

# תשורה

משמחת נישואין של  
מנחם מענדל ואביענה אסתר דהאן



## *Memento*

*Wedding Celebration of  
Mendel & Ariana Dahan*



אגרות קודש למשפחה, קטעי יומן,  
ביאורי כ"ק אדמו"ר באגדתא

ט"ו תמוז ה'תשע"ט

*July 18, 2019*

ב"ה, ט"ו תמוז ה'תשע"ט

With gratitude to Hashem, we celebrate the wedding of Mendel and Aviana. To mark this joyous and memorable occasion, we present you with this memento.

The first part of this *Tshura* contains letters of the Rebbe received by the grandparents and great grandparents of the Chosson and Kallah. These letters, all published here **for the first time**, בפרסום ראשון, and are mostly related to requests for Brochos made on behalf of other people.

Considering that we are within the year of the passing of the Chosson's maternal grandfather, Reb Yankel Simon ה"ה, part of a diary of the end of Shvat 5748 written by the Chosson's father was included. It depicts his interaction with the Rebbe in the days preceding his wedding, culminating with a Sich'a where the Rebbe mentioned the wedding, as a means to cancel out the period of mourning (of the Rebbetzin o.b.m.), ushering in the greatest joy, with the coming of Moshiach.

The second part is an excerpt of the Chosson's father's upcoming book, *Maayon Yaakov*, offering a Chassidic perspective to the Agadeta of Ein Yaakov, based on the Rebbe's writings.

ויה"ר that we should always share and rejoice in each other's simchos with happy hearts, until the ultimate joy of the גאולה השלמה ומלכנו בראשנו.

מיכאל ונחמה דהאן  
מלך ומרים שווארץ

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON<sup>N</sup>  
Lubavitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.  
HYacinth 3-9250

ום מענדל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

ב"ה, שלהי תמוז, ה'תשכ"ז  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

הו"ח אי"א נו"ג כו'  
מו"ה שלום שי'

שלום וברכה!

נתקבל המכתב מיום 7/18 והמצורף אליו.

בבואנו מימי הגאולה י"ב-י"ג תמוז, בו יצא ק"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר  
דצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע נשיא ישראל ממאסרו במדינת מולדתו, שהי'  
תבוש שם בעד עבודתו הכבירה להחזקת והפצת התורה והמצוה, למרוח  
רדיפת הדת שהיתה שם אז במרוס שיאה. ובחסדי השי"ת יצא בנצחון,  
שהרי אלה שאסרוהו הם ששיחרוהו.

וכמו שכתב כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר, היתה גאולתו לא רק גאולה פרטית,  
כי אם גאולה ונצחון לכל עניני היהדות. שלכן ימז סגולה הם לכל בני  
ובנות ישראל באשר הם שם, ובפרט - לאלה ההולכים בדרכיו ומשתתפים  
בפעולותיו ומוסדותיו.

ואם בכל שנה ושנה כך, על אחת כמה וכמה בשנה זו, שהיא שנה  
הארבעים לגאולתו, וכידוע הוראת חכמינו ז"ל שתקופת ארבעים שנה  
מוסיפה הבנה בעומק דעת הרב וכו'.

וכמו כל ענין של זכרון בתורה וביהדות, הכוונה היא שהזכרון  
יעורר את המעשה בפועל ברוח הימים הנזכרים והנעלים, ובנוגע לחג  
הגאולה - ההוראה והמסקנה המדינית היא, שאם במדינה ההיא ובזמן ההוא  
ובתנאים ההם יכול יהודי לעטות ולפעול בעד החזקת והפצת התורה והמצוה,  
מכש"כ וק"ו במדינות ובתנאים נוחים וטובים שלא לערך,

ויהי רצון טיעשה כל אחד ואחת מאתנו, בתוך כל אחבי"י שי", בכל  
האסור מהן שמחה וטוב לבב.



בברכה לבטורות טיבות

מכתב אל אבי זקנו של החתן בקשר לייב תמוז דמניי אזלין  
ולהעיר שמוזכר תאריך הלוועי מתאים ליום החתונה

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

דהאן - ברונא

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON  
Lubavitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.  
HYacinth 9-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

בי"ה, כ"ו שבט תשי"ח  
ברוקלין

האברך שמעון שי'

שלום וברכה!  
מפול רפואי אצל רופא שהבנת אעז שלהא אוחו לו.

ומהנכון להמשיך בהמפול, ויהי רצון שיהי בהצלחה  
ולרפואה קרובה, ובודאי לסוחר לעוררו, שכל שי וסיף בבריאות  
הגשמה, ז.א. בלימוד התורה, הנגלה והנסתר, וקיום המצות בהידור,  
יתוסף גם בבריאות הגוף ובזה גם המיתוש אודותו כותב, ויעין  
ג"כ בלקו"ח פ' דברים ד"ה כ"י המצוה הזאת עה"פ תמים תהי'.

בברכה להוספה בחלמוד תורה  
'וקיום מצותי', ופשוטם בכל האמור

בשם כ"ק ארמו"ר שליט"א  
מיכ"א

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

דאהאן = ברונא

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON  
Lubovitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.  
HYacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

ביה, ח"י איר תשי"ח  
ברוקלין

האברך שמעון שי

שלום וברכה!

נחקבל סכתבו פ"נ מ"מ למטמונים, עבד דניאל שי.  
ובעה רצון יזכירוהו על הציון הק' של כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר זצוקללה"ה  
נבגם ז"ע, מחאים לחוכן כחבו

ובודאי יסבירו - שעליו להוסיף בעניני חורה ומצות  
שע"ז מחוסף בברכה השי"ת, בהפצטרך.

ובכלל כפי שמתאר המ"ח, יש לזה טפולים שחדשו בעת  
ובשנים האחרונות, לכן יפנה הי"ל לרופא מומחה במקצוע.

ומאחר שהוא הכותב ומביא הבקשה, הנה יוסיף הוא  
בהתמה ושקידה בלימוד תורה וקיום המצות בהידור, ובפרט בספרות  
סחים שהיא מלאכת שמים, בלימוד כתיבת האותיות וגם ההלכות, והרי  
ביהוד בשנים אלו זכות הרבים לזו בצ"ב, ביון שמעטים ביהוד מוסחים  
זיראי שמים, והרי זכות ללמוד בשיבה בה לומדים נולה ופנימית יתד  
ז.א. לימוד התורה בהקדמת יראת שמים, ויהי רצון שגם על חבריו שי  
ישפיע בכל האמור.

בברכה לבשו"מ

בשם כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א  
ע. קוויט  
סזכר

מכתב אל סב החתן בו הוראה (באתדל"ע) ללמוד ספרות

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

אשר יצאנו לדרך

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON  
Lubavitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.  
HYacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש  
770 אימטען פארקווי  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

ביה, ת' איר חשי"כ  
ברוקלין

האברך שמעון שי"י

שלום וברכה!

במענה לבקשתו ברכה עבור אחיו לוי שליט"א,

בעה רצון יזכירוהו על הציון הק' של כ"ק סו"ח  
אדמו"ר זצוקלה"ה נבג"ם זי"ע להמצטרך לו,

ומאחר שהוא הפביא הבקשה והוא בן ישיבה טובן  
ופשוט שעליו להוסיף בהתמדה ושקידה בלימוד התורה נגלה וחסידות  
והידור בקיום המצוה, שמלבד גורל הענין מצד עצמו, הנס עי"ז  
יתוסף בברכות השי"ח בהמצטרך לו ובמילוי בקשתו בהאמור.

בברכה לבשו"ם

בשם כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א  
מזכ"ר

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

דהאן-פאריז

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON  
Lubavitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.  
HYacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש  
770 איסטערן פארקווי  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

ב"ה, כה' תמוז תשכ"א  
ברוקלין

מרת ברורי' תחי'

ברכה ושלום!

במענה למכתבה מכ' תמוז.

בעת רצון יזכירו הילדה פריחה תחי', על הציון  
הק' של כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר זצוקלה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע, מתאים לחוכן כתב  
כתבה.

ובודאי הרופא שמזכירה אודותו, רופא מומחה הוא  
במקצוע, והשי"ת הרופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות, ירפאה ע"ה ספול  
פלוני וספול פלוני.

ובודאי תסביר להורי הילדה תחי', שעליהם להתנהג  
בחייו היום יומים בהנהגה מתאימה להוראות חורףנו תורת חיים  
ובקיום מצותי' עליהם נאמר וחי בהם, ובפרט בדיוק זהירות חוקי  
ודיני טהרת המשפחה, ודברים היוצאים מן הלב נכנסים אל הלב  
ופועלים פעולתם.

במרכה לבשו"ט בכל האמור

בשם כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א  
1070-1070  
מזכיר

נ.ב.

בטח לוקחת היא חלק בפעולות נשי חב"ד.

מכתב לסבתת החתן

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON  
Lubavitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.  
HYacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

בי"ה, ב' תמוז חשי"ת  
ברוקלין

תלמידות בית הספר בית רבקה  
אשר בצרפת,

סוניה אביטבול  
רחל סמאן  
רוחמה אמסילי  
מרים דרעי  
חיה פאגעל  
יהודית כהן  
ליזה בן חמו  
ברוריא בוחבום

ה' עליהן תחינה.

ברכה ושלום

במענה למכתבן פ"נ-סבקשות ברכה להצלחה בעניניהן.

יהי רצון מבוראך העולם המשיגה על כל אחד ואחת בפרט,  
אשר יצליחן בהנהגה מתאימה לבת ישראל, שכל אחת מהן נקראת בח שרה  
רבקה רחל ולא, מתאימה לחזראת תורתנו תורת הים, ולהשפיע גם על  
החבירות שלהן בזה.

שעל ידי זה יתוסף בברכות השם יתברך בכל המצטרך להן,  
ובזה גם הענינים אודותם כותבות,

ואתכה מבורות טובות אשר הולכות הן מחיל אל חיל  
ביראת שמים, לימוד הטוב והנהגה טובה, שעל ידי זה מאשרות תחינה  
בגשמיות וברוחניות, והוריהן שיחיו ומוריהן שיחיו ירח מהם רוב  
נחת אמיחי.

בברכת הצלחה

בשם כ"ק ארמו"ר שליט"א

11-11-56  
מזל"ר

אגרת לקבוצת תלמידות בית רבקה,  
ובחן סבתת החתן (בשורה האחרונה)

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

דהאן - סיימאן - ברוקלין

**RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON**  
Lubavitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11213  
493-9250

**מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן**  
**ליובאוויטש**

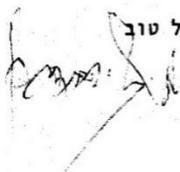
770 איסטערן פארקוויי  
ברוקלין, נ. י.  
ב"ה, כא' שבט תשמ"ח  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

האברך הו"ח אי"א נו"נ וכו'  
גוה' מיכאל שי'  
רב"ג תי'

שלום וברכהו

במענה על ההודעה מקביעות זמן חתונתם  
ליום כט' שבט הבע"ל,

הנני בזה להביע ברכתי ברכת מזל טוב מזל  
טוב ושטהי' בשעה טובה ומוצלחת ויבנו בית  
בישראל בנין עדי עד על יסודי התורה והמצוה  
כפי שהם מוארים במאור שבתורה זוהי תורת  
החסידות.

בברכת מזל טוב  
מזל טוב  


מכתב ברכה להורי החתן שנחתם ביום חתונתם, ראה ביומן דלקמן

## קטעים מיומנו של אבי החתן, שלהי שבט תשמ"ח

**כ"ד שבט**, לקראת ה'אפרופ', שאלתי מהמזכירות האם להכין החבילות שנוהגים לזרוק על החתנים, וגם האם לשנות מסדר החתונה בנוגע לכלי זמר וכדומה, וענו לי שעפ"י הוראת הרבי שליט"א למוסדות שערכו דינער בימים אלו, אין לשנות שום דבר מכפי שתוכנן. אגב, גיסי ר' שמואל שיחי אמר לי שגם אביו [הרה"ח ר' שמעון גאלדמאן, מנהל גמ"ח 'שומרי שבת'] שאל אם הוא אמור לספר סיפור באמצע ההתוועדות כנהוג בכל ש"פ משפטים כשהוא חובש שטריימל, וענו לו שישפר "א לענגערע מעשה".

