"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**

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*Once, in the middle of the street, he encountered Rebbe Yaakov Dovid. Out of embarrassment, so as not to have to speak with the Rebbe, he slipped away and ducked into one of the houses.*


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**In memory of Yisrael Benyamin ben Avraham and Leah Gittel on his first *yahrzeit*, 4th of Kislev. May his memory be a blessing to his wife and all his family and friends.**

*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 YAAKOV DAVID KALISH OF AMSHINOV: SNATCHING A PRAYER

*Rebbe Yaakov Dovid Kalish "the Alter Rebbe" of Amshinov, was the eldest son of Rebbe Isaac of Vorki and the brother of Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vorki. When his father passed away in 5608 (1848), he accepted the authority of Rebbe Shraga Feivel of Gritza, and upon the latter's passing half a year later, he began to serve as Rebbe in Amshinov, while his brother took their father's place in Vorki. Like his father, Rebbe Yaakov Dovid was active in communal affairs and spent much time in Warsaw interceding with the authorities on behalf of the community, at times together with the Chiddushei HaRim (Rebbe Itche Mayer of Gur). Among his many endeavors, he was one of those who acted to annul the Czarist decree against sidelocks and beards. In the way of Vorki Chasidut, he was distinguished by his love for his fellow Jew and by his joy, and was likewise known for drinking substantial amounts of liquor while retaining full clarity of mind throughout. Rebbe Yaakov Dovid passed away on the 4th of Kislev, 5638 (1877), in the health-resort town of Merano, Italy. Two weeks later he was brought to rest in Amshinov.*

The holy Rebbe Elimelech of Grodzisk, of blessed memory—though he himself had ten thousand *chasidim*—would regularly travel to Amshinov for the Rosh Chodesh feast of Rebbe Yaakov Dovid. Rebbe Elimelech was known to pray at great length. Once, he was already standing in the midst of the morning prayer when Rebbe Yaakov Dovid began his own prayers, and the two finished together.

Rebbe Elimelech asked him, "Amshinover Rebbe, when do you pray?" Rebbe Yaakov Dovid answered: "It is written, 'David blessed God before the eyes of the whole congregation; David said…' (1 Chronicles 29:10). King David [his name was also, Yaakov Dovid] always stands in prayer before the Master of the Universe. But when he is 'before the eyes of the whole congregation,' when he is in public, it is only 'David said,' meaning that David snatches a prayer."

Rebbe Yaakov Dovid divides prayer into two categories: prayer in public, with the congregation, is brief and hurried, at least relatively speaking. Prayer in private includes the constant gushing of the heart. The verse he cited in support of this teaching itself reveals the distinction between the two.

In the depths of his soul, a Jew always senses that he is nothing but, "a part of God above" (*Tanya*, ch. 2) who by the will of the Creator became an independent being. This ongoing experience expresses itself in constant prayer, at every step, including pure prayer that is not meant to beseech God for any particular need. Instead, as Chasidut explains, the word *tefillah* (prayer) is related to the root *tofel*, as in the phrase "gluing together [shards of] earthen vessels" (הַתּוֹפֵל כְּלֵי חֶרֶס), which appears in the Mishnah (*Keilim* 3:5). Pure prayer connects or binds a person to God. By being aware of his own being, on the one hand, and on the other hand, by connecting to his root in the Divine, a Jew is constantly yearning to cleave to God and to become a complete expression of Godliness.

Concerning this pure, inner prayer, the Rebbe brings the verse "And David blessed God." Blessing (*brachah*) signifies a drawing-down from above, as in the horticultural term *havrachah*—which means, bending a branch from a vine down to the earth so that it takes root. Thus, to bless God, means to draw Godliness down to the mundane, to reveal, within the soul and within the world, God's being and His presence. The initial letters of the phrase "David blessed God" (ויברך דוד את י-הוה) spell the word "certainly" (ודאי), teaching of the powerful certainty demanded of this type of prayer: one must not be distracted, even for a moment, from the true being of God, echoing the phrase "certain is His name, so is His praise."

