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

בס"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת נָשֹׂא ❁ י-יא סִיוָן תשפ"ה



The Torah's very first message is that we are called upon to rectify the reality of the world that God created for His glory: "to make for Him a dwelling place in the lower realms," through the revelation of God's sovereignty over the Kingdom of Israel on earth

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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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DAILY TEACHING
THE BIBLE'S STRUCTURE

Let us begin with an overview of the Bible—God's word to man.

The Bible contains three parts, each with several books. In all, there are 24 books in the Bible: 5 in the Torah, 8 in the second part, and 11 in the third.

The first part of the Bible is the Torah, which consists of the Five Books of Moses. The message of the Torah is the expression and revelation of God's will to man, to differentiate between good and evil—what should be done and what should not be done. The word "Torah" itself derives from the root that means "to teach." Meaning, that the Torah is the teaching of God's will for man. The five books were written by Moses.

The second general part of the Bible are the Prophets—the Nevi'im. The first 4 books of the Prophets—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings—are basically stories. They give a historical reading of the first generations of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel after Joshua enters and conquers the land. They are full of ups and downs. At times the Jewish people follow the way of God, or at times do not. The prophets come to rebuke the people, but their inner intention is a call. The prophets are thus the Divine call to return. God is constantly calling us: "Return back to Me! My arms are open to receive you, to kiss you, just return to Me." That is basically the message of the Prophets.

The greatest individual of the Prophets is King David. He is the archetypal figure of a *ba'al teshuvah*—one who returns to God. From the beginning he is a great, noble, and courageous figure. But he is not always upstanding, he falls from time to time. But he immediately acknowledges and confesses his fall and he truthfully and in humility returns to God. This is why God chooses him to be the eternal king of Israel. All the truly righteous kings reflect David's personality and why the kingdom of Israel is called the House of David. The Messiah also descends from the House of David. In one place in the Talmud, the sages even say that the Messiah's name will be David. David is the eternal expression of a *ba'al teshuvah*, which is the message of the Prophets in general.

Once again there were 4 historical books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and then 4 prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets). The greatest of the latter is Isaiah, whose soul derives from the highest level as explained in Kabbalah, and his book's most well-known prophecies are those about the Messiah.

The third part of the Bible are the Writings which begins with Psalms written by David, and then Proverbs written by his son, Solomon. In Halachah, we learn that the Messiah must be a descendant of both David and Solomon. He must possess the

power of prayer (David). Prayer expresses the heart of man. What is the service of the heart: that is prayer. The greatest example of this is David in the Book of Psalms. Then Proverbs is the book of wisdom, which teaches that even insights that we have in the Torah come from our devout prayer to God. First, we must pray and then God gives the insight.

The next book in the Writings is Job—the eternal debate between God and man. At the end of the book, God reveals Himself to man and Job is convinced that God is right and that everything is directed towards the eternal rectification of the world. Then we have the books of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Finally, the 24th book of the Bible is Chronicles, which tells the history again of the world, but this time with a greater emphasis on David and his descendants.

It is good to try to condense the entire structure we have seen into simple words. We will say that the Torah is the "teaching"—God's teaching. Torah literally means "teaching." The Prophets are the "Call of God" to return to Him. The word for that in Hebrew is "Teshuvah." The Writings, the third part begins with the Book of Psalms which we repeat daily, far more than we recite any other book of the Writings, and it is "Prayer."

So, the three parts of the Bible can be described as: Teaching (תּוֹרָה), Teshuvah (תְּשׁוּבָה), and Prayer (תְּפִלָּה). The sum of these words in *gematria* is 1839, which means that their average value is 613, the exact number of the commandments in the Torah. In this way, we can see how both the Prophets and the Writings are contained within the Torah.

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DAILY TEACHING

TWO TYPES OF DIVINE REVELATION

THE THREE PARTS OF THE SOUL AND THEIR SEAT IN THE BODY

The Torah is the *mind* of creation. Israel is the *heart* of creation. The nations of the earth are the *liver* of creation. In each of these three vital organs a level of the soul resides. The higher level of the soul resides in the mind, the middle level in the heart, and the lower level in the liver. In Hebrew the names of these three levels of the soul, from above to below, are *Neshamah*, which itself means "soul"; *Ru'ach*, which literally means spirit; and *Nefesh*, which is the natural, or vital, or animate level of the soul, which resides in the liver.

