

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



Wonders

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of HaRav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

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שַׁבַּת שְׁלַח 🌿 כ-כא סיון תשפ"ו



“Do you know what a rebbe is? If he says it should rain on the right side of the wagon, it rains on the right side,” and so he did with the handkerchief. Afterwards he said the same thing for the left side and it rained on the right and on the left, while in between, in front of them, the road remained dry.



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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

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to publish your classes
in book form.
With blessings for success..."

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Wonders

An anthology from the shiurim and farbrengens
of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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FUNDAMENTALS OF CHASIDUT

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

One of the best known concepts in Judaism is Maimonides 13 Principles of Faith, which originally appear in his commentary on the Mishnah and which are recited daily in many congregations. Many are also familiar with the 13 Principles of Divine Mercy that were revealed to Moses by God to assist in bringing about God's forgiveness. The Zohar makes a direct link between the two sets of 13.

Less known is the 9 Principles of Divine Mercy found in our parashah of Shelach. These principles were invoked by Moses after the Sin of the Spies, once again to beseech God for forgiveness. In this first installment of a series of articles, we will explore the 9 Principles of Faith that this second set of Principles of Divine Faith allude to and how they constitute a Messianic level of faith that can bring the heavens down to earth.

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.

THE THIRTEEN AND NINE PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE MERCY

Parashat Shelach centers on the episode involving the spies sent to survey the Land of Canaan, their negative report that concluded that it would not be possible to conquer the Land, and its aftermath. Initially, God's response was that He would strike the Israelites with an epidemic and annihilate them, creating a new nation out of the descendants of Moses. However, Moses invoked the Principles of Divine Mercy he had been taught by God Himself following the Sin of the Golden Calf,¹ which led to God's forgiveness. Still, all the people above the age of 20 would not be allowed to enter the Land and the Israelites

would now be wandering the wilderness for 38 more years.

The Thirteen Principles of Mercy God revealed to Moses in the Book of Exodus are²: Havayah passed by before him [Moses] and proclaimed: "Havayah, Havayah [1] is a benevolent God; [2] compassionate and [3] gracious; [4-5] slow to [demonstrate His] anger [both upon the righteous and upon the wicked]; [6] abounding in kindness [even toward those who do not have enough merits of their own]; [7] and truth [faithfully

2. The enumeration we have used follows the one taught by the Arizal (*Eitz Chaim* 13:9), based on the *Zohar*. *Rashi* and most other commentaries, based on the Sages in *Rosh HaShanah* 17b (and see *Tosafot s.v. Shelosh Esreh Midot* there), enumerate the 13 differently; there are also other enumerations.

1. Exodus 34:6-7.

rewarding those who obey Him]. [8] He preserves [the merit of the] acts of kindness [9] for 2000 generations; [10] He forgives premeditated sins, [11] as well as rebellious sins, and [12] unintentional sins; [13] And He acquits [those who repent]....

At first, it might seem that the Principles of Mercy that Moses invokes after the Sin of the Spies (in our *parashah*) are identical. However, a careful reading reveals that Moses called only upon a subset of the thirteen Principles of Divine Mercy. He said,

Havayah is [1-2] slow to demonstrate His anger, [3] abounding in kindness, [4] forgiving of premeditated and [5] of rebellious sins, [6] acquitting [those who repent] [7] but not acquitting [those who do not repent], [8] remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers on the children, [9] only up to the third and fourth generation.

Only six of the thirteen principles seem to be explicitly identical.³ But in fact, Moses adds three principles that were not counted among the thirteen in Exodus.

3. We might be tempted to say that Moses only mentioned six of the thirteen principles. However, a careful reading is required to fully appreciate Moses' words. He skips over the first five principles out of the thirteen—" [1] *Havayah* [has mercy on the prospective sinner, helping him resist the urge to sin]; [2] *Havayah* [has mercy on the actual sinner, allowing him to repent]; [3] is a benevolent God; [4] compassionate and [5] gracious." He begins with the sixth principle—"slow to demonstrate anger," two separate types of patience, for the righteous and for the wicked—skips over the seventh and eighth principles—" [7] abounding in kindness; [8] and truth"—continues with, the tenth and eleventh—"forgiving of premeditated and of rebellious sins"—and ends with the final principle—"And He acquits."

They are: "[7] not acquitting [those who do not repent]," and "[8] remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers on the children, [9] only up to the third and fourth generation."⁴

Recognizing the second set of Principles of Divine Mercy in our *parashah* leads us to conclude that altogether, there are 22 such principles, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew *alphabet*.

