

שיר הפגעים

תהילים פרק צ"א – "יושב בסתר עליון"

As elucidated by HaRov Elimelech Kornfeld, Shli"ta

תשפ"ד, After the Simchas Torah war,

The 91st perek of Tehillim is referred to as "שיר של פגעים," which we'll translate as "the song that protects from all suffering."

There are some opinions that a person should say it at least once a day to gain special protection throughout the day. The Abudarham points out that this perek contains every letter of the aleph beis except for ך. He explains that the letter ך is also a word, "זיין," translated as "weapons." He says one who deepens his understanding of the lessons taught in this perek won't need the help of physical weapons in his life. He'll be protected directly by Ha-Shem's hand.

This booklet contains **דברי תורה** and **פסוקים**.

Treat it accordingly.

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The text in this booklet, on the shiurim for פרק צ"א, תהילים, was professionally transcribed and edited, based on a small set of the "Psukai Bitachon" shiurim that the Rov began sharing with the Kehillah shortly after the massacre on תשפ"ד, שמחת תורה.

As of today, there have been over 170 shiurim given.¹

The transcriptions were not reviewed by the Rov, Shli"ta, but this pamphlet was published with his blessings.

We pray that our studying this perek enhances our level of Bitachon and hastens the ביאת המשיח וגאולה שלמה במהרה בימינו.

בנחמת ציון וירושלים
ד' מנחם אב, ה'תשפ"ד

¹ You can listen to these shiurim at <https://www.kehillashagra.org/miscellaneous/bitachon/> or, go to <https://www.kehillashagra.org/>, point to **Shiurim**, then click **Audio Shiurim**. From the left menu, click **Miscellaneous** and then **BITACHON**.

Note that the Rov has started פרק צ"א again, entitled, "Divine Dome." Those shiurim have not yet been transcribed and they are currently not on the shul site (due to technical issues). You can hear them here: <https://bit.ly/divinedome>

The following words were in the email message that introduced the first shiur in this project:

In light of the present situation, we are starting a new project that BE"H will help us make a change in the way we relate to our everyday experiences.

It is based on Pesukim of Bitachon from Tehillim and Brachos that relate to that experience.

BS"D if we make even a small change in the way we relate to the situations that we go through, and see the Chasdai Hashem in every one of them, we will be able to build our Bitachon in Hashem in a real way that will remain with us throughout our lives and give us the proper peace of mind to go through life B'simcha and Tuv Levav, and take advantage of every situation to its fullest!

The first shiur is an introduction to this project.

Introduction

Shiur 1 in the series

(Audio file is titled "Psukim of Bitachon & Brachos Introduction")

We're embarking on a significant new project, a testament to our collective commitment to spiritual growth and connection, especially given the present situation.

We're at war now. It's real. It's nothing we can ignore, and we all feel tremendous pain in light of what K'lal Yisroel is going through.

We understand that these challenges, brought to us by Hakadosh Boruch Hu, are opportunities for personal growth and deepening our connection with Him and one another. This lack of connection brought us into exile in the first place and has kept us there for so many years.

We know this is all true, but we must make it real. Therefore, we can't just hold on tight and "get past" this situation. We can't just wait it out until things are back to normal. There is no getting back to normal. We have to make a change.

Chazal tell us that when Ha-Shem brings suffering to a person, it's to humble himself, become closer to Ha-Shem, and, from that place, better follow Ha-Shem's ways.

With this in mind, we're coming together to strengthen our bitachon. We're doing this by learning two topics together. The first is the "pesukei bitachon," specific verses, mostly taken from Tehillim, that will teach us tangible lessons in realizing Ha-Shem's greatness and relying upon Him more authentically.

We'll also apply the principles of bitachon to our everyday lives by saying the brachos.²

² The Rov's words on Brachos are not included here.

With this work, we hope to become people who know how to “live” with Ha-Shem.

It's not enough for us to talk about it. To make these lessons meaningful and authentic to us, we have to apply them. A person can go through life and see nothing. That's a person's default position. We must grow out of that habit and use the whole day – every second, from when we open our eyes until we close them again at night — to learn appreciation and recognition of what Ha-Shem is doing for us. We must learn to pay attention to the tremendous chasodim we are already receiving from Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

The more we do this, the more we will have a basis for building bitachon.

