LIKKUTEI SICHOS AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

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BAMIDBAR

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

(cid:129)

Volume IX: Bamidbar

(cid:129)

In English rendition by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

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PUBLISHER’S FOREWORD

By the Grace of G-d

In the continuing effort to bring the discourses and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson — the seventh Rebbe of Chabad — to the worldwide English- speaking public, we hereby present the eighth volume of “Likkutei Sichos” — a free translation from the Yiddish original\* of Likkutei Sichos volume 4 — on chumash Bamidbar. There has been a great and urgent demand of translations of the works of the Rebbe Melech Hamoshiach. The first volumes of Likkutei Sichos in English were received with great enthusiasm. It is hoped that this volume, too, will help bring the Rebbe’s teachings within the reach of those for whom they have been the “dissemination of the fountains” of Chassidus unlocked by Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov. Thus it will be instrumental in the actualization and realization of the ultimate goal — the complete and final redemption.

inaccessible,

increasing

thereby

With the publication of this volume we join Jews the world over with our fervent prayer that speedily in our days we should witness the fulfillment of the prophecy “And those who repose in the dust will arise and sing” and the Rebbe should redeem us.

Vaad L’Hafotzas Sichos

Erev Yud Shvat, 5757 Brooklyn, NY

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ \*

It should be noted that, as in all translations, despite the effort of the translator and editors, a possibility of inadvertent error exists. For this the translator and editors accept full responsibility.

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TRANSLATOR’S FOREWORD

DESERT JOURNEYS

The name Bamidbar means “in the desert.” This name was chosen because the book begins with a command related by G-d to Moshe “in the desert.” Similarly, it is in that locale that all the other narratives described in the book take place.

Bamidbar is also called Sefer HaPikudim, “the book of Numbers,” for it describes several of the censuses taken of the Jewish people. The Rebbe explains that a census focuses on the fundamental point of the soul, the dimension of our being which is “an actual part of G-d.”1 On this level, all Jews are counted equally; no one is given greater importance than another. Taking a census activates that potential, stirring it into expression.

It is through the expression of this potential that we — as a people and as individuals — can weather the challenges of the journey through “the desert,” a place unfit for human habitation. A desert lacks water, an metaphor for the Torah. But because the essence of the Jewish soul transcends the Torah, it can bring life to such an arid place, and indeed, bring water, Torah, to it.

The Jews’ journey through the desert is employed as an allusion for our people’s struggles in exile. And in this con- text, the same concept also applies: the challenges of the exile can be overcome by stirring the essence of the Jewish soul.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Tanya, ch. 2.

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This highlights the importance of studying Likkutei Sichos. The teachings it contains are not merely interesting ideas explaining the weekly Torah readings. They are that — but most fundamentally, they are the Rebbe’s teachings.

In person, the Rebbe was able — and continues — to ignite the essential Jewish connection which every Jew pos- sesses. When a Jew came to the Rebbe, he came away inspired. He didn’t necessarily understand why, but a soul connection was created, and this motivated him to greater Jewish expression.

This applies also to the Rebbe’s teachings. The Rebbe invested himself in his work, and his teachings reach to a Jew’s core and stir its expression.

A UNIFIED CAMP

When traveling through a desert, unity is of fundamental importance. A person must learn to view a colleague, not as a rival, but as a resource and a partner. This perspective was certainly relevant in the composition of this text, for it fused together the efforts of many different contributors.

The full list of all those who contributed is too long to mention, but notice should be made of the following: Eliyahu Touger who was responsible for the translation, Gershom Gale who did the editing, Rabbi Aharon Leib Raskin who annotated the sources and checked the authenticity of the translation, Yosef Yitzchok Turner who provided the layout and topography, Uri Kaploun who was always available for counsel and guidance, and Rabbi Yonah Avtzon, Director of Sichos In English, who supervised every phase of the project’s development.

EYES TO THE HORIZON

A journey through a desert is not a pleasure gaunt. It is a mission with a purpose. Otherwise, it would simply not be

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worth it. The Jews passed through the desert to enter Eretz Yisrael, and our journey through the desert of exile is in- tended to bring us to the heights of the Redemption.

In this vein, the teachings of the Rebbe are also signifi- cant, for they are a foretaste of the teachings of Mashiach and enable us to anticipate and precipitate the coming of that future era.

May the study of the Rebbe’s teachings encourage us all to take our part in shouldering the mission of spiritual purpose which the Rebbe taught. And may this in turn lead to overtly apparent good and blessing, including the ultimate blessing, the coming of the Redemption, and the fulfillment of the prophecy,2 “And those who repose in the dust will arise and sing,” with the Rebbe at our head.

Sichos In English

Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5757

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 2. Yeshayahu 26:19.

,ujha hyuek

rcsnc

1

BAMIDBAR

THE COUNTDOWN

Every year, we read the portion of Bamidbar before the holiday of Shavuos.1 The reason given is to interpose a Shab- bos between the rebuke of Parshas Bechukosai and the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. Nevertheless, since all Torah matters are characterized by precise detail, it follows that there must be an intrinsic connection between Bamidbar and the coming holiday,2 and that this reading contains a lesson that prepares us to receive the Torah.3

Parshas Bamidbar speaks primarily of a census of the Jewish people. Indeed, because of this reckoning, and the census described in Parshas Pinchas,4 the entire book is referred to as Numbers.5 Herein lies the connection to Shavuos. For as reflected in the mitzvah of counting the omer

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Tosafos, entry Kilallos ShebeToras Kohanim, Megillah 31b. 2. For example, Parshas Nitzavim is always read before Rosh HaShanah to inter- pose between the rebuke of Parshas Ki Savo and the celebration of Rosh HaShanah (Tosafos, op. cit.). There is, nevertheless, an intrinsic connection to the two, as reflected in the interpretation (Likkutei Torah, the beginning of Parshas Nitzavim) that the opening verse of that Torah reading, “You are standing today,” refers to Rosh HaShanah.

3. The fact that, at times, Parshas Naso is also read before Shavuos (and Parshas Vayeilech is at times read before Rosh HaShanah) does not present a difficulty. For there are times when additional preparation is necessary before Shavuos (and Rosh HaShanah). Bamidbar and Nitzavim, by contrast, contain prepara- tory lessons which are absolutely necessary for the commemoration of the holiday. See Rashi’s commentary, Yoma 68b.

4. 5. Yoma, loc. cit.

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before that holiday,6 counting serves as a preparation for this holiday.

What is unique about counting? How does counting pre-

pare us for the giving of the Torah?

NEVER TO BE NULLIFIED

The Midrash7 explains that G-d desired a census of the Jewish people because He treasures them. It continues with an analogy: “The Jews can be compared to a grainheap. Just as grain is counted when it is brought into the silo, so too the Holy One, blessed be He, wished that the Jews be counted at all times.”

The wording of the Midrash is somewhat problematic. Grain is dear to a mortal; he counts his harvest so that he will know how much grain he has. This does not apply with regard to G-d; He always knows how many Jews there are. Why then does He require that they be counted?

The Sheloh8 as quoted in Chassidus9 states that the Jews are counted to endow them with the status of a davar she- biminyan, an entity which is counted.10 For our Sages comment:11 “An entity which is counted can never be nulli- fied.”

To illustrate the concept with a halachic analogy: When one part of a forbidden substance is mixed with more than 60 parts of kosher food, the forbidden entity is considered batul, ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 6.

See the sichos to Parshas Shemini and Parshas Emor in this series, where these concepts are explained.

7. Bamidbar Rabbah 1:4; see Rashi’s commentary at the beginning of this Torah

reading.

8. Cheilek Torah Shebichsav, p. 347a. 9.

See the maamar entitled Tzohar Taaseh LaTeivah, 5673. See also the sichah to Parshas Shmos in this series where the concept is explained. 10. I.e., items which are sold in units, and not by weight or volume. 11. Beitzah 3b; Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 110:1. If such items become mixed with other foods, they do not become batul, even though they are mixed with more than 60 times their volume.

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nullified. Similarly, one could think that the Jewish people, “one lamb among 70 wolves,”12 might become nullified. Nev- ertheless, by commanding that the Jewish people be counted, G-d endowed them with the importance inherent to “an en- tity that is counted,” and this prevents their existence from being nullified.

This rationale, however, is also insufficient. The reason “an entity which is counted can never be nullified” is because it possesses inherent significance. The fact that it is counted merely reflects the importance which exists; it does not pro- duce it.

To refer to the analogue: The Jewish people are in essence important and worthy of being counted. Even if they were not counted, they would remain important. So why was it neces- sary for them to be actually numbered?

FUSING THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Since Parshas Bamidbar serves as a preparation for the giving of the Torah, the above questions can be answered by considering the change brought about by the event at Mount Sinai.

The giving of the Torah created a connection between the material and the spiritual.13 Before Sinai, mitzvos did not affect the objects with which they were performed; they did not endow them with lasting holiness. The giving of the Torah effected a change, empowering the Jewish people to sanctify the material aspects of existence through the observance of mitzvos.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 12. Esther Rabbah 10:11; Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Toldos, sec. 5. See also Yoma

69b.

13. See the exegesis of the verse (Shir HaShirim 1:3): “Your oils are fragrant,” in Shir HaShirim Rabbah. Note also the sichah to Parshas Lech Lecha in this series, where this concept is explained.

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The object of the Jews’ Divine service after the giving of the Torah is to make the world holy, to transform it into a dwelling for G-d. For this reason, the importance of the Jew- ish people must be expressed in a way that can be appreciated by the material world. Even were the virtue of the Jewish people to be solely spiritual, this virtue could never be nulli- fied within the worldly environment, for there is no way that any worldly circumstance can prevent a Jew from carrying out his Divine service. But in such an instance, the Jews’ vir- tue would not influence their environment.

When the Jews were actually counted, their inherent vir- tue was expressed by an activity that could be appreciated within the material world. This enabled that virtue to have an effect within the world.

On this basis, we can understand the connection between Parshas Bamidbar and the giving of the Torah. Taking a cen- sus of the Jews expressed their importance in a material way. This empowered the people to continue in their Divine serv- ice within the material plane, and make this world a dwelling for G-d.

CONQUERING THE WORLD

The above explanation also helps us understand why the census involved only those above the age of 20.14 On the sur- face, every Jew should have been counted, for the act endowed each with the power of “an entity that is counted,” preventing nullification among the gentiles. Why then was the census limited to those above 20?

This question can be resolved by focusing on the differ- ence between the Divine service performed by a Jew before he reaches the age of 20 and that performed afterwards. Before 20, a Jew’s primary efforts are centered on Torah study. Starting at age five, he must spend five years studying the ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 14. See Bamidbar 1:3.

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Written Law, and then five years studying the Mishnah, and then five years studying the Talmud.15

Torah study is directed primarily inward; the intent is not to change the world, but to change oneself.16 Indeed, with regard to intellectual understanding in general, there is an advantage in solitude.

At the age of 20, by contrast, a person becomes outwardly oriented, his efforts center on “pursuit.”14 And at this age, a person becomes obligated for military service, i.e., he must go out to war to conquer the world. This is the spiritual parallel of the command:17 “Be fruitful and multiply; fill up the world and conquer it.” In this way, one makes the world a dwelling for G-d through the observance of mitzvos.18

For this reason, the census did not include those below 20 years of age, for their fundamental concern is personal spiritual development, not the changing of the world. The essential virtue which every Jew possesses is sufficient to carry out that objective. When, however, a Jew attains the age of 20 and is charged with conquering the world at large, this intrinsic virtue must be expressed in a manner that will be noticed by the world at large.

APPRECIATING THE ESSENTIAL ONENESS

As mentioned above, the Book of Bamidbar is also called Numbers. A name, particularly, a name in Lashon HaKodesh,

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 15. Avos 5:22; Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:1. 16. See Eruvin 54a, 55a. See also the sichah to Parshas Chayei Sarah in this series, which contrasts the attainments of a zakein (an individual who centers on Torah study) to a bo bayomim (one whose Divine service centers on mitzvos).

17. Bereishis 1:28. See Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:1, from

which one can infer that from 20 on, one should father children.

18. In this context, it is important to note that the giving of the Torah — and thus the recollection of the census which prepares us for it — comes about through prefacing the promise “We will do” (observe the mitzvos) before “We will lis- ten” (understand the Torah’s laws). See also Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 16c.

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expresses the essence of the object named.19 Since the entire book is called Numbers because of the census described in the first reading, it follows that this census contains the funda- mental element of the book.

Counting does more than communicate inherent impor- tance; it generates a positive quality in and of itself. And because of this positive quality, Parshas Bamidbar prepares us for the holiday of Shavuos just as the counting of the omer prepares us for Shavuos. For with regard to the counting of the omer, the concept of revealing inherent virtue does not apply.

The positive aspect of counting is that all are equal; the great are not counted as more, nor are the small counted as less. Although there are various different levels among the Jewish people, in the census, each one is counted the same.

In this, there is a parallel to the counting of the omer. For although there are differences between the days — there are Shabbasos, festivals, days of Chol HaMoed, and Rashei Cho- dashim, when counting the omer, all days are counted the same.

Counting all Jews as one reflects the essence of the soul, a quality possessed by all Jews equally. With regard to our revealed, conscious powers, intellect and emotion, however, there are differences between one Jew and another. With regard to the essence of the soul, by contrast, all are the same.

There is a fundamental difference between the Divine service associated with the revealed powers and the Divine service associated with the essence of the soul. With regard to the revealed powers of intellect and emotion, each person’s individual identity causes him to see himself as distinct from G-dliness. The person thus observes the Torah and its mitzvos because his understanding and feelings compel him to do so. ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 19. See Bereishis Rabbah 17:4; Sheloh, Hakdamas Beis HaMikdash; Tanya, Shaar

HaYichud VehaEmunah, ch. 1.

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But when he “awakens” and reveals the essence of his soul (“the one which affirms Your Oneness”20), he realizes that the very core of his being is one with G-dliness, as it says:21 “Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, are all one.”

The essence of the soul, common to all Jews, is expressed in the counting of the omer, in which all the days are consid- ered equal. From the standpoint of intellect and emotion, there are differences between one day and another. The ordi- nary weekdays are not the same as Rosh Chodesh, Shabbos, or the festivals. On these special days, a person’s Divine service is charged with vitality. But when it comes to an ordinary weekday, when one must fulfill the charge22 “Know Him in all your ways,” a person may not feel any special vitality.

When, by contrast, a person awakens the essence of his soul, and the entire substance of his being becomes one with G-dliness, this affects his intellect and emotion as well, caus- ing them to approach the weekdays with the same energy as Shabbos or the festivals. Regardless of what the person is doing, his efforts will be permeated by G-dliness.

On this basis, we can appreciate how the census of the Jewish people and the counting of the omer both serve as a preparation for the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. The Ten Commandments begin “I am G-d, your L-rd,”23 i.e., G-dliness is not an incremental element of one’s existence, but is E-lohecho, which can be interpreted24 as meaning “your strength,25 and your vitality.” When a person comes to this awareness, he serves G-d, not only through the ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 20. Cf. Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 327; Yechidah l’yachdecha in the Hebrew origi- nal, referring to the soul as yechidah, which refers to the highest of its five levels.

21. See Zohar, Vol. III, p. 73a. 22. Mishlei 3:6; Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos De’os 3:3. See also the sichah to Purim and Parshas Terumah in this series, where this concept is explained.

23. Shmos 20:2. 24. See Likkutei Torah, Shelach 40c; Balak 73c. 25. See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, ch. 5.

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study of Torah and the observance of its mitzvos, but in every aspect of his life.

TWO COURSES OF ACTION

The fact that the commemoration of the giving of the Torah requires both the recollection of the census and the counting of the omer indicates that each contributes an ele- ment which is lacking in the other; both are necessary to prepare us to receive the Torah.

The census focuses on counting the Jews, nothing else. The counting of the omer, as its name implies, involves counting other entities: the number of days which have passed since the omer offering was brought. This reflects a connection with our Divine service.

One may infer that the census of the Jewish people is as- sociated with the essence of the soul, which is perfect at all times. With regard to this level, no Divine service is neces- sary. Because this potential is sometimes hidden, counting (all as equals) arouses and reveals it.

The counting of the omer, by contrast, refers to toil with our revealed powers (both of the G-dly soul and of the animal soul)26 which we must refine and elevate. This involves a two- phase process: first comes a general influence created by bringing the omer offering, and then more particular efforts as reflected in the endeavor to refine a single emotional quality on each of the 49 days of the counting. (We have seven emo- tional qualities, each of which includes all the others, bringing us to a sum of 49. Thus each of the 49 days of the counting of the omer involves the refinement of a particular emotional quality.) ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 26. See the commentary of the Tzemach Tzedek to Shir HaShirim on the verse (1:4): “Draw me forth, we will run after You.” “Draw me forth” uses a singular form, referring to the arousal of the G-dly soul on Pesach. “We will run after You,” refers to the striving of both the G-dly soul and the animal soul during the counting of the omer.

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Based on the above, we can also appreciate why the mitz- vah of counting the omer is incumbent on every person as an individual, rather than on the nation as a collective.27 Since the counting of the omer reflects an effort on the part of every person to refine his revealed powers, there are differences between the performance of one Jew and another. Thus it is possible that one Jew will have a different reckoning than another,28 or will not count the omer at all.

With regard to the census of the Jewish people, by con- trast, all Jews are counted equally, for this counting relates to the essence of the soul, which all possess equally.

REFRACTIONS OF LIGHT

The above does not contradict the statement that with regard to the counting of the omer, all the days — Shabbos, holidays, and weekdays — are the same, that because the counting is connected with the essence of the soul, one’s service on Shabbos and festivals is the same as one’s service during the week.

Our Divine service during the counting of the omer involves drawing down the soul’s essential light to our individual powers, elevating those powers to the essence. This is alluded to by the command:29 “And you shall count from the day after the day of rest.” Usefartem, the Hebrew for “And you shall count” relates to the word sapir, referring to a shining sapphire,30 in analogy, the light of the soul’s essence. The term “from the day after the day of rest” implies that this light should be transmitted outwards.31

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 27. Menachos 65b. See the sichah to Parshas Emor in this series, where this concept

is explained.

28. I.e., when one crosses the International Dateline in the midst of the counting

of the omer (ibid.).

29. Vayikra 23:16. 30. See Likkutei Torah, Vayikra 35b. 31. Ibid.:36b

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The census of the Jewish people arouses the essence of the soul, and spurs it to express itself in the world. The intent of the counting of the omer is to refine our conscious powers and lift them to the level at which a person’s conduct becomes a fitting expression of his soul’s essence.

THE NEED FOR TWO PHASES OF PREPARATION

On this basis, we can appreciate why both the census and the counting of the omer are necessary before the commemo- ration of the giving of the Torah. As mentioned previously,32 the giving of the Torah brought about a fusion between the spiritual and the material. This fusion was twofold in nature: “the higher realms [the spiritual] descended to the lower realms [the material], and the lower realms [the material] ascended to the higher realms [the spiritual].”33

A parallel exists within our souls: The essence of the soul — the higher realms — should be joined to our conscious powers — the lower realms. This enables our conscious pow- ers to appreciate G-dliness as an integral part of their existence, just as the essence of the soul is “cleaving... to You, the one which affirms Your Oneness.”20

This concept is also reflected in the command: “I am G-d your L-rd.” Enochi refers to G-d’s essence, a level above our comprehension,34 and which is joined to the essence of our souls. This level becomes E-lohecha, the power and life- energy internalized within the Jewish people.

Therefore, before the giving of the Torah, two phases are

necessary:

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 32. See the sichos to Parshas Yisro and Parshas Mishpatim in this series, where this

concept is discussed.

33. Shmos Rabbah 12:3. 34. This refers to a level of G-dliness above the name Havayah, one which “cannot be contained within a name, and which is not alluded to by a letter or even the point of a letter (Likkutei Torah, Parshas Pinchas the maamar entitled Kodesh Yisrael, ch. 3).

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a) a stage of preparation that draws down and reveals the essence of the soul. This is accomplished through the census of the Jewish people.

b) a stage of preparation involving the cultivation of our conscious powers, until they can serve as receptors for that essence. This is accomplished through the counting of the omer.35

(Adapted from Sichos Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar, 5722)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 35. These two phases of preparation parallel the two dimensions of the holiday of Shavuos: a) that it is celebrated on the sixth of Sivan; b) that it is celebrated on the fiftieth day of the counting of the omer. See the sichah to Parshas Emor in this series, where this concept is discussed.

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SHAVUOS

SLEEPING SOUNDLY

The Midrash states1 that the Jews slept the entire night before the giving of the Torah, “because sleep on Shavuos is pleasant and the night is short.... Not even a flea bit them.”

When G-d came to give them the Torah, He found the Jews in deep slumber, and had to rouse them. This is alluded to in the verse:2 “Why did I come when no one was there? I called, and there was no answer.”

To compensate for the nation’s slumber on the night before the giving of the Torah, it is customary to remain awake on the first night of Shavuos, studying the Torah.3

All the stories in the Torah serve as lessons for us in our Divine service. This is especially true with regard to any story which casts the Jews in an unfavorable light. The Torah is careful not to speak deprecatingly even about a non-kosher animal.4 So if it tells a story which portrays the Jews unfa- vorably, we can assume that this is done only because a unique lesson can be derived from that story.

The lesson in this case is apparent: that we should com- pensate for our ancestors’ conduct by staying awake the entire night of Shavuos. To communicate this lesson, however, it would have been enough to summarize the story. The fact that our Sages added phrases such as: “Sleep on Shavuos is ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. 2. Yeshayahu 50:2. 3. Magen Avraham 494:1. 4. Bava Basra 123a.

Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:12 (2).

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pleasant and the night is short.... Not even a flea bit them,” indicates that these particulars contain lessons aside from the one which encourages us to remain awake on Shavuos night.

IN ANXIOUS EXPECTATION

It is well known5 that the promise that they would receive the Torah 50 days after their exodus from Egypt awakened a strong desire within the Jews. With great anticipation, they counted the days until the Torah would be given. This is the source for the mitzvah of counting the omer.

Now, if seven weeks beforehand the Jews could hardly wait to receive the Torah, we can assume that their desire increased as they approached the actual date. They knew G-d was going to give the Torah on the next day. How then was it possible for them to sleep?

Moreover, their counting for 49 days prepared them for G-d’s great gift. On each of these days they became more refined, and more worthy to receive the Torah. And on each of these 49 days, they drew down one of the 50 Gates of Understanding. Thus on the forty-ninth day, they had completed drawing down the 49 gates — the maximum pos- sible through the Divine service of mortals for the fiftieth gate was to be opened by G-d at Mt. Sinai.

When one considers that the Jews had a burning desire for the Torah even while under the influence of Egypt’s 49 Gates of Impurity, we can understand how overwhelming this desire must have become by the time they had refined them- selves in drawing down the 49 Gates of Understanding,6 making themselves worthy of G-d’s priceless gift.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 5.

See Shibolei HaLeket, HaArugah HaSheminis, Seder Atzeres 236; Rabbeinu Nis- sim, the conclusion of Pesachim.

6. Moreover, since the giving of the Torah came on the fifty-first day after the exodus (see the sichah to Parshas Emor in this series), it follows that the fifti- eth Gate of Understanding had also been drawn down at that time.

SHAVUOS

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With such a great desire, does it make sense that the

people would go to sleep?!

We are forced to conclude that even while sleeping, they did not take their minds off the giving of the Torah. Indeed, they went to sleep in preparation for the event.

This is also indicated by the fact that the fleas did not bite them. If going to sleep was a deviation from the Torah, G-d would not have wrought a miracle to enable them to sleep so soundly. The fact that He did implies that this sleep was also part of the nation’s preparation.

REACHING UPWARD

To explain: The Alter Rebbe writes7 that no matter how high a level of understanding a person achieves, or how deep an attachment to G-dliness, since each soul exists within a body, there is no way that a mortal can attain the kind of connection to G-d that the soul enjoyed in its incorporeal state. The human body simply cannot bear that degree of connection.

When a person sleeps, the soul disengages itself from the body to a certain degree and “ascends” to the spiritual realms,8 leaving only a trace of vitality in the body.9 Therefore the sleeper’s soul can grasp a higher level of G-dliness than it can while it is awake and functioning within the body.

For this reason, those people who devote themselves arduously to the study of Torah during the day receive revelations regarding their study at night.10 At times, matters ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 7. Tanya, ch. 37. 8. Bereishis Rabbah 14:9. 9. Zohar, Vol. I, p. 83a. 10. See the maamar entitled BaLailah HaHu, 5700, sec. 1; HaYom Yom, p. 8; Sichas

Simchas Beis HaShoevah, 5721. The Radbaz relates (Migdal David, the commentary to Shir HaShirim, com- menting on (7:10): “the sleepers’ lips murmur”) that he would speak of halachic matters while asleep.

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left unresolved during the previous day become clear by morning, based on the revelation experienced by the soul while the body was asleep.

This is why the Jews went to sleep before the giving of the Torah. They wanted their souls to become disengaged from the realm of corporeal experience and thus be able to grasp even higher spiritual levels. This, they thought, would better prepare them for the revelations to be experienced at the giving of the Torah.

This is implied by the Midrash’s words: “Sleep on Shavuos is pleasant and the night is short.” The more a person labors to refine himself while awake, when the soul is fully enclothed in a body, the higher the level of revelation experienced during sleep. After the counting of the 49 days, the “night” grew “short”; only a little of the world’s darkness remained. For all the preparatory work had been completed, and the great revelation was imminent. At such a time, “sleep is pleasant,” for very high levels can be reached.

Moreover, the spiritual peaks which the Jews reached by sleeping that night affected their environment to the extent that no other living beings disturbed their slumber.11

THE PURPOSE OF THE GIVING OF THE TORAH

But G-d was not pleased with the sleep of the Jewish people before their receipt of the Torah, for this was not the proper manner in which to approach the event.

As mentioned on many occasions,12 the giving of the Torah was a new development in comparison to the observance of the mitzvos by the Patriarchs. After the giving

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 11. This applied also before the giving of the Torah, reflecting the blessing (Bereishis 9:2): “And the fear and the dread of you will be upon all forms of life on the earth.” See Tanya, ch. 24.

12. See the sichos from Parshas Lech Lecha and Parshas Mishpatim in this series,

and the reference to Shmos Rabbah 12:3 cited there.

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of the Torah, the mitzvos would have a permanent effect on the physical substances with which they were performed, imbuing them with holiness.

