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

בס"ד

Wonders

Weekly Magazine of the Shiurim and Farbrengens
of HaRav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

Issue 186

Shabbat Vayakhel-Pekudei-HaChodesh 5786 ❁ March 13-14, 2026
שַׁבָּת וַיַּקְהֵל-פְּקוּדֵי-הַחוֹדֶשׁ ❁ יז-יח אַדָר תשפ"ו



...already in our generation, there was an inception—an atchalta (אתחלתא)— not necessarily the inception of Redemption (אתחלתא דגאולה), but certainly an inception of the Return to Zion. Jews are returning to the Land. We must give thanks for this, it is a miracle in itself according to the Rebbe's approach.

3 **Class Excerpt: Scientific Objectivity and the Subjectivity of Faith**

6 **Five Dynamics of Leadership - Part 2**

9 **Story: The Chidushei HaRim: Sensitivity and Law**

12 **Farbrengen Excerpt: From the Return to Zion to the Coming of Mashiach**

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**

Wonders is distributed weekly in Israel and North America.
For feedback and/or to receive copies for distribution in your area,
write to **mgenuth@inner.org**
Dedication opportunities available.

To see more of Harav Ginsburgh's teachings in English, and to sign up for our weekly email newsletter with updates on live classes and events, go to:

www.inner.org

Books and music are available for sale at www.inner.org/webstore

Join our daily Whatsapp group. Send a message to **+972-50-6528650**

Subscribe to our Youtube channel for hundreds of hours of in-depth study
www.youtube.com/innerorg

Click here to support Wonders (3500 copies freely distributed every week)

Scan this code to access all Wonders past issues

Wonders Staff
Editor: R' Moshe Genuth • Associate Editor: Shelli Karzen
Contributing Editor: R. Avraham Arieh Trugman • Typesetting: Yoel Broderick

CLASS EXCERPT:
SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIVITY AND THE SUBJECTIVITY OF FAITH

Modern technology attempts to convince us that its manipulation of nature is independent of our subjective conscious connection with the Almighty. Over time, we begin to lose our conscious agency, believing that the solution to all humanity's problems will come with enough scientific effort.

Without subjective conscious effort and faith, we lose our ability to differentiate between good and evil and ultimately, we weaken our power of free will.

In this excerpt taken from a class given on the 26th of Tevet, 5786, HaRav Ginsburgh's traces these issues back to the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. The full class was published in Hebrew in the Bo 5786 issue of Nifla'ot.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND CHOOSING WHAT IS GOOD

The Torah addresses the age-long struggle between faith (Divine wisdom) and science (mundane wisdom) through its description of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh—particularly in *parashat Bo*. There are many theological questions that this confrontation raises, one of which is God taking away Pharaoh's free will and coercing him to resist Moses' calls to free the Israelites after the first five plagues. Why would God possibly cancel an individual's free will, even if he is an evil person?[1]

Free will is dependent on one's faculty of *da'at*. *Da'at* is usually translated as "knowledge," but it can also mean consciousness.[2] To *da'at* we associate the ability to differentiate between good and evil, and without the subjective ability to tell the difference between them, there can be no free will. That is why the Torah tells us that, "Behold, I have set before you today, life and the good, death and evil.... And you shall choose life."[3] Being able to choose depends on being able to subjectively identify the difference between good and evil.[4]

This is also why the child, who does not yet possess the faculty of consciousness of good and evil cannot yet exercise free will and consequently is also not held responsible for his actions—which is why children are not punished from Above.

1. The question itself is one that can only be asked by Jews who possess free-will to a greater degree than all others. For more on the unique state of free will in Jews see *Likkutei Torah*, *Emor* 38b and the essay *Kevod Malchutcha* 5660.

2. The modern Hebrew word for "consciousness" (מוּדָעוּת) is cognate with *da'at*.

3. Deuteronomy 30:15 and v. 19.

4. *Ma'or Einayim* on *parashat Bo*.

The *Zohar*[5] teaches that the verse, "You are my son, today I have given birth to you"[6] refers to a child on his *Bar-mitzvah* day, the day on which he is granted the faculty of knowledge.

Consciousness is innately aligned with the good. In other words, the moment that an individual is conscious of the difference between good and evil, he or she is inclined to choose the good. Kabbalah associates one of the Names of God with each of the sefirot: *Kel* with loving-kindness (*chesed*), *Elokim* with might (*gevurah*), etc. The Name associated with the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*), with consciousness, is,[7] whose value is 17, also the value of "good" (**טוב**) providing another **אהוה** demonstration of the inherent connection between consciousness and choosing good over evil. There is also a verse that hints at this connection, "Without knowledge, the psyche lacks goodness"[8] (גם בלא דעת נפש לא טוב).

