

## *Parashat Vayakhel 5784: Aliyah by Aliyah*

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֱלֹהֵ הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה הוִי' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָם (ויקהל לה, א)

First Reading: The Higher Will in the Jewish People

### The Innate Desire to Do God's Will

There is a *tzaddik* that we enjoy mentioning, Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa. The volume containing his teachings is known as *Kol Simchah* (since his full name is Simchah Bunim), and on our *parashah* he draws from the Midrash on a verse from the Song of Songs, "You, my beloved, are beautiful as Tirtzah."<sup>1</sup> The Midrash explains this in a manner this verse reflects a pillar of Chasidic thought that is prominent in the schools of Peshischa and his followers, such as Izhbitza.

The verse's plain meaning is a reference to Tirtzah, which is both a city and the name of one of the daughters of Tzelofchad. However, the Midrash explains that "Tirtzah" (תִּרְצָה) also stems from the root meaning "to want" (לְרַצוֹת). Rebbe Simchah Bunim thus explains that a Jew truly and purely wants to do God's will, which is why God helps him by aligning his will with His own. And thus, the person knows from himself, from his own heart and being, what it is that God wants.

### The Special Role of a Jewish Soul

How does Rebbe Bunim connect this teaching to the *parashah*? From this verse "these are the things that *Havayah* has commanded, to do them" our sages learn of the 39 categories of work that are prohibited on Shabbat. The two words, "And these are the things," are analyzed in the following manner. The value of "these" (אֵלֶּה) is 36. To this are added 2 more, corresponding to "the things" (הַדְּבָרִים) and the definite article in "the things" (הַדְּבָרִים) adds 1 more. Altogether we arrived at 39.

Rebbe Bunim asks: the verse is written in the prescriptive, "the things that *Havayah* has commanded to do them," how is it that the sages glean the 39 prohibited categories from it. He answers that, regardless of the gravity of performing a prohibited category of work on Shabbat prohibitions of Shabbos, there are extraordinary situations in which one is required to indeed perform these prohibited actions on Shabbat.

Shabbat is equal in importance to the entire Torah, and one who is an apostate regarding Shabbat is likened to an apostate regarding idolatry. Idolatry is always prohibited, even if the situation is dire and would be a direct danger to one's life. Yet, regarding Shabbat

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<sup>1</sup> Song of Songs 6:4.

there is a stipulation that life-threatening situations “mortal danger suspends the prohibitions of Shabbat.”

This is one of the most important applications of the Torah’s principle that the commandments are a source of life and not of death, “and you shall live in them and not to die from them,” because Shabbat is meant to be a source of life. Not only is this true in the case of an individual, today it is also very relevant to the communal sphere. The name of our *parashah* stems from the first word, “He [Moses] congregated [or gathered the people]” (ויקהל) and the Jewish congregation nowadays requires us to consider the public realm including laws related to running an entire country’s infrastructure together with an army and other essential services required on Shabbat.

We Are All Shluchim

What is the main idea here? The fact that life-threatening situations suspend the prohibitions of Shabbat reveals that the Jewish people precede the Torah and its commandments. Shabbat is equated with the entire Torah. In addition, “all [the sages] agree that the Torah was given on a Shabbat.” Nonetheless, the “original thought regarding the Jewish people precedes everything,” even the Torah. The “original thought about the Jewish people” also refers to their purpose and mission. God foresaw the souls which would descend into the world, each of which is “literally, a part of God” to create a dwelling place below for God. We are all Shluchim, or emissaries, here, and the Torah is meant to help us fulfill our mission. That is why when a Jew dedicates himself or herself to God’s will, they simply and purely know from themselves what God really wants, even if it is not written in the Torah. They know when to keep the Torah exactly as it is written, and when to pursue something that is not written explicitly.

It is in this vein that Rebbe Bunim explains the verse, “And of the sons of Issachar, there were those who know to comprehend the times, knowing what Israel should do.”<sup>2</sup> The Tribe of Issachar was able to sense the right timing for pursuing a particular course of action and when to pursue something else.

The Zohar says something similar regarding the punctuative halt (*psik ta’ama*) that separates the two subject and the verb in the commandments such as “You shall not murder.” Normally, the instruction of this verse is that murder is prohibited. However, there are times when the punctuative halt instructs us to kill, for instance when the high court, the Sanhedrin, is required to administer capital punishment to a murderer.

Rebbe Bunim does not explicitly state this, but we can say that the same understanding hinges on the language of our verse “These are the things that Havayah commanded to do them.” Moses’ special level of prophecy is identified by the phrase, “this is the thing that Havayah commanded” (זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְיָ הוֹהוּ). Here in our verse, we find the same phrase,

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Chronicles 12:33.

set in the plural, “the things.” Thus, in all that God commands us to do, there are “things” (הדברים), there is a dichotomy. Sometimes, they must be performed and sometimes they should not be performed, and the Jew knows from his heart when to act or not to act. This is an intuition we receive from Moses himself, as it says, “Not so My servant, Moses,” where “Not so” is the two words for no and yes (לאן). The knowledge of when “not” (no) to act this way, and when to act exactly “so” (yes) is from Moses. A beautiful allusion to this can be found in the fact that the words, “These are the things that *Havayah* commanded to do” (אלה הדברים אשר צוה י-הוה לעשת) are equal to 5 times the value of “Moses” (משה). The final word in the verse is “them” (אתם) whose letter permute to spell the word “truth” (אמת), the secret of “Moses is true, and his Torah is true”).