THE THIRTEEN PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

In a seemingly unrelated source, Maimonides enumerated 13 Principles of Torah Faith. They are⁵:

1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.
2. The belief in God's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. The belief in God's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.
4. The belief in God's eternity.
5. The imperative to worship G-d exclusively and no foreign false gods.
6. The belief that God communicates with man through prophecy.
7. The belief in the primacy of the prophecy of Moses our teacher.
8. The belief in the Divine origin of the Torah.

4. The final three principles of mercy do not seem to be describing mercy so much. However, since they correspond to *Ze'er Anpin* (the Small Countenance) which can be a source of judgment, the last three principles limit the amount of judgment administered.

5. As translated on chabad.org.

9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah.
10. The belief in God's omniscience and providence.
11. The belief in Divine reward and retribution.
12. The belief in the arrival of the Mashiach and the messianic era.
13. The belief in the Resurrection of the Dead.

Many have speculated that Maimonides chose the number 13 based on the 13 Principles of Divine Mercy and have even attempted to draw a correspondence between the two sets.⁶

Now that we have seen that *parashat Shelach* enumerates 9 more Principles of Divine Mercy, we are motivated to seek out 9 additional Principles of Torah Faith, not mentioned by Maimonides.

DIVISION OF 22 INTO 13 AND 9

But first we must understand the meaning of the division of 22 into 13 and 9.

According to the *Zohar* and the Arizal, the 13 Principles of Mercy are the secret of the the 13 Rectifications of the Beard (*tikunei dikna*) of *Arikh Anpin*, the so-called Long Countenance, while the 9 Principles of Mercy are the secret of the 9 Rectifications of the Beard of *Ze'er Anpin*, the so-called Small Countenance.

Now, it is stated in the *Zohar*⁷ that the 13 Rectifications of *Arikh Anpin* are themselves the 13 Rectifications of Faith

and these correspond to the 13 Principles of Faith of the Rambam as mentioned above. The *Zohar* is stating that the Rectifications of *Arikh*, which are part of the crown where lie the superconscious faculties of the soul are like principles of faith whose purpose is to act upon the intellect so that we are able to think with a Divine consciousness or rationale. However, these 13 Rectifications are not yet powerful enough to draw Divine light to be revealed below, not just in the intellect, but within the physical reality we inhabit. Thus, Maimonides' 13 Principles of Faith belong to the revealed (*nigleh*) dimension of the Torah, and it is they that affect the rectification of the Sin of the Golden Calf (the sin of anthropomorphism and idolatry). Just as the Sin of the Golden Calf anthropomorphized God, substituting Him for an idol, so the overall thrust for rectifying this sin is the removal of all corporeality from God—the central aim of Maimonides' thought, as is well known.

The 9 Principles of Divine Mercy belong to the concealed (*nistar*) dimension of the Torah (as revealed in the holy *Zohar*, the writings of the Arizal, and especially in the teachings of *Chasidut*), and as such, they affect the rectification of the Sin of the Spies. The Spies' sin was to speak ill of the Holyland, of the Land of Israel. They imagined that the abstract God, removed from all physicality, could not contend with the physicality He Himself created; as they claimed, "for it [the inhabitants of the Land] are stronger than Him."⁸

The overall thrust needed to rectify the Sin of the Spies is the infusion of Divinity into the reality's physical dimension,

6. For an in-depth discussion see Eli Gurfinkel, "13 Principles of Faith and 13 Principles of Mercy," in *Da'at*, vol. 84 (2017), pp. 35-81.

7. See *Sifra DeTzniuta*, ch. 2; *Zohar* 2:177a.

8. Numbers 13:31.

sometimes referred to as “drawing the infinite into the finite,” or “to make for Him a dwelling place in the lower realms.” This rectification is more internal and hidden than the first, for what is required here is a union of opposites, a state of paradox that can carry both the infinite and the finite (abstraction and corporeality) as one. It is well known⁹ that the essence of the Torah’s concealed dimension is to teach and instruct us about attaining states that unify opposites.

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH OF THE TORAH’S INNER DIMENSION

Let us now present the Nine Principles of Faith of the Torah’s inner dimension whose purpose is to infuse the Divine into reality’s physical dimension following the principle that opposites can be united. These nine principles are gathered from the Kabbalistic and Chasidic teachings. Since these principles correspond to the nine chambers in *Ze’er Anpin*, they can be ordered more simply in correspondence to the *sefirot* from wisdom (*chochmah*) to kingdom (*malchut*), as follows:

1. Wisdom: A new understanding of Torah will go forth from Me.
2. Understanding: Human service is needed by God.
3. Loving-kindness: Creation is continually being renewed and personal Divine Providence.
4. Might: Every descent is for the purpose of a subsequent ascent, even sin.
5. Beauty: God desires having a dwelling place in mundane reality.
6. Victory: The tzaddik makes a decree and the Almighty fulfills it.
7. Acknowledgment: the Almighty makes a decree and the tzaddik annuls it.
8. Foundation: All your people are *tzaddikim* (righteous).
9. Kingdom: The Land of Israel and the Jewish body are sanctified.

