

Laws of Fasts Chapter 2 (Auto Translated)

English

Auto Translated

Shiur Overview

Summary of Lecture – Laws of Fasts, Chapter 2 (Rambam, Book of Times)

Halacha 1 – The List of Public Calamities

The Rambam's Words: "These are the public calamities for which we fast and sound the alarm: for an enemy besieging Israel, for the sword, for plague, for wild beasts, for locusts, for grasshoppers, for blight, for mildew, for collapsed buildings, for diseases, for food crises, and for rain problems."

Plain Meaning: The Rambam lists public calamities that require fasting and sounding trumpets: enemies besieging Jews, sword/war, plague, wild beasts, locusts (arbeh, chasil), crop diseases (blight, mildew), building collapses (mapolah), human diseases, livelihood problems, and rain problems (too much or too little).

Insights and Explanations:

1. **Individual Calamity vs. Public Calamity – The Halachic Distinction:** Not every bad thing is a public calamity. For an individual calamity there are no fixed rules – the Rambam said in Chapter 1 "one who has a sick person in his house" only as examples, and the individual decides for himself. But for a public calamity there is a law that **the court decrees a fast**, therefore we need a clear list.

2. **Individual Calamity is Limited to Life-Threatening Situations:** The calamities of an individual are primarily when **his life is in danger** – a sick person, one lost in the desert, one imprisoned – which are three of the four who must give thanks. But **a poor person who has no livelihood** – that is not in the category of individual calamity that requires fasting. Hunger is a public calamity, not an individual one.

3. **Two Conditions for a Calamity Requiring Fasting:** A calamity requiring "to cry out and sound the alarm" has two characteristics: (a) it is **not in his control** – he cannot control it; (b) it is **not something he took the risk for** – like someone who went to live near wild beasts. For such things that one took the risk himself, we don't make complaints – this is a matter of "you shall guard your souls carefully."

4. **The Term "Tzarah" – A Linguistic Analysis:** The word "tzarah" comes from "tzar" – **narrowness, siege, encirclement**. "The enemy who besieges you" – the enemy who surrounds. The Rambam expounds it more broadly: **"for anything that causes you distress"** – everything that creates constriction, whether physical (siege on a city) or emotional. In the Torah and Prophets the word "matzor" (siege) appears rarely, but in Writings it appears several times ("siege and distress"), connected to the destruction of the Temple. The verse "many have besieged me from my youth" is cited – troubles come "bundled in bundles," in packages.

5. **Arbeh, Chasil, Blight, Mildew – Four Types of Crop Plagues:** Arbeh and chasil are two types of locusts, and **blight and mildew** are diseases/damage to crops. Blight – when trees are beaten down by bad weather; mildew – when it is very hot and the crops become pale/moldy. Sometimes the damage comes from weather, sometimes from insects – but all four are plagues on fruits/crops.

Halacha 1 (Continued) – The City and Its Surroundings

The Rambam's Words: "Any city that has one of these calamities, that city fasts and sounds the alarm until the calamity passes. And all its surroundings fast but do not sound the alarm. But they pray for mercy upon them."

Plain Meaning: A city that has one of these calamities – the entire city fasts and blows trumpets until the calamity passes. The surroundings (nearby cities) also fast, but don't blow trumpets – they do pray for mercy.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **Trumpets, Not Shofar: We blow trumpets, not shofar** – shofar is only in the Temple (according to certain opinions). "Sounding the alarm" means trumpets.

2. **What Does "City" Mean and What Does "Its Surroundings" Mean?** It has to do with **the local municipality/government**. The concept "**eparchya**" (**province**) is mentioned – a Roman term for a local region (from which the Catholic "parish" derives). For physical calamities like rain, it's more a geographic question (above/below a mountain), but for sword/war it's more connected to the political government structure.

3. **Distinction Between Fasting and Sounding the Alarm:** Why is there a distinction that the surroundings fast but don't blow trumpets? Fasting is much harder than blowing! The answer: Trumpets make it "more serious" – it should be reserved for when it's "more real," i.e., when the calamity is actually present. The Rambam said earlier that trumpets are part of the prayer gathering – it has to do with warning. The Sages did not institute the obligation of trumpets for such a case, but he doesn't say one may not – it's simply not the obligation.

4. **"But They Pray for Mercy" – Who?** Although the surroundings don't sound the alarm with trumpets, they do pray special prayers.

5. **Condition of an Ongoing Calamity:** An important distinction – the Rambam only speaks of calamities that are ongoing, that can pass through repentance/prayer. A simple tragedy where three people died, without an overall danger that continues to happen, is not the subject of a public fast. It must be something that "can pass" – a situation where one can pray that it will end. The Rambam doesn't state this condition explicitly, but it's necessary from the Mishnah.

6. [Digression: Modern Communities vs. Geographic Cities] In today's times, when something happens to "a few Vizhnitz young men," all Vizhnitz Hasidim feel it's theirs – even in other cities (London, Israel). But **this is an unnatural way of life** – the halacha speaks of geographic proximity, not ideological affiliation. The matter of "who feels it" is a subject of **individual fasting**, not public fasting. The statement "one of a group who died" is more a matter of remembering death and repentance, not a law of public fasting.

Law of Shabbat

The Rambam's Words: "Everywhere we do not cry out nor sound the alarm on Shabbat... except for food crises – we cry out for them even on Shabbat, but we do not sound trumpets for them on Shabbat."

Plain Meaning: On Shabbat we don't blow and don't cry out, except for food crises where we may cry out/pray but not blow trumpets.

Insights and Explanations:

1. Why is Food Crisis So Severe? Food crisis is the worst calamity of all. With a sick person or a plague, one in ten dies, or even one in two. But when there's no food, "no one survives" – everyone dies. Therefore food crisis is almost like actual life-threatening danger, and therefore one may even pray for it on Shabbat.

2. Shabbat – We're Not Talking About Fasting: The subject on Shabbat is not fasting (which we certainly don't do on Shabbat), but praying. The Sages instituted that on Shabbat one should not pray for calamities, but food crisis is an exception.

3. Surroundings on Shabbat: Even when there's an actual calamity today in a city (like gentiles are outside), we do cry out on Shabbat – but this is specifically that city. The surroundings don't do anything on Shabbat.

Halacha 2 – For the Enemy Besieging Israel, How So

The Rambam's Words: "Gentiles who come to wage war against Israel, or to take tribute from them, or to take land from them, or to decree forced conversion upon them even regarding a minor commandment – behold these we fast and sound the alarm until they have mercy from Heaven. In all the cities in their surroundings they fast but do not sound the alarm, unless they blow to gather to help them."

Plain Meaning: When gentiles come to wage war specifically against Jews – to fight, to tax, to take land, or to make decrees of forced conversion even on a minor commandment – we fast and blow trumpets. The surroundings fast but don't blow, unless they blow to call people to come help.

Insights and Explanations:

1. Tribute – Not Regular Taxes: "Tribute" doesn't mean regular taxes that a kingdom may levy. It means special antisemitic taxes on Jews. The word "mas" in the Bible (like "and they shall be tribute to you and serve you") doesn't mean only money – it can mean forced labor, subjugation. It's a calamity, not just taxes.

2. Forced Conversion – Not Killing: "Shmad" here doesn't mean killing (like "until he destroys them"), but a

decree of forced conversion – when gentiles want to prevent Jews from their customs/commandments. Even a minor commandment – even something like eruv tavshilin – when it comes from a place of oppression against Jews, it's a great calamity.

3. The Subject is the War, Not the Conversion: The subject of the halacha is not the content of the decree (which commandment they want to abolish), but the fact that gentiles come with force against Jews – "come to wage war." Twenty tanks standing outside the Jewish neighborhood – that's the calamity. What they want (even if only that we stop putting on tefillin) is only the goal of their war. If we don't comply, they'll shoot. This is a great calamity.

4. Unless They Blow to Gather to Help Them: The only way the surroundings do blow trumpets is for practical reasons – to call people to come help in the war. This is exactly the purpose of trumpets in this context – a practical function, not just a spiritual one.

Halacha – For the Sword, How So

The Rambam's Words: "Even a sword of peace, such as when gentiles go to war with gentiles and pass through a place of Israel... as it says 'and a sword shall not pass through your land'."

Plain Meaning: "Sword" means a neutral war – not specifically against Jews, but a sword/war that revolves around Jews. Even a "sword of peace" – soldiers passing through peacefully – is a calamity.

Insights and Explanations:

1. Distinction Between "Enemy" and "Sword": "Enemy against the cities of Israel" means Jews are the target. "Sword" means the war is between gentiles, but it's happening near Jews. The sword is "neutral" – it doesn't specifically mean the Jews.

2. Practical Reality of a Sword of Peace: Soldiers who don't belong there can do what they want, nothing can be done to them. They can be in the midst of post-trauma, get drunk at night, go out with swords and kill people. This is a real danger. In the laws of hospitality it says soldiers can take anyone's bread – this confirms the reality.

3. Precision in the Verse "And a Sword Shall Not Pass Through Your Land": It doesn't say "a sword shall not come upon you" (a sword won't come upon you), but "shall not pass" – even passing through. The verse doesn't mean only that no war will come, but that not even will a sword pass through. Even seeing war itself is a calamity.

4. Why Does the Mishnah Bring a Verse? The verse gives us a novelty – "and a sword shall not pass" means even a sword of peace. Without this verse we would have thought only a war against us is a calamity. The verse teaches us that even just passing through is already a calamity. The Mishnah uses the word "sword" specifically – a sword passing through is already a sign of unstable times.

5. Jewish Instinct: Jews have "always known" that when gentile soldiers pass near Jews, even peacefully, "it won't end well." This is the Jewish instinct based on historical experience.

6. [Digression: Weapons Among People] We see from here that carrying around a sword, even a sword of peace,

weapons don't belong among people. (Mentioned in the context of a question about carrying a gun on Shabbat.)

Laws of Plague (Epidemic) – Halachot 2-4

A) Definition of Plague

The Rambam's Words: "A city that has five hundred able-bodied men, and three dead came out from it in three consecutive days — this is a plague. But if they came out in one day or in four days — this is not a plague. If it had a thousand, and six dead came out from it in three consecutive days — this is a plague. And so according to this calculation."

Plain Meaning: A city with 500 healthy men, if 3 people die in 3 consecutive days (one per day), this is a plague. If all 3 in one day or spread over 4 days – not. For 1000 people, 6 must die in 3 days.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **What is the Basis of "Plague"?** Plague doesn't mean simply statistically that many people are dying. Plague means there's a contagious disease, some general matter – an "angel" going around. Today we know these are bacteria and viruses, once they couldn't see this, but they knew it was a plague.

2. **Why Do We Need Numbers?** Because once they couldn't see bacteria/viruses, they needed a presumption – a statistical method to distinguish between coincidence and a real epidemic. The Mishnah gives a measure: 3 dead in 3 days from 500 people. But if we know clearly there's an epidemic (like today with modern medicine), we don't need to reach the numbers – we can start fasting before counting. Just like with war, three people don't need to die – because we know there's a war, even if no one dies, it's dangerous.

3. **Why Aren't Three in One Day a Plague?** Because we can attribute it to other causes – an accident, a coincidence. The consistent pattern of one per day for three consecutive days shows it's something systemic.

4. **Distinction Between Plague and Simply Many People Dying:** An example of heat waves in Europe where many elderly people die – this isn't a plague because there's a known cause (heat, no air conditioning). Plague means a spreading disease.

