

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



Issue 203

Wonders

בס"ד

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שַׁבַּת מַטּוֹת-מַסְעִי 🌸 כה-כו תמוז תשפ"ו



“ They eventually contrived through cunning to bring Rabbi Yitzchak onto a ship in the middle of the sea and began to compel him to surrender the gem. Seeing that he would be forced to hand it over, he cast it into the sea and God delivered him from their hands. ”

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*"...It would be proper
to publish your classes
in book form.
With blessings for success..."*

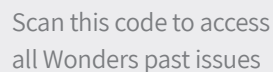
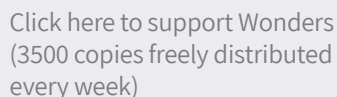
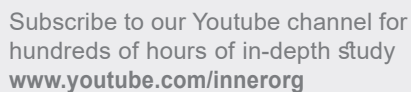
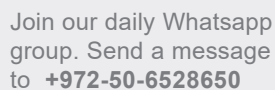
בברכה
לעולם ולעולמי עולם

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

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FUNDAMENTALS OF CHASIDUT

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH: ALL YOUR PEOPLE ARE RIGHTEOUS

We continue our review of the 9 Principles of Faith of the Torah's inner dimension with the eighth principle: that all Jews are considered tzaddikim, meaning that all are given a Divine mission to connect the mundane with the supernal, to reveal Godliness in reality. As such, every Jew, whether man or woman, is like a pillar spanning the abstract distance between the heavens and the 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 EIGHTH PRINCIPLE OF FAITH OF THE TORAH'S INNER DIMENSION

The eighth principle corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation (*yesod*). This *sefirah* is famously connected with the figure of the *tzaddik*, the righteous and pious individual, following the famous verse, "And the *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world"¹ (וְצַדִּיק יְסוֹד עוֹלָם). Like a foundation or pillar unites the roof with the base of a building, so the *tzaddik* lives his life to unite the mundane aspect of reality with God above. The *tzaddik* is thus the embodiment of union and connection and is therefore described in the Zohar as, "connected in the heavens and in the earth"² (דְּאֵחִיד בְּשָׁמַיָא וּבָאָרְעָא). But Isaiah goes one step further and informs us that

the entire Jewish people are considered *tzaddikim* (plural form of a *tzaddik*) "And all your people are *tzaddikim*."³ Every single individual of Israel is a *tzaddik* because all are connected above and below and all are meant to guide the way for all of humanity to discover the connection between the supernal and the mundane.

CHELEK AND CHEVEL

When contemplating the abstract meaning of "above" and "below" in the context of their connection, let us turn to the Tanya's statement that, "the second soul [the Divine soul] within Israel is a veritable part of God above."⁴ It is the Jewish Divine soul that connects the supernal and the mundane. How does this work? By the Ba'al Shem Tov (and earlier

1. Proverbs 10:25.

2. Zohar 2:116a.

3. Isaiah 60:21.

4. Beginning of ch. 2.

Jewish philosophers), it is established that by grasping a part of a substance, you grasp its entirety. The Divine soul of every Jew is a part of God Himself, or God's substance, as it were. Thus, according to this principle, every Jew is an indivisible part of the whole.

The connection and oneness of the Jewish soul to God is alluded to by the verse, "For God's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."⁵ More deeply, "God's portion" refers to the aspect of the Jewish soul being a part of God's essence and the Infinite Light that precedes the contraction or concealment of that revelation, which was needed to create the finite world. "Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" refers to the ray of infinite light (revelation) that inserts a measured revelation that breaks through the contraction.⁶ Thus, the Jewish soul is like a taut rope that connects the essential Infinite Light and the lower, dark world. Indeed, the word "lot" (לֹט) in Hebrew means also means "rope."