EGYPTIAN SCIENTIFIC CONSCIOUSNESS

During the Egyptian exile, our consciousness was in exile and therefore our ability to exercise free will was limited.[9] Only upon leaving Egypt did the faculty of knowledge, consciousness, and our free will gradually appear, until it was fully revealed at the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, allowing us to freely choose to accept the Torah with the foundational statement, "We shall do and we shall hear" (נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמַע). Accordingly, it is not that free will was taken from Pharaoh but rather that free will was still absent. For all of Pharaoh's human capacity for reasoning,[10] without the capacity for free will, his decisions were closer to those of a brute that follows its nature and is bound by it.

Despite the Israelites in Egypt having descended from the Patriarchs who were fully conscious of God, and even though consciousness (*da'at*) is passed down from father to son, it can only persist for three generations. The grandfather can not only share the knowledge with his grandchildren, he can share the true consciousness, which is the experience of knowing God. But by the fourth generation, the consciousness of God is forgotten, and the live tradition becomes an empty routine description. Once the consciousness had been lost to the Israelites, it was all the more so absent from Pharaoh, who is likened to the foreskin that conceals the covenant of circumcision. That is why Pharaoh boasted before Moses, "Who is *Havayah* that I should heed Him and let Israel go? I do not know *Havayah*…."[11]

What did Pharaoh replace subjective knowledge of God with? He himself was a great magician as were his magi, the so-called *chartumim* of Egypt. Witchcraft is based on the negation of Divine consciousness. If it is clear that God

5. 2:98a.
6. Psalms 2:7.
7. *Pri Eitz Chaim*, *Sha'ar Keriyat Shema*, ch. 25.
8. Proverbs 19:2.
9. In Kabbalah the state of exile is known as "three within three" (תְּלַת גּוֹ תְּלַת), the three emotive *sefirot* (and the three intellectual *sefirot*, including knowledge) were curled within the three habitual *sefirot*.
10. As is known in the *Tanya* (ch. 2) that the psychological tension in a Jew is between his animal soul and his Divine soul, so the equivalent tension in a non-Jew is between his animal soul and his intellectual (thinking) soul.
11. Exodus 5:2.

is the Creator and that "All is God and God is all" then the power of witchcraft is nullified. In our modern times, it is science and particularly technology that has succeeded witchcraft[12] in negating consciousness of God as the sole ruler of reality. There are scientists who completely reject God because they have succeeded in manipulating reality in important (albeit, limited) ways and are convinced that given enough time, technology will have no limits. Similarly, Pharaoh was not impressed by the fact that his magi could not duplicate the plague of lice, ostensibly because witchcraft could not manipulate any creature smaller than a grain of barley,[13] for Pharaoh believed like today's scientists, that given enough time, his magi would figure out a way to manipulate these smaller creatures as well. Indeed, today we see that technology can control even sub-atomic particles.

Science and especially technology, because they purport to be objective, negate consciousness, which is sensitive to the human subjective experience. In the language of Talmudic reasoning, consciousness adds the *gavra* (subject) dimension to the *cheftza* (object) dimension.[14] In that generation, the Israelites together with consciousness were exiled to Egypt, the center of culture and science of the ancient world. In our generation, the major exiles of the Jewish people have been to the countries and cultural centers where belief in science is strongest and has become an addiction to science and technology. Success in manipulating and controlling nature leads to "extracting God from the equation." But when God reappears, His reemergence undermines the seemingly consistent scientific understanding, making it irrelevant and forcing us to reunite Torah and science and introduce the supernatural into the natural. Indeed, we see that science is becoming more open to the notion that the human subjective perspective affects reality.

12. [Editor's note: to understand this deep connection, see Lynn Thorndike's monumental work, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*.]
13. Sanhedrin 67b. This measure is about 1cm by 0.7cm.
14. See more in the class from the 20th of *Tishrei*, 5785, published in the Hebrew issue of *Niflaot* for *parashat* Noach 5785, pp. 10ff.

FIVE DYNAMICS OF LEADERSHIP - PART 2

In 2001, Gal Einai published HaRav Ginsburgh's third book in English: Awakening the Spark Within: Five Dynamics of Leadership that Can Change the World.

