

דף יומי • הלל • דף נ"ז

Elucidated Talmud • Statement and Proof • Navy & Gold Edition • with Rashi

THE SUGYA

In this daf, we continue our learning of the halachos of tereifos, focusing on the kashrus of birds and animals that have suffered skeletal or limb injuries. We will look at the Gemara's discussion of broken legs in birds, the convergence of sinews in the thigh, and the halachic status of a dislocated femur or wing, which raises concerns about potential damage to the lungs.

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

EXPLANATION

באֲחוּזַת עֵינָיו,

He did this only **by a sleight of hand**, pretending to slaughter the child.

EXPLANATION

אִינְגִיד וְאִתְנַח,

The father, thinking his son was dead, **fainted and groaned**.

EXPLANATION

עוֹל (למעייניה) [מעייניה]

Through this sudden movement, **his intestines entered** back into his abdominal cavity,

EXPLANATION

וְחִיטָּיהָ לְכַרְסֶיהָ.

and the Roman doctor **sewed up his stomach**, and he recovered.

מִשְׁנָה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

נִשְׁתַּבְּרוּ רַגְלֶיהָ.

The Mishnah stated: If **its legs were broken**, the bird remains kosher.

גְּמָרָא GEMARA

STATEMENT

ההוא צנא דאִינקוֹרִי דַּאֲתֵאִי לְקַמִּיָּה דְרָבָא,

The Gemara relates: A certain basket of birds with broken legs came before Rava.

STATEMENT

בְּדָקִיָּה רָבָא בְּצוּמָת הַגִּידִין, וְאִכְשָׁרִיָּה.

Rava inspected each bird at the convergence of the sinews in the thigh, and when he found them intact, he declared it kosher.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב: שְׁמוּטָת יָד בְּבִהְמָה – כְּשֵׁרָה,

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: A dislocated foreleg in an animal is kosher;

STATEMENT

שְׁמוּטָת יָרֵךְ בְּבִהְמָה – טְרֵפָה,

a dislocated femur in an animal renders it a tereifa;

STATEMENT

שְׁמוּטָת יָרֵךְ בְּעוֹף – טְרֵפָה,

a dislocated femur in a bird renders it a tereifa;

STATEMENT

שְׁמוּטָת גָּף בְּעוֹף – טְרֵפָה, חֲזִישִׁין שְׂמָא נִיקְבָּהּ הֲרִיאָה.

a dislocated wing in a bird renders it a tereifa, because we are concerned lest the lung was perforated when the wing was torn from its place.

STATEMENT

וּשְׁמוּאֵל אָמַר: תִּיבְדֹק,

And Shmuel said: It should be inspected, and if the lung is undamaged, the bird is kosher.

STATEMENT

וְכֵן אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: תִּיבְדֹק.

And so said Rabbi Yochanan: It should be inspected.

STATEMENT

חֲזִיקְיָה אָמַר: אֵין רִיאָה לְעוֹף,

Chizkiyah said: A bird has no lung.

STATEMENT

וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: יֵישׁ לוֹ וְיִשְׁנָה כְּעֵלָה שֶׁל וּוְרֵד בֵּין אֲגַפִּים.

And Rabbi Yochanan said: It does have a lung, and it is like a rose petal in appearance, thin and red, located between the wings.

QUESTION

מאי "אין ריאה לעוף"?

The Gemara asks: **What** does Chizkiyah mean when he says "A bird has no lung"?

OBJECTION

אילימא דלית ליה כלל – והא קא חזינן דאית ליה!

If we say that it has none at all, but don't we see that it does have lungs?

ANSWER

אלא דלא מיטריף ביה,

Rather, say he means **that it is not rendered a tereifa** by a puncture in it.

OBJECTION

והתני לוי: טרפות שמונו חכמים בפכה – כנגדן בעוף,

But didn't Levi teach in a braisa: The tereifos that the Sages enumerated in an animal, their corresponding cases apply in a bird,

OBJECTION

יתר עליהן עוף נשפר העצם אף על פי שלא ניקב קרום של מוח!

and **in addition to them**, a bird is a tereifa if the bone of the skull was broken, even though the membrane of the brain was **not perforated**! Thus, a punctured lung must also render a bird a tereifa.

ANSWER

אלא, אין לו לא לינפל ולא ליחמר.

Rather, Chizkiyah means: **It has no law of falling, and no law of singeing**; we do not fear its lungs were damaged if it fell or was in a fire.

EXPLANATION

מאי טעמא? אמר רב חנה: הואיל ורוב צלעותיה מגינות עליה.

What is the reason? Rav Chana said: Since the majority of its ribs protect it, the lung is safe from such impacts.

OBJECTION

והא מדאמר רבי יוחנן: ייש לו, וישנה פעלה של וורד בין אגפיים – מקלל דחזקה סבר דלית ליה!

The Gemara objects: But from the fact that Rabbi Yochanan says: It does have a lung, and it is like a rose petal between the wings, by inference, Chizkiyah holds that it has no lung at all!

RESOLUTION

אלא אמרי במערבא משמיה דרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא: מדכריו של פריכי ניכר שאינו פקי בתרגולין.

Rather, they say in the West, Eretz Yisrael, in the name of Rabbi Yosei b'rabbi Chanina: From the words of the Great Scholar, Chizkiyah, it is apparent that he is not familiar with chickens, as he indeed meant that they have no lungs.

STATEMENT

אמר רב הונא אמר רב: שמוטת ירך בעוף כשרה.

Rav Huna said that Rav said: A dislocated femur in a bird is kosher.

QUESTION

אמר ליה רבה בר רב הונא לרב הונא: והא רבנן דאיתו מפומבדיתא אמרו רב יהודה משמיה דרב
אמר: שמוטת ירך בעוף טרפה!

Rabba bar Rav Huna said to Rav Huna: But the Rabbis who came from Pumbedita said that Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: A dislocated femur in a bird is a tereifa!

ANSWER

אמר ליה: ברי, נהרא נהרא ופשטיה.

He said to him: My son, every river has its course; different places follow different rulings of Rav according to their local custom.

STATEMENT

אזל רבי אבא, אשכחיה לרב ירמיה בר אבא דקא בדיק בצומת הגידין.

Rabbi Abba went and found Rav Yirmeya bar Abba who was inspecting birds at the convergence of the sinews.

QUESTION

אמר ליה: למה ליה למר כולי האי? והא רב הונא אמר רב: שמוטת ירך בעוף כשרה!

He said to him: Why does the Master need all this trouble? But didn't Rav Huna say that Rav said: A dislocated femur in a bird is kosher? If the whole thigh being dislocated is kosher, surely a defect in the sinews is kosher!

ANSWER

אמר ליה: אנא מתניתין ידענא: בהמה שנתקו רגליה מן הארפוכה ולמטה כשרה, מן הארפוכה
ולמעלה פסולה, וכן שניטל צומת הגידין, ואמר רב עליה: וכן בעוף.

He said to him: I know the Mishnah: An animal whose legs were severed from the knee-joint and below is kosher, from the knee-joint and above is unfit as a tereifa, and likewise one whose convergence of sinews was removed is a tereifa; and Rav said on this: And likewise in a bird.

OBJECTION

אי הכי, קשיא דרב אדרב!

Rabbi Abba said: If so, there is a difficulty of Rav's ruling against Rav's other ruling!

STATEMENT

אישתיק.

Rav Yirmeya bar Abba remained silent.

