"Open my eyes so that I may see the **wonders** of Your Torah"

בס"ד

Wonders

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of HaRav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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When the Ba'al Shem Tov entered, he said, "There must be light for the Jews. My service is to illuminate the Jewish People!" The disciples said that they could not find more than just one candle. The Ba'al Shem Tov instructed them to go up to the roof and bring down icicles and to light them! The students followed their master's instructions with no hesitation, kindled the icicles, and they burned.

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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

"…It would be proper to publish your classes in book form. With blessings for success…"



Wonders

An anthology from the shiurim and farbrengens
of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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CLASS EXCERPT

THE BA'AL TESHUVAH'S LONGER SHORTER PATH

In the long winter Friday nights of 5784, HaRav Ginsburgh dedicated part of the classes he taught to Keter Shem Tov, the anthology of the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings. In this excerpt from one of these classes, he taught the Ba'al Shem Tov's innovative understanding of the Almighty's reluctance to take the people through Philistia on the short road to the Land of Israel.

This class was first published in Hebrew in the Beshalach 5784 issue of Nifla'ot.

One of the principles taught by the Ba'al Shem Tov is that the Torah's words are eternal, which means that they are applicable in every generation, for every person. The principle holds true for the opening verse of our *parashah*. And so, we find the following teaching in *Keter Shem Tov*, one of the earliest collections of teachings heard from the Ba'al Shem Tov:

> On the verse, "When Pharaoh sent the people out, and God did not lead them via Philistia because it was near. For God said, 'The people may have a change of heart when they see war and will return to Egypt.'"[1] The inner meaning of this verse is that man is considered a microcosm [of reality], and contains within "Pharaoh" and "Egypt," etc. And the Torah instructed that the path of *teshuvah* [return to God] be gradual, even roundabout, and not all at once causing him to completely nullify himself.

Every individual who decides to return to God is essentially escaping from their own internal Pharaoh and the Egypt by which they themselves are surrounded. They are running away from them and aiming to reach holiness. This necessarily motivates the *ba'al teshuvah* (the returnee) to want to complete the entire process all at once. But this can lead to a shattering of the individual's vessels—his or her ability to function. The sudden change can lead to disaster. When *teshuvah* is performed in one grand leap, it tends to cause us anxiety and nervousness, which in turn can lead to a breakdown.

To prevent this from occurring, the process must be gradual. Instead of following the direct route from Egypt to the Holy Land—the Land of Israel representing their destination, a life of holiness—by traveling through the Land of the Philistines, "God diverted the people via the desert road toward the Red Sea." The verb used to describe this diversion is וַיָּסֵב, which the sages[2] add also means to recline (הֵסֵבָּה). Reclining is a requirement during the Seder night, our yearly commemoration of the Exodus

1. Exodus 13:17.

2. *Shemot Rabbah* 25:7.

from Egypt. To return to God properly, it is necessary to do advance slowly, to recline and take it easy, to do things gradually, and thereby succeed in adopting a calm and balanced attitude.

Via Philistia (דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים) is the epitome of "a shorter, longer path" (דֶּרֶךְ קְצָרָה וְאֲרֻכָּה), since it is the shortest path from Egypt to the Land of Israel. It thus represents the shortest path from the *kelipah*—the husk that masks the Divine revelation in life—to holiness—the revelation of God's Presence in everyday life. At the same time, it is a longer path, because pursuing it can annihilate the individual's being altogether, preventing him or her from ever reaching their goal of leading a life of holiness. Instead, the individual seeking to do *teshuvah* should turn and take a longer path, one that although it seems like a diversion, a detour, and takes longer, is actually a shorter path, as it encourages a sense of calm reserve and securely reaches the destination of true inner transformation.[3]

CAUTION ON THE ROAD OF TESHUVAH

This teaching from the Ba'al Shem Tov continues with the following insight:

> When the masculine [letters] come first in *Havayah* [י-הוה], meaning that the two letters *yud* and *vav* [יו] precede the two letters *hei* [הה],[4] then loving-kindness dominates, but if they do not, then forgetfulness, represented by Pharaoh, dominates. This is the meaning of the words, "When Pharaoh sent the people out," where [the people refer] to the person's organs, which until now were in submission to Pharaoh, and now he has set them free. "And God did not lead them via Philistia" because there is a dimension known as "via" [or "road" (**דֶּרֶךְ**)]—whose *gematria* [224] is the sum of the Name whose value is 63 and the Name whose value is 161—from which even the wicked can be sustained.

