"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 192

Shabbat Emor 5786 ❁ **May 1-2, 2026**
שַׁבָּת אֱמֹר ❁ יד-טו אִיָּיר תשפ"ו



The guard told them the entire story, and they hung Rabbi Meir's portrait at the gates of Rome so they could bring him to trial, and they said: Anyone who sees a man with this face should bring him here.

3 **Insights on Sefirat HaOmer**

7 **Story: Rebbe Meir Ba'al HaNess: God of Meir, Answer Me**

11 **Fundamental Concepts of Kabbalah and Chasidut: Immaturity, Maturity, and Time**

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

INSIGHTS ON SEFIRAT HAOMER

From the second day of Pesach, the holiday celebrating the Exodus from Egypt, and the holiday of Shavu'ot, when the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, we count 49 days known as *Sefirat HaOmer*. It is in this week's *parashat Emor*, which is always read during these 49 days that the Torah commands us to bring the Omer offering after which the 49 days are named. Immediately following the first day of Pesach, a measure of barley known as an *omer* is harvested and brought to the Temple in Jerusalem.[1] The *cohanim*, the priests, grind the barley and sift it through thirteen increasingly finer sifters until only the finest of flour is used to make a meal offering placed on the altar the next morning, indicating the beginning of the barley harvest period, which culminates seven weeks later with the beginning of the wheat harvest celebrated on Shavu'ot.

The Torah commands us to count each day of these seven weeks from day the first barley is harvested: "And you shall count for yourselves, from the morrow of the rest day [the first day of Pesach], from the day you bring the Omer as a wave offering, seven weeks; they shall be complete. You shall count until the day after the seventh week, the fiftieth day, on which you shall bring a new meal offering to God."[2] This *mitzvah* of counting the forty-nine days is known as *Sefirat HaOmer*, the Counting of the Omer.

THE PRINCIPLE OF INTER-INCLUSION

The key to spiritual growth during the Omer period comes from the Kabbalistic teaching that each of the seven weeks between Pesach and Shavuot corresponds to one of the seven emotive *sefirot*, the channels of Divine influx into the world. The *sefirot* manifest themselves at all levels of reality, including the human psyche and personality. The seven emotive *sefirot* are also known as *midot*, literally meaning "measures," as they in a sense can be used to measure a person's character.

Because each of the seven weeks in the Counting of the Omer has seven days, each day of each week also corresponds to one of the *sefirot*. Thus, the *sefirah* of the week is itself divided into all seven *sefirot* of the heart. This is known as the principle of inter-inclusion (הִתְכַּלְלוּת), whereby a group of n elements becomes n^2 (n squared) elements, with each element possessing aspects of all the other elements (and itself).

Therefore, we are taught that each day of the Omer period represents a combination of two *midot*, two *sefirot*—the primary *sefirah* of the week, as well as an inter-included *sefirah* as defined by the day. This practice of counting and combining the *sefirot* on each day of the Omer period has been universally accepted and appears

1. Leviticus 9-13.
2. Ibid 23:15-16.

in virtually every traditional prayer book.

Focusing on the appropriate combination of *sefirot* each day of the Omer period opens up a plethora of possible connections to the inherent power of the day and provides useful keys to identify and shine upon those areas in our lives that need conscious attention for rectification and improvement.[3] It is important to note that the root word for *Sefirat* [*Haomer*] is the same as *sefirah*, as well as *sapir*, and means "to shine." Since the main focus of the Omer period is to create proper vessels—as manifest primarily in transformed personality characteristics in order to receive the Torah once again on Shavu'ot—these daily contemplations and introspections are incredibly valuable.

A good example of inter-inclusion is the *sefirah* of *tiferet* or beauty, the third of the emotive *sefirot*, which occupies the middle axis and mediates between the expansive energy of loving-kindness (*chesed*) on the right side and the constrictive force of might (*gevurah*) on the left side. The beauty of *tiferet* is that of harmony, holism, symmetry and synthesis, the main idea and ultimate result of inter-inclusion.[4] By taking the best of both *chesed* and *gevurah* and finding the right measure between them, *tiferet* serves a crucial function of creating a totally new perspective that balances and creates peace between competing forces of the psyche. *Tiferet* is also situated in the middle of the sefirot from above to below and thus mediates and inter-includes the upper *sefirot* of the intellect and the lower *sefirot* of the emotional realm. In *Pirkei Avot*, Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi advises choosing a straight path that brings esteem (*tiferet*; beauty and harmony) to the person doing it and earns them *tiferet* from others.[5]

THE STUDENTS OF RABBI AKIVA

According to tradition, 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died during the Omer period because they did not properly honor one another. When scholars treat their peers with disrespect, it is most probably the result of a deficiency in their ability to find how competing opinions together form an inter-included whole. Indeed, it was Rabbi Akiva who taught that "Love your fellow as you love yourself" is a great principle of Torah. Not just a great principle of proper social manners and life, but a great principle in Torah, because without it, one cannot come to properly respect and appreciate that the Torah's "whole" is made out of many individual opinions that come together.

