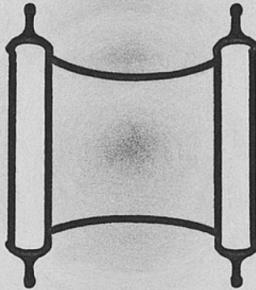


ב"ס

Reb Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Va'eira



*Dedicated in Honor of the
Yahrzeit of*

לע"ג

שרה מרי בת אברהם

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Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

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Parshas Va'eira

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶלْ מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אָנִי ה' וְאַתָּה בָּנָי

And God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord” (Exodus 6:2)

In Rashi: He spoke with him judgment, for he was difficult to speak and to say, “Why have You done evil to this people,” up to here is his language.

And Rabbi Meir of Premishlan of blessed memory said, that every rabbi and teacher to the congregation of the upright must have firmness of mind,

if he sees, Heaven forbid, in the suffering of Israel his people, that he be able to argue on their behalf before the Master of the world,

“Why have You done evil to this people,” and if there is not in him such strengthening, he is not fit to judge the children of Israel.

And he said that this is hinted in the words of Rashi of blessed memory mentioned above, “He spoke with him judgment,” meaning

that the Lord spoke with Moses, that he and a rabbi like him are fit for judgment, to judge the congregation of the children of Israel.

And afterward he explains the reason, for he was difficult to speak and to say, “Why have You done evil to this people,” meaning

if you had such firmness of mind to challenge and to speak before Him, “Why have You done evil to this people,”

then perforce you are fit that judgment of the people of the children of Israel should come forth from your mouth.

A story that happened with my holy elderly father in law Rabbi Reb Meir of Premishlan, that a woman came before him and cried

that she needed some salvation, and he answered her that she should return in repentance to shave the hair of her head,

בריש"י זכר אותו משבט על שהקשה לדבר ולומר
למה ברעפה לעם הנה עד כאן לשונו

ו אמר רב מאיר מפרק מישלאן ז"ל כי כל רב ומורה
לעדת ישראל אריה להיות בו מקיפות הדעת

אם רואה חס ושלום באהר ישראל עמו שיזוכל
לפען בעצם לפני קרבונו של עולם

לאה הרע לעם הנה, ובאם אין בו התחזקות בזו
איןנו ראוי לשפט את בני ישראל

ו אמר כי זהו מראה בדרכי ריש"י ז"ל הנה ידבר
אתו משבט פרוש כי

דבר ה' עם משה כי הוא ורב כמהו ראוי לשפט
לשבט עדת בני ישראל

ו אחר כך מפרש הטעם על שהקשה לדבר ולומר
למה ברעפה לעם הנה פרוש

אם קיה לך מקיפות הדעת בזו להקשות ולדבר לפני
למה ברעפה לעם הנה

על פרחך ראוי אתה כי יצא מפיק משפט עם בני
ישראל

מצשה שהיה אצל חותמי זקנין הקדוש רבינו ר' מאיר מלפרק מישלאן שבאה לפניו אשה ובכתה

שאריך איה יושעה, והשיב לה שמחזיר בתשובה
לגלם שער ראה

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and then she would have salvation. She said to him, Rabbi, first there should be salvation for me, and then I will do according to his words.

And he said to the attendant that he should call the rabbi, the head of the court of the community of Chodrov, Rabbi Yoel Ashkenazi of blessed memory,

and he replied that he was not found here. He said to him, the Rabbi Reb Meir, that he should go to the edge of the city, to its south,

and there he would find him. The attendant went and saw a wagon with men coming,

and he asked if among them was the rabbi, the head of the court of Chodrov, and they said yes.

He said to him, the rabbi calls you to come to him immediately, and he went.

And the Rabbi Reb Meir said to the rabbi, the head of the court of Chodrov, I have a Torah judgment with the woman standing here,

and he told the claims, and the rabbi, the head of the court, said that the justice was with her according to Torah law.

And my holy elderly father in law said, and this is the explanation of the verse, "And God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord,"

Rashi explained of blessed memory, He spoke with him judgment, for he was difficult to speak and to say, "Why have You done evil to this people" (Exodus 5:22),

meaning that the Holy One blessed be He spoke, that with him is judgment, he is able to be a rabbi and to say judgment

between a man and his fellow, for he was difficult to speak and to say, "Why have You done evil," and so on,

and he did not show favor to Me and did not fear Me and did not incline after Me,

וְאֹז יָהִי לְהַיָּה יְשֻׁעָה, אָמֵרָה לֹז, רַבִּי, מִתְחַלָּה מִתְהַנָּה
לִי יְשֻׁעָה וְאֹז אָמֵשָׁה כְּזָבְרִי.

