

NEW

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שופטים SHOFTIM

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

INSIGHTS INTO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Dedicated to

**Emmanuel (Mendel)
Karp**

1905 - 1989

son of Bernard (Berl) and Rose (Rezele)



Manny Karp was the first of his family born in the United States, in 1905. His first language was Yiddish. Losing his mother to the Spanish Flu shaped his resilience and commitment to helping others, ultimately leading to a career as a guidance counselor in Philadelphia public schools. He also served many years as the director of Camp Akiba in the Poconos.

Karp's legacy is characterized by his optimism and unwavering dedication to learning and mentorship. Emmanuel Karp died in 1989.

SHOFTIM I | שופטים א

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Re'eh*, *Mevorchim Chodesh Elul*, 5714 (1954)

Introduction

In Biblical times in *Eretz Yisrael*, a person who killed another could flee to one of six designated cities of refuge where he would find sanctuary from the victim's relatives seeking revenge. These cities existed only within the borders of the Holy Land – never in the Diaspora, no matter how dire the need for protection might have been.

This geographical limitation raises questions: If the purpose of these cities was to provide refuge and enable the killer to undergo spiritual rehabilitation, wouldn't it have been preferable to establish them wherever Jews lived? Why restrict such vital sanctuaries to *Eretz Yisrael* alone?

The Rebbe explores these questions and uncovers a profound insight about our spiritual lives today. He explains that the month of Elul, a month devoted to spiritual stocktaking, functions as our era's equivalent of those ancient cities – a temporal refuge where every Jew can find sanctuary and renewal. Yet just as the original cities had specific requirements for refuge and rehabilitation, our modern spiritual sanctuary demands its own conditions for genuine transformation.

The implications extend far beyond the calendar, touching on how we understand the very nature of spiritual growth, the role of environment in personal change, and the urgent call for all Jews – whether immersed in business or Torah study – to recognize the need to flee to their own cities of refuge.

A Month of Refuge

The Geography of Atonement

1. Previously,¹ I spoke at length regarding how the month of Elul relates to the concept of cities of refuge.

There is an additional dimension to this: Regarding the judges and enforcement officers mentioned at the beginning of this Torah portion, *Sifri* states that judges and officers² must be appointed “in all your dwelling places”³ – even outside *Eretz Yisrael*. *Sifri*⁴ surmises that this command might lead one to think that cities of refuge were also located outside *Eretz Yisrael*. However, although by stating “these judges,” the Torah teaches that the judges (the *Sanhedrin*) had authority outside of *Eretz Yisrael* as well, nevertheless, the cities of refuge were located only in *Eretz Yisrael*. As *Sifri*⁵ explains, although even a killer from outside

א. מֵעַן הָאֵט גֶּעֲרַעֲדֵט בְּאַרְיִכוֹת,
אֲזַל לֹא אִיז אַן עֲנִין פֿון עָרֵי מִקְלָט.

אִיז פֿאַראַן אַ הוֹסָפָה צו דעם:

אויף דעם ענין שופטים ושוטרים
שטייט אין ספרי אַז די שופטים
ושוטרים זיינען געווען בכל
מושבותיכם אויף אין חוץ לארץ.
יכול - זאגט דער ספרי - אַז אויף
ערי מקלט זיינען געווען אין חוץ
לארץ, תלמוד לומר אלה כו', ערי
מקלט זיינען געווען נאר אין ארץ
ישראל. פונדעסטוועגן, זאגט ער
אין ספרי אַז אויף א רוצח שבחוץ

1. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 2, p. 363ff., p. 623ff.

2. From the statements in *Sifri* at the beginning of *Parshas Shoftim* and those in *Sanhedrin* (16b), “From which source [do we derive] that we must appoint judges for Israel? The Torah teaches, “You shall appoint judges. From which source do we know that we must appoint officers...? The Torah teaches, ‘and officers.’” This appears to imply that a distinct instruction is required to teach that we must appoint officers; it is not accepted as a given from the command to appoint judges.

From the phrase (*Bamidbar* 35:29), “in all your dwelling places,” we learn that the *mitzvah* to establish a court applies even outside *Eretz Yisrael* (*Makkos* 7a and *Sifri*, *Parshas Maasei*).

This passage appears to indicate that a separate instruction is necessary to teach that officers must be

appointed. Now, the phrase “in all your dwelling places” refers only to judges. Thus, there is no source that teaches that officers must be appointed outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. Nevertheless, from the words of Rabbi Elazar (*Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Shoftim*, sec. 2), “If there is no officer, there is no judge,” it follows that wherever judges are appointed, officers must also be appointed. From the words of *Yalkut Shimoni* at the beginning of *Parshas Shoftim*, it is evident that he does not disagree with the first opinion mentioned there.

Based on this, several points are understood simply:

a) The Talmud’s question in *Makkos* (loc. cit.), “If so, what does the Torah intend to teach by saying ‘in all your gates’?” “In all your gates” implies only in *Eretz Yisrael*. Since officers are also appointed outside *Eretz Yisrael*, the Talmud finds that verse problematic and offers a resolution.

b) The fact that appointing judges and officers is not counted as two positive commandments can be understood. See *Torah Temimah* at the beginning of *Parshas Shoftim*; the commentary of Rav Yerucham Fishel Perlowe on *Sefer HaMitzvos* of Rav Saadia Gaon, *parshah* 1 at the end.

c) *Rambam*’s wording in *Sefer HaMitzvos* (loc. cit.), “From where [do we know] that we appoint a court for all of Israel? The Torah teaches us: ‘Judges and officers...’ These laws apply both in *Eretz Yisrael* and outside *Eretz Yisrael*.”

