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

נט"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת וַיִּקְרָא ❁ ו-ז נִיסָן תשפ"ה



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



Wonders

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of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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PARTZUF

WHAT SACRIFICE, NEARNESS, CONFLICT, AND INTERIOR HAVE IN COMMON

This week, we begin the third book of the Pentateuch, Vayikra. In English this book was named Leviticus, following the name given to it by the rabbis, the "Torah of the Priests" (תּוֹרַת כֹּהֲנִים). As such, much of Vayikra covers the work of the priests and Levites in the Tabernacle, focusing in detail on the different types of sacrifices and offerings. The Hebrew word for "sacrifice" (קָרְבָּן) stems from the three-letter root קרב, whose different meanings we will explore in this week's *partzuf*. But before we begin, we would like to explain the connection between the contents of the Torah's third book—the rituals of the priests—and its name, Vayikra, meaning "He called out," taken from its first word.

THE FOUNDATION OF JEWISH EDUCATION

According to Jewish custom, children begin learning the Torah in *cheider* from "Vayikra," when they start learning to read. The verb "to read" (לִקְרֹא) in Hebrew means both to call out and to read from a book. The connection between reading and calling out is learnt from the verse, "they are life to those who find them."[1] we learn that it is possible to study Torah (to find) without speaking or reading out loud, but according to the interpretation of the sages, the verse means to say that, "they are life to those who recite them with their mouth." In other words, to truly find Torah, one must read it out loud, uttering that which the eyes see while reading.

There is a connection between these two meanings, as the Alter Rebbe writes in *Tanya*[2] that one who reads from the book is actually calling upon the Almighty to come to him. Hence the verse: "God is near to all who call out to Him, to all who sincerely calls out to Him"[3] can be understood as referring to "calling out the truth," i.e., reading the Torah out loud. By reading the Torah out loud, one calls upon God's essence and being to come to us. This is the essential lesson to take from the first word of this week's parashah and hence of the entire Book of Vayikra: God is near to all who call out to Him through their Torah learning.

TWO-LETTER ROOTS

The connection between calling out (וַיִּקְרָא) and God being near (קָרוֹב) has some grammatical weight. The root of "calling out" is קרא; the root of "near" is קרב. In addition to the better known 3-letter roots, Hebrew grammar is based on two-letter roots as well. These are known as "gates" (שְׁעָרִים), as we envision walking

through a gate that has two doorposts and, on each doorpost, a Hebrew letter is engraved. Say, the letter on the right is a *kuf* (ק) and the letter on the left is a *reish* (ר). If we go through the doorpost in one direction we will read the gate, קר. Walking through it in the opposite direction, we will read the gate, רק. By adding non-consonant letters to the gate, we form the different roots.

The two roots, קרא and קרב share the common gate קר. Although the letter bet (ב) is a consonant and normally, would not be added to the gate קר to form "near" (קרב), but as we saw from the verse in Psalms, "God is near [קָרוֹב] to all who call out [יִקְרָאֻהוּ] to Him," one who calls out to God (by reading the Torah), brings Him near.

GOD CALLS TO US TO DRAW NEAR

We see this connection between קרא and קרב even more pronounced here at the beginning of Vayikra. The first word stems from the root קרא, the second verse reads, "When a man among you brings an offering to God, from the livestock, from the cattle, and from the sheep, you shall bring your offering"[4] (אָדָם כִּי **יַקְרִיב** מִכֶּם קָרְבָּן לַיהוה מִן הַבְּהֵמָה מִן הַבָּקָר וּמִן הַצֹּאן **תַּקְרִיבוּ** אֶת קָרְבַּנְכֶם) and contains the root קרב four times! From one instance of calling out (קרא) come four instances of drawing near (קרב). This is a ratio of one to four which is significant since it is the ratio found in God's essential Name Havayah, which is 1 word to 4 letters.[5] Chasidic writings, based on the holy Zohar, explain that making a sacrifice (or offering) to God draws all the powers and senses of the soul nearer or closer to the Divine.

