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

בס"ד

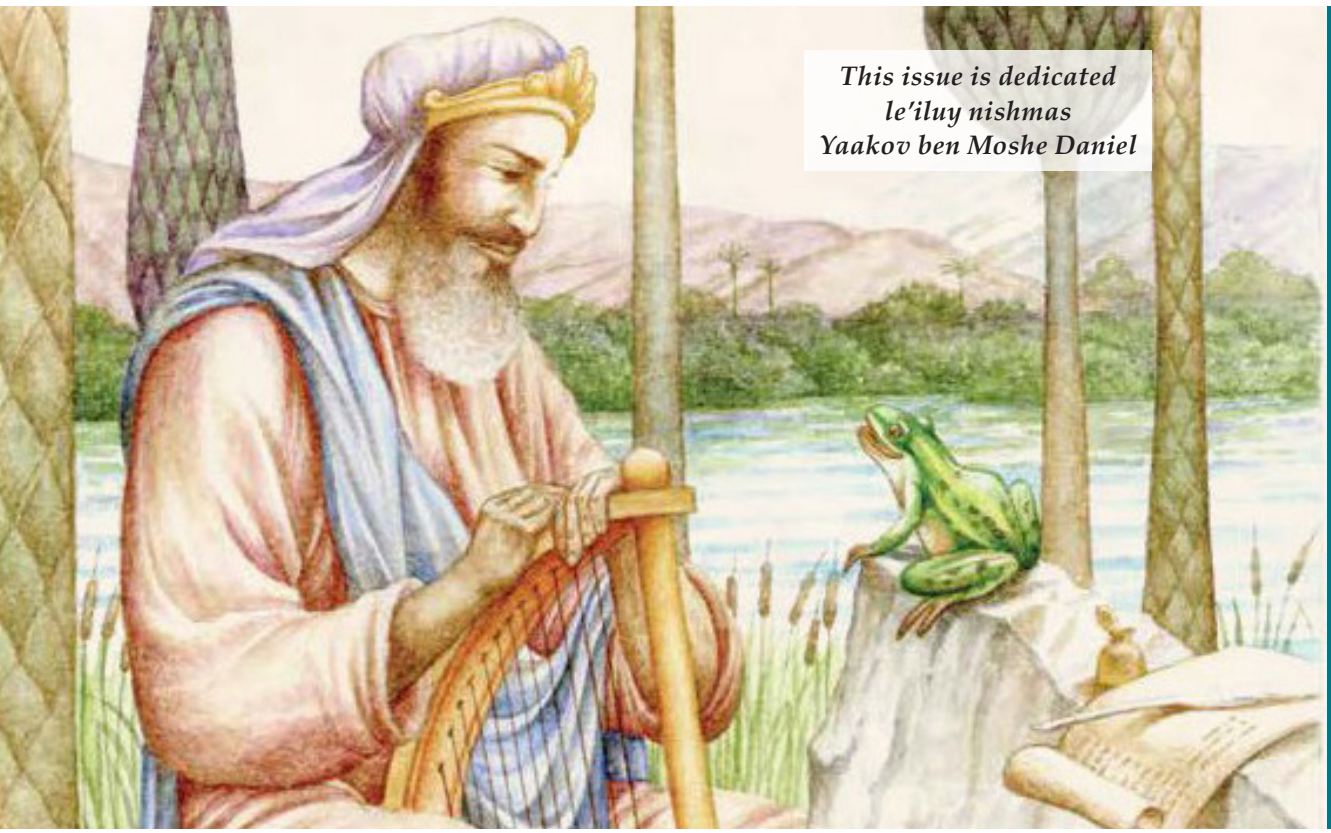
Wonders

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

Issue 141

Shabbat Tetzaveh-Zachor 5785 ❁ March 7-8, 2025

שַׁבָּת תְּצַוֶּה-זָכוֹר ❁ ז-ח טֵבֵת תשפ"ה



This issue is dedicated
le'iluy nishmas
Yaakov ben Moshe Daniel

"*What frogs and butterflies have in common is that they both go through a metamorphosis as they mature. The reason that King Solomon is depicted as a frog is because he too went through a journey that included the human equivalent of metamorphosis.*"

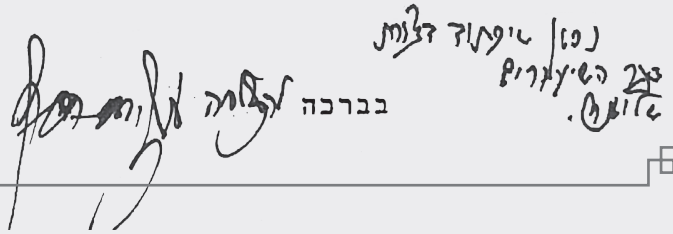
3 **Partzuf:** The Four Parashot: Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, HaChodesh

