

Parashas  
Tetzaveh

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י"ז ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

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# טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

## טיב הפרשה

מעלת הצדקה בדורות האחרונים

*The virtue of tzedakah in the later generations*

## טיב המערכת

מעלת ימי פורים

*The virtue of the days of Purim*

Once, there was a harsh decree upon a certain Jewish town. The townspeople came to the great light of Israel, the holy Baal Shem Tov, asking him to pray for the annulment of the decree. The Baal Shem Tov and his disciples did everything in their power to nullify the harsh decree, but they were unsuccessful.

Finally, the Baal Shem Tov told them that although he had not succeeded in annulling the decree, there was one Jew who could. He directed them to a certain village, instructing them to seek out the village drunkard. "Make sure he blesses that the decree be annulled," said the Baal Shem Tov. And so it was. They traveled to that village and found the drunkard, who was completely incoherent. They waited for him to wake up, and as soon as he did, he stretched out his hand for another drink. However, they refused to give him the bottle until he blessed that the decree be annulled. With no other choice, the drunkard said, "Let the decree be annulled! Now give me the bottle already..." And the decree was annulled!

The Jews wanted to understand the meaning of this and returned to the holy Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov told them that this Jew had once been a great sinner. At one point, he had saved money for a long time in order to commit a serious transgression. Finally, when he had accumulated the necessary amount, he set out on his way. Along the road, he heard terrible cries. He stopped to investigate the source of the shouting and discovered that there was an orphaned bride who lacked the necessary dowry. The groom's side was threatening to cancel the shidduch, and the bride was weeping. Immediately, the man took all his money and gave it to the orphan so that she could go to her wedding, leaving nothing for himself.

In Heaven, a great commotion arose over his deed, and it was immediately decreed that all his blessings would come true. However, the prosecuting angels objected, arguing, "How can such a simple person be granted such great power?" Therefore, it was decreed that he would always remain a drunkard.

Based on this, the Baal Shem Tov explained the power of Purim—a day when every Jew can bring about salvation, as Chazal teach (Yerushalmi Megillah 1:4, 2:6): 'Whoever extends his hand is given'. But this power was given to the drunkards.

Therefore, whether you are reading these words before drinking, in the midst of Purim, or even if Purim has already passed for you—so long as it is still Purim, its spiritual effects remain. Let us make proper use of this elevated time, and with God's help, may you bring about salvation in both the spiritual and physical realms.

Sichah in Kollel Shivti

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וַיִּנְתְּנוּ אִישׁ כִּפֹּר נַפְשׁוֹ לַה' בְּפִקֹּד אַתֶּם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בְּפִקֹּד (אתם: (ל:יא-יב)

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: When you will take a census of the Children of Israel according to their counts, every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul when counting them, and there will be no plague among them when counting them. (30:11-12)

It is explained in the writings of the early sages that for every sin a person commits, they must fast numerous times. These matters are also brought in the writings of the holy Arizal (see *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* at length). Rabeinu, HaRema, codifies these teachings into practical law (see *Orach Chaim* Siman 334:26 and Siman 568:2, and *Yoreh De'ah* Siman 285:4). He writes that if a person has committed severe transgressions, he must undergo a great number of fasts. For example, for desecrating Shabbos unintentionally, forty fasts are required! [See there for an explanation of how these fasts can be redeemed.]

After generations of holy Jews following the guidance of these giants, the righteous leaders of the later generations—most notably the holy Baal Shem Tov and his saintly disciples—taught that although fasting purifies a person's sins, it is not appropriate for people in our times to engage in excessive fasting. This is because souls are already weak, and fasting will only add further weakness. The very refinement that fasting accomplishes can be undone by the frailty it causes. When a person is weakened, they are more prone to stumbling into various sins—especially anger and neglect of Torah study, which are primarily caused by physical weakness. It is possible that the harm done by fasting could outweigh its benefits.

Among the Baal Shem Tov's disciples who elaborated on the dangers of excessive fasting was the holy author of the *Tanya*. He writes in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah* (Chapter 3): 'All of this applies to a strong and healthy person, for whom numerous fasts cause no harm to their physical well-being, as was the case in earlier generations. However, for one whose health would be harmed by excessive fasting—who could possibly even fall ill or suffer pain, *chas v'shalom*, as is common in our generations—it is forbidden to fast

excessively, even for sins that incur the penalties of *kareis* (spiritual excision) or capital punishment by Beis Din. All the more so, one should not fast excessively for failing to fulfill positive commandments or for violating prohibitions that do not carry the penalty of *kareis*. Rather, one should only fast according to what he can clearly determine will not harm them in any way. For even in earlier generations, in the times of the Tannaim and Amoraim, only those who were healthy and able to endure suffering would engage in such fasting. But one who was not able to withstand it and still fasted was called a sinner, as stated in the Gemara (*Taanit* 11a).'

