדי שידכר החומר ויהיו ראויים לקבלת התורה, ובולתי זה לא היו ראויים. וממילא כל שנתקשה השיעבוד מקורב הזיכור לקבלת התורה, ומשה רבנו ע"ה לא הבין את זאת ולכן התרעם למה הרעותה וגו', אבל באמת היתה זאת לטובתם כדי שיתקרב הזיכור. ועל זה השיב לו הקב"ה עתה תראה וגו' אתה מתרעם על קישוי השיעבוד, הנה זהו לטובתם כי רק עתה לאחרי שנתקשה השיעבוד תראה אשר אעשה לפרעה. וי"ל שז"ש כאן ואת"ה כלומר אתה שלא הבנת כי קישוי השיעבוד הוא טובה ליהודים, תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך, כלומר בשבילך יקחו שמן זית זך כתיב למאור, ללמוד מן הזית כי רק לאחר שהוא כתיב אז הוא מוכשר למאור, כן המה ישראל, וז"ש המדרש שהוקשה לו תיבת ואתה, ותיבת אליך, ומתוך הדא הוא דכתיב וכו'. (אפריון פ' תרומה)

² ואתה תצוה, הדא הוא דכתיב [רמיה י"א, טז]: זית רענן יפה פרי תאר קרא ה' שמך, וכו' לא נקראו ישראל אלא כזית הזה בלבד, והלאו בכל מיני אילנות נאים ומשבחים נקראו ישראל, בגפן ותאנה, שנאמר (תהלים פ, ט): גפן ממקרים תסיע, תאנה, שנאמר (הושע ט'): כבכורה בתאנה בראשיתה, פתמר, שנאמר (שיר השירים ז, ח): זאת קומתך דמתה לתמר. קארו, שנאמר (תהלים צב, א): כארו בלבבון ישגה. קאגוז, שנאמר (שיר השירים ו, י): אל גנת אגוז ירדתי, וקראו בכל מיני שלחים, שנאמר (שיר השירים ד, ג): שלחך פרדס רמונים, ובא ירמיה לומר: זית רענן יפה פרי תאר, אלא מה הזית הזה, עד שהוא באילנות ומגרגרין אותו ואחר כך מורדין אותו מן הזית ונחבט, ומשחובטין אותו מעליו אותו לגת ונותנין אותו במטחן, ואחר כך טוחנין אותו, ואחר כך מקיפין אותו בחבלים, ומביאין אבנים ואחר כך נותנין את שמנו. כך ישראל, באין עובדי כוכבים וחובטין אותם ממקום למקום וחובשים אותן וקופטין אותם בקולרין ומקיפין אותם טרטיטיון, ואחר כך עושין תשובה והקדוש ברוך הוא עונה להם, מנין, שנאמר (שמות ב, כג): ויאנחו בני ישראל, וכן (דברים ד, ל): בצר לך ומצאוך (דברים י, לא): כי אל רחום ה' אלהיך, הוי: [זית רענן יפה פרי תאר. דבר אחר, מה ראה ירמיה למשל אבותינו כזית, אלא כל המשקין מתערבים זה בזה, והשמן אינו מתערב אלא עומד, כך ישראל אינם מתערבים עם העובדי כוכבים, שנאמר (דברים ז, ג): ולא תתחתן בהם. דבר אחר, כל המשקים אדם מערב בהם ואינו יודע איזה תחתון ואיזה עליון, אבל השמן אפילו אתה מערב בכל המשקין שבעולם הוא נתון למעלה מהן. כך אבותינו, בשעה שבהם עושים רצונו של מקום נכבים למעלה מן העובדי כוכבים, שנאמר (דברים כח, א): ונתתך ה' אלהיך עליון, הוי: זית רענן יפה פרי תאר. דבר אחר, זית רענן, הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים מח, א): יפה נוף משוש כל הארץ, מהו יפה נוף, לשון ויני קורין לילה נפמי, משוש כל הארץ, שלא היה אחד מישראל מצר לפניה בית המקדש קום, למה, שהיה אדם נכנס לשם מלא עונות, והיה מקריב קרבן ומתכפר לו, אין שמחה גדולה מזה שהיה יוצא צדיק, הוי: יפה נוף משוש כל הארץ. כתיב בצור (יחזקאל כז, ג): צור את אמרת אני קלילתי יפי, את אמרת אבל אחרים אינם אומרים, אבל ירושלים הפל אומרים שבחה, שנאמר (איכה ב, טו): הזאת העיר שאימרו קלילתי יפי, וכתוב (תהלים מח, א): הרי ציון ירפתי צפון קרית מלך רב, מקום שנקראו בני קרבנות, שנאמר (ויקרא א, יא): שחט אתו על ירך המזבח צנה, לכך נאמר: זית רענן יפה פרי תאר, יפה נוף משוש מאיר קר בית המקדש מאיר לכל העולם, שנאמר (שעיהו ס, ג): והלכו גוים לאורך, לכן נקראו אבותינו זית רענן, שהם מאירים ללל באמונתם, לכך אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך

