

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

Rabbi Pinches Friedman

Parshas Shemos 5771

Translation by Dr. Baruch Fox

The Chafetz Chaim's Incredible Insight

“For The Place upon Which You Stand” Regardless of the Place or the Situation: “Is Holy Ground”

In this week's Torah portion, parshas Shemos, we read about the incident of the “burning bush”—HKB”H's initial revelation to Moshe Rabeinu (3,1):

“ומשה היה רועה את צאן יתרו חותנו כהן מדין, וינהג את הצאן אחר המדבר ויבוא אל הר האלקים חורבה, וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש מתוך הסנה, וירא והנה הסנה בוער באש והסנה איננו אוכל, ויאמר משה אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה מדוע לא יבער הסנה.

וירא ה' כי סר לראות, ויקרא אליו אלקים מתוך הסנה ויאמר משה משה ויאמר הנני, ויאמר אל תקרב הלום של נעליך מעל רגליך, כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא, ויאמר אנכי אלקי אביך אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב, ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלקים.”

“Moshe was grazing the sheep of his father-in-law Yisro, the priest of Midyan; he guided the sheep far into the wilderness, and he arrived at the Mountain of G-d, toward Chorev. An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush. He saw and behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed. Moshe thought, ‘Let me turn aside now and see this great sight—why will the bush not be burned?’

Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, ‘Moshe, Moshe,’ and he replied, ‘Here I am!’ He said, ‘Do not come closer to this spot, take your shoes off of your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.’ And He said, ‘I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov.’ Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward G-d.”

The Targum Yonasan explains that when HKB”H tells Moshe: **“For the place upon which you stand is holy ground”**—His intention was to reveal that in this very location, on Mount Chorev, Bnei Yisroel are destined to receive the Torah. We must, however, resolve an apparent discrepancy. Why, here in our parsha, is Moshe warned not to approach too closely; whereas, at the time of Matan Torah, Moshe does approach HKB”H? -- as the possuk records (Shemos 19,20): **“וירד ה' על”**—**“Hashem descended upon**

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

Har Sinai to the top of the mountain; Hashem summoned Moshe to the top of the mountain, and Moshe ascended.”

Additionally, Moshe is cautioned, **“Do not come closer to this spot”**—i.e. do not come any closer to the burning bush, because of HKB”H’s presence there. Why, then, does He proceed to caution Moshe: **“של נעליך מעל רגליך כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא”**—to take off his shoes, because he is standing on hallowed ground? Obviously, Moshe was standing some distance from the bush and was not on hallowed ground. The Ramban sensed this difficulty and addresses the issue in his own sanctified way:

“כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא, אף על פי שהיה רחוק מן הסנה הזהירו בזה, כי נתקדש כל ההר ברדת השכינה אל ראש ההר כאשר בשעת מתן תורה, ומשה בהר היה כי שם עלה, שנאמר ויבא אל הר האלקים חרבה, והסנה היה בראש ההר, והנה כולו קדוש ואסור בנעילת הסנדל, וכך אמרו (שמו”ר ב יג) בכל מקום שהשכינה נגלת אסור בנעילת הסנדל.”

He explains that the entire mountain was hallowed ground, even the area where Moshe was standing. For when Hashem descended upon the mountain, the entire mountain became sanctified. Therefore, wearing shoes was prohibited on the entire mountain. He points out that the burning bush was, in fact, located at the top of the mountain.

“Take Your Shoes off of Your Feet”

To address these issues, let us begin with an illuminating insight from the teachings of the holy author of the “Chafetz Chaim,” who elucidates the possuk: **“כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו”**—**“For the ground upon which you stand is holy ground.”** Upon careful consideration, we find that the yetzer strives to deter one from serving Hashem and observing the Torah by presenting one with all sorts of rationalizations. We are deluded into thinking that our current location and circumstances are making it difficult to serve Hashem properly; however, we convince ourselves that when our location and circumstances change for the better, and the deterrents are gone, we will surely engage in Torah study and serve Hashem devoutly.

