

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



Wonders

בס"ד

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of HaRav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

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Special
Double-Sized
Issue

“ the Tzemach Tzedek's sons came into the room and saw that the Rebbe was crying, and he said: I am crying because that man—who is an important Chassid and a great rabbi—thought that he would find favor in my eyes by disagreeing with the Vilna Gaon. ”

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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

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Wonders

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

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STORY

THE REBBE MOHARASH: HOW TO GIVE COUNSEL

Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, the Rebbe Moharash, was the fourth Rebbe of the Chabad-Lubavitch dynasty. He was born on the 2nd of Iyar, 5594 (1834) to his father, the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek and to his mother the Rebbetzin Chayah Mushka. He was named after the hidden tzaddik, Rabbi Shmuel the Water-Drawer of Plotsk. Though the youngest son, he continued his father's leadership in Lubavitch, while most of his brothers led Chasidic courts in other towns. He married his niece Sterna Schneersohn, and after her passing married his cousin the Rebbetzin Rivkah. He labored greatly on behalf of Russian Jewry and the Jewish people at large, establishing Jewish settlements and interceding with the authorities. He coined the famous Chasidic expression "Lechatchilah Ariber," which means "From the outset, go over the top." He explained it in the following way: "The world thinks that when one cannot go beneath an obstacle one should go over it. But I hold that from the very outset one must go over it. From the outset one must act with full force, be undaunted by anything, and do what must be done. And when one begins this way, the Holy blessed One helps." The Rebbe Maharash was known for conducting himself with great generosity and affluence. He departed this world on the 13th of Tishrei, 5643 (1882), at the age of 48, and was interred in Lubavitch in the ohel of his father, the Tzemach Tzedek. His son Rabbi Shalom DovBer succeeded him in the leadership.

The Chasidic leader and influencer, Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Chen, rabbi of Chernigov, was once visiting the Rebbe Moharash in Lubavitch, as was his custom. He had arrived late for his private audience, so he went to the room adjacent to the Rebbe's chamber and waited there for the Rebbe to pass through, intending to ask him what to do, as he was obliged to travel home. At that moment the Rebbe's attendant came into that room to replace the Rebbe's linen after the previous private audience because during the sessions the garments would become soaked with perspiration. The attendant said to Rabbi David Tzvi: "Perhaps you know why he sweats so much in there when he gives a private audience? Today, even though the sessions lasted only a total of an hour, he sweated a great deal!" Rabbi David Tzvi was silent. The attendant said again: "What is it, for heaven's sake, that makes him sweat so much in there?"

At that moment, the door of the Rebbe's chamber opened, and the Rebbe turned to his attendant and said: "From this day forward you are dismissed from your

position. Not a penny will be deducted from your wages. Go home, and every week I will send your salary to your home."

He then added: "You cannot understand why I sweat. During that hour, twenty-five people came to me for a private audience. To give each person the right counsel, I must feel his distress exactly as he himself feels it. I must strip away my own "garments" and clothe myself in his. And when I then need to give him advice, I cannot do so while still wearing his garments, just as he himself cannot counsel his own soul from within his situation, so I must once again remove his garments and clothe myself in my own again. Thus, for each individual that comes to seek a private audience, I must undress and dress twice. Now consider this: if in the course of one hour a person must undress and dress fifty times, is it possible not to sweat?"

The profound depth of the Moharash's concern for his *chasidim* is bound to the fact that the Rebbe Maharash belongs to the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*). One of the signs for this connection is that he was born on the day that is the "beauty of beauty" (*tiferet shebetiferet*) in the Counting of the Omer. His day of passing is the 13th of Tishrei, which according to the holy Ari is likewise connected to this *sefirah* for the four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot correspond to the letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*, with the 13th of Tishrei

corresponding to the letter *vav* of *Havayah* and representing the *sefirah* of beauty.

Among the soul's faculties, the inner experience of "beauty" is the quality of compassion (*rachamim*). More than any other quality, compassion is characterized by a felt sense of the recipient's situation and a genuine understanding of where he stands and it is from this understanding that the giving flows toward him. Another story about private audiences describes a conversation between the Moharash and his father, the Rebbe *Tzemach Tzedek*:

The *Tzemach Tzedek*, like every Rebbe, had set times for private audience. It was an immensely demanding labor, and once, at the end of a long night of receiving people privately, he opened himself up before his son the Moharash, who was present in his room at the time: "Why do I need this? Would it not be simpler and better if I wrote Chasidic discourses and disseminated them, and each person would find rest for his soul in the living words of God?" The Moharash, who was then a young man, replied at once. He went to the bookshelf, drew back the curtain covering the shelves, pointed to a single shelf containing dozens of his father's handwritten Chasidic manuscripts, and asked his father whether he could have written such works had he not received people for private consultation. His father immediately acknowledged that he could not.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* had several sons who served as rebbes, yet he chose his youngest son to carry on his leadership in Lubavitch. Before his passing, the *Tzemach Tzedek* recited to his son the verse from Job, “One is so near to one that no air can come between them” (Job 41:8). The Moharash did not understand what his father meant. Only after the Moharash himself passed away did people understand. The value of “one” (אחד) is 13. So “one is so near to one” refers to thirteen and thirteen, the 13th of Nissan—the date on which the father, the *Tzemach Tzedek* passed on—and the 13th of Tishrei—the date on which the son, the Rebbe Moharash passed on. The deep bond between them allowed the Moharash to penetrate the depth of his father's mind and to put his mind to peace regarding the difficulties of relating to his *chasidim* and enclothing himself in their garments during their private audiences.

The relationship between the Moharash and his father resembles the relationship between the sefirot of knowledge (*da'at*) and beauty (*tiferet*); knowledge is considered the soul of beauty. The meaning here is that the *Tzemach Tzedek* inclines toward a more “spiritual” and abstract mode of identification with his *chasidim*, just as the *sefirah* of knowledge is considered part of the intellectual *sefirot*. Even though it includes emotion and the soul's power of identification (both of the self as well as empathy for others), it remains, relative to beauty—the center of all the emotive *sefirot*—abstract and conceptual. The Moharash, by contrast, seeks to be a Rebbe who reaches his *chasidim* and truly meets them, a meeting of the soul's singular

part, the yechidah meeting another soul's singular part, out of complete identification between the souls.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* once compared himself to a hat-maker. A hat-maker places hats of various sizes in his shop without having any particular customer in mind. So too a rebbe writes varied Chasidic essays without intending them for any specific person. People then come, study the discourses, and choose the one that has touched their heart, in a sense, they find the hat that fits them. But the Moharash insists on demonstrating that all the richness of his father's Chasidut flows from the direct encounters he has with the chasidim, and not from influencing them from afar. The exhausting personal encounter refines the vessels of the mind and the heart, and it is from that refinement that one merits to reveal and understand the deep mysteries of Torah.

A further well-known story relates that the year 5608 (1848) was considered an auspicious time for Mashiach to come. But, when the year had passed and Mashiach did not come, the *Tzemach Tzedek* said to his son that in fact, the coming of Mashiach had occurred that year, for that was the year that *Likkutei Torah* a seminal anthology of the Alter Rebbe's essays was printed. The Moharash replied that this was not the Mashiach they were waiting for. The *sefirah* of beauty is unwilling to compromise on compassion when the matter truly touches the heart of the other, nor is it willing to compromise about the Mashiach—he must be a flesh and blood human being who will redeem compassionately.

STORY FOR SUKKOT

REBBE TZVI HIRSCH OF ZIDITCHOV: AN ETROG OR A POTATO

Before the holy Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch HaKohen of Ziditchov became widely known, he spent time, after the passing of his master Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, in the presence of the holy Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz. Rebbe Naftali showed him no signs of endearment, and in all things, he was the last to be attended to. Once, Rebbe Naftali's son, Rabbi Elazar, mentioned to his father that he should give some wine to Rebbe Tzvi. His father replied: "Know that all his greatness comes from humility, and if I honor him, he will overturn the world. He is greater than I, and the time will come when you will stand at his door."

Many years later, when Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch had become renowned throughout the world, Rabbi Elazar traveled to see him in Rimanov. When he wished to enter, the attendants told him that the Rebbe was sleeping and that he should wait until he awoke. The attendants offered him a chair to sit but he refused. "I wish," he said, "to fulfill my father's words and stand at his door."

Once, on the festival of Sukkot, Rebbe Naftali wept and said: "I am descended from my grandfather, the Gaon (Yitzchak HaLevi) of Hamburg, and I possess a beautiful, top-quality *etrog*, yet I accomplish nothing. And this Tzvi has an *etrog* worth two *deksir* (small coins), and he illuminates all the worlds with his *etrog*."

It is further told that the holy Rebbe of Ropshitz would take great care to obtain *etrogim* for his holy sons and close disciples. When Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch was in Ropshitz, the holy Rebbe of Ropshitz purchased an *etrog* for him as well. One of the close disciples was puzzled by this and asked the holy Rebbe of Ropshitz in a jesting tone: "Does Hirsch the attendant also need an *etrog*? A potato is surely enough for him!" The custom there was that after Sukkot, the *etrogim* were returned to the holy Rebbe of Ropshitz, who would then examine them. When Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch returned his *etrog*, the holy Rebbe of Ropshitz praised it warmly and said to his close disciples: "He has returned an *etrog* to me, for the *mitzvah* was performed through it in its full measure. But you have returned potatoes to me."

