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MISHPATIM משפטים

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

INSIGHTS INTO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Dedicated to

Emmanuel (Mendel) Karp

1905 - 1989

son of Bernard (Berl) and Rose (Rezele)

Manny Karp was the first of his family born in the United States, in 1905. His first language was Yiddish. Losing his mother to the Spanish Flu shaped his resilience and commitment to helping others, ultimately leading to a career as a guidance counselor in Philadelphia public schools. He also served many years as the director of Camp Akiba in the Poconos.

Karp's legacy is characterized by his optimism and unwavering dedication to learning and mentorship. Emmanuel Karp died in 1989.

MISHPATIM I | משפטים א

Adapted from sichos delivered on Simchas Torah and Shabbos Bereishis, 5715 (1954)

Introduction

One of the hallmarks of a successful communicator is the ability to convey a message in a manner that can be easily and comfortably accepted by his listeners. Even when his theme is one which could easily cause them to feel threatened, he knows how to couch it in terms and frameworks that they can understand and accept without being intimidated.

The *sichah* that follows is a prime example. The Rebbe saw that portions of American Jewry were becoming conformist, taking on the norms of contemporary Western society instead of standing out as individuals and preserving a Jewish way of life. Seeking to warn against such an approach, he highlighted the threat this posed to Jewish continuity. But watch how he communicates that message!

He begins with a seemingly straightforward discussion of Jewish law regarding lost and entrusted articles and a guardian's responsibility for them. Through careful analysis, he transforms this legal framework into a powerful metaphor about spiritual accountability.

Rather than directly criticizing his audience for faults they may possess, he helps them discover how their Divine soul – a precious article that G-d entrusted to them – requires vigilant protection against the influences that might diminish its unique character.

Using the four types of lost articles mentioned in the Torah as archetypes for spiritual failings, he notes that the Talmud finds the Torah's mention of lost sheep a matter that is particularly difficult to understand. In a spiritual light, the Rebbe explains, the difficulty is in the very possibility of a Jew becoming a lost sheep.

A Jew is Yisrael – someone with a distinctive and unique potential that can overcome all challenges.[1] The Rebbe asks – and challenges – his readers: How can it be that a Jew becomes lost, caught up in the sway of a culture that is not his or her own?

Masterfully weaving together legal discourse and spiritual guidance, the Rebbe heightens our awareness of the Divine soul we all possess and provides direction that empowers each of us to express it in our daily conduct.

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1. See *Bereishis* 32:29.

When Lost Souls Return

Legal Claims, Spiritual Parallels

1. This week's Torah reading states,[1] **"Concerning all charges of deceit... regarding any lost article about which one will allege, *Ki hu ze* ('It is this'), the claims of both parties shall come before the judges.**[2] Whoever the judges declare guilty **shall pay double to his fellow."**

The Talmud[3] **explains that this verse refers to a guardian who claims that the entrusted item was lost** while in his possession, **a claim that would** normally **exempt him from payment. {For an unpaid guardian, this exemption applies when he claims** the article was lost through **theft or misplacement, while for a paid guardian it applies when he claims** the article was lost as a result of **unavoidable factors** (*oness).*} When the guardian **takes an oath to support his claim,** and later **it is revealed that he had been negligent with the deposit and had taken a false oath,**[4] **the law is that "the claims of both parties… come before the judges," and** the guardian is required to **"pay double to his fellow."**

As has been frequently discussed, all matters within *nigleh,* the revealed, primarily legalistic **dimension of Torah, have spiritual counterparts. Indeed, it is precisely because these matters exist in the spiritual realm that they subsequently become manifest in the revealed dimension** of the Torah, for every entity or concept in the material plane derives from its spiritual source.

א. אִין הַיְינְטִיקֶער סֶדְרָה שְׁטֵייט, עַל כָּל דְּבַר פֶּשַׁע גו׳ עַל כָּל אֲבֵידָה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר כִּי הוּא זֶה עַד הָאֱלֹקִים יָבֹא דְּבַר שְׁנֵיהֶם גו׳ יְשַׁלֵּם שְׁנַיִם לְרֵעֵהוּ. זָאגְט דִי גְמָרָא, אַז דֶער פָּסוּק רֶעדט וֶועגְן אַ שׁוֹמֵר, וָואס טַעֲנֶה׳ט אַז דֶער פִּקָּדוֹן אִיז בַּיי אִים פַאֲרְלָארְן גֶעגַאנְגֶען, וָואס מִיט דֶער טַעֲנָה וֶוערְט עֶר פָּטוּר פוּן צוּ בַּאצָאלְן: בַּיי אַ שׁוֹמֵר חִנָּם – טַעֲנַת גְּנֵיבָה וַאֲבֵידָה אוּן בַּיי אַ שׁוֹמֵר שָׂכָר – טַעֲנַת אוֹנְסִין, אוּן עֶר הָאט גֶעשְׁוָוארְן אוֹיף זַיְין טַעֲנָה, אוּן צוּם סוֹף הָאט זִיךְ אַרוֹיסְגֶעוויזְן, אַז עֶר הָאט גָאר פּוֹשֵׁעַ גֶעוֶוען אִין דֶעם פִּקָּדוֹן אוּן מוֹעֵל גֶעוֶוען[א] אִין דֶער שְׁבוּעָה – אִיז דֶער דִּין: עַד הָאֱלֹקִים יָבֹא דְּבַר שְׁנֵיהֶם גו׳ יְשַׁלֵּם שְׁנַיִם לְרֵעֵהוּ.

מֶען הָאט שׁוֹין גֶערֶעדט פִּיל מָאל, אַז אַלֶע עִנְיָנִים פוּן גַּלְיָא דְתוֹרָה זַיְינֶען פַאַראַן אוֹיךְ אִין רוּחְנִיּוּת, אוּן אַדְּרַבָּה, וַוְייל דִי עִנְיָנִים זַיְינֶען פַאַראַן אִין רוּחְנִיּוּת דֶערְפַאר קוּמֶען זֵיי דֶערְנָאךְ אַרָאפּ אִין גַּלְיָא.

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1. *Shmos* 22:8.

2. The word *elokim* – translated as "judges" – also serves as a name for G-d, *Elokim,* referring specifically to the attribute of G-dliness associated with judgment.

3. *Bava Kama* 106b, 107b.

4. **See** sec. 10 of **the *maamar* entitled *Mashbi'an oso* (*Kitzurim VeHaaros LeTanya,* p. 57ff).** There it is explained that there is a connection between *mashbi'an,* "cause to take an oath," and *masbia,* "satisfy," or "sate," **as in the verse** (*Tehillim* 145:16), **"[You] satisfy every living being."**

Similarly, parallels to **the laws concerning negligence, misappropriation of a deposit, taking a false oath, and the verdict – that "the claims of both parties shall come before the judges" – also exist in the spiritual realm.**

אוֹיךְ דֶער דִין פוּן פְּשִׁיעָה, שְׁלִיחוּת יָד בְּפִקָּדוֹן, מְעִילָה בִּשְׁבוּעָה אוּן דֶער פְּסַק דִין – עַד הָאֱלֹקִים יָבֹא דְּבַר שְׁנֵיהֶם וגו׳, זַיְינֶען אוֹיךְ דָא אִין רוּחְנִיוּת.

Defining the True Reality

2. The spiritual counterpart of the above concepts is reflected in **a *maamar* delivered by the *Tzemach Tzedek*[5] interpreting the verse** cited above, **"Concerning all charges of misappropriation...."** The *maamar* explains how the verse **applies to the spiritual service within a person's soul.**

ב. כְּבוֹד קְדֻשַּׁת אֲדוֹנֵנוּ מוֹרֵנוּ וְרַבֵּנוּ דֶער צֶמַח צֶדֶק נִשְׁמָתוֹ עֵדֶן, טַיְיטשְׁט אוֹיס אִין אַ מַאֲמָר דֶעם פָּסוּק עַל כָּל דְּבַר פֶּשַׁע גו׳ אִין דֶער עֲבוֹדָה רוּחְנִית פוּן נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם.

To review a portion of this discourse relevant to our topic while making several possible additions:

וועט מֶען אִיבֶּערְרֵיידְן אַ טֵייל פוּן דֶעם מַאֲמָר וואָס אִיז שַׁיָּיךְ דֶערְצוּ מִיט אֵיינִיקֶע הוֹסָפוֹת בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְשָׁר:

Every Jew has been entrusted by G-d with an article – his soul – for safekeeping.[6] He is charged with **guarding it, ensuring that it remains intact and unblemished. Moreover,** he must work to **elevate the soul to an even higher level than before its descent** into this world. Indeed, that is the reason for the soul's descent, for **the soul's descent into the body is "a descent for the purpose of ascent, as is well-known."**[7]

בַּיי יֶעדֶער אִידְן גֶעפִינְט זִיךְ דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְנְ׳ס אַ פִּקָּדוֹן, דָאס אִיז דִי נְשָׁמָה[ב], וועלְכֶע עֶר דַארְף הִיטְן, זִי זָאל אִיבֶּערְבְלַייבְּן בִּשְׁלֵימוּת אוּן נִיט נִפְגָּם ווערְן חַס וְשָׁלוֹם, אוּן נָאךְ מֶער, מַעֲלֶה זַיְין דִי נְשָׁמָה נָאךְ הֶעכֶער ווִי זִי אִיז גֶעווֶען פַאר דֶער יְרִידָה, ווִי בַּאוואוּסְט אַז יְרִידַת הַנְּשָׁמָה בַּגּוּף אִיז – יְרִידָה צוֹרֶךְ עֲלִיָּה.

Every **Jew** takes **an oath to watch over his soul. As our Sages state,**[8] **when a soul is about to descend below, "It is administered an oath, 'Be righteous and do not be wicked.'"**

דִי שְׁמִירָה וואָס אַ אִיד דַארְף הִיטְן דִי נְשָׁמָה, אִיז פַארְבּוּנְדְן אוֹיךְ מִיט אַ שְׁבוּעָה, כְּמַאֲמַר רַזַ״ל[ג], אַז בְּשַׁעַת אַ נְשָׁמָה דַארְף אַרָאפְּגֵיין לְמַטָּה, מַשְׁבִּיעִין אוֹתוֹ תְּהִי צַדִּיק וְאַל תְּהִי רָשָׁע.

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5. The identity of the exact *maamar* to which the Rebbe referred is unclear. Some of the concepts mentioned in the *sichah* are found in *Or HaTorah, Shmos, Mishpatim,* p. 1076ff. There are also *maamarim* from the Rebbe *Maharash* (*Toras Shmuel, 5634,* pp. 128ff., p. 192ff.) that dwell on these subjects. As is well known, many of the Rebbe Maharash's *maamarim* are based on *maamarim* from his father, the *Tzemach Tzedek.* It is possible that the *maamarim* from *Toras Shmuel* cited above were based on *maamarim* from the *Tzemach Tzedek* that are not extant.

6. ***Shabbos* 152b, *et al.***

7. This term, borrowed out of context from *Makkos* 7b, is a fundamental chassidic principle, implying that all spiritual descents ultimately lead to a higher purpose.