Over the next few weeks, we will explain each of these principles in greater depth, beginning with the first.

WISDOM: "A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF TORAH WILL GO FORTH FROM ME"

The first principle of the Torah’s inner dimension relates to the Torah itself, to Divine wisdom. Like all principles of faith, this one pervades much of the Kabbalistic and Chasidic literature, but there are strong echoes of it in the literature of the Torah’s revealed dimension as well. Still, despite having many sources, the most explicit and well-known source is also the one that has probably been studied and commented upon the most. It appears in the midrash on the verses regarding the kosher and non-kosher animal species in *parashat Shemini* in the Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus). It reads:

“These are the animals [you may eat...].”¹⁰
Rabbi Yudan ben Rabbi Shimon said:

10. Though the *midrash* is on the verse, “The following are the creatures you may eat” (Leviticus 11:2), it quotes the parallel verse from Deuteronomy (14:4): “These are the animals you may eat...,” because its translation of “animals” is *Behemoth*, which is the topic at hand.

9. See Rebbe Hillel of Paritch’s commentary titled *BeReish Hormanuta DeMalka*, p. 6, in the name of the *Ramaz*.

The Behemoth and the Leviathan will engage in an animal fight before the righteous in the future. Anyone who was not a spectator at the animal fights of the nations of the world in this world, will merit to see it in the World to Come.

How will they be slaughtered? The Behemoth gores the Leviathan with its horns and rends it, and the Leviathan strikes the Behemoth with its fins and slaughters it.

The Sages ask: Is this a valid ritual slaughter? Did we not learn: “Everyone slaughters, and one may always slaughter, and one may slaughter with any item, except for the harvest sickle, a saw, the teeth of an animal, and a fingernail, because they strangle”?

Rabbi Avin bar Kahana said: The Holy Blessed One said: “Torah will go forth from Me”¹¹ (תּוֹרָה מֵאֵתִי יֵצֵא)—a renewal of Torah [ruling] will emerge from Me¹² (חֲדוּשׁ תּוֹרָה מֵאֵתִי יֵצֵא).

Technically, this interpretation of the prophet’s words is meant to resolve the difficulty of how the Leviathan will slaughter the *Behemoth* (the wild ox)¹³ for the feast of the righteous in the future using a form of slaughter that is not valid under current law.

However, the implications are wider.

Elsewhere, the Sages state¹⁴ that the Torah of this world, meaning the depth to which our wisdom can reach in understanding the Torah is like vapor in comparison to the new and deeper understanding of Torah that will be revealed by the Mashiach. In the language of Kabbalah,¹⁵ the Torah of this world is meant for the World of Creation—for states of consciousness where one remains separate or distanced from the Creator. The Torah, in its present understanding strives to rectify the World of Creation, a world of possessions, of conflict, and sin. However, the wisdom of the Torah that will be taught by the Mashiach is known as the Torah of Emanation. In the World of Emanation (*Atzilut*), consciousness is nullified to God alone and there is no experience of a separate self, so the interpretation of the Torah the Mashiach will teach us will be an expression of God’s inner world, as it were, revealing God’s true oneness within all of creation. According to the Torah of Emanation, *Atzilut*, the Leviathan’s slaughter of the Behemoth using its fin will be considered kosher, as will be explained.

This principle corresponds to (meaning it adds onto) Maimonides’ ninth Principle of Faith in the immutability of Torah, which means in plain language that the Torah we have shall not be replaced, nor shall there be another Torah from the Creator.

WHAT A VETERAN SCHOLAR IS DESTINED TO INNOVATE

The new and deeper wisdom of Torah that will be revealed in the future

11. Isaiah 51:4.

12. *Yalkut Shimoni, Shemini*, §538; see also *Vayikra Rabbah* 13:3.

13. The sum of *Leviathan* (לֵוִיָּתָן) and *Behemoth* (בְּהֵמוֹת) is 949, the product of 13 and 73, or “one” (אֶחָד) and “wisdom” (חִכְמָה). 949 is also the value of “a talent for this world, a talent for the World to Come” (חֹשֶׁךְ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה חֹשֶׁךְ בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא).