These stories reflect a particular quality that belongs to the *etrog*: on the one hand, it symbolizes wholeness—it possesses both

taste and fragrance, which represent Torah learning and good deeds together. Likewise, *hadar* (beauty and perfection) is of special

importance in the *etrog*. On the other hand, it is bound specifically to the quality of humility and lowliness, as is known from the allusion in the *Panim Yafot* that the letters of *etrog* (אֶתְרוֹג) are the initials of the phrase (Psalms 36:12) “let not a foothold of pride come upon me” (אֵל תְּבוֹאֵנִי רֶגֶל גָּאוֹן). It is for this reason that Rebbe Tzvi Hirsch, whose greatness flows from humility, illuminates all the worlds with a simple *etrog* while the disciple who measures the worth of those around him by external appearances turns even a top-quality *etrog* into a potato.

THE SEVEN DAYS AND THE FOUR SPECIES

The seven days and the seven *Ushpizin* (exalted guests) of Sukkot can be correlated to the Four Species. The three myrtle branches (*hadassim*), which themselves exhibit a threefold structure of leaves, correspond to the three Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as well as to the first three emotive *sefirot*: lovingkindness, might, and beauty. The two willow branches (*aravot*) correspond to Moses and Aaron and to the *sefirot* of victory and acknowledgment. The date-palm branch (*lulav*) corresponds to Joseph and to the *sefirah* of foundation (*yesod*). The citron (*etrog*) corresponds to David and to the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*).

According to this division, the final day of Sukkot is the day of the *etrog*. It is specifically on this last day that one should pray to be saved from pride, and one makes a special supplication toward that end. On this day a second nature is instilled within us, the nature of “one who is always wary” (אָדָם מְפֹחֵד תָּמִיד), whose initials spell “truth” (אֱמֶת)—wary of “a foothold of pride”

encroaching upon him.

Why is it on the final day in particular that there is reason to pray to be saved from pride? Our master the Ba'al Shem Tov explained that when God cursed the snake in the Garden of Eden, He said to him regarding his relationship with man: “He [man] will crush your head and you will crush his heel.” The meaning behind this symbolism is that when it comes to rise up to do a good deed—the head—man will usually prevail over the serpent and will crush him. This is a tactic exercised by the serpent, i.e., the evil inclination, because it quietly waits until the good deed has been completed. This is the heel of the good deed, which the serpent then strikes with the poison of pride. Thus, the most dangerous moment of every good deed is its conclusion and completion. It is then that we are prone to be infected with a sense of pride at having performed the good deed. This is why the seventh day is the day of the *etrog*; it is the time when we must pray and guard ourselves from the serpent's bite.

The *Emek HaMelech* records an allusion. When a person overcomes his evil inclination and prevents pride, the image is of his heel above the serpent's head. This can be represented by placing the initial letter of heel (עֵקֶב), *ayin*, before the initial letter of head (רֹאשׁ), *reish*. The word constructed is עָר, whose meaning is “awake.” But when a person succumbs to his evil inclination and feels prideful, the image of the serpent's head above the individual's heel. The resulting word constructed is רֵעַ, meaning “evil.” In Scripture, there is a man named Er, spelled and pronounced exactly like “awake” (עָר). This was Er, Judah's son who was destined to be the progenitor of

the Mashiach (משיח), which in Hebrew has the same value as “serpent” (נחש). But his evil inclination got the better of him—the serpent prevailed over him and inverted the letters of his name, so that the Torah writes that, “Er, Judah’s firstborn, was evil in the eyes of God” (Genesis 38:7). From being a candidate for Mashiach, he succumbed and became “evil,” as above. The *ushpiz* (guest) of the seventh day of Sukkot is David, who constantly struggled to be lowly in his own eyes (2 Samuel 6:22) and not succumb to pride. He is therefore identified here with the *etrog*. His lowliness is the source of his great joy when dancing before the Ark of the Covenant. Sukkot is known as “the season of our joy,” and the joy reaches its apex on the eighth (and ninth) days of Sukkot, fueled by the lowliness and rejection of pride on the seventh.

According to the Ba’al Shem Tov’s explanation, the evil serpent is the serpent of pride, which attempts to plant within a person the feeling that he is a *tzaddik*, a sense of pride over his good deed. This connects with the teaching of the holy Ari that when one performs a transgression of any of the commandments, the damage affects the lower spiritual unification that adds new energy into reality and is symbolized by the letters *vav* and *hei* of God’s essential Name, *Havayah*, the Tetragrammaton. The first two letters, *yud*

and *hei* in *Havayah*, which symbolize the higher unification that sustains reality, are not affected by our transgressions. However, pride is an exception. The value of “pride” (גאווה) in Hebrew is 15, the same as the value of *yud* and *hei*, the first two letters of God’s essential Name, *Havayah*. Thus, pride alone has the power to damage the higher unification between the *yud* and *hei* of the Name. In fact, the value of “foothold of pride” (רגל גאווה) is 248, alluding to the fact that pride has the power to damage every one of the 248 positive commandments!

If at the conclusion of every good deed the serpent attempts to strike and we must pray “let not the foothold of pride come upon me,” how much more so at the close of “the great fair,” i.e., this world we live in is likened to a festive gathering, a fair. The close of the great fair is a euphemism for the day of one’s departure from the world. It is indeed worthy of note that according to the traditions in our possession, both the holy Ari and the Baal Shem Tov, on their final day in this world, with their very last words, sought precisely what is asked for in this verse: to be saved from pride. A beautiful allusion to this is that the values of Isaac (יצחק), the Ari’s first name and Israel (ישראל), the Ba’al Shem Tov’s first name together is the same as this phrase, “let not a foothold of pride come upon me” (אל תבואני רגל גאווה), with the *kollel*.

SUKKOT

THE MERIT OF ABRAHAM

Let us explore important aspects of Sukkot connected to our first Patriarch, Abraham.¹ The Torah relates in *parashat Vayeria* that three angels came to inform Abraham and Sarah that they would finally have a child after a lifetime of barrenness. In fact, even though Abraham first mistook them for three simple wandering men, he nevertheless interrupted a revelation he was receiving from God to greet and take care of them:

And he lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing beside him, and he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent, and he prostrated himself to the ground. And he said [to God], “God, if only I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass on from beside your servant [as I tend to these guests]. [He turned to the three angels and said:] “Please let a little water be taken, and bathe your feet, and recline under the tree.”²

The Midrash relates that it was the merit of Abraham offering these three guests a place to rest under the tree that initially inspired the future holiday of Sukkot.³ This is yet another classic example of the well-known dictum: “The deeds of the Fathers are a sign for their children.”⁴ With this

singular act of hospitality “under the tree,” Abraham opened the gates for the holiday of Sukkot to be revealed to all his descendants who would also one day sit and eat under a roof of vegetation in the sukkah.

GO TO YOURSELF

Having established the essential connection between Abraham and Sukkot, we will go one step further by introducing an essential dynamic in the life of Abraham, which is then manifest in the way that we shake the four species taken on Sukkot outwards and inwards to each of the six directions, as will be explained.⁵

The first-time that God speaks to Abraham, He directs him to leave everything behind and to go unquestioningly where God will lead him: “Go (*lech lecha*) from your land and the place of your birth, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”⁶ A close examination of the words *lech lecha* reveals a profound double meaning: on one hand, God is telling Abraham to go on a physical journey; but, on the other hand, God is instructing Abraham to go on an inner journey as well, for the words “*lech lecha*” can also be understood as, “go to yourself.” God, in His first direct communication with Abraham, seems to be implying that leaving one’s land and one’s paternal home is more than simply a change of environment. For this

1. The following ideas in this article are contained in *Mivchar Shiurei Hitbonenut*, vol. 8, Kavanot HaLulav.

2. Genesis 18:2-4.

3. *Tanchuma Vayeira* 4.

4. *Sotah* 34a.

5. *Mivchar Shiurei Hitbonenut*, loc. cit.

6. Genesis 12:1.

move implies breaking out of a lifetime of habits and norms in order to overcome any physical and spiritual limitations that Abraham may not have even known he had. As we know, this archetypal journey will prove to be both a physical journey to the Promised Land, as well as an inner spiritual journey and struggle to change the world.

As the Torah is eternal and is relevant to every individual, in every era, and in every location, the commandment of *lech lecha*—to go confidently into life and influence both the world around us and our inner psyche and soul—was not given to Abraham alone. All of his descendants (whether by direct lineage or through spiritual identification with him and his cause) are constantly challenged to find God in the innermost recesses of their souls and to simultaneously reveal Him in the material world. This in fact is the message of our shaking the four species both outwardly and inwardly; this *mitzvah* is a virtual reenactment of the very first communication from God to Abraham, which ultimately forms the nature of the mission of the Jewish people and all righteous non-Jews who identify as the spiritual descendants of Abraham.

THE DYNAMIC OF RUN AND RETURN

The energetic dynamic of *lech lecha* is intrinsically connected to a key concept in Kabbalah known as “run and return,” a phrase borrowed from the vibrant movement of the angels in Ezekiel’s vision.⁷ The dynamic 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 pulsating rhythm of motion within every cell and atom.

Shaking the Four Species mirrors and enacts this run and return dynamic inherent in the dynamic of *lech lecha* in a real and tangible way. The original command from God to Abraham to “go to yourself” is thus replicated in the shaking of the Four Species by all his progeny in perpetuity.

JOURNEYING, GOING, TRAVELLING

When Abraham came to the Land of Canaan, he began to traverse the land: “and Abram journeyed, going and travelling toward the south”⁸ (וַיֵּסַע אַבְרָם (הָלוֹךְ וְנִסּוֹעַ הַנִּגְבָּה). In Kabbalah, the south is associated with loving-kindness (*chessed*); meaning that, in effect, Abraham was always travelling towards more and more loving-kindness, regardless of the physical direction he was moving towards. This description of Abraham’s travels through the Land of Canaan seems to use redundant language: “Abram journeyed, going and travelling toward the south.” But in truth, each of these three words connotes a different aspect of movement. Furthermore, it is explained by the sages that the term “going” (הָלוֹךְ) paradoxically connotes a state of rest between movements.