We might not think of it this way, but our difficult time is an eis ratzon. We can make changes that will last for the rest of our lives. We can impact our entire future and make it that much more pleasant. We can master being happy with what we have, respect those around us, and focus our time on all the right things.

Ha-Shem wants us to do this, and it's the greatest thing we can do for ourselves.

Shiurim on Perek צ"א - 91

Shiur 83

We're now starting the perek that is referred to as “שיר של פגעים,” which we'll translate as “the song that protects from all suffering.” There are some opinions that a person should say it at least once a day to gain special protection throughout the day. The Abudarham points out that this perek contains every letter of the aleph beis except for ט. He explains that the letter ט is also a word, “זיין,” translated as “weapons.” He says one who deepens his understanding of the lessons taught in this perek won't need the help of physical weapons in his life. He'll be protected directly by Ha-Shem's hand.

The Torah teaches us “וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים בְּד' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים כְּלַכֶּם הַיּוֹם.” It's a strange posuk when you think about it. Certainly, those who connect to Ha-Shem are alive, but isn't everyone else also?

As we'll see in this perek, the quality of life, even in this physical world, is very different for those who are connected to Ha-Shem, so much so that other people are considered not alive in comparison. If Olam Hazei is all there is, all living things essentially start to die once they're born. But if the next world is the true destination, life will continue forever.

The first few words of this perek teach us something we should keep in mind throughout. Ha-Shem is dwelling “בסתר” in a hidden way. We can't always see what's going on, and the world seems to be going in a way that is the opposite of what we would expect. But we must remember that he is also “עליון,” He's on top of it all, running the show.

With that thought, let's begin.

צא:א - "ישב בסתר עליון; בצל שדי יתלונן"

91:1 - "He who dwells in the secret place of the most High, who abides under the shadow of the Almighty."

Rashi translates this first pasuk as follows: One who positions himself as being together with Ha-Shem can rely on His protection. The verb "יושב" is often translated as "sitting," but very frequently, the true meaning is to be firmly grounded in a particular place. An example of this is by Yitzchok Avinu. The Torah tells us that he was "יושב" in G'rar. Clearly, saying that he sat there doesn't mean anything. Rather, the implication is that he established himself there. That area became his main area of living.

Here, Dovid HaMelech is teaching us that to gain the protection of Ha-Shem's "shade" is just a matter of establishing something about ourselves. We have to be "with" Him. That happens when we do our best to behave in a fashion that reflects our awareness of him and brings Him nachas ruach.

Chazal expresses a similar idea about the verse in chapter 121, "ה' שומרך ה' צלך על יד ימינך," where Ha-shem is called our "shadow" or "shade." When a person blocks the sun with his hand, the shadow cast will be the exact shape of his hand. Similarly, how we relate to Ha-Shem will be how He relates to us. He is our shadow.

Put Yourself In His Hands

When a person is going through a challenge, and certainly during a national challenge, it's important to express to Ha-Shem our belief in His providence over us. We must say to Him, "Even though things are difficult, I know I am in your good hands. I know you love me and the Jewish people, and You are walking over us."

The name for Ha-Shem that is used here is שדי. That name is darshined by Chazal as meaning "שומר לעולמו די," that He limited the world's expansion at the time of creation and said to it "enough!" Ha-Shem set limits to the universe he created, which is the fundamental aspect that makes something a "creation." Something created must have limits to it, while the Creator, as it were, is unlimited. Boundaries or limitations don't apply to Him in any way.

When a person is challenged, he must realize it's being controlled. The challenge is part of creation, which means there are limits to that challenge, and the unlimited One is closely managing the entire experience. The challenge itself is in His hands! Remembering this outlook is the key to bringing the needed yeshuah.

Shiur 84

צא:ב - "אמר לי-ה-וה, מחסי ומצודתי; אלהי, אבטח בו."
צא:ג - "כי הוא יצילך, מפח יקוש; מדבר הזות."

91:2 - "I will say to the Lord, My refuge and my fortress, my God, whom I trust."

91:3 - "For he shall save you from the snare of the fowler and the noisome pestilence."

We started this chapter by learning a general principle: for a person to benefit from Ha-Shem's protection, he should be "with" Ha-Shem. The next verse will tell us more about how to do this. But before that, the verse does something quite peculiar. It starts off with "I will say," meaning that the speaker is telling us about their own experience of bitachon. We'll have to keep this in mind while going through the perek. It will be necessary to find out who this speaker is and how their description of bitachon matches up.