In addition, the words, “the things” (הדברים), in the plural, refers to those things that were commanded explicitly as well as those known only in the Jewish heart.

#### The Secret of Being a King

“And Moshe gathered” (ויקהל משה) and the words, “You are beautiful, my beloved” (יפה את) have the same value. Their value is also the same as “kingdom” (מלכות), or 496. Thus, it is the king of Israel that has the most intuition regarding what God’s will is. This allows the king to wage a voluntary war, one that he decides upon based on his own will, even if there is no Torah imperative to fight this war. He can wage war to expand the territorial boundaries of holiness, even to increase his own fame. When his heart tells him to, he is able to call upon the Jewish people to take risks in all these matters, even to suspend their learning of Torah.

To conclude, let us mention that the next word, “my beloved” (רעיתי) is equal to 2 times the value of “Moses” (משה). Thus, the entire first verse is equivalent to “Moses congregated Moses Moses,” everything is about Moses.

(from a shiur given on 25 Adar 5782)

וְכָל-אִשָּׁה תְּכַמֵּת-לֵב בְּיָדֶיהָ טָווּ (ויקהל לה, ביה)  
Second Reading: The Wisdom of Craftsmanship

#### The Wisdom of Action

After detailing the components of the contribution for the Tabernacle, the ultimate purpose is expressed (in the tenth verse, “The tenth shall be holy”<sup>3</sup>), “And let every wise-hearted among you come and make all that God has commanded.”<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Moshe of

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<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 27:32. According to the *Mei HaShilo'ach*, the essential secret of every parashah is to be found in its ninth verse (see *Mei HaShilo'ach Balak, s.v. Vayomer Bilam* and *Devarim, s.v. Eileh HaDevarim*), but on the revealed plane, the essential verse is the tenth.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 35:10.

Kobrin explained: “It is not intellectualism that is the essence of wisdom, but rather coming and practically doing all that God has commanded.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, the wisdom of the heart is not abstract intellect, but the sense needed to come and actually “do all that God has commanded.”

The wisdom here is expressed specifically through action, as in the verse, “With wisdom You have made them all.”<sup>6</sup> Also, as taught by the Baal Shem Tov,<sup>7</sup> on the verse, “Whatever your hand endeavors to do with your strength, do it,”<sup>8</sup> meaning that you should act with the power (כח) of *mah* (מה), which together spell the word “wisdom” (חכמה). We are required to connect action and thought, or the *sefirot* of kingdom (corresponding with action) and wisdom (corresponding with thought). The unification of kingdom and wisdom is alluded to at the end of the verse that serves as a source for the concept of Four Worlds, “All that I have called by Name and to which My honor, has been created, has been formed, has even been made” (כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתי ויצרתי אף עשיתי) work is the secret of “I have also made it.”<sup>9</sup> All the levels of creation are to be found in the end within the World of Action, the *sefirah* of kingdom, where everything is “made.”<sup>10</sup>

This practical wisdom, the wisdom of the heart expressed through the artistry of the hands, is feminine wisdom, the wisdom of kingdom, as described later in the portion, “And every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands... and all the women whose heart stirred them in wisdom spun the goats' [hair].”<sup>11</sup> In the way of numerical allusion, “the work of the hand” (מלאכת יד)—which has the same numerical value as “*halachah* in practice” (הלכה למעשה), i.e., the practical implementation of the Torah’s wisdom—also has the same numerical value as the idiom “true judgment” (דין אמת).<sup>12</sup>

Even among the men working on the construction of the Tabernacle, Bezalel and Aholiav to name the most important, there is a feminine aspect, since the entire Tabernacle is a type of “feminine kingdom.” The Tabernacle and later the Temple are God’s “house,” and we know that “His house” refers to one’s wife,<sup>13</sup> since its purpose is to provide a place for the indwelling of the Divine Presence. In the Tabernacle and the Temple, we find the High Priest, adorned magnificently and managing it with the finesse of an experienced homemaker.

<sup>5</sup>. *Torat Avot* on *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup>. Psalms 104:24.

<sup>7</sup>. See *Ba'al Shem Tov Al HaTorah* on Genesis 179-183. *Keter Shem Tov* (Kehot Edition), §49, §91, and more.

<sup>8</sup>. Ecclesiastes 9:10.

<sup>9</sup>. Isaiah 43:7.

<sup>10</sup>. *Likkutei Torah*, Balak 67d.

<sup>11</sup>. Exodus 35:25-26.

<sup>12</sup>. Mishnah *Pe'ah* 8:9.

<sup>13</sup>. *Ibid*. *Yoma* 1:1.

Indeed, the source and inspiration for this wisdom is the soul of Moses. Moses' root is in supernal wisdom, the *sefirah* whose inner essence is an absolute nullification to performing "all that God has commanded" (thanks to the clarity emanating from Moses' special level of prophecy, "This is the thing that God has commanded, saying..."<sup>14</sup>). Yet Moses is an applied healer<sup>15</sup> who takes all the wisdom and brings it down to be implemented in practice, through the 613 commandments of the Torah. Indeed, 613 is the value of Moses' best-known connotation, "Moses our teacher" (מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ). Moses receives the ability to take from wisdom and to bring it to kingdom, into practical use, from the merit of Joseph—the archetypal soul of foundation—whose bones Moses carried with him from Egypt and through the wilderness.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, both Joseph and Moses are hinted at here in the verse: the value of "Joseph" (יֹסֵף) is the same as "And every wise-hearted [individual]" (וְכָל חָכֵם לֵב). Moses is hinted to in a more complex way. We recently discussed<sup>17</sup> the three roots of Moses' soul, good, nothingness, and Abel. These three roots appear in the verse as follows.

