

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



Wonders

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“When you reach Meron, place these writings on the grave of Rashbi and you will see a sign.” It is traditionally known that when the students reached the Rashbi’s grave in Meron and placed the writing on the tomb, a hand emerged and took the writing.



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FUNDAMENTALS OF CHASIDUT

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH: OUR SERVICE IS NEEDED ABOVE

One of the best-known concepts in Judaism is Maimonides' 13 Principles of Faith, which originally appear in his commentary on the Mishnah. According to the Zohar, their origin is the 13 Principles of Divine Mercy that were revealed to Moses by God to assist in bringing about God's forgiveness. Less known are the 9 Principles of Divine Mercy found in parashat Shelach, from which stem 9 Principles of Faith of the Torah's inner dimension.

In this second installment on this topic, we review the second principle, that our performance of commandments is needed by the Most High.

*The contents of this series first appeared in Hebrew, in HaRav Ginsburgh's book, *Emunah VeMuda'ut* (Faith and Consciousness). It is being translated here for the first time.*

In the first installment of this series (Wonders, issue 198), we saw the rationale for introducing Nine Principles of Faith based on Kabbalah and Chasidut, the Torah's inner dimension. We surveyed the nine principles of faith and went in-depth into the first one. As noted there, principles of faith are pervasive through Torah literature, both in the revealed and the concealed traditions, therefore hundreds of sources can sometimes be brought for each. Nonetheless, we saw that the first principle—that new interpretations of Torah are innovated in every generation and will particularly be taught by the Mashiach—has a very well-known source, which was quoted there.

BINAH: SERVICE IS A NEED OF THE MOST HIGH

Just before that source for the innovation of Torah, the *midrash* also restates a cardinal principle of the Torah's revealed (*nigleh*) dimension, a principle known to all students of Torah, that, “the commandments were given to Israel only so that they might be refined by them.”¹ In other words, the commandments were given for our benefit as God's creatures who need refinement, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. The corollary of this statement is that God

1. *Vayikra Rabbah* 13:3. Also *Tanchuma* 8; *Bereishit Rabbah* 44:1.

has no need for our service. He does not need us to perform the commandments. In the language of the Bible, “if you become righteous, what do you give Him?”²

According to the concealed (*nistar*) dimension of the Torah, we know (with an inner experiential knowledge) that there is, as it were, a need on God’s part for human service (for He created man in His image, in order to serve Him truly). One of the Biblical sources for this is the verse, “You long for the work of Your hands.”³

The Sages coined the phrase, “service is a need of the Most High”⁴ (עבודת צריך (גבוה). One of the clearest formulations of this principle is found in the words of Nachmanides, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, one of the greatest sages of the Middle Ages. He states,⁵

... There is in this matter a great secret. For in the plain sense of things it would appear that [the dwelling of] the Divine Presence in Israel was to fulfill a want below [a need of the Israelites], but it is not so. It fulfilled a want Above [a Godly need]. It is similar in thought to that which Scripture states, “Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”⁶ And Joshua said, “[For when the Canaanites... hear of it... and cut off our name from the earth,] and what wilt Thou do for Thy Great Name?”⁷ There are many verses which express this thought: “He hath

desired it [i.e., Zion] for His habitation”⁸ and “Here I dwell; for I have desired it.”⁹ And it is further written, and “I will remember the land.”¹⁰

Another important formulation of this same principle appears in the Maharal of Prague. The Talmud states:

Rav Yehoshua ben Levi said: From where do we know that the Holy Blessed One longs for the Priestly Blessing? From the verse, “and they shall place My name.”

The *Maharal* writes¹¹:

The explanation of this matter is that He is the cause of all, and it is impossible for the cause not to provide effluence, and it is a matter that is compelled, for it is fitting for the Supernal One to bestow sustenance upon that which is dependent upon Him. And the Priestly Blessing is the blessing and flow of effluence from every area. Therefore, it is said that the Holy Blessed One longs for the Priestly Blessing, because the cause longs to bestow. Even more than the infant wishes to suckle and the woman [wishes] to nurse—for the power of the one who bestows is greater than that of the receiver, for the former is the active one and the latter is the recipient, therefore the Holy Blessed One longs for the priestly blessing. Likewise, as they said,¹² “the Holy Blessed One longs for the prayer of the

2. Job 35:7.

3. Ibid. 14:15.

4. Based on *Shabbat* 131a and *Moed Katan* 9a.

5. *Ramban* on Exodus 29:46, s.v., *Leshochni Betochar*.

