

מאמר א' • בתקופות העולם

Mussar · Hebrew with Nikud and a Literal Translation

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This page teaches us that when Bnei Yisrael stood at Har Sinai, their neshama was so pure that they could actually see what was heard and hear what was seen, meaning their physical senses and spiritual intellect were completely bound together.

However, the yetzer hara uses the trick of speed and illusion, like a magician's sleight of hand, to rush a person into sin before they can look closely at the truth. From the Dor of Moshe to the Neviim and the holy Yeshivos, the derech of our mesorah has always been to bring the light of Torah into our actual senses and daily living.

Nikud and the literal translation are a learning aid prepared by the editor (AI-assisted, pending review), not the sefer's own vowelization.

וְהִיסוּד הָזֶה הֵצְלִיחַ לָהֶם כָּל כֹּהֵן עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ עַל יְדוֹ לִידֵי כֹהֵן, שֶׁהַעֲדָה עֲלֵיהֶם הִתּוֹרָה:

And this foundation succeeded for them so much, until they reached through it to such a point, that the Torah testified about them:

וְכָל הָעָם רָאִים אֶת הַקּוֹלֹת,

And all the people saw the voices,

וּפָרְשׁוּ חַז"ל (מְכִילְתָּא) שֶׁהָיוּ רוֹאִים אֶת הַנִּשְׁמָע וְשׁוֹמְעִים אֶת הַנִּרְאָה,

And Chazal explained (in the Mechilta) that they would see that which is heard and hear that which is seen,

הַשְּׂגָתָם הִיָּתָה כָּל כֹּהֵן גְּדוּלָּה עַד שֶׁלֹּא הִתְפָּרַד אֶצְלָם הַשִּׁכְל מִן הַחוּשׁ,

Their spiritual attainment was so great that, for them, the intellect did not separate from the physical sense,

וְלֹא כְמוֹ שֶׁהוֹכִיחַ לָנוּ הַנְּבִיא:

And not like that which the prophet rebuked us:

"שָׁמְעוּ שְׁמוֹעַ וְאַל תִּבְיִנוּ וְרָאוּ רָאוּ וְאַל תִּדְעוּ."

"Hear indeed, but do not understand; and see indeed, but do not perceive."

כִּי יֵשׁ "הִעָרְעַר" וְ"דַעְרָה־עָרַעַר", "זַעְהוּ" וְ"דַעְרָה־זַעְהוּ", לְפִי שֶׁאֶצְלָנוּ הַטֶּבַע מְסָה מְבַדִּיל בֵּעַד הַשִּׁכְל.

For there is "hearing" and "deeply hearing," "seeing" and "deeply seeing," because by us, physical nature is a separating screen before the intellect.

בְּשִׁכְלוֹ יָכוֹל הָאָדָם לְצַיֵּר דֶּרֶךְ שֶׁל אָדָם הַשָּׁלֵם,

With his intellect, a person is able to picture the path of the complete person,

אֲבָל כִּיֵּן שֶׁאֵינוּ רוֹאֶה אוֹתוֹ בְּחוּשׁ,

But since he does not see it with his physical senses,

נשאר אצלו הציור הלזה כמו תמונה פוטוגרפית שעינים לה ולא תראה,

there remains with him this mental image like a photographic picture which has eyes but cannot see,

אזנים לה ולא תשמע.

It has ears, but it does not hear.

ועוד שונה הוא ממנה, כי התמונה הפוטוגרפית,

And furthermore, it is different from it, because the photographic image,

אף שאיננה תמונה חיה, בכל זאת,

Even though it is not a living picture, nevertheless,

לכל הפחות, היא מתאמת לדבר המציר,

At the very least, it is verified as true according to the thing that is envisioned,

לא כן ציור חיי השלמות בשכל האדם,

Not so is the picture of the life of perfection in the intellect of man,

שכיון שמעולם לא חי חיי אדם השלם,

for since he has never lived the life of a complete, whole person,

לכן גם הציור שמציר אינו נכון.

Therefore, even the mental picture that he depicts for himself is not correct.

וזהו שאמר הנביא, כי אף ששומעים אנו,

And this is what the prophet said, that even though we hear,

חסר לנו ה"דערה ערעו", ואף שרואים אנו,

We are missing the "derheren" (the deep, inner hearing and absorption), and even though we see,

חסר לנו ה"דערזעהו".

We are missing the "derzehn"—the deep, inner seeing.

וסבת הדבר, כי אדם שבפעצמו אינו שלם ויש לו דבר המעכבו מלהיות כה,

And the reason for the matter is because a person who himself is not complete, and has something that holds him back from being so,

אותו המעכב עצמו מסיד בעדו,

that very thing which holds him back screens and protects him,

עד שאינו יכול לראות ולשמע היטב.

until he is not able to see and to hear well.

וְלוֹ טַעַם לַחַיּוֹת חַיֵּי הַתּוֹרָה בְּמַעֲשֶׂה, אֶזְחָכִים אוֹתוֹ הַנִּסְיוֹן (הַפְּרָקְטִיקָה).

And had he but tasted living the life of the Torah in actual practice, then this experience (the practical application) would have made him wise.

