



NEFESH SHIMSHON

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

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

PEARLS OF WISDOM
FROM THE PARSHAH

The Untranslatable Name

וַשְׁמִי ה' לֹא נֹדַעְתִּי לָהֶם. (שמות ו, ג)

By My Name of *Hashem* I was not known to them. (*Shemos* 6:3)

There is a big difference between the Name *Hashem* and the Name *Elokim*. The Name *Elokim* can be translated into other languages. But the Name *Hashem* is untranslatable. Because only a Jew can understand that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* brings all of existence, past, present and future, into being. This is what the Name *Hashem* signifies.

The human being, as compared to the forces of nature, is a puny creature that is easily swept away by stormy waves of sea. The forces of nature act with tremendous power. A human being is small; he has no control over them. This is the reality of the world.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world, and the world is full of dangers. There are sicknesses, threats to our *parnassah*, and so forth. Naturally speaking, you can't get by in the world. You need *Elokim*, "G-d," Who is above the forces of nature, Who has tremendous, awesome, supernatural powers. He holds the little human being by his hand and rescues him from the storms of this world.

This is why, in former times, every person in the world understood that he can't get by in life without G-d holding him by the hand. (Nowadays, people don't feel they need G-d anymore. They have a health plan, they have social security, they have the media, they have a microwave. Everything is taken care of...)

Avraham Avinu came along with a new idea: The One Who created all of reality it is also G-d! He is not just the originator of reality, He also stands next to us, with us. He takes care of us and understands us. He holds us by the hand and guides us along our way through a world fraught with danger.

This is what we are saying every time we recite a *berachah*. "*Hashem*," the One who brings reality into existence, is "*Elokeinu*," He watches over us and guides us on our path. And we emphasize that He is not just the G-d of the whole world; He specially watches over the Jewish people. He is "*Elokeinu*," our G-d.

And the Name “*Elokeinu*” is in plural. This means that He is the G-d of each and every individual Jew, even of the one who refuses to recognize this.

If the Name “*Elokeinu*” would be in the singular, there would be room for some fool to come along and say, “Okay, He’s G-d, but He’s not my G-d. I am a sinner, an evil person. I transgressed all the *mitzvos*

of the Torah and have severed all connection with Him.” This is why the Name “*Elokeinu*” is recited in the plural form. A person can close his eyes and try to ignore the tremendous treasure that is his, but it won’t help. As long as a person is a Jew, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is his G-d. And He watches over him specially. ●



There’s A Big Difference

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גַם הֵם חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּלִהְטֵיהֶם כֹּהֵן. (שמות ז, יא)

And the sorcerers of Egypt did the same by means of their magic. (*Shemos* 6:3)

In the first two *makos*, we see that also the Egyptian sorcerers possessed great capabilities. They did the same as Moshe and Aharon. They turned water to blood, and they brought out frogs.

However, we need to know that the forces of *tumah* are totally different from the forces of *kedushah*, as I will explain.

There was a story in the time of R. Chayim Vital about a *dybbuk*, an evil spirit that possessed a person, and it was exorcised by witches. People asked R. Chayim about this, saying that it seems to show that witches indeed have special powers. He answered that they put so much *tumah* into the person that the *dybbuk* needed to escape.

I was always puzzled by this explanation. What kind of an answer is this? After all, they succeeded in exorcising the spirit, which shows that they can

indeed do things. What do we care how they did it?

The explanation is like this. It may be compared to a person who has a stain on his garment, and he wants to scrub it and cleanse it with special stain removers. Someone comes along and says, “Why knock yourself out trying to clean the garment? Just cut out the stained spot!”

To which the first person replies, “Are you crazy? True, it won’t have a stain anymore, but the whole garment will be ruined!”

That’s the story with the *dybbuk*. R. Chayim Vital explained: True, they exorcised the spirit, but how did they do it? They put so much *tumah* into the poor person that his soul was completely ruined and destroyed. And then the *dybbuk* left him. At the end of the day, they didn’t help at all. ●





לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ר משה בן אליעזר המבורגר זצ"ל
ומוה"ר ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל
נרבת נבדיהם ~ עשרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנינים אבהם

Emunah Lessons

בְּזֹאת תֵּדַע כִּי אֲנִי ה' (שמות ז, יז)

Through this, you will know that I am Hashem. (Shemos 7:17)

The ten *makos* that Hashem brought on Egypt were not to take the Jewish people out of *Mitzrayim*. For that purpose, there was no need for so many *makos*. Hashem could have whopped them with one big *makah* and then taken His people out of Egypt.

