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

בס"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת וַיְחִי ❁ יג-יד טֵבֵת תשפ"ו



"*On Friday night, when the Rebbe stood to make kiddush over the wine, he poured his cup and took it in both hands with his face aflame. He stood like this for three hours and finally said: "I will not make kiddush over the wine before Mendel is here!" At that moment, a knock was heard on the cabin door, and on its threshold stood Mendel the attendant, who immediately fell into the room, fainting.*"

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"…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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FARBRENGEN EXCERPT
WHO ARE YOU PRAYING FOR?

Throughout 5773 (2013), HaRav Ginsburgh gave a weekly class and farbrengen that was filled with innovative teachings. The class usually began with a new perspective on a topic from the weekly parashah. For the week of parashat Vayechi, the topic from the parashah was the blessings given to the tribes of Judah and Dan and the two tribes, Shimon and Benjamin who historically remained connected with Judah.

In the excerpt we have chosen, the Rav took a deeper dive into the blessing given to Benjamin and ended up speaking about the different types of intent tzaddikim (i.e., everyone who prays) have when praying to God for some benefit.

The full transcript in Hebrew was edited and published in Shiurim VeHitva'aduyot 5773 and on www.galeinai.org.il, which can be accessed at the link above.

BENJAMIN THE WOLF

From the verse, "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he consumes [his foe], and in the evening he divides the spoil,"[1] we learn that the nature of the wolf is to eat at night. The fact that Benjamin's wolf consumes in the morning is a novelty and not the nature of real-life wolves.

How is this novel trait of eating in the morning explained through the lens of Chasidic teachings about the psyche? In the morning, we enjoy clarity of mind (מוחין דקטנות) while in the evening the mind is in a limited state known as "small mindedness" (מוחין דגדלות). Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev writes[2] that when a person has pleasure from serving God, specifically in the service of the heart, in the prayer that he prays before God, he is able through his prayer to ask for and bring down pleasure into all the worlds. He can draw down all the blessings needed, all the effluence, all the pleasure, into the worlds, into our reality, directly to us. That is one type of Divine service. But he writes, there is another type of *tzaddik*, whose every action is meant to give pleasure to God. A *tzaddik* of this type does not think about anyone else's pleasure, not his own, not those around him, only God's pleasure from his service.

This is known as bringing satisfaction and contentment Above, to God. It is only natural that if God is happy, His joy is reflected and permeates all of reality. But there is no need to think about it, certainly not to ask for it—it happens automatically. This type of *tzaddik*, says the Berditchever is the one who is described like Benjamin the *tzaddik*, as one who "consumes in the morning." Still, the *tzaddik* whose intent is to draw God's effluence down into reality, to bring healing to the sick, to provide bread for the hungry, he is also a great *tzaddik*, and he embodies

1. Genesis 49:27.
2. *Kedushat Levi, Vayechi, s.v. Binyamin Ze'ev Yitraf.*

the natural quality of the wolf "in the evening he divides the spoil." All the pleasure he can draw down is considered the "spoil" of his Divine service and he divides it up at night between those who need it. Why at night? Because this is the small-minded state of wanting to draw down the effluence instead of serving God to bring Him contentment. In the morning, the *tzaddik* has a lot more energy in his service, so he can think that his work is only for the sake of God's contentment. But at night, he is in a state of small-mindedness, he has less energy, and so his focus is on serving for the sake of bringing the "spoils" down to reality.

FOUR LEVELS OF PRAYER

Since we have delved into this topic of the intent behind prayer, let us expand it into a full *partzuf*, or model. When a *tzaddik* prays—and every Jew is a *tzaddik*, as the prophet testifies, "And your people are all *tzaddikim*"[3]—most of his prayer is meant to draw pleasure, to bring about good things in a revealed fashion, as the Rebbe would say. The source of all pleasure is in the inner dimension of the crown known as *Atik*. The pleasure, i.e., the good as it is revealed, then descends to one of the levels of reality represented by the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*, which also correspond to the *sefirot*: wisdom, understanding, the emotional faculties, and kingdom.

PRAYING FOR ONESELF

Now, if the person feels that things are bad now (this is how they seem to him in this, our world of deceit, which masks the truth) and they pray from their heart that things get better. They might owe a great deal of money, they might be completely desperate, and they feel that they need to pray to God; He is the only address. In their prayer, they are seeking to fill their own needs. That is a hundred percent ok. There's nothing wrong with that, but that is the lowest level of prayer. This is prayer at the level of kingdom, the final *hei* of *Havayah*. Kingdom is related to the sense of self, "I am prayer"[4] and they are praying for their "I."