9 **Story:** The Avnei Nezer: Settling the Land of Israel

12 **Partzuf:** Metamorphosis in Frogs, Butterflies, and Kings

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

COVER ARTWORK BY YAAKOV DANIEL

Wonders Staff
Editor: R' Moshe Genuth • Associate Editor: Shelli Karzen
Contributing Editor: R' Nir Menussi • Typesetting: Yoel Broderick

PARTZUF

THE FOUR PARASHOT: SHEKALIM, ZACHOR, PARAH, AND HACHODESH

WHAT ARE THE FOUR PARASHOT

The sages established the custom known as the Four *Parashiyot*:

> When the New Moon of Adar occurs on Shabbat, parashat *Shekalim* is read. If it occurs on a weekday, *Shekalim* is read earlier [on the Shabbat before *Rosh Chodesh*].... On the second Shabbat [of Adar, the Shabbat prior to Purim] parashat *Zachor* is read. On the third, *Parah Adumah*. On the fourth, "*Hachodesh* [this month, i.e., Nissan] shall be for you [the first month.]"[1]

The four special *parshiyot* that we read in Adar have are all directed at the same one topic: the redemption from Egypt The redemption from Egypt is the forerunner to the final redemption, the one that we are now nearing, as the sages say, "In Nissan they were redeemed [from Egypt] and in Nissan they will be redeemed [in the future]." We will return to this statement towards the end of the article.

The four *parashot* correspond to the four letters of *Havayah*, from below to above. The straightforward analogy is that *Shekalim* describes bringing a donation to the Temple from which all the public-owned sacrifices for the entire year are purchased. These sacrifices include most importantly the daily Tamid sacrifice, which served as atonement for all sins. The *Shekalim* were thus an atonement and the final *hei* of *Havayah*, is the lower form of *teshuvah*,[2] as well as the act of donating to charity itself which is associated with the World of Action, which corresponds to the final *hei*.

The next *parashah* is *Zachor*—"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way out of Egypt." Amalek acted to blemish our covenant with God, to disconnect us from our newly forged bond with Him. The covenant in Kabbalah is associated with the *sefirah* of foundation, which is one of the sefirot included in the *vav* of *Havayah*. The root of foundation is found in the *sefirah* of knowledge, which is like the key that opens all six sefirot included in the vav (whose value is 6) of *Havayah*. This relationship of Amalek to both the beginning of the *vav*—the *sefirah* of knowledge—and to its end—the *sefirah* of foundation is alluded to in the verse, "Amalek is the head of nations, but its end is to perish forever" (רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עֲמָלֵק וְאַחֲרִיתוֹ עֲדֵי אֹבֵד), where Amalek is described as both the head (knowledge) and the end (foundation) of the nations (גּוֹיִם), alluding to the seven Canaanite nations, which correspond to the "body" (גְּוִיָּה), the exterior dimension of the seven emotive faculties. The annihilation of

Amalek thus represents the rectification of the interior dimension, the essence of the emotional faculties, from knowledge to foundation, all corresponding to the *vav* of *Havayah* and the World of Formation.

Parashat Parah, the third *parshiyah* and its topic is purification from ritual defilement. To prepare the ashes needed to enact the purification, a female red heifer was used. For all other communal sacrifices, only male animals were used, but here we find the exception of a female red heifer. To explain the irregularity, the sages offer the following analogy, "It is analogous to the son of a maidservant who defecated in the king's palace. The king said: the mother should come and clean the excrement of her son."[3] The mother of course alludes to the Mother Principle (אִימָא), or the sefirah of understanding, which corresponds to the first *hei* of *Havayah* and to the World of Creation. Generally speaking, purification (טָהֳרָה) corresponds to understanding (and holiness, קדושה, corresponds to wisdom).

One of the verses alluding to this correspondence is, "Who will give purity from that which is defiled" (מִי יִתֵּן טָהוֹר מִטָּמֵא לֹא אֶחָד). The word "who" usually refers to the *sefirah* of understanding, which has 50 Gates (of Understanding), and the value of "who" (**מִי**) is 50. Thus it is the power of the question "who," the mother principle, that can purify that which is defiled.

Finally, the fourth *parashah*, *HaChodesh*, which relates the laws regarding the sanctification of the new moon (particularly, the new moon of Nissan, the first month in the lunar calendar). Unlike the sun and the earth, which do not renew, the moon renews itself every month. At the end of the month, the moon disappears for view for over 24 hours and when it reappears, it is as if it has been born again. Thus, the new moon is the secret of renewal in general, and Jewish renewal in particular, since the Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle. A Jew has a steadfast belief in the possibility of renewal. In terms of the sefirot, this power of renewal comes through the *sefirah* of wisdom, or the father principle (אַבָּא). In the Torah, the month of Nissan—the month of renewal—is referred to explicitly as the month of *Aviv* (**אָבִי**ב), which literally means the spring, but whose first two letters (אָב) spell the word for "father" (**אָב**), like the father principle. God too loves the Jewish people because they are likened to a youth, because they are full of youthful vigor, "Israel is a youth and I love him, from Egypt I have called upon my son"[4] (כִּי נַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֹהֲבֵהוּ וּמִמִּצְרַיִם קָרָאתִי לִבְנִי).