Chazal tell us that many of the chapters in Tehillim weren't originally authored by Dovid HaMelech. The first Rashi in Tehillim tells us there are no less than ten authors throughout the sefer. This perek, say Chazal, was written by Moshe Rabbeinu, and if we read closely, we'll see that he is introducing a brand new facet of understanding regarding bitachon.

The conditions of bitachon

Moshe tells us that bitachon is made possible because of two facts we know about Ha-Shem. The more we internalize these truths, the stronger our bitachon will be.

First of all, the "G-d" that we're trusting is "Ha-Shem," the 4-letter name that refers to **מדת הרחמים**. He is our merciful father, looking down on us and sustaining us. And that merciful being is "מחסי," "my refuge," which means a protective structure that, by its nature, provides shelter from the outside world. Ha-Shem is extending His mercy to us constantly. We have no idea how many obstacles we're continually being saved from. But it goes further – Ha-Shem's mercy is with us just as much during a challenge when we must run to a "מצודה," or "fortress."

But Ha-Shem is also "אלוקי." We know the general name **אלוקים** refers to Ha-Shem's aspect of having complete control over all forces in the world. He's aware of what's going on and acts upon that awareness. Here, the word is the possessive form – Ha-Shem is "mine." Even though he's running the world at large, anything happening to me stems from Ha-Shem's care for me in particular.

You need to have both of these clear to feel real bitachon. If Ha-Shem had been just a protective being but unaware of what humanity is up to and actively reacting to it, it would have been impossible to trust Him. And the inverse as well – if He were thoroughly aware of what's going on down here but would not act with the world mercifully, we would have no hope of anything good in life. We'd be judged by the letter of the law, and it would all be over for us. Luckily for us, Ha-Shem has both of these aspects; Therefore, Moshe concludes, "אבטח בו," we can trust Ha-Shem wholeheartedly.

Getting Practical

Moshe Rabbeinu then gives two practical scenarios. He tells us of two extreme situations. The first is a "snare" or trap. People can trap us in all sorts of situations with no apparent way out. The second situation is "pestilence." We know we're surrounded by bacteria and constantly at risk of contracting a deadly disease, ch'v.

How is a person saved from these two challenges? Only through focusing on what Moshe Rabbeinu taught us in the previous first – Ha-Shem is constantly providing us with all-encompassing, merciful protection.

It's a tremendous chizuk to know that our level of bitachon depends on focusing on what we already know about Ha-Shem. When we review these ideas, Ha-Shem is merciful. He protects me inherently and gives extra protection when needed. He's my personal G-d and saves me from harm. We merit His Yeshua in any situation.

Shiur 85

צא:ד - "בְּאַבְרָתוֹ, יִסָּךְ לְךָ, וְתַחַת כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה; צְנֵה וְסִחְרָה אִמְתּוֹ."

91:4 - "He will cover you with his feathers, and you will find refuge under his wings; his truth will be your shield and buckler."

The first part of our verse describes Ha-Shem's protection of us using the mashal of a bird. The bird protects its young with its wings and feathers; so too, Ha-Shem protects a person with His very self, as it were.

But the Medrash tells us something further. The first limb described, אַבְרָתוֹ, refers to the part of the wing that would be equivalent to the hand of another animal. Therefore, it relates to the Torah itself, which was given with the "right hand" of Ha-Shem. When we learn the Torah and follow its ways, we show Ha-Shem that we are making His will the focal point of our lives, which earns us His protection.

The Chovos HaLevovos teaches us that a person who claims to have bitachon in Ha-Shem but doesn't keep the Torah can't be called a real ba'al bitachon and can't expect Ha-Shem to protect him. Of course, this person isn't honest with himself—if he genuinely believed Ha-Shem ran the world, he would do as Ha-Shem says. He would want to stay on good terms with the One who is running the world. But in any case, he won't be reaping the benefits of bitachon.

And the inverse, we're learning here, is also true. When we engage in learning Torah and keeping the mitzvos in a meaningful way, that is one of the keys to gaining Ha-Shem's special protection.

The Unlimited World

We said above, and Chazal often say it this way, that the Torah was given with Ha-Shem's "right" hand in particular. We know that the right hand represents chesed, while the left represents din. But we have to think a little bit about what those terms mean.

