"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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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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STORY

REBBE GEDALIAH MOSHE OF ZVHIL: WHAT IS TRUST?

Rebbe Gedaliah Moshe Goldman was the fifth Rebbe of the house of Zvhil. Born to Rebbe Shlomo of Zvhil, he married the daughter of Rebbe David Shlomo of Kobrin. After his father made aliyah to the Land of Israel, he was appointed in 5686 (1926) as rabbi of the town of Zvhil in Ukraine, where he became known as a holy man; he was strict with himself, and as lenient as possible with others. He was persecuted by the Soviet authorities for his devotion to Torah and its commandments and was sentenced to seven years of forced labor in Siberia. Even there he showed unwavering faith and courage, telling his judges that nothing in the world happens without permission from Heaven. After his release he served for a time as rabbi in a town near Moscow, and in 5697 (1937) he succeeded in escaping the Soviet Union and making aliyah to the Land of Israel. In Jerusalem he lived in modesty, and in 5705 (1945), after his father's passing, he began to serve as Rebbe of Zvhil. He passed away on the 24th of Cheshvan, 5710 (1949), and was buried in the Givat Ram cemetery; his grave has since become a place of prayer for many.

Our Rebbe [Rebbe Gedaliah of Zvhil] related that the Maggid of Zlotchov, of blessed memory, once came to Mezritch and asked to be admitted to the house of the Maggid of Mezritch. Members of the household told him that the Rebbe was in great distress over another family who was gravely ill and hovering between life and death. Therefore, the Rebbe was receiving no one. The Maggid of Zlotchov nonetheless asked to be let in. He opened the door, approached the Maggid of Mezritch, and said to him: "I do not understand why the Rebbe is troubled. Surely this sick man will be eating with us at this evening's meal!" And indeed, the sick man recovered, and joined them at the evening meal.

Afterward the Maggid remarked that he himself had seen no natural path to the patient's recovery; it was the Maggid of Zlotchov's words, filled with trust, that had taken effect.

On another occasion he said to his student, Rabbi Eli Rotta: "The measure of trust that I myself hold is to believe that whatever comes to be in the world, and whatever will be, is all for the good. There is, however, a higher level in which, through the strength of firm faith, one draws down the very thing one seeks."

"Do you wish to know what trust is?" our Rebbe once turned to his student, Rabbi Eli, and said, "let me tell you."

In Zvhil, in those generations, it was the custom to betroth daughters at the age of twelve, while the wedding itself would not take place until three years later, at fifteen. Those three years were meant for gathering a sum of money, coin by coin, toward the expenses of the marriage. I knew a Jew, a resident of Zvhil, who betrothed his daughter, and, as was customary, gathered a considerable sum over the years between the betrothal and the wedding.

The Jew reasoned with himself: the Sages taught that all the sustenance a person will receive during the entire year is allotted to him from the first day of the year, from Rosh Hashanah. But this does not include the expenses for Shabbat and festivals. Now, he thought to himself, surely money spent for others' sake in honor of Shabbat likewise falls outside the yearly allowance. Since Zvhil had many poor and destitute people who lacked the means for their Shabbat needs, it seemed only right that the sum now in his hands should be distributed among these poor individuals to buy their needs for Shabbat and festivals, since this money would fall outside his own personal allowance. In this way the poor would gain, while he himself would lose nothing at all from the transaction.

He did indeed distribute the money for the Shabbat needs of the poor of the city, and from then on made a practice of giving a considerable sum to the poor every Wednesday. Heaven assisted him: the money for the approaching wedding was not lacking either, and everything worked out for the very best. From that time the custom spread throughout Zvhil that every Shabbat eve, wagons laden with food would go out to those in need. Our Rebbe concluded his story to Rabbi Eli by saying: "This is faith!"

Rabbi Eli listened to the story with great seriousness, but did not dare ask his Rebbe who that Jew had been. It occurred to him, perhaps, that the wondrous Jew was none other than the storyteller himself.

To properly appreciate these moving stories, let us note, as is our way, the distinctions between the different expressions of faith found in them (the distinctions are the topic of HaRav Ginsburgh's article *Emunah VeBitachon* in his volume Lev *LaDa'at* which he elucidated in length in a series of classes with the same title between 5777 and 5782). Though Rebbe Gedaliah Moshe describes all three by the same words, "faith" and "trust" interchangeably, we will differentiate between their correspondence to one of three facets of a Jew's reliance on God: faith (*emunah*), passive trust (passive *bitachon*), and active trust (active *bitachon*).