PRAYING TO BE A CONDUIT

There is a slightly higher level of prayer, when the *tzaddik* opens a conduit through which the effluence, the good and pleasure, can be drawn down for everyone. But for the effluence to make its way down into our reality, it must pass through him, through the one praying. So, he prays that God bring down the good, that things go well for me, but not that I retain the effluence. He knows this secret. He prays that he will have a lot of money but not for himself. He wants the money to give to *tzedakah*—a very important thing. The Lubavitcher Rebbe also encouraged people to pray that they become affluent—you are permitted to pray for this—so that they can give a lot of *tzedakah*. If this is the intent I have in mind when praying, that I have wealth so that I may give to others, this type of prayer corresponds to the *vav* of *Havayah*. This is still "small mindedness" and is related to the end of Benjamin's blessing, "in the evening he divides the spoil." To divide the spoil, you must have access to it.

3. Isaiah 60:21.

4. Psalms 109:4.

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

The next level of prayer is when someone prays for a friend. They are a *tzaddik* that is not asking anything for themselves, only for someone else. Someone is ill and they are praying for them: "May it be Your will God that you heal, that you send a complete healing to so and so." Or if someone needs livelihood, or a *shidduch*. The person praying is not even a conduit in this case. He is not thinking about himself at all. This level is part of, "the concealed [matters] are for *Havayah* our God."[5] Even though the effluence is meant to be revealed and affect reality in a clear way, there is nothing self-serving in the prayer itself. For this reason, this corresponds to the first *hei* of *Havayah*, the *sefirah* of understanding, the intellectual faculty that is already above the self-serving emotive powers.

PRAYING FOR GOD'S CONTENTMENT

There is one last level of prayer, which corresponds to the World of Emanation, the *sefirah* of wisdom, and the *yud* of *Havayah*. This type of prayer's goal is solely that God receive pleasure from my prayer. An example would be to say, "Almighty Creator who creates me at every moment anew, You should be well, You should feel good about Creation." There is no ulterior thought that if God is good, then it is good for everyone, it will immediately be reflected and expressed in every single part of reality. So, even though the person praying this way is not thinking about the revealed good that will be drawn down into reality because of his words, that is exactly what will happen. This prayer causes the highest degree of good to be revealed in reality. This is the main example of "the concealed [matters] are for *Havayah* our God," the entire prayer is dedicated to "*Havayah* our God."

To summarize,

letter of *Havayah*	*sefirah*	type of prayer
yud	wisdom	Praying for God's pleasure
hei	understanding	Praying for others
vav	emotive sefirot	Praying to receive for the benefit of others
hei	kingdom	Praying for myself

5. Deuteronomy 29:28.

THE END OF DAYS AND MASHIACH

In *parshat Vayechi* Jacob makes a dramatic announcement: "And then Jacob called his sons and said: 'Gather together and I will tell you what will happen to you in the End of Days.'"[1] Jacob

1. Genesis 49:1.

wanted to reveal his prophetic vision of the End of Days to his sons, but just as he was about to speak the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence, left him. Although God did not allow Jacob to openly reveal the End of Days, he was permitted to embed different parts of his overall vision in the blessings he subsequently gave his sons. *Rashi* points out many of these prophetic allusions in his commentary. Judah's blessing, for instance, contains some explicit and other subtler references to the future:

> Judah—you, your brothers shall acknowledge; your hand will beat your enemies' neck; your father's sons will prostrate themselves to you. A lion cub is Judah; from the prey, my son, you elevated yourself. He crouches, lies down like a lion, and like an awesome lion, who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawmaker from among his descendants until *Shiloh arrives* and his will be an assembly of nations. He will tie his donkey to the vine; to the vine branch his donkey's foal; he will launder his garments in wine and his robe in the blood of grapes. Red eyed from wine, and white toothed from milk.[2]

MOSES AND MASHIACH

Much of this blessing is dedicated to describing the tribe of Judah's future role as the progenitor of kings. Not only will the Jewish people accept Judah's descendants as kings and scholars, the nations of the world will also accept his penultimate descendant as the universal ruler of humanity. *Rashi* explains that Jacob is alluding to the Davidic monarchy and to Mashiach, the future redeemer. The Hebrew words, "Shiloh arrives," (**יָבֹא שִׁילֹה**) equal 358, exactly the numerical value of Mashiach (**מָשִׁיחַ**)!

