

# Cancer Cured in the Beis Medrash

BY DON JARASHOW

Iran is facing a moment of upheaval. People are rising against oppression, and the outcome is unknown. Protests and unrest have spread across cities and towns, and thousands have died. Fear and anxiety are real in the region, and tension is rising around the world.

In times like these, it can feel as if the world is out of control. Yet we know that Hashem is guiding history. Even in the storms of life, some endure, some fall, and some grow quietly, steadily, with patience and humility. True strength is not always loud or immediate; it is measured by who remains connected to Torah and to Hashem, even when the chaos surrounds them.

## HAIL

The 7th *makkah*, *makkas barad*: The hail comes down and literally rocks all of Egypt. Fire cased in ice, a miracle within a miracle.

Pharaoh is overwhelmed and asks Moshe to pray for him. Moshe responds that he will pray and the hail will stop. But Moshe adds a detail (*Shemos* 9:31-32):

והפשתה והשערה נכתה כי השערה אביב והפשתה גבעל. והחטה והכסמת לא נכו כי אפילת הנה.

*The flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was ripe and the flax was in its stalk. But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, because they ripen later.*

On the surface, what Moshe said about the different grains seem to be straightforward facts which he related to Pharaoh.

However, the *Pituchei Chosam*, Rav Yisroel Abuchatzera, reveals that embedded within these words is a penetrating *remez* about *kiyum*, endurance, and who ultimately survives in *olam*

*hazeh* and *olam haba*. He writes that the *pasuk* is not only describing different crops, but rather different types of people.

## TYPES OF PEOPLE IN THE PASUK

The פשתה, flax, is read as a *remez* through its letters. פשתה is associated with the letters of שפתים, the lips. It alludes to those whose failure lies in misuse of speech: בעלי לשון הרע, שקר, חנופה, וליצנות.

Next in the *pasuk* is the barley, שערה, which is comprised of the letters רשעה, wickedness, a *remez* to sinners, and specifically בעלי גאווה.

These two categories, the בעלי גאווה and the בעלי לשון הרע, are destined to be נוכתה, wiped out – completely obliterated. They flourish early, they rise to the top quickly like crops that ripen quickly, but because of that, they are vulnerable to destruction. They have a tough shell, but are flimsy and weak.

This is in contrast to the next grain, wheat and spelt, not just in their outer appearance, but in a deeper dimension as well:

– the wheat and spelt will not get struck. Why do they survive?

The *gematria* of חטה is 22 – כ"ב, corresponding to the אותיות – the 22 letters of the alef-beis, the letters of the Torah.

This represents בעלי תורה, those completely bound to the Torah and its precepts.

**“What appears to be a simple agricultural forecast becomes a timeless spiritual law.”**

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Dedicated by Zvi and Tova Mermelstein (Wesley Hills, NY) *Pillui nishmas* my father, R' Naftali Simcha ben R' Avrohom a"h

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כוסמת – spelt is the next grain that won't get struck, and its letters are interchangeable with the letters סומכת, one who leans, who relies. אלו הסומכים על התורה, these are those who place their ביטחון on Torah and on the Ribono shel Olam.

These people will not get struck, not in this world, and not in the next. Why? Because אפילות הנה – they are “late-ripening,” They are humble. They do not rush to prominence. They allow Torah to form them slowly, deeply, organically. And from this process, authentic growth emerges. Their humility, joint with their attachment to Torah, is the key to their *kiyum*.

Thus, what appears to be a simple agricultural forecast becomes a timeless spiritual law. Those driven by *gaavah* and corrupted speech may rise quickly, but they fall. Those who bind themselves to Torah with *anivus* endure forever.

Moshe Rabbeinu was not merely warning Pharaoh about what would be destroyed in Egypt. He was revealing who truly endures through history.

## A LESSON FROM THE MIRROR ROSH YESHIVA

This Shabbos, כ"ח טבת, marks the yahrtzeit of the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Shmuel Berenbaum.

Rav Zechariah Wallerstein, his *talmid*, recounts:

There was an *avreich* in the Mir, a *jungerman* in his early sixties, who had been learning in yeshiva for over thirty years. His wife had sacrificed everything to enable that life. She carried the burden of the home, raised the children, and allowed him to sit and learn with utmost *yishuv hadaas*, uninterrupted for decades. Together they had built a family of *bnei Torah*.

One day, his wife was diagnosed with stage-four cancer.

Broken and terrified, the *avreich* went to Rav Shmuel. “Rebbe,” he said, “My wife is dying. I have children to marry off, a family that depends on her. I need a *neis*. Please, do something.”

Rav Shmuel answered honestly. “I am not a *mekubal*. I don't have access to *segulos* or *kabbalos*.”

The *avreich* replied, “Rebbe, for thirty years I have learned Torah here. My wife gave me that ability. If there is anything that can be done, you must do it.”

Rav Shmuel listened, nodded gently, and the *avreich* left.

A week later, the *avreich* returned, shaken. “Rebbe,” he said, “I didn't travel anywhere. I didn't seek out *mekubalim*. My wife went for a scan yesterday, and the cancer is gone. What happened?”

Rav Shmuel answered with complete simplicity.

“When you left my room, my heart broke. I thought to myself: I am not a *mekubal*, but I do have a *shaychus* with Abaye and Rava. I have lived with them for eighty years. You have lived with them for decades. I began to cry and I said: ‘Abaye, Rava, if you do not intercede for this man, how will he continue learning your Torah?’ That is all I did. If it had anything to do with your visit to me, it was likely in the *zechus* of Abaye and Rava.”

## A LESSON FOR TODAY

While this sounds like a *Rebbishe maaseh*, one of *kabbalah* or esoteric power, the story happened with Rav Shmuel, who definitely was not connected to that. He was *kol kulo nigleh*, Gemara, Rishonim, Achronim, *lomdus* — this was his life.

But based on the Torah we have studied, it is not such a novelty. As we have learned, when a person is a כוסמת, when he is a סומך על התורה, when his life is bound to the אותיות התורה, he is no longer confined to the narrow rules of *teva* alone. That does not negate doctors or *hishtadlus*, but it means that he is living primarily with the Ribono shel Olam.

Such a person is not operated by the world in the same way.

We all need miracles. We all carry darkness, the unknown. But with the Torah Hakedoshah, with חסד – the twenty-two letters of the Torah, and כוסמת – being סומכת on the Eibeshter, life is simply different.

During days like these, a time set aside for introspection, for strengthening קדושה and טהרה, for reconnecting to אמת, we must ask ourselves whether we are plugged into the right things. Sometimes it is difficult. Sometimes it looks strange. Sometimes people question why we are learning more, guarding ourselves more, living differently.

But it is worth everything.

It is not only the *machlah*, the cancer, that can be healed in the Beis Hamedrash through the *koach* of Torah. It is anything. Everything. There is no limit. Just as Hashem has no limits.

Life with Torah, humility and trust in Hashem, changes everything. •

**“It was likely in the zechus of Abaye and Rava”**

