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

בס"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת מִשְׁפָּטִים-שְׁקָלִים ❁ כו-כז שְׁבַט תשפ"ו



While staying in Rabbi Shmuel Vital's home, Rabbi Meir Poppers found a handwritten note from his host's father, Rabbi Chaim Vital. The note stated that his Kabbalistic writings, in which he recorded the Arizal's teachings, should be divided into three parts.

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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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CLASS EXCERPT

WHAT OUR CHILDREN REVEAL ABOUT US

The Ba'al Shem Tov had two children, a boy and a girl. His son was Rebbe Tzvi and his daughter was the famous Odel. Few know about Rebbe Tzvi and his descendants, while Odel's descendants are famous. They include Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, his uncles the Degel Machaneh Ephraim and Rebbe Baruch of Mezhibuzh. What can we learn about the difference between a tzaddik's sons and daughters from the history of the Ba'al Shem Tov's family and how does this relate to each of us?

This class was given on the 7th of Tevet, 5786 and its transcript was first published in Hebrew in Nifla'ot for parashat Shemot of this year.

THE BA'AL SHEM TOV'S GRAND-CHILDREN: REVEALED AND CONCEALED

The Ba'al Shem Tov's son was Rebbe Tzvi whose *yahrzeit* is on the 7th of Tevet. His son, Rebbe Aharon of Titov's *yahrzeit* is on the 5th of Tevet. Both lived their lives out of the limelight; in this, they resembled the concealed *tzaddikim* that the Ba'al Shem Tov was a part of until he was forced to reveal himself. Indeed, both were known in their lifetimes as *tzaddikim*, and they had followers, but they never sought publicity and lived in poverty. Rebbe Aharon once proclaimed that had he so wished, he would have money (and even proved so in a particular incident), but generally he had no interest in it.

It is interesting that in contrast to them, the descendants of the Baal Shem Tov from his daughter, Odel,[1] were much more famous—her eldest son, the *Degel Machaneh Ephraim*, was famous, and even more so his younger brother, Rebbe Baruch of Mezhibuzh. Of course, there was more to them than just what was revealed, as is known from the parable comparing a *tzaddik* to an iceberg,[2] where only ten percent is above water and visible while the other ninety percent is submerged and invisible; but their "visible ten percent" was famous. In the next generation as well, Odel's grandson, the son of her daughter Feige—Rebbe Nachman of Breslov—was very famous.[3]

1. Odel in Hebrew (אֹדֶל) is famously the initials of the phrase (Deuteronomy 33:2), "[from His right hand] the fire of His decree, to us" (מִימִינוֹ אֵשׁ דָּת לָמוֹ). See *Kerem Yisrael* (Zack), ch. 4, note 2.

2. See *Ma'ayan Ganim* vol. 2, "*Kel Mistater*," p. 173.

3. The value of the four names in Rebbe Nachman's lineage—Israel, Odel, Feige, Nachman (**יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹדֶל פֵּיגֶא נַחְמָן**)—is equal to 4 times the value of "light" (**אוֹר**), the average value of each name and implying

We should contemplate why the offspring through the Ba'al Shem Tov's son were more hidden, while those from his daughter were more famous.

CONTROVERSY AND THE DISSEMINATION OF CHASSIDUS

Tzaddikim said[4] that if, after the passing of the Ba'al Shem Tov, all the disciples had accepted his son, Rebbe Tzvi, as their Rebbe, there would have been no disputes between the *tzaddikim* throughout the continuation of the Chasidic movement. Similarly, they said[5] that if after the passing of the Maggid of Mezritch, everyone had accepted the *Me'or Einayim*, Rebbe Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl as rebbe, there would have been no disputes regarding the way in which Chasidut should be practiced.

It is written[6] that there was a connection between Rebbe Tzvi and the *Me'or Einayim*. The Ba'al Shem Tov came to the *Me'or Einayim* in a dream and asked him to look after his son, Rebbe Tzvi, and from then until the end of his life, he supported him. Rebbe Tzvi gave a great gift to the *Me'or Einayim*—the Torah scroll of the Ba'al Shem Tov. I do not know if it exists today, but presumably, it existed until the Holocaust. This was the most precious object in the House of Chernobyl.