It is significant to note that when shaking the four species we do so three times to each of the six directions, for a total of 18 times. The numerical value of 18 equals the word

7. Ezekiel 1:14.

8. Genesis 12:9.

“life,” *chai* (חַי), as in the popular anthem: *Am Yisrael Chai!* Meaning, “the People of Israel Live!” Like Abraham, the Jewish people continually move, in the sense of always progressing and growing, as the expression states: “all that is alive—moves.”⁹

IN A LARGER CONTEXT

This archetypal dynamic of Abraham’s travels is repeated on a larger scale by all of Israel during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. As each encampment along their journey is reviewed in *parashat Massei*, the same formula is repeated: “They journeyed to... and they camped in...”¹⁰ This repetitive phrasing alludes to the way in which all processes function in a dynamic ebb and flow of starts and stops, activity and rest, constantly transitioning between taking the initiative and passively receiving. This same dynamic forms the basic structure of Jewish time as seen in the six days of work, which are then followed by Shabbat, as well as in the six years of agricultural work, followed by a Sabbatical year.

GREATER THAN THE ANGELS

A Chassidic teaching admonishes that if you are not ascending the ladder of life, you are by definition descending, in as much as there is no such thing in life as “standing still.” Although the concept of “run and return” is initially learned from the angels in Ezekiel’s vision, as discussed above, nonetheless in a verse in the Book of Zechariah, angels are actually depicted as

“standing”: “Then I will give you movement among these who stand by.”¹¹ The sages taught that in this verse those “who stand by” are the angels. Angels are described as “standing by” because they do not possess free will which ultimately gives humans the real ability to move, change, and develop. Although the angels “run,” they actually merely return to the same place they began. Abraham as the prototype of the Jewish people was always advancing, progressing, and growing. Shaking the Four Species on Sukkot manifests this type of internal and external movement and growth begun by Abraham and engraved in the soul of every Jew.

THE GOOD NAME

Another significant connection between Sukkot, and in fact, all the *mitzvot*, and Abraham, is encoded in the verse we explored above: “and Abram journeyed, going and travelling toward the south.” The initial letters of the second, third, fourth, and fifth words in this verse spell a very important, though less known Name of God,¹² אהוה, which is known as “the good name,” because its numerical value is “good” (טוב): וַיֵּסַע אַבְרָם הַלּוֹךְ וְנֹסֵעַ הַנִּגְבָּה (The founder of the Chasidic movement, Rabbi Israel Ba’al Shem Tov, whose name means “master of the good Name,” was so-called because he had a special affinity to this Name.

This Name—אהוה—can be found in the Torah’s very first verse in the initials of the words “the heavens and the earth” (אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ), indicating that God’s goodness is woven into the very fabric of Creation and is manifest in the heavens and the earth from

9. Mivchar Shiurei Hitbonenut, loc. cit. The English word for something that is alive is “animal,” which stems from movement, anima.

10. Numbers 33:5-48.

11. Zechariah 3:7.

12. Mivchar Shiurei Hitbonenut, loc. cit.

their inception. Heavens in this context means everything spiritual that would ever be created, while earth implies all material reality that would be created.

From this we can see that Abraham's travels in both the external world and his own internal world were always for the sake of endowing creation with *chesed* and goodness. As this Name of God indicates, he was always uniting spiritual energy within the material realm. This is actually one of the main goals of all the commandments, to take a physical action, a physical object and/or speech and infuse them within the

context of a commandment with Godliness.

The sages describe the Patriarchs as God's chariot, as it were,¹³ able to take the place of the Divine Chariot seen by the prophets, most notably Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. Abraham was the chariot, for drawing together heaven and earth, spiritual and physical. Shaking the Four Species produces the same type of unification: infusing a very active physical act with the spiritual energy and meaning of a *mitzvah*—a commandment prescribed by God to unite the heavens and the earth together.

13. *Bereishit Rabbah* 47:6.

SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEIVAH

THE GAON OF VILNA AND REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLOV

The Rav taught “*Ein KeElokeinu*” from the *Heilige Yid*.

Today (the 19th of Tishrei) is the *yahrzeit* (the day of passing) of the *Heilige Yid* (Rebbe Yaakov Yitzchak of Peshischa), which is why we just played his *niggun*.

In general, it is written that Moshe Rabbeinu knew how to play the melodies of all the souls—this is one of Moshe Rabbeinu's special qualities—and since he is the first redeemer and he is the final redeemer, Mashiach too must know how to play the melodies of all the souls, starting with all the general souls, all the *tzaddikim* who stood

up for the Jewish people. One must therefore become familiar with every kind of melody whose root is in holiness; every Jew has a root somewhere, and this melody is truly special and original, from the melodies of the *tzaddikim*, disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov. The *Heilige Yid* was the outstanding disciple of the *Choizeh* of Lublin and the outstanding rebbe of Rebbe Simchah Bunim, the rebbe of the Kotzker and of the Chiddushei HaRim—from whom come Kotzk, Vorki, and Ger, all from him; this is a very great root within the Jewish people.

Today is also the *yahrzeit* of the Vilna

Gaon. Among the Chassidic *ushpizin* (spiritual guests to our Sukkah), today it's the Tzemach Tzedek, so it's fitting to tell a story of the Tzemach Tzedek connected to the Vilna Gaon. Once, an important rabbi—one of the great masters of Chabad's revealed teachings—came into the Tzemach Tzedek and asked him to look over a volume of responsa or *halachah* that he had composed, hoping perhaps for an approbation, or at least a verbal blessing. When he came in, the Tzemach Tzedek didn't have time to read the whole book, so he pointed to places in the book where the author disagreed with the Vilna Gaon and asked the Tzemach Tzedek for his reaction and blessing. When he left, the Tzemach Tzedek's sons came into the room and saw that the Rebbe was crying, and they asked him what it was, why he was crying, and he said: I am crying because that man—who is an important Chassid and a great rabbi—thought that he would find favor in my eyes by disagreeing with the Vilna Gaon. The

Vilna Gaon—he called him “the Chassid,” as I recall—slept only two hours in twenty-four and was occupied entirely with Torah, so I am crying that people think he would find favor in my eyes by being able to refute the Vilna Gaon.

Yesterday, the 18th of Tishrei, was the *yarhzeit* of Rebbe Nachman—it is known that there are a great many similarities between him and the Vilna Gaon. One of the most striking is that they both wrote lengthy analyses of the Rabbah bar Bar Channah stories in the Talmud, and many other important similar things. I believe there was once a class on this, on the inner connection between them, on their engagement with Torah in the way they learned. Chilik Frank (the clarinet player) tells us that most of today's Jerusalem Breslov Chassidim originally descended from the “*Prushim*,” from the disciples of the Vilna Gaon—it's worth noting that specifically the disciples of the Vilna Gaon became Breslov Chassidim.

SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEIVAH

THE POWER OF SIGHT ON SUKKOT

The universal *ushpiz* (spiritual guest) of Klal Yisrael today, according to the order of the *sefirot*, is Aharon. It is written that the entire Sukkot in essence is connected to Aharon, because all of Sukkot is a remembrance of the Clouds of Glory God placed over and around us

during our years in the wilderness. We must remember this from the very first mitzvah of the festival, on the first day—”so that your generations may know that I made the Children of Israel dwell in sukkot,”etc. The sukkot we sit in are the Clouds of Glory, in the merit of Aharon, and we must

remember him from the very first moment the festival begins—the entire festival is in his merit. Sukkah is also a term related to “Yiskah,” a term for “seeing”—through *Ru'ach HaKodesh* (Divine Spirit); that is why at *Simchat Beit HaSho'eivah* people would merit receiving *Ru'ach HaKodesh*—“you shall draw water joyously from the wellsprings of salvation.” The libations of the rest of the year are all of wine and therefore they correspond to our sense of hearing (for wine relates to the *sefirah* of understanding, and understanding corresponds to our sense of hearing, “I have heard, God, of Your renown, and I was in awe”), but on Sukkot we bring a special water libation. Water corresponds to wisdom, which is sight—that is why on this festival we see Godliness. All year long we can only have second-hand (hearsay, in a sense) knowledge of God's essence, but on Sukkot we can potentially grasp the essence directly (akin to seeing it). This too pertains to Aharon, who is commanded to kindle, which in Hebrew is “to raise” the flames in the Temple Menorah, each of which corresponds to one of the soul roots of the Jewish people. Today we would say that Aharon lights up whatever room he enters. When all the souls in a room are illuminated, one can see God's essence. As the Ba'al Shem Tov said, add light to the room. When there is light, one sees the “visage of the Cohen” (*מראה כהן*), a term whose value is identical to “Divine Providence” (*השגחה*).

First, this means seeing individual Providence in every aspect of reality. One sees more and more Providence. The analogy for this is that just as adding a penny (*perutah* in Hebrew, which also means “a detail”) to a penny produces a large sum

in the end, so we must start by collecting the Divine Providence we see in each detail of life and in each individual soul, until we discover the essential underlying Providence with which God governs all. This is the foundational directive given by Rebbe Nachman and by all other *tzaddikim*. When I see the individualized Providence in every detail, in the life of every soul, that still doesn't mean I perceive Godliness with my sense, but it adds up to a great sum.

