

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 רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Goodbye, Enemies

וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעַת הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוּמָה ה' וַיִּפְצוּ אֹיְבֵיךָ וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׁנֵאֵיךָ מִפְּנֵיךָ: וּבְנַחֲהָ לֵאמֹר
שׁוּבָה ה' רַבּוֹת אֱלֹפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (במדבר י, לה-לו)

And it was when the *Aron* travelled that Moshe said, “Arise, *Hashem*, that Your enemies may scatter, and those who hate You may flee from You.” And when it rested, he shall say, “Return, *Hashem*, the multitudes of Yisrael.” (*Bemidbar* 10:35–36)

Chazal had a tradition that the two *pesukim* of this passage are special. They are considered a whole *Sefer* on their own.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu made signs [of an upside-down *nun*] before and after this passage because it is considered a Book all on its own.¹

If these two verses constitute an entire *chumash* then they must contain an awfully important message.

There are indeed deep meanings to this passage. But let us focus on a very important message for

our times.

Until recently, most people felt relatively comfortable where they lived. But now we hear about the “Intifada” that has penetrated all parts of *Eretz Yisrael*. There could be a bomb ready to detonate or a terrorist carrying a gun anywhere. America, too, is not safe like it was. There is so much violent crime, especially directed toward those who are visibly Jewish.

About this the Torah says וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעַת הָאָרֶץ – “When the *Aron* travels.” The *Aron Hakodesh* contained the Torah and represents the Torah. When the Torah travels from place to place, when it rests not just in the big *yeshivos* and central *batei midrash*, but goes out to every city and town and

¹ *Shabbos* 116a.

neighborhood where Jews live – when the *Aron Hakodesh* of Torah comes to every home, and Torah is learned everywhere – then the next part of the verse is fulfilled.

קוּמָה ה' וַיִּפְצוּ אֹיְבֵיךָ וַיִּגְסוּ מִשְׁנְאֵיךָ מִפְּנֵיךָ – “Arise, *Hashem*, that Your enemies may scatter, and those who hate You may flee from You.” The power of Torah repels our enemies and causes them to flee in all directions.

It is not so when *וּבְנָחָה* – “When it rested.” When the Torah rests in only one place, and doesn’t reach Jews everywhere, then *יֹאמֵר שׁוֹבָה ה' רַבּוֹת אֵלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל* – “He shall say, ‘Return, *Hashem*, the multitudes of Yisrael.’” Then we pray to *Hashem* to bring all Jews to return in *teshuvah*. Because unless they do *teshuvah*, and learn Torah, we are in great danger from our enemies who seek to destroy us.

The *Mefarshim* also explain these verses as alluding to the day that a person departs this world.

“When the *Aron* travels” refers to when a person goes to the next world. If he learned Torah during his lifetime, he is considered to be like the *Aron Hakodesh* that has Torah inside it. If so, “Arise, *Hashem*” – for such a person, *Hashem* comes to greet him. And through this, “Your enemies scatter.” All the accusing angels created by his sins will scatter. “And those who hate You will flee from You.” Those that follow after him, seeking to harm him, will all flee because of the power of Torah.

“And when it rested, he shall say, ‘Return, *Hashem*, the multitudes of Yisrael.’” Thanks to Torah, a person will merit coming to a perfect resting place among the *tzaddikim*. ●

Humility Wins

וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנָו מְאֹד. (במדבר יב, ג)

The man Moshe was very humble. (*Bemidbar* 12:3)

Moshe Rabbeinu was the one who somehow managed to ascend to Heaven, learn the Torah, and bring it down to earth. Not only that, but it is called *Toras Moshe*, implying that Moshe actually acquired the Torah as his own.

How did accomplish this astounding feat, which seems to be so far beyond the realm of any human being?

Said R. Yehoshua ben Levi: When Moshe descended from standing before *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, after receiving the Torah, the *Satan* came and said to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, “Master of the World, where is the Torah?”

