

# PARSHAS MISHPATIM



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## IS YOUR EMUNAH COMPLETE?

### THE CHALLENGE OF EMUNAH

The sugya of emunah is one of the most challenging topics. The general emunah topics of how Hashem created the world, or how He runs it - that people can handle. The challenge lies in the type of emunah regarding which the Gemora in Chullin (7b) states: **אמר ר' חנינא אין אדם נוקף אצבעו מלמטה אלא א"כ מכריזין עליו מלמעלה** - Rabbi Chanina said, a person doesn't stub his finger below, unless they declare about him on high that he should injure it. A real story comes to mind, where a young man got so upset at his father, that he picked up a knife and put it through the father's hand, straight to the table! What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear such a story? A sick young man, a crazy young man? Obviously, he wasn't in normal mode. But believe it or not, today he's a very fine young man. I met him recently. The p'shat is that Hashem decreed on that father that this was supposed to happen. Even something that comes from another person, has be nigzar in shamayim. For some reason, the father had some kitrug in shamayim against him and they asked whether he should get his hand stabbed or not. I am sure it was discussed what part of the hand had to be stabbed - it's unbelievable how the judgement goes! And once it's decreed, it's as if it's done; there is nothing a person can do to avoid it. The Chovos HaLevavos shows this, when he writes as follows in Sha'ar Cheshbon Hanefesh (siman 30):

**וכן לא יוכל אחד מן הברואים להועיל לך ולא להזיקך ולא לאחד מהם יכולת להוסיף בימי חיידך ולא לפחות מהם וכן לכל מדותיך וטבעך ומעלליך הטובים והרעים**

*Similarly, none of the created beings (human or animal) are either capable of benefiting or harming you, and not one of them are capable of adding to the days of your life or subtracting from them; likewise for all of your traits, your nature, and your good or bad deeds.*

He writes likewise in Sha'ar Habitachon (Ch 3-4).<sup>1</sup> This is something we have to figure out how to get into our kishkes. We have to understand that there's nothing that happens to any one of us that's not directly from Hashem. Here is a person who's working for a boss and the boss hates the worker because he's always berating him. The boss thinks that he needs to fire the worker, so he decides to fire him, and he says: **ברוך שפטוני**. But in truth it's not up to him. I've seen many bosses who didn't have the koach to fire their employees because Hashem wanted the employee to have the job. It happened once that I became aware that a certain employer wanted to fire his worker. I told the employee that I was aware that the boss wasn't satisfied with the job he was doing and he could lose his job in that company because of his own negligence. "The fact that Hashem let you hear about it and allowed me to give you a warning is an indication that Hashem is giving you a message that you still have a chance and if you correct yourself, you could stay in this company," I told him. He corrected himself for a day, the next day he forgot about it, and a few weeks later he was out of the job. And now he was forced to correct his shortcomings for the next job.

### TO THE LAST DETAIL

Rav Chaim Volozhiner said in the name of the Gr"a (and Rav Chaim writes that he already reached the same conclusion in his younger years), that it's a common mistake to say that a **בעל הבחירה** is capable of harming another person without it being a decree from Hashem.<sup>2</sup> The Vilna Gaon said clearly that every single thing is nigzar on the person, including which stone he will

<sup>1</sup> "והחמשי שאין ביד אחד מהברואים להועיל את נפשו ולא להזיקה ולא לזולתו כי אם ברשות הבורא יתברך... וכן כשירגיש האדם שלא יועילנו ולא יזיקנו אחד מהנבראים אלא ברשות הבורא יתברך ישוב לבנו מיראתם ותקוותם ויבטח על הבורא לבדו כמו שנאמר (תהלים קמו ג) אל תבטחו בנדיבים בבן אדם שאין לו תשועה" (שער הביטחון ג: טו-י)  
<sup>2</sup> 1 בספר תולדות הגר"י מסלנט כתוב אמר הגר"ח מוולוז'ין זצ"ל: "שמעתי מהחסידי וגם אני אמרתי כן אפילו מנערותי, שזה טעות מה שמורגל בפי העולם שבעל-בחירה יכול לעשות לאדם בלתי גזירת הבורא, רק שבכל דבר נגזר על האדם באיזה אבן ינגף. אבל בעל-בחירה, לא נגזר איזה בעל-בחירה יעשה לו לטוב ולמוטב. אבל אם לא נגזר לו מן השמים, אין בעל בחירה יכול לעשות לו מאומה," עכ"ל 2