B) "Five Hundred Able-Bodied Men" – Who is Counted

The Rambam's Words: "Women, children, elderly who have finished their work, and the sick are not included in the count of the city's people for this matter."

Plain Meaning: We only count healthy men toward the calculation of 500. Women, children, elderly people who no longer work, and sick people are not in this count – neither for counting the 500, nor for counting the 3 dead.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **"Ragli" Means Healthy Men:** The word "ragli" (foot soldiers) means people who can walk on their feet – healthy, working men. It comes from the language of Jacob to Esau. This excludes women and children.

2. **Why Do We Exclude Weak People?** Because elderly, sick, etc. can die more easily from their existing weaknesses – this is not proof there's a plague. Only when healthy people die is this a sign of something abnormal.

3. **[Digression: Application to COVID]** With COVID, primarily elderly people died – according to the Rambam's definition, this alone would not constitute a "plague" according to the numbers. But when we know clearly there's an epidemic (through modern medicine), we don't need to reach the numbers – the numbers are only a presumption for when we don't know.

C) Plague in the Land of Israel

The Rambam's Words: "If there was a plague in the Land of Israel, the rest of the Jewish diaspora fasts for them. If there was a plague in a country and caravans go back and forth from it to another country – both fast, even though they are not far from each other."

Plain Meaning: When there's a plague in the Land of Israel, all Jews in exile fast. When there's a plague in a city that has caravans going to another city, both cities fast.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **Why Do All Jews Fast for the Land of Israel?** Two explanations: (1) The Gemara says "if the strong one was not spared, all the more so" – the Land of Israel has greater protection ("the eyes of the Lord your God are upon it"), and if the protection didn't help there, it's a sign of a great decree. (2) Jews care about the Jews in the Land of Israel – it's a matter of the importance of the Land of Israel.

2. **Caravans – Understanding of Contagion:** The Sages understood very well that people carry around the plague. When caravans go between two cities, there's a real danger the epidemic will spread. Therefore both cities fast.

3. **Story with Shmuel:** Shmuel lived in Nehardea, and when he heard that in Bei Chozai (a nearby city) there was a plague, he made a fast – because the frequency of caravans between the two cities meant it could spread.

Halacha – For Wild Beasts, How So

A) Definition of "Sent"

The Rambam's Words: "We only fast for a wild beast when it is sent."

Plain Meaning: We only fast for wild beasts when they are "sent" – dispatched, released.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **"Sent" Means a Change in the Natural Order:** The language comes from "and I will send upon you wild beasts" – I will send upon you wild beasts. "Sent" doesn't mean the normal reality that if you go into the forest near a bear something will happen. "Sent" means something has changed – the normal order that animals fear people has been removed. It's a crazy, abnormal thing – a sign of "sending evil angels." The verse "and all the peoples of the earth will see... and fear you" is mentioned – when people are honest, animals fear them; when not, they lose the fear.

B) Four Levels of Places

The Rambam's Words: "If it was seen in the city by day – this is sent. If it was seen in the field by day, if it saw two people and did not flee from them – this is sent. And if it was a field adjacent to a marsh... and ran after him – this is sent, if it did not run after him – it is not sent. In the marsh – even if it ran after him

it is not sent, unless it seized both and ate one of them..."

Plain Meaning: The Rambam sets up four levels of places with different criteria: (1) **In the city by day** – even one beast is sent; (2) **In the field** – only if it sees two people and doesn't flee; (3) **Field adjacent to a marsh** – only if it runs after people; (4) **In the marsh** itself – even if it runs after people it's not sent, unless it actually caught two people and ate one (but ate both – also not sent, because that's just hunger).

Insights and Explanations:

1. **"Sent" Means a Change in the Natural Order, Not Just a Tragedy:** The main novelty is that the standard of "sent" is not how great the damage is, but how abnormal the behavior is. The entire system of four levels shows that the more natural the place is for animals, the more extreme the behavior must be to be considered "sent."

2. **Why "Ate Both" in the Marsh is Not Sent:** When the animal ate both people, it's a sign of hunger – a natural cause. But when it only tore apart one (seized) and ate the other, this shows it didn't act only from hunger, but had a crazy aggressiveness – "just to grab" – and this is the sign of being sent.

3. **Connection to the Rambam's Approach Regarding "Chance" vs. Providence:** When a person goes alone to a dangerous place (like a desert with animals), this isn't "sent" – he put himself in. The answer there is simple: don't go there. But when a "sending" comes – animals come into the city, abnormally – then we don't know what we sinned, and we need a **general repentance**, searching for what we're doing wrong. This is the essence of fasting – when the cause isn't obvious.

C) Houses Built in the Desert

The Rambam's Words: "Houses built in the desert and more so in desolate lands... since they are a place where beasts dwell... and a bird of prey came and took an infant from a cradle – this is not sent, these are people who established themselves and came to the place of the beasts."

Plain Meaning: When people build houses in a desert where animals live, and an animal takes a child from the cradle – this is not "sent", because **they** came to **the animal's** place.

Insights: This is compared to "lest the fallen one fall from it" – the calamity comes "from him", from the person's own negligence (not making a fence). We don't need to seek a different cause when the simple cause is clear.

D) Creeping Things of the Earth and Creeping Things of the Air

The Rambam's Words: "Other types of creeping things of the earth and creeping things of the air that are sent and cause harm, such as snakes and scorpions, and needless to say hornets and mosquitoes and the like – we do not fast for them nor sound the alarm, but we cry out quietly."

Plain Meaning: For smaller harmful creatures (snakes, scorpions, wasps, mosquitoes) – even when they are "sent" – we don't fast and don't blow, but we cry out quietly.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **Question – Why is There a Distinction Between Beasts and Creeping Things?** If the essence of "sent" is a change in the natural order, why should a snake that is sent be different from a wolf that is sent? The answer: Snakes and scorpions are **always** dangerous to people – it's hard to make a distinction between "normal" and "sent" with them, because their nature is already aggressive. But with a wolf, which normally flees from people, a change in behavior is clearly visible.

2. **The Ra'avad's Objection:** The Ra'avad asks: "**If they were biting and killing, even hornets and mosquitoes and the like, they are all messengers of the Omnipresent.**" The Ra'avad understands "messengers" that God sends them, and asks what's the distinction – if they're killing people, shouldn't we sound the alarm?

3. **The Maggid Mishneh's Answer:** "**The reason we don't fast – because a person can kill them and protect himself from them.**" We can protect ourselves from creeping things – we can kill them (as we learn on Shabbat that we may kill a "harmful creature"). But with a large animal like a bear or lion, a person cannot so simply protect himself.

4. **Question on the Maggid Mishneh:** If the distinction is only whether we can protect ourselves, then it's not a distinction between "beast" and "creeping thing" as categories, but a distinction between dangerous and not-dangerous. The Rambam however makes a clear category distinction. This remains a question.

5. **"Not the Snake Kills But the Sin Kills":** The statement is brought up but dismissed as relevant to the rule – this is only Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa's high level. **The laws go with the approach that not everything is individual providence**, but when it's a special thing. A second answer: We can make a distinction between an individual who lives with God and always sees hints, to a public matter which must be an exceptional thing – something that brings the world's attention.

6. **[Digression: Does "Sending" of Beasts Actually Exist?]** It's noted that we've never heard in the news of such a phenomenon. But it can happen when the ecosystem is destroyed – when a certain species that other animals used to eat is destroyed, they become "crazy" and go out of their usual boundaries.

Halacha – For Locusts and Grasshoppers

The Rambam's Words: "For locusts and grasshoppers – even if only one wing of them was seen in all the Land of Israel, we fast and sound the alarm for them. And for the govai – we fast for any amount. But the chagav – we do not fast for it nor sound the alarm, but only cry out."

Plain Meaning: Arbeh and chasil (chasil is so called because it "liquidates" – destroys everything in its path) are severe types of locusts. Even with one wing that we see, we fast and sound the alarm, because this is a sign it's laying eggs and soon will come a whole million. Govai – also we fast for any amount. But chagavim don't cause such great damage – we only cry out (cry out only).

Insights and Explanations:

1. The Distinction Between Arbeh/Chasil and Chagavim: Arbeh/chasil destroy all the crops, chagavim eat but don't destroy everything.

2. An Important Principle: Fasting and sounding the alarm is reserved for very important situations. One should not be disrespectful with it. If we make a gathering of awakening every day, it loses its power. But crying out we may always, because "crying out is good for the sick" – prayer is always good.

Halacha – For Blight and Mildew

The Rambam's Words: "For blight and mildew – when it begins in the crops, even if it only began in a small place the size of an oven's opening, we decree a fast for it and sound the alarm."

Plain Meaning: Blight – when a wind beats down the crops (blasting of the east wind). Mildew – a disease that makes the crops pale. As soon as it begins even in a small place "like an oven's opening" (a measure known from the laws of Shabbat), we fast and sound the alarm.

Insights and Explanations:

1. [Digression: Today's Times] It's discussed whether today's times, when there are entire systems of how to take care, the laws are different. In the Land of Israel they still make a decree for lack of rain (the Edah HaChareidis publishes), but with today's reality that we import crops, it's a question whether it has the same parameters. It doesn't hurt to make a proclamation, but it probably must have to do with reality.

2. [Digression: Wedding Costs] Today's times, when everyone must make a wedding for eighty thousand dollars, is much more of a problem than lack of rain – this is relevant to "for food" which comes later.

Halacha – For Collapsed Buildings

The Rambam's Words: "If they sensed in the city a collapse of strong walls that are not by the river – this is a calamity, and we fast and sound the alarm for it."

Plain Meaning: When strong sturdy walls fall down in a city – not walls by a river (where it's normal because the earth is wet) – this is a special calamity and we fast.

Insights and Explanations:

1. "Beri'im" Means Not Primarily "Healthy" But "Strong/Fat": Like "healthy cow" in Joseph's dream, and "healthy and beautiful/good ears of grain". The main meaning of bari is strong.

2. The Distinction: By a river it's normal for walls to fall (floods, wet earth), but when strong walls fall not by a river, it's a sign it came because of sins – a change in the natural order.

Halacha – For Earthquakes and Winds

The Rambam's Words: "And similarly for earthquakes and for winds that knock down buildings and kill – we fast and sound the alarm for them."

Plain Meaning: For earthquakes and for great storms that throw down buildings and kill people, we fast and sound the

alarm.

Insights and Explanations:

1. Interesting Linguistic Note: "Ra'ash" means an earthquake, although the noise (sound) is only a small side-effect – the real problem is the shaking of the earth, not the noise. In Psalms it says "He looks at the earth and it trembles" – a trembling, a shaking. But in the Mishnah it's always called "ra'ash".

2. Earthquakes in Clusters: It's discussed whether earthquakes come in clusters – that when it happens once, it comes more often afterward. In those times they perhaps thought it was such a thing, and it actually was so in certain places.

Halacha – For Diseases (Askara, Wet Rash, Dry Rash)

The Rambam's Words: "Diseases such as askara... for one goes out with it and there is death in it, this is a public calamity and we decree a fast and sound the alarm. And similarly wet rash – this is like a spreading boil, and if it spread among most of the public we fast and sound the alarm for it. But dry rash – we only cry out for it."

Plain Meaning: Diseases are different from plague – with plague you die, with diseases you can die but you don't always die. Askara (a throat disease, like Rashi by Rabbi Akiva's students) – when it goes around and there is death, it's a public calamity. Wet rash (a wet rash/boil) – like a spreading boil, when it spreads among most of the public, we fast. Dry rash (a dry itch) – only crying out.

