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פרשת מטות-מסעי

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Learning Tolerance

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Part I. Tolerating the Wilderness

Tremendous Praise

At the end of Sefer Bamidbar we see a remarkable thing. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is talking now to the Am Yisroel about coming into Eretz Canaan. And He says like this: **כִּי אֲנִי הָשֵׁם שׁוֹכֵן בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** – For I Hashem dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel (Masei 35:34).

It's the conclusion now of that great experience, the forty years in the Wilderness, and finally they're getting the *haskamah* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu: "You've succeeded! I'm proud of you, you're worthy now that I can dwell in your midst." Now, the question is what made them so great, so great that they deserved this praise from Hakodosh Boruch Hu?

You know, the Jewish history is like a book, and it's a book being written by the Am Yisroel even today. Whatever we are doing today; when we live virtuous lives or learn Torah or build more yeshivas; when we establish *frum* families and when we achieve perfection of character;

whatever it is we're doing, we are writing sentences and chapters in that book which will someday be a great history.

Learning to Write

But nobody can write a successful book willy-nilly, without guidance. And so, before we were permitted to set out to write our history we were given a preface with models to follow. I don't know if you ever saw the old school books that were used to teach children how to write – it could be it's the same even today. In the beginning of the book they had written in a nice handwriting all the letters and even some paragraphs and the rest of the book was blank pages. So you turned to the beginning and studied those printed letters and in the blank pages that followed you wrote your own letters, copying that handwriting. And after a while, you learned how to write in a beautiful handwriting.

And so Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us the *Dor Hamidbar* so that we can look at them and utilize them as a model when we're writing the book of our own history throughout all our generations.

And therefore it's important to understand in what way the Am Yisroel in the Wilderness became especially worthy of Hashem's acclaim at the end of forty years. Because what they achieved, and the way they achieved it, we're expected to model our own lives after that.

Savlonus School

I'm going to give the answer first with just one word, one word that will introduce our subject tonight. I'll say the word, but remember, that's not the whole story; there's a lot to say still.

What made them great? The answer is they learned *savlonus*, to tolerate. When we look back at the *Dor Hamidbar* we see that the nation was given a special training for forty years – they underwent a schooling of *savlonus*.

Now, if we're going to understand that we have to study a little bit what it means to live in the Wilderness.

First, let's imagine what happened when they heard that they were going to stay in the Wilderness for forty years. Oooh, were they disappointed! Instead of going **יָוֵם מְדוּרָב עֶשְׂרֵי יוֹם**, immediately to Eretz Canaan, they had to travel around in the *midbar*. "Whoooh! What's going on?! We thought we were traveling to Eretz Canaan!" They were thinking already of the nice juicy figs and dates and big houses with gardens, and all of a sudden they were told, "Forty years in the *midbar*." What a

disappointment that was! You need *savlonus* to take that. It's a tremendous test, a terrible test!

Tolerating Family and Neighbors

You know what it means to live in the Wilderness? They didn't live in houses like they did in Mitzrayim. Back in Mitzrayim they had houses. The Chumash says that. And now they're in tents!

You need *savlonus* if you're going to live forty years in a tent. It's very inconvenient. And they had a lot of children in those days and so it was difficult. Constantly, children were doing things. They were children, not angels. Children complain. They cry. They fight. And a mother has to listen to complaints. She has to listen to them and she has to be able to tolerate it. It's not easy.

And it's not only your own family. One of the features of the *midbar* was the crowding together of all the people. Your neighbors were right there next to you. Your tent is here and the next man's tent is right here. They didn't have any big space between them. And it wasn't houses with walls; it was cloth tents.

When you have a couple of million people camping together in one small place, one tent near another, you have to learn *savlonus*. People could get on each other's nerves all the time. Maybe you want to take a nap and the baby in the next tent is crying loud; he doesn't let you sleep. You have to have *savlonus* for neighbors like that. It's almost impossible for people to live together in such crowded conditions unless you are practicing *savlonus* day and night.

Midbar Mashgichim

Not only your neighbors were crowding in on you. Every Jew had a *mashgiach* appointed over him. You know, in the yeshiva, let's say you have a yeshiva of a hundred boys; so there's a *mashgiach* who's watching the boys. And they feel it's too much. He's always looking at us!

