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



נט"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת מִקֵּץ-חֲנֻכָּה ❁ כז-כח כִּסְלֵו תשפ"ה



...in most years, we read the Torah's dreams during the month of Kislev. The special sense of Kislev is the sense of sleep, which is understood by most commentaries as referring to the sense of dreaming.

3 **Partzuf:** The Torah's Ten Dreams

8 **Story:** Rabbi Yochanan Twersky, the Tolna Rebbe: A Story for Channukah

12 **The Fourth Revolution:** Torah for the Nations

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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PARTZUF

THE TORAH'S TEN DREAMS

Parashat Mikeitz famously begins with Pharaoh's two dreams—dreams neither he nor his wise men could interpret satisfactorily. This signals the greatest comeback of all history, with Joseph—the lowly Hebrew slave boy, sold by his own brothers, who had just spent 12 years in prison—being rushed to hear the dreams and solve them for Pharaoh, a triumph that thrusts him into the limelight of ancient politics and lands him the position of viceroy of all of Egypt.

Dreams are a perennial topic in human thought especially in our speculation about the workings of our psyche. In the Talmud, the ninth and last chapter of the tractate *Berachot*—the Mishnah and Talmud's first tractate—is predominantly dedicated to dreams, their meaning, their interpretation, and some of the laws surrounding them. In modern times, it was Freud's 1899 work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, that was very much responsible for catapulting him and psychoanalysis into the famous theory it is today.

We are all fascinated by our dreams. And rightly so. They seem to be a parallel world that we enter at night (or sometimes in the day; Kabbalists note that the dreams one has during Shabbat afternoon are some of the most vivid and powerful)—a world that seems to mix the remains of the day with the residue of our past experiences in life and then sprinkles the fantastic on it all for seasoning. So many times, we feel that dreams are harbingers of future events. Other times, they feel like they are trying to make us aware of our own sequestered feelings.

It is important to realize that before Moses, most of (if not all) the dialogue between God and man took place during the night, while in a dream state, or something very close to it.[2] The sages captured this in several well-known sayings, of which the most powerful one is, "a dream is one-sixtieth of a prophecy."[3] Every dream has a sprinkling of prophecy in it.

DREAMS IN THE TORAH

In all, the Torah recounts 10 dreams:

- Avimelech's dream to return Sarah to Abraham (Genesis 20:3-7)
- Jacob's dream of the ladder (Ibid. 28:12)
- Jacob's dream of the flocks (Ibid. 31:10-13)
- Laban's dream not to harm Jacob (Ibid. 31:24)
- Joseph's dream of the sheaves (Ibid. 37:5-7)
- Joseph's dream of the sun, moon, and 11 stars (Ibid. 37:9)
- The dream of Pharaoh's cupbearer (Ibid. 28:12)
- The dream of Pharaoh's baker (Ibid. 28:12)
- Pharaoh's dream of the cows (Ibid. 28:12)
- Pharaoh's dream of the grain (Ibid. 28:12)

It would make logical sense to simply correspond them in order with the ten *sefirot*. There is another reason for following this logic. Apart from the first dream, Avimelech's dream, in most years, we read the Torah's account of all the dreams during the month of Kislev. The special sense of Kislev is the sense of sleep,[4] which is understood by most commentaries as referring to the sense of dreaming. The connection between Kislev and dreams is also reflected in in the High Priest's breastplate, which has 12 gems. Each of the 12 gems corresponds to one of the tribes and to one of the months of the year. The tribe that corresponds to Kislev is Benjamin and this tribe's gem is *Achlamah*[5] (usually identified with amethyst), which literally means, "I will dream."[6]

Following this logic, Pharaoh's two dreams described at the beginning of Mikeitz would correspond to foundation (*yesod*) and kingdom (*malchut*). To better understand this correspondence, we need to get into some Kabbalistic symbolism.

Pharaoh's two dreams are not independent; rather, "Pharaoh's dream is one."[7] This alludes to the unification of the foundation and kingdom referred to as the "Chamber of the Sapphire Brick" (הֵיכַל לִבְנַת הַסַּפִּיר), the first and lowest of the seven chambers described in the Zohar[8] used to describe the *sefirot* relative to the level of prophecy they afford.

