

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Mishpatim



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Torah Wellsprings - Mishpatim

From Hashem

It states in this week's parashah (21:13), והאלקים אנה לידו, "And Hashem brought it upon his hand." This pasuk discusses someone who accidentally murdered his fellow man. Who did it? Was it the person's negligence that caused the death? The Torah states clearly that Hashem caused it to happen. This reveals that even when someone harms another person, it is from Hashem. There is no one to be angry at because it was destined. It was from Hashem.

It states (21:19) ורפא ירפא, and the Gemara (Bava Metzia 85.) says, מכאן שנתנה רשות לרופא לרפאות, "From here we learn that doctors are permitted to heal the ill."

Why would we think that doctors may not heal? Why do we need the Torah to tell us that healing is permitted?

Rashi explains that a doctor might say, "If Hashem smote him, I should heal him?" The wound is from Hashem; how do I have permission to go against Hashem's will? Therefore, the Torah tells the doctors that they may heal.

But when we look at the pasukim, it is easy to mistakenly think that it wasn't Hashem Who hit the deceased. It seems that a human being hit him. For it states (21:18-19), וכי יריבון אנשים והכה איש את רעהו באבן או באגרוף... ורפא ירפא, "If men quarrel and one strikes his fellow with a stone or a fist... He shall provide for healing..."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l uses this pasuk as further proof that even when a human being harms his fellow man, it is from Hashem. It is so clearly from Hashem that the doctor would think he couldn't heal him, for it would be like going against Hashem's will.

It states in this week's parashah (22:8), על אשר יאמר כי הוא זה. Devarim Achadim (p.11) explains, אשר יאמר, people say, כי הוא,

that this person is responsible for what occurred. Or they say זה, this other person is guilty. The Torah corrects them and says, עד, האלקים יבא דבר שניהם, attribute what happened to Hashem. Instead of blaming others, recognize that it was *bashert*.

Yosef was sold to Mitzrayim, but he was never angry with his brothers for doing so. Instead, Yosef told his brothers (Bereishis 45:8), ועתה לא אתם שלחתם אתי הנה כי האלקים, "And now, you did not send me here, but Hashem."

When Shimi ben Geira cursed Dovid HaMelech, Dovid said (Shmuel 2, 16:10), כי ה' אומר, "Hashem has surely said to him, 'Curse Dovid.' ומי יאמר מדוע עשית כן? Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

Tanya explains that Shimi was punished for being the *shaliach*, but what happened was destined by Hashem's will.

Once, Reb Michoel Ber Weismandl zt'l cried to Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitz (the Riyatz) zt'l that he could have saved thousands of people from the Holocaust, but evil people prevented him. The Lubavitzer Rebbe said, "And who did all of that?" He reminded Reb Michoel Ber that everything is from Hashem. Reb Michoel Ber said that the Lubavitzer Rebbe's words turned around his entire perspective.

When we recognize that everything is from Hashem, we won't take revenge. The Chinuch (Mitzvah 241) writes, "One of the reasons for the mitzvah of לא תקום (to not take revenge) is so people should take to heart that everything that happens to them – the good and the bad – was destined by Hashem. If someone harms you or causes you distress, believe it is because of your aveiros, and Hashem decreed it. Don't take revenge. Your fellow man isn't the cause of your suffering. The cause is your *aveiros*."

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l (הנהגות) writes, "It is good to remember, always, that everything

is from Hashem, as Chazal (*Chulin* 7:) say, 'A person doesn't hurt his finger unless it was decreed in heaven.' Even when a person is hurt by a human being who has free will, this was also from Hashem. When a person lives with this emunah, it will be easy for him to overcome his anger because he knows it wasn't the person who hurt him.

"And even when a person harms himself, it wasn't because of his negligence or anything like that. It was destined from above. Keep these thoughts in mind, and you will always remember Hashem."

These final words of the Chozeh reveal an important lesson. Even when one harms himself, it is from Hashem. So, what others do to you, and even what you do to yourself, are all from Hashem.

People are upset with themselves when they make poor financial decisions or other foolish choices in life. The Chozeh reveals that these errors were also decreed in Heaven. Don't beat yourself up with regret because this is what was destined to be.

Chesed Brings Salvation

Everyone needs salvations, and people are ready to pay lots of money for segulos. However, they would be much better off using their money to do chesed, such as giving tzedakah or lending money to those in need.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l in his sefer *Ahavas Chesed* (2:5) writes, "When we do chesed, this arouses Hashem's chesed on Bnei Yisrael even when they don't have zechus avos.¹ We live at a time when midas hadin, strife, and hardships prevail in the world. We don't have any other counsel to be saved from the tzaros that come each day other than to be occupied with chesed!"

This counsel is worth remembering. People need salvations. What should they do? Of course, Tehillim and Tefillos help, but remember that doing deeds of chesed also helps. It arouses Hashem's chesed onto them and all of Klal Yisrael.

This week discusses the mitzvah of lending money. People think that the purpose of the mitzvah is to help the poor and those in need, but the Chinuch (66) clarifies that this isn't the reason for this mitzvah. Hashem can assist the poor without our help. Primarily, the mitzvah is so we can be occupied in deeds of chesed, and then we merit receiving Hashem's chesed.