6. Isaiah 49:3.

7. Joshua 7:9.

8. Psalms 132:13.

9. Ibid. v. 14.

10. Leviticus 26:42.

11. In his *Chidushei Agadot* on *Sotah* 38b.

12. *Yevamot* 64b.

righteous,” for it is all one matter.

And understand the proof from what Scripture says, “they shall place My name,” as *Rashi* of blessed memory explained: placing His name upon them is a great need, and this is because He is the Supernal One who bestows effluence upon the world, and therefore this matter is called a great need.

Returning to Scripture, we find that the prophet says: “The humble shall increase in Havayah joy”¹³ (וַיִּסְפוּ עֲנוּיִם בִּי-הוּוֹה שְׂמֵחָה)—not “joy in *Havayah*,” which would mean that they increase the joy they take in their connection with God, but “in *Havayah* joy,” indicating that through the joyful service of the humble—“serve God with joy”¹⁴—they add joy and the revelation of intrinsic light within God’s infinite revelation itself.

SERVICE WITH JOY

The Maharal used a parable of a mother who wishes to feed her newborn to describe God’s need for our service. In the parable, the people who perform the commandments, who serve God are the newborn and the mother is God, as it were. Though at first it would seem that the mother is only interested in feeding the baby for the baby’s need, in truth, the mother wants to feed the baby because it is a relief for her to be able to give to her child. Likewise, God, as it were, gave us the commandments, not just for our own benefit, but so that we would perform them and would merit receiving Divine effluence, thereby fulfilling God’s need to give.

13. Isaiah 29:19.

14. Psalms 100:2.

Indeed, the parable of a mother feeding her newborn is very appropriate since this principle of faith corresponds to the intellectual faculty of understanding (*binah*), which is also known as the Mother Principle (פְּרִצוּן אֵמָא). Understanding is like a space (or a womb, to use another image connected with motherhood) in which what wisdom has grasped fleetingly is integrated and internalized, just as a child develops fully within the womb. Understanding is also the faculty and location of Divine service where joy is experienced, specifically the joy described as, “the joy of the mother of children.”¹⁵

If the space of understanding (*binah*) is not filled with joy, its exterior becomes a source of harsh judgment.¹⁶ We find this principle illustrated in the following verse, which is part of Moses’ warning to the Israelites before his passing, “Because you did not serve *Havayah* your God with joy and goodness of heart, out of abundance of everything—you shall serve your enemies.”¹⁷ To illustrate this in another way, because understanding is where lies our intellectual capacity to fully grasp a matter and internalize it deeply within the soul, it can appear to someone observing from the outside as threatening. Thus, a very smart person who quickly grasps the depth of an issue may act with impatience

15. Ibid. 113:9.

16. *Zohar* 2:175b. To follow our metaphor through, if the intellectual faculty of understanding is not “pregnant” with a Torah idea that it can develop into a fully formed and integrated conceptual scheme, it releases harsh judgments, just as when a woman is without child, she menstruates and the menstrual blood is considered harsh judgment.

17. Deuteronomy 28:47-48.

to others who are unable to do the same. He or she may scorn them for not having yet absorbed the truth and internalized it. This may even lead to impatience and intolerance to those parts of one's own being that have not yet received the new understanding. In short, challenges to the motherly instinct to feed her child lead to a state of harsh judgment.

But inwardly, the acquisition of insight and understanding brings calm to the soul. Likewise, when the child suckles and consumes its mother's sustenance, the mother is filled with joy. When there is no feeling of threat from external challenges, when the truth known internally is revealed outwardly, joy is born in the soul over the holy innovation that has been acquired. When the mother sees her newborn enjoying the sustenance she is giving, she is filled with joy. Likewise, when God sees that we are fulfilling the commandments, even though we are seemingly acting in our own interest, we are also increasing His joy, His love, His compassion.

"GRATIFICATION BEFORE ME"

Like the first principle of faith of the Torah's inner dimension, the principle that our service is needed above also complements one of Maimonides' 13 principles of faith. In particular, this principle complements Maimonides' fifth principle, that it is imperative to worship God exclusively and not foreign gods. The Torah's inner dimension adds that our service of God (with joy) adds light and delight above and causes true gratification before Him. This gratification is described by the Sages with the words, "Gratification before Me, that I spoke and My will was

fulfilled,"¹⁸ and as we have added, that God's inner will has been fulfilled when we serve Him with joy and goodness of heart.