In his dreams, Pharaoh was standing by the Nile, which also hints at the unification of foundation and kingdom since the Nile symbolizes the "River of Peace" (נְהַר שָׁלוֹם), the channel of influence between the two *sefirot* (with Pharaoh standing by the Nile to receive from it). Moreover, the numerical value of the four words, "Behold, he was standing by the Nile" (**וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד עַל הַיְאֹר**) is the same as "kingdom" (**מַלְכוּת**).

Regarding the content of the dreams themselves: the first dream, about the cows, corresponds to Joseph, who is described as "the firstborn of his ox, grandeur is his."[9] The second dream was about sheaves growing from the earth—the earth itself corresponds with kingdom. As long as the sheaves are rooted in the ground, they are legally considered part of the earth.

Continuing with this logic, we note that the first dream described in the Torah was dreamt by Avimelech,[10] a king of the Philistines. Being the first it would correspond to the first *sefirah*, crown (*keter*), and thus, the first and last dreams were both dreamt by kings, as one might expect.

Another principle that the logic of organizing the dreams in their chronological order fits is that of "first darkness, then light"[11] (בְּרֵישָׁא חֲשׁוֹכָא וְהֲדַר נְהוֹרָא) or in one of its other variations, "chaos precedes order" (תֹּהוּ קוֹדֵם לְתִקּוּן). We find hundreds and even thousands of phenomena that when they first appear in the Torah do so in a non-rectified, or chaotic context, but then later appear a second or third time in a rectified context. Thus, the first dream is dreamt by Avimelech, the king of the Philistines who obviously is unrectified and the next dreams are dreamt by Jacob and Joseph. The dreams of Laban, the cupbearer, the baker, and Pharaoh are all in the service of Jacob and Joseph.

ORGANIZING THE DREAMERS BY THE DREAMER

Though corresponding the dreams to the *sefirot* in order of their appearance in the Torah is possible, we will opt for a different methodology: we are going to organize the dreams according to the person who has them. After all, the subject of the dream seems to be more central than its chronological order in the Torah.

crown-keter כֶּתֶר
Pharaoh (cows)

understanding-binah בִּינָה
Joseph (sun, moon, stars)

wisdom-chochmah חָכְמָה
Jacob (ladder)

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
Avimelech

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
Laban

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
Jacob (flocks)

splendor-hod הוֹד
Pharaoh's baker

victory-netzach נֶצַח
Pharaoh's cupbearer

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
Joseph (sheaves)

kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
Pharaoh (grain)

Let's explain the logic of this correspondence. We start off with Pharaoh. He is obviously a king and so his two dreams correspond to kingdom and crown, which is called the crown of kingdom; at times these two *sefirot* are referred to as the supernal crown (כֶּתֶר עֶלְיוֹן) and the mundane crown (כֶּתֶר תַּחְתּוֹן). Avimelech is also a king, and his correspondence with might follows the maxim, "kingdom is constructed from might" (בִּנְיַן הַמַּלְכוּת מִן הַגְּבוּרוֹת). In addition, in his dream, God frightens him, and he is full of fear, the inner experience of might, causing God to comfort him by telling him that it is known that he did unwittingly took Sarah.

Jacob's association with beauty (*tiferet*) is well-known as established, as is Joseph's with foundation (*yesod*). Jacob is also associated with the foundation of wisdom (יְסוֹד אַבָּא). The relationship between wisdom and beauty is referred to by the phrase,

"What is his name, and what is the name of his son,"[12] where "his name" refers to wisdom and "his son" refers to the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*).[13] The word "what" is the filling of God's essential Name, *Havayah* that equals 45, the value of "what" (**מָה**). Thus, Jacob's dream of the flocks represents the spreading out of his essence through his offspring (symbolized by the flocks) and the ladder symbolizes his yearning to ascend to heaven to connect with the Divine and draw it down into his offspring.