The value of the entire verse, "And every wise-hearted among you will come and make all that God has commanded" (וְכָל חָכֵם לֵב בָּכֶם יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְיָ), 1708 is a product of 28, the value of "power" (כֹּחַ) times "nothingness" (אֵין), the Divine power of "wisdom emerges from nothingness"<sup>18</sup> (וְהַחֲכִמָּה מֵאֵין תִּמְצֵא). When a person says, "I have no power [of my own]" (אֵין כֹּחַ), that is the gateway to receiving the Divine power of nothingness, which is akin to saying, "I have power only from God."

The value of just the words "And every wise-hearted among you will come and make" is 17, the value of "good" (טוֹב) times "Abel" (הַבֵּל)! More directly, the sum of every other word in the verse, "And every... hearted... will come... all... Havayah (וְכָל חָכֵם לֵב בָּכֶם יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֵת) is 3 times "Moses" (מֹשֶׁה). The sum of every other letter — וְכָל חָכֵם לֵב בָּכֶם יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ — is 690, 2 times "Moses" (מֹשֶׁה), 345.

#### Artistic Beauty and the Golden Ratio

The wisdom that is expressed in the beauty of handiwork is the secret of the Golden Ratio, the mathematical proportion that governs the beauty of Creation. We also identify it as the secret of the verse, "God gives beauty to Japheth, and he will dwell in the tents of Shem."<sup>19</sup> One of the allusions to the Golden Ratio can be found in the idiom "wise-hearted" (חָכֵם לֵב), whose value is 100. The value of the initial letters of the two words that

<sup>14</sup>. An expression that appears for the first time in our parashah, Exodus 35:4.

<sup>15</sup>. See Migdal Oz, *Sha'ar Hama'aseh*, paragraph 73, footnote 8.

<sup>16</sup>. Exodus 13:19.

<sup>17</sup>. Class from Shabbat Tetzaveh, printed in Nifla'ot Ki Tissa.

<sup>18</sup>. Job 28:12.

<sup>19</sup>. Genesis 9:27.

make up this idiom (הל), 38 and the remaining letters (כסב), 62, is the closest division of 100 into integers according to the Golden Ratio.

However, since the next word “among you” (בְּכֵם) also equals 62, this means that the sum of all three words, “wise-hearted among you” (חֲכָמִים לִבְכֵם), will be 162, the next number after 100 in the Additive Series in which 38 and 62 appear.

The full Additive Series is thus: 6, 4, 10, 14, 24, 38, 62, 100, 162, ...

They Will Come and They Will Make

The most unique expression in the verse is “they will come and they will make” (וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ). An almost identical phrase appears regarding the construction of the Second Temple, “they came and made”<sup>20</sup> (וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ).

Why is it necessary to come before acting? Simply put, one could imagine the place of construction of the Tabernacle (or the Temple) as a construction site to which one must arrive and perform the necessary work. But on a deeper level, the coming is the preparation for the correct action:

The Baal Shem Tov expounds<sup>21</sup> on the verse “The wise-hearted will take commandments”<sup>22</sup> (חֲכָמִים לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת). The “wise-hearted”—as discussed here—is someone who knows how to take two aspects in every commandment he performs: the intention and the action. Thus, in every act, the wise-hearted person performs unifications—the service of God whose purpose is “to unify the Holy Blessed One and His Shechinah in the lower realms.”<sup>23</sup> The verb, “they will come” is then related to coupling and unification and it is what needs to precede the action itself.

Taking action, in and of itself, belongs to a lower realm, as it is associated with kingdom. But because of the act of first “coming,” i.e., “they will come and make,” it becomes a vessel to reveal the secret of the supernal World of Action. What is so special about “coming” and then “making?” We can get a hint of the answer by looking at the value of this phrase, “they will come, and they will make” (וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ). Its numerical value is 411, the same as “something from nothing” (יֵשׁ מֵאֵין). Usually, when something is made (i.e., in the lower realm of kingdom, the mundane World of Action), it is an act of making “something from something”; only the form shaping the material is added or changed. But this special phrase causes the level of the act to completely change and become, like the Creation, an act of “something from nothing.” 411 is also the value of “chaos” (תְּהוֹ). This adds to our

<sup>20</sup>. Hagai 1:14. The sum of the two phrases together, “they will come and make” (וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ) and “they came and made” (וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ) is 828, or 4 times “light” (אור). 828 is also the value of “Tzofnat Pa’ane’ach” (צִפְנַת פְּעִנַח), the name that Pharaoh gave Joseph after he made him viceroy (see Genesis 41:45).

<sup>21</sup>. *Keter Shem Tov* (Kehot Edition) §9a.

<sup>22</sup>. Proverbs 10:8.

<sup>23</sup>. *Tanya* chapter 10 (following the Introduction to Tikunei Zohar).

understanding that the building and making of the Tabernacle and its vessels, etc. introduced the supernal lights of Chaos (אורות דתהו) into the World of Action, thereby leading to a level of supreme level of rectification. This state is known as, “light of chaos in rectified vessel” (אורות דתהו בכלים דתקון).

(From a class given on 19 Adar 5782)

וְהָשִׁיב מִחֲשָׁבֶת לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּזָהָב וּבַכֶּסֶף וּבַנְּחֹשֶׁת (ויקהל לה, לב)

Third Reading: Good, Pleasant, and Useful

Why Was Gold Created?

