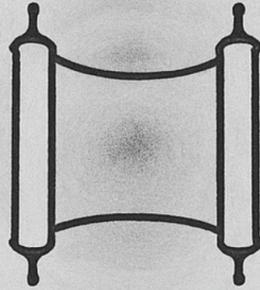


בס"ד

Reb Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo



*Dedicated in Honor of the
Yahrzeit of*

לע"נ

שׂוּרָה מְרִים בֵּית אַבְרָהָם

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Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

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Parshas Bo

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה כִּי אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת לְבוֹ וְאֶת לֵב עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְתִּי אֵלָה בְּקִרְבוֹ י, א
And the Lord said to Moses: Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart heavy, and the heart of his
servants, in order that I place these signs of Mine in his midst (Exodus 10:1)

And the Lord said to Moses: Come to Pharaoh, for I indeed have made his heart heavy. See in (animated) the holy Zohar, part two, page thirty four, that it questions what is written “Come to Pharaoh”; it should have written “Go to Pharaoh”. What is “come”? Rather, that the Holy One blessed be He entered with him chamber after chamber, and the Holy One blessed be He needed to wage battle with him Himself and not another, and so forth.

And from my teacher and master, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, I heard that therefore it is not written “go to Pharaoh” but rather “come to Pharaoh”, so that it should be an acronym of Shovavim Tat, as explained in Reishit Chochmah and in Avodat HaKodesh, that the days of Shovavim are suited for repentance, meaning from the portion of Shemot until Tetzaveh, which are the initials Shovavim Tat, as the verse states “Return, wayward children, I will heal your backslidings” (Jeremiah 3:22). And he said that there are in this great allusions.

Foundations of laws, portion Kol, etcetera.

“Come to Pharaoh.” Rashi explained: and warn him. Rabbi Meir of Premishlan explained that the attribute of judgment prosecuted: you are making his heart heavy and sending him to send the children of Israel. Therefore he said “and warn him”, and the choice is in the hand of the person: if he sends them, it is good, and if not, he will receive the plagues.

“Come to Pharaoh.” Rabbi Meir of Premishlan told that the holy rabbi, Rabbi Zusya of Anipoli, of blessed memory, boasted before the holy rabbi, the Maggid of Mezritch, of blessed memory, that his son is able to learn. And the Maggid said to him: when he will be bar mitzvah, a son of thirteen years, bring him to me. And he brought him. And he asked him: which portion is today? And he answered: “Bo”. And he asked him: it should have said “go”, and why is it written “come”? And he

וַיֹּאמֶר ד' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה כִּי אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת לְבוֹ. עֵינֵי בְּזוּהַר הַקְּדוּשׁ (ח"ב לד.) כִּי שֶׁהַקְּשָׁה מִה כְּתִיב בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה, לָךְ אֶל פַּרְעֹה מִבְּעֵינָא לֵה, מֵאִי בֹא, אֶלָּא דְעִיל לֵה קְדָשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא אֲדָרִין בְּתַר אֲדָרִין וְכוּ', וְקְדָשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא אֲצַטְרִיךְ לְאַגְתָּא 'בֵּה קָרְבָּא וְלֹא אַחֲרָ' וְכוּ'.

וּמְמוֹרֵי וְרַבֵּי [רַבֵּי מְאִיר מִפְּרֵמִישְׁלָאן] שְׁמַעְתִּי, שְׁלִכְךָ לֹא כְּתִיב לָךְ אֶל פַּרְעֹה אֶלָּא בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה שְׂיִהְיֶה רֵאשִׁי תְּבוֹת שׁוֹכְבֵי"ם ת"ת, כְּמִבְּאָר בְּרֵאשִׁית חֻכְמָה וּבְעֵבוֹדַת הַקְּדוּשָׁבַח שְׁכָמִי שׁוֹכְבִים מְסֻגְלִים לְתַשׁוּבָה, הִינּוּ מִפְּרִשְׁת שְׁמוֹת עַד תַּצְנֶה שֶׁהוּא רֵאשִׁי תְּבוֹת שׁוֹכְבֵי"ם ת"ת, כְּמִאֲמַר הַכְּתוּב (יִרְמִיָּה ג, כב) שׁוּבוּ בְּנִים שׁוֹכְבִים אֶרְפָּא מְשֻׁבְּתֵיכֶם, וַאֲמַר שֵׁשׁ בְּזֶה רְמִזִּים גְּדוּלִים

