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

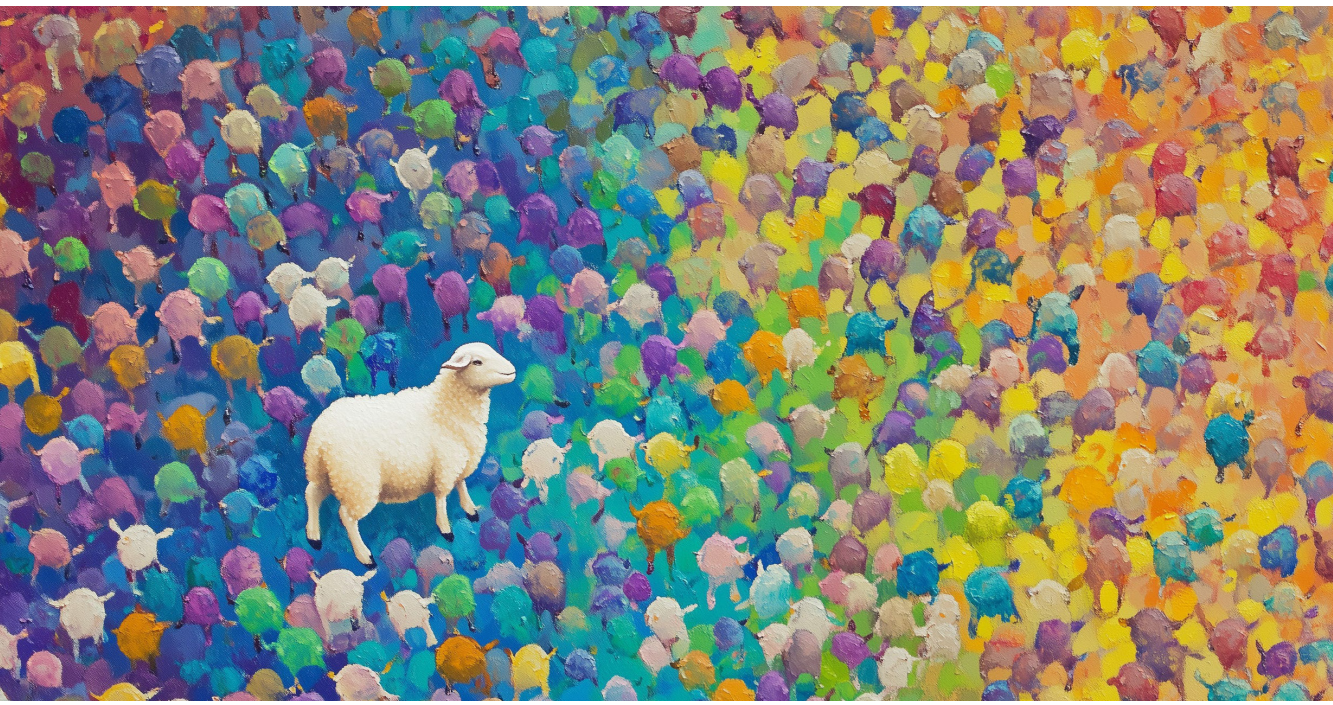
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Wonders

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

Issue 128

Shabbat Vayeitzei 5785 ❁ **December 6-7, 2024**
שַׁבָּת וַיֵּצֵא ❁ ה-ו כִּסְלֵו תשפ"ה



The notion of a "chosen people" is divisive. Literally. But when understood in full context it just might help bring us together.

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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

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



Wonders

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

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CHOSEN: REFRAMING JEWISH ALOOFNESS

It is no secret that Judaism draws a sharp distinction between the people of Israel and other nations. Every Saturday night, during the ceremony of *havdalah* (literally, "separation"), we even bless God for "distinguishing between Israel and the nations."

Why is it so vital for Judaism to maintain such a distinction from other nations and their cultures? Why do Jews strictly avoid intermarriage, limit cultural assimilation, and uphold rigorous conversion standards?

This question lies at the very heart of Jewish identity. Moreover, it directly impacts our lives today, shaping many of the disputes and divisions within Israeli society regarding the character of the State of Israel. Addressing this issue from the perspective of the inner dimensions of Torah—Kabbalah and Chasidut—is therefore of central importance.

SUBMISSION, SEPARATION, AND SWEETENING

When approaching the topic of Israel's distinction from other nations from the perspective of Chassidic teachings, the first concept to grasp is that the very word used for "distinction," *havdalah*, forms the central stage in the fundamental triad of concepts introduced by the Baal Shem Tov, called "submission" (*hachna'ah*), "separation" (*havdalah*), and "sweetening" (*hamtakah*).