14. *Kohelet Rabbah* on the second verse of Ecclesiastes.

15. *Tikkunei Zohar* 4b.

by the Mashiach and subsequently in the World to Come is in essence the inner core of the Torah that was revealed to Moses at Sinai. The Torah's revealed dimension, as it was revealed at Sinai, is the most appropriate expression of that great and infinite revelation that is the Torah's soul for us, limited beings within Creation. The Torah's soul and essence itself will be revealed in the future with the so-called new (understanding of) Torah taught by the Mashiach.

The sages hint to this continuity with the statement that, "All that a veteran scholar¹⁶ is destined to innovate [in Torah] was already said to Moses at Sinai,"¹⁷ yet the innovation is a truly novel revelation. When the innovation reveals a new and meaningful insight into Torah, which then illuminates our reality that is low and dark in terms of Divine light, it is considered absolutely new even though, paradoxically, it was already revealed to Moses at Sinai.

NEW DIMENSIONS

In every generation there is a Moses. This is known in Kabbalah as "the extension of Moses into every generation."¹⁸ This extension of Moses into every generation receives and reveals new dimensions of Torah. This will be particularly true with the coming of the Mashiach. About Moses it says, "he [Moses] is the first redeemer,

and he is the final redeemer."¹⁹ Thus, when Mashiach will come, the essential nature of a "new Torah" will be revealed, even more so than in previous generations.

It is stated in the *Zohar* that, "Torah emerges from wisdom."²⁰ The Torah of this world emerges from the exterior facet of the *sefirah* of wisdom (which unites with the Mother Principle that sits upon the Throne, the secret of the Torah of the World of Creation, described as "the low-hanging wisdom from above is Torah"²¹). But the Torah of the future emerges from the interior facet of the *sefirah* of wisdom (which illuminates only within the world of *Atzilut*— "Abba dwells in *Atzilut*"²²— the secret of the Torah of *Atzilut*), relating to the statement that the interior facet of *Abba* is the interior facet of *Atik*.²³ The exterior facet of wisdom and its revealed dimension represent the capacity to grasp a matter and understand and process it in order to bring it to practical application. But wisdom's interior facet is precisely the capacity to be completely open, without any obstructing self-consciousness, and to receive the light that glimmers above our limited consciousness. This receptive openness is called self-nullification (or *bitul*).

Thus, a true "innovation of Torah" or "renewal of Torah" can only come from genuine self-nullification before the Divine light of the world, which is the source of both the Torah and its innovations.

16. The value of "a veteran scholar" (תלמיד ותיק) is 1000, the same as the value of "Israel, Ba'al Shem Tov" (ישראל בעל שם טוב). The number 1000 alludes to the thousand lights that Moses received at Mt. Sinai (Arizal's *Likkutei Torah, Ki Tisa*).

17. *Vayikra Rabbah* 22:1.

18. *Tikkunei Zohar, tikkun* 69 (113a).

19. See *Midrash Shmuel*, 14.

20. *Zohar* 2:121a.

21. *Bereishit Rabbah* 17:7; see *Torah Or* 111d.

22. *Tikkunei Zohar* 6 (23a). See also Ramaz on *Zohar* vol. 2, beginning of.

23. *Pri Eitz Chaim, Kri'at Shema*, ch. 15.

When one attempts to innovate a new understanding in Torah without a deep and genuine *bitul* to God, the Creator of the world and the Giver of the Torah to His people Israel, the source of the innovation flows from the person's own soul in its disconnected state from its source and from the Creator. Subsequently, the innovation produced is false, bearing no connection to the true Torah—God's Torah.

The distinction between wisdom's interior and exterior facets will help us unpack the midrash's strange image of a battle between animals for the entertainment of spectators. The *Leviathan* is an ocean creature that will eventually meet its demise.²⁴ The ocean and its creatures represent the concealed dimension of reality and of the Torah. The *Behemoth* is a great land creature, and dry land represents the revealed dimension of reality and of the Torah. In the concealed dimension, everything is nullified to the Divine. In the revealed dimension, we find that everything has a consciousness that is separate from the Creator. Thus, the *Leviathan* symbolizes the sages who are masters of the Torah's concealed dimension and the *Behemoth* symbolizes the sages who are masters of the revealed dimension. From its perspective, the Leviathan's intent is to bring about true self-nullification before the Divine, even in the *Behemoth*, even in the revealed dimension of Torah. The greater and more genuine the *bitul*, the more abundant and deep the flow of the infinite that is within wisdom.