אָבֵל אִם לְהִתְמַכֵּר לַחַיּוֹת עַל פִּי הַתּוֹרָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיא אֵינוֹ מְסַכֵּם,

But if to dedicate himself to live according to the Torah just as it is, he does not agree,

אֵלָּא רוֹצֶה הוּא לְדַעַת מֶרְאֵשׁ מָה כְּתִיב בָּהּ וְהִמְתָּאֲמַתָּת הִיא לְחַפְצוֹ אִם לֹא וְתוֹקֵעַ רְצוֹן עֲצָמוֹ אֶל הַתּוֹרָה,

Rather, he wants to know in advance what is written in it, and whether it aligns with his own desire or not, and he drives his own will into the Torah,

אִזּוֹ בְּיָדָאִי כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא חָפֵץ בֶּן יִרְאֶה וְלֹא יִרְאֶה הַדְּבָר לְאַמְתּוֹ כְּמוֹת שֶׁהוּא,

then certainly, just as he desires, so will he see, and he will not see the matter in its true light as it really is,

וּמִמֵּילָא נִפְרָדֶת אֶצְלוֹ הַתּוֹרָה מִן הַחוּשׁ,

And automatically, the Torah becomes separated in his mind from physical sense-perception,

כִּי לֹא נִסָּה לַחַיּוֹת עַל פִּי דֶרֶכָה בְּחוּשׁ,

for he has not tried to live according to its way in actual, tangible experience,

וְלוֹ נִסָּה, כִּי אִזּוֹ אַחֲרֵת הִבִּין.

And had he but tried, then he would have understood differently.

אָבֵל לֹא כֵן בְּשַׁעַת מַתֵּן תּוֹרָה,

But it was not so at the time of the giving of the Torah,

שֶׁמִּשּׁוּם שֶׁהִקְדִּימוֹ "נַעֲשֶׂה" לְ"נִשְׁמָע" וּמִסְרּוֹ אֶת עֲצָמָם לַחַיּוֹת חַיֵּי הַתּוֹרָה בְּחוּשׁ,

that because they preceded "we will do" to "we will hear" and surrendered themselves to live the life of the Torah in a tangible, felt way,

הִגִּיעוּ לְהַשְׁגָּה כָּל כָּךְ בְּרוּרָה שֶׁהָיוּ רוֹאִים אֶת הַנִּשְׁמָע.

They reached an attainment so clear that they would actually see that which is heard.

דִּהְיִינוּ, שֶׁמִּחְצַת הַמִּדּוֹת וְכָל דְּבַר הַחוּצָץ בְּעַד הָרְאִיָּה,

That is to say, that the barrier of the middos and everything that separates and blocks the vision,

לֹא חָצַץ לָהֶם כָּלֵל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכוֹתֵל וְשׁוּם מְחִיצָה אֵינָה מְפַסְקֶת בְּעַד הַשְּׁמִיעָה,

it did not intervene for them at all, just as a wall or any barrier does not block hearing,

וּשְׁמָעוּ אֶת הַנִּרְאָה, כִּי לִפְעָמִים יֵדְמֶן לְאָדָם אֲבֵן סַפִּיר וְהוּא רוֹאֶה אוֹתוֹ,

And hear that which is seen, for sometimes a sapphire stone will come to a person's hand and he sees it,

אָבֵל כִּיּוֹן שֶׁלֹא שָׁמַע מֵעוֹלָם כִּי הוּא דְּבַר יָקָר,

But since he has never heard that it is a precious thing,

לֹא יָחוּס עָלָיו, אָבֵל הֵם שָׁמָּעוּ אֶת הַנִּרְאָה,

he will not have pity on him, but they heard only that which was apparent,

וְלֹא חָסַר לָהֶם שׁוֹם מְשֻׁג בְּעוֹלָם כְּמוֹ לְאָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן קֹדֶם הַחֵטָא,

and they did not lack any understanding in the world, just like Adam HaRishon before the sin,

שֶׁלֹא הָיְתָה לוֹ שׁוֹם מְחִיצָה מִפְּסָקָת.

that he had no separating partition whatsoever.

וְאַל תִּתְמַה אֵיךְ עָשׂוּ לָהֶם עֲגֹל מִסִּכָּה אַחֲרֵי הַכָּרָה חֲזָקָה וּבְרוּרָה כְּזוֹ,

And do not wonder how they made for themselves a molten calf after such a strong and clear recognition,

כִּי הֲלֹא יָדוּעַ שֶׁהָיָה עָרֵב רַב בֵּינֵיהֶם,

For is it not known that there was a mixed multitude among them,

וְאִם נֶעֱזַן בְּדַבָּר נִמְצָא שָׁאִין כָּאֵן מְקוֹם לְתִמְהָ,

And if we look deeply into the matter, we will find that there is no room here to wonder,

כִּי הֲלֹא הַתּוֹרָה מְעִידָה שֶׁרָאוּ שְׂבוּשֵׁשׁ מֹשֶׁה וּפָרְשׁוּ חֲזו"ל (שְׁבַת פ"ט) "כָּא שֵׁשׁ וְטָעוּ בְּמִנְיַן הַיָּמִים" וְעוֹד דְּאָמְרוּ עַל "כִּי זֶה מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ",

For does not the Torah itself testify that they saw that Moshe delayed, and Chazal explained (Shabbos 89a), "The sixth hour came and they erred in the count of the days," and furthermore, what they said regarding the words, "for this man Moshe,"

שֶׁרָאוּ מֹשֶׁה מוּטָל מֵת בַּמֶּטֶה,

that they saw Moshe lying dead in the bed,

וּמָה נוֹכַל לְהַטִּיל עֲלֵיהֶם אַשְׁמָה,

And how can we cast guilt upon them,

כִּי מָה הָיָה לָהֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת מֵאַחֲרֵי שִׁטְעוּ?

