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

נט"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת תְּצַוֶּה-זָכוֹר ❁ י-יא אַדָר תשפ"ו



The numerical value of Amalek is the same as a doubt... A doubt is a metaphoric knot in one's mind.... Some doubts need to be resolved. But others need to be made permissible because they empower our ability to serve God.

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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

LEARNING TO HATE AMALEK

In the latter part of the 5767 (2007), HaRav Ginsburgh introduced a model of 4 types of role models every person needs: a rebbe, a mashpia, a tzaddik, and a hero. This became a central teaching in his corpus of Torah innovations and he has revisited a number of times since.

In a class given to the students of the Od Yosef Chai Yeshivah, HaRav Ginsburgh discussed stories from the life of Reb Hillel of Paritch, perhaps the greatest mashpia or inspirational influencer in the history of Chabad and how they relate to his role. One of these stories relates how seeing the hatred that one great Chabad chasid had for Amalek changed Reb Hillel's life.

Excerpted from a class from the 9th of Elul, 5767 in Yitzhar.

The ideas on doubt appearing in this excerpt were later developed and published in HaRav Ginsburgh's Hebrew volume, Purim Lanu (פּוּרִים לָנוּ).

AMALEK, CIRCUMCISION, AND A MOHEL FOR MY EGO

Last time I was here, we spoke about how every individual must have a rebbe, a *mashpia*, a *tzaddik*, and a hero.[1] These four figures in our lives correspond to the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*, from above to below. What this means is that having a tzaddik and a hero represents the "revealed things, that belong to us and our children," meaning these were always known. The unique innovation of the Torah's inner dimension, of Chasidut is to add a rebbe and a *mashpia*.

In the history of Chabad-Lubavitch the exemplary *mashpia* is Reb Hillel of Paritch. The role of a true *mashpia* is to break the ego (the *yeshut*) of a *chasid* through kindness. The one who does this for me is known in Chabad as my *mohel* (circumciser). Everyone needs a *mohel* to cut and tear away the foreskin that covers their heart—this foreskin is the *kelipah*, the husk that is the ego. This is also connected to the commandment to obliterate Amalek.

Amalek is described in *parashat Ki Teitztei* as "he who chanced upon you, when you were tired and fatigued," which also means "he who cooled you," when you were burning with yearning for God. Amalek is the antithetical force to a *Brit Milah*, a circumcision. He cools one down and injects ego, pride, and anger—for as explained in Chasidut, anger (כַּעַס) is the result of pride (גַּאֲוָה)—the value of anger is 10 times the value of pride. To counter this, everyone needs a *mohel*—someone

1. See HaRav Ginsburgh's class from *Rosh Chodesh Tammuz* 5767 (available on galeinai.org.il).

who grabs him, lays him down, and cuts away that foreskin. It should not be very surprising that this spiritual circumcision is connected with Purim and especially to Shabbat Zachor, the Shabbat that precedes Purim, when we remember the commandment to obliterate Amalek.

REBBE HILLEL'S MOHEL

Once, Reb Hillel of Paritch remarked, "I did not merit that the Rebbe should be my *Mohel*." Even though he did not explicitly mention to which rebbe he was referring—it could have been the Alter Rebbe or the Mitteler Rebbe—he was referring to the Alter Rebbe who he never even merited to see with his physical eyes. Rebbe Hillel came to Chabad from a different background. He had a very great *Tzaddik*, Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl, who was very upset with him for leaving. Through Divine Providence the Rebbe was not to be my *Mohel*. Who, then, was the *Mohel*? Reb Zalman Zezmer.

The story goes like this, said Reb Hillel:

"When I had not yet fully committed to Chabad but was on the way, I happened to be in a synagogue on *Shabbat Zachor* where Reb Zalman Zezmer was present. After the reading of *Zachor* (the portion in the Torah that described what Amalek did and how we must erase his memory), *Ikh hob gezen, az der Yid hot faynt Amalek mer vi ale.* [I saw that this Jew hates Amalek more than anyone else]."

