



## STRICT JUDGMENT VS. RACHAMIM



## THE SETTING: THE INAUGURATION OF THE MISHKAN

Parshas Shemini is broken up into two *sugyos*. *Sugya* number one is about the *miluim*. The parshah begins by relating what took place on the eighth day of the *miluim*, the inauguration of the *Mishkan*. You know when that was? Rosh Chodesh Nisan. There are actually a number of *parshiyos* in the Torah that discuss what transpired on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. More events transpired on Rosh Chodesh Nisan than any other day of the year. I'm not saying the biggest events but more things transpired on Rosh Chodesh Nisan than happened on any other day. Our *parshah* discusses the inauguration aspect of the *Mishkan*.

Take a look at the first *passuk*. ויהי ביום השמיני קרא משה לאהרן ולבניו, "On the eighth day, Moshe called to Aharon and his sons," and to the elders of Yisrael." (Vayikra 9:1). Rashi says ויהי ביום השמיני, it was on the eighth day, למלואים, of the inauguration. הוא ראש חדש ניסן, that was Rosh Chodesh Nisan, ביום, שהוקם המשכן בו ביום, on which the Mishkan was erected. You have to know this in the *kishkes*. When you think of Rosh Chodesh Nisan, everybody has to think this is the final day of *hakamas haMishkan*. ונטל עשר עטרות, and that day received ten crowns. There's no other day in the year that has so many crowns and so many things. It's considered a *rishon* to ten different things.

And Moshe called out to the *ziknei Yisrael*. For what reason? להשמיעם, to let them hear, שעל פי הדיבור אהרן נכנס, that it's based on Hakadosh Baruch Hu's *tzivui* (command) that Aharon is entering the service of Kehuna Gedolah, ומשמש בכהונה גדולה ולא יאמרו, and so that people should not say, מאליו נכנס, he went in on his own (Rashi *ibid.*).

Aharon wasn't appointed by Moshe to be the Kohen Gadol. Aharon was appointed by Hakadosh Baruch Hu. *Perek tes* talks about that story. The *perek* concludes by saying, ותצא אש מלפני ה', "a fire went out from before Hashem," ותאכל על המזבח, "and it devoured on the *mizbeach*," את העולה, "the *olah*," ואת החלבים, "and the *chalavim*," וירא כל העם, "and the *am* saw," וירנו, "and they praised Hashem," "they said *rinah*," ויפלו על פניהם, "and all the people fell on their faces" (v. 24).

## THE EVENT: MISAS BNEI AHARON

*Perek yud* discusses the episode we're going to discuss this year *im yertzeh Hashem*. I would like you to know this episode. ויקחו איש ואביהו, "and the Bnei Aharon took" (Vayikra 10:1). Who are the Bnei Aharon? Nadav and Avihu. What did they take? ויקריבו, "and they placed on it *ketores*," וישימו עליה קטרט, "and they put in them a fire," ויתנו בהן אש, "each man took his *machtah*," מחמתו, "and they brought before Hashem," לפני ה', "a strange fire." They brought an אש זרה אשר לא צוה אתם, "a fire that Hashem had not commanded them." And what happened? וימתו, "and devoured them," ותאכל אותם, "a fire went out from before Hashem," ותצא אש מלפני ה', "and they died before Hashem" (*ibid.* 10:2).

Let's take a look at Rashi. They brought an *esh zarah*, they offered up a strange *esh*, a foreign *esh*. Let's take a look. רבי אליעזר, Rabbi Eliezer said that the sons of Aharon died only because they *paskened* a *halachah* in front of Moshe their *rebbe*. They rendered a *halachah* in his presence. They *paskened* something. There was a *shaylah* and they *paskened* the *shaylah* in front of Moshe their *rebbe*. רבי ישמעאל אומר שתווי יין נכנסו למקדש, Rabbi Yishmael says they died because they entered the *mikdash* when they were *shesuyei yayin*, they had drunk some wine. תדע, the proof to this *psht*, שאחר מיתתן הזהיר, after their death Moshe warned the remaining *kohanim* that they should not enter the *mikdash* after drinking wine Even if they just drank a *revi'is*.

Moshe turned to Aharon and said: "that is what Hashem spoke to me about," saying, "with those that are close to Me, I shall be sanctified" (v. 3). Listen to this. Moshe turns to Aharon and he says to his brother, "This episode, what happened now with your kids, is what Hashem spoke to me about saying, 'With those that are close to Me I will become sanctified, and Aharon was silent.'" וידם אהרן, "and Aharon was silent." ועל פני כל העם אכבד, "and in front of the nation I will become honored."