See also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 34, p. 103ff.

3. *Devarim* 16:18.

4. Cited by *Rambam* (*Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive *mitzvah* 176). The concept is found in *Sifri Zuta*, *Bamidbar* 35:29.

5. *Sifri* on *Bamidbar* 35:13.

Eretz Yisrael could find refuge in the cities of refuge, the cities themselves were located specifically in *Eretz Yisrael*.

From the fact that *Sifri* compares judges and officers to cities of refuge – reasoning that just as judges and officers existed outside *Eretz Yisrael*, so too, one might think that cities of refuge also existed outside *Eretz Yisrael* – we are compelled to conclude that cities of refuge possess a connection to judges and officers.

The purpose of judges – and even officers who “chastise”⁶ – was not for the sake of punishment; instead, the intention was that they would refine the people.⁷ The same applies to the intent of the cities of refuge, concerning which our Sages⁸ state, “exile atones.” As the Alter Rebbe explains in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,⁹ the meaning of *kaparah*, “atone-ment,” is “cleansing” and “wiping away.” Atonement washes away and removes sin, to the extent that the person becomes as acceptable to G-d as before the sin. Consequently, one would think that atonement through exile should also have been possible outside *Eretz Yisrael*. The rationale can be explained as follows: When the term *ארץ*, “land,” is used without a modifier, it refers to *Eretz Yisrael*,¹⁰ as our Sages¹¹ commented, “Why is it called *eretz* (land)? Because it desired (*ratzah*) to fulfill the will of its Master.”

By contrast, the Diaspora is referred to as *chutz la'eret*, which literally means, “outside the land.” According to the above interpretation, it means “outside of [His] will.” Following this line of thinking, seemingly, in places outside *Eretz Yisrael*, there was a greater need to be concerned about killing than in

לְאֶרֶץ עָרֵי מִקְלָט קוֹלָטוֹת, נָאֵר דִּי עָרֵי מִקְלָט אֵלִינִי זַיִנְעֵן גְּעוּעֵן אִין אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּקָּא.

פון דעם וואס דער ספרי שטעלט צו שופטים ושוטרים צו ערי מקלט, אז אזוי ווי שופטים ושוטרים זיינען געווען אין חוץ לְאֶרֶץ אַזוי וואלט מען וועלן מיינען אז אויך ערי מקלט זיינען געווען אין חוץ לְאֶרֶץ, איז געדונגען אז ערי מקלט האבן א שייכות צו שופטים ושוטרים.

דער ענין פון שופטים און אפילו שוטרים שהיו רודים - איז נישט געווען צוליב מעניש זיין, נאר די כוונה איז געווען אז דורך דעם זאל זיין א זיכור.⁸ און אזוי איז אויך דער ענין פון ערי מקלט, גלות - גלות חכפית.⁹ דער פירוש כפרה איז ווי דער אלטער רבי טייטשט אין אגרת התשובה כפרה מלשון קנוח. עס ווישט אפ און נעמט אראפ דעם חטא, און אויך אזוי פיל אז ער ווערט מרוצה ווי קודם החטא, ובמילא וואלט מען וועלן מיינען אז דאס איז געווען אויך אין חוץ לְאֶרֶץ, ווארום ארץ ישראל וואס איז ארץ סתם¹⁰ איז - כמאמר למה נקרא שמה ארץ שרצתה לעשות רצון קונה, און חוצה לְאֶרֶץ מיינט חוץ פון דעם רצון, האט מען דאך אין חוץ לְאֶרֶץ געדארפט באווארענען מער ווי אין ארץ

6. *Rashi*, on the above verse.

7. This concept is reflected in the wording of *Midrash Tanchuma*, loc. cit., secs. 2, 6 that the judges and officers who expropriate property from a defendant execute *mishpat tzedek*, “a just judgment” (*Devarim* 16:18). The Midrash infers that

tzedek relates to the term *tzedakah*, and comments that the legal authorities are “acting charitably with both [litigants,] with the one who was vindicated, [because he has his property returned] and with the one who was obligated [because] they remove the stolen object from

his domain.”

8. *Makkos* 11b. See *Tosafos, Makkos*, loc. cit., s.v. *mid*.

9. *Tanya, Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, ch. 1.

10. See *Taanis* 10a.

11. *Bereishis Rabbah* 5:8; *Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishis*, sec. 8.

Eretz Yisrael. Nevertheless, although judges and officers were also appointed outside *Eretz Yisrael*, the cities of refuge were established only in *Eretz Yisrael*.

יִשְׂרָאֵל, פּוֹנְדְּעִסְטוֹעֶגֶן זײַנען נָאָר שׁוֹפְטִים וְשׁוֹטְרִים גְּעװען אויף אײַן חוץ לָאָרֶץ, אָבער עֲרֵי מִקְלָט - נָאָר אײַן אָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Empathy and Understanding – Prerequisites for Judgment

2. *Teshuvah* involves two elements:¹² regret over the past and acceptance of a resolution not to sin in the future. The two are interrelated.