The peak of our Divine service is achieved, not by aban- doning the body, but by involving it.13 It is through such efforts that a connection is established with G-d’s essence; this cannot be achieved by a non-corporeal soul. Indeed, the advantage of Divine service carried out within the body is so great that G-d and the Heavenly Court make themselves dependent on the rulings of a mortal court. G-d tells us: “You have triumphed over Me, My children,”14 for “the Torah is not in the heavens.”15

Since the purpose of the giving of the Torah was to accen- tuate the advantage of the Divine service performed while the soul is enclothed within the body, the preparatory service must parallel that objective; not to sleep and rise above the body, but to work with it. (This applies even though, at that time, before the giving of the Torah, there was still a decree separating the material from the spiritual.16)

NO MAN CAN REMAIN AN ISLAND

There are those who ask: “Why must I have anything to do with the darkness of the world? Why must I become involved with material things? I would rather cut myself off from all that and devote myself to studying Torah and per- fecting my Divine service undisturbed by others.”

Such people are saying that they have approached the level of Shavuos, when the “night” — the darkness of our ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 13. See Tanya, ch. 35ff. 14. Bava Metzia 59b. 15. Devarim 30:12. 16. A similar concept applies with regard to the Jews’ statement of Naaseh Vi- Nishma, in which the promise “We will do” which refers to the observance of mitzvos, was given precedence over “We will listen” which refers to the study of the Torah (see Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar, p. 16c). This commitment was also made before the giving of the Torah.

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world — is “short.” They want to reach the highest peaks (for “the sleep of Shavuos is sweet”) and not be disturbed by the “fleas” in their environment.

They must know that even before the Torah was given — indeed, on the very day it was given — such an approach was contrary to G-d’s intent. And indeed, we are still compensat- ing for this error today, as we strive to make a dwelling for G-d in this lower world. Surely, this applies after the giving of the Torah, when our efforts must involve setting aside time to share with other Jews, even if they are on a lower level. And we must realize that we ourselves will also benefit from this sharing, as we are taught: “From my students, [I received] more than from all others.”17

This is the reason we do not sleep on Shavuos, the night before we receive the Torah. It is not merely to compensate for the shortcoming of our ancestors. It is because staying awake is part of the preparation for receiving the Torah.

The proper approach is to involve ourselves with the body, the animal soul, and one’s portion in the world. In this manner, one prepares oneself to receive the Torah with a joy that continues throughout the year.

(Adapted from Sichos Chag HaShavuos, 5722)

A CHERISHED DAY

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, relates18 that the Baal Shem Tov cherished the second day of Shavuos. Every year on the second day he would hold a special feast and linger with his chassidim.19

The Maggid of Mezeritch, the Baal Shem Tov’s successor, explained the reason for the Baal Shem Tov’s behavior. The ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 17. Taanis 7a. See also Temurah 16a and the preface to Tanya. 18. Sichos of the Second day of Shavuos, 5704 [Sefer HaSichos 5704, p. 135]. 19. Perhaps this is why my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, designated that the portion of Tanya associated with that day should contain the words “And the Baal Shem Tov explains....”

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second day of Shavuos was the first complete 24-hour day after the Jews received the Torah. The Maggid would add: “In particular, this is true according to the opinion of Rabbi Yossi,20 who maintains that the Torah was given on the sev- enth of Sivan. This is a wondrous dimension.”21

On the surface, the two rationales given by the Maggid are contradictory. If the day is so dear because it was the first day after the giving of the Torah, then according to Rabbi Yossi, this dearness should characterize the eighth of Sivan? But if the dearness results from the fact that the Torah was given on that day (according to the Sages who maintain — as the Alter Rebbe rules in his Shulchan Aruch22 — that the Torah was given on the sixth day), it is the first day of Shavuos which should be cherished?

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 20. Shabbos 86a. 21. As are all matters of P’nimiyus HaTorah, the unique dearness of the second day of Shavuos is alluded to in Nigleh, the revealed dimension of Torah law. To explain: There is a difference of opinion between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai regarding whether it was permitted to offer the burnt offering brought for a pilgrimage festival on the day of the festival itself. Nevertheless, even the School of Hillel (who maintain that one may offer these sacrifices on the festival itself) would in practice follow the ruling of the School of Shammai, who forbade such offerings. Many others followed their practice. (See Shulchan Aruch HaRav 494:19. The sources for these statements were explained in Sichos Chag HaShavuos, 5723 [Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXVIII, p. 24ff.]). Thus the day after Shavuos, (which is the second day of Shavuos in the Diaspora) was a day of slaughter, when the majority of the Jewish people brought their festive offerings. This practice raises certain questions. Generally, the School of Hillel would not follow the rulings of the School of Shammai, even if the latter’s view was the more lenient. {Indeed, regarding a like situation, it was said (Berachos 1:7): “You were worthy [of death] for violating the statement of the School of Hil- lel.”} This would appear to apply with regard to the matter at hand, for postpon- ing sacrifices involved a leniency, since the fundamental mitzvah of bringing burnt offerings for the pilgrimage festivals involves the first day of the festival (Rashi, Chagigah 7b. See also, Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Chagigah 1:1.) Nevertheless, the School of Hillel offered these sacrifices (a thrust toward spiritual ascent) on the day after Shavuos and caused that day to be considered a festival, because of its unique dearness.

22. Shulchan Aruch HaRav 494:1.

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PHASE TWO

The cherished nature of the first 24 hours after the holi- day of Shavuos can be explained as follows: As mentioned above, the giving of the Torah empowered every Jew to refine and elevate the world.23

In actuality, however, these efforts began after the giving of the Torah. The giving itself was a revelation from above — “And G-d descended on Mount Sinai,”24 independent of man’s efforts.

Man’s labor of refinement, which was the fundamental purpose of the giving of the Torah, began after that event. This explains the dearness of the second day of Shavuos. On this day began man’s endeavors to elevate the material.

This is reflected in the fact that the second phase of the dynamic — Moshe’s ascent of Mount Sinai to receive the physical tablets of the Law (symbolic of the elevation of the material realm) — began on the seventh of Sivan.25

MOSHE’S INITIATIVE

Based on the above, we can also appreciate why according to Rabbi Yossi, who maintains that the giving of the Torah took place on the seventh of Sivan, the seventh is a cherished day. Even according to his approach, the phase of ascent began on the seventh of Sivan.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 23. Here the emphasis is not on the elevation of the worldly realm in contrast to efforts to draw down G-dliness. Instead, the emphasis is on the transformation of the worldly realm to holiness. It is not significant whether this transforma- tion comes through drawing holiness into the world (i.e., by means of deeds of kindness and the like) or by elevating the material (i.e., through sacrifices or the like).

24. Shmos 19:20. See Shmos Rabbah 12:3, which cites this verse as reflecting reve-

lation from above.

25. Yoma 4b.

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To explain: Our Sages26 state that Rabbi Yossi maintains that Moshe “added another day (of preparation for the giving of the Torah) on his own initiative, and the Holy One, blessed be He, consented.”

G-d told the Jews to refrain from marital relations for two days, the fourth and fifth of Sivan,27 and so the giving of the Torah could have taken place on the sixth. Moshe, however, added another day on his own initiative, telling the Jews to separate for three days.28 G-d accepted this, and thus it was not until the seventh of Sivan that the Torah was given.

Thus, according to Rabbi Yossi, the designation of the seventh of Sivan as the day of the giving of the Torah depended on the willingness of the Jewish people to add another day of preparation. Thus it reflects mortal efforts toward ascent.

For this reason, according to Rabbi Yossi, the day of the giving of the Torah itself is cherished, while according to the Sages it is the day after the giving which is cherished. And thus Rabbi Yossi considers the seventh day of Sivan — the second day of the holiday of Shavuos — a cherished day.29

Indeed, according to Rabbi Yossi, the dearness of the sev- enth of Sivan is even greater than it is according to the Sages. To refer to the Maggid’s statement, it possesses “a wondrous dimension.” According to the Sages, the uniqueness of the seventh of Sivan is characterized by a single positive thrust, ascent. According to Rabbi Yossi, by contrast, the second day of Shavuos possesses two positive qualities: revelation from above (for it is the day of the giving of the Torah), and ascent, (as reflected in the Jews’ initiative in adding a day of prepara-

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 26. Shabbos 87a. 27. Shmos 19:10. 28. Ibid.:15. 29. Moreover, even according to Rabbi Yossi, Moshe ascended Mount Sinai on the

seventh of Sivan (Yoma, loc. cit.).

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tion). The fusion of both qualities indeed adds “a wondrous dimension.”30

A CONGRUENCE OF MOTIFS

Based on the above, we can appreciate the precision of the wording used by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, that the Baal Shem Tov would cherish the second day of Shavuos. On the surface, the reason he cherished the day was not because it is the second day of Shavuos, but because it is the seventh of Sivan, which according to our Sages is the first day after the giving of the Torah, and according to Rabbi Yossi, the day of the giving.

The explanation is as follows: the second day of Shavuos possesses an advantage with regard to the first. The obser- vance of the first day is mandated by Scriptural Law; as such, the day possesses an inherent sanctity. The observance of the second day, however, is mandated by Rabbinic law, i.e., the day in its own right is an ordinary weekday, but the Jewish people caused it to be endowed with holiness.31 Thus the sec- ond day of a festival possesses a dimension of holiness similar to that described above with regard to the second day of Sha-

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 30. See Likkutei Torah, Parshas Re’eh, the ma’amar entitled ViSamti Kodkeid which

focuses on the synthesis of these trusts.

31. In general, this dimension — that the day is endowed with holiness through the Divine service of the Jewish people — reflects the difference between Shabbos (in which the holiness is indigenous) and festivals, which are de- scribed as mikroei kodesh, literally a “calling forth of holiness.” For the day in itself is not holy, but is rather sanctified by the Divine service of the Jewish people.

[This is implied by the wording of the blessing (Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 250): “who sanctifies Israel and the festivals,” interpreted by our Sages (Beitzah 16b) to mean “who sanctifies Israel, who sanctify the festivals,” i.e., the Jews endow an ordinary day with holiness.]

In a more particular sense, however, since the observance of the first day of a festival is mandated by Scriptural law, the commandment endows us with the power to fulfill it. With regard to the second day, by contrast, since its ob- servance is mandated merely by Rabbinic law, this concept does not apply.

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vuos, the seventh of Sivan. It reflects an elevation of the worldly plane.32

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 32. Based on the above, we can resolve a halachic difficulty. The Magen Avraham (494:1) writes that the Torah was given on the fifty-first day of the omer to al- lude to the observance of the second day of the festivals in the Diaspora. The Chok Yaakov objects, stating that if so, the second day of the festival should be of primary importance, because it is the fifty-first day after the be- ginning of the counting of the omer. This objection can be resolved as follows: With regard to the Divine revela- tion, it was appropriate for the Torah to be given on the fiftieth day of the omer, for it is on this day that the fiftieth Gate of Understanding was drawn down. Even Rabbi Yossi would agree to this, for the sixth of Sivan was intended to be the day of the giving of the Torah (see Tosafos, Avodah Zarah 3a). The rea- son the Torah was given on the fifty-first day of the omer was because Moshe added one day on his own initiative, emphasizing the importance of man’s ef- forts. Thus the first day of the festival — a day when holiness is drawn down on its own accord — is celebrated on the fiftieth day of the omer. The second day of the festival — which emphasizes ascent — is the fifty-first day after the counting of the omer begins, for it shares such a motif.

{According to the Sages, the revelation from above, the giving of the Torah, took place on the fifty-first day after the counting of the omer began, (and not on the fiftieth day, on which we celebrate the first day of Shavuos). [At that time, the length of the months were determined according to the testimony of witnesses who sighted the moon, and in that year both Nissan and Iyar were months of 30 days.] Hence, the fifty-first day after the beginning of the count- ing of the omer fell on the sixth of Sivan. And on this day the Torah was given. [According to the fixed calendar we follow, this is impossible, and the sixth of Sivan is always the fiftieth day after the beginning of the counting of the omer.]}

In essence, the observance of the holiday is associated with the revelation of the fiftieth Gate of Understanding, which was on the sixth of Sivan (see the Sichah to Parshas Emor in this series). Thus the Magen Avraham’s concept re- volves around Rabbi Yossi’s opinion (although he also asks questions with regard to the opinion of the Sages, as underscored by the Machtzis HaShekel), and in this context he explains that the fifty-first day is an allusion to the sec- ond day of the festival. Based on the above, we can appreciate why the allusion to the second day of the festivals was stated with regard to the holiday of Shavuos, and not with regard to other holidays. As will be explained, the second day of Shavuos was instituted only “so as not to differentiate between one festival and another.” Thus it is secondary to the other festivals in this regard [see the Chasam Sofer (Orach Chayim, Responsum 145) which states that in this context it requires greater reinforcement]. Nevertheless, the allusion to the observance of the

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WHERE NO DOUBT EXISTS

As is true with regard to all concepts explained in P’nimiyus HaTorah, the relationship between the observance of the second day of the festivals and the seventh of Sivan is also reflected in Nigleh, the revealed dimension of Torah law.

There is a more severe aspect to the observance of the second day of Shavuos than there is to the observance of the second day of other festivals. The observance of the second day of other festivals was instituted because of a doubt. In places distant from Jerusalem, the day sanctified as Rosh Cho- desh (on which depends the timing of the festivals) was not known with certainty, and therefore Jews observed every fes- tival for two days.

This does not apply with regard to Shavuos, for the observance of Shavuos is not dependent on a particular day of the month, but rather on the conclusion of the counting of the omer.33 This in turn depends on the declaration of Rosh Chodesh Nissan. By Shavuos, the day consecrated as Rosh Chodesh Nissan was known throughout the world. Thus the second day of Shavuos was not observed because of doubt, but “so as not to differentiate between one festival and another.”34 For this reason, our Sages ordained that the second day of Shavuos be observed as a festival, despite the fact that there was never a doubt as to the day the holiday was to be celebrated.35

second day of the holiday is made in connection with this festival because both the seventh of Sivan and the second day of a festival reflect the elevation of the worldly plane.

33. See the sichah to Parshas Emor in this series. 34. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 3:12. 35. See the Chasam Sofer, loc. cit.

On this basis, we can explain why it is prohibited — not only as a matter of custom, but as a point of law — to fast on the day after Shavuos, even in the Diaspora (i.e., the eighth of Sivan). We are forbidden to fast because it is the day on which the sacrifices for the pilgrimage festival were offered, as stated in note 21. Seemingly, in the Dias-

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The inner reason for this law is that the second day of Shavuos and the seventh day of Sivan share the same spiritual thrust. Therefore, this day was always characterized by a unique spiritual significance because of the special qualities it possesses, as explained by the Maggid, and interpreted regarding the views of the Sages and Rabbi Yossi. This draws down greater power with regard to the observance of that day

pora, when the day following Shavuos is the eighth of Sivan, one should be allowed to fast.

{For as stated above, with regard to Shavuos, there was never any doubt regarding the day on which the holiday was to be observed; the institution of the second day was only “so as not to differentiate between one festival and another.” The custom of Isru Chag, honoring the day following the festival, was insti- tuted (as law) only with regard to Shavuos, because of the custom of bringing the sacrifices. But with regard to Isru Chag, the concept of “so as not to differ- entiate between one festival and another,” does not apply, for the eighth of Sivan is not the anniversary of the day on which the sacrifices were brought. There is no doubt about this matter, and hence it should be permitted to fast on that day.} Nevertheless, because our Sages instituted the observance of the second day of Shavuos, not because of a doubt, but by virtue of a definitive decree, that day is considered Shavuos, and the day following it corresponds to the day on which the sacrifices were offered (Sichos Chag HaShavuos, 5716). This situation does not parallel the seven days of compensation which are counted from (and include) the first day of Shavuos but not the second day. (Therefore these seven days end on the 12th of Sivan,\* and not on the 13th.) The rationale for the latter ruling is that the days of compensation do not begin after Shavuos, but rather on Shavuos itself.\*\* Therefore, since there is no doubt that the first day of Shavuos marks the beginning of the holiday (for the Rabbis’ ruling establishing the second day as Shavuos does not detract from the status of the first day), the seven days of compensation are also counted from that day.

Isru Chag, by contrast, is endowed with a unique status since it is the day following Shavuos, because of the prohibition against bringing individual sac- rifices on that day. The second day of Shavuos is definitely endowed with the status of a festival in the Diaspora (although in the Beis HaMikdash itself it was not a festival and sacrifices were offered) according to Rabbinic Law. This applies with regard to the prohibition against work, and this prohibition in- cludes the offering of sacrifices. As such, the day after Shavuos corresponds to the day on which the sacrifices were offered. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \* See Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 71. Note also, Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, p. 1312. \*\* See the notes to Likkutei Sichos, op. cit.

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as a festival. This applies when the months are established according to a fixed calendar and the second day of Shavuos always falls on the seventh of Sivan. Moreover, even when the calendar was dependent on the sighting of the moon, in most years36 Shavuos was celebrated on the sixth of Sivan, for an effort was made to see that the testimony of the witnesses confirmed the dates arrived at by calculations.37

WHEN THE BAAL SHEM PASSED AWAY

The dearness with which the Baal Shem Tov held the sec- ond day of Shavuos found expression at the time of his passing. The Baal Shem passed away on the first day of Sha- vuos, 5520.38 In such an instance, halachah prescribes39 that the person be buried on the second day of the holiday.40

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 36. And the Torah follows the majority. For that reason in many of their state- ments, our Sages associate the holiday of Shavuos with the anniversary of the giving of the Torah. See the sichah to Parshas Emor in this series.

37. See Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 2:4, which explains that, by their calculations, the Sages knew when and where it was possible for the moon to be sighted, and would ask pointed questions to verify that the witnesses had indeed sighted the moon at that time and place. See also the gloss of Tosafos Yom Tov to Rosh HaShanah 2:6.

38. This is reflected in the Alter Rebbe’s reference to the passing of the Baal Shem Tov: “On the fourth day, the luminaries were withdrawn.” We find the ex- pression: “On the fourth day, the luminaries were suspended,” spelling the Hebrew word nitlu, meaning “suspended,” with a tuf (uk,b). The Alter Rebbe restated that expression by substituting the letter tes for the letter tuf (ukyb). “The fourth day” which he mentioned refers to Wednesday, the first day of Shavuos, 5520. The second day of Shavuos can never fall on a Wednesday. See also Likkutei Dibburim, Vol. I, pgs. 32 and 42.

39. In Shulchan Aruch HaRav 526:2, the Alter Rebbe states that it is forbidden to leave a corpse unburied, and so it should be buried on the first day of a festival by non-Jews. In this instance, however, the law does not apply, because on Shavuos morning, the Baal Shem Tov asked his disciples to take care of his burial themselves, and gave them instructions (Shivchai HaBesht). As the Alter Rebbe continues (op. cit.:18), in such a situation the burial should be post- poned at least until the night, in order to fulfill the wishes of the departed. Moreover, the directive to have non-Jews bury a corpse on the first day of a festival applies only when there are non-Jews available, and when there is suf- ficient time in the day for the burial to be completed. Furthermore, although

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Burial was also very significant for the Baal Shem. It is related41 that the Baal Shem stated that he had the potential to ascend to heaven in a tempest as did Eliyahu, but desired to fulfill the Divine decree:42 “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The advantage of returning to dust over ascending to heaven in a tempest echoes the advantage of the second day of Shavuos. For instead of the upward thrust of ascending to heaven, the emphasis is on a return to the earth.

40.

the Alter Rebbe does not mention this, the ruling is not accepted by all authorities (see Magen Avraham 526:1). I have not been able to determine whether the burial actually took place on the second day of the festival. There is a report that the Rebbe Rashab once said the day of the Baal Shem’s burial is unknown. An unedited listener’s record of the sichos of the second day of Shavuos, 5699, [Sefer HaSichos 5699, p. 333], states that the question was asked and the Previous Rebbe replied that this matter was discussed in Lubavitch many years previously, but that there was no definite tradition regarding the matter. The Rebbe Rashab quoted the expression: “No man knows about his burial.” He finished by saying that logic would dictate that they waited until the festival was over. This conclusion raises questions, for the law requires burial on the second day. Also, at the outset, the question was whether the burial took place on the first day or the second day, not whether or not it took place after the holiday. Perhaps the intent was “they waited until after the first day of the holiday.” Alternatively, it can be explained that they waited until after the festival “so that relatives would come, or so that word could be spread to neighboring towns” (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 357:1).

41. Sichos Yud-Tes Kislev, 5664 (Toras Shalom, p. 46). At that time, the emphasis was on the advantage of returning to dust. In the conclusion of the series of mamaarim entitled BeSha’ah SheHikdimu, 5672 [p. 1257] (in the portion that was not recited verbally), the emphasis was placed on the Baal Shem Tov’s ability to ascend to heaven.

(With regard to the necessity of a tempest, see Zohar, Vol. II, p. 197a; see

also Likkutei Sichos, Vol. II, p. 515.)

It must be noted that this entire discussion appears to contradict statements

at the conclusion of the text Shivchei HaBesht.

42. Bereishis 3:19.

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THE BAAL SHEM TOV’S MISSION

It has been explained43 that every teaching from the Baal Shem Tov expresses the essence of his being. The Baal Shem Tov’s mission was to reveal the teachings of Chassidus which underscore the importance of elevating the material world.44 For this reason the Baal Shem Tov cherished the second day of Shavuos, for as mentioned, this elevation is the motif of the Divine service associated with that day.

(Adapted from Sichos Chag HaShavuos, 5720)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 43. See Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, p. 1209. 44. See the interpretation of the verse (Shmos 23:5): “You must certainly help

him” in HaYom Yom, p. 23.

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NASO

FLAWS IN A MARRIAGE

Parshas Naso contains the laws governing a sotah, a woman suspected of immodest conduct. When a man issues a warning to his wife, forbidding her to be alone with a certain man, and she disobeys this warning, she is classified as a sotah.1 Even though she may not have committed adultery, the very fact that she was alone with that man after being warned obliges her to undergo the test described in this Torah reading.

The relationship between a mortal husband and wife mir- rors the covenant between G-d and the Jewish people.2 Accordingly, it follows that the laws regarding a sotah have parallels with regard to the relationship between G-d and the Jews.3

The commandment:4 “You shall have no other gods in My presence” can be interpreted as G-d’s warning to the Jewish nation not to seek intimacy with others. Nevertheless, when considering our relationship with G-d, it is difficult to con- ceive of something equivalent to being alone with another ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Rashi (Bamidbar 5:12) interprets the term sotah as referring to a deviation from the paths of modesty. Similarly, our Sages (Sotah 3a) associate it with being possessed by a spirit of folly. See the sichah to Parshas Metzora in this series, which also focuses on the marriage analogy. In addition to the parallel to the husband and wife relationship in general, the sotah also reflects a particular connection to the concept of the Jews’ fidelity to G-d. Thus with reference to Bamidbar 5:12 our Sages (Yalkut Shimoni, sec. 705) speak of a woman’s infidelity to G-d and to her husband. Shmos 20:3.

4.

2.

3.

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man. How is it possible to hide from G-d?; “there is no place where He is not.”5 We are always being watched by G-d, as it is written:6 “‘If a person will conceal himself in hidden places, will I not see him?’ declares G-d.”

How then, can the Jews seclude themselves, unseen by

G-d, as it were?

The answer depends on the following concept: Our Sages state7 that with regard to a proud person, G-d says: “He and I cannot dwell in the same place.” Thus pride brings about concealment from G-d.8 G-d is not to be found where a proud person is; it is as if G-d does not see him. This is alluded to in the extended interpretation of the above verse offered by the Baal Shem Tov: “If a person will conceal himself in hidden places, because of his ‘I,’ I will not see him.”

WHEN A HUSBAND CAN WITHDRAW A WARNING

Our Sages teach:9 “When a husband withdraws his warn- ing [to his wife], the warning is withdrawn.” It is as if he never issued the warning to begin with.

Our Sages explain,10 however, that a husband has the right to withdraw his warning only before his wife enters into pri- vacy with the man regarding whom she was warned. Once she is alone with him, the warning can no longer be with- drawn, and the woman must drink the bitter waters [if she is discovered together with the man in question].

The rationale is that as long as she has not entered into privacy with the other man, the husband’s warning has not ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 5. Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 57 (p. 91b); cited in Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VehaEmu-

nah, ch. 7.

Sotah 5a.

6. Yirmeyahu 23:24. See also Tehillim 139:7-12. 7. 8. On this basis, we can appreciate why the tractate of Sotah concludes with the subject of humility. For by acquiring humility, the Jews negate the possibility of concealment from G-d, as it were. This precludes the possibility for the spiritual parallel to a sotah (Sichos Erev Shavuos, 5719). Sotah 25a.

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been reinforced by her conduct. Accordingly, since he has authority over his warning, he can withdraw it. When, how- ever, she has already secluded herself with the other man, she is required by the Torah to drink the bitter waters. Her hus- band has no authority over the Torah’s requirement.

The Jerusalem Talmud10 seems to differ, stating that a hus- band can withdraw his warning up until the moment the scroll bearing the sotah’s curse is blotted out in the water.

The Rogatchover Gaon11 explains that there is really no difference of opinion between the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. The Jerusalem Talmud is talking about a meeting which would not be forbidden if not for the hus- band’s warning, e.g., he warned her not to be alone with her father, or with 100 men at the same time. Since such a pro- hibition is entirely the husband’s,12 if he withdraws his warning, there is no longer any reason for the meeting to have been forbidden.13

A parallel exists with regard to the bond between G-d and the Jewish people. Since there is no place apart from G-d, there is, in truth, no possibility for a private relationship apart from Him. When does G-d allow a person to be “alone,” without Him? When that person’s pride banishes G-d’s pres- ence, as it is written:14 “All those with haughty hearts are an abomination to G-d.”

Since the possibility of being apart from G-d is thus dependent solely on His will, G-d can always “withdraw His warning” even if it has been transgressed.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 10. Sanhedrin 8:6. 11. Tzofnas Paneach to Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Sotah 1:7. 12. See the Jerusalem Talmud, Sotah 1:2. 13. [The Babylonian Talmud, by contrast, speaks of an instance in which her act is forbidden because of the prohibition against yichud. In such an instance, the Jerusalem Talmud would also agree that the warning cannot be withdrawn once it has been violated.]

14. Mishlei 16:5.

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MAKING TORAH A PART OF ONE’S BEING

Until what time can the husband’s warning be withdrawn (even in those instances when the prohibition is dependent solely on him)? Until the scroll bearing the sotah’s curse is blotted out.

To blot out the letters on the scroll implies that even before they were washed away, the letters and the parchment were not an integral whole. For if they had been an integral whole, it would not be possible to erase them. For example, when letters are engraved in stone, the letters and stone become a single entity. It is impossible to destroy the letters without destroying the stone itself.

There is a parallel in our Divine service. There are Jews who study Torah in a manner resembling engraving, i.e., it is impossible to erase the letters of the Torah from their being; they and the Torah become a single entity.15

In such an instance, even if a Jew becomes separate from G-d because his pride causes G-d to seclude Himself, this affects only the external dimensions of the situation. G-d’s forgiveness can negate these — and indeed all possible — obstacles, and G-d is “abundant in forgiveness.”16

When, however, the “letters are rubbed out” (i.e., it becomes apparent that the person and the Torah were always two separate entities), it is possible that his self-concern will ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 15. See Sotah 21a. 16. Cf. Yeshayahu 55:7.