The Torah says that the *Nefesh*, the lower level, is the blood. The liver is the seat of the blood. It clarifies, purifies the blood. It sends the blood to the heart. In

the heart the spirit enters the blood, which is the oxygen, and is then distributed to the entire body. But the brain, the mind, is what controls and leads all of the body, the vital organs, and all of the limbs of the body. Each one of these three general levels of mind, heart, and liver possesses three faculties.

Our purpose in these teachings is to address the significance and meaning of Torah. Therefore, we begin with this teaching which will ultimately explain the three levels, the three faculties of the mind, which in Hebrew are called *Chochmah* (wisdom), *Binah* (understanding), and *Da'at* (knowledge).

TWO LEVELS OF PROPHECY

In our previous teaching, we explained that the Torah in general (also referred to as the Bible) is divided into three general sections or parts. The Five books of Moses, which are called *Torah* (specifically), and the *Nevi'im* (the Prophets) and the *Ketuvim* (the Writings).

We explained that the archetypal soul, who is the one that received the Torah from God and gave us the Torah as the Word of God is Moses, the greatest of all prophets. So, the Torah is also a prophecy, it is just a much higher level of prophecy than that of the other true prophets—the prophets of Israel. The difference between the prophecy of Moses and the prophecy of all the other prophets is that Moses saw through a transparent pane, as it were; he saw the word of God speaking to him when the Torah was given at Sinai. This is what we commemorate with the holiday of *Shavu'ot* (also known as the Feast of Weeks)—the time of the Giving of the Torah.

It says that all the people, not just Moses, "saw the voices," meaning that the two senses of sight and hearing united so that the people could literally see the words. The greatest of all the people who merited to see the word of God, was Moses who saw that God was speaking directly to himself. That is why Moses corresponds to both senses together, the sense of sight and the sense of deep hearing.

In Yiddish, the word that means "hearing the deep meaning of a spoken word" is *derher*. It is like the inner ear, the inner hearing, which then combines with sight acting like the power of sight to see the word. That is the nature of Moses' prophecy. Again, Moses prophecy is unique, and this is stressed by the fact that only Moses begins his prophecy with the word "this" (זֶה), as though he is pointing directly at that which he is beholding at this very moment and saying, "this is the word of God." That is the unique expression that begins Moses' prophecy: "This is the word that God commanded." All the other prophets that appear in the second section of the Bible, the Prophets, begin with the word "so" (כֹּה)—"so said God." This word "so" indicates that the other prophets did not see the word through a transparent pane, like Moses, but their prophecy can be likened to seeing through a translucent pane. That is how they "saw" or experienced receiving God's word.

WORLDS, STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE DIVINE CHARIOT

In the terminology of Kabbalah, seeing God's word through a transparent pane requires the state of consciousness of the highest of the four Worlds, which is called

the world of Emanation. At this level, consciousness is solely that of God and His Oneness. That is the level of Moses. His very consciousness is that of the world of Emanation, which, as we will explain, is above the secrets of the Divine Chariot—seen by the other major prophets: Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zachariah—which resides in the three lower worlds of consciousness known as Creation, Formation, and Action.

In our previous teaching, we explained that the greatest of the other prophets—whose prophecies appear in the Bible's second part, the *Nevi'im* (Prophets)—is Isaiah. Isaiah saw the Divine Chariot. What is the meaning of the expression, "Divine Chariot?" The chariot symbolizes a state of being that is totally nullified to the will of God. It performs solely the will of God in its thought, in its speech, in its action, in its deed. It is totally devoted to God and to perform and enact God's mission on earth, which is to spread the Divine light of the Torah and thereby to rectify God's world as He desired in the Creation of the world. In the higher world of Emanation, the concept of chariot as so defined does not apply because, once more, to be a chariot is to be a created being, but a created being which is totally null to the will of the Creator, meaning that it performs solely the directive of the Creator and thereby it leads, as it were, the Creator himself to the manifestation or actualization of His purpose in creation. Just as a chariot leads the one who rides on the chariot to his end, to his mission.

