

# Plan B

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Walking the streets of Israel, one of the most common expressions you'll hear is "*B'seder*." This is generally equivalent to the way we would say, "OK." However, in Israel, this expression has taken on a panoply of different meanings.

"Would you like to meet for coffee at 10?" "*B'seder*."

"How are you feeling today?" "*B'seder*."

"You cut my place in line – that's NOT *b'seder*."

Sometimes someone will even say, "*B'seder gamur*," which means something along the lines of "Very OK."

Literally, the translation of *b'seder* is closer to "in order," as in things are anticipated to proceed according to plan or the expected result. Which brings us to our *parashah*, which begins, "When you go out to war against your enemy" (Deuteronomy 21:10).

Each of us goes out to war every day. Wars are fought because there is a conflict between two parties regarding how a particular issue should proceed or be resolved. We experience conflicts in our dealings with others, but more importantly, we experience a war of sorts within ourselves.

For example, we plan our day around working through a spiritual or business issue and resolving it a certain way, and then against our will, issues come up. "Dad – the bus never came." *Oy vey!* The result is that we experience inner turmoil, a mental war of sorts. We feel abandoned and sometimes even hurt, as if things "just weren't meant to be."

What's the solution? How can I succeed despite my situation?

The verse continues, “and God your Lord delivers them into your hands...” but only when “...you take them captive” (ibid.).

Baseball players often say, “I have no arm.” This is because a limb, even if it’s still whole and attached to the body, is considered missing if it no longer receives proper vitality from the rest of the body. We call this dead weight. So too, human beings often feel like things just aren’t going their way. This is because their life force and vitality is cut off.

Just as a brain-dead body is no longer considered to be alive, our life force and vitality are derived from our intellect. The Hebrew word for intellect is *ChoKhMaH*, which can be divided into two words, *KoaCh MaH* (the power of *what*). This alludes to something we ask every day at the beginning of the Morning Prayers, as we humble ourselves before our Creator: “*What is our life? What is our strength?*”

We get into trouble by thinking that we’re the ones in control. We become like that limb that, while still physically whole, is essentially dead. Real intellect and the subsequent meaning and vitality that we receive are from God alone. When we humble ourselves and our minds in submission to Him, saying, “What is my strength?” we receive from God the ultimate wisdom and clarity that make our lives complete and worth living.

King Solomon said, “The King, bound in *ReHaTim* (chains)” (Song of Songs 7:6). The *Zohar* compares this to the *RaHeTei* (rafters) of our minds (*Tikkuney Zohar* #6). By binding our thoughts to the “King of Kings,” we can take God captive, so to speak, and bring our life into proper alignment with the ultimate purpose of things.

When we engage in *teshuvah* (repentance) during Elul, our days may often seem like a war consisting of many battles. We set out to change our lives and plan accordingly, but things always seem to take place against our will. Don’t despair! By

humbling ourselves and following God's script, we can win the war and merit living a full life with ultimate connection to God.

*Based on Likutey Moharan I, 82*