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[A Dream Death](#)

The gemara¹ says שלוחי מצוה אינן ניזוקין, a person will not be harmed as a result of performing actions that are necessary for a mitzva. How are we to understand this as it seems there have been many times where people have been injured or died as an outcome of a mitzva? One instance is that Sarah died as a result of the Akaida.² A modern-day example is where 45 people died in Meiron³ on Lag Ba'omer in 5781/2021.

¹ Kidushin 39b.

² Breishis 23:2, Rashi.

³ Incidentally, R' Aryeh Tzvi Fromer (Shu"t Eretz Tzvi, 27, s.v. עו"ל בקו"ח" writes that we rule *Birchas Hanehnin* (brachos for enjoyment which apply when one has physical pleasure such as eating and drinking) is Rabbinical (D'rabanan). However, in Meiron *Birchas Hanehnin* is Biblical (D'oraisa). This is because this is the opinion of the Zohar, which was authored by R' Shimon Bar Yochai, and Meiron is his place.

To answer this we need to explain what שלוחי מצוה means. It means he will not get harmed due to that mitzva. It doesn't mean that if he performs that mitzva he won't die (or get injured) because if it is his time to die, then he will die (The only time one's life can be extended is if he is learning Torah as we see with Dovid Hamelech where the Malach Hameves ["Angel of Death"] was unable to overcome him while he was learning⁴).

When Sarah died, it was time for her to leave this world. And she merited to leave this world as a result of the Akaida. The same can be said of others who seem to have died as an outcome of a mitzva. Their time on this world expired and they merited to depart this world as a result of a mitzva. But the mitzva surely did not harm them.

[The Western Wall](#)

The following are some interesting facts about the Kosel Ha'maaravi, the Western Wall.

1) The Midrash foretells that the Kosel Maaravi will never be destroyed.⁵ This is astonishing since in the past 2,000 years, Yerushalayim has been conquered 18 times. This prophecy is reinforced by the fact that Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash with its walls were completely destroyed by enemies. Indeed, it says, ציון שדה, תחרש וירושלים עיין תהיה והר הבית לבמות יער, Tzion will be plowed over like a field, Yerushalayim will become heaps of rubble and the Temple Mount will become like stone heaps in the forest.⁶

2) The Pardes Yosef⁷ brings the following: Once when a small stone fell from the Kosel and landed on the ground, they asked the Rabbanim what to do. They answered that it should be put away in the Beis Midrash above the Aron Kodesh, and that is what they did.

3) In the 19th century, European travelers coined the term "Wailing Wall" for the Kosel when they witnessed the Jewish practice of coming to the site to mourn and bemoan the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

4) The earliest time in history we have of placing notes at the Kosel occurred in the year 1599 when R' Gedalya of Semitz⁸ visited Yerushalayim and the Kosel.

When R' Chaim Elazar Shapira, known as the Minchas Elazar (1868-1937), was at the grave of the Ohr Hachaim during his visit to Eretz Yisrael in 1930, he related the following story. R' Chaim ben Atar, known as the Ohr Hachaim (1696-1743), had a student who was very poor that poured his heart out to him. He wrote a note on parchment and told his student to place it

Consequently, according to this, one who recites a bracha on food or drink in Meiron fulfills a Biblical commandment.

⁴ Shabbos 30b.

⁵ Shir Hashirim Rabba 2:4. Also see Eicha Rabba 1:31. In a similar vein, R' Acha (Shemos Rabba 2:2) said that the Shechina did not depart from the Kosel (see also שו"ת חתם סופר, Yoreh Deah, 233).

⁶ Micha 3:12.

⁷ Devarim 12:4. The author lived from 1875-1942.