This applies with regard to all sins, because all are rooted in pride. For it is pride that causes a person to see himself as an independent entity, separate from G-d’s will. This in turn stems from the spirit of folly associated with a so- tah. There is one exception to the above: the sin of idolatry. Idolatry affects the level of Chochmah (wisdom) within the soul. Chochmah is associated with the awareness that “G-d is distinct,” as explained in Tanya, ch. 19, and in the note to ch. 35. Accordingly, the sin of idol worship affects even “engraved letters.” For this reason, at the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe broke the tablets of the Ten Commandments, although the letters of the Torah were en- graved therein.

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have permeated his being, and the laws of a sotah will apply to him.

What is required of a sotah? To bring a meal offering of barley, which is referred to by our Sages17 as “animal fodder.” This meal offering is a tenth of an ephah in measure, the size of offering brought by the most indigent.18 In the spiritual context, this means that a person realizes that he is “impoverished with regard to knowledge,”19 like an animal20 which has no knowledge at all.

When a person wipes away his self-consciousness to such an extent, he becomes pure, able to resume his relationship with G-d. Indeed, he reaches a higher level than that attained previously, as implied by the promise:21 “And she will be acquitted, and will bear offspring.” Our Sages22 interpret this to mean: “If she would have given birth with difficulty, she will give birth with ease.”

Implied is also a spiritual parallel, for “the offspring of the righteous” — and ‘Your nation are all righteous’23 — “are mitzvos and good deeds.”24

Indeed, the person will proceed to the highest levels, for “In the place where baalei teshuvah stand, perfectly righteous men are not able to stand.”25

(Adapted from Sichos Yud-Beis Tammuz, 5717)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 17. Sotah 14a. 18. See Vayikra 5:11. 19. See Nedarim 41a. 20. See Chulin 5b, which speaks of those who are “sagacious in wisdom and yet

conduct themselves as beasts.”

21. Bamidbar 5:28. 22. Sotah 26a, Berachos 31b. 23. Yeshayahu 60:21. 24. Bereishis Rabbah 30:6. 25. Berachos 34b. See the note on p. 183 of Sefer HaMaamarim 5709.

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EACH ACCORDING TO HIS MEASURE

In tractate Yoma,1 our Sages pose a difficulty: It is written:2 “When the dew descended on the camp at night, the manna descended upon it.” This implies that the manna descended within the camp. But it is also written:3 “And the people will go out and gather [the manna],” from which we can infer that they had to leave the camp to gather the manna. And it is further written:4 “And the people spread out and collected the manna,” indicating that they had to search far and wide.

Our Sages offer the following explanation. The three verses refer to three types of Jews. For the righteous, the manna descended at the entrance to their dwelling. Those of intermediate spiritual stature had to go out of the camp to collect it, and the wicked had to search.

In the same vein, our Sages1 note that the Torah refers to the manna as bread3 and cakes,4 yet also says it must be ground.4 The righteous, they explain, would receive baked bread. Those of intermediate spiritual stature would receive cakes ready to be baked. And the wicked would receive a substance that had to be ground.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Yoma 75a. 2. Bamidbar 11:9. 3. Shmos 16:4. 4. Bamidbar 11:8.

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“BREAD FROM HEAVEN”

The Torah refers to the manna as “bread from heaven,”3 or “grain from heaven.”5 Therefore there are opinions among the Rishonim that the blessing recited over manna praised G-d who “brings forth bread from the heavens.”6

The difference between “bread from heaven” and “bread from earth” is that “bread from earth” requires several types of labor before it can be eaten. Thus with regard to the labors forbidden on the Sabbath, the Mishnah includes the work necessary to prepare bread:7 ploughing, sowing, reaping, and the like. Moreover, even after these labors are performed, the baking of bread produces waste.

“Bread from heaven” is different. All the different labors were not necessary to prepare it,8 nor did it produce waste.9 And this “bread from heaven” was the diet, not only of the righteous, but also of those of intermediate spiritual stature.

(When referring to a person of intermediate spiritual stat- ure, a benoni, the intent is not to speak of a benoni as defined in Tanya,10 but a benoni in the commonly accepted sense of

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 5. Tehillim 78:24. 6.

See the Rame of Panua, Maamar Shabbasos HaShem, Vol. II, with reference to the feast to be eaten in the Era of the Redemption. The Rame explains that at that time, we will taste the manna which was preserved, and recite the above blessing over it.

See also Sefer Chassidim (Mikitzei Nerdomim edition) sec. 1640, which

states that the Jews recited the above blessing over the manna. Although the institution of blessings is generally attributed to King David, who ordained that 100 blessings be recited each day (Bamidbar Rabbah 18:21, cited by Shulchan Aruch HaRav 46:1), in several sources it is explained that blessings were recited previously. See Likkutei Torah L’Gimmel Parshiyos, the maamar entitled Lehavin Inyan HaBerachos. [Or HaTorah, Bereishis, Vol. III, p. 551a ff.] Shabbos 74b.

7. 8. Even those who had to grind and cook the manna did not have to perform all

the labors necessary to prepare ordinary bread. (See also note 14.)

9. Yoma 75b. 10. See ch. 12.

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the term — one whose spiritual scales are equally balanced between merit and sin.)

Moreover, the manna also sustained the wicked. And even then, it did not produce any waste. The fact that wicked people — even those who carried the idol fashioned by Michah11 — partook of the manna did not affect the level of the manna itself. Even as it was digested by them, becoming part of their flesh and blood, it retained all its qualities.

And not only did the manna itself remain unchanged, it elevated those who partook of it. Thus our Sages said:12 “The Torah was given solely to those who partook of the manna,” for the manna refined the Jews and made them worthy of the Torah.

The manna had this effect on all 600,000 Jews, making them worthy of receiving the Torah in its entirety: its simple meaning, its allusions, its homilies, and its mystic concepts.13

Partaking of the manna did not change the nature of the wicked immediately; they did not turn to G-d in teshuvah at that time. For that reason, even after partaking of the manna several times, there were Jews who still had to grind14 and

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 11. For this idol crossed the Red Sea with the Jewish people and traveled with

them to Eretz Yisrael (Sanhedrin 103b, see Pesachim 117a).

12. Mechilta, Shmos 16:4; Yalkut Shimoni to that verse.

See Likkutei Torah, Parshas Eikev (p. 14b), which states that the manna is identified with Moshe, the recipient of the Torah. For this reason, it is written (Devarim 8:3): “He fed you the manna... which your forefathers did not know,” for the forefathers lived before the giving of the Torah. See also the synopsis of that maamar (p. 16b), which states that the manna was the diet of the “generation of knowledge” which received the Torah.

13. See Sefer HaGilgulim, Hakdamah 17; the beginning of Shaar HaMitzvos. See

also Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:4.

14. See the Zohar, Vol. II, p. 62b, and the Tikkunei Zohar, at the conclusion of (the 2nd) Tikkun 3 p. 140b, which explains that crushing the manna in a mortar (Bamidbar 11:9) also relates to the wicked.

It can be explained that in this context (as opposed to the interpretation of “spreading out” to search for manna), there is no difference of opinion be- tween the Zohar and the Talmud (Yoma 75a). Note that in the maamar entitled

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cook before eating. Moreover, several of the incidents referred to in the verse:15 “And you tried me these ten times” occurred after the Jews began partaking of the manna.16 Thus we see that the manna’s effect was not complete. Nevertheless, in all instances it definitely had some influence.

A PARALLEL BETWEEN MANNA AND SHABBOS

Based on the above, we can appreciate a ruling in Sefer HaItim17 quoted in the name of Rav Saadia Gaon: When a per- son finds himself in a distant community on Shabbos, and does not know which Torah portion should be read, he should recite the portion concerning manna. For this portion was related on Shabbos.

On the surface, this ruling is difficult to understand; many portions in the Torah were related on Shabbos. For example, “everyone agrees that the Torah was given on Shabbos,”18 and so the person could read the Ten Commandments. Why should he read the portion concerning manna?

The above question can be resolved by clarifying the intrinsic connection between the manna and Shabbos. Just as the manna did not lose its spiritual quality despite the fact that it descended to very low levels, so too the Shabbos retains its essential quality even as it descends to very low levels.19

Omar Rabbi Akiva in the series of maamarim entitled Yom Tov Shel Rosh Ha- Shanah, 5666, that only the example of crushing manna in a mortar is cited.

15. Bamidbar 14:22. 16. See Archin 15a and the commentaries to Avos 5:4. 17. Hilchos Birchas ViOneg Shabbos, sec. 184. 18. Shabbos 86b. 19. Both the manna and Shabbos join the higher spiritual plane with the lower in such a manner that the spiritual retains its elevated qualities, while the form of the material entities remains unchanged. There is, however, a difference in ap- proach. Shabbos reflects the ascent of the worlds (as they exist) to the spiritual plane, while manna represents the descent of the spiritual (in its transcen- dence) to the material plane.

It is true that as the manna descended to the earthly plane and became ac- tual food, it became somewhat material in nature. For this reason, when

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With regard to the verse,20 “And the heavens, the earth, and all their hosts were completed,” the word vayichulu is associated with the word kilayon,21 meaning “expiration,” i.e., it is as if the soul of the world expired with love for G-d.

This does not mean that the world ceases to exist, but rather that the world as it exists became elevated. For that

Moshe spent the 40 days on Mount Sinai, he did not eat manna in its physical form. Instead, he partook of it in its spiritual form, as the angels do,\* as im- plied by the verse (Tehillim 78:25): “The bread of the mighty was eaten by a mortal.” For this reason, the manna did not descend on Shabbos. For at the time of the ascent of the worlds, it is impossible for the spiritual to descend to the ma- terial plane. Nevertheless, even as the manna existed on the material plane, spiritual lights of the highest levels were enclothed within it.\*\* Indeed, this is the reason why it did not descend on Shabbos, for the ascent involves only the inner dimension of the worlds. The external dimension of existence does not ascend on Shabbos, and therefore other forms of Divine influence, [e.g., rain,] do descend.\*\*\* See Torah Or, Vayakhel p. 89a-b. For this reason, although the manna did not descend into the material plane on Shabbos, in the spiritual planes it was drawn down on Shabbos. All the six days of the week were blessed with manna, because of the seventh day (Zohar, Vol. II, p. 63b). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \* Torah Or, p. 113c. See Torah Or, Beshallach 74a, and Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 7b, which explain that Moshe did not partake of “the bread of the mighty” which is eaten by the angels. This explanation is based on a difference of opinion between Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva in Yoma 75b. Since Rabbi Yishmael interprets the term “bread of the mighty” differently, and explains that it refers to the manna eaten by the entire Jewish people, it can be explained that those maamarim are based on two views mentioned in the Midrash (Shmos Rabbah 47:5,7), of which it can be said “These and these are the words of the living G-d.” Moreover, it is possible to offer a resolution. One might say that when Moshe was studying with G-d, he did not eat at all, but when he was reviewing the teachings himself, he was on the spiritual level of the angels, and therefore ate as they did (a letter of the Rebbe from Tevet 14, 5720).

\*\* Based on the explanation in the maamar entitled Veharichu (Eshalech — Liozna) regarding the dew, it would appear that manna is the essence of the spiritual in- fluence from above.

\*\*\* See Likkutei Torah, Parshas Tazria, the maamar entitled Lam’natzeach Al

HaSheminis.

20. Bereishis 2:1. 21. See Bereishis Rabbah 10:4; Or HaTorah, to Bereishis, loc. cit.

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reason, it is a mitzvah to take pleasure in the Shabbos by eat- ing and drinking.22

Nevertheless, the pleasure which a Jew derives from eat- ing and drinking on Shabbos — i.e., not only the deed, but the pleasure itself — is a mitzvah. During the week, we should not eat or drink more than is necessary to maintain our bodies. And even then, one should not eat or drink for pleasure, but rather out of necessity, for pleasure makes one more materially oriented. On Shabbos, by contrast, not only does the pleasure not make a person materially oriented (as reflected in the Zohar’s statement:23 “The verse24 mentions ‘the waste of your festivals,’ and not ‘the waste of your Shab- bosos’”), the pleasure itself becomes a mitzvah.25

The light of Shabbos permeates creation, to the extent that even an utterly wicked person will not lie on Shabbos.26 The intent is not to say that the Shabbos prompts him to turn to G-d in teshuvah. On the contrary, the person remains the same. Nevertheless, he will not lie on Shabbos because the light of Shabbos permeates even the lowest levels.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 22. Shulchan Aruch HaRav 242:1. 23. Vol. II, p. 88b. 24. Malachi 2:3. 25. See Torah Or; the beginning of Parshas Chayei Sarah; Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar

72a; the maamar entitled Vihu Omed Aleihem, 5663, et al.

26. Jerusalem Talmud, Demai 4:1. Although this same person will lie during the week, for he is utterly wicked, our assumption is that he will not lie on Shab- bos. The fact that such people do sometimes lie on Shabbos is not a contradic- tion. The intent of the Jerusalem Talmud is that the person’s nature, and thus our prevailing assumption when dealing with him, prevents him from lying. But each man possesses free choice, and may act contrary to his nature. This is indicated by the commentators who emphasize that “he speaks the truth,” and “fears lying.” They do not say he cannot lie. This describes even the animal soul of all Jews, including common people. A similar concept applies with regard to the manna. The “bread from heaven” that does not produce waste was the natural food of all Jews. Never- theless, as our Sages underscore (Yoma 75b), the Jews had free choice and were able to buy ordinary food from gentile traders. That food did produce waste (Sichos Shabbos Parshas Eikev, 5723).

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This explains why a person who does not know which Torah portion to read on a given Shabbos should read the one concerning manna. For every type of influence which is drawn down into the world is drawn down through the Torah. Thus the creation of the Shabbos atmosphere — i.e., that the light of Shabbos should permeate the material realm — is also dependent on the Torah. Accordingly, when we do not know the portion connected with any given Shabbos, we should read the one concerning manna, for it conveys the spiritual theme which characterizes the Shabbos.27

The Ten Commandments, and similarly other portions of the Torah, reflect elevated spiritual levels. They do not, how- ever, reflect how these spiritual lights descend into this world without change.

TWO TYPES OF SPIRITUAL BREAD

Everything which exists has its source in the Torah. The Torah is described with the analogy of bread.28 Accordingly, the two types of bread, “bread from heaven” and “bread from the earth” have their source in two different dimensions of “bread” within the Torah.

Nigleh, the revealed teachings of Torah law, parallels “bread from the earth,” while P’nimiyus HaTorah, the Torah’s mystic teachings, parallels “bread from heaven.”29

Nigleh is comparable to “bread from the earth” because it is characterized by questions and differences of opinion, and its study involves effort. P’nimiyus HaTorah, by contrast, is ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 27. To cite a parallel, there are 12 gates of prayer, one relating to each of the 12 tribes. And there is Shaar HaKollel, the general gate. When a person does not know the tribe he is descended from, he should use this general gate (Likkutei Amarim by the Maggid of Mezeritch (ch. 133); the introduction to Shaar HaKollel).

28. See Shabbos 120a, Chagigah 14a, the introduction to the Tikkunei Zohar (1b),

the conclusion of Tikkun 3 (p. 140b), and Bereishis Rabbah 43:6.

29. See the maamar entitled, Ki Savo, 5666, and the maamar entitled Amar Rabbi

Akiva Ashreichem, 5667.

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compared to “bread from heaven,” because within it, “there are neither unresolved questions... nor differences of opin- ion.”30

One should not, however, surmise that because P’nimiyus HaTorah is comparable to “bread from heaven” it is intended for only a spiritual elite. The opposite is true; just as the manna was intended for every Jew, even the wicked, so too P’nimiyus HaTorah is intended for everyone.

And their involvement with P’nimiyus HaTorah will not cause them any loss. On the contrary, since, as our Sages taught:31 “Study is great, because it leads to deed,” the study of Chassidus will lead people to turn to G-d in teshuvah, and become students of the Torah and observers of the mitzvos. As our Sages promised:32 “the light [of the Torah; i.e., P’nimiyus HaTorah33] will point them to the good.”

For this reason, we should not hold Jews back from the study of P’nimiyus HaTorah. On the contrary, we must seek to involve every Jew in this study, for it will lead them to the ultimate truth, to a state in which “he does not lie.” This involves exposing the shades of falsehood which characterize material existence. At that time, there will be no difference of opinion between the G-dly soul and the animal soul, nor will there be any unresolved questions. We will all follow the path of G-d, King of this Earth.

NOT TO STAND IN ANOTHER JEW’S WAY

There are those who claim that people who have not reached the rung of the righteous should not be allowed to study P’nimiyus HaTorah. This is a misguided approach, for bringing a Jew to the study of P’nimiyus HaTorah will moti- ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 30. Zohar, Vol. III, p. 124b; see Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 26. 31. Kiddushin 40b. 32. Pesichtah l’Eichah Rabbah; the Jerusalem Talmud, Chagigah 1:7. 33. See the gloss of the Korban Eidah to the Jerusalem Talmud, op. cit.. See also

Toras Shalom, p. 139.

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vate him to turn to G-d in teshuvah. Preventing him from studying, by contrast, causes him to sink even lower.

Were we to ask the person who was rebuffed, why his spiritual state is so low, he could reply, quoting the verse:34 “I was driven away today from attachment to the heritage of G-d.”

The person who drove his colleague away will himself be subject to examination: How much better and more refined is he than the person he drove away? Moreover, his achieve- ments will be assessed according to the potentials which he himself possesses, and not according to those of the person driven away.

To cite a parallel, Chassidus35 explains that Moshe was “more humble than all the men on the face of the earth,”36 because he made the following calculation: Were another person given the soul which he had been given, and were he to have been granted the same level of Divine assistance that he had been granted, surely that other person would have reached even higher levels.

To clarify the matter with an analogy: When a person prevents another Jew from studying “the Torah of life,” and particularly when he does not allow him to approach P’nimiyus HaTorah, “the tree of life,”30 he can be considered a spiritual murderer. For he is severing his fellow Jew’s attach- ment to the living G-d.37

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 34. I Shmuel 26:19. 35. See Sefer HaMaamarim 5710, p. 237. 36. Bamidbar 12:3. 37. The above does not contradict our Sages’ (Chulin 133a; Rambam, Hilchos Tal- mud Torah 4:1) charge not to teach a student who is morally unrefined (although that directive applies to the study of nigleh, the revealed dimension of Torah law), nor to the parallel admonitions in the Zohar and the AriZal with regard to the preparations necessary for the study of P’nimiyus HaTorah. As explained in other sources, the time has come for “your wellsprings to spread outward,” and even those on the peripheries of Jewish involvement should be exposed to the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

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GLIMMERS OF DAWN

In general, we see that as we draw closer to Mashiach’s coming, the controversy and accusations against Chassidus have abated. For example, in previous generations there were claims that Chassidus should not be studied at all. Such arguments are no longer advanced. There is, however, a new argument: Chassidus is relevant only to a spiritual elite.

Every degree of concealment is motivated by a Divine intent; indeed, the intent is that the concealment itself lead to a greater revelation. Similarly, in the case at hand, not only shouldn’t these statements lead to distress, they should encourage us to intensify our involvement in the study and dissemination of Chassidus.38

This reinforced dedication will have a positive effect. When the yetzer hora sees that the concealment it brought about only caused the study and dissemination of Chassidus to be reinforced, it will see that its efforts were — according to its conception — counterproductive, and will remove that concealment.

May G-d help that we not be distressed by the challenges, nor by the concealment of G-dliness which we face. Instead, may these challenges intensify the spreading of Chassidus. This increase in turn hastens the coming of the ultimate Redemption to be led by Mashiach. May it take place speedily, in our days.

(Adapted from Sichos Yud Shvat, 5717 and Sichos Shabbos Parshas Beshallach, 5723)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

See Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah 4:3,17. Also, consider the above in light of the well-known analogy concerning the priceless gem in the king’s crown that was ground into an elixir to save the life of his son [Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. III, p. 326ff.].

38. In this context, see Tanya, ch. 28, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 25.

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SHELACH

WHY DID THE JEWS LISTEN TO THE SPIES?

In Parshas Shelach, the Torah relates how the men whom Moshe had sent as spies caused the Jews to fear entering Eretz Yisrael by telling them:1 “The people who dwell in the land are very strong.... We are not able to go up against them, for they are stronger than He,” i.e., than G-d Himself. As our Sages comment:2 “It is as if the owner cannot remove his articles from there.”

Every story in the Torah serves as a lesson for the Divine service of the Jewish people in all generations. What lesson can we learn from the story of the spies?

It is true that we are still working to offset the negative consequences of the spies’ report.2 But even so, it is not nec- essary to know all the details of the story; a general account would have been sufficient.

Also, an explanation is required regarding the core issue: How were the spies able to frighten the Jews, and dissuade them from wanting to enter Eretz Yisrael? Throughout its journey from Egypt, the nation had seen how G-d had wrought supernatural miracles. Why were they intimidated by the inhabitants of Canaan?

For example, the Torah describes3 the desert through which the Jews passed as inhabited by “snakes, serpents, and ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Bamidbar 13:28-31. 2.

See Sotah 35a, which explains that as a result of the spies’ conduct there will be “weeping for generations.”

3. Devarim 8:15.

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scorpions.” Our Sages explain4 that even though these crea- tures were of monstrous size, they were slain by the ark5 and the clouds of glory.6

And just as G-d protected the Jews from harm, so too He worked miracles for their benefit. Every day, the Jews ate manna from heaven and drank water from Miriam’s well. Similarly, G-d wrought miracles on their behalf against other nations, the most noteworthy of these being the devastation of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. So great a miracle was this that our Sages describe it as being “difficult.”7

They witnessed these miracles with their own eyes. Why then did they accept the spies’ arguments? Why didn’t they assume that just as G-d had defeated the Egyptians, He would also defeat the Canaanites?

These questions are reinforced by the fact that Calev, when stirring the Jews to reject the spies’ judgment, did not refer to the miracles of the exodus or to those which tran- spired in the desert. Instead, he merely encouraged the Jews:8 “Let us go up and take possession of [the land].”

THE CANAANITES’ FEAR

Can we say that the defeat of Egypt’s army was not enough to inspire confidence with regard to the battle against the kings of Canaan, who were strong and mighty?9 As stated in the Song sung at the Red Sea, when the Canaanites heard of the splitting of the ocean, they all melted in fear10 — a fear

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 4. Midrash Tanchuma, Beshallach, sec. 18; Yalkut Shimoni, sec. 255; see also

Mechilta, Beshallach 15:22.

5. Yalkut Shimoni, sec. 729. 6. Mechilta, Beshallach 13:21; Sifri, Behaalos’cha 10:34; Bamidbar Rabbah 1:2;

Midrash Tanchuma, Beshallach, sec. 3, et al. Sotah 2a; see note 31.

7. 8. Bamidbar 13:30. 9. 10. See Shmos 15:15.

See Rashi, Bamidbar 14:16.

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so powerful that it still affected them11 38 years later, when Yehoshua sent spies into the land.

Moreover, our Sages state12 that whenever a nation subju- gates the Jewish people, G-d makes that nation a superpower. Thus when the Jews were enslaved in Egypt, the Egyptians dominated the world,13 including the 31 kings of Canaan. Thus the devastation of the Egyptians should surely have cast fear into the hearts of their vassals.

WHERE THE SPIES WENT WRONG

In Chassidus,14 it is explained that the real reason the spies wanted to remain in the desert rather than enter Eretz Yisrael is because they did not want to involve themselves with material affairs. In the desert, the nation was removed from all worldly concerns. The people received their physical sus- tenance in miraculous ways, and even their clothes grew with them, as our Sages commented.15

The Jews knew that when they reached Eretz Yisrael, the manna would cease and the well of Miriam would no longer accompany them. Instead, they would have to derive their sustenance from “bread from the earth,” and would have to perform the labor necessary to obtain it.

For this reason, the spies complained that Eretz Yisrael “is

a land that devours its inhabitants.”16

This phrase was well chosen. When food is eaten, it becomes absorbed into the body of the person who partakes of it. So too, the spies complained, when the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael, they would be consumed by the land, and them- ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 11. See Yehoshua 2:10. 12. Chagigah 13b; Mechilta, Beshallach 14:5; Zohar, commenting on Shmos 6:1. 13. See the Mechilta and the Zohar, op. cit. 14. Likkutei Torah, the beginning of Parshas Shelach. 15. Yalkut Shimoni, Rashi commenting on Devarim 8:4, “Your clothes did not tat-

ter.”

16. Bamidbar 13:32.

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selves become earthly.17 This would be a drastic departure from their conduct in the desert, where they were involved only with the spiritual. Indeed, in the desert, even the food they ate, the manna, refined their natures, making them fit to study Torah, as reflected in our Sages’ statement:18 “The Torah was given solely to those who partook of the manna.”

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But G-d’s intent in creation was that a dwelling be fash- lower worlds.19 This requires ioned involvement in the material dimensions of existence, making them vessels for G-dliness. Accordingly, the spies were in error; the ultimate purpose of the Jews’ desert journey was their life in Eretz Yisrael, where they would fashion a dwell- ing for G-d.20 The passage through the desert was merely a preparatory phase.

MIRACLES AND NATURE

Based on the above, we can appreciate why, despite the overt miracles witnessed during the exodus, at the splitting of the Red Sea, and throughout their desert journey, the spies still doubted G-d’s power with regard to the conquest of Eretz Yisrael. They did not draw a lesson from these miracles, for they saw the miraculous and the mundane as two unrelated planes. The miracles of the desert could not serve as indica- tors regarding their future in Eretz Yisrael, because in Eretz

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 17. Calev and Yehoshua used the expression “our bread” (Bamidbar 14:9) to con-

vey the same concept.

18. Mechilta, Shmos 16:4; Yalkut Shimoni to that verse. See the sichah to Parshas

Behaalos’cha in this series, where this concept is discussed.

19. Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Bechukosai, sec. 3; Tanya, chs. 33 and 36. See Par-

shas Acharei in this series, where this concept is explained.

20. The essence of the Jews’ Divine service in Eretz Yisrael involves the observance of the mitzvos in deed, thereby using mundane material entities in the spirit of “Know Him in all your ways” (Mishlei 3:6). In the desert, by contrast, the re- finement of the Jewish people (even the refinement of their bodies accomplished by eating the manna) centered on the Torah. In this vein, we re- fer to Kiddushin 40b, which states that the greatness of Torah study is that it “leads to deed.”

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Yisrael they would have to be involved with material exis- tence.

In the desert, they were involved with spiritual matters, and their lives were controlled by miracles. In Eretz Yisrael, where they would be involved in material affairs, the spies feared that their lives would be controlled by the natural order. (And indeed, with regard to certain matters, this transition was evident immediately upon their entry into Eretz Yisrael. The manna, Miriam’s well, and the clouds of glory all ceased.)

