

דף יומי • חלין • דף נ"ה

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THE SUGYA

We begin this daf by wrapping up a fascinating discussion regarding the precise measurements of the Sages. The Gemara explores whether the term "up to" a certain measure includes that limit or not, bringing proofs from the laws of tumah and taharah in broken clay vessels and bed-ropes. We learn a beautiful, overarching yesod from Rabbi Yochanan that, as a rule, the Sages established their measures stringently to protect the halacha, ensuring we always err on the side of caution in our avodah.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

צמוד א' DAF 55A

משנה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

שיעורן בכדי סיכת קטן ועד לוג.

The Mishnah states regarding broken clay vessels: **their measure** to remain susceptible to impurity is if they can hold **enough** oil **for the anointing of a small child, and** this applies to a vessel that held **up to a log** when whole.

גמרא GEMARA

QUESTION

מאי לאו לוג כלמטה?

What, is it not teaching that a vessel of exactly a **log** is treated **as** though it were **below** that measure, meaning the term 'up to' includes the log itself?

ANSWER

לא, לוג כלמעלה.

The Gemara answers: **No**, a vessel of exactly a **log** is treated **as** though it were **above** that measure, and 'up to' means up to but not including.

QUESTION

תא שמע: מלוג עד סאה – פרביעית,

Come and hear a proof from the next clause: If the vessel originally held **from a log up to a se'ah**, its broken pieces must hold a **quarter-log** to be tamei.

QUESTION

מאי לאו סאָה פֿלמטה?

What, is it not teaching that a vessel of exactly a **se'ah** is treated **as** though it were **below** that measure?

ANSWER

לא, סאָה פֿלמעלה.

The Gemara answers: **No**, a vessel of exactly a **se'ah** is treated **as** though it were **above** that measure.

QUESTION

תא שִׁמְעוּ: מִסָּאָה וְעַד סֵאתִים – בְּחֻצֵי לוֹג,

Come and hear another proof: If it held **from a se'ah up to two se'ah**, its pieces must hold **half a log** to be tamei.

QUESTION

מאי לאו סאתים פֿלמטה?

What, is it not teaching that a vessel of exactly **two se'ah** is treated **as** though it were **below** that measure?

ANSWER

לא, סאתים פֿלמעלה.

The Gemara answers: **No**, a vessel of exactly **two se'ah** is treated **as** though it were **above** that measure.

OBJECTION

וְהִתְנַיָּא: לוֹג – פֿלמטה, סאָה – פֿלמטה, סאתים – פֿלמטה.

The Gemara objects: **But isn't it taught** explicitly in a braisa: A vessel of exactly a **log** is treated **as below** that; a **se'ah** is treated **as below** that; **two se'ah** is treated **as below** that? This proves that 'up to' includes the limit!

RESOLUTION

הָתָם לְחוּמָרָא, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: כָּל שִׁיעוּרֵי חֲכָמִים לְהַחֲמִיר, חוּץ מִכִּגְרִיס שֶׁל בְּתָמִים לְהִקָּל.

The Gemara resolves this: **There** it is interpreted **stringently**, as **Rabbi Abbahu said** in the name of **Rabbi Yochanan**: **All measures of the Sages** are interpreted **stringently**, except for the measure of like a **split-bean** regarding blood stains, which is interpreted **leniently**. Here, treating the exact limit as 'below' makes the vessel more easily susceptible to tumah, which is a stringency.

INFERENCE

דִּיקָא נָמִי, דְּקִתְנֵי עָלֶה דִּהֵיא: חֲמִשָּׁה – פֿלמעלה, עֶשְׂרֵה – פֿלמטה.

The Gemara notes: The language **is also precise**, as it teaches on that same Mishnah regarding a bed-rope: exactly **five** handbreadths is treated **as above** that, and exactly **ten** handbreadths is treated **as below** that, showing we always rule stringently.

MISHNAH

ניטל הטחול,

We learned in the Mishnah: If **the spleen was removed**, the animal remains kosher.

גמרא GEMARA

STATEMENT

אמר רב עירא משמיה דרבא: לא שנו אלא ניטל, אבל ניקב – טרפה.

Rav Avira said in the name of Rava: They only taught that it is kosher when it was **removed**, but if it was merely **perforated**, it is a **tereifah**.

OBJECTION

מתיב רבי יוסי בר אבין, ואיתימא רבי יוסי בר זבידא: חותה מעובר שבמעיה – מותר באכילה, מן הטחול ומן הפליות – אסור באכילה.

Rabbi Yosei bar Avin, and some say Rabbi Yosei bar Zevida, challenged this from a Mishnah: If one **cuts from a fetus that is in its mother's womb**, the cut piece is **permitted for eating** when the mother is slaughtered; but if one **cuts from the spleen or from the kidneys** of the mother, the cut piece is **forbidden for eating**.

INFERENCE

הא בהמה גופה שריא!

We infer: **But the animal itself is permitted!** Even though its spleen was cut, it is not a tereifah, which contradicts Rava's ruling that a damaged spleen makes it a tereifah.

ANSWER

הוא הדין דאפילו בהמה גופה נמי אסירא, אידי דתנא רישא "מותר באכילה", תנא נמי סיפא "אסור באכילה".

The Gemara answers: The same law applies that even the animal itself is also **forbidden** as a tereifah; but since the first clause taught 'permitted for eating', the last clause also taught 'forbidden for eating' to maintain a parallel structure.

RESOLUTION

ואיפצית אימא: ניקב לחוד, ונחתה לחוד.

And if you wish, say instead: A **perforated** spleen is a **separate case** which makes it a tereifah, and a **cut** spleen is a **separate case** which does not make it a tereifah.

משנה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

נִיטְלוּ הַכְּלִיּוֹת.

We learned in the Mishnah: If **the kidneys were removed**, the animal remains kosher.

גמרא GEMARA

STATEMENT

אמר רביש בר פפא משמיה דרב: לקתה בכוליא אחת – טרפה.

Rakhish bar Pappa said in the name of Rav: If it was diseased in even one kidney, the animal is a tereifah.

EXPLANATION

אמרי במערבא: והוא דמטאי לקותא

They say in the West, Eretz Yisrael: And this applies only when the disease reached the white area inside the kidney.

עמוד ב' DAF 55B

EXPLANATION

למקום חריץ.

The previous statement regarding a kidney defect refers to the location of the crevice.

QUESTION

והיכא מקום חריץ?

The Gemara asks: And where is the location of the crevice on the kidney?

ANSWER

לחיורא דתותי מתני.

The Gemara answers: This is a reference to the white matter of fat under the loins where the kidney is attached.

STATEMENT

אמר רב נחוניא: שאלתינהו לכולהו טרופאי דמערבא, ואמרי לי הלכתא כרביש בר פפא, ולית הלכתא כרב עזירא.

Rav Nechunya said: I asked all the experts on tereifos of the West, Eretz Yisrael, and they said to me: The halacha is in accordance with the opinion of Rakhish bar Pappa in the name of Rav that a diseased kidney renders the animal a tereifah, but the halacha is not in accordance with the opinion of Rav Avira that a perforated spleen renders the animal a tereifah.