But in the *midbar*, for every nine people, there was one *mashgiach*! *Sarei asarah* means that of every ten people, one was appointed as a *mashgiach* to watch. And he had full authority over them. You realize what a straightjacket that was? It's a most uncomfortable form of existence. You had to be a big *savlon* because you were constantly being watched; somebody was always looking over your shoulders.

And for every hundred, there was another supervisor, and for every thousand another supervisor. And so the nation in the *midbar* was swarming with supervisors.

Everybody was under the strictest control for forty years. You know what that means to be under constant scrutiny every minute. It was almost impossible to tolerate such supervision! You needed very much *savlonus* to live that way.

Trumpet Trepidation

They had to learn to be *soveil* Hashem too. After all He didn't allow them any *menucha*. He never told them, "Settle in. In this place we'll be staying for at least a month." Oh no; every day they had to be on the alert, maybe they'll hear the sound of the trumpets that will summon them to pull up the stakes of their tents and start moving. They never had any kind of security that they would remain in one place for longer than a day. It's true, in one place they remained for eighteen years. But the entire eighteen years, every day, they were in trepidation. Every minute the trumpet might sound and say: get moving!

And then there was the diet. Here Hakodosh Boruch Hu took us out of Mitzrayim and right away there's no water. Three days with no water – you know what that means, no water. You're thirsty. The children are climbing the walls from thirst. You're irritated. You need *savlonus* for such a test.

Intolerable Food

And food? What food? **וְהָמֵן כְּזֶרַע גֶּדֶה הוּא וְעֵינָיו כְּעֵיִן הַבְּרֹלֶחַ**. The *mann* was colorless; a light color, practically colorless. It means the most dull kind of menu. It was a difficult test. If your wife would serve you every day for one week the same thing exactly, you might feel a little irritated. Suppose she served you a month the same thing, day and night the same thing, I'm afraid what would be. And here for forty years, that's all they had.

Now all of you *tzaddikim*, you know that when they wanted to have a *machshavah* of eating meat, it tasted like meat. But that wasn't so easy. It wasn't just like this, "Meat!" and it becomes meat. No, it wasn't that easy. They had to sit down and say, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu is a *tov umaitiv* and He's able to give me meat and the *mann* has all the good things in it that meat can give me and I would like to have the feeling I'm eating meat." And little by little if you worked on it, you could get a certain amount of *hana'ah* as if you ate meat.

But it was only a matter of the *seichel*. It didn't turn into meat. It was still *mann*. And any moment that he stopped using his *seichel*, it tasted like the same old *mann* again. So he had to keep his mind on it constantly.

And so even if you were from the good ones who could do that, it's a little bit tiresome! They would like to sit down to *real* meat! A red steak and some wheat bread! Ahh! To be able to chew a solid piece of bread. Real food! But the *mann*? Always, day after day, to eat something that just your mind is telling you tastes good?

Punished by Design

Hakodosh Boruch Hu was creating a patient people. Day after day for forty years He was testing our tolerance and making a perfect nation from us. Whether you liked it or not, you learned to be a *soveil*, a patient fellow. You learned to accept your circumstances. It was the most remarkable period in our history, the most unusual period.

And if you'll understand this, you'll understand a big *yesod*. You know some people think that because of the *meraglim*, that's why they were sentenced to be forty years in the *midbar*. After all, it says openly in the Chumash that reason.

But there's a *klal gadol* in history that we have to learn; a very important rule as follows: Whatever happens was planned by Hashem beforehand. **מֵרֵאשׁ וּמִקֶּדֶם** Hashem wanted them to be forty years in the *midbar*. And so whatever your *cheder rebbi* might have taught you, it's time to get this into your head right now. It was planned; in order to make this great generation even greater, even more perfect, so that they should be worthy of the encomium of Hashem, Hakodosh Boruch Hu had in mind from the beginning they should not enter Eretz Yisrael.

Gaining Perfection

And that's because for that great generation it was an opportunity, an opportunity for perfection of character. The Gemara says in Sanhedrin (7a) that when we were good friends, *ki rechimton aziza*, "when our love was very great," Hashem said, "we could sleep together on a very narrow place. But now, even a bed of sixty cubits is too narrow for us." It means this. When people are interested in perfecting their character, they can get along even in crowded and uncomfortable circumstances.