an extensive challenging process.

Rav Shlomo Gantzfried explains, now we can understand the difference, in the language the Torah used in the beginning of *Terumah* and the language the Torah used in the beginning of *Tetzaveh*. Over here, in *Tetzaveh*, it doesn't say ויקחו לי שמן זית, that "and they should take for Me *shemen zayis*." It says ויקחו אֵלֶיךָ, "and they should take for you, Moshe." What is the meaning of this strange *lashon*?

Moshe Rabbeinu, the Torah tells us, came with a *ta'anah*, so to speak, to Hashem. "You sent me to free the Jews and instead You brought *raos*. You brought oppression, You brought more *tza'ar* among the Jewish people. What did You send me for?" Hakadosh Baruch Hu answered him, "You want to know why the Jews needed these *yesurim*? These *yesurim* are the way to bring out from the Jewish people their 'oil.' *Yesurim* are a way of pressing, of hitting, softening up and producing that virgin olive oil." Hashem says, "Now you're going to see what I'm going to do to Pharaoh. Now you're going to see that everything the Jewish people were challenged with, was the way of Me bringing about their *yeshuah*." That's why it says in the *passuk* ואתה, "And you, Moshe, didn't understand the *derech*, My way of conduct when I was treating Klal Yisrael. So you shall command Klal Yisrael about this, and they should take *shemen zayis* אֵלֶיךָ, for you. It means to show you the nature of this *zayis*, that only after you put it through all its steps of processing, does it produce its pure oil."

YESURIM ARE PART OF LIFE

You have to know that *yesurim* are an absolute part of life. From when we're little kids we have *yesurim*. Some of the earliest childhood memories that children have are of suffering. They fell down. They hurt themselves. Maybe they broke something. I remember having a terrible stomachache one time and going to my father who was a *rebbe* and a principal and saying, "I have to go home." He looked at me with his serious eyes and said, "Why?" I said, "I have a stomachache." He said, "You have what?" I said, "A stomachache." I really wanted to go home. He definitely didn't believe me. And my aunt happened to live next door to the *yeshivah*. I wasn't able to go home myself. I was too little to go myself, and it turned out my aunt was going to walk down toward my house so my father let me go but not before giving me a stern warning, to make sure you're going to rest.

When I came home, I got all better, and I started undertaking projects in the house. When it got late in the day, my mother gave me a warning. "Your father is coming home soon. I want to suggest that maybe you go take a nap." My stomach wasn't hurting that much anymore. So I went to bed, and the next thing I remember, my father came to my bed to wake me up, asking if I wanted to eat something, and I started to scream like a banshee because my stomach hurt me. Not because I was afraid of my father. They rushed me to the doctor. They didn't have a car in those days, so they put me in this big carriage, these old time carriages they used to have. I was too big for a carriage at that time. I was in second grade or first grade. We went to the doctor and the doctor said, "Straight to the hospital." I don't remember if it was a hernia or an appendix. It was one of the two. Before that, I had the other one, the appendix or the hernia. I remember being in the hospital. I remember being sad at night and crying. I remember them trying to force me to eat asparagus in the hospital. I had never seen asparagus in my life. The lady there who was in charge of the kids, said, "Eat those asparagus." I ate them and gave them right back to her, reconstituted. Then she screamed at me at the top of her lungs. You remember these things! You're sick. You remember lying in bed. Your mother tries to hold you, make your boobos go away. She promises to take you to the doctor because the doctor makes everything go away, right? *A nechtige tug*.