EXPLANATION

דַּרְבַּ עוֹרָא נִמְי לָא אִמְרוּ, אֶלָּא בְּקוֹלָשִׁיָּהּ, אֲבָל בְּסוּמְכִיָּהּ – טְרֵפָה,

The Gemara notes: And **even** with regard to the opinion of Rav Avira, we said that the halacha is not in accordance with his opinion **only** if the spleen was perforated **in its thin**, narrow end; **but** if it was perforated **in its thick**, upper end, the animal is indeed a **tereifah**.

EXPLANATION

וְאִי אִישְׁתַּיִיר בֵּיהּ פְּעוּבֵי דִינָר זָהָב – כְּשֶׁרָהּ.

And even if it was perforated in its thick end, **if there remained in it** an intact layer of the spleen **like the thickness of a gold dinar**, the animal is **kosher**.

STATEMENT

אָמְרֵי בְּמַעְרְבָא: כָּל הַפּוֹסֵל בְּרִיָּאָה – כָּשֶׁר בְּכוֹלָיָא, שְׁהָרִי נִקְבַּ פְּסוּל בְּרִיָּאָה, וְכָשֶׁר בְּכוֹלָיָא, וְכָל שְׁכֵן הֵיכָא דְכָשֶׁר בְּרִיָּאָה – כָּשֶׁר בְּכוֹלָיָא.

They say in the West: Any injury that renders an animal unfit in the lung is kosher in the kidney; for behold, a perforation renders the animal unfit in the lung, but is kosher in the kidney. And all the more so, where an injury is kosher in the lung, it is kosher in the kidney.

QUESTION

מִתְקִיף לֵה רַבִּי תַנְחוּמָא: וְכֵלְלָא הוּא?

Rabbi Tanchuma objects to this: And is this an established rule?

OBJECTION

הָרִי מוּגְלָא, דְּכָשֶׁר בְּרִיָּאָה וּפְסוּל בְּכוֹלָיָא!

But what about pus, which is kosher in the lung since the lung can discharge it, but renders the animal unfit in the kidney?

OBJECTION

וְהָרִי מֵיִם זָפִין, דְּכָשֶׁרִים הֵכָא וְהֵכָא,

And what about clear water, which is kosher here in the lung and there in the kidney, which does not fit the rule that what is kosher in the lung is all the more so kosher in the kidney, as it is equal in both?

ANSWER

אֶלָּא אָמַר רַב אֲשִׁי: טְרֵפוֹת קָא מַדְמִית לְהֶדְדִּי?

Rather, Rav Ashi said: Are you comparing the laws of tereifos to one another?

EXPLANATION

אֵין אוֹמְרִים בְּטְרֵפוֹת זֶה דּוֹמֶה לְזֶה, שְׁהָרִי חוֹתְכָהּ מִכָּאן וּמִתָּהּ, חוֹתְכָהּ מִכָּאן וְחִיתָהּ.

We do not say with regard to tereifos: This is similar to that; for behold, one cuts an organ from here and the animal dies, and one cuts an organ from there and it lives. Therefore, we cannot derive the laws of one organ from another.

EXPLANATION

וּמֵיִם זָפִין כְּשֶׁרִים, לָא אִמְרוּ אֶלָּא דְּצִילִי, אֲבָל עֲכִירִי – טְרֵפָה.

The Gemara notes: **And** with regard to **clear water** found in the lung or kidney, which we said is **kosher**, we said so only where they are clear, but if they are cloudy, the animal is a **terefah**.

EXPLANATION

וכי צילי נמי לא אמרו אלא דלא סריח, אבל סריח – טרפה.

And even when they are clear, we said so only where they are not foul-smelling, but if they are foul-smelling, the animal is a **terefah**.

STATEMENT

הפוליא שהקטינה, בדקה – עד כפול, בגסה – עד כענבה בינונית.

With regard to a **kidney that shrank**: In a **small animal** like a sheep, it is a tereifah if it shrank **until the size of a bean**; in a **large animal** like a cow, it is a tereifah if it shrank **until the size of an average grape**.

משנה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

ניטל לחי התחתון,

The Mishnah stated: If the **lower jaw was removed**, the animal is kosher.

גמרא GEMARA

STATEMENT

אמר רבי זירא: לא שנו אלא שיכולה לחיות על ידי לעיטה והמראה, אבל אינה יכולה לחיות על ידי לעיטה והמראה – טרפה.

Rabbi Zeira said: They only taught this where the animal is able to live by means of stuffing food into its mouth and cramming it down its throat; but if it is not able to live by means of stuffing and cramming, it is a **terefah**.

משנה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

ניטלה האם שלה,

The Mishnah stated: If its **womb was removed**, the animal is kosher.

גמרא GEMARA

BRAISA

תנא: היא האם, היא טרפחת, והיא שלפוחית.

A Sage taught in a Braisa: **This is the womb, this is the tarpachat, and this is the shalpuachit**; they are all names for the same organ.

משנה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

וחרוטה בידי שמים – כשרה.

The Mishnah stated: **Or if the lung was shriveled by the hand of Heaven**, the animal is **kosher**.

גמרא GEMARA

BRAISA

תנו רבנן: איזוהי חרוטה? כל שצמקה ריאה שלה.

The Rabbis taught in a Braisa: **Which is a shriveled lung? Any animal whose lung has shriveled.**

BRAISA

בידי שמים – כשרה, בידי אדם – טרפה.

If it shriveled **by the hand of Heaven**, such as from fright of thunder, the animal is **kosher**; but if it shriveled **by the hand of man**, such as if a person frightened it, it is a **tereifah**.

BRAISA

רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אף בידי כל הבריות.

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: **Even by the hand of any creature**, such as the roar of a lion.

QUESTION

איבעיא להו: רבי שמעון בן אלעזר ארישא קאי ולקולא, או אסיפא קאי ולחומרא?

A dilemma was raised before them: Does Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar refer to the **first clause** of the Braisa, and his ruling is **for leniency**, meaning that even the roar of a lion is considered like the hand of Heaven and the animal is kosher? **Or does he refer to the latter clause**, and his ruling is **for stringency**, meaning that if it was shriveled by any creature, it is like the hand of man and the animal is a tereifah?

PROOF

תא שמע, דתנא: חרוטה בידי אדם – טרפה, רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אף בידי כל הבריות.

Come and hear a proof, as it is taught in a Braisa: A lung shriveled **by the hand of man** renders the animal a **tereifah**; Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: **Even by the hand of any creature** it is a tereifah. This proves he refers to the latter clause for stringency.

STATEMENT

רָבָה בַּר בַּר חָנָה הָיָה קָאָזִיל בְּמִדְבָּרָא, אֲשֶׁכַּח הִנָּהוּ דִּיכְרִי דְצִמְיָק רִיאַה דִּידְהוּ.

The Gemara relates: Rabba bar bar Chana was traveling in the desert, and he found certain rams whose lungs were shriveled.

STATEMENT

אַתָּא שְׂאִיל בִּי מִדְרָשָׁא, אָמְרוּ לִיה:

He came and asked in the study hall how to determine the cause of the shriveling. They said to him as follows:

ANSWER

בְּקִיטָא – אֵייתִי מְשִׁיכְלִי חִיּוּרִי, וּמְלִינָהוּ מִיָּא קָרִירִי, וְאַנְחִינָהוּ מֵעַת לָעַת.

In the summer, bring white basins, and fill them with cold water, and place the lungs in them for twenty-four hours.

