

During the Three Weeks We Strive to Correct the Traits of "Chochmoh" "Binoh" and "Da'as" through Torah Study

We have just entered the period referred to as "bein hametzorim" – the three weeks beginning with Shivah-
asar B'Tamuz and concluding with Tishah B'Av. This name derives from the possuk (Eichah 1, 3): "כל רודפיה – השיגוה בין המצררים" – all her pursuers overtook her "bein hametzorim," literally translated as between the narrow straits. Rashi comments, in the name of a Midrash-aggadeh: "בין שבעה עשר בתמוז לתשעה באב" – this refers to the period between the seventeenth day of Tamuz and the ninth day of Av.

It is only fitting, therefore, that we examine the sacred service that is required of us during these three weeks. The Tur and the Mechaber (O.C. 428, 8), citing the Pesikteh, spell out the order of the haftaros that are read on every Shabbos from Shivah-
asar B'Tamuz until Shabbos Teshuvah:

"מי"ז בתמוז ואילך מפטירין ג' דפורענותא, ז' דנחמתא... ג' דפורענותא, דברי ירמיהו, שמעו דבר ה', חזון ישעיהו. שבע דנחמתא, נחמו, ותאמר ציון, עניה סוערה, אנכי, רני עקרה, קומי אורי, שוש איש."

The first three are referred to as "ג' דפורענותא" – three of suffering – and the next seven are referred to as "ז' דנחמתא" – seven of consolation. There are precisely ten weeks from the beginning of "the three weeks" to Rosh HaShoneh. The Rabbis instituted that during the three weeks of "bein hametzorim," we recite the haftaros referred to as "gimel d'puranuse" – three portions from the prophets focusing on the suffering related to the destruction and loss of the Beis HaMikdosh. These three haftaros are: "דברי" "ירמיהו", "שמעו דבר ה'", "חזון ישעיהו".

In contrast, on the seven Shabbosos that follow the three weeks of "bein hametzorim," we read the haftaros of "zayin d'nechemteh" – seven portions from the prophets aimed at consoling Yisroel. These seven

haftaros which lead up to Rosh HaShanah are: "נחמו עמי", "ותאמר ציון", "עניה סוערה לא נחמה", "אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם", "רני עקרה", "קומי אורי כי בא אורך", "שוש איש בה' תגל נפשי באלקי"

Ten Haftaros Corresponding to the Ten Attributes

Now, it is incumbent upon us to explain the deeper significance and practical relevance for every Jew inherent in the order of these ten haftaros – "the three of suffering" followed by "the seven of consolation." Why did our blessed sages institute the recitation of three haftaros focusing on the suffering and divine punishment associated with the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh to be followed by the recitation of seven haftaros aimed at consolation? Surely, they intended to convey an important lesson related to repentance and correcting for the destruction.

We will begin our journey of enlightenment with the writings of the great Rabbi Tzoddok HaKohen, zy"א, (Matos 9; Masei 11). He teaches us that these ten haftaros correspond to the ten sephiros – the ten attributes with which HKB"H created the universe. The first three haftaros, which we read on the three Shabbosot of "bein hametzorim," correspond to the first three attributes associated with the intellect: "דעת, חכמה, בינה" – literally translated as wisdom, intuition and knowledge. The subsequent seven haftaros correspond to the seven character traits associated with the heart: "חסד, גבורה, תפארת, נצח, הוד, יסוד" – Love, Restraint, Beauty, Dominance, Empathy, Foundation and Kingship. [Translator's note: These traits are translated into English in many different ways, most of which do not do them justice.] In fact, the Ohev Yisroel, the great Rabbi from Apt, zy"א, in parshat Pinchas, explains the reason for the institution of these haftaros in similar terms.