According to the Baal Shem Tov, every complete spiritual process must follow these three stages. One must first practice "submission" (humble themselves, curb their pride, and acknowledge their limitations). That should be followed by "separation" (self-refinement and separation from negative traits). Finally, the process should lead to a sense of "sweetening" (the attainment of personal wholeness and self-expression).

These concepts suggest that the Jewish people's separation from the other nations is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a broader process. It should be preceded by a certain "submission" with regard to our approach to other nations, and lead to a certain "sweetening" in our relationship with them. It is impossible to fully appreciate what appears to be the Jewish tendency for isolationism without appreciating it as a particular stage in a much wider developmental process.

Let us now examine how the three stages of submission, separation, and sweetening can be understood in the context of our relationship with other nations.

SUBMISSION: EQUALITY BEFORE GOD

In the context of the relations between the Jewish people and the nations of the world, submission means acknowledging the *fundamental equality between Israel and the other nations*.

All human beings are created by the same Creator. All our virtues and talents

were granted to us from Him, and we are all entirely dependent on Him for our existence and sustenance. When we come to appreciate this, we realize we are all equal in the eyes of God. Furthermore, since God is perfect and infinite, any distinctions in greatness or spiritual rank between us are cancelled by the fact that we are infinitely distant from Him (i.e., equally infinitely distant from perfection). God is "everything" and before Him, all of us are "as nothing."

In fact, this sense of humility extends beyond our relationship with the rest of humanity and must govern our interactions with all of creation. In the words attributed to the Baal Shem Tov,[1]

> Do not say in your heart that you are greater than your fellow... Recognize that you are like all other creatures, created solely to serve the Creator. How are you superior to a worm? It serves its Creator to the best of its abilities, while you, like a worm, are but dust and ashes. Were it not for the intellect that God granted you, you would be no better than a worm. Therefore, even compared to a worm you hold no inherent superiority, let alone compared to other people. Contemplate that you, the worm, and all creatures are friends in Creation. None possess power or merit beyond what the Creator has granted them, and this awareness must remain with you always.

This perspective provides the foundational attitude necessary for healthy relationships with others, including the Jewish people's relationship with the rest of humanity. It is the starting point for all distinctions and separations that follow. Even when God took the Jewish people out of Egypt—marking the beginning of our separation into a unique nation—this act was described as, "taking *one nation out of another nation*."[2] Israel was initially a nation like all others. Only after acknowledging this equality, could they be elevated to the status of a "holy nation."

Acknowledging this equality is not only about accepting a profound truth. It also serves as a safeguard, preventing the idea of separation from becoming a tool for condescension, hatred, or oppression.

It is important to emphasize that genuine equality is only possible within the framework of faith in an infinite Creator before whom all are equal. Without this foundation, there is no compelling reason to assume equality among beings, and any social or political ideal of equality becomes an artificial construct imposed on reality, one that will eventually fail and be rejected.

SEPARATION: ISRAEL'S CHOSENNESS

Building on the humble acknowledgment of the equality of all Creation, we can explore the concept of separation between Israel and the nations. This separation is rooted in the belief that the Jewish people were chosen to receive the most complete revelation of Divine wisdom, the Torah, and to use it to sanctify and perfect all of existence, transforming it into a vessel for the Divine Presence. On a personal and collective level, this distinction represents our commitment to align with the Creator, whom we humbly acknowledged in the previous stage, and to approach reality as His emissaries.

The principle of Israel's chosenness

is so fundamental to Judaism that it is impossible to truly understand it without it. Even those seeking universal lessons from Judaism (a subject discussed in the third stage below) must grapple with this concept and its necessity. Why couldn't the Torah be given to the entire world? Alternatively, why couldn't it have been given to the Jewish people, but without so strongly distinguishing them from other nations?

A helpful analogy for understanding the need for distinction can be found in nature, in the transition from the realm of the chemical to that of the biological. This transition hinges on a simple yet profound feature: the membrane. The membrane, which encloses and separates a living cell from its environment, provides the protective conditions necessary for the complex processes occurring within. Without this boundary, biological activity would dissolve and disappear into the surrounding chemical environment.

Similarly, every leap to a higher level of organization in nature requires a form of separation that enables new complexities to emerge. Human society, for instance, must distance itself from untamed nature to establish civilizations—protected spaces where higher pursuits, such as art and philosophy, can flourish.

