

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Mishpatim 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Mishpatim

From the discourses of Moreinu v'Rabeinu
the Gaon and Tzaddik Shlit'a

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Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas Mishpatim 5768

”וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לְבֵנֵת הַסַּפִּיר וּכְעָצֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר. וְאֶל-
אֲצִילֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁלַח יָדוֹ, וַיַּחֲזוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים, וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ.”

“And they saw the G-d of Yisrael, and there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and like the essence of heaven for clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Yisrael He laid not His hand, and they beheld G-d and did eat and drink.”²

Rashi explains: “‘And like the essence [of heaven]’—As the Targum explains, the word כְּעָצֶם indicates seeing the appearance [of something]. ‘For clearness [literally, ‘purity’]’—‘This indicates clarity and limpidity.’”

The Torah of Atzilus and of Beriyah

The Torah comprises two distinct levels. One is associated with the world of *Beriyah*, as we see in the daily prayer *U'va L'Tzion*: **ברוך הוא אלוקינו שבראנו** “ברוך הוא אלוקינו שבראנו...ונתן לנו תורת אמת” —“Blessed is He who *created* us for His honor...and gave us a Torah of truth.” The word for created, בראנו, alludes to the world of *Beriyah* or Creation.³ Then there is the level of the world of *Atzilus* or Emanation, which connotes closeness to Hashem. We see this in the name אצילות itself which indicates that it is אצלו יתי, “near to Him.” Moshe Rabbeinu accessed the Torah at the level of *Atzilus* and then brought it down so that it could be apprehended at the level of *Beriyah*. The

¹ The lesson was delivered at the third meal of Shabbos.

² *Shemos* 24:10-11

³ *Shaar Hakavanos, Drush Ashrei-Pitum Haketores*

name Moshe itself represents this synthesis of *Atzilus* and *Beriyah*: שי מ"ה. The letter *shin* represents the level of *Atzilus* which is associated with the 72-Name, and which emerges from the verses "ויסע" "ויבא" "ויטי"—“And he traveled,” “and he came,” “and he stretched forth”⁴—that describe the events that immediately preceded the splitting of the *Yam Suf*.⁵ Those three verbs all begin with the letter *vav*, and when they are combined they form the letter *shin*. [The *shin* is built from three *vav* forms that expand from a common base.] Moshe Rabbeinu’s relationship to the world of *Beriyah* is seen from the letters מ"ה of his name that express his complete self-abnegation before Hashem: "ונחנו מ"ה"—“And we are nothing...”⁶ The Divine Name with a total *gematria* of 45 known as the שם מ"ה is the analogue of the world of *Atzilus*. Moshe Rabbeinu was the first redeemer and he will also be the final redeemer. As the verse says: "מה" "שהיה" "שהיה"—“That which [מ"ה] was is that which will be.”⁷ The initials of the verse spell out the name Moshe—just as he was the first redeemer, so too will he be the final redeemer.⁸

Just as the *shin* is made of a tripled *vav*, so too is the 72-Name associated with three distinct souls: Yosef to the right, Moshe in the center, and Dovid to the left. This [state of balance] contrasts with the souls of Nadav and Avihu, who despite their holiness and their designation as אצילי בני ישראל—“nobles of the Jewish people”—because they sought to receive the Torah at the level of *Atzilus*, nevertheless Hashem did not “lay His hand [יד"י] upon them.” Although they sought this lofty level, they did not receive it; they did not attain the triple nature of Yosef-Dovid-Moshe expressed in the word for “hand.” The *yud* represents Yosef, the *dalet* is for Dovid,

