"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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שַׁבָּת בֹּא ❁ ה-ו שְׁבַט תשפ"ו



Legions of souls left Gehenom with him leading them, as he brought them to the Garden of Eden (and presumably, Rebbe Moshe Leib did not meticulously count the precise number and smuggled out a few extra).

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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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BIBLE AND CHASIDUT

THE BRIDE'S 24 ORNAMENTS

In another installment on the structure of the Tanach (see issues 151, 152, 153, 157, 158, and 178), HaRav Ginsburgh looks at the significance the sages attributed to the 24 books included in it, which they identified as corresponding to the 24 ornaments that should adorn a bride on her wedding day.

The number 24 has a few other associations, one of the most well-known being of course the number of hours in a day. This is a universal convention, which in Torah is correlated to the permutations of God's essential Name, Havayah and the Name Adni, the Name used to pronounce God's essential Name.

HaRav Ginsburgh taught this class originally in English on the 14th of Sivan, 5785 and it is being published here for the first time.

The Bible consists of 24 books: the 5 books of Moses, the 8 books of the Prophets, and the 11 books of the Writings. The sages teach us that the secret of the number 24 is related to Isaiah chapter 3, verses 18 to 24. In these 7 verses Isaiah enumerates 24 different ornaments or adornments given to the bride on her wedding day.[1] In ancient Israel, before the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the bride would be adorned with these 24 articles of jewelry and clothing before entering the wedding canopy where she would be legally wed to her husband. This is a very beautiful notion that we will try to understand better.

Even though we cannot usually rely on English translations of the Bible, we will have to do our best in this case, because the names of these 24 ornaments are very rare in the Bible.[2]

THE 24 BRIDAL ORNAMENTS

Though Isaiah's prophecy describes the joy and beauty of a wedding, it is actually a chastisement. He is enumerating these 24 ornaments to let the people know that because of their behavior, God is going to divest the people, who are likened to a bride on her wedding day, of these ornaments. The verses read:

> On that day, the Lord will remove the splendor of the (1) shoe-bells, the (2) head scarves, the (3) moon-shaped ornaments,
> The (4) necklaces, and the (5) bracelets, and the (6) veils,
> The (7) bonnets, and the (8) leg bands, and the (9) hair ties, (10) and the brooches, and the (11) earrings,
> The (12) rings and the (13) nose rings,
> The (14) robes, and the (15) shawls,

1. *Bereishit Rabbah* 18:1.

2. In passing, let us mention that in the original Hebrew, these verses contain exactly 48 words, twice 24.

and the (16) kerchiefs, and the (17) pouches,
The (18) mirrors, and the (19) linens, and the (20) turbans, and the (21) clasps,
And it shall be that in the place of fragrance there will be rot, and in the place of the (22) belt, abrasion; and in the place of (23) coiffure, baldness; and in the place of the (24) ornamental belt, a belt of sackcloth; in the place of beauty.

The division of the ornaments among the verses is such that only the third mentions 5 ornaments. We will therefore correspond them with the Five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch.

In the first, second, and fourth verses together, 8 ornaments are mentioned, which we will thus correspond with the 8 books of the Prophets.

The remaining verses enumerate 11 bridal ornaments, so we will correspond these with the eleven books of the Writings.

SCHOLARLY BEAUTY

What is the meaning of this parable in which the 24 books of the Bible are described as 24 ornaments or adornments of the bride?

The sages teach us that every Torah scholar and sage, in order to appear as a beautiful bride before God, the Giver of the Torah, must be fluent in all 24 books of the Bible.[3] Each book of the Bible for the scholar is like an ornament, an adornment that beautifies his soul before God. Rashi, the literal commentary to the Bible that is most relied upon, brings this saying from the sages in the book of Exodus. When God concluded speaking to Moses, teaching him the Torah at Mt. Sinai, He gave him the two Tablets. The Torah uses a word for "concluded" (כְּכַלֹּתוֹ) that is cognate with the word for "bride" (כַּלָּה). And Rashi explains:

> The word "concluded" (כְּכַלֹּתוֹ) is written defectively [without a *vav* after the *lamed*].... just as a bride (כַּלָּה) bedecks herself with 24 ornaments—those mentioned in the Book of Isaiah—so a scholar ought to be thoroughly versed in the contents of the 24 books [of Scripture].