Insights and Explanations:

1. The Distinction Between Plague and Disease is Explicit: A disease means we see the world has become sick with a known disease – we know what it is, we can get sick, we can die but we don't have to. With plague we know we die.

2. Question from Lechem Mishneh: Why doesn't it say by diseases that we need three people (like by plague)? **Answer:** By diseases we already know what it is – we see a known disease going around. The three people measure is only when we don't know what it is (by plague). So says also the Beit Yosef.

3. Wet Rash vs. Dry Rash: With wet rash it's like a spreading boil – it goes around, it's contagious. When it spreads among most of the public, we fast. **Note:** For wet rash it doesn't say we die from it – it seems even without dying, when everyone gets infected, it's enough of a great calamity. **Alternative:** Perhaps when it spreads among most of the public, someone with a weaker immune system will indeed die.

4. Two Types of Calamities are Distinguished: (1) Something contagious where people die en masse, (2) no one will die but everyone gets infected – both are enough of a calamity.

5. For Dry Rash – Only Crying Out: To cry out (pray) is always – for any calamity. But it may be that for some things it doesn't even say crying out – only an individual can always cry out for what hurts him.

Halacha – For Food, How So

The Rambam's Words: "For food, how so? Behold if merchandise items that most of the life of the people of that city depend on them became cheap, such as linen garments in Babylonia, or wine and oil in the Land of Israel, and the commerce decreased until the merchant needs to sell seventeen for six... this is a public calamity and we sound the alarm for it."

Plain Meaning: When the prices of merchandise that is the main livelihood of a city fall dramatically (almost 40%), that a merchant must sell 17 pieces for the price he used to get for 6, this is a public calamity for which we sound the alarm even on Shabbat.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **"Food" Here Doesn't Mean Food But Livelihood/Merchandise:** "Food" in this context doesn't mean lack of food, but the opposite – an **abundance of food** (too much supply), which makes it impossible to sell. The calamity is not that there's nothing to eat, but that there's nothing to earn. This is a supply-and-demand problem – too much supply drives down prices.

2. **"How So" Here Means a Measure** – how much cheapness is enough to count as a calamity.

3. **Why Does it Only Say Cheapness and Not Expensiveness?** Because expensiveness is already included in blight and mildew – when there's little fruit, it becomes expensive. "Food" here means specifically that one cannot sell – it's too cheap, one cannot make any money.

4. **Why

Why is This So Serious That We Sound the Alarm Even on Shabbat? When merchants lose 40%, teachers lose 70%, and kollel students lose 90%. The economic shock filters through and gets worse at each level. **Livelihood is a serious calamity** that can lead to actual danger.

5. **Shabbat and Livelihood – A Contradiction?** Shabbat is "lend to Me and I will repay" – one shouldn't worry about money on Shabbat. The answer: These are good segulot (spiritual remedies), but **in practice when there's a calamity we must stay with the halacha** that we sound the alarm even on Shabbat. Also mentioned is the statement "and all blessing above and below depends on the seventh day" – that Shabbat is connected to livelihood.

Halacha – For Rain: Excessive Rains

The Rambam's Words: "Behold if rains increased upon them until they cause them distress, behold these we sound the alarm for them, for there is no greater calamity than this, that houses fall and they become graves for them."

Plain Meaning: When it rains too much and brings calamities – houses collapse and people are buried in their houses – we sound the alarm. The Rambam says there is no greater calamity than this.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **"For Rain" Means Too Much Rain, Parallel to Food:** Just as "food" here means too much food (not too little), so "rain" here means too much rain. Both are calamities of excess.

2. **Distinction Between the Land of Israel and Babylonia:** In the Land of Israel we only **pray** for

excessive rains, but we **don't fast**, because: (a) the Land of Israel is a **mountainous land** – the rain runs down to the valleys, (b) **their houses are built of stone** – stone houses don't collapse from rain (connected to "a land whose stones are iron"), (c) **most rains are good for them** – for the bigger picture, more rain is good for the Land of Israel. In **Babylonia** however, where houses are built of weak materials (reeds etc.), too much rain is an actual danger, and we must fast.

3. **Mountains Need More Rain:** Because the rain runs down and doesn't stay on top, much more rain is needed for things to grow on the mountain. Therefore excessive rains are a blessing for the Land of Israel.

4. **Proof from Choni HaMa'agel:** With Choni HaMa'agel, when it began to rain too much, they prayed **for the abundance of good** – we see it was indeed a problem, but **no danger** it wasn't in the Land of Israel.

Halacha – Crops That Sprouted and Rain Ceased

The Rambam's Words: "Crops that sprouted and the rain ceased and the plants began to dry, behold these we fast and cry out until rains fall or until the plants dry up."

Plain Meaning: When crops have already begun to grow and the rain stopped, and the plants begin to dry out, we fast and cry out until it rains, or until it's completely dried out (then it's already "too late").

Insights and Explanations:

1. **"Fast and Cry Out" Not "Sound the Alarm":** The Rambam says here **fast and cry out**, which means we blow shofarot (not just sound the alarm). This is a stronger level.

2. **When It's "Too Late":** If the plants are already completely dried out, we stop fasting for this specific matter – because it no longer helps.

Halacha – Time of Tree Blossoming (Passover Time)

The Rambam's Words: "And similarly if the time of Passover arrived or close to it in the Land of Israel, which is the time of tree blossoming there, and rains did not fall, behold these we fast and cry out until rains fall that are suitable for trees or until their time passes."

Plain Meaning: Around Passover time in the Land of Israel, when trees blossom, if it doesn't rain, we fast until it rains or until the time passes.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **Three Periods of Rain Needs:** The Rambam lists three separate times: (a) **Sukkot time** – to fill the cisterns with water for the winter, (b) **End of winter** – when crops need to grow, (c) **Passover time** – when trees blossom. Each time has its own laws.

Halacha – No Water to Drink

The Rambam's Words: "If they have no water to drink, we fast and cry out at any time they have no water to drink, even in the summer."

Plain Meaning: If there's no drinking water, we fast and cry out at any time, even in summer.

Insights and Explanations:

1. **Even in the Summer:** If it's summer and we won't expect rain, but there's nothing to drink, it's a calamity that requires fasting and crying out.

Halacha – Plague of Drought

The Rambam's Words: "If the rains ceased between rain and rain for forty days in the rainy season, this is a plague of drought, and we fast and cry out until rains fall or until their time passes."

Plain Meaning: If in the middle of winter it stops raining for 40 days, this is called "plague of drought" and we fast.

| Full Transcript

Laws of Fasts, Chapter 2 – Public Troubles for Which We Fast

Opening and Introduction to the Chapter

Good evening, dear Jews. We are learning the holy Torah, Laws of Fasts, Sefer Rambam, Sefer Zemanim, Laws of Fasts, Chapter 1. Ah, sorry, Chapter 2. Chapter 1 was yesterday, today we're learning Chapter 2.

So yesterday we learned about the essential mitzvah (commandment) of fasting and to fast and cry out over a trouble. The Rambam began with what the mitzvah from the Torah is and what is from the words of the Sages. It was a beautiful chapter. And today we're going to learn which types of troubles require a fast, and also the details of how many fasts. That is in the next chapter, Chapter 3. I think perhaps we'll learn it.

Distinction Between Public Trouble and Individual Trouble

Yes, which type of trouble? More specifically, you could say which is a public trouble. Because for an individual trouble there are no set rules - whatever a person feels is difficult for him, as the Rambam said "one who has a sick person in his house." He gave examples, there are no laws about this. But a public trouble is indeed a law that the beit din (rabbinical court) decrees a fast. So there is a list of which types of troubles are called a public trouble, and how one decrees a fast for them. Right?

Yes. The interesting thing here is actually the topic that we see clearly that not every bad thing is called a trouble. Certainly not a public trouble, perhaps one would say. Perhaps it's an individual trouble. Perhaps for that individual to whom one of these things happens that isn't listed, let him indeed fast if it's relevant.

No, I was just thinking of something else that I wanted. Individual troubles are such things as his life is in danger, such as he is sick, lost in the desert, and imprisoned. These are basically three of the four who must give thanks who are in danger.

There's no such thing as an individual because he is poor. If there is rain, it has to do with the ancient way of life. If there is rain and there is food, the individual must borrow, he must have a bit of shame. For example, hunger is a public trouble, a plague, all these things are public troubles. For an individual there are fewer options.

Discussion: Individual Trouble and Livelihood

Insights and Explanations:

1. **Distinction Between Cessation of Rains and Plague of Drought:** Cessation of rains is when it doesn't begin to rain at all (we'll learn this later in a larger topic). **Plague of drought** is when it did begin to rain, but meanwhile there's a pause of 40 days – this is a special plague.

2. **Why Doesn't it Say "Sound the Alarm" for Plague of Drought?** It's asked why the Rambam says here only "fast and cry out" but not "sound the alarm". A possible answer: **This is not the main fast for rain** (which comes later with all the details, and there certainly we sound the alarm). This is more a "side" calamity, not the main law of cessation of rains. The answer however remains not entirely clear.

Yes, but it could be that a year which is yes, according to what it is, it means as it is more open for him what he feels as a trouble.

Yes, but I'm saying for example what we're learning... what's it called? We're going to learn in this chapter that if only one person died in a plague, whatever, it's not called a plague. So that person in the family, let him indeed fast.

Perhaps you're also right that one must know which type. But let's say one person has no livelihood. Not on the level that there is such that it's called a trouble that there is no livelihood. Indeed that one who must borrow, let him fast until he gets livelihood. There can be no livelihood. And then I thought that when there is hunger for the city, it's obvious that it's a tragedy for the city, one has no livelihood. He must figure it out. It's less... well, he must figure it out. One of the ways to do it is indeed what is indeed what is fasting causes and doing teshuvah (repentance), whatever. It must also be.

Yes, but we indeed see, in this chapter we're going to see that... if we know the reason for the trouble, it's in your hand, it can depend on the question.

Yes, yes, that's a good thought. In any case, it's not an obligation, it's not relevant to make laws. These are indeed laws for a rabbi. The rabbi should know, ah, this is not a trouble, one doesn't need to decree a fast. But when we speak of an individual, let the individual decide if it's...

Conditions for a Trouble That Requires a Fast

This will go and see in the chapter, that the trouble for which we cry out and sound the alarm, for which we make a fast, is two things: one, things that are not in the person's hand. And second, something he couldn't have expected, something he took the risk, he went to live in a place near wild animals or such types of things, about this one doesn't make complaints. One must simply be more careful, but "you shall guard yourselves greatly."

Yes, okay.

Law 1 – List of Public Troubles

So let's learn. The Rambam says thus: **These are the troubles of the community for which we fast and sound the alarm.** These are the troubles that happen to the community, for which one must fast and blow the shofar. First the Rambam lists a list, and later he goes to explain the details of each one from the list. I think this is all more or less the Mishnah in Taanit that goes in this order.

Yes, holy tractate Taanit.

For the troubles. Troubles is... very interesting, the word tzarah is a precise, more restrictive way, it means a language of constriction, being surrounded, being "the enemy who oppresses you." One who surrounds, but the name has become a noun for all kinds of difficulties, all kinds of constrictions.

Explanation of the Term "Tzarah"

They say indeed "for the trouble," not only "for the trouble of the enemy who oppresses Israel." When the enemies of Israel surround the Jews, that's one thing. But one must indeed surround also when they just attack. Ah, perhaps it indeed means that.