The Torah's purpose is to foster a similar leap, this time not from survival to civilization but from civilization to a *culture of faith*—a life lived in awareness of the Divine reality underlying creation, where every detail of existence is shaped by its connection to that reality. Like all other leaps, this leap too involves an increase in complexity, this time the cultivation of a higher state of consciousness. Those familiar with Torah study will recognize that it demands constant refinement of thought, challenging ordinary concepts and categories. Good and evil, beauty and ugliness, material and spiritual, fate and free will, logic and paradox—regarding all these and more, the Torah requires its students to "leap" to a whole new level of thinking.

To facilitate this leap, a kind of "membrane" is necessary—a protective boundary that allows the unique organism that is Jewish thought and life to grow and thrive. Like a delicate house of cards that can only be built in a sheltered space, Torah study and the cultivation of a life of faith require relatively insulated conditions to flourish. Assimilation threatens to blend the Torah with general human culture, thereby erasing or obscuring its unique message.

To delve more deeply into the need for insulation, let us look at one of the Torah's synonyms for separation, *haflayah* (הַפְלָיָה). This verb first appears at the peak of Israel's separation from the nations—during the plagues of Egypt. Three of the four times it appears in the Torah occur in this narrative. When God distinguishes the land of Goshen from the rest of Egypt during the plague of wild beasts, separates Israel's livestock from Egypt's during the plague of pestilence, and spares the firstborn of Israel during the plague of the firstborn, the Torah uses the verb *haflayah*.

The root of *haflayah* (פלה), is closely related to the root of "wonder" (פלא). This connection suggests that the distinction of Israel is meant to nurture a hidden wonder—a unique form of life and

consciousness that can be recognized (eventually) as wondrous. Indeed, the verses describing this separation don't emphasize Egypt's suffering but rather Israel's preservation: the primary purpose of *haflayah* is not to negate the other but to protect what lies within.

Many struggle to accept the idea of chosenness, largely out of fear that it could lead to national condescension, claims of superiority over other nations. This concern is valid, and that's why the submission stage is a crucial reminder that Israel's chosenness must rest on a foundation of equality.

However, just as submission is extreme in nature ("What makes me greater than a worm?"), so too must the separation be. It is a radical separation designed to cultivate a fundamentally different consciousness from that of other nations. The Torah aims to embed the infinite Divine within finite human life, a task requiring the creation of a sacred space, quite distinct from general culture.

When built upon submission, separation becomes a source not of pride but of profound responsibility. A key passage in the Torah expresses this idea: "For you are a holy people to Havayah your God; Havayah your God has chosen you to be His treasured nation from among all peoples on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more numerous than all the peoples that Havayah desired and chose you, for you are the least of peoples."[3] The sages interpret "the least of peoples" to mean "you make yourselves least [i.e. you humble yourselves] before others." The less we feel entitled to chosenness, the more we become worthy of it.

SWEETENING: MUTUAL ENRICHMENT

We finally arrive at the third stage, sweetening, which reveals a profound insight: the separation of Israel from the nations is only an intermediate step leading to the ultimate purpose—the creation of a harmonious relationship between Israel and the nations.

Sweetening always brings a process full circle, reconnecting with the humility inherent in the first stage of submission. In this context, it means reestablishing an equal and reciprocal relationship between the Jewish people and the nations, now enriched by virtue of the separation which the previous stage established.

The sweetening stage represents Judaism's Messianic vision, where Israel inspires the nations with the light of Torah, while simultaneously learning from the wisdom of the nations.

The prophets spoke extensively about this: "In the days to come… many nations will go and say, 'Let us go up to the mountain of God… that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths; for the Torah will come forth from Zion, and the word of God from Jerusalem.'"[4] And, "I will make you a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach the ends of the earth."[5]

The acceptance of worldly wisdom by the Jewish people is also a theme explored in much of Jewish thought, especially certain Kabbalistic and Chasidic writings (though it is hinted at in Scripture and rabbinic literature). As explained in previous articles,[6] the Zohar envisions a "flood" of spiritual and scientific knowledge in the Messianic era, blending the "higher

wisdom" of the Torah with the "lower wisdom" of human innovation. Chasidic thought elaborates that integrating science and art with Torah reveals the "primordial Torah" that predates creation and forms an essential part of the redemptive vision.[7]

This mutual enrichment requires separation. Only when Torah and other wisdoms are clearly differentiated can their unique contributions be recognized and integrated. The clearer the distinction, the greater the motivation for mutual exchange. The same goes for the opposite: When the separation is blurred the result may be indifferent coexistence, where each side seeks neither to influence the other nor to learn from them.