Similar to how matter can be broken down into separate elements, the Arizal breaks words down into building blocks made up of the different values of God's Names. Thus, the word "way" or "via" (**דֶּרֶךְ**) whose value is 224 is the sum of the filling of God's essential Name (י-הוה), which equals 63 (**יוד הא ויו הא**) and the filling of God's Name *Ekyeh* (אֶהְיֶה), which equals 161 (**אלף הי יוד הי**). These two fillings correspond to the *sefirah* of understanding,[5] which itself represents *teshuvah*—returning to God—as in the verse, "And his heart will understand, he will return and be healed."[6] Apart from representing *teshuvah*, 63 is also the Name associated with the Shattering of the Vessels in the World of Chaos. Hence even though the road can be one of *teshuvah*,

3. As explained in various sources, the "shorter longer path" reaches the perimeter of the destination but does not penetrate it. Therefore, though superficially it seems that the person has changed, their interior remains the same and ultimately, they will revert back to their old habits, or will simply shatter under the weight of holiness.

4. There are 12 possible permutations of the four letters of *Havayah*, God's essential Name (see Wonders issue 179). In 2 of them, the letters *vav* and *yud* precede the two letters *hei*, as they do in the first word of our verse, "when" (וַיְהִי).

5. God's essential Name, *Havayah*, has 4 major fillings (whose values are 72, 63, 45, and 52) that correspond to wisdom, understanding, beauty, and kingdom (or the four letters of *Havayah*), respectively. The Name *Ekyeh* has only 3 major fillings (whose values are 161, 143, and 151) with the first, 161, corresponding to both wisdom and understanding and the two remaining fillings corresponding to beauty and kingdom, respectively.

6. Isaiah 6:10.

"the way of the righteous"[7] ("the way of faith"[8]), it is also be the root of a negative path, "the way of the wicked."[9] Why are the wicked able to sustain themselves from the root of *teshuvah*?

> Because the blemishes and sins of mundane beings cannot reach it [understanding]. About this the verse says, "If you (are wicked) [sin], how can you affect Him."[10]

The *sefirah* of understanding is the source of *teshuvah* because it is not affected by the actions of mundane beings—either positively, or negatively. Thus, at the level of understanding, what can be viewed as a negative act can be reinterpreted and regarded in a positive light. In fact, an argument that was used to demand punishment for a specific act can become an argument proving that there should be no punishment for that act.[11] Good and evil as separate judgments are only relevant in the realm of the emotional faculties (from loving-kindness and further down). That is why *teshuvah* is associated with the *sefirah* of understanding and as quoted above, "And his heart will understand, he will return and be healed."

The *Keter Shem Tov* continues:

> Therefore, *teshuvah* is effective, because the sin has not affected it; even if one has sinned with debauchery, it only awakens love there. It is only further down that the sin makes a negative impression. But when he does *teshuvah*, it makes a good impression, all is mended, because he has returned those levels to understanding [*binah*], to the Name *Ekyeh* [lit., "I will be"]. And he [the Ba'al Shem Tov] said that there are deep wonders in these words, and the discerning will understand them.

At the root, in the *sefirah* of understanding, all is good. Therefore, even if the actions below are considered negative, above they are considered positive. That is why when a person returns to God out of great love (תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה רַבָּה), returning all the way to the *sefirah* of understanding, he can pull the positive assessment of his actions down below and overturn the negative impression his actions left behind. He can literally transform his iniquities into merits. The example brought is of an act of debauchery—whose Hebrew word's (זְנוּת) numerical value is equal to the value "understanding" (בִּינָה). At its root, a sin of this nature stems from a fallen love. Returning to God out of love—love for all that is moral and good, all that God represents—reveals the negative act's source in love even below. This itself provides a new interpretation of what *teshuvah* out of love means: pulling down the primordial love from understanding, transforming even immoral acts of love into something positive. The example goes so far as to say that not only immoral thoughts of debauchery can be mended in this manner, but even actual acts.

However, echoing the danger of taking the shorter longer path, the spiritual root where all sins can be rectified can also become the

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7. Psalms 1:6
8. Ibid. 119:30.
9. Ibid. 1:6.
10. Job 35:6.
11. The most famous example is with respect to Noah's flood. Just before God's decision to flood the world, the Torah writes that, "God saw how great man's wickedness was and that every impulse of the thoughts of his heart was only for evil, all day long" (Genesis 6:5) and because of this decided to destroy the world. But just after the flood, we hear a similar argument causing God to decide to never again destroy the earth because of man, "God said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the soil because of humanity, for the impulse in man's heart is evil from his youth. Never again will I strike down all life as I have done'" (Ibid. 8:21).

root of the sin itself. Precisely because the *sefirah* of understanding can tolerate both the negative and the positive assessments of an action (recall that good and bad are relevant only from the emotive sefirot and below), it can sustain and even promote the sin. Therefore, we should be careful not to reach this level at the beginning of doing *teshuvah*:

> This is why the Torah continues, "God did not lead them via Philistia" because that path can feed the *kelipot*, represented by Philistia.