In that volume, HaRav Ginsubrgh analyzes the concept of leadership from a Jewish point of view and how each person can tap into the soul qualities of a leader to affect their own lives, the community around them, and ultimately, the entire world. Having introduced the broader vision of leadership in the previous issue, we now turn to the first of the five dynamics: the art of compromise—a quality that lies at the very heart of authentic and enduring leadership.

One of the most basic prerequisites of leadership is the ability to find favor in both the eyes of God and people. This principle is stated succinctly by the sages: "If the spirit of man is pleased with him, the spirit of God is pleased with him; but if the spirit of man is not pleased with him, the spirit of God is not pleased with him."[1] From here we learn that leadership rooted solely in imposed authority is not genuine leadership. Authority enforced without consent reflects tyranny, not guidance. True leadership emerges from relationships and the ability to lead through consensus and compromise, with empathy, respect, and an authentic bond with those being led.

This quality is exemplified when Moses is informed by God that he will not lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Moses' reaction is that God must appoint his successor revealing that his primary concern is not his own legacy, but the wellbeing of the nation—that they should not remain "like sheep without a shepherd."[2] God instructs Moses to appoint Joshua as his successor, not because of his political skill, but because of Joshua's unique capacity to relate to every individual according to their inner nature. The Midrash emphasizes this quality, explaining that Joshua possessed the ability to relate to each person in love and empathy, responding to the unique spirit of every soul.[3] Leadership thus begins with a warm personal relationship rather than domination.

The art of compromise, however, must not be mistaken for weakness or moral surrender. It does not mean forfeiting principles or blurring ethical clarity. On the contrary, compromise emerges from inner strength, from the capacity to remain firmly rooted in truth while remaining open, flexible, and inclusive.

A KABBALISTIC PERSPECTIVE

To understand this dynamic more deeply, we turn to one of the

1. *Pirkei Avot* 3:10.

2. Numbers 27:17.

3. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 21:5.

most profound teachings in Kabbalah, articulated by the Arizal. He taught that when the Divine will to create the world arose, a fundamental paradox emerged: how could a finite reality exist within God's infinite Presence? His answer was the doctrine of *tzimtzum*—a contraction of Divine light that created an "empty void," an apparent empty space in which finite existence could emerge. Later kabbalists debated whether the Arizal meant that this contraction was literal or figurative. If understood literally, it would imply a rigid, binary worldview: either God is present or absent; either one position is correct and the other false. But if understood figuratively, as a metaphor used to capture a complex reality for our human finite consciousness, then God's Presence remains all-encompassing while at the same time, room is "made" for Creation and by corollary, reality can include paradox, multiplicity, and the coexistence of opposing truths. Indeed, two of the ways God is described in Medieval rabbinic literature is as "unaffected by paradox"[4] (נִמְנָע הַנִּמְנָעוֹת) and נוֹשֵׂא הֲפָכִים, "the bearer of contradictions."[5]

BEARING CONTRADICTIONS AND OPPOSITES

This paradoxical outlook forms the basis for a central principle of Torah thought. When the sages debated opposing positions, they famously declared: "These and these are the words of the living God."[6] Even when Jewish law follows one opinion, the alternative view is preserved in the Talmud, because it too contains an aspect of truth. Whereas Western thought often recoils from paradox, Torah consciousness embraces it, recognizing that compromise and peace are born from the ability to hold complexity without erasing difference.

This idea is embedded in the very origins of humanity. In the Garden of Eden stood two trees: The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life.[7] The Tree of Knowledge represents binary logic—good versus evil—while the Tree of Life represents wholeness and integration. The Torah itself is described as a Tree of Life: "It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and all its paths are peace."[8] For leaders, whether in a family, a workplace, the wider community, or among nations, the ability to integrate opposing perspectives is essential. Yet compromise has boundaries. One must never imagine that peace is achieved by compromising the moral and spiritual foundations of the Torah, for the Torah itself is the ultimate source of peace.

A vivid example of this balance can be seen in the observance of Shabbat. From an external perspective, Shabbat appears restrictive, defined by prohibitions. But those who observe Shabbat know that these boundaries open the gates to inner peace, sanctity, family connection, and closeness to God and one's own soul.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

It is an accepted principle that every rule has exceptions. For example: Torah law teaches that when human life is endangered, the laws of Shabbat are set aside.[9] The idea of exceptions to the rule is

4. *Teshuvot HaRashba 418.*
5. Lubavitcher Rebbe based on the phrase, "Two opposites in a single vessel."
6. *Eruvin* 13b.
7. Genesis 2:9.
8. Proverbs 3:18.
9. *Yoma* 85b.

taken even one step further in a statement of the sage Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, who teaches that "at times, the nullification of Torah is its very fulfillment."[10] This principle finds expression in the path of a *ba'al teshuvah*, one who returns to a Torah observant lifestyle. Many times, a person who is not brought up in a Torah observant atmosphere and is then exposed to the beauty and richness of Judaism, dives in head first from excitement and a sense of being truly inspired. Some individuals can make such a drastic change in lifestyle easily, yet many of those newly returning to Torah observance often require a gradual, measured approach. Here, taking one's time to properly integrate these sudden changes is not a concession—it is a strategy for lasting spiritual growth.