If the natural order will prevail, they argued, then there was reason to fear the “descendants of the titans”21 who inhabited Eretz Yisrael. For according to the natural order, they were stronger than the Jews.

On this basis, we can understand our Sages’ restatement of the spies’ report:2 “It is as if the owner cannot remove his articles from there.” The spies knew — indeed, they had seen with their own eyes — that G-d is the “owner” of the world, and can do with it as He wishes. Moreover, they realized that every entity in the world is one of G-d’s “articles.”

“Removing his articles” means elevating the sparks of G-dliness enclothed in the physical substance of Canaan. This — the spies felt — is possible if one conducts one’s life in a spiritual manner. In the desert, such conduct is feasible, but not within the material world. For the world to remain unchanged, governed by the laws of nature, and yet become a medium for G-dliness, it was necessary, they thought, for G-d to sacrifice His “ownership” and Himself accept the dictates of the natural order. Accordingly, if it is G-d’s will that the Jews become subject to the laws of nature, the spies were sure there would be no place for miracles.

This argument was rebutted by Calev and Yehoshua with their statement: “If G-d cherishes us... He will give us [the] ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 21. Bamidbar 13:33.

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land.”22 Since G-d’s desire is that the Jewish people will create a dwelling for Him in Eretz Yisrael, the nation should realize that:23 “They are our bread.... G-d is with us. Do not fear them.”

There is no need to fear confrontation with the world. Even though the natural order remains, G-d always accom- panies the Jewish people, and grants them supernatural success. And so the world can be considered “our bread,”24 i.e., it will become part of our being, and will not prevent us from fashioning a dwelling for G-d’s presence.

WHEN TRANSCENDENCE IS ALSO A LIMIT

In truth, miracles enclothed in the natural order are of a higher order than miracles which transcend nature.25 Miracles which transcend the natural order point to a transcendent G-dliness, which disrupts nature. The miracles which are enclothed within the natural order, by contrast, indicate that G-d is above both nature and transcendence, and can there- fore fuse the two and cause them to function in harmony.

This ability was revealed in the Holy of Holies, where the holy ark took up no space. To explain: There were ten cubits from the eastern wall of the Holy of Holies to the eastern side of the ark, and ten cubits from the western wall to the west- ern side of the ark, and the ark itself was a cubit and a half wide. Yet the width of the entire chamber was only 20 cubits!26 Despite the fact that the ark measured 2.5 by 1.5

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 22. Ibid. 14:8. “Cherishes,” chafetz, in Hebrew, reflects the involvement of the in- ner dimension of G-d’s will, which has dominion over the external dimensions of His will. 23. Bamidbar 14:9. 24. See note 18. 25. See Torah Or, Megillas Esther, p. 100a. 26. Yoma 21a.

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cubits, it did not take up space within the Holy of Holies; limitation and transcendency were fused.27

In order for the Jewish people to affect the material world, it was necessary for them to enter Eretz Yisrael. In the desert, they lived above nature. Their entry into Eretz Yisrael was intended to fuse nature and transcendence. For this reason, their entry was marked by the splitting of the Jordan with the ark.28 For the settlement of Eretz Yisrael and the ark share this theme:29 the fusion of limitation and transcendence.30

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 27. The potential to fuse limitation and transcendence stems from G-d’s essence, which is above all limits. For this reason, with regard to the site of the Beis HaMikdash it is written (Bereishis 28:16): “Indeed, Havayah is present in this place.” Havayah is the name which reflects G-d’s essence. This is also the point of the statement of Calev and Yehoshua: “G-d (Havayah) is with us; do not fear them.” Similarly, when G-d did not endow the Jewish people with this power, Moshe warned them (Bamidbar 14:42-43): “Do not ascend; Havayah is not in your midst,” and “Havayah will not be with you.”

Similarly, the ark is described as (Ibid.:44): “The ark of Havayah” (Sichos

Shabbos Parshas Korach, 5722). See also note 30.

28. Yehoshua 4:7. Similarly, the conquest of Jericho — the “bolt of Eretz Yisrael” — (Bamidbar Rabbah 15:15) which was “equivalent to Eretz Yisrael in its total- ity” was brought about by carrying the ark around the city (Yehoshua 6:11ff.).

29. For this reason, when the people decided to try to enter Eretz Yisrael against G-d’s wishes, “the ark of G-d’s covenant did not move from the camp” (Bamidbar 14:44). They were not granted the medium which empowers the conquest of Eretz Yisrael.

30. The splitting of the Red Sea also represented a fusion of nature and the tran- scendent. For that reason, our Sages (Sotah 2a) refer to it as “difficult” (see the maamar entitled HaChodesh, 5654; [see sources cited in Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XX, p. 100]). After the splitting of the sea, this influence ceased. The advantage of the splitting of the Jordan was twofold: a) The river itself agreed to the splitting as it were (see Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 91a), and b) the potential to join the natural and the transcendent was granted in a manner that would continue afterwards. Nevertheless, the splitting of the Red Sea alone is referred to as “difficult,” because it was the archetype for the splitting of all waters.

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ACQUIRING OUR INHERITANCE

This enables us to understand Calev’s choice of words:31 “Let us ascend and take possession of it.” In the Hebrew, the words “Let us ascend” are repeated, aleh naaleh. The implica- tion is that two types of ascent are involved. For were the second ascent to be of the same type as the first, it would have been considered part of that first ascent.32 Calev was alluding to the fact that the entry into Eretz Yisrael would involve not only an ascent to a level above nature (as in the desert), but also an ascent above the level of transcendence.33

This helps us understand the Hebrew term used for “and take possession,” viyerashnu. This relates to the word yerushah, meaning “inheritance.” An inheritance is not con- sidered a transfer of property.

When an article is purchased, it is transferred from the seller’s domain to the buyer’s. When, by contrast, an article is inherited, it remains in the same domain, for the essence of the testator is transferred to the heir.34

This was Calev’s intent when he said “we will take pos- session of it.” When we enter Eretz Yisrael and make material concerns mediums for G-dliness, we will take possession of

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 31. Bamidbar 13:30. 32. To cite a parallel: Angels are referred as “ones who stand” (Zechariah 2:7), al- though they also ascend when offering their songs of praise because their degree of spiritual ascent is always relative. See Torah Or and Or HaTorah, the beginning of Parshas Shmos.

33. This second phase of ascent also endows the first with a higher quality. (To cite a parallel, see Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, p. 1211, which explains that when kabbalas ol, an unlimited commitment to fulfill G-d’s will, is coupled with un- derstanding, the understanding is lifted to a higher rung.) For this reason, two stages of ascent are mentioned with regard to Eretz Yisrael. This is also the implication of the statement of Calev and Yehoshua (Bamidbar 14:7): “The land is very, very good.” The repetition of the modifier alludes to two types of goodness. See also Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 37a, 38c.

34. See Bava Basra 65a, Zevachim 4b with regard to the change in ownership after death. See also the Responsa of the Tzofnas Paneach, Vol. I, Responsum 118.

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the land as an inheritance, for through these efforts, we will relate to G-d’s essence.

SPIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The lesson from the story of the spies can be explained as follows: In his personal life, every Jew journeys through the desert and settles in Eretz Yisrael. Similarly, these two phases are reflected in our conduct each day. We begin the day with prayer and a fixed time of study, and then go out and involve ourselves with elevating material entities. It’s true the tzitzis and the tefillin which we wear are material entities, but put- ting them on each day does not represent involvement with the limitations of worldly existence. This is accomplished when a person involves himself in his profession or in his personal concerns, carrying out these activities according to the directive:35 “Know Him in all your ways.”

A person can argue: “During the study of the Torah, which is the wisdom and the will of G-d, one can feel a bond with G-d that excludes everything else. And during prayer, when one stands before G-d with complete bittul, even one’s ‘I’ should cease to be felt. One should be aware only of G-d. But how can this connection be maintained during one’s involvement with worldly matters? The very Hebrew word for ‘world,’ olam, the word helam, meaning ‘concealment.’36 For the world is characterized by the con- cealment of G-dliness, and the Torah mandates that our involvement in the world recognize its limitations.

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“How then can a person bring himself to the point that he will show no concern for material entities, and will use them only for his Divine service?”

The “land,” it can be argued, “devours its inhabitants.” Since we are involved in material concerns during the major- ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 35. Mishlei 3:6. 36. See Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 37d.

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ity of the day, not only can we not carry out the Divine service required, but our involvement with material entities confuses us, and disturbs us during prayer and study.

This, however, is the approach of the spies. They main- tained that involvement in the world is an insurmountable challenge; even “the owner cannot remove his articles from there.”

The truth is that, although the observance of Torah and mitzvos must conform to the limitations of the natural order,37 we do not have to be restricted by those limitations. “If G-d cherishes38 us” — i.e., if we follow the path G-d cherishes39 and act as His agents — we have the potential to unite nature and that which is above nature, transforming the world into a dwelling fit for G-d.

This potential is granted by the ark, which remains intact

in the present age, entombed under the Beis HaMikdash.40

GOING BEYOND ONESELF

In Kabbalah, and in Chassidus,41 it is explained that the spies functioned in the realm of thought, and did not desire to descend to the realm of speech. Other opinions42 explain that they were willing to descend to the realm of speech, but not to the realm of deed.

The difference between thought and speech is that thought is self-contained. Speech, by contrast, reaches out to another person. Parallels exist between the Jews’ Divine service in the desert and their Divine service in Eretz Yisrael. ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 37. See Sichos Yud-Tes Kislev, 5692 (Likkutei Dibburim, p. 1505). 38. As mentioned above, the word chafetz, translated as “cherished,” refers to the

inner dimension of G-d’s will. See Tanya, chs. 22-23.

39. See Tehillim 37:23: “The steps of man are established by G-d, and He cherishes

his way.” See also HaYom Yom, entry Tammuz 10.

40. Kerisus 5b. 41. Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 38b. 42. Ibid., 37a, 38c.

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The entry into Eretz Yisrael entailed more than the obser- vance of the mitzvos as they are enclothed in material entities (as opposed to single-minded study of the Torah), and even more than involvement with material entities in the spirit of “Know Him in all your ways.” These endeavors can be entirely self-contained. And when a Jew’s Divine service is self-contained, he is still “in the desert,” in the realm of thought, even though he may be involved with material enti- ties. “Entering Eretz Yisrael” means involving oneself with others, devoting oneself to them, and making them into Torah Jews.

The yetzer hora can argue: If one devotes oneself to an- other Jew, and endeavors to influence him, one will surely feel on a higher level. And these feelings will be reinforced if the other person responds with thanks, honor, and praise. Since one does not desire to become conscious of one’s ego or, heaven forbid, become possessed by pride — which is the source of all evil43 — it is preferable to refrain from such involvement in the first place.

This, however, is the approach of the spies, who feared that the “land devours its inhabitants.” When we realize the truth — that “G-d cherishes us” — and dedicate ourselves to carrying out G-d’s will, it is impossible to descend. On the contrary, one’s path will point upward, to the ultimate ascent.

The yetzer hora may still argue: “It is true that one must involve oneself with another person, but it is sufficient to work with a person on your own level. There is no need to descend and work to save a lowly individual. Such involve- ment will surely lead to your own descent.”

In this context, the kabbalistic interpretation of the story of the spies teaches that speech is not enough; deed is neces- sary. Speech relates to equals or near-equals — people who

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 43. Torah Or, p. 831. See also the maamarim entitled Reishis Goyim Amalek, and

Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim, 14d.

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hear and understands what one says. Deed, by contrast, can involve even inanimate matter.

The story of the spies teaches that one must be involved even with a person whose spiritual level is so low that he is considered an inanimate entity. It is through such endeavors that we will reach the ultimate ascent and the coming of the time when we will take possession of Eretz Yisrael as an eter- nal inheritance.

(Adapted from Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shelach, 5722)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

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KORACH

A CHRONOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our Sages1 relate that Korach’s abortive uprising against Moshe and Aharon took place after the spies returned with their negative report. This is reflected in the complaint of Dasan and Aviram:2 “You brought us out [of Egypt,] a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert... and you did not bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey.” Obviously, they were speaking after the decree:3 “You will perish in this desert.”

The question arises: Why did Korach wait until then to stage his revolt? G-d’s commandment to transfer the sacrifi- cial service from the firstborn to Aharon and his sons came at the time of the giving of the Torah, or before the dedication of the Sanctuary.4 By the time the Sanctuary was dedicated, Aharon was serving as High Priest. The giving of the Torah took place on the sixth of Sivan. The Sanctuary was completed the following year, on the twenty-third Adar and dedicated on the first of Nissan.5 The spies did not return until after the ninth of Av. Why then did Korach delay his mutiny until then?

Many say that Korach’s rebellion was sparked by the appointment of Elitzafon ben Uziel as leader of the sons of

Seder Olam Rabbah, ch. 8; cited by the Rashbam and Tosafos, Bava Basra 119a.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. 2. Bamidbar 16:13-14. 3. Bamidbar 14:35. 4. Zevachim 115b; see the commentary of Rabbeinu Bechaye to Shmos 19:22. 5.

See the Jerusalem Talmud, Yoma 1:1.

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Kehos,6 but this appointment also took place previously, at the time of the Levite census in Iyar. The fact that Korach waited until after the ninth of Av leads to the conclusion that his attempt to seize power was related to the story of the spies.

KORACH’S CONNECTION TO THE SPIES

As mentioned,7 the spies wanted to avoid involvement in worldly matters. For this reason, they sought to remain in the desert so that worldly concerns would not disturb the nation’s Torah study and connection with G-d. Moshe pointed out the flaw in this approach, for “deed is most essential,”8 and taught that the ultimate spiritual heights can be reached only through the observance of mitzvos on the material plane.

To develop this concept: The difference between the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos is that Torah study centers on intellectual comprehension. In the realm of intellect, there are differences between individuals according to their level of comprehension. With regard to the obser- vance of mitzvos, however, there is no distinction between one Jew and another. Moshe Rabbeinu’s donning of tefillin is the same act as that performed by any simple person. Yes, there are differences with regard to the intent, but the actual deed is the same.

For this reason, Korach’s challenge came after the return of the spies. For Korach realized that with regard to the study of Torah, Moshe and Aharon were on a higher level than other Jews. After all, Moshe was the one who received the Torah from G-d. He would study with Aharon, then with Aharon’s sons, and only afterwards with the entire ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 6. Bamidbar Rabbah and Midrash Tanchuma, the beginning of Parshas Korach,

cited by Rashi. See the sichah to Parshas Shelach in this series.

7. 8. Cf. Pirkei Avos 1:17.

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nation.9 Moreover, the intent is not merely to say that Moshe and Aharon studied before the rest of the Jewish people, but that their study was on a higher spiritual level.

Accordingly, as long as the Divine service required from the Jews centered on the study of Torah, Korach did not protest the supremacy of Moshe and Aharon. The report of the spies, however, made it clear that “deed is most essen- tial,” i.e., that the observance of mitzvos on the material plane is of primary importance. Since in this context all Jews share a fundamental equality, Korach protested to Moshe and Aharon: “Why do you set yourselves up as supreme over G-d’s congregation?”10

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To explain at greater length: The spies wanted the nation from involvement with material affairs so that the people could devote themselves to the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos.

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Moshe had responded in G-d’s name: The fundamental purpose of the exodus is to enter Eretz Yisrael and observe the mitzvos there on the material plane. For this reason, it is worthwhile to forgo the great spiritual heights that might be reached in the desert.

If so, Korach argued, “Why do you set yourself up as supreme?” The advantage possessed by Moshe and Aharon relates to spiritual matters. If, however, “deed is what is most essential,” and with regard to deed all are the same, why do Moshe and Aharon claim special distinction?11

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 9. Eruvin 54b. 10. Bamidbar 16:3. 11. In the verse cited previously, Korach refers to the people as “the congregation of G-d” using the name Havayah, and in the same verse he states: “The people are all holy, and Havayah is among them.” He uses the name Havayah because it refers to G-d’s essence which is drawn down through the observance of mitzvos. See the sichah to Parshas Shelach in this series, where this concept is explained.

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RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE LEADERSHIP

Based on the above, it is possible to answer another question: How was it possible for Korach and “the 250 princes of the people” who followed him to protest against Moshe and Aharon holding positions of leadership? They held positions of leadership themselves, being “princes of the people.” Similarly, the entire tribe of Levi was given an elevated status, one which Korach and his followers were not willing to relinquish. (For nowhere does it say that Korach was prepared to give up his position. On the contrary, as evident from Moshe’s reply to him, he was seeking priesthood — an even greater position.12)

How

then could Korach make a claim which

contradicted his own position?

We must conclude that Korach did not want to destroy the concept of leadership entirely; he was merely opposed to the type of leadership manifested by Moshe, who was equivalent to a king.13

Korach claimed: It is true that there are different levels among the Jewish people, and those on a higher level can — and should — employ their superior potential in positions of leadership. Nevertheless, since “the entire congregation is holy,” all these levels are comparable. Moreover, as explained above, the differences between one person and spiritual another apply only with comprehension, which the actual is performance of the mitzvos, in which all Jews are equal. Therefore Korach’s group objected to Moshe Rabbeinu serving with the absolute authority of a king.14

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⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 12. Bamidbar 16:10. 13. Zevachim 102a; Shmos Rabbah 2:6, Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Behaalos’cha,

sec. 9, Zohar, Vol. III, p. 83a. See also the sources mentioned in note 6. 14. Aharon’s position as High Priest also aroused controversy, for it also is of sin-

gular uniqueness. See the maamar entitled Ko Sivorchu, 5654.

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Korach understood that all Jews are not the same, and that these differences would manifest themselves in different levels of authority. He objected, however, to one person (Moshe) being incomparably higher than all others.15

THE CORE OF KINGSHIP

Korach had another motive for challenging Moshe’s sov- ereignty. For the bond between a king and his subjects is different from other relationships such as that between stu- dent and master. The connection a student shares with his master concerns only the teachings which he receives from him. The connection between subjects and their king, by contrast, involves the totality of their being; their entire exis- tence is dependent on the king.16

See also Tosefta, the conclusion of Kerisus; Or HaTorah, Parshas Va’eira, on

the verse (Shmos 6:26): “They were Aharon and Moshe.”

15. See Tanya, ch. 44, which states: “Although who is he who would — and how could one — dare to attempt to grasp even one fraction of a thousandth of the level of love of the faithful shepherd, [Moshe]....” The literal meaning of the Hebrew words translated as “dare” is “whose heart conspires.” Thus the choice of language is precise. For in Tanya ch. 20, the Alter Rebbe explains that the desire and yearning in the heart is above con- scious thought, and is a source for conscious thought (which begins as the desire “rises from the heart to the mind”). The implication is that the possibil- ity of approaching Moshe’s level is something which our consciousness would never consider.

16. For this reason, “whenever anyone rebels against a king of Israel, the king has permission to kill him” (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 3:8). Ac- cording to Torah law, punishments are meted out according to the nature of the blemish caused by the unbefitting deed (Tanya, ch. 24). The death penalty is given because kingship (and the rebellion against it) affects the very essence of a subject’s existence. On this basis, we can also explain a narrative from the Tanach. A king who is the son of a king must be anointed when there is a controversy over his suc- cession (Rambam, loc. cit., 1:12). Nevertheless, Rechovam was not anointed despite the fact that Yerovam ben Nevat contested his sovereignty (and moreover, Yerovam was supported by the prophet, Achiyah of Shilo). The rea- son is that Yerovam’s challenge came after Rechovam had already assumed the throne, at which point he no longer needed anointment. For with the assump- tion of his throne, a king acquires the essence of all of his subjects. The controversy affects only their revealed powers. (To cite a parallel: Tanya, ch. 2,

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To illustrate this concept: Our Sages teach that if a person makes a gesture to a colleague in the presence of the king, he is liable to death for rebelling against the sovereign.17

Why? Because he thereby shows that he has remained conscious of his such consciousness may not affect the functioning of the kingdom or undermine the king’s authority, it is considered rebellious.

identity. Though

individual

On the surface, this is a far lesser crime than a student rendering a halachic decision in the presence of his teacher, for the student is dealing in an area in which he has received direct influence from his teacher. And yet making a gesture is considered a more serious act because the king’s sovereignty should encompass the entire existence of his subjects, including even the casual motion of their hands.

The same concept applies with regard to Moshe our teacher. His supreme authority was the source, not only of the Jews’ appreciation of elevated spiritual ideas, but of even the most simple matters.18 The same concept applies with

states that those who rebel against the Torah sages still receive their vitality from those sages.) For these reasons, when a person rebels against a king and rejects his yoke, the king has the authority to kill him, because his kingship affects the essence of the subject’s being.

17. Chagigah 5b.

The Talmud concludes by mentioning that the person executed did not know the meaning of the gesture given by Rabbi Yehoshua in response, and that is why he was executed. This is, however, no contradiction to the concept that the very gesture represented a rebellion against the king. For if the person had understood the gesture, his interaction with Rabbi Yehoshua would have been an expression of service to the king (as we find in many instances in the Talmud and in the Midrash, where Rabbi Yehoshua entered into philosophical discussions with the Roman authorities). This also explains why Rabbi Ye- hoshua was not punished for making a gesture in the presence of the king. 18. Indeed, we find that Moshe was the source [for even] the Jews’ material suste- nance. For this reason, when Moshe protested (Bamidbar 11:13): “From where will I bring meat?...”, i.e., he could not constrict his spiritual influence to pro- vide the people with meat (see Likkutei Torah, Behaalos’cha 31d), G-d told him

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regard to “the extension of Moshe in every generation,”19 the Nesi’im, or heads of the Jewish people.20 Every Jew21 receives his vitality from the Nassi of that generation.22

(Bamidbar 11:16-17): “Gather together 70 of the elders of Israel... and I will cause some of the spirit which rests upon you to emanate and I will grant it to them.” This implies that even the physical food granted to the Jewish people had its source in Moshe’s spirit, for he was the source of all influence for his gen- eration. (See the maamar entitled B’reish Horminisa, 5695, sec. 19).

19. See Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 69 (p. 114a). See also Bereishis Rabbah 56:7, and

Tanya, ch. 42.

20. For the entire Jewish people can be described with the analogy of a human body. Just as the head contains the life-energy for all the limbs (Tanya, ch. 51), so too the “heads of the Jewish people” guide all the souls of their generation. For this reason, the influences of these “head” souls encompasses every aspect of the existence of the people of their generation, even their most mun- dane affairs. All the life-energy of the body, even the vitality of the fingernails, stems from the brain. See Tanya, ch. 2, Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 35d. 21. This includes even those who “willfully sin and rebel against the sages” (Tanya, ch. 2). To refer to the analogy mentioned previously: since the leaders are the “heads of the Jewish people,” they are the source of vitality for all the limbs.

Similar concepts apply with regard to kingship. The sovereignty of the king encompasses not only all the humans in his kingdom (even the most simple), but also the animals, plants, and inanimate objects in the nation. To cite a parallel: Our people were commanded to wipe out every tree and every beast belonging to Amalek (Mechilta, the conclusion of Parshas Beshallach; Midrash Tehillim 9:7). The fact that a particular tree or beast belonged to Amalek af- fected the essence of its being, and therefore it had to be destroyed.

If this concept applies with regard to Amalek, which is associated with the quality of chutzpah, brashness, described as (Sanhedrin 105a): “sovereignty, lacking only a crown,” it surely applies in the realm of holiness. {Indeed, the “attribute of beneficence surpasses the attribute of retribution” (Sotah 11a).} And thus the positive dimensions of a king radiate forth and affect every ele- ment of his subjects’ lives.

22. On this basis, we can explain a citation from the Kehilas Yaakov (authored by the writer of Milo HaRoyim), entry Rebbe, that the word Nassi (thab) is an ac- ronym for the Hebrew words ubhct cegh ka umumhb meaning “the spark of Yaakov our Patriarch.” The advantage of Yaakov over Avraham and Yitzchak is that the influence of Avraham and Yitzchak was not extended to all their descendants. For Avra- ham gave birth to Yishmael, and Yitzchak sired Esav. With regard to Yaakov, however, “his posterity was perfect” (Vayikra Rabbah 36:5). And our Sages declared (Bava Metzia 84a; Zohar, Vol. I, p. 35b): “The beauty of Yaakov re- sembled the beauty of Adam, the first man,” for like Adam’s, Yaakov’s was a

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On this basis, we can understand Korach’s challenge: “The entire congregation is holy;” i.e., with regard to the observance of mitzvos, in which the holiness of the Jewish people is expressed without distinction. And so, “Why do you set yourselves up as supreme”?23 Why with regard to such matters must the Jews be dependent on Moshe’s influence?

WAITING FOR DAYBREAK

To Korach’s challenge, Moshe answered:24 “In the morn- ing, G-d will make known who is His, and who is holy, and He will bring him close.” Rashi explains that “who is His” refers to those chosen for service as Levites, while “who is holy,” refers to those chosen for the priesthood.

comprehensive soul, encompassing all the souls which would later exist. (See the sichah to Parshas Vayeitzei in this series, where this concept is discussed and sources are provided.)

Similarly with regard to the Nesi’im of the Jewish people: Their qualities are drawn down and affect all matters of the people of their generation. Moreover, just as the influence affects every aspect of the lives of the members of their generation, so too, it affects every aspect of the Nesi’im. There is nothing left for them alone. Even the highest of the qualities they possess as Nesi’im are drawn down and have an effect on all the members of their generation. Here also Moshe serves as the paradigm. On one hand, he was superior to all others (see Tanya, ch. 44, and see above note 15), and yet as Tanya contin- ues “Nevertheless, a minute portion and a fragment of his great goodness and light radiates forth to the Jewish people as a whole.”

23. To cite a parallel: In his gloss to the Torah (Tzofnas Paneach, Bamidbar 16:3), the Rogatchover Gaon explains that the priests had supremacy even with re- gard to those matters which they shared with the Levites. For example, with regard to guarding the Beis HaMikdash, there were places which were guarded both by Levites and priests, but in these places the Levites guarded the lower storey, and the priests the upper storey. With this, the Rogatchover wished to emphasize that Korach’s mistake was his failure to realize that even in the matters in which there is similarity, those who are supreme possess an advantage. The above explanation goes deeper, explaining that those on the lower level receive the positive virtues they pos- sess from those on the higher level.

24. Bamidbar 16:5.

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Rashi25 explains further that Moshe had two reasons for

postponing the trial until morning:

a) so that Korach and his followers could do teshuvah;

b) to show that just as the distinction G-d established between day and night cannot be nullified, so too one cannot nullify the distinction conveyed upon Aharon, as it is written:26 “And Aharon was distinguished, to be sanctified as most holy.”

