

Harav Ginsburgh's Weekly Shiur

4 Cheshvan 5774

(Notes taken during class, not reviewed nor edited by Harav Ginsburgh)

It's been many years since we've been here in Eilat, the southern end of our Holy land, fitting to the parashah of the week, ויסע אברהם הלוך ונסוע הנגבה, apparently this week he has to travel all the way to Eilat, the most southern, הנגבה. Even though at the beginning of the parashah he is still called Avram without the hei—only at the end of the parashah at the brit, the covenant of the circumcision, he is called Abraham—and from then on he may no longer be referred to as Avram. Still, at the beginning of the parashah there are a number of different allusions to his name Abraham. In the beginning of the Torah it says, בהבראם, the same letters as אברהם. Avraham is loving-kindness and that is the direction of the south, the depth of love, as it is called in the Book of Formation, is the end of the south. About the verse, ואגדלה שמך and I will make your name great, Rashi says, that this alludes to his having another hei added to his name.

The name Eilat is mentioned 8 times in the tAnach, and the twin city, Etziyon Gever is mentioned 7 times in the Tanach. Sometimes Eilat is called Eilot, which is also mentioned 8 times.

Eilat has a special segulah, in that it equals "truth" אמת, with a small change of the letters. From the most southern point that is where truth will grow from, this is from Eilat, from the truth of Eilat, a very special Torah. Let's do a small קמיע. What happens when we combine Eilat with Abraham. When Abraham reaches the mesaure of truth, when loving-kindness becomes truth, God's own seal, which then makes it as if God is signing the chesed, the loving-kindness. Together these two words have 9 letters:

א	ב	ר
ה	ס	א
י	ל	ת

We can see that the diagonal also spells אמת, truth. Not only does Eilat equal truth, but the diagonal is also truth. What about the corners. They spell יראת which means "fear of," like in Eshet Chayil, אשה יראת ה' היא תתהלל, a woman who fears God will be praised. יראת also equals תורה, Torah. What is the order of the letters? Above there are the alef and reish and on the bottom the yud and the tav. In the Song of Songs, this is the order of the verse, פתחי לי אחתי רעייתי יונתי תמתי. The chattan, the groom of the Song of Songs calls his beloved and denotes her by these three connotations, whose initials are these letters in order. So when Abraham reaches Eilat there is some connection with wholeness. There has to be lovingkindness of truth and true peace also. So when Abraham reaches Eilat we find this secret of these 4 connotations creating peace in the home. What is the value of them altogether? Abraham is 248, the number of positive commandments in the Torah, the number of organs in the body (the number of bones in the adult male body). Also equal to בעולם אלקים, in the image of God. Eilat is 441, which is 21 squared, 21 is the value of the Name Ekyeh (איהיה), the name of the Exodus from Egypt. So together 248 plus 441 equals 689, which is a multiple of 13, as it says Abraham was one (אחד היה אברהם...)

(כי אחד קראתי), two verses that connote Abrahah as “one.” The value of “one” is 13. As an expression, 689 is equal to נצח ישראל, the eternity of Israel. What is the connection between truth and eternity of Israel? It says that נצח ישראל לא ישקר ולא ינחם, the eternity of Israel is always true. Netzach is both eternity and victory. In the psyche, netzach is proactive confidence that God is giving me the strength to be successful.

On the one hand the sages say that someone who wants to be wise, he should travel South. Apparently in Eilat one can become the most wise. When Abraham reaches the end of the South, he suddenly arrives at netzach. So we have here 3 sefirot in Abraham’s travels south: wisdom, loving-kindness, and eternity (חכמה חסד נצח), they make up the right axis of the sefirot. So these are all revealed as Abraham goes south and strengthens in his loving-kindness and his love, giving him more and more confidence to act in reality, to change reality.

What is this right axis of the sefirot? In Kabbalah it says that the right axis is like water that travels from a high to a low place. The left axis is fire, and the middle axis is air.

What happens when one travels to the south. In the Torah when the borders of the land of Israel go from north to south, it is described as the “border descends” (וירד הגבול), that is how Rashi explains this phrase. So the orientation of the Torah is exactly how people draw maps today. Who said that you have to draw that the north is up and the south is down, but somehow this is how things were accepted. The asmachta, source, that this is correct comes from this phrase in the Torah. In the Torah this phrase appears 3 times, then in Joshua this phrase appears another 3 times, again, each time from north to south.