The commandment to love our fellow Jew is key to a perception that we are all a single body. If by mistake a person cuts their right hand with their left, they will not punish the perpetrating left hand by cutting it with the right, because both hands are part of one body. Likewise, the two minds of two Jews may come to opposite conclusions, or exercise two different chains of logic, but in the end, as the Talmud concludes, even contradictory conclusions are both the words of the same living God. The reason they have different opinions is that each represents a different facet of the one God's Torah.

3. *Mivchar Sheurei Hitbonnanut, Chodesh Iyar.*
4. *Yayin Yitzchak, parshat Emor*, section 7.
5. 2:1.

Because they did not commit to loving their fellows regardless of any intellectual dispute, Rabbi Akiva's students lost the ability to recognize how their clashing opinions might be seen as complementary when considered within a larger, more general context (just as the seven *sefirot* of each day within a week of the Omer are all facets of the one main *sefirah* of that week). They certainly could not go one step further and recognize how their colleague's opposing view, when considered using inter-inclusion, could provide them with greater clarity regarding a particular facet of their own opinion.

Because they could not integrate or properly tolerate different opinions, they adopted a negative view of each other. The rectification of their deaths is accomplished when we become aware of, and are sensitive to, on a daily level, the inter-inclusion of the *midot* of each day of the Omer and manifest it in real character improvement.

A GOOD HEART

A beautiful example of the inter-inclusion of diverse opinions is found in a *mishnah* from the tractate of *Avot*, which we customarily read during the Shabbatot of *Sefirat HaOmer*.[6] Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai was one of the most remarkable figures in Jewish history. He was a direct disciple of Hillel the Elder and was instrumental in preserving Judaism's continuity after the destruction of the Second Temple. Among his students, five were particularly distinguished, each embodying a different aspect of spiritual greatness. Of these, Rabbi Elazar ben Arach was described as "a wellspring that never ceases to flow." Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai used to say that if all the sages of Israel were placed on one side of a scale and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach on the other, Rabbi Elazar ben Arach would outweigh them all.[7] What made Rabbi Elazar ben Arach so special?

The *mishnah* relates that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai asked his distinguished five students to go out into the world and identify the most spiritually advantageous attitude or way in life to which a person should cleave. After hearing all five opinions, he chose Rabbi Elazar ben Arach's who replied that it was a good heart, since his opinion included all the others.[8] In other words, his opinion was like the general principle of which his peers' were individual details. In fact, the expression, "a good heart" (לֵב טוֹב), equals 49, the exact number of the days of the Omer, revealing a deep connection between this account and *Sefirat HaOmer*. This period on the Jewish calendar is a time to search for how our diverse, even contradictory, perspectives are included in a greater whole and we can succeed in doing this by having a "good heart." Our spiritual work during *Sefirat HaOmer* should ultimately be guided by a "good heart."[9]

6. There are six Shabbatot from *Pesach* to *Shavu'ot* and five plus one chapters in the tractate of Avot. The sixth chapter is an anthology of sayings from the rabbinic sages that are similar to the ones found in *Avot* and are from the same period but did not appear in the original edited version of the *mishnah*.

7. *Pirkei Avot* 2:11-12.

8 . Ibid 2:13.

9. *Yayin Yitzchak, parshat Emor*, section 7.

In general, Chasidut teaches that the brain should rule over the heart. This means that the intellect needs to guide and direct the emotions. However, it is explained that only the external aspects of the heart should be directed by the mind, while the heart's inner dimension should be guiding the mind. But there is a prerequisite: one must first refine the heart so that it is not fickle and prone to chase after shallow feelings and cravings. One must first have acquired "a good heart," one whose intuition aligns naturally with Godliness and holiness. This is the deep work we should aim for during *Sefirat HaOmer*.