Chesed refers to something unlimited. When Ha-Shem does chesed with us, He's pouring goodness upon us in a way that wouldn't end if it weren't for the fact that we simply can't contain that much kindness. Judgment, however, refers to Ha-Shem holding back his goodness. The midas hadin connects to עוֹלָם הַזֶּה. This world is inherently limited. For every living being, life starts and finishes. Everything breaks down eventually, even amongst inanimate objects. Whatever is gained in this world won't accompany someone after death.

The Midas hachesed, on the other hand, relates to the next world, where life will go on forever. Nothing will ever end. And we access that world – we pave our path into the next world – with our

connection to Torah and mitzvos. The Torah itself is unlimited. That world is given to us with Ha-Shem's "right" hand.

The next part of the verse follows in the same vein. "His truth" is our shield – that refers to the Torah itself. The Medrash here even calls the Torah our ammunition! Another explanation given by the medrash is that when a person is *רחוק* the Torah, i.e., he treats the pursuit of learning and teaching Torah life as a business venture. He puts all of his power into it.

We have the most potent weapon already in our hands. When we connect to Ha-Shem's truth, we build up our level of bitachon and take advantage of this fantastic protection.

Shiur 86

צא:ה - "לא-תירא מפחד לילה; מחץ יעוף יומם."

91:5 - "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night nor of the arrow that flies by day."

Throughout life, we can encounter two types of situations that naturally cause fear.

The first is the darkness of night. When it's dark outside, we have no way of knowing what's out there and no way to prepare ourselves for the risks. The second fearful situation takes place during the day. I see the danger at hand; a lack of clarity isn't the issue. But the problem is that the enemy is shooting arrows at me, and I cannot stop them. I can only either run or figure out a way to protect myself. The clarity of danger, in this case, is precisely what causes the fear.

When someone has bitachon built on the truth of Ha-Shem, as we learned in the previous verse, we can be calm in either situation. Whether we have clarity or not about the details of the problem, we have total clarity that Ha-Shem is running the show. Whether I'm shaken up because I'm not clear about a specific choice in life or my fear comes from knowing the dangers of life all too well, I can relieve my fear by focusing on Ha-Shem's control in every situation.

Night and Day

Ha-Shem splits up our existence into night and day. But more than that – He weaves that division into how He wants us to keep the mitzvos. For example, there is a chiyuv to learn Torah both day and night. Even if a person spends hours studying during the day, he still has to set aside time at night to learn. The same is true about krias shema and tefillah – we have a separate chiyuv for the day and night. And the tefillos themselves fit for those time periods. Why did Ha-Shem set it up this way?

Based on what we've learned so far, it's very clear. Ha-Shem wants to be with us constantly. He set up a "natural" way to keep the connection going constantly. The day starts, and we are full of concerns. We know what's coming our way and feel the need to take action in response. We go to shul, learn, and strengthen our belief that the day's success is all in His hands.

Night arrives, and day is behind us. But now we have new issues that come our way – uncertainties about our future, maybe even about what the next day will bring. Again, we have an opportunity to

daven, learn, and be m'kabel oil malchus shomayim. Whatever the situation, the connection is available, and when we use it properly, we have nothing to be afraid of.

Shiur 87

צא:ו - "מִדְּבַר בְּאֶפֶל יְהֵלֵךְ; מִקְטֹב יִשׁוּד צְהָרִים."

91:6 - "Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor of the destruction that wastes at noonday."

Many seforim, such as the chovos halevovos, point out how futile it is to put our trust in anything worldly. A person might trust in his wealth, strength, or wisdom, but none of that lasts. And it doesn't take much investigation into the world to see the truth of this. And certainly, for the fearful situations we're describing so far in this perek, no amount of money or wisdom can help a person. His only hope is to trust in Ha-Shem.

This verse continues the previous one. We are given more examples of situations that provoke fear and are told that the ba'al bitachon can overcome them. The first is pestilence, which we've spoken about, and the second is some sort of spiritual מזיק, a type of demon or destructive force. Although the division of night and day is given here, we can suggest that this is not the same as the previous verse. Here, perhaps, the timeframes refer to the aspect of temperature during those times. During the night, sickness is more prevalent because of the cold. And the demon being referred to thrives in the heat of the day.