In the Torah's inner dimension, Kabbalah and Chasidut, the bride is a symbol for the *sefirah*—the channel of Divine energy or emanation—called kingdom (*malchut*, in Hebrew). Kingdom is the tenth of the Ten *Sefirot*. A thorough explanation of the *sefirot* is beyond our scope here, but we need to stress that though God is absolutely one, He acts and reveals Himself to us through ten "garments," or "vessels" known as the *sefirot*, each demonstrating a different way in which the Divine manifests and reveals itself in reality.

Each of the *sefirot* also corresponds to one of God's holy Names. Similar to the *sefirot*, the Names of God represent God's actions in reality, as the sages say, "I am named according to My action. When I judge My creatures, I am called *Elokim*. When I wage war against the wicked, I am called *Tzevakot*. When I have mercy on My world, I am called *Havayah*."[4] The Divine Name that corresponds to kingdom is the four-letter Name *Adni*

3. *Tanchuma Ki Tissa* 16. *Shemot Rabbah* 41:5.

4. *Bereishit Rabbah* 3:6.

(אֲ-דנָי).[5] This is also the Name used in place of the Tetragrammaton, God's essential Name, *Havayah* (י-הוה), which we are not allowed to pronounce, as mentioned in our previous teachings. Instead, when reading the Torah publicly, *Havayah* is read as *Adni*. The Name *Adni* is usually translated into English correctly as "Lord." This is perhaps the most well-known Name of God in English, but as noted, it is not God's only Name.

Adni corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom, the tenth and lowest of the Ten *Sefirot*, thus it is considered the lowest of God's ten Names. Despite that, *Adni*/Lord, reflects or enclothes within itself the highest and most essential Name, *Havayah*, the Tetragrammaton, because it is the Name used in lieu of *Havayah* when reading the Torah.

Now, returning to the 24 ornaments of the bride, the bride is one of the symbols associated with the *sefirah* of kingdom and thus with the Name *Adni*/Lord. When we refer to God as Lord, we are referring to Divinity as it is revealed (among other things) through the *sefirah* of kingdom, symbolized by the bride.

24 PERMUTATIONS OF GOD'S NAME ADNI

Whenever we seek to deepen our understanding of a topic related to a number (in this case 24), we search for parallel instances of that number as it appears in Torah.[6] So now let us look at what else corresponds to 24 apart from these 24 ornaments and the 24 books of the Bible.

In mathematics, 24 is the number of permutations that can be made from a word with four (different) letters. Mathematically, calculating the number of permutations possible for n objects is n! (read: n factorial). It is the product of the integers from 1 to n. In the case of 4 letters, the number of permutations is 4! (4 factorial) or 1 times 2 times 3 times 4, which is indeed 24. But, if m of the n objects are identical, then the number of different permutations possible is n!/m! (n factorial divided by m factorial). Since God's Name *Adni* has four different letters they can be permuted in 24 different ways. But because the Tetrgrammaton, *Havayah* (י-הוה) has 2 identical letters *hei* (ה), the total number of different permutations is 24/2 or 12.

Now, since the Name *Adni* corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom and to its symbol the bride, it follows that the 24 different permutations of this Name correspond to the 24 ornaments or adornments of the bride.

The holiday of *Shavu'ot* (the Feast of Weeks) commemorates the day the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai. Because of this, on the night of *Shavu'ot*, we traditionally read an abridged version of the entire Bible—all 24 books. This abridged arrangement of the Bible is known as *Tikkun Leil Shavu'ot*, which literally means "The Rectification of the Night of *Shavu'ot*." It contains the beginning and ending of each of the 24 books of the Bible. By reading it, we are, as it were, adorning ourselves before God with the 24 ornaments of a bride—i.e.,

5. It is customary not to pronounce this Name when it is not part of a verse, which is why we transliterate it into English in a manner that is somewhat different from how it would be pronounced.

6. For the archetypal value of numbers, see in length in our volume, *The Hebrew Letters*.

with the 24 books of the Bible—because the Giving of the Torah is likened to the wedding between God and the Jewish people. In this text, following each of the 24 books of the Bible that we say in short, there appears one of the 24 permutations of the Name *Adni*, thus creating a correspondence between the 24 books of the Bible and the 24 permutations.

A DAY'S 24 HOURS

Another point to add to our list of things that correspond to the 24 books of the Bible is the 24 hours of every day. The 24 permutations of *Adni* correspond to the 24 hours of the day: 12 hours of day and 12 hours of night. According to Torah, the day usually follows the night, meaning that every 24-hour period begins with 12 hours of darkness with the 12 hours of light following. This for example is the order at the beginning of Genesis, where the account of each day ends with the words, "there was evening and there was morning."[7] In other cases, in the Torah, especially regarding the service practiced in the Tabernacle or the Holy Temple, it is the night that follows the day.