fall on to injure himself, which part of his head he will hit, and with how much force. The only thing that's not nigzar with a בעל

הבחירה is which בעל הבחירה is going to harm the person. So let's say, Hashem decides you will get harmed by another human being; it's not nigzar which person will harm you. And the same is true, he says, if it was nigzar that someone should do good to you; it is not known which human being will do that favor for you. For example, someone here is going to give you a present. It's not decreed in shamayim which person will give you that present. It's not decreed in shamayim that your parents are going to support you - even if you think that will be so because you are accustomed to it. Or, if your parents decide to abuse you, r"l, you should know that it wasn't decreed that your parents should abuse you; what was decreed in shamayim is that you were going to be abused. People think they can run away from abuse. The reason is that they believe that the abuse is not decreed upon them. They think, "If I will avoid this person, I will avoid the abuse." It doesn't work like that. Hashem decides how much abuse there is going to be. But if in shamayim it's not nigzar that you will be harmed or abused, you will not be harmed or abused by anyone!

And the emes is that Yosef HaTzaddik already said this to his brothers when his brothers were concerned that after Yakov's death, Yosef would seek revenge against them for his sale. Yosef famously told them: התחת אלוקים אני - am I instead of Hashem? (Bereishis 50:19). Rashi explains that התחת אלוקים אני means: "Do you think that I am in place of Hashem, that if I wanted to harm you in any way, that I could do it? It's impossible! Look, the proof is from what you wanted to do to me: you all wanted to harm me, and did it work? No! Hashem turned it around and made it good, so how in the world can I hurt you?"<sup>3</sup>

### THE ETERNAL LESSON FROM THE MARCHESHES, HY"D

I read an amazing World World 2 story about the famous Marcheshes (Rav Chanoch Henech Eigis, hy"d, of Vilna, 1863-1941). When a Nazi who was teasing him (while torturing him) asked, "So, where is your G-d now?" Rav Chanoch calmly answered, "My G-d is right here, and the only reason you are able to lay your finger on me is because that's what was decreed by my G-d. If G-d had not decreed, you would not have laid a finger on me." The German kept torturing him and asking: "Do you still believe in that?" He answered, "Yes, I still believe that." The Nazi tortured him more and Rav Chanoch kept on saying, "Yes, I still believe that." Until the end.

I've read stories about big talmidei chachamim, r"l, who saw their children or spouses killed in front of them and they carried that hatred all their lives. A lot of times you read these gut wrenching war stories where a parent said to the Germans, "Take my life instead of my child," and you think that it's his choice. No, it's not his choice. That's also min hashamayim because if it was decreed that his child was going to get killed. And sometimes the Nazis killed the father and the child. You can't change it. It's all up to Hashem's will.

### WHAT BOTHERED RAV MEIR SOLOVEICHIK

This is a very difficult topic because one of the greatest subjects in people's lives is the issue of abuse that people receive or have received from others: teachers, parents, siblings, employers, associates, friends, etc. We all believe that everything was chosen by their abusers and has nothing to do with Hashem, and we carry grudges and we try to take revenge, instead of opening up our eyes and saying, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, I know this is from you and please let me understand what it is that You want from me."