24. Isaiah 27:1, Job 40:25 (and see *Bava Batra* 74b-75a), Psalms 74:14, and elsewhere.

“FACE TO FACE”

It would seem to be that the Torah's eternal status is contradictory to the notion that there can be a novelty in Torah. However, the reason these two contradictory propositions can coexist is that, as the Sages state, “The Torah and the Holy Blessed One are entirely one.”²⁵ God—His essence and being—is eternal and forever, “I *Havayah* do not change”²⁶—and yet, and for that very reason, He changes in His external manifestation, as the Sages say that,²⁷ “at the sea He appeared as a warrior and at the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai He appeared to the Israelites as ‘an elder full of compassion,’” etc. Likewise, the Torah is eternal and unchanging in essence and yet (and because of that), “everything that a veteran scholar is destined to innovate was already said to Moses at Sinai.” As the Alter Rebbe of Chabad was fond of saying, “another Giving of the Torah there will not be,”²⁸ yet, in every generation, and especially with the coming of the righteous Mashiach, the Torah's continuing revelation can be described as “a new facet has arrived.” When God communicates with the sages of the generation, the continuing revelation is described as “God has spoken to you, face to face,”²⁹ where the two faces refer to the facet of Mashiach's Torah within the facet of the Torah as it is in this world.

25. See *Zohar* 1:24a; 2:60a; *Tikkunei Zohar*, 6 at the beginning and 24; *Tanya*, ch. 4 and ch. 23; *Likkutei Torah*, *Nitzavim* 46a

26. Malachi 3:6.

27. *Mechilta Rabbi Shimon* 15:3.

28. *Likkutei Shichot* vol. 4, p. 1166. See “*Shuvah Yisrael*” 5666.

29. Deuteronomy 5:4.

STORY

RABBI MORDECHAI ELIYAHU: DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Rabbi Mordechai Tzemach Eliyahu was born on the 21st of Adar I, 5689 (1929), to Rabbi Salman Eliyahu, a Kabbalist and disciple of the illustrious Rabbi Yosef Chaim, known as the Ben Ish Chai from Bagdad, and to Mazal, the sister of Rabbi Yehuda Tzedakah and granddaughter of the Ben Ish Chai's sister. From childhood, he distinguished himself through his talents and diligence in Torah study despite great poverty. He studied under Rabbi Ezra Attiah at the Porat Yosef Yeshiva in Jerusalem and under Rabbi Tzedakah Chutzin. When he was about 20, he was counted among the members of Brit HaKanaim (Covenant of the Zealots), an underground movement whose goal was to establish a halachic state and compel the public to observe mitzvot (although years later, he admitted that, "this path is not suitable for our generation"). At the beginning of 5720 (1960), he was appointed as the youngest dayan (rabbinical judge) in the Land of Israel, at the rabbinical court in Be'er Sheva. In that same year, the bones of the esteemed 18th century intellectual leader, Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (the Chida) were brought from Italy to Israel, and Rabbi Eliyahu handled his wondrous burial at Har HaMenuchot. After four years, he moved to the regional court in Jerusalem, and in 5731 (1971) was appointed as a member of the Great Rabbinical Court. On the 4th of Nissan 5743 (1983), he was crowned as the Rishon LeZion and Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel alongside the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Avraham Elkanah Kahana Shapira. Even after completing his tenure as Chief Rabbi, he remained a leader to many. He was known as a Kabbalist and miracle worker, served as head of the Darchei Hora'ah kollel in Jerusalem, and had over 60 emissaries scattered across various countries. After a period of about two years of declining health, the tzaddik departed this world on the 25th of Sivan 5770 (2010) and was buried in the Chida's Mausoleum, the final resting place for the remains he had miraculously buried there fifty years earlier.

Rabbi Ezra Barnea, cantor of the Heichal Yaakov synagogue, related: Every patient has a treatment file containing all the medications received during treatment, to track the disease's progression and healing. But in my file, there is a special medicine not usually found in patient files.

First, I should relate that for a long period I was under medical treatment and monitoring due to abdominal pains that persisted for a long time. Once a month,

I would come for examinations at the hospital, where they gave me strong medications that didn't always help. At the beginning of Elul, a few days before Rabbi Eliyahu was hospitalized for the second time, the rabbi blessed me with a special blessing and said to me: "That's it, there is nothing wrong with you."

When I arrived at the clinic after three weeks, the rabbi was already hospitalized. The doctor asked me: "How do you feel?" I answered: "Very good, I've been without pain for three weeks."

The doctor continued and asked: "How did the pain stop?"

I answered him with a question: "Do you know Rabbi Eliyahu?"