Both rationales require explanation: According to the first, it is necessary to explain why the nation had to wait an entire night. Teshuvah, after all, requires only a moment. If the only intent was to grant a greater opportunity for repen- tance, there is no end to the matter; some are capable of immediately. others will need to wait until teshuvah morning, and still others will require even more time.

Even according to the second rationale, it remains diffi- cult to understand why it was necessary to wait. The confrontation could have occurred after sunset,27 at which time the division between day and night is also apparent.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 25. Op. cit., based on Bamidbar Rabbah and Midrash Tanchuma. 26. I Divrei HaYomim 23:13. 27. Korach’s mutiny began during the day, as reflected in our Sages’ comments (Sanhedrin 109b) regarding the wife of On, the son of Peles: “She sat at the en- trance to the tent.... All those who saw...,” implying that the events took place at a time when one could see.

Similarly, this can be understood from the Midrash’s statements that Korach came to Moshe with the question: “Are tzitzis required for a garment that is all purple?” For Moshe received the people “from the morning until the evening” (Shmos 18:13). On the surface, one might say that it would not have been possible to carry out the confrontation at night, because it involved bringing an incense offer- ing, and that is permitted only during the day.

It is, however, impossible to say that this is Rashi’s intent, because a) this concept is not mentioned in Rashi at all, and b) Rashi mentions other reasons which are unnecessary if the confrontation had to be postponed because of the incense offering. Therefore we are forced to say that, because of the emphasis the verse places on the word “morning,” Rashi maintains that the confrontation had to

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Also, we must understand how Moshe’s instructions to “Take incense-burners” serves as a reply to Korach’s claim: “Why set yourselves up as supreme [since] the entire congregation is holy.”

Through the confrontation, Moshe proved that Korach was wrong, and that everything Moshe had done was in response to G-d’s command. The confrontation did not, however, show why Korach was wrong.

(Moreover, the use of an incense offering related more directly to Korach’s objection to Aharon’s High Priesthood, and not to his claim against Moshe’s assumption of absolute authority.)

Thus we may infer that by saying the confrontation would take place in the morning, Moshe was alluding to an explanation which refutes the basis for Korach’s argument.

POLISHING GEMS

Our Sages use the expression:28 “Teshuvah and good deeds” and not “teshuvah and mitzvos.” In explanation, the Alter Rebbe states29 that it is possible that a person will per- form mitzvos, but that their light will not shine forth. Teshuvah, however, transforms mitzvos into “good deeds which shine.”

To illustrate with an analogy: There are times when a person possesses gems, but the gems are dirty. The stones remain gems, and have the potential to shine. Nevertheless, as long as they are covered with grime, this potential remains hidden.

be held at that time for the reasons he mentioned. Were these reasons not sig- nificant, the confrontation would have been held at night, using a medium other than the incense offering.

28. Avos 4:17, et al. 29. Likkutei Torah, Devarim 85a, Shir HaShirim 17c.

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Similarly, the purpose of the mitzvos is to increase G-dly light in the world. There are times, however, when they serve an opposite end. When a wicked person studies Torah or performs mitzvos, not only does he not add light to the world, he increases its darkness; his deeds augment the forces of kelipah.30 Moreover, this applies not only to the Torah and mitzvos of a wicked person, but to any observance of the Torah and its mitzvos performed without the proper intent, or for one’s own motives.31

As we can see, when the proper motives are lacking, observance can lead to self-concern and pride.32 A person may feel haughty because he was able to overcome the difficulties preventing him from observing the mitzvos. This is especially true if he observes the mitzvos behiddur, in a beautiful and careful manner.

These feelings of self-concern are the direct opposite of what a mitzvah is intended to evoke. The very word mitzvah relates to the word tzavsa, meaning “connection” or “bond,”33 for the mitzvos enable us to establish a connection with G-d. Self-concern and pride, by contrast, tear one away from G-d. For with regard to a haughty person, it is said:34 “He and I (G-d) cannot dwell in the same place.”

With regard to the inner spiritual nature of the person and the world at large, the positive dimension of the Torah and its mitzvos always retains its integrity. Therefore Torah law35 requires even a wicked person to study and observe, although the immediate effect of his deeds will be to augment the forces of kelipah. Ultimately, when he repents — and he will certainly repent, for “none will remain ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 30. Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah 4:3. 31. See Tanya, ch. 39. 32. Indeed, it is possible that a person will observe a mitzvah to deceive other people with regard to his character. See Tosafos, Shabbos 49a, entry Elisha.

33. Likkutei Torah, Vayikra 45c. 34. Sotah 5a. 35. Shulchan Aruch HaRav, loc. cit.

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estranged from You”36 — the sparks of holiness created by his observance will be liberated from kelipah, and will begin to produce light. Until then, however, his study and observance is like a gem covered in mud.

A person might think: What difference does it make whether my mitzvos produce light immediately? Darkness and light apply only to the revealed dimensions of G-dliness. By performing the mitzvos, G-d’s essence is drawn down, making this world His dwelling. Torah law requires a Jew to observe the mitzvos whatever his present state. Therefore, such a person will continue his observance. The fact that he is temporarily augmenting the forces of kelipah is not of importance to him. He has one purpose, as the Mishnah teaches:37 “I was created solely to serve my Creator,” to carry out G-d’s will. And G-d’s will is for him to observe the Torah and its mitzvos, regardless of the immediate outcome.

The response is that G-d desires not only the actual observance of the mitzvos, but that the mitzvos be observed with the proper intent. There are two elements to the mission of making a dwelling for G-d in this world:38 a) that it become a dwelling for G-d’s essence, and b) that G-d’s essence be revealed, causing the dwelling to shine brightly.

For the dwelling to be “bright,” it must be fashioned with shining mitzvos, mitzvos that refine both the person who observes them and his environment.

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR MITZVOS TO SHINE

This was the answer which Moshe gave Korach and his followers: Yes, “deed is most essential.” But one’s deeds must be permeated by the glow of morning; the mitzvos ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 36. Cf. II Shmuel 14:14. 37. Kiddushin 82a. 38. See the sichah for Shabbos HaGadol in this series, where this concept is also

explained.

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must shine. In this manner, “G-d will make known,” and the world will be permeated by the knowledge39 and revelation of G-dliness. It is possible for mitzvos to be observed without the proper intent, but then they do not shine, nor do they lead the world to the knowledge of G-dliness.

Allusion to this concept is found in the two reasons

Rashi gives for postponing the confrontation with Korach.

The first reason is that Moshe wanted to provide Korach and his followers with the opportunity to repent. Waiting until morning was not necessary, for as mentioned above, one can turn to G-d in a moment. Instead, Moshe was alluding to the idea that their teshuvah should shine with G-dly light. Teshuvah of this nature adds light to one’s observance of the mitzvos.

Even when teshuvah is motivated by fear of punishment, the person’s sins are wiped away; the sinner, however, re- mains unrefined, for his fundamental self-concern persists. For teshuvah to be complete, it has to be permeated by light.

When teshuvah is motivated by love for G-d, one’s willful transgressions are transformed into merits.40 Surely such teshuvah has an effect on one’s good deeds as well, enabling the positive nature of those good deeds which were exiled in the realm of kelipah to be revealed and shine forth.

fact that G-d had established

The second reason Rashi gives is that Moshe was alluding to the fixed distinctions within the world. By mentioning the distinction between morning and evening, Moshe was also alluding to the advantage of mitzvos which shine over mitzvos which are in exile in kelipah. For although both day and night are

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 39. See Tanya, the conclusion of ch. 3. 40. Yoma 86b; see Tanya, ch. 7.

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creations of G-d, and a complete day includes them both,41 the night is dark, and the day, bright.

Similarly, whether or not one has the proper intent, the mitzvos one performs are G-dly acts. Nevertheless, with the proper intent, these acts radiate light; without the proper intent, they are dark.

This also lets us appreciate Moshe’s response to Korach’s claims: “Why do you hold yourself supreme, [since] the entire congregation is holy, and G-d is in their midst.” Every Jew is holy. Moreover, this holiness affects not only the souls of the people, but also their bodies. As a result, they have the ability to draw down G-d’s essence through the physical observance of mitzvos.

The intent of the mitzvos is that they produce light. In this context, there is a great — indeed, an incomparable — advantage to the observance of the mitzvos by Moshe over their observance by the Jewish people as a whole.

Moshe’s Divine service, however, is not insular. We receive all our influence from Moshe — and “the extension of Moshe in every generation.” This applies not only to our to our intellectual and emotional service, but also observance of the mitzvos.42 In particular, the connection to Moshe enables our deeds to radiate light.

A TWOFOLD MISSION

On this basis, we can derive a lesson from the parshiyos Shelach and Korach. There are those who think that the actual observance of mitzvos is not that important; that ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 41. Commenting on the verse (Bereishis 1:5): “And there was evening, there was morning, one day,” Bereishis Rabbah 3:8 associates “evening” with the deeds of the wicked and “morning” with the deeds of the righteous. Their inclusion to- gether as a single day refers to Yom Kippur, when, through teshuvah, the wicked and the righteous are joined together (Rabbi Zaev Einhorn).

42. See Tanya, ch. 42, which describes the fear of G-d which leads to the obser-

vance of the mitzvos as “a small matter” with regard to Moshe.

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what’s most important is having a Jewish heart. And they bring proof from our Sages, who say:43 “G-d desires the heart.”

In contrast, there are those who say that all that matters is the actual performance of mitzvos; that the study of Chassidus and the pursuit of inner refinement is not critical; after all, “deed is most essential.”

With these two parshiyos, the Torah refutes the narrow- ness in both approaches. Parshas Shelach stresses that the approach of the spies, who sought to remain isolated within the spiritual realm, is undesirable. And Parshas Korach shows that the performance of mitzvos in and of itself is also insufficient.

A fusion of both approaches is necessary. This was epitomized in the conduct of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, who dedicated himself to both purposes. On one hand, he devoted his greatest energies, even risking his life, to ensure that a Jewish child should study the alef-beis, that another Jew should observe even one mitzvah. This applies even to Jews who were far from appreciating the intent of the mitzvos or the inner refinement which they are intended to achieve.

Even so, my revered father-in-law sacrificed himself so that such people would observe even one mitzvah. Simultaneously, however, he sacrificed himself to spread the study of Torah, and particularly the study of P’nimiyus HaTorah, the Torah’s mystic secrets. Furthermore, he encouraged his followers to devote themselves to prayer.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 43. Sanhedrin 106b. That source, however, uses the term “the Holy One, blessed be He” for G-d. Chassidus always quotes this statement referring to G-d as Rachmana, “the Merciful One.” This name for G-d is used when quoting this expression by Rashi, Sanhedrin, op. cit.; the Zohar, Vol. II, p. 162b, Vol. III, p. 281b, Yesod Moreh by Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, Shaar 7; Sefer HaChassidim, sec. 590, and the introduction to Chovos HaLevevos.

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This is the path which my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, blazed for all who desire to follow him. Both thrusts are important. Just as we must realize that “deed is most es- sential,” we must also realize that our performance of the mitzvos must be refined and pure. This is accomplished through the study of P’nimiyus HaTorah, and through prayerful service within our hearts.

Through these twofold efforts, we will fashion a dwelling for G-d in this lower realm, and His essence will shine therein.

(Adapted from Sichos Shabbos Parshas Korach, 5722)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

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THREE KINDS OF MITZVOS

There are three categories of mitzvos in the Torah: mish- patim, eidus, and chukim.1 Mishpatim are mitzvos whose observance is required even by human intellect. With regard to eidus, though logic alone would not mandate their obser- vance, we can understand their rationale once they have been commanded by the Torah. Chukim, by contrast, are mitzvos which have no intellectual basis. Indeed, they contradict rea- son, and so must be observed with kabbalas ol, acceptance of G-d’s yoke.

In mishpatim and eidus, G-d’s will has been confined and enclothed in intellect to the extent that our thought processes can appreciate it. With regard to chukim, by contrast, G-d’s will retains its transcendent nature. Even though they exist within our material framework, the chukim reflect the essence of G-d’s will, which is connected directly to G-d’s essence.2 This is why they cannot be grasped by mortal intellect.

Similarly, the observance of chukim requires a commit- ment stemming from the essence of one’s will, reflecting the

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See the sichos to the parshiyos Yisro, Mishpatim, and Bechukosai, in this series where similar concepts are discussed. See also the sources cited there. See the maamar entitled Lech Lecha 5666, which explains that the mitzvos which possess a rationale that can be grasped by mortal intellect relate to the extension of G-d’s will. Because this level is removed from the essence of His will, as it were, it is possible for it to become enclothed in intellect. Chukim, by contrast, relate to the essence of G-d’s will. Therefore they cannot be enclothed within reason.

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kabbalas ol and bittul which are rooted in the essence of the soul, and which transcend one’s conscious powers.

In this light, a connection can also be drawn to the Alter Rebbe’s interpretation,3 which associates chukim with engrav- ing (chakikah in Hebrew). Engraved letters possess an advantage over written letters, for engraved letters are part of the substance on which they are engraved. Written letters, by contrast, are merely added to the surface on which they appear.

This also reflects the advantage of chukim over eidus and mishpatim. Eidus and mishpatim — from the perspective of both G-d (the Commander) and man (the commanded) — do not represent the expression of will in a pure sense. Instead, will is mixed with intellect. Chukim, by contrast, reflect the expression of man’s and G-d’s essential will, and connect the essence of man’s soul to the essence of G-d without the addi- tion of any external factors.

BEYOND THE KEN OF KNOWLEDGE

The fundamental example of a chok is the mitzvah of the red heifer. With regard to this mitzvah, even King Shlomo, who had grasped the most sublime truths and was able to comprehend the rationale for the other chukim, said:4

I was able to comprehend all [the other difficult pas- sages of the Torah], but with regard to the passage of the red heifer, I asked, I researched and I sought. I said:5 “I will become wise,” [but I saw] that it was distant from me.

The rationale for this mitzvah was revealed to Moshe, our teacher, alone, as the Midrash states:6 “The Holy One, blessed ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 3. Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 56a; see also Likkutei Torah, Vayikra 45a. 4. Bamidbar Rabbah 19:3; Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Chukas, sec. 7. 5. Koheles 7:23. 6. Bamidbar Rabbah 19:6; Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Chukas, sec. 8.

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be He, told Moshe: ‘To you alone will I reveal the rationale7 for the red heifer.’”

This is one of the reasons why the Torah introduces the chok of the red heifer with the phrase:8 “This is the statute of the Torah.” The Torah uses such wording rather than “This is the statute of the heifer,” or “This is the statute of the sin offering” because the red heifer reflects the Torah in its totality.9 For the essence of all the mitzvos, even the mishpatim and eidus, is G-d’s transcendent will. With regard to the other mitzvos, however, G-d’s will intellect. Nevertheless, the essence of even those mitzvos remains tran- scendent.10

is enclothed

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In the mitzvah of the red heifer, this quality is overtly revealed. For the mitzvah of the red heifer is not enclothed within reason. Therefore, this mitzvah represents the Torah in its totality.

There are two unique dimensions to the offering of the red heifer:11 a) it makes the pure impure while it purifies the impure, and b) it is offered outside the camp.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 7. The word “rationale” in this context must be interpreted figuratively, for the mitzvah of the red heifer is above all rationale. For that reason, Shlomo’s in- ability to comprehend the reasoning behind the red heifer is not considered a deficiency, as reflected in the statement of Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 19:3): “You have acquired knowledge. What are you lacking?”, implying that from an intellectual perspective, he was not lacking anything. See the maamar entitled Zos Chukas, 5673.

Instead, the revelation of the “rationale” for the red heifer to Moshe reflects how the fundamental bittul which he possessed enabled him to overtly per- ceive G-d’s essential will.

8. Bamidbar 19:2. 9.

See Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 56a; see also the traditional commentaries to the above verse.

10. For the attribute of will retains its fundamentally simple quality even when associated with a rationale. See the maamar entitled Va’ani Tefillasi, 5694. See also Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 19.

11. Sefer HaChinuch, mitzvah 397.

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We can assume that these unique dimensions reveal a quality associated with the essence of the soul, and relate to the Torah in its totality.

The impetus which spurs the essence of the soul to this service is sparked by Moshe, for only to him was the motivat- ing principle revealed. And it is Moshe who conveys inspiration to all Jews.

To underscore this dynamic, G-d commanded Moshe:8 “Speak to the children of Israel, that they shall bring you a red heifer.” It was Elazar the priest who offered the red heifer and carried out all the preparations for the sacrifice. Never- theless, the Torah emphasizes that the heifer was to be brought to Moshe, for it was he who inspired the Divine service that represents the spiritual counterpart of this offer- ing. For this reason, the sacrifice is always referred to as the red heifer offered by Moshe.12 Moreover, each of the eight red heifers offered during the era of the Second Beis HaMikdash, and even the final one to be offered by Mashiach used — or will use — the ashes of red heifer offered by Moshe in the desert.13

PURE, IMPURE

The Midrash states14 that when G-d told Moshe Rabbeinu about the impurity resulting from contact with a human corpse, Moshe’s face turned color. “How will such a person regain ritual purity?” he wondered.

(Moshe was not as bewildered when G-d taught him about other kinds of ritual impurity, for they are limited in nature. But the impurity stemming from contact with a corpse ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 12. See Rashi’s commentary to the beginning of Parshas Chukas. 13. See Parah 3:5 (and the commentary to 3:11); Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Parah Adumah 2:6. See also the commentary of Yedei Mishneh and R. Zaev Ein- horn to Bamidbar Rabbah 19:6; Gur Aryeh and Sifsei Chachamim (to Rashi, Bamidbar 19:2); Sheloh, Cheilek Torah Shebichsav, Parshas Parah, p. 359b.

14. Bamidbar Rabbah 19:4, Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Chukas, sec. 6.

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is the direct opposite of holiness. Holiness is associated with vitality; as long as one clings to “the living G-d,” there is no possibility of death.15 Death reflects separation from G-dliness, and therefore Moshe was bewildered.)

G-d resolved this question for Moshe by teaching him the laws of the red heifer, for the ashes of the red heifer overturn even this type of impurity. The sprinkling of its ashes draws down the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, which transcend all limitations and remove all blemishes.16

For this reason, the red heifer is referred to as a chok. For within the ordinary limits of the spiritual cosmos (i.e., within both the private world of each human being, and within the world at large), it is impossible to bring purity to such a level. For “who can render the impure, pure? Only the One,”17 for He is not bound by any limits.

On this basis, we can also understand why the red heifer is offered outside the camp, in contrast to all other sacrifices, ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 15. On this basis, we can understand the custom (Toras Kohanim, Bechukosai commenting on verse 26:25; B. Kamma 82b) that a corpse is never left unbur- ied overnight in Jerusalem. Jerusalem (ohkaurh in Hebrew) relates to the level of complete fear [(vtrhv ,unhka in Hebrew), Tosafos, entry, Har, Taanis 16a)]. On that level, there is no connection with death. On the contrary, “the fear of G-d [leads to] life” (Mishlei 19:23).

16. Tanya, Iggeres HaTeshuvah, ch. 8. The intent is that teshuvah removes even those blemishes which are caused by willful sins — blemishes for which sacri- fices cannot atone. Such complete restoration is possible because teshuvah draws down the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. For this reason, when the Alter Rebbe quotes the verse (Shmos 34:7): “forgiving iniquity, transgression,... and He cleanses,” he omits the word “sin.” For sin, chatas in Hebrew, refers to unintentional sins that can be atoned for by sacrifices. For the atonement for such sins does not require the influence of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. The verse itself mentions “sins” because of its conclusion (which translates literally as): “and He cleanses, but does not cleanse,” interpreted by our Sages (Yoma 6:1) as: “‘He cleanses’ those who repent; ‘but does not cleanse’ those who do not repent.” Sins are mentioned in this context to show that even “sins” will not be forgiven unless the person repents. For even a sin committed unintentionally requires teshuvah.

17. Iyov 14:4; [the translation is based on the Targum]. See also Likkutei Torah,

Bamidbar 59d.

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which were offered within the Beis HaMikdash. The Alter Rebbe explains18 that all the other sacrifices atone for unin- tentional sins, these being a result of the “intensification [of the influence] of the animal soul [rooted in kelipas] nogah.”19 Therefore they are offered within the Beis HaMikdash.

The red heifer, by contrast, atones for the ritual impurity stemming from a corpse, the very lowest form of impurity, below even kelipas nogah. Accordingly, it is offered outside the camp, for it purifies even those levels outside the realm of holiness by revealing a light that transcends the limits of the spiritual cosmos.

BEYOND SELF-CONCERN

To draw down a light which is above the limits of the spiritual cosmos, one must tap a level of the soul which goes beyond all limits, the level of yechidah, which is expressed through bittul. To put it simply: mesirus nefesh, self-sacrifice, is necessary. A person must put his own concerns aside, go outside the camp, take a cow (indeed, one which is red20) and prepare it as a sacrifice, knowing that he himself will thereby become impure. All this to enable other Jews to become pure.

A person has to be willing to ignore his own concerns to do a favor for another Jew. Moreover, the help which he offers must be given freely, without thought of personal benefit. Our Sages teach:21 “More than the donor gives to the recipient, the recipient gives to the donor.” But when a per- son gives with such thoughts in mind, he has not transcended his limits, and so it is impossible for him to draw down G-d’s essence.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 18. Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 28; see also Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 58c. 19. See the sichah to Parshas Vayikra in this series, where this concept is ex-

plained.

20. Red reflects excitement, the direct opposite of the calm which characterizes

intellect.

21. Vayikra Rabbah 34:8.

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When does a person draw down G-d’s essence? When he does a favor for another person despite the knowledge that he will thereby become impure.22

(G-d will certainly repay him several times over for his troubles, but this is not his concern. He should be willing to make the effort despite the fact that he thereby becomes impure.)

This lack of self-concern is the chok engraved in the very core of his being, and it draws down the transcendent dimensions of G-dliness. For only the essence of the soul can draw down G-d’s essence.

The above concepts enable us to appreciate the ramifica- tions of the two unique dimensions of the laws regarding the red heifer: that it makes the impure pure while making the pure impure, and that it is offered outside the camp.

To explain:

a) Through the Divine service associated with the chukim, we reveal the essence of the soul. For the bittul involved in enabling another Jew to purify himself even though it requires leaving the camp and becoming impure oneself expresses the essence of the soul.

b) This relates to the Torah in its totality, for the purpose of the Torah is to take humanity above all limits, enabling us to subdue our personal “I.” This includes not only the “I” of the body, but also the “I” of the soul. This self-sacrifice is expressed through ahavas Yisrael (the love for a fellow Jew), which is the totality of the Torah.23

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 22. Indeed, even before the priest begins the rites involved with the sacrifice of the red heifer, he is rendered impure. For in the era of the Second Beis HaMikdash, before the priest began the rites, the court would make him impure through contact with a dead creeping animal. He would then immerse and begin the rites connected with the sacrifice (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Parah Ad- umah 1:14).

23. See Tanya, ch. 32; Derech Mitzvosecha, mitzvas ahavas Yisrael.

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The potential for such a commitment stems from Moshe Rabbeinu. He was the epitome of selflessness, and inspired all Jews to manifest bittul.

POSITIVE SELF-CONCERN

On several occasions, it has been explained24 that the Torah fuses opposites. A similar concept applies in the present context: one’s efforts to reach out to another Jew must be coupled with a concern for one’s own refinement.

It is written:25 “When you see a naked person, you should cover him, but you should not turn away from your own flesh.” Mitzvos are described with the analogy of garments.26 Thus the verse can be interpreted as meaning “When you see a naked person — one who has no mitzvos in which to clothe himself — you should clothe him. Inspire him to observe the mitzvos, to wear tefillin and tzitzis.” At the same time, how- ever, one cannot “turn away from one’s own flesh.”

The implication is that one must realize that one’s makeup is materialistically inclined. And one must carry out a process of refinement that includes spiritual counterparts to each of the three steps involved in preparing flesh to be eaten: soaking, salting, and washing.27

In Tanya, op. cit., frequent reference is made to the terms body and soul. In this context, the term “body” also includes the vitalizing force that the body requires. “Soul” refers to the very source of the soul, the level described with the words: “With regard to the soul and the spirit, who can know their great- ness and stature in their root and source, the living G-d.” For it is this level alone which is the source of true love and brotherhood. When, by contrast, a person retains self-concern, even the spiritual self-concern that stems from his soul, true brotherhood is not possible.

24. See the sichah to Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah in this series. 25. Yeshayahu 58:7. See the maamar entitled Oz Yibaka, 5694. 26. Tanya, ch. 4. 27. Soaking the meat refers to “immersing oneself in the waters of knowledge” (cf. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, the conclusion of Hilchos Mikvaos), i.e., the study of the Torah. It also refers to prayer, for prayer is associated with the analogy of water, as it is written (Eichah 2:19): “Pour out your heart like water.”

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Since the mitzvah of the red heifer represents “the totality of the Torah,” it also alludes to this concept. This is reflected in the fact that the ashes of the red heifer offered by Moshe were divided into three portions:28 One was used to purify the impure. One portion was set aside to purify the priests who would offer subsequent red heifers. And a third portion was set aside as “a testimonial.”

One might ask: What is the purpose of a testimonial?

In terms of our Divine service, this question can be answered as follows: Because of the many rigors involved in communal work and outreach efforts, one may forget about oneself. Therefore a testimonial is necessary to remind us that the impurity associated with death should not be allowed to penetrate into our own lives, and require us to use of the ashes of the red heifer.29

SUMMING UP

To summarize:

a) When one sees a Jew who does not appear to be cling- ing to the living G-d, and who looks spiritually lifeless, one might think that the person is beyond hope. The red heifer teaches us that this is not so. Moshe Rabbeinu endowed us

Salting refers to the purging of the excitement derived from worldly pleas- ure. Washing the salt and blood off the meat implies that no trace of the salting process should remain, i.e., this spiritual endeavor should not encour- age pride (Sichos Shabbos Parshas Pinchas, 5710).

28. Tosefta, the conclusion of Parah, ch. 3. 29. This lesson is emphasized through the mitzvah of the red heifer, which centers primarily on purifying others, since: a) As a result of the effort necessary to purify others, the person is likely to forget about himself. For indeed, when comparing himself to the people to whom he is reaching out, he may come to the conclusion that he is on a very high level. b) To reach out to others, one must be on the highest levels of purity oneself. This is why the Sages imposed many stringencies with regard to the purity of those involved in the offering of the red heifer (see Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Parah 2:1).

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with the power to purify every Jew, even one who has come into contact with death.30

b) The yetzer hora can argue: “It’s true that the potential has been granted for such service, but why must you perform it? Why lower yourself to such a level? After all, our Sages teach that31 a person is never told to sin in order to enable a colleague to benefit.

