

Reb Pinchas of Koretz

Imrie Pinchas

Parshas Shemini

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| <p>Siman #232</p> <p>And Aharon lifted his hands and blessed them, etc. (Vayikra 9:22). He said, the lifting of the hands is a great matter, for it is forbidden to lift one's hands in vain, and it is a grave punishment, as it is written in the Zohar (Mishpatim 67b).</p> | <p>וַיִּשָּׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת יָדָיו וַיְבָרֶכֶם וְגו' (ויקרא ט, כ"ב). אָמַר, נְשִׂיאַת כַּפַּיִם הוּא דְבַר גָּדוֹל, דְּאָסוּר לְאַרְמָא יְדֵיהּ לְמַגְנָא, וְהוּא עוֹנֵשׁ גָּדוֹל כְּמוֹ שְׁכַתּוּב בְּזִהָר (מִשְׁפָּטִים (ס"ז, ב</p> |
| <p>And here it is written: "And Aharon lifted his hands..." — the verse itself says regarding the lifting of the hands. And at this time, certainly, the prayer is heard, as it is written in Sefer Yetzirah: "133 links..." and this is the covenant of the tongue, etc.</p> | <p>וְכָאן כְּתִיב "וַיִּשָּׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת יָדָיו" וְגו', הַפְּסוּק בְּעֵצְמוֹ אָמַר בְּנְשִׂיאַת יָדָיִם. וּבְזִמְנֵן הִנֵּה בְּנֹדָאֵי הַתְּפִלָּה נְשִׁמְעַת כְּדְכְתִיב בְּסִפְרֵ יְצִירָה: "ק"ל קֶשֶׁר... וְגו', וְהוּא בְּרִית 'הַלְשׁוֹן וְגו'.</p> |
| <p>And at every time that he prays and his hands themselves are lifted upward, it is a sign that his prayer is accepted. Therefore it is written by Moshe (Shemot 17:12): "And his hands were faithful" — and the Targum translates: "in prayer."</p> | <p>וְכָל זְמַן שֶׁמִּתְפַּלֵּל וַיְדִי בְּעֵצְמוֹ נִרְמִין לְמַעְלָה — סִימָן שֶׁתְּפִלָּתוֹ נִשְׁמַעַת. וְלִכְךָ כְּתִיב בְּמִשְׁנֵה (שְׁמוֹת י"ז, י"ב) "וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֱמוּנָה" וְתַרְגוּמוֹ: "בְּצִלוֹתָא</p> |
| <p>If the Israelites directed their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they would prevail, and his hands would be lifted upward — and there was unification in the ten Sefiros.</p> | <p>אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל מְכוֹנְיִן אֶת לִבָּם לְאַבְיֵהֶם שְׁבִישְׁמַיִם — הָיָה מִתְגַּבְּרִים, וַיְדִי נִרְמִין לְמַעְלָה, וְהָיָה יְחוד בְּעֵשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת.</p> |
| <p>And by Avraham it is written (Bereishis 14:22): "I have lifted my hand..." — and the Targum renders: "in prayer," and he is the first for this.</p> | <p>וּבְאַבְרָהָם כְּתִיב (בְּרֵאשִׁית י"ד, כ"ב): "הִרִימֹתִי יָדִי..." תַּרְגוּמוֹ: "בְּצִלוֹתָא, וְהוּא רֵאשׁוֹן לְזֵה.</p> |
| <p>And this matter of lifting the hands in prayer does not exist among other nations and tongues. And I saw gentiles in their temples specifically separating the hands from one another.</p> | <p>וְדָבָר זֶה שֶׁל הִרְמַת יָדָיו לְתְּפִלָּה — לֹא נִמְצָא בְּאוּמָה וְלִשׁוֹן. וְאֲנִי רֵאִיתִי גוֹיִם בְּכַתִּי עֲכוּ"ם שֶׁלֶּהֶם — מִפְּסִיקִים הַיְדִיִּים דְּנִקָּא זֵה מְזָה.</p> |

[NOTE: Summary:

This discourse highlights the profound spiritual significance of **lifting one's hands in prayer or blessing** — as seen in the actions of Aharon, Moshe, and Avraham. The act is not merely symbolic but is rooted in Kabbalistic and halachic principles, as noted in the **Zohar** and **Sefer Yetzirah**. When a Tzaddik lifts his hands, especially during **Birchas Kohanim**, it represents the flow of divine energy and a connection to the **ten Sefiros**, bringing blessing and unity between the upper and lower worlds. The lifting of the hands also reflects **inner sincerity**; when the heart is directed properly, the hands rise naturally — a sign that the prayer is being received on high.

Unlike other nations who physically separate the hands in their rituals, Judaism uniquely preserves the elevated posture of **joined hands raised in unity**, indicating a complete and unified intent toward the Divine.