As mentioned above, according to Maimonides' plain meaning, service is for our own benefit alone and is relevant only to us. But according to the Torah's inner dimension, when one serves God alone, one is filled with joy as a natural consequence (for all "sadness" arises from a psychological state of being split between two "masters," as it were. The prophet Elijah referred to this split state when he rhetorically asked the people, "For how long will you continue to skip between two opinions?"¹⁹ When the service of God is performed with joy, it is easy for the soul to feel how God above also takes joy in our service. Joy unites our awakening below with God's awakening from above.

But if we feel no joy below when performing our service, then there is no "awakening from below," and consequently, there is no joy above, no awakening from above. It is then that God's motherly principle becomes the source of harsh judgments, as explained above.

Every "awakening from below" is an example of *teshuvah*, of return to God, the service that is intrinsically connected to the *sefirah* of understanding, as it says, "his heart understands, and he returns and is healed." Indeed, there are two types of return to God. The lower aspect of *teshuvah* or return is motivated by a feeling of bitterness because one has drawn so distant from the Almighty. But the higher aspect of *teshuvah*, is accompanied by joy

18. *Sifrei Pinchas* 143.

19. 1 Kings 18:21.

that one is now drawing nearer to God. What this means is that the gratification God receives from our service is just like the gratification a mother receives from feeding her child—the more joy the mother sees in the child’s experience of feeding, the more joy she herself experiences.

THE DOTING FATHER

The Maggid of Mezritch expanded upon the parable of the mother who feeds her child and explored a parable of a father doting over his beloved young son. He is said to have taught the following²⁰:

In the Midrash [Rabbi Yannai said]: The Torah needed to begin only from “This month shall be for you.” And why did He reveal to them the act of Creation?

Technically, if all God wanted to tell us was how to perform the commandments, He should have started the Torah with the first *mitzvah* identified as the commandment to sanctify the new moon. The first commandment appears in the twelfth chapter of Exodus and begins with the words, “This month shall be for you.” Why then did God begin the Torah with the Book of Genesis and with the entire account of Creation?

For the sake of Israel, [because] they said, “We will do and we will hear.”²¹

The Maggid responds with the answer quoted by *Rashi* on the Torah’s first verse, that Creation was for the sake of Israel. But, the Maggid adds, that Israel serves as a reason for Creation because they accepted

the Torah.

This follows [what the Sages said]: “Israel arose in thought.” The primordial will [to create the world] was so that Israel would be righteous in every generation.

The entire purpose of Creation was so that there would be Jews in every generation who would be righteous and perform God’s will.

And the Holy Blessed One, as it were, contracted His radiance;

For God’s purpose to be revealed, He had to contract, or diminish His radiance, meaning his revelation. And this contraction can be understood with the parable of a father and his son.

Like the parable [variant: like the likeness] of a father who contracts his intellect and speaks childish prattle for the sake of his young son. In addition, all the traits connected with childish deeds are to be found in the father, who loves childish deeds so that his son may have delight and feel cherished by him.

Just as the mother wants to feed her child, the father loves his child and contracts himself to have a relationship with child. He steps down from his stature as an adult and enters the child’s world in all respects, enjoying everything the child does.

And because for the Holy Blessed One, past and future are equal, He was pleased by the deeds of the righteous and contracted Himself.

Indeed, Israel are likened to God’s children—“You are children to *Havayah*

20. *Or Torah* 1.

21. Exodus 24:7.

your God”²²—and because God sees past, present, and future together, the foresight that He would engage with them as with His children, led Him to contract Himself primordially into a state in which He would receive pleasure from their deeds.

And the contraction is called wisdom, for wisdom emerges from nothingness.... And the contraction was for the sake of Israel.

And also love caused the contraction.

As explained elsewhere, the highest superrational reason for Creation is love. Just as a child needs to feel that regardless of his or her conduct or accomplishments, their parents love them dearly and adore them. Likewise, God created the world for the sake of His love for His children and the pleasure He receives from them.

22. Deuteronomy 14:1.

And this is [the meaning of] “And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham begot...”

For this reason, God began the Torah with the story of the formation of the Jewish people beginning with Abraham, and Isaac, and tells of the true love between father and son, Abraham and Isaac, to stress that these stories that predate the Giving of the Torah are the type of relationship that God has with Creation.