And even if one fasts for sins he has committed, as Rashi explains there, and as it is stated in the Gemara (*Zevachim* 5a), 'There is no person in Israel who is not obligated in a positive commandment,' etc. All the more so, one who is engaged in Torah study is considered to be sinning doubly, for due to the weakness caused by fasting, he will be unable to study Torah properly.'

However, since a person sins, it is his duty to rectify what he has corrupted. What, then, is his remedy? To this, the *Tanya* continues in his letter (*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, *ibid.*), stating: "But what is his rectification? As it is written (*Daniel* 4:24), *וְחַטְאֵךְ בְּצַדִּיקָה* - 'And redeem your sins with charity.' And as the *poskim* wrote, one should give the monetary value of eighteen meals for each fast of repentance. The wealthy should give according to their means, as written by the Magen Avraham in the laws of fasting (*Orach Chaim* 568:12)."

For when a person reduces his wealth and sets aside money for charity, it leaves a deep impression on his soul. This is because a person's essence is strongly connected to his possessions, as his financial resources provide him with stability and sustain his way of life. Therefore, when one diminishes his wealth, it is as if he is diminishing his very flesh and blood.

And after the author of the *Tanya*

established that *tzedakah* is the means of rectification for a person, he urges the reader in his letter to engage in this rectification even when it involves a significant sum. He writes: 'And even if the total amount reaches a considerable sum, one should not be concerned about the rule that 'one should not give more than a fifth' of his wealth. For this is not considered wasteful spending in such a case, since one is doing so to redeem his soul from fasting and affliction. It is no less important than medical treatment for the body and other essential needs. And since the number of fasts mentioned in the works of repentance is exceedingly great, it has now become customary for all those who are devoted to the word of Hashem to increase his giving of charity significantly, due to the physical weakness of this generation, as they are unable to endure such afflictions.'

Based on the above, we can say that our eternal Torah has already hinted at the obligation of the righteous to awaken the later generations to their rectification through *tzedakah*. The *posuk* states: "And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying..."—this means that HaKadosh Baruch Hu told the tzaddik, who is considered the "Moshe of his generation": "When you take a census of the Children of Israel..."—when you wish to uplift the heads of the Jewish people and purify them from all sin, so that this will be effective "for their count", on the day when Hashem accounts for every living soul, then you must inspire them to "every man shall give..."—to contribute from their wealth to *tzedakah*. This elevation of charity will serve as "atonement for their souls before Hashem", and then, "when you count them, there shall be no plague among them", for through the power of *tzedakah*, they will attain atonement and remove the severity of any harsh decree upon them.

And since this is the rectification of the final generation, it is fitting to further quote from the holy words of the author of the *Tanya* in his *Iggeres HaKodesh* (Chapter 9)

regarding the greatness of charity in these times. He writes: 'Therefore, my beloved brothers, take these words to heart, though they are said very briefly, to understand how, in these times, in the footsteps of Moshiach, the primary service of Hashem is through *tzedakah*. As Chazal have said (*Rambam, Laws of Gifts to the Poor, Chapter 10*): 'The Jewish people will be redeemed only through charity.'"

Chazal did not say (*Kiddushin* 40b) that 'The study of Torah is equal to acts of kindness' except in their days, when Torah study was the primary form of divine service. This is why they were great sages—Tannaim and Amoraim. However, in the era of the footsteps of Mashiach, when the *Succah of Dovid* has fallen to the level of "feet and heels," which represents action, there is no way to truly cling to holiness and transform darkness into light except through action as well—specifically through acts of charity. As is known to those who understand, the aspect of action in divinity is the flow and extension of vitality down to the lowest levels, to those who have nothing of their own. And whoever sacrifices their own desires, opens his hand and heart, subdues the *sitra achra* (the forces of impurity), and thereby transforms darkness into light.' Thus are the holy words.

These words complete the true perspective on the greatness of charity in our times. Without them, we might think that the rectification through charity in our generation is merely a *b'dieved* (after-the-fact) measure—that initially, Hashem desires only fasting and affliction, but due to our weakness, we are forced to rely on *tzedakah* as an alternative. However, from his words, it becomes clear that rectification through *tzedakah* in our days is *le'chatchila* (the ideal approach). Even if we had the strength to increase in fasts and afflictions, the service of *tzedakah* would still be preferable, for this mitzvah has a special significance in our times—it is the most effective path today for spiritual closeness and the refinement of the soul.

