

## The Final Letters of **שְׁלַח לְךָ אֲנָשִׁים** Spell חכם A Jew Devoted to the Torah Merits an Existence Referred to as “Teva Chacham”

In this week’s parsha, we read the following (Bamidbar 13, 2): **“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, שלח לך אנשים ויתורו את ארץ כנען אשר אני נותן לך:—Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, “Send forth for yourself men, and let them spy out Eretz Canaan that I give to Bnei Yisrael. The Ba’al HaTurim notes that the final letters of the three words “שְׁלַח לְךָ אֲנָשִׁים” form the word “חכם”—meaning wise. This suggests that HKB”H was giving Moshe a powerful hint. The key to assisting the spies with the difficult mission that faced them and helping the people better appreciate the merits of the Promised Land was conveyed by the word “חכם”. Let us examine the message conveyed by the word “חכם”.**

Let us begin our explanation of the Ba’al HaTurim’s comment by presenting a vital principle from the great Rabbi Yitzchak Arama, ztz”l, the author of Akeidas Yitzchak, a commentary on the Torah. The great Gaon Chida, ztz”l, describes him as “the divine philosopher.”

### “Teva Mefursam” and “Teva Chacham”

This vital principle concerns the subject of how G-d manages the world: (a) according to the laws of nature—“teva”—or (b) beyond the realm of nature—which we commonly refer to as a miracle or “nes.” It is essential that every Jew believe that the Almighty utilizes two distinct forms of nature to run the universe. The first method is known as “teva mefursam” or “teva pashut”—because it is familiar and recognized by all. This form of nature is seemingly mindless, because it follows the orderly laws of nature established by the blessed Creator during the six days of creation. Fire burns, water drowns, the strong defeat the weak, and so on and so forth.

Yet, there is a second system in operation in the universe—superior and exalted—known as “teva chacham.” This system functions with wisdom and intellect changing itself based on the needs of Torah scholars and those who serve Hashem. When Chazal stated that HKB”H made a pact with the sea obligating it to split before Yisrael during the exodus from Mitzrayim, it was this second method at play. In other words, for the people of

Yisrael, Hashem’s loyal servants, “teva chacham” is revealed. It discerns what Yisrael needs and adjusts itself accordingly.

Now, throughout the Tanach and the Gemara, we find that miracles and wonders were performed on behalf of tzaddikim. Additionally, miracles defying the laws of nature have been performed in every generation for those deserving few. To mankind these acts appear to be miracles classified as supernatural. In truth, however, it is only because we are accustomed to the world being conducted according to the method of “teva mefursam”—where everything has its predictable place and behavior, established during the six days of creation. Consequently, when something deviates from this predictable, familiar behavior, we refer to it as a “nes” or supernatural phenomenon.

Yet, to those who are wise and recognize the formidable, awesome ways of Hashem, these phenomena are understood to fall entirely within the realm of nature—not the realm of nature, however, familiar to all, but the second form of nature known as “teva chacham.” As explained, this method discerns between the righteous and the wicked, and between those who serve Hashem and those who do not.

Applying this concept, he explains Rashi’s comment (Bereishis 1, 1): **“בראשית ברא אלקים, ולא אמר ברא ה’, שבתחלה עלה במחשבה לבראותו במדת הדין וראה שאין העולם מתקיים, והקדים מדת רחמים ושתפה למדת הדין, והיינו דכתיב ביום עשות ה’ אלקים ארץ ושמים”** Rashi distinguishes between the use of the names “Elokim” and “Hashem” (Havaya) during the process of creation. The former name suggests that the attribute of “din”—strict judgment—is operative; while the latter suggests that the attribute of “rachamim”—mercy—is operative. The name “Elokim” suggesting “din” is associated with the first form of nature—that functions in a predictable manner without apparent deviation, e.g. the fire burns and the water drowns.