Why, then, is prayer in the congregation so swift? Here too the Amshinover draws on the verse he cites, "And David said." To say, a saying (*amirah*), is meant to act within the limits of the natural world, which was brought into existence specifically through Ten Sayings, and to effect material salvation for Jews in need of it in mundane matters: children, life, and ample sustenance. As the Zohar explains, the secret of a "saying" (אמר), the root of "saying" (אמירה) is אמר, the initials of "light" (**א**ור), "water"(**מ**ים) , and "firmament" (**ר**קיע), each of which is mentioned five times in the Torah's description of the first two days of Creation—the two inclusive days of Creation—because light, water, and firmament represent the three stages involved in every transformation from spiritual to physical. Light represents the spiritual, firmament the physical, and the water in between represents an intermediate stage.

Repeating this process in order to draw down abundance and affect change in some detail of reality demands great speed because drawing effluence down from the spiritual world into the physical world, requires one to overcome many harsh judgments and obstacles along the way. This resembles a person deliberating if and how to carry out some plan: at a certain point he must stop deliberating and act, before the moment is lost. The secret of the Priestly Blessing is explained in a similar manner. It begins with the words, "Say (אמר) to them"—the blessing that draws down spiritual effluence must be said quickly, as in the verse, "His word runs swiftly" (Psalms 147:15).

One of Rebbe Yaakov Dovid's *chasidim*, Moshe Mordechai, would go from house to house selling milk. Once, in the middle of the street, he encountered Rebbe Yaakov Dovid. Out of embarrassment, so as not to have to speak with the Rebbe, he slipped away and ducked into one of the houses.

Rebbe Yaakov Dovid called after him and said: "We learn in the Mishnah (*Avot* 1:10), 'Love work, and hate rabbinical service.' The meaning is that rabbinical service has two components: dominion and prestige as well as actual rabbinical service, which entails acting on behalf of the community. Work also has two components: the work itself as well as the dominion and prestige that goes along with the work. Indeed, Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa said that even a water-drawer is susceptible to pride and self-importance. The prideful man carries the water on his shoulders without also steadying it with his hand, wishing to display his strength. The ordinary man steadies it with his hands as well. This is the meaning of "Love work"—love the aspect of work within work, and "despise the pride and dominion" that go with it.

Let us imagine the scene for a moment: the *chasid* encounters his Rebbe while engaged in work considered rather lowly. Out of embarrassment he tries to slip away, and fails. And what does the Rebbe do? He criticizes him for the pride he exhibited!

The explanation is that the Amshinover rebbe emphasized that excessive embarrassment does not necessarily indicate humility and lowliness. Often it is merely an expression of the wish to be held in greater esteem, and of the feeling that one's true place is loftier than where one actually stands. With these words, the Rebbe guides his *chasid* to acquire genuine lowliness.

The Mishnah begins with love and ends with hatred—"love work and despise rabbinical service"—the opposite of the order found in the Tanach, "refrain from evil and do good." The Mishnah's order is echoed in the Tanya's teaching regarding the complete *tzaddik*, whose whole-hearted love of the good gives rise to his intense hatred of the evil that opposes that good. Here, the good is the work itself, and the evil is the sense of self-importance it generates, which is, in truth, nothing but a harmful distraction. First one must concentrate on the work at hand. "Love work" by taking to heart that, "It is not for you to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it" (*Avot* 2:16). First and foremost, you should focus on the task itself. When a *chasid* once asked what he should think about while entering the *mikveh*, the Rebbe Rashab instructed him to concentrate on the technical actions of undressing. So too, one engaged in his work, including a rabbi occupied with the needs of his community, should concentrate fully on the task at hand.

In the words of the Rebbe of Amshinov to his disciple, he teaches us to adopt a path of service that is true and effective as well as joyous and free of the burden of mastery and the feeling of pride that accompanies it.