Put another way, in the higher world of Emanation, the world of Moses, all is God and God is all. It is as though the end, the absolutely good end of the revelation of God in all, already exists. But in the lower worlds, this mission is still in the future and we have to work to attain the mission and our purpose in life—our purpose for which we were created. The highest level of consciousness possible in the three lower worlds is to become a chariot for God. It is said that the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were God's chariot more than any other souls on earth. But Moses is even above their level of being a chariot.

PROPHECY AND DIVINE INSPIRATION

Moses' prophecy is a transparent prophecy, and the other prophets experience a translucent prophecy. What they have in common, meaning that what is shared by the prophecy of Moses, which is the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) and the prophecies appearing in the second part of the Bible, the Prophets, is that in both the prophecy is a light which descends from above. God is giving the prophecy. He is placing His word to the mouth of the prophet to convey to us, through a light, a revelation that descends from above.

The essential difference between these first two parts of the Bible—the prophecy of Moses and the prophecy of the Prophets—and the third part, the Writings, is that the Writings are Divine inspiration that God places in the heart of man. We are inspired by God to express ourselves from below up (as in prayer to God). Another way of explaining this difference is that prophecy that descends directly from above is known as "Direct Light" or in Hebrew, *Or Yashar*. Thus, the first and the second parts of the Bible constitute two different levels of *Or Yashar*, of direct light,

light that descends from above to below. But the third part of the Bible, which is the Writings, is described as "Returning Light" (or reflected light), which in Hebrew is *Or Chozer*. *Or Chozer* is when God gives us Divine inspiration, meaning that it reveals the Divine spark in the heart of Israel, the heart of all mankind. We are taught that all mankind can achieve a level of Divine inspiration, and the beginning of Divine inspiration is the ability, the arousal from below, to turn to God in prayer.

The verb *to turn* (to God in prayer) is very important because before we turn to God, our backs, as it were, are to God. In our initial state, we face (we are conscious of) the material reality of the world, and our back (unconsciousness) is to the Creator. But that is not the ideal state, of course. The ideal state is that we turn to face the Creator (in our conscious mind and heart), and the creation itself is to our back (when turning to God we 'forget' the physical reality that seems to deny His Presence). We know that creation exists because God desires that it exists, at least in our state of consciousness, but our face is turned to God. That is already the beginning of Divine inspiration, and the first expression of that Divine inspiration is that we pray to God. This is the consciousness of King David, whose essence is found in Psalms, the first book of the Writings, which are his prayers to God.

The second manifestation of Divine inspiration is found in his son, King Solomon. From the inspiration that is given to man in his heart—in the spark of Divinity that resides in his heart—man receives insight, a sense of truth—of the difference between truth and falsehood. King Solomon's inspired wisdom, which is written in the form of parables taught by a father to his son, appears in the second book of the Writings, the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs is the book that follows Psalms. Solomon addresses us like a dedicated and devoted father coming to teach his son the wisdom that God has inspired and granted him. This is the second manifestation of Divine inspiration, which as explained, is a light that returns or reflects from below to above.

To summarize what we have seen: the three parts of the Bible (Torah, Prophets, and Writings) constitute two levels of descending light (Torah and the Prophets), which is then reflected as one level of ascending, or returning light, from us to God; two levels from God to us, and one level from us to God.

RETURNING LIGHT ASCENDS HIGHER THAN THE ORIGIN OF DIRECT LIGHT

But we are taught something most profound about the returning light, the level that ascends from below. The returning light represents the arousal of our soul to address and to understand as much as we can of the Divine providence of God, and to teach it to our children from generation to generation. This returning light returns so high that in a certain sense it even reaches a climax, an epitome, which is higher than the origin of the descending light. This is an amazing insight. It means that the returning light returns to the very deepest essence of God Himself, both when we address Him in prayer and when we receive insights from Him and teach them to our children.

This is our second teaching to better

understand the significance and the importance of the Writings in the Bible. The Writings are actually the Divine words that we 'read' in ourselves, they are what is inscribed in our own hearts.