**כ"ח שבט**, אחרי שעמד כ"ק אד"ש מהשבעה, נודע שהרבי יחלק דולרים אחר מנחה. כשעברתי, המזכיר ריל"ג אמר לרבי שאני מתחתן מחר, כ"ק אד"ש אמר לי (בלה"ק) "בשעה טובה ומוצלחת", נתן לי דולר נוסף ואמר "את זה תתן לכלה אחר החופה". כשהכלה עברה מאוחר יותר, אמר לה כ"ק אד"ש "די חתונה זאל זיין בשעה טובה ומוצלחת, און ס'זאל זיין א בנין עדי עד", נתן לה עוד דולר ואמר "און דער דולר זאלסטו איבערגעבן צו דער חתן". אחרי תפילת ערבית, נתן הרבי שטר של מאה דולר לגבאים ואמר שיערכו התוועדות לזכר נשמת הרבנית, היום בבית ומחר ב770.

**כ"ט שבט**, הרבי חילק דולרים אחר תפילת שחרית. כשעברתי, אמר לי כ"ק אד"ש "עס זאל זיין בשעה טובה ומוצלחת", נתן לי עוד דולר ואמר "דו זאלסט דאס איבערגעבן צו די כלה נאך'ן שבעה ברכות אדער אין מיטן שבעה ברכות". לאבי מורי אמר "בשעה טובה ומוצלחת", נתן לו עוד 2 דולרים ואמר (בלה"ק) "זה בשביל החתן והכלה".

הגעתי לביתו הק' עם אבי לפני שהרבי נסע לאוהל כדי לקבל הסידור מידו הק' לתפילת מנחה, וחיכינו בתחתית המדרגות. היו שם עוד 2 חתנים שנוסעים לארה"ק לחתונתם בשבוע. הרבי ירד במדרגות ובידו הק' הסידור וערמת מכתבים, ושאל "ווער האט חתונה פריער?" כמובן שלא העזתי לומר "איך" ועמדתי דום, אז המזכיר הצביע עלי. הרבי נתן לי את סידורו ואמר "זאלסט אויסבעטן אלע גוטע זאכן, און אויך אלע אנדערע חתנים, אז די חתונה זאל זיין בשעה טובה ומוצלחת", והביט אל ההורים שיחיו ואמר "איר זאלט האבן א סאך נחת פון זיי און פון די אלע אנדערע קינדער, מתוך אריכות ימים ושנים טובות", ונסע לאוהל. המזכיר נתן לי את המכתב ברכה לחתונה מכ"ק אד"ש ואמר לי שהיום הרבי חתם על המכתב.

במשך היום, חמי קיבל טלפון מהגבאי ר"י פינסון ושאל את פרטי הזמנים של החתונה, והסביר שקיבל הוראה לברר, בכדי שידע על איזו שעה להכריז תחילת ההתוועדות ב770, כך שלא לבלבל את שמחת החתונה!

התרגשותי הגיעה לשיאה כאשר בזמן החופה שנערכה ב770, הרבי אמר שיחה בביתו, ובין השאר הסביר שחתן וכלה הוא עניין הנצחיות, בנין עדי עד, וזה מבטל עניין האבלות, והמשיך אשר "מתקופה של ימי אבלות מגיעים ישר לימים של שמחה, עד לשמחה הכי גדולה שבימינו בזמן הגלות, שהיא שמחת חתן וכלה" (מתוך סרט ההקלטה).

כמובן שאחר השיחה השתתפו כל ידידי וחברי התמימים בשמחת החתונה, למרות המצב רוח ששרר בבית חיינו באותם הימים. וזכיתי להתפלל בבית כ"ק כל התפילות של שבעת ימי המשתה. ויה"ר שיקוימו ברכות כ"ק אד"ש במלואם.

**שיחת יום ד', כ"ט שבט, אור לר"ח אדר תשמ"ח - בביתו הק'  
אחרי חזרתו מה"ציון" ותפלת מנחה וערבית  
הנחת פרטית בלתי מוגה מסרט ההקלטה**

... איז דאס איז דער מנהג, כאמור, אז גלייך ווי ס'איז דא דער ענין של טוב וברכה ונחמה, עאכו"כ אז ס'איז כולל אין זיך די אלע ענינים צוזאמען - איז גלייך בהקדם האפשרי, אדער תיכף ומיד ווען ס'ענדיקט זיך די תקופה און ס'הויבט זיך אן די תקופה **שלאחרי זה** - ולא יוסיפו לדאבה עוד, ואדרבא - "הפכת מספדי למחול ליי", אז ס'קומט, ווי דער רמב"ם איז דאס מצרף צוזאמען: גלייך נאך שבעת ימי אבילות איז "תיקן להם משה רבינו שבעת ימי אבילות ושבעת ימי משתה" - קומט גלייך ענינים של **שמחה**,

און - א שמחה **הכי גדולה**, וואס דאס איז דאך בימינו אלו, אפילו אין זמן הגלות - די **שמחת חתן וכלה**, וואס האט דאך אין זיך די שמחה פון ה' קולות מיטן גאנצן שטורעם שבדבר,

און מיזאגט גלייך אין דעם ענטפער און די באגריסונג פון חתן וכלה - זאגט מען גלייך וועגן די שמחה הכי גדולה - "מהרה ישמע בערי יהודה ובחוצות ירושלים. . קול חתן וקול כלה", מיט די אלע פינף קולות ווי ער רעכנט דארט אויס,

וואס דאס איז דאך אויך, די **התחלה** בזה איז דאך דער "קול חתן וקול כלה" - "חתן זה הקב"ה" און "כלה אלו ישראל",

וואס בזמן הגלות איז דאס נאך אלץ אירוסין, ווי די גמרא זאגט ווען מ'רעדט וועגן גאולת מצרים, "ימי צאתך מארץ מצרים", איז "אראנו נפלאות" - דערציילט אויך (די גמרא) דער מדרש, די הפלאה און די "נפלאות" אפילו [בערך צו] ימי צאתך מארץ מצרים - אז דאס איז דער כללות החילוק צווישן "אירוסין" און "נישואין",

וואס נישואין איז דאך אן ענין וואס דאס איז אן ענין נצחי, ביז וואנענט אז "מזבח מוריד עליו דמעות" אויב מ'וויל דאס, רח"ל, מבטל זיין,

ואדרבא - ס'ווערט נאך אין דערויף גאר אויפגעטאן, אז ביז דעמולט איז דאס מערניט ווי "אירוסין" - קען ניט זיין דער "והיו לבשר אחד"; ווען ווערט דער "והיו לבשר אחד" - אז ס'איז דא דער ענין פון נישואין,

וואס דאס איז דאך אויך ווי אין די גאולה העתידה לבוא במהרה בימינו ממש - די גאולה וואס זי ברענגט דעם ענין פון "שמחת עולם על ראשם", **א בנין עדי עד**,

ביז "והיו לבשר אחד" - אז מ'זעט בעיני בשר ווי אזוי "ישראל אורייתא וקוב"ה כולא חד",

ווי מ'זאגט אין דעם "מענה לשון" וואס איז פארבונדן מיטן זיין אויף א ציון, אז ניט נאר **נישמתא** דילהון קדישא", נאר אויך **רוחא** דילהון קדישא", און נאכמער אפילו **נפשא** דילהון קדישא", און לכל לראש איז גאר **גופא** דילהון קדישא" - איז דאך פארשטאנדיק אז דאס ווערט דער ענין בגלוי, וואס "הקיצו ורננו שוכני עפר", וועט מען דאך זען ווי אזוי "גופא דילהון קדישא" האט חיים נצחיים, וואס נצחיות שטאמט דאך דאס און נעמט זיך דאס און פארבונדן מיט עצמות ומהות - זעט מען דאס אז "והיו לבשר אחד", אז דאס ווערט איין מציאות.

חלק מהשיחה שנאמרה בזמן החופה של הורי החתן, בה התייחס הרבי לחתונה

## **Sicha of 29 Shevat, Erev Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5748**

After the Conclulsion of the Shivah for the Rebbetzin o.b.m

### **During the Choson's parents' Chupa**

- Free translation of the audio recording -

When painful events occur, the Holy One, Blessed be He says that the pain is only transitory and very soon “Rise and sing you who dwell in the dust” with the addition of joy, when “Their mourning will be converted to joy” (Yermiyahu 31:12); “You have changed my mourning to rejoicing” (Tehillim 30:2).

This idea is hinted at in the Rambam's discussion of mourning: Moshe our teacher established for the Jewish people the seven days of mourning and the seven days of rejoicing. (Laws of Mourning ch. 1)

**So that after the period of mourning we immediately enter a period of rejoicing, the joy of groom and bride in these days, an immense joy associated with the “five sounds” symbolic of the five voices heard at Mattan Torah (the marriage ceremony of Hashem and the Jewish people).**

The *Midrash* actually specifies that Mattan Torah represented the “betrothal” and the “wedding” will take place in the future world. In this context the joy of groom and bride refers to the joy of the future when the “five sounds” associated with groom and bride will also be heard.

Marriage creates an eternal bond and an everlasting edifice. It is not a union of two separate entities, rather a unity of one entity, “And they shall become one flesh” (Bereishis 2:24). The Holy One, Blessed be He, the Torah and the Jewish people are truly “one flesh,” because not only is the soul holy but even the Jewish bodies are also holy. This is not yet in a revealed state in this world, but in the future this unity will be revealed and eternal.

Then we will see that the passing of the body in this dimension is only transitory.

Our faith in Moshiach and the resurrection, whether we recite it daily (*Ani Maamin*) or just believe it — as we infer in the Amidah: “We hope for Your salvation all day,” will speed the coming.

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

# מעין יעקב

ביאורים באגדות התלמוד

מיוסדים על תורת כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו

תדפיס ב'



Excerpts of the upcoming book

## Ma'yon Yaakov

Chasidic Commentary on Ein Yaakov  
Based the Lubavitcher Rebbe's works

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

ב"ה

For a number of years, I have been compiling a collection of stories from the Gemara and the Zohar that have been elucidated by the Rebbe Nossi Doreinu. Inspired by the Alter Rebbe's statement (Igeres Hakodesh, 23) that most secrets of the Torah are hidden in Ein Yaakov, I aim to unveil these secrets by adapting Sichos, letters and Reshimos drawn from the Rebbe's monumental works. I have published a small portion of these *biurim* previously, and I am in the midst of preparing new material to be printed in the near future, with the invaluable assistance of my daughter Chaya Mushka Hartman תח"ל. I have named this project *Ma'yon Yaakov*, as it exposes the wellsprings of Chasidus hidden in the tales of Ein Yaakov.

In honor of Mendel and Aviyana's wedding, it is my pleasure to present you with a preview of this upcoming Sefer.

With heartfelt prayers that the merit of disseminating the Rebbe's wellsprings will stand to bring much Mazal to the Chosson and Kallah, seeing only *Chassidische Nachas* from them, and hasten the fulfillment of Moshiach's promise to the Baal Shem Tov, קאתי מר, דא מלכא משיחא, מיד ממש,

מיכאל דהאן  
ט"ו תמוז ה'תשע"ט

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## Returning to Dust

The Talmud<sup>1</sup> discusses whether the bodies of Tzadikim also return to dust after leaving this world, or they are not subject to this transformation. The following story is then related:

הנהו קפולאי דהוו קפלי בארעא דרב נחמן נחר בהו רב אחאי בר יאשיה ואתו ואמרו ליה לרב נחמן נחר בן גברא אתא ואמר ליה מאן ניהו מר אמר ליה אנא אחאי בר יאשיה אמר ליה ולאן אמר רב מרי עתידי צדיקי דהוו עפרא אמר ליה ומני מרי דלא ידענא ליה אמר ליה והא קרא כתיב וישׁוב העפר על הארץ כשהיה אמר ליה דאקרייך קהלת לא אקרייך משלי דכתיב ורקב עצמות קנאה כל מי שיש לו קנאה בלבו עצמותיו מרקיבים כל שאין לו קנאה בלבו אין עצמותיו מרקיבים גשׁשיה חזייה דאית ביה מששא אמר ליה ליקום מר לגווייה דביתא אמר ליה גלית אדעתך דאפילו נביאי לא קרית דכתיב וידעתם כי אני ה' בפתחי את קברותיכם אמר ליה והכתיב כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב אמר ליה ההוא שעה אחת קודם תחיית המתים

שבת קנב,ב

*The diggers who were digging in Rav Naḥman's land [came upon a grave], and Rav Aḥai bar Yoshiya, [who was buried there] rebuked them. They came and said to Rav Naḥman: A person just rebuked us. Rav Naḥman came and said: Who are you, Master? He said to him: I am Aḥai bar Yoshiya. Rav Naḥman said to him:*

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<sup>1</sup> Shabbos 152b.