EXPLANATION

אמר ליה: דלמא שני ליה בין שמוטה לחתוכה?

Rabbi Abba said to him: Perhaps there is a difference for him, Rav, between a dislocated femur and a severed femur?

ANSWER

אמר ליה: ואת מפרשת שמעתתיה דרב? בפירוש אמר רב: שמוטה – פשרה, חתוכה – פסולה.

He said to him: And are you interpreting Rav's teachings on your own? Rav explicitly said: A dislocated femur is kosher, a severed femur is unfit.

EXPLANATION

ואל תתמה, שהרי חתוכה מפאן ומתה, חתוכה מפאן וחיתה.

And do not wonder at this distinction, for behold, if one cuts it here, in one place, it dies, but if one cuts it there, in another place, it lives.

STATEMENT

כי סליק רבי אבא, אשכחיה לרבי זירא דיתיב וקאמר: אמר רב הונא אמר רב: שמוטת ירה בעוף טרפה.

When Rabbi Abba went up to Eretz Yisrael, he found Rabbi Zeira sitting and saying: Rav Huna said that Rav said: A dislocated femur in a bird is a tereifa.

OBJECTION

אמר ליה: חיי דמר, מיומא דסליק מר להכא הנה לן פתחון פה קמיה דרב הונא ושאי לניה, ואמר לן: שמוטת ירה בעוף כשרה.

He said to him: By the Master's life! Since the day the Master came up here, we had the opportunity to speak before Rav Huna and we asked him, and he said to us: A dislocated femur in a bird is kosher.

STATEMENT

ואשפחתיה נמי לרבי ירמיה בר אבא דיתיב וקא בדיק בצומת הגידין, ואקשי ליה: לא סבר לה מר הא דאמר רב הונא אמר רב: שמוטת ירה בעוף כשרה?

And I also found Rabbi Yirmeya bar Abba sitting and inspecting the convergence of the sinews, and I challenged him: Does the Master not hold of that which Rav Huna said in the name of Rav: A dislocated femur in a bird is kosher?

STATEMENT

אמר לי: אנא מתניתין ידענא: בהמה שנחתכו רגליה, מן הארכופה ולמטה – פשרה, מן הארכופה ולמעלה – פסולה, וכן שניטל צומת הגידין, ואמר רב עלה: וכן בעוף.

He said to me: I know the Mishnah: An animal whose legs were severed, from the knee-joint and below is kosher, from the knee-joint and above is unfit, and likewise one whose convergence of sinews was removed, and Rav said on this: And likewise in a bird.

STATEMENT

וַאֲמַרְי לֵיהּ: אִי הָכִי, קִשְׁיָא דְרַב אֲדַרְבּ! וְאִשְׁתִּיק, וְדִלְמָא שְׁנֵי לֵיהּ לָרַב בֵּין שְׁמוּטָה
לְחֲתוּכָה?

And I said to him: If so, there is a difficulty of Rav's ruling against Rav's other ruling! He was silent, and I challenged him: But perhaps there is a difference for Rav between a dislocated femur and a severed femur?

STATEMENT

וַאֲמַר לִי: וְאֵת מְפָרְשֵׁת שְׁמַעְתִּיהָ דְרַב? בְּפִירוּשׁ אָמַר רַב: שְׁמוּטָה – כְּשֶׁרָה, חֲתוּכָה – פְּסוּלָה.

And he said to me: And are you interpreting Rav's teaching on your own? Rav explicitly said: A dislocated femur is kosher, a severed femur is unfit.

QUESTION

וְאֵת, מָה בְּיָדְךָ?

Rabbi Abba then asked Rabbi Zeira: And you, what is in your hand? What did you hear?

ANSWER

הָכִי אָמַר רַב חִיַּיא בַר אֲשִׁי אָמַר רַב: שְׁמוּטָת יָרֵךְ בְּעוֹף טֵרֶפָה,

He replied: This is what Rav Chiyya bar Ashi said that Rav said: A dislocated femur in a bird is a tereifa,

STATEMENT

וְכֵן אָמַר רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב בַּר אִידִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: שְׁמוּטָת יָרֵךְ בְּעוֹף טֵרֶפָה.

and so said Rabbi Yaakov bar Idi that Rabbi Yochanan said: A dislocated femur in a bird is a tereifa.

STATEMENT

וַאֲמַר רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב בַּר אִידִי: אֵילָמַלִּי הָיָה רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בְּאַתְרָא דְּאֹרֻוּ בַּהּ חֲבֵרוֹתָא לְהִתִּירָא, לָא פְּרִיכִיס.

And Rabbi Yaakov bar Idi said: If Rabbi Yochanan had been in the place where the colleagues ruled leniently, he would not have objected to their ruling.

PROOF

דָּאֲמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא אָמַר רַבִּי: שְׁמוּטָת יָרֵךְ בְּעוֹף כְּשֶׁרָה.

For Rabbi Chanina said that Rabbi said: A dislocated femur in a bird is kosher.

PROOF

וְתַרְגְּמוּלֵת הָיְתָה לוֹ לְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא שְׁנַשְׁמָטָה יָרֵךְ שְׁלָהּ, וְהִבִּיאָהּ לִפְנֵי רַבִּי וְהִתִּירָהּ לוֹ,

And Rabbi Chanina had a chicken whose femur was dislocated, and he brought it before Rabbi, and he permitted it to him,

PROOF

וּמִלְחָה רַבִּי חֲנִינָא, וְהָיָה מוֹרִי בַּהּ הִלְכָּה לְתַלְמִידִים: זֶה הִתִּיר לִי רַבִּי, זֶה הִתִּיר לִי רַבִּי.

and Rabbi Chanina salted it to preserve it, and he would teach the halachah to the students: This is what Rabbi permitted to me, this is what Rabbi permitted to me.

RULING

וְלִית הַלְכָתָא כָּכָל הַנִּי שְׁמַעְתָּתָא, אֶלָּא כִּי הָא דְשָׂאֵל רַבִּי יוֹסִי בֶּן נְהוֹרַאי אֶת רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי:

The Gemara notes: And the halachah is not like all these lenient teachings, but rather like this which Rabbi Yosei ben Nehorai asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi:

QUESTION

קְדִירַת קֶנֶה בְּכַמָּה?

How much of a puncture in the windpipe renders an animal a tereifa?

ANSWER

אָמַר לוֹ: מִשְׁנָה שְׁלֵמָה שְׁנִינוּ, עַד כַּאֲסָר הָאִיטָלְקִי.

He said to him: We learned a complete Mishnah: Up to the size of an Italian issar.

OBJECTION

אָמַר לוֹ: וְהֵלָא רַחֵל אַחַת הָיְתָה בְּשִׁכּוֹנֵתֵנוּ שְׁנִקְדָּר קֶנֶה שָׁלָה, וַעֲשׂוּ לָהּ קְרוּמִין שֶׁל קֶנֶה וְחָיְתָה!

He said to him: But was there not a certain ewe in our neighborhood whose windpipe was punctured more than that, and they made for her a tube of reed and she lived?