You've got to realize that *yesurim* are the earliest experiences that accompany people. People say, "Oh, that's a terrible thing to say. That's a terrible thing - to have to grow up with *yesurim*." My friend, that's real life.

YESURIM MEANS YOU'RE OPEN FOR BUSINESS

A Yid came to Rav Chaim for a *brachah*, Rav Chaim asked him, for what? He said, "I want a *brachah* to have no *yesurim*." He said, "You want to leave already?" "What do you mean?" the fellow asked. "You're ready to leave?" "Leave where?" "The world." He said, "Leave the world?! I don't want *yesurim*, that's all." Rav Chaim said, "Life is full of *yesurim*. That's what life is. The only time *yesurim* end, is when you leave this world. You should have the strength and *zei gezunt*. *Brachah vehatzlachah*."

This is such an important message. Any person who is able to, should acquire this perspective on his or her *yesurim*. You have to tell your children and you tell yourself, any *yesurim* you're having, it means Hakadosh Baruch Hu is trying to produce oil. Hashem is trying to produce *shemen zayis*. Yes, you go to doctors. No, doctors don't make boobos go away. A doctor is just a *shliach*. Hashem makes boobos go away. You have to train yourself. If Hashem is giving me *yesurim*, that means Hashem feels that this old bird can still produce oil. This is something you have to know.

THREE TRUTHS ABOUT YESURIM

First of all, you have to know that all *yesurim* come as a result of a person ignoring Hakadosh Baruch Hu. That's *alef*. You can have a big *tzaddik* and he has *yesurim*. (I'm not talking about *yesurim shel ahavah*). But a person could ignore Hakadosh Baruch Hu in a certain aspect of his life. He may be very *frum* in a certain area and a very nice person in a certain area, but in one area he ignores Hashem. That ignoring of Hashem causes Hashem to bring *yesurim* upon him. You have to remember that. Second of all, all *yesurim* are *mechaper*, they atone. And third of all, all *yesurim* are there to fix you. But we don't like the *tikun*. We hate to change.

CHALLENGES WITH TZNIUS

Just this week a woman called me up and she said, "I heard you're an expert on knowing why things happen to people." I said, "Let me tell you right now, I'm not an expert." I said, "Sometimes, Hashem puts ideas in my mind that I can pass along to you." "Well, I have a problem. My problem is I came down with something on my face, and my face is becoming disfigured and it's becoming hideous." I said, "Are you sick? Physically sick?" "No. I've gone to every doctor you could think of. Neurologists, skin doctors, internists, specialists, you name it! I've tried alternative medication. I got shots, steroid shots. I got everything you could think of." She started naming medicines, dangerous medicines. Who knows what she was taking. Nothing helped. Somebody told her, "Here's a number for you to call."

I told her, "The answer is simple, but you're not going to like to hear it." "Oh no, no. Tell me. I want to hear it." I said, "Are you sure?" I said, "What is the effect of this disease, this problem you're having?" "I can't walk out of my house." I said, "Are you familiar with the *passuk* כבוד בת מלך פנימה, the honor, the respect of a woman is in her home? The source of a woman, she's a queen in her home."

Now that's an important concept. That's where the concept of *tznius* comes from. It doesn't mean that a lady is never allowed to walk out her door, but it tells me the idea of "*penimah*." A lady has to be "inside." She has to be *tzanuah*. If you're not *tzanuah*, Hashem says, "You've got to go back inside." You know what *tzanuah* means? Hidden. That's what *tznius* means, hidden. You have to be hidden. I said, "You're challenged with *tznius*. That's why Hashem is putting you in the house."