Joseph's second dream corresponds to understanding, following the association of a river's greatness known as "the width of the river" (רְחוֹבוֹת הַנָּהָר) with the sefirah of understanding.[14] Among the kings of Edom, which we read about in parashat Vayishlach, the sixth king is Saul of Rehoboth on the River (שָׁאוּל מֵרְחֹבוֹת הַנָּהָר), whose origin is literally, "the width of the river," corresponds to the sefirah of foundation, Joseph's archetypal association.

Laban in the supernal role of his soul is all loving-kindness (*chesed*). In that capacity, he is known as "the supernal whiteness" (לִבָּן הָעִלְיוֹן). It seems that his dream caused him to reconnect with his supernal soul, so much so that on his departure, "Laban rose early in the morning and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them."[15]

Pharaoh's cupbearer was victorious, connecting him with victory (netzach), while the baker lost his life, following the verse associated with splendor's (hod) tendency to falter, "My splendor has turned against me"[16] (וְהוֹדִי נֶהְפַּךְ עָלַי לְמִשְׁחִית).

Since we have focused on the names of the dreamers, let us conclude with a point that will strengthen this choice. If we write out their names in Hebrew, we find that they have exactly 49 letters,[17] or 7 squared letters, which we can also write out in the form of a 7 by 7 square, as follows:

א	ב	י	מ	ל	ך	י
ע	ק	ב	י	ע	ק	ב
ל	ב	ן	י	ו	ס	ף
י	ו	ס	ף	ש	ר	ה
מ	ש	ק	י	ם	ש	ר
ה	א	ו	פ	י	ם	פ
ר	ע	ה	פ	ר	ע	ה

Whenever elements placed together sum to a square number or have some other relationship with a square number, this is a sign of their strong relationship, as seen also through the partzuf constructed.

Note that the value of the letters in this square's corners spell the word for "awe" (**יִרְאָה**), or "sight" (**רְאִיָה**).

(based on a class given on the 24th of Sivan, 5754 in Shechem)

1. Deuteronomy 17:11.
2. As Maimonides (*Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 7:2) writes,
There are a number of levels among the prophets…. They all, however, share certain commonalities. They receive prophetic visions only in a visionary dream or during the day after slumber has overtaken them, as (Numbers 12:6) states: "I make Myself known to him in a vision. I speak to him in a dream." All this apart from Moses, who is the master of all the prophets and who, "would prophesy while standing awake" (*Ibid*. 7:6)

3. *Berachot* 57b.
4. *Sefer Yetzirah* 5:1, which is elucidated in the Arizal's summary of Sefer Yetzirah titled *Kelil Tochnit*.
5. Exodus 28:19.
6. Ibn Ezra (extended commentary) on Ibid. Radak, *Sefer HaShorashim, s.v.* חלם.
7. Genesis 41:25.
8. See in length in *Pardes Rimonim* 24:1 and ff.
9. Deuteronomy 33:17.
10. Genesis 20:3.
11. Shabbat 77b. See also the article on the Kings of Edom in Wonders, issue 129.
12. Proverbs 30:4.
13. Zohar 2:79b. In short, these two meanings of the מה, refer first to the relationship captures the statement that "Moses is the interior and Jacob the exterior." Moses' attribute is self-nullification (בִּטּוּל) stated when he says, "And we are naught" (וְנַחְנוּ מַה), i.e., that the word that can be translated as "what" (מָה) also means "nothing." Self-nullification is the inner experience of the *sefirah* of wisdom. Second, when the four central "fillings" of *Havayah* are denoted by their values: עב סג מה בן, and correspond, in order, to wisdom, understanding, beauty, and kingdom. Thus, the filling that equals (45) **מה** corresponds to beauty. Many different explanations have been given for this relationship in Chasidic teachings. Often it represents the yearning that we have to understand not just the Torah in its revealed aspects (halachic), represented by the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*), but also the manner in which these aspects reflect our connection (through our service of) our Father, the mind of God, as it were, represented by wisdom.
14. Explained in length in the Mittler Rebbe's *Sha'ar HaYichud*; see particularly Reb Hillel of Paritch's commentary.
15. Genesis 32:1. See Alter Rebbe's *Likkutei Torah* on *Shir HaShirim* 11a.
16. Daniel 10:8.
17. We write "minister of bakers" (שַׂר הָאוֹפִים), in its full form, as it appears in Genesis 40:2.