## HASHEM'S HONORED YECHIDEI SEGULA

Rashi says היכן דבר, where did Hashem speak to Moshe about this? Hashem spoke to Moshe before this event. And you know what He told Moshe? ונעדתי שמה לבני ישראל ונקדש בכבדי, "I will appear over there and have a meeting with the Bnei Yisrael and I will become *nikdash*, sanctified, in My glory" (Shemos 29:43). אל תקרי בכבדי אלא במקבדי, don't read it 'in My honor' but 'through My honored ones.' אהרן אחי יודע הייתי שיתקדש הבית במידעיו של מקום והייתי סבור או בי או בר עכשיו רואה אני שהם גדולים, Moshe said to Aharon, Moshe said to Aharon, אמר לו משה לאהרן, Aharon my brother, I knew before this *Mishkan* was erected that this house was going to be sanctified with someone who was a *meyuda'av*, who was known, who was close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. I thought either I was going to die today or you were going to die today. Now I see they are greater than me and you. וידם אהרן, "and Aharon was silent." קבל שכר על שתיקתו, he was *mekabel sechar* for his silence. ומה שכר קבל, Hashem spoke to him privately, when it was said to him alone the *parshah* of forbidding the service in the *Mishkan* after having drunk. וועל פני כל העם אכבד, Rashi says, כשהקב"ה, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu does *din* with *tzaddikim*, עושה דין בצדיקים מתירא ומתעלה ומתקלס, Hashem becomes feared, He becomes elevated and He becomes praised. אם כן באלו כל שכן ברשעים, if this is how *tzaddikim* are punished, then all the more so will *reshaim* be punished. וכן הוא אומר, that's what it says in the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (68:36), Hakadosh Baruch Hu's *middah* of *nora* was demonstrated ממוקדשין אלא ממקדשין, from your holy ones.

Now, we have to realize that this *parshah*, this major episode, took place on the eighth day of the *miluim*. Nadav and Avihu brought an *esh zarah*, whatever that is, and they were killed for that, and Moshe Rabeinu told Aharon, "I knew this was going to happen. I thought

it was going to be me or you. It was them. Obviously they're greater than us."

## THE DATE: ROSH CHODESH NISAN

So we need to understand number one, why wasn't Hakadosh Baruch Hu *merachem* on these great *tzaddikim*? If you're going to tell me for some reason they weren't *zocheh* to *middas harachamim*, but we learned this morning בנים תושיע בנים, Hakadosh Baruch Hu saves the children in the *zechus* of the fathers. So why weren't they *zocheh* to have their lives spared in the *zechus* of Aharon Hakohen? He should lose two of his great children?! And also you have to understand why did Hashem pick *davka* this day? Hashem picked the day that Aharon is chosen and He picks the day that took *asarah ataros*, the day that took ten crowns. Ten crowns, I told you, means, 'this is the *rishon*.'<sup>1</sup> You know what that means?!

It's ראשון למעשה בראשית. This is the first day of creation! It's the day of *ma'aseh bereishis*. It's the first day for the *nesi'im's korbanos*. It was the first day for the *kehunah*. It was the first day for the *avodah*. It was the first day an *esh* came down from *Shamayim*. It was the first day *achilas kadshim* were eaten in the *Mishkan*. It was the day the *Shechinah* came down. ראשון לברך את ישראל, the first time Hakadosh Baruch Hu blessed Yisrael! ראשון לאיסור במות, it was the first time *bamos*, private *mizbeichos* became *asur*. ראשון לחדשים, Rosh Chodesh of all months. It was very special. There was no *yom simchah* for Klal Yisrael like this day! The *gemara* (*Megillah* 10b) says: "on that day there was joy before Hakadosh Boruch Hu similar to the joy that existed on the day on which the heavens and earth were created."

That was the day Hakadosh Baruch Hu chose. A very special day. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu picks specifically this day to burn a fire in Klal Yisrael? What's the *pshtat*? Hakadosh Baruch Hu chooses this day? He couldn't pick another day? Wait a couple of days. Wait until after the party to take them out? What's the *pshtat*? Why did He punish them on this day? Doesn't that mess up the *simchah*? You want this *eivel*? Even by the *eigel*, they had time. Why not here?