Reb Hillel had arrived prepared for the reading of Zachor, so when he saw how this Jew hated Amalek, it circumcised him. Let us also say *LeChaim* on that—so that we too should merit the "Great Circumcision."[2] In truth, Amalek resides within my heart, and to uproot and remove him, one must hate him properly. Like Reb Zalman Zezmer, the true *mashpia* is one who can illustrate for you what the hatred of Amalek and the blotting out of Amalek truly mean—and consequently, what it means to not forget God for even a single moment.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz used to say that Amalek is pride. Regarding pride, it is written: "Your heart will become prideful and you will forget *Havayah* your God."[3] The word for prideful (**רָם**) has the same numerical value as Amalek (**עֲמָלֵק**). Thus, Rebbe Pinchas interpreted the end of *Parashat Zachor*: "You shall erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens"—and by doing this—"you shall not forget." If one merits—and only when one merits—to blot out the memory of Amalek from "under the heavens," where the heavens represent the head and the intellectual faculties. Amalek stands "under the heavens," between the head and the heart where it "severs" (*molek*) the Jew from the nape of the neck so that the intellect does not influence the heart. One must seize him there and blot him out—then "you shall not forget," you will not come to forget God. Otherwise, "your heart will become prideful and you will forget."

In the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov, there is a very important statement that just as Amalek is pride, he is also anger, the primary expression of pride. When people do not respect me as much as I

2. Referring to the Alter Rebbe's essay that begins with the words, *Be'etzem hayom hazeh* in *Torah Or* 13b.
3. Deuteronomy 8:14.

think I deserve to be, according to my pride, I get angry. Where is it hinted that Amalek is anger? The Ba'al Shem Tov popularized the gematria that Amalek (**עֲמָלֵק**) is the numerical equivalent of "doubt" or "uncertainty" (**סְפֵק**) and heresy. As we said before, he cooled the boiling vat of water, symbolizing the passion the Israelites had for God when they came out of Egypt, by jumping into it with his own brand of unholy self-sacrifice, which is his *chutzpah* (insolence); the sages describe his leadership as a kingdom without a crown. He seizes leadership through his gall even though he is not worthy of it at all. He has no crown, representing God's consent.

In all, Amalek consists of four traits or qualities: heresy/doubt, insolence, pride, and anger. These are not external to us. They attack us from the inside. Heresy, insoclence, pride, and anger are the character traits associated with an ego that has run amock. To hate Amalek is to hate these traits. However, we are not always aware that we harbor these traits. Because of that we tend to think of Amalek, i.e., these traits as accidental to our nature. In effect, these traits are part of what Chasidut calls "the hidden evil" (רַע הַנֶּעֱלָם). Our responsibility is to fight against the revealed evil in ourselves, the meaning of the verse, "You shall circumcise the foreskin of your heart"[4] (וּמַלְתֶּם אֵת עָרְלַת לְבַבְכֶם)—referring to the evil that a person can circumcis himself. But Amalek is the concealed evil, which an individual cannot reach on his own. If he thinks he can, he is only deceiving himself and self-deception is itself Amalek. About the concealed evil, the Torah says, "And *Havayah* your G-d will circumcise your heart."[5] What can we do about the concealed evil then? We can only hate it. If a person hates the hidden evil within him—the source of heretical thoughts, insolence, pride, and anger (all of which ultimately stem from pride, the ego's essence)—then God will circumcise his heart and remove the concealed evil.

When God circumcises the heart, removing the concealed evil, He is acting from above to below and therefore this is known as the "Great Circumcision," whereas when we circumcise our heart to remove the revealed evil that we are aware of in ourselves, that is circumcision from below. Another way to say this is that the concealed evil is in our subconscious—only God can circumcise that.

At any rate, we opened with the hint from the Ba'al Shem Tov that Amalek is anger. One of the most well known verses in the Tanach regarding anger is, "For His anger is but for a moment, but His favor is for a lifetime." The Ba'al Shem Tov revealed that this verse contains an allusion to Amalek because the word for "a moment" (**רֶגַע**) is an acronym for "Amalek is the inception of all nations" (**ר**אשׁית **ג**וֹיִם **עֲ**מָלֵק).

It is written in the Tanya that one must hate evil. This is especially true of a "perfect tzaddik" (צַדִּיק גָּמוּר). The commandment to hate and to obliterate even the memory of Amalek is *the mitzvah* to which a perfect *tzaddik* senses true and deep affinity. The *beinoni* (i.e., the intermediate, the individual who feels torn between his good and bad inclinations, his Divine and animal souls) does not specifically hate evil; it is

4. Deuteronomy 10:16.

5. Ibid. 30:6.

even written that an imperfect *Tzaddik*—he is already in the state of a *Tzaddik* (because he is no longer torn between the good and the bad) but not complete (because he has not fully nullified his animal soul)—also does not hate evil absolutely. Specifically, it the complete *Tzaddik*—who is usually a unique individual in each generation—is recognizable by his absolute hatred for Amalek. In the Tanya, two terms are used: to hate and to loathe. He hates and loathes Amalek.