When is regret genuine? When, from then on, the person resolves to conduct himself as he should, because if not, what is the effect of his regret? It is like one who immerses himself in a *mikveh* while holding the corpse of a creeping animal¹³ in his hand.¹⁴

Therefore, cities of refuge were located only in *Eretz Yisrael*; if a person remained outside “the land that desires to fulfill the will of its Master,” what effect did his regret have? Accordingly, these cities provided refuge even for a killer from outside *Eretz Yisrael* – exile could help him too – but the exile itself had to be specifically in *Eretz Yisrael*, as it is stated,¹⁵ “He must flee *there*.”

The appointment of judges and officers, however, also applied outside *Eretz Yisrael*. The

ב. אײַן תְּשׁוּבָה זײַנען פֿאַראַן צוויי עֲנִינִים, חֲרָטָה עַל הָעֲבֵר וּמִקְבָּלָה עַל הַבָּא, און ווען אײַז דאָס אַ גוטע חֲרָטָה, בִּשְׁעַת אַז מִכָּאן וּלְהַבָּא אײַז עַר מִקְבָּל אויף זײַך פֿירן זײַך ווי מַעַן דָּאָרף, וואַרום אויב נײַט, אײַז וואָס אײַז דײ פֿעולָה פֿון זײַן חֲרָטָה, עס אײַז כְּטוֹבֵל וְשָׂרָץ בִּידוֹ.

דערפֿאַר זײַנען עֲרֵי מִקְלָט נָאָר אײַן אָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וואַרום אויב עַר זאָל פֿאַרְבֿלײַבן אײַן דְּרוֹסֵן פֿון דָּעם אָרֶץ שְׂרָצָתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן קוֹנֵה אײַז וואָס אײַז דײ פֿעולָה פֿון זײַן חֲרָטָה. און דערפֿאַר זײַנען עֲרֵי מִקְלָט קולטות אויף אַ רוצח פֿון חוץ לָאָרֶץ, אויף אײַם הַעֲלֵפֵט גְלוּת, אָבער דער גְלוּת אַלײן מוז זײַן אײַן אָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל דּוּקָא, וְנָס וְשָׁמָּה.

דער ענין פֿון שׁוֹפְטִים וְשׁוֹטְרִים, אָבער, אײַז גְּעװען אויף אײַן חוץ לָאָרֶץ,

12. Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2; the Alter Rebbe's *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, ch. 1.

The regret over the past may not remain only in the realm of thought but must also be expressed verbally, through confession. (See the Tzemach Tzedek's *mitzvas vidui u'teshuvah* in *Derech Mitzvosecha; Minchas Chinuch, mitzvah 364*.)

Concerning the resolution for the future, the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah* consists “solely of abandoning sin” (*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, loc. cit.), which leads to the inference that the resolve was made merely in the realm of thought.* (We are also

forced to interpret Rambam's words in the beginning of ch. 1 of *Hilchos Teshuvah*, Rabbeinu Yonah's words in os 19 of his *Shaarei Teshuvah*, and the words of others in this manner.) This is evident from *Choshen Mishpat*, the end of sec. 34, and other sources.

See also *Kiddushin* 49b, which states that when a person consecrates a woman on the condition that he is a righteous man, the consecration is valid even though he was known as a sinner previously. The reason is that it is possible he repented at that time. From this law, we see that even mere thoughts of repentance – without anything further – are sufficient

to change a person's status. Further analysis is required.

* See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 17, p. 197ff., and Vol. 38, p. 18ff. (translated in *Selections from Likkutei Sichos, Bamidbar*, p. 106ff.).

13. The corpse of a creeping animal imparts ritual impurity, as stated in *Vayikra* 11:28-30; Rambam, *Hilchos Shaar Avos HaTumaah*, ch. 4. Even though one is immersing in a *mikveh*, which removes impurity, if one holds the corpse of creeping animal, he remains impure.

14. Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:3.

15. *Bamidbar* 35:11.

rationale is that **judging another person** requires one to be able to identify with him, as our Sages taught,¹⁶ “Do not judge your fellow until you reach his place.” A *beis din* in *Eretz Yisrael* cannot adequately appreciate the challenges a person living outside *Eretz Yisrael* faces. They have not experienced the concealment and hiddenness that exist outside *Eretz Yisrael* – how one must confront so much struggle and undergo so many challenges to accomplish any positive achievement in action, and even in speech and thought. In *Eretz Yisrael* – a place where “the eyes of G-d your L-rd are upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year”¹⁷ – one can have no conception of this at all. Therefore, it was necessary to appoint judges and enforcement officers from outside *Eretz Yisrael* to judge the Jews who lived there.

