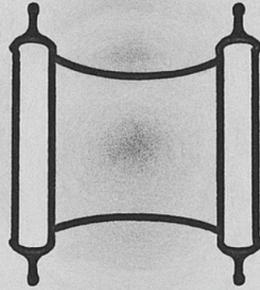


בס"ד

**Menachem Nachum  
of Chernobyl  
Me'or Einayim  
Parshas Mishpatim**



*Dedicated To:*

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# Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl

## Me'or Einayim Parshas Mishpatim

### Introduction

Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (1730 to 1797), known as the Me'or Einayim, was one of the primary disciples of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch, and the founder of the Chernobyl dynasty. His teachings consistently reveal how the inner structure of Torah mirrors the inner structure of the soul, and how Divine light flows through letters, speech, and human consciousness. In this maamar on "And these are the judgments that you shall place before them," he unveils the mystical meaning of "placing" as an act of conscious ordering within Da'at, through which curses are transformed back into blessings and the Divine order is restored.

**And these are the judgments, etc.**, and Onkelos translated:

"And these are the laws that you shall arrange before them."

And this requires explanation: What is the connection between "you shall place" and translating it as "you shall arrange"?

It is understandable according to what our Sages said that "you shall place" refers to the tools of the judges, for which the term "placing" is appropriate.

But the concept of arrangement is not included in the meaning of "you shall place," and it should have said "that you shall set before them."

However, it is indeed true, as is well known, what our Sages said: "In the beginning, He created," etc., meaning for the sake of the Torah, which is called "the beginning of His way," and for the sake of Israel, who are called "the first of His produce."

And the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, and Israel are entirely one, for Israel unites with the Holy One, blessed be He, through the Torah.

For behold, the entire Torah consists of combinations of letters.

And it is stated in Sefer Yetzirah: "He established them in the mouth," meaning that the Holy One, blessed be He, fixed the combinations of the letters of the Torah in the mouth of every single Jew, to manipulate them as he desires.

And this is what our Sages said: "With ten utterances the world was created." But could it not have been created with a single utterance? Rather, this was done to exact retribution from the wicked who destroy [the world].

ואלה המשפטים וגו' ותרגם אונקלוס: "ואלין דינייא די תסדר קדמיהון".

והוא צריך ביאור: מה ענין "תשים" לתרגמו "תסדר"?

בשלים למה שאמרו רז"ל "תשים" הוא כלי הדנינים, שינין בהם לשון "שימה".

אבל ענין הסידור לא נכלל בפרוש "תשים", והוי "ליה למימר" די תשוי קדמיהון.

אכן, הן אמת נודע מה שאמרו רז"ל ל"בראשית ברא" וגו', "בשביל התורה" שנקראת "ראשית דרכו", ובשביל ישראל שנקראו "ראשית תבואתו".

ואורניתא, וקודשא בריך הוא, וישראל – בלא חד, שישראל מתאחדים בהקדוש ברוך הוא על ידי התורה.

כי הנה כל התורה היא צירופי אותיות.

ואיתא בספר יצירה: "קבען בפה", שקבע הקדוש ברוך הוא צירופי אותיות התורה בפי כל אחד ואחד מישראל להטותם לכל אשר יחפץ.

וזהו מאמר רז"ל: "בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם". והלא במאמר אחד יכול להבראות? אלא להפרע מן הרשעים שמאבדים כו'.