The *makos* had a different purpose: before *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem delivered a “workshop” in *Emunah* and in understanding what forces control the world. This was the ten *makos*. Accordingly, R. Yehudah divided them into three sets: באהב, ש, עד”ש, דצ”ך.

The first *makah* in each of these sets was previously announced to Egypt, as a warning, and also as an elucidation of the point. The following *makos* in each set were delivered without further warning.

It all started out with the plague of blood, as we know. At this point, Hashem said: בְּזֹאת תֵּדַע כִּי אֲנִי ה' – “Through this you will know that I am Hashem.” This was followed by frogs and lice, in conjunction with which no particular message was stated. This was the first set. It taught that “I am Hashem.”

The second set began with the plague of *arov*, wild animals. At this point the *pasuk* says: לַמַּעַן תֵּדַע כִּי אֲנִי ה' בְּקִרְבְּךָ הָאָרֶץ – “In order for you to know that

I am Hashem in the midst of the earth.”¹ This was followed by the plagues of pestilence and boils, in conjunction with which no particular message was stated. This was the second set. It taught that “I am Hashem in the midst of the earth.”

Then came the plague of hail, which commenced the third set. Here it says: בְּעִבּוֹר תֵּדַע כִּי אֵין כְּמוֹנִי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ – “So that you will know that there is none like Me in all the earth.”² This was followed by the plagues of locusts, darkness and the smiting of the firstborn, regarding which no particular message was stated. This was the third and last set. It taught that “There is none like Me in all the earth.”

This formed a ladder of three ascending rungs. Alluding to this, we have the three *matzos* that we eat on *Seder* night. The first corresponds to *chochmah*, to knowing that Hashem exists. The second corresponds to *binah*, which signifies understanding the significance of the matter. And the third corresponds to *daas*, which signifies internalizing the message and incorporating it into the course of life. ●

1 Shemos 8:18.

2 Ibid 9:14.

PARSHA TOPIC

Ten Big Lessons

בְּעִבּוֹר תֵּדַע כִּי אֵין כְּמוֹנִי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ. (שמות ט, יד)

So you will know that there is none like Me in all the earth. (Shemos 9:14)

A Lesson in Three Masechtos

Hashem brought ten plagues on Egypt. If we look

at the *pesukim* we will see that the purpose was not to take the Jewish people out of *Mitzrayim*. Because Hashem could have taken them out right away, after

one big *makah*, or even without any *makos* at all. That was not the purpose.

The *makos* were a “public lecture series,” a *shiur klali* if you will, to teach us about *Emunah* and other basics of Jewish outlook.

This is a deep subject that we need to learn. We need to get the message that the *Eser Makos* communicate.

First we need to know a general rule. When you want to learn something, even if the teacher really knows the subject and is a great communicator, you still can't grasp everything in proper depth at one sitting. You need to study it two or three times, make a “*chazakah*” in it, and then you will understand.

Hashem wants to teach us something by bringing *makos* on the Egyptians. There are three “*masechos*” to learn – the *Bava Kama*, *Bava Metziah* and *Bava Basra* of the Exodus from Egypt.

R. Yehudah would give signs for the Ten Plagues: **דצ"ך עדי"ש באח"ב**.¹

We see from the *pesukim* that the first three *makos* comprised one subject, the second three *makos* comprised another subject, and the last three *makos* comprised a third subject. After that came *Makas Bechoros*, which is something else altogether.

Hashem didn't really need to state the explanation of the *makos* more than once, but since His goal was to implant the message in people's hearts, He repeated it again and again.

So before the first, fourth and seventh *makah*, there are *pesukim* that teach us what we are to learn from the three coming *makos*.

Before the first *makah* it says: **בזאת תדע כי אני ה'** – “Through this you will know that I am *Hashem*.”² This was said to Pharaoh, who had previously declared **לא ידעתי את ה'** – “I don't know *Hashem*.” So Pharaoh was taught, through the *makos*, Who *Hashem* is. It's not clear whether Pharaoh actually got the message, but what's more important is that

we should get it. We are supposed to learn from this an important principle in *Emunah*.