Faith—the most basic and passive of the three—is the one Rebbe Gedaliah Moshe testifies that he himself holds: simple faith in God's goodness and Providence, which removes all fear of negative events. Passive trust intervenes, as it were, in the Divine calculus through one's plans, thoughts, and anticipation about the future. One who is exercising passive *bitachon* is confident that his intentions and thoughts carry weight, and that the Holy blessed One will direct one's life on the path desired by the person. This level resembles the story of the Maggid of Zlotchov, who was certain the sick man would recover, and was not merely comforting the Maggid of Mezritch with the words "all is for the good." Yet, the Maggid of Zlotchov did not do anything active. He simply anticipated that God would bring him healing.

The third level, the most striking of all, is the one the Rebbe of Zvhil demonstrates his trust in God through his actions, not just through his good thoughts and plans. He himself gave vast sums of money intended for his daughter's wedding, in complete trust that God would not disappoint him. This is known as active trust, active *bitachon*: trusting in God not for an abstract Divine good, nor even for the a good outcome (as I understand it) that will just unfold but, for the good that God brings about specifically through me, through my own actions in the world.

Indeed, the primary expression of faith and trust in God is to give abundantly to charity with one's money, one's body, and one's soul alike. To be utterly devoted to another, whether materially or in spreading the wellsprings of Torah outward, is the hallmark of one who has active trust in God. Such an individual gives of his whole self, effectively surrendering himself to give charity and to help a fellow Jew. In such charity, faith too is present—faith that every Jew is worthy of one surrendering oneself for his sake. Beyond this, trust is also required: trust that however much one gives to another, nothing will be lacking from one's own needs.

Abraham, the head of all believers, was also the first one who trusted in God. Of him it is said, "And he believed in God, and He [God] counted it to him as a charity" (Genesis 15:6). Abraham embodied his faith and turned it into trust and this trust was the source of his extraordinary loving-kindness towards others, as it says "He who trusts in God shall be surrounded by loving-kindness" (Psalms 32:10). Divine loving-kindness flows through the one who trusts in God expressing itself as boundless giving. On the verse from Genesis, it is taught in Chasidut that, "faith is counted as charity," and likewise that "faith is the result of charity." Faith and trust are bound to charity by a deep connection, and one who truly trusts in God gives to charity without limit.

(adapted from the class of 22 Tammuz 5779)

WONDERS OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

Money

Parshat Chayei Sarah begins with the story of Sarah's burial. Though the Land of Canaan was promised to Abraham by God, for now he had to swallow the bitter pill of having to purchase a plot of land to bury his beloved wife. To that end he bought the field of Machpeilah with its double cave from Ephron the Hittite, "Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had mentioned… 400 *shekel* of universally tradeable silver"[1] (וַיִּשְׁקֹל אַבְרָהָם לְעֶפְרֹן אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר... אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לַסֹּחֵר).

In ancient times people exchanged goods and precious metals. But how could you know exactly how much silver or gold someone had given you and how much it was worth? Well, the entire ancient world was a lot less objective than ours. If we want to know what an ounce of silver is, we use a scale and our electronic scales are very precise. If we want to know if what we are holding is pure silver (universally tradeable), that is a bit trickier because only a special process can tell us what percentage of the metal we are being handed is pure silver and what percentage is not.

In Abraham's time, the only way to know how much silver someone was offering was to actually weigh the silver. To weigh in Hebrew is לִשְׁקֹל and the three-letter root of this verb is שקל. That is why the Torah says that the amount of silver Abraham gave Ephron the Hittite for the field of the Machpelah is referred to as shekels, derived from the 3-letter root of weighing: שקל. The earliest "coins" per se were named after the act of weighing which ensured their value.

FROM COINS TO NATURE

Many centuries later, a new and easier method for knowing a piece of silver's weight (and purity) was developed. The lump of silver was minted into the shape of a coin and was then engraved (or embossed) with the likeness of the king guaranteeing its value. The earliest coins with such engravings date to about the 7th century BCE. The engravings were stamped on the coins and the word for stamping in Aramaic is טִבְעָא, which then became טַבַּע in Hebrew. This earlier form of the word is echoed in the Talmud's treatment of issues relating to the difference between "money" (טִבְעָא) and "goods" (פֵּירֵי). Incidentally, the word for "goods" in Aramaic and in Hebrew stems from "fruit" (פְּרִי).

In the middle ages, the root used for "stamp" or "coin" (מַטְבֵּעַ), which is טֶבַע, became the root for "nature," because like in English, nature could denote the character or persona of a person—like the imprint of the king's likeness on a coin—and it could be Nature with a capital n, referring to the recurring character or persona of the world's forces, like tides and currents in the ocean, or the qualities of materials, and the repetition of the annual seasons, the movement of the stars, etc.