ANSWER

אִי הִדְרוּ בְּרִיזִין – בִּידֵי שָׁמַיִם הִיא וּכְשָׁרָה, וְאִי לָא – טְרֵיפָה.

If they return to their healthy state and expand, it was by the hand of Heaven and the animal is kosher; but if not, it is a tereifah.

ANSWER

בְּסִיתוּא – אֵייתִי מְשִׁיכְלִי שִׁיחוּמִי, וּמְלִינָהוּ מִיָּא פְּשׁוּרִי, וְאַנְחִינָהוּ מֵעַת לָעַת.

In the winter, bring dark basins, and fill them with luke warm water, and place the lungs in them for twenty-four hours.

ANSWER

אִי הִדְרָא בְּרִיא – כְּשָׁרָה, וְאִי לָא – טְרֵיפָה.

If it returns to its healthy state, the animal is kosher; but if not, it is a tereifah.

מִשְׁנָה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

הֶגְלוּדָה:

The Mishnah stated: **An animal whose hide was removed**, Rabbi Meir deems it kosher and the Sages deem it a tereifah.

גְּמָרָא GEMARA

BRAISA

תַּנּוּ רַבָּנָן: הֶגְלוּדָה – רַבִּי מֵאִיר מְכַשִּׁיר וַחֲכָמִים פּוֹסְלִים,

The Rabbis taught in a Braisa: In the case of **an animal whose hide was removed**, Rabbi Meir deems it kosher and the Sages deem it unfit,

BRAISA

וּכְבֵּר הָעִיד אֶלְעָזָר סֵפֶרָא וְיוֹחָנָן בֶּן גּוּדְגָדָא עַל הַגְּלוּדָה שְׁפִסּוּלָהּ.

and Elazar the scribe and Yochanan ben Gudgeda already testified concerning the flayed animal that it is unfit.

BRAISA

אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמּוֹן בֶּן עֲלֵעָזָר: חֲזַר בּוֹ רַבִּי מֵאִיר.

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: Rabbi Meir retracted his view and agreed with the Sages.

QUESTION

מִכָּלְל דְּלִרְבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר פְּלִיג רַבִּי מֵאִיר בְּגִלּוּדָה?

The Gemara asks: By inference, according to Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar, did Rabbi Meir initially disagree regarding a flayed animal?

OBJECTION

וְהִתְנִיָּא: אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר: לֹא נִחְלְקוּ רַבִּי מֵאִיר וְחֻכְמִים עַל הַגְּלוּדָה שְׁפִסּוּלָהּ,

But isn't it taught in a different Braisa: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: Rabbi Meir and the Sages did not disagree concerning a flayed animal, for all agree that it is unfit,

BRAISA

וּכְבֵּר הָעִיד רַבִּי אוֹשְׁעִיָּא בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַבֶּשֶׁם לְפָנֵי רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא מְשׁוּם רַבִּי טַרְפוֹן עַל הַגְּלוּדָה שְׁפִסּוּלָהּ,

and Rabbi Oshaya the son of Rabbi Yehuda the spice merchant already testified before Rabbi Akiva in the name of Rabbi Tarfon concerning a flayed animal that it is unfit,

BRAISA

וְאִם נִשְׁתַּיֵּיר בּוֹ כֶּסֶלַע – כְּשֶׁרָהּ.

and if there remained on it a piece of hide the size of a sela, the animal is kosher. This implies they never disagreed at all!

RESOLUTION

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: מַאי "לֹא נִחְלְקוּ"? לֹא עָמַד רַבִּי מֵאִיר בְּמַחֲלוּקָתוֹ.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: What is the meaning of "they did not disagree"? It means Rabbi Meir did not persist in his disagreement, but rather retracted.

STATEMENT

אָמַר מֶר: אִם נִשְׁתַּיֵּיר בּוֹ כֶּסֶלַע – כְּשֶׁרָהּ.

The Gemara analyzes the Braisa: The Master said above: If there remained on it a piece of hide the size of a sela, the animal is kosher.

QUESTION

הִיכָא?

The Gemara asks: **Where** must this piece of hide be located?

ANSWER

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: על פני השדרה כולה.

Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: It must be along the entire spine.

QUESTION

איבעיא להו: דאריה וקטין, דכי מצרף לה הוי כסלע, או דלמא ברוחב סלע על פני השדרה כולה?

A dilemma was raised before them: Does this mean a strip of hide that is long and thin, which when you combine it together it has the total area of a sela? Or perhaps it must be the width of a sela along the entire spine?

PROOF

תא שמע, דפריש רבי נהוראי משמיה דשמואל: ברוחב כסלע על פני כל השדרה כולה.

Come and hear, as Rabbi Nehorai explained in the name of Shmuel: It must be the width of a sela along the entire spine.

STATEMENT

רבה בר בר חנה אמר: ראשי פרקים.

Rabba bar bar Chana said: The remaining hide must be on the tips of the joints of the limbs.

STATEMENT

רבי אלעזר בן אנטיגנוס משום רבי אלעזר ברבי ינאי אמר: מקום טיבורו.

Rabbi Elazar ben Antigonus said in the name of Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Yannai: It must be on the place of its navel.

QUESTION

בעי רבי ינאי ברבי ישמעאל: ניטל מקום השדרה וכולו קיים, ניטל מקום טיבורו וכולו קיים, ניטלו ראשי פרקים וכולו קיים, מאי?

Rabbi Yannai the son of Rabbi Yishmael raised a dilemma: If the place of the spine was removed but all the rest of the hide remained, or if the place of its navel was removed but all the rest remained, or if the tips of the joints were removed but all the rest remained, what is the law?

RESOLUTION

תיקו.

The Gemara concludes: The dilemma shall stand unresolved.

STATEMENT

אמר רב: כל העור פולו מציל בגלוידה, חוץ מעור בית הפרסות.

Rav said: Any part of the hide saves the animal from being a flayed animal if it remains, except for the hide of the hooves.

STATEMENT

ורבי יוחנן אמר: אפילו עור בית הפרסות נמי מציל.

And Rabbi Yochanan said: Even the hide of the hooves also saves the animal.

QUESTION

בעא מיניה רבי אסי מרבי יוחנן: עור בית הפרסות מהו שיציל בגלודתו?

Rabbi Assi asked Rabbi Yochanan: What is the law regarding the hide of the hooves, whether it saves in the case of a flayed animal?

ANSWER

אמר ליה: מציל.

He said to him: It saves.

OBJECTION

אמר ליה, למדתנו רבינו: אלו שעורותיהן כבשרן – עור בית הפרסות!

Rabbi Assi said to him: But did you not teach us, our Rabbi, in a Mishnah regarding the laws of ritual impurity: These are the animals whose hides are like their flesh, and among them is listed the hide of the hooves? Since it is considered flesh, it should not count as hide to save the animal!

ANSWER

אמר ליה: אל תקניטני, שב לשון יחיד אני שונה אותה.

Rabbi Yochanan said to him: Do not provoke me, for I learn that Mishnah as the view of a single Tanna, which is not the accepted halacha.