LEADERSHIP AND A RECTIFIED EGO

Another essential dimension of leadership is a rectified ego. In Kabbalah, the final *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*), corresponds to kingship and leadership. Yet its inner essence is existential lowliness and humility. This type of humility does not imply weakness or passivity. Moses, described by the Torah as "the humblest of all men," stands as perhaps the greatest leader in Jewish history precisely because his ego did not obstruct empathy, responsibility, or truth.[11] An unrectified ego, by contrast, leaves little room for compromise, understanding, or peace.

Unfortunately, in today's world, we are used to political leaders who crave power and are ready to promise almost anything to their constituents if it leads to reelection. An unbridled ego puts self before virtually all considerations, including trampling over anyone or anything that gets in their way. The way of Jewish leadership demands true humility while at the same time standing strong for eternal values, morals, and ethics, ever ready to find ways to promote true compromise and inclusiveness.

FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE

The above ideas are reflected directly in the Torah's command: "Justice, justice shall you pursue."[12] Torah commentaries ask: why is justice stated twice? One explanation is that we are instructed to pursue justice from multiple angles, to see both sides of an issue. The sages debate whether a judge's primary task is to uncover absolute truth or to bring peace between disputants.[13] Ideally, a judge first seeks compromise and reconciliation. Only when this proves impossible must strict judgment be rendered, and even then, with compassion. Significantly, the Torah is described both as a Torah of truth[14] and a Torah of loving-kindness.[15] Leadership requires the wisdom to balance both.

The sages even teach that "for the sake of peace, one is allowed to alter [the truth]."[16] It is important to note that the actual wording is "to alter," not "to lie." The sages gave permission in certain cases to rise above narrow logic in service of a higher cause, that of facilitating compromise and peace. The ultimate leader, the Mashiach,

10. *Menachot* 99b.
11. Numbers 12:3.
12. Deuteronomy 16:20.
13. *Sanhedrin* 6b.
14. Malachi 2:6.
15. Proverbs 31:26.
16. *Yevamot* 65b.

will embody this synthesis, judging and teaching in a way that unites truth and peace.[17]

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught that every Jew contains a spark of Mashiach, a latent leadership potential whose development brings peace into the world. This vision is captured beautifully in the words of Psalms: "Kindness and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed. Truth will sprout from the earth, and righteousness will look down from heaven."[18]

In a world fractured by division and discord, may we merit to pursue justice while cultivating compromise, and to bring truth and peace together through enlightened leadership.

17. Isaiah 11:3-4.

18. Psalms 85:11-12.

STORY

THE CHIDUSHEI HARIM: SENSITIVITY AND LAW

Rebbe Yitzchak Meir Alter was born in 5559 (1799) to Rabbi Yisrael Rotenberg, the rabbi of Magniszew. In his youth, he was a student of the Maggid of Kozhnitz and his son Rabbi Moshe, and later became close to Rebbe Simchaj Bunim of Peshischa and his successor, the Kotzker Rebbe. In his later years, after the death of the Kotzker Rebbe, he moved to the town of Ger near Warsaw, where he established the Ger Hasidic dynasty. He married Feiga, the sister of the Kotzker Rebbe's wife, and the couple had thirteen children. Almost all of them, except for his daughter Esther, died during his lifetime. After the death of his daughter-in-law Esther and his son Rabbi Avraham Mordechai, he raised his grandson Rebbe Yehudah Leib, the Sefat Emet, who became the Gerer Rebbe four years after his passing. He also raised his grandson Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Elazar Yustman, the Siftei Tzaddik of Piltz.

He was the president of the Rabbi Meir Baal Haness Charity - Poland Branch, and did much for the residents of the Land of Israel. He greatly valued in-depth study but did not neglect breadth of knowledge, requiring his students to know at least twenty pages of Talmud by heart. He became known as Chidushei HaRim, which means "the novellae of the Rim (רים)" where Rim stands for "Our rebbe, Yitzchak Meir" (רַבֵּנוּ יִצְחָק מֵאִיר). In addition to his greatness in Torah, the Chidushei HaRim was known for his advocacy on behalf of Polish Jewry, together with his friend Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorke. He passed away on the 23rd of Adar 5626 (1866) in Ger, where he is buried.