ANSWER

אָמַר לוֹ: וְעַל דָּא אַתָּ סְמִיךְ? וְהוּא הִלְכָה רוּוחַת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: שְׁמוּטַת יָרֵךְ בְּעוֹף טֵרֶפָה,

He said to him: And on this you rely? But is there not a widespread halachah in Israel: A dislocated femur in a bird is a tereifa,

EXPLANATION

וְתִרְגְּמוּלֵת הָיְתָה לוֹ לְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן חֲלַפְתָּא שְׁנִשְׁמָטָה יָרֵךְ שָׁלָה, וַעֲשׂוּ לָהּ שְׁפוּפֶרֶת שֶׁל קֶנֶה וְחָיְתָה!

and Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta had a chicken whose femur was dislocated, and they made for her a tube of reed and she lived! Yet we still rule it is a tereifa.

EXPLANATION

אֶלָּא מֵאִי אֵית לָהּ לְמִימַר: תּוֹךְ שְׁנָיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ הָיָה, הִכָּא נָמִי תּוֹךְ שְׁנָיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ הָיָה.

Rather, what have you to say? It was within twelve months of the injury that she lived, but she would not have survived a full year; here too, it was within twelve months.

STATEMENT

אָמְרוּ עָלָיו עַל רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן חֲלַפְתָּא שֶׁעֲסָקוֹ בְּדִבְרֵי הָיָה,

They said about Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta that he was an experimenter in matters of nature,

EXPLANATION

וְהָיָה עוֹשֶׂה דְּבָר לְהוֹצִיא מִלְּבוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה, שֶׁהָיָה רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אֹמֵר: אִם נִיטְלָה הַנוּצָה פְּסוּלָה.

and he would do things to remove from the heart of Rabbi Yehuda his opinion, for Rabbi Yehuda would say: If the feathers were removed, the bird is unfit.

PROOF

וְתַרְגּוּלוֹת הָיְתָה לוֹ לְרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן חַלְפַּתָּא שְׁנֵיטְלָה נוּצָה שָׁלָה, וְהִנִּיחָה בְּתֵנּוֹר, וְטָלָה עָלֶיהָ בְּמַטְלִית שֶׁל טָרְסִיִּים, וְגִידְלָה כְּנָפֶיִם הָאֲחֵרוֹנִים יוֹתֵר מִן הָרִאשׁוֹנִים.

And Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta had a chicken whose feathers were removed, and he placed it in a warm oven, and wrapped it in a weaver's cloth, and it grew new feathers that were even larger than the first ones.

QUESTION

וְדִלְמָא קָסְבֵּר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה טְרֵפָה מְשַׁבַּחַת?

The Gemara asks: But perhaps Rabbi Yehuda holds that a tereifa can improve and heal?

ANSWER

אִם כֵּן, בְּמִיּוֹדֵי דְּמִיטְרָפָא בֵּה – הִגְדִּילָה כְּנָפֶיִם הָאֲחֵרוֹנִים יוֹתֵר מִן הָרִאשׁוֹנִים!?

If so, in the very thing that renders it a tereifa, would it grow new feathers larger than the first ones? This proves it fully recovered.

QUESTION

מֵאִי עֲסָקוֹן בְּדִבְרֵיָם?

The Gemara asks: What is meant by saying he was an experimenter in matters?

EXPLANATION

אָמַר רַב מֶשֶׁרֶשִׁיָּא, דְּכֹתִיב: "לֵךְ אֶל נְמָלָה עֲצֹל רְאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וַחֲכָם, אֲשֶׁר אֵין לָהּ קָצִין שִׁטֵּר וּמִשֵּׁל, תִּכְיֶין בְּקִיץ לֶחֱמָה".

Rav Mesharshiya said: As it is written: "Go to the ant, sluggard; see her ways and grow wise, which has no chief, officer, or ruler, yet she prepares her bread in the summer."

EXPLANATION

אָמַר: אֵיזִיל אִיחֲזִי אִי וְדַאי הוּא דִּלִּית לֵהוּ מֶלְכָּא!

Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta said: I will go and see if it is true that they have no king.

EXPLANATION

אִזֵּל בְּתַקוּפַת תַּמּוּז, פְּרָסִיָּה לְגַלְיָמִיָּה אַקִּינָא דְּשׁוּמְשָׁמִי.

He went during the Tammuz solstice and spread his cloak over an anthill.

EXPLANATION

נִפְק אֶתָּא חַד מִינֵיהּ, אֶתְנַח בֵּיה סִימָנָא.

One of them came out, and he placed a mark on it.

EXPLANATION

על, אמר להו: "נפל טולא".

The ant entered and said to them: "Shade has fallen."

EXPLANATION

נפקו ואתו, דלייה לגלימיה, נפל שמשא.

They all came out, and he lifted his cloak, and the sun beat down.

EXPLANATION

נפלו עליה וקטליה.

They fell upon that ant and killed it for lying.

EXPLANATION

אמר: שמע מינה לית להו מלכא, דאי אית להו הרמנא דמלכא לא ליבעו.

He said: Learn from this that they have no king, for if they had one, would they not require the king's permission to execute it?

QUESTION

אמר ליה רב אחא בריה דרבא לרב אשי: ודלמא מלכא הוה בהדיהו?

Rav Acha the son of Rava said to Rav Ashi: But perhaps the king was with them and gave permission?

QUESTION

אי נמי, הרמנא דמלכא הוה נקיטי?

Or perhaps they held a standing royal decree to kill liars?

QUESTION

אי נמי בין מלכא למלכא הוה, דכתיב: "בנימים ההם אין מלך בישראל איש הישר בעיניו יעשה"?

Or perhaps it was during an interregnum between kings, as it is written: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes"?

ANSWER

אלא, סמוך אהימנותא דשלמה.

Rather, rely on the trustworthiness of Shlomo HaMelech, who stated it as a fact.

STATEMENT

אמר רב הונא: סימן לטרפה – שנים עשר חדש.

Rav Huna said: The sign of a tereifa is that it cannot live more than twelve months.

OBJECTION

מיתיבי: סימן לטרפה – כל שאינה יולדת.

The Gemara raises an objection: The sign of a tereifa is that it does not give birth.

STATEMENT

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר: משפחת והולכת – בידוע שהיא כשרה, מתנוונה והולכת – בידוע שהיא טרפה.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: If it continues to improve, it is known to be kosher; if it continues to waste away, it is known to be a tereifa.

STATEMENT

רבי אומר: סימן לטרפה – שלשים יום.

Rabbi says: The sign of a tereifa is thirty days of survival.

OBJECTION

אמרו לו: והלא הרבה מתקיימות שתים שלש שנים!

They said to him: But do not many tereifos survive two or three years? In any case, twelve months is not mentioned.

ANSWER

תנאי היא, דתנא: ובגלגלת, עד שיש בה נקב אחד ארוה, אפילו נקבים הרבה מצטרפים למלא מקדח.

The Gemara answers: It is a dispute of Tannaim, as it is taught in a braisa: And regarding the skull, it is a tereifa if there is a single long hole, or even many holes that combine to the size of a drill-hole.

PROOF

אמר רבי יוסי בן המשולם: מעשה בענבול, באחד שנפחתה גלגלתו, ועשו לו חידוק של קרויה וחייה.

Rabbi Yosei ben HaMeshullam said: There was an incident in Ein Bul of a person whose skull was fractured, and they made for him a plate of gourd and he lived.

ANSWER

אמר לו רבי שמעון בן אלעזר: משם ראיה? ימות החמה היה, וכיון שעברו עליו ימות הצנה מיד מת.

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said to him: Is there a proof from there? It was during the summer, and as soon as the cold season came upon him, he died immediately. Thus, we see a tereifa can live for a short time but not a full year.