Subsequently when they were not so perfect, they weren't able to continue that way so Hashem allowed them to scatter in the land of Canaan and each one lived on his own farm far away from each other. And there they had stone houses and real food and all the ordinary conveniences of life.

But in the *midbar* everything was set up to test them. They had to watch out what they said. What will the neighbors say? What will the *sarei*

asarah say? It's the same food again? It's already thirty years, every day breakfast and supper, the same thing! We're traveling? We're not traveling?

And therefore they learned to accept the circumstances and they became perfect in the *midbar*. They lacked many conveniences and they learned to grin and bear it. They learned to tolerate that strict limited diet; they learned to tolerate the scarcity of water and the inconvenience of living in tents. They learned to tolerate the necessity to travel sometimes long journeys on foot. After a while, they became accustomed to it and little by little they gained the perfection of *savlonus*.

Part II. Tolerating Life

The Ladder of Patience

Now, when a person is able to walk in the ways of this model generation with the thought of “לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנָה אֲלֵכִי הַפְּצֹתִי” – I’m doing it because You, Hashem, desire I should do that,” there’s nothing better than that. That’s an excellent way to live.

However we should know that we’re not angels and therefore we have to climb a ladder, the סֹלֶם מֵצֵב אֶרְצָה וְרָאֵשׁוּ מִגֵּיעַ הַשְּׁמִימָה. First you put your feet on the lower rung and then you start climbing; that’s how we’ll get to the top finally. And so we’ll start climbing by recognizing that the *middah* of *savlonus* will be beneficial for us in *Olam Hazeih* living.

First of all, your health. Learning to tolerate and have patience is very important for a person’s welfare because when a person doesn’t have *savlonus*, when he’s impatient, so he creates stress in himself; and what does stress do? The secretions of the glands caused by impatience and stress are always harmful.

Emotional Health

You have to know that this world is not a world of accidents. Forget about all the liars and the *resha'im*, the evolutionists and the scientists. Disregard what they tell you. Nothing is accidental in this world. A human body, any body, is so made that all the parts cooperate with each other. And that’s true about everything, even the emotions. The emotions and the body are built to cooperate. Good emotions are healthy for the body. When you’re calm and happy, it’s beneficial for your body. But when you’re agitated and impatient it’s poison.

I knew a man who never learned to be a *savlan* and his patience was always running thin; everything got on his nerves. The neighbors are on

his nerves, his boss is on his nerves, his wife and children surely are on his nerves; his nerves were always on edge. Finally one time it went from his nerves to his heart; it was too much for his poor heart and his heart stopped beating. They rushed him to the hospital, cut open his breast, and the doctor took the heart in his hand and tried to flex it. Nothing; it didn't move anymore. He was a young man but he died because he never learned the importance of being a *savlan* in *Olam Hazeh*.

Not only in matters of the heart; also in your kidneys. Many people, *lo aleichem*, had kidney shutdown because of stress. Certain stress caused the kidney to stop working. And even if it didn't stop working, they're so spoiled that they have to take insulin; they have diabetes now as a result of stress.

Here's a man I knew who was always fighting with his wife and he became blind eventually and died all alone. Now I don't want to blame him, but there's no question he could have avoided everything. He wouldn't have been blind because we know that עֵינַי נִכְבְּעִים עִינַי. We say it every day in *Tachnun*. "My eye became worn out from *ka'as*." You hear that? If you're excited and irritated all the time it affects your eyes. I'm not blaming him; I don't know who was at fault, but had he learned the art of *savlonus*, he could have lived with his wife and he would have been alive today.

And so that's definitely a rung you can use to begin climbing the ladder of *savlonus* – if you enjoy your kidneys and your heart and your eyes so get busy training yourself to be patient.

"Make It" In Business

But it's not only your health. The *middah* of *savlonus* will make you successful in business too. People who conduct businesses are constantly working on the quality of *savlonus* because you can't make it in business if you're not patient. You have to suffer from your customers.

That's how it is; you can't have a grocery store unless you're a very patient man. Even if you're not, you have to practice ostensibly the *middah* of *savlonus* to your customers; otherwise you won't have any.