The average day (or every day at the equator) is from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. So, in the Tabernacle, the first hour of the day is from 6 to 7 a.m. The 13th hour is from 6 to 7 p.m., and so on. The first hour would correspond to the first permutation of *Adni* and the thirteenth hour to the thirteenth permutation. The order of the permutations was written out by the *Arizal* and as mentioned earlier, is used during the reading of the abridged Bible on the night of *Shavu'ot*. It is:

Hour	Book	*Adni*	*Havayah**
6am – 7	Genesis	א-דני	י-ה**וה**
7 – 8	Exodus	אדינ	יה**וה**
8 – 9	Leviticus	אנדי	יוה**ה**
9 – 10	Numbers	אניד	**ה**והי
10 – 11	Deuteronomy	אידנ	**ה**ויה
11 – 12	Joshua	אינד	**ה**הוי
12 – 1pm	Judges	דאני	וה**י**ה
1 – 2	Samuel	דאינ	וה**ה**י
2 – 3	Kings	דנאי	ויה**ה**
3 – 4	Isaiah	דניא	**י**היה
4 – 5	Jeremiah	דיאנ	**י**היה
5 – 6	Ezekiel	דינא	**ה**היו
6 – 7	Minor Prophets	נאדי	י-**ה**וה
7 – 8	Ruth	נאיד	י**ה**הו
8 – 9	Psalms	נדאי	יוה**ה**
9 – 10	Job	נדיא	ה**ו**הי
10 – 11	Proverbs	ניאד	ה**וי**ה
11 – 12	Ecclesiastes	נידא	ה**ה**וי
12 – 1am	Song of Songs	יאדנ	**ו**היה
1 – 2	Lamentations	יאנד	**ו**ההי
2 – 3	Daniel	ידאנ	ויה**ה**
3 – 4	Esther	ידנא	ה**י**הו
4 – 5	Chronicles	ינדא	ה**יו**ה
5 – 6	Ezra	ינאד	ה**ה**יו

There were very special individuals throughout history who would contemplate the particular permutation of *Adni* (and

7. Genesis 1:5.

* To distinguish between the higher (first) and lower (second) letters *hei* in *Havayah*, we have printed the higher in bold.

of *Havayah*) every hour of the day.[8] Some would even go so far as to divide every hour into four quarter hours, with each 15 minutes corresponding to one of the four letters of the permutation of *Havayah* (or *Adni*) corresponding to that hour, in order. This was especially prevalent in the study halls of the Chasidic movement where many would learn Torah while keeping their consciousness connected to God using this meditation.

What we are now adding is that a perfect soul that is connected to God through Torah could also connect directly by concentrating on each of the 24 books of the Bible in succession for each of the day's 24 hours. The first hour would be dedicated to Genesis, the second to Exodus, and so on until every 24 hours, one would go through the entire Bible.

For us this may seem like an unachievable goal, because of the state of our consciousness now. But there were people alive recently[9] who could go through the entire Talmud in their mind (2711 folio pages of text) in several hours. Even though we cannot conceive of what this might mean, the ideal state of being connected to the Bible and through the Bible, being connected to God, would include a review of each of the 24 books of the Bible, each of the 24 permutations of *Adni*, and each of the 24 ornaments adorning the bride, while recalling that it is we who are God's bride.

8. *Tanya*, ch. 41.

9. One of them was Rabbi Joseph Risen, known as the Rogatchover Gaon.

TIME AND THE SECRET OF GOD

As a nation, the Jewish people receive their first *mitzvah* in *parashat Bo*. This is the *mitzvah* to sanctify the new moon and to designate the month of Nissan as the first of the months: "This month will be for you the beginning of the months, it will be for you the first of the months of the year."[1] This *mitzvah* also involves the Jewish people's initiation into the intricate calculations and profound secrets of the Jewish calendar, which God taught Moses. Along with several other instructions, this commandment was given in preparation for the Exodus from Egypt.

The first *mitzvah* given to the Jewish people is meant to empower them to become masters of time rather than its slaves. This is the most significant distinction between a free person and a slave. A slave is not free to decide what to do with his or her time; only a free person possesses this option. Learning this lesson is the first step in the long road to true freedom. Ultimately, knowing how to use and relate to time is one of the main differences between a successful and an unsuccessful person, both materially and spiritually.