PROOF

דתנא: השוחט את העולה להקטיר כזית מעור של תחת האליה חוץ למקומו – פסול, ואין בו פרת;

As it is taught in a Braisa: One who slaughters an olah-offering with the intention to burn an olive's bulk of the hide under the tail outside its proper place, the offering is unfit, but there is no punishment of kares for it;

PROOF

חוץ לזמנו – פגול, וחיובין עליו פרת.

if he intended to burn it outside its proper time, it is piggul, and one is liable to kares for it. This is because this hide is considered like flesh.

PROOF

אליעזר בן יהודה איש איבלים אמר משום רבי יעקב, וכן היה רבי שמעון בן יהודה איש [כפר] עיכוס ואמר משום רבי שמעון:

Eliezer ben Yehuda of Evelayim said in the name of Rabbi Yaakov, and so Rabbi Shimon ben Yehuda of Kefar Akos would say in the name of Rabbi Shimon:

PROOF

אֶחָד עוֹר בֵּית הַפָּרְסוֹת, וְאֶחָד עוֹר הָרֹאשׁ שֶׁל עֵגֶל הָרֶה, וְאֶחָד עוֹר שֶׁל תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּיָּהּ, וְכָל שְׁמֵנוּ חֲכָמִים גָּבִי טוֹמְאָה אֵלּוּ שְׁעוֹרוֹתֵיהֶן כְּבָשָׂרוֹ.

Both the hide of the hooves, and the hide of the head of a tender calf, and the hide under the tail, and all those that the Sages enumerated regarding impurity as 'those whose hides are like their flesh' are indeed considered hide for all other matters, showing that the view equating them to flesh is only a minority opinion.

SUMMARY

The Gemara then transitions into the practical halachos of tereifos, focusing on the internal organs of the animal. We learn that while the complete removal of the spleen or kidneys leaves the animal kosher, specific localized damage—such as a perforation in the thick, upper end of the spleen, or a disease that reaches the white area of the kidney—can render the animal a tereifah. Finally, Rav Ashi teaches us a fundamental principle in the laws of tereifos: we cannot compare the vulnerability of one organ to another, as the complex nature of the body means what is fatal in one area may be perfectly survivable in another.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

In today's daf, we learn a profound principle about the nature of halacha and life: "Ein omrim b'treifos zo domeh l'zo"—we do not compare different laws of treifos to one another. The Gemara explains that you cannot make a logical comparison between the lung and the kidney, because "you can cut here and the animal dies, but cut there and it lives." What looks like the exact same wound can be fatal in one organ but completely harmless in another.

This is a powerful lesson for our own avodah. How often do we look at a friend or a neighbor and compare our spiritual struggles to theirs? We see someone else facing a challenge and think, "If they can handle that so easily, why am I struggling so much with this?" Or we look at our own lives and wonder why a small setback in one area completely knocks us off our feet, while a major challenge in another area barely affects us.

The Aibershter created each of us with a unique spiritual anatomy. Our neshama has its own sensitive areas, its own "lungs" and "kidneys." What is a minor scratch for one person can be a deep, painful wound for another. We cannot compare our spiritual health or our struggles to anyone else's, nor can we compare our reactions to different situations in our own lives. Hashem knows exactly where you are sensitive and where you are strong.

Today, when you feel yourself starting to compare your spiritual progress, your struggles, or your reactions to those of someone else, stop and remind yourself: "My neshama is unique. I will focus only on the specific avodah Hashem has given to me, without comparing myself to others."

הלכות יסודי התורה • פרק שני

Learned like the daf, the literal words in bold, flowing with the elucidation

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam takes us on a beautiful journey to fulfill the fundamental mitzvos of loving and fearing Hashem. The Rambam teaches us that the path to true yiras Shamayim and ahavas Hashem is through deep contemplation of the wondrous, vast creations that Hashem brought into being. By looking at the greatness of the cosmos, a person's neshama is filled with a powerful yearning to know Hashem, while simultaneously feeling humbled by our own smallness before His infinite wisdom.

To help us begin this contemplation, the Rambam introduces us to the spiritual hierarchy of the universe. He explains the three categories of creation, focusing deeply on the spiritual forms that have no physical bodies—the holy angels. We will learn about their ten distinct spiritual levels, how they receive their existence one from another, and how they all stand in awe, recognizing their Creator according to their spiritual capacity.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

הלכה א

Halacha 1: The Mitzvah to Love and Fear the Glorious and Awesome God

האל הנכבד והנורא הזה

Regarding **this glorious and awesome God**,

מצוה לאהבו וליראה אותו

it is a positive **mitzvah to love Him and to fear Him**,

שנאמר דברים ו ה' ואהבת את ה' אלהיך.

as **it is said** in Devarim 6:5, "**And you shall love Hashem your God.**"

ונאמר דברים ו יג "את ה' אלהיך תירא":

And it is said in Devarim 6:13, "**Hashem your God you shall fear.**"

הלכה ב

Halacha 2: The Path to Attaining Love and Fear of God Through Contemplating His Creation

והיאה היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו.

And how is the path to His love and His fear? How does a person reach these lofty levels of loving and fearing Hashem?

בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים

At the time that the person contemplates His deeds and His creations, the wondrous and the great,

וַיִּרְאֶה מֵהֶן חֲכָמָתוֹ שֶׁאֵין לָהּ עֶרֶךְ וְלֹא קֵץ

and he sees from them His wisdom, which has no measure and no end,

מִיד הוא אוֹהֵב וּמְשַׁבַּח וּמְפָאֵר וּמְתַאֲוֶה תַאֲוָה גְדוֹלָה לַיָּדַע הַשֵּׁם הַגָּדוֹל.

immediately he loves and praises and glorifies, and yearns with a great yearning to know the great Name of Hashem,

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר דָּוִד "צָמָאָה נַפְשִׁי לֵאלֹהִים לֵאלֹל חַי".

like that which Dovid said, in Tehillim, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

וּכְשֶׁמִּחְשָׁב בַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ עֲצָמָן

And when he reflects on these very matters themselves,

מִיד הוא נִרְתַּע לְאַחֲרָיו וַיִּפְחַד וַיֻּדַּע שֶׁהוּא בְּרִיָּה קְטַנָּה שְׂפֵלָה אֲפֵלָה

immediately he recoils backward and fears, and knows that he is a small, lowly, dark creature,

עוֹמֶדֶת בְּדַעַת קְלָה מְעוּטָה לִפְנֵי תַמִּים יְדוּת.

standing with a flimsy, limited understanding before the Perfect of knowledge, the Almighty.

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר דָּוִד "כִּי אֶרְאֶה שָׁמַיָּה מַעֲשֵׂי אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ" "מָה אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ".

Like that which Dovid said, "When I see Your heavens, the work of Your fingers," and then says, "What is man that You should remember him?"

וּלְפִי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ אֲנִי מְבַאֵר כָּל־לִים גְּדוֹלִים מִמַּעֲשֵׂה רַבּוֹן הָעוֹלָמִים

And according to these matters, I explain great principles of the work of the Master of the worlds,

כְּדִי שִׁיְהִיו פֶּתַח לַמִּבִּין לְאוֹהֵב אֶת הַשֵּׁם.

in order that they will be an opening for the understanding one to love the Name of Hashem.

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים בְּעֶנְיֵן אֱהָבָה שֶׁמִּתּוֹךְ כֶּה אֶתָּה מְכִיר אֶת מִי שֶׁאָמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם:

Like that which the Sages said regarding the matter of love, "For from within this, you recognize Him who spoke and the world came into being."