*Didn't Rav Mari say that the Tzadikim will turn to dust? Rav Achai said to him: And who is Mari, whom I do not know?<sup>2</sup> Rav Nahman said to him: there is an explicit verse which is written<sup>3</sup>: "And the dust will return to the earth as it was". Rav Achai said to him: Whoever taught you Koheles did not teach you the book of Mishlei, for it is written<sup>4</sup>: "but envy is the rotting of the bones". This means that anyone who has envy in his heart during his lifetime, his bones rot in the grave, and anyone who does not have envy in his heart, his bones do not rot. Rav Nahman touched him and saw that he had substance. Rav Nahman said to him: Let the Master arise and come into my house. Rav Achai said to him: You have revealed that you have not even studied Prophets, for it is written<sup>5</sup>: "And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open up your graves and lift you up from your graves"<sup>6</sup>. [Rav Nahman once again asked Rav Achai] But it is written<sup>7</sup>: "For you are dust and you shall return to dust" [so why has your body not turned into dust?] He said to him: That verse applies [to Tzadikim] only one moment before the resurrection of the dead.*

The Rif explains that since the last verse mentioned by Rav Nachman was told to Adam, it should

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<sup>2</sup> i.e., Why should I be concerned about what he says?

<sup>3</sup> Koheles 12:7

<sup>4</sup> Mishlei 14:30

<sup>5</sup> Yechezkel 37:13.

<sup>6</sup> i.e., As long as the dead have not been instructed to leave their graves, leaving of their own accord is prohibited.

<sup>7</sup> Bereshis 3:19.

apply to everybody, whether they are Tzadikim or not, for everyone is a descendent of Adam.

The Maharsha explains that the return of all bodies to dust is necessary, so everybody will be recreated from nothing at the time of resurrection, comparable to the original creation of man.

Why is it so imperative to return to dust and then be recreated at the time of resurrection?

The soul's descent into the body is intended for the purpose of elevating the body and vital soul, and through them the entire world. Moreover, this objective is reached primarily through the mitzvos involving action, inasmuch as these mitzvos are performed by the body. The body hosts and serves the neshama. The soul, being so spiritual, needs the body as a vessel to perform mitzvos in a physical form<sup>8</sup>. When the neshama leaves the body and goes to heaven, the soul studies Torah there in a spiritual form but can no longer perform any of its commandments<sup>9</sup>. Hence, no longer serving any purpose, the body automatically disintegrates.

A similar concept can be understood from the analogy found in Rashi<sup>10</sup> between the breaking of the luchos and the death of Tzadikim. The Ten Commandments were engraved in stones by Hashem. When Moshe came down from Mount Sinai and saw the golden calf made by the Jews, the letters flew away<sup>11</sup> and the stones became too heavy for Moshe to carry. Consequently, they fell from his hands and broke. The letters are comparable to the soul and the stone to the

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<sup>8</sup> See Tanya ch. 37

<sup>9</sup> Brachos 17a

<sup>10</sup> Devarim 10:7

<sup>11</sup> See Pesachim 87b

body which hosts it. When the letters flew away, the stones served no more purpose, so they shattered.

The life of a Tzadik is not a physical one but rather a spiritual one<sup>12</sup>. Aware of the true purpose of creation, he elevates and sanctifies his body and the entire physical world around him. His body is not only there to serve his neshama; it became as holy as his neshama.<sup>13</sup> So even after his neshama leaves this earth, his holy body remains intact. As everything holy is eternal, so is the Tzaddik's body<sup>14</sup>. This is how Rav Achai, with a palpable body, was able to have a real discussion with Rav Nachman. In fact, this is the reason why Eliyahu Hanavi's body was not buried, and instead it ascended to the sky, just like his neshama did. This is also hinted by the fact that the numerical value of Eliyahu is 52, equal to the value of the Hebrew word *beheima* which means animal. He sanctified the animalistic aspect of his being (i.e., his body) to transform it into Eliyahu, G-dliness.

Why, then, is it necessary for Tzadikim to return to dust, even if only for a moment, before resurrection? The Admur Hazaken explains this through a parable<sup>15</sup>: A house can either be lifted up from the top using a crane, or picked up from the bottom using a levier or forklift. When a house is picked up from the top, there is a chance that only the top will be lifted while the bottom part will remain down below. However, when picked up from the bottom, even the higher portions of the house are raised. Likewise, every creature is

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<sup>12</sup> Tanya, Igeres Hakodesh ch. 27

<sup>13</sup> See Zohar Acharei, p. 70b

<sup>14</sup> See Sicha of 29 Shevat 5748

<sup>15</sup> Torah Or.

composed of four basic elements, namely fire, water, air and dust, the latter being the lowest<sup>16</sup>. By being interred (even if only returning to dust for one moment before *techiyas hamesim*), the Tzadik elevates the lost sparks of holiness found in the lowest of these elements, completing the elevation of every facet of this world. Indeed, the Baal Shem Tov said that he could have ascended to heaven just like Eliyahu Hanavi did, but he wanted to return to dust so he could elevate the lowest of the four basic components, thereby uplifting the entire creation, including its highest dimensions. He chose to “raise the house from the bottom up”. Perhaps the same was the case for Rav Achai, refusing Rav Nachman’s invitation to rise up.

However, everyone, including those who are alive when Moshiach comes, will need to return to dust right before resurrection, in order to be able to live forever. We are finite beings, so being nullified and then recreated entirely by Hashem will make it possible, even for us laymen, to exist eternally. In fact, The Zohar<sup>17</sup> says that at that time, death will come from the side of holiness, as it is written<sup>18</sup>, “*I deal death and give life*”, so there will be no sequels left from the time of exile, and all humanity will be renewed.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a way to avoid the need to return to dust, even if it is only for a moment. We say in our prayers<sup>20</sup> ‘*My soul should be as [humble as] dust for all.*’ By annulling ourselves with humility towards others while alive, we are fulfilling the verse of “*and*

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<sup>16</sup> See Tanya end of ch. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Zohar vol. 2, p. 108b

<sup>18</sup> Devarim 32:39

<sup>19</sup> See Igros Kodesh Vol. 2, p. 75

<sup>20</sup> Liturgy, end of the Shmonei Esrei prayer

*you shall return to dust*” in a spiritual manner. Then when Moshiach comes during our lifetime, we will be able to live an eternal life without a moment of interruption.

*Based on the Sichos of  
20 Av 5735, Acharei-Kedoshim 5724  
& Maamar Ze Yitnu, Mishpatim 5748.*

## The goat or the sheep

The Talmud<sup>21</sup> relates that once, the temple's courtyard called out that the Kohen Gadol Yisachar Ish Kfar Barkai should get out of the temple, because he honors himself while denigrating the holy sacrifices. Indeed, he would wear gloves during the services not to soil his hands. The Gemarah then recounts his regretful fate:

אמרי מלכא ומלכתא הוו יתבי מלכא אמר גדיא יאי ומלכתא  
אמרה אימרא יאי אמרו מאן מוכח כהן גדול דקא מסיק קרבנות  
כל יומא אתא איהו אחוי בידיה אי גדיא יאי יסק לתמידא אמר  
מלכא הואיל ולא הוי ליה אימתא דמלכותא ניפסקו לימיניה  
יהב שוחד ופסקיה לשמאליה שמע מלכא ופסקיה לימיניה אמר  
רב יוסף בריך רחמנא דאשקליה ליששכר איש כפר ברקאי  
למיטרפסיה מיניה בהאי עלמא אמר רב אשי יששכר איש כפר  
ברקאי לא תנא מתניתין דתנן רבי שמעון אומר כבשים קודמים  
לעזים בכל מקום יכול מפני שמובחרין במינן תלמוד לומר אם  
כבש יביא קרבנו מלמד ששניהן שקולין כאחד רבינא אמר  
אפילו מקרא נמי לא קרא דכתיב אם כבש אם עז אי בעי כבש  
לייתיה אי בעי עז לייתיה

פסחים נז, א

*They said: The king and the queen<sup>22</sup> were sitting and talking. The king said that goat meat is better food, and the queen said lamb meat is*

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<sup>21</sup> Pesachim 57a-b

<sup>22</sup> They were Hasmonean monarchs who ruled during the final era of the second Temple. - Rashi, *ibid.*

*better food. They said: Who can prove which one of us is correct? The High Priest<sup>23</sup> can, as he offers sacrifices all day [and tastes their meat]. He came, [and when they asked him this question,] signaled contemptuously with his hand and said: If goat is better, let it be sacrificed as the daily offering<sup>24</sup>. The king said: Since he has no reverence for the monarchy, sever his right hand. He gave a bribe and they severed his left hand. The king heard and had his right hand severed as well. Rav Yosef said: Blessed is God Who took retribution from Yissachar of Kfar Barkai in this world<sup>25</sup>. Rav Ashi said: Yissachar of Kfar Barkai did not study the Mishna<sup>26</sup>. As we learned in a mishna: Rabbi Shimon says: Lambs take precedence over goats [in every place they are mentioned in the Torah]. I might have thought that this is because it is a more select species. Therefore, the verse states<sup>27</sup>: “If he brings a lamb as his offering”. This order<sup>28</sup> teaches that both these animals are equal. Ravina said: Yissachar did not even read the Torah verse properly, as it is written: “If he brings a lamb”, “if a goat”<sup>29</sup>,*

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<sup>23</sup> This Kohen Gadol was Yissachar of Barkai.

<sup>24</sup> The daily offering is a lamb, proving that its meat is preferable to that of a goat.

<sup>25</sup> and did not wait to punish him more severely in the next world

<sup>26</sup> He did not know that this question is stated explicitly in the mishna

<sup>27</sup> Vayikra 4:32

<sup>28</sup> The Torah passage where bringing a lamb as a sin-offering is discussed appears after the passage describing the sin-offering of a goat

<sup>29</sup> Vayikra 3:12

*teaching: If one wishes let him bring a lamb; if one wishes let him bring a goat.*

The commentators<sup>30</sup> explain that Yissachar of Barkai was punished in such a manner that was commensurate to his depravity. His punishment fit the crime; because he would not dirty his hands with sacrificial blood and was overzealous in keeping his hands clean, both his hands were severed.

The Gemara could have simply state that either animal can be used as sacrifice. Furthermore, even if there were any significance in discussing the taste of goat's and sheep's meat, a straightforward statement to that effect would suffice. Why, then, is this seemingly irrelevant event discussed at such length? Therefore, there must be a deeper meaning to the characters involved in this episode, and it surely carries a message that we can apply to our life.

The lamb is a calm and peaceful animal; it was offered as a *Korban Tamid*. This daily sacrifice was brought consistently in the morning and afternoon. Hence, the lamb represents the Tzadik who is constantly and consistently progressing in the ways of Hashem. Having no Yetzer Hara, the Tzaddik never regresses and only goes forward. Like the lamb, they are peaceful inasmuch as they do not need to fight any evil inclination. Whereas a person who sins and then repents (a *ba'al teshuva*) is likened to a goat. Indeed, the goat is called *Ez* in Hebrew, which can also be translated as bold. A *ba'al teshuva* has to fiercely fight his *Yetzer*

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<sup>30</sup> Rashi and Maharsha, *ibid*.

*Hara* and set high spiritual standards in order to advance spiritually<sup>31</sup>.

The king and queen both represent Hashem. Sometimes Hashem is referred to as king and sometimes as queen. The king refers to *Kudsha Berich Hu*, the level in which Hashem remains aloft and doesn't reveal Himself within the world, comparable to the way a king is separated from his subjects. Whereas the queen refers to the *Shechina*, how Hashem resides within the world.

With this we can understand the choices that were made by the king, the queen and the *Kohen Gadol*. The king's choice was the goat - the *ba'al teshuva*, for he too has positioned himself above the world, boldly avoiding its possible pitfalls. Similarly, the natural choice for the queen was the lamb, the *Tzadik*, who like her, resides within the world and finds the way to bring G-dliness to the world through their daily divine service. Logically, the *Kohen Gadol* sided with the queen, for his duty it is to serve in the Temple, Hashem's dwelling place on this earth, as it is written<sup>32</sup> "And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." His proof was the fact that the lamb is used for the daily *Korban Tamid*, which is also associated to the consistency of the *Tzadik*.

The Rebbe Rashab explains this story from a different perspective<sup>33</sup>. The sheep represents Nigleh, the revealed levels of the Torah (such as Talmud and Halacha); this dimension is applied in practice by involving physical matters. The goat, in contrast, represents Nistar, the esoteric part of the Torah (such as

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<sup>31</sup> See the Maamar Malka Umalketa 5697.

<sup>32</sup> Shemos 25:8

<sup>33</sup> Acharon shel Pesach 5666 (unpublished), see Shabbos Chol Hamoed Pesach 5664.

