



LIVING WITH TEFILLAH



HASHEM WANTS ME TO DAVEN

Our parshas begins with these words: 'וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֵלָּהּ בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר... אֶתֶּה הַחֲלוּת לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת עַבְדְּךָ אֶת גְּדֻלָּךְ, וְגו' "and I pleaded with Hashem at that time saying... You who let Your servant see the first works of Your greatness..." (see Rashi).¹

Recently we related a story about the Brisker Rav when he received a notice from the Russian authorities to vacate his house in Vilna during the war, and how upset he was that his family had already packed up their bags, without his knowledge. The Brisker Rav explained to his family that the proper thing to do would have been to daven, to say Tehillim. Somebody asked me afterwards, "But isn't it wise to take precautions? Why shouldn't he pack his bags? Pack your bags and then say Tehillim." If you're facing a challenge of getting thrown out of your house, why not pack your bags and leave them in the rooms, just in case you get thrown out?

So to answer this question, the Brisker Rav said to his children, "I'm doing what I have to do. Davening is what I have to do. Hashem wants me to daven to Him in this challenge. Why shouldn't it work? If you daven, why shouldn't it work?"

You see, we have very little *emunah* in our davening because we don't see davening as something that is the absolute answer to the problem. If you daven, it should work. If that's what Hashem tells me to do, you have to believe that if done properly, prayer will work. Perhaps the Brisker Rav thought, "Does Hashem want me out on the street? Hashem gave me this house. Hashem was the one who provided me with this house. So why in the world would Hashem put me out on the street now?" The alternative they had given him was not an alternative.

And that's what we have to learn from this. If you have a challenge and you daven, you can rely that it's going to work.

"HOME ALONE"

A young lady called me recently and asked if I could give her some assistance. "I need help," she told me. I said, "What do you need?" She said, "I'm stuck at home, and my parents refuse to send me to school." I said, "What?! They refuse to send you to school?!" "Yes. I'm home alone. I have no siblings at home, and I'm forced to stay at home and get homeschooled," she continued. I said, "Do you live within walking distance to a *frum* neighborhood?" "No. Only driving distance, not walking distance." I said, "Are your parents *frum*?" "Yes, they are *frum*." "Does your mother work?" "Yes." "Does your father work?" "Yes." I said, "That's child abuse! To leave a kid home alone and not let her go to school, to get a Jewish education?!" I said, "Do you have any contact with the outside world?" She said, "Yes. I call people. Once a week people talk to me on the phone. They learn with me a little bit."

I asked her, "How old are you?" "I'm fourteen," she said. I said, "Can I ask you how you got my number?" She said, "My brother, who's learning in Eretz Yisrael right now, told me to call you." I said, "I'm going to help you get you out of this prison."

I remember thinking to myself at the moment, "This is some crazy stuff." I said to her, "Do your parents come from a certain European country where the people are known to be hard-nosed, and the country has a name that's the opposite of a 'tzaddik'?" She said, "Yes. As a matter of fact, that's true." I said, "I should have known." I said to her, "I can't understand this. Can you explain this to me?" She was very respectful. She didn't tell me, "My parents are crazy" or something similar. I said, "Is there any logic to what you're going through? Is it, perhaps, because they don't want to pay for your tuition? If that's the case, I'll arrange to get your tuition taken care of." "No," she told me, "somebody already offered that." I said, "So, what's the *p'shat* then?"

I thought about it some more, and then I said to her, "I want you to understand that this has nothing to do with your parents. This is a challenge that Hashem has given you. I don't know why Hashem chose you for this challenge. But you first have to understand that this has nothing to do with your parents. Your parents are just a mirage and an imagination. This is a challenge between Hashem and you. I don't know the exact reason why you are being challenged

¹ רש"י ד"ה אתה החלות להראות את עבדך. פתח, להיות עומד ומתפלל אע"פ שנגזרה גזירה; אמר לו ממך למדתי, שאמרתי לי (שמות ל"ב) "ועתה הניחה לי", וכי תופס הייתי ברך? אלא לפתח פתח, שביה תלוי להתפלל עליהם, כמו כן הייתי סבור לעשות עקשו (ספרי):

in this particular way, but I know clearly this is a challenge. I know clearly, without a doubt, that Hashem wants you to get a Jewish education. There's no doubt that He does not want a Jewish child to be at home; it's the most rational thing for a child to be in school."

