

# PARSHAS SHOFTIM

תשפ"ה

Klal Yisroel are coming to Eretz Yisroel. But this land is full of avodo zoro and things that the Torah describes as to'eivos. So Hashem warns Klal Yisroel not to learn from the local practices and rituals – molech, magic, omens, divining signs and superstitions. Hashem hates these practices. Why?

Segulos are very popular today. Why does everyone love segulos? Because they are easy. You don't have to invest any real effort. Just put a red string on. Just say or do this special formula and it is all taken care of. There is another seguloh called learning Torah, but no one is interested in that one. Why? Because it takes time and serious effort.

The posuk says Hashem is kicking the non-Jewish nations out of Eretz Yisroel because of these practices. What does Hashem want us to do instead? תמים תהיה עם ה' אלוך.

Rashi explains:

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך. התהלך עמו בתמימות ותצפה לו, ולא תחקור אחר העתידות, אלא כל מה שיבוא עליך קבל בתמימות, ואז תהיה עמו ולחלקו

We shouldn't try to figure out the future. Just accept whatever Hashem sends your way.

Two years ago, I asked myself how the lines in tachanun about Klal Yisroel's lowly, despised status in the world are still relevant? I had a problem being mechaven in this tefillah since there is no overt anti-Semitism in the world today. I just had to believe it was true without seeing it. But then October 7th happened, and all the latent, under-the-surface seething anti-Semitism came gushing up to the surface. The world just exploded with Jew-hatred out in the open.

Two years ago, no-one in his right mind would have predicted these massive social upheavals occurring against the Jews world-wide. People make predictions all the time and forget that Hashem runs all the events of this world in a very detailed way. There are no shortcuts, there are no quick solutions that can go around Hashem's plans for history.

What is avodo zoro? The Rambam describes how avodo zoro got started. People want to avoid having to deal with Hashem. They want to deal directly with the spiritual forces in charge of the natural world, which will give them success. Skip Hashem totally and take Him out of the equation. But it is a total farce.

The Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim writes that everything that happens to a person in this world is a result of Hashem's cheshbon of s'char v'onesh. The good things that just happen to you are s'char. The bad things that happen are onesh. Hashem is guiding your life, and the mitzvah of תמים תהיה is to accept all this without making all kinds of calculations.

And if you do this, Hashem will be with you and give you special protection.

The Rambam says all the forces of nature are working through a system that Hashem is directing constantly.

The Ramban on this posuk says:

וטעם תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך. שנייחד לבבנו אליו לבדו ונאמין שהוא לבדו עושה כל והוא היועד אמתת כל עתיד וממנו לבדו נדרוש העתידות מנביאיו או מאנשי חסידיו רצונו לומר אורים ותומים ולא נדרוש מהוברי שמים ולא מזולתם ולא נבטח שיבואו דבריהם על כל פנים אבל אם נשמע דבר מהם

נאמר הכל בידי שמים כי הוא אלקי האלקים עליון על הכל היכול בכל משנה מערכות הכוכבים והמזלות כרצונו מפר אותות בדים וקוסמים יהולל ונאמין שכל הבאות תהיינה כפי התקרב האדם לעבודתו ולפיכך אחר אזהרת שאלת העתידות מקום ודורש בעד החיים אל המתים אמר שתהיה תמים עם השם בכל אלה ולא תירא ממגיד עתיד אבל מנביאו ודרוש ואליו תשמע וזה דעת אונקלוס שלים תהא בדחלתא דה' אלהך שלא תהיה חסר ביראתו כי "תמים" הוא השלם בדבר כמו שה תמים (שמות יב ה) שאין בו מום ושום חסרון וזו מצות עשה וכבר הזכרתי זה בפסוק והיה תמים:

It is futile to try to figure out what the future holds without Hashem telling you. This is why Hashem gave Klal Yisroel nevi'im and Urim v'Tumim. You don't need to go to these other people who claim to foresee the future, because their predictions are false.