Kabbalah and Chasidus). These lofty teachings are of a more spiritual realm. Consequently, the king, Kudsha Berich Hu, finds affinity with the goat, the lofty teachings of Nistar. The queen, the Shechina, prefers the lamb, since the only way to let G-dliness permeate the material world is by performing mitzvos in the way that is prescribed by Halacha, Nigleh. The kohen gadol, whose function is to serve in the temple meant to be a place for G-dly revelations, naturally agrees with the queen.

Alternatively, the Rebbe Rashab offers yet another angle. The Talmud states that Torah scholars bring peace unto earth<sup>34</sup> through learning Torah in a peaceful manner. Therefore, the lamb, who is a peaceful animal, represents the Torah scholars who devote their lives entirely to Torah study, without any concern for the outside world. The goat represents those who engage in worldly pursuits in order to make a living. Their main spiritual occupation is the performance of *Mitzvos*, such as charity, which involves interaction with the material, imbuing the physical world with holiness<sup>35</sup>.

As the king and queen were arguing about the taste of these animals' meat, culinary pleasure is more accentuated when one experiences a new taste, a new sensation. For the king, considering that he represents kudsha brich hu, separated from the world, his choice would be the goat, for it represents the people involved with the world and elevating it through their *Mitzvos*, a notion that is novel to him. For the queen, the idea of separating oneself from the world is a novelty, as her

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<sup>34</sup> See Yevamos 122b.

<sup>35</sup> Or Hatorah, Vayishlach p. 426a-b.

main concern is to bring g-dly revelations within the world. Therefore, her choice was the lamb, which represents the Torah scholars who are not concerned with imbuing the material world with G-dliness through their actions, but rather rise upwards with their studies.

The Gemara concludes, however, that the lamb and the goat are equal in taste. This points out that both manners of divine service have value and are thus necessary. Moreover, they complement each other. Accordingly, every Jew should have the zeal and boldness of the Ba'al Teshuva as well as the consistency of Tzadikim. Likewise, every Jew should engage both in Torah and in good deeds. Even those who are immersed in Torah study are obliged from time to time to leave their environments and imbue the outside world with holiness. Those who engage in mundane affairs should also separate themselves at times from the rest of the world and wholly immerse themselves in the study of Torah<sup>36</sup>. Alternatively, every Jew has to learn all parts of the Torah. Nigleh must be studied with the same devotion and selflessness as Nistar is learned, and Nistar must be studied with the same reasoning and pursuit of understanding as Nigleh is learned.

*Based on the Sichos of  
Acharon shel Pesach 5720, ch. 12  
and Likutei Sichos vol. XIV p. 314-322*

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<sup>36</sup> See Likutei Sichos vol. XXV, p. 125.

## Soft Like a Reed

The Gemarah<sup>37</sup> states that the curse with which Achiyah Hashiloni cursed the Jewish people is more effective than the blessing with which Bilam blessed them, for Achiyah Hashiloni compared the Jewish people to reeds, saying<sup>38</sup> “Hashem shall afflict you as the reed sways on water”, while Bilam called them cedar trees<sup>39</sup>. Just as the reed stands in a place of water, and the winds blowing against it cannot move it from its place, rather, it sways until the winds subside, and then the reed still stands in its place, the same applies to the Jewish people. After all the difficulties that they endure, they will ultimately survive and return home. However, although the winds will not move a cedar from its place, once the southern wind blows against it, it uproots the cedar and turns it on its face. The Talmud then concludes “One should always be as flexible as a reed and not as stiff as a cedar tree.”

Following this statement, the Gemara records the following incident:

תנו רבנן לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארז.  
מעשה שבא רבי אלעזר (בן ר') שמעון ממגדל גדור מבית רבו  
והיה רכוב על החמור ומטייל על שפת נהר ושמח שמחה גדולה

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<sup>37</sup> Taanis 20a

<sup>38</sup> Melachim I, 14:15

<sup>39</sup> Balak, 24:6

והיתה דעתו גסה עליו מפני שלמד תורה הרבה. נזדמן לו אדם אחד שהיה מכוער ביותר אמר לו שלום עליך רבי ולא החזיר לו אמר לו ריקה כמה מכוער אותו האיש שמא כל בני עירך מכוערין כמותך אמר לו איני יודע אלא לך ואמור לאומן שעשאני כמה מכוער כלי זה שעשית. כיון שידע בעצמו שחטא ירד מן החמור ונשתטח לפניו ואמר לו נענית לך מחול לי אמר לו איני מוחל לך עד שתלך לאומן שעשאני ואמור לו כמה מכוער כלי זה שעשית. היה מטייל אחריו עד שהגיע לעירו יצאו בני עירו לקראתו והיו אומרים לו שלום עליך רבי רבי מורי מורי אמר להם למי אתם קורין רבי רבי אמרו לו לזה שמטייל אחריו אמר להם אם זה רבי אל ירבו כמותו בישראל אמרו לו מפני מה אמר להם כך וכך עשה לי אמרו לו אעפ"כ מחול לו שאדם גדול בתורה הוא אמר להם בשבילכם הריני מוחל לו ובלבד שלא יהא רגיל לעשות כן. מיד נכנס רבי אלעזר בן רבי שמעון ודרש לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארז.

תענית כ.א

*An incident occurred in which Rabbi Elazar Ben Rabbi Shimon, came from Migdal Gedor, from his rabbi's house, and he was riding on a donkey and strolling on the bank of the river<sup>40</sup>. He was very happy and proud because he had studied much Torah. He happened upon an exceedingly*

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<sup>40</sup> The Frierdiker Rebbe related that when he would visit his father in Menton, who was there for health reasons, they would take walks on the boardwalk. Paraphrasing the Zohar, the Rebbe Rashab would tell him "let us go together, you and me, on the ocean shore". The Frierdiker Rebbe explained that his father was referring to the Zohar describing clarity in Torah study as "clear to us as the ocean's shore", which has no visual obstructions. So perhaps one can suggest that this detail indicates the state of mind in which Rabbi Elazar was. Coming from his teacher's house where he studied a lot of Torah, he was deeply engrossed in the clarity of his Torah thoughts (MD).

*ugly person<sup>41</sup>, who said to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, but Rabbi Elazar did not return his greeting. Instead, Rabbi Elazar said to him: Worthless person, how ugly is that man. Are all the people of your city as ugly as you? The man said to him: I do not know, but you should go and say to the Craftsman Who made me: How ugly is the vessel you made. When Rabbi Elazar realized that he had sinned [by insulting this man], he descended from his donkey and prostrated himself before him, and he said to the man: I have sinned against you; forgive me<sup>42</sup>. The man said to him: I will not forgive you go until you go to the Craftsman Who made me and say: How ugly is the vessel you made. He walked behind the man, trying to appease him, until they reached Rabbi Elazar's city. The people of his city came out to greet him, saying to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, my rabbi, my master, my master. The man said to them: Who are you calling my rabbi, my rabbi? They said to him: To this man who is walking behind you. He said to them: If this man is a rabbi, may there not be many like him among the Jewish people. They asked him: For what reason do you say this? He said to them: He did such and such to me. They said to him: Even so, forgive him, as he is a great Torah scholar<sup>43</sup>. He said to them:*

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<sup>41</sup> Rashi & Tosfos *ibid.* suggest that this was Eliyahu Hanavi sent to trigger this discussion to remind Rabbi Elazar to be humble, and make him realize that maybe he should be softer with people.

<sup>42</sup> As if saying "I acknowledge my sin and if you forgive me, the Craftsman will forgive me too". *Maharsha, ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Meaning that being such a scholar, he probably has an explanation.

*For your sakes I forgive him, provided that he accepts upon himself not to become accustomed to behave like this. Immediately, Rabbi Elazar Ben Rabbi Shimon, entered the study hall and taught: A person should always be soft like a reed and he should not be stiff like a cedar.*

The *Rif* explains that when Rabbi Elazar said: “A man should be soft like a reed and not stiff like cedar,” he could have been referring to the ugly man who was unyielding to readily forgive him, or perhaps he was referring to himself who was standing proud as a cedar, insulting the man and refusing to respond to his greeting.

The *Iyun Yaakov* explains that Rabbi Elazar was annoyed by this unmannered man who had the audacity to interrupt him in his thoughts<sup>44</sup>, and the physical ugliness was only a reflection of his actions.

A number of questions present themselves: Did Rabbi Elazar not know that Hashem is the Craftsman of the world and all of its creatures? Indeed, the Mishna<sup>45</sup> teaches us to love even a person whose only asset is having been created by Hashem! So how could such a great person as Rabbi Elazar react in this manner?

We know that the knowledge of a person is reflected on his face, as stated in the Scripture<sup>46</sup>, “a man’s wisdom lights up his face”. But such reflection is

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<sup>44</sup> The Maharsha says that it was inappropriate for simple people to greet talmidei chachamim, as it may disrupt their thoughts. One should wait to be addressed and then respond.

<sup>45</sup> Avos 1:12, following the Chassidic interpretation in Tanya ch.

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<sup>46</sup> Koheles, 8:1, see Metzudas David.

only obvious to Tzadikim, as they would always see things from a deeper, more spiritual perspective. We can see this from the following story<sup>47</sup>: At the end of his life, the Alter Rebbe pointed to the rafters and asked the Tzemach Tzedek to tell him what he sees. The Tzemach Tzedek answered that he sees a beam. The Alter Rebbe replied that he sees the G-dly spark that brings this beam to life. He looked at the essence of things rather than at their exterior appearance.

The same is true with regards to perceiving individuals. A Tzadik would look at a person and see his inner state. This is expressed in a story told about the Rebbe Rashab, who was once learning Torah in his home with Rabbi Yaakov Mordechai Bezfelov, the Poltover Rov. As he was about to leave, Reb Yaakov Mordechai noticed the Frierdikier Rebbe asleep in his cradle. He remarked to the Rashab that one could see the purity of thoughts and the holiness on the baby's face.<sup>48</sup>

Now we can better understand our story. When Rabbi Elazar told the man how ugly he was, he was not referring to his exterior ugliness, but rather to his inner ugliness<sup>49</sup> which he saw. Certainly, Rabbi Elazar knew that there is a Craftsman in this world, but looking at the stranger's face, there was no evidence of any connection he had with his Craftsman. This person was described as *reika*, worthless, which can also mean empty, pointing out that he was devoid of Mitzvos<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Sicha of 10 Shvat 5726, ch.1, Hisvaaduyos 5744, vol. 3 p. 1616

<sup>48</sup> Sicha of 10 Shvat 5722, ch. 13. See Sefer Hasichos Kayitz 5700 for the rest of the story.

<sup>49</sup> Iyun Yaacov, *ibid*.

<sup>50</sup> Ben Ish Chai in Ben Yehoyada, *ibid*.

The Tanya explains<sup>51</sup> that the lowest spiritual level in a person is referred to as *Briyah*, a creature. A *briyah*'s only attribute is his acknowledgment that he was created by Hashem. However, a person can sink so low that he does not even recognize his maker, and cannot recognize his relationship with Him. Responding politely to such a man's greeting would accomplish nothing in bringing him closer to his Creator. By saying: "Look at how ugly you are," Rabbi Elazar was determined to coach this spiritually ugly man.

Then Rabbi Elazar realized that the man might not be at fault, having possibly been brought up in a place where there was no proper Torah environment, so he asks him: "Are all the people where you come from as ugly as you?" This question was not meant to amplify the insult, but rather to find an excuse for this man's spiritual state.

This direct rebuke made the man concede his lack of spirituality and thus do *Teshuva*. The man is now able to tell Rabbi Elazar: "It was Hashem who created me". After hearing that, Rabbi Elazar saw that he had succeeded in refining this man. It didn't change him completely, but at least he was out of the realm of being merely a *briyah*, elevating him to the level where he could indeed recognize his connection to Hashem. Only then did Rabbi Elazar ask for forgiveness, for he caused him grief, albeit for good intentions.

As similar story is told about a Chossid who visited the Rashab soon after he became Rebbe to ask for help on a very sensitive matter. After listening to his request, the Rashab said that he could not help him. The Chossid left the *Rashab*'s room and burst into loud sobs,

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<sup>51</sup> ch. 32

as the Rebbe was his last prospect. When the Rashab's brother, Reb Zalman Aharon, noticed the chossid crying, he asked for an explanation. Upon hearing how the Rashab responded to the man, he went to his brother and told him that, as a Rebbe, he should always give Brochos and not send anyone out hopelessly empty-handed. He also pointed out that the crying Chossid was enduring a great deal of grief. The Rashab then called the chossid back, heard of his question again, gave him advice, and it helped; he was saved.