⁴ Ibid., 14:19-21

⁵ *Sefer Halikutim, B'shalach*

⁶ *Shemos* 16:7

⁷ *Koheles* 1:9

⁸ *Sefer Hapesukim, Yisro*

and the *vav* symbolizes that which joins them in the middle [a *vav* is both a physical hook and the grammatical conjunctive]—Moshe Rabbeinu. For this reason Nadav and Avihu, “ate and drank”—they received the Torah in a more lowly and materialized manner as compared with the purity of Moshe Rabbeinu, on the lower level of *Atzilus* within *Beriyah* rather than *Atzilus* itself. They only reached to the level of, בְּקִרְבָּתָם” “...לִפְנֵי ה'” —“When they drew near before *HaVaYaH*”—of the level “before” that of *HaVaYaH-Atzilus*, which is *Beriyah*. What was the result? “...And they died.”⁹

Theft of the Ox or the Sheep

Whenever the *tzaddikim* fall to the level of learning Torah not for its own sake, the result is that the simple people descend to the level of, “If a man shall steal an ox or sheep, and slaughter it, and sell it...”¹⁰ The verse has a hidden meaning: that the *yetzer hara* snatches a person and places him under its power, and it “slaughters” him—the person sinks into the lusts of this world—and “sells” him—the person falls into the lust for money. Even though the person still appears to be studying Torah and praying, nevertheless he has been “sold” to a foreign people, to the lust for money and honor. The *halachah* demands that the thief “pay four or five times”—and this too has a hidden meaning. The “four” represents the *dalet* of the name Dovid, and the “five” stands for the *yud* of Yosef. When the *yud* is inserted into the *dalet*, it forms the letter *hei*, which equals five.

How is the fallen situation to be rectified? The *tikkun* is found through discovering the inner meaning of the laws pertaining to Jewish slaves, maidservants, and Canaanite slaves. The Jewish maidservant represents the world of *Beriyah*, the Jewish slave parallels the world of *Yetzirah*, and the Canaanite slave the world of

⁹ *Vayikra* 16:1

¹⁰ *Shemos* 21:37

Asiyah. Hashem instructed Moshe to deal with these souls from the lower worlds of *BY" A* and raise their lower and more external forms of *avodah* up to his own level of *avodah* in the world of *Atzilus*. The *avodah* of *Asiyah*—acceptance of the yoke of the commandments—that of *Yetzirah*—the emotions of Divine love and fear—and that of *Beriyah*—mental contemplation of Divine love and fear—all have to be vitalized and uplifted by the highest and innermost *avodah* of *Atzilus* and self-nullification that is the level of Moshe Rabbeinu.¹¹

Most people only serve Hashem at the lower and more superficial level of *BY" A*, they “eat and drink,” and this is why they don’t even realize that the *sitra achra* has “made off with them” and caused them to forget [גניבת דעת] is literally, “stolen their minds”) that there is a higher form of *avodah* of the world of *Atzilus*. But we learn in the deeper Kabbalistic works that there is a process known as the “development of the *Partzufim*,” which means that through development of the higher levels, the lower and more external levels are influenced for the good and also evolve. So even if a person has fallen at the lower levels, if he develops the higher level within himself that corresponds to *Atzilus*, he will find that he will be able to repair the damage that he caused in his personal worlds of *Beriyah-Yetzirah-Asiyah*.

Falling into the Pit

Moshe Rabbeinu was described as being of, “uncircumcised lips,” and was also buried in a place [outside of Eretz Yisrael] that did not benefit his greatness.¹² This was not because there was any lack in him, G-d forbid, but rather because the people of his generation fell short of their spiritual potential and Moshe Rabbeinu suffered the negative effect. Although they had the opportunity to receive Torah from the

¹¹ *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Yei'ud*

¹² *Zohar III:280*

highest levels, from the fiftieth gate, they wasted the chance and were only able to attain the forty-ninth level. Moshe Rabbeinu, however, did maintain the level of the fiftieth gate, which we see from [the unique level he reached at] Sinai and also from the name of his burial place, Mount Nevo. The word Nevo is נ"ו, "the fiftieth is in it."¹³ The Jewish people were the ones who damaged the point of the fiftieth gate [for themselves] and lost the Torah of *Atzilus* because they only longed for the Torah of *Beriyah*, of "eating and drinking" [external *avodah*], which is a form of גסות, self-absorption that alludes to the lower world of *Beriyah* that is associated with the Divine Name ה"ו. [This is the numerical value of the exact permutation of the Divine Name *HaVaYaH* that corresponds to the world of *Beriyah*.]