(מסדי לכות פרא' כל ל"ס וילמל)

בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה. פֶּרֶשׁ רֵשׁ"י וְהִתְרָה בּוֹ. רַבֵּי מְאִיר מִפְּרֵמִישְׁלָאן] פֶּרֶשׁ דְּמַדַּת הַדִּין קוֹטְרָגָה, אֲתָה מְכַבֵּד אֶת לְבוֹ וְשׁוֹלַח לּוֹ לְשַׁלַּח אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לָכֵן אָמַר וְהִתְרָה בּוֹ, וְהִבְחִירָה בְּיַד-הָאָדָם, אִם יִשְׁלַחוּ הוּא טוֹב וְאִם לֹא יִקְבַּל הַמַּכּוֹת

בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה. רַבֵּי מְאִיר [מִפְּרֵמִישְׁלָאן] - סָפַר שֶׁהָרַב הַקְּדוּשׁ רַבֵּי זֹסְיָא - [מְאַנְיָפוֹלִי] ז"ל הִתְפָּאֵר לְפָנָי הָרַב הַקְּדוּשׁ הַמַּגִּיד [מְמַעֲזְרִיטְשׁ] ז"ל שֶׁבָּנוּ יְכוּל לְלַמֵּד, וַאֲמַר לּוֹ הַמַּגִּיד, כְּשֶׁיִּהְיֶה בֶר מְצוּהָ בֶן י"ג שָׁנִים תְּבִיא אוֹתוֹ אֵלַי, וְהִבִּיא אוֹתוֹ. וְשָׁאַל לּוֹ אֵיזוֹ פְּרָשָׁה הַיּוֹם, וְהָשִׁיב בֹּא. וְשָׁאַל אוֹתוֹ לָךְ הֲוֵה לֵה לְמִימַר, וְלָמָּה כְּתִיב 'בֹּא'. וְהָשִׁיב שְׁבֹא' פְּרוּשׁוֹ

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

answered that “come” means come with me, and as it were the Holy One blessed be He said to Moses: I will go with you.

בא אתי, וכבדתיך הקדוש ברוך הוא אמר לו למשה
אני אלה עמך

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar opens with the verse “Come to Pharaoh,” and Rabbi Meir of Premishlan focuses on the precise wording בא אל פרעה rather than לה אל פרעה. Drawing on the Zohar, the teaching explains that “come” implies accompaniment: the Holy One, blessed be He, enters together with Moses into the deepest inner chambers of Pharaoh’s spiritual power. This is not merely a mission assigned to Moses alone, but a confrontation in which God Himself is present, because the struggle with Pharaoh represents a direct clash with entrenched evil that requires divine involvement.

Rabbi Meir transmits in the name of his teachers that this wording also alludes to the spiritual period of Shovavim, an acronym formed from the weekly Torah portions from Shemot through Tetzaveh. These weeks are especially suited for repentance and inner repair. The command “come to Pharaoh” thus contains an embedded message: the descent into places of spiritual blockage or resistance is itself part of the process of return, not a contradiction to it. One enters those places together with divine assistance, not alone.

The maamar further addresses the apparent tension between divine hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and human free choice. Rabbi Meir explains, based on Rashi’s comment “and warn him,” that despite the heaviness of Pharaoh’s heart, the responsibility to warn remains essential. Judgment may prosecute and circumstances may be difficult, but choice remains in human hands. Pharaoh is still given the option to send Israel free, and only if he refuses does he receive the consequences of the plagues. The warning itself preserves moral responsibility.

Through this lens, Pharaoh becomes more than a historical tyrant. He represents inner resistance, stubbornness, and spiritual blockage. The command to “come” teaches that confronting such resistance is possible only when one recognizes that the struggle is undertaken with divine accompaniment. Repentance, warning, and choice all operate together: God provides presence and strength, while the human being must still decide how to respond.

Practical Takeaway:

When facing inner resistance, entrenched habits, or moments of spiritual heaviness, one should not assume that descent means abandonment. The teaching of “come to Pharaoh” emphasizes that entering difficult inner terrain is often part of growth, and that it is done with divine support. At the same time, responsibility is not removed. Even under pressure, a person retains choice and must respond to moral warning. The practical work of repentance involves both trust in divine accompaniment and accountability for one’s decisions.