Hot And Cold

On the surface, a person might think he can handle these issues himself, more so than those mentioned in the previous verse. I can put on a coat at night. I can stay out of the heat or drink something cold. We are being taught that these issues are no different—there is something to be afraid of here, and Ha-Shem remains in charge of whether/how a person will be saved.

This has to be part of the clarity we're building for ourselves. Threats constantly surround us – Ha-Shem put these very threats in the world! And He is in charge of whether or not they will harm us.

The Medrash tells us here that if a person behaves באפל, in a "dark" way, he will be susceptible to these dangers more. Our actions matter, as we've spoken about many times. We can't just sit back and assume that Ha-Shem will take care of us whether or not we're trying to strengthen that connection. We have to strengthen ourselves constantly, and Ha-Shem will respond with yeshuos, both for us and individually and all of k'lal yisroel.

Shiur 88

צא:ז - "יִפֹּל מִצְדָּךְ, אֶלֶף וְרַבְבָּה מִיְמִינְךָ: אֵלֶיךָ, לֹא יִגֹּשׁ."

91:7 - "A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near you."

In this verse, Moshe Rabbeinu teaches us about a new aspect of the fantastic protection we can experience. An unimaginable number of threats can come at us all at once—one thousand from one side and ten thousand more from the other. We'll be outnumbered and have no natural way to free ourselves from the danger. What will be the solution? That threatening army, 1,100 strong, simply won't be able to approach. They won't come near us.

Rashi, based on the medrash, tells us an entirely different interpretation. The 1,100 forces being referred to are not the enemy. It refers to the angels, the positive malachim we create when we do mitzvos. Most mitzvos are done with the right hand; we have far more mitzvos on that side. The word "יפל," he says, can mean "they will dwell." These angels will be next to us, firmly in place, ready to defend us.

However, one might think creating a malach is a package deal. After all, once this malach is here, he will need someone to take care of him and provide for his needs somehow. To that question, the verse answers that "he won't approach you," the malach will be sustained entirely by Ha-Shem, and we can rely upon this protection always.

However we interpret the verse, we can assume both aspects are true. Enemies are all around us, but so are those malachim we created with our Torah and mitzvos. And those angels don't just protect the person who made them; they protect every Jew. Our Torah and mitzvos have always been the key to anything positive we have in this world.

Shiur 89

צא:ח - "רק, בעיניך תביט; ושלמת רשעים תראה."

91:8 - "Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked."

In this verse, Moshe Rabbeinu uses two verbs that mean "to see." The first one, "תביט," connotes placing one's focus on something. It's a proactive choice to look for something in particular. By default, a person isn't trying to say anything in particular and only notices what his mind is wrapped up in.

The Alter of Kelm would illustrate this with a parable of a tailor at a wedding hall. Other people pay attention to the bride or groom, perhaps the decorations or food. The mesader kiddushin is focused on the kesubah and ensuring everything is done properly. But the tailor just sees a thousand suits and how each needs repair.

The next stage after that choice of focus is "תראה." Your physical sight will actually change depending on what you've applied your focus to. The Alter uses this to explain the mishnah in avos "איזהו חכם - הלומד מכל אדם," the truly wise person is someone who learns from everyone. The wise person has learned to always proactively focus. He notices the person getting angry and thinks about how futile it is. He chooses to see the parents speaking nicely to their children and think about how he can apply that in his own life. And so on in every situation.

Perspective Is Everything

An old water-drawer once approached the Ba'al Shem Tov and poured out his heart. He couldn't believe that this was where he ended up in life. He was already well on in years and hadn't gained any significant life skill. He'd been doing this menial, difficult task of water drawing for decades!

A few days later, the same man returned to the Ba'al Shem Tov elated. "Boruch Ha-Shem," he said, "my body still works so well that I can draw water daily and make a living!"

The previous verses taught us how Ha-Shem is taking care of us. That knowledge itself is essential, but we have to take the next step and choose to see that reality all around us. If we have the right mind frame, we can see how Ha-Shem is running the world for us. For a person who has activated this sensitivity, even when evil people appear to receive reward, he'll realize it's not as it seems.

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach once insisted on visiting a recently married talmid. He went out of his way to go to this talmid's house. When asked to explain way, he said, "Many people know about what we call "עין הרע." Someone may look at the good fortune of another and somehow bring out a certain judgment on the person. I make it my business to practice using "עין טובה," and I wanted to come to your house to see everything good there and strengthen it. With Ha-Shem's help, we should work on focusing on seeing Ha-Shem's hand in our lives, and we'll be amazed by what we see.