1. Exodus 12:1.

THE JEWISH CALENDAR

The Jewish calendar is fundamentally a lunar calendar, but it takes the solar cycle into account as well. An important feature of the laws governing the Jewish calendar is that it is not predetermined. You cannot print the calendar in advance for the entire year, because the declaration that a new month has begun depends on the sanctification of the new moon, a function performed by the *Sanhedrin*, the High Court, based on the testimony given by witnesses who had seen the thin crescent of the new moon.[2] In fact, this procedure survived until the 4th century CE when the *Sanhedrin* was disbanded and a precalculated calendar was adopted in response to the reality of life in exile and the needs of Jews all over the world.

The monthly declaration of the New Moon, which determines when the holidays will take place, establishes a fundamental principle: we have the ability to control the flow of time; time should not be treated as an independent force in the universe that controls us. This point cannot be emphasized enough when trying to understand a Jew's relation to time. God gave over into our hands the ability and responsibility to regulate time as a crucial first step in leaving Egypt.

The word for Egypt in Hebrew is derived from the root word meaning "confinement" or "narrow space." The historic Exodus of the Jewish people symbolizes the journey every individual should take from the dark slavery of constricted time and space to the light of freedom and elevated consciousness. For the Jewish people, this transformation was symbolized by their acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai, fifty days after leaving Egypt.

CONSTANT RENEWAL

When reflecting further on the first *mitzvah* the Jewish people received as a nation in preparation for leaving Egypt, we notice that the Hebrew word for "month" (חֹדֶשׁ) is written the same as the word for "new" (חָדָשׁ). They differ only in their pronunciation: *chodesh* versus *chadash*. Each month follows the cycle of the moon, from its inception at the beginning of the month to when it becomes full in the middle, and from its subsequent waning to when it is renewed once again. Consequently, the mystery of time is intrinsically bound up with the concepts of renewal and rejuvenation.

Kabbalah and Chasidut put great emphasis on *hitchadshut*, the ability to renew one's self and to experience time and life as new at every moment. In Psalms, David writes that God tells him: "Today I have given birth to you."[3] The experience of every moment as truly new, the sense of being reborn anew at every moment, is a sign of true Messianic consciousness. According to tradition, David, from whom *Mashiach* descends, was not allotted any time in this world.[4] The Midrash relates that Adam, who was given a preview of the future, saw this and "donated" seventy years of his life so that David could live.[5] Thus, David viewed his entire life as a gift,

2. *Mishnah Rosh HaShanah* chapters 1-2.

3. Psalms 2:7.

4. See also the class excerpt in this issue.

5. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Bereishit* 41.

and therefore he experienced each day as if "today I have given birth to you." This constant awareness of God's mercy and life-giving energy helps explain how David reached such lofty heights in praising God.

The capacity to renew one's self is truly one of the great secrets of attaining personal fulfillment and happiness. Without it, life can quickly wear people down, entangling them in tedious and boring habits, rote thoughts, and actions.

On a national level, renewal is one of the great secrets of Jewish survival. What other people have had to begin again so many times during their long history of persecution? No matter what the circumstances, the Jewish people have persevered and renewed themselves countless times in communities around the globe, generation after generation. This essential power exists in every Jewish soul and is one of the foundations allowing for Jewish continuity. The miraculous ingathering of the exiles and the rebuilding of the ancient homeland in the Land of Israel today clearly bears witness to this truth.

Taking this one step further, by breaking out of the confines of emotional and psychological slavery we are positioned to transcend the narrow straights of Egypt, as symbolic of linear time, and leap "over the sun" to experience a more Divine view of time. Notwithstanding the tremendous importance of renewal, the power to transcend our normative reality and even attain new insights and reveal new spiritual energies is an even greater achievement. This is what the verse in Ecclesiastes implies when it states, there is "nothing new under the sun."[6] When life is lived under the weight of rote habits and fixed routines then one perceives "nothing new under the sun." However, when one views life through a more elevated perspective on time and is inspired through the Divine power of renewal, one can always find something new "above the sun." Interestingly, the *Zohar* comments that there may not be anything new under the sun, but the moon is always changing and renewing itself, thus implying that there is always something new under the moon!