This mutual enrichment sweetens the bitterness that accompanied separation. While some relish the separation stage, others feel uncomfortable with it and yearn for the harmony of sweetening. The challenge today is to bridge the gap between these perspectives. May this exploration contribute to uniting these visions, helping us see that the Torah's ultimate plan encompasses and fulfills the hopes of all its seekers.

1 . *Tzava'at HaRivash* §12.
2 . Deuteronomy 4:34.
3 . Deuteronomy 7:6–7.
4 . Isaiah 2:2–3.
5 . Ibid. 49:6
6 . See *Wonders*, issue 125, pp. 3ff.
7 . See in length in our volume, *Wisdom: Integrating Torah and Science*.

STORY

THE MITTLER REBBE:

A Different Perspective

Rabbi Dov Ber Schneuri, the Mitteler Rebbe, was the second rebbe in the Chabad dynasty, the son and successor of the Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya. He was born following the blessing of the Maggid of Mezritch and was named after him. He was known for the length and depth of his chasidic discourses. His son-in-law, the Tzemach Tzedek, said of him, "If they were to cut my father-in-law's finger, Chasidut would flow instead of blood." Like his father, the Alter Rebbe, he too was arrested following slander by opponents. His festival of redemption from imprisonment falls on the 10th of Kislev. The day before, the 9th of Kislev, is both the birthday and the day of passing of the Mitteler Rebbe, openly fulfilling the verse "I will fill the number of your days" meaning that one will be born and pass on in the same day of the year. The Mitteler Rebbe led Chabad for 15 years and passed away while delivering a chasidic discourse with the words "For with You is the source of life, from the life of life." He is buried in the city of Nizhyn, Ukraine.

The greatness of the Mitteler Rebbe in the revealed Torah was concealed: he did not engage much in halachic rulings and wrote down only a few of his innovations in this area. He is famous for his greatness in Chasidic teachings, to which he truly devoted his soul. Due to the length and depth of his chasidic discourses, the Mitteler Rebbe was called "*Rechovot HaNahar*" (the breadth of the river).

In this context, it is told that the Mitteler Rebbe once asked his attendant: "Please report back to me: Where do people say my strength is greater? In the revealed Torah or in Chasidut?" The attendant went out and stayed for some time, then came back in and said to the Rebbe: "In the revealed Torah, your strength is certainly great, but in Chasidut, your strength is even greater." The Rebbe said: "This is not true. If I were to devote myself to studying the revealed Torah for half a year, there would be no genius like me. But what can I do, for my desire is to grasp the attributes of the Infinite Light. (In another version: my desire is that if two young chasidic men meet, they should speak about the higher and lower unifications)..."

When the holy Mitteler Rebbe assumed the mantle of leadership, he found it difficult to respond to the questions and inquiries sent to him. He appointed his son-in-law, the holy Tzemach Tzedek, and the chasidic genius Rabbi Nechemiah of Dubrovna, to prepare responses for the inquirers. The Rebbe would pass the questions to them, and they would study them and compose the answers. He made one condition: before sending the responses to the inquirers, they should come to him to show him

the answers, so he could ensure that the response was aligned with what he would answer. They did so, and in all the responses, the Mitteler Rebbe agreed with his son-in-law, the Tzemach Tzedek.

Once, a question came, and the Tzemach Tzedek and Rabbi Nechemiah prepared the response. The inquirer requested an urgent answer due to the pressing nature of the question. The Mitteler Rebbe was very busy at that time and they did not have an opportune moment to show him the response for review.

The Tzemach Tzedek and Rabbi Nechemiah agreed that since until now the Mitteler Rebbe had always agreed with them and there had never been an instance when he did not concur, they were confident that this time too he would agree with them. And since the inquirer urgently needed a response, they sent the response without presenting it to the Mitteler Rebbe for review beforehand. After some time, the Rebbe asked his son-in-law, the Tzemach Tzedek, if they had already answered the question. He said that they had already sent the response, explaining that it was urgent and the Rebbe was busy, so they sent it without the Rebbe's review.

The Mitteler Rebbe asked his son-in-law to show him the copy of the response that was sent. When he examined the response, he told them that they had erred, and it contradicted the opinion of *Tosafot* in *Yevamot*! The Tzemach Tzedek was disheartened that he had misunderstood an explicit *Tosafot*. The Mitteler Rebbe, comforted him, saying: "Du bist noch nit kein Rebbe, kenst noch hobn a toi'us [You are not yet a Rebbe, you can still make a mistake]…."