In reply, we are told that this is “the statute of the Torah,” i.e., a principle upon which the entire Torah revolves. One must be willing to sacrifice oneself for a colleague. Until one is willing to make such a sacrifice, one is lacking a connection to the Torah in its totality.

c) A person can err and think that the success of his out- reach efforts is due to his personal talents. To counter such thoughts, he is reminded that before offering a red heifer, one must be purified with the ashes of the red heifer which Moshe offered. Each person must realize that he is only an agent, and that his potential for success is generated by Moshe.

d) One might wish to devote oneself entirely to the purifi- cation of others, without concentrating on oneself. To prevent such an error, the Torah teaches us to keep a portion of the ashes of the red heifer as a testimonial, reminding us to focus energies inward as well as outward.

(Adapted from Sichos Shabbos Parshas Chukas, 5710, Shabbos Parshas Chukas-Balak, 5712)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 30. This is implied by Rashi (Bamidbar 19:2) who speaks of “the red heifer which Moshe offered in the desert.” Why the reference to the desert? Everyone knows that Moshe’s entire term of leadership was spent in the desert! The intent is to teach that Moshe offered the red heifer in “the desert,” a place of snakes and scorpions, indicating that this offering has the potential to purify even such low levels. And it is from the ashes of this red heifer that the priests are purified before offering other red heifers.

31. Shabbos 4a.

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THE POWER OF RESOLUTION

Among the stories which my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, the master of happiness and redemption, related con- cerning his imprisonment and liberation are several which concern the actual imprisonment.1

He told how, upon being brought to prison, he resolved not to lose his self-control, not to be unnerved by the GPO. He decided that, not only with regard to those matters which concern the fear of heaven, but with regard to all things, he would not consider them as having no importance whatso- ever. In his eyes, they were — to quote — “utter nothingness and void.”

He did not alter this approach even after being placed in solitary confinement for refusing to answer questions. Where was he confined? In a cell full of mud with nothing to lean on, which was infested with rats and other vermin. Even after spending an entire day in such conditions, he maintained his resolve to view both his interrogators and their questions as “utter nothingness and void.”

(In this cell, it was impossible to differentiate between day and night, for there was only a small window near the ceiling, and that was blocked by a wall. It was only by noting the changing of the guards, when hot water was brought and the

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See Sichos Gimmel Tammuz, 5701.

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like that the Rebbe was able to determine when it was day and when it was night.2)

At 11 o’clock Thursday morning, Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, guards entered the Rebbe’s cell and ordered him to stand. (When telling this story, the Rebbe emphasized that in prison, he would spend more time in prayer than usual.)

The guards spoke Russian, but the Rebbe — as was his practice throughout his imprisonment — answered in Yid- dish, saying that he would not stand.

What was the crux of his refusal? The rules were that whenever information was to be conveyed to a prisoner, he was required to stand. This was to impress upon him that he was under the prison’s authority. And the Rebbe recognized no such authority.

It appears that one of the guards was Jewish, for he understood the Rebbe’s answer and replied in Russian: “If you do not obey, we will beat you.” To which the Rebbe replied, “Nu.”

The guards carried out their threat, and then left the cell.

Shortly afterwards, a second group entered. With them was Lulav, a Jew who had been among those who had ar- rested the Rebbe. Lulav came from Chassidic stock. He addressed the Rebbe with his title. “Rebbe,” he told him, “Why are you opposing them? Why make this a struggle? They are coming to inform you that your sentence will be lightened. When they tell you to stand, you must stand.”

The Rebbe did not answer.

“Do you want them to beat you?” Lulav asked.

When the Rebbe again refused to answer, the guards beat him again. One of them gave him such a blow below the chin

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 2.

See Likkutei Dibburim, Vol. IV, p. 1317.

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that the Rebbe felt pain for a long time afterwards. Then they also left.

In time, a third group of guards entered the room. Among them was a Jew named Kavalov. They also told the Rebbe to stand, and again the Rebbe answered that he would not. Kavalov attacked the Rebbe with murderous anger, muttering (in Russian): “We’ll teach you a lesson.” To which the Rebbe responded (in Yiddish): “The question is, who will teach who?”

A short while afterwards, yet another group of guards came and told the Rebbe (who remained seated) to go to the prison office. There he was informed that he was to be released from prison and sent into exile for three years in the city of Kostrama.

When the Rebbe approached the table, he saw all the papers from his file. He noticed that one line was crossed out. (This line stated that the Rebbe had been condemned to death. When the Rebbe told the story himself, he did not include this detail, for he did not even want to mention such a possibility. He said merely that a line had been written and then crossed out.)

Further down on the document a line stated that the Rebbe had been sentenced to ten years of hard labor at Solovki (an island near the North Pole). Next to that was written Nyet (no).

At the bottom of the page appeared the terse order:

“Three years in Kostrama.”

The officials told the Rebbe that he was sentenced to ex- ile, and asked him what class of train ticket he desired. He responded: “First class” (in which only the wealthy or high government officials traveled). When they asked whether he had the money to pay for it, the Rebbe replied that if the money they had confiscated from him upon his arrest was not sufficient, his household would make up the difference.

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The officials agreed to this, and told him they would free him from prison at 2 p.m. that afternoon. He would then have six hours to spend with the members of his household before having to leave the city for Kostrama.

As mentioned above, this all took place on a Thursday. With Shabbos in mind, the Rebbe asked when he would arrive in Kostrama. When they answered that he would arrive on Shabbos, the Rebbe declared that under no circumstances would he travel on Shabbos.

When telling this story, the Rebbe would conclude: “Thank G-d, I did not have to travel on Shabbos! I remained in prison until Sunday.”

The reason he was not freed immediately was that the Communists would not allow him to remain at home any longer than they had stipulated. Therefore they held him in prison until Sunday afternoon, at which time they let him go home. On Sunday night, he departed for Kostrama.

When telling the story, the Rebbe would always add that he had already dispatched Reb Michael Dvorkin to Kostrama. There this trusted elder chassid gathered Jewish children and began a cheder. He also checked the local mikveh, and gave instructions for it to be made halachically faultless.

In other words, precisely the same activities for which the Rebbe had been sentenced to death — and only through intervention was that sentence miraculously diplomatic commuted to three years of exile — were being carried out under his direction. For even before he himself arrived in Kostrama, he sent an emissary to establish a cheder3 and make a mikveh fit for communal use.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 3. This can be compared to Yaakov sending Yehudah before him to Goshen

(Bereishis 46:28) to establish a house of study (Rashi).

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FOLLOWING THE REBBE’S PATH

The events which happen to a Nassi, and in particular those which he publicly relates, serve as lessons for us in our Divine service. One of the lessons to be learned from this story is that we can all tread the path which the Rebbe opened.4 For when a Jew makes a firm decision to disregard any concealment his G-dly soul confronts and to overcome all the hurdles and obstacles that lie in the way of spreading Yiddishkeit, G-d will sustain his resolution. Although he may be beaten three times — and according to Jewish law, the recurrence of an event three times is sufficient for us to view it as factor to be considered5 — these blows will not affect his decision. On the contrary, his resolution will stir another Jew who is under the influence of the forces of evil to recognize the existence of Yiddishkeit, Chassidus, and a Rebbe. And in- deed, this other Jew will call out with the latter title.

Ultimately, such resolution will lead to success — indeed, miraculous success — not only in matters of essential impor- tance, but also in those matters which in comparison can be considered secondary. To refer to an expression of the Rebbe Rashab:6 “One remains sound, not only in essence, but in the entire scope of one’s affairs.” And with all one’s concerns, one proceeds to freedom “with an upraised arm,”7 and with “heads held high.”8

Certainly, when a Jew enjoys circumstances which allow him to spread Yiddishkeit freely, — indeed, he is assisted, receiving reward not only in the World to Come, but in this world — he should make a firm resolution to carry out G-d’s

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 4. Once the path is opened by a man of great spiritual stature, it becomes possi- ble for even a person of ordinary attainments (see the Maamar entitled Ki Ka’asher HaShomayim, 5678). [See Bava Metzia 106b.]

5. 6. Toras Shalom, p. 246, 248. 7. 8. The translation of the Targum of the previous phrase. See the sichah to Yud

Shmos 14:8.

Shvat in this series, where the significance of this phrase is discussed.

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mission and extend the scope of the Torah. When he makes such a decision, and remains unphased by all the challenges he faces, he will surely be successful.

These efforts to spread the teachings of the Torah — Nigleh (the revealed dimensions of Torah law), Chassidus, and the observance of mitzvos behiddur, in a beautiful and conscientious manner — will lead to the era when “the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed.”9 May it take place in the immediate future.

THE MERIT OF THE PATRIARCHS

On the verse in this week’s Torah10 reading:11 “From the top of boulders, I see him. I gaze upon him from the hills,” the Midrash comments:12

“From the top of boulders, I see him,” these are the Patriarchs.... To explain with an analogy: A king endeavored to construct a city.... He sought to lay the foundation... but waters rose from the depths and prevented him from doing so... until he came to one place and saw a great boulder. “On this boulder, I will build my city,” he declared.

So too, the world was originally filled with water, and G-d wanted to establish the world.... When the Patri- archs came and [showed that] they were worthy, G-d said: “I will establish the world on them.”

The ultimate intent of creation will be manifest at the time of the coming of Mashiach.13 Just as creation began in the merit of the Patriarchs (as the Midrash indicates), so too the ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 9. Yeshayahu 11:9. 10. See the Sheloh, Cheilek Torah Shebichsav, Parshas Vayeishev, which states: “The festivals throughout the year... all share a connection to the Torah readings [of the weeks] in which they are celebrated.”

11. Bamidbar 23:9. 12. Shmos Rabbah 15:7. 13. See Tanya, ch. 36.

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consummation of creation, the era of Mashiach, will come in the merit of the Patriarchs.

Thus the verse:14 “All that is called by My Name and by My honor....” is rendered by the Targum as: “All this is for the sake of your righteous forefathers who are called by My name, and whom I created for My honor. I prepared an exile for them, but I also performed miracles on their behalf.”

This verse follows the conceptual flow of the previous verses, which speak of the Future Redemption, as it is writ- ten:15 “From the east I will bring your descendants, and from the west I will gather you together. I will tell the north: ‘Give up [the Jews in your lands],’ and the south: ‘Do not prevent them [from leaving].’”

These verses proclaim that in the Future Redemption, the Jewish people will be taken out of every land in which they are to be found. There is, however, a difference in the manner in which the verse refers to the four compass directions. With regard to the east and west it uses the expressions: “I will bring...” and “I will gather...,” i.e., G-d is addressing the Jew- ish people and telling them what He will do. With regard to the north and south, however, G-d addresses the compass directions themselves, telling them “Give up,” and “Do not prevent them.”

Particular emphasis is placed on the north — the source of evil, as it is written:16 “From the north, evil will venture forth.” That direction is told to “Give.” Unlike the south (Teiman) which is merely instructed, “Do not prevent,” the north is commanded to become a giver, i.e., a force contribut- ing to the Redemption.

This reflects the uniqueness of the Future Redemption: even the north will be transformed into a positive influence.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 14. Yeshayahu 43:7. 15. Ibid.:5-6. 16. Yirmeyahu 1:14.

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And this, the Targum emphasizes, will come in the merit of the Patriarchs for whom miracles — similar to the miracles of the Redemption — were performed.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE NORTH

Among the miracles performed on behalf of “our right- eous forefathers,” and in particular the miracles performed for the tzaddikim of the last generation before the coming of Mashiach, are those that anticipate and precipitate the mira- cles of the Redemption. In this vein, it can be explained that the miracles of Yud-Beis and Yud-Gimmel Tammuz were a foretaste of the fulfillment of the prophecy: “I will tell the north: ‘Give up.’”

As mentioned previously, after the Russians decided to send the Rebbe to Kostrama, he refused to go if his journey involved any compromise of the Shabbos laws. And the Rus- sians agreed and kept him in prison until Sunday. This was a radical departure from the usual practice. For just as a pris- oner cannot be released if the authorities want to hold him, so too, when the authorities desire to release him, he ordi- narily has no option to remain in prison. The Rebbe, however, achieved exactly what he desired.

Similar concepts apply with regard to the Rebbe’s depar- ture from Russia. Not only did the Russians “not prevent” him from leaving, they actually assisted him, foreshadowing the fulfillment of the prophecy: “I will tell the north: ‘Give up.’”

For example, the Rebbe said that he would not leave Russia unless he was able to take all his manuscripts and books. When the inspectors wished to prevent him from taking certain rare and valuable texts, the Rebbe said that if so, he would not leave the land. The inspectors telegraphed the higher authorities in Moscow, reporting that Rabbi Schneersohn refused to leave without all his books and

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manuscripts. From Moscow, they were instructed to defer to all the Rebbe’s wishes.

And so the Russian authorities were forced to stamp every carton of the Rebbe’s books so that they could be taken across the border. The north, identified with evil, became an agent of freedom and liberation.

This was a foretaste of the prophecy: “I will tell the north: ‘Give up.’” It reflects not only a miracle that transcends the bounds of nature, but a miracle of transformation.

WHEN THE DAWN BREAKS

The miracles performed on behalf of the righteous, par- ticularly in this, the final generation before the Redemption, anticipate and precipitate the miracles of the Redemption itself, showing us what those miracles will be like.

In the Era of the Redemption, nothing will stand in the way of the Jewish people — we will not have to ask permis- sion from anyone, as alluded to in this week’s Haftorah:17 “The remnant of Yaakov will be in the midst of many peo- ples.... They will not place their hope in men, nor wait upon mortals.”

Moreover, G-d will command the compass directions themselves to help the Jews. G-d will address the world, and transform it into a vehicle of redemption.

Yet the world will continue to exist, as indicated by the verse which speaks about “many peoples,” and the following verse,18 which speaks about “the beasts of the forest.” Never- theless, although the natural tendency of these nations is to resist the redemption of the Jews, “The remnant of Yaakov... will not place their hope in men, nor wait upon mortals.” For G-d will tell the north; “Give,” transforming it into an agent

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 17. Michah 5:6. 18. Ibid.:7.

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of Redemption. And then “the children of Israel will depart with an upraised arm,” and with “heads held high.” May this take place in the immediate future.

(Adapted from Sichos Yud-Gimmel Tammuz, 5722)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

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BALAK

FATHERS AND MOTHERS

Our Sages interpret1 the verse:2 “From the top of boulders, I see him. I gaze upon him from the hills,” as an allegory, explaining that “the tops of boulders” refers to the Patriarchs, and “the hills” refer to the Matriarchs.

The significance of this commentary can be understood by comparing the different relationships which a father and a mother share with their child. A father’s connection is gen- eral; it does not relate to the child’s body in a specific way.3 For it is through the mother’s nurturing of the fetus for nine months that the limbs and organs that make up a child’s body become defined and develop.4

For this reason, even after the child is born, his mother shares a closer relationship with him than his father, for it is she who has shaped the particulars of his existence. And thus, a child has a greater love for his mother than for his father, and a greater degree of awe for his father.5 For love depends on closeness, and awe comes about through distance.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Bamidbar Rabbah 20:19; Midrash Tanchuma, Balak, sec. 12; Zohar, Vol. III, p.

210b.

2. Bamidbar 23:9. 3. Our Sages (Niddah 31a) state that the father’s seed is responsible for the child’s sinews, bones, and nails. Nevertheless, the actual existence of even these parts of the body depends on the nurture the fetus receives in its mother’s womb. See Tanya, ch. 2. See Kiddushin 30b, (quoted by Rashi in his commentary to Vayikra 19:3). The same applies with regard to the Sefiros of Chochmah and Binah which are de- scribed with the analogies of a father and a mother. Chochmah gives rise to

4. 5.

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Similar concepts apply with regard to the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs of the Jewish people. For this reason, when speaking about the Patriarchs, the verse uses the expression “I see him,” which implies gazing from a distance, while with regard to the Matriarchs, it uses the expression, “I gaze upon him” which implies closeness. This is indicated by the Tar- gum for the term “I gaze upon him,” (v,hfx) sichisa, which is also used as the Targum for the word vitabeit.6 Habat, the Hebrew root for the latter term, implies looking closely with intent and concern.7

IN THE IMAGE OF G-D

The conception of a child on the physical plane, as does every other material entity, stems from its spiritual source. Our emotions are referred to as “offspring,” because they are brought into being by intellect. Deep understanding and meditation on the greatness of G-d spawns love and fear of G-d.

More particularly, our conceptual process can be divided into two thrusts: Chochmah and Binah. Chochmah is the semi- nal core of understanding. Therefore it is described with the analogy of a father. Binah represents the development of a conceptual framework, and therefore it is referred to with the analogy of a mother.8

Our soul powers stem from the supernal Sefiros.9 And thus a similar pattern exists with regard to these Sefiros. They

(and is) a manifestation of awe, while Binah gives rise to (and is) a manifesta- tion of love. 6. Bereishis 19:26. 7.

See also Rashi, Bamidbar 21:8.

In other sources, it is explained that “I gaze upon him” refers to staring from a distance, and “I see him” to taking a close look. Both concepts have their source in Eichah Rabbah 5:1. See also the maamar from the Tzemach Tzedek entitled Ki MeiRosh Tzurim (Or HaTorah, Balak, p. 914).

8. Tanya, ch. 3; Biurei Zohar, Balak 103b. 9. Tanya, ibid.

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are divided into two fundamental categories which parallel intellect and emotion, it is the supernal intellect, Chochmah and Binah, which spawn the supernal emotions.10 And these emotions bring into being the spiritual worlds.11

More particular, the parallel reflects the workings of Chochmah and Binah. Chochmah serves as “the father,” for it is distant from the emotions and certainly from the worlds which they bring into being. Binah is considered “the mother” for it is closer to the emotions and also to the worlds.

Because Binah is closer to the worlds, the framework of reference which characterizes the worlds is significant for it. Therefore, the influence of Binah in the world, the compre- hension of G-dliness, does not nullify that framework of reference. Instead, it brings about only bittul hayesh, self- nullification that does not entirely banish one’s conception of self. The person devotes himself to a higher purpose, but still retains his individual identity.

Chochmah, by contrast, appreciates that “He alone exists; there is nothing else”;12 all other existence becomes paled in the light of His presence. This level of awareness is indeed reflected in the name Chochmah whose letters can be rear- ranged to form the words koach mah13 — which reflect complete and utter bittul, bittul bimetzius.

STRIVING FOR A PURPOSE

The Patriarchs and the Matriarchs share a connection with every Jew, endowing every member of people with their

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 10. In this, there is also a parallel to the powers of the soul. For intellect is in-

wardly directed, while the emotions are pointed to others.

11. For this reason, the emotions are referred to as “the days of creation” (Tanya,

ch. 3).

12. Tanya, ch. 35 in the note 13. Tikkunei Zohar, Hakdamah 4a; Tanya, chs. 3 and 18.

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spiritual legacy.14 Implied is that every Jew possesses two gen- eral spiritual thrusts. The Patriarchs endow him with the quality of Chochmah, the potential for complete and utter self- nullification, reflecting the Matriarchs endow him with the quality of Binah, self-nullifi- cation that allows a person to retain his identity, reflecting the lower plane of unity.

the sublime unity, while

The ultimate purpose of existence is that the world be transformed into a dwelling for G-d. Thus our Divine service should not be removed from the world, but should focus on making the world a medium for G-dliness as it exists within its own context. For this reason, the Matriarchs whose Divine service reflects closer involvement with the world possess an advantage over the Patriarchs (despite the fact that Binah, the

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 14. For that reason, there are only three Patriarchs (Berachos 16b). For every in- dividual does not possess the spiritual potentials identified with each of the tribes. With regard to the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs, by contrast, their spiritual legacy is endowed to each and every one of their descendants (Torah Or, Parshas Va’eira 55a). Based on the above, we can explain why certain Rishonim (see Ritva, Yeva- mos 46a) state that the concept that there are only three Patriarchs and four Matriarchs applies only with regard to prayer. On the surface, since the Tal- mud uses the terms, Patriarchs and Matriarchs, to refer to the entire generation which left Egypt, the term is certainly being used appropriately. Why then is it inappropriate to describe these others as Patriarchs also with regard to prayer? This question can be resolved based on the concept that the term Patriarchs and Matriarchs implies that their legacy is conveyed to every member of the Jewish people. Therefore, with regard to a certain quality, others may also be referred to as Patriarchs and Matriarchs if the quality they endowed was granted to our people as a collective. For this reason, the passage in Yevamos uses these terms with regard to the process through which our ancestors accepted Judaism after the exodus. For indeed, this process has a lasting effect on all their descendants, causing each one of them to be considered as part of the Jewish people. Similarly, in the Haggadah the term avoseinu, which means “our Patriarchs,” is used with re- gard to all the people who left Egypt, for the exodus is a matter of general relevance. With regard to prayer, the process of connection between the Jews and G-d, this connection includes only seven fundamental qualities. And these qualities are the spiritual legacies of the three Patriarchs and the four Matriarchs (Sichos 2nd Night of Pesach, 5723).

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influence from quality they personify, merely receives Chochmah, the quality personified by the Patriarchs). And therefore, Avraham was instructed:15 “Listen to everything Sarah tells you.”

Both these thrusts, the striving towards the sublime unity and the lower unity, which come from the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs (the “tops of the boulders” and the “hills”) em- power the Jewish people, enabling them to achieve the state described in the continuation of the verse:16 “It is a nation dwelling alone secure, not being counted among the nations.”

Even during exile, this prophecy continues to be fulfilled. For the identity of the Jews has remained intact; they have not assimilated among the nations. Indeed, the exile lifts the Jews to a higher level, as indicated by the interpretation of this verse by the Targum as foreshadowing the Era of the Re- demption when: “in the future, this nation will take possession of the earth,” with the coming of the true and ultimate Redemption, led by Mashiach; may it take place in the immediate future.

A WOMAN IN HER HOME

Every Jewish home is a world of its own in which is manifest all the Ten Sefiros.17 Just as within the supernal Sefi-

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 15. Bereishis 21:12.

The Alter Rebbe (Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 15c) explains the reason that the Matriarchs possessed an advantage over the Patriarchs as follows: The Patriarchs had a foretaste of the World to Come (Bava Basra 16b) and in that future era, the advantage of the feminine dimension will be revealed as alluded by the prophecy (Yirmeyahu 31:21): “The female will surround the male.” There is no contradiction between that concept and the explanation above, for the concept of a dwelling in the lower world, and that this dwelling must be fashioned within the context of the world itself, will not be revealed until the Era of the Redemption.

16. Bamidbar 23:9; see Rashi’s commentary. 17. In this context, the AriZal (Likkutei HaShas, Yevamos) explains why the mitz- vah of being fruitful and multiplying is fulfilled when one gives birth to one boy and one girl, because this completes the structure of G-d’s name v-u-v-h

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ros and within the powers of our soul, there is an advantage to Binah over Chochmah (despite the fact that Binah receives influence from Chochmah), so too, within the Jewish home, there is a dimension of supremacy to the woman’s position.

And the woman’s position in the home reflects the func- tioning of these Sefiros. The Sefirah of Binah receives influ- ence from Chochmah, and conveys that influence to the emo- tional attributes. So too, a woman receives direction from her husband, as indicated by our Sages’ statement:18 “Who is a proper wife? One that fulfills her husband’s will.” Neverthe- less, the actual functioning of the home including the educa- tion of the children, hospitality to guests, generous gifts to tzedakah and the like are all the women’s province.

A man is not at home during the major part of the day. He is busy with Torah study and prayer, or earning a livelihood. For his will to be “fulfilled,” manifest in actual life, he must rely on his “proper wife.”

Moreover, the Hebrew word translated as “fulfilled” vaug also means “make.” At times, a “proper wife” “makes her husband’s will.”19 For there are times when the pressures and difficulties he faces drain him, and hinder him from desiring the correct things. At that time, “his proper wife” should in a gentle and pleasant manner mold her husband’s will, coaxing to the surface the desire to fulfill G-d’s will that lies within the heart of every Jew.20

“When a husband and wife are worthy, the Divine Pres- ence rests among them.”21 When a Jewish home is conducted

(which reflects all the Ten Sefiros). The father represents the yud, the quality of Chochmah, the mother the first hay, the quality of Binah, the son, the vav, the middos of Za’er Anpin, and the daughter, the second hay, the quality of Malchus.

18. Tanna d’Bei Eliyahu Rabbah, ch. 9 (using slightly different wording). 19. See the interpretation of osin ratzono shel Makom, “fulfilling (or making) G-d’s

will” in Likkutei Torah, Vayikra, p. 32d.

20. See Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Gerushin 2:20. 21. Sotah 17a.

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as “a Sanctuary in microcosm,”22 the Divine Presence rests within. And since the “Divine Presence rests within,” “no evil will dwell among you.”23 On the contrary, He will grant only good, overt and apparent good, as manifest in abundant blessings for children, health, and prosperity.

(Adapted from the maamar and Sichos of Yud-Gimmel Tammuz, 5722)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 22. Cf. Yechezkel 11:6. 23. Tehillim 5:5.

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MAKING AND UNMAKING DISTINCTIONS

Parshas Pinchas begins with G-d’s statement:1 “Pinchas, the son of Elazar... turned back My rage... by his zealousness for My sake.... Behold, I am granting him My covenant of peace, an eternal covenant of priesthood.”

With the phrase “an eternal covenant of priesthood,” G-d implied that Pinchas’s descendants would also be priests.

G-d had already given the priesthood to Aharon and his sons Elazar and Isamar as a hereditary distinction. Nevertheless, only the children born to Elazar and Isamar after they had been installed as priests were granted this status. Pinchas was born before the Sanctuary was erected and was not installed as a priest together with Aharon and his sons. Therefore, until he killed Zimri, he was not considered a priest.2

This raises a question. Divine service warrants reward; the greater the service, the greater the reward. But the priesthood is not a reward. Instead, it is a part of the inherent nature of Aharon and his descendants. By having Aharon anointed as a priest, G-d differentiated between them and the rest of the Jewish people, as it is written:3 “And He distinguished Aharon, to sanctify him and his descendants as most sacred forever.” ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Bamidbar 25:11-13. 2. Zevachim 101b; Rashi, Bamidbar, op. cit. 3.

I Divrei HaYomim 23:13.

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If a person does not descend from Aharon, he is not a priest. There is no Divine service which can cause this status to be conveyed upon him. As Rashi states:4

The Holy One, blessed be He, established distinctions within His world. Just as one cannot turn morning into evening, so too [the priesthood] cannot be nullified. Thus it is written:5 “And G-d distinguished between light and darkness....” and it is written:3 “And He distinguished Aharon....”

Just as the differences between night and day are part of the natural structure of the world, so too the priesthood is an inherent element of nature. Accordingly, the question arises: Since Pinchas was not a priest, how could this status be conveyed upon him because of his zealousness?