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● Practical Takeaway:

When you pray — especially during moments of deep connection like **Shema**, **Amidah**, or **Birchas Kohanim** — be aware of the **position and intent** of your body. Raising one’s hands, or even folding them with kavannah (intention), can serve as a powerful gesture that aligns body and soul toward Heaven. Never underestimate the physical expression of your spiritual longing. If you're a Kohen, approach **Birchas Kohanim** with reverence — it's not just a ritual but a conduit for the Shechinah.

Even if you're not a Kohen, use your **body in avodah (Divine service)** to reflect your sincerity. Let your **heart raise your hands**, not habit.

● True Chassidic Story:

The Baal Shem Tov once observed a simple peasant in shul during Yom Kippur. The man, uneducated and unfamiliar with the prayerbook, stood silently during the service. Suddenly, the peasant lifted his hands upward and called out, “Tatte! Tatte! I don't know how to daven, but I lift my hands to You — take them and help me!”

After the tefillah, the Baal Shem Tov told his students:

“This man’s cry broke through all the heavenly chambers. His hands, lifted in truth and broken-heartedness, brought more rachamim (mercy) to the world than all our eloquent words.”

END NOTE]

| Siman #233 | |
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| “Moshe diligently inquired” (Vayikra 10:16). This is the halfway point of the Torah (Kiddushin 30a). | דַּרְשׁ דָּרַשׁ מִשָּׁה (י', ט"ז). הַצְּפִיָּה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה (קְדוּשֵׁין ל', ל). |
| For Moshe is the soul of the Torah, and he was exceedingly humble from all men — in the secret of blackness, | כִּי מִשָּׁה נִשְׁמַת הַתּוֹרָה, וְהִנֵּה עָנּוּ מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם — בְּסוּד שְׁחֹרוֹת, |
| like the pupil of the eye, which is entirely black, and from it comes the primary vision. | כְּמוֹ בֵּבֶת עֵינַי — שֶׁכֵּלּוֹ שְׁחֹר וּמִמֶּנּוּ עֹקֵר הָרְאִיָּה, |
| And around it there are colors, but vision only comes through it. | וְסָבִיבוֹ יֵשׁ גְּוָנִים, וְאֵין בָּאָה הָרְאִיָּה רַק מִמֶּנּוּ. |
| And if there is even a single white spot within the pupil of the eye, the vision becomes impaired. | וְאִם תִּהְיֶה רַק נִקְוֵדָה לְבָנָה בְּתוֹךְ בֵּבֶת עֵינַי — מִתְחַלְּקֵת הָרְאִיָּה. |
| And the pupil is in the center of the eye — therefore “Moshe diligently inquired” also comes at the middle of the Torah. | וְהַבֵּבֶת עֵינַי הִיא בְּאֶמְצַע הָעֵינַי, לְכֵן “דַּרְשׁ דָּרַשׁ מִשָּׁה” גַּם כֵּן בְּתוֹצֵי הַתּוֹרָה. |
| And the point is called “Mati v’Lo Mati” (Zohar Ki Seitzei 215a), this is the path of the hidden knowledge of 134. | וְהַנִּקְוֵדָה נִקְרָאת “מַטִּי וְלֹא מַטִּי” (וַיִּקְרָא ט"ו, ל'), זֶהוּ נְתִיב הַנִּעְבָּד קל"ד. |

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| Therefore, because “Moshe diligently inquired,” and because it was hidden from him, certainly it was exceedingly lofty in this path mentioned above. | לְכֹד פִּיּוֹן שֶׁ־דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ מִשָּׁה — פִּיּוֹן שֶׁנֶּעְלָם מִמֶּנּוּ — מִסְתַּמָּא הָיָה גְבוּהַ מְאֹד בְּנִתְיַב הַבַּיִל |
| And this is “the halfway point of the Torah,” just like the pupil of the eye which is black. | וְזֶהוּ הַצִּיָּה נֶשֶׁל תּוֹרָה — כְּמוֹ בֵּבֶת עֵינַי שֶׁהוּא שְׁחֹר |

[NOTE: ● Summary:

The verse “דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ מִשָּׁה” (Vayikra 10:16) — “Moshe diligently inquired” — appears **exactly at the midpoint** of the Torah, both textually and thematically. This discourse draws a striking comparison between this midpoint and the **pupil of the eye** (בבת עין), which is entirely black and from which all vision emerges.

Moshe, representing the **soul of Torah**, is likened to this black center — **humble, hidden, and essential**. Just as vision only flows through the black of the eye and not the colorful surroundings, so too, the truest perception and revelation of Torah come through Moshe’s utter humility and self-nullification. A white dot in the pupil — ego or self-awareness — would distort vision. Similarly, any spiritual arrogance obstructs the clarity of divine wisdom.