She said, "What do you mean? I'm *frum*." I said, "This is what Hashem is telling you." She said, "Well, two years ago, I actually made some changes, little changes. Everybody knows you have to start off with small changes." I said, "Well, it was a little two years ago but right now, it's nothing. Hashem wants to see a little more or maybe a lot more. You want to get better? You want to know what Hashem is telling you?"

Then we started to have the discourse. This is what always happens. "No, why can't I just *daven*? I did start *davening*. Could I *daven*? How about *tzedakah*?" I said, "You have *tznius* problems." She said, "Well, I'm not so bad at *tznius*." I said, "It must be bad if Hashem did this thing to your face." Finally, she tells me, "You know what you're asking of me?" I said, "What?" "Every piece of clothing that I own I have to throw out." I said to her, "I know you didn't want to hear this answer, but I'm telling you the *emes*. This is a simple thing. You tried to do everything you could to get out of it. Hashem is talking to you now." "Why did Hashem pick me?" "I don't know. There are people that are worse than you." "That's exactly what I'm thinking," she says. "There are many people worse than me."

I said, "You don't have to listen. It could get worse." I said, "Now, it's only your face. I don't know what could happen next. But isn't it clear to you that Hashem is saying you can't go out of your house. Something about the way you're conducting yourself or presenting yourself is improper." I said, "You're not doing me a favor. I'm trying to help you figure out what Hashem wants from you. I'm trying to help you." She said, "You can't think of anything else?" I said, "Right now, no." I said, "This is clear."

Another lady called me up. She's having a problem with the bottom part of her feet. She's an avid walker, and a biker. She likes to ride a bike around the *frum* neighborhood. That's not so *tznius*. This hampers her from walking around on her power walks. Some people get into this zone where they think you can't exist without the run, or without that power walk. I could relate to it. I could understand it. But Hashem is sending her a message. I said, "Get yourself a stair walker. Walk in your house. Hashem is telling you something."

Another lady called me up and said she was having a problem with her feet. After asking a few questions, it turns out she's a runner. I said, "Where do you run?" "I run in public." That's not so *tznius*. I happened to meet this lady a couple of months later. Something looked out of shape. I took one look at her. She was standing on stilts. She was wearing shoes that looked like they had 8 inch heels. She was walking on her tippy toes. I said, "And you had a question of what's wrong with your feet?! Have you ever taken a look at your shoes?! That's what's wrong with your feet. First of all, it's not even a healthy shoe you're wearing." She was wearing it, even not at a *simchah*. Just regular. She liked high heels. Some people like to walk on their tippy toes. So Hashem was helping her out!

It's the same thing with everything. There's no *yesurim* that's not a *tikun*. You've got to understand that like nobody's business.

HOW TO VIEW YESURIM

Now, I want to tell you how to view *yesurim*. Rav Shach once said he knew a tremendous *ba'al yesurim* who lived in Slutzk, and the man suffered in life *geferlech*. *Geferlech*. Rav Shach was once talking to him, and asked him, "How do you deal with it?" Listen to what he said. He said, "In Russia, the worst of all the *gulags*, the labor camps they had, was a place called Katringa. It was known to be worse than any other place possible. You couldn't live there for more than a few days. Very, very few people made it out of there alive. If they ever gave you this *gezeirah*, you'd get on your knees and you would plead that they send you to the furthest reaches of Siberia. You'd beg because over there, you stood a little better chance to make it. If they were *maskim*, you'd be dancing up and down. I got spared from Katringa! I'm going to Siberia!" A *simchah*.

