

whY I Matter

בשבילי נברא העולם (סנהדרין לז)

Edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld

כח' אב - ד' אלול ה'תשע"ז

August 20 to 26 '17

Volume 18 #45

Young Israel of Midwood

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Shoftim

שפטים

זמנים

Weekdays

Shachris

Sunday 6:50 8 & 8:30

Weekdays 5:50, 6:50, 7:30 & 8:30

Weekday Rosh Chodesh 5:40, 6:40, 7:30 & 8:30

Sunday Rosh Chodesh 6:30, 8:00 & 8:30

Mincha 7:30

Maariv after mincha

שבת שפטים

Light candles 7:20 PM

Mincha 6:45 & 7:30 PM

Shachris 7:30, 8:50 & 9:00 AM

Mincha 1:45, 6:30 & 7:10 PM

Maariv 8:20 PM

Shabos Ends 8:27 PM

THESE ZMANIM ARE DETERMINED BY THE GABBOIM AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THEIR DISCRETION

Elul and Teshuvah The Gemara (Shabbat 12b) states: One may not read by the light of an oil lamp on Shabbat for fear he might tilt the lamp to improve the flow of oil to the wick [which is prohibited on Shabbat]. The Sage Rabbi Yishmael said of himself, "I may read because I will not tilt the lamp." One time he read and nearly tilted the lamp. He exclaimed, "How profound are the words of the Sages who said not to read!" Rabbi Natan says, "R' Yishmael actually tilted the lamp, and [after Shabbat] he wrote in his notebook, 'I read and tilted the lamp. When the Bet Hamikdash is rebuilt, I will bring a fat chatat offering.'" [Until here from the Gemara] **R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l** (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) explains: Writing down one's sins in a notebook awakens a person to the fact that he should remember his sins. The reason is as follows: If a given act had only a temporary impact on one's soul, it would be sufficient to repent immediately after sinning, and

remembering one's sins would serve no purpose. However, that is not the case. The forces within man's soul engage in many complicated interactions, and one sin can have many negative effects. Some forces are hidden deep within the soul, and not until they are called upon to react to some future situation will a person realize that they were impaired by some past sin. Only then will the person be able to repair that part of the damage that his long-ago sin caused, and that is why it is necessary to remember that sin. (Ain Ayah) **R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l** (1823-1900; chassidic rebbe in Lublin, Poland) writes: The sign that one has completed his teshuvah for a sin is that he has no memory of that sin. Just as we are forbidden to say to a ba'al teshuvah, "Remember when you did such-and-such," so Hashem does not remind a complete ba'al teshuvah of his prior sins. As such, the person will not remember them. All human abilities come from Hashem. Just as no person could speak if Hashem did not give him a voice [see Shmot 4:11], so if Hashem does not send a person memories, he will not remember. This is what King David meant when he said (Tehilim 51:4-5), "Abundantly cleanse me from my iniquity, and from my sins purify me. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is before me always." The fact that one still knows of his sins means that he has not yet been cleansed. For his part, however, man is obligated to keep his sins before him always. (Tzidkat Ha'tzaddik)

Not an eye opener

"כי השוחד יעור עיני חכמים" ובפרשת משפטים כתוב "כי השוחד יעור עיני פקחים". כי חכם נקרא בעניני תורה, ופקח נקרא במילי דעלמא, והשוחד מעביר את הדיין על דעתו כעל דעת קונו, זה שמסמא את חכמתו בתורה ואת פקחותו בסחורה...
[בשם הגר"א ז"ל]

R' Yisrael Salanter z"l (1810-1883; founder of the mussar movement) writes: When it comes to the steps man takes to fulfill his physical needs—making money, attaining honor, etc.—the first cause (at least to man's eyes, though really everything comes from the true "First Cause") is a desire for that thing. From there flow intermediate causes, which lead

לכבוד האי גברא וב"ב הרוצים בעילום שמם על הסיוע שמושיטים לי בעין יפה להמשיך את הגליון עוד הפעם בשנה זו שיהיה לזכותם ולזכות כל משפחתם הקב"ה יברך אותם בכל מילי דמיטב מיט ידישע נחת בעושר ואושר ואריכות ימים בבריאות בזה ובבא עבוגצב"ב