The Torah portion of *Pekudei* (next week's *parashah*) enumerates all the weights of all the materials that were donated for the work of the Tabernacle.<sup>24</sup> The counting begins with the weight of the gold, the weight of the silver, and the weight of the copper.

However, there is a very important difference that many commentators point out. There is a striking distinction between gold, silver, and copper: for the silver and copper, it is written what the material weighed was used for. But regarding gold, initially, only the weight of the material is written, but its use is missing. What is the difference?

It is written<sup>25</sup> that gold was created solely for use in of the Temple, unlike silver and copper. Silver and copper belong to this world, and it is permissible for everyone to use silver and copper for their own needs, for mundane purposes. From the outset, however, we should use everything that God gives us for the sake of heaven, so that all mundane things will be pure with the purity of the sacred. Gold, however, is strictly sacred. It was not fitting to create gold at all. It was created for the sake of the Temple.

According to this understanding, there is no need to write what purpose gold serves, because it is obvious that gold and the Temple are one and the same. It is not even for a particular purpose, but rather, a purpose in and of itself. Do we need silver in the Temple? In the days of King Solomon, who built the Temple in Jerusalem, a house for eternity, silver was considered worthless. So too, in the Tabernacle (sometimes referred to as “the Temple”), there is a need to justify the use of silver and copper. But gold needs no justification.

<sup>24</sup>. Exodus 38:24-31.

<sup>25</sup>. *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1.

Gold Expresses “the Nature of the Good is To Do Good”

In the first account of Creation, it was written that everything that God created for His glory was good. From the verse, “God saw the light, that it was good”<sup>26</sup> until the conclusion, “God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”<sup>27</sup>

Afterward, in the second account of Creation, we find the good mentioned only in reference to gold, “And the gold of that land is good”<sup>28</sup> (וַיִּזְהַב הָאֶרֶץ הַהִוא טוֹב); this refers to the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is the place of gold, and the gold of the land is good. Gold is thus intrinsically good, good for the sake of the Temple which is itself an expression of the essence of goodness, the Holy Blessed One.

About the good there is a well-known aphorism, “the nature of the good is to do good” (טַבַּע הַטוֹב לַהֲיִטִּיב). God’s innate nature to do good is revealed in gold. From this we might say that every Jew is a “golden child.” How so? Jew comes from Judah the progenitor of King David. David (דָּוִד) has the same value as “gold” (זָהָב), which is attributed to the seven shades of gold in his beard.

Since gold is the good itself, it is affiliated with the Temple (and the Tabernacle), especially since the Temple is described as, “this good mountain and the Lebanon.”<sup>29</sup> So, since gold is so intrinsically connected with the Tabernacle, there is no need at all to think and specify what the gold is used for.

Good, Pleasant, and Useful

The fact that gold is described as good reminds us of a great principle from the Medieval sages, including the Maharsha and the Maharal, that there are three levels in the psyche known as, “good, pleasant, and useful” (טוֹב עֵרֶב מוֹעִיל). Their initials spell the word “taste,” or “reason” (טעם). These three levels of connection that we have to things in the world correspond to the intellect, the emotions, and the habits.

The good (טוב) corresponds to our intellect, and since we have associated gold with the good, it corresponds with gold as well. The acronym for the intellectual powers is *chabad* and so someone who is connected to Chabad is golden. In fact, the acronym Chabad (חב"ד) also has the same value as “gold” (זהב).

Since gold corresponds to the good and to the intellectual powers, we can continue the parallel and state that someone who has an overflowing heart is associated with silver. In Hebrew, “silver” (כֶּסֶף) means longing, love, and attraction (כַּסּוּפִים). Since the inner experiences of the emotional faculties—love, awe, and compassion—correspond to silver,

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<sup>26</sup>. Genesis 1:4.

<sup>27</sup>. Ibid. 1:31.

<sup>28</sup>. Ibid. 2:12.

<sup>29</sup>. Deuteronomy 3:25.



they also correspond with that which is pleasant (עֵרֶב), which tells us that attraction in the heart is an attraction and longing to that which is pleasant.

Useful (מוֹעִיל) means something that is beneficial or pragmatic. Once again, continuing the parallel, we find that that which is “useful” corresponds with copper. Copper thus corresponds to the habitual faculties—victory, acknowledgment, and foundation. As we have seen, something that is useful (used in some sense) needs to be explicitly described as “useful for what...” It does not stand independently of the goal of its usefulness. Clearly then, the use of the copper brought for the Tabernacle needed to be accounted for. Otherwise, there is no justification for bringing copper to the Tabernacle and the Temple.

This is also true for silver which is “pleasant.” Being pleasant is not an intrinsic trait. Rather, we must indicate what is it pleasant to? To the tongue for instance, to our eyes, etc. Hence, silver too needed to be accounted for. But gold, from which the vessels in the inner Sanctuary were made—the Ark, the Table of Showbread, the Menorah—gold need not be mentioned at all. It is intrinsically good; it is the essence of the intellectual faculties.

The pleasant and the useful, which correspond to the emotional and habitual faculties, parallel the six days of Creation. Everything that God created, He also created “for His glory.” Until we reveal His glory in the world, however, much work is needed, a lot of world repair. But there is something that does not need repair. The Torah preceded the world by thousands of years. It is gold, “There is no good but Torah,” “For I have given you a good teaching.” Those thousands of years that the Torah, the intellectual faculties, preceded the world, need no detailed explanation their purpose. This is what it means to learn Torah for its own sake, the understanding that the Torah is for itself.