EACH ONE RECTIFIED BY ANOTHER

Beyond the inherent essential quality of every Jew mentioned above, there is also an openly unique, individual excellence in each and every Jew that does not exist in any other Jew. The Alter Rebbe writes that we are required to have faith in the teaching of the sages that one must "Be exceedingly humble before every person"⁷ because every Jew must know that

there exists a good quality in his fellow that he himself lacks, and that he must himself be rectified by learning from the good attribute of his fellow. "For it is an established and proper matter that each individual is rectified by his fellow."⁸

GOD BELIEVES IN ISRAEL

The perfection of our love of God is expressed by our love of Israel. This is because when we love other Jews, we are loving those whom God loves, as it says: "I love you, says *Havayah*."⁹ Likewise, the perfection of faith is expressed when one has faith in Israel, faith in each and every Jew. For, once again, one has faith in those whom God has faith. We, the holy people of Israel, are "the emissaries of God [literally, He who loves]."¹⁰ We are God's emissaries entrusted with actualizing and fulfilling His desire in creating the world. And as is the nature of emissary and sender, the sender has faith in that his faithful emissaries will fulfill their mission.¹¹

Our reality is known as "a world of deceit" (*alma deShikra*) because it fools us into thinking that it is autonomous, that it created itself (or has always existed), and that it governs itself, thereby concealing the revelation of Godliness that creates it and sustains it at every moment. The Jewish people including every Jewish soul was sent below to this world to become entangled in it and to redeem it. Certainly, the emissaries will not disappoint their

5. Deuteronomy 32:9.

6. The ray of infinite light and its illumination of reality is alluded to in the verse, "you're your light shall break forth" (Isaiah 58:8).

7. Mishnah *Avot* 4:10.

8. *Tanya*, epistle 22.

9. Malachi 1:2.

10. *Yoma* 19a; *Kiddushin* 23b.

11. Based on the principle that: "it is presumed that an emissary carries out his mission" (See *Eiruvim* 31b and elsewhere).

sender, and in the end the “portion” or “part” of Godliness that has descended will find the “Whole,” i.e., its Godly source and reveal it in reality thereby connecting the heavens and the earth.

“IN ALL YOUR WAYS KNOW HIM”

This principle of faith complements and completes Maimonides’ 12th principle of faith regarding the coming of the Mashiach. The essential innovation regarding faith in the coming of the Mashiach is that then it will be revealed that within every single Jew there is a spark of the King Mashiach. This spark drives every Jew to desire the redemption of the world and to contribute to that end by being a channel for the revelation of God in every detail of reality. Under the inspiration of the universal Mashiach, the spark of Mashiach—the personal aspect of Mashiach—within each and every one will be revealed. This unique quality of the Jewish people is shared by every single individual Jew, man or woman, and it is the crown of our faith that “your people are all tzaddikim.” Every Jew has the

capacity to manifest their Divine soul and their spark of Mashiach in every detail of daily life: Torah study, observance of the commandments, and the elevation of the mundane to a level of sacred consciousness.

This includes elevating even that which seems secular or profane to the level at which its inherent Godliness is revealed.¹² Mundane wisdom and mundane technology are then brought into the service of the ultimate good that is God. The two Biblical figures who most exemplified the elevation of secular wisdom were Joseph and King Solomon. Joseph is the archetypal soul of the *sefirah* of foundation, and King Solomon is considered his most important Biblical reincarnation. When one approaches life and the world from this perspective, one merits to fulfill the injunction, “in all your ways know Him.”¹³

12. In the idiom of the Sages, this is known as, “profane [produce] prepared with purity of the sacred” (חולין שֶׁנֶּעֱשׂוּ עַל טְהָרַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ); *Chagigah* 21b.

13. Proverbs 3:6.

FUNDAMENTALS OF CHASIDUT

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH: SANCTITY OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH BODY

We this installment, we complete our review of the 9 Principles of Faith of the Torah's inner dimension. The ninth principle is in many ways the highest and most difficult to grasp: that there is special sanctity to the Land of Israel and to the body of every Jew. Just as the sefirah of foundation (corresponding to the eighth principle) relates to the sefirah of kingdom (corresponding to the ninth), so the special status of the Land of Israel and the Jewish body serve as a vessel for the revelation of the Divine soul that dwells within the people of Israel as a whole and each individual Jew.