THE WONDERING JEW

# OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

In 2010, HaRav Isaac Ginsburgh received an unusual birthday gift: a Twitter account. While many might not have expected a revered teacher of Torah to utilize such a platform, he embraced it, posting daily. Initially restricted to the medium's strict character limits—which permitted only two or three sentences at a time, these short, highly concentrated messages eventually required expansion and elaboration. To accommodate more substantial, detailed ideas, a blog account was opened for him. This digital teaching phase lasted for an entire year. Later, the staff at Gal Einai painstakingly compiled these exact tweets and blogs, organizing them by subject to create the book *The Wondering Jew: Mystical Musings and Inspirational Insights*.

For those familiar with HaRav Ginsburgh's extensive teachings, his mastery of the Kabbalistic and Chasidic traditions is virtually unparalleled in this generation. Typically, when delivering discourses in Israel to audiences deeply versed in Torah, he transmits the most profound depths of esoteric thought. Yet *The Wondering Jew* reveals a distinctly different facet of his pedagogy. The teachings within that volume are characterized by a light touch, playful language, and good humor. Even when elucidating the most unfathomable spiritual concepts, he does so with an elegant simplicity. The language is tailored for a broader audience, demonstrating that the deepest truths can be made accessible to anyone.

This is the beginning of a series of short articles based on the entries in the book. Each short article begins with a quote from the Wondering Jew. Some of the quotes are shorter and some longer. The elucidation of the quote follows.

## Love and Fear of God

There is nothing to fear except God. But why should we fear someone who is absolutely good? To truly fear God means to fear forgetting Him.

To understand this idea, one must delve into the nuances of the Hebrew language. The term *Yirat Shamayim* is commonly translated as "fear of Heaven," but *yirah* also meaning "awe." Normally, when we speak of fearing God, we

mean that we are in awe of God, not in fear of God. What Rav Ginsburgh is saying here is that despite the normal understanding, there is in every profound love relationship, an inherent measure of fear, which manifests as the fear of doing something inappropriate that would upset one's beloved and cause the relationship to weaken or even break. Thus, in this spiritual context, to truly fear God does not mean to be terrified of His punishment; it means to fear forgetting Him. To battle this fear, we seek to maintain a constant, unyielding awareness of God's Presence in our lives.

This principle beautifully echoes a foundational narrative from the life of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement. When he was just five years old, his father passed away. His father's last will and testament to his young son consisted of two simple but profound instructions: "Just remember two things: do not fear anything or anyone except God and love every Jew." These two principles shaped the Ba'al Shem Tov's entire life. He was completely fearless in initiating a revolutionary movement—Chasidut—which is fundamentally based on the word for loving-kindness, *chesed*. The ultimate teaching is that the only true fear one should harbor is the fear of being distant from God. This sort of "fear" is based on the love, reverence and awe one has for their beloved. Our most natural relationship with the Creator of all should be one of complete love and awe.

Amazingly, the two principles in the Ba'al Shem Tov's father's words are co-dependent. It is impossible to love every Jew if one fears losing anything but one's connection with God. In fact, one will readily find upon simple reflection that all the baseless hatred (the lack of love) for other Jews is caused by allowing ourselves to be misaligned by fear of losing our connection with things other than God.

## Falling in Love with God

If you're dreaming and want to wake up, fall backwards. (just to be on the safe side, make sure there's something soft behind you…)

Free falling in a dream is a good sign. Don't worry, you won't crash; you'll wake up first. God's hand is there to catch you. Fall into it.

Why do we say to "fall in love?" To experience true love, one must fall from the heights of one's ego. Egocentricity leaves no room for love.

The English verb to fall comes from the Hebrew verb *nafal* (נפל), 'to fall,' which bears the same meaning. In Hebrew, this word is cognate to the word for wonder (פלא). By witnessing wonders in nature and in our lives, we fall in love with our Creator.