It was to this failure that the Torah hints when it says, "If a person shall open or dig a pit and [fail to cover it and] an ox or donkey fall in it..."¹⁴ The *sitra achra* digs a trap into which the Jewish people fall; rather than drink from the "well of living waters" [of the Torah of *Atzilus*] which is really their proper level, they fall into the "broken well" which is the pit of illegitimate desires and the blemishing of *Yesod* which is a trap. [We see that Yosef, the epitome of *Yesod*, was thrown into the pit.] As long as a person harbors the desire for anything other than Hashem in his heart, he cannot attain the Torah of *Atzilus*. He may have the Torah of *Asiyah*, which is mostly an admixture of negative [*middos*], that of *Yetzirah* which is equally balanced between positive and negative, or even that of *Beriyah* which is mostly good, but he will not attain that of *Atzilus*. When a person wants the things of this world, it is as though he has dug a pit for the *klippas* in his own domain, and the ox and donkey fall into it. The ox symbolizes Moshiach ben Yosef who was called, "his firstborn ox,"¹⁵ and the donkey represents Moshiach ben Dovid who appears as, "a poor man, riding on a

¹³ *Sefer Halikutim, Va'eschanan*

¹⁴ *Shemos* 21:33

¹⁵ *Devarim* 33:17

donkey.”¹⁶ The Torah of *Atzilus* is the Torah of the future redemption, and when a person turns away from it, it is as though he has caused the two redeemers, and Moshe Rabbeinu who is a composite of them, to fall into ruin.

The true *tzaddikim* of previous generations, however, fulfilled the teaching: “וְהָיָה אִם שָׁכַחְתָּ תְּשַׁכַּח” —“And it will be, if you utterly forget...”¹⁷ The word והיה always indicates joy [or joyous anticipation].¹⁸ When a person “utterly forgets” that which is encoded in the phrase of forgetting—אִם שָׁכַחְתָּ תְּשַׁכַּח, the initials אשׁ”ת—the “wanton woman” of all of the temptations of this world, he generates intense joy on high. There is no way to really attain spiritual goals and also maintain focus on the pleasures and pursuits of this world. Either a person develops into a scholar and merits the crown of Torah, or he is preoccupied with worldly matters. One cannot combine the two. This is all the more true of a person who seeks the higher “crown of a good name” which is the crown of the *Shechinah* and *dveikus*. Clearly, one is either enamored of the spiritual or the material. The Torah “rests in a corner”—and if one veers a little to the right or the left, he will not be able to bind himself to it. He must head directly for the corner—קרן—that corner—the place of *Atzilus* and unity, because the Torah is not revealed where there is disparity. When we are commanded not to allow the Torah to leave [ימוש] our mouths,¹⁹ this means that we must not materialize and darken it [ימשך] so that its light is obscured.²¹

Although one cannot leave behind his attachment to this-worldly desires overnight, nevertheless if one’s innermost desire is focused on Hashem and His Torah, then even if his external aspect is still sunk into worldly matters the fire of the Torah

¹⁶ *Zechariah* 9:9

¹⁷ *Devarim* 8:19

¹⁸ *Bereishis Rabbah* 42:3

¹⁹ *Yehoshua* 1:8

²⁰ *Shemos* 10:21

²¹ *Likutei Moharan* I:110

itself will eventually burn away all of the *klippos*. He must, at the very least, not persist in digger himself deeper into the pit, because otherwise all of the learning that he does will not draw him a whit closer to the true taste of the Torah of the redemption, the Torah of *Atzilus*.