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THE NINTH PRINCIPLE OF FAITH OF THE TORAH'S INNER DIMENSION

The ninth and final principle of faith of the Torah's inner dimension is the faith that even within the physical matter of this lower world there can exist a Divine aspect, known as kingdom, the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*), alluding to mundane reality and the earth, as it is said: "And *Havayah* shall be King over all the earth."¹

In truth, we believe that "God is everything" and "everything is God." This is the inner pulse and rhythm of our Divine

soul as captured in two verses spoken by Moses, "You have been shown, to know, that *Havayah* is God, there is nothing but Him,"² i.e., "God is everything" and "You shall know today and take to your heart that *Havayah* is God in the heavens above and on the earth below, there is nothing else,"³ i.e., "everything is God" or Godly. Nothing in the world is separate from God; on the contrary, one can encounter the revelations of God in each and every thing in the world. But not in everything in the world is there a Divine quality that is capable of revealing this absolute truth.

1. Zechariah 14:9.

2. Deuteronomy 4:35.

3. Ibid. 4:39.

THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND THE DAY OF SHABBAT

The Land of Israel is sanctified in space just as the Shabbat is sanctified in time. In both, physical reality ascends to God. The entire Land of Israel speaks of holiness and purity. Its air is holy as the Sages state, “the air of the Land of Israel makes one wise”⁴ and wisdom is an aspect of holiness, as is known. From the verse, “Your servants desired its stones and its dust they cherished,”⁵ we learn that “its stones are holy, its soil is holy.” As Moses states, it is the “land which *Havayah* your God cares for; the eyes of *Havayah* your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.”⁶ There is a special quality to the Land of Israel: for those who dwell within it, it is possible—without much effort—to be conscious of God’s individual Providence over every detail of the world He created for His glory.

THE LAND THAT DESIRES TO DO THE WILL OF ITS CREATOR

When the redemption comes, “the Land of Israel is destined to spread out to encompass all the lands.”⁷ Today, the lands of the nations are considered ritually impure by the Sages. But in the future, when God removes the spirit of impurity from the entire Earth,⁸—and only God can extract the pure out of the impure⁹—then

the truth will be revealed in its fullness, that God is everything and everything is God. It then that “the glory of the *Havayah* shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together that the mouth of *Havayah* has spoken.”¹⁰

The Land of Israel is simply referred to as “land” (אֶרֶץ) because the root of the word “land” is related to “will” (רָצוֹן) or “desire” and it is the land that desired (רָצְתָהּ) immediately upon its being brought into being, to fulfill the will of the Creator.¹¹ The Sages teach that “Whomever dwells in the Land of Israel is as one who has a God,”¹² which means that dwelling in the Land of Israel causes one to always desire and yearn to draw near and cleave to God. By corollary, when we identify the lands outside the Land of Israel (*chutz la’aretz*) with the continuation, “And whomever dwells outside the Land of Israel is as one who has no God,” we are saying that other lands lack holy desire and therefore in them the mundane, natural will pulls in the opposite direction from God, distancing consciousness from recognizing God’s Providence and Presence. Still, in the future it will be clarified that “from afar *Havayah* appeared to me,”¹³ meaning that even in the very feeling of distance there is Divinity, for the distance itself was also created by God in order to create a bond specifically between those who appear to be distant and separate.

4. *Bava Batra* 158b.

5. *Psalms* 102:15.

6. *Deuteronomy* 11:12.

7. See *Sifrei* on *Deuteronomy* 1:1; *Pesikta Rabbati*, *Shabbat* and *Noach* 2; *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Isaiah* §503.

8. *Zechariah* 13:2.

9. *Job* 14:4.

10. *Isaiah* 40:5.

11. *Bereishit Rabbah* 5:7.

12. *Ketubot* 110b.

13. *Jeremiah* 31:2.

