

Daily Insight
into the
Third Reading of Vezot Habrachah
from Harav Yitzhcak Ginsburgh

From the third reading of *Vezot Habrachah*, we will focus on a part of Moshe's blessing to Joseph: "...his land will be blessed by God...; and the will of he who dwells in the bush [sneh, סנה, in Hebrew]; it shall come on the head of Joseph...." In Hebrew, these words are:

...מְבֹרָכַת יְהוָה אֲרָצוֹ... וְרָצוֹן שְׂכֵנֵי סְנֵה תְּבוֹאֲתָהּ לְרֵאשׁ יוֹסֵף

Rashi offers us the following commentary on these cryptic phrases:

- וְרָצוֹן שְׂכֵנֵי סְנֵה – like the One who dwells in the *sneh*, the bush. And his land shall be blessed from the will of the Almighty who first revealed Himself to me [Moshe] at the *sneh* [the burning bush].
- רָצוֹן – satisfaction and reconciliation. Thus is the meaning of every “will” in the Bible.
- תְּבוֹאֲתָהּ – This blessing should come on Joseph's head.

With this blessing, Moshe passes on God's initial revelation to him at the burning bush to Joseph, who is unique among his brothers.¹ This special connection between Moshe and Joseph was exhibited when the Torah relates that it was Moshe personally who carried the bones of Joseph out of Egypt.² “Bones” in Hebrew also means “essence,” meaning that of all 12 tribes, Moshe identified most with Joseph the son of Jacob. Joseph was the *tzadik*, the righteous individual of his generation, as was Moshe Rabbeinu.³

Indeed, this affinity between the two is expressed numerically, as “Moshe” משה plus “Joseph” יוסף equals ראש (“head”), as both Moshe and Joseph were the heads of the Jewish people in their respective generations. In Hebrew, the initials of the phrase “head of the Jewish people” (ראש בני ישראל), spell “Rebbe” (רבי). Joseph's leadership was spiritually carried and divided between his two sons: Menasheh and Efra'im, who became the two tribes of Joseph. In Kabbalistic terminology, Menasheh and Efra'im represent the two aspects of knowledge (the 5 aspect of loving-kindness and the 5 aspects of might) as it is situated between the shoulders, a quality of leadership given to him from his father's blessing that he should be a “back higher than his brothers.”⁴

Looking at Rashi's comments on the word “will,” we note that the Hebrew word for “reconciliation” is פיוס, which is a permutation of the Joseph, יוסף. When we add the Hebrew idiom for “satisfaction,” נחת רוח to Joseph, יוסף, we get the numerical value of “Tzafnat Pa'ane'ach,” צפנת פענח, the name that Pharaoh gave to Joseph to honor him as his deputy, a name which literally means: “An unraveler of secrets.”



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The source of Joseph's (and anyone else's) wisdom indeed comes from *will*, the Chassidic terminology for what in Kabbalah is known as the lowest of the three heads of the crown, *the patient head* (רישא דאריך). The patient head contains the *concealed wisdom* (מוחא סתימאה), which in the language of philosophy is known as the *origin of wisdom* (כח המשכיל).⁵

One of the most important principle's of Torah mathematics is the ubiquity of certain pairs of numbers that appear as factors of two phrases or words that are inherently related. The Hebrew word used to describe such pairs is "*michlol*," a term borrowed from the ancient Kabbalistic work (attributed to Moshe Rabbeinu himself) called *Ma'ayan Hachochmah* (*The Wellspring of Wisdom*). One of the most important examples of numerical *michlol* in the Torah is the pair of numbers 7 and 13. In our context, we find that:

נחת רוח (satisfaction) = 7 · 96

פיוס (reconciliation) = 13 · 12. [Also, 96 = 8 · 12]

Just as satisfaction and reconciliation together define will, so 7 and 13 together are prime factors of their respective numerical value.

In every *michlol*, one of the numbers is relatively masculine and the other, relatively feminine. In the *michlol* of 7 and 13, 13 is considered masculine and 7 is considered feminine. Applying this to satisfaction and reconciliation, we learn that the nature of reconciliation is masculine, while the nature of satisfaction is feminine. Thus, the nature of a man is to reconcile with his wife, while the nature of the woman is to try and satisfy her husband. In his commentary, *Rashi* places satisfaction before reconciliation. This is an example of the feminine preceding the masculine as described in the verse: "the woman of valor is the crown of her husband,"⁶ a verse that is specifically related to the *sefirah* of crown, the location of will in the soul.

However, the sages in the Talmud offer a different understanding of this verse: "Rabbi Yosi bar Chaninah said: [the meaning of] 'And the will of the one who dwells in the *sneh*,' [is] an eye that did not want to take pleasure from something that is not its own [referring to Joseph evading his master Potiphar's wife] will merit to be eaten [even] amongst those who hate it."⁷ Thus, Rabbi Yosi interprets the word "*sneh*" as similar to the word "hatred." Similarly the sages interpret the name "*Sinai*" as stemming from hatred.⁸

Rabbi Yosi is referring to the law that sacrifices called *kodashim kalim* (minor holiness) slaughtered in the Tabernacle in Shiloh, a town in the territory of Joseph, could be eaten in any place that could be seen from the Tabernacle. After the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel, the desert Tabernacle was erected semi-permanently in the town of Shiloh, where it stood for 369 years. Once the Holy Temple was constructed in Jerusalem it was forbidden to eat a sacrifice outside of Jerusalem. But, in the Shiloh Tabernacle, it was permitted for the owner to take the meat from his sacrifice and hold a *mitzvah* feast in any place that could be seen from the Tabernacle. As it turns out, because of its location near the border of Joseph's territory (specifically, Efra'im the son of Joseph's territory), this included the border with other tribes' territories.⁹

Thus, the meaning of Rabbi Yosi's statement is that because of Joseph's rectified eye he did not covet that which was not his [as per the dictum: "the eye sees and the heart covets"¹⁰—an expression of his rectified will—he merited to have the Shiloh Tabernacle erected in his territory. And, certain sacrifices could be eaten on the border with other tribes, in spite of the hatred that the other tribes had exhibited towards Joseph.