THE MONTH OF IYAR

Although the days of *Sefirat HaOmer* are counted over three months—Nissan, Iyar and Sivan—it is only the days of the month of Iyar that are all part of the counting. According to *Sefer Yetzirah*, each month of the year is associated with one of the 12 simple letters of the Hebrew *alephbet*: הוזחטילנסעצק, and the month of Iyar's letter is the *vav* (ו) whose shape is a vertical line, alluding to a ladder, which one can ascend and descend on, or a man standing erect.[10]

Our relationship with God, other people, and our own self-perception is constantly changing, going through endless cycles of ascent and descent, revelation and concealment, closeness and estrangement. The *vav*'s shape represents both the ascent and descent, to and from God. When God is revealed, or descends, as it were, into reality, that is known as His "direct light" (אוֹר יָשָׁר). When we are awakened to serve God, that is known as "reflected" or "returning light" (אוֹר חוֹזֵר). This is the secret of the Omer period wherein we learn to recognize and integrate both types of revelation and all that they represent. The *vav* symbolizes the channel and conduit that connects God to man, and upper and lower reality, which meet and embrace at Sinai. Shavu'ot, in fact, is celebrated each year on the sixth of Sivan, six being the numerical value of the letter *vav*.

According to *Sefer Yetzirah* the special "sense" of the moth of Iyar is "thought" (הִרְהוּר, or עִיּוּן), which is the translation of the Hebrew word מַחְשָׁבָה. The spiritual work of *Sefirat HaOmer* begins in thought, filters down to the heart, and ultimately reaches concrete action. When the word for "thought" (**מַחְשָׁבָה**) is rearranged, its letters can form the word meaning, "with joy" (**בְּשִׂמְחָה**).[11] Although many people think that being a happy person is a matter of innate disposition and that one is either a happy person or not, the truth is that happiness and being in a state of joy are the result of 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. Ultimately, we have the choice to choose to see our lot in life anyway we want. The Ba'al Shem Tov and later the Rebbe's of Chabad articulated this by stating in Yiddish: "*Tracht gut vet zein gut*," one should "think good and it will be good."[12]

10. Sefer Yetzirah 5:7.

11. *Tikkunei Zohar* 67a; *Mivchar Shiurei Hitbonenut, Chodesh Iyar.*

12. *Iggerot Kodesh* of Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, vol. 2, p. 537; vol. 7, p. 177.

Furthermore, the numerical value of "thought" (מַחְשָׁבָה) is the same as the numerical value of *sefirah* (סְפִירָה). This numerical correspondence strengthens the proposition that through a practice of focused thought directed toward the *sefirot* of the day, deep and profound insights are revealed to assist us in the gradual work of soul healing and rectification that is inherent to the Omer period.

STORY

REBBE MEIR BA'AL HANESS: GOD OF MEIR, ANSWER ME

Rabbi Meir was among the most prominent sages of the Mishnah and one of the founders of the Sanhedrin in Usha. He was born to a family descended from Emperor Nero, who had converted to Judaism. He married Beruriah, daughter of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion, who was renowned for her wisdom. In his youth, he studied under Rabbi Yishmael but received the essence of his learning approach from Rabbi Akiva. He is one of Rabbi Akiva's five disciples "from whom Torah went forth to the world." He also received Torah from Elisha ben Avuyah, from whom he continued learning Torah even after he deserted Judaism and joined the Romans. To explain his continuing relationship with Elisha, the sages said: "Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate; he ate its contents and discarded its peel." He was ordained by Rabbi Yehudah ben Bava with self-sacrifice, and among his students were: Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi, Sumchus, Rabbi Chanan, Rabbi Yaakov, and others. Rabbi Meir served as a scribe of sacred texts and was also known as a great preacher. The rabbis said, "When Rabbi Meir died, there no more masters of parables." The concise language of his teachings was chosen by Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi to serve as the foundation for the Mishnah, and he was renowned for his profound wisdom: "His colleagues could not fathom the depth of his understanding." His date of passing is observed on the 14th of Iyar.

When Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion, one of the Ten Martyrs executed by the Romans, was put to death, the Romans decreed that his wife should be executed and his daughter was sentenced to sit in a brothel. His second daughter, Beruriah, the wife of Rabbi Meir, came before Rabbi Meir regarding her sister's situation and asked that he go and free her.

Rabbi Meir took a large vessel full of dinars and went to the place where she was. Before approaching to save her, he said to himself: If no transgression was

committed with her, a miracle will be performed for her; if she committed a transgression, no miracle will be performed for her.

Rabbi Meir went and dressed as a Roman knight, and said to her: Accede to my wishes, i.e., engage in intercourse with me. She said to him: I am menstruating and cannot. He said to her: I will wait. She said to him: There are many women in the brothel, and there are many women here who are more beautiful than I. He said to himself: I can conclude from her responses that she did not commit a transgression, as she presumably said this to all who come.