The Rebbe asked: since the Rashab was obviously capable of performing a miracle, why did he not do so in the first place? Why did he have to wait for the chossid to cry? The answer might be that the Rashab saw that this man was not yet on the level where he could be a deserving receptacle for the materialization of the Brocha. He needed to be elevated, and the only way was through shaking him up to the very core. By refusing the chossid's initial request, the Rashab spurred him on to a higher level where he was able to receive a Brocha that would come true.

With this story in mind, we can also understand why the ugly man forgave Rabbi Elazar on the condition, "*that he should not accustom himself to doing so*", rather than "that he should never do so again", which implies that this attitude might be acceptable occasionally. Because he also understood that, sometimes, a *Tzaddik* has to use this method of rebuke, but normally the preferred method is to pleasantly bring one to the right path. Only when one is so lowly, not even a briyah, a Tzadik such as Rabbi Elazar or the Rebbe Rashab would know that there may be no alternatives other than to be reminded that there is a Craftsman Who created him. But for laymen as

ourselves, the only and most effective way to bring about change in someone's behavior is to address him in a pleasant and respectful manner<sup>52</sup>.

*Based on the Sicha of Bamidbar 5730  
Likutei Sichos vol. XV, p. 125  
and 10 Shvat 5722*

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<sup>52</sup> See Sicha of Shabbos Vayakel 5752.

## Choni Hamagel's Prayer

Whenever the land of Israel would be afflicted by a drought, the Chachomim would gather the community to pray for rain. Sometimes, they would send for Tzadikim to pray as well. Such an incident is recorded in the Talmud<sup>53</sup>.

ת"ר פעם אחת יצא רוב אדר ולא ירדו גשמים שלחו לחוני המעגל התפלל וירדו גשמים התפלל ולא ירדו גשמים עג עוגה ועמד בתוכה כדרך שעשה חבקוק הנביא שנאמר (חבקוק ב, א) על משמרתי אעמדה וגו' אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם בניך שמו פניהם עלי שאני כבן בית לפניך נשבע אני בשמך הגדול שאיני זו מכאן עד שתרחם על בניך התחילו גשמים מנטפין אמרו לו תלמידיו רבי ראינוך ולא נמות כמדומין אנו שאין גשמים יורדין אלא להתיר שבועתך אמר לא כך שאלתי אלא גשמי בורות שיחין ומערות ירדו בזעף עד שכל טפה וטפה כמלא פי חבית ושיערו חכמים שאין טפה פחותה מלוג אמרו לו תלמידיו רבי ראינוך ולא נמות כמדומין אנו שאין גשמים יורדין אלא לאבד העולם אמר לפניו לא כך שאלתי אלא גשמי רצון ברכה ונדבה ירדו כתיקנן עד שעלו כל העם להר הבית מפני הגשמים אמרו לו רבי כשם שהתפללת שירדו כך התפלל וילכו להם אמר להם כך מקובלני שאין מתפללין על רוב הטובה אעפ"כ הביאו לי פר הודאה הביאו לו פר הודאה סמך שתי ידיו עליו ואמר לפניו רבש"ע עמך ישראל שהוצאת ממצרים אינן יכולין לא ברוב טובה ולא ברוב פורענות כעסת עליהם אינן יכולין לעמוד השפעת עליהם טובה אינן יכולין לעמוד יהי רצון מלפניך שיפסקו הגשמים ויהא ריוח בעולם

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<sup>53</sup> Taanis, 23a

מיד נשבה הרוח ונתפזרו העבים וזרחה החמה ויצאו העם  
לשדה והביאו להם כמהין ופטירות  
תענית כג,ב

*The Sages taught: Once, most of the month of Adar had passed but rain had still not fallen. They sent this message to Choni HaMe'aggel: Pray, and rain will fall. He prayed, but no rain fell. He drew a circle and stood inside it, in the manner that the prophet Chavakuk did, as it is stated<sup>54</sup>: "And I will stand upon my watch and ... I will look out to see what He will say to me". Choni said before Hashem: Master of the Universe, Your children have turned their faces toward me, as I am like a member of Your household. Therefore, I take an oath by Your great name that I will not move from here until you have mercy upon Your children. Rain began to trickle down, but only in small droplets. His students said to him: Rabbi, we have seen that you can perform great wonders, but this quantity of rain is not enough to ensure that we will not die. It appears to us that rain is falling only to enable you to dissolve your oath. Choni said: I did not ask for this, but for rain to fill the cisterns, ditches, and caves. Rain began to fall furiously, until each and every drop was as big as the mouth of a barrel, and the Sages estimated that no drop was less than a log in size. His students said to him: Rabbi, we have seen that you can perform miracles and we will not die, but now it appears to us that rain is falling only to destroy the world. Choni again said: I did not ask for this either, but*

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<sup>54</sup> Chavakuk 2:1

*for rain of benevolence, blessing, and generosity. Subsequently, the rains fell in their standard manner, until all of the people sought higher ground and ascended to the Temple Mount due to the rain. They said to him: Rabbi, just as you prayed that the rains should fall, so too, pray that they should stop. He said to them: This is the tradition that I received, that one does not pray over an excess of good. Nevertheless, bring me a bull. I will sacrifice it as a thanks-offering<sup>55</sup>. They brought him a bull for a thanks-offering. He placed his two hands on its head and said: Master of the Universe, Your nation Israel, whom You brought out of Egypt<sup>56</sup>, cannot bear either an excess of good or an excess of punishment. You grew angry with them and withheld rain, and they are unable to bear it. You bestowed upon them an abundance of your goodness, and they were also unable to bear it. May it be Your will that the rain stop and that there be relief for the world. Immediately, the wind blew, the clouds dispersed, the sun shone, and everyone went out to the fields and gathered for themselves truffles and mushrooms.*

This entire episode is perplexing. Why did Choni Hamagel's prayer for rain not bring "rains of blessings" straight away? Why did rains fall only in drops, and then with too much force, and it was only after his disciples pointed out that these were not

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<sup>55</sup> As to not to appear as ungrateful. *Maharsha, ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Choni mentions the Exodus, because the Jewish people acted in a similar way when they came out of Egypt: they complained in Marah for lacking water ("excess of punishment") and they complained about the Manna ("excess of good"). *Maharsha, ibid.*

beneficial to the world that Choni Hamagel was forced to say that “It was not for this I asked”- and only after all this did rain come down normally? Surely Choni Hamagel himself knew that the people’s request for rain was for normal rains, rain that would benefit them, and not for drops or destructive torrents. Why then didn’t he pray in the first place for “rains of benevolence, blessing and bounty”?

This question applies not only to Choni Hamagel’s prayers, but also to the way Hashem answered it. Hashem certainly knows what type of rain is beneficial. Why then did Choni Hamagel have to pray repeatedly for the proper rain?

The world can be viewed from two different perspectives: from the world itself, seeing only its external appearance; or from above, seeing its true inner nature. The Talmud states<sup>57</sup>, “One mentions the might (*Gevuros*) of the rains in the second blessing of the Amida”. Would it not be more logical to associate a great blessing such as rain with Chessed rather than the rigorous *gvuros*? It is precisely because the rain is such a great blessing that it comes disguised as a nuisance. Indeed, lofty blessing are too great to be sustained by the world in their raw form, so they come concealed in what seems to be an expression of finitude and severity.

Now we can understand why proper rain did not come down in the first place. When Choni Hamagel viewed the world from his lofty level, he saw it in its inner perspective, on a level much higher than it is externally. Thus, to him, even when the rain came down in drops or in torrents, it could still be proper and “normal”. He saw it as a sublime form of blessing.

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<sup>57</sup> Brachos 33a

Indeed, he referred to the torrential rains as “*an abundance of Your goodness*”. Likewise, although Hashem certainly knows what kind of rain is needed, nevertheless, being implored by Choni Hamegel, He sent a lofty type of blessing fitting for a world at the Tzadik’s level.

It was therefore necessary for Choni Hamagel’s disciples to tell him to pray for rain which the world needs. Although from Choni Hamagel’s perspective the world was lofty enough to absorb such blessings, nevertheless, seeing the world from its external appearance, the students pleaded with Choni to ask for the type of rain that *they* can consider “normal”. This is the reason why before asking for the rain to stop, Choni says “*Your nation Israel, cannot bear either an excess of good*” implying that it was the people’s inability to recognize the blessing in this rain that prompted him to ask for it to stop. But he himself saw it as good<sup>58</sup>.

In that case, why didn’t Choni Hamagel explain this to his students? He could have told them to accept the rain for the lofty blessing that it is.

We know that when we pray for our needs, we should, in the first place, pray that the blessings be in a form suitable for us. In a poignant segment of the Yom Kippur liturgy we say: “The gates of Heaven open, and Your good treasure open for us”. This prayer can also be said with a slightly different punctuation, yet an entirely different meaning: “and your treasure *which is good for us*, open”. The latter version is preferred<sup>59</sup>, for although Hashem’s treasure is inherently good, and He surely knows what is “good for us”, we are saying that

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<sup>58</sup> See Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 3, p. 1474

<sup>59</sup> Sefer Hamaamarim 5686, p. 21

since the true good is too lofty for us to absorb, we ask Him not to wait until we are ready to receive this true good, but to immediately grant that which is “good for us”- goodness that is tangible and visible to us, at our level, in the realms of health, wealth, and all family matters<sup>60</sup>.

This incident has profound lessons. Every Jew is obligated to fulfill the mitzvah of praying, which is “that a person should beseech and pray each day... asking for his needs”<sup>61</sup>. In other words, when a Jew needs something, he is obligated to pray to Hashem to fulfill this need. The story of Choni Hamagel teaches *how* a person should pray. Each Jew is Hashem’s child, as written<sup>62</sup>: “You are sons to the L-rd your G-d”- and this applies regardless of his personal spiritual standing. Furthermore, the Baal Shem Tov said that every Jew is like an *only child* to Hashem. So if Choni Hamagel is entitled to demand that Hashem answers his prayers because he is a Ben Bayis, then we certainly have the right to ask in such a fashion as well.

We should be persistent when requesting the fulfillment of our needs, and if our request has not been answered in a way which we perceive as good, we can say “It was not for this I asked.” And if we see the blessing is too much that we cannot yet handle such largesse, we should ask that the blessing be given in a manner commensurate to our situation. We can also learn from Choni Hamagel that just as he was sure that his prayer would be immediately answered, we as well should be certain that Hashem will hear our prayers.

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<sup>60</sup> Maamarim Kuntreissim vol. 3, p. 189

<sup>61</sup> Rambam Hilchos Tefillah 1:2

<sup>62</sup> Devarim 14:1

This faith, in and of itself, is conducive for the blessings to materialize.

But how can we compare ourselves to Choni Hamagel? Our sages say<sup>63</sup> that we are obligated to emulate our ancestors, so too we take heed from the ways of Tzadikim. Moreover, because Choni Hamagel has paved the way, it is now easy for us to do likewise. Especially after the world has been further refined by the multitude of Mitzvos done by the Jewish people since the times of Choni Hamagel, and with the spread of the wellsprings of chassidus in recent years, we are now surely worthy of receiving the loftiest blessings yet in a way that can be perceived as good by all<sup>64</sup>.

In this story, Choni's prayers brought rain, which represents sustenance and blessings in all physical matters. If the above holds true of a Jew's prayers for his personal needs, it certainly applies to our spiritual needs as well as to the needs of the entire nation, particularly to the prayers for the redemption, when all Jews pray daily: "Speedily cause the scion of Dovid Your servant to flourish...for we hope for your salvation every day." This prayer, uttered in Choni's fashion with complete faith and determination, will certainly be fulfilled, with the immediate coming of Moshiach.