There is a drash (homiletic commentary)—and this is the main thing we’d like to develop today, because we are no in the southernmost part of the land of Israel where loving-kindness becomes truth—that “the border descends” means that we have to remove borders (להוריד גבולות). There are borders set up between people, one is from this minhag, the other from the other, one is more frum, the other is less. There are borders. The more we travel south, the more we have to remove these barriers between people, until you reach Eilat and then there are no longer any barriers. But, if you go passed Eilat, you end up, like Abraham in the parashah, in Egypt. You remove barriers to the max, but if you continue, you come to the greatest and most constrictive barrier on the psyche: Egypt. You enter some jail, Egypt, the exile that is the archetypal exile of all exiles. Since Abraham is going south, God wants to show him that it’s very good that he’s going south and increasing his love. Love removes barriers, and so does joy. These two faculties, powers of the psyche have the power to remove barriers. If people are very happy and if they really love each other, then there are no barriers. Except that there is a point where you cross the border of removing borders. When God created the world He used the Name Shakai, which means that there is a barrier. He didn’t let the world expand too much, because that too would be destructive. You might think that it’s good to just remove more and more barriers, but then you suddenly find yourself in the worst kind of barrier.

Afterwards it says, ויעל אברם ממצרים, Abraham ascended from Egypt. This is a prelude to the holy Name, יהוה אשר אהיה with which Jacob's descendants left Egypt and returned to the land of Israel. Abraham travelled south and then to test him, God made a famine in the land, to show what happens if you go too far south—you end up in Egypt. Actually, with this verse, ויעל אברם, Rashi tells us the first time that the map's orientation should be with the north being on top.

So we have to understand what the difference between removing barriers, a good thing, and the type of border that should not be removed but should be retained, the borders of the land of Israel for instance.

Earlier we mentioned the Song of Songs, the love song between the Jewish people and the Almighty. In the parashah the Torah tells us about Abraham's first son, Yishma'el about whom Abraham says, לו ישמעאל יהיה לפניך, Would it be that Yishma'el would live before you. But, Sarah told him that this was too much. You should cast Hagar and her son away from our household. This was a difficult test for Abraham, because at first he was "Peace Now." He wanted to love everyone. But, as much as he enjoyed removing borders and barriers, these should only be the barriers between Jews, there should be no barriers between Jews. But, until the coming of Mashiach, there cannot yet be a connection with the non-Jews, because in the meantime, the Jewish people, in order to be a light unto the nations, we have to be separate. Who makes sure we stay separated? The mother. The mother is who defines our being Jewish. And, Sarah, our first Patriarch, Abraham who came to teach the entire world to believe in one God, she told him that Yishmael cannot live with them. Since it was difficult for him to follow her, God had to appear to Abraham and tell him to listen to her. From here we learn that Sarah has a higher degree of prophecy than Abraham.

Now we said that barriers are removed using joy and love in the soul. When a person has great joy, like when he is at his son's wedding, even if his enemy will suddenly appear, he will go and hug him. Because joy has the power to nullify even hatred, all the more so when there is simply no connection between two people. So one needs a lot of joy and a lot of love. That is what happens when we go south. The more a person goes south and adds wisdom, the more he has selflessness, bitul. The more a person is nullified, the more free he feels and the more joyful he becomes. When these two, wisdom and joy unify that is called the unification of אבא ואמא עילאין.

Now let's just complete this part and then break for more music.

We mentioned the customary map orientation with the north on top and the south on the bottom. So to go from north to south, that is considered descent. But, if we said earlier that the south is chesed, then chesed is the right. There is another way to draw the map. The east is where the sun rises, when a person is looking to the East, his front is to the East, his back to the West, his right to the South and his left to the North. This is another way to orient the map. The Torah's first letter, the bet, has lines to all the sides, but to the North. Only the Mashiach will close the North side, which is alluded to in the word, לסרבה המשרה, a phrase said about the Mashiach, and the square mem, the final mem, alludes to the Mashiach closing the North face of the Torah's first bet. "Northerly" (צפוני) is one of the names of the evil inclination in the Torah.