We want to try to understand this *sugya*. This is a major *sugya*. This is a *sugya* in *briah haolam*. This is a *sugya* in understanding many things. The superficial understanding is that when a person receives a big *onesh*, that's an indication that he is a *shafel* and a *pachus*, a nobody. Usually, you figure if the guy gets a good whack it's a sign that the *mentsch* is a *shafel*. He's a nobody. He's a fallen down person. You figure he's not *zocheh* to any *ma'aseh* of *rachamim*. But in the *passuk* you see just the opposite. The *passuk* says 'הוא' הוא' Hashem - *yud kay vav kay* - told me. It doesn't say Elokim. It says Hashem told me בקרבי אקדש "I shall become sanctified through *krovai*." What does *krovai* mean? *Bechirai*, My chosen ones. My chosen people. Rashi goes out of his way to explain it. Not just close. It's *bechirai*. These are chosen people.

## LIFNEI HASHEM - ATTESTS TO THEIR GREATNESS

Listen to the words of *Chazal* (*Vayikra* Rabbah 20:8) on this *passuk*. אמר רבי אלעזר המודעי, בא וראה, come and see, כמה קשה מיתתן, You know how hard it was? Every place Hakadosh Baruch Hu mentions their *misah* He mentions their *sirchonam*, their *aveirah*. Every time in the Torah Hakadosh Baruch Hu mentions their *misah* He mentions what they did wrong. What's the reason for that? שלא יאמרו שמעשים מקולקלים, so that people shouldn't have what to say. What does that mean? שהיה להם בסתר, they must have had some messed up *ma'asim* in secret and that's what caused it. That's the *minhag haolam*. When somebody dies a *misah meshuneh* so you say, "You never know what's going on." That's why it says in the *passuk* 'לפני' לפני' ה. Their *misah* was *lefnei Hashem*. What does that mean? מלמד שהיה צער לפני המקום, there was *tza'ar* before Hashem. שהיו בני אהרן, בקרבי אקדש<sup>2</sup>, that's why it says

The Medrash is teaching us an interesting thing. Sometimes an *onesh chamur*, a harsh punishment is an indication of a *ma'alah* and not a *chisaron*. You know where else we saw this? We had a *gemara* in *Kesubos* (8b). The *gemara* says Reish Lakish sent his spokesman, Yehuda bar Nachmani, to say *tanchumim* to Rabbi Chiya bar Abba who lost a child. You know what he told him? "Apparently, you and your son are very *chashuv*. You carry a lot of weight. Because the *tza'ar* that you were caused, and the *tza'ar* that your son left this world, is going to be *mechaper* on the sins of the generation."<sup>3</sup> It says (*Shabbos* 33b): when *tzaddikim* are 'seized,' i.e. when they are *niftar*, that is *mechaper* on the *dor*. So evidently, here too, Hashem chose you to suffer and your child to suffer because of who you are. The *avonos* of the *dor* are great and you're going to be *mechaper* on them. In other words, sometimes a person's greatness allows him to carry the generation.

## SUFFERING FOR A TZADDIK - WHY?

What's the *pshtat*? *Lechorah*, it doesn't make sense. Logic would make us think that if a guy is a *tzaddik*, he's *chashuv*, with him you should be *noheg* with *middas harachamim*. Why do we see that the *middas hadin* is *pogea davka* in *gedolim* and *tzaddikim*?

Now, we've told you many times, what's the reason why Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world? The *tachlis* of the *briah* is *leheitiv*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu built the world to be *megaleh* to the world His *chesed*. So the *kasha* is, it says in the *passuk* just the opposite. It says, 'כי אגני ה' אהב משפט' (Yeshaya 61:8), and it says 'ועז מלך משפט אהב' (Tehillim 91:4). We also say in *Shemoneh Esrei* 'מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט'. Hashem loves *mishpat*. What's the *pshtat*?

The *teretz* is it says in the *Zohar* the following words. It says 'הוא רוצה שהעולם יתקיים בדין' He wants the world should be *meskayem* (sustained) *bedin*. And He wants people to know 'יש דיין ויש דיין' What does that mean?

## DIN VS. RACHAMIM, CHESSED VS. EMES

Everybody has to be familiar with the following *gemara*. There is a two line *gemara* in *Rosh Hashanah* (17b). It says like this. Ifl'ai asks a question. In one *passuk* it says, *verav chessed*, Hashem is *rav chessed*. In another *passuk* it says, Hashem is *emes*. *Chessed*

