

בעזרת ש"ת

The Way of Emunah

Collected Thoughts
on the Weekly Parshah

From

**Rabbi Meir Isamar
Rosenbaum shlita**

Shoftim



The Way of Emunah

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Parshas Shoftim



Judging Others Favorably/Tzadikim Judge Everyone Favorably/Judging Favorably Cancels the Sin of Chilul Hashem/The “Heichal Hazechus”/Judging Favorably is Part of “Chasidus”/One Who Judges Others Favorably is Judged Favorably/The Benefits of Achdus/A Persons Words Have an Impact Above/Judging Oneself First/Judging Others as One Judges Himself/First Providing for Others and Then Teaching Them Torah/Working all of His Life for His Portion in Olam Haba

Elul

Investigating One’s Actions/No Understanding/Chasidim Who Steal Aveiros/The Month of Elul Influences the Entire Year/Hashem Waits All Year for Elul/Teshuva During This Month/One Who Delays Teshuva, Has to do it Twice/Trembling During Elul/Goodness From Blessing Others

שֹׁפְטִים וְשָׂטָרִים תִּתֵּן לָהֶם בְּכָל שַׁעְרֶיךָ וְגו' וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת הָעָם מִשִּׁפְט צִדִּיק
(טז, יח)

You shall place for yourselves judges and watchmen at all of your gates... and they shall judge the nation a righteous judgement. (16:18)

Judging Others

states:

Favorably:

“They shall judge the nation a

The Medrash Tanchuma (4) righteous judgment.’ They learns this *pasuk* to be speaking should judge the people about the topic of being *dan l’kaf* favorably and defend them. Rav *zechus* (judging others favorably). It Yehuda B’Rebbe said: Whom do

we learn this from? From Gidon the son of Yoash. In his days, Klal Yisroel experienced difficulties and Hashem sought someone to issue a defense for them but no one could be found because the generation was poor in mitzvos and good deeds. But **once Gidon found a way to speak favorably of them, they were redeemed by an angel of Hashem.** This is as is stated (Shoftim 6:10): ‘And an angel of Hashem came to them and said: Go with your power.’ **With the power of the defense you stated for My children...**”

Tzadikim Judge Everyone Favorably:

Sefer Tiferes Shlomo writes that the way of true leaders and judges is to see the nation in a positive light. When one judges

his friend, he should always judge him favorably in fulfillment of the Mishnah (Avos 1:6) to judge everyone favorably. **This is because their job is to arouse Divine mercy for every Jew, even if he is on a lowly level. If they find a way to view him favorably, he will be deemed innocent.**

This was Shlomo Hamelech prayer (1 Malachim 3:9): “And You shall give to Your servant a listening, knowing heart to judge Your nation and to understand between good and bad, for who is able to judge this difficult nation?” This is hard to understand. Why would a judge be needed to adjudicate disputes between two parties in Shlomo Hamelech’s times? At that time, wealth was everywhere and everyone had whatever they needed, so why would anyone

fight about money? The Tiferes Shlomo answers that what Shlomo actually was davening for was for people to have the heart to judge others favorably.

The way of *tzadikim* is to consider themselves lowly in their own eyes. The bigger one is, the smaller he sees himself (1 Zohar Hakadosh 122B). They act in a way as if there constantly is a judge watching them and judging their actions.

Accordingly, the *pasuk* is saying: “You shall place judges and watchmen in all of your gates” – you should act like the *tzadikim* who conduct themselves as if they are being watched at all times and found wanting. However, this only applies to themselves. **While they should judge themselves harshly, they should judge others favorably**, as the *pasuk*

continues: “They shall judge the nation a righteous judgment.”

Judging Favorably Cancels the Sin of Chilul Hashem:

It is related that Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zy”a*, Rov of Yerushalaim, would judge every Jew favorably, even those who were on a lowly level. He was once asked, “What would the Rov do if he say a Jew enter a non-kosher restaurant on Yom Kippur and eat all types of treif foods. How would you judge him favorably?”

He answered, “I would defend him by saying that he probably suddenly fell ill and needed to eat meat immediately. Since his life was in danger and no kosher restaurants were open, he had to run into a treif restaurant to get

something to eat.”

He was then asked, “We all know the truth. We all know that this guy is a sinner. Why do we need to go to such length to make up a defense for him?”