This *yid* said to Rav Shach, "Every one of us is going to have to face *mishpat* in the next world. And that *mishpat* on the other side of the door is *Gehinom*, for the *aveiros* that a person transgressed in his life. That's like Katringa. If a person could exchange his *yesurim* of *Gehinom*, which are worse than any *yesurim* that a person could imagine in this world – worse than all the chemo, worse than all the migraines, worse than all the gallbladders, worse than having babies. It's the worst of all pain. Nu, would a guy not be in seventh heaven if he got *yesurim* in this world?" He said, "I look at my *yesurim* in this world as an exchange for the *Gehinom* in the future. I'm avoiding Katringa. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu brought this to me in exchange. So why shouldn't I be happy?!"

A person has to know, it's not easy. But a person has to know that there is a way of avoiding *yesurim* many times, and I'll tell you how. *Chazal* (Midrash Tanchuma, Re'eh 2) tell us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu never brings *yesurim* in one bang. This is the *lashon* of the *Chazal* Hashem does not bring any *tzarah* to a person, עד שהוא גולל לאזנו, until he whispers in his ear first, ומתרה בו, and he gives him *hasra'ah*, he gives him a warning, כדי שיחזור בו, in order that he should do *teshuvah*. אם חזר בו, if he does *teshuvah*, good, - הרי יפה, if not, He brings upon him evil.³

DISCOMFORT IS A SIGN...NOT TO BE IGNORED

Yesurim always come as a sign. If I wake up one day and go to *daven* and I feel maybe the tiniest amount of discomfort in my chest, the tiniest amount, you know what I could say? "Ah, it's *gornisht*." If you would come and ask me about it, I would tell you it's nothing. "You'll be fine. Go back and finish *davening*." But, the brocha of *refaenu Hashem veneirafeh* that I say when I *daven* on that day is like I have some *machalah*. When I say *hashiveinu avinu lesorasecha* that day and *selach lanu avinu*, I think of all the *teshuvah* and *selichah*

³ ראה אגני וגו'. זה שאמר הכתוב: ויגל אצנים למוסר וגו', אם ישמעו ויעבדו, יכלו: מיהם בטוב ושיניהם בנעימים, ואם לא ישמעו, בשלח יעברו (איוב לו, י-יב). ויגל אצנים למוסר. אין הקדוש ברוך הוא מביא צרה לאדם עד שהוא גולה לאצנים ומתרה בו, כדי שיחזור בו. אם חזר בו, הרי יפה. אם לאו, מביא עליו רעות. ויגל אצנים למוסר. ממי את למד. מפרעה מלך מצרים, קשהיה מבקש להביא עליו מכה, היה שולח ומתרה בו ביד משה עבדו, שאמר: הניני מביא מחסר ארבה בגבולך (שמות י, ד). וכן הניני גוף את כל גבולך בצפרדעים (ש, ז, כז). מתרה בו למוסר, למוסרה של תורה. ויאמר פי ישובנו מאנו (איוב יו, י). מעול בני אדם ומלעול להקדוש ברוך הוא. יכלו: מיהם בטוב, בטוב הם משלימין שנותיהם.

and *melichah* I need on that day. And then I ask myself, "Why can't I do this on a regular basis: I need some *mechila*, I need some *refuah*, I need some *teshuva*, etc." If I get a pain on my side, I think, "Oh boy. That's the kidneys. That's Hashem being *megaleh* my *ozen*." If you get a crack in your neck, maybe something is starting to grow *chas veshalom*.

Now, some people are hypochondriacs and they run to the doctor right away. I don't like to go to doctors. I say to Hashem, "I got your message. Thank You." And so far, they go away.

But Hashem doesn't bring anything on a person until He's *masreh bo* and He's *megaleh ozno*. That's what Hashem does. The problem is, that most of us blow it off. It's only after months of seeking the treatment and trying to get rid of the sickness, then finally, in exasperation you pick your hands up and say, "Okay, let me call a rabbi. Is there anybody who can give me a *brachah*?" That's when you wake up. You know what Hashem says? "You know what it says in the Torah? If I sent *yesurim* to you and you ignored Me and you said, 'Nah, I'm not a hypochondriac. It's a *mikreh*. It happens. Stuff happens. That's life. Pains, little pains, are part of life.'" You know what Hashem says? Hashem says, "I'm going to bring it upon you seven fold." So what started off as a little thing, may end up to be a much bigger thing. I always think how much is seven times of what I'm going through right now? Let's say a guy ignores that. Hashem says, "I'm going to come down with a wrath upon you like nobody's business."