The full process described by the first two verses is thus that drawing near from below begins with a call from above. First, God calls upon Moses—upon the aspect of Moses in every soul. This is known as an awakening from above (אִתְעָרוּתָא דִלְעֵילָא) whose purpose is to make the soul seek to draw near to God from below, an awakening from below (אִתְעָרוּתָא דִלְתַתָּא). This is the classic relationship between the masculine and feminine in the Torah's inner dimension. In the Torah's revealed dimension, the sages use a beautiful image to depict this same relationship: "for every drop that falls from above, two drops rise from below." However, the ratio in this image is 2:1, whereas here, the ratio is doubled to 4:1—one call from above results in four measures of drawing near from below. The reason is that here, the Torah is referring to, "When a man brings from yourselves," and "yourselves" (מִכֶּם) is in the plural form, referring to both the Divine soul, which yearns to return to the Creator, and the animal soul, which has no such natural inclination. Both souls are captured in the verse's wording, "a man," refers to the Divine soul, and later in the verse, "from the cattle," referring to the animal soul. It is very clear here that the Torah wants us to pay close attention to the connection between these two roots: "calling out" (קרא) and "drawing near" (קרב).

THE MEANINGS OF THE ROOT

The primary source for working with the meanings of a root is the Radak's *Sefer HaShorashim*. There we find that he divides the root קרב into four "matters" (עִנְיָנִים),[6] or meanings. We may add that the

four instances of this root that appear in the second verse of our parashah, as noted earlier, allude to these four meanings.

NEARNESS AND SACRIFICE: THE SAME OR DISTINCT?

The first meaning is "nearness" (קָרוּב). A related meaning is "a sacrifice" (קָרְבָּן), as in our second verse. It is important to mention that according to the Torah's inner dimension—*Zohar* and Chasidic teachings—"sacrifice" is also analyzed to stem from nearness. However, according to the plain analysis, the *peshat* of the Torah's text, nearness and sacrifice are two different matters. Accordingly, there is an even greater stress on the understanding that, ""When a man brings from yourselves" (אָדָם כִּי **יַקְרִיב** מִכֶּם) involves self-sacrifice. Connecting the two meanings together, as stated earlier: to draw near to God, one must be willing to sacrifice.

Another word about קרב as sacrifice: We begin a child's education in the *cheider* with *Vayikra*. The Hebrew word for "cheider" (חֶדֶר), which means schoolhouse, stems from the root meaning to ingrain (לְהַחְדִּיר) because the first thing that needs to be ingrained in a child is sacrifice. A Jew must be willing to sacrifice his comfort and his possessions for the sake of God and for the sake of the Jewish people.

This brings us to how these first two meanings of קרב—sacrifice and nearness—are related. Sacrifice (קָרְבָּן) is a spiritual movement of "run" (*ratzo*) while "nearness" (קִרְבָה) is its complementary movement of "return" (*shov*). It is the highest sense of pleasure to feel close to God. Yet, the need to offer myself to God is the direct opposite from tending to myself. It requires me to completely leave myself, to sacrifice and nullify my own sense of self. When I "run" in this way towards God, God responds in kind ("As water reflects the face to face"[7]) and He too draws near to me and illuminates me, in a movement of "return." Given that nearness is usually understood as gratifying, it is quite an innovation that it is attained through self-sacrifice. We have said this just to emphasize that closeness and offering are not the same thing according to the Radak and the Torah's plain meaning.

CONFLICT AND INTERIOR

What are the two other matters, or meanings included in the root קרב? The one is conflict or battle (קְרָב) and the other is interior (קֶרֶב). As "interior," we find this root used in the verse "And his interior and his legs, he shall wash in water"[8] (וְקִרְבּוֹ וּכְרָעָיו יִרְחַץ בַּמָּיִם). This is the last of the 9 instances of this root's appearance in the first *parshiyah* (paragraph) of our parashah.

There can be a great war, and a private confrontation within it is *krav* – this is how it's understood in Hebrew. This is unlike the Targum language, where the translation for war is *krava*. This means that *krav* is not only a private battle, but the entirety of the war itself is *krav*.

THE PARTZUF OF MEANINGS

Now that we have the four meanings of the root קרב, we need to organize them into a *partzuf*.

We might think that since we have four elements, we should correspond them to the four letters of Havayah. However, as we

will now see, these four meanings create a sort of circular pattern starting with the crown. From the crown they continue to wisdom, to knowledge (*da'at*), and finally to understanding.[9] Like in many other instances, knowledge here encompasses all six emotions of the heart.

Sacrifice we will place in the crown. Thus, "a person who brings from yourselves a sacrifice to God" corresponds to the crown.