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PINCHAS AND ERETZ YISRAEL

After this Torah reading completes telling the story of Pinchas, it relates the command to wage war against Midian, and orders a census because of the Jews who died in the plague. It then speaks about the division of Eretz Yisrael and the appointment of Yehoshua as the leader who will guide the Jews into the Holy Land. At the conclusion of the Torah reading, the order of sacrificial offerings is described. There is a connection between these offerings and the entry into Eretz Yisrael, because certain sacrifices, e.g., the two loaves of bread offered on Shavuos, certain of the communal sacrifices, and the wine libations,6 could be performed only in the Holy Land.7

In his commentary to Bamidbar 16:5, based on Bamidbar Rabbah.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 4. 5. Bereishis 1:4. 6. 7. All the sacrifices mentioned in this Torah reading were offered in the desert (Menachos, op. cit.). Nevertheless, the mention of the sacrifices in this reading

See Menachos 45b, Zevachim 111a.

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Our Sages state8 that if the Jews had not sinned, their first entry into Eretz Yisrael would have initiated the Era of the Redemption. Even though the Redemption did not actually take place at that time, there are parallels between the entrance into Eretz Yisrael and the Future Redemption.9

This helps us understand the connection between the entry into Eretz Yisrael and Pinchas. For Pinchas is identified with Eliyahu,10 the prophet who will announce the Redemption.

WHEN THE MASTER IS REVEALED

In the Era of the Redemption, the Or Ein Sof, G-d’s infi- nite light, will be revealed in an overt manner, as alluded to in the prophecy:11 “No longer shall your Master conceal Himself.”

In the present era, G-d’s light is covered in veils which limit its revelation. In the Era of the Redemption, by contrast, the essence of the light will be revealed. This light will transcend the limits of the spiritual cosmos.

Our array of spiritual potentials parallel those which exist on the mystic plane. Just as there is a light that is limited by the spiritual cosmos, and another which transcends those limits, there are two levels within our souls: One refers to the soul as it enclothes itself in our

is associated with the entry of the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael, as empha- sized in the Sifri and in Rashi’s commentary (Bamidbar 28:2).

8. Nedarim 22b; Shmos Rabbah 32:1. 9. This also relates to the sacrifices described at the conclusion of the Torah reading. For the consummate observance of these commandments will come in the Era of the Redemption, as we say in our prayers (Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 259): “There we will offer to You with love in accordance with the command of Your will.” See also the series of discourses entitled VeKachah 5637, sec. 17ff.

10. Targum Yonason, Shmos 6:18; Zohar, Vol. II, p. 190a; Pirkei d’Rebbe Eliezer, ch. 47; Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Aggadah, the beginning of Parshas Pinchas; Rashi, Bava Metzia 114b; Ralbag, I Melachim 17:1, et al.

11. Yeshayahu 30:20.

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four mediums of conscious powers. This expression (nefesh, ruach, neshamah, and chayah) which parallel the spiritual worlds of Asiyah, Yetzirah, Beriah, and Atzilus.

level has

And then there is a level of soul which transcends all our powers, the level of yechidah. This level is at one with G-d in His manifestation as yochid, “the singular One” — a level that transcends the spiritual cosmos.

To draw down this level into the world, our Divine serv- ice must tap that part of the soul which transcends our conscious powers.12

This is the intent of our Sages’ statement:13 “If Israel turns to G-d in teshuvah, she will be redeemed. If not, she will not be redeemed.” By adding the second clause, our Sages emphasized that teshuvah alone will spark the coming of the Redemption. The rationale for this is not merely that our sins prevent the Redemption from being manifest. Instead, the intent is to emphasize that the Redemption requires teshuvah as a catalyst. In the Era of the Redemption, G-d’s singular Oneness will be manifest throughout existence. In order to draw down this level, teshuvah is necessary.

For teshuvah has the potential to wash away all the blemishes caused by sin.14 These blemishes affect the conscious powers of the soul. When a Jew is motivated by teshuvah, he taps the level of yechidah, and this enables him to transcend his own limitations and rectify all blemishes.

PRECIPITATING THE REDEMPTION

The level of yechidah which surpasses our conscious powers is expressed through mesirus nefesh, self-sacrifice, a ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 12. See the sichah to Parshas Bo in this series, where this concept is explained. 13. Sanhedrin 97b; see the explanation in Likkutei Torah, Ki Seitze, p. 40d. 14. See Likkutei Torah, Acharei, p. 26c.

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commitment that transcends the bounds of reason. For rea- son cannot explain true self sacrifice. Some exert themselves because of the promise of reward, but true self-sacrifice is above such thoughts, and indeed cannot be comprehended at all. The potential for such self-sacrifice comes from the level of yechidah.

This also explains why in the present era — the time of ikvesa diMeshicha, when Mashiach’s approaching footsteps can already be heard — our Divine service requires self-sac- rifice. For the intent is to tap the power of yechidah, and in this manner precipitate the revelation of G-d’s singular one- ness at the time of the coming of Mashiach.

As explained in Tanya,15 mesirus nefesh was always a nec- essary element of our Divine service. Indeed, the totality of our Divine service depends on it. For this reason, the generation that entered Eretz Yisrael was commanded to recite the Shema (with its commitment to mesirus nefesh) twice a day, despite the fact that the nation had already been promised:16 “G-d will place your fear and your dread upon the entire land.”

On a day-to-day level, however, the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos in those days did not require mesirus nefesh. The Jews’ mesirus nefesh represented merely a potential commitment. As such, they drew down the level of yechidah (mesirus nefesh) as it is enclothed in the other four levels of the soul, and which are given expression in the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos.

In the era of ikvesa diMeshicha, by contrast, actual mesirus nefesh is required to give unveiled expression to the level of yechidah within our souls and thus precipitate the unveiled revelation of G-dliness within the world.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 15. Ch. 25. 16. Devarim 11:25.

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SELF-SACRIFICE THAT KNOWS NO BOUNDS

There are also levels within mesirus nefesh itself. Some- times a person makes a commitment of self-sacrifice, but the commitment is limited. He consults the Shulchan Aruch to see whether he is obligated to sacrifice himself for any particular matter.

A true commitment of mesirus nefesh, however, involves devotion to G-d without any restraints — a commitment that transcends all reason and logic.

This level of mesirus nefesh was revealed by Pinchas. He was not required to risk his life in this instance. If he had asked a court, it would not have commanded him to take action.17 For in such a situation, the court does not give the directive:18 “The zealous may strike him.”19 By acting, Pinchas thus expressed true mesirus nefesh.

This reflects the connection between Pinchas and the future Redemption. For the future Redemption will be brought about through this type of self-sacrifice, a commit- ment that is unlimited in any form, one which expresses the level of yechidah which in turn will reveal yochid, G-d’s singular oneness.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 17. Sanhedrin 82a. In particular, this is true according to the Jerusalem Talmud (Sanhedrin 9:7), which emphasizes that “a zealous person striking [the sin- ner]” did not find favor in the eyes of the Sages.

18. The above enables us to answer the question raised by the Chelkas Mechokek in his gloss to Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 16:4, who asks why the Shulchan Aruch does not mention the law that the zealous have permission to slay a per- son caught in sexual relations with a gentile woman, but merely refers to this law in passing: “If the zealous did not strike [such a person]....” There are those who maintain that the Shulchan Aruch does not mention this directive because there is no obligation for the zealous to kill; they are merely given this option. This answer, however, is incomplete, for the very fact that an option is given to kill a Jewish person is a unique concept deserving mention (although a parallel is found in Makkos 11b).

19. Sanhedrin 81b; Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 25:4.

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FUSING OPPOSITES

With regard to the prophecy of the Redemption:20 “I will make your windows21 of gems,” The Talmud states:22 “One23 interpreted this as referring to rubies, and one to jasper. The Holy One, blessed be He, says: ‘I will satisfy both views.’”

A ruby is a red jewel, indicative of energy drawn down from Above. Jasper is a sparkling gem which reflects light so brightly that it can blind,24 alluding to the rebounding light (or chozer) generated by our efforts to refine worldly exis- tence.

This is the core of the difference of opinion as to whether the revelations of the future Redemption will follow the pattern of drawing down energy from above or will be precipitated by the refinement and elevation of the world. G-d says: “I will satisfy both views,” for the future Redemption will combine both thrusts.25

The difference between these two thrusts can be explained as follows. Light which is drawn down from above has no constraints, while the light which is generated by the refinement of the material plane is proportionate to our Divine service, and is thus limited.

But there is an advantage to the light generated by our own efforts. When light is drawn down from above, inde- pendent of the efforts of man, it will not necessarily be internalized within the world, for the world has not been made ready to accept it. Instead, the light shines in an encompassing manner.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 20. Yeshayahu 54:12. 21. [Alternatively, “walls” (Rashi, Yeshayahu, ibid.).] 22. Bava Basra 75a. 23. [The Talmud brings two views: one that the difference of opinion was between the angels in the spiritual realm, and the other that it was between sages on this earthly plane.]

24. See Likkutei Torah, Re’eh 27d. 25. See the maamarim in Likkutei Torah, Re’eh, entitled ViSamti Kodked.

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When, however, the light is generated by man’s efforts to elevate the world, material reality will have become a medium in which G-dly light can be internalized.

The uniqueness of the Era of the Redemption is that it will combine both qualities. G-dly light will be revealed as it is, with no constraints. Indeed, the light will be so transcen- dent that it cannot be drawn down through the Divine service of mortals. And yet this light will be internalized by the world.

There has never been such a revelation, nor will there be until the coming of the Redemption. Although the Alter Rebbe writes that a semblance to this event occurred at the giving of the Torah,26 this refers only to the fact of revelation. At the giving of the Torah, as will happen in the Era of the Redemption, an unbounded, transcendent light was revealed. But at that time the world was not refined, and did not become a medium for the light. Therefore, after the revelation at Mount Sinai was complete, the world remained unchanged. The most clear indication of this fact is that directly afterwards, the Jews worshipped the Golden Calf.27

In the Era of the Redemption, however, both thrusts will come to fulfillment. The world will be refined and will therefore be able to internalize the infinite revelations of that era.

is

identified with Eliyahu,

These concepts are alluded to in the person of Pinchas, who the messenger of redemption. As mentioned above, priesthood is not a quality that can be earned through Divine service. Instead, it is granted from above, defining the nature of a person’s

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 26. Tanya, ch. 35. 27. At the time of the Giving of the Torah, the Jews’ impurity ceased (Shabbos 146a). This temporary respite can, however, be compared to a benoni in the midst of prayer, at which time the evil within his heart is asleep, as it were (see Tanya, ch. 13). It can, however, awaken after prayer (the maamar entitled VaYeired Havayah, 5643).

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existence. We are thus forced to conclude that even before Pinchas slew Zimri, he was for the priesthood. Nevertheless, that characteristic was not expressed until he revealed his zealousness.

fit

Why? Because the intent was that Pinchas reveal his

potential through his own Divine service.

This fusion of opposite tendencies is alluded to by G-d’s statement: “Behold, I am granting him My covenant of peace,” for peace involves the resolution of conflict. Similarly, Pinchas combined revelation from above and his own efforts of refinement, demonstrating within his person a microcosm of the future Redemption. For this reason, Pinchas is identified with Eliyahu.

A FORETASTE OF THE REDEMPTION

A similar fusion of opposites can be expressed in our own Divine service. We must fuse the level of yechidah with our conscious powers, empowering them to internalize the transcendent.28

The intent is not merely to observe the Torah and its mitzvos as they are inspired by the recitation of the Shema, for then a person’s Divine service is carried out with only his conscious powers, and the intensity of mesirus nefesh that stems from the yechidah is concealed within these powers.

Instead, the intent is that throughout the day, a person’s Divine service should pulsate with mesirus nefesh. His yechi- dah should be manifest, shining as an internalized light and redefining the workings of his conscious powers.

Then both advantages will be attained, for the revelation of the yechidah will be internalized. This is both a foretaste

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 28. See the sichos to the Parshiyos Yisro and Mishpatim in this series, where this

concept is explained.

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and a preparation for the revelations of the Era of the Re- demption.

FROM EXILE TO REDEMPTION

In years when the parshiyos Matos and Masei are read together, Parshas Pinchas is the first of the Shabbosos of beyn hameitzarim, the period of mourning for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Since all matters are defined by Divine Providence, this indicates that Parshas Pinchas shares a con- nection to the period of beyn hameitzarim.29

To explain: Directly after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, “the redeemer of Israel was born.”30 This shows that the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash began the process leading to the Redemption.31 And as explained above, the revelations of that era will be associated with the Divine service of Pinchas — the revelation of the yechidah within one’s conscious powers.

This concept is also alluded to at the end of the first of the haftoros read during beyn hameitzarim:32 “Israel is sanctified unto G-d, the first fruits of His yield. All that devour her will be held guilty. Evil will come upon them.”

When translating literally, the subject of the latter phrases are the gentile nations. For “devouring Israel” they will “be held guilty,” and “evil will come upon them.”

Since the Torah was given to the Jewish people, in addi- tion to its simple meaning, the verse must also contain a

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 29. See the Sheloh, Cheilek Torah Shebichsav, Parshas Vayeishev, which states: “Throughout the year, the festivals have a connection to the Torah portions read at that time.”

30. Eichah Rabbah 1:51. 31. See the notes of the Tzemach Tzedek to Eichah, on the verse: Golsa Yehudah

(Or HaTorah, Nach, Vol. II, p. 1035ff.).

32. Yirmeyahu 2:3.

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directive for our Divine service.33 This directive can be explained as follows: When the Jews sin, those sins devour the spiritual potential of Israel. This can be rectified through a guilt offering, for a guilt offering is associated with the revelation of yechidah.34

This is deduced in the following manner: With regard to the guilt offering, it is written:35 “And one will add its fifth to it.” In terms of our Divine service, this means that the efforts of our four potentials nefesh, ruach, neshamah, and chayah are not sufficient; one must also activate the fifth level: yechidah.36

And attention must be paid to the fact that the verse calls for the fifth to be added “to it,” i.e., yechidah is not revealed as an independent quality, but is fused with the other attributes. This empowers the nefesh, ruach, neshamah, and chayah, charging them with the energy of yechidah.

This is also reflected in the Alter Rebbe’s interpretation33 of the verse:37 “Who can number the seed of Israel?” The Hebrew word for number, mispar, relates to the Hebrew ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 33. Indeed, the two concepts are interrelated. The ability of the gentile nations to “devour” Israel stems from Israel’s sins, which devour her spiritual potential. In this vein, it is written (Yeshayahu 49:17): “Those who destroy you and those who lay waste to you will emanate from you.”

34. Likkutei Torah, Pinchas 80d. 35. Vayikra 5:16. 36. This refers to the fusion of the level of yechidah with the attributes of the

G-dly soul, and also those of the animal soul. These concepts shed light on the explanations offered by the Targum and Rashi to the verse in Yirmeyahu that equate Israel with terumah and with the first harvest before the offering of the omer. On the surface, mentioning the harvest before the omer is unnecessary. What does it add to the example of terumah? Indeed, terumah appears to be a more appropriate example, for its consumption by a person forbidden to eat it is a sin worthy of capital punishment. When one considers the spiritual dimensions of this concept, however, the need for two examples becomes clear. For the revelation of yechidah must permeate not only the G-dly soul (alluded to by the example of terumah), but also the animal soul (alluded to by the first harvest before the omer).

37. Bamidbar 23:10.

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sapir, meaning “brightness” and the word rovah, translated as “seed,” relates to the number four, arbeh in Hebrew. The implication is that the level of yechidah must shine on the four attributes of Israel, the nefesh, ruach, neshamah, and chayah, and be internalized within them, thus heralding the revelations of the Era of the Redemption. May it come soon.

(cid:2)(cid:3)

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“A TIME TO EMBRACE, AND A TIME TO REFRAIN FROM EMBRACING”1

With regard to vows, the Mishnah states:2 “Vows are a fence for restraint.” By taking vows, and thus refraining from using or doing things that would otherwise be permitted, a person trains himself in restraint. This is an important ele- ment of our Divine service, as reflected in our Sages’ charge:3 “Sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you.”

Conversely, the Jerusalem Talmud teaches:4 “Is it not suf- ficient what the Torah has forbidden to you?” This, however, serves as a directive for a person whose conduct reflects the verse:5 “G-d made man just.” When a person lives up to his human potential, he does not have to keep himself from involvement with permitted things. Indeed, he must not practice restraint,6 for he is obliged to elevate entities such as animals, plants, and inanimate matter which are on a lower level than himself.

But there are those who “have sought many forms of deception,”5 i.e., people who seek to concentrate their energies on worldly affairs. Instead of seeing themselves as a medium for G-dliness, they seek pleasure in material things. Not only do such people not elevate the material entities with ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Koheles 3:5. 2. Avos 3:13. 3. Yevamos 20a. 4. Nedarim 9:1. 5. Koheles 7:29. 6.

See the Jerusalem Talmud, the conclusion of tractate Kiddushin.

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which they are involved, the desire and satisfaction they experience draw their souls downward (and also lowers the spiritual level of the objects used). Such persons need the restraint encouraged by vows.7

A similar rationale explains why our Sages ordained many safeguards to the observance of the Torah in the time of the Second Beis HaMikdash. In the era of the First Beis HaMik- dash, G-dliness shone forth overtly. Even in the 70 years of exile following the first destruction, traces of this revelation remained.8

In the era of the Second Beis HaMikdash, by contrast, the light of holiness was lacking,9 thus strengthening the forces of evil.10 As a result, restraints and curbs were employed to help overcome the darkness.11

And from generation to generation, as the darkness has continued to deepen, the Rabbis have added even more restraints and curbs.

This dynamic operates not only in the history of mankind as a whole, but within the personal life of every individual. There are times when G-dliness shines within a person’s life. At those times, he need not fear involvement with worldly matters, for the world does not conceal G-dliness for him; on

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 7. See also Likkutei Torah, Matos 84b; Likkutei Sichos, Vol. I, pgs. 254, 565. 8. For example, during this exile there were still prophets. Baruch ben Neriah received the prophetic spirit from Yirmeyahu in Babylonia in the year 3350, 12 years after the destruction, as stated in Sefer Yuchsin. In the era of the Second Beis HaMikdash, by contrast, prophecy no longer existed, as Rashi (Yoma 21a, entry Aron) states. For the Holy Spirit did not rest on the prophets after the fourth year of the reign of Darius (the maamar entitled Boneh Yerushalayim, 5629). See also Eitz Chayim, Shaar Mi’ut HaYareach, ch. 2. See Yoma 21b.

9. 10. As our Sages state (Megillah 6b, cited by Rashi, Bereishis 25:23): “Tyre (a city opposed to holiness) became a metropolis because of the destruction of Jerusa- lem.”

11. See Likkutei Torah, Derushim LeRosh HaShanah 57c.

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the contrary, it serves to reveal G-dliness, as it is written:12 “See who created these.”

But there are also times of darkness, when a person does not perceive G-dliness. At those times, he must employ self- restraint, avoiding involvement even with entities which are permitted. Otherwise, such involvement can drag him to a lower spiritual plane.

GAINING STRENGTH

The advantage of restraint in times of spiritual darkness is

twofold:

a) Through restraint, one separates oneself from the darkness of the world. By avoiding the enemy, we do not allow it the opportunity to conflict with holiness.

b) Restraint draws down a higher G-dly light, and this

empowers the forces of holiness.13

Similar concepts apply with regard to vows. The restraint which vows impose, forestalls (to a certain degree) the spiri- tual decline caused by excessive involvement in material matters. But vows also contribute positive influence, drawing down holiness.14 This empowers a person, and gives him the strength to confront the challenge of evil.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 12. Yeshayahu 40:26; see the explanation of this verse in the series of maamarim

entitled Mayim Rabbim, 5636, ch. 30.

13. The rationale is that these restraints and curbs stem from G-d’s great love for us. To employ an analogy: A father is strict with his son because of his great love for him, protecting him in a comprehensive manner through restrictions and curbs (Likkutei Torah, Matos 85a).

14. For this reason, when a vow is made through comparison (e.g., “This is for- bidden to me like such and such”), the object to which the comparison is made must be a sacrifice. It cannot be an article which is forbidden according by Torah law (Nedarim 14a).

Similarly, our Sages consider objects forbidden by vows as being sanctified (Kesubos 59b), to the extent that a hypothesis is advanced that the prohibition against me’ilah (making mundane use of consecrated property) applies with

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LENDING STRENGTH TO OTHERS

The fact that the restraint stemming from vows is appro- priate in a time of spiritual darkness implies that any person sanctioned to annul vows functions on an elevated spiritual level. Not only does he not need these curbs himself, he is able to strengthen people who would otherwise require a vow, allowing them to persevere in their worldly involvement without stumbling.

For this reason, we see that all those who are given the privilege of nullifying vows are on a higher spiritual level than are the people who take vows. For example, a father can nullify his daughter’s vow because “anything that accrues to her belongs to her father.”15 A husband can nullify his wife’s vows because his wife is considered to be under his author- ity.16

Surely this applies to a wise man who is given the power to absolve the vows of others.17 In fact, one opinion18 holds that, in this context, the term “wise man” refers to a person ordained with the special semichah that began with Moshe our teacher. Such a person surely stands on a very high spiritual plane.

(Even three simple people are sanctioned to absolve a vow. This power is granted them, however, because they

regard to such objects. See Likkutei Torah, Parshas Matos; Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Nedarim.

15. Kesubos 40b. 16. See Kiddushin 30b. 17. For this reason, according to Rabbi Yehudah, when a court of three absolves a vow, one of them must be a wise man (Bechoros 37a). Even the Sages who al- low three ordinary men to serve as a court agree that only a wise man can absolve a vow when acting alone.

Significantly, several authorities maintain that in a place where there is a wise man, a court of three ordinary men is not sanctioned to absolve a vow. See Pischei Teshuvah, Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 238:1.

18. Ramban, Nedarim, ch. 3.

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constitute a court of law, and are thus invested with authority beyond that of their individual selves.19)

SPIRITUAL PARALLELS

The concept of vows and their nullification, like all con- cepts in the Torah, applies within both the macrocosm and the microcosm. Generally, we conceive of the person taking a vow and the one revoking it as two different individuals. Within every personality, however, it is possible to conceive of different planes of Divine service: one rung on which a vow is required, and a higher level which enables the vow to be absolved.

Based on the teachings of Kabbalah, Chassidus explains20 that these two planes refer to the powers of Chochmah and Binah. The approach of Binah necessitates vows and safe- guards, while the approach of Chochmah allows for the nullification of vows.

The difference between these two approaches can be explained as follows: Binah refers to rational intellect, while Chochmah manifests itself in bittul.

Rational intellect is limited in scope, and can reach only so far. Beyond its given range, it is not an effective medium. For this reason, our Sages say:21 “You have no permission to question” with regard to matters that are above the reach of intellect. We cannot approach these levels with our reason, for there is the possibility of error. Our prophets warn22 against those who “are wise to do evil,” i.e., their wisdom is misdirected. Therefore, restraint — which limits the applica- tion of intellect — is necessary, and vows should be taken.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 19. Rashbam, entry Lomar, Bava Basra 120b. 20. Likkutei Torah, Matos 84c, 85a. 21. Rashi, Bamidbar 19:2; cf. Yoma 67b; Midrash Tanchuma, Chukas, sec. 7. 22. Yirmeyahu 4:22.

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When operating from Chochmah, by contrast, there is no suspicion that an error will occur. For Chochmah is character- ized by bittul, selflessness.

This level of bittul is experienced in the Shemoneh Esreh prayer,23 when a person stands before G-d “like a servant before his Master,”24 without any thought of himself. Indeed, a servant is considered no more than an extension of his master. For this reason, “Whatever is acquired by a servant is acquired by his master.”25

Moreover, the bittul which characterizes Chochmah em- powers one’s understanding, directing it in the proper path.26 As mentioned previously, a wise man (chocham) has the power to absolve a vow, lending strength to a person who otherwise would require restraint. In a similar way, the bittul of Chochmah (described with the analogy of both a father and a husband) empowers the functioning of Binah (described with the analogies of a maiden and a wife).27

WHO MAY TASTE THE FRUITS OF THE WORLD?

The need for restraint and vows arises not only because indulgence in permitted things may lead to transgression, but because the indulgence itself is undesirable. As a person

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 23. For the Shemoneh Esreh prayers reflect the level of Atzilus (as frequently ex- plained with regard to the four levels of prayer, see Sefer HaMaamarim 5708, p. 80) and the light of Chochmah shines in the realm of Atzilus.

24. Shabbos 10a. See Shulchan Aruch HaRav, the conclusion of sec. 95, which states that in prayer, one must stand “like a servant before his Master with awe, fear, and dread.”

25. Pesachim 88b. 26. To cite a parallel, our Sages say (Avos 3:9): “Whenever a person’s fear of sin comes before his wisdom, his wisdom will endure.” See also Likkutei Torah, the beginning of Parshas Re’eh; Likkutei Sichos, Vol. II, p. 428.

27. Within the category of Chochmah itself, there are several rungs, the higher the level, the more encompassing the absolution that stems from it. For this rea- son, when a father and a husband nullify a vow, their nullification is effective only with regard to the future. In contrast, when a wise man nullifies a vow, it is as if the vow was never taken.

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becomes engrossed in worldly matters, he begins to consider the world important, and can forget that “there is nothing else aside from Him.”28

The influence of Chochmah which allows for the absolu- tion of vows sidesteps this difficulty. For the bittul of Chochmah not only lifts a person beyond the possibility of transgression, it endows him with a different perspective regarding the physical entities with which he is involved, enabling him to appreciate the G-dliness they contain.29

To explain: As mentioned previously,30 Chochmah and Binah are described by the analogy of a father and a mother. For Binah is considered the “mother,” i.e., a closer source of our emotional attributes.

The supernal emotional attributes are the source for the creation of the world. As such, the connection between our world and Binah is not distant, and Binah grants the entities in this world a certain measure of importance.

Chochmah, by contrast, is described as the father of the emotions — i.e., it is further removed from them, and from the world which comes into being through them. As such, the world is of no consequence to this level. On the contrary, Chochmah is permeated by the awareness that: “He alone exists; there is no other.”31

Since Binah grants the entities in this world a certain measure of importance, restraint becomes necessary. For in- volvement in worldly concerns might create a separation ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 28. Devarim 4:35. 29. To cite a parallel: consider eating for the sake of pleasure on Shabbos (a day on which Chochmah shines within the soul). Indulgence is not only permitted; it becomes a mitzvah and an expression of holiness. We are permitted to absolve vows on Shabbos. This implies that the spiri- tual quality of Shabbos (and in microcosm, this is experienced every day during prayer) empowers the absolution of vows. See Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 84c.