The Chinuch writes, "The root of the mitzvah is that Hashem wants His creations to be trained and accustomed to doing deeds of kindness and compassion because these are praiseworthy traits, and by engaging in these traits, they become worthy of Hashem's kindness. We have said this many times: Hashem's goodness and blessings go to the good, not to those who act in the opposite manner. And, when Hashem does kindness with His creation, that will fulfill Hashem's desire to bestow His kindness to the world. If it weren't for this reason, Hashem could give the poor their needs without our help. Rather, it is Hashem's kindness. Hashem wants us to be the *shluchim*, messengers, to help the poor, so we can merit receiving goodness.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l (*Amud HaChesed*) tells a story that happened with a certain talmid chacham. The Chofetz Chaim doesn't say the name of the scholar, but after the Chofetz Chaim's petirah, his student, author of *Afikei Yam*, said that the talmid chacham mentioned in this story was none other than the Chofetz Chaim, himself:

1. Hashem bestows kindness to Bnei Yisrael because they are descendants of the holy Avos and Imahos. But even if we don't receive Hashem's salvation due to zechus avos, we can receive Hashem's kindness in the merit of our deeds of kindness.

The Chofetz Chaim writes about a person who didn't have children. He came to the Chofetz Chaim zt'l for advice on how he can merit bearing children. The Chofetz Chaim told him, "I don't know segulos, but we do know that Hashem acts with us as we act with others. If you do chesed with others, Hashem will do kindness with you. Perhaps in this merit, you will bear children."

The man followed this advice and opened a *gemach*, lending money to those in need. He wrote up a list of rules and customs on how the *gemach* will be run. One of the customs was that every three years, on Tuesday before parashas Mishpatim, he would make a dinner in the honor of the *gemach*.

Three years later, on Tuesday of parashas Mishpatim, on the date chosen for his first dinner, he also celebrated the bris for his first son. Heaven arranged that the bris would be on the date of the dinner to show that the child was born in the merit of the *gemach*. There shouldn't be any doubt that he bore children in some other merit. It was clarified from heaven that it was because of the *gemach* that his first son was born.

Years passed, and he merited to give birth to several other children. It became difficult for him to run the *gemach*, so he informed the Chofetz Chaim that he wanted to give it over to someone else. The Chofetz Chaim advised him against giving it up. This mitzvah brought him his salvation, and besides, no one would run the *gemach* as well as he did.

Another few years passed, and the man repeatedly asked the Chofetz Chaim for

permission to give the *gemach* over to someone else. It came to a point that the Chofetz Chaim felt that he couldn't say no to him anymore.

The morning after he gave over the *gemach*, he returned to the Chofetz Chaim and told him that he wanted to take the *gemach* back. He said that one of his children began to choke that night. He understood that he must continue his deeds of chesed for the safety of his family.²

The Navi (Yeshayah 58:7-9) says that one of the rewards for giving tzedakah is that one's tefillos will be answered:

פרס לרעב לחמך ועניים מרודים תביא בית... אז תקרא וה' יענה תשוע ויאמר הנני "Share your bread with the hungry, and moaning poor you shall bring home... [Then] when you shall call, Hashem shall answer. You shall cry, and He shall say, 'Here I am.'" This means that in the merit of helping the poor, Hashem will answer all your tefillos.

The Gemara (Yevamos 63.) quotes these pasukim and says they refer to when one lends money to the poor בשעת דחקו when he is having a hard time. Rebbe Hirsh of Riminov zt'l says that בשעת דחקו is referring to the giver. When a person goes through a difficult period, he should help the poor because his tefillos will be answered, and he will experience *yeshuos*.³

The Chida (Shut Chaim Shaal 74:2) teaches that when one gives tzedakah to the poor, it is not the poor who receive a gift. The poor are the ones who are giving the gift! This is because Chazal (Vayikra Rabba 34) say, "More than the baal habayis does for the poor, the poor does for the baal habayis." The poor

2. A man had an ill daughter, and the father cared for her diligently. After some time, the daughter was niftar, and soon afterwards, the father was niftar. Reb Yisrael Salanter said, "We used to think that the daughter lived because of her father who cared for her. Now we know that he lived because of her." The chesed he did for his daughter granted him life.

3. The Beis Yisrael zt'l points out that there are other ways to do chesed, besides giving tzedakah and lending money. With a smile and kind, encouraging words, you do chesed to your fellow man and will be rewarded with salvations.

enable the wealthy to give tzedakah, so the giver gains more than what was given to the poor person.

It states (Mishlei 15:27) וְשׂוֹנֵא מִתְּנַת יָחִיד "He who hates gifts will live." The Chida says this doesn't apply to a person who needs to ask for tzedakah. He isn't receiving a gift; rather, he is giving a gift!

The Torah states (23:5) כִּי תִרְאֶה חֲמֹר שְׂנֹאךָ רֹבֵץ "If you see your enemy's donkey lying under its burden, עֲזֹב תְּעִיב עִמּוֹ, you will surely help him." Unkelos translates those final words as follows: תִּשְׁבּוֹק מֵאֵי דְבִלְבָךְ עֲלוּהִי "Drop whatever is in your heart against this person and unload the animal together with him."

Bris Menuchah (a student of the Ramban) quotes this Unkelos and writes: If you will be תִּשְׁבּוֹק מֵאֵי דְבִלְבָךְ, drop all bad feelings that are in your heart against this person, ותִּפְרָק, you will have your salvation and all your tzaros will go away. This is related to what was discussed above. If you do kindness for others, Hashem will do kindness with you. If you drop all grudges and forgive others, Hashem will forgive you.