Rabbi Meir went over to her guard and said to him: Give her to me. The guard said to him: I fear that if I do so, I will be punished by the government. Rabbi Meir said to him: Take this vessel full of dinars; give half to the government as a bribe, and half will be for you. The guard said to him: But when the money is finished, what shall I do? Rabbi Meir said to him: Say: God of Meir answer me! And you will be saved. The guard said to him: And who can say that this is the case, that I will be saved by this utterance? Rabbi Meir said to him: You will now see. There were these carnivorous dogs that would devour people; Rabbi Meir took a clod of earth, threw it at them, and when they came to devour him, he said: God of Meir answer me! The dogs then left him alone, and after seeing this the guard gave the daughter of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon to Rabbi Meir.

After some time, the matter became known to the government, and they sought to hang the guard. He said: God of Meir, answer me! and their attempt to hang him failed. They brought him down from the gallows and asked him: What is this all about? The guard told them the entire story, and they hung Rabbi Meir's portrait at the gates of Rome so they could bring him to trial, and they said: Anyone who sees a man with this face should bring him here.

One day, Romans saw Rabbi Meir and ran after him, and he ran away from them and entered a brothel to hide. Some say he then escaped capture because he saw food cooked by gentiles and dipped his finger in the food and tasted it with that other finger, and thereby fooled them into thinking that he was eating their food, which they knew Rabbi Meir would not do. The Romans who were chasing him said: Heaven forbid, if this were Rabbi Meir, he would not act in that manner.

Rabbi Meir arose, fled, and arrived in Babylonia.

(*Avodah Zarah* 18a)

The wondrous power of salvation that Rabbi Meir possesses, which is revealed in this prayer, is particularly connected to Pesach Sheni, the Second Passover, celebrated on the 14th of Iyar. This is the day on which those who were not ritually pure and could not bring the Pesach offering on time are given a second chance

to fulfill their obligation. This is also the day traditionally identified as the yahrzeit (day of passing) of Rabbi Meir.

The essence of Second Pesach is that there is no lost cause and all who are impure can be purified and bring the Pesach offering even though its allotted time (the 14th day of Nissan) has passed. Similarly, Rabbi Meir and his prayer are especially capable of extracting people from seemingly hopeless situations. What is Rabbi Meir's secret?

When contemplating the figure of Rabbi Meir, the figure of his wife, Beruriah, stands out prominently. In most places that Beruriah is mentioned, her name is spelled with an *alef* at the end (בְּרוּרְיָא). Her name, spelled with a *hei* at the end (בְּרוּרְיָה), appears only three times corresponding to the three intellectual *sefirot*—the *mochin*—while Beruriah with an *alef* at the end appears seven times—corresponding to the seven emotive sefirot. The last appearance of Bruriah with an alef is in the title, "Beruria the Queen" (בְּרוּרְיָה הַמַּלְכָּה) who converted, alluding to the *sefirah* of kingdom. What does she reveal to us about the character of Rabbi Meir?

One of the well-known stories about Beruriah tells of Rabbi Meir's wicked neighbors, who caused him great distress. Rabbi Meir wanted to pray that they should die, but his wife Beruriah told him that it was not proper to do so for the verse reads, "May sins cease from the earth," the sins should be eradicated but not the sinners, she argued. Instead, pray for them to repent and let their sins cease, and it will follow that "the wicked will be no more." Rabbi Meir accepted Beruriah's words, prayed, and his neighbors repented.

REGARDLESS, THEY ARE CALLED GOD'S CHILDREN

What made Beruriah interpret the verse ""May sins cease from the earth and the wicked will be no more," the way she did? We might say that besides the logic of her argument in and of itself, Beruriah recognized that this was the interpretation that was the best fit for Rabbi Meir himself. This is attested to by one of his most important statements made on another verse, "You are the children of Havayah your God." Whereas Rabbi Yehudah explained that the verse instructs us that, "When you conduct yourselves as would children [of God], then you are treated as [His] children; but, when you do not conduct yourselves as [His] children, you will not be called [God's] children." But Rabbi Meir says: "Regardless [of your conduct], you are called [God's] children." With her interpretation, Beruriah encouraged Rabbi Meir to treat as God's children even those who were wicked and who had distressed him.

