

G-d Knows Your Struggles

BY DON JARASHOW

The Maharal asks a fundamental question regarding last week's parshah. We had just received the Torah at Har Sinai, standing at the highest possible spiritual level. The revelation was sublime, with thunder, lightning, and the Kisei HaKavod, a moment of ultimate holiness.

So why, immediately afterward, does the Torah begin Parshas Mishpatim with laws of damages, theft, and slavery? Why move from such transcendence directly into the most practical and challenging areas of human life?

To answer this, we turn to the Gemara in *Shabbos* 88b. When Moshe ascended to receive the Torah, the *malachim* protested. Such a precious treasure, they argued, belonged in Heaven. Hashem told Moshe to respond. Afraid, Moshe was instructed to grasp the Kisei HaKavod.

Moshe explained that the Torah speaks to human struggle: slavery, work, jealousy, Shabbos, honoring parents, and the yetzer hara. Since the Torah addresses earthly challenges, it was given to human beings, not angels. The *malachim* conceded.

THE DEBATE IN HEAVEN

The Maharal asks: Why the Kisei HaKavod? What was so significant about it? What changed when Moshe grasped it? He further asks: When Moshe Rabbeinu answered the *malachim*, he argued that the Torah speaks to human struggle. He asked them, "Do you have parents? Do you experience jealousy? Do you work? Do you have a yetzer hara? Do you struggle with murder, theft, or *avodah zarah*?" The angels had no answer

and conceded. Why did they concede so completely? True, the angels do not have physical desires to kill or serve idols. But could they not have argued on a more refined level? Even if they do not commit gross physical *aveiros*, perhaps there is some subtle spiritual parallel, some trace of jealousy or deviation from pure unity, that exists even in the upper worlds. Why, then, did they not respond on that level? Why was this Moshe's decisive answer?

"Greatness is not automatic purity; it is elevation that comes through choice."

THE IMAGE ENGRAVED ON THE THRONE

The Maharal explains that this was a purely spiritual debate. The *malachim* claimed the Torah had no place in the realm of *basar v'dam*. By instructing Moshe to grasp the Kisei HaKavod, Hashem revealed a profound truth: the image of man is engraved upon the Heavenly throne itself.

Even in Shamayim, there is recognition of the human being as he truly is — flesh and blood, living with struggle and choice.

A *malach* has no yetzer hara and no internal conflict. Its holiness is inherent. A human being, however, is a fusion of body and soul. His greatness lies not in automatic purity, but in choosing good despite struggle. That potential elevates him beyond a *malach*.

CORPORATE SPONSORS



לעילוי נשמת MY GRANDPARENTS

שמואל צבי בן בנימין הכהן ירשוב ע"ה
ואשתו
חיה בת אברהם יצחק ע"ה



Dedicated by Yehuda & Ricki Weiss (Jackson, NJ)
Pilu nishmas Yisroel Dov ben Yehuda Tzvi

Dedicated by CB & Eithan Pfeiffer (Wesley Hills, NY)
in honor of the bris of their grandson



This is why Moshe grasped the Kisei HaKavod — to demonstrate that the Torah belongs in a world where struggle exists.

HOLINESS THAT IS EARNED

Once Moshe revealed this distinction, the *malachim* understood. Their holiness flows naturally from their essence. A human being's holiness is earned — through effort, pressure, temptation, and perseverance.

Even if angels could identify some abstract spiritual parallel to sin, it would not change the essence of the matter. The Torah was not designed for beings whose holiness is automatic. It was given for beings whose holiness must be earned.

With this understanding, we return to our question: Why does the Torah, immediately after Matan Torah, move into the *halachos* of *eved Ivri*, *nezikin*, theft, and capital cases?

THE TORAH FOR REAL LIFE

Because the Torah was given to human beings.

Immediately after the revelation at Har Sinai, the Torah turns to slavery, financial disputes, responsibility, and failure. It addresses *parnasah* pressures, jealousy, negligence, and human weakness.

Hashem is saying: I know the world you live in. I know it is filled with *nisyonos*, strain, temptation, and setbacks. *Imo anochi b'zarah* — I am with him in his distress.

The Torah is not detached from reality. It was tailor-made for it. Not for *malachim* in a realm of flawless light, but for human beings who rise precisely because they struggle.

And even there, especially there, we remain a Mamleches Kohanim and a *goy kadosh*.

SHABBOS SHEKALIM AND REAL CHANGE

In the *Gemara*, the word לקח is understood as “to take.” The *Chiddushei HaRim* explains that Shabbos Shekalim is a *zeman mesugal* for a person to take himself in both hands.

It is a time for real change, a time for a person to take hold of himself and become different.

Rav Melech Biederman relates: Reb Mordechai, a travel agent who travels often, once had enough points to upgrade to first class by adding one hundred shekels. Curious to experience it, he decided to go for it.

Although he was not wealthy, during the flight he felt like a

millionaire. His seat was wide and comfortable, and he kept adjusting the buttons to find the perfect position. He enjoyed the special treatment that began already at the airport, where he bypassed the regular lines and was assisted by a dedicated agent for first-class travelers.

Meanwhile, a Yid flying economy slipped into the first-class section and looked around. Upon seeing Reb Mordechai, he remarked, “*Oh, it's just that schlepper.*”

At that moment, all the air went out of him. The feeling of wealth disappeared instantly. He realized he had only been playing the part. Someone who knew him saw the reality.

He later reflected that it is not enough to feel wealthy or to act wealthy. If you want to feel rich, the reality has to be real. Otherwise, the illusion cannot last, and the truth will eventually show who you really are.

Shabbos Shekalim is a time to take ourselves in hand, to do teshuvah and truly improve. If a person makes only superficial changes while remaining the same inside, he remains the same schlepper. Real growth requires real change. Now is the time.

The juxtaposition of Shabbos Shekalim and Mishpatim is not coincidental. At this *zeman mesugal*, when we face life's *nisyonos*, moments that feel lonely, dark, or uncertain, we are reminded of who we are and what we have. We are Hashem's beloved nation. We received the Torah from the *malachim*. It was not for them; it was for us, for our mortal struggles, trials, and challenges.

Hashem is fully aware of our struggles. The Torah was given for the real world, for human beings who face temptation, pressure, mistakes, and conflict. Hashem sees our struggles, understands our *nisyonos*, and accompanies us through them.

Even in the midst of difficulty, we can rise, live with *kedushah*, and remain a Mamleches Kohanim and a *goy kadosh*, because Hashem is fully aware of man's struggles. After all, there is an image of man engraved on His Kisei HaKavod. •

“The Torah was given for beings whose holiness must be earned.”

