

When you arrive in the land of Canaan... and I will place a tzaraas affliction upon a house in the land of your possession. (14:34)

V'nasati, “and I will place.” The structure of the *pasuk* is such that it implies good tidings – when, in fact, it means the destruction of one’s home. *Rashi* explains that, when the Canaanite inhabitants of *Eretz Yisrael* saw that their sojourn in the Holy Land was soon coming to an end, they concealed their valuables in the walls of their homes. They were not about to enrich their Jewish victors. In order to avail His People of the Canaanite wealth, Hashem placed an affliction on the part of the wall in which the treasure was hidden. Once the tainted stones would be removed, the hidden treasure would be revealed.

This is a clear case of “it is not what it seems.” To the spectator who is not a believer, purchasing a home and then having to demolish it does not reflect good fortune. When he discovers the hidden treasure, suddenly everything makes sense. Life is good. This, explains **Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl**, is the rationale behind *Chazal’s* statement, “One is obligated to bless (Hashem) for (what seems to be) bad, as he does for good” (*Mishnayos Berachos* 9:5). Likewise, *Chazal* (*Berachos* 60b) interpret the *pasuk* in *Krias Shema*, *V’ahavta es Hashem Elokecha b’chol levavcha u’b’chol nafshecha, u’b’echol meodecha*, “You shall love Hashem, Your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources” (*Devarim* 6:5). *B’chol meodecha, b’chol middah u’middah sheHu moded lach, hevei modeh Lo b’chol*, “Whatever measure (regardless of what your “portion” may be) He metes out to you, praise Him very much.”

We simply do not know Hashem’s Divine plan, but we believe that, whatever it may be, it is ultimately good for us. In his *Pirush HaMishnayos* commentary, the *Rambam* explains that, as one is filled with inner joy upon reciting a blessing over “good,” so, too, should he maintain a like emotion when circumstances compel him to recite *Dayan HaEmes*, the Truthful Judge, with the passing of a close relative.

It is well-known that, when the daughter of the Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim, **Horav Eliyahu David Rabinowitz Teumim (Aderes)**, died, the entire community assembled in front of the *Rav’s* house and waited to accompany the deceased to her final resting place. They waited – and waited, but the *Aderes* remained ensconced in his room, apparently not yet ready to commence with the funeral. When he finally came out of his room, he explained that he was trying to achieve a frame of mind in which he would feel the same inner joy at the moment of his daughter’s passing as he felt when he had received the news of her birth!

It requires superhuman *emunah*, faith, to achieve such a level of perception – to believe that birth and death have a commonality with regard to their “goodness.” To be able to look tragedy in the eye and maintain the inner sense of devotion, joy and acceptance that one has when enveloped in boundless joy takes a perceptive and lucid sense of *emunah* – one that is so clear that there is no

room for questioning – only acceptance.

This vision is invariably complete when one views the situation through the spectrum of hindsight. Then one sees clearly that what he had envisioned as tragedy, misery, or just plain hard luck, was, in fact, his source of salvation. *Rav Galinsky* relates that when the Russians came out with their virulent hatred of anything Jewish, they arrested one hundred students of the *Novaradoker Yeshivah* system, who had been in Lithuania during the Russian occupation. After a quick, mock trial, they were sentenced to hard labor in the frozen tundra of Siberia. The rest of the group, under the direction of *Horav Gershon Liebman, zl*, were able to hide from the Russians. They felt fortunate in being spared from the Russian anti-Semite, while, at the same time, they grieved over the decree to which their fellow *yeshivah* students were subjected. Following the war, *Rav Liebman*, who miraculously survived the war, commented, “We felt bad for you, knowing that you were relegated to the misery and back-breaking labor to which the subhuman Russians subjected their prisoners. At the same time, we were grateful at being spared your fate. Little did we know that soon the tables would be turned on us, when the Germans overran Lithuania and Poland and either outright killed or sent our students to the death camps. Indeed, the decree that sent you to Siberia saved your lives, while what we thought was our salvation, was not.”

This lesson is taught to us by the hidden treasure found buried in the walls of the plagued house which must be demolished. That which at first appears to be the end of the world for the Jewish landowner, is, in fact, his great opportunity for achieving wealth and peace of mind. How he must have wept when they tore down that wall, when he realized how his dream home was becoming a serious liability. How that initial reaction must have changed when he saw the hidden treasures of gold and jewelry. When the *Kohen* declared his house to be covered with a plague, it meant destruction. His home, his domicile of security and stability, was about to be torn down. How he must have prayed to Hashem to spare him this fate, to eradicate the plague, so that he could continue living in his home. How he must have cried that Hashem have pity on him – and how he must now be offering his overwhelming gratitude to Hashem – for not listening to his prayer! Thank you Hashem for decreeing that my house be demolished!

Rav Galinsky quotes a story he heard from *Horav Avraham Yoffen, zl*, which underscores this change in attitude, concerning the focus of one’s prayer. There was a *bochur*, student, in one of *Novaradok’s* branch *yeshivos*. He was a sweet, likeable, young man. His acumen, however, was quite limited; thus, his ability to excel academically was stunted. This affected his entire demeanor, to the point that his family and friends worried about his future. How would he earn a living? How would he make it in the world with all the societal pressures that one must overcome to achieve even the slightest modicum of success? The simple rudiments of math were beyond him. How could he succeed in the world of business? Someone suggested that he purchase a lottery ticket. Who knows? He might win. Imagine the excitement when he guessed all three numbers and won the first prize of five thousand rubles!

He was immediately asked, “How did you do it? How did you know which numbers to pick?”

He explained, "Truthfully, I had never planned on buying a lottery ticket. It was never something in which I believed. One night I had a dream, in which the numbers 17, 18, 370 were prominently displayed. I felt this was Providential; a sign from Heaven that I should invest in the lottery, and that I would win using this number scheme."

Hearing this, his friends asked, "But the lottery has only three numbers. You have seven."

"I know," he replied. "I combined the numbers by adding 17, plus 18, plus 370 to total 415. I then purchased a ticket and picked 4,1,5 which were the winning numbers."

"But 17,18, and 370 equal 405 – not 415! You were wrong." "Well is it not a good thing that I am weak in math?" was the young man's reply.

Everyone had taken pity on him. How would he make it in life? The poor fellow did not even know simple addition. In the end, however, the fact that he could not add correctly is what catalyzed his winning choice of numbers. We do not know what is good and what is bad. We are clueless. We grope through life and survive only by trusting in Hashem, and we accept His Divine Plan for us – with gratitude!