This is the deeper meaning of the verse, “And if you will surely listen to My commandments that I command you this day, to love Hashem your G-d and serve Him with all of your heart and soul...I will give you grass in your fields [for your cattle].”²² If you will only pursue Hashem alone and dedicate your whole heart to Him, I will give you עשׂוּב—the עוֹלָם of the world of *Atzilus* as well as the *shin* with three heads representing the three worlds of *Beriyah-Yetzirah-Asiyah*. Even if your Divine service still falls far short of perfection, nevertheless if you only seek closeness to Hashem in your innermost being, if that is what your heart really desires, you will be given “grass for your cattle”—life-giving light and vitality for all of the souls down to the lowest levels.

We see the significance of the heart’s desire from the greatness of Rav Chaim Vital. In the book that describes his visions, we see that heaven revealed to him how he had attained levels that even the great *tzaddikim* of his time did not achieve. It was not because his deeds surpassed theirs; rather, it was because he utterly despised the temptations of this world and only sought closeness to Hashem and fear of heaven. This depends on one thing alone: the innermost desire of a person’s soul, how much a person really wants to bond with Hashem.

The Secret of *Yibum*

The entire redemption—both personal and collective—depends on the secret of *yibum*. The Torah commands that when one brother dies without issue, the other is

²² *Devarim* 11:13-15

obligated to marry his former sister-in-law and “build his brother’s house,” to bring a new soul into the world that will draw down the light of the deceased husband. The deeper works teach us that these brothers are *Yisrael* and *Yaakov*. [Even though they were two names for the same person, they actually represent two very different soul-levels within the Jewish people as a whole.] The “older brother” is *Yisrael* and is representative of the Jewish people when they are in a state of mature *mochin d'gadlus*—לי ראש = ישראל, “I have a head.” When this brother “dies,” when the Jewish people fall away from this level and cannot access it, the “younger brother” *Yaakov* who is at a much lower level, that of the “heel” [יעקב = עקב], can nevertheless draw down the light of the higher soul. How will the Jewish people now, during the *ikvesa d'Meshicha*, the “heels of Moshiach,” when we are so far from an elevated state of *mochin*, bind ourselves to the *Shechinah* and draw down the light of redemption? We must follow the dictate of the verse, “If he will place his heart, spirit, and soul upon him...”²³ If he will really focus his heart’s desire on drawing down the soul of his deceased brother during the moment of *yibum*, then even “*Yaakov* the younger brother” can be filled with the light of the *mochin* and soul of “*Yisrael* the older brother.” When that happens, “his wife is his mother,” [there is unity between *Malchus* and *Binah*] and his, “brother’s house [*bayis* symbolizes the *Shechinah*] is raised up again.”

Even though we are at the uttermost level of the “heels” of *Yaakov*, nevertheless if we focus our longing and desire on cleaving to the teachings and the ways of the true *tzaddikim* we too will come to desire only closeness with Hashem. When a person has fallen into the pit that his *yetzer* dug for him and has caused the downfall of the ox and donkey, “he must restore money [כסף] to its owner.”²⁴ He must

²³ *Iyov* 34:14; *Zohar* I:155b

²⁴ *Shemos* 21:34

repay the Owner with a great deal of כִּסּוּפִים or longing; he must direct all his heart's desire toward returning to his Creator. This is why Hashem sent the Baal Shem Tov and his students during these latter generations—it was to light the way back to Hashem for all of those who are dwelling in lower places. Even though we are so far from fulfilling their holy teachings, nevertheless if we will just feel a powerful desire to bind ourselves to them and their teachings their light will surely descend and illuminate our own souls in the manner of *yibum*. Then we will know just what we need to do to properly serve Hashem: “He who comes to purify is helped from above.”