RULING

אמר רב אחא בר יעקב, הלכה: טרפה יולדת ומשפחת.

Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: The halachah is that a tereifa can give birth and can improve.

STATEMENT

אמר אמימר: הני ביעי דטרפה

SUMMARY

The daf begins with Rava inspecting a basket of birds with broken legs, ruling them kosher after verifying that the convergence of sinews remained intact. We then learn of a dispute regarding a dislocated femur or wing in a bird; while some Sages rule it a tereifa due to the fear of a punctured lung, others require an inspection of the lung. This leads to a discussion about the nature of a bird's lungs, with Hizkiyya and Rabbi Yochanan debating their physical reality and halachic vulnerability to falls or fire. Finally, the Gemara explores the apparent contradictions in Rav's rulings regarding a dislocated versus a severed femur, clarifying that different injuries to the leg carry distinct halachic consequences.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

In today's daf, we see the beautiful and meticulous care our Chachamim took to understand the physical reality of Hashem's creations. Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta went so far as to conduct experiments with ants and chickens to verify the reality of the physical world and how it aligns with the words of the Torah and Mishlei. He did not rely on hearsay; he wanted to see the truth of the Aibershter's wisdom with his own eyes.

This teaches us a profound lesson in our own avodah. Torah is not a detached, abstract theory. It is the blueprint of reality. When we learn, we must look at the world around us through the lens of the Torah, seeking to find Hashem's wisdom in every detail of our daily lives, from the smallest insect to the food on our table.

Too often, we walk through life on autopilot, missing the wonders of the Creator that are right in front of us. If we look closer, with the curiosity of our Sages, we will find that everything in creation is screaming out the greatness of Hashem.

Today, take one minute to look closely at something in Hashem's creation—a leaf, a insect, or even the intricate design of your own hand—and consciously thank the Aibershter for the wisdom He put into the world.

הלכות יסודי התורה • פרק רביעי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam takes us on a deep journey into the physical makeup of the world below the sky, showing us how Hashem created everything from four basic elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. We will learn how these elements combine to form every single physical thing in our world, from simple stones to the complex body of a human being, each with its own unique nature and balance of warmth, cold, dryness, and moisture.

We will also see how these elements are in a constant state of movement and change, always returning to their roots and shifting from one to another. Through understanding this beautiful, orderly cycle of creation, a Yid can come to a profound appreciation of Hashem's wisdom and the wondrous way He sustains the universe every single moment.

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

הלכה א

Halacha 1 • The Four Elements Composing All Creations Below the Sky

ארבעה גופים הללו שהם אש ורוח ומים וארץ

These four bodies, which are fire, and wind, and water, and earth,

הם יסודות כל הנבראים למטה מן הרקיע.

they are the foundations of all the creations below the sky.

וכל שיהיה מאדם ומבהמה ועוף ורמש ודג

And everything that exists, from man, and from beast, and fowl, and crawling creature, and fish,

וצמח ומתכת ואבנים טובות ומרגליות ושאר אבני בנין

and plant, and metal, and precious stones, and pearls, and other building stones,

והרים וגושי עפר

and mountains, and lumps of earth—

הכל גלמן מחבר מארבעה יסודות הללו.

everything, their matter is composed of these four foundations.

נמצאו כל הגופים שלמטה מן הרקיע חוץ מארבעה יסודות האלו

It turns out that all the bodies that are below the sky, except for these four foundations,

מחברים מגלמן וצורה.

are composed of matter and form,

וגלם שלקם מחבר מארפעה יסודות האלו.

and their matter is composed of these four foundations.

אבל כל אחד מארפעה היסודות אינו מחבר אלא מגלם וצורה בלבד:

But each one of the four foundations is not composed except of matter and form alone.

הלכה ב

Halacha 2. The Four Elements and the Composition of All Physical Bodies

דרך האש והרוח להיות מהלכם ממטה מטבור הארץ למעלה כלפי הרקיע.

The way of the fire and the wind is to be their movement from below, from the center of the earth, upward toward the sky.

ודרך המים והארץ להיות מהלכם מתחת הרקיע למטה עד לאמצע.

And the way of the water and the earth is to be their movement from under the sky downward until the middle,

שאמצע הרקיע הוא המטה שאין למטה ממנו.

for the middle of the sky, it is the bottom, that there is no lower than it.

ואין הליוכם לא בדעתם ולא בחפצם אלא מנהג שנקבע בהן וטבע שנטבע בהן.

And there is no their movement, not by their knowledge and not by their will, but a pattern that was established in them and a nature that was imprinted in them.

טבע האש חם ויבש והוא קל מכלם.

The nature of the fire is hot and dry, and it is light of all of them;

והרוח חם ולח.

and the wind is hot and moist;

והמים קרים ולחים.

and the water is cold and moist;

והארץ יבשה וקרה. והיא כבדה מכלם

and the earth is dry and cold, and it is heavy of all of them;

והמים קלים ממנה לפיכך נמצאים למעלה על הארץ.

and the water is lighter than it, therefore they are found above on the earth;

והרוח קל מן המים לפיכך הוא מרחף על פני המים.

and the wind is lighter than the water, therefore it hovers over the surface of the water;

וְהָאֵשׁ קָלָה מִן הָרוּחַ.

and the fire is lighter than the wind.

וּמִפְנֵי שֶׁהֵם יְסוּדוֹת לְכָל גּוּפִים שֶׁתַּחַת הָרָקִיעַ

And because that they are foundations for all bodies that are under the sky,

יִמָּצָא כָּל גּוּף וְגוּף מֵאָדָם וּבְהֵמָה וְחַיָּה וְעוֹף וְדָג וְצִמָּח וּמִתְּכַת וְאֶבֶן גְּלִמּוֹ מִחֶבֶר מֵאֵשׁ וְרוּחַ וּמַיִם וְעָפָר.

will be found every body and body, from man, and animal, and beast, and bird, and fish, and plant, and metal, and stone, its physical matter combined from fire, and wind, and water, and dust.

וְאַרְבַּעֲתָן יִתְעַרְבוּ בְּיַחַד וְיִשְׁתַּנּוּ כָּל אֶחָד מֵהֶם בְּעֵת הָעֲרוּב

And the four of them mix together and change, each one of them at the time of the mixing,

עַד שֶׁיִּמָּצָא הַמִּחְבָּר מֵאַרְבַּעֲתָן אֵינוֹ דוֹמֶה לְאֶחָד מֵהֶן כְּשֶׁהוּא לְבֵדּוֹ.

until that is found the combined from the four of them is not similar to one of them when it is alone.

וְאֵין בַּמִּעְרָב מֵהֶן אֶפְלוֹ חֵלֶק אֶחָד שֶׁהוּא אֵשׁ בְּפָנֶי עֲצָמוֹ אוֹ מַיִם בְּפָנֶי עֲצָמָן אוֹ אֶרֶץ בְּפָנֶי עֲצָמָה אוֹ רוּחַ בְּפָנֶי עֲצָמָה

And there is not in the mixture of them even part one that is fire by itself, or water by themselves, or earth by itself, or wind by itself,

אֲלָא הַכֹּל נִשְׁתַּנּוּ וְנַעֲשׂוּ גּוּף אֶחָד.

but the whole changed and became body one.

וְכָל גּוּף וְגוּף הַמִּחְבָּר מֵאַרְבַּעֲתָן יִמָּצָא בּוֹ קָר וְחֹם לַח וְיָבֵשׁ כְּאֶחָד.