וְאָמֵר לְהַגְּבָאי שִׁקְרָא אֶת קָרְבָּא אֶב בֵּית דִין קָהָלָת
חָאָדָרָב הָוָא קָרְבָּא רַבִּי יוֹאֵל אַשְׁקְנַזִּי ז"ל

וְהַשְׁיב שָׁאַיְנָבוּ נִמְצָא פָּה, אָמֵר לוֹ קָרְבָּי רַי מַאיִרְלַ'

שִׁילַך בְּקָצָה הָעִיר בְּקָרְזָה

וְשָׁם יָמַצְאָנוּ. כָּלֵך הַגְּבָאי וְרָאָה עַגְלָה עִם אַנְשִׁים
בְּאַיִם,

וְשָׁאֵל אִם יָשׁ בְּיִנְקָם קָרְבָּא אֶב בֵּית דִין מַחְאָדָרָב,
וְאָמְרוּ הָנוּ

אָמֵר לוֹ, קָרְבָּא קָוְרָא אֶתְכֶם שְׁתַבּוֹאוּ אֶלְיוֹ פְּקַד,
וְהַלֵּךְ

וְאָמֵר קָרְבָּי רַי מַאיִרְלַ' לְקָרְבָּא אֶב בֵּית דִין חָאָדָרָב,
יָשׁ לִי דִין תּוֹרָה עִם הָאָשָׁה הַעֲוֹמֶדֶת כָּה

וְסִפְר הַטּוּנוֹת, וְאָמֵר קָרְבָּא אֶב בֵּית דִין שְׁהַצְּדָקָה עַמָּה
עַל פִּי דִין תּוֹרָה

וְאָמֵר חֹתְמִי זָקְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ זֶהוּ פְּרוֹשׁ הַכְּתוּב וַיַּדְבֵּר
אֶלְקָדִים אֶל מִשְׁהָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְיוֹ אַנְּבֵי ד

פְּרַשׁ רְשֵׁי ז"ל ذָבֵר אֶתְכֶם מִשְׁפָט עַל שְׁחַקְשָׁה קְדָבָר
(ולומר לְמַה הַרְעָתָה לְעַם הַנָּהָ) (שםות ה, כב

הַנְּנוּ שְׁדָבֵר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא שְׁאַתֶּנוּ מִשְׁפָט, הוּא
יָכֹל לְהִיּוֹת רַב וְלֹוֶר מִשְׁפָט

בֵּין אִישׁ לְרִעָהוּ, עַל שְׁחַקְשָׁה לְדָבָר וְלֹוֶר לְמַה
הַרְעָתָה וְכֵ

וְלֹא נִשְׁאָ פָנִים לִי וְלֹא יָרָא מִפְנֵי וְלֹא הָטָה אַחֲרִי

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and also this rabbi, the head of the court, did not flatter me and did not fear me, up to here I heard.

וגם קרב אב בית דין זה לא חנף אותו ולא ירא
מפני, עד פאן שמעתי

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan explains Rashi's comment on the verse "And God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord" (Exodus 6:2), where Rashi states that God "spoke with him in judgment" because Moses challenged Him by saying, "Why have You done evil to this people." At first glance, this appears as a critique of Moses. Rabbi Meir reframes it as a qualification. The very fact that Moses had the inner strength and boldness of mind to stand before God and argue on behalf of Israel proves that he is fit to judge and lead them.

According to Rabbi Meir, any true rabbi or teacher of Israel must possess takifut ha-daat, firmness and courage of mind. When the Jewish people are in distress, such a leader cannot remain passive or overly deferential. He must be capable of confronting Heaven itself, asking "Why," and pleading the case of the people without fear. If a leader lacks this inner fortitude, even if he is learned or pious, he is not truly fit to judge Israel, because judging Israel requires standing both before the people and before God.