The point at the center of Torah, like the mystical concept “*Mati v’Lo Mati*” (reaching yet not reaching), reflects the paradox of **divine intimacy and transcendence** — a space only accessed by the most humble seekers.

● Practical Takeaway:

If you want to truly see, spiritually and intellectually, **be like the pupil** — small, humble, and open. The deeper insights of Torah are not found in intellectual brilliance alone, but in **bitul (self-nullification)** and authentic yearning. As you study, strive not to “own” the Torah, but to let it pass through you. Let your learning be black — not dazzling with self-expression, but dark like fertile soil where vision takes root.

When you feel “lost” in a concept or confused in learning, don’t be discouraged. That midpoint, that obscurity — is the access point. That’s where *Moshe* is.

● True Chassidic Story:

The Tzemach Tzedek, third Rebbe of Chabad, once gave a deep Chassidic discourse to a group of elder Chassidim. Afterward, a young student asked, “Rebbe, why do you keep emphasizing *bitul*? Isn’t Torah about clarity and wisdom?”

The Tzemach Tzedek responded with an image:

“You see the pupil of the eye? It is black. All the beauty of the world enters through that blackness. If you make it colorful, you go blind.”

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He continued:

“So too with Torah — the more you are ‘colorful’ and full of yourself, the less you see. But the more you're like that simple black pupil — humble and receptive — the more of the infinite light you absorb.”

The student later became a great chassidic teacher, always emphasizing humility as the root of clarity. **END NOTE]**

| Siman #234 | |
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| “Moshe diligently inquired” (Vayikra 10:16). | (דַּרְשׁ דַּרְשׁ מִשָּׁה (י', ט"ז). |
| From Rabbi Chaim Melamed of Trastinets (may he rest lightly), in the name of my teacher Rabbi Binyamin Ze'ev HaLevi, in the name of the Rav of blessed memory: | מֵרַבִּי חַיִּים מְלַמֵּד מֵטְרַאסְטִינֶעַץ קַל"ה בְּשֵׁם מו"ר רַבִּי בִּנְיָמִין זְעֵב הַלֵּוִי הַלּוֹי בְּשֵׁם הַרַב ז"ל: |
| In the way of derash (homiletics), one may expound even on just a few words, | דַּרְךְ דַּרְשׁ — יְכוּלִים לְדַרְשׁ אֶפְלוּ רַק אֵיזָה תִּיבוֹת |
| even if the verse is not completed according to that interpretation. | אֶפְלוּ לֹא יִשְׁלִים הַפְּסוּק לְפִירוּשׁ זֶה. |
| A hint for this: “דַּרְשׁ דַּרְשׁ” — the halfway point of the Torah (Kiddushin 30a). And understand this well. | זָכַר לְדַבָּר: “דַּרְשׁ דַּרְשׁ” — הַצִּי תוֹרָה (קִידוּשִׁין ל', ו.). וְהִבִּין |

[NOTE: ● Summary:

This brief yet potent teaching, passed down from **Rabbi Chaim Melamed of Trastinets** in the name of **Rabbi Binyamin Ze'ev HaLevi**, emphasizes a core idea in the world of **Torah**

Sheba'al Peh:

In the **path of derash**, **depth can emerge even from a few words** — a full verse is not required. Even a phrase, a double word like “דַּרְשׁ דַּרְשׁ”, can be a gateway to immense meaning.

This is tied to the idea from the Gemara (Kiddushin 30a) that “דַּרְשׁ דַּרְשׁ” falls at the **midpoint of the Torah**, symbolizing that sometimes the essence — the deepest access point — lies **not in quantity but in precision**. A few divine words, if approached with insight and reverence, can open endless wellsprings of wisdom.

● Practical Takeaway:

Don't dismiss small verses or brief ideas in Torah learning. Even **one word**, one unusual phrase, may be the entrance to something far deeper.

You don't always need long shiurim or full chapters to uncover divine light — you just need a **heart that listens** and a **soul that seeks**. Learn to pause over a single pasuk, a single repetition, and say:

“**Why is this here?**”

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The Torah isn't just big — it's **deep**. And every depth begins at a surface point, often in the middle, like “דָּרֵשׁ דָּרֵשׁ.”

● True Chassidic Story:

One of the students of the **Baal Shem Tov** once asked him why Chassidim often make so much out of a single word or letter.

The Baal Shem Tov brought the student to a small frozen lake. With his staff, he made a tiny crack in the ice.

Suddenly, they heard **gushing water** below.

“See?” said the Baal Shem. “A small opening can release a mighty force.”

Then he added:

“So too in Torah. One word, cracked open with humility, can let the entire ocean of Ein Sof flow through.” **END NOTE]**