A BREAKTHROUGH

I said to her, "Listen, this is what you are going to do. Hashem wants you to appeal to Him. Hashem wants you to daven to Him. Hashem wants you to call out to Him. Listen to what I'm going to tell you now. You have to implore Him every single day in *tefillah*. I'm going to give you four *perakim* of Tehillim to say. Say these four *perakim* every day, and I guarantee you, that if you say them sincerely, you're going to be in a Jewish school shortly. But you have to know that the reason I'm guaranteeing you this, is because I have no *safek* that this is from Hashem, and I have no *safek* it's just a challenge, and I have no *safek* that Hashem wants every Jewish person at your age to be in a school to get an education." "But, how do you know?" she asked me. "Simple logic," I answered.

I told her to take a siddur and read Tehillim 120. It starts off with *שיר המעלות אל ה' בצרתה לי*. Dovid Hamelech said when I found myself in a *tzarah*, *קראתי ויעני* - "I called out to You and You answered me," Then I told her to say Tehillim 121, which starts off with *אשא עיני אל ההרים* - "I raise my eyes to the mountains...from where will my salvation come?" Then I told her to read Tehillim 129, where Dovid Hamelech says, *רבת צררוני מנעורי* - "many people have brought *tzaros* on me from my youth." Finally, I told her read Tehillim 130, *שיר המעלות ממעמקים קראתיך ה'*. "You can start to prepare yourself. Pack your bags. You are going to a Jewish school."

She asked me, "Rabbi Brog, have you ever heard of such a case before?" I said, "No, not exactly. Your situation really shocked me. And the reason why I'm so shocked, is that you told me that your parents are shomer Shabbos. If your parents are shomer Shabbos, then, anyone who you're going to tell this to, is going to say your parents are not 100%." I then asked her if she was a troublesome child and I inquired about a litany of potential issues and problems she might have had in the past. I asked her every question in the world: Have you gotten in trouble with technology? With drugs? With bad friends, etc. To every one of those questions she answered, "No." She was a very nice person, *mamash* a nice *neshamah*.

She called me after that from time to time. I asked her, "Are you doing it (i.e. are you davening)?" She said, "I'm doing it." I said, "Don't miss a day." "I'm doing it. I'm doing it," she repeated. And then, one day, her parents said to her, "You know what? We're going to send you to the frum school." When we spoke again, I told her, "You should know, your parents didn't change. Before you called me, many people tried to speak to your parents. There was a blockage there. It wasn't your parents. It was between Hashem and you. This is what you have to understand."

HASHEM WANTS US TO CRY OUT TO HIM

When this girl asked me if I ever heard of such a thing, I said to her, "No, I haven't heard of your exact story, but I did hear of a similar story." There was once a young man that came to our Yeshiva in June, for a visit, and I asked him why he wasn't in Yeshiva. He said, "My father won't hear of it." I said, "Do you wear a yarmulke all the time?" "Yes," he answered. I said, "What's your father's rationale in not allowing you to attend a yeshiva? What's his logic?" He told me, "You don't know my father. He has a strong opinion about things, and that's how it is. I remember telling him, 'Do you understand that it's not your father?' 'What do you mean? Of course, it's my father. Who else would it be?' he said, totally surprised at my question. I said, 'No, it's not your father. It's just a challenge that Hashem has sent you. Hashem wants something from you. Do you think Hashem really wants a young Jewish boy to be in public school? That's not rational. It's the most incongruous thing. Of course Hashem wants you in Yeshiva!' And then I said to him, 'Do you really want to go to Yeshiva?' 'Yes, but I can't bring it up with my father,' he told me. 'And if I did ask him, he would be very upset and the repercussions wouldn't be good.' He was afraid, and for a good reason. I told him to say these four *kapitlach* Tehillim. I told him don't miss it. Start today. It was on Shabbos. He brought me a siddur. I said, 'Go to the beis Midrash now and say these four kapitlach.' He came about twenty minutes later and I could tell from his eyes that he had read it with *kavanah*. 'I guarantee you're going to be in Yeshiva next semester,' I told him.