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| <p>And one must understand: Who gave power to the wicked that they can destroy the world?</p>   | <p>וְצָרִיךְ לְהַבִּינֵן: מִי נָתַן כֹּחַ לְרָשָׁעִים שֶׁיִּכְוִלוּ לְאַבֵּד אֶת הָעוֹלָם?</p>   |
| <p>However, with what has been said, it is understood, for the combinations of letters were given over to Israel, and the wicked pervert the letter combinations from good to evil.</p> | <p>אָבֵל עִם מַאֲמָרֵנוּ יוֹבֵן, כִּי הַצִּירוּפֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת נִמְסְרוּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְהִרְשָׁע מִהִפָּךְ צִירוּפֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת מִטוֹב לְרָע.</p>    |
| <p>And this is a great defect, for it forces the King to clothe Himself in the combinations of evil letters.</p>  | <p>וְזֶהוּ פֶגַם גָּדוֹל, שֶׁמִּכְרִיחַ אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְלַבֵּשׁ בְּצִירוּפֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת הָרָע.</p>   |
| <p>For from the mouth of the Most High, evil does not emerge—on the contrary, only good does.</p>   | <p>כִּי "מִפִּי עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא הָרָעוֹת" – רַק אֲדַרְבָּא, הַטּוֹב.</p>   |
| <p>However, since everything is done through letter combinations, and the wicked pervert the combinations from good to evil, Heaven forbid...</p>                                       | <p>אֲמָנָם, מִכִּיּוֹן שֶׁנַּעֲשֶׂה הַכֹּל עַל יְדֵי צִירוּפֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת, וְהִרְשָׁעִים מִהִפָּכִים הַצִּירוּפִים מִטוֹב לְרָע חַס וְשָׁלוֹם...</p> |
| <p>And this is what is written in the Torah—curses in Torat Kohanim and in Mishneh Torah.</p>   | <p>וְזֶהוּ מָה שֶׁכְּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה – קְלָלוֹת בַּתּוֹרַת כֹּהֲנִים וּבְמִשְׁנֵי תּוֹרָה.</p>   |
| <p>And at first glance, this is a wondrous matter.</p>  | <p>וּלְכַאוּרָה, הוּא דָּבָר נִפְלֵא.</p>  |
| <p>Behold, it is written in the Torah (Proverbs 3:17), "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."</p>  | <p>הֲלֹא הַתּוֹרָה כְּתִיב בָּהּ (מִשְׁלֵי ג', י"ז): "דְּרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי נֵעַם וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שָׁלוֹם".</p>                                     |
| <p>So how could it be that so many curses, God forbid, are written in it?</p>   | <p>יְוָאִיךְ יִהְיוּ כָּל כָּהֵן קְלָלוֹת חַס וְשָׁלוֹם כְּתוּבִים בָּהּ?</p>  |
| <p>However, this will be understood with what I have written: that in truth, they are all blessings for those who uphold the Torah.</p>   | <p>אֲמָנָם יוֹבֵן עִם מָה שֶׁכְּתַבְתִּי, שֶׁבְּאַמַּת הֵם הַכֹּל בְּרָכוֹת לְמַקְיָמֵי הַתּוֹרָה.</p>   |
| <p>But for those who transgress His will, they pervert the letter combinations, and for them, it becomes an aspect of a curse.</p>  | <p>אָבֵל לְעוֹבְרֵי רְצוֹנוֹ, הֵם מִהִפָּכִים הַצִּירוּפִים, וְנַעֲשֶׂה אֲצֵלָם בְּחִינַת קְלָלָה.</p>   |
| <p>As the verse states (Leviticus 26:15), "And if you despise My statutes," then (ibid. 26:25), "I will bring upon you..."</p>  | <p>וְכִמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב (וַיִּקְרָא כ"ו, ט"ו): "וְאִם בְּהִקַּחְתִּי 'תִּמְאָסוּ', אֲזַ (שם, כ"ה): "וְהִבְאֵתִי" וְגו'</p>                     |
| <p>For through the wickedness of the evildoers, they cause the combination to be reversed from blessing to curse, God forbid.</p>   | <p>כִּי עַל יְדֵי רִשְׁעַת הַרְשָׁעִים, הֵם גּוֹרְמִים שֶׁיִּהְפָּךְ הַצִּירוּף מִבְּרָכָה לְקְלָלָה חַס וְשָׁלוֹם.</p>                              |
| <p>And behold, it is stated in the Gemara: What are afflictions of love?</p>  | <p>וְהִנֵּה אֵימָא אֵימָא בְּגַמְרָא: אֵיזָהוּ יְסוּרִין שֶׁל אַהֲבָה?</p>   |
| <p>One said: Any afflictions that do not cause a nullification of Torah study.</p>  | <p>חַד אָמַר: כָּל שְׂאִיִן בְּהֵן בְּטוֹל תּוֹרָה.</p>  |
| <p>And another said: Both types are afflictions of love, as it is stated (Proverbs 3:12), "For whom the Lord loves, He rebukes."</p>  | <p>חַד אָמַר: אֵיזִי וְאֵיזִי יְסוּרִין שֶׁל אַהֲבָה הֵן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (מִשְׁלֵי ג', י"ב): "אֵת אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהַב ה' יוֹכִיחַ".</p>                      |
| <p>One might think this applies even if one does not accept them with love,</p>   | <p>יְכוּל אֲפֵלוּ לֹא קַבְּלֵן מֵאַהֲבָה.</p>  |