It states (21:18-19) וְכִי יִרְיִבִּין אַנְשִׁים וְהִכָּה אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ "If men quarrel, and one strikes the other with a stone or with a fist...he must pay for the medical costs." The Chasam Sofer asks, why does the Torah specify that he hit his fellow man during a dispute (וְכִי יִרְיִבִּין אַנְשִׁים)? The same halachah

applies even if one hits his fellow man without a fight! Also, then he must pay the medical bills.

The Chasam Sofer replies that the Torah is telling us that if there had been peace between them, there would be no medical costs. This is because it states (Yeshayah 57:19) "Peace, peace to the far and the near," says Hashem, 'and I will heal him.'" When there is peace, Hashem heals. There won't be a need to pay a medical bill. It is because of the fights and disputes among Yidden that medical bills exist.

The Pele Yoetz (Vatranus) writes: "Sometimes, with vatranus (letting the other person have his way, rather than to fight with him) you will live, and it will save you from tzaros and problems. How good is his portion! A person doesn't know how to measure it."

Reb Chaim Palagi writes, "When a man has an ill person in his home, he should practice vatranus with the birds, and it is proven and tested that they will daven for him."

Adar

נודה לך... ועל נסִיךְ שֶׁבִּכֵּל יוֹם, (in *Modim*), "We praise you...for the miracles You do for us each day and for Your wonders and kindness, which are constant."⁴ An ideal time to

4. A couple of years ago, a Holocaust survivor passed away at the age of ninety-two. Her son, a tzaddik and chassid and a close friend of mine, told me the story of her survival:

This woman and her older sister were born in Germany before World War II. When cruel decrees against Yidden became commonplace, their parents took their two daughters and escaped to France.

But the Holocaust followed them to France, too, and they were detained in a concentration camp. The father was permitted to leave the concentration camp each morning to go to work, while the mother and the daughters stayed there.

Once, one of the sisters broke her leg. Her mother took her two daughters to the camp gate and, in broken French, told the guard they needed to get to the hospital.

The guard replied, "You and your young daughter can go, but there is no reason to take along your older daughter."

recognize all the miracles that Hashem does for us is during the month of Adar. The Meor Einayim teaches that אדר stands for א' דר, the Alef, (Hashem, the אלוהים של עולם) dwells. During Adar, we discover that Hashem dwells in this world, helping us and performing miracles for us all the time.

Chazal (*Beitzah* 15:2) say, הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו, "If one wants to ensure that his property will remain with him, he should plant an *adar*." The Bnei Yissaschar (*Adar* 1:8) explains that he should implant into his heart the lessons of Adar, the emunah that Hashem dwells in this world, and everything is from Him. This emunah will grant him success and wealth.

The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* says that אדר is *roshei teivos* for רעוא דרעוין אשתכח, "The desire of all desires prevails." This means it is a month of *eis ratzon*, when Hashem's love and desire for us are expressed and felt profoundly.

The Yeshuos Yaakov *zy'a* (the Lemberger Rav) met with Rebbe Eizik of Zidichoiv *zy'a* and said, "I heard that you don't say *tachanun* throughout the month of Adar. Tell me a source for this custom of not saying *tachanun*."

And, please, don't give me a source from kabbalah or chassidus. I want a halachic source."

Rebbe Eizik Zidichoiver replied, "It states (*Esther* 9:22) והחודש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה, ומאבל ליום טוב, 'The month that was reversed for them from grief to joy and from mourning to a Yom Tov.' So, the entire month became like a yom tov, and we don't say *tachanun* on a holiday."

Rosh Chodesh Adar – A Time for Tefillah

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* taught that Rosh Chodesh Adar is an opportune time for tefillah. He learns this from the Chazal that says (*Beitzah* 16:), הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו יטע בהן אדר, "If one is seeking counsel how to ensure that his property will remain with him, he should plant an *adar*."

The Chozeh of Lublin says נכסיו, "his property" refers to tefillah for three reasons:

1) A person's primary property is his good deeds and tefillos. These are the assets that will remain with him for eternity.

2) נכסיו means concealed, and tefillah is concealed. The Gemara (*Brachos* 6:) says,

Using a drop of French that she knew, together with hand movements, she explained to the guard that she could hardly speak French and needed her older daughter to help her communicate with the doctors. The guard accepted the explanation and allowed them out.

The doctors at the hospital informed them that it was a deep wound and that they must operate. They stayed overnight, and in the morning, the doctors told them that the operation was unsuccessful and that she would remain crippled for the rest of her life. The operation probably just made matters worse.

The mother carried her wounded daughter back to the concentration camp.

As they approached the concentration camp, they were shocked by the silence. Even more surprising, the front gate was unguarded. They heard from the few remaining people that there was a deportation a day before. Everyone was sent to Auschwitz r"l.

They were saved because they were in the hospital due to the broken leg, and their father was saved because he was at work.

The family immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, and the woman was eligible for reparations money from the Germans for her wounded leg. She refused to accept the money. She would say, "This foot is mine, and I won't sell it to the *resha'im*. This foot saved our lives."

We learn from this story that even when something terrible happens, trust that it is for our benefit. This story is an example of נסיד שבכל עת עמנו, the miracles Hashem performs for us at all times.