1. Genesis 23:16.

In Hebrew, it was immediately noted that the value of "the nature" (**הַטֶּבַע**) specifically referring to the repetitive events in Nature, i.e., the natural world, was the same as God's Name, *Elokim* (**אֱ-לֹהִים**). Thus, it became popular to think of God as imprinting Himself, as it were, on the natural world.

WE DO NOT YEARN FOR MONEY

Shekel is thus the earliest form of coinage and has become the most generic Hebrew word for a denomination of currency. Nachmanides writes that Moses also made a coin, which he called *shekel*. The value of the word *shekel* (**שֶׁקֶל**) is 430. Clearly, coinage paved the way for attributing monetary value to objects, which we can define as the degree to which people want to possess said objects. Indeed, 430 is also the value of nefesh (**נֶפֶשׁ**), the Hebrew word for the psyche, which also means "to want" or "to yearn for." In fact, the Hebrew word for silver (כֶּסֶף), out of which Abraham's coins were minted, also means "yearning," as in the verse, "because you longed for your father's home"[2] (כִּי נִכְסֹף נִכְסַפְתָּ לְבֵית אָבִיךָ). The value of shekel, 430, is also the value of 4 central phrases that describe the souls and psyches and yearnings of Jews of different stature, as they correspond to the four Worlds, or sources of the different souls.[3] The first, corresponding to the World of Action is "a simple Jew" (**יְהוּדִי פָּשׁוּט**). Corresponding to the World of Formation, the world of emotions is, "a jovial chasid" (**חָסִיד שָׂמֵחַ**). The third corresponding to the World of Creation, whose essence is intellectual, is "biblically learned" (**יוֹדֵעַ סֵפֶר**). Finally, the highest appellation corresponding to the World of Emanation where consciousness is exclusively devoted to holiness is, "a *tzaddik*, foundation of the world" (**צַדִּיק יְסוֹד עוֹלָם**).

Despite the clear differences between individual Jews, differences that stem from the varying roots of their souls and their conduct in life, all souls are equal, just like all coins of a denomination—all shekels—have the same intrinsic value. In fact, the root of shekel, not only means "to weigh," it also means "equal" (שָׁקוּל). Two phrases associated with Shabbat and the shofar reveal this equality. Whenever one prepares (or purchases) something for Shabbat, it is customary to say, "in honor of the holy Shabbat" (**לִכְבוֹד שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ**), whose initials are *shekel* (**שֶׁקֶל**). Similarly, the blessing we say before blowing the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah with the intent of (among other things) awakening our souls as one is "to hear the sound of the shofar" (**לִשְׁמֹעַ קוֹל שׁוֹפָר**). Again, the initials spell *shekel* (**שֶׁקֶל**).

BREAKING NATURE'S UNIFORMITY

The negative side of equality is the notion that Nature is uniform; not just that Nature is the same everywhere and at all times, but that Nature does not treat individuals differently. Divine Providence is the opposite and was Abraham's great discovery and the root of his faith and trust in God: God judges reality based on personal merit and individual conduct. It was on this basis that Abraham tried to prevent the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, "It would be indiscriminate

2. Genesis 31:30.
3. See *El Olam HaKabbalah*, pp. 149–151.

of You to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked—it would be a profanity if the righteous and the wicked be treated uniformly; will the Judge of the entire Earth not conduct justice?"[4] The uniformity of nature and of reality was the doctrine held and espoused by Amalek, who attacked Israel as they came out of Egypt. Amalek wished to cool the belief that God judges on the basis of merit and therefore saved the Israelites from the Egyptians.

One might say that the Amalekites believed that all things were equal, שְׁקוּל, the meaning related to the word *shekel*. Every year, we renew our commitment to cancelling the Godless Amalekite picture of reality in the month of Adar, when we commemorate the bringing of the half-shekel in the time of the Temple. The half-shekel symbolizes the cutting of Nature's uniformity in half, as it were, suggesting that a human being is only one half of a whole. The other half is God, who places the soul in the human, indicating that God is personally involved and provides Providence over all human affairs.

4. Genesis 18:25.

Haran and Hebron

Let us explore even further the letters of the word Hebron in Hebrew: *Chevron*, חֶבְרוֹן. When God told Abraham to leave his country, birthplace and parental home to go to the land that He would show him, Abraham was living in a place called Haran, חָרָן. Rashi explains that until Abraham, God's anger was kindled against the world. [5] He bases his explanation on the name Haran deriving from the root meaning "anger." Until Abraham, the first 20 generations of mankind experienced one calamity after another: the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Cain killing Abel, the introduction of idol worship, the Flood that wiped out humanity, and the dispersion after the Tower of Babel. God's response to all of this is symbolized in what we would term "anger."