He went to camp, but he read those Tehillim every day. One day he was on a trip and came back late. He called me a little fearful. "Is it too late to say them since it's after *shekiyah*?" he asked. I said, "No, you could say it before you go to sleep. Then that young man came home from camp. One evening he was sitting at the table and eating dinner with his family. The father turned to him and said, 'Son, do you still want to go to Yeshiva?' This young man thought it was a trick question, as if he was being set up by his father and it wasn't going to be *pashut* now. 'What do you mean, Dad?' he asked. 'Do you still want to go to Yeshiva?' the father repeated. He said, 'Yes.' 'Okay then, you can go.' And as they say, the rest is history. Today he's a *yungerman* learning in *kollel*, *shteiging* away. It was a *nisayon*. Now why did he have this *nisayon*? I thought about it many times. Why do these people get these *nisayonos*?

There can be many reasons. Perhaps in a previous lifetime they grew up in a frum family and they had all the options to sit and learn, but at some point they rejected it. Maybe they met some bad friends and decided that Yeshiva

wasn't for them. And they left. And Hashem said, "I'm going to put you back in this world in a family where they're not going to let you go to Yeshiva. I'm going to make you aware of Yeshiva, and you're going to want to go, and this time you're going to have to fight to go to Yeshiva." The main thing that a person has to know is that it is a challenge from Hashem that he is meant to overcome.

A BA'AL TESHUVA FROM LUDWIGSHAFEN

I told the same thing to a young man from Germany. He is one of the most amazing young men I've ever met. A young boy from Ludwigshafen, a small town south of Frankfurt. He became frum there, but he couldn't go to Yeshiva. His parents were adamantly against it. "No Yeshiva until you finish high school," they said. I told him that it was ridiculous. I met the kid. A very special person. He didn't belong in Germany with a class of forty-five Turks, with a bunch of Moslems, and three half-baked Jews! That's not where he belonged. He was really yeshiva *bachur* material. How was this young man able to fight the Yetzer Hara and have the strength to be an Avraham Avinu? He was the only sincere Jewish boy in his little, middle of nowhere city in Germany. His high school had a certain *goyishe* teacher who decided, for some reason, that *yiddishkeit* made no sense to her, and every time she wanted to give an example of how strange *yiddishkeit* was, she used an example from the Torah about the *Avos*, and this young man answered all of her questions! He had answers for her. Amazing! He stood up to the world!

I said to him then, "Do you realize it's all a test? Your parents can't hold you back from Yeshiva. There's no such a thing! You can go to Yeshiva. Daven to Hashem. You'll be in Yeshiva." He said, "I know. In two years I'll be in Yeshiva." I said, "No, not in two years! Now! You'll be in Yeshiva now!" He davened to Hashem. One day he sent an email to a rabbi. I'm not sure how he made that contact. He never met that rabbi. Now, the problem was that his parents, who also originally came from that 'non-tzaddik' country, couldn't communicate in English. Amazingly, though, that rabbi called his parents and spoke to them for about a half an hour. He is very dynamic, very personable. A big kiruv person. He had such an impression upon them, that after they finished talking, they walked into their son's room and said, "If you want to drop out of your secular studies now and go to yeshiva, you can." It's amazing!

But the Yetzer Hara is continuing to put all kinds of obstacles in his way. Small obstacles. Hashem wants him to daven to the end. Now, I have already spoken to the Yeshiva in Gateshead. Amazingly, the person in charge of taking in the bachurim is somewhat related; his daughter married my brother's son. In any case, I told him about this bachur. He said, "I can't believe it! I really want to see such a bachur, but the Yeshiva is full now. How is this going to work out?" I said, "You'll meet him. You'll see - it will work. I have no *safek*." This is what you have to know. You have to live with tefillah. And it worked out.