Yes, that's what it means. Tzarah means under siege, one who makes a siege.

So when the enemies of Israel surround the Jews. I'm thinking of a precise point actually, because I noticed in the Chumash and even in the Prophets there isn't the word matzor, but in the Writings perhaps three or four times appears the word matzor, matzor umatzok. Okay, understandably, it's a great trouble, like the destruction of the Temple, and the misery and the Eichah ha'ir, the whole thing. But it could be that the language of tzarah always comes from the siege, when a person feels constricted.

All troubles, as it says in the Kli Yakar, it comes in bundles. "Many have bound me," that it comes in packages, it comes in bundles. Is there a verse, or is this a language we say?

"Many have oppressed me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me."

Yes, many have oppressed me, made constricted.

Exposition of the Verse "For the Enemy Who Oppresses You"

"For the enemy who oppresses you." How did the Rambam derive the word "the enemy"?

"For the enemy who oppresses you," "for anything that constricts you," not only for an enemy, but "the enemy who oppresses."

Interesting, tzar is a noun, the person who makes the siege is the tzar who oppresses you. Czar Nikolai, the tzar who oppresses you. The Rambam says, "for anything that constricts you," anything that makes you constricted, that simply makes you constricted in your heart. A kind of wordplay, a kind of parable with a lesson. There is a physical thing, surrounding the city with a siege, and there is also when a person feels constricted with difficulties.

Okay, but here it means indeed the parable, you know, the original. When the enemies of Israel surround the Jews.

The List of Troubles

And for the sword, a sword, **and for the plague**, a plague, **and for wild animals**, wild animals, **and for the locust**, **and for the grasshopper**, two types of locusts, **and for the blight** when the trees are struck down, **and for the mildew** when there is a drought, no rain comes.

Yerakon means a... no, yerakon means when there is a... excuse me, yerakon means when there is a... heat and not enough water comes, and the crops quickly become moldy. No water is the next thing, and the rain is indeed explicit. I think yerakon, I think it's some kind of disease.

Where does it say later?

Ah, blight and mildew. I think yerakon is very hot, the crops become pale. It could be that it comes from very hot, but I think there is indeed such a thing as a plague for the trees. Some disease comes, it eats up all the...

Ah, I hear. What does yerakon perhaps mean?

Okay.

And for the collapse... But basically, locust, grasshopper, blight, mildew are all four types of ways of the fruits, diseases on the fruits.

Okay. Make it about the fruits. Sometimes the fruits are ruined from the weather, sometimes from locusts or whatever. From certain like plagues, afflictions of the crops. He includes all this together.

Okay. **And for the collapse** when houses fall down, **and for the illnesses** for diseases that come upon people, **and for the sustenance** he'll explain later when there are financial problems, **and for the rain**, and conversely **and for the lack of rain**, when rain doesn't come, or when too much rain comes, we'll see soon.

Law (Continued) – Law of the City and Its Surroundings

The Rambam says, **Any city that has one of all these troubles**, this thing has to do with the city. A city where there is one of these troubles, you have indeed public troubles. **That city fasts and sounds the alarm until the trouble passes.** That entire city must fast and blow the shofar. Until the trouble goes away, as we learned yesterday that it's until the trouble goes away.

Both like, not shofar, trumpets. No one blows shofar here. Trumpets are only initially. Or in the Temple they blow shofar also for a few reasons. In the Temple they blow shofar, it's also the shofar. But this is the city itself.

And all its surroundings, those who live around the city... on one hand they have something to do with the... they aren't so strongly directly affected, but they are close to it, and they worry, they are friends, they are people with whom they do business and the like. I can come to them, that's the word.

Discussion: What Does "City" and "Its Surroundings" Mean?

I don't know. I was thinking when I was speaking about it, what does city mean and what does surroundings mean? One can call it the city, the town, the local municipality.

He says it has to do with the government of that city around.

It's interesting, because I would have said for example that when it has to do with such a thing as rain or these things, one must look above the mountain, below the mountain. It probably has more to do with the geography. When it's like a matter of a sword or a... it should seemingly have to do with the type of government that exists.

Okay, but I won't go into the details of this now, one can simply learn those who are connected, those who are close to it. There is like a bit of a dispute that he brings in the commentaries, and they asked well. There are those who say that... the Gemara says, what does he mean the district. The district is some Roman word for the... I think today there is in the church there is a parish. It's called parish, what's it called, the local area, what the Catholic church calls a parish. Parish is the eparchy, as mentioned by our Sages. Eparchy means that the Catholics took all their names from the Roman Empire.

So, the Roman Empire, the small, like a city or area was called eparchy, something like that. This is under the mayor, let's say, or the that. He didn't exactly live in your area, but you are also.

But regarding, as you say, the matter of law that will make our, as if to have this to do with the townships, or the names of the city.

It's very interesting, because today things are arranged differently. For example, when something happens to a few Vizhnitz young men, no difference whether living in London or in the Land of Israel, it will affect the people of the community. All Vizhnitzers will feel like something is with them.

But this is an unnatural way of life. I'm saying... no, it's also not correct, because let's understand, we remember that... a part should I have to do with the area. What is there? What is there? It's not who feels. Who feels is a matter of an individual fast.

Speaker 2: I agree. An individual fast?

Speaker 1: But are you a Vizhnitz chassid? He wishes that in London there's a trouble, it's the opposite about this, there is fasting that the trouble should go away. Also there is one of the matters of the group, there is such a kind of thing, as if...

Speaker 2: Yes, this is not a claim, this is just to remind. He should remember that one dies and one should do teshuvah, and as if, so again... in the laws of mourning.

Speaker 1: But... and people, until we make claims, even when there is a trouble, making an assembly, is not proper as the Rambam explains like the Mishnah. Because the Mishnah is, there must be another condition that the Rambam doesn't say, that all these troubles are a thing that continues, that can go away.

Simply that there was a tragedy, three people died, there isn't some general thing, there is some plague or some thing that keeps happening, it's indeed not relevant to say one should fast. What will happen? Do you understand what I'm saying?

Speaker 2: He holds, no, this to do, I don't know what, I can't stop him, I don't know what to do.

Speaker 1: In short, yes, okay, further.

Law of Surroundings Regarding Wild Animals

Speaker 1: And all doubt and doubt and doubt, yes, let's go back inside. In all doubt and doubt and doubt regarding wild animals, for example it says even distant ones. It indeed says the distinction, and the Rama doesn't bring it.

But it turns, if they all live in America, the matter can indeed come to them, and the like. It's all dependent on the reality. But not the same that all must fast.

Speaker 2: And not blow, I don't understand, but so is the distinction of not blowing trumpets.

Speaker 1: It's somewhat a lesser level. The fast seems to me much more difficult than blowing shofar, what does it hurt you to blow a bit.

Law of Surroundings — They Fast But Don't Sound the Alarm

Speaker 1: And all its surroundings, the surroundings of the city, the districts, they also fast but don't sound the alarm, they also must fast but they don't blow with any trumpets.

That is, the things, people who have, it's relevant, the next step it can come to them, and therefore they are right, this turns regarding wild animals, for example it says even distant ones. It indeed says the distinction, the Rambam doesn't bring it, but it turns, if they all live in America, the decree can indeed come to them, and not, and the like. It's all dependent on the reality.

But not the same, they fast, they must fast, and don't sound the alarm, I don't understand, but so is the distinction of not blowing the trumpets. It's somewhat a lesser level. The fast is generally much more difficult than blowing shofar, what does it hurt you to blow a bit.

Speaker 2: Very good.

Speaker 1: That this is not so.

Discussion: What is "But We Seek Mercy for Them"?

Speaker 2: And what is this "but we seek mercy for them"? Does it mean all Jews? Or the surroundings?

Speaker 1: No, they don't sound the alarm. Because the Rambam said that the prayer gathering is a part of the prayer gathering where one comes together to blow. It has to do with the warning. Therefore he says that one is indeed not sounding the alarm with the trumpets, but there are special prayers.

Speaker 2: It's simply a good question. Seemingly, seemingly worse. One doesn't know.

Speaker 1: Okay, I mean, our Sages didn't establish the mitzvah of trumpets for such a case. He doesn't say one may not blow shofar. There is an obligation of trumpets, it didn't come to this. But it seems that the trumpets make it somewhat more serious, somewhat greater.

Speaker 2: Yes, one doesn't know. As if put it aside for things when it's real, when it's more real.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Law of Fasting on Shabbat

Speaker 1: The Rambam says, in any case, but what happens on Shabbat? So **"in every place we don't cry out and don't sound the alarm on Shabbat"**. On Shabbat, as we learned yesterday, there is only for certain things, only when it's a trouble now.

And we spoke yesterday that even what we spoke yesterday, that if there is a trouble in a city right now today, the gentiles are outside today, one indeed cries on Shabbat. Does one arrange that the community should gather? No, also one prays for them. This is specifically that city, but its surroundings don't do anything on Shabbat.

Speaker 2: Perhaps that's the meaning.

Speaker 1: Yes, that's what I think. Yes.

Exception: Troubles of Sustenance

English Translation

Speaker 1: Except... except for tzarot hamezunot (troubles of sustenance). Except for one of the things that was counted as tzarot hamezunot, that the difficulties with parnassah (livelihood), about which it says **"tzo'akin l'Hashem afilu b'Shabbat"** (they cry out to Hashem even on Shabbat), about this one may indeed cry out. Even on Shabbat, we will indeed be mitpalel (pray). **"Aval ein matri'in aleha b'chatzotzrot b'Shabbat"** (But we do not sound the trumpets on Shabbat). But no... yes, but blowing chatzotzrot (trumpets), that we don't do on Shabbat.

Discussion: Why is Tzarot Hamezunot So Severe?

Speaker 2: It's not clear to me. We're not talking about fasting on Shabbat, we're talking here about being mitpalel on Shabbat. On Shabbat, Chazal (our Sages) established that one should not be mitpalel. One should not be mitpalel, one should not be mitpalel. Right, why? Just that they pray for parnassah, it shouldn't be.

Speaker 1: There is a tzarot mezunot (troubles of sustenance). Tzarot mezunot is pikuach nefesh (life-threatening). That's what he brings from the...

Speaker 2: No, mezunot (sustenance) is the worst thing. One dies... one person, not everyone will die. If there's no bereshut (plague), everyone will die, no one will survive. A choleh (sick person), there's one out of ten people, one out of every second person survives a davar (plague). But when there's no money, no one survives. No one survives. If we won't have money, no one will survive it. It's the greatest thing.

Speaker 1: I don't know what's going on here, stop it. Okay. Yes.

Halacha 2 — On the Oppression of Israel's Enemy Against Israel

Speaker 1: So now the Rambam is going to go in and explain each one of the categories that they explain. The Rambam says, very good.

Speaker 2: But we don't have chatzotzrot, the distinctions aren't clear. That is, we learned that chatzotzrot shouldn't be blown, we learned not on Shabbat. But there was some time when yes, and your Gemara says it won't help. I don't know, I don't understand what's going on here. I mean, something must have to do with previous chapters, he learns that there is indeed some chatzotzrot that does help. And here we're not talking about it.

Speaker 1: Eh, eh, I don't know.

So anyway, this is the list. How long is the list? One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve other things? Now we're going to learn each one of these things. What is the explanation? When is it already enough of a real tzarah (trouble) that we should have to make a ta'anit (fast)?