For what was there for them to do after they had already erred?

וְעַל עֲצָם הָעֲגֹל גַּם כֵּן לֹא נוֹכַל לְחַיְבָם, שֶׁהָרִי עָשׂוּ אוֹתוֹ רַק לְמִנְהִיג כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב הַכָּתוּב "וַיֵּלֶךְ לְפָנֵינוּ".

And regarding the actual calf itself, we also cannot find them guilty, for they only made it to be a leader, just as the verse says, "and let it go before us."

ובאמת היה להם מקום לטעות, יצן כי משה מת, ומי יודע מה היה איתו עד הנה?

And in truth they had room to err, because Moshe died, and who knows what happened with him until now?

אמנם כבר כתב הרמב"ן ז"ל, שהשקר אין לו רגלים.

However, the Ramban, of blessed memory, has already written that falsehood has no feet.

הינו, שאין לרע בית אחיזה והוא רק אחיזת עינים,

That is to say, that the evil has no real foothold, and it is nothing but an illusion,

הנקרא "פאקוס", שבו מרמים בני אדם ולוקחים מהם ממונם.

which is called "hocus-pocus", with which they deceive people and take their money from them.

וכל כחו של אחיזת עינים אינו אלא במהירותו,

And the entire power of an optical illusion is nothing other than in its speed,

שממהרים כל כך לעשות את הפאקוס,

that they are in such a hurry to make the focus,

עד שאין האדם יכול להסתכל בו כראוי,

to the point that a person is not able to look at it properly,

ולו הביט בראיה חדה, אז הכיר ודאי את השקר והזיוף שבו,

And if he would only look with a sharp vision, then he would certainly recognize the falsehood and the forgery that is within it,

ורק המהירות הנפלאה גורמת להטעות את החוש.

And only the wondrous speed causes the sense to be deceived.

וכן ממש עם דרכי היצר, כי אינו יכול השטן להראות את העבירה בצורת דבר טוב,

And just so, literally, with the ways of the yetzer, for the Satan is not able to show the aveirah in the form of a good thing,

וכל כחו הוא למהר בהליכתו כל כך, עד שבשעה שהאדם מתחיל להביט ולחשב אודותיו, כבר גמר מעשהו, והאדם מוצא שהוא עומד אחר המעשה עם מחשבתו.

And his entire strength is to hasten in his path so much, until at the very moment that a person begins to look and think about him, he has already finished his deed, and the person finds that he is standing after the deed together with his thought.

ולכן אין פורשים רשעים מדרכם,

And therefore, the wicked do not withdraw from their path,

אף כי יודעים הם כי רע ומר הוא,

Even though they know that it is bad and bitter,

יֵצֵן כִּי הַיֵּצֵר מְמַהֵר בְּהִלְכָּתוֹ וְהוּא מְתַנְהֵג בְּכִבְדּוֹת לְעֲמָתוֹ,

Because the yetzer hara is swift in its movement, while he conducts himself with heaviness in contrast to it,

לָכֵן הוּא מוֹצֵא תָּמִיד אֶת עֲצָמוֹ מִנָּצַח.

Therefore, he always finds himself defeated.

גַּם בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָעֵגֶל לֹא הָיְתָה יְכָלֶת בְּיַד הַשָּׁטָן לְהִרְאוֹת בְּצוּרָה בּוֹלְטָה שְׁמֹשֶׁה מֵת וּמְלָאכִים נוֹשְׂאִים אוֹתוֹ,

Even by the episode of the Golden Calf, the Satan did not have the power to show in a prominent, tangible way that Moshe had died and that angels were carrying him,

יֵצֵן כִּי בַּמַּציאות אֵין הַדָּבָר כֵּן,

Because in reality, the matter is not so,

וְהִרְאָתוֹ הָיְתָה רַק אֲחִיזַת עֵינַיִם,

and his showing was only an optical illusion,

שְׁמַהֵר לְהַטְעוֹתָם וּלְרַמּוֹתָם.

that he hastened to mislead them and to deceive them.

וְלוֹ הִסְתַּכְּלוּ בְּהִסְתַּכְּלוֹת חֲדָה, לֹא הָיוּ רוֹאִים מָה שֶׁרָאוּ.

And had they looked with a sharp, penetrating look, they would not have seen what they saw.

וְרֹאִיָּה לַדָּבָר, שֶׁשָּׁבֹט לֹוי נִמְצָא שָׁלֵם כְּשֶׁצִּוַּח מֹשֶׁה "מִי זֶה אֵלֵי",

And a proof to the matter is that the tribe of Levi was found complete when Moshe cried out, "Whoever is for Hashem, come to me!"