CHOOSING THE DIVINE ESSENCE IN THE JEWISH BODY

This faith in the holiness of the Chosen Land also includes the faith in the holiness and unique quality of the chosen body—the physical body of every person called by the name of Israel. The Alter Rebbe explains in the Tanya¹⁴ that God's choosing of the Jewish people is the choosing of the Jewish *body* specifically for the Divine soul in Israel is “a veritable part of God above,” as it were, and therefore the notion of choosing it is irrelevant. When explaining the text of the blessing “*Ahavat Olam*” recited just before the *Shema* in the morning “And it is we You have chosen from all peoples and tongues” he writes, “this refers to the physical body that resembles in its corporeality the bodies of the nations of the world.” Because the Jewish body is similar to the non-Jewish boy, the term “choosing” is applicable here.

Just as the Land of Israel is the appropriate vessel to receive and reveal within it the presence of God's Divine majesty as the verse reads, “the land in which I dwell,”¹⁵ so too the Jewish body is the appropriate vessel to receive and reveal within it the Divine soul—the veritable part of God above that dwells within it.

This principle of faith of the Torah's inner dimension completes and complements Maimonides' 13th principle of faith in the Resurrection of the Dead. Maimonides viewed the miracle of the Resurrection of the Dead as a temporary miracle after which the soul would return to a purely spiritual

life, free of corporeality. However, according to Kabbalah, following Nachmanides view, as above, the miracle of the Resurrection of the Dead is an eternal miracle, eternal life for an eternal body. This is the ultimate revelation of God's very essence, revealing He who is the Paradox of all Padoxes and omnipotent and thus able to dwell as the infinite within the finite.

“AND YOU SHALL BE TO ME A HOLY PEOPLE”

In the future, the verse, “You shall be to Me a holy people”¹⁶ will be fulfilled by the body being refined to its ultimate degree until “it will be said to be holy.”¹⁷ Then we will live up to our title, “the hosts of God” who exist forever. Indeed, the value of “a holy body” (גוף קדוש) is equal to the numerical value of the word “hosts” (צבאות). This word is itself a holy Name of God, which is why He is called “the God of Hosts.” Furthermore, the body will be elevated above the soul. The body is relatively feminine to the masculine soul and its elevation above the soul is the secret meaning of “a woman of valor, the crown of her husband”¹⁸; the body will then nourish the soul by bringing it a revelation of God that the soul itself cannot fathom by itself.

This wondrous innovation in our faith surpasses all others and exemplifies the entire concept of chosenness, for by God choosing the Jewish body, which appears most removed and distance as it were from His essence, in fact even its very opposite, the soul comes to discover the wonder that it is “a veritable part of God above.”

14. Ch. 49.

15. Numbers 35:34.

16. Exodus 22:30.

17. Isaiah 4:3.

18. Proverbs 12:4.

STORY

RASHI: PREPARATING FOR HIS LIFE'S MISSION

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in Troyes, in northern France, to his father Rabbi Yitzchak, in the year 4800 (1040). Very little is known of his early years, though it appears he began learning Torah from his father at a young age. At approximately twenty years of age, Rashi left France for the great yeshivot of Germany. He came first to the yeshivah of Mainz, where Rabbeinu Gershom, the Light of the Exile had taught two generations earlier and whose renown had spread far and wide. There Rashi studied under Rabbi Yaakov ben Yakar, a foremost disciple of Rabbeinu Gershom, who became his principal teacher and instructed him for six years. In his commentaries Rashi refers to him as "my elder teacher," citing his interpretations in numerous places. After Rabbi Yaakov ben Yakar's passing in 4824 (1064), Rashi studied under Rabbi Yitzchak ben Yehudah, likewise among the greatest disciples of Rabbeinu Gershom. After some time, he transferred to nearby Worms, where he learned from Rabbi Yitzchak HaLevi.

Following nearly ten years in Germany, Rashi returned to Troyes and joined the rabbinical court there. He began issuing halachic rulings for the Jewish communities of the surrounding region and maintained an ongoing correspondence with his teachers and colleagues in Ashkenaz (Germany). Apart from a brief return to study at the yeshivah of Worms, Rashi remained in Troyes for the rest of his life, founding there a celebrated yeshivah.