THE SECRET OF GOD: TIME

The verse mentioned above, "This month will be for you the beginning of the months, it will be for you the first of the months of the year," is the 1820th verse in the Torah. The number 1820 is the product of 70 times 26. 70 is the value of the Hebrew word for "secret" (**סוֹד**) and 26 is the value of God's essential four-letter Name, *Havayah* (י-הוה). These two words appear together in the phrase, "The secret of God is [revealed] to those who are in awe of Him"[7] (**סוֹד י-הוה** לִירֵאָיו), suggesting that 1820 is the secret of God's essential Name. Amazingly, God's essential Name, *Havayah* appears exactly 1820 times in the Pentateuch. Thus, by consecrating the month of Nisan and intercalating the Jewish calendar, the Jewish people enter the very "secret of God" and the secret of time.[8]

The "secret of God" alluded to in this verse relates to the way in which we link our experience of time to its Divine source.

6. Ecclesiastes (1:9).
7. Psalms 25:14.
8. *Mivchar Shi'urei Hitbonenut* vol. 3.

Every day in the Morning Service, we state the following: "He renews in His goodness every day perpetually the work of creation." Kabbalah and Chasidut emphasize that creation is renewed not just every day but at every single moment. Modern science now confirms that subatomic particles continually burst in and out of existence, some for merely a billionth of a second. These particles, which mysteriously animate the foundations of physical reality, are the manifestation of God's perpetual renewal of the work of Creation.

Jewish tradition teaches that for God, past, present, and future all occur simultaneously. Significantly, the four letters of God's essential Name, Havayah (י-הוה) also spell the Hebrew conjugations of "being" in past, present, and future tenses: "He was" (**הָיָה**), "He is" (**הֹוֶה**), and "He will be" (**יִהְיֶה**).[9] God, who creates and continuously renews the world and time, is simultaneously "in the world" and "above the world." Thus, when a human being comes nearer to God, he or she can experience time on an increasingly Divine level.

This understanding of the "secret of God" is truly revealing, for the power of renewal entails connecting to an aspect of Godliness, where time and all creation is renewed at every moment. Meditating on the constant renewal of Creation on both the literal, physical level, as well as on the spiritual level, opens the possibility of integrating that energy internally at every moment. This in turn leads to a life of constant rejuvenation and inspiration and is further translated, on a practical level, to making the most of our time.

THE SECRET OF GOD: JOY

The phrase, "The secret of God is to those who are in awe of Him" reveals another important "secret of God" (**סוד י-הוה לִירֵאָיו**), for its numerical value equals that of the primary word for "joy" (**שִׂמְחָה**). To a certain extent, we have only one fundamental choice regarding how to experience life. We either choose a joyous, positive attitude or a more passive, fatalistic, and ultimately unhappy approach.

Furthermore, the letters of the word for "thought" (**מַחְשָׁבָה**) can be rearranged to spell "with joy" (**בְּשִׂמְחָה**).[10] Although many people think that being a happy person is a matter of one's innate nature and that one is either a happy person or not, the truth is that being in a state of joy is a conscious and willful decision. Our thoughts determine whether we are happy or not and any situation in the present or the past can be reframed in a positive manner. The "secret of God" is that a life of constant renewal and inspiration is synonymous with a joyful life; a life focused on utilizing one's time in the most productive way possible leads to fulfillment and happiness.

9. The sum of these three words, "He was, He is, and He will be" (**הָיָה הֹוֶה וְיִהְיֶה**) is 72, the value of "loving-kindness" (**חֶסֶד**), indicating that all of existence is a gift of loving-kindness from God.

10. *Tikkunei Zohar* 67a.

STORY

REBBE MOSHE LEIB OF SASSOV: REDEEMING HEAVENLY CAPTIVES

Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib of Sassov was born around the year 5505 (1745) to Rabbi Yaakov and Rivkah. He studied under Rebbe Shmelke of Nikolsburg for 13 years, as well as under Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk. He resided in the city of Apta (Opatów, Poland) and later moved to Sassov in Galicia, which became an important chasidic center. Rebbe Moshe Leib's activities in Apta and later in Sassov had a significant influence on the spread of the chasidic movement in Poland and Galicia. Among his students were Rebbe Tzvi Hirsh of Ziditchov, Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kosov, the "Holy Jew" of Peshischa, and Rebbe Avraham David of Buchach. He became renowned as a wondrous advocate for and lover of all Jews who devoted himself to redeeming captives and helping others.