Speaker 2: Yes?

Speaker 1: Yes. Such troubles. Yes.

Explanation: What Does "Tzarat Sonei Yisrael" Mean?

Speaker 1: The Rambam says, **al hatzarat sonei Yisrael l'Yisrael keitzad** (regarding the oppression of Israel's enemy against Israel, how so), what does it mean that the enemies of Israel surround the Jews, oppress the Jews?

He says, he explains, **goyim sheba'u la'aroch milchamah im Yisrael** (gentiles who came to wage war with Israel), gentiles will come to make war with Jews, specifically Jews are their target.

Or when they don't come specifically for war, **litol meihem mas** (to take from them tax), to rob, to take from them excessive taxes. Presumably we mean to say not the regular taxes that a kingdom may impose, but special taxes on Jews, antisemitic taxes.

We must remember that mas, in the original, we say mas means tax, but mas is basically, as we learn about certain communities, about individual people, also, but also it's not possible. Do you remember, we learned in the Chumash, that

"v'nomatem l'mas" (and you shall make them tributary), yes? For example, when one conquers a city, there's one way where one pursues everyone, kills them. Another way, that's called shalom (peace). Shalom means they only have to pay. And usually the payment doesn't mean paying a percentage of your things, it means give everything, I don't know, give and so on. It's a tzarah, it's not like we're saying just that one has to pay taxes, we're not talking about that. Mas doesn't mean tax. In general, mas can mean, usually it means that people have to work. It's not just money, it can be...

Speaker 2: "Yihyu lecha l'mas va'avaduchah" (They shall be tributary to you and serve you).

Speaker 1: Yes, exactly.

"O likach meihem erez" (or to take from them land), or if the gentiles want to take territory, you're talking specifically in Eretz Yisrael, or perhaps a gerush (expulsion) like that.

"O ligzor aleihem shemad" (or to decree upon them forced conversion), or gentiles should decree shemad even on a minor mitzvah. Shemad here doesn't mean killing as it often means shemad, "ad yishmidem" (until they are destroyed), but shemad means, as we know, a gezeirat shemad (decree of forced conversion), that the gentiles want to somehow prevent Jews from... want to prevent Jews from their customs, even if it's a minor mitzvah. It's not one of the mitzvot for which one must give up one's life, it's not one of the major things, it's even a minor mitzvah. But since it comes from a place of oppressing the Jews...

Discussion: The Subject is the War, Not the Shemad

Speaker 2: No, the point is they are oppressing, literally they are waging war. But the goal of their war is not to kill or to take money. Their goal now is to stop the Jews from wearing shtrimeles anymore. But it's a war, the tzarah is the war, not the shemad.

Speaker 1: The answer is even... yes, and he would come... it says in the Tur, I don't know if it's not a mitzvah, when it's just a minhag (custom) thing, but I don't know if... he says so, if everyone will follow and he goes to change from a flat hat to a tall hat, it's not a mitzvah, because... I mean, we're not yet talking about when he comes to torture, but he comes... if I see everyone is lining up, then I won't come into the city. It's not a problem. But such a mitzvah, I know that one must stop making eruv tavshilin, that's such a place where they hurt Jews very much. Jews love their Torah and mitzvot. The subject here is not the shemad, the subject here is the war. How they oppress, yes.

Speaker 2: No! Tzar means ba'u la'aroch milchamah (they came to wage war). Standing outside the Jewish area are twenty tanks of the gentiles. What do they want? They want us to stop putting on tefillin, or one small mitzvah. Fine, but if we don't obey, they'll shoot us. In short, it's a great tzarah.

The Law of Fasting and Sounding the Alarm

Speaker 1: So **harei eilu mita'anin u'matri'in ad sheyerachamu** (behold these fast and sound the alarm until they are shown mercy), then we fast and blow the chatzotzrot ad sheyerachamu, until there will be mercy from Heaven.

The Rambam says, this is only... **b'chol ayarot shesevivoteihen** (in all the cities around them), **mita'anin** (they fast) also, **aval ein matri'in** (but they do not sound the alarm). **Ela** (except) that there is indeed when the surrounding cities do indeed blow the shofar, **ela im kein**

tak'u l'hitkabetz l'ezratan (except if they sound to gather to their aid). The only way there is indeed a matter of blowing the chatzotzrot around and around in the cities is for practical reasons, that the people should come help the Jews. There's a war, one must come help the Jews.

Speaker 2: No, it makes a lot of sense, because that's exactly why one must blow, so the surrounding cities should come help.

Speaker 1: Yes, al kol tzarah shetavo al ayarot Yisrael (for every trouble that comes upon the cities of Israel), as we learned in the previous chapter.

Halacha 4 — Al Hacherev Keitzad (Regarding the Sword, How So)

Speaker 1: So the second thing we learned, al hacherev (regarding the sword). **Al hacherev keitzad?** (Regarding the sword, how so?) Cherev (sword) means, the sword is neutral as it were, the sword doesn't come specifically for the Jews, unlike tzaru al ayarot Yisrael (they oppressed the cities of Israel). It's a cherev, it's a sword, it's a terrible thing, it doesn't mean the Jews, but it's terrible because it's going around among the Jews.

So the Rambam explains, **afilu cherev shel shalom** (even a sword of peace), even if soldiers are going around with big swords, even if they come officially, they are at peace with the city, **k'gon sheholchin l'milchamah goyim im goyim** (such as when gentiles go to war with gentiles). Gentiles with gentiles have, Hungary with Romania, I don't know, they're fighting around, **v'avru b'makom Yisrael** (and they pass through the place of Israel), they go through near the Jews. So the Jews always knew, this is the Jewish instinct, that this won't end well.

Halacha 4 (Continued): Cherev Shel Shalom (Sword of Peace)

Speaker 1: And that's indeed how it was. When there were wars between two other nations, the Jews got blamed. Somehow, yes. Harei zo tzarah (behold this is a trouble).

No, it's not the Jews, there isn't a cherev shel shalom. So it means, when an army passes through, the soldiers don't belong here, one can't do anything to them. They want, they can do whatever they want. It's tzarot. They're now in the middle of their post-trauma, and they'll get drunk at night, and they'll go out with the sword and kill people. So there are tzarot?

U'mita'anin u'matri'in aleha (and we fast and sound the alarm about it), **shene'emar "v'cherev lo ta'avur b'artzechem"** (as it says "and a sword shall not pass through your land").

In the blessing it says "v'cherev lo ta'avur b'artzechem," that a sword will not pass through. It means there, not only that no war will come, but not even will a sword pass through. This is the blessing, we see, we understand in general, we understand that re'iyat hamilchamah tzarah (seeing the war is a trouble), that seeing the war itself is a trouble.

Precision in the Verse "V'cherev Lo Ta'avur B'artzechem"

Speaker 1: Interesting, why does one say a verse? Why doesn't the Rebbe say it practically? When to say "v'cherev lo ta'avur b'artzechem" at all, could mean for war, for war against you.

There's a precision, it says with precision, it doesn't say "hacherev lo yavo aleichem" (the sword will not come to you), it's even passing through. It's very interesting.

Speaker 2: Yes, because if there's a reality that there's an army with very strong discipline, they won't hurt anyone, then there's simply no obligation of...

Speaker 1: Well well, when that happens it's indeed frightening, we'll still be waiting for Mashiach to come. I already don't know, there's American military and they should pass through near Brooklyn there will be.

Speaker 2: Look at how they conduct themselves. Not how they pass through, when they are... it says when they settle in a place.

Speaker 1: Yes, yes, true. You're right, they learned it, I mean, in the laws of eruv tavshilin, that they can take everyone's bread.

Speaker 2: Right, exactly.

Speaker 1: Okay, good. So you see, on something that is a reality, after everything we only bring a verse. It's not a contradiction. On the contrary, that's how we understand the verse. Besides what we know from the laws of ta'anit, we also understand a verse. "Cherev lo ta'avur artzecha" (a sword shall not pass through your land) means even a cherev shel shalom.

And therefore the Mishnah uses the language "cherev." It's not, cherev means a sword passes through, it's not specific times, one must fast. Okay.

Anyway, that's cherev.

Digression: Weapons Among People

Speaker 1: Now, what else do we fast for? But interesting, we see here, people ask me, someone didn't ask me about carrying a gun on Shabbat, I know, muktzeh. We see here that going around with a cherev, even a cherev shel shalom, weapons don't belong among people. We're not talking about that.

Anyway, as I say, the cherev, going around with a cherev among people is not a good thing. But you're right, we're probably talking about an army. We're probably talking, the cherev is just a... we mean to say the army that...

Speaker 2: Yes, there wouldn't be a person with a sword.

Speaker 1: I mean, it could be also, but...

Speaker 2: Yes.

Halacha 2: Davar — Definition of Plague

Speaker 1: Eizehu davar? (What is a davar?) The second thing, the third thing was davar. What is a davar? Davar means a plague. But when is the definition of a plague? How many people need to die for us to call it a plague? Because everyone says one must wear a mask doesn't yet mean a plague. One must actually know that people are dying.

Reb Baruch, can you say the introduction in order to negate the mistake that people had?

The Foundation of the Definition of Davar — Contagious Disease

Speaker 2: It means like this: a plague means, when just people die, many people die, it could be it's called mikre (coincidence), it means coincidence. Everyone had the illness, everyone... it just happens that a person dies, who knows.

Davar means that there's something a contagious plague, right? That's the meaning of davar. There's something that

today is called it's contagious, perhaps in the language of the Mishnah, which it's not called, but that's the meaning of **davar**. There's going around something a... it's called a **malach** (angel), yes. A **davar** that goes around.

Let's call it this way, not exactly the precision that's written in those places. A **davar** means that there's something a general matter that exists. It doesn't mean just, **davar** doesn't mean that statistically many people die. **Davar** means, because what's relevant to fasting? The whole fasting is that there's something a problem that exists that we're going to stop through the fasting. So **davar** means that there's something an illness that's going around.

Yes, today we know it's bacteria, viruses. Once we didn't know this, but we knew that it's a **davar**.

The Chazakah (Presumption) of Davar — Measurements

Speaker 2: Now, once we couldn't see that there's a bacteria or a virus, how do you know the difference to distinguish between just sometimes more people happen to die with a **davar**?

Therefore the Mishnah gives a certain list as a **chazakah** (presumption), that if it's so much, this is already not normal. But certainly, needless to say that if we know clearly that there is indeed something a plague, we don't need to reach the numbers.

Speaker 1: Right, one can already start before counting the numbers, because we know there's a plague.

Speaker 2: Here we're talking, how should one establish? How should **Fauci**, whatever, whoever it is, how does he assess it? With this approach.

Speaker 1: No, **Fauci** has other ways.

Speaker 2: The Mishnah, if he has other ways, yes. The Mishnah says a list.

The Rambam's Language

Speaker 2: **Ir sheyesh bah** (A city that has), yes?

Speaker 1: I would perhaps add, for example, we always read in the news, when it was very hot or very cold in the summer, in areas where there's no air conditioning, in Europe many people died. In America one doesn't die, because in America there's already very strong certain air conditioning. That's not a **davar**, because there's a certain cause, a certain...

Speaker 2: Yes. Forget it, **davar** means a contagious disease, yes.

Speaker 2: So the Rambam says like this, **ir sheyesh bah chamesh me'ot ragli** (a city that has five hundred foot soldiers), that there are five hundred people who walk on foot. Why the word **ragli** comes in here I don't know. Perhaps it means healthy people, he says later.

