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



Wonders

בס"ד

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

Issue 130

Shabbat Vayeishev 5785 ❁ **December 20-21, 2024**
שַׁבָּת וַיֵּשֶׁב ❁ יט-כ כִּסְלֵו תשפ"ה



Transcending the ego is noble, but tricky. To attain it, one must first cultivate another trait—lowliness

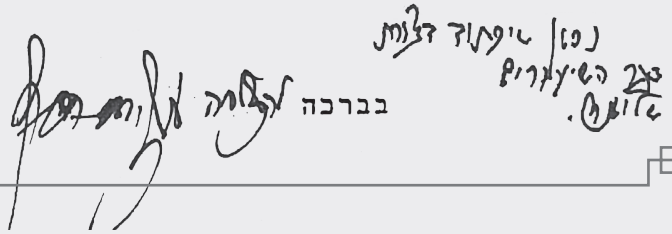
3 **Turn Your Ego Down, Not Off**

8 **Story: Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch:** Intentional Sleep and Daydreaming

11 **Partzuf: The Four All-Inclusive Sins of the Torah**

The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

"…It would be proper to publish your classes in book form. With blessings for success…"



Wonders

An anthology from the shiurim and farbrengens
of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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

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

www.inner.org

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

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

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

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

Scan this code to access all Wonders past issues

Wonders Staff
R. Moshe Genuth, Editor • Shelli Karzen , Associate Editor
Yoel Broderick, Typesetting

TURN YOUR EGO DOWN, NOT OFF

Close your eyes. Tighter. Focus, erase all thoughts. Now say three times, with great intent: "There is no I! There is no I! There is no I!" Now open your eyes, and... congratulations, you've lost your ego! Very soon you will see that life without an ego is much happier and less stressful, and you will be sent an invoice including a double gift: a T-shirt with the inscription "I am enlightened!", and a lapel pin saying "Lose your ego now, ask me how."

Sorry, what did you say? Oh, you *haven't* lost your ego yet? It's still...? I see. Well, sometimes such accidents happen, you probably weren't focused enough. No worries. Let's start from the beginning (don't worry, your credit card will be charged automatically): Close your eyes. Tighter...

* * *

Nullifying the ego is a tricky matter. It begins with a significant insight: that our self-centered, competitive, self-aggrandizing "I" is the source of all our negative traits and consequently, it is the hidden reason for our sadness and suffering. Following this insight, there arises a desire to eliminate the ego, to merge with something greater and higher; but the more one tries, the more complicated it gets, and often it feels like the very attempt only distances us from our goal, as ironically, all attempt to get rid of the ego are themselves centered around the ego.

According to Chasidut, the nullification of the self (*bitul atzmi*) is indeed a high and important level (although, as we will soon see, it is defined somewhat differently from what most people are familiar with). But Chasidut recognizes that there is an inherent trap in trying to achieve it directly. For this reason, an intermediate, more realistic and accessible stage is presented on the way to nullification. It is called lowliness (*shiflut*), and its essence is not the *nullification* of the ego but its *lowering*—acquiring the experience of being small and distant from our Creator. Lowliness is the state experienced when the ego is used in the right way and with it, one can eventually reach, with God's help, a state of true selflessness.

HOW DO YOU SAY "EGO" IN HEBREW?

But let's take a step back and start from the beginning. To properly understand a topic from a Jewish perspective, we must first zero in on its precise Hebrew word. The word "ego" is Latin for "I," and it is not directly related to the Hebrew language although it does strongly resemble the Hebrew word for "pride" (גאוה) and when written with the definite article, האגו, it is literally a permutation of "pride."

Chasidut uses another term to refer

to an inflated sense of self: *yeshut* (ישות). *Yeshut* derives from the word *yesh*, meaning "there is" or "existence," and connotes the experience of being "a thing unto itself" (יש ודבר נפרד)—a feeling that we are a distinct, independent, and self-sufficient being.