8. ***Nidah* 30b;** cited in the beginning of *Tanya.* Based on the connection between *mashbi'an,* "cause to take an oath," and *masbia,* "satisfy," mentioned in footnote 4, taking "an oath" is interpreted as sating the soul with sufficient spiritual potentials to overcome the challenges involved in its descent to this material world.

However, given the nature of this world, there is the possibility of negligence and deceit; the treasured energies that the soul has been given may be misused. In that vein, the verse continues, **"Concerning all charges of deceit…"** – referring to a situation in which **a person is negligent with** the soul that was **entrusted** to him **and violates the oath.**

What leads to the misappropriation of the soul's energies? The nature of instigators is reflected in the verse, which names **"an ox, a donkey, a sheep, and a garment." As will be explained, each of these represents different types** of tendencies **within the animal soul[9] that lead to "any lost article" – the Divine soul becoming lost, (Heaven forbid). This culminates in** the person mistakenly **saying, *Ki hu zeh,* "It is this."[1]** *Hu,* "it," and *zeh,* "this," can both be seen as metaphoric terms. Because his soul becomes lost in this world, he errs and **mistakes *hu,* "it,"** an indefinite term, referring to something whose identity is vague, **for *zeh,* "this,"** the true reality. Material existence rather than spiritual truth is then considered *zeh,* what is genuine and real.

In a true and ultimate **sense, *zeh* ("this") refers** solely **to holiness and G-dliness. That term cannot be used regarding anything** other than **G-d. There are two reasons** for this absolute statement:

a) In general, ***zeh* means "this is what is."** Such definitive and absolute existence **can only be attributed to G-d. The** apparent **existence of a created being** – what we see – **is not its** true reality. Its true reality is **the Divine life-force that continuously brings it into existence from absolute nothingness. In the words of *Rambam,*[10] "There is no true existence other than He."**

b) ***Zeh*** also **implies "here it is,"** meaning **wherever and whenever one is,** it is present; about it, **one can** always **say "here it is." This** type of omnipresence **can only apply to G-dliness because every created being is limited and does not exist everywhere. Therefore, the term *zeh* cannot be said about** a created being. **By contrast, "The name**

"עַל כָּל דְּבַר פֶּשַׁע", אַז עֶר אִיז אַ פּוֹשֵׁעַ אִין פִּקָּדוֹן אוּן מוֹעֵל אִין דֶער שְׁבוּעָה, – מִצַּד וָואס קוּמְט עֶס? זָאגְט דֶער פָּסוּק – "עַל שׁוֹר עַל חֲמוֹר עַל שֶׂה וְעַל שַׂלְמָה", דָאס זַיְינֶען פְּרָטֵי סוּגִים אִין דֶעם נֶפֶשׁ הַבַּהֲמִית (כְּדִלְהַלָּן), וֶועלְכֶע בְּרֶענְגֶען דֶעם "עַל כָּל אֲבֵידָה", אַז דֶער נֶפֶשׁ הָאֱלֹקִית וֶוערְט רַחֲמָנָא לִצְלַן פַאַרְלָארְן. בִּיז "אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר כִּי הוּא זֶה", אַז אוֹיף "הוּא" זָאגְט עֶר אַז דָאס אִיז "זֶה".

"זֶה" – בַּאֲמִיתִּית הַמּוּבָן – גֵייט אוֹיף קְדוּשָּׁה וֶאלֹקוּת. אוֹיף קֵיין זַאךְ קֶען מֶען נִיט זָאגְן: "זֶה", נָאר אוֹיף דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן, מִצַּד צְוֵויי טְעָמִים:

א) "זֶה" מֵיינְט: דָאס אִיז "דָאס", אוּן "דָאס" קֶען מֶען זָאגְן נָאר אוֹיפְן אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן. נִבְרָא אִיז דָאךְ זַיְין מְצִיאוּת נִיט עֶר, נָאר דֶער חַיּוּת אֱלֹקִי וָואס אִיז אִים מְהַוֶּה תָּמִיד מֵאַיִן לְיֵשׁ, וּבִלְשׁוֹן הָרַמְבַּ"ם: אֵין שָׁם מָצוּי אֱמֶת מִלְּבַדּוֹ.

ב) "זֶה" מֵיינְט: אָט דָא אִיז דָאס, וֶוען מֶען אִיז אוּן וואוּ מֶען אִיז קֶען מֶען זָאגְן, אָט אִיז דָאס. אוּן דָאס אִיז שַׁיָּיךְ נָאר אוֹיף אֱלֹקוּת, וָוארוּם יֶעדֶער נִבְרָא אִיז מוּגְבָּל, עֶר אִיז נִיטָא אוּמֶעטוּם, וּבְמֵילָא אִיז נִיט שַׁיָּיךְ זָאגְן אוֹיף דֶעם "זֶה". אָבֶער שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם אִיז שָׁגוּר בְּפִי

9. The vitality granted to a person that grants life to his body, controls his conscious functioning, and is the source for his natural drives and tendencies.

10. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 1:4.

of Heaven is continually on everyone's lips."[11] **Only regarding G-d, who exists everywhere,** of whom it is said **"no place is void of Him,"**[12] **can one say "here He is" –** ***zeh*****.**

כֹּל[ד]. נָאר דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער וָואס עֶר אִיז דָא אוּמֶעטוּם, דְּלֵית אֲתַר פָּנוּי מִנֵּיהּ, אִיז אוֹיף אִים שַׁיָּיךְ זָאגְן, אָט אִיז עֶר – "זֶה".

However, due to the concealment and hiding of Divine truth **caused by the animal soul,** one can err and **confuse** things, **referring to** ***hu*** "it," material reality, **as** ***zeh*** "this," a term that should be reserved for G-d.

אָבֶּער מִצַּד דֶעם הֶעְלֵם וְהֶסְתֵּר פוּן נֶפֶשׁ הַבַּהֲמִית פַארְבַּיְיט מֶען, אוּן מֶען זָאגְט אוֹיף "הוּא" אַז דָאס אִיז "זֶה".

The Possibility of Spiritual Loss

3. In the ***maamar*** cited previously, **the** ***Tzemach Tzedek*** **explains the** counterparts of the **four categories mentioned in the verse,** an ox, a donkey, a sheep, and a garment, as they exist **within the animal soul. An ox refers to a "goring ox,"** an ox known to gore other animals or people without provocation.[13] **A donkey** refers to spiritual frigidity, one who **"feels cold [even] in the heat of summer"**[14] – the intense warmth of holiness. Another term for **a garment,** ***salmah,*** is *beged.* That term shares its root letters with the word *boged,* meaning "[to] act treacherously," **as in the verse,**[15] **"the treacherous ones have dealt treacherously."** Also, the garments refer to our powers of thought, speech, and action,[16] which can be soiled when they are misappropriated. Lastly, **"sheep"** results in the Jewish people reaching the state where **"Yisrael are like scattered sheep."**[17]

ג. אִין דִי פְּרָטֵי הַמַּדְרֵיגוֹת פוּן נֶפֶשׁ הַבַּהֲמִית, וָואס דֶער פָּסוּק אִיז זֵיי כּוֹלֵל אִין דִי פִיר סוּגִים: שׁוֹר, חֲמוֹר, שֶׂה אוּן שַׂלְמָה, אִיז כְּבוֹד קְדֻשַּׁת אַדְמוּ"ר הַצֶּמַח צֶדֶק מְבַאֵר אִין מַאֲמָר, אַז שׁוֹר מֵיינְט שׁוֹר נַגָּח. חֲמוֹר – חַמְרָא בִּתְקוּפַת תַּמּוּז קְרִירָא לֵיהּ. שַׂלְמָה – וּבֶגֶד בּוֹגְדִים בָּגָדוּ, אוּן שֶׂה – שֶׂה פְּזוּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל.

One must guard against all these **types of** negative tendencies stemming from the **animal soul, for they can all lead to the loss of the G-dly soul (Heaven forbid). Nevertheless, in every era, there is a** particular ***kelipah*** **(evil tendency), against which one must stand guard with special** vigilance. **Therefore, we will focus primarily on explaining the concept of "sheep," which is particularly relevant to our generation.**

הֲגַם מֶען דַארְף זִיךְ אוֹיסְהִיטְן פוּן אַלֶע סוּגֵי נֶפֶשׁ הַבַּהֲמִית, וָוארוּם זֵיי אַלֶע קֶענֶען בְּרֶענְגֶען צוּ אֲבֵידַת נֶפֶשׁ הָאֱלֹקִית רַחֲמָנָא לִצְלַן, פוּנְדֶעסְטְוֶועגְן, אִיז אִין יֶעדֶער זְמַן דָא זַיְין קְלִיפָּה, אוּן מֶען דַארְף זִיךְ שְׁטֶעלְן בְּיִחוּד אַנְטְקֶעגְן אִיר. דֶערְפַאר וֶועט מֶען זִיךְ אָפְּשְׁטֶעלְן בְּעִיקָר אוֹיף מְבַאֵר זַיְין דֶעם עִנְיָן פוּן "שֶׂה", וָואס דָאס אִיז נוֹגֵעַ בְּיִחוּד אִין אוּנְזֶער דוֹר.

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11. Literally, "in the mouths of all." See *Sefer HaMaamarim 5709*, p. 20, footnote 132. **See also** ***Torah Or,*** **p. 14b,** which states, **"even infants** know that G-d exists."

12. *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun* 57.

13. See *Shmos* 21:29.

14. *Shabbos* 53a. "Summer" is being used as a translation for "the season of Tammuz," the Jewish month that falls in the midst of the summer.

15. *Yeshayahu* 24:16.

16. See *Tanya,* ch. 3.

17. *Yirmeyahu* 50:17. The verse is referring to the state of the Jewish people in exile.

