



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 Fights Even When We Fall Silent

ה' ילחם לכם ואתם תחישון. (שמות יד, יד)

Hashem will fight for you, and you will be silent. (Shemos 14:14)

“Hashem will fight for you” – Not just for the moment, but forever. (Yalkut Shimoni 233)

Not only at the time of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* did *Hashem* fight for the Jewish people; He will forever fight against their enemies. So says the *Midrash*.

The *Meshech Chochmah* explained this *Midrash* to mean that when the Jewish people left Egypt, they had a good claim to make to *Hashem*: He should fight for them, because He took them out of Egypt, so it is His responsibility to defend them. But the day will come when the Jewish people will say ה' לנו בשת הפנים למלכינו לשרינו ולאבותינו אשר חטאנו לך – “*Hashem*, we are embarrassed before our king and our ministers and our fathers, for we have sinned to You.”¹ We will have no claim to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* that He must save us: “You will be silent.” However, even when we have fallen silent, “*Hashem* will fight for you.”

1 Daniel 9:8.

Another interpretation is that even when we are “silent” from Torah learning and prayer and proper *mitzvah* observance – nevertheless, “*Hashem* will fight for you.” This is because it is His battle, as it says:

תִּנְצְבוּ מַלְכֵי אֶרֶץ וְרוֹזְנִים נוֹסְדוּ יַחַד עַל ה' וְעַל מְשִׁיחוֹ – The kings of the earth and rulers will join together against *Hashem* and His anointed one.”²

When the nations of the world declare war on the Jewish people, their true goal is to fight *Hashem*. If they could build ladders to climb up to heaven and battle *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* there, they would do it. But they can't fight *Hashem* directly, so they attack His dear children instead. So, since it is His battle, “*Hashem* will fight for you.”

The *Ohr Hachayim* explained ואתם תחישון to

2 Tehillim 2:2.

mean that you will “silence” the *midas hadin*, the Divine attribute of stern justice. In other words, you will pray greatly and make your voice heard in the heavens above to silence the accusations of *midas hadin* against you.

We could also understand the *pasuk* as follows: “Hashem will fight for you.” And what should you be doing at that time? “You shall be silent.” You should not be talking and discussing all day about the terrible war and constantly assessing the state of security, because now is the time for *teshuvah*, *tefilah* and *tzedakah*. And more than all, for strengthening our Torah learning. When “you will be silent,” and not talk about mundane matters, and will speak only Torah and *tefilah*, then “Hashem will fight for you.”

The *Targum Yerushalmi* renders the verse as follows: לא תדחלון, קומו ושתוקו והבו יקרא ותושבחה – You shall not fear, arise and be silent and give honor and praise, and glorify G-d.” Just as we can nullify a Heavenly decree by prayer and begging for mercy, so by a prayer of praise and

thanks and confidence in Hashem’s salvation we can nullify an evil decree. As it says in *Tehillim*:

מִהִלֵּל אֶקְרָא ה' וּמֵאֵיבֵי אֹנְשֵׁי – I will cry out in praises before Hashem, and I will be saved from my enemies.³

Rashi explains that the *pasuk* even before Hashem saves me, I will praise Him, because I am sure that He will save me from my enemies.

It sometimes happens that due to fear and stress from troubles, we forget about Hashem’s kindness that is always with us, that He answers us even in at a time of Divine anger. But when Hashem in His great mercy shows us His *chesed* and His wonders even amid all the fear and troubles, we can rest assured that by praising Him and recognizing His kindness, we can annul the evil decree. We may trust in Hashem that He will fight our battles for us, and rescue us from them. ●

³ Tehillim 18:4.

Get Used to Singing

אֲזַיְשִׁיר מִשֵּׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת (שמות טו, א)

Then Moshe and the Israelites sang this song (*Shemos* 15:1)

The *Shabbos* of *Parshas Beshalach* is known as *Shabbos Shirah* because we read *Shiras Hayam* in the Torah. This name highlights the importance of singing to Hashem.

There is more to the matter than just reading the

words of the song as written in the *parshah*. This is a special time to work on the wonderful and sublime *avodah* of singing to Hashem.

David Hamelech would spend all night singing to Hashem and praising Him. He authored the

לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמֹת

מוֹהַ"ד מֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבֹרָח זצ"ל

וּמוֹהַ"ד בְּרוּךְ זָאב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְרָאוּס זצ"ל

נִדְבַת נִכְדֵיהֶם ~ עֶשְׂרֵת אֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי וְהַפְּאֶרֶת בְּנֵי אֲבוֹתָם

wondrous *Sefer Tehillim* in which he included through his *ruach hakodesh* all the types of songs and melodies and praises in the world.