And every body and body the combined from the four of them will be found in it cold and heat, moisture and dryness as one.

אֲבָל יֵשׁ מֵהֶם גּוּפִים שֶׁיִּהְיֶה בָּהֶם חֲזָקָה מִיְסוּד הָאֵשׁ כְּמוֹ בַּעֲלֵי נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה. לְפִיכָךְ יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶם חֹם יָתֵר.

But there are of them bodies that there will be in them strength from the element of the fire, like possessors of soul living, therefore will appear in them the heat more.

וְיֵשׁ מֵהֶן גּוּפִין שֶׁיִּהְיֶה בָּהֶן חֲזָקָה מִיְסוּד הָאֶרֶץ כְּמוֹ הָאֲבָנִים. לְפִיכָךְ יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶם הֵיכָשׁ הַרְבֵּה.

And there are of them bodies that there will be in them strength from the element of the earth, like the stones, therefore will appear in them the dryness much.

וְיֵשׁ מֵהֶן גּוּפִין שֶׁיִּהְיֶה בָּהֶן חֲזָקָה מִיְסוּד הַמַּיִם. לְפִיכָךְ יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶם הַלֵּחַ יָתֵר.

And there are of them bodies that there will be in them strength from the element of the water, therefore will appear in them the moisture more.

ועל הדרך הזה ימצא גוף חם יותר מגוף אחר חם. וגוף יבש יותר מגוף אחר יבש.

And on the way this will be found a body hot more than a body another hot, and a body dry more than a body another dry.

וכן ימצאו גופים שיראה בהן הקר בלבד. וגופים יראה בהן הלח בלבד.

And so will be found bodies that will appear in them the cold alone, and bodies will appear in them the moisture alone.

וגופים יראה בהן הקר והיבש כאחד בשוה. או הקר והלח כאחד בשוה. או החם והיבש כאחד בשוה. או החם והלח כאחד בשוה.

And bodies will appear in them the cold and the dryness as one equally, or the cold and the moisture as one equally, or the heat and the dryness as one equally, or the heat and the moisture as one equally.

לפי רב היסוד שהיה בעקר התערבת יראה מעשה אותו היסוד וטבעו בגוף המערב:

According to the majority of the element that was in the essence of the mixture, will appear the action of that element and its nature in the body the mixed.

הלכה ג

Halacha 3 · The Ultimate Decomposition of All Combined Entities into the Four Elements

וכל המקצר מארבעה יסודות אלו

And every entity combined from these four elements

הוא נפרד בסוף.

it separates in the end and decomposes.

יש שהוא נפרד לאחר ימים אחדים.

There is that it separates after a few days,

ויש שהוא נפרד לאחר שנים רבות.

and there is that it separates after many years.

וכל שנתחבר מהם

And everything that was combined from them,

אי אפשר שלא יפרד להן.

it is impossible that it will not separate into them.

אפלו תהב והאדם

Even the gold and the ruby,

אי אפשר שלא יפסד ויחזר ליסודותיו.

it is impossible that it will not decompose and return to its elements.

וישוב מקצתו לאש.

And a portion of it will return to the fire,

ומקצתו למים.

and a portion of it to the water,

ומקצתו לרוח.

and a portion of it to the wind,

ומקצתו לארץ:

and a portion of it to the earth.

הלכה ד

Halacha 4 · The Return of All Decomposing Entities to the Four Elements

הואיל וכל הנפסד יפרד ליסודות אלו

Since, indeed, every decomposing entity will separate eventually to these four basic elements,

למה נאמר לאדם "ואל עפר תשוב".

why was it said to Adam in the Torah, "and to dust you shall return"?

לפי שרב בנינו מן העפר.

This is because most of his structure is made from the dust.

ולא כל הנפסד כשיפסד מיד יחזר לארבעה היסודות.

And not every decomposing entity, when it decomposes, immediately will return to the four elements directly.

אלא יפסד ויחזר לדבר אחר

Rather, it decomposes and returns to another thing,

ודבר אחר לדבר אחר

and that another thing decomposes and turns to yet another thing,

וסוף הדברים יחזר ליסודות

and at the end of the things, it will return to the basic elements.

ונמצאו כל הדברים חוזרין חלילה:

And thus all things are found returning in a cycle.

הלכה ה

Halacha 5 · The Constant Transformation of the Four Elements into One Another

ארבעה יסודות האלו משתנים זה לזה תמיד בכל יום ובכל שעה

These four elements change into one another constantly, every day and every hour,

מקצתן לא כל גופן.

but only a portion of them, not their entire body.

כיצד.

How so?

מקצת הארץ הקרובה מן המים משתנית ומתפוררת ונעשית מים.

A portion of the earth which is close to the water changes and crumbles and becomes water.

וכן מקצת המים הסמוכים לרוח משתנים ומתמסמסין והוין רוח.

And so, a portion of the water which is close to the wind changes and dissolves and becomes wind.

וכן הרוח מקצתו הסמוך לאש משתנה ומתחולל ונעשה אש.

And so the wind, a portion of it which is close to the fire, changes and transforms and becomes fire.

וכן האש מקצתה הסמוך לרוח מתחולל משתנה ומתכנס ונעשה רוח.

And so the fire, a portion of it which is close to the wind, transforms, changes, and condenses and becomes wind.

וכן הרוח מקצתו הסמוך למים משתנה ומתכנס ונעשה מים.

And so the wind, a portion of it which is close to the water, changes and condenses and becomes water.

וכן המים מקצתו הסמוך לארץ משתנה ומתכנס ונעשה ארץ.

And so the water, a portion of it which is close to the earth, changes and condenses and becomes earth.

ושנוי זה מעט מעט ולפי ארך הימים.

And this change happens little by little, and over the course of time.

ואין כל היסוד משתנה עד שיעשה כל המים רוח או כל הרוח אש.

And not all of the element changes, so that all of the water becomes wind, or all of the wind becomes fire,

שאי אפשר שיבטל אחד מן היסודות הארבעה.

for it is impossible that one of the four elements should be completely nullified.

אֶלָּא מִקְצֵת יִשְׁתַּנֶּה מֵאֵשׁ לְרוּחַ וּמִקְצֵת יִשְׁתַּנֶּה מֵרוּחַ לְאֵשׁ.

Rather, a portion will change from fire to wind, and a portion will change from wind to fire.

וְכֵן בֵּין כָּל אֶחָד וְחֶבְרֹו מֵצֵא הַשְּׁנוּי בֵּין אַרְבַּעַתָּן וְחֹזְרוֹת חֲלִילָה לְעוֹלָם:

And so between each one and its fellow, this change is found among the four of them, and they return in a cycle forever.

הִלְכָה ו

Halacha 6 · The Combination of the Elements and the Bestowal of Form by the Tenth Angel

וְשְׁנוּי זֶה יִהְיֶה בְּסִבִּיבַת הַגִּלְגָּל

And this change in the elements will be brought about by the revolution of the sphere,

וּמִסִּבִּיבָתוֹ יִתְחַבְּרוּ אַרְבַּעַתָּן

and from its revolution, the four of them will combine together,

וְיִהְיֶה מֵהֶן שְׁאֵר גְּלִמֵּי בְּנֵי אָדָם

and from them will be formed the rest of the physical matter of the bodies of sons of man,

וְנִפְשׁ חַיָּה צֶמַח וְאֶבֶן וּמִתְכֶּתֶת.

and the soul of the beast, as well as the physical matter of plant, and stone, and metal.