The Hebrew word "Shiloh," (**שִׁילֹה**) by itself, equals 345, the numerical value of Moshe (**משה**), Moses' name in Hebrew. As the Midrash states, Moses "is the first redeemer and he [his soul enclothed within the soul of Mashiach] will be the last redeemer."[3] This statement links the souls of Moses and Mashiach together. The connection between Moses and Mashiach is further stressed by both their Hebrew names beginning with the letters *mem* and *shin*.

In this blessing, Jacob also subtly sheds light on Mashiach's role and on the change of consciousness that humanity will undergo in the Messianic era. Most importantly, Jacob foresees that the crowns of leadership and scholarship will be combined and come to fruition in Judah's descendants. Moses of course combined both these qualities as perhaps no one else before or after him. Based on this, the Rambam asserts, in his concise, but highly influential treatment of the Messianic era, that for an individual to be considered Mashiach, he must fulfill the following conditions:

> He must be a ruler from the House of David, immersed in the Torah and its commandments like David and his ancestors. He must also follow both the Written and the Oral Torah, lead all Jews back to the Torah, strengthen the observance of its laws, and fight God's battles. If one fulfills these conditions, then we may assume that

2. Genesis 49:8-12.

3. *Shemot Rabbah* 4:2.

he is the Mashiach. If he does this successfully and then rebuilds the Temple on its original site and gathers all the dispersed Jews, then we may be certain that he is the Mashiach.[4]

A NEW TORAH FROM ME WILL EMERGE

The root of the Hebrew word for "lawmaker" (מְחֹקֵק) that Jacob uses in blessing Judah has a number of other meanings: a Divine decree that transcends human logic (חֻקָּה); a law (חק); bosom (חֵיק) or inside; and to engrave (חֲקִיקָה). Not only will Mashiach teach the nation of Israel and the entire world Torah, he will also expose a level of Torah wisdom and mystic thought which is so deep and novel that it will be permanently engraved in the bosoms, the hearts, of his listeners. This new level of understanding is referred to in the Midrashic statement (based on a verse from the prophets[5]): "A new Torah from Me will emerge."[6] According to the traditional understanding of this Midrash, the so-called new Torah will actually be constructed from the very same letters as the Torah we have at present, but our understanding of its profundity will be so much infinitely deeper that it will be like a new Torah.

PROPHECY AND DIVINE INSPIRATION

According to Rambam the Mashiach does not need to be a prophet, nor does he need to perform miracles to accomplish his task.[7] Nevertheless, there are many teachings that draw a parallel between the soul of Mashiach and the soul of Moses. Although according to tradition there are some general disagreements as to the comparable spiritual levels of Moses and Mashiach, relating directly to their respective qualities of prophecy and Divine inspiration (*Ru'ach HaKodesh*), although Mashiach will not compare to Moses' level of prophecy, his soul will reach a higher level of Divine inspiration than Moses inasmuch as the Mashiach will descend from the House of David, who excelled in the realm of Divine inspiration.

A SPARK OF MOSES, A SPARK OF MASHIACH

Regarding Moses the Midrash states: "He is the first redeemer, and he will be the last redeemer."[8] Similarly, the *Zohar* also relates the soul of Moses and Mashiach. The *Or HaChaim*, the famous Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, asserts that the Mashiach will have the souls of both David and Moses.

According to the *Zohar*, the soul of Moses is present in every generation.[9] The Alter Rebbe, Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi, in his classic book, the *Tanya,* explains that every Jew in fact contains a spark of Moses, manifest within their soul's innate sense of knowing God, a power attributed especially to Moses.[10] This soul power is the aspect of Moses as the first redeemer. As the final redeemer, the spark of Moses in every Jew is manifest in the deep Messianic desire to rectify, redeem, and heal the world.[11]

4. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Melachim* [Laws of Kings] 11:4.
5. "Torah will emerge from me" (Isaiah 51:4).
6. *Vayikra Rabbah* 13:3.
7. *Mishneh Torah; Hilchot Melachim* 11:3.
8. *Shemot Rabbah* 4:2.
9. *Tikkunei Zohar* 69 (112a). See also *Zohar* 3:216b.
10. *Tanya* ch. 42.
11. See *Rectifying the State of Israel*, p. 152 note 2.

