



# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

## PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

## Hashem Loves Justice

וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשִּׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם:  
(כא, א)

**These are the judicial laws that you shall place before them. (21:1)**

*Parshas Mishpatim* deals with one of the most important subjects in the Torah, which is monetary laws. They are in the category of *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

Some people think you need to ask a *Rav* or a *Posek* only in Halachic areas such as kosher foods,

the laws of *Shabbos*, how to conduct a wedding or a funeral. But when you have a disagreement with someone over a monetary matter, or you are unsure as to your financial obligations, you can decide it yourself or consult a lawyer.

This is so wrong.

Just like you can't get to the truth in other areas of Torah without the detailed *halachos* that *Hashem* gave us, so it is in monetary matters. We can't figure out what is straight and right simply on the basis of our own intellect and judgment, or by following the regulations of civil law, or by paying a lawyer who knows how to play the system. This will only lead to *gezel* and other forms of unjust gain.

"Justice belongs to G-d."<sup>1</sup> True judgment comes from *Hashem*, and He gave it to the Jewish people in the form of *dinei Hatorah*. You won't

<sup>1</sup> Devarim 1:17.

The zechus of distributing this week's publication goes to  
חיה שרה בת הדסה  
may she have a refuah sheleimah together with all the sick among Am Yisrael

find true judgment anywhere else, as it says, “He did not do so with other nations; He did not grant them knowledge of judicial laws.”<sup>2</sup>

We could compare *dinei mamonos* to *hilchos Shabbos*. Just like you need to consult a *Rav* regarding any and all issues that might arise regarding proper *Shabbos* observance, since they are so complex, so it is with *dinei mamonos*. In almost every matter, *daas Torah* is needed to decide what is permitted and what is not.

An everyday example: you go into the grocery store and pick up an item and inadvertently damage it. Do you need to notify the storekeeper and pay for it?

How punctual do you have to be when you go to work? What can you take home with you from the office? Can you make phone calls there, and for how

long?

Let’s say the apartment building has a leaky roof. Who needs to pay for it? And what if a water pipe needs to be replaced? And where can you hang laundry to dry?

Only a qualified *Posek* can properly resolve questions like these.

It says, “I, *Hashem*, love justice.”<sup>3</sup> *Hashem* loves justice and He loves people who do everything according to the judicial laws of the Torah. You can recognize people like this. They are careful not to cause even the slightest damage to others. They always pay their debts on time. Whenever there is a difference of opinion, they consult *daas Torah*.

This brings the *Ge’ulah*, as it says, “Zion will be redeemed through justice, and those who return to her through benevolent judgment.”<sup>4</sup> ●

2 *Tehillim* 147:20.

3 *Yeshayahu* 61:8.

4 *Ibid* 1:27.



## Who to Turn To?

אם עֵנָה תֵעָנֶה אֲתוֹ כִּי אִם צָעַק יִצְעַק אֵלַי שָׁמַע אֲשַׁמַּע צַעֲקָתוֹ: (כב, כב)

**If you will oppress him, and he will cry out to Me, I will hear his cry. (22:22)**

There is a very important principle of *tefilah* that we may learn from this *pasuk*.

When a person is in trouble, for instance, he urgently needs a sum of money, what does he do? He might run from one person to another, go to get *berachos* from *tzaddikim*, and also *daven* and beg *Hashem* to help him.

Or let’s say a family member is sick. He does all the *hishtadlus*, he goes to the doctor, he makes tests and gets prescriptions from the pharmacy, and

he also *davens* fervently to *Hashem* as part of his *hishtadlus*.

This approach is like a pauper knocking on doors around town. He seeks assistance from many different sources. Among them, he also beseeches this particular householder for help, who, in such a case, is obligated to give him only a modest donation.

The same *halachah* applies in *tefilah*. When a person does many different types of *hishtadlus*, and

among them, he also prays and beseeches *Hashem* for help, he is granted a “modest donation.” *Hashem* will give him a little *siyata d’Shmaya*, in accordance with *Halachah*:

It is forbidden to turn away the pauper empty-handed if he asks for help. However, it is sufficient to give him a dried fig, as it says, “The impoverished man should not come back humiliated.”<sup>1</sup>

There is no obligation to give him more than a small amount, because he has other sources of help, and can manage on his own.

This idea is not hard to understand. Let’s say a very poor man comes and asks for a large sum, and the donor sends him away with a small amount. What was the donor thinking to himself? “He will manage; he will get by without me. He is not going to die of starvation.”