הַלְכָּה ג

Halacha 3 · The Division of All Creations into Three Distinct Categories of Matter and Form

כָּל מַה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ

All that which the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world

נִחְלַק לְשִׁלְשָׁה חִלְקִים.

is divided into three parts.

מֵהֶן בְּרוּאִים שֶׁהֵן מְחֻבְּרִים מִגֶּלֶם וְצוּרָה

Of them are creations that are joined from matter and form,

וְהֵם הֵיִים וְנִפְסָדִים תָּמִיד

and they are coming into being and perishing constantly,

כְּמוֹ גּוּפוֹת הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה וְהַצִּמְחִים וְהַמִּתְכּוֹת.

like the bodies of man, and the beast, and the plants, and the metals.

וּמֵהֶן בְּרוּאִים שֶׁהֵן מְחֻבְּרִים מִגֶּלֶם וְצוּרָה

And of them are creations that are joined from matter and form,

אָבֵל אֵינָן מִשְׁתַּנִּין מִגּוּף לְגּוּף וּמִצּוּרָה לְצוּרָה כְּמוֹ הָרִאשׁוֹנִים

but they do not change from body to body and from form to form like the first ones;

אֶלָּא צוּרְתָן קְבוּעָה לְעוֹלָם בְּגִלְמָם

rather, their form is fixed forever in their matter,

וְאֵינָן מִשְׁתַּנִּין כְּמוֹ אֵלֶּה.

and they do not change like those first ones.

וְהֵם הַגִּלְגָּלִים וְהַכּוֹכָבִים שֶׁבֵּהֶן.

And they are the spheres and the stars that are in them.

וְאֵין גִּלְמָם כְּשֵׁאֵר גִּלְמִים וְלֹא צוּרְתָם כְּשֵׁאֵר צוּרוֹת.

And their matter is not like other matters, and their form is not like other forms.

וּמֵהֶן בְּרוּאִים צוּרָה בְּלֹא גֶלֶם כָּלֵל

And of them are creations of form without matter at all,

וְהֵם הַמַּלְאָכִים.

and they are the angels.

שֶׁהֵם לְאֻכִּים אֵינָם גּוּף וְגוּיָה

For the angels are not body and physical form,

אֶלָּא צוּרוֹת נִפְרָדוֹת זוֹ מִזֹּ:

rather, they are forms separated one from another.

ומהו זה שהנביאים אומרים שראו המלאך אש ובעל כנפים.

And what is this that the prophets say, that they saw the angel as fire and as a possessor of wings?

הכל במראה הנבואה ודרך חידה.

All of this was only in a vision of the prophecy and by way of a riddle,

לומר שאינו גוף ואינו כבד כגופות הכבדים.

to say and to teach us that he is not a body, and he is not heavy like the heavy bodies of this physical world.

כמו שנאמר דברים ד כד "כי ה' אלהיך אש אכלה הוא" ואינו אש אלא משל.

This is just as it is said in the Torah, "For Hashem your God, fire consuming is He," and He is not fire, rather it is a parable to describe His power.

וכמו שנאמר תהילים קד ד "עשה מלאכיו רוחות":

And it is just as it is said in Tehillim, "He makes His angels winds," showing they are spiritual and swift.

ובמה יפרדו הצורות זו מזו

And by what means are these spiritual forms separated, and distinguished, this one from this other one,

והרי אינן גופין.

and behold, they are not bodies that could be separated by physical space?

לפי שאינן שוין במציאותן

It is because they are not equal in their level of existence,

אלא כל אחד מהן למטה ממעלתו של חברו.

rather, each one of them is below the level of his fellow angel.

והוא מצוי מכוח זה למעלה מזה

And each lower angel exists from the power of the one above him, this one above from this one,

והכל נמצאים מכוח של הקדוש ברוך הוא וטובו.

and everything exists from the power of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His goodness.

וזהו שרמז שלמה בכתבתו ואמר

And this is what Shlomo alluded to in his wisdom, and said in the Sefer of Koheles:

"כִּי גִבָּה מֵעַל גִּבָּה שְׁמֵר":

"For high above high watches," meaning that each spiritual level is watched over and sustained by the one above it.

הלכה ו

Halacha 6 · The Spiritual Hierarchy of Angels and Causes

זֶה שֶׁאָמְרָנוּ לְמִטָּה מִמַּעַלְתּוֹ שֶׁל חֲבֵירוֹ

This which we said regarding the angels, that one is below the level of his fellow,

אֵינָהּ מַעַלְתַּת מְקוֹם.

is not a level of physical place,

כְּמוֹ אָדָם שֶׁיּוֹשֵׁב לְמַעַלָּה מִחֲבֵירוֹ.

like a man who sits above his fellow in a physical space.

אֲלָא כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֹמְרִין בְּשְׁנֵי חֻכָּמִים

But rather, it is like that which they say regarding two sages,

שֶׁאֶחָד גָּדוֹל מִחֲבֵירוֹ בְּחֻכְמָה

that one is greater than his fellow in wisdom,

שֶׁהוּא לְמַעַלָּה מִמַּעַלְתּוֹ שֶׁל זֶה.

that he is above the level of this other one in spiritual stature.

וְכְמוֹ שֶׁאֹמְרִין בְּעֵלָּה

And it is also like that which they say regarding a cause,

שֶׁהִיא לְמַעַלָּה מִן הָעֵלּוּל:

that it is above the effect which stems from it.

הלכה ז

Halacha 7 · The Ten Spiritual Levels of Angels and Their Respective Names

שְׁנוֵי שְׁמוֹת הַמְּלָאכִים עַל שֵׁם מַעַלְתָּם הוּא.

The difference of the names of the angels is according to the measure of their level of spiritual attainment.

וּלְפִיכָּה נִקְרְאוּ חַיּוֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהֵם לְמַעַלָּה מִן הַכָּל

And therefore, the highest level are called Chayyot HaKodesh, and they are above all the others;

ואופנים ואֶרְאֵלִים וְחַשְׁמָלִים וְשֶׁרָפִים וּמַלְאָכִים וְאֱלֹהִים וּבְנֵי אֱלֹהִים וְכִרּוּבִים וְאִישִׁים.

and below them are the Ofanim, and Er'elim, and Chashmalim, and Serafim, and Mal'achim, and Elohim, and sons of Elohim, and Keruvim, and Ishim.

כָּל אֵלֹהֵי עֲשָׂרָה הַשְּׁמוֹת שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בָּהֶן הַמַּלְאָכִים עַל שֵׁם עֲשָׂר מַעֲלֹת שְׁלֵהֶן הֵן.

All of these ten names by which the angels are called are according to the measure of their ten levels of spiritual standing.

וּמַעַלָּה שָׂאִין לְמַעַלָּה מִמֶּנָּה אֵלָּא מַעַלְתַּת הָאֵל בְּרוּךְ הוּא הִיא מַעַלְתַּת הַצּוּרָה שֶׁנִּקְרְאת חַיּוֹת.

And the level that there is not any level above it except the level of the God, blessed is He, is the level of the form that is called Chayyot.

לְפִיכָךְ נֶאֱמַר בְּנִבְיאוֹהָ שֶׁהֵן תַּחַת כִּסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד.