In Chasidic terminology, therefore, nullifying the ego is really the same as nullifying *yeshut*. What is the opposite of *yeshut*? It is called "non-being" or *ayin*: the experience (or rather, absence of experience) that we are not an independent entity onto ourselves, but rather part of God, nullified to Him. Beautifully, the Hebrew word *ayin* (אַיִן) is made up of the same letters as "I," (*ani*, אני), but in the right order. This suggests that the ultimate rectification of the self is a state of non-being or nothingness. The one who embodies self-nullification more than anyone according to Chasidut was Moses, who completely dedicated himself to his mission to lead the people of Israel, negating his personal will and not taking any credit for all his great achievements—freeing the Israelites from Egypt, parting the Red Sea, bringing the Torah down, the construction of the Tabernacle, etc.

Self-nullification, it is important to explain, does not mean the elimination of our personality. It is not about erasing who we are. What happens in nullification is that our consciousness is *diverted from focusing on ourselves and instead focuses on God*, until we essentially "lose" ourselves in Him. As an example, Moses did not take credit for all his successful accomplishments but attributed them all to God. In fact, not only does self-nullification not erase our individual and unique sense of self, but it allows it to be expressed more clearly: As we cease to deal with ourselves directly, so our personality sheds the cumbersome garb of our self-image and is able to express itself more freely. By freeing ourselves from the need to focus on our reputation, so to speak, we free our energy to focus on doing more.

THE PITFALLS OF NULLIFICATION

Although there are various degrees and stages in the nullification of the ego, it represents a very high level that an ordinary person cannot reach directly by his own efforts. Who can be like Moses?

Moreover, the path to nullification is fraught with pitfalls that prevent its achievement. One trap is the *crushing disappointment following repeated failures to nullify the ego*, which can lead to depression and even self-hatred. It's no wonder: if we set ourselves an impossible goal and convince ourselves that without achieving it, we are flawed egotists, we end up hating ourselves when we fail (there's certainly room for regret concerning our ego's stubbornness, but to hate ourselves because of its mere existence is unjust and destructive).

A second trap, stemming from the first, is the *conclusion that it's impossible to nullify the ego and therefore pointless to try*. This conclusion reinforces the belief that we must fully accept the ego as it is and instead invest in pampering, loving, and justifying it. The ultimate result is

an empowerment of the ego instead of its nullification.

Lastly, there's the worst trap of all: *falling into the illusion that we have already nullified the ego*. Striving toward nullification creates a strong expectation for it to be realized, which in turn presents a tremendous temptation to interpret various achievements and experiences, as well as compliments we receive, as signs that—"Hey, look, at me: No ego." Falling into this sweet illusion is, of course, the very thing that inflates the ego the most...

Because of all these reasons, Chasidut delineates a prior goal for spiritual rectification, which is related to nullification but saves us from the pitfalls listed: *lowliness*, which is how we started our present journey into the ego.

SO, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NULLIFICATION AND LOWLINESS?

First, in a state of lowliness, we *do* have an ego. It's there, we feel it, and there's no pretense of having gotten rid of it, or easily being able to do so. But the ego is in a *diminished* state. The experience of lowliness, as its name suggests, is that of being in a lower place compared to something higher. What is this higher place compared to which we feel low? Well, lowliness is the recognition that we have a Divine soul entrusted to us by God, that it was given to us for a lofty reason, that we have an exalted purpose to fulfill—*and how very far we are from achieving all this!* In other words, lowliness is the acknowledgment of just how much we *have not* nullified ourselves.

Secondly, lowliness is not the opposite of egocentric *yeshut*. It is not a state of nothingness or of non-being. Rather, it is the opposite of *pride*, namely arrogance and self-exaltation. It is the feeling that we are low compared to something above us. In fact, the Hebrew root of lowliness (שפל) and the Hebrew word for pride (גאות) also mean "low tide" and "high tide," respectively. Amazingly, they have the same numerical value, suggesting they are proportionate to one another—the more prideful we are, the lowlier we need to be in order to rectify ourselves. The more we feel the swell of pride rising in us, the more we need to counteract it with lowliness, by reminding ourselves that our accomplishments are really not ours but that our failures certainly are.