In contrast, the name Havaya suggesting “rachamim” is associated with the second form of nature, “teva chacham”—which is discerning and adjusts itself for the sake of those who

sincerely serve Hashem. Hence, wherever this second form of nature is operative—as it was with Eliyahu at Har HaKarmel—Scriptures employs the name Hashem (Melachim I 18, 39): ה' הוא "Hashem, He is the G-d. Hashem is "Elokim." Hashem has the power to reveal the second form of nature—associated with the blessed name Havaya—by altering the laws of nature associated with the name "Elokim."

This is the message conveyed by Rashi: שבתחלה עלה במחשבה "לבראותו במדת הדין"—at first, Hashem considered creating the world based on a system of "din"—strict judgment—referring to the first form of nature that operates predictably, with consistency and without deviation. "וראה שאין העולם מתקיים"—He saw that the world could not survive employing this method alone; for Yisrael to survive, nature must perforce change itself occasionally. For instance, the fire in the furnace would not consume Avraham or Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah; the sea would not envelop and drown the six hundred thousand members of Yisrael escaping from Mitzrayim through its midst; the hungry lions would not harm Daniel.

Consequently, "והקדים מדת הרחמים"—the attribute of "rachamim" was given precedence. Here Rashi is referring to the second form of nature, "teva chacham"—that wisely accommodates itself for the sake of Torah scholars and those dedicated to serve Hashem. "ושתבה למדת הדין"—both methods are operative in nature. For regular people, "teva mefursam" is operative—it operates without deviation and does not alter itself under any circumstances. For Torah scholars and those dedicated to serve Hashem, however, "teva chacham" is operative; it adjusts itself accordingly to their needs.

### "Teva Chacham" Is Not Miraculous

In parshat Beshalach, the author of the Akeidah applies this concept to interpret that which is written concerning "krias yam suf" (Shemos 14, 15): ויאמר ה' אל משה מה תצעק אלי דבר אל בני ישראל "ויאמר ה' אל משה מה תצעק אלי דבר אל בני ישראל—Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them journey." Hashem's question to Moshe—"Why do you cry out to Me?"—seems surprising. After all, it is the leader of Yisrael's job and responsibility to pray on behalf of Yisrael. Nevertheless, we can provide an explanation. For those who are dedicated to serve Hashem like Moshe Rabeinu, a"h, the second form of nature known as "teva chacham" is operative. It functions intelligently and reasonably, altering itself to accommodate the needs of Yisrael. Hence, there was no need for Moshe to pray; it was totally natural for the sea to split before Yisrael.

Therefore, we find many miracles that occurred for the sake of Yisrael's leaders and select individuals without any intervening

prayers. For example, Yehoshua ordered the sun to stand still in the middle of the day, as it is written (Yehoshua 10, 12): ויאמר "לעיני ישראל שמש בגבעון דום וירח בעמק אילון"—and he said before the eyes of Yisrael, "Sun, stand still in Givon, and moon, in the Valley of Ayalon." Similarly, we find in the Gemara (Chullin 7a) that when Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair went to perform the mitzvah of "pidyon shevuyim"—ransoming of captives—he needed to cross the Ginai River. So, he issued the following proclamation: אם אי אתה חולק גוזרני עליך שלא יעברו בך מים לעולם—**if you do not part on my behalf, I decree that water shall not flow in you for the rest of time.** Subsequently, the river split for him.

A similar incident is recorded in the Gemara (Ta'anis 25a) involving Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa. He saw that his daughter was sad; so he inquired:

בתי אמאי עציבת, אמרה ליה כלי של חומץ נתחלף לי בכלי של שמן והדלקתי ממנו אור לשבת. אמר לה בתי מאי איכפת לך, מי שאמר לשמן וידלוק הוא יאמר לחומץ וידלוק. תנא היה דולק והולך כל היום כולו עד שהביאו ממנו אור להבדלה. **My daughter, why are you sad?** She replied: "I mistook a container of vinegar for a container of oil, and I lit the Shabbat light with it." He said to her: "My daughter, what does it matter to you? He who commanded oil to burn, He will order the vinegar to burn." A Tanna taught: **It continued to burn the entire day until they used it to light the Havdalah flame.**

Thus, we see that these miraculous, wondrous events occurred without any intervening prayers. For, what transpired for them was not in the realm of the supernatural. Rather, for these select individuals a novel, second form of nature exists—"teva chacham." It knows how to adjust itself to the needs of tzaddikim and those who serve Hashem loyally. This is the gist of the Akeidah's concept.