Rav Yosef Chaim replied, “Whenever a person does an *aveirah*, there are two things to consider. 1. The actual sin. 2. The *chilul Hashem* caused by the sin. If we are able to judge him favorably in regard to the actual sin, we also can remove the damage from the *chilul Hashem* he caused. **That is why one must defend every Jew, even if it is hard to do so.**”

It must be added that while one should defend his fellow Jew before Hashem, he still has an obligation to chastise and rebuke the individual he sees committing a sin. One should not let him off

the hook by telling him that he probably did nothing wrong, as this would only encourage him to continue sinning. Rather, he should give *mussar*.

It is related that someone once told Rav Sonnenfeld, “I am certain that the Zionists have no share in Olam Haba!”

Rav Yosef Chaim replied, “It is not our business to know if they have a portion in Olam Haba or not. **What we must do is battle against them so that they have no footing in this world.** We must fight them as strongly as we can so that the young generation does not get influenced by them!”

The “Heichal Hazechus”:

The Chofetz Chaim *zt”l* (Sefer Shemiras Halashon, Perek Hatevunah, 7)

writes that when one defends a Jew to Hashem, he **becomes a conduit of light for the holy chamber that is known as the “Heichal Hazechus”, which is the place where the merits of Yisroel are announced.**

Judging Favorably is Part of “Chasidus”:

The Mesilas Yesarim (19) lists judging others favorably as part of the *middah* of “*chasidus*”. He writes: “There is another primary principle regarding intention in *chassidus*, namely, the good of the generation. For, it is proper for every *chasid* to be motivated in his deeds for the good of his entire generation, to bring merit to them and to shield them. This is the intent of the verse: ‘Say of the *chasid* that he is good, for they shall eat the fruits of their

deeds (Yeshayah 3:10)’, that all of the generation eats of his fruits. Likewise, Chazal say (Bava Basra 15A): ‘Is there a tree there? (Bamidbar 13:20)’ - is there a *chasid* who shields the generation like a tree.

“You will see that this is the will of Hashem, that the *chasidim* of Yisroel bring merit and atone on all the other classes among them. This is what Chazal said regarding the *lulav* and its species: ‘Let these come and atone for these (Vayikrah Rabah 30:11).’ For Hashem does not desire the destruction of the wicked. It is rather a mitzva incumbent on the *chasidim* to strive to bring merit to them and to atone for them. **This intention needs to be included in his Divine service and also be an actual part of his prayers, namely, to pray on behalf of**

his generation, to atone for he who needs atonement, to bring to repentance he who needs to repent, and to plead in defense of his entire generation.”

One Who Judges Others Favorably is Judged Favorably:

The Kedushas Levi writes that the Torah is teaching us that the way to merit being judged favorably during the Yomim Noraim is by judging others favorably.

He says that Hashem judges us with mercy and compassion but we need to do something in order to arouse His *middah* of *chesed*. When we treat each other with *chesed* and judge each other favorably, He also judges us favorably.

This is seen from the *pasuk* that states: “You shall place judges and watchmen in all of your gates” – meaning that you should create openings to reach the Heavens through your own actions. The way to do this is by “judging the nation with a righteous judgment.” **When you judge others favorably, you create these gates to Heaven which allow you to be judged well by Hashem.**

The Benefits of Achdus:

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zy”a* states that **when one defends a fellow Jew, it creates much Divine mercy.** For this reason, we do not recite the words “Yehi Ratzon” in the *tefillah* of “Acheinu Kol Bais Yisroel” (which is recited before Ashrei, Uva l’Tzion). When we say “Acheinu”

we do not need to request Hashem's mercy, as we have already brought it upon us through our *achdus*.

A Persons Words Have an Impact Above:

The Tiferes Shlomo (on Maseches Avos) asks why the Mishnah (Avos 1:6) tells us to judge others favorably. In Shomayim, it is known what the person really did and why he did it. So what does it help for us to judge him favorably?

He answers that words that a person says in this world have much power in the Upper Worlds. **When one defends his friend in this world, he creates a defense for him Above, which serves to protect him from Divine accusations.** On the other hand, if one speaks badly

against his friend in this world, he creates accusations against him in Shomayim. Of course, Hashem knows the truth. Still and all, one can create a *hisorerus* through his words that will protect his friend and shield him from harsh Heavenly judgments.

He proves this from the Gemara (Chagigah 15B) that says that Eliyahu Hanavi once told Rabba that Hashem learns the Torah of every one of the Rabbanan, with the exception of Rav Meir, who learned Torah from Acheir. (Since he studied under the wicked Elisha ben Avuya, Hashem did not accept his Torah.) Rabba defended Rav Meir by saying, "He found a pomegranate, ate the fruit and threw away the peel (meaning that he only took the good from Acheir and discarded the bad parts)."

Eliyahu then said, "Hashem now says, 'My son, Meir,

says...’.” (Hashem is now saying over the Torah of Rav Meir.)