THE KELIPAH OF FORGETFULNESS

> The Ba'al Shem Tov teaching continues: God did not lead them on that path, "because it was near." These words mean that forgetfulness, represented by Pharaoh, is nearby. If a person pursues this path, he will become forgetful. The moment he entertains this idea, he will be quick to return to Pharaoh, quick to forget; therefore, "God diverted them."

Following the road through Philistia[12] feeds the *kelipot* and can bring one to a state of forgetfulness, represented by Pharaoh. The faster one tries to change and pursue a path of holiness, the more one tends to forget one's past failings. King David is famous for having stated, "And my sins are always before me." When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan for his conduct with Batsheba, he immediately confessed his sin. Though he did *teshuvah* immediately and "cleansed his hands" promptly of all transgressions, he was always careful to remember the past so as not to fall into a state of pride in having become a *ba'al teshuvah*.

The beginning of the *kelipah* is arrogance, feeding off Pharaoh's statement, "My Nile is mine, and I have made myself," which immediately leads to forgetfulness, as the Torah states, "Your heart shall grow haughty, and you will forget…."[13] This is not just a theoretical connection. In practice, we see that throughout Moses' interactions with Pharaoh, Pharaoh makes promises that he does not keep because he does not remember having made them. Every lie begins with forgetfulness (**שִׁכְחָה**), which in Hebrew is a rearrangement of the letters of "darkness" (**חֲשֵׁכָה**)—the darkness of the world of deceit that conceals Godliness.

12. The initials of "Philistia" (**אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים**) spell the Hebrew word for "even" (**אף**), the word that separates the three higher spiritual Worlds (states of consciousness) from the lowest World, the World of Action. For more see *Wonders* issue 177, p. 3.

13. Deuteronomy 8:13. The Talmud (*Sotah* 5a) cites this verse as the source prohibiting arrogance and arrogant behavior.

FOUR LEVELS OF SONG

This Shabbat is called *Shabbat Shirah*, the Shabbat of Song, in honor of the song sung by Moses and all of Israel after crossing the Red Sea and seeing the Egyptians drown. This marks the final stage of leaving Egypt and the culmination of generations of slavery and oppression.[1] We are taught that the revelation of God at the sea was so great that what the simplest handmaiden witnessed was greater than even the revelations of Ezekiel the prophet in his vision of the Divine Chariot (*Ma'aseh Merkavah*), one of the deepest secrets of the Jewish mystical tradition.[2] The revelation the people experienced was transformed into spontaneous joy and song. Thus, song becomes the vehicle or chariot of sublime spiritual experience. The Song at the Sea is included in our prayers every morning.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SEFIROT

Let us take a deeper look at song as discussed in Kabbalah and Chasidut. To do so we begin with a discussion of the ten *sefirot* and then how they relate to song. According to the Arizal, the *sefirot* in the World of Rectification, our present reality, are structurally depicted along three vertical axes: two exterior axes and one interior, unifying, one. The two exterior axes are seemingly opposites, while the central axis synthesizes the two. Although the ten *sefirot* can be divided according to a number of different schemes, perhaps the most natural division, especially when the soul's ten powers are being discussed, is into three main groupings, each in the shape of a triangle:

crown (*keter*), wisdom (*chochmah*), and understanding (*binah*)—the soul's intellectual powers.

loving-kindness (*chesed*), might (*gevurah*), and beauty (*tiferet*)—the soul's emotional powers.

victory (*netzach*), acknowledgment (*hod*), and foundation (*yesod*)—the soul's behavioral, or instinctual powers.

At the end of the middle axis, we find kingdom (*malchut*), the final *sefirah* receiving the energy of all the *sefirot* above it.[3]

This arrangement of the *sefirot* is not merely a visual representation of rectification; rather, the three columns and all that they symbolize are the driving forces motivating reality to strive to reach its ultimate purpose of rectification (*tikkun*). In fact, the three axes plus the fact that the *sefirot* are on a triangular lattice and form three triangles is connected to the meaning of the number three, which is rectification (*tikkun*) and permanence (*kiyum*).[4] In Hebrew, the word for "permanence" (קיום) contains the same letters as the word for "line" (קוים), and the two middle letters of the word "rectification" (תקון) can be read as "line" (קו). This single "line" alluded to by the word "rectification" is the middle axis of the *sefirot*, the one that integrates opposites thus creating unity and harmony.