Therefore, it is said in prophecy that they are under the Throne of the Glory, indicating their supreme closeness to Hashem.

וּמַעַלָּה עֲשִׁירִית הִיא מַעַלְתַּת הַצּוּרָה שֶׁנִּקְרְאת אִישִׁים.

And the tenth level is the level of the form that is called Ishim,

וְהֵם הַמַּלְאָכִים הַמְדַּבְּרִים עִם הַנְּבִיאִים וְנִרְאִים לָהֶם בְּמַרְאֵה הַנְּבוּאָה.

and they are the angels who speak with the prophets and appear to them in a vision of prophecy.

לְפִיכָךְ נִקְרְאוּ אִישִׁים שֶׁמַּעַלְתָּם קְרוּבָה לְמַעַלְתַּת דַּעַת בְּנֵי אָדָם:

Therefore, they are called Ishim, because their level is close to the level of the knowledge of sons of man, allowing humans to perceive and comprehend their message.

הַלָּכָה ח

Halacha 8 · The Spiritual Forms' Comprehension and Knowledge of the Creator

וְכָל הַצּוּרוֹת הָאֵלֹהִים חַיִּים וּמַכִּירִין אֶת הַבּוֹרֵא.

And all of these forms, the holy angels, are alive and recognize the Creator,

וְיוֹדְעִים אוֹתוֹ דַּעַה גְּדוֹלָה עַד לְמָאד.

and they know Him with a knowledge that is exceedingly great.

כָּל צוּרָה וְצוּרָה לְפִי מַעַלְתָּהּ לֹא לְפִי גְדֻלָּתָהּ.

This is true of each and every form according to its spiritual level, but not according to His infinite greatness.

אֲפִלּוּ מַעַלָּה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה אֵינָה יְכוּלָה לְהַשִּׁיג אֶמְתַּת הַבּוֹרֵא כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא

Even the first and highest level is unable to grasp the true essence of the Creator as He truly is,

אֵלָא דַּעְתָּהּ קִצְרָה לְהַשִּׁיג וְלִידַע

rather, its mind is too limited to grasp and to know Him fully,

אָבֵל מַשְׁגָּת וְיִוָּדַעַת יוֹתֵר מִמָּה שֶׁמַּשְׁגָּת וְיִוָּדַעַת צוּרָה שֶׁלֹּמֶטָה מִמֶּנָּה.

but it grasps and knows more than what is grasped and known by the form that is below it.

וְכֵן כָּל מַעֲלָה וּמַעֲלָה עַד מַעֲלָה עֲשִׂירִית

And so it is with every single level down to the tenth level,

גַּם הִיא יוֹדַעַת הַבּוֹרָא דַּעַה

it too knows the Creator with a knowledge

שֶׁאִין כַּח בְּנֵי הָאָדָם הַמְּחַפְּרִים מִגֶּלֶם וְצוּרָה יָכוֹל לְהַשִּׁיג וְלִידַע כְּמוֹתָהּ.

that the power of human beings, who are composed of physical matter and form, is unable to grasp and to know like it.

וְהַכֹּל אֵינָן יוֹדְעִין הַבּוֹרָא כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא יוֹדֵעַ עַצְמוֹ:

Yet, all of them do not know the Creator as He knows Himself.

הִלְכָּה ט

Halacha 9 · All Existence Derives from the Creator and He Knows All Things

כָּל הַנִּמְצָאִים חוּץ מִן הַבּוֹרָא

All the existing things outside of the Creator,

מִצּוּרָה הָרְאשׁוֹנָה עַד יְתוֹשׁ קָטָן שֶׁיְהִיָּה בְּטַבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ

from the first spiritual form until the most small mosquito that is in the center of the earth,

הַכֹּל מִכַּח אֱמֶתתוֹ נִמְצָאוּ.

everything only exist from the power of His truth.

וְלִפִּי שֶׁהוּא יוֹדֵעַ עַצְמוֹ

And because that He knows Himself,

וּמִכִּיר גְּדֻלָּתוֹ וְתִפְאָרְתוֹ וְאֱמֶתתוֹ

and recognizes His greatness and His beauty and His truth,

הוּא יוֹדֵעַ הַכֹּל

He knows everything,

ואין דבר נעלם ממנו:

and there is no thing hidden from Him.

הלכה י

Halacha 10 · The Absolute Unity of the Creator, His Knowledge, and His Life

הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מְכִיר אֱמֻתּוֹ וְיֹדֵעַ אוֹתָהּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיא.

The Holy One, blessed be He, recognizes His own truth and knows it as it is.

וְאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ בְּדַעַת שֶׁהִיא חוּץ מִמֶּנּוּ כְּמוֹ שָׂאֲנוּ יוֹדְעִין.

And He does not know with a knowledge that is outside of Him, as we know things,

שָׂאִין אֲנוּ וְדַעַתֵּנוּ אֶחָד

for we and our knowledge are not one, as our minds are separate from our essence,

אֲבָל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ הוּא וְדַעַתּוֹ וְחַיּוֹ אֶחָד מִכָּל צֶד וּמִכָּל פֶּנֶה וּבְכָל דֶּרֶךְ יַחֲד.

but the Creator, may He be blessed, He and His knowledge and His life are one from every side and from every corner, and in every way of unity.

שְׂאֵל מְלִי הָיָה חַי בְּחַיִּים וְיֹדֵעַ בְּדַעַת חוּץ מִמֶּנּוּ

For if He were living with a life, and knowing with a knowledge, that were outside of Him,

הָיוּ שָׁם אֱלֹהוֹת הֶרְבֵּה הוּא וְחַיּוֹ וְדַעַתּוֹ,

there would be many gods there: He, His life, and His knowledge;

וְאִין הַדְּבָר כֵּן אֵלָּא אֶחָד מִכָּל צֶד וּמִכָּל פֶּנֶה וּבְכָל דֶּרֶךְ יַחֲד.

and the matter is not so, but rather He is one from every side and from every corner, and in every way of unity.

נִמְצָאת אֵתָּה אוֹמֵר הוּא הַיּוֹדֵעַ וְהוּא הַיְּדוּעַ וְהוּא הַדַּעַת עֲצֻמָּה הַכֹּל אֶחָד.

Consequently, you must say: He is the Knower, and He is the Known, and He is the Knowledge itself—the whole is one.

וְדָבָר זֶה אֵין כַּחַ בִּפְּהָ לְאֹמְרוֹ וְלֹא בְּאָזְנוֹ לְשִׁמְעוֹ וְלֹא בְּלֵב הָאָדָם לְהַכִּירוֹ עַל בְּרִיּוֹ.

And this matter, there is no power in the mouth to say it, nor in the ear to hear it, nor in the heart of man to recognize it upon its truth and fully grasp it.

וּלְפִיכָּה אוֹמֵר חַי פְּרַעֲה וְחַי נַפְשָׁךְ

And therefore, when swearing by a creation, the Torah says, "By the life of Pharaoh," and, "By the life of your soul," using the construct form 'chei' which implies a life possessed by the person,

וְאִין אוֹמֵר חַי ה' אֵלָּא חַי ה'.

and it does not say, "By the life of Hashem" in the construct form, but rather, "As Hashem lives," using the absolute form 'chai'.