Another important point about this correspondence is that the third and fourth parashot—*Parah* and *HaChodesh*—are always read on adjacent weeks, following the well-known principle that the *yud* and *hei* of *Havayah*, corresponding to wisdom and understanding, are like two companions that never part. However, there can be a gap of one week between the second *parashah*, *Zachor*, and the third and fourth. Likewise, there can be a gap of a week between the first *parashah*, *Shekalim*, and the second *parashah*, *Zachor*, again reflecting the notion that there is a type of gap between the first two letters—*yud* and *hei*—and the final two letters—*vav* and *hei*—and there is a gap between the third and fourth letters, a gap that is especially pronounced when

we consider the Worlds that the letters *yud-hei-vav* and *hei* correspond to—Emanation-Creation-Formation and Action, as reflected in the verse, "All that is in My Name and honor [Emanation], I have created it, I have formed it, even I have made it"[5] (כֹּל הַנִּקְרָא בִשְׁמִי וְלִכְבוֹדִי בְּרָאתִיו יְצַרְתִּיו אַף עֲשִׂיתִיו).

In summary, the first correspondence, and the most straightforward correspondence of the four *parashot* to the four letters of *Havayah* is as follows:

letter of *Havayah*	**World**	***parashiyah***	**topic**	
yud	Emanation	*HaChodesh*	renewal	י
hei	Creation	*Parah*	purification	ה
vav	Formation	*Zachor*	rectifying Amalek, the head and end of all 7 nations	ו
hei	Action	*Shekalim*	donation/charity	ה

Now, even though the order we presented is the most natural one to follow, if we spend some time thinking about it, we can determine that there is another correspondence that can be made. To see this alternate correspondence, let us look at the last *parashah*, *HaChodesh*. Given that it speaks about the commandment to sanctify the New Moon (not just to designate Nissan as the first month of the lunar year), we might argue that it should correspond to the last letter of *Havayah*, the second *hei* that corresponds to kingdom, since the moon corresponds to kingdom.[6] Moreover, the first day of Nissan is designated as the New Year of Kings.[7] This is a very clear connection and we might be tempted to simply continue up the letters of *Havayah*.

However, where this alternate correspondence appears, it is built somewhat differently: *Shekalim*, which we said is about an act of charity, corresponds to loving-kindness; *Zachor*, which is about annihilating Amalek, corresponds to might; the *Parah*, the Red Heiffer corresponds to beauty (*tiferet*) since we are required to, "bring a red heifer that is entirely without blemish, in which there is no defect…,"[8] i.e., a cow that is beautiful in its exterior and its interior. Being perfect and without defect is the special quality of Jacob—the archetypal soul of beauty—whom the Torah describes as a "sincere [perfect] man, dwelling in tents."[9]

might-gevurah (גְּבוּרָה)
Zachor

loving-kindness-chessed (חֶסֶד)
Shekalim

beauty-tiferet (תִּפְאֶרֶת)
Parah

kingdom-malchut (מַלְכוּת)
HaChodesh

Now we have two "competing" models of the four *parashot*. How can we uphold both simultaneously? There is a principle in Kabbalah (which can be ported to anywhere that two models or more are competing, and both seem to be true), that the way to unify two competing models is to identify one as a subset of the other. In other words, one of the models is seen as a more general, inclusive model and the other is seen as more particular.

In our case, we follow the convention that the Worlds are a more general model than the specific *sefirot*. In addition, with the Worlds model, we saw that the four *parashot* go in the order of from below to above, and this is the more general approach when serving God—ascending from below to above.

When we follow this approach, we find that in the World of Action, the *hei* of *Havayah*, which corresponds to *Shekalim*, the particular *sefirah* that *Shekalim* corresponds to is loving-kindness (as in the second, more particular correspondence). In the World of Formation, the vav of *Havayah*, which corresponds to *Zachor*, the particular *sefirah* to which *Zachor* corresponds is might. Next, *Parah* will be in the beauty of the World of Creation, and finally *HaChodesh* will correspond to the kingdom of the World of Emanation.