When the Strong Show Weakness

4. The verse, "Yisrael are like scattered sheep," is problematic: "Yisrael" is the loftier name of the Jewish people. By contrast, the description "**scattered sheep" indicates a deficiency. Why then does** the verse **specifically mention** the superior name, **Yisrael, when describing** the state of the Jewish people as **"scattered sheep"?**

This is precisely the issue that troubled **the Prophet** Yirmeyahu. He observed that **the Jews are distinguished by the name "Yisrael,"** a name given because, **"you have contended (*sarisa*) with angels (*elokim*) and with men and have prevailed."**[18] This name implies **that a Jew has the capacity to be master not only over men but even over angels. How then is it possible for him** to act like a docile sheep, **without** showing inner **strength,** allowing **himself to be drawn after every** outside influence **to the extent that he becomes** even like **a lost sheep?!**

This was also the claim of Haman in the Purim story.[19] The charge he made on the earthly plane to his king, **Achashveirosh,** represents the charge **the heavenly prosecutor** made before **G-d,** the King, ***she'achris vereishis shelo*, "to whom the end and the beginning belong."**[20] Both Haman and the heavenly prosecutor claimed, **"There is one nation scattered and dispersed among the peoples... and they do not keep the king's laws."**[21] The deeper meaning of this claim is: **"There is one nation" – there exists a nation whose** very **essence is *echad* (oneness),** i.e., **they have the power to establish unity everywhere, even "on the earth,"** as it is written **"one nation on the earth."**[22] **However, despite their inherent greatness, they are "scattered and dispersed among the peoples" – they are** swayed and **influenced by everyone and,**

ד. אויף דעם וואָס עס שְׁטֵייט שֶׂה פְזוּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל, פְּרֶעגְט מֶען אַ קַשְׁיָא: יִשְׂרָאֵל אִיז דָאךְ אַ שֵׁם הַמַּעֲלָה, אוּן שֶׂה פְּזוּרָה אִיז אַ חִסָּרוֹן, אִיז פַארְוָואס בְּשַׁעַת עֶר ווִיל זָאגְן שֶׂה פְּזוּרָה, דֶערְמָאנְט עֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל דַּוְקָא? נָאר דֶער עִנְיָן אִיז, אַז דָאס פְּרֶעגְט טַאקֶע דֶער נָבִיא. ווִיבַּאלְד אַז אִידְן ווֶערְן בַּאצֵייכְנְט מִיט דֶעם נָאמֶען יִשְׂרָאֵל – כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹקִים וְעִם אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל, דָאס הֵייסְט אַז אַ אִיד הָאט בְּכֹחַ צוּ זַיְין אַ בַּעַל־הַבַּיִת – שָׂרִיתָ – נִיט נָאר אוֹיף מֶענְטשְׁן – אֲנָשִׁים – נָאר אוֹיךְ אוֹיף מַלְאָכִים – אֱלֹקִים – הַיְינְט ווִי קוּמְט עֶס אַז עֶר הָאט נִיט אִין זִיךְ קֵיין תּוֹקֶף, בִּיז אַז עֶר שְׁלֶעפְּט זִיךְ נָאךְ נָאךְ יֶעדֶער אֵיינֶעם, עֶר אִיז אַ שֶׂה פְּזוּרָה?!

אוּן דָאס אִיז אוֹיךְ גֶעווֶען דִי טַעֲנָה פוּן הָמָן'עֶן, דֶער מְקַטְרֵג אִין הִימְל, צוּ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ זֶה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁאַחֲרִית וְרֵאשִׁית שֶׁלּוֹ: יֶשְׁנוֹ עַם אֶחָד מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים גו' וְאֶת דָּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עוֹשִׂים. "יֶשְׁנוֹ עַם אֶחָד", עֶס אִיז דָא אַ פָאלְק וואָס זַיְין מַהוּת אִיז – אֶחָד, זֵיי קָאנֶען מַאכְן אֶחָד אוּמֶעטוּם, בִּיז בָּאָרֶץ, ווִי עֶס שְׁטֵייט גּוֹי אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ, אוּן נִיט קוּקְנְדִיק אוֹיף זֵייעֶר גְרוֹיסְקַייט, זַיְינֶען זֵיי מְפֻזָּר וּמְפוֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים, זֵיי ווֶערְן נִתְפָּעֵל פוּן יֶעדֶער אֵיינֶעם,

18. *Bereishis* 32:29.

19. *Parshas Mishpatim* is often read on the *Shabbos* on which the month of Adar – the month in which Purim is celebrated – is blessed. Accordingly, the references to Haman and the *Megilah* carry more relevance.

20. *Me'orei Or, maareches os alef, os* 182. The name Achashveirosh phonetically resembles the words *she'achris vereishis shelo.*

21. *Esther* 3:8.

22. *II Shmuel* 7:23. The mission of the Jewish people is to reveal G-d's oneness in all matters, even those that are earthy.

consequently, "they do not keep the laws of the King" – the King of the Universe.

וּבְמֵילָא, וְאֶת דָּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ – מַלְכּוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם – אֵינָם עוֹשִׂים.

A Giver or a Taker

5. The way things should be is that wherever a Jew goes, he should be able to **control** the direction of **the spiritual** climate – **which constitutes the true reality – of the entire city, the entire surroundings, the entire country. Instead, he becomes lost. Not only does he fail to influence** others, **but he becomes influenced** by them, **mimicking** even **the foolish practices of the country, the environment, and the city.**

In all matters, instead of influencing his entire environment to recognize **that Torah Law**[23] **should be the** ultimate **authority, the surrounding environment becomes his authority. And the final authority,** the one **according to whom he establishes his entire household's conduct** and lifestyle **is "the next-door neighbor."** He makes decisions depending on what he thinks other people will say and how he appears in their eyes.

ה. דער סֵדֶר ווי עֶס דַארְף זַיְין אִיז, אַז אַ אִיד וואוּ עֶר קוּמְט, דַארְף עֶר אָנְפִירְן מִיט דֶער (רוּחְנִיּוּת, וָואס דָאס אִיז דִי אֱמֶת'ע מְצִיאוּת, פוּן דֶער) גַאנְצֶער שְׁטָאט, מִיט דֶעם גַאנְצְן אַרוּם, מִיט דֶער גַאנְצֶער מְדִינָה. אוּן אָנְשְׁטָאט דֶעם, פַארְלִירְט עֶר זִיךְ, אַז נִיט נָאר וָואס עֶר אִיז נִיט קֵיין מַשְׁפִּיעַ, נָאר עֶר וֶוערְט נָאךְ אַ מוּשְׁפָּע, עֶר טוּט־נָאךְ דִי שְׁטוּתִים פוּן דֶער מְדִינָה, פוּן דֶער סְבִיבָה אוּן פוּן דֶער שְׁטָאט.

אָנְשְׁטָאט דֶעם וָואס בַּיי יֶעדֶער זַאךְ דַארְף עֶר פּוֹעֵל'ן אוֹיף דֶער גַאנְצֶער סְבִיבָה אַז דֶער שֻׁלְחָן עָרוּךְ זָאל זַיְין זַייעֶר פּוֹסֵק, אָנְשְׁטָאט דֶעם, אִיז דֶער פּוֹסֵק בַּיי אִים דִי סְבִיבָה, אוּן דֶער "נֶעקְסְט־דָאר" – דֶער שָׁכֵן – אִיז בַּיי אִים דֶער פּוֹסֵק אַחֲרוֹן, וָואס לוֹיט דֶעם שְׁטֶעלְט עֶר אַיְין זַיְין גַאנְצֶע הַנְהָגַת הַבַּיִת.

To Be Proud of Who We Are

6. The fault of acting **like "scattered sheep"** – failing to show **inner strength – extends so far that it is evident even in the education of children. They are the hope and foundation of every** Jewish **home and the entire Jewish people.** But instead of Jewish identity being the foundation of the education and training they give their children, parents allow the outside environment to control the spirit of the home.

Consider: **Even when the Jews were in the harshest exile – the Egyptian exile – "the Jewish people maintained their distinctiveness there."**[24]

ו. דֶער עִנְיָן פוּן שֶׂה פְּזוּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל, וָואס עֶס פֶּעלְט דֶער תּוֹקֶף, אִיז אוֹיף אַזוֹי פִיל, אַז אֲפִילוּ אִין דֶעם חִינּוּךְ פוּן דִי קִינְדֶער וָואס זֵיי זַיְינֶען דָאךְ דִי הָאפֶענוּנְג אוּן יְסוֹד פוּן יֶעדֶער הוֹיז פוּן דֶעם גַאנְצְן אִידִישְׁן פָּאלְק, אוֹיךְ אִין דֶעם זֶעט זִיךְ אָן אַז עֶס פֶּעלְט דֶער תּוֹקֶף.

אוֹיף אִידְן אֲפִילוּ אִין שְׁוֶוערְסְטְן גָלוּת, גָלוּת מִצְרַיִם, שְׁטֵייט, מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצֻיָּנִים שָׁם,

23. In the original, the Rebbe uses the term, the *Shulchan Aruch,* referring to the basic code of Jewish Law.

24. The Pesach *Hagadah,* based on *Sifri, Devarim* 26:5.

"They did not change their names, language, or dress."[25] Yet **in our time, people lack such inner strength. Instead, they seek all manner of strategies** to ensure **that their child's Jewish identity not be noticed.**

When a Jewish child walks in the street, it should be apparent from afar that a Jew is walking, for "Yisrael" is a name of honor. Instead, people are actually ashamed of their Jewishness **and try by all means possible to conceal it.**

שֶׁלֹּא שִׁנּוּ אֶת שְׁמָם לְשׁוֹנָם וּלְבוּשָׁם[ה], אוּן אָנְשְׁטָאט דֶעם, הָאט מֶען אִין אוּנְזֶער צַײְט אִין זִיךְ נִיט קֵיין תּוֹקֶף, אוּן מֶען זוּכְט אַלֶע תַּחְבּוּלוֹת, עֶס זָאל נִיט זַײְן קֶענְטִיק אוֹיפְן קִינְד אַז עֶר אִיז אַ אִיד.

דַארְפְן דַארְף זַײְן, אַז בְּשַׁעַת אַ אִידִישֶׁער קִינְד גֵייט אִין גַאס דַארְף נָאךְ פוּן דֶער וַײְטְן זַײְן קֶענְטִיק אַז עֶס גֵייט אַ אִיד, וָוארוּם יִשְׂרָאֵל אִיז דָאךְ אַ שֵׁם הַמַּעֲלָה, אִיז אָנְשְׁטָאט דֶעם, שֶׁעמְט מֶען זִיךְ גָאר דֶערְמִיט אוּן מֶען זֶעט מִיט אַלֶע מֶעגְלֶעכְקַײְטְן עֶס אוֹיסְצוּבַאהַאלְטְן.

Understanding the Inner Meaning

7. The prevalence of the above attitude among the Jewish people today provides the basis for a deeper **understanding** of a passage in the Gemara.[26]

Concerning the law obligating the return of **a lost object, the Gemara asks: Why does the Torah need to mention "sheep"? And the Gemara concludes,** ***Seh d'aveidah kashya,*** which means, **"A [lost] sheep presents a difficulty."**

In the literal sense, the Gemara is saying that when the Torah states that a lost object must be returned, there is reason to specifically mention **an ox, a donkey, and a garment** because, **as stated in that passage, each possesses a novel aspect** that, had they not been singled out specifically, we would not know **that it is necessary to return them.** However, **it seems obvious that** a lost sheep **must be returned.** What new concept is being taught by the Torah's mention of it? That is why the Gemara concludes, "[the mention of] a [lost] sheep presents a difficulty."

What then does the sheep teach us?

ז. לוֹיט דֶעם קֶען מֶען אוֹיךְ דֶערְקְלֶערְן, וָואס דִי גְמָרָא[ו] פְרֶעגְט בַּיי דֶעם דִין פוּן אֲבֵדָה, שֶׂה דִּכְתַב רַחֲמָנָא לָמָּה לִי, אוּן דִי גְמָרָא זָאגְט, שֶׂה דַאֲבֵדָה קַשְׁיָא (מַאי קָא מַשְׁמַע לָן אַז מְ'דַארְף אוּמְקֶערְן – פְּשִׁיטָא). בַּיי שׁוֹר חֲמוֹר וְשַׂלְמָה אִיז דָא אַ חִידּוּשׁ פַארְוָואס מְ'אִיז מַחֲזִיר דִי אֲבֵדָה (כִּדְמְפָרֵשׁ בִּגְמָרָא), אָבֶער נִיט בַּיי שֶׂה.