תיקון גלגול

Rectification of a past life

I was a ten-year-old child when I sat down on my chair in the classroom, but instead of landing on the seat, I crashed onto the floor with great force. It hurt terribly, but more than the physical pain, my soul ached because the boy who had pulled the chair out from under me stood above me, laughing in delight at his prank. The incident repeated itself once more, and this time, I was seriously injured, sustaining lifelong damage to my back. In the hospital, the doctors said that surgery was too risky, and ever since, I have suffered from constant pain.

Thirty-two years passed. Chanukah arrived. I lit the candles, and during the first half-hour after the lighting, I sat there, feeling my usual back pain intensify, leaving me no rest or peace of mind. I remembered that this was a time of divine favor, and I prayed from the depths of my heart that HaKadosh Baruch Hu would remove this pain that had burdened me my entire life.

The next day, I went out to the city streets and stumbled over a bump in the sidewalk. I was thrown forward, trying to break my fall, and instinctively started running while bent over. With divine assistance, I managed to stop and straighten up at the very last second. Because my attempt to stop was so strong and effective, instead of flying forward and landing flat on my face, I fell backward onto my back. My vertebrae cracked loudly with frightening sounds. I thought my body had completely shattered! On top of everything, I landed directly on a sharp stone that pressed into the center of my back. I found myself lying on the sidewalk, injured and bruised—but I felt no pain.

I assumed that my body was in shock and that my condition might actually be severe. I knew I shouldn't move in case I caused further damage. But since no one was passing by to help me, and because I wasn't feeling any pain, I decided to try and get up. (To be honest, I'll quietly admit—I wasn't even sure if I was alive or dead.) Slowly, I got up and began to move my limbs, which, to my astonishment and deep emotion, responded to the commands my brain was sending.

I thanked Hashem and walked home in awe, overwhelmed with gratitude that I could still walk at all. Two days after the incident, I began to feel the pain of deep bruising, but after a month and a half, it completely disappeared. And here is where the true miracle begins: along with the pain from the bruises fading, the chronic pain that had tormented me for thirty-two years also vanished entirely. The sharp stone that stabbed into my back during the fall had pressed into exactly the spot where my pain had been—healing it completely, as if it had never existed!

Now, two months later, I am living a new life. I want to publicize this story to thank Hashem in front of everyone!

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Grasping Hashem's Garments

וְעַתָּה הַנִּיחָה לִּי וַיִּחַר אַפִּי בָהֶם וְאֶכְלֶם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גְדוֹל (לב:)

And now, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn against them... And Moshe pleaded before Hashem his God (32:10-11).

Targum Onkelos translates: "Cease your pleading before Me." Similarly, Rashi explains: "Let Me alone—We have not yet heard that Moshe prayed for them, and yet Hashem says, *Let Me alone*. This opened the door for Moshe, informing him everything depended on him. If he prayed for them, they would not be destroyed."

Rav Abahu said: "If not for the explicit *pasuk*, it would be impossible to say such a thing. It teaches that Moshe seized Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as a person seizes his fellow by his garment, and said before Him: Ribbono Shel Olam, I will not allow You to go until You forgive them. (*Berachos 32a*).

This episode teaches us the extraordinary power of prayer. Before Moshe even began to pray, Hashem informed him of the tremendous impact his prayer could have. Through his *tefillah*, Moshe was, as it were, holding on to Hashem, saying, "I will not let go until You forgive!"

The Tzlach (Rav Yechezkel Landau, the Noda BiYehudah) offers a profound insight:

"These words are metaphorical, yet even so, observe the wisdom in their phrasing. They avoided any suggestion of physicality, using the metaphor of a person seizing his fellow 'by the garment' rather than simply 'seizing his fellow.'

"The intention is that garments symbolize a person's state of mind. For example, in times of joy, one wears festive attire; in times of mourning, black garments, and sackcloth; and in times of war, garments of vengeance, sword, and spear. Likewise, with the Holy One, blessed be He —there is no change in Him. But His attributes, metaphorically referred to as garments, change, as it were, based on the recipients. When mankind follows His will, He dons garments of favor and mercy, so to speak. If they provoke His wrath, He dons garments of judgment and fury, as the *pasuk* says (*Yeshayahu 63:2*), מִדּוּעַ אָדָם לְלְבוּשׁוֹךְ - *Why is Your attire red?* This, too, is a metaphor, describing His attributes as garments. At the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, it was a moment of wrath, and He donned garments of vengeance.

"Moshe, however, metaphorically seized the garments of vengeance, the attribute of harsh judgment, and pleaded, 'I will not let go until You forgive them.'"

This concept illustrates the immense power of prayer. When a Jew stands up to pray and beseech, it is as though he is grasping the Creator with both hands, refusing to let go until his plea is answered. Conversely, if one fails to pray,

it is as though he released Hashem and allowed the decree and wrath to proceed, *chas veshalom*. Therefore, one must always pray and entreat the Almighty, seeking His mercy and compassion to redeem and save us speedily in our days, Amen.