וְאִם הָיָה הַמֵּרְאָה נִכָּר לְכָל בְּלִי שׁוֹם זִיוָּה,

And if the appearance were recognizable to everyone without any forgery,

מִדּוּעַ לֹא חָשַׁשׁ גַּם שָׁבֹט לֹוי עָלָיו,

Why did the tribe of Levi also not worry about it,

אֶלָּא שֶׁעַל כְּרַחֲךָ אֲחִיזַת עֵינַיִם הָיָה וּמִי שֶׁרָצָה לְטַעוֹת טָעָה,

Rather, perforce it was a mere optical illusion, and whoever wanted to err, erred,

וְשָׁבֹט לֹוי שֶׁלֹּא רָצָה לְטַעוֹת לֹא טָעָה.

And the tribe of Levi, who did not want to err, did not err.

וְזֹאת הִיא אֲשַׁמָּתָם שֶׁלֹּא הִבִּיטוּ כְּרָאוּי וְעוֹד צִרְפוּ לָזֶה טְעוֹת הַשָּׁשׁ שְׁעוֹת, וְשָׁבֹט לֹוי לִפְנֵי שֶׁלֹּא טָעָה בְּמֹשֶׁה מֵת.

And this was their guilt, that they did not look properly, and furthermore they joined to this the mistake of the six hours, whereas the tribe of Levi, because they did not err regarding 'Moshe is dead,' did not sin.

לא דחקו אותם גם השש שעות לעשות עֵגֶל, כי חכו שִׁמָּא יבוא.

Even the six hours did not press them to make a calf, because they waited, thinking perhaps he would come.

וממעשה העֵגֶל נוכל לדון,

And from the incident of the Golden Calf we are able to judge,

שדרכי היצר הם אֲחִיזֹת עֵינִים וְכָל כַּחוּ בָּזָה שְׁמִמָּהָר מַעֲשֵׂהוּ,

for the ways of the yetzer hara are optical illusion, and its entire strength lies in this, that it rushes its action,

אולם הבחירה בידינו וְשָׁבֵט לֹוי מְחַיֵּב אֶת הַטּוֹעִים.

However, the choice is in our hands, and the tribe of Levi obligates those who err.

וגם מזה נוכל להבין שֶׁהַחֲטָא לֹא הָיָה פָּשׁוּט כָּל כָּהֵן,

And also from this we are able to understand that the sin was not so simple,

כי הלא גם אחר מעשה העֵגֶל,

For is it not so, that even after the incident of the Golden Calf,

לֹא יָרְדוּ מִמִּדְרָגָתָם לְגַמְרִי.

They did not descend from their level completely.

וּכְמוֹ שֶׁפָּרֵשׁ הַרַמְבַּם "וְלֹא אֶת הַפָּסוּק "וְלֹא שָׂתוּ אִישׁ עֲדִיו עָלָיו",

And just as the Ramban, of blessed memory, explained the verse, "and no man put his ornament upon him,"

שֶׁהַכֹּרֶת עֲוֹתָתָם הָיְתָה אֶצְלָם כָּל כָּהֵן חֲזָקָה,

that the recognition of their crookedness was so strong by them,

עַד שֶׁנָּתְנוּ הַחַיִּים הַנִּצְחָיִים שֶׁהִשְׁגִּיחוּ בְּשַׁעַת מִתֵּן תּוֹרָה,

until they gave up the eternal life that they had attained at the time of the giving of the Torah,

כְּדִי שִׁימְחוּ לָהֶם חֲטָא הָעֵגֶל.

In order that the sin of the Golden Calf should be forgiven to them.

וּכְשִׁיָּרַד מֹשֶׁה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהַתּוֹרָה שֶׁקִּבֵּל בְּיָדוֹ וְהָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהוֹדִיעַ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל חֻקֵּי הָאֱלֹקִים וְתוֹרָתוֹ,

And when Moshe descended from heaven with the Torah that he received in his hand, and he needed to make known to Yisrael the statutes of Elokim and His Torah,

יָשַׁב מֹשֶׁה לְבַדּוֹ לְשַׁפֵּט אֶת הָעָם,

Moshe sat alone to judge the nation,

עד שבא יתרו ושאל אותו מה הוא עושה, והשיב לו:

Until Yisro came and asked him what he was doing, and he replied to him:

”כי יבא אלי העם לדרש את אלקים,”

"Because the people come to me to seek Hashem,"

הינו שהדיני-תורות הבאים אלי אינם כסתם דיני-תורות שזה אומר שלי וזה אומר שלי,

That is to say, that the Torah-lawsuits that come before me are not like ordinary Torah-lawsuits where this one says 'it is mine' and that one says 'it is mine,'

אלא שכל אחד בא לדרש את דבר ד',

Rather, each and every one comes to seek the word of Hashem,

אפשר שלה ואפשר שלי, כמו שאלת אסור והתר (ואע

perhaps it is yours and perhaps it is mine, just like a question of prohibition and permission (and even though Chazal said, "its judgment is for the morning of justice",

זה היה אומר עבדי גנבת וכו',

This one would say, "You stole my servant," etc.,

היה המן מבדר, "אעפ"כ רוב הדיני-תורות היו רק לשאל בדבר ה'.

the manna would clarify [the truth], nevertheless, most of the Torah-lawsuits were only to ask regarding the word of Hashem.)