וָואס טוּט מֶען טַאקֶע מִיטְן שֶׂה? לוֹיט

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25. Concerning **their names and language,** see *Mechilta, Shmos* 12:6, *Vayikra Rabbah* 32:5; concerning **the garments,** see *Midrash Lekach Tov, Parshas Va'eira Shmos* 6:6.

26. *Bava Metzia* 27a.

Based on the points mentioned previously, we can explain the passage in terms of its counterparts **in a person's Divine service, albeit briefly. A goring ox** represents a person easily provoked to anger, to the extent that he takes violent action. **A donkey represents** one who **remains cold despite "the sun of G-d"**[27] shining **"in the heat of summer." A garment represents those who have** sullied their garments[28] by **betraying the Torah and its *mitzvos*.**

In all these cases, **there is a novel dimension regarding their ability to return** to G-d, **and their *teshuvah*** being accepted, for to return, they need to overcome strong inner, spiritual challenges. **However,** what is difficult to understand about the possibility of **a lost sheep repenting? It is merely lost among the nations.** Seemingly, such an individual is not a hardened sinner. When the Gemara singles out the lost sheep and asks: **Why must its return be mentioned?** – metaphorically, it is saying that it appears to be self-understood that such individuals can do *teshuvah*. If a person identified as **an ox** with a rebellious nature can do *teshuvah* and, similarly, those as identified with the other categories in the verse, can also do *teshuvah,* **how much more so is this possible** for one identified as merely a lost sheep!

The Gemara's **answer, *Seh d'aveidah kashya,***[29] **literally, "A lost sheep presents a difficulty,"** can be understood as a commentary on the effort such an individual must invest in returning to G-d. His *teshuvah* **is actually the most difficult.** He **lacks the very foundation of** Jewish law and practice – the inner fortitude to carry out **the** directive, **"Do not be embarrassed before those who mock."**[30] That instruction is so cardinal to Jewish observance that it is placed **at the very beginning of the four portions** of the basic handbooks of Jewish Law, **the *Tur* and the *Shulchan Aruch.***

How will such sheeplike individuals ever **approach Torah Law?**[31] From where will they derive the inner strength

ווִי מֶען הָאט גֶערֶעדט פְרִיעֶר קֶען מֶען דָאס דֶערקְלֶערְן אִין עֲבוֹדַת הָאָדָם (בְּקִיצּוּר עַל כָּל פָּנִים): א) שׁוֹר – נַגָּח. ב) חֲמוֹר – וואָס נִיט קוּקְנְדִיק אוֹיף שֶׁמֶשׁ ה׳ בְּתוֹקֶף תְּקוּפַת תַּמּוּז, אִיז קְרִירָא לֵיהּ. ג) שַׂלְמָה – בֶּגֶד בּוֹגְדִים בַּתּוֹרָה וּמִצְווֹת – אִיז אַ חִידּוּשׁ אַז זֵיי קֶענֶען זִיךְ אוּמְקֶערְן וְשָׁב וְרָפָא לוֹ, אָבֶּער שֶׂה פְּזוּרָה, מֶער נִיט וואָס זֵי פַּארְלִירְט זִיךְ בֵּין הָעַמִּים, אִיז מַאי קָא מַשְׁמַע לָן אַז מְ׳קֶערְט אוּם דִי אֲבֵדָה, עֶס אִיז דָאךְ אַ כָּל שֶׁכֵּן פוּן שׁוֹר וכו׳. עֶנְטְפֶערְט מֶען אַדְּרַבָּה שֶׂה דַאֲבֵדָה קַשְׁיָא[ז] – דָאס אִיז אַמְשְׁווֶערְסְטְן אוּמְצוּקֶערְן. אַז עֶס אִיז נִיטָא דֶער יְסוֹד וְהַתְחָלָה פוּן אַלֶע פִיר חֲלָקִים טוּר וְשֻׁלְחָן עָרוּךְ, דֶער אַל יֵבוֹשׁ מִפְּנֵי הַמַּלְעִיגִים – ווִי ווֶעט עֶר קוּמֶען צוּם שֻׁלְחָן עָרוּךְ? אוּן

27. Cf. *Tehillim* 86:12.

28. See *Tanya*, ch. 3, which explains that thought, speech, and action are the garments of the soul. Also, *Tanya,* ch. 4, refers to *mitzvos* with the analogy of garments.

29. See the *Zohar,* Vol. III, p. 124b, which states, **"A *kashya* [originates] in the forces of evil."**

30. *Rama, Orach Chayim* 1:1.

31. The literal translation of these words is "the *Shulchan Aruch,*" the fundamental code of Jewish Law.

to reverse his conduct? **This is the new concept** that the Torah is teaching by mentioning a sheep. **Even such a lost** person **can be returned** to his Jewish roots, for **"Nothing can stand in the way of *teshuvah*."**[32]

דָאס אִיז דֶער חִידוּשׁ אַז אַזַא אֲבֵדָה קָשָׁה אִיז מֶען אוֹיךְ מַחֲזִיר. אֵין לְךָ דָּבָר הָעוֹמֵד בִּפְנֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה.

The Path to Return

8. The continuation of the verse from the Torah portion cited at the outset **provides a directive and a solution that applies when one acts negligently with an entrusted object, "The claims of both parties shall come before the judges."**

The spiritual counterpart of that directive also applies when the soul becomes lost – and perhaps even deceitfully – because of the spiritual counterparts of **an ox, donkey, garment, or even a sheep. "The judges" refer to the first judge, Moshe, and "the extension of Moshe in every generation."**[33] **It is** a **Moshe who** can **empower a Jew do *teshuvah* in a desirable manner.**

The Torah's verdict continues, **"He shall pay double to his fellow." "His fellow" refers to G-d.**[34] A *baal teshuvah* ("penitent") **pays G-d in a double measure,** intensifying the Divine service he performed **before the sin, as stated in *Igeres HaTeshuvah,***[35] **"If he was accustomed to study one page, he should study two pages...."**

When one makes such an effort, **G-d responds measure for measure:** The transgressor's **intentional sins are transformed into merits;**[36] moreover, **even his animal soul assists in his Divine service.**

Specifically, one whose **animal soul** previously expressed itself as **a** goring **ox** will now bring about **"abundant harvest through the strength of an ox."**[37] Similarly, **the donkey** refers to one whose Divine ser-

ח. עֶר זָאגְט וַוייטֶער אִין פָּסוּק פוּן דֶער סֶדְרָה, אַז דֶער פְּסַק דִין אוּן דִי עֵצָה צוּ דֶער פְּשִׁיעָה שֶׁבַּפִּקָּדוֹן שֶׁבְּסִבַּת שׁוֹר חֲמוֹר שַׂלְמָה אוּן אֲפִילוּ שֶׂה אִיז: "עַד הָאֱלֹקִים – דַּיָּנָיָא – יָבֹא דְּבַר שְׁנֵיהֶם", וָואס דָאס גֵייט אוֹיפְן עֶרְשְׁטְן דַיָּן – מֹשֶׁה'ן אוּן אִתְפַּשְּׁטוּתָא דְמֹשֶׁה בְּכָל דָּרָא וְדָרָא[ז*], וָואס עֶר גִיט דֶעם כּוֹחַ אוֹיף טָאן תְּשׁוּבָה כִּדְבָעֵי – "יְשַׁלֵּם שְׁנַיִם לְרֵעֵהוּ", רֵעֵהוּ גֵייט אוֹיפְן אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן[ח], עֶר וֶועט בַּאצָאלְן דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן בְּכִפְלַיִם, וִוי קוֹדֶם הַחֵטְא, וִוי עֶס שְׁטֵייט אִין אִגֶּרֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה[ט]: הָיָה רָגִיל לִקְרוֹת דַּף אֶחָד יִקְרָא שְׁנֵי דַפִּים כו'.

אוּן דֶעמָאלְט וֶועט אִים דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער גֶעבְּן מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה, אַז אוֹיךְ דִי זְדוֹנוֹת וֶועלְן וֶוערְן כִּזְכִיּוֹת, אוּן אוֹיךְ דֶער נֶפֶשׁ הַבַּהֲמִית וֶועט מְסַיֵּעַ זַיְין לַעֲבוֹדַת ה'.

וּבִפְרָטִיּוּת: פוּן דֶעם נֶפֶשׁ הַבַּהֲמִית שֶׁבִּבְחִינַת שׁוֹר וֶועט וֶוערְן "וְרַב תְּבוּאוֹת בְּכֹחַ שׁוֹר". פוּן

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32. *Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:14.

33. ***Tikunei Zohar, Tikun* 69**, p. 114a.

34. ***Shmos Rabbah,* the beginning of *Parshas Yisro.*** See also *Rashi, Shabbos* 31a.

35. *Tanya, Igeres HaTeshuvah,* **the end of ch. 9.**

36. *Yoma* 86b.

37. ***Mishlei* 14:4. The intent is that the power of the ox be transformed and directed to positive purposes.**

חֲמוֹר - יִשָּׂשכָר חֲמוֹר גָּרֶם[יא], דִי עֲבוֹדָה פוּן קַבָּלַת עֹל כַּחֲמוֹר לְמַשָּׂא. פוּן שֶׂה פְזוּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל, וָואס דָאס אִיז אוֹיךְ וָואס עֶס שְׁטֵייט תָּעִיתִי כְּשֶׂה אוֹבֵד[יג], עֶר בְּלָאנְדזשֶׁעט אַזוֹי וִוי אַ שֶׂה וָואס הָאט נִיט קֵיין אֵייגֶענֶעם תּוֹקֶף אוּן וֶוערְט פַאַרְלָארְן, וֶוערְט דֶער בַּקֵּשׁ עַבְדֶּךָ, מָשְׁכֵנִי אַחֲרֶיךָ, אַז עֶר צִיט זִיךְ נָאכְן אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן לְמַעְלָה מִטַּעַם וָדַעַת. פוּן שַׂלְמָה - וְרֵיחַ שַׂלְמֹתַיִךְ כְּרֵיחַ לְבָנוֹן[יג].

אִין אַלְגֶעמֵיין אִיז דָאס, אַז אוֹיךְ דֶער נֶפֶשׁ הַבַּהֲמִית אִיז מְסַיֵּעַ צוּ עֲבוֹדַת הֲוָיָ׳ כְּמַאֲמַר רַזַ״ל[יד]: וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת הֲוָיָ׳ אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ - בִּשְׁנֵי יְצָרֶיךָ.

(משיחות שמחת תורת ופרשת בראשית תשט״ו)

vice should from now onwards follow the mode implied by the verse,[38] **"Yissachar is a strong-boned donkey," i.e.,** his **Divine service involves the acceptance of the yoke** of Torah **like a donkey bearing its load.**

The "**scattered sheep of Yisrael,**" refers to those **who "have strayed like lost sheep,"**[39] who **wander without inner strength and become lost.** G-d will "**search for [His] servant,"**[40] and prompt such a person to express the love of G-d, following the motif, "**Draw me after You."**[41] Their sheep-like self-nullification (*bittul*) will cause them to be **drawn to G-d beyond reason and understanding.**

The souls alluded to by the term "**garment**" will achieve excellence in the observance of *mitzvos*,[42] as implied by the verse,[43] **"The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon."**

From these examples we can see how, **as a whole, even the animal soul assists in Divine service.** In this vein, **our Sages[44] interpret the verse,[45] "You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your hearts,"** as meaning "**with both your inclinations."**

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38. *Bereishis* 49:14.