The final result is that one sees actual Godliness, but for that one needs many pennies, many particulars, many small instances of Providence. Of every small instance of Providence it is written that “every single penny adds up to a great sum.” Until now I have heard—“I have heard of Your renown”—I have heard that there is the Holy blessed One who performs miracles, but one must see it with one's own eyes; it is not enough to hear. The joy in “the time of our rejoicing” comes from the fact that at long last I merit to see God now, on the festival of Sukkot. As we said, this is especially connected to Aharon (*אֶהָרֹן*) the letters of whose name spell “is seen” (*נראה*) alluding to the verse, “for with You is the source of life; in Your light do we see light,” “for You, Lord, are seen.” May we merit to see Godliness with our senses. Indeed, the Sages connect joy and sight in their statement amount Sukkot: “Whomever did not see *Simchat Beit HaSho'eivah* never saw joy in his life”—one must see joy.

In Kabbalistic nomenclature, joy is the inner experience of *Imma*, the mother principle that is the mature *sefirah* of understanding. To see the joy is to unite the *Abba*, the father principle and the *sefirah* of wisdom with *Imma*.

THE ETROG

WHAT IS MORE CHOICE: A LARGE ETROG OR A SMALL ONE?

Regarding the *etrog*, it is known that the Lubavitcher Rebbe would be *mehader* to take a large *etrog*, a truly large one—this was an innovation, the Rebbe's own innovation. Today too there are many Chasidim who want to do as the Rebbe did, so they go to great lengths to seek out a large *etrog*, but a large *etrog* carries a bit of a problem. In the Rebbe's case, they surely chose a large *etrog* that was one hundred percent clean, but generally a large *etrog* is not one hundred percent clean. So, there is a question of *hiddur* [beautification of the *mitzvah*]—indeed there are different opinions among the Chabad rabbis today—whether it is preferable to have a smaller, clean *etrog*, or a very large one that is not one hundred percent clean. There are rabbis who say that a large, unclean one is better than a small, clean one, but the plain logic would seem to be—if the small one meets the required measure and is clean, it would seem to be more *hadar* [select and beautiful] than a large one that is not one hundred percent clean (of course, we are here not referring to a blemish or blemishes that would disqualify the *etrog*, but rather blotches that do not disqualify it).

THE ETROG AND THE FEMININE

Since the *etrog* represents the *sefirah* of kingdom and that is the feminine and the woman (more specifically it is related to

the “revelation of the crown” of *Ze’er Anpin*, the revelation of the future bride), a large *etrog* is like a “great woman.” The phrase “a great woman”¹ appears in the *Tanach* exactly once—that is the large *etrog*. Who is this great woman? Scripture there is describing the woman from Shunam who made an attic chamber for Elisha the prophet and placed there a bed, a table, a chair, and a menorah—thereby providing him with the four rectifications that correspond to the four Worlds.

[There is an extraordinarily wondrous discourse of the Rebbe Rashab on this verse and this story of the great woman, who made an upper chamber for Elisha the prophet with a bed, a table, a chair, and a menorah. The story behind the discourse on “table, bed, chair, and menorah” is that the Rebbe Rashab once called in several unique individuals, among them Reb Shmuel Gronem, and delivered the discourse before them. Afterward Reb Shmuel Gronem said that he had never heard such a discourse in his life, and nevertheless he was prepared to forgo it—that is, that he himself would not hear the discourse, but that the other students would hear it instead—but they did not merit to hear it, and so it stands to this day. *LeChaim, LeChaim!*]

Getting back to the woman from Shunam,

1. 2 Kings 4:8.

afterward she merits, through the prophet Elisha, to be blessed with a son, and this son—according to the Sages, as is explained at length in the writings of the Arizal—is the prophet Habbakuk. This son dies suddenly and Elisha revives him performing a resurrection of the dead.

Elisha was the disciple of Elijah. Elijah also resurrected a child who had died, the son of the woman of Tzarfat. This child became the prophet Jonah. Habbakuk is thus connected to Sukkot, his mother is the great woman, and Jonah is connected to Yom Kippur, since we read his book on the afternoon of Yom Kippur. But Jonah is also connected to Sukkot because he received his prophecy through *Simchat Beit HaSho'eivah*. The lesson for us is that from Yom Kippur one arrives at *Simchat Beit HaSho'eivah* to attain sight through Divine inspiration.

Habbakuk is related to Sukkot for another reason. Sukkot is said to be alluded to in the words, “and His right hand embraces me,” and Habbakuk stems from the same root as “embrace.” This all provides an important allusion to taking a large *etrog* on Sukkot.

LEAH AND RACHEL: THE LARGE AND SMALL FEMININE

Once again, taking a large *etrog* provides us with *hiddur* [beautification of the *mitzvah*] in terms of size, but in most cases compromises the *hiddur* of cleanliness. But with a small *etrog*, “a small woman” there is no *hiddur* of size, but the *hiddur* of cleanliness is far more commonly found.

We already know there is a “great woman” in Scripture, but is there a “small woman?” The expression “small woman” does not appear in the *Tanach*, but it does suggest the difference between Leah and Rachel.

The Torah writes about them that, “the name of the bigger was Leah, and the name of the smaller was Rachel.” Between the two, who is described as the clean one, the beautiful one in every respect, of whom it could be said, “there is no blemish in you” at all? This is Rachel. Rachel is praised for perfection of beauty—she is the smaller, but she is clean. The real question is which is more *hadar*. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, who is the *tzaddik* of “*Beit Rabbeinu SheBeBavel*”—for whom Leah is the primary *partzuf* of the feminine—for him, the primary objective is to beautify the *etrog* by taking a large one.

Still, we need to inquire in general: which is better—a large, unclean *etrog*, or a small, clean one? To better understand this question, we need to look at its spiritual roots. Spiritually, this is the question of the relationship between Leah and Rachel.

Between Leah and Rachel, each has her own virtue. Leah represents thought, which is known as the concealed World (relative to speech, which is a revealed World, i.e., we express our thoughts through speech). Because Leah is higher than Rachel, I might have thought that by her nature she should be cleaner, because the lower something is, the dirtier it is since it is closer to the impure husks. Not only that, Rachel is the aspect of femininity about which it says that it descends even into the death of the impure husks. So, I would have thought that Leah, who does not descend into the *kelipah*, ought to be cleaner, both physically and spiritually (the physical only reflects the spiritual). So why is this not the case?

The simple explanation is that even when I pray, even when I am standing before God, my thought always wanders, and we recognize that we are thoughts are

not clean. But every person can decide to guard and protect his speech from using foul or negative language, by his own free choice. So, a person can have clean speech—corresponding to Rachel, even though there is no righteous person on earth who is clean in his thoughts. He can think great things, far beyond what he is capable of achieving in speech, but to say that he is clean in thought—that is a very, very serious feat, something reserved for the future.

In the future, Rachel will grow and will be known as “Rachel the Great.” We look forward to Rachel not remaining small but rather coming to include Leah within herself as well. In the language of Kabbalah, the countenance of Rachel will rise and include the countenance of Leah, which is only a fleeting reflection of the complete feminine countenance of the mother principle. *Partzuf Rachel* starts out

as a root, an essential point that emerged in the first emanation of reality. The ultimate purpose is that Rachel will rise and fully inherit Leah, just as “the vessels of Rectification” must inherit and subsume all of “the lights of Chaos.” This state is called “Rachel the Great.” When this happens then the unification becomes between Yisrael and Rachel the Great—the ultimate union of the Messianic era. The bottom line is that this means there will be a large and clean *etrog*.

In fact, the value of “large and clean” (**גָּדוֹל וְנָקִי**) is the same as *hadar* (**הֶדָּר**), beautification. Thus, when instructing us, “And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a beautiful tree,” a tree that has *hadar*, the Torah telling us that we must take a large and clean *etrog*. That is why it is the first of the Four Species enumerated in the verse.

JEWISH ISSUES

TRUE REFORMATION: CHASIDUT AND OUR FUTURE MINDSET AS JEWS

HaRav Ginsburgh has for many decades identified Chasidut as the true reformation movement in Judaism. In his annual Chai Elul farbrengen, he focused on what sets it apart from other attempts that were not positive. He also charts the direction of the necessary coming reformation in the Jewish mindset. This farbrengen is continued in the next article in this issue.

This is a slightly edited transcript of the Chai Elul, 5786 farbrengen given in Efrat.

This evening we want to live with the Ba'al Shem Tov and with the Alter Rebbe, Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad.

What we want to address this evening is how these two luminaries, who were both born on Chai Elul, the essential life of the month of Elul, together brought a revolution to the Jewish world, and to the entire world. We want to understand their message as it applies to us today. We too need a revolution, similar to the one the Ba'al Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe were able to produce.

The Ba'al Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe were born exactly 47 years apart. In Kabbalah, 47 is the value of the unification (the sum) of God's essential Name, *Havayah* (יהוה) and the Name *Ekyeh* (אהיה), the two Names that correspond to wisdom and understanding—the father intellect and the mother intellect. Wisdom and the Ba'al

Shem Tov represent a sudden insight of light, while understanding and the Alter Rebbe represent the feminine capacity to capture that light and contain it. The Alter Rebbe serves as a type of womb to grow the tremendous insight of the Ba'al Shem Tov.

In the Zohar we find two important phrases, that correspond to the Ba'al Shem Tov and to the Alter Rebbe. Together they are the innovation of Chassidut. We need both together.

TWO SEMINAL IDEAS

The first says, “There is nothing void or vacant of God” (לית אֶתֶר פָּנוּי מִנִּיָּה). The second is that “All before Him is like nothing” (כולא קמיה כלא חשיב). The first expression refers to God's omnipresence. God is everywhere physically and spiritually—in my soul he is in every manifestation of my soul. That is what the Ba'al Shem Tov revealed, in a way that was never known or experienced before.