Recall that we began by stating that the mind of reality is the Torah itself with its three parts: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Our next teaching, God willing, will be devoted to explaining more about what the three faculties of the mind are and how they correspond to the three parts of the Bible. For now, let us reiterate that the mind is the Torah, the heart is Israel, and the liver symbolizes the nations of the world. The liver is the seat of the blood. It represents the natural and habitual behavior of the entire body. It is the largest vital organ in the body, much bigger than the heart or the mind itself, which reflects how the nations of the earth are the biggest element in creation, quantitatively. The word liver etymologically derives from the word "live," or "life," which is also related to "love." It also means "fat," meaning that it is big; it also expands, representing expansion. As we said before, it is not just the seat of the blood. It holds the power to purify the blood, to take out all the toxins from the blood, and then to send the blood to the heart, to Israel, which then distributes the blood to all of the organs of the body, all directed by the Torah, which is the mind of creation.

RECTIFYING THE STATE OF ISRAEL: DAVID AT THE HELM

On the upcoming festival of Shavuot, we connect to the figure of King David, "David, King of Israel, lives and endures." David was born and he died on Shavuot, the 6th of Sivan, and on this day, it is customary to read the Scroll of Ruth, which deals with David's lineage and ends with the verse, "And Boaz begot Oved, and Oved begot Yishai, and Yishai begot David."

King David received from God the crown of kingship, for him and for his descendants, forever. The faith and the anticipation of the true and complete redemption, which accompanies the people of Israel throughout all generations (a hope thousands of years old), is bound together with the renewal of the kingdom of the house of David. These are captured in various statements that have become staples of Jewish faith: "I believe in the coming of the Mashiach," "Speedily cause the offspring of David Your servant to flourish" (the King Mashiach is from the seed of David, and within him rests the soul of David himself), and as we welcome Shabbat every week, "Shake yourself from the dust, arise. Don your garments of splendor, My people. By the son of Yishai of Bethlehem. Draw near to my soul, redeem it [alluding to the imminent redemption of each individual soul, and the redemption of all Israel and the entire world]."

RECTIFYING THE STATE OF ISRAEL FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE SON OF YISHAI

It is incumbent upon us today to rectify the State of Israel following the path of King David. Even before we merit the actual revelation of the King Mashiach, we must strive to place the son of Yishai in the lead. This is an allusion to a passage from the Talmud that states that God said to Yerovam ben Nevat. Yerovam was a dissenter from the House of David, who was originally tasked by the prophet Achiyah with founding the Northern Kingdom of Israel that included 10 of the 12 tribes. However, to cement his sovereignty and sever the people's dependence on the unifying Holy Temple in Jerusalem, Yerovam built centers of idolatrous worship in his territory. As a result, the sages describe the following interaction between God and Yerovam:

> "Repent, and I, you, and the son of Yishai will stroll in the Garden of Eden." He said to Him [Yerovam to God], "Who is at the head?" "The son of Yishai is at the head!" "If so," he responded, "I do not want [it]."

Yerovam had good qualifications for leading the Northern Kingdom of Israel; he could be a successful administrator—but only on the condition that "the son of Yishai is at the head." Today too, the rectification of the "State of the Jews" in the Land of Israel can only happen through a shift in mindset leading to the appointment of leadership (the head) with a rectified consciousness (head, thought, and worldview). By correcting the head, the entire people and the entire state are rectified, as the Talmud states, "the whole body follows the head."

What is the path of "the son of Yishai"? What are the primary traits of the desired leader? He is filled with utter faith in God and in His Torah. As King David says, "I have chosen the way of faith; I have set Your judgments [before me]" (דֶּרֶךְ אֱמוּנָה בָּחָרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ שִׁוִּיתִי). He "contemplates the Torah and performs its commandments" with all his heart and always prays for God's salvation: "For I am prayer" (וַאֲנִי תְּפִלָּה). He is full of trust in God alone: "I have placed my trust in Your kindness" (וַאֲנִי בְחַסְדְּךָ בָטַחְתִּי), and from all these he is filled with self-sacrifice for his people seeking to meet all their needs, physical and spiritual. He unifies and binds the entire nation together: "When there was a king in Yeshurun, when the heads of the people gathered, the tribes of Israel unified together" (וַיְהִי בִישֻׁרוּן מֶלֶךְ בְּהִתְאַסֵּף רָאשֵׁי עָם יַחַד שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), where the initials of the words "the tribes of Israel unified together" spell "Yishai" (ישי). He is the king referred to as "one of the people" (אַחַד הָעָם) who makes the people one. Of course, he is not immune to mistakes, but he is a master of *teshuvah* and knows how to confess his sin and repent by openly stating "I have sinned before God" (חָטָאתִי לַה') as dictated by the Torah's description of the expected conduct "When a king sins" (אֲשֶׁר נָשִׂיא יֶחֱטָא). Happy is the generation whose leader confesses his sins and repents, with humility and lowliness that finds favor in the eyes of all: "And I will be lowly in my own eyes" (וְהָיִיתִי שָׁפָל בְּעֵינָי).