Nevertheless, one must believe wholeheartedly that every Jew is capable of serving Hashem properly regardless of his place or his circumstances. He must, however, first eliminate all of the seemingly insurmountable barriers separating him from his master. In the words of the prophet (Yeshayah 59,2): **“כי אם עוונותיכם היו מבדילים ביניכם לבין אלקיכם”**—**“rather, your iniquities have separated between you and your G-d.”** Once these barriers no longer separate him from HKB”H, he will merit the revelation of Hashem’s light, wherever he is in this world—as the angels proclaim in their praise to Hashem (ibid. 6,3): **“קדוש קדוש קדוש ה’ צבאות מלא כל הארץ כבודו”**—**“Holy, holy, holy is Hashem, Master of Legions; the whole world is filled with His glory.”**

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

This, then, is the interpretation of the verses: **“וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש מתוך הסנה, וירא”**—from the fact that the bush was not being consumed by the flames, Moshe understood that HKB”H was present within the bush. Out of his great desire to approach and come closer to Hashem: **“וויאמר משה אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה”**—**מדוע לא יבער הסנה”**—he considers drawing closer and examining this phenomenon more closely.

In response, HKB”H cautions him: **“אל תקרב הלום”**—it is not necessary for you to ascend the mountain or to draw any closer in order to connect with Hashem; rather, **“של נעליך מעל”**—**רגליך”**—simply remove your shoes which constitute a barrier separating a person’s feet from the sanctity of Hashem--which is present everywhere throughout the land. Thereupon, you will realize: **“כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא”**—that HKB”H is present everywhere and at all times.

At the Time of the Future Redemption Shoes Will Be Unnecessary

Seemingly, one might wish to dispute this idea of the Chafetz Chaim’s based on a teaching in the Gemorah (Shabbos 129.): **“לעולם ימכור אדם קורות ביתו ויקח מנעלים לרגליו”**: **“One should always sell the beams of his house (if necessary) to buy shoes for his feet.”** The importance of wearing shoes is stated here emphatically. How then can the Chafetz Chaim claim that shoes represent a barrier between a man and his maker—which need to be removed in order to appreciate the kedushah?

The position of the Chafetz Chaim can be reconciled based on the writings of the incredible Bnei Yissaschar in his sefer Agra D’Pirka (304). Here are his enlightening words:

“הרב מהר”מ חאגיז בספרו משנת חכמים מביא בשם חכמי הרמז, דענין לבישת המנעלים הוא כדי שלא יגע בשרו על האדמה, כי בחטאו של האדם נתקללה, על כן עושין הפסק בין הרגל לאדמה. וכתב דבעבור זה במקום אדמת קודש, שיצאה האדמה מכלל ארור לכלל ברוך יש לילך יחף, וזהו של נעליך מעל רגליך כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא עב”ד.

ובזה מצאנו טוב טעם למה שאמרו רז”ל (שבת קכט.) [לעולם] ימכור אדם כל מה שיש לו ויקח מנעלים לרגליו, דכיון שההפסק הוא בכדי להפסיק בין הקללה, על כן ימכור כל מה שיש לו ויקח מנעלים להפסיק, וזה שמברכין על מנעלים שעשה לי כל צרכי, כי זהו כל צרכי לחפץ בברכה ולהפסיק הקללה.

ובזה מצאנו ראינו כפשוטו טוב טעם ביום הקדוש יום הכפורים נאסר בנעילת מנעל, כי נתקדשה הארץ בקדושת היום ויוצאת אז מן הקללה לברכה. ותבין ביום המקווה לישועה יום שנולד בן דוד [תשעה באב] נאסר בנעילת מנעל, להורות שעל ידי משיח בן דוד תצא האדמה מקללתה לברכה.”

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

He teaches us that the reason for wearing shoes is to create a separation between one's flesh and the ground. After all, the ground was cursed subsequent to the sin of Adom HaRishon. Therefore, where holy ground is to be found, one is obliged to walk barefoot. This is why Moshe was instructed to remove his shoes.

On the other hand, our blessed sages (Shabbos 129.) encourage us to procure shoes at any cost in order to create a separation from the cursed ground. In fact, this is why we recite the berocheh every morning "she'asah li kol tzorki"—praising "He who provides me with all my needs"—over the provision of shoes. Meriting blessings and avoiding curses represents the entirety of our needs.