Our final composite model will look like this:

letter of *Havayah*	**World**	***sefirah***	***parashiyah***	**topic**	
yud	Emanation	kingdom	*HaChodesh*	renewal	י
hei	Creation	beauty	*Parah*	purification	ה
vav	Formation	might	*Zachor*	rectifying Amalek, the head and end of all 7 nations	ו
hei	Action	loving-kindness	*Shekalim*	donation/charity	ה

THE FOUR PARASHOT, REDEMPTION, AND PURIM

On the verse, "Who is she who appears like the dawn"[10] (מִי זֹאת הַנִּשְׁקָפָה כְּמוֹ שָׁחַר), there is a well-known story about Rabbi Chiyah and Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta who were walking in the Arbel valley in the early morning and saw the dawn breaking. The one said to the other, "So too the redemption of Israel will appear, first little by little; as it progresses it will appear more and more clearly." In *Midrash Rabbah* on this verse, we find a more complete four-stage description of the redemption: "Initially it will come little by little, then it will sparkle on and on, then it will propagate more and more, then it will moisten more and more" (בַּתְּחִלָּה הִיא בָּאָה קִימְעָא קִימְעָא, וְאַחַר כָּךְ הִיא מְנַצְנֶצֶת וּבָאָה, וְאַחַר כָּךְ פָּרָה וְרָבָה, וְאַחַר כָּךְ מַרְטֶבֶת וְהוֹלֶכֶת). These four stages of the redemption correspond to the Four Parashot and how they lead up to the redemption from Egypt that we commemorate in Nissan (and ultimately to the true and complete redemption by the Mashiach).

Shekalim, which we associated with charity, collects little by little, as the sages say, "each and every penny [given to charity] combines to form a great sum."[11] We stimulate this through our gifts to the poor on Purim.

Zachor corresponds to the "sparkle" (נִצְנוּץ), which is cognate with "spark" (נִיצוּץ) referring to the sparks of holiness that fell from the shattered kings of the World of Chaos, whose root is in the *sefirah* of knowledge of that world, the root of Amalek. The kings shattered because they were antagonistic to one another. We rectify this through our sending of food to one another on Purim.

Parah means heifer, but it also means "reproduction." This is the actual description found in the third stage of redemption according to this midrash (פָּרָה וְרָבָה). There is a holy Name associated with reproduction, **אלד** (whose value is the same as "Jew," **יְהוּדִי**). We stimulate this stage through our *Se'udat Purim*, which is known as Puria[12] (פּוּרְיָא), with all the meanings associated with this word.

Finally, HaChodesh, which corresponds to wisdom represents renewal itself and is known as the wellspring of the infinite (נְבִיעַת הָאֵין סוֹף), and a wellspring constantly moistens the earth around it, making it fertile, lush, and green. The wellspring of the infinite is found within the Torah, and on Purim we stimulate this stage of the redemption through the commandment to read the Scroll of Esther in the evening and in the day.

(based on a *shiur* given on 22 Adar 5751 and on *Sod HaShem LiYerei'av*, pp. 556-7)

Notes:
1. Mishnah *Megillah* 3:4.
2. See *Tanya*, *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* for the two types of *teshuvah*, lower and higher. Lower *teshuvah* is out of a feeling of fear of God, higher *teshuvah* is performed because of a love of God.
3. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:8. The son in the analogy represents the Golden Calf, which was the most ritually defiling sin committed by the Israelites. The logic behind the analogy is that the "mother," i.e., the cause of the defiling act—the son—is one's thought (which also corresponds to the first *hei* of Havayah, the *sefirah*

of understanding, and the World of Creation). By purifying one's thought, one can rectify one's actions. In addition, we may note that the mother represents *teshuvah*, which has the power to cleanse.
4. Hosea 11:1.
5. Isaiah 43:7.
6. See in length in *Derech Mitzvotecha*, *Kiddush HaChodesh*.
7. *Mishnah Rosh HaShanah* 1:1.
8. Numbers 19:2.
9. Genesis 25:27. The words for "entirely without blemish" (תְּמִימָה) and "perfect" (תָּם) stem from the same root, in Hebrew. Note also the connection between the red heifer that comes to purify, "a man should he die in a tent," and Jacob was "dwelling in tents," the tents of Torah, about which the sages say (*Gittin* 57b), "The words of the Torah endure only for one who kills himself over them, as it is stated, 'This is the Torah, when a man dies in a tent.'"
10. Song of Songs 6:10.
11. *Bava Batra* 9b.
12. *Megillah* 7b.

STORY

THE AVNEI NEZER: SETTLING THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Rabbi Avraham Bornsztain of Sochaczew was born in 5599 (1838) to Rabbi Ze'ev Nachum, author of Agudat Eizov and a Kotzk Chassid, and to his mother, Rebbetzin Dobrish. In the introduction to his book Eglei Tal, he writes: As a child, "my father and teacher, of blessed memory, taught me the ways of pilpul (in-depth analysis), and when I was ten years old, I innovated novel Torah insights." In the month of Av 5613 (1853), at the age of thirteen, he married Sarah Tzina, daughter of Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. He lived in his father-in-law's house, who he considered his primary teacher, until 5623 (1863), four years after Rebbe Menachem Mendel's passing. Before his passing, the Kotzker, as he was known, isolated himself from even his closest disciples. But, even then, during his period of seclusion, the Kotzker would ask his son-in-law to share with him his Torah novellae.