I will never forget how my Rebbi (HaRav Meir Halevi Soloveichik, zt"l) was going through a very challenging time in his life, when his oldest child went through a difficult divorce. My Rebbi really felt the challenge. Someone called me from Eretz Yisroel and asked me to come there, so that perhaps I could speak to the Rebbi, because he wasn't talking to anybody, even to his other close talmidim. So I went to Eretz Yisroel. I hung around for a couple of days. On the third day - when I saw that my Rebbi wasn't talking to me - I decided to broach the subject. I told him, "Rebbi, we are talking about all the subjects except about the elephant ("pil," in Hebrew) in the room." He asked me, "Meheicha teise [who says] that we have to talk about it?" I told him, "The gemora says that if a person has a worry on his mind, he should discuss it: ישיחנה - ישיחנה לאחריים. Right there, on the spot, he asked me, "And how were you machriya (decided) like that lashon of the gemora and not like the other version, which says that a person should remove [yesicenna] the worry from his mind (instead of telling it over to someone)? Why are you machriya (why are you paskening) like the first lashon?"<sup>4</sup> He challenged me on the spot, mamish! I am sure he knew this gemora and saw that it was a safek (whether it's better to speak about it or forget it about), so it wasn't so clear to him that he should talk about it.

<sup>3</sup> כי התחת אלהים אני. שמוא במקומו אני? בתמיה, אם הייתי רוצה להרע לך, פלום אני יכול! והלא אתם פלכם חשבתם עלי רעה, והקדוש ברוך הוא חשבה לטובה והיאד אני לבדי יכול להרע לך: אלא משום דכתיב לא תעיל דויה בלבך דגברי גיברין קטל דויה הא שלמה אמרה (משלי יב, כה) דאגה בלב איש ישחנה ר' אמי ור' אסי חד אמר ישיחנה מדעתו, וחד אמר ישיחנה לאחריים (סנהדרין פ:)



on the guy's pregnant wife, who has to go to the hospital. And yet the Torah still says, **ורפא ירפא!** You should surely heal her. So the Chofetz Chaim wants to know why we would think that this is a case of Hashem "hitting" her? Wasn't it another man who punched her?! In other words, when some guy punches you in the face, where is the **רחמנא מחי** here?! So evidently, when someone punches you in the face, that's called **רחמנא מחי** - Hashem is One who smacked you!

You see from here, says the Chofetz Chaim, that any inyanei tzaar (suffering) that come to a person, even if someone shames you, puts you down, embarrasses you, calls you names, calls you an idiot - you have to know it's all from shamayim, and they are **מגלגלים חוב ע"י חייב** - they appoint someone who's already guilty of some aveiros to administer the "punch" to you. Even if a guy planned to hit you in your face, this was also **השגחה** from Above! The Chofetz Chaim brings clear proof from Dovid Hamelech and Shimi ben Geira. We know that when Dovid was running away from Yerushalayim after losing his malchus, he met Shimi Ben Geira (his former rebbi). Instead of encouraging Dovid, Shimi ben Geira started to call him names (i.e. you are a murderer, an adulterer, a menuval) and he then took dirt and threw it on him! At that moment, one of the soldiers who was next to Dovid Hamelech asked the him if he should kill Shimi ben Geira for being morid b'malchus, but Dovid said, "Leave him alone, because Hashem is the One who told him to curse me." And you have to remember this and never forget this - Hashem does this for the benefit of the person, says the Chofetz Chaim, in order that a person should have a kaporah through this humiliation or insult. You should not eat yourself alive over this and try to respond to your offender to benefit yourself. On the contrary, if you don't respond, you should know that you will have gevaldike zechuyos! Any dibbur that a person speaks - if it's not a form of a mitzvah or an aveira (where you exercise your own bechira) - you should know that it's also from shamayim, because a person has no bechira on it! The Chofetz Chaim writes in Shmiras Halashon (Part 2, Ch. 12) that anything that comes out from the mouth of a person, except for words that are no'gea for mitzvos, aveiros or yiras shamayim, is hakol b'dei shamayim.<sup>7</sup> Do you ever go somewhere and you ask a question and you are not sure why you asked that question?