STORY

RABBI YOCHANAN TWERSKY, THE TOLNA REBBE:

A Story for Channukah

Rabbi Yochanan Twersky of Tolna was born in 5666 (1906) to Rabbi David Mordechai Twersky. In his childhood, his father emigrated to the United States, and in his youth, he made aliyah to the Land of Israel to study Torah. There he also received rabbinical ordination, and in 5687 (1927) he returned to the United States. He married Rebbetzin Tziporah Pearl, daughter of Rabbi Moshe of Stratyn-Toronto, and became the Rebbe in Montreal. He worked to rescue Jews and help them acclimate to their new surroundings during the Holocaust years and assisted Chabad chasidim in establishing the Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva in Montreal. In 5715 (1955), he returned to the Holy Land, lived in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Bayit Vegan, and opened a study hall there. He regularly attended the chasidic gatherings of the Rebbes of Gur and Rachamstrivka, and towards the end of his life, many chasidim began to gather around him. He departed this world on the 25th of Kislev 5759 (1998) and was buried on the Mount of Olives.

Rabbi Chaim Hager of Ottynia (Ukraine) was born in 5622 (1862) to Rabbi Baruch of Vizhnitz, and grew up with his grandfather, the Tzemach Tzaddik, who was very fond of him. At the age of 13, he was ordained by Rabbi Shlomo Drimer, author of the Responsa Beit Shlomo, one of the most important rabbis of Galicia, and several other rabbis. He married Pessia Leah, daughter of Rabbi Yitzchak of Bohush (Romania), and after his father's passing in 5653 (1893), he established his court in Ottynia, with thousands of chasidim. After the Rebbetzin's passing, he married for a second time to Chaya Chasha, daughter of Rabbi Shraga Yair of Bialobrezig, and for a third time to the daughter of Rabbi Tzvi of Rozwadów. During World War 1, he fled to Vienna, and after the war, he returned and settled in Stanisławów near Ottynia. He departed this world on the 25th of Kislev 5692 (1931) in Krakow and was buried in Stanisławów.

"Tomorrow evening is the first night of Chanukah. I will bring the Chanukah menorah from the house in Bnei Brak to the hospital, and the Rebbe will light as he does every year at eight-thirty, yes?" the attendant, R' Eliyahu Dinkel asked Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna.

The Rebbe agreed with satisfaction, and the next evening the attendant arrived with the menorah in hand. He had even immersed it in the *mikveh*, as the Rebbe himself customarily did before lighting the first candle. But when he arrived,

he found the other attendants perplexed. They reported that immediately after nightfall, the Rebbe had begun reciting the special Chanukah liturgy and hymns—*HaNerot Halalu* and *Maoz Tzur*—as he usually did each night *after* the lighting of the menorah. He was weak and his voice was barely audible, but the attendants leaned in and heard, to their astonishment, the Rebbe in the midst of the words he customarily recited after lighting. They were certain that he wished to light the Chanukah candles already, before the set time and even without the menorah his attendant R' Dinkel was meant to bring.

Hearing what had happened, R' Dinkel apologized, explaining that yesterday he had understood from the Rebbe that he did not wish to deviate from the set time for lighting the candles as he did every year, at 8:30pm, and therefore had arrived just now, close to the set time. But the Rebbe expressed no displeasure whatsoever. He gestured with his hand and smiled, as if to reassure him. Indeed, he had not asked to light before the time he had agreed to yesterday. He had only wished to recite the post-lighting hymns before lighting and did not explain why.

The menorah and candle were prepared, the Rebbe devoutly recited the three blessings: *Lehadlik, She'asah nissim*, and *Shehecheyanu,* and the first candle shone with a pure light, like the face of the Rebbe.

Everyone waited to hear the Rebbe reciting *HaNerot Halalu* after lighting that candles, but the Rebbe remained silent. They whispered in his ear; perhaps he had forgotten? They called out *HaNerot Halalu* loudly, but the Rebbe did not respond. He gazed at the candles with his face aglow, a slight smile on his lips, and said not a word. Family members arrived in the room. The Rebbe's daughter and grandchildren addressed him, almost pleadingly: "*Zeide* (Grandfather), happy Channukah," but the Rebbe did not respond.