The two parables of the mother and her child (referenced by the *Maharal*) and the doting father with his son (referenced by the *Maggid of Mezritch*) correspond to the *sefirot* of understanding and wisdom, respectively, stressing that indeed these two intellectual *sefirot* are like two companions that never part. Together, they illustrate why it is that God receives pleasure from our service and our following of His will.

STORY

REBBE TZVI HIRSCH OF ZIDITCHOV: THE ZOHAR'S COMPASSION

Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch of Ziditchov (Zydaczów) was born in 5563 (1803) to Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Safrin in Galicia, a descendant of the author of Tosafot Yom Tov, and brother to the great Chasidic masters Rebbe Moshe of Sambor and Rebbe Alexander Sender of Komarno. He married Rachel Perl from the village of Rudka and was renowned as great in Torah, both revealed and hidden, completing the entire Talmud seven times each year. His primary approach centered on disseminating Kabbalistic teachings combined with Chasidic doctrine. He published his work Ateret Tzvi as a commentary on the Zohar and the book Sur MeRa VeAseh Tov to encourage the study of Kabbalah. Despite opposition from some great Chasidic leaders, he distributed the Zohar and the writings of the Arizal in thousands of copies throughout all the study halls of Eastern Europe, and instituted among his chasidim the custom of wearing white garments on Shabbat, following the practice of the Arizal. So great was his influence and renown that when Galician Jews spoke of 'the Rebbe,' they meant the author of Ateret Tzvi. He was also known by the title of the 'Prince of the House of the Zohar' due to his vast knowledge and extensive engagement with the holy Zohar. In 5581 (1821), he was saved from death when his brother, Rebbe Yom Tov Lipa of Sambor, donated years of his own life. He died of cholera on the 11th of Tammuz 5591 (1831), and his legacy continued through the Chasidic dynasty he established.

Once, two emissaries from the Land of Israel came to Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch of Ziditchov. The custom was that every emissary who traveled abroad would take something from the Land of Israel with him. The *tzaddik* asked them: "What have you brought?" They answered that they had brought two stones from the grave of the Rashbi, the holy Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

The Ateret Tzvi of Ziditchov was greatly moved and requested the stones. They told him that they had taken them with them as a *segulah* for protection on their journey and needed them. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch said to them: "I will give you something equivalent to the stones you took from Rashbi's grave." That entire night he sat and wrote a commentary on the *Idra* (one of the most difficult

sections of the holy *Zohar* authored by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and discussing the deepest mysteries of Kabbalah). Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch's nephew, Rabbi Isaac of Ziditchov saw that he concluded the writing: "Please send us word if I have indeed provided a true explanation. Your student, Tzvi son of Hinda." He gave what he wrote to the emissaries and told them: "When you reach Meron, place these writings on the grave of Rashbi and you will see a sign." It is traditionally known that when the students reached the Rashbi's grave in Meron and placed the writing on the tomb, a hand of fire emerged and took the writing.

Once, on Lag BaOmer, Rashbi's traditional day of passing, Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch sat with his students and spoke in praise of Rashbi. Among other things, he said that Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai has the same numerical value as "*Yedid Nefesh Av HaRachman*" (Beloved of the soul, merciful father). There was one chasid present who quickly calculated and found that the gematria was not precise: Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai (רבי שמעון בן יוחאי) equals 765, while "*Yedid Nefesh Av HaRachman*" (ידיד נפש אב הרחמן) equals 764, one less.

But before he could say anything, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch turned to him: "You are surely a Torah scholar, and you must know that in most instances in the Talmud, Rashbi's name is written without an *alef* in Yochai (יוחי)! According to this detail, the *gematria* is precise."

Since Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch is a student of Rashbi, there is certainly great depth in the wondrous *gematria* he innovated. What is the connection between these two phrases, Rashbi's name and, "Beloved of the soul, merciful father?"