There are well-known stories about the Mitteler Rebbe and the *Tzemach Tzedek*¹⁸ that illustrate the principle that a judge must be able to identify with the people he judges. Once, in the middle of a private audience (*yechidus*) with a chassid, the Mitteler Rebbe interrupted the session for a period of time, secluded himself in heartfelt prayer for a lengthy time, and then resumed the *yechidus*. When he was asked the reason for this, he explained that when someone comes to *yechidus* seeking rectification for a personal failing, one must find within oneself – at the very least in a most subtle way – some connection to that issue, and only then can one respond. When that particular person came to him asking about a very base matter, he could not find within himself any connection to that issue, even in the most subtle way, so he interrupted the *yechidus*. Only after undergoing a soul-searching self-analysis did he find a matter within himself that enabled him to relate to the person's situation. A similar story is related concerning the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

ווארום וועגן משפט'ן יענעם, שטייט דאך¹⁶, אל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו; בית דין שבארץ ישראל קענען ניט וויסן די העלמות והסתרים וואס זיינען פאראן אין חוץ לארץ, ווי אויף יעדער ענין אין מעשה, און אפילו דבור ומחשבה, דארף מען האבן אזוי פיל יגיעה, און ס'זיינען פאראן א סך נסיונות. אין ארץ ישראל – א מצב וואס עיני ה' אלקיך בה מרשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה¹⁷ – האט מען גאר ניט קיין מושג אין דעם, דערפער האבן די שופטים ושוטרים געדארפט זיין אויך אין חוץ לארץ, אויף משפט'ן די אידן פון חוץ לארץ.

ווי עס איז באוואוסט דער סיפור פון מיטעל'ן רבי'ן, און פון כבוד קדשת אדמו"ר הצמח צדק¹⁸ אז אמאל אינמיטן יחידות האט ער מפסיק געווען אויף א משך זמן, און נאכהער געפראוועט יחידות. בשעת מען האט אים געפרעגט דעם טעם אויף דעם, האט ער דערקלערט, אז בשעת מען קומט אויף יחידות פרעגן א תיקון דארף מען געפינען בדקות דדקות על כל פנים דעם ענין ביי זיך, און דעמאלט קען מען ענטפערן. בשעת מען איז געקומען צו אים פרעגן אויף זייער א נידעריקן ענין, האט ער ניט געקאנט געפינען ביי זיך דעם ענין אפילו בדקות דדקות, האט ער מפסיק געווען די יחידות.

16. Avos 2:4.

17. Devarim 11:12.

18. See *Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim*, Vol. 2, p. 712.

This same principle is evident in G-d's instructions to Moshe after the sin of the Golden Calf, "Descend, because your people have become debased."¹⁹ Moshe was then in heaven, in the highest realms, so removed that "he did not eat bread or drink water."²⁰ By contrast, the Jews were on this lowly physical plane and had sunk to the lowest depths. At that time, G-d told him, "Your people have become debased," meaning, since they are your people, you have to descend and identify with them. Through this identification, Moshe established a bond with them and, therefore, was able to defend them.

This concept is reflected in the Alter Rebbe's statements in his note that served as the basis for the text *Baad Kodesh*.²¹ There, he writes that he does not want his judgment to be rendered by lesser officials, because lesser officials cannot be relied upon. Instead, borrowing the wording of a verse from Psalms,²² "From before You [specifically] may my judgment emerge; may Your eyes behold uprightness," he appealed to the Czar to judge his case personally.

The Alter Rebbe saw his judgment as occurring on two planes – the material and the spiritual – simultaneously. His appeal not to be judged by lesser officials was an appeal not to have his judgment in the spiritual realms rendered by the angels²³ because the angels do not feel the concealments and hiddenness experienced by souls on the material plane, but only by G-d Himself, who is aware of these challenges.²⁴ Similarly, the judgment of a person in a court of law must be rendered by a judge on the physical plane, a soul in a body, because such a judge can identify with the person being judged, like judgment that emanates from "before You" – from G-d's Essence, who identifies with the people being judged. This is also the underlying concept why the judges and officers who judged the people in the Diaspora had to come from outside *Eretz Yisrael*.

וואס דאס איז אויך
דער ענין וואס דער
אויבערשטער האט געזאגט
צו משה רבינו, בשעת דעם
חטא העגל, לך רד כי שחת
עמך. "משה איז דאן געווען
אויפן הימל למעלה מעלה,
לחם לא אכל ומים לא
שתה, די אידן זיינען געווען
למטה מטה, האט אים דער
אויבערשטער געזאגט
שחת עמך, זיי זיינען דיין
עם - וואס דורך דעם האט
משה געהאט א פארבונד
מיט זיי און געקענט אויך
זיי מלמד זכות זיין.

ועל דרך ווי דער אלטער
רבי שרייבט אין בד קודש,
אז ער וויל ניט אז דער
משפט זאל זיין דורך שרים,
אויף שרים קען מען זיך ניט
פארלאזן, נאר מען בעט אז
מלפניך (דוקא) משפטי יצא
עיניך תחזינה מישרים,
די שרים פילן ניט וואס די
העלמות והסתרים זיינען,
דעריבער דארף מען האבן
דעם משפט פון א נשמה אין
א גוף - מלפניך דוקא. דאס
איז אויך דער ענין פון דעם
וואס די שופטים ושוטרים
האבן געדארפט זיין אין חוץ
לארץ דוקא.

19. *Shmos* 32:7.

20. *Shmos* 34:28.

21. *Baad Kodesh* is a text composed by the Mitteler Rebbe as an appeal to have the judgment regarding the charges for which he was imprisoned be rendered by the Governor General appointed to supervise the case

and not by any minor officials. It is based on a note composed by the Alter Rebbe who, when imprisoned as a rebel against the Czar, appealed to have his case judged by the Czar himself.

22. *Tehillim* 17:2.

23. The Hebrew term שרים refers

both to officials on the earthly plane and the angels above.

24. As explained in *Baad Kodesh*, since *malchus Shamayim*, G-d's sovereignty, is reflected in earthly monarchs, the judgment of the Czar would reflect the Alter Rebbe's heavenly judgment.