To let someone else into your life requires profound selflessness; egocentricity precludes true connection. By witnessing the wonders in nature and falling away from our egocentricity, we literally fall in love with our Creator. This teaching perfectly encapsulates the wisdom of Maimonides (the Rambam) in the beginning of the *Mishneh Torah*: If one wishes to know about God, they must look at His creation. And when they look at His creation, they will inevitably come to love God.

## Loving God with All One's Faculties

God-awareness finds its ultimate expression in the verse following the *Shema*: "And you shall love *Havayah* your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."[1]

> There are three levels of love: with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole might. Loving with your heart means to love with both your inclinations: the good and the evil.

### WITH ALL YOUR HEART

The Hebrew word for "your heart" (*levavcha*) is grammatically plural because the heart conceptually contains two ventricles, representing the good inclination and the evil inclination. We must learn to love God with both.

> It also means to love with both sides of your heart: right and left. Today the right means conservative and the left means liberal. Conservative love is to love as my fathers did, my ancestors did, from tradition. From them I learned to love God because it is a *mitzvah*. Liberal love is spontaneous. It is love at first sight, because *I* love, not because I was told to. Love with *all* your heart.

Loving God with all one's heart requires integrating both the traditional, commanded love (the right) and the spontaneous, organic love (the left).

1 Deuteronomy 6:5.

## WITH ALL YOUR SOUL

Loving with all your soul refers to situations that demand self-sacrifice. It means devoting your life to your beloved, so much so that you would donate your organs to save their life. By devoting your life to God, you save His life, as it were. God's life refers to the revelation of His presence on earth—His life among us. If God's Presence disappears, it is as though He has passed away. He depends on us to keep Him here with us in our consciousness.

While people are more familiar with the correct notion that the Infinite, Omnipotent God lacks nothing, needs nothing, and is entirely perfect, Chasidic thought stresses a profound intimacy between God and man. With this in mind, to view God solely as a transcendent entity devoid of need is to "sanitize" Him, creating a false separation. The Prophets and Sages clearly illustrate a God who cares deeply, who even cries over the destruction of the Temple. In Chasidic terminology, God possesses a fundamental desire to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds—"God craves having a dwelling place in the lower realms." He depends on humanity to maintain His manifest Presence in the world through our selflessness and actions.

## WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT

Loving with all your might means to love with all your wealth, with all your resources you've acquired through life. The Sages explain that for some, it is harder to give up their wealth than their very lives. Rather die rich than live poor. Loving God with all your might reveals His very essence, not just His life-force. First you become nothing, empty. Then you become part of His absolute being.

To love means to give. We must be ready to give all we have—our hearts, soul, and might to our beloved. If we really love, it's easy."

## A NUMERICAL GEM

A beautiful numerical gem is found in the verse: "And you shall love *Havayah*, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might" (**וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יי־הוה אֱ־לֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדֶךָ**). Its complete value is 737, the same as the word *shalhevet* (שלהבת) "a flame." This teaches us that true love of God should be experienced and expressed as a burning passion, an all-encompassing illuminated state of consciousness inspiring us to reach

ever upward, like a dancing flame.

Aaron, the High Priest, was commanded to light the menorah in the Tabernacle. Regarding this commandment, *Rashi* comments that he should kindle the lights "until the flame (*shalhevet*) rises up on its own [power]." The simple meaning of this phrase is that Aharon is obligated to not only light the candles, but to make sure they will stay lit on their own. Spiritually this means that a superficial love of God based purely on a sense of obligation or duty will not be enough to keep one's candle—i.e., one's soul— lit, so to speak. Rather, one's love of God must be carefully cultivated in a manner that assures it will be an intimate and passionate love that will stay lit through all the ups and downs of life. This can only occur through a fiery, deeply felt, and fervent love of God.

## Closeness to God

Is it possible to measure how close you are to God?