What is the reason for this halachah? The Rabbeinu b'Chaye explains:

Cham saw his father, Noach, not dressed, and Cham told his brothers about this (see Bereishis 9:22). So, Cham sinned with his eyes and with his mouth because [a] he *saw* his father undressed and [b] he *told* his brothers about it. His punishment was that the descendants of his son, Canaan, would be slaves. When a slave's master knocks out a tooth or an eye of his slave, he goes free. This is because the tooth and the eye are the root of his slavery. If they are knocked out, the slave can go free.

From here, we see the importance of guarding the mouth and the eyes.

Someone told the Ruzhiner that his eyes hurt him. The Ruzhiner replied, "How do you know that your eyes hurt you? Perhaps you hurt your eyes."

An Arab was hired to deliver bags filled with merchandise. For each bag delivered, a shekel was placed in a dish. This was done to keep track of how many bags were delivered. When the delivery was completed, they would count the coins to know how many bags were delivered and what the charge would be.

Once, when the Arab noticed no one was watching, he took a handful of the coins from the dish and placed them into his pocket. He thought that he was gaining but was losing way more.

The nimshal is that when people sin with their mouths or eyes, they think they are gaining something – a juicy lashon hara, and the freedom to look wherever they want – but they are losing so much more.

The Rokeiach writes that when Hashem wants to give wealth or honor to a person, the Satan says, "Let's test him first to see whether he deserves it." The Satan tests him with his eyes. The Satan is a *malach hamashchis*, a destroying angel because he harms people and takes away the blessings that would

Kedushah

If one owns a non-Jewish slave, and he knocks out the slave's eye or tooth, the slave goes free, as it states (21:26-27) וְכִי יִכֶּה אִישׁ אֶת עֵין עַבְדוֹ אוֹ אֶת עֵין אִמּוֹתָהּ וּשְׁחַתָּהּ לַחֲפְשִׁי יִשְׁלַחְנוּ תַּחַת עֵינוֹ וְאִם שֵׁן עַבְדוֹ אוֹ שֵׁן אִמּוֹתוֹ יִפֹּל לַחֲפְשִׁי יִשְׁלַחְנוּ תַּחַת שְׁנֵי

have come to them. They end up losing because of the eyes.

Boundaries

This week's parashah (ch.24) retells the story of matan Torah, beginning with the mitzvah of *prishah*. Boundaries were set to show how close the nation was allowed near Har Sinai, and they were commanded not to go beyond this border.

The concept of boundaries is also discussed in last week's parashah, as it states (19:12), והגבלת... השמרו לכם עלות בהר וגנע בקצהו, "You shall set boundaries... Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge..."

The boundaries were a prerequisite for receiving the Torah. An explanation may be that to keep the Torah, one must make boundaries for himself; one must know how far he may go, what he may do, and where he must draw the line.

When the nation left Mitzrayim, Hashem led them along a longer route so the nation wouldn't be tempted to return to Mitzrayim (see *Shemos* 13:17). The Shlah Hakadosh writes, "Recognize and understand how much a person must contemplate and make boundaries and fences for himself, so he doesn't sin. Behold, Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself distanced the nation so the nation shouldn't return to Mitzrayim."

The Shlah adds that this is implied in the pasuk (*Yeshayah* 57:19), שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב, "Peace to the far and the close." This suggests that someone who stays רחוק, far from an *aveirah*, is קרוב, close to Hashem.⁵

The Midrash (*Koheles Rabba* 1:4) states:

Apikorsim held many religious debates with Reb Yehudah ben Nikosa. Once, Reb Yehudah told them, "Let's arrange one more debate, and this debate will determine who is right once and for all. Whoever wins can beat his opponent's head with a hammer."

Reb Yehudah ben Nikosa won the debate and did to his opponents as they agreed. Reb Yehudah's students told him, "Rebbe, Heaven helped you! You won!"

He replied, "Please daven for me because I used to be like a chest filled with precious gems, and now I was emptied, and I'm filled with *ashes*." He meant that after hearing all their heresy in the debate, he felt that he was affected by them.

We say this in response to those who say, "I use the internet, but it doesn't affect me. The internet is dangerous. If the Tana Reb Yehudah ben Nikosa felt affected by the *apikorsim* he heard, we could be sure that the internet isn't good for our neshamos. Unwillingly, we pick up on beliefs and lifestyles contrary to the Torah.

The Wonders of the Jewish Nation

Baruch Hashem Yidden are cautious with the internet, to the best of their abilities, which is miraculous. To live in this generation without internet use, or even with limited internet use, is remarkable and something we can be proud of.

Chazal (*Megillah* 2:) say, "The letters ם and ן of the *luchos* existed with a miracle."⁶ We can explain that the *mem* and the *samech* are closed from all sides, and they imply to erecting boundaries to guard ourselves against foreign influences. Chazal tell us בנס

5. The letters around ה"ר spell קדו"ש. (This is because the letters that surround the letter ה"א are דל"ת before it and ו"א after it. The same is with the letter קו"ף. ש. רי"ש and שי"ן surround it. These bordering letters spell קדו"ש. This is implied in the words (*Shemos* 19:23), והגבל את ההר וקדשתו, which can be translated, "Look at the boundary letters of ה"ר and you will find קדו"ש. The lesson is that if you create boundaries, you will be holy before Hashem.