Nearness in Kabbalah is associated with the way in which God's infinite revelation (אוֹר אֵין סוֹף) is enclothed in the *sefirah* of wisdom.[10] There is an aspect of this in the crown as well (recall that the Torah's inner dimension views sacrifice and nearness as belonging to the same meaning), but with relative to the rest of the sefirot, beginning with understanding, it is wisdom that is singled out for this description of being near. Regarding the crown, another description—"very near"—is generally used. In any case, we correspond nearness with wisdom.

The meaning of the root קרב as battle or conflict refers to the struggle, we all have against the *yetzer*—the evil inclination. All the conflicts in our lives as individuals and all the wars conducted in the world are because of the 7 kings of Edom, the Kings of Tohu, who ruled and died. As we saw in a previous issue (Wonders, issue 144) the root of all the kings and hence all types of conflict is in the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*). The types of conflicts themselves can be corresponded to the emotional realm—the six sefirot that are ruled by knowledge. The value of "knowledge" (**דַּעַת**) is 6 times the value of "opinion" (**דֵּעָה**), and hence we can view all wars as wars between differing opinions.

Finally, קרב as interior corresponds to the *sefirah* of understanding, which is also known as the mother principle (אִמָּא). Indeed, many times, when the "innards" (קרב) are referred to, the reference is to the womb. It even says that our matriarch Rebbecah's name (רִבְקָה) derives from a combination of the letters for "her innards" (קִרְבָּהּ). An important principle in the Arizal's Kabbalah and in Chasidut is that "inner" dimensions, refers to the mother principle. For example, in Psalms a person praying deeply is described as having reached "the innards of man and a deep heart"[11] (קֶרֶב אִישׁ וְלֵב עָמֹק), since the heart is associated with understanding, "understanding is the heart" (בִּינָה לִבָּא).

To summarize:

crown-keter **כֶּתֶר**
sacrifice קָרְבָּן

understanding-binah **בִּינָה** — wisdom-chochmah **חָכְמָה**
interior קֶרֶב — nearness קִרוּב

knowledge-da'at **דַּעַת**
battle/conflict קֶרֶב

(based on a class given on the 25th of Adar, 5772)

1. Proverbs 4:22.
2. Chapter 37.
3. Psalms 145:18.
4. Leviticus 1:2.
5. Note that there is another related root that appears in this verse, in the word "the cattle" (הַבָּקָר), whose root is בָּקַר, a permutation of "near" (קרב).
6. Note that the distinction between the first and second meanings is somewhat implicit.
7. Proverbs 27:19.
8. Leviticus 1:9.
9. Another example of using this circular pattern in a *partzuf* can be found with respect to the analysis of breathing, which contains for parts: inhale, hold, exhale, and rest. An explanation can be found in our classes on Chedvah Breathing (on the inner.org channel on Youtube) and in length in the article "*Sod HaNeshimah*" in *Essa Einai*.
10. See *Eitz Chaim* 42:13 and elsewhere. In Chasidut, see for example the ma'amar *Karov HaShem Lechol Korav* 5718 by the Lubavitcher Rebbe.
11. Psalms 64:7.

STORY

THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE AND VIKTOR FRANKL

The 10th of Nissan is the birthday of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. In connection with this auspicious occasion, we present an analysis of his special regard for world-famous psychologist Viktor Frankl, a holocaust survivor whose work inspired our main articles in recent weeks.

Throughout his years of psychiatric studies, Victor Frankl was a young colleague of Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler. Frankl took a different and opposite approach from theirs: instead of the pursuit of pleasure or status, he argued that man is primarily motivated by a "will for meaning." The uniqueness of man lies in his ability to transcend himself, with the dominant part of the soul being its higher part, not the lower.

These ideas gradually developed in Frankl's mind even before the Holocaust, and became more prominent during his time in the Nazi death camps. He saw that even within the hell and horror, certain prisoners managed to overcome evil by maintaining a positive approach to life and devoting themselves to a purpose and sense of mission that pulsed within them.

After the war, Dr. Frankl found himself standing alone with his unique ideas rejected by the psychological establishment in Vienna. He was surrounded on all sides by loyal disciples of Freud, who denounced him and avoided his lectures. As the years passed, the pressure intensified until he reached a state of emotional despair, seeing his life's work going to waste. He decided to give up spreading his ideas, to move to Australia and join his sister who had survived the Holocaust and immigrated there.

During this period, a Viennese-born woman named Margaret Hayas came to the Lubavitcher Rebbe for a private audience. At the end of the meeting, the Rebbe asked her for a personal favor. He requested that upon her return to Vienna, "Please convey my regards to Dr. Frankl and tell him in my name that he should be strong and continue his work with complete determination. He must not give up, no matter what. If he continues to act with strength and commitment, his success is guaranteed."