Ragli means like the count of men, as it says there excluding women and children. He's going to say the language of **Yaakov** to **Esav**, yes?

Speaker 1: Five hundred **ragli**? I don't know if five hundred **ragli**, besides the women and children which is going to need...

Speaker 2: **Ragli** means foot soldiers, foot soldiers. People who can walk on their feet, **and suddenly they fell ill, and they died. V'yatz'u mimenah shloshah metim b'shloshah yamim zeh achar zeh** (and three dead came out from it in three days one after another), three dead within three days. It says each day there was one dead, yes? One

person dies each day, one out of five hundred. Not many people, that means householders as it were, yes, young men, people that one can count for the matter.

What happens if not three days and each day one, but **yatz'u b'yom echad** (they came out in one day)? In one day three people died, or within four days, it skipped one day when no one died. **Ein zeh davar** (this is not a **davar**), because one can't attribute it to other things, that the three died in one day because of another reason or the like.

What happens if **hayu vah elef** (there were a thousand), there are a thousand? Then also it must be according to the same... calculations. **V'yatz'u mimenah shishah metim b'shloshah yamim zeh achar zeh, harei zeh davar** (and six dead came out from it in three days one after another, behold this is a **davar**), because from every five hundred three died. **Aval im yatz'u b'yom echad o b'arba'ah yamim, ein zeh davar, v'chen l'fi cheshbon zeh** (But if they came out in one day or in four days, this is not a **davar**, and so according to this calculation).

Halacha 3: Chamesh Me'ot Ragli — Means Healthy People

Speaker 2: The Rambam says, this **chamesh me'ot ragli** means healthy people, but people who are just more vulnerable, it doesn't yet become a **davar** with three people in three days.

V'ein hanashim v'haketanim... or zekeinim shesimu melachtam (elderly who have finished their work), elderly who have already retired, and they are not like **ragli**, and they can die more easily because they're already retired, **betelim** (idle), or **they are cholim** (sick), or all kinds of illnesses. For the same reason why they don't work they can die, because they're weak. **And they are not included in the count of the people of the city for this matter.**

What does it mean? When we count the five hundred, we count five hundred healthy people, and the three who die we count three healthy people. They are an extra calculation.

Discussion: Application to COVID

Speaker 1: One must know, with COVID there were many elderly, then it turns out with...

Speaker 2: He can, I told you, then make my definition. This is a **chazakah** to establish that there's a **davar**. You know there's a **davar** because elderly are more prone to die.

Speaker 1: Yes, I understand what you're saying. When you know there's a **davar**, the question already begins, it's indeed a proper **davar**. Just like by war it doesn't say that three people must die, because you know there's a war, even if no one dies, it's dangerous.

A **davar** is something that, how do you know? You need to know, you need to make the **chazakah** as it were, that it's not a coincidence, that it's not just three extra people, or even in one day. What's the explanation? There was an accident, three people died. On an accident we don't fast.

Halacha 4: Davar in Eretz Yisrael

Speaker 2: Another halacha about **davar**, the Rambam says like this, that **Eretz Yisrael** is a different thing. **Eretz Yisrael**, Jews care about **Eretz Yisrael**, **einei Hashem Elokecha bah** (the eyes of Hashem your God are upon it), all Jews look there.

Hayah davar b'Eretz Yisrael (If there was a davar in Eretz Yisrael), then all Jews must care, **mita'anin she'ar galuyot Yisrael aleihem** (the rest of the exiles of Israel fast for them).

English Translation

Is this a matter of the importance of Eretz Yisrael? The Gemara says that **im hagvurah lo kashkefah lekol sheken**. As if because Eretz Yisrael has greater protection, and if the protection didn't work for them, I don't know. It could be because Jews care about the Jews in Eretz Yisrael. That could be.

Hayah davar be'Eretz Yisrael, mit'anin she'ar galuyot Yisrael aleihem, all Jews in exile fast on the... to remove the decree from Eretz Yisrael.

Caravans — Understanding Contagion

Speaker 2: **Hayah davar bimedina**, if there is a davar in any particular province, **veshayarot holchot uva'ot mimenah limedina acheret**, if there is a davar in a city, but it's a city that is a city where people go and come from there to other places, **shteit mit'anot**, both must fast, both that province and also the other province that goes there a lot. **Af al pi she'ein zo rechokah mizo**, because since the caravans come and go, it appears that the Chazal understood very well that this means davar, that the people are the ones who carry around the davar. And if it's already in one place, we already have fear that it will be transmitted and so forth.

A story that they told Shmuel that in Bei Chozai there is a davar, he made a fast. It appears Bei Chozai is a place. Shmuel lived in Nehardea, the next town is Bei Chozai. So he said that the frequency of caravans could spread there.

Nagri stands, I don't know, it says in the Gemara. Anyway.

So this is laws, until here laws of davar. Very good.

Law 5: Wild Animal — Sent

Speaker 2: The next thing was wild animal. The Rambam says thus: Wild animal has more rules. So thus: **Ein mit'anin al chayah ra'ah ela bizman shehi meshulachat**.

Speaker 1: When it's released. Sent? What does meshulachat mean?

Speaker 2: Meshalachat malachei ra'im?

Speaker 1: Ah, malachei ra'im. When it's sent. It means, not the usual order that if one comes near the bear something will happen. Rather when it's sent, it means that it's something a sign from Heaven, that the usual thing has been removed that animals fear people, something has happened a change. One doesn't have to say the word sign from Heaven, but meshulachat means something a crazy thing. It's not the normal...

Speaker 2: That is, I mean that it comes from the language of "veshilachti bachem chayot hasadeh". It's a language, I will send. "Veshilach et be'iro" also stands. This is a language of perhaps inciting.

Law 2 (Continued) — Four Levels of "Meshulachat"

That is, not the usual order that if one comes near the bear something will happen, rather when it's sent. That means that it's something a sign from Heaven that the usual thing has been removed that animals fear people. Something has happened a change. One doesn't have to say the word "sign

from Heaven", but "meshulachat" means something a crazy thing. It's not the normal.

What does it mean? I mean that it comes from the language **"veshilachti bachem chayot hasadeh"**. It's a language, I will send. **"Veshilach et be'iro"** also stands. This is a language of perhaps inciting an animal, or somehow making that the animal, that the wild animal should do something, it's called sending, I don't know.

In any case, in the Mishnah it's called "meshulachat". What does "meshulachat" mean? They know that it's not normal.

Level 1: In the City by Day

How so? The Rambam says thus: **"Nir'atah ba'ir bayom"**, if one sees in the city, in the town, by day, when usually they fear people, one suddenly sees wild animals coming into the city by day, **"harei zo meshulachat"**. This means "meshulachat". This means that something has happened a change that the animals no longer fear people.

Yes, when **"vera'u kol amei ha'arets... veyare'u mimecha"**. What is the language? That when people are upright, the animals fear them, and when not, well, what should I tell you? Okay.

Level 2: In the Field by Day

"Nir'atah basadeh bayom", if however one sees it in the field, where there is a place where there are more... There are three levels. In the city no animal belongs at all. In the field it happens sometimes. And by the lake, a lake is a place where there is water, there is an ecosystem good for animals, there it's normal that animals should be.

So thus: In the city, by day, even one means it's already "meshulachat". In the field, in a field, where there sometimes animals happen, so if it happens more than normal, **"im ra'atah shnei bnei adam velo barechu mipneihem"**. Normally, in a field, if an animal sees that there are two people — two people can be stronger than one animal — yet, the animal sees two people and it didn't run away from them, **"harei zo meshulachat"**. This is also a sign that there is a "meshulachat".

Level 3: Field Adjacent to a Lake

"Ve'im hayetah sadeh semuchah le'agam", if the field is right next to where the animals are found, so when is it called sent? Also it must be more, the animal must dare more than normal. That what? **Ratzah acharav**. Normally it doesn't run after any people. Even when it's next to a lake, it doesn't have so much guts to run after people. If one suddenly sees that the animals have gotten courage that they run after people, **harei zeh meshulachat**.

Lo ratzah acharav, we saw animals near a field adjacent to a lake, but it doesn't run after them. Yes. So since it's a field adjacent to a lake, it's still normal. This is the field adjacent to a lake.

There are four levels: a city, the field, the field adjacent to a lake, and then the lake itself.

Level 4: In the Lake

Umosif, ba'agam, if however the animal is in the lake, there is the place where the animals belong, then even **ratzah acharav**, even if it runs after the person, **eino meshulachat**, it's not called meshulachat, because there is the natural place of the animal, there it drives away whoever comes in.

Ela im ken taraf shnei hem ve'achalu echad mehem. In the lake there is already a greater... No, one piece wilder. **Eino meshulachat**, unless it has actually done such terrible things that it caught two people, and one of them it ate up. It means, one it just mauled and one it ate up, then it's already a great trouble. Why? Because this is no longer the order, even in a lake.

Aval im achalu shnei hem ba'agam, eino meshulachat, rather it was hungry, **vezehu mekomo**. This is its place, and it was hungry, it may, it ate because it was hungry, it's not called meshulachat. If it just mauled people for the fun of it, just to grab, then it's a sign that it's meshulachat. It tore a person even though it didn't eat, then something is wrong.

Innovation: "Meshulachat" Is Not About the Size of the Tragedy

This is in the lake. Now, the same thing. One sees here very strongly that it's not about how big the tragedy is, rather how much, how much a change from the nature of the world it is.

Connection to the Previous Chapter — "Coincidence" and Repentance

This is all the line that the simple people think, so the meaning of the Rambam in the previous chapter, that it's coincidence. He says, it's not from the Almighty that a person, it's not decreed from Heaven? Yes, it's not. That is, it's a decree from Heaven. That is, you went to a place of an animal, next time, be careful. Your repentance, no, you also need to do repentance. Your repentance is not to go by the animals.

But when you haven't done anything different, the repentance needs to be a bit greater repentance, because it's not obvious. This we thought, that it could be that it's not simple that one doesn't need to do repentance. Certainly one needs to do repentance on going to a place of animals, as you say, but that everyone knows, that doesn't need to be said.

The fast one makes perhaps from a thing that isn't clear to everyone what is causing the problem, because one doesn't know. But one sees that something is crazy, something is arousing, something is not normal. Therefore one needs to search for something, figure out what you're doing wrong.

Yes, if a person stumbles with a certain sin that he knows, I know that it was thinking by day he came to a sin, he needs to do repentance on that specific thing. If he stumbles with a sin that was another sin, he needs to be less in anger. When there are things that he can't attribute to some certain thing, he needs a general repentance.

There is also a similar thing, he needs then also to figure out what is the problem, but one doesn't know. Therefore you see that it has come to such an extent, that there is Torah for a person, by day, water, according to the not normal order, something one has done wrong. It could be one discovers during the fasts that one has indeed built the city wrong, or one needs to give food to the animals, I don't know, something one needs to do.

Houses Built in the Desert — "He Came into Its Territory"

Later one will see more similar, this thing, that when it's simply one couldn't have, further, the Rambam says thus: **Batim habenuyim bamidbar o be'aratzot hanishamot**, houses that are built in a desert or in desolate places, so **ho'il vehem mekom gedidei chayah**. Very good. So it says there in the verse, the Almighty says I won't drive out the nations all

at once, because then animals will come. Rather **me'at me'at agreshenu min ha'arets**.