If this seems far beyond us right now, it is only because we are still stuck deep in the pit of the *klippah* of *Yesod*. Our hearts are divided and we are not yet like the pure olive oil that has no admixture or taint, and this blocks our perception and proper feelings. “Those who love Hashem hate evil.” We must come to despise all evil and dedicate our whole heart to Hashem alone. Then, “the corpse will belong to him.”²⁵ The *sitra achra* will die and be removed from the world. We have to believe in ourselves—that we too can achieve the pure *Chochmah* and spiritual vision of the “ox,” Moshiach ben Yosef, as well as the *dveikus* of the “donkey,” Moshiach ben Dovid.

The Freeing of the Jewish Slave

“If you acquire a Jewish slave, he shall work for six years and in the seventh he shall go forth free, for nothing.”²⁶ The *Sefer HaKaneh* explains that through struggling and exerting effort in *avodah* for “six years”—through the “six workday” state of incomplete connection with Hashem—one eventually comes to be released during the “seventh year”—to taste of the level of the *tzaddikim*, which is the fully

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid., 21:2

developed *emunah* and *teshuvah* of being constantly bound to the *Shechinah*. The “six years/days” represent a form of *avodah* that is sometimes pure, sometimes impure, but the “seventh year/day” is the constant and steady stream of life-giving faith with which the true *tzaddikim* live all of the time. Although the *tzaddikim* also serve Hashem in the manner of “running and returning” [or “ups and downs,” as we say], their “down” state is still enlivened by unwavering faith in the power of *teshuvah*, so even when they are “down” they are not really down at all. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, whose faith was complete, expressed it as follows: “If you believe you can destroy, believe you can repair.”²⁷ Those whose *avodah* is in the “six workday” state do not believe sufficiently in the power of *teshuvah*, a faith that stems from the Torah of *Atzilus*. However, the *tzaddik* has attained the Torah of *Atzilus*, and so he is able to acquire all of the souls that are on the level of the “Jewish slave” who “works for six years.” He teaches them the path of true *teshuvah*, and when a person directs all of his heart to binding himself to the teachings of the true *tzaddik*, he too is illuminated by the soul of the *tzaddik*. This is the meaning of the teaching that the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu is en clothed within the soul of each and every true Torah scholar.²⁸ When a person accomplishes this, he merits to join the two redeemers and all of his external aspects are also uplifted, refined, and repaired.

All that we have learned helps to clarify a teaching of the Arizal: The *Yesod* of *Atik* which is the root of the soul of Moshe shines into the “forehead” of *Arich* where three forms of the *Shem HaVaYaH* are revealed. They then flow down to the “thirteen white areas” [of the scalp, between the hairs] and then to the “thirteen hairs,” and from there to the “thirteen rectifications of the beard” [which are points of the “face” that parallel each of the thirteen Divine attributes of mercy]. From there, the source of

²⁷ *Likutei Halachos, Masa u'Matan* 4:17

²⁸ *Likutei Moharan* I:4

blessing and abundance of children, health, and sustenance flows down to the Jewish people. [Although this seems very abstract and esoteric, we have already explored the ramifications of this in terms of *avodah*.] By focusing all of our desires on Hashem alone at the highest level [*Yesod* of *Atik*], we connect with the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu [and its three *vav*-forms] which is a synthesis of the *yud* of *Chochmah*-Yosef and the *dalet* of Dovid. If the Jewish people lack for abundant blessings, it is only because the process of drawing down the light from the highest places has been interrupted. However, if we direct all of our longing and desire toward Hashem alone, we will naturally receive all that we require.

Now, as we are literally on the verge of the arrival of Moshiach, we must yearn powerfully to return to Hashem and, in so doing, purify our innermost selves. For this is an auspicious time, when we have the opportunity to receive the light of the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu through the spiritual mechanism of *yibum*. May Hashem help us to ascend to all of the highest levels, and may we receive an abundance of children, good health, and *parnassah*, until we merit to see the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

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