<sup>1</sup> אמר רבי שמואל בר אמי, מתחלת ברייתו של עולם נתאזה הקדוש ברוך הוא לעשות שפלות בתחתונים, מה נפטר, אם לענין החשבון, לא היה צריך למימר אלא אחד, שנים, שלשה, או ראשון, שני, ושלישי. שמא אחד, שני, שלישי, איתמיה. איתמיה פרע להם הקדוש ברוך הוא, להלן בהקמת המשכן, שנאמר (במדבר ז, יב): ויהי המקריב ביום הראשון את קרבנו, ראשון לברייתו של עולם, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא כאלו באותו יום בראתי את עולמי. תני עשר עשרות נטל אותו היום, ראשון למעשה בראשית, ראשון למלכים, ראשון לנשיאים, ראשון לכהנה, ראשון לשכינה, שנאמר (שמות כה, ח): ועשו לי מקדש, ראשון לברכה, ראשון לעבודה, ראשון לאסור הבמה, ראשון לשחטה בצפון, ראשון לירידת האש, שנאמר (ויקרא י, ב): ותצא אש מלפני ה' וגו' (בראשית רבה ג)

<sup>2</sup> בר קפרא בשם רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר אמר בשביל ארבעה דברים מתו בניו של אהרן, ועל הקרבה, ועל הקרבה, על אש זרה, ועל שלא נטלו עצה זה מזה. על הקרבה, ששכנסו לפני ולפנים. ועל ההקרבה, שהקריבו קרבן שלא נטלו. על אש זרה, אש מבית כירים הכניסו. ועל שלא נטלו עצה זה מזה, שנאמר (ויקרא י, א): איש מחמתו, איש מעצמו עשו שלא נטלו עצה זה מזה. אמר רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר בארבעה מקומות מזכיר מיתתו של בני אהרן ובכלן מזכיר סרחון, כל כך לפיה, להודיעך שלא היה בידם אלא עון זה בלבד. אמר רבי אלעזר המודעי בוא וראה כמה מיתתו של בני אהרן, קרה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא שכל מקום שמזכיר מיתתו מזכיר סרחנם, כל כך לפיה, להודיעך שלא היא פתחון פה לבאי עולם לומר מעשים מקולקלים היו בידם בסתר שעל ידי כן מתו.

<sup>3</sup> חשיב את לאתפוס אדרא - חשוב אתה למעלה לתופסך ואת בניך בעון הדור דק"ל במן צדיקים בדור נתפסים על הדור שנאמר וממקדשי תחלו (יחזקאל ט) [רש"י שם]

means Hashem goes beyond the letter of the law. *Emes* means, that's it. Hashem does the *din*, no *leeway*.<sup>4</sup>

The gemara answers like this. *Betechilah ve'emes*, it starts with *emes*, *ulebasof*, at the end it's *verav chessed*. The *hanhagah* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *betechilah emes*. Now what does that mean to say? The Maharal in *Nesiv Hateshuvah* explains that this means that the *ratzon* of Hashem is to conduct Himself *al pi middas ha'emes* and *al pi middas din*. But if you can't stand based on *emes* then Hakadosh Baruch Hu does *chessed*. And certainly, it's much better if a person could stand *mitzad* the *emes*. דברים גדולים הם אלו דברים לדברים. *Middas hadin* is not *bedieved*. *Adaraba, punkt fakhert*, it's greater. The *ikar* point of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is to *megaleh middas hadin*. So we have to understand *lechorah* if Hashem wants to be *meitiv* how does the *middas hadin* show that? If He wants to be *meitiv* He wouldn't do *chessed*. If *al korchacha* the purpose of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is to be *meitiv*, somehow by showing *middas hadin* that's the way of being *meitiv*.

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato, the Ramchal, mentions this *yesod* in many places. He says as follows. You have to know that *avada* the *reishis retzono* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *leheitiv*. But in order to be *meitiv* a complete *tovah*, He has to make *mishpat*, in order that at the end there should be *sechar amiti*, true *sechar*. It's like a person who trains his son, to perfect his son in order to make *tov* with him in the end. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, he says, is *tachlis hatov*. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu realized that if a person is not going to have *yagia kapav* - if he's not going to earn it - then he's not going to be an "owner" on that *tov*, says Ramchal. And if you're not an owner of that *tov*, you know what's going to happen he says? You're going to end up being embarrassed. You're going to feel like a baby.

Here is a kid who did something good. The father gave him \$5. Pssshhh! He's in seventh heaven. Wow! Someday he'll look back and he'll realize his father was making a joke. "He was making a fool out of me. He was making *leitzanus*. He was trying to motivate me." That was *chessed*. The action I did really wasn't worth a penny. A *mentsch* has to know you'll have the same *boshes hapanim* like you're *mekabel tzedakah* from somebody else.