This idea in the *Tanya* is based on the slightly earlier teaching from the Ba'al Shem Tov that every Jew possesses a spark of Mashiach, as discussed above. This holy spark is the innate leadership potential in each individual waiting to be manifested. When enough individuals clarify, harness, and activate their own spark of Mashiach, a critical mass of redemptive energy will be set in motion, drawing down the revelation of Mashiach into the world.

MESSIANIC COMPASSION

The two cardinal attributes of Moses—compassion and humility—will also be present in the Mashiach. Of these two qualities, Moses' humility was more essentially rooted in his soul, whereas compassion will be the more essential characteristic of Mashiach. The source for this idea is a verse in Isaiah relating to the future redeemer: "…for he who has compassion for them shall lead them, by springs of water he will guide them."[12]

A deep level of understanding this verse is revealed through the numerical value of the Hebrew word "one who has compassion" (**מְרַחֵם**) which is 288. This number has great significance in the teachings of the Arizal who explains that in the initial stages of the Divine creative process a catastrophic event occurred called the breaking of the vessels, when the initial immature vessels of creation could not contain the pure spiritual light of the Creator, and as a result they shattered. According to Kabbalah, this breaking of the vessels that occurred in a previous state of creation actually forms the reality of this world, as the shards of these vessels are scattered, along with the sparks of infinite light they contain, throughout all creation. For this reason, the previous world is referred to as the World of Chaos (*Olam HaTohu*), a chaotic state of reality, whereas our present world is called, the World of Rectification (*Olam HaTikkun*). We are charged, according to this Kabbalistic creation paradigm, with gathering all these scattered sparks in order to bring them back together within the strong and flexible vessels of rectified consciousness.

It is fascinating to note how the Arizal established that it was 288 shards containing sparks of light that fell into the lower worlds due to the breaking of the vessels, He learned the number 288 from the word "hovering," in the Torah's second verse:

> Now the earth was chaotic (*tohu*) and empty and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of God *was hovering* (מְרַחֶפֶת) over the face of the water."[13]

The initial and final letters of the word "was hovering" (**מְרַחֶפֶת**) spell **מת**, "died," while the three inner letters (**רחפ**) equal 288. Thus, the Arizal read this word as indicating that 288 sparks died or fell in the shattering of the vessels of chaos. The word "was hovering" (מְרַחֶפֶת) is understood to imply that the exterior framework (symbolized by the *mem* and the *tav*) of that previous world died when it was shattered, but the 288 sparks of vital energy initially contained within the *World of Chaos*, although fallen, are still present and in fact form the basic reality

12. Isaiah 49:10.

13. Genesis 1:2.

of our world. It is up to us to locate, gather, and elevate them back to their primordial wholeness, thus repairing the world. It is through this very process of liberating the light that we are empowered to bring redemption to the world.

Reflecting on this matter deeply, we see that the secret of redemption facilitated by the Mashiach will be based on his rectified state of compassion, which will have the empathic power—again "the one who has compassion" equals 288—to redeem all the 288 fallen sparks of light, no matter how low they may have fallen. Inasmuch as each Jew has a spark of Mashiach and Moses within them, as well as having an integral part to play in the rectification of the world, it is incumbent upon each individual to cultivate their own qualities of compassion in order to bring redemption to the world.

STORY

RABBI MOSHE OF LELOV: EXTRICATION FROM EXTERNAL FORCES

Rabbi Moshe Biderman of Lelov was born in 5537 (1777) to his father Rabbi David of Lelov, a disciple of the Seer of Lublin. He was a student of Rabbi Yeshaya of Pshedborzh, and in his second marriage, he wed Rivkah Rachel, the daughter of the Holy Jew of Peshischa. The tzaddikim of his generation greatly revered him and praised him in extraordinary terms. The Ruzhiner, for example, said that he had never seen a bearer of a broken heart like Rabbi Moshe. From 5603 (1843) to 5610 (1850), he served as rabbi in the town of Pshedborzh, but all his days he aspired to ascend to the Land of Israel and expressed his intention to hasten the redemption. At the end of 5610, he finally decided to ascend to the Land, parted from the great Chasidic leaders in Poland, and arrived in the Land of Israel in the month of Cheshvan 5611 (1850) together with a large part of his family. After a few days, he fell ill and shortly thereafter departed, only seventy-four days after arriving in the Land, on the 13th of Tevet. He was buried in the cemetery on the Mount of Olives, near the tomb of the prophet Zechariah.