### Miracles beyond the Realm of Nature Occur Only When Man Is Undeserving

We learn from the author of the Akeidah that there is really no such thing as a "nes"—a miracle. What we witness, in fact, is nature itself acting with intelligence and reason. So, when we find that Chazal utilize terms such as "נסים ונפלאות"—**miracles and wonders**—referring to supernatural phenomena, they are referring to acts that occur on behalf of simple, ordinary people. For them, only the first form of nature exists—nature that is consistent and does not deviate from its norm.

Nevertheless, we must endeavor to understand why we often find that it was necessary to pray for a miracle to occur on Yisrael's behalf. For instance, on Purim, Esther instructed Mordechai: לך כנוס את כל היהודים וצומו עלי—gather all of the Jews together and fast for me. The entire Tanach is replete with instances of Yisrael

praying in times of urgent need for HKB”H to perform a miracle on their behalf. Additionally, we must endeavor to understand Chazal’s statement that a person should not rely on a “nes”; for, if a “nes” is performed on his behalf, it is deducted from his merits and assets. This seems difficult to understand in light of the Akeidah’s concept that a “nes” is merely a second form of nature. So, why is a person penalized if a “nes” is performed on his behalf?

Let us explain the matter. Whether worldly matters are conducted in accordance with the first form of nature or the second depends on man’s deeds. When man follows his basic human nature—he does not alter his yetzer or his inherent inclinations, he eats and drinks and satisfies his physical earthly desires—then HKB”H treats him in the same manner; his life is conducted according to the first form of nature, where things are predictable, constant and do not deviate. On the other hand, if a person does not follow his innate nature to pursue material pleasures but instead reigns over his human inclinations and strives to eat and satisfy his physical needs solely for the sake of Heaven, then HKB”H responds in kind, “midah k’neged midah.” For such a person, HKB”H reveals the second form of nature—“teva chacham”—which alters itself according to the needs of Hashem’s loyal followers.

This coincides with what we have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 20a): **אמר ליה רב פפא לאבבי, מאי שנה ראשונים דאתרחיש להו**—Rav Papa asks Abaye: Why were miracles performed on behalf of the earlier generations and not for our generation? Rav Papa adds that it cannot be because they learned more Torah; for he proves that their generation learned more Torah. He goes on to inquire regarding the absence of rainfall. Why did it suffice in previous generations for Rav Yehudah to merely remove one shoe, illustrating his distress and discomfort, and the rains fell immediately; whereas we suffer and pray and cry out all day long without results?

Abaye responds: **קמאי הוו קא מסרי נפשיהו אקדושת השם, אנן לא מסרינן נפשינן אקדושת השם**—in other words, because the earlier generations sacrificed their lives to serve Hashem beyond the realm of nature, consequently it was natural for nature to alter its behavior on their behalf. We, on the other hand, do not serve Hashem beyond the scope of nature, therefore we are limited to the first form of natural existence. To alter the laws of nature demands numerous and lengthy prayers.