Another point, as long as we are at it, from the Ba'al Shem Tov is that pride is the most severely dangerous thing in a person's character. He demonstrates his statement with three arguments. The first is that it is written, "He [God] dwells with them in the midst of their impurity." God dwells with us even when we are impure. Yet regarding someone who has self-pride, "I [God] and he cannot dwell together." Despite it being a great principle of Torah that God dwells with us regardless of our state, if we feel or demonstrate pride in our individual self (excluding national pride), then that rule is broken. As much as God loves us and dwells with us in every possible situation, pride pushes the Divine Presence away.

The Ba'al Shem Tov's second proof is that most people who went mad or lost their mind, did so because of their pride. It is written that when Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz heard this in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov, he felt great satisfaction. What does it mean that they went mad from pride? The Ba'al Shem Tov explained that when a person is proud and thinks he is extraordinary and that he deserves all that he has, he starts asking himself, what could possibly be fitting for me. He initiates all sorts of projects based on his imagined greatness and what he thinks he deserves and should be able to succeed at. But then, when things do not go his way and his ideas go bust, if he has enough pride, his mind will simply snap; he will go mad because things are not going as he wants according to his self-imagined greatness.

These are fundamental matters in Chasidic thought. Every person listening here is destined, God willing, to be a *mashpia*, a spiritual supporter or influencer for many others (whether it be strangers or family members). Therefore, it is essential that they learn about the damage self-pride can do. We have written about this most fundamental point in an article called "A Lesson in Divine Service" (פֶּרֶק בַּעֲבוֹדַת ה'). The general rule is that every psychological problem involves pride to some extent. Many times, self-pride is the root cause for everything that happened afterwards. Whatever their current state, every person can be helped by talking with a capable *mashpia* who knows how to properly address self-pride. If this *mashpia* knows how to "circumcise" self-pride, he could bring about healing too.

The Ba'al Shem Tov's third proof is that every transgression in the Torah requires some physical object (*cheftza*) to commit. For example, to murder you need someone to murder, for forbidden relations you need someone, for Shabbat you need an object, even for idolatry. The only transgression that requires no object to perform is pride. The Torah warns us, "do not follow your heart,"[6] this refers to heresy,[7] which

6. Numbers 15:39.
7. *Berachot* 12:2.

is pride. One can lie on a bed, without anything to do, without any object near or far, and be steeped in self-pride.

Returning to our hatred of Amalek. We said that in the *Tanya* it is written that one should hate and loathe Amalek. If Amalek is both our pride and our anger, which one should we loathe and which one should we hate? We hate the anger and loathe the pride. Pride has a terrible smell. It stinks, which is why we loathe it. It is told in *Tanna Debei Eliyahu* that Elijah the Prophet was walking with a sage. A proud man passed them, and Elijah put his hand over his nose, even though there was no physical smell. Later, they passed someone physically smelly; the sage covered his nose, but Elijah did not. Pride is the smelliest thing, and thus the most loathsome. A perfect *tzaddik* is tested by how much he truly loathes evil—by how much he feels that pride stinks to him, causing him to loathe it.

Anger is different from loathing because it is common for people to act out their anger by for instance striking someone. If we are angry at Amalek, we might be inclined to strike it. Hatred leads to action. If something is loathsome, I leave, I distance myself from a bad smell. But if I hate something because of the harm it inflicts—because it damages others—then I must make sure that it cannot continue to do so.

Returning to the story Reb Hillel related on how he saw Reb Zalman Zezmer hate Amalek more than anyone else. All that we have discussed was just to say that when one hates, they must be prepared to fight and even destroy all phenomena associated with the object of their hatred. If Amalek were just pride, we would only loathe it. But because Amalek is also anger—"a moment in His anger," as we saw above—then one needs to learn how to react with holy anger at Amalek. There is an explanation in Chasidut that to rectify the World of Action, one needs anger—i.e., one needs to hate Amalek. It is impossible to rectify reality without hating Amalek. That Jew who illustrates this for me—not just that I see it in him, but that he implants it in my heart—he is my *mohel*.

Reb Hillel said that he did not merit that the Rebbe, i.e., the Alter Rebbe, would be his *mohel*. For this he needed to find a *mashpia*, in this case Reb Zalman Zezmer. It is possible that on the Rebbe, one does not overtly see the hatred of Amalek like one did on Reb Zalman Zezmer. Since Reb Hillel said he saw that he hates Amalek more than anyone—apparently, he saw something in him that he did not see even in the Rebbe himself. Not that the Rebbe does not hate Amalek—on the contrary, that is what designates him as a true Rebbe, that he hates and loathes evil absolutely, but many things are hidden—yet with Reb Zalman Zezmer, it was tangible, at least for Reb Hillel.