WHAT THE TZADDIK WANTS, WHAT GOD WANTS

Let us return to the distinction with which we began, between the Baal Shem Tov's descendants through his son, who were relatively hidden, and his descendants from his daughter Odel who were famous:

It must be posited that within a *tzaddik*, there is what *he* wants, and there is what *God* wants from him. The *tzaddik* desires to be hidden, like all *tzaddikim* who did not wish to be revealed. However, God has other thoughts. King Solomon says, "many thoughts are in a man's heart." The tzaddik's pure heart is laden with thoughts on how to conceal himself, but they will not be successful, for "God's counsel is what will stand."[7]

It is known[8] that the Ba'al Shem Tov found it very difficult to reveal himself; he resisted and it had to be decreed upon him to reveal himself. Like Moses, who refused God's mission with all his might, the Ba'al Shem Tov wanted to remain hidden, but God wanted him to be revealed. From this we learn that what a person thinks is suitable for them is not always their true destiny, which is what God wants from them. These are two sides of the soul.

Both aspects are expressed in our children: the sons reveal the parent's conscious will while the daughters (and their sons after them) reveal what God wants from the person. A simple example can demonstrate this: a father wants to remain in the *Beit Midrash* and learn Torah all the days of his life, and he teaches his son to do the same—to learn like him and even surpass him in learning. The daughter, however, tells her father she needs to get married and he had better prepare a fine

revelation.

4. *Ma'amar Mordechai* (Slonim), *s.v.* Rebbe Tzvi §1.

5. *Amarot Tehorot*, *Meor Einayim* §18.

6. *Zichronam Livrachah*, *s.v.* Rebbe Tzvi son of the Ba'al Shem Tov.

7. Proverbs 19:21.

8. *Sefer HaToldot, Rabbi Yisrael Besht*, vol. 1, ch. 2, pp. 37ff).

dowry for her. To that end he must go into the world and conduct himself realistically so that he can provide for her needs.[9] In doing so, the daughter aims for God's will regarding the father, which is described in the Talmud with the well-known idiom that one should perform his mitzvah obligations in a worldly way[10] (הַנְהֵג בָּהֶן מִנְהַג דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ), meaning that one should set aside time not only for Torah but also for work. This is known as living a life of "Torah with *Derech Eretz*."[11] Indeed, the sages continue to tell us that "Many individuals strove to follow Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai [who dedicated himself exclusively to Torah but they did not succeed [and ultimately abandoned their Torah learning." This is because most people are governed by the verse, "He [God] did not create it [the earth] to remain uninhabited [or uncivilized]"—God did not intend that this individual strive to isolate and conceal himself—rather, "He formed it [the earth] to be inhabited"[12]—God intends that this individual take an active part in settling the world, starting with the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply,"[13] which necessarily requires one to limit their Torah study[14]).[15]

POTENTIAL VERSUS ACTUALIZATION, PAST VERSUS FUTURE

As a rule, a person's true destiny is hidden in their unconscious, and it is revealed specifically by the prudent daughter, who understands [the secret of the *sefirah* of understanding [*binah*]) one thing from within another[16] thanks to the extra measure of understanding that was granted to women.[17] One might ask if sons do not also have a special affinity for understanding one thing from another? We find that regarding the candidates for becoming judges noted in *parashat Yitro*, the Torah tells us that Moses could not

9. See *Ketubot* 52b.

10. *Berachot* 35b.

11. Avot 2:2. Indeed, the sages go so far as to say that, "*Derech Eretz* preceded the Torah" (*Tanna Debei Eliyahu Rabbah,* ch. 1), which refers not only to chronological precedence but also also to precedence in status (see Tzemach Tzedek's *Or HaTorah Bereishit* vol. 3, 583a). Given that *Derech Eretz* represents God's will and full-time learning represents man's will, this represents the precedence of the crown—God's will—to wisdom—Torah—that which man wants.

12. Isaiah 45:18. See also Mishnah *Gittin* 4:5.

13. Genesis 1:22; 1:28; 9:1; 9:7. See *Wonders* issue 168, "The Year of the Family."

14. Ben Azzai claimed, "And what shall I do, for my soul lusts for Torah; it *is* possible for the world to be sustained by others" (*Yevamot* 63b). However, the words, "my soul lusts" indicates that this is *my* desire, not God's will, and the others you would like to rely on will not birth the souls that *you* could birth—they will not realize *your* potential (i.e., what your future holds, as will be explained). Consequently, Messiah cannot come because the souls in the *guf* (the treasury of souls) have not been exhausted (*Yevamot* ibid.), which symbolizes the potential of each Jew. Nevertheless, every rule has an exception, and one should view Ben Azzai favorably for acting according to his conviction, with boldness toward Heaven. Maimonides and the *Taz* disagree whether his conduct is appropriate *ab initio* for one whose soul lusts for Torah like him, or if merely "he bears no sin." It seems that Chasidut sides with the *Taz*, as the great Chassidic figures did not act like Ben Azzai at all).