ועוד צריך אני להודיע להם את חקי האלקים ותורתיו, הינו, לבדר לכל אחד ואחד את הדרך ילה ביה.

And furthermore, I must make known to them the statutes of God and His teachings, meaning, to clarify for each and every one the path in which he should walk.

ועל זה השיב לו יתרו:

And on this, Yisro replied to him:

לא טוב הדבר אשר אתה עשה.

The thing that you are doing is not good.

נבל תבל גם אתה גם העם הזה אשר עמך

You will surely wear yourself out, both you and this people that is with you

כי לו היו באים אליה לשאל דיני גזלה וכדומה בלבד,

For if they were coming to you to ask only the dinim of theft and the like,

יָכַלְתָּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר לְבַדְּךָ, אֲבָל הֲלֹא צָרִיךְ אַתָּה לְהוֹדִיעַ לָהֶם "אֵת הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ בָּהּ וְאֵת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן" לְכָל אֶחָד לְפִי טִבְעוֹ וּתְכוּנוֹתָיו וּמִדּוֹתָיו,

You could have done the thing by yourself, but behold, do you not need to make known to them "the path in which they shall walk
and the deed that they shall do," for each and every one according to his nature, his traits, and his middos,

וְרֹאיוֹ שֶׁתִּכְּפִיר אֵת כָּל אֶחָד וְשִׁיתְּפָרֵר לָהּ רוּחוֹ שֶׁל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד,

And it is proper that you recognize each one, and that the spirit of each and every one becomes clarified to you,

אֵת זֶה לֹא תוּכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת לְבַדְּךָ,

This, you will not be able to do by yourself,

כִּי נָחוּץ זְמַן רַב וְטִרְדָּה גְּדוֹלָה לְסַדֵּר וּלְבַרֵּר לְכָל אֶחָד אֵת מַצְבוֹ הַפָּרָטִי,

For much time and great exertion are necessary to arrange and to clarify for each and every one his own private situation,

לְכֵן צָרִיךְ אַתָּה לְבַחֵר בְּמַצְיָנִים שֶׁבָּהֶם וּתְלַמֵּד אוֹתָם אִיךְ שִׁיְבָרְרוּ הַדֶּרֶךְ לָעַם "וְשִׁמַּתָּ שָׂרֵי אֱלָפִים וְשָׂרֵי
מֵאוֹת" אַתָּה לֹא תְלַמֵּד לָהֶם אִיךְ לְבַרֵּר אֵת דֶּרֶךְ ד',

Therefore, you must choose the most outstanding among them and teach them how they should clarify the path for the nation, "and
you shall place over them leaders of thousands and leaders of hundreds" you will not teach them how to clarify the path of Hashem,

מָה יַעֲשׂוּ אַחֵר מִיתָתְךָ בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁכָּבֵר לֹא תוּכַל לְהִרְאוֹת לָהֶם אֵת הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ בָּהּ,

What will they do after your death, at the hour when you will no longer be able to show them the path in which they should walk,

וְכֵן עָשָׂה, בָּחַר הַמַּצְיָנִים וְלַמֵּד אוֹתָם וְאֵלּוּ יְלַמְּדוּ לְאַחֵרִים וְאַחֵרִים לְאַחֵרִים.

And so he did, he chose the outstanding ones and taught them, and these would teach others, and the others would teach others.

וְנִמְצָא שֶׁכָּל אֶחָד הָיָה מְלַמֵּד לְחֵבְרוֹ וְחֵבְרוֹ מְלַמֵּד לוֹ,

And it turns out that each one would teach his fellow, and his fellow would teach him,

כָּל אֶחָד הִשְׁפִּיעַ עַל חֵבְרוֹ וְהִשְׁפַּע מִמֶּנּוּ, וְהָיוּ מְלַמְּדִים וּמִתְלַמְּדִים כְּאַחַת.

Each one influenced his fellow and was influenced by him, and they were teachers and learners as one.

כֵּן הָיָה נִמְשָׁךְ הַדָּבָר עַד תְּקוּפַת הַנְּבִיאִים.

Thus did the matter continue until the era of the Prophets.

תְּקוּפַת הַנְּבִיאִים

the era of the Prophets

וּכְמוֹ שְׁמוּשָׁה בְּשַׁעְתּוֹ שָׁפַט אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהוֹרָה לְכָל אֶחָד מֵהֶם הַדֶּרֶךְ הַמֵּיחָדָת לוֹ, כֵּן הָיָה דֶּרֶךְ הַנָּבִיא.

And just as Moshe in his time judged Yisrael and instructed each and every one of them in the specific path unique to him, so too was the way of the prophet.

כְּמָה שֶׁפָּתַח הַגָּר"א, שֶׁהַנָּבִיא הָיָה מְגִיד לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד חֲסָרוֹנוֹ וְתִקּוּנוֹ.