DAVENING IN GALUS: LESSONS FROM YAAKOV AVINU

Now, of course most people ask for silly things in their *tefillah*, like winning a lottery ticket or the like. That's the problem. And you can actually see that during the days when the lottery jackpot is really high, when everybody in shul *shuckeling* away. It's not Sukkos, my friend! Sukkos is over. Just daven to Hashem to be a *mentsch*. But the problem is that you can't ask Hashem for things when you don't acknowledge the "blockages" from Hashem to you.

My Rebbi (HaRav Meir Soloveichik, zt"l) explained to me that in Galus, you've got to do that. He told me an amazing thing. There's a famous Midrash.² Everybody knows that Midrash because Rashi brings it down when Yaakov Avinu slept "in that place" - וישכב במקום ההוא (Bereishis 28:11). Chazal explain in the Midrash, that in "that place" Yaakov did sleep, but the fourteen years before that - when he was in the Yeshiva Shem ve'Ever - he didn't sleep (Bereishis Rabbah 68:11). But do you know what else this Midrash says? The Midrash says in the name of R' Nechemia, "here he slept, but the next twenty years that he was בבית לבן, he didn't sleep." He went a long part of his life without sleep. What was he doing all night?

The Midrash continues: רבי יהושע בן לוי אמר ט"ו שיר המעלות שבספר תהלים - Yaakov used to say Tehillim, that's what he said, the fifteen שיר המעלות. For twenty years, every night, Yaakov Avinu pounded away with שיר המעלות. And רבי שמואל בר נחמן אמר כל ספר תהלים היה אומר - Yaakov said the entire Sefer Tehillim.

So my Rebbi said, "You see? All the years Yaakov was בבית לבן - all his nights - Tehillim!" Where did Yaakov Avinu get this from?" my Rebbi asked.

My Rebbi explained that Yaakov Avinu learned this lesson at night, as he slept in Beis Kel, when Hashem showed him a vision, הנה ה' נצב עליו (Bereishis 28:13). Hashem showed him the *beis Hamikdash*, the *Avodas Hakohanim*. He showed him the *Churban Beis Hamikdash*. He showed him *Galus Yisrael* among the *Umos* until the *Geulah Ha'asidah*. The Midrash says that when Yaakov Avinu was leaving his parents, that was a depiction of *galus* for Klal Yisrael, and whatever happened to Yaakov in the *galus* is *keneged* the *galus* that Bnei Yisrael are going to suffer.

² וישכב במקום ההוא, רבי יהודה ורבי נחמיה, רבי יהודה אמר כאן שכב אבל כל ארבע עשרה שנה שהיה טמון בבית עבר לא שכב. ורבי נחמיה אמר כאן שכב, אבל כל עשרים שנה שעמד בביתו של לבן לא שכב, ומה היה אומר, רבי יהושע בן לוי אמר חמש עשרה שיר המעלות שבספר תהלים, מאי טעמיה (תהלים קכד, א): שיר המעלות לדוד לזילי ה' שהיה לנו יאמר נא ישראל, ישראל סבא. רבי שמואל בר נחמן אמר כל ספר תהלים היה אומר, מה טעם (תהלים כב, ד): ואתה קדוש יושב תהלות ישראל, ישראל סבא

Now, in that *mareh* (vision) Hashem showed him an interesting thing. You know what He showed him? *Sha'ar hashamayim*. Does anybody know what Rashi says? What was the idea of Hashem showing him *sha'ar hashamayim*, the gateway to heaven? Rashi says מקום תפילה לעלות תפילתם השמימה.³ Was Hashem showing him the maps of the Gates of Tefillah in Shamayim? No. And Hashem also didn't tell him the address for all the tefillos. The answer is that Hashem was showing him and telling him the following, "Now, you're going into *galus*. I want you to remember that there's a *sha'ar hashamayim* even in *galus* - the *makom* where tefillos go up - because it's *nogea* even *bezman* that you'll be in *chutz la'aretz*. You always have to daven." The Shulchan Aruch says a person has to daven המקדש, as if he's facing the *Beis Hamikdash* (Orach Chaim 94:1). The Gemora learns it from the *passuk* ארצם (I Malachim , 8:48).⁴ So Hashem told Yaakov Avinu, "Remember, when you are in *galus*, rely on *tefillah*." Now if Hashem tells you to rely on tefillah, *nu*? Each one of us should start a career of being *marbeh be'tefilah*.

