

Psalms chapter VI Gottlieb Edition

- 1: To the chief Musician for stringed instruments, according to the Sheminith, a psalm of David.
- 2: O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure.
- 3: Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak; O Lord, heal me; for my bones shudder.
- 4: My soul is also much troubled. And you, O Lord, how long?
- 5: Return, O Lord, deliver my soul. Oh save me for the sake of your loving kindness!
- 6: For in death there is no remembrance of you. In Sheol who shall give you thanks?
- 7: I am weary with my moaning; all night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears.
- 8: My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my enemies.
- 9: Depart from me, all you evil doers; for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.
- 10: The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.
- 11: Let all my enemies be ashamed and much troubled; let them return and be ashamed in a moment.

- א: לַמְנַצֵּחַ בְּנִינֹת עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
- ב: יְהוָה אֵל־בְּאַפְּךָ תוֹכִיחֵנִי וְאֵל־בְּחַמְתְּךָ תִּיסְרֵנִי:
- ג: חַנּוּנֵי יְהוָה כִּי אִמְלֹל אֲנִי רַפְּאֵנִי יְהוָה כִּי נִבְהַלּוּ עַצְמוֹ:
- ד: וְנַפְשִׁי נִבְהַלָּה מֵאֵד וְאֶתְּ [וְאֶתְּהָ] יְהוָה עַד־מָוֶתִי:
- ה: שׁוּבָה יְהוָה חֲלָצָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי לְמַעַן חֲסִדְּךָ:
- ו: כִּי אֲיִן בַּמָּוֶת זְכָרְךָ בְּשֵׂאוֹל מִי יוֹדֵה־לָּךְ:
- ז: יִגְעַתִּי בְּאַנְחֹתַי אֲשַׁחַה בְּכָל־לַיְלָה מִטָּתִי בְּדַמְעֹתַי עַרְשֵׁי אַמְסָה:
- ח: עֲשֵׂשָׁה מִכַּעַס עֵינָי אֶתְקָה בְּכָל־צוּרֵי:
- ט: סוּרוּ מִמֶּנִּי כָּל־פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹל בְּכִי:
- י: שָׁמַע יְהוָה תַּחֲנֻתִי יְהוָה תִּפְּלֹתַי יִקַּח:
- יא: יֵבֶשׁוּ וַיִּבְהַלּוּ מֵאֵד כָּל־אֵיבֵי יָשָׁבוּ יֵבֶשׁוּ רַגְעַ:

וַיִּסַּע מִלֶּאֱדָם הָאֱלֹהִים הַהֵלֵךְ
לִפְנֵי מִזְזָה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ
מֵאֲזִרְיָהֻם וַיִּסַּע עַמּוּד הָעֶנָּן
מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמֵד מֵאֲזִרְיָהֻם:
וַיָּבֹא בַיּוֹם | מִזְזָה מִצְרַיִם וּבַיּוֹם
מִזְזָה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּהִי הָעֶנָּן
וְהַזֶּשֶׁן וַיָּאֵר אֶת-הַפִּיֶּכֶה
וְכָל-קֶרֶב זֶה אֶל-זֶה
כָּל-הַפִּיֶּכֶה:
וַיִּטּ מִנְּשֵׂה אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-הַיָּם
וַיּוֹכֵךְ יְהוָה | אֶת-הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ
קָדִים עֲזָה כָּל-הַפִּיֶּכֶה וַיִּשָּׂם
אֶת-הַיָּם לְזִזְרָבָה וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם

Let us face it, from man's early youth he is in a constant battle between good and bad. The *yetzer hara* does everything to seduce man to sin, to violate and rebel against the very force which upholds Creation. This is truly a wonder – a paradox! The *yetzer hara* persuades us to fight against the powers of good, to sin against Hashem, without Whom there is no world, there is no “us”! This, says *Sfas Emes*, is the meaning of the *Midrash's* question, *Mi gazar kein*, “Who decreed so?”