The sign of having done a good deed is feeling close to God. Feeling far and estranged from God is the sign of having done something wrong.

The 11th of the 13 principles of faith written by Maimonides is faith in reward and punishment. There is the reward and punishment of the future in the World to Come, but there is also an immediate reward and punishment in this world: feeling close to the Almighty or feeling far and estranged from Him. There is no better feeling than the former, and no feeling worse than the latter.

If a person does a *mitzvah*, (a commandment of the Torah, a well-defined good deed) and still feels far from God, (the One who commanded us to do the *mitzvah*), it must be that either he performed the *mitzvah* by rote, as a matter of habit, or that some egocentric motive entered his consciousness while doing it.

Performing a *mitzvah* for its own sake, for the purpose of fulfilling God's will and completing one's mission in life, will always bring with it a sense of closeness to God.

### DANGERS OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE

A person must make an active effort to perform a *mitzvah* with real *Kavanah*—pure intent; it cannot simply be done by rote or routine. If a sense of estrangement follows a holy act, one must examine how the act was performed. There is an important teaching from the Ba'al Shem Tov on the insidious dangers of spiritual pride:

Sometimes you might experience a momentary high after performing a *mitzvah* but then comes a fallen spirit. The Ba'al Shem Tov, (the founder of *Chasidut*) explains that this is because the high was nothing but a sense of self-satisfaction, not true joy in having merited to do good in God's service.

The sense of self-gratification that comes almost automatically with the performance of a *mitzvah* is likened to the venom of a snake biting your heel. The heel symbolizes the end of the deed.

## ECHOES OF THE GARDEN

This imagery draws deeply upon the narrative of the Garden of Eden. After the snake convinced Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the resulting consequence for humanity was that the snake would "strike at their heel." Symbolically, the heel, the lowest part or end of the body, represents the very end of a deed. When a person feels pride and self-gratification at the conclusion of a holy act, rather than acting purely in the service of God, it is like the venom of the snake biting their heel.

So, don't confuse the false impure sense of self-gratification with the true pure sense of feeling close to God. Closeness to God is gratifying, but it isn't about me being close to Him, it's about Him being close to me.

Humanity usually thinks entirely in the mode of "I want…" Even in the sense of "I want get close to God." While true, placing too much emphasis on one's own ego getting close to God actually prevents that very intimacy. True spiritual success is about acting in a way that allows God to feel close to us.

FROM THE CHASIDIC MASTERS

# REBBE LEVI ISAAC OF BERDITCHEV ON TOLDOT

*Last year and the year before, Rav Ginsburgh devoted his yearly study of the Torah with a Chasidic commentary to Rebbe Levi Isaac 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.*

On the verse "And Isaac entreated *Havayah* opposite [*lenochach*] his wife… and *Havayah* was entreated by him,"[1] Rebbe Levi Isaac of Berditchev expounds that to give birth, Isaac must be "opposite his wife," meaning that he must be a man who is the opposite[2] of Rebeccah his wife and completes her. Specifically, from the power of opposition one merits true unity, "and they shall become one flesh,"[3] which is realized in the child.[4] Good and rectified opposition is specifically the experience of "*nochach*"—standing opposite, in direct I-you relations (and not I-he), when the man stands opposite his wife and conveys to her that "I am here for you," I am your opposite and am meant to complete you.

## THE TZADDIK REVERSES HIMSELF

It is important to emphasize that Isaac did not ask that his wife reverse herself to stand "opposite" him but prayed that he reverse himself to stand "opposite his wife." So it is proper in every rectification between people—a person must change to be fit to connect with his fellow and to give birth with him, and not to expect and pray for a change in the other. And indeed, "and *Havayah* was entreated by him"—God reversed him as he wished. *Rashi* explains, "'and He was entreated by him,' by him and not by her, for the prayer of a *tzaddik* son of a *tzaddik* is not like the prayer of a *tzaddik* son of a wicked person, therefore by him and not by her." The "*tzaddik* son of a wicked person" is a *ba'al teshuvah*, one who has awareness of reversal in essence, whereas the "*tzaddik* son of a *tzaddik*" must learn how one