However, we, too, need to sing these songs, as it says in the *Nishmas kol chai* prayer: שכן חובת כל היצורים לפניך ה' אלקינו וכו' להודות להלל לשבח לפאר לרומם להדר לברך לעלה ולקלס, על כל דברי שירות ותשבחות דוד בן ישי. It says that every person needs to sing his song to *Hashem* for the great and wonderful acts of kindness that he receives every day and every moment.

We imagine to ourselves that if we were among those who left Egypt after hundreds of years of terrible, crushing exile, and *Hashem* redeemed us through such amazing and open miracles, and in the end, Pharaoh chased after us furiously in order to kill us and our children, and at the last moment, the terrible sea that blocked our escape split open and turned to dry land – if we would be among those who passed safely through the sea, we surely would sing to *Hashem* with tremendous excitement! There is no question about it.

Now let us look at a well-known teaching of *Chazal*:

A person's sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the Sea, as it says, "He gives bread to all flesh,"¹ and immediately after that it says, "He cuts the Sea into pieces."^{2,3}

In other words, you come home and look in the fridge, and you see all sorts of good food products in there. Nowadays we have food and we have clothing. Not only for us, but also for the whole family. This is a veritable *Kri'as Yam Suf!* We should be so excited that we start singing.

Chazal say further:

Said R. Elazar ben Azariah: The excretion of waste from a person's body is as hard as the splitting of the Sea.⁴

A person relieves himself. He thinks about the amazing functions of the human body, he feels how *Hashem* is the Healer of all flesh and does wonders, how He keeps him healthy in great kindness and compassion. He just went through a "splitting of the Sea"! He should recite the *Asher yatzar* blessing with excitement and profound thanks.

We need to get used to this wonderful *avodah* of song. We need to open our eyes and our hearts, and join in with the world's song of thanks and praise to its Creator. If we do so, the following teaching of *Chazal* applies to us:

Said R. Yehoshua ben Levi: Anyone who sings to *Hashem* in this world will merit singing it in the next world, as it says, "Fortunate are those who dwell in Your House; they will yet praise You forever."^{5,6}

And *Chazal* said the following on our *parshah*:

Said R. Meir: What is the source in the Torah for *Techiyas Hameisim*? It says, "Then Moshe and the Israelites will sing this song to *Hashem*." It does not say they sang, but rather that they "will sing." This is a source in the Torah for the Resurrection of the Dead.⁷

In other words, whoever sang *Shiras Hayam* now will merit singing it when the *Ge'ulah Sheleimah* comes.

Early Torah sources write that when we recite *Shiras Hayam* in the morning in *Pesukei d'Zimra* we should say it word for word, pleasantly and meaningfully and with great *kavanah*, as if we ourselves passed through the Sea and *Hashem* saved us, like He saved the Israelites when they passed through the Sea. This is a very great thing for the soul, and it atones for all of one's sins, and he who does so will merit singing this song when the *Ge'ulah Sheleimah* comes, may it be soon. ●

1 *Tehillim* ch. 136.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Pesachim* 118a.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Tehillim* 84:5.

6 *Sanhedrin* 91a.

7 *Ibid* 91b.

כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפֵאֶךָ. (שמות טו, כו)

Because I, Hashem, am your Healer. (Shemos 15:26)

The Doctor Doesn't Heal You

I heard a wonderful *mashal* from one of the great rabbis of the *teshuvah* movement in our generation, and the message applies to the subject of healing as well.

He was asked as follows by someone: In previous generations, getting a Jew to change his ways and do *teshuvah* was a rare achievement. Even the greatest *tzaddikim* didn't manage to bring back more than two or three Jews. So how can it be that you have succeeded in getting hundreds and hundreds of people to be *chozer b'teshuvah*?

He answered with wonderful allegory. He said: When you walk past a building site you often see reinforced cement girders, each of which weighs many tons. In order to pick them up and put them in place on the upper stories, a giant crane is used that picks up the girders and puts them where they need to go.

But after the crane has already picked up the girder, and it is dangling in the air, a worker standing on the scaffold above can grab it in his hands and direct it to its exact location.

How is this possible, considering the girder's enormous weight?

Because after the crane has already lifted it up, even bare hands can work with it and move it around.