Lowliness acknowledges that in relation to God's infinite nature, we are always infinitely distant, and therefore no matter how much we have done, achieved, or accumulated, we are always on the same level with everyone else and have no right to aggrandize ourselves.

Just as self-nullification is embodied by Moses, so to lowliness is embodied by another major Biblical figure: King David. David was perhaps the greatest warrior in the Bible, the one who conquered Jerusalem and established his throne there, and of whom songs of praise were written even before he was thirty. Yet all this did not stop him from feeling that he was no nobler than the simplest servants and maids, and during the transport of the

Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, he "leaped and danced" with them as a man of the people. When his wife Michal, the daughter of King Saul, reproached him for this, his response was, "I am even more undignified than this, and am lowly in my own eyes."[1] Although the term "lowly" in this positive sense is mentioned a few times in the Bible, this is the only instance where someone is specifically called by this title. Therefore, David is a symbol of lowliness.

The term "lowliness" may sound negative. Indeed, there is a type of negative lowliness, expressed in depression, self-hatred, and guilt complexes. But this lowliness is in fact *pride in disguise*: It stems from living in the shadow of an inflated self-image, and then not being able to tolerate ourselves when we do not meet the perfect ideal it demands of us. Our pride generates false lowliness in order to extract compliments from people around us, or to serve as an excuse to fall into depression when we fail to achieve our goals.

True lowliness is not about living under the illusion that we are perfect, but rather the exact opposite: a lucid experience of our *imperfection*. Naturally, one who is truly lowly does not fall into despair when he discovers he falls short of perfection; he never expected to be perfect in the first place. This relates also to the trap we discussed earlier regarding self-nullification and the disappointment from discovering we still have an ego. Unlike those striving for nullification, those striving for lowliness are immune to this disappointment, since they never claimed to lose their ego. At worst, they merely discover that they are not lowly enough—and this realization only strengthens their lowliness!

Another difference between negative and positive lowliness is that, while false lowliness is accompanied by a feeling that God is disappointed in us or even hates us, true lowliness goes *hand in hand with the feeling that He loves us and is present with us here and now in our true state*. In other words, when true lowliness is present, we are acutely aware of God's *compassion* for us, of His faith in us. This is not a condescending type of compassion, but a kind and embracing one, like that of a father who loves his son as he is and keeps giving him more and more opportunities.

True, God always expects us to be better than we are and to correct our shortcomings, but on the other hand, He does not love lies or deception, including self-deception. Therefore, every time we honestly admit our true lowliness, He welcomes us with pleasure.

LOWLINESS AND JOY

From all this, it emerges that although there is an element of sorrow that accompanies lowliness, there is a much stronger element of joy—joy in our liberation from the burden of an inflated self-image. In acknowledging that we are lowly and a far cry from fulfilling our purpose in life, we attain a lightness of being and a freedom of will pushing us to strive for more. It allows us to be

1. 2 Samuel 6:22.

happy with our lot (since we do not feel entitled to anything more), and to feel that everything is still ahead of us. When you're at the bottom, you can only go higher.

Indeed, when we are in a state of lowliness, we do not only rejoice in our own lot, but also in God. One who is lowly in spirit knows that everything he has in life is a gift of grace from God. For this reason, he is filled with gratitude and constant joy, as he feels that despite his distance from God, God is close to him and enriches him with His kindness. This sentiment is expressed in the verse, "And the humble shall increase joy in the God...."[2] The joy of the humble—i.e. the lowly of spirit—is in God, He is the object of their joy. (Another interpretation of the verse is that the humble also *add joy to God Himself*, who enjoys seeing them open their hearts to Him).

One who lowers himself in the positive sense we have discussed and progressively diminishes his ego in his own eyes, may one day, without even realizing it, also truly transcend his ego.