This also explains the prohibition against wearing shoes on the sacred day of Yom Kippur. Even the ground is sanctified by the holiness of the day and is transformed from a cursed entity into a holy one. In fact, on Tisha B'Av, the birthday of Mashiach ben Dovid—a day representing our hopes for salvation—we are prohibited from wearing shoes; we do so to signify that when Mashiach comes, the ground will finally return to the realm of kedushah. This was a summary of the Agra D'Pirka.

According to this understanding, we can reconcile the view of the Chafetz Chaim concerning HKB"H's deeper message to Moshe. HKB"H instructs Moshe: **"של נעליך מעל רגליך כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו ארמת קודש הוא"**—**"take your shoes off of your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground."** It is true that the ground was cursed following the sin of Adom HaRishon necessitating that one wear shoes in order to create a separation between one's feet and the cursed ground; however, HKB"H's words to Moshe convey a very important message. Every Jew possesses the potential to reveal the divine spark concealed within the ground; by doing so, he will eventually merit revealing the Divine Presence in that place. Consequently, he will no longer require shoes to protect his feet; such will be the situation at the time of the future redemption when the Glory of Hashem will fill the entire land.

Three Wells Were Dug Corresponding to the Three Holy Patriarchs

We can proceed to interpret the continuation of the narrative in light of this concept (Shemos 3,6): **"ויאמר אנכי אלקי אביך אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב, ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא—מהביט אל האלקים"**—**"And He said, 'I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov.' Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward G-d."** Once HKB"H identified Himself as "the G-d of your father," why was it necessary to add the description "the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov"? Let us introduce the passage in parshas Toldos describing the wells dug by our holy Patriarchs (Bereishis 26,18):

"וישב יצחק ויחפור את בארות המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם אביו ויסתמום פלשתים אחרי מות אברהם, ויקרא להן שמות כשמות אשר קרא להן אביו, ויחפרו עבדי יצחק בנחל וימצאו שם באר מים חיים, ויריבו רועי גרר עם רועי יצחק לאמר לנו המים, ויקרא שם הבאר עשק כי

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

התעשקו עמו, ויחפרו באר אחרת ויריבו גם עליה ויקרא שמה שטנה, ויעתק משם ויחפור באר אחרת ולא רבו עליה ויקרא שמה רחובות, ויאמר כי עתה הרחיב ה' לנו ופרינו בארץ".

"And Yitzchak dug anew the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Avraham his father and the Philistines had stopped up after Avraham's death; and he called them by the same names that his father had called them. Yitzchak's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of fresh water. The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Yitzchak's herdsmen saying, 'The water is ours,' so he called the name of the well Esek because they involved themselves with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also; so he called its name Sitnah. He relocated from there and dug another well; they did not quarrel over it, so he called its name Rechovot, and said, 'For now Hashem has granted us ample space, and we can be fruitful in the land.'"

The Ramban explains that the three wells represent the three Botei Mikdash. Therefore, the first two wells, Esek and Sitnah, were surrounded by controversy between the shepherds of Gerar and Yitzchak's shepherds—for they corresponded to the two Temples that were destroyed due to our numerous sins. The third well, Rechovot, which was free of controversy, represents the third Beis HaMikdash which will stand forever.

We can embellish this idea based on the well-known fact that the three Temples correspond to the three holy Patriarchs. The Gemorah explains (Pesachim 88.): **"לא כאברהם שכתוב בו הר... ולא"**—Avraham referred to the Beis HaMikdash as a mountain, Yitzchak referred to it as a field and Yaakov referred to it as a house. The Alshich writes in Toras Moshe, parshas Bechukotai (Vayikra 26,13), that our enemies were able to conquer the two Temples corresponding to Avraham and Yitzchak, because Yishmael and Eisav descended from them. The third Beis HaMikdash, however, which will arrive in the merit of Yaakov—whose offspring were all pure—will stand for all eternity without interruption.

Following this line of reasoning, we can suggest that the three wells Yitzchak dug also correspond to the holy Avos. The first well corresponded to Avraham who begat Yishmael. Regarding Yishmael, the Torah states (Bereishis 21,20): **"וישב במדבר ויהי רובה קשת"**—**"He dwelt in the desert and he became an accomplished archer."** Rashi comments that he terrorized and robbed all that passed by. Due to the association with Yishmael, who exploited all of humanity, this well was fraught with controversy; thus, Yitzchak named it Esek—a name suggesting exploitation and subjugation.