As the Gra wrote, that the prophet would tell each and every individual his deficiency and his rectification.

אוּלָּם הַדּוֹר שֶׁל הַנָּבִיא הָיָה שׁוֹנָה הַרְבֵּה מִדּוֹרוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ,

However, the generation of the prophet was very different from the generation of Moshe Rabbeinu,

כִּי בְּדוֹרוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה הִכִּירוּ כָּלֶם אֶת רוּחַ הַתּוֹרָה וְכָל אֶחָד רָצָה לְהִתְלַמֵּד מִפִּי מֹשֶׁה וְהַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱמִיד,

For in the generation of Moshe, everyone recognized the spirit of the Torah, and each one wanted to learn from the mouth of Moshe and the officers whom he had set up,

לֹא כֵן בְּדוֹרוֹת שֶׁל הַנָּבִיאִים,

Not so in the generations of the prophets,

הָיוּ נִמְצְאִים פְּאֵלָה, שִׁחְסָרָה לָהֶם הַחֲכָרָה הַגְּבוּהָה,

There were to be found those who lacked this lofty recognition,

עַד שֶׁהָיָה שׁוּנָה לָהֶם לִקְרֹא לַפְּעָמִים אֶת הַנָּבִיא בְּשֵׁם "מְשַׁנֵּעַ אִישׁ הָרוּחַ".

To the point that it was worth it to them to sometimes call the navi by the name 'madman, man of the spirit.'

אָמְנָם אִם שֶׁנִּמְצְאוּ כָּאֵלֶּה שֶׁמֵּאֲסוּ לְהִתְלַמֵּד מִפִּי הַנָּבִיא,

However, even if there were found those who despised learning from the mouth of the prophet,

בְּכָל זֹאת לֹא הָיוּ בְּנֵי הָעֲלִיָּה מוֹעֲטִים וּמִי שֶׁרָצָה לְהִתְלַמֵּד הוֹרָה לוֹ הַנָּבִיא דֶּרֶךְ ד' בְּהַפְרָה מְאִירָה.

Even so, the Bnei Aliyah (men of spiritual ascent) were not few, and whoever wanted to train himself, the prophet would instruct him in the way of Hashem with an illuminating understanding.

עַד שֶׁהָיוּ יְכוּלִים לִפְשֹׁט הָעֲקוּמוּמִיּוֹת שֶׁבַּלֵּב,

until they were able to straighten out the crookedness that is in the heart,

בְּהַפְרָתָם הַחוּשִׁית, בְּכֹחַם הָיָה לְהַפְרִישׁ לְאָדָם מִן הַמִּינוֹת וְלֹא יָמוּת,

With their sensory recognition, it was in their power to separate a person from heresy so that he would not die,

כִּי כָּל הַטַּעַם שֶׁאֱמָרוּ חֲזו"ל (ע"ז י"ז) דְּפָרִישׁ מִמִּינוֹת מֵיִית,

For the entire reason that Chazal said (Avodah Zarah 17a) that one who separates from heresy dies,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַפְרָת חוּשׁוֹ מוֹשְׁכָתוֹ מִן ד' וְהוּא מוֹכֵרָח לְהִתְעַקֵּשׁ נֶגְדַּ טְבָעוֹ וּלְשׁוּב אֶל ד',

Because the recognition of his physical senses pulls him away from Hashem, and he is forced to stubbornly resist his own nature and return to Hashem,

ומהפרישות הבאה בעל כרחו שימות.

And from the separation that comes against his will, when he dies.

אולם עובדי הבעל, שהשיבם אליהו הנביא אל ד' וצווחו כלם "ד' הוא האלוקים" לא מתו,

However, the worshippers of Baal, whom Eliyahu HaNavi brought back to Hashem and they all cried out, "Hashem is Elokim!" did not die,

מפני שלא הוצרכו להתעקש ולשוב,

because they did not need to stubbornly persist and return,

כי הנביא האיר להם בהכרה כל כך חזקה וחושית עד שכל אחד ראה הנדון כמות שהוא וממילא נפרש מן הטעות והטבע,

For the navi illuminated for them with an awareness so strong and sensory, until each one saw the subject exactly as it is, and automatically separated himself from the error and from nature,

ושבו מאהבת האמת, לכן נשארו בחיים.

And they returned out of love for the truth, therefore they remained alive.

ומשמתו חגי, זכריה ומלאכי פסקה רוח הקודש,

And from the time that Chaggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, Ruach HaKodesh ceased,

שבה היה כל אחד משיג חסרונו ותרופתו בהכרה חושית מאהבת האמת,

in which every single person would grasp his deficiency and its remedy with a sensory recognition out of love of the truth,

ומאז ואילך מתחלת תקופת הישיבות.

And from then and onward, the era of the yeshivos begins.

תקופת הישיבות

The era of the yeshivos

ומאחר שפסקה הנבואה, שהשפיעה לעם ישראל דעת חקי האלוקים ותורתו ודבר ה' נעשה יקר,

And since prophecy ceased, which had bestowed upon the Jewish people the knowledge of the laws of Elokim and His Torah, and the word of Hashem became precious,

נפתחו מעינות חיים חדשים,

new wells of life were opened up,

הלא המה הישיבות, כמו ישיבות סורא ופומבדיתא וכדומה.