A miraculous story is told about his funeral: Years earlier, he had officiated over the wedding of two orphans, and the musicians at the wedding played a special melody. At the time of the funeral, those same musicians miraculously appeared, and when they heard which tzaddik was being buried, they remembered that when they had finished playing the special melody at the orphans' wedding, Rebbe Moshe Leib wished for himself: "May it be God's will that I be accompanied by this melody after my passing!" The mourners fulfilled the tzaddik's wish and accompanied him to his resting place with the special melody. He departed on the 4th of Shevat 5567 (1807), and his resting place is in Sassov.

When Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev's daughter gave birth to a son, the date for the *brit* (circumcision ceremony) was set for the 4th of Shevat, 5567 (1807). Many important people gathered for the joyous occasion, including Torah scholars, *chasidim*, and men of good deeds, as well as simple folk who honored their Rebbe.

The holy Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev was accustomed to performing the *mitzvah* of the circumcision early in the morning, but this time he did not appear. The congregation waited a long time for his arrival, minutes turned into hours until some people's patience was nearly exhausted.

Only several hours after midday did the Rebbe emerge from his room, circumcise

his grandson, and name him Moshe Yehudah Leib. After the festive meal, his son-in-law, the father of the child, asked if he would reveal the reason for his delay, and after whom he had named the child. The *tzaddik* turned to the assembled crowd and told them the story behind the scenes:

Today, when I rose early in the morning as is my custom and prepared to bring my grandson into the covenant of our patriarch Abraham, I saw a great darkness covering the entire world. A prince of Israel, the *tzaddik* Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sassov had departed from this world. As I sat in mourning, grieving over the passing of the *tzaddik*, I heard a voice proclaiming: "Make way for Rebbe Moshe Yehudah Leib the son of Rabbi Yaakov, and go out to greet him!"

At the sound of the proclamation, holy and pure souls gathered to greet the *tzaddik*. But when Rebbe Moshe Leib arrived, surrounded by the souls of the righteous, suddenly a cry was heard that went from one end of the world to the other. At that moment, the *tzaddik* left the holy company and ran towards the sound, until he reached the entrance of Gehenom and immediately entered.

A great commotion arose in the upper world, and an order was immediately given to the angel of Gehenom not to ignite the fire while the *tzaddik* was there. The angel of Gehenom came to Rebbe Moshe Leib and asked him to leave the place, since as long as he was there, he had no permission to use the fire. The *tzaddik* replied: "I will not leave until all the souls here leave with me." The angel asked him, "And why?" Rebbe Moshe Leib answered: "During my lifetime, I engaged in the *mitzvah* of redeeming captives and saved many souls, therefore I wish to save souls from their captivity here as well!"

The angel went to the Heavenly Court and reported Rebbe Moshe Leib's demand. When the *tzaddik's* argument was heard before the Heavenly Court, they decided to bring the case before the Throne of Glory. When the court's messenger reached him and informed him of the summons, the *tzaddik* replied: "All my life I devoted my soul to the *mitzvah* of redeeming captives and now, here in the world of truth when this *mitzvah* comes to my hand, shall I not fulfill it?! I will not move from here until I fulfill this *mitzvah*."

Rebbe Moshe Leib then raised his eyes to the Throne of Glory and said, "Master of the Universe, You know how great the *mitzvah* of redeeming captives is. Due to its great importance, You performed it Yourself, not through an angel and not through a messenger. When Israel was in Egypt, You descended in Your glory to redeem them from the house of bondage. Master of the Universe, I have held fast to Your attribute; all my days I labored in this *mitzvah* and all captives were worthy in my eyes. I did not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. Here I have found so many captives, therefore I wish to fulfill this same *mitzvah*. And if not, it

is better for me to remain with them in Gehenom and suffer like them, than to sit with the righteous and enjoy the radiance of the Divine Presence."

Immediately, the Almighty ruled that Rebbe Moshe Leib could redeem as many souls from Gehenom as the number of captives he had redeemed during his lifetime. They checked and found that he had redeemed sixty thousand people in his lifetime! Legions of souls left Gehenom with him leading them, as he brought them to the Garden of Eden (and presumably, Rebbe Moshe Leib did not meticulously count the precise number and smuggled out a few extra). When I saw this, the *tzaddik* concluded, I left my room and named my grandson Moshe Yehudah Leib.

Three things can be learned from this story. Two from Rebbe Moshe Leib, and the third from Rebbe Levi Yitzchak's contemplation of the scene.

First, whatever a Jew does in this lifetime, he continues to do in the afterlife. Although in the afterlife there is apparently no relevance to serving God, and it is the time for receiving reward, Rebbe Moshe Leib engaged in redeeming captives all his life, and so he did in the afterlife. For him, there is no reason for reward as long as the *mitzvah* he engaged in can still be performed by him.