Let us begin with an explanation according to Kabbalah, as befits Rashbi and Rebbe Tzvi, the Prince of the House of the Zohar. The source of the expression "beloved of the soul, merciful father" is from the liturgical poem sung before the Minchah service of Friday, just before Shabbat, known for its two first words, *Yedid Nefesh* (some sing it also during Shabbat). This poem was authored by Rabbi Elazar Azkari and appears at the end

of his work, *Sefer Chareidim*. The acrostic formed out of the first letters of the stanzas is God's essential four-letter Name, *Havayah*, thus the first stanza beginning the letter *yud* in "*Yedid nefesh*" corresponds to the letter *yud* in God's Name *Havayah* and to the *sefirah* of wisdom. Although Kabbalah associates the Book of the Zohar with the *sefirah* of understanding (*binah*), and more specifically with the aspect of understanding known as "the radiance of the supernal mother" (זיהרא דאימא עלאה), Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai is associated with the intellectual aspect of wisdom, or the intellect of the Father Principle (*mochin deAbba*) and thus with the *yud* of *Havayah*. Shabbat, when this poem is sung

or recited, is also associated with wisdom. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's associated with wisdom is hinted to in the Zohar's relatively well-known comment: "Who is 'the face of the Master *Havayah*?' This is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai" (*Zohar* 2:38a). The *sefirah* of wisdom includes the entire Name *Havayah*, as in the verse, "*Havayah* is in wisdom" (Proverbs 3:19) and Rashbi is considered the aspect of wisdom known as, "the face of the Master *Havayah*."

THE COMPASSION OF RASHBI

There is additional depth to this *gematria*. If we calculate the value of the words in the expression, excluding the word "merciful" (רחמן), we discover that the value of, "Beloved of the soul father the" (יְדִיד נָפֶשׁ אֲבִה) is "Shimon" (שִׁמְעוֹן), and thus the entire phrase is equivalent to saying "Shimon is merciful" (שִׁמְעוֹן רַחֲמָן). This is particularly surprising, considering that the name Shimon is a name of severity and judgment. Yet, we find that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who led the generation that followed the terrible war against the Jewish people and the self-sacrifice required by his teacher, Rabbi Akiva and his generation, bases his bond with his own disciples and with his entire generation on love and endearment. As he said, "We depend on endearment" (*Zohar* 3:128a),

meaning that our survival and our success depend only on love and the connection between our souls.

Therefore, it makes perfect sense that *Rashbi* was told that, "by means of your composition [i.e., the *Zohar*] they [the Jewish people] will emerge from exile through compassion" (*Ibid.* 3:124b). Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's teachings and approach as handed down to us through the *Zohar*, arouse God's compassion. Divine service that is based on loving-kindness and endearment between souls and between man and God awakens the revelation of God as the "Beloved of the soul" and as "a merciful Father" who wants to redeem us with compassion.

Though the "Beloved of the soul" is God, the compassion that pours out is also that of *Rashbi* himself. The Sages state¹ that God is called "your friend and your father's friend."² He is not only a Father or King to whom I relate in awe, but also the beloved of my soul. All these aspects of God are revealed by Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, through the friendship and love he spreads among his followers and throughout the entire Jewish people.

1. *Sifrei, Beha'lotcha* 78. *Shemot Rabbah* 27:1. *Rashi* on *Shabbat* 31a, s.v. *De'alach sani*.

2. Proverbs 27:10.

PARASHAT KORACH

MOSES AND KORACH: DISAGREEMENT AND INCLUSIVENESS

In *parashat Korach*, wherein Korach organizes a rebellion against Moses' leadership, the principle of "measure for measure" is evident on both conceptual and practical levels in light of the Arizal's teaching that Korach's soul belongs to the soul root of Cain Adam's firstborn son, and Moses' soul belongs to the soul root of Abel, whom Cain murdered. The spiritual line of Moses' previous incarnations are hinted to in his name (משה) whose three letters are the initials of Moses, Seth, and Abel (משה שת הברך).

There are many obvious similarities between Cain and Abel and Korach and Moses. Just as Cain was jealous of Abel because God chose his offering, Korach was jealous of Moses (and Aaron) because God appointed them as leaders, but he was not. Furthermore, after God chose Abel's offering, He tried to comfort Cain by teaching him to fight his tendency for jealousy and depression, so that he would increase his satisfaction with his lot in life.¹ Likewise, Moses attempted to calm Korach down by providing him with reasons to be content with his life

circumstances. Both attempts failed.² Cain pursued Abel and killed him and Korach pursued his rebellion until the bitter end.