Shifting Scales of Judgment

3. Although the cities of refuge were located specifically in *Eretz Yisrael*, nevertheless, there were different levels. There were cities of refuge in Transjordan,²⁵ where “killers were common,”²⁶ and others in *Eretz Yisrael* proper – which “is called *eretz* because it desired to fulfill the will of its Master.” Even in the Ultimate Future, when “G-d your L-rd will expand your borders,”²⁷ there will also be cities of refuge within those new borders.

The existence of these different levels implies that the concept of “whoever spills the blood of man, by man shall his blood be spilled”²⁸ – which is the underlying principle of cities of refuge – exists on every level according to its particular nature. Even in the Ultimate Future, when the Jew’s Divine service – and also the lack of Divine service – will be on a completely elevated level, there will still be the concept of spilling “the blood of the man of holiness by the man of evil,”²⁹ i.e., a person’s *yetzer hara* will endeavor to sap the energy of his G-dly soul. Therefore, even then, there will be a need for cities of refuge to take in such people.

The concept of a lack of service – and even the opposite of service³⁰ – exists on every level, according to its nature. In other words, what is considered a lack of service is judged according to the positive virtue of one’s level. Thus, for a person on the level of “to Him you shall cling”³¹ – who feels oneness with G-d – to content himself merely with an approach of

ג. הגם ערי מקלט זיינען געווען אין ארץ ישראל דוקא, איז אבער אין דעם פאראן חילוקי מדריגות. עס זיינען געווען ערי מקלט אין עבר הירדן דשכיחי רוצחים²⁵, אין ארץ ישראל, דלמה נקרא שמה ארץ לפי שרצתה לעשות רצון קונה און אפילו לעתיד לבוא, ואם ירחיב הו' אלקיך את גבולך²⁷, וועלן אויך זיין ערי מקלט.

דאס הייסט אז דער ענין פון שפך דם האדם באדם²⁸, וואס אויך דעם איז דער ענין פון ערי מקלט, איז פאראן אין יעדער מדריגה לויט איר ענין, און אפילו לעתיד וואס דעמאלט וועט זיין די עבודה, ובמילא אויך דער העדר העבודה, אין א העכערן אופן לגמרי, איז אויך אין דעם ענין פאראן דער שפך דם האדם דקדושה באדם בליעל²⁹, און מען דארף האפן אויך דעם ערי מקלט שקולטות.

ווארום אין יעדער מדריגה איז פאראן דער ענין פון העדר והיפוך העבודה כפי ענינה, דאס הייסט, אז לפי ערך מעלת מדריגתו איז דאס אן ענין פון העדר העבודה, ביז אז אין דער מדריגה פון ובו תבדקון, איז די עבודה פון אותו

25. Although Transjordan is part of *Eretz Yisrael*, its status is inferior to the portion of *Eretz Yisrael* on the eastern side of the Jordan, which was promised to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Transjordan was incorporated into *Eretz Yisrael* only after its conquest by the Jewish people on their way to the Promised Land at the request of the tribes of Reuven and Gad. See *Bamidbar*, ch. 32.

26. *Makkos* 9b.

27. *Devarim* 19:8. See *Talmud Yerushalmi, Makkos* 2:6; *Sifri* on *Devarim* 19:9.

28. *Bereishis* 9:6. By being exiled to a city of refuge, the killer is safeguarded from the avenger of the blood, who seeks to spill his blood.

29. As explained in *Chassidus (Likutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 13c),

the phrase “spill the blood of man by man,” can also be rendered “spill the blood of man into a man,” i.e., “the blood,” the vitality and energy of the man, “the G-dly soul,” is spilled into – i.e., sapped by – “a man,” the *yetzer hora* and the animal soul.

30. According to his characteristic style, the Rebbe refrained from using pejorative terms directly.

31. *Devarim* 13:5.

“Him shall you serve,”²⁹ is insufficient; for him, this is a matter requiring *teshuvah*.³²

תַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת עֲנִיָּן וְאִם מִעַן דָּאָרְךָ
טָאָן אוֹיֵף דָּעם תְּשׁוּבָה.³

Using Elul to Its Fullest

4. Similarly, the concept of making an account of one’s soul, the spiritual stocktaking that characterizes the month of Elul – the counterpart of the cities of refuge, as mentioned above – is individual in nature, each person according to his level. One must make an accounting of his soul regarding all his thoughts, words, and actions throughout the entire year. Were they in accordance with the *Shulchan Aruch*? Did he extend himself beyond the letter of the law? And was his service conducted according to the principle,³³ “load a camel according to its [capacity]”? That is, a person must ask himself: Did he do as much as he possibly could have done? If a person cannot answer these questions positively, he must do *teshuvah*.