39. Cf. ***Tehillim* 119:176.**

40. The continuation of the above verse from *Tehillim.*

41. *Shir HaShirim* 1:4.

42. See footnote 28 and the *Zohar,* Vol. III, p. 186a, which speaks of the fragrance of his garments.

43. *Shir HaShirim* 4:11.

44. *Berachos* 54a.

45. *Devarim* 6:5.

א) זע ד״ה משביעין אותו (בספר קיצורים והערות לתניא עמוד נז ואילך) מלשון ומשביע לכל חי כו׳.

ב) זע שבת קנב, ב. ובכמה מקומות.

ג) נדה ל, ב.

ד) זע תורה אור יד, ב: אפילו תינוקות כו׳.

ה) שמם ולשונם - מכילתא שמות יב, ו. ויקרא רבה לב, ה. לבושם - מדרש לקח טוב פרשת וארא.

ו) בבא מציעא כז, א.

ז) זע זהר ח״ג, קכד, ב: קשיא מסטרא דרע.

ז*) תקוני זהר תקון ס״ט.

ח) שמות רבה ריש פרשת יתרו.

ט) סוף פ״ט.

י) משלי יד, ד.

יא) בראשית מט, יד.

יב) תהלים קיט, קעו.

יג) שיר השירים ד, יא.

יד) ברכות נד, א.

MISHPATIM II | משפטים ב

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered *Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim,* 5712 (1952)

Introduction

Sometimes profound teachings emerge from straightforward commandments. When the Torah discusses the obligation to lend money to those in need, it seems to be addressing a basic element of social responsibility. Yet through a careful analysis of the precise language the Torah uses, deeper dimensions of meaning emerge, transforming our understanding not only of this particular *mitzvah*, but of our entire relationship with G-d.

The Rebbe begins the *sichah* with an intriguing principle: Whatever G-d commands the Jewish people to do, He does Himself.

This raises a fascinating question: What could it mean for G-d to "lend money"?

Obviously, G-d does not "lend money," per se. He endows the Jewish people with energy and potentials for them to express in their lives. But, in this relationship, the unique dynamics of a loan play an important role. The recipient of a loan gains full ownership of what is given. However, although it becomes his or hers, he or she must repay the lender with something equivalent.

What G-d gives and how the Jews repay Him uncovers the ongoing nature of our relationship with Him.

Building on this introduction, the Rebbe addresses a common spiritual struggle. Many feel they must first achieve a certain level of personal refinement and *mitzvah* observance before engaging with the deeper, mystical dimensions of the Torah. Understanding how G-d's "lending" operates invites us to tap into the spiritual resources made available to all Jews, regardless of their current standing.

The *sichah* culminates in a profound insight into G-d's essential love for the Jewish people – a love that transcends all logic and reason, reaching even those who feel spiritually impoverished. In this way, the Torah's command to lend money encourages us to understand the extraordinary nature of our relationship with G-d.

Loans From Above

G-d also Fulfills *Mitzvos*

1. This week's **Torah reading contains the phrase,**[1] **"If you lend money** to My people, to the poor among you…." **Although it says "if," our Sages**[2] **teach that this does not mean** that the matter **is optional. Instead, this is a commandment**[3] that creates an **obligation** to offer a loan to a person in need.

Our Sages[4] **interpret the verse,**[5] **"He relates His words to Yaakov, His statutes and laws to Yisrael," as meaning that what G-d commands Jews to do, He also does Himself. This is what is meant by "His statutes and His laws." They are His** own **statutes and His** own **laws,** i.e., practices **that He Himself carries out.**

From this, it is understood that G-d also fulfills the command to **"lend money to My people."**

א. אִין הַיְינְטִיקֶער סֶדְרָה זָאגְט עֶר, אִם כֶּסֶף תַּלְוֶה. זָאגְן רַזַ"ל[טו], אַז כָאטשׁ עֶס שְׁטֵייט "אִם", מֵיינְט דָאס נִיט קֵיין רְשׁוּת, נָאר דָאס אִיז אַ מִצְוָה אוּן אַ חוֹבָה.

אוֹיפְן פָּסוּק מַגִּיד דְּבָרָיו לְיַעֲקֹב חֻקָּיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו לְיִשְׂרָאֵל זָאגְן רַזַ"ל[טז], אַז דָאס וָואס דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער הֵייסְט טָאן אִידְן, טוּט עֶר אוֹיךְ אַלֵיין. וָואס דָאס מֵיינְט חֻקָּיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו, זַיְינֶע חֻקִּים אוּן זַיְינֶע מִשְׁפָּטִים, וָואס עֶר אַלֵיין אִיז זֵיי מְקַיֵּים.

פוּן דֶעם אִיז פַארְשְׁטַאנְדִיק אַז אוֹיךְ דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער אִיז מְקַיֵּים אִם כֶּסֶף תַּלְוֶה אֶת עַמִּי.

Defining a Spiritual Loan

2. What does it mean to give **a loan?** It means **giving money to another person even though they haven't earned it** and, at the time, **they give nothing in return. However, it's not a gift; the recipient is obligated to repay** the loan **later.**

Similarly, G-d gives to a Jew, "lending" him various spiritual and material **resources and capabilities. However, He demands that all these** resources and capabilities **be utilized to fulfill the mission He** assigned to the Jews in this world, in this way **repaying** the "loan" **by** observing **His statutes and laws.**

ב. דֶער עִנְיָן פוּן הַלְוָאָה אִיז: מֶען גִּיט יֶענֶעם גֶעלְט, כָאטשׁ עֶס קוּמְט אִים נִיט. יֶענֶער גִּיט נִיט עֶפֶּעס פַאר דֶעם. עֶס אִיז אָבֶּער נִיט קֵיין מַתָּנָה, נָאר יֶענֶער וֶוערְט נִתְחַיֵּיב אָפְּצוּגֶעבְּן שְׁפֶּעטֶער.

אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער גִּיט אַ אִידְן עִנְיָנִים אוּן כֹּחוֹת, עֶר מָאנְט אָבֶּער, מֶען זָאל אוֹיסְנוּצְן דָאס אַלְץ אוֹיף אוֹיסְפִירְן זַיְין שְׁלִיחוּת, אָפְּגֶעבְּן דָאס אִין חֻקָּיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו.

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1. *Shmos* 22:24.

2. ***Mechilta, Rashi*** **on the above verse.**

3. *Rambam, Hilchos Malveh U'Loveh* 1:1.

4. ***Shmos Rabbah*** **30:9.**

5. *Tehillim* 147:19.

The Uniqueness of a Loan

3. Jewish Law recognizes **two** relationships in which one person **gives another something on the condition that it be returned: borrowing and lending. The difference between them is that a borrower must return the exact same item he received. It** never **becomes his. By contrast, a loan is given to be used.**[6] **It becomes entirely the borrower's; he may use it for any purpose** he desires.

G-d's empowerment of the Jewish people alluded to by the phrase, **"if you lend money,"** involves G-d giving them energies and resources **as a loan.** He allows them **to take His gifts and use them for their own purposes,** employing them to accomplish their chosen objectives, **even when they involve lowly matters.**

ג. אִין דֶעם עִנְיָן פוּן גֶעבְּן אַ זַאךְ עַל מְנָת צוּרִיקְצוּגֶעבְּן, זַיְינֶען פַאראַן צְווֵיי אוֹפַנִים: שְׁאֵלָה אוּן הַלְוָאָה. דֶער חִילוּק פוּן דִי בֵּיידֶע אִיז: בַּיי שְׁאֵלָה - מוּז דֶער שׁוֹאֵל אָפְּגֶעבְּן דִי זֶעלְבֶּע זַאךְ וָואס עֶר הָאט גֶענוּמֶען, עֶס וֶוערְט נִיט זַיְינֶע. אָבֶּער מִלְוָה - לְהוֹצָאָה נִיתְּנָה, עֶס וֶוערְט אִינְגַאנְצְן דֶעם לֹוֶה'ס, אוּן עֶר קֶען דָאס נוּצְן אוֹיף אַלֶערְלֵיי עִנְיָנִים.

דֶער טַעַם וָואס דֶער נְתִינַת כֹּחַ פוּן דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן, כֶּסֶף תַּלְוֶה, וֶוערְט אָנְגֶערוּפְן מִיטְן נָאמֶען הַלְוָאָה, אִיז וַוייל דֶעם כֹּחַ קָאנֶען אִידְן נֶעמֶען אוּן אוֹיסְנוּצְן אוֹיף פּוֹעֵל'ן אִין זֵייעֶרֶע עִנְיָנִים, אֲפִילוּ בְּשַׁעַת אַז דָאס זַיְינֶען נִידֶערִיקֶע עִנְיָנִים.

No Place for Reluctance or Hesitation

4. To show how this concept applies in actual practice – particularly regarding the study of *Chassidus*: There are those who believe that before **studying *Chassidus*, they must wait until they first** perfect themselves, **achieving unflawed observance** to the extent that they are meticulous **even with a minor detail of Rabbinic ordinance, and** even **in** matters which are merely **a *hiddur mitzvah*,** the performance of a *mitzvah* in a manner that embellishes it. **They suspect that as long as they possess any shortcoming** in observance, they are disqualified from studying *Chassidus*. **Certainly** they will refrain from such study **if they know that, from time to time, they will not have observed a *mitzvah* in a manner that embellishes it (*behiddur*), violated a** seemingly **minor Rabbinic prohibition, and most definitely, if they have not fulfilled a Rabbinic obligation, or** perhaps **even once** in a while **stumbled concerning**

ד. דֶער עִנְיָן פוּן דֶעם אִין פּוֹעֵל וּבְלִימוּד הַחֲסִידוּת בִּפְרַט אִיז:

פַאראַן אַזֶעלְכֶע וָואס מֵיינֶען אַז מִיט לֶערְנֶען חֲסִידוּת דַארְף מֶען וַוארְטְן בִּיז עֶר וֶועט זַיְין פְּרִיעֶר אָפְּגֶעהִיט בְּתַכְלִית אֲפִילוּ אִין אַ דִקְדוּק קַל שֶׁל דִבְרֵי סוֹפְרִים אוּן אִין אַ הִידוּר מִצְוָה. כָּל זְמַן עֶר אִיז נָאךְ חוֹשֵׁשׁ, אַז עֶר הַאלְט נָאךְ נִיט דֶערְבַּיי, וֶוער רֶעדט נָאךְ אַז עֶר ווֵייס אַז עֶר קֶען אַמָאל אַרִיבֶּערְפַאלְן אִין אַ הִידוּר מִצְוָה, אוּן אִין אַ דִקְדוּק קַל שֶׁל דִבְרֵי סוֹפְרִים, וּמִכָּל שֶׁכֵּן אוֹיב עֶר פַאלְט דוּרךְ אֲפִילוּ אִין אַ דְרַבָּנָן, אוּן

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6. *Kiddushin* 47a, *et al.*

a Scriptural commandment, be it one that involves taking action (*kum ve'asei*), i.e., fulfilling a positive commandment, **or refraining from an action** (*sheiv ve'al taaseh)*, i.e., violating a prohibition. **They** feel that their failings prevent them **from engaging in the study of** *Chassidus*, meditative **service in prayer, or other** lofty spiritual **matters.**

A person with such hesitations **is told:** *Chassidus* is like **a loan;** it **was given to be used. True,** *Chassidus* represents **lofty,** spiritual **teachings.** Indeed, **the Alter Rebbe compared it to the crown jewel in the royal diadem,**[7] a **gem** so essential that, **without it, the crown would not be a crown. Nevertheless,** the crown is given as a loan. implying that **every Jew is given permission to take the king's crown and use it for his own matters.**

No matter how low a Jew's spiritual level, he is asked not to miss his daily **schedule of studying** *Chassidus*. **Even if he may have stumbled** and failed in observing **a Scriptural commandment** (Heaven forbid) **– whether one involving taking action** (*kum ve'asei*) **or refraining from action** (*sheiv ve'al taaseh*) **– he should not forgo studying** *Chassidus* **that day.** This applies **not only to those aspects** of *Chassidus* **that concern Divine service,** matters related to his actual conduct or efforts in prayer, **but even to abstract G-dly concepts – including ideas so lofty that he cannot even imagine how he could apply them in his** life.