1. Exodus 15:1-19.
2. *Mechilta* 15:2.
3. See *Music – The Quill of the Soul,* p.105.
4. *Sod HaShem LiYereiʾav, Klalut Seder Hahishtalshut*, pp. 77-82.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE SEFIROT AND SONG

Having described the structure in which the *sefirot* are arranged, let us now connect these ideas to song. The *Zohar* describes the *sefirot* using a somewhat cryptic division into four progressing levels of song: "A simple song, a double song, a triple song, and a quadruple song."[5] What the *Zohar* means is that the ten *sefirot* can be arranged in the form of a triangle with four lines, with 1, 2, 3, and 4 *sefirot* in each line:

simple song			crown	
double song		wisdom		understanding
triple Song	loving-kindness		might	beauty
quadruple song	victory	acknowledgment	foundation	kingdom

These four levels of song interestingly correspond to the four singers of *Perek Shira* discussed in recent editions of Wonders. The simple song is considered the song of God, the double song relates to the song of man, the triple song corresponds to the song of the angels, and the quadruple song to the song of creation.[6,7]

This structure of the ten *sefirot* being referred to as four levels of song further strengthens the concept that song lies at the essence of the Divine creative process, in as much as the ten *sefirot* are essentially connected with the Ten Utterances—the ten times the Torah account of creation writes, "God said"—through which God spoke or rather sang the world into existence.

TEN ARCHETYPAL SONGS

Furthermore, the Ten Utterances of creation and the ten *sefirot* are essentially connected to the tradition that there are ten archetypal songs sung throughout history.[8] The Song at the Sea in this week's *parashah* of *Beshalach* is one of the ten songs. These songs stand out among all the other countless songs in Jewish tradition in that each one was written in a state of Divine inspiration or prophesy and came at a climactic moment of transition, transformation or revelation for an individual or all the people. They reflect some, or all of the following attributes: a high level of awareness of God's Providence, a sense of mission and purpose, and a sense of completion and wholeness. It is like those rare and unique moments in life when everything seems to fall into place, when everything feels perfect, just as it should be. A moment when everything about life makes sense and we feel an immediate urge to thank and praise God.

5. *Zohar* 3:219b and Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* 3a.
6. See *Wonders* issues 171-173.
7. See *Music: The Quill of the Soul,* p.106.
8. The ten songs are enumerated by *Targum Yonaton* as a commentary on the first verse of the Song of Songs, composed be King Solomon.

These songs accompany history from Adam, the first human, to the Mashiach, who will lead Israel and all the world to the consummate and final redemption. Nine of these archetypal songs appear in the *Tanach* while the tenth song will only be revealed at the time of redemption. These songs are sung by both men and women, kings and judges, individuals and the entire people. Let us now explore further these four levels of song discussed above.[9]

FOUR LEVELS OF SONG

The Simple Song: According to Kabbalah and Chasidut, all songs emanate from the *sefirah* of crown. More specifically, from the loving-kindness (*chasadim*) of *Atik Yomin*, the higher part of the crown whose inner experience is super-conscious pleasure. This level of the crown infuses and sustains all the lower *sefirot*. This explains the great pleasure that music and song arouse in the soul. This level of Divine pleasure in the crown is referred to as the simple song.

The Double Song: When *Atik* garbs and expresses itself in the intellectual *sefirot*—wisdom and understanding—it is called a double song. Here, pleasure manifests as flashes of insight in the *sefirah* of wisdom and the intellectual pleasure of taking the initial spark of inspiration and developing it through understanding. Wisdom and understanding are also known as the father and mother principles and in the *Zohar* they are described as "two companions that never part."[10]

The Triple Song: Relates to pleasure as experienced in the emotions—the three *sefirot* of loving-kindness, might, and beauty. The inner dimension of loving-kindness is love and caring, thus pleasure in loving-kindness arouses the will to give generously to others. Fear or awe is the inner dimension of might and relates to the emotional fear that one's love may be too indiscriminate. This type of fear arouses compassion, the inner experience of beauty, which serves as a composite between love and fear, the energies in loving-kindness and might. Love arouses great pleasure in the soul and culminates in these three *sefirot* working together. Music and song intensely affect emotions, moving the heart to experience feelings deeply.

The Quadruple Song: The final aspect of these four levels of song is associated with the pleasure of self-expression, either through speech or through action. The Quadruple song relates to the four last *sefirot* that constitute our instinctive or behavioristic faculties of the soul. When the pleasure from the crown enters these *sefirot*, it manifests as freedom of expression, bringing in its wake strong feelings of liberation.

Music and song have the unique ability to express the deepest levels of soul – from the emotions to the intellect, from the conscious to the subconscious, and ultimately to the highest levels of super-consciousness rooted in the crown, the source of all music.

9. See *Musicf: The Quill of the Soul,* pp. 108-110.

10. *Zohar* 3:4a.