*Based in part on the sicha of  
Shabbos Shmini, 20 Adar II, 5744*

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<sup>63</sup> See Tana Devei Elihahu Rabba, 25:1

<sup>64</sup> Hisvaaduyos 5748 vol. 1, p. 351

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

## Abba Chilkiya's Wife Brings Rain

The Talmud in Taanis<sup>65</sup> records the following story:

אבא חלקיה בר בריה דחוני המעגל הוה וכי מצטריך עלמא למיטרא הוה משדרי רבנן לגביה ובעי רחמי ואתי מיטרא זימנא חדא איצטריך עלמא למיטרא שדור רבנן זוגא דרבנן לגביה למבעי רחמי דניתי מיטרא אזול לביתיה ולא אשכחוהו אזול בדברא ואשכחוהו דהוה קא רפיק ... כי אתא לביתיה ... אמר לה לדביתהו ידענא דרבנן משום מיטרא קא אתו ניסק לאיגרא וניבעי רחמי אפשר דמרצי הקדוש ברוך הוא וייתי מיטרא ולא נחזיק טיבותא לנפשין סקו לאיגרא קם איהו בחדא זויתא ואיהי בחדא זויתא קדים סלוק ענני מהך זויתא דדביתהו כי נחית אמר להו אמאי אתו רבנן אמרו ליה שדרי לן רבנן לגבי דמר למיבעי רחמי אמיטרא אמר להו ברוך המקום שלא הצריך אתכם לאבא חלקיה אמרו ליה ידעינן דמיטרא מחמת מר הוא דאתא אלא לימא לן מר הני מילי דתמיהא לן ... ומאי טעמא קדים סלוק ענני מהך זויתא דהוות קיימא דביתהו דמר לעננא ידידיה משום דאיתתא שכיחא בביתא ויהבא ריפתא לענני ומקרבא הנייתה] ואנא יהיבנא זוזא ולא מקרבא הנייתה] מגילה, כג, ב

*Abba Chilkiya was the son of Choni HaMe'aggel's<sup>66</sup> son. And when the world was in need of rain they would send Sages to him, and he would pray for mercy, and rain would fall. Once the world was in need of rain, and the Sages sent a pair of Sages to him so that he would pray for mercy and rain would fall. They*

<sup>65</sup> 23a-b

<sup>66</sup> See previous story on p. 41

*went to his house but they did not find him there. They went to the field and found him hoeing the ground ... When he returned home ... Abba Chilkiya said to his wife: I know that these Sages have come due to the rain. Let us go up to the roof and pray for mercy. Perhaps the Holy One, Blessed be He, will be appeased, and it will rain, and we will not receive credit ourselves for the rainfall. They went up to the roof. He stood in one corner and she stood in the other corner. Clouds began to form on that side where his wife stood. When he descended, he said to the Sages: Why have the Sages come? They said to him: The other Sages have sent us to the Master, so that you should pray for mercy for rain. He said to them: Blessed is God, Who did not require you to petition Abba Chilkiya. They said to him: We know that the rain has come on the Master's account. However, let the Master please say and explain to us these aspects of your behavior that are puzzling to us ... And what is the reason that the clouds began to form on that side where the Master's wife stood before your own side? He explained: Because my wife is frequently at home, and she gives bread to the poor, and therefore the benefit to the needy is immediate<sup>67</sup>. In contrast, I give money to the poor, and consequently, the benefit of my gift is not immediate.*

Every incident recorded in the Talmud carries a message we can apply to our daily life. What can we learn from this story?

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<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, her prayers are answered without delay. *Rashi, ibid.*

It is written in Tehilim<sup>68</sup> “Happy are they who perform charity at all times” But is it possible to perform charity at all times? Is one always in the presence of paupers? Therefore, quoting Rabbis in Yavne, the Talmud<sup>69</sup> says that this is referring to one who sustains his children when they are minors. It is the equivalent to giving charity continuously, being that the family is constantly benefitting from the food, clothing and shelter that he provides. This means that giving Tzedakah applies not only to strangers but to our own family and children as well. The same is true for spiritual charity, as poverty applies to knowledge as well<sup>70</sup>. Thus, every father is obligated to sustain his child spiritually by teaching him Torah.

Analogous to material Tzedakah, where the man provides the means whereas the wife shapes it into a useful end product, in the case of spiritual charity (i.e., the education of the children), the father provides the material needs and the wife serves spiritual food.

This concept is illustrated by a story told about the Alter Rebbe. When his son was old enough to study Torah, he told a Chossid: “I am obligated to teach my son, and you are obligated to support your family. Let us exchange Mitzvos. You teach my son, and I will support your family.” Although a father has such an important mitzvah and duty to teach his son Torah, he generally hires a *Melamed* to do so<sup>71</sup>, just like the Alter Rebbe did. Typically, a Mitzvah is better to be performed in person rather than by proxy, yet, for

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<sup>68</sup> 106:3

<sup>69</sup> Kesubos 50a

<sup>70</sup> See Ksubos 68a, Tzavaas HaRibash, Pri Haaretz.

<sup>71</sup> Shulchan Aruch Harav, Hilchos Talmud Torah ch. 1

practical reasons, men pay tuition for someone to teach their children Torah, rather than do it themselves.

The father, through the teacher, instructs his children in the same way that he gives Tzedakah. He provides this spiritual sustenance in an indirect manner. He imparts them with the knowledge, which is only the theory rather than the practice. For example, he would tell them the blessing to recite before eating a fruit, or the laws relating to getting dressed. Conversely, it is the mother that gives the actual *chinuch* and guidance directly. She makes sure that the child *says* the blessing before he eats, or that the girl wears modest clothing, and so on. Although the child goes to school, he needs the all-encompassing guidance that the mother provides in the home, in order to practice that which he learns in school. Hence she teaches her children in the same way that she gives charity: she provides this spiritual sustenance in a direct a practical manner.

We can now understand why Abba Chilkiya's wife was answered first when she prayed for rain. When the wife asks, Hashem responds immediately, because the wife affects the desired end results, whereas the husband is the one who provides the means for her to do so.

In this story, the rain came in the wife's merit, but the message goes far beyond the raindrops. Rain is a blessing; it is called *Gishmei Brocha* which represents *Parnassa* in general. Even the husband's *Parnassa* comes through the merit of how his wife gives tzedakah and how she educates her children. That is why she is called *akeres habayis*, the foundation on which the household stands.

It is important to remember that our sustenance comes from Hashem who bestows His blessing upon

our labor, as the Torah assures us that “the Lord your G-d will bless you in all you do”<sup>72</sup>. This implies that you need to actually do your part and work, but success will be up Hashem. Your occupation is not the real source of your income; it is merely a receptacle for His blessings, which is generated by the proper education you provide for your children, and the Tzedakah that you give. Keeping this in mind would help us focus on what really matters most and invest our time and efforts accordingly.

*Based on the Sicha of Shabbos Bereshis 5717,  
Likutei Sichos vol. II, p. 580*

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<sup>72</sup> Devarim 15:18

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

## How Rabba Shected Rabbi Zeira

The Talmud<sup>73</sup> states that one is obligated to become intoxicated (with wine<sup>74</sup>) on Purim to the point that he cannot distinguish the difference between “Cursed is Haman” and “Blessed is Mordechai”. To prove this point, the Talmud relates a story that was considered too puzzling to be included in most editions of Ein Yaacov.

אמר רבא מיחייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא עד דלא ידע בין ארור  
המן לברוך מרדכי. רבה ורבי זירא עבדו סעודת פורים בהדי  
הדדי, איבסום, קם רבה שחטיה לרבי זירא. למחר בעי רחמי  
ואחייה. לשנה אמר ליה ניתי מר ונעביד סעודת פורים בהדי  
הדדי, אמר ליה לא בכל שעתא ושעתא מתרחיש ניסא

מגילה ז,ב

*Rabba and Rabbi Zeira celebrated the Purim feast together. They got drunk; [then] Rabba stood up, and shected (slaughtered) Rabbi Zeira. The next day he prayed for mercy and brought Rabbi Zeira back to life. The following year, Rabba said to Rabbi Zeira; “Master, let us celebrate the Seudat Purim*

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<sup>73</sup> Megillah 7b

<sup>74</sup> Rashi, *ibid.* because the miracle of Purim started and ended with wine: Achashveirosh removed Vashti from the throne when he was drunk with wine, which led to Esther becoming queen; Esther exposed Haman and his evil plan when she hosted a wine-drinking feast for Achashveirosh and Haman.

*together again.” Rabbi Zeira answered:  
“Miracles do not happen every moment”*

The most perplexing points of this story must be clarified. How could such a great Tzadik as Rabba slaughter another man, even if he was drunk, and why did he wait for the next day to revive him? We know that fear can remove the effect of strong wine, so the shock of slaying another man should have been enough to immediately shake him up. The story become all the more bizarre when Rabba invites Rabbi Zeira again the next year. How can he be putting himself in a situation that has proven dangerous in the past? Moreover, Rabbi Zeira’s response infers that if he had been assured of a miracle, he would have accepted Rabba’s invitation and risk his life again. This implies that the *shechting* wasn’t such a bad thing after all.

The classic commentators offered many answers, but none fully answer these questions.

The Maharsha suggests that Rabba did not really kill Rabbi Zeira. He merely forced him to drink more than he was able to sustain, so he became ill and passed out. Rabba waited a day to see if Rabbi Zeira would get better on his own. When he did not, Raba prayed to Hashem the following day, and Rabbi Zeira was healed.

This does not seem to be the opinion of Rabbeinu Efrayim, (quoted by Rabbeinu Nissim), who says that this story was only mentioned in order to rule out becoming so drunk on Purim, because drunkenness lead to manslaughter. Though this opinion was not accepted, and the obligation to drink an abundance of

wine on Purim remains<sup>75</sup>, we can see that the story is to be taken literally. While some stories mentioned in the Talmud are only allegorical, such tales would usually be recounted in a *Midrashic* context. However, since our story was stated following a *Halacha*, we must say that it has actually happened and is not merely a metaphor.

The Chasam Sofer<sup>76</sup> connects this story to the Talmud's statement<sup>77</sup> that whoever is born under the sign of Mars will shed blood, whereupon Rabba states that he was born under that mazal. The chasam Sofer concludes that Rabba was inherently a murderer who was generally able to control himself, until he was drunk. Nevertheless, as the Talmud continues, such a person can use his predisposition to shed blood for beneficial purposes, such as becoming a surgeon, a mohel, a Shochet etc. Moreover, the Rambam rules<sup>78</sup> that a person is not controlled by his natural tendencies; everyone can overcome them through self-refinement, and channel them to positive purposes.

So we must concur that a killing took place, inasmuch that Rabbi Zeira's soul actually departed his body because of Rabba, and yet it wasn't a negative thing, as Rabba wanted to do celebrate Purim with Rabbi Zeira once again, implying that there was no remorse for the previous year's actions. But how can we make sense of all this?

We find the deadly consequences of drinking wine in another episode told in the Torah. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, brought a sacrifice in the

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<sup>75</sup> Shulchan Aruch Hilchos Purim, 695:2

<sup>76</sup> Responsa, Or Hachayim 185, 196

<sup>77</sup> Shabbos 156a

<sup>78</sup> Hilchos Teshuva 5:4

Mishkan while intoxicated<sup>79</sup> and died. The meforshim say that their death is mentioned right before the kohanim are instructed not to enter the Mishkan while drunk, to indicate that that was indeed the reason why they passed away. But how is it possible for the sons of Aharon, who were so spiritual, to conduct themselves in such a manner?

The Or Hachayim explains<sup>80</sup> that Aharon's sons died because they came too close to an exalted light, which they could not endure. Wine symbolizes the mystical secrets of the Torah. The Hebrew word for wine, יין, has the same numerical value as סוד, the Hebrew word for secret. Thus, for truly great people, drinking wine does not necessarily mean getting drunk, but rather reaching a very high spiritual level that is attained by delving in the most secretive parts of the Torah. This is indeed what has happened to Nadav and Avihu; they have immersed themselves in the Torah's secrets to the point of *kalos hanefesh*. They were seeking to cleave and connect to Hashem, an endeavor to which they succeeded by consuming the "wine of Torah".

In light of this explanation, we can interpret Rabba and Rabbi Zeira's feast from a deeper perspective.

Rabba in Aramaic can mean "the great one", and Zeira can mean "the small one".<sup>81</sup> This implies that Rabba was spiritually higher than Rabbi Zeira. At the Purim meal, they got drunk on wine, which, as stated, represents the secrets of the Torah. In fact, they were

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<sup>79</sup> Rashi, Vayikra 10:2

<sup>80</sup> Vayikra 16:1

<sup>81</sup> See Baba Metzia 85a with the Maharsha's commentary- Rabbi Zeira was a short man and was therefore called Zeira (small)

experiencing a spiritual ascent. When the Talmud specifies that Rabba *stood up* when he slayed Rabbi Zeira, it points out that the “drinking” raised him to a new height. Similarly, using the term *shechted* Rabbi Zeira means that Rabba elevated him too; he pulled him up to his level of spirituality. Chazal say<sup>82</sup> that the meaning of *Veshachat* (and he slaughtered) is *Umashach* - and he drew closer, for when an animal is ritually slaughtered, the shochet pulls the knife towards him. This symbolizes how the animal is in fact elevated from the animal kingdom to become part of the human’s flesh. Similarly, Rabba was pulling Rabbi Zeira up to him, higher and higher. But Rabbi Zeira could not endure these great revelations so his soul departed. Rabba, on the other hand, being at a higher spiritual level, was accustomed to reaching such heights<sup>83</sup>.