He cites the Yerushalmi that says: מאן דאכיל דלאו דייליה, someone who eats what's not his, בהית, he's *mevuyash*, לאסתכולי באפיה, to look in the guy's face.

So he says why does Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to face the world *bemiddas hadin*, like it says *betechilah ve'emes*, and then the end is *rav chessed*? Because through the *hanhagah* of *din* in the world, a person lives and he's able to be *mekabel* over his lifetime what he's earned *bedin*. And then when he comes to the next world to *mekabel* his *sechar*, he'll realize the *emes* in what he really earned. That he wasn't *mekabel matnas chinam*. On the other hand, another guy goes through this world and he's *mekabel matnas chinam*, and he begins to convince himself, "I'm a good man. I'm a big *tzaddik*. Hashem must like me. Look what I have. *Rachamim, zechus avos*. I have this. I have that." There is no point in what he's doing.

I have met the biggest *reshaim* in the world and they thought about how they "beat the system." They always find one good deed that they did, or they think they did, and then they blame Hakadosh Baruch Hu for anything they are missing. They think that one deed should earn them all the *tov* that they have. You have to realize all it is is just *rachamim*.

This *rachamim* sometimes becomes the biggest downfall for a person. Hashem withholds *rachamim*, in order to make you do *teshuvah* and wake up. You have to understand there are no free rides. That's the biggest *chessed*.

Now, there's a famous *Chazal*. Rashi in the first *passuk* in the *chumash* says במחשבה לברואתו במידת הדין Hashem first had a *machshavah* to create the world with *middas hadin* and He saw that the world would not be *meskayem*.<sup>5</sup> The world couldn't exist. So what did He do? He was *makdim middas harachamim* and He partnered it with *middas hadin*. The question is, if Hashem didn't like His original thought, what do we gain by the thought? כך עלה במחשבה. There are very many things that *Chazal* say like that. Remember that story of the *asarah harugei malchus*? So it says that the *malachim* came to Hashem and they said, "Hashem, וזו שוכרה?" You know what Hashem answered? כך עלה במחשבה? What kind of answer is that? You know what the *machshavah* is? This *machshavah* is the *machshavah* of *middas hadin*.

The *tachlis* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants from *brias haolam* is to run this world *al pi middas hadin*. When it says שבתחילה עלה במחשבה לברואתו במידת הדין it means that's the main *she'ifah* (aspiration). *Techilah* means that's the *she'ifah*. That's the goal. *Lebasof*, Hashem wasn't *motzi min hakoach el hapoel* 100%. He didn't do it fully *middas hadin* because He saw the world couldn't exist *al pi middas hadin*. So what did He do? He was *meshatef middas hadin* with *middas harachamim*.

Now, I told you this once before. Maybe many times. You've got to get this into your *kishkes*. There's a famous *Mesillas Yeshtarim* in *perek daled*. He explains that there's no contradiction between *middas harachamim* and *middas hadin*. Really, the world runs by *middas hadin*. *Middas harachamim* is not *makchish* the *din legamrei*. The partnership of *middas harachamim* with *middas hadin* is only to give a person the ability to make it *al pi middas hadin*. Hashem doesn't do *middas harachamim* that contradicts the *din*.

### 'GETTING BY' WITH MIDDAS HARACHAMIM

The *Mesillas Yeshtarim* says, let's say for example, Hashem gives a guy some time. That's not going against the *din*. Hashem's just holding back the *middas hadin* for a while. It's *savlanus*. Hashem is *sovel*. Hashem is patient. *Middas harachamim* buys the guy time. He says, if Hashem gives a guy *tzaros* instead of the *hana'ah* that he had from an *aveirah*, he says, all these things are called *darkei chessed*. They're not *mesnaged* (going against) or *makchish* (contradicting) *mamash middas hadin*. He says, all the types of kindness that Hakadosh Baruch Hu does for a person, is all in order that he should be *zocheh bedin*. All the *rachamim* does is it enables the *middas hadin* to be manifest. Let's say for example a guy is *chayav misah* so Hashem will do *middas harachamim*. He'll make the guy an *ani*. Poverty is likened to death. That's a *chessed*. But the guy shouldn't think, "I should have died." No, you died. Hashem says. You got the *din* by that. Hashem waits for a person with *savlanus*, to help him reach his true goal.

So it comes out that Hashem doesn't run the world with strict *din*. That would mean the second you did something wrong, your hand would fall off. There is also *middas harachamim* and that enables the person to be *zocheh bedin*. That's the *yesod*. The *middas harachamim* buys you time to better yourself, to correct yourself.