BEGIN A NEW CAREER

I remember as a bachur, when Hashem guided me to be interested in the topic of bitachon, I went to my Rebbi and I asked him how I should develop bitachon. He told me, "There's a shul called Zichron Moshe, a famous shul in the Geulah section of Yerushalayim, that has minyanim around the clock. Go there *bein hasedarim*. It will be very quiet there during lunchtime. Find a *shtiebel* and pour out your heart to Hashem to get some bitachon."

And I made it a career of mine. I'd go into a shul, and I can't tell you the number of times I had people come in and tap me on the shoulder and say to me, "Is there anything I could help you with? What's the problem? What's the *tzarah*?" And I'd say, "I'm just looking for bitachon." They would usually say "What?" and

walk away. Maybe he thought I was looking for a *shidduch*, who knows. I was young then. I was 18 years old.

You have to know that this is what it says in Eicha (2:19), קומי רוני בלילה לראש אשמורות שפכי כמים ליבר, "Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water." My Rebbi would always say over the *Targum* on this *pasuk*. The *Targum* says: Arise Knesses Yisrael who are in *galus* and be *osek* in learning Torah at night.... and daven in the *Beis Haknesses* together with the *kahal*, לפני ה'.⁵ This is what we have to learn. A person has to get into the mode of davening to Hashem at all times.

A TEFILLAH WITH "CLEAN" HANDS

My Rebbi said a beautiful *p'shat*. He said there are preparations for *tefillah*. Before one davens, there are certain conditions that a person has to meet in order for his *tefillah* to be *niskabel*. Do you know what one of them is? It's a big one. Make sure you're free from *gezeilah*. The Chafetz Chaim says this idea. He mentions in the *Mishnah Berurah* that in *neilah* we say למען נחל מעשך ידינו, because *gezeilah* prevents *tefillos* from being *niskabel*. You can pour your heart out to Hashem - and you could have a nice, long beard, with a hat - but if you're a *ganav* and you're a *gazlan*, and you stole money from somebody and you think, "It's not a big deal," your tefillah can go unheard.

He continued, "If you look in the parshah, it says יעקב לבדו - "Yaakov remained alone." (Bereishis 32:25). He took his family across the Yabok river, and he remained alone on the other side. Why did he stay there? אמר רבי אלעזר, מכאן לצדיקים שחביב עליהם - "he remained there alone because of small flasks that he had left there." - שנשתייר על פנין קטנים לפי שאין פושטין ידיהן - "Why is it like this? Why are the tzaddikim careful about their money?" - ממונם יותר מגופם, וכל כך למה בגזל - "because they don't do *gezeilah*." So my Rebbi asked, "Why does the Torah teach us this concept specifically here?" My Rebbi explained that the reason is because this middah that Yaakov had was especially important in his success in the battle against the Sar of Eisev. The *nitzachon* was achieved through the power of the tefillos of Yaakov Avinu, and they were accepted only because בגזל! לא פשט ידי בגזל After my Rebbi said that, I remember raising my eyes and asking "Taka?" (is that really so). So he said, "*Lamir kulin in Chazal*" - let's take a look at Chazal.

He opened up the Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 22:3)⁶ which read, just like Klal Yisroel purified their hearts when they sang the shira [Az Yashir], as it says ויראו העם את ה' ויאמינו (i.e., they purified their hearts with *yiras Hashem* and *emunah*), and only then it says Az Yashir, כן צריך האדם לטהר ליבו - "so, too, a person has to purify his heart," because I have no robbery in my hands, "and so it's written in Sefer Iyov, who said חסם בכפי - "my tefillah is pure." Zugt the Chazal, ותפילתי זכה - "someone whose hands are dirtied with *gezel*, calls out to Hashem," ואינו עונה אותו, "and Hashem does not answer him," אבל איוב, "Why [isn't he answered], because his tefillah is intertwined with an aveirah of *gezel*," - למה? מפני שתפילתו בעבירה - "but Iyov, who didn't have an aveira of *gezel*, his tefillos were pure." The Midrash adds