THE SECRET OF ENCLOTHEMENT

The portion of *Tetzaveh* begins with God instructing Moses to command the people to bring pure olive oil to light the lamps of the *Menorah*.[1] The numerical value of the opening words "And you shall command" (**וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה**) is 913, the same as the numerical value of the Torah's first word, "In the beginning" (**בְּרֵאשִׁית**). When the letters of the word "and you" (**וְאַתָּה**) are permuted they read "craving" (**תַּאֲוָה**).[2] Although initially it may be difficult to see any connection between the phrases "and you shall command" and "In the beginning" and "craving"; they seem to be linked by nothing more than letter permutations and numerical values. However, upon deeper reflection a profound idea is revealed.

The sages and subsequent Jewish thinkers have posited various reasons for why God created the world. The verse, "They will make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst,"[3] appearing in the previous portion, alludes to perhaps the deepest reason given for God creating the world: "God has a craving to make for Himself a dwelling place in the lower worlds."[4]

Given this explanation, the Tabernacle clearly represents the fulfillment of God's craving, or perhaps we might say, His passion to make Himself a dwelling place in the lower worlds, to be present within physical reality through the human soul. He commands the Children of Israel to build him a sanctuary where, on the one hand, He can be approached and experienced and on the other hand, in a deeply mysterious way, He could as it were reveal some of His essence to His creation. That was the function of the Tabernacle and the Temples in Jerusalem—to serve as a meeting place between God and man. Their physical structure and the service performed in them were ultimately meant to symbolize the sanctuary to be built within each human being's body, heart, mind, and soul. When this is accomplished, the purpose of creation will be fulfilled.

SHINING LIGHT

Having linked God's purpose for creating the world and the Tabernacle, the presence of light in both is instructive. Just as light was the first thing created, God's first instruction to Moses in this *parashah* is to command the people to take "pure, pressed olive oil" to light the *Menorah* daily. The Menorah's light symbolizes God's light shining within the material and physical world. Just as God illuminates and sustains the mundane reality with His light, i.e., with His revelation, so too we should constantly spread light throughout the world.

The key ingredient to revealing light is passion. In the reason given above for God creating the world, the word for "craving" (תַּאֲוָה), denoting passion, often has negative connotations. Because it is

1. Exodus 27:20.
2. *Amudeha Shivah, Tetzaveh.*
3. Exodus 25:8.
4. *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Naso* 16.

usually associated with baser, physical desires; however, it also possesses positive connotations: enthusiasm, whole-hearted commitment, and love of life. Passion is a burning flame, which when directed properly creates spiritual light. God had a passion, as it were, to dwell in the lower worlds. Man must imitate this passion for life by pursuing goodness and creating a fitting place for God in the world, as well as within the deepest recesses of the soul.

THE ANOINTED ONE

The olive oil used in the Menorah in the Tabernacle is described in the first verse of *Tzetzaveh* quoted above as "pure olive oil, beaten to give light." Olive oil was not only used in the Menorah but also in consecrating the vessels of the Tabernacle. Olive oil was also used to sanctify the *cohanim* as they were initiated into service in the Tabernacle. [5] Additionally, olive oil was used to anoint kings. It is from this ritualistic act that the title "Mashiach," which means "the anointed one," is derived.

Olive oil allegorically represents a profound secret: light emanates from physical matter. When physical matter is probed and beaten like an olive, it reveals a deeper dimension of energy and light. The *Zohar* teaches that all matter is simply different degrees of thickened light. What is true of olive oil is in effect true of all physical reality. Einstein's theory of relativity and other modern scientific revelations about energy and light have confirmed that matter is quite literally pure energy.

Mashiach is charged with teaching the world this link between the physical and spiritual worlds. Mashiach's primary mission is to educate the world, introducing a new level of consciousness to humanity.[6] Ultimately all the people of the world will come to recognize the Divine unity animating all existence and the consummate union between the physical and the spiritual realms. Humanity will then realize that all reality is the light, i.e., the revelation of Godliness. The Menorah symbolizes God's infinite light and a Jew's role in revealing that light in all places and at all times.

THE SECRET OF ENCLOTHEMENT

Following *Tetzaveh*'s opening commandment regarding the Menorah's lighting, the Torah continues with a detailed description of the unique garments worn by the ordinary *cohanim* and the additional special garments worn only by the High Priest. These sanctified garments, the Torah informs us, were made for "glory and splendor."[7] The *cohanim*, who served simultaneously as the people's representatives to God and as God's representatives to the people, were commanded to dress in a manner worthy of their position and spiritual task.