STORY

THE BA'AL SHEM TOV: CANDLES OF ICE CAN ALSO BURN

The Rebbe *Rayatz* (the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe) related what he heard from his father, the Rebbe *Rashab* (the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe):

> In the year 5579 (1819) the Rebbe Tzemach Tzedek (the third Lubavitcher Rebbe) held a farbrengen with his *chasidim*. "The Ba'al Shem Tov," related the Rebbe Tzemach Tzedek, "loved light." In Hebrew, "light" (**אור**) has the same numerical value as "secret" (**רז**).[1] He who knows the inner secret of every matter can shine his light out to the world.
>
> Once, continued the Tzemach Tzedek, the Ba'al Shem Tov's disciples had only one candle. They knew that the Ba'al Shem Tov would be entering shortly. The students felt badly, because they knew that the Ba'al Shem Tov loved light.
>
> When the Ba'al Shem Tov entered, he said, "There must be light for the Jews. My service is to illuminate the Jewish People!" The disciples said that they could not find more than just one candle. The Ba'al Shem Tov instructed them to go up to the roof and bring down icicles and to light them! The students followed their master's instructions with no hesitation, kindled the icicles, and they burned.
>
> Following this story, the *Tzemach Tzedek* sang a chasidic melody with great devotion and said, "For the *chasidim* and disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov, candles made out of ice burned. But for today's *chasidim*, all is darkness and cold."
>
> The Rebbe Rashab would tell this story and conclude, "My grandfather (the Tzemach Tzedek) revealed the ever-burning flame[2] of the soul: that Chasidut can illuminate chasidic homes so that no matter where they are, even at the very ends of the earth, they will succeed in shining forth the light of Torah.
>
> (*Sefer HaSichot* 5700, p. 174)

THE LIGHT OF TORAH

Torah illuminates the world. At first, it may seem that it lights the world only from the outside, or that it remains above the world, far removed from reality. But the more we merit to reveal the secrets of the Torah, the more we understand that the light revealed by the Torah quite literally comes from within the world. Thus, when one knows the deep secret of ice—one can turn it into a candle whose inner light will burn bright.

A similar story already took place in the

1. *Zohar* 3:28b.
2. Leviticus 6:6.

time of the Talmud. Rabbi Chaninah ben Dosa's daughter mistakenly filled the Shabbat candles with vinegar instead of oil. She only realized this after the wick was lit. Seeing his daughter's pain at having prevented them from having light on Shabbat, Rabbi Chanina said to her, "He who told the oil to burn, will tell the vinegar to burn."[3] And burn it did. Our story is even more extreme, with frozen ice transforming into a warming fire.

To shine, a person goes through a process that is very similar to photosynthesis in a plant. First, he receives light from Above, the light of Torah. This light is integrated into the person's soul, and merits him with the revelation of a secret. Afterwards, he can use the secret to illuminate his surroundings.

This process can be learned from two seemingly contradictory parts of a verse, "For his desire is only God's Torah," and then, "And over his Torah he will pore day and night."[4] Does the verse consider the Torah to be God's Torah or is it considered the Torah of the person studying it? The Talmud explains, "At first the Torah is called God's Torah, but ultimately it is called 'his Torah,' i.e., the Torah of the person studying it."[5] First, the light of Torah illuminates the darkness within man, and later, the person himself can illuminate the darkness of his surroundings.

LIGHT AND WARMTH

The Rebbe *Tzemach Tzedek* expressed dissatisfaction with the darkness and cold that he perceived in the *chasidim* of his era. The absence of the Ba'al Shem Tov and his candles spreading light and warmth was sorely felt. The light is in the intellectual faculties of the head. It is Divine knowledge, clear and pure. Those secrets of the Torah that illuminate the intellectual faculties also warm the heart with the holy emotions of love and fear for God.

In our story, it says that the Ba'al Shem Tov liked light. In another place, it is told that he would bless Jewish children to be warm Jews.[6] The *farbrengen*, where the *Tzemach Tzedek* told this story, is a platform for awakening the warmth of the heart of those participating.

The Rebbe Rashab's additional words sweeten the dissatisfaction expressed by the *Tzemach Tzedek*. A *tzaddik* does not complain or criticize unless he intends to rectify the situation. The Rebbe Rashab explained that the severe lack that the *Tzemach Tzedek* felt is what brought him to redouble his efforts to kindle the fire in the souls of his *chasidim* and thus to illuminate chasidic homes.

We can conclude from this story that there was a certain degeneration in the level of warmth and enthusiasm of the *chasidim*. But Chasidut by nature is the revelation of inner secrets and those who study it are supposed to be candles to illuminate every generation, just like the generation of the Ba'al Shem Tov. What happened?

Degeneration is a natural process. Good, however, never gets lost. Instead, it finds other ways to express itself.