What we glean from their teachings is that our task during the three weeks of "bein hametzorim" is to correct the three attributes associated with the intellect — Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as; whereas, after those three weeks, until the end of the year, we are to focus on correcting the seven attributes associated with the heart. When all is said and done, though, these ten weeks are aimed at correcting all ten attributes. Why, then, did our sages of blessed memory see fit to divide these ten weeks into two distinct groups — the "gimel d'puranuse" corresponding to the first three attributes and the "zayin d'nechemta" corresponding to the latter seven attributes?

The Destruction of the Temple Was the Result of Not Laboring over the Torah in Depth

To address these issues, let us introduce the precious insights of several of our great rabbinical visionaries, zy"l, to guide us in our quest. First of all, we find the following Midrash (Eichah Rabbosi, Intro., 2) which elucidates the possuk (Yeshayah 5, 24): "כי מאסו את תורת ה' צבאות, זו תורה שבכתב, ואת אמרות קדוש ישראל ניאצו, זו תורה שבעל פה, וכיון שהשליכו דברי תורה לארץ התחיל ירמיה מקונן עליהם איכה." — Yirmiyah began the lamentation of Eichah because they despised and rejected both the Torah she'b'chsav and the Torah she'b'al peh. In other words, the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh was a consequence of the people not engaging in Torah study.

This coincides remarkably with an essential tenet concerning Torah study which we have learned from the Turei Zahav (O.C. 47, 1). It is vital that every Jew review his holy words, especially during this time of the year, when we are focused on mourning over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh. He teaches us that the main reason the Beis HaMikdosh was destroyed was because the people did not labor and exert themselves in their Torah study; their Torah study was performed in a very leisurely manner. To assist us, we will present his sacred words at greater length.

We have learned in the Gemoreh (Bove Metziah 85., Nedorim 81.): "אמר רב יהודה אמר רב, מאי דכתיב: (ירמיה ט יא), מי האיש החכם ויבן את זאת ואשר דיבר

פי ה' אלו ויגידה על מה אבדה הארץ, דבר זה נשאל לחכמים ולנביאים ולא פירשוהו, עד שפירשו הקב"ה בעצמו, דכתיב (שם יב) ויאמר ה' על עזבם את תורת אשר נתתי לפניהם ולא שמעו בקולי ולא הלכו בה, היינו לא שמעו בקולה היינו לא הלכו בה, אמר רב יהודה אמר רב, — שלא ברכו בתורה תחילה" — this is a statement from Rav Yehudah in the name of Rav elucidating a possuk in Yirmiyah concerning the question of why Yisroel lost their land; the sages and the prophets could not explain the matter until HKB"H explains: **Because they have forsaken My Torah which I put before them.** Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: This means that they neglected to make a berocheh before engaging in Torah study.

The commentaries are puzzled by this statement. How is it even conceivable that Yisroel were exiled from their land for such a seemingly minor transgression such as neglecting to make a berocheh before one's Torah study? The Scriptures are replete with the words of the prophets rebuking the people of Yisroel for performing serious transgressions. In fact, the Gemoreh states explicitly (Yoma 9:): "מקדש ראשון: מפני מה חרב, מפני ג' דברים שהיו בו עבודה זרה וגלוי — the first Beis HaMikdosh was destroyed because Yisroel committed the three cardinal sins of idol worship, immorality and murder. How, then, are we to understand Rav's statement that Yisroel were sent into exile because of a failure to recite the berachah before engaging in Torah study?

Here we find clarification from the Turei Zahav. The sages and prophets were certainly aware of the fact that Yisroel was exiled due to its serious transgressions; what they could not comprehend, however, was why their Torah study did not protect them from committing these sins and from the subsequent punishment. After all, the Gemoreh teaches us (Sotah 21.): "תורה בעידנא — while engaged in Torah study one is protected from sinning and spared from punishment. This forces us to conclude that they forgot the Torah and abandoned its ways; therefore, it no longer afforded them protection. This is what puzzled them and ultimately led them to query: "על מה אבדה — why was their Torah study not sustained — a failure that resulted in their exile from the land?"