This idea is embedded precisely in Rashi's wording. First, Rashi says "He spoke with him judgment," meaning that God acknowledged Moses as someone fit for mishpat, for judging the congregation of Israel. Only afterward does Rashi explain the reason, that Moses had challenged God by saying "Why have You done evil to this people." Rabbi Meir reads this not as cause for disqualification but as the proof of Moses' qualification. The ability to speak with such force and honesty before God demonstrates that one can also issue judgment among the people with integrity and truth.

Rabbi Meir then reinforces this teaching through a lived example. He recounts an incident involving his holy elder, Rabbi Reb Meir of Premishlan himself, in which a woman came crying for salvation. When the rabbi instructed her to undertake a concrete act of repentance first, she refused and demanded salvation beforehand. Rather than imposing his authority unilaterally, Rabbi Meir summoned an external rabbinic judge, the Av Beit Din of the nearby community, and submitted the matter to a formal Torah judgment. When the Av Beit Din ruled in the woman's favor, Rabbi Meir accepted the ruling fully, without flattery, fear, or defensiveness. This behavior mirrored Moses' stance before God: truth and justice stand above personal honor, even when one is a great tzaddik.

The conclusion of the maamar returns to the verse itself. God's speaking "with him in judgment" means that Moses, and anyone who follows his path, is able to render judgment because he does not fear standing up for truth, neither before people nor before God. Such a leader does not curry favor, does not bend out of fear, and does not retreat from moral confrontation. That very fearlessness is what grants him legitimacy as a judge of Israel.

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Practical Takeaway:

Rabbi Meir teaches that authentic leadership and moral authority require courage, not just knowledge or piety. A person entrusted with responsibility over others must be able to speak truth even when it is uncomfortable, to question, to challenge, and to advocate for those in pain. Spiritual leadership is not about submissive silence but about honest engagement, guided by responsibility and love for the people. Even in personal life, this teaching calls on a person to develop inner strength to face hard questions, to stand for justice, and to act with integrity even when it costs comfort or reputation.

Chassidic Story:

The story Rabbi Meir tells is not presented as a parable but as an actual occurrence, and its power lies precisely in its realism. A broken woman comes seeking help, not theory. A great tzaddik gives her guidance rooted in repentance and change. She resists and pushes back. Instead of asserting his spiritual authority, Rabbi Meir does something unexpected. He brings the matter into the framework of Torah law and calls an independent Av Beit Din to rule.

When the Av Beit Din arrives and hears the claims, he rules in the woman's favor. At that moment, Rabbi Meir could have justified himself spiritually, overridden the ruling, or reasserted his stature. He does none of these. He accepts the judgment fully. He does not flatter the judge, he does not intimidate him, and he does not retreat in embarrassment. He models exactly what he taught: the courage to submit even oneself to truth.

This moment encapsulates the entire maamar. Just as Moses could stand before God and say "Why have You done evil to this people," Rabbi Meir could stand before another rabbi and accept a ruling that went against his initial position. Both acts require the same inner strength. In both cases, authority is not weakened by truth but refined by it. The leader who fears neither Heaven nor people when truth is at stake is the one who truly carries mishpat, judgment, in his hands. **END NOTE]**

וְאֶרְאָ אֶל אֶבְרָהָם אֶל יַצְחָק וְאֶל יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שְׁדֵי וְשֵׁמֵי ה' לֹא נָזַעַתִּי לָהֶם וּגְ

And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, and My Name the Lord I was not known to them (Exodus 6:3)

And I appeared to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob. Rashi explained: "to the fathers." And they ask, what does Rashi want with this.

And Rabbi Meir of Premishlan of blessed memory said, that every person must investigate within himself, according to his strength, faith in the God of the world, blessed is He and blessed is His Name, and one must not rely on the custom of our fathers in our hands.

וְאֶרְאָ אֶל אֶבְרָהָם וְאֶל יַצְחָק וְאֶל יַעֲקֹב. פָּרָשָׁ רְשֵׁי אֶל
הָאָבוֹת. וּמְקַשֵּׁין מַאי בְּעֵד רְשֵׁי בָּזָה.

ונאמר רב מאיר [אפרמיישלאן] ז"ל כי כל אדם
אריך לחקיר בעצמו לפי פחו אמונה אלקי עולם בריך
הוא וברוך שמו ו אין לסמוד על מנהג אבותינו בידינו

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And one who believes in the Lord only because his father believed, this is called only a son, for he received his faith from his father.

But one who serves from himself to attain faith is called in the aspect of a father, and it is as if he built a structure of a father to find faith in the God of the world, like Abraham our father, peace be upon him.