When she arrived in Vienna and inquired at the hospital where Dr. Frankl served as head of the neurology department, she was told that the professor had been absent for two weeks. After some effort, she managed to find Dr. Frankl's home address and reach him.

Dr. Frankl, who was in the midst of drafting his immigration documents to Australia, was in an irritable mood and showed little interest in the visitor. Margaret fulfilled her mission and addressed Dr. Frankl: "I was asked to convey regards to you from Rabbi Schneersohn of Brooklyn, New York. Rabbi Schneersohn, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe, sent you the following message: Be strong! Continue your work with complete determination. Don't give up. You will ultimately succeed."

Dr. Frankl's eyes filled with tears. After a few moments, he thanked the woman and told her that he had indeed been thinking of abandoning his efforts to fight for his doctrine and philosophy, and was actually considering leaving Vienna, but now he would reconsider the matter. Indeed, he returned to his work as a psychiatrist and lecturer.

A few years later, in 5719 (1959), Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning* was translated into English. It became a bestseller, selling tens of millions of copies, and established Dr. Frankl's status as the father of logotherapy and a pioneer of all the modern method of Positive Psychology. His approach became a legitimate and central stream in psychology.

[From an interview with Rabbi Biederman, the chief Chabad emissary in Vienna, who verified the story with those involved]

In addition to the Rebbe's revelation of *ru'ach hakodesh* (Divine inspiration), Viktor Frankl recounted two other manifestations of Divine Providence that guided his life.

The first revelation:

Shortly before the United States entered World War II (and a few years after the Anschluss—Austria's annexation to Nazi Germany), Frankl received an immigration visa to the U.S. At that time, Frankl lived with his elderly parents in Vienna, which presented him with a dilemma: Should he escape, thereby removing the protection he provided to his elderly parents by virtue of being the chief neurologist at the Jewish hospital in Vienna, or should he stay and put himself in grave danger? His parents naturally assumed he would emigrate, but he didn't know what to do and longed for a sign from heaven.

One day, upon returning home, Frankl found his father holding a piece of stone taken from the desecrated synagogue's Ark.

"What's this?" he asked. His father replied that it was part of the Ten Commandments that had adorned the Ark.

There was a letter visible on the stone, indicating that this stone had been part of the Ten Commandments on the Ark. "Which commandment?" he asked, and his father answered: "Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long upon the land"... The sign was clear, and Viktor Frankl abandoned the idea of emigration.

As a result, he lost his family and the first manuscript of his book and also suffered for three years in concentration camps. But all the growth that followed the trauma, and the good that his method brought to the world, were influenced by that moment.

The second revelation:

In the pocket of his coat, which he was forced to give up upon arriving at the concentration camp, was the nearly completed manuscript of his first book, *The Doctor and the Soul*. Years later, he recounted that on the same day his manuscript was taken from him, he found in the coat he received at the camp a torn page from a prayer book, with the words *Shema Yisrael* (Hear o' Israel) on it. He saw this as a sign that now it was his turn not only to formulate lofty ideas but also, and perhaps primarily, to live by them.

These instances illustrate how much God watches over all our actions and cares for us. Divine Providence is revealed in every detail of creation, but especially in an individual whom God views as a *tzaddik*, i.e., one who finds righteousness in others. The Rebbe, who also watched over Frankl and his method, fulfilled the commandment of, "And you shall walk in His ways." The Rebbe watches from afar and intervenes precisely when the situation seems hopeless. In essence, this is the deepest sense of the concept of "meaning," which Frankl placed at the center of his method. Meaning is a message from a person's super-conscious, from the part

directly connected to God. This is why, in addition to meaning, Frankl identified faith as the supreme foundation of the soul.

THE REBBE ABOUT FRANKL

To understand the importance the Rebbe saw in Frankl's method, we will present three letters in which the Rebbe mentions logotherapy and delve into them a bit:

In a letter about a mental health patient, the Rebbe refers to Frankl as "a professor who found courage in his soul" and writes:

> And to note in connection with your writing that the aforementioned [individual] is under treatment with a doctor dealing with mental health: Although it is not entirely clear to which doctor you are referring, for (due to our iniquities), there is a certain type of these doctors [psychologists] that begin treatment by speaking [negatively] about God, about the honor of Heaven, and about honoring parents, etc. [meaning, they claim that pursing these causes the patient a great deal of harm], and [they even claim that there might not be any importance to these aforementioned values]. It requires great scrutiny to determine whether these methods are profitable in the end, even if he [the doctor] is well-known and important, and whether or not, in the end more is lost than gained. [However,] clearly several of these doctors [i.e., psychologists] have brought benefit and healed in honest ways. This is especially true since one professor found the courage in his soul to declare and announce that (contrary to the method of the founder of this type of treatment—the known one [i.e., Freud]) faith in God, religious inclination in general that brings content to life, etc., etc., is one of the most effective ways for healing.