Someone suggested to the Rebbe that he should distribute Chanukah *gelt* as was his custom, but this too went unanswered. "Has Grandfather been like this for many hours, not responding or reacting?" the grandchildren asked the attendants who had been on duty since the morning hours. They replied that the Rebbe had spoken today, his mind was clear, and he had engaged with people. Weak indeed, but lucid. Only now had he suddenly changed.

All night the *tzaddik* did not close his eyes, and in the morning, he washed his hands and continued to remain silent with his eyes open, clearly fully conscious but his lips sealed. Around ten o'clock, the doctor entered and noticed that the Rebbe's vital signs were unusual. He looked closely and determined that the Rebbe had passed away. It was a death by Divine kiss. No one understood the meaning of this. Only when several days had passed, and those close to him reconstructed the day

preceding his passing, did they remember a story that the Rebbe used to recount and repeat, especially during the days of Chanukah:

The holy Rebbe Chaim of Ottynia once raised an astounding question: Why is it not customary to recite the blessing of *Shehecheyanu* before departing from this world?! After all, a Jew prepares himself all his days for the separation from this lowly world and the transition to the world of truth to enjoy the radiance of the Divine Presence. When he is about to pass on and still has the strength to speak and bless, he should apparently say the blessing of *Shehecheyanu*, meaning "Blessed are You… who has enlivened us and sustained us and brought us to this moment." Rebbe Chaim raised the question shortly before Chanukah, and concluded: "*Mir vellen zich an eitzah geben,*" meaning, "We will find a solution."

That year, Rabbi Chaim of Ottynia was in the midst of a journey before the first night of Chanukah. When it was time to light the Channukah candles, the Rebbe was in Krakow, far from his home. The *chasidim* accompanying him noticed that the Rebbe was distressed that he didn't have his regular menorah with him. One of them set out, and after many hours of travel, returned with the menorah, reviving Rebbe Chaim's spirit.

Rebbe Chaim prepared the candles, recited the blessings and recited the *Shehecheyanu* blessing of the first night aloud and with enthusiasm as was his way. He lit the candle, and after a short while, he departed to his eternal home...

(After reciting a blessing that precedes a *mitzvah*, one should not talk until he fulfills the deed. This is why Rebbe Yochanan did not speak between the time that he recited the *Shehecheyanu* blessing until he passed away).

The joy of these two *tzaddikim* on the day of their passing is well explained by a passage in Tractate *Sotah*:

"A mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light." The verse compares the *mitzvah* to a candle and the Torah to light. The *mitzvah* [is compared] to a candle, to tell you that just as a candle only protects for a time, so too a *mitzvah* only protects for a time. And the Torah [is compared] to light, to tell you: just as light protects forever, so too Torah protects forever.... This is akin to to a man who was walking in the darkness of night, afraid of thorns, pits, thistles, wild animals, and robbers, and he doesn't know which way to go.

If he chances upon a torch, he is saved from thorns, pits, and thistles, but he is still afraid of wild animals and robbers and doesn't know which way to go. [In the analogy, a person who merits to perform a *mitzvah* is saved from some calamities].

When dawn breaks [i.e., when he merits to learn Torah], he is saved from wild animals and robbers [from sin and suffering] but still doesn't know which way to go [perhaps his inclination will force him to neglect Torah, and the evil inclination and calamity will return]. When he reaches a crossroads, then he is saved from everything. What does the crossroads symbolize? [the Torch symbolizes a *mitzvah*; dawn symbolizes Torah; but what does the crossroads represent?]

Rav Chisda said: This is a Torah scholar and the day of death [Meaning in other words a Torah scholar on the day of his death, who knows that he has not failed and will not fail again].

Interestingly, it is specifically the Channukah candle, one of the most distinct *mitzvot* that matches the description of "a candle is a *mitzvah*," that these two *tzaddikim* dedicated to their joy for having reached the "crossroads"—their day of passing. Indeed, the *mitzvah* of the Channukah candle is especially fitting for the end of a *tzaddik's* life: it is the last of the seven commandments decreed by the rabbis, and thus completes the count of mitzvot to a full "crown" (כֶּתֶר), whose value is 620, alluding to the 613 commandments from the Torah plus the 7 rabbinical commandments.