Even a *melamed* has to suffer from his students. If a *melamed* is impatient with the children, he loses his job. And so it pays for you. It pays in this world for people to practice up on this *middah* of *savlonus*. Your health will improve. Your *parnassah* will improve. Your life will improve! So many troubles will be avoided.

When we look around us and see what happens in the lives of people, we'll see tragedies upon tragedies; widespread *tzaros*, ruined lives. It's a *mageifa*, especially today. Many times, lives are shortened and families are

broken because they didn't have patience. A little *savlonus*, a few minutes of patience would have saved them.

The Mop in The Madhouse

Here's a woman, a *kollel* wife. The landlord had been bothering her for the last couple of months; they didn't pay any rent yet. They have a family of children. It's *erev Shabbos* on a short Friday. The children are making noise and fighting in the house and she's nervous the landlord might come any minute and ask her again. And then the bathroom, the toilet became stuffed and the water overflowed from the bathroom into the kitchen. And she's standing there with a mop mopping up and the children are shouting and she is at the top of the ladder of stress.

Suddenly the husband comes in from the *kollel* and he says, "What's this? A madhouse?" She became so disappointed, so angry. He came in from the outside and she had been all day long with the children; and here she's struggling to clean up the floor with the water. So what happened? She picked up the mop and she hit him in the face with the wet mop.

What happened afterwards I don't want to describe. Tragedy of tragedies. There was a nervous breakdown and a long period of hospitalization afterwards. Of course there was a divorce *nebach*. A tragedy.

Now suppose this woman – I'm not blaming her at all – but suppose she would have listened to the lesson of the *Dor Hamidbar* who trained themselves to be accepting of all of the difficulties that came their way. Suppose she would have made up her mind ahead of time, "When my husband comes in, no matter what he'll say I won't let it bother me. I'll let it pass." In two minutes, the *nisayon* would have been over. Two minutes of keeping quiet, of *savlonus*, and she could have saved herself a ruined life.

The Fugitive Son-in-Law

I can tell you stories and stories like that. Here's a man who lived in the same house as his father-in-law. His father-in-law was a *talmid chacham* and the wife would constantly say, "My father says it's not right. Don't do it that way." It was a burden on him. Constantly he's hearing about his father-in-law. It's coming out of his nose already.

You shouldn't give your son-in-law any advice, by the way. Never give him any advice. Money you can give him and *kovod* too but don't give him any advice. But this father-in-law was generous with advice. And he lived upstairs too.

Well one day this man came home and he had trouble in the office where he worked – nobody has it so easy in this world. Money doesn't grow on trees. He came home tired and the wife said something to him; her father had criticized him for something. He flew off the handle and on that same day he took an airplane and traveled somewhere; he left the country. A *meshugeneh!* He lost his head!

He was sorry immediately. As soon as he landed in the foreign country, he called up long distance and told his wife where he is. She said, "Stay there." And there was a divorce. Oy! He had to leave home; he left his children. He died young as a result. A beautiful young man. A tragedy. If only he would have come to this lecture and learned about *savlonus*.

Healthy, Wealthy and Popular

A husband and wife must have patience with each other. And even though sometimes one of them is very unreasonable, nevertheless don't yield to that impulse to lose patience. No matter what he'll say, or what she'll say, even if it's unfair criticism, be patient. Sometimes in two minutes it's all over. Sometimes not; sometimes it's forty years. But whatever it is, that's your opportunity for success in this world.

And so if you're going ask me how you can you work on *savlanus*, I could tell you to learn the *seforim*; to work on understanding what it means *bitachon* and what it means to learn from the models that Hashem put into the Torah. That would be a good piece of advice – to study the Chumash with that intention and to say, "I'm going to try as much as possible to be like my forefathers." Very good! Excellent! But still, I say that the first thing is to use the idea that it pays for you in this world. "The more I am patient, the better off I am. I'll be healthier and wealthier and happier."

You'll be more popular too. That's the plain truth; a man who is able to control himself gets more popularity. A patient person will be well-liked. Your neighbors will like you. Your employer will like you. Your family will like you better too. You know if a wife is angry at her husband, she loses out. She'll gain more with her husband if she's patient. A husband loses out with his wife. If he shows anger to her, he loses out. By being patient they gain popularity with each other.

Selfish Incentives

Now when you hear that, you say, "Are we doing it for that purpose? Is that *avodas Hashem* if you're doing it for health, for popularity? For business?"