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| therefore, the verse states: "If he offers his soul as a guilt offering," just as a guilt offering is brought knowingly, etc.     | תלמוד לומר: "אם תשים אָשָׁם נִפְשׁוֹ" – מָה אָשָׁם לְדַעַת וְכוּ'.  |
| And this will be understood with what I have written,   | וְיֻבֵן עִם מָה שֶׁכָּתַבְתִּי  |
| that the wicked pervert the letter combinations from good to evil and to afflictions, God forbid.                                 | כִּי הִרְשָׁעִים מִהַפְּכִים הַצִּירוּף מְטוֹב לְרָע וְלִיסוּרֵי חַס וְשְׁלוֹם.                               |
| And the afflictions atone for his sins, and the combination can be reversed like the material of a seal,                          | וְהִיסוּרֵי מִכְּפָרִים עֲוֹנוֹתָיו, וְיָכוֹל הוּא הַצִּירוּף לְשִׁיחָהּ כְּחֹמֶר חֹתֵם.                      |
| and it will be established like a garment of blessing, peace, goodness, and life.   | וְיִתְיַצֵּב כְּמוֹ לְבוּשׁ בְּרָכָה וְשְׁלוֹם, טוֹבָה וְחַיִּים.   |
| Therefore, it says: One might think even if he did not accept them with love,   | "לָזֶה אָמַר: "יָכוֹל אֶפְלוּ לֹא קִבְּלָם מֵאַהֲבָה  |
| the verse states otherwise—afflictions must be accepted knowingly.  | תְּלִמִיד לֹמַר וְכוּ' – אִף יִסוּרֵי לְדַעַת.  |
| And according to our approach, this aligns with a great hint: that the root of these letter combinations is in Da'at (knowledge). | וְעַל פִּי דְרָבֵנוּ, כִּיּוֹנוֹ בְּזֶה רָמַז גָּדוֹל, שֶׁהַצִּירוּפֵי אוֹתוֹת הֵן ל"שְׁרָשָׁם הוּא בְּדַעַת. |
| And so our Sages said in this language: "Bezalel knew how to combine the letters with which the world was created."               | וְכֵן אָמְרוּ רַז"ל בְּלִשׁוֹן זֶה: "יֹדַע הָיָה בְּצִלְאֵל לְצַרֵּף "אוֹתוֹת שֶׁנִּבְרָאוּ וְכוּ'.           |
| For the combinations exist in Da'at,  | וְשֶׁהַצִּירוּפִים הֵם בְּדַעַת   |
| and therefore, one must elevate the afflictions to the level of Da'at.  | וְלָכֵן צָרִיךְ לְהַגְבִּיחַ הַיִּסוּרֵי עַד הַדַּעַת.  |
| And there, the combination will be reversed to its original state,  | וְשָׁם יִהְיֶה הַצִּירוּף כְּמִקְדָּם   |
| as it was originally a combination of blessing and goodness,  | וְשֶׁהָיָה הַצִּירוּף בְּרָכָה וְטוֹב   |
| only that through his sin, he corrupted the order and reversed the channels.  | רַק שֶׁבִּטְטָאוּ קָלָקַל הַשְׁוִיחָה וְהִפָּךְ הַצְּנוּרוֹת.   |
| And when he is atoned for through afflictions, the combination will return to its strength.                                       | וְכִשְׁיִתְפַּכֵּר לוֹ עַל יְדֵי יִסוּרֵי, יִתְחַזֵּר הַצִּירוּף לְאִיתָנוּ.                                  |
| And this is [the meaning of] "And these are the judgments that you shall place, etc."   | "וְזֶהוּ "וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תָּשִׂים וְגו'.   |
| Meaning, you shall place the judgments and laws with knowledge,   | פְּרוּשׁ: תָּשִׂים הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהַדִּינִים לְדַעַת   |
| as it is written regarding the guilt offering (Isaiah 53:10), "If he places his soul as a guilt offering."                        | כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב גַּבֵּי אָשָׁם (ישעיה נ"ג, י'): "אם תשים אָשָׁם נִפְשׁוֹ".                                  |
| Our Sages learned from this: Just as a guilt offering is given knowingly, so too afflictions must be accepted knowingly.          | שֶׁשָּׂמוּ לְמַדּוּ רַז"ל: "מָה אָשָׁם לְדַעַת, אִף יִסוּרֵי לְדַעַת".  |
| And behold, this is also the meaning of "you shall place"—  | – "וְהִנֵּה, כֵּן הוּא הַפְּרוּשׁ "תָּשִׂים   |