Second, we can learn the importance and the value of the *mitzvah* of redeeming captives. Redeeming captives is described by the sages as a "great *mitzvah*" (מִצְוָה רַבָּה) an expression used only for this *mitzvah* and for the *mitzvah* of procreation. In our generation, these two *mitzvot* unite in the effort to bring Jews back to God. Making someone into a *ba'al teshuvah* includes both spiritual procreation—one who teaches his fellow is as if he gave birth to him—as well as redeeming captives—there is no greater redemption of captives than to redeem a Jew from a foreign culture.

The third thing relates to the days of *Shovavim* (the weeks we read the Torah portions from *Shemot* through *Mishpatim*) during which Rabbi Moshe Leib's day of passing falls every year. It is customary to focus on rectifying our covenant of procreation during this time of the year. When Rebbe Levi Yitzchak wanted to approach his grandson's *brit*, he first sat in intense devotion and contemplated the heavenly scene unfolding before his eyes for many hours. From this, much can be learned about rectifying the covenant in our own souls. When a Jew has seen forbidden images or events, even when he fully repents for having seen them, a negative impression that harms him in his continued service of God remains.

How can these images be erased from memory without being pushed into the subconscious where they might, God forbid, do additional harm? When a chasidic story is told with pleasure, in a vivid, detailed, and tangible manner, it erases a thousand images from the unconscious of the person and rectifies the negative impression they leave behind. Thus, one can "come to the brit" of the person and rectify the soul.

FARBRENGEN EXCERPT

THE BA'AL SHEM TOV'S FIRST FOLLOWER

In a class given on the 28th of Kislev this year, Rav Ginsburgh joined his family for a traditional "Latkes Night," which he dedicated to the connection between the two aspects of Mashiach, son of Joseph and son of David.

One of the topics that he explored in some length was the unique understanding of the connection between David and Joseph as presented by Rabbi Meir Margaliyot, author of Meir Netivim, who was the Ba'al Shem Tov's first follower and was a leading rabbinical figure in his own right.

The full text of this farbrengen was first published in Hebrew in the Nifla'ot issue for Vayigash 5786.

Many are not familiar with the Ba'al Shem Tov's early years, before he was commanded to reveal himself as a *tzaddik*. His first devout follower was the brother of a great figure in his own right, Rabbi Yitzchak Dov Ber Margaliyot, the chief rabbi of all of Podolia who famously argued with the Frankists (together with his rebbe, the Ba'al Shem Tov and Rabbi Chaim HaCohen Rappaport) in Lviv in 1759.[1] When he was a teenager, Yitzchak Dov brought his younger brother Meir Margaliyot to the Ba'al Shem Tov, who was then a ritual slaughterer. Rabbi Meir is known as the Ba'al Shem Tov's first committed follower who years later, with the Ba'al Shem Tov's blessing (and insistence), became the chief rabbi of Ostroh, one of the most important Jewish communities in Western Ukraine.

Interestingly, though the Ba'al Shem Tov was his rebbe and teacher, Rabbi Meir Margaliyot addresses him as "my friend and teacher" in their correspondence. No one else addressed the Ba'al Shem Tov this way. The Ba'al Shem Tov himself did not like the title "*chasidim*." The 21 years before he revealed himself were described by his then followers with the verse, "Only good for Israel"[2] (אַךְ טוֹב לְיִשְׂרָאֵל). The value of "only" (**אַךְ**) is 21, and in those 21 years, it was only good for Israel—Israel Ba'al Shem Tov; those were the best years of his life.

Rabbi Meir Margaliyot's works are known as *Meir Netivim*. They consist of both his responsa in *halachah* and a commentary on select topics from the Pentateuch illustrating his genius in gematria and mathematics. The greatest

1. Rabbi Yaakov Emden's addendum to *HaPedut VeHapurkan* (Altona: 1769) 29b.

2. Psalms 73:1.

scholars of his generation described his writing as possible only with Divine Spirit, *Ru'ach HaKodesh*.[3]

One of the topics he innovates upon is the lifespan of King David. Adam, the first human, who was shown the history of all his progeny, saw that David would be given only 3 hours to live, and so he "donated" 70 years of his own life to David. But these 70 years constituted only the lifespan of David's physical being. The life of his soul was given to him by the patriarchs. The Mittler Rebbe[4] describes these two aspects of King David's life as the "stimulus of his physical flesh" (הִתְפַּעֲלוּת חֵיֵי בָּשָׂר) and the "stimulus of his Divine life" (הִתְפַּעֲלוּת חֵיֵי אֱ-לוֹהַּ).