In many places, it seems there is a difference between the service borne to God by servants and the service borne to God by His children. In the prayers we say on the High Holy Days we repeat the phrase, "whether [You, God, treat us] as children or as servants." However, even though there are two opinions, the Rashba wrote in his responsa that in this dispute, the law follows Rabbi Meir and "regardless of your status, you are called [God's] children." One of the reasons for this is the fact that elsewhere in the Talmud, Rabbi Akiva—the teacher of both Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Meir—seems to agree with the latter's opinion.

Although at first glance it seems that this dispute would fall under the realm of *Aggadah* or homiletic passages, since it does not seem to have any practical significance and therefore does not require a *halachic* ruling. But from the words of Rabbi Akiva one can learn that this is not so. Rabbi Akiva brings a parable of a king who became angry with someone, imprisoned him, and decreed that he should not be given food or drink. What happens when someone transgresses the king's command and feeds the prisoner? If it was a servant, the king becomes angry with him; however, if it was his son who defied his will, the king rejoices greatly that someone disobeyed his command and may even reward that person for his conduct. Therefore, says Rabbi Akiva, it is a great *mitzvah* to give charity to every poor person and not to turn him away with the logic that if the Holy Blessed one is angry with him, it is not fitting to feed him. Thus, whether or not the Jewish people are God's children would seem to have practical repercussions that are critical even at the highest levels.

ANOTHER SON: RABBI MEIR, JOSEPH, AND THE MASHIACH

Many of the names of the sages of the Mishnah, the *Tannaim*, also appear in the Bible, but Meir, somewhat surprisingly, does not. In various works, several allusions to the name Meir (**מֵאִיר**) in the Bible are brought, and one of them is in the initial letters of an expression from Joseph the Righteous's blessing (Genesis 49:24), "From there is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel" (**מ**ִשָּׁם **ר**ֹעֶה אֶ**בֶ**ן יִשְׂרָאֵל). What is the significance of this connection between Joseph and Rabbi Meir?

When naming her son Joseph, Rachel prayed, "May Havayah add (יֹסֵף) me another son (בֵּן אַחֵר)." In Chasidic thought, it is expounded that Joseph is able of taking the "other" (אַחֵר)—one who is on the other side of impurity and impure husks—and transforming even him into a son. This ability depends on seeing that essentially, he is God's son even while being in a state of "otherness," and that regardless, "you are called [God's] children."

Like Joseph, Rabbi Meir has the power to bring "others" back to the flock. Indeed, his power is explicitly expressed in his continuing relationship with his teacher Elisha-Acher (Elisha the Other) who was a pre-eminent Torah scholar but eventually became Hellenized and left the Jewish people. Rabbi Meir succeeded in learning even from him, as quoted above, "He ate his interior and threw away the exterior." But more than this, he even exerted great effort to rectify and restore his former teacher, Elisha-Acher, even after his death. Ultimately, after close to two hundred years during which the fire of Gehennom appeared to burn over Elisha's grave, Rabbi Meir succeeded.

Seeing every Jew as God's son is a Messianic power, just as the Mashiach himself will cause all sinners to fulfill regarding themselves "he threw away the exterior." Indeed, Rabbi Meir identified himself as the soul of Mashiach a few moments before his death. Here too lies the connection between Rabbi Meir and Pesach Sheni. Like Pesach Sheni, Rabbi Meir instrumentally acts to spiritually purify the impure and to bring back those who walk on a distant path, until the

coming of Mashiach. Indeed, the initials of one of the descriptions of Mashiach in the Tanach (Lamentations 4:20), "the spirit of our noses, the Mashiach of God" (רוּחַ אַפֵּינוּ מְשִׁיחַ יי-הוה) spell, "Meir" (**מֵאִיר**).

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF KABBALAH AND CHASIDUT

IMMATURITY, MATURITY, AND TIME

Continuing the theme of immaturity and maturity with regard to the Kabbalistic intentions (kavanot) of Sefirat HaOmer begun in our previous issue, this article explores how the four stages of maturity correspond to past, present, future, and eternity. Excerpted from the Seu'dah of Mashiach of 5785. The original Hebrew appeared in the Nifla'ot issue of Acharei-Kedoshim 5785.

The main intentions (*kavanot*) of the Counting of the Omer according to the writings of the Arizal relate to the development of consciousness in four stages first-immaturity, first-maturity, second-immaturity, and second-maturity. In Hebrew these are referred to by the Kabbalists as *katnut alef* (first-immaturity), *gadlut alef* (first-maturity), *katnut bet* (second-immaturity), and *gadlut bet* (second-maturity).