Chassidic Story:

Rabbi Zusya of Anipoli once spoke proudly to the Maggid of Mezritch about his young son’s sharp mind and

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

promise in learning. The Maggid listened quietly and then said, “Bring him to me when he becomes bar mitzvah.” Years later, when the boy turned thirteen, Rabbi Zusya brought him as instructed.

The Maggid did not begin by testing the boy on complex passages or sharp pilpul. Instead, he asked a simple question: “Which parashah is read this week?” The boy answered, “Bo.” The Maggid then asked gently, “Why does the Torah say ‘come’ to Pharaoh? Should it not say ‘go’?” The boy paused and replied simply, “Because ‘come’ means come with me.”

The Maggid smiled. He turned to Rabbi Zusya and said that this answer showed not only understanding, but readiness. The boy had grasped that the Torah does not ask a person to confront fear, power, or inner Pharaoh alone. From that day, the Maggid guided him with care, emphasizing that true growth comes when one learns to recognize divine presence precisely in moments of challenge, not only in moments of light.

This story reflects the heart of Rabbi Meir of Premishlan’s teaching: spiritual maturity is not measured by brilliance alone, but by the awareness that when one is sent into difficult places, one is not sent away from God, but invited to come together with Him. **END NOTE]**

לא ראו איש את אחיו ולא קמו איש מתחתיו שלשת ימים ולכל בני ישראל היה אור במושבם י, כג

A man did not see his brother, and a man did not rise from under himself for three days; and for all the children of Israel there was light in their dwellings (Exodus 10:23)

It is said in the name of my elder, the holy rabbi Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, may his merit protect us, that at first Israel were still not worthy of redemption, since there was not among them love and brotherhood.

And this is alluded to in the verse “a man did not see his brother and a man did not rise from under himself,” for since “a man did not see his brother” and the needs of his body, therefore they did not yet merit to rise and to go out from the lowliness of the pit of their exile.

And only when they were aroused to unite, all as one, did the Holy One, blessed be He, reveal Himself to them and redeem them.

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan interprets the verse describing the plague of darkness: “A man did not see his brother, and a man did not rise from under himself... and for all the children of Israel there was light in their dwellings.” He explains that this darkness was not only physical, but relational and spiritual. Israel was

מתאמרא משמה דזקני הרב הקדוש רבי מאיר
מפרימזשלאן זכותו יגן עלינו דתחלה עדין לא היו
ישראל ראויים לגאולה כיון שלא היו ביניהם אהבה
ואהבה

וכנרמז בקרא לא ראו איש את אחיו ולא קמו איש
מתחתיו, דמתוך ש'לא ראו איש את אחיו' ואת צרכי
גופו, לכן לא זכו עדין לקום ולצאת מתחתיות בור
גלותם

ורק כשנתעוררו להתאחד כלם כאחד נגלה אליהם
הקדוש ברוך הוא וגאלם

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

not yet worthy of redemption because there was a lack of love and brotherhood among them. Each person failed to truly “see his brother,” meaning they did not perceive one another’s needs, struggles, and humanity.

Because of this inner blindness, they were unable to “rise from under themselves,” to lift themselves out of the lowness and confinement of exile. The exile is described as a pit, and as long as people remain turned inward, detached from one another, they cannot climb out of it. Redemption requires more than miracles; it requires a transformation in how people relate to one another.

Only when Israel awakened to unite together as one, restoring love and brotherhood, did the Holy One, blessed be He, reveal Himself to them and redeem them. At that point, light appeared in their dwellings. This light represents clarity, connection, and divine presence, which comes specifically through unity. Thus, the contrast between Egyptian darkness and Israelite light reflects an inner moral and spiritual state, not merely an external condition.

Practical Takeaway:

Exile is sustained not only by external oppression but by internal disconnection. When people fail to truly see one another and care for each other’s needs, they remain stuck, unable to rise. Redemption, both personal and communal, begins with restoring love, empathy, and unity. Creating “light in our dwellings” means actively cultivating brotherhood and shared responsibility, through which divine presence and renewal can emerge.

END NOTE]

וְלִכְלֹ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִחַרֵץ כָּלֵב לְשׁוֹנוֹ לְמַאִישׁ וְעַד בְּהֵמָה לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּן אֲשֶׁר יִפְלֶה ה' בֵּין מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵא, ז

And for all the children of Israel, not a dog will sharpen its tongue, from man to beast, in order that you shall know that the Lord distinguishes between Egypt and between Israel (Exodus 11:7)

And for all the children of Israel, not a dog will sharpen its tongue.