Addressing this question, Rav answers: **שלא ברכו** “because they neglected to recite a berachah before engaging in Torah study. The Gemoreh in Berachot (63:) teaches us: **אמר ריש לקיש, מנין שאין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה, שנאמר זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל** — only Torah study associated with commitment and self-sacrifice is sustained. This fact is reflected in the formula of the berachah recited over Torah study: **יצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה** — the berachah specifically employs the infinitive **לעסוק** rather than **ללמוד** indicating that the study must involve labor, exertion and intense debate, such as one demonstrates in business transactions.

Rav informs us that they did not recite the berachah, **לעסוק בדברי תורה**, with the proper intent — rather than committing to learn with exertion and intensity, they only intended to learn what appealed to them and came easily and effortlessly. As a consequence, their Torah and its associated protection did not last. This is the insight provided by the Turei Zahav.

Based on this insight, it is apparently clear that to correct this serious flaw and to put an end to this bitter exile, it is crucial that we exert ourselves and delve into our Torah study — fulfilling the true meaning of the berachah **לעסוק בדברי תורה**. A very nice allusion to this concept can be found in Scriptures concerning the manner in which HKB”H revealed himself to Moshe before the exodus from Egypt (Shemos 3, 2): **וירא — an angel of Hashem appeared to him in a fiery flame from within the thorn bush**. Rashi points out that He appeared to Moshe from within a thorn bush and not from within some other variety of bush or tree, conveying the message that Hashem is with us even during our times of distress — reflected by the thorns.

According to what we have learned, we can suggest that HKB”H was alluding to the fact that in order to free ourselves from this prolonged exile, we must labor in our Torah study, despite the suffering and self-sacrifice. Thus, HKB”H revealed himself to Moshe in a flame of fire — alluding to the Torah that is compared to fire (see Yirmiyah 23, 29). Furthermore, the words in the possuk for “a flame of fire” are **בלבת אש**. The

word **לב** constitutes an abbreviation for the formula in the berachah **לעסוק בדברי תורה** — indicating that we must labor and exert ourselves in our Torah study.

The Battle between the Neshomeh in our Brain and the Yetzer Hura in the Heart

Continuing along this path, let us rise to the occasion and explain this matter in greater depth. Why, indeed, is it necessary to labor and exert ourselves in our Torah study? We have learned in the Gemoreh (Kiddushin 30:) **כך הקב”ה אמר להם לישראל, בניי בראתי יצר הרע: ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו — so said HKB”H to Yisroel: My children, I have created the yetzer hura and I have created Torah as its antidote (literally: spice); if you engage in Torah study, you will not fall prey to him**. It is essential to understand why it is impossible to overcome the yetzer hura in any other manner other than by engaging in Torah study.

We can explain the matter based on what the author of the Tanya explains at length in Likutei Amarim (Chapters 9-16) concerning the nature of the battle between the good inclination and the evil inclination, the yetzer tov and the yetzer hura. He informs us that this is in fact a struggle between the neshomeh in the brain and the yetzer hura in the heart. This idea is based on the Midrash (Bamidbor Rabbah 22, 9) which elucidates the possuk in Koheles (10, 2): **לב חכם לימינו ולב כסיל לשמאלו - לב חכם לימינו זה יצר טוב שהוא נתון בימינו, ולב כסיל לשמאלו זה יצר הרע שנתון בשמאלו**. The possuk states: **A wise man's heart is to his right; while a fool's heart is to his left**. The wise man's heart refers to the yetzer tov who resides in the right cavity of the heart; while the fool's heart refers to the yetzer hura who resides in the left cavity of the heart.

This, in fact, is illustrated by the following elucidation from our sages (Berachos 54.): **ואהבת את ה' אלקיך — בכל לבבך, בשני יצריך ביצר טוב וביצר הרע** — the possuk states: **You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all of your heart**; this is interpreted to mean with both of your yetzers, your good inclination and your evil inclination — for, they reside together in the cavities of your heart. The Baal HaTanya explains that the origin of the yetzer tov on the right side of the heart

is really the neshomeh in the brain, which is a portion of G-d from above. Therefore, due to the neshomeh's influence, man desires to fulfill the will of Hashem. The yetzer hura, however, residing in the left cavity of the heart, sways man to pursue his earthly cravings and lust. Thus, the Baal HaTanya explains that the struggle between the two yetzers is truly a struggle between the brain and the heart.