Certainly, we need to learn Torah to be able to fulfill the commandments. But learning Torah is, at its core, for its own sake. Torah is intrinsically good and needs nothing besides itself. This is the gold.

#### Unifying the People

From our learning in the past, we knew about these two models, the model of precious metals: gold, silver, and copper, and we knew the model of good, pleasant, and useful. But we did not know that they should be connected and the correspondence between them drawn. This idea was revealed in parashat Pekudei as an answer to the question of why the use made with gold is not specified.

Gold corresponds to the “good” and to the intellect (specifically to Torah) and therefore learning Torah does not need an additional motive, just as the good does not need to be pursued except for its own sake. This is what it means that the gold of the Land of Israel is good—the Torah of the Land of Israel is good for its own sake.

Silver corresponds to the pleasant and to our emotions. We should seek those emotions that are pleasant, to ourselves and to others. Most people in the world find silver pleasant.

Some might ask: why do I love silver? And think the answer is: because it is beneficial. But it is not just that it's beneficial. Even before it is beneficial it is pleasant.

Finally, copper corresponds to habits and to the useful. Only habits that are useful are worthwhile. Copper should be strong enough to hold us together.

#### Diversity

Still, there is a lingering question: why was not everything made of gold? It seems appropriate that in the Temple, everything should have been gold, including the sockets and the altar of burnt offering. Why the need for additional materials?

The Temple is meant to unite us—to create a “Union of Israel” where all of Israel would serve God together. First, all the people of Israel, and then “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”<sup>30</sup> The silver-like people with an emotional persona are needed. All shades, the entire congregation is needed. People who are still in gestation are needed. The habitual/behavioral persona like copper is likened to the development stage of gestation; the silver-persona, is likened to the suckling phase of life. Gold represents intellect and the stage of intellectual maturity in life. A person who is at this stage is independent.

As we have discussed many times, especially in the teaching of the soul, there are dependent people. Someone at the level of silver, and certainly someone at the level of copper, is dependent. But someone at the level of gold is self-aligned and not dependent on anyone.

The leader who is like gold, dependent on no human is still entirely dependent on God. As we will read in the Torah portion of Vayikra, “When a king sins” —who is a leader? One whom, “Havayah is his God,” or as the sages state, “One who has none above him but *Havayah* his God.” Every Jew has a spark of the Mashiach, the true leader, and so this king includes everyone from those who are gold-like to those who are copper-like. The letters of “king” (מֶלֶךְ) are the initials of “brain, heart, liver” (מח לב כבד). All the types are needed in the Tabernacle and all the types are part of the king.

#### The Nature of the Good

Everything, even silver, has a point of gold, and even copper has a point of gold. How do we see this? When we add the words in both models together, we have “gold-good” (זָהָב טוֹב), “silver-pleasant” (כֶּסֶף עֵרֵב), and “copper-useful” (נְחֹשֶׁת מוֹעִיל), their sum comes to 1377, which is divisible by the value of “good”—everything is included in good. Specifically, 1377 is the product of “good” and 81, where 81 is the value of the exalted “I am” (אֲנִי), the first word of the Ten Commandments, and thus, everything together amounts to “I am” times “good,” or, alternately, “I am” times “nature” (טִבַּע).

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<sup>30</sup>. Isaiah 56:7.

Which nature is this referring to? Earlier we mentioned that God’s intrinsic nature is good. So this product is “good” times “nature” referring to the Almighty’s essential good essence. He has no other designation besides being the essence of good. And “the nature of the good is to do good,” as in the verse, “God is good to all, and His compassion is over all His actions.”<sup>31</sup>

(from a class given on the 26<sup>th</sup> of First Adar, 5771)

לְחַבֵּר אֶת־הָאֱהָלָה לְהֵלֵת אֶחָד (ויקהל ל, יח)

#### Fourth Reading: Becoming One Through Love

Love Creates “Something from nothing”

At the beginning of the account of Creation, the Torah states, “These are the chronicles of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that *Havayah Elokim* made earth and heaven.” The sages interpret the word “when they were created” (בְּהִבְרָאָם) as a permutation of “with Abraham” (בְּאַבְרָהָם).

One way of understanding this teaching by the sages is that God created the heavens and the earth with Abraham, i.e., with loving-kindness and love, the attributes of which Abraham is an archetype. Many verses link Abraham to the attributes of loving-kindness and love, such as: “loving-kindness to Abraham,”<sup>32</sup> “Abraham, who loves Me.”<sup>33</sup> In addition, God uses “one” to describe Abraham and the numerical value of “one” (אחד) is 13, the same as “love” (אַהֲבָה), for instance, “Abraham was one”<sup>34</sup> and “As ‘one,’ I have called him.”<sup>35</sup> This means that Abraham is the one, the first to reveal the concept of love in the world and it is with his attribute of love that God creates.

It is not only the Creator that creates with the attribute of love. Every Jew is supposed to be a partner with the Almighty in the act of creation, and to truly create, thereby performing the commandment to resemble God: “Just as He is merciful, so too you be merciful, etc... Just as He creates worlds, so too you create worlds.”