The tzaddik, Rebbe Yitzchak Meir of Ger, the author of *Chidushei HaRim*, had a wonderful sensitivity to discern in any food item if there was even a hint of a forbidden substance, even if according to the letter of the law it was kosher. Once there was a question about a chicken that was cooked in his house, and the maid went to ask the rabbi, who ruled that the chicken was kosher. The maid was new and did not the Chidushei HaRim's custom not to eat anything that had questionable status and which had been presented before a legal authority. Therefore, the maid did not think it important to tell anyone in the house that there had been a question about the chicken.

When the *tzaddik's* attendant brought the bowl with the dish before him, the *tzaddik* set his eyes on the bowl, looked a bit, and ordered it to be removed from the table, refusing to taste it. The attendant went to his wife, the Rebbetzin to find out what had happened, and they both went to the maid, who related the incident.

Such occurrences happened often, and the *tzaddik* once said, "Surely you think this is something that pertains only to a rebbe. It is not so, and every Jew, if he wishes, can sense whether his heart allows him to eat a particular item or not. This is what the verse means: 'between the animal that may be eaten' (Leviticus 11:47) meaning, that allows itself to be eaten, 'and the animal that shall not be eaten' (Ibid.) that does not allow itself to be eaten."

Another time he said to his *chasidim*, "Know that there is no special level in this at all, and each of you can easily attain this sensitivity. This is what the *tzaddik* Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa, of blessed memory, taught us, and it is tested and proven: Before a person puts any food or drink into his mouth, he should firmly decide with a whole heart that if there is, God forbid, any forbidden substance in the food or drink, it would be better for him to choke before he swallows. Then they inform him from Heaven through a clear feeling to refrain from swallowing that item."

A similar story is told in Chabad about Reb Shmuel Munkes, one of the great *chasidim* of the Alter Rebbe. At one of the large farbrengens, during the early days of the Alter Rebbe's leadership, the *chasid* Reb Natan the Shochet brought a fried lung to eat at the gathering. Present at the farbrengen was also the *chasid* Reb Shmuel Munkes, who was considered a chasidic prankster. He was never heard speaking a revealed Torah teaching or Chasidut or praying a long Chabad-style prayer. He was always happy and good-hearted, and at every chasidic gathering, would bring drinks and distribute dessert.

When they brought the fried lung from Reb Natan the Ritual Slaughterer, they handed the bowl to Reb Shmuel to distribute to those present. He was very pleased, danced a lot and did tricks with the bowl. He did not, however, distribute the delicacy. After some time, the young men decided to take it by force. When Reb Shmuel saw this, he jumped from his place, threw the bowl and its contents into the dirty water, and broke out in a happy Cossack dance.

Everyone was shocked at the *bal tashchit* (wastefulness) and decided to give him a *'psak'* (a predetermined number of lashes). Hearing this, Reb Shmuel quickly jumped on the table, and the group of young men lashed him generously. When they finished, he got down from the table coolly and went to look for a replacement for the lung. It was already after midnight, but nevertheless, he found one of the residents of Liozna and received from him a large bowl of pickled cabbage. He returned to the study hall in a joyful dance and put the cabbage on the table, and the young men, who wanted to taste the fried lung, looked at him with a not-so-good eye.

Suddenly the butcher burst in shouting: "Jews! Do not eat the lung, it is not kosher!" Everyone was shocked, and it turned out that the butcher had been out, and his wife had given the Ritual Slaughterer's wife a non-kosher lung instead of the kosher one. When the butcher returned home and discovered the bitter mistake, he ran quickly to Reb Natan the Ritual Slaughterer's house, where he learned that the lung had been taken to the Rebbe's study hall.

When the elder *chasidim* heard this, they assumed the Shmuel Munkes had seen the lung was not kosher through *ru'ach haKodesh* (Divine inspiration). They called him and asked: "What connection do you have to miracles and Divine inspiration? How did you know to destroy the lung?"

"I didn't know anything," said Reb Shmuel Munkes. "But at my first *yechidut* (private audience) with the Rebbe, I resolved in my heart not to want any tasty physical thing. When they brought the lung, I very much wanted to eat from it, and seeing that the crowd also craved it, I decided that there must be some prohibition here, because a permitted thing does not have such a power of attraction. This is what the Rebbe says on the verse "A rich harvest comes through the strength of the ox."[1] This means that the power of attraction of the animal soul is stronger than that of the Divine soul. And so, I threw the lung into the dirty water."