6. This is because the letters were engraved on the *luchos*, and when you carve out a *samech* or a *mem*, the center should fall out, and it won't appear like a *mem* or *samech*. The center remained suspended, which was a miracle.

היו עומדים, doing so is nothing less than a miracle. That is the story of our generation. Among all Yidden, there is a desire to be cautious, and to a large extent, we are being successful. This is the result of the Jewish people's desire for purity and the *siyata d'Shmaya* Hashem gives us.

It states (Bamidbar 12:3) והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה, "Moshe was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth."

The Reshab of Lubavitch zt'l explains that Moshe Rabbeinu saw the sefer of Adam HaRishon that discusses all the people that will live throughout all the generations. He saw the people who will live in the generation before Moshiach comes. He saw the great tests they would endure, yet they would remain loyal to Hashem. When Moshe saw their steadfastness with their emunah in Hashem, even during such times, he became extremely humble.

Psikta Rabsa (36) states that the enemies of the Jewish nation and leaders of countries will say about the generation of Moshiach that they don't deserve to be redeemed. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will reply, "How do you speak against this generation? It is beautiful, and I love them. אני שמח בה ואני חפץ בה, "I am happy with the generation, I desire them, I support them, and I want them. I will destroy all of you, but I will not destroy one of them."

These are very encouraging words, and they discuss our generation. It is a challenging time; there are many tests, but Hashem loves us in this generation. It is a time that reveals our greatness, not our faults. We are so exalted in this generation that even Moshe Rabbeinu felt humble towards us.

The Divrei Yoel of Satmar zt'l was in Kaliv for Rebbe Isaac Kaliver's yahrtzeit, on the seventh of Adar. When he arrived, the day was almost over, and someone asked him, "Why did you come so late?"

The Satmar Rebbe replied, "At a market, the greatest buys and the best merchandise are brought out at the end."

Similarly, we say that the end of times is the most special time for Klal Yisrael. The tests are great, and because of them, our avodas Hashem is so precious to Hashem.

A shady money changer told a client, "If you give me five thousand dollars, I will give you fifteen thousand dollars of counterfeit money."

The client didn't want to hear of it. The money changer explained, "No one will know they are counterfeit. They were made very well. You can test it if you want. Take the fifteen thousand dollars, bring them to the bank, and ask them if the money is counterfeit. They will tell you it isn't because it is so well made."

The man took the money, went to several banks, and they all told him that the money was real.

So, he agreed to the money changer's deal. He paid five thousand dollars and took the fifteen thousand counterfeit money.

Soon afterward, a police officer pulled him over and said, "Let me see your money. I have a report that you have counterfeit money."

Frightened, he explained that he didn't know it was counterfeit and gave the money to the policeman.

The policeman left, and then the man realized he could have simply told the policeman that he didn't have counterfeit money. He could have told the police, "Come with me to the bank, and they will tell you that it is real money."

He immediately went to the police station and told them that one of the policemen had taken away his money for no reason, claiming it was counterfeit when it wasn't.

The police showed him pictures of policemen, "Was this the person who took

your money? Perhaps it was this person? Tell us who it was, and we will get your money back." But no face matched the policeman who had taken the money.

This is what really happened: The policeman was only dressed up like a policeman. He was a thief, working together with the money changer. The fifteen thousand dollars was real money; it wasn't counterfeit. The money changer and the fake policeman figured out how to steal money from people. The changer would take five thousand dollars from people and give them fifteen thousand dollars in exchange, claiming the money was counterfeit. After checking the money in the bank and hearing that the bank doesn't consider the cash counterfeit, they would agree to the deal. It was worthwhile for them to give five to take fifteen. Then, the policeman would show up, claim the money is counterfeit, and confiscate the funds.

But a wise person would say to the policeman, "Why do you say it is counterfeit money? It is real money! You can test it in the bank and see that the money is valid."

The *nimshal* to this story is that the *yetzer hara* comes to people and says, "Your *avodas Hashem* is counterfeit. It isn't real. It has no genuine value."

Many believe that the *yetzer hara* is telling the truth, and they, therefore, feel that there is no reason for them to continue serving Hashem. Why should they daven? Why should they learn Torah if their deeds are counterfeit and worthless? But the wise will proclaim that their *avodas Hashem* is valuable, and they won't let the *yetzer hara* stop them and prevent them from doing Hashem's service.

This is especially true in our times, the final generation, because we are at a time when we are very precious to Hashem. The *yetzer hara* will point to our *aveiros* and blow them out of proportion. The *yetzer hara* will say that all the good we do is counterfeit and valueless. But Hashem will

say, "This is the nation whom I love. This is the *avodas Hashem* that I desire."

Be Smart, Not Correct

Chazal tell us that Yerushalayim was destroyed because they would judge people according to *halachah*. Hashem wants us to go beyond the letter of the law. Not always is being right what Hashem wants from us.

The Chofetz Chaim (Ahavas Chesed, Amud HaChesed 33) writes that when he was young, there was a widow in his neighborhood who couldn't pay her rent. The *baal habayis* warned her that he would have to ask her to leave if she didn't pay. She didn't succeed in raising the money, and the *baal habayis* removed the roof. It was freezing, raining, and snowing inside the home, and she and her children had to leave and seek another place.