We learn of the authority the rabbis have to decree a *mitzvah* specifically from a prohibition: "You must not deviate from what they tell you, either to the left or to the right."[1] This origin is particularly demonstrated by the Channukah candle—a positive commandment whose purpose is to negate impurities and darkness. It is precisely this jewel in the crown of all the commandments that more than anything else expresses the *tzaddik's* joy in all his service of God during his life: Torah, keeping away from evil, and fulfilling the commandments.

THE FOURTH REVOLUTION: TORAH FOR THE NATIONS

One of Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith states: "This Torah will not be replaced, and there will never be another Torah from the Creator, blessed be His name." Naturally, we might expect this principle to be emphasized most prominently in the laws of Torah study, given the well-known assertion: "Torah study is equivalent to all the commandments." Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely in this realm, the laws of Torah study, where some of the most dramatic changes have occurred over the generations. These were true revolutions that significantly broadened access to Torah learning.

Let us explore three major revolutions that reshaped Torah study throughout history. A common denominator of these revolutions is that they were all justified using a rabbinical reading—in itself revolutionary—of the verse "It is a time to act for God; they have violated Your Torah."[1] According to the sages this verse can be also read as saying, "It is time to act for God—*by violating your Torah*." The sages meant by this that at times when the Torah is endangered, we must sacrifice *part* of it in order to rescue *all* of it. As the Talmud puts it: "Sometimes the annulment of Torah is its very preservation."[2]

From these three bold revolutions we may infer that we stand at the threshold of a fourth revolution, one that we are called upon to initiate.

First Revolution: Writing Down the Oral Torah

From the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, there was a clear distinction between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. Everything not explicitly written in the Five Books of Moses (and later in the entire 24 books of the Tanakh)—laws, interpretations, scriptural expositions, and rabbinic enactments—was required to be transmitted orally. As the sages state, "Things transmitted orally must not be written down," thus maintaining a living tradition within the study halls.

This tradition changed dramatically with Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi, who finalized the text of the Mishnah and committed it to writing. The sages explained that this step was taken due to the pressing circumstances of the time, to prevent the Oral tradition of the Torah from being forgotten amidst the hardships of exile and oppression. Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi realized that "It is a time to act for God—violating Your Torah": the prohibition against writing the Oral Torah had to be overridden in order to preserve the Torah itself.

At first glance, the writing of the Oral Torah might seem like a concession—a necessity brought on by the decline of the generations. But upon deeper reflection, it becomes clear this was a positive and Divinely guided development. For centuries, the Oral Torah had been

brewing, so to speak, within the study halls, and it was not yet appropriate to ossify it by committing it to writing. However, by the time of Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi, the Oral Torah had reached maturity and could now be preserved and codified in writing.

Indeed, Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi's first revolution in Torah learning paved the way for the emergence of the entire Jewish library, which continues to expand to this day. Alongside this, the archetype of the Jewish scholar—the "man of the book" steeped in the vast corpus of Torah literature, especially the Oral Torah—was born from this pivotal transformation.

SECOND REVOLUTION: TORAH AS PROFESSION

Rabbi Tzaddok taught: "Do not make [the words of Torah]… a spade with which to dig."[3] This principle, that one must not derive material benefit from Torah study, was codified by Maimonides in one of his most forceful rulings:

Anyone who decides to engage in Torah study while refraining from work, living off charity, desecrates God's name, disgraces the Torah, extinguishes the light of religion, brings harm to himself, and forfeits his share in the World to Come."[4]

Maimonides further emphasized that the sages of the Mishnah and Talmud earned their livelihoods through their own labor and refused to benefit materially from Torah.

However, despite Maimonides' unequivocal stance, Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, ruled otherwise. Following the ruling of many rabbis who preceded him, he permitted Torah scholars to sustain themselves through communal support, a practice followed by today's *kollel* students. After systematically refuting Maimonides' arguments in his commentary *Kesef Mishneh*, Rabbi Karo concluded that even if Maimonides' position was sound in principle, the reality demanded a different approach. He reasoned:

Perhaps all the sages of the generations agreed to permit this based on the principle of "It is a time to act for God—by violating Your Torah." Without providing financial support for Torah scholars and teachers, they would be unable to devote themselves properly to Torah, and it would be forgotten, God forbid.