Another wonder is manifest from the flipside of the *yetzer hara/yetzer tov* battle of wills. Despite the evil inclination's incredible ability to entice us to sin, we have the power within us to prevail over and conquer it, to draw spirituality into a world of darkness, a world filled with hedonism, a world in which ethics are archaic and morality is as bankrupt as the economy. How do we do it? What gives us the ability to prevail? This is the second question presented by the *Midrash. Mi tzivah kein*, “Who commanded so?”

The answer to these questions is forced on us, because there is no logical answer. Thus, it must be noted as above. We come to the conclusion that only Hashem could command these conflicting realities.

The *Parah Adumah* is called a *chukah*, which is also related to the word *chakikah*, etching, engraving. Hashem's Will is engraved into the physical matter of Creation that seems to oppose it. When we recognize that everything originates from Hashem, and that everything continues to exist only because this is His Divine Will, we return Creation to its Creator. This is how *tamei* brings about *tahor* – by returning the universe to its pure, spiritual source.

The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, wonders why a woman who gives birth becomes *tamei*. Hashem has the “key,” the power that opens the womb which releases the child. Hashem's pure hands release the child from an impure place. The mother is *tamei*; the child is *tahor*. It has all been orchestrated by Hashem, Who is the essence of purity. Is this not paradoxical? *Horav Gedalyah Schorr, zl*, explains that the child's purity is an indication that it comes from Hashem and has no real connection to its impure source. The mere fact that a pure child is derived from an impure place demonstrates the Hashem factor in this creation. Likewise, with the *Parah Adumah*: the one who touches the ash becomes impure, while the one upon whom it is sprinkled becomes pure. This teaches us that purity really comes from Hashem.

זאת חקת התורה

This is the chok/statute/decreed of the Torah. (19:2)

The term *chok* is used to describe a *mitzvah* which, for all intents and purposes, seems inexplicable. While Hashem certainly has a rationale for this *mitzvah*, our little finite minds have difficulty understanding that which is infinite. We are instructed to serve Hashem out of love and awe – not because it makes sense, it seems the right thing to do, or we understand it. We serve Hashem because He is the Almighty, and on *Har Sinai* we accepted to be His People, with a resounding declaration of *Naaseh v'Nishma*, “We will do and we will listen.” This declaration affirms our commitment to Hashem and is based on doing – not on listening and understanding. The *chok* then becomes the key to all observances. We serve because

as King. He makes decrees, and we accept them. There is no rhyme or reason – obedience. This is Judaism.

The concept of *chok* goes beyond the scope of *mitzvos*. There are *chukim* in episodes which, at the time, do not make sense: illnesses; financial challenges; such, which are beyond our ability to understand and accept. These inexplicable episodes should be treated the same way we perform *mitzvos* which are *chukim*. They are Hashem's decree. He owes us no explanation. We take it as it comes, and

This is the *yesod*, foundation, of *Parah Adumah*. Hashem seems to be conveying to us the following message: “*Rabbosai* – you are not going to understand of My ways. *Parah Adumah* appears to you as a senseless, contradictory *mitzvah*. This is the way I want it to be, and this is what I want you to follow.”

Perusing our national history, our people have suffered many tragic and grievous events. These experiences run counter to our vision and understanding of a loving and kind G-d. How could He allow these terrible things to happen? Sadly, there are some who employ their inability to understand as a vehicle for reneging on their commitment, to rebel and deny Hashem. Apparently, their ancestors who experienced the tragedies, who were the victims, did not seem to think so. They maintained their belief in Hashem, and with pride and dignity sacrificed their lives to glorify His Name. They are the true survivors. Their descendants, who arrogantly deny Hashem and impugn the integrity of their ancestors, are the actual victims. The parents live on, while the children have chosen to exchange eternal life for temporary gratification.