2. Isaiah 29:19.

STORY

RABBI DOV BER, THE MAGGID OF MEZRITCH:

Intentional Sleep and Daydreaming

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch, known as the Maggid of Mezritch, was the greatest disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov. He was born in Lukatch, Ukraine. His father, Rabbi Avraham, was descended from the Mishnaic sage, Rabbi Yochanan HaSandlar, and generations before, from King David. As a child, Rabbi Dov Ber was obviously brilliant, and his father sent him to study Torah in the yeshivah of the Pnei Yehoshua (Rabbi Yaakov Yehosuha Falk) in Levov. After his marriage, he was a teacher in Tultshin and began learning Kabbalah. Later, he was a maggid (a preacher) in a number of villages.

As soon as Rabbi Dov Ber came to the Ba'al Shem Tov, he became his principal disciple. After the Ba'al She Tov's passing, the Ba'al Shem Tov's son, Rabbi Tzvi, was appointed to lead the chasidim. A year later, during the festive Shavu'ot meal on the first anniversary of the Ba'al Shem Tov's passing, Rabbi Tzvi announced that his father had appeared to him and instructed him to transfer the leadership position to Rabbi Dov Ber. Rabbi Tzvi rose from his place and gave the Maggid his topcoat, which had belonged to the Ba'al Shem Tov, and then the Maggid sat in Rabbi Tzvi's place and began to teach Torah.

Unlike his teacher, the Ba'al Shem Tov, who would travel from place to place, the Maggid stayed in Mezritch and from there sent his students to teach Torah and establish centers of chasidic life throughout Russia, Poland, and even Germany. A few months before he passed away, the Maggid moved to Anapoli due to a plague that had broken out in Mezritch. He passed away on 19 Kislev 5633 (1872) and is buried in Anapoli. The great chasidic aliyah to the Land of Israel came from the Maggid's study hall, led by his disciple, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk who made aliyah in 1777. Among the Maggid's other famous disciples were his son, Rabbi Avraham the Angel, the Alter Rebbe of Chabad, the brothers, Rabbi Zusha of Anapoli and Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, Rabbi Aharon the Great of Karlin, the brothers Rabbi Pinchas Ba'al HaHafla'ah and Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg, Rabbi Yehudah Leib HaKohen, Rabbi Ze'ev of Zhitomer and many more.

Once, on a Shabbat night, the holy disciples of the great Maggid of Mezritch, of blessed memory, sat together, reviewing their Rebbe's teachings. The holy Rabbi Aharon of Karlin, of blessed memory, who was one of the Maggid's greatest disciples, sat alone in his room, whispering something to himself. Suddenly, a knock was heard at the door. It was the voice of the Maggid's attendant:

"Where is Rabbi Aharon? Our Rebbe has instructed that he should stop reciting the Song of Songs. His recitation is causing an uproar in the supernal worlds, and our Rebbe cannot sleep because of it." When the righteous Rabbi Hillel of Paritsch, of blessed memory, retold this story, his eyes welled up with tears, and he said: "From this, we can glimpse the tiniest fraction of the Maggid's greatness. For even though Rabbi Aharon of Karlin's recitation of the Song of Songs was causing an uproar in the worlds, nevertheless, the Maggid's sleep was more precious."

It is told of the holy Ari that once he dozed off a bit, as was his custom, on Shabbat afternoon. When he awoke, he said: "If I were to speak for eighty consecutive years, it would not be long enough to convey the secrets of the Torah that were revealed to me in my sleep." If the Maggid's sleep was more precious than Rabbi Aharon of Karlin's recitation of the Song of Songs, surely he too, like our master the Ari, had lofty secrets revealed to him then. However, a characteristic saying of the Maggid can shed additional light on the nature of his learning during sleep:

There is a mishnah in Avot that teaches: "One who walks on the road while reviewing his studies, and interrupts his review and says, 'How beautiful is this tree...' the verse considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul." The Maggid notes that in other places, the tree is a metaphor for a Torah scholar, so according to this interpretation, a person who interrupts his studies is not marveling at the beautiful scenery but at himself: "How beautiful is the tree that I am...." With this thought, the scholar "interrupts his studies," meaning he interrupts his cleaving to God, because of and due to his learning and his pride in it.