Now, not everybody could be *sovel* the pure *middas hadin*. Only *yechidei segulah* are able to be *meskayem bedin gamur* and for those people, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *mesnaheg* with them like it was במחשבה עלה בתחילה. You know why? Because if Hashem has

<sup>4</sup> אילפי, ואמרי לה אילפא רמי, כתיב: "ורב חסד", וכתיב: "ואמת". בתחלה - "ואמת", ולבסוף - "ורב חסד".  
<sup>5</sup> ברא אלקים ולא נאמר ברא ה', שבתחלה עלה במחשבה לברואתו במידת הדין, ראה שאין העולם מתקיים, הקדים מדת רחמים ונתפנה למה"ד, והיינו דכתיב ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים (רש"י)

to treat you with *rachamim*, that's also babying you. Someday we'll realize that the only reason we made it, is because Hashem was *merachem*.

Here is a guy that didn't study during the semester and he flunks the course. So really he should be thrown out of the course to go work selling hamburgers. So what do we say? No. You can take summer school. Then he buckles down and does the job. You know what he thinks? "Ah! I'm a great guy." No, you're a failure, my friend! The only reason why you made it - is *bemiddas harachamim*. Or here is a guy that made it because he got a 66. The guy passed by the skin of his teeth. You're going to compare him with the guy who got a 99?! Or to the guy who got 100?! He's a failure. It's the *middas harachamim* that allows him to get through at 66.

### MIDDAS HADIN - THE HIGH ROAD TO SUCCESS

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu treats *yechidei segulah*, outstanding people, in a special manner, judging them with *midas hadin*. That's the *pshat* in the famous gemara in *Brachos* (17b). The gemara says דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת מהר חורב ואומרת ואתה עומד עליו, a *bas kol* goes out and says, כל העולם כולו נזוין בשביל חנינא בני, the whole world gets *mezonos* because of the Torah and *ma'asim tovim* of Chanina, My son. His dedication for Torah opens up the faucets and it feeds the whole world. But ואתה עומד עליו, you know what I give him? בקב חרובין מערב שבת לערב שבת. *Kav charuvim* is *gornisht*. He had a pile of *charuvim*, carobs, not a *chashuve ma'achal*. This is what he lived on. All the *rishonim* ask a *kasha*. Can't he get a little bit more? Some dates maybe? Some oranges? Some grapefruit? What's the *pshat*?

Because the *pshat* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu was leading him *al pi din gamur*. He cut him no slack. Like it says in the *passuk* regarding the *mann* in the *midbar*, עומר לגולגולת מספר נפשותיכם. When Hashem gave the *mann*, which was the symbol of the *mazon*, everybody got a little portion. Everybody got exactly what they needed, no more, no less. This is how the world *should* ideally exist. Everybody should have the barest minimum and no one should have any more than the other guy. Everybody should take his pill in the morning, and that's it. But when Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees people are not *noheg* like this because people can't tolerate it so Hashem is *meshatef* the *middas harachamim*.

Now, it's not the *pshat* that His *machshavah rishonah* was canceled or erased. It's not the *pshat* that Hashem's *machshavah rishonah* was to use *midas hadin*, and then He retracted, replacing it with *midas harachamim*. No. Hashem still runs the world with *middas Hadin* but complements it with *middas Harachamim* when necessary. It's *rachamim* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us.

### LOW STANDARDS IN PRE-WAR EUROPE

Now, we live today on a much higher level in quality of life than people lived in Europe or throughout history. Today, the biggest *ani* lives, relatively speaking, like an *osher gadol*. He lives like a *melech*. The greatest *shnorer* today has at least two pairs of shoes and two shirts. In Europe, that was unheard of! The average *yeshivah bachur* had nothing. My *rebbe* once explained to me, "You know what the big *olam hazeh* that a *bachur* had in Europe was? I remember seeing it with my own eyes with my father. It was the end of the day, late at night. They had finished learning a whole day. A *minyán* of *bachurim* got around and they had one cigarette." The European cigarettes came with a filter that looked like a tube. There's a little smoke over here on the bottom. It's like a cardboard tube. He said, "The ten *bachurim* got around and they lit it. Each of them got one puff. That was *olam hazeh*. They slept on very thin mattresses or benches. They had nothing.