It is interesting to note the similarities in the names of the places where Abraham came from, and where he resided in Israel and buried his wife. The name Hebron in Hebrew, *Chevron* (**חֶבְרוֹן**), has the same letters as Haran in Hebrew, *Charan* (**חָרָן**), with the additional letters *beit* (**ב**)and *vav* (**ו**).[6] Both of these letters symbolize connection: *beit* equals two, implying a relationship between two people or entities, and the *vav* means "and" which is the essential connector in language. Therefore, we can see that the names of these places in Rashi's explanations reveal the transition that not only Abraham made by leaving everything behind in following God's command, but also God's relationship with the world transitioning from "anger" to intimate relationship. The root of Hebron (חֶבְרוֹן) is also the root of the word meaning "friend," *chaver* (חָבֵר).

The addition of the letter *beit,* further alludes to the four couples (four pairs of two) that are buried in Kiryat Arba. It also reveals the meaning of Machpelah,

5. Ibid. 12:32.

6. Class on Parashat Vayeitzei, 2 Kislev 5772.

the name of the double cave where Sarah is buried. The addition of the letter *vav* alludes to another tradition that the burial place of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, along with Adam and Eve, is the connecting channel between this world and the World to Come, as discussed above. The Land of Israel connects God and mankind, physical and spiritual, life and eternal life of the soul after death, and this world and the World to Come. Similar to how the Temple Mount serves as a conduit for prayer to rise to heaven, as Jacob stated after his dream of a ladder that connected earth to heaven; the place where our Patriarchs and Matriarchs are buried in Hebron also has the spiritual power of connecting us to a higher reality.

ABRAHAM: BEST FRIEND TO GOD

On Shabbat, many congregations begin the prayers of *Kabbalat Shabbat* by singing the Beautiful *piyyut* (liturgical poem), *Yedid Nefesh*, which refers to the Almighty as the "beloved of the soul." It was Abraham who not only realized the truth of there being One God and then making it his life's mission to teach the entire world this truth, he was also the first human being to connect to God in such an intimate manner, or as Rashi comments, he became "friends with God." It was in Hebron that Abraham became connected to God on the level of intimate "friends."

The prophet Isaiah says in the name of God: "But you, Israel My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, who loved Me."[7] This verse can also be understood as "the seed of Abraham, who I love" or even "Abraham, my friend."

The term friend here does not imply a casual relationship, rather it indicates a close eternal connection called *brit*, or covenant. The covenant that the Almighty made with Abraham is unbreakable; transcending any other type of relationship.[8] Abraham merited to turn God's "anger" into love, resetting human history that will eventually lead to redemption for the entire world.

MARRIAGE AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL

In purchasing the Cave of Machpelah, Abraham established the Jewish people's relation with the Land of Israel. The first Mishnah in the tractate of *Kiddushin* teaches that one of the ways that a woman becomes officially married is through a monetary exchange from the man to the woman. The Talmud teaches that the source for this idea is learnt from a *gezeirah shavah*, a method which compares similar words that appear in Torah text in different contexts.

It says regarding marriage: "When a man *takes* a woman,"[9] and it says regarding Abraham's acquisition of the Cave of Machpelah, where he buried Sarah: "I give forth the money for the field, *take* it from me."[10]

Just as the word take in Genesis is referring to acquiring through money, so too the word take by marriage is referring to acquiring through the agency of money. From here, we learn that since there is a connection between the laws of marriage

7. 41:8.

8. Genesis 17: 4-8.
9. Deuteronomy 24:1.
10. Genesis 23:3.

and the acquisition of The Land of Israel in the above verses, the relationship of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel is akin to a marriage. This further confirms the great love and loyalty shown throughout history by the people of Israel for our treasured homeland.

MASCULINE AND FEMININE PERSPECTIVES

To understand this better: In relationship to God as Creator, all of creation is considered the receptive feminine energy. This is alluded to in the first and last letters of the first word in the Torah, *bereishit*, being a *beit* and *tav*, (בְּרֵאשִׁית) spelling the word "daughter," *bat* (בַּת). Even further, throughout the books of the prophets, Israel is allegorically referred to as the "wife" of God; sometimes as the wayward, disloyal wife, and other times in very intimate, loving terms.

Yet, Israel is considered the masculine in relation to Shabbat and the Land of Israel.[11] One tradition relates that God paired together the days of creation, so that days one and two, three and four, and five and six, each had their mate. The seventh day, Shabbat, inquired of God who its mate would be. God's answer was that the people of Israel would be Shabbat's mate.[12]

In the time of the Talmud, the Sages would greet Shabbat as if greeting a bride. Rabbi Chanina would say: "Come let us go and greet the Shabbat Queen. Rabbi Yannai would say: "Enter O bride, enter O bride.[13] The Arizal and the Kabbalists of Safed in the mid-1500s created a Friday evening prayer service called *Kabbalat Shabbat*, based on the earlier Talmudic precedent. The climax of *Kabbalat Shabbat* is the beloved song *Lecha Dodi*, whose repeated refrain is "Come my Beloved [God] to greet the bride; the Presence of Shabbat, let us welcome!" Similarly, the people of Israel relate to the Land of Israel as a beloved bride.