Indeed, the Maggid himself walked all his days in intense devotion to God. His disciple, Rabbi Ze'ev Wolf, testified about him that if he feared his state of cleaving to God had weakened for a moment, he would stop speaking in the middle of a matter, contemplate briefly, and then resume speaking from a state of cleaving to God.

A true *tzaddik* serves God even during sleep, and certainly the Maggid's eternal cleaving to God did not cease then. We can even say that the cleaving during sleep was more elevated, because sleep removes our regular consciousness. For a *tzaddik* like the Maggid of Mezritch, such a lack of consciousness means an ascent to the root of the soul, "beyond reason and knowledge." To complete the picture, we will bring another famous story, which adds a special hue to the first story:

Before becoming a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid was a genius in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and would pray with the *kavanot* (holy intentions) of the Arizal. He had a friend who also engaged in these matters. After the Maggid became a Rebbe, it happened that they met, and when they stood to pray, his friend finished his prayer a considerable time before the Maggid. His friend asked him about this, saying: "We used to pray together and finish at the same time. What has changed now?"

The Maggid's friend studied Torah most of the year, while his wife managed their business. Once a year, he would interrupt his studies for a few weeks to travel to Leipzig for the fair to buy merchandise, after which he would return home and continue his Torah study. The Maggid asked him: "Why do you need to waste time traveling to Leipzig? Wouldn't it be better to contemplate the journey, thinking that today you are here, tomorrow you are there, until you think you are in Leipzig, and then contemplate the return journey home, thus making the trip in a very short time?"

When the friend heard this, he looked at him in astonishment and said: "Reb Ber, I didn't know you were such an idler! What good will my thoughts do? I need to be in Leipzig to actually bring back the merchandise!"

The Maggid answered him: "So it is regarding the matter of *kavanot* in prayer. It is not enough to just think and intend 'now I am in the World of Asiyah or the World of Yetzirah. One needs to actually be there; to bring back the 'merchandise,' and for this, more time is required..."

This is another facet of the cleaving to God that characterized the Maggid: complete and conscious presence in every detail he contemplated and learned. Returning back to the testimony given by his disciple Ze'ev Wolf, the Maggid is present even in his own sleep experience - he is aware of the elevated nature of his sleep, teaches others about it, and essentially holds both extremes simultaneously: presence and awareness during a time of being "beyond reason and knowledge."

The ability to sleep in such a manner is particularly connected to the month in which the Maggid passed away, the month of Kislev. In *Sefer Yetzirah*, each month of the year is associated with a special sense. Remarkably, the sense of the month of Kislev is the sense of sleep! Before passing, on the 19th day of Kislev, he summoned his favorite disciple, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi and said to him, "Zalmale, today is our Yom tov." Completing his mission in this world in the month of Kislev was for him a festival, illustrating how deeply he was connected to serving God even while sleeping.

PARTZUF

THE FOUR ALL-INCLUSIVE SINS OF THE TORAH

Sometimes, the elements or ideas we gather and organize into a partzuf—a Kabbalistic model—have not been organized in the past. Although it may make a lot of sense to connect them with one another, it is always helpful to strengthen their connection through another type of analysis. For this week's *partzuf*, we are going to look at the all-inclusive sins described in the Torah. These are the sins whose effects are still felt today, usually not just by the Jewish people, but by all of humanity. In addition, the strife or issue that caused them has yet to be remedied.

WHAT IS A SIN?

A sin is a test that has the potential to either reveal the essence of either the individual or a community or, if failed, to derail life and set it on a detour. Chassidut discusses the potential for revealing the essence in length in context of the verse, "For *Havayah* your God is testing you to know whether you love *Havayah* your God."[3] Since God already knows whether we love Him or not, the verse should be read as stating: "God is testing you so that you may know whether you love God."