The 70 years given by the patriarchs are usually calculated in the following manner[5]: Abraham passed away at the age of 175 and Isaac at the age of 180 so that he would not see his grandson Esau's moral corruption. Nonetheless, those 5 years went to David. Jacob lived 147 years, 28 years less than Abraham. Those years went to David. Finally, Joseph lived to 110, 37 years less than his father Jacob, and those years went to David. In total, David received 70 years from Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph.

Rabbi Meir Margaliyot notes that there is a different reckoning brought in the Zohar, which makes a great deal of sense, and it is surprisingly not mentioned in Chabad literature as far as I can recall. The Zohar[6] writes that all 70 of David's years came from Jacob and Joseph alone. The principle it follows is that every son should ideally match his father's lifespan. So, Jacob lived 33 years less than Isaac and Joseph lived 37 years less than Jacob; together they gave David these 70 years. Obviously, this is presents a simpler logic than the other calculation that assumes Abraham should ideally match his son's Isaac's lifespan. When David says in Psalms, "Open my eyes so that I may see the wonders of your Torah" (גַּל עֵינַי וְאַבִּיטָה נִפְלָאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתֶךָ), since the word "open" (**גַּל**) equals 33, he may be alluding to the 33 years he received from Jacob according to this more logical reckoning, since Jacob is considered the pillar of Torah.

In my opinion, this is a far more logical explanation when considering that according to it David—the archetypal soul of kingdom—receives from Jacob and Joseph the archetypal souls of beauty (*tiferet*) and foundation (*yesod*), the two sefirot that are just above kingdom on the middle axis.

Based on this reckoning, Rabbi Meir Margaliyot explains the verse, "By Your arm, You redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph, *selah*"[7] (גָּאַלְתָּ בִּזְרוֹעַ עַמֶּךָ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְיוֹסֵף סֶלָה). The entire verse is describing the redemption, but what is the meaning of "the children of Jacob and Joseph" and why are they "Your people?" It would make sense that they would be the children of Jacob but why would "Your

3. *Zichronam LiVrachah* for *Iyar*, p. 279.
4. Introduction to his *Kuntres HaHitpa'alut*, p. 53.
5. *Zohar* 1:168a and Arizal, *Sefer HaLikutim*, *Ha'azinu*.
6. We do not have this passage in our printed version of the Zohar, however, see *Eitz HaDa'at Tov*, *Vayechi s.v. Inyan velo hesigu*.
7. Psalms 77:16.

people" be the children of Joseph. A simple answer would be to look at these words numerically and notice that the average value of "Your people" (**עַמְּךָ**), "Jacob" (**יַעֲקֹב**), and "Joseph" (**יוֹסֵף**) is 156, the value of Joseph, so Joseph is the essence of these words.

The *Targum* and other commentaries look for the answer in Joseph's role as the provider for all of his brothers in Egypt. Because he ensured their survival, he is seen as their father of sorts. But the Meir Netivim takes a different approach. He writes that though redemption applies to all of Israel, King David speaks of his personal redemption, "God is my rock and my redeemer"[8] (ה' צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי). David is thus both the Mashiach who will redeem, and the one who is redeemed. He represents the *sefirah* of kingdom, which has nothing of its own and therefore first needs God to redeem it. As we mentioned, he had no time allotted for his life and had to receive the gift of life from others—external life from Adam and inner life from Jacob and Joseph (following the Zohar's reckoning mentioned earlier). This is why David refers to both Jacob and Joseph as his fathers. Indeed, when we add "David" (**דָּוִד**) to "Jacob and Joseph" (**יַעֲקֹב וְיוֹסֵף**), the sum equals 358, the value of "Mashiach" (**מָשִׁיחַ**)!

To this explanation we may add another observation that ties the verse to David. The value of the entire verse, "By Your arm, You redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph, *selah*"[9] (גָּאַלְתָּ בִּזְרוֹעַ עַמֶּךָ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְיוֹסֵף סֶלָה) is 1350. Since it consists of 27 letters, the average value of each letter is 50, which is the value of the letter *nun* (**נ**), the 14th letter of the aleph-bet; and 14 is the value of "David" (**דָּוִד**). Thus, numerically, the entire verse alludes to King David.

8. Ibid. 19:15.

9. Psalms 77:16.

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