Before the fourth *makah* there was an introduction to the three coming *makos*: **למען תדע כי אני ה' בקרב הארץ** – “In order for you to know that I am *Hashem* in the midst of the earth.”³ This is a message on a higher level.

And later on, before the seventh *makah*, Pharaoh was warned: **בעבור תדע כי אין כמוני בכל הארץ** – “So that you will know that there is none like Me in all the earth.”⁴

Thus, there are three subjects: “I am *Hashem*,” “I am *Hashem* in the midst of the earth,” and “There is none like Me in all the earth.” As we said before, *Makas Bechoros* is a whole separate subject on its own.

That's the general structure of the *makos*. Now we need to know what's the content of these three “*masechtos*,” the *Bava Kama*, *Bava Metziah* and *Bava Basra* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

Know What World You Live In

The *Bava Kama* is all about: **בזאת תדע כי אני ה'** – “Through this you will know that I am *Hashem*.” There is a natural order in the world, and there is *Hashem* Who made it.

The *Bava Metziah* is all about: **למען תדע כי אני ה' בקרב הארץ** – “In order for you to know that I am *Hashem* in the midst of the earth.” What is in the midst of the earth? *Hashem*. Nature is nothing but the ways of *Hashem*.

The *Bava Basra* is all about: **תדע כי אין כמוני בכל הארץ** – “So that you will know that there is none like Me in all the earth.” There is no natural order and no nature. That's all a mistaken perception. That's darkness. Besides *Hashem*, there is nothing at all.

Now we will explain. Let's say a person is afraid because he needs to pay a large debt and he doesn't have the wherewithal. This is indeed a tough problem. What to do?

Bava Kama says: If you *daven* well, *Hashem* will

1 Haggadah Shel Pesach.

2 Shemos 7:17.

3 Ibid 8:18.

4 Ibid 9:14.

help you pay the debt. *Bava Metziah* says: The debt itself comes from *Hashem*. *Bava Basra* says: You are not in trouble at all. The whole problem doesn't exist. As *Chazal* say, "It's not the snake that kills; it's the sin that kills."⁵

Here's another example of the three outlooks. We can learn it from the well-known story about Nachum Ish Gamzu. He was sent by the Jewish community to the king, and he brought along a chest full of rare gems. When he got there, he discovered that someone had robbed his chest and replaced the gems with mere dirt. Now he was in big trouble, because he needed to present a gift from the Jews to the king.

What's he going to do? Give the king a chest full of dirt? That's not going to be very good for the Jews!

Bava Kama says: Turn to *Hashem*. Pray to Him and say: *Ribono Shel Olam*, look what's happening here. Please, please, help me!

Bava Metziah says: The fact that the chest is full of dirt is from *Hashem*.

Bava Basra says: This, too, is for the good. Everything is just fine, but you don't see it because the world is full of darkness so you don't perceive the tremendous good that a chest full of dirt represents.

In banks, there is a screen on which are displayed tables of stock market trading. People sit and watch the screen anxiously to see if their stocks are going up or down, whether they are gaining or losing.

Bava Kama says: Come on, why are you just sitting there, staring at the screen? Is that going to change the stocks? Go say some *Tehillim* with *kavanah*. That will help more than anything.

Bava Metziah says: Whether the stocks go up or down is all from *Hashem*.

Bava Basra says: The whole thing is nonsense in the first place. Every penny a person has in his pocket doesn't come because of stocks going up or down. That is a total mistake. Blindness. *Hashem* Himself puts the money in a person's pocket according to what he deserves to have. This whole world is full of darkness. The truth is hidden. There is really nothing at all beside *Hashem*.

Let's say a person falls ill. The doctor tells him that he got sick because he did not take care of his health in some way or another. Or let's say someone opened a store and lost all his money. His friend says to him, "You don't know what you're doing. That's not how to run a business."

All this is a mistake. It's not true. *Hashem* alone is true, and "There is none like Me in all the earth." All these other things are not like *Hashem*. They are one big falsehood.

These are the three lessons that *Hashem* sought to teach Pharaoh through the *Eser Makos*. It's not just a matter of how we look at the world. It's more than that. We need to know what world we are living in.