If it is an individual that sins because he or she fails the test, then their personal life is derailed. The remedy for a personal sin is confession, the most important part of doing *teshuvah*. Case in point is the account of Judah's sin against his daughter-in-law, Tamar that appears in our *parashah*, *parashat Vayeishev*. When confronted by Tamar, Judah admits to his wrongdoing and says, "Indeed, she is more in the right than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Sheilah."[4]

Judah's descendant, King David, exemplifies the ability to confess to one's sins. After being confronted by the prophet Nathan regarding his machinations against Uriyah the husband of Batsheba, David immediately confesses, "I have sinned to God."[5] Because of David's immediate submission to God's rebuke spoken through His prophet Nathan, he is considered the exemplar of lowliness before God and the dean of all who seek to repent before God. As such, David's confession is viewed as an important rectification for Adam's attempt to deflect guilt for having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. David's descendant, the Mashiach is destined to bring all of humanity to rectify this predilection to shun responsibility for our actions.

3. Deuteronomy 13:4.

4. Genesis 38:26.

5. 2 Samuel 12:13.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SINS

The Torah describes many sins that might be candidates to be included in this group, but there is no clear rabbinic source that lists what the most important might be. So it is helpful and perhaps even surprising that we can use mathematical analysis to guide and then support our decision to include particular sins in our group.

Let's begin by noting the most general sins that are easy to identify. The first is of course the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. No sin has affected humanity more than this one and, in a sense, all of human history, all the difficulties, all the strife, are the result of this sin. By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, our eyes were opened, but our natural connection with God was severed. Since then, we have been seeking a way back.

The sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge began the process of pushing the Divine Presence, the Shechinah, up seven levels from dwelling in our reality. The return of the Shechinah to human consciousness began with the life and efforts of Abraham and was completed at the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, seven generations later. The sages describe that the poison injected into Adam and Eve by the primordial snake was neutralized by the Shechinah descending upon Mt. Sinai.[6] However, the healing was short-lived and forty days later, the people sinned with the Golden Calf, an all-inclusive sin that once again cast the Jewish people into a state of dissonance from God.

The third prominent all-inclusive sin of the Torah is the Sin of the Spies who went to see the Land of Canaan and then came back with a defamatory report, which caused the people to distrust God's ability to bring them into the Land. The result of this sin was forty years of wandering in the wilderness and ultimately led to Moses not entering the Land. Had Moses led the people into the Land of Israel, he would have constructed the permanent Temple in Jerusalem and the Messianic age would have begun.

IN SEARCH OF MATHEMATICAL SIMPLICITY

After HaRav Ginsburgh first taught about these three all-inclusive sins in the Od Yosef Chai Yeshivah in Shechem, he contemplated the Torah portions in which they appear from a quantitative perspective. The sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge is in parashat *Bereishit*, the 1st *parashah* in the Torah. The Sin of the Golden Calf appears in *Ki Tissa*, the 21st parashah in the Torah. The sin of the Spies appears in *parashat Shelach*, the 37th *parashah*. These three numbers—1, 21, and 37—can be seen as a series. A basic technique used to analyze series is the "finite differences" method. It is the discrete equivalent of finding the derivative of a function and was originally developed by Isaac Newton. If numbers in a series have a constant second "finite difference" they form a quadratic series. For example, the number 1 3 6 form a quadratic series since we can write:

6. *Shabbat* 146b and *Yevamot* 103b.

1 3 6

2 3

1

The difference between 1 and 3 is 2, the difference between 3 and 6 is 3, and the difference between the differences (2 and 3) is 1, also known as the base of the series. We can use the base to find the next number in this series:

1 3 6 10

2 3 4

1 1

The next number is 10. We can use the base to continue generating the rest of the numbers in the series.