15. This constitutes an inner reason for why a man is forbidden to teach his daughter Torah (Mishnah *Sotah* 3:4 and *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:13), so she is not subsumed in *his* desire (reflecting his past, as will be explained) instead of demanding that which God wants from him (his future destiny).

16. See *Rashi* on Deuteronomy 1:13.

17. *Niddah* 45b.

find any that were *nevonim*,[18] i.e., men of understanding. And yet, though we have few descriptions of women in the Torah, one of the few is of the five daughters of Zelophehad who were both discerning in their understanding and exhibited a special love for the Land of Israel,[19] a clear allusion to the notion of *Derech Eretz* mentioned above—indeed, they were able to see what Moses could not see.[20]

In other words, a son can reveal his father's **past** (as well as the present that derives from the past), his primal desire; whereas a daughter is sensitive to her father's **future**,[21] his true destiny from God. Past and present are described in *Sefer Yetzirah* as the depth of the beginning (עֹמֶק רֵאשִׁית) and the depth of the end (עֹמֶק אַחֲרִית),[22] corresponding thus to the son and the daughter, respectively.

Therefore, we often see that the grandson—the daughter's son—surpasses the grandfather; he reveals things that existed within the grandfather only *in potential* (*b'koach*). A *tzaddik* has dreams he wishes to fulfill. For example, he may dream of writing a commentary on the entire Talmud, but he does not succeed in fulfilling his dream during his lifetime in this world. Even among the great *tzaddikim*, there are many such dreams. However, the grandchildren, especially from the daughters, sometimes fulfill many of the grandfather's dreams. The dreams of *tzaddikim* are connected to their destiny-future (in contrast to the tzaddik's desire to remain hidden, which is not a dream but his consciously desired reality for the time being, according to his own mind; this is his past, which he wishes to perpetuate in the present and onward, as mentioned). Every dream is a vision for the future, something that does not yet exist in the present, like the dreams of Joseph and Pharaoh—the dream is a kind of prophecy the *tzaddik* receives, meant to reveal God's will to him.

In the Ba'al Shem Tov's case, it was Rebbe Nachman, the son of a daughter of a daughter, who publicized himself even more than the sons of the daughter (Rebbe Baruch and the *Degel Machneh Ephraim*). He also said that he surpassed the Ba'al Shem Tov, which according to our explanation means he succeeded in revealing and fulfilling the dreams of the Ba'al Shem Tov, which included reaching the Land of Israel, a dream the Ba'al Shem Tov tried to fulfill with his daughter Odel.[23] Rebbe Nachman's journey greatly angered his uncle, Rebbe Baruch.[24]

18. *Eiruvin* 100b.

19. *Rashi* on Numbers 26:64.

20. *Rashi* on Ibid. 27:7.

21. The moment one looks at the future (i.e., what God wants), the present is also included in it—every moment of the present is the future of the past moment, meaning what God wants *now*. This can be seen in the phrase, "to be ready (*atidim*) for this day" (Esther 3:14), which means to be prepared and summoned in the present moment for the future that is coming. Numerically, "present-future" (**הֹוֶה עָתִיד**) has the same value as "Be fruitful and multiply" (**פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ**), the *mitzvah* most connected to the concept of actualizing potential.

22. *Sefer Yetzirah* speaks of 10 depths, each corresponding to one of the Ten Sefirot. The depth of the beginning and the depth of the end correspond to the sefirot of wisdom and understanding, respectively. See commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:5 and *Pri Etz Chaim*, *Sha'ar Tefillot Rosh HaShanah,* ch. 7.

23. *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* (Breslov), vol. 2, §1306

24. *Avaneha Barzel* 15. See *Chayei Moharan* 393.

THE FEMININE FUTURE

An example of sons expressing the past while daughters express the future can already be found with Moses. Moses only had two sons and did not strive to have a daughter,[25] apparently following the ruling of Beit Shammai that one fulfills the commandment of procreation by having two sons.[26] This would present a valid reason for why the accepted ruling is that one should have a son and a daughter, the opinion of Beit Hillel, because one must have a way to extend both one's past (and the present derived from it) and one's future into the next generation.