The Torah spends so much time describing every detail of the sacred vestments because garments, in general, signify a much deeper level of meaning: they are a manifestation of the Kabbalistic and Chassidic concept known as enclothement (*hitlabshut*).This concept

5. Exodus 29:1-37.

6. *Hilchot Melachim* 11:4

7. Exodus 28:2.

was one of the greatest revelations of the Arizal, the leading Kabbalist of the last millennium.[8] The ultimate example of enclothement is God enclothing His infinite light in finite reality. This phenomenon is alluded to in God's Name *Elokim* (אֱ-לֹהִים), which has the same numerical value as the Hebrew word for "nature" (הַטֶּבַע). All further manifestations of enclothement, in a sense, follow from this Divine archetypal paradigm.

Every morning, before praying, a Jewish man wraps himself in a *tallit* (prayer shawl). Many recite the verses: "Bless *Havayah*, O my soul; *Havayah*, my God, You are very great. You are clothed in glory and majesty. Cloaked in light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a curtain."[9] These inspiring poetic words describe the fundamental reality of God's light being enclothed in His creation.

Paralleling God's enclothement in the world, the soul descends from its heavenly abode and is invested in the human body.[10] According to Chasidic teaching, the Divine soul is "an actual part of God Above."[11] Thus, its enclothement in a body mirrors the very dynamic by which God enclothes His light in creation. Since part of God's revelation, is the soul, it follows that in some sense, God's light is enclothed within the human body.[12]

The concept of enclothement in fact manifests itself on literally every level of existence. For example, modern science has revealed that all matter enclothes energy. A world of frenetic energy and movement exists unseen just below the surface of all matter.

Judaism has always posited that physical reality enclothes a much deeper spiritual essence. One of the purposes of the *mitzvot* is to engage an individual in the ongoing process of uplifting and transforming physical objects, deeds, and speech into their spiritual essences. Each *mitzvah* is an opportunity to extract from physical reality the pure, holy spark of enclothed Divinity that animates it. Thus, the relationship between physical and spiritual parallels the relationship between matter and energy.

CONCEALMENT AND REVELATION

Upon deeper reflection we see that garments simultaneously conceal and reveal. The Hebrew root for "world" (*olam*) also means "to conceal."[13] Paradoxically, the world, like garments, both reveals and conceals God. The world and the laws of nature conceal God so well that His presence is not at all obvious, yet to a spiritually attuned soul, the beauty and awesome precision of nature and its laws reveal the handiwork of the Divine.

Indeed, this explains what the verse means when it states that the *cohanim* are to wear their garments for "glory and splendor." These garments concealed the physical and reveal God's glory destined to shine through the souls of those representing both God and His people. Just as every detail of the Tabernacle's construction and of the sacred vessels used in it embody profound secrets of creation,

8. https://inner.org/stages/stages4.htm
9. Psalms 104:1-2.
10. *Berachot* 10a.
11. *Tanya*, ch. 2.
12. *Body, Mind and Soul*, p.11. See also https://inner.org/healing/healing02.htm
13. See *Rashi* on Exodus 3:15.

so too every detail of the *cohanim's* holy garments sheds light on deep concepts relating to the emotions, intellect, and soul of man.

The concepts of concealment and revelation are deeply connected to the holiday of Purim which usually falls near *Tetzaveh* (this year *parashat Tetzaveh* is the Shabbat preceding Purim). Many commentators have pointed out that God's Name does not appear in the Scroll of Esther read on Purim, symbolizing God's Providence hidden in the historical narrative. Only after the miraculous salvation had come to pass did the people realize how involved God had been behind the scenes, leaving nothing to chance. In fact, when delving deeply into the text and the commentaries, one realizes that God's providence was behind every detail of the unfolding story.

Significantly, mirroring God's absence from the Scroll of Esther, Moses is not mentioned in *parashat Tetzaveh*.[14] The simple explanation is that when defending Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses told God that if he did not forgive the people, he should erase him from the Torah.[15] The sages teach that every word spoken by a *tzaddik* is realized in one form or another.[16] Therefore, Moses' name was erased, as it were, from *parashat Tetzaveh*, the *parashah* preceding his demonstration of self-sacrifice, which is related in *parashat Ki Tissa*.