1 Genesis 25:21. "And Isaac entreated *Havayah* opposite his wife" (**וַיֶּעְתַּר יִצְחָק לַהוי' לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ**) equals 1765, which is 5 times (the average of each word) "joy" (**שִׂמְחָה**), as well as, "the secret of *Havayah* is for those who fear Him" (**סוֹד הוי' לִירֵאָיו**), alluding to the union of Isaac and Rebeccah, "those who fear Him." The joy here is the joy of reversal—as will be explained shortly—the secret of Simchat Torah, the joy of "turn it and turn it, for everything is in it" (*Avot* 5:22).

2 "Opposite" (**נֹכַח**) and "reverse" (**הֶפֶךְ**) are a distinct pair of a multiple of 13 and a multiple of 7.

3 Genesis 2:24.

4 *Sanhedrin* 58a (cited in *Rashi* on the verse).

reverses. It is related[5] that one of the *chasidim* once rebuked the Mitteler Rebbe in his youth, that being "a rebbe's son"—a "*tzaddik* son of a *tzaddik*"—he does not understand the difficulties of the young married scholars and their capacity for Divine service. The Alter Rebbe expressed thanks to that *chasid* and said to him, "you have turned my Berel'e [the Mitteler Rebbe] into a *chasid*."

Isaac's reversal "opposite his wife" follows the secret of the verse: "the menorah opposite the table."[6] He, the menorah, must illuminate for her from the side of loving-kindness-love-bestowal, all symbolized by "the menorah is in the south." She is the Table of Showbread, meaning she must set a table for him (the woman's duty[7]), from the side of might-fear-receiving, all symbolized by, "the table is in the north."[8] This is the reversal of Isaac, who innately belongs to the side of might—normally the side of the table full of "tasty foods such as I love"[9]—who must turn to embody the attribute of loving-kindness of Abraham, the side of the menorah in which lies the power of "Abraham began to illuminate"[10] in relation to his wife.

To reverse his innate nature, Isaac must first give himself over entirely to Godliness, through his offering himself as an "unblemished burnt offering"[11] at the Binding of Isaac, the Akeidah. This is once again hinted to in the words, "Isaac entreated *Havayah*," which the Berditchever interprets as, "Isaac turned, i.e., gave himself over completely, to the Holy blessed One." God is known as "the Bearer of Opposites," so when Isaac gives himself over to Him fully, he can also reverse himself in reality as needed, from might to loving-kindness and from the feminine side (the left side, the Table of Showbread) to the masculine (the right side and the Menorah).

## REBECCAH'S STUDY HALL

Thus far we have dealt with the reversal performed by Isaac. Indeed, Rebeccah too is involved in "revolutions" per se. How so? On the verse "And the children struggled within her,"[12] *Rashi* cites the words of the Sages:[13] "When she passed by the entrances of the Torah of Shem and Ever, Jacob would run and struggle to come out; when she passed by the entrances of idol worship, Esau struggled to come out." Rabbi Shmuel of Shinova, author of *Ramatayim Tzofim*, a Chasidic commentary on the *Tana Debei Eliyahu*, asks:[14] why did Rebeccah, who surely was careful with the purity of the children in her womb and strove that they always remain in the study hall of Isaac, pass by "entrances of idol worship" in the first place? Furthermore, why was there a struggle-quarrel between the sons between the study hall and the house of idol worship, when in practice, Rebeccah

5 *Tales of the Chasidim* (Zevin) on the Torah, story 149.
6 Exodus 26:35.
7 *Nedarim* 20b.
8 *Bava Batra* 25b.
9 Genesis 27:4.
10 *Shemot Rabbah* 15:20.
11 *Bereishit Rabbah* 64:3.
12 Genesis 25:22.
13 *Bereishit Rabbah* 63:6.
14 *Ramatayim Tzofim* 6:7.