וְהָאֵל נוֹתֵן לְכָל גֶּלֶם וְגֶלֶם צוּרָה רְאוּיָה לוֹ

And God gives to every matter and matter a spiritual form appropriate to it,

עַל יְדֵי מַלְאָךְ הָעֲשִׂירִי

by the hands of the tenth angel,

שֶׁהִיא הַצּוּרָה הַנִּקְרֶאת אִישִׁים:

which is the level of angelic form that is called Ishim.

הִלְכָה ז

Halacha 7 · The Connection Between Matter and Form and the Perception of Formless Beings

לְעוֹלָם אֵין אֶתָּה רוֹאֶה גֶלֶם בְּלֹא צוּרָה אוֹ צוּרָה בְּלֹא גֶלֶם.

Forever, you do not see matter without form, or form without matter in the physical world, as they are always bound together.

אֶלָּא לֵב הָאָדָם הוּא שֶׁמַּחֲלֵק גּוּף הַנִּמָּצֵא בְּדַעְתּוֹ

Rather, the heart of man, meaning his intellect, is that which divides and separates a physical body that is found before him, doing so in his mind,

וידע שהוא מחבר מגלם וצורה.

and knows that it is composed of matter and form, understanding that these are two distinct conceptual components.

וידע שיש שם גופים שגלמם מחבר מארבעת היסודות.

And the intellect knows that there are bodies in the lower world whose matter is composed of the four elements, fire, wind, water, and earth;

וגופים שגלמם פשוט ואינו מחבר מגלם אחר.

and there are celestial bodies whose matter is simple and is not composed of any other matter, meaning they do not consist of the four elements and cannot change form.

והצורות שאין להם גלם אינן נראין לעין

And the forms that do not have matter at all, such as the angels, are not seen by the physical eye,

אלא בעין הלב הן ידועין.

but with the eye of the heart, through intellectual comprehension, they are known and understood;

כמו שידענו אדון הכל בלא ראית עין:

just as we know the Master of everything, Hashem, without seeing of the eye, but rather through the clear recognition of our mind.

הלכה ח

Halacha 8 · The Form of Man and the Distinction Between Soul and Physical Appearance

נפש כל בשר היא צורתו שנתן לו האל

The soul of all flesh is its form which God gave to it,

והדעת היתרה המצויה בנפשו של אדם

and the extra intellect that is found in the soul of man

היא צורת האדם השלם בדעתו.

is the form of the man who is perfect in his knowledge.

ועל צורה זו נאמר בתורה נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו

And concerning this form it is said in the Torah, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,"

כלומר שתהיה לו צורה היודעת ומשגת הדעות שאין להם גלם

meaning that there will be to him a form that knows and comprehends the ideas that do not have a physical body,

כְּמוֹ הַמַּלְאָכִים שֶׁהֵם צוּרָה בְּלֹא גֶלֶם עַד שֶׁיִּדְמָה לָהֶן.

like the angels who are form without a physical body, until he resembles them.

וְאֵינוֹ אוֹמֵר עַל צוּרָה זֹאת הַנִּכְּפֶּרֶת לְעֵינַיִם

And it does not speak concerning this form which is recognized by the eyes,

שֶׁהִיא הַפֶּה וְהַחֹטֶם וְהַלְּסָתוֹת וְשָׁאֵר רֶשֶׁם הַגּוּף

which is the mouth and the nose and the cheeks and the rest of the outline of the body,

שֶׁזֶהוּ תֵּאֵר שְׁמָהּ.

for this physical appearance, "appearance" is its name.

וְאֵינָהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַמְּצוּיָה לְכָל נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

And it is not the soul that is found in every living soul,

שֶׁבָּהּ אוֹכֵל וְש�וֹתָהּ וּמוֹלִיד וּמְרַגֵּשׁ וּמַחֲרֵהָ.

with which it eats and drinks and reproduces and feels and thinks.

אֲלֹא הַדַּעַה שֶׁהִיא צוּרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ

Rather, it is the intellect, which is the form of the soul,

וּבְצוּרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַכְּתוּב מְדַבֵּר בְּצִלְמֵנוּ כְּדַמוּתֵנוּ.

and concerning the form of the soul the verse speaks when it says, "in our image, in our likeness."

וּפַעַמִּים רַבּוֹת תִּקְרָא זֹאת הַצּוּרָה נֶפֶשׁ וְרוּחַ.

And many times this form is called "nefesh" and "ruach."

וּלְפִיכָּהּ צָרִיךְ לְהִזָּהֵר בְּשִׁמּוֹתֶיהָ שֶׁלֹּא יִטְעֶה אָדָם בָּהֶן.

And therefore, one must be careful with their names so that a person will not err with them,

וְכָל שֵׁם וְשֵׁם יִלְמַד מֵעֲנִיָּנוּ:

and each and every name is learned from its context.

הַלְּכָה ט

Halacha 9 • The Eternity of the Form of the Soul and Its Separation from the Body

אֵין צוּרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַזֹּאת מִחֻבֵּרָת מִן הַיְסוּדוֹת כְּדִי שֶׁתִּפְרֹד לָהֶם,

The form of this soul is not composed of the elements so that it would separate into them upon death, like physical matter does,

ואינה מכח הנשמה עד שתהא צריכה לנשמה כמו שהנשמה צריכה לגוף.

and it is not from the power of the animal soul so that it would be needing the animal soul just as the animal soul needs the body for its existence.

אלא מאת ה' מן השמים היא.

Rather, from Hashem, from the heaven, it is—a direct spiritual creation.

לפיכך כשיפרד הגלם שהוא מחבר מן היסודות

Therefore, when the physical matter, which is composed of the elements, separates and decomposes,

ותאבד הנשמה מפני שאינה מצויה אלא עם הגוף וצריכה לגוף בכל מעשיה

and the animal soul perishes because it is not found except with the body and it needs the body for all its deeds and physical functions,

לא תכרת הצורה הזאת.

this form—the intellectual soul—will not be cut off and destroyed.

לפי שאינה צריכה לנשמה במעשיה.

Because it does not need the animal soul for its deeds and perceptions.

אלא יודעת ומשגת הדעות הפרודות מן הגלמים

Rather, it knows and comprehends the intellects—the angels—which are separated from physical matters,

ויודעת בורא הכל ועומדת לעולם ולעולמי עולמים.

and it knows the Creator of everything, and endures forever and for eternity of eternities.

הוא שאמר שלמה בהכמתו קהלת יב ז

This is what Shlomo said in his wisdom in the Sefer of Koheles, chapter twelve, verse seven:

"וישב העפר על הארץ כשהיה והרוח תשוב אל האלהים אשר נתנה:"

"And the dust shall return upon the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it."

הלכה י

Halacha 10 · The Definition of Ma'aseh Bereshit and the Prohibition of Expounding It in Public

כל הדברים האלו שדברנו בענין זה

All of these matters that we spoke about concerning this subject of the physical universe

כמר מדלי הם

are like a drop from a bucket compared to what there is to know,

וידברים עמקים הם.

and yet they are deep matters in their own right.

אבל אינם פענזין עמק פרק ראשון ושני.

But they are not like the matter of the depth of the first and second chapter, which deal with the spiritual realms and the Creator.