⁸ He was a kabbalist and rabbi in Tzefas. He was the brother-in-law of R' Chaim Vital and a student of the Arizal.

between the stones of the Kosel.⁹ On his way to the Kosel, a strong wind blew his hat off his head. However, he refused to chase it, for fear of dropping the parchment. Then the wind blew off his kippah. Having no choice but to get it, as he stretched for the kippah, the wind blew the note from his hand. When he told the Ohr Hachaim what happened, he took it as a sign of a Heavenly decree and decided not to write another note. Later, a rolled parchment was found blowing through the streets of Yerushalayim, addressing the Shechina on behalf of a poor Torah scholar, and signed Chaim ben Atar. This is what was written in the letter: אחותי רעיתי יונתי תמתי, אבקשך ברחמים להשפיע על פלוני טובה לפלוני בן פלוני, פרנסה טובה לפלוני בן פלוני, my sister, my beloved, my dove, my perfect one (addressing the Shechina).¹⁰ I request with mercy that you should bestow good livelihood upon so-and-so. And then he signed it.¹¹

Soul Music

Music has the power to bring us close to Hashem. In fact, R' Uri, the Saraf of Strelisk, writes that if a person is incapable of drawing himself close to Hashem, then through the "Chamber of Music" (היכל המוזיקה) it is possible for him to draw close.¹² The Sefer Hachinuch¹³ writes that since a man is of a physical nature, he needs spiritual awakenings to connect to the spiritual. Otherwise, in his natural state, he will remain asleep. There is nothing greater than a nigun to accomplish this.¹⁴

The Vilna Gaon tells us that if our souls have stooped to the dust through pain and despair that have descended upon us, we can still invigorate our hearts through זמרה, song.¹⁵ To unshackle oneself from sadness and despair, music is a useful technique to use as the Shomer Emunim¹⁶ writes that one who is consumed with sadness and wants to become stirred to happiness should strengthen himself and sing a joyous song for some time until his heart will transform—against its will—to joy. He will see wonders from this.¹⁷

Why do we get such pleasure from music? R' Aharon Berachya of Modena¹⁸ writes that the soul derives pleasure from music because it is accustomed to music through the songs of the מלאכי השרת ("ministering angels") and the song of the Heavenly circuits. Due to this, when it is in the body and hears music, it gets pleasure, just as it was accustomed to when it was attached to its Source.¹⁹ In a similar vein, R' Shlomo Alkebatz²⁰ writes that music is something נעים לנפש, pleasing to the soul because it was accustomed to listening to it while it was still up on high.

⁹ Today, more than a million prayer notes or wishes are placed in the Kosel each year. Twice a year, before Rosh Hashana and Pesach, the notes are and buried in the Jewish cemetery on Har Hazeisim (the Mount of Olives).

¹⁰ Shir Hashirim 5:2. When R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz (1886-1948) would read the way the Ohr Hachaim addressed the Shechina in this note, he trembled.

¹¹ Masaos Yerushalayim, Maamar Yom Sheini and Taamei Haminhagim, p. 270.

¹² Imrei Kodesh 84. The Shomer Emunim (Maamar Tzahali V'roni 2, p. 381) writes that the Chamber of Music is one of the closest Chambers to us; yet it goes higher and higher, to the highest of chambers.

¹³ 384.

¹⁴ The Piasezna Rebbe writes (Hachsharas Havreichim, 9) that music is a form of revealing the soul and its feelings... Music is one of the keys to the soul, which arouses it and its feelings.

¹⁵ Siach Yitzchak, Siddur Hagra, p. 76.

¹⁶ Maamar Tzahali V'roni, 9.

¹⁷ The Steipler writes (Chayei Olam, 1:1) that the benefit of song is great, aside from the physical pleasure, because song arouses the heart toward drive, diligence (התמדה), deep study (עיון) and awakening (התעוררות).

¹⁸ He was a student of the Rema Mipano and passed away in 1639.

¹⁹ Maavar Yabok, Sifsei Tzadik 31.

²⁰ Manos Halevi 1:8.