### A STRANGE QUESTION

I once told you the following story. My son was learning in a good yeshiva, and for some strange reason - while I was talking to him on the phone one day - I asked him, "Tell me, who's the best bochur in the yeshiva?" My wife heard my question and said, "Why are you asking him this question?" I told her, "I don't know. I have no idea why I asked this question." Meanwhile, my son came back and he told me who the best bochur was. Later on, I was wondering why I asked this question. Was it my curiosity? But I did not know this bochur from the yeshiva, I had no shaychus to him. Three years later I got a phone call from somebody who wanted to suggest a shidduch for my daughter. I asked him, "What is the young man's name?" He told me it was so and so. I said, "Is his father so and so?" He said, "Yes." I told him, "My answer is yes." He asked, "Why? Are you so convinced from what I just told you?" "No," I said, "Hashem gave me a siman l'milsa that is my shidduch." Now, I finally understood why Hashem made me ask that question three years prior to that. So now I wasn't going to think twice about it. He asked me again, "Aren't you going to check him out first?" I said, "I don't have to. I'm not going to look into him, I'm not going to check him out. The answer is yes."

Now, I was so certain that the answer was yes, that we made arrangements for their first date to be on Sunday, a few days later. Incidentally, the bochur's father was planning on leaving for Eretz Yisroel that Sunday. I called him up though I hadn't spoken to him for twenty years. He picked up the phone. I said, "My friend, hello. How are you doing? I heard our kids are going out. Isn't it interesting how the world turns? Listen, I heard that you are going to Eretz Yisroel. Don't go," I told him. "Why not?" he asked me. I said, "You are going to miss the party. This is the shidduch." And it was. Sunday night, Monday, and they were ready. And even though there were things that weren't supposed to work out, Hashem worked it out to the tiniest of details.

One of the interesting things about my son-in-law is that he's a very flowery writer and he knows how to express himself very articulately with his pen. My daughter, she should live and be well - at that time - did not know how to write a better sentence than "Yankel went up the hill." My wife also happens to be a very good writer, and she became a conduit between the two of them, during their engagement! She wrote him back beautiful, flowery letters. The guy was mamish in seventh heaven, and he thought that he got somebody with every ma'alach that he dreamed of! Eventually he found out. You know why it happened? Because that's how Hashem wanted it to happen. Hashem wanted this shidduch to happen.

<sup>7</sup> ויאמר ראובן וגו': את שני בני תמית אם לא אביאנו אליך וגו' (בראשית מב ל"ז). ויאמר: לא ירד בני עמכם, (בראשית מ"ב ל"ז ל"ח). איתא במדרש, שאמר יעקב עליו (בראשית רבה צ"א): בכור שוטה הוא, בני ולא בני הם? וצריך להבין באמת דברי ראובן. אבל הענין לאמתו הוא כך: כל מה שיוצא מפי האדם, [לבד מה שנוגע ליראת השם, שזה תלוי בבחירת האדם], הוא הכל בידי שמים, והוא מאמר חכמינו וזכרונם לברכה (ברכות ל"ג): הכל בידי שמים, חוץ מיראת שמים. ואיתא במדרש, שאמר ראובן נתקים בבני דתן ואבירים, ובאמת הוא עצמו גרם לזה, שאמר (בראשית ל"ז כ"ב): "השליכו אתו אל הבור הזה אשר במדבר", והמעשה היה רע מאד, וכן היה שירדו חיים שאולה לתוך הבור. ובמה שמחשבתו שם היתה לטובה, כמו שכתוב (שם): "למען הציל אותו מידים להשיבו אל אביו", וזה שאחד מבניו, והוא און בן פלת, נצול, ששב בתשובה לאביו שבשמים. ועל זה נקרא שמו און, שהיה באנינות כל ימיו על זה, כמו שאמרו חכמינו וזכרונם לברכה.