Shiur 90 and 90b

צא:ט - "כִּי-אַתָּה יְיָ-הוֹדֵה מְחַסֵּי; עֲלִינוּ, שְׂמֵת מְעוֹנֶיךָ."

91:9 - "Because you, Ha-Shem, are my refuge. You have made the most High your habitation."

In the simple reading of this verse, the speaker is talking to Ha-Shem. He's declaring that Ha-Shem is his refuge and that Ha-Shem dwells, as it were, in the highest of realms. One issue with that p'shat is that it doesn't follow well from the previous verse. Moshe Rabbeinu, until now, was talking to the person, not to Ha-Shem. As well, these two facts about Ha-Shem don't seem to have any connection.

Rashi, however, explains this verse in an entirely different way. The "you" in the verse is still referring to the person. The verse should be read "Because you have said "Ha-Shem is my refuge, then you will be put in a higher place with Ha-Shem." And this flows perfectly from the previous verses. Once a person acknowledges that Ha-Shem is in the world, Ha-Shem elevates him to actually show him that truth. He gets a "bird's eye view," so to speak, and can see just how true it is that Ha-Shem is protecting him."

Above Nature

R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztz'l was a person who seemed to live entirely above nature. Despite his debilitating case of Parkinson's Disease, he kept up nearly everything associated with being a Rosh Yeshiva. He would teach, fundraise, meet with bachurim, and more. He did all this by focusing on Ha-Shem's ability to give him the power to do anything. And fitting for him, he would commonly

bless a person to receive divine assistance that is “למעלה מן הטבע.” He lived that way and knew how much was possible when we chose what to focus on.

And really, this isn't a supernatural phenomenon at all for us. Our nature, as the Jewish people, is above nature. Our bodies do not define us. Our reality comes from our neshamos, which are more potent than any physical creation. Being aware of this is one of our main goals in life. And if we live our lives in a way that confirms the primacy of the neshama, we'll see just how much we're capable of.

R' Tzvi Kushelevsky was blessed with his first child at the age of 87. Those close to him said that for all those years of childlessness, he would always tell people to never give up on their dreams. Ha-Shem can do anything, and we don't claim to know what His plans are. But for him, he was confident it was just a matter of time. And that's the case for all of us. When we commit to this truth of Ha-Shem's unlimited ability, we'll see real miracles in our lives.

Shiur 91 and 92

צא:י - "לא-תאנה אליך רעה; ונגע לא-יקרב באהלהך."

צא:יא - "כי מלאכיו יצוה-לך; לשמרך בכל-דרכיך."

91:10 - “No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your dwelling.”

91:11 - “For he shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

Chazal teach us that the “evil” and “plague” referred to in verse 10 are both physical and spiritual. When it comes to physical issues, we should already be experts. The more we strengthen our ability to see Ha-Shem's hand, the more He uses His power to protect us from harm.

The same is true of spiritual forces. The yaitzer hara has many tools at his disposal to try and make us stumble, which are called “evil” and a “plague.” When we do any mitzvah, including strengthening our trust in Ha-Shem, we create our own malachim to defend against these forces, referred to in verse 11. Ha-Shem will command those malachim to take care of every issue that comes our way.

One Mitzva Leads To Another

And really, it becomes a neverending cycle. As Chazal teach us, “one mitzva leads to another mitzva.” We end up with a constantly renewing force of spiritual defense.

A fantastic ceremony took place when the great Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin was built. Gedolei hador came from all over the world to participate, and of course, the person who donated the funds for the building itself was honored. At one point, a certain Rav approached the donor and said, “I'm not jealous of this mitzva that you did. You're getting so much honor in this world for donating the money for this building; who knows if anything will be left in the next world. But what I want to know is – what mitzva did you do beforehand that led to this one!?”

This is how a person becomes great. One small mitzvah leads to another, which leads to another, and so on. Changing our perspective, even a tiny amount, is the key to putting ourselves on the right path.

Shiur 93

צא:יב - "על-כפיים ישאונוך: פן-תגוף באבן רגלך."

91:12 - "They shall carry you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone."

This verse provides more details about how the malachim will protect a person. Not only will those malachim fight off any forces that come against us, but they will also carry us in the palms of their hands, as it were. We won't even experience discomfort, such as tiring feet. We're being saved from every issue in this world!