### The Revelation of “Teva Chacham” by Avraham Avinu a”h

In Derashos Aryeh (Bereishis 2), he explains very nicely how the alteration of nature for the sake of Yisrael, who observe

the Torah, is actually the true form of nature. He bases this conclusion on the words of the prophet (Yirmiyah 33, 25): **כה אמר ה' אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה חקות שמים וארץ לא שמתי—Thus said Hashem: If My covenant with the night and with the day would not be; had I not set up the laws of heaven and earth . . .** Concerning this covenant and these laws, we have learned in the Gemara (A.Z. 3a): **שהתנה הקב"ה עם מעשה בראשית ואמר, אם ישראל—HKB”H made the continued existence of nature and all of creation contingent on Yisrael’s acceptance of His Torah. Yisrael, Hashem’s loyal servants, sustain and perpetuate all of creation.**

It is evident throughout creation that the Almighty instilled a will to survive in all creatures—to the point that all living creatures pursue their sustenance and endeavor to insure their continued existence. Even a young newborn possesses a strong desire to live and seeks that which nourishes it. This desire to live and survive is an inherent part of nature.

We have learned that if Yisrael—those who observe and fulfill the tenets of the Torah—did not exist in the world, the world along with all of nature would cease to exist. We can conclude, therefore, that Yisrael’s survival and continued existence also represents the continued existence of nature. So, clearly, whenever Yisrael’s survival demands an alteration or upheaval of the natural realm, nature is programmed to act accordingly to insure its own survival. It is no wonder that all of the heavenly bodies and constellations are subservient to those who learn Torah and serve Hashem; for, it is they who sustain and perpetuate all of nature.

Applying this notion, the great author of Shu”t Kol Aryeh explains in his compilation Pesach Tov the significance of Rashi’s comment in parshat Lech Lecha (Bereishis 12, 1): **לך לך, להנאתך, ושם אעשך לגוי גדול, כאן אי אתה זוכה לבנים, ועוד שאודיע טבעך ולטובתך, ושם אעשך לגוי גדול, כאן אי אתה זוכה לבנים, ועוד שאודיע טבעך**—**go for your own pleasure and benefit; there I will transform you into a great nation; here you will not have the privilege of having children; furthermore, I will make your nature known throughout the world.** We can infer from Rashi’s comment that the second form of nature—“teva chacham”—that operates with intelligent desire, began to function in the world with Avraham Avinu.

Accordingly, we find that the laws of nature established at the beginning of creation were altered for his sake. Although, he was thrown into the fiery furnace, the fire had no effect on him. He fathered a son at the age of one hundred, while his wife Sarah was already ninety years old. He waged battle against four kings and was victorious. This is the meaning of HKB”H’s statement to Avraham: **“שאודיע טבעך בעולם”--I will make your nature known throughout the world.** I will make it known throughout the

world that a form of nature associated with Avraham exists in the world. It is the second form of nature known as “teva chacham”; it adjusts itself accordingly to the needs of those who serve Hashem.

In similar fashion, he explains the words of Targum Onkelos in parshat Beshalach on the passuk in Shiras HaYam (Shemos 15, 8): “**וְבִרְוַח אֶפְרַיִם נִעְרְמוּ מֵיָם, וּבְמִימֵר פּוֹמֵךְ הַכִּימוּ מֵיָא**” The passuk employs the term “**נִעְרְמוּ**” which derives from the word **עֲרָמָה** suggesting cunning and wisdom. Based on what we have learned, Onkelos is teaching us that the sea acted according to the second form of nature, “teva chacham.” It cleverly and purposely split on behalf of Yisrael and returned to its previous state to drown the Egyptians. The Targum conveys this fact with the words **הַכִּימוּ מֵיָא**; it acted with intelligence and purpose; it demonstrated the system of “teva chacham.”

### Raise Your Eyes to the Heavens and Recognize Your Creator

Let us continue to explain how it is possible to merit an existence based on the system of “teva chacham.” The prophet says (Yeshayah 40, 26): “**שָׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ מִי בָרָא אֱלֹהִים**”—**raise your eyes heavenward and see Who created these.** At first glance, it is not quite clear what the prophet is demanding. Surely, enough wonders exist down on earth to demonstrate G-d’s presence and to recognize that He is the Creator.