Another story can further clarify this concept. When the Alter Rebbe came to Mezeritch as a young scholar to learn Chassidus for the first time, the Maggid of Mezeritch made a deal with him: “My son Rabbi Avraham will teach you the innermost secrets of the Torah and you will teach him the revealed parts”. One day while they were studying chassidus together, the Alter Rebbe stopped and went to eat a buttered bagel. When asked by Rabbi Avraham for an explanation, the Alter Rebbe said that, because of what they were learning, he felt that his soul was aspiring to go up, and he feared he would die. He could not endure these sublime spiritual revelations, so he needed to deeply connect to something physical to prevent his soul from leaving his body. He knew that physical pleasure, such

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<sup>82</sup> Chulin 30b

<sup>83</sup> This would perhaps fit with the Maharsha’s opinion cited above that Rabba forced Reb Zeira to drink more wine (secrets of Torah) than he was able to sustain.

as eating a buttered bagel, would reach the depth of his soul and reconnect it to his body.

As the Alter Rebbe was still at the beginning of his journey in the study of Chassidic teachings, these revelations were too powerful for him to sustain, while Rabbi Avraham, who was called *Hamalach* (the angel), was already accustomed to such spiritual loftiness, and therefore was not affected by overexposure.

As this episode occurred on Purim, a very spiritual day which our sages compare to Yom Kippur, the day we can get closest to Hashem, Rabba thought that the holiness of the day itself could revive Rabbi Zeira. Seeing that it wasn't the case, he prayed for Rabbi Zeira's miraculous recovery on the next day, and was able to revive him.

The following Purim, assuming that after a whole year of constant strides upwards Rabbi Zeira would be able to endure another revelation, Rabba wanted to hoist him again by sharing with him more mystical thoughts. Although the offer was very tempting to Rabbi Zeira, as the experience of the previous year was a very lofty one, he felt that there was no guarantee that a miracle would happen again. Despite Rabba's proven ability to revive the dead, should death reoccur, Rabbi Zeira feared that he would not be able to convince his Neshama to return to earth this time around. Having already tasted Gan Eden last year, it might not want to come back down. Rabbi Zeira also knew that he still had work to do in this world, and instead of lifting up his own *neshama*, he wanted to bring G-dliness down to earth. For the goal of any inspiration is to be able to bring it down to influence our daily life and mundane practices.

What positive message can we possibly extract from this episode?

Certain Tzaddikim are capable of cleaving to Hashem to the point that their souls are completely disconnected from their bodies, while remaining in this world. The Rebbe relates these two stories to show that this can be achieved even in our generation and by regular people as well.

The Modzitcher Rebbe,<sup>84</sup> was once in need of a lifesaving surgery. Because of his weak heart, the doctors felt that it would be too risky to administer anesthesia. So the Tzaddik proposed that the surgery should be done without anesthesia. He would lay on the operating table and start singing. He assured the doctors that he won't feel anything when he will reach the climax of the *Niggun*, so the surgery should begin then. Because he was able to completely focus on his soul and disregard his body by singing his *Niggun*, the doctors were able to operate on him without anesthesia. While he remained alive, he elevated himself through a *niggun*, in sync with his spiritual self.

The other story is about the Rebbe Rashab. In 5672, the Frierdiker Rebbe was sitting with the Rebbe Rashab on a balcony in Menton, France, where he would spend winters for health reasons. It seemed like the Rebbe Rashab was just looking out, eyes open in a trance. The Frierdiker Rebbe started to make noise, trying to get a response. At that moment, the Rebbe Rashab came back to himself and started writing the monumental Chassidic discourse of 5672, one of the

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<sup>84</sup> Modzitcher Chasidim are known for their interest in -and contribution to- Chasidic music

deepest series of maamorim of Chassidus. He received the insight at that moment, when he seemed to be completely removed from this world.

Such attachment to the Divine is not only reserved for Tzaddikim. The fact that these stories are told to us, with people that are close to our generation, is because we are also able to experience such moments. Like Rabba and Rabbi Zeira, studying chassidus can help us focus on our neshama and not pay attention to the whims of our guf. We often have moments of this kind, but they unfortunately dissipate, and we rather quickly go back to our routine. It is possible for everyone to attain a certain level of *Kalus hanefesh* by reducing our enthusiasm for physical matters and by concentrating more on the spiritual aspects of our existence. It enables us to connect to Hashem in a much deeper manner.

*Based on the Sichos of Shemini and Tazria 5744,  
Hitvaaduyos 5744 Vol II, pp. 1361-1374,  
and Likutei Sichos Vol. XXXI, P.177*

## A million Dinar offer

In the sixth chapter of Pirkei Avos<sup>85</sup>, which praises the virtues of Torah study, Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma tells the following story:

אמר רבי יוסי בן קסמא, פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ופגע בי אדם אחד, ונתן לי שלום, והתזרת לי לו שלום. אמר לי, רבי, מאיזה מקום אתה. אמרתי לו, מעיר גדולה של חכמים ושל סופרים אני. אמר לי, רבי, רצונך שתדור עמנו במקומנו, ואני אתן לך אלף אלפים דינרי זהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות. אמרתי לו, בני, אם אתה נותן לי כל כסף וזהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות שבעולם, איני דר אלא במקום תורה. וכן כתוב בספר תהלים על ידי דוד מלך ישראל (תהלים קיט), טוב לי תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף. ולא עוד, אלא שבשעת פטירתו של אדם אין מלווין לו לאדם לא כסף ולא זהב ולא אבנים טובות ומרגליות, אלא תורה ומעשים טובים בלבד, שנאמר (משלי ו) בהתהלךך תנקה אתה, בשכבך תשמר עליה, והקיצות היא תשיחה. בהתהלךך תנקה אתה, בעולם הזה, בשכבך תשמר עליה, בקבר, והקיצות היא תשיחה, לעולם הבא.. ואומר (חגי ב) לי הכסף ולי הזהב אמר ה' צבאות:

אבות פ"ו מ"ט

*Rabbi Yose ben Kisma said: Once I was walking by the way when a man met me, and greeted me and I greeted him. He said to me, "Rabbi, where are you from?" I said to him, "I am from a great city of sages and scribes". He said to me,*

<sup>85</sup> Ch. 6:9

*“Rabbi, would you consider living with us in our place? I would give you a thousand thousand dinar of gold, and precious stones and pearls.” I said to him: “My son, even if you were to give me all the silver and gold, precious stones and pearls that are in the world, I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of Torah; And thus it is written in the book of Psalms<sup>86</sup> by David, king of Israel, “I prefer the teaching You proclaimed to thousands of pieces of gold and silver”. For when a man passes away there accompany him neither gold nor silver, nor precious stones nor pearls, but Torah and good deeds alone, as it is said<sup>87</sup>, “When you walk it will lead you. When you lie down it will watch over you; and when you are awake it will talk with you”. “When you walk it will lead you” in this world. “When you lie down it will watch over you” in the grave; “And when you are awake it will talk with you” in the world to come. And it says<sup>88</sup>: “Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, says the Lord of Hosts”.*

While every word in the Mishna is measured, this particular Mishna includes many details that seem to be superfluous. Why is it relevant to specify that Rabbi Yosse was *once* walking on the road? The encounter is described as *pogah bi*, meaning not only “met me” but also slighted me, which has a negative connotation. Furthermore, Rabbi Yosse didn’t practice the Mishna’s directive<sup>89</sup> of being the first to offer

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<sup>86</sup> 119:71

<sup>87</sup> Mishlei 6:22

<sup>88</sup> Chagai 2:8

<sup>89</sup> Avos 4:16

greetings, but he waited for the stranger to greet him. The only consideration for employment was the city where Rabbi Yosse was from, and upon hearing that he came from a city full of scholars, the position was secured. Wouldn't it be more logical to first ask for the Rabbi's name and credentials before deciding to hire him? And in his answer, Rabbi Yosse says that even if the man would give him all the silver, gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, he would only dwell in a Torah environment. However, the man only offered one million Dinar and not all the riches of the world. So why did Rabbi Yosse reply with such exaggeration? His reply is all the more perplexing, knowing that Bilam was criticized when he spoke in a similar manner. Indeed, Rashi<sup>90</sup> points out that when Balak offered him a great reward for cursing the Jews, Bilam responded that "Even if Balak filled up his house with gold and silver, I won't be able to transgress Hashem's command." Rashi comments that he was greedy, actually naming his price. So if Bilam was criticized for refusing an offer that was not made, how can Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma talk in a similar way?

To better understand this episode, we first need to describe Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma's divine service. He was absolutely devoted to the study of Torah. Involvement with any other matter, even serving the community, would interfere with this endeavor. That is why he specifies that this story took place when he was *once* on the road, pointing out that this was an unusual situation, since he would normally be studying in the *Beis Hamedrash*.

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<sup>90</sup> Balak 22:18

Nevertheless, even while traveling, Rabbi Yosse was absorbed in reviewing his Torah, so he did not pay any attention to the scenery or by-passers. He was completely oblivious to what was going on around him, so he did not notice the man who greeted him. Had he noticed him, he would have greeted him first, as required by the Mishnah<sup>91</sup>. It was precisely Rabbi Yosse's intense concentration despite the dangers, worries and distractions associated to travels that triggered the interest of this man. This was enough to convince him that Rabbi Yosse was an uncommon sage. He did not need to know his name nor to ask for any other reference. But Rabbi Yosse took the man's greeting as a *pegiah*, an affront, not only for it interrupted his Torah thoughts, but also because Rabbi Yosse realized what the man was about to ask. Suggesting to leave the hall of study and get involved in community matter would, in and of itself, be a *pegiah*.

The stranger then proceeds to ask where Rabbi Yosse is from. By asking this question, the man wanted to know if Rabbi Yosse was indispensable in his town. He felt bad taking such a great man from another city where he would be needed. When Rabbi Yosse answered that he came from a town full of Torah scholars, the man felt that the rabbi's departure from his home town would not alter its spiritual standing. Therefore, he invited him to serve in his town and promised him a million golden dinars and some diamonds and pearls. But how can he envision that such a Tzaddik, who was not swayed by the scenery or travel, would be impressed by a financial proposition? This is precisely why such an offer was made, so Rabbi Yosse would be able to devote his attention entirely to his

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<sup>91</sup> See Midrash Shmuel, *ibid.*

studies and to the needs of the community, without worrying about his own livelihood. This wealth would also enable Rabbi Yosse to support his disciples and even to give charity generously. He would now be a scholar and a benefactor.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Yosse declined the offer, replying that all the money in the world will not move him from a place of Torah. By bringing this hypothesis, although he was offered only a million Dinar, Rabbi Yosse meant to say that even if he possessed all the money in the world, implying that everyone on the planet would rely on his generosity, thereby allowing him to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah* in the most complete way possible, he would still pass on this privilege in order to stay in a place of Torah. Alternatively, by saying “all the gold and silver *in the world*” Rabbi Yosse acknowledged that he could refine the world by using the wealth for a worthy purpose, but this world can also be transformed with Torah study. This offer might have been suitable for another rabbi, but Rabbi Yosse’s efforts were to be directed only on Torah studies.

Such a bold approach requires a solid proof. Therefore Rabbi Yosse mentions three verses to support his viewpoint, but only mentions the source and the author when he cites Tehilim written by David Hamelech. As a king, he was very wealthy and all his riches were spent for the needs of the people<sup>92</sup>, such as forming a strong the army, conquering the land, getting the mishkan to a stable location, and the likes. Nevertheless, Rabbi Yosse points out that knowing the worthy benefits of wealth, David proclaimed that he preferred the Torah over gold and silver, even when

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<sup>92</sup> See Sanhedrin 21a.

used positively. Rabbi Yosse needs to mention that this was written in Tehillim, as it was composed to be recited by every Jew equally, regardless of their level of wisdom or piety. By quoting this verse from Tehillim, Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma is informing the man that this viewpoint isn't just his, but it really applies to every Jew. Everyone is able to value Torah study more than anything.

Rabbi Yosse then continues “*For when a man passes away there accompany him neither gold nor silver, nor precious stones nor pearls, but Torah and good deeds alone,*” emphasizing how Torah is man's guide through his entire life-cycle. Before passing away, the only valuable asset one has is his Torah.

To explain why Rabbi Yosse favored Torah study over the richness of Mitzvos that are facilitated by wealth, he brings one more verse: “*Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, says Hashem*”.