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, “I gave

לְעִירֹי נִשְׁמָת

מֹדַעֲד מֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבוֹרָגָד זצ״ל

וּמֹדַעֲד בְּרוּךְ זֶאֵב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְרָאוֹס זצ״ל

נִדְבַת נִבְדִידִים ~ עֲטַרֵת אֲקִיבָה בְּנִים וְהַפְּאֶרֶת בְּנִים אֲבוֹתֵם

it to the Earth.” The *Satan* went to the Earth, and said, “Where is the Torah?” It replied, “Only G-d knows.”

The *Satan* went to the Sea, and was told, “It is not with me.”

The *Satan* went to the Depths, and was told, “It is not within me.”

The *Satan* went back to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and said, “Master of the World, I searched all over the world and I did not find the Torah.”

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, “Go to the son of Amram.”

The *Satan* went to Moshe, and said, “The Torah that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* gave you, where is it?”

Moshe replied, “Who am I, that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* should give me the Torah?”

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, “Moshe, are you making things up?”

Moshe replied, “Master of the World, You have a hidden treasure that You take pleasure in every day. Should I consider myself worthy of it?!”

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, “Since you made yourself small, the Torah will be called by your name, as it says, זָכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי – “Remember the Torah of Moshe, My servant^{1,2}

If someone would ask us how *Moshe Rabbeinu* merited having the Torah called by his name, as it says, “Remember the Torah of Moshe,” we would probably say it is because he worked so hard for

Torah and toiled over it so greatly. But we see from the above-quoted *Chazal* that just exerting oneself is not enough. Moshe had a deeper virtue than that: “Since you made yourself small.” And so it says in *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim*,³ that Moshe merited receiving the Torah because of his humility.

When *Hashem* gave the Torah to His people Yisrael, Moshe was the one who received it, but he minimized himself. He said, so to speak: This is not my Torah. Who am I, that the Torah should be given through me? At that moment, the Torah became *Toras Moshe*.

If Moshe would have said, even for a moment, “I received the Torah,” it would not have been *Toras Moshe*. Only by saying, “Who am I, that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* should give me the Torah?” did the Torah become his.

Why was diminishing himself so crucial?

Torah is the very peak of bestowing goodness. And one can bestow goodness on such a level only by resembling *Hashem*. And the *Ramchal* writes in *Derech Hashem* that *Hashem's* Will is only to bestow goodness.

Accordingly, if Moshe would have felt when he received the Torah that now he has the Torah, if he would have focused on himself and what he has [he would not have been a proper receptacle for bestowing the ultimate goodness of the Torah. Because Torah is not just something you have for yourself. It is the highest level of bestowing goodness on others.]

Consequently, it would not have been his Torah. But when he said that it is not his Torah, when he expressed humility, it became his Torah, it became *Toras Moshe*. ●

1 Malachi 3:22.

2 Shabbos 89a.

3 3:13.



When in Trouble, Blow Bugles

עַל הַצָּר הַצִּיר אֶתְכֶם וְהִרְעַתֶם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת. (במדבר י', ט)

For the oppressor who oppresses you, you shall blow the bugles. (*Bemidbar* 10:9)

It is a positive Biblical commandment to cry out and to blow bugles over any trouble that might come upon the public, as it says, “For the oppressor who oppresses you, you shall blow the bugles.” In other words, for any matter that oppresses you, such as drought or plague or locusts, and so forth, you should cry out over it and blow bugles.

This is part of the ways of *teshuvah*, for when trouble comes, and people cry out over it and blow bugles, everyone will know that it is because of their evil deeds that their situation became bad, as it says, “Your iniquities set you off course.” This is the thing that will cause people to remove the trouble from themselves.¹

¹ *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Taaniyos* 1:5.