So, here is a guy who is feeling *shvach*, feeling weak. So what does he say? "Oh, a little more sleep. Maybe an iron pill." I say, "You know Hashem is הנותן ליעף כח, Hashem is the One Who gives a person *koach*. No one else gives you *koach*." Not your pills. Not your Wheaties. Not eating avocados for breakfast. Not dipping things in olive oil. That's not going to give you *koach*. What's going to give you *koach* is Hashem, הנותן ליעף כח, העולם הנותן ליעף כח, ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם הנותן ליעף כח, And Hashem is the One who takes away your *koach*. So if you are feeling a little *shvach*, that means Hashem is talking to you right now. You know what Hashem is telling you? "You're losing your *koach*. I'm warning you. You're not using your *kochos* for what I gave you your *kochos* for. You're expending good *kochos* that I invested in you on doing *aveiros*. You're investing your *kochos* in *hevel havalim*, in *shtusim*, in everything but what I gave you the *koach* for."

Now, the problem is a person sometimes calls me up and tells me he has such *tzaros*. I mean, someone gave me a laundry list of *tzaros* one time. I said, "I wouldn't even know where to begin to talk to you because you have to know where things started." I said, "This is the result of repeated warnings from Hashem. And Hashem gave you sevenfold times sevenfold times sevenfold, and you still didn't get the message. What could I do for you? You must learn that the second you experience the smallest pain, don't run to the doctor first. Run to do *teshuvah*. Think, what could this be for? You're feeling tired? Maybe you didn't use your energy for the right thing. When you were awake you didn't use it for the right thing. You didn't utilize your alertness properly. What did you invest your alertness into?" You know how many people start to learn after they get sick? They wake up. Then, they don't have *kochos* to learn.

BE FAITHFUL TO HASHEM

You have to know, one of the main questions that *gedolim* deal with is *yesurim*. And it's not *shayach* for a person to avoid *yesurim* in this world, no matter what. And if Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *kovea* for you *yesurim*, they're called *נאמנים* ונאמנים. The *gemara* (*Avodah Zarah* 55a) says specific *yesurim* that come to a person get *mushba*, adjured, they're put under oath, to come at a specific moment and leave at a specific moment, *נאמנים* ונאמנים.⁴

Now, the time to wake up is *before* you get the *yesurim*, when you get that small warning, that small whisper. A person should *daven* to Hashem before he gets sick. The problem is it's very hard to *daven* to Hashem sincerely and commit to real change before you get *yesurim*. It's only after you get the *yesurim* that you get really smart. Until then you don't get really smart.

"YOU ARE BETTER OFF WITH THESE YESURIM"

There's a *sefer* we have here called *Toldos Yaakov* about the Steipler. He says that there was a fellow who lived on the ground floor, and there was no sunlight or air in his apartment. In Eretz Yisrael, that's a very important question. I never heard of that question until I went to Eretz Yisrael. When you go to Eretz Yisrael, anybody talking about apartments asks, what's the size? Is there light? Is it sunny? He wanted to know if he should move to a different *dirah*. You know what the Steipler told him? "Stay in this *dirah*." "But Rabbi, I'm suffering." "It's better to deal with *tzaros* that you know what the *tzaros* are, than to go to another *dirah* and discover new *tzaros* that you don't know if you're going to be able to handle." You're used to these *tzaros*. Accept them. Finished.