Until Rabba stated a defense of Rav Meir, Hashem would not learn his Torah. Even though He knows everything and He knew how great Rav Meir was, there still needed to be a *hisorerus* on his behalf created in this world. It also works the other way. If a person commits a sin in private, with no one knowing about it, the *middas hadin* is not strongly aroused against him, even though Hashem knows what he did. But if someone reveals his sin, the prosecution against the man becomes stronger.

The Tiferes Shlomo goes on to say that the punishment for all sins is intensified when people say that, “So-and-so did such-and-such.” Once those words are spoken, it is like an arrow is shot out that seals the man’s verdict

both in this world and in the Higher World. For this reason, the Torah warns us (Vayikroh 19:17): “You shall surely rebuke your friend and he should not carry a sin.” This can be understood to mean that when one rebukes his friend for a sin he committed, he should do it in a gentle way, rather than in a way in which he “carries the sin.” In other words, he should only hint at the transgression in a way that his friend gets the message, and he should not mention it outright, as doing so would cause him to be prosecuted.

This idea is also found in the words of the Zohar Hakadosh: “The *Sitra Achra* is an invalid witness to give testimony about Yisroel. Only through the hands of Yisroel can the matter be made to stand.” We learn from this that even if one knows that

his friend did something wrong, he should not speak about it, as doing so will seal the decree against him.

Judging Oneself First:

The Kli Yakar explains the words “*shoftim u’shotrim titein lecha*” by saying that the word “*lecha*” (to yourself) is a reference to the dictum of Chazal (Bava Metziah 107B): “First beautify yourself and only afterwards beautify others”. Thus, the *pasuk* is saying that one should first judge himself and make sure he isn’t doing anything wrong before he judges others.

Judging Others as One Judges Himself:

Sefer Toldos Yaakov Yosef explains this *pasuk* by quoting

the Yaabetz’s explanation of the Mishnah (Avos 2:4): “Do not judge your friend until you are in his place.” The Yaabetz explains that most fights between two people start because one judges himself favorably but judges his friend negatively. Thus, the Mishnah says to put oneself in the same place as his friend, meaning to judge him the same way you would judge yourself. If one does this, he will understand this friend’s position, and he will not be so hard on him.

Accordingly, the Toldos Yaakov Yosef explains the *pasuk* to mean that one should appoint judges “*lecha*” – for yourself – meaning that one should judge what his friend did the same way he would judge himself if he did that action. When one does this, he will not be angry with him

and he will understand him much better.

In this vein, the Mishnah states (Avos 4:1): “Who is strong, he who overcomes his *yeitzer*.” Sefer Avodas Yisroel asks why it says “his *yeitzer*”, rather than “the *yeitzer hara*”. He answers that it is teaching us that one should focus on his own *yeitzer*, rather than constantly looking at the *yeitzer hara* of others, as many people do. One should see his own flaws, and he should not pay such close attention to the flaws of others. Rather, one should see others as truly righteous while working on how to improve himself.

First Providing for Others and Then Teaching Them Torah:

Sefer Ateres Yeshua explains

this *pasuk* by quoting Meforshim (see Alshich on Tehillim 4:6 and on Mishlei 3:1) who describe a debate that is hinted to in the Mishnah (Avos 3:17): “If there is no flour, there is no Torah. If there is no Torah, there is no flour.” Hashem claimed, so to speak, that Klal Yisroel should first learn Torah, and they will then be blessed with *parnassah*. Klal Yisroel counterclaimed that Hashem should first give them *parnassah*, and they will then learn Torah.

He says that in our times, the level of the generation has declined. Therefore, Hashem must first grant us an abundance of *gashmius* before we can properly learn Torah and serve Him. A proof of this is that Yaakov Avinu gave a *bracha* to Zevulun – who represents working for a living – before Yissochor – who represents Torah study (Bereishis 49:13-14).

Additionally, Moshe Rabenu also blessed Zevulun before blessing Yissochor (Devarim 33:18). This indicates that one's *parnassah* must be taken care of before he can sit and learn.

So too, when Yaakov Avinu blessed Menashe and Efraim, he crossed his hands to place his right hand of Efraim, even though Menashe was older. This is because Efraim represents *parnassah*, as Yosef gave him this name to remind him of how Hashem provided for him in a foreign land and granted him wealth (Bereishis 41:52), while Menashe symbolizes Torah, as the letters of his name can also

spell the word “Mishnah”, which is a hint to *Torah shebaal peh*.