In the days of the Ba'al Shem Tov, his disciples were holy people. Even if they could not all kindle ice, they were all

3. *Ta'anit* 25a.
4. Psalms 1:2.
5. *Avodah Zarah* 19a.
6. See *Sod HaShem LiYerei'av*, gate 29. The sun has four attributes: light, warmth, healing, and growth. Light and warmth come together in the Ba'al Shem Tov. He also had the other two traits. He was a Master of the Name, meaning that he was a healer of body and soul. In addition, he "sowed charities and produced salvations" for both the entire Jewish people and for individuals, at all times.

experts at illuminating and warming their surroundings. In subsequent generations, that special attribute passed from the individual to the public. This is the meaning of the light that illuminates chasidic homes. Chassidic homes shine forth love and fear of God simply and naturally. This is a clear advantage over previous generations.

Another rectification affected by the *Tzemach Tzedek* was that wherever his *chasidim* would be, they would succeed in shining forth the light of Torah. When the general light encompassing the public is weakened, the solution is to illuminate another individual. The sages say, "I have learned from my students more than from anyone else."[7] Returning light ascends from the receiver and shines on the giver in a never-ending cycle. One flame joins the next, fertilizing and empowering each other ten times over.

In our generation, we see how all the enthusiasm that was invested in previous times for the service of prayer is now an irrepressible driving force for the mission of shining the light of Torah literally to the very ends of the earth.[8]

7. *Ta'anit* 7a.
8. Excerpted and translated from *Or Yisrael*, vol. 2, p. 74.

FROM THE CHASIDIC MASTERS

AHAVAT SHALOM OF KOSSOV ON MOSES AND JOSEPH'S BONES

In 5784, HaRav Ginsburgh focused for many of the year's Shabbatot on Ahavat Shalom, the teachings of Rebbe Menachem Mendel Hager, the founder of the Kosov Chasidic dynasty. In a note written on the 12th of Shevat 5784, he delved into a number of teachings on parashat Beshalach whose common theme is the special spiritual relationship revealed between Moses and Joseph.

The full text of this note was first published in Hebrew in the Nifla'ot issue for Beshalach 5784.

Moses is known as the unsurpassed prophet and leader of the Jewish people. Yet, before he led the people out of Egypt and into the wilderness, he made it a point to raise Joseph's coffin and carried it with him, in his belongings for the duration of their 40-year journey. Though mentioned seemingly only in passing, the fact that Moses took Joseph's bones with him is a foundation for many legal issues surrounding the Tabernacle and the laws of defilement from a body.

The *Ahavat Shalom* of Kosov provides us with insight about the spiritual relationship between Moses and Joseph and its necessity.

"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him."[1]

This can be explained by way of a parable concerning a king who had two army commanders. One was appointed over the storehouses, to provide his warriors with bread, food, and other necessities and provisions for war. The other was appointed to lead the war itself: to teach the tactics of war with the necessary intelligence and to arrange the troops formation against formation, as is the way of men of war.

Now, that second commander—the one appointed to teach the conduct of war—considered the matter, and a fear arose in his heart that perhaps the first commander, who was appointed to prepare the war's provisions, might not fulfill his appointment with the requisite perfection. This would result in a deficiency in his own appointment, rendering him unable to lead his troops well, properly, and correctly, since they would not have their necessities. Therefore, a sound idea arose in his heart: to join himself with the first commander and assist him in his appointment, so that faintness of heart would not arise, and he would be able to lead them in the specific mission designated to him.

The analogue is self-evident. There are two types of *tzaddikim* whom Blessed God has appointed: One is for the guidance of the masses in the service of the Blessed God with intellect and knowledge; the other is to channel to them their sufficient needs regarding children, life, and sustenance (*banei, chayei, mezonei*).

The *tzaddik* appointed to guide them in God's service needs to partner with the *tzaddik* appointed to channel to them all the good things of the world. For truly, the lack of physical livelihood is a great hindrance to God's service.

This is the secret of "And Moses took the bones of Joseph *with him*" specifically.

For Moses our Teacher was the collective knowledge or consciousness (*da'at*) of all Israel, and he channeled Torah, fear of Heaven, commandments, and good deeds to Israel. Joseph, however, channeled material abundance to Israel, as in the verse, "Joseph sustained"[2] and the verse, "And Joseph was the one who provided [grain]."[3]

Therefore, Moses our Teacher, peace be upon him—immediately and at first glance, upon seeing that he was appointed to be the "Faithful Shepherd" for Israel and to channel to them Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge—took the aspect of Joseph *with him*. He did this so that he would be able to channel to Israel children, life, and sustenance as well. And examine this closely.

When the Israelites left Egypt, they set out on the journey without sufficient food. The sages note that the verse, "And they had also not prepared provisions for themselves" recounts the praise of Israel, who did not ask, "How can we go out into the wilderness without provisions?" but rather believed in Moses and followed him. Nonetheless, Moses embodies "the wise man who foresees the future," and he knew that later the people

1. Exodus 13:19.
2. Genesis 47:12.
3. Ibid. 42:6.

would need material sustenance; therefore, he made a special effort to take the bones of Joseph with him.