And because of this they are called the holy fathers, a chain of fathers, for each one of them did not rely on his father, not Isaac on Abraham, and not Jacob on Isaac.

Rather, each one fulfilled “Know the God of your father and serve Him,” and this is the intention of our holy Torah, that it did not include to say together “And I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

And the verse was precise to state individually “to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob,” for each one labored and found faith on his own.

And this is what was difficult for Rashi of blessed memory, why it is written by each one “el,” therefore he answers that what is written “And I appeared to” applies to each and every one, “the fathers,”

for all of them were fathers and not sons to inherit from their fathers.

I heard in the name of the holy rabbi, our teacher Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, may his merit protect us, that he said to explain the words of Rashi in the Chumash at the beginning of Parashat Va'eira,

that it is written in the verse “And I appeared to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob,” and Rashi explained “And I appeared, to the fathers,” and the words of the wise are graceful.

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan addresses Rashi’s comment on the verse “And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (Exodus 6:3), where Rashi adds the phrase “to the fathers.” Rabbi Meir asks why this clarification is necessary, since the verse already names Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob explicitly. His answer reveals a core principle about faith, spiritual effort, and personal responsibility.

ומי שמאמין בה' רק מסקנת כי אביו האמין זה נקרא
בר' בנו, כי קיבל אמונה מאביו

אבל מי שעוזב מעצמו להשייג אמונה נקרא בחינת
אב', וכי לאו הוא בנה בנו אב' למזוא אמונה אלקי
עולם פאברם אבינו עליו השלום

ומסקנת זה נקראים האבות הקדושים שלשלת אבות,
כי כל אחד מהם לא סמך על אביו, לא יצחק על
אברהם, ולא יעקב על יצחק

אך כל אחד קים דעתו אלייך ועבדרה זו
כוננת תורתנו הקדושה שלא כללה לומר ית' וארא
אל אברם יצחק וייעקב

וזקוק הפתוח ביחס אל אברם אל יצחק ואל
יעקב, כי כל אחד גע ומצא בפני עצמו אמונה

וזה שהקשלה לרשותי ז' לפיה כתיב אל כל אחד
אל', וכי מתרץ מה שכתבו וארא אל' אל כל אחד
ואחד האבות

כי בולם היו אבות ולא בנים לירש מאביהם

שמעתי בשם הרב הקדוש מירון הרב מאיר
מפרימישלאן זללה"ה שאמר לפירוש דברי רשות
בקבush ריש פרישת וארא

דכתיב בפסוק וארא אל אברם ואל יצחק ואל יעקב
ופירוש רשותי "וארא אל האבות", וזה ריש פ"ק ח

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Rabbi Meir explains that true emunah cannot be inherited passively. Every person is obligated to examine himself and, according to his own capacity, labor to attain faith in the God of the world. One who believes in God merely because his father believed is described as a “son,” meaning his faith is received, not earned. In contrast, one who struggles, searches, and arrives at faith through his own avodah is called a “father,” as if he himself laid the foundations of belief.

This distinction explains why the Torah repeats the word “to” before each of the Patriarchs, rather than grouping them together. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are each mentioned separately because each one independently achieved his faith. Isaac did not rely on Abraham’s spiritual achievements, and Jacob did not rely on Isaac’s. Each fulfilled the directive “Know the God of your father and serve Him” by personal effort rather than inherited merit. For this reason, they are collectively called “the fathers,” a chain of builders rather than heirs.

Rabbi Meir contrasts this with a common human tendency. When a person comes from a lineage of righteous and holy ancestors, he is often tempted to rely on their merit instead of striving for his own spiritual completeness. The Patriarchs rejected this path entirely. They did not wish to be merely sons or grandsons of holy men, but to be fathers themselves. This inner resolve is precisely what merited divine revelation to each of them. God appeared to them because each one stood before Him as a spiritual originator, not as a dependent beneficiary of earlier generations.

Practical Takeaway:

Rabbi Meir teaches that spiritual identity cannot rest on pedigree alone. Tradition and family merit are precious, but they cannot replace personal effort. Each individual must ask himself whether his faith is borrowed or built. The call of this maamar is to become a “father” in one’s own spiritual life, someone who takes responsibility to search, struggle, and establish a living connection to God, rather than relying on the righteousness of those who came before.