His towering greatness was immediately recognized throughout the Jewish world; questions were directed to his beit midrash across a wide range of disciplines, and the commentaries he composed spread with remarkable speed throughout the land. Both his sons-in-law were among the foremost Torah scholars of France, and the leading figures of the next generation numbered among his descendants and disciples. Rashi passed from this world on Thursday, the 29th of Tammuz, 4865 (1105), and was buried, according to tradition, in his native city of Troyes.

Rabbi Yitzchak possessed a beautiful gem of extraordinary worth, and the non-Jewish townspeople wished to purchase it for their house of worship. Though they offered a great sum in payment, he refused to hear of it. They eventually contrived through cunning to bring Rabbi Yitzchak onto a ship in the middle of the sea and began to compel him to surrender the gem. Seeing that he would be forced to hand it over, he cast it into the sea and God delivered him from their hands. A heavenly voice was heard in his *beit midrash* (study hall), before all

his students, proclaiming: “Behold, a son is given to you, who will illuminate all Israel.”

Within a year a son was born to him, and he named him Shlomo, after his own father. The child grew in wisdom, and none like him arose in the kingdom of France. Every novella and commentary he encountered or heard—whether from others or from his own understanding—he would set down in a *kuntres* (booklet). It is for this reason that the Tosafists—the generations of Talmudic scholars after Rashi—referred to him as “the *Kuntres*.” He continued thus until his thirty-third year, at which point he vowed to undertake seven years of voluntary exile, to atone for the anguish his father had suffered over the gem he had cast away. For even though his father had sanctified the Divine Name through that act, he had nonetheless endured great pain over the loss, and thus the mitzvah had not been fulfilled in its fullness.

There was yet another reason he wished to go into exile: he had by then completed his commentary on the Torah and most of the tractates of the Talmud, yet he was reluctant to release his *kuntresim*. He wondered—perhaps someone else had preceded him with greater clarity and beauty? And so during his years of exile, he would inquire and investigate in the *yeshivot* concerning the commentaries already in existence. He therefore wandered through Italy, Greece, and the Land of Israel, passed through Egypt where he beheld the *Rambam*, traveled through Persia, and returned by way of Germany to his home, the city of Troyes in France. Upon his return he completed his commentary on the Torah, completed his commentary on twenty-three full tractates of Talmud and many others in partial form, and only then began to disseminate his works.

(*Seder Olam* 4565).

On the surface, the two reasons for Rashi’s self-imposed exile appear unrelated: the first was motivated from his desire to remove any shadow from his father’s act—through whose merit he was born—while the second was prompted by his extraordinary humility. Yet upon deeper reflection, both share a common root: Rashi’s desire to complete and publish his commentary in the purest and most unblemished manner possible.

The atonement for his father’s anguish was not merely an expression of gratitude,

nor simply a wish that all his father’s days be accounted as good. Rashi felt and knew that all his commentaries and novellae drew their life from that very act of self-sacrifice. And though the great pain transformed the deed into something far greater—a mighty triumph for the honor of Heaven, a source of immense Divine delight—*Rashi* nonetheless wished that not even such sorrow would cast the faintest shadow over the light of his great works.

The second reason as well—the concern

lest “someone else had preceded him with greater clarity and beauty”—speaks to Rashi’s singular purity. Like Moses, who pleads with the Almighty to send someone else to deliver the Israelites from Egypt—“Send please, by the hand of whomever You will send”—Rashi too refused to believe that there was none more worthy and righteous than himself to compose the commentary so desperately needed on the Torah. The Midrash reveals (based on the verses) that Moses debated with the Almighty at the Burning Bush for seven days before consenting to the mission of liberating the Israelites. According to one tradition, the seven years of Rashi’s own exile prior to writing his commentary correspond to Moses’ seven days.

In any case, Rashi’s sole purpose was the honor of God, and if another was more fitting, why should he take the task upon himself? Only after years of searching for a scholar or commentary that might fill the great void he perceived in Torah study did he understand that Heaven had chosen him for the mission toward which he had felt so powerful an inner compulsion for so long.