## YOUR THERAPIST WON'T HELP YOU

You should know that every single thing comes from Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Someday Hashem will ask you why you were angry at somebody. "Why were you upset at your parents? I gave you those parents. I made those parents do everything they did for you." And you will come up with a nice excuse: "Oh, well, my therapist said that it was my parents' fault - and if it's my parents' fault - I shouldn't talk to my parents." Let me tell you something: your therapist was wrong. But where did he get that from? He went to school. He went to college and became misguided.

I know many children who went to therapists who told them, "Your father abused you." And the kid would say, "No, I have a very loving relationship with my father. I love my father." And the therapist would then say, "No, you don't understand - he really abused you!" And the kid would repeat, "No, he didn't." The persistent therapist would start getting frustrated, "I am telling you, he had to abuse you! The reason for your strange behavior, the reason why you are acting up this way, must stem from the abuse that you endured as a child."

"But maybe I just don't have the greatest middos; maybe I have challenges in this world, and maybe Hashem gave me those challenges to make me aware of my middos?" the kid asks. So the therapist looks at him and says, "Oh, don't think about that - you are not a bad person. Your parents are!" The kid then persists, "But isn't there a mitzvah of kibud av v'em?" "Oh, that's only if they are tzaddikim, but if they do something wrong, you take a shoe box, write your father's name in it, dig a hole in the ground outside, or if the ground is too frozen, go to the lake, break the ice, stick the box in the hole and say, "Bye-bye, daddy! And then all of your problems are going to be solved."

People don't know how to accept the role of Hashem in their lives. And then they call me and say, "But, but, but..." But, you don't believe in Hashem! You believe what you heard in your silly classes from chamorim and the children of chamorim - that's what you believed in and you espoused that nonsense. You don't understand that Hashem runs the world, and that Hashem put this child with this specific set of parents - it's not an accident, it's not a coincidence. Hashem says, "I'm putting you together with them, so that everybody should know that the father has to be aware of what he has to work on, and the child has to be aware of what he has to work on." Nobody can hurt you or harm you if it's not decreed from Hashem - it's just impossible!

Now, you want to know how to deal with someone who's metzayer (pain) you? There are ways of how to deal with that. Of course you have to learn that. Why does Hashem do this? It's a world of challenges, there's no question that you have to know how to deal with these things. And therefore we have to accept them and we have to mechazek this point - in order for you to get past your personal tzaar. Don't beat yourself up. Know what to focus on and how to focus on it. Take all your challenges and understand how to grow from them.

I once told a therapist, "If you teach people how to grow from their challenges and not run away from them, then you'll have a chelek in Olam Haba and you're going to be a groise tzaddik there - because you are helping people to be strong and you helping them to become complete. But if you tell a person, 'Oy, nebach, this is not your fault. This is someone else's fault. You are not responsible for your behavior; it's understandable why you acted this way' - then you have to know that you will give din v'cheshbon for this in the future. You have to help a person grow by facing their challenge, overcoming it, and moving forward from it. Make the challenge an experience in life that they can grow from."



### THE BOTTOM LINE



The challenging part of emunah is not the idea that Hashem created and runs the world. Rather, it is accepting that everything that happens to us - whether good or bad - is decreed from Above. The stories of the Marcheshes' torture at the hands of a Nazi, or Rav Meir Soloveichik's son's divorce or the surgery of Rebbetzin Sorotzkin's son - all vividly illustrate to us that any damage, suffering, pain, or even the words of reshut that come out of our mouths, are not only decreed in shamayim, but their amount, severity and timing are precisely measured as well. This coming week, if I experience a challenge - no matter how small it may be - I will strengthen my emunah by recognizing and accepting where my challenge truly comes from. And in that zechus, IY"H, I will learn to see any events or challenges I face as hashgacha pratit and not as a coincidence or a set of random events.