Among the Kabbalists, no other intentions are made during the Counting of the Omer. The entire focus during this time of the year is on the counting itself and building the the expanded mental-spiritual states (*mochin*) through these four stages. All the spiritual work done during the Counting of the Omer is aimed at integrating what was revealed on the Seder night; we start counting the evening after the Seder. During the Seder night, "the King of kings revealed Himself to them and redeemed them,"[1] which means that all the *mochin* were revealed at once, but could not be integrated. They flee (just as "the people fled"[2]) and we must reconstruct them stage by stage during the days of the Counting, until we merit to internalize them all with the Giving of the Torah on Shavu'ot, with joy and inwardness.

During the Counting of the Omer we take into account our base animalistic soul, we relate to the animal nature within us and give it its proper place. The animal soul is considered the lowest rung in the order of Creation, yet it is precisely this place where God desires to have a dwelling among the lower realms so that even the material dimension can recognize His sovereignty and truly nullify itself before Him. That is why the intentions of Counting the Omer focus on the four-stage process

1. Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:5.
2. Exodus 14:5.

from immaturity to maturity—including the first stage of immaturity and maturity which specifically relate to the animal soul.

FIRST IMMATURITY: FAITH

We have learned that there is one power in the soul that was not damaged in the Shattering of the Vessels: Faith. This is also true in every individual's life. Even after experiencing a spiritual or psychological fall and shattering, when one is cast down to the lowest level, faith still exists in the soul, and it has the power to resurrect everything that was broken and died. That is why we associate the lowest stage of maturity, the first-immaturity with faith.

One of the reasons for holding a special meal on the seventh (or outside the Land of Israel, on the eighth) day of Passover is to commemorate the miracle of the rescue of our teacher the Ba'al Shem Tov on his way to the Land of Israel. He found himself on a deserted island, together with his student Reb Tzvi, held captive while their captors planned to kill them. Reb Tzvi asked the Ba'al Shem Tov, "Why is the Rebbe doing nothing? Let the Rebbe make some *yichud* (mystical unification) and we will be saved from here!" The Ba'al Shem Tov replied that he had forgotten everything he knew, and asked Rabbi Tzvi whether he remembered anything. He had reached the lowest level of immaturity, of small-mindedness. Reb Tzvi said that he too remembered nothing except the letters of the *aleph-bet*. The Ba'al Shem Tov said to him: "You remember the *aleph-bet*?! Then remind me...." Reb Tzvi began reciting the *aleph-bet* together with the Ba'al Shem Tov, and then the Ba'al Shem Tov's mind returned to him and they were saved.

In Chabad, at this time we hold the Feast of Mashiach, not merely giving thanks for the miracle of the Ba'al Shem Tov's rescue that occurred in the past, but directing our gaze forward, to think about the future, about Mashiach and the Resurrection of the Dead. Thinking about the future is already a more advanced stage. It is second-immaturity, as we will explain.

FIRST-MATURITY: READING THE SIGNS

In first-immaturity, the lowest and most basic state, I do not understand what is happening with me in the present moment, I do not understand what God wants to communicate to me through my circumstances; I can only believe in God and believe that everything He does is for the good. The transition from first-immaturity to first-maturity occurs when we gain a certain ability to understand the messages that God is communicating to us through our circumstances, through our surroundings and through the events that are happening in our lives. At this stage, the understanding of the Divine message hidden in these circumstances usually depends only on logical inference. There is still no clear vision, which comes only with second-maturity, as will be explained below.

When the Baal Shem Tov fell into the ultimate state of immaturity, of small-mindedness, he could remember nothing. As a result, there is also no meaning to what is happening to me at this moment. But when a person possesses even a little awareness (*mochin*), what happens to him reminds him of things he already knows and has encountered before. Thus, the present is understood through our past experiences. One extreme form of this is when I see or experience something and have the sense

that I have already seen or experienced it. This is known as déjà vu—when the memory of the past and the nature of the present experience are interconnected. Since memory is heavy with meaning, I project that meaning onto the present moment, giving an event in the present a meaning based on the past. What this all demonstrates is how memory of the past brings me closer to the first-maturity stage, where I begin to acquire an understanding of Divine Providence. Even animals presumably learn from the past, possessing acquired memory that helps them understand situations, but clearly in human beings memory, experience, and understanding are far more developed and therefore produce a higher level of comprehension. The entire matter of memory begins from Passover, since all the sacred times in Torah—Shabbat and the festivals—as well as many of the Torah's commandments are deemed "a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt" (זֵכֶר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם).

Let us give an example of how remembering the past translates into a mature form of understanding personal Divine Providence from a well-known story about the Tzemach Tzedek.