So, a place where it's empty, so the normal thing is that there should be animals there. **Vehayah mekom gedidachayah**. Uma'aseh lagag venatal tinok me'arisa, it needs to do a very crazy thing. If it actually climbed up on a roof and grabbed a child from the crib, then it's even according to the standards still not expected, then one needs to decree a fast on this. God forbid you shouldn't come to such a situation, **eino meshulachat**.

That is this is not a... How does it become? Wild animal meshulachat? **Eleh bnei adam hem shetaknu be'atzman uva'u limkom hachayot**. These are the people themselves who put themselves in danger and came to the place of the animals. It's a category like **hu ba begvul lah**. It's your fault. You went to the animals, not the animals came to you.

So it says in the verse, **ki yipol hanofal mimenu**, the trouble that will happen from falling from the roof is from him from not putting the fence. So the Rishonim interpret it there. That is, one doesn't need to search why a person fell from the roof, because one didn't answer amen yehei shmei rabba, because that's not called a fence. Already, okay, good.

Law Regarding Creeping Things of the Earth and Creeping Things of the Air

This is animals. What happens **she'ar minei remes ha'arets uremes ha'of**, smaller creeping animals, **sheshulachu vehiziku**, that were sent and caused damage? **Kegon**, there comes a sending, a sending of... ah, in Yiddish, a sending is a sending. Sending means to send, a sending is a sending. Has a good word in Yiddish. A sending of **nechashim ve'akrabim, ve'ein tzarich lomar tzir'ah veyatushin vechayotza bahen, ein mit'anin aleihen velo matri'in**.

Why? Yes, why? I don't know. **Aval zo'akin belachash**. Crying out yes, but not sounding the alarm. Why? Anyway, this is everywhere normal. Snakes and scorpions, such sorts of things? Even if it's a sending? I don't know. Why does he also say creeping things of the earth? One needs to check if it's a place where it's frequent, where it's normal, where we can expect creeping things. Why does one make an extra fence between creeping things and other animals? It appears something is here more.

Objection of the Ra'avad

So, the holy Ra'avad actually didn't understand. The Ra'avad says, **im hayu noshchim umemitim, afilu tzir'ah veyatushin vechayotza bahen, kulam shlichei hamakom hen**. The Ra'avad interpreted messengers that the Almighty sends. The Ra'avad says, what is a difference?

Perhaps the Ra'avad understood that if it's not so dangerous, then one doesn't need to sound the alarm. But what is the plain meaning of the Ra'avad? One says there, **hanachash karuch al akevo**, one speaks when it's not dangerous at all, then one should continue praying.

Answer of the Maggid Mishneh

Etc., it says in the Baraita however, so it says in the Baraita. Ah, so the Maggid Mishneh says differently. **Hata'am she'ein mit'anin, lefi she'adam yachol lehorgan ulehishamer mehen**. One learns Shabbat for example, that one may kill when one sees a wild animal. Wild animal means a tiger, a bear, I don't know.

Question on the Maggid Mishneh

Because then there's no difference between an animal and a creeping thing. He needs to say a general thing. If it's an animal that you can't handle, then it's in the category. That's the meaning. All, we have learned, the Rambam never says rules. So this is the question of the question. So it says in the Baraita. The Baraita says, okay.

Explanation: The Difference Between Animals and Creeping Things

It appears here like it has to do. There are two kinds of categories, but as one understands it's not two kinds of categories. All animals, if it's a wolf, it's sometimes dangerous. If it's a lion, it's always dangerous. A wolf, when it's meshulachat, when it's not dangerous, or it's normal, you go in a safari and a lion dances on you, so you next time don't go in any safari. In a way that is dangerous.

When it's meshulachat, something a crazy situation? Something has happened something? I mean, I spoke earlier when they learned. I don't understand exactly what this means. I have never heard that there happened something a plague that animals are sent. I looked in the news even, I have never heard of such a thing. There isn't, there isn't, in some distant countries, something a... When there is, people live in places where animals roam, one needs to be careful. I haven't heard, but there is such a situation it appears.

I mean, I do remember such a thing, that there was a change in the ecosystem, you know? One destroyed something a certain thing that other animals used to eat, they go crazy, they go out from their usual boundary, and they do things that they don't usually do. Okay, so let's say, I imagine that there is such a thing, it says here in my hands, I haven't heard, but if there is such a thing, this means, when it's a crazy situation, all the wolves there are always forests, but usually they run away from people, suddenly it runs after the people, so troubles.

Unlike a snake also, a snake is always dangerous, it doesn't know what to do with people, it happens always the snakes run after people, but then even if it's so it's easier to give advice, it's not such a trouble as when the wolves have gone crazy. Therefore, one fasts actually, that is one doesn't fast, but one prays. It's something a smaller level. You can understand.

Digression: Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa

Lo hanachash memit ela hachet memit. No, this is only Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who held a high level, he is a Jewish Jew, he held that it's always Divine Providence. But we go here with the approach that not everything is Divine Providence, rather when it's a special thing. No, the laws go here with this. One doesn't fast just because there is a trouble from Heaven, one fasts when it's a special situation that one can change.

Difference Between Individual and Community

Again, one doesn't have to learn it so simply. One can make a difference that a person can himself all the time see Providence and pray. Here one speaks about communal matters there needs to be such an exceptional thing, something that brings the world's attention. One who lives with the Almighty lives, he sees all the time hints, it's a different thing.

Law: Locusts, Chasil, Govai, and Grasshoppers

Already, further we learned that the next thing was two kinds of locusts, arbek and chasil.

He says that grasshoppers are a category by itself. Grasshoppers don't make such a disaster, because he counts them out... ah, ah, ah, on the arbek and on the chasil, two kinds of locusts.

Chasil, he says, chasil is a name of a kind of locust, which is called so because... because it is mechaseyl, it liquidates everything that comes in its way. There are much more aggressive grasshoppers, there are less.

So even lo nir'eh mehem, even one doesn't see but kenaf echad, only one wing, one single piece of arbek, bechol Eretz Yisrael, mit'anin umatri'in aleihem, because it's not good news. It means that one sees now one, it means that it will start laying eggs, and after a bit there will be a whole order. So is the order. The scouts come, then comes the whole million.

Ve'al hagovai, the same thing, a kind of locust called govai, **so also mit'anin bechol shehu,** also the same measure. Why the Rambam divided them, yes.

Locusts — A Lesser Level

But the locust, locusts, they don't destroy the entire crop. They eat, it may not be pleasant, but it's not the same level. "We fast over it but do not sound the alarm, rather we cry out only." They cause damage, but they don't cause such great damage. Very good.

Innovation: One Should Not Be Contemptuous of Fasting and Sounding the Alarm

It's interesting, we see here also that it's not a good thing to cry out too loudly. If you make an atzeret hitorerut (awakening assembly) every day, it loses its power. So the fasting and sounding the alarm is reserved for very important situations. Crying out one may do, because the Almighty says "yafeh ze'akah lecholeh" (crying out is good for the sick), so it's always good to make a cry, a prayer. Fasting and sounding the alarm is something that is held as special, not to be contemptuous of it.

Right, because perhaps it actually does accomplish something. Very good.

Law: Blight and Mildew

Now, further. **"For the blight and for the mildew."** Shidafon means blasted, yes, shidafat kadim. When a wind comes or things come that blast the crops. "And for the mildew," or some other disease that makes the crops become pale. **"From when it begins in the crops,"** from when we see that it's beginning, we begin to cry out. **"Even," says the Rambam, "even if it began only in a small place the size of an oven's opening."** Ah, this is the measure that we learned in the laws of Shabbat, one of the small measures. Yes, ah, yes, very good. You remember that I'm going to say a vort. Yes, kefi tanur, yes. **"We decree a fast and sound the alarm."**

Digression: Modern Times and Drought

I think that all these things are certainly in modern times when there are entire systems of how to take care of this, the laws are probably different. I say, it's a bit interesting to me. I know that in Eretz Yisrael they still do today, I see that the Edah HaChareidit puts out that there is a drought. But I don't know if with today's reality, that there's a year when there's less rain, one imports a lot of crops. I don't know if it has the same parameters as a drought. It doesn't hurt to make a kol

koreh (public announcement), but I say, it probably has to do with the reality on the... it depends how it is in Eretz Yisrael, and in other places it's not.

Law: Collapse — When Walls Fall Down

Now, further. **"For the collapse, how so?"** What does mapolah mean? It's simple, you know that all these rabbis understand, one doesn't rush to make every... one does the matter, these are all examples of what happened in their time, how it was. Yes, what I mean to say is, that in modern times for example, that everyone has to make a wedding for eighty thousand dollars, is a much bigger problem than that rain doesn't come on time. Yes, soon we'll see "for sustenance." Yes, okay. One minute, we'll talk about that in a minute. Now we're holding by mapolah.

"For the collapse, how so?" Mapolah means like "one upon whom a collapse fell," that things, houses collapse. So the Rambam says thus: **"They sensed in the city the collapse of healthy walls,"** proper healthy walls falling down. Bari'im means here strong, yes? Even bari which means healthy, originally means strong or fat. Bari is not primarily a term for healthy. Yes, Yosef's dream, well, a fat cow. And also afterward by the ears it says "healthy and beautiful ears." Healthy and good. Yes, strong walls fall down.

"Not walls that are by the river." If it's built near the river, it's normal that sometimes there's a flood and the walls fall in. But if it's not so, near the river the earth there is wetter. **"But when it's not by the river, this is a trouble,"** this is some special trouble, that this is a special thing that shouldn't have happened, it came because of sins. **"We fast and sound the alarm over it,"** then one must fast and sound the alarm.

Law: Earthquakes and Storms

"And similarly, for the earthquake," I think that ra'ash means an earthquake that makes a noise. Interesting, the noise is only a small side effect. Is that what it's called? Sometimes it does make a noise, not always, it depends. No, I say even if it does make a noise, the noise isn't the problem. The problem is the shaking of the earth, not the noise. Okay, therefore it's actually called such a... In the Mishnah it's always called a ra'ash. In Tehillim there is "He looks at the earth and it trembles," it's called a re'idah, a trembling.

"And for the winds," or great winds come, **"that knock down buildings and kill,"** they throw down buildings and kill, **"and they also fast and sound the alarm over them."** There's a period when there are great storms, or the earth doesn't usually shake once, but there's such a thing that it happens in a bunch at once. Is there such a thing afterward? Yes, there is such a thing. Because perhaps they meant that there is such a thing. Yes, there was yes. No, I say it, usually it didn't happen once, it doesn't happen tomorrow the same. It's not a thing, all things places where in that piece of time happened a few earthquakes.

Law: Diseases — Askara, Wet Rash, Dry Rash

Further, different from a dever (plague) where one dies, this is a disease where one doesn't die yet. One can die. **"Such as askara..."** Ah, you see clearly, diseases is, the distinction that I said earlier between a dever and a disease is stated explicitly, because a disease means that we see that people have become sick, and it's a type of illness that one can become sick from. One knows what one dies from, one can't become sick, one can die, but one can die.

"And such as askara..." Askara is some sort of pneumonia or what? Some disease in the throat. So it says in Rashi by the students of Rabbi Akiva. Oh, charchur. What does it mean? Charchur he says means a fever. Perhaps the the the it's not weaker than a dever.

Question from Lechem Mishneh: Why Not Three People?

The Lechem Mishneh actually asked the question, why doesn't it say here that three people must die? But the answer, as I said, is that this is already known. The three people is when one doesn't know. That's the simple answer. And so the Beit Yosef actually says for other people, in short. It's stated explicitly, the distinction that I said is explicitly here.