Are these not the yeshivos, like the yeshivos of Sura and Pumbedita and the like?

והישיבות האלו הרימו את המצב הרוחני בכל תפוצות ישראל למעלה ראש.

And these yeshivos raised the spiritual state in all the exiles of Israel to the very top.

ומשום מה?

And for what reason?

משום שהיה קשר פנימי בין הישיבות ובין העם והיו מסיעים זה לזה.

Because there was an inner connection between the yeshivos and the people, and they would assist one another.

העם הכיר, כי מקור האמת הוא רק בישיבות וזולתן הכל רק הבל ושוא נתעה,

The people recognized that the source of truth is only in the yeshivos, and besides them, everything is only vanity and a stray falsehood,

והביטו על הישיבות כמו על מורה-שעות מתקן עם מכונה-פנימית אמתית וקוים-מורים מדויקים על נכון,

And they looked upon the yeshivos as upon a well-repaired timepiece with a true internal mechanism and precise indicator-lines set aright,

שהכל מדויקים את מורי-השעות שלהם על פיו,

that everyone aligns their clocks according to it,

וכל מי שהיה משתוקק אל דרך ה' היה דורש ומבקש שמה.

And anyone who was yearning for the way of Hashem would seek and search there.

והישיבות היו בוראות אנשים משלמים בכל המעלות,

and the yeshivos would create men who were complete in all virtues,

יודעים את האלקים וחקיו ותורתו,

They know Elokim, His statutes, and His Torah,

בעלי לב ישר, שכל פניתם ותשוקתם היא לבקש את הנקדה האמתית בכל מעשיהם אשר המה עושים,

Those of upright heart, whose entire focus and desire is to seek the true point in all of their deeds that they do,

וגבורים ברוחם, שכל רוחות שבעולם אינן מזיזות אותם ממקומם.

And they are mighty in their spirit, such that all the winds in the world cannot move them from their place.

וכשהיו יוצאים מן הישיבה אל העולם,

And when they would go out from the yeshiva into the world,

הָיוּ מְקַדְּשִׁים שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם בְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁבָּאוּ שָׁמָּה וְהָיוּ לְמוֹפֶת חַי לְמַעַלְת חַיִּי הַשָּׁלֵמוֹת.

They would sanctify the Name of Heaven in every place that they came there, and they were a living example of the high level of a life of perfection.

וְנִמְצָא, כִּי הָעוֹלָם מְלֵא אֶת הַיְשִׁיבוֹת בְּכַמוֹת הַתְּלִמִּידִים וְהַיְשִׁיבוֹת מְלֵאוּ אֶת הָעוֹלָם בְּאִיכוֹת הַתְּלִמִּידִים,

And it turns out, that the world filled the yeshivos with the quantity of the talmidim, and the yeshivos filled the world with the quality of the talmidim,

וְכַכָּה הָיָה נִמְשָׁךְ דוֹר אַחֵר דוֹר,

And in this way it would continue, generation after generation,

וּבְרִבּוֹת הַזְּמַן נִתְרַבּוּ הַכַּמוֹת וְהָאִיכוֹת בַּיְשִׁיבוֹת וְנִתְרַבּוּ בְּעוֹלָם.

And as time went on, the quantity and the quality in the yeshivos increased, and they multiplied in the world.

הָעוֹלָם וְהַיְשִׁיבוֹת לֹא הָיוּ אֶזְ שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים נִפְרָדִים וְהַפְּכִיִּים זֶה לָזֶה,

The world and the yeshivos were not then two separate things, opposite to one another,

אֶלָּא, אֲדִרְבָּא, הָיוּ יוֹגְמִים זֶה מִזֶּה וּמְסִיעִים זֶה לָזֶה וְרוּחַ אַחַת וְדַעַה אַחַת הָיוּ לְשְׁנֵיהֶם.

Rather, on the contrary, they would draw sustenance from one another and assist one another, and one spirit and one mind belonged to both of them.

כֻּלָּם הָיוּ מְבַקְּשִׁים דַּעַת אֱלֹקִים וּמֵצְאוּ אוֹתוֹ בַּיְשִׁיבוֹת.

They were all seeking the knowledge of Elokim, and they found it in the yeshivos.

בֶּן-הַתּוֹרָה לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהִלָּחֵם עִם עֲצָמוֹ בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ בַּיְשִׁיבָה וְלֹא הִכְרַח לְהִכְנִיעַ אֶת נְטִיּוֹתָיו הַטְּבָעִיּוֹת הַמוֹשְׁכוֹת אוֹתוֹ חוּצָה לָהּ,

The ben Torah did not need to battle with himself while he was in the yeshiva, and he was not forced to subdue his natural inclinations that pull him outside of it,

אֶלָּא, אֲדִרְבָּה, רֹב הָעוֹלָם דָּחַף אוֹתוֹ אֶל הַיְשִׁיבָה,

Rather, on the contrary, the majority of the world pushed him toward the yeshiva,

בְּמַצָּב כָּזֶה הָיוּ הַמְּבַקְּשִׁים מִתְרַבִּים,

In such a state, those who seek Hashem would multiply,

נִבְרְאוּ הִרְבֵּה מְשַׁפְּעִים וּמְשֻׁפָּעִים.