Here again, the principle "It is a time to act for God" is invoked: preserving Torah required overriding the original prohibition against profiting from Torah study.

Behind the practical necessity lies a deeper, positive transformation. The core prohibition was against treating Torah study as a means to an end, such as earning a livelihood, as this would desecrate the sanctity of the Torah. However, if Torah study—for oneself and for teaching others—is treated as an end unto itself, then receiving financial support becomes permissible. This ensures the continuity of Torah in Israel.

Just like the first revolution, this second revolution introduced a new figure into Jewish life: the *full-time rabbi*, whose official role is dedicated to Torah. Examples include communal rabbis, yeshiva deans, or *kollel* students preparing for rabbinic ordination. The formalization of rabbinic ordination (*semichah*), which

began in the medieval period, was institutionalized further under Rabbi Yosef Karo's leadership.

THIRD REVOLUTION: TORAH STUDY FOR WOMEN

Traditionally, the commandment to study Torah was specific to men. Maimonides begins the laws of Torah study with the statement: "Women are exempt from Torah study, as it says, 'You shall teach them to your sons'—and not your daughters." Women could choose to study Torah voluntarily and would even earn reward for doing so. However, teaching Torah to women was prohibited, except for the practical laws they needed to know. Rabbi Eliezer famously taught: "Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is as though he taught her frivolity."[5] Maimonides summarized this view:

A woman who studies Torah earns reward… However, the sages instructed that one should not teach his daughter Torah, because most women's minds are not attuned to learning and they will misinterpret the words of Torah according to their limited understanding."[6]

Throughout history, there were exceptional women who were knowledgeable in Torah and even recognized as scholars, but formal education for women was unheard of. Torah schools, study halls, and *yeshivot* were exclusively for boys, while girls were educated at home.

A seismic shift occurred in the past century. With the advent of modernity, including access to higher education for women, prominent rabbinic leaders, such as the Chafetz Chaim, recognized that the traditional home-based model of Torah education for women was no longer sufficient. They concluded that formal Torah education for girls was essential. This led to the establishment of institutions like the *Beit Yaakov* schools, pioneered by Sarah Schenirer. Here, too, the justification was "It is a time to act for God—by violating Your Torah": if women were not given a Torah education and their studies focused solely on secular knowledge, they might abandon the path of Torah and *mitzvot*, causing irreparable harm to the religious community.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe took this revolution even further. He argued that Maimonides' claim that "most women's minds are not attuned to learning" no longer applies. Women, he explained, had advanced intellectually and spiritually, and far from trivializing Torah, they were now fully capable of deep engagement with it. Beyond this practical assessment, the Rebbe grounded his view in the teachings of the great Kabbalist, the Holy Ari, who described a cosmic process of "the ascent of the feminine" (*aliyat ha-nukva*), which manifests in the rise of women's status.

Thus, what may have initially appeared as a concession to external pressures was in reality a reflection of profound spiritual and social progress. This revolution marked a transformative step forward in the advancement of Torah study and practice.

FOURTH REVOLUTION: TEACHING TORAH TO THE NATIONS

Until now, our discussion has remained within the bounds of the Jewish people, for obvious reasons: the

Torah was given exclusively to Israel, as it says, "Moses commanded us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob."[7] Moreover, the sages decreed that teaching Torah to non-Jews is prohibited: "We do not transmit the words of Torah to a non-Jew, as it is written, 'And He did not make His judgments known to them.'"[8] Maimonides even ruled that a non-Jew who studies Torah "is liable to death [by Divine decree]."[9]

Yet, for millennia, the prophets of Israel foretold of a miraculous shift in this paradigm. Who does not recognize the words of Isaiah: "Many peoples will come and say, 'Let us go up to the mountain of God, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth Torah, and the word of God from Jerusalem'."[10] Similarly, Jeremiah prophesied: "Nations will come to you from the ends of the earth and say, 'Surely our fathers inherited lies.'"[11] Zephaniah envisioned: "For then I will transform the peoples to a clear language, so that all of them may call upon the name if God, to serve Him with one accord."[12]

Even now, non-Jews are obligated to study and observe the seven Noahide Laws, and the sages taught explicitly: "A non-Jew who engages in Torah study [related to these laws] is like a High Priest."[13] It is our mission to spread and teach the Torah of the Noahide Laws to all humanity, as emphasized by Maimonides and others.[14] The Lubavitcher Rebbe championed this cause, dedicating significant efforts to its advancement.