From this, it is understood that not only businesspeople, but also those who sit in the tents of study – who spend the entire year in the tents of Torah and the tents of prayer – must also see the month of Elul as a city of refuge. This is the allusion implied by setting aside the city of “Betzer in the desert”³⁴ as a city of refuge. “The desert” refers to the Torah of which it is written, “And from the desert, [it – the Torah – was given as] a gift.”³⁵ Similar concepts apply concerning prayer.³⁶

The above relates also to the idea discussed two years ago (on *Chai Elul*)³⁷ regarding the undesirable practice in this country: students traveling home

ד. און אַזוי איז דער חֲשָׁבוֹן
הַנֶּפֶשׁ פֿון חֹדֶשׁ אֱלוּל, וְאִם דָּאָס
איז דער עֲנִיָּן פֿון עָרֵי מִקְלָט כְּנָ"ל,
– אַז בִּי אֵיטְלֵעֶכֶן איז דָּאָס לױט
וְיֵין אױפֿן. מִעַן דָּאָרְךָ מֵאָכֵן אַ חֲשָׁבוֹן
הַנֶּפֶשׁ פֿון זײַנע אַלע מַחֲשָׁבוֹת,
דְּבוּרִים און מַעֲשִׂים בְּמִשְׁךְ פֿון אַ
גֶּאָנֶץ יָאָר, צִי זײַנען זײ גְּעװען עַל
פִּי שְׁלָחַן עֲרוּךְ, צִי זײַנען זײ גְּעװען
לְפָנִים מְשׁוּרֶת הַדִּין, און צִי עָס איז
גְּעװען לְפָנִים גְּמָלָא³², און אויב עָס
איז נִיט גְּעװען אַזוי, דָּאָרְךָ מִעַן
הָאָבֵן תְּשׁוּבָה.

פֿון דעם איז פֿאַרשטאַנדיק אַז
נִיט נָאָר בְּעָלֵי עֲסָקִים נָאָר אויף
יוֹשְׁבֵי אֶהָל וְאִם אַ גֶּאָנֶץ יָאָר
גַּעפִּינען זײ זיך בְּאַהֲלָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה
וּבְאַהֲלָה שֶׁל תְּפִלָּה, אויף בִּי זײ
דָּאָרְךָ וְיֵין אֵין חֹדֶשׁ אֱלוּל אֵין עִיר
מִקְלָט, “אֵת בְּצֵר בְּמִדְבָּר”, אֵין
תּוֹרָה, וְאִם אויף אֵיר שְׁטִיט
וּמִמִּדְבָּר מִתְּנָה, און אַזוי אויף אֵין
תְּפִלָּה.³³

דָּאָס איז אויף וְאִם מִעַן הָאָט
גַּעֲרַעֲדֶט פֿאַר צװײ יָאָרֶן (ח"י אֱלוּל)
וועגן דעם מִנְהַג פֿון דער מְדִינָה

32. See the *maamar* entitled *Acharai Havayah Elokeichem teileichu* and its explanation in *Likkutei Torah* where the different levels of Divine service mentioned here are explained at length. See also the end of *maamarim* of the same title in *Siddur im Dach* and the *Tzemach Tzedek's Derech Mitzvosecha*.

33. *Kesubos* 67a, 104a; *Sotah* 13b.

34. *Devarim* 4:43.

35. *Bamidbar* 21:18; see Rabbeinu Bachya on *Bamidbar* 21:19, et al.

36. Note *Likkutei Torah*, the explanation of the *maamar* entitled *Vayidaber... Bamidbar Sinai*, and the *maamarim* cited in footnote 32. In those *maamarim*, prayer is also referred to as a “desert.”

As explained at the conclusion of sec. 3, every person must carry out his Divine service to the fullest extent of his capacities. Thus, even if a Torah scholar spent his year in study, if he did not maximize his potential, he must do *teshuvah* – flee to a city of refuge.

37. See *Toras Menachem*, Vol. 6, p. 166ff.

from yeshivos during the time of Elul and Tishrei. This practice runs contrary to the Torah and also defies basic human logic. Instead of following the well-known directive³⁸ – that during the month of Elul, one should minimize the time spent studying the body of *halachic* knowledge and composing scholarly works and instead focus more on *teshuvah* – students leave, returning home.

During the month of Elul, one must be in *yeshivah*. It should be a foregone conclusion that come what may, during these select weeks in the month when we are commanded “seek My face,”³⁹ each person should resolve, “I will be as I ought to be.”

Where to Take Refuge

5. This directive also applies to businesspeople. Although they are immersed in their business affairs throughout the entire year, during the month of Elul, or at the very least from *Chai Elul* onward – when the daily spiritual accounting for the past twelve months begins,⁴⁰ one day for each month – or during the days of *Selichos* at a minimum, they should flee to the cities of refuge. (As mentioned, these cities existed even in Transjordan, outside *Eretz Yisrael*.⁴¹) They should go to a place of *yiras Shamayim*, “fear of G-d” – a *yeshivah* or the like – and, as is stated regarding the cities of refuge, “His dwelling place shall be there.”⁴²

Every person must feel the need to “flee there”⁴³ – to the refuge of Torah and prayer. One must run to these cities of refuge from all the matters that

אז אין דער צייט פון אלול וְתִשְׁרֵי צַעֲפָאָרְט מָעַן זִיד פֿון די יְשִׁיבוֹת אַהֲיִים, אַז דאָס איז הִיפּךְ הַתּוֹרָה און אויך הִיפּךְ פֿון שְׁכַל אָנוּשִׁי. אַנְשְׁטאַט דעם וואָס עס שְׂטִיט⁴³ אַז בְּחֹדֶשׁ אֱלּוּל האָט מָעַן מִמַּעַט געווען בְּגוֹפִי הִלְכוֹת וּבְחִיבוּרִים און מָעַן האָט זִיד עוֹסֵק געווען מֵעַר בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה, פֿאַרְט מָעַן גאַר אַוועק אַהֲיִים.