When Rabbi Moshe of Lelov journeyed to the Land of Israel, the sea voyage was extremely difficult. The ship was supposed to be at sea for several months, including the month of Tishrei, and Rabbi Moshe made sure to prepare in advance a *shofar*, the Four Species, and boards to build a *sukkah* on the ship.

As *Sukkot* approached, Rabbi David saw that the willow branches he had brought with him had completely withered and were no longer fit for the *mitzvah* of the

Four Species. He turned to the ship's captain and asked him to divert the ship to one of the ports where it would be possible to obtain willows. The captain mocked him: "Should I disrupt the entire plan for a few branches?" Rabbi Moshe offered him a substantial sum of money, but the captain stood his ground. Seeing this, Rabbi Moshe offered him all the money that he had set aside to support him in his final days in Jerusalem.

When the captain saw the enormous sum of money, he changed his mind and sailed to one of the nearby islands. There, the *tzaddik* found willows, and with great joy fulfilled the *mitzvah* of the Four Species on the ship.

***

During the journey to the Holy Land, the ship anchored in a city on the Romanian coast, while the sailors waited for a wind to take the ship to Istanbul. Meanwhile, Reb Mendel, the Rebbe's attendant, went to the city to obtain food for the long journey. When the ship was about to set sail, the attendant had not yet returned from his errands. The Rebbe and his people pleaded with the captain to wait for him, saying it was dangerous to leave a lone man in a foreign city. But the captain did not heed their words and decided to set sail and continue their voyage.

On Friday night, when the Rebbe stood to make *kiddush* over the wine, he poured his cup and took it in both hands with his face aflame. He stood like this for three hours and finally said: "I will not make *kiddush* over the wine before Mendel is here!" At that moment, a knock was heard on the cabin door, and on its threshold stood Mendel the attendant, who immediately fell into the room, fainting.

When he regained consciousness, the Rebbe ordered him not to tell what had happened to him. Only after many years, when he was on his deathbed, Mendel related the story: When he descended from the ship, he was overcome with confusion. He began to walk aimlessly through the city streets, not knowing where he was headed. He walked and walked endlessly, until on Friday night he heard *them*—a euphemism for the impure forces—whispering among themselves: "What shall we do? The old man is shaking the worlds, and he's not willing to make *kiddush* until we return his attendant to him." Suddenly, a strong wind began to blow, and Mendel felt as if he was flying through the air and plunging into the ship. Then he understood that our holy Rebbe had drawn him out from among the external forces and saved him from them.

In Tractate *Berachot*, it is said about the harmful spirits—the impure forces: "These weak knees, they are from them; these legs that stumble, they are from them." In the legs, more than anywhere else in the body, there is a danger that the impure forces will draw their sustenance, and when the legs of Torah scholars falter, it stems from this. In our story too, when the impure forces seize the attendant, they

make him run back and forth without knowing where he is going.

In Kabbalah, the legs correspond to the behavioral *sefirot* victory (*netzach*) and thanksgiving (*hod*). These are the *sefirot* associated with practicality and being able to walk in the world outside of oneself, in contrast to the more internal *sefirot* of the intellect and the emotions. Interestingly, these *sefirot* are also associated with the willow branches that the *tzaddik* cherished so much, those lacking taste and smell. From this, we can understand the strength and weakness of victory and thanksgiving:

On the one hand, the *sefirot* of the legs are stable; they are less prone to changes and deliberations like the mind and heart. The habitual, behavorial forces are all about action: "Intellectual understanding, feelings? What does they have to do with anything? Get up and do something!" From their perspective, victory and acknowledgment are the two sefirot that reflect the unchanging power of the crown (*keter*), the seat of faith that is above all intellect and feeling. On the other hand, for precisely the same reason, they are prone to withering and becoming insensitive; they can easily become heartless, unmotivated, actions or lifeless rote that lacks thought, or attention. A beautiful metaphor for this is a person at a wedding or other joyous occasion, and while everyone is dancing and rejoicing, his knees feel weak and heavy. He has no desire and vitality to make them spring upward (the sages call the knees, "springs").