Yes, that's why we're doing it! It's selfish? It's very good to be selfish. It's common sense; that's how to climb the ladder to Hashem. You have to think, "I'm going to work on achieving patience for my own benefit." It's not *mussar*. It's not *yiras shomayim*. It's the *pashut* idea that it's good for me in this world.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself tells us the physical advantages of good *middos*. Constantly he warns against wrong *middos* and the physical results. For instance, וּפְתָהּ תְּמִית קַנְיָאָה – *envy kills the fool* (Iyov 5:2). Why should He say anything about envy not being good for your health? Who cares about health right now? We're *tzaddikim* here; we're talking Torah and *middos*! An *oived Hashem* should do it only *l'shem Shamayim*!

No. He tells us the physical benefit of avoiding envy. Jealousy could kill you! So we begin to see something of a *chiddush*. When a person undertakes to practice good qualities of character and he's motivated at first by the desire to benefit himself, Hashem smiles upon him and favors him. Yes, Hashem wants you to use that incentive.

Insurance with Benefits

And so before we proceed to the next rung on the ladder of *savlonus* we're going to sum up what we said till now: Patience is for our benefit in *Olam Hazeh*; for our health, for our success in business, for everything. You must have patience for success in *Olam Hazeh*.

The model of the Wilderness generation was taught to us for our benefit because when you look around you'll see that so many of the tragedies of life could have been averted if people would have learned the *daas Torah* of patience! *Savlonus* is one of the great forms of insurance for happiness in *Olam Hazeh*. You're paid off in this world.

And Hakodosh Boruch Hu expects from us that we should look for that benefit! It's not considered a decrease in *avodas Hashem* when one uses this world to learn the greatness of the *middah* of patience. And therefore, the first step to become a *savlon*, a patient person, is to understand that the *middah* of patience is excellent for *Olam Hazeh*.

Part III. Angelic Tolerating

Keep Climbing

Now, everything we spoke about up till now is very good, it's excellent. The *middah* of *savlonus* is excellent for *Olam Hazeh* and if we stopped the lecture right now your trip here tonight would have been

worth it. You'd thank me for the good advice and we could all go home now.

But if that's all it was, it wouldn't be worthy of those words of encomium, of great praise, from the Mouth of Hashem at the end of the forty years: "You are worthy of having Me dwell in your midst."

And so we have to climb the ladder a little higher and understand what it really means to be a *soveil*; how important it really is to become a person who has acquired this *middah* of *savlonus*.

Becoming An Angel

I'll quote from the *Chovos Halevovos Sha'ar Avodas Elokim perek tes*. I'll say it in English. "The Creator created you from nothing and He wishes to elevate your status in this world to the status of His very best; to be like His angels."

Now pay attention to this important principle. Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought you into this world to become better and better and to become the best that we can become. That's it. And so if someone will ever ask you why you're in this world, now you know what to say; "I'm here to become as good as I can be."

And included in that, says the *Chovos Halevavos*, is **לְהַעֲלוֹתְךָ אֶל מַעְלָת הַסּוֹבְלִים** – to elevate man until he reaches the degree, as much as possible, of the angels who can tolerate everything.

So you'll ask me, "What's the big deal? Angels have no free will anyhow." Now whether angels have free will or not is a question I won't discuss right now but angels certainly are suffering for the sake of Hashem. Because angels, you have to know, are intelligent and intelligence reacts to certain situations. And yet, he fulfills his purpose no matter what difficulties he must undergo. He fulfills his purpose without any reaction to difficulties at all.

And that's what Hashem wants to raise us up to in this world; that we should train ourselves to be *sovlim*, people who can bear and tolerate things just like the *malachim*. And so, it's an ideal of ours; a tremendous *avodah*! An important part of our perfection in this world is to become great like the *malachim hasovlim* in their extraordinary patience. You have to learn to take it; like they say, "Grin and bear it."

Getting Greased

Now, it's easier said than done because in a very big way *savlonus* means one thing. *Savlonus* means *emunah* that it all comes from Hashem. When he's impatient, when he complains, he thinks it happened from

some other reason, not from Hashem. But when a person understands that it all comes from Hashem, that's the smooth lining that makes patience possible.