Joseph the Righteous channels material abundance to Israel for he is, "the one who provides to all the land," children, life, and sustenance; he is God's Minister of the Treasury." Moses channels spiritual abundance; he is the "Faithful Shepherd" (רָעֶיהָ מְהֵימְנָא) who gives faith and the Torah to Israel. Yet, Moses needs the material abundance of Joseph with him as well, just as every commander on the front lines in war needs to use all the equipment prepared by the Quartermaster. Thus, it was through Joseph that Moses brought down the manna for the Israelites (described later in the *parashah*). The manna was half spiritual half physical, it is known as the "bread of the Angels"[4] (לֶחֶם אַבִּירִים) that materialized and became human food yet remained pure and refined (that is why the Israelites complained about the manna, because it was not coarse enough in their eyes).

The *Ahavat Shalom* chose the imagery of battle and an army to describe the cooperative relationship between Moses and Joseph because prayer is likened to war in the *Zohar*[5] (שְׁעַת צְלוֹתָא שְׁעַת קְרָבָא). We find a hint of this already in the *Onkelos* translation of the verse, "with my sword and with my bow," which is "with my prayer and with my supplication"[6] (בִּצְלוֹתִי וּבְבָעוּתִי). Moses prays for faith, but by taking Joseph's bones with him, he prays for children, life, and sustenance (and all abundantly). Even though externally, Joseph had already died, his essence (עֶצְמִיּוּת) is present and alive in his bones (עֲצָמוֹת). Indeed, the value of "Joseph's bones" (**עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף**) is 3 times the value of "Joseph is still alive" (**עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי**).

Moses is known as "the head [i.e., the leader] of the Israelites" (**רֹאשׁ** בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), whose initials spell "Rabbi" (**רַבִּי**). He needs Joseph's special understanding of and ability to handle material needs. Adding together "Moses" (**מֹשֶׁה**) and "Joseph" (**יוֹסֵף**) gives us "head" (**רֹאשׁ**). The description of Joseph as the "provider" (**הַמַּשְׁבִּיר**) contains the exact letters as Rabbi Moses (**רַבִּי מֹשֶׁה**).

In fact, Joseph's role is seen throughout *parashat Beshalach*: Moses does not depart before taking Joseph's bones. The Splitting of the Red Sea is achieved through Joseph as the sages explain that, "'the Sea saw and fled.'" What did it see? It saw Joseph's coffin." Afterwards, the manna descended through the power of Joseph the Provider. Finally, at the conclusion of the *parashah*, the war with Amalek was led by Joshua bin Nun, who connects Moses and Joseph since he is a descendant of Joseph on the one hand (from the tribe of Ephraim) and the most faithful student of Moses.

BREAD FROM HEAVEN

Regarding the manna, it is said, "Behold, I will rain down for you bread from heaven. The *Ahavat Shalom* writes,

4. Psalms 78:25.
5. See *Zohar* 1:240b and 3:243a.
6. Genesis 48:22.

It is written that "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." The explanation is that Moses our Teacher who is the secret of the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*) needed to take the attribute of Joseph who is the provider (*mashpia*) with him. Then, knowledge is complete. Because through the aspect of the provider, the provider becomes a receiver, and the receiver becomes a provider.

This follows the sages' statement, "More than the homeowner does for the poor man [by giving him charity], the poor man does for the homeowner [by accepting the charity]."[7] This represents the inclusion of the feminine within the masculine, the receiver within the provider and creates a complete state of knowledge (דַּעַת הַשָּׁלֵם), when there is an inter-inclusion of the left side in the right side—judgments in kindness. However, without the provider [interacting with the receiver], the *sefirah* of knowledge is not complete.

Now, the one who merits complete knowledge (Moses' attribute) merits manna (**מָן**) whose value is 90, the value of the letter *tzaddik* (צ), [alluding to Joseph] the provider.... He merits becoming a stream of abundance, through whom all good is channeled, whether in body, in soul, or in money... This was the intent of the sages' statement, "the manna came down in the merit of Moses," for he is the secret of the complete knowledge….

Now, the generation that left Egypt and walked through the wilderness also possessed complete knowledge because Moses our Teacher, who was the collective knowledge of the Israelites, the secret of complete knowledge, channeled it to Israel. Therefore, they merited receiving manna, which is "bread from heaven"—the masculine dimension [since it descends]. In contrast, "bread from the earth" is the dimension aspect, the aspect of the receiver [and ascends].