What causes this heaviness? The *Tanya* explains that *tzaddikim* succeed in changing their minds and hearts themselves, transforming them from evil to good. The *beinoni* (intermediate person), on the other hand, serves God on the practical level of the soul: in thought, speech, and action. He may experience a state of heaviness and dullness of heart because the heart is not open to Godliness. Instead, it is full of excessive self-awareness, from which the *tzaddik* is protected. This is expressed, as mentioned, in the legs of the soul of the *beinoni*: victory and acknowledgment (or thanksgiving). With regard to the *sefirah* of victory (*netzach*), a person struggles to sanctify himself and abstain even from what is permitted. He attempts to overcome the inclination that entices him not to perform a good deed that is not a complete obligation, to overcome his laziness for the sake of greater closeness to God. Regarding thanksgiving, an intermediate (a *beinoni*) may find it difficult to open his heart in prayer, to sincerely express thanks for the good he received from the Creator, and to recognize that "This time I will praise God, for I have taken more than my share."

In our story, the attendant falls into the hands of the impure forces in such a way that he can no longer save himself. He needs the help of the *tzaddik*, whose Divine consciousness protects him from such a fall. The *tzaddik's* willow branches are full of devotion to God beyond reason and knowledge, and he is ready to give all his wealth for them. Hence, he can be fulfilling the principle that, "a *tzaddik* makes a decree and the Holy Blessed One fulfills it." As explained elsewhere,[1] this is a quality belonging to the sefirot victory and thanksgiving of the *tzaddikim*, those who wrestle with God as it were, causing Him to joyfully admit, "My children have defeated Me!"

1. See our Hebrew volume, *Emunah VeMuda'ut*.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

HOW BA'ALEI TESHUVAH SHOULD EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN

On the 16th of Cheshvan, a group of seasoned Breslov ba'alei teshuvah met with HaRav Ginsburgh to discuss matters relating to raising children as the second generation of ba'alei teshuvah. The Rav has met with such groups in the past and the dialogue always proves to be interesting and insightful, with points of interest for every person, whether they identify as a ba'al teshuvah or as a Breslover, or not.

The dialogue first appeared in print in Hebrew in the Vayishlach 5786 edition of Nifla'ot.

Question: Children who are second-generation *ba'alei teshuva* (returnees to Judaism) sometimes grow up between two worlds. How should they be educated so that they feel whole in their Haredi identity, without a sense of detachment from the past?

Answer: A *ba'al teshuvah* is a new person, not who they were, as explained by Maimonides.[1] On the one hand, they remember the past well, and even extract the holy sparks from it—everything that can help them in the service of God. But on the other hand, they are no longer identified with the past at all. Consequently, they educate their children purely according to the place where they are in the present.

Q: What is the correct way to instill self-confidence and a genuine sense of belonging within Haredi society in the children of *ba'alei teshuvah*? Is this even necessary?

A: In general, there is no need to make an issue out of integrating into Haredi society (but see below regarding the external aspect of the matter). Self-confidence stems from the child seeing a father and mother who are joyful in their service of God, and most importantly acting as *shluchim*, i.e., emissaries for the Jewish people, whose mission is to bring the heart of Jews closer to our Father in Heaven, with pleasantness and the special sensitivity that a *ba'al teshuvah* possesses, even more so than the person born orthodox. A *ba'al teshuvah* must recognize this advantage and project it to their children, thereby instilling in them confidence in the merit that Divine Providence has granted them.

1. *Hilchot Teshuvah* 2:4.

Q: Do second-generation *ba'alei teshuvah* need their own schools, or is it better to integrate them into established Haredi institutions as much as possible? Additionally, is it advisable to cultivate a connection with *ba'alei teshuvah* communities, or is there a concern that this might strengthen a unique identity instead of integrating into the general public?

A: They definitely do not need separate frameworks since "All of Israel are friends."[2]

Indeed, it is always worthwhile to have true friends in matters of the service of God—friends who also understand and identify with the place where you are and the place from which you came, but it is incorrect to separate and turn this into separate communities. The main thing is to integrate correctly and lead forward without feelings of inferiority.

Q: How should one deal with situations where children feel different from their friends because of their family background?

A: One should ignore this feeling. The main thing is to set your sights forward, "their gaze is forward"[3] – we are not here for small matters, we are here for great things. The moment children see a child with a broad perspective, who is proactive and engaged, it does not matter to them at all what background they come from—they defer to them. Children of *ba'alei teshuvah* are meant to be the leaders in society.