אין דער צייט פון חֹדֶשׁ אֱלּוּל דאַרף מָעַן זײַן אין יְשִׁיבָה, און עס דאַרף זײַן אָפּגעלײגט אַז יַעֲבוֹר עָלֵי מָה און די עֲטִלְעֵכֶּע וואָכן אײַנעם חֹדֶשׁ פֿון “בְּקִשׁוֹ פָּנַי” זאל איך זײַן כְּדָבָעִי.

ה. דאָס איז אויך אַן הוֹרָאָה צו בַּעֲלֵי עֲסָקִים, אַז הָגֵם אַ גאַנצן יאָר לִיגֵט ער בַּעֲסָקָיו, אָבער אין דער צייט פֿון חֹדֶשׁ אֱלּוּל, אָדער לְכָל הַפָּחוֹת פֿון ח”י אֱלּוּל וואָס דעמאָלט הויבט זיך אַן דער חֲשֹׁבֹן יוֹם לְחֹדֶשׁ⁴³, אָדער בִּימֵי הַסְּלִיחוֹת עַל כָּל פָּנִים, זאל ער אַנטלויפֿן אין ערי מקלט (וואָס זײַנען געווען אויך אין עֶבֶר הִירְדָן שְׁמֹחוּץ לְאַרְצָא יִשְׂרָאֵל), אין אַן אָרט פֿון רִאֲתַת שָׁמַיִם, אין אַ יְשִׁיבָה וְהִדּוּמָה. און שֵׁם תִּהְיֶה דִּירָתוֹ.

עס דאַרף זײַן דער וָנֶס שְׁמָה, וָנֶס מײַנט אַנטלויפֿן⁴³. אַנטלויפֿן פֿון אַלע ענינים וואָס מָעַן איז אין זײַ

38. *Match Efraim, Elef LeMatch*, sec. 581:15.

39. *Tehillim* 27:8; recited throughout the month of Elul, as inspiration for heartfelt Divine service.

40. The last twelve days of the year especially should be set aside for a spiritual stocktaking. On each day, one should compensate for any lack

of Divine service in the corresponding month of the previous year. See *Kuntreis Chai Elul*, 5703, p. 42 (*Sefer HaSichos* 5703, p. 177).

41. The implication appears to be that just as there were cities of refuge outside of *Eretz Yisrael* proper, so too, there must be “spiritual cities of refuge” for those whose main

occupation is not Torah study.

42. *Makkos* 11b.

43. *Bamidbar* 35:11. The flight must resemble the Jews’ flight from Egypt (*Shmos* 14:5), which as explained in *Tanya*, ch. 31, was a flight from the attraction to Egypt that existed within their own being.

occupy him throughout the entire year. “And there shall be his dwelling place” – he should settle himself there, the setting of Torah should be his fixed place – and “there shall be his burial place,”⁴² to refer to the wording of the *Zohar*⁴⁴ regarding Moshe, “his burial place is the Mishnah.”

The deeper meaning of “burial” is reflected in the teaching⁴⁵ that “one who reaches one hundred is as if he has died, passed away, and ceased to be in the world.” When a person reaches one hundred, i.e., in a spiritual sense, he has worked through and refined all the aspects of all the particular faculties of the soul. (This is alluded to by the number 100. The soul possesses ten faculties and these ten are interrelated – ten times ten.) After reaching such a stage, it is as if the person has “passed away and ceased to be in the world.”⁴⁵ He no longer has any connection to this world’s concealment of G-dliness. Accordingly, he can live a long life because he has nothing to fear.

This “burial” represents the separation of the four elements that comprise the physical body, with each returning and reconnecting to its source. At that point, is fulfilled the pronouncement: “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return,” meaning that one reaches the state of nullification represented by earth, as we say in our prayers, “May my soul be as dust to all.” From this nullification emerges the building of the *sefirah* of *malchus* (“sovereignty,” which is termed *afar*,⁴⁶ “dust”⁴⁷) that is accomplished on Rosh HaShanah.

Through the soul-searching labor of spiritual stock-taking during the month of Elul, culminating in the flight to spiritual refuge, one prepares to be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year on Rosh HaShanah – a year blessed amply with children, life, and sustenance.

א גאנץ יאר, אין ערי מקלט,
און שם תהא דירתו, דארטן
באזעצן זיך, און בסגנון פון
זהר⁴² קבורתיה דיליה (דמשה)
משנה - זאל זיין שם תהא
קבורתו⁴³.

דער ענין פון קבורתו איז ווי
עס שטייט⁴⁴ בן מאה כאלו מת
ועבר ובטל מן העולם, בשעת
ער איז א בן מאה, און האט
דורכגעטאן אלע ענינים אין
אלע פרטי כחות הנפש, (יוד
הכלולים מיוד) דעמאלט איז
עבר ובטל מן העולם, ער האט
ניט צוטאן מיט העלם העולם,
ובמלא קאן ער מאריך ימים
ושנים זיין, ווארום ער האט ניט
פארנואס צו מורא האבן.

וואס דאס מיינט קבורתו -
דער פירוד פון די ד' יסודות
און יעדער קומט צו ומתחבר
לשרשו, עפר אתה ואל עפר
תשוב, דער ביטול פון ארץ,
וואס דערפון קומט דאן דער
בנין המלכות שבראש השנה.