³ זהו שער השמים. מקום תפילה לעלות תפילתם השמימה. ומדרשו, שבית המקדש של מעלה מן כנגד בית המקדש של מטה

⁴ הנה עומד בחוץ לארץ - כינוי את לבו כנגד ארץ ישראל, שנאמר: "והתפללו אליך דרך ארצם" (ברכות, ל, ע"א)

⁵ קומי כנשאת ד' ישראל דשריא בגלותא עסוקי במשנה גליליא ארום שכינתא ד" שריא לקבלין ובפתגמי אורייתא קשרי שפרפרא שדיא ה' מיא עקמומית לביך וסדר' בתיבתא וצלאי בבית כנשאתא כל קבל אפי' יי טול' לותיה בצלו ידך על נפשתי עולמך דצחין בכפא ברש כל מחזין

⁶ כשם שהם הסמיכו שירה אחר האמנה והקריעה, וכשם שהם טהרו לבם ואמרו שירה, שכן כתיב: ויראו העם את ה' ויאמינו, ואחר כך: אז ישיר, כך צריך אדם לטהר לבו קדם שיתפלל, וכן איוב אמר (איוב טז, יז): על לא חסם בכפי ותפילתי זכה. אמר רבי יהושע הכהן בן רבי נחמיה וכו' יש תפלה עכורה, אלא כל מי שידיו מלוכלכות בגזל הוא קורא להקדוש ברוך הוא ואינו עונה אותו, למה, שתפלתו בעברה, שנאמר (בראשית ו, יג): ויאמר ה' לנח קץ כל בשר וגו', אבל איוב שלא היה בעמלו גזל, היתה תפלתו זכה, לכן אומר: על לא חסם בכפי, לפי שאין עול בכפי ובעמלי, תפילתי זכה. אמר רבי חמא בר רבי חנינא מנין שכל מי שהגזל בידו תפלתו עכורה, שנאמר (ישעיה א, טו): ובפרשכם כפיכם וגו' אינו שמע, מפני מה, שידים דמים מלאו. ומנין שכל מי שמרחיק עצמו מן הגזל תפלתו זכה, שנאמר (תהלים כד, ד): נקי כפים ובר לבב, מה כתיב אחריו (תהלים כד, ה ו'): ישא ברכה מאת ה', זה דור דורשיו

“How do we know that someone who has *gezel* in his hands, his *tefillos* are cloudy?” - מנין שכל מי שהגזל בידו תפלתו עכורה
 “As it says in the passuk, ‘When you spread out your hands [in prayer]... I don’t hear..’” - שנאמר ובפרשכם כפיכם וגו’ איני שומע
 “because your hands are full of blood.” They’re bloodied hands. Hands that are full of *gezel* are called “bloodied” hands. And how do you know that Hashem answers somebody who has “clean” hands? As it says in Tehillim (24:4), נקי כפים ובר לבב, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart.” The next pasuk says the following, “He shall carry away a blessing from Hashem.” You hear that?

It says in this *Midrash* clearly the *avon* of *gezel* makes your *tefilos* not be accepted, so a person has to “clean” himself beforehand. Yaakov Avinu needed a *tefillah* to be saved from Eisav, הצילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו (Bereishis 32:12). He wanted Hashem to *mekabel* his *tefillah*. If his *tefillah* wouldn’t have been accepted, he wouldn’t have been spared. Yaakov Avinu was *zahir bagezel* like nobody’s business. Yaakov Avinu now entered Lavan’s house, and he was a tremendous worker for him. He was a very loyal shepherd. It was such an *erliche* קשה ביותר. To be an *erliche* worker in that situation was very hard. There were constantly opportunities to be *meikel* and to be *moreh heter* for himself. Yaakov Avinu was *zocheh* to be *mekayem* this obligation. His loyalty *be’shleimus* to the last penny was simply amazing, even though his father-in-law, was a *ramai gamur*.