to other intermediate causes, until man's desire is realized. Or, the first cause (again, to man's eyes) may be pressure or persuasion applied by another person. R' Salanter continues: What is the "first cause" that leads man to examine his deeds and to focus on mussar during the month of Elul (and all year long)? There is no natural desire for this, as there is with physical needs! Our early Sages were worried by this question. Therefore, based on a midrash, they established the blowing of the shofar during Elul. That is the "first cause" that awakens a person from his slumber and from his busy routine to inspect his deeds, as the verse says (Amos 3:6): "Is the shofar ever sounded in a city and the people do not tremble?" (Ohr Yisrael no.7) **R' Meir Chodosh z"l** (mashgiach ruchani in several Israeli yeshivot; 1898-1989) elaborates: R' Yisrael Salanter is teaching that everything is acquired in its own unique way. And, there is a prerequisite to finding that way, which is the desire to acquire that thing. When the "thing" to be acquired is yirat Shamayim / fear and awe of G-d, there is no natural desire to acquire it. The road is long, and man is mired in his routine, which causes his heart to move farther and farther away [from desiring yirat Shamayim]. The walls between man and his Creator are high, and on every occasion when a person becomes aware of his obligation in this world [which is to attain closeness to Hashem], it seems distant and unattainable. And, man has an unlimited number of excuses to justify himself. Moreover, even the yirat Shamayim that a person acquired in his youth becomes routine. These concerns should be on a person's mind all year long as they affect his Divine service, but even more so in Elul, when a person prepares to stand in judgment before his Creator. (Meir Netivot: Mo'adim)

שפטים ושטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך לשבטיך ושפטו את העם משפט צדק

"Judges and police officers you

shall appoint lecha/for yourself in all your cities . . . You shall not pervert judgment, you shall not show favoritism, you shall not accept a bribe . . . Pursue righteousness . . .” (16:18- 20) The word lecha/for yourself appears to be superfluous. R’ Moshe Feinstein z”l explains it as follows: One should judge himself to determine whether his actions are proper. In addition, one should be a police officer who enforces the judgments that one renders against himself. If necessary, one should punish himself. When one judges himself, he should not pervert the judgment; he should be honest. One should not show favoritism to himself and say that because he is learned his actions must be correct. One should not allow himself to be bribed by his perceived self interest. How can one judge himself honestly? By pursuing righteousness, i.e., having a qualified teacher. (Darash Moshe)

“Judges and officers you shall appoint in all your gates — which Hashem, your Elokim, gives you — for your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.” (16:17) This is the first verse of this week’s parashah. The preceding verse, the final verse in last week’s parashah, states: “Everyone according to what he can give, according to the blessing that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you.” R’ Reuven Halevi Horowitz z”l (chassidic rebbe; died 1810) writes: Sometimes a person complains to Hashem about the fact that He gave the person bechirah / free choice and that he has a difficult battle to wage against the yetzer ha’ra. That person may say to his Creator, “I do not want bechirah. Rather, I place myself entirely in Your hands to lead me in the way of truth and to compel me to do Your will. Even though, in this way, I will not earn reward, I do not care, for the greatest reward is to be able to serve You. I am not asking to change the nature of the world, which is that man has bechirah. Rather, this is my free choice: to serve You without the interference of the yetzer ha’ra.” This, writes R’ Horowitz, is an appropriate sentiment if it is sincere. This, continues R’ Horowitz, is hinted at by the above adjacent verses. “Everyone according to what he can give.” A person has the right to “give”

himself completely into Hashem’s hands, to be ruled “according to the blessing that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you.” How does one accomplish this? “Judges and officers you shall appoint.” This may be clarified with a parable: When a merchant extends credit to another, he establishes a credit limit. At some point, he says, “No more credit until you pay what is due.” Similarly, before a person can take his relationship with Hashem to a new level, he must judge and penalize himself for his past sins. “Judges and officers you shall appoint.” Of course, continues R’ Horowitz, different people have different abilities to do this. Therefore the verse says, “In all your gates.” The word “gate” (“sha’ar”) shares a root with the word “measure” (“shur”). Every person is judged by his own “measure.” Thereafter, the person must continue to “judge the people”—in this case, himself—“with righteous judgment.” A person cannot expect Hashem to send a prophet to guide one’s every step. But, when one sincerely does his best and prays for Hashem’s guidance, Hashem will plant the proper thoughts in his head so that he will act only in accordance with Hashem’s will. (Duda’im Ba’sadeh)