In 5623 (1863), he was appointed as the rabbi of Parczew (Poland), where he stayed for several years, and in 5627 (1867) he moved to serve as rabbi in Krushnevitz (Krośniewice). During these years, he traveled to his teachers, the Chiddushei HaRim of Gur and Rabbi Chanoch Henich of Alexander. After the passing of the Rebbe of Alexander, he began serving as a chasidic Rebbe, and in 5636 (1876) he moved again, to serve in the rabbinate of Nasielsk. The local community members there did not look favorably upon his running a Chassidic court alongside his rabbinical duties, and in 5643 (1883) he moved to serve as the rabbi of Sochatchov (Sochaczew), a position he left after several years, and even established a yeshivah there. He passed away on the 11th of Adar I, 5670 (1910), and was succeeded as Rebbe by his son, Rabbi Shmuel.

"I heard from the son-in-law of the *Avnei Nezer* that once one of the great timber merchants came before him with an urgent problem. He had signed a contract with one of the merchants from Danzig to send him timber on rafts on the Vistula River and that they would arrive on a specific day. And now there was no water on the Vistula River, because of which, the timber would not be in Danzig on the designated day. The merchant feared that he would be left without means of support, because all his wealth and the wealth of other people was invested in this timber that was on the Vistula, and it wasn't moving forward due to the lack of water.

The *Avnei Nezer* pushed him out with his two holy hands and said to him: "And what do you want from me? That I should also provide water on the Vistula?!" The timber merchant left with a bitter heart. But while he was still in the Rebbe's courtyard, not far away, the *Avnei Nezer* ran to him quickly and said: "If you can

give six thousand rubles for the Land of Israel, the timber will be in Danzig at the appointed time!"

The man did not delay and immediately paid this sum in cash. And afterward, there was an abundance of water on the Vistula until it was full to its banks. And when the Gaon Rabbi Meir of blessed memory told me this, it seemed to him as if I did not want to believe such a thing. And he answered me: "Is it not stated in the Gemara that the entire world, meaning all of nature, was created only to command this?"

(from *Abir Haro'im*)

Rabbi Binyamin Mendelson, the *Av Beit Din* of Komemiyut, once wrote: "

When the holy Gaon of Sochatchov, of blessed memory, author of the *Avnei Nezer*, foresaw through Divine inspiration, several years earlier that it would be impossible to stop the people from settling the Land of Israel under the influence of the spirit of the Zionist movement, God awakened his spirit, and he clarified and ruled as *halachah*[1] *(J*ewish law) that the *mitzvah* to settle the Land of Israel through agriculture, buying lands, commerce, and the like, applies in our time even before the coming of the Mashiach.

Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy Blessed One has nothing in His world but the four cubits of *halachah*, for *halachah* determines reality in the world. With this, the holy author of the *Avnei Nezer* established a firm foundation for settling the Land of Israel several years before settlement driven by the spirit of secular nationalism commenced. If he had not preceded this by clarifying the opinions of the *Rishonim* and ruling this *halachah*, that by our settlement in the Land we are fulfilling a *mitzvah*, we would not have found a place to settle here, what with the atmosphere of sin mixed with heretical ideologies."

(Nifla'ot Hatzaddikim)

Indeed, the *Avnei Nezer* elaborated in his books on the greatness of the *mitzvah* of settling the Land and earning a livelihood from it and he practiced what he preached.

In 5658 (1898), he sent his son, the author of *Shem MiShmuel*, who went to the Land of Israel together with his son-in-law. Their goal was to investigate the possibilities of acquiring a plot of land in the Rosh Pinah area, to establish a Chasidic agricultural settlement there, but it did not succeed due to governmental decrees. At that time, special orders were issued to obstruct *aliyah* (immigration) to the Land, and they prohibited the acquisition of land by Jews.

(from Abir Haro'im)

The *Avnei Nezer* was known for his ruling that the *mitzvah* of settling the Land of Israel applies in our time, especially when one earns one's livelihood from it. But beyond the seemingly "dry" ruling, his words and actions reveal an intense desire

and longing for the spiritual value of the Land of Israel. This is also very prominent in the story we brought here. As much as the *tzaddik* was not eager to perform miracles, his approach suddenly changed due to his love for the Land of Israel, and he went out of his way to perform an open miracle for its sake.

That same desire and will is also reflected in his famous ruling that integral to the *mitzvah* of Torah study is the enjoyment and desire one derives from engaging in the Torah's study. "When I was young, there were people with minds like mine," he said later. "But I wanted, I wanted so much! How intensely I wanted...." This triple emphasis reveals how the *tzaddik's* desire penetrates the three highest levels of the soul: faith, pleasure, and will. The same desire (רָצוֹן) is also found in the essence of the Land (אֶרֶץ), as both words can be understood to stem from the same two-letter root. Based on this linguistic analysis, the sages explain the meaning of the word "Land": "Because it desired to perform the will of its Owner."