The second well corresponded to Yitzchak who begat the wicked Eisav. Eisav's ministering angel is the samech-mem who slanders and prosecutes Yisroel. Due to the association with Eisav, this well was also surrounded by dispute; thus, Yitzchak named it Sitnah—connoting these attributes of Eisav. On the other hand, the third well corresponding to Yaakov, who fathered the twelve tribes,

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

who were all righteous, was not disputed; thus, Yitzchak named it Rechovot— **“ויאמר כי עתה—הרחיב ה' לנו ופרינו בארץ”**—**“For now Hashem has granted us ample space, and we can be fruitful in the land.”**

The Wells Were Dug to Reveal the Divine Spark Concealed within the Earth

Now, let us examine an important principle presented by the Sefas Emes (Toldos 5633) in the name of his esteemed grandfather, the author of the Chidushei HaRim. He explains the practical benefit and greater purpose behind the wells. The holy Avos intended to dig beneath the earthly, physical and material surface in order to expose the divine sparks concealed within. In his own unique language: **“אדוני אבי זקני מורי ורבי ז”ל הגיד בענין הבארות שחפרו אבותינו, להסיר—החיצוניות למצוא הארה הגנוזה, שבכל מקום יש נקודה פנימיות”**—our forefathers strove to remove the superficial layers of existence in order to find the illumination concealed within; they understood that all places possess a deeper, internal aspect waiting to be revealed.

The Sefas Emes (ibid. 5647) elaborates further based on the narrative describing the creation (Bereishis 1,9): **“ויאמר אלקים יקוו המים מתחת השמים אל מקום אחד ותראה היבשה ויהי—כך—”****“G-d said, ‘Let the waters beneath the heaven be gathered into one area, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so.”** It is understood that in the heavens above, the divine light of Hashem is unobstructed; however, down below, Hashem’s light is hidden by its earthly confines. This is the significance of water being covered by dirt. The Torah is compared to water, as we find in the Gemorah (Bava Kama 17.): **“אין מים אלא תורה”**—**“there is no water other than Torah.”** Water that is covered by the dirt of the earth symbolizes that Hashem’s light is hidden and obscured by the earthly and mundane nature of this world.

For this very purpose, our holy Patriarchs dug beneath the surface of this physical, material world to reveal **“באר מים חיים”**—the wellspring of life—Hashem’s light concealed within the depths of the earth. Each of the three holy Avos dug in his own unique way, as befitting his own personal attribute; each strove to reveal the source of life—Hashem’s light—even in this material world. They paved the way for Yisroel throughout the generations to reveal Hashem’s light—the wellspring of life—by means of one’s tireless efforts to dig beneath the surface. In this manner, the divine sparks that are concealed in this world are revealed. This is the gist of his explanation.

It is easy to understand, therefore, why the ultimate, undisputed revelation was only realized with the third well, Rechovot—the well corresponding to Yaakov Avinu. As the Zohar hakadosh explains (Vayeitzei 146:): **“על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים, —התורה דא יעקב, העבודה דא יצחק, גמילות חסדים דא אברהם”**—this world is supported by three giant pillars—Torah study, ritual service and charitable acts; Yaakov is the pillar of Torah, Yitzchak is the pillar of ritual service and Avraham represents the pillar of charitable acts. Seeing as

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

the Torah is compared to water, it represents the **“באר מים חיים”**, the true wellspring of life—the light of Hashem concealed by the earthly mundane elements of this world and covered up by dirt. Therefore, it is only through dedicated Torah study—following the example of Yaakov Avinu, the pillar of Torah—that we are able to reveal the “wellspring of life” and the divine spark hidden within the confines of this material, earthly existence.

Now, if we combine the teachings of the Chafetz Chaim with that of the Chidushei HaRim and the Sefas Emes, we will achieve a better understanding of HKB”H’s message to Moshe Rabeinu during the spectacle of the burning bush: **“אל תקרב הלום”**—it is unnecessary to climb up the mountain in order to connect with Hashem; **“של נעליך מעל רגליך”**—simply remove your shoes and any other barriers separating man from the divine spark contained within this earthly existence; in this manner you will appreciate: **“כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו ארמת קודש הוא”**—that this is the way to merit the revelation of that divine spark.