Moses possesses the potential of being both the first redeemer and the final redeemer[27]—he brought us out of Egypt and thus played the role of our first redeemer, but he is also meant to bring us out of our current exile making him our final redeemer. But in his lifetime, because he had only sons, he could not fulfill his role of being our final redeemer, nor did his sons and grandsons fulfill his potential. This would also explain why he was not permitted to enter the Land of Israel. Note that Joshua, who did enter the Land of Israel, had only daughters,[28] to which we may add that a student, relative to his teacher, is likened to a daughter.[29]

In Chabad, too, there is an example of this principle. The Mittler Rebbe, Rebbe Dov Ber Schenuri was the son of Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad. As famous as he was as a Rebbe who published Chasidut in abundance, his character was that of a hidden *tzaddik*. This reached its pinnacle when, as he neared his final days, he travelled to the burial place of his father, the Alter Rebbe to ask him for permission to depart from this world.[30] After him came the Tzemach Tzedek who made great efforts to publicize the teachings of Chasidut in the world, also by virtue of being known as a great genius in the revealed Torah. Under his leadership, Chabad reached its peak size.[31] The *Tzemach Tzedek* was the son of the

25. This provides another point of intersection between Moses and Joseph who also had only two sons, the secret of "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him" (Exodus 13:19); see also Wonders issue 180 (parashat *Beshalach* 5786), pp. 12ff.

26. *Yevamot* 61b. The dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel aligns with their views regarding the creation of heaven and earth (*Bereishit Rabbah* 1:15): According to Beit Shammai, the heavens came first and since the heavens are masculine relative to the earth that is feminine, this implies two spiritual sons without a daughter-Earth. According to Beit Hillel, the heart was created first, implying a daughter first, in the sense of "the end of the deed arises first in thought" because she represents God's will.

27. See *Shemot Rabbah* 4:2; *Zohar* 1:253a; *Sha'ar HaPesukim Vayechi*; *Torah Or* 75b.

28. *Megillah* 14b.

29. Indeed, the true student is one about whom the sages say, "[I have learnt] From my students more than from all of them" (*Ta'anit* 7a and *Makkot* 10a). He is then regarded as a daughter, regarding whom it is fitting to say, "He did not move from loving her until he called her 'my mother'" (*Shemot Rabbah* 52:5).

30. *Sefer HaToladot Admur HaEmtzai*, ch. 10. Indeed, the Mitteler Rebbe himself had mostly daughters, from whom the lineage of the Chabad rebbes, continued.
Tradition states that the holy *Ohr HaChaim* also had only daughters, for whom he wrote his commentary on the Torah (in the name of the Rebbe Moharash. See *HaTamim* issue 2, p. 78 and *Iggerot Kodesh Rayatz* vol. 3, Letter 818).

31. See Memoirs of Rabbi Yehuda Chitrik (*Teshurah* Goldschmid, 5767), ch. 4.

Alter Rebbe's daughter, Devorah Leah.[32] The Alter Rebbe said to his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, "I am the Written Torah of Chasidut and you are its Oral Torah.[33] Just like daughters in relation to their fathers, the Oral Torah reveals the potential hidden within the Written Torah.

"IN THE MERIT OF RIGHTEOUS WOMEN"

To conclude, we have said three similar, but not identical, things:

1. The son inherits from his father what *he* wants, and the daughter inherits what *God* wants from him.
2. The son is the revelation of his father's **conscious** mind, and the daughter reveals his unconscious, i.e., his hidden potential.
3. And very similarly, almost identically: The son is the **past-leading-to-the-present** of the father, and the daughter is his **future**.

This offers us a new appreciation of the sages' statement, "A daughter [born] first is a good sign for [the birth of] sons"[34] (בַּת תְּחִלָּה סִימָן יָפֶה לְבָנִים). Every daughter is in her essence "a daughter [born] first" because she is the beginning of a new revelation that until now existed only in potential. The plain meaning of this statement is that she is a good sign for [the birth of] sons for her parents, but following our approach, we may say that she is a good sign for [the birth of *her*] sons, thereby revealing her parents' concealed potential. Kabbalistically, this is known as the mother principle [the intellect] that gives birth to sons, referring to the revealed emotive faculties of the heart: loving-kindness (*chesed*) and might (*gevurah*).

The idea that girls preserve the future can be seen at the inception of the Jewish nation. The Torah relates that Pharaoh thought the essence of the People of Israel is in their sons and therefore commanded the Hebrew midwives, "Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save."[35] But the midwives, the heroines of *parashat Shemot* (and the entire Book) exhibited tremendous self-sacrifice and disobeyed Pharaoh, "and they saved the male children"[36] out of concern for the nation's future. Pharaoh erred in thinking that the daughters of Israel presented no danger because they could more easily be subdued and assimilated into Egypt. Therefore, it was "in the merit of righteous women that we were redeemed from Egypt."[37], and in their merit, we are destined to be redeemed in the final redemption as well,[38] speedily in our days.