This, then, is man's mission in this world — to insure that the brain reigns over the heart and dictates its behavior. In the words of the Baal HaTanya (Chapter 16): **“זוהו כלל גדול בעבודת ה' לבינונים, העיקר הוא: למשול ולשלוט על הטבע שבחלל השמאלי, על ידי אור ה' המאיר לנפש האלקית שבמוח, ולשלוט על הלב.”** This is an important principle regarding the service of Hashem for the average person; it is crucial to control the natural inclinations of the left cavity, by utilizing the divine light which illuminates the soul in the brain and empowers it to reign over the heart. It is worth adding the following helpful allusion; in all of one's pursuits, one should always remember that the word **מעשה** — which means action or deed — is an anagram of the first letters of the expression **מ'יוח ש'ליט ע'ל ה'לב**, the brain should be the ruler over the heart.

The Intellect in the Brain Encompasses Chochmoh Binoh Daas

Come and see how this sacred mission — insuring that the brain controls the heart — coincides beautifully with the words of the Baal HaTanya himself in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 3). HKB"ח created man consisting of ten elements which are divided into two distinct categories — intellect and character traits. The intellect encompasses the first three sephiros — Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as. The seven character traits in the heart consist of the lower seven sephiros: **חסד גבורה תפארת נצח הוד יסוד מלכות**. It is man's mission to insure that the three components of the intellect in the brain-- Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as — control the expression of the seven character traits of the heart. In other words, he should insure that the "midos," the character traits, which guide one's behavior and actions, reflect only love and reverence for Hashem and not the desires and cravings of this world.

The Baal HaTanya helps us understand how the intellect controls the "midos." Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as are

actually three stages in man's thought process — the development of the thought until the final decision is made to act upon the thought. In this manner, the intellect influences the seven character traits in making a thought into a reality. Let us explain.

"Chochmoh," **“חכמה”**, describes man's first impression or perception of a subject — before he has formulated a plan to transform the thought into a reality. For example, when one first decides to build a house; initially, this idea falls into the category of Chochmoh — it merely represents the initial stage of the thought process. It is referred to as "Chochmoh," because the Hebrew word **“חכמה”** consists of the letters **ח מ ה**, indicating that at this stage the matter only exists potentially but does not exist, yet, in reality.

The second stage of the thought process is "binoh" — the ability to intuit one thing from another. In other words, at this stage, one takes the initial raw thought to build a house and, using one's intuition, develops the thought further — i.e. how many rooms should the house have, etc. During the "binoh" stage of the thought process, one is still deciding how and what to build. Until he has reached a final decision and formulated a definite plan, he is still in the stage of "binoh." Clearly, he will not begin building the house before he has decided the particulars and has formulated a plan or a blueprint.

"Da'as" represents the final stage of the thought process — the final decision. A definite plan and blueprint has been formulated based on the products of the first two stages of ideation. The word "Da'as," translated as knowledge, derives from the possuk (Bereishit 4, 1): **“והאדם ידע את חוה אשתו” — And the man knew Chava, his wife;** the term "knew" here conveys the idea of connection and association. In order to transform potential into reality, one's decision must be intimately bound to his thought process. Without this commitment, he will have constant and recurring doubts concerning how to execute his plan to build the house.