did not pass by both at the same time.[15] The *Ramatayim Tzofim* answers:

> For it is known that the Patriarchs and Matriarchs converted converts, and they needed to speak with idol worshippers and prove to them that there is nothing real in idolatry nor in all types of philosophical wisdom. These are referred to as "the entrances of idol worship," and Esau would struggle to come out since he is from the side of impurity, therefore he wanted to connect with those non-Jews. Whatever positive ideas could be heard there, Esau did not hear at all. Jacob did not hear the negative ideas and only after the idolaters converted and learned Torah and how to serve the Creator, would he struggle to connect with them, and this is referred to as "the study hall."

At the conclusion of his exposition, he adds that the word "*mefarkes*," which in this context means "struggling" is also used by the Sages to describe the departure of the soul from the body.[16] Thus, it hints at Jacob's self-sacrifice not to cleave to Esau's idolatrous proclivity, which served as a preparation for future generations of Jacob's descendants who would dwell among the nations and would not be influenced by them.

But the main novelty of the *Ramatayim Tzofim* is that for the sake of the conversion of non-Jews, even those who were previously idolaters, one must go out from the Torah study hall to the nations. This duty is even entrusted upon a modest woman who is concerned about raising her sons in holiness and purity. This teaching was certainly said under the inspiration of the teacher of the author of *Ramatayim Tzofim*, the Rebbe Reb Bunim of Peshischa, who drew very distant people close through conversations on philosophes that touched their worldview.

Thus, for Isaac our forefather, as for all the Patriarchs, there was a study hall that was entirely holy—into it only the converts entered, after they had converted. But Rebeccah went out also to the study hall intended for outreach—the study hall of the Fourth Revolution, intended for non-Jews. These were known at the time as the study halls of Shem and Ever (who were not yet Jews). In particular, in the study hall of Shem, which literally means "the name," they studied the inner dimension of the Torah that is relevant to the gentiles, and in the study hall of Ever they studied the revealed part of the Torah that is relevant to non-Jews, since Ever refers to light that shines outwards and reaches external reality.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains[17] that when a distant Jew draws near to Torah one should begin learning with him specifically the Torah's inner dimension. The same applies to converts since they are not yet obligated in all the *mitzvot*—the core of the Torah's revealed

15 This question applies only according to Rashi's second interpretation, "struggling and quarreling among themselves," but not according to the first interpretation, "a term of running," where each one runs by himself at the time suited to him.

16 See *Chullin* 37a–38a, and elsewhere.

17 *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 26, 3rd *sichah* on *Beshalach*.

dimension (Ever),[18] but are potentially obligated to the duties of the heart (Shem). Indeed, another connection between Ever and the Torah's revealed dimension and the *mitzvot* can be seen when Jacob fled to Haran, but on his way stopped to learn for 14 years,[19] as a preparation for confronting Laban, where he would observe the 613 (תַּרְיַ"ג) prescriptive *mitzvot* as he himself said, "I have lived with Laban, and the value of the word "lived" (גַּרְתִּי) is 613.[20]

And from where does Rebeccah receive the power to believe that it is possible to rectify and reverse even Esau and the other idolaters she meets at the entrances of idol worship? Rebeccah herself is a *ba'alat teshuvah*, who certainly believes in revolutions. But the power to believe that even a wicked person who follows his eyes and his heart, without any regrets (like Esau[21]), without showing any inclination to change can still do so, this power she receives specifically from watching her husband Isaac, a *tzaddik* who would normally not have a reason to reverse his nature. And yet, as the *Kedushat Levi* said, it is Isaac that reverses his nature. When Rebeccah sees that even a "*tzaddik*, the son of a *tzaddik*" can transform his innate nature, she comes to believe that certainly a wicked person can transform himself.[22]