Thus, in relation to God we are the feminine while in relation to both Shabbat and the Land of Israel we are the masculine. In both scenarios, we are speaking of relationships of eternal love and intimacy.

11. *The Mystery of Marriage*, p. 207.

12. *Bereishit Rabbah* 11:8.

13. *Shabbat* 119a.

FROM THE CHASIDIC MASTERS

REBBE LEVI YITZCHAK OF BERDITCHEV ON CHAYEI SARAH

Last year and the year before, Rav Ginsburgh devoted his yearly study of the Torah with a Chasidic commentary to Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. The classes he gave based on the book are now edited and complete in Hebrew and are soon to be published.

We here provide a translation of the ideas presented in that book on parashat Chayei Sarah.

"And Abraham was old, advanced in days, and *Havayah* blessed Abraham with everything."[1] On this verse Rebbe Levi Isaac of Berditchev offers four teachings in his *Kedushat Levi*. All four teachings share a common core idea: that this verse encapsulates Abraham's ability to bring the Infinite light or revelation of Godliness into the limited nature of this world. We will follow this thread through the different themes in our *parashah*: the passing of Sarah, Eliezer's mission to find a wife for Isaac, and the transition between generations.

"UNTIL ABRAHAM THERE WAS NO OLD AGE"

The first two teachings focus on the words, "And Abraham was old." The relationship between these first two teachings is itself one of "light" and "vessels." From these words, the Sages learned that "until Abraham there was no old age"[2]—Abraham was the first human to experience old age. The first interpretation is that "old age" (*zaken*) refers to the *sefirah* of crown, particularly to its aspect of will[3] that lies above the normal manner of how God's abundance

1 Genesis 24:1. The initial and final letters of the words of the entire verse (**וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַי־הוה בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל**) equal 655, which is the value of "humility" (**עֲנָוָה**) front and back (**ע ענ ענו ענוה ענוה נוהו ה ה**). The value of the remaining letters—the middle letters (וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַי־הוה בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל)—is "lowliness" (**שִׁפְלוּת**). Thus, this verse expresses the perfection of lowliness within humility, which in Kabbalah represents the *sefirah* of kingdom within understanding (the daughter within the mother).

2. "Until Abraham there was no old age" (**עד אברהם לא היה זקנה**) equals 535, "light darkness" (**אור חשך**), alluding to Abraham, who "began to illuminate" (*Shemot Rabbah* 15:20): light from darkness.

3 The root of Avraham's attribute of loving-kindness in the crown is in the attribute of "abundant in loving-kindness" (Exodus 34:6; see *Torat Menachem* vol. 33, p. 316; and elsewhere). "Abundant loving-kindness" (**רב חסד**) plus will (**רצון**) equals crown (**כתר**), 620, the totality of the commandments of the Torah (613 from the Torah and 7 rabbinic commandments, or 613 for Israel and 7 for the nations).

reaches the world.[4] This is the light. The second interpretation complements the first with the understanding that "old age" is revealed in one's hair, which represents the soul's garments: thought, speech, and action. These are the vessels through which God's abundance is revealed. It was Abraham who made it possible for God's Presence to be revealed through these garments.

To develop the first teaching, the *Kedushat Levi* explains that God's abundance reaches the world in two ways. There is abundance that comes in measure and there is abundance that is drawn directly from the Creator. The latter continues to cleave to God as the Source of Life and therefore has no fixed measure. Only Israel, through their cleaving to God, can draw from the latter, unlimited abundance, while the nations of the world receive from the first.[5]

Why the unlimited abundance is referred to as "old age," or more literally as "an elder" (*zaken*), is illustrated with a parable. Before a craftsman makes an object, its form already appears in his thought and the thought then brings the object into existence through action. If the thought of the object is the father, then the action that manifests it into a material object is the son. But the thought itself (the father) is itself drawn from the craftsman's will, which is, following our analogy, the grandfather of the action. If we compare this by analogy by how God brings abundance into the world, then the Jewish people draw down from God's "old age," from God's will, the "elder." The ability to take from God's will by fulfilling His will was initiated by Abraham: "Until Abraham there was no old age." Before Abraham no one could draw abundance from God's will. Thus Abraham "rectified the aspect of old age."