***

A question arose in the house of the Mitteler Rebbe about the kosher status of a chicken that had been ritually slaughtered. The Rebbe's daughter brought the question before the Tzemach Tzedek and other rabbis, and they ruled as they ruled. But she was not satisfied, and said they should ask her father's opinion. When they came to the Mitteler Rebbe and explained their view and the sources from which they derived their ruling, the Rebbe showed them that from this very source, the ruling is the opposite, as it is from most sources...

In these stories, the Mitteler Rebbe's ability to refute the reasoning of the rabbis around him is emphasized. Even when his son-in-law, the genius, studies thoroughly, and even if all the rabbis rule like him, the Rebbe is able to turn the very same sources they used as proof into evidence for his own position. This ability is reminiscent of a statement attributed to the Baal Shem Tov, that "I can refute any logical argument in the revealed Torah, whatever it may be."

What, however, is the point? Is there real benefit in the ability to refute any Torah-based reasoning? After all, the Baal Shem

Tov doesn't even say "any false reasoning," but boasts of his ability to refute any reasoning whatsoever.

The ability to refute any reasoning reveals a deeper dimension behind it and in fact behind all logical reasoning: each logical argument belongs to a certain level in Godliness, to a specific world or *partzuf* (persona) in the intricate system of worlds created at the moment of Creation. But the inner point of them all, the central bolt that runs from end to end, is the point where they are connected to the Godliness that gives them life. In that place, they essentially become nullified and unified with the simple Godliness that is beyond all reasoning and comprehension. A person who is connected to this inner point can freely navigate between the worlds and approaches and can also find in each one its point of nothingness, the point at which it could have been exactly the opposite.

Similar to the Baal Shem Tov, the Mitteler Rebbe could also grasp this point of nothingness, the Godliness in everything and in every reasoning. This is also related to the fact that he lived **נד** (54) years, the secret of the Name **ד"ן** (DaN) in Kabbalah. Scholarly reasonings stem from the Name *sag* [**יוד הי ואו הי**], which belongs to the *sefirah* of *binah* (understanding). But the Name DaN [**יוד הא ויו הא**] is the inverse of *SaG* [the letters hei of the Name DaN are filled with the letter *alef* and the *vav* is filled with *yud*, the opposite of the Name SaG]. With its "judgments" and its assertiveness, the Name DaN nullifies all the reasonings that can flow from the Name SaG.

We won't delve deeper into Kabbalistic matters now, but it is worth noting one timely detail about this Name: The first time the combination DaN is mentioned in the Torah is in the Covenant Between the Parts: "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge (dan)." This teaches us that to judge a nation that enslaves Israel, one must refute all its reasonings. As Rabbi Yochanan said, "He who acknowledges the words of the gentiles falls into their hands." What some nations call "humanitarianism" is actually cruelty. The terms "responsibility and discretion" serve as a laundered term for endangering Jewish lives.

The Egyptians also had a complete philosophy, a system of thought and political correctness, which enslaved entire nations without protest... As then, so today, to escape mental enslavement, there is a need for new and liberated thinking.

PARTZUF

THE HOLY CITIES OF ERETZ YISRAEL

Parashat Vayeitzei begins with Jacob departing Be'er Sheva to travel to Haran, where he is expected to find a wife. The Zohar on our *parashah*[1] begins with a disagreement between Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and one of his students, Rabbi Chiya, regarding the symbolism of Be'er Sheva. The Mikdash Melech on the Zohar explains that the substance of their disagreement is whether like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai symbolizes the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*), or whether, like Rabbi Chiya, it symbolizes the *sefirah* of understanding (*binah*).

If we take a close look at the naming of the city as "Be'er Sheva," we find that it was named twice. The first time was when Abraham made an oath with Avimelech over a well he had dug[2]:

> He [Abraham] replied: "You are to accept these seven ewes from me as proof that I dug this well." Hence that place was called Be'er Sheva, for there the two of them swore an oath.

Later, when Isaac digs new wells to replace his father's wells that the Philistines had obstructed,[3] when he digs the family's seventh well[4] (three dug by his father and obstructed and four new wells dug by Isaac), he calls the place "Be'er Sheva," meaning "the seventh well." In other words, the name Be'er Sheva has two explanations, either after the oath that Abraham and Avimelech took there or after the seventh well dug by Abraham and Isaac.