The general details of both stories are similar: a strictly kosher kitchen, an unknown problem, and a developed spiritual sense that uncovers it. However, when we examine the soul movements of the two protagonists, it becomes clear that the stories are diametrically opposed. While Reb Shmuel Munkes yearns to eat from the lung, and thus understands that it is non-kosher, the *Chidushei HaRim* knows this through a feeling of revulsion and choking. What is the root of the difference between these two sensations?

Reb Shmuel Munkes, who feels an excessive desire and refrains from it, points to the rectification of the power of will in his soul (known as *reisha deArich* in Kabbalistic terms): "I resolved in my heart not to desire any tasty physical thing." Through the refinement of his desires, a person can feel and know what is permissible to eat and what should be discarded.

1. Proverbs 14:4.

The Gerer Rebbe, on the other hand, wanted to eat the soup, and according to one version, even tried several times. But despite this, he felt that he could not eat it; "the animal that shall not be eaten," that shall not allow itself to be eaten. This is the rectification of the faculty of pleasure in the soul (known as *reisha deAyin* in Kabbalistic terms). In his self-sacrifice, the Rebbe surrendered all his pleasure to God, until he derived pleasure only from the Holy Blessed One. Consequently, soup that is not absolutely kosher and not for the sake of Heaven repulses him to the point of choking.

FARBRENGEN EXCERPT

FROM THE RETURN TO ZION TO THE COMING OF MASHIACH

It is clear to all that something has changed in the world. For the past century Jews have been reclaiming their lives in the Land of Israel and the Return to Zion (Shivat Tziyon) has transformed the world. However, the state of Israel is still a far cry from representing the aspirations of the Jewish people to be a nation of priests and a holy people.

This special farbrengen was given in the Rav's home on the 4th of Shevat this year and delineates four stages: life in exile, the Return to Zion, a leap to a state run according to Torah principles, and finally, the true and complete Redemption.

In connection with this week's parashah, Vayakhel, we bring this excerpt regarding the need to assemble our people to continue its transformation and encourage the next steps in Redemption.

The verse warning Pharaoh about the eighth plague reads, "And now send, gather [הָעֵז] your livestock and all that you have in the field; every man and beast that is found in the field and is not gathered home, the hail shall come down upon them and they shall die."[1] This is the only time in the Torah—and Rashi brings two more examples from the Prophets—that the translation of the word הָעֵז (pronounced *ha'ez*, which sounds like "the goat") is gather or assemble. This can easily be seen from the continuation of the verse, "and is not gathered home."

Based on this, we can suggest a new meaning for the verse "*Havayah* will give boldness [עז] to His people, *Havayah* will bless His people with peace": God gives us the strength and boldness to be gathered and assembled together (a gathering for the sake of Torah, for "there is no boldness but Torah"), and this gathering will bring peace to our people.

1. Exodus 9:19.

REPENTANCE, MISSION, AND ASSEMBLY

If the word translated as "gather" (הֵעָז) instructs us to gather together with positive and holy boldness, the words that precede it—"And now send [שְׁלַח]"—require us to first take upon ourselves a Divine sense of duty, a *shelichut*, and even before that we need to perform *teshuvah*, return to God, since the sages say that, "And now" is an idiom alluding to return to God.[2]

So, the order is: first *teshuvah* (return to God), then embrace your Divine mission—your *shelichut*—then assemble the people around an idea that can be realized; a new dream. And this bold dream that requires the boldness given to us by returning to God is to return to the Land of Israel, to return and to thereby be included in the collective body of the Jewish people, for the collective has special status in the Land of Israel.[3] For instance, in the legal principle that "the congregation does not perish."[4] The power of assembly overpowers death, when it serves as the basis for the Jewish willingness to sacrifice one's life for the sanctification of God's Name.

GROUNDBREAKING ASSEMBLIES

The prescribed action (since "action is the main thing") that comes out of this analysis of the verse regarding the plague of hail is that we must hold many assemblies out of a sense of holy boldness.