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My best to my best
 “שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך - אמר ר' לוי: משל למה הדבר דומה? למלך שהיו לו בנים הרבה, והיה אוהב את הקטן יותר מכלם. והיה לו פרדס אחד שהיה אוהבו יותר מכל מה שהיה לו. אמר המלך: נותן אני את הפרדס הזה שאני אוהבו מכל מה שיש לי, לבני הקטן שאני אוהבו מכל בני. כך אמר הקב"ה: מכל האומות שבראתי, איני אוהב אלא לישראל, ומכל מה שבראתי איני אוהב אלא את הדין. אמר הקב"ה: נותן אני מה שאהבתי לעם שאני אוהב. ועוד אמר הקב"ה לישראל: בני, הייכם, בזכות שאתם משמרים את הדין אני מתגבה ומתרום, שנאמר "ויגבה ד' צב-אות במשפט" (ישעיהו ה', ט"ז), ועל ידי שאתם מגביהין אותי בדין - אף אני עושה צדקה ומשרה קדושותי ביניכם. מניין? שנאמר "והקל הקדוש נקדש בצדקה" (דברים ובה ה', ו')
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לבלתי רום לבבו מאחיו ולבלתי סור מן המצוה ימין ושמאל למען יאריך ימים על ממלכתו הוא ובניו בקרב ישראל
“So that [the king’s] heart does not become haughty over his brethren and not turn from the commandment right or left, so that he will have years over his kingdom, he and his sons amid Yisrael.” (17:20) R’ Hillel Lichtenstein z”l (1814-1891; rabbi of

Kolomyia, Galicia) writes: We learn in Pirkei Avot, “If his fear of Heaven precedes his wisdom, his wisdom will persist.” Fear of Heaven is the foundation for remembering one’s learning. This may be alluded to in our verse, R’ Lichtenstein writes. Our Sages say that if one is haughty, his wisdom will be forgotten. And, there is an expression in the Gemara, “Who are royalty? Torah scholars!” Thus, our verse could be read: If one is not haughty and one does not deviate right or left from the mitzvot, i.e. he has fear of Heaven, then he and his descendants will remain royalty, i.e., Torah scholars. (Shiyarei Maskil)

“So that his heart does not become haughty over his brethren. . . .” (17:20) R’ Chaim of Krasna z”l (died 1793) taught: The Torah obligates the king to lord over his subjects. A king may not even show honor to a prophet or a Torah scholar. [See below.] Nevertheless, this trait should only be for show. Inside, he must be humble, as the Torah says, “So that his heart does not become haughty.” However, a Jew other than the king should not say, “I will be humble in my heart but haughty on the outside.” Rather, we read in Pirkei Avot (Ch. 4), “Be humble before every person,” i.e., even when you are before people. (Mayim Chaim, Section 25) Rabbam writes: “We show great honor to the king and we instill awe and fear of the king in every person, as it is written [in our parashah – 17:15], ‘You shall place a king over yourself,’ i.e., that his awe should be ‘over’ you. “All the people must come to the king whenever he wishes, and they stand before him and bow to the ground. Even a prophet, when he comes before the king, must bow to the ground, as it is written [Melachim I 1:23], ‘They told the king, “Here is Nathan, the prophet,” and he came before the king and he bowed to the ground.’ However, the Kohen Gadol need not come before the king unless he wishes to, and he does not stand for the king; rather, the king stands for him. Nevertheless, the Kohen Gadol must honor the king, and he should ask the king to sit, and he should stand when the king enters. “Similarly, the king is commanded to honor those who study Torah, and when the Sanhedrin

and scholars come before him, he should stand for them and seat them beside him. This is what King Yehoshaphat did – when a Torah scholar would enter, he would stand from his throne, kiss him, and call him, ‘My master, my teacher.’ When does this apply? In the privacy of the king’s home. However, in public, the king should not do this, and he should not stand for any man. He also should not speak gently to anyone and should not call anyone except by his first name, all so that people will fear him.” (Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Melachim 2:1 & 2:5) Whether the honor of the king or the honor of a prophet is greater was the subject of a dispute between King Chizkiyahu and the prophet Yishayah. The gemara (Berachot 10a) states: “Who is like the wise man and who knows how to forge a compromise?” [Kohelet 8:1] – Who is like Hashem who knows how to forge a compromise between two tzaddikim? Chizkiyah said, ‘Yishayah should come to me just as Eliyahu went to King Achav.’ Yishayah said, ‘Chizkiyah should come to me just as King Yehoram went to Elisha.’ What did Hashem do? He caused Chizkiyah to be ill and He instructed Yishayah to perform the mitzvah of bikkur cholim/visiting the sick.” Chizkiyah was one of our most righteous kings and Yishayah, one of our greatest prophets. Surely their disagreement was not egotistical. Rather, they appear to have disagreed over whose honor the halachah ranks higher, the king’s or the prophet’s. Why did Hashem forge a compromise? Why didn’t He resolve their dispute? Because, although the honor of a prophet is greater than the king’s *personal* honor, the honor of the *institution* of the monarchy is greater than the honor of the prophet. Thus Rambam writes (Sefer Hamitzvot, mitzvah 173), “The level of the King should be greater than the level of the prophet in our eyes.” It is only in our eyes that the honor of the king should be greater. In private, the honor of the prophet is greater. (Hamaayan - R’ Yisroel Reisman, Pathways to the Prophets, Shmuel I, Tape #35)