וְלִכְלֹ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִחַרֵץ כָּלֵב לְשׁוֹנוֹ.

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said,

[אָמַר רַבִּי מֵאִיר מִפְּרֵמִישְׁלָאן

in the name of his father, his elder, Rabbi Meir the Great and the Holy of Premishlan, may his merit protect us,

בְּשֵׁם אָבִיו זְקֵנוֹ רַבִּי מֵאִיר הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ

[מִפְּרֵמִישְׁלָאן] זְכוּתוֹ יִגֵּן עָלֵינוּ,

that “will sharpen” is from the language of sharpness,

כִּי יִחַרֵץ מְלִשׁוֹן חֲרִיצוֹת

for for all the children of Israel it is not good to be sharp, one thing in the mouth and one thing in the heart;

כִּי לִכְלֹ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא טוֹב לְהִיּוֹת חֲרוּץ אַחַת בְּפִה

וְאַחַת בְּלֵב,

rather, “like a dog, its tongue” means that his mouth and his heart should be equal in every matter.

אַלֵּא כָּלֵב לְשׁוֹנוֹ פְּרוּשׁ פִּי וְלִבּוֹ יִהְיוּ שְׂרִיט לְכֹל דָּבָר

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan focuses on the verse “For all the children of Israel, a dog did not sharpen its tongue,” explaining it beyond its literal sense. He transmits in the name of his father and teacher, Rabbi Meir the Great of Premishlan, that the word יִחַרְצוּ is understood from the language of חֲרִיצוּת, sharpness or cutting. The verse is not only describing physical silence during the plague of the firstborn, but pointing to a moral and spiritual quality expected of Israel.

Rabbi Meir teaches that it is not good for a Jew to be “sharp” in a divided way, one thing in the mouth and another in the heart. Such inner inconsistency, where speech does not reflect true intention, represents a form of moral duplicity. The Torah’s phrase “like a dog, its tongue” is reinterpreted to mean that the tongue, the mouth, and the heart must be aligned. Speech should faithfully express what is truly within.

This integrity is itself part of what distinguishes Israel from Egypt. Just as God differentiates between Egypt and Israel in the plague, so too Israel is meant to be differentiated through inner truthfulness and wholeness. The absence of the dog’s sharpened tongue symbolizes a state where harmful, biting, or deceptive speech has no power. Redemption is connected not only to divine protection, but to ethical refinement, especially in the realm of speech and intention.

Practical Takeaway:

Spiritual integrity requires alignment between inner intention and outward expression. Growth begins when a person ensures that what they say reflects what they truly believe and feel. Guarding one’s speech, avoiding duplicity, and striving for honesty between heart and mouth create a personal boundary between holiness and corruption. This inner consistency is itself a form of redemption and a mark of spiritual distinction.

Chassidic Story:

It was once noticed that Rabbi Meir of Premishlan spoke very little during gatherings, even when many around him engaged in animated discussion. A student once asked him why he chose silence so often. Rabbi Meir replied that words are like tools, sharp instruments that can either build or cut. Before speaking, one must be certain that the heart and the tongue are in agreement.

On another occasion, a man came seeking a blessing but spoke in exaggerated praise of his own righteousness. Rabbi Meir listened quietly and then gently asked him whether his private actions matched his public words. The man fell silent and later admitted that they did not. Rabbi Meir encouraged him to begin by correcting this inner divide, explaining that when a person’s speech becomes truthful, divine protection naturally follows.

Those present later remarked that this encounter reflected the verse perfectly: when speech loses its sharp, biting edge and becomes aligned with truth, it causes no harm. In such a space, even forces that normally threaten fall silent, and a clear distinction emerges between darkness and light.