It is interesting to see that one of the important points the Rebbe highlights in Frankl's innovation is his regard for "the honor of Heaven and honoring one's parents." This connects especially to how Divine Providence guided Frankl and his method through his commitment to the Fifth Commandment—the commandment that connects honoring Heaven with honoring one's parents. The Midrash tells that when God spoke the Ten Commandments, the first commandments elicited a suspicious reaction from the nations who claimed that, "God is seeking His own honor." But when the fifth commandments—honoring one's parents was heard—the nations acknowledged the first four commandments as well.

In a letter to a neurologist, the Rebbe says that

> The state of [a certain patient's] health proves (if proof is deemed necessary for this) the power that faith has, especially when connected to and expressed in actual deed, public activity, fulfillment of mitzvot, etc., for stabilizing a person's mental tranquility.... Despite the approach that because faith and religion demand that a person accept the yoke of Heaven—and therefore restrain and suppress their

> instincts and urges—they are undesirable,... I found particular interest in Dr. Frankl's (Vienna) articles on this. But to my dismay, it seems that his method has not spread, nor has it been adopted as would have been appropriate.

In the third letter, the Rebbe refers to those who diverged from Freud's method, and to Frankl in particular, as evidence that Freud's method is not an absolute truth as the recipient believes:

> It is particularly interesting that Dr. Viktor Frankl, a professor at the University of Vienna, makes purpose in life the cornerstone of his psychoanalytic method."

SUBMISSION, SEPARATION, AND SWEETENING IN FRANKL'S PIVOTAL MOMENTS

The points the Rebbe emphasizes—faith, purpose, and the practical expression of both—are well reflected in the three moments of Divine Providence that accompanied Frankl's life. When we contemplate these moments of Providence and the order of their occurrence, a structure is revealed that pertains to each of us in fulfilling our mission in the world:

The first moment of Divine Providence, of honoring parents, exemplifies submission and the tenet that, "*derech eretz* (proper conduct) precedes Torah." Although honoring parents is a commandment, it is one of the commandments that our common sense also dictates. It is no coincidence that the Talmud employs the story of a non-Jew, Dama ben Netina, to exemplify the way to honor one's parents.

The second moment of Divine Providence, the story with the *Shema Yisrael*, corresponds to separation, or strengthening one's Divine soul by identifying with the Torah and the commandments. The general principle of the Torah's commandments is self-sacrifice for the sanctification of God's Name—the essence of *Shema Yisrael* (as explained in chapter 25 of Tanya). Commandments are also instruments for binding us to God—the declaration we make when saying that "God is one."

The third moment, when he received the Rebbe's prediction of his success, corresponds to a transition from the Divine service of *birur* (clarification—separating the negative from the good) to the Divine service of *yichudim* (unifications). *Yichudim* are performed specifically when engaging in actions that are not mandatory but are still done for the sake of Heaven, following the dictum that, "In all your ways [actions], you should know Him." When we remember that, "it is God who gives you the power to succeed," by virtue of *derech eretz* and Torah, we have discovered the secret of success.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE BA'AL SHEM TOV'S TEACHINGS

(part 1): Tangible Faith

ATONEMENT FOR SINS

The foundation for the Ba'al Shem Tov's approach to Divine Providence appears in the following teaching from *Keter Shem Tov*.[1] Let us quote the teaching in its original form, even though it is a bit complex and written in shorthand. We will fully explain each section of this teaching. The first part states:

> **From the Ba'al Shem Tov: I heard from my teacher an explanation that "Israel was not exiled until they denied God and David," and the explanation of the Talmud states that "there is no difference between this world and the days of the Mashiach except for the [Jewish people's] subservience to the nations." As they said in the Talmud, "Anyone who has passed forty days without suffering has received his world. [And they asked:] How do we define suffering? If someone stretches his hand to take a gold coin from his wallet and takes a lesser coin." The sages challenged this, "But there is no suffering without sin?" Could this possibly be considered atonement for sin?**

The Ba'al Shem Tov begins by connecting three different sayings from the sages. The first is "The Jewish people were not exiled until they denied God and David."[2] It is worth mentioning that in other places, it is stated that the Children of Israel rejected three things—the sovereignty of God, the sovereignty of the House of David, and the Temple. Consequently, the redemption depends on returning ask for these three things. But here, the saying connects faith in God's sovereignty and faith in the House of David together in a way that truly unites them, as we will see in this Torah.