The rectification of the State cannot be achieved only through changes in the systems of government; it must start

with adopting an inner spirit of return to God: "The people of Israel will ultimately do *teshuvah* at the end of their exile, and immediately they will be redeemed," both personal return to God and a collective one, together. Following the return to the Land of Israel in recent generations, its resettling, and the beginning of the ingathering of the exiles—we must now reach the essential point: "And He [God] gave them [the Jewish people] lands of nations… so that they might keep His statutes and observe His teachings" (וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם אַרְצוֹת גּוֹיִם... בַּעֲבוּר יִשְׁמְרוּ חֻקָּיו וְתוֹרֹתָיו יִנְצֹרוּ), and to place at the helm of our collective a figure of truth and faith who expresses the connection to God—"a king from the house of David who contemplates Torah and engages in the commandments"—who leads the redemption forward. This must be a figure whom all desire to emulate, for the king is "the heart of the entire congregation of Israel," and within the heart of every Jew there is a longing to be like him.

"For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, and they will dwell there and possess it. And the seed of His servants will inherit it, and those who love His name will dwell in it. For the conductor, of David, for remembrance" (כִּי אֱלֹהִים יוֹשִׁיעַ צִיּוֹן וְיִבְנֶה עָרֵי יְהוּדָה... לְמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד לְהַזְכִּיר). The true leader aspires "to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty" (לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שַׁדַּי) and lifts his eyes today toward the future vision of, "They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, just as waters cover the ocean. And on that day the root of Yishai, which stands as a banner for the peoples, to him the nations shall seek, and his resting place shall be glorious" (לֹא יָרֵעוּ וְלֹא יַשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל הַר קָדְשִׁי כִּי מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ דֵּעָה אֶת ה' כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מְכַסִּים. וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שֹׁרֶשׁ יִשַׁי אֲשֶׁר עֹמֵד לְנֵס עַמִּים אֵלָיו גּוֹיִם יִדְרֹשׁוּ וְהָיְתָה מְנֻחָתוֹ כָּבוֹד).

Four main areas within the government and state systems currently require fundamental changes at the root-level: the government leadership, the army, the judicial system (the Supreme Court), and the media.

In each of these four areas, we must place "Ben Yishai at the helm," meaning a change of mindset and of leadership—one that will lead the people in a path of righteousness. When, with God's help, we succeed in rectifying them, we will find that things fall into place peacefully, that the disputes between us will end, and that HaShem will help us overcome our external enemies and bless us in all our endeavors.

THE FOUR HEADS OF THE YEAR

These four areas of government and state are alluded to in the opening Mishnah of Rosh Hashanah. In fact, in Hebrew Rosh HaShanah literally means a change of head, or a change in mindset:

> There are four New Years: The first of Nissan is the New Year for kings. The first of Elul is the New Year for the tithing of animals. The first of Tishrei is the New Year for [reckoning] years. The first of Shevat is the New Year for the tree.

Let us elaborate on each according to the order in which they appear in the Mishnah.

A NEW HEAD/MINDSET FOR THE GOVERNMENT

The first of Nissan is the New Year for kings and for festivals: this refers to the rectification of the government and its leadership (the king in the literal

sense). The king leads the people toward their destiny. As the Zohar states, "When the head of the people [the leadership] is rectified, the entire people is rectified."

In today's reality, we must strive to appoint a prime minister (whose duties are similar to those of a king) who openly follows the path of the Torah and enjoys the trust of the broader public—"Your people Israel" (עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל) who are all "believers, children of believers"; a leader who acts as an agent of God—"Who crowns kings, and sovereignty is His"—and who is entirely devoted to the welfare of the people.

A NEW HEAD/MINDSET FOR THE SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

The first of Elul is the New Year for the tithing of animals: this hints at the rectification of the army (and the entire security establishment), since Rosh Chodesh Elul is the time when the king would go out to war, as in the verse, "At the turn of the year, at the time when kings go forth."