The second expression means that everything we see and experience is in a state of self-nullification before God's essence, that's the essence of the Alter Rebbe's understanding.

The first expression is in the heart, the second is in the mind. The Ba'al Shem Tov also said that, "the heart of Israel is always alive," even if it appears that during the exile I am asleep, still my heart is awake and alive. That quality of the heart is what the Ba'al Shem Tov brought to all of us, the entire Jewish people. Before the Ba'al Shem Tov, the Jewish people were in a deep coma. He whispered the name "Israel" (our common name, and his personal name) into our ears and we all woke up. It is the experience of a spiritual resurrection. We came alive again.

How did he do that? By opening our eyes to personal Divine Providence, that some power is here and driving and giving us life, every detail of life, every incarnation is watched over by the Creator, in a way that was not known before the Ba'al Shem Tov. Every minute experience in life is from God because God is omnipresent in the life of each of us.

The Alter Rebbe's innovation is linked to the notion that all is nullified before God. Perhaps the most important word in Chabad is *bittul* (בטול), meaning self-nullification. Not that all that we see does not exist; it in fact does exist. Yet, at the same time, paradoxically, everything is nullified to God, which means that all is like naught before God.

Both the Ba'al Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe reveal God's Presence. But the Ba'al Shem Tov reveals God's immanence and the Alter Rebbe reveals God's transcendence. In

the language of the Zohar, these are known as God's light that surrounds all (סובב כל) and God's light that penetrates all (עלמין) and God's light that penetrates all (ממלא כל עלמין). Both are a revelation of the *atzmut*, the *ousia*, God's very essence. They are two faces or manifestations of the very same essence.

HEART AND MIND

One of the simple parables to understand the relationship between them (particularly why the Ba'al Shem Tov must come first) can be seen in *tefillin*. First, we don the hand *tefillin*, near the heart, which reveals God's immanence in our lives. Then we put on the head *tefillin*, which are on the head and reveal God's transcendence. The head *tefillin* are like a crown above the head. They give us the realization that we are like nothing before God's Presence.

The Ba'al Shem Tov is our heart, and the Alter Rebbe is our brain and they must function together. Nonetheless, the heart precedes the brain, the hand *tefillin* precede the head *tefillin*. First the Ba'al Shem Tov, the heart of all of Israel is revealed and then comes the Alter Rebbe, his spiritual "grandson," who reveals the Ba'al Shem Tov's mindset.

THE CHATAM SOFER

Instead of "revolution," let us use another term that can sound somewhat strange to the Orthodox ear: a "reformation." Chassidut is a holy reformation of Judaism. The Chatam Sofer, who according to Chabad tradition is referred to as the lower *tzaddik*, used to say that something whatever is new is forbidden according to Torah (חדש אסור מן). (התורה). This was a play on a halachic concept called, "the prohibition of the new," which

refers to grain that was harvested before the Omer offering. But the Chatam Sofer used it to say that we are forbidden from changing anything *mitzvah* or custom in Judaism. His reason was that he lived in Germany where the Reform movement started. Because it was not a positive reformation, the Chatam Sofer fought it.

But the Chatam Sofer was also present during the time that Chasidut expanded. He did not use this expression against Chasidut. In fact, just the opposite. He is the last *posek*, halachic authority, that was accepted by the entire Orthodox world, Chasidim and non-Chasidim alike (from thereon everything is under dispute).

His own mentors were Rabbi Nathan Adler and Rebbe Pinchas Horowitz the Ba'al Hahafla'ah. The latter was one of the greatest Chasidic Rebbes. Rabbi Nathan Adler is sometimes called the Ba'al Shem Tov of Germany, a very interesting figure that we cannot devote time to right now, but a great figure who was entirely inspired by the inner teachings of Torah (*pnimiyut HaTorah*). Despite the Chasidic movement being a reformation of Judaism, the Chatam Sofer did not oppose it at all. If we understand what the difference between Chasidut and the Reform movement is, we can understand what the next reformation should be like.

WHAT IS REFORMATION?

To re-form, is to give something a new form. In the Torah this is called, “Degarbment and Engarbment” (פושט צורה) (ולובש צורה). You take off one form (one garment) and put on a new one. The initials spell “explosion” (פוצץ). This phenomenon is akin to an explosion—to remove the old form and put on a new one.

Why did the Chatam Sofer fight against the Reform movement in Judaism? Because it stripped off *halachah* and tried to replace it with something else. But the Chasidic movement removed something from consciousness and adopted a new mindset. Chasidut is a spiritual reorientation of what the Torah's objective is, what the *mitzvot* are for. It is a reevaluation of our intent without changing an iota of our practice.

English is an Indo-European language. In all these languages the root “re” (used as a prefix especially) means to “return,” to go back. The return, the *teshuvah* from that state of being, is to go back to the source. I turned my face away from God and now I turn my face back to God.

When I return my face to God, my state is higher than it was before (originally). That is why a *tzaddik* cannot stand in the place that a *ba'al teshuvah* can stand. The *ba'al teshuvah* is turning back to God, when he recognizes the greatness of the Torah and the *mitzvot*, he feels he is coming home. Like a Jew visiting the Land of Israel for the first time. There is something innate in the soul that experiences this. This is the secret of the yearning of the Jewish soul.

The verb to return (לשוב) is most often used in the Tanach with reference to the Land of Israel. From here, this consciousness of God spreads to the entire world, that is the meaning of the Land of Israel will spread over the entire world. This is one of the points that we will build on to explain what a new reformation requires.

THREE NEGATIVE REFORMS

Whoever has studied a bit of Kabbalah and Chasidut knows that there are four Worlds. The highest is

the World of Emanation (*Atzilut*), where there is consciousness of only God, there is nothing else. From there God created three lower Worlds, which do experience self-consciousness, which is not completely true, but God wants it, so that we can rectify it. These are the Worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action (or Deed).

To fully apply the prefix *re* to the Worlds: in the World of Creation, we must re-Create, in Formation, we must re-From, and in Action, we must re-Do. We can use the word *re-construct* for the World of Action.

But first let us consider the failed attempts at these re-formations. In the World of Emanation there is only God, there is no evil there at all. In Creation there is a little evil and mostly goodness. Formation is half and half. The World of Action is mostly bad and there is a little bit of good.

There were three failed attempts to reform. The most well-known are the Reform and Conservative movements, less well known is the Reconstructionist movement. In terms of adherence to the performance of *mitzvot*, the Reform movement did the most practical damage. But when it comes to faith in God, the Reconstructionist movement did more damage. In Reconstruction, the idea is that there is “peoplehood” (עממיות). As a community, Jews observe, but they should not believe in the God of Israel. Reconstruction advocates for belief in Spinoza’s god. They argue that like any Darwinian-Evolutionary principle, nature simply prefers goodness over evil. But there is no personal God, there is no one to pray to. In general, they embrace the ancient Greek belief that the universe was not created and that God is not the

Creator. Reconstruction is the negative type of World of Action. By damaging the simple faith of a Jew, they destroy the natural *frumkeit* that resides in the World of Action. The Reform movement claims that we are not obligated to do anything. The decision whether to perform a *mitzvah* or not is entirely up to the individual. This represents a re-formation of the World of Formation. The Conservative movement is a little bit better and therefore represents a negative image of the World of Creation.

We need this structure to understand how to perform a positive reformation.

THE BA’AL SHEM TOV’S REFORMATION

Rebbe Isaac of Homil used to say that before the Mashiach can come, we will need a new order of three *tzaddikim*: the Ba’al Shem Tov, the Maggid, and the Alter Rebbe.

Another interesting phenomenon from English. Recreation means שְׁעִשְׁתִּים. It means to play, to engage in some hobby. In English of 500 years ago it didn’t mean to have a good time, it just meant to re-create something. How did it come to mean enjoyment? The way the etymology is explained is that to re-create something you must re-fresh it, re-vive it. The Ba’al Shem Tov revived the Jewish people, by whispering our essential name into our ear, awakening us from our deep coma.

When I am in a state of tension or stress, it can be so hard that it can break me. Even a scholar who is so immersed in his Torah study, can come to a negative state of psychological tension. What should he do? He’s on the verge of having a breakdown. The suggestion offered by Reish Lakish, the

Talmudic exemplar of a *ba'al teshuvah* is that sometimes the nullification of Torah is its foundation.

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains this statement many times. He says that even though the angels that are called “living beings” (חיים) are running and returning constantly, they run to reach their goal, but they also return to a state of rest. A Torah scholar’s goal is to know the entire Torah, to be a genius, a great scholar in Israel, but that can cause tremendous stress. It also gives him a tremendous amount of self-importance (שיוש). To alleviate the stress, he must nullify his learning and thereby nullify himself. He is in a sense re-creating himself. He is refreshing his consciousness.

Spiritually that means to realize that all I have achieved to date, all my accomplishments are egotistic, and the success belongs to God, not to me. I should continue learning Torah, but not out of drive to succeed, not out of competitiveness. I should have a hobby and rest. Then when I return to learning, it will be a different experience altogether. You will be a *ba'al teshuvah*, whose essence is lowliness (שפלות), not self-importance.

The Ba'al Shem Tov’s soul root is identified with Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa. Of all the Sages, he was a famous miracle-worker, close to a prophet. Once his daughter poured vinegar instead of oil into the Shabbat candles. She lit the wicks and then came to her father crying that it would not continue to light. Rabbi Chanina said to her, What do you care? He who told the oil to burn, can tell the vinegar to burn just as well. So, the candles burnt for the entire Shabbat. How did he do this?