From this, every person may learn something about his own calling and mission in life. On the one hand, there burns within each person a strong urge to fulfill his mission in the world—a sense of what is needed in the world and of his ability to fill it. On the other hand, this must be approached with submission, humility, and purity, and with a genuine desire for rectification rather than any wish to displace any other individual who may be more worthy. If such a person truly exists, one must embrace the quality

of “walk humbly with your God” (Michah 6:8) and not hasten toward a mission that is not truly yours.

Rashi’s desire to cleanse the story of his birth from every trace of sorrow over the precious gem is likewise a purity required of anyone setting out on a mission. A mission, like a wedding, is a kind of rebirth. The one sent forth takes upon himself to be born anew—and he must be born free of all residue from the past. So it is written in Kabbalah: The Mother Principle (*Imma*), from within whom souls are born, draws from the attribute of “and cleansed” (וְנִקְּהָ) —the Divine principle of compassion that relates to cleansing and absolution (Exodus 34:7).

There are thus two forms of preparation for any mission. The first is simple purity from the moment of birth, or rebirth—as Rashi atoned for his father’s sorrow. The second is a state of purity described in the Talmud as the type of cleanliness of mind possessed by (Mishnah *Gittin* 9:9) the scrupulous men of Jerusalem (נְקִיֵּי הַדַּעַת שְׁבִירושְׁלַיִם) who were very sensitive to the state of mind of the people they encountered. Here this purity is needed to ensure that the mission one has taken to heart truly falls within the category of being the messenger in “a place where there is no one else [to perform the mission]” (Mishnah *Avot* 2:5). After these two forms of preparation—corresponding to the stages of submission and separation, the first two in the Ba’al Shem Tov’s three stage process of transformation—comes the time for sweetening, pursuing a mission by fulfilling the end of the *mishnah*, “Endeavor to be a man [the messenger for that mission]!”

PARASHOT MATTOT-MASSEI

THE INNER DYNAMICS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

This week we read the last two *parashot* of the book of Numbers: *Mattot* and *Massei*. The portion is called *Mattot*, meaning “tribes,” as it begins with God telling Moses to speak to the heads of the tribes about the laws of vows.¹

Moses’ speaking to the heads of the tribes at the end of the book of Numbers serves as another indication that the torch is being passed on to a new generation. Joshua has just been appointed Moses’ successor² and God had again informed Moses that he will not be entering the Promised Land.³ Moses consequently empowers and honors the heads of the tribes by addressing them. This is especially important because the Jewish people had just spent forty years in the desert because previous heads of the tribes who were among the spies sent to see the Promised Land had undermined their faith in God’s promise and in their ability to conquer the Land of Israel with disastrous results. Moses is indicating that the new leadership is ready to assume responsibility and lead the new generation into the Land of Israel.

FORTY-TWO JOURNEYS

This theme of the people of Israel being prepared to enter the Land of Israel is continued in *parashat Massei*

which marks the end of Israel’s forty-year sojourn in the desert. The entire book of Deuteronomy takes place during a brief thirty-seven-day period when Moses before his death delivers his last preparatory words to encourage the people to enter the land. Therefore, in *Massei*, the Torah summarizes the forty-two journeys that occurred during Israel’s wanderings in the desert, from the time the nation left Egypt to their current encampment in the plains of Moab across the Jordan River from Jericho.

These journeys are introduced by a verse that creates a mirror image: “And Moses wrote their going forth according to their journeys at the command of God, and these were their journeys according to their going forth.”⁴ The words “going forth” (מוצאיֵהם) and “journeys” (מסעיהם) found in the first half of the verse occur in the opposite order in the second half of the verse.

One senses a dynamic pulsating energy in the mirror image syntax of the description of these journeys, which is also dramatically captured by the unique way the words are chanted during the public Torah reading. The only other time this unique melody is used is when the Song of the Sea is read in public.⁵ There too,

1. Numbers 30:2.

2. Ibid. 27:15-23.

3. Ibid. vv. 12-14.

4. Ibid 33:2.

5. Exodus 16:1-19

the energy is palpable as the Jews have just escaped from Egypt and seen their pursuers drowned in the Red Sea.