So there is this other possible orientation. According to this orientation, Abraham is constantly travelling to the right. Indeed it says that whenever a person reaches a crossroads, he should always turn to the right. The right corresponds to loving-kindness, to the south like in the word Teiman (תימנה), which comes from the word "right." But there is another explanation. It is said that "South" (דרום) means דר ברומו של עולם, dwells on the top of the world. So when Abraham is travelling to the south, he is actually constantly ascending, going higher and higher, because he is travelling towards the Infinite light, more and more infinity. More heavens and more the heavens of the heavens. Given this explanation, then the map completely reverses, the South goes on top. But, to complete this, we need another orientation, whereby going to the South means going to the left. Where do we see this? When a Jew enters the Holy Temple. Where did the sages learn that one who wants to grow wise should travel to the south? They learn this from the entrance of the Temple. When a person entered the Temple he entered from the east to the west. The Holy of Holies is at the Westward end of the Temple. There are steps leading from East to West. When you enter the Holy, what is on the left? When you walk from East to West, your left is to the South. So you enter the Holy (and there is no greater orientation for the Jewish mind than how things are in the Temple) and on the left you see the Menorah and on the right you have the Table for Showbread. The Table symbolizes wealth while the Menorah symbolizes wisdom. So one who wants to grow wise should turn to the left, to the Menorah, which is to the south. If one wants to grow wealthy he should turn right to the table of Showbread. If the Temple is your world-map, then for you the South is to the left. Indeed, Abraham called the Temple mountain a mountain, אברהם קראו הר. So on the one hand south represents descent it also represents ascent, and just as it is to the right it is also to the left.

In the psyche, South that is to the right, that is love, חסד. Love of the Jewish people, love of the Torah, love of God. If travelling to the South is an ascent, ascending higher and higher to the heavens, then this is a movement towards nullifying oneself before God. Abraham is the one who teaches the world how to nullify oneself. If travelling to the South, to Eilat is going to the left, then just as much as Abraham is loving-kindness, he is balanced by his fear, his left side—just like a bird needs two wings to fly. There is something in Eilat that as much as barriers are removed, there is a final barrier that ensures that there is no shattering. When you descend, that is becoming one with confidence, like Abraham who constantly has to strengthen himself in feeling his mission from God. Every Jew should have the same experience, knowing that this is what God wants from me, and this my purpose in life.

So far we have seen how travelling south requires removing barriers, but not too many until it becomes Egypt. We also saw how the two faculties, joy and love are what remove the barriers. There are many explanations in Chassidut explaining how joy brings about unity. We are just coming out of the holiday of Sukot, when we take the Four Species and each of the species a different form of unity, and together they are a higher unity even. When we take these species together, we are commanded to be joyful before God. So there is a strong connection between joy and unity.

There is an idiom in Chassidut that says that not only does ascent follow descent, sometimes descent is what causes an ascent that follows. The verse, *אם אסק שמים שם אתה*, *ואציעה שאול הנך*, which hints at this.

So what sometimes seems to be a descent is actually an ascent and vice versa. This is especially felt in Eilat. Lechaim lechaim.

Let's continue to talk about Eilat. Who built Eilat? It says in the Tanach that this was Uziyahu the king, from the house of David. It says that he built Eilat and he returned it to Judah after the king passed away, *אחרי שכב המלך עם אבותיו*, referring to his father King Amatzyah (Uziyahu became king even during his father's life).

We said earlier that the border as it descends south, it also refers to kingdom. Abraham equals the "image of God" (*בצלם אלקים*). God told Adam to be fruitful and multiply and fill the land and conquer it, and rule (*רדו*). So this word *רדו*, to descend also means to rule. This is the destiny of mankind, to rule reality. The eternal king is David. So the border descending, by the border descending, if this is done the right way, removing barriers within the Jewish people, we merit kingship. We learn this from King Saul. About him, God said, *זה יעצור בעמי*, he will unite my people. The Rambam writes that the king's duty is to unite the people, to connect them. How does he do this? By removing barriers between the different Jews. The king that we are waiting for is one who will unite all the Jews, like King David. The Mashiach like him will rule over all the tribes of Israel. Now there is this king Uziyahu who builds this city. He is also known as Azaryah, or Azaryahu. He is better known though as Uziyhau. Both names begin with "boldness" *עו*. To build Eilat, one needs boldness, the boldness to recognize that everything is by God's help.