שְׁאִין הַבּוֹרֵא וְחַיּוֹ שְׁנַיִם כְּמוֹ חַיֵּי הַגּוֹפִים הַחַיִּים אוֹ כְּחַיֵּי הַמַּלְאָכִים.

For the Creator and His life are not two, like the life of living bodies, or like the life of the angels, whose life is distinct from their essence.

לְפִיכָהּ אֵינוֹ מְכִיר הַבְּרֹאִים וְיֹדֵעַם מִחֲמַת הַבְּרֹאִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֲנוּ יֹדְעִין אוֹתָם

Therefore, He does not recognize the creations and know them because of the creations, as we know them, by looking outside of ourselves,

אֶלָּא מִחֲמַת עֲצָמוֹ יָדָעַם.

but rather, because of Himself He knows them.

לְפִיכָהּ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא יֹדֵעַ עֲצָמוֹ יֹדֵעַ הַכֹּל שֶׁהַכֹּל נִסְמָךְ לוֹ בְּהוֹיָתוֹ.

Therefore, because He knows Himself, He knows everything, for everything is dependent on Him for its existence.

הַלָּכָה יא

Halacha 11 · The Depth of Ma'aseh Merkavah and the Limits of Explanation

דְּבָרִים אֵלּוּ שֶׁאֲמַרְנוּ בְּעֶנְיֵן זֶה

These matters that we have said regarding this subject

בְּשְׁנֵי פָּרָקִים אֵלּוּ

in these two chapters

כְּמוֹ טֶפֶה מִן הַיָּם הֵם

are like a drop from the sea

מִמָּה שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְבַאֵר בְּעֶנְיֵן זֶה.

compared to what is needed to explain regarding this subject.

וּבִאֵוֶר כָּל הָעֲקָרִים שֶׁבְּשְׁנֵי פָּרָקִים אֵלּוּ

And the explanation of all the principles that are in these two chapters

הוּא הַנִּקְרָא מַעֲשֵׂה מְרֻכָּבָה:

is that which is called the Work of the Chariot.

הַלָּכָה יב

Halacha 12 · The Restriction and Concealment of the Secrets of the Torah

צִוֵּי חֻמּוֹת הָרָאוּשׁוֹנִים

The early Sages commanded

שְׁלֹא לְדַרְשׁ בְּדִבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים

not to expound on these matters of Ma'aseh Merkavah

אֶלָּא לְאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֻבָּד

except to one man alone,

וְהוּא שֶׁיִּהְיֶה חָכָם וּמֵבִין מִדַּעְתּוֹ

and he must be such that he is wise and understanding from his own knowledge.

וְאַחֵר כִּי מוֹסְרִין לוֹ רְאִישֵׁי הַפְּרָקִים

And after that, they transmit to him the outlines of the chapters,

וּמוֹדִיעִין אוֹתוֹ שְׁמֵץ מִן הַדָּבָר

and they make known to him only a trace of the matter,

וְהוּא מֵבִין מִדַּעְתּוֹ

and he understands from his own knowledge

וַיֵּדַע סוֹף הַדָּבָר וְעִמְקוֹ.

and knows the end of the matter and its depth.

וְדִבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים דְּבָרִים עֲמֻקִּים הֵם עַד לְמָאד

And these matters are exceedingly deep matters,

וְאִין כָּל דַּעַת וְדַעַת רְאוּיָה לְסַבֵּלָן.

and not every mind is fitting to bear them.

וְעַלֵּיהֶם אָמַר שְׁלֹמֹה בְּחֻמָּתוֹ דְּרָהּ מִשָּׁל

And concerning them, Shlomo said in his wisdom by way of metaphor:

כִּבְשִׁים לְלְבוּשָׁה

"Lambs for your clothing."

כִּי אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים בְּפִרוּשׁ מִשָּׁל זֶה

So said the Sages in the explanation of this metaphor:

דְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵן כִּבְשֻׁנֹּו שֶׁל עוֹלָם יִהְיוּ לְלְבוּשָׁה

Matters that are the secrets of the world shall be for your clothing,

כְּלוּמַר לָהּ לְבַדָּהּ וְאֵל תִּדְרֹשׁ אוֹתָם בְּרַבִּים.

meaning to say, for you alone, and do not expound them in public.

וְעַלֵּיהֶם אָמַר

And concerning them, the verse says:

יְהִיו לָהּ לְבַדָּהּ וְאֵין לְזָרִים אִתָּהּ.

"They shall be for you alone, and not for strangers with you."

וְעַלֵּיהֶם אָמַר

And concerning them, the verse says:

דְּבַשׁ וְחֶלֶב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנֶךָ

"Honey and milk under your tongue."

כֹּה פִּרְשׁוּ חֲכָמִים הָרֵאשׁוֹנִים

So explained the early Sages:

דְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵן כְּדֶבֶשׁ וְחֶלֶב יְהִיו תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנֶךָ:

Matters that are like honey and milk shall be under your tongue and kept hidden.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by establishing the mitzvos of loving and fearing Hashem, explaining that these middos are awakened when we contemplate the greatness of His creations. The Rambam then categorizes all creation into three groups: physical things that change, permanent physical bodies like the stars and spheres, and purely spiritual forms without any physical matter, which are the angels. He explains that the physical descriptions of angels in the Torah are merely prophetic metaphors, as they have no physical form or weight. Instead, they are structured in ten spiritual levels, from the holy chayyot down to the ishim, who communicate with the prophets. The Rambam concludes by explaining that while these lofty spiritual beings have immense knowledge of Hashem, even the highest angel cannot fully comprehend the Creator, whose knowledge, life, and Essence are completely one.

The Rambam is teaching us a fundamental secret about how a Yid builds a real, living relationship with Hashem. We often think that love and fear of Hashem are emotions that just have to strike us like lightning, or that they are reserved only for the greatest tzaddikim. But the Torah commands every single one of us, "And you shall love... and you shall fear." How is this possible? The Rambam reveals the path: it comes through active contemplation. When you stop to look at the world, from the vastness of the stars to the intricate design of a tiny leaf, you are looking at the wisdom of the Creator.

This contemplation is a two-step movement of the soul. First, when you see the infinite wisdom and beauty in creation, your heart is pulled close; you are filled with a deep yearning and love to know Hashem. But in the very next moment, as you realize how small and limited you are standing before the Master of the universe, you naturally recoil in healthy awe and yiras Shamayim. True avodah requires both. We cannot serve Hashem properly with love alone, which can lead to familiarity, nor with fear alone, which can lead to coldness. We need the heartbeat of both running and returning.

Today, take just two minutes to step away from your busy schedule, look at something in Hashem's creation, even just the breath in your lungs or the sky outside your window, and think: "The Creator of the entire universe made this with infinite wisdom, and He wants a relationship with me."

תהלים • חמשה קאפיטלער

The Five Daily Kapitlach

CHAPTER PREVIEW

These are the five kapitlach of Tehillim said every single day: 32, 43, 83, 121, and 130, each set word for word with its English meaning. They are gathered here as one section so the whole daily Tehillim can be said and downloaded together.