According to the Ba'al Shem Tov, these forty-two journeys are an archetypal paradigm for every individual's life journey.⁶ Each person, though, experiences these journeys in a fashion uniquely adapted to his or her soul purpose.

DYNAMICS OF THE JOURNEY

There is a beautiful correspondence between these forty-two journeys and the 42 times the three-letter Hebrew root אהב, the root of "love" (*ahavah*), appears in the Pentateuch.⁷ Each of the journeys in the desert, as well as each person's journey through life, corresponds to one appearance of "love," indicating that all of life's journeys take place within the overall context of God's love, despite being filled at times with obstacles, failures, frustrations, and uncertainty. Knowing that God's love for every individual forms the basic existential parameters in which we live has the power to turn obstacles into challenges, trials into opportunities, and adversity into triumph.

Furthermore, according to Kabbalah and Chasidut, these forty-two journeys correspond with the forty-two letter name of God associated with creation and encoded in the forty-two words of the mystical prayer "*Anna Beko'ach*," attributed to the great mystic Rabbi Nechunia ben Hakanah.⁸ The association of these various sets of forty-two teaches us that God's

love is ever present from the inception of creation and within each individual's life journey.

As each place along the journey is mentioned in the Torah the same formula is repeated: "They journeyed from... and they camped in ..." This pattern alludes to how all process and progress work in a dynamic ebb and flow of starts and stops, activity and rest, taking the initiative and passively receiving. This same dynamic forms the basic structure of Jewish time as six days of work are followed by Shabbat and six years of agricultural work are followed by a Sabbatical year.

In Kabbalah this energetic ebb and flow is referred to as "run and return," a phrase borrowed from the vibrant movement of the angels in Ezekiel's vision.⁹ The dualistic pulsation of run and return manifests in countless ways throughout creation: from the contraction and expansion at the very origins of the universe to the beating of our hearts and the pulse of the blood running through our arteries and veins; from the exhalation and inhalation of breath to the highs and lows of human emotions; from the cycles of the seasons to the ebb and flow of the tides; from the give and take of relationships to the cycle of life and death. Spiritually, it manifests as the soul's run and return associated in Chasidic teachings with the joint realizations that "God is all" and "All is God."

A beautiful numerical allusion to the pulse of life encoded in these journeys is found in the numerical value of the word *massei* (מסעי), 180, or 10 times 18, where 18 is the numerical value of the Hebrew

6. *Degel Machaneh Efrayim, Massei.*

7. *Sha'arei Ahavah VeRatzon*, pp. 125-127.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Ezekiel 1:14.

word for life (*chai*), חַי, while 10 times a number symbolizes the activation of that word or concept's inherent potential. Thus, these forty-two journeys represent the manner in which the Jewish people's latent potential became activated and realized when Israel became a nation. This activation of potential also holds true for each person as he or she makes their way through life's journeys.

CHANGING BORDERS

The idea that processes are dynamic in nature, as reflected by the journeys and encampments in *parashat Massei*, is also apparent in the Biblical borders of the Land of Israel delineated, for the first and (almost) only time in the Torah. Although there are scholarly disagreements over where exactly these borders are on the map, the Torah's description is quite detailed. We see that over the course of Jewish history there were five different sets of general borders:¹⁰

- 1) The borders described in our portion of *Massei*.
- 2) The borders established by conquest by those who entered the Holy Land with Joshua.
- 3) The borders of those who returned from the Babylonian exile.
- 4) The borders promised to Abraham in the book of Genesis (from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates), which far exceed the above three.¹¹
- 5) The borders promised in the Messianic era of which it is stated:

"In the future the land of Israel will spread [and encompass] all the lands [of the earth]."¹²

When contemplating the deeper meaning of these changing borders, we realize that just as the journeys and the encampments in the desert were part of an ongoing process of change and growth, so too are the borders of Israel. They are not static; rather, they are pulsating and ever-changing. The truth of this statement is borne out by the last seventy-eight years when the borders of modern Israel changed many times.