ובאור כל אלו הדברים שפפרק שלישי ורביעי

And the explanation of all these matters that are in the third and fourth chapter

הוא הנקרא מעשה בראשית.

is that which is called the esoteric study of Ma'aseh Bereishis, the Work of Creation.

וכך ציוו החכמים הראשונים

And thus commanded the early Sages of the Mishnah,

שאין דורשין בדברים האלו ברבים

that we do not expound on these matters in public,

אלא לאדם אחד מדיעין דברים אלו

rather, to a single person who is wise and understands on his own, we make these matters known

ומלמדין אותן:

and teach them in private.

הלכה יא

Halacha 11 · The Difference Between Ma'aseh Merkavah and Ma'aseh Bereshit

ומה בין ענזין מעשה מרכבה לענזין מעשה בראשית.

And what is the difference between the subject of Ma'aseh Merkavah, the deepest secrets of the Divine Chariot, to the subject of Ma'aseh Bereshit, the secrets of creation?

שענזין מעשה מרכבה אפלו לאחד אין דורשים בו

The difference is that the subject of Ma'aseh Merkavah, even to one individual we do not expound on it

אלא אם כן היה חכם ומבין מדעתו

unless he was wise and understanding from his own mind, possessing deep intuitive comprehension,

מוסרין לו ראשי הפרקים.

and even then, we do not teach him the whole thing, but rather we transmit to him only the outlines of the chapters, the briefest headings.

וענין מעשה בראשית מלמדין אותו ליחיד

And the subject of Ma'aseh Bereshit, we teach it to an individual

אף על פי שאינו מבין אותו מדעתו

even though that he does not understand it from his own mind and cannot figure it out on his own,

ומודיעים אותו כל מה שיכול לידע מדברים אלו.

and we inform him of all that he is able to know of these matters of creation.

ולמה אין מלמדין אותו לרבים.

And why do we not teach it, even Ma'aseh Bereshit, to the public in a large gathering?

לפי שאין כל אדם יש לו דעת רחבה

Because not every man has broad understanding

להשיג פרוש ובאור כל הדברים על פניו:

to grasp the interpretation and explanation of all the matters to their depth and absolute clarity, and they might come to misunderstand these deep concepts.

הלכה יב

Halacha 12 - Contemplating the Creations to Achieve Love and Fear of Hashem

בזמן שאדם מתבונן בדברים האלו

At the time that a person meditates on these matters of the cosmos and the spiritual realms,

ומכיר כל הברואים ממלאך וגלגל ואדם כיוצא בו

and recognizes all the creations, from angel and sphere and man and the like,

ויראה חכמתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בכל היצורים וכל הברואים.

and he will see the wisdom of the Holy One, blessed is He, in all the creatures and all the creations,

מוסיף אהבה למקום

he increases his love for the Omnipresent,

ותצמא נפשו ויכמה בשרו לאהב המקום ברוך הוא.

and his soul will thirst and his flesh will yearn to love the Omnipresent, blessed is He.

וירא ויפחד משפלותו ודלותו וקלותו

And he will fear and he will dread from his lowliness and his poverty and his insignificance,

כְּשִׁיעָרֵיהָ עֲצָמוֹ לְאַחַד מֵהַגּוֹפּוֹת הַקְּדוּשִׁים הַגְּדוֹלִים.

when he compares himself to one of the holy, great bodies like the celestial spheres.

וְכָל שֶׁכֵּן לְאַחַת מֵהַצּוּרוֹת הַטְּהוֹרוֹת הַנִּפְרָדוֹת מִן הַגְּלִמִּים

And all the more so when he compares himself to one of the pure forms that are separate from physical matter, namely the angels,

שֶׁלֹּא נִתְחַבְּרוּ בְּגִלְמֵם כָּלֵל.

that were not joined with physical matter at all.

וְיִמָּצֵא עֲצָמוֹ שֶׁהוּא כְּכֵלִי מָלֵא בּוֹשָׁה וּכְלִמָּה רֵיק וְחָסֵר:

And he will find himself to be like a vessel full of shame and disgrace, empty and lacking.

הַלְכָּה יג

Halacha 13 - Precedence of Halachic Study to the Esoteric Pardes

וְעַנִּינֵי אַרְבָּעָה פְּרָקִים אֵלּוּ שֶׁבְּחֵמֶשׁ מִצְוֹת הָאֵלּוּ

And the matters of these four chapters, which deal with these five mitzvos of knowing and loving Hashem,

הֵם שְׁחֻכְמִים הָרֵאשׁוֹנִים קוֹרְאִין אוֹתוֹ פְּרִידֶס

they are what the early Sages call Pardes, the orchard of deep spiritual wisdom,

כִּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ אַרְבָּעָה נִכְנְסוּ לַפְּרִידֶס.

just as they said, "Four Sages entered the Pardes."

וְאַף עַל פִּי שֶׁגְּדוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיוּ וְחֻכְמִים גְּדוֹלִים הָיוּ

And even though they were great men of Yisrael and they were great Sages,

לֹא כָּלָם הָיָה בָּהֶן כֹּחַ לֵידַע וּלְחַשֵּׁיג כָּל הַדְּבָרִים עַל בְּרִיָּן.

not all of them had the strength in them to know and to comprehend all the matters with absolute clarity.

וְאֲנִי אוֹמֵר שֶׁאֵין רֹאוי לְטַיֵּל בַּפְּרִידֶס

And I say that it is not proper to stroll in the Pardes

אֲלֵא מִי שֶׁנִּתְמַלֵּא כֶּרֶסוֹ לֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר.

unless one has filled his belly with bread and meat.

וּלֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר הוּא לֵידַע הָאֶסוּר וְהַמְּתָר

And "bread and meat" is to know the practical halachos of the forbidden and the permitted,

וכיוצא בהם משאר המצוות.

and the like of them from the rest of the mitzvos.

ואף על פי שדברים אלו דבר קטן קראו אותן חכמים

And even though the Sages called these matters of practical halacha a "small matter,"

שהרי אמרו חכמים דבר גדול מעשה מרכבה

for behold, the Sages said, "A 'great matter' is the workings of the Chariot,

ודבר קטן היות דאביי ורבא.

and a 'small matter' is the debates of Abbaye and Rava,"

אף על פי כן ראויין הן להקדימן.

even so, they are fitting to be given precedence in one's learning,

שהן מישבין דעתו של אדם תחלה.

because they settle the mind of a person first.

ועוד שהם הטובה הגדולה שהשפיע הקדוש ברוך הוא

And furthermore, they are the great goodness that the Holy One, blessed is He, bestowed

ל'שוב העולם הזה כדי לנחל חיי העולם הבא.

for the settling of this world, in order to inherit the life of the World to Come.

ואפשר שיידעם הכל קטן וגדול איש ואשה

And it is possible for everyone to know them, small and great, man and woman,

בעל לב רחב ובעל לב קצר:

one of a broad mind and one of a limited mind.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Rambam explains that all physical creations below the sky are made of a combination of fire, wind, water, and earth, which are themselves combinations of matter and form. Each element has its own natural weight and characteristics—fire being warm and dry, wind warm and moist, water cold and moist, and earth cold and dry—which determine how they combine and how the resulting bodies behave. Ultimately, every combined entity must decompose back into these four elements, though this often happens through a gradual cycle of changing into other entities first. Furthermore, these four elements themselves are in a constant state of flux, with portions of them continually transforming into one another in an unceasing cycle driven by the revolution of the sphere.