Following this approach, let us delve deeper into his quoted words on the virtue of Jewish settlement in the Land:

> It is a great mitzvah to lobby the government to grant permission for a group of people to make *aliyah*. This is certainly of great benefit in several ways:
>
> 1) Making it possible for others to immigrate freely.
>
> 2) Residing there with the goal of fulfilling the commandments in general, and especially the *mitzvot* that can only be kept in the Land, as so many are not familiar with them. And if there are many committed Jews, "each will help his fellow," etc.
>
> 3) With regard to the holiness of the Land and its blessings. For through the fulfillment of *mitzvot* in the Land of Israel, especially the *mitzvot* dependent on the Land which are called "property obligations," just as a person strengthens his soul through fulfilling *mitzvot*, so too the Land increases its holiness through the fulfillment of its *mitzvot*, and the blessing of the Land depends on its holiness.

These three benefits described by the *Avnei Nezer* correspond in order to the three dimensions of: Worlds, Souls, and Divinity. These are the three dimensions of reality mentioned by the Ba'al Shem Tov in his letter about bringing the Redemption. In his letter, he explains that these three, "ascend, connect, and unite with one another," and it seems that each action is particularly related to one of the three aspects, as we will now demonstrate:

Free immigration to the Land of Israel corresponds to the *ascent* of the Worlds within the Jew. Encouraging a large gathering of Torah-committed Jews in the Land corresponds to the *connection* of Souls, as each will help his fellow to fulfill the *mitzvot* dependent on the Land. Finally, God's blessing—His response to the deeds of those who believe in Him and do His will—corresponds to the *unification* of Divinity in our efforts. In the Land of Israel, holiness and blessing unite, as "the blessing of God is what makes one rich"[2] and "there is no [true] wealth except knowledge."[3] The Avnei Nezer's efforts to settle the Land of Israel with Jews who seek God is, in essence, a striving for "the earth shall be full of consciousness of God as the waters cover the sea."[4]

METAMORPHOSIS IN FROGS, BUTTERFLIES, AND KINGS

One of the great principles of life is change. Change can come in a variety of ways, and we usually prefer that it be gradual. But from time to time, we experience change that is far swifter and more punctuated. These types of changes are harder to navigate, but life is not possible without them. One can think of the moment of birth as such a moment of discontinuity. From the safe and carefree environment of the womb, we emerge into the difficulties of living separately from our mother.

Just as there are physical transformations, like birth, there are spiritual transformations, like conversion. Conversion is not just a translation for the Hebrew word used to designate becoming a member of the tribe, arguably the greatest intra-life transformation a person can experience. Still, conversion is also used to describe life-altering realizations or discoveries that change a person spiritually and mentally.[1]

Comparing physical transformations to mental and psychological ones can be a rich source for understanding both. Perhaps most striking in this area is the example of the metamorphosis displayed by two species, one an amphibian, the other an insect: the frog and the butterfly. Both are relatively common and therefore were the object of study and writing of the sages. From their descriptions and from our knowledge of nature, we can gain a great deal of insight into parallel processes in people. In this article we will do that and demonstrate the value of unifying science with Torah, especially when the science originates from direct observations of nature in our backyard.

THE FROG PRINCE

Once upon a time there was a princess… Well, you know how that story goes. Why is it a frog that appears in almost all versions of this fairy tale? Because frogs symbolize change and transformation. Actually, in the story's original title was The Frog King and this is very fitting as we will soon see.

In Torah, the frog is famous as the second plague in Egypt. It is almost impossible to find a pictorial depiction of Egypt that will not include them in some way. But it seems relatively uncommon for a famous Jewish figure to be compared to a frog. However, at the beginning of *Perek Shirah*, we find just that. There is a *midrash* that serves as a preface to *Perek Shirah* and another one that serves as an epilogue. The preface involves a frog and reads:

The sages said concerning King David that when he completed the book of Psalms, he became proud. He said before the Holy Blessed One, "Is there any creature you have created in your world that says more songs and praises than I?" At that moment a frog happened across his path, and it said to him: "David! Do not become proud, for I recite more songs and praises than you. Furthermore, every song I say contains three thousand parables, as it says, 'He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered were one thousand and five.'[2]

A few words about this *midrash*. Though not all the verses quoted in *Perek Shirah* are from Psalms—they come from the entire Bible—a great number are from Psalms, and this is probably the reason that *Perek Shirah* is attributed to King David.[3] This *midrash* explains why David would have composed Perek Shirah.