This also explains the wording of the first blessing in the *Amidah*, which corresponds to Abraham: "He remembers the loving-kindnesses of the fathers and brings a redeemer to their grandchildren." God remembers the loving-kindness, the will from which the fathers, in particular Abraham, drew down abundance and He draws from it again for their grandchildren.[6] Let us add that even

4. Known as *Seder Hishtalshelut*—literally, the order of evolution.

5. To illustrate this difference, the *Kedushat Levi* notes that Ishmael's descendants are described as, "twelve princes according to their nations" and "nations" in Hebrew (*le'umotam*) comes from the word "mother" which also means "a measure" (אמה). But Israel's lineage is described as following "their fathers' houses" and "fathers" in Hebrew (*avotam*), stems from the same root that means "will" (אבה).

6 In the *Kedushat Levi* it is explained that the will, the *sefirah* of crown, is the first source, thought is the father, and action is the son. Since the thought (the father) is also a son of the crown (the "elder"-grandfather), action is the "children's children." One way to understand this structure is to say that thought itself divides into a father, the mind of wisdom, called Abba, and a son (**בֵּן**), the mind of understanding (**בִּינָה**), which feels like a "son" to the crown, the secret of "the revelation of *Atika* [the highest aspect of the crown] within the mother" (*Torah Or*, *Lech Lecha* 11b, and in elsewhere).
It is simpler, however, to explain that "grandchildren" refers to the habitual *sefirot*: victory, acknowledgment, and foundation. There are then four generations (the secret of *Kiryat Arba*, literally "the town of four"): "elder" in the crown, "father" in the intellectual *sefirot*, "son" (or "children") refer to the emotional *sefirot*—loving-kindness, might, and beauty—and children's children, or

though Abraham is the archetypal soul of loving-kindness (*chesed*), its root is in the crown, which is referred to as, "abundant loving-kindness" (*rav chesed*).

Thus, "Abraham was old": he drew from the will. "Advanced in days": he brought that abundance into the temporally limited lower worlds. "And *Havayah* blessed Abraham with everything": with an abundance that includes everything and has no limit.

HAIR AS A GARMENT

The second teaching complements the first. Old age is expressed in one's hair, and in the writings of the Arizal hair signifies a garment.[7] Just as the body has clothing, the soul has garments—the hair. When cut, neither our hair nor our garments cause us pain. God contracts Himself into this world, as it were, so that the worlds can receive His goodness by enclothing Himself, as it were, in our performance of commandments and good deeds. These are the vessels and garments for the indwelling of the *Shechinah*—the Divine Presence.[8] Before Abraham, no one had made such a garment, no one had performed deeds that could serve as a vessel for the Divine Presence.

"ABRAHAM HAD A DAUGHTER, AND HER NAME WAS BAKOL"

The next two teachings focus on the second half of the verse, "And *Havayah* blessed Abraham with everything (*bakol*)," about which the Sages state, "Abraham had a daughter and her name was *bakol*."[9] The Berditchever links the word for "daughter," *bat* (בת) to another statement of the Sages: "A *bat kol* (a supernal voice) goes forth from Mount Chorev and says, 'Return, o' rebellious children.'" What is this voice, which no one seems to hear?[10] Rebbe Levi Isaac answers that it is the arousal of *teshuvah* that comes to every person each day. Its source is the voice we heard at Mt. Sinai, also called Chorev, who said the Decalogue, "I am *Havayah* your God… You shall have no other gods…." These commandments were imprinted in our hearts.

Why is it called a "*bat kol*," which literally means an "all-inclusive voice?" Because as it flows from Mt. Sinai every day, each person contracts himself to receive it according to his own potential and need. One person makes it into the wisdom needed to serve God, another into wealth, a third into honor, and other good things, etc. The channel through which each person limits the descending abundance is called "*bat*," a word cognate with measurement and limitation. Abraham's *bat*, his measure, was named *bakol* for it included all the measures—all possible

"grandchildren" (i.e., the great-grandchildren of the "elder," the crown) refer to the habitual *sefirot*. Thus, the Sages' statement, "until here [the grandchildren] runs the compassion of the father [the elder]" (quoted in Rashi on *parashat Vayeira*)—which says that a person has compassion for his children and his grandchildren (but not for his great-grandchildren)—means that the compassion of the crown is drawn down only to the emotional attributes loving-kindness, might, and beauty, which is the revealed attribute of compassion itself.

7. See also *Tanya*, *Iggeret HaKodesh* 29.

8 The ability to measure is also connected to the interpretations of "Abraham had a daughter, and her name was *bakol*," below.

9 *Bava Batra* 16b.