אַמָאל אֲפִילוּ אִין אַ דְאוֹרַיְתָא, סַיי אִין אַן עִנְיָן פוּן קוּם וַעֲשֵׂה און סַיי אִין אַן עִנְיָן פוּן שֵׁב וְאַל תַּעֲשֶׂה, דַאן - טְרַאכְט עֶר - קֶען עֶר זִיךְ נִיט עוֹסֵק זַיְין אִין לִימּוּד הַחֲסִידוּת און אִין עֲבוֹדַת הַתְּפִלָּה, און בִּכְלָל אִין עִנְיָנִים נַעֲלִים.

זָאגְט מֶען: מִלְוָה לְהוֹצָאָה נִיתְּנָה. נִיט קוּקְנְדִיק אוֹיף דֶער הוֹיכְקַייט פוּן תּוֹרַת הַחֲסִידוּת, וָואס דֶער אַלְטֶער רֶבִּי הָאט אוֹיף דֶעם גֶעגֶעבְּן אַ מָשָׁל פוּן אַן אֶבֶן טוֹבָה וָואס גֶעפִינְט זִיךְ בְּכֶתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ[ז], וָואס אָן דֶעם אֶבֶן טוֹבָה אִיז דֶער גַאנְצֶער כֶּתֶר קֵיין כֶּתֶר נִיט, פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן, גִיט מֶען רְשׁוּת צוּ יֶעדֶער אִידְן נֶעמֶען דֶעם כֶּתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ און אוֹיסְנוּצְן אִים אִין זַיְינֶע עִנְיָנִים.

מֶען מָאנְט בַּיי יֶעדֶער אִידְן, אַז ווִי נִידֶערִיק עֶר זָאל נִיט זַיְין, זָאל עֶר קֵיין אֵיין טָאג נִיט פַארְפֶעלְן זַיְין שִׁיעוּר וָואס עֶר הָאט אִין חֲסִידוּת, און אֲפִילוּ אִין דֶעם טָאג גּוּפָא וָואס עֶר אִיז נִכְשָׁל גֶעוָוארְן חַס וְשָׁלוֹם אִין אַ דְאוֹרַיְתָא, סַיי אִין אַן עִנְיָן פוּן קוּם וַעֲשֵׂה סַיי אִין אַן עִנְיָן פוּן שֵׁב וְאַל תַּעֲשֶׂה, זָאל עֶר אוֹיךְ דֶעם טָאג נִיט פַארְפֶעלְן זַיְין שִׁיעוּר אִין לִימּוּד הַחֲסִידוּת, און נִיט נָאר אַן עִנְיָן פוּן עֲבוֹדָה נָאר אוֹיךְ אַן עִנְיָן פוּן הַשְׂכָּלָה אִין אֱלֹקוּת, און אֲפִילוּ אַזאַ עִנְיָן אִין הַשְׂכָּלָה וָואס מִצַּד זַיְין הוֹיכְקַייט ווייס עֶר גָאר נִיט ווִי דָאס אָרָאפְּצוּטְרָאגְן צוּ זִיךְ.

Whom G-d Chooses

5. Why does G-d give such a loan – i.e., **empower the Jewish people** so generously? **The verse**[1] itself **provides the answer, stating that a**

ה. דֶער טַעַם אוֹיף דֶעם נְתִינַת כּוֹחַ וָואס דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער גִיט - כֶּסֶף תַּלְוֶה, זָאגְט עֶר אִין פָּסוּק - אֶת עַמִּי.

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7. **See** ***HaTomim*****, issue 2;** ***Biton Chabad*****, issue 5;** the *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 3, Letter no. 767, p. 326ff.; *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 30, p. 170ff. (translated in *Selections from Likkutei Sichos, Moadim,* Vol. 1); *et al.*

loan should be given "to My people." Our Sages[8] explain that when faced with the option of lending to a Jew or a non-Jew, "My people [– the Jews –] take precedence."

Hidden in this directive is a profound concept. **Since it is necessary to stipulate that "My people take precedence," it is understood that there is room for thinking otherwise, and yet,** the Sages unequivocally clarify, **"My people take precedence."** The existence of such a possibility **indicates that the empowerment** implicit in the Divine loan **comes from a level** of G-dliness that transcends created existence, one **on which the Divine service of** man or any other **created being has no impact, the rung** on which G-d is described as **"the Singular Master, Root of All Roots."**[9] Regarding this level, Rabbi Abahu declared,[10] **"I do not know which He desires – the deeds of the righteous or the deeds of the wicked."**[11]

Since, at this level, there is an equivalence between good and evil, light and darkness, **a special teaching is needed** to establish the Jews' precedence over the non-Jews. The transcendence that characterizes this level **leaves room to think otherwise. It is only because of G-d's essential choice** – the choice **He** invests **in choosing the souls of Israel – that "My people take precedence."**

זָאגְן רַז״ל[ח], עַמִּי וְנָכְרִי עַמִּי קוֹדֵם. וויִבַּאלְד אַז מֶען דַארְף בַּאווָארֶענֶען און זָאגְן עַמִּי קוֹדֵם, אִיז פַאַרְשְׁטֶענְדְלֶעךְ אַז ס׳אִיז פַאַרַאן אַן אָרְט אוֹיף זָאגְן אַנְדֶערְשׁ, און פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן זָאגְט מֶען עַמִּי קוֹדֵם.

פוּן דֶעם אִיז פַאַרְשְׁטַאנְדִיק אַז דֶער נְתִינַת כֹּחַ קוּמְט פוּן אַזַא אָרְט וואָס דָארְטְן רִירְט נִיט אָן עֲבוֹדַת הַנִּבְרָאִים, בְּחִינַת אָדוֹן יָחִיד שֹׁרֶשׁ הַשָּׁרָשִׁים[יט]. ווִי עֶר זָאגְט[כ] אֵינִי יוֹדֵעַ בְּאֵיזֶה מֵהֶם חָפֵץ, בְּמַעֲשֵׂה צַדִּיקִים צִי בְּמַעֲשֵׂה רְשָׁעִים, און סְ׳דַארְף זַיְין אַ לִימּוּד אוֹיף דֶעם ווַיְיל דָארְט קֶען זַיְין אַ נְתִינַת מָקוֹם עֶס זָאל זַיְין אַנְדֶערְשׁ. נָאר מִצַּד דֶער בְּחִירָה עַצְמִית, וואָס דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער הָאט בּוֹחֵר גֶעוועֶן אִין נִשְׁמוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל, אִיז עַמִּי קוֹדֵם.

An Essential Love

6. Concerning this level, it is written,[12] "'Is not Eisav Yaacov's brother?' declares G-d, 'and [yet] I love Yaacov and I loathe Eisav.'" Since **man's deeds have no impact at this level, Eisav and Yaacov are equivalent; they are brothers. Nevertheless, because of** G-d's **essential choice and love** for the Jewish people – one that transcends all reason and logic – **"I love Yaacov...."**

ו. און דָאס אִיז דִי מַדְרֵיגָה וואָס אוֹיף אִיר שְׁטֵייט, הֲלֹא אָח עֵשָׂו לְיַעֲקֹב נְאֻם ה׳ וָאֹהַב אֶת יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת עֵשָׂו שָׂנֵאתִי[כא]. מַעֲשֵׂה הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים רִירְט דָארְטְן נִיט אָן, דֶערְפַאַר אִיז אָח עֵשָׂו לְיַעֲקֹב, בֵּיידֶע גְלַיְיךְ. און פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן, מִצַּד דֶער בְּחִירָה וְאַהֲבָה עַצְמִית, אִיז וָאֹהַב אֶת יַעֲקֹב גו׳.

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8. ***Bava Metzia*** **71a.**

9. ***Avodas HaKodesh,*** **part 2, ch. 3, cited by** ***Shelah,*** **p. 31b. This concept is explained in the** ***maamar*** **entitled** ***Tze'enah U'Re'ena,*** **5677, and in the** ***maamar*** **entitled** ***Lo Sihiyeh Meshakeilah,*** **5712.**

10. ***Bereishis Rabbah,*** **ch. 2:5.**

11. See *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 7, p. 189ff., translated in *Selections from Likkutei Sichos,* Festivals, Vol. 1, p. 514ff.

12. ***Malachi*** **1:2-3.**

To highlight this essential love, the verse **speaks of lending *kesef* (כסף)**, literally, "silver." ***Kesef* alludes to love, as in the verse,[13] "You yearned greatly (*nichsof nichsafta,* נכסוף נכספת) for your father's house."** Using this specific term implies **that the loan – the empowerment** G-d **grants – is not** evoked **by** the merit of our **Divine service, but** stems **from G-d's essential love for the Jewish people.**

אוּן דָאס אִיז אוֹיךְ וָואס עֶר זָאגְט אִם כֶּסֶף תַּלְוֶה, כֶּסֶף אִיז מְרַמֵּז אוֹיף אַהֲבָה, מִלְּשׁוֹן נִכְסוֹף נִכְסַפְתָּ לְבֵית אָבִיךְ[כב], דָאס הֵייסְט אַז דִי מִלְוָה, נְתִינַת כֹּחַ, אִיז נִיט מִצַּד עֲבוֹדָה נָאר מִצַּד דֶער אַהֲבַת עַצְמִית פוּן דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן צוּ אִידְן.