The principle of "measure for measure" plays itself out when the earth, which had "opened its mouth" to cover up Cain's crime,³ opens and swallows up Korach and his followers, as the verse recounts, "and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them."⁴ Likewise, the very image of the earth opening its mouth suggests that both Cain and Korach were tripped up by the words that came out of their own mouths. In recounting Cain's murder of Abel, the Torah states the following: "Cain spoke with his brother Abel. And it happened when they were in the field that Cain rose up against his brother and killed him."⁵ While the text does not reveal what Cain said to his brother, presumably, it was these words that led to Abel's murder. In Korach's case, the opening phrase of the portion, "and Korach took,"⁶ lacks

1. Genesis 4:6.

2. Ibid 4:8, Numbers 16:1-35.

3. Genesis 4:11.

4. Numbers 16:32.

5. Genesis 4:11.

6. Numbers 16:1.

a direct object; what did Korach take? Therefore, the Sages explain that here the verb “to take” means to “ensnare.” Korach ensnared the peoples’ hearts, tricking them by cloaking his own anger and ambition in populist rhetoric aimed at enlisting their support.

A DISAGREEMENT NOT FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN

It states in *Pirkei Avot*:

Any disagreement that is for the sake of Heaven will endure, but any disagreement not for the sake of Heaven will not endure. What is a dispute for the sake of Heaven? The arguments between Hillel and Shammai. What is a dispute that was not for the sake of Heaven? The argument of Korach and his company [against Moses].⁷

Korach’s argument that all members of the Jewish people are holy and that God is among them was a very strong and persuasive argument for it is undeniably true.⁸ His downfall though was that he turned a profound truth into a populist platitude for the sake of advancing his personal agenda. It can even be said that his populism foreshadowed democracy far before that concept was conceived in Athens around a thousand years later.⁹

Chasidut teaches that although the notion that all Jewish people are holy and God is among them is certainly true, the

full manifestation and revelation of this truth will only truly occur in the future. Until then hierarchy is both a natural and necessary component of human relations. Korach was arguing that the future, in a sense, had already come; therefore, there was no need for a leader like Moses whose authority exceeded everybody else’s. Ironically, Korach, the populist libertarian, cynically employed the notion of equality to advance his own ambitions, while Moses, described by the Torah as the humblest man on the face of the earth,¹⁰ appears to be selfishly fighting to maintain his authority. However, there is no doubt that Moses never sought power and authority for himself; clearly, he only fought Korach’s bid for power because he had no doubt that God had appointed him to lead His people.

RIGHT AND LEFT

In contemporary politics, the label “right” and “left” are common. Despite the tendency to think that these are modern labels to depict different political philosophies, the idea of right and left is intrinsic to fundamental concepts of Kabbalah.¹¹ The ten *sefirot* are based on archetypal energies depicted structurally by right and left axes, as well as an integrative middle axis. The *Zohar* identifies Moses with the energies of the right side, especially loving-kindness, while Korach is identified with the left

7. *Avot* 5:20.

8. Numbers 16:3.

9. *The Inner Dimension: Insights into the Weekly Torah Portion*, p.288.

10. Numbers 12:3

11. *The Inner Dimension: Insights into the Weekly Torah Portion, Korach*.

side, especially the aspect of might.¹² Likewise, Abel represents the right side and Cain the left side.

Moses' love of the people and his constant willingness to sacrifice his own needs for others and defend the people before God was exhibited repeatedly in his life. Korach on the other hand exhibited a thirst for power and might, as he rebelled against Moses and his authority, wanting to take all the power in his own hand, causing deep division and a lack of compromise.

Yet, we see in this story how Moses, after initially humbling himself and begging Korach and his followers to stand down, adopts a very strong stance and exhibits his own brand of might in defending his role as leader, a trait seemingly opposite to his usual "right-side" nature. Paradoxically Korach presented himself as a man of loving-kindness, a lover of the people, and one who has their interests in mind and would bring them true equality.¹³ To understand this seeming switching of roles we turn to a number of important concepts in Kabbalah and Chasidut.

THREE TYPES OF INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT

A deep type of intelligence referred to as "inter-inclusion" posits a type of understanding of reality that goes beyond the superficial appearance of things. Through inter-inclusion, one can gain the ability to perceive how

one thing is included or manifest in something else. This is the way the sages of the Talmud describe the faculty of understanding (*binah*): to comprehend one matter within or from another.¹⁴ This way of thinking is prevalent throughout Jewish tradition, especially in the in-depth learning found in the Talmud.

Another concept that relates to our discussion is "trading places" (*achlifuduchtau*), a term that is used when a sage who usually adopts a certain consistent stance in Jewish law, in an exceptional case, takes a (seemingly) opposite stance.¹⁵ A third concept that is relevant is called "the opposite is the case" (*ipcha meestabra*). This term is used when, in a Talmudic discussion, an opinion or conclusion is presented that is the opposite of what one might initially (logically) think.