The second passage of the *Shema*, which is recited twice daily, contains both the literal explanation as well as the deeper meaning of how the borders are set in each generation.¹³ If we follow God's word and observe His commandments, we will receive the rain in its time and we will thrive and live in peace in our land. But if we do not obey God's word then the heavens will be shut up, no rain will fall, and we will be exiled from the Land. The message is clear: The Jewish people's right to live in the Holy Land is a privilege directly dependent on our actions. The same holds true for the physical borders of the Land: the greater our people's merit and degree of holiness, the more the borders expand and the more the holiness of the Land will increase. Ultimately, in the Messianic era, this holiness will radiate and the Land's unique place before God will expand to encompass the entire world. The people and the Land in fact form a unified, symbiotic unit.

10. From a class given on the 14th of Cheshvan, 2010, in Yitzhar.

11. Genesis 15:18-21.

12. *Pesikta Rabbati*.

13. Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

CREATION AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL

A beautiful allusion to the central role played by the Land and people of Israel in creation and history is found in the description of the borders in *Massei*. The Torah uses the same word “its boundaries” (תוצאתיו) to describe the border in each of the four directions.¹⁴ The numerical value of this word is 913, the same as the Torah’s first word, “In the beginning” (בראשית). This numerical link between the Land of Israel’s borders and the first word in the Torah reminds us of Rashi’s very first comment on the Torah quoted almost verbatim from the Midrash: Since the Torah’s essence is God’s commandments, why does it begin with the account of creation and not with the first commandment given to the Jewish people? *Rashi* answers this by stating that in the future the nations of the world will accuse the Jewish people of stealing the Land of Israel. To preempt such a challenge, the Torah begins with the account of creation to establish that the same God who created heavens and earth is the One who gave the Jewish people the Land of Israel.

14. Numbers 33:4, 5, 9, and 12.

This insight is quite relevant today, when much of the world does in fact accuse us of stealing the Holy Land. In this sense, Rashi’s commentary is truly prophetic.

On a deeper level, we must realize that the Land of Israel is intrinsically connected to the very purpose of Creation: establishing a dwelling place for God in this the most physical of worlds.¹⁵ In the future, the Creator’s infinite energy will be revealed within the finite parameters of the physical world. In a sense, the finite’s ability to contain the infinite is the ultimate unity, the resolution of the paradox of how an infinite Creator can create and maintain a finite world. This future redemptive reality is represented by the Land of Israel’s holiness expanding to encompass the entire world, as the limited borders of this present physical reality will expand to encompass the infinite Presence of God.¹⁶ Until then, we need to use our thoughts, speech, and action to create vessels that will prepare the world for that era. May it come to pass speedily and in our days.

15. See also *Wonders* Issue 202, “Fundamentals of Chasidut: God Desires a Dwelling Place Below.”

16. *The Hebrew Letters*, pp.38-39.

TRANSLATIONS FROM NIFLAOT

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THE LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE OF HOMEOPATHY

Question: The seminars that the Rav gave in the past on homeopathy were, for me, a revolution and a call of direction for clarifying homeopathy from its root. But since the Rav raises reservations regarding the state of homeopathy today, I wish to clarify and understand:

- The Rav writes that homeopathy is based on analyses of words in a foreign language and hence is not attuned to the Holy Tongue and to the true names of the substances.
- A further reservation of the Rav is that the definition of the four elements in homeopathy differs from the definitions of the Torah of Israel. But this matter is not a fundamental principle upon which homeopathic treatment is founded....
- The Rav writes that the homeopathic dilution contains no tangible trace [of the substance] and does not accord with the concepts of nullification (*bitul*) in the teachings of our Sages....
- Is the limitation of a particular method a reason not to use it altogether, until it is clarified in the most precise manner? After all, allopathy too has many deficiencies, which the Rav enumerates, and nevertheless there is no directive not to use that method until it is corrected....



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