"Certainly, I treat him!" the doctor replied. I told him that I received a blessing from the rabbi and since then I feel good. The doctor told me to come back in another month, and to immediately stop taking the medications that were poisoning me.

I returned a month later, and again the doctor asked me how I was feeling, and I answered that I felt very well. He said that if so, he was transferring me to another doctor who would follow up. The two spoke about the tests that had been conducted on me and about the findings. The new doctor opened my file and read it from the beginning. When he reached the last page, he smiled broadly. I asked him what the smile was about, and he answered me: "It says here that the pain stopped after Rabbi Eliyahu's blessing."

Afterwards he told me to come for a checkup in another three months. When I came after three months for the checkup, again I had nothing wrong. The doctor said to me: "You don't need to come for checkups anymore. And if, God forbid, the pain returns, you already know to whom to turn..."

(Avihem shel Yisrael, Vol. 5)

It sometimes seems that doctors and *tzaddikim* live in parallel worlds that never meet. Doctors live in a world of nature, medicine, causes and effects, while *tzaddikim* live in a world of miracles and wonder, of Divine Providence, and of spiritual remedies. What happens when the worlds meet?

Sometimes there is a tectonic shock, a shattering of the previous beliefs of

people who believe only in natural process. Sometimes the reticence comes from the *tzaddikim*, who do not always want the miracle to be revealed through the veil of concealment they have wrapped around themselves. But in stories like ours, what stands out is the ease and delight both of the *tzaddik* on one hand, and of the doctors on the other. The rabbi utters half a sentence and eliminates the illness, and the

doctors who have already come to know him smile and acknowledge with joy that he knows more than we do about the way this world works....

THIS IS THE BA'AL SHEM TOV!

The holy Ba'al Shem Tov also loved this path. It is told of him that when he

had just started to reveal himself before people, he did not have many *chasidim*. Because his followers were so few in number, they were forced to marry their daughters even to individuals who opposed the Ba'al Shem Tov.

One of the Ba'al Shem Tov's *chasidim* was very distressed about this, since his son-in-law absolutely refused to travel to the rebbe. With a heavy heart, he went to the Ba'al Shem Tov and related his distress. The Ba'al Shem Tov calmed the *chasid* and promised him that he would come to visit his city, and thus the son-in-law would be able to meet him. When the Ba'al Shem Tov arrived at that town, he called for the young man, who reluctantly agreed to enter the wagon with the Ba'al Shem Tov.

They began to travel down the street, and the Ba'al Shem Tov asked the young man: "Do you know what a rebbe is?"

It was a bright summer day, and the Ba'al Shem Tov said: "A rebbe is one who, if he takes out his handkerchief from his pocket and says it will rain, immediately it starts raining." As he spoke these words, the Ba'al Shem Tov took out his handkerchief and immediately it rained.

Afterwards he said to the young man: "Do you know what a rebbe is? One who, if he says with the handkerchief that the rain should stop, the rain immediately stops." The Ba'al Shem Tov did just that and the rain stopped. Afterwards he asked the young man again, "Do you know what a rebbe is? If he says it should rain on the right side of the wagon, it rains on the right side," and so he did with the handkerchief. Afterwards he said the same thing for the left side and it rained on the right and on the left, while in between, in front of them, the road remained dry. The revealed miracle affected the groom, who subsequently became a *chasid*.

It is told that when the Ba'al Shem Tov's attendant told this to the Alter Rebbe, the rebbe was amazed and said: This is the Ba'al Shem Tov!

Why was the Alter Rebbe so amazed? What does this miracle reveal about the essence of the Ba'al Shem Tov? The answer lies in the sense of playfulness. In every

miracle of a *tzaddik* we see the disruption of the natural order, but here the Ba'al Shem Tov plays with the world without any real necessity, only to show the young

man and the world “Who is the master of the house?” Of course, one can laugh at someone out of contempt, but one can also laugh with them out of joy and amusement, for the pleasure of all involved in the jest.

When the Ba’al Shem Tov laughs at

nature, nature smiles back at him. This is the Ba’al Shem Tov, and this was the same kind of power that Rabbi Eliyahu also revealed when he caused the medical professionals to laugh at their natural-process work.

PARASHAT SHELACH

THE POWER OF TEN

“**A**nd God spoke to Moses saying: Send for you men that they may spy out the Land of Canaan which I give to the Israelites.”¹ The Hebrew root of the word *Shelach* (which literally means “send”), the name of this week’s Torah portion, interestingly appears in the names of two other portions as well: *Vayishlach*, when Jacob sends messengers to Esau before re-entering the Land of Israel,² and *Beshalach*, when Pharaoh sends the Jewish people away after years of slavery.³

Not only do all three portions share the same root word in their names, they also have coming to the Land of Israel in common. Jacob sends messengers to Esau, hoping to appease him before re-entering the Land. Pharaoh sends the people from Egypt thus sending them on a journey that will ultimately culminate in the Promised Land. In our portion, Moses sends spies to

assess the lay of the land and its inhabitants in order to devise a plan of conquest.