If we combine these two precious introductions from the Baal HaTanya, we achieve a greater understanding of man's mission in this world. One must insure that the neshomeh in the brain — employing the three elements of the intellect, Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as — controls the seven "midos" in the heart — the residence of the yetzer — insuring that one does not perform any action

until he has considered the matter with his neshomeh and his intellect. Weighing the matter with the three elements of the intellect — Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as — one can decide whether or not it is appropriate to perform said act. In this manner, the neshomeh in the brain — with its three factors — exerts its influence on the seven "midos" of the heart in the right cavity. From there, the influence and control will extend to the yetzer hura in the left cavity, as well — affecting one's behavior and decisions concerning what to do and what not to do, what to love and what to fear, what to embrace and what to reject

Torah Concepts Constitute Nourishment for the Brain

In this manner, we can begin to comprehend HKB"H's statement to Yisroel: **“בניי בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו: תורה תבלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים -- בידו”** — **My children I have created the yetzer hura and I have created Torah as its antidote** (literally: spice); **if you engage in Torah study, you will not fall prey to him**. The Gemoreh (Chagigah 14.) states that Torah is referred to as bread, as we find in the possuk (Mishlei 9, 5): **“לכו לחמו בלחמי”** — **Come and partake of my bread** — where bread refers to Torah or, more specifically, to the Written Torah, Torah she'b'chsav.

The Baal HaTanya explains in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 5) that when a person consumes food, it enters his body and is incorporated into his being as a part indistinguishable from his flesh or his blood. In a similar fashion, when one labors with his intellect to understand the Torah, his intellect in his brain incorporates this understanding and Torah insight; in the process, the Torah serves as internal nourishment for the brain in his head.

Thus, we can interpret HKB"H's statement to Yisroel: **My children, I have created the yetzer hura in the left cavity of the heart, the location of the seven "midos" of the heart; I have also created the Torah, which functions as its antidote, since it serves as food for the neshomeh in the brain. If you engage in Torah study, you will not fall prey to it — when a Jew engages in Torah study with his intellect, the light of Torah penetrates the parts of man's brain housing the elements of Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as; this gives the neshomeh the power to illuminate the right cavity of**

the heart and to eventually overcome the yetzer hura located in the left cavity of the heart.

Scriptures Mishnah and Talmud Correspond to Chochmoh Binoh and Da'as

In light of this concept, we can suggest a wonderful interpretation of the following Gemoreh (Avodeh Zoreh 19:): **“לעולם ישלש אדם שנותיו, שליש במקרא, שליש בתלמוד”** — **a man should always divide his life into thirds, a third devoted to Scriptures, a third devoted to Mishnah and a third devoted to Talmud**. Tosafot (שם ד"ה ישלש) write, in the name of Rabeinu Tam, that we fulfill this obligation through the study of Talmud Bavli. For, the Gemoreh states (Sanhedrin 24.): **“מאי בבל, אמר רבי יוחנן, בלולה במקרא, בלולה בתלמוד”** — **what does the name Bavel reflect? It reflects a mixture of Scripture, Mishnah and Talmud**.

In Chidushei Agadot (Avodah Zarah ibid.), the Mahural explains that Torah study is divided into three parts — Scriptures, Mishnah and Talmud — corresponding to Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as. Here are the insightful words of the Mahural:

“כי אלו שלשה דברים הם כנגד חכמה בינה ודעת, החכמה היא כנגד מקרא שאין זה רק התחלת חכמה, ודעת הוא כנגד משנה שיודע הדבר כמו שהוא וזהו נקרא ידיעה, ובינה כנגד התלמוד שהיא בינה יתירה להבין הדבר, ותחלה נתן השי"ת באדם החכמה ואחר כך הדעת ואחר כך הבינה, ולכך אמרו (אבות פ"ה) בן ה' למקרא, ובן עשר למשנה, ובן ט"ו לתלמוד.”

Chochmoh corresponds to Scriptures; it is the first step of the intellectual process. Da'as corresponds to Mishnah; it represents basic knowledge. Binoh corresponds to Talmud; it is the deeper, discerning examination of each subject. First, Hashem instilled in man Chochmoh, then Da'as and lastly binoh. This is the same order we find in the Mishnah (Avos, Chapter 5): one begins the study of Scriptures at age five, Mishnah at age ten and Talmud at age fifteen.