10. See also *Keter Shem Tov* (*Kehot* ed.), 146.

contractions. Abraham's "daughter" (*bat*), his measure, is thus the secret of the *bat kol*, the power to narrow the general voice into any specific blessing a person seeks. The word meaning everything (*kol*, כֹּל) is phonetically identical to the word meaning "voice" (*kol*, קוֹל.)

Every *tzaddik* who follows the path of the Ba'al Shem Tov makes himself available to his community. This was one of the great innovations introduced by the Ba'al Shem Tov. The fourth teaching states that though there is a *tzaddik* whose requests are for himself, and a *tzaddik* whose requests are for the community, from this same verse we learn that Abraham was a *Ba'al Shemske tzaddik*. The untranslatable word אֵת, in "*Havayah* blessed Abraham" (וי־הוָה בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם), also means a more translatable "with," i.e, that whatever God blessed, He blessed it with Abraham. The abundance from above descends into the world through Abraham's *bat*, which is a unit of volume measurement[11] and from there Abraham would distribute it to all who needed it.

THE ELDER EDUCATES THE YOUTH

From these teachings emerges an idea that bears on the gap between generations. The "old age" that Abraham introduced is connected to infinite potential, and Abraham can transmit that potential to the next generation, which is smaller and more contracted than the previous generation.

The ability to contain and contract the infinite within a vessel can also be described using a phrase the Lubavitcher Rebbe used to define the type of Divine service that will bring Mashiach: "Lights of chaos [*tohu*] in vessels of rectification [*tikkun*]."[12] Indeed, the numerical value of, "and Abraham was old" (**וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן**) is the same as that of "chaos" (**תהו**). Thus, this part of the description parallels the infinite energy Abraham is able to access. Yet, at the same time, Abraham is also described as, "advanced in days," which means that he has an orderly accounting of all the days of his life, corresponding to the rectified vessel containing that infinite energy.

But we can also read this the other way around. Chaotic, infinite energy is usually expressed in youth. As a person ages, the more settled and refined they become. Abraham's innovation is that even in old age he continues to engage with the traits of youth, and he has the power to educate the youth and bring its unlimited energy into the vessels of his old age.

The Rebbe of Kotzk explained[13] the verse "Educate the youth according to his way; even when he grows old he will not depart from it"[14] as a warning to the older *chasidim*: Do not stop educating yourself and engaging with the "youth" within you.[15]

11. As in the verse, "it would hold 2000 bat" (1 Kings 7:26).

12 Discourse from 28 Nisan 5751.

13 Cited in *Ramatayim Tzofim*, section 3, letter 8: "He said that the verse warns even the elder that even in his old age he must not cease educating himself."

14 Proverbs 22:6.

15 In "Chinuch Katan," the Alter Rebbe's introduction to Sha'ar HaYichud VeHa'emunah in Tanya, the emphasis is that even the elder-*tzaddik* returns from time to time to the state of the *beinoni*, in passing from level to level, and must then "remember" the service of their youth. There, the return to youth seems like a post factum necessity.

So it is written that Abraham took "his two young men with him."[16] Even in old age he took the years of his youth with him, with all their alacrity and enthusiasm.[17] Indeed, when the traits of youth (of the world of Formation,[18] the world of emotion) rise and join old age (the world of *Atzilut*, or Emanation) without losing their freshness and creativity, the lights of chaos are truly held in the vessels of rectification. For the "jovial *chasid*" of the world of Formation[19] always remains young, as the Tzemach Tzedek said.[20]

THE TRANSITION BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

The bond between Abraham and Isaac is the main subject of the end of *parashat Vayeira* and the beginning of our *parashah*, *Chayei Sarah*. *Vayeira* ends with the Binding of Isaac, the result of which was the inter-inclusion of Abraham and Isaac.[21] *Rashi* relates that on his return from Mount Moriah, Abraham was pondering: "Had my son been sacrificed, he would have died without children. I should have married him to a woman from the daughters of [my allies and friends:] Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre." Then God told him the good news that Rivkah, Isaac's *bashert*, had been born.[22]

The Rebbe of Kotzk explains[23] that the reverse was also true: had God's promise that Abraham's seed would continue through Isaac already been fulfilled, Abraham could have completed the sacrifice. God's answer was that only now had Isaac's true wife been born, and before this Isaac would not have had offspring at all.[24]

The deeper message here is that Rivkah's birth was itself the result of the Binding of Isaac and the passing of Sarah that followed it.[25] Rivkah enters the tent in Sarah's place, and she arouses in Isaac, whose attribute is fear and awe, Abraham's attribute of love. The Torah describes this with the verse, "Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother, and he took Rivkah, and she became his wife, and he *loved* her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother."[26] The Sages reveal an important principle: "No kingdom can take what belongs to another kingdom, not even a

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For the Rebbe of Kotzk, a master of the service of the burning heart, engaging with youthfulness is a constant, a priori engagement that breathes the spirit of life and youth even into the elder.