A KABALAH FROM STEIPLER ON AVOIDING TZAROS

One day, a lady came to the Steipler and said she was dealing with tremendous *tza'ar gidul banim*. She didn't know why it was happening to her. "I'm suffering from raising my children." Her children were big troublemakers. They weren't easy raises. The Steipler told her, "You should know you can't ignore it. You can't avoid it. Certain *tzaros* are part of life. Hashem knows what He's doing. Accept it. But you know you could choose. You could choose. If you don't want the *tza'ar of gidul banim*, invest in being *mekayem mitzvos* with *tza'ar* and *yesurim*. That's another tremendous way." If a person pushes himself to fulfill *mitzvos* and learn Torah *beyesurim*, that goes on his *cheshbon* of *yesurim*. Every time you push yourself to sit and learn, you are getting yourself *yesurim*. You're going to save yourself from *yesurim* in other areas! And if you think you're going to run away from them, you can't. Hashem always knows how to get you back. He could give you bad neighbors. He could give you other bad things.

Once a doctor came to me. He said his wife is suffering from continuous *tzaros*. Every Monday and Thursday, *nach tzaros*. It was *taka crazy*. Nothing was serious, so at first I thought she was a hypochondriac. It turned out she wasn't. One day, she had a jaw problem. One day, she got better. She went to doctors, dentists, oral surgeons. She had TMJ. She got rid of the TMJ. She had to put this thing in her mouth. Don't ask what she had to go through! Then she had a root canal. When she was finished with the root canal, all of a sudden her back went out. When her back got better, her knee started to hurt. There was not a day that went by when she didn't experience some *tzarah*. She came to me, "Rebbi, what is going on with me?" I said, "I have a *kabalah* from the Steipler that a person could choose which *tzaros* they could get. You could avoid *tzaros* by directing the *tzaros* to areas like learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*."

⁴ א"ל זונין לר"ע לבי ולברך ידע דעבודת כוכבים לית בה מששא והא קחזינן גברי דאזלי כי מתברי ואתו כי מצמדי מ"ט. אמר לו אמשול לך משל למה"ד לאדם נאמן שהיה בעיר וכל בני עירו היו מפקידין אצלו שלא בעדים ובא אדם אחד והפקיד לו בעדים פעם אחד שכח והפקיד אצלו שלא בעדים אמרה לו אשתו בוא ונכפרנו אמר לה וכי מפני ששטוה זה עשה שלא כהוגן אנו נאבד את אמונתנו. אף כר יסורין בשעה שמשגרין אותן על האדם משיבין אותן שלא תלכו אלא ביום פלוני ולא תצאו אלא ביום פלוני ובשעה פלונית ועל ידי פלוני ועל ידי סם פלוני כיון שהגיע זמן לצאת הלך זה לבית עבודת כוכבים אמרו יסורין דין הוא שלא נצא וחוזרין ואומרים וכי מפני ששטוה זה עושה שלא כהוגן אנו נאבד שבעותנו. והיינו דא"ר יוחנן מאי דכתיב (דברים כח, נט) וחלים רעים ונאמנים רעים בשליחותן ונאמנים בשבועתן.

I knew this doctor. He had a little challenge; he was a tightwad. His pockets were so tight. He used to put the money in and then sew them tight. I used to ask him, "What do you do that for?" He said, "Rebbi, I don't make a lot of money." I said, "You call \$400,00 or \$500,000 not a lot?" He said, "I'm not holding by \$500,000 yet." I said, "For me, \$450,000 is not small change. You know how much *ma'aser* you

have to give for that?" He said, "Rebbi, no, no. Don't even count that. \$250,000, I put away. I lock it up. That doesn't even count. You know what \$250,000 is for my family?! That's no money at all!" I told him, "My friend, you're a little messed up in your head up there, but I want to tell you something. You want to have no *tzaros*? Give *tzedakah*. I'll make you a plan." I said, "It's got to pinch, because if it doesn't pinch, it's not *yesurim*. Are you going to give me \$100 and hope you're going to have no *tzaros* from that? You can buy your *tzaros* out. Give your money to a poor *talmid chacham*. Give me a check book, sign the checks. Write big numbers there. He told me, "Ok, I'm going to give it to him." I said, "Ok, let's see if your *tzaros* go away."