There were created many recipients of influence and influencers.

אוּלָּם לְדֹאבּוֹן לִבֵּנוּ בָּא הַקֵּץ לְהַצְלָחָה זוֹ.

However, to the sorrow of our hearts, an end has come to this success.

הגיעה העת ושרש פרה ראש ולענה נפל בעולם,

The time has arrived, and a root producing gall and wormwood has fallen into the world,

הלא היא ההשכלה הארוּרה,

Is this not the accursed Haskalah (Enlightenment),

אשר רבים חללים הפילה וטמטמה את לב העם והביא לידי כה,

which has cast down many victims and dulled the heart of the nation, and brought about this state,

שהתחילו מואסים בדבר ה' ובנושאיו,

that they began to despise the word of Hashem and those who carry it,

וכאן נבעה פּרץ בין הישיבות והעולם ונפתח תהום ביניהם,

And here a breach burst open between the yeshivos and the world, and a chasm opened up between them,

ומכיון שהרגישו שחיי העולם וחיי השלמות הם שני הפכים שונים שאינם מתאימים זה לזה ואי אפשר
לפשר ביניהם,

And since they felt that the life of this world and the life of perfection are two different opposites that do not fit with one another, and
it is impossible to compromise between them,

התחילו לעזוב את הישיבות והתקרבו אל מדריכים חדשים,

They began to abandon the yeshivos and drew close to new guides,

מדיחים ומסיתים מדרך האמת,

misleading and inciting away from the path of truth,

ותחת השפעת הרב החדשה,

And under the influence of the new majority,

היה הרב גם בישיבות עצמו הולך ופושר,

the majority, even within the yeshivos themselves, was becoming increasingly lukewarm,

הולך ומצטנן, עד כי גם המעטים שנשארו,

he goes on and cools off, until even the few that remained,

היו לפוסחים על שתי הסעפים.

They became like those who hop between two branches.

סעף זה מושך לכאן וסעף זה לכאן,

this branch pulls to here, and this branch pulls to there,

וכשנשארו באין אונים ממלחמה פנימית זו,

And when they were left helpless from this internal war,

התחילו, כדי לצאת ידי כל הדעות,

They began, in order to fulfill their obligation according to all the opinions,

לפשר בין שני ההפכים ונתערבו אצלם הטוב והרע,

to compromise between the two opposites, and so the good and the bad became mixed together by them,

שהתחילו משמשים אצלם בערבוביא,

that they began to function within them in confusion,

ונברא מין חדש לגמרי, שחסרה לו ההכרה הברורה והמסירות הגדולה,

and a completely new kind of person was created, who lacks the clear recognition and the great self-sacrifice,

והוא כמו מורת שעות שנתקלקלה מכונתו הפנימית,

And he is like a clock whose internal mechanism has become ruined,

שפעם הוא ממהר ופעם מאחר וצריך לדחיפת-היד כדי להעמיד קו-המורה על השעה האמתית.

that sometimes it runs fast and sometimes it runs slow, and it requires the push of a hand in order to set the pointer to the true hour.

וכן היה הרוח בפנימיותם הנגועה משבושי הזמן.

And so was the spirit in their inner essence, which was infected by the confusions of the times.

פנימה היו נבוכים בדרך החיים ורק על ידי דחיפת ה"שלא לשמה" הגרוע היה מתנענע הרב.

Inwardly they were bewildered in the ways of life, and only by means of the push of the worst kind of "shelo lishmah" was the majority moved to action.

גם המצב הזה לא הצליח להתקיים בתמידות ובאיזה מקומות כבר נהרסה כל המכונה הפנימית ולא נשאר כי אם דף עם קוים-מורים לבד,

Even this state did not succeed in enduring continuously, and in some places the entire internal machine has already been destroyed, and nothing remained except a page with pointer-lines alone,

העשוי להתלות בבית-המדרש להראות זמן ההדלקה,

which is made to be hung in the Beis Medrash to show the time of the lighting,

ובבוא זמן ההדלקה טועה האדם וסוֹבֵר,

And when the time of lighting arrives, a person errs and thinks,

כי מורה-שעות אמת הוא והראיה,

For it is a true timepiece, and the proof is,

כי הוא מראה את העת בדיוק,

for it shows the time with exactness,

ואולם באמת טעות הוא, כי רק בדרך מקרה הוא עומד כראוי ולא הוא מסבב את השעה,

But in truth it is a mistake, because it is only by way of happenstance that he stands as is proper, and he is not the one who is causing the hour,

ובעצם הוא דבר תהו בלי מכוּנה פנימית כלל.

And in reality, it is a thing of emptiness, without any inner foundation at all.

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

We must realize that the yetzer hara's main strength is rushing us into action before we can think. To overcome this, we need to slow down, look with a sharp and honest eye at our choices, and connect ourselves deeply to the warm, living environment of the Yeshiva and Torah scholars who help us see the truth clearly.