30. See the sichah to Parshas Balak in this series. 31. Tanya, ch. 35, in the note.

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between a person and G-dliness. This is not true with regard to Chochmah. Since the world is of no consequence for those who function at this level, it becomes possible for them to be involved with worldly concerns without fear of becoming separated from G-d.32

COMFORT AND MERCY

In several years — as is the case this year — the Shabbos on which the passage concerning vows is read is the Shabbos on which the month of Av is blessed.33

The above concepts provide us with a unique insight into the nature of the month. To explain: Av is the name by which the month is referred to in the Targum.34 Nevertheless, it is Jewish custom — and “Jewish custom is considered as the

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 32. A comparison can be made to the contrast between Yosef and his brothers. The brothers were “a chariot [i.e., a medium of expression] for the world of Beriah.” Herein there is a connection to Binah, for “the supernal mother nests in the realm of the Throne [Beriah] (Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 6).” Therefore, they were required to spend their lives detached from worldly matters. For this reason, they chose to work as shepherds. Yosef, by contrast, was a chariot for the world of Atzilus, which relates to Chochmah, for “the supernal father nests in Chochmah” (Sefer HaMaamarim 5696, p. 119 and sources cited there). For this reason, the matters of this world were of no concern for him, and he was able to serve as the virtual ruler of the most powerful country in the world (Derech Mitzvosecha 81a; the maamar entitled Mikneh Rav, 5629; and the maamar entitled Viloh Zachor Sar HaMashkim, 5688; see also the sichah to Parshas Vayigash in this series).

In terms of our Divine service, this refers to the approach of Yichudah Ila’ah, sublime unity, which stems from Chochmah. At this level, worldly mat- ters are of no concern. This approach of Chochmah has an effect on Binah (absolving a vow that would otherwise be required). In terms of our Divine service, this implies that Yichuda Tata’ah, (the lower unity) is dependent on a taste of the Yichudah Ila’ah. See Kuntres Eitz Chayim, ch. 7ff.

33. See the Sheloh, Cheilek Torah Shebichsav, Parshas Vayeishev, which states: “Throughout the year, the festivals have a connection to the Torah portions read at that time.”

34. Targum Yonason, Bamidbar 13:25.

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Torah itself”35 — to bless the month with the name Menachem Av. (Menachem means “the comforter.”)

Moreover, this is not merely a custom; the phrase Men- achem Av is acceptable as a means of dating legal documents and bills of divorce. Furthermore, even if one writes the word Menachem alone, the document is acceptable, for “it is well known that the month of Av is referred to as Menachem.”36

The difference between these terms is obvious. The month of Av is connected with unfavorable events, and thus: “When Av enters, we minimize our joy.”37 Therefore the word menachem is added as a prayer that G-d provide comfort for the negative influences associated with the month.

The name Av also has a positive connotation, meaning “father.” Indeed, it refers to a deeper dimension of consola- tion than does the word menachem. Thus our Sages comment:38

It is the nature of a father to show mercy, as it writ- ten:39 “As a father has mercy on his children.” And it is the nature of a mother to comfort, as it is written:40 “As a man who will be comforted by his mother.” G-d promises: “I will be like both a father and a mother.”

From this, we see that comfort is connected with Binah (the mother), while the influence of Chochmah (the father) is even higher. Thus we see that there are three levels: the

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 35. See the Jerusalem Talmud, Pesachim 4:1; Tosafos, Menachos 20b, entry nifsal uses the expression: “the custom of our ancestors is....” See also Minhagim Ye- shanim Midura, p. 153; Maharil as quoted by the Ramah, Yoreh De’ah 376:4. 36. Pischei Teshuvah, Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 126:12. Knesses HaGedolah,

Even HaEzer 126:41.

37. Taanis 29a. See the Korban Nesanel to Rabbeinu Asher’s rulings on that pas- sage. See also the AriZal’s interpretation of the word avel. (Note Meorei Or and other sources cited in Yair Nasiv.)

38. Pesikta deRabbi Kahana, commenting on the verse (Yeshayahu 51:12): “I, I am

He who will comfort you.”

39. Tehillim 103:13. 40. Yeshayahu 66:13.

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negative dimensions of Av, the comfort stemming from Binah, and the positive influence of Chochmah.

WHERE TEARS HAVE NO PLACE

The difference between comfort and mercy can be ex- plained as follows: Comfort involves the recognition of a loss. Indeed, even after a person has been comforted, he still feels the loss.41 He may understand that there is reason for him to feel consoled, and yet the sensation of loss remains; he has merely learned to accept the negative factors with joy.42

For this reason, one should no longer offer comfort to mourners after the period of mourning passes.43 Since the time of immediate pain has ended, one should not remind people of it, and thus reawaken negative emotions.

For similar reasons, after the resurrection, the concept of consolation will no longer apply, for then “G-d will wipe away tears from every face.”44 ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 41. This is also indicated by the fact that nechamah, the Hebrew word for “comfort,” also means to feel regret. As explained above (see the sichah to Par- shas Toldos in this series), all the different interpretations of a word are interrelated. When a person is comforted, he still feels the loss and has feelings of regret. Moreover, even after a person has been comforted, the loss and suffering he feels are not transformed into good (see note 46), and so he feels regret. The level of Av, by contrast, is not associated with regret. On the contrary, the po- tential exists for the positive factors hidden within the negative to be revealed, as will be explained (Sichos Chof Av, 5712).

42. In this vein, our Sages state (Berachos 60b): “Just as one is obligated to recite a blessing acknowledging positive occurrences, so too one is obligated to recite a blessing on negative occurrences, accepting them also with happiness.” Nev- ertheless, although they are accepted with happiness, they remain negative occurrences. For this reason, the happiness with which they are accepted is not the same as the happiness which greets a positive occurrence. (This is indicated by the expression “just as”.) See Tanya, ch. 26.

43. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 385:2. 44. Yeshayahu 25:8.

It is not appropriate to say that then we will consoled for all the suffering which occurred previously. For in the Era of the Redemption, the positive di-

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Mercy, by contrast, fills the lack a person feels, wiping away pain entirely. For this reason, the resurrection will come about through the attribute of mercy, as we say in our prayers: “He resurrects the dead with great mercy.”45 For the attribute of mercy does not allow for even the concept of death or descent.

This echoes the thoughts explained previously: that comfort stems from Binah (the supernal mother), and mercy from Chochmah (the supernal father). From the perspective of Binah, the world is a significant entity. Therefore even when a person appreciates the need to accept suffering with joy, the suffering remains suffering.

From the perspective of Chochmah (utter bittul), however, worldly existence is insignificant. Therefore worldly priva- tions are not regarded as suffering.46

mension of the suffering of exile will be revealed, and we will see how this suffering led to the Redemption. Therefore we will not need to be consoled. On the contrary, we will thank G-d for our earlier afflictions, as it is written (Yeshayahu 12:1): “I will thankfully acknowledge You, O G-d, for having chastised me.”

45. Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 51. See the explanation in Likkutei Torah, Parshas

Eikev.

46. Since at this level the lack is not felt, it is possible to compensate for it entirely. To cite an example: The resurrection (which, as mentioned above, is associ- ated with the attribute of mercy) has its source in G-d’s essence, a level at which life and death are equal. It is because of the influence of this level that the dead can live again (the maamar entitled Ner Chanukah, 5670). A parallel exists within our Divine service. By accepting privation with happiness, in faith that nothing bad descends from above, one causes the hid- den good within everything to be revealed (Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 11). When privations are accepted with joy, because one does not feel them as privations at all (the approach of Chochmah), total compensation will be granted for any lack. But when the acceptance is motivated by Binah, the pri- vations are felt, and therefore will not be transformed entirely.

(To cite an example: When the refinement of our emotional qualities stems from Binah, an undesirable emotional characteristic is not transformed, it is merely held in check. Since Binah is the immediate source for the emotions, and views emotions as a significant entity, it cannot bring about transforma-

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To cite an example: Reb Zusya of Anapoli was poverty stricken, and suffered many types of privations. The Maggid of Mezeritch once sent a student to him to learn how to accept suffering with joy. When the student told Reb Zusya the purpose of his visit, Reb Zusya replied that he did not understand what the Maggid had in mind. “I have never experienced any suffering,” Reb Zusya exclaimed.

The bittul of Reb Zusya was so great that he did not feel that he suffered even when confronted by strokes of fate which the Torah considers privation. (For if these were not considered privations, the Maggid of Mezeritch would have had no reason to send his student to Reb Zusya. Moreover, the Maggid surely knew Reb Zusya’s spiritual level and how he would respond.)

This is what G-d meant by saying: “I will be like both a father and a mother.” He will grant Jews not only the comfort of Binah, but also the mercy that stems from Chochmah.

NOT ONLY GOLD, BUT SILVER

A question arises: Since in the Era of the Redemption the quality of mercy will be revealed, and this will compensate for all deficiencies, what need will there be for the aspect of comfort, which is connected with a lack and the pain it causes? For what will we be consoled?

These questions can be resolved as follows: The intent behind creation is G-d’s desire for a dwelling in our material realm. This implies that the entities of our material world, as they exist within their own framework of reference, will become a dwelling for Him.

Mercy does not consider the limitations of our world. Thus it could nullify this framework of existence. Since the Divine intent is that this framework continue to exist, com-

tion. Chochmah, by contrast, involves a more distant connection, and therefore has the potential to transform the emotions.)

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fort remains necessary. For comfort recognizes the existence of our world, and operates within that framework.47

This is the intent of G-d’s promise: “I will be like a father and a mother;” He will reveal both the qualities of a father, i.e., the transcendence of Chochmah, and that of a mother, i.e., the comfort of Binah, which will not nullify the world, but will instead enable the revelation of Chochmah to be internalized.

ABOVE THE WORLD, WITHIN THE WORLD

On this basis, we can also appreciate the meaning of Men- achem Av — first menachem, the comforter, and then Av, the father. Our Divine service follows a pattern of ascendancy. Therefore the first stage is comfort, associated with Binah. For the month as it exists within its natural pattern has negative connotations. As mentioned previously, we are instructed: “When Av enters, we minimize our joy.”

Through their Divine service, however, Jews have the potential to draw down comfort during this month, just as they have the potential to draw down holiness by taking a vow.

Afterwards, a higher level is reached, the level of Av, associated with Chochmah. This enables one to absolve vows. Moreover, since the influence of Binah is already present, the influence of Chochmah does not lead to the nullification of the world.

The month is thus a fusion of Chochmah and Binah. This enables the light which transcends the spiritual cosmos to be drawn down and internalized within our world.

(Adapted from Sichos Shabbos Parshas Matos-Masei, 5722)

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 47. Although there is no concept of offering comfort for death, there is a concept of offering comfort for the fact that one is an element of the lower realms, as reflected in the verse (Yeshayahu 2:21): “And he will go into the clefts of the rocks... for the fear of G-d.” See Tanya, ch. 36.

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THE SOUL’S ODYSSEY

The Baal Shem Tov teaches1 that the 42 journeys recounted in this week’s Torah reading are reflected in the lives of every Jew. Birth is equivalent to the exodus from Egypt, and from that point a person makes 42 journeys, until he reaches Eretz Yisrael, the sublime Land of Life.

This teaching provokes a question: Several of the journeys featured events that ran contrary to G-d’s will. Would Divine Providence structure our lives to follow a pattern that some- times opposes G-d’s will?!

From the Baal Shem Tov’s teaching, however, we can infer that the journeys in and of themselves are all phases in holiness. Mankind was given free choice, and it is thus pos- sible to act against G-d’s will. The intent, however, is that “You should choose life.”2 (Indeed, this command empowers us to make the proper choice.) And when this choice is made, all the journeys become stages of ascent.

For example, at the encampment of Kivros HaTaavah (the graves of [those possessed by] craving), the Jews buried those who were punished as a result of their lust for meat.3 This encampment had the potential to bring the Jews to an elevated spiritual state, one in which they could “bury crav- ing.” But the Jews did not rise to the challenge, and so the

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 1. Cited by Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Parshas Masei. 2. Devarim 30:19. 3.

See Bamidbar 11:15.

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forces of evil were able to bring about the outcome described in the Torah.

Every person knows which of the 42 encampments in his life have been used positively, and which have not. With regard to the future, each of us can see to it that every journey leads to a positive goal. This is particularly true if a person “chooses life,” thus connecting himself to “the tree of life,” the teachings of P’nimiyus HaTorah. For P’nimiyus HaTorah reveals the good present within every entity, and transforms the negative qualities into positive ones.

AS THE PENDULUM SWINGS

Similar concepts apply with regard to beyn hameitzarim, the three weeks of mourning between the fall of Jerusalem on the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash on the Ninth of Av. (Parshas Masei is always read during these three weeks.4) The process which brought about these events was intended to bring the Jews to a spiritual peak.5 But we did not make the proper choices, and the forces of evil were able to transform this potential into a negative pattern.

Consider the Sin of the Golden Calf, which is the source of all the sins which followed it. Our Sages explain6 that this sin came about because, at the Giving of the Torah, the Jews had been granted a vision of “the ox-faced creature” — one of the four archangels leading the Heavenly Chariot.7

From this, we can see that the event which led to the most severe sin had a source in holiness, and a potentially holy purpose. And when one desires to “choose life,” not only will ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 4.

See the Sheloh, Cheilek Torah Shebichsav, Parshas Vayeishev which states: “Throughout the year, the festivals have a connection to the Torah portions read at that time.”

5. This is evident from the drastic nature of the descent which came about. 6. 7.

Shmos Rabbah 42:5. See Yechezkel 1:10.

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one not sin, one will be able to tap this positive source. This may lead to a vision of the Heavenly Chariot even more profound than that granted the prophet Yechezkel.8

To cite another parallel: Yeravam ben Navat is cited9 as the paradigm of one who “himself sinned and caused others to sin.” Nevertheless, he was not a simple man. On the con- trary, our Sages explain10 that he was able to offer 103 interpretations to the teachings of Toras Kohanim.

Similarly, when describing Yeravam’s meeting with Achi- yah of Shiloh, the Tanach states:11 “And he was wearing a new cloak, and the two were alone in the field.” Our Sages inter- pret12 this to mean that Yeravam had achieved new Torah insights which only the two of them could comprehend.

Nevertheless, because of the influence of the forces of evil, Yeravam sank to unique depths, building golden calves for the people to worship. (Herein, there was also a direct connection to his former height, for kdg, Hebrew for calf, is numerically equivalent to 103.) If, however, Yeravam had decided to “choose life,” he could have used his potential to reach even more elevated peaks.

Similarly, with regard to beyn hameitzarim and the events associated with it, were it not for the influence of the forces of evil, this episode would have led to heights of holiness. Moreover, even after the influence of evil has been felt, pur- into merits through poseful sins can be transformed teshuvah.13 And through teshuvah we will immediately be redeemed,14 meriting the complete and ultimate Redemption.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 8. Yalkut Shimoni, Parshas Yisro, sec. 286. 9. Avos 5:18. 10. Sanhedrin 103b. 11. I Melachim 11:29. 12. Sanhedrin 102a. 13. Yoma 86a. 14. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah 7:5; cf. Yoma 86b.

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At that time, these days will be transformed into days of joy and celebration.15 From beyn hameitzarim (lit. “between the straits”), we will be granted nachalah bli meitzarim, “an inheritance without any boundaries,”16 which will be revealed in the near future by Mashiach.

(Adapted from Sichos Shabbos Parshas Matos-Masei, 5719)

(cid:2)(cid:3)

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ 15. Zechariah 8:19; Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Taanios 5:19. 16. Cf. Shabbos 118a.

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FOUNDERS OF CHASSIDISM & LEADERS OF CHABAD-LUBAVITCH

Baal Shem Tov (cuy oa kgc; lit., “Master of the Good Name”): R. Yisrael

ben R. Eliezer (1698-1760), founder of Chassidism.

The Maggid of Mezritch (lit., “the preacher of Mezritch”): R. Dov Ber (d. 1772), disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, and mentor of the Alter Rebbe.

The Alter Rebbe (hcr rgykt rgs; lit., “the Old Rebbe”; Yid.): R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), also known as “the Rav” and as Baal HaTanya; founder of the Chabad-Lubavitch trend within the chas- sidic movement; disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch, and father of the Mitteler Rebbe.

The Mitteler Rebbe (hcr rgkgyhn rgs; lit., “the Middle Rebbe”; Yid.): R. Dov Ber of Lubavitch (1773-1827), son and successor of the Alter Rebbe, and uncle and father-in-law of the Tzemach Tzedek.

The Tzemach Tzedek (esm jnm): R. Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1789-1866), the third Lubavitcher Rebbe; known by the title of his halachic responsa as “the Tzemach Tzedek”; nephew and son- in-law of the Mitteler Rebbe, and father of the Rebbe Maharash. The Rebbe Maharash (awwrvn; acronym for Moreinu (“our teacher”) HaRav Shmuel): R. Shmuel Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1834- 1882), the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe; youngest son of the Tzemach Tzedek, and father of the Rebbe Rashab.

The Rebbe Rashab (cwwar; acronym for Rabbi Shalom Ber): R. Shalom Dov Ber Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1860-1920), the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe; second son of the Rebbe Maharash, and father of the Rebbe Rayatz.

The Rebbe Rayatz (.wwhhr; acronym for Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak), also known (in Yiddish) as “der frierdiker Rebbe” (i.e., “the Previous Rebbe”): R. Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe; only son of the Rebbe Rashab, and father-in- law of the Rebbe.

The Rebbe: Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902), the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe; eldest son of the saintly Kabbalist, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, rav of Yekaterinoslav; fifth in direct paternal line from the Tzemach Tzedek; son-in-law of the Rebbe Rayatz.

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GLOSSARY

All asterisk indicates a cross-reference within this Glossary. All non-English entries are Hebrew unless otherwise indicated.

ahavas Yisrael (lit., the love of Israel): the love for one’s fellow Jews

alef-beis: the Hebrew alphabet

AriZal (lit., “the lion of blessed memory”): R. Isaac Luria (1534-

1572), one of the leading \*Kabbalistic luminaries

Asiyah (lit., “deed”): In Kabbalistic terminology, this refers to the lowest of the four spiritual worlds, the realm of spiritual exis- tence which relates directly to our material world.

Atzilus, the World of (lit., “the World of Emanation”): the highest

of the four spiritual worlds

Av: the fifth month of the Jewish year when counting from Nissan (or the eleventh when counting from Tishrei); the month in which both Temples were destroyed

baal teshuvah (lit., “master of return”; pl. baalei teshuvah): a person

who turns to G-d in repentance

batul (lit., “nullified”): with regard to the laws of kashrus, this refers to an amount of a forbidden substance that has become mixed with a greater portion of permitted substances to the extent that the forbidden substance is considered as insignificant; with regard to our Divine service, a state where an individual loses self-consciousness

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benoni (lit., “intermediate man”): classically, an individual whose merits are equally balanced between good and evil; according to \*Chassidus, an individual whose spiritual labors have brought him to a level at which he never sins in thought, word or deed, despite his still-active Evil Inclination; see Tanya, ch. 12

Beis HaMikdash: The Temple in Jerusalem

beyn hameitzarim (lit., “between the straits”): the three weeks of mourning between the fall of Jerusalem on the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash on the Ninth of Av

Beriah, the World of (lit., “the World of Creation”): the second (in

descending order) of the four spiritual worlds

Binah (lit., “understanding”): the second of the Ten \*Sefiros, or Divine emanations; the second stage of the intellectual process, the power that develops abstract conception, giving it breadth and depth

bittul: self-nullification, a commitment to G-d and divine service

that transcends self-concern.

Chabad (acronym for the Hebrew words meaning “wisdom, under- standing, and knowledge”): the approach to Chassidism which filters its spiritual and emotional power through the intellect; a synonym for Chabad is \*Lubavitch, the name of the town where this movement originally flourished

chassid: a pious, kind-hearted person, whose commitment extends

beyond the requirement of the law

Chassidus: the body of Chassidic thought and philosophy

chayah: the fourth level of the soul, the level identified with an all-

encompassing faith in G-d

cheder (lit., “rooms”): school in which young children learn reading

skills and begin the study of the Torah

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Chochmah (lit., “wisdom”): the first of the Ten \*Sefiros, or Divine emanations; correspondingly, the first stage of our intellectual process; reason in potentia

Chol HaMoed: the intermediate days of a festival

davar shebiminyan (lit., “an entity which is counted”): an object which is sold by number rather than by weight or volume; accordingly, each unit is considered a significant entity and can never become \*batul, halachicly insignificant, when mixed with other substances

E-lohim (poss., E-lohecho): one of the names of G-d; in particular, this name is associated with the Divine attributes that hold back, limit, and conceal G-dly influence so that it can descend and ultimately, be enclothed within the limited context of worldly existence

ephah: a Biblical dry measure

Eretz Yisrael (lit., the land of Israel)

Haftorah (pl. Haftoros, lit., “the final passage”): the passage from the Prophets read in the synagogue after the conclusion of the Torah reading

halachah (adj. halachic): the body of Jewish Law; alternatively a

single law

Havayah: the Four-Letter Name of G-d (with its letters transposed, as pronounced in the study of \*Chassidus), signifying His tran- scendence of nature’s finite bounds of time and space

ikvesa diMeshicha: the age which hears the approaching “footsteps

of \*Mashiach”

Kabbalah (lit., “received tradition”): the Jewish mystical tradition

kabbalas ol (lit., “the acceptance of [G-d’s] yoke”): an unswerving,

selfless commitment to carrying out the will of G-d

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

kelipah (lit., “rind” or “shell”; pl. kelipos): used figuratively (on a personal or universal level) to signify an outer covering which conceals the light within; hence, the unholy side of the universe

kelipas nogah (lit., “the shining \*kelipah”): a dimension of kelipah in which the light is intermingled with the shell, giving it the potential to be refined

kosher: complying to the dietary laws; alternatively, fit to be used

for ritual purposes

Lashon HaKodesh (lit., “the Holy Tongue”): Biblical Hebrew

Lubavitch (lit., “town of love”; Rus.): townlet in White Russia which from 1813-1915 was the center of \*Chabad Chassidism, and whose name has remained a synonym for it

maamar: a formal chassidic discourse

Mashiach: the Messiah

mesirus nefesh (lit., “sacrifice of the soul”): the willingness to sacri- fice oneself, either through martyrdom, or through a selfless life, for the sake of the Torah and its commandments

Midrash: the classical collection of the Sages’ homiletical teachings

on the Bible

mikveh: a ritual bath

Mishnah: the first compilation of the Oral Law authored by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi (approx. 150 C.E.); the germinal statements of law elucidated by the Gemara, together with which they constitute the \*Talmud; when not capitalized, a single state- ment of law from this work

mitzvah (lit., “commandment; pl., mitzvos): one of the 613 Com-

mandments; in a larger sense, any religious obligation

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Nassi: (a) in Biblical times, the head of any one of the Twelve Tribes; (b) in later generations, the civil and/or spiritual head of the Jewish community at large

nefesh: soul, more precisely the lowest of the five levels of the soul

neshamah: soul, more precisely the third of the five levels of the

soul

Nigleh (lit., “what has been revealed”): the body of Torah law

omer: a Biblical dry measure

Or Ein Sof: G-d’s infinite light

parshah (pl. parshiyos, poss. parshas, lit., “portion”): one of the 54

weekly Torah readings

P’nimiyus HaTorah (lit., “the inner dimension of the Torah”): the

realm of the Torah that deals with mystical truth

Rabbeinu: our teacher, an appellation of respect added to the name

of great educational leaders

Rambam (acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon; 1135-1204): Maimonides, one of the foremost Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages; his Mishneh Torah is one of the pillars of Jewish law, and his Guide to the Perplexed, one of the classics of Jewish philoso- phy

Rashi (acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki; 1040-1105): the author of the foremost commentaries to the Torah and the Talmud

Rebbe (lit., “my teacher [or master]”): saintly Torah leader who

serves as spiritual guide to a following of chassidim

Rishonim: (lit., “the first ones”): the Torah sages of the Middle Ages

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

Rosh Chodesh (pl. Rashei Chodashim, lit., “head of the month”): the

first day of each Jewish month

ruach: spirit, more particularly, the second of the five levels of the

soul

Sefiros: Kabbalistic term for the attributes of G-dliness which serve as a medium between His infinite light and our limited frame- work of reference.

semichah: Rabbinic ordination

Shabbos (pl. Shabbosos): the Sabbath

Shavuos (lit., “weeks”): festival commemorating the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, in Eretz Yisrael falling on 6 Sivan, and in the Diaspora on 6-7 \*Sivan

Shema: the fundamental Jewish prayer which we are obligated to

recite each day, in the evening and in the morning

Shemoneh Esreh (lit., “eighteen”): the eighteen (later amended to nineteen) blessings of the Amidah prayer which form the basis of the three daily prayer services

Shulchan Aruch (lit., “a set table”): the standard Code of Jewish Law compiled by R. Yosef Caro in the mid-sixteenth century; also used to refer to later codes; e.g., the Shulchan Aruch HaRav compiled by R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi

sichah (pl., sichos): an informal Torah talk delivered by a \*Rebbe

(cf. \*maamar)

Sivan: the third month of the Jewish year when counting from Nis-

san (or the ninth when counting from Tishrei)

sotah: a woman suspected of immodest conduct who is forced to drink special waters as a test of her fidelity; see Numbers, ch. 5

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Talmud: the basic compendium of Jewish law, thought, and Biblical commentary, comprising \*Mishnah and Gemara; when un- specified refers to the Babylonian Talmud, the edition developed in Babylonia, and edited at end of the fifth century C.E.; the Jerusalem Talmud is the edition compiled in Eretz Yisrael at end of the fourth century C.E.

Tammuz: the fourth month of the Jewish year when counting from

Nissan (or the tenth when counting from Tishrei)

Tanach: The Bible

Tanya: the classic text of Chabad chassidic thought authored by the

Alter Rebbe

Targum (lit., “translation”): the rendering of the Bible into Aramaic

tefillin: small, black leather boxes each containing four Biblical pas- sages which the Torah commands adult males to wear daily

teshuvah (lit., “return [to G-d]”): repentance

Toras Kohanim (lit., “the laws of the priests”): a reference to the Book of Leviticus; alternatively, to an exegetical treatise on that book also referred to as Sifri written in the period of the Mish- nah

tzaddik (pl. tzaddikim): righteous man

tzedakah: charity

tzitzis: fringes on the corners of the tallis worn by males (cf. Num-

bers 15:37-40)

yechidah: the highest of the five levels of the soul, the rung in which

the soul is in absolute unity with G-d

yesh (lit., “it exists”): in Chassidic terminology, an entity which is

limited and self-conscious

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yetzer hora: the evil inclination

Yetzirah, the World of (lit., “the World of Formation”): the third

(in descending order) of the four spiritual worlds

Yiddishkeit (lit., “Jewishness”; Yid.): the Torah way of life

Yud-Bais Tammuz: the twelfth of Tammuz; the Previous Rebbe’s birthday and the anniversary of his release from capital sen- tence and imprisonment in Soviet Russia in 1927

Zohar (lit., “radiance”): The title of the classic mystical work em-

bodying the teachings of the \*Kabbalah