However, fulfilling the seven Noahide Laws alone is not enough to realize the prophetic vision of a perfected world. Nor can such a transformation occur without a preceding step. For the nations of the world to recognize the truth and Divine origin of the Torah, which transcends all other religions while serving as their ultimate source of truth (as Maimonides describes Christianity and Islam as preparatory for the Messianic era), they must engage deeply with Torah. This includes not only the practical Noahide Laws but also the profound spiritual and ethical teachings found in both the revealed and mystical layers of Torah.

To bring this vision closer to reality, we propose a necessary fourth revolution in Torah study whose time has come: *opening the gates of Torah to the nations*. This would extend beyond the seven Noahide Laws to encompass teachings that relate to all of humanity—spiritual, psychological, and ethical wisdom from the Torah's mystical dimensions (Kabbalah and Chassidut) as well as practical guidance from its revealed dimensions, many of which are rooted in the Noahide framework. This initiative would not be a call to proselytize or encourage conversion (which must come from a non-Jew's free will) but rather an act of sharing the infinite wisdom and beauty of the Torah. At most, it might inspire some toward conversion, but that would not be its primary aim.

Far from diminishing the unique role of the Jewish people as the "holy nation," such an initiative would highlight Israel's position as a "kingdom of priests" and its mission to bless and elevate all of humanity.

HOW JEWS WILL ALSO BENEFIT

One might ask: The previous three revolutions were focused on preserving Torah within the Jewish people. How, then, does this fourth revolution comply with that goal of benefitting the Jewish people if its primary beneficiaries are non-Jews?

The answer is that teaching Torah to the nations could greatly *strengthen the Jewish world as well*. First, it would challenge and enrich every Jew involved in the process. Engaging with people who are entirely unfamiliar with Torah would introduce Jews to fresh questions and perspectives, invigorating and deepening their own connection to the Torah. This would mirror, on a larger scale, the experiences of Jews who teach Torah to their secular brethren through Chabad houses and similar initiatives.

But the impact goes far deeper. The modern Jewish world faces a profound crisis, marked by the alienation of entire sectors from Torah learning and even from their Jewish identity—a tragic reality that represents the most significant "violation of Torah" in history. At the root of this crisis lies, in part, a perception of Judaism as an insular, national religion with little to offer the broader world. Many Jews, especially those drawn to universal values, feel disconnected from what they see as a narrowly chauvinistic tradition.

Now imagine a reality where Judaism is recognized worldwide as a source of wisdom and inspiration for all humanity. What would happen if Torah study among non-Jews became widespread, or even trendy? Such a development could heal the fractures within the Jewish people, restoring pride and purpose to those alienated from their heritage. In this way, the fourth revolution could bring about a spiritual renaissance within Israel itself, fulfilling the principle "It is a time to act for God; they have violated Your Torah."

By making Torah accessible to the world, we could reclaim its universal relevance, repair the "wounds of my people,"[15] and open a new chapter in the unfolding story of Torah and humanity.

(Endnotes)
1 Psalms 119:126.
2 *Menachot* 99b.
3 *Avot* 4:5.
4 *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 3:10.
5 *Sotah* 20a.
6 *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:13.
7 . Deuteronomy 33:4.
8 *Chagigah* 13a.
9 Hilchot Melachim 10:9.
10 Isaiah 2:3
11 Jeremiah 16:19
12 Zephaniah 3:9
13 *Baba Kama* 38a.
14 *Hilchot Melachim* 8:10; *Tosafot Yom Tov* on Avot 3:14
15 Jeremiah 8:21

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