Some commentators<sup>93</sup> suggest that with this verse, Rabbi Yosse explains that all the riches belong to Hashem. He is the one who gives sustenance. Therefore, He can provide him with his livelihood without having to move to another town.

The inner meaning, however, is that the main difference between the study of Torah and the performance of its commandments is that in order to be able to perform any *Mitzvah*, some money is needed. The Midrash says<sup>94</sup> that if one wants to affix a *Mezuzah* on his doorpost, Hashem has to give him enough money to buy a house, and so for every *Mitzvah*, particularly Tzedakah, when the money was given from above with the sole purpose that it should be distributed to the

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<sup>93</sup> See Kehati, Avot, *ibid*.

<sup>94</sup> Vayikra Rabbah, 27:2

needy. Even a mitzvah that does not require a particular object but is dependent on our emotions, such as love and fear of Hashem, cannot be performed properly without Hashem's help<sup>95</sup>. This is the significance of the verse cited by Rabbi Yosse, our *Mitzvos* are facilitated by Hashem who gives us the means and the strength to perform them. The study of Torah, however, does not depend on Hashem's assistance<sup>96</sup> but rather on our own effort. Applying your intellect to grasp a concept in Torah actually unifies you with Hashem in a way that is not comparable to the connection that can be reached through the performance of Mitzvos<sup>97</sup>. This was Rabbi Yosse's sole interest and to this end he aspired.

This can also be linked to another Talmudic statement by Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma, "two are better than three"<sup>98</sup>. Rashi explains the meaning to be that a young man walks on his two feet, while an old man uses a cane. But Rabbi Yosse isn't simply praising youth, but he is rather referring to studying Torah. *Two* is one person and his Torah; becoming one with Hashem only by learning Torah and without any outside element. *Three*, however, is when Torah is studied with another person, with a teacher, a student or a learning partner. According to Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma, it is greater to learn Torah on your own, because having a partner would diminish your personal achievement. A similar point is conveyed in the following anecdote. The Alter Rebbe once told the Tzemach Tzedek that he wanted to give him knowledge of the entire Torah as a present. The Tzemach Tzedek declined, saying that Torah is to

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<sup>95</sup> Kidushin 30b

<sup>96</sup> Devarim 30:12. See also Devarim Rabbah, 2:14

<sup>97</sup> See Tanya ch. 5

<sup>98</sup> Shabbos 152a

be acquired with effort. The Alter Rebbe acquiesced. Consistent with his approach in our Mishnah, Rabbi Yosse seeks to emphasize on the virtue of investing your own effort in your studies rather than rely on any help, even if it is coming from above. Torah that is earned with assiduousness is more valuable and gratifying than when acquired with outside assistance.

A story is told about a Jew to whom the previous Rebbe advised to spend more time studying Torah and less time indulging in worldly matters. The man replied that a Rebbe is detached from the material world and cannot appreciate worldly pleasures. “Should the Rebbe be put to the test and know the great pleasures life has to offer,” continues the man, “the Rebbe would not ask me to forfeit them.”

Here we are given advice by Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma, a man who was put to the test, and nonetheless chose to remain true to his Torah environment. No money in the world can distract us from our special way of life.

*Based on the Sichos of Bamidbar 5734, p. 148  
and Pinchas 5741, ch. 40-49*

## Rashbi Chases Away the Snake

The Zohar declares that there was not a single affliction decreed by Hashem upon the world that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai did not nullify. The following story is brought as example<sup>99</sup>.

כגון רבי שמעון בן יוחאי, דיומא חד הנה יתיב אבבא דתרעא (נ"א דמערתא) דלוד, זקף עינוי, קזא שמשא דנהיר, ואסתים נהורא ג' זמנין, אדהכי אתחשד נהורא, ואתחזי ביה בשמשא אוכמא וירוקא. אמר ליה לרבי אלעזר בריה, תא אבתראי ברי, ונחמי דהא ודאי גזרה אתגזר לעילא, וקודשא בריך הוא בעי לאודעא לי, דודאי תלתין יומין תליא ההוא מלתא דאתגזר לעילא. ולא עביד קודשא בריך הוא, עד דאודעיה לצדיקיא, הדא הוא דכתיב, (עמוס ג' ז') כי לא יעשה יי' אלהים דבר פי אם גלה סודו אל עבדיו הנביאים. עד דהו אולי עאלו בההוא ברם. תמו סד חוץ דהנה אתי, ופומיה פתיחא (נ"א והוה לחיש בלישניה), ומלהטא בארעא בעפרא. אשתניק רבי שמעון, וקטפר ידוי ברישיה דחויא, שכיד חויא, מאיך פומיה. וקמא לישניה מרחיש. אמר ליה חויא חויא, זיל ואימא לההוא חויא עלאה, דהא רבי שמעון בן יוחאי בעלמא שכים. עייליה לרישיה לסד נוקבא דעפרא. אמר גזר אנא, כשם דמתאה אתגזר לנוקבא דעפרא, כן עלאה יתגזר לנוקבא דתהומא רבא. רחיש רבי שמעון בצלותא, עד דהו מצלי שמעו סד קלא, פוטקרא דקיטפא עולו לאתריכו, קטפירא דבוריני לא שראן בעלמא, דהא, רבי שמעון בן יוחאי בטיל לון. זכאה אנת רבי שמעון, דמארך בעי ביקרך על כל בני עלמא

זוהר ויקרא ט"ו ע"א

<sup>99</sup> Zohar Vayikra, 15a

*For example, one day Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was standing at the opening of the cave in Lod. He picked up his eyes and saw that the sun is shining and then concealing its light three times. Meanwhile, the light of the sun darkened and the sun looked red and green. Rabbi Shimon told Rabbi Elazar his son: come after me, my son, and let us go see. Certainly Hashem wants to inform us of a decree. It is surely pending for three days, but Hashem won't carry out His decree until He informs the Tzadikim. As they were walking, they entered a vineyard. They saw a snake coming towards them with an open mouth, and squirming towards them. Rabbi Shimon bent over and knocked on the snake's head. Then Rabbi Shimon saw that the snake had his mouth open and saying something. So Rabbi Shimon told him: snake, snake, go and tell the snake above (the Satan) that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai is present in this world<sup>100</sup>. Right away, the snake went and put his head through a hole in the ground. Rabbi Shimon then exclaimed: "as the snake down here went back into the ground, so too the big snake above should go down into the great abyss". Rabbi Shimon started to pray. As they were praying, they heard a heavenly voice proclaim: emissaries of evil, go back to your place, for there is no evil in the world now. All bad decrees have been cancelled by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. You have a great merit, Rabbi Shimon, for your Master is compassionate to the entire world in your honor.*

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<sup>100</sup> so he cannot carry out any evil task

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok explains<sup>101</sup> that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai recognized that there were many signs of *gevurah*, might in a sense of severity. Kabbalistic masters associate sunshine to the manifestation of *Chesed*, gratuitous benevolence. The fact that the sunlight was obstructed means that these revelations were being restrained and prevented from coming down. He saw the situation worsen when the sun became entirely dark, indicating that not only the *chessed* was being obstructed, it was the dark effect of *gevurah* that was now exhibited. Then the light of the sun became red, which is also emblematic of *gevuros*. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai realized that all these signs pointed to a decree that needed to be nullified. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai entered a vineyard, referring to Adam's sin, as some authorities suggest that the forbidden fruit was a grape<sup>102</sup>, hence the vineyard would be where the original snake could be found. Rabbi Shimon knew that stern *gevuros* can only be sweetened at their source. As expected, he saw a snake and understood that it was sent from above. He ordered the snake to disappear, thereby concealing the entire Chet eitz hadaas, which is at the origin of all decrees.

This Kabbalistic interpretation of the story clarifies the various details that are related, but many questions remain unanswered. There are several examples of Tzadikim who were able to annul Hashem's decrees, starting from Yitzchok praying for Rivkah to have children and cancelling the decree<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Likutei Levi Yitzchok Vayikra, p. 177

<sup>102</sup> Brachos 40a

<sup>103</sup> Bereshis 25:21

Eliyahu Hanavi<sup>104</sup>, Choni Hame'agel<sup>105</sup> and Rabbi Akiva<sup>106</sup> all brought rain when droughts were decreed. The Zohar<sup>107</sup> also recounts how Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai himself brought rain in a similar situation. Why, then, was this particular tale chosen to prove that a Tzadik could annul a Divine decree, out of the many stories mentioned.

There is a Talmudic rule that whenever many examples are available, the most current situation is used<sup>108</sup>. “Current” could either mean a tale about contemporary sages, or a situation that is similar in nature to the subject at hand. Thus the Zohar discusses an episode involving its author, Rabbi Shimon, rather than one about another, more distant tzadik. Nevertheless, the story told in the Zohar about Rabbi Shimon bringing rain would be more “current” than this one, inasmuch as it is more likely to happen than the unusual situation of the sun changing colors or a talking snake.

To better understand, we first need to point out that there are two types of decrees. One is withholding some goodness, such as holding back the rain. The other is sending an affliction, such as the snake or a plague. Furthermore, there are many stages to the latter. It can be that the decision has been sealed in heaven, or even that a prophet expressed it verbally, or even worse, that the affliction has already begun, such as the plague that

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<sup>104</sup> Zohar vol. 1, p. 10a

<sup>105</sup> Taanis 19a, 23a

<sup>106</sup> Taanis 25b

<sup>107</sup> Zohar vol. 3, p. 59b

<sup>108</sup> See Shabbos 66b

came after Korach's rebellion<sup>109</sup> in the desert, or the snake's presence in the vineyard.

It is self-understood that it would be much easier to change the first type of decree; a prayer can remove the obstruction, and the goodness that was waiting to come down can materialize. In contrast, it would be more difficult to cancel an affliction, especially if it has already started. The closer the decree is to being actualized, the more difficult it would be eliminate it. The greatness of the Tzadik needed to cancel a decree is commensurate to the difficulty in nullifying this decree, that is, the stage of implementation of the decree.

That is why when the Zohar wants to bring an example of a Tzadik nullifying Hashem's decree, it brings the case of one that was already in an advanced stage. Not only that Hashem has decided on doing it and now He's just informing Rabbi Shimon of His plan. In this episode, the snake is already there, with his mouth opened, coming towards the people. The *gezeira* has already started, and yet Rabbi Shimon was able to annul it. Only a saintly person such as Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, who was unique in his greatness<sup>110</sup>, can succeed in this difficult task.

However, as mentioned earlier, Aharon Hakohen was also able to stop a epidemic that had already commenced, when he stood in the middle of the dead and the living with incense and halted the plague<sup>111</sup>. So how is this story with Rabbi Shimon any greater than the one written in the Torah, to the point that the Zohar brings it over the one with Aharon, albeit in similar circumstances?

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<sup>109</sup> Bamidbar 17:11

<sup>110</sup> See Sukkah 45b

<sup>111</sup> Bamidbar 17:13

The difference is that Aharon needed to do an action in order to reverse the course events. He had to take the incense and stand there, an action that is described in the Zohar<sup>112</sup> as “a hassle for Moshe and Aharon”. Whereas Rabbi Shimon was able to effortlessly do the same, without having to resort to actions. In the words of the Zohar Chadash “Rashbi halted a plague in Lod *with his words only*. Hashem decrees, and he nullifies”. He was able to do all this with his prayers alone.

The Talmud states<sup>113</sup> that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai is worthy to rely on his opinion in exigent circumstances. Although this refers to his Halachic rulings, it can also be taken to mean that any Jew in his time of need can rely upon Rabbi Shimon’s merit for salvation. Learning *pnimiyus hatorah*, the Torah’s secrets that were first revealed by Rabbi Shimon, affords us the privilege to rely on his merit. Moreover, it is indeed with the dissemination of his writings that the Jewish nation will come out of exile<sup>114</sup>, may it be speedily, in our days.

*Based on the Sichos of  
Vayikra and Tzav 5741*

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<sup>112</sup> Zohar Chadash Ruth, p. 85:4

<sup>113</sup> Brachos 9a, Gittin 19a

<sup>114</sup> Zohar Vol. 3, p. 125a

תשורה משמחת הנישואין של מנחם מענדל ואביענה דהאן

לזכות

הרה"ת הרב ר' מנחם מענדל שיחי'

וב"ג מ' אביענה אסתר תחי'

דהאן

לרגל יום חתונתם

ביום ט"ו תמוז ה'תשע"ט

בשעה טובה ומוצלחת

יהי"ר שיבנו בית נאמן בישראל, בנין עדי עד

מואר באור וחום חסידותים

ולזכות הוריהם וזקניהם שיחיו

וירוו רוב נחת חסידי מהם תכה"י