זוה יהיה משפט הכהנים מאת העם מאת זבחי
הזבח אם- שור אם- שה ונתן לכהן הזרע
והלחיים והקבה

And he shall give to the priest the foreleg, the jaw, and the stomach

(18:3) When the **Malbim** was installed as Rabbi in Bucharest, which was a large city with numerous Jews estranged from Torah, he held the following sermon: The Torah commanded giving the priest the foreleg (Zeroa), the jaw, and the stomach. Now, in modern times the Rabbi serves as a substitute for the priest. Consequently, I request from you the following three gifts: the arm (Zeroa) – that you should all be careful to observe the precept of Tefillin, the jaw – that you should be meticulous not to shave your beards with a razor, and the stomach – that you be scrupulous to abide by the dietary laws. (Chiyuchah Shel Torah) [Editors note: My father z"l used this possuk and said in the name of the **Malbim** that a rabbi must have three characteristics i.e the Zeroa/arm rule with strong arm, must be a good speaker (Jaw) and watch out for the Kashrut (stomach) of his community]

ראשית דגנך תירשך ויצהרך וראשית גז צאנך
תתן לו

The first fruits of your grain... shall you give him (18:4) As Rashi explains, "This refers to the teruma contribution set aside for the priests. [The Torah] does not specify any amount, but our Rabbis said that a person of good will gives one in forty." Symbolically, "one in forty" is an allusion to Yom Kippur. Moses ascended Mount Sinai on the 1st of Elul, where he remained for 40 days, until Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is thus the most auspicious time of this 40-day period. (Ohr HaTorah)

חלק כחלק יאכלו לבד ממכריו על האבות
Portion for portion they shall eat, except what was sold by the families (18:8) This verse has been translated according to **Rav Ephraim of Lunschitz z"l** (Kli Yakar). He explains that if a kohen cannot eat his entire portion of the sacrifices, he may sell it. He is not required to give it away to a poor kohen. Why not? Because it was "sold by the families." Eretz Yisrael was divided up amongst the tribes based upon the census taken by Moshe, and it was never re-divided and re-allocated even if the relative sizes of the tribes changed. So, too, the early kohanim established shifts and family-groups for the purposes of working in the Bet haMikdash and receiving shares of the sacrifices. Thus, the families of

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(Shmuel Moshe & Chanah ז"ל)

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kohanim "sold" their rights to each other -much as the families of the tribes "sold" their rights to all of Eretz Yisrael (outside of their own tribal boundaries) to each other.

לא ימצא בך מעביר בנו ובתו באש קסם
קסמים מעונן ומנחש ומכשף וחבר חבר ושאל
אוב וידעני ודרש אל המתים כי תועבת ה' כל
עשה אלה ובגלל התועבת האלה ה' אלקיך
מוריש אותם מפניך תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך
"There shall not be found among
you . . . one who practices
divinations, an astrologer, one
who reads omens, a sorcerer; or
an animal charmer, one who
inquires of Ov or Yidoni, or one
who consults the dead. . . You
shall be wholehearted with
Hashem, your Elokim." (18:10-11,
13) **R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l**
(Rambam / Maimonides; 1135-1204)