All introductions and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

פרק ל"ב CHAPTER 32

לְדוֹד מִשְׁכִּיל אֲשֶׁרִי נָשׁוּי פֶשַׁע כָּסוּי חֲטָאָה:
 אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יִחְשַׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עֹז וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רַמְיָה:
 כִּי הִחֲרַשְׁתִּי בְּלוּ עֲצָמַי בְּשֹׁאֲגָתִי כָּל הַיּוֹם:
 כִּי יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה תִּכְבֵּד עָלַי יְדָה נִהַפָּה לְשׁוֹדִי בַּחֲרַבְנִי קִיץ סֵלָה:
 חֲטָאתִי אוֹדִיעָה וְעוֹנִי לֹא כִסִּיתִי אֲמַרְתִּי אוֹדָה עָלַי פֶשַׁעִי לִיהוָה וְאַתָּה נָשֵׂאתָ עֹז חֲטָאתִי סֵלָה:
 עַל זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל חֹסֶיד אֱלֹהִים לְעֵת מִצָּא רַק לְשֹׁטֵף מִיָּם רַבִּים אֱלֹהִים לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:
 אַתָּה סֵתֵר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרֶנִּי רָנִי פֶלֶט תְּסוּבְּבֵנִי סֵלָה:
 אֲשַׁכִּילָה וְאוֹרָה בְּדֶרֶךְ זוֹ תִּלְךָ אֵינִי עֹלָה עֵינַי:
 אֵל תִּהְיוּ כָּסוּס כְּפָרֶד אֵין הִבִּינִי בְּמִתְגַּוְרָסִין עֲדִיו לְבָלוֹם בַּל קָרַב אֱלֹהִים:
 רַבִּים מִכְּאוֹבִים לָרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בִּיהוָה חֹסֵד יְסוּבְּבֵנוּ:
 שִׁמְחוּ בִיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהִרְנִינוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

פרק מ"ג CHAPTER 43

שָׁפֹטֵנִי אֱלֹהִים וְרִיבָה רִיבִי מִגּוֹי לֹא חֹסֶיד מֵאִישׁ מִרְמָה וְעוֹלָה תִּפְלֹטֵנִי:
 כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים מְעוּזִי לָמָּה זִנְחִיתָנִי לָמָּה קִדַּר אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּלַחֲץ אוֹיֵב:
 שְׁלַח אוֹרָה וְאַמְתָּה הַמָּה יִנְחוּנִי יְבִיאוּנִי אֶל הַר קוֹדֶשְׁךָ וְאֶל מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ:
 וְאַבּוֹאָה אֶל מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶל אֵל שְׁמֹחַת גִּילִי וְאוֹדָה בְּכִנּוּר אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים:
 מִה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה נַפְשִׁי וּמִה תִּתְהַמֵּי עָלַי הוֹחִילִי לֵאלֹהִים כִּי עוֹד אוֹדְנוּ יְשׁוּעַת פָּנֶי וְאֱלֹהִים:

שִׁיר מְזִמּוֹר לְאַסָּף:

אֱלֹהִים אֵל דָּמִי לָךְ אֵל תַּחֲרַשׁ וְאֵל תִּשְׁקֹט אֵל:

כִּי הִנֵּה אוֹיְבֶיךָ יִהְיֶינָיִם וּמִשְׁנֵאֶיךָ נִשְׂאוּ רֹאשׁ:

עַל עֲמָךְ יַעֲרִימוּ סוֹד וְיִתְיַעֲצוּ עַל צְפוּנֶיךָ:

אָמְרוּ לָכֵן וְנִכְחָדֵם מִגּוֹי וְלֹא יִזְכָּר שֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד:

כִּי נִוָּעֲצוּ לֵב יַחֲדוּ עָלֶיךָ בְּרִית יִכְרֹתוּ:

אֱהִי אָדוֹם וְיִשְׁמַעְאֲלִים מוֹאֵב וְהַגָּרִים:

גָּבַל וְעֲמֹן וְעַמְלֶק פָּלְשֶׁת עִם יֹשְׁבֵי צוּר:

גַּם אֲשׁוּר נִלְוָה עִמָּם הָיוּ זְרוּעַ לִבְנֵי לוֹט סָלָה:

עֲשֵׂה לָהֶם כְּמִדְיָן כְּסִיסְרָא כְּיִבִּין בְּנַחַל קִישׁוֹן:

נִשְׁמְדוּ בְּעֵין דָּאֵר הָיוּ דָמָן לְאַדְמָה:

שִׁיתֵּמוּ נְדִיבֵמוֹ כְּעָרֵב וְכִזְאָב וְכִזְבַּח וְכִצְלָמְנָע כָּל גְּסִיכְמוֹ:

אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ נִירְשָׁה לָנוּ אֵת גְּאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:

אֱלֹהֵי שִׁיתֵּמוּ כַּגִּלְגַּל כְּקֶשׁ לִפְנֵי רוּחַ:

כְּאֵשׁ תִּבְעַר יָעַר וְכִלְהָבָה תִּלְהַט הָרִים:

כֵּן תִּרְדָּפֵם בְּסַעֲרָךְ וּבְסוּפָתְךָ תִּבְהַלֵּם:

מִלֵּא פְּנִיָּהֶם קִלּוֹן וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמָךְ יְהוָה:

יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהָלוּ עַדִּי עַד וַיִּחַפְּרוּ וַיֵּאבְדּוּ:

וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי אַתָּה שְׁמָךְ יְהוָה לִבְדָּדָה עֲלִיוֹן עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

שִׁיר לְמַעֲלוֹת אֲשָׁא עֵינֵי אֶל הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יָבֹא עֲזָרִי:

עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׁמִים וְאָרֶץ:

אֵל יִתֵּן לַמוֹט רִגְלָךְ אֵל יָנוּם שְׁמֶרְךָ:

הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:

יְהוָה שְׁמֶרְךָ יְהוָה צִלָּךְ עַל יַד מִיָּנָה:

יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא יִכָּכֶה וַיֵּרַח בִּלְיָלָהּ:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל רָע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמֹר צַאתְךָ וּבּוֹאְךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם:

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שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת מִמַּעַמְקִים קִרְאתֶיךָ יְהוָה:

אֲדֹנָי שְׁמֶעָה בְּקוֹלִי תַּהֲיֶינָה אָזְנֶיךָ קִשְׁבוּת לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנִי:

אִם עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר יְיָ אֲדֹנָי מִי יַעֲמֹד:

כִּי עָמַךְ הִסְלִיכָה לְמַעַן תִּגְרָא:

קוֹיֵתִי יְהוָה קִוְּתָה נַפְשִׁי וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחֵלֵתִי:

נַפְשִׁי לֹאֲדֹנָי מִשְׁמָרִים לְבָקֶר שׁוֹמְרִים לְבָקֶר:

יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵל יְהוָה כִּי עִם יְהוָה הַחֲסֹד וְהַרְפָּה עֲמוֹ פְּדוּת:

וְהוּא יַפְּדֶה אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנֹתָיו:

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

When you feel weighed down by your mistakes, do not keep silent or try to hide them. Open your heart to Hashem in honest confession, and then immediately shift your focus to absolute trust in His forgiveness and constant protection, knowing that He never slumbers and is always guarding your steps.

Today, the moment you feel a heavy heart or a sense of spiritual distance, stop what you are doing, speak to Hashem in your own words to acknowledge your mistake, and then say out loud: 'My help is from Hashem, who forgives and guards my soul.'