And what does the stingy man think to himself when he slams the door on the pauper? He doesn’t think, “Let him die of starvation, I don’t care.” He rather thinks, “Why does he have to come to me? Let him go to someone else!” But if he would know for a fact that the pauper has no one else in the world to turn to, he would have to be exceptionally cruel to close the door on him.

So it is when we turn to *Hashem*. When a person figuratively throws himself down on the ground before Him, begging Him to have mercy on him because he has no one else to turn to, and if *Hashem* doesn’t have mercy on him, he will never get out of trouble, *Hashem* will immediately show mercy on him and grant him what he needs.

This is the form of *teflah* called *nipul*, figuratively throwing oneself down on the ground before *Hashem* in utter self-negation, with the attitude

that *Hashem* and only *Hashem* can help, there is no one and nothing else that can help. This is like Esther who threw herself down on the ground before the king, because he is the king and no one else can annul the decree other than him.

Simply speaking, this was also the way that Choni Hame’agel prayed. He drew a circle around himself and stood inside it, and said, “*Ribono shel Olam*, I swear by Your great Name that I am not moving from here until You have mercy on Your children.”<sup>2</sup> He made it absolutely clear that he is not like a pauper knocking on doors around town; he has only *Hashem* to turn to. So *Hashem* showed him mercy.

The Commentators explain along these lines why *Hashem* especially hears the cry of orphans and widows. They cry out only to *Hashem* because they have no one else to turn to. So *Hashem* hears them and answers them.

This can explain why the *pasuk* repeats the word “cry out” and says קָעָץ קָעָץ. Usually a person doesn’t cry out twice, because after he cries out to *Hashem* once and *Hashem* still doesn’t help him, he goes and looks for another way to solve his problems. But orphans and widows don’t have anyone to turn to, so they cry out and then cry out again, and *Hashem* answers them.

It is the same with anyone who makes himself like the orphans and widows, as it says, “My father and mother abandoned me, but *Hashem* will take me in.”<sup>3</sup> This expresses the cry of someone who has no one to turn to other than *Hashem*. He doesn’t cry out and then go to look for other solutions, he rather cries out and then cries out again. *Hashem* will surely answer his prayer. ●

1 *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Matnos Aniyim 7:7.*

2 *Taanis 19a.*

3 *Tehillim 27:10.*



### You Saw that Hashem Cares

As a preface to *Matan Torah*, Hashem said to us:

You saw what I did to Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

What is the significance of this?

As we explained earlier, the best metaphor for our relationship with Hashem is the marriage covenant. When a marriage covenant is established between a man and a woman, the most basic thing that the woman wants to know is if he cares about her. She wants to know how much he values her.

Regarding this, Hashem said to us that the whole world belongs to Him, and there are evil occurrences in the world, such as traffic accidents and sicknesses and all kinds of tragedies, but they have a limit. We never heard of a country where all the water turned to blood. No matter what, water always stays water. But something happened in Egypt that never happened before: the water turned to blood.

Did it ever happen that Hashem brought a plague of frogs on a country? Frogs in the oven and frogs inside their bellies? Did all the dust of a country ever turn to lice? Was a populated area ever invaded by all kinds of dangerous animals? All these things are out of the bounds of nature.

Hashem says, “You saw what I did to Egypt.” You saw how “wildly” I reacted to the Egyptians’ treatment of you. I did things to them that I never did before.

Why?

Because they touched you, and when someone touches you, it is like poking Me in the eye, so to speak. I react ferociously.

This was the first preface to the Giving of the Torah: “You saw” how much I care about you.

This may be compared to a nice, gentle father who sees someone mistreating his only child. He does things that are out of character for him. He does things he never did before, because he cares so much about his child that he just boils over. So it was with Hashem. He cares so much about us, it hurts Him so much to see what they did to us that He boiled over, so to speak.

This is the preface to *Matan Torah*, so we will never start to wonder if He cares about us. He cares so much that He simply “boils over” if anyone touches us. This is the ABCs of Judaism; it is the preface.

As mentioned earlier, when a man and a woman get married, they make *Tanna'im*, which state the basics of the marriage covenant, and later they make a *Kesubah*, which details the specific obligations resulting from this covenant. What are the basics of our covenant with Hashem?