Q: Is it advisable to tell children the story of the parents' return to Judaism (*teshuvah*), and if so, what is the correct manner? Furthermore, how should parents deal with teenagers' questions about the gap between the family's past and their current Haredi life?

A: God brought the *ba'al teshuvah* from darkness to light—"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."[4] Darkness is truly dark; one can't clearly see what is happening in it, and therefore there isn't really anything to tell (i.e., this is the main point for the *ba'al teshuvah* themselves—not to identify with the period of darkness anymore, as mentioned above). To what can this be compared? To someone who wakes up in the morning and feels that they just must describe some vain and empty dream they saw at night. There is no greater small-mindedness than this.

Q: What is the message the parents should convey to their children so that they feel they are continuing an ancient chain and are not 'starting from scratch'?

A: No Jew "starts from scratch." The chain for all of us begins with the blessed Creator of the world, for "there is nothing besides Him."[5] Indeed, some have the merit of ancestors from closer generations, but the *ba'al teshuvah* also has his or her own lineage, as in the well-known stories[6] of several *tzaddikim* who did not have a family pedigree, and that was precisely

2. *Midrash Tehillim*, Psalm 22.
3. Habakkuk 1:9.
4. Isaiah 9:1.
5. *Tanya*, *Sha'ar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, ch. 3 (based on Isaiah 45:6).
6. See *Be'er HaChassidut: Galicia and Hungary* (Steinman) pages 54-55. *Yalkut Sasson VeSimchah* (Bnei Brak 2014), p. 21.

their true lineage—that they emerged from darkness to light.

Q: How can one ensure that the second generation does not feel marginalized but rather an integral part of Haredi society? And in general, many *ba'alei teshuvah* experience a lack of self-confidence or feelings of inferiority compared to veteran Haredim. What is the main advice for strengthening internal fortitude?

A: As will be explained, regarding external matters, it is incorrect to be overly conspicuous, and one should adopt the good social patterns of the environment in which you have decided to live and raise your children. On the other hand, regarding the Torah's inner dimension, the child should be brought to identify and be joyous with the place his parents are in and are proactive, engaged, and influential, as mentioned above.

Q: How can one maintain a balance between spiritual enthusiasm and long-term stability in the service of God?

A: In the language of the sages,[7] this is known as the balance between that which is more frequent (*tadir*) and that which is more consecrated/holy (*mekudash*, which also means "blazing fire"[8]). In Chasidic literature[9] this is referred to as the balance between lights of chaos (the "holy") and the vessels of *tikkun* (the "frequent"). This balance should be divided into two parts: conduct and goal.

Naturally, the goal is to reach a state wherein the lights of chaos are contained constantly within vessels of *tikkun*. This would be a state in which that which is frequent (or regular)—the normal—is itself holy and full of blazing fire. In other words, we would reach a state in which our daily and stable service of God is full of genuine spiritual excitement. That is the goal.

But when it comes to our daily conduct until we reach this lofty goal, in the not yet ideal state, which is more important? In the Talmud, the sages rule that in practice the *tadir*—i.e., the frequent and normal—takes precedence. This is how the actual conduct should also be, emphasizing stability and long-term building in the service of God. Momentary enthusiasm can elevate a person and illuminate their service of God, but without the rectified normal vessels of *tikkun*, without stability, its effect might completely vanish (and even eventually lead to a worse deterioration).

The very entry into the service of God is certainly accompanied by spiritual enthusiasm, but after one has firmly planted both feet within the boundary of holiness, the focus must mainly be on spiritual stability. In line with other concepts—after the *teshuvah* out of love, which is the main *teshuvah* in our generation, one must also build within the soul a simple and natural fear of Heaven, which guides the new daily routines of the *ba'al teshuvah*.

Indeed, there are special times focused on "holiness" meant to preserve spiritual tension and charge routine life with enthusiasm. These include the times in the Jewish annual cycle, Shabbat and

7. *Zevachim* 90b and elsewhere. See *Mei HaShiloach, Mishpatim s.v. Reishit Bikurei Admatcha*.
8. *Kiddushin* 56b.
9. See Lubavitcher Rebbe's discourse of 28 Nissan 5751.

holidays, and special Chasidic dates that call for farbrengens. In addition, there are times when reality demands an exceptional action from a Jew (a type of "holiness"), some campaign dedicated to help others connect to *teshuvah*, special activity to rectify reality, or self-sacrifice to withstand a sudden trial. *Ba'alei teshuvah*, specifically, who have proven their ability to break routine and change, are sensitive to God's call to deviate from the frequent and act in a "holy" manner. The holy action instills enthusiasm in the frequent—the normal routine life—and requires us to constantly listen to God's will thus adding healthy tension and sensitivity to the entire service of God.