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that if a

person can reach a state of “nothingness” (אין), his previous state of being can spontaneously metamorphosize into another state. He who made oil burn can make vinegar burn. He himself, Rabbi Chanina was in a state of nothingness, and so could say that the letters of “vinegar” can permute or transform into the same letters that provide the “oil” with its burning power, and even better. By coming to nothingness, one can change reality. First, you change the permutation (the order) of the letters of the object and then you can give it a new face, a new creation.

THE ALTER REBBE’S REFORMATION

The sign of a true *ba'al teshuvah* is that to reach a higher level of being, he rests or nullifies his previous level. That rest is a state of nothingness (*ayin*), and one of the ways to do that is through recreation. The Alter Rebbe explains this in chapter 33 of the *Tanya*.

The Sages say that God gave us 613 commandments. Then came Habbakuk the prophet and founded them on one *mitzvah* alone: faith. One pillar that holds them all, as it says, “A *tzaddik* [and Your people are all *tzaddikim*] lives by his faith.”² The Alter Rebbe explains that a person, when he feels there is too much weight on his shoulders, even the weight of all the commandments, all he has to do is believe in the omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence of One God.

Before Maimonides everyone believed that God is omnipotent—that He can perform whatever miracles He wants. Came Maimonides and also created a type of reformation in Judaism’s mindset. He

2. Habbakuk 2:4.

emphasized and revealed in the deepest way that God is omniscient—that God and His knowledge is one. This does not negate free will in any way, even though it may seem to be a paradox. Then came the Ba'al Shem Tov and added that God is also omnipresent, both physically and spiritually. To experience this through Divine Providence that is personal was an innovation of the Ba'al Shem Tov.

So, everything says the Alter Rebbe in chapter 33, if I remove all obligations from my consciousness—not that I don't want to be obligated, but I am suffering now from tension that is caused by this consciousness and I need to release that tension—then I need to reduce it all to one thing: faith in God. I remove everything from my mind and focus only on my belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then my soul will be resurrected, and naturally I will desire and be able to perform all the 613 commandments with joy in a way I wasn't able to do before.

This is an example of how the Alter Rebbe brings a new meaning to the well-known saying of the Sages that demonstrates how sometimes the nullification of Torah is what sustains Torah. Removing the tension that comes with responsibility allows my true self to be revealed. What achieves this is our simple faith in God being One. All three “omnis” are faces of the same one God, the same one reality. I am then filled with joy, I am resurrected, and that empowers my ability to perform all 613 commandments.

THE TORAH'S BODY AND SOUL

All this was an introduction to explain what the difference between a negative reformation and a positive reformation is. We do not want to reform the body of

the Torah, we want to reform the soul. All the negative reformations focused on the body. God loves the body. One might think that God loves the soul and so you shouldn't change the soul of the Torah. But the opposite is true.

The body of the Torah should never change. Clearly this refers to cancelling mitzvot, God forbid. But it also includes not putting energy into renewing mitzvot in a superficial manner—such as renewing the *Sanhedrin*, introducing *Techelet*, etc. The common attitude is that renewing these institutions or actions would be a valid reformation, but in truth, our energy should be devoted to reforming the mindset of Judaism, not the mitzvot. It is the soul that needs to be reevaluated and do teshuvah. That is the “reckoning” (תְּשׁוּבָה נֶכְפֶּשׁ) that we do during Elul. What exactly is this re-creation and revival of the spirit, the soul of Torah in the right way. Recreation is the state of “nothingness” between the old being and the new state of being. It is the change in the way you envision your life.

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION AND THE CHASIDIC REFORMATION

The Torah's first word is “In the beginning” (בְּרֵאשִׁית). The first letter, *bet*, is like the word “in the merit of” (בְּשִׁבְלִי). Just as the Sages say that God said about Rabbi Chanina that the entire world eats in his merit, and he himself makes do with a bag of Carobs. The sustenance of the entire world depends on Rabbi Chanina. The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that this word “in the merit of” (בְּשִׁבְלִי) also means a “path” (שְׁבִיל). Rabbi Chanina created a spiritual path in the merit of which the entire world could be sustained. The Ba'al Shem Tov said that he inherited that path, that channel.

There are a number of explanations given by the Sages regarding “for what” (in the merit of what) did God create the world. But according to what we just explained in the name of the Ba’al Shem Tov, God created the world in the merit through the path of Torah and through the path of Israel.

What comes first, the Torah or Israel? Rashi holds that first Torah and then Israel. The Sages state in the *midrash*, that “the thought of Israel preceded everything,” even Torah.

The Ba’al Shem Tov explains that these two opinions are both true. Before the contraction, Israel precede the Torah and connect to God directly. But after the initial contraction, they connect to God through the Torah. The *Zohar* says that after the initial contraction, there are three knots that connect (God, Torah, and Israel). But before the contraction—and we can still experience that state that precedes Creation, according to the Ba’al Shem Tov in Divine Providence and according to the Alter Rebbe in God’s transcendence—the thought of Israel precedes the Torah.

This is a good way to explain the positive reform of Chasidut. Chasidut changes the order: which is for which? Are Israel for the sake of keeping the Torah. This means that without the Jewish people keeping the Torah, there is no Creation. The world has a blueprint, the Torah and that blueprint must be applied by someone. So that leads to the mindset that “Israel are for the sake of the Torah.” This was the mindset of just about all Jews before the Ba’al Shem Tov’s reformation.

To reform properly, you cannot change even the minutest detail of *halachah*. That is why the Maggid of Mezritch gave the Alter Rebbe the monumental task of writing

an updated *Shulchan Aruch*, to show that Chasidut does not change *halachah*. It was vital that this be done, not only not changing anything, but bringing all the updated rulings. His name, Shneur means two lights—the light of the Tanya and the light of his *Shulchan Aruch*.

Now came the Ba’al Shem Tov and taught that Israel (the Jewish people) do not exist for the sake of the Torah, but the opposite. The Torah is for Israel; it is meant to reveal the deepest essence of Israel. As it says in the Tanya, that the Divine soul of Israel is an actual part of God. Torah is what reveals that.

This is the essence of what the Chasidic Reformation is about. Not a single *halachah* is cancelled. These changes are changes of orientation then, of structure of the institutions of Judaism of Jewish society. The center of the community is no longer the rabbi, but the rebbe. This is a positive reformation because the rebbe does not violate an iota of *halachah* and in fact serves as a living example of how a person leads a Torah life. The rebbe wants others to look at him and learn from him how to serve God correctly, each person according to his ability. This is especially true in Chabad, which demands that each individual serve God with his or her own energy and ability.

So, the positive Chasidic reformation was a shift in our mindset about who is for the sake of who? From a mindset that the Jewish people are for the sake of Torah (the mindset of after the contraction) to the view that the Torah is for the sake of the Jewish people.

What can be the next reformation, the next recreation?

THE NECESSARY COMING REFORM: BECOMING EMISSARIES TO THE WORLD

The next reformation has to do with whether the Jewish people exist for the sake of something else. It can be said in two ways. The first sounds easier: the Jews are for God. The greater novelty is that the Jews are for the world.

The initial question is why did God create the world? The two answers were “for Torah” and “for Israel.” Since there are two options, you must ask which came first. If you already realize that Israel are above the Torah then they are for the sake of the world. This is the same as saying that Israel is for God, because God has a passion to have a dwelling place here below. The ultimate purpose is for Israel to go out of themselves. God does not need the world, He is self-sufficient. By creating the world, He went out of Himself, as it were.

By analogy, if we say that the ultimate purpose is Israel, then it must be a self-sufficient form of Israel. Just as God is

self-sufficient without Creation and yet He goes out of Himself to create the world, so even though the Jewish people can exist independently of the world, we too have a passion, a yearning to go out of ourselves into the world. The change in mindset is that the Jewish people need to be emissaries to the world, to be for the sake of Creation.

To make the change we need a new Ba'al Shem Tov, a new Maggid of Mezritch, and a new Alter Rebbe who will show that we are not here to live in a ghetto. We are meant to leave the ghetto and go out into the world, without changing an iota of the Torah. If we stand any chance of surviving it is by being proud of our body—the observance of the mitzvot—but our purpose, our soul, is to rectify the world—to bring peace on earth. If there is no peace on earth than God is not dwelling in the world. We must stop wanting to be correct in ourselves, in our conduct, and understand that the world was not created for us, but rather for God to dwell in the entire world and we are the emissaries that make that happen.

JEWISH HISTORY

TEN ERAS AND TEN DIFFERENT MINDSETS

Continuing the discussion he began on Chai Elul of what true reformation in Judaism is like, HaRav Ginsburgh presents a new approach to charting Jewish history, dividing it into 10 eras and corresponding them to the sefirot. This comprehensive analysis of our almost 4000 year long history, leads up to the third part of this topic, focusing on the interplay between theology, monarchy, and anarchy in Jewish history, which will better help us understand what the necessary, coming reformation of our mindset as Jews will be like. The third part will be printed in an upcoming issue of Wonders.

This is a translation of the article that appeared in the Rosh HaShanah 5787 issue of Niflaot.