The Rambam teaches us a profound truth about our physical existence: everything in this world below the heavens, including our very bodies, is a mixture of the four basic elements of fire, wind, water, and earth. These elements are in a constant state of flux, shifting and changing from one to another, and ultimately, every physical structure is destined to decompose and return to its source. Even the most precious physical things, like gold and rubies, cannot escape this reality.

When you realize that your physical body is made of these shifting, temporary elements, it changes how you look at yourself. The Rambam explains that what truly makes you a human being, the "tzellel Elokim", is not your physical form, but your neshama, the spiritual form given to you by Hashem that is capable of knowing Him. Your body is just a temporary vessel, a combination of dust and wind that will eventually return to the earth, but your spiritual essence is eternal.

This understanding is a powerful tool for your daily avodah. It helps you put your physical desires and worries into perspective. When the yetzer hara tries to make you overly anxious about material comforts, physical beauty, or worldly possessions, remind yourself of this sugya. These things are just temporary combinations of the four elements, constantly changing and destined to dissolve. Your real focus must be on nurturing your neshama, which connects you directly to the Creator.

Today, when you find yourself getting upset or overly invested in a physical frustration or material desire, pause for a moment. Remind yourself: "This is just temporary matter, but my neshama is eternal." Redirect that energy into a spiritual act, like learning a line of Torah or saying a brachah with deep kavana.

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.

פֿאַרק ל"ב CHAPTER 32

לְדוֹד מִשְׁכִּיל אֲשֶׁרִי נָשׁוּי פֶּשַׁע כָּסוּי חֲטָאָה:
אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יַחְשֹׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עֹז וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רַמְיָה:
כִּי הִחַרְשָׁתִּי בָּלוּ עֲצָמַי בְּשֹׁאֲגָתִי כָּל הַיּוֹם:
כִּי יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה תִּכְבֵּד עָלַי יְדָה נִהַפָּה לְשׁוֹדֵי בַּחֲרַבְנִי קִיץ סָלָה:
חֲטָאתִי אוֹדִיעָה וְעוֹנִי לֹא כִסִּיתִי אֲמַרְתִּי אוֹדָה עָלַי פֶּשַׁעִי לִיהוָה וְאַתָּה נָשֵׂאתָ עֹז חֲטָאתִי סָלָה:
עַל זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל חֹסֵיד אֱלֹהִים לְעֵת מִצָּא רַק לְשֹׁטֶף מִיָּם רַבִּים אֱלֹהִים לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:
אַתָּה סֹתֵר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרֵנִי רָנִי פִּלַּט תְּסוּבְּבֵנִי סָלָה:
אֲשַׁכִּילָה וְאוֹרָה בְּדֶרֶךְ זוֹ תִּלְךָ אֵינִי עֹלָה עֵינִי:
אֵל תִּהְיוּ כָּסוּס כְּפָרֵד אֵין הִבִּינִי בְּמִתְגַּוֵּר וְרָסֹן עֲדִיו לְבָלוֹם בַּל קָרַב אֱלֹהִים:
רַבִּים מִכְּאוֹבִים לָרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בִּיהוָה חֲסֵד יְסוּבְּבֵנוּ:
שִׁמְחוּ בִּיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהִרְנִינוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

פֿאַרק מ"ג CHAPTER 43

שָׁפֹטֵנִי אֱלֹהִים וְרִיבָה רִיבִי מִגּוֹי לֹא חֲסִיד מֵאִישׁ מִרְמָה וְעוֹלָה תִּפְלֹטֵנִי:
כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהִי מְעוּזִי לָמָּה זִנְחִיתָנִי לָמָּה קִדֵּר אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּלַחֲץ אוֹיֵב:
שְׁלַח אוֹרָה וְאַמְתָּה הַמָּה יִנְחֹנֵנִי יְבִיאוּנִי אֶל הַר קוֹדֶשְׁךָ וְאֶל מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ:
וְאֲבֹאָה אֶל מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶל אֵל שְׁמֹחַת גִּילִי וְאוֹדָה בְּכִנּוֹר אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִי:
מִה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה נַפְשִׁי וּמִה תִּתְהַמֵּי עָלַי הוֹחִילִי לֵאלֹהִים כִּי עוֹד אוֹדְנוּ יְשׁוּעַת פָּנֶי וְאֱלֹהִי:

שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף:

אֱלֹהִים אֵל דָּמִי לָךְ אֵל תַּחֲרַשׁ וְאֵל תִּשְׁקֹט אֵל:

כִּי הִנֵּה אוֹיְבֶיךָ יִהְיֶינָה וּמִשְׁנֵאֶיךָ נִשְׂאוּ רֹאשׁ:

עַל עֲמָךְ יַעֲרִימוּ סוֹד וַיִּתְּעֲצּוּ עַל צָפוֹנֶיךָ:

אָמְרוּ לָכֵן וְנִכְחֵידֶם מִגּוֹי וְלֹא יִזְכָּר שֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד:

כִּי נִוָּעֲצוּ לֵב יַחֲדוּ עָלֶיךָ בְּרִית יִכְרֹתוּ:

אֱהִי אָדוֹם וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֲלִים מוֹאֵב וְהַגָּרִים:

גָּבַל וַעֲמֹן וַעֲמֶלֶק פָּלְשֶׁת עִם יִשְׁבִּי צוֹר:

גַּם אֲשׁוּר נִלְוָה עִמָּם הָיוּ זִרְעַ לִבְנֵי לוֹט סָלָה:

עָשָׂה לָהֶם כְּמִדְיָן כְּסִיסְרָא כְּיִבִּין בְּנַחֵל קִישׁוֹן:

נִשְׁמְדוּ בְּעֵין דָּאֵר הָיוּ דָמָן לְאַדְמָה:

שִׁיתֵּמוּ נְדִיבֵמוּ 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 תִּרְדָּפֶם בְּסַעֲרָךְ וּבְסוּפָתְךָ תִּבְהַלֵּם:

מִלֵּא פְּנֵיהֶם קִלּוֹן וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמָךְ יְהוָה:

יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהָלוּ עַד־יָד וַיִּחַפְּרוּ וַיִּאֲבָדוּ:

וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי אַתָּה שְׁמָךְ יְהוָה לִבְדָּךְ עֲלִיוֹן עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶשָּׂא 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 מִיִּנְךָ:

יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא יִכָּכֶה וַיֵּרַח בִּלְיָלָהּ:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל רָע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמֹר צַאתְךָ וּבּוֹאְךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם:

פָּרָק ק"ל CHAPTER 130

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת מִמַּעַמְקִים קִרְאתֶיךָ יְהוָה:

אֲדֹנָי שְׁמֶעָה בְּקוֹלִי תַּהֲיֶינָה אָזְנֶיךָ קִשְׁבוּת לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנִי:

אִם עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי מִי יַעֲמֵד:

כִּי עָמַךְ הִסְלִיכָה לְמַעַן תִּגְוֶרָא:

קוֹיֵתִי יְהוָה קִוְּתָה נַפְשִׁי וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחֵלֵתִי:

נַפְשִׁי לֹאֲדֹנָי מִשְׁמָרִים לְבַקֵּר שׁוֹמְרִים לְבַקֵּר:

יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵל יְהוָה כִּי עִם יְהוָה הַחֲסֵד וְהַרְבֵּה 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.'