And so it is, he explained, with *teshuvah* in our generation. The Rambam wrote:

The Torah has promised that the Jews are destined to do *teshuvah* at the end of their exile, and they will be immediately redeemed.¹

We have a special promise from *Hakadosh Baruch*

Hu that before *Mashiach* comes, the entire Jewish people will do *teshuvah*. This makes our final generation completely different from previous generations. When a *tzaddik* in former times wished to bring a Jew to *teshuvah*, he had to "pick him up from the ground," and since the weight of the person's sins was very great, this was an exceedingly difficult task.

But in our generation, *Hashem* takes each Jew who needs to repent and picks him up Himself, and then anyone who is a little handy can grab him and bring him to *teshuvah*.

This *mashal* applies to the subject of healing as well.

Hashem is called אֱלֹקִים חַיִּים, "the G-d of life." Life, by definition, means being connected to *Hashem*. There is no other way to be alive. Just as a person who goes into a perfume shop picks up the fragrance, so every moment a person lives in *Hashem's* world he has a connection to *Hashem*.

"I, *Hashem*, am your Healer." We are not in the center of the picture; *Hashem* is. A doctor needs to know that *Hashem* is the One who does everything. The healing of every person, even if he is beyond critical condition, is not limited by the capabilities of the doctor. Rather, *Hashem* is the One who heals. He is רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות – His healing powers are truly wondrous.

The Unlimited Healer

The *Midrash* says all the healing that the Jewish people experiences is in the merit of *milah*.² The same *Midrash* goes on to say that *birkas refa'einu* in the *Shemoneh Esreh*, the blessing in which we pray for healing, was designated to be the eighth blessing because *milah* is performed on the eighth day.

1 *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:5.

2 *Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 7:3.

What is the intimate connection between *milah* and healing?

Milah is the most basic *mitzvah* that expresses connection between the Jewish people and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. That is why it is called *bris*, which denotes covenant and bond. Sickness is the result of being disconnected from *Hashem*, Who is the Source of life. Healing comes from reconnecting to *Hashem*.

One of the thirteen principles of *Emunah* is that “the Creator — may His Name be blessed — is not physical, and cannot be perceived by physical means, and there is nothing at all to which He can be compared.” *Hashem* is above time, above space, above all the limitations that we know in the physical world. The world in which we live is one of boundaries and limitations, while *Hashem* is above all boundary and limits.

Indeed, we often find the Torah describing *Hashem* in corporeal terms, such as עֵינֵי ה' הַמְהֵרָה – “The eyes of *Hashem* sweep throughout the earth” (*Zechariah* 4:10). But we should know that this is just a borrowed expression. It is used because we can relate to *Hashem* only through the concepts that we are familiar with. This is why the *pasuk* speaks of *Hashem* as if He has eyes. It does not mean that *Hashem* has actual eyes.

We relate to *Hashem* through descriptions, such as: *Hashem* “sees” all, He “hears” all, He is “merciful,” He is “sweet” and “delightful,” etc. But in truth, *Hashem* is above all definition and description.

We will bring out the practical implications of this.

Human beings have a concept called “impossible.” There are situations where a person decides there is nothing he can do to change things. But for *Hashem*, nothing can be called “impossible.” For instance, let’s say a person has to cover a \$10,000 check that he wrote, which will be cashed today. Otherwise his

business will collapse. What does he do? He turns to *Hashem*. This is because he knows that nothing is impossible for *Hashem*. *Hashem* can do new and unexpected things.

However, prayer has rules. *Chazal* teach us³ that we should not pray regarding the past, only regarding the future. For instance, let’s say a person turns onto his street and sees a fire engine at work. He should not pray that the fire did not affect his home. *Chazal* call this a “prayer in vain.” He may pray only that fire *will* not affect his home. Yet, past and future are all the same for *Hashem*. Nothing is impossible for Him. Nonetheless, our prayers must follow certain rules, and one of these rules is that we may pray only regarding the future.

There is a major discussion about praying for a patient that the doctors have given up on, for instance, a terminally ill patient with a malignant disease. There is a view that in such a case we should not pray extensively for his recovery. But not because it is impossible for *Hashem* to heal the patient; rather because there are certain rules governing prayer. We always relate to *Hashem* as above all the limitations known to us.

To illustrate this point, let us imagine a terminal patient lying in his hospital bed, staring in depression at the ceiling. He hears two people talking on the other side of the curtain. They are saying that in the next bed lies a wealthy man with the same exact condition, and he just flew in a world-renowned expert who has developed a promising, experimental treatment. There is a chance that the expert will be able to treat the other patients in the ward, too. A glimmer of hope completely alters the terminal patient’s mood.

Clearly, many things are impossible even for the world-renowned expert who was just flown in. But for the Healer of All Flesh, nothing is impossible. ●

³ *Bava Metzia* 42a.