The Medrash teaches that if one person is carrying another, who is greater? Clearly, the one being carried. Therefore, we learn from here that the Jewish people are greater than the malachim. The entire spiritual realm, including the malachim, was created for our sake. The malachim carry out Ha-Shem's command, but they cannot be influential in the world. Only the Jewish people are given that ability, and all creation was made to support us in our mission.

This is true "Jewish pride." We are proud to be the chosen nation and given a Jewish soul that is holier than the most powerful angels. This type of pride doesn't cause arrogance; on the contrary, it's humbling. This realization causes us to want to be more like Ha-Shem (because we realize that we truly can be). I want to focus on caring for others and giving nachas to Ha-Shem. He chose us to be his representatives, and we must realize everything is in our hands.

Shiur 94

צא:יג - "על-שחל ופתן תדרוך; תרמס כפיר ותנין."

91:13 - "You shall tread on the lion and the snake, the young lion, and the crocodile, and trample them underfoot."

As we've learned earlier, Ha-Shem can prevent any threat from ever crossing our path. And we believe that he does this constantly. Who knows how many bacteria simply don't enter our body throughout the day, despite their close proximity to us. Who knows how many dangerous drivers just don't come down our street.

But Ha-Shem also chooses, at times, to bring the threatening situation right up to us. We don't know why Ha-Shem would choose one method over the other. But we do know that when we are aware of the danger we're in, our only option is to come close to Ha-Shem and try to be "with" Him as much as possible. We must remember that only He can save us and bring Him into the picture.

Peaceful Animals

Truthfully, the nature of the world is only to provide us with good ss. Any situation that is not that way is being orchestrated by Ha-Shem for our benefit.

In Sefer Iyov, we are told that no animal has a natural tendency to be dangerous, even the ones we perceive to be harmful. If Ha-Shem decides, any animal can become a peaceful, helpful creature and help the person accomplish his goals. Chazal tell us that in the times of the Beis HaMikdash,

no animals did any damage in eretz yisroel. Similarly, R' Chanina ben Dosa once placed his foot over the furrow of a harmful animal. The animal attempted to attack but somehow died trying.

The person described in our verse isn't just being saved from harm, however. A lion's fur is soft and smooth. Think of this person walking in the dark and suddenly feeling a pleasant texture on his feet. It's a live, deadly animal, but it's asleep. Not only is the person unharmed, but he's soothed! What a fantastic feeling to know how much Ha-Shem cares for us when we connect to Him in the right way.

Shiur 95 and 95b

צא:יד - "כי בי חשק, ואפלטוהו; אשגבהו, כי-ידע שמי."

91:14. "Because he has set his love upon me, therefore I will save him; I will set him on high because he knows my name."

These last verses will illustrate the highest levels a person can reach in his closeness with Ha-Shem. Here, we're describing someone who has "חשק," a desire towards Ha-Shem. He does the mitzvos out of love, and, in response, Ha-Shem says he will protect him and raise him up.

But this person didn't stop at having a desire for Ha-Shem. The person was "ידע שמי;" he "knew" Ha-Shem. He took that feeling of love and used it to push him toward understanding more about Ha-Shem so that he could connect to Him deeper. He is always trying to see Ha-Shem more in the world.

In this context, Ha-Shem's name means how He interacts with the world. A person who is trying to understand that interaction and realize how it is full of wisdom and kindness the more Ha-Shem responds to him in the way described here. The Rambam teaches us that a person can come to this type of "knowing" Ha-Shem through studying nature. If a person would look into the world around them – the earth, the stars, animal life, and every other amazing thing we take for granted – and work on seeing the profound wisdom behind it all, a deep love for Ha-Shem will begin to grow within him.

Personal Connection

The words used here, אשגבהו, אפלטוהו, connote a personal connection. We know that Ha-Shem runs the world with "hashgacha pratis." He's watching everyone and acting accordingly towards each person. But there are levels in that treatment. If we connect in a rote way, but we don't try to see how Ha-Shem is involved in our lives, Ha-Shem will still take care of us. But we won't have that sense of being personally cared for in our day-to-day lives. However, if we're ready to see that personal treatment, the more he will see it.