I will bear you on eagles’ wings and I will bring you to Me.<sup>2</sup>

It is not about reward and punishment. It is not a business contract of any type. It is rather, “I will bring you to Me.” Being close to Hashem and attached to Him.

### Believing in Mashiach

The Chasam Sofer is puzzled why the Rambam counts belief in *Mashiach* among the Thirteen Principles of Faith. He writes as follows:

There is no way I can believe that our redemption is one of the foundations of religion. Let’s say we would think, *chalilah*, that our sins could result in Hashem sending us away forever, *chas v’shalom*. This would be similar to R. Akiva’s view regarding the Ten

<sup>1</sup> *Shemos* 19:4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* 19:4.

Tribes, that they are rejected forever. Would we then be permitted to throw off the yoke of Heaven's Kingship or change even a tiny bit of a Rabbinic ordinance? *Chalilah*.

We don't serve *Hashem* in order to eat the fruit of *Eretz Yisrael* and to satiate ourselves from its goodness. "My G-d, my desire is to do Your Will." No matter what, in every situation, we are servants of *Hashem*, whatever He may desire to do with us.

Belief in *Mashiach* is not a principle and not a foundation on which to erect any building. The main foundation of everything is to believe in the Torah and the Prophets. And our ultimate redemption is stated there in the *parshiyos* of *Nitzavim* and *Haazinu*, as the Ramban wrote there, and there is a lot written about it in the Prophets. Therefore, someone who doubts our future redemption is denying the principle of faith in the Torah and Prophets.<sup>3</sup>

The Chasam Sofer is saying that it is absolutely clear that we believe the *Ge'ulah* will come. But why should this be made into a basic tenet of Torah belief? If the *Mashiach* would not come, why would the last generation be any different from all the other generations who did not see the *Ge'ulah*? All generations served *Hashem* and eventually went to *Gan Eden* and *Olam Haba*. Why does everything stand on faith in the coming *Ge'ulah*, to the point that the whole Torah falls down without it?

We could answer the Chasam Sofer's *kasheh* by saying that belief in the coming of *Mashiach* is not a basic principle of Torah due to how it impinges on the future, but rather because of how it impinges on the present. It is all about

the basic nature of Judaism. It is about proper understanding of what is happening to us today, and every day, in *galus*.

Judaism is essentially a covenant of love that *Hashem* made with us at *Har Sinai*. The main place of the covenant and the love is in *Eretz Yisrael*, in *Beis Hamikdash*. And a covenant is only worthy of its name if it is an eternal covenant. If *Hashem* would, *chas v'shalom*, cast the Jewish people away forever, Torah and *mitzvos* would turn into a matter of reward and punishment. Indeed, doing *mitzvos* means doing *Hashem's* Will, but even non-Jews may not throw off the yoke of Heaven's Kingship or make the tiniest change in G-d's words for even a moment. However, this is not a covenant with *Hashem*.

Indeed, as the Chasam Sofer wrote, "My G-d, my desire is to do Your Will"... we are servants of *Hashem*, whatever He may desire to do with us." This is surely a beautiful and lofty value. But the basic nature of Judaism is a *bris* of love and attachment with *Hashem*.

This may be compared to a father who threw his son out of the house permanently. It doesn't matter if he did so because he wanted to teach the child a lesson or if he ejected him because he doesn't want to see his face any more. Expelling his son permanently, for whatever reason, is not about the future. It is about the present. It means their relationship is over.

If the *Mashiach* would not come, it would mean that *Hashem* expelled us permanently, and the whole covenant that He made with us was from the beginning only a temporary one. Such is not a true covenant at all. It is a passing relationship, it is missing the very essence of a covenant.

*Hashem's* relationship with us is eternal and unbreakable. Our belief in the eventual coming of *Mashiach* represents this essential principle. ●

<sup>3</sup> Chasam Sofer, *Teshuvos, Yoreh Deah* 356.



### Tangible Blessings

Not only the blessings of *pokeach ivrim* and *malbish arumim* relate to practical and ordinary aspects of our lives, but also the first three blessings of *al netilas yadayim*, *asher yatzar* and *Elokai neshamah* are about very tangible and real things.