In his commentary to the *Haggadah*, *Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita*, explains the verse *Baruch HaMakom Baruch Hu*, “Blessed is the *Makom* (Hashem), blessed He,” which precedes the discussion of the four sons. We understand *Makom* as referring to Hashem, since *makom* means “place”; Hashem is the *Mekomo Shel Olam*, the “place” of the world. He embodies the entire world. *Rav* Weinberger notes that this term referring to Hashem is not found anywhere in *Torah Sheh'B'ksav*, Written Law. The first time Hashem is alluded to by the word *Makom* is in *Bereishis* 2:4, with regard to the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, Binding of Yitzchak, wherein the Torah writes *Va'yaar es haMakom mei'rachok*, “He (Avraham Avinu) saw the place from far.” While we usually translate *ha'Makom* as the place where Avraham was instructed to slaughter Yitzchak Avinu, the *Zohar HaKadosh* contends that *Makom* refers to Hashem. Thus, the *pasuk* is informing us that Avraham sensed that Hashem was distant from him. Specifically at this moment of ultimate sacrifice, when he needed Hashem's closeness more than ever – He appeared distant and unapproachable.

The *Chidushei HaRim* explains this anomaly. After all, this is when Avraham truly required and deserved Hashem's support. He was doing exactly what he was instructed to do. Why not grant him support? Apparently, Hashem was enabling Avraham to magnify the challenge of the *Akeidah*, thereby allowing him to qualify for an exponentially greater reward. When Avraham accepted the *nisayon*, challenge, of *Akeidas Yitzchak*, it was his tenth test. Although he had successfully passed the previous nine, taking the tenth test was equivalent to saying – “I am negating the

first nine. If I pass this one, I receive the reward for all ten. If I fail, I fail all ten.” This was an incredibly difficult step, but our Patriarch was prepared to demonstrate his total conviction.

There were so many questions that must have coursed through his mind. Everything about this test ran counter to what he had been led to believe. How could Hashem promise him a glorious nation if He was demanding that he sacrifice his only son? The *Satan* executed his role in attempting to dissuade Avraham from following through. Indeed, everything was working against his success. Nonetheless, our Patriarch moved forward. It was at this time that he needed Hashem so much; one little bit of encouragement would have gone so far. Instead, Hashem distanced Himself, magnifying the difficult nature of the test. As mentioned, Hashem did this to allow for a potentially greater reward.

Rav Weinberger notes that we employ the term *HaMakom* twice in our vernacular: When we visit a *shivah* house, where mourners are grieving the loss of a loved one, we say *HaMakom yinacheim eschem*, “The *Makom*/Hashem should comfort you.” In light of the *Chidushei HaRim*’s explanation of the *Zohar HaKadosh*, we now have a poignant new interpretation of these words. Someone who has just lost a close relative is going through a grief process that takes its toll on his ability to think rationally. He feels that G-d has distanced Himself from him. At a time like this, we say to him: “*HaMakom*, the Almighty, Whom you feel has distanced Himself from you, will be close with you once again. If you believe that Hashem really cares about you and that what has occurred is part of His Divine Plan, then you will be reunited with Him.”

Another instance when this word is used is in the prayer of *Acheinu kol Bais Yisrael*, “Our brethren, all of the House of *Yisrael*, who are in strife, trouble, the *Makom* should take pity on them and remove them from their troubled circumstances.” Once again, this is an instance when a person begins to question Hashem’s closeness to him. We pray that Hashem will provide him the opportunity to be in His close proximity once again.

There are situations in life when our belief is challenged. It is specifically at these times that we must be resolute in our conviction and make every attempt to transcend the obstacles, so that we come closer to Hashem. Indeed, when He appears far away, it is specifically at this time that we can get much closer – if we only persevere. Patience and conviction are the answers. I came across the following story in Rabbi Hillel Goldberg’s *The Unexpected Road*. It is a story of faith and trust which was challenged a number of times, and, only after generations, did the light finally appear.

The war had ended, and a father and his young son were reunited in Buchenwald’s Barracks 66. It was a miracle that they had both survived. A few days later, they were both taken to France.

Indeed, it was a miracle that the young boy had survived, but he was terribly weak. The torture and starvation had taken their toll on his young body. He was now near death. The doctors said that his only hope for survival was a blood transfusion. Blood was at a premium. The war had just ended, and there were so many wounded and sick, broken people everywhere. Where would this boy’s father find enough

... to allow his son to live? He tried everywhere – to no avail. Finally, he made the ultimate decision: he was going to give his son his own blood. If only one of them would live, let it be his son.