What does it mean to create? It means to bring forth something from nothing (יש מאין)—creating something that is not in reality, or *creatio ex nihilo*. In Chassidic terminology, this is known as extracting something that is a state of “concealment in non-reality” (הַעֲלָם שְׂאִינוֹ) (בְּמַצְיָאוֹת). In contrast, there are also things that are in a state of “concealment within reality” (הַעֲלָם שֶׁשָּׁנוּ בְּמַצְיָאוֹת), which means that the object or concept already exists in reality and only

<sup>31</sup> Psalms 145:9.

<sup>32</sup> Micah 7:20.

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 41:8.

<sup>34</sup> Ezekiel 33:24.

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 51:2.

needs to be given form or developed. This is known in general Jewish philosophy as “something from something” (יש מישי).

Within the human soul, there are forces so deeply hidden that they are considered to be in a state of “nothingness” (אין), meaning they cannot be identified at all. If you were to try and identify these forces in a particular individual, you could not. No psychometric examination or talent-scouting assessment can reveal such a talent or potential that is considered “nothingness.” If an examination uncovers a specific talent in a person, it is because that talent is in a state of “concealment within reality.”

Even though they cannot be identified, it is certainly possible to reveal such forces and talents that are in a state of “concealment in non-reality.” To do so, you need to find enough love in the soul. With that love, it is possible to create and invent new things within the soul, even things that are in a state of “concealment in non-reality.” All of this depends, as mentioned, on the strength of love. Love (אהבה), as taught by Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, is the acronym for “the light of the Holy, Blessed One” (אור הקדוש) (ברוך הוא), the attribute of Abraham through which the world was created *ex nihilo*.

#### Love’s Purpose: Cleaving

Love has two natural qualities: attraction and lowliness. First and foremost, love is an attraction, a desire to cleave to one’s beloved. Love’s lowliness (שפלות) is illustrated by the willingness of the lover to descend to the place of the beloved to get closer to them. The goal of these two qualities is to create a state of cleaving and unity between the lover and the beloved.

These two qualities are found in water, which is why love is likened to water in Kabbalah. Water, like love, has a quality of adhesion, attraction—water molecules stick like glue one to another. In the soul, the quality of adhesion is expressed, as mentioned, in the ability to be attracted to another. But this nature of love also requires the second quality of love—lowliness.

In other words, for the quality of adhesion to operate in a person, one must diminish make oneself lowly. This second quality is seen in water’s nature to flow from a high place to a low one. Thus, in the psyche, “waters of love” (מי האהבה) refers to the love that flows and can connect even those who are at different levels (for instance a parent and a child, a teacher and his students, a rebbe and his *chasidim*, etc.), love easily flows from the lover, who might be higher, to the lower state of the beloved. Even the Almighty, for some reason, desires the lower. Moreover, out of His great love for the lower, He created the entire world, as the sages say, “The Holy Blessed One craved having a dwelling place below.” God yearns to descend and unite with the lowest place—the lowest of the low.

In summary, initially, love brings forth from potential to actual all the forces of the soul and ultimately binds everything together, making it one. Love is what brings the components of the Tabernacle together. It is love that, “connects the Tabernacle, making

it one”<sup>36</sup> (להבדיל את האהל להיות אחד). The Tabernacle symbolizes, on a small scale, all of Creation, all the systems in the soul and in the world in general. Love builds each and every component—for without love, none of the components of the Tabernacle would have been made and without love, no latent talent of the soul could be revealed—nothing would have come from potential to actual. And ultimately, all the parts connect into a single unified whole, just like water; the Tabernacle becomes one and all of reality becomes one.

(from *Otzar HaNefesh* vol. 2, pp. 118-120)

וַיַּעַשׂ בְּצִלְאֵל אֶת־הָאָרֶן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים (ויקהל ל, א)

### Fifth Reading: The Pleasure of Awe

The Rectification of Aaron

“And Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood.” The word “the ark” (הָאָרֶן), is spelled here without the letter *vav*, and thus can be permuted to spell Aaron (אֶהֱרֹן). The ark, the most sacred vessel in the entire Tabernacle, and subsequently the Temple, provides a rectification for Aaron who made the Golden Calf. He did not make it intentionally, but that’s how it turned out, yet the Torah explicitly states, “the calf that Aaron made.”<sup>37</sup> After the sin of the Golden Calf, one needed to pray for Aaron – Moses our teacher prayed fervently to atone for him (and it worked only partially).<sup>38</sup> Everything is related to Aaron and is rectified in the Ark.

The first words of the portion, “And Moses gathered,” are a rectification for “the people gathered against Aaron.” Is there another instance of this word, “gathered” (וַיִּקְהַל) in the Torah? There is one more: “Korach gathered all the congregation against them”<sup>39</sup> (וַיִּקְהַל הָעֵדָה). This is the dispute Korach and his assembly led against Moses and Aaron. This assembly is the exact opposite of the holy assembly.

Thus, there are three instances of “gathered” (וַיִּקְהַל) in the Torah: the first with the vocalization meaning, “they [the people] gathered” (וַיִּקְהַל) and then two times with the vocalization meaning, “he gathered” (וַיִּקְהַל). The first time, the people themselves gathered against Aaron and demanded that he respond to their will, and so it happened. He descended to the people, with self-sacrifice.

<sup>36</sup>. Exodus 36:18.

<sup>37</sup>. Ibid. 32:35.

<sup>38</sup>. Deuteronomy 9:20 and *Rashi loc. cit.*

<sup>39</sup>. Numbers 16:19.

Next, to rectify this, Moses also acted with self-sacrifice, gathered the people to correct the corruption. But then there is suddenly another downfall, the gathering of Korach and his assembly, which will only be rectified by the Mashiach.