The first blessing is about our hands, which are our primary physical tool. Hands have two positions: one in which they are raised upwards, in a form of prayer, as it says:

Let us raise our hearts to our hands, to G-d in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

The other position of the hands is when they are held straight out, to perform work. (Holding the hands downward is not relevant to Jews, only to non-Jews. R. Yehudah Hanasi never placed his hands lower than his sash.<sup>2</sup>)

When we recite *al netilas yadayim* we are saying: *Ribono shel Olam*, these hands, which are central to human action, *asher kideshanu b'mitzvosav!* You granted us *mitzvos* and gave us the ability to *notel* – raise – our hands. You sanctified us and allowed us to understand that the place for hands is not below but above. That all the actions of our hands, and everything we receive from Above, should not be utilized to pursue physical desires, as other nations do. They eat and drink and live to satisfy their desires. Everything we receive from Above is for “raising” our hands. Our lives are lofty and exalted.

This is the first blessing. In it we capsule our thanks to *Hashem* for all that we receive from Him. Everything is coming from *kedushah* and in the framework of *kedushah*. It is not in the framework of the impure.

The second blessing, *asher yatzar*, is about the

fact that we are healthy, that we have properly functioning limbs and thiorgans. This is a veritable fountain from which we can draw endless thanks and praise to *Hashem*.

Generally speaking, when we recite *asher yatzar* we should imagine to ourselves what it was like when we were sick, we should remember when we were lying in bed and couldn't do anything. A sick person is not good for much. When we are healthy and sound we don't think about this, but a sick person knows very well how little he can do.

The third blessing, which is very easy to start reciting almost without noticing, goes like this: “My G-d, the soul that You placed within me is pure.” This is a blessing over the *neshamah*. In order to understand it we need to think a little what “G-d” means, and what it means that we have a soul that comes from Him.

If a person does not get excited to the point of losing his mind when he says, “You breathed the soul into me,” it is only because he doesn't know what the word “G-d” means. G-d breathes a soul into me!! The soul within us is not just something that *Hashem* created. It is more than that. The Zohar states, regarding this point, that “He who breathes out, breathes out part of himself.” Our soul is the breath of *Hashem's* mouth. *Hashem* gave us a *neshamah* that contains the power of eternity.

This blessing also includes a prayer for *Techiyas Hameisim*. This is another area of which we have no comprehension, although it is one of our basic principles. We are here only temporarily. The day will come when we will leave.

*Chazal* say about R. Yochanan ben Zakkai that before he passed away, his disciples came to visit him:

When he saw them he began to cry. His disciples

<sup>1</sup> *Eichah* 3:41.

<sup>2</sup> *Shabbos* 118b.

said... “Why are you crying?”

He answered them, “If they would bring me before a human king who is here today and in the grave tomorrow... and if he puts me to death, his death is not eternal... even so, I would cry. Now that I am being brought before the King of kings of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, Who lives and exists forever and for all eternity... and if He puts me to death, His death is eternal... should I not cry?”<sup>3</sup>

The Rambam says that the severest punishment is not to arise in *Techiyas Hameisim*. Eternity is such a powerful thing that all the tortures of *Gehinom* are as nothing compared to not arising in *Techiyas Hameisim*.

Let us consider the tremendous good and *deveikus* that *Hashem* gave us by placing within us a soul from the very breath of His mouth. The *neshamah* is the “I,” the self. It is not a “him” or “her” or “it.” It is not a certain faculty or aspect of us. It is our very self. As R. Yisrael Salanter writes:

The person who does the sin and the person who is punished [in the next world] is one and the same.<sup>4</sup>

The *neshamah* is us ourselves. What a power of eternity that is!

We give praise and thanks for having a *neshamah*, and we ask *Hashem* that we should merit staying with the *neshamah* forever and ever.

And we conclude the blessing by thanking *Hashem* “Who is the One Who returns souls to dead bodies.” This is a thanks to *Hashem* that we are alive now, that we are alive every morning anew.

## Birkas Hatorah

Also *Birkas Hatorah* is part of *Birchos Hashachar* because it, too, is a thanks to *Hashem* for the great kindness and immense power that is contained in tangible things.

<sup>3</sup> *Berachos* 28b.

<sup>4</sup> *Igeres Hamusar*.

*Chazal* say that *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed because people did not recite a blessing before Torah learning.<sup>5</sup> *Rabbeinu Yonah* explains that they did not see the Torah as important enough to warrant a blessing.<sup>6</sup>

The problem was they didn’t feel that *Birkas Hatorah* is over something tangible. They understood that a person needs to recite a blessing over food, over bread. They understood the blessing *Roka ha’aretz al hamayim*. To bless over every breath, because they understood that the moment they put their head into water and drink a little of it they will feel how sweet a breath of air is.