The second saying is from the sage Shmuel, who says that, "There is no difference between this world and the days of Mashiach except for the [Jewish people's] subservience to the nations."[3] The plain meaning of this saying is that in the time of redemption, there will be no change in the nature of reality. The only change will be the liberation of the Jewish people from their servitude to the nations of the world. However, as we will see, the Ba'al Shem Tov offers a novel explanation of this saying.

The third saying comes from another part of the Talmud altogether and states that, "Anyone who has passed forty days without suffering has already received his world."[4] Meaning, that he has already received "the World to Come," in other words, he has been given ample reward for his service in life. The Talmud then proceeds to ask what constitutes suffering and then gives examples of what the lightest suffering is.

At first glance, we might understand that the question is how it is possible that forty days without suffering is a reward equivalent to the World to Come that a person is destined to receive? And the answer is meant to calm us by noting that even very light suffering, which certainly always occurs, is sufficient to ensure that we do not pass 40 days without suffering; therefore, there is no concern that a person has already been given a reward equivalent to their World to Come.

But the Ba'al Shem Tov extracts a different question from this saying. He asks, since "there is no suffering without sin," how is it possible that the light suffering brought as an example could atone for any sin?

REPENTANCE AS AWARENESS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The Ba'al Shem Tov first answers the last question and then connects the answer to belief in Divine Providence. From his words, we learn that he regards faith in Divine Providence as the most essential element of the faith of a tzaddik Indeed, the value of Divine Providence (**הַשְׁגָּחָה פְּרָטִית**) equals 10 times the value of "faith" (**אֱמוּנָה**). In his words:

He explained that "a tzaddik lives by his faith,"[5] for one who believes in the Divine Providence of the Holy Blessed One and knows that all the events in a person's life come from Him, whether they are insignificant or great; everything is according to the judgment of God, according to the judgment of Heaven.

The sages say that the prophet Habakkuk established the entire Torah on the foundation of faith—"The tzaddik lives by his faith." And with what tenet of faith does the tzaddik live? The most important one is the belief that everything that happens in their life, whether insignificant or important, all is under the Divine Providence of the Blessed One Himself.

From this teaching comes a great principle. When we say that the foundation of the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings is Divine Providence, we mean awareness of Divine Providence. Belief in Divine Providence is not a new idea originated by the Ba'al Shem Tov. It is a subject that was discussed by the great scholars of Israel in previous generations. But the Ba'al Shem Tov added that there is work required—becoming aware of Divine Providence is a spiritual objective. This teaching is not concerned with the specifics of Divine Providence, how God governs all creatures and guides them toward a particular destiny. It is also not about the reincarnations of each soul, another important aspect of Divine Providence. Rather it focuses on that which pertains to the individual human and his or her own path and "rectifications."

Divine Providence is, ultimately, a revelation of God's mercy, but the initial revelation of Divine Providence is through the principle that "the law of the Kingdom is law"[6] (דִּינָא דְּמַלְכוּתָא דִּינָא). Law (**דִּינָא**) is a permutation of God's Name, *Adni* (**אֲ-דֹנָי**), the Name associated with the *sefirah* of kingdom. The beginning, the essence, and the root of Divine service is "mundane awe"[7] (יִרְאָה תַּתָּאָה), therefore the awareness of Divine Providence begins precisely with attention to God's judgment (and from this, one reaches a state where Divine Providence is sweetened and becomes the ultimate revelation of God's mercy, as will be explained).

Many times, we explain that awe of Heaven, even awe in general can be understood as sensitivity. Belief in Divine Providence is sensitivity to Providence itself, and it all starts with a sensitivity to judgment.

Later in this teaching, the Ba'al Shem Tov says that all that a person can grasp about Divinity is in the realm of the *sefirah* of kingdom, but above that, it is impossible to grasp." This is why attention to God's kingdom, i.e., His Divine Providence over the world, is so important, as it is the primary connection we have with God. The first one to call God by this Name, *Adni*, meaning "Master" was Abraham. He recognized that there is a Master of Creation who oversees everything with Divine Providence.