> It came to pass that he was approached by a Jew whose landlord suspected him wrongly of theft and was treating him harshly. The Rebbe sent him to a non-Chassidic Jew in a distant location to testify before the landlord on his behalf that he was not a swindler and to ask for his pardon. The non-Chasidic Jew to whom the Rebbe sent him had no idea why he was being asked to intercede, but in the end was persuaded to make the long trip to the landlord.
>
> When he arrived at the landlord's estate, he realized that he had come exactly in the middle of the landlord's birthday celebration. To his surprise, the landlord was very impressed that he had arrived from far away and asked whether he had come especially in his honor. The Jew did not know what this was about, and the landlord reminded him: "Don't you remember me? You saved my life!" On one of the landlord's journeys he had gotten lost in the snow, and the Jew had taken him into his home, warmed him, fed him, and so on. The Jew remembered, seized the opportunity to act on behalf of the tenant farmer and saved him.
>
> When they came to the Tzemach Tzedek to report the good news, and marveled at the open miracle, he said that this was no miracle. The Tzemach Tzedek explained that from childhood he had been recording in his mind everything he heard and saw, knowing that everything came to his attention through Divine Providence and had value. So many years ago, he had heard that this particular landlord had gotten lost in the snow and had been saved by a Jew from that distant town. Now, when the trouble that landlord was causing was brought to his attention, the memory of that story he had heard came to him and he understood that he had heard it and remembered it precisely in order to save this Jew now.

This is a quintessential story of experience combined with memory. Of course, it involves a *tzaddik*, and there is something here far more precise and profound than ordinary first-maturity, but

the same principle is at play: memory of the past helps us correctly understand the message in the present.

AWARENESS OF SYNCHRONICITY

We can deepen this a bit further. There is a non-Jewish psychologist whose name we will not mention here, who coined the term "synchronicity." In coining the term he meant to say that when two things happen simultaneously without any apparent causal connection, the synchronicity carries a certain message. Indeed, he grasped correctly, in the manner that a non-Jew can express this idea, that there are no coincidences, but rather that everything is coordinated by Divine Providence.

That psychologist also added that the understanding of synchronicity is connected not only to my conscious memories, but also to what resides in my unconscious, and that the unconscious itself is divided into two levels: the personal unconscious and the collective (universal) unconscious. The latter includes things that belong to an entire people (or to all humanity, or even to all of creation), and which express themselves primarily in dreams. This sounds entirely reasonable. The clearest example of collective memory among the Jewish people—the people chosen by God to proclaim His sovereignty to all nations, the people for whom the world was created—is "a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt," the foundational memory for all who carry the name "Israel." As the sages state, "In every generation a person is obligated to see himself as though he personally left Egypt [today, and at every moment always]." How can this be achieved? When we access our collective unconscious and find that in its depths is this memory, which has the power to affect us as individuals.

To state the first and second stages of maturity again: first-immaturity presents as faith in Divine Providence. For example, when I see a leaf rolling along, moved by the wind, I believe that its every movement and where it eventually comes to rest are all by Divine Providence from the Creator. For a Jew this faith is simple and natural—a kind of natural consciousness, as our teacher the Baal Shem Tov revealed.

But the second stage, first-maturity is when I understand that many things are happening simultaneously and everything is connected—the piece of straw rolling by also fell from the roof and left a hole in it, and that too is part of the Divine plan; there are countless variables connected to what is happening now and everything is planned and synchronized together by Divine Providence.

In the first-maturity stage of perception of Providence there are far more *mochin*, far more awareness, and far greater likelihood of understanding the message. For example, if I believe in Divine Providence and a cup falls off my table, I understand that this is how it needed to happen, and therefore I do not get angry at the child who knocked it over. But if a piece of bread falls off my table and a mouse comes and eats it—I understand that God wanted the mouse to eat the bread; there is a message here about compassion for living creatures. In general, I do not hate mice. They too, like me, were created by God for His glory.[3] Someone who experiences only

3. In tractate *Pesachim* there is a discussion

the present moment—only the transient events—even if deep in their heart they believe in Divine Providence, can come to anger. But one who lives with an awareness of the past and of the synchronicity of many things together understands that everything has a background and there is a reckoning from Above governing all events, and therefore, there is no room within for any anger. This is an important principle: anger is only possible in one who only has an immature mindset (*katnut mochin*). But someone who has a mature mindset (*gadlut mochin*), will not easily come to anger, if at all. This is close to the very definition of immaturity and maturity, of youth versus coming of age: a young child gets angry, a truly mature adult does not. In any case, attentiveness to the synchronicity between two events belongs to first-maturity (*gadlut alef*), in which there is far greater understanding of what is happening here.