When considering the various commentaries on the Torah, we find that some of them argue that these were not only two origins for the same name but designated two different locations. For example, the Rashbam writes,[5]

> This was not the same Be'er Sheva we read about in connection with Abraham. There were two places named Be'er Sheva as we know from the verse, "he came to Be'er Sheva in Judah."[6]

Others though, like the Seforno,[7] argue that there is only one location named Be'er Sheva, but when it was named after the oath its name was pronounced "Be'er Shava," and when named after the seventh well, its name was pronounced "Be'er Sheva."[8]

In an essay on the aforementioned passage in the Zohar, the Alter Rebbe[9] explains that the plain meaning of the text as explained by the commentaries and the disagreement between Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Chiya in the Zohar are related. When the place is named after the oath Abraham and Avimelech took, it corresponds to the *sefirah* of understanding, because all oaths relate to understanding. When it is named after the seventh well, it corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*), since it is

the seventh emotive faculty.[10]

Whether there are two different locations called "Be'er Sheva," or whether these are two different names for the same location, we are prompted to see if we can identify other cities and towns in the Holyland with the other *sefirot*.

A most central source on the cities of the Land of Israel is *Chessed LeAvraham*, written by the Chida's grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Azulay.

He extensively discusses the sanctity of the Land of Israel and mentions four holy cities[11]: Tzfat, Tiberias, Hebron, and Jerusalem,[12] in this specific order. He also corresponds them to the *sefirot*. The first two are self-explanatory from a geographic perspective: Tzfat corresponds to victory (*netzach*) which is called "the extreme height" (עֹמֶק רום) in *Sefer Yetzirah*. Likewise, Tiberias corresponds to acknowledgment (*hod*) described as "the extreme low" (עֹמֶק תַּחַת). Hebron he corresponds with foundation (*yesod*) because it literally means to connect or to couple and foundation corresponds to the procreative organs in the body. Finally, Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish people and the capital of the Almighty, is easily corresponded with kingdom (*malchut*). Indeed, Jerusalem contains the palace of the king of Israel as well as the Holy Temple which is the palace of the King of all kings of kings, the Almighty.

The Mitteler Rebbe writes in a letter to the Chassidic settlement in the Land of Israel that before reaching Jerusalem, one must first be in Hebron, just like King David himself. David is the archetypal soul of kingdom, and his ultimate destination is certainly Jerusalem. However, he first reigned for seven years in Hebron. Why? To unite with the three Patriarchs. This means that specifically in Hebron, one can connect with the Patriarchs, who correspond to the emotive *sefirot*: loving-kindness, might, and beauty.

How can we understand the reason that only from foundation can one draw down influence from the emotive *sefirot* and from the Patriarchs? The situation is similar to how we find in the Torah that it is Joseph, the archetypal soul of foundation, who extends from the Patriarchs and transmits their influence downward to the rest of the tribes, the sons of Jacob.

We might have thought that Shechem should be the city that corresponds with foundation, since that is where Joseph himself is buried. Indeed, there certainly is an aspect of foundation associated with Shechem. For example, we find that Jacob blessed Joseph, "And I have given you one portion (*Shechem*) above your brothers." But for some reason Shechem is not mentioned in *Chesed LeAvraham* as one of the four holy cities.

In Kabbalah, Shechem is identified with the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*), specifically *Da'at between the shoulders* (דעת דבין כתפין), since Shechem literally means a shoulder. Just as the flow of seed extends from the *Da'at between the shoulders* to foundation through the spinal cord, there is indeed an aspect of foundation that is drawn down from Shechem. However, it is Hebron that corresponds with foundation.

Hebron is also called *Kiryat Arba* (the City of Four), named for its connection to the four couples buried there: Adam

and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah. This is tied to the secret of the letter *Shin*. The *shin* is found on the exterior of the head *tefillin*. The *shin* is called "the letter of the Patriarchs" (אֶתְּא דְאָבְהָן) because it has three heads, corresponding to the three Patriarchs. On the head tefillin we also find a shin with four heads corresponding to the Matriarchs. On the head tefillin, the four-headed shin is on the left, representing the *sefirah* of understanding (*binah*, or the Mother Principle), while the *shin* with three heads is on the right side, representing wisdom (*chochmah, or* the Father Principle). These need to be united and drawn into a single point at the bottom—the point of foundation at the base of the shin, when it is written in a Torah scroll.

This drawing down and coupling were accomplished by King David during his seven years in Hebron. In that time, he immersed himself in the secret of the *shin*. When the *shin* is joined to the two letters, *dalet* (**ד**) and *yud* (**י**), whose value is the save as *David* (**דָּוִד**), it forms the holy Name *Shakai* (שַׁ-דַּי), the name associated with foundation in Kabbalah.

Thus, David rectified the Name *Shakai*, and through this, he was able to "rectify the world in the kingdom of *Shakai*," by drawing from foundation into kingdom—from Hebron to Jerusalem.