The Chofetz Chaim said that he saw this episode and guarded it in his heart. He was certain that in the end, the *baal habayis* would be punished for causing the *almanah* so much distress. Because it says in this week's parashah (22:21-23) *אם ענה כל אלמנה ויתום לא תענון, וחרה אפי תענה אתו כי אם צעק יצעק אלי שמוע אשמע צעקתו, וחרה אפי*, "You shall not oppress any widow or orphan. If you oppress him, beware, for if he cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry. My wrath will be kindled, and I will slay you with the sword, and your wives will be widows and your children orphans." The Chofetz Chaim was sure that there would be a punishment.

Ten years later, a wild dog bit the *baal habayis*. He began barking like a dog until he died from his wounds and bitter suffering.

One might ask, "What did the *baal habayis* do wrong? He wasn't obligated to give away his apartment for free."

That's true, but we have to think beyond the letter of the law, too. Chazal tell us that Yerushalayim was destroyed because people didn't go beyond the letter of the law. One

has to consider all matters before making a drastic decision.⁷

The Gemara (Taanis 5:) states that when Reb Nachman was leaving Reb Yitzchak, he asked for a brachah. Reb Yitzchak told him, "I will tell you a mashal. A person was walking in the desert; he was hungry, tired, and thirsty, and he found a tree that had sweet fruit, good shade, and water flowing underneath it. He ate from the fruit, drank water, and sat in the shade. When he was ready to leave, he said, "Tree! Tree! How can I bless you? If I were to tell you that you should have sweet fruit, behold you have sweet fruit. Should I bless you to have good shade? You have good shade. Should I bless you that a river should flow next to you? You have that as well! Rather, I bless you that all trees that come from you should also have all these characteristics.' I say the same to you: How can I bless you? Should I bless you with Torah? Behold, you have Torah. Should I bless you with wealth? Behold you are wealthy. Should I bless you with children? You have children! Rather, I bless you that all your children should be like you."

In the mashal, the tree had three qualities: sweet fruit, shade, and a river. In the nimshal, the talmid chacham is described as having three benefits: Torah, wealth, and children.

The Maharsha shows how the three correspond to the three. The sweet fruit represents Torah, the shade represents wealth, as it states בצל החכמה בצל הכסף, and the stream of water flowing represents children, as it says וזרעו במים רבים.

The Pnei Menachem zt'l says that wealth is represented by a shadow because money is an imagination, like a shadow. You can't take it with you.

We will explain:

This week discusses the obligation to return collateral that was taken for a debt. It states (22:25-26) אם חבל תחבל שלמת רעך עד בא השמש תשיבנו לו, כי הוא כסותה לבדה הוא שמלתו לערו במה ישכב "If you take your neighbor's garment as security, until sunset you shall return it to him, for it is his only covering; it is his garment for his skin. With what shall he lie? And it shall be that if he cries out to Me, I will hear because I am gracious."

Rashi explains that the pasuk is discussing collateral taken at the time of the loan to guarantee that he will get his money back. Nevertheless, he must return the garment to the poor person when the poor person needs it. A daytime garment must be returned each morning, and a nighttime garment, such as a blanket, must be returned each night.

This obligation is also discussed in Devarim (24:10). Rashi there describes the debt that is due to him, חוב של כלום, "A debt involving anything." These words can also be translated as "Debt of nothing."

It is explained that Rashi wants to encourage people and help them keep this difficult mitzvah. And it is a difficult mitzvah to keep. After all, he did someone a favor; he lent him money, and he has a right to take collateral to be guaranteed that he will

7. It states (22:21-22) אם ענה תענה אתו כי אם צעק יצעק אלי שמוע אשמע צעקתו, "If you oppress him [the widow or the orphan] if he cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry." The Vilna Gaon explains this pasuk based on the Chazal that Pninah intended l'shem shamayim. She caused pain for Chanah with the intention of causing Chanah to daven to Hashem. The Torah tells us that even if this is your intention, it is an aveirah, and there will be a punishment. This is implied in the words, אם ענה תענה אותו כי תצעק עלי, even if you oppress the orphan or widow because you want them to call out to me, ושמעתי כי חנון אני, Hashem will hear the shouts and will punish those who caused it. As stated in the next pasuk, וחרה אפי והרגתי אתכם בחרב והיו נשיכם אלמנות ובניכם יתמים, "My wrath will be kindled, and I will slay you with the sword, and your wives will be widows and your children orphans."

receive payment. Why must he return it to the poor person each day when he needs it?

Rashi tells him that it is a חוב של כלום, a debt of nothing. Essentially, what is it? It is only money. With this thought in mind, it will be easier for him to keep these halachos.

This is also implied by the shadow, which represents money and wealth, as we saw above. We must remember that money is a shadow; it isn't real. We give money more importance than it deserves. Money is an intangible shadow, a *chov shel klum*, nothingness, and we shouldn't let money blind us of our obligations and middos towards our fellow man.

It states (22:24) אם כסף תלווה את עמי את העני עמך, "When you lend money to My people, to the poor person who is with you, you shall not behave toward him as a lender."

Rashi writes, "You shall not demand it of him forcibly. If you know that he does not have [the money to repay you], do not appear to him as if you have lent to him, but as if you have not lent to him, i.e., do not embarrass him."