Q: Some *ba'alei teshuvah* deal with tensions vis-à-vis family members who are currently not observant. What is the correct way to manage these relationships with love without compromising on principles?

A: In this matter, one must only act with a big picture perspective. Act calmly and out of genuine love for everyone, for "the words of the wise are heard [when spoken with] tranquility."[10]

Following all the above, it is appropriate to add another important principle, even though it is entirely superficial, yet it is known that the exterior influences the interior, as the sages say, "If you go to a city, follow its customs."[11]

One who comes to integrate into a new society, which is foreign to them, must learn, understand, and behave according to the codes of that society, whether they be customs, language, etc. From the Torah, we take our lead from the angels who came in the form of men to Abraham[12] and later to Lot,[13] and from the Writings and the sages, we have the description of Moses when he ascended to Heaven.[14]

For example, if a family of *ba'alei teshuvah* has chosen to join a Haredi community that still speaks Yiddish[15] (it might be either a Chasidic community or it might be a Litvish/Yeshivish community, particularly outside the Land of Israel), to properly integrate, they must learn the Yiddish language thoroughly, speaking at exactly the same level as everyone else. They should be able to joke with everyone specifically in Yiddish. Even at home, the husband and wife, even though both are *ba'alei teshuvah*, should speak and laugh, at least sometimes, in Yiddish. This starts, of course, with the parents, and as soon as the children learn Yiddish in *cheider*, they will immediately pick up the language and integrate completely with their friends there without any sense of inferiority.

For this purpose, it would be appropriate to establish special *Ulpanim* (language schools) for learning Yiddish and for speaking in the Holy Tongue (meaning the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew in study, prayer, and daily life). In those *Ulpanim*, the unique codes of each community and each segment of Haredi

10. Ecclesiastes 9:17. See also *Likutei Moharan* 1:1 for the secret of tranquility.
11. *Shemot Rabbah* 47:5.
12. *Bava Metzia* 86b (cited in *Rashi* on Genesis 18:1-2).
13. Genesis 19:1.
14. See Alsheich on Psalms 78:25.
15. There is a tradition in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov that Yiddish should be spoken until the coming of the righteous redeemer

Judaism would also be taught.

All the above is universal advice, appropriate not only for integrating into a Yiddish-speaking Haredi society. For example, this is how the State of Israel was established, by founding *Ulpanim* for learning Modern Hebrew. Likewise, Jews who immigrated to America from Europe immediately became proficient in the English language, most of them at an even higher level than the locals (which unfortunately also led to assimilation).

Naturally, everything depends on the specific society and its customs. In Chabad communities, for example, Yiddish is less essential (nevertheless, not knowing Yiddish is treated as a deficiency and differentiates between veterans and those who have recently joined), and certainly in the Religious Zionist society, where it is not necessary at all.

Q: Finally, what is the central message that the Rabbi would like to convey to *ba'alei teshuvah* and their children to strengthen them in their life journey and give them a sense of mission?

A: As we have explained, one must be wise with a proactive and broad perspective (*rosh gadol*) in all matters, whether it be regarding oneself and one's actions, regarding the relationship with the current environment, or regarding the connection with the family. At the same time, one must remain true to one's own deepest realizations and decisions and not allow oneself to be swept along by everyone else, thereby losing one's authenticity. Consequently, the goal is to be an earnest individual, like Jacob, who despite being an earnest man himself was able to stand fast even when facing the deceitful Laban. A *ba'al teshuvah* who remains small-minded (*rosh katan*) has somewhat missed the entire point of becoming a *ba'al teshuvah*, which is a shame.

Of course, the overarching principle must be that all that you do should be in the manner of "Serve God with joy."[16] Children of such *ba'alei teshuvah*, will eventually become the leaders in the classroom and in society, until we merit the fulfillment of the goal that "*ba'alei teshuvah* [specifically] will rule the land"[17] with the coming of the righteous redeemer speedily in our days, Amen.

16. Psalms 100:2.
17. See class of 3 Elul 5773, ch. 3.


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