This is also hinted to in the verse of “*shoftim v'shotrim*”, as the word “*shofet*” has the same *gematriah* as “*parnassah*”, while the word “*shoter*” has the *gematriah* of “*tefillah*.” This indicates that one must first have a *parnassah* before he can serve Hashem properly. It then says: “That Hashem your G-d gave to your *shevatim*...” It is saying that we see this concept from the Shevatim of Yissochor, Zevulun, Menashe and Efraim, and how we see from them that *parnassah* comes before Torah study and serving Hashem.

שׁוֹם תִּשְׂמִי עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ וְגו' מִקֶּרֶב אֶחָיִךָ תִּשְׂמִי עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ לֹא תוּכַל לָתֵת
עָלֶיךָ אִישׁ נָכְרִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֶחָיִךָ הוּא (יז, טו)

From amongst your brethren you shall appoint a king over you. You may not put upon you a foreign man who is not your brother. (17:15)

Working all of His Life for His Portion in Olam Haba:

The Chovos Halevavos (Shaar Avodas Elokim, Perek 9) relates a parable of a kingdom that designated one day each year to appoint a traveler passing through the kingdom as the new king. At the end of the year, the king was replaced with another traveler. A foolish man would waste his time, enjoying the life of a king, and he would be left with nothing at the end of the year. A wise man, however, would ask why he was chosen as king, and would find out that he would only have the position for a year. He would then utilize his time as king, to send the king's treasures to a far-off land, where it would be waiting for him when his year was up.

is a “king for an hour”. A foolish man will waste his time and won't save anything for his final destination. But a wise man will collect spiritual wealth during his time as “king” in the form of Torah and mitzvos, which he will send ahead of him to Olam Haba.

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef sees this lesson hinted to in this verse. It says that “you may not put upon you a foreign man.” You should not act like a foreigner who doesn't understand the customs of this world and thinks he is here permanently, and, therefore, does not put anything away for later. Rather, “you should appoint a king from amongst your brothers.” You should act like someone who knows how this world works, recognizes that it is temporary,

The lesson is that every man

and knows that he has to save up all the wealth he can for when his time here is up.

This is Chazal's intent when they say, "Who is a wise man? He who sees the future." One who is wise knows what is coming after he leaves this world. Therefore, he stores up mitzvos and good deeds for the next world.

This is also the meaning of the verse (Koheles 2:14): "A wise man has his eyes in his head." A wise man sees into the distance. He uses his mind to see what is coming next, as opposed to a foolish man who only sees what is right in front of him and doesn't worry about the future.

In this vein, my grandfather, the Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"l, said an incredible explanation of the Mishnah in Avos (6:9) that says: "At the time of a person's death, he is not accompanied by his silver or gold or precious gems or diamonds. He is only accompanied by his Torah and good deeds alone."

One cannot take his silver and gold with him when he dies, but he can send it ahead in advance. When one gives money to *tzedakah* while he is alive, he is sending it ahead to *Shomayim*. When he arrives there after his death, **it will be waiting for him to serve as merits to bring him to Olam Haba.**

Chodesh Elul

One year on Erev Rosh Yom Kippur Koton, the Chodesh Elul, after the Ropshitzer Rebbe walked out of conclusion of the recitation of the bais medrash but then turned

and walked back in. He looked at a group of *chasidim* who were conversing near the door, gestured towards them with his hands and said, “Listen to me you fool. Come here you fool.”

The *chasidim* looked at each other in puzzlement, unsure who the Rebbe was calling. When no one stepped forward, the Rebbe again repeated, “Listen you fool. Come here you fool!” Again, they couldn’t understand who the Rebbe was speaking to in such harsh terms.

The Rebbe finally said, “We just finished the *tefillah* of Yom Kippur Koton and said the Vidui Hagadol of Rabenu Nissim zt”l. We recited the words: **‘I know myself that I don’t have Torah, chochmah, wisdom or understanding... But I am a fool and don’t comprehend. I am an empty person and don’t**

understand.’ But when I called for ‘the fool’ everyone turned to look at everyone else. No one imagined I was talking to him. Did you already forget what you just said?”

Chasidim Who Steal Aveiros:

In the times of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchov zy”a, some people would refer to *chasidim* as “*ganavim*” (thieves). He explained that they were correct to call them by this name because the *yeitzer hara* collects people’s sins all year round and stores them in one place. When Rosh Chodesh Elul arrives, the *chasidim* go to the bais medrash to daven, fast and do *teshuva*, which causes all of the sins to be transformed into merits.

On Erev Yom Kippur, when

the *yeitzer hara* goes to get the sins in order to bring them to Hashem, he finds that they are all gone. The *chasidim* have stolen them all! That is why they are called “*ganavim*” – because they steal the *aveiros*!