### The Rebbe's Power of Tefillah

In the previous generation, one of the great tzaddikim of Yerushalayim was the renowned Rav David Tzvi Shlomoh Biederman, *zt"l*, the Lelover Rebbe. His prayers were legendary, characterized by devotion, self-sacrifice, powerful cries, and abundant tears, in keeping with the tradition of the Lelov dynasty.

The holy Rebbe often traveled abroad, especially to Poland, where he engaged in many activities for the sake of the Jewish people, spending much time on the road.

A reliable individual who once accompanied the Rebbe on his travels recounted staying with him at the same roadside inn. By *hashgachah pratis*, the man was assigned a room adjacent to the Rebbe's. In the middle of the night, the man was awakened by the sound of weeping, groaning, and sighing emanating from the Rebbe's room. Alarmed and shaken, he feared something terrible was happening to the Rebbe. The pure, heart-wrenching cries seemed to come from a soul utterly shattered.

The man quickly got out of bed and rushed to the Rebbe's door, but it was locked. Peering through the cracks, he witnessed a scene of awe-inspiring sanctity. The Rebbe was lying on the floor, engaged in tremendous and fervent prayer. He was striking his chest forcefully and crying out in anguish: "David Tzvi Shlomoh ben Matil, what will be with you? Oy vey, what will be with you? When will you finally do proper repentance?"

The man stood frozen for a long time, watching in awe until the Rebbe's tears and prayers subsided. The intensity of that prayer left an indelible impression on him, and he would recount it often to his children and grandchildren, teaching them the immense power of *tefillah*.

### The Poultry Thief

In the Old City of Yerushalayim lived a precious and upright man, the pious Rav Berish Kornblit *zt"l*. He owned a butcher shop where he sold poultry and meat to the devout residents of the Old City. While working as a butcher, standing for hours a day to serve customers, he was exceedingly careful to guard his holy eyes, refraining from looking at the women who entered his shop.

When a woman entered, Rav Berish would immediately lower his gaze, ensuring not to look at her from the moment she entered until she left. He provided all the service without seeing her, placing the meat on the counter and receiving payment, which the woman left on the table.

One early evening, a question arose regarding the kashrus of a chicken sold in his shop that day. Upon investigation, it became clear that the chicken was certainly not *glatt* kosher, and there was significant doubt as to whether it was kosher at all. Rav Berish remembered selling that chicken to a woman who had visited in the afternoon, but since he had not looked at the customers, he had no idea who she was. He didn't know who had purchased the chicken or how to contact her to inform her of the issue.

Distraught, Rav Berish was at a loss. How could he find the buyer before she unknowingly ate the chicken?

Overwhelmed, he turned to the path of his ancestors. As a God-fearing man, he was terrified of causing anyone to stumble in the observance of kashrus. He locked

his shop securely and hurried to the Kosel, from where the *Shechinah* never departs. There, he prayed fervently, pouring out his heart and beseeching the Almighty that no Jew—man, woman, or child—would come to eat from that questionable chicken. For a long time, Rav Berish clung to the sacred stones of the Kosel, reciting *Tehillim* with tears streaming down his face. When he finally finished his heartfelt prayer, he returned to his shop and reopened it.

To his astonishment, shortly after reopening, one of the righteous women of the Old City entered the shop. She explained that she had been there earlier in the afternoon and had purchased a chicken. But unfortunately, after placing her basket with the chicken on her windowsill, a large cat jumped up, grabbed it, and fled.

A brief inquiry about the time of purchase and the payment confirmed that this was the very chicken in question. Rav Berish was overjoyed that his prayer had been answered and that no mishap had occurred under his watch. He shared the story with the customer, explaining that he had been looking for her to inform her of the issue, but Heaven had protected her protection from the mistake. He then gave her another chicken free of charge.

This story teaches us the profound power of prayer. In every matter, we must open our hearts in prayer and supplication. As the saintly Rav Pinchas of Koretz *zt"l*, once said that we say in *Birkas Shome'a Tefillah*, "For You hear the prayer of every mouth (פה)." Substituting the hard *peh* with a soft *feh*, one gets the word *feh*, emphasizing that even the prayer of someone soiled from being steeped in sins, emitting the foul stench of transgressions, is heard and accepted.

As the Gemara states at the end of *Berachos* (63a) according to the version in Ein Yaakov: "Rabbi Pappa said: 'This is what people say: A thief in the act of tunneling through a wall prays to Hashem.'" Even the prayer of a thief, despite his sinful intentions, is considered prayer. Truly, "For You hear the prayer of every פה!"