This is also a very difficult mitzvah to keep. He lent money and can't even ask for the money back because he knows that the borrower doesn't have money. Perhaps it doesn't seem fair, but the Torah requires this from us. This is because we shouldn't always think about "what is right" but rather "what is the right thing to do."⁸

Changing One's Nature

The Noam Elimelech writes in Tzetz Kattan (16) האדם לא נברא בעולם רק לשבר את הטבע, "Man was created in the world to change his nature." The Tzetz Kattan gives examples of stubbornness, laziness, shamefulness,

8. The 25th of Shevat is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l*.

Returning from Reb Yisrael Salanter's *levayah*, his students calculated that until Moshiach comes, Reb Yisrael Salanter's *yahrtzeit* will always be either before or after Shabbos Parashas Mishpatim. They explained that Rebbe Yisrael Salanter's primary emphasis was to be honest in business and to be cautious with the mitzvos *ben adam lechaveiro*. These are the primary lessons taught in parashas Mishpatim.

A student asked Reb Yisrael Salanter, "Rebbe, who is greater: A Torah student who studies eighteen hours a day or a storeowner who deals honestly?" He asked this because Reb Yisrael Salanter would always say that the highest level is a person who does business honestly, so the student wanted to know whether he would say that he is even greater than a talmid chacham who learns eighteen hours a day.

Reb Yisrael Salanter answered, "Certainly, the honest storeowner is on a higher level. However, since he is on such a high level, it would be proper for such a person to study Torah eighteen hours a day..."

Once, Rebbe Yisrael's students noticed their rebbe washing his hands for bread, using a minimal amount of water. They asked him why he didn't wash with a lot of water, as stated in *Shulchan Aruch* (158:10), "It is preferable to wash with a lot of water. Rav Chisda added, 'I wash with handfuls full of water, and I will receive handfuls of goodness.'" Reb Yisrael Salanter explained that a poor woman was in charge of drawing the water in that house. She would have to carry more water if he washed with a lot of water. "I don't want to become wealthy at the expense of the poor woman's hard work." This exemplifies Reb Yisrael's caution not to harm others and his concern for his fellow man.

Reb Yisrael once saw two children arguing over who was taller. One of them pushed his friend off the curb and said, "You see? I'm taller." Reb Yisrael rebuked the child for doing this, saying, "You don't knock down your fellow man because you want to be taller."

People were talking about a recent niftar, saying he was a *tzaddik nistar* – a hidden tzaddik. Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* corrected them, "Perhaps he was a *nistar*, but then he wasn't a tzaddik. Because in this generation, if someone is a tzaddik, he must reveal himself so he can help others."

someone who doesn't speak clearly, and someone who isn't a masmid by nature. He should go against his nature and acquire good middos and good character traits.

It is written in sefarim that this is done step by step. One can't expect to change immediately, but one takes one step towards improving his nature and then another step, and Hashem will help him succeed.

The Divrei Chaim zt'l is renowned for his deeds of tzedakah. He said, "If I see a poor person and I am not able to help him, I feel like my flesh is being ripped out." However, he also said that he was born with a stingy nature, and he changed it and acquired a generous nature.

When the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz zt'l was young, he was afraid, by nature. His brothers-in-law would throw a chicken at him to tease him because he feared it.

During the First World War, a soldier came into his beis medresh with a rifle in his hand. The Ahavas Yisrael opened his vest in front of his heart, as if to say, "If you want to shoot, do so." He had entirely changed his nature and wasn't fearful at all. This is because it is possible to change one's nature. Every small step in the right direction adds up until Hashem helps him, and he acquires an improved nature.

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 32) discusses the concept of *לכוף יצרו*, to bend and to change one's nature regarding a mitzvah stated in this week's parashah. There are two mitzvos: *prikah* and *te'inah*, which means to help your fellow man unload his donkey and to help your fellow man load his donkey.⁹

Suppose a person sees two people struggling with their animals. One is loading his donkey, and one is unloading his donkey. Who should he help? The Gemara teaches that he should help the one unloading his animal because we must also be concerned with the pain and the distress of animals. Therefore, when we have to choose whether to unload or load an animal, we should choose to unload because, besides helping our fellow man, we also save the animal from distress.

Nevertheless, the Gemara says that if the person who is loading his animal is someone whom you hate, you should help him load the animal because, *לכוף את יצרו עדיף*, "It is better to overcome your yetzer hara." We must train ourselves to go against our yetzer hara and to change our human tendencies. If our tendency is to hate, we must train ourselves to love. As Noam Elimelech teaches, "Man was created in the world to change his nature."¹⁰

9. The mitzvah of *prikah*, to help your fellow man unload his donkey, is written in this week's parashah (23:5) *כי תראה חמור שונאך רבץ תחת משאו וחדלת מעזב לו עזב תעזב עמו*, "If you see the donkey of someone you hate lying under its burden would you refrain from helping him? You shall surely help along with him."

The pasuk that discusses *טעינה* is in (Devarim 22:4) *הקם תקים עמו... לא תראה את חמור אחיך או שורו נופלים*, "You shall not see your brother's donkey, or his ox fallen... You shall pick up the load with him." Rashi writes, "This is the mitzvah of *te'inah*, to help load the package that fell off the donkey."