Let us continue with the Ba'al Shem Tov's words:

And it [every judgment in life] is due to his sin, and immediately he regrets and is filled with awe and fear of God, and immediately he is forgiven since he believes, repents, and attaches his thoughts to the Blessed One. That is why even if one reaches for a gold dinar but ends up with a silver dinar, because it is due to his sin and he regrets it, such an event [of light suffering] is considered an atonement for his sin.

Someone who believes that the light sufferings come upon him, through Divine Providence, because of his sin—and does not just accept this belief but also thinks and identifies the sin within himself—immediately dwells on repentance, whose most important aspect is refocusing on God's Presence. The moment the person awakens in repentance, God forgives him for the sin.

The sages say, "Anyone who commits a sin and is ashamed of it is forgiven [not only for that particular sin but] for all of his sins." If the regret is out of shame, arising from awareness to Divine Providence that reminds a person of his sins, it causes general forgiveness for everything. God's forgiveness for a person's sins, following light suffering, is a revelation of His mercy, and it reveals retroactively that even the judgment was part of God's mercy. It was nothing more than a pinch meant to awaken the person from his slumber, to stir him to repent, beginning with refocusing his faith, and makes it into a vessel for God's mercy.

This is the answer to the Ba'al Shem Tov's question: how can such tiny sufferings atone for a person's sin? It is not an automatic atonement, but rather an atonement that follows repentance. One who properly pays attention to Divine Providence sees the sufferings they receive and immediately reflects on repentance. Then, even the smallest sufferings become an atonement for sins.

DAVID: LOWLINESS AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Now, the Ba'al Shem Tov returns to the two sayings mentioned earlier. First, what we have just described,

this aspect, is referred to as "David."

King David was sensitive to all the shifts in Divine Providence, feeling the 'pinches' and understanding that they came to awaken him. It is written that King David never slept longer than the time it takes a horse to breathe sixty times (in practice about half an hour). This was likely because even the slightest 'pinch' woke him.

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains the significance behind David's name (דָּוִד), which in Hebrew exhibits symmetry: two letters *dalet* (ד) and between them, a *vav* (ו).

For the Infinite, which is referred to as "nothingness," corresponds to the letter *dalet*, and from it the *vav* extends to the second *dalet*, which represents the ultimate lowliness, all under Divine Providence from the Blessed One.

In this section, the Ba'al Shem Tov explains that the first dalet represents the Divine "nothingness" (the *Ein Sof*), the second Dalet represents the lowliness of the person, and the vav is the connection between them. We like to mention the explanation of the Maggid of Mezritch, who serves as a kind of "bridge" between the Ba'al Shem Tov's explanation and Chabad philosophy. He explains that each *dalet* (from the word meaning "there is not," דליות) represents contraction and self-nullification. Hence, the upper *dalet* is the contraction of the Giver in order to give and the second *dalet* is the contraction of the receiver in order to receive, and the *vav* between them is the drawing from the Giver to the receiver.

The contraction of the Giver, of God, means that He is essentially making Himself into "nothing" in order to give. But

the emphasis here from the perspective of the receiver is his lowliness. The ultimate lowliness is attained when one feels that everything is under Divine Providence of Hashem.

In fact, only one who has a sense of his own lowliness can feel that everything is under Divine Providence. One who attributes all their success to themselves is coarse and crude (*grob*, in Yiddish)—he remains indifferent to his failures. He may get a little upset, but he does not view failure as significant. But one who has lowliness knows that all success come from God, but that all his failures are his own doing. He becomes sensitive to every failure and understands that it is his sins that are solely responsible for it. Failure serves as a reminder that he forgot about God. The essential trait of King David is exactly this type of lowliness, as he says, "And I will be lowly in my own eyes." This is why David represents the experience of Divine Providence; his lowliness and his awareness of Divine Providence are interdependent.

Lowliness is a very fundamental principle that we speak of often. Here there is another essential reason for this, because the foundation of all faith, belief in Divine Providence, depends specifically on lowliness. Elsewhere, we delve into the connection between lowliness and God's compassion, and in truth, everything is deeply interconnected. When you awaken from the 'pinch' of God, out of the lowliness it prompts in you, you become a vessel for His compassion.