Chassidic Story:

Among Chassidim, it was often noted how Rabbi Meir of Premishlan related to people who came from distinguished spiritual families. When young men from renowned Chassidic dynasties would come to him seeking blessings, he would treat them with warmth and respect, but he would also probe gently into their own avodah. More than once, he was heard to say in substance that being a son or grandson of a tzaddik is a great gift, but it is not a destination.

One account describes a young man who took pride in being a descendant of well-known righteous figures and assumed that this alone secured his spiritual standing. Rabbi Meir listened patiently and then told him that Abraham was not chosen because he descended from anyone holy, but because he searched for truth until he found it. Isaac and Jacob, he continued, could have relied on Abraham’s greatness, yet they rebuilt their faith through their own lives. Only then did they merit being called “the fathers.”

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The young man left shaken but inspired. He later testified that this encounter redirected his life, pushing him to stop leaning on inherited merit and to begin genuine personal work. In this way, Rabbi Meir embodied his own teaching: the greatest legacy a tzaddik can give is not borrowed holiness, but the courage to build one's own foundations. **END NOTE]**

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה רֵאָה נָתַתִּיךְ אֱלֹהִים לְפָרָעָה וְאֶחָדָן אֶחָדָךְ יְהִי נְבִיאָךְ ז', א'

And the Lord said to Moses, “See, I have made you God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet” (Exodus 7:1)

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said: “See, I have made you God,” and so on, “and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet,”

and “I will be with your mouth,” and “he shall be for you as a mouth, and you shall be to him as God,”

for Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, was a prophet from before,

and now he reached the aspect of “and he was king in Jeshurun” (Deuteronomy 33:5),

the aspect of kingship, and therefore Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

אמר רבי מאיר מפרמיישלאן] ראה נתתיך אלקים [

,וכיו ואחרון אחיך יהי נביאך

,אנכי אחיך עם פיך, והוא יהי לך לפה ואפה פהיה

,לו לאלקים

,כי משה רבינו עליו השלום קיה נביא מקדם

(עהקה הגיע לבחינת ויהי בישرون מלך' (דברים לג, ה

בחינת מלכותיכי, ולכון אחרון אחיך יהי נביאך

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan explains the verse in which God tells Moses, “See, I have made you God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.” At first glance, the verse is puzzling. Moses was already a prophet long before this moment, so why does the Torah now emphasize that Aaron will be his prophet. Rabbi Meir explains that a fundamental shift has taken place in Moses’ spiritual role.

Until this point, Moses functioned primarily as a prophet, a conduit for divine speech. Now, however, he ascends to a higher plane, described by the verse “And he was king in Jeshurun” (Deuteronomy 33:5). This is not kingship in a political sense alone, but an inner spiritual malchut, authority and sovereignty of leadership. When a person reaches this level of malchut, he no longer speaks merely as a messenger. His role is to rule, to direct, and to embody divine authority in the world.

Because Moses has entered this level of kingship, he now requires a prophet beneath him. Aaron assumes this role. Aaron becomes the one who articulates and conveys, while Moses stands in the position of elokim, authority and source, relative to him. Moses is no longer only the mouthpiece of Heaven. He is now the one through whom leadership, judgment, and command flow. Aaron speaks, but he speaks as the prophet of Moses.

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Rabbi Meir ties this to the earlier verses where God says, “I will be with your mouth,” and “He will be for you as a mouth, and you will be for him as God.” These verses are not technical accommodations for Moses’ speech difficulty. They describe a structural hierarchy in leadership. Moses embodies malchut, and Aaron embodies nevuah that flows outward. This division reflects a deeper truth about leadership. True authority does not always speak the most. It establishes direction and empowers others to give voice.

Practical Takeaway:

Rabbi Meir teaches that there are stages in spiritual and personal growth. A person may begin as a conduit, learning, transmitting, and expressing ideas. But maturity requires stepping into responsibility and authority, where one must lead, decide, and carry the weight of outcomes. At that stage, it is not a weakness to rely on others to articulate or implement. It is a sign of true leadership. Growth means knowing when to speak and when to empower others to be your voice.

Chassidic Story:

It was told among the Chassidim of Premishlan that Rabbi Meir often distinguished between those who inspired through words and those who shaped reality through presence. On one occasion, a gifted speaker came to him, admired for his eloquence and ability to stir hearts. The man complained that despite his talents, his influence seemed limited and fleeting. Rabbi Meir listened and then told him that words alone, even holy words, do not make a leader.