16 Genesis 22:3.

17 See the class of 11 Cheshvan 5782, and additional sources.

18 In it dwells the angel *Metat* (מְטַטְרוֹן), whose value equals *Shakai* (שַׁדַּי), 314, and who is called a "youth" (*na'ar*). See *Megaleh Amukot*, *ofan* 14, and elsewhere. See also *Yevamot* 16b; *Zohar* 1:126a and *Zohar Chadash* 86b.

19. See in our article on the word *shekel* above.

20 Cited in *Lichyot Im HaZman*, vol. 4, p. 213.

21 See *Zohar* 1:119b; 3:18a; *Likutei Torah* (of the Arizal), *Vayeira*, *s.v.* "*Sod HaAkeidah*"; *Likutei Torah, Va'etchanan* 8b; ibid. and *Drushei Rosh HaShanah* 58b; *Ma'ayan Ganim* vol. 1, p. 37 ff.

22 *Rashi* on Genesis 22:20.

23 *Ramatayim Tzofim*, section 3, letter 5.

24 In inwardness, this is not only a matter of a missing mate, but also of Isaac himself. Before the Binding (the *Akeidah*) Isaac only had a feminine aspect (*nukva*) of his soul, so he could not beget; only after the *Akeidah* did he merit a masculine aspect his soul (*dechura*). See *Sha'ar HaPesukim*, *Vayeira*; *Sefer HaLikutim*, *Vayeira* and *Vayeshev*. *Or HaChaim* on Genesis 21:2.

25 See *Tanchuma*, *Vayeira* 23; *Bereishit Rabbah* 58:5; and elsewhere.

26 Genesis 24:67.

hair's breadth."[27] Therefore, while Sarah was alive, Rivkah could not appear on the scene. Completing this transition, from Abraham and Sarah to Isaac and Rivkah, is the mission of Eliezer, Abraham's servant, who goes to find a wife for Isaac in our *parashah*. Eliezer functions here as the secret of the voice between thought and speech.

JOINING OLD AGE AND YOUTH

The verse that we have been looking at—"And Abraham was old, advanced in days, and Havayah blessed Abraham with everything"—also reflects how Eliezer's mission was to connect the generations from Abraham and Sarah to Isaac and Rivkah. As noted, the Sages learnt[28] that that "until Abraham there was no old age." Abraham and Isaac looked so alike that people confused them, so Abraham prayed, and old age came into the world. "And Abraham was old" thus emphasizes the gap between the generations, a gap that requires mediation and passage, which is the purpose of Eliezer's mission.

But this gap is not a flaw. It is the answer to Abraham's own request, and bridging it is his "coin": "The coin of Abraham: an old man and an old woman on one side, and a youth and a maiden on the other."[29] A king is defined as one whose coin circulates.[30] The power to carry life across the generations is what makes Abraham a king.

The emissary between the old man and woman and the youth and maiden is Eliezer, Abraham's own disciple (*chanich*)[31] and one of the "two young men."[32] When sending Eliezer, Abraham draws him and his youthfulness into himself. As a consequence, Eliezer is no longer cursed and becomes blessed,[33] and Abraham prepares him for his future incarnations, up to Mashiach ben David.[34] Eliezer is thus the secret of the *bat kol*, the root of the *sefirah* of kingdom within understanding.

The perfection of the revelation of Godliness in the world depends on this union of the generations. And the hint that captures this idea is that the sum of "Abraham-Sarah, Eliezer, Isaac-Rivkah" (אַבְרָהָם שָׂרָה אֱלִיעֶזֶר יִצְחָק רִבְקָה) is 1586, the product of 61, the value of "I" (אֲנִי), and 26, the value of *Havayah* (הוי').

27 *Berachot* 48b; *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 3:11.

28 *Bava Metzia* 87a.

29 *Bava Kamma* 97b (and *Rashi* there). See also *Bereishit Rabbah* 39:11.

30 *Hilchot Geneivah* 5:18.

31 See *Tanchuma*, *Bereishit Rabbah*, *Targum Yerushalmi*, and *Rashi* on Genesis 14:14. See also *Panim el Panim*, ch. 4.

32 *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* ch. 31; *Vayikra Rabbah* 20:2 (and in several places); and so too *Targum Yonatan* on Genesis 22:3.

33 *Bereishit Rabbah* 60:7; *Vayikra Rabbah* 17:5; and elsewhere.

34 See *Sha'ashuim Yom Yom*, *Lech Lecha*, p. 46.

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