Once every seven years, in the year after the Sabbatical year (the *shemitah*), the king of Israel is required to assemble the people. This is known as *Hakhel*. The Lubavitcher Rebbe suggested a great innovation: that *Hakhel* is not a one-time event on the festival of *Sukkot*, but that the entire year after the Sabbatical year is called "the year of *Hakhel*," and that throughout the entire year assemblies should be held whose purpose is to increase our awe of Heaven. We now want to go another step further and say that in each of the seven years of the Sabbatical cycle, we should perform *Hakhel* and encourage assemblies that come from holy boldness, to assemble the people, to receive Torah, to return to God, and to immediately be redeemed.

As a rule, an assembly needs a purpose, and if there are to be many assemblies, they require many different goals around which to gather the people. One can hold Torah assemblies, but that is not what we are talking about now. We are talking about assemblies like those that began revolutions. Every revolutionary movement in the world began with many assemblies. That is how political Zionism began, that is how Agudath Israel began as well. All movements begin with assemblies, and the more the assembly captures the public eye, the more the mission they set out to achieve meets with success.

The example we gave on Shabbat is the assemblies of the Movement for Greater Israel (the Land of Israel defined by the borders promised to Abraham). The famous Israeli poet, Nathan Alterman established this movement after the Six-Day War. Alterman was not so openly observant of Torah and *mitzvot*, but he had Chabad roots and the Rebbe inquired about his welfare. In organizing these assemblies for the Greater Israel, he was careful that

2. *Bereishit Rabbah* 21:6.
3. See *Horayot* 3a. See also *Tzafnat Pa'ane'ach* on *Berachot* 10a.
4. *Horayot* 6a. *Temurah* 15b. *Sifra Dibura Dechata'ot, parshata* 6.

it be inclusive and included a list of people from the left and also from the right. This movement began with assemblies but failed; it did not succeed in affecting a change in reality. Alterman, who breathed the spirit of life into the movement, passed away prematurely. But the main problem was that the movement was not based on the true heritage of Israel, on faith in God and His Torah. The respectable founding members of the movement were not invested in these, because what they wanted was to provide Jews who wanted to flee exile with a safe haven. The longing of the generations for the Land of Israel remained in the background, and the Land of Israel was not necessarily viewed as the Holy Land.

CHANGE BY LEAPS, NOT BY CONTINUITY

The feeling is that what we have been trying to do—to awaken the people to the holiness of the Land of Israel and to the covenant we have with God to observe the commandments—is unfortunately not taking off. This is a sign that we have some problems with our messaging. The message is not clear enough and not innovative enough. We need something truly new. A revolution comes when you are completely not satisfied with what exists. When we talk about a revolution, we want, as the Rebbe emphasizes, that everything be in pleasant and peaceful ways, but it must be a revolution. As he said, "*ker a velt heint*" (Overturn the world today!). Recently we have been talking about the fourth revolution in Torah learning: spreading Torah to the nations. But now we are talking about a revolution regarding leadership in the Land of Israel, a revolution among the Jews.

In the past we talked a lot about what we want, about the changes, and about the ways to achieve them. We mentioned the slogan, the "prophecy" of our generation, that the *ba'alei teshuvah* will take control of the State of Israel. Even though this is catchy, it does not fully convey our truth. What do we mean? The main point is that true innovation is not a continuous process. One cannot expect that gradually (קְמְעָא קְמְעָא), from within the existing situation, will come true change—a real shift from one extreme to the other. Thank God demographics favor Torah observant Jews and they say that within several years they will be the majority. Thank God it is so, but this is not the consolation; this is not the way, not the method. This is not an innovation because it is continuous and revolution is not a continuous process, it is not gradual, it is a leap! We have not been successful in integrating this point into our own thought, and certainly not in conveying it to others. In the past we talked about whether we want a political party. Our conclusion was that a political party is the final and last resort because it is more of the same. It does not convey the message that something new, something else, is needed. Once again, the goal is not that there will be more and more people voting for religious parties; that will not lead to the revolutionary type of change we are seeking!

COMES, LEAPS, JUMPS

To illustrate the matter, let us bring a well-known verse describing the Redemption, "the voice of my beloved, behold he comes, he leaps over the mountains, he jumps over the hills." The

sages say that he leaps over the mountains in the merit of the Patriarchs, he jumps over the hills in the merit of the Matriarchs. But there are three verbs in this verse—comes, leaps, jumps. I don't remember at the moment if anyone interprets it this way, but according to this there are three stages in the verse.

The insight is like this: During the two thousand years of exile, we were sustained by the Torah and the self-sacrifice of the Jewish people, which were fueled by our longing for Redemption. "In the merit of righteous women our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt," and in their merit we are destined to be redeemed as well. The women sang lullabies describing the Redemption to the children, and this kept the Jewish people alive and preserved an ember of faith and longing for redemption.