Nevertheless, the prophet is conveying a very deep point. If a person wishes to gaze upon creation and to reveal “**מִי בָרָא אֱלֹהִים**”—**Who created all of this**—it is essential to elevate one’s physical eyes and view the world with spiritual eyes. To reveal the true essence of creation requires this perspective. This is the prophet’s intended message: “**שָׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם**”—you must view the world from a spiritual vantage point in order to ascertain the truth.

In fact, this is the first principle we mentioned above. The world and nature reveal themselves to us according to the way we view and perceive them. If man chooses to see the world through physical, material eyes, then he will only perceive the physical, superficial world referred to as “teva pashut.” This world functions constantly according to the same laws for all creatures.

Yet, if man chooses to see the world through the spiritual eyes of his inner soul, he will successfully perceive the inner soul of creation known as “teva chacham.” Thus, he will have the privilege of exposing the magnificent world managed directly by the Almighty—the phenomenon of “hashgachah peratit.” He will recognize the hand of HKB”H in every event and occurrence—how HKB”H manipulates nature to conduct the world with unbelievable wisdom. Like David HaMelech, he will proclaim (Tehillim 104, 24): **מָה רָבוּ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה’ כֹּלֵם בַּחֲכֹמָה עָשִׂיתָ מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ**

**“קִינִיךָ—how abundant are Your works, Hashem! You made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of Your possessions.**

How nicely this explains the following allusion in the Gemara (Chagigah 2a): “**סוּמָא בִּאֲחַת מֵעֵינָיו בְּטוֹר מִן הָרְאִייה**”—**a person who is blind in one eye is exempt from the obligation of appearing in the Beit HaMikdash on the “regalim.”** Chazal are providing us with a beautiful allusion. It does not suffice for a person to view the world from a purely material vantage point (one eye) alone; he must view the world with two eyes—from a dual vantage point. He must see the world from a spiritual perspective in order to recognize the neshamah of the creation. **“A person who is blind in one eye,”** however, who is only able to see the world from a material perspective: **“is exempt from the obligation of appearing in the Beit HaMikdash on the “regalim.”** It is preferable that he not look at all; for, no matter how much he looks, he will only see things superficially.

### Man’s Behavior Determines How the World Is Conducted

From what has been said, we understand that the way we view the world actually determines how it interacts with us. When a person sees the world from a spiritual vantage point, not only does he perceive the inner neshamah of creation, but he merits an existence based on a form of nature known as “teva chacham”—which adjusts itself to his needs. In contrast, when man views the world from a purely materialistic vantage point, he only perceives the physical, superficial aspects of the world known as “teva pashut.” Consequently, he experiences the world according to this system and has no way of overcoming simple and often cruel natural occurrences.

This concept is reflected by Chazal’s interpretation of the passuk (Tehillim 121, 5): “**ה’ צֶלֶךְ**”—**Hashem is your shadow.** The Almighty mirrors man like his shadow. Just as a person’s shadow mirrors his actions; so, too, HKB”H treats man according to how he himself behaves.

Now, we know that Hashem only created the world for the sake of man. As it is written: **בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ** and Rashi remarks: “**בְּשִׁבְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ רֵאשִׁית**”—Yisrael is referred to as “reishit.” Thus, the opening passuk of the Torah is interpreted as a statement that G-d created the heavens and the earth for the sake of Yisrael. Man is the central focus of the universe. Therefore, the entire world appears exactly as man appears.

Accordingly, before the sin of Adam HaRishon, when man was as virtuous as the ministering angels, the world was also more spiritual and splendidous. Plants emerged from the ground effortlessly, without thorns and thistle. All of the animals were

subservient to Adam HaRishon. After he sinned, however, and transgressed his Creator's command, he fell from that high spiritual peak. Along with him, all of creation experienced a spiritual descent—from a spiritual pinnacle to a spiritual nadir. As a consequence, the following decrees were issued: **“בזיעת אפיו תאכל”** “קוץ ודרדר תצמח לו” **“by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread”** and **“thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you.”**

So, we see that the universe is man's mirror. If man behaves wisely, recognizing his Maker and knowing his proper place, the universe behaves accordingly. It follows the system known as “teva chacham”—adjusting itself to man's needs. On the other hand, if man acts foolishly, wasting his spiritual powers merely to satisfy his bodily lusts, the universe will not interact with him according to the system of “teva chacham.” Instead, it will follow the ordinary “teva pashut”—a system lacking intelligence.