A deeper explanation offered in Chasidut is that Moses' act of total self-sacrifice for the sake of the people reached such a lofty level of pure faith—associated with the highest level of the crown (*keter*)—that his soul root, which transcends his name was revealed.[17] As a consequence, his name, Moses, could not appear in the *parashah* before because it constitutes a preparation for his ultimate self-sacrifice. Thus, his name is absent from *parashat Tetzaveh* so that he could sacrifice himself in *parashat Ki Tissa*. That is why parashat Tetzaveh begins with God addressing Moses with a pronoun rather than with his name, "And *you* shall command"—a face to face revelation that transcends the enclothement of Moses' soul in his body.

14. This is the only *parashah* after he is first mentioned in the Torah in which Moses' name does not appear.

15. Exodus 32:32.

16. *Makkot* 11a.

17. *Ma'ayan Ganim, Tetzaveh. Yain Yitzchak, Tetzaveh.*

STORY

RABBI MOSHE FEINSTEIN: SENSITIVITY AND LAW

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was one of the greatest halakhic decisors and heads of Torah academies of his time. His Torah greatness was primarily known through his halakhic responsa, collected in the volumes of "Iggerot Moshe." He was revered by the Torah giants of his time and tens of thousands of Jews. Rabbi Feinstein was born on the 7th of Adar 5655 (1895) to Rabbi David Feinstein, the rabbi of the chasidic community in Uzda and a descendant of the Vilna Gaon's family. In his childhood, he studied under his father and acquired proficiency in the three Bavot (Talmudic tractates: Kama, Metzi'a, and Batra). Before his Bar Mitzvah, he began studying at the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Slutsk, under the Gaon Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer. In 1910, he was sent with a group of the yeshivah's best students to establish a yeshivah in Shklov under the leadership of Rabbi Pesach Pruskin whom Rabbi Feinstein considered his primary teacher throughout his life. At the age of seventeen, he was already proficient in the entire Talmud, and by nineteen, he was well-versed in all four sections of the Shulchan Aruch with their commentaries. In 1916, he was appointed rabbi in his hometown of Uzda and after the first World War, he was extensively involved in releasing agunot (women whose husbands had disappeared). In 1921, he was appointed rabbi and head of the rabbinical court in Luban, a position he held until 1937, when he arrived in the United States. Shortly after his arrival, he was appointed Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Tiferet Jerusalem in New York, a position he held for forty-nine years until his passing on the 13th of Second Adar, 5746 (1986).

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky of blessed memory once met his friend Rabbi Moshe Feinstein of blessed memory, who was in an extremely elevated mood. Rabbi Moshe told him that on that day, he had withstood a test sent to him from Heaven:

"A few months ago, I served as a judge in a rabbinical court case, and after I ruled in favor of one of the parties, I received a phone call from a friend of the losing party. He rudely accused me of erring in a matter of basic law and claimed that the ruling was invalid.

Today, I was amazed to see that same person who had offended me in such a disgraceful manner in my home. It turned out that he had come to ask me for a certification to be a ritual slaughterer. My first thought was to expel him from the house but in the end, I decided that since on Yom Kippur I had forgiven everyone who had offended me, I was not allowed to hold a grudge against anyone.

I brought him into my room, tested his knowledge of the laws of ritual slaughter,

and after he succeeded in the examination, I granted him the certification to serve as a ritual slaughterer. As he was about to leave, I rebuked him for his behavior and told him that he had committed the grave sin of disgracing the honor of Torah. However, the young man claimed he had no idea what I was talking about, and that he had never called me! His words rang true, and I sent him on his way. The likely conclusion is that someone else had hidden behind a false name and spoken to me as if in his name."

After recounting this, Rabbi Moshe described to his friend the great joy he felt after withstanding this difficult test, ignoring his personal insult even though he thought the person before him was the one who had offended him.

* * *

Once, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was at a gathering in a New York hotel. In the middle of the public repetition of the *Amidah*, someone informed him, "Rabbi, you have a phone call from the Land of Israel!" Rabbi Feinstein did not move. They tried again: "Rabbi, you have a phone call!" Still, he did not budge from his place. Finally, the man standing next to him finished his *Amidah*, and Rabbi Feinstein left the room to take his call. When asked why he had not left earlier, he replied: "There was a wall before me (referring to the law forbidding one to pass in front of someone praying), so how could I pass?!"

* * *

On one of the intermediate days of *Sukkot* 5732 (1972), it was announced in the small hall of 770 that the Rebbe was calling all those who had recently arrived from Russia to his room. About twenty-five people came. The Rebbe turned to his secretary, Rabbi Hodakov, and asked if everyone was present. When answered in the affirmative, the Rebbe turned to those present and said that he wanted them to go to Rabbi Feinstein and tell him about life in Russia. Among other things, he said: "Tell him everything, without humility...."