END NOTE]

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

וַיֹּאפּוּ אֶת הַבֶּצֶק אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם עֲגַת מִצּוֹת כִּי לֹא חָמַץ כִּי גֵרְשׁוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְהִתְמַהֵמָה וְגַם צִדָּה לֹא עָשׂוּ לָהֶם יב, לט

And they baked the dough that they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of matzah, for it had not leavened, for they were driven out of Egypt and were not able to delay, and also provisions they did not make for themselves (Exodus 12:39)

<p>The holy rabbi Rabbi Meir of Premishlan of blessed memory said on the verse “for they were driven out of Egypt and were not able to delay,”</p>	<p>אמר הרב הקדוש רבי מאיר'ל מפרימשלאן זצ"ל על 'הפסוק כי גרשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה</p>
<p>that sometimes he would say allusions of words of Torah in the Polish language,</p>	<p>ש'לפעים היה אומר רמזי דברי תורה בשפת פוליש]] [פולנית</p>
<p>that the word “gereshu” in Polish its meaning is inferior,</p>	<p>דתבת גרשו' בפוליש פרושו גרוע</p>
<p>that the children of Israel would have been more inferior than Egypt itself had they remained there,</p>	<p>שהיו בני ישראל יותר גרועים ממצרים עצמם לו היו נשארים שם</p>
<p>for one who is refined and holy and falls into the powers of impurity then he becomes, Heaven forbid, more inferior than those who are immersed there from their foundation.</p>	<p>כי מי ששהו עדין וקדוש ונופל בכחות הטמאה אז נעשה רחמנא לצלן גרוע יותר מאשר אלו המושקעים שם מיסודם</p>

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan expounds on the verse describing the haste of the Exodus, “for they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay.” Beyond the historical urgency, he uncovers a deeper spiritual necessity. Drawing on a linguistic allusion, he notes that the word גרשו can be read through a Polish meaning associated with being degraded or inferior. The teaching emphasizes that the driving out of Israel was not only an act of liberation but an act of rescue.

Rabbi Meir explains that had Israel remained any longer in Egypt, they would have sunk to a state even more degraded than the Egyptians themselves. Those who are naturally refined and holy, when they fall into impurity, become more damaged than those who are immersed in impurity from the outset. Egypt was a place saturated with spiritual contamination, and delay would have meant irreversible collapse.

Thus, the haste of redemption was an expression of divine compassion. The inability to tarry was not a lack but a protection. God removed Israel abruptly because remaining would have destroyed them. The matzah itself becomes a sign of this urgency: redemption arrived before corruption could fully take hold. The Exodus, therefore, was timed precisely to save Israel at the final possible moment.

Practical Takeaway:

Spiritual environments matter, and delay in leaving harmful spaces can be dangerous. For people who strive for holiness and refinement, exposure to destructive influences can cause deeper harm than to those already entrenched there. Growth sometimes requires decisive, even abrupt, separation from situations that erode one’s

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

integrity. Redemption often comes not when we feel fully ready, but when staying any longer would cause lasting damage.

Chassidic Story:

It is related that Rabbi Meir of Premishlan once advised a young scholar who was struggling to maintain his spiritual footing while remaining in a socially corrupt environment for the sake of business. The scholar insisted that he could manage, believing his learning and intentions would protect him. Rabbi Meir listened quietly and then told him a brief parable.

A pure spring, he said, can briefly pass through muddy ground and remain clear. But if it lingers too long, even the clearest water becomes tainted. The danger is not immediate, but cumulative. The scholar took the words to heart and soon left that environment, later acknowledging that his inner strength had already begun to erode more than he realized.

Those who heard Rabbi Meir recount this lesson understood it as a living illustration of the Exodus itself. Israel was redeemed not because they were already perfect, but because staying any longer would have made return impossible. The haste of leaving Egypt was an act of mercy, preserving the purity that still remained.

END NOTE]

קִדְּשׁ לִי כָּל בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר כָּל רֶחֶם בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָדָם וּבְבִהֵמָה לִי הוּא יג, ב

Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the opener of every womb among the children of Israel, of man and of beast, it is Mine (Exodus 13:2)

Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the opener of every womb among the children of Israel, of man and of beast, it is Mine.	קִדְּשׁ לִי כָּל בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר כָּל רֶחֶם בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָדָם וּבְבִהֵמָה לִי הוּא
I heard a discourse in the name of the righteous one, our teacher the rabbi Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, of blessed memory: “Sanctify to Me”	שְׁמַעְתִּי שִׁיחָה בְּשֵׁם הַצַּדִּיק מוֹרְנוּ הָרַב רַבֵּי מֵאִיר מְפָרְעֵמִישְׁלָאן וְצ"ל קִדְּשׁ לִי
if you wish to be holy before Me, “every firstborn,”	אִם תִּרְצֶה לִהְיוֹת קְדוֹשׁ לְפָנַי, כָּל בְּכוֹר
every creature must be more important than yourself in your eyes;	צָרִיף לִהְיוֹת כָּל בְּרִיָּה חֹשֵׁב יוֹתֵר מִמֶּךָ בְּעֵינַיִךְ
“the opener,” every opening to every service must be womb, among the children of Israel, the love among the children of Israel;	פֶּטֶר' כָּל הַפֶּתַח לְכָל עֲבוּדָה צָרִיף לִהְיוֹת רֶחֶם בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָאֲהָבָה בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
and if you will say only to the important ones among them, therefore it says “of man and of beast,”	וְאִם תֹּאמַר רַק לְהַחֲשׁוּבִין שְׂבָהֶם עַל כֵּן אוֹמֵר בְּאָדָם וּבְבִהֵמָה
to consider the distinction between one who is in the aspect of “man,”	לְחַשֵּׁב הַחֲלוּק בֵּין מִי שֶׁהוּא בְּבִחִינַת אָדָם