When in Trouble, Attach Yourself to Hashem

As we see from the above-quoted Rambam, blowing bugles in a time of trouble is a Torah-ordained *mitzvah*. And the sounding of bugles accompanies our heartfelt prayer.

Calling out to *Hashem* in a time of trouble is basic to the whole subject of *Tefilah*. *Chazal* describe prayer in general as *bakashas rachamim*, asking *Hashem* for mercy. And *Halachah* dictates that one must pray in a pleading way, like a poor person asking for his needs.² This is the proper way to *daven*.

But it goes even beyond the subject of prayer; it touches on essential human nature. This is a point where humans differ from all other creatures. Other creatures naturally have everything they need. They lack nothing. After an animal eats its fill, it is ordinarily as tranquil as can be. It has no further

worries or concerns. But a human being understands with his mind that there is a future, so he always feels a lack and he is always in a state of trouble because he is concerned about his future.

The more intelligence a person has, the more he knows and feels how lacking he really is, and what great trouble he is in.

All the above applies to a person whose aspirations and desires are material, who seeks out the life of this world. He knows what wealth is, and he feels that he lacks what he could potentially have. And he also recognizes the natural dangers that lie in wait for him at every moment. There are so many things that could go wrong. He has no sense of security that today's tranquility will be there tomorrow, because the world is a constantly spinning wheel of fortune, and at any moment he is liable to experience difficulties.

And it is even more so if he is a *tzaddik*. Even

² *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 98:3.

though he is relaxed and tranquil regarding this-worldly matters, since he relies on *Hashem* to take care of all his needs, he has other, bigger things to worry about. He is concerned about matters that pertain to *Olam Haba*, which is the world of eternity. There is plenty to worry about in spiritual matters:

People who are righteous and straight in their hearts, inside themselves they are always screaming like a lion. They roar over their sins like the roar of the sea. And over their shortcomings in *avodas Hashem*, because this brings great guilt upon a person, like the most serious sins do, as *Chazal* said: “*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* let them go for idolatry, licentious relationships and bloodshed, but He did not let them go for the sin of neglecting Torah study³.”⁴

Everyone in the world, whether he is spiritually oriented or materially minded, has great lacks and is actually in trouble. And it is human nature to seek a way to save oneself, to fulfill one’s needs and get out of trouble.

Why did *Hashem* create us like that?

Our chronic feeling that we lack what we need brings us to always hope for salvation, and since only *Hashem* can save us, we naturally long for *Hashem*, the Source of our salvation. This is the human condition. Being human means connecting to G-d through prayer.

This can be deduced from the words of *Chazal*. *Targum Onkelos* translates the verse וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה – “Man became a living being,”⁵ as follows: וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְרוּחַ מְמַלְלָא – “Man became a speaking spirit.” and the *Zohar* explains that man’s spirit, when it is worthy due to his words of Torah or *Tefilah*, rises up and speaks before *Hashem*.⁶ Thus, “speech” defines the essence of a human being. It is his means for

attachment to *Hashem*. It is human nature that through one’s constant troubles, one is spurred on to *deveikus* with *Hashem* through *Tefilah*.

This is alluded to in the beginning of *Maseches Bava Kama*, where the *Gemara* clarifies the meaning of the term “*mav’eh*”:

Mav’eh is man, as it is written אָמַר שֹׁמֵר – “The watchman said, ‘Morning is coming, but also night. If you will request and ask for it.’”⁷,⁸

Here we find man described as the creature that requests and asks from *Hashem*. This is a human being’s basic nature: he always turns to the One that everything belongs to, and requests from Him. A human being always beseeches his Creator.

Now, a person could pray and attach himself to *Hashem* without being motivated by painful situations. Hymns and praises, too, are forms of *Tefilah*. But there is a big difference between them: a person needs great amounts of self-arousal to bring himself to song and praise. This is because kindnesses and acts of goodness naturally make us forget *Hashem*, as it is written:

פֶּן אֲשַׁבַּע וְכַחֲשֵׁיתִי וְאָמַרְתִּי מִי ה' – Lest I be satiated and deny and say, “Who is *Hashem*?”⁹

However, distressful situations naturally draw a person to *Hashem*, even against his own will.