With all that we have seen, we can address a question that is raised regarding the Mashiach: Must the Mashiach son of David descend patrilineally (son after son) from David, or is it possible he will be of

32. See *Hayom Yom* for the 28th of Iyar. The Alter Rebbe told his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, "A man inseminates first, she bears a female" (*Niddah* 31a) describes your mother, Devorah Leah and "A woman inseminates first, she bears a male" refers to you.
33. See *Iggerot Kodesh Admur Rayatz* vol. 4, p. 266.
34. *Bava Batra* 141a.
35. Exodus 1:22.
36. Ibid. v. 17.
37. See *Sotah* 11b.
38. *Yalkut Shimoni* Ruth, 606.

mixed lineage or matrilineally descended from David? According to what we have explained, he will be specifically a son after daughter. Indeed, by God's will, the destruction of the First Temple and subsequently the Hasmonean Kingdom interrupted the patrilineal lineage of the House of David. Patrilineal lineage preserves the past, while God preferred an emergence of a new potential future through David's daughters. Consequently (as can be shown scientifically), pretty much every single Jew is fit to be the Mashiach and, importantly, there is no need to check the Mashiach's lineage.[39]

39. See *Pri Tzadik* for *Chanukah*, 1 and *Takkanat HaShavin,* 5 (and the sources cited there).

THE INNER DIMENSION OF FAMILY PURITY

One of the many *mitzvot* in *parshat Mishpatim* dictates the husband's obligation to provide his wife with three things: food, clothing, and marital relations.[1] The fact that the Torah obligates the husband to provide his wife with marital intimacy was as revolutionary in its time as it is today. Contrary to most, if not all, other cultures, the Torah considers sexuality in the context of marriage as primarily a man's responsibility to his wife. Taking this one step further, the Oral Torah notes that the man should not just go through the motions in a perfunctory fashion; he must also place his wife's pleasure before his own.

This approach certainly departs radically from the crass and degrading treatment of women as sexual objects pervading many cultures around the world, especially in the subtle and not so subtle use of female sexuality in contemporary mass media and especially advertising. The Torah outlook is diametrically opposed to these prevailing practices and absolutely rejects the crude use of women and degradation of sexuality.

The expression of sexuality within the appropriate marital framework is seen by Judaism as a holy act, bringing together husband and wife in the most intimate and spiritual manner. Although a wife is also obligated to provide her husband with marital intimacy and pleasure, the Torah emphasizes, and enshrines in law, that it is first and foremost a husband's obligation to his wife.

THE FOUNDATION OF MARITAL RELATIONS

Towards the end of *parashat Metzora*, the basic laws relating to menstruation and the requirement that a couple refrain from intimacy during that

1. Exodus 21:10.

time are detailed.[2] These laws, known as the laws of family purity, dictate the rhythm and cycle of marital relations and are considered the foundation of Jewish married life and a Jewish home. Kabbalah associates sexuality and by corollary the laws of family purity with the *sefirah* of foundation, thus intimating that they are the foundation upon which a Jewish home is built. Although the importance of these laws cannot be fully elaborated in this short article, we would like to briefly share two of their fundamental rationales.

Firstly, by creating a cycle wherein physical intimacy between husband and wife is permitted at specific times and forbidden at others, a multidimensional relationship is established. By restricting physical intimacy, the laws of family purity provide the space for other facets of the relationship to develop more fully. The following verse in Song of Songs poetically touches on these various levels of emotional and intellectual attachment between husband and wife:

> I am asleep, but my heart is awake! A sound! My beloved knocks! [He said] "Open [your heart] to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of night."[3]

This moving and complex verse includes a masterly described range of emotional and cerebral connections between husband and wife. "My sister" relates to the deep friendship that should exist between married couples. "My love" represents the fiery, intimate attraction indispensable to a healthy marriage. "My dove" symbolizes the intellectual compatibility individuals require to communicate. "My perfect one" relates to the deep spiritual and mystical soul mate connection rooted deep in a couple's souls.

Secondly, the obligation to refrain from intimacy by remaining physically separate for a certain period of time every month has the paradoxical effect of enhancing the intimate passion between husband and wife. Sexual boredom and loss of passion have disastrous effects on a marriage. Although not always discussed openly or identified as the real problem in a marriage, this reality subtly and unconsciously undermines and destroys many marital relationships. The monthly cycle of closeness and separation does wonders for rekindling love and passion within a marriage. Even secular psychologists are beginning to realize this, and professionals are finally utilizing the inner wisdom of these God-given laws to heal broken relationships.