Note how wonderfully the Mahural's explanation coincides with the Baal HaTanya's conceptualization of Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as. Scriptures, Torah she'b'chsav, represents Chochmoh — it is the first stage of the intellectual interaction with Torah, before

clarifying the details of the precepts in Torah she'b'al peh. Talmud, the intellectual debate among scholars to clarify and deduce the precepts of the Torah represents binoh — intuiting one thing from another and weighing both sides of every issue. Whereas Mishnah, the actual halachic decisions of the Tanaim without the dialectic, represents Da'as — a definitive decision regarding how to proceed and act.

We have now achieved a better understanding as to why our blessed sages instructed us to engage in the daily study of Talmud Bavli, since it is a mixture of Scriptures, Mishnah and Talmud--,"בלולה במקרא," "בלולה בתלמוד." Since it therefore represents a combination of Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as, engaging in the study of Talmud Bavli sanctifies and illuminates those elements of the intellect and brain. Having accomplished this, one can proceed to illuminate the seven "midos" of the heart in its right cavity, and eventually proceed to subjugate the yetzer hura in the left cavity.

We have already seen the words of the Midrash: "כי מאסו את תורת ה' צבאות, זו תורה שבכתב, ואת אמרות קדוש ישראל ניאצו, זו תורה שבעל פה, וכיון שהשליכו --דברי תורה לארץ התחיל ירמיה מקונן עליהם איכה" Yirmiyah began the lamentation of Eichah, because they despised and rejected both the Torah she'b'chsav and the Torah she'b'al peh. As per our discussion, by rejecting Torah she'b'chsav and Torah she'b'al peh — which is comprised of Mishneh and Talmud — they were no longer able to illuminate the elements of Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as in the brain. As a consequence, the brain could no longer control the seven character traits of the heart with its three intellectual elements.

This is also the lesson conveyed by the Taz (Turei Zahav); it is essential to engage in the form of Torah study involving dialectic. By clarifying every halachah through investigation and debate, weighing every aspect of an issue, and only then rendering a halachic decision, this truly represents the process of Chochmoh, binoh, and Da'as applied to Torah study. Having illuminated these three elements in one's intellect, one can rule over his seven "midos" in the heart and subdue the yetzer hura. Since, however, they did not engage in this form of intense and in depth Torah study, their Torah was not

sustained in their intellect and brain, and they could no longer control their seven character traits in the heart.

Alas, we can stand enlightened and rejoice being able to address the reason for the rabbinical institution regarding the order and recitation of the haftaros: "gimel d'puranuse" followed by "zayin d'nechemta." It is necessary to first correct the source of the problem resulting in the transgressions that caused the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh — they failed to engage in Torah study involving labor, effort and debate which is necessary to illuminate the elements of Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as in the brain. Addressing this failure, the Rabbis instituted the "gimel d'puranuse" to teach us what is expected of us during the three weeks of "bein hametzorim." We are to mourn and grieve over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh and to spend as much time as possible engaged in proper Torah study — i.e. Torah study characterized by labor and exertion to stimulate the intellectual elements of Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as. This will serve to atone for the serious flaw in factors that led to the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh.

Once, however, we have achieved atonement during the three weeks corresponding to the "gimel d'puranuse," our intellectual powers will also have been restored. We will now be able to employ the three elements of the intellect, once again, to illuminate the seven "midos" of the heart. Therefore, the Rabbis instituted the "zayin d'nechemta" to immediately follow the three weeks of "bein hametzorim." The seven character traits of the heart can now be consoled, seeing as the yetzer tov in the right cavity can once again overcome the yetzer hura in the left cavity.

In summary, the purpose of our resolve and efforts during the three weeks of "bein hametzorim" is to exert ourselves and labor at our Torah study in order to empower the neshomeh in the brain and to revitalize its three forces of Chochmoh, binoh and Da'as. By so doing, these three forces of the intellect will reign over the seven "midos" of the heart. In this merit, we should realize the fulfillment of all of the prophets' words of consolation regarding Yisroel and the future redemption — swiftly, in our times. Amen.