Rav Leizer Shach tells about how he grew up. He said his father sent him to *yeshivah*. There was no money. He had no income. He *pashut* had nothing. The *bachurim* lived at people's houses. They used to go there for meals. People would shame them. They slept sitting up. Rav Leizer Shach says he didn't even know when his *bar mitzvah* was! One day, he gets a little package in *yeshivah*. Just *tefillin*. No present. Just *tefillin*. His father told him, "*Higia hazman*, start putting on *tefillin*." It's amazing. He left the house with *mamash* zero. People lived like that. They lived like *aniyim*. But we don't live like that now. You know why? It's all *rachamim*, but you should know that we're going to pay for it. We think, "Ahh, we're *tzaddikim*, we have a better life, we have this, we have democracy, we have free will." You know why? Because we look at the *goyim*. It's all part of the challenge. You think, "I'm a little bit like a *tzaddik*. *Baruch Hashem*, I'm learning. I'm *davening*." We're *zocheh* to what Rav Chanina wasn't *zocheh* to.

The truth is Hakadosh Baruch Hu is just treating us with *rachamim gedolim umerubim*. We're living off the fat, off the ATM card. Someday, we're going to find out we have *mamash boshes panim*, what a *bizayon* we're having. And we don't even say thank you to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. All we ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu is, "Why not more?!"

That's the *pshat* in the gemara in *Menachos* (29b) that when Moshe Rabbeinu saw Rabbi Akiva being peeled with the iron combs, he said, Ribono Shel Olam, זו תורה וזו שכורה, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu said שתוק כך עלה במחשבה לפני, "Be silent; this intention arose before Me." What does that mean? The *teretz* is Hashem told him, that's *middas hadin*. Rabbi Akiva lives *al pi middas hadin gamur*. There's no *vitur*. Rabbi Akiva lives without *rachamim*. He's from the *yechidei segulah*. *Yechidei segulah* live *al pi a hanhagah elyonah she'olsah be'machshavah* because that's the greatest *hatavah* for Rabbi Akiva. Right now you don't see it, but when you're going to come to the next world and you're going to see Rabbi Akiva's *olam haba* - you're going to understand clearly - all this is just for his good in the *olam hanetzach*.

### AT LEAST SHOW APPRECIATION

Today we're not on that *madreigah*. But a person has to realize that every single day that you have \$30 in your pocket, that's *rachamim*. I talk to people from Europe sometimes and I ask them, "Could you find a guy in a *shul* who had fifty rubles in his pocket?" It wasn't like that in Vilna before the war. What did you find? How many rubles? What was the average?

My *zeida* told me, "You have no idea." He said about life in Europe before the war, "I came from America. I saw people walking, and carrying their shoes in their hands. I'm looking at a person thinking, why are you carrying your shoes in your hands? I mean what's the purpose of shoes? To me, it was a very strange thing. People carrying their shoes in their hands! I couldn't imagine it. You know why they did that? They didn't want to ruin the shoes. If there was a puddle, you took your shoes off and you walked in your socks. Socks you could wash. Socks you could dry. Your pants you could wash. Your pants could dry."

Some people barely had pants to wear. He told me that his clothes were very limited. He said, "In America I would have never done it, but when I went to Lita," he said, "I wore my winter coat for most of the summers I was there. I wore a winter coat all summer long.

You know why? Because my pants were completely ruined and my jacket was ruined. I didn't have a penny." He said, "You know what I ate for Shabbos? There was no *yeshivah* on Shabbos. I ate two hard boiled eggs for seven years, on Shabbos. That was my *chulent*. Two hard boiled eggs. And I thought I was in Gan Eden. There was no one to turn to. The *yeshivah* was nice. The *yeshivah* even helped you out here and there a *shtickel*, but you know, everything costs money. Money was short. It was a different world." He said, "I couldn't believe it. I'm coming from America," he said. "I would have felt funny wearing a coat in the summer. But over there I didn't even feel funny," he said. "I wasn't the only one doing it. Other people had the same problem. They had no pants. Where could you get a pair of pants? You go to some guy and say do you have a whole pair of pants? There was no such thing as a whole pair of pants in those days."

My *zeida* said he remembers once he was walking and he saw a *goy* collecting. He went to a hut, a *yiddishe* hut that was a hovel and knocks on the door. What's there to get from this Yid? He doesn't have a penny to give. Then the *goy* walks out. "At first," my *zeida* said, "I couldn't even recognize what he was holding in his hand. He was holding this Yid's worn out shoes in his hand! He came out of the house dancing. It was as if he had just won the sweepstakes." From this *alter* poor Yid's *shmatka* deluxe that had holes in every part of the shoe. My *zeida* said it looked to him like tattered leather. It wasn't *shayach* to be worn anymore. And the *goy* was ecstatic! He said, "You walked in certain parts of Europe, not all over but certain parts, and people walked without shoes." He never heard of such a thing. He came from America. He never saw that in America. Even in the early 1900s there was no such thing.