SUBMISSION, SEPARATION, AND SWEETENING

One of the cardinal teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov is that every process, whether material or spiritual, progresses through three stages: submission (*hachna'ah*), separation (*havdalah*), and sweetening (*hamtakah*).[4] This three-stage model can be applied to virtually any circumstance, whether in the material world or the realm of the soul and spiritual advancement. First let us describe in brief these three stages.

2. Leviticus 19:15-24.
3. Song of Songs 5:2.
4. *Keter Shem Tov* (*Kehot* edition) 28.

The first stage of submission, involves submitting one's will, time, energy, and sincerity to God. This stage requires dedication and the resolve to recognize that we are lacking and cannot fully rectify or satisfy our own needs except by turning to God. Emotionally and psychologically, submission entails true humility and a tempering of the ego.

The second stage, separation, involves identifying and connecting with the positive aspects in ourselves, while discerning what will help complete the task and what will distract from it. Whether it is a short-term or long-term project, it will involve making constant decisions that will practically help separate the essential from the extraneous for the success of the endeavor.

The final stage, sweetening, reflects being satisfied and joyous with accomplishing one's goals. This should then lead to acknowledging and praising God for the strength and assistance along the way. Recognizing God's ongoing support brings true joy and sweetness to any experience.

We will now take this three-stage paradigm and apply it to the laws of family purity.[5]

SUBMISSION, SEPARATION AND SWEETENING IN THE LAWS OF FAMILY PURITY

When a woman begins menstruating, she and her husband must separate immediately, regardless of any previous plans. This first stage is called "days of seeing" (*yemei re'iyah*, יְמֵי רְאִיָה). This initial stage lasts approximately five days until the flow of menstrual blood completely ceases. This separation entails not only an act of true submission to God who gave the laws of family purity, they also involve a deep psychological and emotional state of existential humility, an admission that we alone are unable to mend the physical gap that menstruation has opened between us and caused us to "fall" from marital intimacy. Indeed, submission is always softened by the knowledge that the distance is a temporary state and will ultimately reveal itself as serving a higher purpose. This stage concludes with a physical examination to ensure that the menstrual flow has stopped called "pause for purity" (*hefsek taharah*, הֶפְסֵק טָהֳרָה).

The second stage of separation, referred to as the "seven days of cleanliness" (*shivah nekiyim*, שִׁבְעָה נְקִיִים) begins at the cessation of the menstrual flow and continues for seven days. During this time, the couple refrains from all physical contact, a stage of literal physical separation. Despite physical separation, the couple is encouraged to enhance their relationship intellectually and emotionally, as discussed above. At the end of these seven days, the woman immerses in a *mikveh*, a ritual bath.

The third and final stage, sweetening, is known as "days of purity" (*yemei taharah*, יְמֵי טָהֳרָה) begins when the couple reunites, experiencing the joy and renewal of being together again, much like a bride and groom on their wedding night. This culminating stage of sweetening usually lasts for approximately eighteen days, the *gematria* of the word life, *chai* (**חַי**).

The cycle of the laws of family purity

5. The ideas presented for the rest of this essay are found in *Mystery of Marriage*, chapter 12.

described keep a marital relationship fresh and prevents the common issue of couples becoming tired of each other sexually over time. The laws of family purity ensure that the relationship remains vibrant. In a world where relationships often begin with sexual attraction, which can become stale, these laws provide a structure that fosters ongoing renewal and intimacy. *Mikveh* night becomes a time of celebration and connection, reinforcing the bond between husband and wife.

As we have seen, the detailed explanation of the stages in the laws of family purity exactly fit the Ba'al Shem Tov's teaching about the three stages of all physical and spiritual processes: submission, separation and sweetening. The application of the laws of family purity in both their physical and spiritual sense highlights the profound wisdom of this practice. Submission, separation, and sweetening not only maintain the relationship's freshness but also deepen the spiritual connection between husband and wife.

INTER-INCLUSION

A fundamental principle used in Kabbalah and Chasidut is "inter-inclusion," which posits that when an object or an idea is fully mature, it will reflect all its parts in each of its aspects. In our case, since the model we have been using is composed of three parts: submission, separation, and sweetening, in its mature form it will contain 9 parts: the submission of submission, the separation of submission, and the sweetening of submission, and so on. Let us see how our inter-included model applies to the laws of family purity:

Submission within Submission: The first appearance of the menstrual flow brings submission to the laws of family purity and a feeling of existential humility.

Separation within Submission: The laws of separation between husband and wife come into immediate effect, along with the knowledge that it is a temporary situation for a higher purpose.

Sweetening within Submission: After the cessation of the menstrual flow and its confirmation by a *hefsek taharah*, the couple looks forward in anticipation to a renewal of intimacy.