It must be clearly recognized throughout all levels of the army that "Ben Yishai is at the helm." Military leadership must be subordinate to the Prime Minister in every fateful decision.

The spirit of the commander in the IDF and the rules of conduct both in bases and on the battlefield (the so-called ethical code) must all follow the path paved by David the son of Yishai, the Sweet Singer of Israel, who fought the battles of God. Then we will see the fulfillment of the words, "For Havayah your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you and to deliver your enemies before you."

When this spirit guides the army, the issue of yeshivah student enlistment is naturally resolved. Under the inspiration of "Ben Yishai at the helm"—a leader who goes out to war and also meditates on the Torah day and night (as per the requirement that the king keep a Torah scroll with him all his life), a leader who is a "man of war" when confronting the enemies of Israel and also engages in the so-called "[intellectual] war of [comprehending] Torah"—the brave men of Israel will enlist willingly when needed to fight and willingly enlist into study halls when needed for the "war of Torah" (which protects the people), with a sense of unity ("the tribes of Israel together") and mutual responsibility.

A NEW HEAD/MINDSET FOR THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The first of Tishrei is the New Year for years: this hints to the rectification of the judicial system. The first of Tishrei is simply called "Rosh Hashanah," the Day of Judgment for the individual and the collective: "For it is a statute for Israel, a judgment for the God of Jacob" (כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב).

In the governance of the state, the righteous king must ensure that the entire judicial system in the land operates according to the laws and ethics of the Torah of Israel, whose supreme goal is "to do justice and righteousness" (לַעֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה)—and even the king himself is subject to the same laws as the sages rule that the kings of the House of David judge and are judged. The rectification of the judicial system is the most important rectification of the state, for the Hebrew word for "state" (מְדִינָה) derives from "judgment" (דִּין). "And

I will restore your judges as at first, and your counselors as at the inception" (וְאָשִׁיבָה שֹׁפְטַיִךְ כְּבָרִאשֹׁנָה וְיֹעֲצַיִךְ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה).

A NEW HEAD/MINDSET FOR THE MEDIA

The first of Shevat is the New Year for the tree, according to the words of Beit Shammai; Beit Hillel say, on the fifteenth of it: this fourth New Year alludes to the rectification of communication. The tree is the figurative "speech of the field" (שִׂיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה), the conversation of the trees and the conversation of animals. The Torah likens man to a tree: "For man is the tree of the field" (כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה). Man is described as a "speaker" (מְדַבֵּר) because of his singular faculty of speech, which makes conversation and communication possible. This is especially true of the Jewish people, whose "strength lies only in their mouth."

The tree is also the Tree of Life (עֵץ חַיִּים)—the rectification of speech through words of Torah. Indeed, when the Torah is involved then even "the casual conversation of Torah scholars requires study." Their casual conversations are likened to the leaves of the tree, about which the verse says, "its leaf shall not wither" (וְעָלֵהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל).

Rectifying communication—on all official media platforms—demands that everything should be conducted according to the values of the Torah of Israel—speech that is relevant and focused, without slander or other vilifying or denigrating use of language. Official discourse should promote the true goals of the people of Israel according to the Torah. This is the way of the son of Yishai, like the Book of Psalms, where even the most difficult events described are permeated with faith and prayer.

Let us conclude with a beautiful allusion: "Rosh Hashanah" (**רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה**) has a *gematria* of 861. Since there are four "Rosh HaShanah," the total value is 4 times 861, or 3444. This is also the numerical value as the primordial value of the Torah's first word, "In the beginning" (**בְּרֵאשִׁית**). Using the primordial value, in which each letter is set equal to the sum of letters from alef to that letter reflects the secret of "the primordial beginning of His works" (קֶדֶם מִפְעָלָיו מֵאָז).

Thus, the Torah's very first message is that we are called upon to rectify the reality of the world that God created for His glory: "to make for Him a dwelling place in the lower realms," through the revelation of God's sovereignty over the Kingdom of Israel on earth—arising from the clear awareness that: **"Who is at the head? Ben Yishai is at the head!"**

If we have faith and we truly want it, it is not an unachievable dream. "Who is at the head? Ben Yishai is at the head" has the same value as the product of "David" (**דָּוִד**) and "faith" (**אֱמוּנָה**).