דורך דער עבודה פון חשבון
הנפש אין חדש אלול, ביז דעם
ונס שמה, איז א הכנה צו דער
כתיבה וחתומה טובה דראש
השנה לשנה טובה ומתוקה בבני
חיי ומזוני ריחי.

(משיחת ש"פ ראה, מבח"ח
אלול, תשי"ד)

44. *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 27b. See the Mittlerer Rebbe's *Biurei HaZohar*, p. 3c, on that source. See also the Tzemach Tzedek's *Biurei HaZohar*, Vol. 2, p. 624ff.

45. *Avos* 5:22.

46. See *Torah Or*, p. 26c.

47. The *bittul* of “dust” is a necessary element in the spiritual preparation

necessary to rebuild *malchus*, i.e., renew G-d's creative energy, for the coming year. See *Toras Menachem*, 5722, Vol. 3, p. 330.

- (א) נדפס בלקו"ש ח"ב ע' 623.
(ב) געבראָכט אין ספר המצוות להרמב"ם מצות עשה קעו. לפנינו בספרי זוטא.
(ג) ממה שכתוב בספרי ריש פרשת שופטים ובסנהדרין (טז, ב) מנין שמעמידין שופטים לישראל תלמוד לומר כו' שוטרים תלמוד לומר כו', משמע לכאורה דצריך לימוד מיוחד לשוטרים, ובכל מושבותיכם (מסעי לה, כט) דמיניה ילפינן דנוהג גם בחוץ לארץ (מכות ז, א וספרי שם) הרי מדבר רק בשופטים, אבל מדברי רבי אלעזר (תנחומא ריש פרשת שופטים) אם אין שוטר אין שופט, משמע דבכל מקום שממנים שופטים מוכרח שיהיו גם שוטרים (ובילקוט שמעוני שם מוכח דאינו חולק על התנא קמא). ועל פי זה מובן בפשיטות: (א) קושיית הש"ס במכות (שם) אם כן מה תלמוד לומר בכל שעריך, כיון דגם שוטרים נוהגין בחוץ לארץ. (ב) הא דאין מונים העמדת שופטים ושוטרים בשני מצוות עשה. וראה תורה תמימה ריש פרשת שופטים. פירוש הרי"פ פערלא לספר המצוות להר"ג פרשה א בסופה. (ג) לשון הרמב"ם בספר המצוות (שם) מנין שממנים בית דין לכל ישראל תלמוד לומר שופטים
- ושוטרים כו' אלה הדינין נוהגין בין בארץ בין בחוץ לארץ. - וראה גם לקו"ש חל"ד ע' 103 ואילך.
(ד) מסעי לה, יג.
(ה) וכלשון התנחומא: שוטר שיוציא ממנו כו' משפט צדק ללמוך שצדקה עושין כו' ועם החייב שמוציאין את הגזילה מתחת ידו.
(ו) מכות יא, ב און תוספות ד"ה מידו. פרק א.
(ז) זע תענית יו"ד ריש ע"א.
(ח) בראשית רבה פרשה ה, ח. ילקוט שמעוני בראשית רמז ח.
(י) רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ב הלכה ב. אגרת התשובה לרבנו הזקן פרק א. אלא שחרטה על העבר צריך להיות לא רק במחשבה, כי אם גם בדיבור - וידוי דברים (ועיין מצות וידוי ותשובה בספר המצות להצמח צדק. מנחת חינוך מצוה שסד). ובנוגע מכאן ולהבא מצות התשובה היא עזיבת החטא בלבד* (ועל כרחך צריך לפרש כן בלשון הרמב"ם שם ריש פרק א, בשערי תשובה לרבנו יונה אות יט. ועוד) וכדמוכח בחושן משפט סוף סימן לד, ובכמה מקומות. וראה גם כן קדושין (מט, ב). וצריך עיון.
(*) וראה לקו"ש ח"ז ע' 197 ואילך.
- (יא) אבות פרק ב משנה ד.
(יב) דברים יא, יב.
(יג) זע ספר המאמרים - קונטרסים - עמוד 712.
(יד) שמות לב, ז.
(טו) תהלים יז, ב.
(טז) מכות ט, סע"ב.
(יז) דברים יט, ח. ירושלמי מכות פרק ב הלכה ו בגברא. ספרי דאָרט יט, ט.
(יח) בראשית ט, ו.
(יט) לקוטי תורה במדבר יג, ג.
(כ) זע ד"ה אחרי ה' אלקיכם תלכו וביאורו (בסופם - בסידור, בספר המצות להצמח צדק) בלקוטי תורה.
(כא) כתובות טז, א. קד, א. סוטה יג, ב.
(כב) עיין לקוטי תורה ביאור לד"ה וידבר גו' במדבר סיני. לעיל בענין ובו תדבקון.
(כג) אלף למטה במטה אפרים סימן תקפ"א סקט"ו.
(כד) זע קונטרס ח"י אלול תש"ג עמוד 24 (סה"ש תש"ג ע' 177).
(כה) על דרך כי ברח העם (זע תניא פרק לא).
(כו) חלק א כז, סוף ע"ב. און זע ביאורי הזהר דאָרט.
(כז) מכות יא, ב.
(כח) אבות פרק ה משנה כב.



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הרה"ת ר' משה יהודה בן ר' צבי יוסף ע"ה
Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky OBM,
whose commitment has brought this sacred initiative to fruition