After completing Psalms, the midrash describes that David felt some pride at his accomplishment. This is known as feeling one's self. It led him to ask, "Do you God have someone like me who exalts you in this way?" God wanted to nullify his pride and immediately sent him a frog. Before we get to the frog, let us stress that from this part of the midrash, we learn that God reacts to how you feel about yourself. As the Ba'al Shem Tov says, everything you see or hear can be a message from God regarding your present state of mind or actions.

The big question about the *midrash* is, who exactly is this frog? It's not so hard to answer when you consider that the frog quotes a verse describing King Solomon. Many of the commentaries on Perek Shirah also note this. David was seeing his son and his future accomplishments. The question then is, why does the *midrash* picture King Solomon as a frog? What do they have in common?

Before we answer this question, let us note that the frog appears in Perek Shirah. Its verse does not appear in the Bible, but we say it at least twice a day as the unwritten second verse of the Shema: בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. Alongside the frog there are 84 other songs that appear in Perek Shirah. The Hebrew word for "frog" (צְפַרְדֵּעַ) is sometimes broken down into two words: צִפּוֹר דַּעַת, which means "a bird of knowledge." There are a number of different birds that appear in Perek Shirah, but one of them is not a bird at all. It is the animal known as צִפּוֹרֶת כְּרָמִים, which is actually a butterfly. What frogs and butterflies have in common is that they both go through a metamorphosis as they mature. The reason that King Solomon is depicted as a frog is because he too went through a journey that included the human equivalent of metamorphosis.

FOUR STAGES OF METAMORPHOSIS

Scientists describe four stages of development for both the frog and the butterfly. Both start as an egg. The butterfly egg hatches and becomes a caterpillar (זַחַל). The frog egg hatches, and a tadpole (רֹאשׁן) emerges. The caterpillar enters a second womb as it were, which in Kabbalah is described as a second gestation or *ibbur* (עִבּוּר שֵׁנִי), and it becomes a pupa or chrysalis. When it emerges, it is "born again" in a completely different form that cannot be linked back to the caterpillar that entered the chrysalis; it goes through a complete metamorphosis.

Metamorphosis is usually translated as "reincarnation" (גִּלְגּוּל) in Hebrew, probably for lack of a better word. Life forms that go through metamorphosis are in a sense reincarnated. They return to non-being, as it were, and then reemerge as a new being. In Kabbalah this is described as "removing a form and donning a form" (פּוֹשֵׁט צוּרָה וְלוֹבֵשׁ צוּרָה), a power of the *sefirah* of wisdom. To have a constant form is related with the *sefirah* of understanding. While understanding is considered the root of steady being, wisdom is the source of non-being, a state of nothingness that separates any two states of being. Thus, it is the sefirah of wisdom that we associate with the transformations that occur during metamorphosis.

Now, to continue with the frog, unlike the caterpillar, it does not completely shed its first body, rather it goes through a more continuous and metamorphosis. After the tadpole stage, the frog becomes a froglet. It is still longer than it is wide, but it begins to develop hind legs. Some species remain in this state for a year or longer, others race through it in a matter of weeks or days. This is its third stage of development after which the metamorphosis into an adult frog happens, its fourth and final steady state.

In summary, both the frog and the butterfly go through four stages in their metamorphosis from egg to adult.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Frog	Egg	Tadpole	Froglet	Adult frog
Butterfly	Egg	Larva/ caterpillar	Chrysalis	Butterfly

THE FOUR STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN KABBALAH

In Kabbalah, we find a parallel description of four stages of development (even metamorphosis) innovated by the Arizal. He names the four stages: first immaturity, first maturity, second immaturity, and second maturity (קָטְנוּת א, גְּדְלוּת א, קָטְנוּת ב, גְּדְלוּת ב). The second immaturity is considered like a second gestation period (עִבּוּר שֵׁנִי), as noted earlier regarding the butterfly. This is one of the great innovations of the Arizal's teachings of Kabbalah.

Obviously, the Arizal's intent was not to describe just the animal kingdom. This is a process that human beings are supposed to go through as our soul matures and thus these become very useful for describing and understanding our lives. When we translate the Kabbalistic language, which is somewhat technical, into the more experiential language used by Chasidut, these four stages are called: faith, knowing reality, confidence, and seeing the essence (אֱמוּנָה, יְדִיעַת הַמְּצִיאוּת, בִּטָּחוֹן, רְאִיַּת הַמַּהוּת). Let us explain these briefly.

The first stage is faith. When all the potential for future development is hidden, we require faith. The second stage arrives when we already have some familiarity with reality. It is impossible to completely know and understand the essence of reality when we first reach maturity. But it is possible to have knowledge of reality the way it presents itself externally. It would then seem that we have matured and achieved our goal in life. However, when further growth and development becomes possible when we can enter a second gestation, a second state of immaturity. When this happens, it does not indicate a return to faith, but a more solid state of confidence; confidence in God that when we emerge from this second womb, we will have matured even more. In our second immaturity, we remember our knowledge of reality, and that residual knowledge translated into psychological confidence in life and in God. The final stage is in a sense a reincarnation (like the adult butterfly or the adult frog), which manifests as an ability to grasp or see the essence underlying reality.