The repentance here is the desire to cleave yourself to God—if you believe in God and want to cleave to Him, you have already performed full repentance, complete *teshuvah*! This regret and repentance serve as an atonement for the sin, and for all sins, and Hashem bestows upon you great and abundant compassion; you become a 'recipient' of His compassion.

Elsewhere, we explain that in order to experience lowliness, a person must first be convinced that God has tremendous compassion for them, otherwise, their sense of lowliness would shatter them. In the same way here, when a person awakens to repentance, they need to feel God's mercy so that they are encouraged to repent. If they perceive God as a harsh judge, they would despair, do nothing, and their lowliness would turn into a fall. It is knowledge of God's compassion that encourages repentance.

BELIEF IN GOD AND IN DAVID

Continuing with the Ba'al Shem Tov's teaching:

> **When one does not believe that everything is under Divine Providence from God, but instead says, "My own strength and the might of my hand have made this success for me," this is called denying God and the aspect of David just mentioned, because one is denying the judgment of the kingdom of God.**

Normally, we distinguish between belief in God's existence ("There is God in the world") and belief in Divine Providence. Every Jew has belief in God's existence, in a certain way. However, for the *chasid*, there is a great emphasis on belief in Divine Providence. But here, we learn that the denial of David—i.e., of Divine Providence—is equivalent to a denial of God.

In simple terms, there is no belief in Divine Providence without belief in God, but here the emphasis is that belief in God's essence goes hand in hand with belief in Divine Providence. The denial is of "the judgment or law of the kingdom of God." More particularly, *Havayah*, God refers to *Adni* and kingdom refers to David. The denier says, "My strength and the might

of my hand have made this success," and repenting for this is achieved by "And you shall remember *Havayah* your God, for He is the one who gives you the strength to be successful." This "remembrance" is known as the remembrance of the Land of Israel.

This situation, of lack of belief in God's kingdom, is what lies at the core of being under "the subjugation of the nations," which the Ba'al Shem Tov explains (not as the subjugation of a foreign kingdom over the Jewish people, but) as the subjugation of the *sefirah* of kingdom, the kingdom of holiness, the kingdom of God:

Only the kingdom is covered and subjugated to the *kelipah* [the impurity] that covers and conceals His Divine Providence from human beings. In the future, in the days of Mashiach, when He will remove the spirit of impurity from the land, then His Divine Providence will be revealed in every detail. This explains why the Jewish people were not exiled until they denied Hashem and the kingdom of the House of David. This is the meaning of the statement that the difference between this world and the days of Mashiach is the subjugation of kingdoms.

The Ba'al Shem Tov says something profound here, which he repeats in other places: the true purpose of full awareness of Divine Providence will only be revealed in the days of Mashiach. In fact, this revelation is the Mashiach himself. The *sefirah* of kingdom, God's sovereignty over Creation must be freed from the clutches of the *kelipah*, and it follows then that this is the Mashiach.

Today, we have belief in Divine Providence, but only when the Mashiach comes and the *kelipah* disappears will the kingdom be revealed in its fullness, and the belief will turn into complete knowledge, a revelation of Providence in every detail.

We have said in the past that if we want to influence the nations of the world with Torah—a campaign known as the "Fourth Revolution" in Torah learning—we need to explain to them about Divine Providence. Indeed, the revelation of Providence is itself the coming of the Mashiach.

About the coming of the Mashiach, it is said, "For eye to eye they will see when God returns to Zion." "Eye to eye" means a revelation emanating as it were from God's eyes—the secret of Divine Providence—and reaching the eyes of man. The revelation of God's constant watchfulness ("Always Hashem, your God, is watching over it") will be revealed to our eyes specifically with the coming of the Mashiach.

In conclusion, from this teaching it emerges that Divine Providence is connected to belief in God Himself, and the foundation of our Divine service is to strengthen our awareness of Divine Providence, an awareness that awakens the person to return and cleave to God in everything that happens to them.

(based on a shiur given on Shabbat eve of *parashat Shemini*, 5784)

1 . Section 46a. This is part 1 of a multipart article on Divine Providence in the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings. The complete series will be published in *Wonders* over the course of a few weeks.
2 . *Zohar* 2:175b.
3 . *Berachot* 34b.
4 . *Arachin* 16b.
5 . Habbakuk 2:4.
6 . *Bava Kama* 113a and elsewhere. Originally, this statute requires Jews to obey the laws of the state [kingdom] in which they live.
7 . *Tanya*, ch. 41.