You know you have a slippery lining inside of your jacket sleeves so that when you put your hand in, it shouldn't get snagged on the rough wool. You put your hand in and your hand slips down into the sleeve like grease. Well, the lining of *savlonus* is *emunah* and *bitachon*. If you forget about Hakodosh Boruch Hu so you'll get snagged on this or that. But if you're aware of your purpose here, "to raise yourself up to the level of the *malachim hasovlim*," so you're ready to face the world. It'll be much smoother as Hashem puts you through the wringer of life making you into an angel.

And now you know why those tough customers came along in your life. That's why the tough situations come along – in order to give you the opportunity to become a *savlon*.

Getting Smoothed

That's why it's so important to be married. A bachelor even though he might be a fine young man, but he is a rough diamond. A rough diamond has to be rubbed until it is polished. When he gets married, he has to rub against his wife and children in the house. He has to rub against his neighbors. He has to make a living and deal with a boss. He's getting polished every day.

It's like stones in a stream of water; when the water flows over the stones it rubs against them and they all become smooth. That's why all the stones in the bed of the stream are round and smooth; there are no sharp points left because the constant friction makes them nice and round. By being together with people and getting along with them successfully you become nice and round, no more sharpness left on you.

Every person has within him greatness. Hakodosh Boruch Hu breathed into man at the beginning of creation. *Vayipach b'apo nishmas chaim* – He breathed greatness into every person. But that greatness is concealed in its potential.

The question is how do you bring it forth? How do you bring forth that potentiality? How do you turn it into actuality? A person takes the treasures of his *neshamah* and makes it come to the surface by means of living, by struggling and practicing.

You're Testing My Patience!

And that's why to a very big extent our patience is always being tested. You won't escape it because it's Hashem's plan – one way or another He'll test your patience. And if you're able to tolerate things, if you're *soveil*, you should know that there's a change taking place gradually in you. You're becoming greater and greater. You're raising yourself to the level of the *malachim hasovlim*.

That's how to make use of your life. Sometimes we're persecuted by *goyim*. People call me on the phone and they tell me that they're suffering from their neighbors. He blocks my driveway. His children walk on my lawn. For some people the hot weather tests their patience. For others it's the cold of winter; the rain, the snow. Then there comes certain illnesses in life and old age. Often, a person has to tolerate things that are not changeable. *Chalilah*, if a person let's say is disabled it's not easy to tolerate that.

It's always something. And it's always a test. Will you tolerate it? Will you be *soveil* and live with it even with all the difficulties that are involved? You're already a success!

The Reject-Rabbi

Suppose you're a *rebbe*, a *mechanech*. You have a class of boys. It requires a lot of patience, a lot of *savlonus*.

Now some *rebbeis* are failing that test; they don't act with patience. They might even call a boy a dummy. As a boy I remember I was smacked by my *rebbe*. I was smacked by my *rebbe* and I left the *cheder*. He thought I was the worst one. I went to another *cheder*. I was smacked up there too. I left. And somebody said, "He's rejecting all the *chadarim*. Wherever he goes, he's rejected." They didn't have patience for me.

So it's your job as a *rebbe* to practice patience. But not only for the *talmidim*; that also is important by the way because very often a patient *rebbe* will bring out the best in his *talmidim*. But for the *rebbe* too; he brings about the best in *himself* when he trains himself in patience.

When a person lives according to a program of being *soveil* all the time, he becomes a patient person. And the more he does it, the higher and higher he is raised. Anybody who profits from his experiences and he learns to take it, he persists in a calm and accepting attitude to the bumps on the road of life, that person is acquiring the *middah* of *savlonus* and is accomplishing his purpose here.

Grateful for Difficulty

And so now he thanks Hakodosh Boruch Hu that He gave him such a small apartment. He says, “Thank You Hashem for a wife who gives me the same supper every night.” “Thank You Hashem for this difficulty and that difficulty.” Because he knows that living with patience is giving him the success he came into the world to achieve.

Otherwise, when he'll come to the Next World, he'll look back and regret. “Ah! What a glorious opportunity it was and I didn't utilize it properly. This mean neighbor who was making trouble for me. His children used to come out and make trouble for me. He was a *frum* Jew but he was a very unpleasant neighbor. I didn't understand what a great gift it was. Oh, I'm so sorry. If I could come back again to this world for a little while just for one day I'd know how to handle him. I'd become wealthy. I'd become great because of him.”