All his *tzaros* were cured!!! But not *stam*. He gave me a checkbook with twelve checks, one check per month. He was always complaining. I said, "Don't complain. Just remind yourself of the *yesurim*. I know that for you, it's *yesurim*." I said, "I gave you a golden opportunity. You're getting a *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*! When your wife got the TMJ, she got the neck problem, the knee problem, the back problem, there was no *mitzvah* in that. This way, you're getting off the hook for very cheap. You'll be *tzaros* free."

After a year I said, "Nu? Are you going to renew it?" He said, "I think I'm out of the woods." I said, "I hope so." I told the *yungerman* who was receiving the checks, "That's the end of the gravy train." Next month, bam! The *tzaros* were back! I said, "My friend, I'm not home anymore. I'm not home. Deal with the doctors." I said, "You're a doctor. You must love doctors. Deal with the medical field. I can't help you."

Then, his wife started getting better, from the medical aspect. He said, "I think I beat everything." I said, "I hope so." All of a sudden, she turned on him. And the *yesurim* started coming on this guy. It was crazy. The *yesurim* she gave him were abnormal. Crazy *yesurim*. I said, "Hashem loves you." He said, "This is what I get for coming to Hashem?!" I said, "Apparently, you've got a long way to go yet. You made some great moves. You made wonderful moves, but Hashem wants you to get to the top of the mountain, and Hashem is giving you this challenging, climbing experience."

FIGURE OUT YOUR PROBLEM

This is such an important lesson, rabbosai! When you get *yesurim*, I'm telling you, figure out what the problem is. I tell people, "You know where the problem usually lies? In the thing that's right in front of your nose that you don't want to think about." People say, "I don't want to go there. Let's go everywhere else, but there. Maybe my *brachos* aren't so good." Somebody told me recently, "Maybe it's because I'm not making the *meah brachos* with *kavanah*." I said, "Who do you think you are? Hashem needs your *meah brachos*? You think Hashem is going to give you such *yesurim* for not saying *meah* berachos? Nu, maybe if you're Rav Shach."

A person has to realize this and wake up. I'm telling you, there's a way you can deal with it. Hashem is producing pure oil. Yes, you're a tough nut. You're as tough as any olive growing on a tree. Hard like a rock. But with some pushing, some beating, some softening up, some crushing, you could finally produce *shemen zayis zach*. Help yourself produce that *shemen* without having Hashem to need to squeeze out any, and then you'll be ahead of the game. A *gutten* Shabbos!

THE BOTTOM LINE

By commanding Moshe Rabbeinu, וַיִּקְחוּ אֶלְיָדָם שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ, Hakodosh Boruch Hu taught him that just as olives go through a difficult and arduous process to produce oil, the Jewish people endure suffering (*yesurim*) as a means of bringing out their spiritual essence. The difficult and constant *yesurim* in Mitzrayim brought out the שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ ("pure oil") aspect of our nation, by purifying us and bringing out our true essence. In our own lives - when we experience suffering or difficult challenges which are an integral part of life - it also means that Hashem is trying to "produce pure oil" and bring out our pure essence. It's important to recognize the three aspects of *yesurim*: they are brought as a result of ignoring Hashem (even in one, small aspect of our *avodas Hashem*), they are *mechaper* (atone) our past misdeeds and they are also *mesaken* (correct) us. This coming week, if I experience some difficulty - whether physical, emotional or otherwise - I will first attempt (*bli neder*) to find the connection between the nature of my challenge and the potential area where I might have "ignored" Hashem. If I was particularly tired this week, for example, or didn't sleep well, I will try to remember whether I used my energy and time for the right things, or I misused them for things that I shouldn't have. Also, in the spirit of the advice from the holy Steipler Gaon, if I experience certain challenges with raising my children, for example, I will accept it and commit (*bli neder*) to do *mitzvos*, learning and *tzedakah*, with a little bit of a "pinch," when it's not always comfortable or easy. And in the *zechus* of recognizing the purpose behind suffering and challenges, and then committing myself to change, I will strengthen my connection to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and, *iy"H*, will avoid other, unnecessary "reminders."