But they didn’t feel that the Torah is simply and literally the air they breathe, the bread they eat – beside all its utter depth. This was their shortcoming, this is why *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed.

*Birkas Hatorah* means to bless *Hashem* for something tangible, like the other things in *Birchos Hashachar*. They are all blessings over tangible things that we need to notice and be thankful for. Also the fact that we learn Torah is a tangible thing to give thanks for. Because a person who learns Torah is so different from one who does not. It is a tangible difference.

Just like we need to imagine when we say *asher yatzar* was it was like when we were sick and helplessly lying in bed, so when we recite *Birkas Hatorah* we need to imagine what a person is like if he doesn’t learn Torah. This way we will appreciate what a person is like who does learn Torah. It is not just internal matters such as the joy of life and the enjoyment that a Torah learner has. It is a real, tangible difference even externally.

We should never think of Torah and relate to it as something purely spiritual. It also needs to be something physical and tangible for us.

This is the meaning of *Birkas Hatorah*. ●

<sup>5</sup> *Nedarim* 81a.

<sup>6</sup> *Ran ad loc*.

# STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RAV SHIMSHON PINCUS ZT"l



## Never Too Late

One of Rav Shimshon's *talmidim* was married for several years without children. The man's plight pained him deeply and inspired countless tearful *tefilos* on his behalf. One day, he summoned the *avreich* and asked him to inquire if his in-laws had hosted a *kiddush* in honor of his wife's birth. When the *talmid* returned several days later with a negative reply, Rav Shimshon instructed him to host a *kiddush* then, since, "It's never too late."

The *avreich* was hesitant, yet his *rebbe* reminded him that the blessings of the *klal* possess tremendous power, and that the effort, expense, and modicum of shame were well worth the desired outcome. Thus, some thirty years after the fact, the woman's parents hosted a belated *kiddush* in honor of the birth of their daughter — with her husband in attendance — and the results were not long in coming. One year later, the couple cradled a baby boy!

## Watch Your Words

As one who truly appreciated the potency of *tefilah*, there were actually times when Rav Shimshon deliberately avoided praying for specific causes and desires. He explained that one must be wary about asking and beseeching *Hashem* for everything that comes to mind, since one can never know what is truly good and beneficial. He cited several instances in *Chazal* that illustrate how a circumstance may appear terrible at the outset yet is eventually revealed as a priceless gift and salvation.

Rav Shimshon absorbed this lesson in a most chilling and tragic way when the transient relief, joy, and celebration of seeing his *tefilos* and desires fulfilled soon proved to be harbingers of destruction.

A close friend who directed a large Torah organization approached him with a request to help him purchase an expensive car that he believed would help him advance his fundraising activities. Rav Shimshon gladly acquiesced, spilling many a heartfelt *tefilah* along the way for the man's success, assisting and advising him through the process of privately importing an excellent car at an affordable price.

The road to success was fraught with frequent challenges and obstacles. As soon as they overcame one hurdle, another emerged. At one point, Rav Shimshon even made a special trip abroad in order to advance the process, until at long last, the car made it onto the boat.

One week later, the overjoyed owner went to collect his purchase at the port. On that very same day, the car that the man had been so certain would facilitate his endeavors on behalf of Torah skidded on the road and crashed into a tree, killing the driver instantly.

Rav Shimshon grieved the loss of a distinguished *ben Torah* and friend as a brother, feeling partially responsible for the calamity. In the future, when recalling this tragic episode, he expressed sadly, "Never in my life did I *daven* with so much *kavanah* and still meet consistent refusal. Eventually, the *tefilos* did the trick, and the car came through — but not in the way we'd planned. This tragedy taught me the hard way that, sometimes, we shouldn't push so hard. Not every end justifies the means of strenuous *tefilah*. Along the way, we encountered so many complex and bizarre deterrents that we should have grasped at some point that angels of mercy were blocking our path. Yet we were sure that we knew better, and we continued persisting, begging and begging until our *tefilos* prevailed, and the end was so, so bitter." ●

*Published by Kollel "Nefesh Shimshon", Jerusalem – as an ilui neshamah for Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l, and headed by his sons Harav Yosef Dov Pincus and Harav Shmuel Pincus, shlita.*

*For comments, dedications and donations: [nefeshshimshon@gmail.com](mailto:nefeshshimshon@gmail.com)*

*In order to receive the weekly edition, please send a request to the above email address.*