STORY

THE BA'AL SHEM TOV: SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

I heard from my father-in-law, the Gaon Rabbi Aharon Bernstein of blessed memory, who heard from the holy Rabbi Mordechai Tzvi Shmerler of blessed memory, who heard from the holy mouth of Rabbi David Tzvi Chen (the Radatz) of Chernigov of blessed memory:

The holy Mitteler Rebbe once asked his holy father, the Alter Rebbe, to tell him something wondrous about his holy teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch. He replied that the Maggid was truly a chariot for the Infinite—a Divine chariot. When he would move his right arm, he would raise the right arm, which is the attribute of *chesed* (loving-kindness) above, and when he would raise his left arm, he would raise the left arm, the attribute of *gevurah* (might) above!

He asked further: And what, then, was the Ba'al Shem Tov? "Something else entirely!" the Alter Rebbe replied.

[*Zichronam Livrachah*]

The level of the Maggid, related at the beginning of the story, is no small matter. In fact, the title "Divine chariot" is attributed to the holy Patriarchs themselves! This expression reflects their immense self-nullification to the Almighty. They had no self-will other than God's will, and this will operated in them automatically, without need for conscious thought or any mediation: "If this is the level of the student," the Mitteler Rebbe wondered, "what is the level of the teacher?"

Indeed, the Alter Rebbe has no words to describe the Ba'al Shem Tov. This is a level that cannot be grasped or comprehended, and one can only perceive sparks of it. Many stories have been told by *tzaddikim*, and in all of them, the same principle is interwoven: no one has the power to truly comprehend who and what the Ba'al Shem Tov was.

For example, it is told that,

Once on Simchat Torah, the Tzemach Tzedek and his chasidim sat on the synagogue floor and held a farbrengen, drinking vodka in cups. The Tzemach Tzedek spoke about the events that would occur with the coming of Mashiach. The Tzemach Tzedek said: "When Mashiach comes, every homeowner will be like Reb Wolf of

Zhitomir (a disciple of the Maggid). What was the level that made Reb Wolf of Zhitomir a homeowner? Every evening he would sweep his courtyard and then close the courtyard gate and stuff paper underneath so that pigs couldn't enter." The chasidim asked the Tzemach Tzedek: "And what will Reb Wolf of Zhitomir be when Mashiach comes?" The Tzemach Tzedek replied: "He will be like the Ba'al Shem Tov." They asked him: "And what will the Ba'al Shem Tov be?" The Tzemach Tzedek said: "Ah, the Ba'al Shem Tov...." And he gestured with his hand as if marveling at his wonder.

The Ba'al Shem Tov's grandson Rabbi Baruch, who was known for the authority and royalty he conducted, completely nullified himself before the greatness of his grandfather. One of the disciples of Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuzh was a young man, a Torah scholar and a God-fearing person, who came to Rabbi Baruch to learn Torah and Divine service according to the chasidic ways of his holy grandfather, the Ba'al Shem Tov. He would cling to the dust of his Rebbe's feet and travel with him on all his journeys. Once, when traveling back to Mezhibuzh with his holy rebbe, a thought arose in his mind: How much greater and more wondrous could the marvels and awesomeness of his grandfather, the Ba'al Shem Tov have been, that the whole world praises and extols him? His found it difficult to believe that there could be a man who surpasses his holy rebbe.

As they traveled near the city, the young man needed to relieve himself and descended from the wagon, entering the nearby forest. Rabbi Baruch ordered the wagon to continue traveling. When the young man came out of the forest and didn't find the wagon, he walked to the city on foot. Meanwhile, it began to rain and all his clothes were soaked. When the young man arrived at the city, he entered a house to rest a bit and warm up, and saw an old man sitting and learning Talmud diligently, not noticing the young man's entrance. The young man didn't dare approach him until the old man paused his learning and saw the young man. He asked him, "Where are you from?" He said, "I'm from Mezhibuzh and I was traveling with Rabbi Baruch." The old man asked, "Who is this Rabbi? I don't know him and have never heard of him." The young man said, "Why, he's the grandson of the holy Ba'al Shem Tov." The old man replied, "Indeed, I knew the holy Ba'al Shem Tov well. But his grandson I don't know. Let me tell you how great the power of the Ba'al Shem Tov was. When the Ba'al Shem Tov came to live in Mezhibuzh and everyone rushed to him, I wasn't eager to go because I didn't want to interrupt my Torah learning. Even when I heard people greatly praising his wonders, I didn't want to postpone my learning to go to him.