Submission within Separation: A woman at this stage of the "clean days" checks herself daily, submitting to the laws of family purity to make sure she is without a flow of blood. This preserves a certain state of existential humility.

Separation within Separation: Despite a growing arousal of anticipation the couple maintain clear borders of separation.

Sweetening within Separation: The stage of separation is concluded, and the woman immerses in the *mikveh*, a true experience of sweetening.

Submission within Sweetening: Now the couple may reunite, nonetheless marital intimacy still requires a certain attitude of modest conduct as required by Jewish law. Submission to these guidelines ensures that the marital act takes place in a context of spiritual ambience and purity.

Separation within Sweetening: During relations we are taught the importance of holy and proper thoughts. A couple must refrain or separate inappropriate thoughts fueled solely by raw animalistic desire and passion from their minds.

Sweetening within Sweetening: The

joy and closeness engendered by renewed intimate relations is the true sweetening—the goal of the entire process. Not only is this joy shared by husband and wife but also brings the couple closer to God, the "third partner" in any healthy Jewish marriage.

BIOGRAPHY

RABBI MEIR POPPERS: THE YOUNG REDACTOR

Rabbi Meir Poppers, one of the most important Kabbalists in the generation following the Ari, was born in the year 5384 (1624) in Krakow, to his father Rabbi Yehuda Leib Ashkenazi Katz. At the age of thirteen, seeing that he was a genius in Kabbalah and he had no one to learn with at his level in Poland, his parents sent him to learn in Jerusalem, where he received the teachings of Kabbalah from many tzaddikim, among them Rabbi Yisrael Ashkenazi, author of Heichal HaShem, and Rabbi Ya'akov Tzemach the physician. Upon coming of age, he married the daughter of Rabbi Azariah Ze'evi and continued to study in the Kabbalists' yeshiva in Jerusalem. Despite his young age, he was adorned with great praise by the geniuses of his generation.

He toiled on organizing the writings of the Arizal that had been initially edited by Rabbi Chaim Vital and then reedited by his son, Rabbi Shmuel Vital. Ultimately, Rabbi Yaakov Tzemach, Rabbi Meir Poppers' teacher, obtained alternate editions of Rabbi Chaim Vital's writings and Rabbi Meir arranged all that was before him into a new edition, which he divided into three volumes titled Derech Etz Chaim, Nof Etz Chaim, and Pri Etz Chaim. His edition of the Arizal's writings was accepted by all, so much so that his Derech Etz Chaim became known as simply Etz Chaim, sharing the same name that Rabbi Chaim Vital had given his edition. He departed this world in Jerusalem on the 2nd of Adar 5422 (1662) at the age of 38, the same age as the Arizal and was buried on the Mount of Olives.

In the introduction that Rabbi Meir Poppers wrote to his edition (titled *Derech Etz Chaim*) of Rabbi Chaim Vital's book *Etz Chaim*, he says,

> "My soul desired the Torah of Kabbalistic wisdom, and the fiery flames of passion for the coveted Kabbalistic wisdom. From the day I was thirteen years old, it burned within me like a fire burning in my bones. Until the King brought me to His chambers, and I merited to taste with the edge of a staff in the house of the

distinguished teacher, the pious and humble one, the physician and consummate sage, our teacher Rabbi Ya'akov Tzemach, may his light shine. And I studied his books and found favor in his eyes."

Indeed, Rabbi Meir's wanderings from Krakow to Jerusalem at such a young age bore fruit. Following his teacher Rabbi Ya'akov Tzemach, he began to edit and arrange the teachings of the Arizal, which were originally recorded as they were spoken without order or classification between plain interpretation, homiletics, and mystical intentions.

Though he began this work while still in Jerusalem, he only completed it thanks to a journey he undertook that at first prevented him from continuing to work on his edition. The journey was prompted by the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648-49, after which Rabbi Meir wished to inquire after the welfare of his family. Therefore, he left Jerusalem and set out for Poland. On his way, he passed through Damascus, where he stayed for eight days with Rabbi Shmuel Vital, the son of the Arizal's premier disciple, Rabbi Chaim Vital. While staying in Rabbi Shmuel's house, Rabbi Meir found a handwritten note from his host's father, Rabbi Chaim Vital. The note stated that his Kabbalistic writings, in which he recorded the Arizal's teachings, should be divided into three parts. As a result, Rabbi Meir divided his edition of the Arizal's teachings into three parts: He called the first part *Derech Etz Chaim* (which quickly became known as simply *Etz Chaim*). The second part he called *Pri Etz Chaim* and the third, *Nof Etz Chaim*.