Turn Only to Hashem

A person opens his eyes and sees a world in front of him. In this world, all sorts of forces are at work, and a person needs to deal with quite an assortment of difficult problems. Health, poverty, other dangers to one's well-being that exist in the world. Ninety-nine percent of what a person (a non-Jewish one) deals with during the course of the day is protection and escaping the forces of nature. He eats in order to be healthy; he works because he doesn't want to be poor.

There are things you can escape from and there are things you can't. No one can escape death. But not everyone suffers from sickness, and not everyone is poor.

Pharaoh made himself into a god. He made as if he can handle all problems, he can successfully manage things as regards the forces of nature.

Hashem came and told him: You need to know that in this world, which is called the "natural" world, also I have a say. "I am *Hashem*." You need to know that I am stronger than all the forces you can muster.

This is why *Moshe Rabbeinu* battled with the *chartumim*, the Egyptian sorcerers, in the first three *makos*. He played their game, so to speak. He turned his staff into a serpent, and they turned their staffs into serpents. He turned water to blood, and they turned water to blood. He brought frogs up from the

⁵ *Shemos Rabbah* 3:12.

Nile, and they brought frogs up from the Nile.

But when it came to the plague of lice, it suddenly became clear that they can't do everything. They are not in control of lice.

Now, Pharaoh, you need to admit the truth. The world has a Creator!

This was the *Bava Kama*. The first lesson for Pharaoh and for us. "Through this you will know that I am *Hashem*." In other words, there is a world, there are sicknesses, troubles, but there is also *Hashem*, Who is stronger than all that. He created it all. So we should turn only to Him.

Let's say a person doesn't feel well. What does he do? He goes to the doctor, and anxiously asks to be sent for an X-ray. This is a mistake. He should first turn to *Hashem*, and say: *Ribono Shel Olam*, I ask of You to please heal me! I don't want to be sick.

Pharaoh didn't know this. So *Hashem* taught it to him and to us.

Nature is Hashem

The second set of *makos* – wild animals, pestilence and boils – taught us a completely different lesson.

In *makas arov*, the plague of wild animals, the jungle opened its gates and the animals went out and came to Egypt. This was a supernatural event. And in fact, who says that these animals need to be only in the jungle? Why don't they go out and come to places where people live all the time? Because *Hashem* doesn't let them. But now, *Hashem* gave them His permission to go out. The gates of the jungle opened up, and all the animals came to Egypt.

This teaches us that nature itself is *Hashem*.

Then came the plague of *dever*, pestilence. The wild and domesticated animals died. This teaches us that a person may think that he is alive, but the truth is that he is not alive. Nothing just is, because nature is *Hashem*.

And so with the plague of boils. A person sees in front of himself a healthy hand without any wounds or lesions. He thinks to himself: And why shouldn't it be that way? Why should a person suddenly have all sorts of lesions on his skin?

This is a mistake. There is no nature at all. Without *Hashem*, Who is the "Healer of all flesh," there are boils on a person's skin. Without the "Source of life," there is pestilence and the animals die. Without protection from *Hashem*, there is an invasion of wild jungle animals.

This is the nature of the world. Nature is *Hashem*.

This was the *Bava Metzia*. And here, the *chartumim* didn't even show their faces, because life and death are not in their hands, and neither is health. This is not their field, because here we are not talking about nature.

Phenomena Absent from Nature

Now came the third set of *makos*. Hail, locusts and darkness. This was a new lesson, totally different from the previous ones.

The plagues that came before, from *dam* through to *shechin*, were indeed miracles, but they confined themselves to nature. Not so with these three plagues that came at this point. Hail fell from the sky in giant chunks of fire and water combined together. This is a phenomenon that does not exist at all in the natural world.

The plague of locusts emphasized the point even more. The special point of *makas arbeh* was the fact that לפניו לא היה כן ארבה כמוהו ואחריו לא יהיה כן – "Before this, there was never locusts like this, and after this, there will never be." This was something absolutely novel. There is no natural event like this.

This was surely true with the plague of darkness, which, as we know, was a supernatural kind of darkness. It was so thick that they couldn't even move from their place. That is not a natural phenomenon at all. ●