One could, however, argue that not everyone is capable of finding the divine spark concealed in this earthly existence. Therefore, HKB”H adds the following words of encouragement: **“ויאמר אנכי “אלקי אביך אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב”**—“**And He said, ‘I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov.’**” Each of the three Patriarchs dug a well in this world consistent with his particular attribute in order to reveal the divine spark hidden within these earthly confines; they did so to pave the way for future generations of Yisroel to follow in their paths and succeed as they did. In fact, the possuk attests to the fact that Moshe merited the revelation of Hashem’s divine light as he stood on that very spot—without moving any closer. For it states: **“וויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלקים”**—“**Moshe covered his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward G-d.**”

This also clarifies the comments of the Targum Yonasan regarding the possuk: **“כי המקום אשר “אתה עומד עליו ארמת קודש היא”**—“**for the land upon which you stand is holy ground.**” He taught us that this was the location where Yisroel were destined to receive the Torah, Har Sinai. As previously explained, the great success of the third well and its lack of controversy, were in the merit of Yaakov, the pillar of Torah; thus, it was able to reveal the divine spark—the **“באר מים חיים”**. So, Hashem informs Moshe that in the merit of the Torah that they would receive at that site, they would be able to reveal Hashem’s light that was concealed in this earthly existence.

HKB”H is Referred to as “מקום” because He Determines Man’s Place

Based on what we have discussed, I wish to propose an explanation for why HKB”H is often referred to by the title **“מקום”**—meaning “place.” Elucidating the possuk concerning Yaakov Avinu (Bereishis 28,11), the Midrash states:

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

“ויפגע במקום, רב הונא בשם רבי אמי אמר, מפני מה מכנין שמו של הקב”ה וקוראין אותו מקום, שהוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו, מן מה דכתיב (שמות לג כא) הנה מקום אתי, . . . He is the place of the world, the world is not His place. . .”

The Nefesh HaChaim (3,1) explains the meaning of the Midrash as follows:

“ולפי פשוטו רצונו לומר, כמו שהמקום הוא סובל ומחזיק איזה דבר וחפץ המונח עליו, כן בדמיון זה הבורא אדון כל יתברך שמו הוא המקום האמיתי הסובל ומקיים העולמות והבריות כולם, שאם ח”ו יסלק כוחו מהם אף רגע אחת, אפס מקום קיום וחיות כל העולמות, וכמו שכתוב ואתה מחיה את כולם, והוא פינת יסוד אמונת ישראל כמו שכתב הרמב”ם ז”ל בריש ספרו, ולכן קורא בזוהר לאדון כל יתברך שמו נשמתא דכל נשמתין, כמו שהנשמה מחיה ומקיימת הגוף.”

Just as a space tolerates and accommodates any object occupying that space, in a similar manner, the Creator, Blessed is He, is the true space tolerating and sustaining the existence of all of the worlds and creatures. If, chas v’chalilah, He would remove His sustaining force for even a single moment, these worlds would cease to exist.

This is the cornerstone of Yisroel’s belief and faith (as explained by the Rambam, z”l). Therefore, the Zohar refers to our blessed Master as “the soul of all souls”—for He sustains creation just as the soul sustains the body.

Still, why HKB”H is referred to as “מקום”, place, rather than “חיים”, life, or some other similar term, remains to be explained. So, I would like to suggest a novel idea. The reason that HKB”H is referred to as “מקום”—signifying that He is “the place of the world”—is because He determines each creature’s unique place in the universe. He determines where each person will live and what each person’s material and spiritual status will be, in order for that person to successfully accomplish his particular task and mission in this world.

So, whenever our blessed sages refer to HKB”H as “מקום”, they are teaching us that one must willfully accept one’s status and position in this world. After all, HKB”H is “מקומו של עולם”—“the place of the world”—indicating that he has determined and chosen for each person the appropriate place best suited for that person to fulfill his mission in this world.