Afterward, already in our generation, there was an inception—an atchalta (אתחלתא)— not necessarily the inception of Redemption (אתחלתא דגאולה), but certainly an inception of an important process, the Return to Zion. Before the Holocaust, and certainly after the Holocaust, Jews are returning to the Land. We must give thanks for this, it is a miracle in itself according to the Rebbe's approach. This is the stage of "behold he comes," the beginning of coming home. This is the first stage of change that follows the state of exile.

Everything begins with exile, which is the foundation. The days in the future are called "days in which I have no desire." We will long for the service that required self-sacrifice during exile. The service in exile is the foundation of everything. In Kabbalah it corresponds to what is known as "initial immaturity of mind" (קטנות א). Next there is a state of "coming," the beginning of the return to the Land, "behold he comes."

These two levels correspond to "and the revealed things are for us and our children." It follows then that the next two stages will correspond to, "the concealed things belong to the *Havayah* our God" indicating that they must, to a certain extent, be much more innovative than the innovation of the return to Zion, which started some 200 years ago and has continued until today. Coming is still not a leap. But the next stage requires a leap, and the fourth stage requires a jump. They are not the same. Jumping can only be done after you have leaped, and you are approaching the true goal; you jump into the Redemption. Leaping is towards the Redemption, but at the last moment you need to jump with all your strength, with both legs, into the redemption. The jump requires the power of the women—"in the merit of the Matriarchs"—to jump over [i.e., by means of] the hills.

OUR SERVICE ON THE PATH TO MASHIACH

Again, there is no continuous process here. We are all waiting for Mashiach. Those who think the State of Israel is the beginning of Redemption perhaps think we simply need to move forward until Mashiach arrives; no leaps required along the way. The Haredim, who do not believe the State serves any purpose, are only waiting for Mashiach, arguing that only he will solve the problems. Until then, either one should not trust the State of Israel and therefore not participate in it. This is the *Neturei Karta* approach. Alternately, there are those that argue that we need to get along with the existing establishment, and even try to influence it for good, to

strengthen Jewish values, while making efforts to enter the Knesset and benefit from its budgets (for our good purposes).

But, as far as I know, the Rebbe did not speak about another stage between the State of Israel and Mashiach. This is the point of innovation we are now discussing. This is in fact what we have been talking about all these years, only apparently the message was not clear enough. Our projection that *ba'alei teshuvah* will take control of the State, meant that they would create something else; not that they would take control of the existing State of Israel, but rather that they would lead some other entity, here in our Holyland. Clearly, it is not easy for us to envision what this might be. Yet even this new entity is still not Mashiach, but a necessary stage toward the appearance of the Mashiach. This stage is what we can do and what we must do.

Mashiach is a person of flesh and blood, but truly he is "superhuman." He is a man walking among us, but he is also a new soul descending to us from the heavens described in the Torah as, "a star shall rise from Jacob." Until his coming and appearance, we must prepare the ground for him by establishing a new governmental entity that is within our power to create. This is not something that exists yet; it requires a revolution. We believe this revolution can also happen in pleasant ways (according to the Hasidic principle that light dispels darkness naturally, and that everyone is drawn to light). This is the message, and around it there need to be many assemblies. We need to encourage a great deal of thought and discussion about how to convey this message in an acceptable manner—for children to adults, from young to old. We need to inspire everyone that we want something new; that the people of Israel want something else, and that because nothing stands in the way of will, we can realize this goal.

RECTIFYING THE STATE OF ISRAEL

We have a book titled Rectifying the State of Israel. This name can be misleading. The intention was not that we should make do with fixing the existing state (renovate it, refresh it, upgrade it, all with cosmetic repairs), but rather that we must create a new reality, a new state, a different state (beginning with a different Declaration of Independence and continuing with changing the DNA of all government ministries and procedures, to the point where the previous State's legacy is erased). In truth, the new State we dream of and aspire to will constitute, retroactively, the repair of the existing State of Israel, until finally, with the coming of Mashiach, we will be able to say about the existing State that it has made "evil into the foundation for good" and that it illustrates how light that comes out of darkness is superior.

To bring about this reversal (*it'hapcha*), we do not need to break the existing State. It is known that the Alter Rebbe was careful to never break anything, even for a holy purpose, only to take it apart carefully, and then rebuild it.

Harav Ginsburgh's
Nefesh Academy of Torah Psychology
www.thenefesh.org
Join the thousands who have benefitted from a
Torah path to psychological and mental well-being and prosperity