It is certainly interesting to note that it is now known that the right brain controls the left side of the body while the left side of the brain controls the right side of the body.¹⁶ In a similar but slightly different manner, the retina transmits images to the brain upside down and then the brain flips them right side up. These two physiological realities are hinted to in the Hebrew

12. Zohar 3:158a.

13. Amudeha Shivah, Korach, Rishon and Sheni.

14. See Rashi on Exodus 31:3.

15. For more on this idea and its connection to modern science see *Lectures on Torah and Modern Physics*, Lecture 1.

16. For a deep analysis of how the workings of the brain relate to the *sefirot* and the relationship between Moses and Korach see *The Inner Dimension: Insights into the Weekly Torah Portion*, pp. 291-292.

word *sikel* (שִׁכֵּל), employed to describe how Jacob crossed his hands when he blessed his grandson's Ephraim and Menasseh.¹⁷ The word *sikel* comes from the same root as *sechel* (שֶׁחַל), meaning intelligence.

In our case of Moses and Korach, we see that is exactly what occurred, each one adopting an opposite personality trait fitting for the call of the hour.¹⁸ Yet we see in the three ideas just presented—inter-inclusion, trading places, and the opposite is true—seeds of a solution for the binary, dualistic world we live in. Similar to how the middle axis of the *sefirot* is one of integration, holism, and harmony, people in all areas of life need to find ways to integrate opposing opinions. This is particularly relevant to healing the deep discord found in politics everywhere. Yet, it is not confined to just that realm but is appropriate in myriad situations and relationships in life. We are not speaking of abandoning one's beliefs for others but rather of an openness to see points of truth in other opinions and the willingness to bring together various good points in order to create peace and build better working models of cooperation instead of automatically discarding any but our own opinions.¹⁹

17. Genesis 48:15.

18. *Amudeha Shivah, Korach, Rishon and Sheni*.

19. *The Inner Dimension: Insights into the Weekly Torah Portion*, *ibid*. For more on the importance of compromise and inclusiveness, as well as their limits, see *Wonders*, issue 186, *Five Dynamics of Leadership*—Part 2.

ONE STEP DEEPER

It is fascinating to note that on a deep superconscious level both Moses and Korach actually had sparks of their opposite—Moses has a part of Cain and Korach has a part of Abel. According to the Arizal, all souls can be traced primordially back to Adam, Cain and Abel. Korach felt he also had a part of Abel within him as only by incorporating both these energies could he bring all Israel behind him in his rebellion. As for Moses (מֹשֶׁה), his name equals 345 and when subtracting 37, the *gematria* of Abel (אֱבֶל), 308 remains, which is the value of Korach (קֹרַח)! Due to Moses' elevated soul, he was able to rectify the sparks of Cain and Korach in his soul, whereas Korach had yet to accomplish that sort of rectification. This is alluded to in the opening verse where it is stated that “And Korah took,” he took only the negativity of Cain which overwhelmed the good sparks of Abel he had in potential.²⁰

INTO THE FUTURE

Although the classic case provided by *Pirkei Avot* to illustrate an argument not for the sake of Heaven is that of Korach, the Arizal revealed that even in this disagreement both disputants possessed an element of truth. Korach's claim that “the entire assembly, all of them, are holy and God is among them,” was certainly true, so much so, that the Arizal taught that in the

20. *Sha'ashuim Yom Yom, Korach*.



future after Mashiach comes, Korach's soul will rise to a very high level. As a scriptural support for this innovative interpretation, he cites the following verse: "A *tzaddik* [righteous individual] will blossom like a date palm."²¹ As he notes, the final letters of these words in the original Hebrew (צַדִּיק כְּתֵמַר יִפְרֹחַ) spell Korach (קֹרַח), thus hinting that the righteous one who will blossom like a date palm is Korach.²²

21. Psalms 92:13.

22. *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* and *Sefer HaLikutim*.

Therefore, even though Korach's rebellion both appeared to be, and in fact, was not for the sake of Heaven, he did intuit a great truth which will be revealed in the future. Only at the End of Days will Korach "blossom like a date palm" and the words he says from the depths of the earth into which he descended—"Moses is true and his Torah is true"²³—will be revealed as "these and these are the words of the living God."²⁴

23. *Bava Batra* 74a.

24. *Eiruvim* 13b.



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