An Extra Measure of Generosity

7. Since **this empowerment comes from a level where the deeds of** man on **this lowly plane have no impact, it follows that this empowerment is granted to every Jew,** no matter what his actions. **For at the level from which this empowerment emanates, a lack of** adequate **Divine service does not cause any blemish.**

ז. וְוִיבַּאלְד אַז דֶער נְתִינַת כּוֹחַ אִיז פוּן אַזַא אָרְט ווּאוּ סְ'אִיז נִיט נוֹגֵעַ מַעֲשֵׂה הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים, בְּמֵילָא אִיז דֶער נְתִינַת כּוֹחַ צוּ יֶעדֶער אִידְן, וָוארוּם אִין דֶעם אָרְט פוּן וַואנֶען עֶס וֶוערְט נִמְשָׁךְ דֶער כּוֹחַ, הָאט הֶעְדֵר הָעֲבוֹדָה נִיט גֶע'פּוֹעֵל'ט קֵיין פְּגַם.

This is also implied in **the verse's[1] wording, "the poor among you." Though one is poor** – meaning that when **he contemplates his** spiritual **state he is broken by it, and indeed has legitimate reason to be broken – nevertheless, he must know that he, too, possesses this power from Above.** G-d's **essential love extends to everyone, including him. Moreover, precisely because he is poor,** broken in spirit, he becomes an appropriate conduit **for G-d's presence. Indeed, as is well known, G-d's presence rests specifically upon a person with "a broken and crushed heart."[14]**

אוּן דָאס אִיז אוֹיךְ וָואס דֶער פָּסוּק אִיז מַמְשִׁיךְ, אֶת הֶעָנִי עִמָּךְ: נִיט קוּקְנְדִיק וָואס עֶר אִיז אַן עָנִי, עֶר הָאט זִיךְ אַרַיינְגֶעטְרַאכְט אִין זַיְין מַעֲמָד וּמַצָּב אוּן עֶר אִיז צֶעבְּרָאכְן פוּן דֶעם, אוּן הָאט טַאקֶע פוּן וָואס צוּ זַיְין צֶעבְּרָאכְן, פוּנְדֶעסְטְוֶועגְן דַארְף עֶר וִויסְן אַז אוֹיךְ עֶר הָאט דֶעם כּוֹחַ מִלְמַעְלָה, וָוארוּם אַהֲבָה עַצְמִית, דֶערְגְרֵייכְט אַלֶעמֶען, אוֹיךְ אִים, אוּן אַדְּרַבָּה - דֶערְפַאר וַוייל עֶר אִיז אַן עָנִי, אִיז דָאךְ בַּאוואוּסְט אַז דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער גֶעפִינְט זִיךְ אִין אַ לֵב נִשְׁבָּר וְנִדְכֶּה דַוְקָא.

The verse continues, **"Do not act like a creditor to him." If the borrower lacks the means to repay, demanding** payment **will not achieve anything; it will only cause him distress.** Therefore, **one is forbidden to press him** for payment. **Moreover, one is even forbidden to pass by the borrower in a way that would cause him anguish.[15]**

לֹא תִהְיֶה לוֹ כְּנוֹשֶׁה: אוֹיבּ דֶער לֹוֶה הָאט נִיט מִיט וָואס צוּ צָאלְן, וּבְמֵילָא וֶועט דֶער מָאנֶען נִיט הֶעלְפְן, מֶער נִיט וִוי מַאכְן אִים עֶנְג, טָאר מֶען בַּיי אִים נִיט מָאנֶען. נָאךְ מֶער: מֶען טָאר נִיט דוּרְכְגֵיין פַארְבַּיי דֶעם לֹוֶה בְּאוֹפֶן עֶס זָאל אִים מַאכְן עֶנְג[כג].

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13. *Bereishis* 31:30, as quoted in *Tanya*, the beginning of ch. 50.

14. Cf. *Tehillim* 51:19.

15. *Bava Metzia* 75b.

As mentioned earlier, *Chassidus* interprets the verse, **"He tells His words to Yaakov...," as meaning, "what** [G-d] **commands His children, He does." Similarly,** the injunction against causing an indigent borrower suffering **applies Above. When** payment **is demanded** through **the left vector** – the vector associated with Divine judgment and retribution, which could lead to **suffering** – and it **does not achieve anything, it is purposeless.** Thus, such an approach is included in the prohibition, **"Do not act like a creditor to him."**

A sinner should confront himself with the words of Yeshayahu's prophecy,[16] **"Why do you continue** [to invite] **beatings** [by] **persisting in rebellion?"** This wording can also be interpreted as a question posed to G-d, **"Why do You beat…,"** i.e., Why do You punish the Jews for their undesirable conduct? **It achieves nothing. On the contrary, "**[They] **continue to rebel."**

When G-d sees that the left vector achieves nothing, He will begin relating to the Jewish people in a different manner, **drawing close** to them and showing them kindness that stems from **the right vector,** granting them **benevolence, mercy, and visible and manifest good.**

ווי גערעדט פְרִיעֶר - אִיז מַגִּיד דְּבָרָיו לְיַעֲקֹב גו׳ מַה שֶׁהוּא מְצַוֶּה לְבָנָיו הוּא עוֹשֶׂה, אִיז אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ לְמַעְלָה - בְּשַׁעַת אַז מִיטְן מָאנֶען דוּרְךְ קַו הַשְּׂמֹאל אוּן מִיט יִסוּרִים, טוּט מֶען גָארְנִישְׁט אוֹיף, אִיז סְתַּם מָאנֶען - לֹא תִהְיֶה לוֹ כְּנוֹשֶׁה.

אַזוֹי ווִי עֶס שְׁטֵייט עַל מֶה תֻכּוּ עוֹד תּוֹסִיפוּ סָרָה[כד]. עַל מֶה תֻכּוּ - וִוּיבַּאלְד אַז דָאס פּוֹעֵל'ט נִיט, אַדְּרַבָּה, עוֹד תּוֹסִיפוּ סָרָה. בְּשַׁעַת דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער זֶעט אַז מִיט דֶעם קַו הַשְּׂמֹאל טוּט מֶען נִיט אוֹיף, וועט עֶר ווִידֶער אָנְהוֹיבְּן מִיטְן קַו הַיָּמִין, מִיט קִירוּב בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים בְּטוֹב הַנִּרְאֶה וְהַנִּגְלֶה.

(משיחת ש״פ משפטים, תשי״ב)

16. *Yeshayahu* 1:5.

טו) מכילתא הובא בפירוש רש״י על התורה.
טז) שמות רבה פ״ל, ט.
יז) זע התמים חוברת ב. בטאון חב״ד חוברת ה.
יח) בבא מציעא עא, א.
יט) עבודת הקודת חלק ב פרק ג, געבראכט אין של״ה (לא, ב). הענין נתבאר בד״ה צאינה וראינה עזר״ת. בד״ה לא תהיה משכלה תשי״ב.
כ) בראשיה רבה סוף פ״ב.
כא) מלאכי א, ב־ג.
כב) תניא ריש פרק נ.
כג) בבא מציעא עה, ב.
כד) ישעי׳ א, ה.

MISHPATIM III | משפטים ג

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered *Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim, Parshas Shekalim,* 5718 (1958)

Introduction

The *Tzemach Tzedek*, the third Rebbe of *Chabad*, would frequently experience visions of his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, during which he would receive guidance on complex questions of Torah and *Chassidus*.

On one occasion, it had been some time since he had received such a vision. Heavy-hearted, the *Tzemach Tzedek* was heading to *shul* for morning prayers when Reb Pinchas, one of the simple local villagers, approached him requesting a loan of three rubles to buy merchandise to sell and cover his *Shabbos* expenses.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* agreed and asked Reb Pinchas to meet him at home after prayers. As he put his *tallis* on his shoulder to prepare for prayer, a thought struck him, "Today is market day, and the transactions are conducted early. The sooner he has the money in hand, the better."

He set down his *tallis*, went home, took the money, and hurried to find Reb Pinchas in the marketplace to give him the loan. Only then did he return to *shul* to prepare for prayer. At that moment, the Alter Rebbe appeared to the *Tzemach Tzedek* with a glowing countenance and resolved all the questions that had been troubling him.

This classic story illustrates the theme developed in the *sichah* that follows: A loan given on this physical plane – though seemingly a limited, mundane act – can spiral heavenward and draw down boundless blessing.

What We All Can Give

An Interactive Relationship

1. Commenting **on the verse** that begins,[1] **"If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you…,"** ***Midrash Tanchuma***[2] **states that one is** actually **lending to G-d,** as it is written,[3] **"One who is gracious to the poor lends to G-d." By being gracious to the poor – giving *tzedakah*** ("charity") **– one lends to G-d.**

When G-d repays the loan **– He repays according to His measure.** Since **G-d is beyond** all **limitations – He repays in an unbounded way, without** any **limitations.**

At the *farbrengen* of Yud Shvat, the following **concept, as explained by the *Tzemach Tzedek* at the beginning of his *Sefer HaChakirah,***[4] **was discussed: In actual fact, it is impossible for infinity to be manifest within** the realm of **created beings. Even though new created beings will continuously be brought into existence** – one and then another without end – nevertheless, since created beings are finite, **ultimately,** their creation **will remain limited.**

Nevertheless, this limitation **exists only in actual fact** – in other words, practically, **infinity can never be manifest within** the realm of **created beings. However, G-d can** – and has – **invested** an infinite **potential** within our limited world. Thus, the existence of the created beings continues **generation after generation without end.**

Proceeding to **a deeper** level of understanding, it is known that **an entity** that exists for only **a limited time begins its ultimate decline long before** its end,

א. אִין מִדְרַשׁ תַּנְחוּמָא שְׁטֵייט אוֹיפְן פָּסוּק אִם כֶּסֶף תַּלְוֶה אֶת עַמִּי אֶת הֶעָנִי עִמָּךְ, אַז דָאס בָּארְגְט מֶען דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן, מַלְוֶה ה׳ חוֹנֵן דָּל, דוּרְךְ דֶעם וָואס מֶען אִיז חוֹנֵן דָּל - נְתִינַת הַצְּדָקָה - אִיז מֶען מַלְוֶה הֲוָיָ׳, מֶען בָּארְגְט דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן.

דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער אַז עֶר צָאלְט - צָאלְט עֶר לוֹיט זַיְין מִדָּה. דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער אִיז דָאךְ בְּלִי גְבוּל - צָאלְט עֶר אוֹיךְ בְּלִי גְבוּל (אָן אַ גְרֶענֶעץ).

ווִי מֶען הָאט גֶערֶעדט אִין דֶער הִתְוַעֲדוּת פוּן יוּ״ד שְׁבַט, אִין דֶעם עִנְיָן וָואס דֶער צֶמַח צֶדֶק אִיז מְבַאֵר אִין סֵפֶר הַחֲקִירָה בִּתְחִלָּתוֹ, אַז הֲגַם בְּלִי גְבוּל בְּפוֹעַל אִיז נִיט שַׁיָּיךְ אִין נִבְרָאִים, וָוארוּם אֲפִילוּ אַז עֶס וֶועט נִיתּוֹסֵף וֶוערְן נָאךְ אוּן נָאךְ, אִיז, סוֹף כָּל סוֹף, בְּלַייבְּט דָאךְ דָאס בְּהַגְבָּלָה;

דָאס אִיז אָבֶּער מֶער נִיט וָואס בְּפוֹעַל אִיז נִיטָא קֵיין בְּלִי גְבוּל אִין נִבְרָאִים, אָבֶּער בְּכֹחַ קֶען דָאךְ דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער גֶעבְּן וַוייְטֶער אוּן וַוייְטֶער, דוֹר אַחַר דוֹר, עַד אֵין קֵץ. טִיפֶער דֶער עִנְיָן - אַ זַאךְ אַ גְבוּלִי בִּזְמַן, הוֹיבְּט זִיךְ אָן זַיְין תְּחִלַּת הַסּוֹף,

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1. *Shmos* 22:24.