In modern times, the first large Chasidic *aliyah* to the Land of Israel was lead by Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk. He and his *chasidim* first settled in Tzfat and then moved to Tiberias. So they had already rectified victory and acknowledgment, the so-called "two halves of the body," and the first two habitual *sefirot*. To continue moving towards Jerusalem and kingdom, the Rebbe's of Chabad placed great emphasis on strengthening the Jewish community in general, and the Chasidic community in particular, in Hebron. By focusing on Hebron, the place of foundation, the rebbe's wanted to continue drawing Godly revelation down from the Patriarchs, the three emotive *sefirot* until eventually rectifying kingdom.

All the while that Rebbe Mendel Vitebsker was rectifying Tzfat and Tiberias, the Jewish community in Jerusalem pleaded and begged for them to relocate to Jerusalem, Rabbi Mendel and his followers refused and remained in Tiberias.

This also offers us an explanation on why the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi), who had wanted to join his teacher, Rebbe Mendel Vitebsker was turned down by him. It was likely because, in the Land of Israel, the Alter Rebbe's destined place was not the same as that of the other Chassidim. While they belonged in Tzfat and Tiberias, the place for Chabad until the coming of the Mashiach (our generation) is Hebron. From Hebron, the Divine abundance is drawn down through the secret of the name *Shakai* into kingdom.

So, the great and awe-inspiring day will come when Elijah the Prophet announces the arrival of the Mashiach to the holy Jerusalem, which is known as "the Justice of the holy kingdom" (צֶדֶק מַלְכוּתָא קַדִּישָׁא). This is what we are waiting for; this is the current goal—to move from Hebron to Jerusalem.

There is still much to rectify, and we must not abandon any holy place. However, it seems that the rectification of Hebron has been accomplished to some extent. After many generations of effort devoted to Hebron, it has not, unfortunately, reached the level of physical development seen in other places in the Land of Israel. Yet tremendous spiritual energy has been dedicated to Hebron over the years and we hope that the time has come when we can ascend joyfully to Jerusalem, the holy city, together with the Mashiach who will build the Temple, the palace of the Almighty.

GUIDED VISUALIZATION: A CHASIDIC JOURNEY THROUGH THE HOLY LAND

What we have constructed is a *partzuf* of the Land of Israel's holy cities that are particularly related to *Chasidut*. We can use this *partzuf* to embark on a guided visualization through the Holy Land, exploring its spiritual essence and deep connections. This exercise is particularly meaningful for someone far from the Land of Israel, yearning to connect with its sacredness. Imagine yourself as a soul from a bygone era, one of the devoted *chasidim*, traveling through these holy sites. We are not always in favor of using guided imagination, but for our present purpose it will do.

Imagine yourself beginning your ascent to Tzfat. Visualize yourself climbing the hills leading to Tzfat. Picture the mystical air of the city, the vibrant blue doors symbolizing divine wisdom, and the narrow cobblestone streets that echo with the prayers of countless generations. Feel the elevation of your soul as you connect to the spirit of the *sefirah* of victory (*netzach*) that permeates this sacred place.

From there you continue your journey down to Tiberias, situated by the serene Kinneret. Reflect on the humility and splendor of acknowledgment (*hod*) that radiates from this ancient city. Feel the cool breeze from the water and the spiritual depth that arises from calling out to God "from the depths." Let Tiberias ground your inner being with a sense of purpose and clarity.

From Tiberias you can already imagine yourself becoming a Lubavitcher heading towards the heart of Chabad in the Land of Israel in Hebron. Here, at the Tomb of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, connect to the figures of our holy origins. Visualize yourself standing at the resting place of Menuchah Rochel, a symbol of Chabad's roots in Hebron. Feel the bond of unity with the Patriarchs and the spiritual flow of abundance from them making its way into the world.

Now you are ready to ascend with the Mashiach from Hebron to Jerusalem, the Holy City. Picture the bustling streets of Jerusalem, infused with sanctity. See yourself standing on the Temple Mount, alongside Mashiach, preparing to rebuild the Holy Temple—the palace of the King of Kings. Envision the Temple rising in splendor, its light radiating throughout the world, bringing redemption and peace.

All this is before we complete our *partzuf* of all the holy cities of the Land of Israel.

