

That I shall sharpen the shine of My sword and My hand shall grasp judgment. (32:41)

“My hand shall grasp judgment.” *Chazal* (quoted by *Rashi*) derive from the language of this *pasuk* (concerning the concept of “grasping” judgment), “Not like the attributes of flesh and blood (mortals) is the attribute of Hashem. Once a human being shoots an arrow, once he releases the bow, he is unable to take it back. Hashem, however, shoots His arrows and has the power to retrieve them (before they hit their intended target). It is as if He holds them in His hand (*ochazon b’yado*).” *Rashi* is teaching us is that no restrictions limit Hashem’s power. He is not restricted in any way. This homiletic rendering of the *pasuk* imparts an ethical lesson: i.e., Hashem’s power supersedes that of a doctor’s diagnoses, it is never too late; we can and should hope for a reversal of a diagnosis. Prayer has awesome power. When we petition Hashem, we attest to this verity: “Hashem, I know that at any time You can retract the ‘arrow.’ I plead with You to do so. Allow my prayer, accompanied by remorse and repentance to be the medium for achieving atonement.” With Hashem, we always have hope.

We can also derive a *halachic* ramification from this *pasuk*. The *Talmud* (*Taanis* 29a) teaches that the conflagration of the *Bais Hamikdash* occurred – not on the ninth of *Av* – but rather, on the following day. This prompts Rabbi Yochanan to declare that had he been alive when the fast was established, he would have argued for it to be held on the tenth of *Av*. The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, makes a cogent observation based upon the passage in the *Talmud Bava Kamma* 22a, which states that *isho mishum chitzo*, “his fire is like his arrow,” which means that, when one starts a fire, it is like releasing an arrow from the bow: whatever the fire consumes is included in the original lighting of the flame. Similar to releasing an arrow, the deed is considered done, even though a short time has elapsed between the release of the arrow and its striking the target. Therefore, even though the *Bais Hamikdash* burned on the tenth of *Av*, the fire was started on the ninth. Since everything goes according to the beginning of the action that initiated the fire, how could Rabbi Yochanan contend that he would have established the fast day for the tenth of *Av*? [This *halachic sevara*, logic, is consistent with the opinion of the *Nemukei Yosef*, who explains why one is allowed to light candles *Erev Shabbos*, which continue to burn on *Shabbos*. Since we hold *isho meshum chitzo*, the burning on *Shabbos* is considered to have all been completed with the initial lighting prior to *Shabbos*.]

Horav Baruch Shimon Shneerson, zl, quotes *Horav Moshe, zl, m’Boyan*, who employs the above *Rashi* to answer the *Kotzker’s* question. *Isho mishum chitzo* applies to human action, because, once a person releases the arrow, it is unstoppable. He cannot prevent it from hitting its mark. Thus, the entire action is complete in his release of the arrow. Not so, Hashem, Who has control over everything, and, at any time, can stop the arrow’s flight. Therefore, when the fire was lit on the ninth of *Av*, Hashem could have prevented it from burning on the next day. The fact that He did not is reason, according to Rabbi Yochanan, to declare the fast on that day.