### The Meraglim's Epic Mistake: It Is Only Possible to Serve Hashem Properly in the Wilderness

Following this line of reasoning, let us address a question that has puzzled the commentaries. The meraglim were not ordinary people; they were tzaddikim and men of stature. As it states explicitly: **“כולם אנשים ראשי בני ישראל המה”**—**they were all distinguished men; heads of Bnei Yisrael were they.** Rashi provides the following clarification: **“כל אנשים שבמקרא לשון חשיבות ואותה שעה כשרים היו”**—**whenever Scripture uses the word אנשים it is expressing importance; at that moment in time, they were virtuous.** Simple logic would dictate that as the princes and heads of the twelve tribes, they were not simple, ordinary men; they were the elite of the people. This begs the question: How could men of such high stature fall to such depths—rebellious against Hashem and speaking ill of Eretz Yisrael?

Our holy sources point out, however, that the meraglim mistakenly believed that they could only serve Hashem properly and dedicate their lives to Torah in the “midbar.” For, in the “midbar,” they did not need to occupy themselves with mundane, worldly pursuits. For instance, the “mahn” fell from the heavens providing them with their daily bread. In Eretz Yisrael, the “mahn” would cease to fall and they would be required to work their fields and vineyards. As a result, they would no longer be free to engage in Torah study and to serve Hashem as completely. This logic prompted them to attempt to thwart Yisrael's entrance into Eretz Yisrael.

Notwithstanding, there was a major flaw in their logic. In truth, it is Hashem's will that man occupies himself in worldly matters and dedicates them to the service of Hashem. It is precisely for this reason that HKB”H created man as an amalgam of two distinctly opposite components. Man's physical body comes from the soil of the earth—from this world; after forming man's body, G-d blew a living, heavenly neshamah into his nostrils. This unique combination indicates that man is meant to serve Hashem with both elements of this world and elements of the world to come simultaneously. The way to accomplish this feat is to have in mind that all human activities one performs are solely for the sake of Hashem. It is precisely for this reason that HKB”H brought Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael—the land flowing with milk and honey. He intended for them to occupy themselves with matters of this world dedicated exclusively for the sake of Heaven.

If we view their actions in light of the author of the Akeidah's amazing concept, we gain an even better understanding of the magnitude of their error. While it is true that spending too much time dealing with everyday, worldly matters interferes with Torah study and the service of Hashem, it is only true if one does not engage in Torah study appropriately. In that event, a person only merits an existence based on “teva pashut”—which does not discern a person's needs. Yet, if a Jew accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, he merits an existence based on “teva chacham”—which accommodates itself to all of a Jew's needs. As a consequence, his need to deal with affairs of this world is minimized. In the words of Chazal (Berachos 32b): **“מתוך שחסידים הם, תורתן משתמרת ומלאכתן מתברכת”**—**because they are pious, their Torah is protected and their work is blessed.**

The meaning of the Ba'al HaTurim's allusion is now quite clear: the final letters of the three words **“שלח לך אנשים”** form the word **“הכחם”**. HKB”H was warning them not to mistakenly believe that it would be impossible to serve Him properly in Eretz Yisrael—due to the demands of everyday life and a natural existence. For, if they prove to be deserving and serve Hashem beyond the realm of nature, they will merit an everyday existence based on “teva chacham”—which conforms to Yisrael's needs. Their work will be blessed and they will not need to spend too much time dealing with worldly matters.

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