A SPARK OF MASHIACH

Another word stemming from the same root as the name of our parashah, *Shelach* is *shaliach*, meaning an emissary with a specific purpose or mission. The value of *shaliach* (שליח) is 348. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, taught that the difference between the value of *shaliach*, 348, and the value of *Mashiach* (משיח), 358, is 10. The 10 alludes to the letter *yud*, whose value is 10, and represents the hidden point of pure potential, the spark of *Mashiach*, within every Jew.

The prophet Isaiah summed up the Jewish people’s mission with great brevity: “to be a light unto the nations.”⁴ This holy light is initially hidden within every Jew, but when it is activated, the dormant spark of *Mashiach* and a Jew’s hidden leadership

1. Numbers 13:1-2.

2. Genesis 32:4.

3. Exodus 13:17.

4. Isaiah 42:6.

potential are activated. When a critical mass of individual sparks is awakened, the energy of Mashiach will descend into the world.⁵

THE TEN SPIES

The Lubavitcher Rebbe's suggestion that adding the letter *yud*, equaling 10, to the word *shaliach*, makes a great deal of sense in the context of this *parashah*, due to the fact that the letter *yud* and its numerical equivalent of 10 appears repeatedly in *Shelach*. Moses chose twelve spies, one from each tribe to spy out the land.⁶ Ten of them banded together and returned with an evil report, while Caleb and Joshua urged the people not to listen to them, to trust in God's promise to conquer the land. From the fact that the Torah refers to the ten spies as an "evil assembly,"⁷ the sages deduce that an assembly or congregation is composed of at least ten men and therefore ten men are required to form a *minyán*, a prayer quorum.⁸ In essence every *minyán* rectifies the potential power of "an evil assembly" of ten people, by forming an assembly that is focused on doing good.

On a deeper level, 10 is the first number whose factorial, written as $10!$ is greater than 600,000 ($10! = 1 \cdot 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 4 \cdot 5 \cdot 6 \cdot 7 \cdot 8 \cdot 9 \cdot 10 = 3,628,800$), the archetypal number of souls in Israel. Thus, when 10 men join together in prayer, the spiritual origin of all Jewish souls are present in potential.⁹ This helps rectify the divisions and lack of

faith that were unleashed by the evil report of the ten spies.¹⁰

A NAME CHANGE

As Moses sends the spies on their appointed way he adds a letter *yud* to the name of Joshua, who was known as Hoshea until then.¹¹ Every name change in the Torah signifies a change of spiritual status and identity, as well as the attainment of a new level of consciousness. Based on the Talmud, *Rashi* explains that the additional letter *yud* next to the first letter of Hoshea forms God's two-letter Name pronounced *Kah* (כֹּה). Thus, Joshua's new name can be understood to mean, "God will save you" [from the plot of the spies].¹²

The addition of the *yud*, which has a numerical value of 10, alludes to Moses' intuition that Joshua would need this letter's extraordinary energy to ward off the power of the ten spies. As mentioned above, the *yud* also symbolizes the spark of the Mashiach and inherent leadership qualities; thus, Moses was fortifying Joshua by activating his deepest potential, his inner spark of Mashiach and his potential for leadership.

There is a tradition that the *yud* added to Joshua's name was taken from Sarai's name (שרַי) when God changed her name to Sarah (שרָה), He essentially, as it were, removed the letter *yud* from her name and gave it to Joshua. He then added the letter *hei* to her, tuning her into Sarah.¹³ In general, the

5. *Awakening the Spark Within*, p. 31.

6. Numbers 13:3.

7. *Ibid* 14:26.

8. *Megillah* 23b.

9. *The Hebrew Letters*, p. 164.

10. *Yaiyn Yitzchak, parshat Shelach*, #1.

11. Numbers 13:16.

12. *Ibid.*, *Sotah* 34b.

13. Genesis 17:15; *Bereishit Rabbah* 47:1

letter *yud* is considered masculine energy whereas the letter *hei* represents feminine energy. When her name was changed, Sarah had yet to give birth. Adding the letter *hei* and removing the letter *yud* symbolized a certain feminine lack in her physical and spiritual makeup that needed to be filled in order for her to give birth, as she subsequently did.