He explained that Moses did not lose his greatness when Aaron spoke for him. On the contrary, Moses reached a level where his role was to stand as malchut, to bear responsibility for the people and the direction of history. Aaron’s speech was powerful precisely because it flowed from Moses’ authority. Rabbi Meir advised the man to focus less on being heard and more on becoming responsible. Influence, he said, follows responsibility, not the other way around.

The man later reflected that this teaching changed how he understood leadership. He began to invest less in impressing others and more in carrying communal responsibility. Over time, his words gained weight, not because they were more eloquent, but because they were backed by inner authority. In this way, Rabbi Meir’s teaching on Moses and Aaron became a lived lesson in what it means to grow from prophet to king.

END NOTE]

וְהַפְּשָׂתָה וְהַשְׁעָרָה נִפְתָּה כִּי הַשְׁעָרָה אֲבִיב וְהַפְּשָׂתָה גָּבָעַל. וְהַחַטָּה וְהַכְּסָמָת לֹא נִפְאַת כִּי אֲפִילָת הַנָּה ט, לֹא-לְב
And the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in the stalk. And the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they are late (Exodus 9:31–32)

From Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, may his merit protect us: “and the flax,” simple Jews, and “the barley,” righteous ones

* מרבי מאיר מפרימישלאן זכותו יגן עליינו,
וְהַפְּשָׂתָה' יְהוָדִים פָּשָׂוְתִּים, וְהַשְׁעָרָה' צָדִיקִים

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who are exacting like a hair's breadth that they should not sin,
“were struck,” these are the struck ones.

And “the wheat,” the masters of sin, and “the spelt,” these are
the completely stained ones,

“were not struck,” them He does not strike, for “they are late,”
they walk in darkness,

“the wicked in darkness are silenced” (I Samuel 2:9).

שָׁמְדָקִין כָּחָות כְּשַׁעַרָה שְׁלָא יָחִטָּאָה, נִפְתָּח אֶל
אַפִּים.

וְחִטָּהָה הַבָּעֵל חִטָּא, וְחַטָּהָה אֶלָּו הַמְּקַטְּמִים לְגַםְרִי

לֹא נִכְיָא אֹתָם לֹא מַכִּים, כִּי אַפִּילָת הַפָּה הֵם הַזְּלָכִים
בְּאַפְלָה,

:(ירשעים בחשך יקמו' (שמואל א ב, ט

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan interprets the verses describing the plague of hail, where the flax and barley were struck, while the wheat and spelt were not. On the surface, the Torah explains this agriculturally: the barley and flax had already ripened, while the wheat and spelt were still late. Rabbi Meir reads these details as a spiritual allegory for different types of Jews and how divine judgment manifests upon them.

“The flax,” he explains, represents simple Jews, and “the barley” represents the righteous, those who are exacting with themselves “like the breadth of a hair” not to sin. These categories are described as being “struck,” meaning they are subject to divine blows, rebuke, and suffering. This is not a punishment born of rejection, but a sign of closeness. Those who are refined or striving are held to account, corrected, and shaped through yissurim.

In contrast, “the wheat” represents masters of sin, and “the spelt” those who are completely stained. These were “not struck,” not because they are more deserving, but because they are described as “late,” meaning spiritually delayed or dulled. Rabbi Meir explains that such people walk in darkness. They are not awakened through blows, because they are not yet receptive. As the verse in Samuel states, “The wicked in darkness are silenced.” Silence and the absence of correction itself becomes the most severe form of judgment.

The teaching overturns intuitive assumptions about divine justice. Being struck is not always a sign of distance from God, and not being struck is not necessarily mercy. On the contrary, suffering can indicate attention, care, and a desire for refinement, while the absence of response can indicate abandonment to darkness.

Practical Takeaway:

Rabbi Meir’s teaching reframes how a person should view hardship. When someone striving for goodness encounters difficulty, it should not immediately be read as failure or rejection. Often it is precisely the opposite, a sign that one is seen, engaged with, and being refined. Conversely, spiritual numbness, complacency, or the absence of inner struggle may be a warning sign rather than a comfort.

The practical avodah is to ask not “Why am I being struck,” but “What is this meant to awaken in me.” Growth comes from responsiveness. One should seek to remain among those who are awake enough to be corrected,

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rather than those who are left untouched because they no longer feel.

END NOTE]