At that time, even Korach will be rectified, as hinted to in the final letters of the phrase, “A *tzaddik* will flourish like a palm”<sup>40</sup> (צַדִּיק כַּתְמָר יִפְרֹחַ). Then truly it will be revealed that, “the entire congregation are holy, and God is in them.” Korach wanted to reveal that every Jew is like Moses, and so it will be in the future. Korach is from the soul root of Cain and Moses is from the soul root of Abel.<sup>41</sup> It is written<sup>42</sup> that today the Torah is from Abel’s side of reality and in the future, the Torah will be from Cain’s side—that is the Torah of Korach in which, “all the congregation are holy,” openly.

The three who gathered the congregation are thus the people [who gathered round Aaron], Moses, and Korach. The sum of their names (הַעַם מֹשֶׁה קֹרַח) is 768, or 3 times “Aaron” (אַהֲרֹן), meaning that Aaron is their average, and all the gatherings ultimately mean to rectify Aaron’s sin with the Golden Calf.

#### Moses Covered in Awe

After Betzalel made the ark of acacia wood, it is written that, “he overlaid it with pure gold inside and out.”<sup>43</sup> The ark itself is made of acacia wood and is overlaid with another ark made of gold inside and another ark made of gold outside.

Rabbi Chaim of Amdor says<sup>44</sup> that plain gold represents supreme awe. Gold is not love, because love is silver, yearnings. “The superiority of gold over silver”<sup>45</sup> refers to the superiority of awe over love. This type of awe is the awe of shame, the awe of Shabbat, the awe of the Holy of Holies. Gold includes both love and awe, as explained in *Tanya* regarding “the superiority of gold over silver.”

He further explains that the ark made of acacia wood—the essence of the ark in between the two golden arks—represents the body of Moses and it is seemingly hidden or covered with awe from both inside and out. That is, Moses has no self-awareness. He does not feel himself at all, he is not revealed. Moses, when he is above with God, and Moses, when he is below with the people, are all one. Indeed, Moses had no regard for himself. It says that “Moses went down from the mountain to the people”<sup>46</sup> not spending a moment on the

<sup>40</sup>. Psalms 92:13.

<sup>41</sup>. *Sha’ar HaGilgulim, Hakdamah* 33.

<sup>42</sup>. This is the secret of the saying (*Kohelet Rabbah* 11:7), “the Torah that one learns in this world is like vapor [Abel] before the Torah of Mashiach,” in *Shlah, Torah SheBichtav Va’etchanan, Torah Or* 14.

<sup>43</sup>. Exodus 37:2.

<sup>44</sup>. *Chaim VaChessed* §95.

<sup>45</sup>. *Tanya*, ch. 50.

<sup>46</sup>. Exodus 19:14.

way on his own bodily needs.<sup>47</sup> He has no self-awareness. This is the secret of the ark, the Holy of Holies.

Unification of Awe and Pleasure in the Ark

Gold also represents pleasure. On one hand, the world was not worthy of gold—it was created only for the purpose of the Temple.<sup>48</sup> But gold also signifies the prophecy of Moses, our teacher. On the other hand, one who possesses a lot of gold takes pleasure in his gold. So, gold encompasses both awe and pleasure.

There is a clear allusion to this: the entire verse, “And he overlaid it with pure gold, inside and out, and made for it a gold crown all around”<sup>49</sup> (וַיִּצְפֹּהוּ זָהָב טָהוֹר מִבַּיִת וּמִחוּץ וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ זָרָהָב סָבִיב) has the exact same value as, “How beautiful and how pleasant is pleasurable love”<sup>50</sup> (מֵהֵרָא וְיִצְפֹּהוּ זָהָב טָהוֹר וּמִחוּץ וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ זָרָהָב סָבִיב). Furthermore, the verse contains two expressions of gold, “pure gold” (זָהָב טָהוֹר) and “a gold crown around” (זָרָהָב סָבִיב) whose sum is precisely the same as “pleasure” (תַּעֲנוּג).

Rabbi Chayim of Amdor does not write this explicitly, but following his reasoning, it stands to reason that the external gold arks primarily represent awe, and the internal acacia wood ark represents pleasure. Moses’ is in the middle, and he too is pleasure. But this is a pleasure that is not felt at all by the self.

וּבְמִנְרָה אַרְבָּעָה נִבְעִים מִשְׁקָדִים כְּפִתְרִיָּה וּפְרָחִיָּה (ויקרא לז, ב)

### Sixth Reading: The Source of Kabbalistic Doubt

Five Verses that Have No Distinctive Interpretation

Our verse is one of the five verses that have no decisive interpretation.<sup>51</sup> It reads, “And on [the body of] the Menorah,<sup>52</sup> four cups made like almond blossoms, its knobs and its flowers.” Let’s explain: It is evident that the Menorah explicitly includes ornaments that that are shaped like almond-blossoms and like flowers.

Now, even though under the word “cups” (גִּבְעִים) there is an *etnachta*—the cantillation mark indicating a pause—Isi ben Yehudah says that this is one of the five verses that have no decisive interpretation. He is quoted saying, “I do not know if [it should be read as]

<sup>47</sup>. Rashi on Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>. *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1.

<sup>49</sup>. Exodus 37:2.

<sup>50</sup>. Song of Songs 7:7.