Before his name change, Joshua's name Hoshea began with a *hei* (הוּשַׁע), a feminine facet, whereas now his name began with a *yud* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), a masculine aspect. With his name change, the first two letters of his name now spelled the name of God (יה-) but also incorporated in perfect union both his masculine and feminine aspects. All teachings of Kabbalah and Chasidut emphasize that every individual has both masculine and feminine qualities. This is the secret of Adam being created as one being with the male and female components separated only later. Despite their separation, all humans maintain the qualities of the opposite gender within them on conscious and unconscious levels.

By adding a *yud* to Hoshea's name, his first two letters include both positive masculine and feminine aspects, and as mentioned above, form a name of God. Thus, Joshua was able to incorporate a full range of qualities that helped make him the great leader that he became.¹⁴

Although we see that Joshua was called upon to lead the battle against Amalek soon after leaving Egypt,¹⁵ the main impression we have of Joshua is the description of him

as Moses' loyal student, who the Torah testifies, never left the tent of Moses for 40 years.¹⁶ This indicates a much more receptive role. Yet it would be Joshua who would lead Israel into the Promised Land; thus, his need for an additional *yud* to his name to give him the strength, fortitude and leadership qualities for his new role in life.

MAGNIFYING GOD'S NAME

When the people responded to the spies report by complaining and threatening to go back to Egypt, Moses prayed to God to forgive them nonetheless: "And now may the strength of my God *be magnified* as You have spoken saying: God, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, forgiver of iniquity and purposeful sin..."¹⁷ In a traditional Torah scroll, the Hebrew word for "magnified" (גָּדַל) begins with an enlarged letter *yud*. Paradoxically, the *yud* in its usual form is the smallest of the letters; as the Midrash states, it is "the little that contains much."¹⁸ Moses realized the severity of the sins committed by the ten spies and the people. The enlarged letter *yud* symbolizes Moses beseeching God to go beyond the letter of the law by magnifying whatever small merit the people had in order to offset their obvious deficiencies.

One of the foundational teachings of Kabbalah and Chasidut, especially of the Arizal, is that the energy of creation continues to animate all reality and thus influences everything that happens in

14. See *The Hebrew Letters*, p. 230 for more on Joshua's name change.

15. Exodus 17:9.

16. Ibid 33:11

17. Numbers 14:17.

18. *Bereishit Rabbah* 9:7.



the material world below, including of course the existential reality of human beings. Since God created the world in a balanced manner, as expressed in the verse, “this against this has God made,”¹⁹ these energies of creation channeled through the ten *sefirot* also play out in the ongoing inner battle between man’s good and evil inclinations. Yet, while we are influenced from Above, man’s thoughts, speech and actions have an effect and influence on the *sefirot* and the upper worlds. Thus, Moses’ plea that God be magnified and manifest His compassion, in and of itself helped draw that energy into reality.²⁰

In response to his plea God answered Moses’ prayer in the affirmative—“I have forgiven as you have requested”—but then seems to hedge His acceptance with the following bitter rebuke of “all the men who have seen My glory and My signs that I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness and have tested me these ten times and have not heeded my voice.”²¹ Once again, we find the number ten in this *parashah*, in this instance, to denote that this is the tenth time the people have “tested” God. Moses, knowing this, prayed when saying “*yigdal*,” that the aspect of *yud* (ten) should be magnified so that God could forgive the people.

According to tradition, God tested

Abraham ten times.²² Abraham’s final test was the *Akeidah*, the Divine command to sacrifice his son Isaac.²³ The Midrash states that after the ordeal was over, Abraham, who had not protested even once during the test, turned to God and strongly requested that He show his descendants mercy as his reward.²⁴ Abraham’s merit in passing his ten tests gave God, as it were, the strength, patience, and compassion to endure his descendants’ ten tests.

IN CONCLUSION

As the multiple connections in this *parashah* between the number ten and the letter *yud* indicate, the Torah’s stories are linked on many levels. These same connective forces occur and reoccur in our private lives, the history of the Jewish people, and world history. The letters of the Torah represent the building blocks of creation and the fabric of history as it unfolds. Our actions create harmony and redemption or dissonance and disaster; their consequences may be felt immediately or sometimes only generations later. Even now, millennia later, we are still trying to rectify the failings of the spies. Even now the prayers of Abraham and Moses are assisting us in ways we do not fully comprehend.

19. Ecclesiastes 7:14.

20. *Yayin Yitzchak, parshat Shelach*, #4.

21. Numbers 14:20-22.

22. *Pirkei Avot* 5:4.

23. Genesis 22:1.

24. *Bereishit Rabbah* 56:15.



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