The Month of Elul Influences the Entire Year:

One year during the month of Elul, Rav Yoel Chapler *zt”l*, a student of the Lechovitcher Rebbe *zy”a*, heard a simple villager telling his friend, “If we don’t work the fields during this month, we will be hungry all year!”

Rav Yoel repeated these words for the rest of the month, “**If we don’t work to do *teshuva* at this time, we will be ‘hungry’ all year!**”

Hashem Waits All Year for Elul:

The *pasuk* states (Devarim 11:12): “The eyes of Hashem your G-d is upon it from the start of the year until the end of the year.” The Sefas Emes *zy”a* says that this is a hint that from the beginning of the year, Hashem waits for the end of the year, when His children will do *teshuva* and come back to Him.

Teshuva During This Month:

The beginning of the month of Elul is an “*eis ratzon*”, an auspicious time to do *teshuva* and improve our *middos*. Sefer Shaar Hamelech (Shaar 1, Perek 1) writes: “Shlomo Hamelech tells us (Koheles 9:8): ‘Your clothing

should be white at all times.’ This means that throughout the year one should contemplate and investigate his actions to ensure that there is no ‘stain’ upon him. If one didn’t do *teshuva* all year, at the very least he should do *teshuva* starting from the beginning of Elul. This is hinted to by Dovid Hamelech with the words (Tehillim 27:13): ‘Had I not believed (*lulei he’emanti*) in seeing the good of Hashem in the land of the living!’ The word *lulei* has the same letters as the word ‘Elul’ (as is stated in Baal Haturim, Devarim 30:6), but the letters are inverted. (The word ‘*lulei*’ is the word ‘Elul’ backwards.). This is akin to a deer that runs with its head facing backwards. So too, a man runs all year without seeing where he is going. We need this month to turn our faces forward to determine what we did wrong all year and to rectify it.”

One shouldn’t wait to get this *hisorerus* on Rosh Hashanah itself. Rather, he should start from the beginning of Elul.

One day during Elul, Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz *zy”a* turned to his *shamash*, R’ Shmuel Betzalel *z”l*, and asked him, “When during the Yamim Noraim are you aroused to do *teshuva*?”

He answered, “When we recite ‘Min Hameitzar’ right before *tekiyas shofar*.”

The Rebbe responded, “**Shmuel, Min Hameitzer is already late!**”

One Who Delays Teshuva, Has to do it Twice:

Sefer Arvei Nachal writes that if one does an *aveirah* and fails to do *teshuva* all year, he is not

punished for delaying his *teshuva*. This is because an individual cannot repent from his sins on his own except during the Yemei Ratzon that begin with Rosh Chodesh Elul. But if one allows those days to pass without doing *teshuva*, he now must do *teshuva* twice – once for the actual sin and once for the sin of failing to repent in the proper time.

He sees a hint to this from the verse (Bereishis 43:10): “For had we not (*lulei*) delayed, by now we would have already returned twice.” Since the word “*lulei*” is a hint to the word “Elul”, the *pasuk* can be understood to be saying that if one delays and does not do *teshuva* during Elul, he must “return twice” by doing *teshuva* both for the sin and for delaying the *teshuva*.

Trembling During Elul:

Sefer M’Zekeinim Esbonen quotes the elder *chasid*, R’ Yehuda Leib Kastinelitz zt”l as saying that he heard the Kobriner Rebbe relate how he started to devote himself to *avodas Hashem*. He said that when he was 6-years-old, on the Shabbos when Birchas Hachodesh was recited for the month of Elul, he was *shmuzing* with some of his friends when his older sister called to him and said, **“Moishke, we already *bentched* the month of Elul. Even the fish in the lake are trembling in fear. And you are playing with your friends?”**

The Rebbe said, “My sister was a big *tzadekes*. Her words entered my heart and I began to tremble. I remember it until today. From then on, I devoted myself to *avodas Hashem*.”

Goodness From Blessing Others:

The Magid of Trisk zy" a heard from his grandfather, the Meohr Einyaim zy" a, who heard from the Baal Shem Tov zy" a the following words that were told to him by his rebbi, Achiyah Hashiloni:

From the day of the 15th of Av until Rosh Hashanah, there are numerous times when a person blesses his friend with the words "*Kesiva V'chasima Tovah.*" Each time one does so, an angel is created that defends him and speaks well of him. For example, if someone blesses 100 people, he creates 100 defending angels. **When Rosh Hashanah arrives, when every man is judged, this person will have many angels defending him in Shomayim.**



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