You have to know, the way we live today is *mamash* pure *rachamim* from Hashem. We have to remember it's *rachamim gedolim* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is doing with us and we don't deserve this.<sup>6</sup>

## AHARON'S COMFORT - HIS SONS WERE TRULY RIGHTEOUS

That's the *pshat* in the story with Aharon Hakohen. Rashi (ibid.) says on the pasuk הוא אשר דבר ה' לאמר בקרבי, Hashem told Moshe Rabeinu, בקרבי - בקרבי, I'm going to be *makedesh* Myself through my chosen ones. עקשיו רוצה אני, they're greater than you and me. וידים אהרן, and Aharon was silent. You know what Chazal say וידים אהרן means? Everybody thinks וידים אהרן means he was silent. He kept his mouth closed. That's not what the *pshat* is. Listen to the language of Chazal. היה לו הדבר לנחמה, he was comforted. לך נאמר, and that's why it says רע דבר לא ידע דבר רע. He thought maybe his sons were *reshaim*. They made a big mistake. So Moshe Rabeinu was *mechadesh* to Aharon Hakohen that the *middas hadin* was *pogea* in his two sons and its *shoresh* was from that תחילה עלתה במחשבה. From the *hanhagah* that was *kodem* the *middas harachamim*. And this *hanhagah* of *middas hadin* was *nekiyah*, was clean and clear with no *rachamim*. And the only ones who are *zocheh* to this are *kedoshei elyon*. Moshe said, "Only the *bechirai*. I thought it was me. I thought it was you." That's how you get the full benefit from *yegia kapav* without any impression of what we call *nehama dekesufa*, bread of shame. *Sechar yegia bedin gamur*.

This *yedia*, this knowledge was what comforted Aharon. He understood. The *onesh hachamor* testified to their greatness!

So now we understand why Hashem didn't have *rachmanus* on the sons of Aharon. Because it was a *middas hadin*. Hashem wanted them to be *zocheh*, to the highest *magreiga*. But the other *shaylah* we had was, why did Hashem have to do this *davka* on this great day of *hakamas haMishkan*? He couldn't pick another day? Why did he have to do it on this great day of *simchah* in Klal Yisrael. We will discuss this point, iy"H, at a later time.

## IN CONCLUSION

Hashem loves *mishpat* and He wants the world to be sustained through it; through *mishpat* people know that there's a *din* and a *Dayan*. However, although the *ratzon* of Hashem is to conduct the affairs of the world *al pi midas hadin* - which is ultimately better for us - if we cannot withstand the *din*, Hashem employs the *midah* of *chesed*. On a deeper level, the *hanhagah* of Hashem really starts with the *middah* of *emes* and *din*, as the Maharal says, and the *middah* of *chesed* is employed when we cannot withstand the *din*. If Hashem's ultimate desire is to be *meitiv* to His creations, how does employing the *middah* of *emes* or *din* accomplish that? The answer, according to Ramchal, is that in order to bestow the most complete *tov*, Hashem has to employ a system of *mishpat*. *Mishpat* is the only mechanism that enables us to actually earn *sechar* for our actions based on our own efforts, and not be embarrassed with undeserving handouts of *sechar* based purely on *chesed* and *rachamim*. Incredibly, the patience that Hashem shows us with His *chesed* and *rachamim* is purposeful, as it enables us to withstand spiritual cleansing so that we can be *zoicheh* and *yoitze be'din*! There are two ways to view *sechar* we wish to receive. One way is to accept what we earn *ba'din* as the ultimate purpose of Creation, as depicted in the tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu on the great day of *hakamas haMishkan*. Another way is to acknowledge the myriads of everyday *rachamin* and *chesed* from Hashem in our lives, and to understand them in the greater context of being *yoitze be'din* - because they give us a golden opportunity to correct ourselves in a manner that we can withstand.

<sup>6</sup> Participant: What is the whole purpose of [making it this way?] Answer: Because we live in a world that Hashem is trying to encourage us. That's the reason Hakadosh Baruch Hu does it that way [and gives a big bounty of shefah]. Participant: Is this in order to make us show *rachamim* to someone else? Answer: To show *rachamim* to someone else, [yes]. Also, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is trying to make it easier for us, to encourage us to learn. Because today if we're missing the *basar shamein* we could lose our minds already. We're so spoiled. We need our steak. [We say,] "What kind of life is that? למה לי חיים? It's not *kedai* anymore."