The Rambam writes in *Hilchos Sechirus* בעל הבית שמזהר בל, “just like the owner is warned not to steal from the poor worker, so too the poor worker is commanded not to steal from the *ba’al habayis*,” אלא חייב לדקדק על עצמו, “rather, he has to be careful about his time” וכן חייב לעבוד בכל כחו “and he has to work *bechol kocho*. And the Rambam says that we learn this work ethic from Yaakov Avinu who said, “with all my strength I worked for your father.” ⁷ Do you see how great this obligation is? And then later on, when Lavan came to him and chased him down, do you know what Yaakov told him? “You’re not going to find one needle from your house.” Do you know how hard it is not to find anything? You live together, a father-in-law and mother-in-law, in laws with kids. You’ve got twelve kids. They’re running in and out. You’ve got a needle. You’ve got a pin. You’ve got this or that. You’re not going to find anything - אפילו מחט - even a needle from Lavan in Yaakov’s house. Can you understand that? It’s unbelievable. That’s what a person has to realize.

PROTECTED FROM AVEIROS

And you have to *daven* at all times that Hashem should protect you from being *over isurim* (from transgressing aveiros). My Rebbe said over a family story, that when they were leaving Europe, his family went through Russia. They had to first travel to Moscow. In Moscow, they went to the Turkish consul in order to receive papers, so they could enter and pass through Turkey on their way to Eretz Yisrael. That was the land route then. After leaving the consul, they took a train from Moscow to Odessa, and from there, they boarded a ship to Turkey. Under normal circumstances, the train ride from Moscow to Odessa usually took 48 hours. Before they left Moscow, the Brisker Rav was very nervous and worried that they may not get to Odessa before Shabbos, so he had a *shaylah* if he was allowed to get on the train in Moscow. They were literally running for their lives, you understand. This was during World War II. Even though they had more than 48 hours until Shabbos, travel during the wartime entailed constant delays and he was concerned that they may not make it in time.

They stayed in a hotel in Moscow. During that stay, the Brisker Rav found out that the rav of the city of Moscow also lived in that hotel. He thought that maybe this rav could help him get papers to stay over Shabbos in Moscow and leave Moscow on Sunday. He went to that rav’s apartment. The rav turned out to be a real communist,

and he was in cahoots with the Russians and their secret police, the NKVD. However that rav, in a moment of honesty, told the Brisker Rav, “I will give you some good advice. I can get you papers to stay here until Sunday. But you don’t want to stay in Moscow until Sunday. Get on the train and get out of here as fast as you can.”

The next morning, they all got on the train, but there were many *ikuvim* on the road. As they got close to Shabbos, Friday afternoon, it became obvious to everyone there that it was not possible to reach their destination in Odessa before Shabbos. They’d be forced to be on the train on Shabbos. The Brisker Rav told his children to take everything out of their pockets that was *muktzah* - their money, their wallets, their passports, etc. They took everything out of their pockets that they couldn’t carry and they put those items in their suitcases. And then, the Brisker Rav began to say Tehillim, with tremendous *kavanah*. He was davening: “Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I don’t want to be *over* any *isur* of Shabbos. Make the train get there before Shabbos.” This *inyan* made such a *roshem* (impression) on everyone. There were a lot of people travelling with them. Everybody around also began to say Tehillim. The Brisker Rav inspired them. Incredibly, the train rolled into the city on Erev Shabbos as the sun was setting. They made it there by the skin of their teeth. They were *toch* the *techum Shabbos* when Shabbos came.

⁷ דרך שמזהר בעל הבית שלא יגזל שכר עני ולא יעכבנו כך העני מזהר שלא יגזל מלאכת בעל הבית ויבטל מעט בכאן ומעט בכאן ומוציא כל היום במרמה אלא חייב לדקדק על עצמו בזמן שהרי הקפידו על ברכה רביעית של ברכת המזון שלא יברך אותה. וכן חייב לעבד בכל כחו שהרי יעקב הצדיק אמר כי בכל כחי עבדתי את אביני. לפיכך נטל שכר זאת אף בעולם הזה שנאמר (בראשית ל מג) “ויפרץ האיש מאד מאד”: סליקו להו הלכות שכירות (בפי"ג מהל' שכירות ה"ז)

Coincidentally, there was a Gerrer chassid on that train who waited to see if the Tehillim of the Brisker Rav would work, because there was no natural way that it should've worked. When the guy saw the *mofes* (miracle), he made an announcement, "*Fun heint on*, I'm a Brisker chassid - from today on, I am a Brisker chassid!"