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| <p>that you shall place all the judgments and laws with supreme knowledge, God forbid,</p> <p>and then the letter combinations will be reversed from evil to good.</p> <p>And this is why Onkelos translated: "And these are the laws that you shall arrange before them,"</p> <p>meaning, just as it was originally, in their proper order,</p> <p>and the letter combinations were a sign of blessing for Israel,</p> <p>so too now, after they were reversed due to the wickedness of the evildoers,</p> <p>nevertheless, through afflictions, their sins have been atoned for,</p> <p>and the letter combinations returned to their original strength.</p> <p>And understand this well.</p> | <p>שְׁתֵּשִׁים לְדַעַת הָעֲלִיּוֹן כָּל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהַדִּינִים חֵם וְשָׁלוֹם</p> <p>וְאֵז יִהְיֶכּוּ הַצִּירוּפִים מִרַע לְטוֹב</p> <p>וְזֶה שֶׁתִּרְגַּם אֹנֶקֶלוֹס: "וְאֵלֶּיךָ דִּינֵיךָ דִּי תַסְדֵּר לְקַדְמֵיהוֹן"</p> <p>פְּרוּשׁ: כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה מִקֶּדֶם בְּסִדְרָן</p> <p>וְהָיוּ הַצִּירוּפִים סִימָן בְּרַכָּה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל</p> <p>כִּי עַתָּה, אַחֲרַי שֶׁנִּהְפְּכוּ עַל יְדֵי רַשְׁעַת הָרָשָׁעִים</p> <p>מִכָּל מְקוֹם, עַל יְדֵי הַיְסוּרִין נִתְכַּפְּרוּ עֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם</p> <p>וְחָזְרוּ הַצִּירוּפִים לְאֵיחְתָּנָם הָרֵאשׁוֹן</p> <p>וְהָבֵן</p> |
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**[NOTE Summary:**

The verse states: "And these are the judgments that you shall place before them," and Onkelos translates: "that you shall arrange before them." The question arises: why translate "place" as "arrange"? If the Torah intended arrangement, it could have said explicitly, "that you shall set before them." The Sages explain that "placing" can refer to the tools of judges, which fits the literal meaning. But this does not yet explain the deeper nuance of arrangement.

The key lies in understanding that the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, and Israel are entirely one. The entire Torah is composed of combinations of letters. As Sefer Yetzirah states, the Holy One fixed these combinations in the mouth of every Jew, granting the power to manipulate and activate them. With ten utterances the world was created. The wicked can "destroy the world" not because they possess independent power, but because they pervert the combinations of letters from good to evil. This distortion forces, as it were, the King to clothe Himself in corrupted combinations. From the mouth of the Most High only good emerges; evil results from human distortion of Divine order.

This explains how the Torah can contain curses. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness" (Proverbs 3:17), yet many curses appear in Torat Kohanim and Mishneh Torah. In truth, these combinations are inherently blessings. For those who uphold the Torah, they function as goodness. For those who transgress, the combinations are reversed and become curses. As it says, "If you despise My statutes" (Leviticus 26:15), then consequences follow. The reversal is not intrinsic to the Torah but emerges from corrupted channels.

Afflictions of love clarify this dynamic. The Gemara teaches that afflictions which do not nullify Torah study are considered afflictions of love, and even more so when accepted knowingly, like a guilt offering, as in "If he

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places his soul as a guilt offering” (Isaiah 53:10). Afflictions atone by reversing the corrupted combination, like the material of a seal turning over to imprint properly. When accepted with Da’at, conscious awareness, they restore the original order of blessing, peace, goodness, and life.

The root of all combinations is in Da’at. As the Sages said, “Bezalel knew how to combine the letters with which heaven and earth were created.” The combinations exist in Da’at, and sin corrupts the channels. Through conscious acceptance and atonement, the combinations return to their original strength.

Thus, “you shall place” means you shall place the judgments with Da’at, with supreme awareness. Onkelos translates “you shall arrange” because the task is to restore the proper order of the letter combinations, returning them to their original arrangement as vessels of blessing. Even after reversal due to sin, through afflictions and atonement the letters regain their strength and alignment.

#### **Practical Takeaway:**

When experiencing hardship, one should not see it as inherently negative. Instead, one must engage Da’at, conscious awareness, recognizing that Divine good flows through letter combinations that may have been distorted. By accepting challenges with awareness and love, one participates in restoring the proper order of Divine channels, transforming judgment back into blessing.