writes: "All of these things [that our verse prohibits] are lies and hoaxes; they are deceptions that the early idolators used to ensnare followers. Thus, it is not befitting Yisrael, a wise people, to follow such nonsense or even consider for a moment that these things have utility. . . Anyone who believes in these and similar things and says that they are real, but the Torah prohibited them, is nothing but a fool. Wise men and men of full understanding, on the other hand, know with certainty that these things are not matters of wisdom, but only nonsense that those lacking in intelligence follow." (Hil. Avodah Zarah 11:16) **R' Moshe ben Nachman** z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270) disagrees. He writes: Know that the Creator made the "upper" creations rulers over the "lower" creations below them, and He placed the earth under the dominion of the stars and the constellations, as is tried and true, based on the observations of astrologers. All of the stars and constellations have angels that are their "life force." However, they have no separate will; rather, they operate in accordance with G-d's design of the world. . . Ramban continues: There are those who, in their righteousness, deny the reality of these things. However, we cannot deny what our eyes have seen and what our Sages have told us in the Gemara and midrashim. . . Rather, the Torah is teaching us here that if we do His will, we will have no need to seek our fortunes elsewhere, for example, from astrologers. If we are "wholehearted with Hashem," we will have prophets and the kohen gadol with the urim v'tumim to tell us everything we need to know about the future. (Peirush Ha'Ramban Al Ha'Torah) **R' Samson Raphael Hirsch** z"l (Germany; 1808-1888) wrote in a letter: "Who dares to thrust his head between the two great mountains, the Rambam and the Ramban, whose views on this subject have split the worlds. You must admit that your suggestion – that Rambam really shares the view of Ramban and wrote what he wrote merely for the unlearned – is untenable, for he is very explicit in his abuse of those [he considers] foolish enough not to consider magic as absolute nonsense. . . It follows, therefore, that an intelligent person may have in such matters either point of view,

without detracting from the other, or – and in my opinion this is the correct way – he may acknowledge ignorance in such matters. . . . Knowledge of such things is of no help or benefit in our task on earth to heed the words of the Torah and to observe the Divine laws. Whoever does not engage in such speculations and remains ignorant of such matters is none the worse off. What practical difference does it make whether Rambam or Ramban is correct about magic and related matters? In any event, we must keep away from these practices, no matter whether they are illusory or have some substance to them. G-d has declared them abominable, and a responsible and moral person ignores them and does not allow himself to become tainted by that which G-d has declared repugnant. (Collected Writings)

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך

You shall be wholehearted with Hashem your God (18:13) Rashi comments: "Walk with Him with wholeheartedness, look ahead to Him, and do not delve into the future." The **Chofetz Chaim** once said that the commandment to be wholehearted is only "with Hashem your God." On the other hand, concerning human beings, a person is required to know how to outsmart them. One time, several Torah scholars who tried their hand at business, complained to the Chofetz Chaim that the businessmen whom they dealt with, cheated them, and that they lost all their money. He replied based on this verse "You shall be wholehearted." "Since they had learned in Yeshiva, they became accustomed to walk wholeheartedly, thinking naively that one can conduct oneself with wholeheartedness with human beings, as well." (Talei Oiros)

R' Meshullam of Bezier z"l (died approx. 4998/1238) studied under his father, **R' Moshe ben Yehuda of Lunel**, son-in-law of **R' Meshullam ben Yaakov**. The younger R' Meshullam is best known for his Sefer Ha'hashlamah, designed to "complete" the Sefer Ha'halachot of **R' Yitzchak Alfasi** ("Rif"). In reality, however, R' Meshullam often disagrees with Rif's rulings. Sefer Ha'hashlamah is quoted by some later commentators, especially the **Meiri** (13th century), who refers to R' Meshullam as "the great rabbi, father of all who dwell in the tents [of Torah]." The work also is quoted in **Bet Yosef**. The work printed in the margin of the standard edition of Tractate Yevamot under

the title Tosfot Chad Me'kamai ("Additions by One of the Ancients") actually is an excerpt from Sefer Ha'hashlamah. The elder R' Meshullam was the leading scholar in Lunel, Provence in the middle of the 12th century. In addition to his daughter, the mother of R' Meshullam of Bezier, he had five sons. One of these was the **R' Asher of Lunel** who is quoted in Tosfot to Bava Kamma 64a. The famous traveler, **R' Binyamin of Tudela**, mentions meeting "R' Meshullam and his five sons who were wise and wealthy." There were a number of other medieval sages with the name "R' Meshullam," most notably **R' Meshullam ben Kolonimus**, also known as "R' Meshullam of Mainz" and "**R' Meshullam Hagadol** (the Great)." He authored many of the hymns in our Yom Kippur machzor and died in approximately 1020. (Hamaayan, The ArtScroll Rishonim, p. 171, 161, 168, 184; Koreh Ha'dorot, page 16a)

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יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקי ואלקי אבותי
שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לחולים

אליהו זאב בן בריינדל
יחיאל יונה בן זהבה
הרב משה יהודה בן שרה
אברהם פנחס בן שרה עטל
ישראל יוסף בן יוכבד
דוד בן טובשין
חיים משה בן שרה
רחמה חוה ביילע בת חיי
אלטע שרה גיטל בת חיי
בתי בת שרה
בריינדל בת פעשא לאה
תמר אהובה בת גוטקע רייזל
משה שלמה בן גאלדע רעכל
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