TEN PERIODS FROM THE PATRIARCHS TO MASHIACH

From the era of the Patriarchs until our own era, we can identify ten historical periods in Jewish life. If there are ten periods in the history of our people, then according to the Torah's inner dimension, according to Kabbalah, they surely correspond to the ten *sefirot* with which God created the world. Let's give a summary first, and then go into detail:

Everything begins with Avraham Avinu, the first of the Patriarchs, "Avraham was one."¹ He is the head of all believers.² He believed in God, as the Torah states, "and he believed in *Havayah*, and He reckoned it to him as a kindness."³ He is also the first man of loving-kindness.⁴ Avraham initiates

Judaism, but the first period of the Jewish people is called, in general, the era of the Patriarchs—this is the general theme of the Book of Genesis, the first of the Five Books of the Torah. It is called "the Book of the Upright,"⁵ "the book of the upright ones"⁶—they walk uprightly, just as God created man upright, before man schemed and made many machinations—"God made man upright, but they have sought out many machinations."⁷ The era of the Patriarchs is called "before [Divine] speech,"⁸ and it is also before our first exile.

The second period is the Egyptian exile, which contains within it all of our subsequent exiles.⁹

and Isaiah 41:8 ("Avraham who loved Me"); *Pardes Rimonim* 23:1.

5 Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18.

6 *Avodah Zarah* 25a.

7 *Ecclesiastes* 7:29.

8 *Chagigah* 6a; *Sanhedrin* 56b. And elsewhere.

9 *Bereishit Rabbah* 16:4.

1 Ezekiel 33:24.

2 *Shemot Rabbah* 23:5.

3 Genesis 15:6.

4 See Micah 7:20 ("loving-kindness to Avraham")

The third period, which chronologically is a relatively short period—just one generation of forty years—is the generation of the desert. It is a short but jam-packed period: they leave Egypt, receive the Torah, build the Tabernacle. This period ends immediately with the death of Moses; a different leadership, a new world order, already begins. Every period in the Jewish people is a new world order.

Joshua brings us into the Land. He does not complete the conquest,¹⁰ but he certainly starts it and leads into the fourth period: the era of the Judges, which lasts from Joshua to Samuel. In each period, the entire leadership, the entire world order—one might say the entire culture—shares a common theme that we will discuss later. But the people are not satisfied with that world order. At the end of the era of the Judges, the people demand a king like all the nations.¹¹ The demand runs contrary to God's will, but the Holy blessed One, as it were, yields to the people's demand. With this, a new period begins in the history of our people—the era of kings, though the common mindset developed during this period was of Judaism centered on the Holy Temple. Saul, the first king, is still relatively chaotic (*tohu*)¹²; his kingship does not endure, and after him comes King David, to whom the Holy blessed One promises “the Eternity of Israel.” David's purpose is not his wars—he devotes his life to building a house for God: he prepares all the material for the building¹³ and draws

the plans for the building.¹⁴ God tells him, through Natan the prophet, that not he but his son Solomon will build it, since his hands are full of blood¹⁵, but the house will be called by his name (“behold your house, David”¹⁶). Therefore, if one wants to give this period a name, it is the era of the First Temple, until the destruction of the First Temple. This is already the fifth period of the Jewish people.

Afterward, “because of our sins we were exiled from our land”¹⁷—a relatively short exile, seventy years in Babylonia. All exiles are included within the Egyptian exile, so we don't count the Babylonian exile as a separate period or a change in leadership. The final exile, which we are still in, is indeed something different, but we will not refer to it as an exile, as we shall see. Here we are speaking about a change in worldview, in the world order, and what comes after the First Temple is the Second Temple, which is fundamentally different from the First Temple. This is the sixth period, which lasts until the destruction of the Second Temple, and has a “tail” extending until Rabbi Judah the Nassi who compiled the Mishnah. Until then, the crown of Torah was in the Land of Israel.

Then comes the seventh period. We don't call it exile, but something else. The center of gravity of the Jewish people shifts from the Land of Israel to Babylonia, and flourishes there—there are *yeshivot*, and even a limited Jewish authority in the role of the Exilarch (the *Reish Galuta*). The spiritual center in Babylonia flourishes

10 See Joshua 13:1; Judges 1. And elsewhere.

11 1 Samuel 8:5.

12 *Etz Chaim* 8:4. *Emek HaMelech* 5:46.

13 1 Chronicles 22:14.

14 Ibid. 28:11–19.

15 2 Samuel 7:12–13; 1 Chronicles 22:8–10; 28:3–6.

16 1 Kings 12:16.

17 The text of the *Mussaf* prayer for the festivals.

and remains there for eight hundred years (though there was ultimately a decline at the end). Eight hundred years is a tremendous period—like the First and Second Temples together. Rav Yehudah, one of the first sages of the Babylonian period, said that it is forbidden to leave Babylonia for the Land of Israel.¹⁸ It is as if he said that now the *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence) is here, in Babylonia¹⁹—the Jewish people are now a Babylonian people. This is an entirely different mindset, which persisted for eight hundred years, until the end of the era of the Ge'onim. When Rav Hai Gaon passed away, our story in Babylonia came to an end.

We call the next period, after the years in Babylonia, the era of the Dispersion. We left Babylonia, and the story of the Jewish people began in Spain, France, Ashkenaz (Germany), North Africa, and so on—we were scattered among the nations. It is written that the purpose of the dispersion is to add converts to the Jewish people.²⁰ The leadership during the dispersion also changed entirely. In this period, the great halachic decisors are no longer in Babylonia. The *Rif* (Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi) is in North Africa, followed by Maimonides, *Rashi*, *Tosafot*, the *Rosh*—the pillars of Jewish law as it exists today, all of whom are outside Babylonia. Rabbi Yosef Caro, the author of the *Beit Yosef*, rules according to three, like a court—the *Rif*, Maimonides, and the *Rosh*.²¹ This is already the eighth period.

Two hundred fifty years ago, something new began—Chasidut, the Ba'al Shem Tov. Again, this is a new Jewish outlook—in thought, in philosophy, and in the structure of society. Who is at the head, who leads the community here—the rabbi (rav) or the rebbe? This has enormous implications, and one who probes deeply understands that this is already a different reality, as it were, a renewed Judaism. Chasidut does not, God forbid, abandon anything from the past practice (*halachah* or customs) but, “a new face has appeared.”²² We now say that every time in history there is a stage that must involve “divesting of form” and “donning of form”, in other words, “a new face has come here.” In all the generations of Judaism, the ninth period is Chasidut.

What is the tenth period? We anticipate and believe every day that Mashiach will come, and also we see a change—there is *aliyah* to the Land of Israel. Something that has not yet fully happened, but is in process, is very much felt in the air—a totally different mindset of Judaism. This is the tenth stage that corresponds with the sefirah of kingdom (*malchut*): the Messianic era. Many things will change internally, as the Sages teach, and all the more so according to Chasidut.

So, in brief, we have now gone over ten periods in the history of the Jewish people. Let us now see how they correspond to the ten sefirot. This will help provide us with the necessary background to perform our next analysis that will guide us in understanding the direction we are moving in.

In principle the most straightforward correspondence is to follow the order

¹⁸ *Berachot* 24b. *Ketubot* 110b.

¹⁹ *Bamidbar Rabbah* 7:10. *Mechilta* Bo, 14; *Sifrei*, *Beha'lotcha*, 26.

²⁰ *Pesachim* 87b.

²¹ See the introduction of the *Beit Yosef* to *Tur*, *Orach Chaim*.

²² *Shabbat* 112b, *Eiruvin* 24a, and elsewhere.

of the eras and correspond them to the sefirot in order. Nonetheless, we would like to better understand the depth of the correspondence.

INTELLECT: THE PATRIARCHS, THE EGYPTIAN EXILE, AND THE GENERATION OF THE WILDERNESS

The first three eras correspond to the intellectual *sefirot*: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. This gains credence because the Sages describe the third era, the generation of the wilderness as a generation of knowledge (*da'at*),²³ the third of the intellectual *sefirot*. In the same vein, the leader of that era, Moses, is considered the knowledge of all the souls of the Jewish people,²⁴ and when Moses passes, the leadership that takes over has a completely different mindset. The Sages describe this with the metaphor, “the face of Moses was like the face of the sun, the face of Joshua was like the face of the moon.”²⁵

Incidentally, it is important to know that according to the holy Ari²⁶ our present generation—the generation of “the footsteps of Mashiach” (*ikveta deMeshicha*), the generation waiting for the next reform, the tenth era—is a reincarnation of the generation of the wilderness, the generation of knowledge. This means that even when we come to the tenth and final era that corresponds with kingdom, the primary innovation will be in our *sefirah* of knowledge.

In any case, we said that this already reveals the secret, for if the third era is the generation of knowledge, one can understand what the previous stages are. The era of the Patriarchs are wisdom. That is why the word *av* itself is the beginning of “Avraham,” the first of the Patriarchs, followed by Yitzchak-Yaakov. All three Patriarchs are called “*av*,” and “*av*” in Kabbalah—the *partzuf* of Abba, the father principle—is wisdom.

The era of the Egyptian exile is like a mother’s womb. Only here the womb is an impure womb—Egypt. In any case, the Jewish people are born out of the exile, which corresponds to understanding (*binah*), as explained explicitly in Kabbalah.²⁷

We have already spoken about the era of the generation of the Exodus that was in the wilderness for 40 years. They experienced Redemption, signs, and wonders, as well as the giving of the Torah and the making of the Tabernacle, “Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.”²⁸ It is written that “there will never again be a giving of the Torah.”²⁹ There will never be such an experience again. Even the fact that knowledge will be instrumental in the era of Mashiach is something else. It is important to know that the era of the wilderness also experienced the shattering of knowledge, as it did in the World of Chaos (*tohu*); the generation of the wilderness was full of sins. They are described as, “a stiff-necked people”—the nape is the place of the *sefirah*

23 *Vayikra Rabbah* 9:1; *Pesikta Rabbati*, ch. 14; *Pesikta DeRav Kahana, piska* 4, letter *gimel* (based on I Kings 5:11).