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

as the teaching of our Sages of blessed memory in the first chapter of Chullin (5a) on the verse “Man and beast You save, O Lord” (Psalms 36:7),

כְּדָרְשֵׁת רַז"ל בְּפֶרֶק קַמָּא דְחַלִּין (ה:): עַל הַפְּסוּק
("אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה תוֹשִׁיעַ ה' (תהלים לו, ז

these are people who are cunning in knowledge and make themselves like a beast,

, 'אלו בני אדם שְׁעָרוּמִין בְּדַעַת וּמְשִׁימִין עֲצָמָן בְּבִהְמָה

or the aspect of “beast,” people who resemble a beast (ibid. 5a);

(אוּ בְחִינַת בְּהֵמָה בְּנֵי אָדָם שְׂדוּמִים לְבִהְמָה' (שם ה

“this is Mine,” and not for you, this aspect.

זֶה לִי הוּא' וְלֹא לְךָ הַבְּחִינָה

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan expounds on the verse “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the opener of every womb among the children of Israel, of man and of beast, it is Mine.” He reads the verse not only as a commandment about firstborns, but as a foundational teaching about holiness, humility, and love of fellow Jews.

“Kadesh li,” sanctify to Me, is interpreted as a directive to the individual. If a person wishes to be holy before God, the first requirement is “kol bechor,” that every other person must be regarded as more important than oneself. Holiness does not begin with ascetic practices or spiritual achievements, but with the way one views others. True sanctity is measured by humility and by placing the worth of others before one’s own ego.

The phrase “peter kol rechem,” the opening of every womb, is explained as the gateway to all divine service. Every form of avodah must begin with rechem, compassion and love, specifically love among the children of Israel. Without this foundational love, no spiritual practice can be properly opened or sustained.

Rabbi Meir then addresses a possible limitation: perhaps this obligation applies only to those who are refined, learned, or spiritually elevated. The verse therefore emphasizes “of man and of beast,” teaching that love and respect must extend to all. Drawing on the teaching of the Sages in Chullin, he distinguishes between two types of people. There are those called “adam,” who possess wisdom yet humble themselves like a beast, and those called “behemah,” who resemble a beast in conduct. Both are included. Love, humility, and compassion are not selective virtues.

The conclusion, “it is Mine,” teaches that this level of holiness belongs to God alone. It is not a tool for self-glorification. When a person acts with humility and love, they are not acquiring spiritual credit for themselves, but serving as a vessel for divine holiness.

Practical Takeaway:

Holiness begins with humility and love for others. A person cannot claim spiritual growth while placing themselves above those around them. Every relationship, every act of service, and every form of religious devotion must begin with compassion and respect for all people, without distinction. True sanctity is not self-centered. It belongs to God and is expressed through how one treats others.

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Bo

Chassidic Story:

It is related that Rabbi Meir of Premishlan once noticed a simple villager lingering at the back of the synagogue, hesitant to approach the table of learned scholars. When Rabbi Meir invited him forward, the man protested, saying he was unworthy to sit among people of knowledge.

Rabbi Meir gently took his hand and seated him beside himself. He then remarked aloud that the opening of all service is love, not learning. He explained that a person who humbles himself and recognizes the value of others may stand closer to holiness than one who is learned but proud.

Later, a תלמיד once asked Rabbi Meir how one could measure true spiritual stature. Rabbi Meir answered that it is seen in whether a person can make room in their heart for every Jew, regardless of appearance or refinement. Where there is such room, holiness dwells. Where there is hierarchy and exclusion, holiness cannot enter.

END NOTE]