Let us go in a little more depth into the Ahavat Shalom's holy words:

Moses is the archetypal soul of the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*), but to be complete knowledge he requires Joseph the *tzaddik*, the provider who is the archetypal soul of the *sefirah* of foundation (*yesod*). The two together are an inter-inclusion of provider and receiver. Moses, who went up to God to receive the Torah and lived there for forty days and nights represents the heavens, the source of the heavenly bread. Indeed, Moses (**מֹשֶׁה**) plus his quintessential description of his self-nullification, "naught"[8] (**מָה**) equal "heavens" (**שָׁמַיִם**), which itself is 5 times "bread" (**לֶחֶם**).

To rain bread from heaven to earth (unifying the provider and the receiver), Moses needs the power of Joseph, who is the "*tzaddik* the foundation of the world,"[9] described in the *Zohar*[10] as the one who connects heaven and earth.[11] This connection is illustrated in Joseph (**יוֹסֵף**) whose name equals 2 times "bread" (**לֶחֶם**), alluding to

7. *Vayikra Rabbah* 34:10.
8. Exodus 16:7.
9. Proverbs 10:25.
10. *Zohar* 2:116a.
11. In the Bible, see 1 Chronicles 29:11.

bread from heaven and bread from the earth. In Psalms, the manna is described as "bread of Heaven"[12] (**לֶחֶם שָׁמַיִם**), whose value, 468 is equal to the 6 possible permutations of "bread" (**לֶחֶם**) and it follows that it is also equal to 3 times "Joseph" (**יוֹסֵף**).[13]

The phrase, "bread from heaven" used by the *Ahavat Shalom* alludes to the manna in the word "from" (מִן), which can be read as "manna" (מָן). To change the reading, the *chirik* of "from" becomes a *kamatz* in "manna." The vowel signs correspond to the *sefirot*. The *chirik* corresponds to victory (*netzach*), i.e., to Moses himself and the *kamatz* to the supernal crown (*keter*) suggesting that Moses ascends to the supernal realm of the crown to bring down the manna. The filling of the word "manna" (**מם נון**) has the same value as "space" (**מָקוֹם**) as in the verse, "behold, there is a space with Me" (הִנֵּה מָקוֹם אִתִּי), the source of the manna's descent to the Israelites.

MOSES, JOSEPH, AND THE WAR WITH AMALEK

Moses is considered the higher unification, the supernal aspect of the *sefirah* of knowledge (דַּעַת עֶלְיוֹן), higher consciousness that true being (יֵשׁ) can only be found Above and our reality is non-being (אַיִן). Of all human beings, Moses was able to see reality this way, which is seeing it from God's perspective. Joseph represents the lower aspect of knowledge (דַּעַת תַּחְתּוֹן), the lower consciousness that being is below and that all that is Above is like an ungraspable nothingness. This is the normal human perspective. These two perspectives or aspects of knowledge are described as the higher unification in God's essential Name, *Havayah*, i.e., the unification of the two letters *yud* and *hei*, the unification of the *sefirot* of wisdom and understanding and the lower unification of the two letters *vav* and *hei*, the unification of the *sefirot* of beauty and kingdom. Thus, Moses is the higher unification *yud-hei* (י-ה)—Moses (**מֹשֶׁה**) is a multiple of *yud-hei*, 15 times "the living one" (**חַיָּה**)—and Joseph is the lower unification.

Amalek is the separator. This nation "severs at the neck" (i.e., beheads its victims), cutting apart the letters *yud-hei* from the *vav-hei* in God's four-letter Name. That is why the sages state that, "the Name [i.e., God's essential Name] is not complete until the name of Amalek is blotted out." For this reason, the value of "Amalek" (**עֲמָלֵק**) is the same as "doubt" (**סָפֵק**), as taught by the Ba'al Shem Tov taught. Amalek cast doubt on whether there were sufficient material resources when the Israelites came out of Egypt and continues to spiritually cast doubt on each of us in our daily lives whether we have enough livelihood. Therefore, Joshua is needed to fight Amalek and the doubt it casts on us, for Joshua combines Moses and Joseph together.

12. Psalms 105:40.

13. The filling of "bread" (**למד חית מם**) equals 572, or 22 times *Havayah* (**י-הוה**), the value of "they shall be one flesh" (**וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד**). The filling of "heavens" (**הא שין מם יוד מם**) is 546, or 7 times "bread" (**לֶחֶם**). Together, the fillings of "bread [from]" and "heavens" is 1118, the value of the *Shema*, "Hear O' Israel, *Havayah* is our God, *Havayah* is one" (**שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל י-הוה אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ י-הוה אֶחָד**), the essential statement of Jewish faith. Faith (**אֱמוּנָה**) is a permutation of the Israelites words (Exodus 16:15), "[they said to each other: 'It is man' for they did not know] what it was" (**מָן הוּא**).


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