Now, let us return to the three numbers 1, 21, and 37. Arranging them in the finite differences form we get:

1 21 37

20 16

-4

But we can do better by assuming that there is a missing number in this sequence, between 1 and 21. If we add the number 9, we get the following:

1 9 21 37

8 12 16

4 4

By adding the 9, we have speculated that there is another all-inclusive sin in the Torah's 9th *parashah*, which happens to be *parashat Vayeishev*. Another thing that has changed is that the base of the series is now 4, which itself alludes to there being 4 all-inclusive sins. One more important change is the average value of the four numbers: 1, 9, 21, and 37. Their sum is 68, which means their average is 17, the value of the word for sin (חַטָּא). One should immediately question this *gematria*, since the value of "sin" (**חֵטְא**) is 18. However, there is one exceptional instance of the word in the Torah where it is written without the *alef*, regarding a situation in which the congregation inadvertently worshipped in a forbidden way. They then bring "a he-goat as a sin offering"[7] (וּשְׂעִיר עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת). Since the average value is 17, we are pointed in the direction of the Torah's 17th *parashah*, which is Yitro, suggesting that the remedy to all the all-inclusive sins is found in the Giving of the Torah described in that *parashah*. Because the Torah is what designates what is a sin and what is not, it follows that only the Torah can also annul a sin through the path of *teshuvah*.

Before identifying the all-inclusive sin in *parashat Vayeishev*, the 9th *parashah*, let us see what the number preceding 1 is. We can find it by extrapolating backwards:

-3 1 9 21 37

4 8 12 16

4 4 4

It may sound a little strange, but if we follow the numbers logically, we can say that the negative 3rd *parashah* is the third *parashah* backwards from *Bereishit*, which is *Nitzaveem*. *Parashat Nitzaveem* contains what is known as the *parashah* of *teshuvah*, a beautiful allusion to the sages' statement

7. Numbers 15:24. Incidentally, this is the basis of the well-known custom mentioned in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 583:2) not to eat nuts on Rosh Hashanah since the value of "nut" (**אֱגוֹז**) is the same as the value of sin, when written without the *alef* (**חֵט**) as in this verse.

that "*teshuvah* preceded the Creation of the world."[8]

One more point that will be important for our construction of the *partzuf* of the all-inclusive sins in a moment is to look at the number of verses in these parashot. In the 1st and 9th—*Bereishit* and *Vayeishev*—there are 146 and 112 verses, respectively. There sum is 258. In the 21st and 37th parashot—*Ki Tissa* and *Shelach*—there are 139 and 119 verse, respectively. Again, their sum is 258. This both provides additional mathematical support for adding the 9th *parashah* as well as setting the stage to dividing the 4 all-inclusive sins into 2 pairs, just as the first two letters of God's essential Name, Havayah are known as "the concealed" (הַנִּסְתָּרֹת)[9] and the final two letters are known as "and the revealed" (וְהַנִּגְלֹת).

But what is even more interesting is that the number of verses in *parashat Yitro*—the Torah's 17th *parashah*, which we said is the remedy to the all-inclusive sins—is 72,[10] which is 4 times 18, or 4 times the value of "sin" (**חֵטְא**), alluding to its being the remedy for these 4 sins.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SIN OF VAYEISHEV

It is not difficult to identify the all-inclusive sin in the Torah's 9th *parashah*, *parashat Vayeishev*: the sin of the brothers selling Joseph into slavery. It is an all-inclusive sin because the entire Jewish people were involved. When we say that everyone was involved, this does not exclude the possibility of there being exceptions.[11] Indeed, Benjamin was not present when Joseph was sold, just as the Levites did not participate in the Golden Calf. In fact, at first the brothers decided to kill Joseph, having tried him and concluding that he should be put to death. However, *halachah* dictates that if all the judges unanimously find someone guilty of a capital offense, that person is freed. Likewise, if all the brothers had been present and they would have unanimously decided that he was liable for death, then Joseph would have been set free.

Putting a spotlight on the essence of the sin of selling Joseph, we see that it was fueled by a doubt whether a son of Rachel was akin to the sons of Jacob's other wives. In other words, the focus was on the status of maternal descent, since all the brothers shared a common father, Jacob.