24 *Tanya*, ch. 42.

25 *Bava Batra* 75a.

26 *Sha'ar HaKavanot*, the first discourse of the Pesach discourses.

27 See the Pesach discourses in *Sha'ar HaKavanot* and *Pri Etz Chaim*; *Kehillat Yaakov*, entry “*Eretz Mitzrayim*.”

28 Exodus 25:8.

29 *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 4, p. 1166; see the discourse “*Shuvah Yisrael*” 5666, and elsewhere.

of knowledge.³⁰ In this generation there is knowledge of God but on the other hand, the knowledge also breaks—there are signs and wonders that cannot be described, and yet the people keep falling and failing, again and again.

THREE NATURES: ANARCHY, MONARCHY, AND THEOCRACY

To understand how the next three eras—Judges–First Temple–Second Temple—correspond to the emotive sefirot, loving-kindness, might, and beauty (chesed, gevurah, and tiferet), we need to pivot to the central idea behind this analysis.

Chasidut³¹ speaks of a first nature and second nature. The idea is that everyone is born with a first nature, but it is not rectified, and so one must do the work of rectifying character traits and arrive at a second nature, which is more rectified. To be more rectified means to be more aligned with one's true nature. There is a beautiful allusion to this³²: the phrase “second nature” (טבע שני) has the same value as “truth” (אמת). The nature you were born with does not reflect your true self—you must work hard to arrive at your truth. As we have discussed elsewhere, there is also a third nature that follows the second nature. Here we want to add that after one despairs of his third nature, one ends up returning to one's first nature.

When analyzing the eras of Jewish history, the three natures are anarchy, monarchy, and theocracy. The first nature

of the Jew is to be an anarchist.³³ It presents a question of whether this is good or bad—but this is our first nature. A Jew by nature does not like someone lording over him. But what? Anarchism does not always succeed, especially when there are other people around. If I were alone in the world, that would be best, but there are a few other people, and if everyone can do whatever they feel like, society does not always hold together. Therefore, people come and shout that a king is needed—they seek monarchy. But monarchy does not work for them either, so what in the end? Theocracy is needed, rule by the religious establishment. But then you end up with religious coercion?! So maybe it's best to go back to the beginning.

With this in mind, let us examine the next three eras.

JUDGES: ANARCHY AND LOVING-KINDNESS

From the generation of the wilderness we come to “a good and spacious land,”³⁴ and the era of the Judges begins. How do I know that the era of the Judges is anarchy? It is written explicitly in the Book of Judges. There are two entirely identical verses, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes”—so it is written at the end of the Book of Judges, in the episode of Michah's Idol³⁵, and afterward in the affair of the Concubine at Givah³⁶—the two catastrophes that befell the Jewish people

30 See *Etz Chaim*, gate 25, ch. 1. And elsewhere.

31 For example, *Tanya*, ch. 14. And in numerous places.

32 See *HaTeva HaYehudi* [The Jewish Nature], p. 140. And elsewhere.

33 See also the classes of 14 Adar 5773; 1 Adar II 5776. And elsewhere.

34 Exodus 3:8.

35 Judges 17:6.

36 Ibid. 24:21 (the end of the book).

in the era of the Judges. In each of the stories there is another similar phrase, that “there is no king in Israel.”³⁷ According to most commentators, the verse is stating this negatively.³⁸ But when I just read it plainly, like a simple child, what impression does this ending verse of the Book of Judges tell me? Before I know the context, I think, how wonderful—in those days there was no king in Israel, no king is needed at all, every man did what was right in his own eyes, everyone does whatever he feels like, the best it could possibly be. Is there a commentator who says that the condition of the era of the Judges is positive? Yes, the Abarbanel says that this is a positive state.³⁹ In light of his words, one can interpret the phrase “in those days there was no king”—no king is needed, no government is needed—in a positive sense. Amazingly, the value of this entire verse, which repeats twice letter-for-letter, “In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did what was right in his own eyes” (בְּיָמֵם הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיֵּשֶׁר (בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה) is 5 times “truth” (אֱמֶת), where the multiplication by 5 suggests that this truth truly reflected all 5 levels of the soul.

EMOTIVE SEFIROT: THE ERA OF THE JUDGES, THE FIRST TEMPLE, AND THE SECOND TEMPLE

The First Temple era was not a theocracy. The Sages who did live in a theocratic era, try to portray⁴⁰ the First Temple as also a kind of theocracy, but

according to the plain sense, that is not the case at all—we do not see in Tanach that there is a Sanhedrin that deliberates on everything. The Sages simply assumed that this is how things ran, but it seems that the king rules absolutely, doing exactly what he feels like, with no power above him.⁴¹ He does foolish things, sins and is punished. All the power is in the king’s hand—it was a state of full-on monarchy.

What is the difference between the era of the First Temple and the era of the Second Temple? The Second Temple is already theocracy. There is a king, but he is not the main power; that is the Sanhedrin. The Oral Torah begins to develop—this is the main innovation of this period.⁴² There is certainly some government, but it isn’t even so critical that it be Jewish—the main thing is that there are “new faces” among the Jewish people. The Jewish people move into an entirely renewed period, of the development of the Oral Torah, or at least of its spiritual rule. Who is the leader of the generation? The head of the Sanhedrin. There is also a “deputy to the king,” the head of the court—theocracy in every respect.

Anarchy is thus a state of unlimited loving-kindness. Monarchy, the First Temple era, is about might, as we know that, “Kingship is constructed from might (severities).”⁴³ Finally, theocracy, the Second

37 Ibid. 18:1 and 19:1.

38 See *Radak*, Rabbi Yosef Kara, and others on Judges 21:25. And elsewhere there.

39 See Abarbanel on Deuteronomy 17:14 at length (see also *Ha’amek Davar* there).

40 See for example *Berachot* 3b–4a; *Mo’ed Katan* 16b. And elsewhere.

41 See *Horayot* 3:3 (that the definition of a king is “that there is none above him but *Havayah* his God”). And although a king has advisors, deputy ministers ultimately, he is not bound by them, and he chooses, according to his own will, which advisor’s voice to heed.

42 *Torah Or* 120c. And elsewhere.

43 *Etz Chaim*, gate 25, discourse 2; gate 34; *Ta’amei HaMitzvot*, *Parshat Beha’alotcha*; *Siddur Im Dach*, the discourse “*Baruch Merachem Al HaAretz*.”

Temple era corresponds to Torah, the middle axis and the *sefirah* of beauty.⁴⁴

HABITUAL SEFIROT: BABYLONIAN EXILE, THE DISPERSION, AND CHASIDUT

What follows is no longer the same order. Instead, we see the third nature, theocracy, returning to the first nature of the people, anarchy, its foundational instincts. First comes the Babylonian era, the going out “outside the body,”⁴⁵ a departure from life in the Land of Israel. In Babylon, the Torah establishment rules even more than it did in the Second Temple era. The Jewish people have no king of Israel there—there is, of course, the king of Persia, but the authority within the Jewish community, which has powers and even the authority to put people to death on behalf of the crown⁴⁶, is the Torah. This era corresponds to victory, about which it is written, “He [*Ze’er Anpin*, the pillar of Torah] is in victory.”⁴⁷

Then comes the era of the Dispersion (diaspora)—we are already scattered. This is the period of the shaping of *halachah* as we know it today, but Torah is already far less regal—there is no Exilarch and no central authorities. From generation to generation there are fewer powers for the

Jewish community to govern itself and to a certain degree, we move in the direction of anarchy. This period corresponds to the *sefirah* of acknowledgment or splendor (*hod*), which is described by the verse, “my splendor [*hod*] has turned to corrupt me.”⁴⁸

The next era of Chasidut clearly corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation and the *tzaddik*, “the *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world.”⁴⁹ We said in the first class on this topic (from Chai Elul) that Chasidut is a positive and holy reformation. Its main point is that everyone can serve and find God. It is not the halachic authority who is central, but the rebbe, who gives inspiration to the individual. In anarchy there can be a rebbe, but specifically a rebbe according to the Chabad approach, who does not rule over you at all—he can show a living example, he can recommend what to do. He will not force upon you what to do, but will give you inspiration so that you work on God by your own strength⁵⁰ so that you reach the correct conclusion, so that you come to know yourself—as per the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s directive to me personally, “let him consider what he truly wants”⁵¹, this is an expression of Chasidut, that everyone should consider what he wants, and do it. This already sounds like a form of anarchy.

Finally, the era of Mashiach, the tenth era, corresponds to kingdom and will be discussed separately.

44 *Megaleh Amukot*, *Parshat Vayeitzei*, the discourse “*Vayeitzei—Combinations of Letters*”; *Parshat Vayigash*, the discourse “*Vayigash Eilav*,” the fourth [aspect].

45 Based on *Zohar* 1:21b.

46 See also *Bava Metzia* 84a and the *Ritva* (cited in the *Shitah Mekubetzet*) there; *Chiddushei HaRan*, *Sanhedrin* 46a; the responsum of the *Rashba* cited in the *Beit Yosef*, *Choshen Mishpat*, 388 (see also there section 2). And elsewhere.

47 Based on *Tikkunei Zohar*, 13 (28b–29a).

48 Daniel 10:8.

49 Proverbs 10:25.

50 See the “*HaYom Yom*” calendar, 29 Menachem-Av. And elsewhere in Chassidus.

51 The Rebbe’s language in a reply (see the Bloch-Shmulevitz *teshurah*, Tammuz 5783).