When they left the Rebbe's room, the secretaries, Rabbi Binyamin Klein and Rabbi Chaim Yehudah Krinsky, were waiting with the two cars the Rebbe travelled in, and with them they traveled to Rabbi Feinstein. Rabbi Feinstein was very impressed to see young men, most of whom were born many years after the Communist revolution, all God-fearing and proficient in Talmud study, no less than an average Torah student in the United States. When they told him that Rabbi Yaakov Notik was proficient in half of the Talmud, he was beside himself and asked him: "How did you do it? How did you manage to withstand the incredible hardships in the Soviet Union?!" Rabbi Notik answered him: "What choice did we have?" Afterwards, Rabbi Moshe turned to the young men and asked them what they were learning and presented questions about the third chapter in tractate *Kiddushin*. When they answered the questions fluently, Rabbi Feinstein began to cry and had to wipe his eyes.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein knew very well the meaning of Communist grip on Russian Jewry, which began when he was about thirty-five. His brother, Rabbi Mordechai, was killed by the wicked regime, and he himself risked his life, time and again, teaching Torah and saving the lives of other Jews. When he saw young boys committed to Torah study despite experiencing persecution all their lives, he felt this was an amazing phenomenon that touched the depths of the heart. In Chasidic thought, it is explained that tears represent the excess of the intellect, meaning they represent a response to an experience that the mind cannot contain. The intensity of the Divine revelation fills the head and overflows as tears. Here, the intense revelation was the powerful demonstration of how "Torah, the Holy Blessed One, and Israel are all one." Israel in this story refers to the young men who came out from behind the Iron Curtain, the Torah refers to the Torah they learned, and the Holy Blessed One is revealed in their tremendous self-sacrifice they showed when studying God's Torah.

The first two stories highlight how Rabbi Feinstein, as a true Torah scholar, was extremely sensitive to the minutiae of Jewish law and particularly to the feelings of others (as Jewish law dictates). Interestingly, when he set aside his honor (and a sage who sets aside his honor, his honor is indeed set aside[1]), it was revealed that the offender was not the person who stood before him! This reminds us of Rebbe Nachman's saying that "The one they [his opponents] argue against, I too argue against [and it is not me at all]." When we uncover the inner reality behind the external masks, it becomes clear that all Jews are united with God and with each other and disputes arise only from mistaken identity.

1. *Sotah* 41b.

FARBRENGEN EXCERPT
PERMITTING DOUBT

One of the Ba'al Shem Tov's most famous gematriot is that Amalek has the same value as doubt. In a farbrengen given in English a few days before Purim, and focusing on how Torah can mend a broken world, HaRav Ginsburgh delved into one of his favorite (and often misunderstood) topics: doubt, where it resides in the mind, and whether there are different options for dealing with it.

In this excerpt, he challenges the notion that all doubt is negative and reveals a surprising source that can be understood to encourage certain types of doubt.

Excerpted from a farbrengen given on the 11th of Second Adar, 5779 (2019) in Crown Heights.

One of the meanings of the word "Torah" (תּוֹרָה) is derived from the word meaning to release or to permit (הַתָּרָה)—the freedom or permission of something that was previously forbidden. It could also mean the untying of a knot, liberating something that was bound. Great wisdom is required to untie something complex and entangled. The Torah's power to untie is explicitly expressed in the concept known as "resolution of doubts" (הַתָּרַת הַסְּפֵקוֹת). A doubt is like an intricate knot that is difficult to release. If you have doubts in your studies or in the foundations of faith, you are—in your consciousness—entangled, bound, and in Hebrew, we would say, "forbidden" (אָסוּר), which also means imprisoned, or tied up.

What did the Ba'al Shem Tov teach us regarding doubts? On *Shabbat Zachor*, we read, "Remember what Amalek did to you," and on Purim, we also engage in the obliteration of Amalek. The numerical value of Amalek (**עֲמָלֵק**) and "doubt" (**סָפֵק**) is 240, as the Ba'al Shem Tov taught. Amalek signifies doubt—existential doubt. There are all kinds of doubts.

A doubt is a metaphoric knot in one's mind, and the Torah can either resolve the doubt or it can free the individual from the doubt. These are two opposite approaches to a doubt. To resolve the doubt means to prove that the Torah holds one side of the doubt but not the other. For instance, if someone doubts if reality is real or not, the Torah resolves this doubt by writing, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." According to the Torah, reality is real. We might think that to free or release the knot of the doubt is just another way to say the same thing. But, if we allow ourselves a bit of wit in understanding the sages, we can introduce a new, clever, and ultimately deeper meaning to what to do with a doubt we might have.