Rabbi Yosi's reasons that Joseph's rectified will prompted him to do only good unto others and give selflessly; never taking what was not his. Likewise, when the Tabernacle was situated in Shiloh, sacrifices were not "kept" there; Joseph did not "take" what was not his and the sacrifices could be taken out of the Tabernacle by their rightful owners, this, despite the hatred that the other tribes initially had for Joseph. Giving selflessly to another Jew, even amid hatred, is the main quality that we should learn from Joseph; a quality which is expounded on in length in the Tanya.¹¹

In passing, let us note that the Talmud offers two more explanations for why certain sacrifices could be taken out of the Shiloh Tabernacle to be eaten wherever the eye could see. Together with Rabbi Yosi's explanation that we saw, the three can be modeled as corresponding to the Ba'al Shem Tov's transformative submission-separation-sweetening model.

* * *

It is relatively well known that **משה** (Moshe) = 3 · **סנה** (*sneh*), the place where God first revealed Himself to him. Since there are three letters in **משה**, this means that the average value of each letter is **סנה**. We have already noted that the sages interpret the word "*sneh*" to be related to the word for "hatred" (**שנאה**). Each one of these three "*sneh*" that numerically make up Moshe denotes another interpretation of how the leader, the *tzadik* of the generation, can incorporate and deal with hatred. The three interpretations follow the Ba'al Shem Tov's transformative model of submission-separation-sweetening.

Submission: According to *Rashi*,¹² the *sneh* is a symbol that God is with us during times of trouble, particularly when the Jewish people are in the hands of those that hate them.¹³ This is a clear example of submission, where the leader knows that even though we are under the yoke of our enemies who hate us, God is entirely with us. It is as if God dwells in us even in our times of forced submission to our enemies.

Separation: A second interpretation is that God dwells in a person who hates evil, as in the verse: "Those who love God, hate evil!"¹⁴ This is the definition of a *tzadik*, a righteous individual, in the *Tanya* who is measured by his hate for evil, which distracts one's consciousness from God, and indeed every Jew is a *tzadik*, as the verse says: "And your people, they are all *tzadikim*!"¹⁵ In this case, God is dwelling in the *tzadik* who separates himself from evil by hating it. So hatred, the *sneh*, is being used to separate.

Sweetening: But, the true goal is not to hate the evil in a Jew, but to sweeten it, that is to transform it, by indulging him or her with *kodashim kalim*, sacrifices with minor holiness. What this means is that to *sweeten* the evil in a person, we have to reveal the holiness in them. Even if that holiness is trapped in a "minor" state, meaning, the individual has not yet matured enough to acknowledge the greatness of the *tzadik* of the generation and may even oppose the *tzadik*.¹⁶ All this with the rectified eyesight of Joseph (and Moshe), who could indulge all that he saw.

1. Moshe here refers to him literally as, “the ascetic [*nazir*] among the tribes.”

2. Exodus 13:19.

3. The *tzadik* of the generation refers to the individual who is the consummate righteous individual and the spiritual leader of his generation. Noah was the “*tzadik* of the generation” in his generation (see *Shnei Luchot Habrit, Noach, Torah Or*, 2). Joseph the *tzadik* was clearly the *tzadik* of the generation of his generation. Moshe was the *tzadik* of the generation of his generation (see *Ba'al Shem Tov on the Torah, Beshalach* 21). Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, the *mara d'atra* of the Land of Israel, writes that the *tzadik* of the generation is the *tzadik* by whom all the worlds, from the highest to the lowest, are held together, and they all follow his lead (*Pri Ha'aretz, Ekev*). Boaz was the *tzadik* of the generation of his generation (Rebbe Meir of Apt in *Or Hame'ir, Pesach*). Of all the Chassidic masters, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov focused the most on the concept of the *tzadik* of the generation. The Lubavitcher Rebbe expressed in numerous letters that his father-in-law, the Friedeger Rebbe, was the *tzadik* of the generation of his generation.

4. Genesis 48:22.

5. More specifically, the *power of mind* refers in Kabbalah to a particular aspect of the *concealed wisdom* known as *crystal dew* (טלא רבדולחא). See Alter Rebbe's *Likutei Torah, Shir hashirim* 35d.

6. Proverbs 12:4.

7. *Zevachim* 118b.

8. *Shabbat* 89a.

9. See the *Maharsha ad. loc.*

10. *Rashi* to Numbers 15:39 based on *Yerushalmi Berachot* 1:5.

11. See end of epistle 2.

12. *Rashi* to Exodus 3:2.

13. See the *Maharal (Gur Aryeh)* and the *Or Hachayim* on this verse.

14. Psalms 97:10.

15. Isaiah 60:21.

16. See *Likutei Moharan* I, 207.