So it was performed. The father lay down next to his son. The blood transfusion began with the father's blood flowing into his son's arm. The son was saved; his life was before him; a new dawn had risen. However, the father died, lying there next to his son. The young boy grew into a man, nurtured by his father's blood. He had a family – four children. Sadly, he did not live to see his children grow up and marry, because at the young age of forty-three, he returned his *neshamah*, soul, to his Creator.

Four young orphans. It was not supposed to be this way. When the grandfather gave up his blood so that his son should live – he was supposed to live to a ripe, old age. So many questions. No one had answers, but one does not question Hashem. Eventually, we will be privy to the answers – in due time. The four orphans grew up, married, and had large families. Today, there are grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren, all leading Torah lives, studying Torah, performing mitzvot. It is all because a father gave his blood to his son. We now have the answers. This is what *HaMakom*, Hashem, wants. He may seem distant, but actually, He is much closer than we think.

יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל לכן לא תביאו את הקהל הזה
אל הארץ אשר נתתי להם

because you did not believe Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of Bnei Yisrael, therefore, you will not bring this congregation to the Land that I have given them.” (20:12)

The error of *mei merivah*, waters of strife, cost Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* the opportunity to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. The various commentators are troubled with coming to grips with this definitive error. How did Moshe make such a mistake? Hashem instructed him to **speak** to the rock – **not hit** it. *Rashi* explains that had Moshe spoken to the stone, he would have magnified the miracle of water flowing from a stone. While this may be true, it does not explain what Moshe, Hashem's *eved neeman*, true servant – who would never do anything on his own – did. Second, if Hashem had wanted Moshe to speak to the stone, why did He instruct Moshe to “take the staff” in his hand? Third, in *Sefer Devarim* 3:26, Moshe actually blames the nation for his inability to enter the Land, saying that “Hashem became angry with me because of you.” Is this true? The *pasuk* here in *Parashas Chukas* clearly lays the blame at Moshe's doorstep.

Let us first analyze *Rashi's* understanding of the episode. In an attempt to explain *Rashi*, *Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita*, asks how the entire debacle transpired in the sequence that is implied by *Rashi's* explanation of the circumstances. First, why did Moshe hit the rock? Second, why did he hit the rock twice? Third, why is the rock referred to as *ha'sela*, “the” rock, as if it were a specific rock? Fourth, why did Moshe refer to the people as *morim*, rebellious? Were they demanding so much? After all, asking for water is not what one would consider to be overly demanding. Last, why did Moshe ask the people, “Shall I bring forth

water from **this** rock?” Was there another rock in the picture? Hashem commanded him to speak with **this** rock.

Based upon the above questions, *Rav* Friedman presents his understanding of *Rashi* in the following manner: It all started with Hashem instructing Moshe to **speak** to the rock. The reason the term *ha'sela*, referring to a specific stone, is used is that Hashem wanted Moshe to speak to the original stone which had served as *B'eirah shel Miriam*, the Well of Miriam. When Miriam died, the Well reverted to its original function as a stone. Therefore, Moshe and Aharon had difficulty locating **that** stone.

When Moshe and Aharon attempted to speak to the stone, the people asked, “Why bother with that specific stone? Speak to any stone.” Moshe looked at them incredulously and said, “*Morim* – do you not realize that it is not any stone to which we can speak?” During this dialogue Moshe and Aharon saw a stone which resembled the one for which they had been searching. They spoke to it, but since it was the wrong stone, it produced no water. Then, Moshe figured that before when he had **hit** a stone water emerged, therefore he would do so now. He hit the stone and out came a few drops of water. Then Moshe hit the stone again. This time, the water came flowing out.

According to *Rashi's pshat*, explanation, Moshe and Aharon should not be responsible for what happened. It was all an accident, because they had been unaware that they were dealing with the wrong stone. The *Mizrachi* senses this question and replies, *echad shogeg v'echad meizid b'chillul Hashem*, “when it involves a desecration of Hashem's Name, there is no difference if one does so on purpose or inadvertently.” At the end of the day, a *chillul Hashem* was committed. This cannot be ignored.