The bottom line of all of this is that we have to realize this is our job. We might be surrounded by people who don't think this way, who unfortunately haven't been exposed to the Torah properly. We can't let that fact distract us from what we must do. If we want to see Ha-Shem in this world, we will see Him. If we're going to know His name, we will know it. We'll realize that He is running the world, not us. And that will bring every bracha.

Shiur 96 and 96b

"צא:טו - יקראני ואענהו עמו-אנכי בצרה; אסלצהו ואכבדהו."

91:15 - "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will save him and honor him."

In times of difficulty, it's natural for a person to question the necessity of their suffering. "Why does this have to be this way?" he may think. "Why can't it all just go smoothly?" Dovid HaMelech teaches us (Tehillim 91:15) an all-encompassing three-step answer to this question.

First off, Ha-Shem tells us to call him when there is difficulty. He wants us to gain closeness specifically during the challenge, which is undoubtedly one reason for it in the first place. When things are going well – and we hope they continue – a person may not fully connect to Ha-Shem. The relationship will remain superficial. But when he finds himself in a situation where he is more aware of how much he needs Ha-Shem's help, a closeness develops that wouldn't have been there otherwise, specifically through the person's calling out to Ha-Shem with all his heart.

And that's a necessary ingredient in causing the salvation to come. The Rambam tells us that the entire Purim story happened to remind us that when we call out from the depths of our hearts to Ha-Shem, he answers us. Dovid HaMelech is guaranteeing this will happen. And that's what ultimately got us out of Mitzrayim as well – once the yidden called out properly, the Geulah came.

Salvation and Honor

Secondly, Ha-Shem tells us He is with that person during his suffering. And that fact really "answers up" the question. A person assumes he is experiencing difficulties because Ha-Shem left him. On the contrary, it's because Ha-Shem is *with* him and wants to gain a closer relationship with him!

The Mishnah in Sanhedrin teaches us that Ha-Shem even experiences the pain, so to speak. When any Jew is in pain, Ha-Shem screams out, "Ow, my head! My arm! I'm in pain!"

Lastly, Ha-Shem commits himself to saving such a person. We must strengthen our belief that Ha-Shem listens to every tefillah and that no matter what we perceive, He is actively taking care of us in the best possible way.

But Ha-Shem does more than that. This person, who took advantage of the difficulty he was experiencing and asked Ha-Shem's help properly, is rewarded by being "honored." That means he'll be raised to a higher spiritual level in this world and the next. That's the real kavod a person can achieve.

We can apply all of this any time we daven, even if it's for only part of the tefillah. It's a matter of stopping for a moment, committing to focus on the words, and remembering what we're doing. We're asking Him to solve our problem, but we're also coming closer to Him in the process, and really, that's the main thing.

Shiur 97

צא:טז - "אָרְךָ יָמִים, אֲשֶׁר בִּיעָהוּ; וְאַרְאֶהוּ, בִּישׁוּעָתִי."

91:16. "With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

We're at the last line of the "שיר של פגעים," which teaches us how to save ourselves from all sorts of suffering. Dovid HaMelech felt the need to write a concluding line about everything said above. He tells us that there's another piece of the reward for this person who has called out to Ha-Shem from the depths of his heart. The person will have a long, fulfilling life and merit complete salvation.

R' Chaim Volozhiner tells us that when anyone davens, even for personal matters, he should think that he's asking for this yeshuah because that's what Ha-Shem also wants. Because that's the truth – Ha-Shem wants to have everything good! How do we know? Because of what we learned in the verse before – Ha-Shem only brought the tzarah to the person *in order* for the person to get closer to Him. Without that, Ha-Shem would never put the person through pain.

And that's what this person will reach. He got the message. He took advantage of his situation and used it correctly. There's no more point in suffering for him, and he will get a complete yeshuah. And the meforshim tell us that it means this person will be zocheh to olam haba for this. He'll gain a special connection there that he wouldn't have had otherwise.

In Conclusion

We can take this mizmor with us throughout everything in our lives. Perhaps the main lesson we must take from learning this mizmor together is that Ha-Shem loves us. Look at what he's doing for us constantly. Look at how he set up the world to help us come close to him. We must pay more attention to this and respond to that love by appreciating what He's doing for us. My body, my soul, the way everything works together, the way I'm guarded from harm, and the list goes on. How can we not love Him? This is the key to every success in this world.

We know that whatever we're going through, other Jews are going through it as well. We have to use what we've learned to truly daven for what we need, not just for ourselves but for every Jew.