Adding this sin to the series also fills in what seemed to be too big a spiritual leap from the Tree of Knowledge to the Golden Calf, as we will now see.

CONSTRUCTING THE PARTZUF

Since we have 4 all-inclusive sins, it follows that we should correspond

8. *Bereishit Rabbah* 1:4.

9. Following Deuteronomy 29:28. The first two letters, *yud* and *hei*, allude to the relatively hidden intellectual powers, wisdom and understanding. The final two letters, *vav* and *hei* (alluded to in the word "and the concealed," וְהַנִּגְלֹת) allude to the revealed emotional and active powers, beauty (*tiferet*) and kingdom (*malchut*).

10. There are a number of different reckonings of the number of verses in Yitro. They depend on how the text of the Ten Commandments is divided into verse. However, 72 is the number assigned by the *mesorah* and brought in most *Chumashim*.

11. Once again, demonstrating the principle that, "the exception proves the rule," or in the language of the sages, "there is no rule that does not have an exception" (אֵין כְּלָל שֶׁאֵין לוֹ יוֹצֵא מִן הַכְּלָל).

them to the best-known Torah model of the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*. Whenever we have 4 elements that are well-ordered in the Torah, logic dictates that their order be retained. Thus, we create the following *partzuf*:

letter of Havayah	sefirah	All-inclusive Sin	Sin against	
yud	Wisdom	Tree of Knowledge	Self	י
hei	Understanding	Selling Joseph	Brotherhood/ Mothers	ה
vav	Beauty (Knowledge)	Worshipping Golden Calf	Moses	ו
hei	Kingdom	Spies	Land of Israel	ה

Let us walk through the parts of this *partzuf* in a bit more detail, although a complete treatment is beyond our scope here.

First, we want to look at who the sin was aimed at. On first inspection we would say that the first and third sins—eating from the Tree of Knowledge and Worshipping the Golden Calf—were sins aimed at God, while the second sin was against Joseph and the fourth was perhaps against Moses. However, on closer inspection, we can analyze the sins differently.

Even though eating from the Tree of Knowledge seems to be a sin against God Himself, in reality it was a form of self-harm, akin to suicide. Because God had warned Adam that eating from the tree would lead to his certain death, Adam choosing to in fact eat from the tree was a suicidal act. In fact, this is the root of all sin—ignoring one's own well-being and acting in a masochistic manner, inflicting self-harm. But at each level of sin, the harm is inflicted on a more distant and seemingly less intimate part of the self.

All four all-inclusive sins present various degrees of self-inflicted harm. Adam harmed himself directly. His sin attacked the very essence of his being, known as the "power of the essence" (**כֹּחַ מַה**), one of the permutations of "wisdom" (**חָכְמָה**).

Joseph's brothers attacked one of their own, one level removed from harming the self. The connection between the brothers and Joseph was a familial one, but as mentioned earlier, because they were not from the same mother, the attack was against motherhood as the basis of nationhood. In Hebrew (as well as other Semitic languages), the word for "nation" (אֻמָּה) is derived from "mother" (**אֵם**).

The sin of the Golden Calf was not against God. As Maimonides and others explain, the people were replacing Moses—

God's emissary—not God Himself. As such, the Golden Calf was an attack on Moses' leadership.

Finally, the Sin of the Spies was directed not only against Moses, who promised to bring the Israelites to the Holy land, but against Moses' leadership as it would be elevated to the status of being a king, specifically in the Land of Israel. And so, it was an attack against one's homeland.

Let us summarize this additional analysis with an augmented form of our *partzuf*:

letter of Havayah	sefirah	All-inclusive Sin	Sin against	
yud	Wisdom	Tree of Knowledge	Self	י
hei	Understanding	Selling Joseph	Nation	ה
vav	Beauty (Knowledge)	Worshipping Golden Calf	Leadership	ו
hei	Kingdom	Spies	Homeland	ה

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

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