THE COMPLETE PARTZUF

Now let us return to Be'er Sheva, with which we began. We saw that according to Rabbi Chiya's interpretation,

Be'er Sheva corresponds to the *sefirah* of understanding. Next, we also mentioned Shechem, whose root is in the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*). These are two of the three intellectual *sefirot*. Only wisdom is missing. We can conclude that the overall sanctity of the Land of Israel is rooted in *Chochmah* (wisdom), as it is written: "Hashem founded the earth with wisdom." The intellectual quality of wisdom, also known as the Father Principle shines throughout the Land of Israel.

Now we have the three intellectual *sefirot* in place, representing the general secret of the Land. Concerning it, it is said: "The eyes of Hashem your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." The "eyes" signify wisdom, and Hashem's eyes are upon the entire Land of Israel. This is why "the air of the Land of Israel makes one wise." All of this relates to the idea that "Abba founded the daughter," as in, "Hashem founded the earth with wisdom."

Following this, we have the concealed aspects of Be'er Sheva (in kingdom) and Shechem (in foundation), as well as the three emotive *sefirot* (*loving-kindness, might, and beauty*) and the *sefirah* of foundation, which all correspond to Hebron. Then, there are the advising kidneys represented by Tzfat and Tiberias. When I imagine myself in Tzfat, I receive advice from the right kidney, which corresponds to active trust. In Tiberias, I receive the advice of the left kidney, corresponding to passive trust, a quality captured in the well-known phrase, "think good, and it will be good." And so forth, each place and city offering its unique psychological and spiritual power.

Understanding-Binah בִּינָה
Be'er Sheva

Wisdom-Chochmah חָכְמָה
Holiness of Land of Israel

Knowledge-Da'at דַּעַת
Shechem

Might-Gevurah גְּבוּרָה
Hebron

Loving-kindness-Chessed חֶסֶד
Hebron

Beauty-Tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
Hebron

Acknowledgment-Hod הוֹד
Tiberias

Victory-Netzach נֶצַח
Tzfat

Foundation-Yesod יְסוֹד
Hebron

Kingdom-Malchut מַלְכוּת
Jerusalem

Notes:

1. 1:147a.
2. Genesis 21:30-31.
3. Ibid. 26:18-22.
4. Ibid. v. 25 and vv. 32-33.
5. On Ibid. v. 33.
6. 1 Kings 19:3.
7. On Genesis 26:33.
8. See also Radak and Chizkuni Ibid.
9. *Sefer HaMa'amarim 5567* (third edition); also published in the Mittler Rebbe's *Biurei HaZohar* 16c and ff.
10. Incidentally, there is a discourse by the Lubavitcher Rebbe (From Shabbat *parashat Vayeitzei* 5740 printed in *Tiferet Levi Yitzchak – Bereishit*, pp. 158ff.) on the debate in the Zohar, where he explains that the difference between the two opinions of Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Shimon hints at two primary *mitzvot* that we observe each morning: the *mitzvot* of Tefillin and Tzitzit (the tallit). Rabbi Chiya, who expounds on the verse "The sun rises, and the sun sets, and it hastens to its place where it rises" (Ecclesiastes 1:5), says that the essence of Jacob's departure from Be'er Sheva and his journey to Haran symbolizes the mitzvah of Tefillin. On the other hand, Rabbi Shimon, who interprets the departure as a departure from holiness (the Land of Israel) entirely and an entry into the danger of *chutz la'aretz*, aligns his understanding with the mitzvah of Tzitzit and the Tallit.
11. *Chesed LeAvraham*, *Ma'ayan* 3, *Nahar* 13.
12. The value of the names of these four cities "Tzfat Tiberias Hebron Jerusalem" (**צְפַת טְבֶרְיָא חֶבְרוֹן יְרוּשָׁלַם**) is 1644, also the value of "you shall love Havayah your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all your might" (**וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יי-הוה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדֶךָ**). It is also the product of 4 times "chaos" (**תהו**) indicating that the settling and developing of these four cities is a remedy for "chaos," following the words of Isaiah, "So says Havayah, the Creator of the heavens, He is God, who formed the earth and made it, who alone established it, who did not create it to be a wilderness [chaos] but formed it for habitation" (כִּי כֹה אָמַר יי־הוה בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם הוּא הָאֱ־לֹהִים יֹצֵר הָאָרֶץ וְעֹשֵׂהּ הוּא כוֹנְנָהּ לֹא **תֹהוּ** בְּרָאָהּ לָשֶׁבֶת יְצָרָהּ) and that it brings about a sense of God creating reality at every moment out of "nothing" (i.e., that which cannot be perceived). 1644 is also the product of 4 times "being from nothing" (**יֵשׁ מֵאַיִן**), suggesting that the perception that God is continuously creating reality ex nihilo emanates from these four cities.


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