There was a time in history when, if you wanted to know something that was hidden, you went to a novi. He spoke with Hashem and revealed it to you. We are not on that level any more to deserve direct nevuah. But there are still חסידיו אנשי – people who are immersed in Torah and can figure out what Hashem has planned.

Non-Jews can make all kinds of predictions, but Hashem can change things in an instant. We believe that what happens to you depends on your level of closeness to Hashem and to His avodah. Everything that happens depends on your level of avodas Hashem.

The Rambam in Pirush Hamishnayos explains the ma'amar Chazal, אין להקב"ה בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של הלכה בלבד. What can this mean? Aren't there billions of people in the world? What about them? Don't they exist under Hashem's supervision as well? The Rambam says very clearly that the whole world revolves around those few individuals who dedicate their entire lives to avodas Hashem. They are the center of the universe.

The Rambam gives an example of a man who became very wealthy and he invests a lot of money to build a palace with a beautiful garden with trees and fountains. The wealthy man thinks he is doing everything for himself and his own enjoyment. Little does he know that Hashem allowed him to amass all this wealth and make this beautiful garden for a tzaddik who will one day be passing by and needs a place to stop and refresh himself. This is why this man was given wealth – to serve the tzaddikim who devote their lives to avodas Hashem.

We say every day in tefillah: וחי עולם נטע בתוכנו – everything that exists in the universe is because of us and our avodah.

The Ramban continues: You have to have complete faith that Hashem runs the entire world down to the smallest detail. This is a very difficult thing for people to assimilate into their psychology. אין עוד מלבדו.

Hashem promised Avrohom in the bris bein habesorim that he will have a nation who will eventually be given Eretz Yisroel. Avrohom can't understand how it is possible! His wife Soroh is physically incapable of having children! Hashem tells Avrohom, get out of the box you are living in. When you deal directly with Hashem, there are no limits of physical law. Hashem is above all restraints and limitations. You have to change your entire way of thinking.

After Yaakov dies, the brothers come to Yosef with a whole made up story: Yaakov told them before he died to tell Yosef not to take revenge on his brothers for betraying him and selling him into slavery. Yosef realizes what the brothers are trying to do and tells them they have it all wrong. He says, I had to tell you my dreams because they were prophetic dreams and I was obligated to reveal them. But you

thought it was my own ego and my delusions of greatness and you felt threatened. Hashem's plan all along was for me to come to Egypt and become the ruler and pave the way for Klal Yisroel to come into golus under the best possible circumstances. But He used your feelings of jealousy and hatred of me to arrange my coming to Egypt this way. You always had free-will, and you could have chosen differently and Hashem would have found another way for me to come down to Egypt. But everything I went through to get to this point, was orchestrated directly by Hashem. You had nothing to do with it.

Yosef passed all his tests – starting with working in Potifar's house. He had Hashem's Name constantly on his lips. He attributes all his success in developing Potifar's estate to Hashem. When he is put in prison, he took over running the jail and Hashem's Name was on his lips. When the Sar Ha'mashkim and the Sar Ha'ofim come to him with their dreams, Yosef is clear that Hashem gives him the power to interpret dreams. When Pharaoh summons him and tells him that he was

impressed with his great wisdom, Yosef again says it has nothing to do with me. It is not my talents or my wisdom but only what Hashem has given me.

We need to develop the ability to go through life and see how Hashem is running each step and accept that Hashem is in charge. Our job is not to figure out how everything will work out. Our job is to do the right thing and leave the future and the running of the world to Hashem's guidance.

The Ramban is very clear: Anything that happens is a result of our level in avodas Hashem. The Rambam is very clear: It is all a product of s'char and onesh. You can't drop Hashem out of the equation and deal with natural forces. Hashem is the only equation! There is no point in looking for segulos and shortcuts to circumvent the hard work of avodas Hashem and growing in ruchniyus. Do your job with temimus without cheshbonos, and Hashem will give you special hashgocho protis and success as a result.