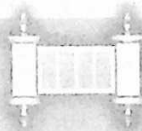
Rav Friedman cites a novel exposition from the *Megaleh Amukos* that illuminates the *mei merivah* incident in a new light. Moshe desired to enter *Eretz Yisrael* so that he could build the *Bais HaMikdash*. Hashem did not acquiesce to Moshe's request. The reason is based on a statement made by *Chazal* in the *Talmud Sotah* 9a, that what was constructed by both Moshe and David *Ha'melech* was never destroyed by our nation's enemies. When the enemies destroyed the first *Bais HaMikdash*, the original *Mishkan* was concealed.

Accordingly, had Moshe entered *Eretz Yisrael* and built the *Bais HaMikdash*, Hashem, Who had taken out His wrath on the wood and mortar of the *Bais HaMikdash* structure, would have to *chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid, do so to the Jewish People. The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* asks: Indeed, how could Moshe have been allowed to succeed in speaking to the rock? Had he been successful, it would have meant an end to the Jewish People, because then someone had to feel Hashem's wrath, and it would not have been the physical structure of the Temple. He explains that had Moshe spoken to the stone, he would have engendered such a powerful *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name, that *Klal Yisrael* would have achieved spiritual perfection, thus allowing for Moshe to enter the Land and build the Temple edifice. There would no longer ever be a need to punish the people. Thus, because Moshe and Aharon did not speak to the stone, they did not enter the Land, because it would have been detrimental to the nation.

Moshe and Aharon were worthy of the miracle. Most of the nation was also worthy. There were, however, the *morim* who insisted on Moshe hitting the stone, which indicated a spiritual deficiency on the highest levels. We now understand why Hashem had Moshe take the staff when, in fact, He wanted him to speak to the stone. That was the plan: speak to the stone; create an incredible *Kiddush Hashem*; go into *retz Yisrael* and build the *Bais HaMikdash*. The people are worthy of maintaining themselves. The *morim* got involved. They could not wait for Moshe to speak to the rock. As a result, he applied the staff. Hashem wanted Moshe to be prepared for both contingencies: if all the people were worthy, he would speak; if they were not, he would have to hit the stone, so that he could not end up building the *Bais HaMikdash*. Thus, by hitting the stone, Moshe *Rabbeinu* actually saved *Klal Yisrael*.

We now address the reason that Moshe hit the rock twice. *Rav Friedman* notes the well-known commentaries of *Ramban* and *Sforno* who maintain that Hashem follows through with a miracle, **after** His servant first sets the tone with a physical action. This act is similar to Moshe throwing the staff to the ground before it became a serpent, raising up the staff before hitting the rock. Hashem wants mortal participation. Having established that Moshe's hitting the rock spared the destruction of the Jewish People during the *churban Bais HaMikdash*, destruction of the Temple, we must also take into consideration that there were two Temples. This required two actions on the part of Moshe. Thus, we now understand why he hit the rock twice.

Parashas Balak



פרשת
בלק

וישלח מלאכים אל בלעם בן בעור פתורה

He sent messengers to Bilaam ben Beor to Pesor. (22:5)

The *Parsha* introduces us to Bilaam *ha'rasha*, the wicked, evil Bilaam, the prophet who was the designated pagan counterpart of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. While our quintessential leader certainly had no equal, as the *Midrash* explains, Bilaam was the Heavenly response to the pagan world's request for equal leadership. Although Bilaam could not have been less like Moshe, he did have within him the ability to rise very high in prophetic powers. As mentioned, he was a degenerate, and therefore he was precluded from rising to spiritual ascendancy. In which specific aspects of his behavior did Bilaam manifest these shortcomings?

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 5:22) distinguish between the *talmidim*, disciples, of Avraham *Avinu* and Bilaam *ha'rasha*. They cite three character traits which, in their positive form, exemplify Avraham's *talmidim*, and in their negative manifestation, represent the evil of Bilaam. They are: *ayin tovah*, a good eye – one who is not desirous of what others have; *ruach nemuchah*, a lowly spirit – humility; and *nefesh shefalah*, a meek soul. Bilaam's students are missing these characteristics. This means, explains *Horav Meir Chodosh, zl*, that one could be sitting in the *bais ha'medrash* studying Torah, even with scholarly proficiency, yet he may still be a student of Bilaam – not of Avraham.