SECOND-IMMATURITY: A GLANCE TOWARD THE FUTURE

In effect, what we have just said is that in first-immaturity there is only an experience of the present moment, without any background or context, without prior memory, but with faith in God and His goodness, and in the fact that everything is by Divine Providence. In first-maturity there is an added awareness of the past, memories that enable one to connect things together and understand something of the message embedded in Divine Providence. This sequence with the present preceding the past corresponds to the order we mention every day in prayer in the "verse" constructed by the sages, "God is King [*HaShem melech*, in the present tense], God was King [*HaShem malach*, in the past tense]." What comes next? The future: "God will be king" (*HaShem yimloch*).

In the past, we have explained that first and second immaturity correspond to the larger topic known as "faith and confidence" (אֱמוּנָה ובִטָּחוֹן), a wide and deep subject that is treated in length elsewhere.[4] More specifically, first-immaturity is the counterpart of the dynamic of faith in the psyche while second-immaturity corresponds to confidence. This correspondence holds up well in our present context. Confidence is how the psyche should relate to the future. One should develop a sense of confidence that future will be good in a way that is visibly and openly positive in our eyes (referring to the good according to our own mundane perspective known as "lower knowledge" [דַּעַת תַּחְתּוֹן], not only according to God's Divine perspective, known as "higher knowledge" [דַּעַת עֶלְיוֹן], for "*Havayah* is a God of knowledges…"[5] encompasses both forms of knowledge; from God's perspective, as the bearer of opposites, and thus even lower knowledge is fully true knowledge). Nevertheless, even though it would seem that confidence represents a state of maturity, there is an element of immaturity in it relative to the maturity of memory of the past and understanding of reality through it. The past carries certainty because it has already occurred, it exists in

regarding the relationship between infants and mice.

4. Beginning with our article by this name in the book *Lev LaDa'at* and continuing with many classes over the years, especially the series of 38 monthly classes given in recent years and available at www.galeinai.org.il/t/lessons/toc_44_3_5.

5. 1 Samuel 2:3.

my memory and is surveyed as a known and ordered fact. The future, by contrast, carries uncertainty. I do not even know whether there will be a future at all (whether the Creator will bring about another moment of existence for the universe), and certainly not what it will contain. How do I know that the sun will rise tomorrow? Only in light of past experience. In first-maturity one feels that the past teaches and explains the present. When one thinks about the future there is uncertainty—an experience of immaturity ("I do not know"), but this immaturity is the second state of immaturity, a smallness that comes against the backdrop of a past that teaches the present, permeated with optimism regarding the future (and this is a great virtue).

SECOND-MATURITY: A VISION OF ETERNITY

Having explained that first-immaturity (*katnut alef*) is the experience of the present alone, that first-maturity (*gadlut alef*) adds a background to the present experience composed of memories from the past, and that second-immaturity (*katnut bet*) is the gaze toward the future, we come to inquire about the nature of second-maturity (*gadlut bet*), which is the final goal of the entire process. Above the three temporal states—past, present, and future—there is a perspective of eternity, a state in which there is no time at all. Regarding the phrase we quoted above, after "God is King, God was King, and God will be King," comes "forever and ever" (לְעֹלָם וָעֶד). This is not meant to imply only the sense of time without end, without duration, but the sense of absolute eternity, a reality of no time altogether.

In everyday speech, when we say there is "no time," we mean that there is not *enough* time to accomplish everything one wanted. But if that is the case, then the advice is to connect to the true "no time," to God's true eternity. This is akin to leaping directly from first-immaturity (*katnut alef*) directly to second-maturity (*gadlut bet*). This is exactly what we experience (at least internally) on the Seder night. If one can successfully leap in this way, there will be time for everything.

Continuing with the correspondence with faith and confidence—whereby *katnut alef* is faith, *gadlut alef* is apprehension of reality, and *katnut bet* is confidence—second-maturity (*gadlut bet*) is the very vision of the essence. In our present reality, the pinnacle of maturity is only an intellectual apprehension of Godliness, but in the future, we will see the Divine essence itself. This is the meaning of the verse, "For they will see eye to eye when God returns to Zion,"[6] and the verse, "and all flesh shall see together that the mouth of God has spoken."[7] Then it will also be felt how impoverished and lacking the level of first-maturity—knowing (only) the existence, but not the essence—really was compared to the second-maturity.

6. Isaiah 52:8.
7. Ibid. 40:5.

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