Wet Rash — Like a Spreading Boil

"For it goes out in it and there is death in it, this is a public trouble,' and we decree a fast and sound the alarm," because we see that something is contagious, some disease is spreading.

"And similarly wet rash, rash," he says, is a noise, a wound, well, what is it called in the plagues, well? Shechin, a boil like that. **"And it is wet,"** what is wet? It's moist. They have such sores. It's a... Okay. Not a dry sore, but a wet sore. **"This is like a spreading boil,"** this is something that is called like a spreading boil, that travels around, **"and if it spreads among most of the public we fast and sound the alarm over it."**

About this it doesn't say that one can die from it. It seems that even without death it's enough of a great trouble. No, perhaps a spreading boil is such a sort of thing that one knows one can die from. No, but it says "and if it spreads among most of the public." It seems that here is the thing, because this itself, that it's very strong... There are two kinds of things: there's when it's a bit contagious, but people die en masse, and here, no one will die, but everyone will become infected from it, it's enough of a great trouble. No, perhaps "and if it spreads among most of the public" is one will die. A large public, let's say, one person who is somewhat weaker, a weaker immune system etc. etc.

Dry Rash — Only Crying Out

"But dry rash," but if an itch comes, but it's not a wet thing, it's not... Ah, chichuch is an itch, very good. Yes. It's dry, just a sore, then **"cry out over it only,"** then one should just pray.

I haven't seen what it was based on not to cry out either. To cry out is always, when any trouble comes, first be praying. It does say to cry out, one should have the duty to cry out, it means one should pray, all these things one should pray. Yes, okay, but it could be that there are yes things, that which doesn't say here, even less than that. But one can't always not... Something that hurts you, you should cry out about it. But who says the individual?

Law: Sustenance — When Merchandise Becomes Too Cheap

"For sustenance, when there is a trouble with sustenance, how so?" So he explains, **"Behold that merchandise items have become cheap."** "How so" here always means like from a measure, right? Something like that. Sustenance can be two things that are a tragedy. It can be great expense or great cheapness. Here it doesn't say about expense, it only says the opposite, when things have become very cheap. Because it can be that expense is already included in what was discussed earlier, blight and mildew is already simple when

there's little produce, then there's great expense. Sustenance means that you can't sell. This is a surplus or an abundance. The trouble here is not the lack of sustenance, but the abundance of sustenance, and you have nothing to do with it. It's too cheap, one can't make any money.

"Such as... 'Behold that merchandise items have become cheap, that most people make their livelihood from them.'" The Bitcoin has fallen very sharply. "Such as 'linen garments in Babylonia.'" No, this is only in a town where everyone's livelihood is from Bitcoin. Or in Babylonia, such as "linen garments in Babylonia."

Law: Merchandise Items Have Become Cheap

Speaker 1:

So it's simple, when there's little produce, then there's great expense. Sustenance means that you can't sell. This is a surplus or an abundance. The trouble here is not the lack of sustenance, but the abundance of sustenance, and you have nothing to do with it. It's too cheap, one can't make any money.

"Such as, he lists the merchandise items, that most of the livelihood of the people of that city is from them."

The Bitcoin has fallen very sharply. **"Such as linen garments in Babylonia."** There they dealt much in linen garments. People, in the time of the Gemara, this used to be the commerce of the Jews. Or, interesting, flax grows a lot in Babylonia, it seems this was the business. Yes. It doesn't have to be the... **"Or wine and oil in Eretz Yisrael."** Yes, we know this, in Eretz Yisrael there's very much wine and oil. **"And the commerce has diminished,"** and there's no longer any business, **"until the merchant needs to sell seventeen for six."** The price falls by forty percent. He has to charge, instead of charging what he used to charge for six, he now charges for ten. Conversely, what he used to charge for six, he now has to charge for ten. He used to get one hundred dollars for ten pieces of linen garments, now he only gets one hundred dollars for sixteen. Or another way of saying the same thing is that one-hundred-dollar things only cost sixty dollars. **"And afterward he will find a buyer,"** but afterward he will find a buyer. **"This is a public trouble, and we sound the alarm over it,"** and over this one even cries out on Shabbat.

Discussion: Livelihood and Shabbat

Speaker 2:

"And all blessing above and below depends on the seventh day," on Shabbat one writes livelihood. I don't know.

Speaker 1:

No, no, I said. Not having money is the worst thing. Jews don't have any livelihood, that's the worst thing, even on Shabbat.

Speaker 2:

It's hard to understand, because we're talking here also that one makes forty percent less, no one will yet die of hunger.

Speaker 1:

No, no. This means that one will yes die of hunger.

Speaker 2:

One won't die of hunger. That forty percent less money makes the Jews die of hunger.

Speaker 1:

One hundred percent. True, if the merchants will make forty percent less, the teachers will get seventy percent less, and the kollel young man is ninety percent less. In short, sustenance. Livelihood is a serious problem. Interesting.

But it's also interesting, because Shabbat itself there is "borrow on my account and I will repay." On Shabbat one doesn't need to worry about money.

Speaker 2:

Well, these are good segulot (remedies), but in practice when there's a trouble one must remain. So it says here. Yes.

Law: For Rain — Abundant Rains

Speaker 1:

Further, the Gemara says further, **"For rain, how so."** Further it was stated, we learn rain. So what does rain mean? It's interesting. I think the language here is the whole time... Sustenance means when there's too much sustenance. Rain means when there's too much rain.

Speaker 2:

Sustenance doesn't mean food. Sustenance means here livelihood.

Speaker 1:

He means the meaning. Earlier it was stated when there isn't. But here, sustenance means that there's too much sustenance. Rain also means that there's too much rain.

Speaker 2:

It doesn't say that there's too much.

Speaker 1:

As if this is **"Behold that rains have increased upon them."** Also, **"merchandise items have become cheap,"** he's now stuck with a lot of linen garments. This is always what happens. The supply and demand is opposite the supply. There's a lot of supply. For rain is an overflow of rain. **"Such as, he explains, 'Behold that rains have increased upon them until they cause them trouble.'" There's too much rain, and the rain will bring troubles.**

Speaker 2:

I don't agree with your interpretation, because let's say more clearly. There's a thing called troubles of rain. There are two types of this. Now, the interesting thing is thus: Rain... Rav, you're going to learn in the next chapter all the details of too little. Here one only learns... There are other words. Let's say more clearly, I'll make it clear. There's such a thing that usually in Eretz Yisrael, now listen, as the Mishnah began, there's such a thing that there's a period when it should begin to rain. If it doesn't begin, that's called drought. But now, before that, one discusses other problems of rain. Either it rains too little, or even not. It began, but it stopped, and the like. That one will learn somewhere.

"'For rain, how so,' he says, 'Behold that rains have increased upon them until they cause them trouble.'" There's too much rain, and it will cause troubles to the people.

"'These sound the alarm over them, for there is no greater trouble than this.'" There can be no greater trouble than this. "'The houses fall,'" the houses fall in, yes, because the earth becomes very... Or because simply the abundance of rain breaks the houses, or the houses fall because the foundation collapses, yes. If one makes houses from weak material, from straw, whatever. **"And the houses**

are found to be their graves," people are unfortunately buried in their houses. Yes.

Distinction Between Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia

But this is in Babylonia and outside the Land, but in Eretz Yisrael one prays for abundant rains, and one doesn't even pray because there's too much rain. Why? Because it is a land of mountains, it's a land of mountains, of hills, therefore most people live on mountains, and it will run down to the valleys. I guess that it's actually not worthwhile to live in the valley, in the... **"For their houses are built of stones,"** this fits very well with the verses there in Va'etchanan, yes, "a land whose stones are iron," "a land where you will not eat bread in poverty," it doesn't say that there's a flood with stones, that there are so many stones, **"their houses are built of stones,"** nothing will happen from rain, **"and abundant rains are good for them."**

About this it says there in the Gemara that Choni HaMe'agel, who began too much rain, he began to pray, they prayed for the abundance of goodness. There one sees that there was yes a problem of abundant rains, but it wasn't a danger. And therefore, one doesn't need for abundant goodness, because it's good, actually good. It's hard for the people here locally, but for the bigger picture it's a good thing. Also it seems that on the mountain one needs more rain, actually because it runs down, no rain remains there, so in order for it to grow one needs that it should rain a lot. Unlike in Babylonia it's a danger, one must fast.

Law: Crops That Have Sprouted and Rain Has Ceased

Speaker 1:

Conversely, the other thing about rain, the other side of the equation, when there's too little. **"Crops that have sprouted,"** it has already begun to sprout, and now it needs rain so it should grow well, **"and the rain has ceased and the plants began to dry,"** the plants begin to become dried out, **"these fast and cry out until rains fall, or until the plants dry out,"** if it's already completely dried out, it's over, and one no longer prays for this, and one no longer fasts for this specific thing.

"And similarly if the time of Pesach has arrived or is close to it in Eretz Yisrael, which was the time of the blossoming of the trees there, and rains have not fallen" – there earlier we spoke about crops, now we're speaking about the trees. Both times one needs rain. **"These fast and cry out until rains fall that are suitable for trees or until their time passes."** If the time has passed, then one is no longer further. When it's too late, when it's too late one no longer prays. One prays, one doesn't make fasting and crying out. For other things, yes.

Discussion: Fasting and Crying Out Versus Sounding the Alarm

Speaker 2:

It doesn't say only fasting and sounding the alarm, but fasting and crying out. Why?

Speaker 1:

Later there will be the larger sugya, it does seem like one blows shofars.

Law: Time of Sukkot – To Fill the Cisterns

Speaker 1:

"And similarly if the time has arrived," so he lists three things. He listed winter, perhaps end of winter when the crops need to grow, spring when the trees grow, and now when it's Sukkot. **"And rains have not fallen sufficient to fill from them the cisterns and the ditches and the caves,"** usually in winter it doesn't rain, so one needs that the cisterns should fill with water for the winter, and this must already happen at Sukkot time, **"these fast until rains fall that are suitable for cisterns."**

Law: They Have No Water to Drink

Furthermore, if they don't have water to drink, if there's no water to drink, then they fast and cry out at all times that they shouldn't lack water to drink, even in the summer months, at any time. Even when it won't rain for a little while then, but there's so little water in the city to drink, it's a great calamity.

Law: The Plague of Drought – The Rains Ceased for Forty Days

If the rains ceased between one rain and another for forty days during the rainy season, the time when we expect rain, when it's in the winter, and it stopped raining, completely forty days there's no rain, **it's called a plague of drought (makat batzores), and they fast and cry out until the rains fall.** Oh, again the same thing, **until their time passes.** That means further, that means even if it already rained, it's not a withholding of rains (atziras geshamim), but this is a new plague, it's a plague of drought. Drought (batzores) means no rain basically, but it's not a withholding of rains because it did rain, but in the meantime there's a whole forty days empty, so it still means that one must fast, and they fast and cry out.

Discussion: Why Not Sound the Shofar?

Speaker 2:

Why did he forget about the sounding of the shofar (masri'in) here?

Speaker 1:

I really don't know. A few things it didn't say sounding the shofar (masri'in), but it could be that the next one, when he goes to discuss the fast for rain (ta'anis matar), there comes a whole...

Speaker 2:

Right, but perhaps that's actually the distinction, because this isn't the main fast for rain, where then certainly yes they sound the shofar. This is something like a side...

Speaker 1:

Ah then now. Okay.

End of Chapter 2.