## AND TO SEND THE CRUSHED FORTH FREE

Amazingly, the numerical value of, "The children struggled within her" (וַיִּתְרֹצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ) is 1218,[23] which also equals another expression (which appears in the context of a proper fast), "and to send the crushed forth free" (וְשַׁלַּח רְצוּצִים חָפְשִׁים)![24] By the power of Rebeccah (רִבְקָה), in whom (קִרְבָּהּ) the children struggled (that is, in her grave (קִבְרָהּ), i.e., her womb),[25] the "crushed" ones—referring to the broken and oppressed—are destined to be sent forth "free," to be born in holiness.

In the end, even wicked Esau, one of the two struggling-crushed sons, is destined to return, or repent (just as the pig, the symbol of Esau,[26] is destined to be purified[27]) by the power of the Jewish Sage who fulfills "know what to answer to a heretic."[28] Whereas our matriarch Sarah distanced unworthy converts,[29] our

18 See *Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah* 14:2–5 and *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 35, 1st *sichah* on *Vayeira*, sections 6–7.

19 *Megillah* 17a.

20 *Rashi* on Genesis 32:5 (from *Pesikta Zuta*, *Midrash Aggadah*, and *Midrash Sechel Tov*).

21 See Genesis 25:34 and the *Radak* there.

22 In the name of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk (*Yemot Olam*, letter 6).

23 1218 is the first number that is also a multiple of "grace" (חֵן) and a multiple of 42 (מב) (the two components of beauty (יֹפִי).

24 Isaiah 58:6.

25 This is the secret of the rising of the well toward Rebeccah—the rising of feminine waters in the secret of the name *ban* (בֵּן), which equals "animal" (בְּהֵמָה), which also includes the root of the evil inclination (the root of Esau), in the secret of "in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalms 51:7). The inclusion of evil in the foundation of the feminine is also the secret and the cause of the woman's menstrual cycle, which expels the bad blood (but their *reshimu*/residue remains and is included in purity, in the well of Rebeccah and afterward in the well of Miriam, etc.).

26 *Bereishit Rabbah* 65:1 (cited in *Rashi* on the verse, 26:34). And elsewhere.

27 *Shelah*, *Chayei Sarah*, letter 10; *Torah Or*, *Vayishlach* 25a.

28 *Avot* 2:14.

29 See *Or HaTorah, Bereishit*, *Chayei Sarah* 119b.

matriarch Rebeccah argues with everyone to prove the Torah's truth. In the merit of Rebeccah's efforts and suffering in arguing with Esau's non-Jewish logic, we find that the Torah states that: "and the elder shall serve the younger"[30] (when he is compelled to admit his righteousness and wisdom), and in the end her educational efforts will bear fruit. Thus, Rebeccah will ultimately succeed even with her wicked son and will bear with maternal pride the title "Rebeccah, the mother of Jacob and Esau"[31] (while Isaac, who already lives in the Future to Come,[32] loves Esau specifically in the present, as he is).

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And see also *Rucho shel Mashiach*, the essay "*Misped HaDadrimon*" (and especially note 8 there).

30 Genesis 25:23.

31 Genesis 28:5. And Rashi wrote, "I do not know what this teaches us." "I do not know" (**אֵיני יוֹדֵעַ**) is the secret of the fiftieth gate of understanding, the mother principle (*Likkutei Halachot*, *Sefirat HaOmer* 1; *Imrei Yosef*, *Vayeitzei* 144d, and elsewhere), the revelation of the name 161 (**קסא**)—the name Ekyeh, the name of the mothers and of birth, with a yud filling (**אלף הה יוד הה**), the secret of the principle of Divine mercy (Exodus 34:7), "and He will cleanse" (**וְנִקָּה**), which is the root of the light of the mother principle—its root in the *Radla* (the Unknowable Head), the secret of the faith of *Ima* specifically.

32 See *Bava Batra* 17a.

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