This year, 5774, *תשע"ד*, needs to be built. To build something, you first have to understand it. One of the signs of this year is "holy boldness" (*עזות דקדושה*). And we need this holy boldness to construct the kingdom. It says that kingdom is built from the *gevurot*, from the judgments of the left side. There is holy boldness and there is profane and negative boldness. Even Uziyahu himself, at the end of his life thought that he could be like the High Priest—he entered the holy in the Temple and wanted to bring incense onto the golden altar. But, as a result he was afflicted with leprosy on his forehead. When he walked into the holy, the High Priest tried to prevent him from doing this. His name was Azaryahu. So the king who had the same name wanted to replace the High Priest by the same name. We all know the song about how he built towers in Jerusalem and in the desert around Jerusalem, and he dug many water holes. But, at the end of his life, he went a little crazy, because he shifted from holy boldness to defiled boldness and the leprosy "shone" on his forehead. The place that boldness appears in the body is on the forehead. That is why the leprosy afflicted him there. In any case, from him we learn how to build this city: how to rectify it, both physical (to make it larger and better) and more importantly spiritually. This is an original Jewish city and thus has to be built his holy boldness. The verse continues, "he built Eilat and he returned it to the kingdom of Judah." Which also means that he returned all the people of Eilat to Yehudah, to

acknowledge God, to thank God for all His goodness, to believe in Divine Providence, to believe in the God of Abraham.

Afterwards it says that there was a non-Jewish king, during the time of Uziyahu's grandson, who conquered Eilat and exiled all the Jews from the city. He brought Edomites (or Arramites) in their place. His name was Ratzin the king of Aram. Apparently, he was very serious (רציני, like רציני). How was he able to do this? Because the king of Yehudah at the time was Achaz. He was according to some opinions the worst king of all, and his wickedness was that he closed the Talmudei Torah, schools of Torah study. So much so that Isaiah the prophet had to teach children in hiding. What we see is that for the non-Jews to conquer this city, there had to be a Ministry of Education that was against Torah. In any case, when we want to rebuild Eilat, we have to have holy boldness, like the sign of this year.

We said earlier that in the Tanach even before the story about Uziyahu, Eilat in the Torah is mentioned together with Etziyon Gever. They are usually mentioned together. This is where ships were built to travel to Tarshish to buy and sell gold. Even though the sages say that if one wants to grow rich one should go to the north, still, the south is connected to the north and in Eilat, this southernmost point, there is a place to travel even further south to Tarshish and to grow wealthy. This wealth has to do with the wisdom of how to build ships. A ship is like a plane. It travels the seas like a plane travels the skies. Perhaps even the Mashiach can be brought from Eilat.

What can we learn from the fact that Eilat is connected to Etziyon Gever. We said that in the Pentateuch these two places are mentioned together. But, there is one place where Etziyon Gever is mentioned by itself without Eilat. This is in parashat Masei where the 42 journeys of the people through the desert are enumerated. It says in Chassidut that every Jew in his life goes through 42 journeys. Just like there are reincarnations (whereby a soul return to the world to fix things it did not in the previous lifetime), there are journeys through life. By Abraham, these journeys are all to the south, to Eilat. In one of these journeys it says, but Eilat to journey no is There. ויסעו מעברונה ויהנו בעציון גבר. there that have should we meditation a is there So .it with together goes always which Gever Etziyon place this is there Kadesh .Eilat through passes which Kadesh to Evrona from journey a ,life in through go to have all we that journey is (עברות) "transgression" means it that is explanation One ?to refer Evrona does What .holiness course of is). In between them is Eilat, or Etziyon Gever. So Eilat is the very best place to do teshuvah. Teshuvah is between sins and between being holy. What does this name עציון גבר, Etziyon Gever refer to? Etziyon means "advice," or "contemplation" (עצה). Etziyon Gever therefore simply suggests that your advice is that you should overcome (להתגבר). The previous Rebbe said that the Tanya is like a book of advice regarding the psyche. The best advice is simply to "overcome" to restrain yourself. Reveal the manhood in you, which is the power to restrain yourself. With this power you will exit Evrona (the sins) and eventually find your way to Kadesh (holiness).

There is a verse in Proverbs related to this name, Etziyon Gever. This verse is עצה עיניו רעה. לחשוב תהפוכות כורת שפתיו כלה רעה. This verse is literally understood to be about someone wicked. עצה עיניו, has a few different impertations. One is that the it is like winking with your eye. Rashi brings this as a second option. Rashi's first option is that this means

“shutting one’s eyes.” Or it might be that one is winking with one’s eyes, as we said. Then כרת שפתי means someone who is talking too much. And then בלה רעה, one stops doing evil.