THE WATCHMAN

Let us see how the frog's name in Hebrew can help us build a parable for the four stages of human development. The first two letters of "frog" (צְפַרְדֵּעַ, **צפ**) can be interpreted as the word "anticipate" (**צפי**תְ), as in "have you anticipated [or waited for] the redemption (צִפִּיתְ לִישׁוּעָה). The next two letters, **רד**, are shorthand for "descent" (יְרִידָה). The final letter, **ע**, is then shorthand for "ascent" (**ע**ֲלִיָּה). The frog is telling us a story, a story of anticipation, then descent and then ascent. If we think of the "anticipation" as a watchman looking out for some sign on the horizon, we can imagine that this is us, standing on top of a watchtower, looking out for the coming of Mashiach. We have a lot of faith that the Mashiach will come and that we will be redeemed. But this faith is passive.

Now, what happens if one day we look out and see the Mashiach. We are filled with elation. We now can see the reality of the imminent redemption. The Mashiach is standing on a high place on the other side of a valley. If we want to reach the Mashiach, we need to act. What can we do? We have to climb down from our high watchtower and approach the Mashiach. We cannot simply jump directly across the valley. We have to make the actual trip across the valley and climb up to where he is standing. To be able to do that, we need a great deal of confidence that even if we leave our tower, we will find our way to the Mashiach. This is known as descent for the sake of ascent. It is easy to see the correspondence to the four stages of development.

THE FOUR STAGES OF KING SOLOMON'S LIFE

As it turns out, King Solomon's life was divided into four distinct stages, and they themselves were modeled around the four stages of development according to the Arizal. His early life was in his father David's palace. It lasted only until the age of 12, when David passed, and he ascended the throne. Then the sages say that he went through three stages, which they describe as being a king, becoming a commoner, and returning to being a king. Elsewhere, we described these three later stages as motivated by the psychological challenges King Solomon endured.

His first 12 years of life represent his first stage of immaturity. He reached the first stage of maturity when he completed the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. But even though he was at what seemed like the pinnacle of his life, he faced a challenge—either it was his foreign wives who caused this, or it was his own hubris—that made him lose his throne and forced him to live like a commoner for a number of years. Eventually, he was able to return to being a king and according to one opinion (in Seder Olam) it was in the final years of his 52-year long life that he wrote his three great works: Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

The man who was Solomon's rival, the man who ended up destroying the Temple Solomon built, was Nebuchadnezzar. Interestingly, he too went through four similar phases: child, then mature man, but then God turned him into an animal and finally restored him to the throne. Indeed, the sages say that Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Solomon through the Queen of Sheba.

FOUR STAGES IN HUMAN HISTORY

There are many more examples of this four-stage developmental process but let us end with history. Human history begins with Adam, whose immaturity leads him to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam represents the soul of the world, and this soul had to wait for 20 generations until it could reach its first state of maturity in Abraham. Abraham is known as the "greatest of the giants," alluding to first maturity. But even though Abraham seems to have finished history by discovering and serving God, at the very pinnacle, when God promises him the Land of Canaan, he is told of the impending descent into exile.

His grandson, Jacob is the one who takes his family with him to Egypt, where the Israelites are forged in a state of second immaturity. Egypt is like a womb that sustains the people of God before they are ready to embark on their journey to receive the Torah. Finally, it is Moses who leads the people out of Egypt and to Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah that represents the state of second maturity—the ability to see the essence of reality, of the Almighty—through the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Arizal	First immaturity	First Maturity	Second Immaturity	Second Maturity
Frog	Egg	Tadpole	Froglet	Adult frog
Butterfly	Egg	Larva/caterpillar	Chrysalis	Butterfly
Solomon	Until age 12	King	Commoner	King
		Built Temple	Usurped	Wrote 3 books
Human history	Adam (Tree of Knowledge)	Abraham (discovers God)	Jacob (Egyptian exile)	Moses (Giving of Torah)

(based on a shiur given on the 28th of Shevat, 5785)

Notes:

1. Case in point are William James' two chapters on Conversion in his seminal work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.
2. 1 Kings 5:12.
3. The verses appearing in *Perek Shirah* are associated with the various elements of creation that belong to the kingdoms of animals, vegetables, and the inanimate. There is no verse corresponding to man, the highest kingdom (דומם צומח חי מדבר). Animals, vegetables, and inanimate objects correspond themselves to the three lower Worlds—Creation, Formation, and Action. Man is associated with the fourth worlds, the World of Emanation. King David is the archetypal soul of kingdom. According to this midrash, David is the kingdom of Emanation that descends to enliven and sustain all the inhabitants of the three lower Worlds by giving it some measure of consciousness of Divinity through the particular verse each is associated with.