"Once, on a Saturday night, the heat was very intense, and after I sat and learned, I

couldn't bear the heat. I got up and went outside to breathe fresh air. As I walked, lost in my thoughts, my feet brought me near the Ba'al Shem Tov's house. I said to myself, 'Let me go and see this man whose fame is known among the people.' I entered and saw the Ba'al Shem Tov sitting on his chair, surrounded by a group of women telling him their troubles, and he was answering each one.

I said to myself: Now, when a person should be engaged in the midnight prayers and rectifications and Torah study, he's busy with women's talk and vanities?! I left there and passed through his study hall, and entered. I saw a man standing before the ark, lamenting from the depths of his heart in the midnight prayer, the words coming from deep within, with a holy melody and great sweetness. I wanted to see who this man was and looked at his face, and saw it was the Ba'al Shem Tov. I ran back to the Ba'al Shem Tov and found him sitting and engaging with the women as before. I couldn't believe my eyes, and I ran back and forth from the Ba'al Shem Tov to the study hall. From the study hall to the Ba'al Shem Tov and found him here sitting and dealing with the women, and there standing in the study hall saying the midnight prayers with tears. I was greatly amazed at this sight. And I realized that it is not for naught that they call him the Ba'al Shem Tov.

"After this," the man continued, "a bad incident happened to me. Every time I said the *Shema*, an impure image stood before my eyes. This caused me great distress. I took upon myself fasts and abstinences, but they didn't help at all. Against my will, I went to the Ba'al Shem Tov and told him everything that had happened to me. He said to me: 'If so, take upon yourself one complete fast from Sabbath to Sabbath.' I went home and did as he said. On Saturday night, I didn't eat anything. In the morning of the first day, when I woke up, the desire for food overwhelmed me greatly. I felt very weak. I thought that there was no way I could keep the fast because the hunger grew stronger from moment to moment. I decided in my mind that I was ready to die. And as soon as I agreed to this in my heart, immediately the hunger left me and I felt satiated as if I had eaten a good meal. And so it was every day. In the morning I was very hungry to the point of death. And when I held back and overcame my hunger, the hunger left me after I agreed to die of hunger. On Friday night I ate the Sabbath meal, and immediately the impure image left me and since then my thoughts have been pure and clean. And I understood that all this was the work of the holy Ba'al Shem Tov and I became very attached to him."

When the old man finished speaking, the young man understood that his holy rebbe had arranged this situation, so that he would hear from the old man about the greatness of the holiness and wonders of the Ba'al Shem Tov. Rabbi Baruch wanted him to understand that all the wonders he had seen with him did not reach the deeds of the holy Ba'al Shem Tov.

WHAT IS HIGHER THAN THE CHARIOT?

In an attempt to trace the path of the tzaddik, we will offer an explanation of the Ba'al Shem Tov's superior virtue: If the Maggid was a chariot, in the aspect of the holy Patriarchs, then the holy Ba'al Shem Tov was in the aspect of Moses of whom it is said that there was no prophet like him, before or after. Moses was also completely nullified to Divinity, but it was not the nullification of a "chariot" like the Patriarchs, but something else: "And he beholds the image of God."

What does this mean? Didn't God Himself tell Moses that "no man can see Me and live"? Chasidut explains that Moses saw the world in the same way that God sees it. Moses identifies with God absolutely, and not just as a vessel in His hands but as one looking through His eyes, and speaking in His name in a way that no prophet could speak.

Therefore, the *tzaddikim* said that while other *tzaddikim* can "open channels of abundance" that were blocked by man's sins, the Ba'al Shem Tov alone could create new channels and change the root of the soul of the person standing before him. Indeed, the great *tzaddikim* (like the Maggid and his disciples) merited the level of being a chariot for the Almighty, as He reveals Himself "after the contraction." But the Ba'al Shem Tov was unified with the simple Infinite light (or revelation of Godliness) that is above all contraction and definition.


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