There is a famous statement (whose origin we will explore below) that states, "There is no joy like the freeing [or untying] of doubts" (אֵין שִׂמְחָה כְּהַתָּרַת הַסְּפֵקוֹת). But, because untying or freeing (הַתָּרַת) can also mean to make something permissible (מוּתָּר), then the meaning of the statement becomes, "There is no joy like permitting doubts." In other words, it is *permitted* (*mutar*) to remain in doubt—the doubt is not terrible; it is okay. A simple example of a doubt that is permitted would be that *chasidim* used to doubt whether they themselves existed; God certainly exists, but whether I exist as an independent entity is a good question, an existential doubt. Doubting the verity of my own existence is an example of a positive doubt—something that we should permit ourselves to have. Having this doubt does wonders for helping us attain the Zohar's dictum, "joy in the heart from this side, weeping in the heart from that side."[1] Indeed, it is possible therefore that there are "permissible" doubts" that can affect our service of God positively.

How can we understand the fact that there are permissible doubts in terms of the sefirot? *Amalek* who is the representative of negative, destructive doubts is considered the unholy opposite (הֶלְעוּמֹת זֶה) of the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*), which is the faculty that makes it possible for us to know God. It creates the unification (יִחוּד) or connection (הִתְקַשְּׁרוּת) we have with God.[2] If you have a knot in your *sefirah* of knowledge, if you have a doubt, then you cannot properly unite or connect to God. In such a case, the evil Amalek-doubt must be resolved; one

1. *Zohar* 3:75a.
2. *Tanya*, ch. 3.

must eliminate the doubt, the Amalek, that weakens one's mind and prevents them from connecting to God.

"THERE IS NO JOY LIKE RESOLVING DOUBTS"

We already mentioned that when a doubt is resolved, the mind feels joy. In fact, as quoted, "There is no joy like resolving doubts." Purim is the peak of joy for the entire year. We feel this joy because on Purim, we obliterate Amalek/doubts, those negative doubts that prevent us from connecting to God and "there is no joy like resolving doubts."

It is worth knowing that the source of this famous expression is not from the Talmudic sages. Rather, it was coined by the *Metzudat David*, an important commentator on the Tanach, on the verse, "What brightens the eye gladdens the heart"[3] (מְאוֹר עֵינַיִם יְשַׂמַּח לֵב). The *Metzudat David* explains that whatever brings clarity (symbolized by the "light of the eyes") in a doubtful thing gladdens the heart, because in the world there is no joy comparable to resolving doubt. Note that the value of his exact wording in Hebrew (אֵין בָּעוֹלָם שִׂמְחָה כְּהַתָּרַת הַסְּפֵקוֹת) together with the value of the phrase in Proverbs (מְאוֹר עֵינַיִם יְשַׂמַּח לֵב) equals 3055, which is 5 times the value of "Torah" (**תּוֹרָה**), which we said earlier is also cognate with the word meaning "resolving" or "permitting" (הַתָּרָה). The multiplication by 5 alludes to what we have discussed elsewhere regarding the 5 basic existential doubts[4] and the 5 essential doubts[5] in Kabbalah discussed by the *Arizal*.

RESOLVING AND PERMITTING DOUBT IN KNOWLEDGE

When the doubt is resolved allowing for the full functioning of the *sefirah* of knowledge, joy is immediately awakened. Regarding this, it is written: "If there is no knowledge, there is no understanding." The inner experience of the *sefirah* of understanding is joy.

Resolving and permitting doubt in our faculty of knowledge correspond to the two sides of knowledge known as the two coronets of knowledge. Resolving a doubt corresponds to the left coronet of knowledge, since the left side represents the act of cutting through the knot that is the doubt, cutting it out like a surgery to remove a tumor. Making the doubt permissible by recognizing that it itself is not evil, it is not terrible to carry some doubts, and perhaps it even causes you to have a broken heart, which is certainly a positive thing regarding serving God, that corresponds to the right coronet of knowledge. So, the left side of our knowledge resolves or eliminates negative impacting doubt and the right side of our knowledge can sustain positive doubts that augment our Divine service.

3. Proverbs 15:30. There is a custom to recite a verse that begins and ends with the first and last letter of one's name after the *Amidah*. Since this verse begins with the letter *mem* and ends with the letter *mem*, it can be used if one wants to recite a verse that fits the Lubavitcher Rebbe's name, Menachem (מְנַחֵם).

4. *Purim Lanu*, pp. 37ff. See there for many deeper insights into the topic of permissible doubts.

5. These are 5 doubts regarding the construction of the Unknowable Head out of the shattered vessels of *mah* and *ban*.