2. *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Mishpatim,* sec. 15.

3. *Mishlei* 19:17.

4. *Sefer HaChakirah,* p. 286bff.

experiencing **change and weakening** over time. **To quote a well-known expression,**[5] **"From the day of their creation, created beings**[6] **begin to continuously wither [and weaken]." From this, we can extrapolate that seeing that a flow** of Divine energy **does not weaken over an extended period** of time[7] enables us to appreciate **it** as **an** expression of **infinity in actual** reality. **On the whole,** from the constancy within existence, it is evident that **the infinite is being drawn down into the finite.**

This lofty philosophical concept can be connected to something very practical – giving charity, and more specifically, giving loans. Herein, we see the connection between the finite and the infinite because, as mentioned, G-d repays a finite gift of charity with infinite blessings that continue endlessly.

Within *tzedakah* ("charity") **– which "is equal to all other commandments"**[8] – there exist several levels. **The highest form of *tzedakah* is *gemilus chassadim*** ("acts of **kindness**") which includes interest-free loans.[9] **Thus, our Sages**[10] **state that acts of kindness are superior to *tzedakah* for "charity is [given] only to the poor, while a loan is [given] to the rich as well."**

***Tzedakah* necessitates the existence of both rich and poor, for if everyone were wealthy,** there would be no opportunity for charity, as implied by the interpretation of the verse,[11] **"Who will preserve kindness and truth?" and** for this reason, it is written,[12] **"The poor shall not cease**

אַ שִׁינּוּי אוּן חֲלִישׁוּת, אַ סַךְ צַיְיט פְּרִיעֶר. וּכְלָשׁוֹן הַיָּדוּעַ[כה], אַז נִבְרָאִים[כו] מִיּוֹם הִבָּרְאָם הוֹלְכִים וּמִתְיַבְּשִׁים. מִזֶּה מוּבָן, אַז וֶועֶנְדִיק אַ הַשְׁפָּעָה וָואס בְּמֶשֶׁךְ זְמַן רַב אִיז אִין אִיר נִיטָא קֵיין חֲלִישׁוּת[כז], וְאַדְרַבָּה - אִיז דָאס מִגַּדְרֵי אֵין סוֹף בְּפוֹעֵל. דָאס אִיז דֶער כְּלָלוּת הָעִנְיָן פוּן הַמְשָׁכַת בְּלִי גְבוּל בִּגְבוּל.

אִין צְדָקָה, וָואס שְׁקוּלָה צְדָקָה כְּנֶגֶד כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת, אִיז דָא דֶער הֶעכְסְטֶער אוֹפֶן פוּן צְדָקָה, וָואס דָאס אִיז גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים, לוֹיט דֶעם מַאֲמַר רַזַ"ל[כח] גְּדוֹלָה גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים יוֹתֵר מִן הַצְּדָקָה, דִּצְדָקָה הוּא לַעֲנִיִּים דַּוְקָא וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים בֵּין לַעֲנִיִּים בֵּין לַעֲשִׁירִים. מִצַּד צְדָקָה מוּז דָאךְ זַיְין עָשִׁיר וְעָנִי, וָוארוּם אוֹיבּ אַלֶע וָואלְטְן גֶעוֶוען עֲשִׁירִים, אִיז - חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת מַן יִנְצְרוּהוּ[כט], לֹא יֶחְדַּל אֶבְיוֹן

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5. See the series of *maamarim* entitled *Mayim Rabbim, 5636*, ch. 33.

6. As explained in *Mayim Rabbim,* loc. cit,, et al., there is a constancy in creation. "The hosts of heaven remain unchanged, each one individually. The host of earth [– the plants, animals, and humans –] remain unchanged, each species separately." The statements in the main text **refer to those created beings whose continuity remains constant as a species, but not as individual entities..**

7. **See *Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachos* 1:1,** which states, **"A day enters** and a day departs…, [even so,] 'These are the chronicles of **heaven and earth, as they were created on the day** G-d **made** heaven and earth.'" The implication is the ongoing chronicles of heaven and earth do not reflect any change in their existence from "the day G-d made heaven and earth." See *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 5, pp. 97-99, where these concepts are explained at length.

8. *Bava Basra* 9a.

9. See *Rambam, Hilchos Matanos Aniyim* 10:7, who writes, "The highest level [of *tzedakah*], beyond which there is none, is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him… a loan."

10. *Sukkah* 49b; *Shulchan Aruch. Yoreh Deah* 249:6.

11. *Tehillim* 61:8. We have translated the verse according to the interpretation by *Shmos Rabbah* 31:5; *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Mishpatim,* sec. 9. According to this interpretation, the verse is saying that were there not to be poor people, there would be no opportunity to perform acts of charity. In its literal context, the verse would be interpreted differently.

12. *Devarim* 15:11.

from the land." However, for there to be acts of kindness, it is not necessary that anyone be poor – in the words of the blessing[13] – **"There shall be no needy among you," for *gemilus chassadim*,** interest-free loans, **can be granted to the wealthy as well.**

To translate the above into concrete action: **Tonight, a meeting is taking place of the Society for Interest-Free Loans for *Shomrei Shabbos*** ("Sabbath Observers"). **[The term "*Shomrei Shabbos*" is not** entirely **precise. Just as there are no distinctions** between the recipients of acts of kindness, **be** they **rich or poor, similarly, there should be no other distinctions** made between Jews, whether observant or not.[14] The term is **presumably** being used merely **to indicate an** organizational **objective.**[15]]

Everyone should participate in this endeavor, **lending money to the fund for the longest possible term. This will enable the fund to lend larger sums for longer periods and, through this, all participants will fulfill** the commandment of **acts of kindness.**

Just as there is no limitation concerning acts of kindness and no distinction is made **regarding who may borrow, whether rich or poor, similarly, there should be no limitation regarding who may participate** as a lender. **Therefore, everyone should contribute to this fund,** no matter how small his contribution.

Asking everyone to participate and donate to this fund **relates** to the Torah **reading, *Parshas Shekalim,*** added **today.**[16] **As is well known, the**

מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ, אָבֶּער מִצַּד גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים דַארְף קֵיין עָנִי נִיט זַיְין, אֶפֶס כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֶבְיוֹן, וָוארוּם גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים אִיז אוֹיךְ לַעֲשִׁירִים.

הַיְינְט בַּיְינַאכְט קוּמְט דָאךְ פָּאר דִי אֲסִיפָה פוּן חֶבְרָה גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים שׁוֹמְרֵי שַׁבָּת (דֶער וָוארְט שׁוֹמְרֵי שַׁבָּת אִיז בֶּאֱמֶת נִיט מְכוּוָן, וָוארוּם כְּשֵׁם ווִי אִין גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים דַארְף נִיט זַיְין קֵיין חִילוּק בֵּין עֲנִיִּים לַעֲשִׁירִים, אַזוֹי דַארְפְן אוֹיךְ קֵיין אַנְדֶערֶע חִילוּקִים נִיט זַיְין. נָאר מֶען מֵיינְט דָאס מִסְתָּמָא אַלְס אַ מַטָּרָה) - זָאל זִיךְ יֶעדֶער אֵיינֶער מִשְׁתַּתֵּף זַיְין אִין דֶעם, מֶען זָאל אַנְטְלַייְעֶן גֶעלְט אִין דֶער קוּפָּה אוֹיף דֶער לֶענְגְסְטֶער צַיְיט, וָואס דֶעמָאלְט וֶועט דִי קוּפָּה קֶענֶען אַנְטְלַייְעֶן גְרֶעסֶערֶע סְכוּמִים אוֹיף לֶענְגֶערֶע זְמַנִּים, אוּן דֶערְמִיט וֶועלְן כָּל הַמִּשְׁתַּתְּפִים בְּזֶה מְקַיֵּים זַיְין גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים.

וּכְשֵׁם ווִי אִין גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים אִיז נִיטָא דִי הַגְבָּלָה פוּן עֲנִיִּים אוּן עֲשִׁירִים בְּנוֹגֵעַ וֶועמֶען צוּ אַנְטְלַייְעֶן, אַזוֹי דַארְף אִין דֶעם אוֹיךְ נִיט זַיְין קֵיין הַגְבָּלָה בְּנוֹגֵעַ וֶוער עֶס זָאל זִיךְ מִשְׁתַּתֵּף זַיְין אִין דֶעם, דֶערְפַאר זָאל יֶעדֶער אֵיינֶער גֶעבְּן אִין דֶער קוּפָּה.

וָואס דָאס שְׁטִימְט מִיט דֶער פַּרְשַׁת שְׁקָלִים וָואס מֶען לֵייעֶנְט הַיְינְט, אוּן ווִי עֶס אִיז בַּאווּאוּסְט דֶער וָוארְט פוּן אַלְטְן רֶבִּי'ן אַז מְ'דַארְף

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13. Ibid. 15:4.

14. The Rebbe is noting that while the organization's name implies it serves only *Shabbos*-observant Jews, its services should be available to all Jews, just as acts of kindness should be performed for all.

15. I.e., the intent of this name is that the interest-free loans enable all Jews to observe the *Shabbos*.

16. During four of the five (or six) *Shabbasos* surrounding the month of Adar, a special reading is added aside from the weekly Torah reading. The first of these four readings, *Parshas Shekalim,* includes the commandment to give the half-*shekel,* a mandatory annual contribution that every Jew, rich or poor, was required to give. Quite often, as on the *Shabbos* when this *sichah* was delivered, *Parshas Shekalim* is read on the *Shabbos* when *Parshas Mishpatim* is the weekly reading.

לֶעבְּן מִיט דֶער צַיְיט, מִיט דֶער קְרִיאָה אִין תּוֹרָה פוּן דֶער צַיְיט, וָואס אִין מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל הָאבְּן זִיךְ אַלֶע אִידְן מִשְׁתַּתֵּף גֶעוֶוען.

(משיחת שבת פרשת משפטים, פרשת שקלים תשח״י)

Alter Rebbe stated that one must "live with the times"[17] – that is, derive lessons from **the current Torah portion** and see their application in his every-day life. The above directive – that everyone should contribute to the free loan fund – is associated with giving the **half-*shekel,*** since **all Jews participated in** making that donation.

17. See *HaYom Yom*, entry for 2 Cheshvan.

כה) המשך מים רבים - תרל״ו, פל״ג, זע דארט.

כו) געמיינט נבראים וואס זיינען קיימים נאר במין.

כז) זע ירושלמי ברכות פ״א ה״א: יום נכנס כו׳ השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות כו׳.

כח) סוכה מט, ב. שולחן ערוך יורה דעה סימן רמ״ט ס״ו.

כט) שמות רבה פל״א, ה. תנחומא שם.

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Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky OBM,
whose commitment has brought this sacred initiative to fruition

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