10. The gabaim came to Reb Yissachar Dov zt'l of Belz when he became rebbe, and they told him the names of the people his father would help financially each month. They figured that his son, Rebbe Yissachar Dov, would want to continue giving these tzedakos because when Rebbe Yissachar Dov became rebbe, he made it a point to continue the path that his father established. Rebbe Yissachar Dov reviewed the list, and he crossed out one of the names. They shouldn't give him money anymore. He explained, "He doesn't need money, so there is no reason to support him. My father gave him money only because he once went against my father. In order to uproot any negative feelings that he might have on him, my father went to the other extreme and helped him. But this man never harmed me, so I have nothing against him. And financially, as I said, he doesn't need support, so there is no reason for me to continue sending him a monthly stipend." His father's way of helping someone he had grievances about is the lesson we are discussing. It is *לכוף את יצרו* to change one's nature and love someone you might be angry at.

The *Shitah Mikubetzes* quotes the Mahari Lunil who writes, "To overcome one's yetzer hara is greater than performing several mitzvos."

According to Your Nature

We discussed above that one should change his nature. However, sometimes we are told that we shouldn't change our nature; instead, we should serve Hashem according to our nature.

For example, we quote from the Vilna Gaon on the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 22:6) חנוך לנער על פי דרכו גם כי יזקין לא יסור ממנו, "Educate a child according to his way, so that even when he becomes old he will never leave it." The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* explains, "Train the child to perform the mitzvos according to his nature, because even when he will become old, he will not leave them. If you train him against his nature, he will only listen to you now, because he fears you. But when he reaches independence and will not have to listen to you anymore, he will not be able to go against his true nature."

The Vilna Gaon quotes the Gemara (*Shabbos*) which states, "Someone who was born under the *mazal maadim*, with a nature for shedding blood, should become either a mohel, or a *shochet*, or a doctor." Instead of going against one's nature, it is better to understand his tendencies and channel them for *avodas Hashem*.

Perhaps the explanation is that one should serve Hashem according to his nature. But when he finds that his nature is preventing

him from serving Hashem, he has to bend and break that nature. As we wrote, this is possible, and is accomplished with small steps and with *siyata d'Shmaya*.¹¹

The Rebbe Reb Zusha *zt'l* would go to *galus*, traveling from one place to another. Once, he came upon the city where the *gaon* Reb Yusfa *zt'l* lived. Reb Yusfa was a great *talmid chacham*, an expert in all parts of the Torah. Reb Zusha went to hear his *shiur*. After the *shiur* Reb Zusha went over to Rav Yusfa to tell him how much he enjoyed the *shiur*. "It was worth traveling the long distance from home to come here, just to listen to this sweet *shiur*."

Rav Yusfa told Reb Zusha, "I understand why you were happy with my *shiur*, but I can't figure out why I'm so impressed by you. At first impression, you look like a standard beggar who goes from city to city to collect money. But I perceive that the spirit of Hashem rests on you. You are certainly a great *talmid chacham*."

Reb Zusha answered, "Not at all. I'm an *am haa'retz*¹².... But perhaps it's because I know how to daven..."

Rav Yusfa replied, "And the people here don't know how to daven?"

Reb Zusha replied, "They know how to daven, but I know how to daven before the Ribon HaOlamim [Master of the World]."

Rav Yusfa asked, "Maybe you can teach me how one davens 'before the Ribon HaOlamim'?"

11. See also *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Mishlei* 932), which tells that Chiya, the nephew of Reb Elazer, had a beautiful voice, and Reb Elazar would always tell him, 'Chiya, my son, stand up and honor Hashem with what Hashem gave you.' Each person must serve Hashem with his talents, and since Reb Chiya had a pleasant voice, he had to serve Hashem in that venue. His uncle, Reb Elazar, told him, "Navos (mentioned in *Sefer Melachim*) had a beautiful voice. When he would go up to Yerushalayim, all the Yidden would gather around and listen to him sing. Once, he didn't go up to the Beis HaMikdash for yom tov, and because of this sin, he was punished. (Achav killed him when he didn't want to sell him his field. But the real reason he was punished was because he didn't do his service, to sing in the Beis HaMikdash.) He didn't serve Hashem with the talent that he had."

12. Reb Zusha said this out of humility, but he was a great *talmid chacham*, and in his younger years, he served as rav of a city for several years.

"I can teach you, but not in front of everyone else. Let's go into a private room and I'll teach you."

Reb Zusha taught the Rav the secrets of *tefillah*; how to pray properly before Hashem. Rav Yusfa was very inspired, "Perhaps I should leave my *rabbanus* and my yeshiva, so I can always daven properly?"

Reb Zusha replied, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu created thousands of people in the world, and although everyone was created with the same two eyes, two ears, a nose and a mouth, everyone still appears differently. Chazal tell us, 'Just as their faces differ, so are their minds different.' Why did Hashem do this? It's because Hashem wants each person to serve Him according to his own way, according to who he is, in accordance with

his strengths and talents. Therefore, you should continue on your path of avodas Hashem to teach Torah to Yidden, and I will continue along my path, the path of *tefillah*."

The Chortkover Rebbe told this story to Reb Meir Shapiro. He added, "Hashem wants you to teach Torah to Yidden. That's the portion that Hashem chose for you. This is why He gave you the talents, willpower, intelligence, and all other traits needed to succeed in that field. You should do your service and teach Torah to Yidden, and I will do my service, to daven to Hashem."

After this conversation with the Chortkover Rebbe, Reb Meir Shapiro decided to open Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, where he channeled all of his abilities to teach Torah to Yidden.