#### **Chassidic Story:**

It is related about Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl that once a simple villager came to him, broken over severe financial losses. The man cried that everything had turned against him, that blessings had become curses. The Rebbe listened and then asked him, “When you recite the blessings each morning, do you think about the words, or do they pass your lips without awareness?”

The villager admitted that he recited them quickly, without much thought. The Rebbe explained gently that the world is built from holy letters, and a Jew’s speech either aligns them or scatters them. “Your livelihood is also letters,” he said. “When a man loses Da’at in his speech and in his trust, the combinations twist. Begin again. Say each word with awareness. Accept what comes with understanding that it is from Him alone.”

The man took this to heart. He began to pray and bless with careful intention, even in difficulty. Over time, his circumstances shifted. When he later returned to thank the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Nachum told him, “Nothing new was created. The letters were simply returned to their order.”

And understand this well.

#### **The Psychology of “You Shall Place”**

The Torah says, “And these are the judgments that you shall place before them.” Onkelos translates it not as “place,” but as “arrange.” That shift is not semantic. It is psychological and spiritual.

**Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl**  
**Me'or Einayim**  
**Parshas Mishpatim**

To place something is mechanical. To arrange something is conscious. It implies order, structure, intention.

Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl teaches that the entire Torah is built from letter combinations. The world itself was created through ten utterances. Letters are not symbols. They are energetic channels. And those channels are placed in the mouth of every Jew. Speech is creative architecture.

Here is the uncomfortable part. If letters create reality, then distorted letters distort reality.

The wicked do not “create evil” independently. They misalign combinations. They reverse channels. What was meant to flow as blessing gets reconfigured as judgment. Not because God emits evil. The verse is explicit: from the mouth of the Most High does not emerge evil. Only good flows from the Source.

So where do curses in the Torah come from?

They are blessings that have been reversed.

This is not poetic language. It is structural language. When the channels of consciousness are misaligned through sin, ego, or disconnection, the energy flows through constricted vessels. The same current that could heal can burn.

That reframes suffering entirely.

The Gemara speaks about afflictions of love. Afflictions that do not stop Torah study. Afflictions accepted knowingly. Why knowingly? Because awareness is the pivot point.

The root of all combinations is in Da'at. Da'at is not just knowledge. It is integration. It is when an idea moves from abstraction into lived reality. When a person experiences hardship without awareness, he experiences fragmentation. When he accepts it consciously, like a guilt offering brought knowingly, he elevates the distortion back into Da'at.

Think of a seal pressed into wax. If the seal is flipped, the imprint distorts. Flip it back, and the image returns to its intended form. Affliction, when processed consciously, flips the seal back.

That is “you shall place.”

You are not just placing laws in front of people. You are placing them with Da'at. You are arranging the inner order of reality.

And that is why Onkelos says “arrange.” Because the task of Torah is not transmission alone. It is restoration of order.

**Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl**  
**Me'or Einayim**  
**Parshas Mishpatim**

When a person meets difficulty with resentment, the letters constrict further. When he meets it with conscious acceptance, not passivity but clarity, he participates in reordering the flow. Blessing reemerges from within judgment.

**Modern Integration**

In therapy language, this is cognitive and spiritual reframing at the deepest level. Two people can experience the same hardship. One collapses into narrative: "This is punishment. This is random. This is unfair." The other says, "This is a distortion in the flow. I will meet it with awareness."

The external event may not change immediately. But the internal arrangement does. And once the internal arrangement shifts, the channels of perception, behavior, and resilience shift.

That is Da'at in action.

It does not deny pain. It organizes it.

**A Contemporary Story**

A businessman once lost a major contract that represented nearly half his income. He spiraled into anger and blame. Sleep disappeared. His speech became harsh. Relationships strained. Everything felt cursed.

A mentor asked him one question: "What are you telling yourself about this loss?"

He realized his internal narrative was catastrophic. "I am finished. I am a failure. This is the end."

The mentor reframed it: "What if this is a redirection? What if this contract was misaligned with your long-term integrity? What if the loss is protective?"

Nothing external changed that day. But internally, something rearranged. He began approaching conversations differently. He explored partnerships he had previously dismissed. Within months, a new opportunity emerged that was healthier and more sustainable.

He later reflected, "The loss didn't destroy me. My interpretation almost did."

The letters were rearranged.

"You shall place" means you must consciously arrange the judgments in your life. With Da'at. With awareness. With intentional alignment.

And when you do, what looked like a curse begins to reveal itself as a blessing returning to its original order.

**END NOTE]**