We might suggest that this is why the possuk, concerning Yaakov Avinu, states: **“ויפגע במקום וילן”**—**“He encountered the place (hamakom) and spent the night there because the sun had set.”** The Midrash explains that he encountered HKB”H who is referred to as “מקום”. We must explain why the Torah chose to refer to HKB”H as “מקום” specifically in this instance. Based on our discussion above, it appears that the Torah is addressing a perplexing question. Since this place was the place of the Sanctuary on Har HaMoriah, why would Yaakov choose to sleep in such a holy place?

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

So, to answer this question, it tells us: **“ויפגע במקום”**—**“He encountered the place”**—he encountered HKB”H, who is referred to as **“מקום”**, place--because He determines the appropriate place for every creature to be. In this particular instance, the earth contracted so that Yaakov would end up in the place of the Sanctuary; furthermore, the sun miraculously set prior to its natural time to facilitate this encounter. As Rashi explains: **“ויפגע במקום, שקפצה לו הארץ... כי בא השמש, . . . the earth contracted for him . . . the sun set for him suddenly, not in its normal time, so that he should spend the night there.”** Due to these unusual occurrences, Yaakov Avinu understood that it was Hashem’s will that he rest there.

This provides us with a wonderful explanation for the Ashkenazic custom to console mourners with the formula: **“המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים”**—**“May the ‘Makom’ console you amongst the other mourners of Tziyon and Yerushalayim.”** Specifically, when we wish to console mourners, who have lost one of their seven closest family members, do we refer to HKB”H by the title **“מקום”**.

As we have learned, HKB”H is called **“מקום”**, because he determines the appropriate place for each individual. Therefore, only He is able to console you; only He knows when the appropriate time has arrived for a given individual to move on from this world to the world to come. Then we add: **“בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים”**—**“amongst the other mourners of Tziyon and Yerushalayim”**—HKB”H determines for them, as well, when the appropriate time has arrived to leave their places of exile and proceed to their destinations of redemption.

“Baruch Hamakom Baruch Hu”

How beautifully this helps us appreciate those well-known lines that we recite every seder night from the Pesach haggadah: **“ברוך המקום ברוך הוא, ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל ברוך הוא, כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה, אחד חכם, ואחד רשע, ואחד תם, ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול”**—**“Blessed is the Makom, blessed is He; blessed is He Who gave the Torah to His people, Yisroel, blessed is He. The Torah discusses four types of sons—one is wise, and one is evil, and one is simple and one who does not know how to formulate a question.”** Once again, we must explain why HKB”H is referred to as **“מקום”** in this instance.

Let us refer to the Gemorah (Bava Batra 16.) discussing Iyov’s statement to HKB”H: **“בראת צדיקים ובראת רשעים”**—**“You created righteous people and you created evil people.”** The author of the Tanya raises the following question in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 1): The Gemorah (Nidah 16:) teaches us that HKB”H determines before every person is born what he is destined to be-- **“גיבור או חלש, חכם או טיפש, עשיר או עני, ואילו רשע או צדיק לא קאמר”**—**“strong or weak, wise or foolish, rich or poor; however, it does not mention evil or righteous.”** If so, how does Iyov make the statement **“You created righteous people and you created evil people”**?

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Shemos

He answers (ibid. Chapter 27) that the Gemorah did not mean that HKB”H actually created people righteous or evil; rather, He created people with tendencies to be righteous and, similarly, people with powerful yetzer horas whose natural inclination is to be evil. Most certainly, though, every one of them still has the freedom of choice to act one way or the other; utilizing the power of Torah, the antidote for the yetzer hora, everyone is able to overcome the evil inclination—according to each individual’s abilities.

In this manner, we can interpret the verses instituted by the author of the haggadah: **ברוך המקום** “ברוך הוא—Blessed is He Who determines each person’s unique place and status in this world to best allow one to perfect one’s soul and correct one’s flaws; **ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל ברוך** “ברוך הוא—Blessed is He Who gave us the Torah, with which the world was created, whose study allows one to find his proper place and, thus, to overcome his yetzer; finally, this provides us with the intelligence to understand that: **כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה, אחד חכם, ואחד רשע, ואחד** **ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול**—each of the four categories of sons has his own special place determined for him by HKB”H—who is referred to as “מקום”—a place appropriate for him to engage in Torah study and remedy his soul.