Story of Gam-Zu

And if you're lucky Hashem will keep polishing you until the end. You know there was man named Nachum Ish Gamzu. It means Nachum of Gamzu. He came from a town called Gimsu. But he was a man who didn't live just by accident. He said, “I am going to call it *Gamzu* because whatever happens to me I am going to say *gam zu l'tovah*; whatever happens is good because it's testing my patience and I'm polishing myself.” He was born in Gimsu but he said ‘Gimsu’ means ‘*gam zu*’ and *gam zu l'tovah*

Now, the Gemara describes the end of Nachum Ish Gamzu's life. He was very ill in his old age. His last days he was suffering and still with everything he continued to say about everything “*Gam zu l'tovah*.” Down to his last day.

Now, the question is, he was such a good man, he had such *emunah*, he had learned to recognize Hakadosh Boruch Hu in everything, so wasn't it enough? He has to be polished down to the last minute of his life? The answer is yes. Because Hakadosh Boruch Hu saw that he was benefitting by it and if that is the case let's bring forth from this man all that he possesses.

So even when he was lying ill on his deathbed, in his pain, in his last agonies, he was still saying, “Ayy! *Gam zu l'tovah*.” Because he's accepting it and that tolerance and patience means even more polishing, more perfection. *Gam zu l'tovah* – it's good for me; it's a very good thing.

The Happy Ending

Here is a man lying on his bed he knows he doesn't have much time left. He's 119 years old let's say and he knows that soon he will die. But he is very uncomfortable; he is in great pain and he is rolling on his bed. In fact, they put him in a special bed with walls on both sides so he shouldn't fall off and he is rolling around back and forth in his agony.

But this man once learned when he was young that being a *soveil* means you're polishing your *neshama*. And so he says, "I am going to utilize my last minutes. In the midst of my *tzoros*, I am not going to concentrate on my pain, I am going to say, Hashem I know it is for my benefit. Hakadosh Boruch Hu is bringing forth from me now in my last minutes, whatever I can bring forth. No matter what, I accept it."

That is the greatness of a man who knows how to utilize his life properly. It's the success of a person who knows that the Generation of the Wilderness found favor in the Eyes of Hashem because they lived lives of patience; of accepting whatever Hashem put to them. And he understands that it's a model for his life too. When we emulate the *Dor Hamidbar* we are acquiring a great *otzar* of *shleimus*, a treasury of perfection that we'll take with us forever and ever in *Olam Habo*.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Accepting Challenges and Learning Patience

The forty years of tribulation in the Wilderness were very difficult indeed, but they brought out the best in us. The *Chovos Halevovos* teaches that our purpose in life is to become elevated to the degree of the angels who tolerate whatever they are tasked with by Hashem. This week I will work on internalizing the lesson that everything is from Hashem and it's all for the best. I will *bli neder* say "This too is for the good" or "All that Hashem does is for the good" three times every day this week in my effort to grow and become a better servant of Hashem.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

517 - Happy With What He Has | 610 - The Great Ones | 801 - Midos and Opinions | 926 - Utilizing Our Fellowman | E-68 - Happiest Era | E-109 - Patience | E-200 - To Awaken the Greatness | E-266 - Alone With Him

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For what reason do the Nevi'im tell us about the war of Gog U'Magog in the times before Moshiach comes? What benefit do we have from this knowledge?



The Nevi'im want us to know that the forces of evil are very powerful in this world and that they will never yield to us easily. And to let us know that even when the time for the *geulah* comes, at that time these forces are going to exert themselves to the utmost to prevent the *geulah*. Why? Because the *geulah* is going to be the beginning of a period of great happiness when everybody will recognize Hashem. And therefore, at that time, our enemies will attempt their utmost to stop the *geulah* and this true recognition of Hashem.

And the Nevi'im want us to know this, so that we should be aware, that in this world – right now too – the *yetzer hara* is doing its best to stop us. And we have to know that we have to fight back and that we are in this world to resist.

Our success depends on our achievements in this area and we have to make sure that we never desist, never weaken, in this area of *avodas Hashem*, no matter how many foolish opponents we have and no matter how strong they appear to be.

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