Not only that, but a person prays with the greatest intensity when he is in trouble. Rare are those who are moved to tremendous excitement because they feel gratitude to *Hashem*. On the other hand, even tough-hearted people are moved to fervent prayer when their only child is sick and in mortal danger. Their *davening* in such a situation is of an intensity that even great *tzaddikim* reach only at special times.

Chazal teach us:

3 *Yerushalmi, Chagigah* 1:7.

4 *Shaarei Teshuvah* 2:9.

5 *Bereishis* 2:7.

6 *Tazria* 46b.

7 *Yeshayahu* 21.

8 *Bava Kama* 3b.

9 *Mishlei* 30.

Said R. Yitzchak: Why were the *Avos* barren? Because *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* desires the prayers of *tzaddikim*.¹⁰

Had Avraham and Sarah been blessed right away with the birth of Yitzchak, their resounding prayer of thanks would surely have made the great roar of the sea seem as nothing. Still, a prayer like this cannot compare to the intensity of their *Tefilah* as they hoped for *Hashem's* salvation over the course of a hundred years.

A great part of *Sefer Tehillim* is composed of prayers of this type:

אֶפְפוּנֵי חֲבֵלֵי מוֹת וּמִצָּרֵי שְׂאוֹל מִצְּאוּנֵי צָרָה
וְיִגְוֹן אֶמְצָא. וּבִשְׁם ה' אֶקְרָא אֲנִי ה' מִלְטָה נִפְשִׁי
The cords of death enwrapped me and the
distresses of the grave found me; trouble
and agony will I find. And in the Name of
Hashem will I call: "Please, *Hashem*, rescue
my soul!"¹¹

David HaMelech always saw himself in distress, as if he was standing at the edge of the grave, and had no choice but to scream out in prayer to the One Who can save him.

Now, there is a type of person who won't ask others for help. It could be either out of embarrassment or out of pride: it is beneath his dignity to ask someone for assistance. However, all this applies only as long as the pain is still bearable. If the trouble grows too great, he will forget his honor and throw himself down on the ground to ask for his life.

This is true even with people so stubborn that they would rather die than be in need of others. The moment their dear child's life is at stake, or their beloved property (which they love more than their

very life) is in danger, they forget their pride, and crawl on the ground as they ask for help.

This applies in *Tefilah* as well. There are people who treat prayer with laziness. But if they are in serious trouble, if they have lost all appetite because they are so distraught with fear and worry, they cast off their laziness. They forget that they are too embarrassed of their sins to approach *Hashem*, they put aside their pride, and throw themselves down in prayer and supplication to *Hashem*. Their *Tefilah* at such a time emanates from the depths of their heart.

Accordingly, the primary method to overcome all forms of negligent behavior in *Tefilah* is to think about how much distress we truly are in. This can be accomplished by considering teachings of *Chazal* that speak of the piercing Divine judgment that awaits us in the next world. Here is an example. *Chazal* say:

One hour of satisfaction in *Olam Haba* is better than all the life of this world.¹²

On this, the *Rishonim* comment that the same is true of punishment in *Olam Haba*. One moment of punishment for the slightest sin is worse than all the suffering of this world put together. Even if all the misery from day one until the end of time would be combined, it still would not equal the suffering of one moment in the next world. All the more so with the punishment for a moment of *bitul Torah*, a sin equal to the three severe sins, or with the punishment for *lashon hara*, which is equal to all of them put together.

A few moments of reflection on such teachings will better motivate a person to *Tefilah* than anything else can. ●

¹⁰ *Yevamos* 64.

¹¹ *Tehillim* 116:3-4.

¹² *Pirkei Avos* 4:17.