Afterwards, he stayed in Istanbul from Purim until Shavu'ot, where he continued his work, and upon arriving in Krakow, he completed writing his edition. In Krakow, he remained until 5414 (1654), received and taught students and wrote his own works of Kabbalah and then set out again for Jerusalem. His journey back to Jerusalem took an entire year, and when he arrived in the Land of Israel, he was ill and exhausted from the prolonged wanderings. Seven years later, on the 2nd of Adar 5426 (1666), Rabbi Meir passed away at the young age of thirty-eight.

(based on *Zichronam Livrachah*)

It is said that at the end of his life, the Arizal stated he would return to clarify his teachings. It is fitting, then, to see Rabbi Meir as this return: At a very young age, his heart already burned for Kabbalah. He authored many books and became a central authority on the Arizal's teachings and finally departed this world at the age of thirty-eight, exactly like the holy Ari.

Thanks to his writings, and even more so, due to his seminal edition of the Ari's writings that ordered them in a clear way,

Rabbi Meir holds a special place among the great Kabbalists. The *Etz Chaim* compilations he arranged became the primary source for Kabbalistic teachings, and many books he authored became cornerstones of Kabbalah. Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, the Chida, a giant in his own right and one of the all-time most important biographers and bibliographers of Torah personalities and writings relates that Rabbi Meir Poppers composed a total of thirty-nine books, corresponding to the numerical value of "dew" (**טַל**) and alluding to the phrase, "the dew of lights is Your dew" (טַל אורֹת טַלֶּךָ), of which only about thirteen are known today.

The great Chasidic masters also greatly revered Rabbi Meir Poppers. His customs serve as a source for various practices in Chabad Chasidut, and his book *Or Tzaddikim*, containing customs and ethical teachings, earned enthusiastic praise from *tzaddikim*. The Maharil of Belz encouraged the printing of a prayer book that incorporated the customs from *Or Tzaddikim*, saying that through this book his holy father began to enter the service of God. The *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz (Rabbi Chaim of Sanz) said of this book that only one who follows it deserves to be called a *chasid*.

An interesting connection between Rabbi Meir Poppers and the Chasidic teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov can be seen in the numerical value of his name (**רַבִּי מֵאִיר פְּאפְּרִישׁ**), which is the same as 3 times the word "*chashmal*" (**חַשְׁמַל**). *Chashmal*, perhaps the most mysterious word in the entire Bible was a subject of study for both the Arizal and the Ba'al Shem Tov. The latter taught that this word *chashmal*, appearing only in the Book of Ezekiel alludes to the three-stage process required for every kind of psychological development: submission, separation, and sweetening. The first part of the word, *chash* corresponds to submission, since one of the meanings of *chash* (חַשׁ) in Hebrew is "silence" (חֵשׁ). The second part of the word, *mal* corresponds to separation, one of its meanings in Hebrew, as in "circumcision" (מל). *Mal* also corresponds to sweetening. The Ba'al Shem Tov taught this process to his disciples, impressing upon them its application for speech. To be able to speak words of Torah and of God, they must first submit and separate themselves from their ego. Then their speech, the meaning of *mal* (as in מָלַל), will be free of self-interest.

Interestingly, in the account of the Divine Chariot in Ezekiel, the word *chashmal* is mentioned exactly three times, the same numerical value as Rabbi Meir Poppers. These three instances of *chashmal* reveal that each stage of the three-stage process itself inter-includes (הִתְכַּלְלוּת) all three stages, like a fractal where each branch duplicates the whole. Thus, there is the submission, separation, and sweetening of submission, of separation, and of sweetening.

Inter-inclusion makes the rigid model more flexible and makes it into a more mature and developed process of change. Instead of sharply jumping from submission to battle, and from there to reconciliation, a person can now discern more subtle shades of emotion and spiritual movements, and the movement toward good flows smoothly. Indeed, while

sharp and uncompromising movements belong to the World of Chaos (*tohu*) that was shattered, inter-inclusion is a distinct characteristic of the world of Rectification (*tikkun*), where kindness and judgment can face each other and achieve mutual fertilization.

Even before considering inter-inclusion that divides the Ba'al Shem Tov's process into 9 stages, dividing the process into three stages already indicates a characteristic of the World of Rectification. Whereas the World of Chaos is characterized by structures that have only two axes to them: a right and a left, loving-kindness and judgment, in the World of Rectification, there are three axes, a right, left, and a middle axis that provides balance between the right and the left. By both balancing and joining the right and the left, the middle axis becomes compassion. Rabbi Meir embodies this ability in the triple *gematria* of his name and in the three books of *Etz Chaim* he gave the world.

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