LEAVE THE BAGS!

When they got to the train station it was already Shabbos. Everybody else took their bags off the train. But the Brisker Rav told his children to leave the bags and not touch them. "But, tatti, we'd lose everything. Everything we own is in those bags. All the money, the papers." "No touching the bags," the Brisker Rav said. "Do you know what my father was busying himself with at that moment? He came out from the train station. He wanted to know which direction we had to walk to get to the hotel where we were staying. All he wanted to know was which way was *mizrach*. That's what was bothering him. You know why? Because on the way, it got really dark, and we were walking on this pitch dark road. There were no lights there whatsoever. My father decided it was time to daven *ma'ariv*. He wouldn't wait until they got to the place to daven *ma'ariv*. He stopped on the road to daven *ma'ariv*. But he wouldn't daven *ma'ariv* until he figured out which way was *mizrach*. 'How can you figure it out? You can't look at the sun. Do you look at the moon?' He said that he saw lights in the distance, and he asked one of the kids to go run to that light. We had no idea how far that light was. At night you can see lights. They may look close, but how close are they, really? So we had to go through these fields. My brother knocked on a guy's house. 'What do you want?' the owner asked him when he opened the door. 'Mister, where is *mizrach*?' my brothers asked. 'My father wants to know which way is *mizrach*. That's all.' He came back and told him which way is *mizrach*. 'Okay, now we're going to daven *ma'ariv*,' my father said." Do you now understand who the Brisker Rav was?

He didn't care about his luggage. When they came to the hotel, they saw their luggage in the lobby. Somebody *pashut* had brought their luggage on a bus from the train to the hotel! And the next day, on Shabbos, they had to walk from the hotel to the port, without their luggage, because the boat was leaving on *motzei Shabbos*. You can't get on the boat without a passport. You can't get on without a ticket. They were davening and kept on davening. They came to the port. They heard the whistles. The Brisker Rav would not get on that boat until it was *achtil* (i.e. the later tzeis). He wanted to wait until the Brisker *shiur*! He wouldn't get on the boat until he davened *ma'ariv*. That's how he was. Nothing fazed him. He knew his challenge was from Hashem.

FIND A QUIET PLACE AND DAVEN!

What would we do? We would lose ourselves. You've got to live with *tefillah*, Rabosai. Live with *tefillah* in your life! Start a career of asking Hashem. Spend a month asking Hashem to help you in one area. Spend two months. Ten minutes a day. It's not a lot. There are quiet times throughout your day. Come to the Beis Midrash and spend some quiet time there. Or go to a quiet room in your house - find a good corner and pour your heart out to Hashem. "Hashem, help me." Say some *kapitlach* Tehillim. You'll be amazed what you will accomplish. Daven to Hashem for clarity in learning. Daven to Hashem for *chizuk* in *emunah* and *bitachon*. Daven to Hashem for *ahavas haTorah*. Daven to Hashem to help you get over your challenges from the *yetzer hara* and your other needs. And *Im yirtzeh* Hashem, you'll be *matzliach*.

IN CONCLUSION

As a believing Jew, I must understand and accept that any challenges I face in my life come only, and directly, from Hashem. And if presently I find myself facing a difficult challenge, I will remember a very powerful lesson from the Brisker Rav, that if I daven sincerely to Hashem, my *tefillos* will work! As the Midrash with Yaakov Avinu illustrated so beautifully, Hashem actually wants me to daven and rely on Him in galus when I face adversity! Nonetheless, I also have to acknowledge the presence of "blockages" that exist between me and Hashem, which may block and not allow my *tefillos* to succeed. Therefore, this coming week, I will find a quiet place and will try to, first, identify the largest "roadblocks" that may impede my *tefillos*, and then work on removing them from my path of Avodas Hashem. With these preparations and attitude to my *tefillah*, IY"H, I will see much *hatzalachah*!