<sup>51</sup>. *Yoma* 52a: Isi ben Yehuda says: [There are] five verses in the Torah whose meaning cannot be decided [i.e., it is unclear from the text how the verses should be read.], “*Se’et*” [Genesis 4:7], “*Meshukkadim*” [Exodus 37:20] “*Machar*” [Exodus 17:9], “*Arur*” [Genesis 49:7], and “*Vekam*” [Deuteronomy 31:16].

<sup>52</sup>. Referring to the Menorah’s middle shaft; on all the side shafts there are three cups per shaft.

‘cups made like almond blossoms’ (גבעים משקדים) or ‘almond blossoms [on both] its knobs and its flowers’ (משקדים כפתריה ופרחיה).” Why say that the almond blossoms are related to the cups despite the *etnachta*? Because in all other places the wording is “cups made like almond blossoms” (גבעים משקדים).

### The Unknowable Head

We said that there are five verses that have no decisive interpretation. The doubt they raise indicate that the root of these verses is in the highest of the three “heads” of the crown, the so-called “head that is not known” (רישא דלא אתידע), abbreviated as *Radla* (רדלא). How do we know it's a doubt related to *Radla*? Because in the *Radla*, the Arizal writes that there are five doubts regarding how it was constructed from the shattered vessels of the World of Chaos. This is so significant that it can be said that the source for the Arizal's teaching that there are five doubts in *Radla*, is in these five verses.

This verse is the principal among the five. It is the only one that *Rashi* in his commentary on the Pentateuch explicitly notes as a verse without a distinctive interpretation.

Now, the value of the verse, “And on the Menorah four cups made like almond blossoms, its knobs and its flowers” (ובמנרה ארבעה גבעים משקדים כפתריה ופרחיה) divides into one of the words of the verse—a very important phenomenon for us, called self-reference, where one word in the verse is the common denominator of the entire verse. That word is “four” (ארבעה). The novelty of this verse is that despite each side branch of the Menorah having three cups, the central branch has four. This also alludes to the verse, “Three are too wonderful for me and four I do not know them”<sup>53</sup> (שלושה הקמה נפלאו ממני וארבעה לא ידעתיים) which apparently is saying that the “four” (וארבעה) is not known, because it is a doubt rooted in the *Radla*—the Unknowable Head.

Moreover “four” (ארבעה) has the same value as “the sequestered light” (אור הגנוז). The entire verse equals 8 times “four” (ארבעה), or 8 times 278. Amazingly, the numerical value of the Talmud’s statement that, “This is one of the five verses without a decisive interpretation” (זה אחד מן חמשה מקראות שאין להם הכרע) is 7 times “four” (ארבעה), or 7 times 278, or the value of the entire verse without the word “four” (ארבעה).

נְוֵי הָעַמּוּדִים וְהַשְּׂקִיּוֹת כְּסָפֵר (ויקהל לח, ז)

### Seventh Reading: The Hooks of the Posts

We are going to focus on the phrase, “the hooks of the posts and their bands were of silver.” This is the first mention of this element of the Tabernacle in our *parashah*. As we recall, the courtyard of the Tabernacle was marked by posts placed with 5 cubits in

<sup>53</sup>. Proverbs 30:18.



between them (about 2.5 meters). The posts had crocheted hangings which served to close the space between the posts. The hangings were attached to the posts with a hook.

In Hebrew, every letter has a meaningful name, and the name of the sixth letter, the *vav*, means “a hook.” Thus “the hooks of the posts” (וַיְהִי הַעֲמוּדִים) are the secret of the letter *vav*. When we write the letter *vav*’s name out it is two letters *vav*: וּ. The first *vav*, which represents the form of the letter, corresponds to the post and the second *vav*, the “filling” letter, which makes it possible to pronounce its name, corresponds to the hook.

In addition, the form, and hence the post itself, corresponds to the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*) since beauty is obviously related to form. The hook corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation (*yesod*). The post represents the axis around which harmony and symmetry (one of the staples of beauty) are revealed throughout nature. The hook represents the power of connection and equilibrium between the symmetrical and asymmetrical states inherent in nature.

Both the post and the hook take on the role of a *vav*, which is to connect. The role of a post is to connect two things, one higher, the other lower. The hooks on the posts also connected the hangings to the posts. In Hebrew the letter *vav* serves as a conjunction.

The hangings of the Tabernacle courtyard represent the power of concealment that exists between Worlds—each higher World hiding itself behind a curtain, so to speak, from the lower World. The posts stand for manifest revelations of light that pass downward from the higher to the lower World. The hooks then serve to connect these two paradoxical states of concealment and revelation. Still, the Torah associated the hooks with the posts—“the hooks of the posts”—which represent revelation and not with the hangings, because the ultimate purpose of linking concealment with revelation is for the sake of continued, even deeper revelation. Concealment is merely a means to an end—revelation. The final revelation enters a world or a frame of reference that could only have come into being and remain in a stable state of existence in virtue of the power of concealment that was involved in ushering it in.

Now, the value of the letter *vav* is 6 and “the hooks on the posts” are mentioned exactly 6 times in the Bible. The first 2 times were in *parashat* Terumah,<sup>54</sup> and the remaining 4 in our *parashah*, Vayakhel.<sup>55</sup> Amazingly, both in the first mention of “the hooks on the posts” in Terumah, and in our verse—its first mention in our *parashah*—the word “hooks” (וַיְהִי) is the sixth word in the verse, a beautiful example of self-reference.

(Based on *The Hebrew Letters*, p. 100).

<sup>54</sup>. Exodus 27:10 and 27:11.

<sup>55</sup>. Ibid. 38:10, 38:11, 38:12, and 38:17