The commentaries say this verse alludes to the three garments of the soul. According to Chassidut we can transform this into a very positive verse.

Let’s begin with the end, וכלה רעה can mean “evil is finished,” and the verse describes how to get rid of evil in the world. To achieve this we first have to be Etizyon Gever. To restrain oneself. The continuation of the verse is that one gets rid of evil by thinking about revolutions. What revolutions? Creating a revolution in the land. The Alter Rebbe says that in order to build a building, one has to capture the walls from the bottom. So to create a positive revolution, לחשוב תהפוכות, in the land of Israel, one has to some special piece of advice—which is to think about revolutions. And then one needs to be כורת שפתי, which means to speak with holy boldness. How do we know that כורת שפתי refers to speak with holy boldness.

We said that this year is not just דקדושה, it could also be a million other acronyms whose letters spell עד. What is the first time in the Torah that these letters appear together. We find this in parashat Lech Lecha, connecting us with the time (living with the times). It says, וינגע ה' את פרעה נגעים גדולים ואת ביתו על דבר שרי אשת אברהם. This is a tremendous chidush that until this point in parashat Lech Lecha there is not place that the acronym appears. Abraham would never have asked Sarah to sacrifice herself, if he didn’t know that she would come out victorious, he wouldn’t have asked him to stop. Sarah had an angel and whenever she told him to strike Pharaoh or someone else. “About” על דבר is equal to 306, אשה, or women.

Now the letters עד also mean “witness.” We cannot accept only one witness.

In parashat Vayeira, this phrase, על דבר, appears a second time. This time it is Avimelech the King of the Philistines that wants to take Sarah (like Pharaoh). It says, כי עצר עזר ה' בעד כל רחם לבית אבימלך על דבר שרה אשת אברהם. So we see that עד (5774) should be a year of...

For this to happen, our spokespeople should be women. Who respects the land of Israel the most? The daughters of Tzlofchad. The boldest speaker apart from them is the first Jewish woman, Sarah, who twice, once with Pharaoh and once with Avimelech, commands the angel boldly to strike them.

Now, Sarah didn’t speak to Pharaoh, she spoke to the angels, similar to how the verse we mentioned earlier says, כרת שפתי, holding one’s lips and not saying anything. Now, we said that עזין גבר is alluded to in the verse, עצה עיני לחשוב תהפוכות. There is another principle in halachah that the “lower is stronger” (תתאה גבר). So any revolution has to start from the lowest, which is Eilat. To really change our state, we have to know that there is a difference between Jews and non-Jews. A non Jew can live here under certain circumstances, but it can’t be that he take our land away from us.

Let’s end with something more. Since Eilat is between Evrona and Kadesh, which journey is it? Each of the 42 journeys corresponds to one of the 42 letters of the Name of 42 letters. Counting we see that of the 42 journeys, the 42 journeys of every Jew in his life, this was the 32nd journey, where 32 equals “heart.” Now Abraham constantly

travelled to the south to identify more and more with his love for every Jew. Now in the entire Pentateuch the root "love" appears exactly 42 times, and these 42 instances of this root correspond to the 42 journeys. Each journey is another love and another love that one brings into the world. So Etziyon Gever is the 32nd time. And what is the 42nd instance of love? It is in the verse that follows the second parashah of Shema in Deuteronomy, where it says that we should follow God's example, to love God, to walk in his ways, and to cling to him." The Alter Rebbe says that from this verse we learn how to make something into love. We learn that love is "made," through meditation. Love is a psychological power, it not only awakens spontaneously but it can also be created. So we see that Eilat is connected with fostering, making love, through meditation. This type of love then brings me to follow God's path: just as he is compassionate, you should be compassionate, etc. We should adopt all of God's traits and mimic him and cling to him. Can one cling to God? How can one cling to the Shechinah? Rather one should cling to scholars of Torah, talmidei Chachamim. This means that every Jew should find the tzadik, the scholar of the generation, to find the Rebbe and to connect with him. What we learn from this is that Eilat is the best place to be a Chassid, because Eilat's special unique love is the love that requires us to first adopt God's character traits which then allows us to cling to our tzadik. The first tzadik was Abraham who travelled to the south and called upon all the people to believe in one God and to begin the revolution that began from below.

With this we will end and bless everyone that we merit all the special segulot of Eilat, the infinite love to bring all the world closer to God.