Let us conclude with the unbelievable words that R' Yisrael of Shklov²¹ (1770-1839) writes from his rebbe the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797). The Vilna Gaon praised greatly חכמת מוסיקה, the wisdom of music. He would say that *most explanations of the Torah, the secrets of the songs of the Leviyim and the secrets of the Tikunei Zohar cannot be comprehended without it. One can revive the dead with its secrets that are concealed in the Torah* (ויכולים להחיות מתים בסודותיה הנגזרים בתורה). Numerous songs and measures descended from Har Sinai by Moshe Rabbeinu. The remainder is mere hybrids.

Noble Non-Jews

There was a woman that saved eleven Jews during the Holocaust by hiding them in her basement and providing them with food and shelter. After liberation, when they wanted to repay her for what she had done, they discovered she had died. One of the eleven that was saved then asked if he was allowed to say kadish for her. R' Efraim Oshry ruled that not only was it permitted but it was a mitzva to say kadish with her in mind.²²

R' Ovadia Yosef was asked if it is appropriate to hold a ceremony with prayer in shul, similar to the Jewish ritual, for a Druze soldier killed in action to elevate his soul (לעילוי נשמתו)? He explained that it would in fact be a mitzva, as the Druze people believe in one G-d, as well as in the afterlife. Furthermore, they are drafted into the Israeli army and give of themselves to protect the residents of Israel.²³ They observe the sheva mitzvos bnei noach, and they are like אומות העולם.²⁴

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

²¹ Pe'as Ha'shulchan, Introduction. He was a student of the Vilna Gaon for less than a year. R' Yisrael of Shklov became the head of the German and Polish congregations of Tzefas and later of Yerushalayim. After living in Eretz Yisrael for several years, he traveled to Europe as a *shadar* (emissary of the rabbis) to collect charity for the poor Jews residing at the Yishuv Hayashan. On his return to Eretz Yisrael he wrote the Pe'as Ha'shulchan, which was intended as a kind of supplement to the Shulchan Aruch, supplying all the agricultural laws obligatory only in Eretz Yisrael, omitted by R' Yosef Karo. He also incorporated in this sefer the notes of the Vilna Gaon to the order of Mishnayos Zeraim.

²² Reponsa from the Holocaust, pp. 164-5.

²³ In an interview R' Ovadia Yosef gave when he was elected chief rabbi, the interviewer from the newspaper Yediot Achronot asked him if he believes that Yeshiva students should be exempt from serving in the IDF? He answered yes! We believe that the Torah over which these students labor day and night protects the IDF soldiers in whatever battles they may face as it says לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אם ברוחי אמר ה', not through might or power but through My spirit said Hashem (Zecharya 4:6).

During Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 (which was a large-scale operation during the second intifada) which occurred during the Pesach intercession, R' Ovadia Yosef publicly called all Yeshiva students to cancel Pesach vacation and "report for duty at the 'army base' of Torah study." R' Ovadia said "the soldiers of the IDF do holy work, safeguarding Israel. Only because the IDF soldiers put their lives on the line to guard us can we study Torah, can we pray in shul and the like. Without the army, would our enemies let us sit peacefully and learn Torah? No! Only through the kindness of the IDF soldiers is this feasible. May Hashem guard them forever! May they return to their homes to live good, peaceful lives! Everyone must appreciate this and bless and pray for them. If you see a soldier, you can only kiss him: After all, he is protecting every Jew in Israel with his very life.

²⁴ Yabia Omer, volume 10, Yoreh Deah 55 and Chazon Ovadia, Availus, volume 3, pp. 238-9. R' Ovadia Yosef's primary work was זבוע אומר (see Tehillim 19:3). He explained the title (see his introduction to Yabia Omer), as זבוע backwards stands for יעקב בן יעקב. Also, עבדיה יוסף has the same gematria as אומר (247). Each teshuva (responso) written by R' Ovadia Yosef constitutes a virtual encyclopedia on the topic he addresses. In a 23 page teshuva (in Yabia Omer, volume 4) addressing the use of hot water from a *dud shemesh* (solar water heater) on Shabbos, he quotes more than 500 sources.